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Lighting the Shadows of the Canon: A Modern and Contextual Reexamination of Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2 Op. 30

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts in Music

by

Jason Pegis

2021

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

Jason Pegis

Doctor of Musical Arts in Music

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Elisabeth Covel Le Guin, Co-Chair

Professor Antonio Lysy, Co-Chair

In this dissertation, I explore the unique musical interests of Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2, Op. 30 (1894) with the intent to promote the piece from its 'fringe' repertory status. The research presented synthesizes historical information, traditional analysis, and material surveys with a physical exploration from the solo cellist's point of view to show effective methods for maximizing drama without sacrificing clarity, promoting a singing, vocal quality of the solo cello, and creating a unique duality of tone combining romantic gravitas with the lightheartedness of operetta. In addition, I track the concerto's reception and repertory status from its premiere in 1894 to 2021 using a survey of existing reviews, articles, public discourse, and recordings. This research aims to encourage more concert programming of the Op. 30, and in the process, makes the argument that canonization and the related false dichotomy between 'light' and 'serious' music styles have been detrimental forces in the consolidation of the cello concerto repertoire.

The dissertation of Jason Pegis is approved.

Jocelyn Hiu Ching Ho

David Kaplan

Elisabeth Covel Le Guin, Committee Co-Chair

Antonio Lysy, Committee Co-Chair

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I never envisioned myself ending up in the final stages of a doctorate program, let alone one in music performance. This has been quite an adventure as someone originally majoring on environmental science.

I owe a tremendous amount of thanks to each of my committee members for being patient and helpful during this process, especially to Prof. Le Guin for the detailed guidance in long-form writing over a time constraint. This dissertation would also not have been possible without a rigorous introduction to music writing from mentors like Prof. Marva Duerksen at Willamette University.

I would like to also my cello teacher Antonio Lysy and previous teachers Page Smith, Jason Duckles, Valdine Mishkin and Matt Haimovitz for fostering my imagination in music and trusting in my drive to improve after starting on the instrument so late. I feel so lucky to have studied with such an incredible gauntlet of players and teachers.

My parents have been nothing but supportive of me over the years; I am privileged not only for their guidance, but because they allowed me to approach music on my own terms rather than forcing me into music from a young age. Of course, I must also thank my brother Michael for giving me the motivation to hold my own against his intimidating PhD in inorganic chemistry, and to all my friends for being incredible.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Lynn Harrell. I had begun my research before he passed away last year, and while I did not have a chance to interview him, I am incredibly thankful for his recording of Herbert's cello works and his legendary style of cello-playing.

BIOGRAPHY

Described as a “true talent" by Christophe Huss of Montreal's *Le Devoir*, **Jason Pegis** started cello in his school orchestra program at age 12 and began lessons from the late age of 16 after becoming passionate about the instrument. Jason served as a strings department Teaching Associate at UCLA’s Herb Alpert School of Music, and holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Willamette University where he studied with Jason Duckles and Valdine Mishkin, and a Master of Music degree on a Max Stern Fellowship from McGill University where he studied with Matt Haimovitz. While at Willamette, his piano trio became the first chamber group from Oregon to become national finalists of the 2014 MTNA Young Artist Chamber Music Competition. He has seen success in solo competitions as well; in 2013 and 2016 winning the Willamette University Concerto Competitions, in 2015 winning the Eugene Symphony Young Artist Competition and Outstanding Cellist Award, in 2016 placing in the finals of the Oregon Pro-Arte Chamber Orchestra Emerging Artist Competition, the following year he placing as a finalist in the McGill Concerto Competition. He has also received the 2016 Zodiac Music Festival Young Artist Award, numerous instrumental awards from Mu Phi Epsilon, and a grant from the Williamson Foundation for Music. He held a principal cellist position of the McGill Symphony Orchestra in 2017 and has performed as part of the Parnassus Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre Classique de Montreal, and Salem Chamber Orchestra among other ensembles.

Despite the pandemic cancelling many events such as a fellowship position to the 2020 Piatigorsky International Cello Festival, Jason has been finding alternative ways to stay creatively active, taking advantage of the conditions by learning audio and video editing skills to produce various cello content. Demonstrating a passion for new music, Jason has acquired grants to commission and premiere works by composers like Kristapor Najarian, Sergei Umroyan, and Quentin Lauvray. Loving chamber music above all else, he has been featured as an artist in the Dilijan Concert Chamber Music Series and SouthEastern Young Artist series, and has performed with artists like Johannes Moser, Axel Strauss, Ettore Causa, Victor Fournelle-Blain, Neal Stulberg, and Denis Bouriakov, Antonio Lysy, Movses Pogossian, Varty Manouelian, and Robert deMaine. Each summer, you can find Jason at the International Cello Institute and often in Europe for small solo and chamber music festivals, such as the Zodiac Music Festival or Accademia Isola Classica. Some highlights of his recent years include touring the US, Canada, and Armenia premiering works as a member of UCLA’s VEM Quartet, and being featured on the Naxos and New Focus Recordings CD “Modulation Necklace,” released January 2020. As a soloist, he has performed with the Shorewood High School Chamber Orchestra, Willamette University Chamber Orchestra, UCLA Symphony Orchestra, Eugene Symphony Orchestra, and the Palisades Symphony. Jason currently plays on an 1880s Neuner-Hornsteiner cello from the Carlsen Cello Foundation.

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1. THE "INTERNAL"

Introduction

Among all the 19th century cello concertos I have worked on as a cellist, I have only encountered one that presents a curious challenge from the soloist's very first note. After a few measures of building introductory material, the orchestra suddenly drops to a simmering undercurrent of tremolo E minor harmony, and the ever-so-exposed soloist must boldly enter with a high C on the A-string (C5) to create a surprising flat sixth. Traditional counterpoint practices insist on the soloist to enter with a triadic tone to begin the concerto (E, G, or B, in this case), which results as the cello's bold entrance on a C being heard as an implied dissonance against the introduced harmony. The surprise is no quick suspension either, as the cello holds the tension an agonizingly slow 1.5 beats before finally resolving to a B. There is no simple way for the cellist to find the C, and it presents a challenge to one's confidence and cellistic ability from the very beginning. This leap-of-faith of a first note is only a small example of the many ways the composer prioritizes and optimizes drama in his concerto, and a moment that I will return to later in detail. It is from a seldom-performed work from a seldom-appreciated man who has been deceased for almost a century, but who at one time was one of the most celebrated and successful musical leaders in the United States as a composer, cellist, conductor, and musical activist: Victor Herbert (1859-1924).

In making a case for the unique aspects of Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2 (1894) and promoting the modern study and performance of it, the first chapter of this dissertation will focus on an 'internal' approach to the matter, synthesizing traditional analytic methods with physical

explorative knowledge from a cellistic point of view, an examination of Herbert's own cello recordings, and an investigation into period critical reviews of his playing. This first section is designed to explore the work itself, showing Herbert's effective methods of maximizing drama without sacrificing clarity, his singing, vocal treatment of the solo cello, and the distinctive duality of tone combining romantic gravitas with the lightheartedness of operetta.

Background

The cello concerto literature of the 19th century is significantly more limited than that of the violin or piano. The development of Western Classical repertoire featuring the cello in a significant solo role was an extensive process that took place from about the 1760s through the 19th century. Up until the end of the 18th century, the instrument was largely used in an accompanimental bass role. While some composers like Dvořák and Brahms admired the sound of the instrument and would occasionally use it for melodic solos in their orchestral works, both composers continued to perceive the instrument as unviable for a solo concerto until the 1890s. Since orchestras and concert halls were becoming larger throughout this period, it was easy to question the ability of the cello to produce enough sound to be heard over so many instruments.

Up until approximately the turn of the 20th century, the main proponents of the instrument's solo capabilities were cellist-composer virtuosos: travelling, performing cellists that wrote their own music to flaunt their impressive technique (ex: The Duport brothers (Jean-Pierre 1741-1818, Jean-Louis 1749-1819), Luigi Boccherini (1743-1804), the Kraft family (Antonín 1749-1820, Nikolaus 1778-1853), Jean-Baptiste Bréval (1753- 1823), Bernhard Romberg (1767-1841),

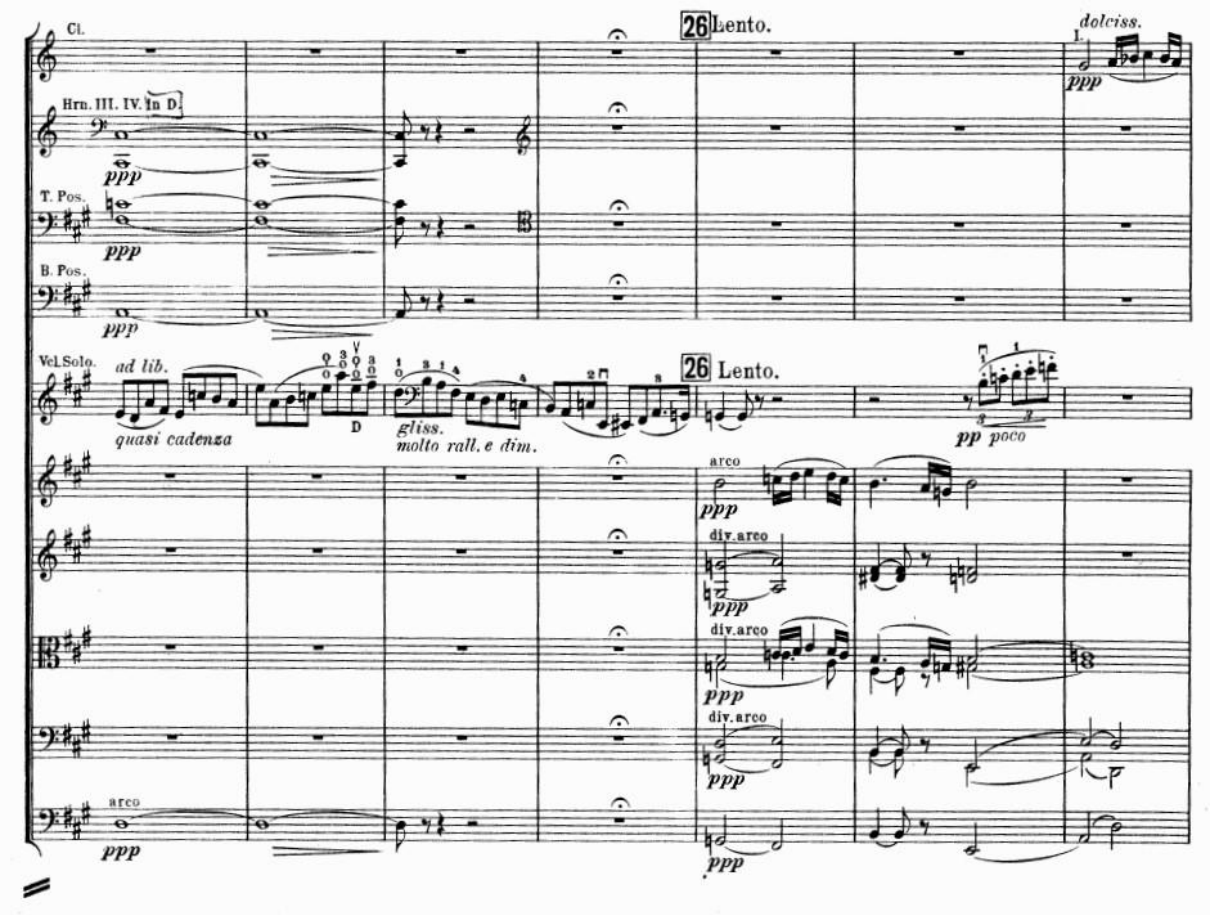
François Servais (1807-1866), Alfredo Piatti (1822-1901), and many others). George Kennaway's recent *Playing the Cello, 1780-1930* gives extensive information on the ways these pioneers of the instrument affected its broadening role in music. These cellists engaged in artistic experiment and pedagogical discourse about vibrato, bow use, posture, and left-hand fingerings, often writing their own manuals of playing, and agreeing or disagreeing with one another.[1] But by around 1850, the pedagogy was established enough to teach cello-playing well, and the many books published in this second half of the century show a big popularity spike in the instrument among amateurs.[2] In fact, there were at least around 80 treatises on cello-playing by 1900.[3] This was happening at the same time as it started becoming more acceptable for women to play the instrument, presenting twice as many individuals with the opportunity to learn the cello.[4] The compositions and pedagogical works developed by these cello virtuosos helped to raise the popularity of the instrument among amateurs, while their performances demonstrated–among other components like its potential for virtuosity–the cello's capability to produce enough sound to be featured in concerto roles by other composers.

One of the most well-known examples of theses influences is the effect that Herbert's Second Concerto premiere had on his colleague Antonín Dvořák, likely serving as the tipping point in his decision to write his Cello Concerto in B minor (1895). Dvořák attended the open dress rehearsal of the premiere for Herbert's second concerto and was so transfixed by it that he came back that evening for the concert. He poked his assistant in delight upon hearing the brilliant

[1] George Kennaway, *Playing the Cello, 1780-1930* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016).
[2] Robin Stowell et al., *The Cambridge Companion to the Cello* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 179.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Kennaway, 207.

orchestration of a certain passage where Herbert balanced multiple trombones with the solo cello line in a fashion that made the cello still clearly heard, one of the first times such an orchestration was created.

Figure 1



Apparently, Dvořák embraced Herbert with compliments after the premiere performance ended due to this balancing act, shown in *Figure 1*.[5] Starting 4 before R. 26, the solo cello begins a meandering, free melodic line as a *quasi cadenza* exclusively in the bright register of the A-string. For half of this cadenza before the cellist descends to lower strings, one bass trombone, two tenor trombones, and two horns, and contrabasses hold a long D7 chord at *ppp* for over eight

[5] Jan Smaczny, *Dvořák: Cello Concerto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 16-17.

beats. The ‘secret’ was making the heavy brass and basses as still and as quiet as possible while keeping the moving cello line in its most audible register. The result is a new, beautiful color for the cello to glide over without the anxiety of balance issues.

This dilemma of balancing full orchestra with solo cello had bothered Dvořák enough to give up on the desire to write a cello concerto, until he heard Herbert manage this with ease. Herbert’s toolbox of techniques for achieving clarity without sacrificing rich blends of color included placing groups of instruments in *con sordino* and/or *divisi* settings, and placing the solo cello into its most audible registers. However, the interest or value in Herbert’s piece should not come strictly–or perhaps at all–from its role as a catalyst to Dvořák’s cello concerto.[6] While the two works will be compared in later chapters for contextual insight, the main purpose of this dissertation is to illuminate the value of Herbert’s Second Concerto as a standalone composition that would add quality and variety to our currently limited pool of 19th century concertos. The methodology for this research includes explorations of period reviews of Herbert’s playing, a detailed literature review of two biographies, one article and two dissertations on Herbert’s cello works, traditional and empirical, cellist-driven analysis of the Op. 30, recordings of Victor Herbert himself and the handful of cellists that have recorded his works, and the application of Western classical canon scholarly discourse on the cello concert repertory.

[6]The collegial relationship between Victor Herbert and Antonin Dvořák has been already established. See: Howard Pollack, “From the New World: Victor Herbert and His Second Cello Concerto,” *Journal of the Society for American Music 2*,1 (2008): 71–99.

The Second Cello Concerto

When Victor Herbert composed his second cello concerto in 1894, he was approaching the apex of his career as both a cellist and composer. The fact that he composed a cello concerto with an intimate knowledge of the instrument and his own playing in mind is of substantial importance to this chapter. He composed the piece after his immigration to the United States, having already written and premiered prior pieces for the instrument with orchestra as part of a prolific solo and orchestral performing career. Meanwhile, he was quickly gaining invaluable conducting experience with various New York orchestras under mentors like Anton Seidl and was developing a deep interest in the idea of composing large-scale vocal works using his experience and affinity for opera. So, by the time he started writing his second cello concerto in 1894, not only was he blending a wide array of musical styles, but he was also bringing in his varied musical perspectives as a cellist, conductor, composer, and orchestral player.

Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2 is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, four trombones, strings, and solo cello. The work is approximately 25 minutes in length and features three distinct sections, *Allegro impetuoso, Andante tranquillo,* and *Allegro*[7] -- that form one continuous larger structure; each section is related with overarching themes. This clever cyclic structure creates a unified concerto out of only a few motives. While the concertos of Schumann and Saint-Saëns have the same fast-slow-fast, continuous structure, neither connect their melodic material as much as in the Herbert.

[7] These three larger sections are not official 'movements' as the work is continuous, but they may be referred to as movements in this essay for the sake of clarity.

There are only three major themes that Herbert utilizes, two which are foreshadowed in the orchestral introduction to the first movement, presented with a sense of instability from many character changes and interruptions, and refusing to hand over full, clear themes until the middle and later sections. The middle *Andante tranquillo* introduces a new theme, a singing, nostalgic aria that is presented in a serene, dreamlike fashion after the tumultuous energy of the *Allegro impetuoso.* The final *Allegro* acts as a return to turbulence similar to the beginning, before all the major themes of the concerto are united at once, and a final celebratory section closes the piece in explosive fashion. Given the unconventional structure of the concerto, it is more appropriate to understand the construction of the piece in the form of a narrative arc: turmoil and anxiety (*Allegro impetuoso*), blissful reflection (*Andante tranquillo*) and celebratory unity (*Allegro*).

The Drama of the Second Concerto

In 1907, after many successful operettas had established him as a leading composer in the USA, Victor Herbert announced he had begun searching for a libretto to write a full-scale opera. During this multi-year search, he shared with reporters some insight into his compositional process when approaching dramatic music:

> For instance, I have been asked whether I shall open my opera with an overture or a prelude. By an overture is meant a resume–a condensation of all the dramatic music of the opera; by a prelude, an independent piece of music, the aim of which is to put the hearer into a proper mood for understanding and enjoying what is to follow. Now, I am not much of a believer in overtures. They tell the whole musical story and often much of the dramatic story before the musical and dramatic story has begun–no very tasteful thing to do. I much prefer a prelude…this is to show the nebular uncertainty of it all. My inclination is to a prelude, but not so short a prelude as the one bar or so with which *Salome* opens, such being far too short a space of time in which to accomplish the physical necessity of getting a large curtain up…it will also be symphonic: by that I mean my opera will not consist of musical numbers loosely conjoined by elementary

> modulations. There will be a continuous, logical and well-knit stream of orchestral development of the dramatic action and comment on it.[8]

Herbert expressed this compositional concept thirteen years after the premiere of his second cello concerto, and in the context of writing an opera, not a cello concerto. However, it is surprisingly applicable to the instrumental work, giving some indication that Herbert's preferences for shorter yet engaging openings (preludes) that highlight uncertainty. The tension generated from the instability that permeates throughout the *Allegro impetuoso* movement makes for an even more satisfying resolution in the third movement (to be discussed later in this chapter), showing a strong instinct for large-scale dramatic control from Herbert.

If an extended concept of tension in the concerto seems reminiscent of Wagner, it is not without reason. Herbert often listed Wagner as one of his most significant influences, and this instrumental concerto contains leitmotifs, melodrama, and 'progressive' harmonies throughout. In fact, one of the 'operatic' elements most instantly recognizable in his Op. 30 that warrants further examination is the unyielding prioritization of drama from its very beginning. I use the word 'drama' in both the emotional sense (excitement, extreme sentiments and contrasts, unexpected events), as well as the definition pertaining to theater and vocal dramatic music.

[8] Victor Herbert, *New York Morning Telegraph*, April 8, 1907, quoted in Edward Waters, *Victor Herbert a Life in Music* (New York, MacMillan, 1955), 370.

Figure 2

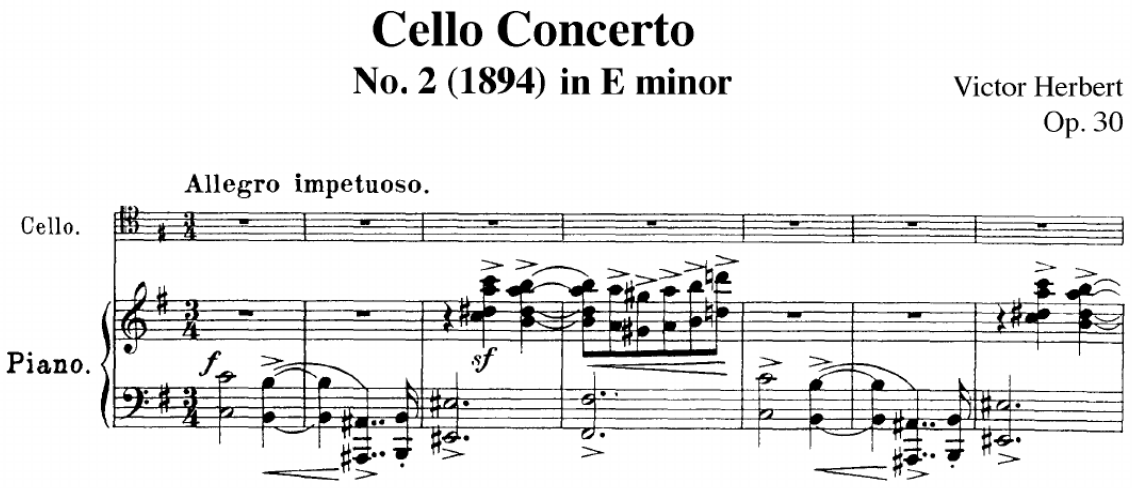


Figure 2 shows the opening of the piano reduction. Before the solo cello enters, much of the principal material is exclaimed loudly, with a mix of brass, winds, and strings interchanging the A and B motives (measure 1-2 for A, measure 3-4 for B). The syncopation, accents, and half-step non-diatonic tones present in this main material provides instability and uncertainty, giving the listener a sense of heightened anxiety or turmoil immediately. Another interesting element that contributes to its intensity is the group of 8th notes coming off the tie into measure 3. The crescendo and rising gesture of these 8ths played by the clarinets, first violins, and violas catches the ear immediately, but is cut off by the lower A-motive before the B-section answers again. Just after, nearly the entire orchestra plays a developing variation of the A-motive that leads the momentum into the *Lento* of the solo cello's entrance.

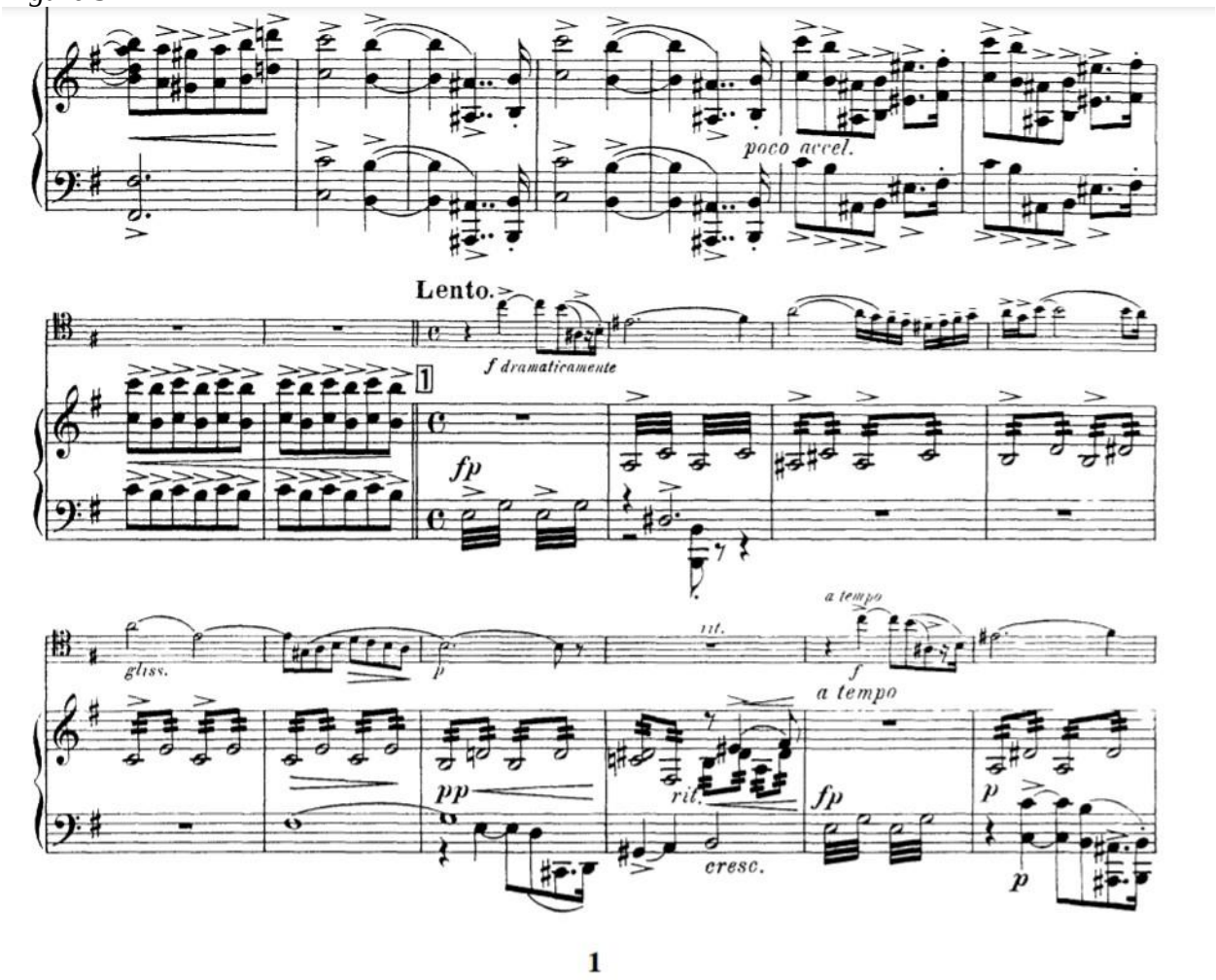
Thinking dramatically, one can picture the solo cello being pushed to play the A-motive material, entering as a tenor voice in the very top of their range; a reactive outburst that could only be appropriate after something shocking and tragic. The stormy surge of the orchestral material leading into the *Lento* gives the audience the impression of being thrown into the middle of an

opera...the long, comfortable introduction found in many concertos is absent, as is the expectation of a simple expository structure. The cyclic structure works so effectively in this concerto because it allows Herbert to think creatively, subvert expectations, and emulate elements of vocal drama within the instrumental piece.[9]

While instrumental evocations of *recitativo accompagnato* had been used before in concertos (such as the second movement Schumann Cello Concerto, or several Mozart Piano Concertos), the placement of Herbert's at the beginning of his concerto (and with so many surprising elements that will soon be detailed) is like opening the curtains to the audience in the very middle of the conflict, designed to grab one's attention in an instant (*Figure 3*). Once the curtain comes up, the solo cellist is revealed as the protagonist in an opera.

[9] Herbert's strong relationship with vocal dramatic music was extensive and will be detailed in a later chapter, but it includes the composition of dozens of light operas, two major operas, playing in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and marrying a talented soprano.

Figure 3



How many other romantic cello concertos have the soloist enter with a pitch outside the tonic triad? As previously noted, the first note of the solo cello line is an accented *forte* C-natural that provides an unexpected minor 6th interval against the E in the violas (rather than the 5th of the E minor triad such to add a B to the E and G present) and subverts expectations of concerto entrances. By presenting a seemingly 'wrong' note**,** it causes the audience to become hyper aware of the cellist from a harmonic standpoint. But there are several other dramatic implications behind this entrance as well.

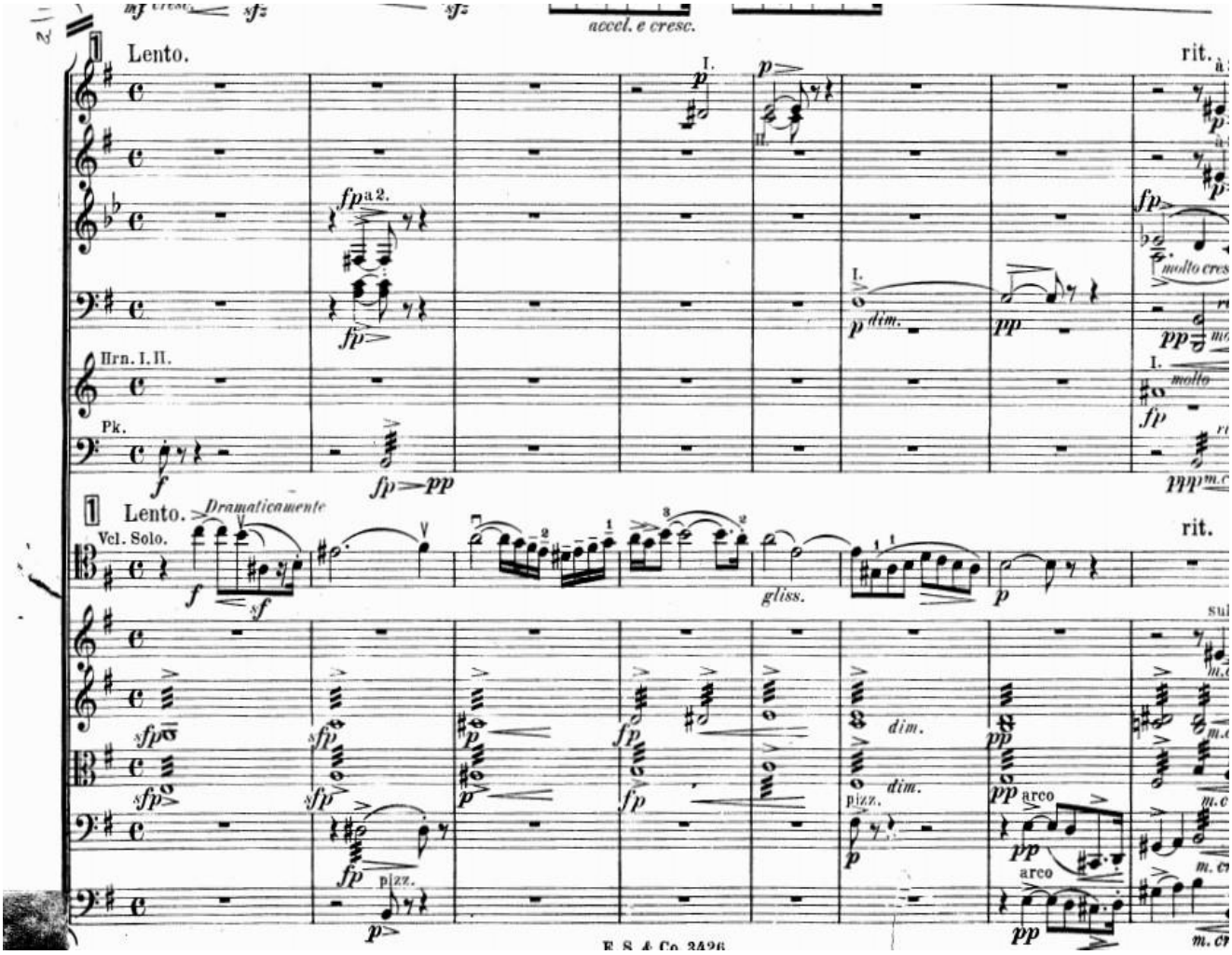
The sudden change from loud, full orchestra tutti performing a 4-measure *cresc.* and *poco accel.* to the sudden near-silence at R. 1 presents a dynamic implosion, inviting a sense of attention on what will happen next. The immediate switch from *Allegro impetuoso* in 3/4 to *Lento* in 4/4 also has a temporal effect, as if the cellist's introduction has so much gravity and weight that it warrants altering the perception of time.

Additionally, many non-diatonic stabs appear after this, creating a large sense of uneasiness in the harmonic tension of this soloist introduction. Once the C-natural to B-natural resolution happens, the very third note is minor 9th below the B-natural, sliding down to an A-sharp (still over a soft e minor in the tremolo), before briefly coming up a half-step to a B that climbs back up into an E-sharp for the first beat of the second measure, held for a ridiculous three beats, jarring with the now B-major harmony in the tremolo. In only two bars, there are three consecutive, prominent non-chordal tones sustained by the solo cellist. As the curtain comes up, the audience is quickly thrown into a heightened state of turmoil and conflict.

Performing this movement also requires a leap of faith to find the opening high C in seventh position on the cello, an area without any solid physical landmarks to confidently place the hand. Finding the pitch somehow beforehand is not very practical. Tapping the string to the fingerboard forcefully to produce a percussive pitch is difficult because the note is so far down the A-string, resulting in little sound. The tutti is too loud to stealthily test the note after the concerto has begun. If done during a quiet moment right at R. 1 or before the concerto starts, it would give away the surprise and result in a less confident, less dramatic execution. There is

really no choice but to nail it on the spot, without any solid form of preparation. The large, dissonant intervals up and down the A-string support the operatic nature of the solo role, with *glissando* even marked 5 after R. 1.

Figure 4

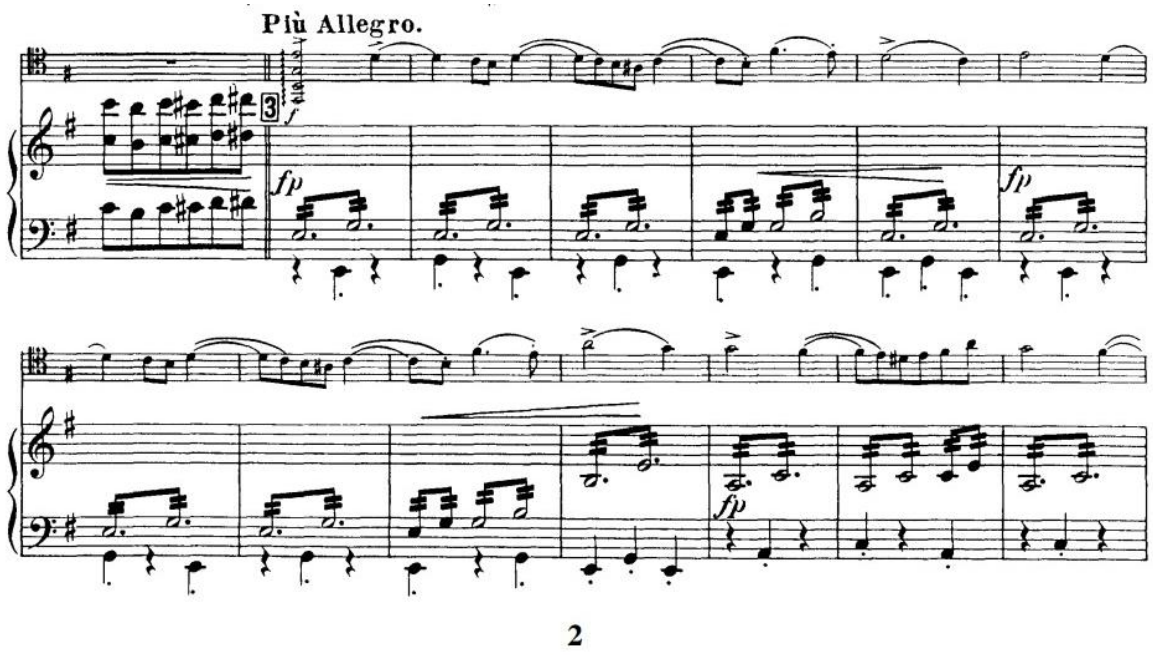


These examples from the very beginning of the piece provide significant evidence of Herbert's prioritization of drama as a main component in this concerto. When I was able to successfully catch the C, either in my own performance or practice, the feeling of physical satisfaction was immense, giving an intense, thorny sensation of engaging with jarring dissonances and resolving

them. Entering against the grain in our loudest register and then phrasing into the second measure with an even tenser harmony gives a physical feeling of gravity and resistance, as if one stretched a moment from a Brahms development to highlight the tension inside it. This feeling of sinking body and arm weight into the string from the bow and moving the contact point close to the bridge pushes our sonic capabilities to the limit, giving the feeling of being connected to the cello as it takes more of my weight and energy and converts it to vibration.

After the recitative-like *lento* of the beginning leaves off on a trailing half-cadence with a B-dominant chord held by strings and timpani, R. 2 marks the return of the screaming tutti miniature prelude that began the piece, only to now lead up to the 'real' beginning of the concerto, R. 3's *Piu Allegro*. The introduction is now over, but the turmoil and drama continue, presenting the feeling of being suddenly thrown into the middle of a tense, anxious battle full of conflicting directions. The cellist enters with a dramatic *ff* accented E minor chord, and though the entrance is placed on the downbeat and in the tonic (unlike the *lento* entrance), the pace is suddenly noticeably faster from the original *Allegro,* the second violins and violas have foreboding tremolos, and the cellists and basses have alternating E and G *pizzicato* quarter-notes between quarter-rests in a duple hemiola against the triple meter time signature. Even more unstable conflict is revealed in the thematic material the cello plays–taken from the violin section's 'answering' motive in the orchestral introduction–which contains short ties over the bar line for the first three measures and agogic accents. These factors combine to paint the picture of a battle between the cellist and the other strings, made even more unsettling by brief, sporadic contributions from winds and brass (*Figure 5*).

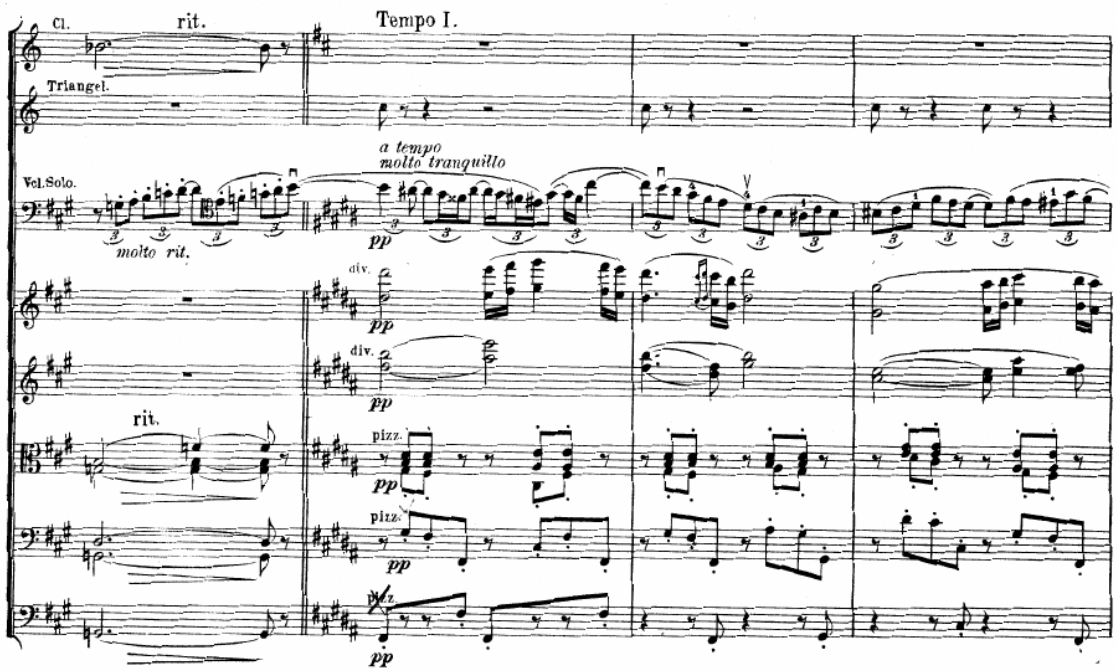
Figure 5



This ‘fighting’ concept is even expressed physically by the cellist, as sharp, quick jabs of the bow on the string are needed to accent the excessive syncopation in a way that shows a sense of the pulse. With the most material to express, the soloist must rise to the occasion as the main engine of the meter and be confident in the bow arm’s attack and release of each longer note, simultaneously feeling the larger pulse in 1 while being aware of the energized subdivision happening underneath. Herbert refuses the audience much sense of conflict resolution harmonically, saving instead for a dream-like second movement in other-worldly keys, before finally presenting ‘real’ key of E major in the coda of the final movement. R. 3 shows remarkable efficiency; Herbert presents the tonic key of E minor and the ‘start’ of the concerto’s ‘exposition.’ However, the theme here is still unstable, and even more interestingly, it is already a slight transformation of the fragments provided in the orchestral introduction. It shows a composer well-aware of standard concerto expectations with a keen interest in subverting them for the sake of implementing thrilling, dramatic material designed to grab attention.

Dramatic and/or vocal moments in the solo cello line do not come at the cost of rich, colorful orchestration. The issue of balancing cello sound with a full orchestra had bothered Dvořák enough to give up on the desire to write a cello concerto, until he heard Herbert manage it with ease. Herbert's toolbox of techniques for achieving clarity without sacrificing rich blends of color included placing groups of instruments in *con sordino* and/or *divisi* settings in addition to placing the solo cello into its most audible register, past middle-C on the A-string. Figure 6 shows all of these techniques being used, starting from 4 measures after R. 26, in the middle of the *Andante tranquillo* (from R. 20):

Figure 6



The muted strings, marked earlier, the pervading *pp* dynamics, the three-part *divisi* in the violas and two-part *divisi* in the first and second violins allows for rich vertical harmonies, warm timbral combinations that highlight a floating, lovely sound, reminiscent of an old black-and-white Hollywood film's love scene (a modern interpretation that only adds to the potential of

presenting the piece today, especially with hindsight of Herbert's direct link to later composers like Korngold and Gershwin). Despite the first and second violins playing in a high register with the first violins having the theme of the *Andante tranquillo*, the solo cello has no problem being heard due to the softening of the tutti texture through these methods. Furthermore, the cellist does not have to play an 'artificial' *pianissimo;* there is no need to push the sound by increasing weight or closeness to the bridge very much because there is so much breathing room created by Herbert for the cello line to dance among the floating clouds of orchestral texture.[10] The violins also get to play out the melody comfortably, without having to suspend or reduce the bow movement, resulting in an extra warm melody that matches the tenderness of the cello's countermelody (extracted and modulated from the main theme of the concerto).

Insight from the Instrument

Although Herbert was a cellist, the idiosyncrasies of his cello writing do not always yield an 'easy' or 'more manageable' solo part, because of his immense talent at the instrument and his dedication to certain musical ideals. Another distinguishing feature of this concerto, not unrelated to its invocation of operatic drama, is his commitment to treating the instrument as a vocal, singing entity. Those who learn the concerto will tackle the challenge of emulating the voice perhaps the most in the *Andante tranquillo.* It features a serene, simple, and nostalgic melody, and is written in a way that can provide much insight into Herbert's musical world and cello playing if viewed through an empirical, cellistic perspective. Almost all of Herbert's performance reviews seem to praise his tone quality with different descriptors, giving clues into Herbert's left hand and right arm use, namely using continuous, singer-like vibrato and slow,

[10] As opposed to the standard practice of playing the second theme of the in the first movement of the Dvořák Cello Concerto *forte* due to the heavy orchestration, despite much softer markings.

concentrated bows close to the bridge for a full, rich sound (these reviews will be explored later in this chapter). This type of physical, instrumentalist point-of-view exploration has been done by a number of scholars in the last decades, using embodiment to add new knowledge to more traditional forms of analysis.[11] Of special interest due to the detail and cello focus is Elisabeth Le Guin's *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology.* The following quote represents an explanation of Le Guin's approach:

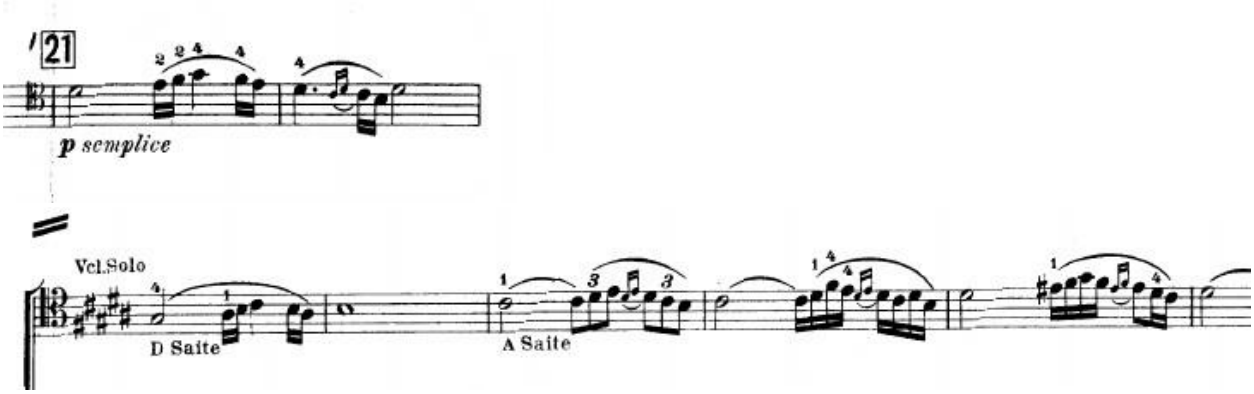
> I was increasingly convinced that certain qualities in Boccherini's music were best explained, or even solely explicable, through the invisible embodied experiences of playing it. No music I have ever played seems so to invite and dwell upon the nuances of physical experience as does Boccherini's: one can count on tiny variations of position, weight, pressure, friction, and muscular distribution having profound structural and affectual consequences.[12]

There are remarkable similarities between Boccherini and Herbert that allow for this type of approach to be perfectly suited to my discussion here. Both were virtuoso cellists who composed not only from a cellistic mindset, but from their own bodies and playing abilities, as both premiered their own works. In other words, learning and performing cello works by Herbert or Boccherini provides a personal, intimate insight into their musical world, their priorities, and their styles. This exploration taps into sensations the composers were likely experiencing while playing their works, which can provide considerable insight that wouldn't be attainable otherwise. Herbert even wrote in fingerings to the solo cello part in the full score, which allows for an even closer evaluation of his playing and his music. For a closer look at type of intimate

[11] Scholars that have effectively utilized these methods include George Fisher and Judy Lochhead, Daphne Leong and David Korevaar, Andrew Mead, Eugene Montague, Mineo Ota, Istvan Molnar-Szakacs and Katie Overy, Tom Beghin, and Elisabeth Le Guin. See bibliography for full works.
[12] Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: an Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 5.

connection to the music possible through the instrument, the opening and main theme of the *Andante tranquillo* (R.21-22) are shown below:

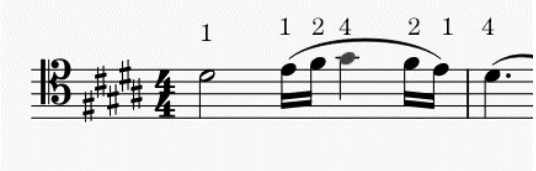
Figures 7 and 8



Despite the many technical fireworks in the first and third sections of the concerto, I find this melody (as well as this entire section) one of the most difficult moments to execute effectively due to the prioritization of singing the line - it must sound simple but still alive and phrased to follow the natural direction of the 2+2+4 phrase. At the *Andante* tempo, immediately apparent are the long slurs and note lengths, requiring the right arm to slowly drag the bow hair closer to the bridge than the dynamic suggests, in order to not run out of the bow (clearly the breath in this singing passage) and not to sound struggled or choked. The right arm pulling and pushing the bow closer to the bridge means it is further away from the body of the cellist, requiring a conquering of the instinctual fear-based reaction of pulling oneself inwards during performance. The positioning of the cello soloist in a concerto makes this inward sensation even more easy to fall victim to, as the cellist is forced to face the audience head-on (as opposed to the soloist in violin or piano concertos, in which the angle of the instrument provides for a more angled, less direct confrontation with the audience).

During loud, impassioned passages, this bow placement is unproblematic, but in softer, legato passages, it can become quite uncomfortable, particularly on the A string. Another challenging element is the shifting – even in the first measure, in which there are only four different pitches, at least one shift is necessary. It would be theoretically possible to use the left thumb on the D-sharp, but the vibrato and sound would be noticeably restricted, therefore impractical. Shifting cleanly during a slur requires subtle trickery to maintain continuous legato; lifting the left-hand finger from its weighted pressure on the string, moving it to a new location, and dropping it down again requires a very independent right hand. To avoid the potential problem of a shift during a slur, the most logical solution would be to shift up 1-1 to the second note, the E. This fingering results in a simpler, 'cleaner' approach as shown below in *Figure 9:*

Figure 9



Herbert's own fingering subverts this expectation for a more expressive fingering, embracing the left-hand motion during the slur. His whole implied fingering is 1--2-2-4---4-2--4, with the last '4' being the first note of the second measure (1 after R. 21). This is an unusually large amount of left-hand motion for a simple melody over a slow, broad bow usage, making it apparent that Herbert desires and/or prioritizes portamento, the vocal expressive technique of audibly sliding from one pitch to another. Even if the notes were hardly changing, the passage would require a serene and confident right arm system. With the moving melodic line, and added expressive fingerings if chosen, this passage becomes the ultimate coordination test: can the player keep a slow, smooth, stable bow motion in a resistant area of the string with the addition of a free, agile

left-arm system? Measures 3-4 of this theme push the challenge even further, requiring more agility from the left-hand fingers as the cellist must quickly execute awkward grace notes and flowing sixteenth-notes. Due to the coordination required, players will likely find that their bow becomes stopped or stuck from their right elbow tensing up in trying to execute the notes with the left fingers, or that they can achieve smoothness of the bow at the cost of left-arm execution becoming poorly timed or overly messy.

I initially approached the slow movement with the expectation that it might be a walk in the park: why would the consummate cellist-composer not give himself a relaxed and low-pressure opportunity for lyricism and expression, without unnecessary technical demands? This assumption was quickly replaced by awe in the face of the gorgeous yet difficult melodies. This melodic content demonstrates the strong affinity for vocal music that Herbert possessed, as well as his Cossmann-esque[13] ability to gracefully and quickly move his left fingers over the fingerboard over contrastingly slow, long slurs with a smooth bow. This type of cellistic examination of the priorities and challenges from the *Andante*'s theme refutes generalizations of this concerto as musically uninspired or as simply a means for Herbert to flaunt his instrumental prowess. This movement is the concerto's sacred inner core, an incredibly dreamy moment of rest and nostalgia, in which Herbert demonstrates how artful bowing and fingering allow the cello to sing long, beautiful phrases over radiant orchestration. Jon Smaczny, in his *Dvořák: Cello Concerto* (1999), claims, "There is, for example, none of that exquisite, almost chamber-like, combinations in Herbert's work that Dvořák adopts so successfully in all three movements

[13] Relating to his studies with Bernhard Cossmann (1822-1910), which will be further examined later in this chapter.

of his concerto."[14] But the *Andante tranquillo* proves that one can balance the cello line with beautiful, intricate tutti writing; the "exquisite" chamber music texture that Smaczny admires is created by the cellist singing over muted divisi string parts that each shine with a sense of individuality.

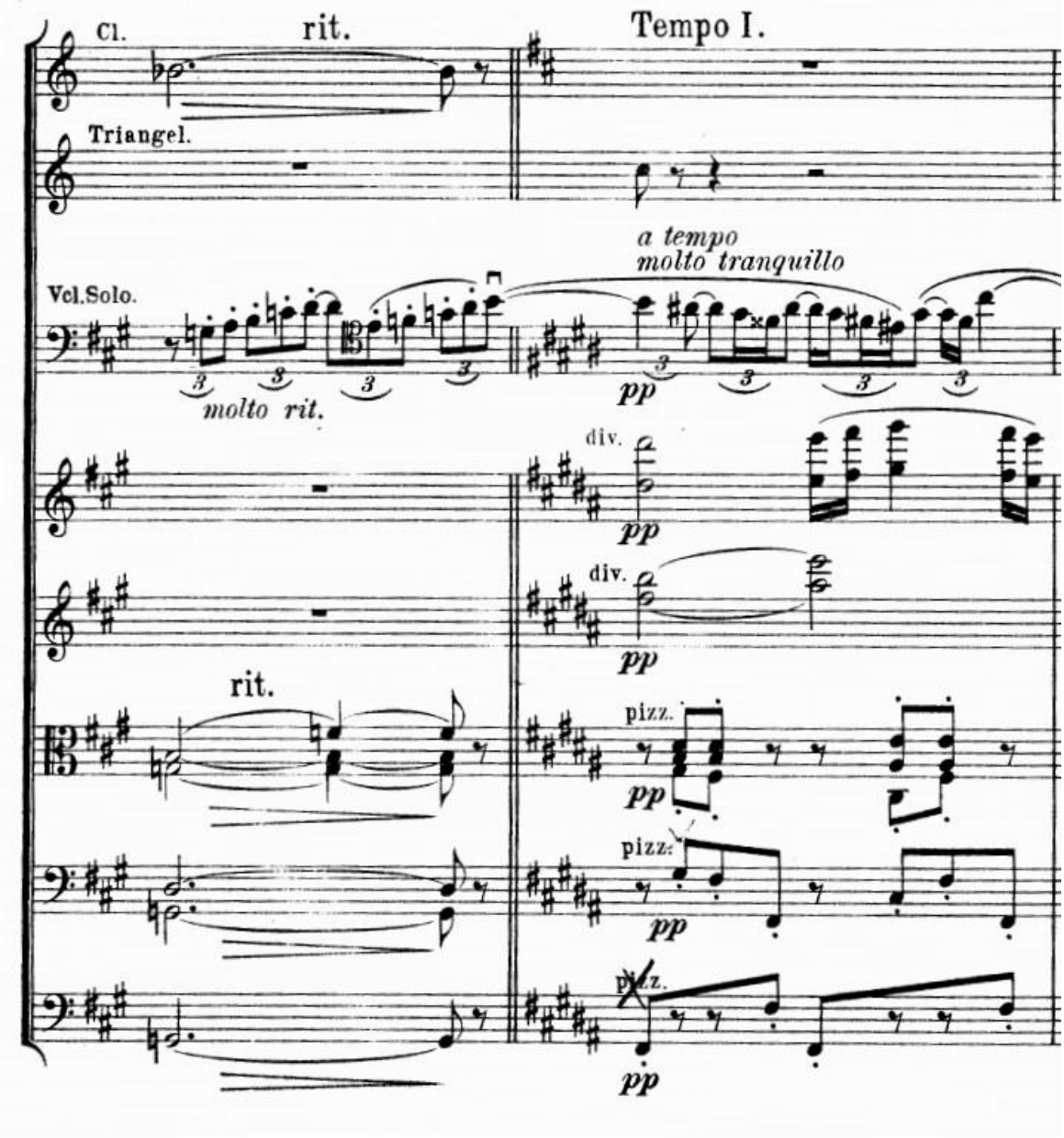
Another nuance of the *Andante tranquillo* is Herbert's utilization of the cello's acoustics with respect to particular key areas, in order to amplify different emotional characters. For example, the natural behavior of the cello in the movement's key of B Major is essential to its emotional profile: its unreal, dreamlike atmosphere is enhanced by the acoustic properties of the cello since no open strings are viable in the diatonic area of B major (A, D, G, C do not belong). This lack of open strings in B major even results in less sympathetic vibration from most fingered notes, since few harmonics are able to be accessed in the B major scale on any cello string. Such a key could be thought of as less 'friendly' or idiomatic to the cello since the instrument is prevented from resonating as freely as it can in the concerto's main key of E minor. However, Herbert uses this key with a specific intention: a more intimate color with a less ringing sound and somewhat muted timbre.

The serenity established in the inner movement contrasts so heavily with the energetic, frenzied character of the first movement. The inner B-section is set in F-sharp minor, which allows for the passionate note played by the cello in this area to be a fingered A on the A-string, one of the most ringing notes on the entire instrument not previously accessible with B major. Eventually, key rises by a half-step to a long G-dominant as the cello slowly wanders up through the

[14] Jan Smaczny, *Dvořák: Cello Concerto*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 18.

extraordinary trombone/horn moment Dvořák liked so much. The harmony of G major is even more resonant on the instrument, presenting an optimistic feeling of openness, before a brief resolution in C Major from the orchestra. But when the solo cello re-enters with a rising, scalar figure, it hovers over a high B across the bar line, never reaching the C, while the orchestra slips back into B major by enharmonically reinterpreting the G-7 chord as an augmented 6^{th}. Moments like these show the extent of Herbert's affinity for the progressive harmonies of composers like Wagner, and he blends this rich harmonic realization with cello acoustics seamlessly. Five measures after R. 26, the resolution into one of the most resonant keys on the instrument is denied, only for the cello to be tossed back into a beautiful B major texture for the woven countermelody and melody interaction of two principal themes. If B major is the established dream key, then the solo cello line very nearly wakes up while holding onto the blissful atmosphere, only to fall deep back into the dream. In other words, the solo cello desires a thematic unification in C major, but it is simply too good to become reality, and at this point of the concerto, can only exist as aspiration (until it finally happens later in the third movement, which will be discussed). It should also be noted that the tension between the cello's B and desired resolution of C is a reference and motivic variation of the cello's opening two notes that begin the *Allegro impetuoso*. In that case, the cello sustains a tense C before resolving to an enharmonic B. But here, the cello sustains a tense B but is denied the implied last note of the scalar figure (C), holding the B over the bar line as the tutti change from a G-dominant harmony to B major instead of the expected C major. The orchestral entrance at *Tempo I* brings harmonic stability to the cello's pitch, ensuring the dream will last a little longer. *Figure 10* shows this blissful key transition five measures after R. 26.

Figure 10


Cl.
rit.
Tempo I.
Triangel.
a tempo
molto tranquillo
Vcl.Solo.
molto rit.
pp
div.
pp
div.
pp
rit.
pizz.
pp
pizz.
pp
pizz.
pp

The Reviews (Were) In

The idea of Victor Herbert as a 'singing' cellist can be supported by other means as well, such as period reviews of his performances. When thinking of the different components of a particularly 'musical' cello performance, one of the first elements that comes to mind is tone. Luckily, newspaper reviews of Herbert's performances have been decently preserved, and excerpts from these can help provide a general idea of the critical perception of Herbert's cello-playing during his lifetime. While reviews are of course secondary sources providing 'external' accounts, I have included these in this chapter to connect them with recordings, score insight, and empirical instrumental observations to create a compelling composite of Herbert's cello playing from the insight out.

At age 23, after a performance of Goltermann's Cello Concerto in A Minor in Germany (1881), one critic was unsure if Herbert's technique was solidified enough to manage certain difficult passages, but agreed that "the player's tone in the singing melodies was beautiful and sympathetic."[15] Another critic on the same performance remarked, "the appearance of the newly engaged cellist, Herbert, afforded real joy...excellent technic [sic] and fine firm tone."[16] When Herbert debuted his own Concerto No. 1, he had seemed to develop his ability as a cellist even further. Waters even highlights the following review taken from a scrapbook collection belonging to Herbert's daughter:

> From the talented young musician we have already received many pearls of his exquisite art...we are happy to assert that the work performed yesterday can be

[15] *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (Nov. 30, 1881): 765, quoted in Waters, *Victor Herbert: A Life in Music*, 16.
[16] *Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik* (Jan. 22, 1882): 41.

> counted among the best compositions in violoncello literature...Herr Herbert played his Concerto himself and gave us repeated opportunity to admire his large, full, and noble tone and his brilliant technic [sic].[17]

Herbert's immigration to the United States resulted in perhaps even more positive reviews of his tone than he had received in Germany. When Herbert performed movements from his Suite Op. 3 in his American debut, the *New York Tribute* described him as, "a good, solid musical German violoncellist, one who produces a fine volume of tone and plays without the extravagant sentimentality which so many of his colleagues affect...a refined fancy."[18] Likewise, the *Herald* wrote, "His style is infinitely more easy and graceful than that of most 'cello players, just as his tone is more liquid, more melodious and of a more noble quality, simply because he never forces the tonal capacity of his instrument beyond its natural limits."[19] After an 1887 recital with pianist Augusta M. Fischer, one reviewer even expressed a clear dislike of Fischer, but still complimented Herbert's sound, writing that he played with "admirable technic and a breadth and sweetness of tone that are seldom found combined in one and the same artist."[20] Another chamber music concert one year later spawned similar praise from the *Musical Courier*: "His compositions...all show a refined taste, abundant melodic invention and great skill in the handling of the orchestra. As a violoncellist Mr. Herbert ranks with the foremost alive, his cantabile being superb and his technic [sic] most facile. He is the prince of good fellows, a most genial friend and companion, and is one of the most popular of our metropolitan musicians."[21]

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[17] Unidentified clipping from the Ella Herbert Bartlett Scrapbook II, quoted in Waters, 20.
[18] *New York Tribune,* Jan 8, 1887, 4.
[19] *New York Herald,* Jan. 8, 1887, 4.
[20] *Musical Courier,* Jan. 19th, 1887, 38.
[21] *Musical Courier,* Dec. 26th, 1888, 468, cited from Neil Gould, *Victor Herbert: A Theatrical Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 45.

Even negative reviews, such as the one from the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* on Herbert's last-minute replacement of a different artist to perform Goltermann in 1881, praise the charming quality of his sound during melodic lines. Critics consistently described Herbert's sound with words like '*cantabile*,' 'beautiful,' 'sweet,' 'liquid,' 'voluminous,' 'facile,' 'simple,' 'elegant,' and 'easy.' One can synthesize these descriptors to provide insight into Herbert's physical approach to the cello: He commonly used a continuous, or singer-like vibrato from a free left arm, made efficient use of gravity and right arm weight to get heavy contact with the string without having to press excessively, and bowed the string close enough to the bridge to get more resonance and overtones. This type of bowing requires less effort (reducing excess horizontal motion and speed of the right arm) and results in a more open sound than pressing in the process, making it more possible to achieve longer slurs by using slower bows closer to the bridge without a crack or tightening in the tone.

At this point, it may be clear that a major part of this chapter deals with discovering Herbert's musical world through his cello-playing. Luckily, in addition to score markings, empirical cellistic observations, and period reviews, there is a primary source that can help corroborate Herbert's musical style: recordings of Victor Herbert himself. In 1912, Herbert's playing was recorded in a series of five pieces for the Victor Talking Machine Company.[22] These short cello and piano compositions, titled *The Angel's Whisper, The Low-Back'd Car, Petite Valse, Scherzo, Simple Aveu, and Pensée amoureuse*[23] are difficult to hear in detail due to the recording quality, but Herbert's playing, even to modern ears, sounds both musically varied and virtuosic.

[22] This 1912 collection can be quickly accessed for listening at the following URL: https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/names/102518. For full citations, see Recordings section in Bibliography.
[23] Samuel Lover composed *The Angel's Whisper* and *The Low-Back'd Car;* the rest were originals.

In *Pensée amoureuse,* Herbert displays a graceful control of the extreme ranges of the cello, using a slow bow closer to the bridge than the fingerboard. One can make out his vibrato as being active most of the time aside from harmonics, which are often approached and/or left with elegant slides. Of the recordings, *Pensée amoureuse* also gives one of the clearest senses of Herbert's vibrato abilities and tone because it contains several sustained notes that are easily heard in the higher registers of the A-string. At the 1:30 mark, one can hear continuous vibrato through each of the descending, high A-string dotted half-notes, and one can clearly make out his preference of triplet rhythms in the vibrato oscillations, a pattern that gives the tone a singing, relaxed effect at a balanced speed. The overwhelming praise of his tone quality in 1880s American reviews checks out, as one can hear his *dolce* execution of melodic lines despite the recording quality, likely one of his defining strengths. Additionally, there are no squeaks, dead notes without core sound (I.e., when the bow is placed too far towards the fingerboard, or with not enough weight), or sudden bulges in the sound that can be heard in his phrases, adding to a sense of 'facility' or 'elegance.'

Perhaps the most unexpected, artistic element observable in the *Pensée amoureuse* is Herbert's use of subtle rubato. Each time the main refrain in played (0:07, 0:38, 2:03, 2:23), Herbert uses a slightly different sense of timing, displaying a sense of musical variety that prevents the repeated theme from becoming stagnant. The theme is comprised of two similar antecedent and consequent phrases, essentially creating eight total repetitions of material. It is quite possible Herbert improvised the timing of these in the moment, as the pianist gets behind Herbert for a brief moment in the instance at 0:38. Hearing this type of timing nuance Herbert had in his

toolbox helps to trust even some of the most praiseful reviews of his playing, such as the *New York Herald's* use of descriptors such as "graceful" and "noble."[24]

Likewise, the recordings of the other pieces display a variety of cello techniques at a remarkable level. The *Scherzo* displays rapidly moving, light left-hand fingers passages of brisk, consecutive 16th notes with perfectly timed coordination of the bow. There is also a remarkable amount of variety in the phrases, for example, even humorously playing *ponticello* for the last reprise. In *Angel's Whisper,* one can hear vibrato shakes on about every note along with varied *portamento* coming from same-finger shifts under a single slur, showing a musical priority for connection between notes even two decades after his second concerto. Likewise, *Petite Valse* similarly shows occasional *portamento* and easily hit octave passages, and *The Low Back'd Car* reveals more left-hand agility in fast notes, varied speeds and sizes of vibrato, and singer-like rubato when approaching large intervals. These recordings paint a portrait of a remarkably talented cellist, despite Herbert's career at the time being incredibly busy outside of cello performance. The collection seems to be a hidden gem; very few musicians or scholars have mentioned them. Lynn Harrell (1944-2020) was one of the handful of cellists to record Herbert's Concerto No. 2, and he said the following about the *Petite Valse*:

> There's a record of him playing one of his own pieces, a little waltz, and it's astonishing. I thought Casals was the great leap forward in cello playing-but no, it seems that Casals made the impact because he was such a dynamic personality as a performer, but the actual standard of cello technique was already high, as Herbert shows real virtuoso playing.[25]

[24] *New York Herald,* Jan. 8, 1887, 4.
[25] Lynn Harrell, "The Total Effect," *Gramophone 66* (Oct. 1988): 539, Interviewed by Stephen Johnson.

Cossmannian Influence

As briefly mentioned earlier, Herbert's main cello teacher was Bernhard Cossmann (1822-1910) while he was in Germany, whose pedagogy had a major effect on Herbert's method of playing the instrument. Cossmann was known as a well-rounded teacher that would give his students a strong technical foundation; Waters goes so far to describe Cossmann as "having a pedagogical instinct that could awaken the individuality of every student in his charge…his students profited musically, technically, artistically, and morally…they obtained a foundation which could not be shaken or impaired."[26] Even Gould notes the influence of Herbert's cello teacher, writing, "<Herbert's> colleagues and his critics were united in their praise of his 'exquisitely poetical refined playing,' a quality that was, apparently, inherited from his studies with Cossmann."[27] While I am not prepared to examine the 'moral' coaching that Waters suggests occurred between the teacher and the pupil, I can certainly examine the cello-playing principles Cossmann promoted.

The pedagogue's exercise book from 1876, titled *Studies for Developing Agility for Cello,*[28] presents many challenging left-hand exercises written over very long slurs. Due to the large number of notes per slur, the cellist is forced to play with a slow, calm bow closer to the bridge side of the string or break the bowing by one's choosing. While the latter decision seems a necessary preliminary step to preparing these exercises, the long slurs seem intentional as part of the challenge; many are on the brink of being unfeasible unless the left-hand fingers are incredibly agile. Whether it is thumb-position thirds, double trills, or arpeggios, it is apparent that

[26] Waters, 7.
[27] Gould, 46.
[28] Bernhard Cossmann, *Studies for Developing Agility for Cello* (London: Schott & Co., 1876).

a major component to Cossmann's pedagogy was the emphasis of well-prepared, quick, free left hand and arm motion over contrastingly slow bow motion from smooth, steady pulls and pushes of the right arm. Below are two examples from Cossmann's *Studies* that show some of the many exercises that feature this type of 'left-fast, right-slow' motion:

Figure 11

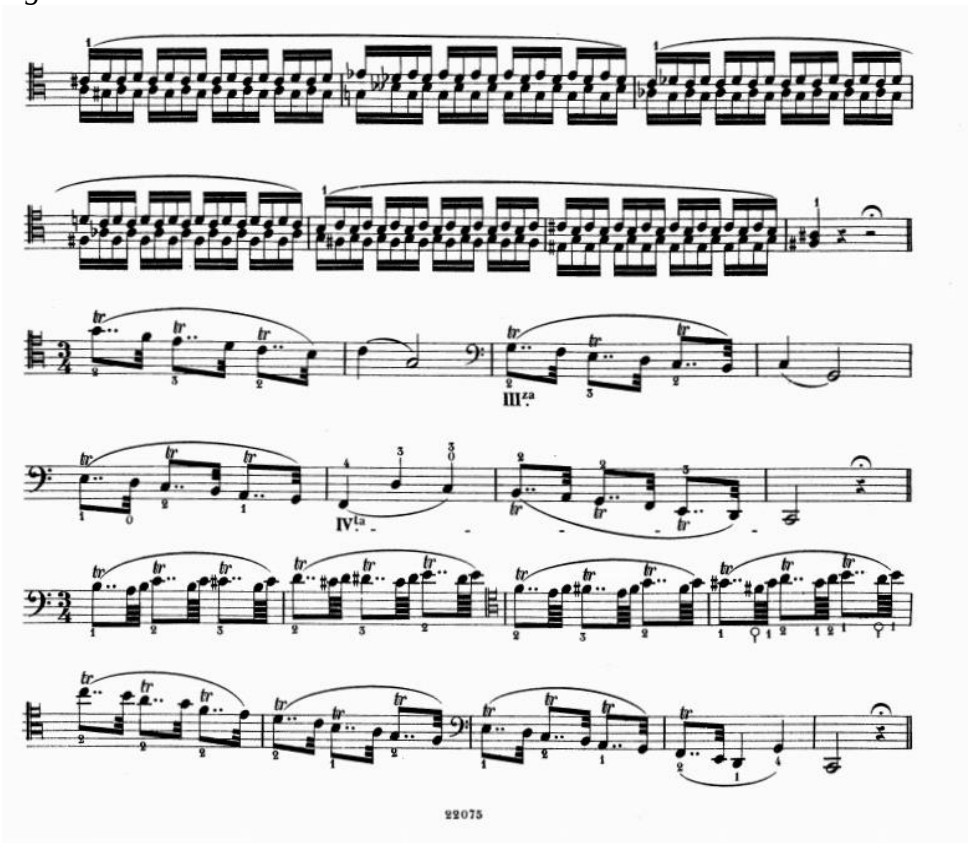
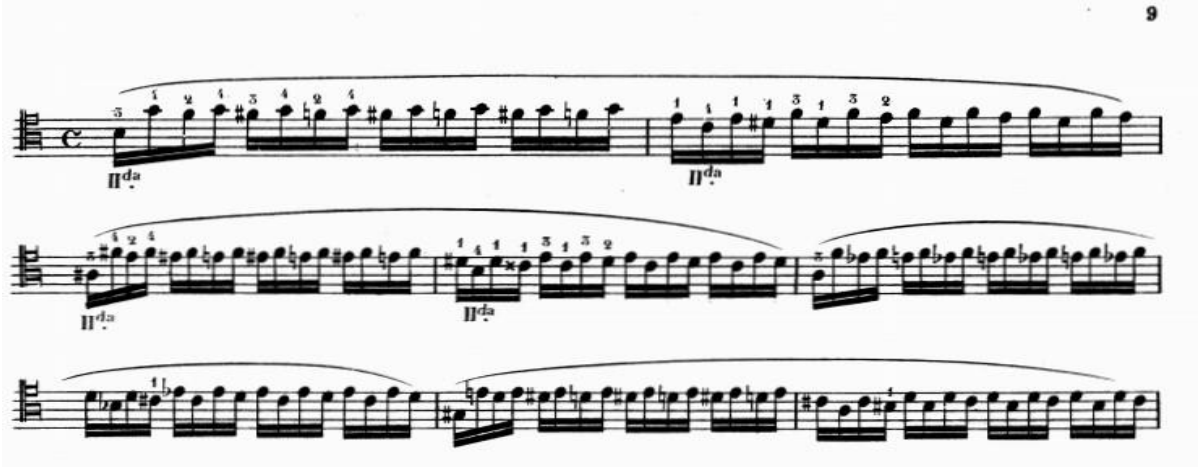


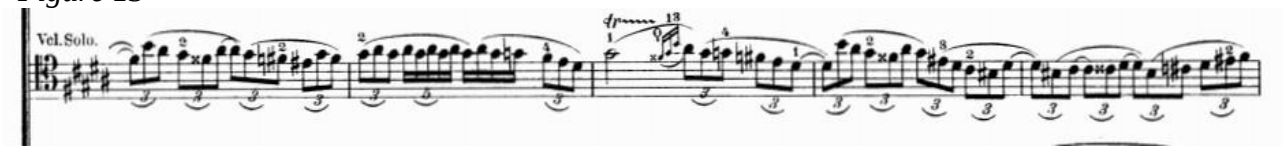
Figure 12



The challenge of these exercises is not simply executing the notes with the left hand, but more so executing them lightly and quickly enough that one does not run out of bow, which is the 'breath' that sustains the pitches. Cossmann's book gives an interesting reflection of certain popular performance practice preferences of the time, illustrating a pedagogical priority that was likely passed on to star pupils like Victor Herbert.

Returning to his second cello concerto, a lot of the original bowings within the score show this same effect (very long slurs of moving notes requiring graceful shifting in the left hand). In the slower, singing solos of works like the Schumann, Elgar, or Dvořák Cello Concertos, cellists are often forced to slyly break longer slurs to prevent running out of bow while having to play with enough sound to be heard at a good balance with the rest of the orchestra. But in similar areas of Herbert's Op. 30, he uses his cello and orchestral composition experience to reduce the amount of sound from the orchestra, allowing for the soloist to play more notes over a single bow in a 'Cossmannian' fashion. In the *Andante tranquillo,* the quietest movement, this happens quite liberally (such as the opening thematic material shown earlier, 2 and 2 before R. 26). Below, Figure 13 shows an extensive use of this concept, during even more tutti activity 5 before R. 27:

Figure 13



Each time I played this movement I ended up changing a few bowings, trying to find the perfect balance between optimizing the bow smoothness while preserving 'oxygen' by splitting a slur

into smaller slurs with bow changes as smooth as possible. Although the movement is far from stagnant, occasionally splitting slurs and using more bow speed with less weight on a repeated section can make for effective variety. It is difficult to achieve a high level of comfort with the original bowings, but if one can smoothly change the bow with little interruption to the phrase, there is hope of expressing Herbert's priority of smoothness.

It should be noted that performing a quick succession of notes requiring fast left-hand finger and arm motion over a long, slow bow is made slightly easier from the use of gut strings, which are more responsive to the left hand (and the bow) at the cost of achieving as much amplitude or tuning stability as steel strings. This comes from the higher thickness and commonly lower tension of gut strings compared to their steel counterparts. It is certain that both Cossmann and Herbert would have played on gut strings, as was standard before the development and slow introduction of steel strings following World War I.[29] Due to the acoustic properties mentioned above, it can be summarized that the cello in the 1890s was generally quieter, since gut strings cannot support as much arm weight into the bow. This context makes the balancing act Herbert achieved in his Second Concerto between the solo cello and the large orchestration (including trombones) even more impressive. In performance practice, it also serves as a helpful reminder that one does not need to press from the arm during the long slurs in the *Andante tranquillo*; the movement is orchestrated to allow the cello to come through at even its quieter, more restricted moments.

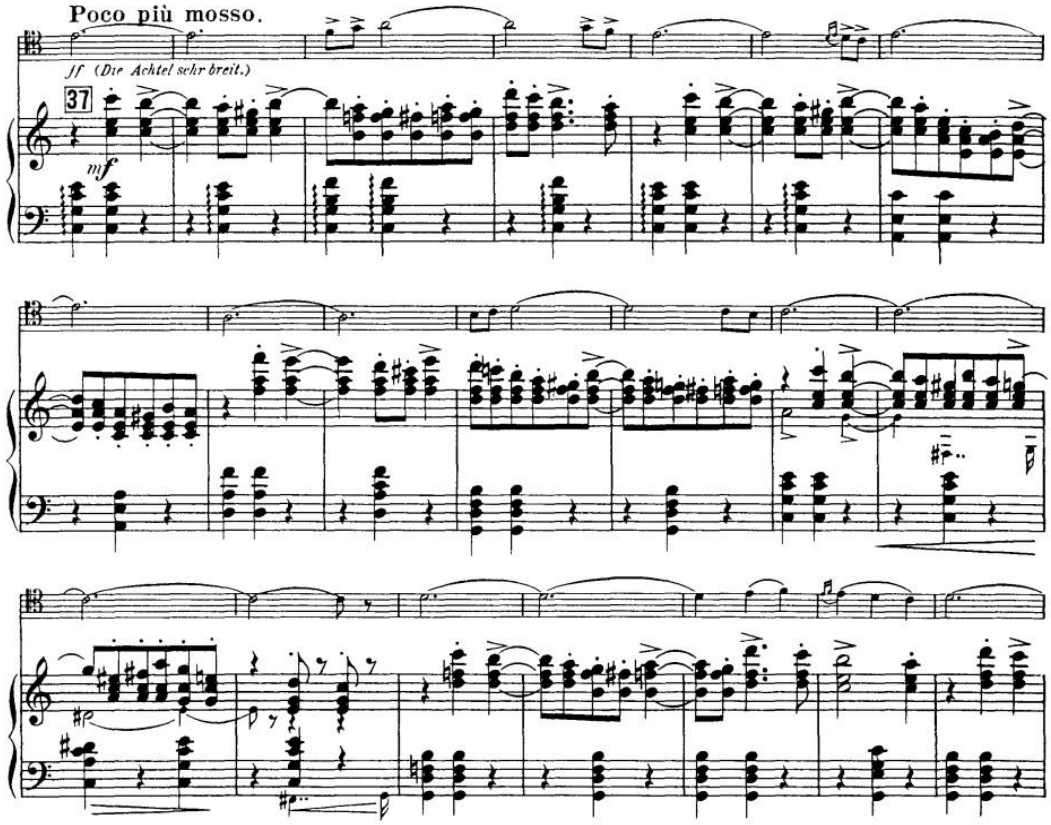
[29] R. Caroline Bosanquet, "The Development of Cello Teaching in the Twentieth Century," in *The Companion to the Cello*, 1999, 205.

The Lighter Side

While previous areas have been identified for their intensity, drama, or singing qualities, Herbert integrates lighthearted joy and humor into the last *Allegro* of the concerto, presenting a climactic moment of total thematic unity and reserving those qualities for the end in a celebratory fashion - battles have been fought and won, and the cellist and orchestra get to embrace a concept too often dissociated from western classical music: fun.

After intense, chromatic triplet and sixteenth-note passages and an explosive solo of a fast 20-note chromatic scale, R. 37 (shown below in *Figure 14*) provides an immense sense of relief and satisfaction for a few reasons. In a delightful *Poco piu mosso,* the cellist plays the *Andante tranquillo* theme, now *ff* with fewer slurs and accents to 'sing' the notes with tremendous energy, as different instrumental groupings of the tutti play versions of the calling and answering A and B motives from the first movement. But instead of B major or E minor, this triumphant unity of the concerto's three main thematic sources is presented in C major, elevating the melodies to a more 'natural' key and adding overtones and amplitude to the solo cello, singing in a state of joy.

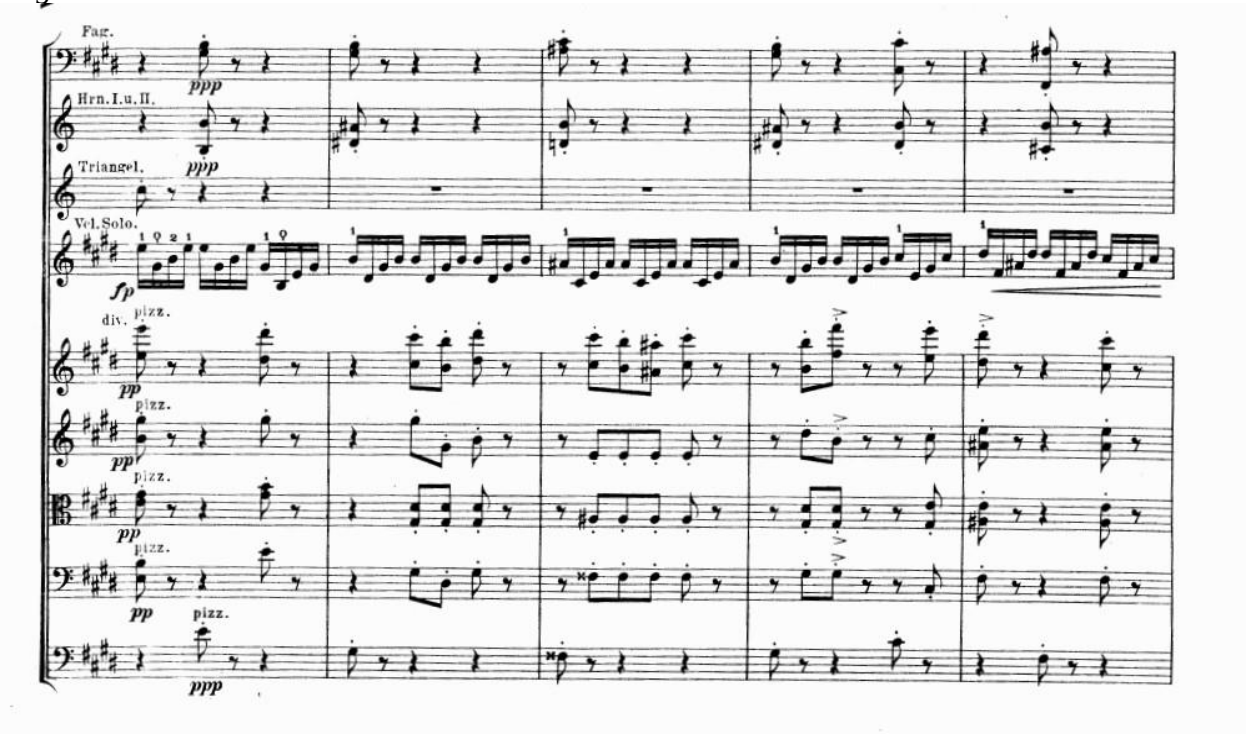
Figure 14



While this C Major unifying moment is thoroughly enjoyable, it is not long before a return to the tonic, but the E minor conflictive quality of the first movement has now been resolved rendering it into the parallel key of E major. R. 39-42 presents more singing and thematic material expression, until a clear coda is reached in R. 43. Marked *un poco meno*, the tempo and atmosphere melt into a dainty Viennese waltz-like setting, with cute dotted eighth notes being passed around the orchestra that always show a clear down-beat. Although the cellist has daunting sixteenths in thumb position, the pervading *piano* dynamic marking in the solo part, along with *pp-ppp* in the rest of the orchestra casts a light, elegant aura over the material. The four measures leading into R. 43 also contain a *cadenza*-like sequence of dissonances leaps in the

moving line of the cello with *molto pesante, glissando,* and in the last two bars, accents over every single separate note of the cello, before wailing on a high D-sharp leading tone over a fermata. There is a lot of energy and aggression that Herbert demands from the cellist at this moment, especially considering the amount and speed of lateral right arm motion required. The juxtaposition of this material to the light-hearted, quiet dance it leads into at R. 43 yields a great sense of humor, as the listener expects a full–bodied orchestral return even more passionate than the previous material. One can imagine Herbert effortlessly showing off his technical capabilities with a smile on his face, able to enjoy the music despite the coordination and speed difficulties of passages like R. 43. There is a two-measure crescendo starting five measures after this coda, but it simply leads to a sudden, even softer dynamic in the orchestra, and only a meagre *fp* over the first sixteenth in the cello line. The audience expects a grand finale, and it seems that the creator of *Babes in Toyland* is now 'toying' with these expectations even further. *Figure 15* below shows an excerpt of this starting six measures after R. 43.

Figure 15



Although a brief, passionate *ff* return of thematic material later interrupts the soft, delicate daintiness, the vast majority of the 'technical fireworks' contain this soft dynamic Was Herbert prioritizing balance? Probably not, since throughout this final section of the concerto, the solo cello and tutti are almost marked with matching dynamics. And while some of the sixteenth-note passages are marked *spiccato*, it is completely possible to play a louder spiccato at a fast tempo by adjusting the amount of bow hair in contact to the string, the contact point of the bow on the string, and the energy produced in the right wrist and forearm. The lightheartedness in so much of this finale comes from Herbert's musical desire for it, not as a means of orchestral compensation for the solo cellist's sake.

Until now, this essay has used a mixture of 'internal' analytical methods to discover the beauty, drama, and unique tonal qualities in Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2, with an emphasis on gaining insight into Herbert's music world through his own cello playing. While this chapter contains new, original observations, there is much to learn from an 'external' approach, examining Herbert's history in music, the scholarly work that exists on his cello pieces, and the recordings that exist of his Second Cello Concerto.

(Chapter 2 follows)

II. THE "EXTERNAL"

While the previous chapter dives into Herbert's second concerto aided by my own empirical experience as a cellist, this chapter explores 'outside' perspectives on the work and the composer's other instrumental music, contextualizing the concerto–both today and historically. But before exploring the discourse around his second cello concerto and recordings of it, it is important to contextualize the piece within Herbert's absurdly productive life.

Historical Happenings

Herbert's life and musical influences were incredibly multifaceted. Though born in Ireland in 1859, he emigrated to Stuttgart, Germany at the age of eight, and it was not long before he started finding success as a young cellist and composer. While studying with Bernhard Cossman from age 15-17, he started performing as a soloist with various orchestras, gained a court orchestral position, and decided to supplement cello by studying music theory and composition with Max Seifritz at the Stuttgart Conservatory. Two of his biggest musical influences included Wagner and Liszt, and there is a direct quote from Herbert that shows how deeply these composers impacted him. In 1902, Herbert spoke to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* about an 1882 concert he saw in Zürich featuring Lizst and Saint-Saens playing Liszt's four-hand arrangement of his *Mephisto Waltz*:

> You should have heard that playing. We were afraid every moment the piano would go to smash under Liszt's gigantic hands that came down like very sledgehammers. He played primo and Saint-Saens secundo, and though Saint-Saens had the more powerful end of the piano Liszt soon overpowered his bass notes completely…Few people wholly realize how much musical art owes to him, not only for his own direct work, but for that done indirectly in championing

> worthy composers, notably the great Wagner…never will I forget the impression Lizst made upon my youthful mind.[30]

Herbert's interest in the powerful theatrics behind the music of these composers can be observed from his very first compositions. His first major works include his Suite for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 3 (1883), his Serenade for Strings Op. 12 (1884), and his Cello Concerto No. 1 Op. 8 (1885).[31] His compositions at this time already showed a unique blend of Germanic styles, incorporating rich Wagnerian harmonies and Lisztian motivic development. Another important aspect to his musical identity was his affinity for vocal music, likely influenced by his relationship to his grandfather, the Irish poet Samuel Lover, as well as his captivation with a talented soprano that sang with his court orchestra in Stuttgart. His marriage in 1886 to that same soprano, Therese Forster, was the ultimate reason for his move to the United States, after Frank Damrosch from the Metropolitan Opera Company had scouted her for a role in New York. Victor Herbert managed to convince the Met scout to add him as the new principal cellist for the orchestra in a package deal, and in October of 1886 the pair set forth on the journey.

Herbert's enterprises in a variety of musical areas in the United States likely originated from a need to add additional income to his Metropolitan Opera salary, but it did not take long for his career in the new country to soar. Gould writes, "When Victor Herbert came to America he saw himself first as an instrumentalist and second as a composer of serious orchestral music. But the path that led him to expand his career into the areas where he would achieve greatest distinction, as a conductor and theater composer, was surprisingly direct."[32] After gaining a little more

[30] Schlotterbeck, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* Mar. 9, 1902, Quoted from Waters, 18.
[31] Waters, 20 (He states it could have been written 1884 but likely 1885).
[32] Gould, 49.

financial stability through landing a position teaching cello at the National Conservatory in 1889, Herbert continued writing concert works, including his *Irish Rhapsody* (1892), *The Vision of Columbus* (1893), and his Cello Concerto No. 2 (1894). His music from this period of expansion blended together Irish melodic gestures from his heritage, a German harmonic language from his time in Stuttgart, a rich timbral palette with detailed orchestrations, and a proclivity for Viennese daintiness. Despite the many directions in which his career was about to expand in at this time, Herbert never ceased to show an interest in composing concert works like these and would continue to write works such as the *America Fantasia* (1898), numerous waltzes, marches, and short cello pieces, film scores, a tone poem called *Hero and Leander* (1901), and *A Suite of Serenades* (1924).[33]

Herbert's transition to writing operetta can be best understood as a mix of practical and creative reasons. Operetta or 'light operas' became immensely popular in the later decades of 19th century America.. Knapp writes, "Operetta composers from Europe fed a resurgent US American taste for something musically more elevated, whose European roots could be embraced as a hedge against the encroachment of a (by some lights) coarsening 'popular' style."[34] With his German compositional training and inspired orchestrational skills, the potential for a notable involvement in operetta was certainly not lost on the composer; Herbert was a perfect fit to write appealing stage music. But scholars seem to agree that trying his hand at genre was not simply a business maneuver; he had been interested in experimenting with operetta for some time, even before writing his second cello concerto, as records show his first stage work, *La Vivandiere,*

[33] The *Suite of Serenades* was composed during his last year of life and had the unfortunate timing of being premiered at the same concert as Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue.*
[34] Raymond Knapp, "Camping along the American Operetta Divide (on the Road to the Musical Play)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Operetta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 126.

was written in 1893.[35] The period between 1893-1900 would mark a substantial broadening point for Herbert, as his career in a variety of musical areas started to rapidly expand.

Herbert replaced founder Patrick Gilmore as the leader for the 22nd Regimental Band of the New York National Guard in late 1893. Not only did it help Herbert 'Americanize' his image during a growing movement towards nationalism in the American arts scene,[36] but it also supplemented his income and allowed him to perform a mix of his own compositions and original orchestral arrangements. He stayed as the bandleader until 1900, even though his first performed operetta, *Prince Ananias* (1894), was successful enough to result in numerous commissions in the following years, such as *The Wizard of the Nile* (1895), *The Serenade* (1897), and *The Fortune Teller* (1898). These successful operettas would result in many more to come for the composer, and Herbert would go on to write about 45 before the end of his life in 1924.[37]

Understanding Herbert's musical life can be difficult due to the amount of overlap in different career areas. For example, in that same early period of 1894-1900, in addition to 'making it' as an operetta composer, expanding his solo cello career while writing and premiering orchestral compositions such as Cello Concerto No. 2 (1894), leading one of the finest military bands in the country, and working alongside Antonin Dvořák at the National Conservatory as a composition and cello professor , he also was hired as the principal conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony in 1898, a position he kept until his resignation in 1904. This laudable conducting achievement was a notable step up from his first appointments in New York, where he had worked as the conducting assistant to Anton Seidl (music director of the New York Philharmonic and

[35] Waters, 72.
[36] Gould, 66-67.
[37] The most complete list of his compositions can be found in Appendix A and B of Gould's *Victor Herbert, A Theatrical Life* (2008).

Metropolitan opera), another German-trained musician who had emigrated to the US. Herbert gained substantial training from Seidl as a conductor and human being, learning "the importance of personality for musical success with an orchestra."[38] Herbert transitioned from summer festival conducting positions to regular season guest conducting gigs, and had gained enough attention from his involvements with Seidl and others (such as Theodore Thomas) that the Pittsburgh Symphony administration specifically targeted him as a new hire. In an analysis of this career transition, Gould writes that Herbert was likely using the same rationale that went into his desire to create operetta:

> At this point it might be useful to take a step back and view the situation from Herbert's point of view. His career had brought him prominence as a soloist, bandmaster and stage composer. He was well established and respected in New York musical circles. He had a good income and a growing family. He spent summers at the Lake Placid club. He had been commissioned to provide the band music for the inauguration of William McKinley. Who needed Pittsburgh? Herbert was probably responding to the two elements that consistently motivated him: a new artistic challenge and the opportunity to add to his income.[39]

Herbert's influence on the Pittsburgh Symphony was a remarkable triumph despite initial controversy over the hiring decision. He brought in many strong orchestral players from New York to help fill out the sections, and would balance programs to appeal to a variety of tastes. Waters shows this programming philosophy in an excerpt from a letter from Herbert, addressed to the orchestra's administration about an upcoming concert program, involving an American pianist. Herbert states the following:

[38] Gould, 56.
[39] Gould. 88.

> I enclose <the> letter from Whiting. I think it would be nice to have an American Composer and Soloist for a change. I saw his Fantasy: a very good work. As to his 2nd Part numbers all Brahms–no. If Mr. Frew [other administration head] is in favor of having him [Whiting], will you please communicate with Whiting…that we must have selections of a popular or brilliant character in the <2nd> Part of our program. Tell him we don't believe in forcing the Brahms-pills down our audience's throat as long as we can give them pleasant and more exhilarating doses of morphines <sic>. (read more-Finesse!) ha! ha! To be serious, Whiting is certainly one of the best American composers and a fine pianist.[40]

Even in his conducting, Herbert wanted to reach as many people as possible, producing concerts with Pittsburgh, and later with his Victor Herbert Orchestra that included programs containing a variety of styles, often including new American works, famous Italian arias, Wagner or Beethoven Overtures, a Symphony by Tchaikovsky or Brahms, and perhaps a selection from Herbert's own orchestral works or operettas. The above quote shows an equity in the treatment of different types of music during an era where musical opinions could get quite heated (more on this will follow in chapter 3). Even Herbert's tone in the letter shows a mixture of light-hearted humor and resolute commandments.

Herbert continued writing operettas even before resigning from his intensive work in Pittsburgh, writing *Babes in Toyland* (1903), which Steven Ledbetter claims was "the first of a series of hits that made him one of the best-known figures in American music."[41] He would go on to compose *Mlle. Modiste* (1905), *The Red Mill* (1906), *Naughty Marietta* (1910), *Sweethearts* (1913), *Eileen* (1917), in addition to two operas (*Natoma* in 1911 and *Madeleine* in 1914), and one of the earliest scores for a feature film, *The Fall of a Nation* (1916).

[40] Waters, 176.
[41] Steven Ledbetter, "Herbert, Victor," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford, 2001.

It should also be noted that Herbert was extensively involved as an activist for musicians' rights. He believed vehemently that musicians should always be compensated for their work, be it a composition, performance, or recording. Much of Herbert's career took place during a time of very little legal protection for American musicians, and Herbert was one of the leading figures to openly advocate for change. Herbert was involved with numerous court cases (one of which will be highlighted in the next chapter), and would testify before Congress more than once. A fine anecdote from his court appearances comes from a incident that occurred after the hearing on *The White-Smith Music Publishing Company v. The Apollo Company* (1908). According to Harry B. Smith, a senator approached Herbert pleading, "Sir, you should not expect to be paid for your music. God gave you your talent and your work belongs to the world. You should be proud to have your songs sung by the people. You should be above asking for payments for them," to which Herbert retorted, "Fine! And I am to be fed by ravens, I suppose?"[42] In addition to smaller lawsuits, Herbert would end up influencing the creation of the 1909 Copyright Act, and took the leading role in the 1914 founding of the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP), directing it for the rest of his lifetime, and paving a road more easily traversable for future artists in America.

The Two Biographies

"I have made no attempt to deal with his orchestral compositions simply because, lovely as some of them may be, they are musically insignificant."[43]

[42] Harry B. Smith, "Canned Music and the Composer," *American Mercury* (Aug.1924), quoted in Gould, 213.
[43] Gould, xiv.

Of the two significant biographies on Victor Herbert, it may come as a surprise that the above quote comes from the much more recent one: Neil Gould's *Victor Herbert: A Theatrical Life,* published in 2008. The earlier work, published in 1955 by Edward N. Waters,[44] provides a lengthier biography of Herbert's life and work and includes a little material on Herbert's pieces outside of operetta. Though quite detailed, it can be faulted for lacking some citations, as well as for its consistently hagiographic approach, which is likely related to the considerable control Herbert's daughter Ella Victoria Herbert Bartlett exerted over Waters' work. In fact, Gould offers this circumstance as one of the primary motivations for writing his 2008 biography, which is intended to "supplement" but not replace the Waters.[45] The statement quoted above from the preface of Gould's book invites scrutiny because he fails to substantiate the claim of Herbert's 'musical insignificance' and because he neglects to address Waters' promotion of Herbert's instrumental works. Waters, however, devotes several pages (out of 575) to Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2.[46] Given the book's publication date of 1955, during a fairly idle period in the concerto's performance history, Waters' choice to include matter on the piece is noteworthy.

Gould's justification for his neglect of Herbert's non-vocal works is worthy of further unpacking. To call Herbert's non-vocal works both "lovely," and "musically insignificant" is of course a curious contradiction, but the more tangible substance of the quote comes from the claim of *musical insignificance* itself. Even in a book largely praising Victor Herbert, Gould himself invokes a sweeping critical standard comparing the value of different types of Herbertian music.

[44] Waters, *Victor Herbert A Life in Music,* 1955.
[45] Gould, xiv.
[46] Waters, 84-87.

Perhaps if he had claimed that Herbert's orchestral works were 'historically insignificant' then some evidence could have been presented showing the fall in Herbert's popularity among rapidly changing practices and philosophies of the first half of the 20th century, changes that lingered well into the latter half. "Musical insignificance," however, is a claim that is not only impossible to defend, but also actively perpetuates a rigid cycle of thinking that diminishes certain musics solely on the testimony of authors, musicologists, critics, or other 'experts.' More on this topic will follow in Chapter 3, which deals with the larger forces responsible for deciding which pieces are 'significant' should be programmed.

One common claim that appears about Herbert's operettas from critics both past and present deals with the 'quality' of his librettos, which many have claimed to be 'poor.' It is important to note that critics from Herbert's time did not necessarily reflect the opinions that audience members may have had. Herbert used the same librettist (Harry B. Smith) for many of his works, and the massive success of productions like *Naughty Marietta, Eileen, Babes in Toyland,* and *The Red Mill* provide some evidence that their stories and dialogues were at least 'good enough' for most concertgoers. However, these texts were pitched toward the turn-of-the-century American public, including many references and jokes of the time and culture; they are less universally accessible than those of W. S. Gilbert, for example. This is likely one of the major reasons for the lack of Herbert stage works being programmed today. Waters makes the following conclusion in 1955:

> The composer's failure to find a worthy literary partner has been decried so often as to become proverbial…Herbert certainly never found a librettist even faintly approaching Sullivan's partner, and many of his books were of the shoddiest. But they were acceptable (for a while) to the contemporary public, and there is no

> record that Herbert himself was dissatisfied with them…Undoubtedly, some (perhaps most) of Herbert's finest stage music is heard no more because it is wedded to words and situations which cannot be revived, but the cause is not limited to the words alone. Convention and taste and credibility are all contributing factors; if these, or the prejudices based on these, can be overcome, a surprising amount of the best Herbert can be restored to performance.[47]

Stephen Ledbetter agrees with this sentiment, writing, "Many of Herbert's stage works were criticized in his own day for poor librettos and conventional lyrics. Those weaknesses have prevented large-scale rediscovery of his operettas, though a few revivals with heavily rewritten librettos took place in the 1980s, possibly the harbinger of a more general reconsideration of his art."[48]

This reconsideration Ledbetter mentions is actually happening to some extent even today, in the form of the Victor Herbert Renaissance Project (VHRP), led by Alyce Mott. The project creates concert versions of Herbert's operettas, without staging but instead with a narrator, 5-8 main characters, a chorus, and original Herbert orchestrations.[49] The company, now called VHRP Live![50] has been quite active in New York City for the past seven seasons and is even staging Herbert's 1914 *The Only Girl* for live performance in February 2022, and *Mlle Modiste* in April 2022. Organizations like these are admirable and certainly point to the possibility of Herbert's vocal works experiencing a resurgence. However, if they take this much effort to restore because of their librettos, would it not be easier to revive Herbert's instrumental works that do not contain text?

[47] Waters, 574.
[48] Ledbetter, "Herbert, Victor."
[49] Alyce Mott, *"The Victor Herbert Renaissance Project*," (VHSource, VHerbert.com: 2008).
[50] The project can be found at the following URL: https://vhrplive.org/

Scholarly Writings on Herbert's Cello Music

I am not the first cellist to show a scholarly interest in Victor Herbert. Of the three extensive written works that have some level of focus on his second cello concerto, two are from DMA dissertations. Cellists in their Doctor of Musical Arts degree have the unique perspective of writing as a student and performer well-engaged with their repertoires and the musical trends in their field.

Darrett Adkins

Darrett Adkins' "The Cello in the New World: A Study of American Concert Music for Cello through 1925" (Juilliard, 1999) was the first extensive look into Herbert's second concerto. In Adkins' search for quality American cello works written before 1925, he made the decision not to include Herbert's first cello concerto (Op. 8) since it was composed overseas before Herbert's move to the US. Herbert's second cello concerto ranks among the works most praised by Adkins. He pays much attention to its radical form and acknowledges its resurgence around 1999, optimistic about the concerto's future. With his analysis of the work comes commentary on the composer himself, including a statement connecting Herbert's values to his compositional style. He writes,

> <His> commitment to quality and accessibility is equally apparent in the development of his compositional style, which had counterparts in both the 'serious' and 'light' veins. In each, there is no question that he uniformly excelled, even while facing criticisms of the oversophistication of his 'light' music and astonishment at the complexity of his 'serious' scores. Today one finds these criticisms ridiculous, as the music is charming, clear, and exceedingly well-made.[51]

[51] Darrett Adkins, "The Cello in the New World: A Study of American Concert Music for Cello through 1925," DMA diss., (Juilliard School: 1999), 43.

Later, Adkins gives more direct examples of this stylistic duality between 'serious' and 'light,' making it clear that Herbert was able to balance both elements in the second concerto. He cites m. 410, the blissful coming-together section in the middle of the *Andante* as an example (referenced in Chapter 1), stating that while the violins play the muted principal theme from the start of the section, the cello countermelody that supports it "is nothing less than the missing recapitulation of the main motivic material from the first movement, presented in a sugar-sweet obbligato that totally understates its structural significance. It seems typical of Victor Herbert to use such a conceit to delight his audience while at the same time making a most interesting formal statement."[52]

Adkins uses this illustration of Herbert's depth beneath lighter, daintier material to tie into the topic of virtuosity. While the concerto certainly prioritizes the solo cellist as the protagonist of the work, it saves a lot of the 'virtuosic fireworks' for the final coda; Adkins suggests that Herbert is treating such material as a celebration for completing the first movement's delayed recapitulation.[53]

In the context of cello concertos of its time, the work made much greater use of tutti sections. Adkins argues that it makes sense the concerto was called 'overly-symphonic' by some period reviewers such as Reginald de Koven[54] since the work "was a significant challenge <to norms>, and ran the risk of making itself irrelevant by virtue of its

[52] Adkins, 57
[53] Ibid., 59-60.
[54] Reginald de Koven, *New York World* (1894), quoted in Waters 86.

complexity."[55] Adkins ends his section on the concerto and the composer with optimism for the future of the work, noting the rise of knowledge about the work in the cello community during his time of writing (1999).[56]

Mon Yun Amy Hsieh

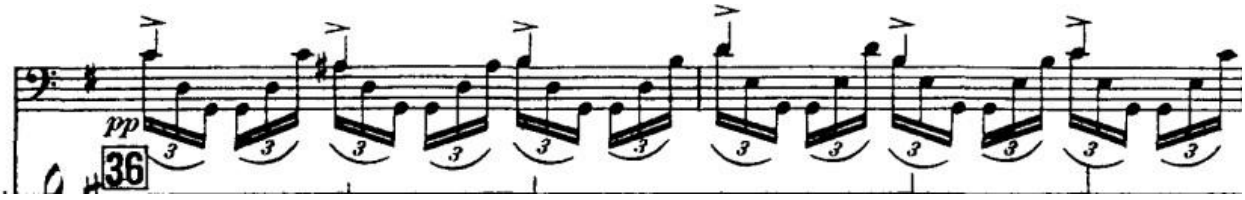
Another DMA dissertation, written eight years later, is Mon Yun Amy Hsieh's "The Two Cello Concertos of Victor Herbert," (Boston University, 2007), which focuses solely on Herbert's two cello concertos, understandably providing more depth than Adkins. Hsieh, like Adkins, notes the second cello concerto's different stylistic and formal elements compared to the first. She writes, "Different in concept of form and style from the First Concerto and the Suite, the Second Concerto exhibits a vigorous, energetic character, a heartwarming, passionate melody, and a remarkable unity through thematic derivation and manipulation…"[57] Hsieh emphasizes romantic qualities like the colorful, full-bodied orchestration, harmonies and dissonances borrowed from Schubert and Wagner,[58] and cyclical construction of the thematic material throughout the three continuous movements. While the continuity between movements is evident from a first listen, Hsieh illustrates the extent of the subverted structural norms—and the effects those subversions produce—in great detail. For example, she notes that unlike traditional sonata-form first movements, Herbert places the orchestral exposition in m. 139-171, *after* the solo exposition (m. 49-139), evoking a sense of disorientation in combination with the disguised forms of the thematic material.[59] In other words, Herbert slyly saves the satisfying relief of structural and

[55] Adkins, 61.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Mon Yun Amy Hsieh, "The Two Cello Concertos of Victor Herbert" (Boston University, 2007), 62.
[58] Ibid., 89.
[59] Ibid., 66.

tonal stability for the second and third movements, while keeping the first movement surprising. Hsieh refers to Adkins' research, agreeing with him on the remarkable monothematicism of the work.[60]

Aside from the structural, harmonic, and thematic analysis she provides, perhaps of greatest interest is Hsieh's empirical, cellist-based analysis from her own performance perspective. Hsieh frames this content within a separate section on performance practice suggestions, providing tips to other cellists learning or interested in learning the concertos. While her recommendations are thoroughly helpful, Hsieh does not make connections between these difficult passages and the rhetorical or emotional content tied to them. Much of this section of her thesis is focused on the last movement, since it incorporates much of the material from the first movement in addition to new demanding sections. Hsieh covers the fast arpeggiated passages in thumb position (R. 43-45, etc.), recommending the practice of slowly played, blocked double-stops to hear and tune the chords. The closest Hsieh comes to connecting these difficult excerpts to affect or expressive goals happens in her advice on the arpeggios that cross over three strings with a slurred bowing at R. 36. *Figure 16* shows an excerpt of this bowing pattern, isolating the cello part.

Figure 16



[60] Hsieh, 66

Hsieh connects the *leggiero* marking of the passage to the sensation of lightness required in the bow hand, reminding the player to avoid squeezing from the fingers or applying too much weight from the arm or back. Instead, she recommends a subtle index finger motion to bring out accented melodic notes through the sweeping arpeggios, helping the passage to achieve a floating, effortless effect despite the quickness of the notes, resulting in a fun, celebratory conclusion of the piece.

Before ending her section on performance practice advice with balancing and tempo tips, Hsieh goes into detail on the bow mechanics involved in the second movement. While she does not admit its difficulty outright, she shows a notable interest in the peculiar challenge of playing the *Andante* with a free, singing tone, in a manner that achieves smoothness without sacrificing phrasing and variety. She gives a clear generalized summary of the components on the cello that affect dynamics (bow pressure, bow speed, length of bow) as well as tone quality (bow speed, bow distribution, concentration of sound, and vibrato).[61] She argues that the difficulty of effectively executing the *Andante* movement comes from the number of variables the cellist must manage, writing, "The A Section of the second movement <starting at R. 21> especially requires all techniques to obtain an expressive sonority in soft dynamic."[62] Hsieh advises the 'opening up' of the bow (I.e., using more bow) in the main melody once the theme becomes more embellished, and varying the amount of bow used in the faster rhythms to prevent stagnancy. In addition to bow recommendations, Hsieh also advises for specific changes in vibrato, such as wider vibrato to R. 22's *molto espressivo* line, and narrower vibrato on the subito *pp* high C-sharp three measures after R. 22.

[61] Hsieh 95-96.
[62] Hsieh, 96.

More evidence of Hsieh's captivation with the executional challenges of the *Andante* can be found shortly after in a very different type of advice, as she appeals to the performer to transcend executional mechanics of playing and tap into deeply personal or emotional characters to attach to the melodic material. She makes the following claim:

> An aural image of sound and a certain music character in one's head will help to create a specific sound. Imagining a particular kind of sound and specific kind of character on a certain passage will prevent the performer from solely playing the notes; instead, the music should be played from the heart. For instance, the performer should picture a simple, touching moment of his or her life in mind when playing the main theme, and have an aggressive, soaring feeling for the *piu mosso* of the second movement.[63]

While this type of non-mechanical, imaginative musical advice is something musicians run into and employ frequently, the *Andante tranquillo* is the only area of the concerto that Hsieh recommends this type of pathos-based approach in addition to physical performance tips. I—and most likely any other cellists that have worked on the piece—can relate to this, since this movement has required notably more practice hours poured more hours than either of its exterior movements. The difficulty making the 'singing' melodic lines appear effortless and organic is paired with immense physical and emotional satisfaction when all the variables 'click' into place.

In line with Adkins, Hsieh ends her dissertation by noting the increased frequency of performances and recordings of Herbert's *Concerto No. 2 Op. 30* around her time of writing (2007), expressing hope that the Herbert's instrumental music will resurface and gain currency in the classical music world. Gould's *Victor Herbert: A Theatrical Life* was released just a year

[63] Hsieh, 97.

later, and while it was likely helpful in the promotion of Herbert's life and his operettas and operas, it has been either detrimental or non-impactful in regard to the concert music, due to his gratuitous dismissal of Herbert's orchestral works.

Pollack

If Adkins started scholarly momentum in 1999 towards Herbert's cello concertos and Hsieh developed it with more detail and performance practice instructions in 2007, then Howard Pollack pushed the momentum even farther one year later in 2008, but from a different angle. In the article, "From the New World: Victor Herbert and His Second Cello Concerto," Pollack similarly claims that Herbert's Op. 30 deserves more attention. In his opinion, the piece is "a subtly crafted composition that brilliantly exploits the resources of the cello," and displays a rare stylistic blend of different musical nationalities that includes theatrical elements.[64] Pollack gives a clear walkthrough of the concerto, highlighting its thematic transformations and key areas, which serves as a great introduction to the piece for those interested in it. But in addition to formal analysis, Pollack makes the concerto's other strengths very clear: an orchestration that gives incredible clarity to the solo cello line, and an adept, detailed solo part from a proficient composer who knew the instrument intimately. While talking about the large-scale, loosely sonata-form structure of the concerto, he remarks:

> Such a form clearly serves the work's lovely and expert solo writing, which constitutes the music's primary appeal. But though some of the soloistic passages pose considerable technical challenges…what impresses, rather, is the sheer beauty of the writing and the assured and masterful use of the instrument's lyrical

[64] Howard Pollack, "From the New World: Victor Herbert and His Second Cello Concerto," *Journal of the Society for American Music 2*,1 (2008, 71–99), 71.

> capabilities, enhanced by some skillful indications for fingerings and shifting strings, and some effective use of glissandos, harmonics, and the like. [65]

In other words, Pollack is saying that the orchestration is accommodated to clearly present the solo cello line, which is the main substance of the piece. While this generalization may downplay the effectiveness of the orchestral tuttis, Pollack is accurate in identifying the solo cellist as the protagonist of the piece (contrasting with Smaczny's description of the Dvořák Concerto as a more egalitarian, chamber-like treatment of the instruments).[66]

With Dvořák in mind, Pollack notes the lack of scholarly work on Herbert's Op. 30, mentioning that its claim to fame has been reduced to its role as a stimulus to the Dvořák Concerto. He unpacks the relationship between the two pieces with greater detail than had previously been done.[67] He claims that there are likely a number of areas in Herbert's work that could have influenced, consciously or subconsciously, Dvořák's cello writing or general melodic material in his concerto, aside from the trombone section we know Dvořák admired (5 after R. 25, shown in chapter 1).[68] But Pollack notes that the extent of the influence will be impossible to solidify because Herbert and Dvořák were friends and colleagues that likely affected one another's compositions in a variety of ways. Yes, Dvořák was captivated at the dress rehearsal and premiere of Herbert's second cello concerto, producing his own the next year; but Herbert had also played the "Dumky" Trio with Dvořák, and was sitting as principal cellist in the New York Philharmonic for the premiere of Dvořák's "New World" Symphony, which could have affected his own cello concerto that he would have been writing around that time. The two were quite

[65] Ibid., 86-87.
[66] Smaczny, 18.
[67] Pollack, 90.
[68] Ibid., 93.

involved in one another's musical lives during their employment at the National Conservatory, which is why Pollack describes them as being "apparently engaged in a sort of dialogue…"[69] But regardless of influences, Pollack, like Smaczny, make it clear their general styles still show massive differences. He states, "Similarly, in more general matters of style, form, and tone, the two works–although both rooted in the German Romantic tradition–contrast notably, with Herbert closer to Liszt and Dvořák nearer to Brahms."[70] The more free structure of Herbert's second concerto can certainly be compared to Liszt compositional techniques, but Wagner should be referenced here as well due to the dramatization and non-traditionalist harmonic treatment throughout the work.

What stands out even further about Pollack's article is his tracking of the piece's status through time in addition to analysis. It should be noted that the concerto was riding its largest wave of popularity in 2008, so a few of Pollack's claims and/or assumptions are outdated. For example, he opens the article by claiming that the Op. 30 is "one of the few American nineteenth-century orchestral works to have established itself in the repertoire, as evidenced by the recent releases by cellists Lynn Harrell, Yo-Yo Ma, among others."[71] In 2021, I can safely refute this; in my casual conversation with Dr. Pollack about this article, he agreed the concerto is certainly still not within the ranks of standardized concert repertoire. This also helps contextualize his later claim of the concerto proving "slow to establish itself."[72] Although it was remarkable that it reemerged at all, it has evidently sunk back down into murkier water over the past decade.

[69] Ibid., 95.
[70] Ibid., 93.
[71] Ibid., 71.
[72] Ibid., 88.

Nevertheless, Pollack's overview of the piece's fortunes through time is helpful, starting with an 1898 cello and piano score published by Schubert and Co., and an orchestral score published by Kalmus around the same time. After Herbert premiered it in 1894 with the New York Philharmonic Society, the next cellist to play the piece was Elsa Ruegger in 1903, with the Pittsburgh Symphony (conducted by Herbert!) and later with the New York Philharmonic in 1907. Pollack claims that it took ninety years for the New York Philharmonic to program it again (James DePriest and Lorne Munroe in 1993), and then again in 1995 with Yo-Yo Ma.[73]

Additionally, Pollack claims the concerto's history shows a long eclipse of the work following Herbert's death, citing a 1940 *New York Times* article that refers to the work as being obscure.[74] He claims that the post-World War II era saw the first signs of enduring life for the concerto, referencing the Bernhard Greenhouse 1953 recording, the George Miquelle 1958 recording, and the new Leonard Rose edition of the cello part in 1961, followed by the concerto's "high period" starting in the late 1980s with recordings from Julian Lloyd Webber, Lynn Harrell, and Yo-Yo Ma.

The Research as a Whole

From a scholarly perspective, Adkins, Hsieh, and Pollack have helped to promote investigation into Herbert's cello concertos, despite shortcomings by others like Gould or Smaczny. There is also a very recent trend of graduate students writing theses, treatises, and dissertations about cellist-composer pieces with similar goals of promoting them, such as Katherine Ann Geeseman

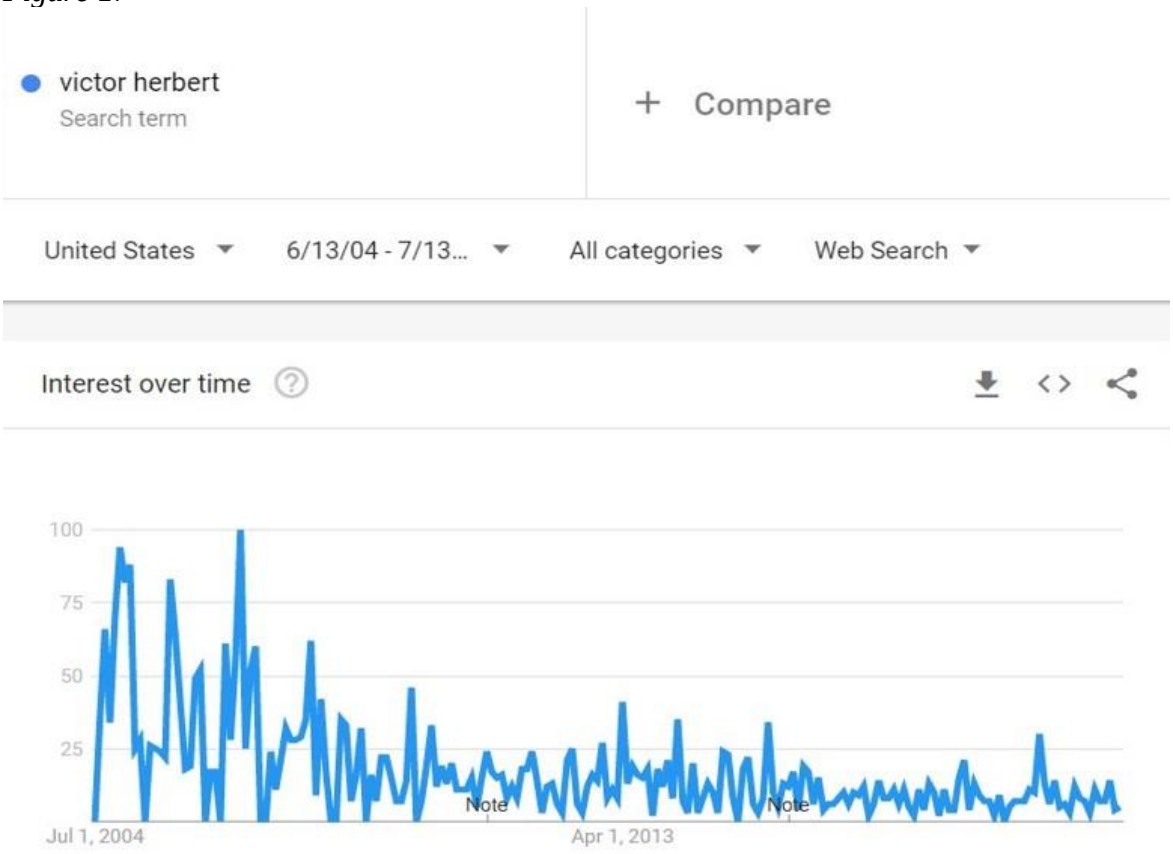
[73] Pollack, 89.
[74] Olin Downes, "Speaking for the Czechs," *The New York Times*, Jan. 21, 1940, quoted in Pollack, 90.

writing about the Goltermann concertos in 2011, [75] or Adam Stiber writing about the Davydov concertos in 2020.[76] In concert halls in the US today, there has also been a recent trend of reexamining forgotten composers, even from the 18th century, such as Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745-1799).

If Pollack had written his article in 2021, I think he would agree with my generalization that the grouping of different Op. 30-related happenings shows two large waves of popularity, one ~1950-1960, and one ~1990-2010. While the current decade has shown a few sparks of activity (such as the 2016 Mark Kosower recording, or Yo-Yo's shoutout of the piece in a 2020 *New York Times* article),[77] recent years have been relatively stagnant for the piece. The following figure from the search analysis tool Google Trends presents a clear picture of fading second wave in Victor Herbert discourse, showing diminishing popularity (y-axis) of the search time "Victor Herbert" between June 2004 and July 2021 (x-axis).[78]

[75] Katherine Ann Geeseman, "The Rise and Fall of the Cellist-Composer of the Nineteenth Century…," DMA diss., Florida State University, 2011.
[76]Adam Stiber, "The Cello Concertos of Karl Davydov…" DMA diss., University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2020.
[77] Yo-Yo Ma, "5 Minutes That Will Make You Love the Cello," *The New York Times*, June 2020.
[78] 2004 is the oldest starting year Google Trend allows, but it shows a good portion of the 'second wave.'

Figure 17



Recordings

The recordings of the Herbert Cello Concerto No. 2 by prominent cellists have unquestionably been one of the major forces in the promotion of the piece. Not only do well-known soloists drive the 'metagame' of discourse around their instruments and repertoires, but recordings can reach the public, critics, and musicians alike, and the prominence of streaming services for music today make listening more accessible than ever. While I have put the complete list of recordings of the concerto in the bibliography (8 recordings total), the main one I want to highlight is Lynn Harrell's 1986 recording with Neville Marriner conducting the Academy of St-Martin-in-the-Fields.

Harrell (1944-2020) was the second most well-known name to record the piece, behind only Yo-Yo Ma who recorded it later in 1995. His recording is impactful for more reasons than his fame. It is exceptional for two major reasons: he recorded the concerto on an all-Herbert album, and his strengths as a cellist are more suited to the piece than anyone else that has recorded it so far. On the first point, the most common CD trend with the concerto has been to pair it with a recording of the Dvořák Cello Concerto. Ma did this in 1995 with his album *Concertos from the New World,* Gautier Capuçon followed suit in 2009 with *Dvořák / Herbert: Cello Concertos,* and James Kreger the same in 2001. Mark Kosower, the only cellist to record the piece in the current decade (2016), pairs the Concerto No. 1 and 2 with Herbert's *Irish Rhapsody* for orchestra, which is certainly a laudable amount of attention to Herbert's instrumental pieces. However, Harrell's 1986 album included *both* cello concertos *as well as five other* pieces for cello and strings by the composer. He was the first to record the first cello concerto, and the first to take the plunge into any additional cello repertoire from the composer. This was a huge step forward after a three-decade gap in recordings of the second concerto. Without Harrell's recording, Herbert's other cello works would likely have remained dormant.

In the cello community, Lynn Harrell was known for his sound production, tone, and ability to emulate the human voice. Pairing these qualities with an effortless control over the entire instrument's range makes it easy to understand why the Herbert second concerto would be the perfect match for the legendary American cellist. In his recording, the character changes are powerful and alive, the vibrato and bow usage is varied, and there is no shy conservatism when it comes to *portamenti* or other expressive techniques. The more lighthearted virtuoso spots, such

as in the coda of the final movement, sparkle with a sense of suave, smiling humor, and the heavier, wailing moments leave nothing held back. Harrell embodies the graceful control over the instrument that Herbert likely had, and the recordings show a deep, earnest affinity for Herbert's music that helps it transcend the other recordings by a sizable margin. Records like the interview with Stephen Johnson mentioned in the previous chapter make it clear that Harrell was well-researched when it came to Herbert and his cello-playing, which may have kindled his unexpected choice to add an unwritten solo cadenza during the suspenseful measure before the coalescence of all the major themes at R. 37 (the only recorded cellist to make such an addition to the work). While I have not been able to find the reason behind this decision, one can imagine the public outcry if he had chosen to do this in another concerto without a full cadenza from a similar time and context, such as the Dvořák Cello Concerto. The reason the social response behind such a hypothetical situation can be accurately predicted is due to the canonization of a piece like the Dvořák Concerto, and this is a core topic of what will be explored in the next chapter.

(Chapter 3 follows)

III. THE "META"

Introduction

On June 3rd, 2020, the *New York Times* published an article with the title "5 Minutes That Will Make You Love the Cello."[79] This was part of a series of articles that asked various artists involved with classical music for their recommendation of a short piece to listen to, with the goal of inducing readers to 'fall in love' with classical music. The contributing voices were instrumentalists, choreographers, critics, and composers, and each gave a short, written defense of their choice along with an attached audio streaming link of the piece they chose. The second piece in the series was presented by Yo-Yo Ma. As I anxiously scrolled down, I remember thinking that the likeliness of him choosing a movement from the Bach Solo Cello Suites was a near certainty. However, I was thoroughly surprised, as he wrote the following above the embedded audio clip:

> Dvorak's Cello Concerto is perhaps the most beloved work for cello and orchestra. It is an astounding piece. But as a performer, I am always looking for the preconditions of a composer's creativity, the genealogy of a work. A very short story: In March 1894, Dvorak heard the New York Philharmonic perform his friend Victor Herbert's new E-minor cello concerto. Afterward, Dvorak is said to have rushed backstage, telling Herbert it was 'splendid, absolutely splendid.' Almost exactly a year later, Dvorak finished writing the concerto that we know so well.[80]

Scrolling down further revealed a link to Ma's Decca recording of the *Andante tranquillo* from Victor Herbert's very own Cello Concerto No. 2. Yo-Yo Ma is a cellist that lives up to his

[79] Yo-Yo Ma, "5 Minutes That Will Make You Love the Cello," *The New York Times*, June 2020.
[80] Ibid.

reputation; he has played all the major works of the cello repertoire while constantly working to expand it, moving in and out of traditional classical barriers with grace and intellect. Yet he chose a movement from Herbert's second cello concerto, which at about eight and a half minutes in his recording, certainly stretched the "Five Minutes That Will Make You Love the Cello" title. While his brief description of the work only contextualizes it in relationship to Dvorak– following a trend that will be unpacked in detail later–his nomination of the Herbert concerto here speaks volumes on his enduring role as a major champion of the work, one that synthesized 'serious' writing with 'light' appeal in 1894. Before addressing these terms, it will be helpful to first identify where the piece stands in 2021.

As covered in the previous chapter, there have not been very many events involving Herbert's cello music in the past decade, outside of Mark Kosower's 2016 recording; but small sparks in the zeitgeist, like this article, keep me optimistic. I admire and empathize with Ma in his battle to promote works that deserve some space on the concert stage, as I began really questioning our limited cello concerto repertoire only a few years ago, while starting the final phase of my university-based musical training.

Among performance students, there is often an assumption that the cello concertos we hear in concerts or learn through our instructors or institutions reflect a carefully cultivated list constructed of the best works of their genre. If this were the case, then that would imply that only a handful of quality cello concertos, and even fewer from the 19th century, were truly excellent. I was not immune to this idea when I was a younger student, assuming that the Schumann, the Saint-Saens, and the Dvorak concertos were the only three quality works of the genre written

between 1800-1899; I subsequently dismissed any solo concerto from a composer I was not familiar with (or even worse, from a cellist). Even if one were to disagree with my arguments and remain adamant that the Herbert Concerto No. 2 should not be performed more frequently, I would hope that in 2021, they would agree that there are likely other cello concertos from the vast 19th century literature that are due for a revitalization. So why do such narrow repertoire lists exist? When were they created, and what or who perpetuates them?

Herbert was truly famous during much of his career, to the point of not being able to walk outside without being instantly recognized and engaged by others.[81] Examining how a musician went from being one of the most well-known in the United States to largely absent from our music education and concerts is one way to address the questions I ask above. As established in the previous chapter, Herbert's career crossed so many different paths, including conducting major orchestras, leading the best American military band, performing cello as a soloist and ensemble player, aiding in the formation of ASCAP, teaching, and of course, composing. It is entirely possible he had his career eggs in so many baskets that it became a nuisance for historians to categorize him. Even if this were true, it seems likely there is more to the story. I believe that the uncertain status of Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2 in the present day comes from the persistence of ideas and prejudices around Herbert's earlier identity as a cellist-composer, his strong association with operettas, and the piece's overblown attachment to the Dvorak Cello Concerto. These reasons are directly related to the idea of musical canonization. The content from the previous two chapters used a variety of methods to gain insight into Victor Herbert's music and the unique qualities of his Cello Concerto No. 2, but what follows will

[81] Waters, 555.

address the social and cultural obstacles such a piece must surmount to become more frequently learned, performed, and/or discussed.

The Canon

It is important to establish the difference between the terms "canon" and "repertoire" in music. Joseph Kerman suggests the following:

> We feel awkward, even a little uneasy about using the term <canon> as it is used to other arts, to mean (roughly) an enduring exemplary collection of books, buildings, and paintings authorized in some way for contemplation, admiration, interpretation, and the determination of value. We speak of the repertory, or repertoires, not of the canon. A canon is an idea; a repertory is a program of action…Repertoires are determined by performers, canons by critics…[82]

Put simply, the policing role that critics and other music 'experts' have adopted has warped society's views on aspects of Western classical music. One of the reasons behind this general trend is simple: music is a long aural tradition with only a relatively recent ability to be preserved as sound, and our obsession with understanding the past makes it easy to pay too much attention to what somebody wrote once about Beethoven ages ago. This is a sizable part of the problem, but there is much more to unpack, especially during the 1800s.

William Weber writes, "A paradigm shift occurred in musical culture in the early nineteenth century, whereby revered old works—newly called 'classics'—began to rival contemporary ones as the guiding authority over taste."[83] Before this shift, it was common for audiences to avoid

[82] Joseph Kerman, "A Few Canonic Variations," *Critical Inquiry 10*, no. 1 (1983): 107, 112.
[83] Ibid., 105.

being associated with music more than a few years old, and there was a clear separation of past and present music.[8485] While some composers would become quite recognized during their lifetime, their death would usually mark the death of their music as well. Concert programming in the first half of the 19th century showed a much more collegial atmosphere around music, as Beethoven, Weber, Mendelssohn, and Schumann were programmed alongside their colleague composers such as Spohr, Mehul, and Cherubini.[86] However, around 1810-1820, the philosophy of German Idealism was sweeping over European society, and concertgoers started approaching concert halls not for entertainment, but in a quest to find truth in art.[87] Kant's philosophical ideals were applied to music after critics like ETA Hoffman began writing about music in new ways that affected the ways audiences viewed music as a whole. The Hoffmanian notion of seeking perfection in the realm of the infinite came from the need to escape the failed reality happening in real life for many at this time.[88] Knapp details this phenomenon:

> One aspect of this separation was primarily intellectual, although it was encouraged by the setting; as music from the past was presented in an atmosphere that increasingly fostered a contemplative, even reverent response, music became detached from its original supporting context and rationale. Individual pieces that survived this process particularly well became part of a musical canon of seemingly autonomous works, each having stood the 'test of time' by achieving a continuing vitality independent of its origins.[89]

[84] Weber 110.
[85] It is worth noting that this attitude endures in practically all repertoires *except* Classical music.
[86] William Weber, "Canonicity and Collegiality: 'Other' Composers 1790 – 1850." *Common Knowledge* 14 no. 1 (2008): 106.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Raymond Knapp, *Making Light: Haydn, Musical Camp, and the Long Shadow of German Idealism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 7.

This had a notable impact on the way concert-goers viewed the role of music in society. Ideas about the identity, purpose, and performance of Western music changed, an obsession with the past blossomed, and over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries many living composers' works ceased to be performed to make room for repeated performances of the same few works.

As music enthusiasts in the 19th century began looking back in time towards composers of the past to idolize in their quest for musical 'truth,' they showed a clear favoritism to those that had recently died. Some of the first composers to make it onto the list of 'high' art include Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, gaining an elevated status as a sort of god-like musical trinity after their deaths. Outside of Haydn and Mozart, most composers from the 18th century and earlier would never make it into the canon that developed, besides Bach and perhaps Monteverdi. Some composers like have also been canonized in ways that are removed from their main achievements of their times; for example, Antonio Vivaldi's concertos and *The Four Seasons* are supremely popular today, but Vivaldi saw the most success from his extensive opera output.

The repertoires of instrumental and especially chamber-instrumental works became progressively narrowed, and by 1900 the canon had narrowed even further.[90] Kerman and Weber seem to be mostly in agreement that the 19th century canonization has caused many worthy pieces to be forgotten, or at least that the canonization of classical music gives a distorted view of music history. Weber writes, "We need to look back at the fruitful collegiality that existed between canonic and contemporary music in the early nineteenth century, involving as it did a wide array of composers and tastes not yet bound by rigid assumptions about supposed 'levels'

[90] Weber, 123.

of taste."[91] Kerman concludes his article with a somewhat similar call to action, writing, "Those critics who still believe in the canon must work to keep it viable, and work freshly."[92]

Canonized 19th Century Cello Concerto Repertoire

The canonization of only a select handful of composers to represent the 'best' classical music has been both exclusionary and long-lasting, and this can be seen when examining the current list of cello concertos authorized in professional performance degree programs. The only concertos written between 1800 and 1900 that consistently make the list of 'standard repertoire' include the 1850 Schumann Cello Concerto, 1872 Saint-Saens Concerto No. 1, 1877 Lalo Concerto in D minor, and 1895 Dvorak Cello Concerto. If we expand the list to include other forms featuring prominent solo cello, we can add the 1814 Beethoven Triple Concerto Op. 56, the 1876 Tchaikovsky Rococo Variations Op. 33, the 1887 Brahms Double Concerto Op. 102, and the 1897 Strauss *Don Quixote*. Even then, that is only eight pieces of music, and one of them is a tone poem. While there are certainly several smaller pieces such as the 1880 Bruch *Kol Nidrei*, the number of large-scale, 19th century works that feature the instrument as a major solo voice in our current repertoire is vastly more limited than the lists for violin or piano. There were many other concertos written for the cello during that century, and one would expect a few of them, even if by lesser-recognized composers, to make their way into our list (such as works by cellist-composers), but these types of works are rarely admitted to the repertoire. The canon is a rigid force that does not budge easily.

[91] Ibid.
[92] Kerman, 134.

This German-Idealist musical philosophy behind the canon rejects virtuosity since a virtuoso player can be entertaining and draw the audience's attention towards playing ability rather than the experience of the music as a whole. But the issue is that even if this were true, but this ideology inconsistently to the point of absurdity. There are countless examples of canonized pieces that were written by virtuoso composers that played the instruments of those pieces. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1759-1791) wrote 25 piano concertos, 17 piano sonatas, and 5 violin concertos. He was at such a level of musicianship and comfort at the keyboard that he would famously improvise cadenzas and other material with ease. Yet strangely, one does not observe most Mozart listeners doubting the musical brilliance behind the keyboardists' concertos. Composers like Mozart shatter the idea that a virtuoso's music for their instrument is cursed to be unmusical. Lesser-known virtuoso composers with works that have not been recorded and analyzed nearly much as those of Mozart are the most at risk for these type of assumptions and generalizations, such as Victor Herbert and his works for cello. Virtuosity and musical depth are not mutually exclusive.

"The compositions of that nature do not enter into the field of a serious classical criticism–these compositions, especially of that kind which are written to order, where a libretto is furnished for the purpose of getting a musical entertainment, because it is not music in the sense of educational music."[93]

[93] Waters, 202.

Seeing the 'Light'

The first idea important to note is that this kind of dismissive language is not a recent development that distorts the reality of ideas during Herbert's lifetime; the quote comes from 1902, and such judgments were pervasive throughout his life. There are multiple accounts by Herbert and others using terms such as 'serious,' 'light,' and 'popular' in the context of Herbert's style or programming that give some historical insight into these labels. After *The Fortune Teller's* premiere, Waters claims a *New York Times* critic wrote, "There are numbers grave and gay, light and serious, catchy in the most popular manner and musicianly <sic> in a thoroughly praiseworthy style."[94] Similarly, a patron of the Pittsburgh Symphony remarked on Herbert's recent employment to the orchestra, "His reading of classical music shows a true appreciation of the better ideals…while his performances of the 'Stars and Stripes Forever' is enough to win the admiration of the most severe critic. His happy intermingling of popular and classical music has made him more appreciated than ever in Pittsburg."[95]

These terms, in wide circulation around 1900, are all alive and well today. But while they may seem as casual or non-threatening descriptors, they are terms that perpetuate the idea of canonization in Western classical music.

Broadly speaking, operetta is not considered 'serious,' and only 'serious' music (or music from 'serious' composers) has been preserved by the canon. While instrumental pieces and musical theater have remained popular today, operettas are *rarely* performed in the United States, often

[94] *New York Times,* Sept. 27th, 1898, quoted in Waters, 138.
[95] Arthur Wells, *Musical Courier* Nov. 24, 1897, quoted in Waters, 36.

seen as a relic of the past or stylistically antiquated[96]...not quite fully musical theater, not 'serious' enough to be ranked with opera, with a close link social norms and cultural happenings of the time they were performed.[97] The ostracization of operetta from classical music did not start decades after its popularity; it was a battle being fought by Herbert until the end of his life.

In 1902, Victor Herbert sued Marc A. Blumenberg of the *Musical Courier* for libel after Blumenberg published a piece that claimed that nothing Herbert composed was 'original' music.[98] This court case is fascinating, not only because Herbert won the suit by a landslide and was awarded $15,000 as a result, but because the cultural ideas present in the court transcript reflect these very same ideas of 'light' versus 'serious' music. According to Waters, Blumenberg's vendetta against Herbert was likely because Herbert did not give in to his blackmail scheme of requesting money from new artists to New York in exchange for favorable reviews. [99] Gould agrees there were murky financial doings happening around Blumenburg and the *Musical Courier*, but Gould brings up the point that the critic's vindictive attitude towards Herbert could have been attached to a more personal angle: Blumenberg's cousin was American cellist Louis Blumenberg, who had been in competition with Herbert since his US arrival, likely being overshadowed as Herbert's career took off. [100] During the hearing, Blumenberg was asked to give the grounds to his opinion that *The Fortune Teller* had 'no merit' and that all of Herbert's comic operas are clear plagiarisms:

[96] The *Victor Herbert Renaissance Project Live!* is the main and perhaps only group attempting to bring back Herbert's operettas in the US; they can be found through their website: https://vhrplive.org
[97] Knapp, *Making Light,* 215.
[98] Marc Blumenberg, *Musical Courier July 17th, 1901* quoted in Gould, 192-194.
[99] Waters, 195.
[100] Gould, 198-199.

> The compositions of that nature do not enter into the field of a serious classical criticism–these compositions, especially of that kind which are written to order, where a libretto is furnished for the purpose of getting a musical entertainment, because it is not music in the sense of educational music. It is music in the sense of public entertainment–it is not anything in connection with classical music, and nothing with music as an art. It is only in reference to public entertainment in conjunction with singers and dancers. These are the ordinary, common American operas–but they are not exactly operas, they are operettes, something of that kind–and the music of that kind…is not considered as eligible as music under the regime of classical interpretation. It may be written correctly, but it is not original; it has no creative character; it is common-place in order to reach the taste of the public, because the public is not educated in classical music. And one of the reasons why it is not, is because this music which is written to order, most of it, is put before the people. One of the greatest effects of the Courier is to educate people in classical music, and to discourage this kind of music that Mr. Herbert has written. It was only after he got into the business of writing music to order that he fell from that high stand, and for that reason the paper protested that a person who lives in that atmosphere of comic opera music cannot legitimately aspire to do that which men do who devote themselves to the study of classical music.[101]

This statement is a cluster of illogical, archaic philosophies to unpack. But it gives insight into the mind of a pretentious (and possibly corrupt) New York music critic that had been thoroughly seized by the idea of music canonization, as well as insight into some of the corrosive ideas that still come up today as more diluted versions. Behind Blumenberg's defamation of Herbert's music as valueless, artless, unoriginal work is a mix of brittle sub-arguments. He clearly dismisses the newly popular genre of operetta as a form of music. But he even goes further than that, arguing that classical music should not be entertaining, and that its practitioners should not be compensated (to avoid 'uninspired' music). [102] Rather, it should be high-brow and educating

[101] Waters, 202.
[102] This claim was perhaps the most easily challenged by other witnesses, who brought up plenty of examples of canonized composers that composed 'to order.'

(I.e., not for commoners). This last subtext attaches to issues of social class. Blumenberg is just one instance of critics around the turn of the century in America, voicing their inner fears of being associated with poor or "common" people. The large wave of immigrants coming to America (Herbert included!) during this time produced a sort of xenophobic panic.
Herbert, meanwhile, was writing music that could be appealing to a wide array of people, and applying his classical composition training to a newer, popular theatrical form. It was easier for critics voicing loud minority opinions to attack his music than for them to accept changing social and musical landscapes.[103]

Blumenberg's team failed to produce any notable evidence of works Herbert had allegedly stolen material from, nor did they identify a specific passage in one of Herbert's works that was stolen. But some of these attitudes about a musical hierarchy of value persist in the classical community today. Such attitudes are not very helpful as descriptors of musical sound, and as anything more, they are simply arbitrary classifications of a broadly varied spectrum of pieces. Functionally, the word 'serious' applied to a Classical piece has been used to mean long duration instrumental and not vocal, with some exceptions like Wagner opera, and a few large-scale chorus and orchestra works by Bach, Brahms, etc.); tonally heavy or dark; and/or attached to a German identity.[104]

Of the few scholars to attempt tackling this issue, Raymond Knapp has written the most extensively. In his book *Making Light,* he compares Haydn's instrumental music to American

[103] Herbert even has an eerie direct connection to the racial fears of white America at this time: the 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation* directed by D. W. Griffith was such a successful adaptation of the 1905 novel *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* that it spawned a sequel called *The Fall of a Nation,* a film about America fighting off European invaders, and Victor Herbert was hired to score the film (likely the first full-length original score to any film).
[104] Knapp, *Making Light,* 15.

musicals, pointing out that they both blend contrasting emotional evocations in an effective manner. He then uses this comparison to argue that the unity between 'light' and 'serious' is in fact feasible and that can even add to the musical experience. He states the following:

> With both Haydn and many musicals, fun and seriousness coexist easily… <often> the result of a sophisticated play with generic expectations that, however humorous or lighthearted, does not detract from the music's expressive potential. But with serious nineteenth-century music…gratification generally comes from a kind of immersion of the self into something larger, releasing a capacity to feel deeply. While Haydn and musicals seem to be more aware of the individual operating interactively with other individuals within a larger social environment…most concert, chamber, and operatic music from the nineteenth century seems designed to help one forget both self and others in favor of inwardness, contemplation, and submission to a deep, even overwhelming experience of the music.[105]

This type of coexistence between fun and seriousness is exactly what I found in Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2, and as a general stylistic trend of the composer. Even the interaction between the cellist and the orchestra seems related to Knapp's idea about the operation between the individual operating with others on a larger social scale, as the first movement shows the individual (solo cellist) at odds with the greater society (orchestra), presenting a narrative arc that ends with a satisfying coming together between the two in the third movement. Like Herbert's compositions blending elements from European classical music with newer popular styles and forms, Knapp's scholarly work helps to bridge the gap that persists in modern conceptions of different types of music.

[105] Ibid., xi.

Another anecdote that illustrates the effects of the 'serious-light' divide on Herbert's career concerns Herbert's hiring as the music director and conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony. The decision was controversial, and the controversy was created by a few critics who thought it was a terrible decision to hire a man who had led a military band and written a few operettas (among many other accomplishments in his varied career). Critics at this time were notably harsh because they were able to often vent their opinions anonymously in the press without the fear of having to own up to them.[106] When Pittsburgh management asked Herbert for his CV, the pressure of being recognized as a 'serious' musician caused him to decide to thoroughly edit it, removing as much association to operetta or band as possible. Gould summarizes the edits with the following:

> The first thing we notice is that Herbert is reacting to the pressure from Frew, the Orchestral Committee, and the *Courier* as being known as a bandmaster and stage composer… he chooses to omit them from the resume submitted…Second, in emphasizing what can be called the 'serious' aspects of his career, he emphasizes his European experience, tacitly acknowledging the fact that for this period the imprimatur of European training and experience was the sine qua non of acceptance as a serious musician in the United States…this document, with its redactions, reveals more than it conceals.[107]

One of the edits even highlighted Herbert's mentorship with Seidl while downplaying the relationship Herbert had with Theodore Thomas, a major American conductor that was known for incorporating shorter, popular into his concerts. All of this shows that not only has Herbert's legacy been battling a powerful set of ideas about classical music, but Herbert was literally engaging with these same ideas during his own career. It must have been incredibly frustrating

[106] Joseph Arthur Mann, "Nineteenth-Century Music Criticism and the Case of James William Davison," *The Musical Times* 157, no. 1936 (2016): 100.
[107] Gould 96-97.

to have to hide impressive musical elements from his resume to ease unjustified fears from orchestra management and critics about a position for which he was wholly qualified.

Synthesis

Howard Pollack wrote that, "Few histories of American music have paid the <Cello Concerto No. 2> or any of Herbert's other concert works much attention...scholarly interest has focused, rather, on Herbert's contribution to the lyric stage, including not only his approximately forty operettas but his two operas, *Natoma* and *Madeleine."*[108] Given Herbert's major contributions to operetta–as well as his incredibly varied career in music as a whole–it is perhaps not surprising that his instrumental music has been largely overlooked. But if added to the very short list of 19th century concertos frequently performed today, Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2, Op. 30 would exemplify a work that could add breadth and interest to our stagnant repertoire from that era.

Op. 30 combines elements from other European concertos with a unique Herbertian sound that blends sublime lyricism and rigorous melodrama with daintiness, humor, and fun. The orchestration is brilliantly written to maximize color combinations without covering the cello, allowing the solo cellist to flourish without having to press or artificially alter phrase markings or dynamics, giving the audience the best of both worlds. The cyclical structuring of thematic material over the three continuous movements results in a concert experience that is engaging without being overly drawn out or repetitive, and the coda of the final *Allegro* uses virtuosic passages in the cello as a means of adding a celebratory nature to the ending of the concerto.

[108] Howard Pollack, "From the New World…, 71."

It is important to note that because Herbert was intimately involved with the concert repertoire for cellists during his time, he knew the strengths and weaknesses of the repertoire. Not only did he tour with works like the Saint-Saint Concerto No. 1, Goltermann and Romberg concertos, and the Rubinstein Concerto No. 2, Op. 96 (only one of these remains in our repertoire), but he also gave the American premiere of the Brahms Double Concerto Op. 102 in 1889.[109] He was able to understand each works' priorities and challenges from a cellist's, conductor's, and composer's perspective. Creating his own concerto allowed him to implement the concepts that worked from pieces he knew (like the continuity and pacing of the Saint-Saens) and circumvent concepts that were not as effective (I.e., the challenging balance between violin, cello, and orchestra in the Brahms Double). His unique perspective makes it clear why Dvorak could have admired Herbert's monumental new work 1894 as much as he did, but the relationship between the two works would turn out to be a double-edged sword for Herbert after his death.

While it is laudable that cellists like Yo-Yo Ma or Gautier Capuçon have recorded Herbert's Op. 30, pairing the work with Dvorak's concerto attaches the works in a way that can continue to suggest a progress narrative in music, painting the Herbert as a type of progenitor, or prototype to Dvorak's work. The recordings are one example of discourse, including scholarly work, that only mentions Herbert in the context of advancing Dvorak's music. In cellist culture, this is undoubtedly the most common idea that is perpetuated, since most cellists are exceptionally familiar with the Dvorak Concerto, but very few are acquainted with operetta. It is striking to see scholars from recent decades painting the Herbert Concerto No. 2 as a lesser prototype to the

[109] Waters, 47.

Dvorak. Even though the work is an instrumental concerto written by a German-trained composer, they associate Herbert with his later career writing light operas, and completely neglect his 'serious' works. The Dvorak Concerto has been remembered as a 'serious' work, while the Herbert Op. 30 has been remembered as a 'light' work that helped to create Dvorak's *magnum opus.* This is to say there is perpetual idea that Herbert took 'a good stab' at a late romantic cello concerto, and Dvorak 'perfected' it, rendering Herbert obsolete. These types of misinformed ideas are the reason scholarly work like Pollack's article that examines them both in detail is so necessary, who attacked this progress narrative, building up the Herbert Concerto's agency as its own work with its own voice. Pollack writes, "…For in addition to serving as a stimulus to Dvorak, the Concerto helped forge, in its own way, a distinctive music 'from the new world…'"[110] He is also perhaps the only scholar to attempt a detailed description of the unique stylistic qualities of Op. 30. He writes the following:

> But what we find nonetheless in the Second Concerto–as compared not only with Dvorak's works of the early 1890s, but to some extent even with Herbert's earlier music–is a growing and pronounced individuality that would have deep ramifications for the development of American music. Some of this involves its tone, which is frank and direct, and one that alternatively involves some somber melodrama, sweet sentiment, and carefree humor. In terms of form and style, one further notes some distinctive features as follows: 1) considerable rhythmic vitality, epitomized by the syncopations, polyrhythms, and unusual phrase lengths found in the impetuous main theme; 2) a tuneful melodic language; 3) rich seventh, ninth, and thirteenth chords; 4) a particularly delicate orchestral palette; and 5) an unacademic approach to form. If this style…seems in some sense American, it might be in part because such music filtered down to–and up from–the commercial avenues of Broadway, Tin Pan Alley, and eventually Hollywood.[111]

[110] Pollack, 97.
[111] Pollack, 96.

In other words, Op. 30 bridges different musical worlds together, and Pollack argues that this is exactly what makes it stronger, rather than weaker. And despite the proximity of Herbert and Dvorak, their two concertos have strikingly different priorities; Herbert's work blends rich orchestration with a clear prioritization of the solo protagonist in a quasi-theatrical setting, whereas the Dvorak presents a piece much more evocative of large-scale chamber music, giving individual instruments in the orchestra much prominence in each movement. Though he presents the case in clearly hierarchical terminology in *Dvorak: Cello Concerto,* Smaczny further clarifies the difference between the pieces:

> This sonority-led approach to the technical questions lifts Dvorak's concerto into a different category from the virtuoso concertante works of the contemporary repertoire. In concertos by the likes of Davidov, Popper and Herbert, the nature of the virtuosity, while fearsome, is designed to dazzle; Dvorak's intentions…are focused much more on the expansion of timbre and the interaction between the cello and other instruments…

Smaczny's comparison is not without some element of truth, however he is casting too wide a net. Herbert's work is more orchestrally dense than any of the concertos by Davidov, Popper, and other cellist-composers to the point that critics at the New York premiere wondered if it was even a concerto given the thickness of the orchestral writing.[112] Smaczny's statement also implies a false dichotomy in assuming that a work cannot be designed to dazzle and have musical richness.

[112] *New York Tribune,* 1894, quoted in Waters, 86.

Conclusion

Herbert's transition into writing vocal music happened around the same year as the composition of his second cello concerto, but there is exceptionally little research that acknowledges Herbert's different compositional identities. Music scholarship has mimicked concert programming in separating 'serious' and 'light' musics, furthering the solidification of the divide between the two. His style falls into a unique place somewhere in the middle of this arbitrary division, rendering the labels unclear and questioning the need for the division in the first place.

It will not require a sudden, massive resurgence of operetta in American theaters to re-popularize Herbert's name. He wrote instrumental works sparingly throughout his entire lifetime, such as his Suite for Cello and Orchestra Op. 3 (1884), Serenade for Strings Op. 12 (1884), *Hero and Leander* (1901), Suite of Serenades *(*1924) and others. While any further research into his second cello concerto can only help, encouraging ground-breaking research into these other works (many of which have received next to no scholarly attention) will help to promote further interest in the performance of these works. If writing about Herbert's works means I am presenting a 'serious' examination of something 'light,' then so be it; I hope others will feel inspired to make a case for works by similarly neglected composers and help deconstruct a broken ideology from the 1820s that still influences our musical world.

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