THE IMMORTAL HAND

PIANO CONCERTO FOR THE RIGHT HAND

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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Abstract

*The Immortal Hand*, a concerto for piano right hand and orchestra, is a culmination of my studies at University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. It is a personal piece that portrays an emotional journey, from anger and struggle to triumph and joy. Each of the three movements, which are played without pause, depicts a different mood: anger and struggling – turmoil and searching – exciting and active. Several years ago, I had an experience where the use of my left hand was severely limited. As piano is my primary instrument, I chose to write a piano concerto that would reflect the struggles of this personal experience, while also providing a rare outlet for others dealing with similar problems.

There are very few piano concertos written for one hand. The number of left-hand piano concertos increased somewhat after World War I. This is largely due to Paul Wittgenstein, a highly-respected pianist who injured his right arm during World War I. He subsequently commissioned composers to write piano concertos for him. In comparison with the number of left-handed piano concertos, piano concertos for the right hand are extremely rare. Because of this, and because of my own previous injury limiting the use of my left hand, I decided to write a concerto for the right hand.

In this piece, I wanted to find a way to link all of my movements musically. I focused on using four specific motives \(a, b, c, d\) to unite the entire piece. In particular, the \(a\) motive appears at the very beginning of the main theme of each movement, creating a common thread the runs throughout the entire work.

The first movement is in ternary form, while the second and third movements are each in rondo form. I expressed a development of emotional conflict in the second movement, which links the very different characters of the first and third movement. In the third movement, there are moments of recollection of the first and second movements.

In this concerto, I did not consciously write in any traditional keys, preferring instead to incorporate modes. These modes help express the emotional content of the work. For example, in the second and third movements, both of which are composed in rondo form, the refrain returns in a different mode each time. This allows the overall mood of the refrain to change with each appearance. In the second movement, most notably in the introduction, I used contrasting modes to portray the emotional conflict that is so important in this particular movement.
The Immortal Hand is a musical portrayal of the development and eventual resolution of conflict, one that is particularly personal to me, given my own experiences. I also composed this piece to provide new repertoire for others going through similar circumstances. By combining my experience as a pianist with my work as a composer, I have been able to tap into my own experiences as a culmination of my studies at University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.
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Chapter 1: Description of the piece and its place in the repertoire

_The Immortal Hand_, a three-movement, 25-minute piano concerto for the right hand is a large-scale work for piano and orchestra portraying an emotional journey of struggle, anxiety and depression, ultimately climaxing with a glimmer of hope. Each movement of this work has a solo cadenza and is dominated by conversational passages between piano and orchestra. As a pianist who has studied for many years, I thought that choosing this instrument would be appropriate for my dissertation. I purposely wrote a piece for the right hand that requires great stamina and energy from the soloist. I seek to showcase the ability of the right hand to perform virtuosic repertoire and to encourage one-handed (right-handed) pianists by adding to the minimal amount of repertoire for right hand piano.

The first movement portrays the idea of suffering. The main theme of the first movement provides a foundation for the entire piece, and returns throughout. Movements 2 and 3 have their own distinctive themes, both of which reference this main theme in various ways. The second movement transitions from the mood of the first movement’s ending. It is slow, and has a lyrical melody that is often layered and shared by different instruments, creating kaleidoscope-like textures. This movement suggests a gradual calming and emphasizes the idea of hope. Following this, the third movement begins with music that is energetic, fast, and scherzo-like. The mood of this movement depicts an overflowing of hope and a renewal of vitality.

The soloist acts as a storyteller in this piece. The orchestra supports the soloist’s emotional arcs through harmony, texture, rhythm, and timbre. At times the pianist acts as an accompanist for other instruments. Unlike many traditional piano cadenzas, instruments join the pianist’s solo passages at various moments within this concerto. Also, the main musical theme is emphasized by appearing many times throughout the piece, played by the piano as well as by other instruments.

There are several reasons why I have chosen a piece for right hand alone. In addition to having long wanted to write a concerto for my primary instrument, piano, I have experience with the limitation of being able to use only one hand. Years ago, I was in an accident that resulted in an injury to the left side of my body. I was unable to play with my left hand, which, as a pianist, was obviously a frustrating experience. I wanted to convey a message of hope in this piece, espe-
cially to performers who may have lost the use of a hand. Writing such a concerto is also an opportunity for me to explore the possibilities of my instrument, and to expand my knowledge of large ensemble music.

Another reason why I wrote for the right hand is the paucity of works composed for the right hand. Since sustaining my injury, I have naturally become more interested in studying pieces for one hand. Piano concertos for one hand make up a tiny portion of the piano concerto repertoire, and most one-handed concertos were composed since 1900. Since most well-known one-handed pianists injured their right hands, many one-hand piano works are for left handed pianists. Of all one-handed pianists, Paul Wittgenstein is perhaps one of the most well known, commissioning works for left-hand piano from many composers. One-handed concertos became much more common in the 20th century after Paul Wittgenstein began commissioning composers to write left-handed piano concertos for him. He influenced other one-handed pianists by showing the potential of performing with a single hand.

In order to situate my composition within a historical context, I will next provide a detailed list of one-handed pianists, works and composers who wrote for these specific performers.

**Paul Wittgenstein (1887-1961)**

Wittgenstein was an Austrian pianist who, after losing his right arm in World War I, commissioned many composers to write pieces for the left hand. He contributed to the breadth of the one-handed repertoire by premiering and performing pieces written for him for over 40 years, up until his death in 1961. Interestingly, though Wittgenstein was responsible for the creation of many works for one-handed piano, he did not allow these pieces to be performed by other pianists during his performing career. In a letter to another one-handed pianist, Siegfried Rapp, Wittgenstein explained: 1 This strong-willed policy sometimes worked to the repertoire’s detriment. For instance, Paul Hindemith’s *Klaviermusik*, a piece written for but never performed by Wittgenstein, narrowly avoided exclusion from the repertoire, were it not discovered by Wittgenstein’s widow after his death. Proprietary attitude aside, without Wittgenstein’s commissions much of the one-handed piano literature would not exist today. While Wittgenstein had other contemporaries, who performed as one-handed pianists, Wittgenstein was the most recognized and well-known one-handed pianist of his generation.

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1 Lesnie, Melissa. Paul Wittgenstein: The Man with the Golden Arm March 20, 2014

2
Below is a list of pieces composed for Wittgenstein, although he did not premiere every piece. Below is a list of pieces written for Wittgenstein, although he did not premiere every piece. (The premiere date is unclear for some pieces. In these instances I have listed the earliest known performance, which may or may not be the first performance of the work.)

Concerto No.2 in E-flat major, Op.28, 1924 Sergei Eduardovich Bortkiewich (1877-1952) premiered by Wittgenstein in 1929.

Piano Concerto in F minor for Left Hand Rudolf Braun (1869-1925) premiered by Wittgenstein in 1927.

Diversions for Piano (Left hand) and Orchestra, Op.21, 1940 Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) premiered by Wittgenstein in 1927.


Concerto Leonard Kastle (1929-2011) composition date unknown, premiered by Kastle in 1981


Concerto pour la main gauche seule, D major, 1929-30 Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) premiered by Wittgenstein in 1932.


Paraphrase für pianoforte linke Hand und Orchester, 1929 Eduard Schütt (1856-1933) premiered in 1929 by Wittgenstein.

Concerto piece for pianoforte Left Hand, 1923 Alexandre Tansman (1897-1986) premiere date unknown.

Leon Fleisher (b.1928)

Fleisher performed as a left-handed pianist during a bout with focal dystonia for 18 years, a nerve disease that can occur on specific parts of the body. After starting having treatments in 1995, he was able to perform with both hands again.

Concerto for the Left Hand and Orchestra, 1990 Curtis Curtis-Smith (b.1941) premiered by Fleisher in 1991.

Piano Concerto for Left Hand 1993 Lucas Foss (b.1922) premiered by Fleisher in 1994

Concerto for 3 Hands Gunther Schuller (1925-2015) premiered in 1990 (This piece was written for Lorin Hollander (b.1944) and Fleisher.)

Gary Graffman (b.1928)

Graffman is an American pianist and teacher. He injured his right hand and became a left-handed pianist. Like Fleisher, he might have had focal dystonia.


Gaesa, a two left-handed piano concerto 1996 William Bolcom (b. 1938), premiered by Graffman and Leon Fleisher in 1996.

Harriet Cohen (1895-1967)

Cohen was a British pianist, for whom many composers wrote small pieces and concertos. Bela Bartok composed the last 6 pieces of Mikrokosmos for Cohen. Other composers such as Arnold Bax, Jean Sibelius, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Edward Elgar, and Ernest Bloch also dedicated pieces to her.


Siegfried Rapp (1915-1982)

Rapp was a German pianist who lost his right arm during WWII. Prior to losing his arm, he premiered both the Piano Concerto No.4 by Sergei Prokofiev and Piano Concerto No.2 for the Left Hand by Sergei Bortkievich (1877-1952). These composers wrote for Wittgenstein, but he
never performed their new works because he reportedly did not understand their music. Rapp had to ask Wittgenstein for permission to perform the left-handed concertos the latter composer had commissioned. After Wittgenstein died, Rapp frequently performed works that were originally written for Wittgenstein.

Otakar Hollmann (1894-1967)

Hollman, a Czech pianist, studied violin before becoming a pianist. After he injured his right arm during WWI, he was not able to play the violin. Then he started training his left hand to be a one-handed pianist.

Divertimento: pro klavir levou rukou a maly orchestr, for piano (left hand) and chamber orchestra 1926 Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959) premiered by Hollman in 1947.

There are very few works composed for the right hand alone. There are a few notable works incorporating right hand-only parts. The concerto by the French composer Henri Cliquet-Pleyel (1894-1963) is probably the only complete concerto for the right hand, but very little information exists about this work. Other concerti are for three hands, which were commissioned for a specific couple - Cyril Smith (1909-1974), who was an English virtuoso pianist and a teacher, and his wife, Phyllis Sellick (1911-2007), who was also a pianist and a teacher. Smith had thrombosis and a stroke in 1956, which caused his left arm to become paralyzed. After this event, several friends of Smith and Sellick wrote music for three hands that was dedicated to this couple.

Concerto for Two Pianos (3 Hands) and Orchestra, Op.104, 1990c by Malcolm Arnold (b.1921) first performed by Cyril Smith and Phyllis Sellick in 1969.


Unlike these pieces, I wanted to write a concerto in which all movements feature only the right hand, so that a pianist who could not use his/her left hand would have the opportunity to perform with an orchestra as a soloist on a full-length piece. While my work is specified for the right hand, I give the performers the option to play the right hand part with both hands. In this way, the performance of the piece should not be as limited.
Chapter 2 Issues Pertaining to One Hand Piano Works in Composition and Performance

Piano pieces for one hand provide opportunities for both composers and performers in exploring a particular set of colors and possibilities for piano performance. However, alongside the possibilities available in writing for one-handed piano, this performance framework also presents particular challenges for both composition and performance. There are challenges inherent in composing and performing any one-handed piano work, and there are also several challenges that are specific to works for the right hand. As the theme of this composition deals specifically with overcoming challenges, I felt that the challenges specific to writing and performing this repertoire acted as useful inspiration for conceiving and composing this piece.

Below, I consider the most significant problems in writing my dissertation composition. I also present several of the methods that I used in order to overcome these specific challenges as they came up during the process of composition. In providing context for the challenges of writing one-handed piano compositions, as well as personal solutions to these problems, I hope to encourage others to consider composing for one-handed piano, thus adding to this limited body of repertoire.

Technical and Physical Concerns for One-Hand Piano

When one sets out to compose a work for one-hand piano, there are obvious limitations and concerns, both technical and physical. One of the most prominent technical concerns in composing for one-handed piano is that harmonic possibility becomes limited through the use of only one hand. The pianist has fewer notes available at a time, as one hand is limited in stretching and reaching notes on the piano keyboard. When both hands play ten-note arpeggios or scales, it becomes much easier, as the fingers do not need to shift. Keeping this in mind, I envision that some of the “taller” chords within my composition will be rolled more slowly in my concerto than would be if played with two hands. For example, at m. 105 in the third movement, if only one hand is used, it would be impossible to roll the written eighth-note chord at the same pace as two hands. Thus, the speed of chords such as these will be executed more slowly when only one hand plays.
One other technical consideration I considered is that the fluidity of arpeggios or scalar runs, including hand-over-hand patterns, are obviously not an option. This presented a challenge to me as I composed, and subsequently poses a challenge to the performer. One example of a virtuosic arpeggiated passage is between m. 45 and m. 61 in the first movement, which features a series of sixteenth-note runs. It would be much easier to perform if the runs were to be executed with two hands; for instance, at m. 45, the left hand could play the very beginning of each sextuplet, G, while the right hand plays the rest of the notes in the pattern (C-F-G-F-C). However, since this is a concerto for one hand, playing these arpeggios becomes more difficult, but also far more virtuosic for the pianist.
Another technical issue involves the limitation of register. It is difficult to use the entire range of the piano. If a performer uses both hands, it is possible to play with the right hand on the higher register and the left hand on the lower register. In my piece, I often have wide shifts for the right hand in order to utilize various registers of the piano within a passage. Sometimes these shifts are very quick, and I judiciously chose certain places for these shifts. Too many of these quick shifts would make the piece prohibitively difficult. An example of this is at mm. 183 and 184 in the third movement of my concerto. In this example, the right hand sounds an D-sharp and E as a grace note right after a glissando, before quickly moving back to the previous register at the beginning of the glissando to a series of chords above these notes. In this case, quick register shifts serve to counter the problem of limited range possibilities with one hand.

![Figure 2.3 mm. 183-184 in the third movement](image)

Connected to the previous thought, one must also factor in the speed pertaining to leaping across the keyboard when writing for one hand. When the performer utilizes both hands, this leaping gesture is easy to play, but when using only one hand, it requires more time. An example of this within my concerto is in mm. 159-160 within the first movement. This section contains several large leaps, which could be challenging for the pianist, but also visually and technically impressive. To offset the difficulty slightly, there are a few eighth-note rests between several of the jumps.
Another technical consideration is the limitation placed on the use of extended technique. Since the pianist may only be able to use one hand, some established extended techniques, such as holding the strings while playing on the keyboard, bowing the strings inside the piano, and creating harmonics, are not available to use.

One other prominent concern is volume, due to the physical limitations of one hand comparative to two-handed playing. One cannot easily produce the same amount of sound from a piano when playing with only one hand. This is especially important to consider when writing a concerto. Playing full chords with both hands can create a louder sonority – comparatively, chords are clearly limited when playing with only one hand.

Still another concern relates to fatigue. Because only one hand is available, the hand is required to be much more active than it would be in a two-hand piece. Activity to be especially aware of in one-handed piano performance includes the requirements of the hand and possibility of fatigue in shifting the hand across the full range of the piano keyboard, as well as the increased likelihood for awkward hand positions as a result of limited flexibility and reach. In composing my concerto, I worked to avoid awkward hand positions as much as possible. However, the toccata-like figure that I employed in the lower register for the third movement of my concerto will likely present a challenge to the performer. If notes were shared between two hands, this section would be much easier to play. However, with the right hand playing in the lower register, this section becomes far more visually and technically impressive, while also remaining aware of the leaning body position required to access these notes by avoiding the use of the sustain pedal in this portion of the piece.
When one sets out to compose for right-hand piano specifically, a number of unique challenges present themselves in addition to those mentioned previously. First, balance is an important concern, particularly concerning the right hand in the lower register of the piano. Since this hand position would require the pianist to twist and reach across the keyboard, the position is somewhat physically awkward to execute. This position makes it difficult to play loudly, especially if the hand is required to play several notes, and balance between the piano and other instruments should be a consideration when writing passages for one-handed pianists in these registers.

Figure 2.5 The toccata-like figure in the third movement

Figure 2.6 The right hand in the lower register
Performing with the right hand as opposed to the left hand also potentially creates specific balance issues with orchestra. The right hand is generally comfortable playing in the higher range of the piano as a result of not needing to reach over one’s body. However, the higher register of the piano has a thinner texture than the lower range, meaning that balance is often a perpetual problem for the right-handed pianist. In my concerto, within the coda of the first movement, the pianist is required to play loudly within the high register. This requires the pianist to have high endurance and a strong keyboard attack in order to penetrate through the orchestra’s sound.

Figure 2.7 The piano plays higher register against the orchestra

One other concern for the right hand is the thumb position, which makes it difficult to emphasize certain notes. Usually, the third and fourth fingers of the hand are weaker than other fingers, while the thumb contains the most weight and strength. On the right hand, this means that the top end of chords will likely be weaker than the rest of the chord, while the lower end of
chords will be stronger. One example from the first movement of my concerto demonstrates a potential challenge for the performer. In this section, which features one of the main themes of the concerto being played at the top end of a series of chords, along with harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment. In this section, the pianist may be required to use extra stamina and strength in order to bring out the melody on the top of the chords.

![Figure 2.8 m. 24 in the first movement](image)

Another physical concern relates to the position of the body and the use of piano pedals. During one-handed piano playing, it can be difficult to use more than one pedal, depending on the register being played with the hand. The body can maintain a comfortable, straight position when the right/left hand is accessing the middle range of the keyboard, which means that it is also easy to use the sustain pedal. However, when the left hand is required to play on the higher range of the keyboard, or the right hand is used in the lower register, the player’s body will need to lean to either the right or left side in order to reach the extreme ends of the keyboard with one hand. As a result of this awkward positioning of the body, it will be difficult to use the pedals. The feet need to be grounded in order to support the sound in this stretched position, especially for combatting problems of balance. Because of this, when the right hand plays in the lower register of the piano for an extended period of time, it may be less taxing for the performer to avoid extensive use of the sustain pedal in this position. Without the pedal, the sound produced on the keyboard will be crisp and clear, which could be beneficial for the composer in increasing the range of timbral colors available in one-handed piano performance.

Relatedly, a similar concern is in finding ways to sustain notes and melodies without the use of the pedal. Notes clearly cannot be sustained in one register while playing in another without the use of the pedal. This affects both melody and harmony. If the melody and accompaniment are played without the use of the sustained pedal, the melody would become
disjointed, or would cut off between notes. One of the example of this occurs in mm. 112-120. Here the melody floats above an accompanimental texture. Without use of sustain pedal, it would be difficult to bring out the melody.

![Musical notation](image1)

The melody line between mm. 112 and 120

![Musical notation](image2)

Figure 2.9 The melody line and the actual piano part in mm. 112-120

Although there are several challenges specific to writing for the right hand, the right hand also has several advantages. It's often far easier to play in the upper register, which can create a timbral effect unique from left-handed piano repertoire. Writing in favor of the position of the thumb on the right hand also has some potential benefits. The weight of the thumb means that the player has more strength on the lower ends of chords, and writing in favor of this can also create unique timbral and register effects. Also, as a majority of people are right-handed, and many pianists resultantly favor the right hand, the right hand often has more strength in general than the left hand might.
Although several of the limitations discussed here suggest a comparative loss of virtuosity, I believe that there is a visual component to one-handed performance that enhances the virtuosic qualities of the performance. When one hears a one-hand piece, it may not sound virtuosic in comparison to the increased flexibility and volume possible in two-handed piano performance. However, being able to see the increased dexterity, endurance, and body movement required of the performer when executing a performance with one hand adds to the virtuosity and experience of the performance. This suggests that there is a visual aspect to one-handed piano pieces that becomes lost in audio recording.

This piano concerto developed as a project informed by personal experience, and, as such, the technical and physical challenges in writing for one-handed piano performance resonated with my desire to create an emotionally turbulent piece. My intention for writing this piano concerto is to face and overcome these problems. The piece is virtuosic because it is written specifically for one hand. While two hands may allow for more flexibility, the use of two hands means that the performance of this repertoire becomes far easier and less intense for both the performer and the audience. Also, in highlighting the specific strengths and limitations of the right hand across the full range of the keyboard, certain aspects of timbre, strength, texture, and virtuosity can be brought out in performance that might not be as obvious in a two-handed or left-handed performance. In writing this piece and discussing various problems of this genre of composition here, I hope to both encourage performers and composers to explore this repertoire and add to the limited body of pieces currently available.
Chapter 3: Analysis of First Movement

The first movement deals with themes of struggling and anger. I started this piece in a difficult, emotional place, because I wanted to express the intense emotion of my own experience of losing the use of one hand. This intense beginning provides a unique starting point that I can eventually develop and resolve throughout the course of the three movements.

The first movement is structured in ternary form, with the addition of an introduction, a cadenza, and a coda. Although I did not consciously set out to write in ternary form, an analysis of the music shows that this is the most closely related form to this first movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mm. 1-23</th>
<th>mm. 24-86</th>
<th>m. 87-135</th>
<th>mm. 136-164</th>
<th>mm. 165-196</th>
<th>mm. 197-218</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Cadenza</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Coda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 The form of the first movement

Overview

The introduction and the first A section is mainly meant to convey feelings of anger and frustration. The A section introduces the main theme played by the piano, and includes the $a$ and $b$ motives of this movement. The B section has three subsections, each suggesting emotional conflict. The piano cadenza that follows contains two contrasting parts, and is very energetic and filled with tense dissonance. Compared with the first A section, the second A section is even more emotionally intense, with thicker dissonances and even more virtuosic passages from the solo piano. The coda starts with a feeling of anger, but becomes calm toward the end.

The Introduction

The introduction (mm.1-23) consists of two parts: mm. 1-15 and mm. 16-23. The prevailing mood conveyed within this section is anger. The combination of the percussion instruments’ crescendos and the ascending gesture in the woodwinds are meant to depict feelings of frustration and anger. The various rhythmic subdivisions in each instrument’s ascending synthetic scales make this opening cloudy and more chaotic.
In m. 2, the strings play a chord comprised of all pitches in the E Aeolian scale. The orchestra’s anger is transferred to the solo piano, which enters for the first in m. 16. The sustained low E octave represents the anger settling in the bottom of one’s heart. Both the chord played by the strings and the arpeggios in the solo piano part of m.16 are meant to conjure up the same feelings: anger and struggle.
The piano gesture in mm. 16-18, seen above, reappears at the end of this movement, recalling this angry mood. In comparison with the first part of the introduction, which features a texturally thick and slow harmonic rhythm, the second part contains more rhythmic motion and harmonic dissonance. At the end of the introduction, the dissonance of the low A and A-flat in the piano creates an unease that leads to the harmonies of the next section.

**The first A section**

Following the introduction, the A section presents the movement’s main theme (mm. 24-46) and is divided into two sections: mm. 24-32 and mm. 33-46. The main theme is made up of two motives that provide most of the material in the first movement and also recur throughout the entire piece.

![Figure 3.3 The motives a and b](image)

The motive that begins the A section is of particular importance, since it returns throughout the movement. In m. 24, the A-sharp and B at the top of the chords make up the two-note \( a \) motive. In various places, this motive appears in different forms, including diminution and retrograde. An example of diminution occurs in the piano in m. 41 and again in m. 137. This diminution appears in the brass as well in mm.197-198 and mm. 201-202.

![original](image)
Figure 3.4 The different form of the a motive in another place in the first movement

This 2-note motive also appears as a variation. For example, a modified version of the a motive, this time featuring a whole step instead of a half step, occurs in m.33 and 36 in the piano part.

Figure 3.5 The modified version of the a motive at m. 33

In addition, a loose retrograde form of the a motive, descending by whole-step instead of half-step, is used in the B section in mm. 87-88.

Figure 3.6 The loose retrograde form of the a motive

The b motive appears more frequently than the a motive, occurring approximately 20 times in this movement. A few examples are presented below: mm. 98-99 (piccolo, flutes, and oboe), mm. 199-200 (trumpets and trombone), and m. 207 (glockenspiel). While the a motive does not appear often in this movement, it plays a greater role later on. This motive is used in
the main theme of both the second and third movements. The gesture of the a motive, which consists of an ascending half-step, appears in the lines of other instruments, and is meant to recreate the mood of the original appearance of this motive. This half-step is part of the main theme, and by repeating this motive in many places among several instruments, it becomes recognizable as important reoccurring motive, despite consisting of only a half-step.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 3.7 The b motives at m. 98, 114, and 207.

At m. 33 (the second part of the main theme), the strings enter with a tremolo to create a shimmering effect, and the slow descending line of the melody in the piano and strings’ tremolo evokes a melancholic mood. At m. 47, the flute repeats the main theme, followed by the entrance of more instruments, which share the main theme with each other in a conversational manner. The theme here, presented in a higher range, combined with the use of vibrato in the woodwinds, depicts the accumulation of sadness. The non-stop, sparkling higher register of the piano, taking on the role of accompaniment in this section, supports the mood conveyed by the woodwind instruments. The piano descends into a lower register to join the strings in m. 66, and few leading into the B section.
The B section

This B section is the central section of the movement. It begins at m. 87, following a short cadenza in the piano part. This section is divided into three sub-sections: mm. 87-97, mm. 98-106, and m. 112-121. Each sub-section conveys a different mood: the appearance of hope, the repeated descent into sadness, and the return of anger, respectively. This range of moods enforces the sense of struggle throughout the B section. Each sub-section is characterized by its own mode: C Lydian, E-flat Dorian, and C Aeolian. These modes influence the mood of each section.

The first subsection is played by flutes and oboe in the C Lydian mode. I chose these instruments and this mode for their brightness.

The mode of the second subsection at m. 98 is E-flat dorian. I chose this mode for the second subsection because of its melancholic sound. The color of the lower strings’ pizzicato underneath the sustained strings is intended to evoke the imagery of loneliness and dropping tears, adding to the sad character of this subsection.

In contrast to this melancholic subsection, the solo piano in the following subsection plays forte, with thicker chords and a wider range. The piano writing in this subsection is aggressive and furious.
The B section concludes with a transitional passage at m.126. In this bridge, fragments of the \( b \) motive overlap to create the aforementioned kaleidoscope.
The Cadenza

Following the bridge is the most substantial piano cadenza within this movement (mm.136-164). There are two moods cast in this cadenza: the first, in mm. 136-152, is anger, and the second, in mm.153-164, is the idea of hope. The latter is more active than the former, and borrows melodic materials from the B section. The fortissimo glissandi combine with a greater amount of dissonance to create anger. The first part of the cadenza uses fragments of the main theme from the A section.

The second A section (Recapitulation)

Carrying over the tension from the cadenza, the A section returns at m. 164 with the main theme – the most intense moment in this movement – this time played by the orchestra rather than the piano. In this section, the texture is thicker and the range is wider compared to the previous A section. The rapid, ascending notes in the winds and strings just before m. 165 are frustrating and angry reminders of the piece’s opening. The main theme of the B section appears in the horns in mm. 165-170, and is layered with the main theme of the A section played by woodwinds (piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet.) and strings (violin. and viola).
The Coda

From m.174, the second half of the main theme is used to build towards the Coda. The $b$ motive is used simultaneously in the brass parts (mm. 178-185), while the 4-note ascending, chromatic repeated figure in the piano part comes from the $a$ motive.

There are alternating statements of motives $a$ and $b$, for example in the horn parts of mm.197-202.

The recapitulation the $b$ motive is varied through changes in rhythmic values. In m. 207 there is an example of diminution in the glockenspiel. At the same time, there is an augmentation of the motive in the first violins. Although the pitches and rhythms are not exactly the same as the original $b$ motive, the intervallic contour of the line is similar, and thus these presentations can be recognized as variations of the $b$ motive.
At m. 213, the piano figure from mm. 16-18 returns recalling the mood from the beginning of this movement, but with greater calm and quiet, as opposed to the opening’s struggle and anger. The music then moves immediately into the next movement without pause.
Chapter 4: Analysis of Second Movement

The second movement builds on the atmosphere of the first movement by exploring the development of emotional turmoil. My idea for this movement was to create a more quiet and spacious atmosphere than the first movement. It is structured in ABACA form, with the addition of an introduction and a short cadenza. While not originally conceived as such, following completion of the movement, I observed that its structure is similar to rondo form. However, this is only in a formal sense, rather than a tonal sense. The rondo form in the second movement is unusual; in the common-practice era, ternary form was more typical for the middle movement of a three movement concerto. However, my primary concern during the process of building this movement was in using the motives from the previous movement to express a development of mood, and I did not feel bound by tradition. The motive a from the previous movement is continuously used as the basis for generating for building new melodies in this movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mm. 1-24</th>
<th>mm. 25-48</th>
<th>mm. 49-69</th>
<th>mm. 70-90</th>
<th>mm. 91-103</th>
<th>mm. 104-130</th>
<th>mm. 131-141</th>
<th>mm. 142-173</th>
<th>mm. 174-177</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Piano Cadenza</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Coda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 The form of the second movement

The introduction has four sub-sections, with varied modes and moods. There are four A sections and two contrasting sections, as well as a piano cadenza. The two main motives, c and d, are introduced in the first A section. The B section and C section are texturally similar and suggest a more spacious quality than the A sections. However, the inverted d motive in the B section and the c motive in the C section are slightly different from each other as to what they are meant to evoke. The loosely inverted d motive is introduced as a questioning theme. This is intended to create a sense if instability, with the minor second on the bottom and the minor third on top. This pitch set appears in the third movement as well. The cadenza strongly reintroduces the c motive within the piano. The short coda that follows acts as the transition to the third movement.
The Introduction

There is no pause between movements 1 and 2, and the introduction (mm. 1-24) begins with the piano and low strings sustaining the low E octave from the previous movement, carrying over the serene mood. In m. 2, the piano states a figure taken from m. 16 in the first movement.

There are four subsections in this first section, distinguished by sustained tones in the bass line which move from E to C. As mentioned previously, the first part (mm. 1-6) carries over the calm and quiet atmosphere from the end of the first movement. The second subsection (mm. 6-9), through the sudden, unexpected appearance of the whole-tone scale, suggests a feeling of change and searching for hope. The whole-tone scale creates an ambiguous tonal center, which is thematically used here to depict wonder and the search for hope. The bass note changes to D-flat in the third part (mm. 10-22), yet the mood is still hopeful. Hope is suggestively attained in the last part (mm. 22-24), which brings relief through the return of a tonal center and the brighter sound of the C-Lydian scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mm. 1-6</th>
<th>mm. 6-9</th>
<th>mm. 10-22</th>
<th>mm. 22-24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E aeolian</td>
<td>E-flat whole-tone</td>
<td>D-flat whole-tone</td>
<td>C Lydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calm</td>
<td>Searching for hope</td>
<td>still searching for hope</td>
<td>hope and relief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 The four subsections
The Body of the Second Movement

Following the introduction, the emotional confusion continues through the rest of the movement. Each section’s characteristics are distinct from the others, with frequent juxtaposition of various moods, and sometimes the mood changes abruptly within the middle of a section.

The First A section

The A section (mm. 25-43) is calm and relaxed at the beginning. However, the mood becomes increasingly anxious through the end of this section. The main theme consists of two parts: mm. 25-33 (played by clarinet), and mm. 34-43 (played by piano). The first part has two important motives, c and d, which appear throughout the movement.

![Figure 4.2 The motives c and d](image)

Parts of the c motive also appear harmonically, with each of the tones played simultaneously as a chord in some places, including m. 27 (glockenspiel), and m. 32 (piano).

![Figure 4.3 A chord by glk. at m. 27](image)

The d motive appears in different forms in mm. 40-43: a modified inversion of the original form is used in several places in this movement: mm. 59-63 (tuba, cello, and bass), and mm. 164-170 (flute). This modified inversion of the d motive appears in various moments to add a dark, nervous color to the orchestral texture. This inversion is played by low-range instruments in most cases.
The horns carry the anxious mood to the next section through the following loosely inverted $d$ motive. This part (mm. 44-48) transitions to the B section. The harmony here shifts slowly through changes in the bass line, descending from C to A. This bass line, played by low instruments, sounds dark and foreboding. The arrival at A marks the beginning of the next section.

**The B section**

The short B section (mm. 49-69) is a conversation between the piano and brass. This section creates a gradual calming of anxiety by the start of the next A section. The inversion of the $d$ motive is given to the brass section. The dynamic marking of $ppp$ and the dissonant interval of an augmented 4th (mm. 46-48 in the clarinet and bassoons, mm. 52-53 and mm. 57-58 in the
trumpets, trombones and tuba) make a sound suggestive of low, soft voices being heard amidst the dark.

One of the special features of the second movement is the use of quartal harmony that comprises the arpeggios in the piano part, and is found in other places in this movement as well. In this B section, the piano sustains this quartal harmony that sounds suspended and unresolved by building from a low to high register. This line oozes from the piano, and is meant to depict a spirit wandering in the dark.

![Figure 4.6 The quartal harmony played by the piano at m. 54](image)

Mm. 59-69 consist of a transition back to the A section. The main idea of this transition section continues the ideas of the previous section. The bass line moves through the use of the d motive, while the woodwinds, piano and strings have arpeggios. At m. 63, the d motive is spread throughout and layered over the other instruments, building anxiety, while the strings bring calm in the next section.

**The Second A section**

The main theme of the A section (mm. 79-90) returns in D dorian, played by flutes, oboe and piano. Compared with the first A section, it is a little darker as a result of the mode. The strings whisper to each other, and a sound like a small bell heard from afar is played by the triangle. Compared with the B section, this section is less dissonant, and brings about a return to calm. From m. 78, the second part of the main theme is used as instruments enter successively, building tension towards the climax at m.88. Concurrently, at m. 78, the contrary motion in the lower instruments and other instrumental parts create an expansive feel. The texture becomes thicker, the range is higher, and each instrument plays louder, building to m. 88. The tension
with running triplets in the woodwinds (mostly F Lydian mode), glissandi in the piano, and
tremolo by strings lead into the C section.

The C section

The building tension of the previous section explodes with thick dissonance. This disso-
nance is created at the beginning of m. 91 from a combination of the B-seventh chord and quartal
harmony (EADGC). Right after this dissonant explosion, the dark colors of the B section return.

The C section (mm. 91-103) is similar to the B section, spacious and quiet. There is a
conversation between piano and woodwinds in the first four measures of this section. This time,
unlike the B section, the piano continues without any pause after an arpeggio underneath the
woodwinds. The three notes of the c motive are whispered by woodwinds, piano and glocken-
spiel. Compared with the B section, there is less chromaticism, a lighter texture, and a higher
register. A similar texture is used for the third A section.
The Third A section

The less dissonant harmony continues into the next A section (mm. 104-114). This section begins with the main theme played in B Lydian mode by the bassoon. The sustained and widely spaced harmonics in violin and bass, sounded without melodic motion, give a spacious and somewhat lonely quality to the sound. A loose inversion of the c motive occurs in mm. 113-
114 in the piano part. At m.114, the addition of more instrument parts and a pedal C in the bass part slowly builds up the tension.

![Figure 4.9 The original and a loose inversion of the c motive](image)

**The Cadenza**

The piano plays a descending quintal arpeggio (mm. 124-130), which serves as the transition to a short piano cadenza (mm. 131-141). The piano cadenza uses the c motive to punctuate the next section. A strong statement of the c motive through octaves played in a low register suggests confidence, and shows the decisiveness of reaching for hope without anxiousness. The piano’s gesture continues to the next section.

![Figure 4.10 The c motive at m. 131](image)

**The Last A section**

The main theme of the A section returns, stated by the clarinet at m. 142. Compared with the first A section of this movement, the piano’s light, sparkling accompaniment with a sustained pedal and the strings’ slow harmonic changes depict glimmers of hope. In m. 155, the second half of the main theme is stated in the woodwinds. Other instruments join gradually and echo the melody, building tension. The harmonic changes that occur from m.162 become more chromatic towards the end of the piece and bring intensity and excitement. The melodic material in mm. 162-167 is borrowed from mm. 39-42.
The Coda

The chromatic intensity surges into the Coda at m. 174. The motion of the piano evokes the idea of trying to reach previously unattainable heights. The piano’s sixteenth notes and the timpani roll at the end of the movement bring tension, which then continuous carries over into the third movement without pause.
Chapter 5: Analysis of Third Movement

The third movement is the most exciting and active movement in the piece, and its mood of overriding hope of this movement strongly erases the negative moods from previous movements. This movement is structured in ABACA form, including a short introduction, cadenza and coda. Although this movement and the second movement utilize the same form, the mood is very different between these movements, with emotional turmoil being the theme of the second movement and a lively, joyful mood pervading this final movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mm. 1-3</th>
<th>mm. 4-39</th>
<th>mm. 40-54</th>
<th>mm. 55-99</th>
<th>mm. 100-141</th>
<th>mm. 142-183</th>
<th>mm. 184-203</th>
<th>mm. 204-278</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>introduction</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Cadenza</td>
<td>Coda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 The form of the third movement

**Overview**

The second movement moves directly into the third, and this final movement begins with a brief introduction of an accompanimental texture. The two important themes are introduced in the first A section and come back with varied forms each time. The motives from the previous movements are reintroduced in this movement. Between the A sections, there are two different sections, B and C, to contrast with the A sections - both of these sections use a thinner texture and are less active. The main theme is also heard at the cadenza and the coda. The cadenza is intended as a recollection of the first theme of this movement. Instead of having an enormous, triumphant ending, I instead chose to write a quiet ending for this piece as a recollection of the first movement. There are two parts within the coda. The rhythmic figure in the introduction of this movement is reintroduced in the first part of the coda. Also, the beginning of the first theme is heard again. The second part of the coda closes the piece quietly with the recollection of the introduction of the first movement.

**The Opening**

The introduction is only three measures in length, yet it is important because the material is used later in this movement. Following the ascending sixteenth-note passage played by the piano
at the end of the second movement, which depicts a hand reaching out for hope, the third movement opens with a chord depicting the attainment of that hope. The lack of a pitch center in the 8-note scale leading into the beginning of movement three creates a feeling of listlessness. But when the orchestra suddenly punctuates the beginning of the third movement with its forceful crashing chord, that sense of listlessness suddenly disappears. The chord at the very beginning of the introduction is built primarily with open fifths (A, E, B, F-sharp and C, G) but also features a G-sharp and F-sharp which clashes with G-natural. The piano’s run from the previous movement reaches this dissonant chord sounds as if breaking through a barrier. Just after the presentation of this chord, a rhythmic gesture is introduced in the upper strings (mm. 1-3). This gesture is comprised of new material, and appears at the end of this movement as well (mm. 66-75 on snare drum, m. 155 on violins. and snare drum, mm. 205-220, 243-251 on violins. & viola).

Figure 5.1 The strings at m. 1

The structure of the main themes
The A section (mm. 4-39) is the most important section in this movement because the main themes in this movement are introduced here and appear again in other A sections later (mm. 55-99 and mm. 142-183). This section is divided into two parts, which are the first theme
in mm. 4-20 and the second theme in mm. 22-38. Within each of these themes, there are two melodic components, in mm. 4-7 and mm. 8-20 for the first part and mm. 22-30 and mm. 32-38 for the second part.

*The First Theme*

The first theme (mm. 4-20), bounding with jubilance, showcases the right hand of the pianist running across the keys with joy. The first melodic component (mm. 4-7) introduced by the piano is built upon two motives taken from previous movements: the *a* motive from the first movement and the *c* motive from the second movement. The first five notes in the first melodic component also appear at the cadenza, and again at the coda.

![Figure 5.2 The first component of the first theme played by piano at m. 4](image)

At the same time that the piano introduces the first theme’s second component (m. 8-20), the clarinet, oboe, and flute work together to present the beginning of the first component, resulting in a layering of the two components.

![Figure 5.3 The second component played by piano, layered with the first component played by flute, clarinet, and oboe at m. 7](image)
A loose inversion of the \( d \) motive, which was used in the previous movement, appears, played by clarinet and bassoon in m.11. This gesture continues until m.16.

![Figure 5.4 A loose inversion of the \( d \) motive at m. 11](image)

**The Second Theme**

Like the first theme, the second theme (mm. 22-38) is also divided into two sections (mm. 22-30, mm. 32-38). The second theme is primarily introduced by the woodwinds. In this entire section, the register of the piano accompaniment is lower and the dynamic softer, keeping the energy at bay until m. 37. The energy bursts forth again, though, when the B section begins at m. 40. Compared to the first theme, the second theme is less percussive and smoother. The second theme’s first component is stated by flute. It develops as a conversation between flute and clarinet, which both embellish the theme.

![Figure 5.5 The first component of the second theme played by flute at m. 22](image)

As the conversation continues between flute and clarinet, the violin joins in, layering the motive \( d \) underneath.

![Figure 5.6 The \( d \) motive played by violin at m. 25](image)
Whereas the first component of the second theme is structured like a question and answer, the second component of the theme is more resolute. At this time, the theme moves into a higher register and increases in volume, creating a strong and confident air.

![Figure 5.7 The second component of the second theme played by clarinet at m. 32](image)

**The second A section**

The second A section, presented in mm. 55-99, is slightly varied from the A section’s initial presentation. The first theme’s first component is in mm. 55-58, followed by the second component in mm. 59-64. In this return, the first component of the first theme (mm. 55-58) is less texturally dense and less active than the first A section. Also, in contrast with the first A section, the piano’s dissonant parallel minor-major seventh chords create a heightened sense of anxiety.

![Figure 5.8 The parallel minor/major seventh chords played by piano at m. 55](image)

The second theme’s first component occurs in mm. 75-78, and the second component occurs in mm. 79-86. The second component of the first theme begins with clarinet in the pickup to m. 59. The toms’ rhythmic figure exudes confidence, and alters the mood of the previous component. In m. 61 to 63, the woodwinds overlap, leading to the climatic moment of this section (m. 64). Mms. 64-74 are an extension of both the second component and the rhythmic fig-
ure that comes from the strings at very beginning of this movement, played in this instance by snare drum.

![Figure 5.9 The rhythmic figures of the snare drum at m. 66 and the original figure played by strings at m. 1](image)

The second theme featured in the piano (mm. 75-86) is shorter than the previous theme, and is echoed by flute. Similar to the first A section, the less rhythmically driven texture creates a calming effect. The piano continues to play the second component from m. 79. At m. 91, motive c enters quietly with harmonics played by strings. These harmonics evoke those played by the strings in the second movement.

**The Last A section**

The last A section returns quietly in mm. 142-203, and again is quite different from the previous A sections. In this section, the first component of the first theme is in mm. 142-154. This time, there is no second melodic component of the first theme, because the first component has been extended in this return. I felt that the extension of the first component did not connect well with the second component of this section, and by including the second component the theme would have been out of proportion with the rest of the materials in this movement. The second theme’s components are in mm. 156-169, and mm. 177-203.

Compared with other appearances of the first theme for the A sections, this return (mm. 142-154) is calmer, using a higher register for both strings and piano accompaniment. These instruments are overlapped by the woodwinds using the c motive, which builds excitement through m. 154. The density of notes within the solo piano is increased from m. 130 to depict the piano’s
ascending run out of the darkness. As the piano reaches its higher register, the strings join quietly.

At m. 156, the second theme begins. This theme is more energetic and active than the previous section as a result of the addition of driving percussive rhythms. The rhythmic idea, played by the strings, depicts an abundance of excitement, and is derived from the introduction of this movement. In this section, this melodic component is different from previous sections. The melody is not smooth, instead creating hiccups of excitement through disjointed rhythms and frequent short rests.

![Figure 5.10 The first component of the second theme at m. 156](image1)

Between mm. 166-170, the ascending sixteenth notes in the piano leading to the next section are comprised of whole-tone scales and an eight-note scale. Excitement is generated through the quick alternation of scales.

![Figure 5.11 The alternating scales played by piano at m.166](image2)

At m. 170, the second component of the second theme starts with an augmentation of its original form, played by trumpet and toms.

![augmentation](image3)
The B and C sections

Between each A section, there are contrasting sections. These establish mood shifts between sections, and are quieter and less active.

The short B section (mm. 40-54) is a conversation between the percussion (mainly toms and snare drum) and the other instruments. The musical idea of this section comes from the second movement. This section contains a loose inversion of the \(d\) motive, which is originally heard in the second movement as a questioning theme.

Figure 5.13 The original \(d\) motive from the second movement and the loose inversion of the motive
Although the tempo does not change, the slow rhythm and harmonic changes of the C section (mm. 100-141) give the section a slow, expansive feel. The strings’ harmonics and muted brass provide thinned-out, softer tone colors. I included this section as a musical contrast to the other fast and busy sections of the movement, but also as a place where the pianist can recover from the otherwise extremely virtuosic playing of this movement. Mm. 127-140 function as a bridge to the next section. From m. 130, the piano extends into a higher register, and is joined by the strings in m.135. The piano accompaniment carries the feeling of this dreamy section into the beginning of the next section.

**The Cadenza and Coda**

*The Cadenza*

The cadenza and the coda are both important sections in this movement, as they bring the concerto to its close. The first component of the first theme appears in each section, but manifests in different ways. The large coda concludes both the third movement and the entire piece.

The cadenza (mm. 184-203) functions as a bridge into the coda, but is also an important moment to demonstrate the skill of the right hand. I added a cadenza in every movement because I wanted to emphasize and reintroduce the main theme by the piano alone. I also placed a cadenza within this movement in order to recall the first component of the first theme. This
component is present at the very beginning of the cadenza and again later in mm. 191-192. This component also includes the \(a\) motive, with an emotionally turbulent feeling created through dissonances. These dissonances are especially pronounced through a minor second (B-sharp and C-sharp in the right hand and E and E-flat in the left hand) and the use of the lower register.

![Figure 5.15 The dissonances at m. 184](image)

The first component of the second theme is used at m. 197, and is presented with an edgier, more active sound than the previous appearance of this same melody. This is achieved through a continuous descent towards the lower register, and depicts the erasing of anxiety, anger, and frustration, which have accumulated at the bottom.

![Figure 5.16 The first component of the second theme at m. 197](image)

The Coda

The Coda (mm. 204-278) is divided into two sections, mm. 204-256 and mm. 257-278, and begins with the first component of the first theme. This is played by both the flute and oboe parts.

![Figure 5.17 The first component of the first theme played by flute and oboe at m. 204](image)
The first half is a conversation between the piano and string orchestra. The action in this section is provided by the rhythms in the tom parts, while the piano has a toccata-like quality (mm. 201-217).

This toccata-like music is similar to the third movement of my work *The Elemental* (2010). The accompaniment played by piano at the conclusion of this earlier piece starts from the lower register and depicts both darkness and an excited energy. I wanted to revisit this material, and it was an ideal fit for this section. Since this section is a long journey towards the concluding second half, I sought a means for playing the piano one-handed for a long length of time with a perpetual stream of sixteenth notes.

![Figure 5.18 The piano figure from the third movement of *The Elemental* (2010)](image)

The dry *col legno* string parts match the color of the piano, while the rhythmic idea comes from the introduction, as in m. 155. This idea is used from m. 205 to 251, and establishes the main idea of this section.

![Figure 5.19 The rhythmic figure played by upper strings at m. 205](image)
At m. 216, the lower strings enter, while the timpani takes over the piano part at m. 217. The snare, combining with the strings, adds rhythmic tension. This section is mainly a conversation between the piano, percussion, and other instruments.

Figure 5.20 The conversation between the piano, percussion, and other instruments

Mm. 224-251 functions as a transition into the final section (mm. 253-278). In mm. 247-251, sustained harmonies in the lower brass with markings such as *fp* and *crescendo to f* aid in building tension.

Mm. 253-278 is the second half of the coda and a recollection of the introduction from the first movement. This reappearance of the introduction is quiet, whereas before it was aggressive and energetic, evoking moods of anger and frustration. Comparing with the first movement’s introduction, this section is heard as a memory of a past event, now quiet and subdued. At this moment, the anxiety and anger from the beginning of the work has faded and become merely a memory.

The low E pedal in the bass recalls the feeling of the introduction from the first movement. The anger and struggling has passed. Compared with the texture of the first movement,
the use of harmonics in the strings along with muted brass colors give the music a subdued effect, as if being heard from a distance. The raucous melody of the first movement is now played quietly by the flute in the beginning of this section at m. 254.

At m. 258, the horn provides the bottom layer of sound, and other instruments follow in layers, filling out the harmony. The small bell-like sound of the glockenspiel acts as an extension of the piano’s arpeggios. Tremolos in the strings begin at m. 266 and continue in a descending fashion until the end of the piece, adding to the relaxing and calming effect of this final section. The consonant harmony at the end fully releases the previous tension.

Figure 5.21 The filling out of the harmony

This movement is partially intended as a recollection of both the first and second movements. Although this movement is mainly joyful in nature, some moments flash back to previous sections from other movements. As described above, this movement borrows the d motive and the texture/instrumentation from the second movement in sections B and C. Instead of creating a large, energetic ending, the unexpected resolution into relaxed beauty creates a powerful contrast with the violence and dissonance of previous movements. The piece ends peacefully, bringing a close to a long journey, in which the anxiety from the opening has become just a memory.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

This piece is the culmination of my studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. When I first decided to enter the Ph.D program, I had already formed the idea of writing a piano concerto for my dissertation. Since I have been studying piano performance for a long time and I received a master’s degree in piano performance at UH, I thought it would be an appropriate instrument to feature in my dissertation. I also thought that my dissertation would provide a good opportunity to gain experience writing a large-scale ensemble piece. However, the idea to write a piece specifically for right-hand piano alone came later, after experiencing the temporary loss of the use of my left hand through injury. Through my various experiences throughout my graduate studies as both a performer and composer, I have gained knowledge of concertos, orchestration, and the ability of performing one-handed on the piano.

While analyzing my piano concerto, I discovered many things that I was not initially aware of, including specific forms and modes within the piece. I did not plan structures or forms of movements before composing – these happened as a byproduct of composing based on particular moods I wanted to convey. The emotional journey of trauma and recovery is my primary focus in this piece, and other aspects of form and structure arose as a byproduct of this focus. My first concern while composing the piece was crafting the main theme. This theme is crucial to the development of the piece, since it returns in many forms throughout. Because of the first theme’s importance, I spent a great deal of time crafting it.

I often composed intuitively when writing this piece. While conforming generally to standard forms, I did not adhere to their every convention. The second and third movements are good examples of this approach to composing. While the forms in these movements resemble that of traditional rondo, the refrain returns in a different mode each time it is reintroduced (the common practice for composing in rondo form usually involves reintroducing the main theme in the same mode). The same main theme appears in each movement, but in each reappearance I changed modes or otherwise altered notes to more accurately adapt to the mood I was attempting to convey. My use of mode during composition was often unconscious, and grew out of my desire to convey various...
moods during composing – as this method of composition suggests, this piece is very personal.

This is the first piece in which I have consciously attempted to unify the work as a whole by linking movements motivically. I had composed several multi-movement pieces previously to this work, but this was my first time composing with common motives between movements. When I wrote the main theme of the first movement, I decided to use the a motive (a melodic half-step) for the main theme of each movement in order to unify the entire piece. In order to distinguish this two-note motive, I placed it at the very beginning of the main theme of each movement.

I purposely limited myself in the amount of musical material I used in this piece in order to focus instead on developing thematic material. This was a challenge for me to use limited motivic ideas to create the music. A problem I have frequently experienced in writing music is that I tend to keep introducing new material, and it often becomes difficult to distinguish which is the most important theme within the music.

I had envisioned the title and program in advance of composing. I usually title my works after I complete them. However, on some occasions, especially when the work I am writing is programmatic or references an outside inspiration, I title my pieces before composing. Previous examples of this method for titling my pieces include the works The Tree, for horn and piano, The Food chain, for saxophone quartet, and Deathstalker for cello and piano. These last two works were also multi-movement pieces.

The three-movement form found in The Immortal Hand is one I have utilized in previous pieces. Before this piano concerto, I wrote a three-movement piece entitled The Elements, for solo piano, and the above mentioned Deathstalker, for cello and piano. As in my piano concerto, both of these pieces are organized as fast-slow-fast. I thought this organization was appropriate for my piano concerto as well, due to my focus on thematic materials for this piece. I wanted a first movement that was agitated, a second movement that was slow and searching, and an energized third movement. The difference between my concerto and previous pieces are the use of motivic materials, which are woven throughout the work. Also, none of my previous 3-movement works fit any traditional forms, while this piece texturally makes reference to several forms, including two rondo forms present in the composition. However, as I previously mentioned, I did not set out
to write in these forms, and only became aware of them after a subsequent analysis of the piece.

Although this piano concerto is a three-movement piece, there are no pauses between any of the movements, giving the impression of a large single-movement work. However, each movement of this piece has an individual character. In my other multi-movement pieces, some movements link together, but not every movement.

In my graduate studies, I have noticed that I am especially comfortable writing for piano. As mentioned, the piano is my primary instrument, and this has most certainly contributed to my ease in writing for the instrument. I tend to use strings as a supportive cushion, using them to sustain notes rather than making them active. In general, the strings in this piece are used primarily for harmony rather than counterpoint. While the woodwinds often engage with main theme in a conversational manner, the piano usually accompanies this conversation with more flourishes, frequently using a higher register and fast notes. Muted brass in this piece function to create an unsettled mood. The snare drum and toms are usually called on during excited moments within the piece.

Many contemporary compositions for piano make use of extended techniques, and it was suggested to me that I consider incorporating these techniques in *The Immortal Hand*. However, I consciously limited myself to more traditional pianistic techniques, as a result of this piece being written for right hand only. Many extended techniques require both hands to create the sound. For instance, one hand touches or presses the strings inside the piano while the other hand plays on the keyboard. Harmonics and pizzicato also require the use of both hands. As a result, I decided to focus my intention instead on developing virtuosic piano lines on the keyboard to capitalize on the strengths of one-handed piano playing.

I could have opted to use the inside of the piano to provide unusual sounds. However, I decided that even if I used extended technique methods such as scraping or hitting the strings, both possible with one hand, it would not resonate with my purpose in writing this piece. This piece would ideally be performed in a large venue, and extended techniques are generally quiet. This would not be ideal due to the large size of the ensemble and the potential space of the performance hall. Since this piece is for right hand only, and the extended techniques possible for one hand would be limited anyway, I
wanted to focus on the performance on the keyboard to take advantage of one handed playing and on the venue in which the performance might occur.

Another challenge in composing this piece was orchestration. Although I have some experience orchestrating for small ensembles, this piano concerto was my first complete orchestral work. I have been preparing myself for this challenge gradually over time. I began writing pieces for trios of instruments, then for *Pierrot* ensemble, and then for various combinations of woodwinds. Throughout these experiences, I gradually became more comfortable writing for larger ensembles. I do not yet know how this piece would sound in live performance, as I have yet to hear the orchestral parts, but writing pieces for these smaller ensembles and hearing them performed has helped to inform this piece. My main concern with orchestration was in the balance of sound and texture between piano and orchestra.

Even though I have been careful with respect to balance issues, there are moments in the piece that present challenges. For example, the orchestra may cover the sound of the piano’s higher register. However, I believe the dynamics of the orchestra can help to control the balance issue. For example, starting at m. 197 in the coda of the first movement, the piano plays in a high register, and is accompanied simultaneously by most of the orchestra, but the dynamics between piano and orchestra are contrasted so that the piano can be heard. Another specific challenge is that the piano is not a sustaining instrument. When a note or chord is played, the sound immediately decays. This could present a problem when combined with orchestral instruments, many of which can sustain tones at a constant dynamic. One solution to this problem is to add tremolos in the piano part, and this is illustrated in m. 45 of the third movement. Although this is a piano concerto, the pianist also needs occasional rest, especially in an otherwise extremely virtuosic piece. With this additional challenge in mind, I found ways to let the orchestra take over for the piano at key moments. For example, in the first movement, the orchestra takes over the recapitulation right after the piano’s virtuosic cadenza.

In addition to compositional challenges, there will likely be some difficulties and challenges in performing this piece. The first issue is the performer’s stamina. Through my experience with piano, I believe that the piano part is manageable for a professional musician, even though it is technically difficult. However, because I composed little by
little over time, I am not sure if it would be difficult to keep the same energy and play through the entire piece without pauses between each movement. Although I composed for right hand only, I also give an option for playing with both hands so that this piece will have more opportunities to be performed. I have not considered the possibilities for performing the piece with left hand only, yet it may also work.

One challenge is having the piece performed at all. Orchestral performances of contemporary compositions are uncommon, and premieres of new piano concertos are even more uncommon. Performances of piano concertos for one hand are especially rare. However, the unique nature of the concerto (being for one hand) might actually make it stand out among other concertos, so I am hopeful that the piece will be performed in the future.

I hope this piece would be an encouragement for any one-handed pianists who have lost or injured their left hand, giving them hope through new, specialized literature for one-handed piano and providing them with opportunities to perform with an orchestra.

Although I wrote this piece for one-handed performers, I hope that any pianist may try and enjoy performing my piece, including performance for two hands.

This piano concerto is a personal one, not only because of the emotional journey developed in the concerto, which resonates personally with my own struggles, but also because the piece is the culmination of my nearly 12 years of graduate study at University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. While this piece was challenging to write, I feel that it is a good representation of my many learning experiences at the university. I am glad to have the opportunity to bring together my years of experience into one final work for the composition program at University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.
Bibliography


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The Immortal Hand

Piano Concerto for the Right Hand

Composed by Megumi Kurachi
Instrumentation

2 Flutes (2nd flute doubling Piccolo)
2 Oboes
2 Clarinet in B-flat
2 Bassoons
4 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in C
2 Trombones
  Tuba
Timpani (4)
Percussion 1
  Bass drum
Suspended cymbal
  Glockenspiel
Percussion 2
  Snare drum
  Tam-tam
  Triangle
  Toms
Solo piano
Strings
The Immortal Hand

concerto for piano right hand and orchestra

I.

Spacious, \( \frac{d}{\text{tempo}} = 108 \)

Flute 1

Flute 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B, 1, 2

Bassoon 1, 2

Horn in F, 1, 2

Horn in F, 3, 4

Trumpet in C, 1, 2

Trombone 1, 2

Tuba

Timpani

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Piano solo

Spacious, \( \frac{d}{\text{tempo}} = 108 \)

Viola I

Viola II

Viola

Cello

Contrabass

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Picc.
Fl. 1
Ob. 1, 2
B. Cl. 1, 2
Bsn. 1, 2
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
C Tpt. 1, 2
Tuba
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Vln. II
Vla.
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Cb.
Pno.

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The Immortal Hand I

\[ \text{Fl. 1, 2} \]
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Hn. 1, 2
C Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
Tuba
Tam.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Pno.
Vln. 1
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

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III.

**Allegro** (M.M. $\frac{4}{4} = c. 120$)

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