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## “WE NEVER KNOW WHERE WE’LL END UP”

### Nielsen’s alternative endings to the Flute Concerto

By Tom Pankhurst

In October 1926 a version of Carl Nielsen’s Concerto for Flute and Orchestra was performed in which the composer concluded the work in D major instead of the E major of the final published version.<sup>1</sup> The performance and reception issues around this change to the concerto are comprehensively discussed in Kirsten Petersen’s article on pp. 196-225 of this volume, along with an admirable introduction to the structure and a facsimile reproduction of the original ending. The following article explores some more detailed analytical and broader theoretical issues that arise from the alternative endings.

The closing keys of the two versions may only differ by a tone, but it is nevertheless tempting to read this shift as a seismic one; seismic, that is, for anyone who seeks to understand Nielsen’s music at the technical level. If there is more than one possible final key, what does that imply for the rest of the structure? Even if the original ending was hurriedly dashed off to meet a tight deadline, so that we need not necessarily view it as more than an emergency short-cut, the nature of the alterations, above all the choice of a different concluding tonality, should cause at least a tremor of uncertainty in any analyst who makes claims about structural integrity or dramatic schema based on large-scale tonal trajectories in Nielsen’s works. Clearly, in this case at least, Nielsen either had no such guiding strategy in mind at the outset, or he changed his mind about the most appropriate outcome when he was able to reflect on the matter. Either way, he was obeying to the letter his radical principle: ‘We never know where we’ll end up’.<sup>2</sup>

Since, as usual, there is no documentation for the rationale underlying his detailed thought-processes in the composition of the Flute Concerto, we are at liberty to hypothesize. In so doing we can hardly avoid the truism that endings are something to take very seriously, not least because of the way in which they reflect back on the rest

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1 As detailed in Kirsten Petersen, Preface to *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra*, *Carl Nielsen Works*, II / 9, Copenhagen 2002.

2 *Vi aner ikke hvor vi ender*, cited in Torben Meyer & Frede Schandorf Petersen, *Carl Nielsen, Kunstneren og Mennesket*, Copenhagen 1948, vol. 2, 271.

of the work. We therefore stand to gain significant insight into the large-scale design of one of the last of Nielsen’s major works to lack detailed analytical commentary. At the same time, we have an opportunity to reflect more broadly upon the nature of traditional notions of ‘structure’ and ‘work’, embracing the potential threat to these notions represented by Nielsen’s seemingly pragmatic, quasi-improvisational approach to composition, and hence, ideally, contributing to a wider epistemological debate.

In this short paper I aim to pursue each of these two lines of enquiry to a modest degree: whilst the changes Nielsen made to the end of the Flute Concerto can be understood as reflecting some of the work’s inner dramatic tensions, the fact that the alternative first version differs so radically in its material and in its tonal goal also challenges the critical and analytical frameworks – resting on notions of integrity and of cannot-be-otherwise – within which issues of compositional construction are usually explored. And it is this broader challenge that I shall address first.

### Analysing Endings

The field of semiotics offers a useful theoretical framework for such an investigation in Raymond Monelle’s discussion of the relationship between art-work and criticism. Monelle draws on the work of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, who, as part of a wide-ranging study of mathematics, logic and metaphysics, proposed various ways of categorising objects and the functions of signs. Monelle suggests that, in Peirce’s terms, music cannot ever properly move from *rheme* (an object that exists purely as possibility) to *dicent* (an object that exists on the plane of the real). He proposes instead that the musical artwork should be understood as a ‘seeming dicent’, capable of expressing only ‘virtual objects and virtual events’.<sup>3</sup> If musical objects only seem to move from the potentiality of Peirce’s Firstness (as *rhemes*) to the reality of Secondness (as *dicents*) this has ramifications for the level of Thirdness (musical objects as *arguments*), on which analysts posit purposeful and logical relationships between musical objects. Perhaps we should not need reminding that it is only *as if* the key of E major at the end of Nielsen’s Concerto is inevitable, but, in the heat of interpretation, it is all too easy to forget that analytical explanation only *seems* to attain the status of Peirce’s *argument*. Monelle suggests that the ‘seeming argument’ identified by the analyst operates instead on the level of narrative logic;<sup>4</sup> to trace a logical trajectory or an inner coherence is, in this sense, only to tell one of many possible stories about a work, and Nielsen’s alternative endings bring us face to face with this fact.

In a somewhat different context, Nicholas Cook has also articulated the potentiality of musical objects and their openness to multiple interpretations. One of his ex-

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3 Raymond Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*, London 1992, 219.

4 *Ibid.*, 218

amples is a television advert for a Citroen car, in which he suggests that ‘the energetic and expressive attributes of Mozart’s music [extracts from *The Marriage of Figaro*] ... cluster themselves around the car’:

The music, so to speak, seeks out the qualities of the car, and conversely the image of the speeding Citroen might be said to interpret the music. ... it is central to my argument that music never is ‘alone’, that it is always received in a discursive context, and that it is through the interaction of music and interpreter, text and context, that meaning is constructed, as a result of which the meaning attributed to any given material trace will vary according to the circumstances of its reception.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, according to Cook, there is always a relationship between music and the listener’s interpretative intuitions, whether they are informed by a text, title, programme or even an analysis. Hence, there is no such thing as a pure and unmediated version of a piece of music; the listening experience is always contingent on something, whether that something be an advert or a scholarly discussion. Our listening (and analysis) is also radically affected by any previous experience of the music in question, in particular by our knowledge of how the piece concludes.

The end of a work is, of course, particularly privileged in determining the narrative interpretation that the listener takes away from his or her experience of the piece – just as with the end of a novel or film. Composers interpret what has gone before in the way they choose to end a work and, particularly on analytical reflection, our analytical interpretation ‘seeks out’ those qualities that support the established trajectory of the piece. On the other hand, if the keys and structures of an individual work are not locked into generally acknowledged procedures and structures in the way that they are pre-eminently in the Viennese Classical style, then the terminal key is less important than one might think. William Benjamin has pointed out that the emergence of non-concentric tonal structures – i.e. any structure which ends in a different key from the beginning – was not the principal challenge to mainstream monotonicity; far more subversive was the way in which Bruckner and other late nineteenth-century composers relied on a ‘return to’ the opening key, rather than the ‘motion within or prolongation of that properly speaking constitutes monotonicity’.<sup>6</sup> If this sense of ‘motion within’ is already not present, an ending in any key can potentially be made to sound convincing. The various traditional modes of conclusion – categorised in relation to fi-

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5 Nicholas Cook, ‘Theorizing Musical Meaning’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, 23 (2001), 180.

6 William Benjamin, ‘Tonal Dualism in Bruckner’s Eighth Symphony’, *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality*, W. Kinderman, H. Krebs. (eds.) Lincoln, Nebraska 1996, 238.

nales by Michael Talbot as ‘relaxant’, ‘summative’ or ‘valedictory’<sup>7</sup> – are established much more crucially by parameters such as tempo, dynamics and instrumentation than by key.

That composers can invite us to hear any number of different possible endings as convincing is instinctively grasped by many listeners and occasionally voiced by more open-minded analysts, as by Nicholas Marston apropos the *Grosse Fuge* and the original finale to Beethoven’s Op. 131 String Quartet:

musical material is fluid, possessing multiple tendencies and possibilities that are not directed towards a single inevitable *telos* ... we as listeners or ‘readers’ are ineluctably complicit in creating the sense of an ending.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed even the most seemingly perfect, balanced and logical ending may be subject to the general critique advanced by Nielsen himself in his essay ‘The Fullness of Time’:

even if we were to agree that we had achieved the best and the most beautiful that it is possible to achieve, we should be impelled, in the end, thirsting as we do more for life and experience than for perfection, to cry out: Give us something else; give us something new; for Heaven’s sake give us something bad, so long as we feel we are alive and active and not just passive admirers of tradition!<sup>9</sup>

This thought opens the door to the kind of pragmatic approach to tradition and innovation – including choice of concluding tonality – that marks so many of Nielsen’s mature concert works. The question then arises as to how the resulting freedom may be distinguished from the merely arbitrary. And in order to get further towards understanding the musical surface in any given instance, we need to ponder the nature of the contrasts in operation. The contrasts that occur within the framework of the Flute Concerto as a whole can be read in a number of dimensions, not least those between orchestra and flute and between different keys. In this article I choose to read them principally in terms of Schenker’s early ideas on the drama inherent in the tonal system.

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7 See Michael Talbot, *The Finale in Western Music*, Oxford 2001.

8 Nicholas Marston, “The sense of an ending’: goal-directedness in Beethoven’s music’, Glenn Stanley (ed.), *Beethoven Studies*, 84-101, Cambridge 2000, 101.

9 *og selv om vi naaede til enighed om, at nu var det bedste og skønneste naaet, vilde Menneskene, der tørster mere efter Liv og Oplevelse end efter det fuldkomne, tilsidst raabe i Kor: giv os noget andet, giv os noget nyt, ja giv os i Himlens Navn hellere det slette og lad os føle, at vi lever, i Stedet for bestandig at gaa rundt i daadløs Beundring for det engang vedtagne.* John Fellow, *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid*, Copenhagen 1999, p. 342.

### Tonal dichotomies – a Schenkerian view

In *Harmony*, Heinrich Schenker appears to connect the fundamental aesthetic dichotomy of Artist and Nature to the preoccupation of tonality with flatwards and sharpwards motion, the two pairs being mediated by the concept of proliferation and return.<sup>10</sup> Schenker describes the rising fifth as a ‘descendant’ of the fundamental in the harmonic series and therefore as having a basis in Nature that may be subverted by the falling fifth – from, say, dominant to tonic – which is an artistic rather than a natural phenomenon:

Nature had proposed only procreation and development, an infinite forward motion [in which each tone posits itself as a root with its own overtones]. The artist on the other hand, by construing a fifth-relationship in inverse direction, falling from high to low, has created an artistic counterpart to Nature’s proposition: an involution.<sup>11</sup>

The wider context for this reading is Schenker’s idea that tonal music is the result of a constant struggle between Artist and Nature. He considers that ‘every tone is possessed of the same urge to procreate infinite generations of overtones ... [and] contains within itself its own major triad’.<sup>12</sup> It is from this idea that Schenker develops the idea of tonicization as an instance of Nature getting the upper hand – the overtones of a given scale-step break free from the constraints of the diatonic scale of the original tonic.<sup>13</sup> He goes on to explain the conflicting demands made on the Artist by the procreative urges of the tones on the one hand and the need to produce a comprehensible work of art on the other:

On the one hand, he was faced with the egotism of the tones, each of which ... insisted on its right to its own perfect fifth and major third ... On the other hand, the common interest of the community that was to arise from the mutual relations of these tones demanded sacrifices.<sup>14</sup>

As pointed out by Gary Don, Schenker’s play of forces echoes Goethe’s notion of *Steigerung*, in which the tendency for growth and elaboration is countered by *Spezifikationstrieb*, which ‘keeps growth from getting out of hand, from changing the plant to a point where its form is no longer recognisable’.<sup>15</sup> This is particularly interesting in relation

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10 Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony*, Oswald Jonas (ed.), Elizabeth Mann Borgese (tr.), Cambridge Mass. 1994, especially 31-43.

11 *Ibid.*, 31.

12 *Ibid.*, 28-9.

13 *Ibid.*, 252.

14 *Ibid.*, 30.

15 Gary Don, ‘Goethe and Schenker’, *In Theory Only*, 10/8 (1988), 6.

to Nielsen’s dramatic pushing at the boundaries of tonal sense.<sup>16</sup> But for the time being I shall continue to concentrate on rising and falling fifths in the abstract, before redirecting attention to the Flute Concerto.

To suggest that rising fifths are somehow more ‘natural’ – a notion Schenker explicitly extends to sharpwards harmonic progression<sup>17</sup> – in a sense inverts our intuitions. Flatwards progression – each step being analogous to a perfect cadence – seems somehow ‘easier’ than sharpwards motion, which, in order to be consolidated, would necessitate a further step to the new dominant-of-the-dominant and back. As we have seen, however, Schenker’s idea is that the sharpwards proliferation is natural – by analogy with biological growth – and that this process is forcibly (by the human agency of the artist) reversed by flatwards motion. Nielsen’s characteristic rising-fifth background structures – which are fundamental to his Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Symphonies as well as to the Flute Concerto, despite being incomplete in Schenkerian terms – would thus be interpretable not so much as struggling to progress against the grain as of letting Nature have her head.

### A sharpwards trajectory

In these terms, Nielsen’s sharpwards modulating compositions shift the ideal balance that Schenker proposes between Artist and Nature (as exemplified in the monotonal *Ursatz*) towards the latter, as it were freeing the ‘natural’ development of sharpwards movement without letting the music run out of control. This metaphorical dialectic is particularly appropriate in the case of the Flute Concerto, which, at least in its definitive form with the revised ending, traces across its two movements the same basic background bass progression as *The Inextinguishable* – from D through A to E.

The opposition of Artist and Nature also maps interestingly onto the more obvious dichotomy between wild, unruly forces within the orchestra (particularly the clarinet and trombone) and a flute part that, as Robert Simpson suggests, ‘is exquisitely calculated to suit the character of its dedicatee, inclined to fastidious taste’.<sup>18</sup> It is significant in this regard that the unruly (and therefore ‘natural’?) trombone provokes two of the most crucial sharpwards modulations (in the first movement at bb. 80-100 and at the end of the work). Similarly, when the flute is allowed to express its more ‘artistic’ lyrical character, it tends to do so on the flat side of the work’s tonal spectrum. Counter-intuitive though it may appear to be, Schenker’s metaphorical reading of sharpwards and flatwards motion therefore seems highly appropriate in the case

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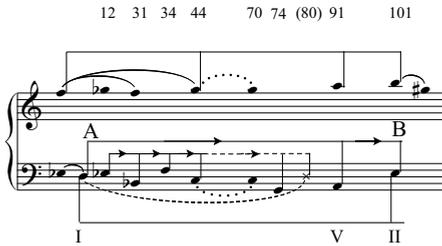
16 See Tom Pankhurst, ‘Different names for the same thing ...? Nielsen’s Forces, Schenker’s Striving, Tarasti’s Modalities and Simpson’s Narratives’, *Carl Nielsen Studies*, 1 (2003), 133.

17 Schenker, *op. cit.*, 32ff.

18 Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist 1865-1931*, London 1979, 140.

of the Flute Concerto. I am not of course suggesting that the Artist versus Nature dichotomy is explicitly the subject matter of this work, simply that a number of oppositions within the work may fruitfully be read in this way.

As shown in *Ex. 1*, the first hundred bars of the first movement offer a promising start to any search for stories concerning sharpwards and flatwards movement. After a ferocious clash between D and Eb, the tonality is settled in favour of the latter, with a restrained semiquaver theme introduced by the flute (incipit A). From here it is possible to trace a steady sharpwards motion through a return to D at b. 80 and on to an E major climax at b. 101 (incipit B), which is clarified on the bass staff of *Ex. 1* by the beams and arrows connecting sharpwards motion on two levels. This journey from the genteel restraint of b. 12 to the boisterous muscularity of b. 101 seems to support a reading that maps flatwards vs. sharpwards opposition onto ‘artistic’ fastidiousness versus ‘natural’ unruliness.



Ex. 1: Graph of Flute Concerto, first movement, bb. 1-101.

incipit A

incipit B

The two sharpwards steps from D to E across this phase of the first movement prefigure the overall trajectory of the work in its final version, and the relationship of this E major passage at b. 101 to the end of the Concerto highlights the relevance of Peirce's trichotomy to this situation. A listener who has not previously heard the work could not know of any connection between the E major at 101 and the end of the work, although he or she may be aware that such connections may exist (Firstness); a repeat listener may, perhaps cued by the motivic connection to the end of the work (i.e. the trombone from b. 200 in the second movement), experience a frisson of familiarity and expectation (Secondness); the analyst-listener, on the other hand, may ideally understand and interpret the connection (Thirdness).

The fact of Nielsen's re-writing reduces the gap between these different experiences. His apparently changing interpretation of his own music by his alternative endings renders the analyst, like the naïve listener, only able to speculate about potential and possibility: if the work ends in D, then the first movement's E major section is out on a sharpwards limb, from which there will ultimately be a retreat; if the work ends in E, then b. 101 invites interpretation as something like a first attempt or premature arrival. With two possible endings in view instead of one, the 'seeming' quality of musical objects posited by Monelle comes into relief: if the strongly sharpwards orientated first movement suggests that the work 'must' break free from the confines of D, this imperative was evidently not clear to the composer when he wrote the first version of the ending.

### Finale

The second movement of the concerto is a sonata rondo, the two versions of the work being identical until b. 169 – halfway through the recapitulation. After a violent and angular introductory string unison centred on D, the beginning of the movement settles flatwards onto a whimsical G major (*Ex. 2, incipit A*). This flatwards tonal trajectory continues towards the key of F at b. 50, as shown in *Ex. 2*. As the rondo theme transfers to the strings, the solo flute trills elegantly over the top; in terms of the dichotomy outlined above, the refined Artist has Nature firmly tamed (by falling fifths) as this Arcadian vision of tranquillity fades away in b. 61. In the second subject, the flute adopts a more muscular persona, and in a slower triple time the music climbs back sharpwards towards G. In a seeming parody of the end of the first subject, however, the section ends with the flute skittering in panic over the *fortissimo* orchestral tutti. In the terms set out by Schenker, it is as if, by instigating a sharpwards trajectory, the flute has unleashed elemental forces that it is unable to control. *Incipit B* shows the first re-assertion of the second subject, just before it is brought to this sudden and rather brutal end.

Intro Exposition		Development		Recap.
Rondo	2nd Sub.	Rondo	(Intro) 2nd Sub.	Rondo
1st Sub.		1st Sub.		1st Sub.
12	29	50	62	73
	85	93	123	128
		138		145

Ex. 2: Graph of Flute Concerto, second movement, bb. 1-145 (both versions)

12 solo fl. & strings  
*grazioso*  
*mp*

incipit A

85 solo fl.  
*ff*

ob. & vl. + 8ve above

tutti string chords  
(lowest note only shown)

incipit B

The development section compresses a similar sequence of events into a slightly shorter span. The flatwards drift takes us only as far as the subdominant (b. 123) and is cut short by a return of the staccato unison from the introduction (b. 128). The second subject provides an immediate and impassioned sharpwards corrective (b. 138), with a  $D^7$  chord paving the way for the return of the G major rondo theme in b. 145, which seems weak, even prosaic, after the drama of the second subject material. The transformation of the opening rondo material from 2/4 into 6/8 exacerbates the sense that this theme is now inappropriately light-hearted in relation to the seriousness of intervening events.

One of Robert Simpson's principal interpretative conceits is to suggest that the listener's belief in the ability of various keys to provide adequate closure may be un-

dermined by their dramatic context – G major in the Fifth Symphony, for example, becomes ‘philosophically as well as musically not possible’.<sup>19</sup> The notion that keys in Nielsen’s works are by turns compromised or valorised this way, until only one is left in contention, is powerful and fascinating, but it does not sufficiently acknowledge the fact that one could probably construct, post hoc, narratives to justify nearly any ending. By the beginning of the recapitulation in the second movement of the Flute Concerto, many dramatic oppositions have been brought into play: sharpwards versus flatwards tonal movement, flute versus orchestra, stability versus instability, artistic polish versus raw power. These are not simple polarities in which one term is clearly more desirable than the other; they form part of a wider aesthetic tension between the idea of the traditional light-hearted rondo-finale and something much more threatening. It is a dilemma perhaps best encapsulated by Nielsen’s plea, quoted above: ‘for Heaven’s sake give us something bad, so long as we feel we are alive and active and not just passive admirers of tradition!’ Whilst the G major rondo theme is pleasantly familiar on its recapitulation, the concerto, particularly in its first movement, has already summoned forces that are less controllable but more exhilarating.

That Nielsen redrafted the end suggests that there are at least two plausible ways of working through this problem. From this point of view, the original (and briefer) D major ending implies that satisfactory tonal closure is ultimately achievable and that it is possible to subsume the previous energies and ambiguities into a monotonal scheme. The final version, however, with its more exhilarating but less unequivocally triumphant E major ending rather seems to suggest that there is in fact no real way to resolve the work’s tonal tensions.

*Ex. 3* shows the second movement’s recapitulation as it appears in the final version of the work. One can trace a similar sharpwards trajectory towards E major to that at the beginning of the first movement (*Ex. 1*) and the two sections also have motivic material in common. In this final version, the music swings wildly between the E<sup>b</sup>, the key in which the polite semiquavers in b. 12 of the first movement appeared, and E major, at the sharpwards limit of the concerto’s tonal range. Out of these conflicting keys emerges a tranquil G major (incipit B), the notional home tonic of this movement; but the music then pushes sharpwards on to a properly established E major at b. 200.

In terms of the Artist versus Nature dichotomy, this represents at least a partial triumph of natural proliferation over monotonal artistic involution (i.e. the return to the initial tonic by descending fifth from the dominant). Only infinite sharpwards movement would be a true victory for Nature, however; so, strictly speaking, any sort of tonal closure might, in this context, be understood as representing an Arcadian ideal-

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<sup>19</sup> Simpson, *op. cit.*, 108.

zation. This throws light on the passage shown in incipit D, a sudden irruption of violence that comes immediately after the arrival on E. Why this sudden petulance from the flute and timpani now that the energetic E major from the first movement has been recaptured? Perhaps the point is that in the act of capture the vitality is lost – the confirmation of something (in this case E major) can never be as exciting as its discovery. Whatever the rationale, this suddenly violent passage reminds us, with less than fifty bars to go, that uncontrollable forces are still crucially present.

Gunnar Heerup wrote of the definitive version of the Flute Concerto in 1927 that ‘the last third of the [second] movement [of the concerto] seems without justified connection to the rest and along with the rhapsodically abrupt ending gives the movement a strangely short-tailed impression’.<sup>20</sup> In terms of the foregoing interpretation, this effect might be quite deliberate: Nielsen would rather give us something Heerup considers ‘bad’ than construct a finely wrought peroration that simplistically subsumes the dramatic and aesthetic complexities of the work. If E major was more gradually achieved or more comprehensively established, the sublime fragility of the arrival on E major at b. 200 (*Ex. 3, incipit C*) would either be lost or crushed under the weight of triumphant confirmation.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the second movement of the Flute Concerto, measures 145 through 255. The notation is in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first system covers measures 145 to 187. It features two tritone intervals marked with dashed lines and brackets, and chord progressions labeled G:I VIII, (E♭: I), III E:V, and I. The second system covers measures 187 to 255, showing further tritone intervals and chord progressions labeled B, C, E:I, I, and V I. Measure numbers are indicated above the staff lines.

Ex. 3: Graph of Flute Concerto, second movement, bb. 145-end (published version)

<sup>20</sup> Cited in Petersen, *op. cit.*, xxxii

175

incipit A

187

Strings

incipit B

195

Solo fl.

Trb.

Lower strings

+ sustained chords in bassoons and horns

p espress.

pizz.

p

incipit C

219

incipit D

258

solo fl.

temp.

trombone

strings and woodwind trombone

dim.

p

incipit E

A prominent feature of the recapitulation of the second movement in its final version is the tritone relationship. This interval maintains an ambivalent position within the tonal system in that it makes the closure of the diatonic cycle of fifths possible, and yet, within the artifice of equal temperament, it represents the furthest one can travel from a given point of departure. This dual role as agent of both return and rupture makes the tritone especially interesting from the point of view of the Artist versus Nature dichotomy.<sup>21</sup>

In the foreground, a string of parallel tritones from b. 175 (incipit A in *Ex. 3*) disrupts the surrounding prolongation of the dominant of E, and the final confirmation of this key is rudely interrupted, the flute going almost completely off the rails at b. 211, underpinned by a pedal on the timpani that moves from A to Eb (*Ex. 3*, incipit D). The ensuing E major at b. 231 is relatively weakly projected and itself drifts into a tritonally related Bb, as shown on *Ex. 3*. It is as if Nielsen wants to keep open the prospect of tonal disruption, avoiding the artifice of triumphant closure. The final thirteen bars first recall the skittish flute and timpani duet from b. 211 before concluding with a contemptuous E major cadence accompanied by loud trombone yawns (*Ex. 3*, incipit E). Simpson interprets this as a kindly joke on the work's fastidious dedicatee,<sup>22</sup> but it could equally be understood as a symptom of what I understand as the work's central dilemma – the tension between proliferation and closure, exhilarating chaos and satisfying order, Nature and Artist.

*Ex. 3* also shows how the middleground linear structure can be read as a rising span of three whole tones in the treble from D to G#. It is interesting that this is comparable with the upper-voice progression in the first hundred bars of the concerto, which similarly spans a sharpwards trajectory to E (as shown on *Ex. 1*, where the top-line progression is from F to B). In the first version of the concerto the top voice in the second movement comprises a third progression from D to F# (see *Ex. 5*). In the published version the final step up a tone to G# helps define the modulation from one diatonic collection to another. What makes this middleground progression tense and subversive is that, within a given key, the last note of a tritone progression would be expected to resolve either down from  $\hat{4}$  to  $\hat{3}$  or up from  $\hat{7}$  to  $\hat{8}$ . The middleground tritone takes us out of the closure suggested by the tranquil G major at b. 187 and into a new tonal region, breaking open the artifice of the closed tonal structure.

It is noteworthy that there are also several examples of tritones closer to the foreground. *Ex. 4a* from the first movement comes from just before the arrival back on D at b. 80 (cf. *Ex. 1*). The passage as a whole spans a tritone in the bass, and the fi-

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21 Schenker understood the tritone primarily as an artistic abandonment of Nature's perfect fifth for the sake of diatonic comprehensibility (see Schenker *op. cit.*, 42-44)

22 Simpson, *op. cit.*, 142.

nal ascent in the treble spans the same interval. There are also many vertical tritones. It is interesting that this tritone passage occurs just before the first significant intervention of the trombone and timpani, the two main sources of disruption from within the orchestra. *Ex. 4b* represents a moment of exhilarating energy as the music surges sharpwards from F through A to F#. Whole-tone scales, including a span of a tritone, seem to drive the music along this trajectory. *Ex. 4c* marks the beginning of the rondo theme's tonal explorations in the development of the last movement, as again the tritone is associated with breaking out of the diatonic scale.

Ex. 4: Extracts involving tritones from Flute Concerto (published version)

a) first movement, bb. 74ff.

b) first movement, bb. 134ff.



c) second movement, bb. 100ff.

### Two endings: the artifice of closure

Ex. 5 shows the tonal structure of Nielsen's first version of the recapitulation of the second movement. I earlier suggested that in a tonally non-concentric work nearly any key might be made to sound convincing. If this is to some extent true, it is perhaps the manner in which Nielsen arrives at D and E in his two versions of the concerto that is more important than the keys themselves. I will speculate below on how the final tonal destination reflects back on the overall structure, but in terms of the immediate dramatic impact of the ending, the local tonal shape of the last twenty-six bars is more important than their place in the overall key scheme of the piece.

In both versions of the concerto there are episodes of tonal dislocation, but there is a crucial difference of context. In the final version, bb. 145-187 offer the potential of a closed structure, albeit one in which the mediant and flat submediant would have to be understood as substituting for a dominant, a weak but plausible prolongation of G. It would be perfectly possible to establish G more firmly in the ensuing bars, but this fragile structure is instead broken apart, and the movement ends in E. It is interesting to compare the music that precipitates this tonal rupture in the final version to its equivalent in the first draft. Whereas the dramatic trombone intervention at b. 195 in the final version (*Ex. 3*, incipit C) occurs at the moment the music shifts from G to E major, the same intervention in Nielsen's first attempt (*Ex. 5*, incipit B) is framed *within* the terminal D major prolongation. This radically affects the status of the trombone intervention and consequently the balance between tonal proliferation and closure at the end of the work.

A musical score for the end of the second movement, first version, from measures 145 to 189. The score is in treble and bass clefs. Above the staff, measure numbers 145, 161, 169, 171, 173, 176, 181, 183, and 189 are marked. The music features a complex tonal structure with chromaticism and dissonance. Below the bass staff, a graph shows the chord progression: I VI II (under measures 145-150), I V (under measures 151-155), V (under measures 156-160), and I (under measures 161-165). Labels A and B are placed above the bass staff at measures 151 and 155 respectively.

Ex. 5: Graph of Flute Concerto, end of second movement, bb. 145-end (first version)

169 upper ww. & strings

lower ww. & strings + brass

incipit A

173

solo flute

timp.

Trb.

*f marcato il ritmo*

incipit B

Ex. 6 puts the two endings of the Flute Concerto in context, or, more to the point, reads the rest of the work in relation them. Although the first movement is not, of course, materially affected by the revision, at least not for a first-time listener, it is nevertheless tempting to trace a progression from II through VI to III at the end of the first movement (see dotted lines above the bass stave of Ex. 6b) when just such a two-stage sharpwards movement spans the published version of the last movement. The revision means that untrammelled sharpwards motion becomes the most significant large-scale organizing principle across the work, replacing what is in many ways the tighter and more immediately logical structure shown in Ex. 6a.

1st movement                      2nd movement

44   91   101   134   146   158   171   178   180                      12   157   161   189

D:I                      II                      =III                      I IV                      V                      I

(G: I)

Ex. 6a: Graph of Flute Concerto, entire, (first version)

1st movement                      2nd movement

44 91 101 134 146 158 171 178 180                      12 157 161 169 179 188 200 231

D:I    V:II                      II:VIII    G:V:I    VI:II    III:I                      E:I    V:I

Ex. 6b: Graph of Flute Concerto, entire (published version)

As shown in *Ex. 6a*, the whole concerto in its original form can be understood as a prolongation of D minor/major. From this perspective, the main body of the last movement, with its periodically returning G major, becomes a large-scale approach to the dominant A (which arrives at b. 161) – a subdominant relaxation that, by the end of the movement, takes quite an act of will to overcome. In *Ex. 6b* it again takes an effort of will to break out of the G major rondo, but the context is very different: the overall trajectory is of relentless sharpwards motion, from which the beginning of the second movement provides a temporary reprieve.

*Ex. 7* shows a falling fourth motif prominently figuring in the original conclusion that does not appear in the final section of the published version of the concerto; it can be traced back to the first appearance of the rondo theme (*Ex. 7a*). At b. 169, this motif reappears as an accompanying figure in the bass, which, with its emphasis on A, gives the music a feeling of leaning towards the dominant chord (*Ex. 7b*). In the light of the wider context outlined above, this could be understood as helping to secure D against its tendency to act as a dominant and thus to move flatwards. In this way this innocuous accompanying figure assumes an important role in the dramatic tension between the comfortable G major that has dominated the second movement and the more edgy sharpwards orientation of the first movement. It is interesting that in the final bars, the motif subtly recalls the wider subdominant tendency of this movement by slipping in an extra step to G before leaping down to D (see brass line on *Ex. 7c*). The context in the final version of the Concerto is totally different, because the G/D plagal ambiguity is made irrelevant by the bold sharpwards move to E major. As a result there is not the same need to safeguard the ‘tonic D’ against becoming a dominant.

Ex. 7: Motivic use of falling fourths in Flute Concerto (first version)

12 Solo fl. & strings  
*grazioso*  
*mp*

a) second movement, bb. 12ff.

b) second movement bb. 169ff. (first version)

Woodwind  
Brass  
Timpani  
Solo Flute  
Strings

Woodwind  
Brass  
Timpani  
Solo Flute  
Strings

*Molto Rit.*

c) second movement, end (first version)

In the original version, the proliferating sharpwards tendencies of the first movement are balanced by subdominant tendencies in the second movement, a strategy that results in overall closure in D, albeit heavily inflected by this subdominant. In the final version, however, the same sequence of events culminates in a breaking-out of the closed structure into a highly idiosyncratic E major ending. Nielsen seems deliberately to strive for an uneasy truce between the forces of disruption and closure in that the artifice of tonal closure is eventually accepted, but this is countered by a non-concentric background structure and many foreground disruptions. Whereas the first version concludes with a comparatively unequivocal D major, the published concerto offers a brief vision of a bucolic G major ending at b. 187 before being thrust rudely into an E major that, as discussed above, is far from a triumphant summation.

In his survey of generic patterns of development in the concerto finale, Michael Talbot suggests that ‘the concerto likes to end with relaxant jollity’ – ‘relaxant’, that is, as opposed to his other two main categories of ‘summative’ or ‘valedictory’.<sup>23</sup> He implicitly includes Nielsen Flute Concerto in this category, discussing it in the next paragraph as an example of the neo-Classical trend for multiple soloists. It seems to me that yet another underlying tension in the concerto is in fact that Nielsen cannot or will not decide whether the finale is ‘relaxant’ or ‘summative’, the first category, according to Talbot, being an *envoi* and the second a *dénouement*.<sup>24</sup> The second movement settles quickly into the relaxant vein but by the end it has acquired many qualities of the summative category. It brings back previous themes (b. 200 is a gloriously transcendent version of b. 101 from the first movement) and is certainly not lacking in drama, but the final E major is so short and lacking in weight and the end so anticlimactic that, judged as a summation in the usual sense, it is surely a failure. Nielsen was quite capable of composing a transcendent blaze of glory, but, even more than in the Fourth Symphony and somewhat less than the Sixth, he seems in the Flute Concerto deliberately to compose music that explicitly casts doubt on its own ending.

In this article I have mostly chosen to interpret dramatic musical contrasts through the filter of a battle between the forces of Nature, with its unpredictable vitality, and Art, which, as Schenker suggests in *Free Composition*, provides the closure not on offer in life: ‘Man lives his whole life in a state of tension. Rarely does he experience fulfilment; art alone bestows on him fulfilment, but only through selection and condensation.’<sup>25</sup> The unexpected disruptions and brevity of the ending of Nielsen’s Flute Concerto give it a raw vitality; closure and synthesis are invigorated by waywardness and disruption.

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<sup>23</sup> Talbot, *op. cit.*, 180.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>25</sup> Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, Oswald Jonas (ed.); Ernst Oster (tr. and ed.), New York 1979, xxiv.

In the original version of the concerto the tendency to break out of structures both tonal and formal is subsumed within a monotonal scheme. The E major version, on the other hand, foregrounds sharpwards expansion and erases the previous overarching D major structure entirely in the process – the key has not, after all, been established convincingly elsewhere. As this process of recomposition suggests, the analysis of structure is really an exploration of the act of *structuring* on the part of the listener/analyst – out of many possible musical threads one chooses to understand a work as coherent in terms of a tonal trajectory, motivic network or series of expressive devices. Unless the possibility of different compositional choices is denied, such coherence can only be ‘seeming’, a fiction that fits with the facts of the composition as written. I am emphatically not suggesting that there is any sort of dramatic ambiguity with regard to the final key in the Flute Concerto – there is no particular play on listener expectations in that sense – rather, the dramatic play is on a much more fundamental level – something that the change of tonal structure points up rather than exposes.

I have described this play primarily in terms of Schenker’s dichotomy of Artist and Nature, not least because, on a deep structural level, the E major version represents a victory for the forces of ‘natural’ proliferation, whilst the D major conclusion effects an ‘artistic’ return. Gunnar Heerup, whose opinion on the short-tailed nature of the work I quoted earlier, invokes a different but related dichotomy – that of the ‘sculptural’ (in the sense of structured or moulded) and imaginative (in the sense of free or rhapsodic).<sup>26</sup> However we understand this fundamental duality, it inevitably creates a crisis in terms of the how to end a work. One of the possible solutions to the problem of how to encapsulate both freedom and closure is to close and yet acknowledge the contingency of that closure. In this sense the short-tailed nature of both versions of the ending of the Flute Concerto helps to expose the artifice of large-scale closure, to acknowledge that the closure is not real or permanent. This ‘seeming’ quality of the ending, both in the foreground and on the largest scale, is, of course, doubly exposed by the fact that there are two fully realized endings.

#### A B S T R A C T

The two alternative endings to Carl Nielsen’s Flute Concerto conclude the work in different keys. This article explores some analytical and theoretical issues raised by the radically different overall tonal structures implied by these different conclusions, taking the opportunity to reflect on our understanding of what tonal closure means for Nielsen.

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<sup>26</sup> Cited in Petersen, *op. cit.*, xxxii