A NEGLECTED TRAILBLAZER: JULIA PERRY'S VIOLIN CONCERTO

by

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Introduction

Julia Perry (1924-79) was an American composer, teacher, and conductor. During her lifetime, many of her works were unacknowledged, despite the fact that she was one of the first African American female composers to have a work performed by the New York Philharmonic.[1] Today, recordings of her most popular works, such as her *Stabat Mater* (1951) for contralto voice and orchestra, as well as her *Short Piece for Orchestra* (1952), are easily accessible. However, most of her compositions were not recorded, and likely never performed. One of those works is Perry's *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* from 1968.

At the turn of the 20th century, most composers were still modeling their violin concertos after concerti written during the Romantic era. Robert Riggs, musicologist and professor emeritus at the University of Mississippi, claims that the violin concertos written before 1930 had to "depend on the conventions of the nineteenth century."[2] These violin concertos from the early 20th century, such as those by Edward Elgar and Jean Sibelius, still display conventionally Romantic qualities such as "emphasis on virtuosic display, sense of heroic soloist versus orchestral masses, and assimilation of

[1] Julia Perry, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra,* New York: Carl Fischer, LLC, 2021. https://www.carlfischer.com/b3470-concerto-for-violin-and-orchestra.html
[2] Robert Riggs, "The Violin Concerto in the Twentieth Century," in *The Violin (Eastman Studies in Music Book 135),* ed. Robert Riggs (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2016), 186.

symphonic principles."[3] However, as the 20th century progressed, composers tended to stray from these principles that were standardized during the Romantic era. Riggs claims that by the 1930s, "numerous composers developed innovative ways to reinvent the genre with their new compositional techniques and aesthetics."[4] Riggs cites Arnold Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto*, Op. 36, as an example of this novel blend of the traditional and avant-garde, but acknowledges the fact that "despite the concerto's traditional compositional elements and expressive content, it has proved notoriously difficult for audiences and performers to accept."[5] Other composers took the opposite direction; many chose to recall the Baroque era as inspiration for the forms of the movements in their violin concerti. In addition to Stravinsky's use of movements entitled "Toccata," "Aria" and "Capriccio," Riggs mentions Britten's as well as Shostakovich's prominent use of the passacaglia in their violin concerti.[6] After several approaches during the first half of the century, it is possible that the question remained for many twentieth-century composers: how could one write new music that was more accessible to the listener? Julia Perry's *Violin Concerto* offered a unique solution in response to this question.

During the first half of the 20th century, the presence of atonality in music increased, a trend that was primarily led by the Second Viennese School with their frequent use of the twelve-tone technique. In the 1960s, Julia Perry's *Violin Concerto* offered a new approach to the avant-garde with its unconventional approach to both form and atonality. Instead of melodic themes, classically traditional harmonic

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 195.
[6] Ibid., 203.

progressions, or even the twelve-tone method, Perry's concerto establishes an anchor for the listener through recurring themes and set classes, moments of consonance and triadic chord structures, and distinct rhythmic motifs. These tools delineate sections within this through-composed concerto, providing the listener with a sense of aural organization.

Other composers at the time would frequently focus on just one of these aspects in their music; for example, Schoenberg primarily focused on implementing the twelve-tone technique throughout his *Violin Concerto,* Op. 36, with very few moments of consonance. On the other hand, Stravinsky's *Violin Concerto in D* is an example of the neoclassical, with its recall of Baroque forms and clear tonality present throughout. Schoenberg and Stravinsky were in Perry's orbit during the time she was writing many of her compositions, along with Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975) and Béla Bartók (1881-1945). These composers could have influenced Perry in her compositional writing style; I hear elements of all four of these composers in her works, especially in her *Violin Concerto*. By implementing several of these popular compositional techniques at this stage of the 20th century, Perry's *Violin Concerto* offered an innovative yet accessible approach to the musical form of the twentieth-century violin concerto.

Chapter One: The Life of Julia Perry

Julia Amanda Perry was born on March 25, 1924 in Lexington, Kentucky. She was born to Dr. Abe Perry, a "distinguished, well-spoken physician and amateur pianist,"[7] and America Lois Heath Perry, a former schoolteacher. Julia Perry was the fourth of five sisters, and in 1934, the family moved to Akron, Ohio.[8] The Perrys were a "refined, educated family, members of the Negro upper middle class."[9] They settled in a good neighborhood near the University of Akron, which had "good schools and a cordial racial atmosphere."[10] Julia and her sisters all began violin lessons, and Julia also began studying voice with Mable Todd, a former pupil of John Finley Williamson at Westminster Choir College, and a "strong presence in the musical life of Akron."[11] Soon after she began her musical studies, Perry was accepted to the Spicer Observation School for talented children, a school run by the University of Akron.[12]

Kermit Moore (1929-2013), an eminent American conductor and cellist, grew up one block away from Perry. Moore recalled Perry as an "outgoing, cheerful, aggressive tomboy who would suddenly ride off on his bicycle, then leave it unceremoniously at the

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[7] Helen Walker-Hill, *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African-American Women Composers and Their Music* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 97.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 98.
[10] Ibid., 97.
[11] Ibid., 98.
[12] Ibid.

playground while she played baseball."[13] In addition to her musical talents, Perry was skilled in both track and baseball. Moore and Perry both sang in the Moore Junior Singers, a select choir formed by Kermit's mother and a group that was respected within the area; they often performed at elegant church teas and were heard on Cleveland's WTAM radio.[14] Moore remembered Perry as a fantastic sight reader and a "fine dramatic soprano who was confident and uninhibited in performance."[15] Perry was also regarded as a talented violinist; she would often perform with Kermit in chamber music concerts for the Akron Liedertafel, a prestigious men's chorus.

In 1940, Julia's sister Lois died in a train accident at the young age of 20. Lois had been a talented pianist, and taught in the preparatory division of the Cleveland Institute of Music; however, her existence has never been acknowledged in any biographical material. This is most likely because Julia rarely discussed the subject, even with close friends. At this time, Perry was in Central High School, and news of her school musical accomplishments had started to appear frequently in the *Akron Beacon Journal*.[16]

Upon graduating from high school in 1942, Perry won a scholarship to the Cleveland Institute of Music. However, her parents felt CIM was too far from home, so Perry attended the University of Akron for a year before winning a scholarship to Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, which was ironically even farther away.[17] There, Perry studied composition with Henry Switten, and took lessons in voice, piano, violin, acting, and conducting. Perry was a prominent musician within the

[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

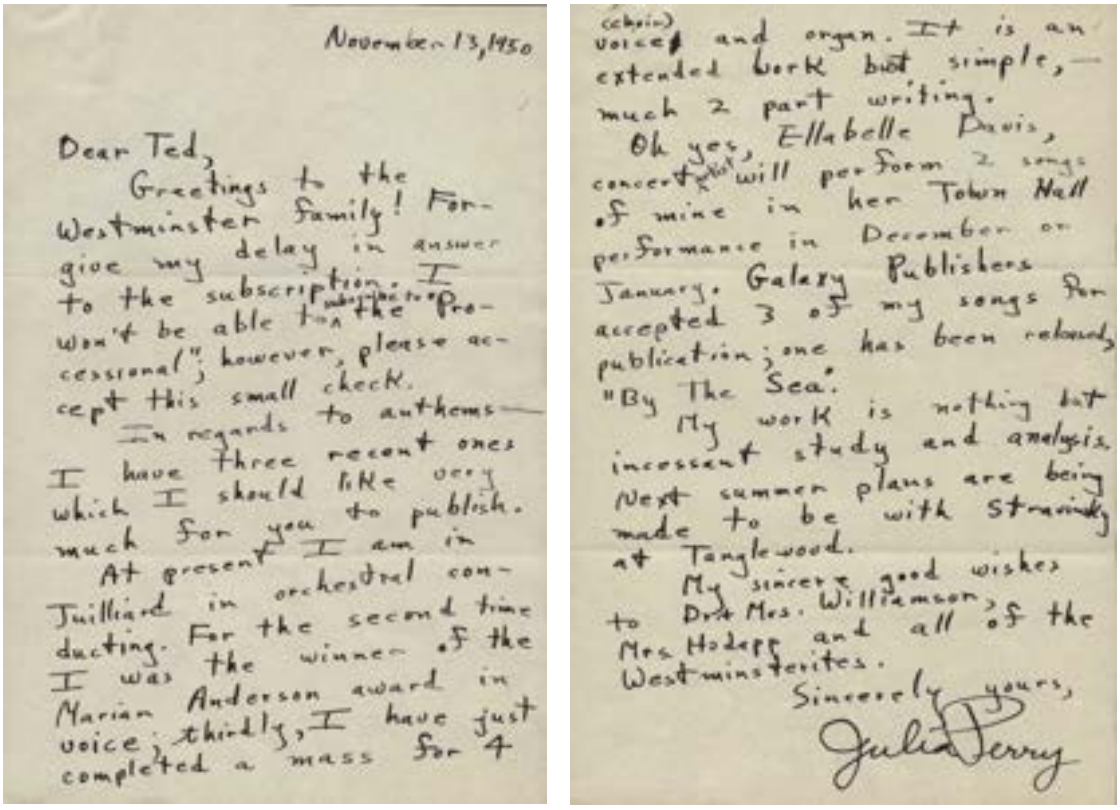
Westminster community; in addition to being the "pitch giver" for the Westminster College Choir and singing as soloist with the choir in their concerts at Carnegie Hall, Perry was concertmaster of the Westminster College Orchestra.[18]

By 1948, Perry had earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Westminster Choir College. The summer after graduating, Perry attended the annual convention of the National Association of Negro Musicians in Columbus, Ohio, and won first prize in both voice and composition. That fall, she began her faculty position at the Hampton Institute in Virginia, where she taught voice, theory, orchestration, and composition. Perry only stayed at Hampton for one year before she attended the Berkshire Music Center Festival in Tanglewood, Massachusetts, to study choral singing and conducting with Hugh Ross. By this time, Perry was beginning to attract more attention, and was even labeled a "Promising Negro Composer" in an issue of the *Christian Science Monitor*. Popular sopranos at the time, such as Nan Merriman and Ellabelle Davis, were including Perry's songs in their concerts.[19]

By 1950, Perry was working as an assistant coach in the Columbia University Opera Workshop, and was taking classes in conducting within the Extension Division at The Juilliard School. In the fall of 1950, she met the young Italian conductor Piero Bellugi. Bellugi recalled being "immediately drawn to the slim tall girl with a bunch of music paper under her arm…She showed [him] the beginning of a *Stabat Mater* she was composing and [he] was amazed at her musicianship."[20] Bellugi liked Perry so much

[18] Ibid., 99.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

that he wrote to his former teacher in Florence, Luigi Dallapiccola, and persuaded him to accept Perry as a student at Tanglewood the next summer.[21]



November 13, 1950

Dear Ted,

Greetings to the Westminster family! Forgive my delay in answering to the subscription. I won't be able to the Processional"; however, please accept this small check.

In regards to authems— I have three recent ones which I should like very much for you to publish. At present I am in Juilliard in orchestral conducting. For the second time I was the winner of the Marian Anderson award in voice; thirdly, I have just completed a mass for 4 (choir) voices and organ. It is an extended work but simple,— much 2 part writing.

Oh yes, Ellabelle Davis, concert[illegible] will perform 2 songs of mine in her Town Hall performance in December or January. Galaxy Publishers accepted 3 of my songs for publication; one has been released, "By The Sea."

My work is nothing but incessant study and analysis. Next summer plans are being made to be with Stravinsky at Tanglewood.

My sincere good wishes to Dr. & Mrs. Williamson, Mrs. Hodapp and all of the Westminsterites.

Sincerely yours,

Julia Perry

Figure 1: Letter from Julia Perry to Ted Cronk concerning the publication of her music, 1950.[22]

Perry's studies with Dallapiccola in Tanglewood initiated what was to be her extended apprenticeship with the teacher. After a successful premiere of her *Stabat Mater* for solo voice and string orchestra at Tanglewood that summer, Perry decided to travel to Florence to study with Dallapiccola full time. With the support of an anonymous donor from Akron, Perry traveled to Europe in November of 1951. Once

[21] Ibid.
[22] [Letter to Ted Cronk, 1950], in the Julia A. Perry Collection (WCC0019). Talbott Music Library Special Collections, Westminster Choir College of Rider University (Lawrenceville, NJ).

Perry arrived in Italy, her *Stabat Mater* was performed in Milan, Naples, and Rome, and was recorded for broadcast on Radio Italiano. Perry wrote the following to her Akron patron: "The Milanese critics are most caustic. However, they were favorable and, more important, the public liked it. They cheered, yelling 'brava, brava, brava.' I was quite nervous."[23]

In the summer of 1952, Perry traveled to Salzburg, Austria, and Fontainebleau, France. In France, Perry studied at the American Conservatory with Nadia Boulanger, and won the prestigious Prix Fontainebleau with her *Viola Sonata* (a work that has since been lost). That same year, Perry also wrote one of her most popular pieces, *Short Piece for Orchestra*. In the fall, Perry resumed her studies with Dallapiccola in Florence. Journalist Patricia Sides, who was then doing research in Florence, described Perry as "tall, dignified, gracious, serious, but also very funny."[24] Sides also recalled that Perry was well-liked and respected, and everyone called her "Maestra."[25]

By August of 1953, Perry had returned to the United States, and was enjoying the fame from the success of her *Stabat Mater*. In the fall of that year, Perry received the first of her two Guggenheim Fellowships, and by 1955 had returned to Florence to study with noted composer/conductor Roberto Lupi. In 1957, she received another Guggenheim Fellowship, during which she made a tour of concerts and lectures throughout Europe. On this tour, Perry secured conducing engagements with the Vienna Philharmonic and the BBC Orchestra in London. Her photo appeared in a *Life* magazine

[23] Walker-Hill, 100.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

article on women abroad, and her works were being frequently performed in Europe and the United States.[26]

By the summer of 1959, Perry had moved back to Akron, and was living in an apartment above her father's medical office. Perry noted that her apartment was "well-equipped except for a piano."[27] Over the course of the next few years, Perry composed her *Homunculus C.F.* for 10 percussionists. About *Homunculus,* Perry wrote, "These clinical surroundings evoked memories of the medieval laboratory where Wagner, youthful apprentice to Faust, made a successful alchemy experiment, fashioning and bringing to life a creature he called homunculus."[28] Perry's interest in chemistry and witchcraft resurfaced in her opera *Symplegades,* which was based on the 17th century Salem witch trials.[29]

By 1961, Perry had developed symptoms of an ailment called acromegaly, a condition which causes enlargement of bones in the hands, feet, and face, in addition to other symptoms. Perry's colleagues and friends noticed a difference in her demeanor during this stage of her life; she was described as being "religious in a rather obsessive way," as well as "peculiar, difficult, and quick to take offense."[30] Perry had also started to teach piano lessons in Akron, as well as frequently guest lecture at universities, most likely from a dwindling of financial resources. When Perry was once asked in a post-concert interview if she wanted to teach, her response was, "If I can get around it, no."[31]

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[26] Ibid., 102.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 101.

At the beginning of 1964, William Steinberg, conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, planned to conduct Perry's *Short Piece for Orchestra* with the New York Philharmonic on the orchestra's European tour that season. However, Steinberg suggested that Perry alter the title and call it "Study" instead. Since Perry wanted her piece to be performed by the New York Philharmonic, something that was especially rare for a work by a black female composer, Perry agreed. In light of the positive turn of events that had begun for Perry that year, the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters awarded Perry a grant to support a recording by Composers Recordings Inc. However, CRI was only interested in Perry's *Homunculus C.F.,* despite the other vocal pieces she had submitted, and it ended up being the only piece by her on the LP.[32]

In 1966, Perry was teaching French and German as a substitute teacher in the Akron public schools when she was engaged to teach for a year at Florida A&M University that fall. In addition to music, Perry had always been intrigued by words, writing the lyrics to several of her songs as well as her opera libretti. Between 1965-70, Perry continued her prolific production of compositions; in addition to finishing her opera *Symplegades,* Perry wrote "Negro spirituals for orchestra without soloists" and Symphonies No. 5 and No. 6. As of today, it is unclear whether these exist. Also during this time, Perry looked to popular writers for inspiration; the story of Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant* served as the basis for her libretto of her opera of the same name. Many of Perry's works from this period, such as *The Selfish Giant,* as well as a "contemporary American play"[33] she wrote in 1969 entitled *Fisty-Me*, demonstrate that she "felt

[32] Ibid., 103.
[33] Ibid., 108.

strongly" about "ideals, social issues, beauty, love, loneliness, suffering, and redemption, and wanted to intensely communicate these feelings in some way."[34] 'Fisty' is an adjective from British English meaning "relating to boxing or the use of fists."[35]

As Perry's *Violin Concerto* was composed from 1963-68, it is very possible that Perry was inspired by those same themes when she was composing that piece.[36]

In the spring of 1970, Perry suffered the first of her strokes that would "paralyze her right side, rob her of speech, and confine her to a wheelchair until the end of her life nine years later."[37] Although Perry eventually taught herself to write with her left hand, most of her letters and scores from that time are more difficult to read, especially when compared with her penmanship from earlier in her life. After slight improvement in 1972, Perry suffered additional strokes, most likely in early 1973 and late 1974. In 1977, Perry again made some improvement, as she discussed that she would be able to come home, get a leg brace, exercise, and start to walk and talk again.[38]

Despite her health complications, Perry continued to write and promote her music. In March 1971, Perry sent the score of *Soundout* for marching band to Southern Music, "apologizing for her illegible manuscript and explaining the addition of letter names to notes."[39] In addition to announcing her new compositions, Perry was hopeful that she would return to conducting; in 1975 she told musicologist Dominique-René de Lerma (then teaching at Indiana University) that she once prided herself on her

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[34] Ibid., 104.
[35] *Collins English Dictionary*. Copyright © HarperCollins Publishers.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 105.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

"Toscanini precision" and "Stokowskian grace," and that she was starting to exercise her conducting arm.[40]

Perry spent her last days tirelessly promoting her compositions, even though she was "mentally confused and spoke with difficulty."[41] In May 1976, Perry asked conductor Paul Freeman and Professor de Lerma if the second movement of her Symphony No. 8 "Simple" could be performed on the Columbia Artists Black Composer Series. In his reply, de Lerma acknowledged the injustice of the neglect Perry suffered, especially in her last years, by stating that "I am sensitive to the fact that you are among those established figures who have not been included thus far in the AAMOA's projects, and I am hoping that the opportunity to involve you will develop before too much longer."[42] Unfortunately, the opportunity never did arise.

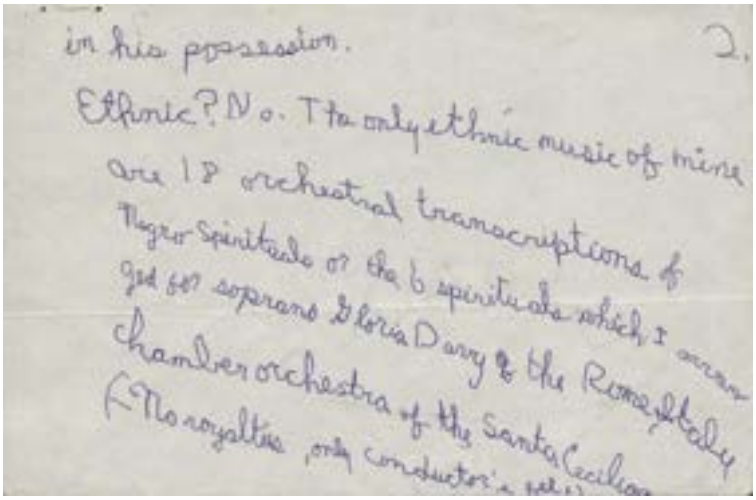
in his possession. 2.
Ethnic? No. The only ethnic music of mine
are 18 orchestral transcriptions of
Negro Spirituals or the 6 spirituals which I arrange
for soprano Gloria Darry & the Rome Italy
Chamber orchestra of the Santa Cecilia
No royalties, only conductor's

Figure 2: A letter from Perry to James McKeever from 1974.[43]

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 105.
[43] [Letter to James McKeever, 1974], in the Julia A. Perry Collection (WCC0019). Talbott Music Library Special Collections, Westminster Choir College of Rider University (Lawrenceville, NJ).

In January-March of 1979, Perry was still submitting pieces to Southern Music Company, such as her *Quinary Quixotic Songs* for baritone and five instruments, but sadly her pieces were turned down. On 24 April 1979, Perry died in Akron General Medical Center of a cardiac arrest. She was 55 years old. In the years following her death, "no systemic attempt was made to catalog or preserve her music," and by the 1990s, many of her works were lost.[44] While many have attempted to complete a catalog of Julia Perry's works that do exist, it is difficult to locate a source that is coherent, reliable, and comprehensive. Kendra Leonard's *Julia Perry Working Group,* which is a scholarly online group with links to PDFs of several of Perry's pieces, seems to be the best resource for a catalog of Perry's works at this point, and is an admirable ongoing effort to find and archive as many of Perry's works as possible.[45]

[44] Ibid., 106.
[45] Kendra Leonard, *Julia Perry Working Group:* https://hcommons.org/groups/julia-perry-working-group/documents/

Chapter Two: Julia Perry's Works in Social Context

Although race, class, and gender were major shaping factors in her life, Julia Perry didn't openly address these issues until the mid-1960s, when she made her views known through her opera libretti, plays, poetry, and music. The 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were decades of immense turmoil in the social and political atmosphere of the United States. Despite spending more than three years abroad, Perry was aware of the events in the United States that took place while she was away. Even so, it must have been quite the shock for her to return to a country with new racial attitudes and growing civil rights activism.[46]

Unlike most other black female composers, Perry was able to successfully pursue her career in a "largely white musical world."[47] In an article from a 1949 issue of the *Christian Science Monitor* entitled "Promising Negro Composer Lauds Peace Role of Music," Perry claimed to have "enjoyed remarkable freedom from prejudice and misunderstanding" and believed that "music, coupled with her own fearless state of thought" was responsible.[48] While this statement might be true, it is most likely that

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 107.

Perry's confidence was influenced by the protection that she was afforded as a member of the Negro upper middle class.[49]

It is also likely that Perry was influenced by the thinking of her white professors, especially during her time at both Westminster Choir College and the Hampton Institute. The choir piece that she wrote for the Hampton Institute choir included "African-American musical idioms not found in her later works."[50] However, Perry never publicly acknowledged the Harlem Renaissance revival of African American culture and creative arts, nor did she set the poetry of popular black writers, such as Langston Hughes or Countee Cullen, to music.[51]

By the 1950s, Perry was frequently employing contemporary European compositional techniques in her music. Due to "the façade presented by the musical establishment at that time, race and gender were irrelevant to musical excellence."[52] Other popular female composers at the time, such as Louise Talma and Ruth Crawford Seeger, "would have been insulted by the label 'woman composer' (especially since they knew that their sex was an obstacle to being taken seriously)."[53] Like other African American musicians before and during her time who achieved such prestige, Perry was accepted by other musicians as a composer "who happened to be black."[54] Regardless of the title of the article from the *Christian Science Monitor,* Perry "would not have asserted her identity as a woman composer or a Negro composer."[55]

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[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

Perry was in the United States from 1953-55, when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned segregation in public schools, and the Montgomery bus boycott was starting. These events might have inspired Perry to express her thoughts on race. In a diary she sent to her good friend Patricia Sides, Perry "had written in capital letters, one beneath the other: THE NAME, THE FACE, THE RACE, next to her initials, JP."[56] Sides said, "I was surprised by the sense of implied militancy. In Italy, Julia was well aware of what was going on in the U.S. with the advent of the Civil Rights movement and all it was likely to mean, but she-to my knowledge-had never expressed herself so strongly before."[57]

Perry's desire to freely express her feelings on race in the United States was reflected in her compositions from this period. In her works from 1966-67, she was making clear references to her own racial identity. For example, in her *Symphony No. 5 "Integration Symphony"* and *Symphony No. 10 "Soul Symphony,"* she was including Negro folk songs. Perhaps the most overt expression is Perry's play from 1969 entitled *Fisty-Me*. In this work, Perry touches on the "greatness of black heroes," such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Harriet Tubman, as well as "racial equality, educational relevance, and a special peeve of hers: the ignorance and prejudice of calling black and American Indian culture 'ethnic.'"[58] The whole play embodies "an angry tone of protest, a sense of being overwhelmed by male dominance," and openly acknowledges both gender and racial discrimination.[59]

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[56] Ibid., 108.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 109.

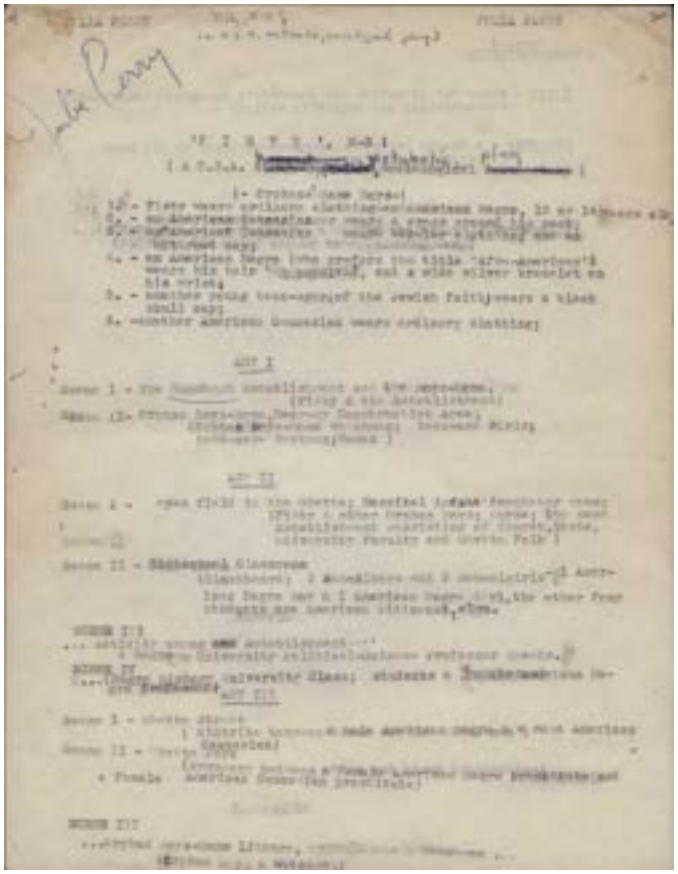

Figure 3: The title page of the script for Fisty-Me.[60]

The clearest indications of Perry's views may have been her own life decisions and actions. Rather than marriage and domesticity, Perry committed to the pursuit of a career and creative expression. Despite her racial ambivalence and the "Eurocentric" titles of her best-known pieces from the 1950s, Perry taught at African-American schools (most likely due to the bias at other institutions) and exposed her racial identity in the compositions written in the later part of her life.[61] Despite the success of the

[60] ['FISTY', M-E], in the Julia A. Perry Collection (WCC0019). Talbott Music Library Special Collections, Westminster Choir College of Rider University (Lawrenceville, NJ).
[61] Walker-Hill, 109.

works written in the first half of her life, Perry became "trapped in a body that could not move or communicate, and soon became irrelevant and invisible to the world."[62]

Julia Perry's Violin Concerto in Context

Julia Perry composed her violin concerto between 1963-68. These five years were a tumultuous time in the United States, as protests against remaining segregation laws continued, as well as an unrelenting demand for equality among women and people of color. 1963 was a very eventful year in the U.S. alone; Betty Friedan's controversially feminist *The Feminine Mystique* was published in February, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in August, the infamous 16th Street Baptist Church bombing took place in Birmingham, Alabama in September, and President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in November.

By 1968, the Vietnam War was in full swing, with the highest level of U.S. troop commitment to date.[63] In April, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, initiating an eruption of violent riots across the United States. President Lyndon B. Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which is also known as the Fair Housing Act. This legislation is essentially an expansion of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and "prohibits discrimination concerning the sale, rental, or financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, and sex."[64]

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[62] Ibid.
[63] T. Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "United States presidential election of 1968," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 29, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/event/United-States-presidential-election-of-1968.
[64] Jenny Cobb, "Civil Rights Act of 1968," *Artifact Spotlight,* Bullock Texas State History Museum, October 2014. https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/artifacts/civil-rights-act-1968-spotlight-102414#:~:text=An%20expansion%20of%20the%20landmark,%2C%20national%20origin%2C%20and%20sex.

It is possible that the events from this period awakened Perry's desire to offer her own musical protest by composing a piece that symbolized the defiance of the traditional repertoire from the European canon. It is also likely that Perry chose to compose in one of the most traditional of genres, the violin concerto, which had been around for several centuries. Because this type of composition had been handled in the same manner for hundreds of years, Perry would have had an opportunity to offer a new approach to the genre of the violin concerto.

Chapter Three: Julia Perry's *Violin Concerto*

Most violin concerti composed in the first half of the 20th century continued to follow the typical 3-movement format from the Classical and Romantic eras. Popular twentieth-century violin concerti with 3-movement structures include those by Sibelius (1904), Elgar (1910), Prokofiev (1917 and 1935), Schoenberg (1936), Britten (1939), Barber (1939), Walton (1939), and Korngold (1945). While the tempi of the three movements of these concerti varied (the standard concerto format is fast-slow-fast, and some of these concerti are slow-fast-slow, such as Prokofiev No. 1), each concerto is still very clearly organized into three movements. This clear structural organization, as well as the tonality present in these concerti (except for the Schoenberg), offers the listener concrete forms of aural organization.

Perry's *Violin Concerto* avoids this traditional 3-movement structure, and also evades tonality. Instead, Perry chose to compose a through-composed work in one movement. Looking at the organization of her music through set classes shows an organization of pitches that leads the listener. Rather than the triadic structures, diatonic melodies, scales, chords, and cadences used in tonal music, intervals are paramount in set theory. Set theory is an excellent way to comprehend Perry's composition.

Set Theory

The primary composers often associated with set theory are the composers of the Second Viennese School; Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951), Anton Webern (1883–1945), and Alban Berg (1885–1935). When these composers began to write atonal music in 1908, "there was no widely-accepted systematic analytical approach that could show relationships between different pieces until Allen Forte published his seminal *The Structure of Atonal Music* in 1973, in which Forte applied set theory mathematics to music."[65]

In set theory, pitches are represented by integers, as shown in Figure 4. Within this integer notation of pitch, we assume enharmonic equivalence (e.g., C# and Db are both '1') as well as octave equivalence (e.g., a C played in different octaves will always be '0').[66] We also use the modulo 12 system in set theory: as Dr. Robert Hutchinson explains, this system means

> we restart our numbering after 11 (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 0, 1, 2, 3, etc.). We are used to modulo 12 thinking since we all deal with clocks. If a meeting ran from 11am to 2pm, it lasted 3 hours. Therefore, an interval from pitch integer 11 to pitch integer 2 spans 3 semitones.[67]

Note name:	C	C♯/D♭	D	D♯/E♭	E	F	F♯/G♭	G	G♯/A♭	A	A♯/B♭	B
Integer:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Figure 4: The integer representation of pitches.[68]

In set theory, pitches can be combined to produce a set class. One has to choose a set of pitches in the music (usually 3, 4, or 5 pitches), find the pitch integers, and then

[65] Robert Hutchinson, "33.1 Set Theory," *Music for the 21st-Century Classroom,* November 2008. https://musictheory.pugetsound.edu/mt21c/SetTheorySection.html
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

find the normal and prime forms of these sets.[69] Once the prime form of a chosen set of pitches has been found, one can find the set's Forte number.[70] As Dr. Hutchinson explains,

> when Allen Forte created a catalog of every possible 3-, 4-, 5-, 6-, 7-, 8-, and 9-note set in Appendix 1 of *The Structure of Atonal Music*, he labeled each prime form with two numbers separated by a hyphen. His labels (3–1, 3–2, etc.) are now known as 'Forte numbers.'[71]

Forte's system allows for a more methodical organization of these different sets that did not exist before he published this list in 1973, allowing for an easier way to analyze and organize these sets within atonal music.

Examining Perry's work through the lens of set classes, I observe that these different set classes, as well as rhythmic motifs, are significant in Julia Perry's *Violin Concerto*. These set classes and rhythmic themes offer a sense of organization to the listener within the atonal background of the piece. As Arnold Schoenberg once said, "I find above all that the expression, "atonal music," is most unfortunate-it is on a par with calling flying "the art of not falling," or swimming "the art of not drowning."[72] On the other hand, Perry's former teacher, Luigi Dallapiccola, developed serialist techniques to allow for a more lyrical as well as consonant style in his compositions.[73] This type of consonant lyricism, while not necessarily involving serialism, can be heard in Perry's

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[69] See the following links for how to find normal and prime forms:
Normal form: https://musictheory.pugetsound.edu/mt21c/NormalForm.html
Prime form: https://musictheory.pugetsound.edu/mt21c/PrimeForm.html
[70] Robert Hutchinson, "33.6 Lists of Set Classes," *Music for the 21st-Century Classroom,* November 2008. https://musictheory.pugetsound.edu/mt21c/ListsOfSetClasses.html
[71] Robert Hutchinson, "33.5 Forte numbers," *Music for the 21st-Century Classroom,* November 2008. https://musictheory.pugetsound.edu/mt21c/ForteNumbers.html
[72] Arnold Schoenberg, "Hauer's Theories," *Style and Idea* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 210.
[73] Edward Wilkinson, "An Interpretation of Serialism in the Work of Luigi Dallapiccola," PhD diss., Royal Holloway, 1982.

Violin Concerto as well. By combining elements of atonality with moments of harmonic lyricism, is almost as if Perry's concerto was attempting to reconcile the consonant and the dissonant.

Set Class Organization within Perry's Violin Concerto

Perry begins her *Violin Concerto* with a 30-measure violin cadenza. This cadenza is significant in that the set classes found within it will become significant in the concerto, and which will ultimately progress the piece forward. It is possible that Perry was inspired by the way Sibelius used the violin cadenza as the entire development section in the first movement of his violin concerto. From the beginning, Perry is asserting the power of the solo violin.

The cadenza at the beginning of Perry's *Violin Concerto* begins with a motif that is heard throughout the concerto, as shown in Figure 5. This theme, made up of pitches E (4), C (0), A# (10), and B (11), has the prime form [0126] and Forte number 4-5. The next two measures of the cadenza are followed by different pitches of the same intervals. The concerto opens with three vulnerable yet defiant statements of set class 4-5, establishing its importance from the beginning of the piece. This use of 4-5 also emphasizes the classically traditional 4-bar phrase structure. Following the three statements of set class 4-5 is a fourth measure in 7/4, which consists of an artificial harmonic on a dotted whole note, followed by a quarter rest. This fourth measure gives the space for a brief phrase ending, before a second 4-bar phrase statement of 4-5s beginning in measure 5.

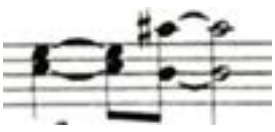


Figure 5: The opening 4-5 motif of the cadenza, m. 1.

This motif returns in m. 15 of the cadenza with a more complicated rhythm, as shown in Figure 6. This repetition of set class 4-5 right before the transition to a new section in m. 18 seems to delineate a loose ABA form within this first section of the cadenza. This gesture is significant because it maintains a form of organization within the piece, and allows the listener to recognize the fact that they have heard this distinct motif in the piece shortly before.

Figure 6: 4-5 motif in m. 15-16.

The next section of the cadenza, marked Moderate at quarter note = 84, has a distinct rhythmic pattern presented from the start, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Rhythmic motif of Moderate section, m. 18.

In this section of the cadenza, the set classes are organized in a classically traditional phrase-like structure. For example, in this first statement in measure 18, the set classes are arranged in an AABA-like form, as shown in Figure 8; 3-4, 3-4, 3-1, 3-4.

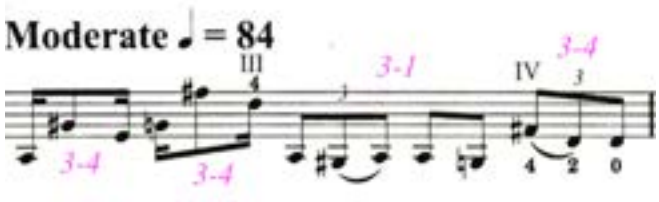


Figure 8: First measure of Moderate, m. 18.

In measures 27-29, we see set class 4-5, again signaling the end of a section. In measure 30, Perry concludes the violinist's cadenza with a triple-stop on the notes D and C, as shown in Figure 9. When tied to the F-natural the beat before, these notes make up set class 3-7, a diatonic set class. The chord at the end of this phrase mirrors a classical type of phrase ending, evoking a more traditional cadence.

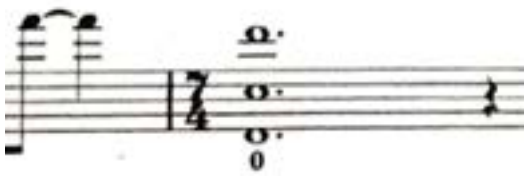


Figure 9: Conclusion of violin cadenza, m. 29-30.

The orchestra enters at measure 31 as the solo violinist switches to playing quintuplets, initiating a new section of the piece. Set class 5-26 is now the principal set class, as shown in Figure 10. The quintuplets aid the listener's aural perception of this set class. This section from m. 31-38 is a perfect example of the use of a rhythmic motif coupled with a consistent set class to anchor the listener's aural organization.

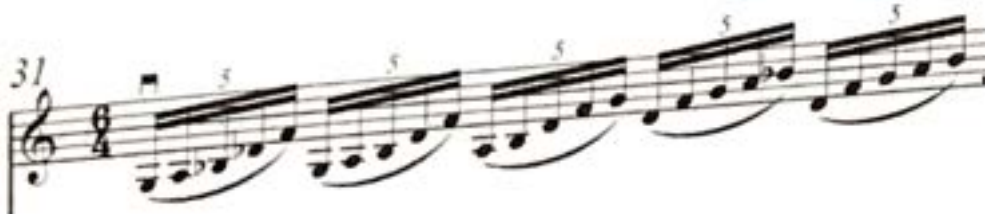


Figure 10: Quintuplets in solo violin in m. 31.

This type of repetitive pattern occurs again in the solo violin in measure 80, which initiates a new section of the concerto after a long orchestral tutti between measures 54-79. In measure 80, the solo violin begins a semi-regular rhythmic pattern, alternating between nonuplets and quarter note triplets, as shown in Figure 11. Besides the consistency of repeating these rhythms, the notes are ultimately seen and heard in groups of three. Each of these 3-note groupings is a member of set class 3-11, a set class which forms a consonant triad.[74] When compared to the previous repetition of the more dissonant and quasi-whole tone set class 5-26, this consonance from 3-11 offers the listener a sharp contrast.

Figure 11: Nonuplets alternated with quarter note triplets in m. 80.

At the beginning of this section at measure 80, the solo violin is the instrument with the most rhythmic and harmonic activity; the orchestra is sustaining pitches in trichords. Once the violin rests in measure 88, the trumpet takes over the 3-note repetitions until measure 96, as shown in Figure 12. However, these three-note groupings in the trumpet are not members of set class 3-11. Instead, they belong to more

[74] Joseph Nathan Straus, "List of Set Classes" in *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2000), 378.

chromatic set classes, such as 3-6, a whole-tone segment, and 3-5, a favorite of Schoenberg's commonly referred to by music theorists as the 'Viennese trichord.'[75] This increased chromaticism can be seen as a preparation for the next section of the concerto, which begins in measure 96.

Figure 12: 3-note groupings in trumpet, m. 91.

This brief segment, which extends from measures 96-100, resembles that of a transitory intermezzo with its wandering character, absence of repetition, and the artificial harmonics in the solo violin. The 'a tempo' direction at measure 101 delineates a new section of the piece. This portion assumes a very mechanical and quasi-electronic persona, with the unfaltering pizzicato quarter notes in the solo violin and the staccato triplet interjections from the orchestra.

As before, the regular rhythm of this section is supported by the presence of a consistent set class; in this case, set class 4-16 is the harmonic pillar within this passage. Between measures 101-116, the solo violin maintains steady pizzicato quarter notes in 5/4 time, as shown in Figure 13. Here, each five-note grouping forms set class 4-16. Similar to the previous sections of this concerto, the time signature in this passage aids the listener's aural understanding of the featured set class. This underlying organization

[75] Ibid.

is especially helpful in this section; the violinist has to use nearly the entire range of the violin in order to execute this pizzicato. To most listeners, the use of this extensive range would likely make the passage sound random and difficult to follow melodically, but the presence of a consistent set class coupled with a steady rhythmic repetition conveys the mechanical, forward-moving character of the music.

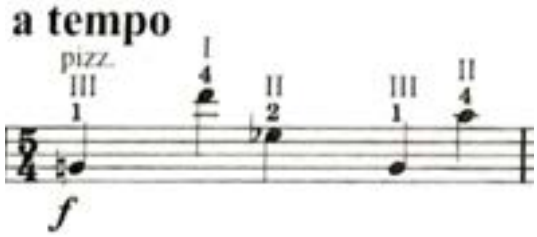


Figure 13: Pizzicato in solo violin, m. 101.

Following another orchestral tutti between measures 117-130 is a slower section, which illuminates intervals rather than set classes. Perry uses the semitone and its inversion, the major 7th, as the significant intervals in this passage. In measure 130, the solo violin moves from a G# to a G-natural which sets the tone for the rest of the passage by establishing the downward half step motion, as shown in Figure 14. The orchestra provides an accompaniment, which is unsettling harmonically with its frequent chromaticism and repetition of tritones. Similar to the section at measure 96, this roaming segment between measures 130-144 resembles transition material.

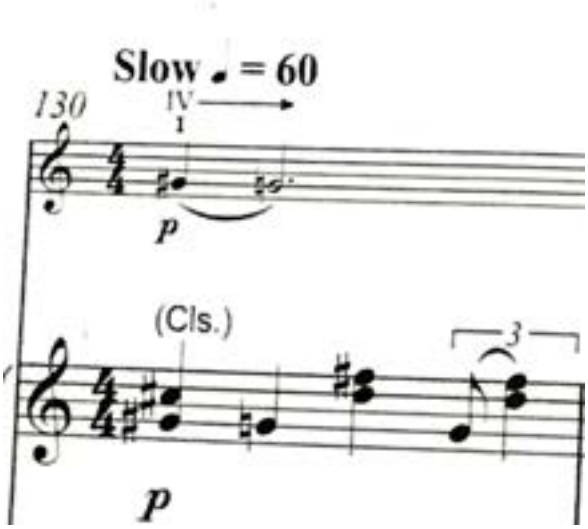


Figure 14: Semitone motion in solo violin with chromatic orchestral accompaniment, m. 130.

After this musical resemblance of primordial soup, measure 145 recalls a familiar motive: the set class 4-5 motif from the very beginning of the concerto. However, this theme is only briefly recalled before the solo violin is interrupted with a long orchestral tutti. This tutti passage gives way to another new section, where Perry once again plays with intervals.

From measure 174-182, Perry repeats the ascending interval of a major 7th three times, as shown in Figure 15, followed by three statements of the same descending interval. During this sequence, the orchestral accompaniment is quite simple, in that it only involves the repetition of an A.

Figure 15: Ascending major 7th, m. 177-78.

Between measures 183-198, Perry moves to a sequence of alternating ascending perfect 4ths and descending perfect 5ths. This sequence could be in reference to the circle of fifths progression, which is a tonal idiom in traditionally classical music. The occasional major 7th thrown into this sequence signals the start of a new 'phrase' within the sequence. These sequences in the solo violin provide a sense of symmetry and progression, offering a grounding opportunity for the listener.

Figure 16: Perfect 4ths sequence, m. 184-86.

Perry continues to manipulate interval progressions until measure 226, where another tempo change signals the start of a new section of the concerto. This passage recalls the consonant set class 3-11. Similar to the previous section that emphasized set class 3-11, this segment at measure 226 contains several notes in groups of three, this time in sextuplets, which again enables the listener to easily hear the emphasis of the trichord set class. Also, very similar to the previous section that featured set class 3-11, the sustained chords in the orchestra provide minimal accompaniment under the very active solo violin. These chords in the orchestra are also members of set class 3-11, reinforcing the importance of that particular trichord to the listener.

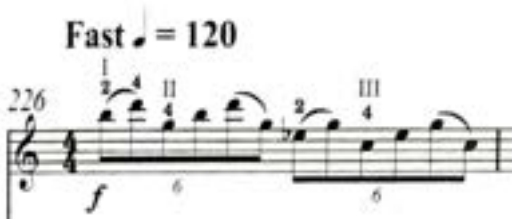


Figure 17: New section at m. 226.

Measures 262-276 offer a quasi-recapitulation, in that the introductory 4-5 theme returns in its entirety, along with the same material that follows it from the beginning of the concerto.

Figure 18: 'Recap' of the first theme, m. 262-64.

Following this brief recap, the solo violin plays a tremolo accompaniment to a more active orchestral texture, which begins in measure 277. In the solo violin at measure 291, Perry recalls the semitone and major 7th material from the passage at measure 130. This material, which extends from measure 291-312, is placed a semitone higher than the passage at measure 130. Perry's presentation of the same material echoed at different pitches resembles the recapitulations found in most sonata forms within traditionally classical, tonal music. However, instead of placing the second theme from the exposition in the tonic key in the recapitulation, Perry recalls the same material, but just modulates it up a semitone. Here, Perry's variation on the classical recapitulation aids the listener, in that they will most likely recognize the familiar

material in the solo violin from earlier in the concerto. Instead of the presence of set classes, this opportunity for intervallic recognition helps establish the listener's harmonic understanding of the work.

Figure 19: Recapitulation of semitone/major 7th material, m. 291.

The tempo change to quarter = 120 initiates a new section of the concerto at measure 313. Here, the solo violin interjects sextuplets over the active orchestral texture, emphasizing the return of the trichord. Between measures 316-328, set class 3-11 is established as the prominent set class yet again, as shown in Figure 20. However, in measure 330, set class 3-12 is featured as the new important set class, as shown in Figure 21. This movement from the consonant triad of 3-11 to the augmented triad of 3-12 could be another variation on the idea of the harmonic chord progression. Instead of functional harmony, the movement from consonance to dissonance within the set classes here is what heightens the harmonic tension, and ultimately drives the momentum in this passage.

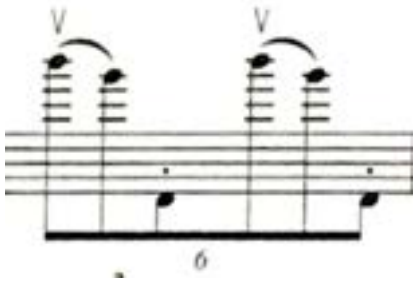


Figure 20: Set class 3-11, m. 316.

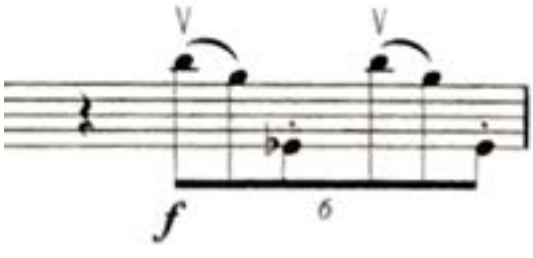


Figure 21: Set class 3-12, m. 330.

The second and final long violin cadenza of the concerto begins in measure 341, where set class 3-11 returns as the most prominent set class. The constant 16th notes in this section of the cadenza (with the occasional triplet thrown in) establish a manic, restless, even frustrated, energy. At first, this character is additionally emphasized by the ongoing tension between the consonance of 3-11 and the dissonance of 3-12. However, while the rhythm continues to be very active throughout this section, the harmonic content actually becomes quite still.

Aside from a couple of interjections of 3-12, along with quick appearances from set classes 3-9 and 4-22, 3-11 prevails as the most prevalent set class, assuming a role similar to pedal point in tonal music, until the downbeat of measure 354. The juxtaposition of this repeated consonance within a very manic rhythm creates a frustrating energy. While the consistency of the rhythm here is aurally helpful, there is a lack of harmonic direction.

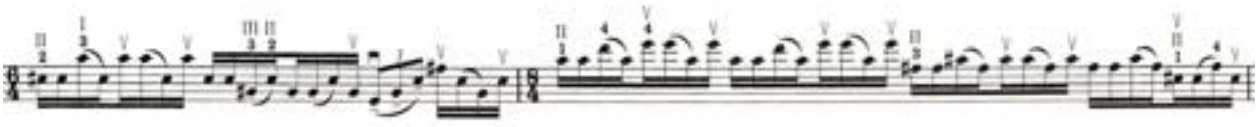


Figure 22: Example of set class 3-11 as a 'pedal point' in the cadenza, m. 350-51.

Measure 354 initiates a new section within the cadenza, and a slower tempo, as well as slower rhythmic motions, remove the manic edge of the previous section. The harmonic material of this section recalls material from the first cadenza of the concerto. In this section from measure 354-382, Perry takes smaller rhythmic and harmonic motives that were established from the beginning of the piece, and writes variations on

them. One of the examples of this is between measures 363-364, as shown in Figure 23. A lot of this material is quoted exactly from the beginning, which acts like another moment for a brief recapitulation, before concluding the piece with brand new material.

Figure 23: Variations on the triplet and 16th-8th-16th note motives, m. 363-64.

Perry concludes her *Violin Concerto* with another manically fast passage in 6/4 time. The orchestra rejoined the solo violin in measure 380, and in measure 382, the violas and lower woodwinds initiate the prominent final motive of the piece, as shown in Figure 24.

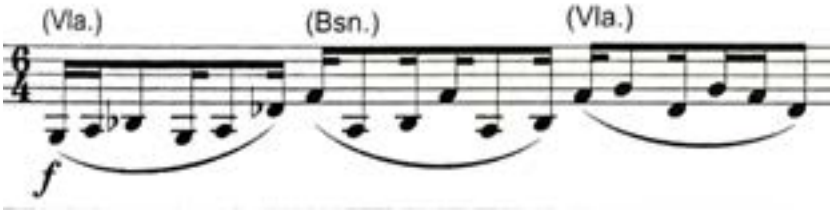


Figure 24: Concluding motive introduced by violas and bassoon, m. 382.

The octatonic set class 3-2 is the prominent set class in this finale of the concerto. The final chord of the concerto, as shown in Figure 25, is an abrupt fortissimo exclamation in set class 4-22, a set class which is a neighbor of the whole tone tetrachord family. These final dissonant statements reassert the no-nonsense atonality of Perry's *Violin Concerto*.

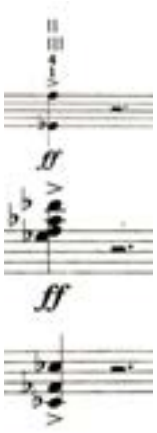


Figure 25: Final chord of the piece, m. 392.

Form

The set classes are well-organized within Perry's *Violin Concerto,* but the actual form of the concerto is irregular. For one thing, it is in one continuous movement, while most traditional violin concertos (even from the 20th century) are in three movements. However, Perry uses tempo markings to delineate sections. The tempi of the concerto are arranged in the following order:

1) Slow, quarter = 60, m.1.
2) Moderate, quarter = 84, m. 18.
3) Fast, quarter = 120, m. 54.
4) Moderate, quarter = 84, m. 96.
5) Slow, quarter = 60, m. 130.
6) Moderate, quarter = 84, m. 151.
7) Fast, quarter = 120, m. 155.
8) Moderate, quarter = 84, 174.
9) Fast, quarter = 120, m. 226.
10) Slow, quarter = 60, m. 265.
11) Fast, quarter = 120, m. 313.
12) Moderate, quarter = 84, m. 354.
13) Fast, quarter = 120, m. 382.

From this list of tempi, it is clear that Perry only alternates between three tempi: Slow (quarter = 60), Moderate (quarter = 84), and Fast (quarter = 120). While there is

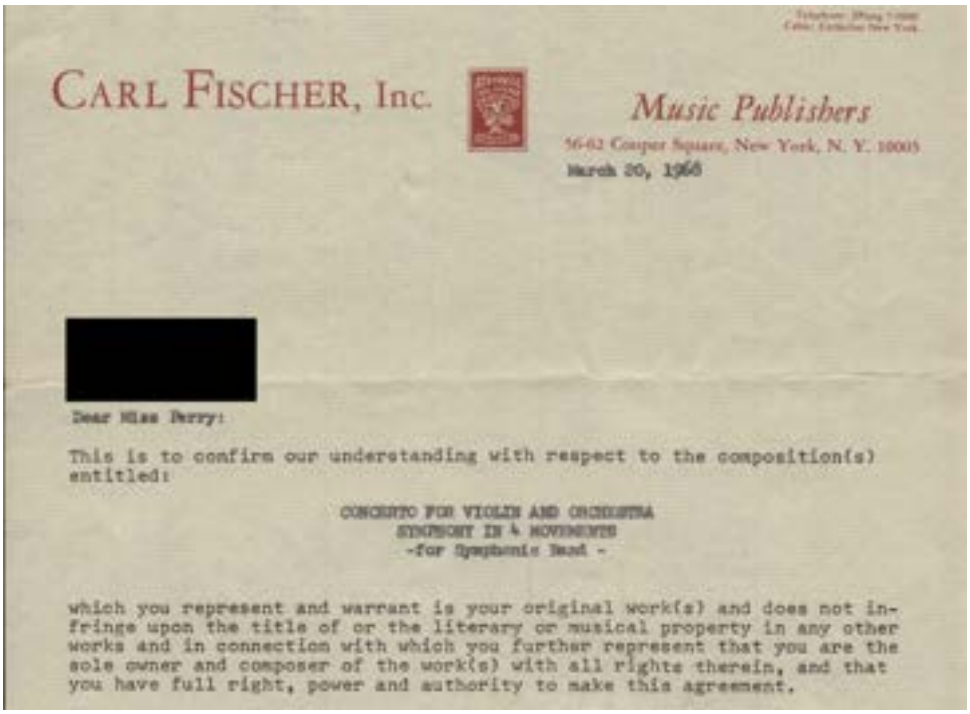
no clearly distinct pattern in her arrangement of these tempi, the start of each new section is clear, because of the tempo change. These three tempi are different enough to distinguish from each other, but not so different that it causes a jarring effect to the listener. Similar to the organization of the set classes, the division of sections within these three different tempi help to provide a loose structure of the piece. Even though the form of Perry's *Violin Concerto* is unconventional, this intentional alternation of tempi makes the concerto more accessible, both to the listener as well as to the performers.

Instrumentation and Orchestration

Julia Perry made some unique decisions in the instrumentation of her *Violin Concerto*. For one thing, the full name of this piece is "Concerto for Violin and Orchestra," as shown in Figure 26. This title of the work implies Perry's desire for a substantial and involved orchestral accompaniment, in addition to the virtuosity of the solo violin. The complete instrumentation for this violin concerto is as follows[76]:

Solo Violin, Flute 1, Flute 2, Piccolo, Oboe 2, Clarinet 1 in Bb, Clarinet 2 in Bb, Bassoon 1, Bassoon 2, Tenor Saxophone in Bb, Horn 1 in F, Horn 2 in F, Trumpet 1 in C, Trumpet 2 in C, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Timpani, Percussion, Piano, Harp, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass.

[76] Julia Perry, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra,* New York: Carl Fischer, LLC, 2021. https://www.carlfischer.com/c737-concerto-for-violin-and-orchestra.html



CARL FISCHER, Inc.

Music Publishers

56-62 Cooper Square, New York, N. Y. 10003

March 20, 1968

[redacted]

Dear Miss Perry:

This is to confirm our understanding with respect to the composition(s) entitled:

CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA
SYMPHONY IN 4 MOVEMENTS
-for Symphonic Band -

which you represent and warrant is your original work(s) and does not infringe upon the title of or the literary or musical property in any other works and in connection with which you further represent that you are the sole owner and composer of the work(s) with all rights therein, and that you have full right, power and authority to make this agreement.

Figure 26: 1968 Letter from Carl Fischer, Inc. that states the full name of Perry's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra.[77]

Perry's decision to include a tenor saxophone part in this work is particularly noteworthy, in that between 1963-68, it was fairly uncommon to see the inclusion of tenor saxophone in orchestral works. One of the very first composers to include the saxophone in an orchestral work was Georges Kastner, who included the instrument in his opera from 1844 entitled *The Last King of Juda*. It was especially uncommon to see any kind of saxophone present in the instrumentation of a violin concerto. Alban Berg (1885-1935) did include an alto saxophone in the orchestral accompaniment for his *Violin Concerto* (1935). However, in Berg's concerto, the alto saxophone doubles as a third clarinet, so the distinct timbre of the saxophone is not as featured as it is in Perry's

[77] [Carl Fischer Inc. Publishing Agreement Letter for "Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Symphony in 4 Movements-for Symphonic Band"], in the Julia A. Perry Collection (WCC0019). Talbott Music Library Sp ecial Collections, Westminster Choir College of Rider University (Lawrenceville, NJ).

concerto. While the saxophone was gaining in popularity in symphonic works during the 1920s-1940s,[78] it was still rare to see its presence in the symphony orchestra.

Perry was unafraid to make bold choices through the instrumentation of many of her pieces; for example, her *Homunculus C.F.* (1960) is scored for harp, celesta/piano, and eight additional percussionists. About *Homunculus,* Perry wrote, "Having selected percussion instruments for my formulae, then maneuvering and distilling them by means of the 'Chord of the Fifteenth' (C.F.), this musical test tube baby was brought to life."[79] In 1960, Perry was clearly in her experimental phase of composition, a phase that extended to the instrumentation and orchestration choices of her *Violin Concerto*.

The saxophone, along with the rest of the woodwind section, has a very active role in Perry's *Violin Concerto*. Most of the significant material that supports the solo violin is present in the woodwinds, an example of which is shown in Figure 27. This is an orchestration choice which is reminiscent of the very active woodwind parts in Igor Stravinsky's *Violin Concerto* (1931). It is possible that Perry was influenced by Stravinsky's concerto as an influence on her own concerto. Either way, Perry's use of the woodwinds in her *Violin Concerto* was experimental and modern for a violin concerto of that time, in that not all of the significant accompaniment material was automatically given to the strings. This orchestration choice of favoring the lush sound of the orchestra's string section was the norm in most classical and romantic violin concertos; however, composers in the 20th century established more of a balance between woodwinds/brass and strings in their violin concerti, and Perry is no exception.

[78] See: Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* Op. 64 (1935), Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances* Op. 45 (1940), Vaughan Williams' Symphony No. 6 (1947).
[79] Walker-Hill, 113.

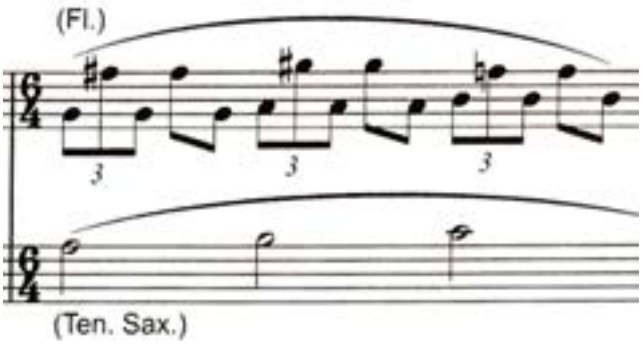


Figure 27: An example of woodwinds with primary accompaniment material, m. 41.

Along with the addition of an active tenor saxophone part, Perry made the unique decision to include two violin cadenzas in her *Violin Concerto*. Similar to the cadenza in Sibelius's *Violin Concerto in D minor,* Op. 47 (1905), the cadenzas in Perry's piece progress the concerto both harmonically and musically. For example, in the *Moderate* section of the second cadenza between measures 354-382, the solo violin recalls the material from the very beginning of the concerto, an excerpt of which is shown in Figure 28. This recapitulation is significant in that it reestablishes an aural foundation; after several measures of wandering 16th notes, the familiar material presented in the *Moderate* offers a grounding opportunity for the listener. Much like the violin cadenza in Sibelius's *Violin Concerto*, which functions as the entire development section, the second cadenza in Perry's *Violin Concerto* serves as one of the more extensive and significant moments of recapitulation in the piece.

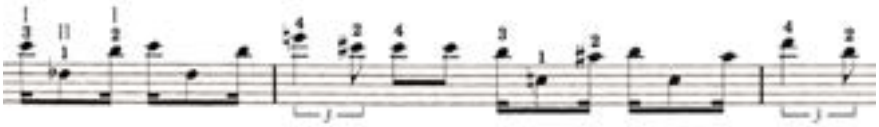


Figure 28: Recapitulation material, m. 360-362.

In addition to the lengthy cadenza near the end of the piece, Perry's *Violin Concerto* begins with a violin cadenza that is thirty measures long. While some violin concerti do begin with the solo violin playing alone, one mostly finds an orchestral introduction before the violin enters, in many twentieth-century violin concerti.[80]

In the violin concerti from the 20th century, it was more common to see the solo violin begin the concerto alone than in violin concerti of previous centuries, but it usually only lasted for one or two phrases. For example, Sergei Prokofiev began his *Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor* Op. 63 (1935) with the solo violin playing alone, but the orchestra enters in measure 9. Similarly, Béla Bartók began his *Violin Concerto No. 1* Op. posth. (1908, pub.1956) with the solo violin on its own, but the orchestra enters in measure 7. In Perry's *Violin Concerto,* not only does the solo violin play alone for an extensive thirty measures, but it introduces one of the most prominent themes and set classes of the concerto in the first measure, as shown in Figure 29. Even though Perry entitled the work as a concerto for both violin and orchestra, Perry establishes the dominance of the solo violin from the very first measure of the work, and throughout the first cadenza of the piece.

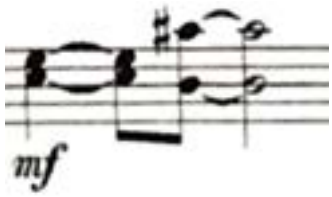


Figure 29: Reminder of the opening 4-5 motif, m. 1.

[80] See: Beethoven's *Violin Concerto in D major* Op. 61 (1806), Brahms' *Violin Concerto in D major Op. 77* (1878).

Bowing and Fingering Suggestions

Throughout the solo violin part of her *Violin Concerto,* Perry makes several suggestions for bowings and fingerings.[81] While these markings are often sensible suggestions and demonstrate that Perry undoubtedly understood the violin, they do not always offer the most practical solutions. The fingering suggestions are not sophisticated, and would most likely not be the ones chosen by a seasoned concert artist. Figure 30 is a passage which demonstrates this type of awkward fingering, which is technically possible, but is difficult to implement in context.

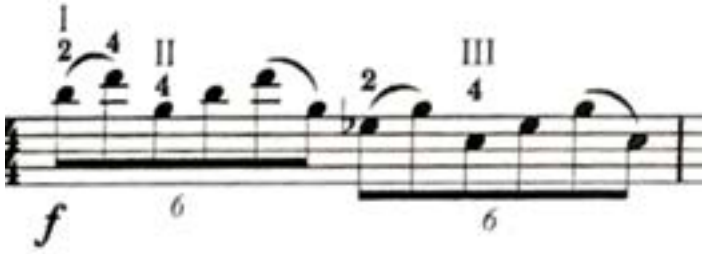


Figure 30: Example of a difficult fingering, m. 226.

This fingering suggestion shows Perry's understanding of the violin. It definitely makes sense for the violinist to stay in third position here, and it is possible. However, it is difficult for most violinists to block the 4th finger between two strings, and still get a good sound on those notes. It would be better for most violinists to use a different finger in this situation, especially since the passage is so fast.

My solution for this passage is to start in fourth position (as shown in Figure 31), so that I would be able to block my bigger, thicker 3rd finger between the E and A strings, and later the A and D strings. While I was able to play Perry's suggested

[81] Note: these markings are not edits by another violinist, as often found in violin concerti. The score for Perry's *Violin Concerto* reads: "Bowings and Fingerings Provided by the Composer."

fingering in third position here, my decision to move it up to fourth position made it much easier to get a clear, ringing sound on all of the notes in this fast passage. It is also much more comfortable to play. While this example is a perfect demonstration of Perry's understanding of the instrument, it simultaneously illustrates her lack of attentiveness to what would be easiest for the violinist. Her choices seem to be playable, but do not seem to be artist-level choices. While many of Perry's suggested fingerings are very helpful throughout her *Violin Concerto,* this is one of the few that would not be ideal for most violinists.

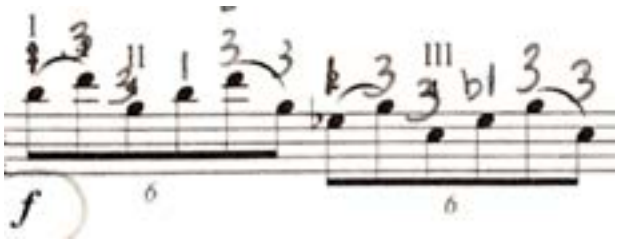


Figure 31: My fingering solution for m. 226.

Perry's suggested bowings follow a similar pattern as her fingering choices. Most of the provided bowings are possible and usually the best choice for the passage; however, like the suggested fingerings, there are some bowings that lack sophistication. An example of one of these bowings is shown in Figure 32. Here, Perry suggests that the violinist start on an up bow, which means that the open G would be on a down bow. This bowing is problematic; with Perry's suggested bowing, it is much more difficult to place the emphasis on the first note of the three-note figure, which in my opinion makes the most musical sense. This is because up bows are naturally weaker than down bows; when playing up bow, the violinist has to fight the forces of gravity.

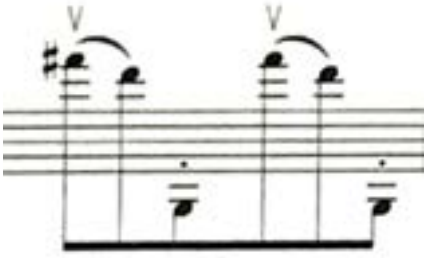


Figure 32: Perry's suggested bowing, m. 313.

As shown in my solution in Figure 33, it is more advantageous for the violinist to start this passage on a down bow each time, in order to use the weight of the frog to emphasize the first note of each three-note grouping. This bowing also allows for the violinist to cross over to the open G string quicker, because it is much easier to control the bow when at the frog than when stuck in the upper half of the bow. This bowing also makes more sense musically, in that the first note gets the most emphasis at the frog, and the third note, played in the middle-upper half of the bow, gets the least amount of volume.

Figure 33: My bowing solution for m. 313.

It is unusual for composers, especially those who were not professional violinists, to provide so many fingering and bowing suggestions in their violin concerti and sonatas. However, Perry provides several suggestions for the solo violin in her *Violin Concerto;* I would estimate there are fingering and bowing markings for roughly 90% of the notes in the solo violin part. However, there are rarely any dynamics and/or phrase markings printed throughout the entire concerto. I think Perry's focus on the fingering and bowing aspects of this concerto could illustrate Perry's "obsessive"[82] nature as a composer and person, and/or her desire to prove that she was an accomplished violinist. Perry seemed to pride herself on the fact that she was a multifaceted musician; as shown in Figure 34, between 1966-67 she was planning on composing "solo instrumental pieces for every instrument of the orchestra (with piano accompaniment)."[83]

This amount of effort to control these many aspects within her *Violin Concerto* could demonstrate Perry's determination to demand respect from violinists, her listeners, and the performers of her compositions.

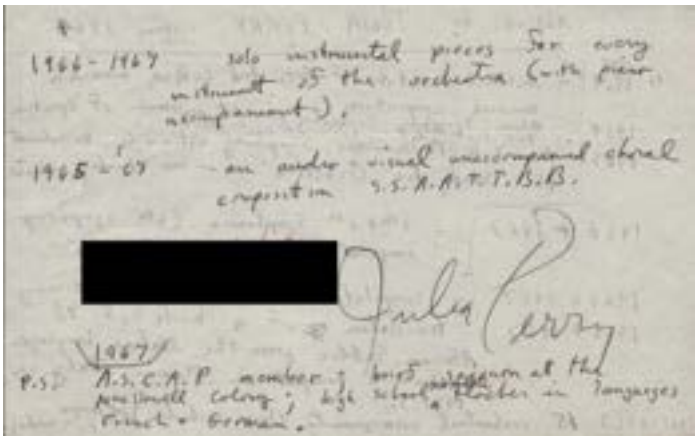


Figure 34: Perry's addenda since 1964.[84]

[82] Walker-Hill, 102.
[83] [Addenda for Julia Perry Since 1964], in the Julia A. Perry Collection (WCC0019). Talbott Music Library Special Collections, Westminster Choir College of Rider University (Lawrenceville, NJ).
[84] Ibid.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Julia Perry was a prolific composer, conductor, performer, and academic, not to mention one of the first African American women to conduct major symphony orchestras around the world and have her work performed by the New York Philharmonic. Unfortunately, most of her compositions were not recorded, and most likely never performed. This negligence of her as well as her music at the time most likely had to do with Perry's gender and race, despite the fact that she was a member of an upper middle class Negro family. Perry once said, "music has a unifying effect on the peoples of the world, because they all understand and love it… and when they find themselves enjoying and loving the same music, they find themselves loving one another."[85] Perry's words especially ring true when considering the events that were occurring during the time that she was writing most of her compositions: the Vietnam War, political uproar in the United States, and the continuous demand for equality among women as well as people of color. Despite the fact that most of her music was ignored, Perry never stopped writing, even after she suffered two strokes and was confined to her bed during the last several months of her life.

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[85] Maria Popova, "Trailblazing Composer Julia Perry on Music as the Universal Language of Love and Mutual Understanding," *The Marginalian,* November 2021. https://www.themarginalian.org/2021/11/21/julia-perry-music/

Compositional methods that involved altering melody and harmony, such as the twelve-tone technique, were most popular during the first half of the 20th century. These methods are especially apparent in the violin concerti written during this time, such as Arnold Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto*, Op. 36 (1936), as well as Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto* (1935). Schoenberg once said about his own compositions, "I am delighted to add another unplayable work to the repertoire."[86] While I am sure that Schoenberg made this remark in good humor, it is clear that at this point in time that lots of twelve-tone compositions were considered inaccessible.

Julia Perry's *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* offered a new approach to the avant-garde in the 1960s, both with its unconventional form as well as its unique organization of set classes. As shown in my analysis, Perry uses rhythmic motifs as well as the methodical arrangement of set classes to delineate sections within her through-composed concerto, tools which provide both the listener and the performer with a sense of aural organization. In addition to rhythmic themes and ordering of set classes, Perry's concerto offers a distinctive technique to form, instrumentation, and orchestration.

Beyond Perry: The Future of Works by Underrepresented Composers

Before Julia Perry's *Violin Concerto,* prominent composer Florence Price (1887-1953) composed two violin concerti: her *Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major* (1939) and her *Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor* (1952). Like Perry, Price was an African American woman who was a significant and productive composer during the first half and middle

[86] Merle Armitage, *Schoenberg;,* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 149.

of the 20th century. Also similar to Perry, Price was a multifaceted musician; in addition to being a prolific composer, she was a pianist, organist, and music teacher. Price was also noted as the first African American woman to be recognized as a symphonic composer, and the first to have a composition performed by a major orchestra.[87]

Since the 1960s, there have been several more violin concerti written by women. Some that are most commonly performed today are Joan Tower's *Violin Concerto,* dedicated to Elmar Oliveira (1992), as well as Jennifer Higdon's *Violin Concerto,* dedicated to Hilary Hahn (2008). Missy Mazzoli's *Violin Concerto,* which was just commissioned for Jennifer Koh by the National Symphony and the Cincinnati Symphony, is scheduled to be premiered in 2023. Unlike the violin concerti by Price and Perry, these violin concerti were immediately acknowledged and performed by some of the best performers in the world, and in the case of Mazzoli's work, eagerly awaited. Tower's *Violin Concerto* was even a finalist for the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for Music.[88] Unfortunately, there are many violin concerti that were written by female composers in the second half of the 20th century that are still not commonly performed, such as Margaret Sutherland's *Violin Concerto* (1960), Lucrecia Kasilag's *Violin Concerto No. 1* (1983), and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* (1997).

While these three examples of commonly performed violin concerti from the 1990s and 2000s are written by white women, it is important to acknowledge the increasing trend of compositions by women that are being acknowledged and performed by major symphony orchestras and soloists on a regular basis. Unlike during Price and

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[87] Nicolas Slonimsky (ed.), *The Concise Edition of Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 8th edition, (New York: Schirmer, 1994), 791.
[88] David Shaw, "Times Wins a Pulitzer for Coverage of Riots: Journalism: Prize is for spot news. Miami Herald hurricane stories cited; Washington Post gets 3 awards," *Los Angeles Times,* (April 14, 1993).

Perry's era, it is now encouraged for musicians to perform works by underrepresented composers, the term 'underrepresented' referring to women and people of color.

While Price and Perry were actually given some recognition while they were living and composing, there are several composers from the 20th century and earlier that were largely ignored, and whose works are just starting to be performed now. The question for many is, why did it take so long to recognize composers that have gone unacknowledged for so long? There are obvious reasons which have to do with gender and racial inequalities, some of which are still prevalent today. In an article from 1940 entitled "Why No Great Women Composers?", American psychologist and educator Carl E. Seashore (1866-1949) rules out the factors of native talent, intelligence, musical temperament, creative imagination, musical precocity, education, late emancipation of women, marriage, and endurance as possible reasons for why women composers are often ignored.[89] Rather, Seashore argues that "woman's fundamental urge is to be beautiful, loved and adored as a person; man's urge is to provide and achieve in a career."[90] While there are many things wrong with this statement, unfortunately Seashore's view might very well represent the popular perspective of many in 1940. Luckily, this outlook changed as the 20th century progressed.

In her article from 1993 entitled "Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s," American musicologist Susan McClary (1946-) acknowledges that "prior to 1970, very little was known-or, at least, remembered-about women in music history."[91] Despite the lack of recognition of these composers, McClary

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[89] Carl E. Seashore, "The Psychology of Music. XV. Why No Great Women Composers?" *Music Educators Journal* 26, no. 5 (1940): 21–88. https://doi.org/10.2307/3385588
[90] Ibid., 88.
[91] Susan McClary, "Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s," *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 399–423. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178376

acknowledges that there were "extraordinary" women writing in the more distant past, such as Hildegard von Bingen of the twelfth century and Barbara Strozzi of the seventeenth century.[92] However, even with the increase in women that were writing during the 20th century, McClary identifies the fact that these women were promptly forgotten as well.[93]

Unlike the hypothesis offered by Mr. Seashore for why women composers are routinely forgotten, McClary claims that this lack of remembrance is due to the fact that women had to write music that "guaranteed performers and a clientele; and this often meant composing works that could be presented by the composers themselves or by an extensive network of female musicians who purchased such music for their own purposes."[94] McClary acknowledges that because of this limitation, women had to write pieces for "solo voice, piano, or small chamber ensembles-genres that do not have the same prestige value as the orchestral and operatic repertoires from which they were usually barred."[95]

While this article by Susan McClary is filled with valuable information and insight on feminism in music, I find it is most significant to highlight McClary's concluding claim that "musicology has been permanently transformed by its encounter with feminism."[96] Even in 1993, McClary acknowledged that the regard of female composers has "changed beyond our wildest hopes," and even better, these "cross-disciplinary conversations are happening on a regular basis."[97]

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[92] Ibid., 400.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 400-401.
[96] Ibid., 420.
[97] Ibid.

Luckily, in 2022, these 'cross-functional conversations' have continued to happen so often that they have become a normal, expected, and even encouraged aspect of both musicology and performance. However, it is the responsibility of today's musicians to unearth this neglected repertoire from past centuries, especially works that were written by female composers and composers of color. Conversations about these composers are the first step, but the realization, interpretation, analysis, and performance of these works are what will ensure their appropriate inclusion in the wider field of classical music.

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