

A user's guide to Joachim Raff's Violin Concerto No. 2, in A minor, Opus 206 (1876-7)

By Dr. Avrohom Leichtling (June-July, 2004)

The 2nd *Violin Concerto* is a fascinating piece, primarily because of what it does *not* do. I'm convinced that Raff was among the more politically incorrect composers of the 19th century. Unlike the more well known eccentrics of the 19th century, Beethoven, for example, or Berlioz, or even Alkan or Litolff, or Liszt, whose musical digressions, were often perceived as being "beyond the pale," Raff worked entirely from within much more traditional ground. But, he is so much more subversive than nearly all of his contemporaries precisely because he invariably does what you do not expect him to do, at virtually any given moment. It doesn't matter if it's a four-square, closed ended theme, or a bizarre series of modulations, or the use of structural and textural overlays, or a formal inversion, or an seemingly incongruous stylistic shift. Raff always looked for something fresh and new, not conventional or hackneyed. Form and texture are used in contrapuntal constructs, not solely as vehicles for the laying out linear counterpoint, a radical concept for the time.

Raff's fundamental "eclecticism" has, for over a century, been the basis for rejecting his work. As the later history of western music clearly shows, especially after the collapse of tonality, Raff's fundamental orientation was the only path one could logically follow in order to reconfigure and recreate unity on a much broader linguistic basis. That so many contemporaries learned from Raff, and then, within a generation, took music beyond the bounds of conventional tonality must not escape notice.

There are many works of Raff's which are difficult - and not because their grammar and syntax took them beyond tonality, or, conversely because they did not tend to land in the chromatic polyphonic quicksand of Reger, Bruckner, Mahler, et al. In an age that increasingly demanded emotional excess, Raff would often have come to be seen as a cold fish by those requiring "big, bold and emotionally overpowering statements" as the principal sign of artistic validity. Indeed, there is a very strong prescient tendency towards what the late 20th century would call minimalism, almost literally, especially if one considers such representative late works as *Macbeth*, or the great oratorio *Welt Ende - Gericht - Neue Welt* (which has a virtually Orffian primitiveness about it, in 1879 no less, more than fifty years before *Carmina Burana*).

Raff's whole manner is far more subtle and half-hidden - a description that could easily be applied to the later impressionists. Raff demands that you, the listener, participate in the process of music making. He challenges your assumptions about musical processes, musical content and even musical aesthetics by beginning on well trodden paths but then quickly moving on. It is not possible to really understand and, therefore, love this music simply by sitting back and letting it wash over you. Raff requires the primacy of an intellectual component as part of your job as listener. Some "won't get it," and the pedantically inclined will attempt to debunk its "consistent rule breaking." Raff himself undoubtedly would have said without so much as a second thought, "that's your problem!"

Raff's concerted works number nine in total. Four of these, including two concerti, are for violin and orchestra. Three, including one concerto, are for piano and orchestra. The remaining two are the two cello concerti. The Second Violin Concerto, dating from 1877, is Raff's last such work.

The A minor concerto was originally intended for the young virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate. However, due to a rupture between violinist and composer, "the concerto" as Helen Raff writes, "to which a superfluous program was *appended*" (my emphasis), "was taken up first by Hugo Herrmann" who first performed it at a "concert of the Allgemeine deutsche Musikverein in Erfurt, 1 November 1877. He played it again eight days later at a Museum Concert in Frankfurt-am-Main." All that remains of the "superfluous appended program" consists of three quatrains published in the preface to score attributed to Arnold Börner, a pseudonym Raff used for such purposes. The relevance of these twelve lines of poetry to the music is beyond the scope of the discussion which follows. My concern here is purely one of musical structure and process. For the sake of completeness, however, they are included at the beginning of each movement.

Given the conventions of the concerto form in general, and of "sonata-allegro," "ternary" and "rondo" forms in particular as practiced universally throughout the 19th century, Raff, in this work as in a great many other compositions, takes great liberties with these standard issue musical molds. The analysis which follows in large part documents Raff's extremely subjective and subversive attitude to form as much as it delights in the sheer inventiveness of the music itself. The present work is an excellent illustration of how Raff takes a traditional form and then stands it on its ear. The work is scored for a very modest, but also familiar ensemble consisting of 2 Flutes, 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets, 2 Bassoons, 4 Horns, 2 Trumpets, Timpani and Strings.

FIRST MOVEMENT - Allegro (A minor)

"You feel your life's frail barque foundering, the storm rages, and in vain do you pit your pious courage against its fury"

The first movement, which might normally be expected to be cast in a sonata form, or some recognizable variant of it, does appear to have an exposition. It might appear to have a development. It seems to have a cadenza. It certainly has a recapitulation (of sorts) and coda. The problem here is that these things do not occur in their normal dispositions. The key word here is *appear* because while Raff gives us all the *gestures* of the form, a closer examination reveals that many elements have been run together to produce a hybrid of the fundamentally tripartite overall structure of the sonata principle.

Raff begins by giving us an impressive upward pile-up of octaves on E, the dominant of A minor. Over this appears a very brief but forceful thrusting motive (four eighths and a quarter) which, along with a total of eleven measures of orchestral crescendo, brings us immediately to the solo violin. An impressive opening, this, but deceptive, too, since neither the octaves nor the thrusting motive are our theme. It doesn't even land on an A minor triad, but rather on an inverted (and misspelled) augmented sixth chord on F (one of the harmonic maneuvers that can embellish whatever triad is a half-step below it, normally the dominant of the tonality - it sounds like a dominant seventh, but functions in a completely different manner). So important is this little idea that it will later become the basis for the last movement

- and I'll refer to it there as the "urthema" - as in original, generating theme or motive

After the violin comments on this opening, Raff repeats it, but this time lands on an inverted F sharp major dominant seventh. The violin's answer is longer and goes further away from its point of origin. While pursuing an increasingly lyrical manner (even while swiping at the thrusting motive), the orchestra continues, more and more in the background kicking and batting the little thrusting motive amongst the instruments. Behind all of this is a broad transition to A minor, the key of the piece. Ultimately, after 65 measures of this "introduction that is really not an introduction," the violin has its way, and a real tune emerges, a quietly bittersweet and autumnal melody that, demonstrating the extreme discretion of its composer, steers a good course away from becoming maudlin and saccharine by a comfortable margin.

Over the next hundred measures, this material undergoes an elaborate series of extensions and developments which, inevitably, arrive at the first real tutti, a full throated statement of the A minor tune. The thrusting motive also goes through a series of elaborations appearing backwards, or in telescoped form, as often as not. The arrival point of this entire musical arch, the slashing orchestral chords of the very opening, prepare the way for C major for what might be a second theme group. The violin intones a new idea consisting only of long values (dotted halves) occasionally interspersed with the thrusting motive. This could be the beginning of a cantus firmus, a hymn tune or chorale, or a deceptive ploy. The two motives playing off against each other are very much like a cinematic dissolve. This passage bears a striking resemblance to the opening of his 9th Symphony (which was in fact the eleventh in order of composition) which Raff would compose very shortly after completing the Concerto.

During the next 100 measures the orchestra drops out of the picture, almost altogether. This sounds suspiciously as if heading for a cadenza (even though it ought to be "the secondary theme") - but, if it is, it's in the wrong place. Working with the cantus firmus idea, the violin moves into a long series of triple stopped chords that contain occasional shorter phrases, including the first real hint of "more typical" soloistic passage work (as if making a fuller statement of the previously hinted-at broad theme). This now jumps headlong into a very extended bit of passage work - as if Raff had decided, finally, to make use of all the sixteenth notes previously unused in the movement (but hinted at in the preceding measures). For the next 90+ measures, the violin does not break away from its plain and subdued, virtually baroque figuration almost as if the violinist is saying "*don't pay attention to me, listen to what's going on in the background.*" Very, very gradually, beginning with sparse winds, Raff plays with the cantus firmus chorale idea but without pushing the musical drama forward. Indeed, something is extremely askew here at least by the standards of conventionality that guide your expectations.

When, 343 measures into the movement, we get the next orchestral tutti, it is a full restatement, in A major, of the chaconne with chorale idea (which had begun originally in C major), not the main theme (as might be expected). And, to top it all off, this leads without any transition to the *recapitulation*, also in A major! But, what happened to the development? The truth is that as Raff has been stating his materials, he has very slyly been applying the broad range of developmental

principles and practices to them. Up until this very moment, you've had statements of three separate thematic ideas *and* also their development all rolled into one. When the recapitulation begins in the tonic *parallel major*, it is very striking indeed for the tonal reversal with which it commences.

The deceptive A major beginning of the recapitulation does not last for very long for eventually the darker tonic A minor asserts itself effectively tightening the dramatic screws. During the final 160 measures of the movement, not only are all the materials of the beginning (including the preemptory opening fragments) brought back, but the movement, at long last, establishes a clear and unequivocal forward thrust. Ultimately, it will have taken us 569 measures to get to a real point of dramatic arrival. That's a very long windup in order to earn the final A minor slash, and as clear an example as any of how Raff chose to reinvent a conventional practice and, in so doing, give it a fresh and compelling new approach. You want the movement to end, you want the drama to be ratcheted up. It does, not because conventional expectations have been satisfied, but specifically because you have been forced to pay more attention proceedings that defy convention. The listener has been drawn into the process. From another perspective, this self-same fundamental intellectualization of the process, by this period in musical history, had been largely co-opted by enormous emotional forces.

SECOND MOVEMENT - Adagio (C major/C minor)

"Coming from distant heights, the soft breath of consolation and hope nears; you feel a reviving warmth, and peace enters your heart"

Raff, ever the economist, does not simply begin another movement. Looking back at the disparate elements of the movement just completed, Raff extracts the *cantus firmus* principle as defined by the C major music in the first movement, along with its stringless orchestra, and makes them the basis for the second movement's point of departure. Indeed, it is 75 measures into the movement (almost precisely one third of the total, or about 3 minutes at the prevailing tempo markings) before any strings are heard at all. Raff is often accused of "lacking any real poetic vision" (as compared, say, to Liszt). The degree to which this kind of aesthetic judgment is misleading is easily demonstrated by the second movement of this concerto. Beginning with the clearest and simplest possible color, one known to all church organists and chamber music players, two flutes and two clarinets widely spaced, intoning a lovely chorale-like passage whose piquant harmonic turns add an undeniably otherworldliness to them, the violin enters, as does an occasional oboe, not in the stratosphere, but on the G string, below the winds, with its own take on the woodwind tune. The dynamics never venture above mezzo-forte. Gradually, the upper winds give way to bassoons, four horns and timpani - but in absolute serenity. There's not a curlicue anywhere - no slow movement acrobatics from the violin - just ethereal and exquisitely poetic music flowing gently as if out of some fountain beyond time and space.

However, as the romantic ethic generally dictates that nothing remains emotionally static, that the sun always gives way to clouds and storm (and/or vice-versa), Raff, in his own way, begins to darken his palette as strings gradually enter and the tonality shifts to C minor. The shift is not a sudden volte-face. This, by the way, is a very interesting reversal of the more normal procedure which would have had the strings in their "soft, velvety" mode only to be dramatically intercepted by sinister

brass, winds and timpani. Inasmuch as this piece is very much about role reversals, the heretofore absent strings' role as purveyors of tragedy should surprise no one. Furthermore, the solo violin, which has been in its similarly inverted low register, now climbs into more stratospheric realms, complete with "characteristic" octaves and old fashion "Hungarian Sixths" as the mood darkens and secondary thematic material complete with funereal dotted rhythms and alternating episodes of villainous tremolando and syncopated bowing in the strings becomes the dominant mode. The funeral march rhythm dominates the thematic material as well as its accompaniment. The entire passage (from rehearsal letters [D] through [I] inclusive, or a total of 66 measures) contains barely more than 16 measures where there is any degree of tutti. It is as if the tragedy of this central section has been kept under strict control by becoming unconditionally uncomfortable emotionally, rather than overwrought. Throughout this more typically romantic dramatic outburst, Raff refuses to wear his heart on his sleeve (which would have made the entire passage rather *more* typical if clichéd). Another expectation has been thwarted.

But, as in life as well as the romantic violin concerto, "uncomfortable moments" soon pass, and C minor gives way to the initial C major (along with its calm and reserve). Keeping in mind Raff's predilection for running formal procedures over themselves, it is interesting to note that the return of the opening materials is quite far from a literal restatement. For example, the return of the beginning is now accompanied by gentle arpeggiated pizzicati in the Cellos and Violas. This time, too, the solo violin glides gently over the flutes and clarinets, not under them as at first - itself an illustration of texture inversion (not merely invertible counterpoint) if nothing else. Just as our tune is coming to its cadence point, however, the previously sinister string tremolandi return, only this time within a dynamic range of pianissimo to piano, but, more importantly, without so much as a hint of the minor mode. There is a brief quickening of the tempo as if "something" might happen. This "something" never does, however, even though the violin makes gestures that give us the sense that it's on the cusp of a cadenza.

From this point (i.e. letter [K], or the final 50 measures of the movement), the original thematic idea finds itself fragmented and passed between the violin and various instruments of the orchestra over almost uninterrupted sustained chords in the strings. That's not all, though, for our funeral dirge (remember the C-minor tune with the characteristic dotted rhythm) reappears now transformed into C major (a really implicit Piccardian third [as opposed to a reversed p/c as in the first movement]). Fragments of the two melodic ideas intertwine as the rhythmic pulse fades almost to imperceptibility. In the end, the violin makes its way up from the open G string all the way to the final "Scheherazade E" - that is, the high harmonic on the E string which so effectively ends the Rimsky-Korsakov suite (which would not be written for four years). There, it's the tonic of E major, but here, it's third of C. And, ultimately, things end pretty much as they began, generally speaking, with an ethereal C major chord in the winds, brass and timpani, pianissimo, the strings having dropped out (or having been dropped) sometime before the end. It is as typical a "poetic moment" as one is likely to find in the romantic concerto literature.

One final point deserves mention here. If the first movement was, in effect, a tripartite movement with sonata form elements, the second movement would appear to be closer to a more "normal" three part structure - the world famous A-B-

A. The truth, however, is that the second "A" is more than simply a restatement although it appears to begin that way. This second "A" actually goes well beyond restatement and becomes a very extended development and coda rolled into one. Now while it's not at all unusual for codas to be implicit or explicit secondary developments, Raff saves his development for the end, not the middle or, as in the case of the first movement, the beginning. That's curious because if true, it would almost seem as though Raff has constructed a structural palindrome of the first two movements in which the procedures of the first movement appear in reverse order in the second

THIRD MOVEMENT - Allegro (A major)

"The storm seems about to resume, but you heed it not, for the pain that oppressed your heart has given way to joy and pleasure"

In one respect, at least, Raff provides the appearance of normality in the final movement of the concerto. If we could say that the first movement jiggles back and forth between its "*air pathétique*" and light-to-moderate melodrama, and that the second movement more clearly jiggles back and forth between Apollonian calm and Dionysian drama, then, the third movement appears to provide the dramatic resolution for these conundrums by at least establishing, *almost* from the outset, a decidedly optimistic and outgoing persona. All is extrovert, even modestly athletic and acrobatic (more in keeping with the "true venue" of the Romantic Concerto). Having now arrived at the opening of the final movement of the concerto, one might hope for something "a little more normal" from Raff - something more recognizable in form and content. Alas, from the very first note, we learn that our crafty, sly composer still has a hand full of aces and jokers yet to be played.

Right from the first note what should we hear but the very same E octave pile up with which the concerto began two movements earlier. Not only that, but the upward thrusting motive which followed originally is stated here exactly as it first, too! But even more than that, there is one very subtle and all important change in the way it is *notated* (not necessarily how it sounds at first). The meter has been switched from 3/4 to 6/8, along with the corresponding re-casting of the original rhythm to correspond to the compound duple conventions of 6/8. It is the same set of four eighth notes followed by a quarter: in 3/4 these would have been notated as two pairs of eighths, now they are grouped as three eighths (the first beat of the 6/8 meter) followed by a single eighth and the quarter (the second beat of the 6/8 meter). The real change, of course, is that the harmonic ambiguity Raff set up in the first movement has been replaced with a deceptively solid arrival on the E dominant of the key of A (major or minor might still be debatable). The violin enters immediately with the appropriate flourishes on the E major triad moving upwards, but almost immediately breaks off with a new idea that has a remarkably familiar ring to it - possibly an echo of the first movement's chorale or the second movement's cantilena.

As in the first movement's opening, the third movement's recasting of that opening repeats the procedure only this time the F sharp we land on belongs to D major, the subdominant relation of A major, not the first movement's F sharp major as the dominant of B. The significance of this very subtle shift tells us that we are more and more likely finally going to establish A major as the center of the piece. As at first, we are only given fragments and hints and a general sense of harmonic

direction. Indeed, at first Raff uses no key signature at all and, given the very close proximity to the materials of the first movement, it just might be possible that the question of modality (major or minor) is not altogether certain. However, by modulating to D major, then eventually to E major with all the interior figuration coming from the key of A major, the question is finally answered when the A major key signature is established 35 measures in. But, for all these implications, the tonic A major triad itself (with the definitive 'A' on the bottom) has still not been sounded, and also no A major-ish tune to go along with it. The initial thrusting rhythm, now (and *almost* forever more) played twice as fast, begins to emerge with more urgency, as if to suggest that *it* has finally come into its own as the real thematic subject of the entire concerto!

There is also another, very important clue here - the avoidance of the tonic "A" in the bass, and the almost constant use of the cadential second inversion triads suggesting, but never giving, points of arrival.

All 668 measures (or 11 minutes) of the finale play specifically and quite consciously with cadential delay and resolution. It *always* sounds like it's just about to be "going home," but, except for a few deceptive arrivals, doesn't "turn the lock and open the door" - not until the very last minute. The real wonder of it is that the final movement, overall, is the longest (certainly in number of measures, and virtually so in performance time - itself another reversal of traditional procedure), yet for all of its delayed resolutions, feels like the shortest!

Throughout the movement, Raff goes tradition one better by throwing off what sound like secondary themes, as if they would be in a sonata form environment, not only "in the wrong key," but also by effectively doing nothing with them, as in a more purely classical rondo. On the other hand, with his "real" subjects, he develops the materials almost immediately upon stating them, as in the exposition/development overlay procedure from the first movement. The result is neither sonata form, nor sonata rondo, nor rondo - but, rather, a typically Raffian extension and "corruption" of the generating formal principles.

From the moment Raff actually establishes the key signature of A major (i.e. measure 35, rehearsal letter "A") until the note "A" appears in the bass, and our urthema turns itself into a capricious tune, another 30 measures go by. During this time, the unresolved second inversion A major triad, which keeps shifting back and forth to the E dominant, plays host to the emerging theme and the emerging sense of A major. But, at last, at rehearsal letter "B" (measure 63), accompanied by quietly clucking strings and flutes, the violin presents "the theme." Inasmuch as this is a Raff concerto, the tune is really not so much a full blown melody as much as it is the beginning of one that is typically distracted. Raff wanders off into a development of it in C sharp minor. Quickly pulling back at letter "C" (measure 88) we get what appears to be a restatement of our theme. This does not last long at all either. After a second 16 bar period, we're off onto a second developmental extension. Indeed, from letter "D" (measure 105) until letter "G" (measure 174) we get little else other than development *along with* the sense of impending arrival. Keep in mind that, heretofore, there hasn't been a tutti of any substance yet, and the tonic key, while now established, hasn't been given with any kind of "authoritative" statement. One would think, given the long, long implied pedal point on E (as in second inversion A major / E dominant) that the build up to the

"tutti you know is coming" would finally give us our capricious tune but in full orchestral dress. When, at last, we get the first real orchestral passage (i.e. letter "G"), although it's in A major, it's not our fully worked out urthema, but a totally new idea - a brisk and not so vaguely martial theme which strides forth incisively to the extent of having the whole orchestra playing in absolute rhythmic unison. Whole beat dotted quarters are interspersed with biting triplets - the whole has a very heroic air to it.

There is only one problem with it, though. It's all an illusion: a decoy, a deception.

There are a few other problems, too, of which we should make note. Were this a secondary theme (sonata *or* rondo) it ought nominally to be in the dominant key - or some place else, anywhere, but not in the tonic. Keep in mind the structural principle that even transcends sonata form but is fundamental to tonal music: begin at home, go somewhere else, come back home. Raff didn't exactly begin at home, hasn't gone very far away. But, *from literally the very first note of the movement*, he has been preparing for his return. It's actually a marvelous joke done with an absolutely straight face. Once pomp and circumstance have been given their due, they are promptly dismissed and never referred to again during the 470 odd measures that remain to the movement except by the most incidental and vague references. Once the tutti disintegrates into the stew of odds and ends that Raff whips up for the ensuing, more formal development is undertaken. More properly, one should say, perhaps, the development appears to continue unabated and unencumbered by expository proceedings. Maybe.

By measure 198, our first (and only real) tutti begins to fall apart having landed in B major, the dominant of E. Little by little, longer rhythmic values begin to be introduced, almost as if we were being prepared for a replay of the same maneuver we encountered at the parallel location in the first movement. The violin, however, will have nothing to do with this attempted relaxation. It impudently spits out the head of our thrusting urthema, which immediately prompts a reaction from the winds: a fragment of our secondary non-theme. In response, the violin as it takes off reiterating materials very similar to what were heard at the opening of the movement (when virtuoso figuration had not yet coalesced into a theme). The orchestra, in the meantime, remains stuck in the E major second inversion / B dominant universe - another apparent preparation for a homecoming. As the violin makes its way downwards, the orchestra's longer note values become more insistent, and the violin eventually even breaks the 6/8 meter with a brief hint of, what, 2/4!

Four measures before rehearsal letter "I" (measure 242), the violin begins yet another tune, without the 6/8 triplets (indeed with many duplets imposed on the rhythmic plane) and very elegant in it's "on the G string" manner. But there's no tonic triad here - just the preparation for one. The lower instruments refuse to part with their "B" with E major trying to gain the upper hand harmonically. It's the same procedure as in the beginning. While the violin keeps up its serenade, the woodwinds peck away at it with their impish 6/8 chirping. By the time the orchestra finally achieves E major at measure 272, sneaky first violins and first bassoon surreptitiously add the coagulating D natural to the proceedings, thus effectively killing E major as a tonal center by turning it into the dominant of A *minor*, and related keys. As always, this does not last for very long, of course, for ultimately, by

letter "K" (measure 312) the violin lands on B (H / Si) - which, given the dearth of such things up until now, requires from it a long held trill! The same B (etc.) finds a home in the cellos and basses, with shifting B dominant sevenths and E major playing about it, and for a while, it appears as though we are in a cadential mode. We're coming to the end of the piece, at last. But, we're in the wrong place, of course, because the key of the piece is A major, not E major. The violin trills upward until it reaches its high B where 6/8 gives way to an apparent 2/4, and our previous duplets become the dominant rhythm. But this is not a climactic moment. Indeed, it's marked mezzo forte, hardly the stuff of heroic endings. The metrical shift also creates what in 20th century parlance is referred to as a metrical modulation: the tempo, pulse-wise, remains constant, but the change in primary pulse-value creates the illusion of a slower tempo. But remember, this is Raff - and without question we are dealing with smoke and mirrors here, all the way.

At letter "L" (measure 344), we seem to have landed in more purposefully in E. The violin has resumed its acrobatics and variations on our urthema, the orchestra playing with various thematic fragments which try making a stab at our heroic theme from almost two hundred measures earlier. The development goes on. At letter "N" (measure 380), we're back to B (...) and it's looking like E major will win the battle. Woodwinds give out the head of our 2/4 tune once the violin has reached its second trill point - this time on F sharp (the fifth of B which is the dominant of E, which is the dominant of A). The violin, having now finished with its high trilling, returns to its back to acrobatics again as the orchestra makes an end-run preparation for its second tutti - one that sounds much like a concluding statement.

The resolution is thwarted at the last minute (i.e. rehearsal letter "O" - measure 400). The orchestra shifts suddenly off key to C major! The opening thrusting motive returns, as it was at the beginning, but must contend with a battle between itself and the heroic theme. Indeed, this is neither recapitulation, climax, nor another rondo episode. After not more than about 25 measures, the textures peter out, and with E securely in the bass, we eventually get what actually constitutes the closest thing to a thematic restatement we're likely to get. Indeed, for some thirty measures, the illusion is maintained. As B major suddenly shifted to C major earlier, here E major shifts to F major (the explicit musical reference here refers to an augmented sixth embellishment of the dominant - let's leave it at that for now except to note that, as previously mentioned, Raff opened the first movement with this same harmonic device. Its appearance at this point suggests another musical knot is being tightly tied). An effort at restating our secondary, more lyrical theme is made, but after twenty measures, it is summarily dropped.

We are now at the point of making the real preparation for our homeward landing. At rehearsal letter "R" (measure 493) Raff has given up all pretence of a straightforward restatement - and has, in fact, reverted back to development. There are a few new things added here. First off, as the tempo begins to accelerate (at first, it's implied in the direction of the music, and actually written out as "accelerando un poco" 28 measures later) Raff finally indulges in some of the more usual violinist's virtuoso tricks by having the soloist play increasingly rapid double stopped triplets. Fragments of our secondary lyrical theme are also heard along with this - and if one listens very carefully, one will notice the shape, the outline of our urthema buried in the midst of all this virtuoso business. At letter "S" (measure 559) it might seem as though we've reached the third orchestral tutti - but we're back to

establishing E as the key, not A! Further, after four measures during which Raff gives us a fragmentary echo of our earlier heroic tune, he then summarily drops the whole thing. As before, it is given only enough exposure to remind our ears that this should be recognized as "something familiar." Raff seems to be saying here, "You know the tune, now. Go and listen to it on your own. You don't need me to play it again."

As before, things peter out leaving the violin fairly close to the top of its range with what will serve as the closet approach to a cadenza Raff will permit, and, without the orchestra (as if to reinforce the illusion! Raff marks the passage "accelerando" and, ultimately, "Più mosso." Not only that, but at measure 576 he finally changes the meter from 6/8 to 2/4. Furthermore, unlike the more normal cadenza procedure which would impose a change of direction, tempo and figuration, here we are being propelled forward strictly in tempo. Ultimately, the rest of the orchestra returns content with single struck chords and bits and pieces of what was originally the 2/4 thematic fragment (although originally notated as duplets within a compound triple meter). The violin can't resist 2/4's duplet seductiveness, and gives in briefly. But, in the last half dozen measures, we are *finally* given the concluding A major triplet arpeggiated fanfares we've waiting eleven minutes to hear. The orchestra agrees, and with a series of incisive A major slashes, finally brings the piece to a conclusion. There is no big orchestral peroration, there are no fireworks or flashiness. The music simply arrives with all the inevitability that it has been generating from the first measure, to the final A major chord - nothing else is really necessary! This is *romantic allegro* with all the trimmings, but absolutely shorn of its excess emotional baggage.

What, then, when all is said and done do we really have here? Is it a rondo? No, not exactly. Is it a sonata form? Possibly, but it's too complex structurally to fit even the broader outlines of exposition, development, recapitulation. Is it a sonata-rondo? That might be closer, but Raff takes far too many liberties with his materials to be able to discern the formal outlines with any degree of clarity. It is, in fact, much like the first movement - with its appearance of older formal organization, but conceived from the very beginning in an even more thoroughly organic manner. Themes appear, but invariably dive directly into their own extensions and developments even before you heard the whole thought. Is there a whole thought? Yes, but is neither alpha, nor omega, but both.

One expects Romantic concerti, on the whole, to be full of bravado, passion and fireworks. This piece has all of these things, but in moderation. The real interest in this case is not so much in the externals as much as it is in the internal process of knitting its own materials into a very tightly organized whole. More often than not, everything happens in it by implication and indirection. What big statements there are in it are few and far between, and only long enough to let you know that they're there. It's that very quality that makes eleven plus minutes of music go by in a twinkling. By far, that feat in and of itself is an infinitely more difficult thing to bring off. And Raff does it with panache, absolute clarity of expression, and a sureness of technique which is a marvel to behold.

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Monsey, New York

The score:

Volker Tosta's beautifully prepared modern edition of the score is published by Edition Nordstern: Raff Werke Band XVI/2a - 0116-2060, 166pp.

About the author:

Avrohom Leichtling is a composer who lives and works in the New York City area. He was a student of Vincent Persichetti and Roger Sessions at The Juilliard School, Darius Milhaud, at The Aspen Music Festival, and Samuel Dolin at The Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto. He studied conducting with Jorge Mester. Dr Leichtling received his Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees from The Juilliard School (in 1968, 1969 and 1971). For many years following his graduation from Juilliard, Dr Leichtling taught at several different universities in the US including Juilliard, William Paterson University, Drew University, Grinnell College, East Carolina University and The University of Connecticut (Storrs). He presently lives in Monsey, NY and works as a systems engineer and programmer. Over 70 works have been published. His works, which number over one hundred, include 7 Symphonies, 5 operas, 5 string quartets, Concertos for Violin, Viola, Piano Trio, Tuba, numerous other orchestral and band works, keyboard, chamber, vocal and choral music, electronic, theater and film music. He writes about music with a composer's eye to the architectural and dramatic forces that shape the designs and progression of musical thought.