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## X MARKS THE SPOT: AN ANALYSIS OF EDWARD GREGSON'S TRUMPET CONCERTO

BY WILL KOEHLER

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# X MARKS THE SPOT: AN ANALYSIS OF EDWARD GREGSON'S TRUMPET CONCERTO

BY WILL KOEHLER

This article was reviewed and approved for publication by the ITG Editorial Committee.

Educated at Goldsmiths' College and the Royal Academy of Music in London, Edward Gregson has established himself as one of the most important composers for brass in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In addition to his compositional work, Gregson has also led a long and successful career as an educator at such institutions as Goldsmiths' College, University of London (1976 – 96) and the Royal Northern College Music in Manchester (1996 – 2008). Gregson's first brass compositions were written for brass band and large brass ensemble, and one of his first accomplishments as a composer was his Quintet for Brass (1967), which was a finalist in the BBC competition for young composers and recorded by the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. This piece was the foundation that Gregson used to build his large contribution to the repertoire for brass bands and large brass ensembles. These works cover 25 years and include *Essay* (1970), *Connotations* (1977), *Dances and Arias* (1984), *Of Men and Mountains* (1991), *Rococo Variations* (2008), and *Symphony in two movements* (2015). Gregson currently writes for brass band, wind band, and choir. His first brass concerto was the Horn Concerto (1971), followed by the Tuba Concerto (1976) and Trombone Concerto (1979). The Trumpet Concerto was written for James Watson, Howard Snell, and the Wren Orchestra of London in 1983.<sup>1</sup>

Gregson's Trumpet Concerto has been described as a "virtuosic showpiece" that has sparkling and haunting characteristics and continues to grow in popularity in the trumpet community, and is often used either to feature a principal trumpet or guest soloist with orchestra or for undergraduate and graduate recitals.<sup>2</sup> The concerto is cast in three movements, entitled *Allegro vigoroso*, *Mesto* ("In Memoriam Dmitri Shostakovich"), and *Vivo e brillante*.<sup>3</sup> Originally written for string orchestra, timpani, and solo trumpet in B-flat, the instrumentation of the concerto has also been reduced for trumpet and piano. Both the original orchestration and piano reduction give a full texture with which the soloist can blend and over which he or she can soar, without any risk of being overpowered by the accompaniment.

An understanding of the form of the Trumpet Concerto and the role that thematic development plays in the musical structure can be used to aid in a player's interpretation. In the following analysis, continuous measure numbers are used throughout and line up with the number system provided by the composer in the score, marking every ten measures.

## Movement 1: *Allegro vigoroso* (Sonata form)

Exposition: Theme 1 - Transition 1 - Variation 1 of theme 1 - Transition 2 - Theme 2 - Transition 3 - Variation 2 of Theme 1

Development: Material from Themes 1 and 2, but never complete versions of either

Recapitulation: Theme 1 - Transition 1 - Theme 2 - Transition 2 - Variation 3 - Coda

The first movement, *Allegro vigoroso*, opens with a three-bar introduction in the timpani, and these three bars anticipate Theme 1. The opening three-note motive endures throughout the concerto and functions as a marker that begins Theme 1, so it is important to perform it the same way each time that motive returns, unless otherwise notated by the composer. The opening motive, which consists of two eighth notes and a half note, is known as Motive X. The exposition begins in measure 4, with the soloist stating the same angular motive as the timpani (see Example 1).

Motive X marks the beginning of Theme 1 in measures 4 – 18. In measures 16 – 18 is another version of Motive X that occurs throughout this concerto; for the purpose of this analysis, this second version of Motive X will be labeled "X1." Although Gregson continues to develop this melodic material past measure 18, future statements of Theme 1 either contain different material or end with X1 repeated twice by the trumpet. Because X1 is consistently

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used at the end of Theme 1 and is always repeated twice, X1 also lends clarity and definition to the end of Theme 1 and should be approached the same way each time it is played.

Theme 1 can be divided into four sections, which are defined using the previously established motives. The initial statement of Motive X is quickly repeated with thematic expansion, and after Gregson expands Motive X, he repeats the pattern with different thematic material. The four parts of Theme 1 are important because the same pattern can be found later in the exposition in Theme 2. The themes throughout this movement are linked by transitions that contain fragments of old material or new material introduced by the composer. Transition 1 begins in measure 19 and continues until the next statement of Theme 1 in measure 34. Theme 1 returns in measure 34, but this time Gregson inverts Motive X and transposes it up a whole step from the original pitch level of Motive X. Although the motive has changed, one should still approach it in the same way as it was initially stated. Due to the transposition and inversion of Motive X and the expansion of the melodic material, measures 34 – 51 are labeled "Variation 1 of Theme 1." As part of the development of Variation 1, Gregson uses a twelve-tone row, which is stated by the soloist beginning in measure 42,

Trumpet in Bb

**Allegro vigoroso** ♩ = 96

Example 1. Edward Gregson, Trumpet Concerto, movement 1, measures 4 – 24

and this same twelve-tone row is used in the second movement as well.

Transition 2 connects Variation 1 to Theme 2, which begins in measure 66 (see Example 2). Theme 2 is lyrical, in marked contrast to the angularity of Theme 1. The difference in these row themes can determine how the performer wishes to approach each theme, but the choice should remain consistent throughout the movement for continuity. Despite its differing character, Gregson continues the pattern of having four parts to Theme 2, where each of the four sections begins with three quarter notes that lead into a longer note.

As Theme 2 develops, Gregson interjects material similar to the angular and aggressive material found in Theme 1. In addition to the contrast in character, Gregson also introduces canonic counterpoint to the trumpet melody, which begins in measure 80. This counterpoint that Gregson introduces against the solo trumpet is a secondary lyrical line, and knowing the content of the accompaniment can aid the soloist when determining musical interpretation. The downbeat of measure

118 marks the end of Theme 2, which is due to the crescendo leading into that downbeat. Marked “fortissimo,” the downbeat of measure 118 is the first time the soloist and orchestra align since the beginning of Theme 2, and the soloist and accompanying ensemble should both emphasize this material.

At this point, the exposition could be ended, and the composer could proceed with the development. Instead, however, Gregson creates a second variation of Theme 1. Measures 118 – 131 serve as Transition 3, this time linking Theme 2 to Variation 2 of Theme 1. For this variation, the soloist uses a straight mute and is instructed to play with a “menacing” character. Once this variation is finished in measure 146, the exposition of the first movement concludes.

The second beat of measure 146 marks the development of the first movement. The solo and orchestral parts become more intricate in their development and alternate between melody and accompaniment. Until this point, the soloist has had large statements of material, followed by interjections from the orchestra or thematic material to connect ideas stated

Example 2. Edward Gregson, Trumpet Concerto, movement 1, measures 66 – 101

by the soloist. In measure 150 is an example of the more intricate interaction between the soloist and orchestra.

Throughout the development section are elements of Theme 1 and Theme 2, but never an exact statement of either theme. The development builds to measure 179, where the theme in the timpani, the tonic, and Theme 1 return, marking the beginning of the third section of the sonata form, the recapitulation. Although shorter than previous statements of Theme 1, the recapitulation starts and ends in the same manner, with Motive X at the beginning and X1 repeated twice by the soloist at the end. A transition begins in measure 194 and continues until measure 224, where Theme 2 returns in the accompaniment. Theme 2 is passed from the accompaniment to the soloist in measure 237. Adhering to the pattern represented by the recapitulation of Theme 1, Theme 2 is interrupted by material from Theme 1. Gregson creates a fourth variation of the first theme, beginning with Motive X stated by the soloist, who is instructed to use a Harmon mute (stem in). Variation 4 uses an inversion of Motive X that connects this statement of Theme 1 to previous statements. Beginning in measure 286, Gregson concludes the first movement of his concerto with a coda and includes one final statement of Motive X.

### Movement 2: “In Memoriam Dmitri Shostakovich” (Ternary form)

- A: Established at Mesto, X2 followed by tone-row inversion, and muted trumpet
- B: Established at Poco piu mosso, the composer’s use of lyricism (pedal point), in contrast to the A section, and the use of the open trumpet
- A: Established at Mesto, the return of X2 followed by the inversion of the tone, and muted trumpet
- Coda: Established at Piagente, 6/8 time, with trumpet cadenza

“In Memoriam Dmitri Shostakovich” is marked “Mesto” and is cast in a ternary form with a cadenza at the end of the movement. The soloist enters with cadenza-like material that is stated at two different points throughout the first A section of the movement; the first time is muted, and the second time is played open. The soloist could use the same mute used in the first movement, but he or she might want to consider using a different mute with a warmer color to match the solemn and reflective character of this second movement. There are two important connections between movements one and two. The first can be seen in measures 318 and 319. In the first move-

ment, the soloist plays a twelve-tone row in the first variation of Theme 1. That same row is used in measures 318 – 319, but it is stated in the *pizzicato* violin part and transposed down a perfect fifth. A comparison of the two rows can be seen in Examples 3 and 4.

The second connection between movements one and two helps create the ternary form of the second movement. Motive X and the variations used extensively in the first movement return at the beginning of this section of the second movement. Motive X is stated in harmonic and rhythmic diminution in the trumpet cadenzas at the beginning of the second movement, so the motive now contains two sixteenth notes and an eighth note—as opposed to the two eighth notes and a quarter note from before. This rhythmic motive gives definition to the first A section because it is used constantly, similar to a tonal pedal point.

Movement two consists of three distinct elements that define it as a ternary form with coda (ABA'-Coda)—Motive X2, tempo changes, and material from the soloist. Marked “Mesto, quarter note equals 66,” the second movement opens with a motive, here labeled “X2.” This motive is established in the accompaniment in measures 310 – 313 (see Example 5) and is then followed by a transposition of the tone row from the first movement, seen in meas-

ures 318 and 319 (see Example 4). After a brief cadenza from the soloist, X2 returns and closes out the first A section of the ternary form.

The B section begins in measure 350, marked “Poco piu mosso, quarter note equals 76,” and the rhythmic motive used in the first part of the movement is replaced with a pedal point. X2 is used again towards the end of this section, hinting that something is about to change.

Returning to the first tempo indicated, measure 393 is marked “Mesto” and establishes the beginning of A', the third part of the ternary form. Although similar, the two A sections are not identical. The pattern of X2 followed by a variation of the tone row is found in measures 400 – 409 (see Examples 6 and 7) and solidifies the idea that this section is truly another (revised) version of A. The third and final factor in delineating the form of the second movement can be seen in the instructions for the soloist, which indicate using a straight mute in the A sections, and removing the mute for the B section. Measure 418 is marked “Piagente, dotted quarter note equals 42,” and the meter switches from 3/4 to 6/8, indicating that the A' section has ended and that the coda of the second movement has been reached. The coda is serene and poignant, establishing itself, according to the composer, as the heart of the concerto.<sup>4</sup>

**“The soloist could use the same mute used in the first movement, but he or she might want to consider using a different mute with a warmer color to match the solemn and reflective character of this second movement.”**



Example 3. Edward Gregson, Trumpet Concerto, movement 1, measures 42 – 47

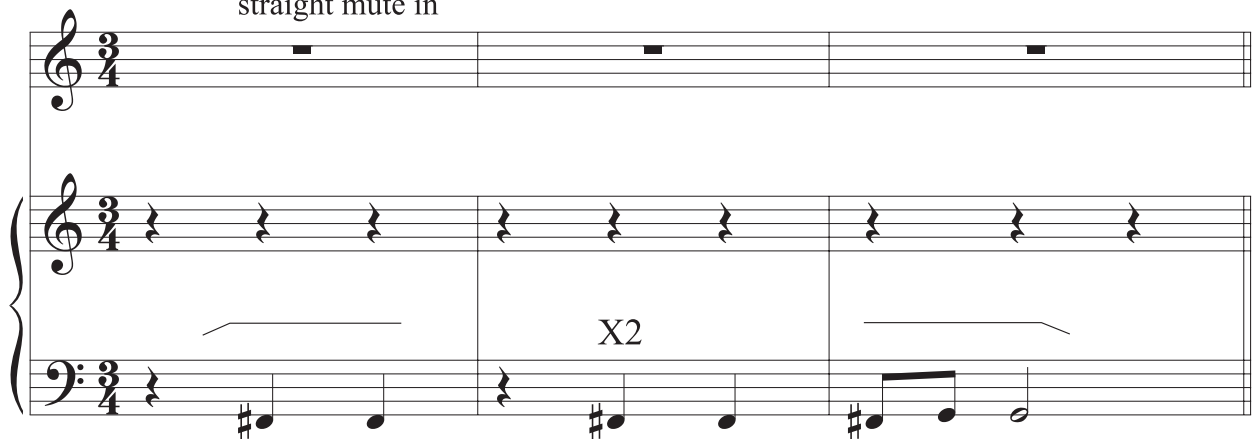


Example 4. Edward Gregson, Trumpet Concerto, movement 2, measures 318 – 319

31

Mesto ♩ = 66

straight mute in



Example 5. Edward Gregson, Trumpet Concerto, movement 2, measures 310 – 313

Example 6. Edward Gregson, Trumpet Concerto, movement 2, measures 400 – 401

Example 7. Edward Gregson, Trumpet Concerto, movement 2, measures 407 – 408

Gregson titled the second movement of his concerto “In Memoriam Dmitri Shostakovich” in honor of the great Russian composer. When asked about this, Gregson stated, “Shostakovich’s slow movements are always heartfelt and rather poignant. It seemed natural to make the slow movement the one where I pay tribute to him via his cypher.”<sup>5</sup> Gregson constructed his second movement with material that is significant

to Shostakovich and his career. Shostakovich used a cipher of his name in many of his works, and in the third movement of his Symphony No. 10 in E Minor, Op. 93 (1953), a four-note motive is used to depict the death of Joseph Stalin.<sup>6</sup> The cipher contains the first letter of Shostakovich’s given name (“Dmitri”-D) and the first three letters of the German spelling of his family name (“Schostakovich”-SCH). Those letters (D, S, C, and H) translate to the musical pitches D, E-flat, C, and B-natural (see Example 8), and this same motive is found in a variety of works from throughout Shostakovich’s career.

This motive plays an important role in the second movement of the concerto, and the first presentation of the cipher is located in the muted trumpet part in measures 337 and 338.

“Shostakovich’s slow movements are always heartfelt and rather poignant. It seemed natural to make the slow movement the one where I pay tribute to him via his cypher.”

The cipher is transposed from its original pitch level, but the intervals between notes are preserved (see Example 9).

Similar to the first entrance of the soloist, the second entrance begins with Motive X and ends with a transposition of the cipher. The cipher is used throughout the movement and is embedded in the accompaniment. Gregson inserts a passing tone into the cipher; however, if the passing tone is canceled out through analysis, a transposition of the cipher remains. Example 10 shows one way in which Gregson embeds the cipher in the accompaniment harmonically.

Gregson connects movements two and three with a composed solo cadenza. In a Classical-era concerto, such as Haydn’s Concerto in E-flat, the cadenza is used to showcase the virtuosity of the soloist and is often improvised. The cadenza that connects the last two movements of Gregson’s concerto serves another purpose: to create a bridge between the two movements. Material extracted from both the second and third movements are alternated and combined to form this cadenza.

The cadenza unfolds by alternating between slow and fast material, with each statement gradually expanding. The last statement of the fast material ends with a fermata, where the

Example 8. Dmitri Shostakovich, Symphony No. 10, measures 48 – 49, cipher used in Gregson’s Trumpet Concerto



Example 9. Edward Gregson, Trumpet Concerto, Movement 2, measures 337 – 338

soloist is instructed to flutter tongue with a fortissimo-piano crescendo. From this moment on, the tempo is marked “fast,” and the final passage serves as the bridge between movements two and three.

### Movement 3: Vivo e brillante (Five-part rondo form)

A-B-A-C-A-Coda

A five-part rondo, entitled “Vivo e brillante,” serves as the third and final movement of Gregson’s Trumpet Concerto. The first A section of the rondo begins in the first measure of the movement, measure 461, and extends to the downbeat of measure 472. Keeping to a pattern well established thus far in the concerto, the A section can be divided into four parts, which include the initial statement of a motive, an expansion of that motive, a recapitulation of the motive, and further development.

A transition with sparse material resembling the opening is used to connect the A section to the B section, which begins in measure 484. The B section is much more lyrical than the exciting, flashy material contained in the A section. The soloist begins in measure 483 with a series of sixteenth notes that lead into measure 484. Although the B section is significantly longer than the A section, the same four-part pattern is maintained.

In the second transition, the orchestra takes over; until the next transition, the soloist has no primary material that aligns with the motives discussed thus far. Instead, Gregson constructs a three-voice fugato that extends from measure 528 – 546, and the soloist returns with a short interjection in measure 551. Throughout this transition, the soloist and the orchestra alternate in a call-and-response fashion, stating short segments of material similar to the A section of the rondo. To ensure that all alternating material is heard from both players, it is important for the soloist and the accompaniment to be aware of when the other part is important.

The second statement of the A section begins in measure 565. Following a short transition after the second statement of the A section is the Scherzando, which forms section C of the rondo. Gregson changes the meter from 4/4 to 6/8, and the soloist’s role becomes more acrobatic. Extending to the downbeat of measure 564, section C is followed by a brief

transition that includes a meter change back to 4/4. The final statement of the A section begins in measure 565 and is concluded in measure 576. At this point, Gregson could have ended the third movement, but he instead chose to add a coda, which includes a brief inversion of the material from the A section of the rondo and a final statement of motive X from the first movement.

Edward Gregson establishes flow and connection throughout the entire Trumpet Concerto, making it a very idiomatic piece of music and an excellent piece for inclusion on a large orchestral concert program. While trumpet concertos are not programmed with full orchestra as often as performers would like, Gregson’s piano reduction does make it programmable for recitals and competitions as well. Although this piece has existed since 1983, it has not been performed as frequently as many other standard twentieth-century concertos. The work, however, contains many characters and colors that help establish it as one of the great concertos of the trumpet repertoire and has been described as a “virtuosic showpiece.” It requires a great deal of technical facility, which lends itself well to developing

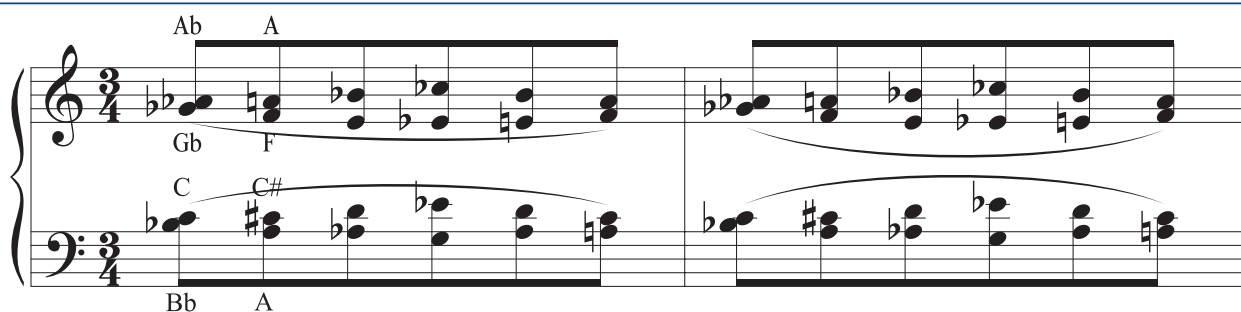
“Gregson’s Trumpet Concerto is a wonderful addition to the trumpet repertoire, deserving of greater popularity and exposure.”

advanced technique for students. Ramon Parcells performed the piece with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (conducted by Gunther Herbig), and a number of other American and European orchestras have programmed the piece as well.<sup>7</sup> A notable recording is Ole

Edvard Antonsen with the BBC Symphony, under the direction of Clarke Rundell.<sup>8</sup> Gregson’s Trumpet Concerto is a wonderful addition to the trumpet repertoire, deserving of greater popularity and exposure. It is this author’s hope that an increasing number of performers will share it with audiences in the years to come.

*About the author:* A native of Pittsburg Kansas, Will Koehler is currently pursuing a Doctor of Music degree in trumpet performance at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. He is assistant manager with the Indiana University orchestras and is on the brass and visual staff with Bloomington High School North. He has taught at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and main-

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Example 10. Edward Gregson, Trumpet Concerto, Movement 2, measures 351 – 352

tained private studios in Denver and Philadelphia. He holds an MM degree from Temple University, as well as BM and BME degrees from Pittsburg State University. His primary teachers include Joey Tartell, Jeff Curnow, Al Hood, and Todd Hastings.

#### Endnotes

- 1 “Edward Gregson,” accessed November 21, 2013 (<http://www.edwardgregson.com>).
- 2 Peter Wood, review of *Gregson: Concertos*, by Ole Edvard Antonsen, *International Trumpet Guild Journal* 33, no. 3 (March 2009): 89.
- 3 Edward Gregson, *Trumpet Concerto* (London, England: Novello Publishing, 1983).
- 4 Edward Gregson, interview with the author, January 18, 2016.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Dmitri Shostakovich, *Symphony No. 10 in E Minor, Op. 93* (Miami: Edwin F. Kalmus & Co., Inc., 1953).
- 7 Gregson, interview.
- 8 Edward Gregson, *Trumpet Concerto*, Ole Edvard Antonsen with the BBC Philharmonic, conducted by Clark Rundell, Chandos CHAN 10478, 2008, CD. 