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Alexander Glazunov and his Violin Concerto: History, Biography, and Performance Perspective

Gregory Glessner

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Gregory Glessner

Alexander Glazunov and his Violin Concerto:

History, Biography, and Performance Perspective

May 2014

Dr. Timothy Dixon, Project Sponsor

Messiah College

Written in fulfillment of Music Department Honors

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GREGORY GLESSNER

Glazunov's Life:

Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov, who was born on August 10, 1865, was a highly influential musician and composer in the early 20th century. Despite living well into the 20th century, he adhered to the compositional techniques and ideals of the 19th century. Glazunov generally wrote in a highly romantic style throughout his life, and never gave in to the stylistic pressures of the early 20th century. He worked prolifically in many genres, including symphonies, concertos, tone poems, string quartets, and ballets; however, he wrote relatively little vocal music, and no opera. Glazunov was also a proficient conductor and an excellent pianist. He served a short tenure on the faculty of the St. Petersburg Conservatory starting in 1899, and then he became the director of the conservatory from the end of 1905 to 1928.

Glazunov showed his musical talent at an early age. His parents were relatively wealthy, as his father was a major book publisher, so the young Alexander would have a good opportunity to grow his talent. Glazunov started piano study with Mily Balakirev at age 9 and started composing at age 11. At age 14, Glazunov started composition and orchestration study at the suggestion of Balakirev. Glazunov was by all accounts a great student. Rimsky-Korsakov said that “in a single lesson, Glazunov could absorb more material than a regular conservatory student in a month.”¹ He made very fast progress, and was highly methodical in his working. The young Glazunov also had good musical penmanship, which his teachers would have appreciated.

Through his musical study with Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov would be influenced by “The Mighty Five.” The Five was a group of Russian composers (Balakirev, Borodin, Cui, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov) concerned with the development of a Russian National Style based on the native folk music. Glazunov was not greatly interested in the programmatic and realistic music associated with the new Russian National School. He would rely on the more absolute musical forms and devices present in the music Western Europe.² His

Russian heritage and Western style of composition led some to call his music “a Russian version of Brahms.”³

Glazunov wrote his first symphony in 1881, and it was successfully premiered in 1882 with Balakirev conducting. Rimsky-Korsakov invited the wealthy timber merchant, amateur musician, and philanthropist, Mitrofan Belyayev. Belyayev was a major sponsor of The Five, and he put significant amounts of money and time toward furthering the careers of the young generation of Russian composers, including Glazunov. After hearing Glazunov's symphony, Belyayev decided to take Glazunov to Weimar in 1884. While in Weimar, Belyayev arranged for Liszt to conduct Glazunov's first symphony. This performance was highly successful, and that success initiated the beginning of the Russian Symphony Concerts in the 1886-1887 season. This was a series of concerts in which many new Russian works were premiered. In addition to setting up the Russian Symphony Concerts, Belyayev started a publishing firm which published works of Glazunov, Lyadov, Borodin, and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Glazunov would keep composing, and in 1889, he wrote another symphony. Glazunov conducted the premiere of this second symphony at the 1889 Paris World Exhibition. Glazunov never studied conducting formally, but he was proficient on the podium. He had a good knowledge of the orchestra from his study of orchestration with Rimsky-Korsakov, and he had a very good ear. Despite his inexperience, Glazunov was a decent conductor, but he would be in at least one situation where his conducting was inadequate.

Glazunov conducted the premiere of Rachmaninoff's first symphony in 1897, and the performance was not successful. It was, in Rachmaninoff's words a “fiasco.”⁴ The best explanation of this failure is that Glazunov did not properly understand the music and that he under rehearsed it. Rachmaninoff wrote in a letter to his friend Alexander Zatayevich:

I am amazed; how can such a talented person as Glazunov conduct so badly? I'm not talking about conducting technique...; I am talking about his musicality. He does not feel anything when conducting. It is as if he doesn't understand anything!⁵

There were, however, other factors at work. Rachmaninoff would later claim that Glazunov was drunk on the podium. This is not confirmed, but Glazunov had an alcohol problem for much of his life. One listener at the concert said "his fault is a truly Russian one: he drinks."⁶

Rachmaninoff's claim was not implausible.

Even if Glazunov had been sober and had led a perfect performance of Rachmaninoff's symphony, its reception might not have been much better. Cesar Cui said of the symphony:

If there were a conservatory in Hell, and if one of its talented students were to compose a program symphony based on the story of the ten plagues of Egypt, and if he were to compose a symphony like Mr. Rachmaninoff's, then he would have fulfilled his task brilliantly and would delight the inhabitants of Hell. To us this music leaves an evil impression with its broken rhythms, obscurity and vagueness of form, meaningless repetition of the same short tricks, the nasal sound of the orchestra, the strained crash of the brass, and above all its sickly, perverse harmonization and quasi-melodic outlines, the complete absence of simplicity and naturalness, the complete absence of themes."⁷

Cui's criticism may be excessive, but the symphony does have some unusual features. According to Johnson, Rachmaninoff's first symphony "has more than its share of bizarre moments, particularly in the finale, with several explosive bursts, sudden pauses and, especially, a notably un-triumphant coda with a grinding inexorable string theme repeated ad infinitum."⁸

Taneyev and Rimsky-Korsakov criticized the symphony similarly to Cui. The premiere of this symphony was likely ill fated no matter who was on the podium, because it broke with so many expectations. For a piece like this, Glazunov was probably not a suitable conductor.

After the Rachmaninoff symphony debacle, Glazunov entered the most active and creative period of his life. From 1897 to 1906, Glazunov composed three ballets, four symphonies, numerous tone poems, two piano sonatas, a string quartet, numerous art songs, and the violin concerto. He took a position on the faculty of the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1899,

and he would stay there almost continuously until 1928. Even though this period was very creative for Glazunov, it was also very turbulent.

The year 1905 was probably the most turbulent year of Glazunov's life, and was also turbulent for all of Russia. On January 22, 1905, the Bloody Sunday Massacre sparked a series of riots and strikes throughout Russia among students and the working class. The Conservatory was not immune to the unrest. Students were boycotting classes and examinations, and on March 30 of that year, the striking students would storm the Conservatory and set off stink bombs inside, forcing everyone inside to flee.⁹ At that time, Rimsky-Korsakov, who was the director of the Conservatory, supported the student protests. He was promptly forced out of his position, and Glazunov then resigned on April 4 in protest of Rimsky-Korsakov's dismissal. Glazunov laid low for a few months and came back to the Conservatory in December as the director. His first action was to bring Rimsky-Korsakov back to the faculty.

In reaction to the turmoil of 1905, the Russian Government took action by releasing the October Manifesto. This document contained specific promises from the government including “real personal inviolability, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association.”¹⁰ These promises were short lived. After the immediate effects of the Manifesto went away, the Government started using intimidation tactics against the revolutionaries. Antisemitism also took hold as “the right-wing elements stirred up a horrendous wave of anti-semitic pogroms, carried out by hooligan gangs with official support at the highest level.”¹¹ This claimed the lives of thousands of Jews throughout Russia.

As director of the Conservatory, Glazunov would help the Jewish people whenever he could. At the beginning of WW I, when Jews made up about 4 percent of the Russian general population, about half of the Conservatory students were Jewish. Glazunov openly welcomed Jewish people, while other universities turned them away.¹² When asked by the authorities how

many Jews were in the Conservatory, Glazunov answered defiantly “we don't keep count.”¹³ Shostakovich said that “an independent and even challenging answer like that could have created problems for Glazunov. But he wasn't afraid.”¹⁴

At this time, the Russian authorities were particular about which Jews would be allowed to settle in the cities, and were not generally permitted to attend institutions of higher learning. Many young Jewish musicians in danger of deportation would seek refuge at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and Glazunov would find them shelter during their entrance examinations, even in his own home. According to Slonimsky, “Glazunov, the most law abiding of musicians broke an unjust law, but the authorities never called him to account.”¹⁵

In the years of fallout after the uprising of 1905, the most active time in Glazunov's life was coming to an end. His creativity trailed off significantly after the completion of his eighth symphony in 1906. There were many reasons for his creative decline, including his ever increasing workload at the conservatory and his worsening alcoholism. Glazunov's popularity also declined because his composition style was eclipsed by the new innovations of the 20th century which he refused to adopt.

As Glazunov's composition career was slowing down, he dedicated more of his life to teaching. He taught composition, orchestration, and chamber music at the Conservatory. Glazunov had many pedagogical quirks, and according to Shostakovich, they created some uncomfortable situations. During chamber music coaching sessions, Glazunov would sit at his desk some distance away from the group. He would allow the group to play through their entire piece, even if it was a large work, and then make a short indistinct speech that no one could understand. Shostakovich said that it seemed wrong to move closer or to ask Glazunov to repeat himself. The group would repeat the complete work, and then Glazunov would give a shorter and less distinct speech to close the session.¹⁶

While teaching, Glazunov almost never moved from his desk. That was because he had a rubber tube sticking out of his desk through which he sipped alcohol. Glazunov was highly dependent on alcohol, and Shostakovich doubted that Glazunov was capable of teaching “without this fortification.”¹⁷ Even though Glazunov had strange ways while teaching, Shostakovich spoke highly of Glazunov as a pedagogue.

You might get the impression that there was nothing to be learned from Glazunov. You would be mistaken. He was an excellent pedagogue, but first one had to learn how to learn from him. I think I mastered that art, I learned the secret. And so I have every right to call Glazunov one of my teachers. In order to really study with Glazunov you had to meet him as often as possible, catch him wherever possible—at concerts, at people's houses, and naturally, at the Conservatory.¹⁸

Even though Glazunov could seem rather puzzling in his methods, he was effective in his own unusual way.

Glazunov remained the director of the Conservatory until 1928 when he left Russia to conduct concerts around the globe. He left an indelible mark on the program and curriculum at the Conservatory with his establishment of an opera studio and a student orchestra. His popularity as a composer was declining quickly at this time, his health was worsening, and his alcoholism was increasing further. Glazunov settled in Paris with his wife and daughter in 1934. In the same year Glazunov wrote his last well-known work, his Saxophone Concerto. He died two years later on March 21, 1936.

Glazunov's Musical Style:

Glazunov was extremely conservative in his style. His compositional output reflects the styles and genres of the 19th century, and does not include any of the new techniques of the 20th century. Glazunov was not secretive about his conservatism, as he would once walk out of a performance of Prokofiev's music “in fear for his hearing;” however, it may have been because he simply did not approve of the music.¹⁹ Even though Glazunov was nurtured by the new

Russian National School of composers, he was much more influenced by Western music, especially that of Liszt. According to Slonimsky, Lisztian harmonies are apparent in Glazunov's work. On the trip when Belyayev took Glazunov to Weimar, the pair also visited Bayreuth where they heard Wagner opera. Glazunov would only adopt external color effects from Wagner. Slonimsky notes that "perhaps this inner antagonism to Wagner made Glazunov avoid the theatrical musical genre; he never wrote an opera."²⁰ It was not only antagonism toward Wagner that kept Glazunov from writing opera. He simply preferred the abstract expression of instrumental music in traditional forms to the more realistic expression of vocal and program music.

Glazunov wrote eight symphonies and an unfinished first movement of a ninth. The form and style of these symphonies is Romantic and very consistent, as all but one of them are in the traditional four-movement form. They include a sonata-like opening, a slow movement, a scherzo, and a long finale. All of the symphonies are very similar in length, and the only substantive formal difference between the symphonies is the respective positions of the slow movement and scherzo. The one symphony that is in three movements is also traditional for the three-movement symphonic form.

As an orchestrator, Glazunov worked to make his symphonic writing highly playable. This, however, does not mean that Glazunov's works are necessarily easy. He did not try to simplify technical issues.²¹ He wrote and orchestrated his music to make the statement he wanted to make, and each instrument plays an integral and indispensable part. Glazunov, however, did not try to make his music or orchestrations excessively difficult. For him, there were three ways of orchestrating: "(1) so that any fairly efficient ensemble could play the music after a reasonable amount of rehearsing; (2) so that only a virtuoso orchestra, with an expert conductor, could make it sound; and (3) so that no conductor and no orchestra could possibly attain satisfactory

results.”²² He taught student orchestrators to use the first method. Glazunov used instrumental doubling to create security among the players, without creating excessively thick or muddy textures.

Glazunov wrote concertos for violin, piano, cello, and saxophone. These pieces are much more variable in form and structure than the concertos. They seem rhapsodic, creating a tone-poem like mood, but they are far from formless. The concertos also tend to be more harmonically adventurous and experimental than Glazunov's other works. The concertos have anywhere between two and four sections that are bound together without pauses. Glazunov used his usual orchestration techniques, as each part is well supported but not redundant. The textures, while substantial, are generally very transparent. The solo line is always firmly backed by the orchestra, but it is never overpowered, even in its softest moments.

Even though Glazunov stayed with his Romantic style, he was well aware of the innovations of the 20th century, and he did not penalize students at the Conservatory for working in a 20th century style. “Glazunov remained faithful to the ideals of the nineteenth-century art. He refused to compromise with dissonant music; but he was unfailingly fair to students of his Conservatory who indulged the passion for modernistic discords, provided they fulfilled their academic requirements.”²³ Glazunov once said “of course art must progress with the rest of the world [but] personally, I prefer evolution to revolution, even in music.”²⁴ Glazunov likely understood the styles of the 20th century and the students' desire to work in those styles. He stood firmly by the Romantic style because of his personal philosophical convictions, and almost certainly not because of ignorance or lack of understanding.

The Violin Concerto:

Glazunov wrote his violin concerto in 1904, and dedicated it to Leopold Auer, who first performed it in February 1905 at the Imperial Russian Musical Society of St. Petersburg with

Glazunov conducting. The piece would receive its public premiere in Great Britain not with Auer, but with the young Mischa Elman on the violin. Glazunov was visiting Auer, and he heard Elman playing the concerto. Glazunov was sufficiently impressed to ask Auer if Elman could play the British premiere of the concerto, and Auer agreed.²⁵

Glazunov's violin concerto, like his other concertos, is relatively short in length and quasi-rhapsodic in form. It forms one musical unit, but it possesses four distinct sections identifiable by thematic material. The formal structure, while not obvious, is very strong. There are five main themes that hold the concerto tightly together. The piece opens with a fairly typical sonata exposition. Two contrasting themes are presented—one in A Minor, the other in F Major. The First Theme:²⁶



According to Fairley, “this freely-flowing melody, improvisational in character, becomes the frame on which the composer erects increasingly brilliant, virtuoso writing for the violin.”²⁷ This theme comes back repeatedly in the concerto.

The Second Theme:

Tranquillo.

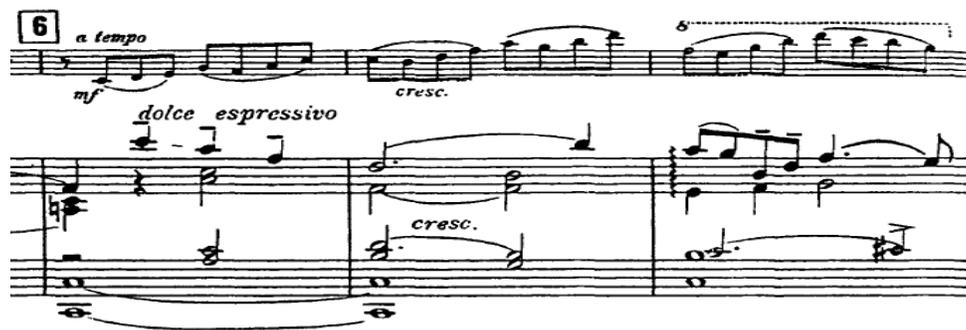
dolce

animando

a tempo

rall.

This theme which is rather simpler than the first provides a welcome contrast. This theme completes the sonata exposition, and will come back with the first theme to be developed later in the concerto. As this second theme unfolds, an accompanimental figure appears in the solo line. Unassuming as this figure may be, it becomes significant in the development of the concerto.



As would be expected in a sonata form, there is a cadence in the key of the second theme, then the development starts. After a false start of a development, a new theme in Db Major comes in.



This theme creates a self-contained ABA form, which is common in songs and slow movements of symphonies and concertos. This section represents the slow movement in the overall form of the concerto, but it is dropped in between the exposition and development of the sonata form. After this detour, the real development ensues.

The first and second themes are restated quickly, then the accompaniment figure from the second theme comes back with a vengeance.

This figure is diminished and chromatically altered, but it is highly recognizable. The development techniques used here are similar to those used in previous eras, as Glazunov makes much use of augmentation, diminution, and fragmentation. After some development, the first theme comes back making a strong appearance.

The first theme returns in a fairly complete form, but it is not a real recapitulation, as it is re-harmonized, and there is still significant development going on in the solo part and the orchestra.

Despite the development that occurs in this passage, the first theme is complete enough to make this the passage serve in some capacity as recapitulation. This segment of the concerto serves a double function—furthering the development, while re-presenting the first theme. Glazunov apparently folded the end of the development into the first part of the recapitulation, which was

an ingenious way of making the form more compact. After this quasi-recapitulation of the first theme, the second theme comes back in C Major.



This recapitulation of the second theme is very similar to the initial appearance of the theme. It provides a calm contrast to the previous section. With both themes recapitulated in some way, the sonata form is completed.

The cadenza is placed right after the recapitulation, and serves as a bridge to the finale. It brings back the themes that were involved in the creation and development of the sonata form. The placement and function of the cadenza varies in the Romantic violin concertos. In Mendelssohn's violin concerto, the cadenza is between the development and the recapitulation of the first movement. Sibelius's violin concerto includes two cadenzas in the first movement. During the Classical period, cadenzas were generally improvised and placed near the end of the first movement. Romantic cadenzas are usually written by the composer and integrated into the form of the concerto. Glazunov wrote this cadenza and soldered it firmly into the structure of the piece. Even though Glazunov's placement of the cadenza seems unorthodox, it is very classical in that it comes right after the close of the sonata form.

The biggest turning point in the concerto is during the cadenza. After some development on the three main musical ideas in the sonata form, the first theme comes back as the subject of a fugue.

Più sostenuto.

arco

p

This fugue eventually breaks down until the main theme is hardly audible, and that is the last of the initial themes heard in the concerto. The cadenza turns away from the initial material to point towards the joyous finale that is to come. Before the finale, however, there is a transition that builds energy through fast, arpeggiated runs in the solo part, low dominant pedal tones in the orchestra, and a chord mutation from C Major, to C# Diminished, to C# Minor, then finally to A Major.

animando

cresc.

dim.

p

mf

pp

The finale commences with its march-like theme, which is first given by the trumpets, then echoed by the violin. This theme becomes the basis for the modified rondo form in this section.

31 Allegro. $\text{♩} = 84$

marcato



After the main theme is passed between the trumpets and violin, the violin plays virtuosic variations on the main theme. The full orchestra then boldly presents the main theme, leading to the first episode.

36 Solo *grazioso*

p



This episode begins with a lilting dance-like tune in C# Minor. The solo part gets more virtuosic as this episode unfolds. Double stops and fast arpeggios, along with a series of modulations, bring back another statement of the main theme in A Major by the full orchestra.

The second episode is a pentatonic folk-style tune in D Major:

40

Solo *Sul G*

f



The accompaniment to this tune consists of open fifths in the cellos on the open strings, A and D, further emphasizing the folk element. Like the first episode, this one increases in its complexity and virtuosity as it progresses. Another series of modulations brings this episode out to C Major, where the main theme starts to develop.

At the C Major cadence the main theme comes back in canon with its own inversion. For clarity, the canon is illustrated in a four-part open score:

According to Micci, the fact that this is a chordal line makes this “ingenious and effective” contrapuntal trick possible.²⁸

After the inversion canon, the main theme, along with its inversion, are developed further, eventually leading to the final statement of the main theme. This time, however, the main theme is presented much differently from before. The orchestration is much lighter, with upper woodwinds, glockenspiel and harp being the main timbres. The violin is accompanying with pizzicato chords which are plucked in the manner of a balalaika.

51 *quasi guitarra*
f

The rest of the movement is dedicated to development of the main theme, and there are no further episodes or returns of the main theme. Virtuoso display becomes the focal point, but musical beauty is still paramount as the piece comes to a big finish in A Major. As Fairley notes, “the music’s warm, romantic cast is always present—even during the most brilliant moments of the concerto’s closing section.”²⁹

Use of the Violin:

Throughout this concerto, Glazunov makes full use of the violin without creating excessive technical difficulty or virtuosic display.³⁰ The main themes are predominantly in the high or low registers, which are the strongest on the violin. The solo violin is always strongly backed by the orchestra, but is never overpowered. When the violin is in a weak register or playing softly, the orchestration is thinner. When the violin is in a stronger register or playing double stops, the orchestration is thicker to provide support for the solo line.

Glazunov uses double stops on the violin both harmonically and contrapuntally. There are several instances in the concerto when there are parallel thirds, sixths, or octaves to add thickness to the texture of the violin part. Glazunov used only the most idiomatic double stops for the violin. The first instance of double stops is in an especially passionate moment in the Db Major section.

Musical score for measures 11-16. The top staff is a melodic line starting at measure 11, marked with *cresc.* and *f passionato*. The bottom staff is a bass line starting at measure 16, marked with *mf*.

Glazunov also uses octaves to emphasize a portion of the main theme for this section. The use of octaves adds sound without adding the thickness of thirds or sixths. This is the only instance of octaves in the whole concerto, except for an optional use of octaves at the end of the concerto. With the use of octaves here, Glazunov not only achieved the emphasis provided by double stops, but also also a wonderful clarity and purity of timbre perfect for the moving emotional quality of the line.

Musical score for measures 17-22. The top staff is a melodic line with triplets, marked with *mp* and *cresc.*. The bottom staff is a bass line starting at measure 16, marked with *f* and *più piano*.

When the first theme is recapitulated, it is in parallel sixths. As the concerto develops, the drama builds up, and the sixths provide an outburst intensity.

Musical score for measures 23-28. The top staff is a melodic line with triplets, marked with *passionato* and *mf*. The bottom staff is a bass line with octaves, marked with *colla parte*.

Another instance of double stops is at the beginning of the finale, where the violin copies the trumpets' lines. These statements are in mainly thirds and sixths, and are very idiomatic for both the violin and the trumpets.



As the excitement and sound build near the end of the finale, double stops are an integral part of the development. These sixths start to move up in sequence to build anticipation. While idiomatic for the violin, this passage demands difficult formations of the left hand in order to reach the notes on the fingerboard.

Glazunov uses three note chords conservatively and effectively in this concerto. There is only one significant instance of them aside from the final chord. He uses them to provide a punctuation before the first theme returns.

Musical score for violin and cello/contrabass, measures 21-23. The violin part is marked "Solo" and features a tremolo of double stops. The cello/contrabass part is marked "(Ossia.)" and features a tremolo of double stops. Measure 23 is boxed.

Double stops and chords such as these have been relatively common in writing for the violin since the Romantic period. Glazunov takes double stops a step further by using fingered tremolo. This enables the violin to produce full chords without the thickness and high amplitude of sound created by bowing three note chords. Here in the cadenza, they are used to fill in the chord progression into the end of the cadenza. They come in gradually as part of the contrapuntal line, but soon, all that is left is the chord progression.

Musical score for violin and cello/contrabass, measures 24-26. The violin part is marked "sul II-III C." and features a tremolo of double stops. The cello/contrabass part features a tremolo of double stops. Measure 24 is boxed.

In the second episode of the finale, they are used to produce extra rhythmic motion in addition to filling in chords underneath the melody.

Musical score for violin, measures 43-44. The violin part is marked "Solo" and features a tremolo of double stops. Measure 44 is boxed.

Fingered tremolos are also used to create shimmering accompanimental lines in the solo part to support prominent lines in the orchestra. This technique is sometimes used in symphonic literature, but almost never shows up in concertos for violin. Nevertheless, this technique is effective.

A musical score snippet for a violin concerto. The top staff is a single treble clef line. It begins with a box containing the number '45' and the word 'tremolo' written above it. The music consists of a rapid, continuous series of eighth notes, creating a shimmering effect. The dynamic marking 'f' (forte) is placed below the first few notes, and 'p' (piano) is placed below the last few notes. The bottom two staves are a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with piano accompaniment. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand, with some notes marked with 'p'.

Harmonics are used sparingly throughout the concerto, but Glazunov definitely uses them in the right places. Natural harmonics are created on string instruments by touching the string lightly at a certain point while bowing it. Artificial harmonics are created by firmly stopping the string with one finger, and touching it lightly with another. Glazunov uses both varieties in the concerto for various purposes. Their clear and bright timbre makes them ideal to top off upward runs, and to create timbres that blend well with the brighter instruments of the orchestra such as piccolo, triangle, and glockenspiel. One instance of harmonics leading to the top of a run occurs two measures before the F Major cadence at the end of the second theme.

A musical score snippet showing a melodic line in a single treble clef staff. The music features a series of eighth notes that rise in pitch, ending with a sharp upward flourish. A dynamic marking 'dim.' (diminuendo) is placed below the first few notes. The bottom two staves are a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of sustained chords in the left hand and rests in the right hand.

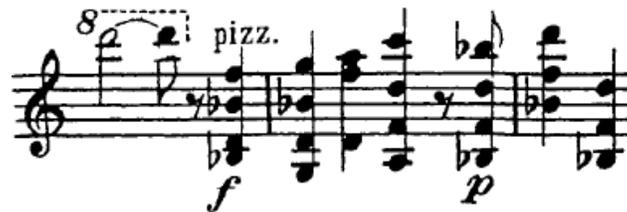
Since artificial harmonics do not project as well as regular notes, Glazunov greatly reduces the orchestration when the violin is playing them. It would be possible for the violin to play these notes as regular stopped notes, but the harmonics have a certain lightness that allows the forward motion to easily continue without interruption. Glazunov uses harmonics at the top of the final run to the end of the concerto. The orchestration is quite heavy here, but Glazunov ingeniously placed the orchestral chords on the off beats in order to allow the sound of the violin harmonics to come out of the texture.

The image shows a musical score for violin and piano. The violin part is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It features a series of artificial harmonics, indicated by the word "Ossia:" above the notes. The piano part is written in bass clef with the same key signature. It includes dynamic markings: *p cresc.*, *mf*, *cresc.*, and *f*. The score is set in common time.

Another instance of harmonics is at the beginning of the cadenza. They extend the upward run, but they give a distant sound as the second theme recapitulation fades into the cadenza.

The image shows a musical score for violin, starting at measure 28. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. It features a melodic line with a fermata over the final notes. The instruction "Cad. a piacere" is written above the notes. The score is set in common time.

Pizzicato, both right and left hand, is present in only a few places throughout the concerto, but is used very effectively. Glazunov introduces it in the cadenza where a fragment of the first theme is re-presented.



In the opening exchange of the finale, Glazunov includes left hand pizzicato. These plucks are exclusively on open strings which are more resonant than stopped notes, especially when plucked in this way. These left hand pizzicati are combined with artificial harmonics to create a uniquely sparkling timbre. The orchestration is also very bright and sparkling with piccolo, upper winds, triangle, and harp being the instruments of choice. These sounds complement each other very well, and the sounds of the violin are easily heard.

A musical score for the opening exchange of the finale. It consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. The middle staff is in treble clef and contains a dense, rhythmic accompaniment of sixteenth notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A dynamic marking 'p' is visible at the beginning of the bottom staff.

Glazunov used the standard violin techniques as well as some unusual ones in his concerto, but he never used any technique for the sake of the technique. He never wrote to create technical flash. Glazunov wrote this concerto to create beauty in music, and all of the technical, melodic, harmonic, and formal devices that he used were means to that end. According to Micci:

Glazunov was ingenious in his use of the above violinistic devices, but he did nothing to exploit further the technical possibilities of the violin. This he did not care to do, as

further exploitation might have meant deviation from the path of the ideal and of the purely beautiful, and might have caused his music to border on the grotesque and exaggerated. Although his violinistic effects are at times both complex and startling, they are always held under a well-ordered restraint, together with a consciousness of a sense of beauty of musical contour and design. There are never any obvious technical maneuvers as used by Paganini, Vieuxtemps, or Wieniawski. There are no superfluous features, no extra runs or series of harmonics added simply as an encouragement to brilliant technical display. Every device is musical in its technicality, and is employed as a definite part of a total tonal design.³¹

Glazunov had a great mind for music and, despite his peculiarities, a great heart for people. According to Oscar Potoker, who was one of Glazunov's students, "his consideration for every insignificant human being is the most beautiful thing I ever saw."³² He would help people in need, especially those who were under governmental oppression. His heart for people also comes out in his orchestrations. He almost never put long stretches of rest in any part, because he believed that no one should sit idle while others worked.³³ As director of the Conservatory, Glazunov made the welfare of the students the first priority, and he was always ready to help people when they needed help.

Even though Glazunov was far from being an "innovative" composer, he definitely affected the course music in the 20th century. After Glazunov's life, his pupils, Shostakovich and Prokofiev, would go on to define Russian Music of the 20th Century. Glazunov had various musical influences, ranging from the New Russian School of composers to the western composers of the time such as Wagner and Liszt. He chose carefully what he would incorporate into his style of composition. Glazunov is one of few composers whose style did not change significantly over the span of a career. One could say that Glazunov was stubborn, which may be true to a certain extent. Glazunov worked hard to perfect his style, but he did not try to break new musical ground.

Glazunov used music as a great means of artistic expression. He avoided the vocal genres because they were too realistic, and "saw in the orchestra the idealistic instrument of

expression.”³⁴ Glazunov was always working for beauty and perfection rather than innovation or progress, and wrote no music that sacrificed beauty for anything else. Micci notes that “his kingdom is one of beautiful tonal lines, one of enlightened academicism that which is romantic but not exaggerated. The solutions to his creative problems are so clear, luminous, and musical that the listener is unaware of the brain-wracking work involved.”³⁵ This is especially apparent in the violin concerto with the ingenious formal constructions, the use of the violin, and the orchestrations that allow the music to come through so purely, clearly, and effortlessly.

Glazunov could have written a violin concerto in a standard four movement form with the technical flash that was so popular at the time, but it is good he did not, for he would not have written the concerto that he did. The concerto includes many beautiful lines and nothing is out of proportion. The solution that Glazunov found in the form of the concerto is also very beautiful, but it is not immediately apparent unless one looks for it. The greatest musical lines, the greatest forms, the best proportions, and the most effective solutions to problems, are the ones that can easily go unnoticed. A listener may not be immediately struck by the sheer beauty and elegance of Glazunov's violin concerto, not because of ignorance, and not because the concerto fails to be beautiful, but because the concerto has a freedom and purity of expression within its structure that brings the musical content forth so transparently that the piece itself almost fades into the background.

Notes

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6. Phillip Ramey, liner notes to Alexander Glazunov, *Concerto for Saxophone and Quartet for Saxophones, Op. 109*,
7. Brent Woo, "Letters from Sergei Rachmaninoff," 2-3.
8. Lawrence Johnson, "Chicago Clazzical Review."
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14. Dmitrii Dmitrievich Shostakovich, *Testimony*, 166.
15. Nicholas Slonimsky, *Writings on Music*, 44.
16. Dmitrii Shostakovich, *Testimony* 58-9.
17. Dmitrii Shostakovich, *Testimony*, 59.
18. Dmitrii Shostakovich, *Testimony*, 59.
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20. Nicholas Slonimsky, "Writings on Music," 42.
21. Nicholas Slonimsky, "Writings on Music," 42.
22. Nicholas Slonimsky, "Writings on Music," 42.
23. Nicholas Slonimsky, "Writings on Music," 44.
24. Phillip Ramey, liner notes to Alexander Glazunov, *Concerto for Saxophone and Quartet for Saxophones*, Op. 109,
25. "Montgomery Philharmonic They Write Descriptive Music: Program Notes," Montgomery Philharmonic: Reinventing the Community Orchestra, accessed April 30, 2014, <http://www.montgomeryphilharmonic.org/page44/notes2.html>.
26. All musical examples copied or derived from Alexander Glazunov, *Concerto in a Minor, Op. 82*, ed. Leopold Auer (M.P. Belaieff, 1905), 1, accessed April 30, 2014, <http://imslp.org/wiki/Special:ImagefromIndex/04326>.
27. E. Lee Fairley, preface to Alexander Glazunov, *Concerto in a Minor, Op. 82 for Violin and Piano* (New York: International Music Company, 1967).
28. Alfio Micci, "A Study of the Glazounow Violin Concerto" (master's thesis, Eastman School of Music, 1941), 24, accessed April 30, 2014, <http://hdl.handle.net/1802/9006>.
29. E. Lee Fairley, preface to Alexander Glazunov, *Concerto in a Minor, Op. 82 for Violin and Piano*.
30. This discussion of violinistic devices is modeled after Micci's in "A Study of the Glazounow Violin Concerto."
31. Alfio Micci, "A Study of the Glazounow Violin Concerto." 18.

32. Phillip Ramey, liner notes to Alexander Glazunov, Concerto for Saxophone and Quartet for Saxophones, Op. 109,
33. Nicholas Slonimsky, "*Writings on Music*," 42.
34. Alfio Micci, "*A Study of the Glazounow Violin Concerto*," 6.
35. Alfio Micci, "*A Study of the Glazounow Violin Concerto*," 6.

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