**Summary of Three Dissertation Recitals**

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my grandmothers, Rosemary Brooks and Carolynne McDonald, Kimberly Backman, my father Freddie U. Brooks, mother Stacci L. Evans, sister Stacci L. Brooks, Aunt Lolita Black, and my ancestors. Thank you for all that you have sacrificed to make this a possibility and reality for me.

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**ABSTRACT**

The repertoire in the following dissertation recitals highlights music written for winds from the Renaissance to present. Works for both large ensemble and chamber ensembles were presented, and each recital features diverse compositional perspectives.

The first recital was a combination of performances with the University of Michigan Symphony Band , Symphony Band Chamber Winds, Concert Band, and Concert Band Chamber Winds. The recital included *Cathedral*s by Kathryn Salfelder; *Dream Forest* by Yosuke Fukuda; *Inhere, Adhere* by Cole Reyes; *Deep River* by Benjamin Horne; *Boom Goes the Dynamite* by Paul Dooley; *Seascape* by Ruth Gipps; *Lyric* by George Walker (transcribed by Luci Disano); and *Ballad*e by Samuel Coleridge Taylor (transcribed by Donald Patterson). A lecture titled "Surround Sound" showcased the interconnected threads between eras, identities, cultures, and the self and was presented to the graduate conducting seminar on November 11th, 2025.

The second recital was a combination of performances with the University of Michigan Symphony Band Chamber Winds, Concert Band, and an ad hoc recital ensemble. The recital included "First in the Earth" from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* by David Maslanka; *I need to thank you* by Rj Dion; "*With Malice Toward None"* from the film *Lincoln* by John Williams (transcribed by Paul Lavender); and Symphony No. 4 by David Maslanka. A lecture titled "I Need to Thank You" reflected Andre DeShields second cardinal rule, "Slowly is the fastest way

to get where you want to be," and preceded the ad hoc recital performance at Pioneer High School on December 5, 2025.

The third recital was a combination of performances with the University of Michigan Symphony Band, Symphony Band Chamber Winds, Concert Band and an ad hoc recital ensemble. The recital included *...and the swallow* by Caroline Shaw (arranged by Danielle Fisher; "Coming Home" from *Desert Roads* by David Maslanka; "Resilience" from Symphony No. 1: *And Yet, They Persist* by Zachary Meier; *Verve* by Cole Reyes, "Motherless Child" from *Spiritual Symphony* by Benjamin Horne; and the Finale from *Symphony No. 1* by Paul Cravens. A lecture titled "Keep Climbing" embodies the essence of Andre DeShields third cardinal rule, "The top of one mountain is the bottom of the next, so keep climbing," and preceded the ad hoc recital Hankinson Hall on February 20, 2026.

**Recital One Program**

**Cathedrals** (2008) — Kathryn Salfelder (b. 1987)

*University of Michigan Concert Band*
*April 16, 2025*

**Dream Forest** (2014) — Yosuke Fukuda (b. 1975)

*University of Michigan Chamber Winds*
*January 31, 2025*

**Inhere, Adhere** (2025) — Cole Reyes (b.1998)

*University of Michigan Concert Band Chamber Winds*
*September 19, 2025*

**Deep River** (2021) — Benjamin Horne (b. 1995)

*University of Michigan Concert Band*
*February 4, 2025*

**Boom Goes the Dynamite** (2023) — Paul Dooley (b. 1983)

*University of Michigan Symphony Band*
*October 30, 2024*

**Seascape** (1958/2004) — Ruth Gipps (1921-1999)

*University of Michigan Symphony Band Chamber Winds*
*January 31, 2025*

**Lyric** (1946) — George Walker (1922-2018) *arr. Luci Disano*

**Ballade** (1898) — Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) *trans. Donald Patterson*

*University of Michigan Symphony Band*
*February 6, 2025*

**Recital I: *Surround Sound***

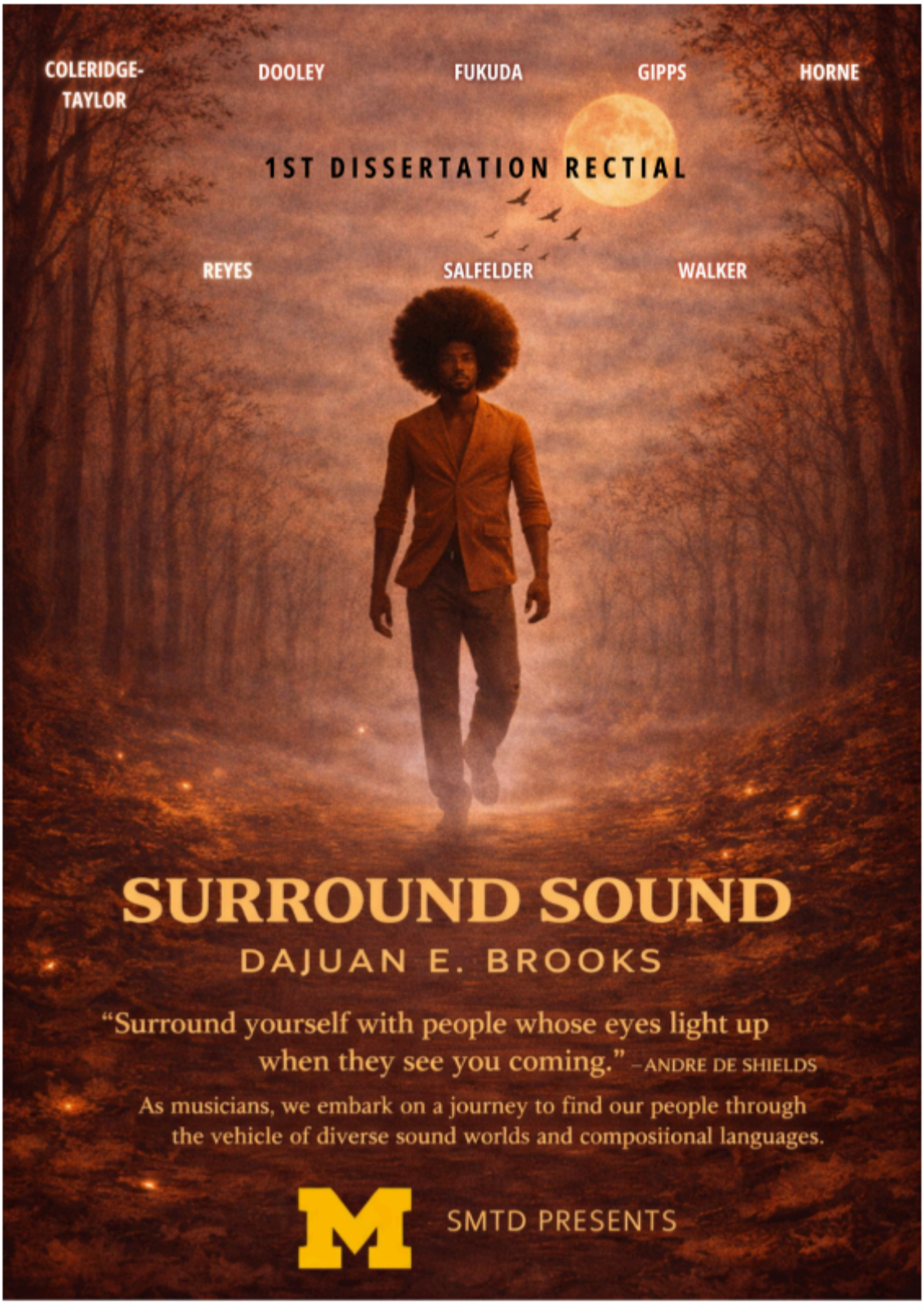



Figure 1: Recital One Flyer.

## Recital One Program Notes

This journey and concert series started serendipitously with a quote by André DeShields. André DeShields was born in 1946 and is known as an actor, director, choreographer, and motivational speaker whose most famous works on Broadway include, *Warp!*, *Play On!*, *Ain't Misbehavin',* the original production of *The Wiz*, and most recently *Hadestown*.[1] I wrote about his three cardinal rules in my application letter, which provided the themes for all three of the recital concerts that I would present at the University of Michigan. Through this submission was born the three-part concert series: 1. *'Surround Sound'*, 2. '*I need to say thank you'*, and 3. *'Keep Climbing'*.

This dissertation begins with that document and represents aspiration, but now also reflects lived experience. My application letter outlined values rooted in mentorship, belonging, and purpose. At the time, these ideas existed as hopes for what could be. Over the course of my doctoral study, they became the foundation of how I think, how I teach, and how I create. What began as intention has grown into practice, shaped by the people, spaces, and opportunities that have surrounded me during my time at the University of Michigan.

At the center of this transformation is a simple and powerful structure. DeShields' cardinal rules became more than inspiration; they became a framework for understanding my own journey as a conductor, musician, and human being. Each recital in this series reflects one of those rules, and together they tell a story of growth that is deeply personal and profoundly communal. The following is the letter that began it all:

[1] "André De Shields," National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed May 20, 2026, https://nmaahc.si.edu/andre-de-shields.

The Power of Three

"First-time Tony award winner André De Shields talks about his three cardinal rules of ability and longevity. First, surround yourself with people whose eyes light up when they see you coming. Second, slowly is the fastest way to get to where you want to be. And third, the top of one mountain is the bottom of the next, so keep climbing.[2]

These rules have come to be my guiding principles, both in life and in my career as a music performer and music educator. My goal is to plant trees under whose shade I will not sit – to uplift the voices, minds, thoughts, music, and hearts of those around me. I want to be a beacon of hope and freedom from the ideologies that have chained and shackled people of a different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and ability within the historical classrooms and performance spaces of music.

As a first-generation college student, I am a product of the many people who have guided me and nurtured my dreams and aspirations. Throughout most of my academic career, I never had a Black teacher of any kind, nor a Black music educator. As a student at Northwestern University, I've reviewed dozens of studies about how representation matters – case studies like the Clark Doll Tests done at the W.E.B DuBois Institute Colloquium[3], in which children both black and white were shown to associate positive qualities with white dolls and negative qualities with black dolls. I have been to many collegia, workshops, and symposiums and heard countless people talk about their first experiences seeing women who looked like them or teachers and conductors who

[2] *André De Shields, acceptance speech, 73rd Annual Tony Awards, Radio City Music Hall, New York, NY, June 9, 2019. Quoted in "Tony-Winner André De Shields on 'Hadestown' and His 'Karmic Debt' for a Life on Stage," CBS News, June 12, 2019, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tony-awards-winner-andre-de-shields-hadestown-star/.*
[3] "Professor Revisits Clark Doll Tests | News | The Harvard Crimson," December 1, 2011, https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2011/12/1/clark-dolls-research-media/.

identified as they do, and how these seemingly simple encounters liberated them in profound ways. For many years, I truly believed that this would never happen for me, and worried that I would always harbor a certain sense of loneliness.

Everything changed when I began my studies at Northwestern for the Leadership, Equity, Inclusion, and Organizational Change (LEIOC) Certification Degree program within the Master of Science in Leadership and Organizational Change (MSLOC). Dr. Ahmmad Brown was the first Black professor I ever had. Dr. Brown is a graduate of Harvard, owns a successful business and consulting firm, and is a leading agent of organizational change within the diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) sector. He is brilliant and kind; a spirit and light that illuminates every room that he enters, and every Zoom call that he unmutes. Most importantly: He does what he does not only for the Black students in the room, but for everyone in the cohort – challenging us and giving us the space to expand our minds, thoughts, and senses of self. While this was happening, I realized that this is what thousands of students have said they have experienced with me, and I want to continue to do this for many others to come. I want to be the change agent who has the courage to speak up, speak out, and help create a world of music that fills musicians' cups with fulfillment, joy, and belonging.

Being a public school teacher in both Illinois and Texas exposed me to some harsh truths about the educational world, and helped me center my purpose and my goals. I was always one of ‘the few’ and realized that many people and spaces would exclude me because of how I look and identify. Not only did I feel this happening to me; I saw it happening to so many of my colleagues who felt the glass ceiling thicken as the years went by. I saw districts in central Texas with nine high schools, each with five or more

directors, and not one black person in those spaces or positions. This says a lot to us, but it says more to the students about what belonging looks like or lack thereof, what uniqueness looks like, and where they might fit in. I believe the greatest contribution anyone can make to the arts today is the gift of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Looking forward, I want to use my voice to encourage and uplift the unheard, and help recruit the dynamic and diverse musicians and educators of the future. This can never happen when so many remain unseen and unheard.

In my career both in education and beyond, I want to learn from the best while fostering strong community, friendships, and musicianship both within and with others. I want to understand mentorship, creativity, and knowledge on a molecular level. I want to study with a teacher whose humanity shines through the world we live in, who pushes me to always be the best version of myself, and who believes in me deep within their core. I want to learn how to cultivate the minds, hearts, and talents of those around me, with artistry and advocacy at the center of everything I do. These are the things that I want out of my future degree program, and this is what I will do in return after finishing my DMA. Thank you for considering my application to the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance."

What once lived on the page as a statement of purpose now returns as lived reality, and the first of DeShields' three principles, "surrounding yourself with people whose eyes light up when they see you coming," becomes the foundation for the opening concert of this series. This idea moves beyond philosophy and takes shape in sound, in people, and in the spaces we create together. It asks us to think about music as something shared, something built through trust, care, and the presence of others who affirm who we are.

The repertoire for this concert reflects that idea in both sonic and human ways. Kathryn Salfelder's *Cathedrals* transforms the performance space through antiphonal brass, surrounding the audience in a way that blurs the line between performer and listener and creates an experience that feels communal rather than distant. The sound does not simply project forward, it exists all around us, reminding us that music is something we inhabit together.

George Walker's *Lyric for Strings* offers a more intimate perspective on this same idea. Written in memory of his grandmother, the piece carries a deep sense of love, care, and remembrance. It speaks to the feeling of being seen by someone who values you fully. This connection is personal for me, as it mirrors my own relationship with my grandmother, Carolynne McDonald, whose presence has been a constant source of strength in my life. When she sees me, her eyes light up, and that feeling has shaped how I understand belonging, purpose, and the responsibility to carry that same care forward to others. Her image appears in this dissertation as a reflection of that enduring influence.



Image 1: The author, DaJuan Brooks, with his grandmother, Carolynne McDonald, at the Rose Bowl Rehearsal with the Michigan Marching Band, University of Southern California, December 31, 2023.




Figure 1.1: TEDxUofM, "Radiance," Power Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 2026, Promotional Flyer.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Ballade* brings this idea into the realm of mentorship and opportunity. Edward Elgar recognized Coleridge-Taylor's talent and advocated for him, opening doors for a Black composer during the 19th century that allowed his music to be heard on a larger stage. That act of recognition created access and possibility. On March 14, 2026, at a TEDx event at the Power Center, Carol Hutchins shared a statement that continues to resonate deeply with me: Achievement is the result of opportunity.

This truth is evident in Coleridge-Taylor's story, and it is equally present in my own journey as the first Black DMA student in wind band conducting at the University of Michigan. My presence here is the result of people who chose to see me, support me, and believe in what was possible for my future. These experiences point to a larger truth; that growth is never an individual act but a collective one, shaped by the people who surround us and the environments that either affirm or deny our sense of belonging.

During my doctoral oral examination, I shared an image of my teachers and family members, and it became clear that among all of those influences, only one was a Black educator, Dr. Ahmmad Brown. His presence in my life changed everything, because for the first time I could see a version of myself reflected in the path I hoped to follow. Before that moment, I had never encountered someone who looked like me in those spaces, and that absence shaped my understanding of what was possible. His presence reshaped it entirely.




Figure 1.2: Brooks, DaJuan, "Mitochondrial DNA," Doctoral Oral Examination, Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 2026, Presentation Slide.

The first concert in this series is an embodiment of the understanding that we are capable of growth and transformation when we are surrounded by people who see us, hear us, understand us, and value us. As Klementina Sula reminds us, these forms of recognition shape what we believe we can become, and through that belief, we begin to move toward new possibilities. It is from this place of connection, recognition, and shared experience that we now turn to the music of Kathryn Salfelder, whose work continues to explore how sound, space, and human experience intersect in meaningful ways.

**Cathedrals** (2008) Kathryn Salfelder
(b. 1987)

Kathryn Salfelder (b. 1987) is an American composer whose work centers on the intersection of historical practice and contemporary compositional language. Her music engages late Medieval and Renaissance polyphony while integrating 21st century techniques, often drawing directly from early sources such as chansons, motets, and masses, while also adapting broader structural and formal ideas from these traditions.[4] Her works have been commissioned and performed by major ensembles and institutions, including the Albany Symphony, Boston Musica Viva, the United States Air Force Band in Washington, D.C., and the American Bandmasters Association. Performances of her music have been given by the Minnesota Orchestra and by hundreds of university and conservatory ensembles across the United States.[5]

Salfelder has received significant recognition for her work, including the ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award, the ASCAP CBDNA Frederick Fennell Prize, the Ithaca College Walter Beeler Memorial Composition Prize, and the United States Air Force Colonel Arnold D. Gabriel Award. Her wind ensemble works *Cathedrals*, *Crossing Parallels*, and *Reminiscence* are published by Boosey and Hawkes. She completed her Doctor of Musical Arts at the New England Conservatory, where she also earned her Bachelor of Music. She holds a Master of Music from the Yale School of Music. Her principal teachers include Michael Gandolfi, Aaron Jay Kernis, and David Lang. In addition to composing, she maintains a private studio focused on

[4] Kathryn Salfelder, "Cathedrals," Score, Boosey & Hawkes, 2008.
[5] "Kathryn Salfelder Website," n.d., https://kathrynsalfelder.com/about.

figured bass and composition and has held teaching positions at the New England Conservatory and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.[6]

*Cathedrals* is conceived as a fantasy on Giovanni Gabrieli's "Canzon Primi Toni a 8" from *Sacrae Symphoniae* (1597). Gabrieli's work, written to be performed in St. Mark's Basilica in Venice, employs *cori spezzati*, or spatially separated choirs – typically two brass ensembles positioned in opposing galleries. This antiphonal approach becomes a central structural and sonic model for Salfelder's work.[7] In figure 1.3 Salfelder requests for the seating to mimic what Gabrieli would have wanted but within a modern concert hall setting.

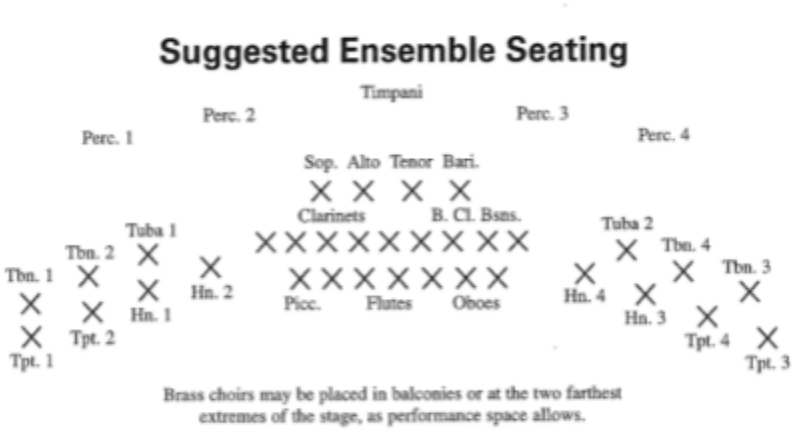



Figure 1.3: Kathryn Salfelder's suggested ensemble seating for Cathedrals, positioning brass choirs at opposing extremes of the stage to evoke Gabrieli's cori spezzati tradition within a modern concert hall setting.

Salfelder reimagines this tradition through what she describes as a "neo-renaissance" approach. The piece incorporates antiphonal ensemble placement, canonic textures, and contrapuntal techniques rooted in 16th century practice, while simultaneously expanding the timbral palette through modern wind ensemble orchestration.[8] The result is a deliberate synthesis

[6] "Kathryn Salfelder Website."
[7] Salfelder, "Cathedrals," Score.
[8] Salfelder, "Cathedrals," Score.

of historical and contemporary sound worlds, where Renaissance spatial ideals coexist with modern harmonic color and instrumentation.

A defining structural element of *Cathedrals* is its reliance on the golden ratio, expressed as approximately 1 to 0.618. Salfelder organizes the large-scale form of the piece around this proportion, with the primary golden section occurring at measure 141, and surrounding regions extending roughly from measures 114 to 177.

The golden ratio, often denoted by the Greek letter *phi*, describes a proportional relationship in which the ratio of a smaller segment to a larger segment equals the ratio of the larger segment to the whole, approximately 0.618.[9] In music theory, this proportion has been used as an analytical framework for understanding large-scale form, particularly in studies of Claude Debussy's music, where structural divisions and climactic points have been interpreted as aligning with golden section proportions.[10] These proportional relationships are often associated with asymmetrical formal design and may be modeled through numerical systems such as the Fibonacci series.[11] At the same time, scholars emphasize that such proportional analyses are based on observed structural patterns rather than definitive evidence of compositional intent.[12] In *Cathedrals*, Salfelder uses this proportional system not as an abstract concept but as an audible formal guide. As she writes in her program note, the golden section and its surrounding area have "audible characteristics, often evidenced by cadences, changes in texture and juxtaposition of ideas."[13] These markers are not abstract. At measure 114 the texture begins to shift, moving away from the dense antiphonal exchanges between brass choirs and introducing more open suspended

[9] Craig Ayrey, *Review of Claude Debussy and Twentieth-Century Music; Debussy in Proportion. A Musical Analysis*, by Arthur B. Wenk and Roy Howat, *Music Analysis* 3, no. 3 (1984): 271, https://doi.org/10.2307/854141.
[10] Richard S. Parks, review of *Review of Claude Debussy and Twentieth-Century Music; Debussy in Proportion: A Musical Analysis*, by Arthur B. Wenk and Roy Howat, *Journal of Music Theory* 29, no. 2 (1985): 323, https://doi.org/10.2307/843618.
[11] Ayrey, *A Musical Analysis*, 271–72.
[12] Ayrey, *A Musical analysis*, 271.
[13] Salfelder, "Cathedrals."

quality. The golden section itself at measure 141 arrives as a moment of stillness, a clearing of the sonic landscape that functions as both structural pivot and an expressive release after the accumulation of material that preceded it. The region extending to measure 177 then draws the two harmonic and textural worlds of the piece back together before the final section begins.

For the conductor, these proportional landmarks are not simply analytical checkpoints. They are the spaces where the piece breathes, shifts weight, and changes direction, and understanding them is essential to shaping the arc of a performance. This creates a perceptible sense of the balance and inevitability in the unfolding of the work, linking her compositional process to historical precedents while maintaining a contemporary sonic identity.

Central to *Cathedrals* is the tension and dialogue between past and present. Salfelder explicitly frames the work as a synthesis of "the old and the new," combining the spatial mystique and modal language of Gabrieli with the expanded color palette of modern winds and percussion.[14] This synthesis operates on multiple levels, drawing structurally from Renaissance proportional design, while texturally incorporating imitative counterpoint and canonic writing. Spatially, it revives antiphonal brass choirs. At the same time, the harmonic language extends beyond strict modality, and the orchestration introduces timbral combinations unavailable in the 16th century. The result is not a pastiche, but a recontextualization of historical materials within a contemporary expressive framework.

The direct quotation of Gabrieli's *Canzon Primi Toni a 8* serves as a focal point in the piece. This material enters at measure 41, marking a clear point of historical reference within the broader modern texture. At this moment, Salfelder bridges centuries of musical practice, allowing the Renaissance source to emerge within a newly constructed harmonic and timbral

[14] Salfelder, "Cathedrals," Score.

environment. The entrance functions both as a structural marker and as a conceptual anchor. It reinforces the work's engagement with early music while also highlighting the transformation of that material through modern compositional techniques.




Figure: 1.4: Annotated Score Excerpt Salfelder, Kathryn, Cathedrals, Boosey & Hawkes, 2008, mm. 41-49, Score. Annotations by DaJuan Brooks.

In addition to modern compositional techniques, this passage is a discovery around tonal pitch centers that were different from the original. Through this discovery comes direct correspondence with Salfelder, where she explains the decision to make A the common tone in the opening statement of the *Canzon Primi Toni a 8*. In an April 2, 2025 email, she clarifies the harmonic structure surrounding the entrance at measure 41 and confirms that the pitch A in the score is correct and that the sonority at that moment forms a D7 chord. She also explains that the

response in the right brass choir at measure 45 is transposed up a whole step from Gabrieli's original, necessitating the adjustment from G to A in the trombone part. This is significant for both analytical and performance purposes because it demonstrates that while Salfelder draws directly from Gabrieli's material, she adapts it to fit her harmonic framework and registration design. The use of a dominant seventh sonority situates the passage within a more modern tonal context, even as the contrapuntal and spatial elements evoke Renaissance practice.[15]

*Cathedrals* stands as a clear example of Salfelder's compositional voice. She integrates historical models with contemporary techniques in a way that is both structurally rigorous and sonically distinctive. The use of the golden ratio provides a formal backbone, while the incorporation of Gabrieli's *Canzon Primi Toni a 8* establishes a direct dialogue with the past. Through these elements, the work achieves a balance between continuity and innovation, positioning itself within a lineage of composers who engage history as an active compositional resource.

[15] DaJuan Brooks, "Cathedrals," personal communication, April 2, 2025, Email Correspondence with Kathryn Salfelder.

**Dream Forest** (2014) Yosuke Fukuda
(b. 1975)

Yosuke Fukuda was born on April 19, 1975, in Suginami, Tokyo and has become a distinguished Japanese composer, arranger, and oboist. He is especially known for his innovative contributions to wind band music and multimedia sound design. From a young age, Fukuda exhibited an extraordinary affinity for music, beginning with explorations on the synthesizer during his childhood. At age 11, he composed and arranged music using a desktop music system, and experimented with adapting traditional classical works by composers such as Claude Debussy for the synthesizer. His first original work for wind band emerged during this period.[16]

Fukuda's in-depth exploration of synthesizer technologies and the multimedia capabilities of computers as a young musician informed his innovative approach to sound design as a professional. After graduating high school in 1994, he began working in the music industry while continuing to compose for theatre, opera, dance, and television. His unique expertise in music led to his appointment as president of Digital Wonderland, DAW Product, in 1999.[17]

Fukuda's breakthrough as a composer came with his wind band composition *Dancing in the Wind – Kazenomai,* which won the prestigious 14th ASAHI Composition Prize in 2003. This work was widely performed by Japanese wind orchestras and solidified his reputation as a leading young composer in the country. His music is extensively published, and his arrangements appear on successful recordings such as *Disney on Brass* (Yutaka Sado & Siena Wind Orchestra) and *Copland & Gershwin* (Kim Seikyo & Siena Wind Orchestra). Fukuda's discography spans dynamic symphonic works, intricate chamber music, and recognizable catchy melodies. His multidimensional compositional style integrates sound system technologies to create immersive

[16] "Fukuda Yosuke : Bio & Sheet Music - Hafabra Music," accessed March 23, 2026, https://www.hafabramusic.com.
[17] *Fukuda, Yosuke Legato Music, n.d., accessed March 23, 2026, https://legatomusiconline.com/composer-arranger/fukuda-yosuke/.*

and dramatic musical experiences that are unique within the wind band canon. Today, Fukuda is an active conductor, lecturer, and composer whose work continues to influence the evolution of wind band repertoire both in Japan and internationally.[18]

The composer offers the following about his work, *Dream Forest*:

> "When lost in the forest, we can be overwhelmed by its mysterious atmosphere.
> Domineering trees, dense atmosphere, whispering voices of birds...
> Wandering through such a forest in a dream, even more strange things will happen.
> Things appear and then vanish, a sense of time is lost or confused ... but the calm of the forest in such a dream can also satisfy."[19]
>
> Such stories, the development of musical motifs, the progression of mysterious chords, etc. were created by members of the NAKAMURA Dai-ichi Junior High School Band.
> It consists of triple and duple meter dances, a mystical sounding middle section, a recapitulation of the previous two-beat dance, and a coda. I would appreciate you unfolding this vivid musical world like a picture book, enjoying the chain of melodies and the changing sound color.

The program note Fukuda provides is not simply descriptive. It is an invitation. When he writes of being lost in a forest, overwhelmed by its mysterious atmosphere, and of strange things appearing and vanishing in a dream, he is describing an experience that is both deeply personal and universally recognizable. For me, programming *Dream Forest* on this recital was a deliberate choice rooted in invitation. The piece asks its performers and its audience to surrender to disorientations, to trust that being lost is not the same as being without direction, and that calm can be found even in the most unfamiliar terrain. These are not abstract ideas. They describe the

[18] "FUKUDA Yosuke."
[19] Yosuke Fukuda, "Dream Forest," Score, Brain Ensemble Collections, 2017.

experience of navigating spaces that were not designed for you, of finding your fitting in environments where your presence is still new, and of discerning that belonging does require certainty.

The formal structure of *Dream Forest* mirrors this journey with remarkable precision. The piece opens at Rehearsal A with a *Tempo di minuetto* at quarter note equals 144, a triple meter dance in G major marked fore across the full ensemble. At first glance, it appears bright, energetic, and deceptively familiar. The minuet is one of the oldest and most recognizable dance forms in Western music, and Fukuda deploys it here as a kind of false comfort. The listener enters the forest thinking they know where they are.

The shift to Rehearsal C at measure 36 introduces the *Vivace* at quarter note equals 160, where the meter changes to duple and the key signature moves to flats, signaling the second dance. This is the moment Fukuda describes as "wandering" where the familiar triple meter gives way to something more urgent and rhythmically driven. The energy is no longer stately. It is propulsive, almost restless, and the chromatic activity that develops through Rehearsals D and E depends on the sense of disorientation. The wind chimes that enter around Rehearsal E are particularly effective, floating above the ensemble texture like something half-heard in a dream, present but not fully graspable.

The heart of the piece arrives at Rehearsal G with the *Adagio* at quarter note equals 63. This is the mystical middle section Fukuda describes, and it is where the program note becomes most viscerally true. The tempo drops nearly in half, the harmonic language becomes more ambiguous, and the texture changes to reveal individual voices moving through slowly shifting harmonies. Percussion colors, particularly the suspended cymbal and wood block, create a sense

of suspended time. Fukuda writes of "a sense of time being lost or confused," and at this moment the music achieves exactly that. From the podium, this section requires a different kind of attention than the dances that surround it. There is no forward momentum to rely on. The conductor must instead hold space, allowing the music to exist without pushing it, trusting that the ensemble will find its own way through the stillness. It is one of the most demanding moments in the recital, not technically, but psychologically.

The return of the *Vivace* at Rehearsal I and the *Tempo Primo* at Rehearsal L brings back the material of the opening dances, but they do not land the same way. Having traveled through *Adagio*, the listener hears the familiar material differently. It is not simply recapitulation; it is a recognition, the feeling of returning to something you thought you knew and finding that you now understand it more fully because of where you have been. Fukuda describes this in his note as the "calm of the forest in such a dream" that "can also satisfy." That satisfaction is earned. It arrives only because the piece has taken you somewhere genuinely disorienting.

The coda at Rehearsal O, marked *Maestoso* at quarter note equals 112, brings the pieces to a broad and ceremonial close. The tempo is slower than either dance, more deliberate, and the full ensemble builds through a crescendo to a final fermata. It does not resolve with triumphant certainty so much as with settled acceptance. The forest does not become less mysterious. The dreamer simply learns to be at peace within it.

One of the most significant details in Fukuda's program note is his acknowledgment that musical motifs, the mysterious chords, and the creative storytelling of the piece were developed collaboratively with the student members of the Nakamura Dai-ichi Junior High School Band. This is not a small detail. It means that *Dream Forest* is not solely the product of one composer's

imagination. It is the result of a community of young musicians being trusted with creative agency, of a composer choosing to listen to the people who would bring his music to life rather than simply handing the notes to execute. These collaborative origins connect directly to the values that animate this dissertation. Growth is never individual. The forest is always built by more than one person.

**Inhere, Adhere** (2025) Cole Reyes (b.1998)

Cole Reyes is an American composer whose work centers on collaboration, performer experience, and structural clarity through rhythm, texture, and harmonic exploration. Born and raised in Bartlett, Illinois, Reyes grew up in a family environment that strongly supported early musical study. His parents, Dion and Chris Reyes, encouraged both him and his younger sister Sydney to begin musical training at a young age. Reyes began piano lessons at the age of six, an experience that quickly revealed both his resistance to traditional practice routines and his natural inclination toward improvisation. Rather than repeating assigned exercises, he often spent long periods at the piano creating melodies and accompaniments of his own. These early improvisational habits later became foundational to his compositional voice.[20]

Teachers soon recognized the musical potential within these spontaneous improvisations and encouraged Reyes to begin notating the music he was inventing. Through this process, he discovered composition as a discipline. What began as casual exploration at the piano gradually developed into a sustained interest in writing music. During late elementary school his musical activities expanded significantly. In fourth grade he began studying French horn and joined his school choir, two experiences that broadened his musical perspective beyond the keyboard. By the end of elementary school, Reyes was already balancing several musical roles as a pianist, horn player, and singer. This environment allowed him to experience music through multiple perspectives and contributed to an early understanding of harmony, ensemble texture, and vocal writing.[21]

[20] Cole Reyes, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Cole Reyes Through Verve and Inhere, Adhere," (Ann Arbor, MI), March 12, 2026.
[21] Reyes, "Interview: Verve and Inhere, Adhere."

Reyes received his first formal exposure to composition during middle school through a small elective course focused on melodic writing. Although modest in scope, the course introduced him to the basic principles of organizing musical ideas and translating creative impulses into notated form. During these years he composed primarily for piano, the instrument with which he was most familiar. However, his musical focus expanded significantly during high school.[22]

Reyes attended Wheaton Academy in Wheaton, Illinois from 2012 to 2016. During this period his compositional interests shifted strongly toward vocal music. Encouraged by his choir director, he began writing extensively for choir and voice, developing a deep interest in harmonic color and vocal texture. His background as a pianist contributed to a more harmonic focus in composition, and choral writing offered a natural extension of those interests. Throughout high school much of Reyes's creative output consisted of choral compositions, which allowed him to explore dense harmonic writing and expressive melodic lines.[23]

In 2016 Reyes enrolled at Washington University in St. Louis, where he pursued a double major in music and mathematics. He completed both Bachelor of Arts degrees in 2020. His time at Washington University marked the beginning of more focused compositional study. Reyes studied composition primarily with Christopher Stark and also worked briefly with composer LJ White. Because the composition program was relatively small, Reyes benefited from individualized mentorship and close faculty attention. Stark's mentorship proved particularly influential, providing Reyes with structured compositional training while encouraging him to continue developing his personal voice.[24]

[22] Reyes, "Interview: Verve and Inhere, Adhere."
[23] Reyes, "Interview: Verve and Inhere, Adhere."
[24] Reyes, "Interview: Verve and Inhere, Adhere."

During his undergraduate years, Reyes began expanding beyond vocal music into instrumental composition. He wrote chamber works including a string quartet and several smaller instrumental pieces. At the same time he remained deeply engaged with vocal music and maintained connections with the university's choral program. Notably, works of his were performed by the Washington University choir both during his freshman year and again during his senior year, creating a symbolic bookend to his undergraduate experience.[25]

Another formative aspect of Reyes's undergraduate life was his involvement in a student pop a cappella ensemble. He was a member of the group throughout all four years of his degree and became its music director during his sophomore year. In this role he arranged a large portion of the ensemble's repertoire and rehearsed the group three times per week. The practical demands of writing arrangements for live performers and hearing those arrangements rehearsed immediately provided Reyes with constant feedback on his writing. This environment strengthened his understanding of vocal texture, balance, and performability. The experience also reinforced an idea that continues to shape his compositional philosophy: music is written for people to perform, not in isolation.

Upon completing his undergraduate studies in 2020, Reyes moved to New York City to pursue graduate study at New York University. There he entered the Master of Music program in composition, formally titled "Music Theory and Composition: Concert Music." His graduate studies occurred during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, a circumstance that significantly shaped his experience of the city and its musical environment. Despite the challenges of isolation and limited performance opportunities, Reyes worked closely with several influential composers

[25] Reyes, "Interview: Verve and Inhere, Adhere."

including Rob Honstein, Michael Gordon, and Julia Wolfe. These mentors encouraged him to refine his compositional technique while developing a stronger sense of artistic identity.

Living in New York during the pandemic also led Reyes to reflect more deeply on the social dimension of music making. The difficulty of forming artistic connections during that period reinforced for him the importance of meaningful collaboration. As a result, he began placing greater emphasis on building creative partnerships with performers whose musical instincts and personalities aligned with his own.

After completing his master's degree in 2022, Reyes remained in New York City for a year while working as a barista and pursuing freelance compositional opportunities. During this time he received commissions and performances while continuing to develop collaborative relationships. One of the most significant developments from this period was the founding of the Telos Consort, a chamber ensemble consisting of two saxophonists, violin, cello, and piano. Reyes serves as the group's composer and artistic director. The ensemble was formed in collaboration with fellow musicians from his graduate program and quickly became a central creative outlet for his work. Through ongoing rehearsals, performances, and experimentation with the ensemble, Reyes found a consistent laboratory for refining his compositional voice. The group has since developed into a sustained artistic partnership and continues to perform and commission new works.[26]

In 2023 Reyes began doctoral studies in composition at the University of Michigan, where he is pursuing the Doctor of Musical Arts degree. His studies there have allowed him to work with a diverse group of composers whose perspectives span a wide range of compositional

[26] Reyes, "Interview: Verve and Inhere, Adhere."

traditions. His teachers at Michigan have included Roshanne Etezady, Kristin Kuster, Bright Sheng, Evan Chambers, and Michael Daugherty. Reyes has emphasized that one of his primary motivations for pursuing doctoral study at Michigan was the opportunity to work within a large performance-centered musical environment. Unlike some of his previous institutions, Michigan provides extensive opportunities for collaboration with instrumentalists, conductors, and ensembles. These interactions have allowed Reyes to continue developing the collaborative compositional approach that defines much of his work.[27]

Throughout his development as a composer, Reyes has consistently emphasized the importance of writing music that engages performers as active participants in the musical experience. His compositions often prioritize clarity of gesture, rhythmic vitality, and structural anchor points that organize musical material across time. At the same time, he frequently designs musical passages with the goal of creating a sense of collective enjoyment within the ensemble. For Reyes, the success of a composition is measured not only by the final sonic result, but also by the experience of the performers who bring the work to life. This philosophy reflects the cumulative influence of his early improvisation at the piano, his formative experiences writing for choir, his practical arranging work in *a cappella* ensembles, and his later collaborative work with chamber musicians. Across these varied contexts, Reyes has developed an artistic identity rooted in musical dialogue, structural creativity, and the shared joy of performance.

*Inhere, Adhere* was written in 2025 for the University of Michigan Symphony Band Chamber Winds Concert, and was selected as the department-winning composition to be featured as the world premiere. The composer writes in the score:

[27] Reyes, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Cole Reyes Through Verve and Inhere, Adhere."

> *Inhere, Adhere* is a meditation on accepting that which is inherent. Inherent to wind instruments is their need for breath to produce sound. Inherent to keyboard instruments is their natural resonance, which decays after their sounding mechanisms have been activated. These ideas provided the framework for the piece, allowing resonant and staggered breaths to provide adhesion for the ensemble, allowing sound to undulate freely and then, all at once, stopping.[28]

The form of the piece is very formulaic in nature and is straightforward by design. Throughout the piece are three moments which have been highlighted in green in the table below that are uniquely designed to evoke a sense of breath and resonance that permeates within the hall.

The cellular melodic material that unifies *Inhere, Adhere* is an upward tremolo gesture that appears at the opening and is expanded and reinterpreted throughout the piece. This small but generative idea functions much like breath itself: It begins as something contained and intimate, and grows outward as the piece develops. Reyes returns to this gesture across formal sections, each time reshaping it within a new harmonic or textural context, so that the listener experiences it as both familiar and renewed. It is the musical equivalent of the inhale that precedes every exhale – the thing that makes the release possible.

[28] Cole Reyes, "Inhere, Adhere," Score, Cole Reyes Music ASCAP, 2025.




Figure 1.5 Tremolo Gesture representing breath m. 1-4 annotated by DaJuan Brooks

**Inhere, Adhere Formal Analysis Chart**

| Formal Identity | Measure Number |
|---|---|
| Introduction | 1 |
| A Section | 15 - Letter A |
| Primary Theme - '*accented cut-off*' | 23 - Letter B |
| Secondary Theme - Breathing Mechanism | 53 |
| Section A - Closing | 59 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Sonic Climax | 64 |
| B Section | 66 - Letter F |
| Tertiary Theme | 69 |
| A Prime - PT and TT present | 97 - Letter I |
| A Prime - Closing | 100 |
| Closing - ‘emotional climax’ | 108 |

Figure 1.6: Brooks, DaJuan, "Inhere, Adhere Formal Analysis Chart," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 2026, Table.

The three green-highlighted moments in the chart above represent the philosophical and emotional core of the piece. Each one is a musical depiction of breath, not as a metaphor, but as physical experience.

The primary theme at measure 23, marked by what Reyes calls the “accented cut-off” captures the sensation of exhaling sharply at the end of exertion through wind speed and the abrupt release, the kind of breath that escapes involuntarily after a long run. From the podium, it reads as a collective musical sigh, the embodiment of an ensemble exhaling together in one unified gesture. It is one of the clearest examples in the repertoire of an entire ensemble breathing as a single organism.




Figure 1.7: accented cut-off m.23

The secondary theme beginning at measure 53 is, in my view, one of the most beautiful passages of the entire recital. Anchored by bass clarinets, tenor saxophone, and baritone saxophone carry a stress-release, stress-release, stress-release pattern in three successive waves; a musical analogy to the rhythm of the lungs expanding and contracting. This moment appears twice more throughout the piece, each time with the same organic inevitability. As Reyes writes in his score, "sound undulat[es] freely," and in the space of the hall itself, creating a floating quality that is nearly impossible to manufacture and entirely impossible to fake.[29]

[29] Reyes, "Inhere, Adhere."




Figure 1.8: m. 53, breathing mechanism - bass clarinet, tenor sax, baritone

The closing section at measures 108, the "emotional climax," is my favorite moment of the entire recital. Reyes has written something that mirrors a very specific and deeply human experience: the feeling of finishing an extremely taxing day, arriving home, sitting down with your favorite person, animal, and/or beverage, and taking that first true breath. The day has not come to an end but the strenuous parts are over and you can breathe. It is the moment when everything you have been carrying, every tension, every effort, every held emotion, finally releases. The music does not resolve so much as it exhales. For an audience that has traveled through the entire piece, that moment of release lands with full emotional weight precisely as Reyes intended it.




Figure 1.9: m. 108, emotional climax

The values embedded in *Inhere, Adhere* – collective breath, ensemble cohesion, and structural clarity – are inseparable from the biographical and artistic context from which the work emerged. The harmonic richness of the sustained woodwind passages carries the fingerprints of his writing for choir, where dense voicing and expressive melodic lines were his primary tools. The community-centered philosophy Reyes developed while arranging for his *a cappella* ensemble at Washington University, where he learned that music exists not on the page but in the room between people, finds its fullest expression here. The tremolo gesture carries that

same spirit: improvisational, expansive, contracting and breathing organically across the structure. It echoes the child at the piano who refused to repeat exercises and instead invented his own music. What Reyes has written is a piece that breathes the way he composes: collaboratively, intuitively, and with deep attention to the experience of the people in the room.

Taken together, these three moments make the case that *Inhere, Adhere* is not simply a piece about breath as a concept. It is a piece about breath as the connective tissue of collective human experience. Breath begins inside the body, generated by the lungs and the biological systems that sustain us. It travels through a wind instrument, which is itself a system, a network of tubing, valves, and resonant chambers designed to shape and project that breath outward. From there it becomes sound, which permeates the room, enters the ears, and is received into the bodies of every listener. What began as something inherent to one person becomes something shared by everyone in the space. Reyes has not simply written a piece about breath. He has written a piece that traces breath from its most private origin to its most communal destination, and made that entire journey audible.

**Deep River** (2021) Benjamin Horne
(b. 1995)

*University of Michigan Concert Band*
*February 4, 2025*

Ben Horne is a conductor, composer, arranger, and active low brass performer. His original compositions and arrangements span myriad musical styles and his music has been performed by prestigious ensembles such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Chicago Lyric Opera, Houston Opera, and "The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band. He has also collaborated with prominent instrumental soloists, and his music has become standard repertoire for several international solo competitions including International Trombone Festival, the International Tuba and Euphonium Conference, the Leonard Falcone International Euphonium and Tuba Festival, the International Trumpet Guild Conference, and the International Horn Society Symposium. His music has been featured at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago and the College Band Directors National Association Conference. Beyond the United States, Horne's music has received performances in Europe, Asia, and South America. Additionally, Horne's works have been chosen as laboratory music for conducting symposia around the country, lending new perspectives within the wind band medium.[30]

Equally comfortable as an instrumentalist (euphonium) and conductor, Horne won the Mid-Atlantic Regional Tuba Euphonium Conference Solo Artist Competition and has been a finalist in the Southeast Regional Tuba Euphonium Conference Solo Artist Competition and the International Euphonium and Tuba Festival Solo Artist Division. He has appeared as a guest conductor and clinician with various ensembles worldwide and is currently completing a

[30] Benjamin Horne, "Bio," HORNE MUSIC, accessed March 26, 2026, https://hornemusic.weebly.com/bio.html; Benjamin Horne, "HORNE MUSIC," HORNE MUSIC, accessed March 26, 2026, https://hornemusic.weebly.com/.

Doctorate of Musical Arts in Wind Conducting and a Master's of Music Composition degree at Michigan State University.[31]

On his setting of *Deep River,* the composer writes:

> 'Deep River' is an arrangement of the traditional spiritual of the same name for wind band. This arrangement is inspired by a popular art song version by Henry Burleigh. His low baritone voice as well as renditions by singers such as Paul Robeson are the motivation for this version's use of solo tuba for the song's initial presentation. Other allusions to Burleigh can be found throughout this work.[32]

> Deep river, my home is over Jordan.
> Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground
> Oh, don't you want to go to that Gospel feast?
> That Promised Land, where all is peace?

Horne's setting of *Deep River* is rooted in the tradition of folk song arrangement for wind bands pioneered by Percy Grainger, whose approach to setting folk melodies became foundational to the wind band canon. Grainger's method of representing the different interpretive shadings a folksinger might apply to verses of a song through continuous variation, with differing rhythmic harmonic, and orchestrational structures, is evident throughout Horne's arrangement.[33] Rather than presenting the spiritual as a static hymn, Horne treats each statement

[31] "HORNE MUSIC," accessed March 26, 2026, https://hornemusic.weebly.com/.
[32] Benjamin Horne, "Works," HORNE MUSIC, accessed March 26, 2026, https://hornemusic.weebly.com/works.html.
[33] Williams Carson, "Percy Aldridge Grainger," EBSCO Research Starters, 2023, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/percy-aldridge-grainger.

of the melody as a new interpretive layer, honoring both the oral tradition from which the song emerged and the expressive flexibility that made it endure.

The piece opens with short “testimonies” from various solo instrumental voices before the song formally begins. This is a deliberate compositional choice that mirrors the communal call-and-response traditions embedded in Black church music and the spiritual tradition. No single voice owns the melody at the outset. Instead, the music creates space for each voice to speak before the community gathers. This opening gesture is one of the most theologically and culturally precise moments in the entire recital. As a Black conductor, standing in front of an ensemble and hearing those testimonies ring out one by one before the congregation joins together, the weight of what Horne has written is impossible to miss.

The solo tuba leads the first verse, an intentional evocation of the low, authoritative baritone voice of singers like Paul Robeson and Harry T. Burleigh, whose art song setting directly inspired this arrangement.[34] The choice to honor Burleigh specifically is significant because he was one of the first Black composers to arrange spirituals for the concert stage. He brought music that originated in slavery in the formal repertoire of classical performance. Horne, a Black composer himself, is not simply arranging a song. He is continuing a lineage, acknowledging that the music he sets has already traveled a long road from the fields of its birth to the concert halls where it now lives.




Figure 1.10: m. 11-19 tuba solo - *Deep River* 1st verse/statement

At the conclusion of the lyric "peace,” the alto saxophone solo "crosses" the ensemble into a new section where the song begins again in a livelier iteration, this time featuring the full

[34] Benjamin Horne, “Spiritual Symphony: Four Settings of African American Spirituals for Wind Band” (Dissertation, Michigan State University, 2026), 8.

saxophone *soli*.[35] This structural hinge is one of the most effective moments in the arrangement. Grainger's influence is audible here: The cross-fade technique, where one voice increases volume while another fades is embedded in the transition as the tuba's solemn weight gives way to the saxophone section's most urgent, communal energy. The crossing is not just textual, referencing the lyrics about crossing the Jordan River. It is sonic and emotional, a genuine shift in the feel of the room.




Figure 1.11: m. 36-46 - alto saxophone solo transition, the "crossing" moment

The saxophone *soli* that follows deserves particular attention. Where the opening was reverent and spare, this section is full, rhythmically alive, and joyful. Horne does not simply repeat the melody more loudly. He reimagines it, giving it new harmonic color and rhythmic vitality while keeping the original contour intact. The result is the musical equivalent of a




Figure 1.12: m. 38-46 - saxophone soli, lively iteration

congregation that began in quiet prayer and has arrived, by then, at full-throated celebration.

[35] Benjamin Horne, "Deep River," Score, Horne Music, 2021.

Programming *Deep River* on this recital connects directly to this dissertation's larger argument about belonging, justice, and the responsibility of presence. The spiritual as a form was not created for concert halls. It was created in conditions of unspeakable suffering, as a way for enslaved people to communicate hope, resistance, and longing for freedom that the people around them refused to legally acknowledge. From the moment Burleigh first brought these songs to the concert stage, to the resounding resonance of each Horne rendition, they have acted not simply to preserve this music, but to insist that it – and the voices who created it – deserve to be heard in every room. Standing on the podium conducting *Deep River* as the first Black DMA student in the wind band conducting at the University of Michigan, I was acutely aware that I was part of that insistence. My presence in that room, like the music itself, was a statement about who belongs and who always belonged.

**Boom Goes the Dynamite** (2023) Paul Dooley
(b. 1983)

Paul Dooley is one of the most-performed living composers in America today. His music, which seeks to meld the roots of Western Classical music with the contemporary influences of the dance, art, technology, and nature Dooley experiences in the world around him, is the recipient of frequent worldwide acclaim. Dooley's music has been called "impressive and beautiful" by composer Steve Reich, and has been commissioned by leading American orchestras like the Nashville Symphony and the Detroit Symphony, as well as ensembles such as the Singapore Symphony and "The President's Own" United States Marine Band. His works have been performed in major venues including Carnegie Hall and have also been heard on NPR's *Performance Today*. Dooley's most recent works include *Circuits and Skins*, a percussion concerto inspired by EDM, and *The Conductor's Spellbook*, a piece for young audiences. Dooley's music has been the subject of doctoral dissertations, and has earned several substantial awards including the Sousa/ABA/Ostwald Award and the William D. Revelli Prize. Recordings of his compositions have been released by a number of labels, including NAXOS.[36]

Born in 1983 in Santa Rosa, California, Dooley began composing while still a teenager and his significant mentors include composers Frank Ticheli and Michael Daugherty. He earned his degrees from the University of Southern California and the University of Michigan.[37] From 2013 to 2025, Dooley served on the music faculty at the University of Michigan, and led the annual Computer Music Showcase for the university's Performing Arts Technology program.

The composer offers the following on his electric work for winds and percussion, *Boom Goes the Dynamite*:

[36] "Paul Dooley," accessed March 26, 2026, https://www.pauldooley.net/.
[37] "Paul Dooley."

> Boom Goes the Dynamite (2023) was commissioned by a consortium of wind bands and individuals organized by Caroline Hand in honor of Thomas Caneva's 17 years of service and dedication to the Ball State University School of Music.
>
> The comical catchphrase "Boom Goes The Dynamite" was coined in 2005 by a Ball State University student during an ill-fated sports broadcast, which quickly went viral on YouTube. An inexperienced operator had accidentally fast-forwarded through the broadcast script, forcing the young sportscaster to improvise and stumble his way through the show, live on air. This four-minute dark, yet playful, concerto for wind band recreates this frantic and terrifying experience using several driving phrygian rhythmic motives, with maracas, flexatone, triangles and cymbals providing a bright yet tense timbral counterpoint.[38]
>
> I was tremendously honored to compose this new work for my dear friend Tom Caneva. I cherish the numerous times I have been able to work with Tom and his Wind Ensemble at Ball State University. Their magically lyrical, spontaneous, clear and detail-oriented performances are a composer's dream.[39]

Paul Dooley describes *Boom Goes the Dynamite* as a recreation of a "frantic and terrifying experience,"and the score delivers on that description from the first measure. There is no introduction, no clearing of the throat. The piece begins in *medias res*: Bassoons, horns, and trombones launch into chromatic, syncopated figures at fortissimo, and the maracas enter almost immediately, rattling beneath the texture like a broadcast gone wrong before the audience has even settled in. For a conductor this opening presents a particular challenge. There is no

[38] Paul Dooley, "Boom Goes The Dynamite," Score, Paul Dooley Music, 2023.
[39] "Paul Dooley," accessed March 26, 2026, https://www.pauldooley.net/works/boom.

gathering moment, no preparatory breath for the ensemble. You are already inside the chaos when the downbeat arrives.

The piece is cast in 4/4 at a quarter note equals 120-126 and runs 212 measures over approximately five and a half minutes. Though Dooley does not label sections, the score moves through several distinct expressive zones that correspond loosely to the narrative arc embedded in the program note: the initial panic of the ill-fated broadcast, a series of desperate improvisational episodes, a strange interior stillness, and finally a headlong collapse toward the end. These zones are not clearly delineated so much as they accumulate and dissolve, which is precisely the point. The piece does not behave itself. It refuses to resolve neatly into manageable formal units because the experience it depicts is one of total structural breakdown.

The harmonic language throughout is rooted in what Dooley calls “phrygian rhythmic motives,” and the score confirms this at every level. The half-step ceiling concerns melodic motion in nearly every instrument family from the opening bars forward. The bassoons and low brass establish descending chromatic figures in mm.1-4 that resist tonal grounding, generating a quality of unease that is rhythmic as much as harmonic. The ensemble never settled into a key center for long enough to feel oriented, which is a deliberate simulation of the sportscaster experience: The script has been taken away, and nobody is quite sure where they are.




Figure 1.13: m. 1-4, bassoon and horn lines showing opening Phrygian chromatic gesture

One of the most structurally significant moments in the piece occurs at rehearsal 20, where the texture suddenly clears. The vibraphone and marimba emerge in a chamber-like *soli* passage, marked "*forte secco*, no pedal" against near-silence in the rest of the ensemble. After nineteen measures of relentless collective activity, these moments resemble the sportscaster's pause mid-sentence: a beat too long and a silence that the camera catches and the audience watches with horrid empathy. As a conductor, this is where I would ask the ensemble to "sit in the discomfort." The impulse in this kind of high-energy piece is to rush through the quiet moments to get back to the noise, but Dooley has written a stillness here that deserves to be inhabited.




Figure 1.14: mm. 20-21, vibraphone and marimba soli

The piece pivots again at Rehearsal 82, marked "*poco piu mosso*: Militaristic," where a different kind of moment takes over. If the earlier sections simulate panic, this section has the quality of someone overcompensating, reading too fast, too loud, too deliberately. The texture is relentless and march-like, and Dooley drives the ensemble forward with a momentum that does not feel like confidence so much as bravado. It is the sonic equivalent of someone who has lost the script and decides to perform "authority" instead of the actual text.

To such a surprise, this passage in the score arrives later in the piece, in what might be understood as a second large section, where the upper flutes and clarinets suddenly emerge in a lyrical, horizontal chorus against everything that surrounds them. Up to this point the writing has been almost entirely angular, rhythmically displaced, and harmonically restless. This moment is different in kind, not just in degree. The melodic lines breathe and extend, and the effect on the ensemble is somatic as much as musical. After holding so much tension in the body, the upper

woodwinds offer something the piece has not yet allowed: release through sustained, singing tone.




Figure 1.15: m. 125 - 130 upper woodwind choir lyrical horizontal writing

The most unexpected passage in the score is the extended interior section beginning around Rehearsal 131, where a new tempo (quarter note = 152-160) introduces something completely different in character. Trombones and tubas sustain long, ominous tones marked *piano*, while the woodwinds and saxophones move in gentle contrary motion above. The glockenspiel, chimes, and eventually the vibraphone enter at Rehearsals 138 and 142 respectively, and the saxophones hold long tones marked *piano espressivo.* This section, spanning nearly thirty measures, is the psychological center of the piece. Dooley gives the audience a moment to breathe, and to remember that underneath the chaos there is still a person behind the microphone– a human being trying to find their footing.




Figure 1.16: m. 131-142, trombone and tuba sustained tones with glockenspiel and saxophone texture

What follows is a long, cumulative return. Beginning at Rehearsal 149 and accelerating through Rehearsals 153, 160, and 176, Dooley rebuilds the full texture layer by layer until the ensemble is back at maximum density and maximum volume. The snare drum, medium, and small triangle, and large bass drum drive the final approach from measure 176 onward. In Rehearsal 197, a sudden *ritardando* arrives, pulling the tempo from quarter = 120 all the way down to quarter = 60, then 40, as though the broadcast has literally run out of steam. The final gesture is the most irreverent in the piece: a *lunga* fermata at measure 211, followed by a maracas with an instruction reading "solo, as loud as possible," which dissipates into silence at measure 212. It is a cut to black, a transmission that simply stops.



Figure 1.17: mm. 209-212, final lunga and maracas soli

During the performance of this work, the final "boom" landed with such force that a child in the audience called out, "what happened!?!" The audience laughed and broke into applause. It was an unscripted moment of communal reaction, and it was also a perfect reenactment of the piece's own subject. The sportscaster's fumble had become the audience's fumble, and the room transformed into something joyful. Dooley's gamble in writing a piece about public embarrassment is that held up in the right light and performed with enough craft, that

embarrassment stops being humiliating and becomes something everyone can share. That child's question embodied the piece working exactly as intended.

There is something I keep returning to in thinking about this piece as the first Black DMA student in the wind band conducting at the University of Michigan. I was handed *Boom Goes the Dynamite* in part because Paul Dooley was our faculty composer, and programming a colleague's work is a natural part of institutional life. But institutional programming is never neutral, and the expectation of who carries a tradition forward, and how, is always inflected by race. The sportscaster in the 2005 broadcast was a young person thrown into an impossible situation: improvising in public, hoping no one would notice the seams. There are moments in my own graduate experience that have felt recognizably like that. What Dooley has done in this piece is take that experience of visible, uncomfortable improvisation and make it something worth performing, worth celebrating, worth commissioning from a major composer for a national conference premier. That reframing is important for me: Not every moment of stumbling is failure. Sometimes it is just what being the first looks like.

**Seascape** (1958/2004) Ruth Gipps
(1921-1999)

*University of Michigan Symphony Band Chamber Winds*
*January 31, 2025*

Ruth Gipps was born in 1921 and is a transformative figure in 20th-century British music. Gipps helped to redefine the gender norms of her era during a time when orchestras, wind bands, and military ensembles were overwhelmingly male-dominated. In the face of gender exclusion, Gipps carved out a space for women in music by founding and conducting the Portia Wind Ensemble.[40] This ensemble was designed to champion female musicianship and performance opportunities and also became an influential platform for premiering new compositions by notable British composers, including Gordon Jacob, Peter Maxwell Davies, Harrison Birtwistle, and Alan Hoddinott.[41]

Among the works premiered by the Portia Wind Ensemble was *Seascapes*, composed by Gipps in 1958. The work is scored for a double wind quintet with an English horn replacing a second oboe and augmented by an optional string bass in the present edition by Rodney Winther. This brilliantly colorful and individualistically artful piece showcases Gipps' palpable talent for orchestration. The instrumentation enriches the tonal landscape and Gipps explores a vibrant texture and timbral depth through the intricate lines of the piece.

The programmatic elements of *Seascapes* reflect a direct connection to the natural world and our experiences in it. The work is believed to have been inspired by a visit to Broadstairs, a coastal town in Kent, where Gipps delivered lectures. Recalling her experience, she remarked: “I spent the night in a hotel right on the beach. I could hear the sea. I always loved the sound of the

[40] Leah Broad, “Ruth Gipps in Her Own Words,” Substack newsletter, *Songs of Sunrise*, November 8, 2022, https://leahbroad.substack.com/p/ruth-gipps-in-her-own-words.
[41] “Gipps, Ruth,”Classical Music”, August 5, 2021, https://www.classical-music.com/features/composers/gipps-ruth.

sea and particularly storms."[42] This experience for her became the blueprint of her connection to the ocean expressed through her unique compositional voice, which vividly captures both its serene beauty and tempestuous power.

Structurally, *Seascapes* moves through three large sections that Rod Winther's program note describes as ternary in design, and the score confirms this architecture clearly. The opening section establishes the piece's impressionistic language immediately: The flutes and clarinets enter together in measure 1 with soft, undulating arpeggios marked *piano*, their lines overlapping in chromatic waves that evokes the continuous motion of water. There is no melody yet, only texture and color. Gipps is not painting a postcard of the sea; she is recreating the physical experience of listening to it, the way sound arrives in layers and never fully resolves. The oboe enters in measure two with a solo line marked *piano espressivo*, marking the first moment of individual voice against the collective shimmer. It is a quietly radical gesture: a single melodic thread surfacing from the undifferentiated texture, the way a swimmer might surface from beneath a wave. *Seascapes* premiered on October 7, 1960, performed by the Portia Wind Ensemble under the baton of James Verity, and the work has since withstood the sands of time as a testament to Ruth Gipps' courageous artistic vision and her significant contributions to the wind repertoire.[43]

[42] Rodney Winther, program notes, in Ruth Gipps, Seascape, op. 53 (Miami: Warner Bros., 2004)
[43] Braddock, "The Chamber Wind Ensemble Music of Ruth Gipps (1921-1999),"15




Figure 1.18: m. 1-3, flute and clarinet arpeggios with oboe solo entering

The middle section arrives at Rehearsal 34, marked *allegro moderato*, quarter equals 100, and the character of the piece shifts entirely. The clarinets and bassoons move in staccato, march-like figures beneath an English horn solo marked *Mezzo-forte marcato*, and the effect is striking precisely because of how it differs from everything that came before. Winther describes this as "small, halting march." The march does not stride forward with confidence; it proceeds in fits and starts, interrupted by solo voices and shifting dynamics, as though the sea itself has changed mood without warning. This is Gipps writing about the storms she described loving not as spectacle, but as something more interior – a shift in the atmosphere that the body registers before the mind names it.




Figure 1.19: m. 34-36, English horn march theme over staccato clarinets and bassoons

The most searching passage in the score arrives at Rehearsal 51, marked *andante doloroso*, quarter note equals 60. The Italian is precise: sorrowful, not merely slow. The oboe carries as a solo line marked *piano molto espressivo*, and the flutes and clarinets move in long, quietly dissonant sustained tones beneath it. This is the lyrical interior of the piece,the moment Gipps pulls the ensemble away from exclusively texture and rhythm, and asks instead for something more exposed and vulnerable. The quasi cadenza sections at measures 47 and 74 frame this interior space with passages for solo instruments playing freely, each one a brief moment of complete individual expression before the ensemble reclaims the texture. Structurally these cadenzas function as breathing room. For the conductor, they are also a reminder that a piece requires trust: trust between the soloist and the ensemble; trust between the ensemble and the conductor; trust that the silence between phrases will not collapse into anxiety.




Figure 1.20: m. 51-53, oboe solo marked Andante doloroso with sustained woodwind support

The return of the opening material at Rehearsal 85 completes the ternary arc. The flute and clarinet arpeggios come back exactly as they were, but the dynamic marking of *pianississimo* tells a different story. What began at *p* now returns at *ppp*, as though the sound has been worn down by everything that happened in between. This is not a triumphant recapitulation. It is a return to the beginning with full knowledge of the journey, which is a different thing entirely.

That first performance on October 7, 1960, led by James Verity and the Portia Wind Ensemble, introduced the world to a composer willing to demand that wind players listen to the sea. Over sixty years later, the work endures, not as a historical curiosity, but as a living score that still asks something of the people who play it and the people who hear it. To program Seascapes is to trust that Ruth Gipps' vision was worth the journey, and to discover, every time, that it was.

Ruth Gipps' story resonates personally with me as I bring this piece into my dissertation. Gipps founded the Portia Wind Ensemble because the existing institutions of her time would not make space for women. She did not wait for permission to build something meaningful. She built it herself, and in doing so created the conditions under which this piece, among many others, could exist and be heard. I think about that act of institution-building often, particularly in a space where my own presence is still unusual, still the first of its kind. Gipps' music does not announce its resistance. It simply proceeds with craft, beauty, and seriousness, which has always been its own form of argument. *Seascape* asks us to listen carefully to what has been here all along, waiting to be heard.

**Lyric** (1946)

George Walker
(1922-2018)
arr. Luci Disano

Born in Washington, D.C., in 1922, George Walker stands as one of the most significant figures in American classical music. His father was an immigrant from Jamaica and a self-taught pianist who built a career as a physician, while his mother, Rosa King, nurtured Walker's prodigious musical talent from an early age. By five, Walker was immersed in piano lessons, and by fifteen, he had entered Oberlin College to study piano and organ. Schooling continued at the Curtis Institute of Music where he focused on both composition and piano, studying with the great Rudolf Serkin, and Walker became Curtis' first Black graduate in 1945. That same year, he debuted with the Philadelphia Orchestra, performing Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto under Eugene Ormandy, breaking racial barriers as the first Black instrumentalist to perform with the ensemble.[44]

Walker's compositional career was equally groundbreaking, culminating in his 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Music—the first awarded to a Black composer—for *Lilacs*, a poignant setting of Walt Whitman's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*. Across his lifetime, he crafted over ninety works, encompassing orchestral, chamber, and piano compositions, with *Lyric for Strings* standing as his most beloved and performed piece.[45]

Originally conceived as the second movement of his *String Quartet No. 1* in 1946, *Lyric for Strings* was both a personal and artistic milestone. Dedicated to his grandmother, Malvina King, a former enslaved woman whose resilience and legacy profoundly shaped Walker's life, the work began as an intimate lament upon her death. Reorchestrated for string orchestra, its hauntingly beautiful lines interweave a rich tapestry of counterpoint, evoking themes of grief,

[44] George Walker, Benjamin Horne, "Bio," accessed March 26, 2026, https://georgetwalkercomposer.org/Bio/.
[45] "Home," accessed March 26, 2026, https://georgetwalkercomposer.org/.

hope, and transcendence. The original string quartet movement premiered at the Curtis Institute shortly after it was written. Walker referred to it as “my grandmother’s piece,” underscoring its deeply personal origins, and the work continued to evolve for decades before Walker reorchestrated it for full string orchestra in 1990 under the title *Lyric for Strings*, which quickly became his most performed composition.[46]

Renowned conductors such as Gustavo Dudamel, Paul Freeman, Andrew Davis, and Riccardo Muti are just some of the leaders from premiere orchestras to perform this work. Maestro Muti described it as "touching, sincere, and honest," a testament to Walker’s unparalleled ability to channel deep and universal emotion through his unique personal voice.

Dr. Luci Disano’s 2023 transcription, published by Southern Music under the title *Lyric for Band*, is presented on this program simply as *Lyric,* reflecting both the transformation of the work into a new medium and the way the piece has accumulated and shed names across its history. Walker called it first *Lament,* then *Adagio*, before it received its professional premier and was renamed *Lyric for Strings* in 1990. Each title tells you something about where Walker was in his relationship to the grief the piece carries. Disano is an American conductor, clarinetist, and arranger who has served as conductor, soloist, and ensemble member with “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band, and holds a DMA in Instrumental Conducting from the University of Maryland. In her editorial notes, Disano writes candidly about the challenge she faced: noting that any attempt to recreate the sound of the string orchestra with a wind ensemble “would inevitably result in a mediocre substitute at best.”[47] Her solution was not imitation but reimagination. Rather than asking the winds to sound like strings she endeavored to paint

[46] “George Walker Reflects on Memorable Performances of His ‘Lyric for Strings’ Chicago Symphony Orchestra,” Experience the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, accessed March 26, 2026, https://cso.org/experience/article/3219/george-walker-reflects-on-memorable-performan.[sic]
[47] Luci Disano, *Lyric for Band* (San Antonio; Southern Music Company, 2023), “Editorial Notes,” 2.




Figure 1.21: m. 1-6, English horn solo opening with staggered

Walker's harmonies "with the myriad hues available to the instruments of the wind band." This philosophical shift, from substitution to transformation, is what makes the transcription successful and what makes it worth examining closely.

The introduction to *Lyric for Band* opens with a solo English horn, marked *pp* and unaccompanied that establishes a modal, mournful quality that will govern the entire piece. This is one of Disano's most consequential decisions. In the string original, the opening belongs to muted strings entering one by one in long, hushed sustained tones, each entrance quietly adding

to a gathering warmth. The quality of effortless resonance, the way bowed strings sustain without visible effort, creates a vulnerability winds could never replicate directly – and Disano does not try. Instead, she distributes the entries across the ensemble in long sustained tones that flower organically beneath the English horn, asking players to enter without emphasis and allowing the sound to accumulate. She notes in her editorial that "the staggered entrances in the introduction must be performed precisely in time, without emphasizing the attack, in order to establish a sense of rhythm as the ensemble sound blooms organically from the English horn solo."[48] The pizzicato challenge of the original is thus transformed into a breath challenge: how to enter without being heard entering. As a conductor, this is where I spend time in rehearsal, teaching the ensemble to disappear into the texture rather than announce themselves into it.

At measure 24, the piece moves to *Più lento*, and Disano herself flags this passage noting that "the ensemble balance in measures 24-27 can present a particular challenge." She suggests that cornets play into the stand so that their tone color does not dominate. This is the first time in the piece where the harmonic weight of Walker's writing is spread across the ensemble, and the danger in a wind band is that brighter timbres can overwhelm the inner voices that carry the emotional content. What is needed here is what Walker's grandmother's story demands: not dominance, but presence. The clarinets must tune precisely here. This moment carries the weight of a stele, something carved rather than played, a monument to the grief that gave the piece its name.

The shift into the second large section at Rehearsal 36, marked *più mosso*, brings one of the most striking harmonic events in the piece. The key moves away from the opening's modal darkness toward E major, and the effect on the listener is immediate and physical. This is the section where Walker's connection to hope, however strained, becomes audible. The lines are

[48] Disano, *Lyric for Band*, 2.




Figure 1.22: m. 24-27, Più lento, clarinet unison passage with trombone and tuba sustains

still long and searching, but the harmonic foundation has changed beneath them. Again, that change registers in the body before the mind names it. Conductor Ricardo Muti's description of the piece as "touching, sincere, and honest" is perhaps most clearly earned here, because Walker does not resolve the grief into simple consolation. The major key does not announce relief; it announces the *possibility* of relief.

The climax arrives at measure 45, where the full ensemble reaches fortissimo and the

harmonic language pushes to its most dissonant and most intense. In my score I have noted the harmony moving through E, A, and B minor, a cluster of related tonalities pressing against each other under the weight of the full band. This is the implied pain Muti and others have heard in

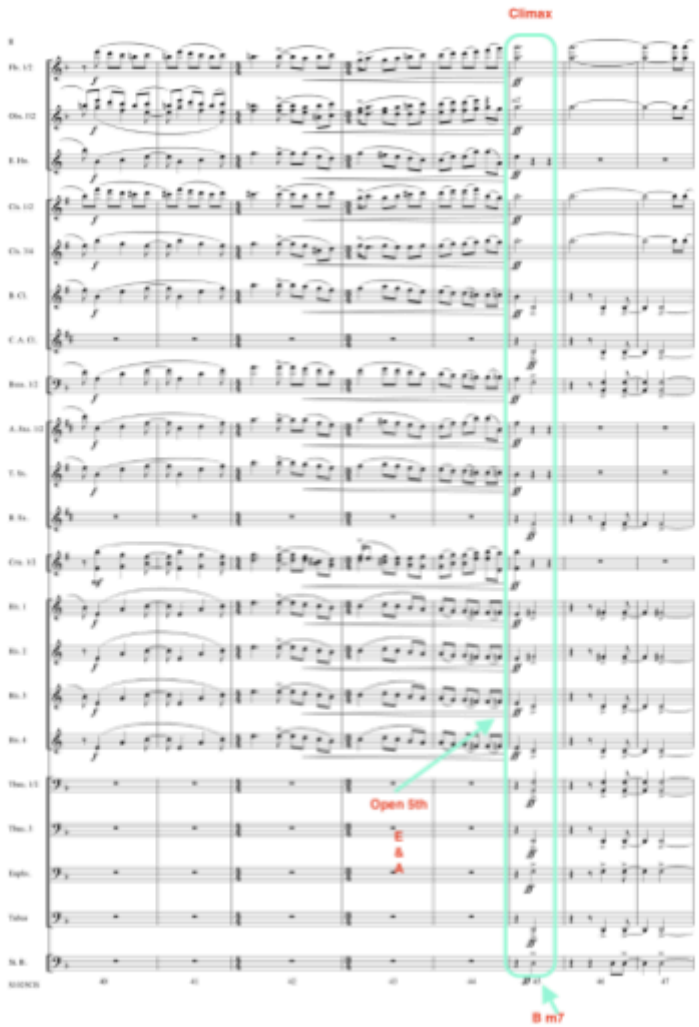



Figure 1.23: Musical climax with delayed low sustain

the piece: Walker does not depict grief through absence or restraint at the climax but through accumulation, through the sound of everything being said at once. Disano's wind band forces the climax outward in a way the strings original cannot, because the dynamic ceiling is higher and employs timbres only possible for wind instruments; this is one place where the transcription gains rather than loses something from the original.

What follows is the piece's most important moment of restraint. Beginning at measure 53 with a single transitional bar, and then through mm.59-67 where the *Tempo primo ma con moto* brings back the opening material in E major, and the piece begins its long exhale. The theme passes through flutes, oboes, clarinets, and horns in succession, each voice taking it up and releasing it until finally at measure 68 the oboe carries a version of Theme 1 at *mezzo piano*.The *più lento* at measure 79 brings the ensemble to its closing moments. Disano has thinned the texture deliberately, bringing the ensemble back by measure 86 to something approaching the intimacy of the opening, while the final fermata settles across all voices at *pianissimo*.

Walker's connection to his ancestors, culture, Black spirituals and American folk traditions permeates *Lyric*, from its mournful opening to its transformative moments of hope and serene resignation. The piece connects to my own dissertation not only through its musical content but through its history of firsts. *Lyric* embodies Walker's deep connection to his heritage and his unyielding quest to transcend societal and artistic boundaries. Walker was the first Black graduate of Curtis, the first Black instrumentalist to solo with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the first Black composer to win the Pulitzer Prize. He carried each of those distinctions alongside the grief that made this piece, and he refused to let either the grief or being the first define the limit of what he could make. *Lyric* embodies Walker's deep connection to his heritage and his unyielding quest to transcend societal and artistic boundaries. That refusal is the most honest thing about *Lyric*, and it is why the piece endures.

**Ballade** (1898)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875-1912)
trans. Donald Patterson

The rise of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor to considerable fame is a testimony to both his great talent and unrelenting drive. Born in 1875 in London to Daniel Taylor, a Creole doctor from Sierra Leone, and Alice Martin, a poor British woman, his early years were marked by the dominating influence of economic deprivation. Despite the barriers of racialism and poverty, Coleridge-Taylor emerged as one of Britain's most renowned composers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Coleridge-Taylor was nurtured by his maternal grandfather, who introduced him to the violin, igniting his passion for music. By fifteen, he had earned a place at the Royal College of Music, where he turned from violin performance to composition under the guidance of Charles Villiers Stanford. His aptitude for composition became apparent when, by age sixteen, he had published several choral works. By twenty-one, he was beginning to receive acclaim, significantly supported by the guidance of notable luminaries such as Edward Elgar, who referred to him as "far and away the cleverest fellow going amongst the young men."

Coleridge-Taylor's fascination with his African heritage informed his compositional voice, akin to Brahms' and Dvořák's incorporation of European folk idioms. In 1904, he became one of the few Black artists invited to the White House, meeting President Theodore Roosevelt. His influence reached as far as Washington, D.C., where the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society was formed in his name. Despite his achievements, Coleridge-Taylor faced serious financial problems. He sold the rights to a major work "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast" for a paltry sum of fifteen guineas and never received any royalties from its countless performances. His early death at thirty-seven from pneumonia brought on by overwork emphasized the injustices that artists –

especially those of color – faced during his lifetime. It was such injustice that led to the establishment of the Performing Rights Society in the United Kingdom to ensure that future generations of composers earned the rightful fruits of their talents and contributions to our artform.

Elgar's support facilitated Coleridge-Taylor's first significant commission from the esteemed Three Choirs Festival in 1898. Originally extended to Elgar, the commission was subsequently transferred to Coleridge-Taylor following Elgar's strong endorsement. The result was the work *Ballade* in A Minor, Op. 33, which had its successful première under the composer's baton. This orchestral work stands as both an intense and lyrical showcase of Coleridge-Taylor's ability to create and weave together compelling themes with dramatic orchestral flair.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor completed his *Ballade in A minor,* Op. 33 for orchestra in 1898, at a moment when he was just beginning to attract serious attention in England as a composer of remarkable gifts and uncommon range. The work belongs to a tradition of single movement orchestral ballades indebted to both Chopin's piano ballades and the narrative impulse of late Romantic program music, though Coleridge-Taylor's version resists easy categorization. It is dramatic without being theatrical, lyrical without being sentimental, and structurally taut in a way that rewards sustained attention across its considerable length. The version I conducted for this recital is the 2020 transcription prepared by Master Gunnery Sergeant Don Patterson for the United States Marine Band, where it was catalogued under the title *Ballade,* Op. 33*: Transcribed for Concert Band* and assigned library number R-9706. Patterson made no separate editorial statement within the score, but the orchestration itself speaks clearly: He has handled the transfer from strings and orchestral winds to concert band with restraint and care, distributing

Coleridge-Taylor's long melodic lines across instruments capable of sustaining the composer's Romantic phrasing without flattening its expressive contour.

For me, conducting this piece carries a weight that goes beyond the technical challenges of the score. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was himself first, a man of African descent who achieved a level of recognition in European classical music that no one who looked like him had reached before, and who did so without abandoning the particularity of who he was or where his music came from. I am the first Black doctoral student in wind band conducting at the University of Michigan. Those two facts are not equivalent, and I do want to collapse the distance between his world and mine. But there is something that passes between us across that distance, a kind of inheritance I feel when I stand in front of this music, something that asks me to take seriously both the beauty of what he made and the condition under which he had to make it.

The *Ballade* opens in 6/8 meter with a tempo marking of *allegro enererico, ma non troppo presto,* and the first thing the listener hears is a collision between two textures that will spend the entire work learning to coexist. The upper voices – piccolo, flutes, and solo clarinets – enter with a sustained trill figure marked *sforzando* to *piano*, shimmering and held at the top of the ensemble's register. Beneath them, the clarinet choir, and lower winds launch into a driving sixteenth-note pattern marked *energico ben marcato*, insistent and forward-leaning, pushing the music into motion before the opening gesture has resolved. Patterson's distribution of these roles preserves the orchestral character of the opening exactly: The shimmer belongs to the instruments with the most ring and sustain, and the engine belongs to the instruments with the most rhythmic articulation.




Figure 1.24: m. 1-9, showing the opening trill figure in Piccolo and Flutes against the *energico ben marcato* pattern in the reeds, horn and euphonium

The opening dialectic, between the sustained and the driven, between the lyrical and the muscular is not resolved in the first pages. It is the question the piece spends its entire arc asking. At Rehearsal 3, measure 25, the B theme enters in the oboes and solo clarinets over *staccato* accompaniment in the lower winds, and the character of the music shifts decisively. Where the A theme was propulsive and harmonically restless, the B theme is warm, long-breathed, and inward. Coleridge-Taylor marks this section *p cresc.*, and the melodic shape has the quality of someone speaking up carefully after a long pause, each phrase extending just a little further than you expected before folding back. As a conductor, I found myself needing to resist the

temptation to rush through this passage, to let the ensemble breathe rather than push toward the next arrival. The *Ballade* demands that kind of patience from its interpreter and the difficulty lies within that sustained vulnerability.

The structural pivot I return to most often when I think about this piece happens at Rehearsal 6, where the meter shifts from 6/8 to 2/4 and the tempo marking changes to *Moderato, ma con passione*. Everything slows and becomes clear musically and harmonically. The first and second oboes carry a lyrical line of unusual warmth, while the bassoons provide a walking foundation beneath them. Patterson's scoring here is spare, almost chamber-like. Coleridge-Taylor has stripped the texture down to its essentials, as if to say: Here is what this music is really about. The *con passione* marking is not a direction to play loudly. It is a direction to play truthfully, leading us into the 'Love Theme' at rehearsal 6, being lifted through harmonic arpeggios in the bassoon and bass clarinet.




Figure 1.25: mm. 94-100, showing the Moderato, ma con

The climax arrives at Rehearsal 8, where a *poco ritardando* gives way to a section marked *Appasionato* and the full ensemble comes together in a statement of the A theme that now sounds earned. The dynamic markings climb to *ff* and virtually every instrument in the band is engaged. As a conductor, I experience this moment as something Coleridge-Taylor prepared for over the entire span of the work. It is a triumph that is not handed to you, but one that is gained through patient negotiation of all that came before. It is the kind of arrival that draws its significance from the  difficulty preceding it.




Figure 1.26: m. 137-144, showing the Appassionato climax with full ensemble at forte

After the *Appasionato,* the *Ballade* does not end quickly, but diminishes gradually. The final pages amount to the most quietly beautiful in the work. The themes return in fragments, the texture thins, and the music finds its way to a close that feels like an ongoing conclusion. Coleridge-Taylor does not tie everything up. He lets the questions the piece has been asking

remain through thematic fragmentation, and I believe it is one of the most honest things a work of this kind can do.

I chose this piece for this recital because I believe the repertoire we place on our programs is a form of argument. It argues for what belongs in the concert hall, who belongs on the podium, and whose music is worth the time and attention of the wind band world. Samuel Colridge-Taylor made music of the highest order, and while for much of his career the institutions around him responded to that music with admiration, they were never quite willing to convert that admiration into full belonging. I empathize with that experience. Conducting his *Ballade* was, for me, one way of saying that his belonging and mine are not contingent on anyone's permission. They were always already there.

**Recital Two Program**

**Concerto for Alto Saxophone** (2000) — David Maslanka (b. 1943-2017)
I. Fire in the Earth

Steven Banks, Alto Saxophone

**I need to thank you** (2025) — Rj Dion (b. 1975)
I."Apprehensive to be me"
II. "Following your step"
III. "Reflecting"

Dr. Ricardo Allen, Soprano Saxophone
Citrine Quartet

**With Malice Toward None** (2025) — John Williams (b.1932)
*trans. Paul Lavender*

Dr. Jacinda Ripley, Trumpet

**Symphony No. 4** (1994) — David Maslanka (b. 1943-2017)

*Dissertation Recital*
*Pioneer High School*
*Schreiber Auditorium*
*December 5, 2025*

**FLUTE**
Alan Cook
Joyce Eu
Tieran Holmes
Dakota Olson

**OBOE**
Hannah Grosse
Jacob Pagone
Cynthia Trang
Ethen Tran

**CLARINET**
Braxen Butler
Lawson Caldwell
Zachary Gall
Dave Kim
Allison (Ally) Park
Alan Sun
Jaden Tan
Nicholas Ebbers
Luke Viskupic
Tim Kulawiak
David Molina
Finnegan Armstrong
Erie Liang
Emily Johnson-Liang
Caleb LaBelle
Mara Mayer
Alan Cook
Sofia Jimenez

**BASSOON**
Sandra Bailey
Ella Hebrard
Heather Hippchen
Chloe Meyer
Teodor Vujic

**SAXOPHONE**
Steven Banks
Rimas Stapusaitis
Alex Procajlo
Kyle Kato
Rico Allen
Laura Ramsay
Benjamin Facundo
Lauren Troutman
Jonah Kulick
Zachary Solomon

**TRUMPET**
Jacinda Ripley
Whitney Corpany
Stephen Grindel
Josue Villegas
Luca Evangelista
Caleb Jones
Nate Hubbard
Naqib Solihin Bin Azman
Gabriel Johnson
Ian Rutledge

**HORN**
Ethan Damura
Jackson Jeffrey
Claire Marquardt
Taylor Peterson
Dallin Taylor
Nicholas Valencia
Emily Whittaker
Geoffrey Randolph

**TROMBONE**
Makenzie Barber
Aiden Drysdale
Marlia Nash
Jihong Son
Stuart MacKenzie

**EUPHONIUM**
Jack Bird
Hunter Bellows
Tyler Simpson Pouncéy

**TUBA**
Ryan Lofland
Zhaowei Qu
Benjamin Vargas
Tyler Johnson
Haley Pauzus

**PERCUSSION**
Kate Galyen
John Tatara
Julian Toogood
Noah Reingold
Collin McGill

**DOUBLE BASS**
Minglu Jiang
Diego Patino

**HARP**
Maydine Bellot

**KEYBOARD**
Matthew Osterholzer
Nathan Jeffery
Liz Ames

Recital 2: I Need To Say Thank you

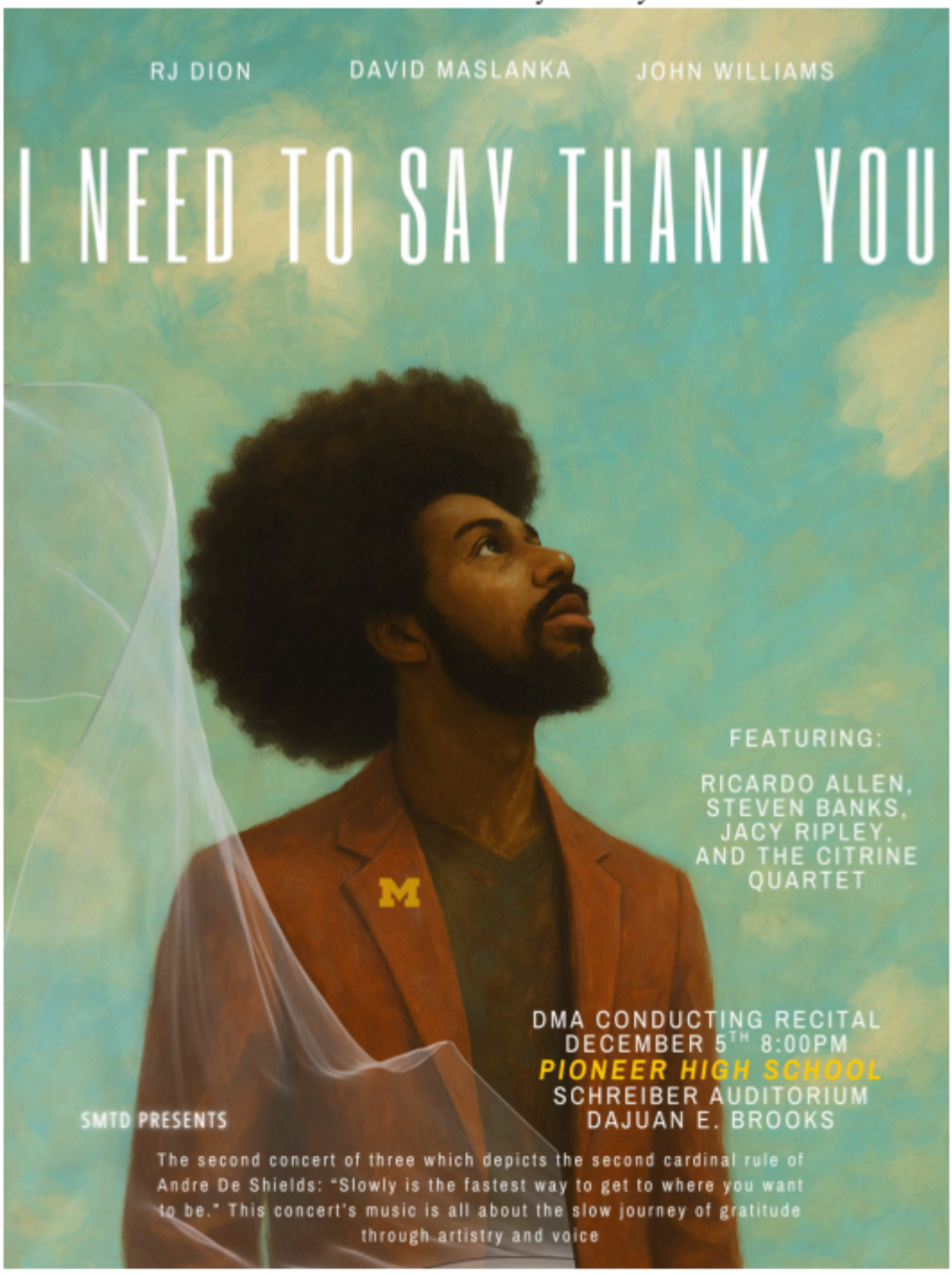



Figure 2: Recital 2 Flyer

**Recital Two Program Notes**

Recital two was inspired by and realized through two specific concepts and pieces. The first was the second cardinal rule from Andre DeShields: "Slowly is the fastest way to get to where you want to be," and the second was Rj Dion's concerto grosso piece titled "I need to thank you." At first glance, DeShield's second cardinal rule lands as a warm and thoughtful offer of advice; but upon another look, garners significant scientific study surrounding the concept of growth versus speed. This is a concept that runs counter to our culture in which speed and efficiency, along with immediate results, are rewarded and become the focus of our generation. The data from an extensive meta-analysis shows that knowledge and skill development acquired gradually over a long period of time persists as opposed to rapid gains achieved through confined effort which tend to fade quickly.[49] Nicholas Cepeda specifically offers through his research, "The spacing interval producing maximal retention increased as the retention interval increased".[50] For those who embark on complex, yearslong, identity-shaping work, slow development throughout their journey and the process coincides with learning, expertise, and resilience across time. The evidence confirms that sustainable growth depends on slow accumulation, stable practice, and the repetition of the engagement activity.

Sustained growth requires more than individual effort. Environments that embody persistence, safety, and continuity are what make slow, lasting development possible. Specifically, belonging and one's groundedness within the spaces in which the individual occupies are key attributes to their success. Gregory M. Walton and Geoffrey L. Cohen's monumental study revealed that the presence or absence of belonging was the determining factor

[49] Nicholas J. Cepeda et al., "Distributed Practice in Verbal Recall Tasks: A Review and Quantitative Synthesis.," *Psychological Bulletin* 132, no. 3 (2006): 354–80, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.3.354.
[50] Cepeda, "Verbal Recall Tasks", 360

enabling individuals to persist through long-term challenges. Within the study across three years, students engaged in randomized social-belonging intervention which proved to be fruitful for African American students. The report states, "The intervention closed the minority achievement gap in cumulative GPA by fifty-two percent, and decreased from 0.29 grade points in the control condition to 0.14 grade points in the treatment condition."[51] These results are important because they display slow emergence through gradual intervention improvements surrounding belonging, paralleled with the concept of slow, distributed development.[52] The study also revealed that African American students scaled adversity at significant rates when they found belonging within their community in their academic institutions. "African American students whose sense of belonging was more robust to daily adversity showed greater improvement in their postintervention GPA."[53] The performance of first-generation Black collegiate scholars who attend predominantly white institutions (PWI) are not singularly enhanced by this phenomenon, because it generates the psychological stabilization and sustainability that is essential for long-term growth engagement without succumbing to the pressures of isolation, chronic stress, and stereotype threat.

Belonging presents the environmental stability through slow growth, while gratitude solidifies the strength required for internal capabilities that sustain it. Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough's studies within the phenomenon known as 'gratitude' provide insight into how gratitude improves the health, outlook, and sustained engagement of individuals. "Participants in the gratitude condition reported significantly greater satisfaction with their lives as a whole and more optimism regarding the upcoming week than did participants in the control

[51] Gregory M. Walton and Geoffrey L. Cohen, "A Brief Social-Belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students," *Science* 331, no. 6023 (2011): 1448, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1198364.
[52] Walton and Cohen, "Social Belonging Intervention", 1448.
[53] Walton and Cohen, "Social Belonging Intervention", 1449

condition."[54] Gratitude also coincides with physiological and behavioral consistency: "The gratitude-group participants experienced fewer symptoms of physical illness than those in either of the other two groups."[55] Within my experiences as a student at three different PWI's and six degree programs, time has revealed that students and colleagues alike who experience gratitude express similar outcomes. Gratitude, paired with belonging has contributed to an upward trajectory within my studies, helping me overcome my own experiences of stress and reactive factors to become more disciplined and experience more sustainable wellbeing. Emmons and McCullough state: "People in the gratitude condition spent significantly more time exercising than those in the 'hassles' condition."[56] Ana Luísa Diniz and colleagues sharpened these findings through a more recent clinical meta-analysis which confirmed that the reduction of psychological distress decreased through gratitude interventions across randomized trials. They report that gratitude groups showed "lower anxiety symptom scores" with a mean reduction of 1.63 GAD-7 points, while depressive symptoms displayed a similarly reduced mean difference of "1.86 points lower" on the PHQ-9.[57] The data continues to reinforce the notion that emotional regulation is stabilized by gratitude, which allows for the manifestation of slow but steady positive growth. Psychological pressure decreases allowing for the embodiment of patience through consistency and deeply engaging long-term work. The music on this program is, for me, the living evidence of those findings. On December 5th, 2026, I presented 'I Need to Say Thank You,' the second of a three-part series centered around Andre DeShield's second cardinal rule ("Slowly is the fastest way to get to where you want to be"), while embodying the first cardinal

[54] Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough, "Counting Blessings versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 2 (2003): 384, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377.https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377.
[55] Emmons and McCullough,"Counting Blessings versus Burdens," 385.
[56] Emmons and McCullough,"Counting Blessings versus Burdens," 385.
[57] Geyze Diniz et al., "The Effects of Gratitude Interventions: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Einstein (São Paulo)* 21 (July 2023): 6, https://doi.org/10.31744/einstein_journal/2023RW0371.

rule ("surround yourself with people whose eyes light up when they see you coming"). Living within these two worlds, I chose to open the concert with David Maslanka's *Concerto for Saxophone* performed by Steven Banks, a colleague and dear friend who played in my first ad hoc ensemble on January 8th, 2017 at Northwestern University.

Banks is an American saxophonist and composer committed to placing the saxophone at the center of the classical music world. His programming and compositions engage deeply with the human experience while championing diverse voices in concert music. Critics praise his warm, glowing tone, expressive musical voice, and technical command. Rick Perdian of *Seen and Heard International* wrote that Banks "has the potential to be one of the transformational musicians of the twenty-first century."

Banks has established himself as a dynamic soloist and recitalist. In 2022 he received the Avery Fisher Career Grant and was selected for WQXR's Artist Propulsion Lab. He was the first saxophonist to win First Prize at the Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions. He has appeared with major orchestras including the Cleveland Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, Utah Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, and Aspen Festival Orchestra, collaborating with conductors such as Franz Welser-Möst, Xian Zhang, Rafael Payare, John Adams, and Matthias Pintscher. In recital he has performed at venues such as the Kennedy Center, Merkin Hall, Davies Hall, and Festival Napa Valley with pianist Xak Bjerken.

An active chamber musician and composer, Banks is a founding member of the Kenari Quartet, which won First Prize at the M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition from the University of Michigan and two silver medals at the Fischoff Chamber Music Competition. As a composer, he

has received commissions from organizations including Young Concert Artists, WQXR, Latitude 49, and Yale University. His music has been performed at Carnegie Hall and published by Murphy Music Press. A strong advocate for diversity in classical music, Banks lectures widely on the history of Black classical composers, having co-founded initiatives such as Learning to Listen and Illuminate! with the Sphinx Organization. He serves as Artist-in-Residence and faculty member at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and has long supported the dreams of students all over the world, including myself. It was a privilege to share the stage with such a rare and dynamic talent, as displayed through his warm and kind spirit and artistry.

**Concerto for Alto Saxophone** (2008) David Maslanka
I. First in the Earth (b. 1943-2017)

David Maslanka was born on August 30, 1942, in New Bedford, Massachusetts, the youngest of three sons.[58] His musical life began in public school, when he learned clarinet in the fourth grade. Maslanka's path into a serious music career began early and was built steadily. By his senior year of high school he was commuting weekly to Boston to study clarinet at the New England Conservatory of Music, and performing with the Boston Youth Orchestra, experiences that emphasized a deep seriousness in musical study.[59]

Maslanka entered the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in 1961, earning his degree in Music Education, with an emphasis in clarinet in 1965.[60] During his junior year, his class spent a full year abroad at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria. It was also at Oberlin where he first studied composition with Joseph Wood, who played an important role in building Maslanka's confidence as a composer.[61] Most memorably, Oberlin brought him into direct contact with major living composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Elliott Carter. Maslanka would later recall a defining moment in his career was watching Stravinsky rehearse and conduct the Symphony of Psalms.[62] From Oberlin, Maslanka moved into graduate work at Michigan State University where he completed both his Master of Music degree in 1968 and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1971, both in theory and composition.[63] His principal teacher was H. Owen Reed, whom Maslanka later described as a father figure, crediting him with shaping both his

[58] Stephen Bolstad, "David Maslanka's Symphony No. 4: A Conductor's Analysis with Performance Considerations" (Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2002).
[59] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: "Considerations," 1.
[60] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: "Considerations," 1.
[61] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: "Considerations," 2.
[62] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: "Considerations," 2.
[63] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: "Considerations," 2.

compositional discipline and openness to contemporary techniques.[64] Reed's pedagogical philosophy encouraged exploration of current compositional trends and experimentation, which gave Maslanka both technical range and permission to develop his own voice.[65]

Maslanka began his academic career in 1970 at the State University of New York at Geneseo. He later held positions at Sarah Lawrence College from 1975 to 1980 and at Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York until 1990.[66] During this period, he composed across a variety of media, but it was his music for wind ensemble that increasingly brought him national recognition. By the late twentieth century, his works were becoming central to the developing serious wind ensemble repertoire.[67]

Among his early major works for winds was *Concerto No. 1 for Piano, Winds, and Percussion (1976)*. A pivotal composition was *A Child's Garden of Dreams* (1981), which significantly expanded Maslanka's visibility, establishing his reputation within the wind band community.[68] Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Maslanka produced a series of large-scale works for wind ensemble, including multiple symphonies that have since entered the core repertoire. Symphony No. 4, in particular, has been recognized as a landmark composition, noted for its episodic structure, unifying thematic gestures, and incorporation of chorale materials.[69]

In 1990, Maslanka relocated with his family to Missoula, Montana, a move that would fundamentally reshape both his creative process and his compositional identity. Swearinger observes that the change of environment was accompanied by a shift in his music toward greater

[64] Justin Swearinger, *An Overview of David Maslanka's "Hosannas" and Its Dedicatee, Gary Green*, 2022, 191.
[65] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 2.
[66] Swearinger, *"Hosannas"*, 1.
[67] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," vi.
[68] Swearinger, *"Hosannas",* 1–2.
[69] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," vi.

tonal openness and contemplative quality, reflecting his physical surroundings and spiritual practice. Equally important was a new daily discipline: Maslanka committed himself to studying and playing Johann Sebastian Bach's chorale harmonizations every morning, a practice that Swearinger notes had lasting effects on his compositional voice.[70] The chorales became more than source material: They became a lens through which he understood structure and meaning in music.[71] The integration of Bach chorales is evident in major works such as *Symphony No. 4* and later compositions, where chorale melodies function as thematic anchors and metaphysical symbols.[72]

Maslanka's compositional philosophy was deeply connected to meditation and introspection. His meditative practice informed both his creative process and his understanding of musical form. Bolstad describes his compositional method as one in which thematic material often emerged through extended periods of contemplation rather than purely technical construction.[73] This approach is especially evident in large-scale works, where expansive structures unfold episodically, yet are unified through recurring intervallic motives and spiritual symbolism.[74]

Throughout his career, Maslanka composed over 150 works, including more than fifty for wind ensembles. His wind output includes eight symphonies, numerous concerti, and major choral-wind works such as his *Mass.* [75] In addition to wind ensemble works, he composed chamber music, orchestral works, and a substantial body of solo literature, including significant

[70] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 20–22.
[71] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 20–24.
[72] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 20–24.
[73] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 15–17.
[74] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 35–44.
[75] Swearinger, "Hosannas", abstract.

works for clarinet and marimba.[76] His clarinet concerto, *Desert Roads,* demonstrates Maslanka's affinity for lyricism, extended tonality, and the integration of chorale textures within a neoromantic framework.[77] His works for unaccompanied marimba, including *Variations on Lost Love* (1977), *My Lady White* (1980), and *A Solemn Music* (2013), reveal another dimension of his aesthetic, emphasizing depiction, introspection, and motivic development tied to emotional states. These works illustrate his capacity to fuse structural rigor with spiritual narrative.[78]

In his later years, Maslanka continued to refine his integration of chorale materials and large-scale spiritual architecture. Works such as *Hosannas* (2015), commissioned in honor of Gary Green, represent the culmination of decades of collaboration within the wind ensemble community. Matthew Maslanka, the composer's son, has described his father's later work as built around three consistent elements: chorale-based writing, intense and turbulent passages, and a deeply heartfelt center.[79]

Maslanka's influence extended far beyond composition. As an educator and mentor, he shaped generations of conductors, performers, and composers.[80] His collaborations with conductors such as Gary Green resulted in multiple commissions that significantly expanded the wind ensemble repertoire. His works have been recorded widely and are published by several major publishers, including Carl Fischer and Maslanka Press.

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[76] Corey Robinson, "Depiction Through Evocation, Representation, And Introspection: An Examination of David Maslanka's Unaccompanied Marimba Solos" (University of North Texas, 2018), 2.
[77] Myroslava Oksana Hawryluk Hagen, *An American Neoromantic: David Maslanka's Concerto for Clarinet and Wind Ensemble: Analysis, Insights to the Composer's Performance Intentions, and Discussion of the Commissioning Process*, 2018, 18–22.
[78] Robinson, Marimba Solos," 1–2.
[79] Swearinger, *"Hosannas",* 1–3.
[80] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," v.

David Maslanka died in 2017, leaving behind a body of work that reshaped the artistic possibilities of the wind ensemble medium.[81] His music is characterized by spiritual intensity, expansive lyricism, structural integration of chorale archetypes, and a deeply personal engagement with meditation and metaphysical inquiry. Through his symphonies, concerti, chamber works, and pedagogical legacy, Maslanka stands as one of the most significant American composers for wind ensemble in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

David Maslanka's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble* holds a central place within the contemporary saxophone repertoire. Composed in 1999 and premiered in 2000, the work represents one of Maslanka's most expansive explorations of the expressive and spiritual potential of the saxophone within the wind ensemble medium. The concerto was commissioned by a consortium led by Jerry Junkin of the University of Texas and Gregg Hanson of the University of Arizona, two conductors who were both deeply committed to championing Maslanka's compositional voice. Maslanka began composing the concerto in the summer of 1998 and completed the work on December 27, 1999. Each movement was finished individually over the course of that year, with the first movement completed on November 16, 1999.[82] The premiere was scheduled for the 2000 Biennial Conference of the North American Saxophone Alliance and ultimately featured Joseph Lulloff as soloist with the University of Arizona Wind Ensemble.[83]

As the author of this dissertation, the presence of Gregg Hanson in the history of this concerto carries profound personal significance. Hanson served as my first conducting teacher

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[81] Swearinger, "Hosannas" abstract-2.
This biographical information was compiled in conjunction with Michigan ChatGPT
[82] Otis Murphy, "A Performance Guide to David Maslanka's Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble" (Indiana University, 2006), 14, https://search.worldcat.org/title/289616341.
[83] Murphy, "A Performance Guide" 14.

and mentor during my undergraduate studies at the University of Arizona from 2010–2014. During my time there, he embodied the very spirit of musical mentorship and generosity that shaped my earliest experiences in conducting. Hanson was a passionate advocate for David Maslanka's music and frequently programmed his works with the Arizona Wind Ensemble, believing deeply in Maslanka's compositional voice and philosophical approach to music making. His enthusiasm for this music was contagious. I quickly realized that I wanted to learn as much from him as possible, which led me to pursue multiple years of independent conducting study with him while a student at the University of Arizona.

Gregg Hanson exemplified the first of André De Shields' "Cardinal Rules of Longevity:" surround yourself with people whose eyes light up when they see you coming. Hanson's eyes and spirit would brighten in exactly this way whenever I entered the rehearsal room. He cared deeply about his students' success and trajectory, and his mentorship played a formative role in my development as a conductor. Hanson passed away in 2023, yet his influence remains central to my artistic life. When assembling this recital program, performing Maslanka's Saxophone Concerto became a meaningful way to thank him for believing in me and for giving me the opportunity to begin my journey as a conductor.

Hanson himself was also closely connected to the University of Michigan, having studied as a member of the Symphony Band under the legendary director William D. Revelli. He frequently shared stories with his students about his time in the Michigan band program and served as an enthusiastic ambassador for the wind band tradition and for music education more broadly. Hanson maintained a close relationship with David Maslanka, which led to several extended residencies by the composer at the University of Arizona during my time there. One particularly memorable residency occurred during the Western premiere of Maslanka's

*Symphony No. 9*. During that visit, I had the opportunity to speak with Maslanka on several occasions. His calm presence and thoughtful reflections on music and life left a lasting impression.

Maslanka often spoke about his compositional process in terms of meditation and deep listening. He described the importance of hearing the sound of each instrument internally before writing for it. In one conversation, he remarked to me that my bass clarinet sound was the sound he imagined when composing for that instrument. That moment remains one of the most meaningful affirmations of my musical life and continues to shape my understanding of orchestration and musical identity.

*Symphony No. 9* itself carried particular emotional weight for Maslanka because of the long-standing superstition known as the "curse of the ninth," the belief that composers often die after completing their ninth symphony. This association is frequently discussed in relation to composers such as Ludwig van Beethoven, Anton Bruckner, and Gustav Mahler. Maslanka spoke openly about his awareness of this historical pattern and about the vulnerability he felt while composing *Symphony No. 9*. Sadly, he passed away in 2017 while working on his *Symphony No. 10*, which remained unfinished. The inclusion of Maslanka's music within this Dissertation Recital collection therefore stands as both a tribute to his artistic legacy and a personal expression of gratitude to Gregg Hanson for the mentorship and opportunities that helped shape my path.

The first movement of Maslanka's saxophone concerto is titled "Song: Fire in the Earth." Maslanka described the inspiration for this movement as a sequence of vivid images experienced while walking through a Montana field on a bright autumn day. The images included a distant

row of red plant stems caught by the morning sun, snow resting on surrounding mountain peaks, and green grass at his feet. These impressions inspired the short poetic description that appears in the program notes:

> Fire in the earth
>
> Snow in the heavens
>
> New green grass in the middle of November.[84]

Although this imagery informs the expressive character of the movement, Maslanka emphasized that the music itself does not attempt to depict these images directly. Instead, the poetic imagery provided a psychological starting point for the composition. The resulting movement conveys a sense of spaciousness and openness that Maslanka associated with the landscapes of Montana.[85] Structurally, the movement follows a modified ternary design of ABA′B′A″.

| Section | Measures | Tonal Area | Musical Characteristics |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 1–17 | D minor | Opening thematic statement in solo saxophone over steady eighth note accompaniment. Establishes lyrical character and stable pulse. |
| b | 18–32 | E ♭ major | Secondary melodic material. Narrower melodic range and calmer character. |
| c | 33–55 | F major | Expanded melodic embellishment leading to cadence in relative major. |
| B | 56–85 | Modulatory | Tonal centers cycle through B ♭ minor, G ♭ , A ♭ , C, and F. Texture becomes more contrapuntal and ensemble oriented. Saxophone becomes integrated within ensemble. |

[84] Murphy, “A Performance Guide,” 14–15.
[85] Murphy, Murphy, “A Performance Guide to David Maslanka’s Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble,” 14. 15.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A′ | 86–102 | D minor | Return of primary theme with new sixteenth note accompaniment texture creating stronger momentum. |
| b′ | 103–117 | E ♭ major | Variation of secondary theme with more animated accompaniment. |
| c′ | 118–139 | F major | Expanded closing material with developmental gestures. |
| B′ | 140–169 | Modulatory | Return of modulatory section with similar tonal cycle as earlier B section. |
| A″ | 170–201 | D minor | Augmented presentation of primary theme. Phrase expansion and calmer orchestration. |
| b″ | 202–223 | E ♭ major | Final variation of secondary theme. |
| c″ | 224–250 | F major | Closing statement leading to final cadence. |

Figure 2.1: Formal Analysis/Performance Guide for David Maslanka's Concerto for Saxophone: *Fire in the Earth*

The movement begins in D minor and features a continuous eighth-note accompaniment pattern that supports a soaring saxophone melody.[86] The opening texture establishes a steady pulse and harmonic grounding that remains a defining feature throughout the movement. Maslanka referred to this sense of continuity as the "reliability of pulse," describing it as a musical analogue for the sustaining rhythms of life itself.[87]

The A section presents a lyrical theme built primarily from long note values outlining the underlying harmonic structure. The melody moves through intervals of steps, thirds, fifths, and octaves while passing tones in shorter rhythmic values connect the structural pitches. Suspensions and appoggiaturas appear frequently within the melodic line, creating gentle dissonances that resolve into the surrounding harmony.[88] The harmonic language during this

[86] Murphy, "A Performance Guide"| WorldCat.Org," 16.
[87] Murphy, "A Performance Guide"| WorldCat.Org," 17.
[88] Murphy, "A Performance Guide"| WorldCat.Org," 17.

section is relatively simple, with progressions built largely from functional i–iv–V–i patterns in D minor.

In contrast, the B section introduces a more fluid and modulatory harmonic environment. Beginning in measure 55, the music shifts to B-flat minor and begins to cycle through a sequence of tonal centers including G-flat major, A-flat major, C minor, and F major before eventually returning toward D minor.[89] During this passage the saxophone becomes less dominant as a soloistic voice and instead blends into the ensemble texture, participating in a series of exchanges between woodwinds and brass. Maslanka fragments the melodic material across multiple instrumental groups, producing a chamber-like interplay within the larger wind ensemble.[90]

Another distinctive feature of this section is the shift in meter to 5/4 and the use of counterpoint within the ensemble. The previously constant eighth-note accompaniment disappears, replaced by more varied harmonic rhythms and layered instrumental textures. The saxophone line functions as an obbligato figure above the ensemble rather than as the primary melodic carrier.[91] After the B section, the return of the A material restores the original tonal center of D minor while introducing subtle variations in texture and accompaniment. The saxophone melody reappears with a new motoric sixteenth-note accompaniment, producing a more energized character than in the opening statement.[92] Later returns of the A material involve augmentation and expansion of the original melodic idea, extending the phrase length and altering the dynamic profile to create a sense of development across the movement.

[89] Murphy, "A Performance Guide," 16.
[90] Murphy, "A Performance Guide," 21.
[91] Murphy, "A Performance Guide," 20.
[92] Murphy, "A Performance Guide," 22–23.

Maslanka also employs characteristic orchestration techniques throughout the movement, particularly the doubling of the saxophone line by other instruments in order to expand the color and resonance of the solo voice. For example, in measure 18, the saxophone melody is doubled by the first and second flutes. Although the flutes share the same dynamic marking, their lighter timbre subtly amplifies the saxophone's sound rather than competing with it.[93] Similar doubling occurs later in the movement with trumpet, clarinet, and other instruments, creating a shifting palette of tone colors that reinforces the expressive intensity of the solo line. See figure 2.2 for the depiction of this doubling with oboe.

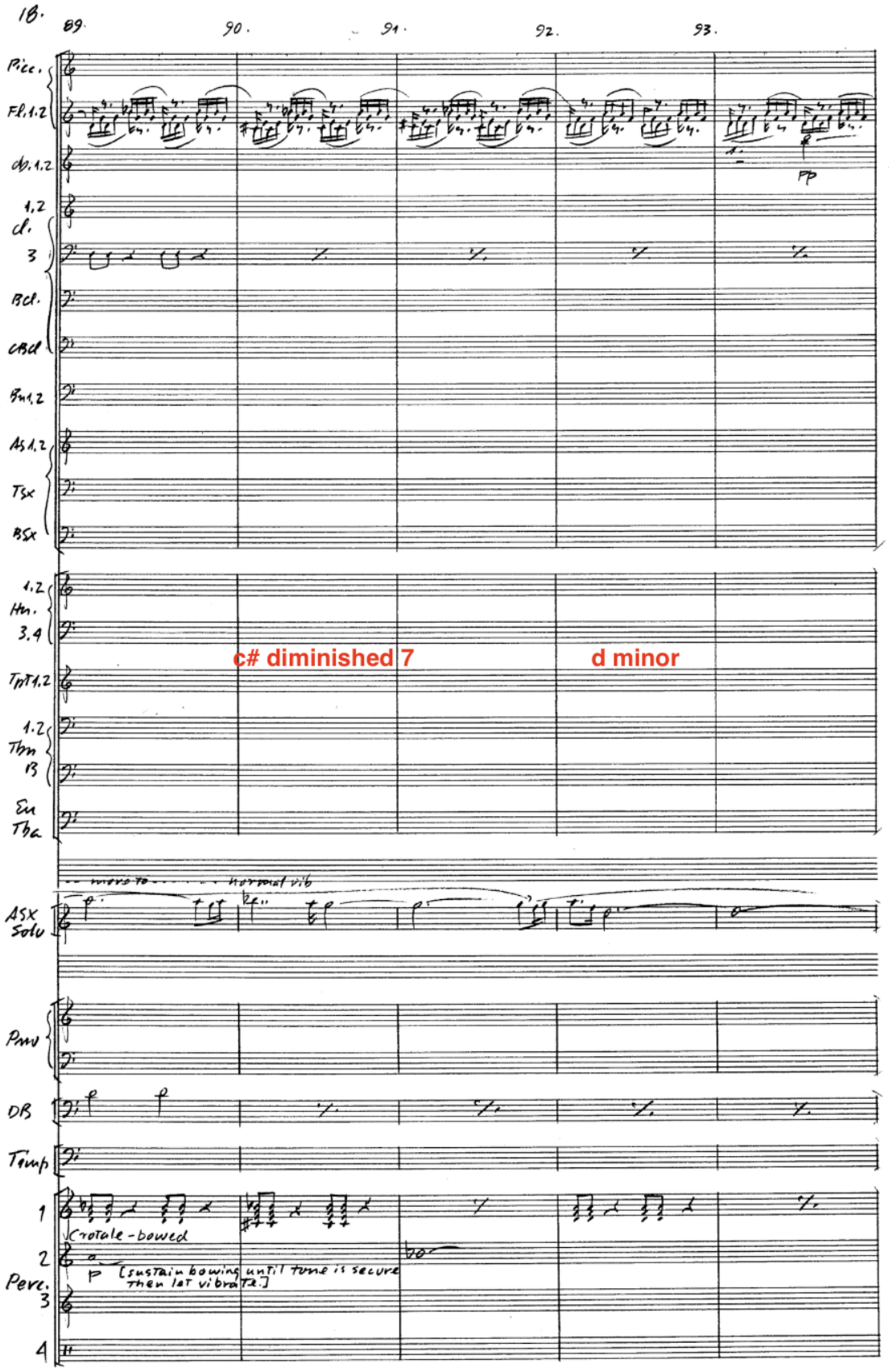
One of the most striking aspects of the first movement is Maslanka's approach to harmonic motion during transitional passages. These modulating sequences frequently move through symmetrical collections of tonal centers rather than following traditional functional progressions. In figure 2.2, this technique appears prominently in the B section of the movement, where the tonal centers B ♭ minor, G ♭ major, A ♭ major, C minor, and F major appear in rapid succession.[94]

Music theorist Richard Cohn has described a related harmonic system known as the Hyper-Hexatonic Cycle, a transformational network that links triads through symmetrical voice-leading relationships. In Maslanka's music, similar cyclic harmonic motion often functions as a transitional device connecting larger tonal regions.[95] Cohn depicts this in figure 3.3, now retitled 2.3.

[93] Murphy, "A Performance Guide," 14. 24–25.
[94] Murphy, "A Performance Guide," 16.
[95] Brooke Madison Cole, *An Overview of Select Compositional Techniques in David Maslanka's Symphonies No.4 and No. 9*, (Kansas City Missouri), 2019, 61–62.

In both the *Concerto for Saxophone* and Maslanka's *Symphony No. 4*, which is addressed later in this paper, these harmonic cycles create a sense of continuous expansion and transformation rather than conventional modulation. The progression through multiple triadic centers within the B section of "Fire in the Earth" mirrors harmonic procedures that Maslanka uses elsewhere in his wind ensemble works, particularly in large transitional passages that move between structural tonal areas.


19.
94.
95.
96.
97.
98.
Picc.
Fl.1.2
Ob.1.2
cresc. grad.
1.2 Cl.
3
BCl.
CBCl.
Bsn 1,2
ASx 1,2
TSx
BSx
Oboe doubling Solo
1,2 Hn.
3,4
D Major
B flat 7
Tpt 1,2
1,2 Tbn.
3
Eu.
Tba
ASx Solo
cresc. grad.
mp
Perc
DB
cresc.
mp
Timp
1
cresc.
mp
2
Perc
3
4


18.
89.
90.
91.
92.
93.
Picc.
Fl. 1.2
Ob. 1.2
1.2
Cl.
3
Bcl.
CBcl
Bsn 1.2
As 1.2
Tsx
BSx
1.2
Hn.
3.4
c# diminished 7
d minor
Tpt 1.2
1.2
Tbn
B
Eu
Tba
move to ... normal vib
ASX
Solo
Pno
DB
Timp.
1
2
Perc.
3
4
Crotale - bowed
[sustain bowing until tone is secure then let vibrate.]


84.
85.
hold back slightly
86.
in tempo
87.
88.
Picc
Fl. 1, 2
Ob. 1, 2
1, 2 Cl.
3
Bcl.
ABcl.
Bn 1, 2
AS 1, 2
TSx
BSx
1, 2 Hn
3
TpT 1, 2
1, 2 Tbn.
B
Eu
Tba
A. Sx. Solo
Perc.
DB
Timp
1
2
3
4
mf
sim.
p
d minor
g minor
non vib.
pp
(Pizz)
(arco)

Figure 2.2: m. 84-98 oboe and solo alto saxophone doubling with harmonic modulating sequence

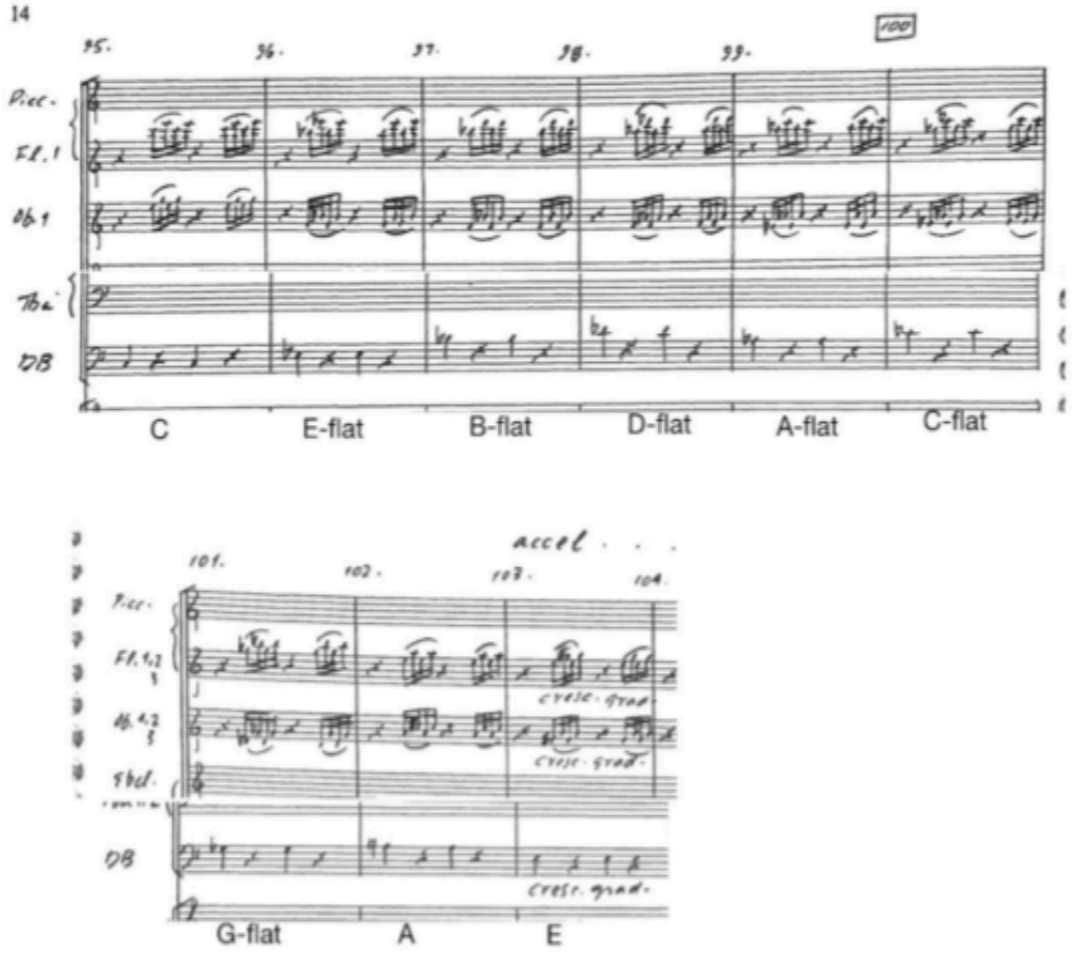



Figure 2.3: Cycling through Cohn's Hyper-Hexatonic System in *Symphony No. 4* from Cole 2019

Conducting, 'First in the Earth' in this recital was, for me, an act of reciprocity. The movement's harmonic restlessness, its refusal to settle into any single tonal center for long, mirrors something I recognize in my own journey as a conductor: the feeling of moving through unfamiliar landscapes with only the reliability of pulse to orient oneself. Maslanka described composing this movement from images of a Montana field in autumn: fire beneath the earth,

snow above it, new grass in between. That image of life pressing upward against cold is not incidental to the music; it is the music. Programming this work alongside *I need to thank you,* a piece built equally on gratitude and the courage to create, felt like the most honest way to honor both Gregg Hanson's memory and the tradition of mentorship that has carried me to this point.

**I need to thank you** (2025) Rj Dion
(b. 2000)

As mentioned above, the concert theme was inspired by, and based on Rj Dion's piece entitled *I need to thank you,* composed for solo soprano saxophone, saxophone quartet, and chamber winds. Dion was born in 2000 and raised in Salem, New Hampshire before relocating to Londonderry, NH with his family. His mother is from Portugal and raised a family of five after immigrating to the United States. Because of her strong connection to Portuguese folk music, she was an influential and uplifting voice in Dion's life in understanding their culture through the traditions and music of Portugal. This early exposure to Portuguese folk music shaped his reverence for music in his own life. Dion started playing the piano and clarinet at age seven and added the saxophone at the age of ten. He continued with his musical studies in the public education system in New Hampshire.[96]

Dion was significantly inspired by his high school band director, Marty Claussen, who played a critical role in his life both musically and professionally. Mr. Claussen was a percussionist who had served in the military and taught for over twenty-five years. Dion's first experience with Claussen was when he played the vibraphone in middle school jazz band class. While Dion was originally focused on jazz, Claussen exposed him to several contemporary classical voices. Jennifer Higdon's Viola Concerto was a standout for Dion, while other composers like Philip Glass, Meredith Monk, Vijay Iyer, and Tyshawn Sorey also were contributing figures to his desire to pursue composition. "All the composers Claussen brought to me were based in improvisation, jazz, and blues. They also had deep connection to the music of their childhoods and brought that to their art." From performer to composer, Dion became enthralled with the opportunities to create sounds and textures in ways that have not been curated

[96] Rj Dion, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Rj Dion and His Composition 'I Need to Thank You,'" (Ann Arbor, MI), December 23, 2025.

before. Claussen pushed him to begin composing early in his career and this would inspire transcriptions followed by original new works. Dion speaks of Claussen as an unwavering support system of his exploration and identification as a composer, musician, and artist.

Dion continued his education at The University of Hartford and the Hartt School of Music. He studied jazz saxophone with Javon Jackson and composition with visiting guests in a process that deviated from conventional practice. Dion also spent a year working at the Hartford Public Library and developed a love for text and the stories that connect people. After graduation from Hartt, he began his Master of Music degree in composition at the University of Michigan where he studied with Michael Daugherty and Kristen Kuster. During his studies at the University of Michigan, Dion stayed engaged in saxophone performances and improvisation, and particularly immersed in the music of Coltrane and Duke Ellington.[97] While Coltrane's music enhanced Dion's understanding of compositional structure, the works of Jennifer Higdon particularly shaped his understanding of concerto writing for a solo voice with ensemble accompaniment. Dion's piece *I need to thank you* grew from an assignment in a 2025 University of Michigan Chamber Winds course led by composer Roshanne Etezady. At its inception, the piece was orchestrated as a *concerto grosso* for saxophone quartet and chamber winds. This first draft became the second movement of the piece. The next two movements grew from the opportunity to have the piece premiered on this ad hoc recital on December 5th, 2025. Both Dion and I met numerous times to discuss instrumentation, ideas, and a possible soloist. Dion knew that he wanted the piece to feature the Citrine Quartet, all of whom currently study at the University of Michigan, and we talked about expanding the movement to incorporate another soloist as well. My collaborative idea was that we start as individuals, and through time meet

[97] Dion, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Rj Dion and His Composition 'I Need to Thank You.'"

others along the way through a journey of self-exploration and discovery. What emerged was an opening movement that starts with a solo soprano saxophone who is then joined by the saxophone quartet in the second movement. The soloist and quartet explore finding a symbiotic pulse and rhythm that can be interpreted as a parallel to our collaborative musical study in the classroom. By the third movement, there is consistent dialogue between the soloist and the quartet that eventually leads to them becoming interlocked. The final movement reflects on the present and begins with a gesture inspired by J.S. Bach which appears throughout the movement. A cadenza shaped by the interplay that one feels happens consistently in our minds as they continue to play music. The closing motivic gestures were influenced by the mentorship of Dion's teacher, Michael Daughtery.



Figure 2.4: Dion's inspiration while writing

While writing this piece, Dion would sit alongside an image of New England, [see figure 2.4] which became a grounding inspiration for the composition. That artwork was a guide for pacing, color, and overall line within the piece. It represents at its core an all-encompassing statement of gratitude for people who opened the path to music, music education, performance, and composition for him.

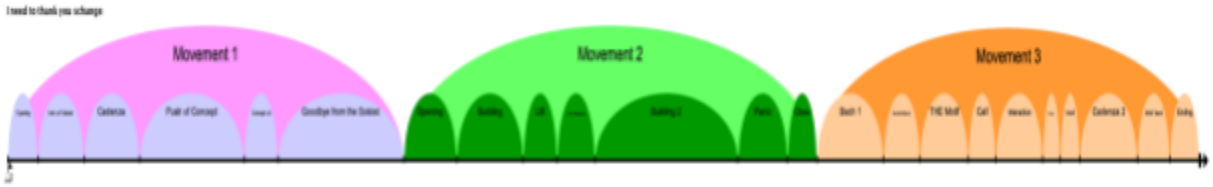



Figure 2.5: Dion graphical vision of the "flow" of the piece

(Each Movement in figure above can be found in larger print below. See Figures: 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9)

| MOVEMENT 1 | MOVEMENT 2 | MOVEMENT 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Opening → Intro of Soloist → Cadenza → Push of Concept → Concept x2 → Goodbye from the Soloist | Opening → Building → Lift → Call + Response → Building 2 → Panic → Close | Bach 1 → Soloist Back → THE Motif → Call → Interaction → Push → Motif → Cadenza 2 → Motif Back → Ending |

Figure 2.6: Typed topography and "flow" of piece provided by Dion

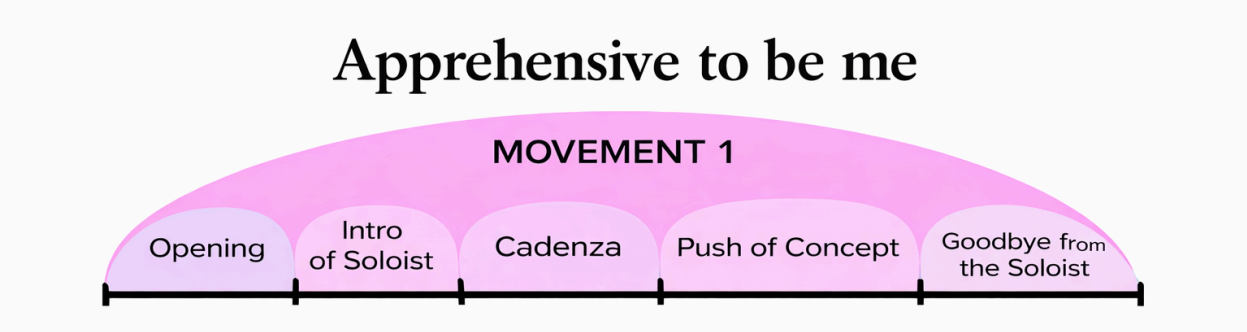



Figure 2.7: *Apprehensive to be me* formal flow analysis

The first movement begins with an aural depiction of the title of the movement: “Apprehensive to be me”. The ‘lone’ soloist represents an individual whom the listener will follow on the journey through the work. Measures one through eight, labeled “Opening” in the figure 2.7, are introductions to both the piece and the movement. The introduction is built from a long, three-chord motif that shifts and grows in tension and density within the instrumentation and texture, setting the ‘sound world’ found in figure 2.8.




Figure 2.8: m. 1- 6 Three chord motif in 'opening'

Representing human interaction, this movement is bookended with a musical ‘hello’ and a closing ‘goodbye.’[98] Both gestures start identical in function and instrumentation, but the closing ‘goodbye’ is set a major third higher.




Figure 2.9: closing ‘goodbye’ with same three chord motif

After the opening, the solo soprano saxophone enters with a concert E which rhythmically evolves over two measures and depicts the sense of “apprehension” from the title. [See figure 2.10]

[98] Dion, “Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Rj Dion and His Composition ‘I Need to Thank You.’”

At letter A, a cadenza for the soloist is presented with piano accompaniment. This moment leads to a duet between the right hand of the pianist and the soprano saxophone that then cadences on an A minor chord in measure thirty-five. [See figure 2.11]

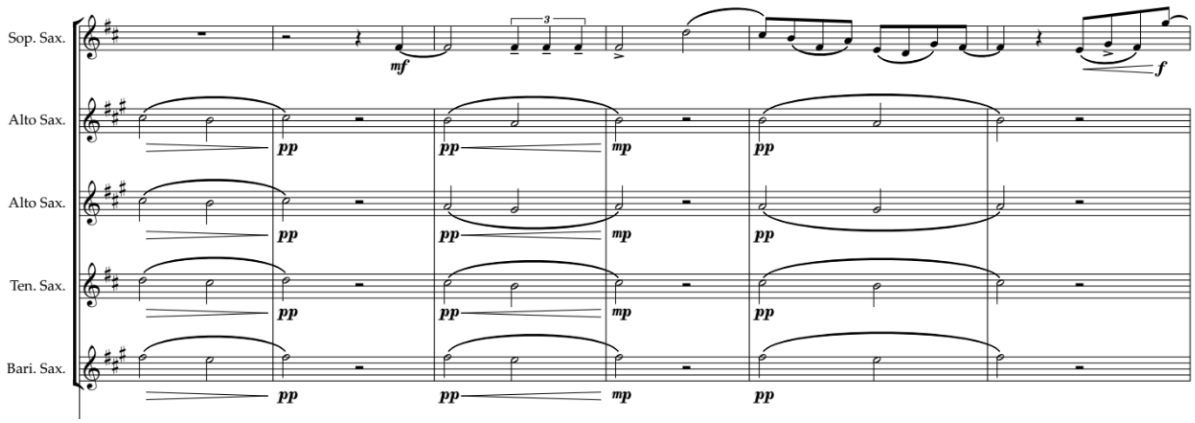



Figure 2.10: Soprano saxophone apprehension

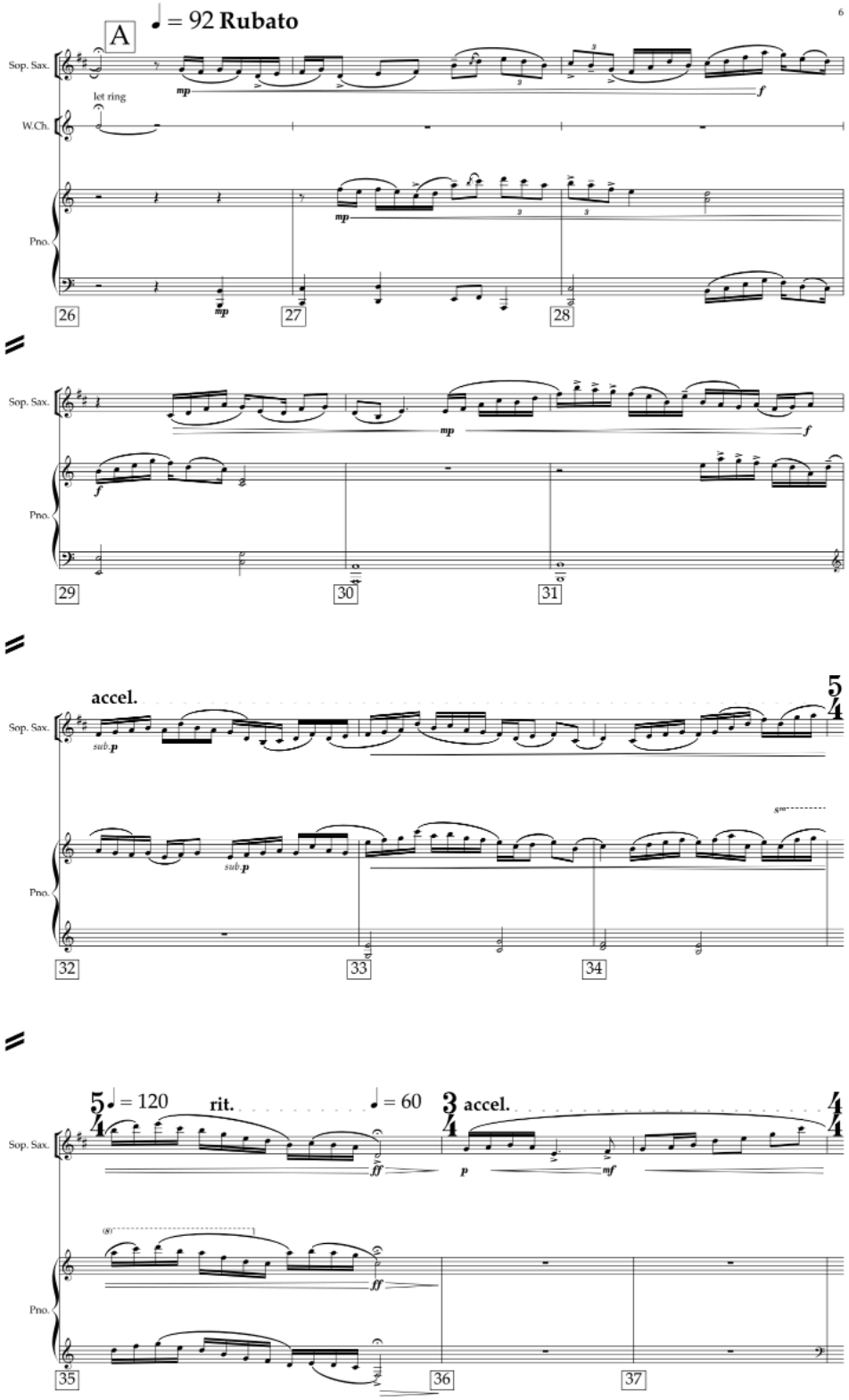



Figure 2.11: Letter A - Saxophone Cadenza with piano accompaniment




Figure 2.12: Dion's 'Push of Concept'

This cadenza is meant to stand as a "private moment" for the soloist, and gives the full ensemble space before entering at letter B for a section the composer calls a 'push of concept.'[99] Led by the

[99] Dion, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Rj Dion and His Composition 'I Need to Thank You.'"

physical standing and reemergence of the saxophone quartet along with horn, euphonium, tuba, and double bass, the lush chords from the beginning are heard once again. [See figure 2.12]

The composer elaborated on this ‘push of concept':

> After the push of concept, a ritardando leads us into the ‘goodbye from the soloist’ at measure seventy-two. As the goodbye is coming to a close, the piano line emerges with soft 16th notes that are pedalled to create a resonance in the textural atmosphere. This line meant a lot to Dion, and was something that he and his professor went back and forth about the validity to keep or not in the final edits. “I look at the ending right before E, I think it was probably around measure 86 or 88, where the pianist comes in with this right hand line, this right hand 16th note line with the pedal down. It’s just really soft. It feels like semi not supposed to be there. It’s like, a little out of place. But every time it stops, it feels right. That chord just rings out. The remaining actuations of those notes just stick, and that to the end was something I fought really hard to keep with my private teacher. Like, no, trust me, this feels right. This makes sense.”[100]

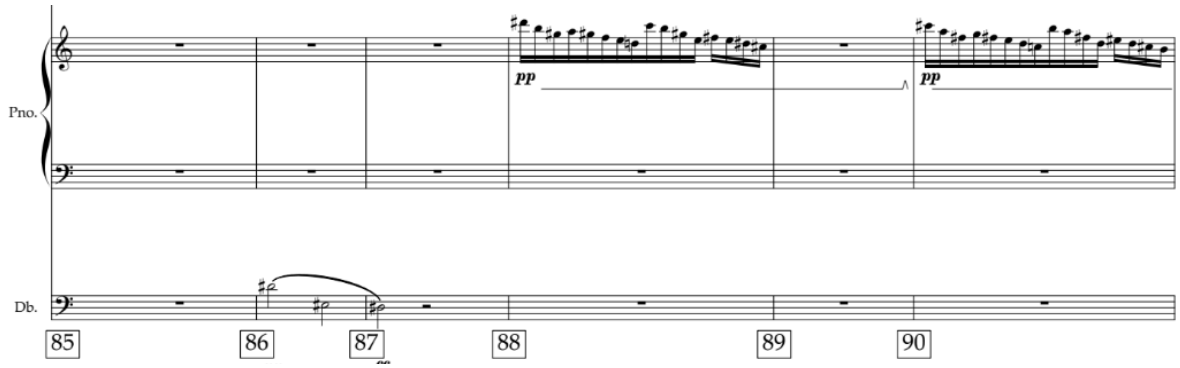



Figure 2.13: Dion’s feel right moment

[100] Dion, “Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Rj Dion and His Composition ‘I Need to Thank You.’”

Movement two is titled ‘Following your step’ and is meant to be experienced by the listener as a “fisheye.” Dion talks about a fisheye lens, which utilizes an ultra-wide focal length to allow the viewer to see elements in the same frame which are both near and far away. This movement is the musical manifestation of when you follow your steps, you must be ‘zoomed in’ to each individual placement of the step, while also being cognizant of where you are going – the ‘zoom out’.

Through the “zoomed out” view, this movement is built in six sections [see figure 2.14]

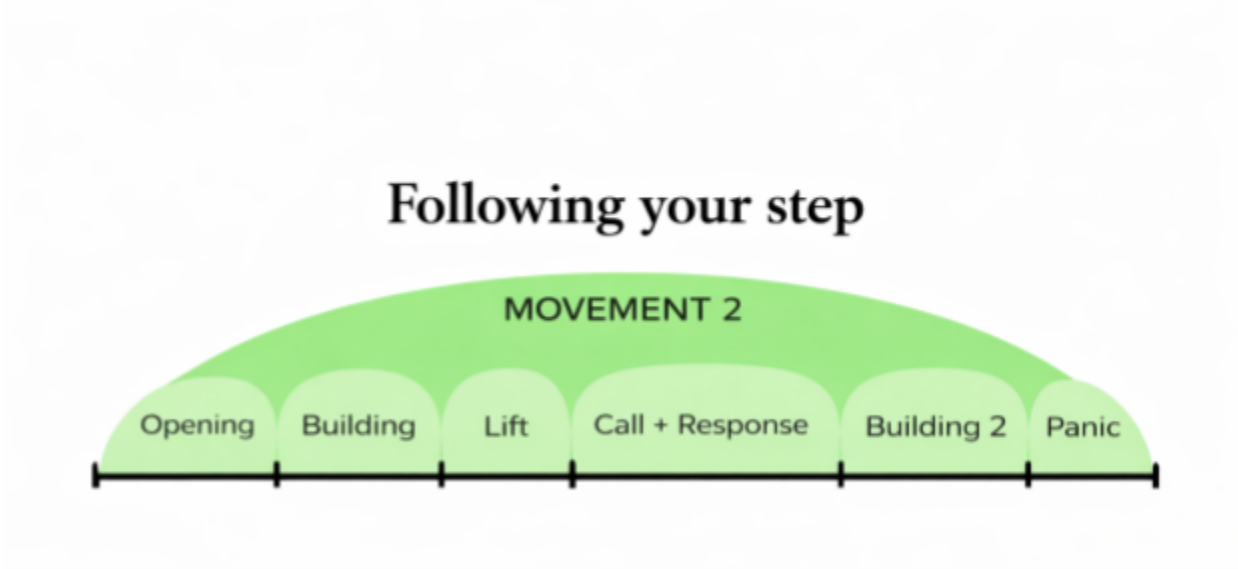



Figure 2.14: *Following your step* formal flow analysis

The ‘zoom in’ begins at measure one in the saxophone quartet figures, which Dion explains is a depiction of becoming “part of something bigger than yourself.”[101] As each saxophone evolves throughout this opening, the shared rhythmic composite increases while creating an active texture through imitation.

[101] Dion, “Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Rj Dion and His Composition ‘I Need to Thank You.’”

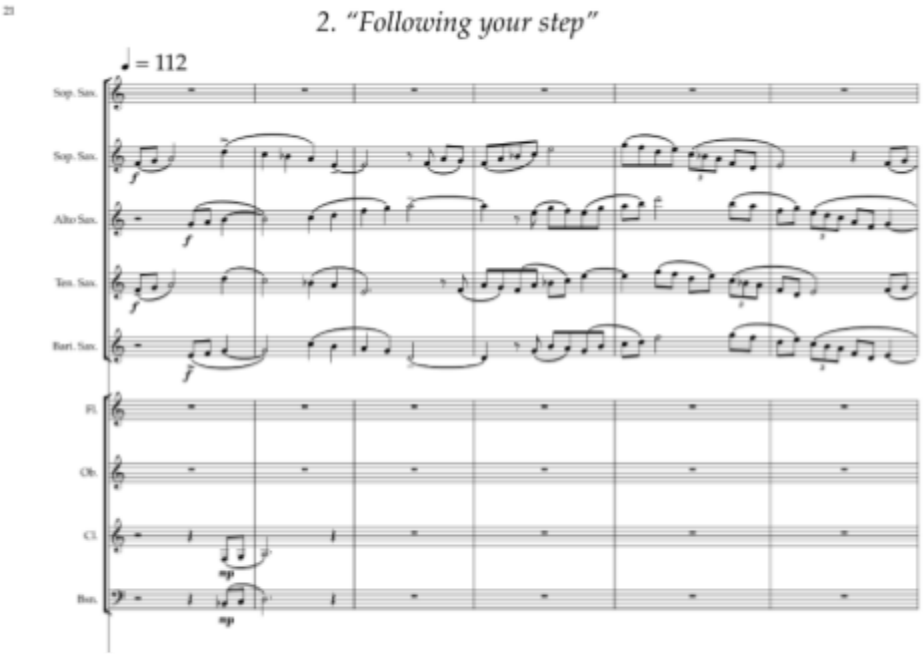



Figure 2.15: *Following your step* music depiction through imitation

In figure 2.15, the musical statement starts with the soprano saxophone, is imitated by the tenor saxophone, and then joined by the baritone and alto saxophone in parallel 6ths. Just like footsteps imitating one another, Dion uses this compositional technique as a way to signal that we are moving forward and "following your step." As the steps move forward, the woodwinds start the 'building blocks' through a downward cascading line, which eventually progresses through the entire ensemble.




Figure 2.16: 'The Lift'

This process leads into one of the most notable moments of the entire piece, identified by Dion as the "lift." [see figure 2.16] This portion of the piece is called the lift, to depict what one would do with their feet when following their foot steps. To move forward, we must lift our left foot and then our right in sequence. Through this, we adapt in different aspects of our lives. When an individual runs a marathon as opposed to hiking up a mountain, the type of step, height, speed, intensity, and pressure of each step will vary due to the environment in which the user is engaging. In this particular section, measure sixteen begins to transform the musical environment

to a tango style.  By measure nineteen, the tango is in full swing, and the steps move forward in a new way, energetic and with a fresh perspective of the thematic material. [see figure 2.17]




Figure 2.17: Dion's Tango

After the "lift," Dion composes a "call and response" section which begins by looking back to the first movement. As a person moves forward step by step, the composer notes that one still continues to look back, wondering about the past as well as the present and future. In measure forty nine and fifty, Dion recalls the same musical contour and overall shape of the line from the first movement, moving from C# minor - D# diminished - E major 7, which then repeats in measures fifty-one through fifty-two. [see figure 2.18]




Figure 2.18: Recall of opening

After looking back, we look forward into the next section of the piece with a call and response between oboe and bassoon, followed by tenor and baritone saxophones in figure 2.19. The oboe, tenor saxophone, and baritone saxophone have identical pitches through their call and response pages, yet the bassoon does not. My interpretation of this specific choice is one in which someone has an experience where you meet people who are completely different from you, yet they communicate openly through the same language. The difference does not prohibit moving forward together through shared experiences.




Figure 2.19: Call and response to depict looking forward

What Dion composes here is a concept that many systems thinkers have long worked to formalize: distinct elements, different in nature, brought into conversation with one another in a way that produces something none of them could achieve alone. In Chapter 1 of *The Magic Ring*, Piero Mella grounds his articulation of systems thinking in Ludwig von Bertalanffy's general definition of a system. To understand why this compositional choice works the way it does, a brief look to how thinkers have defined systems is particularly relevant. Mella writes, "A system can be defined as a complex of interacting elements. Interaction means that the elements, p, stand in relations, R, so that the behavior of an element p in R is different from its behavior in another relation R′."[102] Immediately following this definition, Mella clarifies that a dynamic system is "a dynamic unity composed of interconnecting and interacting variables."[103] A system is not merely a collection of parts. It is a structured network in which elements acquire different behaviors depending on the relations in which they are embedded. Furthermore, the system as a whole

[102] Piero Mella, *The Magic Ring: Systems Thinking Approach to Control Systems*, 2nd ed, Contemporary Systems Thinking Ser (Springer International Publishing AG, 2021), 17.
[103] Mella, *The Magic Ring*, 17.

exhibits characteristics that do not reduce to any single constituent element. Mella's argument remains within the domain of systems science, describing interacting variables, relational dependence, and dynamic unity. This is exactly what I hear Dion employing in this movement.

When this framework is applied to Dion's compositional technique in this movement, the musical texture may be understood as a dynamic system of interacting motivic variables. As the movement progresses, Dion expands the orchestration, increases tessitura, and intensifies dynamic contrast, thereby enlarging the relational network in which the primary musical cell operates. In measure sixty-seven, the saxophone quartet initiates a downward cascading gesture that functions as a large-scale "call." This gesture is answered by the horn, trombone, euphonium, and tuba choir. [See figure 2.20] An *accelerando* then heightens the urgency of this exchange, propelling the gesture forward in momentum before it is answered again by the flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon choir. At this macro level, the musical cell behaves differently depending on orchestration, register, and tempo context. In Bertalanffy's terms, the same element stands in different relations and therefore exhibits different behavior.[104] The call in the saxophones is not identical in structural function to the response in the brass or the subsequent answer in the woodwinds. The behavior of the cell shifts as its relational environment shifts.

[104] Mella, *The Magic Ring*, 17.

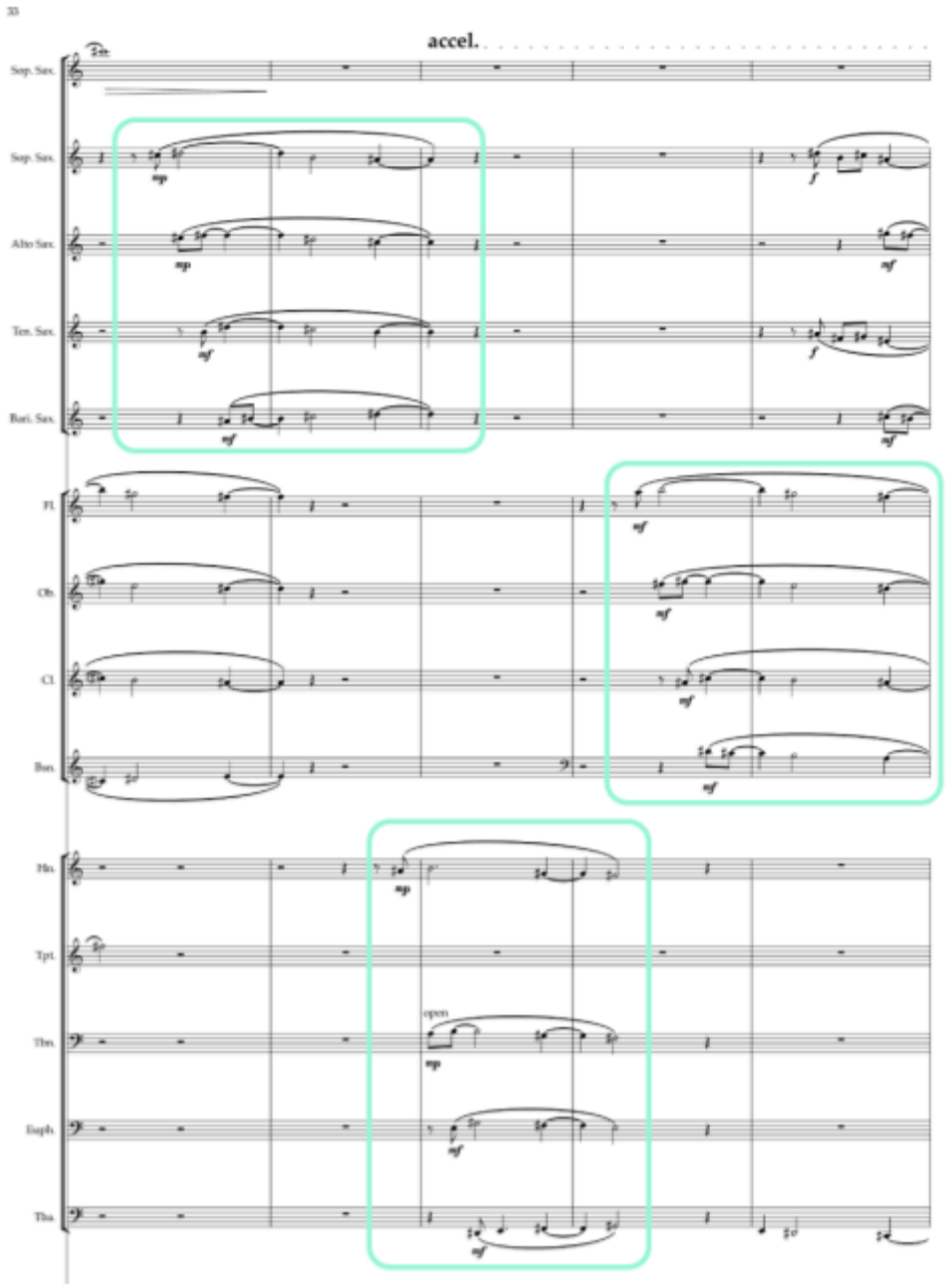



Figure 2.20: Dion's Musical interconnecting and interacting variables

Closer examination of the same passage reveals additional layers of imitation nested within this larger formal exchange. Within the saxophone quartet itself, Dion constructs smaller-scale call and response gestures through paired interactions. The soprano saxophone initiates the first cell, which is answered by the alto saxophone. The tenor saxophone then reaches outward with a

related gesture that is answered by the baritone saxophone. These two-voice interactions function simultaneously within the broader sectional call and response. Here, the musical line serves as both initiating agent and responding element depending on its relational placement. The soprano saxophone in measure sixty-seven initiates one conversational exchange with the tenor saxophone, while at the same time the alto and baritone form a parallel dialogue. Each line contains identical or near-identical material, yet its function changes according to context. In systemic language, the musical cell behaves differently in relation R than in relation R′. [105] The imitation is therefore not decorative. It is relational and structural.

At an even more refined level, the cascading gesture itself contains internal repetition and contour mirroring. The downward motion unfolds in segments that echo one another within the same line. This internal recursion creates coherence within the cell before it even enters into dialogue with another voice. Although Mella does not discuss music specifically, his description of a dynamic system as a unity of interacting variables.[106] The identity of the gesture in this movement does not arise from isolated pitches. It emerges from relational placement across multiple structural layers: internal contour relationships, duet-level imitation, and large-scale sectional call and response.

Thus, Dion's compositional voice in this passage may be understood through a systems framework. The movement exhibits multi-layered imitation operating across scales. At the macro level, sectional choirs engage in large-scale call and response. At the meso level, paired instruments within the quartet engage in duet imitation. At the micro level, the cell itself contains internal contour echo. Each layer reshapes the meaning of the cell through relational context. The

[105] Mella, *The Magic Ring*, 17.
[106] Mella, *The Magic Ring*, 17.

compositional technique therefore reflects a dynamic unity composed of interconnecting and interacting variables, as described by Mella.[107] What appears on the surface as imitation becomes, upon closer analysis, a systemic architecture in which musical behavior is determined by relational placement within an expanding network of texture, timbre, tessitura, and momentum.

The next development within this movement comes the second ‘build’ starting in measure seventy-four, in which Dion created a smokey texture through orchestration and




Figure 2.21: Dion’s Second Build

[107] Mella, *The Magic Ring*, 17. This information was edited in conjunction with ChatGPT.

harmonic development. This build is as exactly as it sounds and starts from the foundation, the tuba and works upward, as though we are walking up the steps to our next destination. Starting from G sharp-minor-F sharp minor-Asus4-5 in measure seventy-seven. The downbeat of measure seventy-seven is the climax of this short-lived build [see figure 2.21] which leads us into the next section that Dion has named "Panic."

In the "panic"segment, Dion seeks to depict the time in a person's life or experience where they have built something important. As the work commences, so too does panic often ensue. In measure eighty-three this sense of anxiety within the quintet begins and the rhythm becomes unstable within the chamber group. Starting with the baritone saxophone's quintuplet, which is juxtaposed with the soprano saxophone sixteenth notes, further rhythmic chaos is introduced with the quarter note triplet of the tenor saxophone. [see figure 2.24] This is a tactical and practical way of creating a sense of anxiety and the unsettled nature of the music as Dion closes the movement.




Figure 2.23: Climax of short-lived build

This ending to the second movement provides contrast for the opening of the third movement, entitled "Reflecting." Within the movement, there are nine  sections that Dion presents as notable. This opening reflective motive comes from J.S. Bach's Chorale, *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott.* [see figure 2.26]




Figure 2.24: Dion's depiction of panic

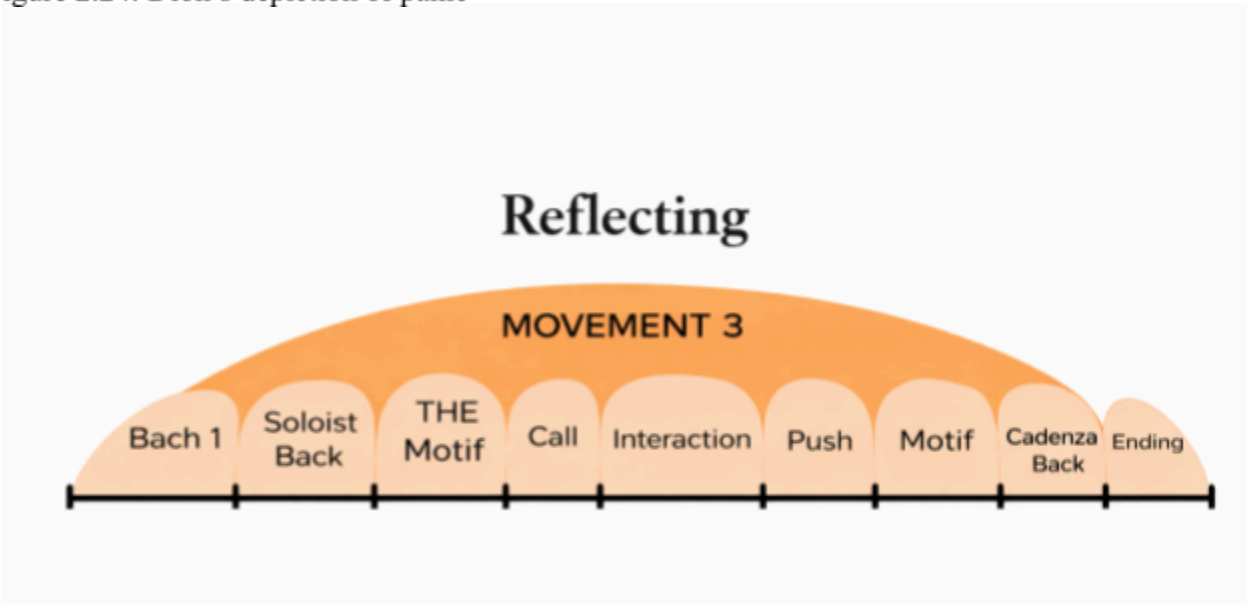



Figure 2.25: *Reflecting* form analysis




Figure 2.26: Opening reflective motive comes from J.S. Bach's Chorale, *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*

This quotation specifically came about because of a conversation as the commission was in its developmental stages. The composer and I spoke about the length of the piece, movements, instrumentation, and content. Knowing that this recital program would culminate with David Maslanka's Symphony No. 4, I recognized an opportunity to ask Dion to include a reference that would draw the works closer together. Many of Maslanka's works, such as *Desert Roads* and *Recitation Book* include quotes of Bach Chorales. When imagining what Dion's piece might symbolize through his own compositional voice, I shared the idea to also include a Bach chorale in his work.. Dion picked *"Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott"* simply because "it spoke to him." It became the opening of the third movement, literally " Reflecting" on the work of a brilliant composer of the past. According to Bach-chorales.com, "This chorale survives without text. The text that appears here is the one provided by editors of the Bach Gesellschaft Ausgabe (BGA. It is probable that this setting came from the lost cantata BWV 80a, the earlier Weimar version of

BWV 80. (See NBA III/2.2 KB, p.270.)" [108] Upon further investigation, no more information could be retrieved about the lost cantata BWV 80a. The translation of the text presented by Martin Luther is from 1529 [see figure 2.27], and like in Maslanka's works, Dion uses this musical setting for a similar effect. "I have used Christian Symbols because they are my cultural heritage, but I have tried to move through them to a depth of universal humanness, to an awareness that is not defined by religious label. My impulse through this music is to speak to the fundamental human issues of transformation and re-birth in this chaotic time."[109] By using the music of Bach, Dion shows this universal humanness through the musical expression, harmonic functionality, and line without text.

Figure 2.27: Martin Luther Transition of *"ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott"*

| *German Text* | *English Translation* |
|---|---|
| *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott,*<br>*ein gute Wehr und Waffen.*<br>*Er hilft uns frei aus aller Not,*<br>*die uns itzt hat betroffen.* | *A mighty fortress is our God,*<br>*A good defense and weapon.*<br>*He helps us freely out of all the need*<br>*That has now overtaken us.* |

Dion's reimagining of the BWV 303 Chorale starts directly in the four voice saxophone quartet; however, a unique aspect of the quote is Dion's choice to combine it with an oboe solo line introduced by an arpeggiated chord in the harp. [see figure 2.28] This exact "old and new" presentation and ensemble response is repeated three more times before the following section where the soprano soloist returns in measure sixteen.

In the next section, the soloist returns, exploring and reflecting on the material that was presented at the beginning. Dion restates the 'following your footsteps' scalar gesture over a

[108] Luke Dahn, "BWV 303," *Bach Chorale BWV 303*, 2018, https://www.bach-chorales.com/BWV0303.htm.
[109] David Maslanka, "Symphony No. 4," Score, Maslanka Press, 1993, 3, https://davidmaslanka.com/works/symphony-no-4-2/.8

resonant A minor 7 chord in measure twenty-three. [see figure 2.29] Through the 'following your footsteps' gesture, the movement leads to a section the composer simply labels "motif." Dion presents the new motif that repeats ten additional times through this movement. [see figure 2.30]




Figure 2.28: Dion's reimagining of the BWV 303 Chorale

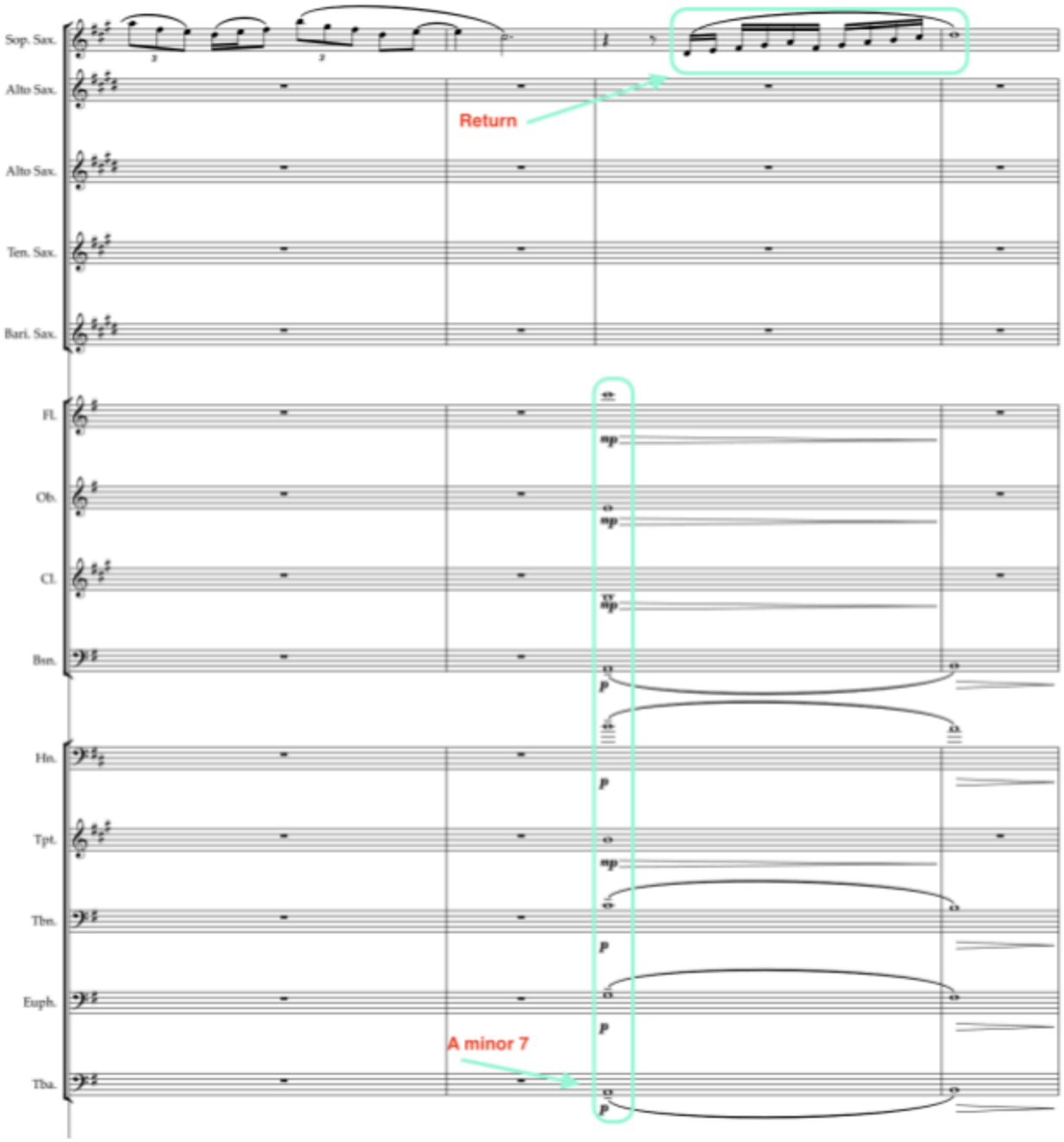



Figure 2.29: Dion restates the ‘following your footsteps’ scalar gesture

| Statement of Motif | Measure Number |
|---|---|
| 1st - Original Statement (Soprano Saxophone)<br>2nd - WW's<br>3rd - Saxophone Quintet<br>4th - Add Trumpet<br>5th - Same as fourth statement<br>6th - Same as fourth and fifth statements<br>7th - Soprano Saxophone Acapella<br>8th - Fl, Ob, Cl<br>9th - WW's and Piano<br>10th - Add Trumpet<br>11th - Sax Quartet, WW's, Hn, Tpt, Tbn, Euph | 25<br>29<br>33<br>37<br>81<br>85<br>100<br>103<br>106<br>109<br>120 |

Figure 2.30: Chart of Dion presentation of new motif and its repetitions

After the fourth restatement of the thematic material, measure fourty-one presents an interaction, which is a massive transition that leads to the "push" in measure fifty-six. This "push" is motivated by the percussion parts in this section. The snaredrum and glockenspiel are in a duet that is rhythmically driven by the use of stroke and accent in the snaredrum part.

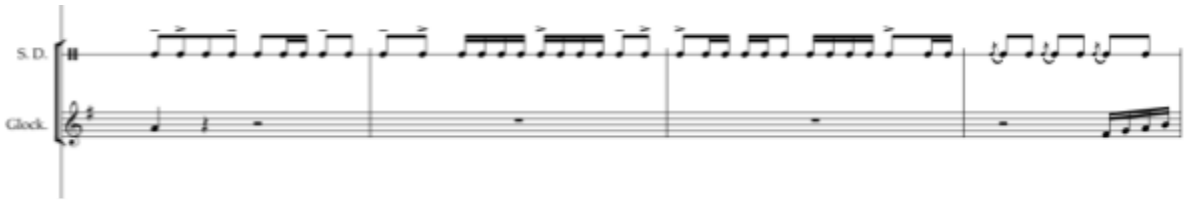



Figure 2.31: Dion's 'Push' - the snare drum and glockenspiel duet

Dion pushes the listener back into the seventh section of this "motif" movement, where the thematic material is repeated for the fifth and sixth times since the opening presentation. These statements are identical to the fourth statement. At bar one hundred, Dion creates a transitional "call" before the response of flute, clarinet, and oboe in measure one hundred and three. This moment leads the piece into its final section and a coda that is very appropriately titled "ending.' Dion uses call and response frequently within this piece, a repetitive device he employs to show urgency within the flow of both the movement and the work as a whole. Through the reworking

and fragmentation of the thematic material, Dion cadences in A major after the final thematic fragment is presented by the solo soprano saxophone. The intent is to leave the listener with a sense of peace and release after a musical evolution over three movements, representing a person who is lost and still finding their way – and a hope of what is yet to come.

**With Malice Toward None** (2024) John Williams

(b.1932)

John Williams was born into a musical family in 1932 in New York City, New York. Johnny Williams, John's father, was a studio musician and jazz percussionist who embodied music in his everyday life, exposing his son to this extensive and expressive musical environment. Because of this, young John was on the inside of the professional music realm rather than an academic one. Later, the Williams family relocated to Los Angeles, where John became an active participant in music himself. John attended North Hollywood High School, finding a second home in the sanctuary of study in piano, composition, and orchestration.[110] After high school at North Hollywood, Williams became a student at the University of California, Los Angeles in composition and piano.[111] While enrolled in school at UCLA, he also began working regularly in the film studio industry, where he played piano on recordings for television and movies.[112] Williams moved to New York City to attend the Juilliard School and studied piano with Rosina Lhevinne.[113] Being immersed in such a rigorous conservatory education while actively performing both in the professional studio world and in jazz and pop environments led Williams to discover his compositional voice through exploration and workflow alignment.[114] The amalgamation of the professional performances and conservatory education created a fundamental understanding of efficiency, clarity, and fluency which later categorized Williams' work ethic and overall approach to his film scores in Hollywood.[115]

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[110] Tim Greiving, *John Williams: A Composer's Life*, 1st ed. (Oxford University PressNew York, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197620885.001.0001.
[111] Greiving, *John Williams*, 56.
[112] Greiving, *John Williams*, 78–79.
[113] Greiving, *John Williams*, 67–68.
[114] Greiving, *John Williams*, 67, 78.
[115] Greiving, *John Williams*, 25–27, 31–32.

Williams transitioned to being a full-time composer after performing on hundreds of film scores as the first-call studio pianist in Hollywood during the 1950s and 1960s. Because of his early film and television work, Williams was able to establish himself in the Hollywood system which eventually led to his associations with directors Steven Spielberg and George Lucas. Emilio Audissino positions Williams as the composer who reinvented and revived symphonic film scoring practices during the late twentieth century, centering his style in late-romantic orchestral vernacular, thematic clarity, and historical musical identifiers. [116] Through works for film, television, and the concert hall, Williams' music permeates every significant American film genre, earning him distinction as the most decorated composer in cinema history. Scholars continuously stress that Williams' abilities to communicate narrative through his compositional voice, both in restraint and grandeur, is what gives both music and movies iconic legacies.[117] Such is the case in Williams' music written for the Spielberg biopic *Lincoln*.

Abraham Lincoln served the United States of America as its sixteenth president during one of the most significant times for American history and politics; Lincoln's presidency coincided with the American Civil War from 1861-1865. The 2012 film *Lincoln,* directed by Steven Spielberg, spotlights political bureaucracy, moral ambiguity, resistance, rebellion, and restraint. Set at a time nearing the imminent union victory, President Lincoln chooses to focus on the moral cost of the conflict, and reflects on his belief that slavery was the national sin that demanded the atonement from both political parties. During his second inaugural speech, President Lincoln said:

[116] Emilio Audissino, *John Williams: Music for Films, Television, and the Concert Stage*, Contemporary Composers, volume 1 (Brepols, 2018), 1–12.
[117] Timothy E. Scheurer, "John Williams and Film Music since 1971," *Popular Music and Society* 21, no. 1 (1997): 59–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/03007769708591655.

> Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.[118]

This section of the speech primed congress for what became one of the most prolific and monumental statements of humanity, which closes his address.

> With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.[119]

"With malice toward none" becomes a ringing bell within the ethical and moral core of the film *Lincoln*, and it serves as the title of John Williams iconic composition that is heard numerous times within the film. *Lincoln* received multiple Academy Award nominations for Daniel

[118] Abraham Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address*, Unabridged, with Dion Graham (Blackstone Audio, Inc. : Made available through hoopla, 2014).
[119] Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address*.

Day-Lewis's portrayal of the sixteenth president. Day-Lewis' interpretation of Lincoln's fatigue and the moral gravity of the moment informed Williams' compositional approach. The composer noted that it was critical to avoid overscoring the film; rather to use specific thematic appearances that would align the music with the human aspects of the film rather than the action.

"With Malice Toward None" serves as the main thematic material of the movie and is composed to function as a reflective and memorial component rather than a traditional *leitmotif*. The *Malice* theme itself carries the sonic markers of American democratic idealism that famous American composer Aaron Copland first established as a musical vocabulary: open intervals, which depict optimism, a stepwise melody that feels both hymn-like and folk-rooted, and a piano accompaniment that suggests the plainspoken quality of the American countryside rather than the grandeur of the concert hall.[120] Audissino identifies Copland as one of Williams' central mid-century influences, and nowhere is that inheritance more audible than here. The melody moves with a spacious, faithful quality of a congregational hymn, sorrowful and hopeful in equal measure, unadorned enough to feel communal rather than composed. It does not announce itself. It arrives quietly, the way grace does.

[120] Audissino, *John Williams*.




Figure 2.32: *Lincoln,* 'Trumpet Hymn' cue revives the 'With Malice Toward None' theme for Lincoln's final scene from Prower 2024, Figure 32

As Conor Power notes in his dissertation about Williams' compositional techniques, this music operates through the absence of repetition of specific musical moments, a strategic diplomacy used to gain dramatic effect through its limited placement.[121] Williams and Spielberg stated that the intention was to create a reverential atmosphere around Lincoln and his words. The moral framing becomes the focus and connection to the character rather than the use of dramatic events themselves. This statement appears in the published piano score for Lincoln and is used in Power's dissertation.[122]

The "*Malice*" theme is presented three times within the film. The first time is within the opening prologue of the film where the text reads:

From its earliest days,

The American experiment and democracy

Was threatened by internal division

Of the question of human slavery.

[121] Conor Power, "Composing America: Patriotism, Mythology, and Piety in the Film Scores of John Williams" (PhD Diss, Maynooth University, 2024).
[122] John Williams, *With Malice towards None: For Solo Trumpet with Piano Reduction* (Hal Leonard, 2012).

> Could a People's government cohere half slave and a half free?
>
> As each attempt at compromise failed, antagonism between the slave south and the free north grew increasingly violent until 11 southern states seceded from the union and then came war.[123]

This text is accompanied by solo trumpet, an instrument that represents an association of American ceremonial, military, and memorial contexts throughout our nation's history. The most ubiquitous of these examples is the bugle call 'taps,' which embodies both reflection and heroism; a musical call to think about people of service and sacrifice being laid to rest. In the film, the narration is underscored by the transparent presentation of the trumpet accompanied by sustained strings. The following scene occurs after a bloody mêlée has commenced, and the dark outline of a figure revealed as Lincoln (Daniel Day-Lewis) is listening to the unjust experiences of a black soldier in the war.



Figure 2.33: *Lincoln,* Lincoln stands as soldiers depart but Clark remains to finish reciting the Gettysburg Address from Prower 2024, Image 7

[123] *Lincoln*, Biographical Historical Drama, directed by Steven Spielberg (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2012), 35 mm, 150 minutes.

Power states:

> We first sight Lincoln from behind  encouraged to regard his silhouette as if his visage and presence were too sublime to behold. The president (a 'scraped right off the penny' Daniel Day-Lewis) is seated, taking shelter from the rain, as two Black soldiers — Cpl. Clark and Pvt. Green — approach him to discuss equality. Their candid exchange is interrupted by two enthusing white soldiers, who take turns gracelessly reciting the Gettysburg Address at the president. All the soldiers are called to muster, but Clark (David Oyelowo) remains to conclude the recitation in earnest, literally looking up to Lincoln who has risen to his feet to bid the soldiers goodbye .[124]

The next presentation of 'Malice' appears almost two hours after the prologue, and manifesting as a 'reminiscence motif' (or *Errinerungsmotiv*), associated with post-Revolutionary opéra comique, than as a typical filmic leitmotif.[125] This approach in function is one that is known and experienced in other Spielberg historical dramas and reveals more about the tone of the movie rather than the narrative within it. After the Thirteenth Amendment has passed, the president has a reflective yet humble celebration with his valet, Slade (Stephen McKinley Henderson) where he says 'I suppose it is time to go. Though I would rather stay.' This is where 'Malice' begins again accompanied by strings as he walks out of the building toward Ford's Theatre.

[124] Power, "Composing America: Patriotism, Mythology, and Piety in the Film Scores of John Williams," 128.
[125] Power, "Composing America: Patriotism, Mythology, and Piety in the Film Scores of John Williams," 136.



Figure 2.34: *Lincoln,* The President departs from the White House for Ford's Theatre as Slade looks on. From Prower 2024, Image 9

The orchestral interlude that precedes the theme's final appearance functions as a moment of suspension music that does not move forward so much as it breathes, holding the accumulated moral weight of everything Lincoln has carried before releasing it into the reprise. Power reads this structural restraint as the central to Williams' approach throughout the film: the score refuses to editorialize, choosing instead to accompany Lincoln's interiority with silence-adjacent stillness. Power further states, "The retention of the opening theme until this moment reveals much about the grander function of hymnal music as a component of filmic myth. It acts as a sort of 'baptism' for the president as a symbol, bookending the film by recognising the fulfilment of a fabled destiny and providing a musical frame for the entire story. In contrast to the other themes that reflect various aspects of Lincoln's character, his purpose, and his government, 'Malice' canonises the icon. The tone of finality in the scene; Lincoln's unknowing goodbye, Slade's distant admiration, and the audience's foreknowledge, is also marked by the dignifying and ennobling essence of the trumpet (so often capitalised upon in film music for such purposes)."[126]

[126] Power, "Composing America: Patriotism, Mythology, and Piety in the Film Scores of John Williams," 137.

The version performed on this program is a transcription for the band of the orchestral original by Paul Lavender, expanded by Williams' from the original score. The original 'With Malice Toward None' was written for solo trumpet and orchestra and performed on the film's soundtrack by Chris Martin and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Lavender's arrangement was subsequently prepared for "The President's Own" United States Marine Band, and premiered by that ensemble with Williams conducting and Thomas Hooten as trumpet soloist. That performance with a military ensemble who directly serves the President of the United States (including Lincoln himself) amplified the work's ceremonial and memorial dimensions.

For this recital program, the wind ensemble arrangement served an additional deliberate purpose. Lincoln's story, and the tradition of ceremonial trumpet playing it invokes, has historically centered around male voices and male bodies. Featuring Dr. Jacinda Ripley as a soloist was an intentional act of reframing;  placing a woman of extraordinary artistry at the center of a narrative about moral courage, grace, and transformation. Her playing brought not only the intimacy and gravity this music demands, but a perspective that extended the recital's central thesis: that belonging reshapes what is possible in a space, and that gratitude sounds different when it comes from someone for whom the room was not originally built.

Dr. Jacinda Ripley is the Assistant Professor of Trumpet at Tarleton State in Stephenville, Texas. She previously held collegiate positions at Saginaw Valley State, Alma College, the University of Olivet, and Saint Xavier University. She has performed with the Jackson, Lansing, Battle Creek, Flint, Adrian, Racine, and Saginaw Bay Symphonies and was a trumpet fellow at the National Orchestral Institute in 2022.

Dr. Ripley maintains a private studio and has presented masterclasses to studios across the United States, recently including the University of Michigan, University of North Texas, the

University of Texas- Austin, the University of Massachusetts- Amherst, the University of Utah, the University of Iowa, and Illinois State Trumpet Studios. She has given presentations at the International Women's Brass Conference and serves on the editing team for the International Women's Brass Conference Noteworthy Newsletter. Ripley is an active member of the International Trumpet Guild; she is acting Prelude Coordinator of the ITG Conference.




Figure 2.35: Williams' connective tissue original to transcription

Ripley received her Doctorate of Musical Arts from Michigan State University. She holds a Master of Music in Performance from Northwestern University and a Bachelor of Music in Performance from the Eastman School of Music. Her primary trumpet teachers have included Justin Emerich, Robert Sullivan, James Thompson, and Leah Schuman.

While at Northwestern University in 2014 to 2017, I met Jacy Ripley while playing in the Northwestern Symphonic Wind Ensemble. From the beginning of our relationship, she was someone I admired, and believed was a true artist who could make people feel deeply when she played. This quality further echoes the first essay, with Dr. Ripley embodying a person 'whose eyes light up when they see you coming.' No matter what the circumstances, Dr. Ripley was a consistent light that was as bright as the Chicago Skyline. In the spring of 2025, Dr. Ripley was performing with the Jackson Symphony in Jackson, Michigan where I was score reading for a concert cycle. We talked about the importance of David Maslanka's *Symphony No. 4*, the theme of this recital and the process of selecting accompanying repertoire. When I asked if she would like to play in the performance, she immediately accepted with the biggest smile on her face, and I asked what she might like to perform, and she responded with Williams' music.

The present version of the solo differs from the original score in that the interlude in the middle of the piece does not exist in the material that Williams wrote for the film. Williams treated this solo for the concert stage, using the trumpet solos in the film as the seed for an expanded and emotional feature for trumpet and orchestra that exists outside of its original purpose. Programming this work alongside Maslanka's *Symphony No. 4* was a deliberate choice: Both Lincoln and Maslanka understood that the weight of transformation does not resolve cleanly, and that the most honest response to chaos is not resolution, but gratitude.[127] Maslanka built this concept, and his reverence for Lincoln, into the very fabric of *Symphony No.4*.

[127] Maslanka, "Symphony No. 4," 3.

**Symphony No. 4** (1993) David Maslanka

(b. 1943-2017)

*Symphony No. 4* begins with an image: Lincoln's coffin was loaded onto the train to Springfield, Illinois– while a brass band played "Old Hundredth," a hymn of praise and thanksgiving accompanying the body of a man who held a nation's chaos and forged something new from it at great personal cost. Maslanka has written of his long fascination with Abraham Lincoln, and it was Carl Sandburg's biography that unlocked the symphony's central musical choice. That image became the emotional and spiritual backbone for this piece. It is a large-scale work in which Maslanka frames a narrative of inner life and transformation through recurring motives, chorale quotations, and a sectional plan that conductor and scholar Steven Bolstad presents as a conductor-facing roadmap.[128]

Bolstad labels the symphony's large design in six continuous sections: section I is built around a primary theme with "light" and "dark" versions: section II centered on the famous hymn "Old Hundredth": section III presents a "world force" hymn: section IV as an "art song" complex and a pivotal chorale statement as a point of "transformation:" section V as return and intensification; and section VI as epilogue.[129]

[128] Maslanka, "Symphony No. 4," 3.
[129] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 30–34.

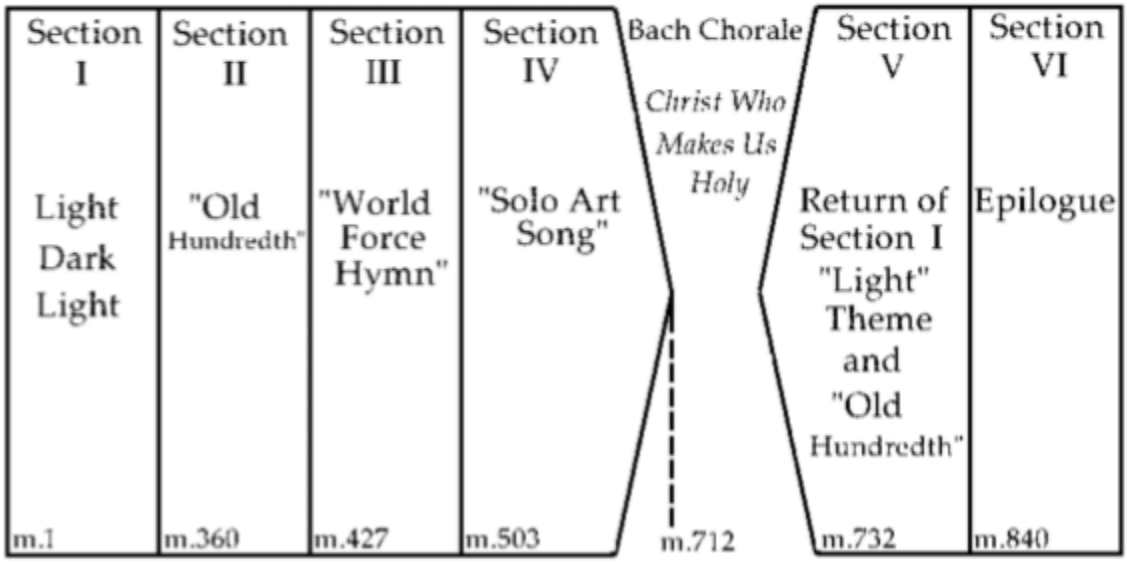



Figure 2.36: Large-scale from *Symphony No. 4* adapted from Bolstad 2002, Table 1

A separate techniques study by Brooke Madison Cole also charts *Symphony No. 4* through a sonata-informed lens, marking primary theme, transition, a medial caesura[130][shown in the figures 2.37 and 2.38 below], secondary-theme space, extended development, recap zones, and closing space.[131]

[130] Brooke Madison Cole, *An Overview of Select Compositional Techniques in David Maslanka's Symphonies No.4 and No. 9*, (Kansas City Missouri), 2019, 57.
[131] Brooke Madison Cole, *An Overview of Select Compositional Techniques in David Maslanka's Symphonies No.4 and No. 9*, (Kansas City Missouri), 2019, 57.




Figure 2.37: Reduction of medial Caesura in *Symphony No. 4* adapted Figure 3.3 from Cole 2019

| Measure | Label | Information |
|---|---|---|
| 1-87 | Primary Theme | Starts with horn solo; C major |
| 88-333 | Transition | Development of P-zone; C minor |
| 334-359 | Primary Theme | Recapitulation of Primary Theme starting with horn solo; C major |
| 360-405 | Transition | |
| 405 | Medial Caesura | F major triad over a pedal C |
| 406-417 | Secondary Theme | "Old Hundredth" in C major |
| 418 | Essential Exposition Closure | PAC in C major |
| 418-426 | Closing space | |
| 427-731 | Development | Uses C major and minor, E major and minor, and G major |
| 427-502 | Development A | Long and connected |
| 503-711 | Development B | Funk style |
| 712-731 | Development C | "Christus, der uns selig macht" |
| 732-789 | Primary Theme Recap | |
| 790-800 | Transition Recap | |
| 801-839 | Secondary Theme Recap | |
| 840-end | Closing Space Recap | |

Figure 2.38: Form Chart for Maslanka *Symphony No. 4* adapted Figure 3.1 from Cole 2019

Reading Bolstad's section map alongside the sonata-informed chart supports a practical hearing: Maslanka sustains familiar classical functions, yet he charges those functions with symbolic materials, especially hymn and chorale references, and with a consistent set of unifying gestures.[132]

Illustrations

| Measure | Borrowed Material | Function | Orchestration |
|---|---|---|---|
| 400 | "Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten" | transitional | Alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone, bass trombone, double bass, harp, piano |
| 406 | "Old Hundredth" | Climatic, melodic, and harmonic | Full ensemble |
| 711 | "Christus der uns selig macht" | Melodic and transitional | Piccolo, flute, clarinet, harp |

Figure 2.39: Quotations used in *Symphony No. 4* adapted Figure 2.1 from Bolstad 2002

[132] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 44–45.

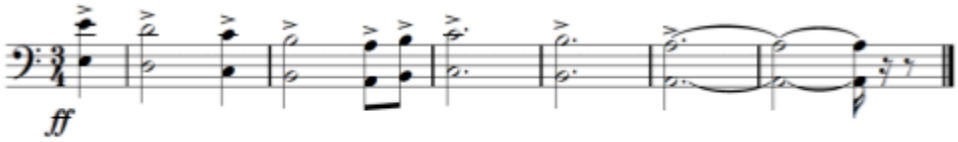



Figure 2.40: 371 Bach Chorale, number 112, *Only Trust in God to Guide You* from Bolstad 2002, Figure 5-2

Figure 2.41: Piano reduction of the *Only Trust in God to Guide You* phrase as it appears in the Symphony, m. 400-405 from Bolstad 2002, Figure 5-3




Figure 2.42: Final phrase of the *Only Trust in God to Guide You* melody as it appears in In Memoriam, m. 55-61 from Bolstad 2002, Figure 5-4




The above reductions document how these hymns appear in the symphony. In addition to these significant quotes from Bach and others, Bolstad explores the tonality of the original sections of Maslanka's themes, and of the harmonic arc of the overall symphony:

The majority of the Symphony No. 4 has a tonal center of C, being largely in C major or C minor. Except for momentary wanderings to other key areas, periods of tumultuous dissonances, the statement of the Bach chorale "Christus, der uns selig macht" in the relative key of A minor, and the shifts to b-flat and a-flat in section VI, the Symphony remains primarily in C [see Table 2].[133]

| I | II | III | IV | Chorale | V | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C - c - C | C | C - D - C | C - c - C | a | C | $B^{b}$- $A^{b}$- C |

Figure 2.43: Tonal Centers, *Symphony No. 4* from Bolstad 2002, Table 2

In this performance as a conductor, what strikes me about the opening of the Symphony is the way in which it commands the room before a single *tutti* note is played. In the context of this particular recital performance, a woman performed a trumpet solo as prelude to the Symphony, and a Black and Queer conductor led this reading for a mostly white audience in the hall. Through this simple opening, Maslanka asks all of us to stop, to attend, to prepare for a monumental commentary on society and togetherness. The performance was also in December at the end of the fall and at the very precipice of winter. In this light, the opening solo horn feels like the last warm light before transformation. We do not know yet what is coming, but feel that something significant is about to happen. Like Lincoln's political beliefs, the seeds he planted were to create growth that would lead to new heights for humanity and the country. Like the country, the ninety-six individuals within the ensemble resemble a nation, full of different

[133] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 34.

cultures, identities, and languages giving a performance that is diversely informed by their experiences. As Mallory Beth Thompson, former Director of Bands at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music, consistently said: "we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us."

In Bolstad's reading, Section I establishes the symphony's core thematic foundation and the work's recurring unifying elements. Part A presents three statements of the theme: a solo horn opening on a mixolydian dominant field, then a middle-voice statement in the tonic, then a *tutti* version of what the composer calls "bright winds," each reinforcing the "rising three-note" gesture, the broader "rising-expansion" idea, the passage from "individual" toward "universal," and the culmination in "shouts for the joy of life."[134]

Figure 2.44 Harmonization of theme, Section I, Part A, m. 30-32




Figure 2.45 "Rising three-note" gesture of "light" theme, Section I, m. 30-32




[134] Bolstad, "David Maslanka's Symphony No. 4: A Conductor's Analysis with Performance Considerations," 39.

Bolstad identifies the major influences and references in this music, noting repeated-tone figures that suggest psalm-tone practice and modal color produced by flat-seventh inflections at key cadential points:

> The theme itself has a soulful, hymnic quality. The chant-like repeated notes of m. 35-36 and m. 41-42 suggests a chorus singing a Psalm tone. The flat sevenths that appear at the end of the first and second statements (the F in m. 25 and the B-flat in m. 58 respectively) create a folk-like modal quality. Measure 58 combines both versions.

He also highlights a persistent C pedal underpinning the second statement, with tension generated by D, F, and A in upper textures, heard as an “underneath rumble” that signals something pending, except in m.58-59.



Figure 2.46: 'Underneath Rumble'

Bolstad interprets those "random" pitches as structurally derived from augmentation of the rising three-note cell (C–D–E) and from the rising-expansion tones embedded in the theme.[135]

[135] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 44–45.

Part B of Section I turns toward the "dark" version of the main theme through developmental intensification and textural changes that Bolstad inventories measure-by-measure: stretto of the dark theme, canonic working of a falling minor-third fragment, major chords descending in third-relations, whole-tone cluster cascades, and reiterated "rip" gestures.[136]

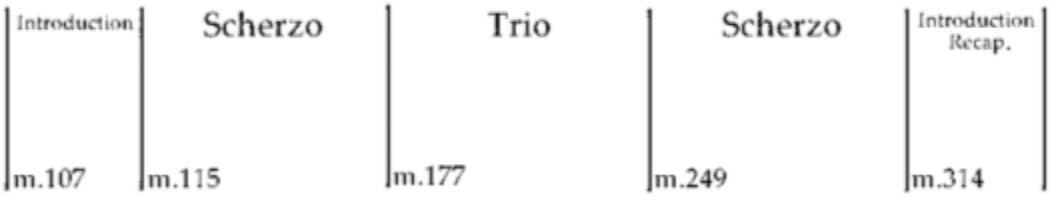



Figure 2.47: Form; Part B of Section I, M. 107-333 from Bolstad 2002, Table 5

This inventory matters for analysis because it demonstrates Maslanka composing "darkness" less as a new theme than as a transformation engine applied to the opening's cellular content. The same chart also marks the return of the "light" version at the end of Section I, framing the section as an internal ternary–A B A′–with the "thematic field preserved while the surface undergoes forceful distortion."[137]

Cole and Bolstad describe this same harmonic moment differently: Cole analyzes it as cycling through the Southern hemisphere of Cohn's hyper-hexatonic system, while Bolstad hears it as clashing clusters of descending thirds. Both readings identify the same structural function: a destabilizing force that prepares the return of the light theme. Sutton offers a third and complementary reading, organizing the symphony not in any formal zones but by four moments she identifies as audible voices of the Earth: the opening do-re-me motive, the "Old Hundredth", the "World Force Hymn," and the closing "shout,"

[136] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 32–33.
[137] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 44.

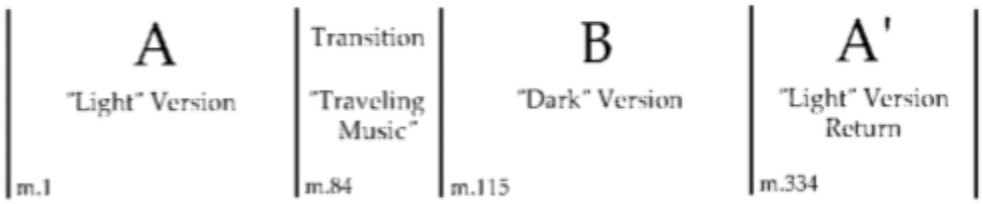



Figure 2.48: Form; Section I, m. 1-359 from Bolstad (2002), Table 3

Where Bolstad maps sections and Cole maps sonata structure, Sutton maps spiritual emergence, and together the three readings confirm that Maslanka's formal and spiritual architecture are inseparable. As a conductor, I find Bolstad's reading more immediately useful at the podium, but Cole's hyper-hexatonic analysis reminds me that the instability felt at that moment has deep structural roots, not just surface turbulence.

Figure 2.49: Cohn's Hyper-hexatonic System

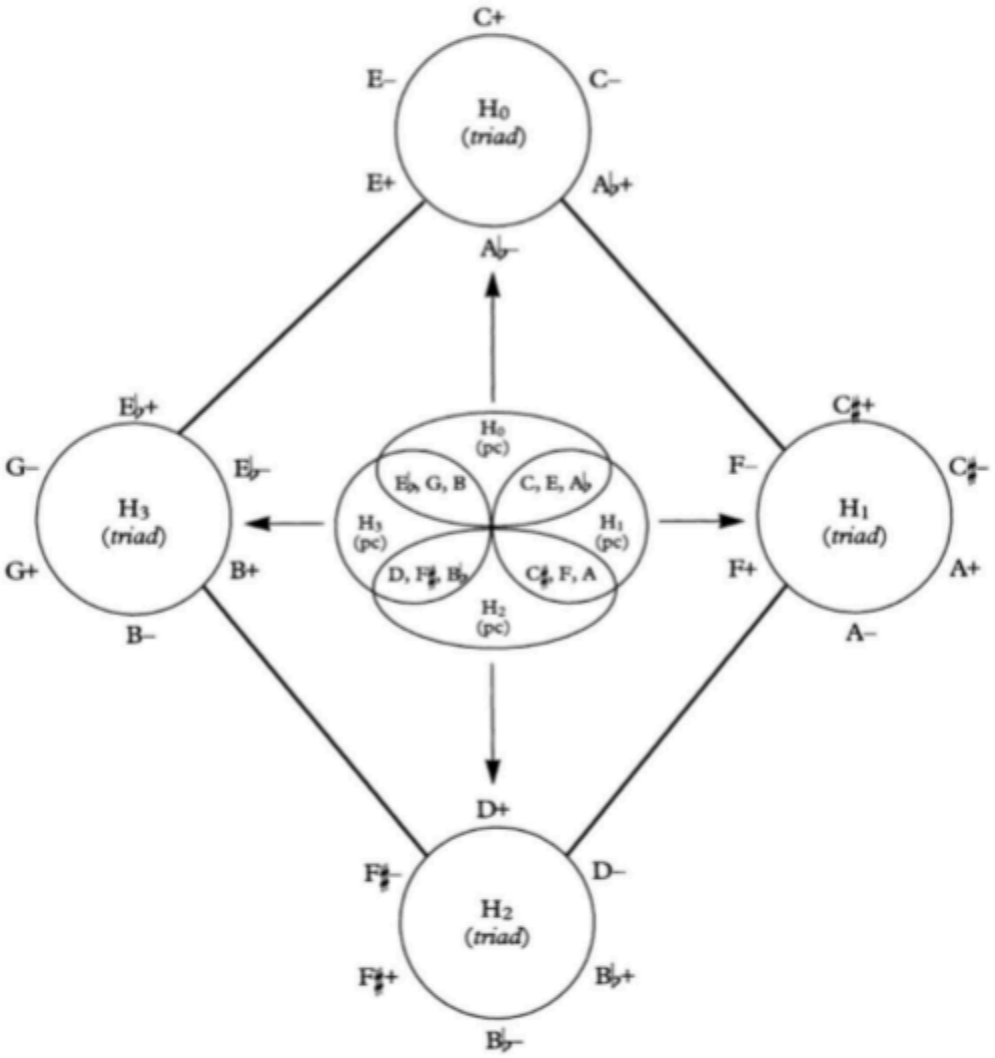


Figure 2.50: Piano reduction of clashing major and minor third, m. 155-157




Figure 2.51: Piano Part Cycling of Southern Hemisphere




Section II introduces "Old Hundredth" within sound imagery Maslanka labels "nature music," then subjects the hymn to distinct modes. This section outlines notes of "Old Hundredth" in augmentation in the solo flute, acting as a potential memoriam for the fallen President using the chorale, followed by a "power-surge" version of the melody before the "night music" transition material.[138] Even at the level of form charting, "Old Hundredth" functions as more than just quotation. It becomes a reference-point the symphony later "remembers," reshapes, and finally reclaims in Section V as part of a broader process of integration.[139] That image, the brass

[138] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 33.
[139] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 44.

band, the hymn, the coffin on the train, resonates differently now that we heard it named at the outset. In section II, Maslanka brings "Old Hundredth" into the texture for the first time; understanding the history of its relationship to Lincoln transforms how Maslanka's "nature music" is heard. It is not only pastoral; it is commemorative, bearing the weight of what has been lost and what will be preserved through this music. For me, standing at the podium, it carries something even more personal: in one hand holding the grief of knowing that my ancestors were excluded from things that are afforded to me, and in the other hand holding gratitude for the opportunity to illuminate the hardship of their experiences while rewriting the possibilities for those to come.

Section III advances a "world force" hymn through sequential statements and preparation gestures, ending with a falling minor third. Bolstad marks two main statements of the theme and a metric-modulation bridge into Section IV.[140]

Figure 2.52 First phrase of Section III's "World Force" theme ending with the falling minor third gesture, m. 427-434




Figure 2.53 First phrase of Section IV's "Solo Art Song" theme ending with the falling minor third gesture, m. 504-508




[140] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 33, 41.

Maslanka strings large spans together by allowing hymn-like material to behave like thematic zones in a long sonata-development field, rather than isolated chorale moments. Cole's formal analysis of the symphony maps this same territory, tracing a long connected development region that moves through shifting major and minor key areas before the transformation point, which from the podium, is the cumulative moment of the entire piece thus far.[141]

Section IV is where the symphony arguably becomes most personal; the most exhilarating moment for the performers is a challenge that feels like pushing toward a summit you can almost see. Maslanka frames it as the "art song" complex, the place where the individual voice is most exposed before being, in Maslanka's words, "ground into little bitty pieces."[142] What that means in practice is moving through a saxophone solo of startling intimacy, into turbulence, and then through jazz material that feels chaotic. Holding all three of these qualities as one psychological arc is emotionally intense.[143] These three sections according to both Bolstad and Maslanka are meant to aurally depict the turbulence of life through 'war-like' intentions. The resonance of this concept is particularly relevant to my experience in thinking of my ancestors and the connection to Lincoln. Bolstad says:

> Part B contains some of the most dissonant and turbulent music of the entire Symphony. While Part A presents the concept of "the personal" through the solo voice of the art song, Part B, in the words of the composers, "is a call to arms announcing war-like intentions," and "it takes the personal and grinds it into little bitty pieces." At the heart of Part B is the unifying element of "conflict and struggle." Through harsh dissonance and highly agitated rhythmic figures, Part B

[141] Cole, *An Overview of Select Compositional Techniques in David Maslanka's Symphonies No.4 and No. 9*, 57.
[142] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 43.
[143] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 33–34, 44.

represents the conflicts and struggles an individual inevitably encounters in life. There are four sub-parts to Section IV, Part B. These include the fanfare-based music of m. 570-588, the turbulent bass melody music of m. 589-605, the return of the art song still in harmonic conflict (m. 606-616), and the resolution music that reunites the theme into a unified voice (m. 617-627).

Part B's fanfare music (m. 570-588) is dominated by a two measure dotted motive [see Figure 6-23].[144]

Figure 2.54 Piano reduction of fanfare motive stated in upper woodwinds, m. 572-573




Figure 2.55: Agitated bass-line melody of Section IV, Part B, m.595-602




By the end of Section IV, the symphony has moved through grandeur, nature, spiritual force, and now something deeply human. The effect is cumulative: The ensemble and listener have traveled far enough that what comes next lands differently than it would at the beginning.[145]

[144] Bolstad, "David Maslanka's Symphony No. 4: A Conductor's Analysis with Performance Considerations," 61.
[145] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 44.

The chorale that follows, "Christus, der uns selig macht" in measures 712–731, is the pivotal point of "transformation" and is the hinge upon which the whole symphony turns.[146] Bolstad connects the clarinet extended techniques here to Maslanka's study of Goethe's *Faust;* specifically the cries of the Blessed Boys, pure souls who never lived in the human world, functioning as a channel to the "other side," with the implication of transformation from "individual" to "universal." The composer describes it as "unique and otherworldly."

Figure 2.56: Bach Chorale, number 307, "Christus, der uns selig macht"




[146] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 34.

Preparing and conducting this passage is unlike any experience in the repertoire to me. These "otherworldly" sounds arrive after intense turbulence, which they do not resolve so much as transcend. The chorale thus acts simultaneously as harmonic pivot, narrative turning point, and timbral symbol. What follows in Section V does not feel like a recapitulation – it feels like a transfiguration.[147]

Section V reintroduces earlier themes with what Bolstad calls greater purity and power, and he ties those qualities to concrete musical parameters. After an A minor chorale that closes on a dominant E-major sonority, the music resolves by third-relation to C major, a brightness Bolstad links to the opening "shout for the joy of life" motive.

Figure 2.57: Tutti "shout for the joy of life," m. 798-801

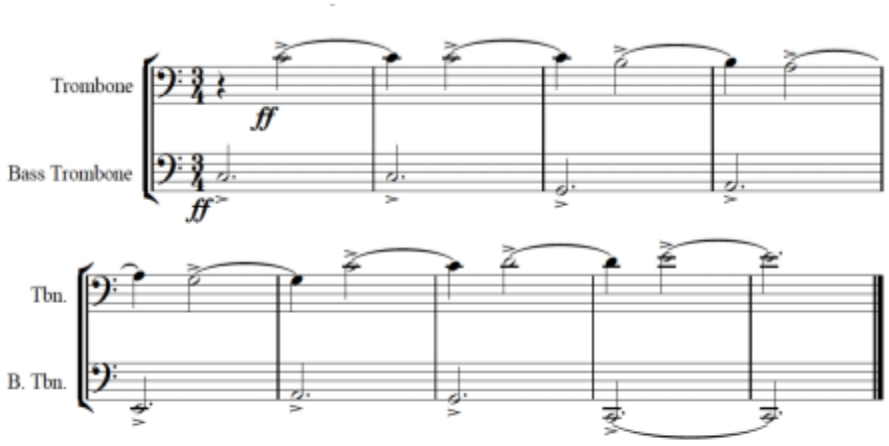



He also reads the "shouting" motif's I–V–IV–I progression as an "Amen" response to the Bach chorale. The "light" theme returns in C major with open voicing and pedal-point stability, stated in *fortissimo* horn fifths, then strengthened further through timpani strokes, intensified internal sixteenth-note energy, an *accelerando*, and syncopated five-note groupings rising toward a climactic *tutti* shout. What is striking to me about this moment is that Maslanka treated the recapitulation not as a formal obligation but as something earned. He achieves this through

[147] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 68–69.

registration openness, harmonic stability, and the release of accumulated rhythmic pressure.[148] Sutton notes that Maslanka described the message of praise in "Old Hundredth" as something "the music itself wanted rather than something he intended to happen," which is perhaps the most honest account of how gratitude works: It is not planned, but arrives after everything that came before it.[149]

Figure 2.58: Old Hundredth melody and mass line, m. 802-810




Section VI, the epilogue, binds earlier thematic shapes to new closing materials through rising-expansion and quotation linkage. Bolstad notes similarity between the epilogue theme and the earlier light theme, both expanding to scale-degree sol while embodying rising-expansion. As the epilogue expands, Bolstad marks the arrival of "Golden Light" music, a quote from the fifth movement of Maslanka's earlier *Symphony No. 3*, functioning as transitional material that prepares the final music. He then ties the concluding passage to extra-musical source, describing inspiration from the power of the earth experienced during travel in Western Montana and Central Idaho, and he reads the closing "earth" theme as another rising-expansion instance where

[148] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 69.
[149] Kate L. Sutton, "David Maslanka and the Natural World: Three Studies of Music for Wind Ensemble" (M.M., The Florida State University, 2014), 32, https://www.proquest.com/docview/1560289565/abstract/EFFD801AA5504761PQ/1.

a plagal mi–fa–mi contour expands to sol, now within A-flat major. Bolstad also points out a harmonic intensification where the expansion reaches a tension-laden A-flat instead of the expected A, sharpening the sense of arrival as hard-won rather than decorative.[150]

Figure 2.59: "Earth" theme, m. 887-902




Figure 2.60: Portion of Section I, Part A, "light" theme, m.35-39




Upon first studying this score, I did not realize the "Golden Light" melody at measure 866 was a quotation from his *Symphony No. 3*. I discovered in a manner similar to how Maslanka says he himself discovers most things: gradually, through attention.[151] The epilogue does not

[150] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 72.
[151] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 71.

announce meaning; it simply arrives. Conducting it, I found myself thinking less about resolution and more about groundedness: the ideas that we do not need to arrive at a clean answer to feel



Figure 2.61: 'Golden Light' Theme from *Symphony No. 3* by David Maslanka

held. What Maslanka offers at the close is not triumph. It is proximity: to the earth, to each other, to something larger than any one of us. As someone who has often felt like an outsider in this

tradition, I hear the epilogue as an invitation rather than a conclusion. The effort it takes to get there is the point.

Bolstad, Cole, and Sutton are ultimately describing the same symphony from different vantage points: one from the podium, one from the score, and one from the Earth itself. Bolstad traces what a conductor hears: theme giving way to darkness, hymn zones deepening into chorale, and arriving to a recapitulation purified by open voicing and pedal stability.[152] Cole shows why architecture persists: a sonata trajectory with real medial caesura, extended development regions, and earned closure.[153] Sutton reminds us what all of it is reaching toward: four moments where the voice of the Earth breaks through the formal structure and says something that theory alone cannot contain.[154] What all three readings confirm is that this symphony does not give you its ending. You must travel through it to reach your individual conclusion.

By programming "With Malice Toward None" alongside *Symphony No. 4*, I intentionally mirror Maslanka's vision of Abraham Lincoln. He is not just a historical figure, but a living model for transformation. Lincoln held the chaos of a divided nation in his hand and forged something new from it at great personal cost. That same arc lives in *Symphony No. 4*.

For me, the shout of joy carries deep personal meaning. To be the first Black Queer man in this doctoral conducting program is to hold joy and burden in the same breath; to love what you do completely while also knowing that your presence in the room is itself a statement, to build a chosen family while missing your own, and to find belonging in a place that was not

[152] Bolstad, Symphony No. 4: Considerations," 44–45, 68–72.
[153] Cole, An Overview of Select Compositional Techniques, 57.
[154] Sutton, "David Maslanka and the Natural World," 29.
All images for Symphony No. 4 are from Bolstad, Symphony No.4: Considerations

always built with you in mind, while all the growing as both a musician and human being. I have learned that dissonance is not always a problem to be solved. Sometimes we must hold multiple conflicting truths at once and find joy anyway.

The text of "Old Hundredth" reads: "make a joyful noise and be thankful, and bless his name." I ended this recital with thank you to my family, my teachers, my mentors, the 96 musicians, some of whom flew in from around the world to support me. Slow growth, belonging, and gratitude have not just been the intellectual framework of this recital. They have been the lived reality of how I got here. Maslanka's symphony ends not with resolution but with a shout. I now add mine to it. It was transformative on a molecular level for my artistry, my craft, and my spirit.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, Walton and Cohen found that African American students scaled adversity at significant rates when they found belonging within their community in their academic institutions. "African American students whose sense of belonging was more robust to daily adversity showed greater improvement in their postintervention GPAs."[155] I can say from a humble and grateful place that I am one of the African American students in a PWI who did experience this exact phenomenon, and became more invested and saw extreme increase in my academic performance when I found belonging within the School of Music, Theatre, & Dance at the University of Michigan. This second recital concert was an opportunity to express what gratitude looked like while presenting music with the ninety-six volunteer musicians whose eyes light up when they see each other coming, when I see them all coming, and to do this while performing music that embodied the second cardinal rule: 'Slowly is the fastest place to get to where you want to be.' This second concert was closed with this

[155] Walton and Cohen, "Social Belonging Intervention", 1449

speech, one inspired by the speech given by Lincoln in his address to congress, but through the lens of a first generation, gay, Black man, whose ancestors were not given the voice, choice, opportunity, or platform that I am humbled and honored to now have. It is a platform that my grandmother, born in 1943 and still alive today, did not have, as Brown v. Board of Education would not pass until 1954. I owe this opportunity to people like her, Rosemary Brooks, and the many others who sacrificed for me to be the first African American Doctoral of Musical Arts for Wind Band Conducting within the School of Music, Theatre, & Dance at the University of Michigan. I closed this recital with the following:

> *I need to say thank you* is a concert about gratitude and love as a breathing opportunity to thank those who we love and appreciate with all of our hearts, so I will start this final portion of this concert with personal thank yous. Please bear with me as I try to do this with the utmost respect for everyone in this room today. In the background you hear the instrumental version of Beyoncé's *Flaws and All* from her tour entitled 'Renaissance'. This song was playing in this exact way as she spoke to the audience of over 100,000 people that summer night in Chicago, and she expressed her gratitude to her family, friends, and fans for supporting her for over twenty-five years, so I thought that I might follow suit and give my thank you's and gratitude in the same way. See, Beyoncé's concert changed the DNA fibers of what I thought music was and it changed my life. Concerts are all about the shared experience, one that brings us together through a plethora of lived experiences. My first Beyoncé concert was with Charlie Schurman, then the second with Taylor Peterson who is on the stage tonight playing the opening horn solo, and the final one being with them both and Ben Perri. Through this I realized that I

am a product of the love and support of those who poured into me, my hopes, and dreams, and I am eternally grateful for you.

First I'd like to start by thanking my family: my dad Freddie Brooks, my mom Stacci Evans, sister Stacci Brooks, brother Brandon Dennis who are home watching. My granny Caroline McDonald and aunt Lolita Black Mancha who are always the north and south poles that have created groundedness in my heart.

The band staff and faculty and colleagues for your patience and kindness as I have grown and continue to within my journey here at the University of Michigan: Dr.Frey, Dr. Pasquale, Deaunna Dresch, Kimberly Miller, and Kimberly Baumgartner. Professor Fettig for his guidance along the process of bringing this together and accepting me into the studio here at the University of Michigan and my committee for all of your grace and kindness through this process!

I want to give a special shoutout to Rj Dion, for being the composer who inspired this entire concert theme with his beautiful composition, and *I want to thank you*! Friends like Kevin Carroll, Nicholas Davis, Jesse Skaar, Jessen Smith, Tori Chung-Swanson, Albert Cox, Ben Perri, Sandra Bailey, Stephen Grindel, and the others that I might have left off for time , but for your constant love and belief in me as a human and person.

I want to say thank you to the woman who got my career started, who saw something in me and said "you have it," even when I did not believe that I did: PA Ford, best friend and mother to my two beautiful god-children. My teachers who I mentioned before from all grade levels, some who are here today. Mrs. Betcher who drove all the way here from Tennessee, and my student teacher mentor Kevin Carroll who taught me

everything. My Michigan mom—Heidi Vacca, who helped to keep me centered and loved and cared about me through everything while here. I am thankful for my spiritual and psychological mirror, Olivia Carollo. I also want to thank Dr. Jacy Ripley, Dr. Ricardo Allen, Steven Banks, and the Citrine quartet who were our soloists of the night and shared such unparalleled artistry that you heard on the first half of the concert tonight. I have to thank the silent angel in my life that has truly been the reason why I am authentically myself. A person who pushes me and loves me no matter what, and who unwaveringly stands with me and by me through it all; Kimberly Backman. You are the light that illuminates the parts of my soul that I did not know existed. You are the definition of unconditional love and through that, I know all is possible.

[To the musicians on stage] Lastly, I want to thank all of you, who have given me something so priceless. Your time, your energy, flying from all over the world from places like Singapore and Washington, and giving me your trust to have a good experience and to be a part of this huge process. My mentor teacher Dr. Mallory Thompson always says "we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us". And I realize that this is such an honor, because through all of your hard work and dedication to your craft, there have been so many things that you have experienced that I do not even know about which has brought you to this point in your career at the University of Michigan. And to know that I get to witness and be a part of your journey and interact with those shoulders that you stand on as I do with my past teachers, mentors, family, and ancestors, is the honor of a lifetime. What we have done tonight, no matter where or how it goes, will live on as a core memory that will power my Pixar *Inside Out* control center for the rest of my life and I hope that it does for you as well.

Lady Gaga's famous words are "There can be 100 people in the room and 99 don't believe in you, but all it takes is one who does." And I am grateful for the 96 of you who said yes. We all joined music for a multitude of reasons and I came to find that the universal truth is that it ignites something special within us from a young age. In a way that not many other things can. MBT [Mallory Beth Thompson] always says "let's put something beautiful into the world," so that people can feel and experience beauty in multifaceted ways that make people feel something. And if nothing else, I hope you know that you have changed my life and made me feel hope, joy, and excitement in a world that is hard for many of us in different ways. You've helped me belong. Thank you for being the reason humanity resonates at its highest frequency today and forevermore. My granny always says "give me my flowers when I am alive, not when I am dead" and so I implore you to think about and send those flowers, literally and or figuratively during and after the concert. Thank you, we would now like to present to you, David Maslanka's *Symphony No. 4*.

**Recital Three Program**

**Octet, Hon. II: F7 (1802)** — Joseph Hadyn (b.1732-1809)

*Symphony Band Chamber Winds*
*February 4, 2026*

**and the swallow** — Caroline Shaw (b. 1982), *arr. Danielle Fischer*

**Symphony No. 1** *And Yet They Persist* — Zachery Meier (b. 1992)

II. Resilience

World Premiere

**Desert Roads** — David Maslanka (b. 1943-2017)

III. Coming Home

Lewis Gilmore, Clarinet

**Motherless Child** — Benjamin Horne (b. 1995)

**Verve** — Cole Reyes (b. 1998)

World Premiere

*Dissertation Recital*
*February 20, 2026*

Recital 3: *Keep Climbing*

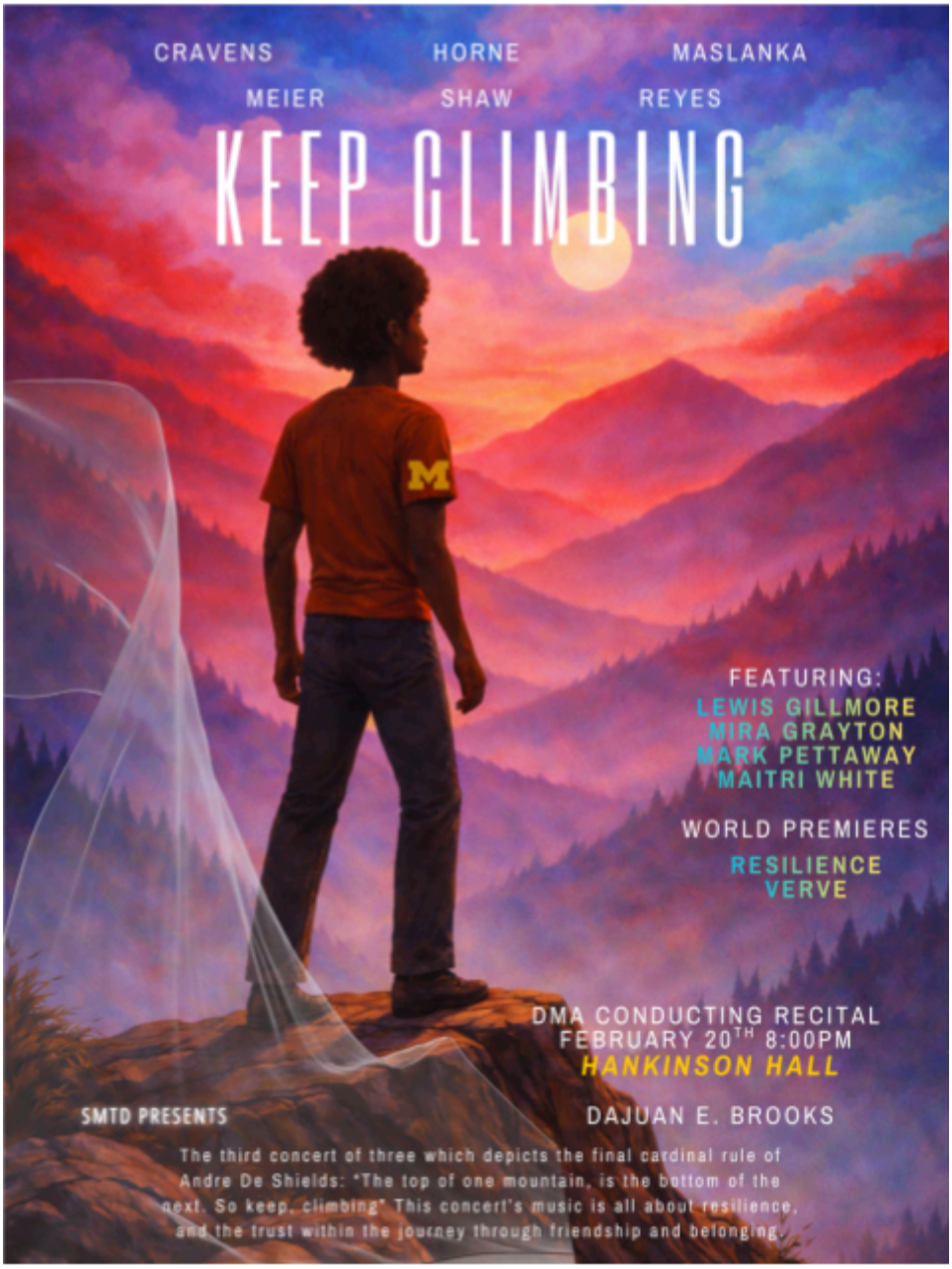



Figure 3: Recital Flyer

## Recital Three Program Notes

**Octet, Hob. II: F7** (1802) Joseph Haydn
(b. 1732-1809)

André DeShields reminds us that the top of one mountain is the bottom of the next. Standing at any summit worth reaching means reckoning with who built it, who was allowed to climb it, and who planted a flag that history may or may not have recorded accurately. Few figures in Western art music represent that summit more completely than Joseph Haydn. Born in Rohrau in Lower Austria on 31 March 1732, Haydn's career spanned the transition from the late Baroque patronage system to the emerging public musical culture of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. As James Webster and Georg Feder observe, Haydn began his professional life within "the traditional patronage system of the late Austrian Baroque," yet by the end of his life he functioned as a largely independent artist within a rapidly changing musical economy.[156] To program a work attributed to Haydn is, in some sense, to begin at the place where the classical tradition learned what it was. What I did not anticipate as a conductor and interpreter was how much that attribution would itself become part of the story.

Haydn's life has often been read as the narrative of perseverance emerging from modest circumstances, and that reading is not without merit. He was born into a family of limited means, received his earliest musical training away from home, and spent his young adulthood navigating financial hardship while attempting to establish himself as a freelance musician in Vienna. One early nineteenth-century source described how, after leaving the cathedral choir, Haydn "endured all the rigour of adverse fortune, finding it very difficult to earn even a bare subsistence."[157]

[156] Georg Feder and James Webster, "Haydn, (Franz) Joseph," in *Oxford Music Online*, by Georg Feder and James Webster (Oxford University Press, 2001), https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.44593.
[157] Simon P. Keefe, Haydn and Mozart in the Long Nineteenth Century: Parallel and Intersecting Patterns of Reception (Cambridge University Press, 2023), 70, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009254359.

Without formal conservatory training, he educated himself through theoretical study, score analysis and accumulated knowledge of practical experience. Reflecting on his career, he famously remarked that he had achieved his accomplishments through "much diligence" and believed that his example demonstrated how "something may still come from nothing."[158]

That something mentioned above, became foundational. When Haydn entered the service of the Esterházy family in 1761 he gained access to a resident ensemble of skilled performers, and the institutional stability to experiment relentlessly. The Esterházy court represented one of the most important aristocratic musical establishments in Central Europe, maintaining its own orchestra, opera house, and theatre. Haydn's duties included composing new works, directing rehearsals, supervising musicians, and providing music for religious services and theatrical productions. According to Nicholas Mathew, the terms of his contract required him to appear daily before the prince to receive instructions and to ensure that the musicians under his authority fulfilled their obligations properly.[159]The Esterházy environment proved extraordinarily productive for Haydn. He later reflected on the creative advantages of this situation, explaining that his relative isolation allowed him to develop his own distinctive style: "I was cut off from the world; there was no one near to confuse or torment me, and I was forced to become original."[160]

The result was a body of work that redefined what the symphony and string quartet were understood to be. Later critics and historians came to describe him as the composer who gave the symphony its mature shape and created the fully worked-out string quartet, a composer whose

[158]Nicholas Mathew, "Work," in *The Haydn Economy: Music, Aesthetics, and Commerce in the Late Eighteenth Century* (University of Chicago Press, 2022), 125–27, https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.7208/chicago/9780226819853-005/html.
[159] Mathew, "Work," 126.
[160] Howard C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn, the Early Years: 1732-1765*, Haydn : Chronicle and Works / H. C. Robbins Landon 1 (Indiana Univ. Pr, 1976).

combination of “productivity, quality, and historical importance” in these genres has few parallels in the eighteenth century.[161] Webster and Feder note that by the 1790s Haydn emerged as “the most celebrated composer of his time,” and later generations would come to venerate him as the first in a Viennese lineage that included Mozart and Beethoven.[162]

Haydn's importance to the history of the symphony and string quartet rests less on the invention of either genre than on the degree to which he transformed both into sustained, flexible, and intellectually compelling forms. He inherited genres that had often served lighter, courtly, or occasional functions and converted them into forms capable of extended argument, formal balance, wit, and expressive depth. As Emily Dolan observes, nineteenth-century writers repeatedly heard in his work the decisive shaping of modern instrumental music, identifying him as the composer who gave the symphony a durable formal identity and the string quartet what later critics would call its "worked-out" form. Webster and Feder state that if Haydn is popularly called the father of the symphony, he could "with greater justice" be regarded as such for the string quartet. That judgment reflects the extraordinary extent to which he shaped both genres as vehicles of serious compositional thought rather than social entertainment. What made this possible was not genius in isolation but the cumulative discipline of institutional life. His decades at Esterházy gave him regular access to skilled players, the freedom to experiment through performance, and the time to refine ideas across dozens of works. Dolan captures this best: Haydn never had an isolated "experimental period" but instead "experimented, innovated, expanded, and developed continually throughout his life." He did not simply add to the repertory. He changed what these genres were understood to be.

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[161] Emily I. Dolan, *The Orchestral Revolution: Haydn and the Technologies of Timbre*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 90–91, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139235976.
[162] Feder and Webster, “Haydn, (Franz) Joseph.”

I find myself drawn to the phrase "something may still come from nothing." As a Black and gay student navigating spaces that were not originally built with me in mind, I understand that formulation differently than its original context might suggest. Haydn meant it as a statement about individual effort and discipline. I hear it also as a reminder that the mountain has always been built by people who were told, in one way or another, that they did not quite belong on it.

The legacy of relentless invention extended naturally into the wind writing that would eventually produce the work at the center of this program. Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, aristocratic courts across Central Europe maintained wind ensembles known as *Harmonie*, typically consisting of pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns, and bassoons. These groups served both ceremonial and social functions. Performing outdoor music, arrangements of operatic favorites, and original chamber works performed during dinners or public festivities, a practice commonly referred to as *Tafelmusik*. *Harmonie* ensembles became an important feature of courtly musical life between approximately 1775 and 1825, and composers frequently wrote divertimenti, serenades, and partitas specifically for these ensembles.[163]

Haydn's engagement with wind writing began early in his career. During his service to Count Morzin in the late 1750s he encountered a court ensemble of oboes, horns, and bassoons, and the practical possibilities of those forces clearly stayed with him. When he entered the Esterházy court in 1761, wind ensemble music became an even more prominent feature of courtly entertainment. Haydn composed numerous works for winds during this period, including divertimenti, menuets, cassations, and outdoor pieces sometimes referred to as Feld-Parthien. As H. C. Robbins Landon observes, the cultivation of wind band music formed part of the broader

[163] Timothy Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7," Program Note, 2011.

musical innovations introduced at the Esterházy court.[164] What strikes me as a conductor is how intimate this tradition is. *Harmoniemusik* was never meant for large concert halls or distant audiences. It was music composed for proximity, where the architecture of the room and the scale of the ensemble demanded a different kind of listening than that which the concert hall would later require. That intimacy shapes how this repertoire must be approached, and it is part of what makes the Octet feel immediate even now.

Within this broader tradition stands the *Octet in F major, Hob. II:F7*, a work whose authorship has long been debated and whose unresolved history I find both troubling and instructive. Although the piece has traditionally circulated under Haydn's name, no autograph manuscript survives, and modern scholarship frequently places the work among the doubtful compositions within Haydn's catalogue.[165] Both H. C. Robbins Landon and George Feder attribute the work instead to Paul Wranitzky, a Moravian-born composer active in Vienna and closely associated with Haydn's musical circle. Publishers of the late eighteenth century often attached the names of famous composers to works of uncertain authorship in order to increase sales, which has contributed to the unusually large number of spurious compositions attributed to Haydn.[166]

Paul Wranitzky was born in Moravia in 1756 and moved to Vienna in 1776, where he soon became an important figure in the city's musical life. He served as music director at Count Johann Esterházy's court and later held conducting positions at the Kärntnertor Theater and the Burgtheater. During his lifetime he was widely respected as both a composer and violinist, and he conducted many of Beethoven's early works. His catalogue includes symphonies, stage

[164] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7."
[165] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7," 2.
[166] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7," 2.

works, and chamber music, and the Belgian musicologist François-Joseph Fétis later remarked that Wranitzky's compositions compared favorably with those of Haydn.[167]

The historical circumstances surrounding the Octet further complicate its attribution. The work appears to have been written relatively late in the eighteenth century at a time when Haydn was producing fewer instrumental chamber compositions. After returning from London in 1795, he devoted much of his energy to sacred vocal works, including the oratorios *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. Since the Esterházy musical establishment had been largely dissolved in 1790, Haydn no longer faced the same institutional obligation to compose functional music for wind ensembles. Wranitzky, by contrast, remained actively involved in writing instrumental and chamber works during this period, which strengthens the argument that the Octet may have originated within his compositional circle rather than Haydn's.[168]

As a scholar in the work of my master's degree study, I am drawn to sit with the uncertainty rather than resolve it prematurely. We cannot know with certainty whether this was Wranitzky's work entirely, a collaboration, or a composition deeply shaped by his influence. What we can say is that the historical record has consistently favored the name already in power. Landon and Feder's scholarship makes clear that Haydn's catalogue contains an unusually large number of misattributed works, and the conditions that produced those misattributions were not accidental. They were the predictable outcome of a publishing economy that traded on reputation, and of an archive that recorded the famous at the expense of the overlooked. Wranitzky was not a minor figure. He was a serious composer whose work earned serious comparison to Hadyn's during his lifetime, and yet his name has largely disappeared from the

[167] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7."
[168] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7," 2–3.

repertory while Haydn's has endured. I did not come to this music looking for that argument. But I am grateful to have been trained to recognize it when the music itself raises the question, and more grateful still that the music exists at all, whatever name we place upon it. Regardless of its precise authorship, the Octet in F major represents a refined example of late eighteenth-century *Harmoniemusik*. The work unfolds in four movements and combines classical structural balance with several unexpected harmonic and formal gestures.

Figure 3.1: Formal Structure Analysis, Movement 1 - Haydn Octet

MOVEMENT I – Allegro Moderato - Key: F Major

EXPOSITION

| SECTION | MEASURES | KEY AREA | PHRASE STRUCTURE | PRIMARY MATERIAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theme I | 1–12 | F | 4 + (4+4 extension) | Oboe I presents primary melody |
| Bridge | 13–22 | F → V | [2+2] + [2+2] + 2 | Oboe I continues melody, bassoons establish dominant with eighth notes |
| Theme II | 23–38 | C | [4+4] + [4+4] | Oboes present theme, clarinets double at octave, bassoon counter-motive |
| Closing Group | 39–50 | C | 6 + 6 | Oboes repeat dominant pitch G over moving harmony |
| Codetta | 50–57 | V–I | 4 + 4 | Oboe I eighth-note motive over sustained harmony |

DEVELOPMENT

| SECTION | MEASURES | KEY AREA | PHRASE STRUCTURE | TEXTURE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Episode 1 | 60–70 | C → d → Bb | 2 + (2+2+2) + 3 | Oboes and clarinets off-beat figures above bassoon harmony |
| Episode 2 | 71–78 | Bb | 4 + 4 | Sequential development |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Episode 3 | 78–86 | Bb | 4 + 4 | Motivic continuation |
| Episode 4 | 86–97 | F → c → Bb → g → C → F | — | Imitative counterpoint between oboe, clarinet, bassoon |

RECAPITULATION

| SECTION | MEASURES | KEY AREA | PHRASE STRUCTURE | PRIMARY MATERIAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theme I | 98–109 | F | 4 + 4 | Clarinets carry melody, oboes double at octave |
| Bridge | 110–119 | I → V | — | Transition material |
| Theme II | 120–135 | F | [4+4] + [4+4] | Clarinets and horns reinforce melody |
| Closing Group | 136–147 | C | 6 + 6 | Dominant repetition in clarinets |
| Coda | 147–160 | F | [2+2+2+2] + 6 | Layered entrances leading to final cadence |

Figure 3.2: Formal Structure Analysis, Movement 2 - Haydn Octet

MOVEMENT II – Andante con Variazioni - Key: b-flat Major

THEME

| SECTION | HARMONY | TEXTURE | FEATURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Antecedent (a) | Bb I → V | Clarinet I melody | Dolce character |
| Consequent (a′) | V7/V → V | Oboe doubles clarinet | Fuller ensemble |
| Section b | V7 → I → V | Ensemble texture | Expansion |
| Final phrase (a″) | I → V → I | Full ensemble | Closing cadence |

VARIATIONS

| VARIATION | KEY AREA | PRIMARY FEATURE | INSTRUMENTAL FOCUS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variation 1 | Bb | Triplet obbligato | Bassoon I |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variation 2 | Bb | Virtuosic passagework | Clarinet I (32nd notes) |
| Variation 3 | g minor → Bb | Expressive duet | Horn I and Bassoon II |
| Variation 4 | Bb | Return to original tempo | Bassoons in unison, oboe obbligato |

CODA

| SECTION | FEATURE |
|---|---|
| Closing Coda | 32nd-note motive builds tension before final bassoon solo |

Figure 3.3: Formal Structure Analysis, Movement 3 - Haydn Octet

MOVEMENT III – Menuetto - Key: F Major

| SECTION | PHRASE STRUCTURE | KEY AREA | MELODY |
|---|---|---|---|
| Minuet | 4 + 4 | F | Oboe I, later Oboe I / Clarinet I |
| Trio I | 4 + 4 | F | Horn I melody |
| Trio II | (2+4) + 4 | d minor | Clarinet I and ensemble |

Figure 3.35: Formal Structure Analysis, Movement 4 - Haydn Octet

MOVEMENT IV – Finale (Allegro)
Key: F Major

EXPOSITION

| SECTION | MEASURES | KEY AREA | FEATURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Theme I | 1–11 | F | Clarinet carries primary melody |
| Bridge | 11–23 | F → C | Tutti statement with imitative responses |
| Theme II | 23–33 | C | Clarinet and oboe dialogue |

DEVELOPMENT

| SECTION | MEASURES | KEY AREA | FEATURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Episode 1 | 34–38 | C | Oboe melody harmonized by oboe II |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Episode 2 | 39–50 | C → d → e → G → e | Call-and-response between clarinet and bassoon |
| Episode 3 | 51–66 | E → F | Clarinet motor rhythm beneath oboe melody |

CODA

| SECTION | MEASURES | KEY AREA | FEATURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Final Coda | 66–75 | F | Terraced entrances using Theme I material |

The opening movement follows a recognizable sonata-allegro design. After a brief introduction, the principal theme appears in the clarinets before circulating through the ensemble. A contrasting secondary theme emerges in the oboes in the key of C major, establishing the conventional tonic–dominant relationship characteristic of Classical sonata form. The development section begins in C minor and explores motives from both thematic areas before leading into a restrained recapitulation and concluding coda.[169]

The second movement presents a theme and variations rather than a traditional slow movement. The clarinet introduces the theme, which then passes through the ensemble in a series of variations that highlight different instrumental colors. The bassoon introduces triplet figuration in the first variation, while the clarinet takes on more elaborate ornamental writing in the second. The third variation moves to G minor and features a duet between horn and bassoon that produces a darker expressive character. An unexpected harmonic shift leads into a brief connecting passage that signals the final variation before the movement concludes with a decorated restatement of the theme.[170]

[169] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7," 3.
[170] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7."

The third movement is a minuet with two contrasting trios. The first trio features the horn in a style reminiscent of hunting calls, reflecting long-standing associations between the horn and the hunt in eighteenth-century music. The second trio presents a striking contrast; set in D minor, it opens with a near-unison chromatic gesture and develops through unusually dense chromatic writing in the clarinet and bassoon parts. Such harmonic boldness is uncommon in typical examples of *Harmoniemusik* and suggests a compositional voice that moves beyond conventional Classical idioms.[171]

The finale adopts an abbreviated sonata form. The clarinet introduces the principal theme over a steady bassoon accompaniment, while a contrasting idea appears in the clarinets and oboe. The development section moves through increasingly remote tonal areas, including B major, before turning back toward the home key. Rather than presenting a full recapitulation, the music moves directly into a short coda. In its final measures the piece recalls material from the end of the first movement, creating a cyclical reference that anticipates structural techniques more commonly associated with nineteenth-century Romantic composers.[172]

These stylistic features contribute to the continuing debate surrounding the Octet's authorship. The adventurous harmonic language, the transformation of the variation theme, and the cross-movement reference in the finale differ somewhat from Haydn's typical approach to these genres. Yet whether the work originated with Haydn himself or with Paul Wranitzky, the *Octet in F major, Hob. II:F7* remains an engaging example of late eighteenth-century wind writing. Its elegant structure, colorful instrumentation, and expressive variety reflect the vitality of the Harmoniemusik tradition and the artistry of the wind players who animated Europe's

[171] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7," 3–4.
[172] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7," 4.

aristocratic courts during this period.[173] This is music that rewards the listener who pays attention, and it is also music that rewards the scholar who asks questions the score alone cannot answer.

Whatever name history places on this music, the work endures, and the question of attribution is not incidental. The archive has never been a neutral document. It records what those in power decided was worth preserving, and it assigns credit according to the same logic. As a Black and gay doctoral conducting student, one of the first in my program, I do not approach this tradition as a settled inheritance. I approach it as someone who has been taught to read the mountain carefully, to notice who built it, who was written out of its construction, and what it means to keep climbing anyway. Haydn or Wranitzky, or some combination of both produced a work of genuine beauty and craft. That beauty is not diminished by the uncertainty. If anything, the uncertainty makes the music more honest about what the classical tradition has always been: a record of extraordinary human achievement that is also, and always, incomplete. To program this Octet is to hold both of those truths at once. The top of this mountain is the bottom of the next, and I am grateful to be climbing.

[173] Hemenway, "Joseph Haydn: Octet in F Major, Hob. II:F7."
This information was edited in conjunction with ChatGPT

**and the swallow** Caroline Shaw
(b. 1982)

Caroline Shaw stands among the most distinctive musicians working in contemporary concert music. Her career moves across composition, performance, and collaboration. Shaw often identifies herself broadly as a "musician" rather than strictly a composer, reflecting work as a violinist, vocalist, producer, and composer across many musical contexts.[174] Her music frequently blends historical musical language with contemporary sound practices, drawing influence from early polyphony, folk traditions, and experimental vocal technique.

Shaw was born in 1982 in Greenville, North Carolina. Early violin study and ensemble participation shaped her musical development and established a lifelong engagement with chamber music and collaborative performance. She completed undergraduate study at Rice University before continuing graduate work at the Yale School of Music. Throughout her career Shaw maintained close ties with performers and ensembles, including the vocal ensemble *Roomful of Teeth*, whose experimental vocal approach influenced several of her early compositions.[175]

International recognition arrived in 2013 when Shaw received the Pulitzer Prize in Music for *Partita for 8 Voices*. At age thirty she became the youngest composer in history to receive the award. The Pulitzer committee described the work as an inventive *a cappella* composition exploring speech, whispering, sighing, and other extended vocal sounds alongside traditional

[174] Caroline Shaw, *Caroline Shaw Music*, n.d., accessed March 18, 2026, https://carolineshaw.com/bio/.
[175] Tom Huizenga, "Caroline Shaw's Love Letter To The String Quartet," with Caroline Shaw and Kanye West, Deceptive Cadence [BLOG], NPR, April 19, 2019, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2211461342/citation/3CED01605ED445A0PQ/1.

singing.[176] This interest in breath, vocal color, and the physical nature of sound remains central to Shaw's later music, including the choral work, *and the swallow*.

Composed in 2017, *and the swallow* sets a portion of Psalm 84, a biblical text centered on longing for refuge and nearness to the divine. The piece was commissioned by the Netherlands Chamber Choir and premiered on November 11, 2017 at Union Theological Seminary in New York City as part of Lincoln Center's White Light Festival project titled *The Psalms Experience*.[177] This festival presentation included new musical settings of biblical psalms by contemporary composers, situating Shaw's composition within a long historical lineage of psalm settings.

The selected portion of Psalm 84 focuses on themes of longing, shelter, and belonging. The psalm opens with a declaration of yearning for a sacred dwelling place: "How beloved is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts; my soul yearns." The text then introduces imagery from the natural world. Even small birds find refuge in sacred space: "The sparrow has found a house, and the swallow her nest, where she may raise her young." The psalm concludes with travelers passing through the "Valley of Bakka," a place of hardship that becomes transformed into a place of life-giving springs.[178] The progression from longing toward renewal forms the emotional and theological arc of the text.

Margaret Burk's analysis emphasizes the close relationship between Shaw's musical language and the imagery of the psalm. The composition opens with parallel root-position chords

[176] "Partita for 8 Voices, by Caroline Shaw (New Amsterdam Records)," *The Pulitzer Prizes*, n.d., https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/caroline-shaw.
[177] Bozeman Symphony, "Program Notes: Night & Light - The Music of Lauridsen and Shaw," Bozeman Symphony," n.d., accessed March 18, 2026, https://www.bozemansymphony.org/program-notes/music-of-lauridsen-and-shaw.
[178] "Psalm 84:1-6, New Revised Standard Version," n.d., https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+84&version=NRSVUE.

that move through flat-centered harmonic regions. Burk describes this sonority as a blurred harmonic wash resembling watercolor, creating an atmosphere of calm reflection at the beginning of the piece.[179] As the work develops the texture expands into eight independent vocal parts divided into double chorus. Each voice enters through close imitation, creating overlapping melodic fragments that gradually form a rich polyphonic texture.

Imitation functions as one of the central structural elements of the composition. Individual voices repeat short melodic gestures at slightly delayed intervals. This process produces a layered musical surface in which melodic ideas echo across the ensemble shown in the teal box in figure 3.4. The resulting texture reflects the searching character of the psalm's opening lines, particularly the phrase "my soul yearns." Through imitation Shaw transforms the act of musical entry into a sonic metaphor for longing and response.

[179] Margaret Burk, "Summary of Dissertation Recitals: Three Choral Programs" (University of Michigan, 2022).




Figure 3.4: Reorchestrated chamber winds setting of Shaw's *and the swallow*

Polyphony strengthens this effect by allowing each vocal line to retain independence while still contributing to a unified harmonic environment. The eight-part writing recalls Renaissance choral polyphony, a stylistic influence frequently present in Shaw's work. Rather than constructing dramatic harmonic tension, Shaw prioritizes clarity of line and resonance of

vertical sonorities. Burk describes the resulting effect as kaleidoscopic, a constantly shifting texture formed through the interaction of multiple independent voices.[180]




Figure 3.5: Depiction of Shaw's Neo-Renaissance Polyphony within the chamber winds setting of *and the swallow*

[180] Burk, "Summary of Dissertation Recitals: Three Choral Programs."

Rhythmic fluidity also plays a significant role in shaping the musical character of the work. Shaw frequently shifts the listener's sense of pulse through subtle metric reinterpretation and hemiola gestures. These rhythmic changes blur the boundaries between duple and triple groupings, creating the sensation of suspended time. The effect resembles natural breathing patterns rather than rigid metrical structure. Such rhythmic flexibility reinforces the contemplative character of the psalm text.




Figure 3.6: *and the swallow* rhythmic hemiola

Shaw further expands the sonic palette of the choir through unconventional vocal gestures. Moments of humming interrupt the flowing polyphonic texture, creating a sense of inward meditation. Later passages employ sustained consonant sounds, particularly the letter "n,"

which Burk interprets as an evocation of rainfall in the psalm's reference to autumn rains.[181] These quiet textures transform the choir into an atmospheric soundscape in which the boundaries between musical gesture and environmental imagery become blurred. Fisher then reworks this




Figure 3.7: Timbral trills that represent "n" sound from original setting

effect into the instrumental arrangement by creating repeated figures that emulate Shaw's vocal techniques.

One of the most striking symbolic elements of the composition lies in the image of the swallow itself. Shaw has explained that the swallow represents a bird seeking safety for its young. In this interpretation the nest becomes a symbol of protection and security rather than

[181] Burk, "Summary of Dissertation Recitals: Three Choral Programs."

merely a physical location. Shaw extends this metaphor to human experience, suggesting that the psalm's imagery reflects the universal desire to create spaces where families and communities remain safe.[182] Through this lens the swallow emerges as a powerful symbol of belonging.

The concept of belonging has received significant attention in contemporary scholarship on vulnerability and community. Brené Brown describes belonging as the courage to remain authentic while maintaining connection with others. According to Brown, true belonging does not require individuals to alter themselves in order to gain acceptance:

> Belonging is being a part of something bigger than yourself. But it's also the courage to stand alone, and to belong to yourself, above all else, I belong to me. So even when I feel alone and I wonder, like, who's my crew and who are my people, I belong to me, for sure. I think that's the thing, that I feel like I belong everywhere I go, no matter where it is or who I'm with, as long as I never betray myself. And the minute I become who you want me to be in order to fit in and make sure people like me, is the moment I no longer belong anywhere.[183]

Instead it arises when people present their full identities within a community that acknowledges and receives them.[184] Viewed through this framework, Psalm 84 expresses a similar longing. The psalmist seeks a dwelling place where the soul may rest without disguise or transformation. Within the larger narrative of this recital program, *and the swallow* represents an early stage in a broader journey of growth and aspiration. Every journey begins with recognition of a destination. Psalm 84 begins precisely with this realization. The psalmist names the desire for a dwelling

[182] Burk, "Summary of Dissertation Recitals: Three Choral Programs."
[183] Lewis Howes, *The Truth About Fitting In*, n.d., https://www.facebook.com/lewishowes/videos/the-truth-about-fitting-in/1422474589603213/.
[184] Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Hazelden Publishing, 2020).

place and imagines belonging through the image of the swallow and her nest. By articulating this vision the text establishes the direction of the journey itself.

The final lines of the psalm deepen this idea of transformation. Travelers passing through the Valley of Bakka encounter drought and hardship, yet the valley becomes a place of springs. The imagery suggests that movement toward belonging reshapes the environment through which the traveler moves. Shaw's musical language mirrors this transformation through gradually unfolding textures, subtle rhythmic shifts, and an atmosphere of quiet renewal. In this way *and the swallow* functions not only as a meditation on refuge and home but also as a musical reflection on the beginning of a journey toward belonging.

**Symphony No. 1** *And Yet They Persist* Zachary Meier
(b. 1992)

II. Resilience

Zachery S. Meier is an American composer, flutist, and educator whose work spans wind ensemble, chamber music, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and music for theatre and movement. Born in February in Fairbanks, Alaska, Meier entered life with an early medical crisis. Five days after his birth, he was flown from Fairbanks to Seattle, Washington, where he underwent surgery to correct a coarctation of the aorta. He has described this as an intense and formative beginning, followed by the relief of a strong recovery and the expectation, communicated to his family, that reaching adolescence would signal long-term stability. This early experience shaped his first awareness of health and fortitude as experienced realities, long before they appeared as artistic ideas.[185]

Meier's childhood unfolded through several moves that placed him in communities across Minnesota. After his family returned to his parents' hometown in southern Minnesota, they relocated to a Minneapolis suburb, then to Hutchinson for several years, and later back to Fairmont. Across these settings, he encountered creative activity as part of daily life. His mother, attentive to his energy and interests, encouraged him to pursue arts experiences early, including dance and ice skating. While he does not remember all of these experiences firsthand, he recalls photographic proof. He considers these early activities as signs of a family environment that appreciated creativity, movement, and exploration. In school, visual art became his clearest early passion. He remembers constant drawing, drafting, and experimenting with line, stencils, and color, supported by a steady supply of art materials from his parents. At this stage, he did not yet

[185] DaJuan Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist," (Ann Arbor, MI), February 7, 2026.

describe music as his primary outlet. Instead, the through line was making things, learning through experimentation, and building a personal relationship with creative work.[186]

Meier's first sustained entry into music came through the school band, molded by both interest and cultural expectations. When he had the opportunity to choose an instrument, he was strongly drawn to the flute, with clarinet and French horn as alternatives. He has noted that a director's hesitation to enroll male flute players exposed him early to the gendering of instruments, particularly within a small-town band culture. Despite this, he was allowed to join the flute section. He continued developing through school instruction and sectionals and began building musical fluency. In middle school, however, he stepped away from the instrument for a time, feeling that the musical activities available to him did not engage the same creative drive he found in art classes. Rather than ending his musical identity, this pause clarified what he needed from artistic work: invention, curiosity, and a sense of discovery.[187]

High school represented a return to music with a broader range and deeper purpose. Meier returned to the flute world while also playing violin in orchestra, maintaining dual participation in band and orchestra throughout those years. During this period, he became increasingly interested in repertoire itself, especially new music and emerging composers writing for wind band. That curiosity prompted him to compose in a practical, self-directed way. Without a background in formal piano study, he began experimenting at the piano, learning scales and harmonic motion through trial, improvisation, and ear-based discovery. He has identified this as a decisive turning point, the moment when sound-making shifted into the desire to build music of his own. Encouragement from his teachers reinforced this shift. He recalls being told that if he

[186] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."
[187] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."

wrote something, the ensembles would read it or perform it. He acted on that invitation, composing a short orchestral work that his teacher premiered at a concert. Meier has emphasized how crucial early validation proved, not only because the performance recognized his potential, but because it established a model of artistic community: composing as relationship, trust, and shared risk.[188]

As he approached graduation, Meier initially planned a future in architecture, drawn to drafting, design, and the concrete logic of building. The successful experience of writing and hearing his music performed quickly changed that trajectory. He switched to music late in the application cycle,and he ultimately chose the University of Minnesota Duluth, citing a strong audition experience, a persuasive campus visit, an intuitive sense of fit, and the practical benefit of remaining close enough for family to attend performances. He entered as a flute performance major, but composition remained central to his identity. Peer encouragement led him to assemble a portfolio and share it with Dr. Justin Rubin, who became an early, decisive mentor. Meier recalls Rubin urging him not to suppress his compositional voice and inviting him into a composition seminar, laying the groundwork for an undergraduate path defined by the pairing of performance and composition.

During his undergraduate years, Meier managed the tension between two demanding tracks. A candid conversation with his flute professor clarified both the possibilities and the cost: he could pursue both, but only with significant time, effort, and sustained dedication. Over time, he focused more strongly on composition while completing degrees in both flute performance and composition. This adjustment also sharpened his professional questions, notably about graduate study. When considering master's programs, he weighed artistic opportunity against

[188] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."

financial reality. He has described a working belief that institutions that fund students through assistantships often signal a deeper investment in their development. After facing waitlists for assistantships, he worked at Wells Fargo during the summer and found the environment incompatible with his personality and values. He describes himself as a "helper" rather than a "seller," and he connects this to a more extensive discomfort with self-promotion. This self-understanding is not presented as a fixed limitation, but as a continuing area of growth that affects how he approaches professional life. He prefers music and relationships to speak on his behalf, even while recognizing that professional sustainability requires learning how to advocate for his work.[189]

A significant opportunity arrived in July 2014. Meier received a call from the chair of the music department at Washington State University, offering a teaching assistantship contingent on his arrival in Pullman by August 1. The offer came quickly and required rapid personal and administrative decisions, including leaving behind newly established relationships. Meier accepted, interpreting the moment as both a practical opportunity and a personal calling. This move became foundational for his development as a composer and teacher, and it strengthened his devotion to building community, including within queer spaces. Upon arriving, he was supported by Chris Dickey, the tuba professor at Washington State University, who provided housing for two weeks during a tight transition. Meier describes this relationship as continuing and formative. During his first semester, Dickey invited him to write a piece for tuba and piano, which Meier identifies as his first experience of being "technically commissioned." That commission led to *Azure Roads*, a work shaped using shared symbolism and a concept-driven approach. Meier named the piece for a mutual affinity for blue and organized the work around

[189] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."

five different "colors" of blue expressed through texture and sectional contrast. In his telling, *Azure Roads* represents the moment when extramusical ideas became a structural tool, expanding his compositional thinking beyond form and harmonic analysis into a more intentional engagement with timbre, texture, and metaphorical organization.[190]

From this point forward, Meier's career developed through steady collaboration across mediums, ensemble types, and artistic communities. His music has been commissioned and performed by musicians and ensembles across the United States and internationally, including Canada, Italy, and Vietnam. His collaborations range from solo and full-ensemble works to multimedia projects, movement scoring, and incidental music for theatre. Recent commissions include *Ex/Body: strike, vibrate, shatter* for movement artist Molly Shanahan and her company Molly Shanahan/Mad Shak Dance Company, *Music for The Pests* for Denison's Theatre Department, and *Meraki* for Washington State University's Symphonic Wind Ensemble under the direction of Danh Pham. Additional recent works include *Through & Between* for Heather Neuenschwander and Tatianna Cassetta; *Hush* for Sophia Tegart and Sarah S. Miller; *with this, we begin anew* for Jeremy Crawford and David Tayloe; *Transfuse* for French Horn and Electronics for Anna Marshall.

His music has also been performed by  a wide range of ensembles and presenters, including the Ho Chi Minh Ballet Orchestra, Washington Idaho Symphony, Washington State University Wind Ensemble, the University of Iowa Symphony Band, the University of Iowa Center for New Music Ensemble, ETHEL, JACK Quartet, George Mason University Wind Symphony, and the Cincinnati Conservatory Wind Symphony, among others. This breadth of performance contexts shows a composer whose catalogue moves fluidly between traditional

[190] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."

concert settings and interdisciplinary spaces where sound interacts with movement, theatre, and technology.

Meier holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Theory and Composition from the University of Minnesota Duluth, a Master of Arts from Washington State University, and a PhD in Music Composition from the University of Iowa. He has spoken about the University of Iowa as a truth teller's environment. The environment at Iowa was eye-opening in ways that were not always comfortable. The composers around him were working in textural and sound-based idioms that felt foreign to the harmonic and formal instincts he had spent years developing, and that gap produced genuine self-doubt. Over time, however, he developed a guiding stance of curiosity toward unfamiliar work, learning to value the person behind the music and to develop respect for multiple listening practices. This shift expanded his compositional resources toward timbre and texture, providing, as he describes, more tools to express and more intentional decision-making on the page.[191]

Meier has also received considerable recognition and professional validation for his work. In 2015, he won the Washington, Idaho Symphony Composition and Concerto Competition and was featured as a spotlight artist on Minnesota Public Radio's *Spotlight Regional Artists* series. In 2017, he was selected for the National Band Association's Young Composers and Conductors Mentor Project, which included participation in rehearsals and the performance of his wind ensemble work *Reigniere* with the United States Air Force Band. In 2016, he was recognized as an outstanding graduate student for achievements in composition, performance, and academic scholarship, and he was inducted into Tau Beta Sigma. In 2021, he received a Denison University research grant to pursue further adaptations of the bowed piano in

[191] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."

collaboration with Molly Shanahan and Mad Shak, a project intended for a premiere in Chicago in 2023. His professional affiliations include membership in ASCAP, SCI, NFA, and NACUSA.

As an educator, Meier currently serves as Visiting Assistant Professor at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, teaching composition, theory, computer music, and queer studies. He traces his professional and artistic development through a vast network of mentors and collaborators. He credits David Gompper, Josh Levine, Sivan Cohen Elias, Jean François Charles, Gregory Yasinitsky, Danh Pham, Scott Blasco, Ryan Hare, and Justin Rubin as key mentors who have molded his music and scholarship. He has also engaged with composers including Marcos Balter, Amy Williams, Erin Rogers, Pamela Z, Felipe Lara, Natashia Diels, Mark Camphouse, Nathan Daughtrey, Timothy Mahr, and Kevin Walczyk. Across these relationships, a consistent theme emerges in Meier's narrative: composition as connection, teaching as mutual learning, and creative practice as a devotion to curiosity, collaboration, and community.[192]

Meier describes Symphony No. 1, *And Yet They Persist* as a large-scale, three-movement journey built around persistence, resilience, and arrival. "Resilience" is the second movement, which he first conceived as a standalone work. Its character began as slow, quietly persistent, and gradually intensified. Meier planned an opening that starts soft, grows toward several climaxes, and ends in a bright, sparkling, triumphant close, and his plan was realized throughout the process. For Meier, the movement traces an inner narrative. Reflection and reminiscence move toward rejoicing, marking the feeling of reaching a long-sought destination.[193]

[192] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."
[193] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."

Figure 3.8: Formal Structure Narrative Description

| Measure | Inner Narrative | Section Subscript |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | The Mist and The Mountain | Gentle, with clouds of translucence |
| 53 [Letter B] | The Traveler | Foggy, with introspection |
| 72 [Letter C] | The Trek | Resilient, looking forward |
| 86 [Letter D] | The Traveler and The Climb | Determined, moving quicker |
| 102 [Letter E] | The Peak | Joyous, with hard-fought elation |
| 128 [Letter H] | The Sunshine and Rain | Centered realization, and what's next… |

At the center of the symphony is a recurring harmony Meier calls the "persistence chord." He explains that this chord appears across this movement in different forms. In the second movement, it often functions as a cluster, sometimes presented as brief airy bursts rather than a fully stated event. His goal is to plant it early as an "earworm," something the listener senses before they understand it, and then recognizes as it returns later. He notes early appearances as a "ghost" version around measure 5, thickening by measure 10, and later emerging more fully as an ensemble sonority around measure 34 against bright percussion and keyboard colors.[194]

[194] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."




Figure 3.9: Symphony No. 1: And Yet, They Persist - persistence chord

Meier frames the opening of the movement as a traveler's journey around a mountain on a hazy day. On this hazy day, fog, mist, and clouds obscure the peak. In this atmosphere, the persistence chord glimmers in saxophones and clarinets as a subtle sign of forward motion and hope. As the music continues, marimbas develop the harmony further through tremolo textures that remain intentionally "sonically fuzzy," then gradually clarify the sound world as the ensemble pushes forward. He connects this to an undulating musical motion, with winds entering

and exiting in waves to create a continuous sense of movement through the combination of air and the "persistence chord."[195]

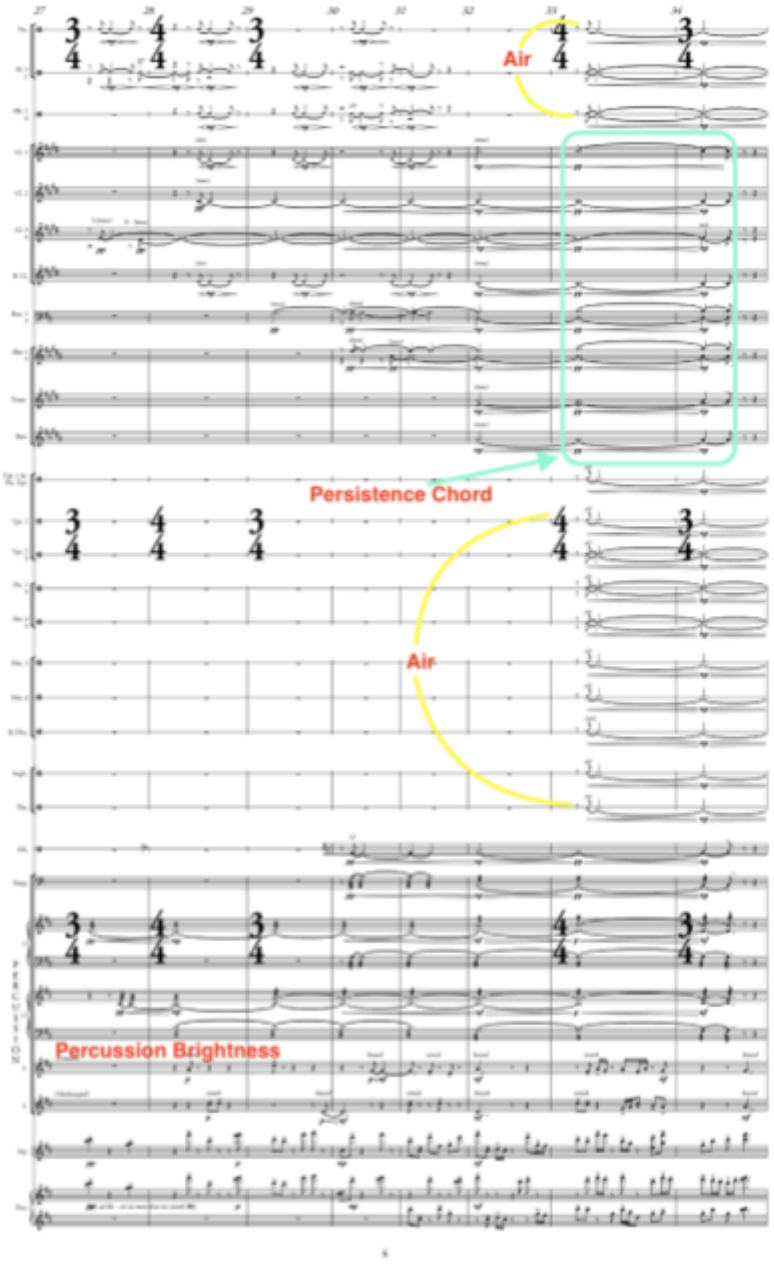



Figure 3.10: Persistence chord layered with air

[195] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."

At rehearsal letter B, Meier shifts from a harmonic gesture into a more explicit melodic identity. He describes this as the first clear melodic context for the "traveler," presented in the clarinet. He links this decision directly to the dedicatee, describing the clarinet line as written with the author of this dissertation in mind, since it is my primary instrument.




Figure 3.11: The Traveler clarinet solo

He also places this within a longer personal plan, building a series of works that feature different instruments over time, with this movement serving as his clarinet-focused statement. In this B section, he also describes the "persistence chord" as partially deconstructed. Flutes and clarinets "walk through it," then he steps back to explore variant clusters from the "persistence chord" and new motion. During this musical "walk through", Meier states that this clarinet solo is meant to depict the internal struggle and emotional questioning of the traveler. This is something with which I resonate, and during rehearsals, many of the performers spoke to me in shared experience as their own version of being the "traveler."




Figure 3.12: New cluster meets new feature

Meier identifies a later return of the persistence chord at rehearsal letter D, where it bursts out more actively. He describes a rotational scoring process in the upper winds. The chord appears first in clarinets, then transfers to saxophones, then to flutes, then returns to clarinets.

This treatment highlights timbral shift as a primary compositional method, aligning with his stated emphasis on texture and timbre as structural forces rather than harmony alone.




Figure 3.13: Timbral shift of persistence chord within different instrument choirs

Meier points to a significant textural build from measures 66 through 71, describing it as a first major moment when the surrounding environment begins to "emerge from the clouds." The musical world becomes more visible, more present, and more vivid. After this crest, he describes a quietening into the brass as an internal warmth, a confirmation of the belief that the traveler will reach the summit. He then describes a prominent euphonium melody at letter D moving toward letter E. He ascribes this moment to collaboration, explaining that the euphonium was given space to sing and supported by horns and trombones, which he imagines as bursts of light shining through clouds.




Figure 3.14: Burst of light shining through the clouds

Approaching the letter E and the lead-up to the summit, he intensifies the tension through renewed cluster writing, trills, and a more active percussion texture. He highlights large harp glissandi as a pre-summit signal, followed by a climactic arrival that he calls a peak. He clarifies that this is not the final peak of the entire symphony. Instead, it is a significant intermediate summit, with the ultimate peak reserved for the end of the third movement. Even so, the arrival at this summit is expansive and triumphant, denoting an increase in confidence and affirmation.




Figure 3.15: Intensified tension surrounding clusters

Meier frames the movement as a personal message, describing it as a "love letter" to a close friend and future colleague. The musical voyage expresses reassurance, confirming that the dedicatee is on the right path and pointing toward an even larger future.[196] The movement

[196] Brooks, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Zach Meier and Symphony No.1: And Yet, They Persist."

culminates in a large brass and full-ensemble statement, including a trumpet fanfare and broad chorales across horns, trombones, tuba, and euphonium. Within the musical feeling of exultation at letter E, we find ourselves arriving in D major which solidifies and confirms the feeling of arriving at the peak of the mountain within the traveler's journey. But a few bars later, our hard-won joy is met with realization that this elation comes at a cost, one which must be embraced through effort and sacrifice. This exact moment in which the travelers realize this occurs in measure 105, when a dissonant flat sixth degree of the scale protrudes vigorously through the texture, signaling its returnof the flat sixth degree  in measure 108. This feeling of pain only lasts a brief moment;  it is a momentary depiction of tension followed by a tonal resolution and release that, leaves both the listener and the figurative traveler with an ultimate feeling of peace.




Figure 3.16: Joyous, with hard fought elation Flat 6-5 resolution

This closing re-establishes the "persistence" chord in its most extended form while bright, sparkling colors sit above it, described as celebratory and luminous. Meier describes the aleatoric layer later in the movement as pure texture– air, wind, and color strengthening the sensation of standing at the mountain's top and gazing forward to what comes next.

"The top of one mountain is the bottom of the next, so keep climbing".[197]

The movement ends with the sounding of a rainstick, symbolic of the concept that through the downs, there always comes the up, and through the ups, rain can fall as well.

[197] *Andre De Shields 2019 Tony Speech for Hadestown - Featured Actor in a Musical, 2019, Video.*

**Motherless Child** Benjamin Horne
(b. 1995)

The inclusion of *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child* by Benjamin Horne in this recital program grew from a desire to foreground the lived experiences of Black ancestors through musical storytelling. As the culminating performance of my doctoral studies, I felt a responsibility to acknowledge the historical context that made my presence in this space possible. My grandmother, Caroline McDonald, was born in 1943. Eleven years later the United States Supreme Court issued its ruling in the landmark decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional in 1954.[198] The historical proximity of this event remains striking. My grandmother was a child during the transition toward desegregated education, yet within one generation I now stand on the stage of the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance presenting a final doctoral recital.

Conversations with students during rehearsal revealed how distant this history often feels to younger generations. Many expressed surprise when they learned how recently legally enforced segregation existed in the United States. These discussions reinforced the importance of including repertoire that engages directly with the historical experiences of African Americans. Spirituals provide a powerful vehicle for this kind of storytelling because they encode both the emotional realities and the cultural resilience of enslaved communities. As musicologist Eileen Southern explains, spirituals emerged from the lived conditions of slavery and functioned as "expressions of sorrow, hope, resistance, and faith within the African American community."[199]

My connection to Benjamin Horne's *Spiritual Symphony* first emerged during the Midwest Clinic in December 2025. Horne had recently received the National Band Association

[198] James T. Patterson, ed., *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*, Pivotal Moments in American History (Oxford University Press, 2011).
[199] Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3. ed (Norton, 1997).

William D. Revelli Memorial Band Composition Award for the work, an award named for longtime University of Michigan band director Dr. William D. Revelli. Horne structures the symphony around four traditional African American spirituals, each presented as an individual movement that may also stand alone in performance. After discussing the symphony with a colleague from the University of Georgia, Dr. Jack Eaddy, I listened to the movement based on "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child." The emotional immediacy of the music quickly resonated with the larger narrative arc I hoped to create within the recital.

Following the first rehearsal, however, I felt that the instrumental performance alone did not fully communicate the historical weight of the spiritual tradition. African American spirituals originated as vocal expressions shaped by communal participation rather than written notation. Scholars have long emphasized that the power of spirituals lies in the combination of text, melody, and collective performance practice.[200] For this reason I decided to incorporate a vocal prelude that would foreground the spiritual tradition before the ensemble entered.

I invited vocalist Maitri White to perform the opening spiritual. As I researched different vocal settings of "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," I encountered a webinar recording featuring Ysaye Barnwell, who presented an arrangement combining three spirituals in a three-part round. The round included "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," "Wade in the Water," and "I Wanna Die Easy." This discovery proved particularly meaningful because another movement of Horne's *Spiritual Symphony* incorporates "Wade in the Water." Including the round therefore allowed the performance to reference additional elements of the symphony's spiritual framework while still presenting a single movement.

[200] Samuel A. Floyd, "Black Music and Writing Black Music History: American Music and Narrative Strategies," *Black Music Research Journal* 28, no. 1 (2008): 111–21.

The spiritual "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" carries profound historical significance within African American culture. The text reflects the trauma of family separation under slavery, when enslaved people were frequently sold away from their parents, spouses, and children. Musicologists note that the metaphor of the "motherless child" became a powerful symbol of emotional and physical displacement within enslaved communities.[201] The spiritual therefore expresses both personal grief and collective historical memory.

"Wade in the Water" similarly holds layered cultural meaning. While the song references the biblical story of healing waters in the Gospel of John, it also functioned within the context of the Underground Railroad. Harriet Tubman and others reportedly used the song as coded instruction for those escaping slavery, advising them to move through water in order to prevent tracking dogs from following their scent.[202] The spiritual thus combines biblical imagery with practical strategies for survival and resistance.The final text in the round, "I Wanna Die Easy," expresses a longing for spiritual rest after a life marked by suffering. Many African American spirituals look toward death not with despair but with hope for liberation beyond earthly oppression. Scholars have noted that this eschatological perspective offered enslaved communities a powerful source of psychological and spiritual resilience.[203]

In shaping the performance, I also drew inspiration from the first cardinal rule articulated by performer André De Shields: "surround yourself with people whose eyes light up when they see you coming." This principle has guided many of my artistic collaborations throughout my time at the University of Michigan. Two colleagues immediately came to mind when I

[201] Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music To The Civil War*, Music in American Life (Univ. of Illinois Press, 2003).
[202] Shane White and Graham J. White, *The Sounds of Slavery: Discovering African American History Through Songs, Sermons, and Speech* (Beacon Press, 2005).
[203] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, Updated ed (Oxford Univ. Press, 2004).

envisioned the three-part vocal round: Mira Grayton and Mark Pettaway, both of whom I met through diction courses within the music program. Their generosity and warmth had already shaped my experience within the community, and inviting them to participate felt like a natural extension of that shared artistic environment.

The spatial design of the performance became an essential component of the storytelling. Maitri White opened the work alone with two verses of "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child." After her final phrase, Mira Grayton entered from another location within the hall singing "Wade in the Water." The shift in location redirected the audience's attention and created a sonic representation of movement and escape. Finally, Mark Pettaway entered from the opposite rear corner of the hall singing "I Wanna Die Easy," his tenor voice providing a contrasting timbral color. The three voices gradually interwove as the round unfolded, allowing the texts to coexist simultaneously within the performance space. What began as a solitary expression of sorrow expanded into a communal musical testimony. In rehearsal, performers immediately sensed the emotional gravity of the moment. By the time the ensemble entered with Horne's symphonic movement, the hall had already been transformed into a space of remembrance and reflection.

| **Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child** | **Wade in the Water** |
|---|---|
| *Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,* | *Wade in the water,* |
| *Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,* | *Wade in the water, children,* |
| *Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,* | *Wade in the water,* |
| *A long way from home.* | *God's gonna trouble the water.* |

| **Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child (Verse 3)** | **I Wanna Die Easy** |
|---|---|
| *Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,* | *I wanna die easy* |
| *Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,* | *When I die* |
| *Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,* | *I wanna die easy* |
| *A long way from home.* | *When I die.* |

Figure 3.17: Three part round - Horne's *Spiritual Symphony* Prelude Lyrics

Through this performance structure, the prelude functioned not only as an introduction to Horne's composition but also as an act of historical acknowledgment. The voices of the spiritual tradition entered the recital hall as living testimony to the resilience of African American culture. By connecting these songs to the broader narrative of my family history and educational journey, the performance honored the generations whose sacrifices made this moment possible.

**Verve**

Cole Reyes
(b. 1998)

Cole Reyes's *Verve* reflects many of the compositional priorities that characterize his broader musical language, particularly his concern with performer engagement, flexible metric organization, and the manipulation of recurring structural ideas. Reyes describes the work as "a short work for symphonic band celebrating the vigor and enthusiasm of making music together."[204] He further notes that while performers and circumstances change over time, the musical experiences created through performance remain lasting: "As times change, as people come and go, the music that we get to perform and hear stays with us forever. When we bring our own unique verve to what we create, we make something special that transcends just ourselves."[205] This idea of shared energy and collective investment provides the central artistic premise for the composition.

From the perspective of a conductor and collaborator, this philosophy resonates strongly with the lived experience of ensemble music making. Conductors witness firsthand how the spirit of a rehearsal or performance shapes the outcome of a piece. A composition such as *Verve* does not exist solely on the printed page; it becomes meaningful through the people who bring it to life. In many ways, Reyes's program note speaks to a larger truth about ensemble performance: music creates a space where individual contributions combine into something larger than any single performer. Each musician brings their own energy, background, and interpretation into the ensemble, and through that process a shared musical identity begins to form.

[204] Reyes, "Interview by DaJuan Brooks: Getting To Know Cole Reyes Through Verve and Inhere, Adhere."
[205] Cole Reyes, "Verve," Score, Cole Reyes Music ASCAP, 2026.

This perspective aligns with ideas of collective creativity and vulnerability discussed by researcher Brené Brown. Brown argues that meaningful collaboration requires individuals to bring their authentic selves into shared work, stating that "true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world."[206] When applied to musical performance, this concept suggests that ensembles achieve their most powerful moments when musicians fully invest themselves in the process of creation. Rather than striving for sterile perfection, performers contribute their own musical personality, energy, and humanity to the work. In this way the music becomes a product of collective courage and openness.

Structurally, *Verve* can be understood as following a broad ABA formal design. The opening section introduces sharply articulated musical gestures that function as structural pillars within the texture.

| | |
|---|---|
| A | Measure 1 |
| B | Measure 68 - Letter D |
| $A_1$ | Measure 126 - Letter G |

Figure 3.18: *Verve* structural analysis

These gestures appear as accented attacks that serve as recurring anchor points throughout the first portion of the piece. Between these anchor points, Reyes gradually expands the musical space that separates them. Early in the work the gestures occur in relatively short spans, but the intervening material lengthens progressively over time. What begins as short two-measure units

[206] Brené Brown, *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone*, First edition (Random House, 2017), 31.

gradually expands into longer spans of four, six, eight,  and eventually twelve measures, creating a sense of structural growth and propulsion.[207]

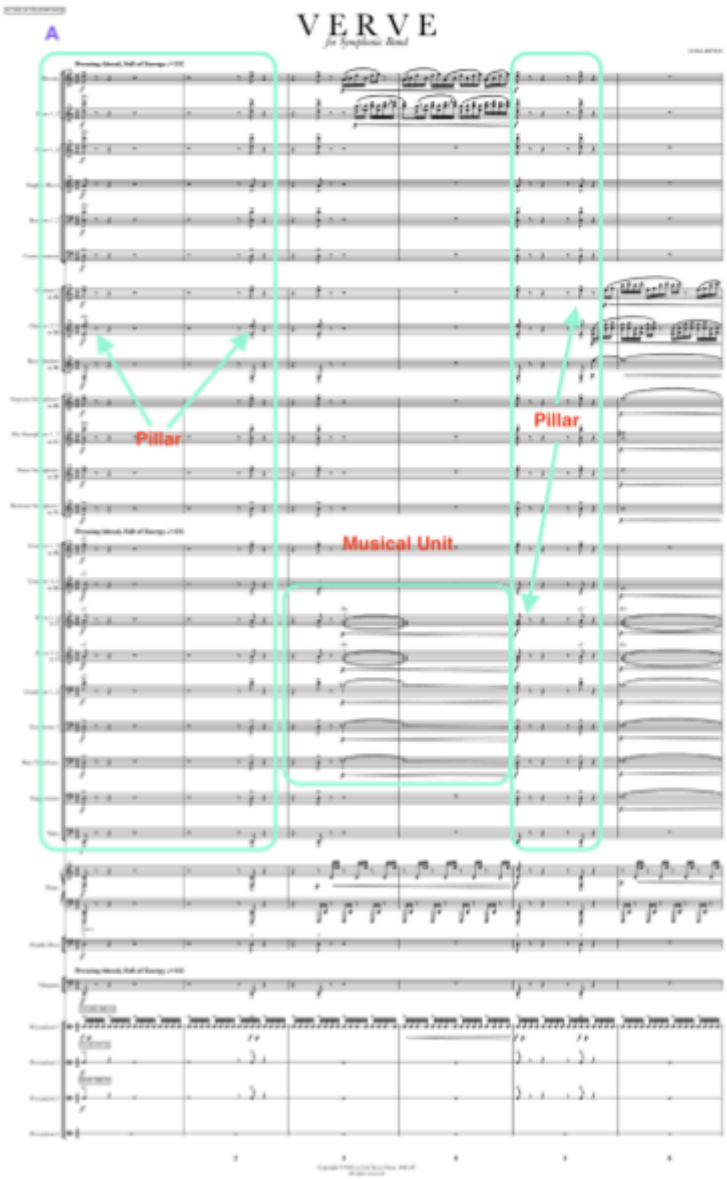



Figure 3.19: *Verve* accented attacks within pillars

[207] Brooks, "Getting To Know Cole Reyes"

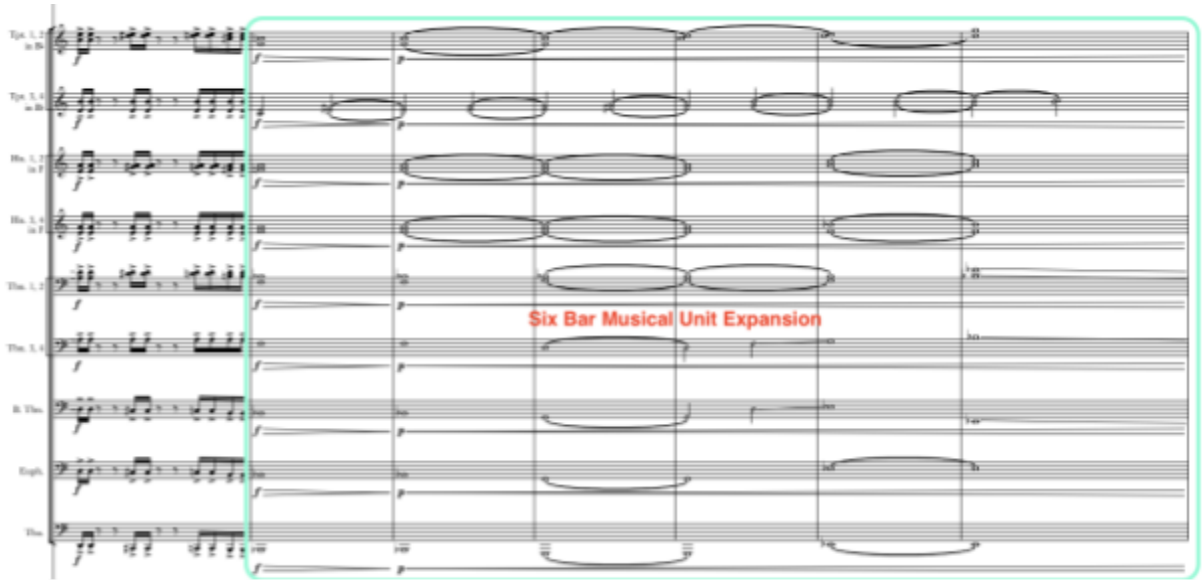



Figure 3.20: Six bar musical unit expansion example

This method of expanding the distance between recurring musical ideas reflects a compositional technique that Reyes identifies as central to his writing. He frequently organizes musical material around recognizable anchor points and then manipulates the temporal space between their appearances. By stretching or compressing the musical distance between these gestures, Reyes shapes the pacing and dramatic contour of the work while maintaining structural clarity. This approach allows listeners to perceive continuity across the composition even as the surrounding musical material evolves.[208]

The central B section of *Verve* introduces a striking contrast by temporarily abandoning these anchor gestures. Reyes describes this portion of the work as descending into a more expansive and cavernous sonic environment. The absence of the structural pillars established earlier creates a moment of suspension within the musical narrative. When the anchor gestures

[208] Brooks, "Getting To Know Cole Reyes"

return in the final section, they restore the structural framework of the opening material and guide the work toward its conclusion.[209]




Figure 3.21: Verve, the central ‘b’ section

[209] Brooks, “Getting To Know Cole Reyes”

Rhythm and meter play an equally important role in shaping the character of the piece. Reyes does not begin with a fixed meter when composing. Instead, he begins with a musical idea and allows the meter to adapt to the phrase. For example, a phrase that naturally occupies eight beats may appear as two measures of 4/4. If the idea expands to nine beats, Reyes might distribute it across changing meters such as 4/4, 3/4, and 2/4. In this way the meter serves the musical idea rather than constraining it.[210] In the case of *Verve* he does this within the B section of the piece, overlapping the three ideas that were present from the beginning of the piece. He interjects the rhythmic motor with the original pillar which has now become rearticulated




Figure 3.22: Adaptable meter changes with thematic layering

[210] Brooks, "Getting To Know Cole Reyes"

sixteenth notes, joined by the two bar musical unit. These two things in conjunction with the meter changes allows for musical symmetry centered around the new B section sixteenth notes.

This flexible approach to metric organization draws partially on the additive rhythmic processes associated with minimalist composer Philip Glass. Reyes often extends musical phrases by adding a single beat to an established rhythmic pattern. These incremental adjustments subtly alter the rhythmic structure while preserving forward momentum. The resulting rhythmic language produces a sense of motion and unpredictability that contributes to the energetic character suggested by the title *Verve*.[211]




Figure 3.23: Verve, Meter vitality while moving forward

For performers and conductors, these compositional choices reinforce the central idea behind the piece: music making as a shared human experience. The rhythmic vitality, shifting formal space, and recurring structural markers invite performers into an active and collaborative

[211] Brooks, "Getting To Know Cole Reyes"

musical dialogue. In this sense, *Verve* becomes more than a display of compositional technique. It becomes a framework for communal creativity, where the enthusiasm and commitment of each musician shape the final result.

Within ensemble culture, this concept echoes a broader leadership principle. Brown notes that meaningful leadership emerges when individuals choose courage and connection over control and isolation. She writes that "the courage to be vulnerable is not about winning or losing; it is about the courage to show up when you cannot control the outcome."[212] In the rehearsal room, this courage often appears in the willingness of musicians to take risks, experiment with sound, and invest emotionally in the performance. Through this process, the ensemble moves beyond technical execution toward a deeper artistic connection. In *Verve*, Reyes captures this idea musically. The piece celebrates the vitality that emerges when musicians commit themselves fully to the act of creating together. This is not a piece in which one person is in control, including the conductor. One might think while experiencing a piece like this that the conductor is the key, but as my middle school band director Eric Evans taught us to respond when asked "whose responsibility is it for time?," we would all answer "EVERYONE!" When this transformation of thought occurs, performances become something that extends beyond the notes on the page; they become moments of shared expression and empathy that remain with both performers and listeners long after the final sound fades.

[212] Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts* (Random House, 2018), 20.

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## Appendix

**Interview With RJ Dion**

DaJuan Brooks 0:04
Okay, I think it's recording now, yeah, yeah, perfect.

DaJuan Brooks 0:09
And then I'm also going to do it on my phone, because, you know Apple, like your apple, when you use that feature, what's it called Voice Recording, or whatever voice memos you can get a transcript from

DaJuan Brooks 0:24
that, so I'll just do both, and then figure it out later. More your time.

DaJuan Brooks 0:31
All right, hey, man, how are you doing?

DaJuan Brooks 0:34
I'm good. I'm doing good. Thanks for asking. I just wanted to get, like, a lot of more information about you as we're going through this process. Basically, this is for me to I will write the dissertation about you and about the piece, and I'm going to end up putting this interview in the appendix of the dissertation too, so that if anyone ever wants to use it for other things and like, for other pieces that you do, then they'll be able to or maybe even this piece, right? Because we're hoping that more people will play it. Definitely, that sounds great. Yeah, I got the recording, and I it's wonderful. It's just the one of me conducting, though. So I haven't sent it to you yet because I don't have like the audio, and I don't have the like the audio house video, so, but once I get that, he said, it'll be after the New Year. I'll make sure that I send it over to you for you to use in whatever way you like.

RJ Dion 1:36
Great. That sounds awesome. Yeah.

DaJuan Brooks 1:38
Okay, well, in the basically, you know, when you do these kind of dissertations, there's always, like, a big, hefty amount of information about the composer and, like, where he, where they are from, that kind of stuff. And I basically, kind of want to get to know as much information as you're willing to give me about you, you know, like when you were born, where you were born,

your family, anything that you're willing to tell me because that I basically will write up and put it in my dissertation, then hopefully we'll even use this, you know, and put it on some of those websites for the wind band projects and things like that, so that, like the people can really Get a full sense of who you are. Another piece,

RJ Dion 2:24
definitely, yeah, you want me to just start with, like, the basics, like, yeah,

DaJuan Brooks 2:29
yeah. That'd be great, yeah.

RJ Dion 2:31
Born in 2000 have a family out where I am currently in New Hampshire.

RJ Dion 2:39
I grew up in Salem, New Hampshire.

RJ Dion 2:43
Now, family lives out in Londonderry, which is like 20 minutes north. It's yeah, family of five to two younger siblings, parents, Corgi that I'm you know, is probably standing by the door.

RJ Dion 3:00
But yeah,

RJ Dion 3:02
music wise, started at like seven on the piano and clarinet. Grew up with my mom, who's immigrated here from Portugal, and her whole family has a huge cultural significance to folk music, so the expectation to learn an instrument was pretty was there, and I kind of just fell in love with it. 10 years old, picked up the saxophone, which leads into this piece. Did it through all levels, K through 12, well, starting in fifth grade, so five through 12 and got to high school, really did not want to do band. Was completely against it, only like jazz music didn't want to do marching band. And the piece where, you know, we worked on is dedicated to my band director, who, week one said, Yeah, I'm happy to have you in jazz band, but give me a shot. Like, let me prove to you that this is fun. And so, yeah, he kind of got me. He convinced me pretty quickly. And yeah, as it was going, I really started wanting to write during my first year, my freshman year in high school, wrote this really goofy chamber piece for like, one of each part of the friend group ended up being like three brass and two percussion and a saxophone. And he said, This is great. It's not going on the cabaret, because you want to write better than this. And showed me Jennifer Higdon, who ended up becoming my favorite composer. Showed me her and Philip Glass and all these wonderful modern composers, because he knew I coming from someone who just exclusively liked playing jazz music. I wanted to see the performer. I wanted to see the person I'm listening to. I wanted to understand them. And so he knew, and I think this is the biggest credit to him, knew that that's the way to get me into writing classical music. This show me living people, doing it from there. Went to the Hart school. I. For my undergrad in composition, and worked on jazz saxophone with Javon Jackson. I think the wildest thing is the heart school, I didn't study with any of the faculty there for my private lessons in composition.

So I actually studied with guests the entire time. And yeah, I ended up taking a year off working in Hartford Public Library, and then got into the University of Michigan. Here we are. Oh, that's awesome.

DaJuan Brooks 5:29
Can you tell me more about, like, your childhood and like, teenage years? Like, what were the things that kind of really put you in the path of becoming a composer too, like it could have been your playing that did that, or, you know, anything. What would that like?

RJ Dion 5:52
I first favorite musician was John Coltrane. So just understanding that he wrote the music he played and he worked with all these other greats who wrote their music, it felt like an obligation to do the thing I liked doing. It felt like I should write what I'm playing. I should have a say in this. And so when it was kind of shifted by that band director, by my band director, it became a like, oh, I can do this in here too. I can do this in this facility, in this instrumentation. It's not just when I play jazz music I can actually write in general. And yeah, I think it started improvisationally. A huge fan of John Coltrane and two gallington, so the expectation of writing your own music felt like a given.

DaJuan Brooks 6:36
Wow, that's amazing. And are there any like, you know, John Coltrane twos that you feel kind of have inspired your like musical language at all, or how you think about it, or any composer, really. I know you mentioned Jennifer hen as well.

RJ Dion 6:54
Yeah, Coltrane countdown has been my favorite. I mean, it's off the Giant Steps album, and everyone points to that because it's such a cultural point of his career. But countdown, I think, has a really interesting vibe to it that I caught on immediately. Higg didn't her concerto writing is really what got me into composing. He showed me her Viola concerto, right? Band director Marty Clawson, first piece he ever showed me was that, and so I got to just explore what it meant to, like, identify a soloist, and how cool and how kind of similar of a crossover that is to what I was doing at the moment. This is the soloist. This is the person we're building around. So, yeah,

DaJuan Brooks 7:39
wow, that's awesome. Okay, so then, yeah, tell me a lot more about your band director. Like, when did you meet? Like, tell me stories about the band director. Like, his name, everything.

RJ Dion 7:52
Yeah, Marty Clawson. He came to it was middle school, you know, you do the little recruiting trip down to the grades below and convince them to come in. And he came to jazz band, and he played vibraphone with us. He grabbed his mallets, he played a bunch of tunes with us that day, and said, I can't wait to have all of you with it with me next year. And it got me to be like, Oh, I could do this. This would be fun. And what he left out was, I had to be in marching band. He left out a little like, Oh, if you're going to be in it, you have to also be in marching band. And now that's changed, but at the time, that was the requirement, so I kind of sheepishly jumped in, and

the entire time he knew, like, Okay, this kid just wants to play jazz music, so let's give him the opportunity. Let's let's go for it. He had taught there for over 25 years when he retired just last year. Yeah, percussionist. Played in the military as a percussionist, and then got the job, kind of in happenstance, the person who was originally in the position had to go on leave because they were giving birth, and he was given the opportunity, and then that person moved on, and he was given the job, and the rest is history. He taught myself and my little sister, and was just a huge influence to both of us. You know, she's now teaching herself so for elementary ed, so it's great connection to have, yeah,

DaJuan Brooks 9:27
that's awesome. And are there any like special stories, or anything that, like you feel were like catalysts for this piece, or memories or Yeah, or important to you. You know what I mean.

RJ Dion 9:43
A lot of the Quartet writing was referencing or me re looking at my original quartet writing with him as my quote, unquote teacher, as someone who's looking over my shoulder and going, I. That works. But can you think about it like this, like him thinking of it as purely a teacher and not someone who's going to be performing this music? He gave me a lot of like, if I had to play this, this is how I'd feel about it. And so I went back and found those handwritten, really poorly made scores of Saxophone Quartet music, and parsed through moments that I thought were really interesting and tried to give myself another chance at them. Now, almost a decade later, be like, Okay, what would I do now with this idea? And it kind of built from there. There's a couple vibraphone moments in the piece. Is a little dedication to him, where they're playing counter in the second movement to the tango. There's little Parson parsing ideas of him convincing me to write down my solos in jazz band transcribe myself. And so it felt like I was kind of transcribing myself as I was writing through the saxophone parts.

DaJuan Brooks 10:56
Oh, well, that's wonderful.

DaJuan Brooks 11:00
Um, yeah, so let's,

DaJuan Brooks 11:02
is there anything else that you want to tell me about him, or that you would like other people to know about him?

RJ Dion 11:08
Or I would say he's the like, perfect ex, like, example of a educator who meets you where you are and doesn't, doesn't expect anything from you. Just knows to meet you the way you want to be met. And it was me at 14, thinking I was going to become a baseball player, even though I was never going to get taller. Him not telling me that, and instead giving me the opportunity to play as much saxophone as I wanted to. And the minute I said I want to write, he gave me every reference he had, and it just kind of gave me that blanket of support

DaJuan Brooks 11:44

that's awesome. It's really, really great. Thank you so much for sharing all that stuff that's really, really wonderful. You. Is it okay if we start talking about the piece a little more? Yeah, of course. Okay, so looking at how this was conceived, can you start with that from the beginning and kind of where you're at?

RJ Dion 12:11
Yeah, I was asked in a composing for wind ensemble class last year, winter term of 2025, now, and to write a excerpt, or like a miniature for chamber wins. We were working on chamber wins pieces and talking about how they fit in programs. And I came up with the idea of a saxophone quartet, kind of concerto grosso, with one of everything around it, so I could build these little moments of brass ensemble, brass quartet, wind quintet and Saxon quartet, kind of playing together. So all these mini chamber ensembles working together. And I worked through the first assignment and really liked it, and that actually ended up becoming the ending of the second movement. And so as I was working through it and talking about it, we actually talked about it a little bit. And it was the idea of extending it out, giving it the full idea, the full pitch, the full three movements, to fully discuss the relationship with my band director, the meeting each other, the getting into a rhythm. And what happens after you graduate, you know, the reflecting on all the instrumental experiences that you had with somebody, and I would say compositionally, the second movement was the starting point, what we call now the second movement. And it went to the first movement, that chordal, that three chord back and forth concept, and then just trying to weave between those and make it make sense.

DaJuan Brooks 13:46
Well, that's awesome. Okay, that's that's really great. Thank you. So can we go, like, move it by, move it now, and kind of talk through that, sure. Yeah. So inside of your, I guess, what would you call it? Is it? Would you call it a timeline or the Yeah, so in your timeline, it talks about like, what each portion of this is? So movement one, you have a total of six inner sections of that movement. Can you kind of talk me through that? It says that you have an opening, which we we know comes back a little bit later. You have the introduction of that soloist with the cadenza, which is absolutely stunning. And then I wanted to get more understanding of what the push of the concept was for you. Like, what does that mean in particular? So that I'm writing about it, I can make sure it's clear to our audience, yeah,

RJ Dion 14:46
push of concept or, like, the kind of, I maybe refrain would have been more of the technical term, but when you're writing through it, you're just kind of going, Yeah, this is how I'm going to define it. And just leave it there and just say, okay, that's, that's how I'm thinking of it. I. Really push of concept, or the more smaller sections, like concept two or a goodbye from the soloist, as I kind of referred to the end of it, are really just moments to for me, push of concept was a here's why. This is the five of them standing together. This is why the saxophones are all together on this. This is why you see them and they're not a part of the ensemble entirely. Really, just giving a space to hear the ensemble interact with the soloist was really what I was looking for, so that it just didn't feel like a piece that could be immediately referred to as a concerto that a soloist plays with a pianist. Like, why are we bringing all these people together to play? This was the biggest thing for me, and kind of what I kept referring to as I went along throughout the movements.

DaJuan Brooks 15:57
Oh, okay,

DaJuan Brooks 16:00
that's brilliant. So you have the opening which is the same as the ending. It's like it very much comes back. Is there anything else in that, in specific, like the cadenza talk to me about that, what? What was your idea around it? And was there anything that that

RJ Dion 16:21
I I really wanted a moment that felt personal. You know, we have these big, lush chords that the soloist is kind of dancing around, and I really just wanted to take those away for a second and give the soloist a true moment at the beginning. You know, knowing that this is three movements, and it's a gauntlet for a soloist. It was just, let me give the soloist a second to play with a pianist, kind of like I was referring to. And in the push of concept, avoiding that feeling, why don't I just give it to you right now and then move back to the chamber wins, move back to full ensemble stuff.

DaJuan Brooks 16:59
Okay, that's awesome. So

DaJuan Brooks 17:03
in the first movement, is there anything or any moments that you're like, man, wow. This is like my compositional voice, like I feel so, like I love this moment, or like, this is what I want people to, like, hear, think or feel when this is going on. Like, is there a moment like that for you in this piece, or, like, in this movement? I mean,

RJ Dion 17:28
yeah, I look at the the ending right before E I think it was probably around measure, 86 I would assume, or 88 where the pianist comes in with this right hand line, this right hand 16th note line with the pedal down, it's just really soft. It feels like semi not supposed to be there. It's like a little out of place. But every time it stops, it feels right. That chord just rings out the remaining actuations of those notes just stick, and that to the end was something I fought really hard to keep with my private teacher. Like, just, no, I trust me. This feels right. This makes sense. I know looking at it, you're like, why is that even there? It works. It makes sense. And hearing it live just felt like it cemented that moment for me.

DaJuan Brooks 18:23
That's awesome. And that started to measure 88 Yes, thank you. I see it right here in this core right hand piano. Wow, really, really beautiful to know. And I yeah, this piece is absolutely stunning. Like, can we move on to the second movement? Yeah, absolutely. So it's called following your step. Can you tell me more about that?

RJ Dion 18:48
Yeah, it was the getting into a rhythm with being now a whatever you'd call a band kid, being that high school band kid that everyone referred to as such. You know, taking on leadership roles, being fully committed to the idea of starting with your left foot and just going as a group and

finding unity in that. And that's why it's saxophone really starting it out, mainly because you know, you're given a section and you're told like, Hey, this is the ensemble you're going to be a part of. These are the guys you're going to rehearse with every week. These are people that you're going to be with on the busses and spend your four years with. It felt like kind of a small thank you to them, a small you know, as the pieces I need to thank you to a wonderful band director. Just these little moments that felt like us doodling and me just thanking everyone for giving me that space. Wow.

DaJuan Brooks 19:50
And then in measure 16, we get to one of the most iconic, I think, of the piece, which. Is stunning in every way. Can you tell me about it?

RJ Dion 20:03
Yeah, that's the Fiber Phone moment that I specifically I mentioned earlier, going with the tango with Barry sax, alto sax and vibes. This was the actual starting point in that class that I mentioned. This is where the piece started. This is I just wanted to do this idea and have it echo throughout the entire ensemble, and getting to keep it and make it work in the overall piece was really exciting. Because there's moments where you write something and you're like, Yeah, this is great, and then the context doesn't fit. So I was really happy to keep it. I'm happy that everyone liked it. It was

DaJuan Brooks 20:42
really nice to hear. Yeah, it was absolutely wonderful,

DaJuan Brooks 20:47
great. So in this portion

DaJuan Brooks 20:49
of the piece you have, I think it's seven sections this time is there? What I want to hear more about the building, the lift and the panic. What does this mean for you?

RJ Dion 21:07
So especially this movement, I used the audio timeliner to give myself emotional cues I give myself, maybe like a you have to move on from the idea. So these building sections, these repetitive triplets, these 16th note triplet lines that land pretty aggressively, and the sopranos Axel is now joining the Quartet and becoming a quintet, and kind of playing with them directly. I wanted to have a moment that panicked and a moment that felt like the whole thing was falling apart for a second, you know, because you're, if you're trying to resemble being a teenager, and you're gonna have a moment where you question why you're doing things that you're doing. So I wanted to give that some sort of moment a blip, if you would. You know, I would say, for me, it was definitely auditioning for colleges and being like the second composer in a while from my high school, you know, the other one was at Ithaca College at the time, and so knowing that, okay, there's composer that's done this before, but I'm not him. I'm completely different person. What do I do? And I wanted to have that panic moment, these building moments being like years that have went by smoothly, you know, becoming myself, and then that moment of like, am I actually doing the right thing? That little seed of doubt being represented.

DaJuan Brooks 22:34
Wow. Thank you so much for that.

DaJuan Brooks 22:39
So now we get to the next portion of the piece, which is the third and final movement, which is entitled reflecting. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

RJ Dion 22:52
Yeah, that's, this is the present tense movement. This is the movement that I wanted to write from how I'm feeling now. You know, quit ironically. Quit reflecting on everything after writing the first two movements, and think about how I'm feeling about everything right now.

RJ Dion 23:11
The movement really was

RJ Dion 23:15
a love moment for me. It was a moment to thank directly, just to be this is how I'm feeling now, hearing that someone who did so much for everybody around me in my childhood gets to retire and gets to enjoy it again and not be so worried about everybody else, for once, was really sweet. And there's also a movement I would directly contribute to how wonderful my time with Michael Doherty this school year has been giving him this concept, and just working through this movement, specifically with him, was really helpful, bringing that repetitive motif that the entire ensemble brings, and just getting to have that interaction and being like this is a movement that I I really want to work with you on. This movement. I really want to, you know, parse together and really think out so awesome.

DaJuan Brooks 24:07
And then just to confirm the sections of this movement, so you have the Bach opening, which leads us into a soloist. I can't really read it. What does it

RJ Dion 24:19
say? It's a soloist moment. I believe,

DaJuan Brooks 24:23
when I look at it, it looks like there's a CK on the back of the world.

RJ Dion 24:26
So it's probably soloist back. Then we're bringing back the soloist after the Bach moment.

DaJuan Brooks 24:33
Okay? And then you have the motive, which is,

RJ Dion 24:38
yeah, yep,

DaJuan Brooks 24:39
you get the call,

DaJuan Brooks 24:42
and what are you referring to as the call?

RJ Dion 24:47
Kind of the Ensemble's reaction to that motif, how the rest of the piece, or how the rest of the ensemble moves to that motif. So just give you a measure. Example, I would say, you hit these responding lines that the upper winds have before the motif they bring. I bring them back intentionally to have, like a sort of a wind up experience, like the piece is winding itself back up into why this moment's so important.

DaJuan Brooks 25:20
So, yeah, can you show me where that would be at

RJ Dion 25:24
the physical copies, let me gonna hear pages turn

RJ Dion 25:41
so we get the motif

RJ Dion 25:45
first time, just the soloist in 25 right? And then the call starts at 29 it's everyone playing it back at the soloist, and then the Quartet plays Yeah. And then it continues after that into that fall, that measure 45 for fall, the call is, I would say, as I was writing it, the call was the third time you heard the motif going into that next section at 41 ish.

DaJuan Brooks 26:19
Interaction, yes, okay.

DaJuan Brooks 26:24
And then after the interaction, is what I can't see. That starts with an F.

RJ Dion 26:32
I believe it's it's the fall, if I'm not mistaken, let me do

RJ Dion 26:59
use of

RJ Dion 27:07
that's what happens when screens refresh. My apologies, no, it's okay.

RJ Dion 27:20
Okay, it should be.

RJ Dion 27:35
Believe it's interaction,

RJ Dion 27:39
finish, motif, Cadenza, and then motive back, I believe is the pattern. Wait, would you say so it should be finish? Would be that word? Oh, finish. Originally, that's where I argued the ending was going to be. I didn't want to bring the motive back, and then having a professor who writes concertos like Michael Doherty just to be like, No, you need another you need to keep going. You need to keep going like this. Needs to we need another condenser. We need to hear the motive again, like, keep it in people's heads.

DaJuan Brooks 28:19
Okay, so that word after the interaction of the finish, where does that start with measure?

RJ Dion 28:29
It's right before condenser two. So that is

RJ Dion 28:40
right around 70. Yeah, right. Oh, that's 68 so there's this long held out chord the alto sax is getting out of the Quartet, is getting to play the finish the wrap of the line that was going and everyone now is starting to play these ascending lines and falling together again.

DaJuan Brooks 29:02
And then f would be them when the motive comes back,

RJ Dion 29:08
yes, okay,

DaJuan Brooks 29:11
then the cadenza happens.

RJ Dion 29:16
Yeah, the saxophone quartet getting to interact with the soloist, awesome.

DaJuan Brooks 29:22
And then the motto comes back in letter G, then you have the ending there.

DaJuan Brooks 29:28
Yes, this is wonderful.

DaJuan Brooks 29:31
And you know what? So when you're writing your piece, this is some of your like composition techniques and like, how you how you write, like your process, other composers like davidsonka, right would go and meditate for a long time and then write. It's like, is there anything in particular about your process that you want highlighted, or you want people to know also, like, this is really, really. Cool the way that this has been, this diagram has been created for you

through your program. It's like, you go in and name this. Does it? Do it for you? How does that so can you talk? Tell me talk more about those two things. Yeah.

RJ Dion 30:12
So for the timeliner, I name them. I am actually the one that's like picking where the sections cut. I'm just uploading the MIDI into it, and it and it identifies when movements end. So here's like a pause, and then that's where it cuts a big swath. So it identified the movements. And then I started trying to build each movement from there, like how to reflect on if a movement, a section of a movement, is too long, or something isn't paced well, when I start a project, I usually have a title that I'm running with or a visual. So in this case, it's the painting that's referenced on the cover of the piece. I was just looking up landscapes that felt like home a bit, just looking for something that looked like a painting that could be from New England. I mean, like, Okay, what makes sense here? And finding public domain poetry or art that I can utilize in some way in reference, was where I was going.

DaJuan Brooks 31:14
Okay, so the piece that so this piece is also inspired by that our work that you found,

RJ Dion 31:24
yeah, that's kind of the starting point of a piece for me is like always finding some sort of reference material.

DaJuan Brooks 31:31
So what about this piece?

DaJuan Brooks 31:34
Like, was the connection to gratitude and the want to thank someone, or of your band director, like, what? What about

DaJuan Brooks 31:41
that particular

RJ Dion 31:46
for you, the artwork felt like a place we'd be waiting for a competition, or like the band would be driving to, like Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to be at a football game, and we'd look out at the coast, and we just see September New England, so slightly, some coloring of the of the leaves around us, but nothing yet, just like a really great scenic spot, you know, having like the concept of wanting to thank him and then trying to find things that reflected moments with him was kind of What I was going for, that weren't musical, that were just completely in a different art form, stunning.

DaJuan Brooks 32:27
And when you like look at that piece, is there any particular like accent, or are there any particular like things in the painting that, to you also are represented musically, and what you wrote again, do you see a cloud and it looks feels like this to you? Or is it? Was it just like overall, that's how it felt.

RJ Dion 32:47
I would say overall, a lot of my recent saxophone writing has been kind of around brushstrokes, like, really, like zooming in on a photo and just seeing the brushstroke of the painter, and that idea of the work of it, I think, is really interesting. Like in this case, the cover is so zoomed in, you can kind of see it. You can kind of see the brush strokes.

DaJuan Brooks 33:12
Yes, like one of the as you're speaking, I'm thinking a lot about the cadenza, particularly the one in the last movement. I feel like that is a huge breath, brush strokes, moments, yeah, that is so wonderful. It really does remind me of the cover a lot. Do you agree? Or were you

RJ Dion 33:29
absolutely, yeah, yeah. I think the chordal stuff came from the artwork, like the first movement, those long three set chords that the ensemble was playing. I i I definitely would say a lot of the structure of the piece as I was writing could be referenced to the artwork. The overall theme, obviously towards my band director and gratitude to him.

DaJuan Brooks 33:52
Wow, this is stunning. Thank you so much for all this. This is, I think, really, really helpful. Yeah, happy to am learning so much more about you, and truly, it's been wonderful. Thank you. Yeah, okay, is there anything else that you would want you know our audience, or for people to know or to be thinking about you know when they're playing the piece, or just about you, or anything.

RJ Dion 34:24
I mean, I think our dress rehearsal, or one of the rehearsals with the full ensemble, I referenced the idea of just going to a moment where you can see how important the person in that moment was for you, and starting playing that piece, playing this piece with that thought, that's what I tried to do every time I wrote the piece. And so if you have somebody like that in your life, or someone that affected you like that positively, you know, hopefully you can conjure up a feeling of that. But otherwise, no, thank you for following up and wanting to talk about it.

DaJuan Brooks 34:59
Yeah. That sounds great. Thank you, of course.

DaJuan Brooks 35:04
All right, so I just stopped it there.

DaJuan Brooks 35:08
Let me see if there's a way to stop the recording here. Hold on. Stop. Don't.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

**Interview with Zachery Meier**

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 12:13:19 to 12:13:19
Okay. Wow. Let's get it going, so… Um… Welcome.

[Zachery Meier] 12:13:28 to 12:13:28
Hello! How are you?

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 12:13:31 to 12:13:46
I am really excited about doing this project with you, and I have been.
I… it's… I feel like I… yeah, I just can't really explain it. I don't have really much words other than to say that I'm really excited, so.
I am going to go ahead and let you talk. But the whole… The whole point of, um… this interview is so that I can use it to.

[Zachery Meier] 12:13:49 to 12:13:49
the feeling is very mutual.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 12:13:58 to 12:15:08
For two things. For one, for the dissertation. And for two.
To try to add to the wind repertory project websites about you on the page, so that if anyone ever wants or needs.
Uh, to use it, to try to play the piece, and then we'll be able to.
Um, so, yeah, so I want to know everything that you're willing to tell me.
And in any details that you want to as well. So, I'm thinking about, like, how, you know.
When you look up Stravinsky or Tchaikovsky, or, you know, any of those composers.
Bernstein, you get, like, this extensive amount of information about him.
And so, that's kind of where I'm coming from. I want to get to.
No, you learn as much about you that I can get.
Um, to put on the page. So, starting from.
you know, when you were a kid, where you were born.
your education as. Like a, you know, a public school, private school, what would that look like growing up, family, if you're willing to tell me.
And then, you know, your secondary schooling into. higher education, then tell me.
Whatever else you want me to know about, maybe any of your other outside things that you like to do, or like the flu choir thing, or… Other pieces of information that you want other people to know.

[Zachery Meier] 12:14:15 to 12:14:15
Perfect.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 12:15:20 to 12:15:20
And then, yeah, just… then we'll… after that, we'll talk about the piece.

[Zachery Meier] 12:15:24 to 12:15:24
Great! That all sounds wonderful.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 12:15:27 to 12:15:27
Very excited.

[Zachery Meier] 12:15:28 to 12:16:41
I feel like I'm gonna be talking a lot.
Okay.
Um, okay, so where it all began…
One very cold…
Winter's night.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 12:15:31 to 12:15:31
That's good, because usually you don't, and I'm always the one talking a lot, so… It's good for…

[Zachery Meier] 12:16:43 to 12:46:41
in February,
in Alaska.
I was birthed…
in Fairbanks, Alaska.
And I think what was the important part of that is I had… I don't know if you know this, but I was flown from Fairbanks, Alaska to Seattle, Washington 5 days after I was born.
Because I had the…
Uh, coartasian of the aorta.
Which means that I had a small…
well, how do I want to say it? I had a, um…
Small tube of the aorta.
that gave blood flow to the lower half of your body.
Um, that needed to be operated on. So I had heart surgery 5 days after I was born.
in, uh, Seattle, Washington. They flew me on a private government jet all the way from Fairbanks, Alaska, down to Seattle. It was super snowy, super, like, winter weather,
And we had to fly at only 10,000 feet all the way down, so…
pretty traumatizing way to…
to be entered into this world.
But, I was one of the lucky kids that actually took to the surgery.
And they mentioned if I could make it to 13?
I would be totally fine without any complications.
So that was kind of a little bit of…
the relationship I had with…
health at the beginning of my life.
Um, then we moved a year later back to my parents' hometown in southern Minnesota.
And…
Then moved shortly after that to, um, a suburb of Minneapolis.
Hutchinson lived there for about 3 years, and then moved back down to Fairmont.
in all of that, I was kind of exposed to a lot of creative activities,
Um, I was in a small dance troupe, I was an ice skating troupe. I don't personally remember any of these things, but there is picture evidence of all of these.
Um, and I would have to say I'd look pretty cute doing it.
So, I think from the beginning, my parents, or at least my mom, I think my dad always really supported it,
But my mom was interested in getting me into doing creative activities. She knew I had a lot of energy.

a lot of interest in…
moving my body, doing creative work, so I think she really…
latched onto that, and gave me opportunities to explore…
Um, the creative side of me.
I started school in southern Minnesota.
Um, really interested in art. You could always see me doodling and drafting things and working with colors.
Drawing off the page, trying to figure out how, like, line and stencil work.
Um…
would bring out some of the things that I really wanted to explore. My parents got me lots of arts and crafts supplies for birthdays and Christmases.
So I think from the get-go, I was always interested in creating.
I don't know if that always landed itself to music at that time, but I think I was always interested in making things.
Uh, fast forward into, like, elementary school when we first got to…
try out some of the different instruments.
I was really drawn to the flute for some reason. I have no clue why.
But the flute was number one, and then I was gonna go to the clarinet or the French horn.
Which are wildly different.
in, um…
What I was interested in, but there was one spot left, and the band director was like, well, I usually don't take…
male flute players, but I'll make an exception, and let's do it. You seem really interested, really invested.
And I think that was the… one of the first times, then.
I was exposed to kind of the gendering of instruments.
small town in Fairmont, Minnesota.
probably… a little red dot in the area.
And my band director
was… he was a nice, nice person. I don't even… I couldn't even remember his name to tell you the truth.
And… we took lessons, I got to continue developing my flute skills.
And I actually quit.
I think it was in seventh grade, 6th or 7th grade, because I thought that…
It really wasn't for me, or the things that we were doing weren't really interesting, but it didn't itch the creative…
side that I actually was getting in a lot of my art classes.
So I really invested more…
Um, at the end of elementary kind of time, doing more art.
related activities.
And then we go into high school.
And then I get back, I go back into the flute world, and I go back…
into orchestra, actually playing the violin. So all throughout high school, I played the flute and violin, both in the…
the band and orchestra.
And… really got more invested in…

playing new repertoire, looking for new composers, looking for new music.
That was written for band.
Um…
And I think that kind of drew me into, like, the creation of music. Like, how are people making…
music.
And so I never took any piano lessons. I really never took any private flute lessons other than the ones that we got.
In our sectionals.
for band…
And then I… I think I just started sitting down at the piano, and I just started, like, playing around with things.
And I was like, well, this is interesting to me, and I think I kind of learned my way through, like, what scales were on the piano, what…
Some harmonic motion was through the piano, and I would just…
improvise, and just sit there and see, like, well, what sounds good to my ear? What sounds good to…
what I'm playing.
And I think that may have been when it really sparked, like,
I think I'm interested in making music, in composing.
And my band teacher, my orchestra teacher, were really encouraging. They were like, well, if you write anything for us,
We'll play something, or we'll at least read it.
And that was when…
I actually wrote a small orchestra piece.
I don't even remember the title of it.
It was probably, like, everlasting love, or on the precipice of… of…
sadness, or whatever emotional thing you want to write about in high school.
Um…
But she premiered it, and she put it on actually one of the orchestra concerts, and I think that really…
It meant a lot to me.
to know that I had that support in high school from my orchestra and band teachers.
And… before my senior year of high school, I was gonna go off and be an architect.
I think that's kind of when I thought, you know,
I like drafting, I like buildings, I like design.
I like that kind of physical artwork.
And then it was my senior year after writing that piece, and…
the orchestra playing it, getting a lot of really good feedback from it.
that I was like, no, I think I have to go… I have to go do music.
And my parents were like, what?
Because I had talked about architecture and going to, like, some state school for architecture and whatnot, and then I just pivoted really quick.
into music, and I think because of that, I…
was a little bit late to the application process.
And so I applied to…

The University of Minnesota Duluth, I applied to Luther College,
In Iowa, and then where else? And then I think I applied to Florida State?
Why Florida? I don't know, I…
I think I just wanted to go visit Florida. And that'll come back as to actually why I went to Washington State.
Later. Um…
I got into Luther, I got a really good scholarship.
It was still just more expensive than I think my parents were willing to spend, um…
not really knowing how far I would go in music, or how successful I would be. They… I don't think they ever…
didn't have belief that I would do something, but just didn't know. Neither of them are musicians.
kind of as an aside, I have no musicians in my family.
not even in my extended family. I am, like, this lone rainbow sheep in many ways in my family.
Um, my sister tried the violin for a year, and my mom actually paid her to stop practicing.
Because it was just out of this world.
She's like, I know how your brother practices,
And he's into it. He's so…
curious about how this works,
And you are just not curious in how this works. You are doing it because it is…
an assignment, and you are not loving this. So she's like,
Don't worry about it. Go into… she did tennis for 4 years, and she loved it.
That was her avenue. Um…
So, Luther, Florida State University, and University of Minnesota Duluth.
were my, like, kind of top choices. I ended up going to the University of Minnesota Duluth for a couple of reasons.
I had a really good audition, I had a really…
good… visit to the campus, and it felt like that's where I needed to go for some reason.
That was really calling me. It wasn't too far away from my family, so they could come and visit, come to concerts.
Um, they really enjoyed Duluth as well, so it was…
it just seemed like a perfect fit at the time. That's where I was gonna go.
Um, I started off as a flute performance major.
But I still kept writing, and I showed a couple of my friends that I met in the wind ensemble.
Some of these, and…
One of my really, really good friends of the time was like, you need to show the comp professor this. Like, you need to pull a portfolio together of the stuff that you've written, and just, like…
try it. Maybe you can minor in composition, maybe you could do…
this, this, or that. I gave my portfolio to…
Dr. Justin Rubin.
And he literally looked at me and he said,
I know you want to be a flute major.
But I really think that you should…
not squash this opportunity to explore.
your compositional voice. And I really would like you to join and come to Comp Seminar,
And just see where things go.

And from there…
That was pretty much my undergrad, was this pairing of loop performance and…
composition.
Uh, I had a pretty tough conversation my junior year.
Because I was fi- I was, like, feeling this pull of, like, where do I need to be putting more of my…
time and effort.
And my flute professor at the time
told me, you can do both.
But just know it's gonna take a lot of time and effort.
And it's gonna take a lot of dedication, and if you really want it,
you really have to remind yourself of the work that goes into all of it.
And so I eventually…
focused more on composition.
And I did end up, uh, getting a degree in both flute performance and composition, but I felt like that was the kind of pull of, like, what am I gonna do for my master's degree? Where am I gonna go next?
Um, I applied to…
a few different colleges for my master's degree.
And I was accepted and everything, but I was on a waitlist for TAs for two of them.
And so, in the summer, I was like, I…
can't afford… like, I don't want to take out any more student loans, I can't really afford to go unless it's gonna get paid for.
And I think there is a psychology behind…
Maybe I'm right, maybe I'm wrong.
around those are the, like, universities that are willing to invest money in you are probably willing to invest.
time and resources as well.
And not that when you don't get a TA, doesn't mean that you're not gonna be…
taken care of or not cared for at a level, but I feel like there's, like, a, um…
a bit more of a commitment when you're bringing someone, you're paying for their way, you're giving them a TA to teach.
as a… a…
bigger connection. And, like I said, maybe I'm right, maybe I'm wrong.
Um, but that's just what I felt and the reason I didn't want to pursue going…
to a place that didn't.
provide me a TA. Um…
I started working at Wells Fargo in the summer.
I hated it. Ooh, I'm not… I'm not a seller.
I'm a helper, and when you're in any kind of, like, commercial business, you have to be…
You have to be a selling person, and I'm just not. And I think that's probably, uh…
character flaw in everything that I do, is I'm not a seller.
I'm…
It's really hard for me to sell my music, it's really hard for me to sell myself.
And I think that's something I would like to continue developing, but I think that is a core part that I want my…

music to speak for itself. I want my connections to speak for themselves.
And not necessarily me. So doing this interview with you,
is actually difficult, because I'm not very good at selling myself. But I'm always happy anytime that…
I can help. Um…
And that sometimes means I have to talk about myself.
To go back to the story, sorry.
Um…
I was working at Wells Fargo, I hated it.
And I was…
going home one afternoon, I think it was the middle…
to end of July of that summer.
2014.
And… I got a call from the chair of the music department at Washington State University.
Saying, hey, we just had an opening of our TA ship.
If you can be here by August 1st for the teaching assistantship
like, um…
I think they had, like, a training week, like, a couple things that you had to do. If you can get to Washington State, which is in Pullman, Washington…
by August 1st, which was, like, a week and a half after this phone call.
He said, you can have a TA, everything's paid for.
everything will work out.
And I had just started…
trying to figure out and cope with the fact that I'd probably have to work at Wells Fargo for a while.
So it threw me for a loop.
But I think that's when I…
really had a hard conversation with myself that…
I need to pursue this. I need to take this opportunity. This is clearly something in…
whatever spiritual ether…
galaxy realm that's telling me that I need to go. I need to go do this.
And so that was the summer I actually started dating my current husband.
And we had dated for… maybe 2 months?
At that point, and I was like, oh no.
How do I do this? Like, I mean, this isn't just a long distance, this is, like…
driving 24 hours distance away from each other, so…
I was broke, he was broke, it's not like we could fly and see each other.
So, I essentially…
kind of ghosted him for a day?
And he reached out and said, like, hey, is everything okay? What's going on? And…
I eventually had a conversation with him saying, hey,
I got this teaching assistantship at Washington State.
I have to go. Like, this is…
this is something I have to pursue. I want to make a career.
out of this, so…
we can call this just, like, kind of a fun summer fling of enjoying each other's company.

But I'm leaving for Washington as of, like, July 31st.
And he said, well, hey, give me a couple of months to wrap up things here, figure out my life.
And I'll meet you there in October.
And so, after that…
I was like, this, yeah, this, this is it. I have to go.
I have to figure this out. So, Washington State…
started…
with me staying with…
Um, one of the…
I don't want to say one of the only, but…
Maybe one of the more openly queer faculty members.
Allowing me to stay with them for 2 weeks. And…
I think that really shaped…
what I was gonna be interested in moving forward. I didn't think I knew what to do then, at that point.
But that I really wanted to connect with the queer community.
And… Chris Dickey, who is the tuba professor at Washington State, allowed me to stay with them for…
Two weeks before my apartment had opened up, because it was weird housing,
situation and trying to find something so, uh, short on time.
And I really grew to have a…
unique and strong relationship with them.
And I think that…
I mean, we still, uh, text and chat to this day, almost every other day.
Um, and I brought Chris out here last year for a concert, and…
At the end of that first year, or actually, no, sorry, at the end of the first semester,
Chris had reached out and said, hey, I want you to write something for me.
Write something for tuba and piano.
And I think that was the first time I had been, like, technically commissioned.
And I was like, okay, cool, this is an opportunity to really invest in composition that's…
personalized to a single person.
So I started thinking, like, well, how do I write something for one person? What are elements that are interesting?
thought I could focus on. So we had, like, a long conversation.
Really wanted something lyrical, something slightly technical.
Um, and then, whatever inspiration I wanted to take, and for me, that was kind of strange, because I never thought of…
I've never connected
direct inspiration into music composition. It's usually been, oh, I have this melody, let's explore this, let's create some harmony.
But now, kind of creating a deeper connection with the music that I'm making that's…
personalized to somebody.
I think sparked from that first piece, which was Azure Roads for Tuba and piano.
And we call it Azure Roads because we both had a love for blue.
And so, there's 5 different colors of blue,
Happening throughout the piece that I was inspired, so different textures,

creating, um…
different sections of the work. And I then started creating this, like, blue motive.
And I was like, well, this is kind of interesting.
It has really, like, I mean, if anybody else could spark the color blue out of this music…
great, but I think it was a way for me to start organizing things outside of form.
and direct harmonic analysis, or direct textures, and really start thinking about, well, what are…
extra musical elements that I can bring into my music.
And that sparked a couple more compositions and a couple more things in my master's degree.
Um, I kept playing flute,
I kept, uh, composing.
And that really led me to wanting to continue to learn more, and to get into a slightly bigger program.
that I could have more opportunities to write music and get commissions.
Not for the money, but just to continue…
connecting with people. I was…
I think really…
heartened by the fact that Chris had reached out and asked me for a piece of music, and I was like, that's the kind of connections I want.
Money has never been…
a driving factor for me. I mean, everybody needs money. Everybody needs to live.
But I've always…
been more concerned with the connections that I make through my music, rather than the money that I make.
Um, I'm starting to learn that the compensation of time
is necessary, and the compensation of work.
is really where the money needs to come from.
But my first…
Instinct is always gonna be, I wanna make music with people I connect with.
And if we can find money for that…
lovely, great, let's do it. I… let's work hard to find that.
But I will never sacrifice making a connection with somebody over…
like, maybe the financial obstacles.
Um, and then comes…
the summer of 2016.
And I met one of the most beautiful people in my life.
Um… no.
What I will say…
We remember this meeting very differently.
I remember seeing this…
absolutely phenomenal person. Walk into this room.
And the…
I'm getting, like, chills thinking about it. Um…
the presence that my beautiful friend Dewan walked into the room with.
with confidence, with, like, I…
not even a shh.
a shard or a shred of…

instability, or feeling like you don't belong in that room.
You walked into that room as if we were all…
actually waiting for, like, the CEO of a company to get into that room.
And that's why I may or may not have
wanted to also be on that level.
So, I introduced myself.
in a way.
Um…
That's good, give them a nugget, give them something.
Um, but I had met you, and…
I think that was another pivotal moment that I knew
you and I were just gonna be…
friends for forever. I think the interaction that we had over that festival
Which was the, uh, conductor composer-conductor project?
Thank you. Um…
And that was in DC, and I had a really good time getting to know you.
Um, and I had some really good…
lessons with Mark Camp House, and I think that was also another, like, reaffirming, okay,
this is good, I'm gonna keep moving forward.
Um… and also I had a really lovely conversation with Timothy Marr.
Um, from St. Olaf, and so I think that was just, like, really nice reaffirming. I'm on the right path, I have more to learn, I have more to do.
But there's a spark, there's an interest in the field.
Um, and then I get to the University of Iowa. That's where I went to get my PhD, and my entire world.
flipped. Um…
I was really unsure…
once I got into the program.
of the other composers that…
we're creating music at University of Iowa. They were creating, now, what I would consider, like, wildly…
interesting, textural…
um… sound-based music that…
I just never found myself inside of.
or understanding enough to appreciate?
Because it wasn't based…
in the parameters that I had been exploring.
Such as, like, more strict harmony, more strict melodic construction.
um, formal structures.
And for the first year and a half that I was at Iowa, I was just constantly questioning
why I was there.
if I was, you know, good enough, because there's all these, like…
wildly intelligent people making music.
And I was like, well, is this the next level? Is that the, like, level above what I'm writing?
Um, and what I…
asked so many of the composers there, it was like,

How do you explore all of these things? I really just genuinely didn't understand…
anything about the music they were writing.
But what I did cultivate there, that I'm so, so deeply appreciative of today…
is…
I think it's a famous Walt Whitman quote.
Don't be judgmental, be curious.
And that quote stays with me.
To this day. Because I am always…
remaining curious about what people are doing.
And why it interests them.
And that, to me, is what makes their music interesting, is to get to see the person behind the music,
And that doesn't always happen a lot of the times we're exposed to this music in a concert.
The composer stands up and then walks away, and you're just like, what was that?
And I'm…
I learned to love…
and truly love the music they were writing.
Because it was… curious. They were curious about things. They were exploring things.
That didn't necessarily…
need to sound…
pretty, but they were beautiful in their own way, and I really learned a lot of that music I would still consider beautiful.
But it just doesn't have the same parameters.
as other music that might be more audience-friendly.
that don't want to study, or don't want to be…
um, asked.
to listen in a different way.
And that's nothing against anybody.
I know music has multiple purposes in everybody's life.
And… I think it's important
To know that, but then to also be interested in…
supporting artists exploring and doing what they do and do well.
Um… so I started writing a little bit more experimental music in my…
PhD to kind of just explore, well, what does my voice do, or what am I interested in in this world?
And I think it really did help.
give me more…
tools in my toolbox, or what I like to say, more crayons in the, in the…
the collection.
Because now I can consider…
all of the different elements that go into music that aren't just based on melody and harmony.
but rather timbre and texture, which I think are really important.
In a lot of my music. And they come out in different ways, and in different parameters, and different, um…
compositional techniques. But the…
the…

the…
way that I now include it into my work, I think, is more intentional.
And the reason I'm picking certain things
is not because I don't have other ways of saying it, but that this is the way that it…
needs to be said. This is the way it needs to be composed.
Um, still, I'll always take feedback, I'll always, like, continue revising, but…
I'm now making more solid decisions about
what I'm wanting to explore.
And how that should come across on the page.
So then Iowa, uh, I wrote a number of pieces there, and then I…
was going to start my…
I believe 4th year at the University of Iowa.
when I was given a call that…
um… a colleague at the… at Denison University,
needed a sabbatical replacement for a semester.
And if I was interested in coming and teaching,
college for a semester.
all the way out… outside of Columbus, Ohio. And I'm just like, holy cow.
That's, like, super far away away.
how am I gonna do that while also…
keeping my TA, or keeping my position at Iowa, and…
Eventually, I had to make the decision, well, this is that next step before you graduate, is, like, getting some actual real-world, real teaching experience.
the college level. And so, I took it for the semester,
They asked if I wanted to stay for another semester,
And now I'm finishing up, or this'll be my seventh year here at Denison, so it just…
continued to…
go forward with that. I really have loved teaching, and…
the best…
kinds of teaching, I think, are when you can learn both from
The students and work with the students.
Um, I think it's been a really good…
experience for me to…
reaffirm that I'd always really wanted to be a teacher.
And in order to be, I think, a good teacher,
You have to stay curious.
Because students are going to come in with their own experiences, their own lives, their own…
stress and their own accolades that I think…
really color the way that they write their music.
And where they approach their music, and…
I think if you can both remain curious in the room,
you can really create some unique, personal, and interesting music.
What more?

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 12:46:43 to 12:49:21
Wow. No, that was… literally perfect. Um… I don't think I need much else.
Uh… is there anything else that you… Want me to record, or that you feel like is important, that

is.
That should be… Included…
Um, it's okay, I mean, if you want, you can also just send me your… Like, send me your, uh… Like, either resume or CV, and I can, like, add some of the, like.
additional accolade things that you have done. You know what I mean? Or bio or something, send me, like, a really long… yeah, and then I can add that as well.
Okay, so now we are going to move on to…
This, um… So… I… I want to tell you a little bit more… I don't know if I should tell you this.
Before we talk about your piece, or… Should I tell you after?
So, well… Let's talk… I want to hear you talk first, so… Uh, can you please talk about the symphony? And I know this is just the beginning stages of it all.
But just, like, what does it mean to you? What is… what is it about? And then… kind of walk me through… Um, the piece and, like, the compositional process for you, anything that you… any harmonies, any specific things that you want me to highlight in the paper, um, and also in the lecture.
Possibly, and the other thing I wanted to… because you brought up that.
for you, it's not about harming. Um, it's about… you said texture.
And timber… So if there's, like, you know, 2 or 3 places in this where you're like, bam, this.
This is what I mean by, this is how the music should go, or like, this is how it has to be. I think you used something along those.
words earlier. So there's, like, you know, a place or two that you feel like, yeah, this… This is… This is… this is me, this is it, this is… what I want people to hear and feel and experience when they're hearing this piece.
So, just… that's where I'm kind of going with this, and then I'll talk with you about.
But I think, um, at the end of it, like, why this is so important.

[Zachery Meier] 12:47:01 to 12:49:34
I talked a lot about my life, and I think I talked a little bit about music.
I don't know if you want me to talk more about…
music in general, I feel like I gave, like, a bio that was…
lightly highlighted with some musical things, but…
Cool.
Yeah, yeah, yeah, I can do that.
Perfect.
That's up to you.
Mm-hmm.
Perfect. Um…
If at any point you want me to, like, go further into something, interrupt and just…
be like, hey, talk a little bit more about that.
Uh, so a little background on the Symphony No. 1, and Yet They Persist.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 12:49:36 to 12:49:36
Yeah.

[Zachery Meier] 12:49:40 to 12:59:55
Uh…
I was writing sketches for…

a piece.
A while back…
And… the character of what was coming to mind was this, like, slow…
Yet…
persistent, and…
I want to say targeted, but, like…
a growing sensation.
And within that piece, I wanted it to start…
soft, and have a couple of, like, big climactic moments, and then finally get to this ending.
That was really beautiful and sparkly, and triumphant.
that lent itself to kind of a journey, a journey through yourself, a journey through a moment in your life.
of reflection, of nostalgia.
to finally then rejoice in the fact that you've arrived.
somewhere that you've wanted to.
for a really long time.
And I think that's kind of just the general story, or the general journey of the piece itself.
And as I was coming up with these sketches,
And these ideas that I was putting together, I was really…
struck by this cluster, this chord that I had constructed.
And I think I had eventually told you, I labeled it the persistence chord.
And that chord shows up a few times in the harmonies,
Um, and clusters, especially in this beginning,
part with the clarinets and the saxophones, these little…
kind of bursts of really airy,
really soft moments at the beginning. I just want…
the idea of that.
to be…
gestured at, rather than…
fully telling the audience, this is it, this is the important part.
I want it to almost feel like a tiny little earworm.
that will come back in a couple other parts of the…
this, um, second movement.
And because of that journey, because of that structure,
It really dawned on me that, okay, this actually kind of feels like the second movement
of a larger piece that I want to create.
And that's when I was, like, actually, this is the second movement of my first symphony that I want to write.
And resilience, or maybe…
Did I lie? It might have been known as the resili… no, it's the persistence chord.
It is the persistence court.
Because it's gonna show up in all 3 movements.
In different ways. And I really want that chord to be highlighted in different ways in those three movements, but in this way, it comes as a cluster
And a little bit of a burst of sound.
So, I think I was talking to you a little bit earlier in this process of, like, the beginning of the

piece,
is this traveler's journey
kind of around a mountain.
And at the base of the mountain,
kind of a hazy day. We can't quite see the top.
We can't see the peak of the mountain.
So we've got this mist, we've got these clouds, we've got this…
hazy fog around us. And I think that's where, like, the glimmer of the persistence chord.
comes in in the saxophones and the clarinets. It's just this idea of, like, there's a…
There's a little nugget, there's a little thought.
that we're gonna get somewhere someday.
That we're gonna arrive somewhere.
And so that's really how I look at this first…
couple of measures…
into, like, A.
And then the marimbas kind of take over this idea, building this court a little bit more.
Giving us more information that's…
Still sonically fuzzy?
Because you've got these tremolos inside the marimbas.
But it's a little bit more clear. We're not surrounded so much by all of the fog.
It's still there.
But we move through it, and there's a little bit more just gesture in the winds, allowing them to kind of come in and out, creating this undulation, this movement motor forward.
And then as we move through the piece and kind of get to B, in this B area, this is where I finally give us, like, a melodic context of what the traveler is.
Um, in beautiful clarinet.
Because…
I was really thinking of Dewan in this moment, and as a clarinetist…
a cleric, cleric anophonist?
Um…
I… I wanted to highlight the clarinet here.
In addition, I have this kind of in the back of my head, my first big piece was Rainier.
It was also about a mountain, and it had a beautiful alto flute and flute solo.
And so, for me, I'm kind of thinking a little bit…
longevity. I have a wind piece that highlights the flute.
I am now gonna have a wind piece that highlights the clarinet, and I think I'm gonna move through that in some of my other wind pieces of…
Maybe in the other movements, I highlight the oboe, and I highlight the bassoon, and I continue having…
a little bit of trajectory of, like,
when I'm 80 years old and people want to program my music, they're like, I've got this really cool, or really good bassoonist, and I'll be like, I've got my 7th symphony that does something. I don't know.
But that's kind of in the back of my head of another reason why I picked the clarinet next.
was to get a little, um, more…
Um… inspiration on that.

So this… the clarinet goes through this kind of undulating, beautifully, like,
almost as if you're going across rocks, and going across, like, valleys and hills, like, on the trail.
Um, this really kind of…
I don't want to say bumpy, but it's got more contour. There's more contour to the melodic line here.
in some kind of stable…
Slowly moving, almost Debusian little planing of…
chords coming through.
And then it gets into kind of our first little peek.
at what we're gonna be getting later, in measures like 66 through 71.
is all of this really beautiful texture. We're starting to see the things around us. Things are starting to kind of pop out of the clouds.
Um, supporting us as we're working through. So I really think of 71
as kind of our first…
big moment.
to then kind of be quieted down in our heads or in our internal…
dialogue to just the brass. Okay.
Here's kind of the warmness that we feel thinking about, okay, we're gonna get somewhere someday.
We're gonna get to the top of that mountain.
And so I think see the trek.
is really reestablishing
a warmth that's already inside of us, and kind of that spark, that light.
That's coming through.
Um, and that moves all the way into…
this really beautiful moment at D, where all of these chords start to kind of come through.
with a beautiful euphonium melody that…
To one also…
supported, and said, maybe the euphonium could have a moment here.
And I agreed. And it's beautiful. I think we really had, like, a good collaboration there.
And the horns and the trombones are kind of…
These little bursts of light that are kind of popping out through the clouds and really trying to help support this euphonium line.
get us to this beautiful moment.
at… E.
Before we get to the peak, there's tension. I use, um, some more cluster chords. I'm trying to create some trills and…
in the percussion, it starts to get a little bit more…
textural and, um, interesting. The harp is giving us big glistes right before 1-0…
to the peak.
Um, and this is really where we come out of the clouds, and we find ourselves not at the entire peak of the mountain, but we can see the peak.
And we're at kind of a good summit of partway through there. I really want the peak to be at the end of the third movement.
But we've really gotten…
Um…

our final triumph. We've made it. We've really found ourselves.
inside of, um, the journey that we've gone on. So this peak is kind of one of the smaller peaks that's next to a bigger one that we're gonna go through.
Um… really expanded, really triumphant, but kind of feeling…
more…
confidence in ourselves more…
affirmed in our choices and where we're at.
And I'm thinking about how do I…
kind of write this love letter to a really good friend, a really good…
future colleague, DeJuan, of saying, like, you are on the right path.
You are where you need to be.
wherever that might, like, might end up.
you're where you need to be.
And… I believe that where you're going next is even bigger, even better.
even brighter. And that's really what I want to explore in the third movement.
And then we get to the end, big giant, like…
trumpet fanfare, and horns, and…
Um…
trombone, tuba, euphonium, just, like, these big, beautiful chords.
re-establishing that kind of persistence chord with all of this beautiful light and sparkles.
On top. To celebrate.
where we're actually at, and all of the…
journey, all of the struggles are worth it, and that we've made it.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 13:00:03 to 13:09:01
You made me cry, and… That's… A lot on a Saturday.
It's so amazing. Um…
You're right. Um… Wow, this is incredible.
I've never felt so attached to a piece of music, um… I know it's gonna be really special.
Yeah, the 60 players that will be there. They will make this very special, so I… I'm so excited.
Yeah. Oh yeah, it…
But yes, this is really… Really stunning. So, just because I'll have to probably show where the, that… persistent score comes in a couple of times.
the teacher, so I… I see the first time it happens at measure 5.
No, it's okay. Well, yeah, like, show me, like, is there a place where it is deconstructed?
for you?
Oh, there, I see that, yeah.
Yeah.
Okay, so… B is a variation.
I'm sorry, I'm writing something down.
That's so sweet. You're so kind.
You're gonna… yeah, you already made me cry about that one, and then I just cried some more, so we're just gonna…
Um, yes, so this is absolutely stunning. Like I told you before, I really, I really love this piece, and um… Letter E, I told you, when this comes, I think this is going to be one of the best things that's ever.
That will hit the market. Um… I think people are gonna be all over the moon. I've actually… I

don't know if I told you, but… I've changed the order of the concert, and this is last.
Yeah, this is last concert. Um… So now the order… the order of the concert currently is… we start out with… Um, Caroline Schalls and Swallow.
Yes, and then we move to…
Uh… Omar Thomas' of Our New Day Begun.
If I can get the extra progressionist, I need one more percussionist.
Then from that piece, we go into the… the concerto by Maslanca Swim Movement, uh, called Coming Home.
Then we move, uh, into the piece called, uh, Verve.
Which is… It's cold. Coles.
And I've thought about putting Ghost Beast before. or the other one, but then I realized, like.
you know, there's a reason why. Basically. Um, you know, a brand new David Gun has the… the Black National Anthem in it, which, you know, the Black National Anthem is supposed to start events, and so…
I'm starting with that after we set the stage of.
What Psalm 48 says. or sorry, 38 says, right, with… Caroline Shaw's piece.
Uh, and then… so then poll's piece will happen after that.
And then I think I'm also… I just found another 4-minute piece that I really like by.
Benjamin Horn called Motherless Child, which will start with a soprano who will sing.
the motherless child is spiritual, and then we play that. He just won the Ravelli.
Price, and then we will go from that to… Your peace.
I believe that's, uh… This will be the end of the concert. It's… I might not do the motherless child, it just kind of depends right now.
But we will see. And… Uh, it depends on how… because with only 3 rehearsals.
you know, my first rehearsal was tomorrow. So I will… it depends on how everybody is playing all this music. If they play all this music and they really.
seem energized and everyone's gonna practice, and it gets good, then.
I won't be worried about playing all the music, but if they're not ready, then I'll start pulling certain pieces and getting things.
Um, but this is really good, because now this gives me a lot to talk about at the lecture.
Um… And so, the end of it, just so I understand too, the aleatoric pieces, or part of the F and G.
So that's over the top of now the most extended version of this persistence scored.
That then… and that's just supposed to be, like, texture, like, wind, air, like, color, everything in your face, and you're at the top of this mountain.
Looking into the next thing. So that's really wonderful. I just definitely want to highlight this, and it gives me an opportunity to be able to, like, show these things when I'm talking about it through the lecture.
Um, and then it obviously, easily, when I get to do that via the… Uh, the actual document itself.
So, this is everything I needed. Um, and more. And… I'm gonna stop the recording, let me just go ahead and stop this.

[Zachery Meier] 13:00:10 to 13:09:01
I'm sorry.
It could have been a Friday afternoon instead, and I'm not sure that would have been better.
I'm so excited. And I think that's a great number.
I think for this piece, specifically,
Yeah.

Uh-huh.
So, 5 would get a ghost version of it, and then we get it again at measure 10.
a little bit thicker.
and sound. Um, a few times at the beginning. So, like, really any time that we hear pitch, you're gonna hear that.
kind of cluster.
Um, but I really…
think we hear it…
in the whole, um, ensemble.
at… my goodness, I'm getting old, I can't see anything.
Um… 34.
34, we'll see, like, kind of a bigger ensemble version of that.
that's going against all of the sparkliness of the…
Kratallis and the Glockenspiel, and the piano and the harp.
Um… where else can we see it?
I mean, I kind of almost constructed… it's deconstructed in so many places in here.
Um…
I would say getting into…
into B, the flutes kind of do a little deconstruction of it. The flutes and the clarinets.
kind of walk through it. Yeah.
Um, and then I… I… not abandoned, but I move away from that chord at B.
And I try to explore, like, a slight different variation.
on some clusters and some movement there.
But then, I bring it back…
in a different format, D, and that's the chord that kind of bursts out.
A little bit. So at D, you'll see it first in the clarinets, then I give it to the saxophones.
Then I give it to the flutes, then it comes back to the clarinets, so, like, all in the upper winds.
at D.
And if you want, in the transcr… or if you want in the, um…
that that solo is me, is my interpretation of you.
or, like, my representation of you.
Because it's written for you.
Mm-hmm.
Is that coal? Yep.
I think it'll be a wonderful program.
I think it'll be a wonderful program.
Good.
Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.
Yep. Yep.
Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.
Great.

**Interview with Cole Reyes**

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:05:59
Hey, Cole, it's really great to see you again.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:06:02
How are you doing? I'm great. It looks like the pizza is good, huh?

[Cole Reyes] 15:06:04
I'm doing alright, how are you, DaJuan?

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:06:14
Well…

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:06:19
I just want you to know that I'm really excited to get this opportunity to speak with you today. Especially someone who's really well-known around university, and within both of our communities, super excited. Can you go ahead and tell me a little bit about yourself? You know, start out with, like, where you from? And go as deep as you would like or not as deep as you would like.

[Cole Reyes] 15:06:52
It's my pleasure to speak with you as well, DaJuan.

[Cole Reyes] 15:07:02
Well, I'll start from the beginning. I am from outside Chicago originally. I have mom, dad, and sister. And my mom in particular was really excited about having me and my sister begin. Musical studies at a pretty young age and so they started us both off with piano lessons starting at like 6 years old. And so I started that. When I was 6, and I realized pretty quickly that I hated practicing, and so once I essentially became. acclimated with the piano enough, I really started improvising quite young. And so I would often just sit at the piano and and play out melodies, try to play out melodies in accompaniment that were never written for me. And I didn't really like think much of it, it was just that was something that was really natural to me.

[Cole Reyes] 15:07:59
Um, and so as I got a little bit older, I started to have, you know, teachers that really encouraged me to say, hey, you can, you could write down these improvisations, and they'll be compositions. I'm like, oh wow, that's really cool. Um, and so I… I realized that that was something that I'd wanted to do pretty early on. Uh, once I was in 4th grade, I started also playing the French horn and singing in choir, both of which ended up becoming pretty influential for me. And so, really, like, by late elementary school, my musical life was pretty robust, and I knew that it was something that I wanted to keep.And for the rest of my life. Once, I remember in 6th grade, I took this, like, extra little elective course, I think it was 6th grade, maybe 5th grade where, uh, it was like a tiny little composition studio. It was my first ever training in composition, and it was really just, like, trying to write melodies together, and that was really all it was.

[Cole Reyes] 15:09:04
And and the first, you know, first things that I would write were for piano. Uh, because that was the instrument that I was most familiar with. Um, but then pretty, uh, quickly thereafter, after I mostly had written just for piano through, like, middle school, once I got to high school, I had a choir director that was particularly… encouraging to me about writing for voice and writing for

choir, and so I really started to try to get, um, that into my language as well. And since I was a pianist, I really had a really fond…association with harmony and and exploring possibilities there and so it felt very natural to start writing for choir as well. And so throughout most of high school, I ended up writing quite a lot of choral music, and that ended up being the predominant output that I had at that time.

[Cole Reyes] 15:10:03
After high school, I got into university and I went to Washington University in St. Louis, and I double majored in music and math. And so I was a math major, but also got a BA in music, technically an AB, but that's besides the point. Um, and I had my first real composition professor, his name was Chris Stark. He's still a good colleague of mine today, and I really appreciate how much attention he gave to me in my undergraduate curriculum. Since it was a pretty small program, I really got a lot of personalized instruction and encouragement, so that was really great. And, uh, throughout my undergrad, I still wrote a lot of choral music, had, um, uh, the university choir performed a piece that I had written both my freshman and my senior year, I believe. Um, so that was kind of, like, a good bookending moment there. Um, but I also started to write a bit more for instrumentalists at that time as well. At the same time, while I was in undergrad, I was also part of a pop a cappella group for all 4 years, and beginning my sophomore year, I became music director.And that required me to do a lot of arranging. I arranged most of the songs, or a good amount of the songs that we did for the rest of my time in that group. And I think that, you know, having this weekly rehearsal where I was, you know, leading rehearsal with my co-music director.

[Cole Reyes] 15:11:36
3 times a week on arrangements that I was writing, I got a lot of really in-depth, persistent feedback on how I was writing. And it really… made me… it just ingrained so many good habits of thinking about the ways in which I'm writing, and that people are gonna actually be playing these, or singing these lines. How do I write things in a way that's most effective? And that really was informative. For me. And then by the end of my undergraduate curriculum, I had started to write a bit more for instruments. I wrote, like, my first string quartet, I wrote my first chamber pieces. the ones that I was proud of, I would say, or at the time proud of, probably won't see the light of day anymore now. But, uh, at the time, I was really happy with the things that I was writing there. Um, that led me, uh, by the end of my undergraduate.curriculum, I pretty confidently knew that I wanted to pursue music for my future degrees, and so I applied and got into a master's program at New York University, and so I went to NYU in 2020, in the middle of COVID, weird time to start a master's program. And while I was there, I studied with Michael Gordon, Julia Wolf, and Rob Honstein, who were all amazing mentors for me, and really encouraged me to, you know, refine my craft.

[Cole Reyes] 15:13:06
Start working on my individual voice, and really they were just incredibly encouraging as much as they could be in that really crazy time around 2020. Living in New York really was a big change. I, you know, grew up outside Chicago, then I was in St. Louis, and now in a big city of New York, and trying to find connection there, especially, like, musically was really, really hard during the pandemic. And I think that it really instills this idea in me that I… I want to make music with people that I really enjoy being with, and so that was something that really started in

my master's, by, like, finding those collaborators that I'm like, it feels so easy to make music with you.

[Cole Reyes] 15:13:52
And that is something that I've continued to take into my practice today. And so once I finished up my master's program in 2022, shortly thereafter, I somewhat jokingly said to one of my friends in my master's program, who was a year below me, but also had a… already had a doctorate in saxophone performance.

[Cole Reyes] 15:14:14
I jokingly said to him, so when are we starting our group? And that ended up turning into a real group. We, we met and we discussed and we ended up forming Telos Consort, which is a group of. 2 saxophonists, violin, cello, and piano, and me, a composer, kind of remaining as an artistic director. And that has been a really beautiful musical home for me. To have a chamber ensemble that I can work really closely with. asking questions, and really it helped me develop my voice and my writing style so much through my continued collaboration with them. We're going into like our fourth, we're ending our fourth season now about to go into our fifth season, which is just crazy to me. We've made it this far. So I graduated in 2022 with my master's. I took a year off.

[Cole Reyes] 15:15:11
After my master's, I just worked as a barista in New York, had some commissions, had performances. Tried to do that for a little bit, um, but I knew that I wanted to get a doctorate. I really loved teaching, and I knew that was something else that I wanted to be a part of my life, and so I applied to a couple of places, and I ended up getting into the University of Michigan, which was one of my top choices, and so I was really excited. Um, to be able to, you know, uproot from New York and move to Ann Arbor and start a new life here and while I've been here, I've just, um… had an amazing time studying with some fantastic people. I've gotten to study with Roshana Dasadi, Christy Custer, Evan Chambers, Bright Shang, and now I'm finishing up my degree with Michael Dougherty.

[Cole Reyes] 15:16:02
And it's just been a beautiful experience getting to work with them and get all of their individual unique perspectives. And one of the things that I really wanted out of a doctoral program that I had not yet had in my master's or my undergrad was a really strong performance and conducting studio. There weren't really big programs anywhere else that I'd been, and I knew that one of the things that I was lacking were these sort of collaborators. You know, we're making music, we're not making music in a vacuum, we're making music with people. And I think finding those people and actually having, like, friendships grow into collaborations has been really special to me and something that I am really lucky to have found here at the University of Michigan. That was kind of a blaze through my upbringing. Do you have questions or anything else like that I should fill in the gaps for?

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:17:00

Yes, that was awesome. Thank you so much. One of the things I want to make sure that I'm really clear about with your background is, where were you born? What year? How many siblings do you have? Do you have any pets or anything that you want to like to tell us about? Just all that as well. And then if you could just go over. I know you talked about it in here, but just so that it's streamlined for me, where did you attend schools and what years did you attend schools? And then what were the degrees there?

[Cole Reyes] 15:17:30
Yep. So, uh, I grew up in a town called Bartlett, Illinois. Mom, dad, and a younger sister. I grew up with dogs my whole life. We had one dog bait. Um, mom and dad were, uh, Dion and Chris, Sydney is my younger sister, Bailey was my first dog. Um, after that, we got Coco and Buddy. Um, and now, uh, we have Lulu. What are their names? We know their names. Um… And, uh, I went to Wheaton Academy for high school from 2012 to 2016. I went to Washington University in St. Louis from 2016 to 2020, and got a double degree in, uh, music and math. Those are both BAs. I went to NYU from 2020 to 2022, got a… they have a really stupid way of doing this. Master in Music… colon, music theory and composition, colon, uh, concert music. But an MM in composition, effectively. Um, and then, uh, I have begun, uh, at the University of Michigan pursuing my DMA in music composition in 2023, potentially graduating this year in 2026.

[Cole Reyes] 15:19:00
Did I hit it? Did I hit it all?

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:19:02
You nailed it. Thank you so much. And then… Lastly… Uh, who were your… did you talk about your teachers at each institution?

[Cole Reyes] 15:19:16
condensed, it was Christopher Stark and also LJ White for a little bit, uh, at Wash U. At NYU, it was Rob Honstein, and then it was Michael Gordon, and then it was Julia Wolf.

[Cole Reyes] 15:19:29
And then here at the University of Michigan, it was Roshana Dalani, then Christy Custer, then Bryan Shang, then Evan Chambers, and then now Michael Doherty.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:19:37
Perfect. Thank you so much. Then the last thing we'll talk about really quickly.

[Cole Reyes] 15:19:39
Mm-hmm.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:19:42
is about verse. I have the information for… At least, uh… I did for this one. So… Just quickly like I mean, I can kind of talk through it. You didn't even have to talk about it.

[Cole Reyes] 15:19:46
Verve.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:20:02
So, it's very much, in my mind, and I'm deducing this so that I can talk about it in the paper.

[Cole Reyes] 15:20:07
Huh. Yep.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:20:09
Um, right, so it's very much ABA in my mind.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:20:13
And, um… The section we talked about before was basically you have all these hits, these stabs that kind of become pillars, and then in between each pillar, it elongates.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:20:28
over time, so… you know, looking at how it starts in the beginning and those two measures and measure three and four, that is then elongated by the time you get all the way down like 19, it becomes four measures, and then after that becomes eight. And so then we get.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:20:45
to the next section, right? Is that correct? Great. And then… The use of mixed meter here. Is there anything in particular that you were trying to, like… you know, invoke or feel.

[Cole Reyes] 15:20:46
Huh.

[Cole Reyes] 15:20:59
Yeah, my, my use of mixed meter is I really, I have ideas that happen to me and I then fit the meter around those ideas. And so I try not to regiment myself to keeping myself inside of any given meter at any point.

[Cole Reyes] 15:21:19
Um, you know, like, I'll often have a phrase, like, alright, that's an 8-beat phrase, so we've got maybe 2 bars of 4-4, and I'm like, okay, now it's getting a little bit longer, now it's 9 beats, so that might be, you know, 4-4, and then 3-4, and then 2-4, and then, you know, things like that, where I, uh, often add, like, just a single beat to a… to an idea that kind of comes from Philip Glass and his, like, additive rhythms and so that was kind of what I was thinking about metrically and hyper metrically there.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:21:50
Great. And then lastly, is there anything in this piece in particular that you would say?

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:21:59
I really love this. This is something that I would.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:22:03

characterize as a co-re compositional voice technique. whether it be texture, color, meter, anything in particular.

[Cole Reyes] 15:22:09
Um…

[Cole Reyes] 15:22:14
I I really, well, A, this is definitely a piece where I'm like, I want everybody to have fun and I think if you're playing and not having fun, you're doing it wrong. Um, and so, yes, there's some hard stuff, uh, that is littered throughout the piece, but ultimately, there is supposed to be this collective joy.

[Cole Reyes] 15:22:32
That I think that is happening throughout the music making process. I think that's pretty emblematic of a lot of the things that I write, is I really try to write for the experience, as well as the end product.

[Cole Reyes] 15:22:45
Um, but I also think that, you know, this.

[Cole Reyes] 15:22:49
One of the things that comes back a lot in my music are these sort of, like, anchor points, where you'll have, like, the very beginning, you know, that sort of idea keeps coming back, and there is this sort of, like, shifting amount of space between instances of that idea.

[Cole Reyes] 15:23:05
That's something that I do actually in a lot of my music, whether it's fast or slow, is there'll be kind of an anchor point and manipulating the amount of space that exists between those anchor points. And then often with a section that completely negates the anchor point. So that's this sort of, like, B section in Zerve.

[Cole Reyes] 15:23:24
where it kind of descends into this, you know, big cavern almost and then of course it comes back to, you know, signal the end. Yeah.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:23:34
Okay, that's literally perfect. That's all I need. Thank you so much, Cole Reyes.

[Cole Reyes] 15:23:40
Thank you to DaJuan Evan Brooks.

[DaJuan Evan Brooks] 15:23:40
Stunning.