A Survey of Selected Saxophone Excerpts from Wind Band Literature of the Past Twenty-Five Years

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ABSTRACT

Performance opportunities for saxophonists in military bands, university bands, and community bands are widespread and ever-expanding. Studying saxophone excerpts from wind band repertoire can be a beneficial supplement to the traditional saxophone curriculum in applied music programs.

Previous research on this topic addressed saxophone excerpts from wind band literature prior to 1984. Therefore, there is a need for information about recent works and excerpts that reveal the creative ways composers are now writing for the saxophone within its increasingly important role in wind band literature.

This treatise focuses on select saxophone excerpts from wind band literature of the past twenty-five years. The compositions included in this document were chosen by surveying band directors and military band saxophonists. In the survey, the musicians were asked to recommend the best band literature from the past twenty-five years that includes significant saxophone excerpts. The criteria used in the selection process for each work included the artistic merit of the composition, the breadth of performances of the piece, and whether the piece warrants repeat performances. Each chapter includes information about the composer and each piece surveyed, noteworthy saxophone excerpt(s) within each piece, and the author’s performance comments on the excerpts. In addition, interviews with the composers provide valuable information about each work, their thoughts on the saxophone within the wind band, and their comments on the specific excerpts.
INTRODUCTION

Instrumentalists have long recognized the importance of studying orchestral excerpts in order to improve musicianship, prepare for auditions, and to become familiar with the literature of outstanding composers. Consequently, the availability of orchestral excerpts is quite abundant. Unfortunately, there is not as much effort focused on the study of excerpts from wind band literature.

The opportunities for performance in wind bands such as military bands, university bands, and community bands are widespread and ever-expanding. Composers continue to provide challenging and rewarding literature, and to explore new ideas and techniques that reflect the expressive potential of this vital medium. Therefore, there is a need for information about recent works and excerpts that reveal current musical trends, and the direction in which composers and conductors are leading the wind band. Furthermore, this study will allow saxophonists to discover and experience the creative ways composers are now writing for their instrument within its increasingly important role in wind band literature.

Previous research on this topic addressed literature prior to 1984; therefore, this treatise focuses on saxophone excerpts from select band literature of the past twenty-five years. This study includes information about each composer and piece surveyed, noteworthy saxophone excerpt(s) within each piece, and the author’s performance comments on the excerpts. In addition, interviews with the composers provide valuable information about each work, their thoughts on the saxophone’s role within the wind band, and their comments on the specific excerpts.

The author surveyed a number of available excerpt books to serve as models for this study. Darren Holbrook’s doctoral dissertation, Selected Wind-Band Excerpts for the Saxophone¹ and The Orchestral Saxophonist² by Bruce Ronkin, examine saxophone excerpts of band and orchestral pieces from major nineteenth and twentieth century composers. There are also a number of orchestral solo books for other instruments such as The Orchestral Clarinet: A

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Study of Symphonic Repertoire; An Annotated Guide to Excerpts for Trumpet and Cornet from the Wind Band Repertoire; Excerpts for Flute from the Wind Band Literature: An Annotated Guide for Practice, Performance, and Audition Preparation; and Notable Percussion Excerpts of the Twentieth Century Wind-Band Repertoire. The primary model for this treatise is Holbrook’s 1983 doctoral dissertation.

There are many sources for wind band literature and composers. Richard Hansen’s The American Wind Band: A Cultural History provides an in-depth and comprehensive history of the American Wind Band, and also discusses current trends and new directions. William Rehrig’s The Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music: Composers and their Music and Ann McCutchan’s The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak about the Creative Process provide comprehensive information about composers and their craft.

In order to choose excerpts from the past twenty-five years for inclusion in this treatise, the author surveyed over fifty university band directors. In the survey, the directors were asked to recommend the best band literature from the past twenty-five years that includes significant saxophone excerpts. The criteria used in the selection process for each work included the artistic merit of the composition, the breadth of performances of the piece, and whether the piece warrants repeat performances. In addition, several military band saxophonists made recommendations that further supported and, in some cases, added to the list of suggested repertoire recommended by university band directors. Based on these various recommendations, as well as the author’s examination of the saxophone solos and excerpts, the following works were selected:

- Symphony No. 2 (1985) by David Maslanka
- Winds of Nagual (1985) by Michael Colgrass

• Symphony No. 1 (1984-87) by Johan de Meij
• Bum’s Rush (1994) by Donald Grantham
• Urban Requiem (1995) by Michael Colgrass
• Hell’s Gate (1996) by David Maslanka
• J’ai ete au bal (1999) by Donald Grantham
• Red Cape Tango (1999) by Michael Daugherty (arr. Mark Spede)
• Fascinating Ribbons (2001) by Joan Tower
• Circus Maximus (2004) by John Corigliano
• Redline Tango (2004) by John Mackey
• Symphony No. 2 (2004) by Frank Ticheli
• Radiant Joy (2006) by Steven Bryant
• Wolf Rounds (2006) by Christopher Rouse

After determining the works for inclusion in this treatise, the author selected the excerpts from each composition that represent the most significant and challenging moments for the saxophone soloist or saxophone section.

Each chapter in this treatise examines a specific composition and includes a brief biography of the composer, background information on the piece, and the composer’s thoughts on the saxophone excerpts. In addition, the musical excerpts are provided with the author’s interpretive thoughts and performance comments. Since the excerpts represent some of the most challenging saxophone moments in wind band literature of the past twenty-five years, this treatise is intended for experienced saxophonists with advanced technical and musical skills.

**Background and Significance**

**The Saxophone**

Adolphe Sax envisioned an instrument with the power of brass, the sonority of woodwinds and the flexibility of strings.\(^\text{10}\) His invention was realized when he placed a woodwind mouthpiece on a brass instrument. There is no definite conclusion as to how this was done; however, Sax had in mind an instrument that would sound similar to an ophicleide with a

bass clarinet mouthpiece.\textsuperscript{11} This suggestion is most likely accurate because the first saxophone made was a bass saxophone, similar in size and shape to the ophicleide.

Adolphe Sax’s perseverance in promoting his new invention proved to be successful, although he had many obstacles to overcome. Instrumentalists refused to play the saxophone under any circumstances because of their close relationships with instrument manufacturers.

The instrumentalists got together, at the secret urgings of the manufacturers, and decided to reject Sax’s instruments collectively, and to refuse to play these instruments under any circumstances. The many small mechanics’ shops were also a vigorous foe of Sax’s. Up to that time, it was customary in instrument-making for one small firm to produce only the body of the instrument, another the cups and keys, a third the valves, a fourth to provide the finish, etc., and the main firm just assembled everything and stamped their trademark on the instrument. Sax was forced to break with this technique. He needed very special keys and bodies, and above all, it appeared very important to him that the entire instrument was to be built by the same person. But the small firms, with good reason, saw a dangerous change there that had to be resisted to the utmost.\textsuperscript{12}

Despite these setbacks, the creation of the saxophone had quite a positive impact in the music community, even in its early stages. Early supporters of the saxophone included notable composers such as Hector Berlioz, George Kastner, Gioachino Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti, and Giacomo Meyerbeer. Berlioz and Kastner used this instrument in arrangements and compositions, respectively, and enthusiastically welcomed its conception. Berlioz wrote these kind words about the bass saxophone:

The tone color of the saxophone bridges the gap between the tone colors of a brass and woodwind instrument. But also brings to mind, however more remotely, the sound of the strings. I find its principal advantage to be the richly changeable beauty of its various expressive capabilities. At one time low and calm, then passionate, dreamy and melancholy; occasionally tender like the breath of an echo, like the indefinite, plaintive howl of the wind in the branches; moreover, like the uncanny, fading vibrations of a bell long after it has been struck. I know, up to now, of no other instrument that possesses this particular sound that seems to lie at the limits of that which is audible.\textsuperscript{13}

Adolphe Sax designed a saxophone family of six members, all with identical fingerings and pitched in E flat or B flat. The sopranino was pitched in E flat; the soprano, in B flat; the alto, in E flat; the tenor, in B flat; the baritone, in E flat; and the bass, in B flat. This group was


\textsuperscript{13} Hector Berlioz, \textit{Feuilleton du Journal des Débats} (Paris, August 21, 1849).
intended for use in military bands. Sax designed another group of six instruments for use in operatic and symphonic orchestras. Although now considered obsolete, these instruments were pitched in either F or C. The contrabass, pitched in E flat, was added later.

On March 1, 1845, Sax submitted a proposal to the French government to reorganize the military bands. “Above all, the technically imperfect instruments should be replaced by more perfect ones, whereby they could economize on musicians.” His proposal differed from the traditional military band instrumentation in that the oboes, bassoons, and horns were removed and replaced by a saxhorn family. These plans were greatly criticized and on April 22, 1845, a competition of the two types of instrumentation, old and new, was planned. In a sense, it was a “battle of the bands” to determine whether the traditional French military band instrumentation was superior to Adolphe Sax’s proposal. After Sax’s instrumentation was demonstrated, there was no doubt that his ideas for the ensemble would lead to great success in the evolution of the wind band. Oscar Comettant, a contemporary composer and music critic, wrote in 1860:

The instruments of Sax sounded majestic, uniform, in a word, perfect, and was quite able to influence the audience and the judges to favor the new system. That was music as military needed it – strong, masculine accents, full sounding, noble, long solemn, well sustained tones, more uniform, better balanced, and infinitely more suitable to stimulate the fighting morale of the soldier on the march or on the battlefield.

Although the saxophone was not used in every French regiment, military bands from other countries soon enjoyed the benefits of this new instrument. The successful inclusion of saxophones in military bands eventually led to more compositions for bands with saxophones included in the standard instrumentation. The saxophone is now an established instrument in wind bands.

15. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. See Appendix B for an example of Adolphe Sax’s military band instrumentation.
The Wind Band

“The most important key to the success of any performing ensemble lies in the quality of its repertoire.”\(^{22}\) In this statement from 1994, Donald Hunsberger points to the importance of the availability and performance of good music in order to foster the advancement and viability of the wind band. How does one define good music and who decides the artistic merit of a piece? This question may never be answered to everyone’s satisfaction; however, in 1999 there was a panel discussion at the Ninth International Congress of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles that attempted to explore this topic. Two panelists, Timothy Reynish and David Whitwell, suggested that music must touch our emotions in order to last the test of time.

I believe that we have and are, creating a vital repertoire. I believe too that the emotional content is more important than whether a work has form, has consistency, shape, design, balance, ingenuity, genuineness, musical validity. For me the important concept is emotion: does the composer run the gamut of emotions, do I weep with him, laugh with him, am I merry or sad, am I touched with beauty, stung with musical asperities?\(^{23}\)

What music is, and has been since the most remote time, is a special language for the purpose of communicating feeling. We use English, German, and French to talk about math, science and literature, but these languages are not effective in describing feeling. The language we use to describe feeling is Music because the emotions are universal; all men understand this language. Jean Jacque Rousseau (1712-1778) in his *Lettres sur la musique francaise*, suggests that the only way a piece of music can be interesting to a listener is if the music “conveys to the soul” the emotions which the music is intended to arouse. And he is right, at least with regard to art music.\(^{24}\)

In the early 1980’s, wind bands faced a relative paucity of new quality repertoire in the 1970’s. Furthermore, the few great works such as Corigliano’s *Gazebo Dances* and Husa’s *Apotheosis of This Earth* went mostly unnoticed because there were fewer high profile performances during the decade.\(^{25}\) With the events surrounding America’s Bi-Centennial Celebration, there was an abundance of available resources and grants, but there were no prominent composers approached to compose works for this event. Unfortunately, compositions


written within this decade failed to last the test of time compared to earlier masterworks such as Dahl’s *Sinfonietta*, Hindemith’s *Symphony for Band*, and Husa’s *Music for Prague*.

In response to the lack of masterworks from the 1970’s, conductors and musicians pushed for the promotion of the wind band as a serious medium for creating great art. In 1981, Frank Battisti, Timothy Reynish, and William Johnson organized the International Conference for Composers, Conductors, and Publishers where there was great discussion about future goals. This conference brought forth a new organization, the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles, which established two main goals for the future:

1. to promote symphonic bands and wind ensembles as serious and distinctive mediums of musical expression and cultural heritage
2. to encourage the composition of music that reflects national heritage and transcends international boundaries

In 1985, Frederick Fennell charged the new international organization to pursue, perform, and promote quality wind band compositions.

Compositions for band must continue to address the undeniable factors of quality and artistic conscience. We conductors must remember that what we play can help listeners and players explore the marvelously intimate depths of human psyche, a dimension which the however remarkable “artificial intelligence” of the computer cannot reach. Composition in its “here-today-gone-tomorrow” and “what have-you-done-for-me-lately” image hardly makes for a music of substance. Without some small percentage of the output of band music being ascribed to what reflects a deeper command of the experience of life, we shall remain child-like in our ways … Lasting values in band music can only come from composers who write and conductors who play – a seemingly obvious relationship that today is still far from realized in performances as logged.

This was an important statement and, in retrospect, Fennell’s thoughts turned out to be quite prophetic. Much of the great band music from the 1980’s to the present does, in fact, reflect our emotions and contemporary culture.

CHAPTER 1

SYMPHONY NO. 2 (1985)
By David Maslanka (b. 1943)

Born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, David Maslanka received his formal music training at the New England Conservatory, Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, Mozarteum in Salzburg, and Michigan State University. He holds a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Oberlin Conservatory and a Master of Music and PhD with emphasis in Music Theory and Composition from Michigan State University. Maslanka’s major teachers were Owen Reed (composition), Paul Harder (theory), and Elsa Ludwig-Verdehr (clarinet).¹

From 1970 to 1990, Maslanka held academic teaching positions at colleges and universities such as State University College, Geneseo, NY (1970-74); Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY (1974-80); New York University (1980-81); and Kingsborough Community College (1981-90). Since 1990, he has been a free-lance composer, working exclusively by commission.

In addition to his teaching duties, Maslanka has been a guest composer at over one hundred universities, music festivals, and conferences, and his music has been performed around the world. His awards and honors include National Endowment for the Arts Composer Fellowships in 1974, 1975, and 1989; MacDowell Colony Residence Fellowships in 1974, 1975, 1978, 1979, and 1982; the National Symphony Orchestra regional composer-in-residence award in 1999, and the ASCAP Composer Awards, which he has received annually since 1980.

Maslanka has written many large-scale works for wind band and also numerous solo and chamber works for wind and percussion instruments. He is quite comfortable writing for winds and percussion because of his many years performing in wind bands as a clarinetist. He also prefers writing for this medium because the wind band has become so flexible and expressive:

I played mostly in band when I was growing up and the character of wind instruments struck me. The quality of wind sounds just struck me as sharply distinct and characterized and full of life. Most of the good music written for the wind band has been written since 1950. We’re now at the end of this century where it can kind of be seen as a golden age for wind band writing. The wind ensemble has developed an expressive

medium of its own—it’s not an orchestra, it is a wind band and it has been evolved into a very capable, flexible thing.\textsuperscript{2}

Music for wind ensembles has blossomed in the past thirty years, simply blossomed, so the ensemble is a serious musical element in the evolution of modern music. I remember Owen Reed, with whom I studied in graduate school, saying the typical thing: ‘As a serious composer, you’re allowed to write one band piece. If you write two band pieces, then you are stigmatized as a band composer and nobody takes you seriously again ever.’ I certainly didn’t follow that advice. So it turns out that I just went wholesale into the writing of wind music. At the same time, I had written a whole bunch of other stuff too. I had figured that my pieces for wind instruments, at least for wind bands, amount to about one-third of my output altogether.\textsuperscript{3}

When composing a new work, Maslanka always feels a personal connection to the piece. His method of composing comes from flashbacks of childhood or remembered experiences, visualizing the performance space, and judging each new idea from the perspective of an audience member.\textsuperscript{4} He also recognizes a strong influence of psychology, religion, and mythology when creating new melodies and harmonies.\textsuperscript{5} At the onset of composing a new work, Maslanka experiences a variety of emotions:

When I’m starting a new piece, it feels like I don’t know how to compose because I’ve never written this particular piece before. I don’t know how to do it and I feel very stupid. There’s this huge pile of music that I’ve written and there’s this blank page right in front of me. And I don’t know what goes on this page. Yes, there is a lot of strain. It is in part the tension of not knowing and the tension of searching out something which has never happened before and which you don’t know. On the other hand, there is that miracle which does happen each time I compose. Between the start and the finish of that session, something miraculous has happened—that thing which never existed before has come into place. Really fine things happen, really fine ideas, really nicely made music will happen, and I can only say, ‘Wow! That wasn’t there before today!’ And all of a sudden it is. These are the kinds of pleasures which are intensely attractive to me and keep me going.\textsuperscript{6}

Having written a saxophone sonata, a concerto, a saxophone quartet, a piece for saxophone and marimba, and many wind band works that feature the saxophone colors quite often, one would correctly assume that he is a fan of the instrument. In an email to the author, Maslanka offered the following thoughts about the saxophone:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[2.] David Maslanka, interviewed by Russell Peterson, November 30, 1998, Lawrence University, Appleton, WI.
  \item[4.] Ibid.
  \item[5.] Ibid.
  \item[6.] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
I seem to identify with the saxophone as a significant extension of my own voice. The saxophone has one of the richest and most flexible of the wind voices. It can whisper, but it can also be impressively powerful and dramatic. It has a tremendous array of colors and moods. The saxophone is a very challenging instrument to play well, and to play with subtlety. Most people’s experience of saxophones is kids honking away in a school band. In my lifetime as a composer, saxophone performers have achieved ever higher standards of refinement. The saxophone sound, with all its range characteristics, and its methods of articulation, is uniquely and powerfully itself.7

Maslanka’s Symphony No. 2 was commissioned in 1983 by the Big 10 Band Directors Association and was completed in 1985. The last movement of Symphony No. 2 was completed first and was independently premiered at the CBDNA conference in Boulder, Colorado in 1985. The full premiere, directed by John Paynter, was performed by the combined Symphonic Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band from Northwestern University on February 28, 1987 during the College Band Directors National Association National Conference in Evanston, Illinois.

Maslanka dedicated Symphony No. 2 to his competition teacher, Owen Reed, and specifically dedicated the second movement, Deep River, to the astronauts who died in the Space Shuttle Challenger tragedy on January 28, 1986: Francis R. Scobee, Michael J. Smith, Judith A. Resnick, Ronald McNair, Ellison S. Onizuka, Gregory B. Jarvis, and Christa McAuliffe. The opening of the second movement begins with an arrangement of the traditional African-American spiritual Deep River from which the movement gets its title. In his own words, Maslanka describes the inspiration of the second movement:

The composition of this movement involved for me two meaningful coincidences. The body of the movement was completed, and then I came across Deep River while working on another project. The song and my composition fit as if made for each other, so I brought the song into the Symphony. The last notes were put onto the score of this movement almost to the hour of the space shuttle Challenger disaster. The power of these coincidences was such that I have dedicated this music to the memory of the astronauts who lost their lives.8

7. David Maslanka, email message to author, August 1, 2008.
Saxophone Excerpts

Excerpt 1.1: *Symphony No. 2* (mvt. II: *Deep River*), measures 1-31

Maslanka provides the following thoughts on the first saxophone excerpt:

The opening of the second movement of *Symphony No. 2* is the significant saxophone music in the piece. I am very interested in old-style African-American gospel music, especially vocal quartets and quintets. The saxophone ensemble in the second movement should strive for that quality of intensity and expression. As in composing, as I have described above, the players must put aside their intellectual ideas about interpretation, and allow the music to speak through them. This may seem like a contradiction in terms, but it is the key to good performance with any music.9

The movement begins with the saxophone section introducing the “Deep River” theme. The soprano saxophone is the primary solo voice in the section. Maslanka marks the solo “like a spiritual – soulful tone and vibrato.” He also suggests the contrabass clarinet line to be replaced with a bass saxophone if available. There are two places in the contrabass clarinet line (measure 7 and measure 15) where there is a low A marked. If a bass saxophone is used, it will be necessary to play the low A an octave higher. The triplet rhythms in measures 16-21 present a swing feel to the quartet feature. This is a distinct style change compared to the previous measures, however the swing rhythms should be performed with elegance, not aggressiveness. Maslanka uses many ornamental grace notes and extremely challenging cadenza-like technical passages in the alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone lines (measures 21-24). These passages are very difficult to synchronize, although the slower tempo will allow for flexibility during the fast technical lines.

Excerpt 1.2: *Symphony No. 2* (mvt. II: *Deep River*), measures 115-135

This soprano solo requires intense volume and vibrato in order to soar above the ensemble. The grace notes must be quick and snappy due to the faster tempo. The difficult rhythms are even more complicated due to the extensive amount of grace notes; technique and rhythm must be precise. The soloist should also be aware of potential intonation issues during this excerpt. On the soprano saxophone, high C’s tend to be quite sharp, and the middle Db’s in measures 130-132 may be very flat due to the ff dynamic marking.

9. David Maslanka, email message to author, August 1, 2008.
Excerpt 1.1: *Symphony No. 2* (mvt. II: *Deep River*), measures 1-31
Excerpt 1.2: Symphony No. 2 (mvt. II: Deep River), measures 115-135

Sop. Sax.

\( \text{ff} \) vib. on

\( \text{sf} \) \( \text{ff} \)

\( \text{no vib.} \)\( \text{add vib.} \)

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CHAPTER 2

WINDS OF NAGUAL (1985)

By Michael Colgrass (b. 1932)

The earliest musical experiences for prize-winning composer Michael Colgrass were as a jazz drummer in Chicago. Born in Brookfield, Illinois, he attended the University of Illinois studying percussion performance and composition where his primary teachers were Paul Price (percussion) and Eugen Weigel (composition). He also studied composition with Darius Milhaud at the Aspen Festival (1953 and 1958) and Lukas Foss at Tanglewood (1954).

As a performer, Colgrass has performed with a wide variety of groups such as the New York Philharmonic, the Dizzy Gillespie jazz combo, the Modern Jazz Quartet, the original West Side Story orchestra on Broadway, and in a number of ballets and operas.

Michael Colgrass won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1978 for *Déjà vu for percussion quartet and orchestra*, which was commissioned and premiered by the New York Philharmonic. Four years later he won an Emmy Award for the PBS documentary *Soundings: The Music of Michael Colgrass*. Other notable recognitions and awards include two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Rockefeller Grant, First Prize in the Barlow and Sudler International Wind Ensemble Competitions, a Ford Foundation Award, and the 1988 Jules Leger Prize for Chamber Music. He has received commissions from organizations as diverse as the Boston Symphony, the Brighton Festival in England, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Detroit Symphony, the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, the New York Philharmonic, and the St. Louis Symphony.

At the suggestion of his percussion teacher, Paul Price, Michael Colgrass started composing in college.

Price invited me to a percussion ensemble concert in a last ditch attempt to get me to be a serious classical music student. After the concert he asked me what I thought of it. I arrogantly told him I admired the student’s playing but that I thought the music was ‘terrible’. These were works by Varese, Harrison, Cage, Cowell, and the other giants of early percussion composition. He took a long look at me and said quietly, ‘If you don’t like what you heard, why don’t you try your hand at it.’ I was thunderstruck by his suggestion because I thought you had to be dead to write music. He showed me some scores and I immediately dived into my first piece, *Three Brothers* for nine percussionists. We performed the work soon after it was completed (8 May 1950). Then
it was published and recorded, and has become a percussion classic, of all things! I’ve been writing music ever since.\(^1\)

Colgrass writes music as a musician with a performance background. He knows the musicians should enjoy playing the piece and the audience must enjoy it as well:

I write for the musicians. They have to play it and comprehend it, so I see and hear it from their standpoint. I was a player for many years, so I identify naturally with the performer. Coming out of a jazz background, as a musician, composing and performing are almost one act to me. In fact, for many years I didn’t think of myself as a composer, but rather as a performer who was providing material for my colleagues. I certainly hope listeners enjoy my music and I make every effort to explain it and write clear program notes. I love to do pre-concert talks and to meet the public in post-concert chats. Some composers may think of this as pandering to the public, but I call it communicating.\(^2\)


Michael Colgrass states that “one reason why I like to write for bands, is because the first musical aggregations that first impressed me were bands, jazz bands, big bands, although that is not the instrumentation of wind ensemble or concert band. Nevertheless a band’s a band; ensembles without strings were my first influences.”\(^3\)

Winds of Nagual: A Musical Fable for Wind Ensemble on the Writings of Carlos Casteneda was commissioned in 1984 by Frank Battisti, conductor of the New England Conservatory Wind Ensemble from 1969 to 1999. It is the first piece Michael Colgrass composed for wind ensemble and it was adapted from his solo piano work, Tales of Power (1980), based on the writings of Carlos Castaneda. Since Colgrass had never written a work for wind band before 1985, he was actually surprised that he was commissioned to write for this

\(^2\) Ibid.
instrumentation. After accepting the commission, he considered the subject matter of *Tales of Power* and decided that the wind band would be an excellent medium for the piece.\(^4\)

The New England Conservatory Wind Ensemble, conducted by Frank Battisti, performed the premiere of *Winds of Nagual* in Boston’s Jordan Hall, February 1985. Considered by Colgrass as one of the definitive performances of the work, the premiere was the inauguration of one of the most successful works in the wind band repertoire.\(^5\) During its first year, *Winds of Nagual* won the Sudler International Wind Band Composition Prize, the National Band Association Best Composition Award and the internationally recognized Barlow Award for composition. Michael Colgrass provides the following explanation of the programmatic material:

*Winds of Nagual* is based on the writings of Carlos Casteneda about his 14-year apprenticeship with don Juan Matis, a Yaqui Indian sorcerer from Northwestern Mexico. Casteneda met don Juan while researching hallucinogenic plants for his master’s thesis in Anthropology at UCLA. Juan became Casteneda’s mentor and trained him in pre-Columbian techniques of sorcery, the overall purpose of which is to find the creative self—what Juan calls the *nagual*.

Each of the characters in the piece has a musical theme: Juan’s is dark and ominous, yet gentle and kind. Carlos is open, direct and naïve. We hear Carlos’ theme throughout the piece from constantly changing perspectives, as Juan submits him to long desert marches, encounters with terrifying powers and altered states of reality. A comic aspect is added to the piece by don Genaro a sorcerer friend of Juan’s who frightens Carlos with fantastic tricks like disappearing and re-appearing at will.

The listener need not have read Castaneda’s books to enjoy the work, and I don’t expect anyone to follow any exact scenario. My object is to capture the mood and atmosphere created by the books and to convey a feeling of the relationship that develops as a teacher of ancient wisdom tries to cultivate heart in an analytical young man of the technological age."\(^6\)

*Winds of Nagual* consists of eight movements without separation. In an email to the author, Colgrass offered extensive descriptive narrative of each movement in order to thoroughly understand the character and journey of the piece:

\[
\text{I. THE DESERT and II. CARLOS MEETS DON JUAN: FIRST CONVERSATION} \\
\text{The piece opens with desert birds and the atmosphere of the Sonoran desert. Out of these sounds we hear a dramatic theme in the low brass and winds depicting don Juan} \\
\]


emerging from the mountains. Then we hear the naive Carlos (solo clarinet) diffidently approaching Juan, and Juan's weird responses that have a hypnotic effect on Carlos as he shows the young man a new concept of himself.

III. GENERO SATIRIZES CARLOS
Juan introduces Carlos to another sorcerer, named don Genero. Genero pokes good-natured fun at Carlos' overly serious view of life. Then Genero suddenly flies onto a mountaintop and disappears.

IV. CARLOS STARES AT THE WATER AND BECOMES A BUBBLE
In this episode, Juan teaches Carlos self-hypnosis, by concentrating on a bubble in a little creek and imagining himself inside the bubble. Inside the bubble, Carlos travels with the river (alto flute version of his theme), which grows to immense proportions (whole ensemble in swirls of sound), until he is tumbled helplessly by giant cascades of water. Juan wakes him up with a shrill cry (piccolo, Eb clarinet). Carlos says, "How far away was I?" "You were a thousand miles southwest of here." "What would have happened if you hadn't awakened me?" "You'd never have come back."

V. THE GAIT OF POWER
Juan shows Carlos how to "trust the force," by running between rocks and cacti at night without touching them (staccato timpani, bass drum, contrabassoon, trombones and tuba). In the dark a terrifying creature leaps at Carlos (six trombones flutter tonguing on glissandi) and he runs. Juan yells at him not to run but to stand his ground against the threat. Carlos exerts his will (Carlos' theme in heroic form in the brass).

VI. ASKING TWILIGHT FOR CALMNESS AND POWER
This is the episode where Juan teaches Carlos how to meditate. Juan takes Carlos on a long hike into the mountains, finds a vista overlooking a beautiful green valley and asks Carlos to find his "place of power." Carlos walks around on the plateau until he feels a strange warmth and sits down. Juan tells him that, regardless where his body is at the time of his death, this is where Carlos will come to die. On this spot he will scan his life (soprano saxophone, then flugel horn, playing the most mature version of Carlos' theme). He will recall his victories and his defeats, and Death will wait patiently. When he is finished, Death will put his hand on Carlos' shoulder and point to the south. (This beautiful episode is toward the end of Tales of Power.)

VII. JUAN CLOWNS FOR CARLOS
Here Juan cuts up, making fun of Mariachi music and generally acting silly. He is trying to lighten up the moment, because, unknown to Carlos, they will soon part—never to see each other again.

VIII. LAST CONVERSATION AND FAREWELL
Juan, Carlos, along with Pablo and Nestor (two other apprentice sorcerers of Juan's), march slowly to a high mountain plateau. Juan engages Carlos in conversation as they walk (we hear Juan's and Carlos' themes answering each other). Juan tells Carlos that his apprenticeship is complete and that he no longer needs Juan. Carlos is grief-stricken by
this news. Juan tells Carlos this is his last test, that he will leap from the mountaintop and survive by his force of will and that the two men will never see each other again. We hear Carlos' theme now in its most conventionally heroic form with full brass, just before the three apprentices, one by one, leap into the abyss and explode into a thousand views of the world, which is expressed by a thunderous version of Carlos' theme.\(^7\)

**Saxophone Excerpts**

Michael Colgrass provides the following thoughts on the saxophone excerpts:

Sax players should use American style sax playing, not French style with its [traditional] quick vibrato. I want straight tone so the music is understated. As a composer I intend to write the emotion into the music. Any attempt to emphasize the emotion runs the danger of overstating it. Cool detachment is the byword. Within that, the very fine player will find his/her own way of being also expressive, but that assumes a great deal of control and good taste on the part of the player.\(^8\)

**Excerpt 2.1: Winds of Nagual (mvt. VI: Asking Twilight for Calmness and Power), measures 334-371**

At this point in the piece, the main character, Carlos, learns to meditate while resting in a peaceful, green valley. He discovers that, in this place, his soul will come to rest when he passes away. Here, he examines his life. “He will recall his victories and his defeats, and Death will wait patiently. When he is finished, Death will put his hand on Carlos' shoulder and point to the south.”\(^9\)

This beautiful soprano solo needs nothing more than the elegance of simplicity inherent in each phrase. Colgrass, in the instrumentation, sets the stage for the soprano with very light-textured accompaniment performed by the harp and marimba. There is no need to exaggerate the volume or utilize excessive expression in this solo.

Possible intonation issues should be a concern for the soloist. In measures 354 and 355, the high A is commonly a sharp pitch. The entire phrase beginning in measure 362 is written in a register and key that is, for the soprano saxophone, potentially quite sharp in pitch. Embouchure and oral cavity adjustments such as slightly dropping the jaw and lowering the tongue position may be necessary on the high D’s, C’s, Bb’s, and A’s.

\(^7\) Michael Colgrass, email message to author, July 20, 2008.  
\(^8\) Michael Colgrass, interview by author, telephone, July 20, 2008. 
Excerpts 2.2 and 2.3: *Winds of Nagual* (mvt. VIII: *Last Conversation and Farewell*), measures 522-526 and measures 553-557

The following soprano solos represent Carlos’ grief as he learns Juan no longer needs him as an apprentice. Colgrass uses the harp as the primary accompaniment during these Carlos theme solos; however, in measures 522–524, the alto saxophone shares the accompanimental role with the harp. In these excerpts, the soprano saxophonist should use the alternate F# fingering.

Excerpt 2.1: *Winds of Nagual* (mvt. VI: *Asking Twilight for Calmness and Power*), measures 334-371
Excerpts 2.2: *Winds of Nagual* (mvt. VIII: *Last Conversation and Farewell*), measures 522-526

Excerpts 2.3: *Winds of Nagual* (mvt. VIII: *Last Conversation and Farewell*), measures 553-557

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Johan de Meij, born in Voorburg, Netherlands, studied trombone and conducting at the Royal Conservatory of Music at The Hague. Early musical experiences include performing in local wind bands and in a youth orchestra in The Hague, but it was the Dutch Cavalry military band that sparked his music career:

I was just a very eager amateur player. At the same time, I was studying in a teacher training college to be an elementary school teacher. I did specialize in music but I was never planning to be a professional musician or a composer until I had to go into the army and I was lucky enough to be sent to one of the military bands. I played music all day there; I played tuba, euphonium, alto horn—the whole range. That was actually the switch in my life when I felt ‘this is much more fun than being a teacher.’

After his military service, de Meij joined a forty-piece professional wind orchestra in Amsterdam. As a freelance musician, he performed in various orchestras and played with “great names like Bernard Haitink, Valery Gergiev, and Edo de Waart—some of the big conductors in the Netherlands.”

Although he had experience arranging music while performing in the military band and the wind orchestra of Amsterdam, de Meij had no formal training in composition. However, his first work, Symphony No. 1 The Lord of the Rings launched his successful career as a composer in 1988. He has received prestigious awards such as the Sudler Composition Award in 1989, First Prize at the International Composition Competition of Corciano in 1999, the Oman International Composition Prize in 2000, and the Second Prize at the International Composition of Corciano in 2006. Notable works in his catalogue of compositions include: Symphony No. 1: The Lord of the Rings; Symphony No. 2: The Big Apple; the trombone concerto, T-Bone Concerto; the cello concerto, Casanova; and most recently, Symphony No. 3: Planet Earth for orchestra.

2. Ibid.
Johan de Meij has earned an international reputation as a composer and arranger and, as a conductor and clinician, he is in demand throughout the world. In addition to composing, de Meij currently performs trombone with the Orkest de Volharding in Amsterdam, the Amsterdam Wind Orchestra, and substitutes with the Netherlands Radio Chamber Orchestra. He also manages the music publishing company, Amstel Music.

*Symphony No. 1: The Lord of the Rings* was written between 1984 and 1987, and was premiered by the *Groot Harmonieorkest van de Gidsen* conducted by Norbert Nozy. Johan de Meij received no commission for this work; instead, the inspiration came from his love of music and “to see what I could do as a composer.” He chose *The Lord of the Rings* due to the “colorful personalities” of the characters in the J.R.R. Tolkien famous trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. In his own words, Johan de Meij describes his *Symphony No. 1*:

Although it is not simple to summarize such an extensive and complex work, the main outline is as follows: the central theme is the Ring, made by primeval forces that decide the safety or destruction of the World. For years it was the possession of the creature Gollum, but when the Ring falls into the hands of the Hobbits the evil forces awake and the struggle for the Ring commences. There is but one solution to save the World from disaster: the Ring must be destroyed by the fire in which it was forged: Mount Doom in the heart of Mordor, the country of the evil Lord Sauron. It is the Hobbit Frodo who is assigned to carry out this task, and to assist him a company, the Fellowship of the Ring, is formed under the leadership of Gandalf, the wizard, which includes the Hobbits Sam, Peregrin and Meriadoc, the Dwarf Gimli, the Elf Legolas, Boromir and Aragorn, the later King. The Companions are secretly followed by Gollum, who does not shun any means, however perfidious, to recover his priceless Ring. However, the Companions soon fall apart, after many pernicious adventures and a surprising dénouement Frodo and Sam can at last return to their familiar home, The Shire.

I. GANDALF (The Wizard)
The first movement is a musical portrait of the wizard Gandalf, one of the principal characters of the trilogy. His wise and noble personality is expressed by a stately motif, which is used in a different form in movements IV and V. The sudden opening of the *Allegro vivace* is indicative of the unpredictability of the grey wizard, followed by a wild ride on his beautiful horse “Shadowfax”.

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5. Ibid.
6. Dénouement is a series of events following the climax of a drama or narrative. These events serve as the conclusion of the story.
II. LOTHLORIEN (The Elvenwood)
The second movement is an impression of Lothlórien, the elvenwood with its beautiful trees, plants, exotic birds, expressed through woodwind solos. The meeting of the Hobbit Frodo with the Lady Galadriel is embodied in a charming *Allegretto*; in the Mirror of Galadriel, a silver basin in the wood, Frodo glimpses three visions, the last of which, a large ominous Eye, greatly upsets him.

III. GOLLUM (Sméagol)
The third movement describes the monstrous creature Gollum, a slimy, shy being represented by the soprano saxophone. It mumbles and talks to itself, hisses and lisps, whines and snickers, is alternately pitiful and malicious, is continually fleeing and looking for his cherished treasure, the Ring.

IV. JOURNEY IN THE DARK
The fourth movement describes the laborious journey of the Fellowship of the Ring, headed by the wizard Gandalf, through the dark tunnels of the Mines of Moria. The slow walking cadenza and the fear are clearly audible in the monotonous rhythm of the low brass, piano and percussion. After a wild pursuit by hostile creatures, the Orcs, Gandalf is engaged in battle with a horrible monster, the Balrog, and crashes from the subterranean bridge of Khazad-Dûm in a fathomless abyss. To the melancholy tones of a *Marcia* funèbre, the bewildered Companions trudge on, looking for the only way out of the Mines, the East Gate of Moria.

V. HOBBITS
The fifth movement expresses the carefree and optimistic character of the Hobbits in a happy folk dance; the hymn that follows emanates the determination and noblesse of the hobbit folk. The symphony does not end on an exuberant note, but is concluded peacefully and resigned, in keeping with the symbolic mood of the last chapter “The Grey Havens” in which Frodo and Gandalf sail away in a white ship and disappear slowly beyond the horizon.  

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**Saxophone Excerpts**

Johan de Meij offers his thoughts on the saxophone:

> It is a very versatile instrument; you can practically write anything. I’ve never noticed that something I wrote is unplayable. There are so many amazing players; technically it’s never a problem.

Gollum [movement three] is a great example of how you can use the soprano saxophone as a very effective instrument in the band, like the Eb clarinet. I think it only makes sense to use the saxophone if you give it a specific role…specifically in Gollum, I use it because it can imitate the character of Gollum with the flutter tongue and make him whine and make him very aggressive and sound like a wild cat. For that reason, I kept...
the same instrumentation in the symphony version. I didn’t transcribe it to a symphony orchestra instrument because I don’t think you can replace the soprano saxophone by anything else.9

Excerpt 3.1: Symphony No. 1 (mvt. III: Gollum), measures 13-73
The soprano saxophone solo begins with an unaccompanied cadenza. The soprano saxophonist must display a wide range of dynamic expression and perform the accents and grace notes with aggression. The solo should reflect the sleazy nature of the character Gollum, for which the movement is titled. Johan de Meij describes Gollum as a creature that “mumbles and talks to itself, hisses and lisps, whines and snickers.”10 Intonation issues could present problems in measures 13-17 and in measures 26-32 due to the many Db pitches. It is common for a soprano saxophone to have very sharp pitch tendencies on a high Db and flat pitch tendencies on the middle Db. The quiet dynamics, as indicated in measures 14 and 15, could present more exaggerated pitch issues in the high register. If the middle Db is flat, the saxophonist should depress the middle side C key to raise the pitch. This would likely be needed during the middle Db’s with a marked crescendo (ms. 15 and 17), since the faster air could cause the pitch to go even lower. Measures 21-23 are marked “conducted” due to the synchronized rhythms performed by the soprano saxophone, xylophone, and piano in measures 22 and 23. In measure 40, “Allegro quarter note = 100,” the soprano saxophonist performs a lyrical solo, marked bizarre, while the woodwind section provides a rhythmic accompaniment. In measures 61-73, the soprano saxophone shares the solo line with the piccolo, but the resulting pitches create tritone intervals highlighting the bizarre feel of the movement.

Excerpt 3.2: Symphony No. 1 (mvt. III: Gollum), measures 169-189
In this excerpt, marked “Andante quarter note = 60,” the soprano saxophonist performs this solo with the trombone soloist. Rhythmic precision and intonation must be exact. In measure 173, the 32nd notes are marked quasi gliss, since the trombone soloist, sharing the melodic line, has quarter notes on beats 2, 3, and 4 with glissandi between each note. The soprano saxophonist should closely mimic the glissando effect created by the trombone slide during beat 2 in measures 173 and 181.

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Excerpt 3.3: *Symphony No. 1* (mvt. III: *Gollum*), measures 233-244

This solo features the baritone saxophonist performing a beautiful solo line accompanied by two solo clarinets. It is important to maintain an even and consistent tone quality throughout the range of the instrument. Proper air support is critical to the success of the *pp* low C from measures 241-244.

Excerpt 3.1: *Symphony No. 1* (mvt. III: *Gollum*), measures 13-73
Excerpt 3.2: *Symphony No. 1* (mvt. III: *Gollum*), measures 169-189

Excerpt 3.3: *Symphony No. 1* (mvt. III: *Gollum*), measures 233-244
CHAPTER 4

BUM’S RUSH (1994)
By Donald Grantham (b. 1947)

Donald Grantham was born in Duncan, Oklahoma and began piano lessons at the age of eight. At age 10, he joined his elementary school band as a trumpet player and continued playing the trumpet through college. Grantham studied composition with Ralph Lewis (Chickasha, Oklahoma) and Kent Hughes (Wichita Falls, Texas) before enrolling at the University of Oklahoma as a composition major, where he studied with Charles Hoag and Spencer Norton. Grantham graduated from Oklahoma University in 1970 and started graduate studies in composition at the University of Southern California where he received his Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees. While attending the University of Southern California he held an assistantship teaching freshman and sophomore theory, aural skills, keyboard harmony, counterpoint, and form and analysis.¹ In 1975, Grantham accepted a theory and composition teaching position at the University of Texas at Austin where he is currently the Frank C. Erwin, Jr. Centennial Professor of Music.

Grantham has received numerous composition awards including the Prix Lili Boulanger, the Nissim/ASCAP Orchestral Composition Prize, First Prize in the Concordia Chamber Symphony’s Awards to American Composers, a Guggenheim Fellowship, three grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, three First Prizes in the National Bandmasters Association/William Revelli Competition, two First Prizes in the American Bandmasters Association/Ostwald Competition, and First Prize in the National Opera Association’s Biennial Composition Competition. His compositions have been performed by the Cleveland Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony, the Atlanta Symphony, and numerous wind bands throughout the country.²

Bum’s Rush was written in 1994 for Jerry Junkin and the University of Texas Wind Ensemble. The piece was premiered by the U.T. Wind Ensemble at the Texas Music Educators


The expression, “bum’s rush,” can be defined as a physical action that forcibly ejects a person, usually from a bar or a brothel.¹ Grantham’s inspiration for the piece came from Los Angeles crime novels by Raymond Chandler and Cormac McCarthy’s book *The Crossing* that tells the story of three journeys taken from New Mexico to Mexico. Grantham offers the following thoughts on the inspiration for *Bum’s Rush*:

Often when I read something that appeals to me, a musical idea occurs, as when I read Raymond Chandler’s novels years ago. Recently I finished a book by Cormac McCarthy called *The Crossing*. [It contains] evocative descriptions of nineteenth-century Texas and Mexican scenes. Music could emphasize the powerful atmosphere of these scenes, as in Barber reading *A Death in the Family* and then having the idea for *Knoxville*. In any case, when the opportunity to do a wind ensemble piece came along, the Chandler was already in place.

… it’s really just the atmosphere. A very general kind of thing really. The piece musically reflects Los Angeles in the 1940’s. All the Chandler movies, film *noir*, that kind of thing.²

*Bum’s Rush* implements a significant amount of American jazz rhythms and jazz styles that only a few composers have successfully explored for wind band before this time. In his interview with James Tapia, Grantham describes the style of *Bum’s Rush*:

I guess about 10 years ago I wanted to incorporate some popular elements, some more obviously American elements into my instrumental music than I had done before. That also ties in with the R. Chandler forties sort of thing. Particular jazz elements from that period appealed to me. I thought they could work very well in the harmonic language I was using and still am using: octatonic construction along with the syncopated rhythm I like. It seemed to mesh very naturally.³

**Saxophone Excerpts**

**Excerpt 4.1: Bum’s Rush, measures 5-26**

In the fifth measure of the piece, the alto saxophone is featured in a large, exposed solo. This solo requires a laid back, jazzy style. Grantham suggests a “mysterious, foreboding, but crisply

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³. Tapia, 12.
articulated” feel for the beginning of the piece.\(^6\) The alto saxophonist should exaggerate the very quiet entrance and proceeding sustained pitches. These sustained pitches (measures 5, 8, 10, 11, 14) should quickly increase in volume and the vibrato should increasingly intensify toward the moving line. In measure 6, the smear from Bb to C should be noticeable, yet tastefully executed. Moving the fingers slowly from side Bb to C while bending the pitch with slight jaw motion would effectively create this smear. Another appropriate option is to slowly slide from bis Bb to the side C fingering. The triplet figures should be played in a jazz style. Accents that occur during the triplet figures should not sound too forced. The technical passages that contain notes in the low register (measures 16, 17, 22, 25) require proper air support in order to achieve consistent tone quality within the flowing line.

**Excerpt 4.2: Bum’s Rush, measures 33-43**

This alto solo sneaks into the spotlight after a rhythmic soli from the clarinet and flute section. The \(ppp\) dynamic in the first note must be underneath the woodwinds and quickly and expressively increase through the measure. This solo melodically and rhythmically expands the idea of the previous solo, although the style remains the same. In measure 36, it is important to maintain good tone quality through the intervallic leap into the high E\# and F\#. The accents on these pitches should not distort the sound in any way.

**Excerpt 4.3: Bum’s Rush, measures 69-75**

The alto saxophone solo, in measure 69, begins much like the first alto solo in measure 5. In measure 74, Grantham provides the soloist with a rhythmic and technically difficult cadenza. The saxophonist should implement elegant rubato leading up to the fermata, while maintaining the style from the previous solos. After the fermata, a hesitation followed by a gradual acceleration into the trill would be ideal.

**Excerpt 4.4: Bum’s Rush, measures 383-393**

This soli showcases the saxophone section performing jazz rhythms and accents, by now, familiar to the audience. It is important that each individual saxophonist match the style precisely and accurately place the rhythms in order to sound like a solid unit. The accents and

\(^6\) Donald Grantham, *Bum’s Rush*, (Austin, TX, Piquant Press, 1994).
the legato articulations (measure 385) must be consistent from soprano to baritone saxophonist and the crescendo in measure 385 must be exaggerated. In measure 389, Grantham instructs the saxophonists to produce a loud grunt: “Uh! (Low, hollow exclamation, as if struck in the stomach).” Consistent with jazz style, in measure 392 and 393 the saxophone section should highlight the higher intervallic leaps.

Excerpt 4.1: *Bum's Rush*, measures 5-26

Excerpt 4.2: *Bum’s Rush*, measures 33-43

```
J = 72  solo  

Alto Sax

ppp cresc.  ------- mf
```

```
A. Sax

mp  ------- mf
```

```
A. Sax

pp  

T. sax

pp
```

```
A. Sax

cresc  ------- f dim.  pp
```

```
T. sax

cresc:  ------- f dim.  pp
```

Excerpt 4.3: *Bum’s Rush*, measures 69-75

```
J = 72  solo espress.  

Alto Sax.

pp cresc. poco a poco  ------- mf dim. poco a poco  ------- p
```

```
cadenza, ad lib
```

```
ritenuto accel. poco a poco  
```

```
74  
```

```
tr bb
```

```
f  ------- sfz p cresc  ------- f molto!
```
Excerpt 4.4: *Bum’s Rush*, measures 383-393

\* = “Ulu” (Low, hollow exclamation, as if struck in the stomach)

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CHAPTER 5

URBAN REQUIEM (1995)
By Michael Colgrass (b.1932)

Urban Requiem was commissioned by Gary Green and the University of Miami Wind Ensemble. The work was completed in 1995 and premiered at the Southern Regional Convention of the College Band Directors National Association in Biloxi, Mississippi on January 26, 1996. Colgrass wrote this work to reflect the city and culture of Miami. He wanted to include all aspects of urban life, including the ethnic groups, the tension of city life, and the ongoing problems with crime. Colgrass also wanted to feature the excellent jazz department and saxophone studio at the University of Miami. In composing Urban Requiem, he “thought about writing for a city, and what instrument represents a city…saxes seemed to be a really urban instrument representing urban life.”¹

Upon writing the piece, he decided to make Urban Requiem more than just a reflection of Miami; the piece is also a reflection of the cities in which he has lived. Colgrass describes the influence of cities in Urban Requiem:

I love cities. I walk in the city at night. I used to, especially in New York. I always walked late at night. I would walk until one or two in the morning [and] look at people. Bars are open till four in the morning, stop in and have a beer, then keep walking. Look at people on the streets, whoever. Sometimes talk to people and note the contrast from going through a dingy area then a high class area; a noisy area then a quiet area. Hearing different kinds of music as I am walking along and the music is just crazy. It might be any music coming from anywhere at anytime. Out of a car window, somebody walking down the street, or walking by a nightclub²

Although Colgrass uses his experience living in cities as a source of inspiration, Urban Requiem emphasizes the soul and flare of Miami with the use of Caribbean and Latin music.

The use of saxophone is extremely prominent throughout this work. After the initial theme of the piece is presented, Colgrass uses each saxophone to introduce the characters of each section:

I thought of urban areas, where the saxophone was spawned, and of the tragedies and struggle that occur in this environment daily. I feel that the saxophone is particularly well suited to express the variety of emotions required for this idea, because it can be not only highly personal and poignant in character but also powerful and commanding. It can howl like a banshee or purr like a kitten. In short, the saxophone is perhaps more like the human voice than any other instrument. In my mind I heard four saxophones singing like a vocal quartet, a music that was liturgical in nature but with a bluesy overtone, a kind of ‘after hours’ requiem.3

The physical set-up of the band on stage presents a very theatrical feel to Urban Requiem. The unusual placement of sections in the ensemble represent separate “neighborhoods” and the saxophonists interact with sections throughout the piece. In his dissertation, The Assimilation of Musical Styles of Michael Colgrass’ Urban Requiem, Paul Garcia describes the effective use of “neighborhoods”:

Each ‘neighborhood’ corresponds with the tessitura of the saxophone that “lives” there. For example, the alto saxophone “neighborhood” includes the alto flute, English horn, trumpets, and 1st and 2nd horn, while the tenor saxophone “neighborhood” features the trombones, 3rd and 4th horn, drum set, tuba, oboe, and 1st and 2nd bassoon. These “neighborhoods” are made clearer through the establishment of a specific style associated with each saxophone. The playing style that is established within each “neighborhood” does change, but not until the character of each instrument has been well established. Some of these changes occur through interaction between the sax soloists and members of other “neighborhoods” throughout the piece, while others occur as a result of the conflicts that Colgrass has created throughout the requiem. At various places in the piece Colgrass will instigate this interaction by moving different members of the ensemble from their assigned place to join the saxophone quartet at the front of the ensemble.4

The following picture shows how the saxophonists are located within the instrumental arrangement on stage in order to create the “neighborhoods”:5

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In an interview with the author, Michael Colgrass offers these performance notes for the saxophone section:

The first thing I would say to the four sax soloists is to play in American style, not French style. That means virtually no vibrato, although at times you might want to warm your tone up a bit with a little vibrato, but being very judicious about it. The saxophone tone I like for this piece is what you might call a cool sound—like that of Lee Konitz, Paul Desmond and Stan Getz. I don’t mean that all the sax players need to have the same tone that they have, but at least to have the understated coolness of sound that they are known for.

One of the flaws of some performances I’ve heard is when the soloists try to be expressive and add emotion to the playing. That can make the piece sound sentimental, especially in the opening quartet, which should be understated. Simplicity and a cool detachment is the keyword here. Strong emotional expression is written into the notes and phrases when I want it later on. The sax is such a powerfully expressive instrument that one has to consider toning down the emotional element, giving the impression that the emotion is just below the surface and could come through at any time—as in the climax following the tenor sax and jazz drums solo, which is wild and where any kind of exaggerated tone can be employed, before returning to the cooler sound again in the alto saxophone set-up.
sax/english horn duo following the chaos. But in most cases, the power of the emotion in this piece will be produced by just following the dynamics—the louder the sax becomes the more emotion it will automatically convey; the softer it is the more removed it will sound.

Also be very judicious about slides. I have written in one or two slides and these should be done very subtly, only a slight suggestion. It takes only the slightest bit of a slide to give the effect desired here, unlike the typically exaggerated type of slides used liberally by film composers in movie scenes where the sax provides a sleazy background to a beautiful woman running her hand up her silk stocking.

To me, the saxophone is the instrument that sounds most like the human voice, and that’s the feeling I am aiming for in this piece—to have these four soloists be like four characters in a play.⁶

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**Excerpt 5.1: Urban Requiem (quartet feature), measures 1-64**

The saxophone quartet is the only melodic voice in the first 64 measures of the piece. In this section, the quartet is accompanied only by a synthesizer programmed to a “Fender-Rhodes” setting. The soprano saxophone is the main voice for the quartet in this section and establishes the melodic material of the theme, which is based on J.S. Bach’s *Musical Offering*. The dynamic range in this section varies from ppp to f; perfect intonation and blend is crucial to the success of this opening section of the work. The use of exaggerated, expressive vibrato is not necessary in this quartet feature. If vibrato is implemented, it should only be used to create subtle tone-color contrasts.

**Excerpt 5.2: Urban Requiem (alto feature), measures 80-105**

The alto saxophone exchanges melodic material and ideas with the alto flute. The solo passages are very rhythmic and, as Michael Colgrass suggests, should be played with a smooth jazz tone and style similar to saxophonists Lee Konitz or Paul Desmond.⁷ Although there are very difficult technical passages, the saxophonist should strive to perform this solo with effortless fluidity.

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⁶ Michael Colgrass, email message to author, July 20, 2008.
⁷ Lee Konitz and Paul Desmond were popular saxophonists in the Cool Jazz movement of the late 1940’s and 50’s. The Cool Jazz movement avoided aggressive tempos and abstract harmonies that were associated with bebop-style. Lee Konitz and Paul Desmond demonstrated darker and smoother tones, and their improvisations were more melodically based.
Excerpt 5.3a and 5.3b: *Urban Requiem* (baritone feature), measures 114-130 and 150-205

The baritone solo, in measure 114, begins with a syncopated melodic line (excerpt 5.3a). This passage eventually transforms from serene melodic material to more intensified and angular gestures (excerpt 5.3b). Colgrass’ use of the baritone saxophone’s high register adds to the intensity of this section. Since the majority of the solo is written in the higher register of the instrument, the many difficult technical passages that venture into the palm keys, combined with the sharp intonation issues in the high register, are the primary challenges and concerns for the baritone saxophonist. The difficult intervallic leaps (measures 165-167, 174-175, 180-182, and 184-192) should be performed with the same horizontal flow as the melodic sixteenth notes.

Excerpts 5.4a-5.4d: *Urban Requiem* (soprano feature), measures 213-220, 269-274, 281-288, and 291-304

The soprano saxophone solo is marked *jazz feel*, however, the opening moments of the solo hints of a salsa style. The salsa rhythms are even further evident in measures 238-243, 269-274, 281-288, and 291-296. Within the beginning of the soprano saxophone solo, there are many exchanges of melodic material and ideas with the piccolo and flute. Colgrass then uses the marimba, pans, timbales, and cowbell to compliment the texture of the solo from measures 254-297. Measure 298 begins the transition from Latin to jazz style as the beginning of the tenor solo overlaps the soprano line. Although it is not indicated in the score, all sixteenth-note passages should be very legato or slurred.

Excerpt 5.5: *Urban Requiem* (tenor feature), measures 303-332

The tenor saxophone solo begins as a duet with the soprano saxophone followed by a transition into a written-out jazz improvisation with drum set accompaniment. This drum set and tenor combination immediately establishes a change to jazz style. The technique required in this tenor solo is extremely challenging, and the style must be very lyrical and jazzy. In measures 323-326, Colgrass provides the tenor saxophonist with a flourishing melodic line into the upper range of the instrument. This should be executed with tremendous energy in order to highlight the brilliance of the tenor saxophone sound in the high register. Sixteenth-note passages should be very legato or slurred.
Excerpt 5.6: *Urban Requiem* (quartet feature), measures 334-372

The quartet returns, and from measure 334-364, each saxophonist flowingly passes rhythmic material from one voice to another in order to present a lyrical melodic line. In measure 365, the quartet is required to perform a difficult passage of sixteenth notes, and this material eventually leads to a free improvisation section marked with the following instructions: “Basic chord is C# 7 and C# 9, but gradually stray from there harmonically as in free-style jazz ala Coltrane. All soloists are totally free and separate from each other. Exploit altissimo register, as well as honks, shrieks and growls, especially as you approach climax at bar 386.” Saxophonists should perform the sixteenth-note passages with legato articulations or slurs.

Excerpt 5.7: *Urban Requiem* (quartet feature), measures 574-590

Marked “40’s Hotel Style,” the soprano and baritone saxophones present a distinctly different style in this section. The duet should be a humorous reflection of the 1940’s high society district of the city. In a style similar to the saxophone section playing in the Guy Lombardo Orchestra, the note lengths should be short, the articulations must be very light, but crisply separated, and the vibrato should be quite exaggerated. The swells to f in measures 585, 587, and 589 must be exaggerated, and the decrescendo to p in measure 589 must be observed so the alto and tenor saxophone answer in measure 590 is effective. Measures 580, 581, and 590 should be performed humorously in a style similar to a laugh or a child’s taunt.

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9. Guy Lombardo was the leader of the famous dance band, *Lombardo & His Royal Canadians*. Lombardo’s band sold millions of records from 1927 to 1954, but is most known for his New Year’s Eve show featuring the song, “Auld Lang Syne.” In this traditional celebratory New Year’s Eve song, the saxophone section used extremely exaggerated vibrato and pitch bends.
Excerpt 5.1: *Urban Requiem*, measures 1-64
Excerpt 5.2: *Urban Requiem*, measures 80-105
Excerpt 5.3a: *Urban Requiem*, measures 114-130
Excerpt 5.3b: *Urban Requiem*, measures 150-205
Excerpt 5.4a: *Urban Requiem*, measures 213-220

Excerpt 5.4b: *Urban Requiem*, measures 269-274

Excerpt 5.4c: *Urban Requiem*, measures 281-288
Excerpt 5.4d: *Urban Requiem*, measures 291-304

Excerpt 5.5: *Urban Requiem*, measures 303-332
Excerpt 5.6: *Urban Requiem*, measures 334-372
Excerpt 5.7: *Urban Requiem*, measures 574-590
CHAPTER 6

HELL’S GATE (1996)

By David Maslanka (b. 1943)

David Maslanka composed *Hell’s Gate* in December 1996 for John Combs and the Hellgate High School Band in Missoula, Montana. Combs commissioned this challenging work when Maslanka’s son entered the Hellgate High School music program. Maslanka observed the many talented musicians involved in the band and especially took notice of the excellent saxophone section. The difficulty of *Hell’s Gate* came as a surprise to Combs, but the challenge was accepted and the premiere, which took place in March 2007, was a “spectacular success.”¹

It is interesting to note how the school and the piece derived their name. Hellgate High School is named after the section of Missoula where the Clark Fork River flows through the Mission-Sapphire mountain range. This area, also known as Hellgate Canyon, was the location where local Native Americans suffered surprise attacks from warriors of the Blackfeet Nation. The local Salish people and their allies would travel through this gorge to reach the buffalo grounds, and because they always feared an ambush, they named it *Ne-Missoula-Takoo* or “place of fear by the water.” Later, French trappers named the canyon *Port d’Enfere* or “Gate of Hell” after discovering the atrocities.²

In the following quotes, Maslanka offers his thoughts on the title and describes the saxophone solos in *Hell’s Gate*:

Having come up quickly with a title for my piece, I had to muse for a long time on its implications. The immediate picture that comes to mind is “The Flaming Gates of Hell,” and the desire to avoid these at all costs! Whatever one’s religious beliefs, “the gates of hell” can be taken psychologically to mean any extremely difficult point of transition in the maturing process of person—one that cannot be avoided but must be gone through.³

The piece is something of a soul journey, the soul being represented by the trio of solo saxophones, and especially the solo alto saxophone. The soul is plunged willy-nilly into the fierce struggle of life. It survives, and responds with a deeply mournful and upwardly struggling and yearning attitude. With this attitude come first visions of the religious nature of the human being, and first hints of wholeness. Life overtakes, and the struggle is joined in earnest. The soul is driven to the extremes of its ability to endure, until in the middle of this there is a memory of the early vision of wholeness. The soul

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¹. David Maslanka, e-mail message to author, August 1, 2008.
responds in agony, and then bursts into full and passionate awareness of its own nature. Reconciled to its connection, the soul opens to the full power of its earthly life. At this point of opening I have placed the Lutheran hymn tune *Christ, du bist der helle Tag* (“Christ, you are the bright day”)—a beautiful metaphor, regardless of your cultural tradition, for the passage into self-awareness. I was further compelled to use this tune because of the last two words of its title: *helle tag* = “Hellgate”! The work ends with the soul—the alto saxophone—transformed. It plays a quiet and beautiful solo song.⁴

**Saxophone Excerpts**

*Hell’s Gate* features an alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone trio extensively, although the main voice of the piece is the alto saxophone. As Maslanka states, the trio of saxophones represent a soul journey through life. The solo alto excerpts in *Hell’s Gate* display mourning, struggling, yearning, and agony. The soloists must perform these excerpts with complete control and command of the expressive potential of the saxophone. In an interview with the author, Maslanka further describes the saxophone solos:

The alto part is the lead solo, and by far the most prominent. The piece feels like a “life story.” The solo voices need to be earnest and forceful. Loud passages need to have a raw edge to them. Players need to throw themselves at the music. This does not suggest bad or unfocused tone, but a striving for the most dramatic presentation possible. Tempos have to be established with the conductor, but they must be very close to what is marked. Conductors and players, either consciously or unconsciously, tend to back away from fast tempos. Work against this tendency. If tempo is too slow the music will lose its dramatic edge.⁵

**Excerpts 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3: Hell’s Gate (alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone trio sections), measures 1-34, 149-201, and 228-243**

The tempo for *Hell’s Gate* is marked “very fast, quarter note = 180.” In the first excerpt, the saxophone trio section is marked “Bursting” and must be performed passionately with fierce intensity. The primary sounds and intensity come from the saxophone soloists while the band provides only rhythmic support. Maslanka implements bends, guttural growls, and held tones with wide vibrato. There are also several altissimo passages in the alto and baritone saxophone lines. The alto saxophonist will need to perform altissimo G’s and the baritone saxophone passages require altissimo G#’s. In measures 7-17, Maslanka often places the alto and baritone

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⁵ David Maslanka, interview by author, August 1, 2008.
saxophone one half step apart during many held tones, including the altissimo G’s and G#’s, in order to create an even more aggressive sound within the suggested exaggerated vibrato and growl markings. Excerpts 6.2 and 6.3 must match the “Bursting” intensity of the beginning section. In Excerpt 6.2, the alto, tenor, and baritone saxophonists perform, for the majority of the excerpt, unison rhythms with driving and vigorous intensity. Maslanka continues to place the alto and baritone saxophone one half step apart during unison rhythmic material from measures 151-174. The end of notes following slurs marked with a staccato must be released with precision, and the accents and staccatos must be stylistically matched. Excerpt 6.3 combines elements of Excerpts 6.1 and 6.2. Excerpts 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 present very challenging rhythmic and technical passages.

**Excerpts 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, and 6.7: Hell’s Gate (alto features), measures 35-46, 92-125, 350-360 and 390-408**

The following excerpts provide an opportunity for the saxophonist to display the beauty and expressive qualities inherent in the saxophone. The slow moving lyrical lines should be performed soloistically above the texture of the ensemble. Long phrases and wide varieties of dynamic ranges present many challenges for saxophonists. In Excerpt 6.4, the tempo is marked “quarter note = 90 not slow!” and the alto saxophone performs the primary solo line while the trumpet and clarinets perform a subtle countermelody marked “expressive, mournful.” Even though the alto saxophone solo begins mp, the soloist should perform above the clarinet and trumpet soli. Excerpt 6.5 is marked “in tempo (same), quarter note = ca 90.” In measures 94-107, the alto saxophonist performs this solo line with a similar moving solo line from the contra alto clarinet. In measures 105-114, the first horn joins the clarinet section to support the alto saxophone solo as it increases in intensity and volume. The background texture of the solo changes in measure 115 as the muted brass section quietly provides gently moving half notes and whole notes. In excerpt 6.6, Maslanka implements the use of Bach’s *Christ, du bist der helle Tag* (Christ, you are the bright day). He suggests a tempo of “quarter note = 48 freely, expressive” and chooses the alto sax, trumpet, tenor sax, and bass trombone to stand up and perform the four-part harmony. The alto saxophone is the primary voice for this chorale setting, and the balance should be adjusted accordingly. In the final excerpt, measures 390-408, the alto
saxophone melody delicately concludes the piece. The saxophonist should play as expressively as possible with tranquility within the reserved dynamic level.

Excerpts 6.1: *Hell’s Gate*, measures 1-34
Excerpts 6.2: *Hell’s Gate*, measures 149-201
Excerpts 6.3: *Hell's Gate*, measures 228-243
Excerpts 6.4: *Hell’s Gate*, measures 35-46

A. Sax, \( \frac{\text{\textit{Not Slow!}}}{} \) \( \frac{\text{\textit{1,90}}}{} \)

Excerpts 6.5: *Hell’s Gate*, measures 92-125

A. Sax, Solo \( \text{\textit{A warm, moving solo tone}} \)

fervently

\( p \) cresc.

\( \text{\textit{dim. grad.}} \)
Excerpts 6.6: *Hell’s Gate*, measures 350-360

Excerpts 6.7: *Hell’s Gate*, measures 390-408
CHAPTER 7

J’AI ETE AU BAL (1999)

By Donald Grantham (1947)

The phrase *J’ai été au bal* is a Cajun phrase that means *I went to the ball* and is also the title of a 1989 music film/documentary on Louisiana French and Zydeco music. The inspiration for *J’ai été au bal* for Wind Ensemble came from Donald Grantham’s visit to New Orleans in the summer of 1998. The energy of the music he heard performed in clubs and in the streets made a distinct impression on him. This piece reflects the spirit found in the music of south Louisiana and, in honor of the Cajun culture, Grantham uses melodies from traditional Cajun songs. Two Cajun songs that are quoted within *J’ai été au bal* are *Allons danser, Colinda*, and *Les flammes d’enfer*.

Commissioned by Jerry Junkin and the University of Texas Wind Ensemble, *Jai ete au bal* was first performed in Austin, Texas on February 24, 1999. Donald Grantham offers the following thoughts on the work:

*J’ai été au bal* is a celebration of some of the popular/fold music styles of Louisiana—in particular Cajun music and the brass band tradition of New Orleans. The dance flavor of much of the music is suggested by the title (“I went to the dance”), and two traditional Cajun tunes are employed. The first appears near the beginning and later at the end. *Allons danser, Colinda* (“Let’s go dancing, Colinda”) is a boy’s attempt to coax Colinda into going dancing, and part of his argument is “it’s not everyone who knows how to dance the two-beat waltzes.” This touching little tune does work better in a syncopated two, but is usually represented in notation as $3 + 3 + 2$. The second Cajun song is *Les flammes d’enfer* (“The flames of hell”), most often performed as a heavily-accented two-step. My version is much faster and lighter, and is introduced by a country-fiddle style tune. The brass band section begins with solo tuba, followed by a duet with the euphonium, and culminating in a full brass presentation.¹

**Saxophone Excerpts**

The saxophone quartet is an important component to this piece. Although there are not many moments where the saxophone quartet is featured as a solo unit, there are many saxophone

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¹. Donald Grantham, *J’ai été au bal* (Austin, TX: Donald Grantham, 1999), ii.
section passages that are vital to the texture and style of J’ai été au bal. In a sense, the four saxophone voices function as a small soloistic chamber group within the large ensemble.

**Excerpts 7.1, 7.2 & 7.3: J’ai été au bal, measures 7-18, 27-31 and 35-36**
The first three excerpts contain exposed saxophone material that features important melodic passages requiring matched tone quality and vibrato from each saxophonist. Grantham marks at the beginning of the piece “Heavy, Deliberate (quarter note = 69).” Although the tempo is slow, there are many meter changes that require even and consistent eighth notes. In measure 7, the saxophone section performs the rhythmic and flowing melody that increases in intensity all the way through measure 18. The woodwind section enters in measure 19 and expands the idea introduced by the saxophone section. In measure 27, the soprano and alto perform a duet feature that Grantham marks “very light.” The blues influenced scales, intervals, and articulations suggest an elegant foreshadowing of the upcoming swing section. Measures 35 and 36 continue the “blues” line passed from the soprano through the baritone saxophone. The accents in the alto and baritone saxophone lines should reflect and emphasize the bluesy nature of the passage.

**Excerpts 7.4 and 7.5: J’ai été au bal, measures 140-146 and 161-168**
Marked “Half note = 96 in Light Swing Rhythms,” the baritone saxophone solos follow a similar solo passage from the tuba and euphonium. These solos resemble a written-out improvisation in a light swing style. The solo in excerpt 7.4 doubles the double-bass part and is accompanied by a rhythm section (Trap Set and Piano). Excerpt 7.5 begins with a duet with double bass but a transition leads to a trio with euphonium and tuba.

**Excerpts 7.6, 7.7 and 7.8: J’ai été au bal, measures 180-192, 214-226 and 348-401**
The saxophone section performs swing rhythms and difficult technical passages that must be performed with accurate style and precise articulations. These excerpts must be well rehearsed in order to successfully perform these passages. In measure 186 (excerpt 7.6), the soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones perform this swing feature with the clarinet section. The articulations and accents must match similar lines in the clarinet section. In measures 214 and 215 (excerpt 7.7), the saxophone section performs the same rhythmic line but the entrances are staggered; this creates constantly moving eighth notes. In order for these measures to be effective, the accents
should be exaggerated and the eighth notes must be precise. In measures 218 through 223, the saxophone section performs the soli line with the brass section. Measures 224 through 226 feature an exposed solo section for the saxophonists that leads to a transition into a trumpet solo. The *sfzp* should be performed in the style of a jazz “sting”; however, the held pitch must be quiet enough to allow the overlapping moving line to be heard clearly. Measures 350 through 359 (excerpt 7.8) showcase short, bluesy riffs from each saxophonist, creating a flowing line that accompanies a flashy moving line in the clarinet section. In measure 360, the saxophone section joins the clarinet section performing the difficult moving line. The accents, articulations and blues influenced passages enhance the spirited, energetic style. Grantham uses the saxophone section, paired with the upper woodwinds, to perform the difficult, yet extremely exciting, final moments of the piece (excerpt 7.8).
Excerpt 7.2: J’ai été au bal, measures 27-31

Excerpt 7.3: J’ai été au bal, measures 35-36

Excerpt 7.4: J’ai été au bal, measures 140-146
Excerpt 7.5: *J’ai ete au bal*, measures 161-168

\[ \text{\textit{Bari. Sax.}} \]

Excerpt 7.6: *J’ai ete au bal*, measures 180-192

\[ \text{\textit{Sop. Sax.}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{Alto Sax.}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{T. Sax.}} \]
Excerpt 7.7: *J'ai été au bal*, measures 214-226
Excerpt 7.8: *J'ai ete au bal*, measures 348-401
360

mf

363

f

366

mf

369

f
A native of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Michael Daugherty studied composition at North Texas State University (1972-76), Manhattan School of Music (1976-78), and Yale University (DMA, 1986). His primary teachers were Earle Brown, Jacob Druckman, Roger Reynolds, and also György Ligeti in Hamburg, Germany. In 1979, Daugherty was awarded a Fulbright grant to collaborate with Pierre Boulez at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique in Paris. Other awards include the Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts. From 1986 to 1991, he taught composition at Oberlin College Conservatory, and since 1992 he has served as Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Daugherty is currently one of the most performed and commissioned American composers. He received international acclaim after a Carnegie Hall performance of his Metropolis Symphony by the Baltimore Symphony in 1995. Since then, his works have been commissioned and performed by orchestras such as the National Symphony Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

His music reflects contemporary American popular culture, and his compositional style combines meticulous polyrhythmic counterpoint and influences of pop music from his childhood.¹ Daugherty has written works that show his interest in popular American icons such as Desi Arnaz (Desi written in 1991), Elvis Presley (Dead Elvis and Elvis Everywhere – both written in 1993), Liberace (Le tombeau de Liberace written in 1996), Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (Jackie O – an opera written in 1997), and his enthusiasm for Superman comic strips of the 1950’s (Metropolis Symphony written from 1988-93). Michael Daugherty comments on his inspiration:

Before I can write a note of music, I have to have a visual image—an American icon like Elvis, a pink plastic flamingo, or Jackie Kennedy. Just like an actor, I like to research my ‘role’ before I compose. For example, I watched videos of Liberace and read his

autobiography before I composed *Le Tombeau de Liberace*. Before I composed *Elvis Everywhere*, I attended the International Elvis Impersonators Convention in Las Vegas and heard more than 200 Elvi perform. I can only write music about an experience I have lived myself. It would be difficult for me to set the poetry of Sappho, for example. But I could be inspired by *Star Trek*, because I have seen every episode. I use icons like Superman, Liberace, Jackie-O, and Elvis in composing because they allow me to play with ‘public’ vs. ‘private’ emotion, ‘external’ vs. ‘internal’ feeling, ‘fake’ vs. ‘authentic’ representation.²


Daugherty offers his thoughts on the influence of geography:

> To get ideas for pieces I sometimes drive in the country to small towns…I like eating in a small-town mom and pop restaurant, the family-dining place. The cuisine might not be great, but it’s where the townies go. I also check out the thrift stores, antiques malls, the stores that are not part of a chain—where you can sense the individual who runs the place. I like going to state fairs and county fairs, where there are large groups of people. I like looking at old books and magazines from the 40s, 50s, and 60s. I like collecting old books about twentieth-century music that are out of print. I want to make connections between things past and present. After a long drive I’ll come back to my studio with everything I’ve seen sinking in, and some idea will hit me and I’ll start writing.³

*Red Cape Tango* reflects Michael Daugherty’s ability to compose music with which audiences can identify. Originally written for orchestra, it is the fifth movement of Daugherty’s *Metropolis Symphony*, which pays homage to the comic hero, Superman. The movement titles for the symphony are, *Lex, Krypton, Mxyzptlk, Oh, Lois*, and *Red Cape Tango*. Each movement of the *Metropolis Symphony* was written separately and, within a period of five years (1988-93), the entire work was completed. Because of the symphony’s duration, it is not uncommon for the movements to be performed independently.

*Red Cape Tango* is the musical setting of Superman’s battle and eventual death at the hands of the comic figure, Doomsday. In this epic battle, both Superman and Doomsday die from their wounds.⁴ Musically, it seems quite fitting for Daugherty to choose a tango with elements of the *Dies Irae* theme intertwined and, in a sense, dancing closely together. Perhaps, the tango was chosen to represent the close hand-to-hand combat.

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3. Ibid.
With great enthusiasm, Michael Daugherty approved a transcription of *Red Cape Tango* for symphonic band by Mark Spede in 1999. Since the wind and percussion sections of the orchestral version could remain essentially the same, proper treatment of the string section was the only challenging issue for the arrangement. Daugherty gave Spede several suggestions for properly choosing solo voices and implementing important orchestral decisions. One of his primary suggestions was to use the soprano saxophone in place of the solo violin due to the saxophone’s ability to closely match the range and timbre of the violin.\(^5\) Michael Daugherty offers the following program notes for *Red Cape Tango*:

*Red Cape Tango* was composed after Superman’s fight to the death with Doomsday, and is my final musical work based on the Superman mythology. The principal melody, first heard in the bassoon, is derived from the medieval Latin death chant *Dies Irae*. The dance of death is conceived as a tango, presented at times like a concerto comprising string quintet, brass trio, bassoon, chimes, and castanets. The tango rhythm, introduced by the castanets and heard later in the finger cymbals, undergoes a gradual timbral transformation, concluding dramatically with crash cymbals, brake drum, and timpani. The orchestra alternates between legato and staccato sections to suggest a musical bullfight.\(^6\)

**Saxophone Excerpts**

The saxophone section, in the arrangement for band, takes the place of the string section. The soprano saxophone solos were originally for violin, and the violin II solos are replaced with either the second soprano saxophone or alto saxophone. Michael Daugherty suggested the use of saxophone for these solos because he feels the instrument shares the role of the strings. “When I’ve done my own re-orchestrations of my pieces for orchestra to the symphonic band world, I frequently recompose the string parts using saxophones.”\(^7\)

**Excerpt 8.1: *Red Cape Tango*, measures 30-37**

The soprano saxophone performs this solo canonically by entering two beats behind the bassoon. Held pitches must be in tune with the unison pitches in the bassoon solo. Soprano saxophone 2

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5. Mark James Spede, “Michael Daugherty’s *Red Cape Tango*: a Transcription for Band” (D.M.A. diss., The University of Texas, 1998), 44.
7. Michael Daugherty, interview by author, telephone, July 30, 2008
must match tone quality and intonation of soprano saxophone 1 in order to sound like one flowing line.

**Excerpt 8.2: Red Cape Tango, measures 44-78**

Except for the dynamic markings, the soprano solo from measures 44-51 is identical to the solo in measures 30-37. The alto saxophone enters in measure 52 performing a unison duet with the soprano. The soprano saxophonist is required to perform in the higher range of the instrument with the solo flute and Eb clarinet; perfect intonation is essential. The technical passages ascending and descending from middle F# to high F#, in measures 59-70, begin as a minor scale with hints of chromaticism in measures 61 and 62. From measure 65-77, Daugherty uses flowing chromatic scales to fill in the octave F#'s. The high F# on soprano is commonly quite sharp; therefore, it may be necessary to drop the palm D key when fingerling this note or, if using the front F# fingering, lower the pitch using proper voicing. Voicing skills are paramount on the soprano, more so than the other saxophones, due to the extremely sharp high register. The flutter-tongue technique (in measures 62, 65, 67, and 69) can be performed by rolling the letter “R” on the tip of the tongue while playing or by growling with the voice.

**Excerpt 8.3: Red Cape Tango, measures 145-160**

The saxophone section performs the *Dies Irae* theme of *Red Cape Tango*. It is written with octave displacement in order to achieve dramatic impact. Technical passages must be precise. The alto and baritone saxophone must perform the passages in the high register with excellent control; sharp pitch tendencies in the high E’s and F#’s must be corrected.

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8. Donald Sinta, *Voicing* (Laurel, MD: Sintafest Music Company, 1992). Voicing refers to an awareness and control of the muscles and soft flexible tissue in the oral cavity and vocal tract. Playing the saxophone requires change in the configuration of our mouth, tongue, and throat which contributes directly to control over range, intonation, and dynamics. Further, our personalized timbres are greatly influenced by how we manipulate this tract to resonate each note.
Excerpt 8.1: *Red Cape Tango*, measures 30-37
Excerpt 8.2: *Red Cape Tango*, measures 44-78
Excerpt 8.3: *Red Cape Tango*, measures 145-160
CHAPTER 9
FASCINATING RIBBONS (2001)
By Joan Tower (b. 1938)

Joan Tower, hailed by the New Yorker as “one of the most successful woman composers of all time,” was born in Rochelle, New York, but spent her early years in South America. She returned to the U.S. in 1958 to attend Bennington College (1958-61) and Columbia University (MA 1965, DMA 1978). Since 1972, Joan Tower has been a member of the composition faculty at Bard College Conservatory of Music.

Tower has received numerous awards and accolades including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1977), a composer-in-residence position with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra (1985-87), a 1990 Grawemeyer Award, the 1998 Delaware Symphony’s Alfred I. Dupont Award for Distinguished American Composer, and an Honorary Degree from the New England Conservatory (2006). She also was the first composer chosen for the “Ford Made in America” commissioning program. Joan Tower’s Fanfares for the Uncommon Woman has been performed by over five hundred ensembles and the Nashville Symphony’s 2008 recording of Made in America, Tambor, and Concerto for Orchestra won Grammy Awards for Best Classical Contemporary Composition, Best Classical Album, and Best Orchestral Performance.

Although Joan Tower’s compositions display her sincere artistry and her gift in creating great works, she admits that the composition process is quite tedious and does not come easily. In the following quotes, Towers describes her composition process:

I’m a very hands-on person. I start with an idea, two notes, four notes, and then I start sculpting it. I distrust pre-compositional thinking, because it can never be all-inclusive; it forces you by definition to think about one thing at a time…in writing music, you’re dealing with a whole range of complex parameters at once, right from the start. You have to consider time, space, rhythm, dynamics, pitches, color, all of which together create the personality of the piece. If you isolate one element, you don’t have a personality of the piece. I like to start with the identity right away, using everything that I have.1

Composing for me used to be an agonizing process, and now it’s a challenging process. I took the torture out of it because after years and years of saying to myself, ‘The only way you can do this is to be tortured eight hours a day,’ I realized I was being ridiculous. So I backed off a little with the torture. It’s still very difficult work. You

have to be infinitely patient, and you have to be a very good listener. You have to be alert to every little move you’re making.²

Joan Tower’s Fascinating Ribbons was composed in 2001 and commissioned by members of the College Band Directors National Association. Thirty-one organizations participated in the consortium commission and were given exclusive performance rights for a period of one year.³ The piece was dedicated to Jack Stamp, Conductor of University Bands at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, who for five years persisted in asking Tower to compose a piece for band. Tower turned down the request several times due to her unfamiliarity with the wind band genre.⁴ However, she attended the 1999 CBDNA conference at the University of Texas in Austin and witnessed numerous high quality performances and the conductors’ eagerness for new literature. Because of this experience, and some arm-twisting by Jack Stamp, during the conference she announced at a composer’s forum, “I definitely will say now that I will write a band piece.”⁵

After deciding to compose a piece for band, Tower pursued a process of learning more about the wind band medium. She studied band scores of composers such as Grantham, Schwantner, and Hindemith and she also listened to numerous recordings of band music. Having never written a piece for band, Tower was not confident about writing for an unfamiliar instrumentation and, in an interview in 2002, she discussed the reasons for her uncertainty:

[M]ost of the music written for band is written by band composers—people who know the band—and so the sound is phenomenal. All the doublings are just perfect, and the spacing is perfect…or the music was written by composers who lived in the universities that have big bands. So I got depressed and told Jack [Stamp], ‘I don’t think I can do this. I mean this music sounds so great.’ I wasn’t as impressed about the music itself. I was more impressed by the orchestration.⁶

At first Tower was overwhelmed, but in the end, the craft of the composer shined through and the result was a powerful composition by a legendary composer.

The title, Fascinating Ribbons, was chosen due to the ribbon-like scales in the work. It was suggested by a friend to use the title Fascinating Ribbons in reference to George and Ira

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² Ibid.
³ John Fletcher, “Joan Tower’s Fascinating Ribbons for Band: Genesis and Analysis” (D.M.A. diss., The University of Oklahoma, 2002), 49.
⁴ Fletcher, 48.
⁶ Fletcher, 207.
Gershwin’s song from 1924, *Fascinating Rhythm*. After choosing the title, Tower quoted the Gershwin song at the end of the work. “One of the rhythmic motives was taken from George Gershwin’s *Fascinating Rhythms* and many of the contours of motives in the piece are shaped in curved ‘ribbon’ patterns—hence the title *Fascinating Ribbons.*”

The premiere performance took place at the University of North Texas on February 22, 2001 by the Keystone Winds, conducted by Jack Stamp.

Writing for band was a new experience for Joan Tower, especially since she had never written any works for saxophone. Instead of shying away from the saxophones for this work, she decided to feature the section with prominent exposed parts. “I just decided that it was about time I got to know the saxes, and the best way to do that was to put them out front.”

The original version of the piece had a short eighteen-measure saxophone soli, however, after hearing the section for the first time, she decided to revise it. In the final version, the saxophone quartet has a large thirty-two measure cadenza-like feature. “I revised it because I felt it was short circuited. At first, I was I was being very timid. I wasn’t too sure about this. So, when composers aren’t too sure, they short circuit things. When I heard it, I thought, ‘this is too short—this is just too short.’”

**Saxophone Excerpts**

Joan Tower offers the following thoughts on the saxophone and the excerpts in *Fascinating Ribbons*:

It’s a fantastic instrument; it’s so versatile and so powerful. It has tremendous projection ability. It also has the same kind of flexibility as the clarinet has—the articulation, short notes versus the singing notes. When this band piece came along I thought, ‘uh-oh, I’ve got four saxophones here. Let’s see; I guess I’m going to feature them.’ This was a real risk for me because I hardly knew the saxophones at that point. So, I decided to have them running around because I remember Coltrane. I used to listen to Coltrane in New York and he just ran around that instrument—just unbelievable. So I guess that was kind of coming in to that cadenza—Coltrane—except in chords, which is not so easy.

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8. Fletcher, 209.
Excerpt 9.1: *Fascinating Ribbons*, measures 178-209

Joan Tower features the saxophone quartet extensively in measures 178-209. The dynamic level is marked $ff$ and the quartet soli is an exposed feature with unison rhythms and very difficult technical passages (frequent use of octatonic scales). The most difficult challenge for the saxophone section is the rhythmic variety from measure to measure and, often, from one beat to the next. For example, the saxophone section has aggressive and fast moving triplets in measure 178 and changes to sixteenths on the second beat of measure 179. This triplet-to-sixteenth transition continues until measure 186. Beginning in measure 194, the rhythmic variety gets progressively difficult. Tower presents ever-changing eighth note triplets, quarter note triplets, sixteenths, quintuplets, and sextuplets within a very fast tempo (quarter note = 152). Rhythm, technique, and articulations must be precise.
Excerpt 9.1: *Fascinating Ribbons*, measures 178-209
CHAPTER 10

CIRCUS MAXIMUS (2004)

By John Corigliano (b. 1938)

John Corigliano is one of the most widely recognized and acclaimed American composers. Not only is his music performed and recorded by the world’s most visible orchestras and musicians, but he has also received Grammy Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, and an Academy Award for film scoring.

Corigliano studied composition with Otto Luening at Columbia University and Vittorio Giannini at the Manhattan School of Music; he also studied privately with Paul Creston. After receiving his undergraduate degree at Columbia University (Bachelor of Arts, 1959), he was hired as a music programmer for the New York Times radio station and later as a music director for the radio station WBAI-FM in New York. He also held the position of associate producer of music programs for CBS television and music director of the Morris Theater in New Jersey. Since 1968, John Corigliano has taught composition at colleges such as the Manhattan School, Lehman College, City University of New York, and the Juilliard School.¹

He has written many major works that have reached audiences throughout the world. His numerous acclaimed compositions include three major symphonies, a violin sonata, a string quartet, a violin concerto, an oboe concerto, a clarinet concerto, a percussion concerto, a guitar concerto, a film score for The Red Violin, a large scale two-act opera The Ghosts of Versailles, and Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan.

John Corigliano often uses traditional instrumentation while exploring innovative compositional techniques to create new colors, texture, and expressive qualities. However, it is not uncommon for him to experiment with non-traditional instrumentations. For example, his one-act opera, Naked Carmen (1970), uses synthesizers, amplified instruments, kazoos, an orchestra, and vocalists of rock, soul, and opera backgrounds. Corigliano writes music with the intent to reach a broad audience:

I care deeply about communicating with my audiences. For quite a while now too many composers have seemed not much interested in communication, particularly with big

audiences, and this has tended to give modern music a bad name. There’s obviously something wrong when large numbers of people race for the exit signs when they see the name of a contemporary composer on a symphony program. That’s the fault of ignorant and reactionary audiences, you might say, and that is partly true. But I also wonder about those composers…the ones who write music that has little or no reference to an audience. I don’t understand composers with what I call an eternity complex, people who ignore today’s audiences and think of themselves as misunderstood prophets whose masterpieces will be seen as such in a century or so. I wish to be understood, and I think it is the job of every composer to reach out to his audience with all means at his disposal.²

Corigliano has written three symphonies; the first symphony was written for full symphony orchestra; the second symphony was written for string orchestra; and the third symphony, Circus Maximus, was orchestrated for winds, brass and percussion. Symphony No. 3: Circus Maximus, which took two years to complete, was commissioned by Jerry Junkin and the University of Texas Wind Ensemble. The premiere performance was in Austin, Texas at Bass Concert Hall on February 16, 2005. Circus Maximus is John Corigliano’s first work specifically written for band; his Gazebo Dances, arranged for band, was originally written as a piano four-hand suite.

In his approach to Circus Maximus, Corigliano was enthusiastic about the challenge of writing a large-scale work for band and also excited about the advantages the ensemble presents. Attending a band concert, I find exhilarating. For starters, the repertoire of band music is largely contemporary. As a result the audiences expect and look forward to their own ears and respond directly to what they hear. Most important of all, concert bands devote large amounts of rehearsal time over a period of weeks—not days—to learning thoroughly the most challenging of scores. With its combination of new notations and spatial challenges demanding an intricate coordination of a large work, Circus Maximus could only have been attempted under special circumstances. I have started the compositional process by building a shape, or architecture, before coming up with any musical material. In this case, the shape was influenced by a desire to write a piece in which the entire work is conceived spatially. But I started simply wondering what dramatic premise would justify the encirclement of the audience by musicians, so that they were in the center of an arena. This started my imagination going and quite suddenly a title appeared in my mind: Circus Maximus. The Latin words, understandable in English, convey an energy and power by themselves. But the Circus Maximus of ancient Rome was a real place—the largest arena in the world. 300,000 spectators were entertained by chariot races, hunts, and battles. The Roman need for grander and wilder amusement grew as its empire declined.³

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² John Corigliano, interview by Phillip Ramey, album liner notes for Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, New World Records 80309.
Circus Maximus is Corigliano’s musical representation of his thoughts on contemporary society. Although continuous innovation of technology and modernization provides a wealth of convenience, unfortunately, it can cause sensory overload and potential destruction. In his own words, Corigliano describes his influence for writing Circus Maximus:

Circus Maximus came from the idea that I could actually have a large body of instruments learn something so well that I could have different groups in different parts of the hall who play just starting on cue. Then the idea of what that meant for the audience turned into the idea of this grand circus, the maximal circus, and the idea that technology is the circus of our time. Circus Maximus is in Rome, but it had daily performances for 1,000 years, and it seated 400,000 people a day. So we’re talking about the ultimate entertainment. The ultimate gladiators and chariot races and competitions. The ultimate “American Idol,” Jerry Springer, of watching news and seeing the scroll below, of being on the phone, listening to music and on the computer at the same time. There’s a frightening quality to that. We have the same diversions. I’m not here to condemn them because I love them too. I have my iPhone right next to me here, and I’ve got my computer and the TV is still on, even though it’s on mute control. I love all this stuff, but I also know that same technology makes it possible for a suitcase to be brought into a city and destroy everybody. This piece is about all that.

The parallels between the high decadence of Rome and our present time are obvious. Entertainment dominates our reality, and ever-more-extreme “reality” shows dominate our entertainment. Many of us have become as bemused by the violence and humiliation that flood the 500-plus channels of our television screens as the mobs of imperial Rome, who considered the devouring of human beings by starving lions just another Sunday show. The shape of my Circus Maximus was built both to embody and to comment on this massive and glamorous barbarity.

Circus Maximus was composed in eight sections without pause and lasts approximately thirty-five minutes. Corigliano describes each movement:

I. INTROITUS
Trumpets and percussion surrounding the audience play fanfares, signaling the opening of the work. The full band enters with a primitive call from the clarinets. A short central section features the lowest winds and brass followed by the joining of the offstage and onstage ensemble playing together this time, and reaching the first climax of the work.

II. SCREEN/SIREN
A saxophone quartet and string bass call from the 2nd tier boxes in seductive inflections. Other instruments scattered around the hall (clarinet, piccolo, horns, trumpet) echo the calls, which are suddenly interrupted by…

III. CHANNEL SURFING
Our need for constant change echoes the desires of the ancient mob, only now we can access it all by pressing a button. Music in this section is constantly interrupted by other music and comes from all sections of the hall.

IV. NIGHT MUSIC I
Tranquility in nature. Away from cities, forest sounds suspend time. Animals call to each other.

V. NIGHT MUSIC II
The hyper night-music of the cities pulse with hidden energy and sudden flashes. Sirens and distant battles onstage build tension to…

VI. CIRCUS MAXIMUS
The peak of the work incorporates all the other movements and is a carnival of sonoric activity. A band marching down the aisles counterpoints the onstage performers and the surrounding fanfares. Exuberant voices merge into chaos and a frenzy of overstatement.

VII. PRAYER
In answer to this, a long-lined serene melody is set against a set of plagal (IV-I) cadences that circle through all the keys. The rising line grows in intensity against the back.

VIII. CODA: VERITAS
Music from the Introitus enters almost inaudibly, but grows in intensity until it dominates the “prayer” music, and the surrounding trumpet calls reach an even higher peak. A gunshot ends the work.⁶

Corigliano requires the saxophone quartet to be located in the 2nd tier box and part of the “Surround Band.” “I like the sax sound by itself and not as a doubled sound. So the idea of isolating them and taking them out of that, giving them their own place, and then uniting them with a bass player so they could do something that is jazz influenced…it was exciting to me—to give the saxes a personality.”⁷

In the score of Circus Maximus, John Corigliano provides the instrumentation and positions of the musicians on stage and in the concert hall:

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Circus Maximus
Instrumentation and Positions

STAGE
(Stage Band)

Stage Band
4 Flutes (1 and 7 doubling Piccolo)
4 Oboes (1 doubling English Horn)
3 Clarinets in B-flat
2 Bass Clarinets
1 Contrabass Clarinet
1 Bassoon
4 Cornets
4 Trumpets in B-flat (1 & 2 doubling Trompet in D)
4 Flairs in F
4 Trombones
2 Euphoniums
2 Tubas
2 Horns
1 Harp
1 Timpani
1 Percussion (4 - 5 players)

Surround Band
1 Clarinet in B-flat
4 Saxophones (1, Alto, 1 Tenor, 2 Baritone)
2 Trumpets in B-flat (1 & 9 trombones)
2 Horns in F
3 Percussion
2 String Bass

Marching Band
2 Trumpets in B-flat
2 Cornets
2 Euphoniums
2 Tubas
2 Timpanis
2 Percussion (Percussion: 2 from Surround Band)

*Note: A 12-gauge shot gun is required. It should be for a soft lead/black powder gun. A "cracker" made by Winchester, a "black powder" charge is not an acceptable substitute, but the black powder is louder and creates much larger flame from the barrel. Because of safety considerations, a licensed pyrotechnician may need to be hired to fire the shot gun instead of having a percussionist do so.

**Note: Trumpets 8-11 have been cross-cued on measure in the Trumpet 4 part to facilitate the minimum number of players.

G. Schirmer, Inc.
New York, NY
Saxophone Excerpts

Corigliano offers the following thoughts on the first saxophone excerpt:

Their role in the piece is in an entire movement called *Screen/Siren*, which is the whole idea of seduction. It is part of ancient entertainment—not just ancient entertainment but the ancient world because the sirens were these women who lured boats to crash on the rocks in ancient Greek legends. In addition, in the modern world, the sirens are the people who are selling us shampoo and hair products and seducing us into buying and doing things because of their beauty and their sexuality. So, the whole idea of seduction and the idea of the ability of the saxes to have this wonderful portamento quality of sliding in and out of notes, which is very seductive—plus their sound, which I felt was the perfect answer to that movement. So the entire movement is really about them.  

Excerpt 10.1: *Circus Maximus* (mvt. II: *Screen/Siren*), measures 1-48

Mvt II. *Screen/Siren* begins with an alto saxophone duet. The two altos start the movement after holding a fermata from the end of the previous movement. In the first measure of the second movement, the 1st and 2nd alto saxophonists perform a cadenza-like measure, marked “freely, seductive.” The instruments double one another, thus the fermatas, rhythms, and technical passages in this one measure duet must be perfectly together. The tenor and baritone saxophone enters in measure 9, introducing the audience to the saxophone quartet sound. This section features slow lyrical passages at a reserved dynamic level which, combined with the location of the quartet, suggests a distant, lonely sound. The tone and vibrato from each saxophonist should be consistent in order to produce the appropriate blend. Although the alto saxophonists are required to perform several quiet passages in the high register, the most noticeable range difficulty of the quartet feature is evident in the tenor and baritone saxophone parts. The baritone saxophonist will need to perform a phrase marked *p* with an altissimo G, G#, and A, while the tenor saxophonist performs an altissimo G with the same dynamic marking.

Excerpts 10.2 and 10.3: *Circus Maximus* (mvt. III: *Channel Surfing*), measures 50-55 and 81

Corigliano also gives further insight on excerpts 10.2 and 10.3:

Later in the piece they become another kind of siren, which is the sirens that police cars have and air raids have. This kind of wave form—a shrieking wave form. And so they have two roles as sirens; one as the seductive siren and the other one is the alarm siren—

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and that has to be played as a louder passage, of course. They play that in the *Channel Surfing* scene and in the big *Circus Maximus* scene. So they [the saxophones] become a very important part, as a character, of this piece—the siren.

The following excerpts contain short, aggressive saxophone quartet passages that feature slap-tongue techniques\(^9\) in the tenor and baritone saxophone parts at *ff* dynamic levels while the 1\(^{st}\) and 2\(^{nd}\) alto saxophonists perform loud and obnoxious lines marked “like police sirens.” The quartet material from these two excerpts also occur in movement VI *Circus Maximus* (measures 25, 27, and 28).

**Excerpt 10.4: Circus Maximus (mvt. V: Night Music II), measure 1**

This technical passage is marked “jazz feel” and contains similar melodic material in each individual part, yet each saxophonist enters an eighth note apart. Each saxophone part does not line up precisely, yet the notes, rhythms, and articulations must be well rehearsed in order to produce the “trickle down” effect passing from the 1\(^{st}\) alto through the baritone saxophone.

Corigliano prefers a free jazz feel in this section and the saxophonists should allow their personality to enter the interpretation.

“The saxes need to have that personality and I, very often, find that I’m encouraging them to be more free. I would have expected these saxes of the university systems to be more comfortable with jazz, but I have found some of the players actually are not. They play it as a concert player plays jazz just as if we were asking a cellist to play jazz…so I try to encourage them to have that freedom and that sense of stepping out of the classical and into another world.”\(^{11}\)

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10. Slap-tongue is produced by articulating aggressively enough to create suction between the reed and tongue. This suction will cause the reed to pull away from the mouthpiece and will create a popping sound when it snaps back into place.
Excerpt 10.1: *Circus Maximus* (mvt. II: *Screen/Siren*), measures 1-48
Excerpt 10.2: *Circus Maximus* (mvt. III: *Channel Surfing*), measures 50-55

Excerpt 10.3: *Circus Maximus* (mvt. III: *Channel Surfing*), measure 81
Excerpt 10.4: *Circus Maximus* (mvt. V: *Night Music II*), measure 1
CHAPTER 11

REDLINE TANGO (2004)

By John Mackey (b. 1973)

John Mackey was born in New Philadelphia, Ohio and studied music at the Cleveland Institute of Music (BFA, 1995) and The Juilliard School (MM, 1997). During his years at the Cleveland Institute and Juilliard, his primary composition teachers were Donald Erb and John Corigliano, respectively.

While living in New York from 1995 to 2005, Mackey actively wrote music for dance and collaborated with choreographers such as Robert Battle, David Parsons, and Igal Perry. He also received commissions from the New York City Ballet’s Choreographic Institute, Jeanne Ruddy Dance, and the Alvin Ailey Dance Company. In 2004, Mackey wrote the original score, Damn, for the U.S. Olympic Synchronized Swim Team, which won the bronze medal in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.¹

Despite Mackey’s young age, his music has recently surged into the musical world with performances in venues such as Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Italy’s Spoleto Festival, the Sydney Opera House, and Weill Recital Hall, among others. His compositions have also been performed throughout the United States and in countries such as Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, England, Germany, Italy, Japan, and New Zealand. Mackey has received composition awards such as ASCAP Concert Music Awards (from 1999-2007), Morton Gould Young Composer Awards (2002 and 2003), an NEA grant in 2007, and has held residencies at the Vail Valley Music Festival (Vail, Colorado), the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music (Santa Cruz, California), Arizona State University, Florida State University, Ohio State University, University of Michigan, University of Southern California, and the University of Texas.

The work, Redline Tango, has seen several changes since it was first conceived. The first version, titled Dementia, was originally written in 2000 as a quartet for clarinet, violin, cello and

piano. It was composed at the request of Robert Battle, choreographer for the Parsons Dance Company in New York. After receiving some complaints about the title, Mackey decided to change the name to *Breakdown Tango*. The title *Redline Tango* was adopted for the version written for orchestra, which was commissioned by the Brooklyn Philharmonic in 2003. It was then re-worked, or in Mackey’s own words, “windstrated” in 2004 at the request of a consortium commission organized by Scott Stewart (Emory University) and Scott Weiss (Lamar University). The Emory University Wind Ensemble, conducted by Stewart, premiered this version on February 26, 2004. Mackey’s *Redline Tango 2004* won the Walter Beeler Memorial Composition Award in 2004 and the American Bandmaster’s Association / Ostwald Award in 2005.

John Mackey provides the following program notes for *Redline Tango*:

*Redline Tango* takes its title from two sources. The first is the common term of “redlining an engine,” or pushing it to the limit. In the case of this score, “redline” refers to the “red line,” or the IRT subway line (2 and 3 trains) of the New York subway system, which is the train that goes between my apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music), where this work was premiered.

The work is in three sections. The first section is the initial virtuosic “redlining” section, with constantly driving 16th-notes and a gradual increase in intensity. After the peak comes the second section, the “tango,” which is rather light but demented, and even a bit sleazy. The material for the tango is derived directly from the first section of the work. A transition leads us back to an even “redder” version of the first section, with one final pop at the end.²

**Saxophone Excerpts**

**Excerpt 11.1: Redline Tango, measures 67-78**

In measure 67, the soprano saxophonist performs a fast, lyrical solo over a repetitive two-measure, tango-influenced bass line performed by the baritone saxophone, bassoon, and 1st trombone. Although there are several measures of 5/8 alternating with 3/4 time, the mixed meter should not get in the way of the flowing melodic line. The soprano solo should be performed as a connected eight-measure phrase despite the two beats rest in measure 71. The crescendo on G#
in measure 70 should serve as the connection to the lower G# in measure 72. The alto saxophone, paired with the 1st flute, completes the melodic line in measures 75-78.

**Excerpt 11.2: Redline Tango, measures 103-133**

In measure 103 and 104, the soprano saxophonist performs extremely aggressive and rhythmic flourishes that outline the octave C#’s. It is important for the soprano saxophonist to properly place the lower C#’s on the second eighth note of beats one and two of measures 103 and 104 in order to perfectly place the high C# on the downbeats. The tenor and baritone saxophone parts in this excerpt contain extremely complicated rhythms in a constantly changing mixed-meter bass line, while the alto saxophone has soloistic interjections in measures 107-108, 124, and 128. This rhythmic bass line material returns in measures 141-154, 240-251, and 280-291 of Redline Tango.

**Excerpt 11.3: Redline Tango, measures 166-190**

The soprano solo in measure 166 is slower and more flexible in tempo than the solo from the previous section of the piece. The indicated smears and pitch bends reflect, in Mackey’s words, the “sleazy” nature of Redline Tango. The smears going down a whole or half step can easily be performed by lowering the jaw. The pitch bends on the second half-note in measures 168 and 173 and also on the last two quarter notes of measure 172 can be performed by lowering the jaw while fingering chromatically downward. In measures 179-185, the soprano saxophonist is instructed to perform the melodic line in a “schmaltzy” style. The flexibility of tone quality in the high register and written scoops should be enough to capture the “schmaltziness,” therefore, exaggerated vibrato is not necessary in this passage and would only take away from the beauty of the phrase. The scoops in measures 180, 184, and 185 should be performed by slowly fingering the next note higher while slightly bending the embouchure lower and then upward. The “mini cadenza” in measures 186-190 is marked “extremely freely” and, in measure 187, “very dramatically (almost over the top).” In measure 186, the first sixteenth note figure should accelerate and the second should ritard into the trills in measure 187. The intensity and speed of the trills should increase all the way into the fermata on high Eb. The “add lib run” in measure 189 can be performed by first, bending the pitch downward with exaggeration and then fingering
a fast chromatic scale down to low D. The decrescendo will help the sound of the “ad lib run” since it can disguise the chromatic scale and make it sound more like a glissando.

John Mackey offers the following advice on performing this cadenza:

It is a tango, so it needs to be sexy. Really take advantage of the spotlight that is on the player to do something interesting and do something cool and play the notes that are there. I don’t like it so much when things are added. If too much is done, the piece kind of stops at the cadenza. I don’t want that to happen. But, within what’s on the page there is a lot of room for things you can do. At the top of the cadenza, there is a big bend down. It’s a chromatic run, but it’s also supposed to be bent. Different people, depending on what their throats can do, can bend it really far before they pick it up with keys. It’s fun to hear stuff like that.4

Excerpt 11.1: *Redline Tango*, measures 67-78

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Excerpt 11.2: *Redline Tango*, measures 103-133
Excerpt 11.3: *Redline Tango*, measures 166-190

Tango, Somewhat freely $d = 56$

soprano saxophone

solo richly, rubato

$\text{f}$

measure 166

bead pitch down at end (like a sigh)

measure 169

measure 173

ad lib chromatic run down to f

mp

mf

measure 176

schmaltzy

mf

measure 179

measure 182

f

measure 185

extremely free

measure 188

ad lib run

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CHAPTER 12

SYMPHONY NO. 2 FOR CONCERT BAND (2004)

By Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)

Frank Ticheli spent his childhood in Monroe, Louisiana and later moved to Texas where he graduated from L.V. Berkner High School in Richardson. He received a Bachelor’s degree in music theory and composition at Southern Methodist University and a Master’s and Doctorate in composition at the University of Michigan where he studied with William Albright, Leslie Bassett, William Bolcom, and George Wilson. Ticheli served as Assistant Professor of Music at Trinity University (San Antonio, Texas), composer-in-residence with the Pacific Symphony Orchestra, and is currently Professor of Composition at the University of Southern California.

Ticheli’s compositions have been performed by the Atlanta Symphony, the Detroit Symphony, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and he has appeared as guest conductor throughout the U.S. and Europe. He has received numerous awards including the William D. Revelli Memorial Band Composition Contest, the Charles Ives Award, and the Walter Beeler Memorial Prize.

Frank Ticheli has written a wide variety of music including works that were influenced by the Los Angeles riots (Radiant Voices), the Mt. Vesuvius eruption (Vesuvius), the Columbine shootings (An American Elegy), and also jazz style (Blue Shades). Jazz influence is often evident in his work, and it stems from his childhood in Louisiana, where his father was a jazz musician and his grandfather performed in a Dixieland band. “New Orleans traditional jazz is in my DNA…it’s very personal for me.”

With close to thirty years of experience composing music, Ticheli has admitted that the creative process is difficult to understand. “It’s not an easy thing to talk about or do. It’s a great mystery, and I don’t really understand how one composes, I just know that I do it…you’re thinking about all the instruments, you’re thinking left to right in time and you’re think up to down vertically—thinking about the register and the chords and the texture.”

2. Ibid.
Even though Ticheli has written works for orchestra, chorus, and chamber groups, the majority of his compositions are written for band. When asked about his motivation to compose for wind band, he replied:

The one thing the wind band has is a whole group of saxophones and the orchestra doesn’t have that. There are certain things a wind ensemble can do that an orchestra can’t and vice versa…it’s the uniqueness of it that appeals to me, but also it’s the fact that when I write for wind ensemble, nine times out of ten, it’s going to be rehearsed and preformed carefully by people who have time and have motivation and have passion for new music, for living composers. So that’s a huge reason, just knowing that my music will be cared for and not just babysat for a little while and then abandoned. And I’ve grown up with it. I’ve grown up playing in public school wind bands my whole life, all my childhood, just like so many other Americans.³

Ticheli’s Symphony No. 2 was dedicated to Dr. James Croft upon his retirement as the Florida State University Director of Bands. Croft’s friends and former students commissioned it as a gift of thanks for his teaching, friendship, and guidance. The first performance was planned for his retirement concert in April 2003; however, since Ticheli was not yet finished composing the work, only the first two movements were performed.⁴ The complete symphony was premiered by the University of Michigan Symphony Band, conducted by Steven Davis, at the 2004 CBDNA North Central Division Conference. Ticheli offers the following program notes for Symphony No. 2:

The symphony’s three movements refer to celestial light—Shooting Stars, the Moon, and the Sun. Although the title for the first movement, Shooting Stars, came after its completion, I was imagining such quick flashes of color throughout the creative process. White-note clusters are sprinkled everywhere, like streaks of bright light. High above, the Eb clarinet shouts out the main theme, while underneath, the low brasses punch out staccatissimo chords that intensify the dance-like energy. Fleeting events of many kinds are cut and pasted at unexpected moments, keeping the ear on its toes. The movement burns quickly, and ends explosively, scarcely leaving a trail.

The second movement, Dreams Under a New Moon, depicts a kind of journey of the soul as represented by a series of dreams. A bluesy clarinet melody is answered by a chant-like theme in muted trumpet and piccolo. Many dream episodes follow, ranging from the mysterious, to the dark, to the peaceful and healing. A sense of hope begins to assert itself as rising lines are passed from one instrument to another. Modulation after modulation occurs as the music lifts and searches for resolution. Near the end, the main theme returns in counterpoint with the chant, building to a majestic climax, then falling to a peaceful coda. The final B-Flat major chord is colored by a questioning G-Flat.

³ Frank Ticheli, interview by author, telephone August 8, 2008.
⁴ Ibid.
The finale, *Apollo Unleashed*, is perhaps the most wide-ranging movement of the symphony, and certainly the most difficult to convey in words. On the one hand, the image of Apollo, the powerful ancient god of the sun, inspired not only the movement’s title, but also its blazing energy. Bright sonorities, fast tempos, and galloping rhythms combine to give a sense of urgency that one often expects from a symphonic finale. On the other hand, its boisterous nature is also tempered and enriched by another, more sublime force, Bach’s Chorale BWV 433 (*Werr Gott vertraut, hat wohl gebaut*). This chorale—a favorite of the dedicatee, and one he himself arranged for chorus and band—serves as a kind of spiritual anchor, giving a soul to the gregarious foreground events. The chorale is in ternary form (ABA). In the first half of the movement, the chorale’s A and B sections are stated nobly underneath faster paced music, while the final A section is saved for the climactic ending, sounding against a flurry of 16\(^{th}\)-notes.\(^5\)

**Saxophone Excerpts**

The following excerpts are all from the second movement, *Dreams Under a New Moon*, which is described as “a series of dreams or dreamlike events…intended not only to express a dreamlike world, but also to open a door that would invite the listener to enter into that world. The movement’s form is extremely free, but its freedom is balanced by intense motivic unity and economy of means.”\(^6\)

**Excerpt 12.1: Symphony No. 2 (mvt. II), measures 2-10**

The first entrance of the alto saxophone immediately follows a similar moving line from the first and second clarinets. It is important that the alto saxophonist colors the sound closely to that of the clarinet in order to maintain the flow and texture of the opening theme. During the first two measures of the alto passage, there are soloistic sixteenth note passages in the flute and oboe parts. Therefore, the alto saxophonist’s tone quality must also balance beautifully with flute and oboe. In measure six, the sixteenth notes must be even and precise since the first clarinets have the exact articulations and rhythmic pattern.

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6. Ibid.
Excerpt 12.2: *Symphony No. 2* (mvt. II), measures 31-33

The tempo marking is quarter note equals 56 and the solo in measures 31 through 33 presents rhythmic challenges and displays a wide range of dynamic control. Alternate F# fingering should be used for the last F# in measure 32.

Excerpt 12.3: *Symphony No. 2* (mvt. II), measures 41-59

Frank Ticheli’s thoughts on the third excerpt:

> The movement suddenly darkens and intensifies. A solo alto saxophone shouts out fiercely—the call motive interwoven into the solo—like a lone voice raging against injustice. Against this, the ensemble plays a series of forceful snap-rhythm chords. During this intense dialogue between soloist and ensemble, the ensemble members must obey the dynamics carefully, coming down to *piano* where indicated so that the soloist may be heard clearly. Likewise, the soloist must throw caution to the wind, playing as powerfully and aggressively as tastefully possible. Even as the soloist’s dynamic level diminishes, the intensity level should remain very high.⁷

> That particular solo is very aggressive and shouting above the ensemble. There’s nobody else that can do that in the orchestra or in the wind ensemble. It’s only a sax player who can do that solo in that register with that intensity.⁸

Beginning in measure 41, the section is marked *Aggressive*, therefore the alto saxophone solo must be forceful and intense. The first note, low B, is marked *ff* with an accent, however this pitch must be controlled and refined yet, at the same time, it must be aggressive. This solo is rhythmically challenging and the accents and articulations must be clear. Also, high F’s and D’s on the alto saxophone are often sharp; the saxophonist must play these pitches in tune in order to outline the minor 3rd intervals (“blue notes”) that are so prevalent throughout this movement. In measures 56 and 57, the alto saxophonist must play the middle D’s in tune, since these pitches are often quite sharp.

Excerpt 12.4: *Symphony No. 2*, (mvt. II), measures 155-160

This section recalls the “Aggressive” theme, now marked *ffff*. The alto saxophone is paired with the horn while the trumpets respond with a similar *marcato* passage. The saxophone section is required to perform in an extremely powerful manner, yet tone must not get distorted or thin.

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⁷. Ibid.
⁸. Frank Ticheli, interview by author, telephone, August 8, 2008.
Excerpt 12.1: Symphony No. 2 (mvt. II), measures 2-10

Tranquil, poco rubato (\( \text{\textit{\textbar}} = \text{c. 44} \))

Excerpt 12.2: Symphony No. 2 (mvt. II), measures 31-33
Excerpt 12.3: *Symphony No. 2* (mvt. II), measures 41-59

Excerpt 12.4: *Symphony No. 2* (mvt. II), measures 155-160

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CHAPTER 13

RADIANT JOY (2006)
By Steven Bryant (b. 1972)

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Steven Bryant was surrounded by music at an early age. His father was a band director and professional trumpet player, and because of this influence, he spent much of his early years in a band room. At seven years old, Bryant started composing melodies and, when it was time to join the band, he chose the saxophone. His composing and interest in arranging continued through high school, and this eventually led to his decision to pursue saxophone and composition in college. “I wrote my first wind piece my senior year. Probably around then in high school I realized that this is unusual and…I did feel compelled to do it.” 1 After high school, Bryant studied composition at Ouachita University with Francis McBeth, the Juilliard School with John Corigliano, and the University of North Texas with Cindy McTee.

Although still early in his career, his success as a composer is shown in the growing list of ensembles and organizations that have commissioned his works. The list includes the Amherst Saxophone Quartet, the Indiana University Wind Ensemble, the U.S. Air Force Band of Mid-America, the Calgary Stampede Band, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Wind Orchestra. His compositions have been recorded by the University of North Texas Wind Symphony, the El Paso Wind Symphony, the Rutgers University Wind Ensemble and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Wind Orchestra.

Bryant prefers writing works for large ensembles, especially wind bands. The act of composing is both a frustration and a joy for him. In the following quotes he describes his thoughts on creating music:

I think it’s like an addiction. It’s a high; it’s a legal high I guess you would say. Because it’s incredibly frustrating for a large part of the process, but as you get toward the end—or at least as I get toward the end—as the pieces start falling into place, it becomes euphoric. It really does. My mind is racing; my heart’s beating really fast as the puzzle solves itself and I see the path open and I see, ‘Ah! This is it!’ 2

I’m drawn to large ensembles. I’ve written some chamber music; I have a saxophone quartet, for instance. But very few chamber works; I find that terrifyingly

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1. Steven Bryant, interview by author, telephone, August 21, 2008.
2. Ibid.
difficult to write. So, I’ve been drawn to large ensembles, large forces, lots of sound. Not just a loud wall of sound, though I love that too, but the vast orchestrational possibilities and colors. I find myself drawn to mixing up many different colors and jumping from one to another rapidly. I would love to write more for symphony orchestra too, I just haven’t had that many opportunities—I have three works. Really, it comes down to practicality. The wind ensemble most closely satisfies the two things I want, which are a large group of forces and colors and many performance opportunities at a high level. There it is. I get to hear the music that I write and I get to hear it more than once. I think that’s critically important.3

In 2006, Jack Stamp, director of bands at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, commissioned Steven Bryant to compose a piece for wind band. At first, Bryant intended to write a more serialized, twelve-tone row influenced piece combined with a constant groove.4 However, after several weeks of frustration due to a lack of progress with the original idea, the piece took a surprising turn:

By a couple of months in, I was almost angry about the piece because I couldn’t figure it out. I had nothing. Then, at some point—I can’t remember precisely the day or what exactly happened—I had the groove; I just turned on the sequencer and the computer and started recording…I just made up this little line, and that became the saxophone line. Then, I thought, ‘OK, that’s totally not what I thought I was going to write. That’s a totally different idea than what I thought I was doing—what I’ve been banging my head against the wall—but that seems like a lot of fun. Let’s just do that.’5

Jack Stamp and the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Wind Ensemble premiered Radiant Joy on October 15th, 2006. The following year, it was named winner of the National Band Association’s William D. Revelli Contest.

Saxophone Excerpts

Steven Bryant offers the following advice on the saxophone excerpts:

Style is everything. If you don’t know that style and don’t feel comfortable with the kind of laid back jazz—even though that word is stretched so far to accomplish so many things—just playing the notes is not enough. Not all the notes are equally important. It should feel very comfortable to the listener as well as the player—almost as if you’re just sitting down to improvise and it just happens to be completely ordered, structured…but it should still have that loose, very comfortable feel—stylistic comfort. That, to me, is most

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. 

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important. I don’t obsess over particular notes or pitches. I don’t mean loose as in rhythmically loose [or] sloppy, but very comfortable with the style.⁶

Excerpt 13.1: Radiant Joy, measures 18-28
Bryant marks the tempo “Groovin’ (quarter note = 126-130).” This excerpt is a fast paced rhythmic duet with the soprano and baritone saxophonist performing a solo line two octaves apart. The technical sixteenth-note patterns and syncopated rhythms must be accurate. The soprano saxophonist is required to perform in the higher register; sharp pitch tendencies, especially high D’s, E’s, and F’s, must be corrected. This duet occurs again in measure 122 of Radiant Joy.

Excerpt 13.2: Radiant Joy, measures 40-56
This saxophone section feature is similar to the soprano and baritone duet, yet the technique and syncopation is extended and becomes more difficult. Each saxophonist must strive to perform precisely as a unit in order to achieve proper balance as a section. In turn, this will allow the important saxophone feature to shine through as the solo line. The alto, tenor, and baritone lines are written in the high register; sharp pitch tendencies must be corrected. This saxophone feature occurs again in measure 144 of Radiant Joy.

Excerpt 13.3: Radiant Joy, measures 166-176
The baritone saxophone takes over the melodic material in an exposed solo. In the fifth measure of the solo, Bryant writes a solo countermelody performed by the pianist. Melodically, the two lines are similar but the rhythmic differences require precise tempo matching in order for the solos to line up correctly.

⁶. Ibid.
Excerpt 13.1: Radiant Joy, measures 18-28
Excerpt 13.2: *Radiant Joy*, measures 40-56
Excerpt 13.3: *Radiant Joy*, measures 166-176

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CHAPTER 14

WOLF ROUNDS (2006)
By Christopher Rouse (b. 1949)

Award winning composer, Christopher Rouse, was born in Baltimore, Maryland and, at an early age, knew that he would spend his life composing music. Growing up, Rouse was highly influenced by both classical and rock music. Rouse studied scores and searched for new music that he had not yet heard.\(^1\) He eventually became very interested in the music of the rock band Led Zeppelin.

The music [of Led Zeppelin] was very dissonant, full of strange influences and weird recording techniques. Partly it was the loudness, that raunchy, hard-driving quality, but also the fact that they were doing so many fascinating things with meter, with silence, with phraseology. It wasn’t just mindless heavy metal in 4/4. Led Zeppelin’s music guided me into thinking about things like rhythm, meter, and silence in my own music.\(^2\)

After graduating from Oberlin Conservatory in 1971 with a Bachelor of Music degree, he studied composition with George Crumb for two years (1971-73). Rouse then chose to study composition with Karel Husa at Cornell University where he earned his Master of Fine Arts and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees. During his years at Cornell, he composed several pieces and won a prestigious National Endowment for the Arts fellowship. In 1978, Christopher Rouse accepted a teaching position at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor where he received a Rockefeller Foundation grant and another National Endowment for the Arts fellowship. He taught composition at the Eastman School of Music from 1981-2002 and since 2002, has taught composition at the Juilliard School of Music.

Christopher Rouse is world renowned for his orchestral writing. His compositions have been performed by major orchestras in the U.S. and also the Berlin Philharmonic, the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in Birmingham, England, the orchestras of Sydney and Melbourne, the London Symphony, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Stockholm Philharmonic, the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony, the Vienna Symphony, the Orchestre National de France, the Moscow Symphony, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra,

\(^1\) Catherine A. Rand, “Christopher Rouse’s *Wolf Rounds*: Compositional Insight and World Premiere Performance Preparation” (D.M.A. diss., The University of Miami, 2007), 24.
the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the radio orchestras of Helsinki, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Leipzig, Tokyo, Austria, and Berlin.

In addition to his Rockefeller Foundation grant and two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, Rouse has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for his trombone concerto, written in 1993, the Academy Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Grammy Award in 2002 for Best Contemporary Composition, and he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2002.³

When asked about his creative process and composing, Rouse replied:

I think there is a need to speak to humanity, to say something meaningful about the human experience. We realize, of course, that the vast majority of Americans will never know our work exists. Even the majority of people who hear our pieces will not be struck by what we’re writing about. But the connection our work makes with the few people who are affected, moved, or excited by our music validates the effort. To bring to receptive peoples’ ears and eyes, hearts and brains a vision of what it is to be a human being is the real purpose for me—that’s the reward.

On to practical matters. Let’s say I’ve been commissioned to write a twenty-minute orchestra piece, using no more than the basic complement of instruments, no extra players, no organ, no offstage brass. The first thing that occurs to me is what the piece will try to say, what it’s about. Next, I usually decide on the material near the end of the piece, the final point of arrival. Then I decide on various waystations, including the beginning of the piece (which may or may not be the next thing that occurs to me after the ending). Once I have enough waystations, I feel ready to begin writing, even though there are still millions of musical decisions to make. With enough waystations not too far apart from one another, I have an overall sense of the architecture of the piece. Figuring out how to get from A to B and B to C can happen during the process of writing.⁴

Gary Green and the University of Miami Wind Ensemble commissioned Wolf Rounds in 2006. The ensemble performed the premiere at the Stern Auditorium of Carnegie Hall on March 29, 2007. At first, Christopher Rouse was not interested in writing a piece for band due to an insecurity to write for an ensemble “without the strings.”⁵ However, he ultimately decided to make a significant contribution to wind band literature. In the following quotes, Rouse discusses his reasoning for agreeing to compose Wolf Rounds and the creative concept behind the work:

Unless you are doing a lot of transcriptions or arrangements, [wind ensembles] don’t have a lot of pre-twentieth century repertoire. So, as a result, …[from] the people who do

⁵. Rand, 35.
really care about contemporary music, and are good musicians, there is a level of commitment. You see it in Gary Green, and excitement about doing new repertoire by composers who don’t necessarily live exclusively in the band world. That [energy] is projected to the students, who get excited; they work hard and get committed to doing this music. And that is such a wonderful experience. I understand that there is a real feeling that people want to play your music.6

My concept of the work was to introduce a series of “circular” musical ideas that would repeat over and over until metamorphosing to a new idea that would then also be repeated in the same fashion until becoming yet another. These musics would be of different lengths so that their repeated overlaps would produce a constantly changing sonic landscape. Sometimes these ideas would repeat verbatim; at other times there would be gradual but constant development within each repetition. Some instruments would introduce new musics while others would continue to repeat their material for a longer period of time before moving on to a new idea.

My first impulse was to entitle the work “Loops,” as it seemed to me that this was an accurate description of the processes involved in composing the piece. However, this title seemed a bit prosaic. The word “loops,” though, led me to think of the Latin word “lupus,” which means “wolf.” I was put in mind of the way in which wolves circle their prey, and these predatory rounds of course reminded me of the circular nature of my presentation. Thus the final title: Wolf Rounds.7

(Reprinted by kind permission of Christopher Rouse)

The end result, Wolf Rounds, is not just another piece for band. It is quite possibly one of the most significant pieces for band written in recent years. “The thing that is important is that we have a significant, arguably, one of the greatest composers of our time on the earth right now, writing a piece for an ensemble that is primarily winds and percussion.”8

When Christopher Rouse composed Wolf Rounds, he included only the bass and baritone saxophones. However, the bass and baritone saxophone parts in Wolf Rounds include arguably the most important and substantial moments in the wind band genre for these instruments together. Rouse specifically chose not to write for tenor, alto, or soprano saxophone because of his dislike of the instruments, and due to the “grunge-like” nature of the piece, he felt the type of sound that the bass and baritone saxophone could produce would be most appropriate for the style.

Now originally, I had no saxes. But then as the specifics of the piece became clearer I decided I wanted a couple of low ones. If the contrabass sax were more readily available, I probably would have chosen bass and contrabass.

6. Rand, 34.
This is something that sounds like something out of Seinfeld. Saxophone players are wonderful, the best citizens, etc. etc. But, I basically don’t like the instrument; I don’t like the sound certainly of the alto. That for me is fingernails on a blackboard. It drives me up the wall, the tenor marginally less. The soprano is kind of whiny, wheezy. I just don’t like the color, timbre of the saxophone. Except for the low ones, I just picked these low ones because I wanted a gross sound. That’s why they don’t really have anything lyrical, its all just “dat dat dat dat dat” because that’s something I feel they do very well, the low ones, particularly the bass. The bari can still be a pretty good melody instrument, I just didn’t treat it that way.

I wanted to be able to have bass lines that [were] kind of grungy, an edge to it, which I couldn’t really get with bassoons. Tubas can do great kinds of gastrointestinal sounds, but they don’t have the same kind of edge that low saxes have. Saxes really have that “zzzz” quality to them in the low register which is what I wanted for my bass line.9

Saxophone Excerpts

The following excerpts showcase Rouse’s intentions for the two saxophones in Wolf Rounds. The majority of the baritone and bass saxophone passages in the piece outline the “grunge-like” bass lines that are so prevalent in the piece. In several sections of the composition, the bass line is the actual focal point and the baritone and bass saxophones become the featured voice. The saxophonist’s approach to performing Wolf Rounds should be loud and obnoxious, with extreme attention to detail on rhythmic accuracy. In an interview with the author, Rouse suggests that the saxophone parts are “intended to sound funky and rather gross. It was my intention to heavily amplify the string bass—making it sound something akin to an electric bass—and then have the baritone and bass saxes add a rough, edgy quality to that sound. Often the string bass is doubling all or part of the combined sax lines. The overall effect is intended to be reminiscent of funk music.”10

Excerpt 14.1: Wolf Rounds, measures 1-55

The baritone and bass saxophones introduce the bass line vamp along with the string bass, tuba, bassoon, and bass clarinet. Despite the several instruments performing the bass line, it is the saxophone section that establishes the “edgy,” grunge-like tone concept. The baritone and bass saxophone should be equal in volume in order to sound like one instrument creating a single bass

10. Christopher Rouse, email message to author, July 27, 2008
line. The articulations should be aggressive and crisp and, even though the suggested dynamic is **ff**, the accented notes should be performed much louder than non-accented notes. These strategically placed accents immediately set up the “funk” style in the opening moments of the piece.

**Excerpt 14.2: Wolf Rounds, measures 184-200**

The following excerpt presents challenges to the saxophonists, not only due to the fast tempo but also because of the technical passages starting in the low register. The baritone and bass saxophones pass the triplets to the oboes on beat 1 of measure 185, 188, and beat three of 190. Starting in measure 191, the saxophones coordinate with triplet passages in the woodwind section. The technical difficulty of these triplet passages may cause the saxophonist to drag the tempo; however, since these short triplet gestures in the woodwind section must be precise, the saxophonists must serve as the anchor to keep the tempo steady. Proper air support and embouchure are vital to perform these passages cleanly, confidently, and in time.

**Excerpt 14.3: Wolf Rounds, measures 518-552**

The following excerpt displays a powerful recurring bass line that passes from the baritone to the bass saxophone. The volume should be **ff** and the intensity should drive all the way to the low Bb’s in measures 518-533. The placement of the accents in these measures is more awkward in the bass saxophone line compared to the easily placed accents in the baritone saxophone passages. However, the accents must be obvious and accurate. In measure 535, the saxophones perform a unison four-note bass line with the horns, tuba, and string bass. Although this is a line that was being performed by the bass trombone, tuba, and string bass since measure 517, it really becomes evident when the baritone and bass saxophone enter. The tone quality of the saxophones performing **ff** in the low register adds the needed edge during measures 535-552.

**Excerpt 14.4: Wolf Rounds, measures 565-605**

Measures 565-591 presents a rhythmic, syncopated bass line that is especially awkward in the bass saxophone’s low register. The four-measure saxophone figure is performed five times with seven beats of rest separating each occurrence. Each subsequent statement begins on the beat prior to the previous statement. For example, the phrase in measure 565 begins on beat one, and
the phrase in measure 570 begins on beat four; measure 576 begins on beat three and measure 582 begins on beat two. The final occurrence of the phrase in measure 588 returns to beat one. The fast tempo requires quick and accurate movement in the bass saxophone’s spatulus keys during the last few beats of each phrase.

The baritone and bass saxophone lines from 592-626 are very similar to the bass lines at the beginning of the piece, however the saxophone sound is more exposed in this excerpt. Articulations, especially in the low register (measures 618-626), must be crisp.

**Excerpt 14.5: *Wolf Rounds, measures 629-658***

Measures 629-635 feature the low register of the baritone saxophone at a *ff* dynamic. The rough, edgy sound from both saxophones should not only be embraced, but also exaggerated. The saxophones join the low woodwinds, low brass and string bass in measures 637-658 but it is the saxophone’s purposely-intended raucous tone that should be the focus. To accomplish this, the baritone and bass saxophone must stress the volume through these phrases.

**Excerpt 14.6: *Wolf Rounds, measures 664-672***

The baritone saxophone performs this difficult passage in unison with the clarinets and oboes. The *ff* volume helps the intonation since the baritone saxophone high register is often very sharp, and louder dynamics on saxophone help lower the pitch. The articulations must be crisp in order to match the clarinet and oboe articulations, and the tone quality of the altissimo G#’s should be consistent with the other notes within the phrase.
Excerpt 14.1: *Wolf Rounds*, measures 1-55
Excerpt 14.2: *Wolf Rounds*, measures 184-200
Excerpt 14.3: *Wolf Rounds*, measures 518-552
Excerpt 14.4: *Wolf Rounds*, measures 565-605
Excerpt 14.5: *Wolf Rounds*, measures 629-658
Excerpt 14.6: *Wolf Rounds*, measures 664-672
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWS WITH COMPOSERS

Steven Bryant
Telephone interview
August 21, 2008

JB: What type of music inspires you?

SB: That’s a huge question. The best answer is—it depends on the day and the time and when in my life you’re asking that. In general, [it is] music that has a clear direction and a clear journey so to speak, transformation perhaps; something that really grabs you—a surface that is very accessible—and also depth. It needs to have both for me. That’s also what I try to create in music—music that grabs you on the first listen, but doesn’t let you go on the fifth or sixth listen.

JB: Please discuss your musical background.

SB: I grew up in a musical family. My dad was a band director and professional musician—trumpet player—jazz and classical—before I was born and all through my youth. So I grew up in a band room, literally. My mom would do the flags so, after school or before I was even in school, I would spend all my time in the band room. So, I was around music; there were instruments around the house. I started piano lessons when I was six or seven and I loved playing piano, but I hated playing other people’s music and practicing. I really liked playing; I just wanted to make up stuff. So, there were many years of struggles with lessons and actually practicing. I took up saxophone when I started in junior high when we started band. I played alto sax for all those years and through college and probably around ninth or tenth grade. I had always been fascinated with writing music down—just the notation and the way it looked—and sometime around then I just started writing things down and just making things up. I made no distinction between a cheesy pop song or a brass arrangement. I would love to arrange stuff from early Chicago albums; I would just pull it up and arrange it for friends in high school and we would play them. So, it was just always in the air and around. It never seemed odd to me to sit down and make up music. I think the one thing that really got me back into and fascinated with playing piano, which I had taken a break from and from there started writing, was when Bruce Hornsby’s song The Way It Is came out in 1986, I said, ‘Alright I’ll figure that out.’ So I sat down, figured it out and from there I just started making up stuff and really writing.

JB: Was there an event or certain thing that lead to your career in composition?

SB: I don’t know if there is any one thing. When I went to college I didn’t know what else to do so I majored in composition. I studied with Francis McBeth and that was really a good, solid fundamental education and grounding in how to deal with the compositional process. The summer after I graduated from undergrad, I went to a one week festival and John Corigliano was there as a guest composer; that’s when I met him. It was in Arkansas. It was a very small festival so I actually got to spend a lot of time with him and show him my music. It was very
personal. It was really cool and that lead to me studying with him a couple of years later. Then, of course, spending my time in New York and the people I met at Juilliard. Friends of mine like Eric Whitacre, Jonathan Newman, and John Mackey, we were all in school there together. It is, in large part, who you know and just by being in a place like that, I got to know a lot of people who have become very successful. Whether it’s the right thing or not, who you know does make a difference in where you are.

**JB: When did you realize you had a gift in composition?**

SB: You know, it’s funny; I never thought, ‘Oh, I have a special gift in composition.’ I just felt compelled to make things and not just in music, though that’s where I found the most fascination. The first thing I ever wrote down, musically, I was probably seven or eight years old and I had just started piano lessons. I remember it. I don’t know where it is, but it’s in 6/4 in d minor and I just felt compelled to do that. It didn’t seem odd or unusual or outside the norm to me to write music. I guess I assumed anybody could do anything they wanted. Then it wasn’t really until I was in high school that I started writing and I wrote my first wind piece for my senior year. Probably around then, in high school, I realized that this is unusual and, although I wouldn’t say that I thought, ‘Well, I’m good at this,’ but I did feel compelled to do it—that’s a better way to put it.

**JB: What do you like most about composing?**

SB: I describe composing like—I’ve recently come to this description—I think it’s like an addiction. It’s a high; it’s a legal high, I guess you would say. Because it’s incredibly frustrating for a large part of the process, but as you get toward the end—or at least as I get toward the end—as the pieces start falling into place, it becomes euphoric. It really does. My mind is racing; my heart’s beating really fast as the puzzle solves itself and I see the path open and I see, ‘Ah! This is it!’ and it falls into place—especially if I surprise myself even with something small. I come up with something that I don’t know where that came from, but [I think], ‘Wow! That sounds really cool to me!’ I really like that. That feeling keeps me coming back for more even though that’s only five or ten percent of the process and the other ninety percent is incredibly frustrating and has you questioning, ‘Why am I doing this?’

**JB: Describe your composition process (inspiration, setting, etc).**

SB: Beginning a piece is always very difficult because that means that I have to force myself to sit there and not surf the web, email, or do anything else. And [I have] to really think deeply for hours about what it is I want to do with this piece—what do I want to explore—the clichéd blank canvas—facing that and the horror of that. But, just doing that—I have a computer, I have a keyboard. I do most of it directly in the computer, though I do still sketch things with pencil and paper; it’s kind of back and forth between the two and it depends on the type of music I’m writing. I still do a sketch of, not necessarily of notes, but shapes and just general prose about the architecture of what I’m going to do—just notes to myself and maybe a diagram. [The diagram] starts small and gets bigger and then there’s some stuff up here high and then something huge comes in low—something like that—just generic shapes, not actual pitches. It’s a lot of different fragmentary ideas that eventually start to coalesce into something. Or, I find a
particular melodic or harmonic thing that really catches my ear like with *Radiant Joy*, the actual sax lick—the melody. I just played that one day and thought, ‘Ah! That feels good’ and from that it just unfolded very quickly, but it took a long time for me to get to that point.

*JB:* How would you describe your composition style?

*SB:* I have no idea, to be honest. It depends on the piece. For instance, if you just heard *Radiant Joy* and tried to extrapolate from that, you would have no idea what the rest of my music sounds like. That’s actually in a lot of ways a rather different piece for me, though, to me, it seems very much a part of my compositional world and sound aesthetic. Everything is very motivically based. I try to use an economy of materials. [A] very small amount of materials spin out an entire piece and, regardless of the characteristic of the piece—whether it’s brash and aggressive or quirky and bizarre, or very lyric and, hopefully beautiful—it’s all that same principle underlying it. But, as to compositional style, like a label—I have no idea; I don’t have one for you, I’m sorry [laughs].

*JB:* Are there any particular aspects of the wind band that inspire you to compose for this medium?

*SB:* Well, first and foremost, I grew up around it. My father was a band director. It seemed utterly natural. Growing up in Arkansas, there were plenty of bands in the southern United States. Not so many symphony orchestras, so first and foremost, it was one of practicality based on what I was around. I wrote for band because I would have a band to play the music. I could have written for symphony orchestra, I guess, but I never would have gotten to hear it. What’s the point in that? At the same time, I’m drawn to large ensembles. I’ve written some chamber music. I have a saxophone quartet, for instance. But [I have written] very few chamber works; I find that terrifyingly difficult to write. So, I’ve been drawn to large ensembles, large forces, lots of sound. Not just a loud wall of sound, though I love that too, but the vast orchestrational possibilities and colors. I find myself drawn to mixing up many different colors and jumping from one to another rapidly. I would love to write more for symphony orchestra too, I just haven’t had that many opportunities—I have three works. Really, it comes down to practicality. The wind ensemble most closely satisfies the two things I want, which are a large group of forces and colors, and many performance opportunities at a high level. There it is. I get to hear the music that I write and I get to hear it more than once. I think that’s critically important.

*JB:* Could you discuss *Radiant Joy*, the inspiration for the work and the work itself?

*SB:* *Radiant Joy* was the first work I wrote—the first wind band work—and, actually, the first work I had written in about two and a half years. I took a break, not necessarily planned, but my life took a series of turns, so I ended up not writing anything for a while. When I came back to write this—this was a commission from Jack Stamp—I spent probably two months, maybe three, beating my head against the wall trying to come up with something. My initial idea was to do something that was dealing with serialized elements—some twelve tone rows. I have a number of sketches of things like that—all the while with a groove—with a steady pulse. I wanted to fuse these two things in some way because it was something I had never done, and it just seemed like that’s what I wanted to do. But it never went anywhere. I just got more and more frustrated.
By a couple of months in, I was almost angry about the piece because I couldn’t figure it out. I had nothing. Then, at some point—I can’t remember precisely the day or what exactly happened—I had the groove. I just turned on the sequencer and the computer and started recording. I had a high-hat [imitates high-hat groove] and then I just said, ‘Screw it.’ I just made up this little line, and that became the saxophone line. The trumpets also have it—the shout chorus. Then, I thought, ‘OK, that’s totally not what I thought I was going to write. That’s a totally different idea than what I thought I was doing—what I’ve been banging my head against the wall—but that seems like a lot of fun. Let’s just do that.’ So, without thinking about it, I decided I’m not going to be critical about it. I’m not going to think about it. I’m just going to have some fun here. Then, I just started making up stuff and the whole piece just unfolded really quickly from there. But it took several months for me to get to the point where I could find that. The piece itself is, I think, rather straightforward. It’s quasi A-B-A, at least in character. You’ve got the fast section, the sparse middle section, then come back—recap and then you’re out. So, I don’t think it’s a particularly complex composition, but I like to not repeat things exactly, so there are a number of subtle variations when things come back.

*JB:* Anything about the premiere or early performances?

*SB:* Jack Stamp’s group at I.U.P. [Indiana University of Pennsylvania] did great with it. It was really fun. I went out there and worked with them. They got the piece and played it really well. It was really the easiest birthing process of a piece that I’ve ever had. Once everybody gets in the groove and they get the notes under their fingers, the piece seems to play itself. People seem to like the piece. They get it; they learn it. We have a good time and it feels great. I like that.

*JB:* Are there any particular characteristics of the saxophone that interests you as a composer?

*SB:* I come to it a little bit differently than a lot of my other composer friends. A number of them express the sentiment of ‘What do I do with the saxophone?’ when they are trying to orchestrate or trying to write for winds. It kind of baffles them—the whole sax section. But it never has for me. I was a sax player so the transpositions aren’t a problem. I played alto—they’re clear to me. What it feels like or what it could sound like—the possibilities of the saxophone—maybe I had a better idea of that than some of them who have only heard perhaps really unsavory and not satisfying sounds from the saxophones in various settings, which, that’s easy to make. To me, [I like] the agility of the saxophone, plus the power, and the homogeneity of the section top to bottom—the only other place you get that is really with the clarinets—it’s just really useful as an orchestral tool. I particularly love having them trill in the middle [to] low range really softly; it just really fills out the section. It can kind of be like strings in that setting. I don’t know, it just doesn’t seem tacked on to the ensemble to me. It feels very integral to what a band is. It feels comfortable because I’m a saxophone player.

*JB:* What role do you think the saxophone plays in the ensemble?

*SB:* The role of all the instruments varies from piece to piece. I’m always looking for a new role for them to play—something new for them to do in the music. That being said, there are certain things each instrument family obviously is naturally fitted to. The saxophones, obviously, in *Radiant Joy*—there was no question—there wasn’t a decision to make there. This started off
with saxophones. This is absolutely in their domain. This is probably the easiest and most obvious usage—in *Radiant Joy*. Sometimes they don’t have that big of a role. I’m writing a piece right now for wind band and electronics—laptop computer. In one of the movements, the saxes barely play until the very end and [in] other movements they play quite a bit more, but it depends on what the piece calls for. It’s a piece-by-piece basis, not necessarily a general principle that I can name for you.

*JB:* Could you discuss the saxophone excerpts and solos in *Radiant Joy*? Are there any specific performance aspects a saxophonist should know when interpreting the work?

*SB:* Style is everything. If you don’t know that style and don’t feel comfortable with the kind of laid back jazz—even though that word is stretched so far to accomplish so many things—just playing the notes is not enough. Not all the notes are equally important. It should feel very comfortable to the listener as well as the player—almost as if you’re just sitting down to improvise and it just happens to be completely ordered, structured and [jokingly] sixty to eighty people around you all improvising perfectly together, but it should still have that loose, very comfortable feel—stylistic comfort. That, to me, is most important. I don’t obsess over particular notes or pitches. I don’t mean loose as in rhythmically loose [or] sloppy, but very comfortable with the style—ghost notes—what to swallow—what to bring out.
Michael Colgrass  
Email correspondence  
July 20, 2008

**JB:** What type of music inspires you?


This is a tough list to make, because I might be inspired by many other works, especially if the performance is particularly insightful—like Schoenberg’s *Erwartung* sung by Jesse Norman—the only performance of that work that ever stayed in my memory.

**JB:** Please discuss your musical background and describe the event or events that led to your career in composition.

**MC:** I was raised in a small town, Brookfield, Illinois, which was absolutely devoid of music, dance or theater. Movies were my culture. At age 10, I saw drummer Ray Bauduc in a movie play *Big Noise from Winnetka* with bassist Bobby Haggart and I was mesmerized. I hounded my father for a drum, and when I got it, I immediately played the rhythms I heard Bauduc play in that movie. I soon formed my own band, *Three Jacks and a Jill,* and started my career as a self-employed musician. I traveled into Chicago to hear the big bands and imitated every drummer I heard. Jazz was my only ambition up to age 19.

I went to the University of Illinois and studied percussion with Paul Price, who was just starting the percussion ensemble as an accredited course in universities. But I was a bad student academically because I was playing a jazz band six nights a week.

Price invited me to a percussion ensemble concert in last-ditch attempt to get me to be a serious classical music student. After the concert he asked me what I thought of it. I arrogantly told him I admired the students’ playing but that I thought the music was terrible. These were works by Varèse, Harrison, Cage, Cowell, and the other giants of early percussion composition. He took a long look at me and said quietly, ‘If you don’t like what you heard, why don’t you try your hand at it.’ I was thunderstruck by his suggestion because I thought you had to be dead to write music. He showed me some scores and I immediately dived into my first piece, *Three Brothers* for nine percussionists. We performed the work soon after it was completed (8 May 1951). The performance was a complete fiasco. I rememberPrice calling me in the dressing room afterward and saying, “I don’t believe this music is right, Colgrass. It has too much wrong notes.” I told him I was not interested in his opinion and I was going to do what I wanted. And so I have ever since.
1950). Then it was published and recorded, and has become a percussion classic, of all things! I’ve been writing ever since.

**JB:** What do you like most about composing and when did you realize that you had a special gift in composition?

**MC:** I like the challenge. Nothing I have ever done has ever been more challenging. No matter how satisfied I might be after writing a particular piece of music, the next one is always the one I eagerly look forward to in anticipation of finally getting it really right. I realized I had a gift when I was writing my first piece, *Three Brothers*, for nine percussionists, and especially during and following the performance of that work on 8 May 1951.

**JB:** Describe your composition process (inspiration, setting, etc.).

**MC:** I am inspired by movies, plays, novels and public events—and, of course, for style and procedure, music itself.

Process: my music is based on the idea of a conflict between opposing elements, or what I call a musical counterpoint of musics, or what has been called ‘a counterpoint of characters,’ because I think of the different instruments as characters in a play. I will create motifs or melodies that represent these different characters, work those small pieces of material to the limit, then stick them in a drawer and forget about it. But my unconscious keeps working on it and suddenly music will start singing itself to me, and I just do what the music tells me to do.

**JB:** How would you describe your composition style?

**MC:** My music is an amalgam of styles, combining Baroque, Classical, Romantic and ethnic styles and using a combination of sonata and variations forms and jazz. Not that you will outwardly hear the music as jazz, but it’s usually there underneath, and is the primary driving force. Jazz is, to me, what folk music was to European composers—jazz is, to me, urban folk music.

**JB:** Are there any particular aspects of the wind band that inspires you to compose for this medium?

**MC:** I love having the freedom to create my own ensemble by going to the smorgasbord of instruments the band offers. Orchestras are more limited and more conservative, in that regard. Allowing only slight variation from the norm, they like you to keep the same basic configuration of instruments. And band directors are open to anything (when I speak of band I mean wind ensemble—one on a part.) So many colors are open to me with a wind ensemble. And I know the pieces will be rehearsed carefully and given ample time. And I find wind ensemble directors inspiring; they study your score and want to know all about it. With orchestra conductors you are lucky to get a 10-minute phone conversation. Band directors communicate with each other, so as soon as a new piece is played, the word travels. Not to mention that the larger band pieces can be rented so a composer can realize the same income from a performance of a band piece as from an orchestra piece, and will probably get many more performances.
JB: Are there any particular characteristics of the saxophone that interest you as a composer? Please include any general thoughts about the saxophone as well.

MC: For me, the sax is more like the human voice than any other instrument. It can make so many different kinds of sounds, from howling, to crying, to whispering, to heartfelt, warm-toned, full-bodied emotion. I think the sax also is embedded in my musical memory and background from my early days as a jazz musician.

JB: Please discuss the saxophone solos/excerpts in Urban Requiem. Are there any specific performance aspects that saxophonists should know when interpreting this work?

MC: The first thing I would say to the four sax soloists is to play in American style, not French style. That means virtually no vibrato, although at times you might want to warm your tone up a bit with a little vibrato, but being very judicious about it. The saxophone tone I like for this piece is what you might call a cool sound—like that of Lee Konitz, Paul Desmond, and Stan Getz. I don’t mean that all the sax players need to have the same tone that they have, but at least to have the understated coolness of sound that they are known for.

One of the flaws of some performances I’ve heard is when the soloists try to be expressive and add emotion to the playing. That can make the piece sound sentimental, especially in the opening quartet, which should be understated. Simplicity and a cool detachment is the keyword here. Strong emotional expression is written into the notes and phrases when I want it later on. The sax is such a powerfully expressive instrument that one has to consider toning down the emotional element, giving the impression that the emotion is just below the surface and could come through at any time – as in the climax following the tenor sax and jazz drums solo, which is wild and where any kind of exaggerated tone can be employed, before returning to the cooler sound again in the alto sax/english horn duo following the chaos. But in most cases, the power of the emotion in this piece will be produced by just following the dynamics. The louder the sax becomes the more emotion it will automatically convey; the softer it is the more removed it will sound.

Also be very judicious about slides. I have written in one or two slides and these should be done very subtly, only a slight suggestion. It takes only the slightest bit of a slide to give the effect desired here, unlike the typically exaggerated type of slides used liberally by film composers in movie scenes where the sax provides a sleazy background to a beautiful woman running her hand up her silk stocking.

To me, the saxophone is the instrument that sounds most like the human voice, and that’s the feeling I am aiming for in this piece—to have these four soloists be like four characters in a play.

JB: Please discuss the saxophone solos/excerpts in Winds of Nagual (specifically the soprano saxophone solo in Asking Twilight for Calmness and Power). Are there any specific performance aspects that saxophonists should know when interpreting this work?

MC: Sax players should use American style sax playing, not French style with its quick vibrato. I want straight tone so the music is understated. As a composer I intend to write the emotion into the music. Any attempt to emphasize the emotion runs the danger of overstating it. Cool
detachment is the byword. Within that, the very fine player will find his/her own way of being also expressive, but that assumes a great deal of control and good taste on the part of the player.
John Corigliano
Telephone interview
August 20, 2008

JB: Please discuss Circus Maximus and the inspiration for the work.

JC: Jerry Junkin in Austin wanted me to write a band piece for some time and I had not wanted to because of A) the fact that I’m not familiar with the band repertoire and don’t feel it the way I do an orchestra and B) I thought I would have to limit the difficulty since I’m used to dealing with major symphony orchestras—and that the band piece would have to be somewhat limited. He [Jerry Junkin] played for me an arrangement of the Tarantella movement of my first symphony, which is very, very difficult, and his band played it magnificently. I realized I didn’t have any problems on the technical side. Finally, after discussions and thought, I came up with an idea of how to write a band piece that I might find exciting to do and the reason is that I always liked spacial things in music because I think it takes us out of the ideas of earphones and peddling down the street listening to Mahler. In the concert hall you can make it special. I tried to do that in my orchestral music. My clarinet concerto has five French horns in the first boxes and two trumpets above that and clarinets above that and antiphonal timpani, etc. to get a space feeling in the hall. Things like my Pied Piper Fantasy or Promenade Overture involve actual entrances and exits out through the hall while playing. Either the pied piper with kids and the soloist entering and leaving or Promenade Overture with building the entire orchestra player by player, starting with only four percussionists to a full symphony. So, the idea of that has always been fascinating to me, but the problem with symphony orchestras is that they start on Tuesday looking at the music and they play it on Thursday barely knowing it. So, I could only do limited things. I think the thing that gave me the idea of Circus Maximus was the idea that I could write an entire full-length, thirty-five to forty minute piece that involve these spatial complexities and then a band would have the time to rehearse it and learn it, whereas the orchestra could never do that. So that’s why I thought of space and playing with instruments around me and then the whole idea of surround became what was like a circus arena. Then the circus idea came to the word Circus Maximus and the place I visited many times when I was in Rome. The whole idea of writing a piece called Circus Maximus of our time and relating it to this historical entertainment stadium in Rome that sat four hundred thousand people a day for a thousand years and right till the fall of the empire, I thought that was extremely appropriate considering our entertainment world around us and our iPods and computers and televisions and film, etc. etc. So all of those came together, and over a long process involving planning of movements and thoughts of how things should go together, I built an architecture of the entire piece first and then proceeded to write it—very often checking with Jerry [Junkin] about possibilities of instruments doing certain things—certainly about using the enormous amount of trumpets, for example, that I use, etc.—that this was a real practical thing. Because you could never do this in a symphony concert—you couldn’t ask for eleven trumpets. They just have no budget for it and they would just say no. So again, the whole idea of expanding the band even in special ways was something that I could do because of the university idea of the band being part of the school and therefore there would be other people who could be called in to play. So the whole thing evolved out of me asking questions; finding answers; asking more questions; finding answers—until it came time to compose the piece and then doing the same thing. But, at least I had a map and I knew what I wanted to do and so then it was the composing of this piece, which took time too. Then
Jerry started rehearsing it—I got it to him early enough that he could rehearse it months before he premiered it in the fall. I really worked to get it to him even earlier than he wanted so that he could try things out and start to unmask what it really was. I think partly because he had it early and partly because he is so devoted and the kids in the band were so great and devoted, they ended up learning it better than any orchestra could ever do a piece of mine times ten—times a hundred. The performance was extraordinary. Then they brought it to Carnegie Hall and played it in a band convention week in Carnegie and it was an extraordinary event. I can’t imagine a more exciting New York premiere or premiere than that because all the people in the audience were connected with bands and understood what bands can do/can’t do and how this was stretching them. So the electricity in the audience was extraordinary. I’ll never forget it. In fact there is a wonderful picture Jerry Junkin has, if you’re interested, of the gunshot fired in Carnegie Hall at the moment of the flame coming out of the gun—the last note—and it’s quite a terrific picture. We had a great deal of trouble stretching that into the piece because of the legal ramifications of shooting a gun in concert halls. We’ve had to get permits. You have to have special people fire it. When we did it at Disney Hall you had to lower the charge considerably because the fire marshal wouldn’t let us use the charge that we had originally specified. No amount of arguing could change that because of California’s fear of fires. So there are always adjustments—things done that are slightly different from place to place. But now I think the band world really knows this piece and when they play it—wherever I go—it’s with a tremendous amount of authority.

_JB: How did you approach the saxophone section when writing Circus Maximus and what role do you feel the saxophone plays in the ensemble?_

_JC: I didn’t want to have the kind of sound that is done for young bands where a lot of people double the same line and you get a kind of glutinous feeling, especially when the saxes are doubling the lower brass and the horns. Instead of making them more, to me, it makes it less. I like the sax sound by itself and not as a doubled sound. So the idea of isolating them and taking them out of that, giving them their own place, and then uniting them with a bass player so they could do something that is jazz influenced—and the lone bass player, who usually sits around just doubling the tuba line, is able to play as a bass—it was exciting to me to give the saxes a personality. Their role in the piece is an entire movement called Screen/Siren, which is the whole idea of seduction. It is part of ancient entertainment—not just ancient entertainment but the ancient world because the sirens were these women who lured boats to crash on the rocks in ancient Greek legends. In addition, in the modern world, the sirens are the people who are selling us shampoo and hair products and seducing us into buying and doing things because of their beauty and their sexuality. So, the whole idea of seduction and the idea of the ability of the saxes to have this wonderful portamento quality of sliding in and out of notes, which is very seductive—plus their sound, which I felt was the perfect answer to that movement. So the entire movement is really about them. Then, later in the piece they become another kind of siren, which is the sirens that police cars have and air raids have, this kind of waveform—a shrieking waveform. And so they have two roles as sirens; one as the seductive siren and the other one is the alarm siren—and that has to be played as a louder passage, of course. They play that in the Channel Surfing scene and in the big Circus Maximus scene. So they [the saxophones] become a very important part, as a character, of this piece—the siren. I think isolating them, for me, was an answer, technically to free up the sound—to be pure saxes versus pure lower brass and winds.
without saxes. And it gave the sound of the concert band, on stage, a sound more like an orchestral wind section than like band—because doubling wasn’t taking place—which is really what I wanted to do also.

**JB:** Are there any particular characteristics of the saxophone that interest you as a composer?

**JC:** It has a quality because of its brassness and its woodwindness. It has a very special sound and it’s a shame that it’s not a standard instrument in the orchestra. I’ve used it in *Mr. Tambourine Man* also—my setting of Bob Dylan—a prominent alto alternating with baritone sax. And, again, the players usually come in from the outside of an orchestra because the orchestra is not built with the saxes as part of it. So, even though a clarinetist might be able to play a sax, usually what happens is they get someone to come in to do it. Therefore, it’s not something that you tend to do a lot with orchestras because it requires hiring somebody else. I love the sound, of course, and I love the character and mood. It’s also a very—just by its nature—a very twentieth-century sound because, even though in the nineteenth-century the saxophone was invented and Bizet used it and Debussy at the end of the century wrote the *Rhapsody*, we tend to think of that sound as: A) more American than French and B) more of our time than any other orchestral or band instrument because trumpets way back in the eighteenth-century and oboes and flutes and strings and all of these instruments, yet the saxophone really came to its own in the twentieth century.

**JB:** Are there any performance aspects that saxophonists should know when interpreting the solos and excerpts in Circus Maximus?

**JC:** Well, I think they should know the character, which I think I wrote the word seductive. And I think that they should take those liberties because the only problem with players playing music of living composers or contemporary music is they tend to be very literal. Because they feel that everything we write is what we want done and nothing else. There are some composers who feel that way so they’re not wrong in thinking that but I don’t think you can apply that to all living composers or all twenty and twenty-first century composers. Many of them need your personality plus what they write and I certainly want that. So the saxes need to have that personality and I, very often, find that I’m encouraging them to be more free. I would have expected these saxes of the university systems to be more comfortable with jazz, but I have found some of the players actually are not. They play it as a concert player plays jazz just as if we were asking a cellist to play jazz. Rather, what I would have expected naturally is the saxophonist to be playing half jazz and half concert music, just as a part of what they do. So then if you ask them to play something and you give them the cue of how to play it, they can go into that world naturally. I’ve found that really isn’t the case. It’s sometimes the case. And then other young performers really want to be very literal about it as if this were a Stravinsky piece they were playing and that isn’t really what I wanted. So I try to encourage them to have that freedom and that sense of stepping out of the classical and into another world.

**JB:** What type of music inspires you?

**JC:** Mostly music I don’t like. Because when I love something I just get overwhelmed and listen to it and just soak it up. When I hear something I don’t like, I very often get inspired because I
say, ‘That was a good idea but it was all messed up in the way that was done.’ So, I always advise my students to listen to lots of music, and when you don’t like it, listen even harder. Because if you can discover what you don’t like, then you can probably use your imagination and get excited and think, ‘What would you do if you wanted to make something you do like?’ That’s more of an inspiration to me in a funny way and I do lots of research, of course. After I decided I would do the band piece, I heard every band piece by every composer I could get my hands on. So it’s a combination of listening to everybody’s work and getting the idea of what they can do and it’s also listening to things that don’t work and seeing how they might work. Basically, I think that’s the way to do it. Just be out in the world and absorb.
Michael Daugherty
Telephone interview
July 30, 2008

JB: What type of music inspires you?

MD: I am inspired by any kind of music that is creative and surprising and where the genre or the style that the composer is working in is—that the boundaries of that style are pushed or somehow are reframed in a different sort of way. So, I should say that I’m aware of the history of most styles of music, be it jazz or classical or rock music, whatever. So, when I listen, I put the piece I’m listening to into historical perspective. Was it composed in the 50s? Was it composed in the 19th century? Then I think about what other music was being written at that time, and then whatever that composer was doing was original or somehow that composer was making a personal statement within the time frame that they lived in.

JB: Please discuss your musical background and describe the event or events that led to your career in composition.

MD: I grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and was born April 28, 1954. Growing up during that time of the 50s and 60s was a time of extreme social and political change. You had the Beatles coming to America, you had the Vietnam War, and you had the Civil Rights movement happening, you had the feminist movement happening. There were lots of changes going on in America, socially. What I mean about the Beatles is a different kind of fashion, different kind of attitude, you had Woodstock, free love, the use of drugs and this is all hitting mainstream America now. It used to be that only jazzers did drugs in dark alleys. Now with kids living in suburbs who were all of a sudden experimenting with new lifestyles: people living together, people doing drugs, people trying new social patterns. So, it was a really huge upheaval, socially. Of course, the Vietnam War was a time that pitted different generations against each other, which led to a lot of discussion and the breaking down of parental authority. Of course that is going to affect the music too. So you had composers who were writing music that challenged the basic notion of what music had always been. You had people like John Cage, people like Stockhausen, people like Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Paul Robeson. Many, many different kinds of music is going on: you had The Beatles, you had Blood, Sweat & Tears, you had James Brown, Motown; all these different kinds of musics were completely new. They were synthesizing different things together that had never been put together before. Crossing over boundaries racially, socially, and politically. This really influenced my music. In other words, the idea of crossover—a term that was being invented at that time—an integrating of ideas that would have been separated. Mixing together rock and classical or jazz and classical or funk music and electronic music—mixing together of things was crossing over of boundaries was indicative of that time. That left a great impression on me, so when I started composing my music like Metropolis Symphony, using Superman as a starting point, or a piece like Niagara Falls using a trip to Niagara Falls, or Desi using an icon from a television show, using that as an inspirational basis to write a piece for wind ensemble. This all came out of the idea of growing up in a time where there was crossing over; boundaries were being challenged. It was a time of crossover racially, socially, politically, and as I said before, musically. So, my music, [when] you hear the sounds, the titles really come out of that time.
period. So, there is really no one event that started my music. I think it’s a combination of all those things.

JB: What do you like most about composing and when did you realize that you had a special gift?

MD: I like being in the drivers’ seat so, I’ve never liked sitting in the back seat. I think the reason I started composing music is because I was hearing music that other people were not composing. Really, to hear the music I wanted to hear, I had to create it. I enjoy composing mentally. The act of composing is one of solitude. You have to come up with your ideas yourself and no one can compose the music for you. Unless you’re a film composer—some film composers have 10 people working for them. Essentially you have to come up with the ideas yourself. One of the ways I counteract solitude in the compositional process is that I also like to collaborate. So, when I’m writing a piece, like Ladder to the Moon, for violin and wind octet and several bass and percussion. If I’m writing a piece like that, I’ll work with the players. I’ll work with a violin player. When I wrote Brooklyn Bridge, I worked with a clarinet player.

There is a kind of collaboration there where they’ll come into my studio at Ann Arbor and play what I composed that day. Through that, it’s sort of a collaborative process that makes it not so much of a lonely process. When you think about jazz or rock music, for example, that’s a very collaborative process, where it’s usually a group of people working together. Of course when you’re rehearsing music for band, again, that’s a group of people working together. So, I suppose, being a conductor, when you learn the piece by yourself, I suppose, but very soon you’re in front of a group of people. It’s a collaborative sort of process and I think with composition it might take, like Brooklyn Bridge took me a year to compose that piece. So, for one year I’m by myself, basically writing that piece. One of the things I like to do is collaborate with players, but also to do reading sessions. What we did with Brooklyn Bridge about four months before the official premiere, we did a reading session of the piece. I had the piece done enough that we could do a reading session then to record the reading session and listen to it and then I can make adjustments as I need to. I might feel like dramatically something isn’t working or musically something isn’t working or compositionally something isn’t working and I can adjust it. In most genres such as film or theatre, this is how it is done. Theatre and film are a very collaborative process and dance is the same way. Your pages are made continually in the creative process. The actors will add lines, the cameraperson will suggest, ‘maybe they should stand here instead of there,’ the dancer might suggest to the choreographer some movements. It is a very give and take fluid kind of relationship between people when they’re working creatively. I try to do that as a composer to get feedback from not only players, but conductors, but at the same time maintaining the vision of what I want to do. That makes it less of a lonely process and more of a collaborative process as a composer.

JB: Describe your composition process, your inspiration, your setting?

MD: I’m somebody that, to get ideas, I like to do a lot of research or think about a piece a long time before I like to compose it. In the case of Niagara Falls, that’s a place I visited many times driving across Canada and going into New York state. Or Brooklyn Bridge, when I lived in New York over the years, I liked going. Taking the subway down to Brooklyn Bridge, walking across the bridge, I always found that to be a very personal and memorable experience. When I wrote
Bells for Stokowski—I was always a big fan of Stokowski. If I write a piece like Bells for Stokowski, I read biographies on Stokowski, I went to the Philadelphia orchestra, I went to their archives that the library had to look at photographs of Stokowski, talk to people who have seen him conduct. When I wrote Rosa Parks Boulevard, before I wrote it, I met Rosa Parks and was able to talk with her for half an hour about some questions I had about what kind of music she liked and what was her favorite piece of music, what instruments she liked. Doing research is really important to me. Many actors do that. Before they do a role, they become that role for a while. If they’re going to play a medical doctor, they’ll work at a hospital for months to observe or whatever. The process of putting myself in the role of the person or the subject I’m going to write. Like when I did the Georgia O’Keefe piece, Ladder to the Moon, I actually went out to New Mexico, spent a week out there and visited places that Georgia O’Keefe went to do her painting. That’s part of the process, but the next part of the process, of course, is putting the notes down. After I feel I’m emotionally informed in the piece I want to write, then back in Ann Arbor I’m in my studio. For years I’ve been using a computer to notate. I use Macintosh computers, whatever the current version is. I use a Kurzweil keyboard as my MIDI. I also have a Yamaha Disklavier that I use, which is an acoustic piano that has MIDI capabilities. I can interface that with the computer, then I have synthesizers to play sounds of the orchestra. I use this digital performer program to sequence the sounds, sequence my music. I’ll start with one layer and I’ll add another layer to that. I kind of add things layer by layer and listen to it and I usually record it. Let’s say I get 30 seconds of music done, I’ll then put it on a device, like a cassette or I suppose now pretty soon it would be an MP3 or something. Then I can listen to that. So if I put it on a cassette or a CD, I can drive around in the car and listen to what I composed that day. I can put it in the kitchen while I’m doing the dishes upstairs—I’ve got a stereo up there. I’ll listen to what I wrote that day, or what I’ve written up to that point, say 5 minutes, and I’ll listen to it in a variety of settings: where I really concentrate, and when I’m half-listening to it. Sometimes you can pick up a lot of ideas or hear what isn’t working if you’re not concentrating too heavily on a piece, ironically. So, I’ll listen to it driving in the car, I’ll listen to it in various settings, and I come back the next day and I pick up where I left off and compose a little bit more. I’ve got to keep this process going. Then, of course, I said I bring players in occasionally to play along with the sequencer. If it’s a concerto, you know, the concerto parts in the sequencer and the soloist comes in and plays with real time. I record it digitally, so I can put that on a CD and listen to it. It’s a very interactive process. Not only am I using my mind creatively and intellectually, but I am also using my ears all the time. It’s a constant feedback between what I create and then hearing it and then reacting to that and making adjustments accordingly.

JB: How would you describe your composition style?

MD: I think that I’m constantly balancing the macro with the micro, the large form of the piece with all of the intricacies of the detail of the piece as well. I’m looking for the big picture, but I’m also involved with the intricacies: the dynamics, articulations, timbre, rhythm, and chords. I’m picking the different aspects very carefully and how things relate to each other. I’m a very logical composer, I think. I create my basic ideas, my basic themes, the motives, intuitively. Once I’ve created that, putting the piece together is like a puzzle, it’s very intricate, like a mosaic, very intricately structured. If you look at my pieces you’ll see that part of what composing is about is using a minimum amount of material and then spinning your piece off of
that, and trying to find every possible way to get the accompaniment to all the layers of the piece—the accompaniment to the main theme, to the secondary theme—they’re all related to each other. When I grew up I remember always liking to play the inventions of Bach, for example, or fugues, just to see how all of this music could be generated off of one little motive was fascinating to me. And a lot of the composers I admire, like Gustav Mahler, for example, or Shostakovich, or even certain ways Charles Ives, would generate material off of one theme, then generate a couple of themes, then generate a whole work off of that. Some would do it in a much more disciplined way than others. I’ve always admired that kind of composing. Of course the whole twelve-tone influence comes from that, where you generate a whole piece from a twelve-tone row. I always thought that was fascinating. That’s really the difference between improvisation and composition. I’m a very good improviser, so I could just sit down and improvise a piece for piano and it would sound pretty good. I’m very fast at improvisation; I can improvise pretty much in just about any style, it’s just something I’ve always been able to do. That’s very different than composing. I could just improvise something and quickly orchestrate it and say, ‘okay, there’s the piece,’ but that is not composing to me. Composing is very carefully structuring a piece, putting all the pieces of the puzzle together, making it like a jigsaw puzzle you get in a box and you can assemble it and all of a sudden you have this very logical structure there. That, to me, is what composing is all about.

*JB: Are there any particular aspects of the wind band that inspires you to write for this medium?*

MD: What I like about it are the people who are in the world of wind ensemble or symphonic band. There are great conductors and performers. These people are really into music. They like contemporary music, they like playing music by living composers. They’re open to pretty much any idea you can come up with: use of electronics, dance, videos or reconfiguring seating of the ensemble, large groups or small groups or whatever. It’s a very flexible world where the composer really can be very creative. To me, the band world now, is where the orchestral world was back in the 19th century, which was a very creative time and where the orchestral world was a really a part of society. There was a great excitement to that world. The professional orchestral world now is a very different place where the attitudes of many of the players toward management are not what I would call positive attitudes. In the band world, maybe because it is not professional, it keeps a sort of—I’ve always preferred college athletic sports as opposed to professional athletic sports. In college there’s just the age they’re at and this certain energy there that just can’t be matched anywhere else. The enthusiasm and level of playing at the college level is very high. You can write anything you want. There is usually not an issue about what can be played or what can’t be played, and if there is, it’s a psychological issue. I really feel that in most cases, bands can be playing any level of complexity they want to be playing and any level of difficulty of works. I think sometimes people are a little too cautious about that issue. Yeah, it’s a wonderful world and it’s a world where composers feel welcomed. That’s why you’re seeing a lot of composers today in America—not so much in Europe—the most interesting composers in America today working in that genre. I mean you just had John Corigliano and Christopher Rouse just now, in the last several years, write their first real piece for band. I think that shows a sign of the times, that the band is a very exciting place. You also had Joseph Shwantner just write his first piece recently for band. I think composers who, before, were not interested or didn’t write in that genre, are now writing in that genre—the band world. I think that’s a sign that there are great things to come.
JB: Are there any particular characteristics of the saxophone that interest you as a composer?

MD: I really like the saxophone. When I was at North Texas State in the 70s there were two kinds of saxophone playing, they called it legit or jazz. The legit sound was the French sound, the heavy vibrato, French sound. The jazz sound was a Coltrane, Charlie Parker kind of sound. The players would have two different kinds of mouthpieces and two different kinds of attitudes about playing the music—kind of a split personality. But, I’ve always loved the saxophone. The sax is a very interesting instrument because of the altissimo range and the fact that it’s such a versatile instrument. The fact that it has been used in the jazz world and the jazz players have really come up with all these very interesting ways: multiphonics, alternate fingerings, and all these sort of things. The saxophone is an incredibly versatile instrument, and I’ve always loved it. I especially like four saxes together. I’ve always liked that sound of four saxophones. Traditionally, in the jazz world, in the big band world, the saxophones were really the string section. Sometimes we think of the saxophone as being very energetic, raucous sort of instrument, but a lot of the scoring, a lot of the arrangers use the saxophones in big band like strings. They can play very melodic and very soft as well. I like the sax; it’s an interesting family. It’s a shame the saxophone has not really been included in the orchestral world. One of the theories I’ve heard from William Bolcom is that in the early 20th century the American Federation of Musicians basically came up with a roster of what the official orchestra was and the saxophone was not included in that. It was basically the orchestra we have today—so, no guitar and no saxophone. Percussion was a loose word at the time and the percussion world has seen huge growth of what is available to use for percussion. By and large the orchestra has been frozen since the early 20th century. William Bolcom’s theory was that because the AFM’s sort of freezing of the instrumentation only allowing an alto sax because of *Bolero* and a few other pieces—which is played by the second clarinetist. Allowing only an alto saxophone or one saxophone—that’s it—basically to cover those pieces because composers had put those in their pieces, *Pictures*, and so forth. Both of those are Ravel pieces that use the saxophone. But saxophone quartet never became a part of the orchestral pallet, which is too bad. So, it’s been sort of “ghetto-ized” in jazz, big band and wind ensembles. You know there are occasionally composers who do use the saxophone. I know John Adams has used them in orchestral music. Some of the pieces I’ve written for symphonic winds have used saxophones, so that means they have to hire a sax if they do it in an orchestra concert. It’s one of the great instruments of the 20th century, certainly.

JB: How do you approach the saxophone section or a saxophonist when writing works for band and what role do you feel the saxophone plays in the ensemble?

MD: I think for me the saxophone certainly shares the role of the strings. When I’ve done my own re-orchestrations of my pieces for orchestra to the symphonic band world I frequently recompose the string parts using saxophones. I frequently think of the saxophones as being melodic instruments or strings. But the big concern is function. Because of the timbral range and the dynamic range, they can pretty much assume any role within a symphonic band context.

JB: In the arrangement of Red Cape Tango, how do you feel about the way the saxophone section was used in the orchestration?
MD: That’s the one piece of mine that I didn’t actually do the orchestration on, Mark Spede did. I did work with Mark quite a bit on the piece. He showed me the first version of it and I suggested some re-orchestrations, along with Jerry Junkin. It was actually his idea to have that piece re-orchestrated for band. Mark Spede, I believe, did that for his doctoral dissertation. I remember I made a number of suggestions, as I saw it, about orchestrational things. It’s actually because of that experience that I then realized that I could do that myself, so I did that for *Bells for Stokowski, Rosa Parks Boulevard*—I think that’s it—those two pieces. It’s a lot of work. It’s almost like redoing the piece totally. In the reverse, I may do an orchestral version of *Brooklyn Bridge*, clarinet concerto, if the opportunity arises. A lot of clarinetists are playing it and there’s been some interest in a version out there for orchestra. I like what Mark did with the piece. I think the way the saxophone is used is very appropriate.

JB: I’m noticing a lot of composers are using soprano, alto, tenor, baritone instead of the traditional alto1, alto2, tenor, bari sax. Do you think it is a result of seeing more saxophone quartets performing in competitions or playing recitals? Do you think it’s that influence or do you think it’s a personal sound choice by the composer?

MD: Well, I think for me, I was always a great fan of John Coltrane playing the soprano sax. So I first became aware of the soprano sax because of John Coltrane. It just seems like with the soprano you have even more range. So I think for me it’s the sound, the timbre, but also the fact that it adds upper notes, which then provides even greater possibilities. It just depends, if I want a more mellow sound, I’d probably go with the two altos. But, if I want a fuller range I’ll go with the soprano. I think, too, that twenty years ago the soprano saxophone was less common, I’m going to assume, in band music. And now almost every alto player plays soprano. Even alto flute twenty-five years ago would have been rare and now every university school of music has an alto flute—or should have an alto flute. It just makes sense to use an alto flute if the appropriate mood calls for it.

JB: Do you have any suggestions for performance interpretations of the saxophone solos in Red Cape Tango?

MD: I’ve always preferred the jazz soloist myself, to the French sound. I guess the sound I like is that. I like the American sound. I don’t mind the French sound, but in my ear I’m usually hearing the American, jazz sound. Maybe someday I’ll come up with a piece that uses a French sound. I think I like the American sound. That’s just what I grew up with.
Donald Grantham
Telephone interview
November 16, 2008

JB: How do you approach the saxophone/saxophone section when writing works for band and what role do you feel the saxophone plays in the ensemble?

DG: Well, I don’t think that I approach it very much out of the ordinary. I look at it as a very strong reinforcement for the woodwind section—kind of the same role that the horn plays in the orchestra. They can play with the brass and the woodwinds and reinforce them very effectively.

JB: Please discuss the saxophone solos/excerpts in Bum’s Rush. Are there any specific performance aspects that saxophonists should know when interpreting this work?

DG: I got in touch with a saxophonist and tried over all the solos and tweaked them. It has been a long time; I don’t remember exactly what we did. I think we modified the range in the opening solo a little bit. I was just going for a pretty virtuosic kind of jazz style in all of the saxophone sections in that piece.

JB: Please discuss the saxophone solos/excerpts in J’ai été au bal. Are there any specific performance aspects that saxophonists should know when interpreting this work?

DG: Of course, it is supposed to be a kind of Louisiana stylistic effect in the whole piece. Anything [the saxophonists] can do to familiarize themselves with that literature would help out with that.

JB: Are there any particular characteristics of the saxophone that interest you as a composer?

DG: I think it is a really fine solo instrument. I like the timbre of it. I like the way it blends with other instruments and reinforces them, especially oboes and horns, which I use them with pretty frequently. I guess I like them better, mostly, the less vibrato there is. That’s a comment that I have made frequently when I have gone to hear my pieces played and I occasionally even write in the score to use very little or no vibrato.
Johan de Meij
Telephone interview
July 28, 2008

JB: What type of music inspires you?

JDM: I would say classical music. I think if you know my work you can easily find which composers have been very important for the way I write. I can name a few: Puccini, Stravinsky Prokofiev, John Williams, John Adams, Aaron Copland, Tchaikovsky—those guys. They have been a great source of inspiration and I like their music very much. Sometimes I deliberately try to sound like them. I do it on purpose. There are more: Schubert, Dvorak, Shostakovich, Sibelius, Nielsen. We have so much amazing literature, especially in the classical field. You may notice that I’m not mentioning any wind music composers. Although there are a few that I like very much, the majority of my inspiration comes from the great classical literature.

JB: Please discuss your musical background and describe the event or events that led to your career in composition.

JDM: As a composer I am actually a late bloomer because I didn’t start until I was 31. I grew up in the Netherlands, in Vorburg—my hometown, and my first musical experience was getting acquainted with a trumpet player who played in the local wind orchestra of Voorburg. He gave me my first lessons on trumpet and, after half a year, I joined the local band and I switched to cornet and then, after a year, the conductor asked me to switch to trombone because we didn’t have enough trombones. I said, ‘OK’ because I was always intrigued by the trombone. So I switched to low brass and I never changed ever since, although later I also picked up tuba and euphonium. So that was the beginning. I started in the local band and I loved it. I was fifteen years old, which is actually rather late to start a musical instrument. Pretty soon I also joined a youth symphony orchestra in The Hague. My whole career, I have always been with one leg in the wind band world and the other leg in the symphony world. I think you can sort of hear that in the way I write and the way I orchestrate. I try to make the band sound like an orchestra. I don’t mean this badly but some of the band pieces [out there] really sound like band. I think there is a way to avoid that by using different orchestration and, like I said, all the examples come from—I’m self-taught; I never had one lesson. All my lessons are with the dead guys; the composers that I just mentioned. [Growing up] I was very greedy in knowing stuff and I went to the library once a week and I borrowed LP’s with all the classical music—all the Mahler all the Bruckner, and I would read the scores simultaneously. I think that’s where I learned most of my orchestrations. I never studied the scores, really; I just looked at them while I was playing the LP’s. I’m talking about the end of the 60’s early 70’s and there were no CD’s yet—I sound like an old man [laughter]. From there on, I grew up in a very versatile musical world. I played in a Dixieland Band, I formed my own brass quintet and a brass quartet, I played in an Opera Orchestra and in a Big Band. I did everything which I could find. I was very greedy and ready to learn, but I was not planning to be a professional musician; I was just a very eager amateur player. At the same time, I was studying in a teacher-training college to be an elementary school teacher. I did specialize in music but I was never planning to be a professional musician or a composer until I had to go into the army. [I was] drafted for sixteen months and I was actually lucky enough to be sent to one of the military bands. I played music all day there. I played tuba,
trombone, euphonium, alto horn—the whole range. That was actually the switch in my life when I felt, ‘This is much more fun than being a teacher.’

**JB: Which military band were you in?**

JDM: It was the Nederlandse Cavalerie, the Dutch Cavalry. It’s actually the part of the army with the tanks and the ground division. My first destination was to go to Germany and be there for sixteen months driving a tank or being a soldier, but I was lucky enough to stay in the Netherlands and I could just join the band. We would do concerts and ceremonies. That’s where I started to make my first little arrangements—not very impressive—but that was in 1976 so I was only twenty-one by then. Right after the military service, I happened to win an audition with the Amsterdam Police Band, which was a forty-piece professional wind orchestra. So I never became a schoolteacher. I only [taught] four months just before I had to go into the army to overlap that period. That was it. Right after my military service, I could go directly into this band in Amsterdam for euphonium and trombone on the side, but my main instrument was euphonium. I played there for eleven years until the band was—they stopped it financially and that was the end of that. In those eleven years, I started to make my first arrangements and actually, by the time the band was killed, I just finished *Lord of the Rings* in 1988. So, I actually lost my job and I started my own company, Amstel Music, just to publish *Lord of the Rings*. Because that came out and nobody wanted to publish it so I said, ‘well, I will do it myself.’

**JB: No one wanted to publish it at the time?**

JDM: No, because it was too long. It was forty-five minutes. I was publishing with Molenaar and all my first arrangements, like James Bond and Phantom of the Opera, they are all still with Molenaar. They were hesitating; they said, ‘It’s such a long piece.’ In a way, it was true; by then it was not a tradition that wind band works were any longer than six minutes. Molenaar was very hesitant to publish it and actually said, ‘No, I’m not going to do it,’ which he later very much regretted, of course, because it became an instant hit and it’s still the best selling piece in my catalogue. So, after the military service, I decided to become a professional musician and I played in a lot of symphony orchestras during my Amsterdam Police Band time, as a freelance player. I played with some great names like Bernard Haitink, Valery Gergiev, and Edo de Waart, some of the big conductors in the Netherlands. Those were all enormous inspirations just to create my own music, but it took a while until I started my own composition.

**JB: What do you like most about composing?**

JDM: I like to express myself in a creative way. The big difference with performing, of course, is that whatever you make will always be there even if I’m not on this earth anymore. With playing, it’s the opposite; you play a wonderful concert, people applaud and they go home and they forget about it—only if it’s really bad they always remember that [laughs]. The wonderful thing about composing: it’s not a very easy job. It takes a lot of energy and a lot of your time and thought, but as soon as it’s done and it’s good, it’s there forever. That’s the great thing about it. That’s what I love about composing—and arranging too, of course.

**JB: Was there a certain time when you realized that you had a gift in composing?**
JDM: Well, it took a while. Actually, *Lord of the Rings* was my first piece and that was my introduction into the world as a composer. It wasn’t until the premiere of *Lord of the Rings* that I found out, ‘Hey, wait a minute. This is something special, this is not the usual kind of band music.’ So, from then on I was sort of launched into the big world. After that I wrote a lot of other pieces, but *Lord of the Rings* was really the starting point in my career and the starting point as a composer.

*JB: How would you describe your composition process?*

JDM: That’s one of the hardest questions. I always try to give a different answer because the process is always different—it’s never the same. But, I can say for sure that it hardly ever starts with inspiration. Inspiration always comes later. It always starts with just thinking about, ‘What’s the subject? What kind of piece do I want to write?’ And then comes the hard part. The hard part is just sitting down with a blank piece of paper in front of you and you start from scratch. I start to gather themes or chord progressions until I have enough rough material that I could sort of start to sketch—a very rough layout of the piece. That takes a couple of weeks. So it’s not so that when I’m riding my bicycle or taking a walk through the woods that I come up with this great theme and come home and write it down. No, that’s not the way it works. I just have to invent at the keyboard or on a piano, and that gets it there. Mozart just had it in his head and all he had to do was write it down. As far as I know, most composers do not work that way. It’s just work. My inspiration almost starts when the extended work is done and then I come up with certain changes or better instrumentation or a better transition here or there.

*JB: How would you describe your composition style?*

JDM: I would say neo-classical. It’s not very contemporary. It’s sort of based on tonality on classical music, but with contemporary influences here and there.

*JB: Are there any particular aspects of the wind band that inspires you to compose for this medium?*

JDM: Absolutely. What I love about the wind band and that whole world is they are so open to new music. If I’m writing a new piece there are at least twenty bands that are begging me to do the world premiere, whereas the symphony world is much more difficult to get into. They prefer to play the classical repertoire and very few of them are open to playing a new work—especially in America. For commercial reasons, they have to fill up the hall. It’s easier to fill up the hall with Dvorak and Chopin than with de Meij or [incorrectly pronounces] “dimayjee” [laughs]. That’s the hard part.

I do have some symphonic works now; the three symphonies are re-written for orchestra and so is my cello concerto. Actually, my first symphony was written for orchestra first and then transcribed for wind orchestra. But there you go, the sad part is after the premiere of my first symphony, which was very well received—we had three concerts, rave reviews, a CD recording, and ever since it has never been played for orchestra. And there is no interest at all. I have sent it to many conductors. The wind band version has been played many times already; not as much as *Lord of the Rings*, though, and same for *The Big Apple Symphony*. *Lord of the Rings* is
beyond comparison to all the other works. It has had thousands and thousands of performances over the last twenty years. The nice exception is that the symphony version of *Lord of the Rings* is actually doing very well.

**JB:** Could you describe the inspiration of *Lord of the Rings* and any aspects of the premiere or early performances that would be of interest?

**JDM:** It was my first piece for wind orchestra and I wanted to write something substantial because, in those years and still, the typical wind band concerts have seven pieces before the intermission and nine after the intermission and then five encores, but they are all very short works. And I thought, in comparison with the symphony world, it wouldn’t be a bad idea [for a concert] to have a substantial work like a concerto and a symphony and a larger piece and that’s it. But in the 80’s, it wasn’t so used and that’s why my publisher refused to publish it. He said, ‘no, it’s too long and nobody can concentrate that long.’ Fortunately, I didn’t follow his advice; otherwise, we wouldn’t have this piece. So, the main reason [for writing it] was I wanted to have a substantial work for wind orchestra. There was no commission. I just did it for fun and for my love of music, and I wanted to see what I could do as a composer because I had never done anything before besides arranging. I chose *Lord of the Rings* just because I thought it would be a good idea. It was very colorful [with] personalities and an exciting book and, of course, it was way before the movie came out. It turned out to be a great idea because, especially after the movie and during the movie, the symphony got another launch. Everybody now knows who Gollum is and Gandalf is etc. So, that turned out to be a very good choice, not because I was such a Tolkien fan or something. I heard about his book and thought that may be a good idea. So, I started reading it with the idea of writing music to it. I read it with a different perspective than just a fan or normal reader.

So, it was premiered in Brussels on March 15, 1988. I finished it in December of 1987, to be precise, and it was recorded by the Belgian radio, so immediately I had a wonderful recording. From there on it went pretty fast. The Dutch Royal military band made a CD of it the same year and with that recording I sent to the Sudler Prize in Chicago and I won the first prize the next year in 1989. It helped me a lot in getting in the publishing market, and from that year on I have been to Chicago every year to the Midwest Clinic. I was able to find a U.S. distributor, Ludwig, until 1995 and then I changed to Hal Leonard, and I’m still working with them. *Lord of the Rings* has been a very important piece in my life. Actually, it was a turning point from being just an arranger. I was a composer instantly. It also launched my company Amstel Music, which is still very small. I only publish my own works and a few other composers like Soren Hyldgaard and the classical arrangements that I do, but I try to keep it small and delicate as possible.

**JB:** Are there any particular saxophone characteristics that interest you as a composer?  

**JDM:** I try to use the saxophone for its best colors and it’s best ranges. I like certain combinations and I try to avoid certain combinations, like flute and saxophone—I don’t like at all [that] sound. Sometimes I try to make it sound as part of the string orchestra like the violas or cellos. It can add some wonderful colors to the wind band palate, but you have to do it right. If you do too much doubling with the horns or the other brass it gives this typical band sound, which I try to avoid. I always consider the saxophone as a quartet—sometimes a quintet with the
soprano. Some of my wind band works have a soprano on top of the two altos, tenor, and baritone. I write a lot in families—the trombones, the horns, the saxophone—they always have their own set up, like in the orchestra.

JB: How do you approach the saxophone or saxophone section when writing works for band and what role do you feel the saxophone plays in the ensemble?

JDM: It is a very versatile instrument; you can practically write anything. I’ve never noticed that something I wrote is unplayable. There are so many amazing players; technically it’s never a problem. They can ‘bblbblbblb’ [imitating fast playing].

JB: Please discuss the saxophone solos and excerpts in the piece?

JDM: Gollum is a great example of how you can use the soprano saxophone as a very effective instrument in the band, like the Eb clarinet. I think it only makes sense to use the soprano saxophone if you give it a specific role. Grainger did that in some of his works. It’s a wonderful sound. I love the soprano saxophone as long as it’s used right. It doesn’t make sense to have it double the trumpet or clarinet—then it sounds awful. Specifically in Gollum I use it because it can imitate the character of Gollum with the flutter tongue and make him whine and make him very aggressive and sound like a wild cat or whatever. For that reason, I kept the same instrumentation in the symphony version. In the symphony version, it’s the same instrument. I didn’t transcribe it to a symphony orchestra instrument because I don’t think you can replace the soprano saxophone by anything else.
**John Mackey**  
Telephone interview  
August 26, 2008

**JB:** *What type of music inspires you?*

**JM:** I think it varies quite a bit. It often depends on what kind of piece I’m writing at the time. I listen to a lot of different things depending on the style of the piece I’m trying to write. I listen to some contemporary classical music. I listen to a band called *Tool*—their music is basically rock—fairly hard rock. They have a lot of very interesting uses of rhythm and meter and things that I incorporate into a lot of my music. There is an attitude and aggression in some of their songs—I try to work in that kind of strength into pieces that I do myself. There’s a piece that I have, called *Turbine*, that actually uses quite a bit of rhythmic things that I got from their music. I’m about to start a new piece and I’ve been listening to quite a bit of [John] Adams, which I listen to a lot anyway. A lot of it, [I listen] for pacing—I think Adams is great at pacing something where he can make something twenty minutes long that I don’t get tired of listening to even if there is no melody at all. I don’t think Adams is great with melody, but he is incredible with pacing of shape. Orchestration—I think he does extremely well also. I get a lot of orchestration ideas from him even though it doesn’t sound like Adams when I’m done, I don’t think. I don’t think it’s nearly as good as Adams [Laughs]. I’ve done pieces that are bluegrass inspired and I would spend a summer listening to bluegrass. For *Sasparilla*, that was more of a cowboy piece so I listened to cowboy songs for a month before I wrote *Sasparilla*.

**JB:** *Please discuss your musical background.*

**JM:** My parents were musicians—my dad still plays sax and trumpet, nonprofessionally, and he was in a couple of the Navy bands. He played trumpet in the sixties. My mom was a flutist. My grandfather owned a music store and played clarinet and flute. So there is a musical background for sure, but I didn’t study anything formally until I got to college. I had never studied an instrument, so I don’t play any instruments at all. I can kind of type my way badly on a piano, but that’s about it. If you put a piece of sheet music in front of me at a piano, I probably can’t play it [Laughs]. Unless it’s really easy piano music for children—I could do that, but I can’t play any other instruments. I’ve always written everything on a computer and that’s the only way I can hear the stuff that I’m writing, so I’m dependant on that for as long as I’ve been writing. I started when I was eleven—just using a Commodore 64 [computer] writing music just for fun. My grandfather taught me how to read music. [He taught me], if you’re in 4/4 [time], how many rhythmic lengths you need to add up to four beats. So, once I knew that I could randomly pick stuff until I figured out what sounded good. I put a lot of standard rep into the computer. My mother worked at Ohio State University and I would go to the music library and check out scores when I was twelve and thirteen and I would put the scores into the computer, basically sequencing them. That’s how I learned counterpoint, orchestration, and figured out arranging, because the Commodore could only play three notes at a time. So if I had a big piece that had fifteen things happening at once, I had to figure out what were the three most important things at any one time. That’s how I learned transposition, too, because the scores were transposing scores so I would have to figure out if you put in a French horn part the way it looks on the page, it would be wrong. It was all just self-taught. She had music theory books and I
would put the exercises into the computer to hear them because we didn’t have a piano or anything either. I didn’t even have the option of learning to play piano because we didn’t have a piano. Everything was all just computer until I got to college. Still, that’s how I write everything—on the computer. But then, I took piano class, and by that time, you start learning piano when you are seventeen and it’s a bit late. So I’m not at all good. It’s not like I can’t read music [Laughs]. I can basically play melodies as I’m working on a piece on a digital piano that’s hooked up to the computer, and I can find chords and things. That’s probably why my music doesn’t have a ton of counterpoint, really. It’s because I’m putting things in one at a time. I can’t actually play them—two things at the same time. I depend on ostinato where things will just repeat and the computer can repeat stuff easily and I can put something on top of it. But figuring out two completely independent things at the same time is hard to do if I can’t actually play them at the same time. That’s probably why there’s not a ton of counterpoint in what I do.

**JB:** Please discuss the event or events that lead to your career in composition.

**JM:** I don’t know. That could be any number of things. My living comes from writing for band now, and that happened because of *Redline Tango*. That was from going to a CBDNA convention in Minneapolis and [I] met some people who I gave CD’s to—band directors who commissioned *Redline Tango* and they heard the orchestra version of *Redline Tango* and asked me to transcribe it for band. And that is basically why I have a career—from that one piece. Being smart enough to go to that convention and lucky enough to meet people who insisted that that was the piece that I should transcribe rather than other pieces I had on the same CD, which I thought would make more sense, but they really pushed for *Redline Tango*. The success of that is what led to more commissions and performances. Before that, I was writing primarily for dance companies in New York City, which is fun but you can’t make a living doing that.

**JB:** What do you like most about composing?

**JM:** I don’t really like it at all [laughs]. It’s incredibly hard and slow. I like finishing but generally it’s just not fun work. I’m slow and it takes me a long time to figure out how to start a piece. There are parts that are fun when things are going well, but that’s not the majority of time. The majority of the time it’s very, very, difficult for me. I don’t write very many pieces per year. I’m supposed to be writing a piece right now that I don’t quite know how to start writing it. So, I keep putting it off. I wouldn’t describe it as something that I like. I like having done it – I love having finished a piece, but I don’t like it when I’m working on it, necessarily. I can get very cranky and not fun to be around—at least for my wife; no one else really sees that. I get kind of less nice, I guess.

**JB:** Describe your composition process.

**JM:** Generally, once I know what the commission is, I talk to my wife about it. She’s a writer. I, generally, will try to come up with what a piece is about. It’s never completely abstract because that’s too hard to just say, ‘I’m going to write a nine minute piece’ and there are no specific guidelines about what the piece will do or a title or something. We will generally talk about what a piece is about and then I’ll figure out the structure of it—maybe a timeline of what will happen in the piece—somewhat specifically with the shape of things on a piece of paper; maybe
with words or things like, ‘This many minutes of this type of introduction’—just figuring out structure on paper with what looks like a graph timeline. Then I start writing and I write everything on the computer with piano sounds and trombone sounds and percussion. As I’m working on it, I’ll slowly orchestrate from that so that there becomes less and less piano sounds and they become assigned more and more to specific patches. Then I go through and do the actual orchestration at the end. That’s basically the step by step. The crucial thing is coming up with what the piece is about before I start writing it. Even if that’s just as little as a title, which often it is—that’s helpful. The piece that I’m about to start—I have a title and I know generally what it is about, but now I’m at the part where I have to find some kind of notes [laughs]. All of these steps are kind of equally difficult; finding notes is the hardest one. I know the shape of it, but I don’t know yet what the notes are. So that’s the next half and that’s the most time consuming. You asked me earlier about what I like—I actually do like orchestrating the pieces because that’s not quite as hard. That’s more fun because then it’s just like deciding what colors things are going to be, and that’s fun. That’s just like trial and error, and playing with things; it’s like a puzzle. But, before that, when you’re actually finding pitches—that’s the very, very hard part. So that’s where I am, now, on this new piece and that’s why I’m putting it off because I know that next step is going to be really hard.

**JB:** How would you describe your composition style?

**JM:** I never know what to say to that because I feel like the pieces, hopefully, are fairly different. *Sasparilla* doesn’t sound like *Turbine*, for example. There are things that, I think, sound like I do them. There are stylistic things; generally, there is a rhythmic thing—a rhythmic element that’s in all the pieces. There’s some kind of direction in a piece, I hope. I think pacing is very important to me when I’m working. Good rhythmic drive—there’s not a ton of slow music in the catalogue that I have. Slow music is very hard for me to write, I think, because I depend so much on rhythm. Stylistically, the most unifying thing really is a strong rhythmic sense in most of the pieces and a lot of percussion—at least in the band pieces—obviously not in the string pieces. In the band pieces, the percussion is extremely important to me. So, there’s a lot of percussion in them. There’s not a ton of counterpoint. There’s a lot of ostinato. I’m not really sure what else makes it sound like me. I don’t want to know because then I would get self-conscious about it.

**JB:** Are there any particular aspects of the wind band that inspires you to compose for this medium?

**JM:** There are a lot. I love being able to write for a large ensemble. That’s very fun. It’s great to write for ensembles with conductors that are eager for new pieces. As a composer, it’s incredibly gratifying to write a piece that somebody wants to play. That’s a huge, huge deal. I don’t want to write pieces that nobody will ever hear about. And I feel like, with bands, there is definitely a desire for repertoire more so than any other medium I know of. There are solo instruments that want repertoire—I’m sure euphonium players would love more euphonium sonatas. But big ensembles—the only large ensembles that want new works all the time every year is band. That’s just great to have that kind of desire for the work. Also, there are a lot of really good bands that can play very hard music. So I don’t ever—unless the commission is specifically for a younger band—I never try to write a piece thinking, ‘Oh, that’s going to be too
hard.’ That’s just never a consideration. That was what I was initially concerned with when I was going to start writing band music. I didn’t want to do Redline Tango as a band piece because I thought it would be too difficult and nobody would ever play it. I didn’t know what college bands could do. I only knew bad high school bands [where] everything is in Bb and 4/4, and this is not what I know how to do. So, I was completely ignorant of what the possibilities were. It’s great to write music as hard as I want to write it and have it get played and have it played well and travel a lot. All of that is incredibly appealing to me. And I like the sound of it. It’s a big loud thing—at least it can be big and loud—and it doesn’t have to be big and loud, but I like big and loud—and it does that very well.

**JB: Discuss Redline Tango and describe the inspiration for the work**

JM: I wish I had paid more attention while I was writing it. When I’m writing a piece, often I’m too close to it to know exactly where things are coming from. The very first version of the piece was a quartet for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano and it was called Breakdown Tango. It was a chamber music commission from the Parsons Dance Company, where I was the music director at the time. I was writing it for a choreographer named Robert Battle, whom I had worked with quite a bit before. We collaborated on several pieces – several of which have now been transcribed as band pieces. He and I, I think we’ve probably done eight pieces together. This might have been our fourth piece together. He likes things that are really hard to count. His best friend was a clarinetist, so the reason it was scored for the ensemble that it was scored for is his friend, this clarinetist, had an ensemble that was clarinet, violin, cello, and piano. The ensemble had been determined because we could afford them. As a dance company, we didn’t have much money—but we could afford his friend’s group. So, that was why it was scored that way. It was basically fast and hard to count and then something different in the middle and then fast and hard to count again. That was basically the idea. It was written pretty much abstractly at that point; that was how I did stuff at that time. Back when I wrote the original version, which I think was in 2000, I was not so concerned about planning out structure before I started a piece. That’s why it’s a simple A-B-A structure. So, I did the chamber version then I got a commission from the Brooklyn Philharmonic to do an orchestra piece, and I rewrote it for orchestra. It got a few performances and I had a decent recording, and it was that recording that the guys heard at CBDNA and asked me to transcribe it for band. That version has gotten a whole bunch of performances. The original version, the quartet version, still gets played sometimes by the group that commissioned it, and they recorded it, commercially. It’s funny to listen to that one now because it’s just four people and it sounds so intimate and small compared to the enormous thing that the band version is—just scoring-wise for seventy players instead of four players. There’s no percussion in the original version. The tango theme was originally violin and clarinet; now it’s soprano sax and clarinet. As far as inspiration when I was writing it—it was just, ‘I’m just writing a piece.’ I was working full time at the time and it was just a fun piece to write for this friend of mine—the choreographer who I wrote for all the time. There was no big grand thing; it was just, ‘Oh this will be fun and, oh, I’ll stick a tango in the middle because that’ll be weird.’ In 2000, that was kind of like a new thing to do. Tango was—I don’t think it had quite gotten overplayed yet, when I did it. Now, I feel like tango is a little overdone. But when I did it, it wasn’t yet. I would never put a tango like that, I don’t think, in a brand new piece. The sax concerto has a tango in it but that’s because of Redline Tango that there is a tango in the sax concerto. Now it feels a little bit like, ‘We’ve probably done enough tango’ [laughs]. But, yeah,
at the time it was just like, ‘Oh, it’ll be fun. I’ll put a tango—that’ll be kind of weird. And
[Robert Battle] wanted something weird. The piece was originally called Dementia when he did
it—when the choreographer did it. And we got angry letters from people who had relatives who
had suffered from Dementia and [they] didn’t think we should call a piece Dementia. It was a
weird thing. The new title is better.

**JB:** Are there any aspects of the premiere or early performances of the wind band version that
would be of interest?

**JM:** The premiere was done by Emory [University band], and Frank Wickes [director of bands at
Louisiana State University] was there. He heard it and really liked it. He performed it at LSU,
and his band is fantastic. The recording was great. He sent me the recording and I thought ‘Oh,
this piece is ok! This might be fine!’ He sent the recording to a bunch of his friends to share
with them this new piece. That’s another great thing that happens in bands that doesn’t happen
in orchestra—conductors sending recordings of new pieces around. So, he sent it to people who
then did it, and I got a call from Bob Reynolds and he said, ‘I really like this piece and I want to
do it at U.S.C..’ Bob Reynolds talked to former students of his about the piece and said, ‘This is
a really good piece and you should do this piece too.’ It was just an amazing thing that happened
where I didn’t do anything because I didn’t know anybody. I didn’t [think], ‘Oh, I should
probably send this piece to Bob Reynolds.’ I never would have done that, but Frank Wickes
knew that and sent it to Bob and then Bob sent it around. It all just kind of snowballed from
there. It seems like when a piece is going to be a hot piece, it just kind of explodes through
snowballing of sending out CD’s of concerts.

**JB:** Are there any particular aspects of the saxophone that interest you as a composer?

**JM:** I now feature the saxophone in almost every piece, and I think part of it comes from—as a
section—there’s no other—I guess kind of clarinets, but clarinets in band to me sound like
band—if you have a mass of clarinets, it pretty quickly sounds like you’re in a band—
saxophones—you can have just four saxophones and it sounds like—there’s almost a string
sound or a choral sound. Just the blend of the section, without being doubled like crazy with
four people on each part, is a really lovely sound. You get the dynamic control like you would
have with clarinet but you don’t have the unisons thing that you get from clarinets. So, you can
write with—stuff can be incredibly difficult, dynamically or with leaps of range. You can play a
sax like you can play a clarinet or a flute but you have four of them so you go pretty high to
pretty low in the ensemble, and it’s almost like having a string quartet in the band. That’s kind
of how I think of it. For someone who studied writing very traditionally with classical training,
you write for band and kind of miss strings. The closest thing to me in the band that can do that
kind of lushness is the saxophone section. As solo instruments, I think it’s a pretty different
sounding instrument from the other instruments in the ensemble. Now, every [piece I write] uses
it. I never would have thought to put soprano sax in Redline Tango; that wasn’t my idea. That
was the idea of Scott Stewart at Emory. When we were talking on the phone about doing the
transcription I said, ‘I can’t transcribe this piece. It’s an orchestra piece that has a violin solo in
the middle of it. You don’t have a violin in the band.’ And he said, ‘It’s a soprano sax solo.’
And I thought, ‘Really?—OK, whatever’ [laughs]. So, I did and it’s way better as a soprano sax
solo than it ever was as a violin solo. That’s what, I think, convinced me of the power of the
instrument. Also, hearing the variety of performances and the way different people play that solo in that piece is very exciting to me. There’s a cadenza in it and some people—even for the people who play the notes as I’ve written them, which is what I prefer—I’ve been to lots of performances where they think it’s like, ‘Let’s play a solo.’ I don’t like that. I think that kills the pacing. I think it needs to be brief and needs to be basically what I put on the page. But, even in sticking to that, there’s incredible variety from player to player on how those things are paced and speed of trills and shape of dynamics within them and the different ways people can bend pitches within what I’ve indicated. But there’s still a lot of variety that they can play with there. I think it’s a great instrument and it was really fun to write a concerto for it. I’m glad that my first wind band concerto was for sax. I think it was really fun and I think there was also a need for repertoire. There are no soprano sax and band concertos. I heard a couple, I guess, but there aren’t any big twenty-minute things that I knew of for the instrument. And that didn’t feel fair—I felt that there should be. All of the saxes I think are great. I don’t know that I would write a bari sax concerto because that would end up sounding, to me, like a joke. It would be awfully difficult to write that piece and not have it be funny. I don’t think the other saxes are amusing in any way—they can be—but I don’t think they are inherently jokes [laughs]. Contrabass saxophone is kind of funny and not something I would really want to write for as a solo instrument. Contrabassoon—I love contrabassoon, but it’s not a solo instrument unless you’re being funny. But, I think my favorite thing about the sax is just the blend from instrument to instrument and how you get an actual sax choir—the sound can be like a choir.

JB: Describe your thoughts on the role of the saxophone in the wind band?

JM: The section is a real section. It has more powerful blending options with each other than anybody else.

JB: Discuss the specific soprano solos in Redline Tango and are there any performance aspects a saxophonist should know when interpreting the work?

JM: Once one gets to the solo in the middle, it is a tango, so it needs to be sexy—it needs to be about that. I don’t think I’ve heard that overdone yet. I don’t think that can be too much, especially when you’ve got the Eb clarinet with that “klezmery” bending, screaming thing that it does. If that is completely crazy, which I think it should be—the Eb clarinet part is kind of over the top—there is a lot of room to go kind of nuts and not be out of place. It’s a big feature and the reason, I think, that people do the piece is the soprano solo in the middle of the piece. I think that is the unique selling thing to that piece. I don’t mean selling, financially—I mean the thing that makes people say, ‘Oh yea, I’ll do that piece. It has that great thing in the middle.’ Really take advantage of the spotlight that is on the player to do something interesting and do something cool and play the notes that are there. As I said a few minutes ago, I don’t like it so much when things are added. Sometimes it works—there are some small additions in the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra recording where the soprano player did add a little bit in the cadenza, but I think it slows down a little bit too much—the pacing, like we were talking about. If too much is done, the piece kind of stops at the cadenza. I don’t want that to happen. But, I like some things [the saxophonist in the Tokyo Kosei recording] added because he did it within the correct style. I’ve also heard people add things that ended up sounding kind of “new agey.” For younger players who haven’t improvised a lot, there is the danger of them just improvising what they know—
which may be light jazz or something. If it loses any of the edge in the cadenza—that kills it even more. Then it starts to sound like cheesy soprano—it starts to sound like Kenny G if you’re not careful. There is a very thin line in the there that, if it they cross that, then the cadenza just sounds dumb, I think. So that’s why I generally, to be safer, want it to stay closer to what is on the page. But, within what’s on the page, there is a lot of room for things you can do. At the end of the cadenza, there is a big bend down. It’s a chromatic run, but it’s also supposed to be bent. Different people, depending on what their throats can do, can bend it really far before they pick it up with keys. It’s fun to hear stuff like that. Don Fabian—I loved what he was able to do with pitch bending in one of the performances I heard with the Dallas Wind Symphony—he could bend the thing and just sound so sleazy and nasty. I really dug that.
David Maslanka
Email correspondence
August 1, 2008

JB: What type of music inspires you?

DM: I find something attractive in every type of music. When I was a child, I was the one who listened to my mother’s collection of classical records. I loved Bach, Schubert, Chopin, Rimsky-Korsakov. My first record purchase, as a child, was Rossini’s William Tell overture. I like music that has a big heart and a big way of expression. Subsequent favorites include Berlioz, Brahms, Schoenberg, Mahler, Stravinsky, Bartok, and Shostakovich. Folk music is very important to me. There are some very simple folk songs that I love.

JB: Please discuss your musical background and describe the event or events that led to your career in composition.

DM: There was no musical training in my immediate family, although my mother had talent, and her father was an amateur violinist. My older brothers were indifferent to their music lessons, and I had to beg for mine. I began clarinet at age nine, quickly went to private lessons, played in school bands through high school. I won a spot in the Greater Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra when I was a senior, and that experience probably was the thing that pushed me to music study.

I went to Oberlin Conservatory. My freshman roommate was a violinist, and he was continually writing eight bars of a string quartet. I sat down and wrote twenty pages—not good or developed, but twenty pages. I then began to think of myself as a composer, was admitted to a composition class in my second year, and was allowed to study privately in my junior and senior years. I was admitted to Michigan State for graduate work in composition, and the five years I spent there with Owen Reed and Paul Harder as mentors, gave me a solid technical foundation.

I think composers are born, and that no amount of study can create a composer. It is matter of discovering who you are.

JB: What do you like most about composing and when did you realize that you had a special gift in composition?

DM: The thing I like most about composing is the sense of discovery. Powerful musical expressions “show up” in me, things that I could never have preconceived or guessed were going to happen. I had completed a PhD, and was in my first university position when I wrote my Duo for Flute and Piano (1972). The music was literally torn out of me. It was, and still is, an amazing piece, and I had no idea where it came from. It was then that I fully realized that something special was going on. Taking responsibility for my talent was another thing. It took until the late 1980’s to understand that composing was my primary responsibility in this life, and in 1990 I stepped away from university life, and became a composer only.

JB: Describe your composition process (inspiration, setting, etc.).
DM: I begin by contemplating the people who have commissioned me. This helps me to find the core energy that needs to happen in the composition. I think of music as healing energy. People ask me to compose but without being able to verbalize why the music is needed. My contemplation process does not give me musical sounds, but conditions my consciousness to receive what needs to happen. Music as healing energy: musical vibration stays in the mind and body, and over a period of time works its way to the deepest parts of a person. I have seen very large changes take place in me and in other people over the course of many years.

I never presume to know what a piece is supposed to be. I start actual composing by accepting every idea, no matter how unlikely it might seem. I will often sketch bits and pieces for some time before I begin to perceive the line of thought that is emerging. It is an interesting balance between the conscious and unconscious minds: it is necessary to have a trained intellect to write music, but it is also necessary to release the intellect at the start of the process, and in fact all through the process. Once a certain amount of musical material has appeared, it may seem possible to guess what an overall shape or direction might be. Sometimes this works, but often, making such a guess becomes a stumbling block to what truly wants to happen. And so, conscious mind has to be continually in receiving mode rather than dictating mode. It takes patience and trust, especially with very large pieces.

I use paper and pencil, never a computer. My studio is separate from my house, and is a quiet and beautiful place, without computer or phone.

JB: How would you describe your composition style?

DM: I suppose “Neo-Romantic” is a good label. I tend toward larger expressive forms that have their roots in tonality. Melody and line are at the basis of what I do.

JB: Are there any particular aspects of the wind band that inspires you to compose for this medium?

DM: I played in bands and wind ensembles all through public school and college. I had some, but much less, orchestral experience. The sound of the wind band was in my ear as I began to want to write pieces for larger ensembles. My first major wind ensemble piece was *Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion*. It was written without commission or promise of performance. I simply wanted to write such a piece.

My biggest attraction to winds, and also the biggest problem in writing for them, is the variety of instruments. They do not blend easily, as the strings do in an orchestra. It is a major challenge to write clear textures for wind band. At the same time, having so many disparate colors makes for a huge number of possibilities. I don’t think it is possible to exhaust the possibilities of winds, brass, and percussion.

JB: Please discuss *Hell’s Gate* and describe the inspiration for this work, describe the work itself, and please discuss any aspects of the premiere or early performances that would be of interest.

DM: *Hell’s Gate* was written for the Hellgate High School band of Missoula, Montana where I live. When my son Matt entered the band program at Hellgate, the conductor, John Combs, engaged me to write something for the band. I listened very carefully to the band for strengths
and weaknesses, and was made aware that there were a number of fine saxophone players. “Hellgate” is the name of a certain area in Missoula. It was a place where many ambushes and attacks occurred in the early days of settlement here. **Hell’s Gate** was a simple twist on the place name. As I worked into the composition, the Chorale melody *Christ du bist der helle tag* (Christ you are the bright day) showed up and became an important element. The words “helle tag” turn out to be an anagram for “Hellgate,” and this seemed to confirm the appropriateness of the choice.

The music focuses on the solo alto saxophone, and seems to tell the story of the unfolding of a life, from difficult and troubled beginnings to awareness of universal force. The theme of transformation has been a life theme for me, and this piece is a clear illustration of the evolution of a soul.

**Hell’s Gate** was a shocking surprise for John Combs. It is a piece that he would never have picked on his own, since it appears to be so difficult. But since he had commissioned it, he went purposefully ahead to make the performance. I give John a huge amount of credit for this. I had listened carefully to his ensemble and I knew that his band was capable of this. The result was a spectacular performance, which John said was an absolute high point for his teaching career.

**JB:** Please discuss Symphony No. 2 and describe the inspiration for this work, describe the work itself, and please discuss any aspects of the premiere or early performances that would be of interest.

**DM:** Symphony No.2 was commissioned by John Paynter for the Big Ten Band Directors Association. The last movement was completed first, and given an independent premiere at the 1985 CBDNA conference in Boulder, Colorado. It was performed by the University of Iowa band, conducted by Myron Welch. It took me the next two years to finish the whole symphony, and the full premiere was given at the 1987 CBDNA conference at Northwestern University. John Paynter conducted the combined NU band and wind ensemble. This premiere was a stunning event. Paynter had a flair for the high dramatic, and used this huge piece to make a huge statement about wind sound. There were maybe 125 performers on stage. The audience went crazy and stood and cheered for minutes. Since then, it has been mostly the last movement that gets performed. It is a large and powerful tour de force, and it has become a stand-alone concert piece. I am happy that it is being used, but dismayed that conductors ignore, or don’t even know about the first two movements.

It is almost never possible for me to talk about inspiration for a piece before it is composed. I very rarely try to write a piece “about” something. After Symphony No. 2 was finished I began to understand that it was about loss—deep, personal loss. That loss applied to me, but it also had a universal quality. The second movement, for instance, was completed on the day of the space shuttle Challenger disaster. That movement begins with a soulful rendition of “Deep River”—crossing over to the other side. I dedicated the movement to the memory of the astronauts.

**JB:** Are there any particular characteristics of the saxophone that interest you as a composer? Please include any general thoughts about the saxophone as well.
DM: I seem to identify with the saxophone as a significant extension of my own voice. The saxophone has one of the richest and most flexible of the wind voices. It can whisper, but it can also be impressively powerful and dramatic. It has a tremendous array of colors and moods. The saxophone is a very challenging instrument to play well, and to play with subtlety. Most people’s experience of saxophones is kids honking away in a school band. In my lifetime as a composer, saxophone performers have achieved ever-higher standards of refinement. I have a new recording of my *Recitation Book* for Saxophone Quartet, done by the Masato Kumoi Quartet of Tokyo. The level of performance is almost miraculous.

It is important that saxophone players understand that they are not trying to imitate strings, or to feel that they are a poor second to string sound. The saxophone sound, with all its range characteristics, and its methods of articulation, is uniquely and powerfully itself.

JB: How do you approach the saxophone/saxophone section when writing works for band and what role do you feel the saxophone plays in the ensemble?

DM: I suppose at this point in my writing career that I have a characteristic way of writing for band and wind ensemble, but I don’t think of myself as having a method of orchestration, or having a predetermined way of using instruments like the saxophone. Orchestration is tied intimately to composing, and the whole process is one of continuous exploration. I know a lot about orchestration, but in the same way as composing, I have to set my thinking brain aside, and simply listen internally to what wants to happen. Colors emerge as they are needed. I think of the band not as a unit, but as a large collection of potential colors. The saxophones play a large variety of roles in this color palette. I have become deeply interested in clarity of colors. I want every sound that I choose to be clearly exposed, and so, many score pages will only call for a few instruments. I am really interested in how the saxophones can be both solo colors and participants in beautiful blends with a wide variety of other instruments. Earlier pieces, such as *Symphony No. 2* and *Hell’s Gate*, contain many more tutti passages than I currently write. I was more interested in raw power. I guess I am still interested in raw power! It depends on what is needed. In my most recent wind piece, *Symphony No. 8*, I call for six saxophones: soprano, two altos, tenor, baritone, and bass.

JB: Please discuss the saxophone solos/excerpts in *Hell’s Gate*. Are there any specific performance aspects that saxophonists should know when interpreting this work?

DM: *Hell’s Gate* is for solo alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones and band or wind ensemble. The alto part is the lead solo, and by far the most prominent. The piece feels like a “life story.” The solo voices need to be earnest and forceful. Loud passages need to have a raw edge to them. Players need to throw themselves at the music. This does not suggest bad or unfocused tone, but a striving for the most dramatic presentation possible. Tempos have to be established with the conductor, but they must be very close to what is marked. Conductors and players, either consciously or unconsciously, tend to back away from fast tempos. Work against this tendency. If tempo is too slow the music will lose its dramatic edge.

JB: Please discuss the saxophone solos/excerpts in *Symphony No. 2* (specifically the saxophone moments in the second movement). Are there any specific performance aspects that saxophonists should know when interpreting this work?
DM: The opening of the second movement of *Symphony No. 2* is the significant saxophone music in the piece. I am very interested in old-style African-American gospel music, especially vocal quartets and quintets. The saxophone ensemble in the second movement should strive for that quality of intensity and expression. As in composing, as I have described above, the players must put aside their intellectual ideas about interpretation, and allow the music to speak through them. This may seem like a contradiction in terms, but it is the key to good performance with any music.
Christopher Rouse
Email correspondence
July 27, 2008

**JB:** What type of music inspires you?

CR: Music with expressive urgency.

**JB:** What do you like most about composing?

CR: To be honest, I don’t really like composing at all. Nor do almost all of those I’ve spoken to about it. It is laborious, frustrating, often painful work. However, I recognize that I’m impelled to do it. The only thing worse than composing would be NOT composing.

**JB:** Are there any particular aspects of the wind band that inspires you to compose for this medium?

CR: The fact that most of these ensembles, being comprised of students, tend to have a very positive, “can do” attitude. The enthusiasm can be very gratifying. Also, if a work turns out well, it can receive quite a few performances. But I do miss the strings.

**JB:** Are there any particular characteristics of the saxophone that interest you as a composer? Please include any general thoughts about the saxophone as well.

CR: As I mentioned [in a previous email], I really am not wild about the instrument. The tone of the soprano, alto, and tenor saxes actually sets my teeth on edge. I prefer the baritone and bass—and wish there were more contrabasses—for their gruff, growly, grungy quality. But I avoid all saxes as melodic instruments—I just don’t like the color in that context. I’ve found that saxophonists are among the most talented and committed of today’s classical musicians, and they’re also the very best musical citizens one could ask for. So please forgive me: I really don’t in essence like the saxophone. I used the baritone and bass in *Wolf Rounds* primarily for their “gross” potential; the soprano, alto, and tenor are for me akin to fingernails on the blackboard.

**JB:** Please discuss the saxophone excerpts in Wolf Rounds. Are there any specific performance aspects that saxophonists should know when interpreting this work?

CR: All of the sax parts, really, are intended to sound funky and rather gross. It was my intention to heavily amplify the string bass—making it sound something akin to an electric bass—and then have the baritone and bass saxes add a rough, edgy quality to that sound. Often the string bass is doubling all or part of the combined sax lines. The overall effect is intended to be reminiscent of funk music.
Frank Ticheli  
Telephone interview  
August 8, 2008

JB: Are there any interesting aspects of the premiere or early performances of Symphony No. 2?

FT: Well, the premiere was only a partial premiere. It was commissioned in honor of Jim Croft upon his retirement. By the time his retirement party took place, I had not yet finished it—by that point I had only finished the first and second movements. So the last movement, Apollo Unleashed, didn’t happen yet. And then later on I finished Apollo Unleashed and then Jim Croft conducted the premiere himself at the WASBE conference, when it was held in Sweden. So, that’s just a bit on the production background of it. It took a while to finish the piece.

JB: Are there any particular characteristics of the saxophone that interest you as a composer—and feel free to include any general thoughts about the saxophone as well.

FT: Well, there are two places where only saxophones would work—the only instrument that I could think of which could play the particular music that I wrote. And the reason I think that’s compelling is because you are often sort of faced with these choices. This could be for one instrument or for another. Or let’s say someone transcribes this for orchestra, ‘Well these can go to strings, this can go here and so forth.’ There are two spots where that’s going to be difficult, and that would be in the second movement in measure forty-one. Page fifty [in the score], that particular solo, which is very aggressive and shouting out above the ensemble. There’s nobody else that can do that in the orchestra or in the wind ensemble. It’s only a sax player who can do that solo in that register with that intensity. So that’s something unique right there. And another kind of thing—I’ll show you another spot. Last movement, measure fifty-eight, page eighty-six of the score. Those triplets right there—[energetically sings] ‘ba-da-da da-da-da da-da-da!’—down in the low register sax, all four in four-note chords there—those are four part harmonies there. Now who else could do that? I’ve got it a little beefed up in bassoon and contra bass, but really, what are they adding? Not much at all. So really there’s nobody—I could put it in the strings but it would not have nearly the kind of weight and raucous power that the saxes have down in that range. So if I were to orchestrate this, and in fact, I am going to be orchestrating this at some point. I’m going to have to rewrite that because, as it is, I’m not going to have a whole sax quartet in the orchestra version, unless it were a sax concerto or something like a sax quartet concerto. But since it’s not, then I’ve got to figure out how to do that. Now how would you deal with that? You can’t—there’s no way. If I gave that to the strings it would just not have the same power. I have to literally rewrite it. I’ll probably end up giving it to the strings, but I will rewrite it in a way that makes the strings sound intense, because the notes are less important than the emotional intent—the expressive intent, rather. Expressively, I’m after that raucousness. So, I have to rewrite it to make it raucous in the strings. So, first of all it will be something that’s not slurred in the strings and I might even put it in sixteenth notes—something like that. That would give me the same kind of quality that I’m after there.

The alto in page forty [of the score]—you notice that I have the clarinets starting with the tune and then you see the alto dovetail out of that taking over the second clarinet. The clarinets are up to mezzo then they fade away, whereas the sax stays up. So that kind of [creates a] color morph.
You can’t tell when the clarinet sound stops and the alto sax color begins. It kind of becomes a ‘claxophone’ [laughs]. The [alto solo] I already talked about in page fifty—that’s the crucial one. Nobody else can do that—band or orchestra. In fact it’s so crucial that, when I do the orchestra version, I may include the alto sax in that version. I think I have to. Otherwise something will suffer there. Nobody can do that but the alto saxophone.

JB: How do you approach the saxophone section when you are writing works for band? What role do you feel the saxophone plays in the ensemble?

FT: Well, like any instrument, they can play many roles. It’s not any one role, and that’s the beauty of orchestration. If every family had one role per composer, that would be a dull composer. The whole point is to celebrate all the possibilities of the instrument. The raucousness that I just talked about, but then that sweet lyricism they can have, the percussive attacks that it can have, the soft dynamic level with which it can play up high—it’s endless, and it goes on and on like that. So, the role is multi-faceted. My approach to the saxophones, orchestrationally, would be to write for them as an independent family just as I like to do with any family of instruments. I’m a huge fan of transparency—a huge advocate, rather, of transparency, which means I don’t like the kind of opaque over-doubling and so forth. If you look at this piece you are not going to see the saxophones doubling the horns, for example. I just don’t do that. I don’t like to do that. The only time they might double the horns would be in a huge tutti section or something where my need for extreme power supercedes my need to have pure transparent color. That’s the only time that would happen. So I can see, for an example, I’m going to look at the climax of the second movement because that’s a huge climax, and I bet there’s some doubling there. Yeah, page seventy-two, measure one-fifty-five—that’s one of those examples of those rare spots where I have the saxes doubling the horns—you see that fanfare-like thing. But even then, it’s only that one little lick right there and then, look, I’ve got saxes on their own by measure one-fifty-seven. And then with the horns at one-fifty-eight, and then again that’s because I’m after a huge fanfare-like power and raucousness. Even then when you would think, ‘Okay, that’s safe, that’s going to be fun,’ even there you have to deal with intonation issues. And this is one of the main reasons I do not like to double saxes with horns—intonation. The other reason, of course, is the colors are not compatible to me. And it’s such a stock doubling, especially for young musicians. Anyway, long story short, I like them to be independent and not just doublers of other instruments.

JB: Are there any particular aspects of the wind band that inspires you to compose for this medium?

FT: There’s a lot of things. As I just said, one thing the wind band has is a whole group of saxophones and the orchestra doesn’t have that. So, when I want to do something like that triplet spot that I pointed out to you on page eighty-six, I have to have them. There are certain things a wind ensemble can do that an orchestra can’t and vice versa, of course. In fact, there are probably more things an orchestra can manage than band, but there are those things which a band can do which an orchestra can’t. So, it’s the uniqueness of it that appeals to me, but also it’s the fact that when I write for wind ensemble, nine times out of ten, it’s going to be rehearsed and preformed carefully by people who have time and have motivation and have passion for new music—for living composers. So that’s a huge reason, just knowing that my music will be cared
for and not just babysat for a little while and then abandoned. Those are some of the main reasons. And I’ve grown up with it. I’ve grown up playing in public school wind bands my whole life, all my childhood, just like so many other Americans. So, it’s kind of a part of me, my musical DNA.
JT: How Fascinating Ribbons got started? That’s an interesting story. I think you may know it already, but I guess I’ll tell it in my words in case something you have is incorrect [laughs]. Jack Stamp, who you know, called me and said I love your music and I would like to come have a lesson with you. I told him that I wasn’t giving a lot of private lessons at that time. He said, ‘I really, really would like to do that and I’m willing to drive eight hours to do that.’ I said, ‘OK, if you really want to drive eight hours, that’s fine’ [laughs]. So, he drove eight hours and we had a lesson on his music, and then we started talking about band music. He said, ‘You don’t have any band music,’ and I said, ‘Yeah, I don’t know the band world and I haven’t been around the band world.’ He said, ‘You should start thinking about writing a piece for band.’ I kept saying, ‘No, I don’t think so. I just don’t feel comfortable with that.’ So, then we started talking about my ballet, Stepping Stones, and he said, ‘The last movement would work a whole lot better for band than it works for orchestra. You really should think about orchestrating it for band.’ I said, ‘No, I don’t really, again, I don’t understand the band medium and it would make it worse, probably.’ I said, ‘What about you? Could you do it?’ And he said, ‘Well, sure I guess I could.’ So he went ahead and did an arrangement for band of Celebration [fanfare for band from Stepping Stones]. I don’t know how many weeks, months later—he called me again and said, ‘OK, now, you have to write a band piece.’ I said, ‘Jack! You don’t understand this. It’s a very difficult medium,’ and he just kept persisting. Anyway, to make a long story short, I call him the composer stalker [laughs]. He really goes after what he wants, which is great and most music gets written that way—with people who are stalkers [laughs]. Then he called me in—I can’t remember what year it was—the CBDNA was having a convention in Austin, Texas—and I had a performance in New Orleans of my piano concerto. [Jack] said, ‘Listen, you keep telling me that you’re not around bands. We would like to invite you to our convention in Austin just to hear bands, because there’s a whole bunch of bands that will be there and they’re really good.’ I thought that was a really nice invitation and it was on my way back from New Orleans. So, I said ‘Fine, I’d love to do that.’ So, I did and that’s when things started to fall apart [laughs]. So, I went to that convention and heard these fantastic bands—really good bands. They sounded like the Chicago Symphony, and I was so impressed. Then I got to meet a lot of the band conductors and I started, in the short period of time that I was there—two to three days, to get to know that world. Jack also had me give a speech for the directors at CBDNA, which was a big hit because Jack and I are very funny people [laughs]. So, we wowed them. Then he turns to me in the middle of this talk and he says—by this time I had gotten to know this world, at least superficially—he says, ‘OK, let’s cut to the chase. Are you writing a band piece or not? I’m tired of this.’ [laughs] I looked at him because he caught me off guard—it was a public question in front of all these people—and I stopped and I thought for a minute and I said, ‘You know what? I think I will give it a try.’ Cheers went up from the audience. It was very heartwarming. I said, ‘The reason is because what I have seen of this world so far is wonderful.’ First of all, an orchestra convention would never invite me—pay my way, pay my hotel—just to hear orchestras. They would never do that, ever. Second of all, they don’t do these large consortium commissions, which the band world does on a regular basis. They wouldn’t do that. They don’t
share music and soloists the way the band world does. It’s just a much more generous and also
humble world. I’ve met, quote, a lot of the legends in that world, who were right there in the
convention. They were just wonderful, down home, regular people. They didn’t act like they
were legends. In the orchestra world, they do tend to act like they are that way. I was comparing
it to the orchestra world because they are always comparing themselves to the orchestra world,
and they come out always on the bottom. I finally said, ‘You guys’—unfortunately it’s mostly
guys—‘You guys need to treat yourselves better and stop thinking of yourselves as second class
citizens, because you have so much going for you that’s so much better than the orchestra world.
And that’s why I’m going to dip my toe in this.’ Another standing ovation. So that’s the story,
from the horse’s mouth, as it were [laughs].

JB: Are there any aspects of the premiere or early performances that would be of interest?

JT: Well, when I first heard it by Jack’s group—he premiered it with IUP [Indiana University at
Pennsylvania]—of course, I was a nervous wreck. This was not an easy medium for me. That’s
why I had resisted it so long. It was hard. The piece was hard to play. They were kind of
bumbling their way—not bumbling their way through it—after a while, they played it really
well. But, at first, they were struggling. And I was struggling because I thought, ‘That’s not
working and that’s not working.’ I was trying to listen to what was being played that wasn’t
working and what was written that wasn’t working, which is always a problem with composers.
Is it the performers that are doing it or is it the piece that’s doing it? So, it was very anxiety
provoking. Luckily, it was a short piece [laughs] and not a big massive piece that was going to
fall flat on its face [laughs]. After a while, I started to get more objective and I started to get
more into the band sound. I tweaked it; I made changes here and there. I actually changed one
section that was not working—it was between the saxophone solos and the ending. There used
to be something in there that I took out because it just didn’t work. So, it got tweaked and
changed and tweaked and changed. Finally—it takes me a long to like my music—a long time—
because I’m so critical of it and so vulnerable to it. I heard Jerry Junkin play it with the
University of Texas band about four years ago – three years ago, I think. I was just blown away.
Then the piece started to be more likeable to me. It took that long [laughs].

JB: Are there any characteristics about the saxophone that interest you as a composer?

JT: It’s a fantastic instrument. It’s so versatile and so powerful. It has tremendous projection
ability. It also has the same kind of flexibility as the clarinet has—the articulation—short notes
versus the singing notes. When this band piece came along I thought, ‘Uh-oh, I’ve got four
saxophones here. Let’s see—I guess I’m going to feature them [laughs].’ This was a real risk
for me because I hardly knew the saxophones at that point. So, I decided to have them running
around because I remember Coltrane. I used to listen to Coltrane in New York and he just ran
around that instrument - just unbelievable. So I guess that was kind of coming in to that
cadenza—Coltrane—except in chords, which is not so easy.

JB: How did you approach the saxophone when writing Fascinating Ribbons and what role do
you feel the saxophone plays in the ensemble?
JT: Being a kind of beginner with the band, I can’t sound very authoritative about the role of the saxophone in the band. I just don’t have the experience right now. The saxophone, to me is a very underrated instrument, and it should be used a lot more both in the orchestra world and the chamber music world. It has a reedier sound than most of the instruments in the band.

JB: Why did you decide to revise the saxophone cadenza?

JT: I revised it because I felt it was short-circuited. At first, I was being very timid. I wasn’t too sure about this. So, when composers aren’t too sure, they short circuit things. When I heard it, I thought, ‘This is too short—this is just too short.’ That’s why I lengthened it, basically. [Remembering a performance of Fascinating Ribbons] Somebody came to Carnegie Hall and played the piece—the University of Louisville. I met the saxophonists at the party afterwards and they were so thrilled they had nailed it. So, we celebrated together. It was fun.

JB: Why did you choose to include soprano in the section as opposed to the traditional alto, alto, tenor, baritone saxophone instrumentation?

JT: I guess it just gives you a higher range. Something simple like that. It also gives you a different sound.
APPENDIX B

ADOLPHE SAX’S INSTRUMENTATION FOR MILITARY BAND

INFANTRY

2 flutes or piccolos
4 E flat clarinets
8 clarinets in B flat
2 soprano saxophones
2 alto saxophones
2 tenor saxophones
2 baritone saxophones
2 cornets
4 trumpets
4 trombones
2 soprano saxhorns in E flat
2 soprano saxhorns in B flat
2 alto saxotrombas
2 baritone saxhorns in B flat
4 bass saxhorns in B flat
2 contrabass saxhorns in E flat
2 contrabass saxhorns in B flat
5 percussion

CAVALRY

1 sopranino saxhorn in B flat
2 sopranino saxhorns in E flat
4 soprano saxhorns in B flat
2 alto saxhorns in A flat
2 alto saxotrombas in E flat
2 baritone saxotrombas in B flat
4 bass saxhorns in B flat
2 contrabass saxhorns in E flat
2 contrabass saxhorns in B flat
2 cornets
6 trumpets
6 trombones  (AATTBB)\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Whitwell, 88.
APPENDIX C

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Jonathan D Bergeron

From: Human Subjects [humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu]
Sent: Thursday, September 04, 2008 5:36 AM
To: Jonathan D Bergeron
Subject: Human Subjects Staff Review

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Human Subjects Application - For Full IRB and Expedited Exempt Review

PI Name: Jonathan Douglas Bergeron
Project Title: A Survey of Selected Saxophone Excerpts from Wind Band Literature of the Past Twenty Five Years HSC Number: 2008.1641

Your application has been received by our office. Upon review, it has been determined that your protocol is an oral history, which in general, does not fit the definition of “research” pursuant to the federal regulations governing the protection of research subjects. Please be mindful that there may be other requirements such as releases, copyright issues, etc. that may impact your oral history endeavor, but are beyond the purview of this office.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


“Pitty Poor Mr. Sax Who Invented the Saxophone.” Literary Digest 97 (April 1928): 46.


Jonathan Bergeron joined the faculty of Northern Arizona University in the fall of 2000 where he teaches applied saxophone lessons, coaches saxophone quartets and directs the NAU Saxophone Orchestra.

As a soloist, Jonathan has performed concerts throughout the United States and in countries such as Austria, Poland, and Ireland. Recent concerts have included the Witold Lutoslawski International Festival of Contemporary Music and the Czech-American Summer Music Institute. He was named national first runner-up in the 1998 Collegiate Artist Competition sponsored by the Music Teachers National Association and received first prize at the 1995 Monroe Concerto Competition. Since his appointment at NAU, Jonathan has performed or presented master classes at many universities including the University of Nebraska, the University of Memphis, Duquesne University, the Crane School of Music (Potsdam, NY), the State University of New York at Fredonia, Florida State University, Middle Tennessee State University, the University of Southern Mississippi, Henderson State University, the Szczecin Academy of Music (Poland), and the Wroclaw Academy of Music (Poland). Jonathan frequently performs with the NAU Faculty Chamber Series and is currently the principal saxophonist for the Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra.

As the soprano saxophonist in the Sax-Chamber Quartet, he was invited to perform at the 26th Annual "International Week 1999" in Graz, Austria. The quartet was only the third American chamber group invited to participate since 1974; previous ensembles represented the Eastman and Juilliard Schools of Music.

His Sax-Chamber Quartet was declared winners of the Music Teachers National Association Collegiate Chamber Competition (1998), the Carmel International Chamber Music Competition (1998), semifinalist in the Fischoff Chamber Music Competition (1998), and third prize in the Coleman International Chamber Music Competition (1999).

Jonathan has also performed at the New Orleans Jazz Festival, the Jazz Times Convention, and the North American Saxophone Alliance Conferences. He holds degrees from Florida State University and the University of Southern Mississippi where his teachers were Patrick Meighan and Lawrence Gwozdz.