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Four Movements in Search of a Composer for Wind Ensemble and Brass Sextet

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FOUR MOVEMENTS IN SEARCH OF A COMPOSER
FOR WIND ENSEMBLE AND BRASS SEXTET

By
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ABSTRACT

_Four Movements in Search of a Composer_ draws inspiration from the play _Six Characters in Search of an Author_ by Luigi Pirandello. Rather than a character sketch of the six Characters in this play, this piece centers around four moments from the play highlighting grand philosophical and artistic ideas. The first and last movements form a pair centered around the entrance and exit of the Characters. These metatheatrical moments from the play are represented in the interaction between the wind ensemble and the brass sextet. The rehearsal of one play is interrupted by the appearance of the Characters, causing the actors to stop as each notices the characters. The piece being played on the stage by the wind ensemble in this composition is influenced by the works for band of Stravinsky and Messiaen. The offstage brass ensemble interrupts this with a march. I have used the motives from each of these to represent the dichotomy of reality (work on stage) and fantasy (march) that appears throughout the play. The ending of _Six Characters in Search of an Author_ is quite complex, with the metatheater of the Characters’ story, the interaction of all in the present, and the overarching question of what is real and what is fantasy all at work. After the actors and director leave, the remaining four Characters (two died as their story was told) have the final scene. Three remain stuck in the theater while one is able to leave. For the final movement of _Four Movements in Search of a Composer_, the interplay between the march and the initial piece is at first reversed and then begins to blur, just as what is reality and fantasy begins to blur in the play. As the wind ensemble finishes, three Characters (part of the brass sextet) continue looping a fragment of the march as if stuck, while the other one plays the altered chant that is part of the Messiaen-influenced work in the first
movement while moving through the audience and eventually exiting the hall. The second movement of *Four Movements in Search of a Composer* centers around the idea that the characters do not experience their story in a teleological manner (hence the difficulty in trying to tell their story). Central to this movement is a six-note motive. Fragments of this motive build into an aggregate before the motive is repeated and harmonized, cementing the “correct” order into the listeners’ minds before the order is scattered, employing layers of the motive and/or its harmonization forward or backward beginning at any point within the motive. The third movement centers around the question of which is more real: the character or the actor. In this movement, aleatoric blocks are set out with the indication that the conductor chooses the order in which to cue the groupings of instruments. The blocks are created around particular intervals, sonorities, or gestures in such a way that a different order is going to create a different implication for the listener. For instance, the second block has one group focused around a minor third and another around a major third. One order might hint at a major sonority moving through an (014) sonority before becoming minor. Another order might begin with the (014) and overlap with the other groups enough that the implications of major and minor never surface for the listener. *Four Movements in Search of a Composer* is my musical implementation of the ideas and moments of Pirandello’s play that grabbed my attention in my first encounter with the work.
PERFORMANCE NOTES

The brass sextet should be offstage. For the first movement, they operate independently of the ensemble on stage. They should operate as a chamber ensemble and be placed together, perhaps somewhere in the hall to the side of the audience but still in view of the conductor (for the other movements).

In the second movement all times given are approximate. Each player should play within the tempo range indicated, but in no way try to coordinate. (Clarinet 1 begins with the first cue from the conductor; flute 1 begins after approximately 2”; etc.).

For the third movement, at block A the conductor will cue each grouping of instruments (marked by the numbers 1-7) in the order that he or she chooses. Players within each group should strive to play together in the blocks marked as such. In the other blocks, players should play independently of the others within the group. In each block, players should repeat as specified (number of repetitions, approximate duration, until cue for next block) and then rest until cued for the next block. In block C, the gestures within the frame should be repeated for the approximate duration specified. For the conductor, blocks may meld from one to the next (i.e. block B may begin before all groups have finished block A). The durations given for each block are approximate. The reverberation of each hall and rehearsal space will be different. Experiment with the order and timings. Each block is designed to focus on either a particular sonority or a specific set of intervals in such a way that different orders and different timings of cues will yield different sonic results (i.e. the major and minor thirds of block B could yield either an implication of a major sonority or a minor one to begin and becomes the (014) sonority or the blocks representing each of these intervals could be cued in rapid succession, eliminating any major or minor implication).

For the fourth movement, if possible, the stage lights should dim beginning at letter N or even be turned off once the ensemble reaches the final fermata. Trumpet 2 of the sextet should memorize the chant here and play as he/she moves through the aisles amongst the audience before exiting the hall during the last phrase.
Duration: c. 19 minutes
Transposed Score

Four Movements in Search of a Composer

I. Characters

Marshall Jones
*Offstage sextet is independent, having a different meter and tempo than the ensemble on stage. The sextet may function with or without a separate conductor. The sextet part is on pp. 17-18. They should enter when the main ensemble reaches m. 165.

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II. The Eternal Moment

\(\text{\( \text{\( \text{\( \text{\( q.=72-88 \)}}\)}} \)\)

individual players should play within this range, but in no way coordinate

13"
Picc. Fl. 1,2
Bsn. 2
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
B. Cl.
Cb. Cl.
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax. 1,2
Hn. 1,2
Hn. 3,4
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tbn. 3
B. Tbn.
Euph.
Tba.
Hp.
W. B.
Mrcs.
Glock.
For the third movement, at block A the conductor will cue each grouping of instruments (marked by the numbers 1-7) in the order that he or she chooses. Players within each group should strive to play together in the blocks marked as such. In the other blocks, players should play independently of the others within the group. In each block, players should repeat as specified (number of repetitions, approximate duration, until cue for next block) and then rest until cued for the next block. In block C, the gestures within the frame should be repeated for the approximate duration specified. For the conductor, blocks may meld from one to the next (i.e. block B may begin before all groups have finished block A). The durations given for each block are approximate. The reverberation of each hall and rehearsal space will be different. Experiment with the order and timings. Each block is designed to focus on either a particular sonority or a specific set of intervals in such a way that different orders and different timings of cues will yield different sonic results (i.e. the major and minor thirds of block B could yield either an implication of a major sonority or a minor one to begin and becomes the (014) sonority or the blocks representing each of these intervals could be cued in rapid succession, eliminating any major or minor implication).

III. The Illusion of Reality

Groups 4-7 tacet

[Diagram of musical notation]

[Note: This diagram represents the musical notation for the blocks specified in the text.]

A c. 30-40 seconds
Groups 1-3 and 7 tacet

\[ \text{c. 35-45 seconds} \]
Group 7 tacet
Groups 2-5 and 7 tacet

[c. 30-40 seconds]
c. 45-60 seconds

Group 3 tacet
IV. EIXS

Moderato \( \frac{2}{4} \) – 100

Piu mosso \( \frac{2}{4} \) – (20)
hold as long as possible, but do not re-enter, decrescendo al niente

* During the fermata, the 2nd trumpet of the sextet will play the chant from the first movement while moving toward the exit of the hall. The wind chimes may serve as the cue for this, or the trumpet may start first while the wind chimes are cued later.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Marshall Jones earned his Bachelor of Music Education from the College of Wooster in 2000 and his Master of Music degree from the University of South Florida in 2010. He is currently a D.M. candidate at Florida State University. He has served as a music director in churches in SC, NC, FL, and GA. His compositions have been featured at SCI Region VI Conferences, the Oregon Bach Festival Composers Symposium, Soundcrawl:Nashville, and as part of the International Horn Symposium. He is also a recipient of an ASCAP Plus award for 2012 -2014, and a fellow of the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Marshall’s works have been performed by members of the FSU Horn Choir, USF Percussion Ensemble, the Eppes Quartet and the Florida State University Philharmonia Orchestra.