

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: NEW, FORGOTTEN, AND RARELY PERFORMED WORKS FOR BASS TROMBONE AND TROMBONE ENSEMBLE OR WOODWIND QUINTET

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The bass trombone has seen a veritable explosion of solo repertoire since the 1960s, but not all this music has been accepted into the known repertoire. Like any living repertoire, pieces fall out of favor or simply fail to gain popularity. This dissertation seeks to bring attention to and aims start the process of integration (for new repertoire) and reintegration (for old) solos with chamber winds, specifically trombone ensembles and woodwind quintet. A new composition from Adrian B. Sims and works by John Frith, Charlie Small, Williams Schmidt, Manny Albam and Hidas Frigyes were recorded. Two known works (Frith and Hidas) were included as a vehicle to interest listeners in the album and to invite a soft comparison to show the quality of the other works and stir interest in programming them. Three topics are discussed for each work: composer biographical information, program notes including structural and harmonic analytical information when appropriate, and suggestions to future performers. Adrian B. Sims' *The*

*Sword of Orion* is examined in detail as it is the composer's first work for solo bass trombone, and he is unknown to the wider trombone community. Insight is given on the compositional process and the composer's thoughts and interpretation of the work as the author worked with him to commission and record the work. Exploration of musical character is given prominence to aid future performers in attaining the right style and characteristics for each section, and analysis is done to understand the harmonic and thematic development style of the work. There are many pieces written for bass trombone and chamber winds, with the trombone ensemble being the most popular and well known. However, the woodwind quintet is just as satisfying an ensemble to pair with the bass trombone, and there are other solos out there with this ensemble setting that have yet to gain traction or be recorded. It is also arguably a more versatile ensemble. It is the hope of the author that solos will continue to be written with woodwind quintet as it offers opportunities for blend and character that do not exist when performing with trombone ensembles.

NEW, FORGOTTEN, AND RARELY PERFORMED WORKS FOR BASS  
TROMBONE AND TROMBONE ENSEMBLE OR WOODWIND QUINTET

by

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## Preface

The concept of this recording is rooted in two places: a love of trombone chamber music, and curiosity of works that are essentially forgotten, or rarely performed.

I was first introduced to trombone chamber music as a senior in high school by Professor David Vining at Northern Arizona University's trombone day in 2007. The final concert of the evening was the trombone choir, and prospective students were invited to perform one piece with them: Vaclav Nelhybel's *Tower Music*. Even though I was a novice to chamber music and the wider world of the trombone, from that point on I was hooked on trombone choir. The following year I was introduced to the bass trombone soloing with a chamber ensemble from a recording of Eric Ewazen's *Concertino for Bass Trombone and Trombone Choir*, which I later performed on a recital. Performing with a trombone ensemble is a rewarding experience for many reasons, including the homogeneity of the trombone sound across its considerable range of four and a half octaves. Many compelling works have been written for solo bass trombone and trombone ensemble, ranging from trombone trio to undecet (11 players), and new works continue to be written.

As is evidenced by the plethora of modern digital recordings, the same group of works are routinely recorded and performed, arguably creating a positive feedback loop promoting the awareness and popularity of the same core group of solos. My repertoire selection is the search for the new, or the old made new, to bring awareness to these forgotten works. As with any living repertoire, music – whether a specific

piece, composer, ensemble or style – can thrive once introduced, but it can also fall out of style or simply fail to be accepted into the regularly performed and remembered repertoire. Solo bass trombone with woodwind quintet is on the edge of this boundary. Frigyes Hidas' *I+5* is a piece that has gained a modicum of acceptance into the solo repertoire. But there are other pieces that are performed rarely or not at all. I have chosen one recently recorded work with each ensemble to contrast with the lesser known to show their musical quality is inherent to the work, not whether it has been recorded by a well-known or currently active soloist.

My exploration of this repertoire yielded pleasant results that this ensemble has several pieces that have flown under the radar of modern soloists since their creation, and are worth bringing to attention for their quality, stylistic variety, and accessibility to performers and audiences alike. The opportunity to record works that have never been recorded is as thrilling and daunting opportunity that I am thankful to have been able to undertake.

## Dedication

For my grandpa, David Morgan Foster  
Si fractus fortis

## Acknowledgements

There are so many people to thank during the 3½ years of working on this Degree. Matthew Guilford for guiding me not only as a student of the trombone but as an example of an excellent person who was always approachable and understanding. Also, for guiding this project and performing on three of the works on this recording. You stood by me during the scariest and most confounding crisis of my life and your compassion, understanding, and flexibility meant the world to me. You truly went above and beyond your duties as a teacher. Your guidance, feedback, and the example you set will stay with me throughout my life.

To Aaron LaVere, Brian Hecht, and Nathan Zgonc, who have shaped me musically, provided me with professional opportunities, and given me much food for thought on what it means to be a musician, a trombonist, and a critical thinker.

To my mom who has been my constant and unfailing source of support and encouragement and, along with my sister Anja, for suffering this degree vicariously through me and knowing how difficult, rewarding, frustrating, and exciting this whole process has been. Even though we basically talk daily, I still think you underestimate how much your steadfastness and outside perspective have made this degree possible.

To Aaron Muller at UMD who fought for me to be able to record on campus in a manner that provided me with my best opportunities for success.

To my friends and colleagues at UMD who have supported me, given feedback, and helped me have a life outside the classroom.

To Adrian Sims for writing a new solo that I'm excited and proud to have been a part of.



To Antonino d'Urzo, my recording engineer, for being patient with a first-time recording soloist, for offering invaluable feedback and suggestions on the recording and editing process, for rescheduling more times than I can remember because of Covid causing venues and people to be unavailable like it was going out of style, and especially for or your excellent work.

And finally, all the musicians on my recordings who stuck with me even though Covid made everything an enormous hassle.

Thank you all!

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## **A Beautiful Noise**

by John Frith

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## **Concertino for Bass Trombone (or Tuba) and Woodwind Quintet**

by William Schmidt

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## **The Sword of Orion**

By Adrian B. Sims

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## **The Significant Other**

By Charlie Small

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## **Escapade**

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## **1+5**

By Frigyes Hidas

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# Chapter 1: Repertoire and the Selection Process

## Repertoire

### With Trombones

The Sword of Orion (2020)..... Adrian B. Sims (b. 2000)

A Beautiful Noise (2009)..... John Frith (b. 1947)

1. A Beautiful Noise
2. Vocalise
3. Rondo-Finale

The Significant Other (1994) ..... Charlie Small (1927-2017)

The Significant Other #2

### With Matthew Guilford, tenor trombone

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### With Woodwind Quintet

Concertino for Bass Trombone and Wind Quintet (1977)..... William Schmidt  
(1926-2009)

1. Movement 1
2. Movement 2
3. Movement 3

Escapade (c. 1972)..... Manny Albam (1922-2001)

1 + 5 (1994)..... Frigyes Hidas (1928-2007)

1. Moderato
2. Allegro giocoso; Moderato
3. Sostenuto
4. Allegretto; Allegro; Moderato

## Tenor vs. Bass Trombone

To the untrained eye, today's tenor trombone and bass trombone may seem very similar in size, however, a short explanation of differences between them is required to put the importance of bass trombone solo repertoire into its proper context. Unlike instruments such as the clarinet and bass clarinet or viola and cello, the tenor and bass trombone are both set in the same register: there is no octave displacement in pitch between the two. For physical differences, the bass trombone has a larger bore size (the interior diameter of the tubing of the instrument), a larger bell, a larger mouthpiece, and almost always a second valve.<sup>1</sup> This second valve is critical for the modern bass trombone to be fully chromatic, as the first valve (and the only valve on a tenor trombone) is pitched in F, making a low C<sup>2</sup> difficult at loud volumes or technical passages, and a B<sup>1</sup> a half step lower only possible by bending the pitch down with the embouchure (lips), which can compromise the tone. The effect these physical differences have is that the bass trombone specializes in performing in and below the bass clef whereas the tenor trombone operates primarily in and above the bass clef. Both instruments can technically play the same notes

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<sup>1</sup> The typical bore size of a "symphonic" tenor trombone is 0.547", compared to the bass trombones' 0.562". "Dual bore" options also exist where the top tube of the hand slide is the same as just mentioned, and the lower tube is larger at 0.547/0.562 for tenor and 0.562/0.578 for bass. Bell sizes are typically 8.5" in diameter for tenor and 9.5" for bass, although these can range from 7"-9" and 9-11", respectively. Most modern bass trombones and bass trombonists perform on instruments that have two valves. Sometimes using a single valve bass is preferred for a lighter tone/balance/blending reasons, or when repertoire not requiring a second valve is being performed. Not all tenor trombones have an F attachment (valve). The tenor trombone also comes in smaller bore sizes from 0.547-0.485". A smaller bore size coupled with a smaller mouthpiece usually makes the high range easier, increases endurance, increases the "point" on articulations, and reduces the size and breadth of the sound. Pictures of various trombones can be found in Appendix A.



without pitch bending (except for B<sup>1</sup> and B<sup>0</sup> on tenor)<sup>2</sup>, but the tonal characteristics, high range endurance, and ease of notes in the extremes are noticeably different. The bass trombone has a larger sound, and it generally has more low and mid-register than high overtones in the sound compared to a tenor trombone, making it what is typically described as “warm” or “dark” compared to tenor trombone. The sound and articulations are generally less pointed, and the larger mouthpiece reduces endurance in the high range (which varies depending on the player but is generally considered to start between F<sup>4</sup> and B<sup>b4</sup>) compared to tenor while increasing the ease of playing below the bass clef staff. Because these two versions of the trombone focus on different aspects of register, they have largely developed separate repertoires. The tenor trombone has concerti for it dating back to the 1800s (and the alto trombone to Leopold Mozart) but the bass trombone did not start to be written for as a solo instrument until the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> The instrument itself didn’t frequently have a second valve (and therefore an easily accessible fully chromatic register) until the second half of the 1900s.<sup>4</sup>

### **Selecting Repertoire with Trombone Ensemble**

The process for selecting repertoire was to pair a known, recorded work with each ensemble – trombone choir and woodwind quintet – with works that have either never been recorded, new commissions, or works that are not available in a digital

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<sup>2</sup> The tubing on some F valves can be pulled to E to play an in-tune C<sup>2</sup> and lip down to a B<sup>1</sup>, however, this is usually only done when those two notes are needed, which is rare for tenor trombone in the western classical literature.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Yeo, “Evolution: The Double-Valve Bass Trombone,” *International Trombone Association Journal*, vol. 43 no. 3 (July 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Yeo, “Evolution.”

format. Additionally, these other works must be outside the commonly performed solo repertoire. The two known works included are John Frith's *A Beautiful Noise* and Frigyes Hidas' *I + 5*. Denson Paul Pollard of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra recorded *A Beautiful Noise* in 2013 on an album of the same name with the Columbus State University Schwob Trombone Ensemble on Summit Records. Gerry Pagano of the Saint Louis Symphony Recorded *I + 5* in 2014 with members of the St. Louis Symphony on the self-published album *Ubiquity*. Michael Eversden, the retired bass trombonist of the North Netherlands Symphony, also recorded *I+5* on the CD *Out of Bounds* in 2014 on the Aliud label. Hidas' work has gained wider acceptance in the known repertoire than Frith's, whether by virtue of being older, less difficult, composer recognition, or other factors.

The Frith solo was chosen as the known work for its relative newness, the existence of only one professional recording, and the unique sounds, styles, and demands of the soloist when compared to other works. Works that were ruled out because of too many existing recordings and being too well-known include pieces by Ewazen, Tommy Pederson's *Blue Topaz*, Steven Verhelst's *Capriccio*, Tomasi's *Être Ou Ne Pas Être*, Koetsier's *Falstaffiade*, John Stevens' *The Chief*, and many arrangements of music for other instruments. Some works, like Stephenson's *The Road Not Taken* were ruled out for their virtuosic demands on both soloist and ensemble members, as well as the size of the ensemble.<sup>5</sup> Of the previous selections,

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<sup>5</sup> This project was taken on during the Covid-19 pandemic. Repertoire was chosen before any vaccines were developed, and adjustments had to be made to account for a restricted number of performers and recording location availability.

only the Koetsier doesn't have a recording that is well-known by today's young and upcoming American trombonists.

The repertoire for solo bass trombone with trombone choir is, relative to solos with ensembles other than piano, diverse and thriving. However, there is always room at the top for new works, so having a professional and personal friendship with the composer, the author commissioned Adrian B. Sims, via consortium, to write a new solo for bass trombone and 6 trombones. The result is *The Sword of Orion*, which the author recorded April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Its public premier, where it received two performances, was at the International Trombone Festival at Columbus State University on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, by Brian Hecht (Atlanta, now Dallas, Symphony Orchestra), then by George Curran (New York Philharmonic) the following day. Matthew Guilford (National Symphony Orchestra) followed this with a performance of the work in late July at the DC Trombone Workshop at Shenandoah State Conservatory. The work is receiving positive attention and it may quickly make its way into the standard bass trombone solo repertoire, although its exceptional difficulty will likely limit performances to professionals and highly skilled graduate students.

Charlie Small wrote *Conversation* for tenor and bass trombone in 1976, and it has arguably set the standard for substantial, "serious" trombone duets. It is well-known and perhaps the most-recorded trombone duet by professionals with no fewer than four recordings on five officially published albums.<sup>6</sup> At least one prominent

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<sup>6</sup> Ron Barron and Douglas Yeo (*In The Family*, and *Proclamation*, 1996), Joseph Alessi and James Markey (*On Base*, 2009), M. Dee Steward and Peter Ellefson (*Dee Plus*, 2005), Colin Williams and George Curran (*Roadwork*, 2009), Charlie Small and David Taylor (unpublished recording on YouTube).

trombonist thinks it is the “finest duet ever written for tenor and bass trombone.”<sup>7</sup> The author first heard a recording of *Conversation* in 2008, so when more music by Small was sought out, it was a pleasant surprise to find this second duet, *The Significant Other* on the market. Curiously, there were no recordings of the work, not even on YouTube or other accessible locations. Thus, this work was chosen as an opportunity to record an unknown work by a well-known composer is rare. It was while communicating with former teacher Douglas Yeo (Wheaton Conservatory; Boston Symphony Orchestra, retired) that the existence of an unpublished part two to this duet existed. Through contact with Douglas and Charlie Small’s son David Small, the executor of Charlie’s estate, permission was given to record the work. The unique opportunity presented was cause enough to include a duet on this recording in lieu of a true bass trombone solo with trombone ensemble.

### **Choosing Repertoire with Woodwind Quintet**

Hidas’ *1 + 5* showed the author that bass trombone can fit into and blend quite complementary with a woodwind quintet. It is also the only professionally recorded solo with that ensemble available in digital or CD format, thus making it a reasonable starting point for the woodwind component of the recording. Other works with woodwind quintet were found in addition to the two additional works chosen for this recording, and a recommended resource can be found in the Appendix. The initial goal was to search for at least one substantial multi-movement work. After ordering a copy of the Schmidt *Concertino*, playing through the solo part, spending time in score

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<sup>7</sup> Douglas Yeo, “Conversation”, last modified November 3, 2016, <https://thelasttrombone.com/2016/11/03/conversation/>.

study, and plucking out harmonies on a piano, it was evident that this work met the criteria. It was a substantial 3 movement work that has never been professionally recorded and it seems to have been largely forgotten. Written for and premiered by Terry Cravens, Professor of Trombone and the University of Southern California (USC) and prolific Los Angeles freelancer, it was a surprise that this piece had flown under the radar.

The final choice afforded the author a great deal of flexibility: it would not need to be a lengthy work in lieu of the other works, and something of a lighter style or nature would be welcome to balance out the repertoire already chosen. Including a composer of some renown outside the trombone community would be ideal. All the music chosen so far is of a serious nature, so Manny Albam's *Escapade* fulfilled its namesake and was selected. It is in a commercial/straight jazz style with several cadenzas and has the widest range of any of the works with woodwind quintet of E<sup>#4</sup> to F<sup>#1</sup>. This work does have a professional recording by Dr. Thomas Streeter, who recorded in 1972 on the album *Thomas Streeter – Music for Bass Trombone* with the Kendor Music label. However, this was on a vinyl recording and it has not been digitized. It was only through Interlibrary Loan that the author was able to listen to the recording. With the repertoire selected the next process was to secure the required musicians and a location to record.

## Chapter 2: Works with Trombone Ensemble

### *The Sword of Orion* by Adrian B. Sims

#### The Composer and the Collaborative Process

Adrian B. Sims is a young but emerging composer hailing from Seattle, Washington. Born in 2000, he eventually moved to Maryland where he graduated from Catonsville High School and started a dual major in music education and composition at the University of Maryland College Park.<sup>8</sup> The trombone is his instrument of choice, and he studies it with Matthew Guilford and composition with Dr. Robert Gibson. At the time of writing, he has found success writing for the grade school band repertoire, where he was written or been commissioned to write ten pieces for band and two for adaptable ensembles. He has eight chamber ensemble works, including *The Sword of Orion* to his credit. Sims counts Brian Balmages as his primary compositional inspiration, and Sims' music is intensely rhythmic and hard driving using thematic development and harmonic arguments to move his works forward.<sup>9</sup> Of his composition style he states:

“I like my ideas to be concise but developed. [the 5-note theme in measure 117] is simple but it goes all kinds of places. The way I develop is mostly related to harmony: I [as a performer] think it's going to *this* place, then I bring it down [in an unexpected way] into another place.” For me, everything is one cohesive idea. I don't think about the key signature...that section (measure 195) is in Db minor. I didn't think “I want to write in Db minor”, that's what was there... I don't think about what the articulations are, the dynamics are, about what the style is, the mood is, everything is just one cohesive idea. That section rings of that kind of heroic character, and that's definitely

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<sup>8</sup> Adrian B. Sims, “About Adrian,” last modified November 20, 2019, <https://www.adriansims.com/about>.

<sup>9</sup> Adrian B. Sims, interview by author, College Park, Maryland, September 2021.

what I was going for. I can't point to a specific image in the sky of that, but that's what the character was."<sup>10</sup>

Sims is also branching out into film music and has started incorporating the fast turnaround times of the field, and therefore efficient compositional process, into his own methods.

The title and image on the cover of *The Sword of Orion* is inspired by nature. While looking online for wall art, the composer found a composite image of the Orion Nebula taken by the Hubble Space Telescope in 2004 and 2005<sup>11</sup> and instantly knew that both the image and the nebula's location – a part of the “sword” within the Orion constellation – would serve as the title and inspiration for a future composition.<sup>12</sup> The author and composer met through the University of Maryland where the composer started his Bachelor's the same semester the author started his doctoral degree. After performing Sims' *Trombone Quartet No. 1* that year and hearing his compositional style grow over the following years, the author decided to commission Sims to write a solo for bass trombone and trombone sextet of about 8 minutes in length, with an expected performer skill of a graduate student or professional soloist. Sims has already achieved success as a regularly commissioned composer for grade school bands, but this was his first foray into a solo literature. An unusually large consortium of 20 members was assembled for two primary reasons.<sup>13</sup> Spreading out the costs associated with commissioning a commercially successful composer lessened the burden on the author to solely finance the whole piece while

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<sup>10</sup> Sims, interview by author.

<sup>11</sup> M. Roberto, “Hubble's Sharpest View of the Orion Nebula,” Hubblesite, last modified January 11, 2006, <https://hubblesite.org/contents/media/images/2006/01/1826-Image.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Sims, interview by author.

<sup>13</sup> A complete list of the consortium members can be found in the appendices.

ensuring Sims was paid a fair rate. Of equal or greater importance, the work would receive a wide initial distribution among many of the most prominent bass trombonists in the United States. Should the work receive a successful debut, this will hopefully lead to acceptance into the current repertoire as well as additional solo commissions in the future.

As part of the collaborative process between composer and consortium lead, and to give a common starting point, Sims asked the author for things that inspire him. What do you do to relax? What are your interests outside of music? Hobbies? What do you draw inspiration from? To that, the author responded with nature, being in and enjoying the natural world, and space. The author spent many years in Arizona, known for hot summers, saguaro cacti, and the Grand Canyon. But it has a much wider variety of climates than is widely known, including pine tree forests, and a city at 7,000 feet of altitude (Flagstaff, Arizona) that experiences all four seasons and averages over seven feet of snow per year.<sup>14</sup> It shares the wide-open skies and vistas of the great plains states, the mountain vistas courtesy of the many mountain ranges, and many national and state parks that preserve the natural beauty of the land. The author draws inspiration from hiking unnamed mountains and trails to “get away from it all”. Once about 80 miles outside of Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona’s next natural inspirational wonder makes its appearance: night skies with little light pollution. The author spent hundreds of nights over the course of fifteen years looking at the night sky, with and without a telescope, enjoying the beauty of those vistas. All

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<sup>14</sup> Adrian Skabelund, “National Weather Service: Flagstaff sees on average hotter weather, less rain, snow than 30 years ago,” *Arizona Daily Sun*, June 19, 2021, [https://azdailysun.com/news/local/state-and-regional/national-weather-service-flagstaff-sees-on-average-hotter-weather-less-rain-snow-than-30-years/article\\_e9b85eea-8d8f-5461-b93b-943e9500d8bc.html](https://azdailysun.com/news/local/state-and-regional/national-weather-service-flagstaff-sees-on-average-hotter-weather-less-rain-snow-than-30-years/article_e9b85eea-8d8f-5461-b93b-943e9500d8bc.html).



things related to space, astronomy, astrophysics, and near-science fiction are sources of interest to the author. That is the common inspirational ground between the composer and the author.

The author's intent with feedback on the work during the compositional process was to keep it minimal to avoid influencing or otherwise affecting the compositional process. Feedback primarily came in two forms: pointing out particularly enjoyable and effective sections and keeping the piece bass trombone oriented. Many sections of this work are above the staff, which is not an ideal range for the bass trombone to stay in, particularly for extended periods in a solo piece, so efforts were made to generally lower the tessitura to make it more accessible to a wider range of performers. Examples of changes of this type can be found in measure 35 and 213-216, with their high octave written as an option to the performer, as well as measures 45-49, 66-71, and 176-183 being printed an octave lower than originally written. The composer also being tenor trombonist impacted the composition.

“In a lot of ways, I *was* writing this for tenor trombone. A lot of lines were up the octave, and you said to take it down an octave and it was even better. So, in a sense...it was from a tenor perspective, I wasn't hearing the lower stuff. But it works, especially in this piece. There's high stuff too, like [measures 15, 31, 51 and] 59, so there's that contrast there. When the low stuff is good, it really comes though [measure] 66 comes out and the listener is impressed at how wide the range [of the bass trombone] can be, particularly how low [it goes].”<sup>15</sup>

The range of this piece is substantial: D<sup>1</sup> to B<sup>4</sup>. While this range is not exceptional to the professional or orchestral bass trombonist – Kodaly's *Háry János Suite* goes as

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<sup>15</sup> Sims, interview by author.

high, and Berg's *Three Pieces for Orchestra* is as low – this work routinely goes between, or very near to, both of those extremes. In the end the author chose to err on the side of fewer suggestions and direct instruction to not stifle the creative process, especially considering many of these high sections were quite beautiful and poignant. Optional octave changes have been put into several moments that either allow the performer to retain the original higher octave or the raise the exceptionally low section from measures 66-71. That section can be particularly difficult after playing loud, and then high, a few measures beforehand. However, the printed octaves are the preferred and official octaves.

Changing the register of a passage changes more than just the register. It changes the timbre, the intensity, and the general feel of a passage. Therefore, every time an octave change was suggested, the author had very specific and carefully decided reasons for it. Some changes were a case of it being too much high playing or being too much for bass trombone in addition to what's already in the work to have the piece be accessible to as many performers as possible. Examples of this include measures 36 and its previous tied note, and 213-216. The former moment also changes the emotional energy of the moment. Jumping from F<sup>#3</sup> to A<sup>4</sup>, while difficult, has a certain bittersweet poignancy. Jumping down to A<sup>2</sup> instead brings warmth and comfort. It also prepares the performer and listener for the F<sup>#1</sup> in the following measure.

The moments where an octave was lowered to below the staff were done almost entirely for musical reasons. Early in the collaborative process the author started making overdub tracks to play along with. As part of that process the

emotional-musical content was explored in depth and several sections were found to be enhanced by lowering the octave. Measure 46-47 (although also through 49) is the prime example of this. These measures used to be an octave higher (although some notes were changed in measures 48-49 when the register did), but the descending line of C<sup>#3</sup>-F<sup>#2</sup> was a spot that instinctively jumped out as needing to resolve down to C<sup>b2</sup> instead of up. Doing so provides the first moment where the full richness and depth of the trombone choir is heard in this piece. The low-set C<sup>b</sup> major chord completely changes the texture and tone of the moment, going from a still tonally ambiguous and high-set, thinner texture to a sure-footed, earthy and powerful register of the bass trombone. The final octave change of note is measures 66-71. Again, when playing with an overdubbed choir, the dark, menacing character of this section was evident. On a hunch, the author played the section down an octave from the draft Sims had sent over and knew that *that* was that sound that would make this moment pop. The recordings with both octaves were sent to the composer and he agreed that this change was a keeper. Its increased difficulty might cause some performers to pass over the piece, so the option was included to perform it as originally written.

### **About the Work**

*The Sword of Orion* is a dynamic and demanding work inspired by an image of the Orion Nebula within the Orion constellation. The work is approximately eight minutes long and is in a single through-composed movement. Instead of using structural forms such as Sonata, Rondo, Theme and Variations, or other defined

forms to organize the piece, Sims structures it through harmonic problems that must be solved, typically through basic motifs that can be developed in many ways.

The work is divided into two distinct segments: A slow opening fantasia in three section that gives way to a more rhythmically and hard driving second half. Given its history as improvisatory rather than a strict structural style, the fantasia is most appropriate label for the opening slow section. The indicated instructions allow for rhythmic flexibility in measures 18 and 37, (including other changes not directly indicated by the composer) as well as the more florid writing of measures 30-37 and 43-51 give it an improvisatory sense. The uncertain tonal centers and opaque harmonies add to this free feeling, as do character shifts that rebut each previous one's argument. Finally, the lack of meaningful repetition precludes any defined structure from being applied. Harmonies in the fantasia section are informed by the concept of a nebula and the implied ambiguity that can be metaphorically described as nebulosity.

The opening fantasia can be divided into three distinct sections: measures 1-44, 45-60 and 61-71. The first 19 measures have relatively straight forward harmonies, but with added notes, whether an added fourth, seventh, or second, often preceded or followed by an open fifth, possibly representing the openness and vastness of space and the night sky. This changes in measure 20 with the introduction of the "nebulous" idea. Starting in measure 26 this idea is added to by additional motion in the other parts, giving a sense of chaotic random motion that further obscures the tonality. This begins to coalesce in measure 28 around two alternating

chords, B and A major with a G pedal point (Figure 1). As the solo part becomes more complete, the ensemble further coalesces into simple quarter note motion while

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The image shows a musical score for measures 26-29. It consists of six staves. The top staff is a bass clef with a whole note chord in measure 26 and a melodic line starting in measure 27. The second staff is a treble clef with a melodic line starting in measure 26, featuring triplets in measures 27, 28, and 29. The third staff is a bass clef with a melodic line starting in measure 26, featuring triplets in measures 27, 28, and 29. The fourth staff is a bass clef with a melodic line starting in measure 27, featuring a sextuplet in measure 27. The fifth staff is a bass clef with a melodic line starting in measure 26. The sixth staff is a bass clef with a whole note chord in measure 26 and a melodic line starting in measure 27. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*.

Figure 1 measures 26-29, the full "nebulosity" theme in trombone one and two, and the first statement of the primary theme in the solo.

retaining harmonic ambiguity. Sims crafted this harmonic and rhythmic nebulosity in such a way that it still functions as the emotional stage for the soloist, increasing and easing tension and at key moments, without being too aleatoric or truly random. A moment of clarity and relative serenity is reached in measure 34, but it is still clouded by non-chord tones. The first moment of peaceful repose and pure harmonies without added notes is measure 36 where the work settles on a v- I motion arriving on a B major chord (Figure 2). This tonal motion of minor v to major I will be a recurring idea throughout the piece. The work quickly moves to great tension and dissonant harmonies with an exposed D-F third in the first two trombones which stands in stark contrast to the overwhelming number of F<sup>#</sup>'s heard so far in the piece. This is

immediately met with the dissonant and surprising D split-third chord that provides a sharp, bitter moment that makes the previously peaceful moments that much more poignant for it, and the following section more meaningful (Figure 3).

The second defined section starting in measure 45 marks the second sounding of the primary motif. It moves away from an introspective and harmonically nebulous character to a confident, powerful, and hopeful character. The low, thick chords in measure 45 for the first time show the richness of the low register of the trombone and rise to sound the primary motif in  $A^b$ . The harmonies are now exceedingly clear and tonal consisting mostly of major chords. The ensemble texture builds and crescendos to the first tutti *forte* in the work, a triumphant arrival on a  $D^b$  chord with a rising and falling arpeggio in the solo voice. This outburst of clarity is in clear defiance of the murky beginnings of the tonally ambiguous opening. This slowly recedes to a peaceful transition that allows the soloist to show their quiet high playing with one last contemplative call.



Figure 2 measures 35-36



Figure 3 measures 39-40. top line is in tenor clef (F natural notated), all others are in bass clef

Measure 61 initiates the final section of the fantasia by returning to the nebulous harmonies, this time without the rhythmic complexity. Sims states of measures 61-71,

“I couldn’t tell you what it’s like being in a nebula, I’ve never experienced it, never been to space, but I imagine being disoriented in all of that, and that comes through being disoriented harmonically. I don’t know what key it’s in. I don’t *care* what key it’s in. I just know it’s the way I want this to sound and there’s something kind of uncomfortable about it, it feels kind of lost, but it’s [still] going somewhere. Every note goes somewhere and takes us somewhere and either adds or resolves dissonance.”<sup>16</sup>

This section (Figure 4) is more akin to floating through space and seeing the chance alignments caused by one’s motion changing the harmonies, with sometimes random events interrupting the moment. Starting in measure 62, harmonies become more dissonant, and glissandi are used to add additional ambiguity and confusion to the moment. The soloist breaks through this now dark, gloomy, even menacing, mood on

a pedal D in measure 66.<sup>17</sup> Through a series of split third chords the soloist starts to force the dissonant harmonies to



Figure 4 measures 68-71 and the return of "nebulous" harmonies

<sup>16</sup> Sims, interview by author.

<sup>17</sup> In trombone terminology, pedal notes are all notes from B<sup>b</sup> 1 and lower.

converge on beat three of each measure, finally arriving in measure 72 on an E major chord, coming from a  $\flat$  VI – V voice leading motion to a moment the composer calls “a ray of sunshine peaking over the horizon.”<sup>18</sup> Another statement of the theme in a peaceful A key area leads to a repeat of the opening open fifth call from measure 14-15 signaling the close of the slow section and the start of the fast section, which immediately starts with a measure in five-eight time tied over from the previous chord. This is a reminder that the nebulosity is still present.

Almost exactly half the length of the performance time, the fast section is driven by the harmonic development on and reworking of the theme of the work. The original theme and the basic idea that ties the entire work together is found measure 117-120 with measure 117-118 being the smallest, most fundamental part of the theme (Figure 5). This theme shows up in quickly recognizable forms in measures 27



(the first statement of a recognizable form of the motif)(Figure 1), 46, 50, 75, 121, 127, 131, 135, 185-189, 195, 236, 240, 247, 253, 267, 277, 283, and 289. These are the comparatively obvious version of the theme. Some are seen in diminution or augmentation, some in as partial segments (measures 33, 48, 72, 232, 293), with a note added and/or removed or rest inserted between notes (9-10, 37-38, 77, 269), or a note placed out of order (56). Finally, some are otherwise derived from the measure 117 motif (35, 43, 51, 53, 151). As is evidenced by this list, the entirety of this piece is infused with material directly related to or derived from the primary motif.

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<sup>18</sup> Sims, interview by author.



The solo entrance in the fast section serves as a vehicle for technical virtuosity and setting up the various elements of the rest of the piece. The frenetic transition calms down somewhat and the primary theme, and in fact the first notes that were put on paper, appears in measure 117. Here the theme is of a noble character. Frequent time changes add interest and variety, and the theme is heard in G, A<sup>b</sup> and G<sup>b</sup> in rapid succession. Sims then moves away from the primary motif and onto secondary motivic ideas that can sometimes also be traced back to the primary motif. A motor component starts in the ensemble in measure 142 and will continue almost uninterrupted for the rest of the piece. The solo line alternates between lyrical, sweeping melodies (measures 135,

151, 176, 195) and shorter, buoyant, and intense ideas (167, 207). This leads to the first climactic moment of the fast section, the statement of the primary theme in D<sup>b</sup> with the solo now heard above the staff in lyrical form with the ensemble providing rich block chords underneath (Figure 6). This is the highest tessitura the soloist will use for the rest of the work and the highest

The image shows a musical score for measures 195-198. The score is written for a soloist and an ensemble. The soloist's part is in the top staff, marked with a box containing the number '195'. The ensemble part consists of seven staves below the soloist's part. The soloist's part features a melodic line with a rising fifth interval (D-A) and is marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*). The ensemble part provides rich block chords underneath, marked with a forte dynamic (*f*). The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The soloist's part is written in a soprano clef, and the ensemble part is written in various clefs (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass).

Figure 6 measures 195-198

since the rising fifth D-A call at the end of the slow section.

Measure 216 begins a new section that isn't dominated, or even obviously influenced, by the primary motif. The character also changes immediately from clear

harmonies and melodic driven segments to harmonic ambiguity, dissonant intervals, and a thinner texture. Glissandi move from unisons to half steps and back, and an “in one” feel emerges from the three-four time signature. While the ensemble starts to return to its ambiguous and menacing roots, the soloist once again bursts into the moment to change directions with a vastness and picturesque melody worthy of a movie scene. The harmonies change to major and hopeful as excitement builds to a frenetic series of ascending sixteenth notes in the solo part in measures 243-245.

From measure 247 to the end the harmonic motion starts to speed up. Key areas move from  $D^b$  in 247 to  $B^b$  in 253,  $E^b$  acting as dominant in 264, and the final tonal center of  $A^b$  in 277. The texture here mixes legato motifs from measure 41 with the short note motor element of the fast section. The triplets in measure 276 are a variation on measure 194 and the lead up to the respective theme statements. The final statement of the theme arrives at the coda of measure 283, this time in a five-eight time signature after an *accelerando*. Harmonic nebulosity and dissonant intervals return in a final moment to finish solving the half-step disagreement that has permeated the piece.  $A$  is played against  $A^b$  prior to the closing three chords of  $D^b$  major –  $A$  major –  $A^b$  open fifth sequence with  $A^b$  winning at the end. Although it is tempting to attempt to analyze the opening key area of  $D$  with the closing one of  $A^b$ , there is no deliberate meaning behind the tritone relationship (Figure 8).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Sims, interview by author.

Harmonically, there is one primary argument put forward that the piece must solve: which chromatic neighbor tone belongs. The most common way this argument is seen is through split third chords. Its first, and most jarring, entrance is in measure 39 (Figure 3). D major clashes with D minor, and after a minute of hearing F<sup>#</sup>'s, the F<sup>♮</sup> is quite the surprise. This disagreement over the correct interval is then played out more surreptitiously, first horizontally in measure 41, then horizontally and vertically in measure 42-44 (Figure 7). The A-B<sup>♭</sup> over a G-D fifth becomes A-B<sup>♭</sup> over an F<sup>#</sup>-C<sup>#</sup> fifth, becoming the enharmonic minor and major third of the chord. Measure 42 places an A in the solo while the choir voice moves to B<sup>♭</sup> on the next eighth note presenting the split



Figure 7 measures 43-44

thirds. This harmonic idea of the ascending chromatic half step that serves as the third of the chord also appears in the *Dark, Brooding* section of measures 67-72, then not until 236 where it rapidly appears again in measures 265-274 and 300 between soloist and ensemble. Its inverted form of the major third fighting the fourth scale degree also appears throughout the work whenever ambiguity is needed. Perhaps the most startling realization of this harmonic struggle is the relationship between the fifth and lowered sixth or raised fourth scale degree in a chord. This form of dissonant tension presented either vertically or horizontally is present throughout almost the entirety of the work. Selected locations include measures 35, 47, 59-74, 125, 132, 154-158, 190, 216-236, 248-278, 282-283, and the final measures of 296-302. This final clash that repeatedly moves between A and A<sup>♭</sup> isn't resolved until the final chord (Figure 8). Fascinatingly, and whether on

intentionally or not, this V vs  $\flat$  VI is baked into the primary motif's first chord progression of  $i - \flat VI - V/IV - IV - i$ .

*Figure 8 measures 296-302, the final harmonic argument*

### Performance Considerations and Suggestions

Although the intent with this commission was to have it approachable by an average-to-advanced graduate student, it is virtuosic in the technical and range demands of the soloist. Strong chordal tuning skills are also required due to the high number of thirds in the solo part. A strong, lyrical high range up to  $B^4$  is a must. The sustained D's and breath in measures 12-13 should be feathered with the ensemble as to not know when you stopped one note and started the next. The opening statement quickly rises to  $A^4$  by measure 15 and is approached by slur from  $D^4$ . Practice partial-skipping slurs to ensure smooth execution of this completely exposed moment – no one else is playing here. A possible alternative is to simultaneously slur *and* very lightly articulate the note to aid in clipping an in-between partial. Keep the tone pure,

relaxed, and sweet. The section marked freely in measures 18-19 may be played in time, but the suggestion by the composer is to do what you want with the time here (Figure 9). No matter the choice made, work with the conductor to ensure the choir's



Figure 9 measures 18-19, a pseudo-cadenza

entrances on beat 3 and 2 of measures 18 and 19, respectively, line up with your time. They

should fit your time, not the other way around. Experiment with changes to time, dynamics, and phrasing to achieve the musical goal. The first note of measure 20 and 22 are the third of the chord so plan accordingly to lower the pitch so it rings true without having to adjust after arriving. Everything from measure 9 through measure 23 in the solo part should have a sweet, pure essence to the character.

Measure 27 is the first statement of the primary theme, which will return throughout the piece. Keep it broad and moving forward. Take a large enough breath to play until the end of the C<sup>#</sup> in measure 29 without interrupting the phrase.

Although marked *mezzo forte*, it only needs to be singing and full, not loud *per se*. It is perfectly acceptable to have the trombone choir play softer through the entire section until measure 38. Understanding the underlying harmonies will aid you in your musical choices: the underlying chord of measure 29 alternates between D and A major with a G pedal underpinning the tonality. Arriving on the perceived tritone from the bass voice can be a shock if not prepared musically. You may wish to drive that phrase to the C<sup>#</sup> to draw out the tension and tonal ambiguity, or to the D in the previous measure depending on your goal. Do not let the sextuplet in measure 30 distract you from the goal of this phrase: the A<sup>4</sup> in measure 31, which you may wish

to linger on.<sup>20</sup> The C<sup>#</sup>'s in measures 32 and 33 and the F<sup>#</sup> in measure 34 are the third of the chord so plan accordingly. Do not rush through the sixteenth notes or triplets in measures 33-35, especially the arrival on beat 3 of measure 34. The choice of which octave to perform in measure 35-36 will need to be made. If the high version is chosen, keep the tone pure and sweet, like measure 15. The arrival on the B major chord of measure 36 is the first pure and tonally unambiguous chord since the solo began (notwithstanding the B<sup>b</sup> chord in measures 3 and 11). The run marked *freely* in measure 37 may be played in time or you may wish to linger on the lower notes as if it were feather beamed (as it was in an earlier version of the draft); however, lining up the choir entrance after your arrival on the top E is paramount. The choir should also crescendo in the final two beats of measure 37, with an even greater crescendo into measure 39. The clashing split third chord of measure 39 is an intense and important moment. Lean into the dissonance here! The new tonal center of D minor (compared to the D major chords of earlier) should be shocking and have a piercing quality to it. This moment relaxes – by moving through the tritone of A<sup>b</sup> – to a new harmonic theme: a sustained note with changing root (G minor to F<sup>#</sup> minor/major).

In measure 44, despite the slur indicating otherwise, you may want to linger on the beat 3 resolution in measure 44 then breathe before measure 45. This starts a new section that sees the full return of the primary theme, now in A<sup>b</sup> minor. The voice leading between the solo and 3<sup>rd</sup> trombone in measures 45-46 should be brought out. Measures 47-48 provide a unique challenge in that almost every beat is the third

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<sup>20</sup> Sims, Interview with the author.

of the chord. Spend time with tuning drones, or by making your own backing track to practice these chord changes so they all ring true. This section from 45-53 is the first time the full ensemble reaches a *forte* dynamic and in a major key area (D<sup>b</sup>). You will need to play out to be heard in measures 50-52, but the choir only needs to be *forte*, as there are many moments later in the piece for louder dynamics.

The section from measures 53-81 is transitional in nature. Measures 53-61 should be the post-storm calm. Return to a pure, lighter sound as in the beginning. Try phrasing from the A<sup>b</sup> in measure 58 to the A<sup>♯</sup> in measure 59: this should be one of two moments in the solo of “a ray of sunshine peeking over the horizon” that provides a moment of repose and peace before what is to come.<sup>21</sup> The tonality quickly returns to ambiguity – nebulosity for the metaphorical aspect – and the trombone choir will need to phrase these changes slightly to keep the music moving forward. The general musical line will inherently want to diminuendo to the arrival in measure 66 as the harmonies get progressively denser and more dissonant but a slight crescendo into measure 66 will set up that arrival point. Your entrance on pedal D in measure 66 should be dark, ominous, and even menacing. Dynamic hairpins may be used here to shape the phrase and add tension to the dissonant arrivals on beat three of each measure. This is the most harmonically dissonant and ambiguous section of the piece and represents the imagined disorienting experience of floating through a nebula, with all its gas, dust, and celestial bodies obscuring everything, moving in unpredictable ways. Do what you must to achieve a true slur from the pedal D to the pedal A in 66 even though it isn’t technically slurred as the D will otherwise feel

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<sup>21</sup> Sims, Interview by author.

orphaned from the following phrase if there is a gap to breath or reset the embouchure. Practice using or ignoring a shift, embracing the shift, pitch bends, and other techniques to build that ability. Be aware of what part of the chord you have, particularly the minor thirds on beats 3-4 of measures 68 and 71. The  $\flat$ VI - V motion in trombone 2 of measures 72 and in the solo part of measure 73 is the second of the “ray of sunshine” moments. Let that E major chord be an arrival point where the harmonic ambiguity of the previous section is put to rest and replaced by peace.

Measure 96 is perhaps the most difficult moment in the entire piece (Figure 10). The tempo is marked at a blisteringly fast quarter note = 162. However, the



composer has noted that although desired, it is not a strict tempo marking.<sup>22</sup> What sounds exciting and good in a compositional program may sound just as good slower with real musicians. Quarter note = 152 is a more attainable tempo for a wider player base. The extremely low tessitura combined with the fast tempo and loud dynamic make this daunting to even the most skilled performers. If you have a shift in your pedal register, you may want to try playing the first 2, or even all 5, notes in your shift, then return to normal in the following measure. Alternatively, slur that entire measure if that’s the difference between the notes coming out or not. Trombone 5 doubles the solo an octave higher in that measure, so you need immediacy of response on the note, not strictly volume. You can also have the trombone choir

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<sup>22</sup> Sims, interview by author.



reduce their volume further as a final option. Experiment with alternate positions and valve combinations in the sixteenth note runs for the rest of the piece. Try the A in sixth position in measure 99, then in measures 101 and 106, E in seventh position or F on second valve and flat second position are all valid combinations to try.

Measure 117 is the prime form of the main theme, and the first notes written in this piece. Keep it heroic, the phrases long, and rhythmically accurate. The long note values should contrast sharply with the shorter notes in the ensemble. Drive through the suspension in measure 132 and have the choir bring out their resolutions. Measure 135 should be an immediate texture and mood shift to more pastorage and carefree. Measure 142 introduces the motor element common in many of Sims' pieces that will be present for the rest of this piece.<sup>23</sup> Have everyone put a slight emphasis on the downbeat and, most importantly, keep everything light. This figure will tend to drag over time as everyone starts to fatigue and having a conductor keep everyone moving along can be quite helpful. In measures 158-159, pulse the downbeats and put extra emphasis on the first of each 3-note grouping in the following two measures to bring out the six-eight feel.

The change in style in measure 167 should shift from lyrical to crisp. Keep the sixteenth notes exceptionally clean, especially on repeated notes. The pedal E in measure 176 should be a surprise to the audience as the pedal register hasn't been used in more than a minute and a half of music. Enter confidently but with enough room to grow as the phrase rises in tessitura. Keep the lyrical aspect in the low range

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<sup>23</sup> Sims, Interview by author.

here; playing loud and low is not impressive, lyrical and low with a great sound and clean slurs *is* impressive.

The next section introduces the theme in diminution withing the five-eight time and begins a long build up to the chorale statement of the theme in measure 195. Although marked *forte* in measure 189 you will need room to grow so either have everyone take the volume down one level or add a diminuendo in measures 190. Ensure the choir doesn't crescendo until measure 193, and trombone two should help lead the crescendo into measure 195. Keep the chords broad and round and keep the solo line here lyrical and free of strain in the sound. This is in the upper register for a sustained loud passage for bass trombone, but it is only nine measures. Be aware of when you have the third of the chord in measures 197 and 201. On this section Sims says, "There's something that tips just a little bit more on edge than a tenor playing that [high and lyrical]." <sup>24</sup> The material beginning in measure 207 is answer to the call from measures 167-173 so play it in the same style. Keep the chords in measure 215 long. The solo part is the only one with the third of the chord, so keep the F<sup>#</sup> low, and keep the energy up through the glissando.

Measure 216 begins a completely new section with an immediate mood change. Glissandi here should start moving immediately and slowly instead of at the lats moment as trombonists typically play glissandi. This section should be lightly articulated and mysterious in character in the ensemble. The tonal ambiguity here is a reference back to the ambiguity from the opening of the piece, and the dissonant intervals should not be minimized. The solo interruption in measure 228 should start

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<sup>24</sup> Sims, Interview by author.

to reform the tonality while its lyricism contrasts with the pointed and somewhat dissonant nature of the choir. The feeling should have a vast, picturesque, almost movie like quality to it here. Be intentional in phrasing through these long notes to keep it from stagnating. Practice measures 228-241 with tuning drones to hear the harmonies so you can land immediately on the major and minor thirds present throughout this section.

In measure 256, do not clip the top E<sup>b</sup> short, but do land very strongly on measure 257 as you are the only voice playing on that beat. The ensemble returns in measure 265 with the theme found back in measure 41 so keep their phrasing similar. The scale in measure 270 should be tested with all valve combinations and alternate positions possible until success is found. Try the G<sup>b</sup> with the second valve (if an independent valve) or the following F in sixth position. Try the D<sup>b</sup>, C<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup> in fifth, first valve + flat second, first valve + flat third to A<sup>b</sup> in third, or even D<sup>b</sup> in fifth, C<sup>b</sup> with second valve + flat third, then B<sup>b</sup> in first. Keep the triplets long and do not rush them. The duple in measure 275 will require subdivision to execute properly. Keep this section broad and strong.

The harmonic-melodic progression relationship from measure 277 to 278 is perhaps one of the most surprising of the entire work. Previous versions of the theme had a pattern equivalent to I –<sup>b</sup> VI. This iteration moves to the *minor* <sup>b</sup>vi chord *and* places the final note of the solo line a half step higher than expected. The interval pattern of the solo line would expect to place a G<sup>b</sup> in measure 278, not a G<sup>♮</sup>, however, because this statement of the theme begins on the fifth of the chord, the G<sup>♮</sup>

breaks the melodic expectation while maintaining the harmonic root tone. The first trombone line moving from G<sup>#</sup> in 277 down to G<sup>n</sup> in 278 has a sinister suggestion reminiscent of the changing third in Mahler's sixth symphony. This highly unexpected moment further raises the energy before the transition into the coda. Finally, keep the short reprieve of measures 290-295 light and buoyant before the final push to the end. Here, the *fortississimo* reflects the intensity of the moment, not necessarily a pure volume label.

A few final notes from the composer: the glissandi in measures 15, 101, 215-222 should start immediately and take the full duration of the printed note value. The rest are at the performer's discretion. None of the following ideas are notated, but the composer's personal interpretation at the time includes:

- measure 11 with a slight ritard
- 20-23 as slightly faster, with a ritard from the end of measure 23 through the end of 25, back to A tempo at measure 26.
- Measures 30-37 do not need to be in strict time
- The appassionato from measures 46-48 may be faster
- Bring out trombone 5 in measures 26-27, trombone 4 in 27 and 31, and trombone 3 in 34-35 as important countermelodies.<sup>25</sup>

The composer's view on his music is best explained in his own words:

“My perception of the piece changes as I work on it. The reason I decided to not feather beam measure 37 was so that if someone didn't want to play it that way, they wouldn't feel like they had to. They can just have that little bit of space before it. The *freely* makes it so you can do exactly that, and you can do what you want. As much as possible I try to stay out of the way of the performer. Look at tempo for example. In the midi example [sent to the author during the composition process], there are a *lot* of tempo changes that are not in the score and that's because I want to give the soloist the opportunity to make their own music out of it. I feel that the music wants to move forward [in a given location]. I'm not going to put a metronome marking in [I feel a small change] because that takes away

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<sup>25</sup> Sims, interview by author.

performance creativity, and frankly, if they're a good enough musician, that's something they'll do and feel that naturally. Once I put a double bar on a piece and I send over the files, it really isn't my piece anymore. It's yours and whoever else is playing it. I've put it out and it's everyone else's job to make it their own piece. So, your version is going to be different than Brian's [Hecht] version, than Goerge's [Curran] version, than Matt's [Guilford] version. Everyone views the world differently so everyone's going to have a different take based on their experience, their anything. I think we get into a situation of taking composers too literally with what they say and sometimes the performer's musicality can be a better decision than what the composer has written."<sup>26</sup>

### *A Beautiful Noise* by John Frith

#### **About the Composer**

John Frith is an active composer living in the United Kingdom. Born in 1947 in Hampshire, he studied composition at Dartington College of Arts with Richard Hall. He continued his studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he studied french horn with Anthony Halstead and composition with Edmund Rubbra. While there he won the School Brass Prize (1971) and Composition Prize (1972) before becoming a freelance musician where he performed with many London orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra. Frith transitioned to a career as a composer and teacher, working for Abingdon School, then Northampton Music School, Oundle School, then for Worcestershire Youth Music, developing music project with children and teaching brass. He retired from teaching full time in 2007 but continues to compose. Frith wrote *A Beautiful Noise* in 2009 for British bass trombonist Jonathan Warburton and the Columbus State University Trombone Choir

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<sup>26</sup> Sims, interview by author.

where it was premiered during the 2009 Eastern Trombone Workshop in Arlington, Virginia, USA.<sup>27, 28, 29, 30</sup>

### **About the Work**

*A Beautiful Noise* is a three-movement work that shows the warmth and humorous side of the bass trombone. The work follows a normative fast-slow-fast movement scheme, with themes from the first and second movements appearing in the third to tie everything together in a show of compositional forethought. In an unusual choice of scoring, the work is for bass trombone and seven trombones in the choir instead of the more common six or eight.

Movement one, marked *Vivo*, is a monothematic movement where small motivic or rhythmic ideas are traded between soloist and ensemble to create a fabric that is familiar but not boring or overly repetitive. The primary melody/theme (P) is lush and lyrical in nature.<sup>31</sup> It shows both the wide range of the bass trombone while hinting at the darker and more aggressive capabilities with the shift to eighth notes at the end of the theme (Figure 11). The piece's home key is nominally E<sup>b</sup> major, as seen below, but chromatic alterations shown in the first two measures set up that chromaticism of the solo part. The chromatic alterations also add a sense of unease

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<sup>27</sup> "John Frith," edition db, accessed November 19, 2021, <http://www.editiondb.com/johnfrithtext.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> "John Frith," Composers, Writers and Editors, Camden Music, accessed November 19, 2021, <https://www.camdenmusic.com/composer.php?id=00000019>

<sup>29</sup> "John Frith," Warwick Music Group, accessed November 19, 2021, <https://warwickmusicgroup.com/2019/05/22/john-frith/>.

<sup>30</sup> "John Frith: A Beautiful Noise – Bass Trombone & Trombone Ensemble," Warwick Music, accessed November 19, 2021, <https://www.warwickmusic.com/p/6ZBr/>.

<sup>31</sup> In Hepokoski and Darcy's *Elements of Sonata Theory*, they break down sonata form exposition using thematic terminology. P themes are primary themes and they occur in the exposition before the transition away from the home key. Secondary (S) themes are after the transition and are usually in a new key. Closing figures (C) come after the S theme(s) and end the exposition so the development may begin.

Vivo  $\text{♩} = 92$

Figure 11 the first and second statement of the P theme

and tension that propels the work forward, keeping the listener's expectations on edge. The P theme moves to the trombone choir while the soloist picks up the rhythm of the opening two measures (Figure 12) in a role reversal that is seen throughout the work. The *sotto voce* marking is interesting as the choir is marked *poco forte* and the

Figure 12 measures 25-27

soloist normally should be clearly heard above

everything else. But this sets up a dialogue between soloist and ensemble that is seen across all three movements of this piece. The soloist then re-enters with the theme set very low, and with an altered rhythm as if to say "hey, this is *my* solo, give it back!" Yet that is deferred until after a full statement of the P theme, now in its most common form of parallel dominant seventh chords (Figure 13). Harmonic tension

Figure 13 measures 32-35 the choir's P theme chords

comes from the opening measures harmonic motion: I -  $\flat$  ii - I motion and

is used to exploit chromatic neighbor tones that aren't expected in a largely tonal piece. This is what gives the P theme its chromatic tension and allows for frequent key area changes. The next interesting motivic moment to happen is a series of glissandi in measures 50-52 as seen below in Figure 14. It serves as the climax of the

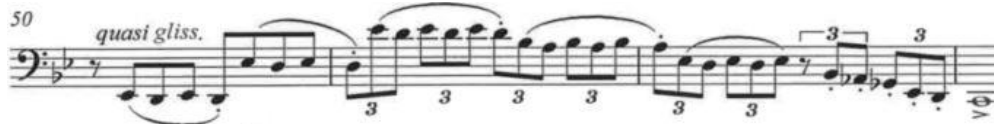


Figure 14 movement 1

opening with aggressive chord hits in the choir. The music continues alternating between the P theme and secondary ascending scales and descending chords. These fragmentary thematic ideas also include the frequently used idea of ending (or eliding) a phrase with either the last two or three eighth notes of a measure, all accented, and with the final one being a *sforzando*. The ensemble texture is almost uniformly eighth note scales and/or hits as seen in measures 113-114 below. This can be heard as fragments all over the movement but is prominent in the solo bass trombone in measures 81-84, 113-125, and 140-147. Its various forms are seen in Figure 15.

All in all, the P theme is heard, completely or partially, twelve times. With the secondary fragment essentially evolving into a theme unto itself, it can be argued to



Figure 15 clockwise from top center: measures 81-84; 117; 142-147; 113-114.

rise to the level of a secondary theme (S) that contrasts with the first. In terms of applying a strict form analysis, this is difficult as it is so fragmented, but the author deemed that it acts as a secondary theme substantially enough to earn the label.

The second movement, marked *andante espressivo*, is the mournful search for belonging and companionship. The soloist plays an upwardly hopeful but harmonically unsure melody that always resolves downward, signaling a failed search (Figure 16). This can be considered the “searching” motif and is accompanied by

static and bleak chords from the ensemble. Although the piece is nominally in C minor (the relative minor of the first movement’s primary theme and starting key), the first note of the piece is a C#! This ascending scale is almost an octatonic scale

Figure 17 measures 6-9, the primary theme of the second movement, the “lonely” motif

except for the inclusion of the A<sup>b</sup>. The second theme (Figure 17), and the primary theme of the movement, is a sustained theme that meanders down from a finally heard C minor chord. The ensemble's sparse and unresolved harmonies along with the long note values in the solo give a palpable sense of isolation and loneliness. As the chords warm up and the tonality moves towards major, the solo part gains hope and excitement at the prospect of companionship (measures 15-18). This burst of hopeful energy climaxes at measure 19 with what is nominally a C major chord, but with the addition of an A and the opening's "searching" motif, (now starting on a G<sup>#</sup>) that cloud the clarity of the moment and sow doubt into this newfound companion (measures 19-21). Measures 22-24's descending theme reveal that this companion is not the right one and the soloist and choir meet on a low-set G dominant seventh chord (V<sup>7</sup>) in third inversion. The searching motif returns in measure 26, now a fifth lower, before turning into a meandering 2-against-3 syncopation show the soloist recalling the previous match through rose-tinted glasses. The first trombone picks up the "lonely" motif to remind us that it wasn't meant to be before playfully joining the soloist in a duet for a flurry activity as if flirting and leading this lonely person on. But this is all for naught as it comes crashing down again to an even lower set A dominant seventh chord.

The first nine measures are now repeated, and the search begins anew. This time however, the "lonely" motif instead of progressing downwards first goes up from E<sup>b</sup> over C to G<sup>b</sup> (the tritone of the C tonal area) to further bring out the isolation and anguish the soloist is experiencing. Measure 15-21 are repeated in the same hope-elation-disappointment cycle before moving onto a short cadenza. This

now moves to a B<sup>b</sup> dominant seventh chord to move in a new direction:

companionship found at last and a triumphant ending in E<sup>b</sup> major.

The third movement, the Rondo Finale, is where the composer's nationality shines through. Although initially aggressive, the soloist enters with a buoyant and jolly ascending theme where the antecedent is in two-four time and the consequent of the phrase is in three-eight time (Figure 19, below). As indicated in the name, this is



Figure 19 measures 18-25, the second statement of the P theme. The printed key signature is G major, one sharp.

the A section of the rondo and contains the highest note of the piece, the B in measure 22. This gives way to the lyrical short secondary theme that links the A and B section, and in which the rich B section's melody is built from (Figure 18, S theme). Compare measures 26/27 to 39/40: It is fundamentally the same material. The change in styles relaxes the intensity of the moment before the return to the refrain A section.

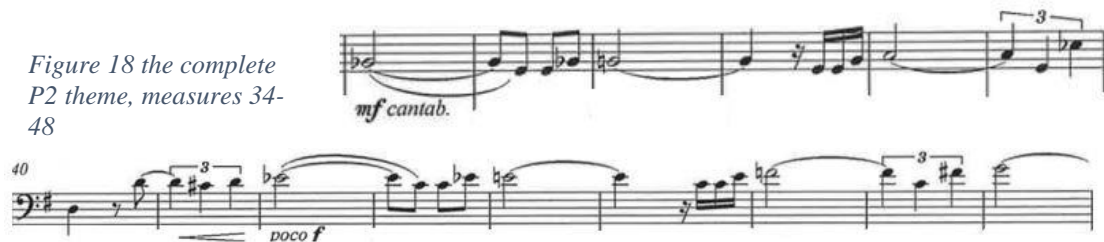


Figure 18 the complete P2 theme, measures 34-48

The C section of the rondo is the most intense for the soloist and the most diverse in the movement. A long string of sixteenth notes (Figure 20) and syncopated



Figure 20 measures 66-70. this carries on for three more measures in this fashion

eighth/sixteenth notes (Figure 21) give this a frantic feeling that contrasts with the S theme in the trombone choir.



Figure 21 measures 74-76

These two ideas make an unusual 12-measure phrase which in measure 78 start to alternate in chunks for another 14 measures. This is where the magic of this movement appears: the return of the P theme from the first movement of the work (Figure 22, below). Overlapping the themes from both movements



Figure 22 measures 78-82

functions in a similar manner to recapitulation in sonata form where the first theme is brought back to signal the end of the development. Yet this movement isn't even halfway over, being only in the C component of this rondo form. It's a fascinating juxtaposition of ideas that works surprisingly well because of the similarities between

the first movements them and this movement's B theme. Both use a measure long note followed by quarter note triplets and large upward slurs. It's even possible that they are derived from each other to make the three movement more organically feel like a single work instead of three distinct unrelated movements as is often the case in multi-movement trombone solos.

After this, a series of A<sup>1</sup>, B<sup>1</sup>, A, B, sections happen, each half as long as their previous appearances. Then at measures 132 the first movements' P theme makes another appearance as a duet in octaves between the solo and second bass trombone. The rhythm, and more importantly the intervals, are modified to be all half steps (Figure 23) but with an upward jump to keep the upward leaping interval from the first movement.

This is  
undergirded by



*Figure 23 measures 132-136, the P theme from the first movement*

the trombone choir playing material from the opening, passing off a continuous line of aggressive chromatic sixteenth notes. The appearance of the material from the first eight measures has a semi-recapitulation effect. After that ten-bar phrase a portion of the P theme from the second movement also appears with the choir mimicking it and with snippets of this movement's S theme. The third movement's measures 142-143 and second movement's measure 4 are seen, respectively, in Figure 24 below.



*Figure 24 excerpts from movement 3 (L) and 2 (R)*

After this there is transitional and closing material before a final statement of the A section and a flourish of the sixteenth notes from the opening measures to finish

off the work. At first glance this has the organizational pattern of ABACA<sup>1</sup>B<sup>1</sup>AB<sup>2</sup>DE -transition-A. This give the work a 12-part rondo form which is incredible given that it is only a three-minute movement. This requires some small clarifying points required. The C section combines new material in the solo with B material and the 1<sup>st</sup> movement P material in the choir. The D section (measures 132-141) combines the first movement's P theme but with sixteenth notes found in the beginning of this movement. Is that similar enough to what is found in the C section to be classified as a derivative of the C section? It is: compare measure 1-2 and 132-133 in the tenor trombones with measure 13 and 66-67 in the solo. It's essentially the same thing, as the sixteenth notes in the A theme are built on the idea present in the first two measures. Therefore, this D section is a variation on the C section. Measures 142-151 are new however, built on either material from the second movement or completely new depending on the importance of the interval patterns. The author hears and sees the two movements connected here. Compare Figure 24 above with measure the additional examples in Figure 25 below: movement 3, measure 146-147 (L) and

with opposite effects. While the second movement is a “lonely” idea, it appears in the fourth movement twisted, sarcastic manner in a quick argument between soloist and first trombone. It is a subtle reference, but one that can be made. The final form

analysis of this rondo is therefore in the form ABACA<sup>1</sup>B<sup>1</sup>AB<sup>2</sup>C<sup>1</sup>D-transition-A (as coda).

### **Performance Considerations and Suggestions**

The performance difficulties of this work are less complicated than the theoretical analysis would indicate. In the first movement, the tendency will be to come off the ties late in all parts. The scoring is quite dense and loud so you will need to be able to play loud for much of the work and still maintain a good sound. Practice loud pedal notes, particularly *forte pianos* without becoming edgy. Exaggerate the glissandi but keep them in time. You will also need to practice a fast single tongue or a very slow triple tongue for measures 52 and 130, which must be clean and loud.

The second movement's lyrical phrases are quite long, and you will likely need to choose between moderating the volume and taking a breath. The author chose the former. With the figure that appears in measures 1-2, 15-18 and can be performed several ways, but the most logical way is to make it one continuous line and crescendo. Making each 4-6 note phrase its own crescendo that keeps resetting can give a musical motion-sickness feeling to it if not executed well. The *quasi gliss* marking in measure 33 is unclear, and it's also unclear if it should be in measure 35. Experiment with different slide movement speed, or even having the gliss only being on the ascent note under the slur. When performing the legato sections, keep the musical idea and character or emotion of the moment first and foremost in your mind. This will bring the audience in to your story and help them to experience your music and not just hear to it.

The third movement has details that are difficult to execute well. The decrescendo on the figure in measure 13 is a fundamental part of that theme and will need to be executed convincingly well even up to high B<sup>4</sup>. The three-eighth measures should be kept with the eighth note staying the same tempo with the downbeat light

and buoyant and the second note accented as a sarcastic jab. Measures 66-90 are likely going to be the most difficult in the entire work. A sixteenth note rest is not enough time to breath at this tempo, so tank up in measures 66 and force the trombone choir to achieve a true piano so you don't have to play too loudly. Ensure the accents in this section are clear and use them as a goal in your phrasing to build excitement. The syncopations following this are also quite difficult. Regular practice with a metronome, internal subdivision, and learning to feel that groove will be effective practice tools. A metronome with the eighth notes sounding may be particularly helpful as the choir always has figures that that give a composite rhythm of either continuous sixteenth notes or sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth note. Keep the measures before rehearsal letter O clean and light as you descend and diminuendo despite the accents. Ensure the ensemble is softer than you are there, and ensure you are *pianissimo* so that the final crescendo is an electrifying end to the work.

### *The Significant Other* by Charlie Small

#### **About the Composer**

“If virtuosity were an illness, and its primary symptom anonymity, Charlie Small’s picture would be in the Physicians’ Desk Reference.”<sup>32</sup> Born on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1927, Charles Srulowitz, “Charlie” Small grew up in Manhattan’s Lower East Side during the Great Depression. He was the youngest of eight children and by the time he got to high school he knew he wanted to be a musician: “Being anything else never

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<sup>32</sup> “Trombonist Charlie Small,” Tumblr, accessed September 7, 2021.



entered my mind.”<sup>33</sup> Two of his older brothers were performing musicians and helped support the family during the Great Depression. He took lessons at the Manhattan School of Music, then with Al Godlis of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra (retired). He landed his first job in 1942, while in high school, at Grossinger’s Catskills Mountain Resort where he learned to sightread often times nearly illegible manuscript. The following year he spent the summer performing at Tamiment Lodge in the Pocono Mountains (PA), then eventually started performing club dates with Enric Madreguera’s Orchestra at the Commodore Hotel in New York City during his final year of high school. These experiences prepared him for his first big break.<sup>34</sup>

Charlie auditioned into Tommy Dorsey’s Orchestra at 17 years old, crediting his previously built sightreading and transposing exercise with clinching the position. He only stayed there a year though, because only Dorsey could have trombone solos, so he was ‘stolen’ by the Harry James Orchestra as lead trombone. He later was employed as an extra, then fulltime trombonist with the American Broadcasting Company Staff Orchestra where he would regularly solo, notably on “Tea and Crumpets,” and so his sound made it into the ears of millions of Americans.<sup>35</sup>

His career continued to flourish, and he married Emily Strassner, a Julliard and Bard College trained pianist, and they had several children together. While his children were at school, Small took arranging and composition lessons with Hall Overton (who taught at Julliard). Of the experience, Small says, “Prior to this time,

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<sup>33</sup> Erik Ketcherside, “Yards and Yards of Velvet: Remembering Charlie Small,” *International Trombone Association Journal*, 46, no. 1 (January 2018): 18.

<sup>34</sup> Charlie Small, “Sentimental Journey or Tons & Tons of Spit Paper,” *New York Brass Conference for Scholarships*, (1988): 2, 6, <https://trombonistcharliesmall.tumblr.com/>.

<sup>35</sup> Small, “Sentimental Journey,” 6-8.

my enjoyment of music was mostly an aural experience; now a new world opened up as I become more aware of what composers were writing.”<sup>36</sup> With his intense craving of knowledge, he enrolled in the Manhattan School of Music and earned a bachelor’s and M.A. degree. He continued working and composing, eventually retiring to the Phoenix metropolitan area where he continued composing and started a trombone choir of local students, residents, and professionals in the area to meet occasionally to read trombone choir music.<sup>37</sup>

### **About the Work**

Unlike Charlie Small’s well-known *Conversation*, this duet is dominated by intervallic melodies and harmonic arpeggiation. The tenor trombone part also goes a half step higher, and stays higher and for longer periods of time, than *Conversation*. Written in 1994, this duet does not have a dedication like his previous one, which Charlie wrote for himself and David Taylor.<sup>38</sup> If *Conversation* is seen as a heated and dynamic back and forth between two people – whether opponents, neighbors, friends, or lovers – *The Significant Other* is programmatically more specific and intimate. The style and interaction between the two parts would suggest a couple living together that simply tolerate each other.

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<sup>36</sup> Small, “Sentimental Journey,” 8.

<sup>37</sup> Ketcherside, “Yards and Yards of Velvet,”: 17, 20.

<sup>38</sup> David Taylor is an active bass trombonist living in the New York city area. His career and style defy categorization. He has performed almost any type of music imaginable using bass trombone, ranging from standard orchestral literature to jazz, commercial, chamber, fusions, and many other. His style is uniquely his own. His relevance here is that in addition to being the partner for Charlie’s *Conversation*, he has commissioned and composed an incredible amount of music for bass trombone frequently in, or soling with, chamber ensembles. Eric Ewazen’s *Concertino* and *Capriccio* for bass trombone and trombone choir were written for him as was Frederic Rzewski’s *Moonrise with Memories* among many others. His numerous recordings continue to break ground in content, style, technique, expressiveness, and creativity. He is one of the most prominent luminaries of solo bass trombone.

Choices must be made regarding the character of the duet. When are the two voices complementary, indifferent, or antagonistic? Will the same thematic material be performed the same way by both performers or differently as an extension of individuality within the concept of this close relationship? What is the character of each theme? Exploring the subtleties of this work and aligning them with your interpretation will add depth and refinement to the performance.

The opening two measures are broad and powerful motif, starting *forte* with the bass trombone's line suggesting a  $i - \flat VI - v^{6/4} - \flat ii$  motion (Figure 26). The bass trombone is seemingly yelling at their partner while the tenor is attempting to stand their ground, swatting away the attack with each repeated eighth note. This is

followed by a one measure interruption then a repeat of the opening bars at piano before moving onto the

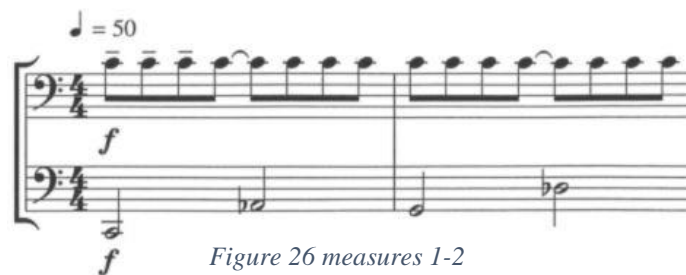


Figure 26 measures 1-2

primary theme. In the manuscript Small writes *not heavy* in measure 6 (Figure 27)



Figure 27 manuscript, measures 6-7

and places the melodic tenor trombone and

harmonic bass at different dynamics.<sup>39,40</sup> This dynamic swapping of *mezzo forte* vs

<sup>39</sup> Charlie Small, *The Significant Other*, unpublished musical score, 1994.

<sup>40</sup> Several markings in the manuscript did not make it into the published engraving for unknown reasons.

*piano* is common throughout the piece and is a curious choice. Musicians are taught to bring the melody out and to keep the accompanying figures softer. Was this done to intentionally exaggerate the dynamic difference, for a programmatic reason, or because Small thought the two voices wouldn't balance? There is no clear answer, so it is up to the musicians to decide how to interpret the marking. The tenor trombone's melody is curiously set against the bass an octave and tritone apart. Then the voices switch with the bass voice starting on low E, in a copy of the third measure of the tenor's statement of the theme then moving down to pedal F using the same tritone intervals of C<sup>3</sup>-G<sup>b2</sup>-C<sup>2</sup>. This line slurs up a major seventh then proceeds to descend chromatically passing through alternating consonant and dissonant intervals.

Measures 6-14 are being considered the "A" theme. The opening statement of the first two measures now then returns, now a fifth lower, moving to the "B" theme.



Figure 29 measures 19-20



Figure 30 measures 23-25 1/2-10, intro to the B theme

The bass trombone starts the B theme in measure 17, working its way up in a grumbly fashion via chromatically ascending major thirds (Figure

28). The tempo is fast at quarter note = 126, more than double the opening tempo, and all eighth notes have staccato marks over them. The tenor trombone takes over the theme, building tension with the continued ascent of the line (Figure 29). The second part of the B theme arrives in measure 23 (Figure 30). It may be possible to consider

this a new theme but the seamless connection and the leading up to these measures makes it appear as a natural extension. Each measure alternates between *mezzo forte* and *piano* while the bass voice backs this with short arpeggiated figures, and both voices collectively descend over more than three octaves.

The A theme makes an incomplete return in measure 32 (Figure 31) before moving on to what at first seems to be a new idea: a slowly descending melody in the tenor with chromatically ascending major thirds in the bass voice, clearly based on the first component of the B theme. The tempo here is quarter note = 60, the tempo of



*p* Figure 31 measures 36-38

the A theme, but the material in the bass trombone is based on the B theme so classification becomes initially complicated. Charlie Small uses motifs in very specific ways, with each theme having an associated tempo, so this mixing of the two is fascinating. Because it's an extension of the just heard A theme and, because tempo and melody take precedence over the harmonic bass line, it makes more sense to classify this as a variant of the A theme (A<sup>2</sup>). This is bolstered by the A theme returning in its normal form in measures 41-42.

The bass trombone redirects back to the B theme (B<sup>2</sup>, measure 45) and continues to stay in control an octave lower than the tenor's original statement. An ascending C minor triad, outlined in the increasingly pestering tenor trombone's protesting interjections, and the two find another way to show their disagreement as seen in Figure 32.



Figure 32 measure 52

A seemingly new section begins in measure 54 but upon closer inspection it is the A theme from the tenor trombone, now in the bass and in a more lyrical form without the thirty second notes, so it has been designated theme A<sup>3</sup> (Figure 33). The bass trombone line ascends to A<sup>b4</sup> before descending rapidly to B<sup>1</sup>, becoming increasingly agitated as shown by pattern of half steps and tritones. The tenor

trombone then tactfully steers the moment back to a slightly different form of the B theme (B<sup>3</sup>, measure 64) with a legato repetition (measure 73).

Figure 33 measures 54-56

What the author considers a truce offering figure now occurs: ascending arpeggios that land on a minor seventh two octave apart sounds repeatedly. Time appears to stand still while the two try to interact more amicably with each other.

Their disagreement is more muted, but still present in the next section, the C theme of measure 81 (Figure 35). Eventually the two switch parts with the bass playing the tenor's line an octave lower, changing at the last beat to arrive back on the "truce" motif (Figure 34).



Figure 34 measures 89-90, the second "truce figure"

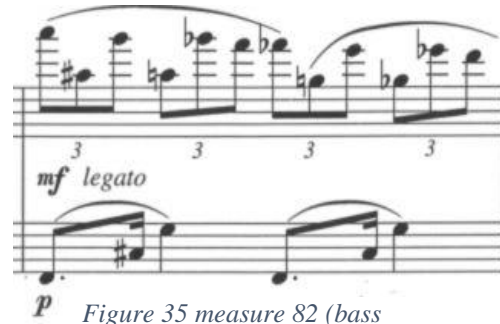


Figure 35 measure 82 (bass clef in both parts)

The moment of relative peaceful co-existence was short lived however, as what functions as a recapitulation appears. The A and B themes returns in measure 91 for a full restatement of measures 6-22 (with the bass trombone having the ascending third figure instead of the tenor) before it devolves back into their aggressive disagreement of triplets vs. sixteenth notes.

The final section of seemingly new material now begins in measure 112 with low and quiet quarter notes in the bass that ground a syncopated figure in the tenor. The keen-eyed performer will realize that this syncopated figure is a modification of the B theme's ascending major thirds, with the bass part recomposed to keep the syncopated feel, leading it to be classified as theme B<sup>4</sup>. This section acts more as a transition as it is only six measures long. The final form of the A theme is brought back for one more statement, this time high in the tessitura of the tenor trombone, but with the paired with the descending intervals of the bass trombone's B theme from measure 23, now slurred) earning it the classification A<sup>4</sup>. The thirty second notes are

gone, and a legato *piano* variant brings the tenor up to E<sup>b5</sup>. Measure 124 marks the coda, a slow rehash of the B theme's grumbly bass trombone figure. This summarizes the tension of the relationship but settles amicably on octave F's (Figure 36 the last



Figure 36 the last three measures of The Significant Other

three measures of The Significant Other).

The interval sequence in the coda section is a summarization of work's harmonies, which include a heavy reliance on octaves, minor thirds, perfect fifths, tritones, and diminished and minor sevenths.

The form is episodic in nature and can be mapped in its least condensed form as:  $ABA^2B^2A^3B^3CAB^2B^4A^4+B$ , coda( $B^5$ ). However, many of these sections are half the length of the A and B sections set out in the beginning. With parentheses used to make reading the pattern easier, it can be further combined and reduced (with  $\frac{1}{2}$  length sections in italics) from  $ABA^2B^2A^3B^3CAB^2B^4A^4+B$ , coda( $B^5$ ) to  $(AB)(A^{1+2}B^2)(A^3B^3)C(AB^{2+4})(A^4B^{coda})$ . This makes the pairing easier to see, and to see that everything is set around the distinct middle C section. Three AB pairs are set before and two after. In many sonata forms, the exposition can be quite lengthy as the primary theme area, transition, secondary theme, and closing statements must all happen. This work does not have the harmonic outline or specific events that must happen to be classified as a sonata form by Hepokoski and Darcy, but it is also a modern work, and their book examines the 18<sup>th</sup> century sonata and its many



variations.<sup>41</sup> The largest argument against this is that the C section does not act like a development. In fact, it is an island completely unto itself set apart before and after with a figure that acts as a buffer between the surrounding material. Therefore, and without a greater understanding of 20<sup>th</sup> century variations on form, it could bear some resemblance to a ternary form with the opening and closing sections repeated.

### **Performance Considerations and Suggestions**

As with any duet, many choices will have to be made regarding overall character, transitions, tuning and other things. The opening tempo of quarter note = 50 is exceptionally slow especially given the volume and low tessitura of the bass trombone part. This is exacerbated further in the work when this is presented again a fifth lower. If measure one's tempo is increased, consider a slight increase to measure six's A theme tempo throughout the work to maintain the tempo relationship.

One of the most daunting aspects of the work is brought into focus with the A theme of measure 6: intervallic tuning. Questions of who will be adjusting pitch at what points will need to be answered. The determined musician can go through and notate each interval in the piece with which direction the adjustment should be made, however, with several hundred notes requiring adjustments to ring in tune, this is a substantial task. An alternative option is to only tune the longer held harmonies and focus on consonant intervals, but keep in mind that even half steps and tritones will sound audibly in tune or out of tune depending on the adjustments made. Raising the

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<sup>41</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and the Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2006), 14-22.

A<sup>b</sup> and D<sup>b</sup> of measures 1 and 2, respectively, will help those to be ring correctly. Tuning can also be done melodically. Rehearsing in a live space such as a performance hall, stairwell, or quiet parking garage can help you hear the resonance you are producing. The harmonies are so frequently dissonant (tritones, half steps, whole steps) that the minutia of tuning all those intervals will likely only be fully appreciated in a recording that is examined in depth. One dissonant interval that *will* need to be tuned appropriately is the C- B<sup>b</sup> interval in measures 77, 79, 89, and 90. Although this is enharmonically a major second, The B<sup>b</sup> will sound as a minor seventh to the C, and it will need to be lowered considerably. Depending on the specifics of the moment, an alternative is to tune the C high to compensate. Matthew Guilford said during an ensemble coaching that “it’s more important to be together than to be right,” but try to keep it consistent.<sup>42</sup>

Transitions from one section to another offer the choice of inserting a momentary pause or not. Some instances, such as measures 5-6, 31-32, and 111-12 should be performed without a gap or rest. Measures 14-15, 80-81, 90-91 and 98-99 are less clear. For practical considerations, there is no location to empty the condensation that will be building up in the slide during the performance. These transitions are possible locations to do that. They also offer a moment of repose, particularly after measures 80 and 90. Try to solve the technical problem with a musical solution.

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<sup>42</sup> Matthew Guilford, lecture, University of Maryland College Park, November 2021. This was in reference to being in tune and in time with each other rather than in tune with a tuner but not with the ensemble.

The tenor trombone's part consists in large part of large intervallic slurs in the upper register, staying almost entirely above the staff. Clean slurs that skip over partials are a basic requirement to perform this work well. Measures 82-85 are exceptionally difficult, as seen slurring intervals as wide as from C<sup>5</sup> – C<sup>#4</sup> – B<sup>4</sup> and D<sup>b5</sup> – E<sup>4</sup> – C<sup>5</sup>. In the original manuscript Small marks this section with the descriptor *liquid* but that marking did not make its way into the published edition.<sup>43</sup> The ending is as similarly difficult section. Small marks an optional octave displacement (“8va [if] possible”)<sup>44</sup> from F<sup>4</sup> up to E<sup>b5</sup>, all while piano. The following measure includes a D<sup>b</sup> a whole step lower and requires the tenor to accurately jump partials up and down in that register to close out the piece. Endurance, an excellent ear, and being able to play in the high range without strain or muscling though will be paramount for a successful execution of this work. In addition to this, the piece includes many interval patterns that alternate between tritones and fourths or fifths, such as measure 111 adding to the challenge.

For the bass trombonist, the piece is notably less demanding, but not without challenge. This part ends up with the more complicated tuning duties, if each interval is going to be adjusted. Choices such as sustaining or backing off the sustain in measures 1-2, 15-16 and 100-101 will need to be made depending on the character and style you wish to depict. Measures 17-18 and their repeats throughout the work are the next most troublesome spot. Work to keep the pedal notes clear and smooth. You may want to experiment with different valves on the starting F, and with

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<sup>43</sup> Charlie Small, *The Significant Other*, unpublished musical score, 1994.

<sup>44</sup> Small, *The Significant Other*.

stopping the slide on each note if the lick is goopy and unclear. This may also require a legato double tongue in this register. Finally, ensure the eighth notes following that are even without either the higher or lower notes being louder. The last 4 measures, built on this material require a choice of playing the grace notes as printed, or as sixteenth notes as in previous versions. The original manuscript has these as thirty second pickup notes to each measure, so they were changed to grace notes at some point. The choice was made in this recording to perform them as ordinary sixteenth notes to apply a stodgy, older character to this theme. That made more sense than playing them as fast grace notes only to land on comparatively slow eighth notes. The printed thirty second notes, however, will need to be played very quickly, so practicing both the jump downwards and pedal register slurs in a faster tempo will reap dividends.

As an ensemble, several ambiguous markings will need to be discussed. The *A tempo* at measure 54 is preceded by a ritard. The immediately previous tempo was the faster quarter note = 126, however, the melodic material is that of the opening slow section where the quarter note = 60. This recording chose the latter tempo as Small's duet *Conversation* is highly motivically structured, and each motif has its own tempo, style, and other attributes. The next choice that needs to be made is the tempo of measures 112, 118, and 126-127. Measure 112 is marked "a little slower", coming from quarter note = 126. Small does not offer any guidance on how much "a little" is. Is this only one or two metronome clicks slower, perhaps something closer to quarter note = 112, or maybe something more drastic, like a tempo in the 90's or the 80's? How much slower should 118 be in comparison? It also says, "a little slower."

In the end, this recording goes with a more drastic interpretation, ending up in the 80's for tempo range of these first two sections. A different but still educated and reasonable interpretation would be to place the two "a little slower" sections as a gradual slowing of the tempo to the printed tempo marking in measure 123 of quarter note = 80. The tempo of measure 126-127 may only be limited by the speed at which the pedal notes can be played cleanly. Here, this recording also went with a more drastic interpretation of the crescendo and tempo increase.

There are several inconsistencies in the score and parts. The phrase markings of measures 8-12 and its reappearances are inconsistent. Sometimes the slur continues over the bar line, sometimes it does not, and sometimes it is split halfway through the measure. Finally, measure 45 is marked *mezzo forte*, but every other time this theme appears, it starts piano and has *cresc. poco a poco* indicated. The manuscript indicates the same thing, but the author argues that this is an error given Small's otherwise consistent motivic markings on this theme.

There are two sections where rhythmic coordination will be important in order to keep the music from slowing: measures 81-88 and the figure in measures 52 and 111. In the former, keeping the phrase moving forward is more important than strict sixteenth note placement. Place it after the tenor's last triplet of each beat and keep the music in the forefront. In the latter locations, the temptation will be to drag the sixteenths to match the tenor's triplets. Focus on keeping the first note of each beat together and staying true to the musical idea: chaos and disagreement.

## *The Significant Other #2*

### **About the Work**

In a series of emails with Douglas Yeo<sup>45</sup>, Charlie Small's *The Significant Other* came up and the author asked Yeo if he had ever spoken with Small about it. Small and Yeo made a corrected and definitive edition of *Conversation* in 2016 through Ensemble Publications, which raised the question of whether they had done the same with the other duet. Sadly, they did not. The author was shocked when Yeo said the published edition was only the first half and that he had the second half. Yeo scanned and sent the original manuscript over, along with the note Small wrote when he sent the papers to Yeo. Yeo warned that Charlie's handwriting, "is not always easy to decipher...and he makes mistakes. I learned this not only when I worked with him on his *Conversation*...but also when Ron Barron and I made an edition for publication of Charlie's *Stringing and Sliding Along* for trombone (or bass trombone) and violin. We had fits trying to read Charlie's mind since all of the scores and parts we had contained differences."<sup>46</sup> This is true in comparing the score and parts for both parts of *The Significant Other*, including with the published manuscript for part 1. Part two has fewer conundrums, though, including easily fixed accidentals. As stated earlier, Charlie's use of sequences and patterns is deliberate and consistent across his other works, so in a sequence of ascending major thirds, a sudden minor

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<sup>45</sup> Douglas Yeo was the bass trombonist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1985-2012. The author studied with him while pursuing a Master of Music degree.

<sup>46</sup> Douglas Yeo, personal communication with author, email, March 23-26 2021.

third seemed incorrect (measure 53). This was supported by a similar passage earlier in the work.

Two final decisions that had to be made were the first note in measures 22 and 70 of the first trombone. The manuscript contains an E<sup>#</sup> moving to F, enharmonic equivalents. It was decided that the note was supposed to be an E<sup>b</sup> largely due to the scalar nature of the passages, and the surround presence of only F's and E<sup>b</sup>'s. The piece is almost exclusively in F minor and C minor with a figure that acts a cadence in B<sup>b</sup>. Lastly, measures 133-134 have an added ledger line in the manuscript of the first trombone part. The last note of each measure should be a C<sup>b</sup>, not a D<sup>b</sup>.

Returning to Small's consistency of patterns is the key as these measures are a series of ascending perfect fourths. C<sup>b</sup> continues the pattern correctly.

Harmonically the piece is clearly in F minor with excursions to C minor (the dominant minor) and shorter sections in B<sup>b</sup> minor that act as transitional material. The only sections that do not fall into these categories are chromatic sequences. There are two important harmonic ideas that the work is built on: the first, as seen in the A theme of measures 4-29, is the duality between the C – G and C<sup>#</sup> – G<sup>#</sup> perfect fifths (Figure 37). This first appears in measure 4 with the bass trombone, alternating between the two for five measures and is present in the remainder of the work. The other is the tritone between G-D<sup>b</sup> and C-G<sup>b</sup>. The former tritone arrives in passing in

measure seven in the tenor trombone.

A pattern of



Figure 37 measures six to eight

descending fourths sequences down through the key of F minor (with the C/G vs. C<sup>#</sup>/G<sup>#</sup> duality rolling along in the bass), and this is the only tritone found within the F natural minor scale and is played when the sequence shifts from fourths to fifths. The next time a melodic tritone appears is measure 21 in the tenor trombone. This four-note sequence of G-D<sup>b</sup>-C-G-(E<sup>b</sup>) is heard in the tenor trombone, which then repeats three more times expanding out to G-D<sup>b</sup>-C-G-(D<sup>b</sup>). The D<sup>b</sup>-G tritone then appears immediately in a short bass trombone transitional cadenza that then expands to C-G in the following measure. The four-note sequence then shows up in both parts (Figure 38) but the bass trombone's statement is transposed down a fifth and with an added note to become C-G<sup>b</sup>-F-(D<sup>b</sup>)-C, with the D<sup>b</sup> being a chromatic neighbor tone to the following beat's C which suggest a relationship to B<sup>b</sup> minor. After this slight

alteration, the figure shows up without the added neighbor tone.

The importance of this figure is

truly shown by the work

ending with this

sequence, now in F

minor (Figure 39). Thus,

the pattern first seen in

measure 21 ends the piece.

Figure 38.  
 measure 36, tenor trombone (L) and  
 measure 44, bass trombone (R).  
 Both are in bass clef.

135

Figure 39 the last two measures of the piece

The format of the unpublished part two of the duet is similar to the published first half. Most of this piece is based on this half's A theme disguised to feel like something new. The three-measure introduction is taken from the B theme of the first



duet. The “A” theme with its two distinct sections runs from measure 4-29 with Figure 37 showing the first three measures of this new material. The B theme, as seen in Figure 41, runs from measures 32-48. A possible third section, C, can be argued for measures 97-101 (Figure 40), but parts of it are subtly based on the B theme’s bass



Figure 40  
measures 97-101,  
the possible C  
theme

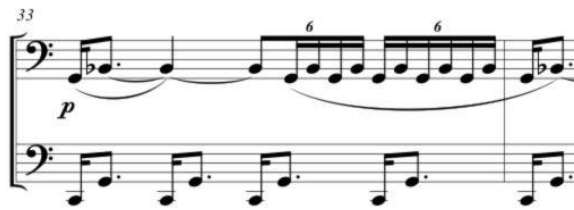


Figure 41 measure 33’s rhythmic interplay (B theme)



Figure 42 measures 74-75, both in bass clef

part of ascending fifths being expanded upon. Figure 42 and Figure 43 show forms of the A section returning in various ways. Evaluating the form based on thematic content

therefore give this a setting of  $ABAA^1A^2CA^3A$ . If, however, the tempo changes count toward labeling something as a new theme, then the

scheme changes to:  $ABAD^{1,2}CD^{1+2,1}A$ . Although this may not provide an easier way to classify it, it is a different way to look at it. What remains is that it is an episodic work.

## Performance considerations and Suggestions

There is a wide latitude of artistic interpretation that can be made in this movement. Small's dynamic markings are sparse and his crescendi/decrescendi are even rarer. Many sections start at *piano* with crescendo thrown in at seemingly random locations with no clear goal, and only for one or two beats at a time. This is where artistic interpretation is key to breathing life into this duet.

One aspect Small was very specific about is tempi. The markings in the piece range from a low of 69 to a high of 93 beats per minute. This is a narrow gap and while following a composer's notations is recommended, let the musical decisions lead the way so that the marked tempi do not become restrictive. Bear in mind the musical-emotional relationship that tempo has on any given section of music. In terms of ensemble, the tenor part is the more difficult of the two by a wide margin. The work is full of jumps of fourths, tritones, and fifths ranging up to C<sup>5</sup>, requiring exceptional accuracy and endurance when starting so high. There are several extended sections of octaves that also prove difficult. Resist the temptation to add time for breaths, such as in measures 98-100.

One recurring figure and one section will require rhythmic diligence. The tenor trombone's melody in measures 6-8, and the repeats of it throughout the piece including the bass trombone's version of that rhythm, must be executed as downbeats, not pickups. Do not be early and do not accent the second, lower note, which is especially likely to happen in the bass trombone part. The next section that requires diligence is measures 32-46. Initially, the same issue just mentioned applies: the sixteenth is the beat, not the pickup. There are eighth-note passages that are offset by

a sixteenth note that gives a composite rhythm of continuous sixteenth notes. The tendency in music like this is to slow down. Lastly, the rhythmic juxtaposition seen in Figure 41 (below) must be maintained. Measures 33-34 and 41-42 may be difficult to line up if you do not distinguish the difference in sixteenth note type. Aim to line up beat four and the follow downbeat of each of these measures, and ensure the downbeat is a true sixteenth note, not a continuation of the previous measure's triplets.

The final conundrum is the time signature change between measures 132 and 133. It transitions from six-eight to two-four, but without information of whether the beat or the sixteenth note stays the same. It made more sense for the beat to stay the same and allow the slightly slower sixteenth notes to close out the work with this four-measure codetta. You may choose to do otherwise as Small left no direct information to guide the performer.

In relation to character and interpretation, of *The Significant Other #2* has a more amicable and reconciliatory tone. The pair are at times in unison, with unison tritone intervals perhaps suggesting this being begrudgingly, other times comfortably doing their own independent things giving the performer a different character to explore than the first duet part. Keep articulations of the same marking consistent. Several sections stand out as ripe for musical-emotional moments. The first is measures 32-48. This can be interpreted as each performer telling their version of the story and venting their issues while the other listens.

The second contrasting section is measures 74-93 and its companion in 102-114. Measures 74-93 (Figure 42) begins the first mostly harmonious interaction

between the two voices with colorful half step arrivals to add touches of regret and bittersweetness to the moment. The parallel perfect fifths show a rare moment of complete agreement and perhaps even peace in the relationship. Measures 80-81 cast this into doubt with the chromatically ascending sequence, but this is counteracted by measure 82-93's touching quality where the two are continually coming closer to each other working towards unisons, but only arriving at a minor seventh (Figure 43). The second time this section appears it ends with the chromatically ascending sequence before returning to the opening's "independent parts" material.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for bass staves. The first system, labeled '83', shows two staves. The upper staff contains chords and a melodic line with half-step arrivals. The lower staff contains a chromatically ascending sequence of notes. The second system, labeled '90', also shows two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line, ending with a phrase marked with a box containing the letter 'E'. The lower staff continues the chromatic sequence, ending with a phrase marked with a box containing the letter 'p'.

Figure 43 measures 83-94, built on the A theme's bass trombone part

## Chapter 3: Works with Woodwind Quintet

### Concertino for Bass Trombone and Woodwind Quintet by William

### Schmidt

#### About the Composer

Born in 1926, William Joseph Schmidt Jr. started his musical journey with saxophone when he was six and later picked up clarinet and piano. He served in the Navy from 1944-46 as a musician and arranger in the Admiral's band on the USS Iowa (Pacific fleet), then again on the USS Tarawa (Mediterranean fleet) during the Korean war (1950-52) as musician and arranger. Between his years in the Navy he studied composition at the Chicago Musical College with Max Wald. After his second time in the Navy, he studied composition at the University of Southern California with Ingolf Dahl, earning his bachelor's and master's degrees. He started publishing his compositions through Avant Music (now Western International Music Inc.), the publishing company he started in 1959. He was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Music in 1981 for his *Double Concerto for Trumpet, Piano, and Chamber Orchestra*. "Much of [his music] is influenced by jazz and folk music...and he was passionate about photography, gardening, and studying Asian art, textiles, and architecture."<sup>47</sup>

He was an avid backpacker and would go up into the San Gabriel mountains northeast of Los Angeles when he wasn't composing. Terry Cravens of the University

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<sup>47</sup> "William Joseph Schmidt Jr," *New York Times*, obituaries, August 17-18, 2009.  
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/nytimes/name/william-schmidt-obituary?pid=131489943>.

of Southern California recalls that Schmidt (Bill) was lighthearted and “a jazzy guy” and incorporated aspects of that into this work.<sup>48</sup> His 160 compositions and 470 arrangements were focused on the “neglected woodwind, brass, and percussions instruments,” including classical saxophone.<sup>49</sup>

### **About the Work**

Schmidt’s *Concertino* is a substantial work for bass trombone in a serious style that captures the freedoms of tonal and structural relations of the 1970s and 80s. It was written for Terry Cravens of the University of Southern California. After leaving the West Point military band and coming to the Los Angeles area, Cravens joined the Los Angeles Brass Society, which had a grant to produce recordings. He recorded Schmidt’s trombone trio, and Schmidt approached Cravens and said he wanted to write a solo for him with woodwind quintet.<sup>50</sup> There is a discrepancy in the premier date: Terry Cravens says it was 1977 and published later. The interior cover page says it was premiered on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1980, and lists the performers.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, the work as it is published is titled “for Bass Trombone (or Tuba) & Woodwind Quintet”<sup>52</sup> but Cravens has no recollection of a tuba part version from the time of the premier as he was performing from a manuscript, so it appears to have been an addition after the fact, possibly to sell more copies or because the range of

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<sup>48</sup> Terry Cravens, Interview by author, September 17, 2021.

<sup>49</sup> “William Schmidt,” Musicalics, accessed on November 21, 2021.  
<https://musicalics.com/en/composer/William-Schmidt>

<sup>50</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

<sup>51</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

<sup>52</sup> William Schmidt, *Concertino for Bass Trombone & Woodwind Quintet* (Los Angeles: Western International Music, 1980).

this piece works for bass tuba.<sup>53</sup> The largest series of choices stemming from this different part that the performer will have to make is whether or not to incorporate various octave changes from the tuba part into the trombone part. Some of the changes make musical sense as it is evident where a musical line went down into the pedals only bounce up an octave in the trombone part but keep descending in the tuba part.<sup>54</sup> Cravens states in an interview with the author that “I don’t think it makes any difference...unless when it changes the chord [inversion]. I like to play what the guy wrote, sometimes dropping it down [an octave] to say, “look what I can do” detracts rather than enhances, in my opinion.”

Cravens also remembers premiering the work on a single valve bass trombone even though the work contains many low B<sup>1</sup>'s that typically require a second valve to be played without lipping the note down and distorting the tone, especially at louder volumes.<sup>55</sup> Cravens recalls that even though he did have a trombone with a second valve in E, it was cumbersome so he would use his single valve horn and would pull the valve to an E and play the B's in seventh position.<sup>56</sup> This is the same time period where double-valved bass trombones were becoming available commercially and gaining acceptance in the United States.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

<sup>54</sup> The best examples of this are movement two, measures 48, 59, and 70.

<sup>55</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

<sup>56</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

<sup>57</sup> Yeo, “Evolution”: 34-43.

Each movement of this work has a distinct series of characters and interactions with the woodwinds to explore different colors. The first movement starts out lighthearted with the soloist ‘thumbing their nose’ and blowing raspberries with the glissandi and *forte pianos* in measures 8-10 (Figure 46). This is a component of



Figure 46 Schmidt movement one, measures 8-10

the A theme which starts as happy and lighthearted but is shaded by harmonic tension

through a split third chord in measure 14. The B theme appears in measure 22: a flowing melody with the flute separated by three octaves that is peculiar for its registral jumps that break a mostly stepwise melody into a more soaring melody (Figure 45) because of the upward leaps. The beauty of the line is clouded by the

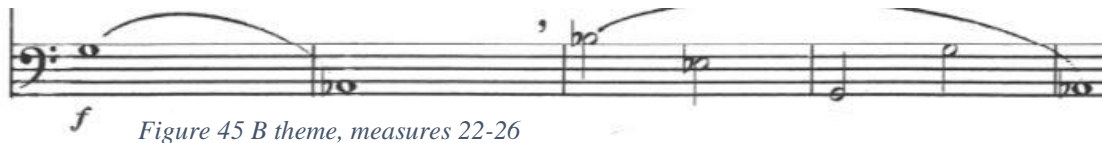


Figure 45 B theme, measures 22-26

chromatic ostinato in the clarinet (Figure 44). A portion of the A theme returns the piece to a lighthearted nature before a



Figure 44 B $\flat$  clarinet, measures 20-21

new C theme appears in measure 40. This new theme is influenced by jazz and should almost have a swing feel, with a slight emphasis on the eighth notes.<sup>58</sup> This theme spins out for many measures, and at times the soloist is paired as a duet with the horn, flute, and clarinet, respectively. The B theme makes a return in measure 87 now as a cannon with the horn and bassoon in octaves, and the solo entering four measures

<sup>58</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.



later and a half step higher that produces two measures of parallel half steps. This presents not in a jarring and dissonant interruption but a sweet and kind redirection of the tonality in a new direction. In a chromatically colored E minor feel, the solo and horn move in opposition with the solo moving downwards and the horn moving up and in reverse that creates a tense disagreement between the voices. This is aided by the return of the clarinet's interval series from measures 20-21, now in the clarinet, oboe, and flute.

A long quintet interlude that gradually reduces the texture to one voice at a time with several periods of silence provides a welcome change to the texture. The return of the A theme and rearranged snippets carry the piece to an exciting but tense close with a B split third chord in the upper four woodwinds and the solo and bassoon punctuating with B-F<sup>#</sup> fifth *sff* marcato accents. The overall thematic layout of this movement is ABA<sup>1</sup>CB<sup>1</sup> interlude/transition A<sup>2</sup>, which would almost classify as a modified rondo form. However, the returning A sections are built on the second half of the theme. The middle A<sup>1</sup> appearance is built on measures 6-8 and acts as a ten-measure transition from the B to C themes and is not even a half showing of the A theme. A different way to look at the form would be to pair themes and flipping the last two: AB - A<sup>1</sup>C - B<sup>1</sup>A<sup>2</sup> becomes AB - A<sup>1</sup>C - A<sup>2</sup>B<sup>1</sup> making it more akin to a ternary form with each section introduced with A material.

The second movement completely changes the color palate by starting with unaccompanied trombone using a cup mute. The mute darkens and somewhat hollows out the sound while reducing the volume. Here, the solo's character is introspective and downtrodden, moving slowly downward by half steps and thirds. Each phrase is

played twice, with the second one having a single chromatic alteration that shifts the rest of the phrase up a half step (Figure 47). Between the mute and chromatic



Figure 47 The opening measures of the second movement

alterations, it's a haunting effect that Schmidt employed well. He then pairs this with the bassoon, horn, and clarinet to create a quartet moving almost exclusively in parallel chords that the flute and oboe punctuate with a sixteenth note motif that the soloist will later elaborate on. After the soloist takes over the sixteenth note interjections, a chorale that pairs the soloist and clarinet, two octaves apart, against everyone else adds a moment of poignancy. The clarinet and bass trombone sound blend well with this voicing and the interactions between the overtones produces an emotionally powerful moment.

The next segment of the second movement is essentially an extended cadenza. Lasting from measures 46-59 and about a minute in length, the soloist can make many choices about character to make each performer's interpretation unique. After this cadenza ends, the opening measures sounds in the clarinet, now playing the theme inverted and ascending. The soloist joins the bassoon and clarinet (after the theme statement) as the bass voice with cup mute once more and finishes out with a three-measure cadenza while the bassoon and clarinet hold a G-D open fifth.

The final movement is the tour-de-force for all voices in the ensemble. Schmidt uses three primary themes, rotating between them frequently, to build essentially everything in the movement (Figure 48-51, below). Each theme comes

back so many times that assigning a clear form is problematic.<sup>59</sup> The movement rapidly moves through sections of tutti power, dramatic lyricism, and pointillistic ideas, sometimes combining the melody of one with counterpoint or accompaniment based on another. Each thematic area averages between 12 and 18 measures which makes identifying each section easier as they come at regular intervals. The two sections that stand out are measures 88-98 and 102-109 which is the only music that does not stem directly from either the A, B, or C themes. The horn and bass trombone start out in canon before switching to homorhythm. The interval structure is also fascinating as they start out a half step apart (measure 93) then move to thirds (95-98). Four measures



Figure 48 movement three's A theme

later (Figure 51) the two now line up in



Figure 49 B theme

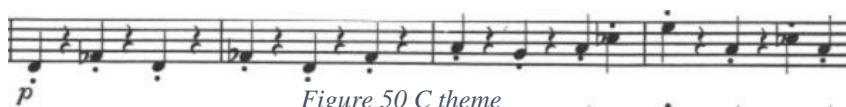


Figure 50 C theme

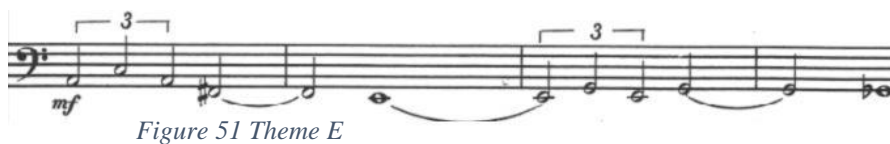


Figure 51 Theme E

octaves in a more lyrical style while the woodwinds have a composite continuous quarter note rhythm.

<sup>59</sup> If each showing of each theme is mapped, the result is  $ABA^1CA^1DEA^2C^2A^3C^2A[A+B]AC[A+B+C]$  overlapping as coda]. Variants on each theme, not key relationship, are indicated by the superscript.

The real moment of compositional brilliance is from measure 178 to the end where all the themes are overlaid in various ways, with theme A being rhythmically sped up and cut into small pieces in the solo bass trombone part. Lastly, the final measure brings with it a surprise twist to end with: the coda has been building the expectation of F minor as the final home key, but the final note is octave E's! It is quite a subversion of expectations and makes the ending that much more interesting.

### **Performance Considerations and Suggestions**

William Schmidt knew the trombone and its capabilities well, having written for the brass of the Los Angeles Brass Society for many years. The piece lays well on the horn with only a few locations being made easier by the addition of the second valve. This piece is not one of deep significance – not as an insult to it – but understanding that it was composed as incidental music for a solo bass trombonist friend to play with woodwind quintet will keep the choices made in the right frame of mind.<sup>60</sup> Keep the character of the first movement light and execute the *forte piano*'s clearly as they are a critical part of the primary theme.<sup>61</sup> The theme at measure 40 has a strong jazz influence, and although not marked, it isn't inappropriate to put a small swing on the rhythm, but if this is done, the rest of the ensemble will need to do it as well.<sup>62</sup> The difficulty with the swing feel is when to stop swinging – does it end in measure 70, 80, 82, or elsewhere? The clarinet line in 83 should not be swung, and the transition may sound arbitrary. Aim to compliment the instruments that you share

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<sup>60</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

<sup>61</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

<sup>62</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

a duet with as these pairings were chosen deliberately to show different aspects of the bass trombone. Marcato markings should not be aggressive, only “a good poke of fun.”<sup>63</sup> Choices must be made whether to play purely the original bass trombone part or to incorporate some of the octave changes from the tuba part. As noted above, Terry Cravens does not have anything inherently against the substitution, but it should be done for a musically coherent and compelling reason as opposed to thoughts of “look at what I can do” or “look, low notes!”<sup>64</sup> The octave change in the first 19 measures is problematic as it changes the inversion of the intervals with the bassoon from unstable perfect fourths to very stable and strong perfect fifths. This repeats at the end of the first movement. Allow the work to gradually become less serene and move from light and fun to more intense as the harmonies become more complex.

The second movement poses an immediate problem with the cup mute: is the *mezzo forte* indicated meant for the apparent volume to the listener, or the volume produced before the mute comes into play? The former will reduce the phrase length and effectively change the dynamic to *mezzo piano* or *piano* whereas the latter likely necessitate breaking most of Schmidt’s phrase markings. The is most notable in measures 19-26 as the texture thickens notably. Allow the character to change as the texture, note lengths, and context change. The *fortissimo* and accents in measures 36-40 should still be sonorous and vocal. The cadenza<sup>65</sup> from measures 46-59 will allow you to explore several different characters, so experiment with articulations, rubato,

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<sup>63</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

<sup>64</sup> Cravens, Interview by author.

<sup>65</sup> Terry Cravens calls this section a cadenza.

and phrase goals. This movement contains the three octave changes that the author does recommend making. First, in measures 48 beat four and all of 49; second, measure 59; third, the A<sup>b</sup> in measure 70. These are all lower in the tuba version where the line continues descending. It is unknown why Schmidt raised these notes up an octave (or lowered them for the tuba); pedal notes were known and performed in both the orchestral, movie music, and solo literature by this time. Either way, make your decision based on musical judgment, not a desire to play more low notes. The pedal notes at the end may not speak or center on all cup mutes – try rolling up a 3x5” card and sticking it into the mute various distances to find a location where all the notes will speak uniformly.

The third movement finally allows the soloist to have duet with the oboe (measures 47-62), so capitalize on the characteristics of the oboe and match it. The primary theme in the opening measures should be broad and smooth – the woodwinds will have this later and will by default have a smoother legato. The slurs in the B theme of measures 30-25 need to be smooth despite the leaps. Work to match the legato of the woodwinds in the descending scale in measure 32 as this will keep the style uniform and impress the audience. Measures 90-113 and 151-171 are extended duets with the horn. Study the score for the grace notes that have been whited out of the trombone part but are present in the horn and tuba part and add them back in as they are eminently playable (Figure 52). Even though measures 102-109 are not



slurred, keep  
them  
cantabile

*Figure 52 Measures 92-96. Trombone on top, missing a grace note, tuba on bottom.*

and flowing forward. The sinister aspect of the line comes from the harmony and rhythm, not the articulation. Measures 122-131 have frequent half steps with the bassoon or horn when moving upwards, so lean into the rising intensity and dissonance, using it to heighten the musical moment. Measures 179-221 can be performed without using the valves if rapid use of sixth and seventh positions are consistently in tune. In the final page of the solo, work to have thematic clarity where the three primary themes overlap so the audience can hear them all. Finally, lean into the unexpected final chord: the audience will be expecting F minor, but the octave E's will add a question mark instead of an exclamation if not played exuberantly.

### Escapade by Manny Albam

#### **About the Composer**

Born in 1922 and named “one of the most important mainstream jazz arrangers of the 1950s and 1960s,” Manny Albam grew up in New York and was arranging and performing on baritone saxophone by the time he was 19.<sup>66</sup> He performed or arranged for Don Joseph, Muggsy Spanier, Bob Chester, Georgie Auld, Charlie Spivak, and Boyd Raeburn before his time in the Army from 1945-6. In 1951 he stopped performing to focus on arranging and composing, having his works recorded with bands ranging from Gerry Mulligan, Dizzy Gillespie, and Stan Getz to Count Basie, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, and Buddy Rich. He formally studied composition with Tibor Serly (one of Zoltán Kodály’s students) from 1958-1960. It was during this time that two of his best and most well-known pieces were written: *The*

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<sup>66</sup> Fred Sturm, *Changes Over Time: The Evolution of Jazz Arranging*, (Advance Music, 1995), 216.

*Blues is Everybody's Business* (1958) and *Soul of the City* (1960). Albam also became involved in music (jazz) education through the Eastman School's summer arranging workshops and working at Glassboro State College (New Jersey). He continued to write music for top bands, including names modern students will recognize: J.J. Johnson, Jim Pugh, and Hank Jones. Albam later joined the faculty at the Manhattan School of Music and became the Director for the BMI Jazz Composers Workshop in New York.<sup>67, 68</sup>

### **About the Work**

Although composed by the well-known Manny Albam, there is little information available on *Escapade*, both from the composer or other sources. The work does not have a dedication, but it was recorded by Dr. Thomas Streeter of Illinois Wesleyan University in 1972 on the LP *Music for Bass Trombone* (Kendor KE 9972), the year he was hired at IWU. The doctoral dissertation "Selected Works for Solo Trombone with Woodwind Ensembles" by Alan Lynn Arnold (1978) indicates that it was commissioned by the composer Christopher Dedrick for Dr. Streeter. Streeter describes the piece as a "pleasant, "middle-of-the-road" composition which must be interpreted a bit freely in order to be logical and worth-while in a musical sense."<sup>69</sup> Therefore it appears that Streeter's whole album was Dedrick's idea, or perhaps sponsored by him, who had five of his pieces recorded on it.

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<sup>67</sup> Sturm, *Changes Over Time*, 216.

<sup>68</sup> *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Manny Albam," accessed November 21, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J005000>.

<sup>69</sup> Alan Lynn Arnold, "Selected Works for Solo Trombone and Woodwind Ensembles" (doctoral diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1978), 36.



Of the most interesting things that could be tied to this piece is Dr. Streeter's relationship with jazz and the jazz program at IWU. When Streeter was hired, he recalls that, "Up until I arrived if anyone was caught playing jazz in a practice room, they were asked to leave the building. It was considered risqué music at the time."<sup>70</sup> Having been in the U.S. Air Force's Airmen of Note jazz ensemble before coming to IWU, it's not a stretch to imagine this he would have been both disappointed and excited with a potentially great opportunity. As a well-respected performing musician, he founded the jazz program at IWU and recorded his LP of new music for bass trombone – including *Escapade* – within a year and a half of being hired. It is unknown if there is a direct link between the commissioning and recording of *Escapade* and the act of founding the jazz program at IWU, but the possibility is there.

The work is light at heart and conservative in its jazz influences. It is not swung, and in the predominant harmonic language of jazz, many of the chords are extended harmonies, whether seventh or ninth chords. This is apparent as early as measure 4 in the first chord of the piece, where from bottom to top, the chord is a B<sup>b</sup> maj 7/9 (C-B<sup>b</sup>-D-F-A). Curiously, the ninth is frequently in the bass trombone, giving a unique sound to this voicing, including the last chord of the piece, an E<sup>maj 7/9</sup> chord with the F<sup>#</sup> both in the bass trombone and flute. The harmony is the main source of jazz influence, but the melodic effect of Albam almost exclusively has the soloist enter on an offbeat is an intriguing choice. With two small exceptions, every note that

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<sup>70</sup> Rachel Hatch, "Founder of the IWU Jazz Program to Retire in May," News and Events, Illinois Wesleyan University, March 28, 2011, [https://www.iwu.edu/news/2011/fac\\_StreeterProfile\\_00311.html](https://www.iwu.edu/news/2011/fac_StreeterProfile_00311.html).

is not preceded by a rest is an offbeat, usually a pickup into the following measure.

The two exceptions are measures 70 and 72, where the bass trombone is not



Figure 53, the second statement of the opening theme.

functioning as a solo voice, but as bass voice to the trio of horn, bassoon, and trombone. Yet the melody in the flute and oboe do enter on the offbeat to maintain the idea. The main melody as seen in Figure 56 is the best example of the stylistic elements of the piece. This figure also shows a point of interest: the accent in measure two. This is one of only five accents in the solo in the entirety of the work: this one, one in this same phrase a ninth higher in measures 60-62, then on the dotted half notes of measures 111-113. The inclusion of this accent in the second measures is quite peculiar, as it only shows up in the melody when it is exact the rhythm. The second time it appears however, the slurs are different, as seen below in Figure 53.

Structurally, the piece can be broken into three sections: The opening section based on the opening theme, a legato transitional section built around the first of the *ad lib* semi-cadenza sections, and the third section that returns to the articulated style of the opening, but with a reworked ascending theme. The opening section is largely in a call-and-response form with the bass trombone functioning in a harmonic role when not stating the theme. In the second section, the texture thickens, and melodic ideas are traded not antiphonally, but in a layered fashion with entrances being staggered one or two measures at a time. The middle section is also dominated

exclusively by time signatures of five-four or three-four, which further delineate it from the other two sections.

The third section enters with a change back to common time and the trombone entering after a short rest on a theme that is fundamentally related to the opening theme. As seen below in Figure 54, the eighth-note pickup still exists, but the intervals are different, and the tune rises for an additional octave before falling again.



Figure 54, measures 136-138.

The first six notes of this figure will be the basis for the solo part for the remainder of the piece. With the solo voice being based around a tonic of C, transitioning to the second section which arrives on  $D^b$ , and the third section being based around  $F^\sharp$  (minor, and with a frequent  $C^\natural$  that acts as a leading tone to the  $C^\sharp$ ) giving this an overall enharmonic spelled harmonic motion of  $C - D^b - G^b$ . However, the harmonies of the quintet tell a different story. The first, and most frequently repeated chord of the first section is the  $B^b \text{maj } 7/9$  chord including the solo melody sound in C, the ninth (or second) of the chord. This appears at the end of the work, where the solo has been in  $F^\sharp$ , but the woodwinds are in E tonal area. The frequent inclusion of  $D^\natural$  and  $D^\sharp$  give it a modal feel as the  $D^\sharp$  is only in the  $E \text{maj } 7/9$  chord. This is further supported by the tonality of the opening measures with its  $B^b \text{maj } 7/9 - F^9$  chord relationship, with the C in the solo voice. Looking into the middle section, it is evident that while the tonality arrives at  $D^b$ ,  $G^b$  has been replaced with  $G^\natural$ . One possible key structure is therefore  $B^b$  Lydian –  $D^b$  Lydian – E Mixolydian. Because

the average listener will want to hear the F<sup>#</sup> as the tonic because of the solo, this chord spacing with the solo having the ninth on the bottom is at first blanche unstable, but when put into context of this being jazz, it is no longer odd. With the ensemble vamping between D<sup>maj 7/9</sup> and the E<sup>maj 7/9</sup> chords at the end, Albam wanted this jazzy major 7<sup>th</sup>-9 chord to be the harmonic spine and indeed final tonality of the work.

The remaining analytical question is whether this is a ternary or through-composed work. The similarities between the thematic material of the opening and closing sections – the upbeat pickup that is slurred into the next measure, the overall shape of the phrase rise and falling before returning to the starting note are very similar. The main melody from measures 1-4, (Figure 56) and its second form in measures 6-7 in (Figure 55), both have a dominant-tonic relationship over the course of their first three measures. If measures three to four and 141-142 are compared, it is



Figure 56, measure 1-4 of Escapade

clear they have the same interval pattern spelled with different enharmonics (Figure 55), ergo they are the same material. The opening A section's material



Figure 55, measures 6-7



measures 3-4 (L) and 141-142 (R)

returns. What makes this a ternary instead of a rounded binary is the fact that the B section's material in D<sup>b</sup> is not based on material from the A section. Although the key of the returning A section is “wrong” by not being in the key of the opening section, at this point in history, key relationships have been freed and the A theme

does not need to return in its original key to operate in a structural way. Therefore, because of the returning A section's material is based so directly on the opening of the work, this has a ternary form. The return of the main theme is short, being only one quarter the length of the piece. It contains two cadenzas which work to bring the piece to a close with material that is familiar, but still fresh to the listener.

### Performance Considerations and Suggestions

With the style of this work is in a light and straight jazz style, the correct execution of the indicated slurs and articulations will give this piece its flair. The rhythms have flavors of rock and commercial music as well, but the harmonies point to a jazzier style. This piece is straight forward with three distinct sections, and three moments that are essentially cadenzas. Keep the playing tasteful and on the light side. This will also aid in blending with the woodwind quintet. There are two typos in the solo part: measure 17 is full of  $D^b$ 's, not  $D^{\sharp}$ , and the half note  $D^b$  in measure 19 should not be tied to the dotted quarter note. Treat this section as if you are functioning as timpani. The horn, then flute have the melody, and you are the bass to the rest of the ensemble's chords. A slight accent or emphasis on each note will aid in clarity and providing rhythmic pulse to the ensemble.

There are three moments in *Escapade* that are marked *ad lib* where the performer will be required to interpret the marking and decide a course of musical

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff begins at measure 100, marked 'Ad lib.' and 'f'. It contains a series of eighth and quarter notes with slurs. The bottom staff begins at measure 110, marked 'A tempo' and 'f'. It contains a series of quarter notes with slurs. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

Figure 57. The first *ad lib* section in *Escapade*

action. The first one, in measure 100, as seen in Figure 57. The first *ad lib* section in *Escapade* is 10 measures of unaccompanied bass trombone. With the composer not giving any specific instruction to aid in interpreting the moment, it is acceptable to continue through at tempo without changing anything. However, the work has been continuing at a consistent, hard-driving tempo for nearly two minutes and a change in pacing provides an opportunity to raise interest in the audience with a tempo modification. The route the author took is to *ritard* into measures 102 with a fermata on that downbeat, then start *piano* and much slower, then make a continual crescendo and *accelerando* into measure 110 where the woodwinds enter. Your interpretation will be different, but experiment with this moment.

The second *ad lib* moment is measures 150-156 as seen in Figure 58. This can

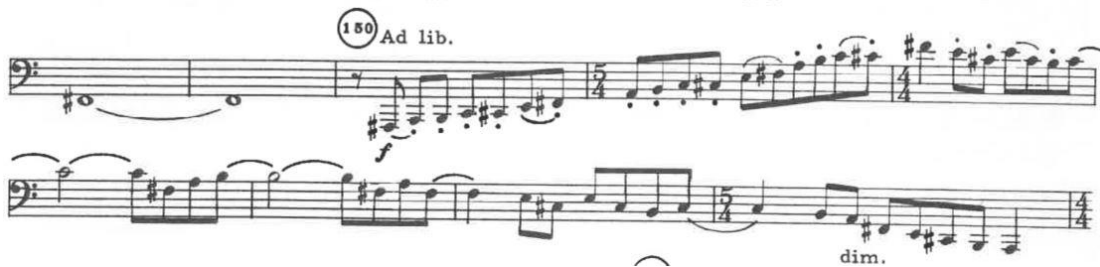


Figure 58 the second cadenza-like section

be interpreted in a continuous tempo and played as written, or the time can once again be modified. The author started the cadenza immediately slower, then sped up through the end of measure 151. The diminuendo in the last measure was paired with a *ritard* to prepare the audience for the entrance of the woodwind quintet. In a

moment of irony, this interpretation was decided on before Dr. Thomas Streeter's recording of this work was received, and he made essentially the same decision.

The final cadenza-like section is seen below. The low tessitura will likely require a breath by measure 163, so a quick solution is to play the C<sup>#</sup> long and take a big breath after that and *accelerando* back into the *A tempo* of measure 165.

Regardless of the choices made, keep the tone and slurs consistent between open, single and double valve, and pedal registers. Finally, the last three eighth notes before the *a tempo* will need to be clear to cue the woodwinds back in. This music is seen in

Figure 59.



Figure 59 the final cadenza-like section

A final moment that can be modified is before the final chord of the piece. Albam marks to *diminuendo* and *rallentando*, and after having a climax at a strong *forte*, this seems somewhat counterintuitive. You may wish to improvise, or noodle, for a moment before the last note. There is precedence for this in performances of other jazz-styled solos. Use your discretion and keep it in character with the piece.

### 1+5 by Hidas Frigyes

#### **About the Composer**

Hungarian composer, conductor, and pianist Frigyes Hidas (Frydyesh Heedosh; in Hungarian, names are in surname - given name order) was born in 1928 and attended the Franz Liszt Academy of Music where he studied composition with János

Visky and sacred music and conducting with László Somogyi from 1947-1952.<sup>71</sup> He went on to become the music director of the National Theatre from 1952-1966 while maintaining his compositional activities, winning his first Erkel Prize in 1959 for his Oboe Concerto (and his second in 1980). He went on to also conduct the municipal Operetta Theatre from 1974-1976 until he retired to be a fulltime composer. From then, he was awarded the title Artist of Merit in 1987 and the Béla Bartók-Ditta Pántory Prize in 1993.<sup>72</sup> Hidas “firmly believed in tunes and harmonies in a traditional sense of those terms and always wrote in an easily accessible idiom,” and composed for all genres including choral, solo, chamber, orchestra music, concerti, ballets and operas. Hidas’ compositional style stayed within tonality, although he did experiment with serial elements, and was influenced by jazz at times, becoming more interested in structure later in his compositional career.<sup>73, 74</sup>

Some of Hidas’ works that a trombonist may already be familiar with are his *Meditation* for unaccompanied bass trombone, his *Baroque Concerto* for alto trombone and string orchestra, the *Alteba Trio* for trombone trio, and *Seven Bagatelles* for twelve trombones. All these works and more were commissioned by trombonists who clearly took a liking to his music. Hungary was a satellite state of the Soviet Union during most of Hidas’ life and that may have influenced his compositional style. He certainly wasn’t under the intense spotlight of composers like Shostakovich, but it is difficult to tell how much that may have affected his style. As

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<sup>71</sup> *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Frigyes Hidas,” Accessed November 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.12992>.

<sup>72</sup> *Grove*, “Frigyes Hidas.”

<sup>73</sup> *Grove*, “Frigyes Hidas.”

<sup>74</sup> “Hidas, Frigyes,” *Editio Musica Budapest Zeneműkiadó*, accessed November 21, 2021, [https://www.emb.hu/en/composers/hidas\\_frigyes](https://www.emb.hu/en/composers/hidas_frigyes).



previously noted, his personal style is tuneful and easily accessible and seems genuine without needing to take soviet censorship into consideration. Hidas knows the trombone well in all its forms, having written successful works for alto, tenor, and bass trombone, with his *Meditation* frequently found on recitals and student competitions.

### About the Work

*I+5* is a four-movement work written in 1994 for “Mr. Roy Pickering”. The movements follow the form of a concerto in miniature with a prelude movement setting the expectations for form, harmony, and colors available to the ensemble. It is lighthearted in nature and predominantly in the key of E<sup>b</sup> major, with excursions to nearby tonal areas. Of the many facets of this work is the way in which the bass trombone blends with the ensemble: there are many moments where the solo is simply an extension of the quintet and the color and blend of that sound shows how fitting the bass trombone is with the woodwind quintet.

At just over a minute long, the first moment sets the stage for the entire work. It is pastorage and nature, alternating moments of playfulness, wistfulness, and foreshadowing an appearance of *sturm und drang*. It is a truncated rounded binary in E<sup>b</sup> major. Two statements of the main theme (Figure 60) an octave apart quickly move into a harmonically unstable and transitory area before chromatically moving back to the home key and reprising the main theme. Closing material appears after a measure of rhythmic intensity in the solo part, and the aural palate



has been set for the rest of the work. This movement is in a short rounded binary form, with the themes being AABA, and the B section being a harmonically opaque transitional section that returns the work to the home key for the final statement of the main theme.

The second movement is triple the length of the first movement and takes the classical form of a scherzo. The primary thematic material is a rising arpeggio based on a minor triad with a ninth and raised seventh, (Figure 62) and is in the style of *sturm und drang*. Chromatic sequences that ascend by minor thirds paired with alarmed bird-like calls in the flute drive the tension forward. The harmonic progression of the first four measures is G – B<sup>b</sup> – C<sup>#</sup> – E (all minor chords),



Figure 62 movement 2 opening measures

outlining a diminished seventh chord based on the i chord and is rife with tension and harmonic possibility. The melody bounces in a call-and-response manner between the solo and clarinet and continues to grow more alarmed as the movement progresses.

Rhythms start to enter in a jagged manner, on either the third or fourth sixteenth note of the beat adding additional expectations of rising to a climax. The first moment is the arrival on a first inversion G minor chord in measure 25, as seen in Figure 61.

This is also the most technically and rhythmically intense moment in the entire work for the soloist. After this, the main theme comes back in several new key areas in the



Figure 61 measures 21-25

woodwinds, but the energy is waning, tension is easing and the storm of *sturm und drang* is receding. This concludes the A section of the movement.

The B section begins in the submediant, E<sup>b</sup> major, and is the pastorate section of the movement. Its gently rising and falling theme (Figure 63) is carefree and playful, belaying the tension of the previous section. The woodwinds move to



Figure 63 measures 53-56, the slow section's primary theme

staccato, bouncy and light harmonic figures to

compliment the solo line. Small hints of the previous stress return in measures 67-68 while acting as a small development section, but the character is warm and welcoming.

Before too long, the A section must make its reprisal in the recapitulation, and the transition is done through rising chromatic half steps in the bass trombone, one per measure, from E<sup>b</sup> to G. The *sturm und drang* returns and repeats the first 20 measures verbatim. Then, instead of moving the material found in Figure 61, it moves to material based on the bassoon's part from measures 28. The quintet holds chords during these measures and the whole line descends, slowly releasing the tension. This material is then mixed with the quarter note idea from measures 36-37 to raise the tension again to push into the coda where the tension returns in its fullest force, this time in the woodwinds. The piece ends with a flourish, not unlike a storm slamming a door shut (Figure 64). This gives this movement an overall structure of AB – CDC – AB<sup>1</sup> coda, and with the complete restatement of the A theme, this lends to being

classified as a ternary form. It lacks a distinguishable development section, instead having a rounded binary form in its place for the slow middle section.

The image shows a musical score for the final measures of movement 2. It consists of five staves. The top three staves are for woodwinds (flute, oboe, and clarinet), and the bottom two are for strings (violin and viola). The score is in 3/8 time and features a variety of musical notations, including dynamics (ff, f), articulation (accents), and fingerings (6). The music is characterized by a rich texture and a strong sense of direction.

Figure 64 the final measures of movement 2

Movement three is the slow pastorage and chorale movement. The woodwinds start with a repeating offbeat ostinato while the bass trombone has a low singing melody characterized by alternating leaps and stepwise motion, often leaping down to a chromatic neighbor or leading tone. The texture is rich and full of suspensions that guide the listener through the story that is being told. The middle section is faster, and rapidly sequences through several key areas going from F to C<sup>#</sup> minor, E minor, A minor, and B<sup>b</sup> minor for no more than four measures at a time. This middle section consists only of its own melodic content that is different from the opening content. Each key area has its turn with only slight modifications to intervals or the order of

the rhythm before ending on an F major chord, acting as dominant to the returning A section in B<sup>b</sup> major.

The form of this movement is A – B as transition – C (faster tempo, sequencing) – A – B as retransition – A<sup>1</sup> coda, allowing it to be categorized as an extended ternary form where instead of the faster middle section having three sections, the return of the A section gets an additional showing for the retransition to steer the A theme back to the correct home key of B<sup>b</sup> major.

The fourth movement is the most varied of the suite. It starts with a substantial cadenza for the bass trombone with the mood oscillating between triumphant/joyful and sullen/sinister/apologetic. The movement is nominally in and based around E<sup>b</sup> major, but the cadenza ends by outlining the <sup>b</sup>VI chord, C<sup>b</sup>, and moving down to F in anticipation of its stepwise resolution to the E<sup>b</sup> in measure 20. The primary theme of the A section (Figure 65) is joyful and light with its angular rhythm smoothed over with the indicated slurs. It rapidly pivots away from the home key and meanders

20 Allegro  $\text{♩} = 72$   
*mf*

26

The image shows a musical score for the A section primary theme. It consists of two staves of music in bass clef. The first staff starts at measure 20 with the tempo marking 'Allegro' and a quarter note equal to 72 (♩ = 72). The dynamic marking is 'mf'. The music features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes with slurs. The second staff starts at measure 26 and continues the melodic line, ending with a first ending bracket and a first ending mark '1'.

Figure 65 movement four, the A section primary theme

through several transient tonal areas before arriving on a partial statement of the theme in B major in measure 48. It remains upbeat throughout this cut-time section.

The B section starts in measure 5 with a lilting five-eight time interspersed with measures of six-eight and nine-eight. The mood here is more reserved and the solo entrances are syncopated, creating a continuous eighth-note pattern to give a sense of a perpetual conversation between the solo and upper woodwinds (Figure 66).

This becomes the primary theme of the new B section of the movement. This theme is stated twice within an eight-measure period before moving onto transitional material. After an overt nod to Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* in measures 63-64, a transitional section with the soloist on a B pedal point leads to a repeat of the B theme, this time playing

Figure 66 the B section of the fourth movement

the first half of each measure in a seven-bar phrase that leads to a chromatic scale oriented around D. This functions as the dominant for the entry of the A theme in measure 81, now in G major. This version of the A theme is set a sixth lower than the opening to showcase the richness and lyricism of the low range of the soloist. The section is only 20 measures long, almost half of the first A section's 35 measures. The opening A theme contains what in a sonata form would be called *fortspinnung*, or the "moment-to-moment spinning-out of modular growth and elaboration," which usually

occurs immediately after transitional elements in the exposition of a work.<sup>75</sup> The second showing of the A theme does not contain this, which is why it is so much shorter this second time through.

This leads to the second B section of measures 101-119, which is 7 measures shorter than the first B section and is notably different. The primary theme of this section is only stated once and instead of a repeat leading to two four-bar phrases, this showing gets a standard antecedent-consequent phrase structure of four + four measures. The time signature changes to two-four with a metric modulation that keeps the eighth-note constant and functions as a slightly complicated harmonic transition to the home key. When viewed from the home key, the tonal areas move from A<sup>b</sup> (IV, measures 101-108) to a tonally ambiguous section from 109-116 where the soloist plays a B minor scale with a flat second scale degree while the quintet holds a B major flat-9 chord. This then degenerates to a B<sup>o maj7</sup> and further then to B<sup>o7</sup> with the B<sup>b</sup> to A<sup>b</sup> suspension in the flute and oboe, which can be respelled as a D<sup>o7</sup> chord, or vii<sup>o</sup> in the home key. The recently heard B<sup>b</sup> still gives the listener the feeling of B<sup>b</sup> (V) to E<sup>b</sup> (I) even though that isn't the actual harmony sounding. The A section then returns triumphantly for a full statement before an eight-measure coda to finish out the work.

The ABAB<sup>1</sup>A structure of the work allow it to be classified as a rondo but is it a sonata-rondo?<sup>76</sup> According to the work of Hepokoski and Darcy it does not qualify.

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<sup>75</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 16.

<sup>76</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 400-401.

Not all rondo forms must have alternating sections such as ABACA. ABAB<sup>1</sup>A is a variant of the five-part rondo.

There is no Medial Caesura, no perfect authentic cadence(s), no Essential Expository Closure, no Secondary Theme, and the end of what would have been Closing Material ends with a restatement of the Primary Theme (albeit in a different key, now B major).<sup>77</sup> There have been 100 years of harmonic and thematic development since most of the works they examined were written, and the generally accepted formal events and waypoints have continued to erode. Although their book is not about a set of hard rules – rather explaining the essential structural moments and examining all the many variations (which they call “deformations”) of sonata form in the Classical and Romantic eras – there are nonetheless several key events that must occur and the Hidas fails on most of those counts. Some elements or portions of sonata form are present, but these characteristics can be found in other non-sonata works as well.<sup>78</sup>

### **Performance Considerations and Suggestions**

The Hidas is a relatively straight-forward work that does not require extensive score study and interpretation like some of the other works on this recording. In general, the style is to be kept light and the elegance of the bass trombone should shine throughout as an expansion and enrichment of the woodwind quintet’s aural palate.

In the first movement, keeping chordal tuning in mind will reap rewards in live spaces as the overlapping arpeggios will resonate and be plainly in or out of tune.

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<sup>77</sup> See the “list of abbreviations” for definitions of these terms.

<sup>78</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 9-17, 51-71, 180-182, 397-399, 400-401.



Keep the sixteenth notes in measures 40 clean and uncompressed. Do not smack the last two notes: this is just an octave jump, nothing more. Feel free to add dynamic shading to your phrases as this movement has minimal dynamic instruction.

The second movement contains more challenging moments to execute well. Measures 21-25 will require excellent slide technique, rhythm, and consistency of sound and articulation across several registers. If sixteenth note clarity and slide technique is challenging to smooth out, and if you have an independent second valve, experiment with it and see if that makes the sixteenth notes smoother. Whether E in flat third or F<sup>#</sup> is played on the valve, it may leave you with a satisfactory solution if it does not change the sound quality. Practice this section with a metronome and gradually reduce the percentage of the beats it sounds.<sup>79</sup> Being able to ‘bounce’ off the woodwind’s downbeats will help, but only if you remain aware of their time and don’t give in to rushing or dragging. The quarter notes in measures 36-37, 121-125 will need to be strictly in time while the quintet hold their chords, so subdivide throughout these sections. The offset rhythm in measures 55-56, 59-60, 82-83 and 88-89 will also need subdivision as it is easy to listen to the quintet’s rhythm and become disoriented. The interplay there is fast enough that reacting will cause the sections to drag, so be proactive with your rhythm. Towards the end, measures 116-120 have alternating rests as seen below (Figure 67), and the tendency will be to enter late in the first, third, and fifth measures shown. Practicing with a metronome and quick

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<sup>79</sup> Smartphone apps like *Time Guru* have this function to gradually and randomly reduce the beats played.

breathing will aid in this section. Don't forget to phrase these sections despite their challenges.

Movement three will be aided most by practicing with tuning drones as most



Figure 67 movement 2, measures 116-121

of it is a slow chorale with long sections of static harmonies. This will help you find the correct adjustment for each chord tone and deliver a beautiful melody that is interesting in all of the right ways. There are several moments when the solo moves from a minor third to a major third, such as measures eight, eleven, and twelve where practicing moving from minor to major thirds with just intonation will be particularly useful. Pay special attention to the low-voiced major thirds measures 13-15, notably the pedal G in measure 15 which is the major third of that chord. Measure 59 is missing the dot on that whole note – it should be evident that it lasts all six beats of the measure, but it is a typo in the solo part.

The fourth movement's opening cadenza will allow you to capitalize on your musicianship without the need for strict time. Use this to enhance the musical story you are telling. You may wish to bring out the accidentals that are most foreign to the key of E<sup>b</sup>, such as the low B in measure 15, and the tritone after it. Try not to disrupt the phrases with many breaths but keep the tone and phrasing first and foremost in your performance. The main theme should be playful and sing songlike. Although the dotted-eighth sixteenth note rhythm is more march like, but do not emphasize them, and keep them long and smooth. They should provide a lilt, not a hard driving style. The chromatic line in measures 35-37 will need to be tuned well to keep the relationship between half steps and whole steps clear.

The key to putting together the five-eight/mixed meter/triple meter sections is to understand that there are continuous eighth notes and the syncopations are a continuation of the steady time. Do not let the *sforzandi* in measures 65-70 become splashy or crass – you are performing with a woodwind quintet, not a brass quintet – context matters. The movement should largely be lyrical and refined. Several moments allow for the darker and more threatening side of the bass trombone to be implied, but only implied and not let loose. When done well, this work provides ample opportunities for a new blend and sound color that is surprisingly well thought out. For all the reputation the bass trombone has of being overpoweringly loud and aggressive, it can also be light, nimble, and refined. Showcase these attributes with this work.

## Appendix A

Consortium members for Adrian B Sims' *The Sword of Orion*:  
Credits as the members requested

Skyler Foster (lead)  
Christopher Bassett, Jacksonville Symphony and Santa Fe Opera  
David Bobroff, Iceland Symphony Orchestra  
Dennis Bubert, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, University of Texas at Arlington  
Evan Clifton, West Michigan Symphony  
George Curran, New York Philharmonic  
DC Trombone Workshop  
Austin Fairley  
Matthew Guilford, University of Maryland School of Music  
Randy Hawes, Northwestern University, Cleveland Institute of Music  
Brian Hecht, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra  
Shelby Kifer, University of Tulsa  
James Markey, Bass Trombonist, Boston Symphony, Faculty New England  
Conservatory  
Jim Nova, Pittsburgh Symphony, Duquesne University  
Gerry Pagano, Bass Trombone, St. Louis Symphony  
Bradley Palmer, Southeast Trombone Symposium  
Denson Paul Pollard, Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, MET Opera  
Orchestra  
Gabriel Langfur Rice, Boston University  
Jonathan Warburton  
Douglas Yeo, Wheaton College (Illinois)

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Members in the Trombone choir recordings (alphabetically):

Gil Cruz, Matthew Guilford (bass), Brett Manzo, James Martin (bass), Pedro  
Martinez, Nathan Reynolds, Adrian B. Sims

Members in the woodwind quintet recordings:

Ignis Wind Quintet: Danielle Kim (flute), Nathaniel Wolff (oboe), Kyle Glasgow  
(clarinet), Zachary Miller (horn), Christian Whitacre (bassoon)

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Additional works for solo bass trombone and chamber ensembles can be found in

Clinton Nieweg's excellent resource *Music for Bass Trombone: Compositions for*

*Solo Bass Trombone with Orchestra or Band*. Cherry Classics Music Method Books

& Studies for Brass. Vancouver, BC: Cherry Classics Music, 2017.



*Figure 68 visual comparison of a tenor (single valve) and bass (double valve) trombone. Photos by the author.*



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