Summer 2018

Technical and Performance Analysis of Scott McAllister's Devil Sticks, Uncle Sam's Songbag Vol. I, Freebirds, and Funk

James Gruetzner

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Technical and Performance Analysis of Scott McAllister’s Devil Sticks,
Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, Freebirds, and Funk

by

James M. Gruetzner

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Arts and Letters
and the School of Music
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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August 2018
ABSTRACT

Four of composer Scott McAllister’s works, Devil Sticks, Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, Freebirds, and Funk feature the clarinet within a variety of ensembles. The purpose of my dissertation is to analyze the music in three ways: the background and outside influences found within each work, what happens in the pieces in terms of clarinet interaction with the ensemble(s), and finally relate it to McAllister’s other works. Through an interview with the composer, insight was gained into the background and history of each work, including who commissioned and first performed each one, any themes running throughout each piece, and outside influences, musical or otherwise, which appear in the pieces. An analysis of each piece in terms of overall form and structure, musical gestures contained within, and interaction between the clarinet and other instruments helps to define the clarinetists’ role in each piece. The information gathered is then combined to relate the compositions to others by the same composer, revealing commonalities and providing insight into stylistic characteristics used by McAllister as a whole. This information is gathered in hopes of an end result of helping performers to dissect the music to find the influences, compositional techniques, and commonalities with other works by the same composer in order to further their understanding of not only the four pieces predominantly featured throughout the document, but extrapolate the findings into McAllister’s compositional tendencies as a whole.
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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

Composer Scott McAllister rose to prominence through his solo clarinet compositions such as his 1996 clarinet concerto entitled X Concerto and his 2001 rhapsody for clarinet entitled Black Dog. His compositional output is not limited to solo works for clarinet, but also includes solo repertoire for a variety of other instruments, chamber music, and music for larger ensembles such as the orchestra and wind ensemble. His pieces have gained recognition in the clarinet community, having pieces commissioned and performed by players and ensembles such as Charles Neidich, Richard Stoltzman, and The Verdehr Trio. His reputation expands beyond the clarinet community, having his works commissioned and/or performed by notable ensembles such as The President’s Own Marine Band, New York Philharmonic, and Chicago Symphony. As his compositional output continues to grow, specific trends begin to emerge throughout his compositions as a whole, giving him a unique and discernable voice in the world of music. Four of his works, Devil Sticks, Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, Freebirds, and Funk each incorporate the clarinet and utilize the instrument in a variety of different ensembles. The ensembles include a clarinet quintet, a trio for clarinet, mezzo-soprano, and piano, a double concerto for two clarinets with orchestra, and a trio for clarinet, violin, and piano. An analysis of each different work provides insight not only into how McAllister deals with the clarinet in a variety of ensembles, but specific trends that emerge in his compositions as a whole.

Before one is able to fully comprehend a composer’s intention for a composition, if there is one, an insight into their situation and inspirations during the writing process should be attempted. An interview with Dr. McAllister revealed many of these insights
and inspirations about the four works discussed in this document. His discussions of each piece at length reveal not only information about who commissioned the works and why, but also his reasoning behind aspects such as the names of each work, allusions to other pieces, and the overall mood he was hoping to convey with each one. Future performers can use this information while learning the piece, either for the first time or a subsequent performance, to inform and assist their preparation process.

As a musician performing with an ensemble, it is paramount to understand how the part interacts with the others in a group. The four compositions discussed each incorporate clarinet and it is through this lens each work is approached in this document. Whether the clarinet is the most important voice, plays a supporting role, or a combination thereof changes as each piece progresses, and this situational knowledge assists performers as they prepare each work. Furthermore, through the analysis of each piece, specific trends and compositional techniques become apparent. Through recognizing compositional trends found in each piece, specific examples of which are discussed in each chapter, future pieces by McAllister become more easily accessible and take less time to interpret. McAllister also enjoys alluding to other pieces of music, either his own or from outside sources, many times in the form of direct quotes. Recognizing these give the performer more information about how to treat them musically when giving a performance of each work.

Through an understanding of the history and background behind each composition, how the clarinet interacts with a variety of ensembles, and finally how each work relates to his other compositions, performers can give informed performances of the
four compositions discussed in this document and then further extrapolate on the information to approach future performances of his works.
CHAPTER II - BIOGRAPHY

Scott McAllister was born in Vero Beach, Florida in 1969 and grew up in Lakeland, Florida with his family.¹ He became involved with music young in life, through playing recorder in elementary school and experimenting with composition starting at the age of seven.² McAllister recalls that his family lived in a bad neighborhood, but there was a music teacher at his elementary school who had a passion for Renaissance music. As such, she started young Scott on the recorder, and he took a quick liking to it.

Upon entering junior high, McAllister joined band with the hope of playing recorder in the ensemble. When his teacher told him recorders are not band instruments, he decided upon the “big recorder,” or clarinet. When his grandfather learned McAllister chose to play the clarinet, he took an old brass clarinet he was going to turn into a lamp and instead gave it to his grandson. McAllister’s grandfather was a trumpet player and understood the importance of creating a good tone, and this influence guided the young musician’s practice ethic.³

During the summers, McAllister would go to Pennsylvania with his grandparents, and his grandfather would spend all summer making twelve-year-old Scott do long tones for two to three hours a day. For two weeks during these summers in Pennsylvania, the

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¹ Tori L. Patterson, “A Performance Analysis of Stylistic Features of Scott McAllister’s Selected Works for Solo Clarinet: Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind, Black Dog: Rhapsody for Clarinet (and Piano), and Bling Bling” (DM Treatise, Florida State University, 2008), 2.
² McAllister, interview by author, 2017.
³ Ibid.
family would drive up to Chautauqua for the music festival in New York. This began his exposure to professional classical music, and his family would watch three concerts a week during the music festival. At the age of 15, McAllister auditioned into the youth orchestra. While playing in the youth orchestra McAllister studied with Roger Hiller, the principal clarinetist for the Metropolitan Orchestra for many years. These summers provided an insight into the world of orchestral music, something otherwise absent from the Florida music scene which was overrun with bands.

His early interest in composition spurred from his grandparents. He recalls, “My grandmother had some things, a little piano and a little electric organ and I’d mess around—back then I loved cluster sounds, like a lot of kids do, but I’d try to figure out how to write those down.” He was studying piano informally at the time and that, along with his experience on recorder, gave him the tools needed to read music and attempt to write down what he was hearing. It was not until he was a few years older and playing the clarinet that he started to write more formal works. The earlier works he wrote were for the clarinet, mostly duos and trios in the style of Mozart. In his early days of writing, he was heavily influenced by Mozart’s style, but as he got older and into high school, he began to experiment more with twelve-tone music. Twelve-tone composition changed the way he thought about music. Since pitch was now controlled, he began to focus more on rhythmic intensity rather than harmonic progression. When he was in 11th grade, McAllister won the Florida Bandmaster’s Composition Contest for a piece he wrote.

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
entitled, *Capriccio for Clarinet and Piano*. After winning the award, the Director of Bands at FSU sent McAllister a congratulatory letter and in it mentioned, “Never forget about writing for the band.”

Upon completing high school, McAllister went on to study music at Florida State University studying clarinet with Dr. Frank Kowalsky. The composition teacher at FSU during this time, Dr. John Boda, had an open-door policy which McAllister took full advantage of beginning his first year of school. Scott would go in daily with some of his twelve-tone works and Dr. Boda would play through them and teach him about the world of composition. McAllister ended up taking both composition and clarinet lessons simultaneously as he worked through his undergraduate degree. By the time his senior year rolled around, McAllister had accrued enough credits to major in both composition and performance and was awarded both a Bachelor of Music and a Bachelor of Arts from Florida State. It was during this time at FSU that McAllister built his relationships with both Dr. Kowalsky and Dr. Croft, the wind ensemble director. Years later, in 2001, Dr. Croft commissioned McAllister to write *Black Dog* for Dr. Kowalsky and the FSU Wind Ensemble. McAllister went to Rice University and received his Master’s in composition, though had intended on getting a double Master’s—one in composition and one in clarinet. Due to his proficiency on the clarinet, McAllister was hired to play with the Houston Symphony quite a bit when he started at Rice. His playing had gotten so strong

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7 Ibid.  
8 Ibid.  
9 Ibid.  
10 Ibid.
by this point that McAllister recalls a master class with Robert Marcellus in which Marcellus told him, “If you get a job before you leave college, just take it.”\textsuperscript{11} His aspirations of becoming a professional clarinet player came to an end in 1994 when he was injured in a car accident, leaving him unable to play the clarinet for the same lengths of time he had prior to the injury. The accident occurred right after he finished his doctorate. He got a sum of money as a settlement from the accident and built a house in Florida on a lake and decided to become a full-time composer.\textsuperscript{12} This level of isolation gave him time to think about who he wanted to become as a composer. McAllister taught a music appreciation class at Florida Southern College and recalled lecturing about Antonín Dvořák and his experience in America. Dvořák, McAllister recalls, was confused as to why Americans were not using their folk music as a basis for composition like the European composers were accustomed to and used this as the idea behind the New World Symphony.\textsuperscript{13} McAllister says of this, “I went to a male, white, nineteenth-century school of music my whole life,”\textsuperscript{14} and even though this made up a part of who he is it does not represent his whole musical being. He had composed primarily in the academic style of composition, going so far as to win the Ladislav Kubik International Prize in Composition with his piece \textit{Screaming Azaleas} during his time at Rice.\textsuperscript{15}

Despite his success, McAllister started thinking about combining his classical music upbringing with his love for country, rock, and grunge music, among others. This

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
led to McAllister composing *X Concerto* in 1996. This composition includes elements of grunge music, especially that of Alice in Chains and Nirvana, as well as quotes from the Mozart Clarinet Concerto K. 622.\textsuperscript{16} *X Concerto* was premiered by Paul Votapek in Naples and was well-received, solidifying McAllister’s desire to further pursue this style of composition.\textsuperscript{17} He went on to write many pieces for a clarinet, chamber ensembles, wind ensemble, and orchestra. Dr. McAllister is now on faculty as Professor of Composition at Baylor University in Waco, TX.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
CHAPTER III – DEVIL STICKS

*Devil Sticks* was commissioned in 2003 by the Buffet Summer Institute run by Mitch Estrin in Jacksonville, Florida.\(^\text{18}\) The original inspiration for the piece comes from street performers McAllister witnessed while in Prague. A devil sticks performer holds one stick in each hand, and maneuvers a third stick between the other two in various ways to create a visually appealing performance.\(^\text{19}\) Upon receiving the commission of a short, five-minute work, he thought back to the street performers and their rhythms, and believed he could create a fun, musical interpretation of the performance. The result is a light-hearted piece of music meant to be performed as a short, fun addition to a concert.

All musical examples in this chapter are transposed in the key of Bb or Eb respectively for the instrument, unless otherwise noted. The piece follows a more traditional form than many of McAllister’s other works. It is not very lengthy, with a performance time of about five minutes in length rather than his more typical ten to twenty-minute range for recital pieces. It also follows a form of ABA1. During the “A” sections (A/A1), the clarinets represent the performance of a devil sticks performer. In these sections, the bass and Eb clarinets represent the sticks in each hand of the street performer, knocking the middle stick (represented by the 3 Bb clarinets) back and forth. This is done through the rhythmic ostinato shown in figure 1. The first 16 bars of the work tune the audience in to the idea of the performer passing sticks back and forth from one hand to the other. During this introduction, the bass and Eb clarinets trade off playing either the macro beats (1\textsuperscript{st} and 4\textsuperscript{th} eighth note) of each bar and the micro beat (3\textsuperscript{rd} and 6\textsuperscript{th} eighth note).\(^\text{18}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
eighth note) of each bar.

![Sheet music](image.png)

*Figure 1. Devil Sticks, measures 1-4.*

This 16-measure introduction is comprised of four 4-bar phrases. The first four bars consist of the bass clarinet playing Ebs on each macro beat with the Eb clarinet answering with clarion Gbs on the micro beats (figure 1). Because of this representation, the performers should keep the music light, yet with a steady pulse, in order to represent the ease with which the performer controls the sticks. These two notes set up the tonal area of Eb minor by sounding the root and third of the chord. In measures 5-8, the Eb and bass clarinets switch roles with the Eb playing macro beats and bass clarinet playing micro beats. At the same time as switching roles, they change pitches. The bass clarinet descends a whole step to Eb (concert Db) while the Eb clarinet ascends a whole step to F (concert Ab) as shown in Figure 2. This perfect fifth (Db-Ab concert) act as an embellishment of the tonic chord through expanding contrary motion for four bars before resolving back down to the Eb minor chord in measures 9-12.
The bass and Eb clarinets return to their original roles of playing the macro and micro beats respectively, but this time the bass plays the first two eighth notes of each macro beat instead of just one (the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th eighth note of each 6/8 bar), creating a composite rhythm of constant eighth notes for four bars as shown in Figure 3. Once again the bass clarinet is playing Eb and the Eb clarinet is playing Gb concert.

Figure 2. Devil Sticks, measures 5-8.

Figure 3. Devil Sticks, measures 9-12.
In the final four bars of the phrase, shown in Figure 4, the rhythm returns to what it had been the first four bars (bass on first and fourth eighth note, Eb on the third and sixth eighth note), but the sounding notes change to imply the dominant, Bb Major.

![Music notation](image)

*Figure 4. Devil Sticks, measures 13-16.*

The bass clarinet plays a concert Bb and the Eb answers with a concert D. For the next 15 measures (17-31), the bass and Eb repeat this exact pattern, the only difference being the final measure of the repetition is cut out.

Beginning in the beat before measure 16, the street performer goes from just passing the stick back and forth to doing more exciting moves and flips with the middle stick. This is represented in *Devil Sticks* by the three Bb clarinets. On beat two of measure 15, the Bb clarinets play an upward sextuplet figure in perfect intervals: $3^{rd}$ clarinet plays the root, $2^{nd}$ clarinet plays a fifth above it, $1^{st}$ clarinet plays an octave above the $3^{rd}$ part. The Bb clarinet entrance should be played in a controlled, yet bombastic manner, again imitating the virtuosic movements of the street performer. This sweeping figure leads into measure 16, where the Bb clarinets play five repeated eighth notes. This sextuplet leading to five repeated eighth notes is a recurring theme throughout the A
sections of the work. In terms of key, the Bb clarinets act independently of the Eb/bass ostinato. They are outlining the dominant 7 chord (concert Bb, Db, and Ab) over the tonic chord heard by the ostinato. The Bb clarinets then repeat the gesture, this time sustaining the V7 chord and resolving it to a tonic chord in measure 21. This resolution occurs during the bass/Eb embellishment of the tonic chord. After this resolution, the Bb clarinets begin playing more independently of one another, rhythmically speaking. Although they are not playing in unison rhythmically, they are playing with heavy imitation, creating a hocket-like effect in the Bb clarinets, as seen in Figure 5.

![Figure 5. Devil Sticks, measures 25-28.](image)

The three Bb clarinets trade-off the sextuplet line.

This is one of the staple elements of the work, clarinets playing with imitation so that the energy exudes from all over the ensemble in quick succession rather than just from a single, lead player. Beginning in measure 22, the Bb clarinets play arpeggiated sextuplet passages in a one beat canon starting with the 3rd clarinet, followed by the 2nd, and finally the 1st part. Each clarinet ends the arpeggio on a concert Db, until the downbeat of measure 24 where they resolve to the root (Eb concert). These arpeggiations span two
octaves plus a fourth, giving the piece an exciting energy which becomes prevalent in the A sections.

In the following four measures, 25-28, when the bass and Eb clarinets resolve to sounding the tonic chord again, the Bb clarinets trade off eighth note and chromatic runs which all revolve around an Eb minor triad, ultimately settling on the third (gb) in measure 28, while the bass and Eb clarinet play the root (Eb) and fifth (Bb) respectively. In measures 29-31, the final part of the introduction is repeated, but this time lasting for only 3 measures rather than 4. The instability this causes is foreshadowed harmonically during these measures. The listener is expecting a dominant chord set up by the bass and Eb clarinets (playing Bb and D respectively), the Bb clarinets interrupt the harmonic stability by trading a metered trill between F and Gb. This causes the listener to hear both the stable dominant triad (Bb/D/F) as well as the more unstable augmented triad (Bb/D/Gb).

In measure 32, the two groups of instruments switch roles. Now the Bb clarinets are playing the more “harmonic” content, while the bass and Eb clarinets play the more explosive, exciting elements. Rather than continue the same rhythmic ostinato heard for the first 31 bars, however, the Bb clarinets create composite rhythms switching back and forth between constant sixteenth notes and constant eighth notes, shown in figure 6. The three clarinets play either concert Eb or concert Bb in this section, implying the tonic and dominant respectively. The harmonic rhythm is also quicker than the beginning of the piece during this section. After an initial three measure introduction to this new texture, the harmony changes every two measures rather than every four, as it did at the beginning.
The Eb and bass clarinets (top and bottom line respectively) take over the melodic material while the three Bb clarinets (middle three) trade sixteenth and eighth notes. Devil Sticks, measures 33-36.

The texture changes once again in measures 41-49. The bass and Eb clarinets continue playing melodic content, but change to introduce the “...To the Pines” melody (Figure 7) heard in other McAllister works, such as his clarinet concerto *X Concerto* \(^{20}\) and his wind ensemble piece *Music from the Redneck Songbook II*. \(^{21}\) McAllister first heard the melody while living at his lake house in Florida and composing *X Concerto*. \(^{22}\)

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\(^{20}\) Scott McAllister, *X Concerto* (Waco, TX: Lydmusic, 1996).


\(^{22}\) McAllister, interview by author, 2017.
His neighbors were playing music loudly while building a house next door to him, and
one of the albums they were playing often was *MTV Unplugged* by grunge rock band
Nirvana. The final song on the album is Nirvana’s cover of a song Lead Belly had
popularized before, called “In the Pines,” which they called “Where did You Sleep Last
Night?”

![Image of musical notation]

Figure 7. Devil Sticks, measures 41-49.

The Eb and bass clarinets play the “To the Pines” melody as a duet an octave apart while the three Bb clarinets continue trading sextuplet figures.

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23 Ibid.
The “to the pines” melody is performed in unison, with the Eb clarinet playing in
the chalumeau range while the bass is playing in the clarion. Because the two outer
clarinets are now playing melodic content, rather than representing the sticks of a street
performer, the part should be approached more sensitively, with more expression so the
melody comes out of the texture. While this melody is being played, the Bb clarinets
introduce another reoccurring element to the work: sextuplet runs traded between
instruments, where each player starts a run where the last instrument leaves off. For
example, in measure 41, the third clarinet plays a run from “F3” to “F4,” at which point
the second clarinet begins on a “F4” and returns to “F3,” then the third part picks the run
up again from “F3.” These traded sextuplet runs reoccur many times throughout the
piece, especially during transitional periods between bigger sections of the music. The
notes included in them are “F, G, Ab, Bb, C, and E,” which spells out F harmonic minor
(Eb concert) with the sixth scale degree omitted. In measures 50-71, the Eb and bass
clarinets bring back their initial pattern they played during the opening 16 measures of
the piece, this time ending during the seventh bar of the first repetition (measure 71).
Each member of the quintet revisits their initial roles in terms of tonal painting, with the
Eb and bass representing the sticks held in each hand, while the Bbs are the center stick
being tossed around. At this point the street performer’s tricks become more complicated,
which is represented by the Bb clarinets, creating an overall sense of ambiguity in
measures 50-61. The first four measures of this section are rhythmically ambiguous to the
listener, done with the use of polyrhythms. The first clarinet is playing 4:3, while the
second and third parts remain in triple. The second part is performing constant triplets,
but the third part is just accenting specific beats throughout the section. In order for this
polyrhythmic section to achieve full effect, each of the three Bb clarinets should balance their dynamics with one another and remain especially cognizant of the dynamic tendencies of extreme registers. The next four measures begin with a single measure of sextuplet runs followed by three measures, which bring back the tonal ambiguity performed in measures 29-31 (a metered trill by the Bb clarinets between F and Gb). In measures 58-61 the Bb clarinets play the same material as they did in measures 50-53, bringing back the rhythmic ambiguity. Measures 62-64 act as a transition from the rhythmic and tonal ambiguity introduced in the previous twelve measures back into a more controlled texture. This is done with the Bb clarinets playing the “transitional sextuplet” runs across all ranges of the instrument, shown in Figure 8.

![Figure 8. Devil Sticks, measures 63-64.](image)

In measures 65-71, the material from measures 17-23 returns, giving the listener a sense of familiarity and a break from the aural chaos of the previous section. In measures 72-79, all five instruments trade off the “transitional sextuplets,” signifying the upcoming
transition. Measure 80 brings both the transition and the “A” section of the piece to a close. For the first time, all five parts are playing mostly in unison (with the bass clarinet sounding an octave lower than the other four players). The instruments repeat a sextuplet pattern twice in the bar and all stop abruptly before moving on to the “B” section (Figure 9).

The “transitional sextuplets” are traded amongst the five players until they all come together to close the A section in the unison patterns in measure 80.

The “B” section of the piece begins in measure 81, which is indicated in the score by a double bar, change of time signature (4/4 rather than 6/8), and a tempo change (quarter equals 60 instead of quarter equals 120). The overall texture of the piece changes completely during the B section, from upbeat and excited to a much calmer and more pensive mood. This sudden contrast is something that is quite common in McAllister’s works. The bass clarinet is the first voice to enter the new texture with a sounding concert Eb, which leaps up a tritone to B natural. While the bass sustains the B, the Bb clarinets crescendo into the texture, appearing to outline an Eb7 chord without the third scale degree (G). A beat after the Bb clarinets enter, the bass clarinet resolves the tritone to a
Bb. The third clarinet, which is playing the seventh of the chord (D) resolves to an Eb on the downbeat of the next measure, creating a “power chord” of only the root and fifth (Eb, Bb) sounding in different octaves. One beat later the Eb clarinet enters and plays a D so it is once again present, but this only sounds for a beat before all instruments stop playing. In the pickup to measure 84, the Eb plays the same figure the bass clarinet played in the pickup to measure 82, but does so one octave higher than the bass had. The Bb clarinets enter again, repeating the same material from their previous entrance. After the D in the third clarinet part resolves to an Eb, the bass clarinet enters with the third of the triad (G) rather than the seventh (D) that the Eb had before. This time, however, when the other four instruments drop out, the bass clarinet crescendos out of the texture and begins to descend towards the root of the chord from G to F. Rather than resolving on the root (Eb), the bass clarinet drops down to the fifth (Bb). With all five clarinets simultaneously playing fast and loud, special care should be given to balance in order to achieve a “wall” of even sound, rather than allowing one of the instruments to come out of the texture.

*Figure 10. Devil Sticks*, measure 87.

The four-note pattern is repeated with staggered entrances in the Bb clarinets, second Bb part.

As the bass clarinet sounds the Bb in measure 87, the second clarinet begins an ascending four sixteenth note ostinato (Figure 10), which continues for seven measures. The notes in the ostinato are Bb, C, Db, and F, which create a Bb minor tonality. The other two Bb clarinets later enter with the same ostinato, but they are displaced from the
beat to create a less homogenous texture. The first clarinet enters one eighth note before measure 88 and the third part enters on the second eighth note of measure 88. The ostinato is played softly in all the clarinet parts and is in the chalumeau register, which is characteristically delicate on the instrument. This creates a quiet, minimalist texture. Once again, each part should blend with the other, creating a singular sound and tone, as though it was performed on a piano. In the fourth and fifth measures of the ostinato pattern, the F changes to Gb, which suggests a Gb Major first inversion tonality (Bb, C, Db, and Gb). After two bars of Gb Major, the Gb goes back to F and the tonality is therefore back to Bb minor. For the next seven measures, the Bb clarinets repeat the previous seven measures verbatim, again beginning with the second clarinet. In the first two measures of this repetition, the bass clarinet plays a Bb, reiterating the Bb minor tonality sounded in the Bb clarinets. During this section, the “...to the Pines” melody makes another appearance (Figure 11), this time split between the Eb and bass clarinets, each playing two notes at a time. Beginning with the Eb clarinet, the melody is split as follows, where each two notes contained within parenthesis is played alternately by the Eb and bass clarinets: (Gb, Eb) (Eb, Bb) (Bb, Ab) (Bb, Gb) (Ab, Bb). At this point the quote comes to an end. Because this melody is split between the two parts, the two performers should maintain the dynamic as if only one person was performing the melody. Each instrument should begin at the same dynamic as the previous one left off.
Figure 11. Devil Sticks, measures 95-100.

The Eb clarinet (top line) and bass clarinet (bottom line) play the “…To the Pines” melody, two notes at a time each while the Bb clarinets create the background texture with the off-set four note ostinato.

Beginning in measure 101, the intensity builds, and continues to do so through measure 103. The intensity is built through both with a three-measure crescendo to create a steady increase in volume, as well as metrically through increasingly short note values. The tempo remains the same during this increase in intensity, but the note values get shorter in all parts except the bass clarinet, culminating in a hemiola pattern with 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes against sextuplets in measure 103. This suddenly stops at the end of measure 103, and is followed by three beats of silence to clear the air (Figure 12). The crescendo which began in measure 102 continues all the way through measure 103, ending only when the
silence begins.

In the pickup to measure 105, the same chord progression which began the B section (measures 81-86) returns, but each part is transposed down a perfect fourth, this time outlining a Bb sonority rather than an Eb on. In the final measure of this progression, the bass clarinet again alludes to a 3-2-1 descending line, but again does not end on the tonic and instead jumps down to an Eb. This Eb signals the beginning of the A1 section of the piece.

The A1 section begins with an exact repetition of the first forty measures of the work, which acts to indicate the change of texture back to the opening aesthetic of the work. After the first forty measures of A1, rather than dissolving into the ambiguous transition heard in the A section a different idea appears. In measure 150, the time signature changes from 6/8 to 3/4, and the quarter note maintains the same tempo as the dotted quarter note, from dotted quarter note equals 120 to quarter note equals 120. The first Bb clarinet enters first and introduces a sixteenth note pattern for one measure. The

Figure 12. Devil Sticks, measures 102-103.

The rhythmic intensity builds through measure 103 until coming to an abrupt halt in measure 104.
third Bb clarinet picks up the sixteenth note pattern from the first part and embellishes upon it, whereupon the three Bb clarinets begin a one beat cannon for the following four measures, beginning with the 3\textsuperscript{rd}, followed by the 2\textsuperscript{nd}, and finally the 1\textsuperscript{st} parts. The rhythmic content of this canon contains an element reminiscent of rhythms found in other McAllister works, such as \textit{Black Dog} (Figure 14) and \textit{Bling Bling} (Figure 15), a sixteenth note triplet followed by two sixteenth notes (Figure 13).

\textit{Figure 13. Devil Sticks}, measure 154.

\textit{Figure 14. Black Dog}, measure 155.

\textit{Figure 15. Bling Bling}, measure 39.

Figures 13-15 are written in Bb.
In measures 155-157, the Bb clarinets continue to play sixteenth note patterns while the Eb and bass clarinets begin a melodic figure based around four notes (Eb, Cb, Bb, Gb). Measures 158-159 mark the second time in this work that all five instruments play in unison, this time performing the triplet versus sixteenth note figures from measure 154. Measures 160-162 are quite similar to measures 155-157, with slight variations in the rhythmic content of the Eb and bass clarinet parts. The Bb clarinets repeat the same notes and rhythms as they did in the earlier measures. In measures 163-168, the Bb clarinets play a canonic ascending arpeggiated figure alternating between Bb and Eb starting on a chalumeau Bb and ascending to the altissimo Eb. This canon begins with the third clarinet, followed by the second, and ultimately the first joins in, each separated by an eighth note. While this canon sounds in the Bb clarinets, the Eb and bass clarinets play the final iteration of the “...To the Pines” melody, this time two octaves apart (Figure 16).

![Figure 16. Devil Sticks, measures 163-167.](image)

The “...To the Pines” melody appears again in the Eb and bass clarinet parts, this time playing together rather than trading notes of the melody. The bass clarinet sounds one octave lower than written.

During measures 169-177, the material from measures 72-80 is repeated verbatim in all five parts. The final three measures of the piece begin with the Eb and first clarinet playing a descending Eb harmonic minor (without the 4th scale degree) sextuplet run in

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unison, beginning on an Eb7. Once the two instruments reach the next beat, the second and third clarinets play the same descending run displaced down one octave. The final full beat of the piece consists of the third full-ensemble unison (displaced by an octave in the bass clarinet) occurring in the piece. This time, the ensemble repeats the same descending six-note pattern as was played the previous two beats, finally coming to a close on an Eb concert eighth note to end the work.

The role of the clarinet in *Devil Sticks* is to musically represent a street performer performing with devil sticks. McAllister divides the three type of clarinets, Eb, Bb, and bass, into two groups: the Eb and bass clarinets and the three Bb clarinets. This is similar to how actual devil sticks are separated into two roles: the first role being the stick in each of the two hands that manipulate the second role, the third stick, which moves freely between the other two. Much like how the two roles of the sticks come together to create a singular performance, the two groups of clarinets work together to create a harmonious piece of music. The piece also contains many similarities to other McAllister works. Perhaps the most prominent is the key in which most of the virtuosic figures are written: Eb harmonic minor. Most of his pieces where the clarinet plays the most important role, such as *Black Dog, Freebirds, X Concerto*, and *Bling Bling*, contain a large amount of writing in Eb harmonic minor. Eb harmonic minor, written as F harmonic minor for the clarinet, is a very idiomatic key for the instrument leading McAllister, a clarinetist himself, to favor it, because much of his writing is considered to be highly virtuosic and full of energy.\(^6\)

\(^6\) McAllister, interview by author, 2017.
Another element this work has in common with others are juxtapositions in energy. His pieces often abruptly change from high-energy, exciting virtuosity to low-energy subdued and pensive sections. The abrupt change of pace from the A to the B and back to the A1 sections are emblematic of his writing. Rapid alternations in mood appear in various forms in his works such as *Black Dog*, *X Concerto*, *Freebirds*, and *Funk*. They do not always indicate a specific form as they do in *Devil Sticks*, but they are standard in his writing.

One of the melodies used in the piece, the “…To the Pines” melody, also appears in various forms in *X Concerto* and *Songs from the Redneck Soundbook II*. *Devil Sticks*, was premiered to an audience of clarinetists and since *X Concerto* had already become popular amongst clarinetists, he decided to throw the melody in as his signature, of sorts.\(^{27}\)

Finally, specific gestures such as driving sextuplets and composite rhythms split between lines in a hocket-like fashion appear throughout *Devil Sticks*, much like they do throughout others of his works, such as *Black Dog*, *Freebirds*, *Funk*, and *Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. 1*. These sorts of gestures create the high-energy, driving intensity for which McAllister has become known, and appear throughout his catalogue. Because this piece is written for an ensemble of clarinets, it contains many similarities to McAllister’s other clarinet-centric pieces.

\(^{27}\) Ibid.
CHAPTER IV - UNCLE SAM’S SONGBAG VOL. 1

*Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. 1* is a five-movement work for clarinet, mezzo-soprano, and piano. It was commissioned by Music Teachers National Association in 1998, when Scott McAllister was the Commissioned Composer of the Year in Florida.\(^{28}\) The premier took place at University of North Florida and featured McAllister on clarinet along with two of his colleagues on faculty from Florida Southern University.\(^{29}\) McAllister includes performance notes in the score which read,

> *Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. 1* is a collection of songs for mezzo-soprano, clarinet, and piano. Each song represents real-life events and issues that are prevalent in America today. In the first volume, there are five songs that reflect the following scenarios: censorship, sex, loneliness, and murder. Like a songbag in which various songs are ‘thrown’ together, this work reflects the often paradoxical life of the 1990’s through its use of conflicting and contrasting styles, including minimalist interjections, explosive driving sections, and psychedelic passages.\(^{30}\)

As the notes suggest, the text in this work is, in McAllister’s own words, “in your face,” which he did intentionally. McAllister wrote the text to all five movements, which he chose from a collection of poems he had written over many years.\(^{31}\) The poems he chose to use as the text for the composition are entitled, *Censored, She Bares All, Mrs. B, Film at Eleven,* and *Don’t Come to My Window!*. The order of the movements was chosen by

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\(^{28}\) Ibid.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Scott McAllister, *Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. 1* (Waco, TX: Lydmusic, 1998).

\(^{31}\) McAllister, interview by author, 2017.
McAllister, but can be performed in any order, at the performer’s discretion. All vocal, clarinet, and piano parts are in the key of C unless otherwise noted. All scores included are formatted with the vocalist as the top line, the clarinet as the middle line, and piano as the bottom grand staff unless otherwise noted.

“Censored”

Straight walking crooked talking blowing in Sunday winds.
Blind men forget dreams, even their forgiven sins.
Burning onion skins soaked in spit and rage.
The tongue speakers born again lick the ash of every page.
Poor Boo Radley.
He will never have a friend,
Huckleberry’s raft is sinking,
The ash lickers won’t rescue him.
Maya, Maya your page is on Faya,
Hurry!
Set your bird free from that smoked cage.
Too late.
Their god has spoken,
Your Dreams are Deferred, your words not saved.
Richard Wright burns well at night
So the tongued people say.
Goodbye George and Lenny,
I hear the crackle.
The flame is blowing my way.

The first movement, entitled Censored, was inspired by the censorship of books in Central Florida, the region in which his wife taught. Upon hearing about the banning of books due to what was deemed not suitable for students, McAllister decided that he, too, could write something that would be censored one day. The first four lines of the text paint a picture of a crowd of born-again religious-folk gathering around a pile of burning

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32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
books on a Sunday. After this four-line exposition, the text begins to mention specific works and/or authors which are being burned in the flames. The line, “Poor Boo Radley/He will never have a friend” refers to one of the main characters, a recluse, in Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird.* The next two lines, “Huckleberry’s raft is sinking/The ash lickers won’t rescue him” refer to the sinking of the raft that the title character of Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* uses, while the onlookers of the book burning sit idly by. The next three lines, “Maya, Maya your page is on Faya/Hurry!/Set your bird free from that smoked cage” refer to the African-American poet Maya Angelou, specifically her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.* The line, “Your Dreams are Deferred, your words not saved” refers to *Montage of a Dream Deferred,* a collection of poems published by African-American poet Langston Hughes. The lines “Richard Wright burns well at night/So the tongued people say” references the African-American author Richard Wright. “Goodbye George and Lenny” contains the last allusion to an outside piece of literature, this time referring to the two main characters from John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men.* The final two lines, “I hear the crackle/The flame is blowing my way” bring us back to the narrator’s point of view watching and/or listening to the book burning.

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The piece begins with both the clarinet and vocalist sounding a concert D at a loud (forte) dynamic. The piano enters an eighth note later, also on a concert D. The vocalist sings the line “Straight walking crooked talking blowing in Sunday winds,” beginning on a D, rising up to the tri-tone (Ab), and descending back down to an E on the word “winds.” As the vocalist sings the word “wind,” the clarinet paints the text. It does so by performing a sweeping 32nd note arpeggio, ascending and descending between a higher and lower register, emulating a gust of wind (Figure 17). This gust should be performed as the clarinetist imagines a gust of wind might sound like, altering dynamics and perhaps tone to fully paint the text.

![Figure 17. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. 1, “Censored,” measure 3.](image)

Top line: mezzo soprano, bottom line: Bb clarinet.

Beginning in the fourth and fifth measures, the piano plays a more rhythmic part two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note. Above the piano line, the clarinet plays three note patterns, resembling an inverted mordant, where a pitch is sounded, followed by a chromatic upper neighbor, resolving on the first pitch. At first these occur only on the offbeats, until measure five, at which point they occur on every eighth note, increasing the rhythmic intensity, as shown in Figures 18 and 19.
Figure 18. Uncle Sam's Songbag Vol. I, “Censored,” measure 4.

Figure 19. Uncle Sam's Songbag Vol. I, “Censored,” measure 5.
Above this, the vocalist sings, “Blind men forget dreams even their forgiven sins,” rising from a D to a C. In the sixth measure, as the vocalist sustains the word “sins” on a C above the piano, which is sustaining an A, the clarinet repeats the wind gesture.

Throughout most of this piece, the clarinet and piano act as the canvas upon which the vocalist paints music and text, and therefore should always be aware of the vocalist’s dynamic tendencies. In measures seven and eight, the vocalist sings “Burning onion skins soaked in spit and rage the tongue speakers born again lick the ash of every page” in a driving rhythm on a D. The clarinet subtly enters with Ds underneath the vocal line, emphasizing the text being performed. Beginning in these measures, the piano plays a descending 32\textsuperscript{nd} note gesture, which continues through measure 12. Over the next two measures, the vocalist repeats the same text in the same rhythm as the previous two measures, this time on an Ab, a tritone above the D (Figure 20).

![Figure 20. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Censored,” measures 8-9.](image)

On the first repetition of the text, the vocalist rises by a tritone. The clarinet takes a less subtle role during this repetition of text, now playing half note triplets first ascending, then descending across the range of the instrument at a louder
dynamic than before. In measures 11 and 12, the vocalist repeats the text a final time in the same rhythm, now on a B. The clarinet plays B's in the same rhythm, but at a higher dynamic than in measure six, but rather than continuing through the next measure as it had before, plays the wind gesture again, which then crescendos to the downbeat of measure 13. The vocalist repeats the same material ("Straight walking crooked talking blowing in Sunday winds") from the beginning of the movement in measures 13-15. The clarinet and piano repeat the same driving music from measures 4-6 during this repeated vocal line, creating a greater intensity to the text than was present during the first iteration.

New material begins in measure 16, when the vocalist sings, “Poor Boo Radley He will never have a friend.” The clarinet stays out of the way of the vocalist, only playing short gestures while the vocalist is resting or sustaining a pitch. The piano creates tonal ambiguity here by playing a C-sharp minor triad in the left hand against a D-minor triad in the right hand. In measure 17, more text painting occurs, as the vocalist sings descending chromatic sixteenth notes with the words, “Huckleberry's raft is sinking. Huckleberry’s raft is sinking.” The clarinet plays an ascending chromatic 32nd note gesture in the same measure, creating a sense of urgency (Figure 21).

On the downbeat of measure 18, the momentum comes to a sudden halt and tone becomes more pensive. The tempo changes to quarter note equals 52, the piano plays a whole note C, and the clarinet plays a whole note A-sharp. The vocalist sings “The ash lickers won't rescue him,” starting on a B natural, descending to a Bb on the word “rescue.” The word “him” marks the downbeat of measure 19, at which point the intensity of the previous measures returns. At this point, the clarinet should enter
unapologetically and with force, almost surprising the audience into mood change. The tempo increases to quarter note equals 132. At this point, the clarinet plays a four-measure glissando from a D concert up to a Bb concert on the downbeat of measure 23.

Figure 21. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Censored,” measure 17.

The vocal line descends as the words “Huckleberry’s raft is sinking,” representing the sinking raft. The clarinet and piano ascend at the same time, creating contrary motion.

As the clarinet ascends with a glissando, the piano plays a descending chromatic gesture with quarter note triplets in the left hand and sixteenth notes in the right, shown in Figure 22.
The vocalist re-enters in measure 23, as the clarinet finishes the glissando with the words “Maya Maya your page is on Faya Faya” In measures 26 and 27, the vocalist reiterates “Maya Faya Faya Maya,” and the clarinet and piano repeat the same glissando and chromatic material from measures 19-22. The mood abruptly changes once more in measure 30, at which point the piano begins an ascending monophonic eighth note line. The vocalist sings, “Hurry! Set your bird free from that smoked cage” in measures 30-36. More text painting (Figure 23) occurs during this passage, as the word “bird” is sung on the downbeat of measure 33. Beginning on the second beat of this measure, and continuing through measure 36, the piano and clarinet trade off a “tweet-like” gesture achieved by playing two sixteenth notes at a time.
The traded sixteenth notes between the clarinet and piano represent birds.

The tempo changes once again in measure 37, to quarter-note equals 52, at which point the vocalist sustains the word “cage” on an Ab while the piano plays Gb. The vocalist is alone for the following four measures, marked “Freely.” The text, “Too late their god has spoken, Your Dreams are Deferred, your words not” are sung by the vocalist in a slow, descending step-wise motion. At the end of measure 42, the clarinet and piano enter the texture once again as the vocalist sings the word “saved.” In measure 43, the tempo changes to quarter note equals 50. The piano plays a two measure ostinato (Figure 24) from measure 43 through measure 52, comprised of constant eighth notes.
The repeated piano ostinato creates a more calm and reflective tone.

The clarinet sustains the pitch from measure 42, a D, until measure 44. At this point, the clarinet and the vocalist begin more interplay. The vocalist sings the text “Richard Wright burns well at night” with the notes D-F-E in measures 44 and 45. In measure 46, the clarinet plays the same notes, but faster rhythmically an octave lower. In the same measure the vocalist starts the next line of text, “So the tongued.” In measure 47, the vocalist sings and the clarinet plays a “B,” finally coming together. The clarinet and vocalist are in rhythmic and harmonic unison for the first time in the movement in measure 48 (Figure 25), with the words “Goodbye George.” This unison does not last, however, and in the next measure, the two musicians play in harmony for the words “Goodbye Lenny.” During these three measures, the clarinet should increase their dynamic to a higher level, matching that of the vocalist.

The clarinet (bottom line) and vocalist (top line) play together for the melancholic “Goodbye George, goodbye Lenny” line.
The clarinet sustains through measure 50, finishing the phrase before exiting the texture. The vocalist sings “I hear the crackle. The flame is blowing” from measures 50 into measure 53. In measure 53, the piano also exits the texture, leaving the vocalist alone to sing “My way” twice, in a descending minor third with a G on the word “My” and an E on the word “Way.” The sung E on the word “Way” fades away into the final measure, at which point the clarinet and piano enter. The piano plays octave C’s and a G in the left hand and a G and D in the right hand. Above this, the clarinet plays a Db (Figure 26), which takes away from any sense of finality or ease the listener might otherwise feel at the end of the movement. The clarinetist should fade out into silence along with the piano.

Figure 26. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Censored,” measures 55-56.
“She Bares All”

She dances for the truck-man with her hair up tight,
Bouncing her breast-ed nipples behind mirrored bars and invisible glass
While empty eyes count the bounty from an endless lap around the track.
Bending, stretching, turning, laughing
At the fat truck-man wanting, watching, butt crack showing on a plastic-covered perch
As he fondles his mind knowing not to touch the soft blond hair
Desire...desire.
Dancing for one more of his dirty dollars sweaty and wrinkled against her skin.
Final lap for the food and rent that will feed fatherless children
Tithe and offerings on white laced plates.
Dancing through the truck-man’s smoke, lost in his fog,
Not waving but drowning.

The second movement, “She Bares All,” tells the story of a stripper giving a truck driver a lap dance while thinking about her fatherless children at home who need to be fed with the money she is earning. When McAllister was a college student, he drove back and forth between Lakeville and Tallahassee quite often. Right off the side of I-75 near Gainesville, there was a strip club, which would advertise on the side of a road, using the words, “She bares all!” McAllister said that this made him think of “the story of a lady baring all, more than just her body, but her soul and everything just to get money.” This made him think of his own mother who, although not a stripper, was a single mother who had to work three or four jobs at a time to support her family.

The movement is in 3/4 time. In the first measure, marked at quarter-note equals 76, the piano plays three quarter note cluster chords, the left hand descending and the right hand ascending, leading towards a GbM7 chord on the downbeat of measure two.

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41 McAllister, interview by author, 2017.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
The opening chords of the second movement suddenly change pace from the quiet fade-out in the first movement.

On the downbeat of the second measure, the tempo changes to quarter-note equals 144.

Beginning on the second beat of the second measure, the piano plays repeating eighth notes on a G. This continues for almost the entire movement. According to McAllister, these repeated notes are meant to convey intensity and “make you feel like, ‘Ah, I can’t get out of this circle.’”\(^\text{44}\) As such, they should be played perfectly metronomically and aggravatingly similar to one another in terms of both volume and length. Above this, the clarinet plays a metered resonance trill on a clarion B (concert A).

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\(^\text{44}\) Ibid.
This is metered as eighth notes, where each note alternates between the resonance fingering and the normal fingering, beginning on a resonance. Beginning on the third beat of measure nine, the clarinet plays the first occurrence of a recurring melodic motif. The motif includes the notes, “B-B-C-D-Ab-F.” This motif should come out of the texture every time it appears throughout the movement.

\[ \text{Figure 29. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” pickup to measures 10-12.} \]

Clarinet part in the key of Bb.

Although the left hand of the piano plays mostly only the repeated Gs, the right hand occasionally interjects with eighth notes or a fragment of melody. As the clarinet plays the recurring motif, the piano plays the first five notes (B-B-C-D-Ab) in unison with the clarinet before switching to eighth note repeating Bs.

\[ \text{Figure 30. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 10-12.} \]

Clarinet in the key of C (top line), piano (bottom line).

The vocalist enters one beat before measure 16, with the text, “She dances for the truck man with her hair up tight.” The clarinet plays long notes underneath the vocal line.
After the vocalist finishes the first line, the clarinet plays the melodic motif again. While the vocalist is sustaining the pitch (D) of the last word, the pianist plays eighth note F#s and Gs in the right hand to add more intensity. In measure 26, the vocalist enters again singing, “Bouncing her breasted nipples her nipples behind.” In measure 27, the clarinet plays an arpeggiated pattern, playing D-D-A-Eb, followed by D-D-A-D, and then back to D-D-A-Eb. During the third arpeggiated pattern in the clarinet, the piano plays a G# against an A in the right hand (Figure 31). The vocalist goes on to sing, “mirrored bars.” Underneath the word “bars,” the clarinet and piano play repeated eighth notes, the piano on A# and B, and the clarinet on an A with the resonance key. This is performed as a written B on the clarinet, with the bottom right hand side key pressed to raise the pitch. The clarinet should draw attention to the extended technique through use of dynamics, and then settle back into the texture. The vocalist continues on to sing, “and invisible glass.” Upon singing the word “glass,” the clarinet plays the now familiar melodic motif.

Figure 31. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 28-30.

The arpeggiations in the clarinet resolve on notes dissonant to the vocal line (D against Eb, Eb against F).
Starting on the beat before measure 38, the vocalist sings “While empty” as a quarter note G, an octave jump up to another quarter note G, then descends to a half note D. The clarinet imitates this two beats later, landing on the D as the vocalist goes on to sing “eyes count the bounty.” The vocalist ends the phrase on an Eb on the word “bounty,” at which point the clarinet joins on an Eb.

From measures 42-46, the meter changes to 2/4. For these measures, the clarinet plays the same metered timbre trill as it did beginning in measure two. The piano continues the repeating Gs in the left hand, and the vocalist sings, “from an endless lap around the.” In measure 47, the meter changes back to 3/4 and the vocalist resolves the thought with the word, “track.” The voice and piano take a break after this, and the piano plays a few eighth notes in very low and then very high octaves to add intensity. The vocalist re-enters with “Bending stretching Bending turning.” The word “Bending” is sung on a low D, and the words “Stretching” and “turning” are sung on a higher B and Bb respectively. The clarinet imitates this, playing a chalumeau E (concert D) which leaps up to a clarion E, then repeats the D before jumping to a clarion F, as seen in Figure 32.

![Figure 32. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 51-54.](image-url)
In measure 55, the vocalist sings, “bending” on a D again, before text painting the word “laugh-.”

![Musical notation](image)

*Figure 33. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 55-58.*

This is done by singing half steps (G-G#, A#-B, C#-D, and E-F) in eighth notes (Figure 33), repeating each set of two twice before resolving on the “-ing” on a C. The clarinet performs a glissando from E3 up to C6. It then plays a similar line to the vocal part, but descends rather than ascends the pattern (C-C#, A-A#, E-F) before resolving on an Ab.

Beginning in measure 60, the music slowly builds in intensity. The vocalist sings, “At the fat truck man wanting, at the fat truck-man watching, at the fat truck man wanting, at the fat truck man watching,” with each repetition of the “at the fat…” growing louder in dynamic. Underneath this, the piano slowly adds in one note at a time to the repeating G, until there is an eight note cluster repeating in measure 67. The clarinet enters in measure 63, sustaining an Eb, then crescendos while rising to a Gb. After the vocalist sings the final, “watching,” the clarinet has a sudden, jarring timbre trill for a quarter note on a clarion B. This trill should be brought out of the texture, surprising the audience.

In measure 68, the texture thins out to the single repeating G in the piano while the vocalist sings, “butt crack showing.” In measure 69, the piano adds more notes to
thicken the texture, ultimately repeating the same cluster from measure 67, which it then repeats for the following six measures (Figure 34).

Figure 34. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 68-70.

The piano grows from playing a single note to a cluster in three measures, increasing the harmonic intensity.

The clarinet plays a resonance trill, which begins metered on the third beat of measure 70, as the vocalist enters again. The vocalist sings, “on a plastic covered perch, on a plastic covered perch, on a plastic covered,” with the same notes and rhythms during each repetition, while the clarinet plays a steady eighth-note metered timbre trill on clarion B.

In measure 76, the texture once again thins back out to the piano repeating the G. The vocalist then sings, “As he fondles,” with a G leaping up to an Eb, to which the clarinet responds with a concert G leaping up an octave. The two musicians join in rhythmic unison as the vocalist sings, “his mind,” on a G leaping up to a D. The clarinet plays a G leaping up to an F, creating a harmony between the voice and clarinet. The clarinet then goes on to play the melodic motif it uses throughout the movement, above which the vocalist sings, “knowing not to touch the soft blonde hair.” In measure 84, for the first time in this movement, all of the instruments drop out and there is no repeated “G.” Instead, the tempo changes to quarter equals 60 and the vocalist alone sings “desire…desire.” on a Bb.
In measure 87, the tempo goes back to quarter note equals 144 and the piano begins playing the repeated G once again. From here until measure 112, the clarinet plays the same material, seen in Figure 35, in every measure, becoming part of the “trapped” intensity McAllister conveys in the movement. The clarinet plays a half note E, which is tied to a quarter note E on the third beat, before which three grace notes are played. These are F-E-F, which gives it a brief half-step murmur before the third beat. The grace notes add instability to the written “E,” and should not stick out of the texture, but once again create an uneasy feeling in the listener.

Figure 35. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 87-90.
Clarinet part written in key of Bb.

The vocalist enters one beat before measure 91, singing “She dances for the truck man with her hair up tight.” This follows the familiar rising and falling motion the voice does for most of this movement (B-C-D-C-Eb-D). The voice goes on to sing, “Dancing for one more of his dirty dollars sweaty and wrinkled against her skin,” again, all between the narrow interval of B-Eb. McAllister then paints the picture of the exhausted stripper during the text, “Final lap for the food and rent,” which descends almost chromatically (G-Gb-F-E-D-Db), shown in Figure 36.

Figure 36. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 106-108.
A glimmer of hope appears when the children are mentioned, with the words “that will” sung on an E that leaps up to a C on the word “feed,” which descends chromatically to a Bb while the words, “fatherless children,” are sung. Measures 114-125 are split up into three, four-measure phrases. During each of these, the piano crescentos from piano to mezzo-forte or forte, adding notes to the steady eighth note texture as it does so. After four measures, the texture thins out and the crescendo and adding of notes begins anew. Similarly, the clarinet plays constant eighth notes, which crescendo every four measures, but plays the same note (concert D) across three or four octaves, rising and falling again, to create the feel of perpetual motion. These notes should sound as even as possible, and special care should be taken to ensure the tone does not change drastically between octaves. The vocalist sings the words, “tithe and offerings white laced plates,” three times, slightly varying the notes each repetition as shown in Figures 37-39. During the first four measures, the phrase begins on a D, leaps up to a C, leaps back down to a D, and then leaps up to a B. The second iteration of this is the same, the only exception being that the final note is a Bb rather than a B. The third phrase, the vocalist begins on a D, leaps up to a C, steps up again to a D, and finally leaps up a minor third to an F.

Figure 37. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 114-117.

Figure 38. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 118-121.
In measure 126, everybody except the eighth note G in the piano leave the texture completely. In measure 127, the piano adds a high Ab and an A just over an octave above it in the right hand. These higher notes add to the intensity already felt by the repeating G. In measure 128, the vocalist and clarinetist enter the texture, each playing a descending figure, painting the hopelessness of the situation. The vocalist sings the same phrase, “Dancing through the truck-man’s smoke,” three times, each time descending chromatically three notes (Bb-A-Ab) (Ab-Gb) (Gb-F-E), which is shown in Figures 40-42. Again, this takes place as three, four-measure phrases. The clarinetist plays a metered timbre trill similar to the previous times in this movement, but every other measure descending a half step (C-Bb-A-Ab-G). When the clarinet lands on the G in measure 138, it is played for four bars rather than two like the previous metered timbre trills.

Figure 40. *Uncle Sam’s Songbag* Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 128-131.

Figure 41. *Uncle Sam’s Songbag* Vol. I, “She Bares All,” measures 132-135.
Once again, the hopelessness and despair of the dancer is represented by a descending chromatic line.

In measure 141, the vocalist sings “Lost in his” on an Eb, resolving to a D on the word “fog” in measure 142. When the vocalist sings “fog,” the clarinet paints the picture of fog by playing repeated eighth notes on the lowest note on the instrument Figure 43), E3.

The chalumeau notes in the clarinet (bottom line, key of C) represent the fog in the text. E3 is in the chalumeau register, which can be considered muddy. This paints the picture of being lost in a haze. The same thing happens a second time in measures 143-144. In measure 145-146, the vocalist repeats the same text and notes a third time, but rather than play the same material as before, the clarinet begins the melodic motif on the third beat of measure 146. This time the clarinet does not resolve the top Ab to an F as before, but rather sustains it. While the clarinet sustains the Ab, the vocalist sings “Not waving but drowning,” to the same melodic motif the clarinet introduced at the beginning of the movement. In measures 152-155, this same thing is repeated in the two parts. Both the clarinet and the vocalist diminuendo to nothing by the end of measure 155, leaving the
piano playing the repeating G, A, and Ab for the next five measures unchanged and alone. In measure 160, the piano begins to crescendo. In measure 161, the G in the left hand leaves the texture, leaving only an Ab against an A in the right hand. In measure 163, the Ab leaves the texture as well, leaving a high A repeating at a fortissimo volume. This continues for seven measures, with nothing else occurring in the music. The piece ends abruptly in measure 169, with a fermata over an eighth rest at the very end of the measure. There is no movement at this point, just the sustain of the A. The sustain pedal remains activated during the fermata, and the note fades into silence, thus ending the movement.

“Mrs. B.”

Her dogless leash laid across knobs unturned.
Fifteen years obedient
Warm and kind.
Invaded hearts opened their vessels,
Fear again returned.
Cracked leather leash
Children long forgotten,
Days turned into weeks
Months.
Years.
Silent explosions,
Evaporated dreams.
Memories long remembered
Like a dogless leash.

The third movement, entitled “A Dogless Leash” draws its text from McAllister’s poem called “Mrs. B.” When McAllister was living in Houston, he would take his yellow lab on daily walks near Rice University. There was an elderly lady who would walk her

\[45\] Ibid.
dog along the same route every day. McAllister would join her for the approximately fifteen minutes she walked, leading the two of them to become good friends. One day, after about a year, he stopped seeing her. After a few days he found out that she had passed away one day after her dog died. He recalls, “I went to her apartment. I saw where she died in her chair, and she had been staring at—just sitting near the door, but right over the door knob was the dog’s leash… I just lost it.” He wrote the text soon after the discovery of her passing, all the while thinking about loneliness and different issues caused by American culture. This particular poem was written close to the time he composed *Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I.*

The movement opens with a seven measure “chorale” which McAllister has used in multiple works (Figure 44). He first used it in his chamber piece, *Screaming Azaleas*, which won The Ladislav Kubik International Prize in Composition in 1994. He says of the chorale, “I love that chorale. It’s a little signature chorale I wanted to put in a couple different pieces because…you think, ‘Oh this piece will never take off, so I’m going to steal it from myself and use it again!’” After using it in “A Dogless Leash,” McAllister included it in the second movement of his clarinet concerto *Bling Bling* (2003) (Figure 45), as well as in the movement “A Dogless Leash” in his concept symphony for wind ensemble, *Mercury on the Moon* (2012). This seven measure chorale appears a total of four times throughout the movement, each time rising up one octave. The chorale begins

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46 Ibid.  
47 Ibid.  
48 Ibid.  
49 Ibid.  
50 Ibid.  
51 Ibid.
on an Eb minor chord, which introduces the key of the movement. It modulates to EM in the fourth measure, and finally fades out in the seventh measure sounding an E and a B, leaving the ear unsure of tonality.

![Musical staff](image)

**Figure 44. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “A Dogless Leash,” measures 1-7.**

The recurring chorale in this movement is the same chorale used in *Bling Bling*.

![Musical staff](image)

**Figure 45. Bling Bling, movement II, measures 49-52.**

Handwritten markings included in original.

In measure eight, the meter changes to 3/4 and the tempo is marked “A Little Faster.” For the following ten measures, the piano and clarinet begin a rhythmic ostinato. In each measure, the left hand of the piano plays dotted half notes on the first beat (two Ebs in octaves every time), while the right hand of the piano plays two changing quarter notes. Beginning on the second beat of measure eight, the clarinet plays two quarter notes, the second of which ties over to the first beat of the following measure, and continues this pattern. Above the Eb sounding in the left hand of the piano, the right hand piano and clarinet play unison notes beginning on the fourth scale degree of Eb minor
(Ab) and ascend step wise to the sixth (Cb/written B-natural). After sounding the sixth, the right hand piano and clarinet jump back down to the Ab and begin their step-wise ascent again, this time rising all the way up to the tonic, Eb. After reaching the tonic, the unison line descends step wise down an Eb minor scale. On the third beat of measure sixteen, however, the Eb minor tonality is interrupted with a major third (G-natural), giving a brief moment of major tonality to the listener before dropping down to the minor second (E-natural) and finally resolving on the tonic (Eb) the beat before measure eighteen, shown in Figure 46. During the ascending and descending lines between the clarinet and piano, the clarinetist should shape the phrase, while the piano player uses the quarter notes to accentuate the movement, rather than take over the texture.

![Music notation](image)

**Figure 46. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “A Dogless Leash,” measures 15-18.**

The piano emphasizes each of the changing notes in the clarinet (top line, key of C).

In measure eighteen the meter changes back to 4/4, where it stays for the remainder of the movement. The diad from the third beat of measure seventeen continues to sound as a whole note which diminuendos. There is no movement in this measure until the fourth beat, where the singer enters for the first time on an Eb. For the next nine measures, the piano repeats the first nine measures of the ostinato heard in measures eight through eleven, this time extending the second of each two-note grouping by a single beat
to fit into the 4/4 meter and the Eb in the left hand of the piano is played in one octave rather than two. The clarinet repeats the pattern for the first four measures along with the piano, before abandoning the exact repetition in measure 23. In measure nineteen, the vocalist sings “dog” on the tonic (Eb), “less” on the minor second (E-natural), and then leaps to the fourth (Ab) for the word “leash.” The vocal line then continues in a step-wise fashion up to the seventh (Db) on the fourth beat of measure 22, where the line begins a step-wise descent down to the fifth (Bb). In beat four of measure 23, the vocalist breaks away from step-wise motion, instead dropping by a third to the minor third (Gb). This stepwise motion accentuates the overall mood of depression, as it conveys a lesser energy than using leaps and wider intervals. At the same time, the clarinet breaks away from the elongated repetition of measures eight through twelve and leaps up to the sixth (B-natural) and then up again to the tonic (Eb), where it stays for the next two measures. In measures 24-25, the vocalist continues in step-wise motion up to the sixth (B-natural). Both the clarinet and voice remain absent in the texture in measure 26, and then enter in unison in measure 27. The vocalist sings the word “Invaded” on a B-natural while the clarinet plays in unison pitch and rhythm, which then descends to the fifth (Bb) in the third beat of the measure for the word “hearts.” After the clarinet sounds the Bb for a single beat, it leaps up to the minor second (E-natural) on beat four of measure 27, and sustains the pitch until the downbeat of measure 30.

In measure 28, the vocalist sings “opened their vessels” descending from the seventh to the fifth. In this measure the piano breaks away from the repetition of the earlier pattern as well, this time sounding an Eb in the left hand, followed by the right hand joining the clarinet on an E-natural. In measure 29, the piano stops playing. It is in
this measure that the clarinet diminuendos the E-natural while the singer, now with a
tempo marking of “freely,” sings “Fear again returned” on an Ab.

![Freely and Tempo 1](image)

*Figure 47. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “A Dogless Leash,” measure 29.*

As the vocalist finishes the text “fear again returned,” the same melancholic chorale from the beginning of the piece returns, aurally representing the fear.

This creates a sounding tritone, which slowly fades into the next measure. In measure 30, the seven measure chorale from the beginning of the movement returns, this time played up one octave. The chorale ends in measure 36.

![Tempo 1](image)

*Figure 48. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “A Dogless Leash,” measures 30-36.*

The same chorale as the beginning of the movement, one octave higher. Bottom staff is in bass clef.

In measures 37 through 46, the piano repeats the material it had in measures 19 through 28. During these measures, the clarinet echoes the rhythms of the right hand of the piano, offset by two quarter notes. The clarinet line is characterized mostly by large leaps of more than an octave in contrast to the piano right hand, which has the maximum leap of a minor third. Again, these large leaps should sound as smooth as possible. The voice begins again in measure 38, singing an ascending and then descending line, with the words “cracked leather leash children forgotten” generally rising up to an E-natural in measure 40, and the words “Days turn into weeks months years” descending down to a
Bb in measure 46. The word “years” is repeated three times, each time lowering in pitch (Eb, B-natural, Bb) and dynamic (piano, pianissimo, pianissimo with a diminuendo), shown in Figure 49. Both the clarinet and voice play whole notes in measure 46 which end on the downbeat of 47.

![Figure 49. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “A Dogless Leash,” measure 43-46.](image)

As the time in the text increases from “months” to “years,” so do the note lengths. Each representation descends in register.

In measure 47, the opening chorale returns, this time two octaves higher than the initial iteration, as seen in Figure 50.

![Figure 50. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “A Dogless Leash,” measures 47-53.](image)

The chorale returns, this time two octaves higher than the first.

In measure 54, the clarinet and piano musically represent a violent outburst of emotion as a result of the loneliness and depression (Figure 51). The piano plays a cluster chord with the lowest note as a C1 and the highest as a B2. Above the piano part, the clarinetist plays a Bb6 (written altissimo C). These are both performed as a whole note with a fermata over them at a quadruple forte dynamic. The idea of this note is to finally release all of the built up tension, sadness, loneliness, etc. felt by the narrator throughout
the work. This being the case, it should not only be a complete surprise to the audience, but can also be played deafeningly loud and seem out of control, while the pianist slams their hands down on the keyboard.

![Musical notation](image)

**Figure 51. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “A Dogless Leash,” measure 54.**

The piano plays a sudden cluster underneath the loud, high note in the clarinet part (top), representing a sudden outburst, or scream by the protagonist in the poem as though the depression has finally gotten the better of them.

After a measure of silence to reset the overall tone of the movement, the piano begins playing an exact repetition of measures 37-46. During the first four measures of this repetition, the clarinet begins an exact repetition of what it had performed in measures 19-22. In measures 58 and 59, the mezzo-soprano enters with the lyrics “silent explosions,” which are sung to the same pitches and meter of the clarinet part two beats before the clarinet plays them (Bb, B-natural, C# in succession). This introduces the imitative texture of the following three bars, during which the clarinet plays the exact melody that is sung by the vocalist one beat after the vocalist sings. The vocalist is
singing the lyrics “Evaporated dreams” and the clarinet acts as text painting by causing the theme to become more ambiguous and the ascending line that is sung is reminiscent of evaporation, shown in Figure 52. This “evaporation” gesture in the clarinet should imitate the vocal part, but take care not to cover it.

![Figure 52. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “A Dogless Leash,” measures 60-62.](image)

The clarinet (bottom line) imitates the vocal line, representing the dreams evaporating away like steam.

In measure 63, the clarinet and vocal line finally line up and perform the same music in unison with one another. This changes in 64, where the clarinet changes to a leading tone to the E at the end of the measure while the voice sings a leading tone B resolving to a Bb tritone below the clarinet. In measure 64, the vocalist sings the words “Like a dogless leash” at their own tempo, all on an Ab. When the vocalist says the word “leash,” the clarinet enters with an E a major tenth below the voice, which the player then sustains with the note “circular breathe if possible” above it through the end of the piece.

Beginning in measure 66, the piano plays the final iteration of the opening seven measure chorale, this time a full three octaves above the initial introduction. In the final measure, the piano plays an Eb, which then fades out with the clarinet E fading with it (Figure 53).
"Film at Eleven"

I saw a news flash one day  
*Film at eleven decapitated baby*  
Fried and filleted.  
I saw a news flash one day  
*Pretty ballerina seven years old*  
Lying in the basement what was her name?  
Was it Jon-Benet?  
I saw a news flash one day  
*Mother driving children to a watery grave watching*  
O.J. get away while  
Jeffrey had an all you can eat buffet.  
I saw a news flash one day  
*Film at eleven.....*  
I think I’ll go to bed early.

*Film at Eleven* is about violence in the media. The text from the poem comes from McAllister’s reactions to crazy news events of the nineteen nineties. The text paints the picture of a narrator watching the news, and learns about a decapitated baby, the murder of JonBenét Ramsey, a mother driving her children into the water to kill them, O.J. Simpson running from the police, and Jeffrey Dahmer eating his victims. The narrator ultimately decides to turn off the depression-inducing television in favor of the comfort of sleep.

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52 Ibid.
This movement differs in instrumentation from the other movements in this work in that it is a duet between the clarinet and voice. It also contains no bar lines and is metronomically freer than the others. The clarinet plays a more central role than it does in the other four movements, as it creates the only non-text music for the movement. The clarinet introduces the overall shocking nature of the news flashes with a fast, loud arpeggio up to A concert which is articulated in a progressively faster manner before jumping up to a concert Db/C#. This opening gesture should be jarring to effectively introduce the tone of the movement. This introduction is followed by two arpeggios, the first leading to a D, and the second leading to an E. After sustaining the concert E for a moment, a timbre trill is added in while the note crescendos which is abruptly cut off by a descending four-note chromatic grace note figure, shown in Figure 54. This timbre trill can be performed either by using pinky keys, or the sliver key with the third finger on the right hand.

![Figure 54. Uncle Sam's Songbag Vol. I, “Film at Eleven,” measures intro.](image)

The clarinet part, written in concert Bb.

While the middle notes of the arpeggios remain the same (alternating between E and A), the first note of each arpeggio changes to outline a D minor tonality. The first is an A, the second an F, the third a D. Together with the top notes, the clarinet stays in a D-minor tonality. The vocalist, in contrast, begins to sing in C minor while the clarinet repeats an elongated repetition of the initial arpeggiated figures in D minor. This takes place while
the vocalist sings, “I heard a news flash one day/Film at eleven/decapitated baby fried and filleted.” Beginning here and continuing throughout this movement, the contrast between the keys of the clarinet and the vocalist emulate the dissonance felt between the news stations and the narrator. During this first part of the piece, the clarinet sustains notes in the upper clarion and altissimo register while the vocalist stays within a narrow range of less than an octave and lower than the clarinet (between Eb4 and C5). After the end of the first part, the clarinet and voice play in more similar registers as one another. The clarinet is playing a repeating pattern, shown in figure 55.

![Figure 55. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Film at Eleven,” measures extended technique.](image)

The top line (vocal) is in concert pitch, the bottom line (clarinet) is in Bb. This pattern for the clarinet is performed by playing written E3, F4, and B5, but leaving the right hand down creating the F to sound both lower and more muffled than an F normally would. While playing this gesture, the clarinetist should use less air than one usually would to compensate for the greater resistance created by leaving the right hand down in order to prevent squeaks. This occurs while the vocalist sings, “I saw a news flash one day/Pretty ballerina seven years old.” When the vocalist sings the words “years old” on a D3, the clarinet finally comes to rest on E3. The vocalist then sings, “lying in
the basement,” during which time the clarinet once again performs the now familiar F-B-F arpeggiation, which resolves on an F#5 (E concert) in contrast to the sustained F in the vocal part.

For the first time in the movement, while the vocalist sings “what was her name?,” the clarinet and voice perform the same rhythm in unison. The clarinet plays a clarion Ab (concert Gb) against the voice’s Ab resolving to G on the word “name.” The clarinet then interrupts the thought (which in the poem ends with “was it Jon-Benet?,” however this is excluded in the musical setting) with a sudden “news flash” from the clarinet, which plays the opening arpeggio ending on the clarion “B.” This news flash should create a sudden change of mood, like a person drifting off in thought suddenly being awoken by a news flash on the television. The clarinet then fades out on a concert C, seemingly giving the pitch to the vocalist who begins the next “I saw a news flash one day” on a C. After the vocalist sings these words, the clarinet fades out and the voice performs alone a rhythmically free, “Mother driving children to a watery grave/watching O.J. get away.” The voice resolves on a Gb under a fermata on the word, “a-way,” at which point the clarinet enters the texture again with a tremolo between concert G and Eb. The clarinet then repeats the same arpeggiated “keep the right hand down” figure it had earlier in the movement while the vocalist sings “while Jeffrey had an all you can eat buffet.” The voice resolves the word “buffet” on a B, which is sustained as the clarinet slows the figure, finally landing on a concert Eb. After the two musicians cut off, the clarinet plays the opening sequence again, outlining the D minor triad. The vocalist once again enters with the same “I heard a news flash one day” figure as they sang in their first entrance, this time going on to repeat “film at eleven” twice rather than just once and

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ending on an Eb with a fermata. The clarinet plays a rhythmic variation of the same notes it played at the first iteration of “I heard a news flash one day/film at eleven,” coming to a rest on a pianissimo E6 (concert D) with a fermata over it. This once again illustrates the dissonance between the narrator and the news with the clashing of an Eb against a D. This dissonance seems to be the final point in convincing the narrator to turn off the television, because after the fermatas cut off, the vocalist sings (unaccompanied), “I think I’ll go to bed early” on an Eb, and then fades out the word “early” to end their thoughts on the matter. After the vocalist begins the sustain of the last syllable of “early,” the clarinetist sneaks in with a final F#6 (concert E) at a quadruple piano. Shown in Figure 56, this note crescendos steadily, and once the vocalist discontinues singing, a resonance trill is added to the note, which continues to crescendo to a quadruple forte before bringing the movement to an abrupt close on the four note descending chromatic grace notes heard two previous times earlier in the movement.

Figure 56. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Film at Eleven,” outro.

The end of the movement is reminiscent of the final note of the opening line in the clarinet. The clarinet line (bottom) is played as written in the key of Bb.
“Don’t Come to My Window”

Don’t come to my window!
Dipping hope buckets into streamy currents of unpersoned people,
For the American dreamer is no longer sleeping nor
Watching subliminal messages on a remote-control nor
World championship wrestling and Jerry Springer’s next guest.
Don’t come to my window!
Porn surfers suffering scar tissued hands shaped like the plastic mouse
That will soon be in every house mind and soul,
For the American dreamer ran away with the King James version
Hiking with Moses’ stick and Edison’s lantern to find a way home.
Don’t come to my window!
Fast food quick loan next-day-air can’t wait for the green light
While dumping, pumping, flushing society sludge, thinking it’s goodbye.
Now I know why the Indian cried
The American dreamer is no longer sleeping
He died.

“Don’t Come to My Window!” was inspired by scammers. Specifically, the people who hold buckets supposedly collecting money for an organization or charity, but really just scamming people into giving them money.\textsuperscript{53} The inspiration for this movement comes from McAllister’s own anger about the state of American society.\textsuperscript{54} Although the scammer was the initial inspiration for the text, the poem paints the picture of a narrator spiraling down a mental drain caused by all the problems s/he sees in American society. The text can be broken into three verses, each separated by the line, “Don’t come to my window!” which alludes to a search for the personification of the American dream,

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
referred to as the American dreamer, through various seedy aspects of society. In the first
verse, the anger is turned towards the television and the media it produces. This includes
various subliminal messages one may find in the media, TV wrestling, and The Jerry
Springer Show. The second verse talks about how innovation has replaced religion in a
society in which the dreamer has run off with the religious aspects (King James
version/Moses’ stick) and pre-industrialization technologies (Edison’s lantern) leaving a
society of mindless and soulless people with computer mice imprinted into their hands
from surfing through pornography. The final verse refers to the impact the search for
instant gratification has had on society. It mentions specifically how the fast-paced way
of living (fast food, quick loans, next-day air deliveries, impatiently waiting at a stop
light) distracts members of society from the harm they are doing on the environment
(dumping, pumping, flushing sludge, thinking it is gone for good, rather than piled up all
around us). The line, “Now I know why the Indian cried,” refers to a commercial which
was popular in the nineties which featured a Native American gentleman who sheds a
tear when he sees trash on the ground. The poem ends on a most ominous note: The
American Dream has died.

“Don’t Come to My Window!” is composed in a chorus/verse manner, beginning
with a chorus. Each chorus is comprised of a bombastic introduction in the piano (Figure
57) followed by the vocalist singing, “Don’t come to my window!”

55 A talk show hosted by Jerry Springer starting in the 1990s that featured
controversial topics.
56 McAllister, interview by author, 2017.
The unsettling introduction sets the tone of the movement.

This is followed by the verses, which begin with the clarinet and piano setting the tone for the verse for a few measures before the vocalist begins singing the text. The first chorus begins in the first measure of the piece, which is in 2/4 time. The piano plays for three measures, each one beginning with a quarter note C in three octaves at a double forte dynamic, followed by a sixteenth note cluster with a marcato marking. Each cluster played by the piano gets progressively higher, signaling a growing intensity felt by the narrator. In the fourth measure, the vocalist enters alone, singing “Don’t come to” on a Bb, “my” on a G, and “window!” on a Gb.

In measure seven, the piano and clarinet start the six measure introduction to the verse before the vocalist begins (Figure 58). For the first two measures, the piano plays eighth note triplets. For these triplets, the first two beats remain the same in both measures (C, D) and the third beat is comprised of two notes separated by just over or under an octave. These are Ab/A, G/Ab, Ab/A, and C/B respectively. Over these triplets in the piano, the clarinet plays sextuplets. In the first measure, the sextuplet pattern spells out the first six notes of an Eb major scale with a flat sixth, and in the second measure
they spell out the first six notes of a Bb major scale with a flat sixth. These sextuplet patterns should lead directly from one into another, as if to emulate the revving of a car engine. In measure nine, the piano plays accented quarter note triplets, playing two octaves of B-Bb-A in the left hand and two octaves of C#-D-D# in the right. Above this, the clarinet plays an altissimo A (concert G).

![Musical notation]

*Figure 58. Uncle Sam's Songbag Vol. I, “Don’t Come to My Window!,” measures 7-9.*

Clarinet part in C (treble clef), the top line of the grand staff is in treble clef, the bottom is in bass clef.

Measures ten and eleven repeat what was played in measures seven and eight verbatim.

In measure twelve, the rhythms are the same as measure nine, but the notes change. This time, the piano plays Eb-D-Db in the left hand and E-F-F# in the right and the clarinet plays a Bb7 (concert Ab) above it. For the next eight measures, the piano plays the same material it played in measures seven and eight, repeating the two measure figure a total of four times. This triplet ostinato becomes quite familiar throughout the rest of the movement, specifically during the verses. Above the triplet ostinato, the clarinet plays a descending chromatic four note quarter note figure (Figure 59), which takes place in the
throat tones (Bb-A-Ab-G), all slurred with and performed with a resonance trill. This is repeated three times and then settles on the G for what would be the fourth repetition.

Figure 59. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Don’t Come to My Window!,” measures 17-20. The descending quarter notes are made more unsettling with resonance trills, performed as written above in concert Bb. These two parts together create a dark, uneasy mood in support of the text. The vocalist sings the first line of the poem, “Dipping hope buckets into streamy currents of unpersoned people” from measures fourteen through twenty-one in no particular key, adding to the anxious nature of the movement. A moment of word painting occurs on the word “streamy,” during which the vocalist sings a descending chromatic eighth note pattern from Bb down to F (Figure 60), reminiscent of a cascading stream.

Figure 60. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Don’t Come to My Window!” measures 15-18.

In measure 21, the piano plays the quarter note triplets from measure nine, followed by the quarter note triplet figure from measure twelve in measure 22. The clarinet brings back the sextuplet figures from measure eight, which is then repeated up one octave in measure 22. The piano returns to the two measure triplet ostinato for the following 20 measures (23-42), while the clarinet plays the same material from measures thirteen and fourteen starting in measure 23 and going halfway through measure 30. The
vocalist performs the line, “For the American dreamer is no longer sleeping nor watch-” in a slightly more stable manner than the first line. This time, the singer begins on a Db, leaps up to a B, which then resolves down to a Bb twice. The third time, the Db leaps up to a C, indicating a change in texture is about to occur. The C occurs during the “watch” part of the text, which then begins a descending chromatic eighth note figure during “-ing subliminal messages on a remote control.” This starts on a C, and descends chromatically over an octave down to a B. During this descending chromatic figure, the clarinet plays an ascending chromatic eighth note figure, starting on a concert E and rising to a concert F, creating contrary motion as seen in Figure 61.

![Figure 61. Uncle Sam's Songbag Vol. I, “Don’t Come to My Window!,” measures 30-34.](image)

Contrary motion between the clarinet (bottom, key of C) and vocalist (top).
In measures 35-40, the clarinet repeats the two measure resonance trill ostinato which was interrupted by the text painting, this time a ninth higher, descending from written C to written A. Above this, the vocalist sings, “nor World championship wrestling and Jerry Springer’s next guest,” again, not following any particular tonal center. In measures 41-42, the clarinet brings back the familiar sextuplet patterns from measures seven and eight. At this point, the forward momentum is suddenly halted, as the piano in four octaves, the clarinet, and the vocalist all spend the next four measures playing concert Db in a unison rhythm: quarter note followed by an eighth note.

The vocalist is singing “Jerry! Jerry! Jerry! Jerry!” during this section (Figure 62), which is an allusion to The Jerry Springer Show, in which the audience would often break into the same chant (“Jerry! Jerry!”) when the show got particularly violent, scandalous, or exciting.

Figure 62. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Don’t Come to My Window!,” measures 41-45.

After mentioning the Jerry Springer show, all three instruments imitate the audience’s chant of “Jerry! Jerry!”
The descending resonance trills bring the first verse to a close. The next six measures, or the second chorus, repeat the material from the first six measures verbatim. The second verse begins in measure 53, at which point the piano plays the same material as it did in the first six measures of the first verse. The clarinet plays something slightly different, however. The clarinet part begins in the pickup to measure 53 with a chromatic 32nd note passage interrupted by eighth notes. This stops in measure 55, during the quarter note triplet figure in the piano. In measures 56-59, the clarinet plays the sextuplet patterns previously introduced, ascending in register throughout the four measures. In measure 59, the piano strays from the material presented in the previous verse, playing As in two octaves with the left hand for the first beat, and five eighth note triplets with a G against an A over an octave above it with the right hand, signaling the upcoming texture change.

In measure 60, the piano and clarinet begin a two measure ostinato, which sets the tone for the second verse. The left hand of the piano repeats the rhythm of two eighth notes and a quarter note, playing G-D-Eb in measure 60 and G-D-C in measure 61. In the right hand, the piano plays the same G against the A it played in the previous measure as eighth notes on beat two. This two bar ostinato is repeated from measures 60 through 101. Along with the piano, the clarinet plays a half note concert D in measure 60, followed by four sixteenth notes (D-Eb-D-Eb) and a quarter note D in measure 61, shown in Figure 63. Similar to the grace note trills in “She Bares All,” this clarinet gesture acts to create an uneasy feeling within the listener through the alternating half-steps. This is repeated along with the piano through measure 101.
Figure 63. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Don’t Come to My Window!,” measures 60-63.

A slower version of the repeated ostinato from “She Bares All” appears in the clarinet (top line, key of C) part.

The vocalist begins on the second beat of measure 63 with the text, “Porn surfers suffering scar tissued hands/Shaped like the plastic mouse/That will soon be in every house mind and soul/For the American dreamer ran away with the King James version/Hiking with Moses’ stick and Edison’s lantern to find a way home.” In contrast to the first verse, the vocalist sings a more melodic line, now in C minor. The only time the vocalist strays from C minor is in measures 91-95, at which point s/he switches to Eb minor for the words, “Hiking with Moses’ stick and Edison’s lantern.” This verse as a whole is much more subdued and calmer than the other two verses in the movement. This mirrors the more thoughtful mood of the text of the verse. Rather than talking about aspects of society, which make the narrator angry and anxious, the narrator becomes sad for a moment thinking about why we have become what we have.

In measures 102-107, the third chorus occurs repeating the same material as the previous two. The third verse is the same material as the first verse, more intense and bombastic again, but this time varied slightly. From measures 108-118, the clarinet and piano play the exact material from measures 8-18. The vocalist enters in measure 114
with their first iteration of, “Fast food quick loan next day air can’t wait for the green light.” In measures 119-137, the piano alternates between playing the familiar quarter note and eighth note triplet patterns. The clarinet plays mostly sextuplet figures in three different octaves, with the exception of measures 121-125, during which it plays the descending chromatic quarter tone resonance trills figure from before, this time a ninth higher. In measure 121, the singer enters with the second iteration of “fast food quick loan next day air can’t wait for the green light,” this time with a more obvious text painting (Figures 64 and 65). During the words, “Fast food quick loan next day air,” the vocalist performs in a rushed sixteenth note rhythm. More frustration is shown during the “can’t wait for the green light.” These words are performed in a steady quarter note rhythm in a higher range, only changing notes from E to Eb on the word “light.”

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

*Figure 64. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Don’t Come to My Window!,” measures 114-118.*

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

*Figure 65. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Don’t Come to My Window!,” measures 121-125.*

The second repetition of the text is less metered and more unstable, signifying the unrest the narrator is feeling.

In measures 130-134, the vocalist enters with, “While dumping While pumping flushing society sludge,” during which time the clarinet rests until the word “sludge.” The words “thinking it’s goodbye” end the third verse in measures 135-137.
After this third verse, rather than another repetition of the chorus, there is an “outro.” Measure 138 appears to begin another chorus, as the piano performs the same two chords from the first measure of the movement. In measures 139-140, all three musicians perform the same material, all in the same octave for the first time in the movement, illustrated in Figure 66.

Figure 66. Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, “Don’t Come to My Window!,” measures 139-140.

All three musicians, vocal (top), clarinet (middle), and piano (bottom), perform in unison for the allusion to the TV commercial. The vocalist sings the words, “Now I know why that Indian cried,” while the clarinet sustains the last pitch (Db) through the following measure, in which the piano performs the same material from the second measure of the movement. In measure 142, the vocalist re-enters with, “For the A-. “ In measures 143-147, the three musicians once again perform in unison as the vocalist sings, “-merican dreamer is no longer sleeping.”
The text at the end of the movement changes tone from anger to sadness, which is reiterated in the clarinet part. This otherwise calm sadness is interrupted by violent outbursts by the piano, reminding the listener of the anger felt earlier in the movement.

In measure 148 (Figure 67), the piano plays the two chords from the third measure. At the end of this measure, the clarinet begins a ten measure resonance trill on concert B, which is performed at pianissimo and fades out in the last measure. This resonance trill can be most easily performed through the use of pinky keys. The instructions to the performer on the music say to “circular breathe if possible.” The vocalist sings, “He died.” three times, each time getting softer. After the first two times it is sung, the piano follows with the same chords from the third measure. On the third repeat of the text, the vocalist sings each word with a fermata over them, finally fading out on the word “died.” to bring the movement, and subsequently the work, to a close.

In *Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I*, the clarinet plays multiple roles, each contributing to the overall effect of the work. At times, the clarinet acts as an accompaniment, adding different colors or harmonies to the piano or vocal lines. Other times, however, the
instrument is used to paint either text or emotions. The text painting is readily present, taking place with the sweeping, wind-like gestures while the vocalist is singing about wind, or an eighth note “laughing” gesture to paint the word “laugh.” On a more subtle level, however, the clarinet is used in a similar fashion to a Greek chorus, representing the narrator or protagonist’s emotions. In these instances, the clarinetist reflects the tone of the text. For example, the clarinet plays a slow, quiet part during a sad or reflective text, an incredibly loud and shrill high note representing an internal scream, or playing a repetitive gesture again and again to represent the feeling of being trapped within ones’ reality.

The work also contains similarities to other McAllister works. The seven measure chord progression that occurs throughout “A Dogless Leash,” for example, is also used in two of his other pieces, Screaming Azaleas, and Bling Bling. More recently, McAllister re-arranged three entire movements, “Censored,” “A Dogless Leash,” and “Film at Eleven” for his piece for wind ensemble with electric guitar and tenor soloist entitled Mercury on the Moon. Other commonalities between this piece and others are his use of extended techniques in the clarinet, such as resonance fingerings to add non-traditional colors to the music. The piece also contains seemingly unexpected changes in energy and mood. Overall, the work separates itself in many ways from his clarinet-centric works but still includes enough characteristic elements to be representative of a McAllister composition.
CHAPTER V – FREEBIRDS

Freebirds was commissioned by Robert Spring and Josh Gardner, both of whom teach clarinet at Arizona State University. In 2005, Robert Spring released a CD entitled Black Dog\(^5\), which featured two of Scott McAllister’s works, Black Dog (2001) and X Concerto (1996). The CD did well commercially, so Spring contacted McAllister in hopes of commissioning a piece for his next album after Black Dog.\(^5\) McAllister says of the situation, “I thought, ‘Ah, same thing again. What can I do? I’m done here! . . .’ But I didn’t want to pass up the opportunity because his CD was doing so well and Black Dog was really taking off. I thought, ‘I don’t want to write another Black Dog, but maybe I could do Black Dog on crack!’ You know, for two people.”\(^5\) As he began the compositional process, McAllister began improvising different things on the clarinet, and was struck by a glissando, which ranges from E\(_3\) all the way up to C\(_7\). Although McAllister was not able to perform the glissando when he first came up with the idea, Spring, well known for his extended technique abilities, was immediately able to perform the glissando.\(^5\) This glissando laid the groundwork for the compositional process, and McAllister began using it as the basis for the idea of two people dueling on clarinets. Similar to his inspiration for Black Dog, McAllister thought about his favorite songs of his youth and settled on the Lynyrd Skynyrd classic Freebird.\(^6\) He says, “I remember

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\(^5\) McAllister, interview by author, 2017.

\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Ibid.

those dueling guitar solos. They went on *forever* in the long version of that song. I thought, ‘Man, this would be great for two clarinets.’” He originally planned on using *The Devil Went Down to Georgia* by The Charlie Daniels Band, but it began to get too theatrical for McAllister’s tastes, so he went back to focusing on just music, similar to how Lynyrd Skynyrd just focuses on playing music rather than telling the story of a battle between a musician and the devil. For most of the wild parts of the piece, the accompanying instruments, be them a band, an orchestra, or a piano, play the chord progression from *Freebird*. McAllister intentionally wrote the solo clarinet parts to be quite difficult, or in his own words, “the clarinet part’s exhausting. I wanted something where both people would just be on their knees at the end. But having fun, because it’s idiomatic!” Again, similar to *Black Dog*, *Freebirds* utilizes contrast. In order for the intensity of the work to be pleasing rather than overwhelming, McAllister juxtaposes the wild and exciting sections with calm, serene sections to balance each other out. Along with *Freebird*, he tried to use another one of his favorite pieces from his childhood, *High Flying Bird* by Richie Havens, but it never quite fit into this work. This inspiration finally made an appearance later in the final movement of *Epic Concerto*. He admits that

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64 McAllister, interview by author, 2017.
65 Ibid.
indeed all of the glissandos and tone bends featured in the work are “bird-like,” even though the piece is not truly about birds.\textsuperscript{68}

All clarinet parts included in this chapter are in Bb unless otherwise noted. Much like many of McAllister's works, \textit{Freebirds} includes drastic contrasts between slow, serene sections and bombastic fast ones. It opens slowly, with the quarter note marked at 60. In the score it says, “Freely. Like the Introduction at a Rock Concert.” This sets up the overall tone of the piece, which is meant to emulate the energy and showmanship of a typical rock concert. In preparation for a performance, the two soloists should either attend or watch videos of live rock music in order to best emulate the styles and mannerisms of a rock musician. It is also marked that the lights should be dimmed or shut off entirely for the introduction. This creates further ambience to the introduction when done, however this is where the dictation of showmanship subsides for the piece. In the piano reduction, the pianist performs various extended techniques such as an uneven tremolo, a fingernail or coin scraped across the Gb string, and the dampening of strings with a finger while the other hand presses the keys as normal. These set a mysterious tone at the beginning of the work. This mysterious nature is done differently in the full orchestration. In this case, the ambience is created with sustained pitches in the lowest instruments, a slow melody performed by the middle instruments, and rhythmic accelerating and decelerating articulated notes in woodwinds, trading off between sections. As the clarinet soloists walk out from either side of the stage, they introduce the “bird call” motif (Figure 68), first by the 1\textsuperscript{st} part, which plays an F6, then bends

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
downward like a seagull call. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} part responds by sounding a C6, which bends down in the same manner as the “F.” These pitch bends should descend at least a full step, if not more, and they can be played fairly freely and vary in length. The second clarinet soloist should do his or her best to emulate the sound of the first soloist’s pitch bends.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{freebirds.png}
\caption{Freebirds, measures 5-7.}
\end{figure}

The two clarinets trade notes with falls, imitating bird calls. This is traded back and forth between the two soloists sparingly at first, then getting closer together and eventually being played at the same time. In the 9\textsuperscript{th} bar, a two-measure ostinato begins in the piano (or harp/mallets in the wind ensemble version), which outlines a C minor tonality. After the first two bars of this ostinato, the clarinet soloists begin trading off 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes (Figure 69), similar to an electric guitar “shredding.” This shredding is reminiscent of some of the solo parts in Black Dog (Figure 70).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{freebirds2.png}
\caption{Freebirds, measures 11 and 12.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{blackdog.png}
\caption{Black Dog, measures 14 and 15.}
\end{figure}

Similarly, the solo clarinet (key of Bb) in Black Dog has rapid 4-note repeated patterns.
After shredding for four measures, the soloists play staggered entrances of a full range glissando from E3 up to the altissimo C7, shown in Figure 71. These glissandos should sound completely without meter and the two soloists should not either start on the E3 or end of the C7 at same time.

Figure 71. Freebirds, measures 15 and 16.
The two solo clarinets play offset glissandi across the full range of the instruments.

As suddenly as it begins, this exciting burst of energy subsides and the texture quickly reverts to the subdued feeling similar to that of the beginning of the piece. The piano plays an ostinato pattern consisting of four notes—Eb, F, G, and Ab. In the band version, however, these ostinatos are played by the winds, each section playing at a slightly different tempo. The clarinet soloists then trade off the birdcall figures again over the ostinato.

In measure 28, the two soloists play the first real melody of the piece—a slow, free, hymn-like melody, similar to the hymn section of Black Dog. This melody is played in unison until the last two notes, during which the 1st solo part jumps up one octave. The soloists sustain the final note of the melody (Ab) until the downbeat of measure 35, at which point the tonality abruptly changes to Bb minor in the piano part. In the wind ensemble arrangement, some instruments continue the four note ostinato from the previous bars until measure 36, effectively diluting the sudden key change. The Bb minor
key is set up in a minimalist style, with instruments either alternating between Bb and Db in a sixteenth note pattern, or simply sustaining a Bb. In measure 38, the 1st solo clarinet starts a melancholic melody in Bb minor, which is given an eerie feeling by written downward pitch bends on many of the longer pitches, shown in Figure 72. This melody is imitated, creating a harmony, by the second solo clarinet part in measure 39.

*Figure 72. Freebirds, measures 40-42.*

The two clarinets play the melody, characterized by sustained pitches with falls at the end of them. This melody should be played with great expression, and provide a stark contrast to the later, fast sections of the piece. The momentum created by the sixteenth notes discontinues suddenly as the first solo clarinet hits the F6 of the melody for the second time. This section is followed by the now familiar birdcall motif. In measure 48, the minimalist Bb minor texture begins again, this time twenty beats per minute faster, marked at quarter note equals 80. It is the same as five measures prior in the piano part.

At this point in the wind ensemble part, the music varies slightly in that the flutes and low brass play constant eighth note Bbs rather than sustained pitches. The two soloists begin short, arpeggiated 32nd note bursts of notes in measure 54. These start first with only three notes performed a beat apart, but slowly more notes are added and the two parts get closer together through measure 59. Also beginning in measure 54, the two-measure ostinato pattern from measure 9 reappears, and slowly crescendos providing a harmonic line underneath the clarinet soloists. In measure 60, the 32nd note alternations between the
two soloists culminate in the two instruments “shredding” once more, as they repeat the same gestures and notes they played in measures 11-19. This includes the four measures of shredding notes followed by the five measures of full range glissandos. This continues until the downbeat of measure 69, at which point the introduction of the piece (“A” material) comes to an end.

Measure 69 marks the beginning of the faster, “B” material. The tempo doubles to quarter note equals 160, and the shorter, more staccato rhythms create a more lighthearted and whimsical texture. This “B” material begins with a six-measure chord progression repeated, during which one chord is played in each measure. This is repeated a total of four times, totaling twenty-four measures. These chords are Eb major, Bb major, C minor, Db major, Ab major, and Bb major, which shift the tonality to major. After the first two repetitions of the progression, it is colored by virtuosic sixteenth note runs either by the high woodwind section (piccolo through alto saxophone), or by the right hand of the piano to give the texture a more driving motion. After the progression has repeated all four times, the most apparent influence of Lynyrd Skynyrd is heard. Lynyrd Skynyrd’s *Free Bird* is iconic for having two distinct sections—the first approximately five minutes are slower with lyrics, suddenly changing to just over four minutes of two guitarists soloing simultaneously, oftentimes in a “dueling” manner.\(^{69}\) Beginning in measure 81, a four measure chord progression very similar to a progression in *Free Bird* begins. In McAllister’s work, the progression is EbM/GbM/AbM(x2).

During the dueling guitars section of the Lynyrd Skynyrd song, the rhythm section

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81
repeats the chord progression GM/BbM/CM(x2), exactly a major third higher than the progression McAllister uses in *Freebirds*. After the chord progression is introduced in the accompaniment, the two solo clarinets take the role of the two dueling guitars. The guitar solos in the original are characterized by high energy, fast, sweeping arpeggios, driving rhythms, and fast repeated notes. The clarinets in *Freebirds* pay tribute to all of these. Beginning in measure 81, the two solo clarinets begin with unison virtuosic passages. These passages should be performed with a great amount of energy and lightness, suggesting ease of virtuosity. Beginning in measure 83, they begin playing more independently of one another, performing gestures such as trading off sixteenth note passages or playing runs simultaneously in contrary motion. There are many different gestures utilized many times throughout these dueling guitar sections, and they are organized as follows:

1. Ascending/descending 16 note passages paired into groups of two notes one semitone apart (Figure 73). Many of the runs are set up this way, (Ex: measure 82, 85).

![Figure 73. Freebirds, measure 82.](image)

The ascending line is made up of groups of two notes, each a half-step apart.

2. Repeated chromatic minor thirds pattern (Figure 74). These are similar to a chromatic descending pattern (ex: C, A, B, Ab, Bb, G, etc.), except each group of two notes is repeated once (ex: C, A, C, A, B, Ab, B, Ab, etc.). Examples of this occur in (82, 109, 165).
Figure 74. *Freebirds*, measure 82.

Each descending third is repeated twice, then chromatically descends.

3. Patterns which repeat in different octaves in quick succession (Figure 75). This can be in groups of four or six. (mm 85-86, 106) These passages outline an F minor triad, and include the first, second, third, and fifth scale degree (86, 83).

Figure 75. *Freebirds*, measure 86.

The four-note pattern is repeated three times to rapidly ascend from the lowest register of the clarinet to the highest.

4. Sixteenth notes with a repeating three-note pattern (Figure 76). This creates a rhythmic feel similar to the clave rhythm commonly heard in Latin music (dotted 8th, 16th, 8th rest 8th note). It is also similar to the returning patterns used by the members of Lynyrd Skynyrd in their guitar solos. (Ex: 83, 97, 105).
5. Broken groups of articulated sixteenth notes trading off between two clarinets, rapidly bouncing between 2-3 octaves (Figure 77). The composite rhythm during these gestures is constant sixteenth notes, but the rapid shifting between clarinets gives it a more bouncing feel, like one might hear in a hocket. (Ex: 87-88, 121-122, 125-126).

6. The “Melody.” The melody (Figure 78) is comprised of four measures, the first two consist of the same notes (different octaves, sometimes a fall added in), and act as the “call.” The second two measures change during each repetition and take the place as the “response.” The first two bars of the melody imitate the rhythm section in Lynyrd Skynyrd’s *Free Bird*, during much of the guitar solo. The rhythm section accents the first two beats of each measure in the repeated chord progression, especially about six minutes and thirty seconds into the song.\(^{70}\) Similarly, both clarinets play the same notes (again, sometimes different octaves), but the first two of each bar are accented quarter notes. These quarter notes are followed by four sixteenth notes leading to the final quarter of the

\(^{70}\) Ibid.
bar. These notes do not change. The “response” measures are used to provide momentum into the next repetition of the four bar chord progression without adding in anything too complicated. This is done one of three ways:

\[\text{Figure 78. Freebirds, measures 117-118.}\]

Here the two clarinets play the first two measures of the melody an octave apart.

A). Groups of four sixteenth notes (or 3 sixteenth s and a sixteenth rest) are repeated four times (Figure 79). (measures 91-92, 103-104, 155-156).

\[\text{Figure 79. Freebirds, measures 103-104.}\]

B). Rapid sextuplet falls, 32nd note ascents leading to a unison rhythm (Figure 80). (119-120).
Figure 80. Freebirds, measures 119-120.

C). Chromatic runs spanning one octave per beat ascending and descending, or repeating eight note chromatic ascents (Figure 81) (measures 131-132)

Figure 81. Freebirds, measures 131-132.

6a. There is a variation on the melody, in measures 163-164 (Figure 82). These are related to the melody due to their slower rhythm (tied eighths or even quarter notes), specifically on Eb concert.

Figure 82. Freebirds, measures 163-164.

The first measure of the variation is similar to the first measures of any repetition of the melody, except it begins with three quarter notes followed by the sixteenth note gesture rather than two quarter notes, the sixteenth gesture, and a third quarter note.

7. Accented eighth notes displaced by leaps of over 2 octaves, which always lead into the next gesture (measures 111-112, 143-144). These can either be together, as seen in Figure 83, or offset by an eighth note as seen in Figure 84.
8. Metered 32\textsuperscript{nd} note half step trills for three beats followed by an accented quarter note which has a fall on it (Figure 85); the two clarinets fall one beat after each other, never at the same time, causing a callback to the bird call gestures earlier in the piece (measures 112-115, 144-147).
Figure 85. Freebirds, measures 113-115.

The first solo clarinet ascends to a quarter note, while the second soloist plays the same material in a one beat canon.

The dueling clarinet section comes to a close with a unison ascending chromatic scale from E3 up to G#6. Once the clarinets get to the G#, the half step from G-G# is repeated three times, finally settling on a sustained G# for two beats. This G# ends with a downwards lip bend in measure 171.

In measure 171, the texture changes abruptly from the explosive rapid notes to the pensive slower material found in the “A” section of the work. The piano plays the four-note pattern found in measure 24, shown in Figure 86. (Eb, F, Ab, G). Rhythmically, the piano continues playing continuous eighth notes in the left hand, while playing varying lengths of notes in the right hand (1.5, 2, or 3 beats per note). In the wind ensemble version (Figure 87), the clarinets play the four note pattern as continuous eighth notes offset by one beat, similar to the slower middle section of Devil Sticks (Figure 88).

Figure 86. Freebirds, piano reduction, measures 171-174.
Figure 87. Freebirds, wind ensemble arrangement, measures 171-174.
The same measures as they appear in the wind ensemble version clarinet parts. The entrances are offset by two notes.

Figure 88. Devil Sticks, measures 87-89.
In the “B” section of Devil Sticks, the three clarinets are also playing a four note pattern, offset by two notes.

After this introduction, the solo clarinets bring back the same melody they played beginning in measure 28. This melody is rhythmically altered due to the fact that the tempo is still quarter note equals 160 rather than 80. As the melody begins, it starts with tied whole notes as opposed to whole notes found earlier in the piece. As the melody continues, however, the written note lengths get closer to those of the original melody, effectively creating a slight metered accelerando. Again, this melody should be performed quite expressively to provide contrast for the audience. This material comes to an end in measure 188, and beginning in the next measure there is a callback to the six measures of fast, sixteenth note driven material from measures 75-80. This leads the listener to believe the clarinets are going to begin dueling once more after the
introduction of fast material as they did in measure 81, but instead the piece changes abruptly to a slower texture once more.

The tempo changes to quarter note equals 60 in measure 195. For the following ten measures, there is an exact repetition of the first ten measures of the piece. The tempo drops once again, this time to quarter note equals 50 in measure 205, at which point a variation of the material from measure 35 returns. The pattern (two pitches alternating outlining the first and third of a minor triad) has two main differences from the material in measure 35. First, this time the alternating pitches are eighth notes rather than sixteenth notes. Second, they are alternating between G and Bb rather than Bb and Db. Beginning in measure 210, the first solo clarinet enters the texture again beginning a melody, which is split between the two soloists, shown in Figure 89.

![Figure 89. Freebirds, measures 210-214.](image)

The melody is split between the two soloists, again characterized by sustained pitches with falls. This material is reminiscent of that which was played in measure 39, and similarly, the final notes of each of the soloist’s melodic fragment bend downwards creating an eerie texture. The texture is given more forward momentum in the pickup to measure 220, at which point the first solo clarinet plays an ascending 32\textsuperscript{nd} note run while the second solo clarinet is playing a lip bend. The second solo clarinet repeats the 32\textsuperscript{nd} note run in the following measure. In measure 222, the two clarinets play the passage in unison, followed by an eighth note canon ending in a final descending lip bend. During the
following six measures (224-229), the piano plays chords in a minimalist manner while the soloists rest. Measures 230-237 bring the slower middle section to a close, and the introductory material is repeated one final time, complete with the sound effects in the piano and “bird calls” by the solo clarinets.

In measure 238, the familiar spritely sixteenth note runs over the six-measure chord progression make another appearance, signaling the beginning of another “B” section. After the six-measure introduction, the four measure chord progression re-enters and the clarinet soloists begin imitating dueling guitars once more. This time, they have slightly different patterns than the first “B” section. They begin by trading sextuplets every beat, creating a connected and seamless sixteenth note sextuplet composite rhythm, shown in Figure 90.

![Figure 90. Freebirds, measures 245-246.](image)

After four measures of the trading off, they play four measures of the same material displaced by one octave in a one beat canon. During these four measures, most of the material is taken directly from the first “dueling guitar” parts, so the material is familiar both to the players and the audience. In measures 252-255, the two players trade sextuplets once again, leading into measures 256-257, at which point the clarinet soloists accelerate the rhythmic intensity of the work. During these two measures, the clarinets play a rhythm (arpeggiated ascending sixteenth note triplets followed by an eighth note)
first in unison, but they offset by an eighth note. Note, when the clarinets are offset by an eighth note, the composite rhythm is continuous sixteenth note triplets or eighth notes, depending on which part of the gestures the listener hears more clearly. In measure 257, the two soloists play the last two beats in unison once again. In measure 258, all textures come to an abrupt halt, and the time signature changes to 2/4 for one measure before returning to 4/4. In this one two-count measure, both clarinet soloists play a metered half step 32\textsuperscript{nd} note trill between F# and G in the altissimo register. In the wind ensemble score, the piccolo, flutes, and clarinets of the ensemble join the soloists for the trill an octave below them, thickening the texture. Measures 259-272 are a unique part of the piece, during which time the clarinet soloists create a sound like the cries of a flock of seagulls, shown in Figure 91.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure91.png}
\caption{Freebirds, measures 259-261.}
\end{figure}

The lip bends change direction, indicated by the line extending from the note heads.

The background instrument(s) in this section performs the now familiar chord progression beneath the controlled cacophony from the soloists. This part should be fun and is a great opportunity for the clarinet soloists to incorporate movement into the performance rather than stand in the traditionally still fashion. This “seagull” section is split into two parts. During the first six measures, the piano plays the six-measure sixteenth note material heard previously in the piece. Over this, the two soloists play F6
quarter notes, offset by an eighth note. Each of these quarter notes has a lip bend either up or down, as dictated by the music, creating a composite rhythm of eighth note attacks. During the second half of the “seagull” material (Figure 92), the piano plays the four-measure chord progression, which is heard all throughout the dueling clarinet parts of the piece. This time, however, each measure is repeated once causing the progression to last eight measures rather than four. During the first six measures of this progression, the two soloists trade off playing either the seagull bends for one measure or a four sixteenth note pattern for one measure.

*Figure 92. Freebirds, measures 265-267.*

The two soloists trade gestures every measure, so each of the two gestures is heard at all times. Initially, the first clarinet begins the sixteenth note pattern, then plays the seagull noise for a measure, while the second clarinet begins with the seagull gestures and then switches to the sixteenth note pattern.

In measure 271, the two soloists change the texture to unison 32nd note passages. In measure 272, the two soloists trade the 32nd note run back and forth (eight 32nd notes followed by an eighth note, or an eighth note followed by eight 32nd notes respectively). In measure 273, the offset full range glissandos heard before beginning in measures 15 and 64 make a final appearance. Underneath these glissandos, the supporting instrument(s) play different material than they did previously, this time playing the four-
measure chord progression (EbM/GbM/AbM/BbM) twice through. The supporting instruments are playing a rhythmic ostinato (eighth note followed by a sixteenth note triplet), twice per chord. This creates a forward momentum, slightly march-like, underneath the glissandos so the momentum does not stop. In measure 281, the tempo is set at quarter note equals 160 and the solo clarinets repeat guitar solo material from the previous dueling guitar sections. In measure 294, there is a four measure accelerando culminating in measure 297, which is the final statement of the guitar solo “melody,” with the tempo marked “As Fast as Possible.” Up until this point, the melody consists of two two-measure phrases. In this final statement, however, the second two-measure phrase is expanded to be eight measures long. Beginning in measure 299, the two soloists play unison four note sixteenth note patterns, followed by two measures of alternating the four-note patterns. In measure 302, the two instruments play unison sixteenth note patterns again, this time followed by three measures of alternating four-note gestures. In the third measure of the alternating gestures, the gestures get higher, which lead to measure 306. In measure 306, the two soloists are unison again, repeating a sixteenth-note pattern (E, G, G#, A) four times before coming to a stop on a C7 on the downbeat of measure 307.

In measures 307 until the final measure of the piece, there is a double clarinet cadenza. The cadenza is written in as suggested gestures (approximately one per measure) with fermatas over them. It is marked, “Cadenza, quasi, go wild, free.” In the first and second measures, 307-308, the accompanying instrument(s) play an Eb Major chord. Above this, the soloists sustain a C7 which then fall and begin to “shred,” or repeat a 64th note pattern (F, G, Ab, G, etc.), shown in Figure 93.
The first gesture of the cadenza—a sustained C followed by a “shredding” gesture. After the soloists have played around on these notes for what they consider to be an acceptable amount of time, they fall to an F3 in measure 309. As the clarinets hit the F, the accompanying instrument(s) play a Gb Major chord. After sustaining the F, the two soloists play chromatic runs beginning on F3, ascending to F4, then descending once again to F3, shown in Figure 94.

The second written gesture of the cadenza, chromatic rips across an octave.
Once these gestures come to a close, the two clarinets ascend up to Bb7 on the first beat of measure 311. As the soloists play the Bb7, the accompaniment plays an Ab Major chord. After sustaining the Bb, the clarinetists “shred” once again, this time repeating an eight note pattern (F, G, B, C, Eb, C, B, G) rather than the four-note one found two measures earlier. This “shredding” gesture also spans a much greater distance, a minor seventh, than the first one, which only spanned a minor third, shown in Figure 95.

![Figure 95. Freebirds, measure 311.](image)

At this point in the piece, the soloists should be having as much fun as possible and give the impression of losing control to add excitement to the performance through these cadenza patterns. This final pattern comes to an end with a final descent down to an F3 by the soloists on the downbeat of measure 312. After sustaining the F3, the two clarinets glissando in unison up to an F6 on the downbeat of measure 313. When played with just piano, the piano plays two eighth notes on beat four of measure 312 (Gb/Bb followed by F/D) in both hands, ultimately arriving to the downbeat of measure 313 at the same time as the soloists with an Eb played in four octaves of the piano. In the wind ensemble arrangement, the high instruments play a sextuplet chromatic scale beginning on the fourth beat of measure 312, ending on the downbeat of measure 313 on a concert Eb. The lower instruments play descending eighth notes starting on the fourth beat of measure
312 (Gb, then F) and reach the downbeat of measure 313 on a concert Eb with the rest of the players, thus ending the work.

Figure 96. Freebirds, measures 312-313.

The final two measures of the piece, the clarinets glissando up and meet the accompaniment on the downbeat of the final measure.

The two clarinet soloists in Freebirds take on the same role as the clarinet soloist in McAllister’s earlier composition, Black Dog: guitar soloists. Similar to how the solo clarinet in Black Dog is meant to represent the famous rock guitarists Jimmy Hendrix and Jimmy Page, the clarinets in Freebirds take on the role of the dueling guitar soloists popularized by Southern rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd in their song Freebird. The two clarinets play sweeping, high energy gestures above a repeating chord progression.

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Footnote 71: Tori L. Patterson, “A Performance Analysis of Stylistic Features of Scott McAllister’s Selected Works for Solo Clarinet: Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind, Black Dog: Rhapsody for Clarinet (and Piano), and Bling Bling” (DM Treatise, Florida State University, 2008), 21.
similar to how rock guitarists solo over a chord progression played by the band behind them.

There are a number of similarities to McAllister’s other compositions as well. The first of these is the use of quotes from rock music throughout the piece. McAllister often uses popular music quotes in his music, such as the grunge music of Alice in Chains and Nirvana in X Concerto, a melodic quote from Led Zeppelin’s Black Dog in Black Dog, the popular guitar riff from Deep Purple’s Smoke on the Water in X3, the chord progression from Radiohead’s Creep in his wind ensemble work Amp, and a motif based on Justin Bieber’s Baby in his wind ensemble work Popcopy Rated T. Similarly, Freebirds uses the repeated chord progression from the guitar solo section of Free Bird as a basis for the driving, energetic sections of the piece. The virtuosic clarinet lines are also mostly written in the idiomatic key of Eb minor, as is standard for McAllister’s more clarinet-centric pieces.

Finally, perhaps the most emblematic of McAllister’s writing is the rapid shifts between the mood, from driving and energetic and fast to slower and more pensive. The slower sections are also similar to Black Dog in that they contain clarinet melodies, which are sustained and move quickly between the registers of the instrument. Overall, Freebirds contains its own unique challenges while still maintaining the overall feel and sound of a McAllister composition.
CHAPTER VI – FUNK

Funk was composed in 2005 for Strata trio (James Stern, violin; Nathan Williams, clarinet; Audrey Andrist, piano).\textsuperscript{72} It is McAllister’s second composition for the trio of instruments (clarinet, violin, and piano), the first being the Verdehr Trio’s 1998 commission X3. The inspiration for Funk came from a bad divorce McAllister was going through with his first wife.\textsuperscript{73} He says of the situation, “I was a full-time dad and had a two-year old and a six-year old and had to be writing music. I was in a ‘funk’ state of mind. So Funk is a state of mind.”\textsuperscript{74} McAllister notes that his piece, Pistol Packin’ Mama for saxophone and piano was written during the same time period and thus similarly inspired.\textsuperscript{75}

Funk is somewhat programmatic, in that each instrument represents a different character. McAllister wrote the piece to represent a state of disarray between three disillusioned parties. The clarinet represents him, the violin represents his ex-wife, and the piano represents the lawyer.\textsuperscript{76} For the majority of the piece, none of the characters get along. This combative texture occasionally resides and is taken over by memories of rare moments of tranquility. The piece gradually intensifies from being more thoughtful to more intense and angry, building up to a shouting match near the end leading to the divorce being finalized, every person taking a final breath, and letting out a last bit of emotion beginning the process of moving on. This piece differs from many of

\textsuperscript{72} McAllister, interview by author, 2017.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
McAllister’s other clarinet compositions in that it is more through-composed rather than split into “A” and “B” sections. Another notable compositional technique in this piece is the use of either extra keys pressed to open vents and the use of an alternate register key, both used to alter pitch so the violin and clarinet do not agree on pitch center.

When figures appear in score form, they appear as violin on the top line, clarinet (in C unless otherwise noted) on the middle line, and piano on the bottom line. *Funk* opens with the left hand in the piano playing a rhythmic ostinato alone, consisting of three sixteenth notes on A, which alternates resolving up to Bb and C. The violin voice begins in the fifth bar in disagreement with the piano, starting on an Ab. The clarinet enters in the next measure beginning on a concert B. This alludes to the inability for the three parties to agree with one another, as each instrument starts on a different note, a half step away from the piano, shown in Figure 97.

*Figure 97. Funk*, measures 5-7.
During the beginning of the piece, each instrument seems to play their own material, never quite agreeing on a unified idea. Each instrumentalist should take care to play exactly what is written in their part, and not be swayed by dissonances or rhythmic ambiguity. In measure 15, the meter of the piece becomes much less ambiguous, as though all three instruments agree on a single tempo. The right hand of the piano plays constant eighth notes in a high register while the left hand of the piano plays an ostinato in the low register. The clarinet alternates between the two registers, first playing the resonance trill #1 from *X Concerto* (Figure 98) in the chalumeau and an unspecified resonance trill on an F6 (Figure 99).

![Figure 98. X Concerto, measure 1.](image)

The first note of *X Concerto*, the trill is written with the instruction “Trill1—play a low e then trill right index finger (may tend to squeak if too much air is applied.” Appears as written in concert Bb.

![Figure 99. Funk, measures 15-17.](image)

Figure is clarinet part as written, key of Bb.

After the piano and clarinet set up this texture, the violin begins a melody in measure 17. This melody slowly crescendos for eight measures, gaining intensity as it unfolds. The violin melody creates an uneasy feeling through the use of half step portamentos. In
measure 25, the texture changes again. The meter changes to 2/4 and the left hand of the piano plays a two-measure ostinato while the violinist plays off beats above it. These off beats start as a single note, and after two measures change to double-stopped notes. In the pickup to measure 27, the clarinet takes the melodic role, which, in contrast to the other two instruments is connected and flowing. As the clarinet plays this melody, the right hand of the piano plays an imitation of the melody, sometimes on the same pitch as the clarinet, sometimes a step away, as shown in Figure 100.

![Figure 100. Funk, measures 26-28.](image)

The piano part echoes the clarinet note in the clarinet’s octave, followed by notes a ninth higher.

In measure 32, the violin enters with melodic material similar to the material introduced by the clarinet five measures before. The two instruments seem to be figuring out their differences, and in measure 36 play in unison. In measures 37 and 38, all three instruments play two half note A's in the same octave. For the first time in the piece, all three instruments are in agreement. This rhythmic harmony fades after these two measures, as the three instruments are still playing the same A, but each of them enters on a different beat (violin on beats one and two, the clarinet on the off beats, and the violin on the third sixteenth note of each beat), shown in Figure 101. After the agreement from
measures 37 and 38 begin to fall once again into disarray, the three characters are left where they began, and the material from measures 41-50 returns.

![Figure 101. Funk, measures 37-40.](image)

The “As” start in rhythmic and tonal unison, as though an agreement between the three represented parties has been met. This peace soon falls apart in the following two measures as the rhythmic unison dissipates.

After the call back to the beginning of the piece, a new texture begins in measure 51. The piano plays a low, arpeggiated figure through the majority of this new texture. Above it, the clarinet plays repeated E3 eighth note triplets (Figure 102). Two measures after this begins, the violin enters, playing repeated quarter-note triplets on a D, an octave above the clarinet. These triplets alternate being played fingered on one string and both fingered on one string and played on an open string, creating a color change between each note of the triplet figure.
In measure 61, the clarinet enters with an eerie melody, which reoccurs multiple times throughout the piece. The melody utilizes resonance fingerings to alter pitch, shown in Figure 103. This melody should come out of the texture and played with expression.

During the first few pitches of the melody (B6 and Bb6), the b-flat side key is held open, causing the notes to be sharp. The melody arpeggiates downwards quickly to an E3. After the low E speaks for a sixteenth note, the player adds the a-flat left side key which acts as an alternate register key, causing a flat B5 to sound. The first part of the melody repeats itself and then the clarinet suddenly goes from playing melodic material to joining the piano on the arpeggiated sixteenth notes in measure 69. At this point, the violin enters...
with a rhythmic modulation of the melodic material from measures 17-21, this time an octave higher. Another conflict arises for four measures from measures 76-79, during which point the piano plays sixteenth notes alternating between the higher octaves of the piano, rather than the lower range of the keyboard utilized until this point. Above this, violin plays harmonics alternating between eighth notes and eighth note triplets. While this happens, the clarinet plays quarter note triplets, alternating between E3 and the false register-keyed B5 that was used in the melody, shown in Figure 104.

Figure 104. Funk, measures 76-79.

The clarinet part above, as written in the key of Bb.

After these four measures of disagreement, an eight-measure semblance of tranquility returns with the material from measures 61-68. The emotional dissonance between the three instrument characters fades away in measure 88. The violin and clarinet drop out of the texture, and the piano plays a monophonic line in the right hand, creating a melancholic tone, as though a moment of sadness is being shared. The violin enters with a weeping musical gesture played on the upper extreme of the instrument, descending from an E down to an A. In measure 93, the piano reminds the other two instruments of their difficult task at hand, settling a divorce, and interrupts the thought with a repeated A on the higher end of the keyboard. At this point, the clarinet starts a connected line alternating between a concert A and an added side key causing the pitch to alternate between agreeing with the piano part and playing sharp to the piano. As this
interplay between the two instruments occurs, the violin plays short bursts of 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes, creating a feeling of building unrest. The clarinet joins the 32\textsuperscript{nd} note bursts in measure 97, and by measure 98 all three instruments are playing 32\textsuperscript{nd} note bursts. These bursts never line up, and gradually grow in number of notes played in each burst, shown in Figure 105. This creates the feel of three people all talking over one another, not listening to or paying attention to what the others have to say.

\textit{Figure 105. Funk, measures 100-101.}

The 32\textsuperscript{nd} note bursts represent the turmoil felt between the three parties involved in the divorce.

As quickly as the argument begins, in measures 106-113, the same material from measures 61-68 returns in all three instruments. This eerie melody is only played once this time, however, as in measures 114-128 the music from measures 26-40 returns.

In measure 129, the tone of \textit{Funk} changes from sadness to anger. This is accomplished by driving sixteenth notes (Figure 106) in the left hand of the piano. The right hand of the piano introduces a somewhat “funky” rhythm, which is later repeated by the three instruments in unison.
In measure 133, the violin enters with rapid-fire 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes, mostly repeating on the low range of the instrument. In contrast, the clarinet enters near the end of the measure with 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes in the altissimo register. The violin and the clarinet take turns figuratively yelling at one another with fiery 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes, each interrupting the others’ musical gestures before either can finish. These parts should be played rudely, imitating arguments between a couple going through a divorce. In measure 136, the violin, clarinet, and right hand of the piano all play a unison rhythm, marked by marcato accents alternating between extreme ranges, shown in Figure 107.
In measure 138, the 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes reappear in the clarinet and violin, and although the violin continues the bursts, the clarinet abandons the 32\textsuperscript{nd} note figures in measure 139, opting instead to play marked notes alternating between extreme ranges, similar to the material in measure 136. Beginning at the end of measure 141 and through measure 143, the clarinet and violin play unison 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes. This angry outburst does not last for long, and in measure 144 the violin begins a more legato, connected melody over the texture below, similar to the earlier clarinet melody.

In measure 145, the clarinet begins playing a 32\textsuperscript{nd} note part, which many clarinets may recognize as an exercise using all four pinky keys (Figure 108), alternating between G3 and the four notes the pinky keys control in the chalumeau register.
Figure 108. Funk, measure 145.

Clarinet part in the key of Bb.

The violin melody comes to an end in measure 147 and the violinist returns to playing 32\textsuperscript{nd} note bursts. In measures 149-152, the material from 140-143 returns.

In measure 153, the texture suddenly changes once again, as though all the anger is being interrupted with a fond memory, shown in Figure 109. The time signature changes to 6/8, and the three instruments play calmer, legato arpeggios. The three instruments are not playing in unison, but rather with staggered entrances and with different starting pitches. These arpeggios create an ambiguous mood, neither joyous nor angry, but thoughtful. They are created by alternating between major and minor thirds, D-F-A-C-E-G, for example. This memory turns to sadness in measure 157, with the return of the melancholic clarinet melody from measure 61. The sadness once again transforms to anger in measures 165-172 with the return of the material from measures 130-137.
Figure 109. Funk, measures 154-156.

Handwritten pedal markings included in original score.

This time, however, the “funky” rhythm played by the right hand of the piano for the first two measures is played by all three instruments in unison. Reflecting the rapidly changing nature of emotions, in measure 173 the anger suddenly changes back to the tone of the “memory” section, and the alternating major and minor third arpeggios from measure 153 return. In measure 177, the angry unison 32nd notes in the clarinet and violin return, and then repeats again in the next measure transposed up a major third.

After a few more short 32nd note outbursts, the anger subsides in measure 181 with both the solo instruments sustaining a D. In contrast, the piano begins play short bursts of sixteenth note Ebs for two measures, before finally playing constant sixteenth notes in measure 183, shown in Figure 110.
Figure 110. Funk, measures 181-183.

Pencil markings included in original score.

The right hand of the piano begins a two measure ostinato in measure 184 (Figure 111), slowing down the rhythmic intensity of the piece thus bringing the mood back to a more pensive, melancholic feeling.

Figure 111. Funk, measures 184-185.

Pencil markings included in original score.

The clarinet begins a sustained, expressive melody just before measure 186, reminiscent of the hymn sections of McAllister’s 2001 composition Black Dog. The violin enters about two measures later with a sustained, expressive melody of their own. This melody is not played in unison with the clarinet, but rather the two complement each other as they develop, shown in Figure 112. The two players should bring out the interplay
between the two parts, each playing with expression while still cognizant of the other’s music.

**Figure 112. Funk, measures 188-190.**

Violin (top) and clarinet (bottom, concert pitch).

In measure 192, the piano changes the tone with the left hand playing arpeggios rather than a repeated note, creating a more calming tone. In measure 193, the right hand of the piano joins the clarinet and the two instruments play in unison through measure 196. In measure 197, the right hand of the piano stops playing and the clarinet starts a sixteenth note rhythmic canon on an Eb, which the violin repeats two beats later. From measures 199-202 the clarinet and violin alternate playing sixteenth notes (Figure 113) to create a continuous sixteenth note composite rhythm.

**Figure 113. Funk, measures 200-202.**

The two instruments cannot seem to agree on when the sixteenths should occur, but do agree on which pitch they should be played on. The sixteenth notes come to an end in measure 203, when the clarinet and violin sustain an Eb rather than articulate it. At this point, the piano plays a more extended arpeggio for three beats. During the next three measures, the piano plays the same arpeggios and the clarinet and violin re-articulate their sustained Eb, all the while slowing down to bring
sense of steady rhythm to a halt. At the end of measure 205, the clarinet changes from playing an Eb to an E concert, or written F#. The sustained Eb fades out in measure 206, while the clarinet sustains and the tempo changes to quarter note equals 52. In measure 207, the left hand of the piano begins a slow ascending arpeggiated ostinato underneath the sustained clarinet pitch. This pitch then changes to a B5 with the added side Bb key to make the note sound sharp.

Beginning in measure 210, the violin enters with a soft melody in the low register. The melody suddenly crescendos and the rhythms get faster before calming back down to a calm mood. In measure 216, the clarinet joins the violin, and the two instruments play the melody, displaced by an octave at first, and then meeting to finish it in unison, shown in Figure 114.

![Figure 114](image)

*Figure 114. *Funk, measures 216-218.

The violin part (top) is joined by the clarinet part (bottom) for the first two measures, but after this initial agreement each instrument goes their own way.

In measure 218, the two instruments separate again, at the same time the right hand of the piano enters and plays in unison with the clarinet’s melodic material. This continues through measure 223, at which point the clarinet and piano fade out and the violin ascends to an F# and then G which is held from measures 225-230. After about two measures of the sustained G alone in the violin, the piano enters with the same material it
plays in the first four measures of the piece. Measure 230 is mostly silence, as the pensive nature of this section fades away and all is seemingly ending on a peaceful note.

Once again, this peace does not last long, and in measure 231 the piano starts a verbose, driving eighth note rhythm in 6/8, as shown in Figure 115.

![Figure 115](image)

*Figure 115. Funk, measures 231-232.*

Tempo marking included in original score.

After the piano introduction, the clarinet and violin play explosive material, either driving sixteenth or eighth notes, with material similar to gestures performed earlier in the piece, but now in triple instead of duple meter. In measure 239, the meter changes to 3/4 and the three instruments play another iteration of the syncopated “funky” material heard earlier in unison, shown in Figure 116. In measures 240-244, the material from measures 232-236 is repeated. This repetition is altered only slightly, in that the violin plays a rapid repetition of an A in the second measure where it had nothing the first time. In measures 245-247, the meter changes back to 3/4 for the final iteration of the syncopated “funky” material in the violin, clarinet, and right hand of the piano while the left hand of the piano plays driving triplets. The following four measures repeat the exact same material from measures 241-244. In measure 252, the overall tone changes once more, and the
alternating major and minor arpeggios return, this time faster, creating a more urgent than peaceful feel. This familiarity only lasts four measures, and in measure 256,

\[\text{Figure 116. Funk, measure 239.}\]

Violin (top), clarinet (middle), piano (bottom).

the angry 32\textsuperscript{nd} note material from 142 returns, but broken up between the clarinet and violin and metrically transposed to sixteenth notes in 6/8 while the piano plays driving eighth notes in the left hand. These disjunct, angry figures finally come together in measures 260-61, at which point the violin and clarinet play in rhythmic unison for two measures with accented high notes, shown in Figure 117. In measures 262-265, the final iteration of the angry 32\textsuperscript{nd} note material from measure 142 returns, this time as an exact repetition of measures 177-180. Beginning in measure 266, the meter changes back to
6/8, and the three instruments begin to play ascending arpeggios, starting with the piano alone, then the piano and clarinet together, and finally all three instruments in rhythmic unison.

Figure 117. *Funk*, measures 260-261.

All three instruments join together on a driving eighth note pattern. The low, accented notes in the piano, along with the high accented notes in violin and piano create a high level of intensity.

Finally, in measure 273, the clarinet and violin begin playing in unison with one another while the piano plays driving eighth notes, shown in Figure 118. The music from here until the end of the piece is representative of the final feelings of anger and rage felt by all parties involved, and as such the performers should play in a violent and aggressive manner. The clarinet and violin parts alternate between sixteenth note patterns and driving accented eighth notes, all in the higher ranges of the instruments. Due to the extreme nature of this section, there are moments where the clarinet rests rather than play in unison with the violin to allow the player to breathe. These gestures get higher and
louder, as though all the parties are letting out their final angry emotions about each other as well as the whole situation. This crescendo continues all the way to the end of the section, culminating in all three instruments playing staccato, accented, repeated eighth notes for three measures before coming to an abrupt halt.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 118. Funk, measures 273-276.**

At this point in the piece, all three instruments are playing loudly and erratically, essentially yelling at one another. Finally, the divorce is finalized and the arguments stop. The time signature in measure 285 changes to a 2/4 bar in which nobody plays, and has a double bar to signify the ending of the piece. The piece actually finishes with a final measure tagged on to the end, where all three instruments let out a final gesture; an accented $fff$ figure, to represent the final burst of energy at the end of the long, tumultuous process of ending a marriage, as seen in Figure 119.
The driving eighth notes come to a sudden stop, followed by a two-beat resolution to the conflict. Finally, all three parties have their last, bombastic say about the situation on the downbeat of the final measure of the piece.

_Funk_ sets itself apart from McAllister’s other works in a number of ways. The first is that it is through-composed. While many of his other compositions are split between distinct sections or movements, _Funk_ tells a story. Another unique characteristic of the piece is that each of the three instruments involved play a different role in said story, the violinist representing his now ex-wife, the clarinet representing himself, and the piano representing the divorce lawyer. The three characters are generally at odds with one another, only coming together for brief moments of peace between argumentative outbursts and angry sentiments. Because of the story telling nature of the work, no one instrument is more or less important than the other; they each play a significant role in the tale. This is dissimilar to works like _Freebirds_, in which the clarinet plays the most important role, or _Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. 1_, in which the clarinet plays a supporting
role to the vocalist. There are similarities to his other works as well, like the use of resonance fingerings. Rather than being used to emulate the effects used by rock guitarists like they are in pieces such as *Freebirds* and *Black Dog*, they are used more to create a feeling of uneasiness or disagreement between characters similar to how they are used to set tone in *Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I*. Like the three other works discussed previously, *Funk* quickly changes between energy levels without transitions. Rather than being used to break up the monotony of a single mood as it is in other compositions, these transitions are used to emulate the emotions felt during the process of a divorce, such as fits of rage being interrupted with fond memories before dissolving into sadness. Overall, *Funk* is a standalone work within the solo and chamber pieces McAllister has written for clarinet. It does have similarities to the others but is a truly unique and interesting work.
CHAPTER VII – CONCLUSION

Every artist has a personal voice with which s/he speaks through to create an individualized, unique interpretation of a work. The information provided in this document is intended to provide insight into the inspirations for, processes of, and elements contained within each composition. Each of the four works contains unique challenges, requiring every player to approach many aspects of their own playing. First, the overall form of each piece gives the performer an idea of where to begin their interpretation. Depending on if the piece is in ABA1 like *Devil Sticks*, separated into distinct movements like *Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. 1*, alternating between flowing, legato and fast, virtuosic sections such as *Freebirds*, or through-composed like *Funk*, the performer is able to make informed decisions on how to pace and interpret each piece.

Understanding the role of the clarinet in each work, whether it is emulating a street performer like in *Devil Sticks*, supporting the vocal line and text like in *Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol I.*, taking the role of a rock guitarist shredding on the concert stage as it does in *Freebirds*, or even playing the role of McAllister himself as he goes through his divorce as the clarinet does in *Funk* is paramount to an informed performance. Beyond understanding the role the clarinet plays in each piece, recognizing traits that occur throughout McAllister’s compositions makes for a more enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Certain elements such as rhythmic gestures, quick changes in tempo and energy, musical quotes from outside sources, and the Eb minor virtuosic gestures appear throughout McAllister’s base of work, creating an overarching thread of commonality between each composition. As a performer becomes more familiar with the
commonalities, McAllister’s compositional voice becomes more pronounced, making each piece feel more familiar and therefore easier to interpret.

*Devil Sticks*, *Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I*, *Freebirds*, and *Funk* each provide valuable offerings for both the standard clarinet repertoire and music as a whole. Regardless of the venue in which they are performed, they each have the potential to reach a wide variety of audiences. Scott McAllister’s music has great potential to reach new audiences due to the fact that it takes elements from both the “traditional” classical music world and that which is considered “popular” music amongst non-musicians. As such, the importance to understand both sides of the musical spectrum used in the composition of the works cannot be understated.
APPENDIX A – Interview with Scott McAllister

Interview Completed January 23, 2017

MG: Why don’t we just go ahead and start with the basics?

SM: Alright, sure.

MG: I know you’ve said it before in other interviews, but let’s just talk about how it all started. You’re from Florida.

SM: Yes

MG: And you started pretty early, right?

SM: Yes, composing at around seven, and then I played the recorder in elementary school. We were living in a bad neighborhood, like project kind of area, and the music teacher there was great. She was really into Renaissance music, and she gave me a recorder and I got pretty good at that. I got to junior high and the band director said, “You can’t play recorder here.” So I said, “I’ll take the big one [clarinet].” (laughs) My grandfather at the time was making a lamp out of his brass clarinet and said, “Well, before I make a lamp out of this, why don’t you play this this summer?” He was a great trumpet player, and we just did long tones all summer long. In Pennsylvania I would go spend the summers with him and he would keep me away from the mountain girls (laughs) and make me practice two to three hours a day.

MG: (laughs) Really?

SM: At that young of an age!

MG: Wow. How old did you say?

SM: I was twelve, I believe.

MG: Holy cow!

SM: I know. That was a lot of practicing. Then, for two weeks out of those summers, we’d drive up to Chautauqua. There would be three orchestra concerts a week up there, and I eventually tried out for the youth orchestra when I was 15 at Chautauqua and did that for four years. I studied with Roger Hiller and got to know him. He was principal of the Met for many years.

MG: Right.
SM: He was a Bonade student. So that was a great way to improve my technique and to meet all sorts of people. Then I’d go back to Florida, to ‘band world,’ where there were no orchestras in my area. That’s kind of how I got started.

MG: Great! You said you started composition at seven?

SM: Yeah, my grandmother had some things, a little piano and a little electric organ and I’d mess around. Back then I loved cluster sounds, like a lot of kids do, but I’d try to figure out how to write those down. I took a little bit of piano right around that time, and with the recorder just enough to read music at least, and try to write it down. But it wasn’t until about twelve or so, when I got serious on the clarinet, that I started writing a lot of clarinet duos and trios in the style of Mozart, because he was one of my big influences when I was younger. Then eventually I moved on to twelve-tone music in high school. Just the other day I found a duo that everybody really loved when I was in eleventh or twelfth grade.

MG: Yeah?

SM: I’ll have to break that out sometime. It’s based on a matrix. But it’s all kind of free and has all sorts of “rock” rhythms in it. (laughs)

MG: That’s great!

SM: So that was kind of the beginning of something there.

MG: Did any of those find their way into any future compositions?

SM: Um, no probably not. What freed me up was the twelve-tone writing in high school; it made me think of more complex rhythms. I then started writing with these more complex rhythms. I didn’t have to worry about pitch so much, because it was all controlled. I used the matrix freely, but then my rhythmic intensity changed.

MG: Right.

SM: So it was a good experience.

MG: Good. Okay, so then you started at Florida State, right?

SM: Yes.

MG: It’s where you did your undergrad? You started composing right away, right?

SM: Yeah! Dr. Frank Kowalsky accepted me into the program. I was on an exemption list. I am dyslexic also, I have a visual/motor complex thing where it’s hard to put
numbers in order and just some weird things where I could not get through the SATs to get into Florida State so got me in through this, like football players have an exemption kind of deal. John Boda was the composition teacher there. He’s Ellen Zwilich’s teacher, when Ellen Zwilich was a student back in the ‘50s and ‘60s. She’s there now at Florida State still, first Pulitzer Prize winning female composer. Anyway, the first day of my freshman year I brought some of those twelve-tone pieces over to Dr. Boda. He had an open door policy and I learned so much from him. He just said, “Come in any time you want.” And I’d go in every day.

MG: Great.

SM: He was great, he would just play everything I brought in and really nurtured me. I use some of his teaching techniques now with my students at Baylor. He was great. So I’d go to clarinet lessons, I’d go to composition lessons, and just try to balance the two.

MG: Okay, so you were both majors.

SM: I was both majors. Florida State didn’t allow that, I’m not sure if they still allow it, but I was the first student to break through the glass ceiling. By the time my senior year came around, I went to the dean and said, “I have everything for composition, I have everything for performance. I feel like I deserve a Bachelor of Music and a Bachelor of Arts on the same degree.”

MG: Right.

SM: So they made that happen—I was really pleased. We’re trying to do that here at Baylor, also. You can’t major in two majors in the school of music, but I had both, because so much overlapped! Except a little extra theory, and of course I was taking composition, and I’d be doing that anyway.

MG: Yeah, exactly.

SM: Yeah, might as well! That was great. Having Frank Kowalsky as my clarinet teacher was great because he put the safety belt on me, because I was a little bit wild in my playing.

MG: (laughs)

SM: And boy, during my first year, I think I was the 22nd or 25th clarinet player sitting in the Symphonic Band, you know, second section. After that first year, beginning my Sophomore year, I was third in the whole studio and I was playing in the orchestra. Frank said, “Oh you don’t have to play in band anymore if you don’t
want to.” But me as a composer, I got to know Dr. Croft really well while I was there.

MG: Of course.

SM: I said, “Oh, no, I can’t do that.” So I would fill in, or sit in with the wind ensemble, just because that was such a great ensemble. I would just sit with the score.

MG: Yeah, with Dr. Croft.

SM: It was great. Hard to believe all those years later, he commissioned Black Dog, you know? (laughs) But going back to high school again, I don’t think a lot of people know this: Dr. Croft sent me a letter. In eleventh grade I won the Florida Bandmaster’s composition contest for a piece called Capriccio for Clarinet and Piano. We just moved and I found that again, too! Found a pencil copy, it’s just a fun “tonal-ish” piece. It’s funny. I won that contest with it and he specifically sent me a personal congratulatory letter saying, “Never forget about writing for the band.” And I never forgot that. I told him before he passed away, I said, “I have that letter still!”

MG: That’s great, I obviously got into your compositions from the clarinet side, and then found out that you also do a lot of band music.

SM: Right.

MG: Since then I’ve gotten to play more, like Gone.

SM: Yeah!

MG: After Florida State, where was the Master’s?

SM: Master’s at Rice. Rice University.

MG: That was the Doctorate as well?

SM: Yes, I stayed for both.

MG: Right, okay I thought so. Is that the point when you went full-time composition?

SM: I was doing both—I was getting the Master’s in composition, but I was going to get a double Master’s eventually. I figured, my clarinet playing was at a high level. I was playing with the Houston Symphony that first year and so it was great. I was subbing principal and playing a lot. My teacher at Rice was principal
there, so whenever he was out of town I was first call—it was great. So I was just getting ready for the auditions!

MG: Right! Didn’t you have a master class, where, who was it? Someone told you--

SM: About jobs? Yeah, that was Marcellus.

MG: He said, “As soon as you get that first job…”

SM: Yeah, Robert Marcellus. Man, I was so honored. I guess it was the first movement of the Mozart Concerto I played for his last master class that he gave, while he was blind. He was great. I remember after the first movement he just stopped me and said, “If you get a job before you leave college, just take it.” And I was like, wow, man. That’s like Bill Jackson and those other guys. Hey, I’m in good company here! I was very honored. So when I got to Rice, I figured I don’t need a degree, I just need to be in a place. I wasn’t sure about auditioning for the Shepherd School Symphony, because that was the first year the new conservatory was started. Larry Rachleff and half of Oberlin’s string faculty was hired. I said, “Wow, this is a new place.” But I was on a full-ride from composition, and my clarinet connection with the Houston Symphony was great. Then Larry Rachleff asked me to audition so I played the Martino Set [A Set for Clarinet by Donald Martino] for him, and he was like, “Principal clarinet!”

MG: Wow!

SM: So I sat in that orchestra. It was better than the Houston Symphony a few times! (laughs) I mean, the first rehearsal was just like a performance, so I thought, “Wow, what a great place for me to be able to play these excerpts.” So we opened with the Bartok Concerto for Orchestra, I think I did Beethoven three, Miraculous Mandarin, and all these great pieces. This and playing with the Houston Symphony and trying to compose at the same time!

MG: Of course, yeah. All of that at once! (laughs)

SM: But I was single. (laughs), It was easier. It was a lot easier than now. But then the car accident happened in 1994. Other than that, my writing for the clarinet didn’t take off until after the accident.

MG: Okay, so you did that through your Master’s and Doctorate.

SM: Yeah.

MG: So then, *X Concerto* was written during that time?
SM: That was right when I finished—just a few months after I finished at Rice. The piano version was 1996.

MG: Oh, really?

SM: Yeah, the piano version was first.

MG: Oh, clarinet and piano.

SM: Yeah, no, clarinet and piano! And then after that accident, I couldn’t really find a job. I was 25 or 26 years old and had a doctorate. So I took what little money I had gotten from the accident settlement, because the lady that hit me was a personal injury lawyer, drunk on her way to an AA meeting. That was her third DUI, so she had very minimum insurance. But we took that money, built a house in Florida on a lake, where I was from. I said, “I’m just going to be a full-time composer.”

MG: Great.

SM: I grew a beard, and after a while the trees started talking back to me and I thought, “I’d better do something different!” (laughs) It was finally the first time I began to move away from the “academic” style of composition. I was a pretty academic composer at Rice. I did well, I won this Kubik International Prize contest [Ladislav Kubik International Prize in Composition] with my chamber piece called Screaming Azaleas. It’s got a cool solo clarinet part in the middle of it. But once I got out of University, I kept asking myself, “who am I as a composer?” I was lucky to teach a music appreciation class at Florida Southern College. I remember lecturing on Dvorak coming to America. As I’m lecturing, I’m screaming in my head! I’m hearing myself lecture how Dvorak came to America and told all the American composers, “Why aren’t you using your folk music?”

MG: Right.

SM: “That’s what we do in Europe.” That’s when he wrote the New World Symphony. And I kept thinking to myself, “What is my folk music?” And, “Who am I as a composer?” I went to a male, white, nineteenth-century school of music my whole life, and that’s part of me, it gave me the fundamentals, but it’s not—but then I started thinking. I grew up watching my mom do the hustle, and listened to everything through grunge music. I listen to anything from country music to hard rock to Led Zeppelin, and had that Chautauqua classical music world. I said, “Why can’t I combine the two? That’s my folk music.” So X was just an experiment. The second movement came first, because my neighbors next door to me on that lake in Florida, they were building their house. These guys were high! His house was built on beer cans (laughs) and they were pretty high. They were playing Nirvana’s MTV Unplugged album. They played Where Did You Sleep
Last Night by Nirvana, and then Alice in Chains’ “Sickman” album over and over again. So I thought, “I can’t concentrate right now, so I’ll just do some variations on the Nirvana tune.” Then once I finished that, my birthday came up—June 13th—my wife, who knows I like old music, gave me a CD of old music. It was kind of like what Bartok did, going through the woods and finding old tunes and folk music. So she gave me this CD from Bascom Lamar Lunsford, I don’t know if you’ve read that?

MG: I did somewhere, yes.

SM: All of the sudden that tune was on there! Kurt Cobain’s tune. I thought, “Wait! I don’t have to get permission—this is our music! This is folk music.” So all I stole from Kurt Cobain was the form of his version. You know, fourteen times, or however many times that is and his screaming at the end. That’s where those high Cs come from. So that was my big breakthrough there, and I was really embarrassed about it because I had a tune, and it’s a lot different from my other music. So I thought, “No, nobody’s going to play this, especially with all the high Cs.”

MG: Right, especially in the melody.

SM: Yeah. (laughs) By that time my hand was coming back a little bit and I was playing in the Florida Orchestra a little, but I never had the endurance to have a full-time gig because I don’t have feeling in the last two fingers. But back to those high Cs, Frank Kowalsky, even in high school when he judged me for a couple of State Competitions, he always called me “G-Man”.

MG: By the way you played those altissimo Gs, right?

SM: Yeah, really quietly! It was so much fun. But that’s where those high notes just came from. Paul Votapek premiered X Concerto, he kind of surprised me with it in Naples, where he still is now. He was teaching, and I was surprised to see it on the program. When I did, I thought, “Wow!” I looked around me, it was a bunch of grunge kids, and I thought, “Okay, there can’t be any harm in doing this. At the end, everybody just stood up at the end and clapped, and I thought, “Wow, my music’s never—people like it—but they never stood up and clapped!” You know? (laughs)

MG: Right, right. That’s one of the more interesting things I’ve found about your music, in performing your music especially, it’s always the music I get the most compliments for after each performance.

SM: Sure, thanks!
MG: Because it’s more—it bridges that gap, I feel like, because there’s still classical elements in it, but people who don’t necessarily know…And when I say get complimented, I mean by friends who aren’t musicians or classically trained. They will come to a performance and watch and say, “Wow, that piece is really cool.” So it’s role in bridging that gap is important, at least to me, as someone who comes from both classical and rock upbringing.

SM: Right, exactly. And that explains my epiphany of joining classical and our American folk music together. It makes me feel like, hey, that was a good first try! (laughs) You know? I’ve been up and down a little bit, but everything’s been kind of connected to that.

MG: Yeah, and there are a lot of extended techniques. When I first heard X Concerto, I was fortunate in that it was with a live orchestra. The thing that initially hit me in that first performance was the beginning with those timbre trills.

SM: Right.

MG: So at what point did you decide to throw those in, or were they just things you’ve always been interested in, or?

SM: I always loved Leslie Bassett’s Soliloquies, and a lot of pieces like that. I wrote that second movement first, and then I wrote the third movement second. Just something head-banging. Then I didn’t know what to do! I said, “This isn’t really a concerto.” So I went and wrote the first movement last. I had a dream of those trills at the beginning. I was playing those in my dream. I had to have done those before in a practice room or something. I put those trills in at the beginning and then again at the end of the movement.

MG: Yeah.

SM: So I woke up the next morning, and boy that whole first movement just came to me and I thought, “Wow, that’s an interesting movement.” When people do the band version of that piece, they usually skip the first movement. They usually just do the second and third movement for time reasons, but I love that first movement. It’s psychedelic. It’s meant to kind of set everything up with those extended techniques. But that’s kind of where it came from, a dream, and then that’s when the whole piece finally came together. I said, “Oh this is really a concerto!” Now, it doesn’t have a big cadenza or anything like that, but it’s still a concerto. After that was done, I think I threw in those little snippets of the Mozart, because I thought, “Maybe this will win a concerto competition someday!” You know? (laughs) And then it’ll be like a tongue-in-cheek thing for all the clarinet players! (laughs)

MG: (Laughs) Yeah, the first time I heard it, I thought, “Oh, hey!”
SM: Yeah, and that’s the reason I thought, “Hey, maybe this will win a contest.”

MG: And it did!

SM: And it did, it has! I was very honored, yeah.

MG: Yeah, that’s wonderful! So the pieces I’m writing about, maybe we can talk about them in order of composition?

SM: Okay, yeah sure!

MG: We’ll try it like that.

SM: If I can remember the order. (laughs) You might remember!

MG: (laughs) Well some of them, I actually couldn’t find dates for.

SM: Okay, I can try to find the dates, sure.

MG: Okay, so there’s Devil Sticks, Freebirds, Uncle Sam’s Songbag Vol. I, and Funk.

SM: Okay. I think Uncle Sam’s Songbag is after first. I think that’s ’98.


SM: That’s Uncle Sam’s Songbag, yeah. I remember when we performed that. I was commissioned by MTNA. I was the Florida MTNA commissioned composer of the year. I wrote that and performed in it, also, with a couple of faculty from Florida Southern College when I was there. I think it was the University of Florida, or North Florida where we premiered that. It was a surprise—it went over really well! The content is kind of “in your face”

MG: That it is.

SM: There were a bunch of old ladies, teachers, from around the state of Florida there. But I remember the Master Jockamos, who were very famous piano teachers at FSU. They were pretty up in years, and they…everybody just loved it! I couldn’t believe it, with the text in there, especially! (laughs) So I was impressed with them.

MG: Yeah, that kind of leads to the next question: Who wrote the text?

SM: I wrote the text.
MG: You wrote the texts?

SM: Yeah. It’s from a collection of poems I collected of my own for awhile.

MG: Okay, so how’d those come about?

SM: Over the years and just kind of growing up and thinking about all different things. I could write another volume now, with all that’s going on in politics!

MG: Oh, yeah!

SM: Just kind of about the end of the world, the degradation of the world. The “Censorship” poem is from when I was in Florida. My wife was teaching in a school in Central Florida and they banned a bunch of books, you know, like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and all these great books so I thought, “Well I’m going to be the next one to be censored one day” and I kind of did that on purpose. So there are all sorts of alliterations in there about the different books that were banned in Florida in that first poem, “Censored.”

MG: I’ve gone through, and I think I’ve collected all of the references.

SM: Oh, good!

MG: So that’s how “Censored” came to be. So these are all works you’ve written over time?

SM: Yeah!

MG: And then you just went through and found some that worked together?

SM: Exactly. “Mrs. B” is about a lady in Houston that I would walk my dog with. I’d walk my yellow lab every day near Rice University with this older lady had her lab. Her lab was about eighteen years old, and he could barely walk. We made really good friends and I’d walk with her for about fifteen minutes a day, as far as she could walk. We made good friends. But then one day, after about a year or so, I didn’t see her. I worried about her after a couple of days and found out she passed away. But the day before she passed, her dog died. When I went to her apartment, I saw where she died in her chair, and she had been staring at. She was just sitting near the door, and right over the door knob was the dog’s leash. And I just lost it.

MG: Oh that’s crazy
SM: Then I wrote the poem after that experience. I was just thinking of loneliness and all these different things that American society has put us in. I wrote that pretty close to the time I wrote *Uncle Sam’s Songbag*.

MG: That is a heavy one.

SM: Definitely.

MG: Quick question about “Mrs. B,” well, two. First of all, on the movement itself, it’s named “A Dogless Leash,” is that how it should be called?

SM: Yeah, exactly. But it comes from “Mrs. B.” The real title is “Mrs. B.” But “A Dogless Leash,” I don’t know why I did that. It should probably be “Mrs. B,” I probably should change that officially. (laughs) I’ll have to go through that.

MG: The other one is, when did you write *Bling Bling*?

SM: *Bling Bling* was about, I was here at Baylor, so it had to be 2003 probably. Sometime right around 2003.

MG: So it was after *Uncle Sam’s*?

SM: Yeah. It came after *Black Dog* for sure.

MG: So it was definitely after this?

SM: I think it was right before *Freebirds*.

MG: Right. So in the second movement of *Bling Bling*, there’s that chord progression which also appears in “Mrs. B.”

SM: Oh yeah! That’s absolutely from Mrs. B. It’s also from *Screaming Azaleas*, which is that 1994 piece that won the award. Yeah, I love that chorale. It’s like a little signature chorale I wanted to put in a couple different pieces because you know, you write something you really like and you think, “Oh this piece will never take off, so I’m going to steal it from myself and use it again!” (laughs) Good ear to catch that!

MG: Thanks! I was just wondering what importance it has to you.

SM: The last time I used it was in this *Mercury on the Moon*, a big wind ensemble piece. Each time that chorale is repeated, it rises. It’s like four different times. It starts in low brass and keeps going up in different instruments. It’s kind of fun.
MG: Yeah, anytime I’m talking to someone about your music, I always refer to that chord progression as, “You know that chord progression that makes you cry?”

SM: (laughs)

MG: It’s so heavy, you know? That’s great. So what about “She Bears All?”

SM: “She Bears All?” That’s about a stripper.

MG: Well, yeah. (laughs)

SM: As a college student, I was a driving from Lakeville Florida up to Tallahassee all the time. There was, or there used to be (I don’t know if it’s still there) a strip bar started right on 75, somewhere near Gainesville, near UF. It was a big deal. It was just such a controversy that all of the sudden there’s a strip bar right there, right on the highway. They would advertise like crazy. “She bares all,” that’s what it said on the signs all the time: “She bares all! She bears all!” It reminded me of the story of a lady baring all. More than just her body, but her soul and everything, just to get money. I’m not saying—my mom wasn’t a stripper at all! But she had three or four different jobs. She had to work as a cocktail waitress, a nurse, and she was a single mom as well. I’ve always felt sorry for women that had to go through that. I just pictured this lady just baring everything and giving up everything so that she could make ends meet. So that’s where that came from. The intensity of those repeated notes make you feel like, “Ah, I can’t get out of this circle.”

MG: Alright, cool. Also, how does, that instance of, when you’re playing that resonance figure on the B (gestures fingers and sings part)

SM: Oh, that little resonance.

MG: Is that meant to make you feel a little uneasy about it?

SM: Yeah, exactly. A little tension, absolutely.

MG: I’ll have another question about that when we get to Funk. So “Film at Eleven” is obviously about what was going on in the news in the nineties.

SM: Absolutely, yeah. It’s kind of crazy!

MG: You know, it’s funny, the first time I heard it I was just like, “Okay, this is fine.” Then I went back and read it again and was like, “Oh!”

SM: (laughs)
MG: I was thinking about that Beatles song, *A Day in the Life*.

SM: Yeah!

MG: And I thought, “It’s a similar concept.” Now, “Don’t Come to My Window.”

SM: Yeah that one talks about the bucket people. When you stop at the light they come up with their buckets and try to get money from you. But you know it’s all fake and they’re scamming—it’s a scam. So there’s a little anger in there. There were those years where I was just getting tired of people eating off of society and not working. That Indian at the end, “I know why the Indian cried,” when I was a kid there was a commercial.

MG: Yeah, with the Indian and his--

SM: His tear, yeah, and there was litter everywhere. There’s a lot of anger in that poem.

MG: Right, so this is a car window! I was always picturing it as like a house window, so it didn’t fully make sense.

SM: Yeah, sure! Like, “Get away from here! Don’t come to my window.”

MG: So when you were composing this piece, it seems like the first—I didn’t play this until this past year—this was the first one I’ve played where it felt like the clarinet was more of a supporting role, as opposed to the lead.

SM: Yeah

MG: Obviously it’s a part of the ensemble, but it’s like, “Okay, I think that the main focus now is obviously on the text and the vocalist.”

SM: Yeah, I worked really hard getting the clarinet out of there. Make sure it’s out of the way! Knowing my other pieces.

MG: When you were composing this, there are a couple of spots with some real text painting in there, where the clarinet reminded me of Wagner in the way that there’s these specific things that are supposed to tell you what to think about the text.

SM: Right, like a leitmotif

MG: Precisely, and even beyond that. Like the scream in the middle of Mrs. B, which is really unsettling. Did those just happen as you’re writing along, you think, “Oh,
I think I’m going to paint this.” Or before you started, did you think, “I need this word to pop out?”

SM: The text tells me what to do, yeah. And vice-versa. Sometimes I’ll be working on music and the text comes, or the text is usually there first and I just paint the text with the music, and try not to get in the way so much of that either. I’m a big believer in improvisation in composition, so a lot of times I’m improvising both at the same time. Like a songwriter would, with a guitar and a pad, writing the text and the chords and fitting the words and the music together.

MG: Right, so there’s no set order of which came first, it just all happens as it happens?

SM: Yeah. A lot of times the words come first. It really is easier to write text, for me. Then once that’s done, the music’s already ready to go.

MG: Okay, great. So as far as the order they’re in. Was that done on purpose? I mean, obviously “Don’t Come to My Window” is the most bombastic, so it’s at the end.

SM: Right. I fought with what order to put things in. I guess it wouldn’t bother me if someone put them in a different order. I’d be okay with that, especially if they interpreted it their own way. I like when my music’s not always the same. So if somebody wanted to move that around a little bit, I’d be fine. Or even take out some of the movements. Some people have done that.

MG: So it’s not necessarily 1-2-3-4-5?

SM: It wouldn’t have to be, no. But for me it worked better. That’s the way I conceived it first, yeah. The poems were the same way. I had a big collection of all of my poems. I had them all out and looked at them. One was just about an old man riding one of those little carts in the grocery store with the oxygen tank. He was the rudest man I’d ever heard of, so I wrote this terrible poem about him! (laughs) It was just funny. I thought, “I’m not going to put that one in there!” It’s funny because when I was younger, it’s just all of those little funny things I notice about society. I lived in Florida, too, it’s a crazy state! There are so many different types of people. It’s so much fun to kind of make fun of them a little bit, but also show the sadness in their lives too.

MG: Wow. Good, okay, so which one came next?

SM: Uncle Sam was ’98, and the X Cubed was right around that time for the Verdehr Trio. That was 1998 too, I think.

MG: That’s a fun one.

SM: Yeah, that’s fun. (laughs) The Smoke on the Water there.
MG: Yeah, right at the end.

SM: And then, Devil Sticks wasn’t until I believe 2003 also. It was the Buffet Summer Institute that Mitch Estrin runs in Jacksonville. Devil Sticks was the first one they commissioned, and then I think the next summer they commissioned a second one, which was Ketchak II.

MG: That one I’m not familiar with.

SM: [Stanley] Drucker is on that one on YouTube if you look on there. Ketchak II was the second quintet that they wanted. I think two years in a row I was the composer there for that. It’s a weeklong summer thing that they do. Devil Sticks was just, you know, every time someone asks me to write another clarinet piece, I go, “Oh, I don’t want to write another clarinet piece!” (laughs) But that one only had to be five minutes. I had not composed for a group since I was a kid, I never did a quintet or a quartet or anything like that. While I was in Prague, I remember watching these guys doing tricks with devil sticks, and I thought, “Wow, these are cool.” I noticed their rhythms and I thought, “Well, I’ll try to do something fun and musical with that.” So nothing rock inspired, but just music for fun, you know?

MG: Yeah! In that one you can hear the (imitates devil stick performer while singing Eb/bass part at the beginning)

SM: Yeah, exactly.

MG: The back-and-forth with the devil sticks and the flips and all that.

SM: Right.

MG: So that all happened in Prague. That was one of my questions. So did you already have the commission when you saw devil stick performed and thought, “There’s an idea!” or?

SM: No, I just remember thinking, “Gosh, what am I going to do for this piece? It can only be five minutes, so I can’t develop a whole lot.” It just popped in my mind. I remember looking it up and watching performers online after that. I said, “Oh, this will make a great short, five-minute piece.” I can do what you just said—have the motive go everywhere and kind of emulate that energy. That went really well. It’s performed quite a bit! There are a lot of groups out there now.

MG: And it’s a fun one, it works really well in recitals I think as a nice little piece.

SM: Yeah, a perfect little thing to put in, definitely.
MG: So it seems like in this, the Bb clarinets represent the middle stick and the bass and Eb for the most part are the outer two sticks

SM: Yeah, exactly.

MG: It’s broken up into the two groups. Let me ask you this—as I was going through and actually analyzing the piece, is there any significance in the key of Eb minor, or is it mostly for idiomatic writing?

SM: Yeah, mostly for idiomatic writing, exactly. I knew they wouldn’t have much time. They’re top professional people playing, but they weren’t going to have much preparation time—maybe one or two rehearsals at most. So I had to make sure it was really idiomatic. I can’t remember who was playing on that first performance. I know that Drucker was on the next one, but I can’t recall. Oh, I think Gilbert, Dan Gilbert was playing principal on this one with somebody else at Cincinnati. I can’t remember all the names, but it was a great group! After I heard it first, I thought, “Man, I should’ve written something harder!” (laughs) But a couple of them were kind of conservative players, too. Orchestral players. They really enjoyed me writing that piece instead of something crazy and wild with extended techniques, which wasn’t really in their wheelhouse as much. I think that worked really well.

MG: You have a bunch of four against three, and that kind of stuff. Does that represent anything, or is that just more of what you were talking about with rhythms?

SM: Yeah, that’s just rhythms and colors. I was just trying to give everything a little more complexity beyond the more basic rhythms. I think I was probably just a little bored in my mind, and I like having those twos and threes together. It gives it a good texture.

MG: Right, that definitely came as a surprise at our first rehearsal!

SM: That’s right. (laughs)

MG: One of the other things that happens in this piece is it reminded me of Black Dog, that’s the first piece of yours I played. There’s the juxtaposition between the fast and crazy and the really sedated, more pensive section. So that sets up the ABA1 form.

SM: Yes. Exactly.

MG: The outside A/A1 sounds like the actual devil sticks, so what about that middle section?
SM: I don’t know that there’s anything programmatic about it. It’s more of a place to cleanse the pallet a little bit and changing the mood. I can’t remember if there’s anything compositionally I borrowed from other pieces.

MG: It has the “To the Pines” quotes in the middle section.

SM: Yeah! “To the Pines” is in it. That’s right. That was just kind of like a little fun, signature thing because I knew everybody in the audience was going to be a clarinetist, so part of me was like, “I wonder how many of those people will get that?” (laughs) And they did! So “To the Pines” fit well with that.

MG: Right, split up between the Eb and Bass.

SM: That’s right.

MG: That’s fun! There’s an interesting part where you threw in what sounds almost like Figaro’s Aria, the (sings Eb/Bass part), it just reminded me of that, was that intentional?

SM: No, that probably wasn’t intentional at all. Those things just pop out. (laughs)

MG: The Eb and bass play it as a melody together.

SM: Oh, yeah I know what you’re talking about. That just came out. You know, nothing’s new in the world! (laughs)

MG: Great, that’s all my questions about that. So let’s talk Freebirds.

SM: Yeah.

MG: Obviously a lot of fun. Let’s just start at the beginning: Who commissioned it?

SM: Robert Spring and Josh Gardener. They’re teaching together at Arizona State. Bob’s going to have this new CD come out and he really wanted something. He just finished his CD “Black Dog” which started doing really well. He was selling a bunch of copies and asked me about doing something else, and I thought, “Ah, same thing again. What can I do? I’m done here! There’s nothing I can do.” But I didn’t want to pass up the opportunity because his CD was doing so well and Black Dog was really taking off. I thought, “I don’t want to write another Black Dog, but maybe I could do Black Dog on crack!” (laughs) You know, for two people. So I started improvising a little bit, and I noticed some similarities a little bit. When I came up with that gliss, from the low E to the high C—Every time I tried to do it, I’d gag and almost throw up because of how I was trying to do it with my throat. He [Robert Spring] fortunately knew how to do it and wrote about it later in one of the Clarinet magazines. He wrote about how to do it. That
spurred the excitement for the piece about two people dueling. Then the idea of *Freebirds* came along, because I went back to what inspired *Black Dog* so much. It was really going back to my childhood and some of my favorite pieces. What could be more southern and great than *Freebird*? I remember those dueling guitar solos. They went on *forever* in the long version of that song. I thought, “Man, this would be great for two clarinets.” My original idea was to do a *Devil Went Down to Georgia* kind of thing, you know, where they’re fighting each other? But that got too theatrical and I said, “Eh, I just want to write music,” and then that whole *Freebird* dueling guitar thing came up. I thought, “Oh this is great.” So all that music in *Freebirds* is pretty much my first improvisations over the chord progression. The band, orchestra, and now piano versions are all just the *Freebird* chord progression underneath the clarinets. It’s not very difficult for the accompaniment. But the clarinet part is *exhausting*. I wanted something where both people would just be on their knees at the end. (laughs)

MG: And I think you got it!

SM: But having fun, because it’s idiomatic! And the audience hopefully joins in on that excitement.

MG: Right. Again, there seems to be a lot more contrast in this one similar to others. So in *Black Dog* you have your rockin’ Jimmy Hendrix, Led Zeppelin kind of stuff, then the Southern Baptist hymn, that slower melody. In this one, in the slow sections, it’s always so pretty,

SM: Oh, thanks!

MG: Did anything in particular inspire that? Or did you just write it for the piece?

SM: No, it’s just the ideas that were coming to me over the chord progression of the song. I was just improvising. I definitely knew it was going to be so in your face and intense that I really had to have the opposite to make that intensity work. So I thought about my beautiful ideas that were coming out, I really worked on those being pretty. That way when that crazy, wild stuff came along, those glisses especially, the contrast would be so great that it would hopefully make the piece work even more without going too far. At the beginning I just wanted it to be like a rock concert. When some people perform it, they’ll come in on opposite sides of the stage, kind of like, “Here I am.” And the other person will say, “Here I am. I’m so great.” Two electric guitar-playing rock stars. All those little small glisses and dips throughout the piece, those are just kind of bird like. I know the [Lynyrd] Skynyrd song’s not really about birds, well mine’s not really about birds either! I wanted to base part of it on Richie Havens. I don’t think anybody knows this, so this’ll be new in your deal, Richie Havens’ *High Flying Bird*. That’s one of my favorite songs. Richie Havens is a folk artist and *High Flying Bird*—I was inspired by that in the last movement of my *Epic Concerto*. I finally used it. I was
going to use it in this piece, *Freebirds*, but I couldn’t make it work at all with Lynyrd Skynyrd, so I just stuck with that chord progression. Everything just flowed. And Bob Spring was a constant inspiration for it. That, and working with Arizona State, with Gary Hill. I had worked with them before and it’s just like, “Yeah, I’ll do another one!”

MG: The first time I heard this, it was the one done in Texas, for the TMEA, was it?

SM: Oh, okay, was that Texas Tech that did that?

MG: I don’t recall. I just looked it up on Spotify one day, heard it and was like, “Oh that’s awesome.” So that one’s for clarinets and band. It’s done with band, it’s done with piano, obviously there are some differences. When it comes to piano, there are some extended techniques. Was that just-

SM: Oh, for the piano part? Yeah, it was hard to transcribe that for piano.

MG: Did that come second?

SM: Yeah, that came second. It was the band version first. I knew I had to do a piano version because *Black Dog* and *X* do so well. So this gives everybody a chance to play it for a concerto competition, or just the piano version on it’s own. But it’s not as great. I thought about putting percussion in there, like the Nielsen Concerto does, but there’s not that important of a percussion part really, just atmosphere, so I like it better without. The orchestra version’s pretty cool. I can’t remember who premiered that orchestra version. It might have been Julia Heinen, I think.

MG: Out in Cali?

SM: In California, yeah. We did that. It’s funny, this morning I got two requests for two different marching bands to use *Freebirds* for their marching band. One drum corps and one high school group. Last year, one of the largest bands, Frisco, or Plano, one that has over 400 kids in their marching band. They did it, they used two minutes of *Freebirds* in their marching show. So I guess it somehow got out! (laughs) But the clarinet players are out there going crazy out on the field.

MG: Of course! (laughs)

SM: But yeah, the piano version’s not my favorite, but it does give people an opportunity to play it more.

MG: Right. So then that actually leads into the question: For pieces like this, or *X*, or I guess *Black Dog*, where you do have multiple transcriptions of it, which obviously you’ve done yourself. How do you, let’s say you start with the band version, and then say you’re doing the same piece for orchestra as well. Do you
think of it like, “I’m going to take this clarinet part and reimagine the accompaniment, or do you stick as well to the original as possible? Especially between band and orchestra?

SM: I try to keep it as original as possible. I mean, I’ll even cut and paste a lot from both versions. A good example—just a couple of months ago was the premier of the orchestra version of *Black Dog*, with the Seattle Symphony. That’s my favorite version of *Black Dog*, just because of the strings. It’s so subtle and rich. Especially during that hymn part, it’s just so beautiful with the strings. It’s good with a good band doing it too, but the orchestra version works really well. I guess when I go to orchestra, I do have to change quite a few things because I know it’s harder. If I wrote the orchestra version first, which I’ve never done on these pieces, it would’ve been a lot harder to make it work for wind ensemble. It’s almost easier to go from wind ensemble to orchestra. Because the orchestra can just sustain so much, and the colors are a lot easier to keep going. Everybody doesn’t have to breathe all the time! (laughs) So writing for the wind ensemble is the hardest to do first.

MG: When it came to *X Concerto*, was the wind ensemble…

SM: Oh wait. Yes, the wind ensemble arrangement was first. Piano was ’96, wind ensemble was ’97. Diane Barger commissioned that. ’98 was the Neidich version for string orchestra. So band was first, then Neidich—and that’s not full orchestra, it’s just almost Copeland instrumentation, without the harp, I guess.

MG: Right, okay. So then when did the (this is a little off topic, sorry).

SM: Sure, that’s alright.

MG: For *Black Dog*, the orchestra version—when did you do that?

SM: I did that a couple of years ago.

MG: Was that for ICA?

SM: That was for Mark Nuccio. Mark Nuccio did *Black Dog* at North Texas, the band version, when he was still assistant principal of the New York Philharmonic. He said, “I’ll do this for orchestra. Get it done.” So I thought, “Yeah, New York Phil. Let’s do it!” And so I did, and it just kinda sat. They had some kind of conflict going on, with principals and what was going to happen. Anyway, he got the job at Houston, so I think he’s real interested in playing it down there. But I didn’t want to wait anymore, so I think there was one version, not the real version, but I think somebody won a concerto competition out in Oklahoma on it. But the real premier was just in November [2016], when I finally got it all orchestrated
correctly. That’s was for Benjamin Lulich, he’s the new principal there, that was a great performance. That was so much fun—it was great.

MG: I heard it at ICA a few years ago.

SM: The orchestra version?

MG: It had to be orchestra, because Dr. Heinen--

SM: You know what, Heinen played the chamber orchestra version, it’s not the full orchestra. And that was just a personal favor. It had to be a very small string section, I don’t think there was any winds or brass? I think it was just strings. Yeah, I forgot about that. I just quickly took two days and just sent that to her, because she’s a good friend. I said, “Yeah, sure, I’ll do that.” But yeah, I remember I heard it. I never saw it, but I hope it worked! (laughs)

MG: Yeah, no, it worked. It was great!

SM: I need to dig that out…

MG: Yeah. I love Black Dog, it’s great.

SM: Oh, thanks!

MG: Back to Freebirds: I have not heard the orchestra version of Freebirds yet. How do you deal with the timbre differences between the orchestra and wind ensemble, I mean with the solo clarinets going as wild as they’re going?

SM: It’s a lot easier than it was for the band. With the band, I really try to keep it as light as possible. I remember in Black Dog there were parts where we just had to get everybody down to one on a part a few times, and still it was almost too loud.

MG: Oh, yeah, near the end.

SM: Yeah, especially near the end when the clarinet goes lower, with all those arpeggios, but the Black Dog orchestra version: no problem. If you say, “Hey, everybody take it down a notch.” Everybody can still play, but you still get the fullness. The orchestra version of Freebirds I think I only heard twice. It works better than the band version in a lot of ways, because it’s just easier for the conductor and easier for the soloist not to feel like you’re just blasting all the time just to be over the band. The saxophones, those are—that’s why you’ll see that Freebirds is orchestrated much more thinly than Black Dog. I mean, I could’ve done a lot more with it, but I kept thinking to myself, “Well, remember Black Dog, remember Black Dog!” So I learned from Black Dog. I knew the band, when I was at Florida State, I’ll never forget this guitar concerto. Somebody wrote for
wind ensemble and acoustic guitar. (laughs) It was a nightmare! It was like, “One on a part! No! Nobody play!” (laughs) We even amplified the guitar. It was insane. Wind ensemble is very difficult. I have almost just as many orchestra pieces as I do wind ensemble pieces, but my name’s more in the wind ensemble world, because I think I’ve figured out how to keep that balance, like what you’re asking about. It’s hard.

MG: Yeah, of course. So there are a lot of rhythms, I know we keep coming back to rhythms, but there seem to be a lot of the triplet/sixteenth patterns. Like any time there’s a running sixteenth passage, there’s a triplet thrown in. I find that all over the place in your music, is that just one of your favorite rhythms?

SM: Yeah! I just love it, yeah. It’s like the, I don’t know if it’s in that piece, but the Scottish Snap stuff. The sixteenth followed by a dotted eighth, you know (sings), stuff like that. Probably way deep in my subconscious all those great excerpts (being a clarinet player) are big influences. Solo pieces like Martino and Leslie Bassett’s Soliloquies, to name some of my big pieces. Like Capriccio Español, all those great excerpts are all some stuff I worked really hard on, you know? I loved to play them as a kid, and so having fun in music like this is probably subconsciously influenced by a lot of excerpts and a lot of great pieces.

MG: Yeah, and this—when I was reading the treatise about Black Dog, you were talking about how a lot of this was improvised. You had this going on, you were playing around on the clarinet and just thought, “Oh that sounds really cool, I’m going to use that!” so was that basically how you wrote a lot of this fast, shredding, material?

SM: Oh yeah. That’s, like I said, it’s very visceral. My first improvisation is all that. I just wrote it down. Then you feel it that way. Most of my best ideas, for sure, come that way. I’m in the zone, and I’m just writing ‘left to right,’ and I just think, “Ah, this is it.” Then some of the compositional things happen with that material later. But the notes that you see, the energy is fresh. I’m sweating when I’m playing it, and my vein’s poking out of my forehead. I think, “Hey, if I’m feeling that now, then hopefully that will transfer over to the performer and to the audience. But if I’m just writing note-to-note, analyzing too much, not having fun at all, then the piece is probably going to be that way.

MG: Yeah, I do like in this piece how the first and the second—no one gets a break.

SM: Right! Exactly! (laughs)

MG: There’s no real first part, it’s just…

SM: Yeah, I wanted two equal parts. That was the big thing on this, too.
MG: Two lead guitars!

SM: Yeah, exactly.

MG: Yes, that’s a lot of fun. So let’s talk *Funk* for a second.

SM: Okay, yeah!

MG: So let’s just start with the basics: Who commissioned *Funk*?

SM: *Funk* was commissioned by Stratta. Nathan Williams, he was at Interlochen.

MG: Wasn’t he at UT?

SM: He was at UT, he’s not at UT now, but he’s playing in Houston playing with ROCO [River Oaks Chamber Orchestra]. I wrote a double bass concerto for them and he was there. But Nathan Williams has a trio. But that was at Interlochen when he was there. *Funk* was ’05, probably? I wrote a series of three pieces inspired, badly, by a divorce. I ended up with my two boys. I was a single dad. I had this house that was way too big in Crawford, Texas where we lived. So I was a full-time dad and had a two-year old and a six-year old and had to be writing music. I was in a ‘funk’ state of mind. So *Funk* is a state of mind, not rhythms. (laughs) So if somebody were to write that down. I think it’s one of my best pieces, actually. That and the other piece that was written during that time for saxophone and piano, called *Pistol Packin’ Mama*. You should listen to that sometime, there might be some similarities in energy there. *Funk* was just a state of mind. It was just expressing myself at different times writing a piece, of just anxiety and anger, and hope at the same time in this piece.

MG: I’ve got to be honest, when I first heard about *Funk*, I had never heard it performed. I was just on your website looking around and said, “Oh! There’s a piece called *Funk*!” I just ordered it.

SM: Sure, cool! (laughs)

MG: Then I bought Dr. Bargé’s album.

SM: Oh, yeah!

MG: So I was expecting, you know, being familiar with some of your other works—I was expecting something more like *Krump!*, or something.

SM: Yeah, exactly! (laughs)

MG: I thought, “Oh, this is going to be funky!” Then as soon as it started, I thought
SM: “Ooh, this is dark.” (laughs)

MG: Yeah, I thought this is ‘in a funk,’ as opposed to…

SM: Yeah, I was. Absolutely.

MG: There is a funk rhythm in there, about one measure at a time, but that’s it. So let’s talk about one of the things I like most about this piece. It’s ethereal, it’s uneasy. A lot of that comes from the clarinet being made slightly out of tune with those resonance fingerings—whether it be the Ab key to sound the B rather than the register key, or that melody that keeps--

SM: (sings the melody) yeah

MG: Especially when the violinist is holding the pitch, and then the clarinet is not there in tune. When I first played it with my violinist, he kept going, “I think you’re sharp.”

SM: (laughs) He’s like, “No, it’s..” I love it! It’s supposed to be like Pistol Packin’ Mama is—It’s like an argument. The clarinet’s me, my ex-wife’s the violin, and the pianist is the lawyer. Then it switches around a little bit. People can’t get along, but then you’re getting along. Then you have memories. It just goes in and out of love/hate stuff.

MG: Yeah, you can definitely hear that. You actually just answered my question I was about to ask about form. It’s definitely very different than others.

SM: I need to get a better version of that, too. (points to score) I think there’s still some handwritten--

MG: In the clarinet part?

SM: Yeah, in the clarinet part. If I could find the file! That’s the problem—it’s like, what version of Finale was that? (laughs)

MG: Because this was a few versions back!

MG: So this is the second trio you’ve written for this instrumentation?

SM: Yes, there’s X cubed. That was ’98 and this was ’05.

MG: Did the composition of X3 have any sort of effect on how you wrote this?
SM: It did because it was a great experience learning all the great colors you can utilize from those three instruments. Especially when they’re in unison together. I learned a lot on the Verdehr Trio’s piece X3. Just that experience as a whole. But I was excited, because it had been quite a few years since I’d written it. I remember after writing X3 thinking, “Yeah, I want to do this again.” So having Stratta ask for a piece, that was great. I knew Nathan, and that was great. That was the inspiration, really. And I needed to write! I didn’t know what I wanted to write, but I knew I needed to. Those pieces came along at the right time. I’d say, “Okay, I need to keep writing, and write through all this mess in life at the same time.” I had just gotten tenure at Baylor right at that same time, so it was a pretty interesting time.

MG: Right. I feel like this piece more than others, Devil Sticks excluded, but take your concerti for instance. When it comes to performances of your works, you said you like your versions that are not carbon copies of one another?

SM: Right, exactly.

MG: How much freedom do you allow your performers?

SM: Quite a bit of freedom within reason. If there are a lot of changing of notes, and especially tempo is a big issue. Pitch is important still, but it’s more about energy. A lot of times I’m happiest when somebody’s creative in a good way, a musical way. You’re like, “Oh, I didn’t think about it that way!” Then if it makes it individual, that’s great. When people start cutting chunks of the music out, formally things don’t work. Then it’s just like, “No, I don’t want to do that.” Just call me and I’ll help you through it.

MG: That I’ve heard in Freebirds a lot. In a lot of recordings I’ve heard.

SM: Yeah, they take a chunk of it out, and I’ve worked with them on that, and that’s okay. Especially in wind ensembles going on tour, they don’t have time. That’s why Black Dog gets performed so much more than X.

MG: Because it’s just the right amount of time.

SM: Exactly right. It’s a marketing thing too, you know?

MG: Like the classic three-minute radio rule.

SM: Yeah, exactly.

MG: But definitely in this one, there’s…
SM: In Funk, I would definitely not take anything out. I’d have a hard time figuring out what to take out. But it’s not super-long, though.

MG: No, it’s not long at all. About half way through the piece, it goes from being more thoughtful to getting more and more intense.

SM: More agitated, definitely. It just takes you to the very end, absolutely.

MG: It takes you with that (sings).

SM: Right, all that play back and forth. Arguing. (laughs) You’re trying to get together, but! Yeah, the end is very in your face. We were finalized with everything, and I think it was just kind of like a journal ‘moving on’ kind of thing.

MG: Yeah, there’s that two beats of silence and then the final (sings last measure).

SM: Yeah, exactly.

MG: Cool. That gives a whole new meaning to the piece. We’re at almost exactly one hour. Can I ask two final questions?

SM: Oh yeah, sure!

MG: There are a lot of clusters in your music. Is that just going back to your early days of composition? You said you loved those clusters of sound.

SM: Yeah, exactly. I love those colors, and eventually I combined, as a young composer always does, I went from minimalism to twelve-tone maximalism pieces. I just call myself a ‘middleamist.’ I like to grab those colors from all those areas, but my music always has a center to it, like you said, your friends that don’t know a whole lot about music—they can experience those colors and clusters, but they also feel like they can hang on to something. Rhythmically and harmonically there’s usually a center there. That’s part of what I like to do in my music.

MG: I think we’ve talked a little bit about this, but basically your process. Let’s say you get a commission, someone calls and says, “This is what I want. Here are the specifications.” What do you do from there?

SM: I like to create a relationship. Because for me I get inspired from that, first of all, just being asked is inspiration. For so many years as a young composer, you fight for people to play your music, and when people ask I get really inspired. Usually I have something personal for them. So like their signature, like a double bass concerto I composed a while ago. I would go to his studio, and he’d play for me and I’d say, “What kind of things do you do that you feel like you do better than anybody, or maybe nobody else does?” I try to work that into the music. So 100
years from now they can say, “Oh, well that’s his signature” kind of thing. Kind of like Paganini and a whole lot of composers and performers have. If I have a programmatic order or idea, I’ll incorporate that. Sometimes something else is programmatic. Like in that double bass concerto, in the orchestra I was writing for, there was a violinist that just passed away of cancer. I knew her at Rice. The person I wrote this double bass concerto for, he was at Rice also, so we had this Houston/Rice connection. So in the middle of the second movement of the double bass concerto, there’s all of the sudden a violin duet with him. I didn’t tell anybody about it, just a couple people knew. For me that’s just a little inspiration. I can give homage to her and just celebrate her life a little bit. So little things like that help me out a lot. I don’t always have to have something programmatic to inspire me, it could just be just a killer player that just wants something. I’ll hear them play and say, “Oh man, I can’t wait to write this for your band or your orchestra or you individually.” It just depends!

MG: I was going to ask if you thought about the performers you were composing for.

SM: Oh yeah! All the time. Because I am a performer, too. Or was a performer, and I feel like if the performer catches on fire, then my music will to the audience and to whoever else. Not everybody’s going to like everything all the time, but for me, I write for the performer first. Not for me.

MG: Finally, I’m basically just trying to go through pieces that haven’t been written about. Only X has been, maybe I should have replaced it with Epic.

SM: Yeah! But that would be another whole book! (laughs)

MG: That’s what I was thinking! But how, when you’re writing for clarinet with different ensembles, because obviously I have to approach it from a clarinet angle. As a clarinetist yourself, how do you think about the clarinet’s role, or does it just sort of come naturally? I don’t know if I’m asking this too clearly, but I have two different trios with different instrumentation, or clarinet solo, clarinet duo, etc.

SM: Oh, how it fits into the ensemble, or no ensemble?

MG: Right! And I guess you have your solo clarinet piece as well…

SM: Yeah, unaccompanied. That’s the hardest thing to compose is something unaccompanied because it’s just so naked. You’re out there, it’s like a good speaker or teacher or preacher—you have to keep so much variety going to keep the interest. But once they ask me to incorporate clarinet—one thing I haven’t done yet is clarinet and string quartet. I think that’s going to be a good one if I do one someday, because I’ve never done a string quartet by itself, and one of my favorite all-time pieces is the Mozart Quintet [k. 581], so I’m waiting for that some day. I don’t know what’s going to happen, or if it will happen, but I can feel
a little spark, like, “Ooh I wouldn’t mind doing that someday.” Anything that involves clarinet, like different chamber pieces, I have so much experience performing in the old days, I remember being in a woodwind quintet, so those moments help me, because I know what it sounds like and feels like to be in those ensembles. Woodwind quintet is one of my least favorite things to write for, because it’s just so dry, and I didn’t like being in them when I was younger. There are a couple good pieces I like, so I kind of hung on those. I just finished one for Diane Barger’s group in Nebraska. I think that’s going to be a good one, I worked hard to try to—the thing that scares me is the French horn. I feel like, “What are you doing here? Get outta here. Leave!” (laughs) One of my students replaced the French horn with a saxophone, and it was great! So instead of being scared of that, I embraced the horn part and really gave the horn player a great part and that helped me get through the piece. I just faced that fear and wrote something great for the horn. That changed the piece. It made it fun. Incorporating the clarinet is different for every piece, I guess, depending on the inspiration and performer. There are some performers I probably wouldn’t write a bunch of high C’s for, because I don’t want to make them that uncomfortable. A couple of people, I’ll say, “I’ll probably put one or two in there, if that’s okay.” And they feel bad, because they feel like, “We have to have all these things if you’re going to write it.” I think some of my pieces have mellowed out. I think some don’t have any in them.

MG: I feel like that’s one of your signatures is those high C’s.

SM: Yeah! It is. It’s there every now and then.

MG: It’s not in Funk.

SM: I don’t think in Funk it has one at all!

MG: In the other four there definitely are.

SM: Yeah, definitely.

MG: Alright, well thank you very much!

SM: Thank you, if you have any follow-ups, email any time, or call. Thanks for doing this.
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 16111104
PROJECT TITLE: Technical and Performance Analysis of Scott McAllister's X Concerto, Freebirds, Devil Sticks, Funk, and Uncle Sam's Songbag
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Mike Gruezner
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Arts and Letters
DEPARTMENT: Music
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 12/15/2016 to 12/14/2017
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board


Compact Disc.


Patterson, Tori L. “A Performance Analysis of Stylistic Features of Scott McAllister’s
Selected Works for Solo Clarinet: Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind, Black Dog: Rhapsody for Clarinet (and Piano), and Bling Bling.” DM Treatise, Florida State University, 2008.


