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## **Selected Wind Band Works of Jennifer Higdon: A Conductor's Analysis**

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SELECTED WIND BAND WORKS OF JENNIFER HIGDON:  
A CONDUCTOR'S ANALYSIS

by

Mark Patrick Johnson

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School,  
the College of Arts and Sciences  
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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## ABSTRACT

Pulitzer Prize winning composer Jennifer Higdon rose to worldwide prominence through her orchestral compositions. She is a prolific composer who has made significant contributions to the genres of solo concerti, mixed chamber ensemble music, choral music, and opera. Higdon describes her approach to composition as intuitive, where music is internally heard and then notated.

The purpose of this study is to create a conductor's analysis for four wind band pieces written by Dr. Jennifer Higdon. It will examine the signature characteristics of Higdon's compositional style and use those characteristics as a fundamental for the creation of written analysis. The dissertation will provide conductor's analysis's for *Kelly's Field*, *Machine*, *Mysterium*, and *Road Stories*.

Published research on the wind band music of Jennifer Higdon is minimal. Each of the four works will be analyzed with regards to instrumentation, form and structure, melodic content, harmonic content, and rhythmic content. Information on commissioning, historical context, and the programmatic nature of the works will be also investigated. The combination of all these elements defines Higdon's compositional style across all genres.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like thank my committee and the excellent faculty here at The University of Southern Mississippi that have provided support, guidance, and encouragement throughout my three years.

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And finally thank you so much to Dr. Jennifer Higdon for your music that compelled me to research and write this dissertation.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, Mark and Sharon: I will be eternally thankful for growing up in a house with music constantly playing. Thank you for supporting my passion for music through lessons, instrument purchases, rides to rehearsals and auditions, and being in the audience for many, many concerts since 1995. I love you both very much.

To Sharon and Tom Biga: From the moment Kasey brought me to meet you, I felt like I was a part of your family. Thank you for your many years of support throughout many moves and adventures.

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To my many teachers throughout my life: Thank you for the many lessons learned.

To my students past, present, and future: Thank you for allowing me to share my passion and love of music.

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# CHAPTER I –INTRODUCTION PURPOSE, NEED FOR STUDY, AND METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

American composer Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962) is an internationally known composer whose music is performed by ensembles globally. Her early writings focused on chamber music, but her recognition has come through her orchestral compositions. As of 2004, her work *blue cathedral* was the most-performed work of all pieces by a living composer.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, Higdon was awarded The Pulitzer Prize in music for her Violin Concerto. In 2012 and 2018 Higdon earned Grammy Awards for her Percussion Concerto and Viola Concerto. She has been commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chicago Symphony, and The Atlanta Symphony<sup>2</sup>.

Although Higdon's primary output is orchestral and chamber music, she has written works for wind band. As in her works for orchestra, her wind band music features motivic construction, expanded percussion technique, extended parallelism, and beautiful lyricism.<sup>3</sup> Higdon paints an image for the audience, to create a meaningful personal experience, then take them on a journey all through her music.<sup>4</sup> On composing Higdon stated, "I try to shape the music. I guess I'm chiseling away, trying to find the

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1. Brenda Rossow Phillips, "Jennifer Higdon: A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Flute and Orchestral Works" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2005), 1.

2. Jennifer Higdon, "Jennifer Higdon" last modified 2018m accessed September 10, 2018, <http://www.JenniferHigdon.com>.

3. Marian Stewart, "Jennifer Higdon" in *A Composer's Insight: Volume 5*, ed. Timothy Salzman (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2012), 120.

4. Phillips, 14.

sculpture within the stone.”<sup>5</sup> In addition to her instrumental works, Higdon has composed works for choir and an opera, *Cold Mountain*.

Higdon only composes on commissions, with a multi-year wait for new commissions. As of 2010, the wait for new commissions was five years with Higdon turning down two or three requests a month.<sup>6</sup> Characteristics of her compositional style are maintained across all genres, though Higdon was quoted as saying, “My style changes from piece to piece depending on the commissioner. For instance, last year I wrote something for a junior high band. That’s really different from what I might write for a professional symphony orchestra. And occasionally I’ll change the language of a piece to reflect what kind of piece it is.”<sup>7</sup> When asked again in the same interview about her musical language and its usage across her works she responded, “It’s funny—my pieces do change; their harmonic language changes from piece to piece. But I think it needs to be that way because it keeps it interesting for me. I set up some sort of challenge in there, something to explore for myself.”<sup>8</sup>

Higdon’s music is frequently referred to as being accessible to listeners of all backgrounds or as “audience friendly.”<sup>9</sup> While some composers may not enjoy their music referred to in this way, Higdon stated, “My job is to communicate—I feel that you

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5. Donald McKinney, *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music: Nine American Composers*, ed. Michael K. Slayton (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 13

6. Philip Gambone, “Jennifer Higdon,” in *Travels in a Gay Nation: Portraits of LGBTQ Americans* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 164.

7. McKinney, 16.

8. Ibid., 26.

9. Gambone, 163.

should be able to come to my music without having any kind of knowledge about classical music. I want to be able to speak to you on a kind of visceral level.

‘Accessibility’ doesn’t seem like a negative word to me.”<sup>10</sup> In response to reporters using the term accessibility, Higdon said, “Do you mean ‘communicative’? I’m of the mind that you can write quality music that speaks. The whole point is just to have it speak.”<sup>11</sup> Higdon believes that her music is accessible due to the clear melodies and rhythms in each composition and that the listener can follow the musical ideas.<sup>12</sup> “I feel a responsibility to be articulate in the music and not waste their time.” She continues by saying, “Music is communication. Otherwise, I don’t see the point.”<sup>13</sup>

In 2003, Jennifer Higdon became the first female composer to be featured at the Tanglewood Contemporary Music Festival. When asked about the impact of her gender and the importance of this honor, Higdon said “I don’t ever think about the fact that I’m a woman. All I’m interested in is the music. Is it well written? Is it going to be interesting for the people who have to sit in the audience?”<sup>14</sup> The importance of Higdon’s identity as a lesbian composer is frequently downplayed by Higdon herself. In response to a question about her orientation and how it relates to her music Higdon responded, “I don’t know if anyone can actually tell that. I’m always too busy thinking about whether this

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10. Andrew Quint. “Speaking with Composer Jennifer Higdon: The Communication Thing,” *Fanfare: The Magazine for Serious Record Collectors*, May 2004, 44.

11. Gambone, 169.

12. Quint, 26.

13. Christina L. Reitz, “Comprehensive Analysis of Selected Orchestra Works by Jennifer Higdon” (PhD diss., University of Florida, 2007), 26.

14. Gambone, 167.

music is interesting to listen to...Queer music? If you did a blind test, I don't think you would be able to tell."<sup>15</sup> Higdon's insists on her gender and sexual identity not being a factor, either negatively or positively, in her successes.

Higdon and prior researchers have described her compositional process as intuitive. "My method of writing is instinctive, trying to find those sounds that are interesting to combine. When I do talks at universities, the professors are horrified when I say that I just follow my ear."<sup>16</sup> Her works begin with the first melodic idea, which typically is not found at the beginning of the work. The initial sketches of the work are transformed into full orchestration through, as Higdon puts it, her own subconscious. "I think actually what happens is [when] I start working on a piece, I'll do a lot of sketching, my brain will put these elements together and I don't know they're there. I don't realize it even, it just comes out."<sup>17</sup>

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to create a detailed conductor's analysis of four band works by Jennifer Higdon: *Road Songs*, *Machine*, *Kelly's Field*, and *Mysterium*. The analyses will provide conductors a resource for use throughout their planning, score study processes, rehearsals, and performances. Interviews with collegiate conductors with expertise in the works of Jennifer Higdon will assist with the analysis of each work and provide needed background information on each work.

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15. Ibid., 168.

16. Ibid., 167.

17. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 29.



## Need for Study

In his 2012 dissertation on Pulitzer Prize winning composers' views on writing for band, Troy Bennefield notes, "Currently, five dissertations examine the chamber, flute, and orchestral music of Jennifer Higdon while none study her wind band compositions."<sup>18</sup> The current writing on the wind band music of Jennifer Higdon is limited to two chapters in the *Teaching Music through Performance in Band* series and a chapter in *A Composer's Insight: Volume 5*. Other writing on Higdon detail her choral, chamber, concerti, and orchestral writing but omit her band works from the discussion.

For Jennifer Higdon to be chosen for the Pulitzer Prize, her composition was judged by a panel of composers, performers, and music critics. The panel must find the work to be a "distinguished composition" and have been premiered or first recorded that year.<sup>19</sup> With the jury's selection of Higdon to win the Pulitzer prize, they have enshrined her name into a community of composers such as: John Adams, John Corigliano, Morton Gould, Joseph Schwantner, and Steve Reich.<sup>20</sup> The band music of these composers have been studied and written about, while the band music of Higdon has been largely ignored in writing.<sup>21</sup>

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18. Troy Bennefield, "Selected Pulitzer Prize-Winning Composers' changing Views on Composing for Wind Band" (DMA diss., University of Oklahoma, 2012), 18.

19. "Administration of the Prizes," The Pulitzer Prizes, accessed October 15, 2008, <http://www.pulitzer.org/page/administration-prizes>.

20. "Music," The Pulitzer Prizes, accessed October 15, 2018, <http://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-category/225>.

21. Stephen Andrew Hunter, "An Annotated Bibliography and Performance Commentary of the Works for Concert Band and Wind Orchestra by Composers Awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music 1993-2015, and a List of Their Works for Chamber Wind Ensemble" (DMA diss., The University of Southern Mississippi, 2016), 148.

## Methodology

A detailed analysis of each work will be created through analysis of the following elements:

- Instrumentation and Orchestration
- Form and Structure
- Melodic Content
- Harmonic Content
- Rhythmic Content

This study will also provide details of the synthesis of the work including the commissioning organization(s), premiere information, and dedications.

### Instrumentation and Orchestration

Higdon seeks different colors and timbres in her orchestration. Her music features an expanded percussion section to allow for a variety of sounds. Higdon often writes melodic lines that combine instruments of differing timbres to create the a unique tone and color. Melodic lines are prevalent in all instruments of the ensemble, including instruments that traditionally do not play melodic material.<sup>22</sup>

When asked to what does she attribute her innovation in orchestration, she responded, “Fear! Fear of boring people. Which makes my brain leap forward trying to find unusual colors. When I would look around at concerts, people were snoozing. That’s a pretty hideous way to spend an evening.”<sup>23</sup>

### Form and Structure

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22. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 38.

23. Gambone, 167.

Higdon does not use traditional forms in her compositions, instead she allows her musical intuition to create structure.<sup>24</sup> A sectional based analysis will be utilized to describe the form of each work. Changes in tempo, mood, texture, motivic use, or tonal center establish transitions or beginnings of a new section.<sup>25</sup>

Higdon's says that she does not consider form while composing. "That's the one thing I don't think about. I don't ever think about form. Ever, ever, ever. Oddly enough, even my pieces that get done a lot—I couldn't tell you what the form is at all."<sup>26</sup> Her works utilize a loose incorporation of returning material, "It's always necessary when composing to bring materials back so that there is something to hang on to in the development of the story that is the music."<sup>27</sup>

### Melodic Content

Higdon's melodies combine her experiences of flute playing, her study of counterpoint, and her exposure to popular music. Her lyrical melodies achieve musical direction through ascending intervals, written ornamentation, and frequently ambiguity of meter. Non-lyrical melodic material features motives within a small range of notes, typically no larger than a perfect fifth. Both lyrical and non-lyrical compositions tend to feature only one theme at a time before moving onto a new theme.<sup>28</sup>

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24. Ibid., 39-40.

25. Virginia Broffitt, "The Music of Jennifer Higdon: Perspectives on the Styles and Compositional Approaches in Selected Chamber Compositions" (DMA diss., The University of Cincinnati, 2010), 21-22.

26. Gambone, 167.

27. Broffitt, 21.

28. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 36.

Higdon focuses on the melodic and compositional content of single-line instruments, describing the process of composing as, “I always think about composing and music as lines.”<sup>29</sup> Brenda Rossow Phillips, in her 2005 dissertation describes the process as “She [Higdon] is keenly aware of the direction of the line and where the emphasis should be, which she explains is the reason there is so much melody in her music.”<sup>30</sup> Christina Reitz describes the originality of Higdon’s melodic materials as,

“Because of her self-admitted lack of experience with the standard canon, quotations and references to other composers and their music is nonexistent. A lack of formal training until her collegiate years has resulted in a complete avoidance of systems during the compositional process; indeed, nearly all of her works emerge from an exploration of sound... The ‘joy of sound’ is frequently her rationale for compositional curiosities in her music”<sup>31</sup>

### Harmonic Content

Higdon avoids traditional harmonies and harmonic progressions, instead she says, “I follow my ear.”<sup>32</sup> Christina L. Reitz discussed this with the composer and came to this conclusion, “Because she thinks linearly, Higdon does not compose with key centers or harmonies in mind. When a tonality clearly emerges, she explains it as a manifestation of her subconscious.”<sup>33</sup> The avoidance of tonal centers has led Higdon to compose without key signature or traditional key relationships.<sup>34</sup> The frequency of tonal movement

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29. Philips, 1.

30. Ibid., 1.

31. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 31-32.

32. Phillips, 17.

33. Christina L. Reitz, *Jennifer Higdon: Composing in Color* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2008) 17.

34. Phillips., 17.

“...proved to be too cumbersome for both the performer and her. To resolve this issue, Higdon discontinued the use of key signatures almost entirely.”<sup>35</sup> Bitonality is used throughout Higdon’s compositions, frequently written as two major triads a major second apart. In some areas of bitonality Higdon removes the third from one of the triads to create stability. Higdon uses open perfect fifths throughout her work including in parallel motion.<sup>36</sup> The inversion, a perfect fourth, is used sparingly. Traditional harmonic analysis is unable to create an effective method for understanding the harmonic language of Higdon, instead analyses based on key and tonal centers will be used.

Higdon’s music is tonal, with only two pieces that she categorizes as atonal. Brenda Rossow Phillips described Higdon’s usage of tonality as “...the art exhibitions of the 1960s removed the need for abstract and experimental art, as she now prefers to write pieces that are more programmatic”<sup>37</sup> In another interview Higdon described her thinking on atonal versus tonal as, “Not that there’s anything wrong with atonal; I think the trick is to make sure whatever you’re writing, whatever the language is, you’re writing the best music you can. I think of music as good music and bad music, as opposed to tonal versus atonal.”<sup>38</sup>

Higdon attributes her modulations to distant keys to her intuitive composition style. Dr. Phillips’s 2005 dissertation describes Higdon’s modulations by writing, “in her

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35. Ibid., 17.

36. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 33-34.

37. Phillips, 14.

38. Quint, 44.

estimation, if it sounds like a natural succession and the harmonic quality supports the direction of the line, then the function of the chord or the relationship of the key areas does not matter. She relies heavily on her ear for the linear and harmonic movement of her works instead of the rules set by theorists over the years.”<sup>39</sup> Distant modulations are enhanced by the use of modal mixture to vary the use of major chords, a compositional technique that Higdon described as fascinating.<sup>40</sup>

### Rhythmic Content

When asked about her use of rhythm in her works, Higdon said, “I think I have a need for clear rhythm or pulse. I think that is a very prominent thing because I listened to so much of the Beatles growing up. I listened to an extraordinary amount of the Beatles!”<sup>41</sup> Her childhood passion and aspirations of being a writer impacted her composition. She stated, “Writing poetry and stories taught me about rhythm and pacing.”<sup>42</sup> Additionally, Higdon’s first experience studying music was as a percussionist on the drum line of her high school marching band. She has attributed this to her development of rhythm, saying “We weren’t learning to read musical notes in a clef...it was studying rhythm.”<sup>43</sup>

Higdon considers rhythm the most complex aspect of her music, but insists that she does not write complexity for complexities sake. She hears the rhythm first, then

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39. Phillips, 9.

40. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 34.

41. McKinney, 14.

42. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 16.

43. Ibid., 17.

finds a way to notate the rhythm.<sup>44</sup> She finds inspiration in the rhythms of pop music saying, “I like to check out some of the rhythms that the rappers are doing.”<sup>45</sup> Most of Higdon’s rhythmic construction comes from rhythmic motives and their layering. Unlike her contemporaries, Higdon rarely uses meter change in her works.<sup>46</sup>

Even during slower tempo works, Higdon writes rhythms with many fast notes within one beat. She states,

“Sometimes I have something that is moving at somewhat of a clip, and there are a million notes crammed in there but the whole overall feel of the melody is slower moving. It is really deceptive. I don’t know if that is just a kind of nervous energy in the line or what. I think it might be something like that, filling up the space. The only reason I figured this out is by being asked so much about it... [without all these notes] the line, I think would not be as interesting. I think it gives the music a peculiarity by having all these bends in there...it is interesting and it is a different way of composing but it was something that came about instinctively.”<sup>47</sup>

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44. Philips, 18.

45. Broffitt, 24.

46. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 36-37.

47. Phillips, 18.

## CHAPTER II – BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jennifer Higdon was born in Brooklyn, New York on December 31, 1962. In 1963 Higdon's family relocated to Atlanta, Georgia where her father worked as a commercial artist and a professor at the Atlanta College of Art. Due to a growing dissatisfaction with the Atlanta school systems and a desire to be closer to extended family, Higdon's family moved to a 40-acre farm in Seymour, Tennessee.<sup>48</sup>

Higdon's study of music began when she was 14 as a percussionist in her high school's marching band.<sup>49</sup> While in high school, Higdon found a flute and first year instructional book in her attic and began to teach herself the flute. After finishing the instructional book, her mother purchased the next two levels of instructional books for Higdon to use. By the end of that school year, Higdon was the principal flutist of her high school band while simultaneously playing on the drumline.<sup>50</sup>

After attending a summer flute camp at Bowling Green State University, Higdon knew that she wanted to attend the university and study with flautist Judith Bentley. Higdon enrolled in BGSU in 1981 where she studied flute performance.<sup>51</sup> During a flute lesson her sophomore year, Bentley asked Higdon to compose a piece for flute to be performed at a masterclass given by flautist and composer Harvey Sollberger. Higdon

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48. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 15.

49. Ibid., 17.

50. Broffitt, 7.

51. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 18.



describes this work, *Night Creatures*, as being “about two minutes long, slow moving music, chromatic, and a little atonal. It seems like I had a couple of effects in it, like tongue flaps and key clicks.”<sup>52</sup> This foray into composition changed the course of Higdon’s musical career.

Due to a restructuring of curriculum at BGSU, Higdon required a second senior year to graduate. During this time, she petitioned to take composition courses, but was rejected due to the classes being restricted to only composition majors.<sup>53</sup> This set back did not stop Higdon from composing, instead she continued composing and compiled a portfolio of compositions to submit for graduate school admissions. During her final year at BGSU, conductor Robert Spano joined the faculty. Higdon was given permission to enroll in his graduate conducting course. Through his mentorship, Higdon elected to attend Spano’s alma mater, The Curtis Institute of Music, for an Artist Diploma in composition.<sup>54</sup>

At The Curtis Institute, Higdon studied composition with David Loeb and Ned Rorem. Higdon has credited Rorem with his influence on her phrasing and musical line<sup>55</sup> saying, “Ned Rorem taught me to think of melody and what the vocal line can do.”<sup>56</sup> In addition to the knowledge gained from studying with her composition teachers, her peers

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52. Phillips, 5.

53. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 20.

54. Broffitt, 9-10.

55. Phillips, 8.

56. Broffitt, 11.

had a major impact on her education stating, “I actually think I did most of my learning from my colleagues... just being around musicians of such caliber was an ear-opener.”<sup>57</sup>

After her studies at Curtis, Higdon applied to the Master of Arts program at the University of Pennsylvania but was rejected twice before beginning her studies in the fall of 1989. She bonded with her primary composition teacher, George Crumb, over similar backgrounds of being raised in rural America and a love for nature. Higdon recalled studying with him by saying, “George Crumb really influenced me to think about timing and the color possibilities of all instruments,”<sup>58</sup> and, “...to control the elements that you have in the south and write them in a way that it is easier for the players to perform.”<sup>59</sup> After earning her Master of Arts in Composition, Higdon continued her academic career at UPenn, entering the Doctor of Philosophy in Composition program.

Higdon stated that her Ph.D. program was difficult to complete. “Since I grew up on rock and roll, I just don’t know this stuff. Getting through the doctoral exams for me was a nightmare. I took them a lot.”<sup>60</sup> Her first doctoral thesis, *Zones*, was rejected by her doctoral committee telling Higdon that the work did not fulfill the requirements for a doctoral thesis. A second doctoral thesis, *Voices* a three-movement work for string quartet, was accepted. Higdon had this to say about her Ph.D.:

“In my doctoral program, [being an instinctive composer] was a problem. That’s why I got held up an extra year at Penn. It took me two tries to get out of Penn. It was *Voices* I ended up getting out on but I had another piece that they turned down called *Zones* and it was totally absurd. They just didn’t know because they

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57. Ibid., 11.

58. Ibid., 12.

59. Phillips, 8-9.

60. Reitz, *Comprehensive Analysis*, 21.

were used to thinking of things theoretically and I wasn't thinking of it that way which made them completely suspicious. Totally suspicious of what I was doing. I didn't fit the box of what they were expecting. It is very interesting”<sup>61</sup>

After graduation from UPenn, Dr. Higdon was contacted by Robert Spano who convinced her to join the faculty at The Curtis Institute where she currently teaches. Originally her teaching included composition, counterpoint, and 20<sup>th</sup> century music but due to a demanding schedule of composing four to six hours a day, Higdon now only teaches composition lessons for two to three hours a week.<sup>62</sup>

In 1995, Higdon wrote *Shine* for James DePriest and the Oregon Symphony. The work was commissioned by an ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) program that provides young composers the opportunity to write their first symphonic composition.<sup>63</sup> Higdon later submitted this work to the Philadelphia Orchestra leading to the commissioning of *Concerto for Orchestra*. The concerto was premiered at The League of American Orchestras' national conference for a crowd of three thousand orchestra managers. The night of the performance, she recalled thinking, “My entire life was coming down to those thirty-five minutes. I thought, either I'm going to be working at McDonald's tomorrow, or it's all going to take off.”<sup>64</sup>

Through all her challenges and successes, Higdon believes that she is “a very lucky composer.”<sup>65</sup> Higdon has received commissions from orchestras including: The

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61. Phillips, 10.

62. Broffitt, 14.

63. Ibid., 14.

64. Gambone, 166.

65. Broffitt, 15.

Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chicago Symphony, and The Atlanta Symphony. She was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 2010 for her *Violin Concerto*, and is a two-time Grammy award winner. From 2016 to 2018 Higdon served as the Barr Laureate Scholar at the University of Missouri Kansas City and in 2018 was the artist in residence at both the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University and The University of Texas, Austin.

### CHAPTER III – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

David Martin Booth was the first author to write about the band music of Jennifer Higdon. “Rhythm Stand” in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band: Volume 6* (2007) provides a small biographical sketch of the composer, analysis of *Rhythm Stand*, a historical perspective of the work, and teaching considerations. This teacher resource guide does not provide any information on the composer’s style or techniques, instead focusing solely on the needs of *Rhythm Stand*. At the time of this publication Higdon had only composed two works for band, *Fanfare Ritmico* (a transcription) and *Rhythm Stand*.

*Fanfare Ritmico* received its own teacher resource guide in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band: Volume 9* (2013). Karen Fannin wrote a more detailed biographical sketch than Booth, and included references to works that had been composed between her teaching guide and Booth’s guide. Importantly, Fannin included a suggested listening list that provides the reader a reference to finding high quality recordings of Higdon’s music. Like the writing of Booth’s guide, Fannin included an analysis of *Fanfare Ritmico*, a historical perspective of the work, and teaching considerations. Fannin included quotes from the composer that describe her compositional style, but Fannin does not discuss the compositional language used across Higdon’s compositions.

Marian Stewart’s chapter on Jennifer Higdon in *A Composers Insight: Volume 5* (2012) is the only writing that discusses Higdon’s band compositions as a catalog. An in-depth biography is followed by a discussion on compositional style. The author relates compositional elements to information presented in the biography, as well as quotes by

the composer discussing her compositional idiom. Stewart presents brief analyses of *Fanfare Ritmico*, *Rhythm Stand*, *Kelly's Field*, *Road Stories*, and *Mysterium*. Stewart also includes analyses of Higdon's chamber works for winds as well as concerti with band accompaniment. A short discussion of conducting considerations is included, where Stewart discusses the challenges of conducting Higdon's band music.

Christina L. Reitz's dissertation "Comprehensive Analysis of Selected Orchestral Works by Jennifer Higdon" (2007) provides an in-depth presentation of the compositional language of Higdon. Three orchestral works are used as a medium to investigate and identify Higdon's compositional idiom: *blue cathedral*, *Concerto for Orchestra*, and *City Scape*. In the discussions of each work, Reitz provides specific treatments of harmony, melody, rhythm, texture, orchestration, and form. The analyses and biographical information provided in this dissertation formed the basis for Reitz's book *Jennifer Higdon: Composing in Color* (2018).

Brenda Rossow Phillips's dissertation "Jennifer Higdon: A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Flute and Orchestral Works" (2005) discusses Higdon's compositional language through a different set of terms than Reitz. Phillips focuses on programmatic elements, imagery, narrative storylines, melodic characteristics, and harmonic characteristics. A brief explanation of each element is presented in the second chapter with discussion of each element's specifics in *Autumn Reflection*, *Legacy*, and *blue cathedral*. The author summarizes that the style of Higdon is an extension of the way she approaches flute playing.

Virginia Broffitt created a similar list of elements to Phillips and Reitz in analyzing the music of Higdon in her dissertation, "The Music of Jennifer Higdon:

Perspectives on the styles and compositional approaches in Selected Chamber Compositions” (2010). Broffitt identifies harmonic and melodic trends as well as structural elements that make up Higdon’s compositional language. Each element is identified and analyzed in three chamber pieces: *Summer Shimmers*, *DASH-*, and *running the edge*. The author states that this study confirms that Higdon’s compositional idiom is not limited to one genre or medium.

Higdon’s compositional approach from commission and conception through final performance was detailed in Max Brenton Harkey Williams’s dissertation, “Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto*: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work” (2010). Williams does not focus on the analysis of this Pulitzer winning concerto, instead approaches the concerto from a musicological point of view. Interviews with the composer, the soloist, and members of the premiering orchestra allow the readers to gain insight into the conception and creation of Higdon’s music.

Kerry Brunson’s 2009 thesis, “Mass Classical: America, Accessibility, and the Atlanta School of Composers” discusses Higdon’s participation in the Atlanta School of Composers. The document discusses the creation of the school, as well as brief descriptions of each composer involved. Bremer discusses, in generalities, the composition style of the school’s composers and their similarities. Included in the study is data on Atlanta Symphony performances of Jennifer Higdon’s works, as well as worldwide orchestral performances of Higdon’s works.

Alexandra Dee also wrote her 2017 dissertation on the Atlanta School of Composers. The work entitled, “The Atlanta School: A New Approach to Promoting Audience Receptivity to Contemporary Symphonic Music” discusses the creation of the

school, but focuses on the reaction and reception of the general audiences of the Atlanta Symphony. Data on Atlanta Symphony performances is included. There is minimal information regarding the music of Jennifer Higdon, and no information discussing her compositional style or techniques. Information on Higdon is mostly relegated to biographical and commissioning data.

Higdon's orchestral work *blue cathedral* was one of five pieces recommended for performance by David Tedford in his doctoral essay entitled, "Performing the Canon or Creating Inroads: A Study of Higher Education Orchestral Programming of Contemporary Music." The essay focuses on the programming data of college orchestras, and then recommending five new additions to the standard repertoire. The work does not feature analysis of *blue cathedral*, but instead a generalized description that could be used to interest conductors in programming the work.

Deena K. Reedy's 2002 dissertation discusses Higdon's solo flute work *rapid.fire* as a medium for teaching general audiences appreciation and understanding of modern music. The dissertation entitled, "A Performer's Guide to Creating a Listening Road Map: Applications to Late Twentieth-Century Solo Flute Compositions by American Women Composers Joyce Mekeel and Jennifer Higdon" creates what Reddy calls "listening road maps" as a way to engage listeners. These are created through structural and form analyses. There is some discussion of Higdon's compositional style, but the work mainly features analysis. The work is based on interviews with Higdon that center on *rapid.fire* and Higdon's own flute experiences.

Ronda Benson Ford uses Higdon's work *Song*, as a way to discuss treatment of extended techniques on the flute. Written in 2005, the work contains a brief analysis of



*Song* based on a thorough interview with Higdon. “A Door to Extended Techniques: Five Analyses and Composer Interviews from the National Flute Association’s High School Soloist Competition” also contains biographical information as well as compositional style and commission information based on *Song*.

Higdon’s work for clarinet, violin, and piano is discussed in Lynda Baber Dembowski’s 2008 dissertation entitled, “Solo and Chamber Clarinet Works by American-Born Women Composers: 1990-2005.” The information presented about Dr. Higdon is minimal, limited to only a brief biography and a catalog of her clarinet compositions. A program note written by the composer is quoted, then supplemented with information from an interview with Higdon. The document is a listing of the author’s recital programs and her presented program notes; there are no analyses present.

Christopher Cicconi’s 2012 dissertation, “Band Music, A Handbook: A Comprehensive Catalog of Band Music Written Since 1995” contains a listing of the band works of Higdon. This dissertation provides no analyses, program notes, commission information, or performance commentary. Cicconi provides information on year of composition, duration of the work, publisher, and instrumentation.

## CHAPTER IV – MYSTERIUM

*Mysterium* was commissioned by Scott A. Stewart and the Emory University Wind Ensemble in partnership with Scott Weiss and the University of South Carolina Bands. It is a transcription of Higdon's choral work *O Magnum Mysterium*, and is the only transcription of one of Higdon's choral works. *Mysterium* was premiered on April 20, 2011, by Dr. Stewart and the Emory Wind Ensemble and was recorded by the same ensemble on their album entitled *In the World of Spirits* on the NAXOS label. Of the commission Dr. Stewart said:

The commission came about in a series of commissions that I did while I was at Emory University...I was very interested in having both established composers in the wind band area, [and] established composers not in the wind band area who had maybe been successful in orchestra, or opera, or chamber, or keyboard and had not written for winds. ...we talked back and forth for a while which she [Higdon] said, 'I want to do a piece for you.' I think, even at the time she was so swamped with maybe two years out work or something that she said, 'I don't think I can do a full [composition],' I think we were suggesting a full 8-10-minute original piece, "so maybe I shouldn't accept this commission." We were successful in accomplishing getting a piece she had already written, and that was the impetus for her to say "Okay I have time to orchestrate, or windstrate this because its already written." And so that's how it nudged her to say this is doable. And so, we went with the title *Mysterium* and she transcribed it. To my memory we didn't have to do many alterations at all.<sup>66</sup>

The choral text, listed in the original printing of the work<sup>67</sup>, is as follows:

*O Magnum Mysterium* (traditional)

O magnum mysterium,  
Et admirabile sacramentum,  
Ut animalia viderent Dominum natum  
Jacentem in praesepio.

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66. Scott A. Stewart, interview by author, January 25, 2019.

67. M. Stewart, 138.

Beata Virgo  
Cujus viscera meruerunt  
Portare Dominum Christum.

O great mystery  
And wondrous sacrament  
That animals might see the newborn Lord  
Lying in a manger  
Blessed is the Virgin,  
Whose womb was worthy  
To bear the Lord Christ<sup>68</sup>

The program notes for the work, written by Higdon herself, states, “*Mysterium* is a tribute to the wonderful mystery of how music moves us. Perhaps it is the unexplainable that creates such magic, for both the performer and the listener, but there is no denying the incredible power of a shared musical experience.”<sup>69</sup>

#### Instrumentation

2 Flutes	4 Horns in F
2 Oboes	3 Trumpets in Bb
3 Clarinets in Bb	2 Tenor Trombones
1 Bass Clarinet in Bb	1 Bass Trombone
2 Bassoons	1 Euphonium
2 Alto Saxophones in Eb	1 Tuba
1 Tenor Saxophone in Bb	Double Bass
1 Baritone Saxophone in Eb	

1 Percussion:  
Vibraphone and Chimes

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68. Jennifer Higdon, *O Magnum Mysterium*, (Philadelphia, PA: Lawdon Press, 2002).

69. Jennifer Higdon, “Mysterium Program Notes,” accessed January 30, 2019, <http://jenniferhigdon.com/pdf/program-notes/Mysterium.pdf>.

Higdon's choral work, *O Magnum Mysterium*, is scored for choir, two flutes, chimes, and crystal glasses. In this transcription for band, Higdon retains the flute descant lines. When the flutes are tutti, Higdon has scored the oboes to double the flute to reinforce the descant line; this coincides with the measures in the work where all or nearly all instruments are playing. Some conductors have opted to place the solo flutes outside of the ensemble to create an antiphonal effect.<sup>70</sup>

The work calls for one percussionist, but the player is active throughout the work. The crystal glasses of the original work are replaced by vibraphone although, the chimes are retained from the choral work. The musical line is nearly identical between the crystal glasses and the vibraphone, but due to the vibraphone's potential for rhythmic movement, Higdon added motion to the vibraphone part.

*Mysterium* is scored in choirs of instruments. Both A sections feature reed choirs, though the A' section does include brass for harmonic reinforcement. The B section features a brass choir of trumpets and trombones (later adding euphonium, tuba, and double bass) paired with clarinets and bassoons.

The texture of the work varies substantially throughout the work. The use of choirs creates quasi-antiphonal textures. Dynamics are created predominantly through the addition and subtractions of instruments. The dynamic peak of the work, measures 45-47, is the only time in *Mysterium* where all performers are playing. Measure 74 has nearly all performers, but the bass trombone is absent.

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70. S. Stewart.

## Form and Structure

This six-minute work follows a traditional ternary form of ABA'. While the melodic content of the A and B sections are different, they are most set apart by instrumentation and tonal differences. The first A section features a reed choir, and notably the brass are tacet. Although the harmonic movement of the work is non-traditional, the tonality of the A sections is D major. The B section, in G major, begins with a brass choir and builds towards a full ensemble moment before fading away back into the A' section. There are no tempo changes between the sections.

Figure 1. *Mysterium* form chart.

Form Division	Descriptions of musical material
Introduction: mm. 1-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major chord planing in reed choir centered on D major.</li> <li>Pedal D and A in vibraphone</li> </ul>
A: mm. 11-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A theme begins in clarinet 1 and alto sax 1</li> <li>D major key center</li> <li>Major triad planing</li> <li>Flute duet descant becomes progressively busier.</li> </ul>
B: mm. 33-53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brass choir builds into full ensemble (m. 45)</li> <li>Gradual decrescendo begins at m. 48 through instrument exits and written dynamic changes.</li> <li>G major key center</li> </ul>
Transition: mm. 54-61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flute duet accompanied by chimes.</li> <li>Open 5ths in reed choir (m. 58) set up a return to D major.</li> </ul>
A': mm. 62-94	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Return of A theme in clarinet and trumpet</li> <li>D major key center</li> <li>Final large texture at m. 74</li> <li>Gradual decrescendo and thinning of texture until m. 94</li> <li>Ends on D major triad</li> </ul>

## Melodic Content

The A section theme begins at measure 11 in the clarinet 1 and alto sax 1.

Although these instruments enter at measure 8, this three-measure phrase is part of the introduction rather than the theme. The A theme utilizes predominantly stepwise motion in contrasting rhythm to the accompanying voices. Phrasal direction is achieved in phrases through ascending and descending lines that aligns with crescendos and decrescendos. The A section is a large-scale representation of the musical direction of the individual phrases. The A section begins at mezzo piano and crescendos to measure 22, then decrescendos through measure 32. These dynamic changes are paired with ascending motion towards measure 22, followed by descending motion towards measure 32.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Clarinet in B♭ 1, Clarinet in B♭ 2, Clarinet in B♭ 3, and Bass Clarinet. The score covers measures 15 to 19. The key signature is one flat (B♭), and the time signature is 3/4. The music is written in treble clef. The dynamics are marked as mezzo piano (mp) and mezzo forte (mf). The notation includes various note values, rests, and phrasing slurs. The instruments are arranged in a four-staff system. The first three staves are for the Clarinet in B♭ 1, 2, and 3, and the fourth staff is for the Bass Clarinet. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests. The dynamics change from mp to mf in measure 16 and back to mp in measure 17. The phrasing is indicated by slurs and breath marks.

Musical Example 1 *Mysterium*, mm 15-19, clarinets and bass clarinet.

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Unlike the melodic content in the A section, the B section features a homophonic texture that blurs the line between the harmonic elements and the melody. This author

analyzed the stepwise motion of the trumpet 1 and clarinet 2 (later clarinet 1) to be the melodic content of the B section.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Trumpet in B♭ 1, Trumpet in B♭ 2, and Trombone. The score is written for measures 32-38. The key signature is one flat (B♭ major or D minor). The time signature is 4/4. The dynamics are marked as *p* (piano) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The Trumpet in B♭ 1 and Trumpet in B♭ 2 parts are in the treble clef, and the Trombone part is in the bass clef. The music features a melodic line in the trumpets and a supporting line in the trombone, with various rhythmic patterns and dynamic changes.

Musical Example 2 *Mysterium*, mm 32-38, trumpets and trombones.  
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The B section features groupings of three in the motivic ideas of the melodic line. The first motivic grouping is in measures 33-39 (divided into mm. 33-35, mm. 36-37, and mm. 38-39). Higdon changes the rhythmic content of the motive and the dynamics in the second presentation of the motive to create musical motion. The second grouping of three is the motive found in measure 41, which is varied by expanding the texture and ranges of the instruments in measures 43 and 44. The third grouping of three is found in measures 45-47. Higdon varies the rhythmic content of the motive, found in measure 45, in measure 46 as well as changing the melodic content slightly in measure 47. The final grouping of three is found in measures 48-50. The motive is altered through metric changes caused by the diminution of the rhythm. These groupings are the instrumental interpretations of repeating texts in the choral work.

Clarinet in B $\flat$  2

Clarinet in B $\flat$  3

Bassoon 1

Bassoon 2

*ppp* *pp* *pp* *p*

Musical Example 3 *Mysterium*, mm 32-39, clarinets 2 and 3, and bassoons.  
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Clarinet in B $\flat$  2

Clarinet in B $\flat$  3

Bassoon 1

Bassoon 2

*mp* *mp* *mp* *mp*

Musical Example 4 *Mysterium*, mm 41-43, clarinets 2 and 3, and bassoons.  
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Clarinet in B $\flat$  1

Clarinet in B $\flat$  2

Clarinet in B $\flat$  3

Musical Example 5 *Mysterium*, mm 45-47, clarinets.  
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Clarinet in B $\flat$  1

Clarinet in B $\flat$  2

Clarinet in B $\flat$  3

Musical Example 6 *Mysterium*, mm 48-50, clarinets.  
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The final A section presents the melody from the original A with little changed. Brass instruments have been added to both the harmonic material and the melodic material. A rhythmically diminished variation of the A theme is present at measure 81 in the clarinet 1 and alto saxophone 1. This variation on the melody is used as a transition from the A melody into the cadential sequence at the end of the work.

While prominent, the flute solos throughout are not the melodic content of the work. Instead these solos are a descant above the ensemble that extends and stretches the

harmonic ideas of the work. These solos are unchanged from the choral work, where they fulfill the same roll of the descant. The melodic content of *O Magnum Mysterium* is only found in the choir, rather than the flute descant or crystal glasses. In this transcription, Higdon placed the melodic material throughout the ensemble with the exception of flutes and oboes.

The flutes exhibit Higdon's ideals for flowing melodic lines of stepwise motion with ascending leaps. Frequently the flutes seem to create dissonance with the instrumental choir underneath, but Higdon utilized the flutes to create extended harmonies of 9, 11, and 13 chords. This is difficult for the listener to hear due to the large intervallic difference between the flutes and the next lowest voice. This distance is often greater than an octave, and at times a distance of two octaves. At measure 45, the flutes become tutti and add oboes to the descant line. There is no change in the style or function to the descant, only increasing the number of voices performing the line.

#### Harmonic Content

The work is overall based in the key of D major. Higdon uses major triadic planing to create harmonic movement, rather than using common practice tonal harmonic movement. Throughout the work, there is no V to I cadential movement, instead relying on a stepwise return to the tonicized chord to create cadential points. This cadential movement is first demonstrated in measures 1-7 of the introduction in the clarinets and saxophones.

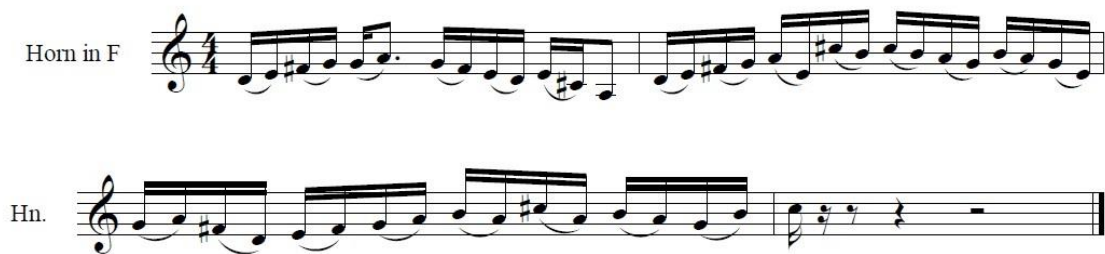
Musical Example 7 *Mysterium*, mm 1-7 saxophones.  
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It is also prominently featured from measures 78-94 forming a large cadential extension leading towards the final chord. It is worth noting that although there are no traditional cadences, the overall tonal structure of the work is I—IV—I in the key of D major. This could be analyzed as the composer writing a plagal cadence, into this sacred work.

The A section features stepwise harmonic motion created through triadic planing. The melodic line, in alto saxophone 1 and clarinet 1, as well as the flute duet add harmonic extensions to the major triads in the lower clarinets and lower saxophones. Higdon maintains a perfect 5<sup>th</sup> interval between the two lowest voices throughout the A section (baritone saxophone and tenor saxophone, or bass clarinet and 3<sup>rd</sup> clarinet), with few exceptions. The entire A section is accompanied by a drone, in the vibraphone, of an open 5<sup>th</sup> built on D. This drone reinforces the tonicized center of D, and allows the harmonic movement back to D major to serve as a cadential function.

The B section features movement between two distantly related chords: Bb major and G major. This movement hides the tonal center at the start of B section, as both are represented equally. It is only with the entrance of the full ensemble that the tonal area

becomes clear where Higdon has written three measures of G major (mm. 45-48). These three measures feature harmonic extensions of major 9, 11, 13, and 15 which obscure the G tonal center. The movement of the horns in these measures is a trademark of Higdon's compositional style which uses 16<sup>th</sup> note scalar lines, G major in this case, to reinforce the tonal center.



Musical Example 8 *Mysterium*, mm 45-47, horns.  
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Additionally, the chimes are playing G and B which reinforces the strength of the G major tonal center. The movement between Bb major and G major returns to create a cyclical ending to the B section. The descending and ascending stepwise planing is again used cadentially in measures 51-53.

Open 5ths in measures 58-61 moving in stepwise motion are used as a transitional device to lead into the major triad planing of the A sections. The final A returns in at measure 62 with the key center once again in D major. Higdon once again utilizes major triad planing, descending from D major to Bb major then ascending back to D major, but in this A' section she incorporates the brass into the harmonic movement. The open 5<sup>th</sup> in the vibraphone, which was absent in the B section, returns to reinforce the D major

tonality. The work's final cadence, as stated earlier, is brought about through stepwise motion ending on a D major chord.

### Rhythmic Content

Unlike Higdon's other works, *Mysterium* features meter changes throughout the composition. The work is primarily in common time, with interruptions by measures of two or three beats. The meter changes are transcribed from *O Magnum Mysterium*, where Higdon uses them to accommodate the rhythmic implications of the text.

With the exception of flutes and oboes, there is a notable absence of Higdon's traditional rhythmic complexity and syncopation. Eighth and quarter note syncopations can be found in the A section, but none in the B section of the work. Ties over bar lines, a Higdon trademark, are present in the introduction and the second A section only.

Though the B section does not feature syncopation, it does feature the illusion of an accelerando through changing the dominant rhythm from quarter notes to 16<sup>th</sup> notes. Higdon then reverses this effect from measures 45 through 53, ending with whole notes. The chimes assist in the illusion of ritardando by moving from the aleatoric section to a rhythmic construction of eighth notes, then quarter notes, and finally ending with half notes in measure 58.

### Performance Commentary

Dr. Stewart describes the difficulty of *Mysterium* as a grade IV and grade VI simultaneously, adding, "Everybody's grade IV, except for the flutes who are grade

VI.”<sup>71</sup> Though not originally conceived for wind band, Higdon’s natural ability in orchestration allowed for the creation of a homogeneous texture using groupings of heterogenous instruments.

The piece is not without its challenges. The flute and oboe lines present the most musical complexity of the work, and are difficult to align within the sections. It is recommended to rehearse the flute and oboe lines separately from the ensemble to facilitate the learning of the technical passages. While measures 1-44, and 86-94 are marked solo in the flutes, it may be necessary to limit or reduce the number of players in the tutti sections. On the Emory Wind Ensemble’s recording, Dr. Stewart reduced the flutes in measures 54-57 down to two players, to facilitate balance, blend, and rhythmic accuracy.

Balance is a challenge throughout the work. The saxophones, especially tenor saxophone, should be careful to balance to the clarinets that they share a line with. When the full ensemble is playing for the first time at measure 45, the horns will need to be brought out. The horn line is written one dynamic lower than the rest of the ensemble, and without careful attention it may be obscured by the rest of the brass section.

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71 S. Stewart.

## CHAPTER V – KELLY’S FIELD

*Kelly’s Field* was commissioned by The Midwest Band Clinic in 2006, and was premiered December 26, 2006 in Chicago by The Musashino Academia Musicae Wind Ensemble from Tokyo, Japan. The seven-minute work was commissioned to honor Jennifer Higdon’s former teacher, Mark Kelly, who retired as Director of Bands at Bowling Green State University. The title refers to Kelly’s field of knowledge, his experience as a conductor and educator, as well as the symbolism of students as plants growing through the work of Kelly in his field. Higdon refers to this in her program notes as, “musicians, striving to grow and growing to play, in a field that I distinctly consider...Kelly’s Field.”<sup>72</sup> Higdon approached the composition by drawing from her time as Kelly’s student. In the program notes for *Kelly’s Field*, Higdon writes:

“Thinking of what type of music would be appropriate to honor ‘Chief’, I felt that a tapestry of playful gestures and bold statements would most accurately reflect his knowledge and gifts that always become evident upon his ascending a podium. Some of my most vivid musical memories come from performing as a member of one of his various bands at Bowling Green, including a truly inspiring performance at Midwest. To this day, when I write music, I recall the thrill of the sound of an ensemble coming together to communicate through the power of music...”<sup>73</sup>

In addition to the recording made at the premiere of the work, *Kelly’s Field* was recorded by The University of Missouri Kansas City Wind Symphony in 2018. This album is currently only available through SoundCloud.<sup>74</sup>

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72. Jennifer Higdon, “Kelly’s Field Program Notes,” accessed January 30, 2019, <http://www.jenniferhigdon.com/pdf/program-notes/Kellys-Field.pdf>.

73. Ibid.

74. The SoundCloud album containing the wind band music of Jennifer Higdon can be found at: <https://soundcloud.com/bandsatumnkconservatory/sets/digital-release-122018>.

## Instrumentation

Piccolo	E♭ Alto Saxophone
Flute 1	B♭ Tenor Saxophone
Flute 2	E♭ Baritone Saxophone
Oboe 1	B♭ Trumpet 1
Oboe 2	B♭ Trumpet 2
E♭ Clarinet	B♭ Trumpet 3
B♭ Clarinet 1	F Horn 1 and 3
B♭ Clarinet 2	F Horn 2 and 4
B♭ Clarinet 3	Trombone 1
B♭ Bass Clarinet	Trombone 2
Bassoon 1	Bass Trombone
Bassoon 2	Euphonium
B♭ Soprano Saxophone	Tuba

### Percussion:

Timpani, Tam-Tam, Marimba, Suspended Cymbal, Low Tom-Tom, Vibraphone,  
Suspended Cymbal, Bass Drum, Suspended Cymbal

The percussion is limited in scope, only utilizing four performers, and does not require expanded percussion instruments.

Throughout the work, Higdon combines the tenor saxophone with the bassoons to create an unusual reed timbre that accentuates the playing of one of the work's themes. Solis and solos are used throughout the work to introduce new themes or musical ideas.

## Form and Structure

*Kelly's Field* is built upon a traditional rondo form. The form, ABCAB, has been modified, removing the second and final A sections that would typically be in a Rondo following the B sections. Key relationships are not a determining factor in the form,



instead Higdon uses tempo changes to mark the beginning of each new section.

Modifying the form further, are an introduction, transition, and a coda.

Figure 2. *Kelly's Field* form chart.

Form Division	Descriptions of musical material
Introduction: mm. 1-10	Quarter note=92 Quartal chords in brass with supporting timpani
A: mm. 11-30	Gallop motive, scalar sextuplets, primary theme
B: mm. 31-57	Quarter note=102 Ascending minor seventh theme and counter theme, augmentations of primary theme
C: mm. 58-91	Quarter note=72 Woodwind Choir, sustained quartal harmonies. C Theme presented by solo instruments
A': mm. 92-107	Quarter note=92 "Gallop" motive, scalar sextuplets, primary theme
Transition: mm. 108-115	Primary theme with quartal chord accompaniment
B': mm. 116-124	Ascending minor sevenths and counter theme,
Coda: mm. 125-136	Quartal chords in brass with supporting timpani

### Melodic Content

Higdon based *Kelly's Field* on six musical ideas. These motives, with the exception of the primary theme, are bound to a specific section of the work. The primary theme is present through both A and B sections, but not in the C section. These motives and themes are not tied to a set tonality, instead Higdon moves them as she feels appropriate, saying "I just let the music unfold."<sup>75</sup>

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75. Broffitt, 27.

The first musical idea of the work is a repetitive 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> note motive first presented by the trumpets in measure 11. This motive is more rhythmic than melodic, and is a reoccurring musical presence throughout the A section. In Marian Stewart's writings on *Kelly's Field*, she refers to this motive as galloping material or galloping theme.<sup>76</sup> It is layered with the second musical idea of the work beginning in measure 16, scalar sextuplet runs in the woodwinds. These scalar lines are not bound to a key or tonality, allowing the motive to change between modal tonality and sequential ideas.

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Trumpet in B♭ 2

Trumpet in B♭ 3

*mp* *p*

*mp* *p*

*mp* *p*

Musical Example 9 *Kelly's Field*, mm 11-14, trumpets.  
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76. M. Stewart, 122.

Musical Example 10 *Kelly's Field*, mm 16-19, flutes, oboes, and clarinets.  
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The primary theme of *Kelly's Field* begins in measure 21, first played by bassoons and tenor sax. Higdon set the theme nearly two octaves below the other motives, as a way to highlight the timbre of the bassoons and tenor sax. The primary theme appears throughout each of the A and B sections of the composition. While the theme was not composed using dodecaphonic methods, the theme is treated in a serial fashion to create variations throughout the composition.<sup>77</sup>

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77. Ibid., 123.

Bassoon 1

Bassoon 2

Tenor Sax in B $\flat$

Musical Example 11 *Kelly's Field*, mm 21-23, bassoons and tenor saxophone.  
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The B section contains the next melodic idea of the work, a motive comprised of ascending minor sevenths. A trumpet solo presents this motive at measure 31, but it was first presented in measure 26 by the woodwinds. The woodwind presentation of the motive is obscured by the superimposition of the gallop motive, the primary theme, and the sextuplet motive.

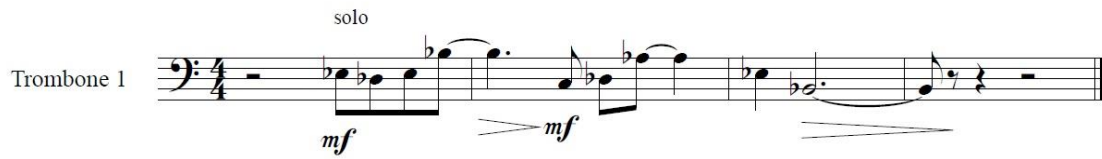
Trumpet in B $\flat$

solo

*mf*

Musical Example 12 *Kelly's Field*, mm 31-34, trumpets.  
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The B motive is passed through the ensemble, in solos, as the musical texture gradually thickens. It is often accompanied by a secondary B theme which appears in measure 31 in the trombone 1. Variations of the secondary B theme are found in horn (m. 40), and trumpet 1 and soprano sax (m. 45).



Musical Example 13 *Kelly's Field*, mm 31-34, trombone 1..  
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Variations and fragments of the primary theme appear throughout the B section and combine with a rhythmic ostinato, the B motive and the secondary B theme to create a thickening texture that builds towards measure 54. A reduction in texture features a trumpet solo playing the primary theme, which is used as a transition into the C section.

The C theme first appears as a solo in the clarinet 1. It features a combination of ascending leaps with triplets and dotted rhythms. The C theme then is passed to solos in flute 1 and later oboe 1. This theme appears the least frequent of all the themes and motives within *Kelly's Field*, appearing only four times with one presentation a brief fragment. Higdon employs repetitive triplets beginning at measure 80, but they lack the intervallic motion or dotted rhythms that are present in the C theme.

Musical Example 14 *Kelly's Field*, mm 58-61, clarinets.  
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A chant-like melodic line appears in the upper winds at measure 80. This rhythmically tutti melody is accompanied by drone-like quartal chords in the bassoons and saxes, which creates a monastic chant quality. The time signatures change to accommodate the chant rhythms, allowing for a quasi-free time feel.

The return of the A section at measure 92 employs the thematic and motivic elements from the first A section. The gallop theme is now played by the clarinets and marimba, with rhythmic reinforcements in all brass except euphonium. The sextuplets are once again in the flute, oboe, and upper saxes. The primary theme is played as before in the bassoons and tenor sax, with the addition of the euphonium to the theme.

A transition into the final B section interweaves the chant accompaniment from the saxes, the galop motive, the primary theme, as well as a fragment of the C theme. The C theme fragment and the sax accompaniment maintain the same rhythmic content from the C section, even though the tempo is 20 beats per minute faster. The final B section maintains the 92 beats per minute of the A section, rather than the 102 beats per minute of the original B section. Higdon does not bring back the thinner texture of solos in this B section, instead allowing tutti sections to play the B motive as well as fragments of the secondary theme.

### Harmonic Content

Throughout the composition Higdon uses quartal chords and open fifths instead of tradition triadic harmonies. In Marian Stewart's research on the work, she determined that the main compositional focus of Higdon was the melodic and motivic elements of the

work. The work was approached linearly by the composer and the resulting tonality is “incidental and secondary to the motivic material.”<sup>78</sup>

The introduction and coda feature staggered entrances that create sustained quartal chords. These quartal harmonies are maintained throughout the A and B sections, but are more difficult to identify due to the lack of sustained rhythms. The B section features rhythmic ostinatos played a whole step apart creating inversions of the quartal chords when the B theme is added. This is evidenced in measure 32 between the marimba, clarinets, and trumpet 1.

The C section sounds consonant and vastly harmonically different than the rest of the work. This is due to the fact that Higdon borrowed the chord progression from a movement of her string quartet *Immense Sky*. Although the chord changes are the same, Higdon said that she approached with different compositional intent.<sup>79</sup> Higdon reinforced the different character of the C section with the scoring, writing this section for woodwind choir, and omitting the brass and percussion.

The use of bitonality is nearly absent from this work. The exception is at measure 134. Here the quartal harmonies combine to create Higdon’s trademark bitonality of two triads a step apart with one missing the third. The bitonality is analyzed as a c minor triad over a Bb open fifth. This moment of bitonality functions as a transition from the prior quartal harmonies into a Bb triad, the final chord of the work. The Bb triad is the only example of triadic harmony used in the work and its selection may be due to it being a traditional band key. This could be seen as a homage to the influence of Professor

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78. Ibid., 122.

79. Ibid., 124.

Kelly, but when asked about this Higdon stated, “I just followed my ear, that’s all it was.”<sup>80</sup>

### Rhythmic Content

The music of Jennifer Higdon is full of syncopation, and *Kelly’s Field* is no exception. Throughout this work Higdon writes rhythms that avoid the downbeats. The rhythm in the saxes from measure 12 through 19 creates a hemiola-like effect when placed against the eighth and two sixteenth rhythms of the trumpet. The meter changes do not adjust the sixteenth note rhythms of the trumpets, but instead allow the melodic line to obscure the pulse.

At measure 31, Marian Stewart refers to the ostinato as Morse code.<sup>81</sup> This highly syncopated rhythmic ostinato avoids downbeats through ties and dotted rhythms. As this line evolves it becomes less syncopated, and by measure 45 the line is primarily made up of groups of four sixteenth notes. The return of the B section at measure 116 does not present the Morse code, instead Higdon replaces it with constant sixteenth note movement.

### Performance Commentary

This tribute work for Mark Kelly contains the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements expected of a work written by Jennifer Higdon. Performers are responsible for an extended range on their instruments, with clarinet 1, trumpet 1, and horn 1 parts containing frequent playing in extreme high registers. The clarinet 1 requires a three-octave range throughout the work.

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80. Ibid., 124.

81. Ibid., 124.



Conductors must strictly adhere to the tempo changes in *Kelly's Field* due to Higdon's use of the tempo changes to mark the formal structure of the work. While rehearsing, the conductor must create horizontal lines that connect the individual motives and fragments of the work. In addition, frequent 7<sup>th</sup> intervals, of both major and minor, require precision of pitch and intonation.

## CHAPTER VI – ROAD STORIES

*Road Stories* was commissioned by The National Wind Ensemble Consortium Group (NWECEG) led by Glen Adsit, director of bands at the Hartt School, in 2010. At the time, the NWECEG was made up of 31 different colleges and universities, as well as two United States Air Force bands, a music company, and conductor Timothy Reynish.<sup>82</sup> In an interview with Marian Stewart, Higdon stated that she wrote the work as "...a description of life's journeys, [while] at home between trips."<sup>83</sup> *Road Stories* received its premiere performance by The University of Texas Wind Ensemble on November 28, 2011.<sup>84</sup> The work was recorded in 2018 by the University of Missouri Kansas City Wind Symphony, though the containing album is currently only available on SoundCloud.<sup>85</sup>

This multi-movement work is made up of three movements: *Speed Bike*, *Winding Tree Lane*, and *Rail Lights*. Dr. Higdon wrote the movements to be performed together or as separate individual works. Unlike many of her other works, Higdon does not provide program notes on this work, nor is there any information from the composer given in the score. Dr. Andrew Hunter writes the following information on the work in his 2016 dissertation on Pulitzer Prize winning composers, "This work is more

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82. Jennifer Higdon, *Road Stories*, (Philadelphia, PA: Lawdon Press, 2010).

83. M. Stewart, 129.

84. Hunter, 161.

85. The SoundCloud album containing the wind band music of Jennifer Higdon can be found at: <https://soundcloud.com/bandsatumnkcconservatory/sets/digital-release-122018>.

programmatic in nature than much of the rest of Higdon's compositional output, with clear pictures being painted in each of the three movements."<sup>86</sup>

#### Instrumentation

4 Flutes (4 <sup>th</sup> doubling piccolo)	3 Trumpets in Bb
2 Oboes	2 Tenor Trombones
Clarinet in Eb	Bass Trombone
3 Clarinets in Bb	Euphonium
Bass Clarinet in Bb	Tuba
2 Bassoons	Celesta
2 Alto Saxophones in Eb	Double Bass
4 Horns in F	

#### 4 Percussion:

Timpani, Marimba [5-octave] Vibraphone, Chimes, 2 Suspended Cymbals, Sizzle Cymbal 5 Temple Blocks, Snare Drum, Vibraslap, Brake Drum, Tambourine, Castanet, 5 Temple Blocks<sup>87</sup>, 2 Triangles (small and medium)

In a 2013 interview, Higdon discussed her difficulties in composing this work for winds,

"...because I'm used to writing for orchestra, and with the wind ensemble combination of instruments, I had to think a lot more about balance, in much different ways. Even though I started music playing in a wind ensemble, my composing years have been so filled with string instruments that I needed to re-examine my understanding of acoustical balances. I also worried a lot about the piece being idiomatic..."<sup>88</sup>

#### Movement I – *Speed Bike*

Dr. Carolyn Barber, director of bands at The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, describes *Speed Bike* as, "The joy of riding a bicycle and that feeling when you are going

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86. Hunter, 162.

87. 5 Temple blocks is listed twice in the score by the composer. *Speed Bike* requires two sets of temple blocks to facilitate quick changes between instruments.

88. Ronald E. Grimes, "Glen Adsit, the Hartt School, and the Joy of Commissioning", *Fanfare* January/February, 2013, 129.

really, really fast and you come over the top of the hill and your internal organs are still going up even as you and the bike are going downhill....Wonderful things when you are a little kid.”<sup>89</sup> Dr. Hunter describes the movement as, “*Speed Bike* is meant to be reminiscent of quickly riding on a bicycle over hills, around sharp turns, with the scenery racing by the rider.”<sup>90</sup>

### Form and Structure

Higdon lists the movement as being between three and four minutes long. The form of the work is dictated by thematic content, with tonal center movement aligning with the change in thematic content. The author has analyzed the form as ABA'B' with a short coda at the end. The motivic material from the A section appears at the beginning of both of the B sections as transitional material, which camouflages and obscures the beginning of the B sections to both the performers and listeners. With the exception of the coda, all sections are marked by double bar lines.

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89. Carolyn Barber, “University of Nebraska-Lincoln Wind Ensemble Performance” (live recorded concert video, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, December 7, 2016), accessed January 1, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuHod9Dr7tg&t=1744s&index=5&list=WL>.

90. Hunter, 162.

Figure 3. *Speed Bike* form chart.

Form Division	Descriptions of musical material
A: mm. 1-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A theme first presented in Horns</li> <li>• Timpani theme in counterpoint with A theme</li> <li>• C tonal Center</li> </ul>
B: mm. 30-48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offbeat motivic material (B Theme)</li> <li>• Melodic material in instrumental choirs</li> <li>• Gb Lydian Tonality</li> </ul>
A': mm. 49-62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return of A theme and Timpani theme in different instruments with variations</li> <li>• A Tonal Center</li> </ul>
B': mm. 63-81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Off beat motivic material (B Theme)</li> <li>• Texture thickening from solos to full ensemble</li> <li>• Bb Lydian Tonality</li> </ul>
Coda: mm. 82-92	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variations on themes</li> <li>• Ends on Db triad</li> </ul>

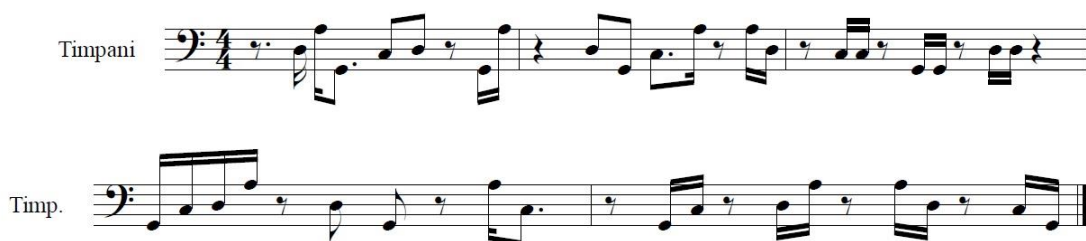
#### Melodic Content

Higdon wrote *Speed Bike* based on four musical ideas. These ideas are created by combining small fragments into larger musical ideas. The A theme is first presented in the horns in mm. 1-5. While the range of the theme is a major 9<sup>th</sup>, the individual fragments within are composed using Higdon's typical range of a perfect 5<sup>th</sup>. The ascending and descending movement of this theme are symbolic of a bicyclist ascending and descending hills on their ride. The A theme is also used as transitional material at the beginning of both B sections.



Musical Example 15 *Road Stories* movement I, mm 1-5, horns.  
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The first presentation of the Timpani theme is in measures 1-5. Though at first this theme appears to fulfill harmonic function, this author's analysis reveals that the theme is a melodic idea in counterpoint with the A theme. The Timpani theme is later performed in the A' section by wind instruments while the timpani creates a different harmonic structure.



Musical Example 16 *Road Stories* movement I, mm 1-5, timpani.  
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New thematic material appears at the start of the B section at measure 33. Two musical ideals are present, an offbeat bassline in the low winds and a chordal melody in instrument choirs. The bassline utilizes syncopation that obscures the pulse due to its avoidance of the beat. In measure 37 the bassline shifts to downbeats only to return back

to offbeats in the next measure. The offbeats are present in the B' section in measures 69-72. Higdon created a variation of the offbeat idea in measures 74-76, writing three measures of the bassline on the beat. The offbeats are maintained by the triangle during these measures creating a rhythmic construction of steady eighth notes, the only moment in the work with this constant eighth note rhythmic construction.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Bass Clarinet, Bassoon 1, and Bassoon 2. The music is in 4/4 time and consists of three measures. The Bass Clarinet part is written in treble clef, while the Bassoon parts are in bass clef. All three instruments play a steady eighth-note pattern throughout the three measures. The notes are: Measure 1: Bb, Ab, Gb, Fb; Measure 2: Eb, D, C, B; Measure 3: Ab, Gb, Fb, Eb. The key signature has four flats (Bb, Eb, Ab, Db).

Musical Example 17 *Road Stories* movement I, mm 33-35, bass clarinet and bassoons.  
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The chordal melody of the B section is the only lyrical passages written in this movement. Unlike Higdon's other works with lyric content, there is a notable absence of large ascending intervals and syncopation. The motion of this melodic idea is attained through the changes in instrumentation. Higdon writes each three-measure phrase for a different choir, flutes, brass, and saxophones respectively. These chordal melodies are interrupted by an ascending and descending scalar line based on the Gb lydian scale, another programmatic illustration of the bicyclist riding on hills.

The image shows a musical score for four flutes, labeled Flute 1 through Flute 4. The music is in 4/4 time and spans measures 33 to 35. Each flute part is written on a single staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The music features a quartal harmony, with notes often appearing in groups of four. The dynamics are marked with a forte 'f' at the beginning of each staff. The notation includes various note values, rests, and slurs, indicating a complex melodic line for each part. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical Example 18 *Road Stories* movement I, mm 33-35, flutes.  
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### Harmonic Content

The counterpoint between the A theme in the horns and the Timpani theme create bitonality, but it is not the two triads one half step apart that Higdon frequents. Instead Higdon combined the quartal harmonies of the Timpani theme (ADGC) with the C major sonorities of the A theme. While the quartal notes are part of the C major scale, Higdon does not write tonicizations of C in the Timpani theme, instead she avoided writing the prominence of a single pitch. The combination of the two themes does not support tertian harmonies, and there is no evidence of cadential movement. The additional layers of texture added into the primary two themes conform to the established tonalities.

The A' section is layered with new additional tonalities. The quartal harmony is now presented in tenor and baritone saxophone, euphonium, and tuba (BEAD) with slight variations on the original Timpani theme. Theme 1's variation is now set in the key of D



major in the alto saxophones, which is supported by the D7 chord that is arpeggiated in the timpani. Higdon presents the key of A major in the flutes and clarinets.

In contrast with the bitonality of the A sections, the B sections are based in the lydian mode: Gb lydian in the first B section and Bb lydian in the B' section. The lydian scales are played using quintuplet, sextuplet, and septuplet rhythms. The scales are supported by a bassline and chordal melodies using the same scalar mode. The B' section features variations on the lydian chordal melodies and baseline. A brief segment of bitonality is created by the quartal harmonies of the fanfare-like brass in mm. 78-81.

The composition avoids use of traditional cadential movement until the final two measures. The bitonality of the coda gives way to a tutti rhythm where Higdon expands the register of the ensemble, ending with an Ab major triad spread across 5.5 octaves. The Ab triad resolves to a Db major triad, creating an unexpected traditional harmonic relationship.

### Rhythmic Content

Like most Higdon works, *Speed Bike* features a significant amount of syncopation. Throughout the work there is an avoidance of beat 1, especially in the harmonic or supporting voices. In the first sixteen measures of the work, there are only three measures where beat one is present in the supporting lines. The avoidance of beat one is continued into the B sections where only the chordal melodies contain the down beat, with the exception of measure 37. The coda, beginning at measure 82, features the majority of the ensemble playing on beat one. Each measure of the coda has notes on beat one, a direct change from the earlier sections of the work.

In the B and A' sections, the non-pitched percussion instruments play fragments similar to the rhythms to the fragments of theme A. These rhythms are not variations or repetitions of thematic rhythms, instead these fragments are rhythmic counterpoint to the melodies in the wind instruments. This is a similar technique to that which Higdon used in the counterpoint between the horns and timpani in the first five measures.

### Performance Commentary

In this movement, Dr. Higdon has created a programmatic musical representative of a bike ride across a trail with many hills. For the benefit of this musical image, conductors must emphasize dynamic swells and bring attention to ascending and descending “bicycle” lines throughout the work. These dynamics and melodic contour should interrupt the surrounding passages and be evident to the listener.

The movement features complex harmonies that some performers may not be comfortable with. Higdon’s use of bitonality through this work creates an intonation challenge to conductors and performers. Conductors should isolate each key areas out of the combined bitonality to correct intonation before recombining the tonalities. The B section extended passages utilizing the lydian mode requires attention to play the non-standard triads with adjusted intonation.

### Movement II – *Winding Tree Lane*

Higdon describes this movement as, “...a quiet street of leafy sunlit patterns, absorbed by the traveler in slow footfalls; this is time movement in contemplative movements.”<sup>91</sup> Dr. Barber described the movement as, “The feeling of going for a walk

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91. M. Stewart, 139.

on a lovely leafy sunlit day and the way your mind wanders and is sometimes in the present moment, and is sometimes in the past, and is sometimes in the future.”<sup>92</sup> *Winding Tree Lane* is twice as long as the first movement and although much slower than the other two movements, it is no less rhythmically or harmonically complex. The celesta makes its first appearance of the work in this movement.

#### Form and Structure

Unlike the first movement, *Winding Tree Lane* does not use a traditional form. Changes in musical material and texture dictate the form of the work. The majority of the work is through composed, with little musical material being repeated. The exceptions are the sections from measures 52-58 and 92-99 where Higdon repeats musical ideas in new keys with slight variations. While the beginning and end of the work are similar in compositional approach, the difference in musical direction and tonal area prohibit the author from labeling them with the same section title.

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92. Barber.

Figure 4. *Winding Tree Lane* form chart.

Form Division	Descriptions of musical material
mm. 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open 5<sup>th</sup> drones in clarinet 3 and bass clarinet, later in saxophones and bassoons</li> <li>• Stepwise ascending melody with diatonic triadic planing</li> <li>• Layering of melodic planing builds towards climax at measure 30</li> <li>• C major tonal area</li> </ul>
mm. 31-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diatonic planing in horns and mallets—key of Ab</li> <li>• Solos in flute, oboe, and clarinet</li> </ul>
mm. 37-51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stepwise ascending melody with diatonic planing in clarinets</li> <li>• Parallel fifth accompaniment in tuba and trombone</li> <li>• Ascending G major scalar lines in saxophones</li> <li>• Bitonality of D major and G major</li> </ul>
mm. 52-58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensemble divided into three groupings: stepwise planing, a 16<sup>th</sup> note bass line, and horns with 32<sup>nd</sup> notes</li> </ul>
mm. 59-68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First appearance of celesta</li> <li>• Chamber winds setting with solo bass clarinet, oboes, flute, and bassoons</li> </ul>
mm. 69-80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguity of pulse through rhythmic construction of constant motion</li> <li>• Woodwind choir with planing followed by brass choir without planing</li> </ul>
mm. 81-91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open 5<sup>th</sup> drone in alto saxophones</li> <li>• Stepwise ascending melodic line with diatonic planing (variation on opening melody)</li> <li>• Eb scalar lines in bassoons and tenor sax</li> </ul>
mm. 92-99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return of material from mm. 52-58</li> </ul>
mm. 100-123	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> chord drones in mallets</li> <li>• Variation on opening material. Descending planing lines instead of ascending.</li> <li>• End on G major triad</li> </ul>

## Melodic Content

The majority of this movement features diatonic, ascending melodic lines that differ in melodic content, phrasing, length, and instrumentation. The first of these melodies begins in measure 2 in the clarinet 1. This 15-measure melody is broken into four phrases that all start on G and each phrase ascends further than the prior phrase. The final phrase of the first presentation of the melody moves to the Eb clarinet to continue the ascending movement.

Clarinet in B $\flat$  1

Clarinet in B $\flat$  2

Musical Example 19 *Road Stories* movement II, mm 2-8, clarinet 1 and 2.  
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Higdon reduces the texture at measure 31 to allow the ensemble to play with a chamber music characteristic. Solos in the flute, oboe, and clarinet are more rhythmically complex than any prior musical material and feature large leaps that contrast with the stepwise motion of the accompanying voices. Prior melodic material was limited to a small range but these solo voices expand the melodic range to more than three octaves.

Flute 1

Oboe 1

Clarinet in B $\flat$  1

Fl.

Ob.

B $\flat$  Cl.

Musical Example 20 *Road Stories* movement II, mm 32-36, flute, oboe, clarinet 1.  
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A variation on the ascending lines begins at measure 43 in the trumpets. Instead of parallel thirds or triads Higdon displaces the second voice by two measures. The trumpets are not in strict canonical imitation, each voice has independence of rhythm that allows for the varying of length of the metric displacement between voices. Thirds are present throughout the line, although they are not as strictly followed as prior presentations of the melodic ideas.

The ascending lines build towards a climax at measure 52 where the music is divided into two melodic ideas that break away from the lyrical style of the prior 51 measures. The low woodwinds and low brass feature a sixteenth note passage consisting of large leaps with reoccurring minor 7ths. The upper winds and trumpets continue the

established stepwise motion, though the four measures feature both ascending and descending motion. Both musical lines begin a decrescendo into silence in measure 56 which gives way to a chamber music style, similar to that of measure 31. This section features atmospheric lines in the mallet percussion that outline simultaneous G and A major triads that accompany the solo voices in the woodwinds. Solos by bass clarinet, oboes, bassoons, and flute contain a large intervallic distance between the highest and lowest voice, nearly a five-octave range.

A repeat of the ensemble duet from measure 52 appears at measure 94 to create the movement's climax which leads to a final presentation of the stepwise melodic line with one important variation. The stepwise melodic motion now descends, rather than ascends, beginning with the trumpets in measure 101, then passed throughout the ensemble in choirs. A gradual decrescendo through the final 23 measures ends with a pianissimo G major triad in the clarinets that was approached through descending stepwise motion.

The image displays a musical score for three Clarinets in Bb, labeled 1, 2, and 3. The music is written in 3/4 time and features a descending stepwise melodic line. The first four measures of the excerpt show the melody descending from G4 to D3, with triplets of eighth notes in measures 1 and 2. The final measure of the excerpt shows the three clarinets playing a G major triad (G4, B4, D5) in a pianissimo (pp) dynamic. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, time signatures, notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Musical Example 21 *Road Stories* movement II, mm 119-123, clarinets.  
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## Harmonic Content

This movement is the most consonant sounding of the three due to Higdon's utilization of diatonic triads through the majority of the movement. Traditional harmonic movement and resolution is not used, instead triads move by diatonic planing in mostly ascending motion. The ascending harmonic pattern is established in the first 15 measures of the movement by the clarinets, and is continued throughout the work by different sections. Often rhythmic drones, typically an open fifth, in lower woodwinds or low brass support the tonal center. At the beginning of the movement the bass clarinet and clarinet 3 play an open fifth of C and G reinforcing the key center of C, and helps to support an implied cadence when the triadic planing lands on a C triad.

Like all other compositions by Higdon, this movement features bitonality, with these sections of bitonality serving as contrast to the lyrical consonant sections. The keyboard percussion provides the first instance of bitonality at measure 31 through 36. Higdon stacks two 6ths that are a whole step apart, unlike the half step distance usually employed by the composer. These 6ths move in parallel motion throughout the 5 measures, with the 6ths becoming 5ths for three notes in the progression. This bitonality in the keyboards ends at measure 37 where the vibraphone sustains a DMm7 chord in first inversion. The horns take over the diatonic planing established in the opening but the key area has changed to Eb; the horns in combination with the keyboard instruments creates a bitonality that is more consonant than dissonant



The image shows a musical score for measures 32-36 of *Road Stories* movement II. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes Marimba, Chimes, and Vibraphone. The second system includes Mba., Chm., and Vib. The music is in 3/4 time and features complex harmonic textures with bitonality.

Musical Example 22 *Road Stories* movement II, mm 32-36, marimba, chimes, and vibraphone.

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Measures 37-50 continue the usage of bitonality, though nearly all of the ensemble is playing in the key center of D. The two exceptions to this key center are in the alto saxophones and chimes. The alto saxophones have ascending scalar lines in the key of G major while the chimes create an open 5<sup>th</sup> drone effect on E and B. The tension of this bitonal area moves the music to a climax point at measure 52 where the music moves between measures of A and B. These keys are left ambiguous due to chords missing thirds, and the presence of alternating of major and minor thirds in chords with thirds. The same harmonic techniques from measures 52-57 are used again in measures 92-99.

Higdon returns to a single key area at measure 69, with the ensemble staying in D major for 12 measures featuring more diatonic planing. A direct modulation at measure 81 takes the ensemble to the key of Eb. The open 5<sup>th</sup> in the chimes creates dissonance by sounding an open 5<sup>th</sup> on F. The chimes could be seen as a brief bitonal interruption, though the use of the scalar line in the key of Eb leads to analysis of the F and C as moments of dissonance instead.

Measure 100 begins the final key area of the movement, G major. Diatonic planing, beginning in the keyboard percussion instruments, descend towards a final cadence in G set up by a 23 measure long pedal G in the tuba and double bass. This is the only section to feature descending planing, and planing using 7<sup>th</sup> chords.

### Rhythmic Content

The slower tempo of the movement should not be associated with rhythmic simplicity. Syncopation is present throughout the work, as well as a melodic avoidance of beat 1. The harmonic voices use syncopation as a way to obscure the downbeat. This is evident in the drone rhythm in 3<sup>rd</sup> clarinet and bass clarinet at the beginning of the movement. The drone starts as two dotted quarter notes per measure until measure 9, where a quarter note displaces the rhythm leading to an obfuscation of beat one.

The image shows musical notation for two instruments: Clarinet in B $\flat$  and Bass Clarinet. Both staves are in 3/4 time. The Clarinet in B $\flat$  staff shows a sequence of dotted quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, G60, A60, B60, C61, D61, E61, F61, G61, A61, B61, C62, D62, E62, F62, G62, A62, B62, C63, D63, E63, F63, G63, A63, B63, C64, D64, E64, F64, G64, A64, B64, C65, D65, E65, F65, G65, A65, B65, C66, D66, E66, F66, G66, A66, B66, C67, D67, E67, F67, G67, A67, B67, C68, D68, E68, F68, G68, A68, B68, C69, D69, E69, F69, G69, A69, B69, C70, D70, E70, F70, G70, A70, B70, C71, D71, E71, F71, G71, A71, B71, C72, D72, E72, F72, G72, A72, B72, C73, D73, E73, F73, G73, A73, B73, C74, D74, E74, F74, G74, A74, B74, C75, D75, E75, F75, G75, A75, B75, C76, D76, E76, F76, G76, A76, B76, C77, D77, E77, F77, G77, A77, B77, C78, D78, E78, F78, G78, A78, B78, C79, D79, E79, F79, G79, A79, B79, C80, D80, E80, F80, G80, A80, B80, C81, D81, E81, F81, G81, A81, B81, C82, D82, E82, F82, G82, A82, B82, C83, D83, E83, F83, G83, A83, B83, C84, D84, E84, F84, G84, A84, B84, C85, D85, E85, F85, G85, A85, B85, C86, D86, E86, F86, G86, A86, B86, C87, D87, E87, F87, G87, A87, B87, C88, D88, E88, F88, G88, A88, B88, C89, 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A280, B280, C281, D281, E281, F281, G281, A281, B281, C282, D282, E282, F282, G282, A282, B282, C283, D283, E283, F283, G283, A283, B283, C284, D284, E284, F284, G284, A284, B284, C285, D285, E285, F285, G285, A285, B285, C286, D286, E286, F286, G286, A286, B286, C287, D287, E287, F287, G287, A287, B287, C288, D288, E288, F288, G288, A288, B288, C289, D289, E289, F289, G289, A289, B289, C290, D290, E290, F290, G290, A290, B290, C291, D291, E291, F291, G291, A291, B291, C292, D292, E292, F292, G292, A292, B292, C293, D293, E293, F293, G293, A293, B293, C294, D294, E294, F294, G294, A294, B294, C295, D295, E295, F295, G295, A295, B295, C296, D296, E296, F296, G296, A296, B296, C297, D297, E297, F297, G297, A297, B297, C298, D298, E298, F298, G298, A298, B298, C299, D299, E299, F299, G299, A299, B299, C300, D300, E300, F300, G300, A300, B300, C301, D301, E301, F301, G301, A301, B301, C302, D302, E302, F302, G302, A302, B302, C303, D303, E303, F303, G303, A303, B303, C304, D304, E304, F304, G304, A304, B304, C305, D305, E305, F305, G305, A305, B305, C306, D306, E306, F306, G306, A306, B306, C307, D307, E307, F307, G307, A307, B307, C308, D308, E308, F308, G308, A308, B308, C309, D309, E309, F309, G309, A309, B309, C310, D310, E310, F310, G310, A310, B310, C311, D311, E311, F311, G311, A311, B311, C312, D312, E312, F312, G312, A312, B312, C313, D313, E313, F313, G313, A313, B313, C314, D314, E314, F314, G314, A314, B314, C315, D315, E315, F315, G315, A315, B315, C316, D316, E316, F316, G316, A316, B316, C317, D317, E317, F317, G317, A317, B317, C318, D318, E318, F318, G318, A318, B318, C319, D319, E319, F319, G319, A319, B319, C320, D320, E320, F320, G320, A320, B320, C321, D321, E321, F321, G321, A321, B321, C322, D322, E322, F322, G322, A322, B322, C323, D323, E323, F323, G323, A323, B323, C324, D324, E324, F324, G324, A324, B324, C325, D325, E325, F325, G325, A325, B325, C326, D326, E326, F326, G326, A326, B326, C327, D327, E327, F327, G327, A327, B327, C328, D328, E328, F328, G328, A328, B328, C329, D329, E329, F329, G329, A329, B329, C330, D330, E330, F330, G330, A330, B330, C331, D331, E331, F331, G331, A331, B331, C332, D332, E332, F332, G332, A332, B332, C333, D333, E333, F333, G333, A333, B333, C334, D334, E334, F334, G334, A334, B334, C335, D335, E335, F335, G335, A335, B335, C336, D336, E336, F336, G336, A336, B336, C337, D337, E337, F337, G337, A337, B337, C338, D338, E338, F338, G338, A338, B338, C339, D339, E339, F339, G339, A339, B339, C340, D340, E340, F340, G340, A340, B340, C341, D341, E341, F341, G341, A341, B341, C342, D342, E342, F342, G342, A342, B342, C343, D343, E343, F343, G343, A343, B343, C344, D344, E344, F344, G344, A344, B344, C345, D345, E345, F345, G345, A345, B345, C346, D346, E346, F346, G346, A346, B346, C347, D347, E347, F347, G347, A347, B347, C348, D348, E348, F348, G348, A348, B348, C349, D349, E349, F349, G349, A349, B349, C350, D350, E350, F350, G350, A350, B350, C351, D351, E351, F351, G351, A351, B351, C352, D352, E352, F352, G352, A352, B352, C353, D353, E353, F353, G353, A353, B353, C354, D354, E354, F354, G354, A354, B354, C355, D355, E355, F355, G355, A355, B355, C356, D356, E356, F356, G356, A356, B356, C357, D357, E357, F357, G357, A357, B357, C358, D358, E358, F358, G358, A358, B358, C359, D359, E359, F359, G359, A359, B359, C360, D360, E360, F360, G360, A360, B360, C361, D361, E361, F361, G361, A36

As evidenced by the melodic examples presented earlier in the chapter, the ascending melodic lines avoid beat one. This is established by ties across the bar lines or by rests on beat 1; Higdon also uses this technique in the chamber solo sections. There is an increased rhythmic complexity in the solos of the work that creates contrast to the approachable syncopation of the rest of the work.

### Performance Commentary

This consonant movement is slower than the surrounding movements, but no less complex. The tempo does not affect the rhythmic difficulty of the work. The avoidance of beat one throughout the work increase the importance of each performers internal pulse and their attention to the conductor. The work is consonant, but contains diatonic and chromatic planing throughout which leads to intonation challenges across the ensemble.

The principal players of each woodwind section are required to play solo passages in a chamber setting. These passages should be treated carefully to balance the solos as equal musical partners, and avoid the dominance of one instrument. The flutes are frequently in the extreme upper register of the instrument, paired with one or more instruments in octaves. Attention to intonation is needed frequently to address tuning issues in the woodwind octaves. The same detail payed to octave intonation must be given to the large melodic intervals, especially the minor 7<sup>th</sup> interval found throughout the work.

### Movement III – *Rail Lights*

Higdon describes the final movement of *Road Stories* by saying:

“*Rail Lights* is the visual phenomena of being on a train, looking through windows at fast passing lights. No picture is clear, but sometimes a space will go by, where the passenger can see a larger picture than the momentary shifts of light slivers. The traveling that we all do while moving from one day to the next often shows us only passing glimmers, but there are those moments when a clear picture shifts into the focus of a larger world.”<sup>93</sup>

#### Form and Structure

*Rail Lights* is five minutes of minimalistic motion that shows Higdon’s skill in combining motives to create a compelling musical texture. Throughout the movement Higdon takes a sparse texture and layers it with additional performers to create terraced dynamics. The moments of loud dynamics and full textures suddenly give way to small instrumentation and soft dynamics. This rise and fall happens three times throughout the work before Higdon brings the work to a final climax.

The structure of this movement is best described by a quote from Marian Stewart, “The use of minimalism with regard to texture often is the best indication of a sense of formal sectional structure...”<sup>94</sup> The divisions given below in the form diagram are based on the double bar lines inserted by the composer; each of the new sections begin with changes in texture. The work does not change tempo, nor are there many apparent key areas, so these do not factor into determining form and sectional structure.

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93. M. Stewart, 139.

94. Ibid, 120.

Figure 5. *Rail Lights* form chart.

<b>Form Division</b>	<b>Descriptions of musical material</b>
mm. 1-41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constant 16<sup>th</sup> rhythmic construction introduced in trumpets</li> <li>• Layering of motives</li> <li>• Gradual thickening of texture</li> </ul>
mm. 42-46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition with elements of first section</li> </ul>
mm. 47-74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetitive motives in celesta</li> <li>• Canons in woodwinds</li> </ul>
mm. 75-99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train effect in low brass and low winds</li> </ul>
mm. 100-123	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodwinds with constant 16ths</li> <li>• 16<sup>th</sup> in imitation beginning at 116</li> <li>• Percussion absent through most of section</li> </ul>
mm. 124-161	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of sextuplets and quintuplets</li> <li>• First triadic harmony of the work in measure 156</li> </ul>

### Melodic Content

The melodic content of this movement is created by layering motives and expanding on them. Each segment of the form features different motives and musical ideas, creating different scenes or vignettes that one would see while traveling on a train. There are similarities between the different sections of the work, but nothing is presented in exact repetition, just as a traveler on a train would not see exact repetitions of scenery on their journey, instead they would notice similarities in the fields and cities they pass.

The movement begins with constant sixteenth notes divided between the three trumpet parts which moves from trumpets to clarinets in measure 22. The flute 1 and oboe 1 join the sixteenth note line at measure 11, with an inversion of the trumpet 1 line.

Trumpet in B $\flat$  1

Trumpet in B $\flat$  2

Trumpet in B $\flat$  3

*p*

B $\flat$  Tpt. 1

B $\flat$  Tpt. 2

B $\flat$  Tpt. 3

Musical Example 24 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 1-4, trumpets.  
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Flute 1

Oboe 1

*mp*

*mp*

Fl. 1

Ob. 1

Musical Example 25 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 11-14, flute 1 and oboe.  
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There are few measures in the movement that do not have a sixteenth note rhythmic construction as Higdon uses this rhythmic construction to create the effect of motion throughout. These sixteenth notes become the base layer to which Higdon adds to.

A second melodic idea begins in the bassoons in measure 4. This line features long note values with ties across bar lines and large ascending and descending intervals.



Musical Example 26 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 4-10, bassoons.  
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As this melodic idea evolves, it retains the long note values with ties and the intervallic distance rather than being exact repetitions of both pitch and rhythm. Bass clarinet, euphonium, tuba, and double bass all join into this musical idea. Higdon spotlights this grouping of instruments in measure 34 where the sixteenth notes are noticeably absent.

Higdon typically includes sixteenth note scalar lines in her works and this movement is more evidence of this. The sixteenth note scalar lines in the flutes beginning at measure 22 is the third melodic idea of the section. The C major scale is used, but Higdon has written the line so that no tonicization occurs. The scalar lines and fragments do not end on recurring pitches, nor is there a 7-1 scale degree relationship present.

The image displays a musical score for four flutes, labeled Flute 1, Flute 2, Flute 3, and Flute 4. The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems, each containing four staves. The first system covers measures 22-26. Flute 1 and Flute 2 have a forte (ff) dynamic marking. Flute 3 and Flute 4 have a forte (ff) dynamic marking. The score shows a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth notes and slurs. The second system continues the pattern, with a measure rest in measure 33. The score is divided into two systems, each with four staves.

Musical Example 27 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 22-26, flutes.  
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This idea continues until measure 33 where it is interrupted by two measures of rests where no sixteenths are present. The scalar line returns in measure 35, continuing through the transition, measures 42-46, finally ending at measure 51.

The low woodwinds and low brass present a five-measure theme beginning at measure 47. This only appears one other time, at measure 94. This theme is used during transitional material before and after the middle section of the work.



The image displays two systems of musical notation for brass instruments. The first system includes parts for Trombone, Bass Trombone, Euphonium, and Tuba, all marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system includes parts for Tbn., B. Tbn., Euph., and Tuba. The notation shows scalar lines in the upper woodwinds, now found in all upper woodwinds.

Musical Example 28 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 47-51, trombones, euphonium, and tuba.

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This is layered with a variation on the prior scalar lines, now found in all upper woodwinds. These scalar lines imply a key of D through accidentals and ending on an A major chord, which is V in the key of D. As with the theme in the low woodwinds and brass, these measures appear again as transitional material at measure 94.

The image shows a musical score for two woodwind instruments, Flute and Oboe 1, in 4/4 time. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 47, 48, and 49. The second system contains measures 50 and 51. The Flute part is written on a single staff, and the Oboe 1 part is written on a single staff. Both parts feature a constant sixteenth note rhythmic construction, with frequent syncopations and rapid runs. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4.

Musical Example 29 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 47-51, flutes and oboe 1.  
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The celesta enters in measure 51 to continue the constant sixteenth note rhythmic construction. The initial syncopation of the left hand becomes straight eighth notes in measure 53 and when combined with the syncopations of the right hand, the resulting rhythmic construction is constant sixteenths.

*sounds Sva*

Celesta

Cel.

Musical Example 30 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 51-55, celesta.  
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This two-measure figure is repeated eleven times throughout this section. Higdon layers this repetitive figure with a different repeating figure in the piccolo. The piccolo plays its four-measure syncopated figure four times.

Piccolo

Musical Example 31 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 53-57, piccolo.  
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The three flute voices are written in canon beginning at measure 54. The canon is set at a distance of one beat, with the second and third voices containing slight pitch variations of the original voice. The repetitive movement of the pitches causes the combination of the three voices to often be dissonant. The cannon transforms into rhythmic sixteenth notes similar to the trumpets at the beginning of the movement.

Flute 1

Flute 2

Flute 3

ff

ff

ff

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Fl. 3

Musical Example 32 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 54-57, flutes and piccolo.  
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The image displays two systems of musical notation for three flutes. The first system is labeled 'Flute 1', 'Flute 2', and 'Flute 3' on the left. The second system is labeled 'Fl. 1', 'Fl. 2', and 'Fl. 3' on the left. All staves are in 4/4 time. The notation features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs, eighth-note patterns, and quarter notes, often with accents (>) and slurs. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first system covers measures 58-61, and the second system covers measures 62-65.

Musical Example 33 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 58-61, flutes.  
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At measure 71 the woodwinds begin a brief call and response. It begins in canonical nature, but loses the strict repetition after two measures. The line culminates in a change of texture and character at measure 75, which begins a new section of the work.

Beginning in measure 75, there is a variation on the flute sixteenth note scalar lines from measure 22 presented in oboe and clarinet 1. These scalar lines are layered with rhythmic sixteenth note fragments in the flutes and marimba, similar to the trumpet sixteenth notes at the beginning of the work. A new musical idea is presented by bassoon, tenor sax, euphonium, tuba, and double bass at measure 75. This syncopated line creates a sense of speeding up through the gradual reducing of note values through the phrase. This line is a reoccurring programmatic theme that represents a train starting

and gaining speed. It is repeated in fragment at measure 84, then in full with different pitches at measure 87.

Bassoon 1  
 Bassoon 2  
 Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$   
 Alto Sax in E $\flat$   
 Tenor Sax in B $\flat$

Bsn. 1  
 Bsn. 2  
 B. Cl.  
 A. Sx.  
 T. Sx.

Musical Example 34 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 75-80, bassoon 1 and 2, alto saxophone 1 and 2, tenor saxophone.

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A change of texture at measure 100 features the woodwinds continuing the rhythmic drive of constant sixteenth notes, although now the notes move in whole steps.

Higdon uses whole steps two ways in this section: sixteenth notes alternating notes a half step away and sets of sixteenth notes moving a whole step every four notes. The sixteenths are layered with scalar lines, now in bass clarinet and bassoon. A shortened version of the train theme appears in the saxophones in measure 106, with horns joining in measure 110.

Repetitive whole step movement continues throughout the rest of the work, being found in different woodwind voices until three measures from the end. Sixteenth note scalar lines receive some slight variations as the work moves toward the final measures. In measure 124-131, the scalar lines add quintuplets and sextuplets to the sixteenth note rhythms. In measure 141, the scalar lines return to sixteenth notes beginning in the tenor saxophone. Flutes, oboe 1, celesta, join the scalar line at measure 145 and continue these scales until the final measure of the movement.

A new theme is presented in the low brass and low woodwinds in measure 144. The syncopated line combines ties, triplets, and dotted rhythms to contrast the rapid moving sixteenth notes of the rest of the ensemble. The theme combines stepwise motion with large intervallic movement unlike the other themes of the movement that have stepwise motion or large interval motion, but not both. These low instruments join with trumpets at measure 156 to create sustained G chords, the first sustained chords of the entire movement. The layers of rapidly moving sixteenth notes ascend or descend towards a final cadence, ending on a G major triad.

#### Harmonic Content

Unlike the other two movements of this work, there are no clear defined sections of key centers in the work until the last six measures. The individual melodic lines and

their counterpoint are the focus of the movement, and the harmonic implications of their counterpoint is secondary to the horizontal movement of the lines. The individual lines do not feature dominant to tonic movement, nor do they feature leading tone resolution movements. When asked about tonal centers by Dr. Virginia Broffitt in her 2010 dissertation, Higdon stated, “to be honest, I never think of tonal centers...not in any of my pieces... I’m always thinking of how much direction is in the line and the textures and harmonies, and how ‘unclear’ I want things to sound.”<sup>95</sup>

The trumpet counterpoint at the beginning of the work, as seen in musical example 24 features three lines with different dominating pitches. The combination of F#, G, and A do not create an implied tonal center, and no pitch of the three permeates the counterpoint of all three voices. This trend is seen throughout the first section of the work which features voices that are steps, either whole or half, apart. This is evidenced in the trumpets at measure 23, as well as clarinets from measures 22-30. Other examples of this same technique can be found throughout the work such as: measures 103-115 in flutes and oboe 1, trumpets at measures 116-123, and flutes and oboe measures 135-145.

Trumpet in B $\flat$  1

Trumpet in B $\flat$  2

Trumpet in B $\flat$  3

Musical Example 35 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 23-26, trumpets.  
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95. Broffitt, 29.



The image displays a musical score for four parts: Clarinet in B $\flat$  1, Clarinet in B $\flat$  2, B $\flat$  Cl. 1, and B $\flat$  Cl. 2. The score is written in 4/4 time and spans measures 22 to 26. The Clarinet in B $\flat$  1 part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet in measure 24. The Clarinet in B $\flat$  2 part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with continuous sixteenth-note patterns. The B $\flat$  Cl. 1 part has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet in measure 24. The B $\flat$  Cl. 2 part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with continuous sixteenth-note patterns. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B $\flat$ ).

Musical Example 36 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 22-26, clarinets 1 and 2.  
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The first sustained chord of the work is found in measure 156 in the brass and low woodwinds, a G7sus4 in second inversion. Higdon uses this chord to create tonality for the end of the work through the four measures of the repeated chord. The suspension is finally resolved into the last chord, a G major triad. The rapid sixteenth note voices above the G chords incorporate the G major scale into their movement, but notes outside of the scale continue to be present.

The image displays a musical score for eight instruments: Trumpet in B♭ 1, Trumpet in B♭ 2, Trumpet in B♭ 3, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Bass Trombone, Euphonium, and Tuba. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a near-constant rhythmic construction of sixteenth notes. The dynamic marking *f* (forte) is present at the beginning of each staff. The notation includes various rhythmic values, including sixteenth notes, eighth notes, and quarter notes, with some measures featuring a syncopated off-beat measure.

Musical Example 37 *Road Stories* movement III, mm 156-159, trumpets, trombones, euphonium, tuba.

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### Rhythmic Content

This movement features a near constant rhythmic construction of sixteenth notes symbolizing the constant movement of a train. Measure 34, and the final measure are the only measures in the work to not contain sixteenth notes. The final measure contains a sustained note followed by a sforzando eighth note to end the work. Measure 34 is an abrupt interruption to the sixteenth note construction featuring a syncopated off beat measure immediately followed by a return to the sixteenth note construction.

Unlike other Higdon works, syncopation is not a constant presence in this movement. The main use of syncopation is in the celesta right hand from measures 51-74. This pairs with the 8ths in the left hand to create a constant sixteenth note rhythmic construction. The other use of syncopation in the work is during the train themes as seen in example 34. Triplets and sextuplets are typically found in the works of Higdon, but in this movement they are mostly absent due to the prevalence of the sixteenth note rhythmic construction.

#### Performance Commentary

The final movement of *Road Stories* is a rhythmically driving work from beginning to end. Performers and conductors must always subdivide in sixteenth notes throughout. Although the syncopation in this movement is minimal, the constant presence of sixteenth notes creates an aurally complex rhythmic sound.

The technical passages of the movement utilize the rapid pace of sixteenth notes throughout, but the passages are scalar. Each player must play confidently with independence as there is little doubling throughout the movement. Canonical imitation throughout, often displaced by a beat or less, require independence of all performers. The celesta is critical to the success of the movement and may not be omitted.

## CHAPTER VII – MACHINE

*Machine* was commissioned by The National Symphony Orchestra of Washington D.C., in 2003. In 2017, the work was transcribed for band by David M. Blon, a Doctorate of Musical Arts student at the University of Missouri Kansas City where Dr. Higdon was, at the time, the composer in residence; *Machine* is the only band work written by Higdon that was not transcribed by Higdon herself. The band transcription received its premiere performance on April 24, 2018 by the University of Missouri Kansas City Conservatory Wind Symphony conducted by Dr. Steven D. Davis. *Machine* was recorded in 2018 by the University of Missouri Kansas City Wind Symphony, though the containing album is currently only available on SoundCloud.<sup>96</sup>

Higdon provides the following program notes for the work, “I wrote “Machine” as an encore tribute to composers like Mozart and Tchaikovsky, who seemed to be able to write so many notes and so much music that it seems like they were machines!”<sup>97</sup> A review of the work in the Washington Post, as quoted on Higdon’s website, describes the piece as, “...one long, loud, freight-train crescendo with hellishly snapping winds and jumping-bean rhythms, and it sweeps relentlessly forward for just under three minutes, then stops on a dime. For sheer unpretentious fun it was just the ticket.”<sup>98</sup>

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96. The SoundCloud album containing the wind band music of Jennifer Higdon can be found at: <https://soundcloud.com/bandsatumkcconservatory/sets/digital-release-122018>.

97. Jennifer Higdon, “Machine Program Notes,” accessed January 30, 2019, <http://www.jenniferhigdon.com/pdf/program-notes/Machine.pdf>.

98. Jennifer Higdon, “Orchestral Reviews,” accessed January 30, 2019, <http://jenniferhigdon.com/orchestralreviews.html>.

## Instrumentation

Piccolo  
2 Flutes  
2 Oboes  
3 Clarinets in Bb  
1 Bass Clarinet  
2 Bassoons  
2 Alto Saxophones in Eb  
1 Tenor Saxophone in Bb  
1 Baritone Saxophone in Eb  
3 Trumpets in Bb  
4 Horns in F  
2 Tenor Trombones  
1 Bass Trombone  
1 Euphonium  
1 Tuba  
1 Double Bass  
Timpani

*Machine* is scored using typical wind band instrumentation. Unlike other fast tempo works by Higdon, this work only utilizes one timpanist in the percussion section. The rhythmic and accented nature of the winds in this work are a substitute for the extensive percussion writing typically found in the works of Higdon.

## Form and Structure

This two-minute work follows ABA'B' form with a nine-measure coda. The sections of form are defined by their melodic and motivic contents. The A' and B' sections are not in their original presentation's key area, but retain their melodic contents. The recall of prior material with different orchestration is a hallmark of Higdon's writing, and a way that Higdon helps to establish form.<sup>99</sup>

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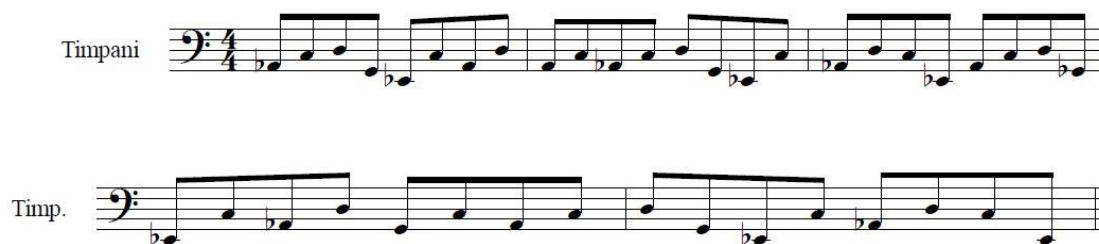
99. Reitz, *Composing in Color*, 21.

Figure 6. *Machine* form chart.

<b>Form Division</b>	<b>Descriptions of musical material</b>
A: mm. 1-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Layering of multiple musical ideas beginning with 5 beat timpani motive</li> <li>• Isolated tonalities, no unifying tonality</li> </ul>
B: mm. 24-39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offbeat trumpet solo in A</li> <li>• 5 note grouping scalar lines in woodwinds</li> <li>• Bitonality of A/E major</li> </ul>
A': mm. 40-53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All layers occur simultaneously</li> <li>• Isolated tonalities, no unifying tonality</li> </ul>
B': mm. 54-64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offbeat trumpet solo in G major</li> <li>• Tonalities shifting between F major and G major</li> </ul>
Coda: mm. 65-73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triadic planing moves ensemble from bitonality to a final chord of D major</li> </ul>

### Melodic Content

Higdon begins the work with a five beat timpani motive that is repeated throughout both A sections in the work. The five beat motive creates a hemiola of five over four against the rest of the ensemble. This motive is the only melodic idea in the work that is featured in exact repetition. The notes of the motive, when aligned vertically, create the combination of Ab major and G open fifth. This bitonal chord, with two chords a half step apart with one third omitted, is a hallmark of Higdon's compositional style.



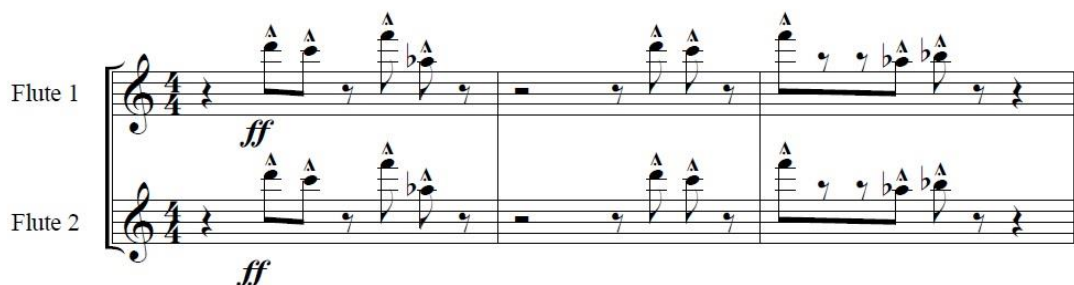
Musical Example 38 *Machine*, mm 1-5, timpani.  
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The sixteenth not scalar lines in the clarinets and oboes begin in measure 5 as fragments of scales. Throughout the A section, the scalar lines become longer until measure 17 where the lines are three to five beats long.

The image shows four musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Oboe 2' and the three staves below it are labeled 'Clarinet in B♭ 1', 'Clarinet in B♭ 2', and 'Clarinet in B♭ 3'. All staves are in 4/4 time. The Oboe 2 staff shows a single melodic line starting in measure 5. The three Clarinet staves show more complex, overlapping scalar lines, with the first two marked with a forte (ff) dynamic. The notation includes many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, indicating rapid scalar passages.

Musical Example 39 *Machine*, mm 17-19, oboe 2 and clarinets.  
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Higdon begins the next melodic idea at measure 8 in the flutes and alto saxophones. Instead of a repetitive motive, the flutes and alto saxes play a one measure theme followed by rhythmic variations on the theme. The pitches are not altered, but in some variations the pitches have been reordered.



Musical Example 40 *Machine*, mm 17-19, oboe 2 and clarinets.  
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The B section begins with a solo trumpet playing an ascending and descending scalar line in A major. Higdon avoids presenting the scale in order, instead skipping notes and inserting intervallic leaps of fourths and fifths. The range of the trumpet is a minor ninth, with the highest note being a B (A concert).



Musical Example 41 *Machine*, mm 24-26, trumpet 1.  
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Scalar lines in the woodwinds are grouped in fives, both in quintuplets and five connected sixteenth notes. The scalar lines are built on the E major scale, although none of the scales begin on E. There are no predominant notes at the beginning or end of the scalar lines to suggest a scale mode, so they are best analyzed as E major.

Both the A and B sections feature musical motion through the layering of musical lines. The A' and B' feature the same musical lines as before, but instead of introducing one line at a time, Higdon begins with all musical lines layered. The A' is a much-shortened version of A, 10 measures compared to 23 measures. There is no development



of themes or motives here, instead Higdon composed a final presentation of these melodic ideas without changes. The B' receives the same shortened presentation, now 11 measures instead of 16.

### Harmonic Content

The A sections of *Machine* do not present a clear tonal area. Instead, each musical idea is treated as an individual voice with its own tonality. Higdon has discussed this style of composition describing it as "...writing contrapuntally rather than harmonically."<sup>100</sup> A harmonic cluster is created throughout the A section, causing tension begging for a resolution.

The work begins with Higdon's bitonal trademark, two triads half step away with one missing a third, in the timpani. The timpani does not provide a harmonic foundation for the other voices, instead the woodwind entrances in the first five measures suggest a tonality of C minor (oboe, clarinet, and alto saxophones) or F minor (bassoons). The F minor of the bassoons move to a pedal G in measure 7 where the clarinets now have scalar lines in G minor. Throughout the changing individual tonalities, the trumpets present their own tonal cluster of Eb, F, and G before settling in F major in measure 16. The motive of the flutes and alto saxophones that begins in measure 8 is based on a BbMm7 add9 chord.

In measure 17, Higdon introduces another compositional hallmark, parallel fifths in the trombones and euphonium. This E open fifth creates sustained harmonies without establishing a major or minor tonality, while at the same time moving stepwise towards resolution at measure 24. Underneath the E fifth is a pedal D in the timpani and a motive

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100. Reitz, 16.

in bass clarinet, bassoon, baritone saxophone, bass trombone, and tuba that suggests D. The low wind and low brass motive carefully omits the third to provide modal ambiguity. With the layering of the scalar line in clarinets, measures 17-23 presents a large harmonic cluster containing tonalities of E, D, G, C, Bb. If the tonal center pitches are combined, it creates a CMm7 add 9 chord, although this is not an overarching tonal structure due to the lack of harmonic movement in C throughout the individual voices.

The B section begins at measure 24 with a bitonal chord of C# minor and B with no third. The harmonic voices of saxophones, horns, tuba, and double bass establish a tonality of E major in measure 25. The five note groupings in the clarinets and flutes are also in E major. The melodic line in the trumpet tonicizes A major, creating a bitonality of E and A majors. The tonal pitches of the two keys create Higdon's prominent interval of a perfect fifth.

A two measure bitonal transition at measure 40, DMm7 and C, leads to A' at measure 42. The bitonal harmonic movements returns in the A', but all parts have been transposed a half step. The B' section also is transposed, but not at a consistent interval. The trumpet solo, beginning at measure 55, is now in the key of G major. The five note groupings alternate keys between F major and G major.

The coda, beginning at measure 65, begins with a Gm7 chord alternating with a D major triad. In measure 70, the trumpets, trombone 2, and euphonium sustain a D major triad for four measures until the end of the piece. At the same time, the oboes, alto saxophones, baritone saxophone, horns, trombone 1, bass trombone, tuba, and double bass descend from D major in planing triads down to a Gb major triad. The descending

line is followed by Bb major, Ab major, Gb major, Ab major chords, still utilizing planing, before resolving to D major for the final chord of the work.

### Rhythmic Content

*Machine*'s high energy is established through the constant pulse of eighth and sixteenth notes throughout. There is no beat in the work that has a slower rhythmic construction than two eighth notes, with a majority of the work featuring a rhythmic construction of sixteenth notes. Syncopations throughout the work avoid the extreme complexity that is common in the music of Higdon. Repetitive eighth rest followed by eighth note patterns are common in melodic and accompanimental lines. Ties across bar lines are nearly absent from the work, primarily found in measures 65-69 in the horns.

Both the A section and B section feature rhythms based on the number five. The opening timpani motive is a five-beat pattern that creates a five over four hemiola. The same motive occurs in the A' section in tuba and double bass. The B and B' sections feature scalar lines in groupings of 5. These take place as both quintuplets and five sixteenth notes slurred. The works of Higdon typically feature triplets and sextuplets rather than the quintuplets presented in this work.

### Performance Commentary

*Machine* presents the most complex harmonies of all the works investigated in this dissertation. The layering of musical ideas all with their own keys force the need for player independence. Ensembles may benefit from rehearsing the A sections in sectionals or small group rehearsals. Although the work features many rapid technical passages, they are predominantly scalar lines or utilize notes found within a major scale.

If possible, measures 24-39, and 54-73 in trumpet 1 should be played on Bb piccolo trumpet for ease of playing.

## CHAPTER VIII – CONCLUSION

On her experiences composing, Jennifer Higdon stated, “It’s pretty amazing to think that you can write music that will actually affect people and that people have fun with.”<sup>101</sup>

Her intuitive compositional style evolved from her unique background and musical training. No matter the difficulty of the music, or the ensemble she carefully considers those playing the music.

I try to make sure that if I’m writing music, it’s something that’s going to be playable for the group. I’m really, really careful about that because I’ve been on the other side of the fence. I know what it’s like to sit there and try to interpret a new work of music. It’s not an easy thing to do. So I do everything I can when I’m writing to make sure it works.<sup>102</sup>

Research on the music of Jennifer Higdon revealed the characteristics of her compositional style. This dissertation identified those elements in the included wind band works, confirming that her stylistic traits are present in her wind band repertoire as well as her orchestral repertoire. Her use of bitonality is found in all of the four works in this dissertation, with an emphasis on her trademark half-step triads. The high energy of *Kelly’s Field*, *Machine*, and *Rail Lights* is established through Higdon’s characteristic syncopation and rhythmic complexity. Although non-traditional form and structure are present in the music of Higdon, this dissertation found *Mysterium* and *Kelly’s Field* to contain traditional forms.

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101. Broffitt, 113.

102. Ibid., 113.

The four works discussed in this dissertation are only a selection of Jennifer Higdon's wind band music. Further research should be done on Higdon's concerti for soloist and wind ensemble. Additionally, the chamber works featuring winds such as *Autumn Music*, *Ceremonies*, *Solitudes*, or *Stomp and Dance* warrants research and analysis.

The wind band music of Jennifer Higdon is high quality music that is deserving of recordings, performances, and research. Though sometimes labeled as "accessible", this author and Dr. Higdon do not see this negatively. Whether writing for orchestras, wind bands, or chamber music Higdon creates music that is both auditorily and intellectually stimulating. When discussing the effects her music has on others she says:

For me music speaks to a part of each person that is hard to define with words. The truth is, there is not a way to anticipate or even explain this. And while the reason for composing is different for each person who creates music, for me it's about communicating with something undefinable within musicians and audience members. That's spiritual communication and a true inspiration for composing.<sup>103</sup>

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103. Reitz, *Composing in Color*, 11.

## APPENDIX A – Interview with Dr. Scott A. Stewart

Mark Johnson: I'm here today to ask you some questions pertaining to *Mysterium*. My research has told me that you conducted the premiere recording and commissioned the work. Is that correct?

Scott Stewart: That's correct.

MJ: How did this commission evolve, or come about?

SS: The commission came about in a series of commissions that I did while I was at Emory University. Which was...when I came to Emory in '99, I also inherited the Atlanta youth wind symphony. Since I left Emory in 2013 I took the AYWS with me. But at the time I was kind of centered at Emory, and so I saw it as two jobs rolled into one. We started a commissioning initiative at Emory that involved both of the groups. So sometimes I would commission through the Atlanta Youth Wind Symphony and sometimes through Emory. In this case I...well as background, I was very interested in having both established composers in the wind band area, established composers not in the wind band area who had maybe been successful in orchestra, or opera, or chamber, or keyboard and had not written for winds; and I'm also very interested in film, television, and video game composers writing for wind ensemble or concert band. So those are three of mine, oh and a fourth category, I would say, is encouraging young composers. So, helping out with smaller scale commissions, somebody who is just out of college, undergraduate or maybe a masters degree. So those are the four categories of commissioning that I focused on. And in this case, because Jennifer was a part of what's called the Atlanta School of Composers, through the Atlanta Symphony and their conductor Robert Spano, which is kind of a really innovative concept for new music. In

that, instead of the orchestra commissioning a piece, bringing in the composer, premiering the work, then having them fly away, Robert established a handful of regulars. These are like: Michael Gandolfi, Osvaldo Golijov, Jennifer Higdon, Christopher Theofanidis, and some others, who would on a cyclical basis come to Atlanta with new works. And so they became our friends that came back again and again. Which helped soften the blow of the stigma of new music. So general audiences of the Symphony began to look forward to Jennifer Higdon coming back for another commission. Kind of a normal thing, instead of “Oh god, we’ve got to sit through some 20-minute bizarre piece sandwiched between Beethoven and Dvorak.” And it worked. And it’s still working. Jennifer and I had met on numerous occasions when she was in Atlanta. She had written a couple of wind pieces, I think the Fanfare Rhythmico was already out there, but there wasn’t a lot from any of the Atlanta School of composers. Since then both Michael Gandolfi and Chris... have written some awesome pieces for wind band. And this by the way, was, when I first approached Jennifer about writing, I think it was three weeks, I’ll have to check the calendar, but I was right before she won the Pulitzer Prize. (laughter)

MJ: (Laughter)

SS: And so, if I had timed it in the wrong direction, I wouldn’t have been able to afford it, and she wouldn’t have been available. So, I think it started as a, you know, “That sounds fun, let’s keep in touch about that.” And then it eventually, maybe within the year, I was able to secure a grant from the University Research Committee at Emory, which provided money for your area of expertise. I wasn’t necessarily looking for travel or publishing, but I was interested in the creation of new art works. We matched that with Scott Weiss



from South Carolina. So basically, Emory and South Carolina contributed the commission funding to Jennifer, and I wish I still had my emails but because my Emory email account is no longer active, I think I lost those when I left. But we talked back and forth for a while which she said, “I want to do a piece for you.” I think, even at the time she was so swamped with maybe two years out work or something that she said, “I don’t think I can do a full” I think we were suggesting a full 8-10-minute original piece, “so maybe I shouldn’t accept this commission”. I said, “well Hang on, let me toss another idea at you. Eric Whitacre and Steve Bryant and some others, Morton Lauridson, have had some success in transcribing some of their choral works to wind works.” And a lot of the time it works very nicely, sometimes it doesn’t. But certainly, Eric Whitacre and Morton Lauridson have had success in that area. And it adds a little bit of, well a lot of weight when the composer themselves do the transcriptions, instead of handing it over to an arranger. So, she said that’s really interesting, why don’t I send you a CD of a bunch of my choral works and see if you like any of them. So, she sent me a CD. I think initially she wanted to do, she said, “I have a nice version of *Amazing Grace*, that would be really fun to set for winds.” My reaction was, “Well that’s a great tune, and people love that tune, it’s really well known. But Frank Tichelli has a highly published version of *Amazing Grace*, and probably there are 5 or 6 others out there that people have and would probably be saturating the market with that one tune. I always like for commissions to have legs beyond the commission. That’s one of the complaints I have about new music for orchestra, a new piece for orchestra gets a premiere and that’s the last time you hear it. I was thinking I want this to be a score that’s in the bins at all the music publishers at Midwest, and people say, hey that’s a piece I want to do with my

group. I listened to all the songs on the CD, I did like the *Amazing Grace* version but I tried to steer her away from that. And the piece that really caught my ear on this collection was *O Magnum Mysterium*, which of course has probably dozens of settings going back to the Renaissance, and certainly a well-known Christmas text. But it's a really beautiful SATB version with flutes and vibes, and I thought that's kind of nice because there's already kind of a concept for percussion and woodwinds there. And then with the kind of wide-ranging choral sound, maybe that would be an interesting challenge to see if we could flesh out a wind ensemble score. And the flute parts are basically already written, and the vibe parts are basically already written. So, I suggested this, and she said that could be really, really nice. The one thing I did kind of insist on, because I'm always thinking about marketing. You know how people buy wine bottles based on the label sometimes, it kind of has to have a good title. I think Morten Lauridson's *O Magnum* was out, and it just looks like a choral piece. So, I said "I really think you should change the title to something that's more wind band friendly." And I think she was the one that suggested "Well how about just *Mysterium*?" I said, "That's perfect." Because a lot of composers, like Steve Bryant has almost all of his music as a one-word title. It's very evocative, and it kind of invites a first-time viewer to look further into it, just by its very name—mystery. So, we were successful in accomplishing getting a piece she had already written, and that was the impetus for her to say "Okay I have time to orchestrate this because it's already written." And so that's how it nudged her to say this is doable. And so, we went with the title *Mysterium* and she transcribed it. To my memory we didn't have to do many, um, alterations at all. She's a very skilled

orchestrator. The flute parts are wickedly devilish. People sometimes ask me what the grade of the piece is, and I tell them it's a grade IV and a grade VI.

MJ: Uh-huh

SS: Everybody's grade IV, except for the flutes who are grade VI (laughter). And, um, when you do it in the wind ensemble version, let's say you are at a high-level conservatory or college it's a little more doable because presumably you have one person per part. But if you are doing it with a concert band with the doubling, it's very, very challenging to line up all those flute entrances in the middle. But it's a very satisfying piece. And its scored well. I think, you know, when you rehearse it, its wise to tell the story of the genesis, and say this was a setting for this text and show the Latin text and English translation. Then explain it's a Christmas text, but now it's been abstracted a bit to remove words. And now we are telling a story, as we are doing when we play music without text, in a very beautiful way. But now we have the voice of Pulitzer prize winning composer who is really central on the composition scene right now. And so, we ended up premiering it and we skyped Jennifer into a couple rehearsals. We thought we were really cool, because these were vey innovate times to have a little face on a computer (laughter).

MJ: Sure

SS: Did the premiere at Emory. I think Scott did it later that spring. And the new recorded it and put it on that NAXOS album that we distributed.

MJ: Very good. There's not many recordings of this out there. I have listened to your recording quite a bit while preparing the work. It's interesting looking at the choral version of the work because they tend to separate the singers and the flutes by some

distance. They are almost antiphonal. Is this an approach you use when you did the work, or did you keep them in the section?

SS: Do you mean in terms of physical placement of the flutes?

MJ: Correct

SS: Yeah, we kept them in the ensemble. I was aware that, I don't think they were offstage, but I'm aware there are some performances where they are way off the stage, stage right. We did not try that necessarily, because the flutes do participate in the whole ensemble on the outer part. They have that crazy flute part in the center, but I think it would work. I think it would be an interesting option to try, we just didn't do it at the time.

MJ: What were some of your rehearsal challenges with this work?

SS: I think the first challenges were...with any piece in which the original medium wasn't wind band, knowing it was conceived as a choral work, was trying to figure out how to have a whole bunch of heterogeneous instruments to sound homogeneous. I guess that's something we do all the time anyway. It was particularly evident in, you know, in the same challenge with some of Eric's pieces and Laurdison's pieces where we're trying to, in a way, reproduce either a choral palette or an organ palette. Either way, the idea that we have either voices or pipes that are basically all the same shape trying to make a homogenous sound which is always a problem. We have double reeds versus conical bore, versus cylindrical bore, versus reeds. You get all kind of things conflicting in the air. That was the big one. I think that articulation also is always on my mind in terms of trying to avoid any abruptness. Entrances need to be organic, and choral/vocal in nature rather than hard tongued. Which can sometimes be the default for a lot of wind players,

even professional players. So, I think, finding some kind of vocal choral sounding soundscape in terms of blend and homogeneity, are the two biggest ones. Then, of course, a close third is the technical challenge of the flutes and finding a way to balance that energy and motion and virtuosity with a chorale texture beneath it. And trying to figure out how much is too much or not enough, and where is that little sweet point where there are two events happening simultaneously that also interact with each other. So, I think that that was always something that was addressed, especially in early rehearsal days.

MJ: Did you have rehearsals where you did not have the flutes on this, and just rehearsed the core of the band?

SS: Yes, yes. We did, in fact we had flute only rehearsals, then we had the rest of the group rehearsals, and then we would combine them later. I was fortunate at Emory to have that kind of schedule where I could say, like professional symphony orchestras or military band, flutes 5-6 tutti 6-6:30 whatever. I could divide it up. That sectional approach was a very effective way to allow each of the dispirit portions to work on their technique and then bring it together. So they weren't struggling with the technical part when they were in the full ensemble rehearsal

MJ: Do you have any advice for conductors who will conduct this work in the future?

SS: Well I probably do, and if I weren't driving, this is something that would be a good part for me to email you because I have a lot of notes in my score if those would help.

MJ: Yeah, that would be wonderful.

SS: I would, and I think there are a couple places where you find once you've rehearsed that are like these instruments should never play the same note at the same time. (Laugh)

Or there are too many thirds in this chord where I think I made some editorial decisions. I may or may not have consulted the composer on those (laugh) but I'll check my score. I think I do have a couple of notes that may be helpful.

MJ: That would be wonderful. Have you done any other works by Higdon?

SS: I've done the fanfare, I've done her little *Rhythm Stand* for BandQuest. Which is lovely. What's interesting about Jennifer is she does not necessarily aim to write for high school, she writes whatever comes out. Which is awesome. It's some of the best music of our time, in my opinion, but it's not immediately accessible to all age groups (laughter).

MJ: Correct.

SS: In my mind, *Mysterium* is one of the most accessible pieces for high school and college groups, and it's not too long. The saxophone concerto, which is really hard, is also like a half an hour of music, like half a concert. That's part of her world has been opera, symphony, concerto, really long pieces and that's not the world of high school and college. But I think she highly values...you know she's a teacher herself. I went to her panel discussion at Midwest this year. She's very grounded and very grateful for education and recognizes that her music is being played in largely in colleges and universities and professional groups that value music education. So, she's certainly an ally. She's also a great ally for women who are still highly underrepresented in composition and conducting I would say. And for the LGBTQ+ community, who are...I don't know if they are underrepresented, but I think she's a powerful voice for lots of future composers and musicians to say "hey she looks like me." Which is different then

most people looking up at white men, white cisgendered straight men. I think she...her music is of significant cultural value, and some pieces of her identity are of added value.

MJ: Part of the genesis of this project for me, well first of her compositional style and her music call me. I'm a huge music theory geek, the analysis of this is incredible to me.

She is one of the only composers writing in her style. If you had to sum up her music, I'd say it's bitonal, but consonant.

SS: Right

MJ: And heavy, heavy rhythmic complexity.

SS: I'd agree.

MJ: Because of that, there aren't groups are playing her work, and there isn't much written. And two of the pieces I'm writing on, have nothing written.

SS: No analyses?

MJ: Correct. And so, one of them is a transcription of her orchestra work Machine. And to my knowledge is the only work transcribed by someone else. He's a D.M.A. student at UMKC where she was in residence.

SS: So, did she supervise it, or I assume she approved it?

MJ: I'm making that assumption, only because she was there at the same time. I'm trying to get in touch with Steven Davis and the student that wrote it, but I'm playing phone tag.

SS: I agree completely. I think Jennifer as a composer who works at a university has never left the audience the way that avant-garde composers of the 60s and 70s left their audiences. So, there's something about her writing that is very personal and very open and communicative and very palatable. I usually use my dad, who is not a musician, as a reference. I try to decide would my dad enjoy this? And I think my dad would enjoy

90% of her music. It's, as you say, consonant. It's interesting, it has layers to it, and it's not just major. It's pleasant, it's pleasing and it takes you on a journey and brings you somewhere. The other thing, I think you're exactly right. When I look at my kids, the 16-year olds that are in school today, their music is rhythmic heavy as opposed to when I was growing up in the 80s it was Michael Jackson and Madonna very melodic heavy, so there were lots of tunes to sing. The rhythm was very repetitive and not super interesting I would say. But today rap and hip-hop and techno, even billboard top 40 stuff is very rhythmic. I think Jennifer has latched onto this very rhythmic culture. She is unapologetically, sometimes very complicatedly rhythmic. But also, very accessible to general audiences. I think intriguing to seasoned musicians. I think people enjoy playing her music.

MJ: What I'm hoping to do with this, I'm hoping with some written analyses to make these works more approachable. Because I think even some collegiate directors will see this music and struggle to find a place to start.

SS: I agree. I agree. I understand that Mallory just did this at Northwestern. Jennifer told me, I talked to her in December, and she said she just found the recording and it was awesome. You may want to see if Mallory would give you a recording of that concert.

MJ: Yeah that would be wonderful. Since she was in residence at UMKC, they recorded her whole band catalog, not the concerti but everything else. I'm doing four works: Road Stories, Kelly's Field, Machine, and Mysterium. There has been a lot written about Fanfare Ritmico, and as much as I do like Rhythm Stand, it's an outlier to the rest of her catalog.



SS: Yeah, everything from Band Quest is. It's a brilliant initiative because it's getting top composers to write for little kids. Maybe the hardest thing they've ever had to do. I think you are write, that is a separate category.

MJ: I think it's important that someone in our field who's written 7 pieces of music and a Pulitzer prize winner, and heavily prolific in other genres...I think it's important to shed light on what she's doing and who she is.

SS: Of course, and to encourage her to keep doing it.

MJ: I think that's all the questions I have for now. I may shoot you an email here or there.

SS: Yeah absolutely. I'll dig out my score and find those note, which may or may not be helpful. I recall the ending being very hard to tune. We worked very hard on that ending.

MJ: Thank you for your time

SS: Let me know how I can help.

## APPENDIX B – Letter of Permission

### PERMISSION FOR USE OF COPYRIGHTED MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Jennifer Higdon  
Cheryl Lawson, Vice President  
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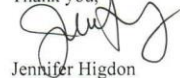
Mr. Mark P Johnson  
417 S 15<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Hattiesburg, MS 3940

Dear Mr. Johnson,

As requested, a *gratis* is hereby granted for the use of musical examples (excerpts only) from the following compositions of Jennifer Higdon, solely for educational purposes as included in your doctoral dissertation entitled *Selected Wind Band Music of Jennifer Higdon: A Conductor's Analysis*. By the terms of this agreement, the entire musical composition will not be copied for inclusion in the document, nor will any portion of the musical score be made available for resale in any manner.

Please retain a copy of this letter as evidence of this permission

Thank you,



Jennifer Higdon

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## APPENDIX C - IRB Approval Letter



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Feb. 5, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

Acting on behalf of 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 regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University guidelines, I have reviewed the following project and have determined that review by USM's IRB is not necessary.

Principal Investigator: Mark Johnson

Title: "Selected Wind Band Music of Jennifer Higdon: A Conductor's guide"

Date Submitted: Jan. 15, 2019

Formal IRB review is not required in this instance, as the project does not meet federal or institutional definitions of "human subjects research."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Samuel Bruton".

Samuel V. Bruton

Director of the Office of Research Integrity

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