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# Graduate conducting recital

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GRADUATE CONDUCTING RECITAL

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Master of Music Degree

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Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg, Kansas

May, 2012

GRADUATE CONDUCTING RECITAL

Ryan Cole Lovell

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One simply could not wish for a better teacher, friend, or father figure.

I also want to thank my mother for always believing in me.  
There was never a time when I questioned her faith and love.  
She encouraged me every day of my life  
only if she could see me now - I'm getting my masters degree!  
Love you mom!

My grandmother has always been my rock. She raised me when my parents were absent and she continues to do this every single day.  
Without her i would have never made it to this level!

Finally, I can't forget my patient co-workers, good friends, teachers assistants, and students who have witnessed my craziness during the whole thesis process.

## GRADUATE CONDUCTING RECITAL

An Abstract of the Thesis by  
Ryan Cole Lovell

The contents of this thesis will consist of six chapters, one for each piece of repertoire conducted. Chapters will include biographical information on the composer, background of the work, rehearsal strategies, suggested conducting considerations, suggested listening, and a conclusion of the piece. It will also include a recital DVD of the pieces performed by various ensembles over a three year period.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Chapter One - ASCEND.....	1
Composer.....	1
Composition.....	2
Historical Perspective.....	2
Technical Considerations.....	3
Stylistic Considerations.....	4
Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations.....	4
Suggested Listening.....	5
Conclusion.....	5
Chapter Two - ANCIENT AIR AND DANCE.....	7
Composer.....	7
Composition.....	8
Historical Perspective.....	8
Technical Considerations.....	9
Stylistic Considerations.....	9
Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations.....	10
Suggested Listening.....	11
Conclusion.....	11
Chapter Three - O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM.....	12
Composer.....	12
Composition.....	13
Historical Perspective.....	13
Technical Considerations.....	14
Stylistic Considerations.....	15
Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations.....	15
Suggested Listening.....	15
Conclusion.....	16
Chapter Four - AUTUMN ON WHITE LAKE.....	17
Composer.....	17
Composition.....	18
Historical Perspective.....	18
Technical Considerations.....	19
Stylistic Considerations.....	19
Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations.....	20
Suggested Listening.....	21
Conclusion.....	21

Chapter FIVE - VESUVIUS.....	22
Composer.....	22
Composition.....	23
Historical Perspective.....	23
Technical Considerations.....	24
Stylistic Considerations.....	25
Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations.....	25
Suggested Listening.....	26
Conclusion.....	27
 Chapter SIX - AURORA AWAKES.....	 28
Composer.....	28
Composition.....	29
Historical Perspective.....	31
Technical Considerations.....	31
Stylistic Considerations.....	33
Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations.....	33
Suggested Listening.....	34
Conclusion.....	35
 Bibliography .....	 36

## CHAPTER I

### *Ascend*

(3rd Movement from the "Gregorian Suite")

### **Composer**

Samuel R. Hazo is a very popular composer born in 1966 who currently resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mr. Hazo became the first composer in history to be awarded the winner of both composition contests sponsored by the National Band Association. He won the William D. Revelli in 2003 and the Merrill Jones in 2001.<sup>1</sup>

Hazo has composed band music for all grade levels and his compositions have been performed around the world. His works are in high demand throughout band programs. His works have been premiered at the Music Educators' National Conference, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, National Band Association, Texas Band Association, and College Band Directors National Association.

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<sup>1</sup> Ascend (Movement III of Georgian Suite), Samuel R. Hazo, MusicWorks Grade 3 - Hal Leonard Online." Hal Leonard Online. <http://www.halleonard.com/product/viewproduct.do?itemid=4002328&lid=0&keywords=ascend%20hazo&searchcategory=00&subsiteid=6&> (accessed April 15, 2012).



Hazo has been a music teacher at every educational grade level from kindergarten through college. He received his bachelor's and master's degree from Duquesne University where he served on the Board of Governors and was awarded as Duquesne's Outstanding Graduate in Music Education.<sup>2</sup> Recordings of his compositions are exclusively on Klavier Records and Mark Records.

### **Composition**

*Ascend* was composed as a result of a commission by Erin Cole for her students at Tapp Middle School in Powder Springs, Georgia. This piece was premiered at the 2004 Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, Illinois. It is listed as a grade three in difficulty and is approximately three minutes in length.

### **Historical Perspective**

Mr. Hazo speaks of *Ascend* by saying, "It was a true honor to compose a piece for such a gifted teacher with such gifted students, at a school with a rich history of commissioning projects."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel R. Hazo - Composer - Biography." Samuel R. Hazo - Composer - Symphonic Band. Orchestra, Wind Symphony. <http://www.samuelrhazo.com/bio.html> (accessed April 15, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> *Ascend* (Movement III of Georgian Suite), Samuel R. Hazo, MusicWorks Grade 3 - Hal Leonard Online." Hal Leonard Online. <http://www.halleonard.com/product/viewproduct.do?itemid=4002328&lid=0&keywords=ascend%20hazo&searchcategory=00&subsiteid=6&> (accessed April 15, 2012).

*Ascend* was written to be the closer in their Midwest Clinic program. The conductor had heard *Ride*, another composition by Hazo, and wanted a piece with the same energy and drive, but for middle school students. With this in mind Hazo wrote the piece to use a similar chordal structure as *Ride*. It was his ultimate goal to have the piece have as many educational opportunities as possible. He also wanted to keep up the excitement factor for the audience. He states, " I truly hope *Ascend* is enjoyable for the conductor, the musicians and the listener."<sup>4</sup>

### Technical Considerations

Although *Ascend* was written for a middle school band the piece offers many challenges even for the accomplished ensemble. The piece utilizes many meters throughout and does not stay in one meter for too long. The constant shift from 4/4, 3/4, and 2/4 will keep the musicians on their toes.

Throughout the piece Hazo uses many syncopated lines to keep the listener interested, which makes the piece sound more difficult than it really is. The opening section is a full ensemble statement of the syncopation used throughout the piece.

The tempo of the work is a constant quarter note equals 136. When moving through the different sections of the piece this tempo can present challenges in the area of ensemble precision. The final consideration for *Ascend* would be to make sure the

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<sup>4</sup> Elliot del Borgo - eNotes.com Reference." eNotes - Literature Study Guides, Lesson Plans, and More.. [http://www.enotes.com/topic/Elliot\\_del\\_Borgo](http://www.enotes.com/topic/Elliot_del_Borgo) (accessed April 15, 2012).

ensemble can keep up the much needed energy to sustain intensity from beginning to end.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

To keep the style light and syncopated the ensemble must adhere to the accents written and strive to execute them consistently throughout. Hazo presents the main theme in a variety of orchestrations, however he often shifts the accent pattern to create interest in the theme.

In the “Fugue” the style is much different than the previous syncopated section. It is important that the ensemble members focus on a smooth transition as the fugal statements evolve. It is important for those players with the response to accurately reflect the style of those who presented the fugal statement. The final section of the piece is just like the beginning and will require the same type of attention to the syncopated style.

### **Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations**

*Ascend* is a composition full of syncopation throughout every section and theme. The piece is also full of mixed meter. Once the students understand the compositional structure the meter should not be a problem.

To help the ensemble the conductor must make sure they are displaying an easy to read beat pattern. It is also important that the conductor executes a clear gesture of syncopation in order to assist the ensemble in the placement of the end of the beat.

Once the clear beat pattern and use of the gesture of the syncopation are properly executed, the piece is not too difficult to conduct.

To keep up the energy throughout the piece the conductor will need to consistently check a metronome to assure proper tempo. The percussion will also be a great asset to help with tempo maintenance, because the snare commonly doubles the syncopated pattern.

### **Suggested Listening**

As mentioned earlier in the chapter Hazo modeled this piece after his own *Ride*. Although this piece is far less challenging than *Ride*, it will give the ensemble a start to understanding Hazo's compositional style and energy required for his pieces. Another great selection would be *Afterburn* by Randall Standrige, because The work demonstrates the same type of multi-meter and syncopation as used in *Ascend*.

### **Conclusion**

*Ascend* is a powerful opener for any middle or high school band. It is commonly listed a grade three on most state band lists. Since this piece has a lot of mixed meter and syncopation it may be challenging for most middle school groups, although the

piece would be a nice selection for any high school group. The nice three part chorale in the middle section will give your best horn, trumpet, and alto sax players a chance to shine at any contest or concert. This piece was performed in Joplin, Missouri at the State Concert Band Festival on April 18th, 2010 with the Neosho Missouri High School Concert Band.

## CHAPTER II

### *Ancient Air and Dance*

#### **Composer**

Elliot Del Borgo, born in Port Chester, New York holds a Bachelors of Science degree from the State University of New York. He also earned a Masters of Education degree from Temple University, and a Masters of Music degree from the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music. While at Philadelphia he studied theory and composition with Vincent Persichetti.

In 1973, Del Borgo earned his doctoral degree from the State University of New York. After obtaining his degrees he taught instrumental music in the Philadelphia Public Schools. He also taught in higher education at the Crane School of Music from 1966 until 1995.

His works include *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night* - an orchestral poem based on a poem of the same name by Dylan Thomas. He has also written for many

famous occasions such as the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York. He has had approximately 600 pieces published for band in all grade levels.<sup>5</sup>

As an award winning ASCAP composer, he was also elected into the American Bandmasters Association in 1993. Del Borgo is used often as a clinician, adjudicator, and a lecturer as well as being very well known in the band world.

### **Composition**

*Ancient Air and Dance* is a musical depiction of a religious ritual. The piece contains many colors played by the percussion section and are also present in the very mysterious opening played by the low woodwinds. The constant driving rhythms and sometimes dissonant harmonies are the foundation of the dance. It is a grade three selection and is approximately six minutes in length.

### **Historical Perspective**

The piece *Ancient Air and Dance* is written to sound like an old religious dance ritual. The opening is very thinly scored, and the dance theme played by the clarinets, creates a haunting mood as it is played above open intervals in the accompaniment part. As the dance progresses a much thicker texture evolves and the dance becomes more complex and several variations begin to added. Throughout the piece the dance like

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<sup>5</sup> Elliot del Borgo - eNotes.com Reference." eNotes - Literature Study Guides, Lesson Plans, and More.. [http://www.enotes.com/topic/Elliot\\_del\\_Borgo](http://www.enotes.com/topic/Elliot_del_Borgo) (accessed April 15, 2012).

figures are extended and are also made more harmonically complex to symbolize the dance becoming more intense as the piece progresses.

### **Technical Considerations**

*Ancient Air and Dance* is composed with many technical surprises as the piece progresses. The beginning of the piece is in a slower tempo, but is full of short statements that are filled with difficult leaps. It is important that these are played accurately over the thinly scored percussion.

After the initial statement at measure 22 the composer adds yet another layer and begins to use sixteenth notes in the woodwinds to create a sense of increased intensity.

When the tempo changes in measure 30 the pulse becomes quarter note equals 156. This is a rather fast tempo for young players and can be difficult as the piece continually gets technically challenging towards the end.

As the piece continues it is a restatement of the previous section, only displayed through different instruments. The piece ends with one final restatement of material perviously presented.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

The style of *Ancient Air and Dance* contains a wide range of articulations and dynamics. The opening of the piece is the softest section and is also the only legato



section. This provides the ensemble the opportunity to develop their expressive playing skills. In the opening there are some interjections from the brass that are marcato and at a louder dynamic. The orchestration of the percussion writing provides those players an excellent opportunity to play on some of the more non-traditional percussion instruments, such as woodblock, triangle, bongos, and tam-tam.

### **Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations**

When performing this piece with the ensemble the conductor must consider the maturity and confidence of the players. The piece requires the students to come out of their “comfort zone” because there are a few times when the range and rhythms are not what are characteristically in this grade level. Brass range and woodwind technique is something to consider when looking to perform this piece.

When rehearsing the piece it would be a good idea to consider the scalar resources used and to incorporate the rhythms into a warm-up exercise. This will serve to improve the confidence level of the ensemble whenever they come across examples in the piece.

Ensemble precision during the faster sections will be a challenge to both the conductor and the ensemble. The tempo will require both the ensemble and the conductor to be very diligent with the accuracy of the more difficult rhythms.

## **Suggested Listening**

Since *Ancient Air and Dance* contains a wide variety of styles and rhythms the best example of a another piece would be *Ritual Dance* by the same composer. This piece contains similar writing as *Ancient Air and Dance*, but is a more difficult composition. *Ritual Dance* will provide the ensemble a good example of the style and tempo required for performing *Ancient Air and Dance*.

## **Conclusion**

*Ancient Air and Dance* is a great piece of music that contains many challenges for any ensemble. Once the students have mastered the selection, many musical concepts will have been addressed. This piece was performed in Branson, Missouri at the College of the Ozarks Concert Band Festival on April 20th, 2010 with the Neosho Missouri 8th Grade Band.

## CHAPTER III

### *O Magnum Mysterium*

#### **Composer**

Morten Lauridsen was born in Colfax, Washington in 1943, and was raised in Portland, Oregon. During his college years he studied at Whitman College and the University of Southern California. While at USC he studied composition with Ingolf Dahl and Halsey Stevens. After graduation he joined the faculty in 1967 and was Chair of the Department of Composition from 1990 to 2002. While the chair he founded the advanced studies program in Scoring for Motion Pictures and Television. From 1994 to 2001, he also served as Composer-in-Residence of the the Los Angeles Master Chorale.<sup>6</sup>

Lauridsen is one the most frequently performed American composers today. His music has gained a permanent place in the standard vocal repertoire. He is the recipient of several awards from the Endowment of the Arts, ASCAP, and Chorus America.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Richard B. Miles, and Larry Blocher. "O Magnum Mysterium." In *Teaching music through performance in band*, 447-452. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> O Magnum Mysterium - Wind Repertory Project." Main Page - Wind Repertory Project. [http://www.windrep.org/O\\_Magnum\\_Mysterium](http://www.windrep.org/O_Magnum_Mysterium) (accessed April 15, 2012).

## Composition

The setting of *O Magnum Mysterium* was commissioned by Marshall Rutter in honor of his wife, Terry Knowles, in 1994. The first performance was given by the Los Angeles Master Chorale on December 18, 1994, conducted by Paul Salamunovich.<sup>8</sup>

The wind band version was arranged by Robert Reynolds. He is one of the most influential conductors and teachers in the history of the wind band world. On March 21, 2003, Reynolds' adaptation for winds was premiered by the University of Southern California Thornton Wind Symphony in Los Angeles, California. This piece is also arranged for solo voice, men's chorus, and brass ensemble. This piece is listed as a grade four and is seven minutes in length.

## Historical Perspective

In the score the composer offers advice on his setting of *O Magnum Mysterium*:

For centuries, composers have been inspired by the beautiful *O Magnum Mysterium* text depicting the birth of the newborn King amongst the lowly animals and shepherds. The affirmation of God's grace to the meek and the adoration of the Blessed Virgin are celebrated in my setting through a quiet song of profound inner joy.

To completely understand the historical reference of this piece it is important to read the original text of *O Magnum Mysterium*. The preface to the score offers the following translation:<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Richard B. Miles, and Larry Blocher. "O Magnum Mysterium." In *Teaching music through performance in band*, 447-452. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

O Magnum mysterium,  
et admirabile sacramentum,  
ut animalia viderent Dominum,  
natum, jacentum in praesepe!  
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera  
meruerunt portare  
Dominum Christum. Alleluia!

O great mystery,  
and wondrous sacrament,  
that animals should see the new born  
Lord, lying in their manger!  
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb  
was worthy to bear the  
Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia!

### Technical Considerations

The arrangement of *O Magnum Mysterium* is for basic band instrumentation with very sparse percussion (timpani and suspended cymbal). Cross-cueing is used to help the horn and bass clarinet parts. This will enable bands without strong players in those sections to properly execute the piece. The selection has also been transcribed to the key of E-flat major. This is a half step higher than the original key.

The tempo is marked *Adagio molto legato e espressivo* (quarter note = 66-72). Throughout the piece there are many tempo fluctuations. The time signature is 4/4 with some 3/2 meter in which the quarter note stays the same. The dynamic contrast is extremely wide with uses of *pp* to *ff* throughout the piece. There are a few solos, including trumpet, horn, and euphonium. They require confident, lyrical, and sensitive playing.

## **Stylistic Considerations**

The most important stylistic consideration of this arrangement is to have the most lyrical, legato style possible. This style is imperative in order to emulate the original choral work.

The breath marks have been included to help with phrasing points; however, it is important that “gaps” in the music do not occur. It is important to achieve a feeling of flow through the music without interruptions.

## **Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations**

Keeping a vocal-like musical line requires strong air support by each player in the ensemble. Articulation markings used in the wind setting consistently match the choral version so that the tonguing style used matches the diction of the text of *O Magnum Mysterium*. In other words when the diction calls for a vowel or soft consonant the arranger has written a more legato articulation. Likewise when the text calls for a hard consonant the players are asked to execute a heavier articulation.

## **Suggested Listening**

Letting the ensemble listen to the choral work will enable the players to match the phrasing of the original vocal work. Another piece written in the same style of *O Magnum Mysterium* is *Lux Aeterna* by Morten Lauridsen.

## **Conclusion**

This piece is a great work to teach the ensemble proper phrasing to match vocal style. It will also help the ensemble to develop a very sensitive legato style. Due to the tempo fluctuations it will also challenge the students to watch carefully and to be sensitive to the conducting gesture. This piece was performed in Joplin, Missouri at the State Concert Band Festival on April 18th, 2012 with the Neosho Missouri High School Wind Ensemble.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Autumn on White Lake*

#### **Composer**

Samuel R. Hazo is a very popular composer born in 1966 who currently resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mr. Hazo became the first composer in history to be awarded the winner of both composition contests sponsored by the National Band Association. He won the William D. Revelli in 2003 and the Merrill Jones in 2001.<sup>10</sup>

Hazo has composed band music for all grade levels and his compositions have been performed around the world. His works are in high demand throughout band programs. His works have been premiered at the Music Educators' National Conference, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, National Band Association, Texas Band Association, and College Band Directors National Association.

Hazo has been a music teacher at every educational grade level from kindergarten through college. He received his bachelor's and master's degree from

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<sup>10</sup> Ascend (Movement III of Georgian Suite), Samuel R. Hazo, MusicWorks Grade 3 - Hal Leonard Online." Hal Leonard Online. <http://www.halleonard.com/product/viewproduct.do?itemid=4002328&lid=0&keywords=ascend%20hazo&searchcategory=00&subsiteid=6&> (accessed April 15, 2012).



Duquesne University where he served on the Board of Governors and was awarded as Duquesne's Outstanding Graduate in Music Education.<sup>11</sup> Recordings of his compositions are exclusively on Klavier Records and Mark Records.

## Composition

*Autumn on White Lake* was commissioned by Lakeland High School of White Lake, Michigan: Robert Green, Conductor.<sup>12</sup> Lakeland High School was the first school in his career to invite him as a composer/clinician. While in White Lake, Michigan he states, "I vividly remember that crisp October Saturday and how wonderful it was to hear my music being played by an ensemble other than my own or my friends'."<sup>13</sup> Many years after the visit to Michigan, Hazo received a call from Mr. Green to commission a piece for Lakeland. *Autumn on White Lake* was written to remember his first visit to that school. This piece is six minutes in length and is listed as a grade four.

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<sup>11</sup> Samuel R. Hazo - Composer - Biography." Samuel R. Hazo - Composer - Symphonic Band. Orchestra, Wind Symphony. <http://www.samuelrhazo.com/bio.html> (accessed April 15, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Hazo - Wind Repertory Project." Main Page - Wind Repertory Project. [http://www.windrep.org/Samuel\\_Hazo](http://www.windrep.org/Samuel_Hazo) (accessed April 15, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Autumn on White Lake, Samuel R. Hazo, MusicWorks Grade 4 - Hal Leonard Online." Hal Leonard Online. <http://www.halleonard.com/product/viewproduct.do?itemid=4002967&lid=0&subsiteid=6&> (accessed April 15, 2012).

## **Historical Perspective**

The premise of *Autumn on White Lake* is to represent the feeling and overall impression that Mr. Hazo experienced while visiting White Lake, Michigan for the first time. The crisp air of autumn and the falling leaves are to be heard throughout the piece.

The opening of the piece represents the falling leaves and is shortly followed by a theme that represents the autumn wind. The style of the selection reflects many memories as a child while experiencing the autumn seasons. The middle and ending sections of the work constantly revisit the opening theme.

## **Technical Considerations**

This piece does not contain many technical considerations because of the tempo and duration of the piece. The tempo is quarter note = 56 throughout. Although listed as a grade four piece, the technique of the piece is not a problem. The most difficult technical passage is in measure 56 when the low brass have a triplet eighth figure.

## **Stylistic Considerations**

While the technique of the piece is not that difficult the greatest challenge is the style. The demands of the lyrical passages are quite difficult. The texture of the piece is

often very thin and the melody is passed between voices. These transitions which often appear between bar lines need to be seamless.

There are several soli sections in the high woodwinds that require players to have a good sense of intonation and the ability to play expressively. The piece is full of exact dynamic markings with many crescendos and decrescendos that will need to be observed by the ensemble.

### **Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations**

As stated in the previous section the demand for expressive playing will be difficult for the players as well as the conductor. The conductor will need to be very precise with what they want from their ensemble at all times. The entrance and release of the notes are very important for the performance of this piece and can be executed clearly with the help of the conductor.

The opening is very thinly scored and is very exposed. The players will need to be highly aware of other voices in the opening section. The “wind theme” played by the flutes in measure 7 will need to be consistent throughout when the theme returns.

The percussion section adds color with the wind chimes and mallets. In the beginning they will need the conductor’s assistance to establish proper balance within the ensemble. Measure 56 is the only section in the piece that is a different style from the rest of the composition. The accented detached rhythmic figure provides a nice contrast from the rest of the composition. The ensemble should pay careful attention not to play this figure too loudly so that the “wind theme” is still heard.

The ending of the piece revisits the opening theme and concludes with a mallet duo and a sustained chord played by the winds. This gives the impression that the autumn memory is now ending.

### **Suggested Listening**

Other selections to assist with the preparation of this piece would be *Perthshire Majesty* by the same composer and *October* by Eric Whitacre. These would both be excellent examples to share with the ensemble to exhibit expressive and legato playing.

### **Conclusion**

*Autumn on White Lake* is an excellent composition to demonstrate true legato playing within the ensemble. *Autumn on White Lake* will be a great piece for both concerts and contests at the high school level. The piece will stretch the performer and the conductor to grow in his or her musicianship. This piece was performed in Pittsburg, Kansas at the Pittsburg State Wind Ensemble Concert on October 6th, 2011 with the Pittsburg State Wind Ensemble.

## CHAPTER V

### *Vesuvius*

#### **Composer**

Frank Ticheli is an Associate Professor of Composition at the University of Southern California. He received his master's and doctoral degrees in composition from the University of Michigan, where he studied with William Albright, George Wilson, Leslie Bassett, and William Bolcom.<sup>14</sup> His compositions for winds have been performed widely throughout the world and have won several awards, including the 1989 Walter Beeler Prize and First Prize in the eleventh annual "Symposium for New Music" held in Virginia.<sup>15</sup>

Ticheli has written many works for band including a piece commissioned for the Columbine High School tragedy, *An American Elegy*, honoring and commemorating those affected by the shooting tragedy. Other wind band works include *Amazing Grace*,

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<sup>14</sup> Richard B. Miles., and Larry Blocher. "Vesuvius." In *Teaching music through performance in band*, 733-752. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Vesuvius - Wind Repertory Project." Main Page - Wind Repertory Project. <http://www.windrep.org/Vesuvius> (accessed April 15, 2012).

*Blue Shades, Cajun Folk Song, Fortress, Gaian Visions, Music for Winds and Percussion, Pacific Fanfare, and Postcard.*

### **Composition**

*Vesuvius* was commissioned in 1999 by the Revelli Foundation for the Paynter Project.<sup>16</sup> While composing *Vesuvius*, Ticheli used a theme left over from an earlier piece, *Radiant Voices*. "This wild uninhibited form of dance could have represented a last celebration during the final doomed days of Pompeii."<sup>17</sup> The piece is approximately nine minutes in length and is listed as a grade five on many state lists.

### **Historical Perspective**

Ticheli's music for winds reflects the work of a composer, active and much sought-after, whose music appeals to a wide variety of players and listeners. His compositional works range from simple to very complex for the players, as well as the audience. A prominent feature of Ticheli's style is his use of melodies and themes that form the foundation, and then grow and develop as the work progresses. In *Vesuvius*, Ticheli's use of melodic and harmonic motives, at first hinted at early in the piece and then more fully developed as the work unfolds, is reminiscent of the forms and

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<sup>16</sup> Richard B. Miles., and Larry Blocher. "Vesuvius." In *Teaching music through performance in band*, 733-752. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> *Vesuvius - Wind Repertory Project.* "Main Page - Wind Repertory Project." <http://www.windrep.org/Vesuvius> (accessed April 15, 2012).

compositional style of classical music. The overall effectiveness of this work draws from both the classical and romantic styles of music.

### **Technical Considerations**

The modal harmonic and melodic foundation of *Vesuvius* is an excellent study of scalar patterns that are increasingly being used by composers. Modes in the piece include phrygian (A), aeolian (D), lydian (B-flat), dorian (A), and a touch of major and minor. Since the harmonic foundation of these modes is presented in either tonic pedal tones or open fifths, intonation is a challenge.

Shifting mixed meters and uneven divisions of measures present a pulse and rhythm challenge. Measures in 9/8 (for example, the meter of the primary theme) are divided 2+3+2+2, forming a sort of uneven 4/4 measure. *Vesuvius* is considered a challenging piece for any musician. Keeping a steady eighth note pulse and not allowing the second beat to turn into a triplet can be a challenge and will help with the development of individual counting skills.

Wide contrasts in dynamics are a prominent feature of *Vesuvius*, not just in tutti scoring but also in shifting combinations of instruments. A good relative sense of dynamic range, the technique to play with a good tone and at a fast tempo, and the ability to project subtle as well as overt dynamic expression are challenges for every ensemble member. The percussion section should be placed where there is enough room to set-up and for movement, since every percussionist is handling five or more instruments.

## **Stylistic Considerations**

To capture an older or “ancient” style of tonal center, the themes and harmonies in this work are based on a mixture of aeolian, dorian, lydian, and phrygian modes. These modes, while not often encountered in many works for winds, are a refreshing contrast to major or minor tonalities and can be introduced to musicians in this context where the modal sound is clearly heard in both the melodic and harmonic elements of this piece.<sup>18</sup>

Two styles of playing dominate the work: an energetic, almost frantic character that is occasionally accented and featured in a wide variety of dynamics; and a smooth, legato texture that moves almost as quickly as the 9/8 tempo.

## **Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations**

In rehearsal, one of the most difficult sections is the main theme first presented in the alto saxophone solo. The theme is presented many times and in a variety of sections.

Theme 2 is a more aggressive and rhythmically active variation of Theme 1. Both of these themes share the same primary pitches and melodic shape. The brass and woodwinds both share this theme.

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<sup>18</sup> Richard B. Miles, and Larry Blocher. "Vesuvius." *In Teaching music through performance in band*, 733-752. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2002.



Theme 3 is the opposite of theme 1 and 2. It is more melodic and less rhythmic in nature. Each time the theme is repeated, one of its notes is chromatically altered. The theme is presented first during the oboe solo.

Theme 4 is constantly evolving each time the figure is played. The first time this theme is introduced it is in the horn section, but is immediately restated as a five note motive.

*Vesuvius* is a furious dance. To properly communicate the work to the audience the ensemble must perform all of the accents, dynamics, and *sfz* markings. In addition, the tempo must not drag. Ticheli states, "In its initial performance it was noticed that playing the piece at an even faster tempo helped to revive the energy of the piece."<sup>19</sup>

### **Suggested Listening**

As in the rest of the chapters, it is suggested that the conductor should provide the ensemble with an outstanding recording of the work. In preparing an ensemble for a performance a suggested recording would be the 1999 performance of *Vesuvius* by the North Texas Wind Symphony, conducted by Eugene Migliaro Corporon. This performance was at the World Association of Symphonic Band Ensembles held in San Luis Obispo, California.

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<sup>19</sup> *Vesuvius* - Wind Repertory Project." Main Page - Wind Repertory Project. <http://www.windrep.org/Vesuvius> (accessed April 15, 2012).

## Conclusion

This is a great piece of music for any band today. It presents many challenges to both the high school and the college performer. It is a great challenge for the conductor as well. Like many of Ticheli's compositions, *Vesuvius* is destined to be a staple of the wind band repertoire for many years to come. This piece was performed in Joplin, Missouri at the State Concert Band Festival on April 18th, 2012 with the Neosho Missouri High School Wind Ensemble.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Aurora Awakes*

#### **Composer**

John Mackey, born October 1, 1973 in New Philadelphia, Ohio, holds a Master of Music degree from The Julliard School and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with John Corigliano and Donald Erb, respectively.

He is becoming one of the most performed composers at all grade levels. His pieces are being performed in many middle schools, high schools, and colleges. His works have been performed at the Sydney Opera House, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Weill Recital Hall, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Italy's Spoleto Festival, Alice Tully Hall, the Joyce Theater, Dance Theater Workshop, and throughout Italy, Chile, Japan, Columbia, Austria, Brazil, Germany, England, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Aurora Awakes." Welcome to Osti Music. <http://ostimusic.com/Aurora.html> (accessed April 15, 2012).

Mackey has been recognized with numerous grants and awards from organizations including ASCAP.<sup>21</sup> Mackey's first work for band, *Redline Tango*, won the Walter Beeler Memorial Composition Prize and the Ostwald Award from the American Bandmasters Association. Mackey's other works for band include *Asphalt Cocktail* (2009), *Clocking* (2007), *Concerto for Soprano Sax* (2007), *Drum Music: Concerto for Percussion* (2011), *Foundry* (2011), *Harvest: Concerto for Trombone and Wind Ensemble* (2009), *Hymn to a Blue Hour* (2010), *Kingfishers Catch Fire* (2007), *Redline Tango* (2004), *Sasparilla* (2005), *Strange Humors* (2006), *Turbine* (2006), *Turning* (2007), *Undertow* (2008), *Xerxes* (2010).<sup>22</sup>

## Composition

*Aurora Awakes* was commissioned by the J.E.B. Stuart High School Wind Ensemble, Doug Martin, director, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the school. The only specific request made of the composer other than general guidelines about the length and difficulty of the piece was for a big ending that sounds like a celebration. Mackey has repeatedly used the words sparkly, bright, and happy to describe his sense of the piece, all adjectives representing a celebratory event. Note that Aurora is the Roman goddess of dawn.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Richard B. Miles, and Larry Blocher. "Aurora Awakes." In *Teaching music through performance in band*, 602-615. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Aurora Awakes - Wind Repertory Project." Main Page - Wind Repertory Project. [http://www.windrep.org/Aurora\\_Awakes](http://www.windrep.org/Aurora_Awakes) (accessed April 15, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Richard B. Miles, and Larry Blocher. "Aurora Awakes." In *Teaching music through performance in band*, 602-615. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011.

*Aurora Awakes* is only the fourth piece in history to win both the Ostwald Award from the American Bandmasters Association and the William D. Revelli Award from the National Band Association. It received over one hundred performances within a year of its premiere in May 2009. It is approximately eleven and a half minutes in length is listed as a grade six on most state lists.

The program note by Jake Wallace reads in part:

*Aurora Awakes* is...a piece about the heralding of the coming of light. Built in two substantial sections, the piece moves over the course of eleven minutes from a place of remarkable stillness to an unbridled explosion of energy—from darkness to light, placid grey to startling rainbows of color. The work is almost entirely in the key of E-flat major (a choice made to create a unique effect at the work's conclusion, as mentioned below), although it journeys through G-flat and F as the work progresses...

...Though Mackey is known to use stylistic imitation, it is less common for him to utilize outright quotation. As such, the presence of two more-or-less direct quotations of other musical compositions is particularly noteworthy in *Aurora Awakes*. The first, which appears at the beginning of the second section, is an ostinato based on the familiar guitar introduction to U2's "Where The Streets Have No Name." Though the strains of The Edge's guitar have been metamorphosed into the insistent repetitions of keyboard percussion, the aesthetic is similar—a distant presentation and Mackey's, however, is that the guitar riff disappears for the majority of the song, while in *Aurora Awakes*, the motive persists for nearly the entirety of the remainder of the piece...

...The other quotation is a sly reference to Gustav Holst's *First Suite in E-flat for Military Band*. The brilliant E-flat chord that closes the Chaconne of that work is orchestrated (nearly) identically as the final sonority of *Aurora Awakes*...Mackey adds an even brighter element, however by including instruments not in Holst's original: That has always been one of my favorite chords because it's just so damn bright. In a piece that's about the awakening of the goddess of dawn, you need a damn bright ending—and there was no topping Holst. Well...except to add crotales.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Richard B. Miles, and Larry Blocher. "Aurora Awakes." In *Teaching music through performance in band*, 602-615. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011.

## Historical Perspective

John Mackey is a leading composer during the new Internet age. His music can be accessed at anytime and is widely spread over many different social medias. He is part of a new group of composers that are all products of their time and culture.

His publishing website Ostimusic.com is not only home to his compositions, but to his widely read blog that many musicians around the world read about his journeys in the life, not to mention his cat Loki.

This piece and many of his pieces, just like the other composers of his generation, are drawn from many different influences, such as popular music, art music, and non-Western music. He and the others do not rely on a dominant school of compositional thought. They use whatever they need to make the piece their own.<sup>25</sup>

## Technical Considerations

*Aurora Awakes* requires an ensemble with exceptional rhythmic discipline. While the piece is primarily in 3/4 and 4/4 meter, there are a few exceptions. The opening section is written in an extremely slow cut time (conductors may wish to conduct the quarter note). For the entire second half of the work, there is an unbroken chain of sixteenth notes that must be performed with absolute metronomic accuracy as it is passed around the ensemble and played at every dynamic level. This is made more

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<sup>25</sup> Aurora Awakes - Wind Repertory Project." Main Page - Wind Repertory Project. [http://www.windrep.org/Aurora\\_Awakes](http://www.windrep.org/Aurora_Awakes) (accessed April 15, 2012).

challenging by having the sixteenths integrated seamlessly with other layers of rhythmic activity. Maintaining clarity becomes especially challenging in the *molto allargando* at the very end of the piece.

Upper woodwinds and percussion must have extremely fluent technique with the E-flat major scale, and double-tonguing is required in all flute parts. The piano part is very challenging, and requires players with great rhythmic control and developed technique. Intonation can be difficult during the first section, both during the quiet outer sections and the G-flat major climax. Intonation can also be a challenge for brass and low woodwinds in the fast section.

High notes for brass include a written B-flat for the horn 1-2 and written high D for trumpet 1. The last note of the piece is a high C for trumpet 1. There are solos and exposed passages for a number of instruments, primarily clarinet, flute, piano, and vibraphone. There are a number of four-against-three figures, four dotted-eighth notes in a measure of 4/4, or twelve sixteenth notes slurred as four groups of three.

The dynamic range of the piece is extremely wide, from *niente* to *ffff*, requiring extraordinary control of intonation and tone quality at these extremes. Balance of the various layers can be difficult to achieve, depending on the size and instrumentation of the group. At letter N, there are six different musical strata in the winds alone. Even pacing a rehearsal of the piece can be challenging because of the long periods of rest in some parts, and the fact that the level of technical challenge varies widely from part to part.

The piece is scored for full symphonic wind band. Considerations outside of the standard instrumentation are the very important piano part and parts for

contrabassoon, E-flat soprano clarinet, two bass clarinet parts, contrabass clarinet, two tuba parts, and string bass. Flute, clarinet, horn, and trumpet each have four parts, and there are six percussion parts plus timpani. Mallet choices and other percussion-specific equipment issues will need to be resolved carefully; for example, the size of the sand blocks and the type of tambourine used.<sup>26</sup>

### **Stylistic Considerations**

There are many opportunities for expressive demand. There are several solos in the slow section of the piece. This piece will require players to be very sensitive to the dynamics written on the page. Mackey is very deliberate with his dynamic markings throughout the piece. The faster sections of the piece require both sensitive and expressive playing even in the quick parts.

### **Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations**

In rehearsal the hardest part of this piece will be the complex rhythmic structure in the fast section near measure 90. The soloistic rhythms in the opening are just up to the individual performers. The constant 16<sup>th</sup> notes in all parts only stop at the final chord of the piece.

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<sup>26</sup> Richard B. Miles, and Larry Blocher. "Aurora Awakes." In *Teaching music through performance in band*, 602-615. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011.



The timbre of the piece is typical “Mackey Sound.” There is a Mackey Sound which has become identifiable over the composer’s career, and this piece includes several of the hallmarks of this sound, including:

1. Highly exposed percussion parts which include significant keyboard percussion as well as crotales and multiple suspended cymbals, while usually omitting snare drum.
2. Important alto and tenor saxophone parts which rarely double other instruments.
3. Loud trombone (and sometimes horn) glissandi
4. Ostinatos which repeat in one or more voices with occasional variation while other layers are added and developed. Mackey has a great ear for timbre and orchestrates carefully.<sup>27</sup>

The last chord of the piece is a direct quote from the first movement of Holst’s *First Suite*. Careful attention to tuning will have to be given to this very rare full ensemble chord at the end of the piece.

### **Suggested listening**

All of Mackey’s compositions are on his website. Most are available to stream and some compositions are even available to download. Some of his wind works that have the same style and difficulty, of *Aurora Awakes* include, *Redline Tango*, *Foundry*, and *Turbine*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Richard B. Miles, and Larry Blocher. "Aurora Awakes." In *Teaching music through performance in band*, 602-615. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Aurora Awakes." Welcome to Osti Music. <http://ostimusic.com/Aurora.html> (accessed April 15, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

This work has become a standard in the wind band repertoire almost overnight by winning the Ostwald Award from the American Bandmasters Association and the William D. Revelli Award from the National Band Association. This piece is very challenging, but yet very rewarding to the conductor, performers, and to the audience members once it is mastered. It is a piece that will get programmed for as long as wind bands continue to perform. This piece was performed in Pittsburg, Kansas at the Pittsburg State Wind Ensemble Concert on April 12th, 2011 with the Pittsburg State Wind Ensemble.

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