

THESIS

A GUIDE TO THE PERFORMANCE OF JAMES M. STEPHENSON'S *SYMPHONY NO. 2*:

VOICES FOR CONCERT BAND

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ABSTRACT

A GUIDE TO THE PERFORMANCE OF JAMES M. STEPHENSON’S *SYMPHONY NO. 2: VOICES FOR CONCERT BAND*

James M. Stephenson is an American composer whose compositions are lauded by critics, performed on multiple continents, and recognized with prestigious awards from respected intuitions. His *Symphony No. 2: Voices for Concert Band* won the 2017 National Band Association William D. Revelli Composition Contest, and the 2018 Sousa-ABA-Ostwald Composition Contest. It was commissioned by “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band and Colonel Jason Fettig. It was premiered on December 14, 2016 at the Midwest Clinic: International Band and Orchestra Conference at the McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois.

This thesis infuses James M. Stephenson’s personal and intimate knowledge of his *Symphony No. 2: Voices for Concert Band* with a theoretical analysis to provide conductors, performers, and other musically curious patrons insight into understanding its performance. A granular analysis of this symphony examines theoretical topics such as form, melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, texture, orchestration, instrumentation, and unifying thematic material. The theoretical analysis then combines insights from Stephenson about the symbolic and emotional development of the piece, along with salient rehearsal considerations. Finally, this paper documents current influences on Stephenson’s work and his broader views on composing, composers, and the state of wind bands in general.

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DEDICATION

In memory of James, Jr. and Shirley Stephenson

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

James M. Stephenson III is an American composer whose compositions are lauded by critics. Wynne Delacoma writes, “Stephenson’s orchestration is astonishingly inventive. His score exploits every ounce of its boundless capacity for orchestral drama and color.”¹ The reputation of his music has carried it to performances in multiple countries throughout North America, Europe, and in New Zealand.² He showcases his flexibility to compose in a wide range of mediums that includes major symphonies, ballets, and pops music, using his own blend of standard symphonic language alongside modern compositional techniques, jazz and popular influences. This is evidenced in his list of commissions from world-class organizations and soloists. Among others, he composed on commission for “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, and the San Francisco Ballet. Renowned musicians and soloists have also commissioned Stephenson. This list includes Christopher Martin (principal trumpet, New York Philharmonic), Joseph Alessi (principal trombone, New York Philharmonic) and jazz saxophonist Branford Marsalis. Stephenson’s compositional output includes brass literature, solos and concerti on a variety of instruments, and a balanced output of pieces for orchestra and wind band, including four symphonies: one for brass, one for orchestra, and two for wind band.

¹ Wynne Delacoma, review of concert performance by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Chicago, *Musical America Worldwide*, June 17, 2019.

² James M. Stephenson, “Media Kit” (accessed September 23, 2020), <https://composerjim.com/about/media-kit/>.

A litany of successes and wide-ranging performances suggest Stephenson's *Symphony No. 2: Voices for Concert Band* has the durability to stand the test of time.³ *Voices* won the 2017 National Band Association William D. Revelli Composition Contest, and the 2018 Sousa-ABA-Ostwald Composition Contest.⁴ *Voices* was commissioned by "The President's Own" United States Marine Band, under then Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fettig, and premiered on December 14, 2016 at the Midwest Clinic: International Band and Orchestra Conference at the McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois. Since its premiere, it has received no fewer than twenty performances by universities in the United States and Spain.⁵ Yet despite all its success, this is the first in-depth study of Stephenson's *Symphony No. 2: Voices*.

The challenge is, how can the composer's intent be documented and made accessible to conductors and performers? In her forward to Mark Camphouse's book, *Composers on Composing for Band*, volume one, Mallory Thompson, director of bands at Northwestern University writes, "The most important relationships in a conductor's life are with the people they conduct and with the composers whose music they are re-creating. Conductors face the daily challenges of interpreting the composer's intentions through a notation system that is inherently inadequate."⁶ Her ultimate question is: how can conductors go about building a relationship with composers (living or past) in order to understand and communicate more fully (more than music notation allows) the vision of the composer? Her answer (although in the

³ James M. Stephenson's *Symphony No. 2: Voices* hereto also referred to as *Voices*.

⁴ ABA is the American Bandmasters Association.

⁵ "Symphony No. 2 (Stephenson)," Wind Repertory Project (accessed September 23, 2020), [https://www.windrep.org/Symphony_No_2_\(Stephenson\)](https://www.windrep.org/Symphony_No_2_(Stephenson)).

⁶ Mark Camphouse, *Composers on Composing for Band* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2002), 1:ix.

context of advocating for a specific book that compiles the writings of composers) is one that is universally germane—by learning directly from the composer either through writings, interviews, lectures, or in direct conversation.

Even a living composer cannot personally interact with every individual performer of his or her music. In order to assist conductors and performers in their understanding of Stephenson's *Voices*, the best source to consult for research is the primary source, the composer himself. The best time to do that is while he is alive to tell his own story, in his own words. This conductor's analysis infuses James M. Stephenson's personal and intimate knowledge of his *Symphony No. 2: Voices* with a theoretical analysis to provide conductors, performers, and other musically curious patrons an insightful means to understand its performance.

Conductors' analyses have been researched and written as scholarly thesis and dissertation-style documents covering composers who are no longer living, such as Richard Strauss and Ludwig Beethoven, and composers whose compositions are receiving their premiere performance as part of the dissertation process, such as Viet Cuong and his 2019 composition *Bull's-Eye*.⁷ As of September 28, 2020, the ProQuest database returned a result of 650 theses and dissertations in the field of music whose abstract contains the term "conductors analysis."⁸ The ability for conductors and composers to have access to detailed and insightful information about the performance of specific music is an important matter for those who strive to offer informed performances to an audience. This is evidenced in the breadth and depth of scholarly writing that has been presented in the form of a conductor's analysis.

⁷ Nils Fredrik Landsberg, "Viet Cuong's *Bull's-Eye*: A Conductor's Analysis" (DMA diss., University of Kansas, 2019), iv, ProQuest 27545808.

⁸ *ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global*, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://www.proquest.com>.

PREVIOUS SCHOLARLY WORK

Stephenson's life and his compositions are only beginning to surface as the subjects of scholarly writing. To date there are four thesis or dissertation-style documents written entirely or in part about Stephenson and his compositions: two examine his music for trumpet, one is a conductor's analysis of his symphony for orchestra, and one includes his symphony for wind band as part of its larger study on the renaissance of the American symphony for wind bands. The following literature review encompasses each of those documents.

Kyle Norris submitted a DMA dissertation at North Dakota State University titled "Twenty-first Century Trumpet Music of James M. Stephenson III" in 2012. Norris examines many of Stephenson's works for trumpet, which include etudes, solos, and chamber music. As part of his study, Norris also compiled an extensive biography of Stephenson, who grew up in a family that was musical, but only as an avocation. Stephenson's father was an electrical engineer outside the field of music, but his interest in music led him to develop and build an early synthesizer. His mother was an avid amateur singer and flutist. His two siblings each participated in musical opportunities through their school-aged years, but neither pursued music beyond college. Stephenson's musical foundation began with piano studies along with a music theory component, and then he added trumpet through his school band program. His trumpet progress was rapid, and further encouraged through his attendance at the Interlochen Arts Camp and eventually the Interlochen Arts Academy. Subsequently, he attended New England Conservatory, studying trumpet with Charles Schlueter.⁹

After earning his bachelor of music degree, Stephenson immediately earned a position in the Naples Philharmonic (Florida) and made his primary full-time living as a trumpet player. It

⁹ Charles Schlueter was the longtime principal trumpet for the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1981–2006) and faculty member at the New England Conservatory.

was during this time when Stephenson began to arrange music for brass quintet, expanding to complete arrangements for the Naples Philharmonic, and eventually to write his own compositions. In 2005, Stephenson and his wife, Sally, moved back to the Chicago area to pursue a full-time career as a composer.

Between 2005 and 2012, three of Stephenson's pieces premiered at the International Trumpet Guild, including one premiered by Christopher Martin, then principal trumpet with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He also served as the composer-in-residence with the Lake Forest Symphony (Illinois). As of 2012, Stephenson's works were performed by several major orchestras: Chicago, Cleveland, Minnesota, Baltimore, Atlanta, Boston Pops, and Cincinnati Pops.¹⁰

Additionally, Norris's dissertation explores the influences that contribute to Stephenson's compositional voice. These include composers such as Sergei Prokofiev (for balance of importance between melody, rhythm, harmony and orchestration), W.A. Mozart (for beauty and elegance), Ludwig van Beethoven (for compositional structure in regard to the use of unifying thematic material), and Charles Ives (for his individuality). Stephenson draws musical lessons in orchestration from Ravel, Tchaikovsky, Brahms, J.S. Bach, Bernstein, and contemporary composer John Adams.¹¹

All of these influences, along with Stephenson's formative years as a professional trumpet player, reveal themselves with his own voice that places importance on lyricism, and the use of demanding (often virtuosic) technical passages. He uses rhythm as a means to depict

¹⁰ Kyle Matthew Norris, "Twenty-First Century Trumpet Music of James M. Stephenson" (DMA diss., North Dakota State University, 2012), 1–8, ProQuest 2505225.

¹¹ Norris, "Twenty-First Century Trumpet Music," 9–12.

various characters or moods in his music. His compositional voice is also one of great detail. His music is often manicured with detailed markings for phrasing, dynamics, articulations, and special effects, which creates a broad palette of colors while also communicating as much of the composer's intent as possible.¹²

In 2015, Joseph Nibley submitted a doctoral treatise titled "The Commissioning of James M. Stephenson's *Sonata No. 2* for Trumpet and Piano from Inception to Premiere" at Florida State University. Nibley's doctoral treatise is a step-by-step account from commission to premiere of Stephenson's *Sonata No. 2* for trumpet. Nibley's treatise details Stephenson's compositional process from beginning to end. From Nibley's account, it is clear the compositional process for Stephenson, from inspiration to manifestation, was personal, insightful, and symbolic. Through an in-person interview/conversation between Nibley and Stephenson, the piece began to "take shape" in Stephenson's mind. Stephenson writes about the piece he composed for Nibley: "The work that immediately came to mind during the conversation was one that would describe my understanding of his life up to that point: Pain, Sadness, Perseverance, and Tranquility."¹³ Stephenson's process illustrates the humanness of his voice and intent as a composer.

Jacqueline Townsend submitted her 2018 DMA dissertation titled "The Renaissance of the American Symphony for Wind Band as Exemplified by the Recent Symphonies of Donald Grantham, David Dzubay, James Stephenson, and Kevin Walczyk" at the University of North Texas. As part of Townsend's larger look at American symphonies for wind band, Stephenson's

¹² Norris, "Twenty-First Century Trumpet Music," 74–75.

¹³ Joseph Alexander Nibley, "The Commissioning of James M. Stephenson's *Sonata No. 2* for Trumpet and Piano from Inception to Premiere" (DMA diss., Florida State University, 2015), 11, ProQuest 3705895.

Symphony No. 2: Voices serves as one of her case studies. She uses a ten-point rubric of standard symphonic norms, which she built from previous scholarly work on a related topic. Along with *Voices*, she examines three other American symphonies for band, which also premiered in 2016, to draw conclusions about the trends in the American symphonies for band. Townsend found that five characteristics have remained largely true to standard symphonic norms: instrumentation that supports an expansive or large-scale ensemble; multiple contrasting movements or sections; sonata-allegro, rounded binary, or similar form in the first movement or section; thematic cohesion between movements; and the intention of communicating a broad message to the public. Two additional norms were met by three out of the four pieces in her study: a fast-slow-fast pattern between movements (while *Voices* is the symphony that does not meet this norm, it reverses the pattern: slow-fast-slow), and the overall performance length between 17–27 minutes (noting that the Walczyk *Symphony No. 4* is only one minute short at 16 minutes.) The other three norms were met by two or fewer of the symphonies in her study: typical second movement form, typical third movement form, and typical fourth movement form.¹⁴

For *Voices*, as she did with each piece in her study, Townsend lays out a big-picture structural sketch of each movement, which includes identifying the form and delineating the subsections of the form and their tonal centers; in some cases, she includes thematic material as part of her structural analysis. According to Townsend, Stephenson's *Voices* is the most divergent from standard symphonic norms fully meeting only five of ten criteria. It fully meets these five norms: instrumentation that supports an expansive or large-scale ensemble, multiple contrasting movements or sections, thematic cohesion, length of 17–27 minutes, and intent to communicate a

¹⁴ Jacqueline Kathryn Townsend, "The Renaissance of the American Symphony for Wind Band as Exemplified by the Recent Symphonies of Donald Grantham, David Dzubay, James Stephenson, and Kevin Walczyk" (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2018), 54.

broad message. It meets these two norms with variance: typical first movement form (which appears in the second movement for *Voices*), and typical fourth movement form (which appears in the third/final movement for *Voices*). It fully diverges from three norms by not using a fast-slow-fast pattern of movements, not using the typical second movement form, not using the typical third movement form.¹⁵

Most recently, in 2019, Alexander Magalong submitted his doctoral essay, “James Stephenson: Symphony #3 ‘Visions’—A Conductor’s Literary Companion,” at the University of Miami. In Magalong’s doctoral essay, he provides an overview of Stephenson’s *Symphony No. 3: Visions* for orchestra as a guide for conductors and performers. It expounds upon theoretical elements, orchestration, and thematic and motivic development. Additionally, Magalong poses potential performance considerations such as balance, articulation, precision, and conducting challenges. Among his observations and conclusions are: the accessibility of Stephenson’s harmonic and melodic language; his “ingenious treatment of motives;” his complex use of textures; and that his themes, motives, and ideas often intertwine, evolve, and develop throughout his symphony.¹⁶

Magalong’s essay also includes an appendix containing the complete transcript of his interview of Stephenson, which includes Stephenson’s insights into how his *Symphony No. 2: Voices* for band is similar to and different from his *Symphony No. 3: Visions* for orchestra. Stephenson self-identifies the latter, *No. 3* for orchestra, as less “forward” than his earlier *No. 2* for band in that *No. 3* more closely relates to “symphonic tradition ... in its four-movement

¹⁵ Townsend, “The Renaissance,” 55.

¹⁶ Alexander Magalong, “James Stephenson: Symphony No. 3 “Visions”—A Conductor’s Literary Companion” (DMA diss., University of Miami, 2019), 107, ProQuest 27668859.

expositional first; slow second; scherzo third; Finale fourth,” whereas he took more risks to diverge from some symphonic traditions in *No. 2*.¹⁷ His interview is relevant to further studies by providing additional context from the composer about the use of his own compositional voice in different settings and for different purposes.

With the benefit of approximately four hours of face-to-face interviews with Stephenson, in the context of his *Symphony No. 2: Voices*, the following chapters detail Stephenson’s compositional process and philosophy, the background on his *Symphony No. 2: Voices* including its unifying material, and a theoretical analysis of each movement which is infused with insights about the symbolic elements Stephenson included, and salient rehearsal points. The analytical research and observations are based on a three-part interview with Stephenson; an interview with the commissioner and conductor of *Voices*’ premiere performance, Fetting; and detailed score study. The interviews of Stephenson parallel the model used by Mark Camphouse in his series *Composers on Composing for Band*. They include questions on biographical information, his creative process, his thoughts on orchestration, what he thinks is important for conductors and performers to know about this piece, the development of his compositional voice since 2012, his opinions on contemporary composers and compositions, and his thoughts on the future of the wind band.¹⁸

¹⁷ Magalong, “James Stephenson,” 115.

¹⁸ Camphouse, *Composers on Composing for Band*, 1:xii–xiii.

CHAPTER 2: THE COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS: AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES M. STEPHENSON

A summary of Stephenson's biography, as presented in Kyle Norris's 2012 DMA dissertation, is included in chapter.¹⁹ This current chapter documents further insights about Stephenson's values and philosophies garnered from face-to-face interviews of Stephenson and Colonel Fetting, commissioner of *Voices*, by the author.

Stephenson grew up in a supportive household, one in which the interests of the children were well supported by their parents. Stephenson talks about the type of support he felt and the values he learned from his parents during his formative years.

The things that I remember very distinctly are just a sense of discipline, was a big one. A sense of hard work. It kind of goes along with discipline. Being patient. My dad hated instant gratification. He hated it. And it's just something that's even more of a thing today, right, as we all know?

Other values I think that maybe they didn't talk about, but I just grew up with were a real interest in people, other people. Trying to be fair, always thinking of the other side of the coin—if you are going to make an argument, you are going to consider that the other person might have a different point of view, a different story before you even make that argument.

Certainly—gosh, like I said, there's going to be more. I just remember my dad—my dad founded his own company. A lot of times I would be riding in the car, and he would be telling me his frustrations about things he thought he was doing for other people and things that they just didn't get. You have 200 employees, and they are complaining. And he's like, "You know, I created this company and you're working because I created this company, and I'm doing the best I can for you. You know, there's 200 of you I have to consider," that sort of thing. All of these things have found their way into my being one way or another.

One thing that was not a big part of my childhood, which is something that I still—and will probably come out the more we talk, is there wasn't a ton of, "Hey, I love you" in the family growing up. I felt it because they supported everything I did. It's very important to say that. From the get-go, I had a trumpet placed under the Christmas tree when I was ten, and any interest I had in music, going to camp, going to Interlochen for high school, going to summer music festivals when I graduated from college. College was expensive, all of those things. There was never, hey, we can't afford this, or hey, that

¹⁹ Norris, "Twenty-First Century Trumpet Music," 1–8.

might be a really risky business to get into; you might reconsider it. It was always, Jim, you go for it. But there was not a whole lot of, oh hey, love you, see you later, that kind of stuff.

And those “I love yous” that didn’t necessarily happen in my childhood, they happen a lot in our close-knit family here. A lot of that is credit to my wife. She’s a lot more open about that sort of thing. I’ve had to learn how to do that. So, I credit my wife for that.²⁰

The value of taking an interest in other people influences the way Stephenson draws inspiration from the those who commission him. When asked to describe his commissioning process, his answer further depicts the importance of the that value.

Every commission is so different. Everybody has their own set of circumstances. I’m always talking with people. Whether it’s e-mail or something like this, I’m trying to figure out what makes them tick, why they are wanting this new piece, what their personality is. And from that comes sounds in my head and then that becomes the creative impulse for whatever happens next. But each piece ends up being totally different.²¹

Fettig’s experience working with Stephenson through the commissioning of *Voices* extends this personal value further to include a deep-seated modesty that also plays a part in the psyche of Stephenson and his process. Fettig notes:

He is one of the most generous and genuine people that I’ve ever met. The more successful and famous you get, sometimes you don’t expect there to be just a real humility and personability ... kind of a down to earth kind of quality. Jim has been that way since the beginning. And he always will be. It’s just the way he’s wired.

In some ways he’s very self-effacing. I think sometimes he doesn’t realize that he has earned all of his success. He doesn’t know if he’s qualified to be the great composer that he is. I kind of get a kick out of it because it’s like, Jim, how much success do you have to have? How many ensembles and great musicians have to play your music and love it before you believe that, yes, in fact you belong in this class of great American composers?

But in a way it’s endearing, too, it makes him an incredibly collaborative musician. So, he wants to have a relationship with the players who play his music and the

²⁰ James M. Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

²¹ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

conductors who conduct his music. It's very much a collaborative and personal experience, which I love.²²

Stephenson reflects on his children and how they have shaped or influenced his work as a composer.

Two ways that are probably not going to be the answer that you expect, but one way is that, when we left our careers in the orchestra for me to become a full-time composer, there was a very real reality. It was very real that I had to figure out how to pay for this. And so, four children, it was a very expensive existence, and so, it inspired me. I mean, I think I got this from my father, maybe from my mother too. But like I said, she really didn't tell us much.

I never looked back once we left our jobs. My job was to now figure out how to make a living as a composer because of all of our expenses and needs. So that inspired me to work my butt off even more than ever. So that's one way.

Another way is that my kids, who aren't as firmly grounded in classical music as I am—even though my daughter is now doing composition—when they were growing up, they were all about the radio and all about singer-songwriters and making up their own songs. And it's sort of—I can tell you many times—I am sitting upstairs in my house right now and our piano is downstairs. And I would hear my daughter, or both of them, coming up with their own stuff downstairs, And I'm like, man, that is really beautiful; I like that. And I've got to remember that these things are very appealing, and it's important that you write music that people like to hear. Or we'll be driving to school and listening to the radio and they are listening to some tunes and I'm like, that's got a great bass line. Why can't I do that in classical music? That sort of thing. So I would say that having the kids around, it certainly provided me with that other insight too. It doesn't mean it has to be of any less intellectual quality. You can do both, I believe. And that's what I always strive to do.²³

His children's influence on him to create music that is accessible to a broad audience directly correlates with his value of considering the perspectives and experiences of others.

When I write my music—I've only grown comfortable saying this really in recent years because I thought I shouldn't admit this—but I really do think about the audience. I think about the players. I think about the conductor, of course. I think about the librarian. I think about even the administrators. I think about the person who commissioned the piece. Every note is written with those people in mind because we're all part of it. A lot of pieces have to come together for this piece to exist. And, first and foremost, I'm thinking about myself, of course, because I want the piece to reflect how I feel about life and how I feel about the music and all of that. But everything else, especially performers,

²² Jason Fettig, interview by author, December 2020.

²³ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

they are the ones really putting their necks out there, playing under the hot lights. Spur of the moment someone might throw them weird cues, or they might have taken a faster tempo or something like that. Somebody might have just coughed. Somebody might have shifted their seat back there. All of these things can happen. So, my job is to make sure what I put on the page provides as much information and comfort, whatever is possible, so they can do their jobs. I think about all of this stuff when I write, I really do.²⁴

Among his extensive works list, Stephenson highlights two of his compositions as professional turning points: *Symphony No. 2: Voices for Concert Band*, and *Concerto No. 1 for Trumpet and Orchestra* (2003). He delves into the effects each had on his career.

The obvious answer would be my *Symphony [No. 2]*. That's the one that seems to get the most attention in the concert band world, wind ensemble world. And what is interesting to me about that is that it was only after I revealed why I actually wrote the piece. I didn't tell anybody it was about my mother for about two years, and I didn't even want to. But once I told Colonel Fetting, he's like, "You've got to tell everybody that." So I started telling. What I learned was that people resonated with that. I'm a little bit reluctant to show all of my emotions like that because—this is going to sound weird, but I find that to be arrogant to do that, to assume that my emotions might be even important to anybody else seems wrong. Or it seemed wrong to me. But now I've come to learn through the symphony that there are people who appreciate knowing that sort of thing.

So, I would say that was a big—it's interesting to say—turning point, because every piece I write, to me, has just as much meaning as the Symphony. Every piece has just as much stuff in there that I think if people want to discover, it's there. So, that being premiered at Midwest and being played by the Marine Band, and then people finding out that it was about my mother, they resonated with that. People have become more interested because of that.

Interestingly enough, it was scheduled to be played a lot more and in some important places when everything shut down for [COVID-19].²⁵ I think there were probably 10 or 15 performances waiting to happen, including Carnegie Hall, including Symphony Hall Boston, including over in the Netherlands, including Tanglewood in the summer. And now I'm just, well, are people still going to be interested? I don't know.

But to further answer your question, I think another turning point was when I wrote my first trumpet concerto, which was for solo trumpet and chamber orchestra. And it was the first time in my life where I was writing a piece for a specific person who challenged me, who said, "Hey, I want you to write this piece, and I want you to do this. You know, I've heard your music. I need you to step it up a bit. I need you to do this. I want you to do this." So, I did that.

²⁴ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

²⁵ COVID-19 refers to the Coronavirus outbreak which began late in the year 2019 and became a global pandemic. In reaction to COVID-19, many public events were cancelled or postponed in an effort to reduce to spread of the disease.

It was played by a really fine group in Boston. I was down in Florida at the time. I sort of felt this extra pressure to try to write something that the musicians would find enjoyable and meaningful and all of that. And so those two things went well. And the press liked it; I got three really nice reviews.

And so those three things together gave me confidence to think, hey, maybe I do have something to say in this world. But it doesn't matter. Every new piece is a new challenge. It doesn't matter what you've done in the past. You've got to step up every time.²⁶

Stephenson briefly addresses how his compositional voice has changed over the past decade. Then he turns the topic specifically to the "band world."

In 2012, I really didn't know anything at all about the wind ensemble, the band world, I really didn't. I've written some pieces for it. In the eight years since then, I've been to a lot more concerts. I've written a lot more pieces for wind ensemble. And I've learned a lot from composers writing for wind ensemble. Even this year I was judging for the—because I'm an ABA member—So, I had the privilege of listening to the 60 or so compositions—I don't know how many there were. I had my little group to listen to. And the writing is so good. It was so inspiring. I don't know how much of that the conductors will devour when it comes out. I didn't know to what degree you might find out all of the finalists or final twelve. Oh, my gosh. They are such good pieces, all of them. And I found them to be really, really inspiring. I couldn't wait to listen to the next one. Oh, my gosh. I became a student. I wasn't a composer making a living at it. I was a student trying to learn from all of these composers, and it was really cool.

So that's always going to happen. Everybody, I'm just going to be influenced by everybody I hear on a daily, monthly, yearly basis. And I'm still a curious composer. So, I don't know if I said that in 2012. But if I didn't, I was then. And if I did say it, I can say it to you again, that I still am a curious composer.²⁷

In a follow-up question, the conversation turns to the future of the wind band in general.

Stephenson expresses enthusiasm for its future in great part because the medium is replete with captivating new compositions.

I have one big thought. And I think, especially because of what I just heard in the ABA competition, I think the other areas of music should pay more attention to wind band if they are not already. What I'm hearing is so compelling and so interesting. I love writing for all. I grew up playing in orchestra. Orchestra is my baby. I've only discovered wind ensembles in the last ten to twelve years. But I hope that wind ensembles somehow find more of a place in the public arena beyond just being played in conservatories and

²⁶ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

²⁷ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

colleges and universities. Because, especially with what I've been hearing lately, oh my gosh. I have so many friends in the orchestral world. I would invite them to go hear some of our fine military ensembles and college, university ensembles, and they might have a different opinion. And then they would hear the music and they might say, "Wow! I wouldn't mind playing some of that." And there's some really good stuff out there. So that's my opinion. I hope—whether or not I'm a part of what moves it into other areas ... I hope somehow more of it gets heard.²⁸

When asked for his thoughts on the general state of composing in 2020, Stephenson states he is drawn to composers and compositions who strive to show the complexity of artistry while remaining accessible to the audience.

Well, I'm always just really interested in the craft being used for the right reason. I'm not a fan of toys. I'm not a fan of, oh, this is cool. I'm not a fan of doing things because it's a fad. I'm a fan of the craft being there and being used to deliver something that has depth; I like music that makes the audience feel smarter rather than dumber. I think we've all been in concerts where we hear something, like, I have no idea what's going on here, and I feel really stupid and I don't know why. Then we go to concerts where it's just stunning and the composer, or theater, or playwright, or artist, they do their craft in such a way that you're involved in it, you feel it, you understand it. Their skill level is certainly above what you could imagine, but they are presenting in a way that invites you in rather than pushes you away.

I know that that imbues everything I write. I'm not saying that I am incredibly skilled at what I do. I'm always trying to learn and get better. But it is always the number-one task, is to invite the audience to be a part of it rather than to—I can do this; I don't care if you don't understand, you know, that sort of thing. So that's how I approach listening to music. And I'm immediately attracted to the composers that are following that path.

And since 2016, where I'm a little bit more comfortable saying, Hey, this is what it's about. If that finds relevance with you, it's all there for you, but I'm giving you a heads-up. We'll see how that turns out. We're all different and that's just where I'm at right now.²⁹

Looking to the future, the author asked Stephenson what he would like to compose if there were no limits placed on him, if he received a *carte blanche* commission. He responds with a focus on storytelling.

²⁸ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

²⁹ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

I'm interested in serious projects. I don't want to write too many fanfares anymore. I don't want to write too many fill-in-the-blank three, five-minute kind of things. So, for me I would love to continue the symphony trail. I would love to write an opera. And when I say "LOVE" that's in all caps. Because I've discovered, especially now having just written a ballet score—and then, again, maybe this started with writing the piece about my mom, the *Symphony*—I discovered that I am really comfortable and enjoy and inspired by telling a story. My music goes somewhere I would never otherwise find unless I was telling a story. Because I sort of, like, give up; I let go when somebody else is giving me the trajectory of it. I find that really compelling. Anything that's a story. So that could be more ballet scores. That could be an opera. Even if it was a musical, theater music somehow. Anything where I get to add my voice to another narrative, I'm all about it. Sign me up; I want to do it. That's kind of where I am right now.

And that doesn't mean I don't want to write a symphony, because I think a symphony is a place where I can discover that narrative within myself. But I would probably have in my mind somewhere where it's going. I wouldn't make up a fairytale, but I would make up some sort of journey. Yeah, big pieces are what I'm interested in.³⁰

On a personal note for Stephenson, his mother, Shirley, passed away in 2016 just as he was about to start composing his *Symphony No. 2*. The loss of his mother played a major role in shaping *Symphony No. 2* and rightfully occupies a significant portion of this paper. Stephenson's mourning of his father in 2020 took a similar path through a new composition, *as the fireflies watched* (2020). With parallel symbolism, Stephenson scored this work for tenor voice and a chamber ensemble of nine instrumentalists. In conversation with the author, Stephenson talks about the piece and memories of his father.

It was supposed to be premiered in about a week, but with everything going on with COVID they decided to move it to next spring. I decided to write about my experience growing up with my dad and some of that support that I mentioned earlier. And I decided also to take down some musical barriers and not care about styles and things like that. And I'll tell you why. Because, first of all, it's called *as the fireflies watch*, and that's because one of my earliest memories of my dad was playing catch with him in our backyard. And we would do it on a June evening or July evening. And it would get darker and darker. And I would just say, "No, let's keep going." And he, even though he was incredibly busy doing his company and everything that and I come to find out later that a lot of that was very stressful, would play catch until it got dark and the fireflies were out. And so that's my memory of just, "Throw me another one. Throw it higher," that sort of thing.

³⁰ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

And then as the piece goes on, it's four movements with solo tenor also. Tenor and chamber ensemble because my dad was a tenor. Every instrument I chose in the ten-piece ensemble had something to do with him or with me. He played saxophone and bassoon in high school. He was a piano player. He had a jazz band. So, I got bass and drums in there. I played trumpet. And there's tenor. I can't remember what else I had. A flute. My mother played the flute. So, all of these things represent my family. And there's one movement it is just total pop song. Very much like Broadway-feeling kind of thing. And that's because my dad, when he would come home from work and sit at the piano, he would just play show tunes and play pop songs.

And all the text is my own; I wrote the words. I wanted to go there. It was just like: This is going to be how I feel about my dad. I'm not going to hold anything back. I'm not going to try to protect myself or worry about what other people are going to think. I'm just going to just write it, write about my dad. So, I wrote all of the words and put whatever style of music I wanted to put in there. Tried to make it representative and meaningful throughout. I haven't heard it yet, but I was happy with what I wrote, and we'll just see what happens.³¹

Stephenson expresses unprompted thoughts at the close of the interview. The importance of these reflections is underscored by his desire to volunteer them.

You've, obviously—you've forced me to unearth things about this piece that I had forgotten and so that is a nice walk down memory lane. You know, I love these conversations too. I don't get to have them nearly as often as you'd think. You think that when we go have premieres with this orchestra and that orchestra or this band, whatever, you end up sitting down and having lengthy conversations about the meaning of music and life, and it just doesn't happen very much. This person is running this way; I've got a deadline; and I'm running this way, or whatever. And so, I appreciate these conversations a lot as well. And selfishly, obviously, because it's about my piece and it's kind of fun.

But I'm very appreciative that you're ... doing so much about this piece, because I'm afraid it's going to disappear. I think all of us, composers, feel that way about all of our music, especially now when we don't know when things are going to get played again. Half of the time we're writing music and we're like: Should I be doing this? Why am I doing this?

So, as much as you can, include the overriding reason for why I wrote this piece, or how I came to write this piece. I think that's crucial. We've uncovered—talked about a lot of technical stuff, but the technical stuff is so below the emotional part. The technical stuff is just a means for composers to get to an end. But if the technical stuff doesn't ever support the emotional stuff, then I don't do it. It's got to be there for a reason, or it doesn't happen.³²

³¹ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

³² Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SYMPHONY NO. 2: VOICES

Voices, composed and premiered in Chicago, Illinois, in 2016, was commissioned by Colonel Fettig. The premiere took place as the centerpiece of a concert by the “The President’s Own” U.S. Marine Band at the 2016 Midwest Clinic.³³ The piece is approximately 22 minutes in duration, and contains three movements, the second of which is also designed to serve as a stand-alone movement. It utilizes the following instrumentation: mezzo-soprano, piccolo, 3 flutes (+alto), 2 oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, 3 B-flat clarinets, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 saxophones (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone), 4 horns, 3 cornets (+flugels), 2 trumpets, 3 tenor trombones, bass trombone, 2 euphoniums, 2 tubas, double bass, piano (+celesta), harp, timpani, 2 mallet percussion, 4 percussion.³⁴ The composer self-publishes the piece through his own company, Stephenson Music, Inc.

The concept for Stephenson’s *Symphony No. 2: Voices* came to fruition after years of conversation between the composer and Fettig. Fettig was familiar with Stephenson’s compositions through previous performances and collaborations. He was searching for the right time and place to commission Stephenson for a new major work. In an interview, Fettig recounts:

³³ The Midwest Clinic is a professional conference held annually in Chicago, Illinois. Its mission is “to strengthen international instrumental music education through extensive professional development opportunities, inspirational experiences, and cultivation of rewarding professional relationships.”

³⁴ The percussion parts include the following: mallet 1—marimba, glockenspiel, crotales, xylophone, chimes, cymbals, triangle; mallet 2—xylophone, cymbals, vibraphone, marimba, glockenspiel; percussion 1—snare drum, triangle, tam-tam, 20-inch suspended cymbal; percussion 2—triangle, tam-tam, woodblock, 13-inch suspended cymbal, tambourine, slapstick; percussion 3—triangle, 17-inch suspended cymbal, tambourine, chimes; percussion 4—bass drum, djembe, 20-inch suspended cymbal.

I wanted to have him write us this piece, and it was really centered around the Midwest [Clinic] performance and finding something substantial that we could add to the repertoire and feature and debut. It was kind of a serendipitous moment because Jim was originally from Chicago. He lived there. They came back home. He was a composer with whom we had started to develop a musical relationship; a relationship between Jim and “The President’s Own.” I conducted one of his previous premiers that he wrote for us. And I loved his language; I loved what he was doing and how dexterous and how virtuosic he was in his language and the way he composed. So, I knew he was exactly the composer that was going to give us something that I hoped he would deliver, which was a piece that, not only spoke to a wide range of people, but was a showcase for the organization, for the band. And it was also something that was constructed in a very intricate and interesting way.

There’s a lot of music that’s written for band these days, that it’s very beautiful, or it’s kind of mood music. It really hits you in a visceral way; and it utilizes the band in a beautiful way, but it doesn’t go particularly deep in its formal structure. I just knew the kind of composer Jim was, he doesn’t write music like that. He writes music as visceral and emotional, but it’s always intricately constructed. I got that when I conducted and premiered his oboe concerto years prior. I studied that piece. I saw such a special quality in that music. So that was what I was hoping for, and he delivered in spades with the symphony. I gave him the extra special challenge of saying: you can only make it 20 minutes long. He would have written a much longer piece, or somewhat longer, if he had that flexibility. But you know how Midwest goes; you get an hour-long program. I needed it to be 20 minutes so it could be the feature of the program, but I had other areas I could go in.

So, the essence of the piece was born out of that friendship. We got together in Chicago, a couple years prior, in 2014, which was my first year as director. This was my first big commission as director, and I offered him the commission. I said, I would love for you to write a piece. And at that point we didn’t know it was going to be a symphony. It was something that came to fruition later. But we decided it was going to be something he wrote. It was going to be the feature of that program at Midwest, and we were off running at that point.

And then it was just a matter of finding what that piece was going to be. That was a project mostly for Jim—to go through that process of deciding what he wanted to write for this ensemble. We didn’t know exactly how Jim was going to fill those 20 minutes. Was it going to be a symphony? Was it going to be something else? I left it wide open for him. We knew it was going to be the feature of the program. And then over the course of the next year, the symphony found its voice, literally. Jim decided what he was going to write and that it was something that ended up bringing several worlds together for the organization, for what we represent, for his own personal life. As you know, the story is very personal, although he didn’t share that with me right away. So, all of these things came together to bring the piece to fruition.³⁵

³⁵ Fettig, interview by Author, December 2020.

The author asked Stephenson how he arrived at the full and official name of *Symphony*

No. 2: Voices for Concert Band. Stephenson states:

The symphony was certainly because I think of a symphony as a milestone for a composer. It's something you don't just sit down and spit out a symphony. It takes a lot of time. And the title itself implies that there's a lot of meat in there and it's a serious piece of work. And I guess the question might be, you know, is a three-movement piece that goes slow, fast, slow, is that a symphony?

But when I talked with Colonel Fettig, we were trying to come up to the decision as to what this piece was going to be. It lasted several months. We had many conversations where I thought I would be writing something patriotic, or I thought I would be writing something based on Norman Rockwell and we would have images on the screen and all of this sort of thing, because this is a United States Marine Band, let's do something like that. It was only after those didn't really appeal to me, and having written *Symphony No. 1*, which I had learned from by writing it—I know what hits and I know what misses with that piece—that I felt that *Symphony No. 2* was something that should happen. So that's where that comes from.

The concert band, I don't want to dwell too much on the whole concert band, wind ensemble thing, because I think I simply called it a concert band because I knew that it was going to be a big group on stage playing it.³⁶

The importance of the subtitle *Voices* is well documented in Stephenson's original program notes:

Recently, I was awaiting an international flight, when I heard the distinct sound of laughter coming from behind me. Because I could not see the people laughing, it occurred to me that it was a universal language of happiness; one which cannot evoke any judgment based on racial, religious, gender, social, or any other type of prejudice. I decided to not turn around, but rather to enjoy the laughter for what it was. It was this decidedly delightful sound of the human voice that inspired my 2nd symphony for wind ensemble.³⁷

Two years after the premiere, Stephenson added a second part to his program note, revealing another personal layer of meaning behind this piece and its subtitle.

On April 23, 2016, my mother, Shirley S. Stephenson, passed away, at the age of 74. It was the first time anyone that close to me had died, and I honestly didn't know how to respond. As this new piece—the symphony—was the next major work on my plate, I

³⁶ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

³⁷ James M. Stephenson, "Symphony No. 2" (accessed February 7, 2021), <https://composerjim.com/works/symphony-no-2/>.

thought the music would come pouring forth, as one would imagine in the movies, or in a novel. However, the opposite happened, and I was stuck, not knowing how to cope, and not knowing what to write. Eventually, after a month or so, I sat at the piano, and pounded a low E-flat octave, followed by an anguished chord answer. I did this three times, with three new response-chords, essentially recreating how I felt. This became the opening of the symphony, with emphasis on the bass trombone, who gets the loudest low E-flat. I vowed I wouldn't return to E-flat-major until the end of the piece, thus setting forth a compositional and emotional goal all at once: an E-flat to E-flat sustaining of long-term tension, technically speaking, and the final arrival at E-flat-major (letter I, 3rd movement) being a cathartic and powerful personal moment, when I finally would come to terms with the loss of my mother. The voice in the piece is that of my mother, an untrained alto, which is why I ask for it without vibrato. In the end, she finally sings once last time, conveying to me that "all will be ok".³⁸

In a document written for Fettig, Stephenson notes three reasons for the subtitle *Voices*: his desire for this to be a concerto for wind ensemble in which each instrument's voice would be heard; his hope to utilize the Marine Band's vocalist, Sara Sheffield; and the mezzo voice part would also represent the voice is his late mother, Shirley.³⁹

As mentioned earlier, Fettig shared that Stephenson wanted his second symphony to reflect the values of the Marine Band and what they represent. Stephenson views the Marine Band as a group of 85 musicians working together as one and serving as musical ambassadors for a set of values to the nation and globally. When asked to comment further about how the piece supports what the Marine Band represents, Fettig says:

I wanted the piece to be American in some way. Not necessarily in a saccharine kind of patriotic way. But since we are such an American institution and I was commissioning an American composer, really a quintessential American composer of our time, I wanted the piece to have some of that identity, in whatever way that meant to Jim. It could be a different way than Copland thought of it. It could be a different way than Bernstein thought of it, or Gershwin, any of these great American composers of the Twentieth Century. It could take on a new idea. And where he went was something that was distinctly American while also being international. This idea of voices, of this universal language of music but in a distinctly American package, because he's an American

³⁸ James M. Stephenson, "Symphony No. 2" (accessed February 7, 2021), <https://composerjim.com/works/symphony-no-2/>.

³⁹ James M. Stephenson "Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper with/for Col. Jason K. Fettig," unpublished, 2020.

composer, but thinking broadly across the spectrum of all voices. I thought that was very beautiful. It still felt very nationally proud to me, but in a very open-minded way, which is, for me, the best of both worlds.

In addition to that ... this kind of reckoning, this personal reckoning and personal journey of healing was the layer underneath. That was like a bonus to what was already there in the piece. The fact that he didn't really share that with me at first, I thought was so beautiful because it was his own, as the creator of the piece, it was his own story. It was his own voice being woven into all of these other voices.⁴⁰

After composing the introduction, Stephenson composed the remainder of the symphony out of order. The additional assignment of composing at least one stand-alone movement caused Stephenson to skip ahead and fulfill that request by writing the fast, virtuosic second movement next. Ultimately, the second movement produces a majority of the original content that serves as seeds for the outer movements. Stephenson then wrote the third movement and finally circled back to complete the first movement from measure 14 to the end. The only material from the introduction that is utilized later is the trumpet solo in measures 7–9.

UNIFYING MATERIAL

In an interview by Jeannine Wagar, renowned orchestral conductor Herbert Blomstedt was asked how he arrives at his vision of the music.⁴¹ He says, “Studying the score, listening to the score in your mind. I feel I must know the inner secrets of a score before I go in front of the orchestra.”⁴² A theoretical analysis of the score seeks to uncover the secrets tucked within the composition: its form, melodic content, harmonic content, rhythmic content, texture, and orchestration. Learning the inner secrets of *Voices* takes place at the confluence of a theoretical

⁴⁰ Fetting, interview with Author, December 2020.

⁴¹ Herbert Blomstedt is an American-Swedish conductor, having held posts with the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Danish Radio Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony, and the San Francisco Symphony.

⁴² Jeannine Wagar, *Conductors in Conversation*, (Boston: G.K. Hall & Company, 1991), 9.

analysis and the insights shared by the composer. Revealing *Voices*' inner secrets, making them accessible to conductors and performers, aids in their understanding and communication of the composer's intent through rehearsal and performance. In the case of *Voices*, uncovering the secrets begins by understanding the symphony's unifying material.

The most important element uniting all three movements relates to the symphony's subtitle, *Voices*. Stephenson writes about the overarching significance of the voice concept in his program notes.

Voices. They come in so many forms. Some high, some low. Extremely loud, or extremely soft. Some are menacing, or angelic. A voice is completely unique to each individual, and instantly recognizable to a close friend or relative. As a verb, it is used to express or vocalize an opinion. Used together, voices can express opposition, or unification. It occurred to me that all of these and more can be represented within the scope of a wind ensemble. The symphony No. 2 is an exploration of as many voices as I could formalize, resulting in a kind of concerto for wind ensemble. The culmination of the symphony is one of a unified voice, bringing together all of the different "cultures" and "individual voices" of the wind ensemble to express an amassed vision of hope and love.⁴³

There are several layers of significance to this subtitle, *Voices*. First, and arguably most important, Stephenson scores the symphony for concert band to include a unique additional instrument, a mezzo-soprano voice. The role of the voice is a symbolic gesture to Stephenson's mother, who was an amateur singer. As such, Stephenson includes voice as another timbre in the ensemble, not as a soloist. The mezzo-soprano voice appears in all three movements singing on the neutral syllable "O" or "Ooo," and should be performed, as noted in the score, without vibrato, symbolic of Stephenson's mother's untrained voice.⁴⁴ Second, the title of each

⁴³ James M. Stephenson, "Symphony No. 2" (accessed February 7, 2021), <https://composerjim.com/works/symphony-no-2/>.

⁴⁴ "O" is intended to sound like the word "oh." "Ooo" is intended to sound like the oo sound of the word moon.

movement indicates a type of voice, or perhaps a tone of voice. Regarding movement titles,

Stephenson says:

I was looking for phrases that followed the word “voices.” So, you have voices “of One” at the end, and the middle movement are things that sound like voices, “Shouts and Murmurs.” And so, you have voices “of One” at the end, and voices “of Passion” at the beginning. I don’t even know if that’s a phrase, but it sounded like one to me . . . and it matched how I felt.⁴⁵

Third, in Stephenson’s preparation for this composition, he created a list of words related to voices in general. He was asked about the use of the word “stentorian” in movement two, which brought about the broader discussion about using different voices as inspiration.

Stentorian comes from the name of a trombone quartet I know. So I knew that was a word. But I definitely at one point Googled different voices so that it would inspire me to put different sounds into this piece.⁴⁶ I don’t think stentorian was one of those, but other things appear. I don’t remember what it is off the top of my head. I’m Googling it again. “Stentorian,” of a person’s voice, loud and powerful.⁴⁷

Throughout all three movements, Stephenson represents types of voices, tones of voices, or moods of voices. Some are marked in the score, some reveal themselves in composer interviews or writings, and some are simply apparent in the music itself. The introduction of movement I shows the term “menacing” in the bass trombone (m. 1). Stephenson refers to the opening chord as an anguished chord in his program notes, or a “cry-out-to-the-world” chord in a document he wrote for Fettig.⁴⁸ Movement II contains the bulk of voice-like references, starting with the opening cymbals described in the score as “whispering/murmuring.” Stephenson refers to the

⁴⁵ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

⁴⁶ “Googled” or “Googling,” according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is defined as “to use the Google search engine to obtain information about (someone or something) on the world wide web.”

⁴⁷ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

⁴⁸ Stephenson, “Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper,” Unpublished, 2020.

first *forte* arrival at measure 36 as a “shout.” A few seconds later, he explores the voices of “sultry” and “echo,” as noted in the score in measures 51 and 55 respectively. The list of voice-types in movement two is long; each is included within the analysis of the movement in chapter five. Movement III continues the exploration of voice types, two of which are: a “soulful” voice in measure 1, and what Stephenson referred to as an “eerie” alto saxophone solo at measure 24.⁴⁹

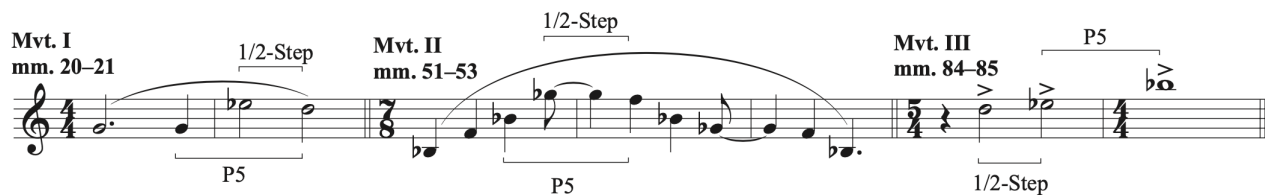
Structurally, the most unifying element is an interval motive (which will appear as [IM] for the purpose of this paper) of a perfect fifth and a half step (see example 3.1). The [IM] was first composed in movement II at measure 51 and can be examined by looking at the harp or crotales part. Here the notes B-flat, F, and G-flat are spread out across a minor thirteenth, but when considered in a closed voicing, it includes a perfect fifth (B-flat to F) and a half step (F to G-flat). When performing the symphony in its entirety, the first appearance of the [IM] chronologically is in movement I, measure 20, in the mezzo voice. Here the [IM] is reconfigured to G, E-flat, D, where the perfect fifth occurs between the first and last pitches, and the half step from the middle to the last pitch. The [IM] becomes pervasive as a means of constructing melodic and accompaniment content, and as an overall architectural plan for the tonal centers of symphony. Stephenson speaks to this architectural plan when discussing movement III, the ending of the entire symphony.

If you look at letter G is where I see it, where I think the coda really starts. That’s in the key of G. And then at letter H, it’s in the key A-flat-minor. And letter “I,” finally it’s E-flat. That’s the biggest moment of the piece. If you think of those intervals, G to A-flat to E-flat, it matches also the keys of movement one, movement two, movement three, which also match that whole interval structure that’s prevalent throughout.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Stephenson, “Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper,” Unpublished, 2020.

⁵⁰ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

Throughout the piece, Stephenson manipulates the [IM] freely, using multiple inversions; reordering the intervals; utilizing octave displacement; composing it ascending or descending, horizontally in a lyric manner, or vertically as a chord. Many appearances of the [IM] are noted throughout the analysis chapters. During an interview, Stephenson says, “I’m a very big fan of putting little Easter eggs in there.” There are undoubtedly more appearances of the [IM] to be found.



Example 3.1.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. I (mm. 20–21), mezzo voice, the first *performed* example of the interval motive.
Mvt. II (mm. 51–53), harp, the first *composed* example of the interval motive.
Mvt. III (mm. 84–85), brass, the final *performed* example of the interval motive.

Another stealthier unifying element revolves around the number three. Although there is no symbolic meaning or reference to the number three, its use is prevalent and conscious. It likely originates from the movement I introduction in which there are three anguished chords (mm. 1, 5, and 9, respectively). Accompanying each of these chords is a cymbal crash. While this seems like a small detail, Stephenson intentionally develops the use of cymbals throughout the piece. For example, in measures 25–26 three cymbal strikes appear. Moving further ahead, the beginning of movement II opens with three different cymbals spread across the percussion section and notated as “whispering/murmuring.” The development of these three cymbal parts is explored further in chapter five. This idea is carried forth all the way to the end of movement III (mm. 80–82) where three different cymbal parts punctuate this phrase.

There are additional ties to the appearance of objects in sets of three: three movements, a unifying three-note interval motive [IM], three unison notes at the conclusion of the piece. When asked what else performers can look for that come in sets of three, Stephenson answered off the top of his head, “Oh, I don’t know. I would just say that if you find anything, it’s there for a reason. It’s not happenstance.” Further appearances of objects in sets of three are noted throughout the analysis chapters.

Fettig had the honor of being the first to study, rehearse, and perform *Voices*. The author asked Fettig about his own discovery process in learning the score. Fettig recalls:

I discovered a lot of things as I studied the piece and lived with it. But I didn’t catch everything. It wasn’t until Jim and I really talked after the fact and put together our after-action report of the creation of the piece, and the analysis of it, that I really got a full accounting of everything that’s in there, all of the connections that he makes and the way that he composed this. The biggest one—and the one that he was proud of almost right away, he said, “Did you discover something about the key relationships?” And he said this to me almost from the very first day after he sent me the first version of the score. He had even built into the macro structure the key relationships of each movement following the interval structure that is the nucleus of the entire symphony—that fifth and that half step that comes back in different ways. I knew those motives were there, but I didn’t realize exactly where they were. There are dozens and dozens and dozens of iterations and references to this.⁵¹

The unifying concepts and materials are the building blocks of this composition. They are the key to unlocking the hidden secrets tucked within the score, and they are important in effectively communicating Stephenson’s message to the audience.

⁵¹ Fettig, interview with Author, December 2020.

CHAPTER 4: MOVEMENT I “PRELUDE: OF PASSION”

Departing from a symphonic norm, *Voices* opens with a movement that is not a sonata-rondo. Instead, movement I “Prelude: of Passion” functions as a five-minute and thirty-second slow prelude to the symphony. “Of Passion” is a voice type that also references how Stephenson felt as he began to compose this piece while also processing the loss of his mother.⁵² Structurally, “of Passion” consists of an introduction, three sections, a recapitulation, and a coda (see table 4.1). The opening is marked “Adagio – always intense” (56 BPM), and proceeds to “Lento – soothing – l’istesso tempo” (52 BPM), then through “Andante” (72 BPM), and eventually back to “Adagio semplice – sweetly” (56 BPM).⁵³ This movement uses two melodic themes. Theme A (mm. 20–27) is presented by the mezzo voice. Theme B (mm. 32–39) is allocated to the solo alto saxophone. There is also a significant feature presented as an ostinato in the harp and clarinet (mm. 28-29).

⁵² Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

⁵³ BPM is the abbreviation for beats per minute and refers to metronome markings notated in the score by Stephenson.

Table 4.1.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. I Structure

Sections	Introduction	Section 1		Section 2
Measures	1–13	14–19	20–27	28–47
Material		Transition/Intro	Theme A	Theme B
Tonality	Eb	Gmaj/F#	G	G
Tempo	c. 56	c. 52	c. 52	c. 72
Indication	Adagio–Always Intense	Lento–Soothing–L'istesso Tempo	–	Andante
Meter	varied	4/4	4/4	3/4
Dynamics	<i>ff-pp-ff</i>	<i>pp</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>p-mf</i>
Duration	1:10	1:00		:55

Sections	Section 3			Recapitulation	Coda
Measures	48–59	60–63	64–77	78–85	86–93
Material	Theme B		[IM]	Theme A'	
Tonality	B	B	B	G/B Pedal	G
Tempo	c. 72	c. 72	c. 72	c. 56	c. 56
Indication	A Tempo–a bit psychotic	–	a tempo–ma meno mosso	Adagio Semplice–Sweetly	–
Meter	3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4
Dynamics	<i>f</i>	–	–	<i>p</i>	<i>pp</i>
Duration	1:30			:30	:30

The introduction was the first material Stephenson composed for *Voices*.

Chronologically, he composed the remainder of this movement last, as such, he was able to reverse engineer material to foreshadow future musical ideas. The introduction sets forth the first concept that serves as a unifying element of the symphony—things composed in sets of three. He presents three “anguished” chords in measure 1, 5, and 9, all underpinned with a menacing E-flat

in the bass voices.⁵⁴ The anguished sound, which symbolizes Stephenson's mourning of the death of his mother, is achieved through polychordal structures that can be most easily identified by examining the right and left hand of the piano. In measure 1 the polychord is B half diminished 7 over E-flat-minor (see example 4.1). In measure 5 it is C-flat-major 7 over E-minor. In measure 9, the entire polychordal structure is revealed when also considering the upper woodwinds. The top portion of this polychord sounds a D-flat-major 7 with an added G-flat for dissonance; the bottom is an F-minor triad. Identifying these polychordal structures can assist rehearsal efficiency by hearing each portion of the chord separately. Supporting these three anguished chords are the bass drum in tandem with the E-flat pedals on beat 1, and the crash cymbals with the polychords on beat 2. Motivic development is an important compositional consideration for Stephenson. He demonstrates attention to this detail, even in the introduction, on the third iteration of the anguished chords by delaying the anguished chord to beat 3 and adding a triangle roll to coincide with the chord and crash cymbal. This is an important development to note, capitalizing on the delayed anguished chord and ensuring the triangle timbre is balanced to be heard in rehearsal and performance. These anguished chords, along with their underpinned E-flat tonality, also serve as the opening bookend of the symphony; they are harkened again to close the final movement.

⁵⁴ Stephenson, "Symphony No. 2" (accessed February 7, 2021), <https://composerjim.com/works/symphony-no-2/>.



Example 4.1.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. I (m. 1) piano reduction, polychord. (Note, the piccolo also has an F7 sounding an octave higher than the F6 shown in the piano reduction.)

Between each of the three anguished chords are waves of emotion represented by polyrhythmic murmurs in various woodwinds at a *pianissimo* dynamic, still underpinned with the E-flat pedal (see example 4.2). In the second wave (mm. 7–8), Stephenson uses his native instrument, the trumpet, to introduce a plaintive chromatic line. Although marked *piano*, it should be balanced above the murmur to illicit the listeners' attention. The third wave (mm. 10–12) adds piccolo and flutes to the murmur, and the murmur begins in a notably higher register traversing the dynamic range from *piano* to *forte* and continuing to crescendo as it descends to its termination point at the end of measure 12. New in this third wave is the horn, alto clarinet, and English horn motive in measures 10–11; it is the strongest voice in the texture marked *fortissimo*. This wave comes to a sudden end, leaving only a previously scraped cymbal to vibrate in the grand pause of measure 13. All of these waves present an unsettled sound rife with dissonance, or intentionally ambiguous tonality. The ultimate measure 12 serves as a worthy example. The pedal E-flat continues underneath a solid E-minor chord presented in the saxophones and cornets for the duration of the measure. Nearly all other instruments descend on an E-minor scale that replaces all E-naturals with E-flats. This obscures the tonality and adds unresolved dissonance to the upcoming *subito* grand pause. Also noteworthy in measure 12 is Stephenson's use of the 8/4

time signature rather than a continuation of the previous 4/4, which suggests these eight beats should be performed in one continuous musical gesture, where beat 5 is part of the long crescendo and bears no extra weight as a pseudo downbeat.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Clarinet 1 and Tenor saxophone. Both parts are written in 4/4 time. The Clarinet 1 part is a continuous eighth-note melody, while the Tenor saxophone part is a continuous eighth-note melody. The two parts are written on separate staves, with the Clarinet 1 staff above the Tenor saxophone staff.

Example 4.2.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. I (m. 8) polyrhythmic murmurs.

Section 1 (mm. 14–27) is indicated at the *lento* tempo of 52 BPM and is approximately one minute in duration. It contains a dual-purpose transitional–introductory phrase and a phrase that introduces theme A. The *anacruses* to measure 14, presented by the harp, signals the start of the transitional phrase, which proceeds through measure 19. This transitional phrase is six measures long and is another example of something composed in sets of three. The harp anacruses culminating with a triangle stroke occurs three times. Each time it introduces a three-note iteration of a G-major 7 chord in third inversion occurring in measure 14 with piccolo, flutes, cornets, and low brass; measure 16 with piccolo, flutes, clarinets, bassoons, and saxophones; and in measure 16 with the piccolo and flutes. Tonally, this transition uses a frequent device of Stephenson’s in that it pivots on a common pitch. In this case it pivots on the note G. Whereas in the earlier phrase G was the third of the tonal center, the tonality pivots here making G the root of the phrase. In this transition, Stephenson also employs another of his favorite tools to propel the music forward. He obscures the root and accentuates the seventh scale degree by using the aforementioned third inversion of G-major 7 chord, thus placing the seventh

scale degree in the prominent bass voices. In measures 18–19, Stephenson again uses his native instrument, the solo cornet, to present a soothing G-minor scale motive. The same descending minor scale is heard in E-flat-minor in measures 23–25 in the mezzo voice. This is a poignant and important emotional moment in the piece representing Stephenson (solo cornet) ushering in the mezzo voice’s first entrance. The mezzo voice, as Stephenson writes in his program note, “is that of my mother, an untrained alto, which is why I ask for it without vibrato.”⁵⁵ This moment should be contemplative and allowed to broaden as the emotion dictates.

After the obscured tonal center of G from the previous transition-introduction, the phrase starting at measure 20 makes clear its tonic through the sustained tremolo of G and D in the marimba, coinciding with the elided end of the cornet solo on G, and the start of the mezzo voice on G. The mezzo voice, performed on the neutral syllable “O” (pronounced like the word “oh”), exposes this movement’s theme A. This is also the first appearance of the most important and prolific unifying material of the symphony, which is the three-note combination (another item related to things composed in sets of three) of the intervals of a perfect fifth and a half step (identified in this paper as the “**interval motive**,” or [IM]) (see example 4.3).⁵⁶ In this initial appearance, the pitches are arranged G, E-flat, D. The perfect fifth appears between the first and last note, the half step appears from the middle to the last note. The remainder of this section’s mezzo voice melody proceeds mostly by descending scale and includes the 5-note minor descending scale (m. 23–25) performed moments earlier by the solo cornet (m. 18–20), as if to imply “Yes, you are part of me; I am part of you.” The English horn in measures 21 and 23–25,

⁵⁵ Stephenson, “Symphony No. 2” (accessed February 7, 2021), <https://composerjim.com/works/symphony-no-2/>.

⁵⁶ Stephenson, “Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper,” Unpublished, 2020.

echoes the half step from the [IM] and should be invited to momentarily come forward in the texture. In measures 26–27, the English horn becomes the first derived variation of the [IM] by reordering the pitches: G, D, E-flat. Section 1 is accompanied throughout by a tremolo in the marimba. In measures 24–25, there are three additional layers added to the texture: the clarinets add a chordal tremolo, the harp and flutes add a glissando-like effect, and the suspended cymbal played with a small hard stick adds a grouping of three notes in each measure (also contributing to things composed in sets of three). These textures add to the already haunting emotions of the section led by the mezzo voice.

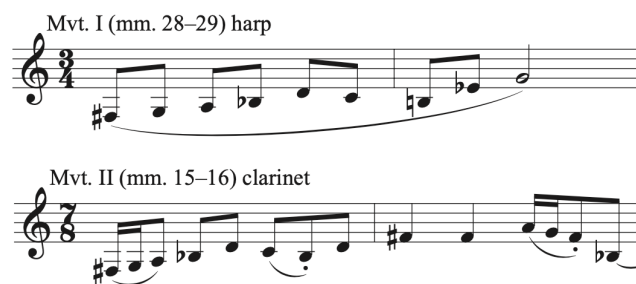


Example 4.3.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. I (mm. 20–27) mezzo voice, theme A, includes interval motive.

Section 2 is approximately fifty-five seconds in duration and includes measures 28–47. It can be divided into an introduction (mm. 28–31), main theme (mm. 32–39), and developmental transition (mm. 40–47). It remains primarily in the tonal center of G. Stephenson opens the introduction to this section with an important foreshadow in the harp and clarinet. He reverse engineers the first nine pitches from movement II, theme A (movement II, mm. 15–21) and strips them of rhythm to become a metronomic ostinato (transposed accordingly with slight pitch adjustments on the last three notes). Similar to earlier examples, he starts this ostinato on the seventh scale degree to set it in motion; the ostinato comes to rest on the tonic of G before repeating identically four additional times throughout this section’s main theme area (see example 4.4). The establishment of the G tonality is supported by the cornets in measures 29 and 31 and the first trombone in measures 33 and 35 as they emphasize the tonic-dominant

relationship between the tonal center G and its dominant of D. These seemingly simple textural figures provide an array of timbral variety through the use of different mutes. Note in measures 29 and 31, both cornets should use cup mute; the missing notation for cup mute in first cornet in these measures is an error. This detail is germane because in the upcoming trumpet parts at measure 40, Stephenson intentionally uses one trumpet open with the other muted. This is discussed further in a subsequent paragraph.



Example 4.4.

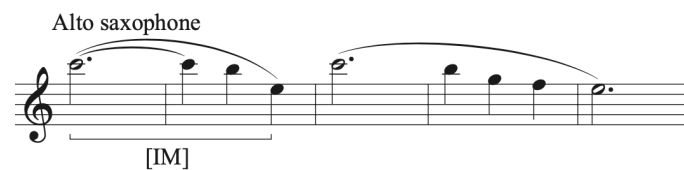
Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.

Mvt. I (mm. 28–29) harp, ostinato based on Mvt. II, theme A.

Mvt. II (mm. 15–16) clarinet, excerpt of mvt. II, theme A.

This section's main theme (theme B) is presented by the solo alto saxophone (see example 4.5). It opens with a second derived variation of the [IM] by reordering the pitches: E-flat, D, G (mm. 32–33) and then repeats those pitches on the downbeats of each measure 34–36. He develops this by adding passing tones to step through the interval of the perfect fifth (m. 35). Melodically the main theme area of section 2 concludes with the solo alto saxophone reiterating the half step interval three times (mm. 37–39) with progressively louder dynamics (*mp*, *mf*, *f*) and the last iteration is up one whole step. Tucked into the texture of this phrase are two additional examples of the [IM]. In measures 35–36 the fourth horn plays F-sharp, G, D; in measures 37–39 the solo euphonium plays G, A-flat, E-flat. These should be allowed to come forward in the texture enough to be noticed. The bass line starting at measure 32 attempts to thwart the tonal

center of G by starting on an E-flat and eight measures later, alluding to an authentic cadence in E-flat. Although it does not succeed in tricking the listener in that regard, it is an interesting flirtation with the opening tonality. This eight-measure sequence of notes is used again starting in section 3 but spelled enharmonically. For both of these reasons, it is an element to call to the musicians' attention and aspire to communicate to the listeners.



Example 4.5.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. I (mm. 32–36) alto saxophone, theme B, includes the interval motive.

Measures 40–43 start a transition that imparts a developmental sound. Stephenson uses the first two-measure fragment of the solo alto saxophone, adding weight with the bass clarinet and contrabassoon. He then repeats the fragment up a minor third, taking the accompaniment up in pitch to match. Meanwhile, Stephenson scores a counter line in the first and second trumpets, with the second trumpet muted while the first trumpet remains open. Here the choice to mix different trumpet timbres is intentional, based in a personal anecdote from Stephenson.

The principal trumpet of the Marine Band, Kurt Dupuis, and I have been acquaintances and friends since college. He went to Boston University; I went to New England. So always been in touch with him, especially through Facebook and whatnot. And about a year before I wrote this piece, they were in rehearsal in D.C. and it was one of those cold days where the pavement sort of ices over. And he had forgotten his mute in rehearsal. (This has nothing to do with my piece. This is a year before.) He had forgotten his mute in rehearsal. So, he runs out to the car, to go get his mute, not recognizing that the pavement had iced over. He slips and lands on his elbow and basically shattered—to be honest, I don't remember if it was his right arm or left arm—but it shattered his arm from his elbow to his wrist. So, for like three months he was in this kind of position, with a cast on (indicating arm up at a 90-degree angle). You know, pictures on Facebook with this big old cast and you can't play, of course, and all of that sort of thing.

So, the reason that trumpet one is open and trumpet two is muted, because I didn't want Kurt forgetting his mute again and having to run out to the car and break his arm again. And so, you know, that was kind of just a fun nod to my friend Kurt. But it also kind of creates a unique sound. And I always tell that story when I'm in rehearsal. And when I'm visiting groups, they get a kick out of it. So, the idea is that trumpet two is supposed to be, actually, the strong—I didn't mark this correctly. Trumpet two should be the stronger of the two. And the trumpet one—because I like that nasally muted sound—with trumpet one just sitting on top of it. But that's the story behind letter F.⁵⁷

Measures 40–43 set a tonal transition in motion which is progressed in measures 44–47. Starting at measure 44, the prominent fragment, which is repeated and eventually transposed, is borrowed from the harp and clarinet ostinato (mm. 28–29, *refer to example 4.4*), and is supplemented with the weight of English horn, more clarinets, tenor saxophone, and piano. These four measures experiment with different harmonies as they work their way to an A dominant 7 chord in measure 47. As this section concludes, the A dominant 7 chord resolves nontraditionally to a polychordal structure on the downbeat of measure 48 (which is examined in the next section).

Underneath the ostinato fragment is an ingenious bass line built on two overlapping variations of the [IM]. When examining the pitches of the bass line in measures 44–47, they are A, B-flat, F, E. The first three pitches contain the intervals of a half step and a perfect fifth (A, B-flat, F). The last three pitches contain the intervals of a perfect fifth and a half step (B-flat, F, E). Stephenson gives himself permission to manipulate the motivic cell freely using intervals in any direction and with octave displacement. This type of overlapping of the [IM] is additional foreshadowing of examples to be uncovered in the future (see example 4.6).

⁵⁷ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.



Example 4.6.

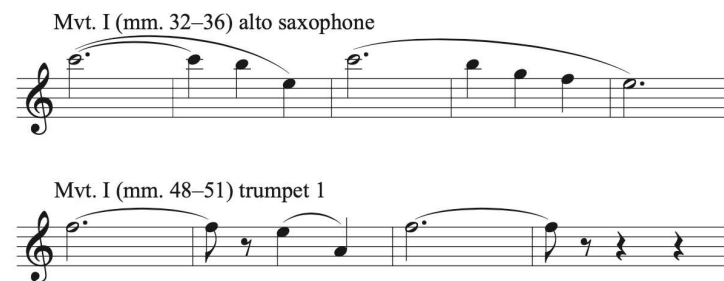
Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. 1 (mm. 44–47) tuba, bass line contains two overlapping inverted variants of the [IM].

Section 2 also transitions dynamically from *piano* to *forte*. The pacing of this crescendo should be measured and the peak only to *forte*, guarding against getting too loud this early in the piece. Stephenson also suggests the tempo marking is an approximation; the conductor and ensemble should allow this section to push and pull, to call upon the movement’s emotional namesake “of passion,” to achieve a haunting, almost manic feel.⁵⁸

Section 3 begins at measure 48 with a distinct change in energy and texture, labeled “a bit psychotic,” which this author interprets as the definitive reason for outlining measures 48–79 as its own section, even though its melodic material is related principally to theme B. It is roughly half thematic and half transition, enduring for approximately one minute and thirty seconds. It begins at a sustained *forte* dynamic, dropping to a *subito piano* (m. 60), which coincides with the start of a long twenty-eight-measure pedal B. It quickly crescendos back to another *forte* (m. 64) and then begins to relent and transition (m. 66) through a twelve-measure decrescendo and thinning of texture until it reaches the recapitulation. The psychotic section is vaguely in the tonal center of B, but this is well obscured until the aforementioned pedal B takes hold.

⁵⁸ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

The dominant layer of the texture in the first phrase of this section (mm. 48–55) begins with the trumpets, euphonium, soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones presenting a version of theme B (noting the euphoniums depart from this timbral combination in measure 52). One distinct difference in this occurrence of theme B is how Stephenson implies different note groupings. In the original occurrence of theme B, the note group indicated by the phrase mark covers the first three notes and restarts with the fourth note. Here there is a rest after the first note, which shifts the subsequent note grouping to include the second through fourth notes (see example 4.7). This shift in note groupings should be called to the attention of the musicians and given careful consideration to express with the specificity notated by the composer.



Example 4.7.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. I, theme B, different examples have different note groupings, which suggest a unique expressive intent for each example.

Surrounding the theme are several additional layers, each speaking with its own tone of voice—creating many voices speaking at once—and contributing to the psychotic nature of this section. There are the flutes and clarinets, occasionally joined by other upper woodwinds, on a frenzied, urgent run of sextuplets moving by pairs of half steps, undoubtedly the interval of choice for exploitation due to its presence in the [IM]. Underneath these two layers is an element written in triplet subdivision that Stephenson described as sounding “soldier-esque” (cornets,

glockenspiel, cymbals, triangle, high woodblock, and tambourine).⁵⁹ Speaking with a marshal voice, this cadre is the machine driving the pulse forward. The bass instruments serve as a reality check by using the same sequence of pitches first presented by the double bass in measures 32–39. The bass line progresses at the same pace as it did initially, but in this psychotic section, the rests are replaced with syncopated rearticulations of the pitches. When asked about his choice of the descriptive term “a bit psychotic” Stephenson says:

That’s just a means of trying to influence the way that it’s played. I always have to get people to sound a little crazier in this section. It usually comes with me getting the percussion to just be a little bit louder. And the cornets need to be louder. Very rhythmic, like a soldier, doing this sort of thing with a clown’s face. Be like a nightmare ... or like you’re watching a Stephen King movie with a clown in it.⁶⁰

The trombones (mm. 49, 51, 55) add glissandi filled with unresolved angst. One final layer comes to the fore in measures 52–55 when the bass trombone, euphoniums, and alto and bass clarinets recall the earlier harp and clarinet ostinato, emphatically repeating the last three pitches two additional times. The thickness of the texture and heaviness of the volume challenges the clarity of the ensemble sound. This necessitates each layer of the texture is carefully manicured in articulation, balance, interpretation, intonation, and tone separately before placing the layers back together for maximum transparency of the whole.

Measures 56–59 look and sound similar to the previous phrase’s measures 48–51, with the pitches of the bass line being one slight difference. The major difference, however, is the truncation of this phrase segment after four measures followed by a *subito piano* and subito texture change in measure 60. As noted earlier, this is also the onset of the twenty-eight-measure

⁵⁹ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

⁶⁰ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

pedal B, scored here in the timpani and bassoons with the addition of bass clarinet (m. 62) and contrabassoon (m. 63). The four measures from 60 to 63 serve as a linking phrase from the previous theme B-related material to the upcoming transitional phrase at measure 64. The drama of this linking phrase is propelled by the *subito piano* followed by a crescendo to *forte*, and the indicated *poco agitato* and subsequent *ritardando*. The clarinets, later joined by oboes, continue a similar urgent pattern of half steps in a sextuplet division as they did in the previous phrase. The horns and cornets trade two measures each of syncopated minor triads, which are rhythmically borrowed from the rhythm of the bass line at measure 48. The final thrust of this linking phrase is found in the trombones and combined parts of alto and baritone saxophone (mm. 62–63), which perform a descending B harmonic minor scale (with modification near the end). They are countered in contrary motion in measure 63 by the trumpets, which ascend an enharmonically spelled B-major scale. Stephenson selects the piccolo and horns (m. 63) to connect the linking phrase to the upcoming transition through the use of the [IM] starting on beat 2 and progressing over the bar line to measure 64; the pitches are E-fat, B-flat, B.

A transition that occupies nearly half the length of the psychotic section begins at measure 64. It utilizes all fourteen measures to decrescendo from *forte* to *pianissimo*, and to deplete the texture from a multilayered tutti to merely a few remaining remnants upon which the listener may reflect. This phrase begins, again, much in the same manner as the phrase at measure 48. It uses nearly all of the same layers of the texture: the urgent upper woodwind sextuplets, the soldier-esque triplet figures, and a strong presence in the trumpets of the theme B fragment that is also the [IM]. The continuation of the pedal B is handed to the bass voices with a steady pulsation of eighth notes starting each measure on the ‘and of one.’ The up-beat activation

of each repetition serves the propulsion of forward motion through the upcoming extended decrescendo.

A new and noteworthy textural element in this transition can be found in the soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones, joined later by the horns. They have a string of perpetual [IMs] in measures 64–71. It starts with the alto saxophone performing the pitches C, B, E, with the soprano and tenor saxophone joining in unison on the C and B but breaking into an E-minor triad on the third note; the horns join here adding weight to the progression. Each successive parallel minor chord in the saxophones and horns alternates between a descending half step and a perfect fifth. The succession of minor chords starting in measure 66 is: E-minor, E-flat-minor, A-flat-minor, G-minor, C-minor, and B-minor. Therefore, any three notes in succession, in any of the individual parts, can be examined to find the [IM]. Interestingly, Stephenson phrases the progression into three groupings of two notes each. This accentuates the compositional element of things appearing in sets of three. It also places more emphasis on the half step while almost disguising the perfect fifth. He further embellishes this grouping with the use of an accented *forte-piano* followed by a crescendo-decrescendo for each of the first two groupings; the final grouping initiates at *mezzo forte*.

In measures 72–78, the dynamic has reached *piano* and continues to soften, the texture has thinned, and the orchestration has lightened. The pedal B is found in the double bass and timpani. The urgent sextuplet figure is in the hands of the bass clarinet and bassoons but disappears before the end of the phrase. The soldier-esque triplets can be found in the cornets, woodblock, and tambourine; the cornets hand off to the horns, which quickly dissipate into the distance, leaving the *pianissimo* woodblock and tambourine to be the last-heard of this element. The contrabassoon is the linchpin to another set of three. In this case, the contrabassoon, along

with second and third clarinets, commence the phrase at measure 72 with parallel major triads (C-flat and B-flat-major). The clarinets depart in favor of the bass trombone and tubas (and euphoniums in measure 76-77 only), which reiterate the same two parallel major triads with the contrabassoon and then continue on with two parallel minor chords (A-flat and G-minor). When studying those four chords in succession (C-flat-major, B-flat-major, E-flat-minor, D-minor), the [IM] can be found in the progression of the roots and in the progression of the fifths of those chords. One iteration can be found starting on the first chord, and another iteration starting on the second chord.

With all of that examined, the primary timbre to the fore is the first euphonium from measure 72 to 75. The euphonium opens with the [IM] (C-flat, G-flat, F) and continues to descend with pairs of notes in each measure, mixed with half steps and whole steps. Within the euphonium melody there are three instances of the [IM], but the intentional note groupings suggest the emphasis is on the stepwise motion more than the leaps. Note the final two pitches of the euphonium phrase join the aforementioned contrabassoon, bass trombone, and tuba chords. This transitional phrase is closed with the solo flute and harp recalling the ostinato from measure 28 (which is also a foreshadow of movement II, theme A).

Measures 78–85 serve as a **recapitulation** of section 1. Stephenson returns to the *adagio* tempo of 56 BPM to reprise the haunting mezzo voice theme nearly identically to its first appearance in measure 20, although this time marked “semplice–sweetly.” While technically it is marked 4 BPM faster than its initial occurrence, Stephenson is less concerned with the exact tempo and encourages conductors and performers to take expressive liberty as the moment

demands.⁶¹ The mezzo voice melody in this section, still on the neutral syllable “O,” is shadowed more closely by the English horn. The bassoons add harmonic and timbral support with a simple accompaniment to melody. The harp contributes two glissandi to the texture in measures 82–83. While the tonality for this section is firmly in G-major, there is an unsettled feeling provided by the continuation of the B pedal which started in measure 60 of the previous section and continues through the recapitulation into the start of the coda. Stephenson again pivots back to G using B as the fulcrum, whereas in the previous section the B pedal represented the tonal center, now it is the major third of the tonal center G. The flutes permeate this section with five repeated long tones G-major triads. The marimba supports tonality with a tremolo on G and D which continues beyond this section into the coda. The final moment of transition into the coda is marked by the oboe, which recalls a previously used variation of the [IM] with pitches ordered G, D, E-flat. This entire section, like its earlier companion, indicated dynamics of *piano* and *pianissimo*. Stephenson indicates the mood or emotion “sweetly.” Performers should take great care to support the quality of sound and intonation at such soft dynamics and in consideration of accompanying a solo voice. Overall, the orchestration of each instrument’s range in this section is moderate, which should facilitate the performers’ ability to use finesse on this delicate passage.

The coda (mm. 86-93) continues the delicate journey to the end of the movement with dynamics ranging from *piano* to *pianississimo*. With the marimba tremolo and timpani B pedal continuing from the previous section, the horn, mezzo voice, English horn, and oboe place a root position G-major chord on the first beat of the coda (m. 86). In measures 86–88, the first

⁶¹ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

trombone utilizes a previously used [IM] variation in its inversion; the first pitch in each measure are F-sharp, G, D. The interval of the perfect fifth is again filled in with passing tones. Upon completion, the tuba and euphoniums join the trombone to gently strike another G-major chord (m. 88). This also marks the cessation of the pedal B that has endured for nearly ninety seconds. In the same measure, a harp glissando leads to a cymbal scrape with the shrill and dissonant polychord reminiscent of one of the anguished chords from the introduction—here scored for piccolo, flutes, and clarinets. In measures 90–91, the sound of the celesta is introduced for the first time. This is another moment of masterful manipulation of the [IM] (see example 4.8). The motive is present in the top notes of each celesta chord overlapped in each set of three successive notes, and each chord is built with the [IM] intervals with allowance for octave displacement and inversion.

Celesta

Overlapping
top note [IMs]:

The musical notation shows a sequence of chords in 3/4 time. The top notes of the chords are E-flat, D, G, F-sharp, B, and G, which are connected by a line and labeled as 'Overlapping top note [IMs]'. Below the staff, the intervals between these notes are shown as triads: E-flat-D-G, D-G-E-flat, G-F-sharp-B, and F-sharp-B-G. These are labeled as 'Inversions of the [IM]' with the specific intervals listed below them: G, D, E-flat and B, F#, G.

E-flat D G F-sharp B G

E-flat D G F-sharp B

D G B B G

G E-flat E-flat G F-sharp

Inversions of the [IM] Inversions of the [IM]

G, D, E-flat B, F#, G

Example 4.8.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. I (mm. 90–91) celesta, overlapping [IMs] in the top notes, and inverted [IMs] in the chords.

The saxophones (mm. 90–91) gently place a sequence of ascending minor triads. Stephenson borrowed (or reverse engineered) this brief motif from movement II (movement II, mm. 66, 93, 166, 237, 267). The coda, and movement I, concludes with piccolo and bass clarinet (mm. 92–93), an unlikely but wonderful duo, recalling the harp and clarinet ostinato from measure 28 with slight modification of the last three notes to include the [IM] (B, C, G) and

arrive at a consonant G-major tonality (note the final implied chord omits the fifth). Stephenson does not indicate a *ritardando* in the score, and this is one place where he intends no tempo fluctuation: *l'istesso tempo a la fine*.⁶² The recapitulation and the coda together have a duration of approximately one minute.

Each musical event in the coda as described in the preceding paragraph takes place in succession, without much overlap. Each event should be musically curated to capture the full attention and imagination of the listener. Although the movements are separate, due to the strong amount of unifying material across all movements, it is advantageous to have only brief pauses between movements. This detail takes careful planning of percussion instruments and their locations so there is no need to reposition instruments or players between movements.

⁶² Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

CHAPTER 5: MOVEMENT II “SHOUTS AND MURMURS”

Movement II “Shouts and Murmurs” is the only movement that was designed for potential performance as a stand-alone piece. This offers conductors the flexibility to program the entire symphony as the major work on a program, or to present movement II alone as part of a broader programming landscape. At nine minutes and thirty seconds, “Shouts and Murmurs” provides ample depth, a colorful sonic palette, and a wide-ranging emotional journey that challenges and rewards conductors, performers, and audiences. As the movement title suggests, Stephenson explores a multitude of voices types ranging from murmur to shout. The movement does not adhere to a specific classical form, but it most certainly has form. This chapter analyzes the movement in eight sections (see table 5.1). Sections 1 (mm. 1–35) and 2 (mm. 36–105) take on the task of exposing themes A and B respectively. Section 3 (mm. 106–150) is a *scherzando* in feel (not in form); it toys with both themes in different tonalities and textures before breaking out in pure laughter (m. 134). Section 4 (mm. 151–176) serves as a celebratory reprise of an earlier theme B phrase with a transition gearing downward toward the next section. Sections 1–4 are all under the marking “Allegro” (c. 152–160 BPM). Section 5 (mm. 177–204), marked “Adagio – chorale” (c. 66 BPM), features the mezzo voice touring through a cycle of [IM]s (referred to as theme C for this analysis) accompanied by sounds from around the globe. Section 6 (mm. 205–274) returns to “Allegro – come prima” (c. 152–160 BPM) and serves as a recapitulation of themes A and B. Section 7 (mm. 275–297), “Chorale – Stentorian” (half note = c. 66 BPM), is the climactic section of the movement juxtaposing themes A and C simultaneously. Section 8 (mm. 298–347) is a hearty coda once again marked “Allegro – come

prima” (c. 152–160 BPM). It uses fragments from themes A, B, and C before arriving to an exclamatory ending.

Table 5.1.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. II Structure

Sections	Section 1	Section 2				
Measures	1–35	36–105				
Material	Theme A	Theme B				
Subsections		36–50	51–64	65–77	78–92	93–105
Tonality	F min	Db	Bb, D	G	G	trans
Tempo	c. 152–160	c. 152–160				
Indication	Allegro	–				
Meter	7/8	7/8 (others)				
Dynamics	<i>ppp-pp-ppp</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>p-mf</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f-ff-p</i>
Duration	1:00	1:40				

Sections	Section 3		Section 4	Section 5
Measures	106–150		151–176	177–204
Material	Theme B	Theme A', trans	Theme B, trans	[IM], A
Subsections	106–126	127–150		
Tonality	D, C, F#	Poly, Db	Ab	G
Tempo	c. 152–160	–	c. 152–160	c. 66
Indication	–	–	–	Adagio–Chorale
Meter	7/8 (others)	–	7/8, 5/8	4/4
Dynamics	<i>p</i>	<i>p-mf-f-p-f</i>	<i>f-ff</i>	<i>p</i>
Duration	1:10		:40	1:45

Sections	Section 6			Section 7
Measures	205–274			275–297
Material	Theme A	Theme B	Theme B, trans	Theme A, [IM]
Subsections	205–218	219–251	252–274	
Tonality	Ab	Ab, Eb	Gb	Gb, C min
Tempo	c. 152–160			c. 66
Indication	Allegro–Come Prima			Chorale–Stentorian
Meter	7/8	–	–	2/2
Dynamics	<i>pp</i>	<i>f-p-mf</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f-ff-mf-p</i>
Duration	1:35			:50

Sections	Section 8		
Measures	298–347		
Material	Theme A, B, [IM]		
Subsections	298–314	315–326	327–347
Tonality	C	C	C, Ab maj
Tempo	c. 152–160		
Indication	Allegro–Come Prima		
Meter	7/8, 2/4	7/8, 2/4	2/4
Dynamics	<i>pp-mf</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>ff</i>
Duration	1:00		

Movement II was the first movement Stephenson composed after creating the introductory material to movement I. **Section 1** (mm. 1–35) takes on its own micro rounded binary form of aba' and uses approximately one minute to introduce three important concepts. One concept is the notion of a global community: seven continents—one world. As such, Stephenson uses the number seven as a fundamental building block for this movement. The preponderance of phrases are seven measures long, the predominant meter is 7/8, as the piece progresses there are instances of seven repetitions, and he composes theme A to start on the seventh scale degree. The other two important concepts introduced in this section are the three-cymbal percussion texture (another example of something composed in a set of three), and theme A, both of which are discussed subsequently.

Within section 1, the micro-a phrase (mm. 1–14) presents three differently sized suspended cymbals (13-inch, 17-inch, 20-inch) rhythmically whispering and murmuring from “all around” (see example 5.1). To aid in this effect, the cymbals are to be located equidistant on the left, center, and right of the percussion section. Although errantly omitted from the score, Stephenson wishes for this phrase, and others like it, to be played with brushes (until measure 113 where it is marked “slightly harder stick”).⁶³ This phrase is fourteen measures long (two sets of seven, which are not duplicates of each other) at a *pianississimo* dynamic, and the cymbals should be allowed to vibrate marked “L.V. sempre.” The last measure of the phrase brings forth a harp glissando as a harbinger for the next phrase.

⁶³ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

The image shows a musical score for three cymbals: 13", 17", and 20". The score is written in 7/8 time and consists of seven measures. The 13" cymbal part starts in measure 5 with a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The 17" cymbal part has a dotted quarter note in measure 1, a quarter note in measure 2, and a dotted quarter note in measure 5. The 20" cymbal part has a dotted quarter note in measure 3, a quarter note in measure 4, and a dotted quarter note in measure 7. The dynamic marking *ppp* is placed below the 17" cymbal staff in measure 5. The instruction "L.V. Sempre" appears above the 13" cymbal staff in measure 5 and below the 20" cymbal staff in measure 1.

Example 5.1.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. II (mm. 1–7) percussion, three-cymbal texture, “whispering/murmuring from all around.”

The micro-b phrase consumes measures 15–28. This phrase is the premiere appearance of theme A presented initially in the B-flat clarinets, then immediately repeated by the E-flat clarinet and soprano saxophone (see example 5.2). It is the first establishment of an F-minor tonal center. The theme itself is seven measures long and starts on the seventh scale degree of the F harmonic minor scale. In its initial statement, (m. 15) theme A is accompanied by a rhythmic perfect fifth interval between first and second flutes (F and C). It is also pushed forward by a repeating three-note pattern in the marimba, which has as its lowest pitch E (again the seventh scale degree) and its upper pitches are C and F (supporting the flute interval and the establishment of F as the tonal center for the section). The clarinets have an indication of *pianissimo* “as soft as possible.” They will, nevertheless, need to play with a certain conviction to navigate this *scherzo*-like theme with occasional ties across the bar line and quirky direction changes—all in a 7/8 meter. The repeat of theme A is intact, seven measures long, beginning at measure 22. The melody is transferred to the E-flat clarinet and soprano saxophone. The rhythmic perfect fifth is given to the second and third cornets, and the marimba continues to drive forward, but now with a six-note pattern using the same pitches as before. The B-flat

clarinets add to this texture a staccato descending F-minor-major-9 arpeggio (starting on the ninth and descending: G, E, C, A-flat, F, E). The harp runs a steady stream of sixteenth notes along the F harmonic minor scale, again placing the seventh scale degree prominently on the bottom and top of its pattern. The last additional element added here is a muted first trombone glissando in the third and sixth measures of this phrase.



Example 5.2.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. II (mm. 15–21) clarinets, theme A.

As suddenly as theme A appeared, it disappears again at measure 29, leaving the listener back among the micro-a' suspended cymbals whispers and murmurs. This phrase is marked “as before” and should continue the use of brushes, noting the quick change to loud mallets only in measure 35. The rhythmic ingredients use the same language as in the beginning but are not direct duplicates. Whereas both the micro-a and micro-b phrases were fourteen measures long (two sets of seven), this phrase is only seven measures long. It concludes with a dramatic crescendo on a timpani roll from A-flat to D-flat, thus setting up a change in tonal centers for the next section.

Section 2 (mm. 36–105) is seventy measures long and shares recognition as the longest section with section 6. This section is approximately one minute and forty seconds in duration. For this analysis, section 2 is further broken down into five subsections. These subsections relate

to each other through their extensive use of what is identified as theme B. Each subsection explores theme B with a different setting in mood and texture. Stephenson is exploring the characteristics of different “voices” with each subsection. The entire section continues at the initial descriptive marking of “Allegro” (c. 152-160 BPM).

Measures 36–50 bound **subsection 1**. Here Stephenson explores the “shout” voice.⁶⁴ This is also the introduction of theme B, which appears in the first trumpet (harmonized by other trumpets and cornets) and is seven measures long (following Stephenson’s nod to the global community of seven continents). Stephenson tucks an inversion of theme B into the second cornet part. The inverted theme is used again later in this movement, and as source material for the third movement’s mezzo voice theme. Theme B contains only three pitches (another item composed in a set of three), which move diatonically. However, in his future uses of theme B, Stephenson takes liberty to place the theme diatonically in different places. This creates slight variation in the location of whole steps and half steps and also creates a nuanced sound in each appearance (see example 5.3). In this subsection, the theme is presented twice consecutively—the second time (m. 43) up two diatonic steps (a minor third) with the additional weight of piccolo, flutes, oboes, E-flat clarinets, and euphoniums added to the trumpets’ and cornets’ sound.

⁶⁴ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

Mvt. II (mm. 36–42) trumpet 1, theme B



Mvt. II (mm. 36–42) cornet 2, theme B inversion



Mvt. II (mm. 43–49) trumpet 1, theme B transposed diatonically down a sixth



Example 5.3.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.

Mvt. II (mm. 36–42) trumpet 1, theme B.

Mvt. II (mm. 36–42) cornet 2, theme B inversion.

Mvt. II (mm. 43–49) theme B diatonic transposition down a sixth.

In exploring the shout voice, Stephenson uses layers of counter lines and accompaniments often placed in the mid and upper ranges of each instrument family, which aids the power needed for a “shout.” These layers also define the tonality based on D-flat. The trombone family roars through a D-flat Lydian scale in octaves with a glissando rip interjection mid-phrase. For the second half of the subsection this line gets handed over to a soaring horn section with support from the first trumpet, English horn, and second and third clarinets. The bass instruments (bass clarinet, bassoons, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone, euphonium, tuba, double bass, and timpani) sustain a D-flat (tonic) with an occasional jump to A-flat (dominant). In the second half of the phrase, this group primarily sustains the dominant A-flat. The horns initially punch forth a rhythmic pedal on their F-sharp⁵ (concert B₄) before departing on their aforementioned scale passage. Finally, the remaining upper woodwinds and first cornet interject atop the trombone glissando with a D-flat Lydian flourish of sixteenth notes while the piano and xylophone add a punch to the end of this flourish. In the second half of the subsection, this

flourish is reallocated to B-flat, alto, and bass clarinets, along with soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones, and harp. This flourish is not unison but could generally be thought of as a D-flat mixed-mode scale (minor on the bottom tetrachord and major on the upper tetrachord). The final layer in the texture of the second half of the phrase is provided by the soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones, along with the trombone family. They add an accented passage of continually inverting chords using the notes B-flat, F-flat, and A-flat. Ultimately this subsection contains two consecutive appearances of theme B (which is seven measures long). The second appearance truncates the theme after six measures and then appends a brief two-measure transition, which serves to ease the mood from “shout” to the upcoming “sultry” voice of the next subsection.

Subsection 2 (mm. 51–64) are marked with two essential voice characteristics: “sultry” and “echo.” Again, this subsection contains two consecutive (this time complete) appearances of theme B for a total of fourteen measures. Theme B’s seven measures can also be dissected into a 4+3 measure-grouping. Stephenson indicates a “sultry” characteristic for the first four measures, and “echo” for the last three measures. The echo coincides with a notated dynamic decrease and should be carefully performed to ensure the +3 measures sound as one’s voice might if echoing back across a canyon. This indication appears on both iterations of the theme in this subsection and is explored again later in the movement. To accentuate the sultriness of this section, Stephenson alters the melodic note in the fourth measure, lowering it one-half step, creating a sultry bluesy sound. Similar to the previous subsection, here the theme appears at one pitch level initially (m. 51) in the soprano and alto saxophones, and then up two diatonic steps (a major third) in the flutes and oboes (m. 58). In both instances the theme is dueted in parallel thirds.

Of equal consequence in this subsection is the accompaniment found in the harp, crotales, B-flat and alto clarinets. Given that Stephenson wrote this movement first (save the movement I

introduction), this accompaniment was the first interval motive [IM] element to be composed in Stephenson's timeline, which he then used extensively as a unifying element throughout the symphony.⁶⁵ Examining measures 51–54, the harp contains the entire composite of this accompaniment figure, which is supported in a cascading manner among the crotales, B-flat and alto clarinets. Here, he uses the pitches B-flat, F, and G-flat spread across a minor thirteenth (octave plus a minor sixth). The presence of the perfect fifth from the lowest note B-flat up to F serves as a magnetic draw to B-flat as the tonal center. The melodic theme B and its duet starting on the pitches of B-flat and D, respectively, further define this phrase's tonal center as B-flat-major. In the fourth measure of this phrase (m. 54), the muted horns add weight to the texture by joining those which were playing on an E-flat-minor 7 chord. Additionally, in this measure the double bass (with rhythmic support from the suspended cymbal) adds interest with a new moving line highly related to the [IM] comprised of perfect fifths, whole steps, and half steps. The final four pitches in this line form two precise overlapping groupings of the [IM] (D-flat, G-flat, F and G-flat, F, B-flat). Measures 55–57 are the +3 echo of what has been described above, with slight modifications facilitating a smooth transition to the next phrase in a new tonality of D-major.

Measures 58–64 are the same structure as measures 51–57. Thus, the few differences that exist here are the essential elements to bring forth in performance: orchestration and tonality. The “sultry” and “echo” melody has been orchestrated here in the flutes and oboes and include the bluesy melodic variant in the fourth measure. The [IM] accompaniment remains intact in the harp and is still cascaded in the crotales and B-flat clarinets. The difference here is the addition of third horn (open) and subtraction of alto clarinet. In the fourth measure of this phrase (m. 61)

⁶⁵ Stephenson, “Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper,” unpublished, 2020.

the muted trombones and fourth horn add weight while the other horns are tacet.⁶⁶ Tonally, this phrase has ascended by a major third from its predecessor, moving from B-flat to D-major. This is defined in the same manner as the previous phrase with the [IM] accompaniment (D, A, B-flat), accentuating the notes D and A, while the theme B melody opens with D and F-sharp (creating a D-major triad). Although the dynamic markings here mirror those in the first phrase, it would be effective to support the elevated tonal center with a slight dynamic increase beginning in measure 58.

Subsection 3 (mm. 65–77), here Stephenson uses only the first measure of theme B as the fragment. (*Refer to example 5.3.*) Speaking in an “insistent and urgent” voice, this subsection traverses the dynamic range from *piano* to *forte* at the downbeat of the next subsection.⁶⁷ Thirteen measures long, this can be thought of as a 6+7 measure-grouping. The initial six measures remain in the 7/8 meter; the subsequent seven measures switch to 5/8. This is the first meter change in movement II. By shortening each measure, the theme fragment gets further truncated and its rate of repetition is hastened, which serves the sense of urgency moving toward the next subsection.

The melodic fragment is incessantly repeated by the euphoniums throughout this subsection. As the phrase proceeds, more instruments are added to the melodic voice, increasing both its weight and span of orchestration: first the horns, then clarinets, then oboes and flutes, finally trumpets and cornets. Further insistence is provided by the left-hand piano ostinato of

⁶⁶ Rehearsal note: in measure 61 the fourth horn has the lowest sounding pitch, D, which is the root of what functions as a D⁺^{#9} chord.

⁶⁷ Insistent and urgent are voice types allocated here by the author.

steady eighth notes (also scored in hocket between the bass clarinet and contrabassoon).⁶⁸ This six-note pattern is built on two subgroups of closely related [IMs]. Stephenson capitalizes on an interesting feature of a six-note pattern in a six-measure phrase of a 7/8 meter: as the pattern metrically displaces itself, it allows for seven repetitions before it returns to its original metric position. This is another nod to the global sevens concept discussed earlier (see example 5.4). Especially for the bass clarinet and contrabassoon in hocket, the challenge of the metric displacement is further exacerbated by the application of the hocket technique. Thus, the ostinato will need isolated rehearsal to hear how they fit with the left-hand piano. The conductor's metronomic steadiness will benefit their success, and their success will benefit the success of these phrases.⁶⁹



Example 5.4.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. II (mm. 65–70) piano, six-note ostinato pattern repeating seven times.

Counter to the ostinato are the bassoons and marimba, which take turns presenting a more fluid line of eight notes outlining a G-minor-major 7 arpeggio. This counter ostinato is metrically stable, repeating initially every two measures, then truncated to repeat every measure. As this line continues, the marimba drops out and the tenor and baritone saxophone join later. When the

⁶⁸ Hocket is a technique where two (or more) musicians rapidly alternate short phrases or rhythmic groupings.

⁶⁹ Errata: The left-hand piano in measure 72, second note, should be F-sharp, and in measure 76 the third note should be E-natural.

phrase switches to the 5/8 meter, this counter ostinato is further truncated to fit within the shorter measure. This continual truncation also lends itself to the urgency felt in this subsection. Aligned with the counter ostinato are the double bass, glockenspiel, snare drum, and suspended cymbals (and alto saxophone at measures 70–75). The double bass performs a pizzicato F-sharp on the downbeat of each repetition while the glockenspiel (and alto saxophone) plays a B-flat on the upbeat (or “up measure”) of each repetition. The snare drum and suspended cymbals support with rhythms that are also metrically stable—not displaced. Given the rhythmic complexities of this subsection, all of the instruments that relate directly to the counter ostinato will benefit from an isolated moment of rehearsal to hear how they work together.

Further texture is added to this phrase in measures 66, 68, and 71–77 by the tenor and baritone saxophones, and then the trombones. Their starting and ending pitches spell an E diminished triad. This interesting color was first composed here, and then reverse engineered into the final measures of movement I (saxophones).

The tonal center of subsection 3 is G-minor. Elements that support the creation of the G-minor sound are the melody fragment—its notes in telling positions are G, B-flat, and D. The counter ostinato outlines a G-minor-major 7 arpeggio. Finally, the subsection concludes with a sixteenth note flourish of a G harmonic minor scale.⁷⁰ However, there is intentional dissonance and instability created throughout this section with the strong presence of scale degree seven, F-sharp, in prominent places at prominent times. Both the ostinato and counter ostinato begin their patterns on an F-sharp. As mentioned above, the double bass pedals an F-sharp on strong beats throughout this subsection. Finally, the timpanist sustains a rolled F-sharp throughout measures

⁷⁰ Rehearsal note: the harp flourish indicates G-major, presumably a necessity to be set for the upcoming subsection in G-major.

71–77. The continued prominence of this leading tone functions on two levels. First, it is a constant forward thrust contributing to the insistent and urgent voice of the subsection. Second, it serves as a symbolic gesture to the seven continents concept woven throughout this movement.

After an insistent, urgent crescendo and flourish from the previous subsection, Stephenson delivers the arrival of a “happy, celebratory” voice in **subsection 4** (mm. 78–92).⁷¹ The fifteen measures of this subsection can be grouped as 7+8, however the latter could also be thought of as another seven-measure grouping by combining the last two measures into one super-measure. This is examined in a subsequent paragraph. The former seven-measure grouping (mm. 78–84) uses a modified ostinato emphasizing the root, G, while the theme places the pitches B and D on strong beats to create a stable tonality of G-major. This moment of straightforward major tonality contributes greatly to the satisfying celebratory sound and feeling. For the duration of this seven-measure phrase, there are no accidentals used in any part, except for the interjection in the fourth measure of the phrase (m. 81). Here the cornets and xylophone (with rhythmic support from snare drum) have a G-major scale, which includes some chromatic passing tones to fill out the measure; the low brass, double bass, alto clarinet, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone, harp, and bass drum punctuate with two dissonant non-triadic chords that lead back to a G root in the following measure.

The latter measure grouping (mm. 85–92) still functions in the tonality of G; however, there is nearly a complete avoidance of the actual pitch of G in these measures.⁷² Here Stephenson outlines a B diminished triad in the melodic theme over an F-sharp pedal point.

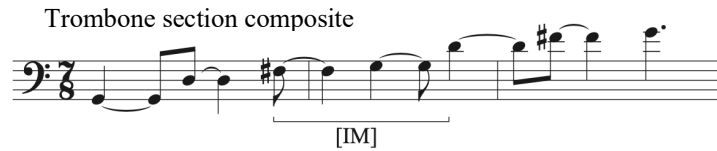
⁷¹ Happy and celebratory are voice types allocated here by the author.

⁷² The exceptions to the near total absence of the pitch G can be found on the last note in measure 91 in the melody voices, and in measure 92 in the last note in soprano saxophone and first trombone.

Together these function as a quasi-dominant substitute, sonically making the listener want to hear the tonic of G again. The listener will be surprised when the subsequent phrase veers off in a new direction.

In this subsection, theme B is presented without variation and is transposed to G-major (mm. 78–84), and then repeated up a minor third (mm. 85–92). It is orchestrated in the flutes; oboes; E-flat and B-flat clarinets; soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones; trumpets; and glockenspiel. The modified ostinato appears only on the first half of this subsection, led by the piano and double bass with full support from the baritone saxophone and bass clarinet. The bassoons and tubas also join the ostinato, in hocket format, which endures the same rhythmic and metric challenges mentioned in the previous subsection. Again, Stephenson works in a grouping of seven; if one considers the ostinato as sets of three notes, there are seven sets of three beginning at measure 78, and again at measure 82. The ostinato also contains three overlapping sets of [IMs].

A fresh and important application of the [IM] can be found in the counter line given to the trombones with the alto clarinet and timpani in support (see example 5.5). This element opens with a tonally centered low G and D and rises over the course of two octaves using only the pitches F-sharp, G, D (half step and perfect fifth intervals, respectively). This new element in the texture appears twice in the phrase beginning on measure 78 and again at measure 82. It should be strongly considered as the distinguishing feature of the phrase to bring forward in the balance.



Example 5.5.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. II (mm. 78–80) trombone section composite, built on the [IM] of F-sharp, G, D.

The second half of this subsection begins at measure 85. The orchestration remains largely the same, however there are a few noteworthy distinctions upon which to capitalize. The ostinato is replaced with syncopated *forzando* pedal F-sharps by the bass voices. This is a powerful sound that is employed again in other contexts later in the movement. As mentioned earlier, the melody migrates up a minor third and outlines a B diminished triad. Measure 88 deserves recognition for three elements packed into this single measure. First, it is a solitary 3/4 measure among the overarching 7/8 meter. Second, the horns take turns ripping octaves from their C4 to C5. Third, the trombones and timpani (with bass drum support) punch out two overlapping sets of [IMs]: F, B, B-flat (the half step from B to B-flat is inside the perfect fifth from F to B-flat), and B, B-flat, F-sharp (the half step from B to B-flat is also inside an inverted perfect fifth—now a perfect fourth—from B to F-sharp). In measure 89, the cornets begin a run through a three-note pattern of sixteenth notes, which reside along their G Locrian mode. Finally, as this subsection comes to a close (mm. 91–92), the bassoons; soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones; and tenor trombones recall the chromatically ascending figure previously presented in measures 66 and 71.

Measure 92, a lone measure in the 1/4 time signature, deserves a moment of consideration. This is a sequence Stephenson reprises a few more times throughout the movement. The underlying eighth note pulse remains constant from the previous measure into

the subsequent measure. The conductor could certainly conduct it as its own measure with just a downbeat and proceed to the next measure with another downbeat. This interpretation would give credence to Stephenson's use of a bar line meter change. However, when taken in musical context, the continuation of the cornet scale passage and of the bassoon, saxophone and trombone element proceeding straight through measure 92 makes this measure feel more like the last beat of a measure, an upbeat, than its own solitary downbeat. If one takes this interpretation, measures 91 and 92 could be thought of as a single measure in 9/8 time with a beat grouping of 2+2+3+2 and conducted in an asymmetric four pattern. This interpretation would functionally honor the prevailing seven-bar phrasing concept.

Subsection 5 is the final subsection of the grand section 2; it is transitional in nature. Occupying measures 93–105, it is a two-part transition with the first part being seven measures in 5/8 time (mm. 93–99), and the second part being six measures in 2/4 time (mm. 100–105). The principal material in part one is a melodic fragment of theme B, whereas the primary material in part two is the ostinato reimagined. Over the course of the subsection, Stephenson first increases the dynamic to *forte* (*fortissimo* for some) before finally retreating in both dynamic and texture as the transition leads to the next section.

Measures 93–99 contain four layers to the texture. The pedal point on C-sharp (piccolo, third flute, E-flat clarinet, first B-flat clarinet, horns, and timpani, with rhythmic support from snare drum) acts like gravity as it sustains throughout this seven-measure phrase drawing the rest of the ensemble toward it. The theme B melodic fragment (first and second flutes, oboes, second and third clarinets, and trumpets) harmonically functions with that pedal point collectively oscillating between an F-sharp-minor chord and C-sharp⁷ chord (when including the pedal point C-sharp as part of the chordal structure). On the opposite end, the bass instruments

(alto and bass clarinet, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone, bass trombone, euphoniums, tubas, double bass, and piano) chromatically descend each measure with a syncopated entrance on their unison-perfect fifth-octave chord until they reach the root of D-flat (C-sharp) to match the previously mentioned pedal point. The heart of the texture continues the recalled English horn; bassoons; soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones; and tenor trombones chromatically ascending figure. While the figure itself is ascending, in this phrase Stephenson repeats the figure in each measure, lowering it by half step each time until it also reaches the point where it joins the others (m. 97) to complete an ensemble D-flat⁷ harmony, on which everyone remains for three measures (mm. 97–99).

Part two of this transitional subsection (mm. 100–105) is six measures long and can be further dissected into a 3+3 measure grouping. Here Stephenson takes the ostinato, which at its core is a three-note grouping based on the [IM], and sequences it through that grouping by lowering it a major third with each repetition, with the first repetition starting on the pitch D. As a result of the sequence, the first notes of each grouping spells a D augmented triad (D, A-sharp, F-sharp). The reimagined ostinato is orchestrated for three measures in the piccolo, flutes, oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, soprano and alto saxophones, and cornets. This figure is relayed to the horns and euphoniums for the final three measures of the phrase, through which they decrescendo to *piano*.

A secondary line of interest is added to this texture at first among the B-flat and alto clarinets with momentary support from the piccolo and flutes, and then from the soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones. This figure contains alternating minor and major arpeggios. Examining the initial appearance of this element in the clarinet section shows their first three pitches spell their E-minor arpeggio in second inversion (B, E, G) and their next three pitches spell their B-

flat-major arpeggio in root position (B-flat, D, F). This concept is passed among the already-named groups before a complete reorchestration in the last three measures when it is relinquished entirely to the piano (with the harp supporting on every other note). The final element of these last three measures (mm. 103–105) lies in the bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, trombones, tubas, double bass, crotales, and bass drum. They punctuate the onset of each melodic three-note grouping with non-triadic dissonant chords.

Measures 106–150 shall be examined under the umbrella of **section 3**. It is 45 measures long and approximately one minute and ten seconds in duration. It continues to apply the initial descriptor of “Allegro” (c. 152–160 BPM). This section takes on the playful characteristics of a *scherzando* (but does not imply adherence to a *scherzo* in form). It can be further divided into six phrases starting at measures 106, 113, 120, 127, 134, and 144, respectively. For this analysis, the first three phrases are discussed together because they each use theme B as their melodic source. The last three phrases are discussed individually, as each is unique in character or function.

The first three phrases progress through three tonal centers (D, C, F) and are entirely in the 7/8 meter. They share the common use of theme B, and each is the standard seven measures long. However, each phrase imparts its own unique treatment of the melody. For phrases 1 and 2, Stephenson recalls the “sultry” and “echo” voices first heard at measure 51. Phrase 1 (m. 106) places an inverted theme B in first bassoon with a duet of the originally configured theme in the second bassoon. The duet opens on the interval of a major third, D and F-sharp, providing strong definition to the D tonal center. Phrase 2 (m. 113) orchestrates the inverted theme in the soprano saxophone with the original theme below in the tenor saxophone. In this repetition however, the opening interval is a perfect fifth, C and G, which provides a tonic-dominant relationship for this phrase’s tonal center of C. Phrase 3 (m. 120) returns to a duet of the original theme B in parallel

thirds among the oboes. Its starting pitches are A and C; when placed over the lowest note of the bassoon passage (F) this completes an F-major triad. Of these three phrases, this phrase is the least settled in tonality because it also presents several dissonant elements. If examined in isolation, the melodic duet itself outlines an F-sharp diminished 7th chord. This chord when considered against an F in the bassoon passage forms an F-dominant 7 flat-9 (enharmonically). The presence of the flat-9 creates dissonance. Additional dissonance is placed in the bass voices with syncopated entrances on octaves D-flats in the bass instruments plus piano and harp (with support from tam-tam). D-flat is the perfect choice to bring dissonance to this phrase in that if it is considered vertically in the orchestration, there is an F as the lowest pitch of the bassoon figure, C as the primary melodic tone, and D-flat as the bass instruments' pedal points (together forming the [IM] of F, C, D-flat).

Each of the three phrases also contains a stream of steady eighth notes. In phrase 1 this element belongs to the E-flat clarinet, then piccolo. They take the ostinato originally presented in the bass range of the piano in measure 65 and move it to the soprano range here. The choice of range and timbre play into the playful *scherzando* feel of this section. Additionally, this element opens on the pitch A, which completes a D-major triad when added to the melodic duet's opening pitches, further cementing the tonal center of D. In measure 113, phrase 2 moves the steady stream of eighth notes to the piano and harp with a newly configured pattern. In this case the pattern matches and accentuates the 7/8 meter. It places the pitch C on strong beats in each measure, further grounding this phrase's tonal center. The third phrase at measure 120 takes this pattern and continues it in the bassoons in hocket. This application of the hocket is less daunting than previous settings because both the pattern and the players always restart on downbeats. In

this phrase, the lowest note of the bassoon pattern places an F on strong beats. As discussed above, this works in tandem with the melodic duet to outline the tonal center of F.

Along the way, these phrases contain additional whimsical moments that add to the playful *scherzando* feel: the E-flat clarinet interjection in measure 109; the open fifth gestures in the horns and flutes throughout phrase 2 (m. 113); the pitch and direction change in the piano and harp starting at the end of measure 115; the piccolo and English horn arpeggio in measure 123; and the bass clarinet and soprano saxophone riffs in measures 124 and 126. These should each be encouraged to take their moment and poke through the texture as if they are individual voices being heard over the din of voices in a crowd.

Finally, as is the Stephenson way, every element presented should be developed in some way. Throughout these three phrases and into the fourth phrase upcoming, Stephenson recalls the introductory cymbals from measure 1, starting out like the beginning as whispers and murmurs at *pianissimo* (again his desire to use brushes was omitted in error).⁷³ In phrase 2 he notates the use of a slightly harder stick and increases the dynamic to *piano*. In phrase 3 he increases the dynamic again to *mezzo forte* and adds a fourth vibrating instrument with tam-tam. As the piece continues to the next phrase at measure 127, the cymbals now use larger hard sticks and are marked *forte* as the whispers and murmurs now develop into “full-on shouting” and are the dominant voice atop the winds, which are marked *piano* or *pianissimo*.

Having already bridged to the fourth phrase starting at measure 127 by discussing the cymbal development above, the section has also finished its exploration of theme B in favor of theme A presented by a muted solo cornet, but here with fanciful pitch variations when compared to the original (m. 15). This *scherzando* version capitalizes on side-stepping

⁷³ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

chromaticism and brief conversational takeovers of the theme by other voices. For example, in measure 131, the horns jump in with a two-note “chuckle” using parallel major triads. In measure 133, the soprano saxophone actually finishes the sentence for the muted cornet as the cornets now break out in their own laughter of parallel major triads.

The euphoniums, tubas, and double bass sustain a B-flat-major triad through this fourth phrase, while the B-flat clarinets murmur through a sixteenth note passage using three pitches. This clarinet run harkens back to the cornet motif at measure 89. The final layer to the texture of this phrase comes from the muted second and third cornets, which jab a series of parallel major thirds until they are joined by the first cornet to flush out the aforementioned parallel triads in measure 133. The tonal center for this phrase is best described as nebulous. Contributing factors to the nebulosity are the side-stepping nature of the melody, the presence of parallel major thirds and triads in the cornets and horns, and the contradicting tonalities of the steady clarinet murmur (F, G-flat, A-flat) versus the sustained B-flat triad in the euphoniums, tubas, and double bass.

The fifth phrase is ten measures long encompassing measures 134–143. It can be further dissected in measure groupings of 4+6. Of utmost importance to this section is the underlying symbolism. Stephenson states:

Letter L is literally the laughing part. So “L” is for laughing. And you’ll notice that every section, except for the percussion, gets to have their chance at the little laughing bit. Every instrument in the ensemble is a different shape, different size. It represents different people, no matter what they look like, laughing.⁷⁴

Structurally this phrase is built upon parallel triads, which move mostly by thirds. They are passed around the ensemble from one instrument family to another in an unbroken lineage of

⁷⁴ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

eighth notes. It is often frosted with a sixteenth-note scale, where the accidentals change rapidly to match the parallel triads they are accompanying. Similar to the previous phrase, there is no traditional sense of tonality here given the nature of moving parallel triads. However, a faint sense of D-flat as home base starts to emerge in measure 138 when the stable element of the bass instruments (bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone, bass trombone, tuba, double bass, timpani) begin to punctuate with an ascending [IM] of F, C, D-flat. The notable dividing point for this phrase is at measure 138 when the direction of the “laughing” triads changes from descending to ascending. At this moment, the indicated expression of the laughter also reverses from a decrescendo to a crescendo. The ascending laughter is made slightly more challenging through a series of meter changes: 7/8, asymmetric 9/8, 12/8 and 6/8.

The sixth and final phrase of section 3 is transitional in nature from measure 144–150. It has a time signature of 6/8. The onset of these seven measures arrives with a *piano* dynamic (although unmarked, the effect of this dynamic is *subito*). Tonally, it continues to subtly lean toward D-flat. The bass instruments continue their ascending [IM], which now becomes perpetual rather than sporadic. The B-flat and alto clarinets add another repetitive murmur, which places the note D-flat on each beat; the alto and tenor saxophones join in measure 148. In measures 147–150, the solo trumpet and solo trombone state a descending chromatic line that culminates on D-flat. This brief motive is the only content originally composed in the movement I introduction that gets reprised in movement II.

The trombones at measure 144, and the horns and measure 146, begin to foreshadow the tonality of the next section, A-flat-major, by softly repeating a set of diatonic thirds that outline an A-flat-major triad (with passing tones in between). This element continues throughout the phrase, growing stronger through a crescendo and the eventual addition of the second and third

cornets. The phrase is capped off with an ascending flourish in the upper woodwinds and first cornet, and a descending glissando in the first and second trombones to deliver the listener to the next section.

Section 4 (mm. 151–176) is twenty-six measures long and approximately forty seconds in duration. It continues to apply the initial descriptor of “Allegro” (c. 152–160 BPM). Most importantly it is a reprise of the “happy, celebratory” phrase and subsequent transition from measures 78–105. It is almost identical in mood, form, and function from its first appearance. This paragraph focuses exclusively on the differences, which are few and modest. Here in section 4 the tonal center is a minor second higher, now in A-flat-major. There are subtle tweaks to the orchestration: the [IM] figure led by trombones no longer has the alto clarinets in support, and in measure 161 there are no octave horn rips—which places further emphasis on the [IM] quarter note statement in the trombones and timpani. The subsequent transitional phrase here (mm. 165–176) is also very similar to its predecessor (mm. 93–105), with a few functional differences necessary to facilitate a transition to a different destination. Whereas the original transition was a two-part transition, here it is a one-part transition (simply omitting part two in its entirety). The analogous portion used for this transition was seven measures long initially and is now ten measures long. Originally Stephenson descended chromatically in the bass line while remaining stationary with the theme B fragment. Here he has to descend the melodic fragment twice to facilitate a different conclusion. In the previous version the transition concluded on a fairly tidy dominant chord. Here, the conclusion ends with four tonally competing elements. There is a bass instrument pedal point on an open fifth of A-flat and E-flat. The theme B melodic fragment oscillates between the duetted A and C on beat 1 and a cumulative G-sharp diminished triad for the remainder of each measure. The chromatic ascending statement in the English horn,

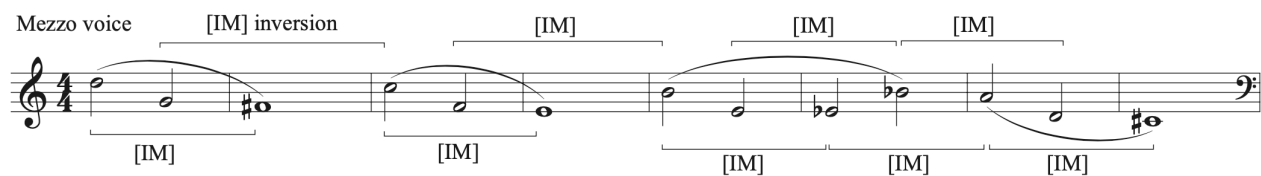
bassoons, saxophone, and trombones outlines an A-diminished 7 chord. And finally, there is a multi-octave pedal point on the pitch D presented in the piccolo, horns, vibraphone, and timpani. It is helpful for the mezzo voice to know this upper pedal point can serve as a pitch source for her entrance at the beginning of the next section. Section 4 concludes with a grand pause in measure 176, where vibraphone and tam-tam vibrate through while all other instruments are silent (and dampened if necessary).

Section 5 (mm. 177–204) is the first departure from the initial tempo. Stephenson uses the indication “Adagio – chorale” (c. 66 BPM). The section is twenty-eighth measures long, one minute and forty-five seconds in duration, and exclusively in 4/4 time. The section can be grouped into measures of 8+8+8+4. This section has many noteworthy elements which are discussed in the coming paragraphs. Most notable is the reentry of the mezzo voice for the first time in this movement. It is intended to be another instrument color among the ensemble and has been treated carefully to double with different instruments throughout this section. Stephenson’s intention in combining the voice and various instruments is “to achieve a blend, and to match up in register and sonority to create some sort of ‘other’ instrument” through the melding of timbres.⁷⁵

Here the voice type Stephenson is exploring is “calm.” He composes an elegant progression of lyrical beauty through a continuous cycle of [IMs], allowing for inversion and occasional whole steps to accommodate harmonic needs (see example 5.6). The melody opens with the mezzo voice paired with flugelhorn in measure 177. Stephenson indicates *molto dolce* and a *piano* dynamic for both, but also suggests the mezzo voice should sing “whatever dynamic

⁷⁵ Stephenson, “Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper,” Unpublished, 2020.

needed to be audible.”⁷⁶ In measure 185, the mezzo voice is now blending with a single flute. For this phrase, Stephenson adds crescendos and decrescendos but remains generally in the piano dynamic. The final duet occurs between the mezzo voice and horn beginning at measure 193. The dynamic has increased to *mezzo forte* for four measures while the rest of the ensemble remains at *piano* or *pianissimo*. The mezzo voice and horn return to *piano* in measure 197 to finish their duet.



Example 5.6.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. II (mm. 177–184) mezzo voice, melody built on a succession of [IMs].

The tonality of this section starts and ends in G but cycles around the globe in between. Stephenson uses the nature of the perfect fifth, and its inversion of a perfect fourth, along with the adjoining half step to continuously resolve intervals downward. Example 5.7 takes the perfect fifths and perfect fourths from the mezzo voice melody and stacks them vertically for illustrative purposes. (Note values have been omitted to facilitate formatting.) In this illustration, the downward resolution becomes apparent and never solidly hints at a G tonality except on the first and last pitches. The melody resets to a higher pitch level with each new phrase, and also with a new duet pairing. There is one exception where Stephenson uses a major third from G to B (m. 197) which needed to be altered to meet the supporting harmonic structure. (Note the presence of B/C-flat in the harp, double bass and marimba in measure 197.)

⁷⁶ James M. Stephenson, *Symphony No. 2: Voices for Concert Band*, (Chicago: Stephenson Music, Inc., 2016).



Example 5.7.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. II (mm. 177–200) analytic illustration showing descending resolutions of the mezzo voice melody.

Another through-piece of section 5 is the walking bass line, which is present from the downbeat of measure 177 to the conclusion of the section at measure 204. The bass line serves as a steady source of propulsion while myriad elements are advancing in and ebbing out of the passage. It also supports the ever-resolving harmonies. Although not inherently built on the [IM], Stephenson tucks several appearances of those intervals into the bass lines. (Examples can be found in measures 180–182, 184, 186, 188, 189, 194, 196–197, 200, 201–204.) Conductors and double bass players should notice Stephenson’s directions in measures 177, then 191–192, to play first in a classical pizzicato style, then a jazz pizzicato style, and back to a classical pizzicato style. The classical pizzicato is intended to have the traditional decay to each note creating a nuanced separation from note to note. The jazz pizzicato is intended to be more sustained and connected, as would be the case in a jazz swing style.

Over the course of this section, the flute, English horn, oboe, first B-flat clarinet, and piccolo each have the opportunity to overlay a countermelody that is loosely related to a theme B fragment. This countermelody’s first appearance is measure 178 in unison between third flute and English horn. It begins with a series of repeated pitches followed by a descending whole step, then an ascending minor third. As the countermelody develops, Stephenson allows flexibility in the quality of the descending step and ascending third; they can both be either major or minor intervals. Its relation to theme B can be illuminated by looking at the theme B fragment used in measure 71 in the euphoniums. As the fragment repeats, the note grouping heard by the

listener starts on beat 2 and crosses the bar line to beat 1. The notes in that grouping are C, B-flat, D—intervals of a descending whole step and ascending minor third. Throughout section 5, this countermelody is passed around until its final appearance, which starts at measure 197 in the piccolo and first B-flat clarinet.

It was Stephenson's intent to also use this section as a musical representation of the global community. It is not Stephenson's intent to actually represent the music of each continent, as is the case with so many groupings of sevens throughout the movement. He writes, "I couldn't even imagine writing music of Antarctica."⁷⁷ Instead he does this by asserting instruments and compositional styles that are not typical in music of the American wind band (yet). These are often indicated to be performed softly "as if from another room."⁷⁸ In measure 184, he asserts an African djembe in a double-feel rhythm. Measure 186 contains a brief use of Middle Eastern harmonies by the bassoons and double bass. Measure 189 parades in a marching band scored in the horns, snare drum, and cymbals. Measure 191 implies an underlying double-feel again, this time in a swing style with a tenor saxophone solo above a jazz-style pizzicato bass, and a ride cymbal plus a cross stick on the rim of a snare drum.

At measure 193, the bass clarinet and bassoons manage to bring back theme A, now juxtaposed in a 4/4 meter with slight pitch modifications for harmonic reasons and shortened by one eighth note value so that it can restart strongly on the downbeat of measures 196 and 199. They are still indicated at a *piano* dynamic underneath the *mezzo forte* dynamic of melodic voice and horn. This reprisal of theme A is accompanied in rhythm by the flutes, which serve as a tonal drone of repeated pitches. Coinciding with theme A's reprisal are a gentle tremolo in the harp

⁷⁷ Stephenson, "Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper," Unpublished, 2020.

⁷⁸ Stephenson, *Symphony No. 2*, (Chicago: Stephenson Music, Inc., 2016).

and three-note repeating pattern in the marimba. These instruments shift pitch to match the cyclical resolving of intervals in the melody. The whispering cymbals from this movement's opening phrase return again in measure 199, marked "like beginning," which infers the use of brushes (omitted in error) until measure 201 when it is indicated with "slightly harder stick."⁷⁹

The last four measures of this section (mm. 201-204) have a dual purpose. They serve as a culmination of the "Adagio – chorale," and as a transition to the next section. As a culminating feature these measures settle firmly in a tonal center of G. The marimba continues its pattern using only the pitches G and D. The double bass plays a G on the down beat of each measure. The cornets, third and fourth horns, and contrabassoon sustain a G-major triad on the downbeat of measure 201, and then hand it over to the trombones and tubas in measure 202. There is a pedal point on the note D that is handed off each measure from B-flat clarinets, to horns, to soprano and alto saxophones, and finally to trumpets. As a transitional phrase, these measures isolate a fragment of theme A, pass it along each measure from bass clarinet and bassoons; to B-flat clarinets; to E-flat and alto clarinet; and finally to flutes, oboes, soprano saxophones, alto saxophones, and euphoniums. This fragment is repeated through an *accelerando*, and further fragmented in measure 204 with still more *accelerando* and a *crescendo* that leads into the next section.

Section 6 (mm. 205–274) returns to the initial tempo with the indication "Allegro – come prima" (c. 152-160). Stephenson refers to this as a "quasi-recap."⁸⁰ Perhaps the main reason he qualifies the term recap with quasi is because of the inference that a recapitulation is part of classical forms, such as in a sonata-allegro. While this movement is not bound by any classical

⁷⁹ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

⁸⁰ Stephenson, "Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper," Unpublished, 2020.

form, it does have form. One of the elements Stephenson uses in the form of this movement is certainly a recapitulation of themes, as evidenced in the coming paragraphs. This section is seventy measures long, one minute and thirty-five seconds in duration, and is mostly in 7/8 time, with some transitional phrases metered in 5/8. The section can be grouped into three subsections: subsection 1 (mm. 205–218) recapitulates theme A, subsection 2 (mm. 219–251) recapitulates theme B, and subsection 3 (mm. 252–274) recapitulates the happy, celebratory material also based on theme B and includes the subsequent transition. The details of the inner workings of the material in the recapitulation hold true from the earlier examination of sections 1 and 2. These paragraphs, therefore, highlight salient points and illuminate the notable variety Stephenson uses herein.

Section 6, subsection 1 (mm. 205–218) opens with two successive statements of theme A, first in the solo piccolo (m. 205), and then in the solo oboe and solo tenor saxophone (m. 212). Just as it was in the opening (m. 15), each statement is seven measures long for a total of fourteen measures. In this recapitulated setting, the tonal center has moved to A-flat with the theme continuing to accentuate the seventh scale degree by placing it strongly on beat 1. The accompanying rhythmic perfect fifths are present at first in the B-flat clarinets, and then handed to muted trombones. The second statement of theme A includes a staccato descending arpeggio, as was the case in the opening, but here it is a C-flat-major 9 arpeggio performed by the soprano saxophone and E-flat clarinet on rotation. The xylophone motors along with steady eighth notes emphasizing the tonic (A-flat) dominant (E-flat) and leading tone (G). This motor is handed to the marimba for the second statement. Here the harp joins with rhythmic running of the A-flat harmonic minor scale bordered by the seventh scale degree on the bottom and top. Theme A is concluded with the addition of woodwind voices on the melody, horns and cornets on the

rhythmic perfect fifths, cymbals and bass drum crescendo, and timpani glissando from E-flat (dominant) to A-flat (tonic).

Section 6, subsection 2 (mm. 219–251) recapitulates theme B by using several of the texture and mood applications from the original exploration of this theme. The analogous phrases from the opening to the recapitulation are enumerated in table 5.2.

Table 5.2.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. II, theme B, analogous phrases.

Opening:	Recapitulation–Analogous Phrases:
Measure 36–50	Measure 219–235
Measure 65–77	Measure 236–251
Measure 78–99	Measure 252–274 (also analogous to measure 150–175)

Measures 219–235 continue the recapitulation’s current tonal center of A-flat. These phrases recall the “shout” voice and are orchestrated almost identically to their analogous phrases. One difference is the phrase extension that doubles as a miniature transition from measures 232–235. Here the extension is four measures long, where the analogous phrase was two measures long (mm. 49-50). Measures 236–251 are also orchestrated identically to their analogous measures from the opening. They start with a tonal center of E-flat but reach G-flat by measure 246. This is a repeat of the urgent, insistent sounding voice. The earlier version’s measure grouping is 6+7. The recapitulation’s grouping is 6+10. The additional measures are, in essence, measures 247–249. These measures allow for a longer tonicization of G-flat before squarely arriving there at measure 252.

Section 6, subsection 3 (mm. 252–274) recalls the happy, celebratory phrase and the subsequent transition from its analogous phrases. The phrase begins in a stable G-flat-major.

Specifically, the measures from 252–266 are orchestrated with only minor adjustments along the way. This iteration includes the octave rips in the horns (m. 262) as in the first appearance (m. 88), but not in the second (m. 161). The subsequent transitional phrase (mm. 267–274) is eight measures long and can be thought of in a grouping of 4+4. Its original analogous phrase (m. 93) is seven measures, and its second example (m. 166) is ten measures. This phrase works its way harmonically toward C-dominant, which it sustains from measure 271–274. The orchestration has a few modifications. Theme B fragment is presented by the first and second flutes, oboes, B-flat and alto clarinets, and horns. The octave pedal point is scored for piccolo, third flute, English horn, E-flat clarinet, cornets, trumpets, xylophone, and timpani (with rhythmic support from the bass drum). The chromatically ascending figure is allocated to the bassoons; soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones; and tenor trombones. The syncopated descending perfect fifth and octave is heard in the bass instruments: bass clarinet, contrabassoon, bass trombone, euphoniums, tubas, double bass, and piano.

Section 7 (mm. 275–297) is twenty-three measures long, fifty seconds in duration. It is the climactic section (mm. 275–290) of the movement followed by a transition (mm. 291–297) of decreasing dynamic, thinning texture, and retreating momentum. This section is composed in cut-time. Stephenson chooses a symbolic descriptor: “Chorale – Stentorian” (c. 66 BPM). Stentorian, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is “(of a person’s voice) loud and powerful.” Its etymology reaches back to a Greek warrior, Stentor, “whose voice was as powerful as fifty voices of other men.” Here Stephenson calls on a “stentorian” voice to deliver the climax of movement. The beginning of the section, however, is not the ultimate highpoint; great care will need to be taken to save some energy in reserve until measures 283–288, where the official pinnacle occurs.

The second layer of symbolism in the descriptor is the reuse of the term “chorale” from section 5. Here in section 7, Stephenson uses the same elegant melodic progression first heard in the mezzo voice and flugelhorn (m. 177), which is a continuous cycle of downward resolving [IMs]. The section opens in G-flat-minor with this melody placed in the second trumpet and first trombone, and then cycles around various harmonies, much the same way as in section 5, until arriving at C-minor in measure 289. The melody appears to be doubled in rhythmic progression, but due to the *alla breve* time signature, it actually proceeds at the same pace as it did in section 5.

The measure groupings for this section are 8+8+7. The definitive criteria in delineating these groupings are the aforementioned melodic structure and the orchestration, which are discussed as part of the following paragraphs. However, there is one element that works against that measure grouping—the application of theme A starting in measure 275 (flutes, oboes, English horn, and B-flat clarinets). In the context of cut-time, theme A concludes after six measures and restarts immediately in the seventh measure (m. 281), which is mid-phrase in the wholistic view of the landscape.

Another layer to the texture that was heard previously in the “Adagio – chorale” section (m. 177) is the walking bass line provided by the bass clarinet, bassoons, contrabassoon, bass trombone, tubas, double bass, and piano. Also doubled in printed rhythm, it is paced in cut-time at the same speed as before. The whispering and murmuring cymbals from the opening measures return here, also in a *forte* stentorian manner. In the third measure of the phrase (m. 277), the horns recall the countermelody theme B fragment that first appeared in measure 178 of the “Adagio – chorale.” There are additional long tone chords in the cornets, trombones,

euphoniums, and timpani, which harmonically support the ever-resolving progression of the [IM] melody.

In measures 275–282, the first 8-measure grouping, Stephenson has marked the dynamic *forte* and has kept some instruments tacet during this phrase in order to heighten the true climax in measures 283–288. Starting at measure 283, he increases the dynamic to *fortissimo*, brings all the instrumental forces to bear, and adds two more layers to the texture. Previously tacet, the soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones; timpani; snare and bass drum add a new element to the texture. The rhythmic perfect fifth that has accompanied several previous phrases is now a rhythmic minor triad that moves in support of transient harmonies. It starts on an E-flat-minor triad and works its way to the target tonality of C-minor. The horns, which were already playing on the previous phrase, continue here with their own new soaring counter line of half notes. It culminates with a stealthy [IM] on their last three notes of the phrase (mm. 288-290), where the outer two notes form the perfect fifth and the half step is contained in the middle (E, G-sharp, A). The second trombone supports the horn line in measures 283–284 before returning back to its harmonic support role.

To maximize the strength of the ensemble for the true climax, Stephenson also adds brightness to the orchestration by reinforcing the statement of theme A with the addition of piccolo, E-flat and alto clarinets (which, due to its misalignment with the overall phrase structure, is in the third measure of its restatement). He brings in the baritone saxophone to supplement the weight of the bass line. He rests the first trumpet until this moment when it enters an octave above the second trumpet on the chorale melody. He again asks the now stentorian cymbals to use a harder stick. All musicians are now marked *fortissimo* until measure 289, at which time there is an ensemble decrescendo, and all movement descends in range. As discussed

earlier, the tonality of C-minor arrives at this decrescendo point (m. 289) and endures throughout the pending transition.

Measures 291–297 serve as a seven-measure transition and conclusion to the climactic section. The B-flat clarinets carry the motion of theme A onward through a continued decrescendo and declining of range. Their statement is not theme A precisely, but utilizes the same language in rhythm, articulation, and style. After just two measures, this line is handed to alto and bass clarinets and bassoons. A walking bass line continues in the contrabassoon, tubas, and double bass. It also gets passed along after two measures to the euphoniums, which pass it yet again two measures later to a pizzicato double bass. The timpani reiterates the idea of the rhythmic perfect fifths, but now as a single pitch in rhythm only. The cymbals regress back to softer sticks and toward their original whispers and murmurs. This transition is harmonically supported by a perpetual C-minor chord in whole notes, which is also reorchestrated every two measures until it regresses from a triad to a simple unison C in measure 297 on the double bass and timpani. The transition (and the section) comes to an end after a *ritardando* (mm. 295–296) reaches the fermata in measure 297.

Section 8 (mm. 298–347) is the final section of the movement—the coda. Stephenson returns to the original “Allegro – come prima” (c. 152-160 BPM). The section is forty measures long, one minute in duration, and split mostly between the meters of 7/8 and 2/4. Stephenson uses fragments of each theme plus additional layers of previously used elements to create a grand and glorious ending that rivals the energy of climactic section 7 and serves as a fitting coda in the event this movement is performed on its own. There are three subsections to the coda: subsection 1 (mm. 298–314), subsection 2 (mm. 315–326), and subsection 3 (mm. 327–347). The tonal center is in C from measure 298–334, at which point it pivots to A-flat for the final conclusion.

Section 8, subsection 1 (mm. 298–314) opens with a glissando from the harp on the *anacruses*, leading to a succession of long tone entrances that help maintain the tonal center of C. The euphoniums, tubas, timpani, and trombones have staggered entrances which are built upon the [IM]. Tubas and timpani enter on C; two measures later, bass trombone enters on G; two measures after that, third trombones enter on A-flat (completing the [IM]), with second and first trombones entering on C in successive measures after that. As the pyramid builds, the dynamic increases from *pianissimo* to *mezzo piano*. Over the course of measures 306–314, many more instruments join in the cavalcade of entrances that build on the [IM] of C, G, and A-flat: bass clarinet, bassoons, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone, horns, first cornet, and trumpets. The gradual dynamic increase continues as new instruments join the cause. Supporting the same tonality, the muted horns also enter immediately at measure 298 with the familiar rhythmic perfect fifth (C and G) firmly supporting the tonal center. This relays to cornets in measure 304, which are joined by the euphoniums in measure 311.

The piccolo and first clarinet strike up a repetitive fragment of theme A, which begins to juxtapose a pending sense of the ending tonality by staying exclusively in the key of A-flat-major throughout this subsection. Additional instruments are added to this layer every few measures: flutes, more clarinets, oboes, first cornet, xylophone, and snare drum. The opening salvo of theme B is asserted in the second measure of this subsection (m. 299) by the alto and tenor saxophones. It is joined in measure 305 by the soprano saxophone, measure 306 by the English horn, measure 309 by the third clarinet, measure 310 by the bass drum, and measure 311 by the second B-flat and alto clarinets.

Section 8, subsection 2 (mm. 315–326) brings a new texture to the coda. Twelve measures in length, it can be thought of as 6+6 with each half being nearly identical to the other.

Each half can be further grouped as 4+2. Having reached *fortissimo*, the tonal center of C is being maintained by the rhythmic perfect fifth figure in the horns, second and third cornets, and trumpets (C and G), along with a sustained G (trilled) in the piccolo, flutes, oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, soprano and alto saxophones (mm. 315–318). The clarinets reiterate the three-note G Locrian run first stated by the trumpets in section 2, measure 89. Stephenson then advances an epic battle of [IMs] (mm. 316–318) in contrary motion—each pitch *fortissimo*, accented, and consuming an entire measure. One group (first bassoon, tenor saxophone, tenor trombones, first euphonium, piano) presents an ascending [IM] (B, C, G), while the other group (bass clarinet, second bassoon, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone, bass trombone, second euphonium, tubas, double bass, piano, timpani) presents a descending [IM] (E, E-flat, A-flat). This subsection would appear to omit theme A entirely if not for the covert operation of the snare drum, which showcases four measures-worth of theme A from measures 315–318 (with additional support from the bass drum).

Measures 319–320 are the +2 portion of the phrase grouping. There are two brief facets that essentially serve as *anacruses* to measure 321. The piccolo; flutes; E-flat, B-flat, and alto clarinets; and first cornet reset at *forte* and crescendo through a two-octave sixteenth note ascending flourish from G to G. The timpani uses its four drums to rifle through a solo marked *tutta forza* (full force), which is built upon two overlapping [IMs]: one starting on the first note and another starting on the second note (G, A-flat, E-flat, F-flat). The glockenspiel and xylophone add rhythmic support to the timpani solo, while the snare drum, tam-tam, and bass drum add energy to the ensemble crescendo. Measures 321–326 are an exact replica of 315–320 with one exception: the two-octave sixteenth note flourish starts a perfect fourth higher on C.

Section 8, subsection 3 (mm. 327–347) is the final push to the end and briefly revisits three distinct thematic ideas in succession. The measure grouping is parsed as 8+8+5. The first eight (mm. 327–334), still in C, highlight the [IM]. The second eight (mm. 335–342) powerfully assert a fragment of theme B and arrive to the ultimate tonal center of A-flat. The final five (mm. 343–347) close with a nod to theme A. Measures 327–334 open similarly to the previous subsections with the concept of the rhythmic perfect fifth idea, but this time the horns and trumpets have the rhythm on octave Cs while the piccolo, flutes, oboes, English horn, and E-flat clarinet trill sustained octave Gs. In the second measure (m. 328), another epic battle of [IMs] ensues, this time offset by one measure. The [IMs] are again in contrary motion and in retrograde from the phrase at measure 316. A descending [IM] (B, E, E-flat) initiates the battle (alto and tenor saxophones, tenor trombones, euphoniums, right-hand piano). In response, an ascending [IM] (G-flat, G, D) fights back (bass clarinet, bassoons, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone, bass trombone, tubas, double bass, left-hand piano).

The tenor trombones provide a segue to the next measure grouping—and the next tonal center—through a glissando landing on an A-flat-major triad (m. 335). They are joined on the downbeat by the saxophones and horns, which sustain this chord for the duration of the eight-measure grouping. The pervasive rhythmic perfect fifth is coopted by the flutes, oboes, and second and third B-flat clarinets on an A-flat and E-flat. They are joined in measure 339 by English horn, E-flat clarinet, first B-flat clarinet, and alto clarinet. Measure 337 brings what Stephenson refers to as “a Shostakovichian unison” in the brass, low reeds, and piano.⁸¹ This three-note figure is a fragment of theme B, similar to the fragment used by the flutes in measures

⁸¹ Referring to Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich, Stephenson alludes to Shostakovich’s propensity to marshal the bold and bombastic power of the brass instruments through the use of tutti unison writing alongside a sparkling accompaniment in the woodwinds.

178–180, which ultimately was extracted from the first trumpet, measure 37, the last three notes. Here the powerful unison appears accompanied by three suspended cymbals (a different cymbal for each note of the motif) and it is repeated three times, being transposed down a half step each time. The timpani, snare drum, and bass drum also enter in measure 337. However, while the rest of the ensemble is marked *fortissimo*, these instruments are marked *pianissimo*; their entrance is designed not to be heard. They crescendo over the course of this measure grouping to *forte* and then continue as a through piece to the last measure grouping.

Measures 343–347 is the final measure grouping and most dominantly features theme A. With the timpani, snare drum, and bass drum having arrived at a *forte* dynamic, the lower cornets and trumpets strike a crisp *fortissimo* A-flat-major triad. They are the only wind instruments on display in measure 343 and sustain without relenting. Subsequently, the remainder of the winds enter in measure 344 with three layers to the texture. The fragment of theme A rides along the top of the ensemble in the piccolo; flutes; oboes; English horn; E-flat, B-flat, and alto clarinets; and first cornet. The bass instruments (bass clarinet, bassoon, contra bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, bass trombone, tubas, and double bass) utilize a descending [IM] (F-flat, E-flat, A-flat). In the middle range, a sequence of three non-triadic chords descends chromatically in the soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones; horns; tenor trombones; and euphoniums. Thus far, subsection 3 has been in the time signature of 2/4. As the layers of the texture coalesce, Stephenson provides one last reminder of the 7/8 meter in the penultimate measure, which delivers the movement to its ultimate and satisfying conclusion at measure 347 with a short, *sforzando*, open fifth interval (A-flat and E-flat).

CHAPTER 6: MOVEMENT III “OF ONE”

Movement III “Of One,” is the final movement of the symphony, which includes the emotional high point of the entire piece and the resolution of Stephenson’s personal search for peace and acceptance following the loss of his mother. The movement title refers to many voices speaking as one. This is an intentional and symbolic recognition of the commissioning ensemble, “The President’s Own” Marine Band, which is filled with musicians of many different backgrounds working together “full of selflessness and support for one another,” acting “how any group should act, for the good of their family, their community, their country, their world.”⁸² For approximately six minutes and twenty seconds, “Of One” returns to a slow tempo that is through-composed and focuses mostly on a single theme, which for the sake of this document and to rightfully honor the composer and his mother, is referred to as “Mother’s theme.”⁸³ Movement III is examined in five sections (see table 6.1). It opens in section 1 (mm. 1–13), marked “Adagio – Soulful” (c. 56 BPM), with a chant-like euphonium solo and the presentation of Mother’s theme. Section 2 (mm. 14–33) indicates “Piu mosso – soothing” (c. 66 BPM) and explores familiar fragments of themes, including Mother’s theme and theme B from Movement II, along with additional contrapuntal material. Section 3 (mm. 34–46) places Mother’s theme underneath an ever-reaching stretch of triplets. Section 4 (mm. 47–54) suggests “Lento – Angelic” (c. 52 BPM, c. 48 BPM) and is a quasi-recapitulation of the original setting of Mother’s theme. Section 5, the coda (mm. 55–86), progresses from “Lento” through “Grandioso” to “Molto Grandioso.” Section 5 continues its focus on Mother’s theme with additional layers of

⁸² Stephenson, “Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper,” Unpublished, 2020.

⁸³ Mother’s theme is a term allocated by the author.

unifying material, and a final return to the anguished material from the symphony introduction in Movement I.

Table 6.1.

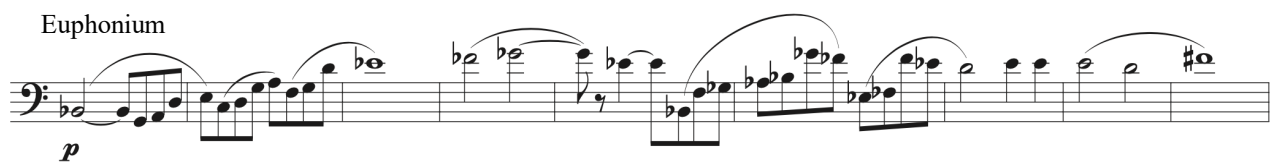
Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. III Structure

Sections	Section 1		Section 2	
Description	Chant-like	Mezzo Voice		
Measures	1–8	9–13	14–23	24–33
Material	Reminiscent	Mother's Theme	Fragments	Mvt. 2, Theme A Fragment
Tonality	Ab min	B maj	B	G# min
Tempo	c. 56	–	c. 66	c. 60
Indication	Adagio – Soulful	Peacefully	Piu mosso – Soothing	–
Meter	4/4	–	–	–
Dynamics	<i>p</i>	<i>pp</i>	<i>p–mf</i>	<i>pp–f</i>
Duration	:40	:20	:40	:30

Sections	Section 3		Section 4
Description	Maniacal	Sinister	Mezzo Voice
Measures	34–38	39–46	47–54
Material	Mother's Theme	Mother's Theme	Mother's Theme
Tonality	E min	E min	G maj
Tempo	–	–	c. 52
Indication	–	–	Lento–Angelic
Meter	–	–	–
Dynamics	<i>f</i>	<i>f–p</i>	<i>p</i>
Duration	:20	:40	:35

Sections	Section 5		
Description	Coda		
Measures	55–70	71–82	83–86
Material	Mother's Theme	Mother's Theme	Symphony Intro
Tonality	G maj, Ab min	Eb maj	Eb maj
Tempo	–	c. 52, c. 48	–
Indication	–	Grandioso, Molto Grandioso	–
Meter	–	–	–
Dynamics	<i>p–f</i>	<i>f, ff</i>	<i>ff</i>
Duration	1:05	1:00	:30

Movement III is entirely in common time with **Section 1**, “Adagio – Soulful” (c. 56 BPM) being approximately one minute in duration. It opens with a chant-like euphonium solo that gives both the performers and audience a moment to reflect and catch their breath after the frenzy of the previous movement (see example 6.1). Pacing can be measured here to allow for this intended moment of introspection. Exploring the “soulful” voice, the euphonium solo is stitched together with fragments, or reminiscences, of several familiar themes and a foreshadow of the upcoming Mother’s theme. Measures 1–2 are modified [IMs] using whole steps in place of half steps except for the final iteration, which is exact: G, D, E-flat. Measures 3–4 hint at the intervals of Mother’s theme (E-flat, F-flat, G-flat). Measure 5 into 6 capitalizes on two overlapping [IMs] (B-flat, F, G-flat, D-flat). Measures 7–9 recall the movement II theme B fragment (movement II, mm. 178–180). This opening phrase loosely alludes to an A-flat-minor tonal center; the strongest clues are the A-flat-minor chord in measure 3, beat 1, and measure 5, beat 2.



Example 6.1.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. III (mm. 1–9) euphonium solo.

Accompanying the euphonium solo are the tubas and second euphonium with a gently moving sustained chordal accompaniment. There are additional lines of counterpoint provided in measures 3 and 5 by the celesta, and also divided among the bass clarinet, B-flat clarinet, flute, and piccolo. In measures 6–7, the piccolo concludes this line of accompaniment with a three-note prequel of the movement II, theme B fragment coming up in the euphonium. The final layer is

added by the vibraphone with motor on. This sound, in conjunction with the piccolo, is intended to create a “ghostly...hollow sound.”⁸⁴ When asked about the opening of movement III,

Stephenson says:

I remember thinking, all right, the euphonium hasn’t had a big solo yet. And usually ... they’re the ones who can recover from a rough beating the easiest. Because that second movement ... is pretty hard-core. So, I give them the solo, knowing that they could play something like that relatively easy. And then I do remember trying to force that interval motive into the opening. And I was like, you know what? It’s just not working. So, I make it a fourth. And then the last one is the fifth going to the E-flat. That worked for me. And then after that, of course, it is the voice motif. It’s the same music that she sings in B-major, but it’s just written in a different key. And then after the euphonium starts, I thought it would be cool to have that low tuba euphonium chorale together, because that’s always such a beautiful sound.⁸⁵

Measures 9–13 is the important arrival of the mezzo voice singing Mother’s theme, marked “peacefully” (see example 6.2). The melody is an inversion of the intervals from movement II theme B and is now set in B-major. The flutes join the mezzo voice in unison but should be under the voice in balance and also with minimal, if any, vibrato. The remainder of this setting is padded with sustained chords in the B-flat and bass clarinets and the marimba, with one additional B-major chord provided by the trombones and timpani.



Example 6.2.

Symphony No. 2: Voices by James M. Stephenson, ©2016, Stephenson Music, Inc.
Mvt. III (mm. 9–13) mezzo voice, Mother’s theme.

⁸⁴ Stephenson, “Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper,” Unpublished, 2020.

⁸⁵ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

Section 2 (mm. 14–33) moves slightly ahead in tempo (c. 66 BPM) and should, at first, convey a “soothing” voice. One minute and ten seconds in duration, section 2 can be examined in two equal sets of measures, 10+10. Measures 14–15 serve as a miniature introduction to this section with a static B-major chord in the horns (and other instruments which are still fading out from the previous phrase). Importantly in measure 15, the bass trombone strikes an A-natural in discord with the established tonality of B-major, as if to suggest all is not yet settled. This note, while dynamically marked *piano*, should be overtly balanced to be noticed. This A-natural also leads into the next measures by completing a downward [IM]. While the horns continue a *pianissimo* bed of lush chords, measure 16 is the onset of an eight-measure contrapuntal phrase using several familiar fragments along the way. In measure 16, the oboes open with Mother’s theme before veering off into an ascending [IM] followed by the movement II theme B fragment mentioned earlier and then wandering their way to a descending [IM] leading into measure 24. In measure 17, the first cornet counters with its own melodic line. Tucked within its first measure are the notes B-flat, F, G-flat—another [IM]. The harp and celesta present descending [IMs] in measures 16 and 18. The English horn and second B-flat clarinet twice interject just the half step from the [IM] in measures 16–18. Measures 22–23 provide an opportunity for the first horn, bass trombone, and piccolo to exemplify the “Of One” moniker as they should seamlessly pass a continuously moving eighth-note line from one to the next. This aspect of the phrase may be difficult for the noted musicians to hear due to density, proximity, and range. It may necessitate a moment of rehearsal to isolate for clarity. All of this contrapuntal material has further importance as it serves to move from B-major to the next tonal center of G-sharp-minor.

Measures 24–33, now securely in G-sharp-minor, use both the familiar movement II theme B fragment and the [IM] as the primary source material to accentuate a *poco a poco*

accelerando which builds for the remainder of this section. The solo alto saxophone presents an “eerie” version of the movement II theme B fragment in measure 25 before turning it over to the tuba, then flute and tenor sax, and finally the trumpet and trombone (elongated). In measure 26, the bass clarinet and bassoons counter with a long tone variation of the [IM], followed by faster versions in composite among the euphoniums and B-flat clarinets (m. 30), with the addition of second cornet in measure 32. Providing stealthy support for this section are the horns, which continue in four-part chordal accompaniment, and the bass instruments (double bass, second tuba, bass trombone, and eventually timpani), which take turns ensuring a G-sharp pedal point is ever-present throughout the phrase. This section delivers momentum across the bar line into the next section with a descending flourish (notated as a *quasi-gliss.*), a crescendo, and most notably what Stephenson likens to the “Mahler death-blow” bass drum strokes.⁸⁶ Stephenson says, “That’s what I call it, whenever I’m conducting it, because they never play it loud enough.”⁸⁷

Section 3 (mm. 34–46) holds the current tempo (c. 60 BPM), adheres to measure-groupings of 5+4+4, and is one minute in duration. This section pivots to an E-minor tonality, which is setting up its relative major for the next section. Mother’s theme is now present in the bass voices (double bass, tubas, euphonium, second through bass trombones, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, bassoons, and contrabassoon) from measure 34–42. Mother’s theme in this instance is founded on the pitch E, giving strength to the tonal center. The new and most prominent element of this section is assigned to the flutes, oboes, and E-flat and B-flat clarinets. Marked *forte* and *pesante*, these instruments have a relentless passage of accented triplets starting on the pitch B (which assists in establishing the E-minor tonality), endlessly reaching

⁸⁶ Referring to the powerful hammer blows of fate in the finale of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony.

⁸⁷ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

upward for something which seems just beyond their grasp. The relentlessness begins to subside in measure 39 when the triplets give pause and are taken up again in measure 40 by the second trumpet, E-flat and B-flat clarinets. It is passed again to the flutes and cornets in measure 41 but now marked *mezzo forte* and scored in their mid-range. Relenting further, the triplets are granted to the celesta and glockenspiel in measures 43–46. Another layer in the texture can be found in the English horn; alto clarinet; soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones; and horns. This cadre chromatically descends a four-part chord, except for the top pitch, which remains on the pitch B from measure 34–39 before it also starts to descend. The lengthened presence of this pitch will be utilized as a surprise pivot when it becomes the third of the upcoming tonal center—and the starting pitch of the mezzo voice’s reprise of Mother’s theme. In measures 35–38 the cornets, trumpets, and first trombone jump to the fore with two unison accented interjections with its most notable feature: an opening interval of an ascending major ninth. As the energy begins to subside in measure 39, the cornets and first trombone join the saxophones in the chromatically descending chords. The timpani, which had been outlining an E-minor triad, comes to sustain a rolled tonic E for the next eight measures.

Measures 43–46 serve as an interesting transition to the next section. Aiming for the upcoming relative G-major, Stephenson essentially relinquishes concern for vertical harmony through this transition in favor of linear voice leading by chromatic scale. When taken as a whole, it is akin to streams of light entering a prism in one color (E-minor) and exiting another (G-major). It is important to note while all instruments are moving by chromatic scale, there is just one that stands alone in moving by the intervals of Mother’s theme. The euphoniums fragment the initial three notes and sequence them ascending through three pitch-levels: E, F-

sharp G; B-flat, C, D-flat; E, F-sharp, G. Stephenson provides the following reflection about this transition:

I will give you a hint: Do not try to analyze the four bars going into F in movement III. It's just all about voice leading and getting us to G-major. If you try to analyze it vertically, you'll be in trouble. It's just a chromatic crumbling. And we finally arrive at G-major at letter F. And my goal was just to worry about everybody's lines and to have letter F be absolutely magical when we got there.⁸⁸

With the arrival of **section 4** (mm. 47–54) comes a reprise of the original setting of Mother's theme, this time in G-major. This reprise is eight measures long, approximately thirty-five seconds in duration, and is slightly slower than the first setting. Here it is marked "Lento Angelic" (c. 52 BPM). The "angelic" mezzo voice is now truly solo with only a static G-major triad passed among instrument families for accompaniment; there is no wind instrument doubling the voice. There are two exceptions to the G-major triadic accompaniment. In measure 51, the harp, third and fourth horns, and B-flat and bass clarinets change to an E-flat-minor ninth chord. In this moment, Mother's theme sits atop the chord on the ninth. The second exception is in measure 54 when the first bassoon enters on an E-flat, as if to suggest again that all is not yet settled. But this time it resolves immediately back to a satisfying D, the fifth of the G-major chord in measure 55.

For the performers, more important than understanding the technical aspect is to understand Stephenson's emotional journey with the arrival of Section 4. He writes, "Those eight bars were so easy to write. It was literally as if my mother was with me, letting me know that everything was going to be OK. That she was in a good place, and the suffering was over."⁸⁹ The

⁸⁸ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

⁸⁹ Stephenson, "Symphony #2–VOICES–Paper," Unpublished, 2020.

conveyance of acceptance with the section suggests this should be performed with a great sense of calm and stillness.

Section 5 (mm. 55–86) is the coda. Relative to the length of the movement, it is quite long with a duration of approximately two minutes and thirty-five seconds (over one-third of the movement.) However, when considered as a conclusion to the entire symphony, it is a fitting and substantial resolution to the journey from start to finish. The coda starts at the previous tempo “Lento” (c. 52 BPM) before picking up a little momentum at measure 63, “poco mosso.” It then indicates “Grandioso” (c. 52 BPM) at measure 71, followed by “Molto Grandioso” (c. 48 BPM) at measure 79. The challenge here is the pacing of energy and volume. Conductors should take great care to save room dynamically and for broadening until the very end. The emotional importance of the coda cannot be understated; it deserves explicit efforts to connect the musicians to the meaning in an ultimate effort to share that with an audience. When asked to speak about the coda Stephenson says:

You have so many things happening simultaneously. You have the voice motif—singing voice motif—and the trombone. You have the interval motif in the low instruments. And you have the opening euphonium line in the harp. And you have the interval motif in reverse, in the euphonium. And then you have the heartbeat in the mallets, which—yeah, that’s—the heartbeat being important because it’s like my mother is telling me that life can go on without her.

So that’s why the heartbeat sort of starts ... right there. There are so many things going on at the same time. And then all I do is change keys and add more instruments from that point on. That’s all I do, in quotes.⁹⁰

At the foundation of the coda is a progression of three tonal centers: G, A-flat, E-flat. These tonal centers represent the ending tonal centers of each movement in order, and they represent the unifying element of the [IM]. Ultimately, measures 55–82 layer myriad elements explored throughout the symphony. It begins in the tonal center of G-major at measure 55 with

⁹⁰ Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

trombones presenting a chorale setting of Mother's theme. This concept is passed along to other instruments, such as the English horn and saxophone family, in measure 59. At measure 63, the tonal center progresses to A-flat-major, and now the oboes, E-flat clarinets, horns and first cornets have the chorale setting of Mother's theme. Reorchestrations continue all the way through measure 78. There are countless appearances of the [IM], starting with double bass and tubas in measures 55–57 with frequent continued sightings also through measure 78. The euphoniums add two ascending [IMs] in measures 56–59. This version is relayed to the tenor trombones, and then to the saxophones, followed by the upper woodwinds, and so on through measure 78. Two more layers to the texture are included at the onset of the coda: the heartbeat on the marimba and the harp reprise of the opening of the chant-like euphonium solo. Even this element takes its trip around the ensemble moving to the first B-flat clarinet in measure 59, the bassoons, bass clarinet, and euphoniums in measure 63, and others onward through measure 70.

Measure 71 is the emotional climax of the symphony. Having started the entire symphony in the tonal center of E-flat, Stephenson vowed not to return to E-flat until the end of the symphony, symbolically representing resolution in mourning the loss of his mother. Here, the glorious, resounding E-flat-major carries forth all of the elements that were already established in the previous phrase (except for the chant-like melody), and Stephenson adds a layer of resolving half steps, initially in the flutes, soprano and alto saxophones, and second cornet. This resolving half step follows suit of the other elements and is found in measures 73, 75, 77, and inverted in measure 78. About the arrival back to the key of E-flat (rehearsal letter "I"), Stephenson writes in his program notes:

I think it is the most difficult times we endure that force us, inspire us, to dig deeper than we could ever imagine. On the one hand, I am, of course, deeply saddened by the loss of my mother; but on the other, I will always have this piece—which is the most personal to

me—to in essence keep her alive in my heart. I always tear up at letter I. Always. But they are tears of joy and treasured memories of 74 years with my mother.⁹¹

Measures 79–82 arrives to “Molto Grandioso” (c. 48 BPM) with the full forces of the ensemble, marked *fortissimo*, contributing to four textural elements. On the bottom of the ensemble, the bass instruments are repeating a descending [IM] driving home the E-flat root. At the top of the ensemble the piccolo, flutes, oboes, English horn, clarinets, celesta, harp, marimba, and glockenspiel run a stream of steady descending eighth notes, which reset each measure up a diatonic step—as if striving to eventually reach the root E-flat. In the middle, there are horns, cornets, trumpet, euphoniums, and chimes trading and overlapping ascending [IMs], seemingly on every beat. In support of this energetic activity, the tenor trombones and saxophones sustain triadic chords throughout.

The grand finale strikes at measure 83 with a return of the symphony’s introductory material. The bass clarinet, bassoons, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone, fourth horn, tenor trombones, euphoniums, tubas, double bass, celesta, and timpani, with support from the bass drum, exalt a *fortissimo* E-flat. Omitted from that list intentionally is the bass trombone, which also exalts an E-flat, but marked one dynamic louder than all the others with the addition of the word “triumphant.” (Compare to movement I, measure 1, when marked up a dynamic but indicated “menacing.”) Following the triumphant E-flat, the remainder of the ensemble recalls one of the “anguished” polychords with E-flat-minor on the bottom and B-minor 7 on the top. Percussion adds to the fervor with rolled bass drum, snare drum, and triangle, and added tam-tam in measure 84. In a final display of unity (mm. 84–85), the cornets, trumpets, and tenor trombones join together on one final powerful unison [IM] (D, E-flat, B-flat), which is ultimately

⁹¹ Stephenson, “Symphony No. 2” (accessed February 7, 2021), <https://composerjim.com/works/symphony-no-2/>.

joined by the full ensemble in measure 86 on an E-flat-major chord spanning the range of orchestration from E-flat1 to E-flat7 while the harp celebrates with continued glissandi at will.

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters spend a great deal of time delineating, identifying, naming, categorizing, and otherwise overanalyzing the granular details of Stephenson's *Symphony No. 2: Voices*. This is a necessary step to unlock the hidden secrets held within. However, these granular details are just the words; they are not the story. Stephenson says, "The technical stuff is just a means for composers to get to an end. But if the technical stuff doesn't ever support the emotional stuff, then I don't do it."⁹² Stephenson is a storyteller, and the story of his *Symphony No. 2* is both deeply personal to him and universal to humanity. It is the story of a child navigating the loss of his mother. It is the story of a global community that always has the option to speak together with one resounding voice. If the performance goal is to honor and communicate the composer's intent, then it is essential for performers to fully embrace the stories Stephenson tells through this music.

Stephenson's music expresses a genuineness that is akin to his own spirit. He takes great care to align the music with the occasion, with the purpose of the commission, and with the character of the people involved with the commission. Colonel Fettig speaks about Stephenson's nature as a "humble servant" to the music community. Fettig says, "Just like the last movement of the symphony, 'of One,' I'm so grateful to have somebody who is so successful and so highly sought after in his profession, but to treat every opportunity the same. Whether he is writing for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra or writing for a high school band, he puts his heart and soul

⁹² Stephenson, interview by author, November 2020.

into every piece he writes.”⁹³ Stephenson maintains a sincerely optimistic outlook on the global community and lives that ideal through his work as a composer, and through his life as a son, brother, husband, father, and friend.

⁹³ Fetting, interview by author, December 2020.

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSION FOR USE OF COPYRIGHTED MUSICAL EXAMPLES

STEPHENSON MUSIC, INC.

February 24, 2021
James M. Stephenson
Composer/President/CEO: Stephenson Music, Inc.
264 Park Ave.
Lake Forest, IL 60045

To: Myron Peterson
Master's Candidate in Wind Conducting Colorado State University

Dear Mr. Peterson:

In accordance with your request, I hereby grant permission for the physical or digital reproduction of excerpts of the score to my work *Symphony No. 2: Voices for Concert Band* as part of your graduate thesis entitled:
A GUIDE TO THE PERFORMANCE OF JAMES M. STEPHENSON'S
SYMPHONY NO. 2: VOICES FOR CONCERT BAND.

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Sincerely,



James M. Stephenson

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APPENDIX B: JAMES M. STEPHENSON INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

PART I

MP: In 2012, the Norris dissertation covered broadly, the trumpet music of James M. Stephenson. He did, I thought, a pretty thorough biography. So, any biographical stuff that we talk about, for the most part, would have to be 2012 to present, except this question that I think might be interesting. And that's what types of values did your family instill in your youth that you think that you carry with you today, that might apply itself in your work?

JS: I didn't expect that one. You are going deep right away. (laughs)

MP: (laughs)

JS: Well, what will probably happen is, I'll give you an answer right now and then like a half hour from now, I will say, "Wait a minute. This is—"

MP: We can totally do that. You can also e-mail.

JS: I can tell you that I grew up in very much a—not a total 1950's household, but kind of. Dad was doing all the work, and Mom was home most of the time. Finally, when we all left home and got our own lives going, she would start volunteering places and finding more things that she actually wanted to do that was put aside for so many years. So, most of my conversations that I recall are what my dad would tell me. Mom was always in agreement with Dad no matter what he said. It would only be every once in a while, she would sneak something in there and I'd be, oh, hey, Mom, nice to get to know you a little bit.

The things that I remember very distinctly are just a sense of discipline, was a big one. A sense of hard work. It kind of goes along with discipline. Being patient. My dad hated instant gratification. He hated it. And it's just something that's even more of a thing today, right, as we all know?

MP: Right.

JS: Other values I think that maybe they didn't talk about, but I just grew up with were a real interest in people, other people. Trying to be fair, always thinking of the other side of the coin—if you are going to make an argument, you are going to consider that the other person might have a different point of view, a different story before you even make that argument.

Certainly—gosh, like I said, there's going to be more. I just remember my dad—my dad founded his own company. A lot of times I would be riding in the car, and he would be telling me his frustrations about things he thought he was doing for other people and things that they just didn't get. You have 200 employees, and they are complaining. And he's like, "You know, I created this company and you're working because I created this company, and I'm doing the best I can for you. You know, there's 200 of you I have to consider," that sort of thing. All of these things have found their way into my being one way or another.

One thing that was not a big part of my childhood, which is something that I still—and will probably come out the more we talk, is there wasn't a ton of, "Hey, I love you" in the family growing up. I felt it because they supported everything I did. It's very important to say that. From the get-go, I had a trumpet placed under the Christmas tree when I was ten, and any interest I had in music, going to camp, going to Interlochen for high school, going to summer music festivals when I graduated from college. College was expensive, all of those things. There was never, hey, we can't afford this, or hey, that might be a really risky business to get into; you might reconsider it. It was always, Jim, you go for it. But there was not a whole lot of, oh hey, love you, see you later, that kind of stuff.

MP: Sure.

JS: It was just more of a support kind of thing.

MP: Yeah. Just a side note, but what was your dad's business?

JS: He founded—if he were still alive, he would hate the fact that I can't exactly say it, but it was pretty high tech. It was—let's say it was high-speed data acquisition. He would come up with hardware components that could measure things traveling at a very fast rate of speed.

So, if you might imagine, NASA has what they call a superconductor and they throw these atoms around in one of these big tubes. He would have invented the device that could tell what was happening to those atoms as they spun around that tube. That was just part of his—NASA was one of his clients. He had a lot of clients over in Europe. And he invented some things that I can't even describe what they did. But he invented automatic bowling scoring before Brunswick discovered it. Unfortunately, Brunswick patented it before my dad did. My dad built a synthesizer. My dad built his church's electrical organ. So, all these things—his business was the stuff that I don't understand. But music was his passion, which is where I got it from.

MP: That's very interesting. Okay. Wow! I read the one about his invention of a synthesizer, so I had that one in the back in my mind. But the bowling, that's a huge bonus.

JS: Yeah, if he had gotten the patent, you know, I might be talking from Stephenson Bowling headquarters instead, but—(laughs)

MP: (laughs) Maybe.

So, let's just turn a little from that side of your family to the side that you have now. Can you speak a little bit about the family that you have there in your household and how their importance might affect your work also?

JS: Well, we have four children. We have three girls and a boy. The boy is the youngest. Our youngest is a junior in high school. So, we're almost empty nesters at this point. They are very close in age, which was incredibly hectic when we were younger. My wife is a violinist. And we met playing in symphony orchestra in Florida. So, for a long time our lives were raising four children, who span six years. So, you can imagine that it's a lot of diapers. And we're going to work playing in symphony orchestra. And it gives me a headache to even think about that time in our lives. It was insane. I mean, now that we're coming out this side of it, it's really cool that

they are close in age and they are all very much in touch. And those “I love yous” that didn’t necessarily happen in my childhood, they happen a lot in our close-knit family here. A lot of that is credit to my wife. She’s a lot more open about that sort of thing. I’ve had to learn how to do that. So, I credit my wife for that.

You know, there’s certainly the occasional fights here and there. It’s a loud house because—or it was when they were all here. It’s four children. And music has been a significant part of most of their upbringings. Our oldest played violin and went into a business career. She still plays in orchestra. She’s living in the Netherlands, so she’s found some orchestras to play in. Our second daughter is actually studying composition at Boston University.

Our third daughter is doing her thing, writing—like, she’s a singer-songwriter. She’s studying film in college, but she’s a singer-songwriter and kind of finding her way through Tik Tok and YouTube and other things that kids do these days. She’s doing really well. I mean, I’m incredibly impressed with what all of our kids are doing.

And our son is probably the one who is the least musical. I think he wanted to rebel against what his sisters had grown up doing. He kind of put away the tuba early on, saying, “Nope, I’m not interested.”

MP: That happens. As long as they find some passion in life, right?

JS: Yeah. Exactly.

MP: How has their presence in your life impacted your work, do you think, or shaped it, or how does it work its way in?

JS: Well, I mean, two ways that are probably not going to be the answer that you expect, but one way is that, when we left our careers in the orchestra for me to become a full-time composer, there was a very real reality. It was very real that I had to figure out how to pay for this. And so, four children, it was a very expensive existence, and so, it inspired me. I mean, I think I got this from my father, maybe from my mother too. But like I said, she really didn’t tell us much.

I never looked back once we left our jobs. My job was to now figure out how to make a living as a composer because of all of our expenses and needs. So that inspired me to work my butt off even more than ever. So that’s one way.

Another way is that my kids, who aren’t as firmly grounded in classical music as I am—even though my daughter is now doing composition—when they were growing up, they were all about the radio and all about singer-songwriters and making up their own songs. And it’s sort of—I can tell you many times—I am sitting upstairs in my house right now and our piano is downstairs. And I would hear my daughter, or both of them, coming up with their own stuff downstairs. And I’m like, man, that is really beautiful; I like that. And I’ve got to remember that these things are very appealing, and it’s important that you write music that people like to hear. Or we’ll be driving to school and listening to the radio and they are listening to some tunes and I’m like, that’s got a great bass line. Why can’t I do that in classical music? That sort of thing. So I would say that having the kids around, it certainly provided me with that other insight too. It doesn’t mean it has to be of any less intellectual quality. You can do both, I believe. And that’s what I always strive to do.

MP: Are there any other biographical landmarks since 2012 until now that are really noteworthy for you, for your career?

JS: I mean, in recent years, having music played by some major orchestras and certainly the Marine Band and major bands. And now I just finished a ballet score for San Francisco Ballet. So, these things are constantly challenging me to up my game and dig deeper and find more within myself.

On a personal level, my dad just died about seven months ago.

MP: Oh, I'm Sorry.

JS: So, I've actually recently written a piece about him and that relationship, which stems from my approach to the Symphony. So, there's a lot of digging deep going on, a lot of self-awareness, a lot of just learning, just always trying to learn about myself and then trying to see how it will find its way through my musical voice.

MP: Yes. Sorry to hear that.

JS: Thank you.

MP: So just out of curiosity, what form will this piece take that you were speaking about, that you're composing now and processing your father?

JS: About my father?

MP: Yeah.

JS: I've already finished. It was supposed to be premiered this November.

MP: Was it for orchestra or a band?

JS: Ten-piece wind ensemble. It was supposed to be premiered in about a week, but with everything going on with COVID they decided to move it to next spring. I decided to write about my experience growing up with my dad and some of that support that I mentioned earlier. And I decided also to take down some musical barriers and not care about styles and things like that. And I'll tell you why. Because, first of all, it's called *as the fireflies watch*, and that's because one of my earliest memories of my dad was playing catch with him in our backyard. And we would do it on a June evening or July evening. And it would get darker and darker. And I would just say, "No, let's keep going." And he, even though he was incredibly busy doing his company and everything that and I come to find out later that a lot of that was very stressful, would play catch until it got dark and the fireflies were out. And so that's my memory of just, "Throw me another one. Throw it higher," that sort of thing.

And then as the piece goes on, it's four movements with solo tenor also. Tenor and chamber ensemble because my dad was a tenor. Every instrument I chose in the ten-piece ensemble had something to do with him or with me. He played saxophone and bassoon in high school. He was a piano player. He had a jazz band. So, I got bass and drums in there. I played

trumpet. And there's tenor. I can't remember what else I had. A flute. My mother played the flute. So, all of these things represent my family.

And there's one movement it is just total pop song. Very much like Broadway-feeling kind of thing. And that's because my dad, when he would come home from work and sit at the piano, he would just play show tunes and play pop songs. And so I decided to write. And all the text is my own; I wrote the words. I wanted to go there. It was just like: This is going to be how I feel about my dad. I'm not going to hold anything back. I'm not going to try to protect myself or worry about what other people are going to think. I'm just going to just write it, write about my dad. So, I wrote all of the words and put whatever style of music I wanted to put in there. Tried to make it representative and meaningful throughout. I haven't heard it yet, but I was happy with what I wrote, and we'll just see what happens.

MP: I'm excited to hear that myself.

JS: Yeah, me too.

MP: Hopefully soon.

JS: I think in April. So, I have to be patient.

MP: Is there a particular composition of yours that you that you might cite as a turning point in the success of your career?

JS: Yeah. I guess the obvious answer would be my Symphony.

MP: No. 2?

JS: Yeah. That's the one that seems to get the most attention in the concert band world, wind ensemble world. And what is interesting to me about that is that it was only after I revealed why I actually wrote the piece. I didn't tell anybody it was about my mother for about two years, and I didn't even want to. But once I told Colonel Fetting, he's like, "You've got to tell everybody that." So I started telling. What I learned was that people resonated with that, just like you said recently.

MP: Right.

JS: I'm a little bit reluctant to show all of my emotions like that because—this is going to sound weird, but I find that to be arrogant to do that, to assume that my emotions might be even important to anybody else seems wrong. Or it seemed wrong to me. But now I've come to learn through the symphony that there are people who appreciate knowing that sort of thing. So, I would say that was a big—it's interesting to say—turning point, because every piece I write, to me, has just as much meaning as the Symphony. Every piece has just as much stuff in there that I think if people want to discover, it's there. So, that being premiered at Midwest and being played by the Marine Band, and then people finding out that it was about my mother, they resonated with that. People have become more interested because of that.

Interestingly enough, it was scheduled to be played a lot more and in some important places when everything shut down for [COVID-19]. I think there were probably 10 or 15 performances waiting to happen, including Carnegie Hall, including Symphony Hall Boston, including over in the Netherlands, including Tanglewood in the summer. And now I'm just, well, are people still going to be interested? I don't know.

But to further answer your question, I think another turning point was when I wrote my first trumpet concerto, which was for solo trumpet and chamber orchestra. And it was the first time in my life where I was writing a piece for a specific person who challenged me, who said, "Hey, I want you to write this piece, and I want you to do this. You know, I've heard your music. I need you to step it up a bit. I need you to do this. I want you to do this." So, I did that.

It was played by a really fine group in Boston. I was down in Florida at the time. I sort of felt this extra pressure to try to write something that the musicians would find enjoyable and meaningful and all of that. And so those two things went well. And the press liked it; I got three really nice reviews.

And so those three things together gave me confidence to think, hey, maybe I do have something to say in this world. But it doesn't matter. Every new piece is a new challenge. It doesn't matter what you've done in the past. You've got to step up every time.

MP: I think also in the Norris-2012 you talked about your compositional voice. And there's a pretty nice list of composers, specific composers, and how they influenced your own voice. Are there any new—post-2012—additions to your influences, your voice? Or how has your voice changed?

JS: I would say I've certainly become more confident in my own voice, for sure. But I know I'll say that again in ten years. I'll say, "Hey, I think I'm in this place now and I feel really good about it," and it will change ten years after that.

I would say in 2012, I really didn't know anything at all about the wind ensemble, the band world, I really didn't. I've written some pieces for it. In the eight years since then, I've been to a lot more concerts. I've written a lot more pieces for wind ensemble. And I've learned a lot from composers writing for wind ensemble. Even this year I was judging for the—because I'm an ABA member now because of the—I guess it's because of the Symphony, and now I'm a voting member and all of that sort of thing. So, I had the privilege of listening to the 60 or so compositions—I don't know how many there were. I had my little group to listen to. And the writing is so good. It was so inspiring. I don't know how much of that the conductors will devour when it comes out. I didn't know to what degree you might find out all of the finalists or final twelve. Oh, my gosh. They are such good pieces, all of them. And I found them to be really, really inspiring. I couldn't wait to listen to the next one. Oh, my gosh. I became a student. I wasn't a composer making a living at it. I was a student trying to learn from all of these composers, and it was really cool. So that's always going to happen. Everybody, I'm just going to be influenced by everybody I hear on a daily, monthly, yearly basis. And I'm still a curious composer. So, I don't know if I said that in 2012. But if I didn't, I was then. And if I did say it, I can say it to you again, that I still am a curious composer.

You might already know this; but I sat in my trumpet chair in Naples, Florida. And it was when my wife sort of posed the idea of leaving that job. And I said, well, I could sit here for—I got the job when I was 21—I could sit here for 44 years and then retire, everything would be fine. I'm living in beautiful Naples, Florida, hardly every wear long pants you know. It's shorts

every day, go to the beach, play a concert, and all of that stuff. Or I can see on the other side of the fence and try out this new thing. So, I quit when I was 38; you did 47.⁹⁴ That's pretty impressive. But as I'm sure you would agree—I don't know, I don't want to put words in your mouth—but it was very eye-opening to me to realize that, wait a minute, I can do something else. I don't have to just do one thing in my life.

Which even now this means I can—if I wanted to quit composing—I know that I could probably find something else and that would be okay, you know? There's no law that says I have to be a composer until I'm 85, whatever. I love doing it. I'm going to set the record straight that I have no plans on quitting. But if I did, it's not the end of the world.

MP: There's comfort in knowing you could—you can do other things and experience other ways and be okay. On a related question, what are your thoughts in general about the contemporary composers and contemporary compositions?

JS: Well, I'm always just really interested in the craft being used for the right reason. I'm not a fan of toys. I'm not a fan of, oh, this is cool. I'm not a fan of doing things because it's a fad. I'm a fan of the craft being there and being used to deliver something that has depth; I like music that makes the audience feel smarter rather than dumber. I think we've all been in concerts where we hear something, like, I have no idea what's going on here, and I feel really stupid and I don't know why. Then we go to concerts where it's just stunning and the composer, or theater, or playwright, or artist, they do their craft in such a way that you're involved in it, you feel it, you understand it. Their skill level is certainly above what you could imagine, but they are presenting in a way that invites you in rather than pushes you away.

I know that that imbues everything I write. I'm not saying that I am incredibly skilled at what I do. I'm always trying to learn and get better. But it is always the number-one task, is to invite the audience to be a part of it rather than to—I can do this; I don't care if you don't understand, you know, that sort of thing. So that's how I approach listening to music. And I'm immediately attracted to the composers that are following that path.

MP: Both from a research perspective, and just from a human perspective, I perceive your willingness to share your emotions, and the background of the piece as giving, not as much as arrogant as you spoke of earlier. I think it relates to what you were saying about wanting to involve the audience. Your willingness to share helps bring people into the music. In my opinion.

JS: Well, I'm still a work in progress. You know, I think we all are, and I self-reflect all the time. You know, as I said, in 2016 and before that, all of this stuff is in the music if you want to come get it. It's there for you to find. I wasn't going to tell you about it. I would like you to like the music. I wanted you to appreciate it. If you felt compelled to dig in, then that would be great; it's there.

And since 2016, where I'm a little bit more comfortable saying, Hey, this is what it's about. If that finds relevance with you, it's all there for you, but I'm giving you a heads-up. We'll see how that turns out. We're all different and that's just where I'm at right now.

⁹⁴ “You did 47” is a reference to the age at which the author made a job change. Stephenson knew this from previous conversation.

MP: Of course, Symphony No. 2, I know for sure, have the NBA recognition and the ABA recognition. I can tell you're not someone to toot your own horn so-to-speak, because there's really no mention of that in your CV or on your website, or very little.

What other awards, recognitions, grants, that sort of thing, are hiding out that you might have received along the way?

JS: You're not going to find much.

MP: Okay.

JS: I actually just applied for a grant and they asked that same question. And I'm like, you know—first of all, I won the Fanfare competition 20 years ago. I've been—

MP: Is that at Dallas?

JS: No, I don't think that one existed back then. It was for the Florida Orchestra. It was actually called *An American Fanfare*; it was my first piece for a band. Somebody heard it and said, "Hey, why don't you write that for band." So that might be why I'm sitting here talking to you today because of that.

I've won a couple residency kind of things, artist colony kind of things. But I'm not going to try to give you a reason why. I don't apply to very many, for one thing. Oh, I had a CD that was Grammy-nominated, but it wasn't really because of my music. The CD was all of my music, but it was Grammy-nominated for engineering. So, I don't know if I can take credit for that or not. I can say that I have a Grammy-nominated CD, but I wasn't (inaudible). Although the engineer was very nice. They were like, "Look. We wouldn't have done our job the way we did it if it wasn't for your music." But honestly—that's about it.

I honestly don't apply to very many, but I also—because I've never been part of the academic track—I don't even know about half of them. I'm usually so busy writing that I'll hear, "Oh, man, the deadline was last week."

MP: And this one is only open for people from this age to that age; that one is for people a year younger than me.

JS: Yeah. And I started composing full-time at age 38. And a lot of those things were quickly out of reach for me; you have to be 35 and younger, or that sort of thing. I've made a conscious decision not to get wrapped up in awards and that sort of thing. Sometimes things happen to me that are just unexplainable and don't seem fair. You can either dwell on it and have it take up way too many hours that you could be doing more productive things. So that's where I'm at.

MP: What do you think is important for performers to know about your music?

JS: Gosh. Well, I've covered some of this. You know, definitely I would want them to know that everything is in there for a reason, and everything, if they want to study it, they're going to find something. I'm a very big fan of putting little Easter eggs in there. Not just tricks; they are all in there because they support the music. So, conductors should know that. Performers, I understand this because I used to sit in an orchestra, we have our own job to do; we may not have the time to

dig into a score and find out what something is. We just want to be able to play what's on the page. We are worried about that; is my high A going to be sharp, stuff like that.

Whereas conductors, I think that is their job, to impart the wisdom that they glean from the score and supply that information to everyone who's playing it to heighten the performance. So, I would love for conductors to know that it's all there if they want it.

When I write my music—I've only grown comfortable saying this really in recent years because I thought I shouldn't admit this—but I really do think about the audience. I think about the players. I think about the conductor, of course. I think about the librarian. I think about even the administrators. I think about the person who commissioned the piece. Every note is written with those people in mind because we're all part of it. A lot of pieces have to come together for this piece to exist. And, first and foremost, I'm thinking about myself, of course, because I want the piece to reflect how I feel about life and how I feel about the music and all of that.

But everything else, especially performers, they are the ones really putting their necks out there, playing under the hot lights. Spur of the moment someone might throw them weird cues, or they might have taken a faster tempo or something like that. Somebody might have just coughed. Somebody might have shifted their seat back there. All of these things can happen. So, my job is to make sure what I put on the page provides as much information and comfort, whatever is possible, so they can do their jobs. I think about all of this stuff when I write, I really do.

MP: For Symphony No. 2, a specific question. The title, *Symphony No. 2 – Voices – for concert band*. I think both parts of your program note, the first part and the second part, speak well to why you chose the word *Voices*. What about the other parts of the title, Symphony No. 2? Was that a conscious choice to use the symphony moniker and then the term concert band also?

JS: I didn't call it wind ensemble? Did I call it concert band?

MP: In the score it's "for concert band."

JS: I think that's because the Marine Band was certainly not a wind ensemble playing it, were they? I know they have a lot of clarinets. Well, anyway. The symphony was certainly because I think of a symphony as a milestone for a composer. It's something you don't just sit down and spit out a symphony. It takes a lot of time. And the title itself implies that there's a lot of meat in there and it's a serious piece of work. And I guess the question might be, you know, is a three-movement piece that goes slow, fast, slow, is that a symphony?

But when I talked with Colonel Fettig, we were trying to come up to the decision as to what this piece was going to be. It lasted several months. We had many conversations where I thought I would be writing something patriotic, or I thought I would be writing something based on Norman Rockwell and we would have images on the screen and all of this sort of thing, because this is a United States Marine Band, let's do something like that. It was only after those didn't really appeal to me, and having written Symphony No. 1, which I had learned from by writing it—I know what hits and I know what misses with that piece—that I felt that Symphony No. 2 was something that should happen. So that's where that comes from. Does that make sense?

MP: Absolutely.

JS: The concert band, I don't want to dwell too much on the whole concert band, wind ensemble thing, because I think I simply called it a concert band because I knew that it was going to be a big group on stage playing it.

MP: So, the sky is the limit. Carte blanche: If you received that commission, carte blanche, any medium, any anything, is there a piece you really want to do, you have an idea for? Is there just really something musically that's in you and you want to get it out?

JS: Absolutely. I would either want—I'm interested in serious projects. I don't want to write too many fanfares anymore. I don't want to write too many fill-in-the-blank three, five-minute kind of things. So, for me I would love to continue the symphony trail. I would love to write an opera. And when I say "LOVE" that's in all caps. Because I've discovered, especially now having just written a ballet score—and then, again, maybe this started with writing the piece about my mom, the Symphony—I discovered that I am really comfortable and enjoy and inspired by telling a story. My music goes somewhere I would never otherwise find unless I was telling a story. Because I sort of, like, give up; I let go when somebody else is giving me the trajectory of it. I find that really compelling. Anything that's a story. So that could be more ballet scores. That could be an opera. Even if it was a musical, theater music somehow. Anything where I get to add my voice to another narrative, I'm all about it. Sign me up; I want to do it. That's kind of where I am right now.

And that doesn't mean I don't want to write a symphony, because I think a symphony is a place where I can discover that narrative within myself. But I would probably have in my mind somewhere where it's going. I wouldn't make up a fairytale, but I would make up some sort of journey. Yeah, big pieces are what I'm interested in.

MP: I'll throw one more out there. What are your thoughts on the future of wind band in general?

JS: I have one big thought. And I think, especially because of what I just heard in the ABA competition, I think the other areas of music should pay more attention to wind band if they are not already. What I'm hearing is so compelling and so interesting. I love writing for all. I grew up playing in orchestra. Orchestra is my baby. I've only discovered wind ensembles in the last ten to twelve years. But I hope that wind ensembles somehow find more of a place in the public arena beyond just being played in conservatories and colleges and universities. Because, especially with what I've been hearing lately, oh my gosh. I have so many friends in the orchestral world. And I don't know if they'll ever hear me saying this to you, but—what was your instrument?

MP: Trombone.

JS: Trombone. Maybe this is the same for you. But when you grow up as a youngster playing—I was a trumpet player; you're a trombone player. If you audition the best, what ensemble do you get placed in?

MP: The orchestra.

JS: The orchestra. If you go to a conservatory—for me, I went to Interlochen, maybe it's not the same situation everywhere—but when I went to Interlochen for camp for seven summers and then high school, if you were considered one of the top three or four players, you got placed in the orchestra. And then the next ten get placed in the wind ensemble. And so, what happens to those orchestra players? What do they think about wind ensembles? They think they're lesser. They are not as good, right? And believe me, from my years of playing in orchestra—and I think they would admit this too—that's still how they think of bands. They are lesser than orchestras. I would invite them to go hear some of our fine military ensembles and college, university ensembles, and they might have a different opinion. And then they would hear the music and they might say, "Wow! I wouldn't mind playing some of that." And there's some really good stuff out there.

So that's my opinion. I hope—whether or not I'm a part of what moves it into other areas or whatever, I hope that the general public somehow—and I say this at the worst possible time because right now none of us are performing during the [COVID-19] era, but I hope somehow more of it gets heard.

MP: I appreciate your time a great deal. We'll talk again soon and dig in on *Symphony No. 2* specifically.

JS: I look forward to it. Take care.

MP: Likewise. Thank you.

PART II

MP: When I am writing—rather than writing every time it comes up, *Symphony No. 2: Voices*, is there a preferred, shortened version that you like? In my drafts I tend to write *Voices*.

JS: I think as long as you stated at the outset that it's *Symphony No. 2: Voices*, and then you start casually referring to it as *Voices*, that's fine. That's even what I've noticed when I was traveling around, is that people would just call it *Voices*. And I'm like, wait—oh yeah, it's that one. I think it's fine. Actually, I say my second symphony, to be honest. Because I don't—I don't really think of it as *Voices*. Or I'm coming to think of it as *Voices*, now that other people say it more. Let me put it another way. I don't assume that other people will know what I'm talking about if I just say *Voices*. But, of course, if people are saying it to me, I do know what they are thinking about.

MP: Do you have any other primary source documents related to the piece? Like early sketches, if you ever wrote melodic ideas or motives either on paper or electronically?

JS: That's a really good question. Nobody has ever asked me that. I have this—you can't see this [on our video call]. That's not the Symphony, but this is my little sketch book, it has all sorts of pieces in here. So, I would have to look—let's see. There's my third symphony. We're getting closer. Oh, there's my bass trombone concerto. Well, this is kind of fun. It's funny. I'm seeing

all of these pieces that—never mind. I won't even go there—pieces that I never even wrote. Okay. I can still pay attention while I'm – (shows notebook)

MP: Hey, look at that.

JS: Do you recognize that clarinet line?

MP: That's the start of movement 2.

JS: Yeah, there's the euphoniums—look at that. There's me writing out all the modes because I thought I was going to include all of the modes at that point. Because I'm not really an expert on modes, so I had to write them all down.

MP: Yes, I'd love all of this. And for future reference, what I've learned from our musicologists: don't throw those away, ever.

JS: Me, you mean?

MP: Yes. You. Historians want those.

JS: Well, I would never assume that. But here's my opening three chords.

MP: Nice.

JS: The three—What's the word I'm looking for? Oh, look at that. My old thoughts. Okay. Yeah, I have them. I didn't know I had those. Thanks for bringing that up.

MP: Victory. Yes, if you are willing to scan those and send them.

JS: Sure.

MP: You mentioned last time also that there were a couple of reviews that you received, although they might have been as much about trumpet music or something. Two you have in your bio or on your websites, quotes from two reviews, one of which I tracked down the original source. The other one from the *Boston Herald*.

JS: Oh, so not about the Symphony?

MP: Correct, just about you, in general.

JS: Oh, yeah, yeah. I think that paper has gone. The *Boston Herald*, maybe?

MP: I think it was the Herald.

JS: One of my better reviews. I mean, that was almost 20 years ago. But it was such a nice review, especially at the time.

MP: You don't happen to have a copy of it, do you?

JS: Oh, gosh. Maybe. Maybe. It depends. This is 2003. So, anything I have would've been like an old e-mail address, like AOL probably. But somewhere—somewhere I probably have the newspaper articles, but we're not nearly as organized as you would hope! I'll look for it.

MP: Great. Any of that would be great documentation to put in a paper, even as an appendix.

JS: It's funny because, you know, last time we talked about how—that was you I talked to about not winning many awards, right? And I honestly haven't gotten a ton of reviews, in general. And I think it's because a lot of reviewers are just not working anymore. You know, that whole business—unless you're applying in a major city, you don't get a review in the Des Moines Register or the—probably even the paper where you are. It just doesn't happen.

MP: Last housekeeping question is an easy question. All of your score covers are really great. Is there any extra significance to the cover, to this image, blending the photo with the sound wave image?

JS: Yeah. I found that picture of the mountains and the trees and recognized, of course, as so many of us have seen, the sound wave effect. And when we speak, we create sound waves and so I created that on my Mac. And, it's not original. I think I've probably seen that idea somewhere. I wanted the mountain scene because the piece—it was supposed to be big and grandeur and all of that sort of thing. It resonated with my image of the music. And then the second part is somewhat obvious with the sound waves.

MP: Do you remember what the sound waves were? Does it happen to be part of the song?

JS: No, it's—I don't remember. I don't think it's anything specific. Although it could be the first—it could be those big shout chords at the beginning, like (sings a sound). But it's not.

MP: So, I have been reading some of the other dissertations that are out there and listening to the Mark Connor interview and things. It seems to me that your creative process and your commission process are really pretty interwoven. Could you talk about your creative process and talk about your preferred commission process. Maybe that's just one question.

JS: Well, with the exception of last Saturday, I very rarely—I can only think of a few occasions where I sit down and write something that I'm not commissioned to write. So, my process is making whatever I'm commissioned to write. You know, sort of bringing in the machine, you spin it around, and then you put your voice on it.

Last Saturday I wrote a piece based on the election. I wrote a kind of impromptu fanfare for democracy. And it's a brass ensemble fanfare. It literally was a beautiful day here. It was 70 degrees. We had just found out the results of the election. And you just walk outside, no matter what side you're on, and there's just sort of this sigh of relief that the whole thing is at least showing some closure. Great weather. And people were out. And we went out and had lunch. We had a beer. And the whole time I'm hearing this fanfare in my head. And I'm like, I have to write

this. So, I wrote a brass ensemble fanfare for democracy that day. And I actually sent it to Jason [Fettig]. You know, I said, Hey, any chance you guys might consider this for some big occasion coming up? And so, we'll see what happens there.

MP: Very nice.

JS: All I have to say is that that was a very rare occasion where I did something just because I felt like I had to, for my sake, write it. Did that answer your question? You were asking --

MP: Creative process and commission process, how they typically work for you.

JS: I mean, every commission is so different. Everybody has their own set of circumstances. I'm always talking with people. Whether it's e-mail or something like this, I'm trying to figure out what makes them tick, why they are wanting this new piece, what their personality is. And from that comes sounds in my head and then that becomes the creative impulse for whatever happens next. But each piece ends up being totally different.

Although this Symphony, I guess that's a very good question.

Jason had said, "I need a big movement in case something might be done—stand alone." Well, that's after we at first had thought it would just be something American. We talked over several months about—it just needs to be something big and American. And we tossed around the idea of doing these Norman Rockwell pieces. Because I had some in my house, maybe I could write and show images on the screen and my big sweeping music.

And then right after my mom died is when it became a very personal piece. So, it went away from the Americana idea. And then Jason had said, Hey, we need a big movement, if you don't mind. Once we decided it was going to be a symphony, he said, let's do a big movement. That became the second movement. So that was inspiration for the nine minutes of crazy intense stuff. But then the personal stuff was the inspiration for the rest of it.

So, in that case I dug inside. I wasn't using a conversation with somebody else. That was a piece that became very important to me. Just like the other piece I sent to you, *as the fireflies watched*. That was a case where—actually, it was a big deal because she, meaning Catherine Rand, who commissioned the fireflies piece, she gave me permission to write whatever I wanted, even though it's for their hundredth anniversary. Which normally might be, hey (indicating) for a hundred years. But she said, no, it's okay. If you want to write something personal, we're good with that. So that allowed me to write that piece about my dad.

And especially, also given the circumstances of being a pandemic, I had to write it for a smaller number of players. And all of these things come together.

MP: Yes.

JS: It just makes we want—I wish I could talk with every composer ever out there, you know, back from 1780, whenever, it doesn't matter. Just, ask what was going on? What made you write this piece the way you did? I think it's how we all work.

MP: The historians, musicologists, are doing that—and that's why you keep your sketch book, because somebody later is going to want to figure out the things that haven't already been figured out about your pieces.

JS: Maybe. But then it could be like my dad's case. I mean, he died in April and his house was just filled with so much stuff. And we had one week to clean it out because it was selling. So, who knows. If there are historians looking for his stuff, we had to get rid of so much stuff because we had to get it out. And we had no room to put anything.

So, I'll send you a few pages. And that might be all—if I die tomorrow, that might be all that's left. A kid will just come in and throw it away and, like, who cares about that.

MP: I'll scan the whole thing and send it back.

JS: Okay. (laughs)

MP: (laughs) OK. Well, shall we just tear into it a little bit? Can we talk about the unifying material and then maybe each movement separately? But if we get sidetracked—just going where it goes is fine.

So, what I'm temporarily calling the voice motive. I don't know what you want to call it, but the 5th and the half step. What do you call it—what would you call it if you were calling it something?

JS: I wouldn't call that the voice motive. That's hard because are you talking about the voice as a singing voice, or are you talking about the voice as in the piece? So, you might have to call that motive something else—because the singing voice has a different motive, I think.

MP: Yes. Good point.

JS: So, voices—maybe the voice motive would be the 5th and the half step. And then there might be the singing voice motive. Or just the voice motive, which I think I have as, you know, (sings notes), that whole thing.

MP: Yes. I'll refer to that motive differently for clarity. What other unifying material do you feel like you've planted intentionally in all three movements? There's one that starts with a repeating pitch and then kind of chromatically descends. That appears fairly regularly.

JS: Where is my score? I've got to think about this. Certainly—well, because the first movement ends up being a lot of just prelude material, some of that stuff just doesn't get repeated as much as stuff in the second or third movement. I'm trying to think.

The thing I just sang, with the voice (sings notes), of course, that gets (sings inverted notes). That's the same thing but flipped. So that appears certainly in two and three. You know, the fifth and second is so huge because not only are those intervals used, but it's the keys of three movements as well as—it's the keys of the coda that happened in the third movement too. (Music sounds) Cymbals? Wait. Do I do cymbals in the first movement? Probably not. I don't think I did. Do I do cymbals with the big chords? I don't even remember.

MP: Yes. In the first movement, yes.

JS: So, you might say that cymbals, in groups of three, are prevalent in all movements. Yeah, because even (sings sounds)—Then at the very end I think there's a final three on the last page (sings sounds) Or does it happen four times? Go to your last page. How many times do I do cymbals?

MP: Let's see. Across players, there's three on the very last page. One each in three different players.

JS: Right. Yeah, so all of that stuff is on purpose. I don't want to force anything. I think that's about it. There might be others. I wish I had my score nearby. Oh, wait. There it is. If you get to know me better, you will find that I don't always remember everything that I've composed. When you start getting into the 300-piece territory, you kind of forget. But this is a big one, so I should know.

I think—what was the chromatic thing that you were talking about?

MP: Yeah, the first time I see it is on page 4, right at the end, going into page 5. And then I do find things very much like that in other places.

JS: Yeah, it certainly happens in the second movement which was very intentional. And I don't remember offhand where it is in the third movement. (sings sounds).

MP: Three, page 75. Sort of. But then it's not quite the same.

JS: No, but that happens somewhere else. There's a reason for that. I can't remember. But I do think when I do that whole chromatic thing, I think, is related.

MP: Any other overarching, unifying material or concepts that are important to be documented, do you think?

JS: In the third movement? If you look at letter G is where I see it, where I think the coda really starts. That's in the key of G. And then at letter H, it's in the key A-flat-minor. And letter "I," finally it's E-flat. That's the biggest moment of the piece. If you think of those intervals, G to A-flat to E-flat, it matches also the keys of movement one, movement two, movement three, which also match that whole interval structure that's prevalent throughout.

MP: So, you consider G as the start of the coda?

JS: Yes. It's definitely G for me because you have so many things happening simultaneously. You have the voice motif—singing voice motif—and the trombone. You have the interval motif in the low instruments. And you have the opening euphonium line in the harp. And you have the interval motif in reverse, in the euphonium. And then you have the heartbeat in the mallets, which—yeah, that's—the heartbeat being important because it's like my mother is telling me that life can go on without her. So that's why the heartbeat sort of starts—not sort of. That is why it starts right there. There are so many things going on at the same time. And then all I do is change keys and add more instruments from that point on. That's all I do, in quotes.

MP: Right!

JS: That was a challenge, I've got to say. Trying to draw out this thing that builds from letter G to the end and trying to figure out the way to orchestrate it so that it continues to grow—it has to grow over probably two minutes of music or a minute and a half from that point out. I remember struggling over that a bit.

MP: Since we're talking about movement three. Right up-front, the euphonium theme or the euphonium melody. I don't know if we want to call it a "theme" per se. How did you derive that? It seems to have a compilation of fragments from other material.

JS: Yeah. First of all, I remember thinking, all right, I'm going to make this really obvious with the intervals. Well, first of all, I remember thinking, all right, the euphonium hasn't had a big solo yet. And usually if you just—from my knowledge of euphoniums is, they're the ones who can recover from a rough beating the easiest. Because that second movement, the second movement is pretty hard-core. And so, I give them the solo, knowing that they could play something like that relatively easy. And then I do remember trying to force that interval motive into the opening. And I was like, you know what? It's just not working. So, I make it a fourth (sings sounds). And then the last one is the fifth going to the E-flat. That worked for me. And then after that, of course, it is the voice motif. It's the same music that she sings in B-major, but it's just written in a different key. And then after the euphonium starts, I thought it would be cool to have that low tuba euphonium chorale together, because that's always such a beautiful sound.

MP: Yeah, all the conicals.

JS: Yes.

MP: And there is the idea that starts with one repeated pitch. Two before A (sings sounds)

JS: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MP:—and then different intervals. But in the first movement, there's maybe three of the same pitches and then it continues chromatically down.

JS: That might have been on purpose. I can't say. I don't remember. We should have done this interview right after I wrote it. Where were you?

MP: Funny. I was probably between bells teaching high school.

JS: The important thing for me, with all the tuba euphonium chorale, was the counter point; giving everybody something to do. Making everybody's voice important. You know, it is clearly the first euphonium solo. But then as it moves on, everybody has little moving parts and has a voice of their own, something to say.

That is totally where those triplets—that's exactly what the alto sax plays. And then the tuba. I'm talking about the alto sax at bar 25. The tuba, bar 27. Flutes. Tenor sax. Trumpet, trombone. And then I start augmenting it. Trumpets, trombone, in 31, upper woodwinds 33. And

then finally the bass drum gets the last death blow in measure 33. Because that's what I call it, whenever I'm conducting it, because they never play it loud enough.

MP: Okay. I'll pencil in more Fs.

JS: I figured one F would be enough, but it never is.

MP: And then things like measure 29–32 in the euphonium, the big jump and then the descent?

JS: Yes. Once we start writing a certain motif, at least in my case, they are going to find themselves coming back over and over again, even if it's just hinting at it. I mean, if you look at measure 3, you know, what the celesta and woodwinds are doing (sings sounds). And then all these half steps that either rise or fall. That's almost exactly what is happening in that other part that you're talking about. And then it finishes with the fifth. So, it's all there. It's all part of the same DNA strand.

The main reason for it is, I'm trying to express that feeling of crying out. And hope, filled with loss or (sings sounds), you know, it's just—it's a little bit distressing, a little bit yearning and sad.

I will tell you, the quasi-gliss lines in measure 33 with those huge 20—what do you call a 20-tuplet?

MP: I think I'd call it a 20-tuplet.

JS: Do you have a score that those exist in euphonium as well? That wasn't my idea at first. I think it was Jason or somebody who said, no, euphoniums can do that too. So, we threw that in there. And I'm so happy it's there because you can hear it just a little bit. Like throughout the mess, you can (sings sounds). And I think it's the euphonium line.

MP: And three times, it looks like; 33, 37, 38.

JS: Of course.

MP: What else comes in threes that people can look for?

JS: Oh, I don't know. I would just say that if you find anything, it's there for a reason. It's not happenstance.

MP: Absolutely. So, in my idea of the form, I sort of find an ABA. But I guess I need to just reconsider that given your earlier mention where that coda starts at G.

I sort of have sections divided at—beginning to 33—movement 3. Beginning to 33, And then 34 to 46. And then F starting at—I have to rethink—

JS: I think B to D as just kind of, just more development. It's always repeating itself. It doesn't really—. Then I start throwing those triplets in there that we talked about. I'm sort of just looking and I'm searching. And then D is a big moment. I don't know. It's still really kind of developing there too. I can't really give this an ABA.

MP: Through? Do you think of it as through-composed?

JS: Yeah. We have the opening and introductory solo, tuba quartet. And then I gave an oboe solo. Well, then we have a voice, four or five bars there. And then the oboe solo is, again, an instrument that I didn't feel had been featured enough. But, again, there's so much going on. It's just like all of this dense material underneath. It's not really—it just feels like it's still developing at that point.

So, I would say, yeah, you've got the opening, followed by that short reminder of the voice theme. And then it's just trying to find itself. It's trying to get to that resolution, growing in anger, growing in anger. And then we finally get it at F, certainly, and then coda G. That's how I think of it.

MP: So, listening to you—one of my questions was, how do you define form? And that probably is different per piece. But in this case, it sounds like it's really about the thematic development?

JS: Yeah. The form of the piece was sort of decided for me. Because Jason had said they want that stand-alone movement. And I knew that I needed to write something about my mom. And so that second movement—what became the second movement, I just felt like I had to say something profound, if I could. I didn't know it when I started the piece, but I knew I had to try to figure something out. So that's why—I was like, well, what if I did slow, fast, slow. That's how that was decided. And then the second movement, which I wrote first. You know all of this, right? I wrote the second movement first?

MP: Yes.

JS: I mean, it's really not a rondo but that darn thing keeps repeating itself—measure 78 (sings sounds).

MP: Movement 2?

JS: Yes. I remember when I was writing, I had done it so many times. But the middle section of that second movement became super important to me, the chorale thing, which then allowed itself to repeat in a bigger form. That was huge. I was able to do that chorale in a huge thing. So yeah, the form kind of reveals itself to me as I write. Does that make any sense? It's important for me to repeat things. I think listeners appreciate that. And then it's—for me—it's just figuring out how much can I repeat something and still do fresh material and make it interesting. I never repeat anything verbatim, especially since this is concerto for wind ensemble, in essence. I try to give everybody something to do because everybody deserves their own voice.

MP: So, it sounds to me, regarding form, it's more: Does this—does this just actually work?

JS: Yep. And I have written a ton of sonatas. And I guarantee you that I don't fall into sonata form. Not that I have to. But somebody might see that and think—expect something. Yeah, music for me has to be—what's the word I'm looking for?

MP: I hate to put one in your mind, but organic?

JS: Thank you. Perfect.

MP: Can I quote you on that?

JS: Yeah, of course. You quoting me. Quote me quoting you. Absolutely has to be organic. Because to me, I think an audience can sense that. There's a sense of discovery. Because I'm discovering as a composer as I'm writing, and I think that transmits to the audience.

Now I want to be clear. I do go back and correct things that I don't feel work right. Because we get these big moments as composers. Oh, I've got to get that down. And then you go back to it. Wait a minute. I didn't even prepare the audience for that big moment. So, then you're going back and fitting in 12 measures here, or whatever, to make that work. So that happens in every piece. But at the moment, I'm just like, let's go, you know, and then I fix it later.

MP: Brilliant. So, looking further at movement 2—since that is the—what are you calling it? The big movement? Is that what Col. Fettig was asking for, was—

JS: He wanted something that could potentially stand on its own.

MP: So just as a side question, you don't mind if one movement gets—that movement—gets performed by itself?

JS: I don't mind, but I think you're cheating an audience. Because I think the third movement is so rewarding. Sorry. It sounds like I'm bragging, but—I think there's so much to be had, listening to that third movement. I'm sad if somebody only does the second movement.

I think I had intended to just sell the second movement on its own. I might have even done that initially, but I don't do that anymore because I want to encourage people to do the whole thing. So, let's continue into the second movement.

MP: So obviously—maybe—do you think the most fitting way that I can talk about it and write about it is to dispense with any sort of form talk and just talk in sections of the music?

JS: Uh-huh. Yes.

MP: So that, actually, is freeing. Thank you.

JS: Glad I could help.

MP: Absolutely. The rhythm in the intro, the percussion—

JS: Yeah.

MP:—I haven't figured out a source for that. Everything has a reason. So how did you arrive to that rhythm?

JS: I don't know if this was in any podcasts you might have heard or interviews, but I wanted to get—it's purely just the effect of the people whispering. And when it's performed, I insist that the cymbals players are one stage left, one in the middle, the other stage right so that we get the effect of gossiping or whispering from around the stage. So, the rhythm is an attempt of that sounding somewhat random.

By the way, if it's not in your score, make sure you correct it, that the cymbals should use brushes and not sticks. Then it's soft dynamic.

MP: pianississimo

JS: Yes, it just says pianississimo. It doesn't specify that they should be using brushes.

MP: It does not. Okay. I'm penciling that in.

JS: Every time I show up somewhere and I start conducting that movement, and they are using sticks, I get reminded that I never fixed that.

MP: That's huge.

JS: It's only the soft spots. And then when it's louder, it's definitely sticks.

MP: Okay.

JS: But it's relatively obvious except for the fact that I didn't notate it.

MP: So B, it goes back to brushes as before?

JS: Yep.

MP: Another question. The theme that—do you call it a theme, the clarinets have at A?

JS: Sure.

MP: When you were creating A, was that an original—I'm going to write an original melody here, or is it also derived from some other seed that you have?

JS: No, it was completely original. Again, forgive me if I've already told you this or you already know this. But my original intent with this movement was to represent the entire world. Did I ever tell you that?

MP: You didn't, but I read it in, I think, the Townsend dissertation.

JS: Well, I was going to try to write based on seven continents, which I eventually gave up. But that's what gave me the idea, to put it in 7/8. That's what gave me the idea to make seven-bar phrases. And that's what gave me the idea to start this—I don't know what mode to call it—but

to start it on the seventh scale degree of F-minor. So that's why, all those things put together, the rhythm, you know, I knew it was going to be a fast piece, 7/8.

So, you've got—I love cross bar rhythm stuff that Stravinsky would do. I try to come as close as I can. So, all of that went into—that's why the marimba has (sings sounds), but the bottom note is not the tonic. It's the seventh scale degree, which is a favorite trick of mine, by the way. I do that in so many pieces.

Yeah, I was really excited when I came up with this little tune, actually. I thought it was really cool. And then to have that open, the hollowness of the flutes, which are, of course, the 5th. Which if you add that to the E natural, which gives me my favorite little interval technique. But, yeah. (sings sounds)

What I love about this is that it's not that hard for the clarinets, as I thought it was going to be when I wrote it. The flutes have a harder time than the clarinets.

MP: The flutes doing the pedal point?

JS: (sings sounds). Yeah. (Laughs)

MP: I won't make any flute jokes here.

JS: Yes. So basically, the seventh scale degree of a harmonic minor scale is a pretty cool sound. I'm going to use that again someday when enough time has passed.

MP: Okay. So, movement three, the voice (sings sounds) is ascending. So, you inverted it from this movement—at C, I think, is the first time, then, that we hear that?

JS: Yes. Well, if you look at C, it's actually going both directions.

MP: True. True.

JS: First trumpet has it in the real direction, and then the second cornet has it going up.

MP: And you are calling the “down” one the real direction for this movement?

JS: Yeah. When I hear it in my head, I hear (sings sounds). I hear that, but it's certainly representative of C going both directions. But, yeah.

MP: Okay. And so, the second section, if we're talking just in sections, you would say starts at C? Or would you say B?

JS: No. You have to give C a section because that's the first time of the shout. You've got to love that chord at C, though, man. Thank you, Bernstein.

MP: Measure 64, the six note grouping in the bass. That concept makes frequent appearances. Often, but not always—seems like it's two of the 5ths and half steps motive put together, but in this case with some whole steps.

JS: I would call that, actually, two groups of—I wouldn't call those six. I would call them groups of three.

MP: Two groups of three?

JS: It's actually three eight against seven eight, which happens a lot in this movement. And it takes seven measures for that to work itself out. So that's all on purpose. I'm out at six measures. Wait a minute. (sings sounds).

MP: Yes. And it comes—yeah, at E.

JS: Yeah, it happens 14 times. So that's two times seven. (sings sounds) it happens 14 times.

MP: If you think of them as—if you think of three notes?

JS: Which is how I think of it. Because if you look at—yeah, that's how I think of it. Because it's changing—because it drops a step each time.

MP: Right. And then it returns.

JS: Yeah, I know what you're saying. But I do not remember thinking that it was a group of six.

MP: Okay.

JS: Because later on we have other $3/8$ things, $7/8$. So I know that was a consistent effort on my part. Especially if you look at how the bass clarinet and contrabassoon pass it back and forth, it's all part of the $3/8$ versus $7/8$ stuff.

MP: Okay. And how much, if any—I don't want to force things—is the shape of that, though it's not exactly the same as the 5^{th} /half step. Is there any relationship in your mind?

JS: Oh, completely.

MP: I mean, what is it? Tritone, whole step, then 5^{th} and—

JS: Yeah.

MP:—whole step?

JS: Yeah. I probably tried it. I'm guessing I tried it with the true intervals first, and I didn't—to me—if you put a G on a down beat of E, suddenly it sounds like G-minor. And I didn't want it to sound like that. So that's how I propel music forward, is by putting little question mark notes in there and make it not answering the question.

MP: Yes. Okay. H, I, J, K.

JS: By the way, the second bar E, in case you're wondering, those little saxophone licks are there because of how the first movement ends. Are you a saxophone player?

MP: Trombone.

JS: But you're fingering like you know—

MP: I taught a high school band for 23 years. I can keep up with a pretty good seventh grader on saxophone.

JS: Awesome. Eighth grader, you're out of your league. But seventh grader—

MP: Average eighth-grader, maybe. But the good ones definitely should be ahead of me by then.

JS: (Laughs.) So, I'm guessing that I didn't know how to end the first movement at some point. And I borrowed that little lick to give to—it's in the saxes, right?

MP: Right.

JS: Yeah, if you look four before the end of the first movement, I'm pretty sure—I'm not pretty sure; I'm positive that I stole from myself.

MP: Re-appropriated.

JS: Yes. If there's ever a champion of re-appropriation, it's me. It makes composing so much easier. You're like, what shall I do here? I'll just steal it from myself.

MP: It's called unity, bringing unity, to the piece.

JS: You said it; not me. I don't know what you're talking about.

MP: Absolutely. While we're on that little riff, it seems like you use that also with trombones, something very similar but through a gliss.

JS: Uh-huh.

MP: Not that that's right on the exact moment of topic, but does that represent anything, is it symbolic of anything?

JS: With the trombone, particularly?

MP: Yes. And then, of course, you know—especially glisses are—

JS: Idiomatic?

MP: Yeah. It's so different than anything else. And it's like, I'm going to use one here and it's going to mean something. I don't know.

JS: I mean, if you think of a scherzo, which I kind of think of this movement as. Does it even say in the beginning?

MP: I don't think so, no.

JS: But I think of this movement as a scherzo in 7/8. But, you know, that sort of implies that there's going to be—I don't want to use the word “cute,” but—

MP: Jovial? Whimsical?

JS: Whimsical is a good word, yeah. And a muted trombone doing that kind of—it just allows for that. I give them glisses and other character, too, later, where it's (sings sounds), that sort of thing. But, yeah, look, nobody else can do it, so why not let them do it. Although I do have the symphony doing it. I'm kidding. And the horns do their rips. But, yeah.

MP: So, I think of H, I, J, K, in my mind as a section.

JS: Before we go there, make sure you look at letter F, just to amplify my 3/8 versus 7/8 topic. You know, look at what the basses are doing versus what the trombones are doing. (sings sounds).

MP: That's such a great phrase. I'm glad you bring that back, three times.

JS: And you notice that F—I am answering the question a little bit. Now it's forte, whereas before we were softer. So, I am going ahead and putting a solid G in the bass, at least on the downbeat, to sort of say, yeah, we're in G-major here, whereas before we were at G-minor. But I didn't really let you go there because F-sharp the bass. So here where it's loud, I sort of answer the question. When it's soft, I propel the music forward.

You were asking about H?

MP: Kind of defining sections a little bit. I think of those four as a section, and L as a transition.

JS: You know the story behind L, right? H, I, J, first of all, are like concerto for wind ensemble in its true form. I'm just passing the theme around, letting different people show off their stuff, but it's always orchestrated differently.

But at the same time—the whispering is growing in the cymbals. And actually takes over. When I conduct this, I tell people: Look, by the time we get to K, the cymbals are running the show here. It should be annoying us at that point because they're forte, with the sticks (sings sounds). The poor cornet is trying to play that (sings sounds). You know, all of that stuff is on purpose.

So, letter L, there's a story about, which is actually how I first used to introduce this piece, is that I—when I wasn't talking about writing about my mother, because I hadn't wanted to talk about that yet—that I heard people in there laughing.

MP: Right.

JS: Letter L is literally the laughing part. So “L” is for laughing. And you’ll notice that every section, except for the percussion, gets to have their chance at the little laughing bit (sings sounds). Every instrument in the ensemble is a different shape, different size. It represents different people, no matter what they look like, laughing. So that’s what that is all about. It always—whenever I’m performing this with a group, whenever I tell that story—they immediately play L differently. They sort of identify with me and, oh, okay, we’re important, you know?

MP: Yeah, I can see from the player side of it. Before knowing that, almost like: I’ve got to nail this really meticulously.

JS: Right. But if you just (sings laugh sounds), gives me this freedom to play it.

MP: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

The chorale, obviously, is its own section. The whole of the work is, you know, slow, fast, slow. Movement 2 by itself is fast, slow, fast if you consider the chorale in the middle.

JS: Right. It has two little slows, because the chorale comes back. The grand chorale. That’s fast, slow, fast, slow, fast. W is marked in cut time. So, it appears fast, but it’s a chorale, right? So, it’s slow.

MP: Yeah, that’s true. I guess I didn’t think of it as—I don’t perceive that section as slow, W, although that chorale is written in a rhythmically elongated way—out of necessity in cut time.

JS: I mean, it doesn’t last long, but you can’t categorize it in the same sentence as a scherzo. I mean, it’s definitely different material.

MP: You come up with some great words, “stentorian.”

JS: Well, I think I Googled—although stentorian comes from the name of a trombone quartet I know. So, I knew that was a word. But I definitely at one point Googled different voices so that it would inspire me to put different sounds into this piece. I don’t think stentorian was one of those, but other things appear.

MP: I looked it up; it does have a voice-related definition.

JS: Stentorian?

MP: Yeah.

JS: I don’t remember what it is off the top of my head. I’m Googling it again. “Stentorian,” of a person’s voice, loud and powerful. That’s the first thing that comes up.

Backing up, there's a lot to talk about in the chorale. Probably since we have to wrap up for now in three minutes, we don't jump into that yet, I'm guessing.

MP: Fair.

JS: It was really fun writing that chorale because I was really looking for a different sound world, if you will. And combining the human voice with the flugelhorn and later with French horn and flutes and other things, it allowed me to do that. And, of course, not using text.

MP: Right.

JS: Jason and I joked about letter Q. Not joked, but he—when he first got the score, he was like, I thought that was so cool how you were able to fit all of that 7/8 material into 4/4 time. And that was a headache. I mean, it doesn't—it's not exactly what happens in the 7/8 time, but it was a real headache trying—I remember actually having to compose to make that work.

MP: It's awfully darn close to the 7/8, though. Obviously, you have to re-beam and such—

JS: Well, I think it is. I'm just talking about the notes and like the intervals. I couldn't do the same intervals. I had to—

MP: Finesse?

JS: Harmonically finesse things, yes.

MP: So, yeah, actually, let's just—we'll just hit pause there. And you're traveling soon, I think you said?

JS: I'm leaving tomorrow. I'll be gone for just three days. And then I will be writing—I get to write a band piece for the Air Force Band. Yes, they want some big sort of flashy closer that—five- or six-minute closer—that we can record and play at every concert and have the audience go wild. So those are my directives.

MP: A perfect Pre-Thanksgiving project.

JS: I think it's due by December 1st, so wish me luck.

MP: Okay. Good luck.

JS: All right. Cool. Thanks.

MP: I really appreciate this. This is a lot of fun.

JS: My pleasure. Look, this is a lot of fun for me, too. See you soon.

MP: Talk to you soon.

PART III

MP: So, in our last conversation I was so intrigued by and appreciative of all of your insights on specific sections, so I thought—whereas, we were jumping around last time—that maybe we would start back at the beginning and see if we can eventually meet up with where we left off last time.

JS: Yeah. It's funny, my score is still the first version, there are things missing that I later corrected. I find myself, when I'm conducting it, "Wait a minute." Oh, that's why, because it wasn't in the first edition. So, lead on.

MP: Maybe we should start by talking about the movement title "Prelude: of Passion."

JS: Yeah, that's exactly what you think it is. I mean, I was looking for phrases that followed the word "voices." So, you have—voices "of One" at the end, and the middle movement are things that sound like voices, "Shouts and Murmurs." And so, you have voices "of One" at the end, and voices "of Passion" at the beginning. I don't even know if that's a phrase, but it sounded like one to me. Is it a phrase?

MP: If it wasn't, it certainly is now.

JS: And, you know, it matched how I felt.

MP: That's the most important. So, in the beginning we have the three big chords and—I don't know what you want to call the moments in between.

JS: In between the chords?

MP: Yes.

JS: It's just exactly what it sounds like. It's just, there's a loud event and then just mumbling, murmuring, like "what just happened" kind of thing. Whisper soft in the clarinets and saxes. So, it's purposefully written to be very—almost non-structure. What's the word I'm looking for? Almost a random sound. There isn't much—other than just (sings murmur sounds). You know, total murmuring going on between the chords.

I do remember the struggle to change each chord each time so that by the time we get to the third one, there's at least a glimmer of hope. I think the third one is a little bit more tonal or brighter or whatever. By the way, those chords don't have names. I don't know if you tried to analyze them, but, it's kind of like a diminished chord on top of something else; you know.

MP: Yeah, I figured some sort of polychord—

JS: Yeah. I mean, the D-minor against E-flat-minor, that's on purpose. So, if you look at the piano part, that kind of outlines what it is. And then I just voiced it after that. So, you have the E-flat-minor and then D-minor hidden on the top chord. And I remember trying to decide what

might be the best top note or other note to throw on there. But even though—in piano, it's a B. And that's not actually the top of the chord, you've got the piccolo way up an F.

MP: Then measure 12, page 8. Just from a conducting standpoint or compositional standpoint, why 8/4 as opposed to two measures of 4/4?

JS: Yeah. I just wanted to fill a page with music. No, I'm kidding. Why did I do that? Let me see here. I know the reason. Oh, man, I bet if I had more time to think about this—I mean, the easy answer is that I wanted it, you know, to feel like that one continuous—I didn't want anybody dividing it into two bars of four or something like that. I just needed it to feel like one big gesture. Let me think about this. I don't have a good answer for you other than just creating that sort of expanse, right?

MP: Sure. That's a great reason, actually.

JS: Have you discovered—have you analyzed what the scale is I use yet? I'm trying to figure out—does it come from—

MP: I did. I wrote down here, let me look—

JS: See, now I'm proving to you that I'm not theoretical—I must have based it off something.

MP: I write down the term G-major-minor. So, the lower tetrachord looks to be from G-major and the upper tetrachord is from G harmonic minor.

JS: Oh, yeah. That's—yeah, like a major minor—or—you know what I think I did? I think that it's supposed to hint at E-minor. I just leave it out, the E. I change the E to E-flat in the scale just so it wouldn't sound resolute. And then to emphasize that E-flat, I put that in the bass instruments at the end of the bar—all the time.

MP: Yes, in timpani, left-hand piano, tuba, bass.

JS: Yeah, that's totally it. It's an E-minor scale with E-flat because it's in the bass. So, you don't ever get to—because if you look at the chord in the cornets. They play in E-minor triad, as do saxophones; total E-minor on the downbeat. And then I just throw an E-flat in the bass and I match that in the scale. All right. Moving on.

MP: Okay. So, we get through that intro material. And then we're into the next section, I guess you would say.

JS: The Andante?

MP: Yes. Is there anything you want to add about the music from C to E before we get to the Andante?

JS: I mean, it's just—it's just my typical—well, I wanted to clear the air, of course, first of all, from all of that crazy stuff we had been enduring up to that point. But even so, I don't ever let you rest. It's in G-major, but, doggone, if I'm not going to put that F-sharp in the bass.

MP: Right.

JS: Just to keep you from thinking that we landed anywhere. You know, a side note, the horns' chord in second bar of C seems tricky to hear, that can be a common place to chip a note.

MP: Good disclaimer. Is there any particular symbolism in this phrase, something you are trying to represent or depict, or an emotion?

JS: Just trying to set up the voice's first entrance. So probably symbolic that I use a cornet to lead into the voice the very first time, because that's my instrument. (sings sounds) so it blends right into the voice. And then, of course, D is the first time we get our famous interval. Even though it was written last, it's the first time I introduce it in the time spectrum of the piece. And I wanted it, of course, to sound haunting. That's why we have our marimba doing what it's doing. This takes us into the E. (Sings sounds) Everything about this is just me trying to be as haunting as possible. The scoring of the alto sax entrance, to me, had that almost noir character to it. The fifth of the E. Everybody hovering around—sort of a G-minor feel (sings sounds). So, I'm still looking at a score that has alto clarinet playing at an E. Your score probably doesn't have that, right?

MP: No. The alto clarinet is resting in my score, correct.

JS: I first put that in alto clarinet. And then I showed up somewhere and they said, "This isn't going to work too well." Or Jason just said very nicely, "Would you consider putting that in the first clarinet?" It's in the first clarinets.

MP: Yes.

JS: I will tell you that I encourage people, in performance, to play with the tempo of this movement as much as possible; perhaps even more than what I've put in there. Poco agitato can be more agitato. And just more push. You know, it's a passion. It should feel of the moment. It should swell. It should come back. It should just be unpredictable, manic at times. I've said this in several interviews—do you know the story behind the letter F in the trumpets?

MP: It doesn't ring a bell. You should tell it again so it will be in this transcript.

JS: A nice pun there with regard to trumpets—rings bell. Well done. Yeah. So, the trumpets are all friends of mine. The principal trumpet of the Marine Band, Kurt Dupuis, and I have been acquaintances and friends since college. He went to Boston University; I went to New England. So always been in touch with him, you know, especially through Facebook and whatnot.

And about a year before I wrote this piece, they were in rehearsal in D.C. and it was one of those cold days where the pavement sort of ices over. And he had forgotten his mute in

rehearsal. (This has nothing to do with my piece. This is a year before.) He had forgotten his mute in rehearsal. So, he runs out to the car, to go get his mute, not recognizing that the pavement had iced over. He slips and lands on his elbow and basically shattered—to be honest, I don't remember if it was his right arm or left arm—but it shattered his arm from his elbow to his wrist. So, for like three months he was in this kind of position, with a cast on (indicating arm up at a 90-degree angle). You know, pictures on Facebook with this big old cast and you can't play, of course, and all of that sort of thing.

So, the reason that trumpet one is open and trumpet two is muted, because I didn't want Kurt forgetting his mute again and having to run out to the car and break his arm again. And so, you know, that was kind of just a fun nod to my friend Kurt. But it also kind of creates a unique sound. And I always tell that story when I'm in rehearsal. And when I'm visiting groups, they get a kick out of it.

MP: That's a great one.

JS: So, the idea is that trumpet two is supposed to be, actually, the strong—I didn't mark this correctly. Trumpet two should be the stronger of the two. And the trumpet one—because I like that nasally muted sound—with trumpet one just sitting on top of it. But that's the story behind letter F.

MP: Okay. Actually, I see the dynamic under the trumpets indicates that too.

JS: Oh, it does in your score?

MP: I've got piano for the first trumpet and mezzo piano for the second trumpet.

JS: Oh, yeah. So glad I changed that. Good.

MP: I have to ask—I've been trying to think about this. The double bass line that starts in measure 32, feels like and seems like it is something – significant. It comes back, in terms of the order of pitches, at G.

JS: Oh, I'm playing around with—this whole movement has been flirting with—it starts in E-flat and then there's G-major. So, I'm simply flirting with those two keys that I've introduced. Does that make sense?

MP: It comes back, as I mentioned—the pitch order is the same but different rhythm. The metric rhythm it the same, though. Four counts of D-sharp, two counts of G, etc.

JS: Well, that's just because the line, you know, the pizzicato just matches what the line is doing in the clarinet. (sings sounds).

MP: Right.

JS: (sings sounds) so the pitches are landing on the final note of the clarinet line.

MP: And then when it happens at G, tuba and double bass, it's not really going with that line anymore. But I guess the metric rhythm has already been set, I suppose?

JS: Yeah. Well, now I'm just getting—I want it to be pulsating. Is that what you're talking about?

MP: Yeah.

JS: Letter G? Now kind of—if you ever study any of my music more beyond this piece—which I'm sure you'll be sick of Stephenson after this piece—I rarely will do the same thing twice. One of my early conductors—my first conductor, when I started composing, I gave him a score, and he told me this metaphor about a magician. He looked at my score—and I was probably 25 at that time—and he said, “You know, if you went to a magician's performance and you pulled a rabbit out of a hat,” he said, “All right, everybody. Here we go. Pay attention, you know. Here's my rabbit. Now watch this one. And I've got another trick for you.” He does this. And if he pulls the exact same rabbit out of the hat, you're not going to be very impressed, right? “I saw that one already.”

And that story always stuck with me. So usually if I repeat something—and I think most composers do this—there's going to be a different rabbit coming out of the hat.

MP: Absolutely.

JS: So, you've got to change your rhythm, try to make that part a little bit more psychotic at G. Do you have—do you have D-sharps in the bass?

MP: Yes.

JS: Yeah. I remember doing that on purpose because, you know, the whole goal of this piece was to start with E-flat and not get to E-flat until the end. Instead of writing E-flats, I wrote D-sharps. (laughs)

MP: (laughs) Just to throw off—

JS: Just to make sure I wasn't putting too many E-flats in there.

MP: Cover your trail?

JS: Yeah, exactly.

MP: Last time we talked about the vocabulary word “stentorian.” Is there any, you know, any reason to choosing the word “psychotic” here?

JS: That's just a means of trying to influence the way that it's played. I always have to get people to sound a little crazier in this section. It's—it usually comes with me getting the percussion to just be a little bit (sings sounds) louder. And the cornets need to be louder (sings sounds). Very

rhythmic, like a soldier, doing this sort of thing with a clown's face. Be like a nightmare, that whole spot, or like you're watching a Stephen King movie with a clown in it.

MP: Thank you for that image.

JS: Welcome.

MP: I sort of indicated for myself—this may or may not be the way you think of it. I would like to hear, from 48, G, from psychotic, all the way through 77 as sort of a larger identifiable section.

JS: Oh, sure. I just wanted to—it's—I'm sorry to use the word "crazy." That's probably not PC. It should just be, you know, moving, pushing, pulling, the audience along for a ride. And then, you know, it's kind of development sort of thing. There's little bits of—hints of other material throughout the piece. You get from point A to point B., just taking us on a wild ride. So that when we get back to—what did you say, 77? When we get to J, you know, we're in a different place, even though the material is very similar to what we had before with letter B or C.

MP: Right.

JS: Now we're still in three, and I switch around to the movement of the voice in the English horn and the bassoon. I switch it around a little bit; but, you know, we should really feel like we've been through a ringer and now we're back to where we were, but things are a little different.

I do remember now. One of my favorite tricks—I steal this from Beethoven—where you suddenly drop a third. It's one of my favorite things he does. This big moment, big chord. You think you've arrived and then he'll just go, nope, bang. I'm dropping the root a third. And what you thought was the root is now the major third. And it's a really great trick that I just love that he does.

So, I do remember that letter I, if not sooner, there's a reason we're oscillating on all of these Bs. (sings sounds) I mean, that happens a lot.

MP: Yes. And B, you've got that B pedaling from basically 60 until after K.

JS: I knew that eventually I was going to be arriving in G-major. But you're thinking that B is our fundamental, and then suddenly we're back in G. There's this different sort of release by doing that. You see that lastly in the bass clarinet. The bass clarinet going into J and (sings sounds) hovering on a that concert B, that's when the voice comes in, we're now in G and that bass clarinet B becomes a third. So, all of that material leading up to J is just me preparing for that drop of a third like Beethoven always does.

MP: Backing up for a second to 48, specifically at G. I've been visiting and re-visiting the tonal center there. I wrote in my score G-question mark and B-question mark.

JS: Good luck. Well, I mean, you could—I just glanced at it. It looks like quasi B-major. Because if you look at piano, you know, it's a B chord with a D-sharp in the bass. But if you

look at the horns, they've got—you know, if you always consider the D-sharp being the third in the bass, the horns outline the rest of it. Yeah, fine. That's great, but—yeah, that would make sense.

Wait a minute. Hold on. Hold on, everybody. It's been a long time. Just bear with me. All right. I think what the woodwinds are outlining, if you look at their main beats—if you agree with me that beats 1, 2, and 3 are—let's just call it F-sharp A and D.

MP: Sure.

JS: If you—okay. So put that in your right hand, you have a D-major chord—

MP: Yes.

JS: Now look at my first shout chord of the piece. And if you look at the right hand of the piano, it's D-minor. Forget the B, all right?

MP: Okay.

JS: Forget the B. On the right hand of the piano, the first shout chord, that's D-minor. Let's change it to D-major. And that gives you the notes that I'm oscillating on. (sings sounds). And then if you look at the left hand of the piano, in the first shout chord, you know, it's an E-flat-minor chord.

MP: Yes.

JS: Yeah. So, I'm just taking that B-flat, in that E-flat-minor chord, and moving it up a half step. I've moved the F natural up a half step in the right hand, and I've moved the B-flat up a half step in the left hand. And that's how you end up with the harmonies at letter G.

MP: Okay.

JS: Nobody is ever going to hear that, right? But that's just where I get my inspirations. What am I going to do with the woodwinds? Well, what can I do with that first chord? And I'll just oscillate around it.

MP: Right.

JS: Thank you for forcing me to remember why I did that.

MP: (laughs) So, I see where those ideas are coming from. Does that override what you said earlier about saying it's sort of in B-ish overall?

JS: I mean, think about it. A D-chord on top of a B-chord, no matter how you invert it, is basically a seventh and a sharp nine. Sorry. I'm geeking out a little bit, but...

MP: Yes. I see a B7-sharp-nine, too.

JS: So that's exactly right.

MP: Okay. Great. I can take one of the question marks off of my score. It's B

JS: And then psychotic, I give the cornets something else entirely different.

MP: Yes. The soldier-esque thing?

JS: They are in E-flat. A-flat-minor, E-flat-minor (sings sounds). I'm happy we rediscovered that. I never would have remembered that. And like the B, just going over it, I do remember that the Bs—the oscillating B stuff was going to have to result in the drop of a third in G. That's why I did it. And the whole B7 with a sharp 9, however you want to call it, it's all there on purpose. And I remember looking back at my first chord and thinking, I can make this work. There you go. On to the next.

MP: That's great. Anything else in the movement that bears symbolism that would be good for others to know when they perform this someday? And the trombone glisses—I feel like there's something there. Like measure 55, 57, but I don't want to go force things, you know. Not specifically material, but more like mood or something?

JS: Yeah, that's supposed to be absolutely menacing, maniacal. I didn't put any words in there, but I like them a lot. It really adds a lot to the performance when they just really smear the heck out of it.

MP: And J and K, is there anything that you want to ensure people know about these areas?

JS: I mean, the voicings were very much on purpose, just to sort of exaggerate the character. I often ask the flutes at J to not use too much vibrato. So, I just want a sweet sound, but I don't want something with really wide vibrato.

English horn, I usually have to encourage them to lean into their notes a little bit just to frame that out. This is all technical stuff.

Symbolism?

As you know, the shout chord gets repeated one last gasp, pianissimo, in the upper woodwinds after K. I prefer without retard. Does your score have a retard in there?

MP: It does not.

JS: I can't tell you how many times I show up in the first run and everyone does a retard. I prefer it out. It's almost like we've been through this entire chaotic nightmare and then we've just forgotten about it. So, I don't want it romanticized at the end, just (sings sounds). Done, you know. No—don't make a big deal out of it.

MP: No maudlin expressions here. Do you have a preference—intention behind how long to wait between movements? You think like the Holst in E-flat, when the material is so related from movement to movement, is like – bang – you just go.

JS: Probably depends on the ensembles, but it doesn't hurt to kind of launch right into the second movement pretty quickly on this one. I think after the second movement we need to breathe a little bit. We need to give it some space. But I don't think it should be attacca, but it can be relatively soon.

MP: Of course, the last—the flute, the piccolo, and bass clarinet line, obviously ending with the three notes – interval motive. Is that collection of notes or intervals a derived variation of something else we've heard, or will hear? The harp/clarinet from earlier maybe?

JS: Yeah. It's the same interval pattern. So, if you start on the third eighth note of letter E, for example. And then I just wanted to make sure I ended with the interval thing, that's all. Did we already talk about the saxophones continuing what happens in the second movement?

MP: Yes.

JS: I borrowed from – I'm saying I borrowed because I wrote the first movement last. So, I borrowed from the second measure of E in the second movement.

MP: I really like how the fifth and the half step motive—how you make that so pliable. For example, movement one, fourth measure from the end, celesta. I think—if you just look at the top notes: take the first three notes, that's the set of intervals. Then if you start on the second note and take three notes, that's the set of intervals. If you start on the third note and take three notes, that's the set of intervals.

JS: Yes.

MP: Sorry, that wasn't a question. That was just an observation: I love how you make use of the motive with such flexibility.

JS. And the chords are all the intervals too, if you re-spell them—

MP:—and allow for inversion—okay. I don't think I would have spotted that. That's great. Last time we spent some time in movement two, but we didn't necessarily talk about all of the movement, so let's turn that that. Would you talk about the chorales and any other symbolic elements that you composed into the piece?

JS: Let's start at letter O. I do remember that—

MP: Did you say O?

JS: Yeah. I do remember at O, I was trying to create those sound worlds, like the seven different continents, if you will. I was really having a field day with orchestration. I was really having fun mixing the voice with other instruments. So, voice mixed with flugelhorn. Of course, they are all doing the intervals. And then you have the triplets coming in, hinting at material that you

recognized before (sings sounds). At letter P, or right around there, you have the djembe coming in, which is sort of hinting at Africa. Not sort of; very much hinting.

MP: Very much so.

JS: And then you have the bassoons doing sort of a Middle Eastern harmony, just throwing them in there (sings sounds) just for two bars. I mean, these things just pass by. And this is while I'm mixing voice with flute and vibes.

And then you have the little marching band walk by, which is bar 189, the horns and the snare drum and cymbals. That's like—America got a lot of attention for—or North America, I should say. Because that's very American, a little marching band. And then we have a little jazz band that walks by. A tenor sax swinging. With jazz pizz all of a sudden and the suspended cymbal and all of that stuff.

Something for some other dissertation—I know I based that entire walking bass line on something. And I can't, for the life of me—I want to say it was the clarinet theme from the beginning, like I'm doing that in slow motion (sings sounds), but I can't verify that. This is one of my favorite sections of the piece. And it very rarely—it's hard to pull off, let me put it that way, for a band just to keep this overall—almost static music with all of these colors going off at the same time.

People get—like especially at Q, the bassoon and bass clarinet—get really excited about the fast notes they have. And I really just want to (sings sounds) stay relaxed and still. And they are all like (sings sounds), trying to get energetic with it. And I'm saying, no, just chill. We're relaxed. This is all really like you just smoked a joint. (laughs) You know, don't get excited. Not that I would know about that.

And you got the blending of the voice in the horn and the harp. But that's rarely heard, admittedly. But then bringing the cymbals back in. They start whispering back at 197. And from that point on it's just—the trick is how to get back to tempo.

I said it before, and Jason mentioned it too. I was proud of doing it, and he was proud of noticing it. But just getting that 7/8 stuff on top of 4/4 at Q is kind of fun. From this point on, it's kind of giving various people similar material, pulling different rabbits out of different hats.

Then we get to the big moment, stentorian at letter W, where it's pretty much all of that same material but now the suspended cymbals become crash cymbals. It was very important for me when I started with the suspended cymbals, with the brushes—

MP: Yes.

JS:—at the opening of a movement. I didn't want to be accused of just doing something as a trick. I hate when a composer is doing that. So, it was very important for me to even develop the cymbals. They go from whispering to—finally at W we have (sings crashing sounds), this sort of thing. So, they developed into something themselves.

And you've got the big tune in some of the brasses. You've got the opening clarinet motive in all of woodwinds. You've got the walking bass line in the low instruments. You've got the cymbals that have developed. With that being said, the actual climax is at 283 because, what's missing from letter W is the flute part, the opening fifth (sings sounds), all of that stuff. That's missing in letter W. But it finally happens at 283. The saxophones have it, and the bass

drum and snare drum have that rhythm (sings sounds). And, of course, it's double forte. So, don't let anybody fool you; 283 is the climax.

MP: Noted. 283 is the climax.

JS: Not letter W. And I don't think it's by accident, by the way, that that climax, it is a D-sharp. The walking bass is now, and the timpani on the low E-flat / D-sharp. And so, there's that.

MP: If people misidentify the climax, do they misidentify it in terms of starting at W as opposed to—

JS: Yeah. W is just so huge. You know, we finally arrive at this big thing. They haven't saved enough room to get to 283.

MP: Well, you told us in the dynamics also. So, the clue is there.

JS: I did.

MP: Do you identify X as the coda?

JS: Yes, X. It's a short one. One could be tempted to say it's earlier; but, no, it's X for sure. Again, there's tons of things going on at once at letter X. I'm sure you've identified them. But I want to make sure you identify the perfect fifth half step motif pyramiding in the low bass and up through the rest of the bass. It keeps repeating. And that is often not heard in performances, especially like the G coming in on the bass trombone and then the A-flat coming in, in the third trombone. So, I usually tell them to put little pings on those notes so it builds. Not only is it building in range, but it's also crunching in time. It starts—the duration of the pyramid notes get shorter and shorter as we head towards letter Y.

MP: Nice. Regarding the rhythm that you spoke to earlier, when we see it at Y (sings sounds), it sounds potentially like Morse code-ish. Is there anything there?

JS: No, just the same rhythm that the flutes did in the beginning.

MP: Yes. That's one of those things you wonder—maybe there's a hidden message, in morse-code there.

JS: A few pieces I use Morse-code, but this is not one of them. And I'm sure you noticed that it's a big battle at letter Y between upper low brass and lower low brass. You know, some of them are doing the intervals going up and some of them are doing the intervals going down.

MP: Yes, absolutely. And then at Z, I love that also, offset by a measure.

JS: Oh, yeah.

MP: On a personal note, I just got sad that we won't get to perform it this year due to COVID-19. I mean, I've always been sad about not performing it, but I just felt an extra pang of it.

JS: Yeah. Someday.

MP: Indeed.

JS: I'm sure you noticed that (sings sounds). As much as it sounds like Shostakovich, the brass in unison going (sings sounds) in measure 337. You know, that's just (sings sounds), from the clarinet theme at the beginning, right? The last three notes of the first measure.

MP: I notated it from measure 19 beat 3. It works in either place. Measure 15 or 19 beat 3.

JS: I see. Yes.

Also, I will give you a hint: Do not try to analyze the four bars going into F in movement 3

MP: Why's that?

JS: It's just all about voice leading and getting us to G-major. And it's not—if you try to analyze it vertically, you'll be in trouble. It's just a chromatic crumbling. And we finally arrive at G-major at letter F. And my goal was just to worry about everybody's lines and to have letter F be absolutely magical when we got there.

MP: Thanks for the hint. I'm sure you just saved me an hour or two.

JS: I knew all along, this movement—I'm on the third movement—being called "of one." My entire goal, it was like three things. It was. I needed to end in E-flat-major, and I needed to feature the wind ensemble of the Marine Band as a concerto for wind ensemble, if you will, because I wanted every single instrument to be represented equally.

And, you know, if you even step back from there and look towards humanity, we all different. We are all look different. We sound different. We have different shapes. And so, the entire piece, I wanted everybody to have their chance.

But I knew all along, being voices "of one," that I wanted them to also be in unison at some point. So that's why the last the ending is the intervals, of course, in the brass, in unison.

MP: (sings sounds.)

JS: Yeah. And with trumpets on top, of course, because they are the best instrument ever.
(laughs)

MP: (laughs) For unity's sake. And I suppose having every single player in the organization doing it would have just been too much?

JS: Yeah. Yeah. I think—that was probably my brass-player mentality taking over. But there is something to just saving that final chord for the last gas. If I had everybody doing the last three bars, the last chord wouldn't mean anything.

MP: Absolutely. Okay. Jim, I just love to have these kinds of conversations. And it brings me a lot of joy. So, I appreciate your time.

JS: It's my pleasure. Thank you. You've, obviously—you've forced me to unearth things about this piece that I had forgotten and so that is a nice walk down memory lane.

You know, I love these conversations too. I don't get to have them nearly as often as you'd think. You think that when we go have premieres with this orchestra and that orchestra or this band, whatever, you end up sitting down and having lengthy conversations about the meaning of music and life, and it just doesn't happen very much. This person is running this way; I've got a deadline; and I'm running this way, or whatever. And so, I appreciate these conversations a lot as well. And selfishly, obviously, because it's about my piece and it's kind of fun.

But I'm very appreciative that you're going—or you are doing so much about this piece, because I'm afraid it's going to disappear. I think all of us, composers, feel that way about all of our music, especially now when we don't know when things are going to get played again. Half of the time we're writing music and we're like: Should I be doing this? Why am I doing this? And so selfishly, the fact that you're spending so much time on this piece, means a ton. So, as much as you can, include the overriding reason for why I wrote this piece, or how I came to write this piece. You know, I think that's crucial. We've uncovered—talked about a lot of technical stuff, but the technical stuff is so below the emotional part. The technical stuff is just a means for composers to get to an end. But if the technical stuff doesn't ever support the emotional stuff, then I don't do it. It's got to be there for a reason, or it doesn't happen.

MP: Yes, absolutely. My goal is for this paper is to get to your truth. That's the goal.

JS: Good luck.

MP: All right. I appreciate it again.

JS: Thank you. Stay in touch, for sure.

JS: Absolutely. Take care.

APPENDIX C: COLONEL JASON FETTIG INTERVIEW

MP: Colonel Fettig, good morning.

JF: Hi. How are you doing Myron?

MP: I'm doing great—as great as can be expected during a pandemic, at least. How are things going for you and for the Marine Band?

JF: I'm in the same boat. Things have been really good in some ways, and in some ways it's been the biggest challenge of my career, just trying to manage the way that we have to perform and execute our mission, and try to keep everyone safe and healthy.

MP: I can only imagine the challenges. On behalf of a grateful nation, let me say thank you for your diligence to continue the mission and serving our country and its people through music. Also, thank you for taking the time to visit with me about Jim Stephenson and his *Symphony No. 2 – Voices*, which just for the record here, you were both the commissioner and the premiere performer, which took place at The Midwest Clinic in 2016, correct?

JF: Yes. And I'm very glad you are taking an interest in Jim and this piece. You know, when Jim wrote it, and I got it, I thought this is something that's really going to have some traction. It was interesting--It took a little while. It took longer than I thought. But, I think this has been the case with most major pieces in our repertoire that have become staples of the modern repertoire, especially the longer ones. The symphonies, you know, they haven't always caught on right away and I think part of the reason is because of the difficulty in programming. Not only the difficulty of the piece, but also just finding the real estate for it. And so, when you get a symphony—this is a short symphony, so it's not like a 35-minute piece like, you know, John [Mackey's] or Adam Schoenberg's--but you still have to build a program around it, versus a little six- or eight-minute piece that you can just throw on any program and it works. So maybe that's why it took a little bit of time. And also, there are some unique elements, of course, with the vocalist and other things.

But I was a little surprised that it took about a year before other bands started saying, hey, you know what? We should give this a shot. I'm glad that it's really caught fire now, because I do think it's a substantial addition to the repertoire. It's accessible both for the musicians and the audiences, but there is so much in there--as you've discovered—to find and discover for conductors and for players alike

MP: Absolutely. Is there anything else you want to share about the origin story that may not have come out yet?

JF: Yes. I'll probably be saying some things that are redundant to what Jim said. But from my perspective, Jim and I have developed such a wonderful relationship and a friendship, both personally and musically. It really started to develop prior to, and came to fruition with, the symphony. Because when I decided that Jim was the composer, I wanted to have him write us

this piece, and it was really centered around the Midwest [Clinic] performance and finding something substantial that we could add to the repertoire and feature and debut.

It was kind of a serendipitous moment because Jim was originally from Chicago. He lived there. They came back home. He was a composer with whom we had started to develop a musical relationship; a relationship between Jim and “The President’s Own.” I conducted one of his previous premiers that he wrote for us. And I loved his language; I loved what he was doing and how dexterous and how virtuosic he was in his language and the way he composed.

So, I knew he was exactly the composer that was going to give us something that I hoped he would deliver, which was a piece that, not only spoke to a wide range of people, but was a showcase for the organization, for the band. And it was also something that was constructed in a very intricate and interesting way.

There’s a lot of music that’s written for band these days, that it’s very beautiful, or it’s kind of mood music. It really hits you in a visceral way; and it utilizes the band in a beautiful way, but it doesn’t go particularly deep in its formal structure.

I just knew the kind of composer Jim was, he doesn’t write music like that. He writes music as visceral and emotional, but it’s always intricately constructed. I got that when I conducted and premiered his oboe concerto years prior. I studied that piece. I saw such a special quality in that music.

So that was what I was hoping for, and he delivered in spades with the symphony. I gave him the extra special challenge of saying: you can only make it 20 minutes long. He would have written a much longer piece, or somewhat longer, if he had that flexibility. But you know how Midwest goes; you get an hour-long program. I needed it to be 20 minutes so it could be the feature of the program, but I had other areas I could go in.

So, the essence of the piece was born out of that friendship. We got together in Chicago, a couple years prior, in 2014, which was my first year as director. This was my first big commission as director, and I offered him the commission. I said, I would love for you to write a piece. And at that point we didn’t know it was going to be a symphony. It was something that came to fruition later. But we decided it was going to be something he wrote. It was going to be the feature of that program at Midwest, and we were off running at that point.

And then it was just a matter of finding what that piece was going to be. That was a project mostly for Jim—to go through that process of deciding what he wanted to write for this ensemble. We didn’t know exactly how Jim was going to fill those 20 minutes. Was it going to be a symphony? Was it going to be something else? I left it wide open for him. We knew it was going to be the feature of the program.

And then over the course of the next year, the symphony found its voice, literally. Jim decided what he was going to write and that it was something that ended up bringing several worlds together for the organization, for what we represent, for his own personal life. As you know, the story is very personal, although he didn’t share that with me right away. So, all of these things came together to bring the piece to fruition.

MP: His personal side of the story is what Jim and I spent more time talking about. How does it fit, as you were saying, your organization’s mission?

JF: Well, the whole theme, I wanted the piece to be American in some way. Not necessarily in a saccharine kind of patriotic way. But since we are such an American institution and I was commissioning an American composer, really a quintessential American composer of our time, I

wanted the piece to have some of that identity, in whatever way that meant to Jim. It could be a different way than Copland thought of it. It could be a different way than Bernstein thought of it, or Gershwin, any of these great American composers of the Twentieth Century. It could take on a new idea. And where he went was something that was distinctly American while also being international. This idea of voices, of this universal language of music but in a distinctly American package, because he's an American composer, but thinking broadly across the spectrum of all voices. I thought that was very beautiful. It still felt very nationally proud to me, but in a very open-minded way, which is, for me, the best of both worlds.

In addition to that (that was just the surface of the theme and the inspiration), but behind that, this kind of reckoning, this personal reckoning and personal journey of healing was the layer underneath. That was like a bonus to what was already there in the piece. The fact that he didn't really share that with me at first, I thought was so beautiful because it was his own, as the creator of the piece, it was his own story. It was his own voice being woven into all of these other voices. The piece stood on its own without that. But when he did share that with me finally, I encouraged him to share it with everyone because I thought everyone who learns this piece or gets to know it—as a player, conductor, audience—will want to know that this was very special, and this came from a very deep place.

I think the best music we have is the music that really feels personal to the creator. As conductors, the best music we have are the ones that we connect with personally and we infuse everything we have into it. We can't necessarily do that with every piece of music, but the ones we do, it's that much more special because we are deeply invested in it as artists.

The composers do the same thing. If a composer is willing to share his or her deepest feelings and personal experiences and weave that into the music, that music becomes so much more special. Not only the notes that are on the page, but the way people hear it, because they know it's personal and it means something beyond just what they see on the page.

MP: Absolutely. Are there any other insights that you have to share about Jim, both as a person and as a composer? Although you spoke to that very nicely.

JF: I could go on forever about Jim. He's one of my favorite people. First of all, having nothing to do with our professions, I love spending time with him, talking about family, about life. Just having a beer after a performance is so much fun. He is one of the most generous and genuine people that I've ever met—and it runs the spectrum in our world. The more successful and famous you get, sometimes you don't expect there to be just a real humility and personability, if that's even a word; kind of a down to earth kind of quality. Jim has been that way since the beginning. And he always will be. It's just the way he's wired.

In some ways he's very self-effacing. I think sometimes he doesn't realize that he has earned all of his success. He doesn't know if he's qualified to be the great composer that he is. I kind of get a kick out of it because it's like, Jim, how much success do you have to have? How many ensembles and great musicians have to play your music and love it before you believe that, yes, in fact you belong in this class of great American composers? But in a way it's endearing, too, it makes him an incredibly collaborative musician. So, he wants to have a relationship with the players who play his music and the conductors who conduct his music. It's very much a collaborative and personal experience, which I love.

Because we're responsible for realizing this music, it's this great responsibility to bring this music to life. You want to do it right, but you also want to be a part of that process. You

want to have a say in how that goes. Some composers are more open to that than others. Jim is very open to that kind of collaboration.

In addition to that, one of the other things I think that he is doing that I think is so important in our profession is he's bridging that gap between the orchestra world and the band world. One of the things that we try to do in the Marine Band, for a long time and certainly during my tenure, is to blur those lines, to not make it band and orchestra, just to make it music, symphonic music. You know, we bring in our orchestral conductors all the time who don't have a lot of experience with band, to work with our musicians. We bring in composers that haven't written a lot for band to try to bring them into this world.

Jim is already there. Since the beginning of his career, he has written equally for all ensembles. He's written ballet now. He's written for great orchestras, great bands. And he treats it all the same as an artist. He writes music, and it doesn't matter what ensemble it's for. The music is the music. He's playing a huge role in bringing those worlds together and making us one. Just like the last movement of the symphony "of One," and not thinking about it in different terms. I'm so grateful to have somebody who is so successful and so highly sought after in his profession, but who treats every opportunity the same. Whether he is writing for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra or writing for a high school band, he puts his heart and soul into every piece he writes. It's very clear when he goes through that process, that is important to him. And I admire that so much. I think that kind of humble servant—servant to our art mentality—is so critical to us preserving this art and keeping music alive in all of these areas and keeping the idea of live performance and new music alive. It takes us all to come to the table with that attitude. That's something that Jim and I share in our personal lives and our professional lives, and I'm really grateful for it.

MP: That's well said. Hopefully the band can continue to earn a level footing alongside some of the other mediums of music.

JF: I think we're also helping—the band community is—helping the orchestral community because we are so immersed in new music. We're so focused on building our repertoire and taking new music seriously. You know how much effort we put into bringing new pieces to life, rehearsing them, performing them, getting them out to multiple ensembles to get played dozens and if not hundreds of times. That is very unique to the band community. It's much more difficult to establish in the orchestral community. But when you have composers who are living in both of those worlds, as they currently are, the orchestral community sees how seriously bands take new music. And I think that bleeds over and helps our orchestral friends also embrace new music and make it part of a bigger space on their programs for the music of our time, and not just the wonderful pieces of the past. We don't always need another performance of Shostakovich 5. I think there's room for more new music. And so many great composers from all kinds of backgrounds are writing music today. And I think we play a big part in encouraging that.

MP: Absolutely. Can you speak to things that you've learned through the rehearsal process, things that are challenges for the conductor, for the players, any specific symbolism, or Easter Eggs as Jim called them in one of our conversations, that you may have found throughout the piece? Really, anything that will be helpful for people who may read this thesis or perform this piece down the road someday.

JF: Sure. I discovered a lot of things as I studied the piece and lived with it. But I didn't catch everything. It wasn't until Jim and I really talked after the fact and put together our after-action report of the creation of the piece, and the analysis of it, that I really got a full accounting of everything that's in there, all of the connections that he makes and the way that he composed this.

The biggest one—and the one that he was proud of almost right away, he said, “Did you discover something about the key relationships?” And he said this to me almost from the very first day after he sent me the first version of the score. He had even built into the macro structure the key relationships of each movement following the interval structure that is the nucleus of the entire symphony—that fifth and that half step that comes back in different ways. I knew those motives were there, but I didn't realize exactly where they were. There are dozens and dozens and dozens of iterations and references to this. And part of the way that he was able to do that is that he composed the symphony out of order. He wrote the second movement first and then was able to draw all of the different elements that he wrote into that movement and put them in the outer movements. It ties together beautifully.

It's been such a joy for me as a conductor to continually discover those Easter eggs that he's put into this piece. That definitely influences the way that we rehearse it, and we play it. Balances in this piece are critical. There's so much going on. And it's very carefully composed. It works very well, but it takes some effort to get everything to mesh the way it needs to. A lot of the parts are very difficult, too, so it takes some effort on the player's part to get it under their fingers before they can kind of tweak it to get it where it needs to be “as one.”

One of the goals, when I've rehearsed this piece, is to point out all the places that we want to share with the audiences. Some of them are meant to be obvious. Some of them are like a really clear motivic introduction. Others are kind of buried in the texture. They are meant to be more experienced and felt by an audience rather than clearly, “Oh, there's another one. There's another one. There's another one.” It's more—you get the sense that everything is tied together in a beautiful way, but you don't exactly know how. I think that's okay for the audience, but I think that the musicians need to know where these places are, if they don't discover themselves, which often they do. So, a lot of that rehearsal time is spent saying, Hey, here's another one of those moments where we want to draw attention to this connection, to the motive, or drawing attention to the key relationships between the three movements.

No one is going to hear that in the audience. Unless you were giving a pre-concert lecture, that wouldn't be something that would be there. That's more just kind of a wink and a nod from the composer, and the conductor saying, hey, look what I've done here.

And then what you do feel, though, is the E-flat, the return of E-flat at the end. This idea that he starts the piece with this very definitive, very clear E-flat rooted right in the tonic, but then by the end—he doesn't bring that back until the end—you do feel that progression, even if you can't put your finger on it as an audience member, to that final exhalation of arriving back in your home key at the end. And that, of course, symbolically represents the voice of his mother and this reckoning with the loss of his mom and then finally being able to let it go in a way, and kind of feel at peace with that, which is so beautiful when you think about that. But even if you don't have that story, just the visceral feeling of returning to E-flat is so satisfying when it gets there. That's something the players want to clearly articulate. Those are the moments where the players need to feel together as an ensemble, this is an arrival point that we know and we want to communicate clearly to the audience. So, those challenges are there, but they are joyous

challenges. They are not frustrating challenges. They are challenges of discovery. To have the players say, Hey, did you notice that? Did you see that come back there? Or to just point it out.

If you are teaching this piece as a pedagogical point, there is so much of a lesson that's embedded in there on form, and on structure, and on cyclical relationship. This really is very much a cyclical symphony: like the Franck D-minor, like *Symphony Fantastique*. These are great symphonies that have these little nuclei that are then spread throughout the whole piece. To teach that is so much fun. To say, look at what a composer can do when they are really putting this puzzle together in a pretty crafty and beautiful way. If you are conducting professionals, it's just a matter of making sure they know what they need to hang their hat on at any different part of the piece.

There are, of course, many conducting challenges and technical challenges for the players, embedded. I mean, the second movement alone is a tour de force of rhythmic and harmonic challenges. Jim's voicings are very complex. The way that he puts together harmonic progressions are gorgeous, but they take a lot of effort to keep the line going where it needs to go so that the resolution is where it needs to be.

And then rhythmically—Jim writes very rhythmically complex music, but in a very satisfying way. The second movement is in 7/8, of course, but it's not in 7/8. So many times it goes across the bar and he plays with fives and sevens. There's a whole story to that as well—about trying to write music of the world and the seven continents. You can go on and on with all the little symbolism nuggets that he's embedded into this 20 minutes of music, which is incredible to me.

But it takes some effort as a conductor, knowing how to conduct the piece in a way that gives everybody the information they need. To a degree, it's just repetition, also. It's getting people comfortable with the hemiolas and the cross-rhythms. And this idea, like Ives, you're going to be in different places at different times, but then you all come together in a moment; knowing how to get from Point A to Point B to Point C, with all the textures intertwining and then arriving at the same time.

What's amazing in Jim's music is, those rhythmic and harmonic moments are often dovetailed and coincided. His rhythm, and his music, and his harmonic motion are almost always deeply connected, which is also very satisfying as a musician. It makes perfect sense for a player—you're moving through a sequence of rhythmic issues and a sequence of harmonic issues, but they're happening in tandem, and then they arrive at the same time. So, those can be hooks that people can grab on to as they are learning how to negotiate some of the more difficult music.

MP: That's great. Can you speak to the challenges logistically, technically of having the mezzo voice in the ensemble as far as balance, making that heard? And also, maybe specifically the chorale. Being such a landmark of the movement itself, what have you discovered in that chorale area?

JF: Yes. So, to your first question, the challenges of the voice is a significant one, and it depends partially on who your singer is because every mezzo is going to have a different quality to their voice. Singing without vibrato is a challenge for a lot of singers. They don't like it, but it makes perfect sense why Jim has written it this way—and it can be very beautiful, much like Renaissance music or other music that doesn't use a lot of vibrato. There's a pure, angelic quality to it. But it takes a little effort to get that texture just right for the singer. And the placement of

the singer, I think, depends also on what kind of voice they have. Jim clearly wants this to be another instrument in the orchestra versus a solo. So, putting them out front as a soloist doesn't make sense.

In our performances, we have our mezzo actually in the front row with the woodwinds because it was easier to hear her in the texture and we didn't have to amplify her. I could easily see a soprano being further back in the band or on one of the wings, as long as they are in the ensemble. The idea is that sometimes it serves a little bit as a soloist but not a featured soloist, and other times it's just another instrument in the texture. The place where the soloist—the soprano—doubles with all of the instruments. There's an opportunity here to listen to the flugelhorn, listen to the horn, and find a way to match their timbres.

So, yes, it's an opportunity to do something which is very unusual for a singer, which is to act like an instrument, and have it be a timbre. I think of *and the mountains rising nowhere*, Schwantner, and I think of it for two reasons. One is because of the whistles and the singing and the humming. It's the same idea, right? It's all wordless. And it's supposed to be part of the instrumental texture and just another ethereal sound that people aren't used to hearing. But I also think of it in the sense that it might be nearly impossible to perform that piece live the way that I think Joe may have ultimately intended it. We recorded it—and we had to go through all kinds of hoops to get it to sound and balance the way that I think it should.

Jim's piece is a little easier to make it sound right live, but you've got to experiment a little bit. You've got to work with the voice you have, and the placement, so that you get exactly that blended timbre that he intends. Have the singer be versatile, in the sense where sometimes they will come out of the texture and other times they'll recede back into it, like at letter O.

You asked about the continental quality at O. I think this was Jim's idea of—in this Shostakovich type kind of scherzo movement—to have this moment of respite. And in this moment of respite—I almost think of it like the eye of a storm—you have this kind of hurricane swirling in the outer parts of this movement and then in the middle you've got the eye, where everything kind of calms down for a bit, like the fourth movement of the *Sea Interludes* of Benjamin Britten. But then the voice comes in and matches with this motive, the fifth and the half step (sings sounds), and then back and forth, inverted, backwards, all kinds of ways.

Underneath it you've got these little references; Middle Eastern music, the marching band, and the jazz, and just subtle kind of parenthetical dreams that waft by of different kinds of music that we all enjoy. The idea here is that it's all in one space. They are kind of woven into the texture of this chorale, which in and of itself is very soothing and very beautiful.

So, again, another brilliant moment from Jim where there is symbolism right in front of your face, but you're also enjoying the music just for what it is, as music. It exists on so many different levels, which makes it so much fun to conduct and to study, but also just to listen to as a regular audience member.

What I haven't spent a lot of time talking about, just a little bit, are the conducting challenges or the conductor's perspective in a real detailed way. The idea of making it your own, I think, is important. For me, I think it works very well for this piece, and for Jim, because there's a lot of opportunity to interpret. Jim leaves some space for you to put your own voice in there, so to speak. I keep using that—voice. Right from the beginning, how much time you take to develop these ideas; there is some room in there for movement. Jim tells me that I've interpreted the piece the way he heard it. But I'm sure if he conducted it, he would do it a little bit differently than I do it. The last movement, there are all kinds of opportunities as you move

through these ideas for a rubato—a rubato that really is not written in there but can be just at the whim of the conductor and the players, how you feel it.

I tend to go even slower than he's marked at the end. I crossed out, with his permission—he has at one point 56 or 60—and I crossed it out and moved about four or six clicks slower in my mind, because that's what I hear. I do the same progression, the same kind of evolution of that tempo that he has written in, but I've moved it to the right just a little bit—or to the left. I think the Midwest performance that we did, that's there. My tempi may be a little bit slower than what he's got on the score, but he was okay with it. That was how I was feeling at the moment. And as long as the general shape and the general concept of front to back is there, I think there's space in music to do that. And there's probably space to go in a different direction as well. So that permission, for conductors and the reasoning behind it, I think, is something Jim is okay with, and actually appreciates.

The second movement, just the technical theory behind how to conduct that, how far do you show the hemiola while still keeping a 7/8 going? There are a lot of opportunities to be alla breve versus to the quarter note in different parts of the piece. Those are some of the challenges but also the opportunities to make music with this.

MP: Yes, he mentioned in one of our conversations his encouragement of conductors to take his tempi as suggestions, feel free to push and pull, etc. All of his tempi are listed as “circa,” which I think is his way of notating his approval to interpret with one's own sense of artistry.

JF: Yes. Another thing about Jim, if I may, that is so amazing to me, is how quickly he writes. He gets in these waves of inspiration and he—he would be embarrassed if I said this—but he has this kind of Mozart-like quality, of being able to sit down and write tremendous amounts of the very complex, very interesting intricate music in a short amount of time. I marvel at it. Because if I was a composer, it would take me months and months and months to craft things the way that he hears them in just a few short weeks. I know once he gets writing, he goes, you know? He just gets in the moment, and I'm sure it's exhausting after a while. I get those Facebook posts where he says, “I just finished a piece. I'm having a beer. I've got to decompress.”

But it's a rare gift to write that kind of music, with that kind of language, as quickly as he does. I hope that it continues to flow, that the ideas keep going. He's writing a lot of music for a lot of different types of ensembles, and it doesn't seem to be slowing down. So, it's great. He has a lot more left in him.

MP: Yes. I think his ingenuity with the way he derives variation from nuggets will continue to be a source of new and fresh material all the time, I think.

JF: Yes, absolutely.

MP: One thing we haven't talked about today is the form, or the overall map, if you will, of this Symphony, and especially in the context of what is typical or atypical about it within the norms of symphonies.

JF: Well, one of the things that I love about this piece is the form of it. When you are talking about a symphonic form, you have a couple of different options. You can go the fast slow fast; and most of the contemporary symphonies are three-movement symphonies these days. A four-

movement symphony seems to have gone out of fashion. I think the last one I know that's been written recently is probably Bill Bolcom's symphony, which is four movements. And they are all wonderful. There absolutely needs to be a four-movement symphony.

But most of the contemporary symphonies are three. A lot of times they are fast slow fast, which I think makes sense. You hit the audience with a big opening flourish, and then you have the beautiful slow movement, and then you end up with this big, exciting finale. And Jim, from the beginning, had decided that it would be the opposite of that. And I love that. I'm thinking, even though this is going to be the end of our Midwest program, it didn't need to be, you know, fireworks and bonbons. I knew that what he was going to write was going to be emotionally powerful and it would fit at the end of a symphony, at the end of a program. I didn't know, of course, the backstory, which makes it all the more appropriate, that the end was this apotheosis of emotion. But that also gave us the option of having the central movement be—as I asked him, and I think he probably told you—to be a standalone piece, too.

So, knowing that programming is always a challenge for us, to have 20 minutes or 25 minutes on a program sometimes can be difficult, but you could carve out nine or ten. If a part of the symphony could be done as a standalone piece, that would be a bonus. And that's what he did. So, he started with that. That was like the big kind of filling in the middle of the piece and then he had to figure out what to do on the outer ends. And he went to the third movement next, but he also knew the third movement was going to be this emotional reckoning, and he also had to do it in the six minutes that he allotted himself because of my time restrictions.

But, I actually like the fact that I put this time restriction on him. I gave him no other conditions, but I did tell him that he needed to keep it within 20–22 minutes. But because he was forced to do that, he made something that I think hits all the right places in the right time. It doesn't overstay, but it also doesn't hurry. That six minutes of that apotheosis feels just right. And the music itself—the reason it's so beautiful is that it's not complicated. One of the things that Jim—I think one of his philosophies is—if it doesn't need to be complicated, don't make it complicated. He writes a lot of complex music, and the second movement is very complex in its construction, but also there's beauty and simplicity. And this piece is simple without being simplistic. That last movement, when you start with just the quartet of low brass, just a little chamber group in the ensemble (another training/teaching opportunity also for high school or college band is to say, there's chamber music all over the place in this symphony; it's not just symphonic stuff), to start there and then to have that melt into that first entrance of the soprano, doing this snippet of the second movement (sings sounds), that same scale, just a scale of “mi fa sol mi.” It's so gorgeous the way that he brings it in, and to have the soprano, like an angel, kind of drop in there.

The whole piece from that moment is just one slow progression, harmonically and rhythmically, to the climax of E-flat. I've rarely conducted anything that's as moving as those six minutes and just that evolution to that apotheosis. That's the only word I can use to describe it, is an apotheosis. It can go no further emotionally than where he goes with it. What an amazing symphonic ending. The way that happens after the nine minutes of breathlessness of the scherzo is also very satisfying, just as a player, and as a conductor, to do that.

Then you get back to the introduction, which Jim has always been self-conscious about, I think, that he wanted to write a longer introduction, a more symphonic introduction, but I didn't let him because I told him he could only have 20 minutes. So, he had four or five minutes left after he written all of this gorgeous music in two and three. But I also think it's appropriate, that it's just a prelude. It's a little taste. It's a little introduction of all of these little things you're

going to hear in the scherzo. When the scherzo comes, it's not exhausting because you just got your appetite whet by the intro. Then you get this substantial piece of meat in the scherzo, and then you get this moment at the end of it.

Formally, I think it's a really satisfying piece in its compact construction. And it also is something that can be programmed in a lot of different places, because it doesn't take up an entire half of the music. As a conductor I think there's a place for these pieces, substantial symphonic pieces that don't take up an entire half of the program. We need that as programmers. We need something that does that but doesn't feel like it's missing something.

I think Jim absolutely hit the bull's-eye with a complete piece of music, from start to finish, that says just enough, but doesn't say more than it needs to.

MP: If you have time for one more question, earlier you mentioned the words "form" and "formal." One of the things I've noticed is that Jim seems to feel free to not worry about formal forms, such as sonata-allegro, and so on. Obviously, Jim's music has form. Unquestionably. But what have you noticed about Jim's use of form, which is perhaps just very unique to him?

JF: Yes. The closest movement here to a sort of classical form is the second movement, the scherzo, which is really an ABA form. I mean, it's got a big chunk of A. The chorale is the B section. And then the A comes back but in a truncated form, in a variation. And then there's a coda. The outer movements don't have a sonata allegro form or any kind of discernable rondo form. But when I say "form," there's two different kinds for me. There's the actual structural form like we're talking about where: Is it a rondo? Is it a sonata form? And then there's motivic form. Like the other great cyclical symphonies that we talked about, the form is derived from the motive. So, the motives are decided upon. They are introduced and then they are developed. And that's what this is. It's a very contemporary concept where you don't need to have a straight-up kind of key relationship where you move the exposition into the subdominant—or into the dominant. And then you come back, and you end the piece on a different key. You don't need to do that. But if there's motivic form, that's what makes the piece satisfying. It gives you, as a listener, something to grab on to. You recognize these themes, and you recognize how they are developed and how they move and how they are turned around.

And in the last movement, even though it's through composed, you get the introduction of the theme, the revamped version of the theme but with the soprano. And then he simply just evolves and develops that theme through different keys. You're getting a formal development that's very recognizable and that you can latch on to. So, it's formal without fitting into a nice, neat package of your classical and romantic forms that we are accustomed to in our studies.

I think a lot of pieces don't have that kind of connection. I think a lot of pieces, it's like they start, they go, and then they end. And you can't identify that development, whether it's harmonic or motivic development. But in Jim's music, you almost always can. It's a staple of his compositional process to have some sort of development. And then that dictates the form, how he develops those themes and that harmony.

And I don't think Jim—you know he's a self-taught composer—I think he would probably tell you that he doesn't think in those terms either. I don't think he thinks in those terms, even harmonically. I think sometimes his harmonic development structure is instinctual. He just knows where he wants it to go as a musician. He's not doing an analysis other than just general key relationships. We're moving from a Neapolitan to the dominant—I don't think he thinks in that way as a composer, which frees him up to be a contemporary composer who can

write anything. But his instincts as a player, and as a conductor, lead your ear to places where you want them to go. It's the best of both worlds. It's open and it's not labeled, but it still feels familiar in a way that's satisfying.

MP: Yes. I don't think I found any Neapolitans or any other augmented sixth chords.

JF: Yeah, look for those German augmented sixth chords, right? You'll probably go crazy if you try to do a line-by-line analysis in that way. But he's very conscious of his key relationships. There's no doubt about that.

MP: Well Colonel Fetting, I appreciate your time and insights about Jim and his *Symphony No. 2*.

JF: Thanks, Myron. Good luck with all of this. Thanks so much. Take care of yourself.

MP: You too. Talk to you later.

JF: Yes. Talk to you later.

APPENDIX D: JAMES M. STEPHENSON'S UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS ON *SYMPHONY*

NO. 2: VOICES

Symphony #2 - VOICES - paper with/for Col. Jason K. Fettig

Presented informally by James M. Stephenson (Jim); composer. ComposerJim.com

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

What follows are some thoughts on the genesis and background of my 2nd Symphony - VOICES, in collaboration with Colonel Jason K. Fettig and "The President's Own" US Marine Band, as well as a bit of a deeper dive into the form and analysis of the various thematic, harmonic, and structural devices I used throughout.

It's important to note that I am not a "conservatory-trained" composer; therefore, the language I use may not be in keeping with others who have gone that route.

It's also important to note that I am going mostly from memory when referring to the timeline of things, and with regard to various conversations. It is completely possible that I might misremember a few small details.

Also of interest to me, though not particularly developed in this paper, is where the Symphony #2 stands amongst my own output of symphonies; how it reacted to and followed my first symphony, and consequently informed and shaped my third. But those questions are for another time.

GENESIS AND BACKGROUND

My recollection is that Jason called me sometime in late 2015/early 2016 to ask about writing a "major work" for the Marine Band. I recall discussing that it would be convenient to meet in person to discuss because my daughter was then attending George Washington University in DC. One of these such meetings was a breakfast at my hotel (I think), in early 2016. What sticks out for me was the notion that I would write something distinctly American - not necessarily patriotic - and that I might have suggested writing something based on Norman Rockwell paintings. (My mother had given me the one of a red-headed kid playing trumpet on a chair, and I've always been fond of it).

We left that breakfast with a firm commitment to something that would be 20 minutes, in order to fit the Midwest Clinic program, and that I would need to get it to them by the fall for their December premiere. Jason had also suggested that one movement be an exciting virtuosic and energetic 8-9 minute tour de force, so that it might stand on its own for future programming that couldn't fit a 20 minute piece.

Other than that, I was excited that I had full control of the artistic product (thank you Jason), and that I had the best band in the country for whom to write it.

What I think ultimately led to it being a symphony - in my mind - was the slow realization that symphonies didn't have to be 45 minutes, like is so prevalent in the orchestral world (my home turf). I knew I wanted to write something important, something that would "land", and upon noticing other "shorter" symphonies that were out there, the form began to take shape in my mind, even before the unforeseeable subject matter would reveal itself (more on that later).

The premiere took place in December of 2016, at The Midwest Clinic, to a packed house, for two successive performances. I couldn't have been more thrilled at the performances. Col. Fettig dug deep into the score, and executed an emotional and technically stellar premiere. The audiences - from all appearances - seemed to really appreciate and feel the emotional weight of the piece, even though they really didn't know the full story of what it was about. (Neither did Jason or the band - again, more on that later).

Despite its initial success, the piece did not "take off" immediately. There was still more to be revealed about its "story", which I didn't feel comfortable sharing for some time. It subsequently went on to win the "Best-Composition of the year" for the NBA Revelli Award, and the ABA Sousa-Ostwald Award, both of which gave it some nice publicity, and perhaps encouraged directors to take a second look. Additionally, the Marine Band produced a top-notch recording in 2017, and due to its incredible and wide-reaching distribution, the piece reached a lot of new ears as well. I was at those recording sessions, and thoroughly enjoyed the chance to offer some extra input into what was already a fantastic product.

It was after this that the piece began to get played a lot across the country and additionally, around the world. I've heard high school bands play it (I never could have imagined this), and I've been made aware of performances in Spain, Japan, Australia, the Netherlands, France, Germany, and others. In the US, it's had its Carnegie Hall debut, and was scheduled for 30 or so performances in the past year. It was scheduled for a Boston Symphony Hall debut, a Tanglewood debut, another Carnegie performance, and performances in Texas, Missouri, Michigan State, Northwestern University, and several others in the spring of 2020 alone, before COVID-19 had other ideas.

I believe that its success is almost entirely due to the Marine Band's wonderful premiere and recording, and also partially due to the story of the work, which I finally told Jason after the recording sessions, and which I will again reveal now. The story is almost entirely responsible for the form of the work, for the instrumentation choices, for the arc, and most importantly, for the emotional aspect. So let's dig in.

FORM AND GENERAL ANALYSIS

Why is it called “Voices”?

There are three critical reasons for the subtitle of VOICES being added:

- 1) As a conductor, I had worked with the Marine Band’s vocalist Sara Sheffield on a few occasions. I had invited her as my soloist for several pops concerts I had conducted. I wanted to figure out a way to employ her into the new symphony, therefore immediately giving the piece a new sound.
- 2) I knew I wanted this to be a concerto-for-wind-ensemble of sorts. Everybody in the band is a fantastic musician, and I wanted to somehow allow for each of their voices to be heard. This was inspiring for me as a composer, to know that I had these amazing “tools” to work with.
- 3) Most importantly, once I knew that the piece was to be about my mother, the use of Sara’s voice was perfect to represent my mother’s “voice”. This completely shaped the work, and made the subtitle a necessity.

The three movements all relate to the subtitle of Voices:

- I. (Prelude): Of Passion
- II. Shouts and Murmurs
- III. Of One

FAST-SLOW-FAST form:

As mentioned earlier, it was requested of me to create a stand-alone movement, and that a fast virtuosic 8-9 minute movement would be ideal.

To me, in order to create a balanced symphony, I knew that this movement would have to be the middle movement. A 9-minute movement meant that the other two movements had to average roughly 5:30 each. I also knew that nine minutes of fast music would be incredibly difficult to compose, and would be demanding for both players and audience. Therefore, having a slower movement on either end could provide relief for everyone, while also giving the piece a nice arc. I composed the three movements entirely out of order:

- First: I wrote the introduction, from the beginning to letter C.
- Next: I wrote the entire 2nd movement
- Next: I composed the third movement
- Last: I wrote the rest of the first movement, from letter C onward.

DIGGING IN TO MOTIVIC/THEMATIC IDEAS

(by order in which they were composed)

In April of 2016, when it became time in my writing schedule for me to compose this piece, unfortunately, I experienced the death of my mother. She had been sick for quite some time, but, in the end, it happened quite quickly. It affected my emotional state a lot more than I thought it might. It was the first close family member I lost, and I didn't know how to respond. As I have said on many occasions, I thought I would go to the piano, and the ideas would pour out, like they're 'supposed' to, for us artists.

The opposite happened, and I experienced writer's block, for nearly a month.

I finally went to the piano, and my left hand landed loudly on an octave of low Eb's. I subsequently figured out a "cryout-to-the-world" chord that followed it, and I knew I had something on which to build. The following 12 measures represent three such low-Ebs and cryouts, each divided by quiet foggy-headed, dazed, confused, searching noodling sounds, as if I'm still trying to figure out what to do next.

There are some very important things that came from this **13-measure introduction**:

- 1) Most importantly, I decided that I would not arrive at the tonic of Eb again until the end of the piece. That the entire piece would be a discovery toward the coming to grips of my mother's death. This forced my hand compositionally, and allowed me to discover new pathways.
- 2) That I would use musical directions that represented types of voices.
(Somewhere I made a list of about 30 types of voices that I might use)
The bass trombone is marked "menacing" - and is the loudest low Eb scored.
Clarinets and saxophones are marked "whisper-soft".
- 3) With the exception of the the trumpet in measure 8, none of this music became fodder for any of the rest of the piece. It is unique unto itself, and allowed for me a...
- 4) jumping off point. Once I got this intro out of my system, once I shouted out to the world three times, I felt free to begin really working on the piece, and the juices started flowing.

MOVEMENT II: SHOUTS and MURMURS

When first conceptualizing the 2nd movement, there were two things I wanted to represent.

- 1) Shouts and Murmurs (which comes from a section of the New Yorker Magazine) gave me musical inspiration and dynamic "voices" to exploit.
- 2) The entire world. Yes, that's correct. That was my idea.
Knowing that the Marine Band was such a wonderful representation of the United States, why not use their voices in that status to represent the entire world?

Therefore, I endeavored to first represent the seven continents of the world by:

- 1) Using 7/8 as a time signature. Here are the opening three cymbals, meant to represent a whispering voice, like spreading rumors around a room:

Allegro (♩ = c. 152-160) [2 + 2 + 3]

- 2) Using 7 bar phrases

- 3) Using a scale which started on the 7th scale degree of the F harmonic-minor scale. E-F-G-Ab-Bb-C-Db-(E)

Here is the main melody, presented first in the clarinets:

- 4) Using a djembe - for Africa (m. 184)
- 5) Middle-Eastern harmonies (m. 186)
- 6) a marching band (189-190) & jazz band (191-192) for North America

It's important to note that I quickly gave up on the idea of representing seven continents (I couldn't even imagine writing music of Antarctica.) However, I immediately enjoyed the new sounds that were emerging directly from the harmonic scale inversion.

Letter C (m. 36) is our first "shout".

The melody in the first trumpet becomes absolutely crucial to the rest of the piece, as we shall see. I essentially drop the tonality by a Major 3rd (from F minor to Db) - an old Beethoven trick, which immediately adds strength - and the trombones repeat the clarinet scale pattern, now in rhythmically-augmented form. (Still 7 bar phrases, by the way).

At letter D (m. 51), while the saxophone duo plays the melody in *sultry* and *echo* form (two more “voices”), the harmonic accompaniment introduces a most important interval pattern, which becomes a staple in the piece. I say “introduces” and “becomes” because one has to remember that this is actually the first time I wrote it. It appears in the first movement, but remember, I wrote the first movement last.

The rising minor-6th, followed by half-step (Bb-Gb-F) is best exemplified in the harp:



Quickly copied and inverted the double-bass in m.54:



Meanwhile, all of this time, the murmuring in the cymbals begins to slowly intensify.

A fun trick with 7-bar phrases and 7/8 time is that if you throw a 3/8 pattern on top of it, the only time they will line up is every seven bars.

Therefore, E-F contains two such seven-bar segments, with shortened main melodic motifs in G minor, underscored with that same interval pattern, with intensifying cymbals, so that letter F becomes a true landing point, now in G Major. (and by the way, look at the saxophones in m. 66, and then have a glance at the saxophones at the end of movement 1, to see why that is there.)



Bass line:



All of these same ideas continue to develop and repeat themselves (the crazy cornet figure at m. 89 was simply written for two reasons: 1) I used to play trumpet, and b) if you’re going to take a rabbit out of a hat, and then repeat the trick, the repetition better be more exciting the 2nd time).

Though it only last a few seconds, letter G (m. 100) contains some of my favorite music. A 3/8 pattern now over 2/4, with alternating major and minor arpeggios all sitting atop pf the now ever-present interval figure.

Letter H features new instruments melodically, playing again in *sultry* and *echo* fashion while once again the cymbals rise from rumor-spreading whispers to full on shouting, almost overtaking the band at letter K.

Not to be forgotten are the perfect-5th interjections, first introduced with hollow character by the accompanying flutes at letter A (m. 15), now repeated by the horns at letter I (m. 113). Also of note is that each of the melodic doublings (bassoons at H, saxes at I) now consist of the 2nd player accompanying the first with the inversion of the same melody.

Letter L (m. 134) is a key moment in the piece, but only because of where its inspiration came from.

When I was contemplating the “concerto-for-wind-ensemble” aspect of this piece, I was sitting at an airport gate. I happened to hear some people laughing behind me, and instead of immediately turning around to see who it was, I instead just enjoyed the laughter, noting that it could be coming from people of any sort of race, color, creed, size, sex, etc. And this is much like any group of people who work together - in my case, a group of musicians.

And so letter L - coincidentally but not on purpose standing for “Laughter” - is literally the entire wind ensemble laughing. Each section gets to do it (except for the non-keyboard percussion).

(Rehearsal/performance note: I usually have to ask every section to play louder than marked upon their entrance).

The laughter inverts (as does “the interval”), and we finally arrive at a full on statement of the melody, very happily stated at letter M (m. 151) in Ab Major (the relative major from the opening). [*Incidentally, the trumpet and trombone descending chromatic statement from m. 147-150 is the only thing borrowed from the introduction of the entire piece (m. 7-8)].

And finally - letter O (m. 177):

There is some of my very favorite music in the entire movement, if not the entire symphony.

I always knew I wanted to treat the singing voice as an instrument of the ensemble, and to have it situated in the ensemble, and not as a soloist. Literally, just another voice in the band. That is also why there is never any text.

Consequently, when she is singing, all of the instruments are meant to achieve a blend, and to match up in register and sonority to create some sort of “other” instrument.

The voice is paired up with the very mellow flugelhorn, accompanied by other flugelhorns, french horns, euphoniums, and with interjections from Alto flute and English horn. Again, all very mellow instruments.

The voice's intervals are always that of the 5th-then-half-step interval, displayed with some sort of inversion.



I don't recall this entirely, but I believe my intent with the walking bass line was that of an imitation of the opening clarinet line, but now augmented. The shape is certainly somewhat similar. Also looking back, I'm not altogether certain why I put it in G major. It looks like I changed my mind by the third note of the walking bass line!

The interjections in Alto flute and English horn are again, augmentations of the three-note pattern seen in most of the woodwinds at letter N. (which itself is a shortened snippet of the main shout-melody).

Afore-mentioned "other-worldly" effects are added to the voice/flute/vibes melody around letter P. All of this orchestration is centered around everyone having a chance to say something and add to the conversation, or blend with their colleagues to form a cohesive sound.

Managing to throw the opening clarinet motif into the bassoons and Bass clarinet (with accompanying flutes) was a really fun challenge. Now the 7/8 pattern fits into large 4/4 bars, and notwithstanding some notes changed to fit the harmonies, it led nicely into a quasi-recap at letter R (m. 205). The cymbals also join in on the fun (m. 197), again almost identically repeating their rhythmic pattern from the opening, even though we are now in 4/4.

It is important to note that, despite the rhythmic activity, and all of the counterpoint and voice-mixing, the overall intent I am after from rehearsal O to R is one of great calm. It is when ensembles achieve this that this section proves to be the most successful.

Letter R to W recaps already discussed materials, but in different keys, and with different instrumentations.

Letter W (m. 275) is (almost) the climax of the movement (except for the last measure).

At letter W, almost every motif is happening simultaneously, all at a pretty solid **f** dynamic:

The upper woodwinds are playing the clarinet motif.

The low ww's and brass are playing the walking bass line.

The trombones and most of the trumpets are playing the interval motif

The horns enter with the previously played english horn/alto flute motif.

The cymbals (now crash cymbals) are now augmenting the rumor motif, but loudly.

The true climax of the movement comes at measure 283, when the instrumentation is heightened to full force, everyone is marked **ff**, and the other percussion and saxophones enter with the aforementioned flute rhythm (letter A), driving home that NOW we have arrived.

In practice, it is hard to save up more volume/sonority for that arrival-point at m. 283, but if it can be managed, it is truly exciting.

Everything dies away, and we are launched into the CODA at letter X (m. 298). Underneath the already familiar motifs, the brasses are building a pyramid; each entrance furthers the 5th-half-step motif (C-G-Ab), while also gaining in speed.

At letter Y, while the clarinets are murmuring LOUDLY, and while the horns and trumpets/cornets are punctuating that flute rhythm, the lower woodwinds and brasses have their own battle. Half of them are playing the interval motif right-side up, while the other half are playing it inverted:

But - the surprise to most would be that the Snare Drum actually has the melody here, playing the rhythm of the opening clarinet line amidst all else going on:

At letter Z, again, instruments battle up and down on the interval motif, before we finally arrive at Ab Major (m. 335) - the relative major of the opening F minor. A quick Shostakovichian unison brass reminder of the main shout motif occurs from m. 337-342, (reinforced by crash cymbals, by no accident), and all things drive homeward to a final perfect 5th Ab-Eb chord at the end. This reminds us of the opening hollow flutes (by interval only), but also allows for us to be undecided as to whether this was a triumphant ending or a painful one. With no 3rd, it is hard to tell. The fact that it ends in Ab is absolutely of most importance, as will be discussed soon.

MOVEMENT III: of ONE

Glancing at the opening key signature of the third movement makes me smile. It's obvious that I knew where I wanted the movement to end (Eb Major), but we are in no way in Eb at the onset of this movement.

Also to be discussed, the title "of One". I will get to that.

The opening through letter D consists of some very dark and dense harmonies, and it might even be fruitless for me to try to dissect it all.

A couple of things to note:

It was at this point that I felt that my "concerto-for-wind-ensemble" had yet to feature the euphoniums and tubas enough. And I also felt that euphonium might be the "easiest" instrument upon which to recover after the breathless ending to the 2nd movement. (I have yet to hear any positive or negative support of this assertion).

In any case, that is why it starts with a euphonium solo, and quartet.

If looking at the solo Euphonium line from measures 3-5, it is obvious that it mirrors the voice entrance to come at letter A, though the former is in some sort of Ab minor, while the voice is clearly in B Major.

The use of the low piccolo and vibes with half motor was intentional so as to give the sense of a ghostly and (again) hollow sound, so that the B Major at letter A would be that much more rich.

It was at letter A (m. 9) that I knew that I was representing the voice of my mother.

It felt so good to write that music. Simplistic yet very important at the same time.

Her melody - accompanied by similar sounding flutes - is again the "shout" melody from the 2nd mvmt, but now set in an entirely different register, and set quietly, as if we're coming to peace after the emotional turbulence of the previous time. The straight-tone direction is to mimic that of my mother's singing, because she was not a professional vocalist, and therefore could not use vibrato.



Letter B (m. 14) features the oboe (again, an instrument I felt deserved more attention at this point). (note: in performance, I often have to ask the oboe player to change to almost *f*, so as to soar above the orchestration.)

The A-natural in the bass trombone (m. 15) is important. It reminds us that we're not quite at peace yet. And it also sets up the interval pattern that is so often used. (A-G#-C#).

Admittedly, this section (B-D) is thick, and requires a good amount of rehearsal to be executed properly. The low horns often struggle, and everyone has to support the oboe. Of particular note are the succession of eighth notes in the 1st horn - bass trombone - 1st horn - solo oboe in measures 22-23. If these handoffs can be heard, it helps these two bars make sense.

The eerie Alto saxophone at m. 25 echoes similar material from before, while the Bass Clarinet and Bassoon remind us of the interval pattern yet again.

The alto saxophone passes to the 1st tuba, who passes to the tenor sax and flutes, who pass to the trumpet/trombone (augmented), who pass it to the upper woodwinds, who pass it finally to the bass drum. This all has to happen amidst a poco accelerando, and the final bass drum strokes should be similar to those of the Mahler "death-blows" in his 6th symphony. Need I say more?

Arriving at letter D (m. 34) in E minor was important to me. It is both the relative minor to G Major, where we will arrive soon, but also seemed a very far distance away from Eb Major, the eventual resolution of all of the pain I was suffering.

To stress this rather maniacal feeling, the (augmented "shout") melody appears in austere fashion in the low brass and woodwinds.

The upper woodwinds are constantly desperately trying to reach higher, searching for something to grasp, only to be brought down again by my tumbling bass clarinet, bassoons, saxophones and euphoniums.

At letter E (m. 39), the sinister E minor starts to slowly dissipate. (If the band isn't emotionally exhausted by this point, then the director hasn't done their job).

Someday I will do a harmonic analysis (no I won't) of the four bars leading into letter F, but suffice it to say that it is all about voice-leading, and ascending and descending chromatic lines, all finally melting into the magical arrival of G Major at letter F. The only voice that is not chromatic is the euphonium, which was an attempt to replicate the opening of the movement, while fitting within the harmonic framework.

I used the word “magical” on purpose when describing the arrival at letter F. Those eight bars were so easy to write. It was literally as if my mother was with me, letting me know that everything was going to be ok. That she was in a good place, and the suffering was over. And that was ok for me to move on with my life now.

The voice sings one last time - firmly in G Major - using the familiar material, with cushions of beautiful sound underneath her.



The bassoon tries to interject one more question mark with an Eb in measure 54, but this time, instead of taking us elsewhere, it does in fact safely resolve back to G Major.

The final chorale/Coda from G to the end is some of the most important music I’ve composed.

I knew that when I started this final chorale, that it should attempt to be some of the most beautiful music I’d ever written, void of complexity, but meaningful in its depth. It had to represent my mother.

The simplistic part is represented by the trombone chorale, which would get repeated and re-orchestrated over and over. It is merely the “shout”/voice theme, first presented the warmest way I could possibly write it - a trombone choir. It’s like a big hug.

Intermixed in and around that chorale is a bass line that constantly reminds us of the interval motif, but in a way that somehow sounds less foreboding than in previous utterances. While that bass line reaches up and then falls back down, a euphonium takes those same intervals, and turns them upward (m. 56-59, etc); always seeking, always yearning with hope. The harp and subsequent other eighth-note passages are re-enacting the opening euphonium solo, but again, now brimming with hope and splendor. And finally, there is a constant heartbeat in the repeated mallet notes, which grow and grow as the heart would in any fond remembrance of someone dear who is lost.

This eight bar segment moves from G to Ab minor (letter H), with all of these motives being reworked, passed around, the orchestration constantly growing and growing.

Finally, at letter I, we do indeed arrive at Eb Major, the key I had been striving for through the entire piece.

I must confess that, when at the piano composing this section, and upon arriving at Eb Major, I did indeed shed a few tears. I hate to sound “over-the-top”, but it almost felt that someone else was writing it.

The transition from G Major to Ab Minor to Eb Major worked so seamlessly, and so gloriously. All of which was fortified by the fact that those three keys ALSO represented the interval motif I had been hammering home throughout the entire piece: G-Ab-Eb. A half-step and a perfect 5th.

At letter J, I have a dim memory of why I composed the eight notes in the scale pattern that I did for all of the woodwinds/keyboards/mallets. But I could be wrong. It's clear to me that I had the accented notes reaching upward toward the final Eb. I ‘think’ I chose adding the Gg into an otherwise Eb scale was so that it would mimic the scale I chose for the clarinets at the onset of mvmt. 2, but down a step. If I were to follow that logic, then there should also be a Cb, but I think I merely decided against that, due to the harmonic clashes it would have forced.

A couple of final notes:

The bass trombone does indeed get the loudest Eb one last time, as a bookend to the opening of the piece. The opening “cryout-to-the-world” is repeated, but as one might recall, it was marked “menacing” at the beginning. Here, it is again **fff** (everyone else is merely **ff**), but this time it is marked with the additional “triumphant” directive, because that is how I felt.

Lastly, the movement is entitled “Of ONE”.

It was also part of my ongoing agenda to use this tremendously talented group of individuals (the Marine Band) to display how people of different backgrounds, races, colors, creeds, etc) could all work together as one to produce such a glorious sound, full of technical wizardry and heart-wrenching passion. That 85 people on one stage could all breathe together, move their fingers together, move together, phrase together, and successfully act as a unit, full of selflessness and support for one another. It is my view that this is how any group should act, for the good of their family, their community, their country, their world.

As a last statement to that effect, I wrote the final interval-motif in unison, to be performed “as one” (m. 84-85 in the brasses), before the final Eb chord of affirmation is played.



MOVEMENT I: Prelude: 'of PASSION'

Having already discussed the introduction, I will now focus on the music I actually composed last: Letter C (m. 14) to the end of the first movement.

One thing to mention is that, at this point, I had already composed about 16 minutes worth of music. Therefore, I knew that this final bit of the first movement had to stick somewhere near 4 minutes. I won't lie, I did feel a bit boxed in by this fact, but nonetheless I proceeded and hoped to do the best I could.

The good thing was that I had so much motivic material already spelled to in the other two movements, that I felt that all I had to do now was to write precursors of things to come. Hence the addition of the word "Prelude" to the subtitle of the movement.

As mentioned earlier, after I had composed the introduction, I felt free to move forward and write whatever I wanted. This allowed for a complete shift in mood and flavor to begin letter C. Because of everything I'd already composed, I knew that I needed to be in G Major (I'll explain this soon).

After the denseness and activity of the introduction, I decided to change the scenery with wide-open spaced chords: G Major but an F# in the bass. (a hint at the 7th scale-degree plan of the 2nd movement?). The Eb in the euphonium in the bar before D (m. 20), is now obviously a hint at things to come as well.

Letter D - in linear terms of performing left to right - is the first use of the voice. (but we all know that I had already written the other movements first). Therefore, it was wide open territory for me to introduce the interval motif, and give the piece the haunting sound it needed, so as to be resolved some 17 minutes later.



It doesn't hurt to mention again that the voice is meant to have very little vibrato, if at all, in order to accurately represent that of my mother. Again, the voice is amplified by alto flute doublings, or english horn echoings, all in an attempt to create that new sound-world, and take advantage of this addition of a new "voice" to the wind ensemble.

At letter E (m. 28), I needed a haunting melody. True to form, I simply stole from myself. The alto clarinet (sometimes played by regular clarinet, as shown here - doubled by harp - is 'simply' the same as used in mvmt 2, but again, transposed and augmented.



The Alto Saxophone solo at measure 32, again chosen for its eeriness, is simply the opening voice (interval) material flipped around, and is accompanied by open 5ths in flutes (seem familiar?) and a muted trombone to add to the overall color.

The euphonium interjects the interval material in meas. 37-39, while the contrabassoon and bass clarinet join with the saxophone melody (I usually ask them to play louder) at letter F.

There is a special story that accompanies the trumpet passage at letter F, and it bears telling.

The year before I was to compose this piece, a good friend of mine, Kurt Dupuis, who is principal trumpet with the Marine Band, had an unfortunate accident. Upon running to his car in December to retrieve a forgotten mute, he slipped on some ice and shattered his entire wrist and forearm. The recovery process for him was brutal, and quite long. I initially thought I'd have both trumpets muted at letter F, but I didn't want poor Kurt to forget a mute again, and subsequently break another arm, so I left the first trumpet open, while having the lower octave muted. While an amusing anecdote, I wouldn't have done that if I didn't think the resulting color would be effective. It's a fun story to tell whenever I'm doing the piece in person. (I usually have to ask the lower octave to play louder, and tell the first player to just sit on top of the 2nd player's sound, to achieve the right kind of effect).

Letter G (m. 48), is marked "a bit psychotic". I really hope for exaggerated character here. The tempo should fluctuate quite a bit, and the cornets and percussion can/should overdo the character. It should feel like we're in a scary clown movie, with the was representing howling wind across the entire scene. I do recall writing low D#s in some of the bass notes because I was so against using Ebs, for aforementioned reasons.

The low brass and other low winds have the tune at meas. 52, which gets passed to the horns in each measure thereafter. (I usually have to point this out, and ask the horns to really bring there notes out).

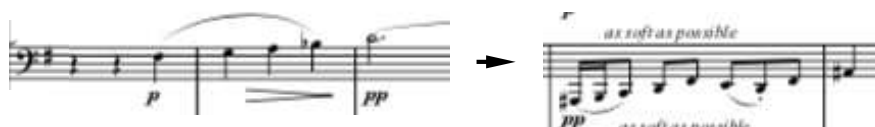
The descending scale of the high trombones/alto sax at m. 61 is that familiar harmonic minor scale again (E minor).

The craziness slowly starts to dissipate beginning after letter I. (Note: it looks as if the motivic Eb-D notes in the piccolo, Eb clar , Sop. Sax, piano and glock. might be hard to hear amongst the chaos at m. 65 and following measures, but if they're told to really go for it, I've found that it works)

With yet another sorrowful recap of the opening clarinet motif, we arrive back in G Major at letter J (m. 78).

The solo voice again sings similar material to before, sometimes reacting to the english horn, sometimes leading it, and a final - and somewhat hopeful - oboe brings us to letter K.

Even a seemingly innocuous trombone solo of m. 86-88 reminds us of the clarinet motivic material, which is integral to both the first and 2nd movements.



One final ghostly recurrence of the opening “cryout-to-the-world” chord occurs in the upper ww’s in m. 88, followed by chromatic saxophones (foreshadowing small bits of mvmt. 2), and one last gasp of the clarinet motif (in bass clar/piccolo), before finally settling into a purposefully anti-climactic final G major chord in bass clarinet, soprano sax and piccolo. (plus timp and bass).

I knew where the piece still needed to go, of course, and I wanted to end the movement quietly, almost as if nothing had ever even happened. There would be plenty of fireworks to come. No need to overdo them at this point.

Also, ending in G major was a necessity. It was the final piece of the puzzle in solidifying the intervallic motif, now in terms of structure.

With the first movement now ending in G, the keys of the movements become:

G Major — Ab — Eb Major.

This again codifies the intervallic motif, but now at the structural level. It is my belief that this is what differentiates a symphony from other suites, or tone poems, that might occupy the same amount of real estate. A symphony has the same DNA throughout, where everything is related to itself, even at the large scale, and provides a world that satisfies both aurally and theoretically.

IN SUMMARY

Despite the attention paid to thematic, harmonic, melodic, intervallic, and rhythmic ideas, it is my firm belief that none of that matters if the piece doesn't also satisfy at the most basic of listening and emotional levels.

And - if it does not satisfy those who are performing it, then it is of no use as well.

Throughout the compositional process of this Symphony #2 - VOICES - it was at the forefront of my brain to first honor and represent my mother to the best of my ability.

When I reached tears while composing third movement, I personally felt relief and pride that I might have accomplished that.

Secondly, I wanted to write music that would stir up emotion in those performing, and those listening. I wanted those who were playing it to have a chance to speak through their instruments, and to add to the conversation of the music while playing it. I wanted to provide technical challenges, that while requiring practice to perform, would also result in the feeling that it was time well-spent. That it was worth it.

Lastly, I wanted to write something that (hopefully) would add a new "Voice" to the wind ensemble medium. I wanted to write a piece that those who were interested might find reason to study and come back to every so often, to hopefully discover new meaning and new ideas that might resonate with their lives and their interests.

As I said at the very beginning, I had this amazing group of musicians with which to work. And an open invitation to compose whatever I wanted. It was my utmost desire to write a piece worthy of that challenge, and something the Marine Band and Col. Fettig would be proud to have inspired, and proud to perform whenever such an occasion might arise.

My mother had beautiful eyes, and a wonderful smile. I still see them in my mind's eye whenever I think of this piece.

APPENDIX E: FACSIMILE OF ORIGINAL SKETCHES FOR SYMPHONY NO. 2: VOICES

The image displays two pages of handwritten musical sketches for a symphony. The left page features a 2-4-12 bar sketch with a key signature of one flat. Below the notation, there are several checkmarks and notes: "✓ timp solo", "✓ cymbal transition", "✓ add 2 more bars to transition", and "✓ Jazz Saxes?". The right page contains more musical notation, including a section labeled "Bb M7 + B (Eb)" and "Eb".

2-4-12 bar sketch

✓ timp solo

✓ cymbal transition

✓ add 2 more bars to transition

✓ Jazz Saxes?

Bb M7 + B (Eb)

Eb

M Eb

DORIAN

PHRYGIAN

LYDIAN

MIXOLYDIAN

AOLIAN

LOCRIAN

starting on Eb

Eb

← LOCRIAN

DORIAN

PHRYGIAN

LYDIAN

MIXOLYDIAN

AOLIAN

LOCRIAN

Handwritten musical notation on two pages of a notebook. The left page is labeled "Euph" and contains several staves of music with notes, rests, and accidentals. A large bracket on the left page spans across the middle and right pages, with the text "1st and 2nd or 3rd Passes" written inside it. The right page contains more musical notation, including a section labeled "we hold" with an arrow pointing to a specific measure. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, notes, rests, and accidentals.

Handwritten musical notation on two pages of a notebook. The left page is labeled "A chord" and contains several staves of music. The right page contains more musical notation, including a section labeled "Same" with an arrow pointing to a specific measure. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, notes, rests, and accidentals. The left page also has a section labeled "make:" with a bracketed musical phrase.

APPENDIX F: AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Myron Peterson, a graduate teaching assistant at Colorado State University (CSU), previously spent twenty-one years as a director of bands at Urbandale High School in Urbandale, Iowa, from 1998 to 2019. During his tenure, the Urbandale High School band program grew in size from 110 students to more than 180 students. In 2006, Peterson directed the Urbandale Wind Ensemble as the class 4A honor band at the Iowa Bandmasters Association Conference. The band has since appeared three times at the IBA Conference as a clinic band: in 2008 for the “Band Boot Camp,” in 2014 as an ensemble in service to the Young Conductors Symposium, and in 2016 presenting a clinic titled, “Developing Non-Verbal Communication in the Concert Band.” Peterson has led performances with the Urbandale bands across the United States, having performed concerts and collaborated with bands in Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, Indiana, New Jersey, Connecticut, Hawaii, and Missouri. Prior to his arrival at Urbandale, Peterson taught for two years in the Oskaloosa Community School District, also in Iowa.

After twenty-three years developing band programs in Iowa, Peterson is currently pursuing a master of music degree in wind band conducting under the primary instruction of Dr. Rebecca Phillips, professor of music at CSU. Peterson earned his bachelor of music education in 1995 from the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). There he studied conducting with Dr. Ronald Johnson, Dr. Rebecca Burkhardt, and Mr. Bill Shepard. He is currently studying trombone with Dr. Drew Leslie, assistant professor of music at CSU. He previously studied with John Hanson and Max Bonecutter while at UNI, and further studied with David Stuart of Iowa State University and Mike Schmitz of the United States of America Navy Band.

Peterson performs regularly with the NOLA Jazz Band, Tony Valdez Large Band, the Plymouth Brass Consort, The Metropolitan Brass Quintet, and as a freelance trombonist in various chamber settings around the Des Moines, Iowa, and Fort Collins, Colorado, areas. He has performed with the Boulder Philharmonic, and in the pit orchestra at the Civic Center of Great Des Moines for national touring productions such as *The Color Purple*, *High School Musical*, and *Chicago*. He is an active adjudicator and clinician in the concert, jazz, and marching band fields.

As a leader, Peterson served as the president and on the board of directors for the Iowa Bandmasters Association (IBA), president of the South Central Iowa Bandmasters Association (SCIBA), and was the founding treasurer of the Jazz Educators of Iowa (JEI).

In addition to his professional affiliations with the IBA, SCIBA, and JEI, Peterson is also affiliated with the National Band Association, College Band Directors National Association, National Association for Music Education, Iowa Music Education Association, and Iowa Alliance for Arts Education.