

THESIS

CRACKING THE CODE: A CONDUCTOR'S ANALYSIS OF DAVID BIEDENBENDER'S

ENIGMA

Submitted by

David W. Davis

School of Music, Theatre, and Dance

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Music

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2026

Master's Committee:

Advisor: Rebecca L. Phillips

K. Dawn Grapes

James Taylor

Dawn Mallette

Copyright by David W. Davis 2026

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

CRACKING THE CODE: A CONDUCTOR'S ANALYSIS OF DAVID BIEDENBENDER'S

ENIGMA

This thesis presents a complete conductor's analysis of David Biedenbender's *Enigma*, consisting of a biographical sketch of the composer's life and career, an overview of his compositional voice, and a theoretical and rehearsal analysis of the piece itself. David Biedenbender has become one of the foremost composers of the twenty-first century through his prestigious accolades, notable commissions, and collaborations with leading ensembles internationally. Several sources offer a patchwork of his biography, but no single source extensively covers his life and career, resulting in a pressing need for scholarly research. This document helps fill this gap.

Enigma is a significant contribution to wind band repertoire, as evidenced by a 2024 William D. Revelli Memorial Competition Contest award and widespread programming across the country since its premiere. By masterfully blending his contemporary voice and training with the cornerstone work of J. S. Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*, Biedenbender pays appropriate homage to one of the most celebrated composers and pieces in history, as *Enigma* utilizes formal structures, melodic material, and accompaniment figures found in the original. Biedenbender's treatment of each musical element demonstrates careful craftsmanship and design. Through analysis of the theoretical elements of composition and their respective

performance considerations, this thesis creates a usable guide for conductors in their efforts to understand, prepare, and perform this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first acknowledgement belongs whole-heartedly to Dr. David Biedenbender. Your *Melodious Think* was one of the first pieces I ever played as a young clarinetist in my undergraduate studies, and I have since been an admirer of your music. *Enigma* is an absolute masterpiece, and I cannot think of a more fitting and rewarding piece to culminate my time at Colorado State University.

To the members of my graduate committee, thank you for your guidance in finalizing this document and preparing me for graduation.

To Dr. Dawn Mallette, thank you for sitting on my committee and offering your unique perspective. Your time and efforts are graciously appreciated.

To Dr. K. Dawn Grapes, thank you for giving me the literary and academic tools needed to write this thesis. Your classes were insightful and engaging, with just the right amount of humor and food. Thank you for fostering my love of twentieth-century music and the research process.

To Dr. James Taylor, thank you for your wisdom, sense of leadership, and spontaneous bits of trivia. I learned so much simply from watching your calm demeanor on the podium and on the tower. I hope to replicate this approach with my own ensembles throughout my career.

To Dr. Rebecca Phillips, no one has pushed me to the levels of musical and organizational excellence to the extent you have. You believed in me even in moments when I didn't and gave me grace as I grew to think more globally as a conductor. Thank you for being the mentor I needed during this degree.

To my CSU conducting cohort members, James, Cameron, and Amanda, thank you for making these past two years some of the most memorable I've ever had. Whether it was talking shop while setting up for rehearsals, taking pictures of people taking pictures at recitals, or climbing over each other in the office, I couldn't ask for a better group of peers and colleagues.

To Mr. Cuddles, the UCA cat, thank you for the surprise visits to our building. Despite your occasional sass, it was always a most auspicious day when you found your way inside for attention.

To my parents and family, thank you for your continued support for me and my career. Even while several states away, you helped me move in and out of apartments, tuned into concert livestreams, and encouraged throughout this journey.

Finally, to my wonderful fiancée Lauren, I am forever in your debt for agreeing to long distance these past two years. You are my foundation and my motivation to get through the hardest days. I simply could not have done this without your unconditional support. The future is so bright ahead of us and I love you dearly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview and Purpose.....	1
Methodology.....	1
Review of Literature and Sources related to David Biedenbender	5
CHAPTER 1 – BIOGRAPHY AND VOICE OF DAVID BIEDENBENDER.....	8
Biographical Sketch.....	8
Output and Compositional Process.....	12
Compositional Voice.....	14
Influences.....	14
Melody.....	15
Harmony.....	17
Rhythm.....	18
Orchestration/Timbre.....	20
Form/Construction.....	22
CHAPTER 2 – <i>ENIGMA</i> BACKGROUND	24
<i>Enigma</i> Source Material	24
Bach as Source Material for Wind Band Repertoire.....	27
<i>Enigma</i> Commission and Arrangement.....	29
Score Orientation and Programming Considerations.....	30
CHAPTER 3 – <i>ENIGMA</i> THEORETICAL AND REHEARSAL ANALYSIS.....	33
Overview of Form and Theme.....	33
Introduction and Development.....	33
Section One (mm. 1–27).....	34
Section Two (mm. 28–40).....	38
Section Three (mm. 41–52).....	40
Section Four (mm. 53–70).....	41
Section Five (mm. 71–89).....	42
Passacaglia.....	44
Variation One (mm. 90–97).....	45
Variation Two (mm. 98–105).....	46
Variation Three (mm. 106–113).....	48
Variation Four (mm. 114–120).....	49
Variation Five (mm. 121–128).....	50
Variation Six (mm. 129–137).....	51
Variation Seven (mm. 138–147).....	53
Variation Eight (mm. 148–155).....	55
Variation Nine (mm. 156–163).....	56
Variation Ten (mm. 164–171).....	58

Variation Eleven (mm. 172–179).....	59
Variation Twelve (mm. 180–187).....	61
Variation Thirteen (mm. 188–195).....	62
Variation Fourteen (mm. 196–203).....	63
Variation Fifteen (mm. 204–211).....	65
Variation Sixteen (mm. 212–219).....	67
Variation Seventeen (mm. 220–227).....	69
Variation Eighteen (mm. 228–235).....	71
Variation Nineteen (mm. 236–243).....	72
Variation Twenty (mm. 244–251).....	73
Variation Twenty-One (mm. 253–260).....	74
CONCLUSION.....	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	78
APPENDICES.....	81
A: PERMISSIONS FOR MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....	81
B: DAVID BIEDENBENDER: PUBLISHED WORKS	82
C: <i>ENIGMA</i> MAJOR THEMES AND TEXTURES REFERENCE GUIDE	87
D: TREATMENT OF THEME IN PASSACAGLIA SECTION (MM. 90–260)	90
E: <i>ENIGMA</i> PROGRAM NOTES	91
F: DAVID BIEDENBENDER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	92
G: AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY.....	107

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Symmetry in Passacaglia Section of Bach's <i>Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor</i>	27
Table 2.2 <i>Enigma</i> Instrumentation	31
Table 3.1 <i>Enigma</i> Form	33
Table 3.2 Introduction and Development Form	34
Table 3.3 Passacaglia Section Form	45

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , “Sound Delay” Texture and Melodic Line	35
Figure 3.2 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Sixteenth Note Accompaniment.....	36
Figure 3.3 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Solo	38
Figure 3.4 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Mensuration Canon Texture (Reduction).....	40
Figure 3.5 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Passacaglia Theme and Accompaniment	42
Figure 3.6 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Climax Motives.....	43
Figure 3.7 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Passacaglia Theme	45
Figure 3.8 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Passacaglia Theme Alteration	47
Figure 3.9 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Solo and Echo	47
Figure 3.10 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Glissandi Texture.....	50
Figure 3.11 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Sextuplet Texture.....	51
Figure 3.12 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Inverted Passacaglia Theme	52
Figure 3.13 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Cadential Extension	54
Figure 3.14 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Passacaglia Theme and Countermelody.....	55
Figure 3.15 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Change in Accompaniment Texture	58
Figure 3.16 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Melodic Interjection	59
Figure 3.17 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Material Borrowed from Bach (Variation Three).....	61
Figure 3.18 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Material Borrowed from Bach (Variation Six)	63
Figure 3.19 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Material Borrowed from Bach (Variation Nine)	64
Figure 3.20 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Sextuplet Texture.....	66
Figure 3.21 David Biedenbender, <i>Enigma</i> , Variation Sixteen Cadence (Reduction)	69

INTRODUCTION

Overview and Purpose

The etymology for the word *enigma* originates from a Greek word meaning “to speak in riddles.” American composer David Biedenbender (b. 1984) explores this concept in his composition of the same title, in which he masterfully blends his contemporary voice with J. S. Bach’s cornerstone work, *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*. While the formal design and quotation of melodic material in *Enigma* bear unmistakable similarities to its source material, these similarities may not be readily apparent to those unfamiliar with these works. This thesis, in the form of a conductor’s analysis, assists conductors to “crack the code,” as it were, on how to effectively prepare and perform this piece. Chapter one addresses how *Enigma* fits within the context of David Biedenbender’s career and compositional voice. Chapter two provides the historical context behind *Enigma*’s source material and information relevant to its programming. Chapter three analyzes the theoretical components of the score and offers rehearsal suggestions for the conductor to consider. Together, this document creates a useable guide for conductors and adds to the collective body of scholarly research on David Biedenbender.

Methodology

There are four parties involved in the performance of any musical composition: the composer, conductor, ensemble, and audience. The composer first conceives a work, after which the conductor studies the background of the composer, the compositional elements that form the composer’s voice, and eventually the piece to be performed. After this preparation, the rehearsal process allows the conductor to guide the ensemble to eventually achieve the composer’s intent. Finally, the audience experiences the combined efforts of composer, conductor, and ensemble.

A conductor's analysis fulfills the second step in the process listed above. Frank Battisti and Robert Garofalo, in the *Guide to Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor*, state, "A composer notates ideas in the score in order to transmit a musical creation to someone else. The conductor's challenge is to transform the notation into an expressive image."¹ To accomplish this challenge, the conductor must thoroughly prepare the music prior to the first rehearsal. This preparation includes understanding the life and career of the composer as well as their compositional voice, and finally, completing a theoretical and rehearsal analysis of the piece itself. The information obtained through this process is intended to provide technical information and aesthetic considerations necessary for a convincing interpretation, aiding the conductor throughout the rehearsal process and the eventual performance for an audience.

When constructing a biographical sketch, the conductor may find insight from information such as the composer's first experiences in music, from whom they received instruction, their artistic inspirations, and what genres they frequently write. The result is a clear picture of the composer's background, development and style. In his essay, *The Art of Conducting*, Eugene Ormandy states the conductor "must understand the historical context in which a particular work is conceived, and bring to bear upon the growing interpretive edifice a thorough knowledge of the stylistic requirements inherent in the work."² All compositions are a cross-section of a composer's background, compositional voice, and the cultural zeitgeist in which they live; rarely, if ever, is music composed in a vacuum. With careful preparation, the conductor can use this information to better understand the historical and cultural context behind

¹ Frank L. Battisti and Robert Joseph Garofalo, *Guide to Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor* (Milwaukee, WI: Meredith Music Publications, 1990), 1.

² Eugene Ormandy, "The Art of Conducting," in *The Professional Symphony Orchestra in the United States*, ed. George Seltzer (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975), 98–99.

a given piece, as well as the mindset of the composer at the time of composition. Neglecting to consider these aspects limits the conductor's ability to make educated interpretive decisions.

In addition to the composer's biography, an understanding of their compositional voice is crucial to creating an authentic interpretation that does not stray from their original intent. This necessitates a review of the composer's works to identify what patterns can be found in musical elements (melody, harmony, rhythm, etc.), so the conductors can then intentionally highlight these elements to bring out the composer's unique voice. Donald R. Hunsberger reinforces this concept in stating that an interpretation with appropriate style is created out of knowing the cumulative output of the composer. Additionally, he argues there is a huge benefit to being "immersed in the *music* world, not just the band world," meaning this survey of a composer's music should not be restricted to pieces within the same medium.³ Throughout this process of identifying a composer's voice, a conductor will determine how the piece fits into the total scope of the composer's output and gain insights into the composer's decision-making process.

Finally, a conductor's analysis examines the theoretical content of a piece and provides rehearsal considerations necessary to effectively teach a performing ensemble. In her book, *Beyond the Notes: Thoughts on Meaningful Music Making*, Paula Crider identifies two purposes of score study, one that is musical in nature and one that is pedagogical.⁴ A director must have a clear, compelling vision for the music, as well as the tools and rehearsal skills needed to teach their ensemble. In essence, music without interpretation is lifeless, and rehearsals that do not effectively communicate the conductor's vision will never see it realized in performance.

³ Donald R. Hunsberger, "Chapter 4: Donald R. Hunsberger" in *Rehearsing the Band*, ed. John E. Williamson (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2008), 36.

⁴ Paula A. Crider, *Beyond the Notes: Thoughts on Meaningful Music Making* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2024), 27.

The conductor's theoretical analysis investigates how the score is constructed by analyzing musical elements such as form, orchestration, and texture. Understanding these building blocks is critical for the conductor to appropriately develop their interpretation. Catherine Comet states, "You go as deeply as possible. You need to be able to reconstruct from scratch what the composer originally did and then put it back together again. You have to look at the larger perspective as well as the single components that comprise the work."⁵ The writing style of the composer and the nature of the piece determine what musical elements are most pertinent to the conductor. In his book, *In Pursuit of Great Conducting*, H. Robert Reynolds states that part of the score study process is determining what kind of analysis is needed. Using William Schuman's *Chester* as an example, Reynolds argues that a harmonic analysis is more practical in the first half of the piece, whereas a motivic analysis is better suited for the second half.⁶

A rehearsal analysis synthesizes this information by providing practical considerations for how to best treat the theoretical elements to create a clear, convincing performance. In addition, a rehearsal analysis focuses on technical issues within the piece that could present problems for the conductor or ensemble, such as balance, phrasing, conducting clarity, rhythmic challenges, and rehearsal pacing. These are provided alongside the theoretical findings throughout each section of the piece. With Biedenbender's background and compositional voice as a contextual framework, the Chapter 3 analysis in this document provides a detailed guide of *Enigma* for conductors to utilize.

⁵ Jeannine Wagar, *Conductors in Conversation: Fifteen Contemporary Conductors Discuss Their Lives and Profession* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1991), 29.

⁶ H. Robert Reynolds and Doris Doyon, *In Pursuit of Great Conducting* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2025), 85.

Review of Literature and Sources related to David Biedenbender

As of September 2025, only one thesis or dissertation existed that analyzed Biedenbender's music. Haley Houk's 2025 DMA dissertation, "The Reed Quintet: A Study of the History of a New Woodwind Genre, with Analyses of Paul Dooley's *Warp & Weft* and David Biedenbender's *Refraction*" analyzes his chamber piece as a new standard in reed quintet repertoire.⁷ Specifically, Houk examines how the timbre, rhythmic devices, and orchestration of each movement stylistically match the source material from which they are derived, information useful for understanding elements of his compositional style. Biedenbender has composed many groundbreaking pieces both before and after writing *Refraction* in 2015, adding to his body of work and necessitating a further examination of his compositional voice.

As no thesis or dissertation exists with biographical information on his background or career, interviews will be a significant source of information about the composer. Several interviews over the last five years are available online, providing context on Biedenbender's upbringing, career, and compositional philosophies. Each provides a unique angle to help understand him as a composer.

In December 2020, Biedenbender was interviewed by Jeffrey Leung from the Maryland Chamber Winds.⁸ The interview begins with a discussion of Biedenbender's childhood and early musical experiences on low brass instruments. Biedenbender describes how he enjoys writing for both wind band and saxophone, stating that those communities have been particularly open to

⁷ Haley Houk, "The Reed Quintet: A Study of the History of a New Woodwind Genre, with Analyses of Paul Dooley's *Warp & Weft* and David Biedenbender's *Refraction*" (DMA Diss., University of Houston, 2025), ProQuest 32262662.

⁸ Later renamed to the Newfound Chamber Winds; David Biedenbender, "Maryland Chamber Winds Composer Spotlight Series," interview by Jeffery Leung, Maryland Chamber Winds, December 2, 2022, Video, <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1Aeshe4ram/>.

new literature. He then discusses the circumstances behind writing *Kairos* in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, likening music to an antidote. Biedenbender concludes the interview with his philosophy on the relationship between composer and performer, likening his music to the start of a conversation, which the performer then turns into beauty.

In October 2023, David Osenberg from the WWFM The Classical Network did a composer spotlight interview with Biedenbender on his background and achievements.⁹ They discuss the inspiration and commission for two of Biedenbender's chamber works, *Shell and Wing* and *Red Vesper*. Biedenbender then describes his friendship and artistic collaboration with poet Robert Fanning, stating many of his compositions are inspired by Fanning's work. Additionally, this interview covers Biedenbender's compositional philosophies and creative process. He describes how he initially begins writing music, starting with the title or a single motive and developing outwardly. Finally, he discusses his desire to collaborate with other musicians and vary his output to include a range of ensemble types.

In June 2024, Dr. Chris Heidenreich from the University of Michigan-Flint interviewed Biedenbender in an episode of CBDNA's Conducting Masterclass series.¹⁰ In their discussion of the composer's early childhood, Biedenbender describes his experiences in high school band and his first attempts at arranging and composing. He goes into detail about his mentors, musical influences, and how his writing process has evolved since graduating and starting a family.

⁹ Radio broadcast licensed to Mercer County Community College in West Windsor, NJ; David Biedenbender, "David Biedenbender, composer," interview by David Osenberg, *Cadenza with David Osenberg*, WWFM The Classical Network, October 13, 2023, audio, <https://www.wwfm.org/show/cadenza-with-david-osenberg/2023-10-21/david-biedenbender-composer>.

¹⁰ David Biedenbender, "Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview," interview by Chris Heidenreich, *Conducting Masterclass*, CBDNA, July 26, 2024, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bofkAQpopIU>.

Additionally, he speaks on what he learned from his trip to India in 2010, when he traveled with Stephen Rush and the University of Michigan composition studio to study Carnatic music.

In addition to interviews, the *Teaching Music through Performance in Band* series by GIA Publications contains four chapters that analyze Biedenbender's music.¹¹ These chapters are organized in units such as composer biography, background information on the piece, technical considerations, prominent musical motives, and an overview of form. The four pieces examined include *Schism*, *Luminescence*, *Melodious Thunk*, and *Unquiet Hours*, together spanning a period of eight years in Biedenbender's compositional career from 2009–2017. These chapters are brief but assist in building a framework of Biedenbender's compositional style.

Finally, David Cook's 2018 article, "David Biedenbender's *Synchronicity* for Clarinet and Piano: Compositional and Performative Insights," presents an account of the piece's commission and describes the stylistic and historical influences for each movement.¹² Cook highlights key musical motives and compositional techniques while giving performance considerations for effective interpretation. This article contains brief theoretical elements but is largely useful for understanding Biedenbender's compositional process and how he draws inspiration from sources such as Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto* and the Swedish metal band, Meshuggah.

¹¹Edward C. Harris, "Melodious Thunk: David Biedenbender (b. 1984)," in *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*, Vol. 10, Larry Blocher, Eugene Migliaro Corporon, Ray Cramer, Tim Lautzenheiser, Edward S. Lisk, Richard Miles, edited by Richard Miles, (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2015), 446–452; Douglas Stotter, "Luminescence: David Biedenbender (b. 1984)," in *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*, Vol. 10, Larry Blocher, Eugene Migliaro Corporon, Ray Cramer, Tim Lautzenheiser, Edward S. Lisk, Richard Miles, edited by Richard Miles, (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2015), 771–779; Brian A. Silvey, "Schism for Winds and Percussion: David Biedenbender (b. 1984)," in *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*, Vol. 11, Larry Blocher, Eugene Migliaro Corporon, Ray Cramer, Tim Lautzenheiser, Edward S. Lisk, Richard Miles, edited by Richard Miles (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2017), 625–632; James Batcheller, "Unquiet Hours: David Biedenbender (b. 1984)," in *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*, Vol. 12, Larry Blocher, Eugene Migliaro Corporon, Ray Cramer, Tim Lautzenheiser, Edward S. Lisk, Richard Miles, Andrew Trachsel, edited by Andrew Trachsel, (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2021), 488–495.

¹² David Cook, "David Biedenbender's *Synchronicity* for Clarinet and Piano: Compositional and Performative Insights," *The Clarinet* 45, no. 3 (2018): 46–50.

CHAPTER 1: BIOGRAPHY AND VOICE OF BIEDENBENDER

Biographical Sketch

David Biedenbender was born on September 28, 1984, in Waukesha, Wisconsin. In 1989, when he was still a young child, his family moved to Michigan, where he eventually attended Mount Pleasant Public Schools. His paternal family included several Lutheran pastors, and his first musical experiences include singing in the church choir and watching his mother perform as an organist. He initially joined the school band on trumpet before switching to euphonium in the ninth grade. Biedenbender describes his early musical experiences as having “lots of low end;” in addition to euphonium, he played tuba, bass trombone, and electric bass.¹³ While in high school, he played in nearly every ensemble the school offered, including concert band, orchestra, jazz band, and marching band. Looking back, he remarks, “I practically lived in the band room.”¹⁴

Biedenbender’s first experience writing music was arranging brass chamber groups for his church. He met David Gillingham, a professor of composition at Central Michigan University (CMU), when he joined the high school marching band in the eighth grade and played an arrangement of Gillingham’s *Stained Glass*. Additionally, Gillingham’s daughter was Biedenbender’s trumpet section leader. This connection to a prominent composer, as well as a lecture Biedenbender attended at CMU by composer Augusta Read Thomas, prompted him to attempt his first original composition. The result was a thirteen-minute work inspired by the liturgical passion week, which he sent to Gillingham for critique. With the support of his Mount

¹³ Biedenbender, “David Biedenbender, composer.”

¹⁴ Biedenbender, “Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview.”

Pleasant High School band director, Matthew Taton, Biedenbender conducted the premiere of this piece with his own high school band. After graduation, he accepted an invitation by Gillingham to study composition at CMU.

At Central Michigan, Biedenbender pursued a degree in composition and theory while continuing to play euphonium. He describes Gillingham as “warm and supportive . . . expanding my perspective early on.”¹⁵ In addition to Gillingham, Biedenbender studied composition with José-Luis Maúrtua, whom he describes as more intense. In Biedenbender’s first lesson with Maúrtua, they deliberated about possible voicings of a single measure for the entire hour, at which point his teacher instructed him to apply that same intensity to the whole piece.¹⁶ Following his undergraduate program, Biedenbender attended the University of Michigan for graduate studies.

As a master’s student, Biedenbender studied with Bright Sheng and Michael Daugherty. He credits Sheng for expanding his concept of formal structure and proportions, carefully managing the pacing of musical ideas to spend sufficient time on them. In their lessons, Biedenbender recalls using a “composer-ly approach” to Schenkerian theory, considering the outer voices and horizontal motion in music as opposed to vertical counterpoint.¹⁷ Daugherty was hands-on with experimenting and editing Biedenbender’s music in real time, showing his student the full potential of his music by utilizing a diverse range of development techniques.¹⁸

¹⁵ David Biedenbender, interview by author, Fort Collins, CO, December 15, 2025.

¹⁶ Biedenbender, interview.

¹⁷ Biedenbender, interview.

¹⁸ Biedenbender, interview.

As a doctoral candidate, Biedenbender studied with Kristin Kuster, Evan Chambers, and Michael Daugherty, the latter of whom served as Biedenbender’s advisor for both his thesis and dissertation. Kuster guided Biedenbender through moments of writer’s block, reflecting on his compositional process and creativity.¹⁹ Chambers was similarly detail-oriented, like Maúrtua, often spending entire lessons on a few measures. Biedenbender recalls him saying, “The first millisecond of a piece is the first impression. It’s got to be good.”²⁰ In 2009, Biedenbender was awarded a Master of Music in Composition and in 2013 a Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition with cognates in theory, electronic music, and conducting. During his time in Ann Arbor, he was also awarded a certificate in Music Theory Pedagogy in 2012.

Throughout his graduate and doctoral studies, Biedenbender was afforded several opportunities to travel both domestically and abroad. In 2010, he traveled with Stephen Rush and other University of Michigan students to Mysore, India, where he studied South Indian Carnatic music and the *mridangam* with Vidwan Ramanujan.²¹ In 2012, he visited the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in Uppsala, Sweden, where he studied with Anders Hillborg and Steven Stucky.²² Later that year he participated in a composition program led by Sydney Hodkinson and George Tsontakis at the Aspen Music Festival and School, in Colorado.²³ In 2013, he was selected for a composition fellowship at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in Santa

¹⁹ Biedenbender, interview.

²⁰ Biedenbender, interview.

²¹ A *mridangam* is a traditional, two-sided drum used in South Indian Carnatic music.

²² Anders Hillborg is professor emeritus from the Malmö Academy of Music and a freelance composer; Steven Stucky was an American, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer known for his collaborations with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and other premier U.S. symphonies.

²³ Sydney Hodkinson was a professor emeritus from the Eastman School of Music and artist-in-residence through the Ford Foundation Contemporary Music Project; George Tsontakis is a distinguished composer in residence at the Bard College of Music in New York.

Cruz, California, studying under Kevin Puts.²⁴ Finally, after earning his doctorate, he was a composition fellow with the CULTIVATE creative workshop at the Aaron Copland House in New York, studying under Derek Bermel.²⁵ In summary, this extensive list of educational opportunities demonstrates Biedenbender's diverse background and provides insight into the formation of his compositional voice.

After earning his master's degree, Biedenbender began his theory and composition teaching career. In 2009, he served as a lecturer in music theory at Oakland University. While there, he published two of his earliest works for wind band, *Stomp* and *Luminescence*. During his doctoral studies from 2010–2013, he taught music theory as a graduate student instructor at the University of Michigan. Biedenbender composed one of his most programmed works, *Melodious Think*, during these studies in 2012. In 2013, he was hired by Madonna University as an adjunct assistant professor of music composition and orchestration. The following year, he served as an assistant professor of music composition and theory and coordinator of theory at Boise State University. While in Boise, Biedenbender wrote several major chamber works, such as *Red Vesper* and *Refraction*. In 2016, Biedenbender was hired by Michigan State University as an assistant professor of composition. In 2022, he was awarded tenure and in 2024 he became chair of the composition area. In addition to the aforementioned positions, Biedenbender has collaborated as a guest composer at several universities, including the University of Texas at Austin, Nazareth College (Rochester, NY), and University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

²⁴ Kevin Puts is a Pulitzer and Grammy Award-winning composer and professor at the Peabody Institute.

²⁵ Derek Bermel is a clarinetist and composer, active in classical, film, and pop collaborations.

Output and Compositional Process

Biedenbender composes for a wide variety of forms, writing extensively for wind band, chamber, and solo instrumental mediums. Other genres in his cumulative output include voice, choral, jazz, electroacoustic, and opera. He enjoys writing for both wind band and solo saxophone especially, finding these communities to be particularly open to collaboration and new music.²⁶ Biedenbender's diversity in genres is intentional; he strives to live a "varied and rich artistic life" by never staying in one medium too long.²⁷ His favorite genre is "whatever I'm working on right now," and he finds his wind band music, for example, is stronger after writing a choral or chamber piece.²⁸ During the writing process of a given piece, he typically studies numerous examples in the same medium, familiarizing himself with a diverse range of repertoire and composers.

At the beginning of his composing career, Biedenbender often wrote at odd hours of the night or during extended twelve- to eighteen-hour-long sessions. Later, in graduate school, he wrote primarily when he felt inspiration. Now, he holds himself to a regular schedule of composing one to three hours every day. Biedenbender coaches his students in this practice as well, explaining there is a "certain ease you encounter when you have created something the past several days."²⁹

Many of Biedenbender's works are a conversation across time and discipline, a statement of "I love what you did, here is my response."³⁰ This appreciation germinates into a title or

²⁶ Biedenbender, "Maryland Chamber Winds Composer Spotlight Series."

²⁷ Biedenbender, "David Biedenbender, composer."

²⁸ Biedenbender, "Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview."

²⁹ Biedenbender, "Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview."

³⁰ Biedenbender, "David Biedenbender, composer."

motive he then develops. Biedenbender typically determines the title as his first step; he likens this to sculpting, finding the piece and chipping away to reveal the final product rather than composing out of the blue. He places high importance on a good title, claiming they help him “see and taste” the piece.³¹ The title is also the audience’s first impression of his music, so it should invite them in. While he has experimented with short score formats to generate ideas, Biedenbender typically composes while orchestrating directly into a full score. Timbre is a critical component to him, so every note is carefully voiced in the desired instrument and range. He describes this process as determining the “meaning of your notes,” recognizing that “an A in a flute part at [the dynamic] piano is a different color than the tuba at forte.”³²

As a highly commissioned composer, Biedenbender often writes for specific individuals or ensembles and enjoys the collaborative aspect of utilizing players’ sound characteristics in the compositional process. When he wrote his first piece for members of his high school band, he discovered that “knowing their sound, and who they were, and what they could do, and the character that they were going to bring to their part, all of that played a role for me.”³³ He loves writing for soloists and collaborating with them in a way that allows their “personality to come through in the music.”³⁴ Throughout this process, Biedenbender is keenly aware the performer is responsible for bringing his music to life, so the mechanics of how that sound is created is very important to him. “I don’t know if that sets me apart...but that’s what makes me tick.”³⁵

³¹ Biedenbender, “David Biedenbender, composer.”

³² Biedenbender, “Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview.”

³³ Biedenbender, “Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview.”

³⁴ Biedenbender, “Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview.”

³⁵ Biedenbender, “Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview.”

Compositional Voice

Influences

Biedenbender credits his writing style to the many instructors and mentors he studied with over the years. Among these mentors, Steven Stucky taught him “no composer can be an orphan.”³⁶ Rather, all composers are products of their training, and their music draws inspiration from the past. Biedenbender also credits his influences from historical composers, namely, Monk, Bach, Machaut, and Schumann. He actively keeps a growing list of composers in whom he takes interest, believing that listening is one of the most important things a composer can do. As of 2024, this list totaled over 300 names, which Biedenbender uses as a tool to help his students absorb as much music as possible.³⁷

Biedenbender pursues many interdisciplinary projects that connect his music to other fields of study. In 2013, Biedenbender’s music was featured on *Beyond/Within*, a project combining music with dance. His *Liquid Architecture* for bass trombone and piano was paired with a routine choreographed by Ann Arbor Dance Works artistic director and University of Michigan faculty member, Jessica Fogel. In 2014, artist Creighton Michael commissioned Biedenbender to write the music for his art installation, *Double Dutch*.³⁸ This collaboration paired the hand-drawn animations of Jennifer Macdonald with Biedenbender’s composition that featured the harpsichord and a quotation of the sacred song “Daphne,” as notated in the Dutch Camphuysen Manuscript.³⁹ Beginning in 2014, he developed a close working relationship with

³⁶ Biedenbender, “David Biedenbender, composer.”

³⁷ Biedenbender, “Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview.”

³⁸ New York-based artist and visiting lecturer at Princeton University, known for sculpture, drawings, and paintings.

³⁹ A seventeenth-century anthology of thirty-six anonymous keyboard works.

poet Robert Fanning; both artists have created original pieces inspired by the other's work and they share progress updates on their ongoing projects.⁴⁰ Examples of Biedenbender's music inspired by Fanning's poetry include *Shell and Wing*, *What is Written on the Leaves*, *Severance*, *in a field of stars*, and *all we are given we cannot hold*.

Biedenbender frequently takes inspiration from scientific fields and the applications of electroacoustic technology. In 2009, he collaborated with Robert Alexander and co-directed the MiND ensemble (Music in Neural Dimensions) to create music based on neural feedback collected by an Emotiv EPOC headset.⁴¹ Electroencephalography (EEG) data collected from the headset created a live visualization of brain activity, becoming a texture from which to then create music. Biedenbender's 2012 work, *a line between two spaces*, features a heavily improvised performance of piano and various electronics including laptop, iPad, and Nintendo Wiimote. In 2021, he was named guest composer at the U.S. Department of Energy's Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, a role intended to merge art and science; this resulted in his 2022 *Symmetry Breaking* for piano duo, inspired by the concept of subatomic systems breaking apart and reassembling.

Melody

Biedenbender's melodies can be viewed in two broad categories: lyrical and motivic. His lyrical melodies draw from his experience as a euphonium player, an instrument he refers to as the "tenor of the wind band."⁴² He often thinks about melody as something that is sung, resulting

⁴⁰ Biedenbender, "David Biedenbender, composer."

⁴¹ At the time of this project, Alexander was a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan and a sonification specialist with the Solar Heliospheric Research Group.

⁴² Biedenbender, "Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview."

in parsimoniously written melodies with long, regular phrases that mimic the verse of song. This connection between melody and singing is prevalent across his compositional output, in which he has taken inspiration from choral hymns and written for chamber ensembles with a vocalist. Biedenbender's concept of melody is not exclusive to bel canto-style songs, however, and he believes sung melodies can also be "weird" or include an element of improv.⁴³ Jazz-influenced works, like *Schism*, include dedicated improvisation sections, with written guidelines to play "à la Charles Mingus Big Band".⁴⁴ In contrast, *dream of ember*, *dream of star*, has an improvised section for crotales and triangle, a style of writing better classified as indeterminacy.⁴⁵

Biedenbender's lyrical melodies are also characterized by the frequent use of ornamentation, including grace notes, beamed grace notes, mordents, and turns. These are especially prevalent in solos and soli written for woodwinds. In a given phrase, these ornaments might be written for nearly every note and fluidly change between different ornamentation types, creating an ethereal or dreamlike feel. An example can be seen in the opening to the first movement of *Kairos*, where the bassoon and oboe have near-continuous streams of ornamented notes.⁴⁶

Biedenbender's motivic melodies use short, repeated fragments that slowly develop on successive iterations; possible changes include modifying the melodic contour, modifying the rhythmic content, adding additional voices, or introducing other motives. These melodies are

⁴³ Biedenbender, "Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview."

⁴⁴ David Biedenbender, *Schism* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2010).

⁴⁵ David Biedenbender, *dream of ember*, *dream of star* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2021).

⁴⁶ David Biedenbender, *Kairos* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2020), mm. 1–23.

often initially pointillistic, utilizing significant amounts of silence between motives. As the music develops, these motives combine to create a composite, hocket-like texture. An example of this is found in the piano cadenza of *Red Vesper*, where an eighth-note motive is restated multiple times as the melodic content slowly varies and additional voices gradually enter.⁴⁷ Additionally, these fragments often are split between different voices in the ensemble, resembling the *Klangfarbenmelodie* technique coined by Arnold Schoenberg.

Harmony

While melody, harmony, and texture often develop together, Biedenbender finds himself “leading” his compositional process with harmonies.⁴⁸ The melodies to which he gravitates are often “context-based,” supported by strong harmonic context.⁴⁹ His music is best classified as tonal with frequent tertian additives and occasional use of modes. Seventh chords are extremely common, and harmonies often include ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth extensions. This language can be attributed to Biedenbender’s experience playing electric bass in jazz band and his love of alternative rock and metal, where such harmonies are common practice. His use of dissonance comes primarily through sustained harmonic seconds, suspensions, and sequences of anticipated notes. Occasionally, Biedenbender will write harmonic progressions with elision, causing brief moments of dissonance as chords overlap. Biedenbender also creates dissonance by imitating a melodic motive in successive, overlapping voices with offset entrances and varying note lengths.

⁴⁷ David Biedenbender, *Red Vesper* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2014), mm. 24–46.

⁴⁸ Biedenbender, interview.

⁴⁹ Biedenbender, interview.

This technique is used particularly at cadence points, creating harmonic tension through tonal obscurity.

During the writing process, Biedenbender is keenly aware of the relationship between groove and harmony, which together create a sense of direction. In some pieces, “the conception is much more textural, ... sort of setting up a vibe.”⁵⁰ As such, the bass voices in his compositions are often equally responsible for supporting the pulse as they are the harmonic progression. His harmonic vocabulary is often reminiscent of jazz or funk, featuring driving repeated motives, punchy attacks, powerful fifth chords, and intricate offbeat rhythms.

Biedenbender’s use of modulations is often subtle; as opposed to noticeably contrasting sections, he uses shared tones and related keys to establish seamless changes. In many cases he modulates to a parallel mode, creating a slight change in nuance with no change in the tonic root. An example of his modulations can be seen in *Before the Dawn*, where he uses mediant motion to progress through E-flat Lydian, G Lydian dominant, and finally B-flat major.⁵¹ Additionally, *Luminescence* frequently changes between minor keys and Lydian dominant modes to create an evolving range of colors while evoking the older harmonies used in hymns.⁵²

Rhythm

Rhythm is a quintessential element of Biedenbender’s music, active in both his melodic and harmonic writing. In addition to pointillistic melodies and grooving bass lines, Biedenbender

⁵⁰ Biedenbender, interview.

⁵¹ David Biedenbender, *Before the Dawn* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2023), mm. 69–81.

⁵² Douglas Stotter, “Luminescence: David Biedenbender (b. 1984),” in *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*, Vol. 10, Larry Blocher, Eugene Migliaro Corporon, Ray Cramer, Tim Lautzenheiser, Edward S. Lisk, Richard Miles, edited by Richard Miles, (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2015), 777.

treats beat subdivisions in several significant ways: First, he frequently changes between duple, triple, and other less common divisions. He partially attributes this to his 2010 trip to Mysore, India to study Carnatic music, where subdivisions of sevens, nines, and more are common.⁵³ An example can be seen in *Shell and Wing* where the vibraphone progresses through triplets, sixteenths, quintuplets, and sextuplets in the span of a single measure.⁵⁴ In the first movement of *Cerulean*, all saxophone voices similarly moves between changing subdivisions.⁵⁵ Both examples create the impression of accelerating or decelerating while the tempo remains constant.

Second, Biedenbender frequently writes voices with intricate, offbeat lines that combine into a shared, composite rhythm. Occasionally this composite rhythm is written in its entirety in one section of the ensemble, with others fitting into that texture. For example, the marimba opens *Enigma* with an elaborate rhythmic line while each woodwind voice plays fragments of the complete texture.⁵⁶ Particularly in chamber works with limited instrumentation, Biedenbender often does not state this composite completely in one voice, instead relying on the component parts.

Third, Biedenbender's music frequently utilizes polyrhythms of two or more beat subdivisions. He most often uses combinations of two/four against three but will also set less common divisions such as fives and sevens. In *Shell and Wing*, the piano and glockenspiel are written in duple while the vibraphone is primarily in compound meter. In a more extreme example from the same piece, Biedenbender later writes simultaneous quarter-note triplets in

⁵³ Biedenbender, "Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview."

⁵⁴ David Biedenbender, *Shell and Wing* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2018), m. 35.

⁵⁵ David Biedenbender, *Cerulean* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2017), mm. 1–52.

⁵⁶ David Biedenbender, *Enigma* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2024), mm. 1–8.

soprano and strings; sixteenth, quintuplet, and sextuplet notes in the woodwinds; and eighth-note triplets in the piano.⁵⁷

Orchestration/Timbre

Biedenbender uses an extensive array of compositional devices and implements to achieve a diverse color palette. He models his approach after the orchestration of John Williams' film scores, appreciating the way Williams writes each instrument in a register that "lets them shine."⁵⁸ Biedenbender typically begins writing a piece with a list of different colors and timbres he wants to incorporate, careful to compose contrasting sections throughout a work while maintaining a sense of continuity. "I love thinking about digging into the most characteristic registers and colors of the instruments."⁵⁹ His goal is to have the audience think, "Wow, the instrument I'm hearing right now is just the coolest," adding, "performers feel great when they feel that as well."⁶⁰ To accomplish this, he features different sections or section groupings throughout the piece and utilizes techniques specific to each instrument. As a low brass player, he favors heavy and bold parts for the low brass and low reed parts, particularly in pieces influenced by his love of rock music. While considering appropriate context, he aims to make the oboe sound "reedier," the bass trombone "grittier," and the trumpet "brighter and bolder."⁶¹

⁵⁷ David Biedenbender, *Shell and Wing* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2018), m. 77.

⁵⁸ Biedenbender, interview.

⁵⁹ Biedenbender, interview.

⁶⁰ Biedenbender, interview.

⁶¹ Biedenbender, interview.

Biedenbender's treatment of brass is particularly unique, utilizing a combination of mutes, stopped horn, glissandi, and short one-bar crescendos to create a Doppler-like effect. With these effects, the brass often defines the ensemble's tone color in a given section: Mutes and stopped horn create immediate changes in timbre, contrasting with the material around it; glissandi in trombone create harmonic "gradients," blurring the lines between chord changes; and all brass voices perform swelled, often-overlapping long tones, causing them to seemingly fade in and out of focus. This versatility and range of timbre makes them chameleons within the ensemble, quickly changing timbres to facilitate the intended mood of the piece.

Biedenbender utilizes extended techniques in the woodwinds as well, calling them, "whimsical and fun."⁶² The beginning to *Cyclotron* features growls in the saxophones, *Cerulean* opens with performers blowing air through their horns, and *Mosaic* contains multi-phonics in saxophone and oboe.⁶³ Biedenbender's writing for woodwinds frequently includes ornamentation and flourishes, particularly when they are the primary melodic line or suddenly replace another grouping as the melodic line. In this way, his melodic writing for woodwinds is energetic, sprightly, and clear in purpose. When used as a background or accompaniment figure, woodwinds often have extended scalar runs, which may consist of a single line played among one or more voices, or as a series of continuously overlapping fragments, creating a musical Shepard tone.

Biedenbender's percussion writing favors keyboard instruments, equally responsible for melodic content, accompaniment figures, and establishing the feeling of pulse. Often the

⁶² Biedenbender, interview.

⁶³ David Biedenbender, *Cyclotron* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2017); David Biedenbender, *Cerulean* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2017); David Biedenbender, *Mosaic* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2025).

keyboards double other voices on the melody or contribute to intricate composite rhythms, rather than being the primary voice in the texture. Non-pitched implements like snare or bass drum are used sparingly, often combined into an existing keyboard part rather than requiring a dedicated auxiliary player. Even in pieces with an extensive list of percussion implements, such as *What is Written on the Leaves*, keyboards are often the dominant voice of the percussion section. Works that draw from the jazz idiom, such as *Mosaic* or *Schism*, feature an extended percussion roster and/or drum set player.

Form/Construction

While many of Biedenbender's works follow traditional patterns, his formal designs are determined by his musical ideas, not the other way around. His writing process prioritizes "developing an idea, or two, or three, and realizing their potential through development techniques. Then determining how I'm going to lay them out, what order, or what their relationships are to each other."⁶⁴ He likens the beginning stages of his writing process to "building a bunch of puzzle pieces" at which point he "figures out how they fit together"⁶⁵ As a result, certain compositions are better described as sectional or through-composed. His music does not always return to opening melodic material, but rather takes an idea or motive and develops it naturally over the course of a piece.

Many of Biedenbender's shorter works for band or chamber winds feature homogenous writing, fully demonstrating his ability to develop melodic material while maintaining a uniform aesthetic. In his larger works containing more contrasting material, Biedenbender often

⁶⁴ Biedenbender, interview.

⁶⁵ Biedenbender, interview.

introduces new sections through a change in the rhythmic content. He may pivot to a new rhythmic motive, a different primary beat subdivision, or a change in the groove created by percussion and bass voices. For example, *Kyrie (for Machaut and Pärt)* demonstrates this with noticeable shifts in rhythmic content in the melody and accompaniment of each of its six major sections.⁶⁶ In this way, his form is felt as much as it is heard melodically or harmonically.

Additionally, Biedenbender often uses forms that are stylistically appropriate to the genres in which he is writing, creating a natural blend of his music with the source material from which it borrows. *Schism*, for example, draws heavy inspiration from the jazz idiom and uses a standard jazz form of introduction, head, solos, head, and coda. Similarly, Biedenbender's settings of choral hymns and poetry often mimic the verse and stanza structure of their source material. *all we are given we cannot hold*, based on poetry by Robert Fanning, uses similar material for each line, evoking the natural cadence of the written text.

⁶⁶ David Biedenbender, *Kyrie (for Machaut and Pärt)* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2019).

CHAPTER 2: ENIGMA BACKGROUND

***Enigma* Source Material**

Enigma draws significant inspiration from J. S. Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*, BWV 582, which Biedenbender cites as one of his favorite compositions. Major elements such as Bach's passacaglia theme, the overarching structure of twenty-one variations, and several accompaniment figures are all directly utilized in *Enigma*. For the purposes of understanding the historical context and the ways in which *Enigma* compares to the formal structure of its source material, a brief background and analysis of the *Passacaglia and Fugue* is provided.

Though one of Bach's most prominent works for organ, the *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor* was likely first written for a manual harpsichord with a pedal.⁶⁷ Bach composed this piece between the years 1708 and 1717 during his second residency in Weimar, Germany. At the time of its writing, the *Passacaglia and Fugue* was his longest and most ambitious work, approximately nine minutes in duration.⁶⁸ Ostinato-based compositions were common among Bach's contemporaries, and he plausibly drew inspiration from these works. Among these works were three compositions by the renowned Dieterich Buxtehude, which Bach's older brother compiled in his manuscript of fifty-seven keyboard pieces, the *Andreas Bach Book*. This collection provided J. S. Bach a resource of compositions to study as a young composer. Around this time in 1705, Bach was granted leave from his position as organist in Arnstadt to visit

⁶⁷ David Mulbury, "Bach's 'Passacaglia' in C Minor: Notes Regarding its Background, Essence, and Performance," *Bach* 3, no. 2 (April 1972): 14, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41639849>.

⁶⁸ Klemens Schnorr, "Litanei und Ostinato in Bachs Passacaglia c-Moll BWV 582," *Anuario Musical* (2001): 163, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/litanei-und-ostinato-bachs-passacaglia-c-moll-bwv/docview/1313590/se-2>.

Buxtehude in Lübeck and become more familiar with the latter's compositions. While modern analysis of form reveals differences between his works and J. S. Bach's, there are noticeable similarities in the counterpoint and variation techniques used.⁶⁹ In addition to Buxtehude's influence, Christian Friedrich Witt's *Passacaglia in D Minor* is similar in structure to Bach's *Passacaglia* and could have been a model for him, though the exact date of completion for Witt's work, and by extension which came first, is unclear.⁷⁰

Conductors of *Enigma* should be aware Bach's *Passacaglia* theme uses all the notes in the C melodic-minor scale in a repetitive iambic rhythm, comprised of two parts: The first half is borrowed from the *Trio en Passacaille* by André Raison, while the second features original material by Bach.⁷¹ The full theme is first presented in the pedal bass, followed by twenty variations and concluding with a fugue. This final fugue variation is labeled "Theme fugatum" or "Fuga cum subjectis," emphasizing these are two continuous sections as opposed to separate movements like a prelude and fugue. While certain modern editions have added a double bar between the passacaglia and fugue sections, original editions had no visual indication of separation between the two.⁷² Bach further supported this element of continuity by immediately treating the fugal subject with its countersubjects, as opposed to the conventional method of first stating it unaccompanied. His treatment of the fugal theme is largely typical of Baroque

⁶⁹ Schnorr, "Litanei und Ostinato in Bachs Passacaglia c-Moll BWV 582," 164.

⁷⁰ Mulbury, "Bach's 'Passacaglia' in C minor: Notes Regarding Its Background, Essence, and Performance," 17.

⁷¹ Donald Hunsberger, "Johann Sebastian Bach's *Prelude in E-Flat* and the *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor* in Transcription for Wind Ensemble" (DMA Diss., University of Rochester, 1963), 6.

⁷² Schnorr, "Litanei und Ostinato in Bachs Passacaglia c-Moll BWV 582," 167.

counterpoint but lacks many devices common to fugues such as augmentation, diminution, or inversion.⁷³

As is common in Bach's works, the *Passacaglia* section contains an axis of symmetry where individual variations and groups of variations can be grouped together based on similarities in melodic material, rhythmic devices, or number of concurrent voices. Each of these groupings have corresponding groupings across this axis of identical length.⁷⁴ For example, variations one and two notably share similar accompaniment figures, as do variations nineteen and twenty (see Table 2.1). This line of symmetry is signaled at variation eleven by the theme abruptly moving two octaves from the pedal bass to the soprano range.⁷⁵ Only one pairing shows an inverse relationship: Variations nine and twelve are constructed in opposition to each other. The accompaniment in the former is based on thirds with the theme in the bass while the latter features stepwise motion with the theme in the soprano.⁷⁶ While the *Fugue* section contains similar elements of structural design, the component halves do not correspond across an axis as strongly.⁷⁷

⁷³ Mulbury, "Bach's 'Passacaglia' in C minor: Notes Regarding Its Background, Essence, and Performance — Part II," 16.

⁷⁴ Mulbury, "Bach's 'Passacaglia' in C Minor: Notes Regarding Its Background, Essence, and Performance — Part II," 12.

⁷⁵ To observe patterns of symmetry, formal analysis necessitates framing the passacaglia section as the initial ostinato theme followed by twenty variations before the fugue. Future references in this document to material from Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue* will use this model of numerology in reference to specific variations.

⁷⁶ Mulbury, "Bach's 'Passacaglia' in C Minor: Notes Regarding Its Background, Essence, and Performance — Part II," 14.

⁷⁷ Mulbury, "Bach's 'Passacaglia' in C Minor: Notes Regarding Its Background, Essence, and Performance — Part II," 14–16.

Variations	1–2	3–5	6–9	10–11	12–15	16–18	19–20
Length of Groupings	2	3	4 (3+1)	2	4 (1+3)	3	2

As a devout Lutheran, Bach constructed this piece with symbolic elements meaningful to his Christian faith. The final variation is unique because the fugue subject is accompanied by two counter subjects, a possible representation of the Holy Trinity.⁷⁸ Additional meaning is found in the number of phrases across the entire work: The fugue theme is repeated twelve times, combining with the twenty-one passacaglia statements for a total of thirty-three thematic statements. While not universally agreed upon today, thirty-three is commonly thought of as the length of Christ's life.⁷⁹ While the symbolic meaning in *Enigma* centers largely on the structure of twenty-one variations, these aspects of Bach's design are prominent enough in the *Passacaglia and Fugue* to make them significant in understanding the historical context of the source material.

Bach as Source Material for Wind Band Repertoire

Organ works, particularly those by J. S. Bach, have historically been frequent subjects for wind band transcriptions and arrangements. Both mediums create sound through the same general principle of wind through pipes of varying lengths; orchestration of the wind ensemble resembles the registration of the organ; and groupings of wind instruments can be thought of as

⁷⁸ Schnorr, "Litanei und Ostinato in Bachs Passacaglia c-Moll BWV 582," 171.

⁷⁹ Schnorr, "Litanei und Ostinato in Bachs Passacaglia c-Moll BWV 582," 171.

ranks of pipes.⁸⁰ Wind bands performing transcriptions often take additional measures to match the articulation style common to organists, both to create clarity in dense, polyphonic textures and to create a more authentic representation.⁸¹ Donald Hunsberger, who arranged several major organ works by Bach, argued, “the uniqueness of wind band timbres rivals only that of the organ as a true source of combinations and range.”⁸²

The *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor* has several iterations in the wind band repertoire. Nicholas D. Falcone began scoring the first major wind band transcription in 1926, during his tenure as director of bands at University of Michigan and performed the completed work as early as 1931.⁸³ The most programmed transcription comes from Donald Hunsberger in 1968, transcribed for the Eastman Wind Ensemble. In his arrangement, he notably scored woodwind voices in groups of three and brass voices in groups of four, creating color combinations similar to the registration capabilities of the organ.⁸⁴ In 1993, Ron Nelson wrote *Passacaglia (Homage to B-A-C-H)*, neither an arrangement nor a transcription. Instead, the counterpoint in Nelson’s work largely uses the famous B \flat –A–C–B \natural motive Bach introduced in *The Art of the Fugue*, with a notable quotation of the Bach passacaglia theme in variation nineteen. In 2014, Marc

⁸⁰ Robert L. Martin, “Wind Band Transcriptions of Johann Sebastian Bach's Organ Works and the Application of Organ Registration in Orchestration.” (Thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2019), 9, ProQuest 13859466.

⁸¹ James L. Montgomery, “Application of Baroque Organ Articulation Concepts to a Wind–Band Transcription of J. S. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565” (Thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2000), 7, ProQuest 1402556.

⁸² Donald Hunsberger, “Wind Library: Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565” *WindWorks* 2, (Fall 1998): 2.

⁸³ Joseph Dobos and William Berz, “Nicholas Falcone, The Band Director You’ve Probably Never Heard Of,” *Journal of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles*, 8.

⁸⁴ Hunsberger, “Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Prelude in E-Flat* and the *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor* in Transcription for Wind Ensemble,” 19.

Sosnowchik transcribed and edited Leopold Stokowski's *Passacaglia and Thema Fugatum in C Minor* for orchestra, using an unpublished manuscript from the Leopold Stokowski Collection at the University of Pennsylvania. Biedenbender's *Enigma* joins this list of major compositions through the similarities in formal design to the Bach *Passacaglia and Fugue*, extensive use of the passacaglia theme, and quotation of accompaniment figures.

***Enigma* Commission and Arrangement**

Enigma was originally composed for brass choir and organ. Biedenbender conducted the premiere performance with the Beaumont Brass and organist Patrick Johnson on September 20, 2022, for the dedication of the newly-installed Red Cedar Organ in the Michigan State University Alumni Memorial Chapel. Biedenbender dedicated the work to his former teacher, José-Luis Maúrtua, who died in spring 2022. A special note of gratitude to Ken Heinlein is included in the score, for whom Biedenbender thanks for his knowledge of J. S. Bach and of brass writing, which guided him in writing this piece.

Biedenbender created the wind band arrangement in 2024 for Henry L. Dorn and the St. Olaf Band, who premiered the piece on January 28, 2024. Following the band's domestic tour that year, Dorn sent recordings of their performances to the CBDNA panel and was selected to perform at the 2025 national conference in Fort Worth, Texas. Under the baton of guest conductor Kevin L. Sedatole, with whom Dorn studied with for his doctorate, the St. Olaf Band again performed *Enigma* on March 27, 2025. In the less than two years since its publication, *Enigma* has been performed by several major university ensembles including Michigan State University, University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory, and Indiana University.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ In 2025, Kevin L. Sedatole and the Michigan State University Wind Symphony professionally recorded *Enigma* and *River of Time* through Blue Griffin Recording.

Additionally, in 2025, Biedenbender provided an “touring edition” of *Enigma* to the “The President’s Own,” the United States Marine Band, which replaces piano and organ with xylophone and harp. This tour was ultimately cancelled due to a government shutdown and the edition is unpublished as of March 2026. In this version, the xylophone part largely doubles or pairs with the marimba, while the harp fluidly shares material with various parts in the ensemble.

Score Orientation and Programming Considerations

In his program notes, Biedenbender states the title, *Enigma*, comes from a Greek word meaning “to speak in riddles.”⁸⁶ His composition centers on this idea, as the theme is gradually revealed alongside other key melodic and rhythmic motives. The latter half of this piece takes this theme and repeats it cyclically over twenty-one variations, matching the structure of the original by Bach.

Enigma is a single movement work approximately twelve minutes in duration, self-published through Bent Space Music. The score is transposed with clear indication of key signatures. Rehearsal markings are found approximately every eight to twelve measures and each measure is numbered in the score at the bottom of the page. All tempo markings are notated with specific beats-per-minute designations, and verbal descriptors, mostly in English, are occasionally given to suggest the intended style. Performance of this piece does not require an errata list.

Enigma is written for an expanded wind ensemble with organ, featuring auxiliary instruments in several sections, namely contrabassoon, contrabass clarinet, soprano saxophone, and piccolo trumpet (see Table 2.2), the last of which is marked by the composer as optional but

⁸⁶ David Biedenbender, *Enigma* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2024).

strongly encouraged.⁸⁷ Organ is marked similarly, with a special note that the registration should add color and depth to the orchestration, matching the winds rather than dominating the sound. Trumpets should be prepared with straight, harmon, and cup mutes, while trombones will need only straight mutes. Matching mutes across individual sections may help with blend. Horns are written in four parts with first/second being the higher and third/fourth the lower. In the score, part divisions occasionally switch between a dedicated part per line to multiple parts sharing a single staff. All instances of the latter are clearly marked with numerals indicating which part(s) are playing. Exact instrumentation including part divisions for winds is organized below (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 <i>Enigma</i> Instrumentation		
Woodwinds	Brass and Strings	Percussion and Keyboards
Piccolo	Piccolo Trumpet (Optional)	Timpani [4 Drums]
Flute 1/2	B \flat Trumpet 1/2/3	Marimba
Oboe 1/2	F Horn 1/2/3/4	Glockenspiel
Bassoon 1/2	Trombone 1/2/3	Vibraphone
Contrabassoon	Bass Trombone	Crotales
B \flat Clarinet 1/2/3	Euphonium	Tam-Tam
Bass Clarinet	Tuba	Bass Drum
Contrabass Clarinet	Double Bass	Tubular Bells
Soprano Saxophone		Suspended Cymbal
Alto Saxophone		
Tenor Saxophone		Piano
Baritone Saxophone		Organ (Optional)

Percussion is written primarily for timpani and keyboards, with a select few non-pitched instruments used. Parts one and two exclusively play marimba and glockenspiel, respectively. In contrast, part three splits vibraphone with tam-tam, and part four splits crotales/tubular bells with

⁸⁷ Conductors should note the piccolo trumpet is doubled or cued in other voices.

concert bass drum/tam-tam/suspended cymbal. A double bass bow is used in the vibraphone in measures 53–62.

There are a few unique markings in the score that may not be familiar to the conductor or performer. Biedenbender frequently uses a “flared” crescendo, indicating a more rapid growth at the end of the sustained pitches. Additionally, these “flared” crescendos are sometimes initiated with a small circle rather than an “*n*” or *niente*, for growing out of nothing. Biedenbender credits the concept to Anders Hillborg, using crescendos to recreate electronic music playback effects, where “all of the attacks become swells.”⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Biedenbender, interview.

CHAPTER 3: *ENIGMA* THEORETICAL AND REHEARSAL ANALYSIS

Overview of Form and Theme

Successful rehearsal and performance of *Enigma* necessitate understanding Biedenbender's setting of Bach's passacaglia theme within the form. *Enigma* follows an overarching two-part structure of "Introduction and Development" followed by the "Passacaglia Section" (see Table 3.1).⁸⁹ The Introduction and Development (mm. 1–89) slowly reveals the passacaglia theme and other compositional devices used later in the piece. This section can be further broken down into five sections based on texture and melodic content. The Passacaglia Section (mm. 90–260) has twenty-one variations, just as Bach's did, beginning with the first full and unobstructed statement of Bach's passacaglia theme (mm. 90–97).⁹⁰ A table illustrating how the theme is scored in each variation is found in Appendix D.

Section	Introduction and Development	Passacaglia Section
Measures	mm. 1–89	mm. 90–260
Tonality	Eb/Cm	Cm

Introduction and Development

Describing this section as expository or fantasia-like, Biedenbender embeds the theme in "hidden ways" with the intent to clearly reveal them later.⁹¹ "I've long been enamored by this

⁸⁹ Formal analysis in this document will treat measure 53 as the first statement of the theme, followed by twenty-one variations beginning at measure 90.

⁹⁰ To clarify verbiage throughout this document, "*Passacaglia and Fugue*" refers to the work by Bach, "Passacaglia Section" refers to the second part of *Enigma* (mm. 90–260), and "passacaglia theme," or simply "theme," refers to a specific iteration of the eight-measure ostinato within *Enigma*.

⁹¹ Biedenbender, interview.

idea of a reverse theme and variations, where you have the most obscure version of a theme at the beginning, then the most clear version at the very end.” Biedenbender also describes this section as having the most “me” in the piece; the material and form are more original, freely developed in his own style.⁹²

Section	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
Measures (mm.)	1–27	28–40	41–52	53–70	71–89
Tempo	♩=108			♩=54	♩=108/♩=54
Tonality	E♭/Cm	E♭/Cm	Cm	Cm	Cm

Section One (mm. 1–27)

Enigma begins with short, one- or two-bar motives featuring woodwinds and percussion. While centered tonally in E-flat, the relative major to primary tonal center in the Passacaglia Section, the theme can be implicitly heard through each eight-bar phrase. The vibraphone performs the melodic line in its entirety, supported by woodwinds, which double fragments of the melody while also creating an intricate, echo-like accompaniment (see Figure 3.1).⁹³ Performers should take great care to maintain rhythmic accuracy, noting that parts within a section are largely independent. The conductor can aid players by maintaining strict tempo to facilitate accurate rhythmic subdivision. Throughout these motives, Biedenbender creates a sense of falling or descent by means of tessitura and orchestration. In most instances, each motive begins on its highest note and descends an octave or more, ending on the motive’s lowest note in all cases but one (mm. 3–4). The individual entrances in the accompaniment also follow a

⁹² Biedenbender, interview.

⁹³ This style of accompaniment is hereafter referred to as the “sound delay” texture.

general pattern of flute, oboe, clarinet, then saxophone, resulting in a gradual darkening color throughout the score.



Figure 3.1. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, “Sound Delay” Texture and Melodic Line
Woodwinds and Vibraphone, mm. 1–2

The first complete phrase lasts eight measures and structurally follows a pattern of two-two-four. Measures 1–4 comprise two fragments, each two measures in duration. Measures 5–8 comprise four successive one-measure fragments. Each fragment is characterized by the melodic contour beginning in a high tessitura and as well as changes in the harmonic background, noticeable especially in the piccolo and marimba voices as they outline the tonic and mediant of each triad. In the second half of the phrase (mm. 5–8), the motives and harmony change every measure, creating a sense of forward momentum through four successive, one-measure fragments. The ensemble should be aware the harmonic progression utilizes planing chords rather than strong root motion or dominant tonalities. Particularly because of the absence of bass

voices in this opening, the conductor may consider rehearsing with a drone or having the ensemble play static chords of each motive to assist in hearing the harmonic movement.

The leading-tone pickup into measure 9 uses a flared crescendo in alto saxophone and trumpet, resolving up by half-step to the tonic. These performers are responsible for significant dynamic contrast from niente to *fortissimo* across a single beat. Measures 9–16 follow a similar structure to the first eight-bar phrase, with minor changes to the melody and several noticeable changes to the accompaniment: The primary melodic content remains in the vibraphone, doubled by fragmented entrances in other voices; however, these motives feature only the first two notes of the ones heard earlier, either a descending minor sixth or minor third. The most significant change is the introduction of the organ and piano on a motor rhythm of near-continuous sixteenth notes (see Figure 3.2), with the piano occasionally playing a reduction of the organ line (mm. 10, 13, 17). These voices add tertian extensions of sevenths or elevenths to the harmonic progression, which otherwise mirrors the first eight bars.



Figure 3.2. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Sixteenth-Note Accompaniment Piano and Organ (Right Hand), mm. 9–12

In the following phrase (mm. 17–24), Biedenbender again uses a two-two-four structure while continuing to develop the accompaniment. For the first time in the piece, brass and low wind voices play sustained notes. Each is shaped by a flared crescendo, a figure that will be common throughout the rest of the piece. In measure 22 the rhythm of each figure becomes irregular and begins overlapping, obscuring the sense of meter slightly. These performers must maintain precision in their entrances and releases, as well as carefully blend as they crescendo with non-linear growth, never sacrificing tone quality.

The melodic material and texture change drastically in measures 25–27, which function as linking material to section two. Percussion and keyboards abruptly change the accompaniment with a strong downbeat in octaves (*ff*), followed by a syncopated line of sustained minor seconds; all other voices, including a lyrical oboe solo (see Figure 3.3), enter after this initial attack.⁹⁴ Harmonically, these three linking measures blur the lines of the tonal center through tertian extensions and unconventional resolutions. Measures 25-26 outline clear V-i motion in C minor, yet surprisingly resolve to Eb⁷ in measure 28. Viewed another way, the eleventh and thirteenth extensions in measure 27 could be seen as the third and fifth of a B-flat chord, and Biedenbender simultaneously creates resolution in C minor while establishing dominant functionality in E-flat. The conductor may elect to have performers bring these notes (D–F) slightly out of the texture, to better transition into the next phrase.

⁹⁴ This solo is also notated as optional cues in the piccolo trumpet.

Section Two (mm. 28–40)

Section two of the Introduction and Development is characterized by the lyrical, heavily-ornamented oboe solo and the first use of the “Mensuration Canon” Figure.⁹⁵ The sense of a phrase beginning in measure 28 is asserted by the accompaniment more than felt by the solo, which ties across the bar line in an extended, wandering melody. Because nearly every note is written with changing grace note figures, the performer of this solo should take care that the ornaments do not interfere with the rhythmic accuracy of the notes they adorn. The first bassoon and alto saxophone gradually join the soloist (mm. 31, 33), also with heavily ornamented lines, resulting in an intricate polyphonic texture.



Figure 3.3. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Solo
Oboe 1, mm. 25–34

The conductor should be aware section two playfully uses E-flat and C-minor tonal centers. The oboe solo dances around the notes G and E-flat (mm. 28–30), pitches functional in both keys. The accompaniment begins on an E \flat ⁷ for the first two measures, changing to C \flat ⁷ in measure 30. In this instance, it functions more as the vi⁷ of E-flat rather than a sudden

⁹⁵ The term “mensuration canon” refers to a Renaissance-era technique of imitating a melody in one or more voices of proportionally different note lengths, beginning either simultaneously or in succession; In *Enigma*, Biedenbender frequently combines this with simple imitative canon techniques. Found frequently throughout the piece, additional iterations of this specific canon (see Figure 3.4) are referred to as the “Mensuration Canon” Figure.

modulation. The melody in oboe and bassoon strongly suggests a resolution into C minor (mm. 33–35), as both phrases end on C and use a B-natural leading tone.

Measures 35–40 are transitional, preparing the return of material from the section one. As the woodwind soloists decrescendo, Biedenbender adds eliding note swells in the brass voices; each grouping crescendos while another decrescendos, creating a nebulous web of changing colors and harmonies. Performers will need to prioritize listening to members in their grouping to maintain proper balance and intonation. During these sustains, the motor rhythm in the keyboard instruments changes to a triplet subdivision, creating the immediate feeling of new material or an impending change in form. Conductor and performer alike will need to be diligent in maintaining an even pulse across this change. The final four measures of this line (mm. 37–40) begin rhythmically decelerating through changing subdivisions, beginning with a quintuplet over two counts (m. 37) and slowing all the way to a half note (m. 40).

In measure 38, woodwinds and trumpets play a mensuration canon of scalar material descending from A-flat to B-natural (see Figure 3.4), a figure repeated frequently in *Enigma*. The primary voice begins on the downbeat in eighth-notes, with two imitating voices in quick succession. The first imitation enters on the “and of one” in eighth notes and the second on count two in quarter-note triplets. Second trumpet should be aware the second set of quarter-note triplets will extend over the barline, landing back on the beat on count two. The combined effect is a melodic version of the rhythmic sound delay texture in section one.

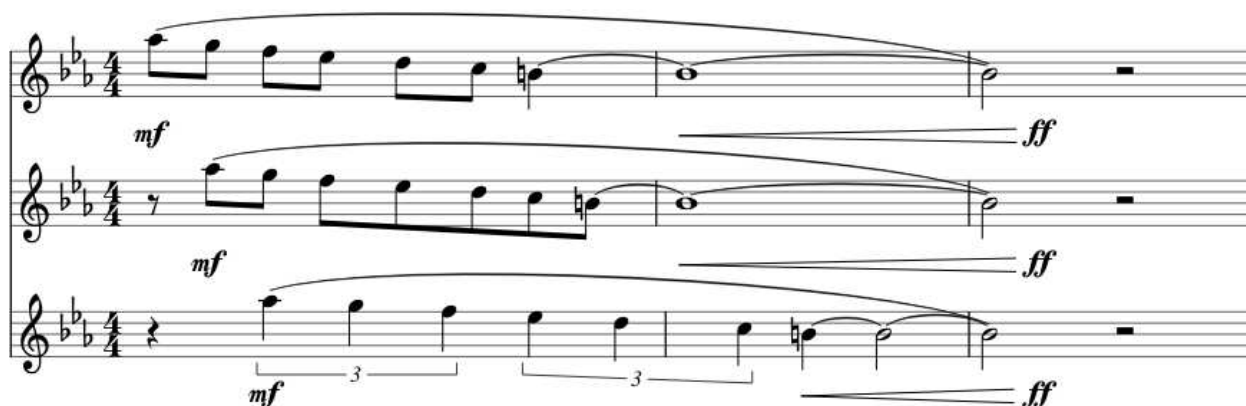


Figure 3.4. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, “Mensuration Canon” Figure (Reduction)
Picc., Fl., Ob., S. Sax., Picc. Tpt., Tpt., mm. 38–40

Section Three (mm. 41–52)

Section three returns to the “Sound Delay” Texture found earlier in woodwinds and keyboard percussion, developed with additional accompaniment figures which obscure the phrase structure. The listener will likely hear this section as twelve measures long with groupings of two-two-five-three, notable for the additional four measures and the asymmetrical division of the phrase. While the “Sound Delay” Texture follows strict two-measure patterns, the accompanying voices deviate from this regularity in the latter half of this section (m. 46), beginning with the “Mensuration Canon” Figure repeated in high woodwinds and trumpets (m. 46). This figure leads almost immediately into a series of cross-rhythms between the alto/tenor saxophone and French horns, stretching the expected pattern of two-measure fragments. The peak of the phrase arrives on measure 50, played by bassoon, tenor saxophone, trombone, and euphonium. The conductor should ensure this sixteenth-note motive is prominent, as this figure becomes the basis for the climax later in section five.

Among the note swells in measures 43–46, Biedenbender mixes instrument parts for a more blended sound in each grouping. These performers should be aware of which instruments to listen to and blend with, as they often are not playing with the rest of their section.

Additionally, they should be mindful of the chord tuning responsibilities of each sustained note, in particular the trumpets and trombones playing Cm^{add9} in second inversion (m. 45).

Section Four (mm.53–70)

Measure 53 is significant as the first full statement of the passacaglia theme. However, Biedenbender uses several techniques to obscure its arrival and meaning (see Figure 3.5). First, he expresses the entire theme in whole notes, removing the feel of the triple meter seen later in the piece. Second, he writes this same whole-note line in parallel fifths and offset by one count in the horns and bassoons, masking the melodic clarity of the passacaglia theme below them. Third, the flutes and oboes complicate the texture with regularly changing cross rhythms that outline an ascending C-minor scale expressed in successive harmonic seconds. Finally, the theme is interrupted in measure 61 by the piccolo, flute, and piccolo trumpet, drawing the listener's attention away before the phrase is complete. While Biedenbender acknowledges that most individuals familiar with Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue* will likely hear it here, these devices create an intentionally enigmatic statement of this material, with meaning that will not be fully revealed until later in the piece.⁹⁶ The conductor should consider the balance of voices in order to facilitate the recognizability of the passacaglia theme.

⁹⁶ Biedenbender, interview.

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 4/4 time signature, containing four measures of whole rests. The second staff is a treble clef with the same key signature and time signature, containing four measures of music. It starts with a half note G4 (pp), followed by a quarter note A4 (f), and a half note B4 (pp). The third measure contains a half note C5 (f) and a half note B4 (pp). The fourth measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (C5, B4, A4) (pp), followed by another triplet of eighth notes (G4, F4, E4) (pp). The third staff is a treble clef with the same key signature and time signature, containing four measures of music. It starts with a half note G4 (mp), followed by a half note A4 (f), and a half note B4 (pp). The fourth measure contains a half note C5 (pp) and a half note B4 (pp). The bottom staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, containing four measures of music. It starts with a half note G2 (mp), followed by a half note A2 (mp), and a half note B2 (mp). The fourth measure contains a half note C3 (mp) and a half note B2 (mp). The instruction 'mp austere' is written below the first two measures of this staff.

Figure 3.5. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Passacaglia Theme and Accompaniment
Fl., Ob., Bsn., Hn., Tbn., B. Tbn., Euph., Tuba, D. Bass, Org, mm. 53–56

The interruption (m. 61) begins with an ornamented melody in piccolo, flute, soprano saxophone, and piccolo trumpet playing in octaves. The stepwise motion and frequency of grace notes call back to the oboe solo in measure 25, whose style the soli performers should collectively match. The melodic line continues for three measures (mm. 61–63) before transitioning into a mensuration canon descending through a C-melodic-minor scale. While similar melodically to the figure seen in measure 38, this texture uses differing rhythmic schemes in which note lengths throughout each voice are not consistent. A second mensuration canon in the tenor voices (mm. 68–70) continues the descending motion, now with quintuplets in second trombone. The conductor should interpret these combined measures (mm. 64–70) as a single texture moving through the orchestration of the ensemble.

Section Five (mm. 71–89)

The final section within the Introduction and Development is the first climax of *Enigma*, constructed as a series of two-measure motives that slowly layer additional melodic fragments (see Figure 3.6). Measures 71–72 form the “Climax Motive,” repeated a total of seven times.

Comprised of two parts, the whole-note portion in low woodwinds and low brass alternates between a C-minor chord (root and fifth) and a C-minor chord with tertian extension (root, fifth, and fifteenth). The notated-mordent portion in French horn, euphonium, alto/tenor saxophone, and organ similarly alternates between embellishing the third or the thirteenth of each C-minor chord. Given the full texture at a strong dynamic, the conductor should carefully balance the ensemble so that each voice is present, and the volume doesn't impede the clarity.

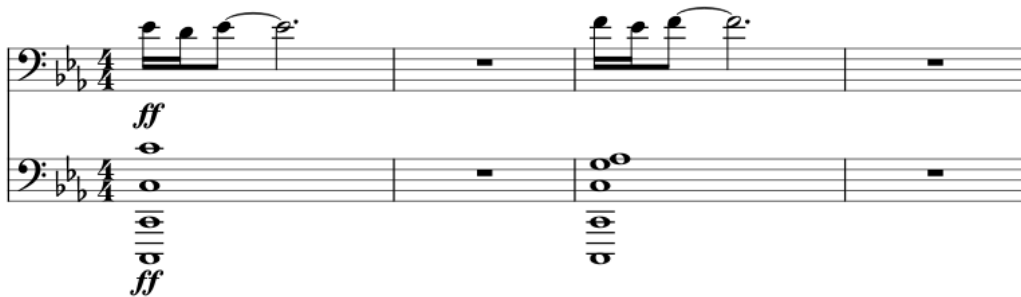


Figure 3.6. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Climax Motives (Reduction)
Tenor and Bass Voices, mm. 71–74

Layered into the successive statements of the “Climax Motive” are three key figures: The first is a sustained harmonic minor second in the organ (m. 74), which clashes with the soprano voices and adds a ninth to the harmony. The second is a series of interjections by timpani (m. 75–82), which becomes gradually longer with each iteration. This performer will need to carefully mute drumheads that clash with the chord changes, in particular the low F (mm. 78, 80). Finally, the fourth Climax Motive is preceded by eighth-note pickups leading into the mordent (m. 76).

Measures 83 to 89 powerfully conclude the Introduction and Development by altering the material from both the Climax Motive and “Mensuration Canon” Figure. Biedenbender begins by presenting the notated-mordent figure homophonically, outlining the root and fifth of a C-minor chord. This figure echoes three times over the next two measures, with changing instrumentation each time. The final mordent (m. 84) leads into a brief soli by low woodwinds and low brass. Descending from the sixth scale degree, this soli imitates the melodic content of

the “Mensuration Canon” Figure but expressed now in unison. The final three measures (mm. 87–89) similarly draw from the “Mensuration Canon” Figure, with a half-note line in descending from G to B-natural. This figure resolves in measure 90 by half-step, firmly establishing the C-minor tonal center in the Passacaglia Section. Rhythmically, Biedenbender marks these three measures “in 2,” smoothly transitioning into the time signature used for the rest of the piece. Both conductor and performers should internally subdivide during this transition to facilitate the tempo change.

Passacaglia Section

After the first variation, Biedenbender often sets the passacaglia theme in the low voices and organ, writing the accompaniment in the higher voices. While he occasionally modifies the material, the passacaglia theme is present in some capacity for the entirety of this section (see Figure 3.7). Conductors should be cognizant of how the theme moves throughout the ensemble, taking care to balance it within the texture. In particular, variations six, seven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and seventeen significantly alter the passacaglia theme rhythmically and/or melodically. Additionally, while the theme is eight measures in duration, Biedenbender occasionally modifies this by eliding phrases or appending material after the theme. Variations four, six, seven, sixteen, seventeen, and twenty-one all feature irregular phrase lengths (see Table 3.3). The conductor should be aware of these outliers in order to appropriately phrase cadential moments.



Figure 3.7. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Passacaglia Theme
Bassoon, mm. 90–97

Table 3.3 Passacaglia Section Form							
Variation	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven
Measures (mm.)	90–97	98–105	106–113	114–120	121–128	129–137	138–147
Tempo	♩=54		♩=72				
Tonal Center	Cm						

Variation	Eight	Nine	Ten	Eleven	Twelve	Thirteen	Fourteen
Measures (mm.)	148–155	156–163	164–171	172–179	180–187	188–195	196–203
Tempo	♩=72						
Tonal Center	Cm						

Variation	Fifteen	Sixteen	Seventeen	Eighteen	Nineteen	Twenty	Twenty-One
Measures (mm.)	204–211	212–219	220–227	228–235	236–243	244–251	252–260
Tempo	♩=66	♩=56	♩=48	♩=56		♩=52	
Tonal Center	Cm						

Variation One (mm. 90–97)

In measure 90, Biedenbender fully reveals the theme in the first of twenty-one “cyclic”⁹⁷ variations on Bach’s passacaglia theme. The theme is voiced transparently with few accompanying textures, echoing the simplicity of the source material’s first variation.

⁹⁷ David Biedenbender, *Enigma* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2024).

Biedenbender describes this minimalistic variation as the point in which “everyone is in on it,” after the less recognizable statement earlier in measure 53.⁹⁸ The theme is voiced among an interesting mix of solo flute, bassoon, horn, and organ, with euphonium joining in the latter half of the phrase (mm. 93–97). Performers should be conscious of balance and blend, particularly the bassoon, which is voiced in the higher portion of its range. Euphonium performers should strive to seamlessly enter the texture, adding depth and color without an abrupt attack. Throughout the entire phrase, all performers should stagger-breathe, striving for a continuous, unbroken phrase for each variation.

This variation notably resolves after the downbeat of the eighth measure in the phrase, due to the “Mensuration Canon” Figure (mm. 96–97) and the passacaglia theme initially arriving to tonic at *piano* (m. 97). The canon voices resolve on either count two or the “and of two,” while the tonic in the theme is not audibly heard until approximately the same time. To stress this delayed cadence, performers should stress the B-natural and exaggerate the crescendo on tonic.

Variation Two (mm. 98–105)

The passacaglia theme moves to a new grouping of tenor saxophone, second horn, first trombone, and organ, accompanied primarily by a lyrical duet between oboe and clarinet. The second half of the theme (mm. 102–105) modifies the expected rhythmic and melodic content (see Figure 3.9) with half-note triplets and a notated mordent, calling back to the Climax Motives in section five. Performers of this line should highlight the changes to the theme, stressing the A-flat anacrusis (m. 101) and adding a crescendo through the triplets (m. 102).

⁹⁸ Biedenbender, interview.



Figure 3.8. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Passacaglia Theme Alteration
A. Sax., T. Sax., Hn., Tbn., mm. 98–105

Throughout the entire variation, the theme is accompanied by solos in both oboe and clarinet, similar in style to the ornamented, stepwise melodies in measure 25. The clarinet is an echo of the oboe, delayed by one count and written at a soft dynamic (*p*), but identical otherwise (see Figure 3.8). This delay results in frequent harmonic seconds, often resolving to unison for only a moment before one voice pulls away. Because of the duet’s imitative nature and the extended use of ornaments, both soloists will need to maintain strict part independence to remain accurate. The conductor may consider having one or both individuals temporarily remove ornaments in rehearsal to check the integrity of the line.



Figure 3.9. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Solo and Echo
Oboe 1 and Clarinet 1, mm. 98–105

At the conclusion of the phrase, Biedenbender employs the “Mensuration Canon” Figure in the high brass voices (mm. 104–105), however, the resolution is joined by a syncopated figure

in bassoon, trombone, and organ, on repeated fifth scale degrees. This rhythm creates dominant functionality as it crescendos out of the texture, mitigating the felt resolution of the cadence. Additionally, the conductor may consider using the last two measures in this variation to accelerate into the next phrase, as no written transition in tempo is indicated.

Variation Three (mm. 106–113)

In variation three, tempo increases immediately to $\text{♩}=72$ and the texture expands to include the passacaglia theme alongside two accompaniment figures, one of which acts as a delayed echo of the theme. Played by bass trombone, tuba, double bass, and organ pedal, this statement of the theme is presented in its entirety with no alterations. Bass trombone and tuba should take particular care to stagger their breaths to maintain brass presence on the theme.

The first accompaniment figure in French horn and euphonium utilizes the first six notes of the theme (C–G–E \flat –F–G–A \flat), resulting in a rough, one-measure delay with the bass voices. The remainder of this line (mm. 109–113) creates harmonic interest with frequent suspensions and retardations involving non-chord tones. For example, in the final measures of the phrase, Biedenbender utilizes two raised leading tones; in measure 112, he voices a $\sharp\hat{4}$ resolving to G, suggesting a V/V harmony, followed by a $\sharp\hat{7}$ resolving to tonic in measure 113. In both instances, these leading tones create dissonant harmonic minor seconds before resolving into the passacaglia theme. Performers of this countermelody should be aware of the harmonic relationship of their line to the theme, and musically shape the line accordingly.

The second countermelody comprises a sequence of mensuration canons in the woodwinds and organ. While based on the same figure used previously (mm. 38), the melodic content and rhythmic scheme change over the course of the variation in two ways: First, the

primary voice in the canon does not always descend from A-flat. Second, the primary voice does not always begin on count one. All performers should be aware no two iterations of the canon are the same, when comparing note values, starting pitches, and where in the measure each iteration begins. In particular, individual parts within the clarinet section are the most independent from each other and the other woodwind voices.

Variation Four (mm. 114–120)

Variation four is the first variation in *Enigma* with an irregular phrase length; only seven measures long, the resolution (m. 121) elides with the beginning of variation five. The passacaglia theme is performed primarily by bass voices, accompanied by a trumpet solo and trombone glissandi. Regarding orchestration, Biedenbender features reduced instrumentation, soloists, and softer ensemble dynamics to create a chamber-like setting.⁹⁹

Described as “solemn” by performance directions, the solo trumpet accompaniment moves through non-chord tones to create a series of retardations, anticipations, and suspensions. While functioning similarly to the countermelody in the previous phrase, the solo in variation four frequently moves on the off-beats, standing out against the passacaglia theme. The soloist should be aware most of their chord tones are thirds, apart from measures 116 and 119, where they play roots.

Additionally, the theme is accompanied by two extended glissandi in the first and second trombones (see Figure 3.10). Each glissando is marked with note stems on the beat, a visual indicator for a smooth, linear crescendo. In both instances, the performers will need to use the

⁹⁹ This reduced texture continues through variation five (mm. 121–128) and variation six (mm. 129–137).



Figure 3.11. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Sextuplet Texture
Piano, mm. 121–124

Variation Six (mm. 129–137)

Variation six spans nine measures; the first eight contain the theme followed by one measure of linking material. Biedenbender notably inverts the passacaglia theme and sets it as a solo in the tuba (see Figure 3.12). This setting marks a unique contribution, as no such inversions are present in Bach’s *Passacaglia and Fugue*. In addition to the continued sextuplet texture in piano and organ, two additional brass voices accompany the soloist. The inverted theme takes several liberties with the rhythmic material and melodic contour: Larger intervals are connected with added passing tones (mm. 131, 133) and certain notes are displaced by an octave (mm. 134–135). Performers of this solo should be aware of the tonal relationship of this solo to the passacaglia theme, as well as strive to maintain smoothness across the ornamented figures.



Figure 3.12. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Inverted Passacaglia Theme
Tuba, mm. 129–136

The first accompanying brass voice is the first French horn (*p*) on a sequence of three-note motives consisting of a dotted half note, a quarter note a step up, and a dotted quarter note a third down. Harmonically, each motive typically begins on a chord tone, moves by whole/half step to create dissonance, and resolves down a third into a new chord. One key exception is the treatment of the second motive (mm. 130–131): The downbeat of measure 131 is immediately dissonant as the tuba soloist moves up the half-note triplet. The horn performer should consider shaping the line with slight crescendos on individual motives and through the sequence as a whole.

The second brass figure is a series of gradual glissandi in first and second trombone (*pp*). Each instance spans a whole or half step over three counts, creating a harmonic gradient against the tuba soloist. Throughout the variation, the glissandi occasionally connect or overlap. For example, in measures 132 and 133, two glissandi are connected into one gesture; first trombone ascends from C to D, followed immediately by second trombone descending from D to C. To accomplish these gestures, performers should carefully control the rate of pitch change as they alternate between whole and half steps.

Variation Seven (mm. 138–147)

Following the tuba solo, the passacaglia theme returns to its original, uninverted melodic contour, but with modified rhythmic values and a unique phrase structure. After a one measure introduction (m. 138), the theme spans 139–146, interrupted by cadential extension beginning in measure 145. While the passacaglia theme clearly cadences as expected in measure 146, the added melodic material dominates the texture and delays the resolution until measure 147. In total, variation seven has a felt structure of one-six-three.

Biedenbender expresses the theme as subdivided, “bouncy” triplets on repeated pitches in saxophone and trumpet, though the theme may not be immediately recognizable, as the initial pickup on C and following pickup on E-flat are both missing.¹⁰⁰ While both pitches are present in measure 139, neither have a strong entrance on count three. Throughout variation seven, trumpets and woodwinds shroud the theme with repeated pitches. These notes obscure the theme and change the voicing/harmony on nearly every single count, the musical equivalent of hiding a tree in a forest. Performers should be aware of this intricate writing and slightly bring out the pitches of the theme within the texture. In particular, the anacrusis-to-downbeat intervals will facilitate easier recognition for the listener.

In the accompaniment, percussion joins keyboards on the motor rhythm from the previous variation. While piano and organ perform consistent sextuplets, the rhythm in marimba, glockenspiel, and vibraphone contains intermittent quarter notes, changing the pattern almost every beat. The melodic contour in percussion is a parsimonious reduction of the piano and organ, using more stepwise motion and fewer leaps of an octave or more. The result is an

¹⁰⁰ Described as such by performance directions.

intricate composite rhythm, where percussion creates a nebulous feeling of groove while the keyboards use octave displacement to highlight certain notes, maintaining the shimmering effect.

Additionally, variation seven features a significant phrase extension. In what would be the phrase's penultimate measure (m. 145), bassoon, alto saxophone, trombone, and euphonium begin an ascending, C-minor scale starting on B-natural (see Figure 3.13). This line initially begins as quarter notes before changing to triplets (m. 146) and finally one beat of eighth notes (m. 146), creating the impression of acceleration despite consistent pulse. These performers should enter strongly, as this line becomes the dominant melodic texture and alters the phrase structure.



Figure 3.13. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Cadential Extension
Trombone, mm. 145–147

The following cadence (m. 147) is inconclusive both tonally and texturally. First, the phrase resolves to a second-inversion tonic, with trombone and euphonium playing the fifth as the bass of the chord. Second, the countermelody in French horn and the accompaniment in clarinets for variation eight begin one measure early, eliding with the end of variation seven. Together, the inauthentic cadence and overlap of phrases maintain momentum into the next phrase. The conductor can interpret variations seven and eight two continuous phrases approaching the first climactic moment of the Passacaglia Section, rather than independent sections.

Variation Eight (mm. 148–155)

Variation eight is the first of two climactic points within the Passacaglia Section. After previous iterations with altered melodic/rhythmic content, the theme returns unmodified to the low woodwinds, low brass, and organ pedal (*f*). Additionally, Biedenbender presents the theme homophonically, with euphonium and third trombone voiced in parallel fifths. While three total accompaniment figures join this texture, the modal French horn soli is the most prominent, functioning as a countermelody to the theme (see Figure 3.14): This line begins in measure 147 with two short, eighth-note motives similar to a notated turn. Harmonically, this countermelody creates frequent harmonic major sevenths and augmented fourths against the passacaglia theme. Biedenbender sets trills on the raised $\hat{7}$ and $\hat{3}$ scale degrees, further accentuating the departure from C minor. The conductor should be aware the soli does not resolve until the anacrusis in measure 155, sustaining a harmonic major ninth while the passacaglia arrives to tonic.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system shows the French Horn part (treble clef) and Bass Voice part (bass clef) in 3/2 time, key of C minor. The French Horn part begins with a trill on G4, followed by a melodic line with trills on G4 and Bb4. The Bass Voice part starts with a whole note chord of C4 and Eb4, marked *ff*. The second system continues the French Horn part with a triplet of eighth notes and a trill on Bb4. The Bass Voice part continues with whole note chords: Eb4, C4, Eb4, and C4.

Figure 3.14. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Passacaglia Theme and Counter melody
French Horn and Bass Voices, concert pitch, mm. 147–155

The second accompaniment figure is a series of repeated-note patterns in woodwinds, percussion, and piano. Flute, clarinet, and marimba play continuous eighth notes while the remaining keyboard instruments and piano alternate between four quarter notes or two dotted quarter notes.¹⁰¹ Both groupings play in octaves, changing pitches and beginning motives together. When the French horn soli becomes more syncopated in measure 151, this accompaniment figure follows suit, changing notes on the offbeats. The conductor and performers should be aware that the French horn soli and motor rhythm texture do not align, instead creating their own composite rhythm outside the passacaglia theme.

Saxophones make up the final accompaniment grouping, performing a series of swelled long tones. Each entrance is initially dissonant until the peak of the crescendo (*f*) harmonically aligns with the passacaglia theme, meaning these performers will need to anticipate their chord tuning responsibilities to the basses. The first two sustains double the root of the chord (mm. 149, 150), the following two outline the third and seventh (mm. 151, 153), and the final measure outlines the fifth and ninth (m. 155). Each performer should be aware of the chord tuning responsibilities for each note, particularly in measures 151 and 153, where the alto and tenor saxophone trade responsibilities.

Variation Nine (mm. 156–163)

Variation nine can be seen as a continuation of the previous phrase, comprising the second half of the first climax of the Passacaglia Section. Texturally, the passacaglia is set in a similar fashion with three accompaniment figures, two of which have similar textures in variation eight.

¹⁰¹ One exception is measure 153, which begins with a quarter-note triplet.

First, the countermelody accompaniment in French horn is joined by first and second trombone. While initially playing in unison, this soli fractures into two groupings (m. 159): the French horns continue with the countermelody as heard earlier in variation eight, while trombone plays new material exclusively on the off-beats (mm. 160–161). The trombone performers should be aware the B-natural and F in measure 160 are augmented fifths against the passacaglia and will clash with the perfect fifths played by euphonium. The two fragmented countermelody lines reconnect in measure 162, creating a unison retardation into the cadence (m. 163).

The secondary accompaniment figure presents new material, replacing the repeated note figure from variation eight. Piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, piccolo trumpet, and organ perform a sequence of changing subdivisions; the first two beats comprise quarter-note triplets, changing to sixteenth notes on the third beat. The changing subdivision every pickup provides a rhythmic means of generating forward motion, aligning with the rhythmic cadence of the passacaglia theme. The entirety of this texture is ascending, scalar fragments in C minor, with a brief change to melodic minor in measure 157. While the individual parts for flute, oboe and clarinet perform this line every other measure, piccolo, piccolo trumpet, and organ play each motive. For these performers in particular, rhythmic integrity may prove difficult as they alternate between triplets and duple subdivisions. In rehearsal, the conductor may invite them to lightly articulate the downbeats to better internalize the first note of the triplets, until the tie can be reintroduced.

In measure 161, the secondary accompaniment figure abruptly changes to sustained tones outlining notes around the tonic (see Figure 3.15). Almost every note enters on the offbeat and has ornamentation, with few exceptions (mm. 161, 162). Because the heavily-ornamented line is now expressed as a soli, performers must ensure the ornamentation does not affect the rhythmic

The contrasting second section (mm. 167–171) uses denser orchestration and more melodic accompaniment. The canon is interrupted by high woodwinds, piccolo trumpet, keyboard percussion, and organ (*ff*) partway through the phrase in measure 167 (see Figure 3.16), becoming the dominant melodic voice for the rest of the variation. The melodic minor sextuplet lands on the raised seventh, resolving up to tonic in the following measure (m. 168). Performers should listen to the bassline and ensure the B-natural does not “overshoot” as the third of the chord. The downbeat of measure 169 is a notated version of two ornaments, a lower mordent on E-flat followed by grace notes rising to A-flat.



Figure 3.16. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Melodic Interjection
Piccolo Trumpet, concert pitch, mm. 167–171

Beginning in measure 167, tenor saxophone, trombone, and euphonium separate from the passacaglia theme, becoming more syncopated and harmonically dissonant. Two key examples include tritones against the basses (mm. 167–168). The cadence features a prominent delayed resolution, in which the trombone glissando from D–E \flat creates a $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{3}$ retardation (m. 171). While other voices decrescendo, trombones should lean into this effect accentuating harmonic gradient.

Variation Eleven (mm. 172–179)

In variation eleven, the orchestration simplifies and the dynamic level drops significantly. Only two figures accompany the theme and most of the ensemble is voiced at *mezzo piano* or less. Nearly all bass voices drop out, leaving the theme in trombone, bass trombone, euphonium, and organ pedal. While not quite-chamber like, the depth of sound is noticeably lighter. The

conductor can interpret this variation as a moment of comparative respite after the recent climax. The conductor should also note this iteration of the theme contains a small alteration, embellishing the final two measures of the phrase; rather than a direct V–I, the passacaglia theme leaps to mediant (m. 178) before creating a $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{1}$ suspension (m. 179). These performers should stress this downbeat slightly, reserving the written decrescendo for the later portion of the measure.

French horn and bassoon perform a unison countermelody similar to that in measure 106, in which the first six notes are borrowed directly from the passacaglia theme. This figure is identical until measure 177, when the entrances and tied notes differ slightly. To highlight rhythmic changes and non-chord tones, performers should crescendo slightly through the whole note in measure 176, making the abrupt cutoff and subsequent offbeat entrance more pronounced. Additionally, the F#–G in measure 178 should lead to the retardation in measure 179, stressing the dissonance until finally resolving in the anacrusis.

During the first half of variation eleven, soprano and alto saxophone alternate brief motives to create a continuous run of eighth notes in both C minor and melodic minor (mm. 172–176). The composite line is doubled in the vibraphone and organ, two dynamic levels lower. The saxophones should aim to create a seamless, blended sound as they trade off, staying precisely with the conductor. Beginning in measure 176, additional voices begin entering with similar scalar patterns. The conductor will need to decide how noticeable each entrance should be, whether each addition is prominently heard or if the color of this texture expands more gradually throughout the phrase. The final measure (m. 179) crescendos and accelerates through changing subdivisions, building momentum into the next variation. Counts one and two utilize sextuplets,

changing to thirty-second notes on count three (notated as a triplet per eighth note and a sixteenth-note grouping per eighth note, respectively).

Variation Twelve (mm. 180–187)

In variation twelve, the passacaglia theme is presented initially alongside two accompaniment figures, joined later by a soli in bass voices beginning in measure 183. The theme is expressed as repeated notes in the horn (stopped) and marimba; the diminishing quality of the repeated quarter notes resembles a less complicated version of the “sound delay” texture seen in measure 1, with each entrance overlapping and trailing away.

The initial primary accompaniment figure (mm. 180–182) is a series of mensuration canons built on two motives borrowed from variation three of the Bach *Passacaglia and Fugue* (see Figure 3.17). Both motives feature ascending perfect interval(s), followed by stepwise motion. Measures 180 and 181 set the first motive in two voices, while measures 181 and 182 set the second motive in three voices. After measure 183, both motives are used more freely, with changes to the melodic contour, extensions in the length, or with added ties and rests.



Figure 3.17. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Material Borrowed from Bach (Variation Three)
Trombone, mm. 180

The second, less prominent, accompaniment texture in variation twelve is a series of light notes on the beat in piccolo, flute, and glockenspiel. The latter plays sustained half notes (*mf*) while the woodwinds reinforce the attacks with staccato eighth notes (*p*). Given the rhythmic and dynamic writing, the piccolo and flute performers should articulate in a way that matches the

mallet selection of the glockenspiel. Melodically, this line seldom lines up with the passacaglia theme, instead playing frequent harmonic seconds that are tantalizingly close to chord tones. The downbeats of measure 180 and 183 are the only two notes to enter in tandem with the theme.

Beginning in measure 183, a soli performed by contrabassoon, contrabass clarinet, baritone saxophone, bass trombone, tuba, and double bass becomes the dominant texture for the rest of the phrase. This line incorporates fragments from the material borrowed from Bach's variation three, in particular the ascending perfect fifth interval (mm. 183, 185) and the stepwise three-note pattern (m. 183). This soli presents several rhythmic challenges: measure 183 contains a triplet pickup followed immediately by an eighth-note pickup, a distinction that performers may mistakenly blur the lines between. Additionally, in measure 186 the subdivision changes from eighth notes to triplets in the middle of count two. The conductor should take time to isolate this texture and check for rhythmic integrity, particularly considering the frequent cross-rhythms created by the accompaniment voices.

Variation Thirteen (mm. 188–195)

In variation thirteen, the orchestration reduces significantly to four performers, consisting of a flute solo and three accompanying trumpets. The passacaglia theme is presented in one of its least recognizable states, set among an eighth-note motive borrowed from variation six of Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue* (see Figure 3.18). Biedenbender sets this motive on every beat of the phrase until measure 195, creating a composite rhythm of continuous eighth notes. Many notes in the theme are passing tones and their location within the subdivision of the beat fluctuates, loosening the feel of a triple meter to the listener. Performers should prioritize continuity of the line and blend within the section, rather than attempting to bring out the notes of the theme.

During the cadence (m. 195), this texture abruptly changes as second and third trumpet immediately play a notated lower mordent on $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{1}$, respectively. First trumpet embellishes the resolution, completing the triad with a lower mordent on count three.

Figure 3.18. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Material Borrowed from Bach (Variation Six)
Trumpet 1-3, concert pitch, mm. 188–189

The flute solo plays in the lyrical, ornamented style found in earlier woodwind solos (mm. 25–34). Almost every note is adorned with ornamentation, fluctuating between one, two, or four grace-note patterns. Rhythmically, this melody uses frequent, changing syncopations and ties across the barline, contrasting with the regularity of the sixteenth-note line in trumpets. The melodic contour follows a natural arch across the phrase, peaking on $\hat{6}^b$ (A-flat) at the end of measure 190 and gradually descending to tonic at the cadence (m. 195).

Variation Fourteen (mm. 196–203)

Variation fourteen similarly borrows material from Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue*, using a motive from the organ pedal in variation nine (see Figure 3.19). French horn, trombone, and euphonium play a continuous sequence of this motive, consisting of three eighth-note pickups and a quarter note. The conductor should ensure note lengths are consistent across brass voices, releasing quarter notes to allow the subsequent eighth note fragment to be heard. This motive almost exclusively outlines a third, apart from the last iteration which spans only a second (m.

202). Barring one modification (m. 201), all notes of the passacaglia theme are present in this sequence, outlined clearly in motives beginning on count three. In most instances, the motives on counts one and two build a triad or seventh chord of the expected quality on the bass note. However, three measures in this variation subvert harmonic expectations. In measure 197, Biedenbender uses modal mixture, passing through a first inversion \flat II into a minor v with a lowered leading tone. Later in measure 200, he raises the seventh scale degree over an E-flat in the bass, creating a temporary augmented triad until the next beat. Finally, in measure 201, Biedenbender delays the arrival of tonic with a second instance of an E-flat augmented triad.



Variation Fifteen (mm. 204–211)

In the three variations immediately preceding fifteen (variations twelve, thirteen, and fourteen), the theme was less identifiable, either hidden within intricate textures or expressed as rhythmic motives borrowed from the Bach *Passacaglia and Fugue*. Variation fifteen begins the final climax of the piece, opening with the bold return of the passacaglia theme in the low woodwinds, low brass, and organ pedal. In this *maestoso* statement of the theme, the tuba, double bass, and timpani invert the opening interval and descend a fourth, creating additional depth of sound in the ensemble. Ideally, the conductor would want two performers on the tuba part to allow for seamless breathing. If only one player is present, it is recommended they breath before each pickup to maintain the metric triple feeling.

Texturally, two figures accompany the theme, both of which modify previously used material to culminate the piece as well as build intensity. The countermelody performed by trumpets (excluding piccolo), horns, trombones, and alto/tenor saxophone features modal borrowing from the parallel C major, syncopated rhythms, and use of trills. Like the fragmentation in variation nine's countermelody, this figure temporarily separates into two lines (mm. 208–209). The first grouping of alto saxophone, trumpets, and first/second horns arpeggiate a G major chord (m. 208) leading to a half-note triplet beginning on F# (m. 209). Musically, the performers in this grouping should crescendo slightly to this triplet, highlighting the tritone dissonance. The second grouping of tenor saxophone, third/fourth horns, and trombones plays entirely on the offbeats (mm. 208–209), moving largely in stepwise motion. Performers in this grouping should put clear definition on the beginnings of these notes and play slightly shorter to highlight the syncopation. In the final measure (m. 211), trumpet and alto/tenor saxophone embellish the resolution with trilled figures on a syncopated rhythm. Third trumpet

should be aware they perform delayed entrances compared to the others and should not attempt to align with their section.

The second accompaniment figure modifies the split-sextuplet texture seen in variation seven. While piano and organ play continuous sextuplets, the woodwinds and keyboard percussion play quarter-note triplets with intermittent eighth notes, either the first or second note in each beat (see Figure 3.20). Among these woodwinds, piccolo and flute are the only voices to begin on measure 204, all others in this texture enter in measure 205. This second grouping should internally subdivide prior to their entrance, ensuring a seamless addition to the existing line.

The final two measures in variation fifteen (mm. 210–211) have a ritardando slowing the tempo from 66 to 56, during which the triplet texture in woodwinds and percussion changing to quintuplets and eventually eighth notes. With the changing subdivisions and rhythmic layering in the trumpets, the conductor should take care to organically decelerate through these two measures, pacing equally across the ritardando.

The image displays a musical score for measures 204 and 205. It features five staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a 3/2 time signature, containing quarter-note triplets. The second staff is a treble clef with a 3/2 time signature, marked 'ff', containing continuous sextuplets. The third staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a 3/2 time signature, marked 'ff', containing continuous sextuplets. The fourth staff is a bass clef with a 3/2 time signature, containing quarter-note triplets. The fifth staff is a bass clef with a 3/2 time signature, containing quarter-note triplets. The score is in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Figure 3.20. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Sextuplet Texture
Keyboard Percussion, Piano (RH), Organ, mm. 204–205

Variation Sixteen (mm. 212–219)

Variation sixteen and seventeen (mm. 220–227) are notated as seven and nine measure-long phrases, respectively. Measure 219 contains a rehearsal marking, tempo change, and new performance direction (*devastating*), despite being the last measure of the theme from variation fifteen. Aurally, the listener will likely hear these variations as two phrases of eight, as no thematic material is lost or extended. For the purposes of this document, the analysis will examine both phrases as two complete statements of the theme. The passacaglia theme, marked *pesante*, is performed by low woodwinds, low brass, double bass, organ pedal, and timpani. The contrabassoon, tuba, double bass, and timpani again invert the opening interval and descend a fourth before continuing with the theme.

Bassoon, alto/tenor saxophone, French horn, and trombone perform the countermelody, frequently separating into two independent lines (mm. 212–213, 216–217). During moments where the countermelody is split, the component parts may need to play with slightly more articulation and space between notes to maintain clarity. As these voices sustain over movement in the bass, they create frequent suspensions, many of which do not resolve conventionally. In measures 214–217, the combined countermelody voices play heavily syncopated lines, sequencing several suspensions together. Biedenbender specifically notates the syncopations in measures 216–217 with accents, suggesting the conductor interpret them more prominently than the syncopations earlier in the variation.

Approaching the cadence, bassoon, tenor saxophone, third/fourth French horn, trombone, and organ perform a syncopated rhythm entering on the offbeat and tied into half-note triplets (m. 217). Including the B-flat before this figure, the (B \flat)–A \flat –G \flat –F is essentially descending scalar motion with a lowered fifth and octave displacement. In measure 218, these voices arrive

on either C or E-flat, creating accented non-chord tones that resolve inwardly to D on count three. Tenor saxophone, third/fourth French horn, and trombone all have a $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{3}$ retardation in measure 219, accentuated by a glissando in trombone. These performers should be aware the rest of the ensemble decrescendos while they remain at *fortississimo* to accentuate this resolution.

In measure 213, the high woodwinds and high brass perform the “Mensuration Canon” Texture in three parts; the conductor should be aware performers may not have the same entrance as they did in earlier statements of the canon. All voices resolve to an ornamented tonic C, either on the “and of one” or on count two (m. 214). In the latter half of the variation (mm. 215–218), Biedenbender employs ornamented notes leading from scale degree five up to tonic. The melodic line begins monophonically, doubling the rhythm of the passacaglia theme (mm. 215–216). The final two measures (mm. 217–218) begin staggering these entrances, with figures on nearly every sixteenth-note subdivision in measure 218 (see Figure 3.21). Each ornament has three grace notes and arpeggiates a triad, either in root position or second inversion. The conductor should be very mindful to evenly control tempo as the players execute the written *molto ritardando* (mm. 217–218) throughout the increasingly intricate rhythms.

The image shows a musical score for Variation Sixteen Cadence (Reduction) by David Biedenbender. It consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system includes a 'molto rit.' marking. The notation features complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and rests, characteristic of the composer's style.

Figure 3.21. David Biedenbender, *Enigma*, Variation Sixteen Cadence (Reduction)
Woodwinds, Trumpet, Glockenspiel, Organ, mm. 215–219

Variation Seventeen (mm. 220–227)

Variation seventeen is unique, constructed almost entirely from the flared crescendos utilized throughout *Enigma*. Given the nature of swelled figures being an acoustic representation of electronic sounds played in reverse, Biedenbender conceptually views this variation as the emotional climax of *Enigma*, as if the entire piece is being quickly played backwards.¹⁰² He

¹⁰² Biedenbender, interview.

likens this effect to a movie where, “you get to the end of someone's life and you literally play the whole thing from death to birth in twenty seconds.”¹⁰³ After the dramatic climax of variation sixteen, what follows is the “air being slowly sucked out of the room for an entire variation.”¹⁰⁴

The passacaglia theme is embedded within the swell texture and reinforced faintly in organ (*mp*). Unlike earlier treatments, however, these gestures decrescendo after the flare, rather than releasing; each instance grows from *pianissimo* to *forte* over one count, followed by a decrescendo to *pianissimo* in two counts.¹⁰⁵ This change to the structure causes the decrescendo for each iteration to extend completely into the crescendo of the following iteration. For a brief moment in between each beat, the chords before and after are equally present, creating isolated instances of bitonality. The result is a harmonic gradient as chords repeatedly shift in and out of “focus.”

Structurally, a crescendo peaks on every count after measure 221, frequently changing the voicing or chord quality. Isolating the harmonic composition for motives at their peak reveals that the passacaglia theme is set frequently as either the third or fifth of the chord. During this nebulous harmonic texture, a sustained G in the organ pedal provides stability in the way of dominant prolongation through most of the phrase (mm. 220–226). Successful performance of this variation requires a consistent approach to the flared crescendo across the ensemble; performers must identify and blend with the members in their grouping, and each iteration of the swell texture must match throughout the phrase. The organ, with the unaltered theme and dominant prolongation, is a reference point for performers as they work to align pitch. The

¹⁰³ Biedenbender, interview.

¹⁰⁴ Biedenbender, interview.

¹⁰⁵ Bass trombone has one exception in measure 222. This performer decrescendos for only one count before beginning another gesture.

conductor should be aware the theme, in particular the metric regularity of half and whole notes, is not established until measure 222. The opening pickup on C is present in measure 219, but only in the decrescendo among low woodwinds and brass, not on count three.

Variation Eighteen (mm. 228–235)

Following the textural and emotional climaxes of *Enigma*, the final four variations present increasingly somber iterations of the passacaglia theme. In variation eighteen, the theme is performed by bassoon, baritone saxophone, double bass, and organ, accompanied only by a series of swelled notes across the ensemble. This phrase is the first time double bass plays the theme as pizzicato notes; this performer will need precise pitch accuracy, as there is no ability to adjust after the note is struck. Vibraphone supports this line with sustained, dotted whole notes on count one of every measure except 232.

The swelled notes in the accompaniment are extended, growing for three counts and falling for three, with no use of flared crescendos. Each grouping enters on the downbeat of a given measure, peaking at the beginning of the next. The melodic content ascends the C-minor scale, including B \flat –B \natural –C towards the end of the phrase (mm. 233–234). Every measure, except the first, contains diatonic harmonic seconds as one voices grows while another fades. Where possible, performers should listen to the grouping before theirs to hear the scalar structure of the line. Saxophone and first horn slightly shift the timing of this pattern in measure 233, entering instead on count two as they establish the leading tone of the cadence.

Variation Nineteen (mm. 236–243)

Variation nineteen continues to expand the passacaglia theme texture while reducing the accompaniment. Baritone saxophone and bassoon are replaced by a larger grouping of bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon, bass trombone, euphonium, and tuba. These voices are in unison apart from euphonium, which plays in parallel fifths. Bass drum doubles the theme rhythmically, the first time non-pitched percussion is used this way. This performer should ensure the volume and resonance from the bass drum do not mar the clarity of the ensemble. All wind voices with the theme are marked “solemn” in the score and low brass has an additional marking to stagger breathe. Because the number of individual parts playing the passacaglia theme significantly increases (from approximately five players to as many as ten), the conductor should ensure this variation is dynamically seamless and the first note does not “pop.”

The overlapping swelled sustains in the accompaniment simplify to one part per entrance, now exclusively in the trumpets (mm. 236–241). Beginning with measure 236, the successive entrances of each crescendo are again scalar, outlining C–D–E \flat –F–G of the C-minor scale and creating perpetual harmonic seconds. Upon arrival to the fifth (m. 240), flute, oboe, clarinet, and piccolo trumpet join suddenly, reinforcing this G with an ornamented long tone over three measures. Harmonically, this G functions as the third in measure 240, the fifth in 241, and the root in 242. Performers of this note should be aware of the changing chord-tuning responsibilities to appropriately “shade” the note. In the final measure of the phrase (m. 243), the tuba performs the last note down the octave; the conductor should be aware this note may be particularly difficult for performers not on a C-instrument.

Variation Twenty (mm. 244–251)

The final two variations (mm. 244–251 and 252–260) pair together in two primary ways as the conclusion to *Enigma*: First, the passacaglia theme grouping is largely consistent across both variations, performed by contrabassoon, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, bass trombone, euphonium, tuba, double bass, and organ pedal, later joined by bassoon (m. 251). Timpani begins by doubling all downbeats of the theme (mm. 244–252), later playing only instances of the tonic/dominant (mm. 252–260).¹⁰⁶ Second, Biedenbender begins stacking harmonic seconds in measure 247, developing into a four-note cluster chord in measure 250. This chord sustains across the phrase and throughout the last variation, releasing only in the final measure.

Variation twenty begins with the “Mensuration Canon” figure in horn and alto saxophone (m. 244). Instead of resolving, bassoon, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, and trombone answer with a quotation from variation three of Bach’s *Passacaglia and Fugue* (m. 245). Both the canon and response resolve to G, creating only momentary consonance before horns, vibraphone, and organ begin layering the cluster chord (m. 247). Each successive harmonic second is introduced one note at a time on count two, while the passacaglia theme is sustaining. To make this layering more prominent, the conductor may consider instructing cluster chord performers to slightly accent each entrance. With G as the base of this chord, and the raised B-natural introduced in measure 249, this cluster-chord functions as a dissonant realization of dominant prolongation. During which, the passacaglia theme briefly fragments; bassoon, bass clarinet, and organ pedal arpeggiate a C-minor triad in half-note triplets while the remaining voices continue with the theme. No dynamic change is indicated, though performers should crescendo slightly to stress the rhythmic dissonance and change to the theme.

¹⁰⁶ In variation twenty, measure 246 is an outlier harmonically; the timpani does not double the theme but rather plays the fifth.

Variation Twenty-One (mm. 253–260)

Finally, in variation twenty-one, Biedenbender concludes *Enigma* with a fading, pensive statement of the passacaglia theme. This final iteration appends a measure of fermata to the expected theme, for a total of nine measures in duration. During the first eight measures, the theme plays under the faint, G–Ab–B \flat –C cluster chord sustained in clarinet, vibraphone, and organ (mm. 252–259). Biedenbender credits this texture to the end of Luciano Berio’s setting of Bach’s *Contrapunctus XIX* from *The Art of the Fugue*, accomplishing a different but similarly haunting affect. Performers not playing the tetrachord will need to listen across this dissonance to align pitch, particularly in the penultimate measure (m. 259) to ensure no adjustment is needed as the cluster chord drops out.

In what would be a rhythmically consistent variation, two percussion voices create instability. First, vibraphone performs a “very slow, random, out of time tremolo” on the cluster chord, with a special note for attacks to be barely audible.¹⁰⁷ Second, tubular bells are equally as unpredictable rhythmically, albeit more tonal. Alternating between tonic and dominant, the syncopated entrances use both quarter-, eighth-, and half-note triplet offbeats “as if out of time.”¹⁰⁸ The final four measures (mm. 257–260) have a written *ritardando* approaching the cadence, during which percussion slowly drops out (mm. 257, 258). As the cluster chord releases, only flute, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, double bass, and organ remain on the final note.

¹⁰⁷ Described as such by performance directions.

¹⁰⁸ Described as such by performance directions.

CONCLUSION

Enigma is the culmination of David Biedenbender's unique compositional voice, diverse influences, and extensive training, making it a significant contribution to the wind band repertoire. As an award-winning composition, this piece masterfully blends Biedenbender's contemporary voice with the cornerstone work of J. S. Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*, paying appropriate homage to one of the most celebrated composers and pieces in history by utilizing formal structures, melodic material, and accompaniment figures found in the original. Biedenbender's treatment of each element of the music demonstrates careful craftsmanship and design.

The orchestration and timbral diversity of *Enigma* demonstrates Biedenbender's understanding of a characteristic wind band sound, both on an individual and ensemble level. *Enigma* utilizes a unique, expanded instrumentation including several auxiliary instruments, such as soprano saxophone, piccolo trumpet, and organ. This instrumentation is realized to its fullest potential, featuring nearly every instrument in a prominent solo or soli settings. Additionally, Biedenbender uses implements and instrument-specific techniques to bring out the characteristic qualities of each instrument. Brass frequently use mutes, glissandi, and stopped horn, while woodwinds use flourishing ornamentation. All instruments perform flared crescendos, a technique characteristic of Biedenbender's writing. Through intentional orchestration and compositional techniques, Biedenbender creates a diverse color palette and characteristic settings for each instrument, making *Enigma* both rewarding for the performer and engaging to the listener.

Biedenbender's treatment of melody demonstrates his ability to manage pacing through development techniques. *Enigma* introduces melodic material and gestures in the Introduction and Development, organically recalling said material throughout the Passacaglia Section. This unifying material connects the entire piece while maintaining interest and momentum. The piece opens with the "sound delay" texture in woodwinds, later used in variations seven, eight, and twelve. The overlapping flared crescendos first seen in measures 22–23 later appear in variations six and seventeen, the latter being almost exclusively constructed with them. The mensuration canon in measure 38 is the primary accompaniment figure in variation three, appearing also in variations one, two, sixteen, and eighteen. Finally, fragments of the passacaglia theme are laced across the opening, most notably hinted at in measure 53. Throughout the Passacaglia Section, Biedenbender varies the theme and borrows material from the Bach *Passacaglia and Fugue* to create texturally unique iterations of repeated thematic material. Notable examples include variation six, in which Biedenbender inverts the theme as a tuba solo, and seventeen, in which he sets the passacaglia among overlapping flared crescendos.

Enigma is a quintessential representation of Biedenbender's treatment of rhythm. In the opening and climax of the Exposition, Biedenbender repeats small rhythmic motives, gradually layering additional fragments to reveal an intricate composite texture. Throughout the work, he utilizes a wide array of beat subdivisions, both vertically as polyrhythms and horizontally with rhythmic acceleration and deceleration. These figures often work together to create harmonic tension, such as the rising harmonic seconds in woodwinds at measure 53. Each variation in the Passacaglia Section has a dedicated rhythmic scheme, often established by the primary accompaniment figure or a groove created by percussion and keyboards. By changing the

rhythmic content, Biedenbender imbues each phrase with unique character, and the formal structure is felt as much as it is heard.

As a composer of his academic and professional standing, Biedenbender and his extensive compositional output warrant additional scholarly research, for which several intriguing possibilities exist. Conductors would benefit from similar theoretical and performance analyses on other award-winning compositions of his, such as *Unquiet Hours* or *River of Time*. Similarly, performers could create instrument specific performance guides from any of Biedenbender's chamber or solo works such as *Between Words* (bassoon), *Sacred Geometry* (brass quintet), or *Detroit Steel* (alto saxophone or flute). Finally, several possible interdisciplinary approaches could examine how Biedenbender's compositions connect to fields outside of music. For example, several of his works set the poetry of Robert Fanning, which could be cross-referenced for how Biedenbender uses orchestration or certain techniques to invoke meaning from the text. Alternatively, works such as *Cyclotron* and *Symmetry Breaking* are inspired by scientific concepts and could be analyzed to observe how acoustic instruments are used to represent these concepts or recreate electronic effects.

Through careful study of Biedenbender's career and voice, the historical context surrounding works like *Enigma*, and the theoretical elements in his scores, conductors will "crack the code" on successfully performing his compositions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- American Bandmasters Association. "Sousa-ABA-Ostwald Composition Contest Winners." Accessed Sept. 11, 2025. <https://www.americanbandmasters.org/sousa-aba-ostwald-composition-contest/>.
- Battisti, Frank L., and Robert Joseph Garofalo. *Guide to Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor*. Milwaukee, WI: Meredith Music Publications, 1990.
- Biedenbender, David. *Before the Dawn*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2023.
- . *Cerulean*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2017.
- . *Cyclotron*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2017.
- . "Conducting Masterclass: David Biedenbender Interview." Interview by Chris Heidenreich. Conducting Masterclass, CBDNA, July 26, 2024. Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bofkAQpopIU>.
- . "David Biedenbender." Interview by Jeffrey Leung. Maryland Chamber Winds Composer Spotlight Series, Maryland Chamber Winds, December 2, 2022. Video. <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1Aeshe4ram/>.
- . "David Biedenbender, composer." Interview by David Osenberg. Cadenza with David Osenberg, WWFM The Classical Network, October 13, 2023. Audio, 59:42. <https://www.wwfm.org/show/cadenza-with-david-osenberg/2023-10-21/david-biedenbender-composer>.
- . *dream of ember, dream of star*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2021.
- . *Enigma*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2024.
- . Interview by author, Fort Collins, CO, December 15, 2025.
- . *Kairos*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2020.
- . *Kyrie (for Machaut and Pärt)*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 20190.
- . *Mosaic*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2025.
- . *Red Vesper*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2014.
- . *Schism*. East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2010.

- Blocher, Larry, Eugene Migliaro Corporon, Ray Cramer, Tim Lautzenheiser, Edward S. Lisk, Richard Miles, and Andrew Trachsel. *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*. Edited by Richard Miles and Andrew Trachsel. Vols. 10–12. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2015–2021.
- Cook, David. “David Biedenbender’s *Synchronicity* for Clarinet and Piano: Compositional and Performative Insights.” *The Clarinet* 45, no. 3 (2018): 46-50.
- Crider, Paula A. *Beyond the Notes: Thoughts on Meaningful Music Making*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2024.
- Dobos, Joseph and William Berz. “Nicholas Falcone, The Band Director You’ve Probably Never Heard Of.” *Journal of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles*.
- Green, Elizabeth A. H. *The Modern Conductor*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1987.
- Houk, Haley. "The Reed Quintet: A Study of the History of a New Woodwind Genre, with Analyses of Paul Dooley’s *Warp & Weft* and David Biedenbender’s *Refraction*." DMA Diss., University of Houston, 2025. ProQuest (32262662).
- Hunsberger, Donald R. “Chapter 4.” In *Rehearsing the Band*, edited by John E. Williamson, 29–38. Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications: Distributed by Hal Leonard, 2008.
- . “Johann Sebastian Bach’s Prelude in E-Flat and the Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor in Transcription for Wind Ensemble.” DMA Diss., University of Rochester, 1963.
- . “Wind Library: Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565.” *WindWorks* 2, (Fall 1998): 2.
- Martin, Robert L. “Wind Band Transcriptions of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Organ Works and the Application of Organ Registration in Orchestration.” MM Thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2019. ProQuest (13859466).
- McCutchen, Matthew. “David Biedenbender’s *Enigma* Wins the 2024 NBA William D. Revelli Memorial Band Composition Contest.” *NBA Journal* 65, no. 2 (Winter 2025): 14–17.
- Montgomery, James L. “Application of Baroque Organ Articulation Concepts to a Wind-Band Transcription of J. S. Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565.” Thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2000. ProQuest (1402556).
- Mulbury, David. “Bach’s ‘Passacaglia’ in C minor: Notes Regarding Its Background, Essence, and Performance.” *Bach* 3, no. 2 (April 1972): 14–27.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41639849>.

- . “Bach’s ‘Passacaglia’ in C Minor: Notes Regarding Its Background, Essence, and Performance — Part II.” *Bach* 3, no. 3 (July 1972): 12–20. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41639861>.
- Ormandy, Eugene. “The Art of Conducting.” In *The Professional Symphony Orchestra in the United States*, edited by George Seltzer. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975.
- Reynolds, H. Robert, and Doris Doyon. *In Pursuit of Great Conducting*. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc, 2025.
- Schnorr, Klemens. “Litanei und Ostinato in Bachs Passacaglia c-moll BWV 582.” *Anuario Musical* (2001): 163–172. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/litanei-und-ostinato-bachs-passacaglia-c-moll-bwv/docview/1313590/se-2>.
- Wagar, Jeannine. *Conductors in Conversation: Fifteen Contemporary Conductors Discuss Their Lives and Profession*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1991.

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION OF USE FOR MUSICAL EXAMPLES

DAVID BIEDENBENDER'S *ENIGMA*



David Biedenbender <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>

To: @ Davis,David



Thu 1/22/2026 7:09 AM

**** Caution: EXTERNAL Sender ****

Hi David,

You have my permission to reproduce excerpts of the *Enigma* score for the exclusive purpose of creating musical examples in the text. I am the copyright holder of this work, along with my (self-)publishing company, Bent Space Music. The work is registered through ASCAP. The appropriate copyright information is included on the first page of the score.

Best,

DB

APPENDIX B: DAVID BIEDENBENDER: PUBLISHED WORKS AS OF MARCH 2026

BAND/WIND ENSEMBLE

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Time Flies</i>	2026	9	Band
<i>Mosaic</i>	2025	10	Band
<i>Enigma</i>	2024	12	Wind ensemble
<i>River of Time</i>	2024	18	Solo trumpet and wind ensemble
<i>Before the Dawn</i>	2023	5	Wind ensemble
<i>River of Time</i>	2023	18	Solo trumpet and orchestra
<i>Enigma</i>	2022	12	Brass choir and organ
<i>Extinguish Thou My Eyes</i>	2022	6	Chamber winds
<i>blue dream of sky</i>	2021	7	Brass choir
<i>dream of ember, dream of star</i>	2021	7	Band
<i>This Night</i>	2020	4	Wind ensemble/saxophone quartet/choir
<i>Kyrie (for Machaut and Pärt)</i>	2019	5	Chamber winds
<i>Severance</i>	2019	21	Saxophone quartet and wind ensemble
<i>What is Written on the Leaves</i>	2019	24	Wind Ensemble
<i>Cyclotron</i>	2017	10	Wind ensemble
<i>Ghost Apparatus</i>	2017	7	Band
<i>Their Eyes Are Fireflies</i>	2017	20	Solo trombone and wind ensemble
<i>Unquiet Hours</i>	2017	7	Band
<i>Spartan Fanfare</i>	2016	2	Brass and percussion
<i>Daybreak Crossing</i>	2013	5	Wind ensemble
<i>Dreams in the Dusk</i>	2013	14	Concerto for alto saxophone and wind ensemble
<i>Melodious Thunk</i>	2012	5	Band
<i>Schism</i>	2010	6	Small wind ensemble
<i>Luminescence</i>	2009	7	Wind ensemble/band
<i>Stomp</i>	2009	5	Wind ensemble

CHAMBER

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Before the Red Sky Reaches Us</i>	2025	15	Tenor, violin, violincello, percussion
<i>Vision</i>	2025	6	Two trumpets and organ
<i>Between Worlds</i>	2024	18	Bassoon and piano
<i>Fireflies</i>	2024	5	Trombone choir
<i>all we are given we cannot hold</i>	2022	27	Soprano, clarinet, piano

<i>Sacred Geometry</i>	2022	17	Brass quintet
<i>Symmetry Breaking</i>	2022	9	Piano four hands
<i>in a field of stars</i>	2021	20	Soprano and flute, clarinet/bassoon, violin, violincello, percussion, piano
<i>Kairos</i>	2020	5	Reed quintet
<i>Kyrie (for Machaut and Pärt)</i>	2019	5	Two flute, two oboe, two clarinet (Bs Cl), alto Saxophone, four horn, two bassoon, bass clarinet
<i>Shell and Wing</i>	2018	17	Soprano and flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, violincello, piano, vibraphone
<i>Solstice</i>	2018	24	Piano quartet
<i>Anaphora</i>	2017	7	Saxophone quartet
<i>Cerulean</i>	2017	13	Saxophone quartet
<i>Ferrum</i>	2017	7	Percussion quartet
<i>Spiral</i>	2016	2	Eight trumpets
<i>blue dream of sky</i>	2015	7	Trombone choir
<i>Refraction</i>	2015	11	Reed quintet
<i>Red Vesper</i>	2014	8	Mixed chamber/piano quartet
<i>Grit</i>	2012	7	Flute, clarinet, piano, percussion, violin, viola, violincello
<i>Surface Tension</i>	2012	8	String quartet
<i>you've been talking in your sleep</i>	2010	9	Saxophone quartet
<i>Stomp</i>	2008	5	Flute, clarinet, violin, violincello, piano, marimba

SOLO/CONCERTO

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Between Worlds</i>	2024	18	Bassoon and piano
<i>River of Time</i>	2024	18	Solo trumpet and wind ensemble/orchestra/piano
<i>Refuge</i>	2022	5	Solo viola
<i>Detroit Steel</i>	2018	7	Solo alto saxophone
<i>Still and Quiet Places</i>	2018	7	Flugelhorn/alto saxophone and piano
<i>Their Eyes Are Fireflies</i>	2017	20	Solo trombone and orchestra
<i>Detroit Steel</i>	2016	5	Solo flute
<i>Synchronicity</i>	2016	17	Clarinet and piano
<i>Together Alone</i>	2016	7	Solo flute
<i>Radiant Spheres</i>	2014	17	Tenor trombone/euphonium and piano
<i>Walking on the Ceiling</i>	2014	16	Soprano saxophone and piano

<i>Dreams in the Dusk</i>	2013	14	Alto saxophone and wind ensemble
<i>Liquid Architecture</i>	2012	13	Bass trombone and piano
<i>Images</i>	2008	16	Alto saxophone and piano

ORCHESTRA

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>River of Time</i>	2023	18	Solo trumpet and orchestra
<i>Enigma</i>	2022	12	Brass choir and organ
<i>blue dream of sky</i>	2021	7	Brass choir
<i>something deeply hidden</i>	2020	11	Orchestra
<i>Feed</i>	2017	13	Two sopranos and chamber orchestra
<i>Their Eyes Are Fireflies</i>	2017	20	Solo trombone and orchestra
<i>Spartan Fanfare</i>	2016	2	Brass and percussion
<i>I'm Down</i>	2013	5	Baritone and chamber orchestra
<i>Strange, Beautiful Noises</i>	2013	7	Orchestra
<i>Along the Road</i>	2012	13	Soprano and flute, clarinet, bassoon, piano, strings
<i>Schism</i>	2011	6	Sinfonietta
<i>Dance the Dream Awake</i>	2009	9	Orchestra

DUO

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Symmetry Breaking</i>	2022	9	Piano four hands
<i>between us</i>	2021	12	Clarinet and alto saxophone
<i>Still and Quiet Places</i>	2018	7	Flugelhorn/alto saxophone and piano
<i>Synchronicity</i>	2016	17	Clarinet and piano
<i>Radiant Spheres</i>	2014	17	Tenor trombone/euphonium and piano
<i>Staying the Night</i>	2014	9	Flute and clarinet, flute and alto saxophone, soprano saxophone and alto saxophone
<i>Walking on the Ceiling</i>	2014	16	Soprano saxophone and piano
<i>Liquid Architecture</i>	2012	13	Bass trombone and piano
<i>Images</i>	2008	16	Alto saxophone and piano

VOICE

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Before the Red Sky Reaches Us</i>	2025	15	Tenor, violin, violincello, percussion
<i>all we are given we cannot hold</i>	2022	27	Soprano, clarinet, piano
<i>in a field of stars</i>	2021	20	Soprano and flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, violincello, piano, percussion
<i>Shell and Wing</i>	2018	17	Soprano and flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, violincello, piano, vibraphone
<i>Feed</i>	2017	13	Two sopranos and chamber orchestra
<i>I'm Down</i>	2013	5	Baritone and chamber orchestra
<i>Along the Road</i>	2012	13	Soprano and flute, clarinet, bassoon, piano, strings

IMPROV/JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Ampersand</i>	2014	9	Soprano saxophone, baroque violin, piano, bass, drums
<i>Into the Wind</i>	2013	35	Improvisation/live electroacoustic with dance
<i>a line between two spaces</i>	2012	11	Piano and interactive electronics
<i>Space Case</i>	2006	10	Big band

CHOIR

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Flux</i>	2016	6	SSAATTBB (a cappella)
<i>This Night</i>	2012	4	SATB (a cappella) and (optional) solo instrument
<i>Three Rilke Songs</i>	2012	12	SSAATTBB (a cappella)

ELECTROACOUSTIC

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>a line between two spaces</i>	2012	11	Piano and interactive electronics
<i>cold. hard. steel.</i>	2009	4	Stereo electroacoustic
<i>Awakening</i>	2008	2	Stereo electroacoustic

MULTIMEDIA/INTERDISCIPLINARY

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Double Dutch</i>	2014	4	Video/installation
<i>Into the Wind</i>	2013	35	Improvisation/live electroacoustic with dance

SOLO WITH ELECTROACOUSTIC

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Resonance Modes</i>	2014	8	Amplified prepared piano with electronics

OPERA

Title	Date	Duration (min.)	Instrumentation
<i>Feed</i>	2017	13	Two sopranos and chamber orchestra

Climax Motives (Reduction), mm. 71–74

Two staves of music in bass clef, 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The top staff features a melodic line with eighth notes and slurs, marked *ff*. The bottom staff features a bass line with whole notes and slurs, also marked *ff*.

Inverted Passacaglia Theme in Tuba, mm. 129–136

Two staves of music in bass clef, 3/2 time, key of B-flat major. The top staff features a melodic line with eighth notes and slurs, marked *mf cantabile*. The bottom staff features a bass line with eighth notes and slurs, including a triplet, marked *mf cantabile*.

Passacaglia Theme and Countermelody, in F Horn and Bass Voices, mm. 148–159

Four staves of music in treble and bass clefs, 3/2 time, key of B-flat major. The top two staves feature a melodic line with eighth notes and slurs, marked *ff*, with trills indicated above. The bottom two staves feature a bass line with eighth notes and slurs, marked *f*, including a triplet.

Variation Twelve Accompaniment Figure in Trombone, mm. 180–187

Borrowed from Bach Variation Three

f

Variation Thirteen Theme Texture in Trumpet, mm. 188

Borrowed from Bach Variation Six

mp graceful

mp graceful

mp graceful

Variation Fourteen Theme in Trombone, mm. 196-197

Borrowed from Bach Variation Nine

mf

mf

APPENDIX D: TREATMENT OF THEME IN PASSACAGLIA SECTION (MM. 90–260)

Variation	Measures	Voicing	Special Notes
1	90–97	Fl, Bsn, Hn, Org	Monophonic setting, minimal accompaniment
2	98–105	T. Sax, Hn, Tbn	Rhythmic/melodic alteration (mm. 101–103)
3	106–113	B. Tbn, Tuba, D. Bass, Org	
4	114–120	B. Cl, B. Sax, Euph, D. Bass, Org	Seven bar phrase
5	121–128	Glock, Vib	Percussion only setting
6	129–137	Tuba	Inverted theme, nine bar phrase
7	138–147	S. Sax, A. Sax, Tpt	Repeated triplets, ten bar phrase
8	148–155	Cbsn, Cb. Cl, *Tbn (3), B. Tbn, *Euph, Tuba, D. Bass, Org	Tbn (3) and Euph in parallel fifths
9	156–163	Bsn, Cbsn, B. Cl, Cb. Cl, B. Sax, *Tbn (3), B. Tbn, *Euph, Tuba, D. Bass, Org	Tbn (3) and Euph in parallel fifths
10	164–171	Bsn, Cbsn, B. Cl, Cb. Cl, B. Sax, B. Tbn, Tuba, D. Bass, Pno, Org	
11	172–179	Tbn, B. Tbn, Euph, Org	$\hat{2}$ – $\hat{1}$ suspension in Tbn (1/2) and Euph (m. 179)
12	180–187	Hn	
13	188–195	Tpt	Theme expressed as motive from Bach variation seven
14	196–203	Hn, Tbn, Euph	Theme expressed as motive from Bach variation ten
15	204–211	Bsn, Cbsn, B. Cl, Cb. Cl, B. Sax, B. Tbn, Euph, Tuba, D. Bass, Org	
16	212–218	Cbsn, B. Cl, Cb. Cl, B. Sax, B. Tbn, *Euph, Tuba, D. Bass, Timp, Pno, Org	Euph in parallel fifths, notated as seven bar phrase
17	219–227	A. Sax, T. Sax, Tpt, Hn, Tbn, B. Tbn, Euph, Tuba, Org	All voices except Org expressed as swells, notated as nine bar phrase
18	228–235	Bsn, B. Sax, D. Bass, Org	
19	236–243	Cbsn, B. Cl, Cb. Cl, B. Tbn, Euph, Tuba, D. Bass, Org	
20	244–251	Cbsn, B. Cl, Cb. Cl, B. Tbn, Euph, Tuba, D. Bass, Org	
21	252–260	Cbsn, B. Cl, Cb. Cl, B. Tbn, Euph, Tuba, D. Bass, Org	Nine measure phrase, added fermata

APPENDIX E: *ENIGMA* PROGRAM NOTES

Enigma was originally written for brass choir and organ for the dedication of the Red Cedar Organ in the Michigan State University Alumni Chapel. This version was created for my friend Henry Dorn and the St. Olaf Band. It was awarded the 2024 National Band Association William D. Revelli Memorial Prize.

Enigma comes from a Greek word that means “to speak in riddles,” and in this piece, the riddle—or theme—is revealed gradually. The theme comes from the *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor* by Johann Sebastian Bach, which is one of my favorite pieces of music, and, once the theme is revealed, it is repeated cyclically with 21 variations, just like in Bach’s original. This piece is dedicated to my former teacher, José–Luis Maúrtua, a composer, theorist, conductor, and teacher with whom I studied at Central Michigan University. José–Luis was an extraordinary musician and teacher who was tirelessly dedicated to his students and to pushing them to do their best. I am forever grateful for the lessons I learned from him, and my music and my life are far better for having known him. Unfortunately, he was taken from this earth far too young—at the age of 57—by pancreatic cancer in the spring of 2022. I miss him dearly, and this music is for him.

Program Note by Composer
David Biedenbender, *Enigma* (East Lansing, MI: Bent Space Music, 2024).

APPENDIX F: DAVID BIEDENBENDER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

DEC. 15, 2025

DD: I'd love to start by asking you a few questions about your experiences in college and how they shaped you as a composer. From what I've read, it's clear that while you were at Central Michigan, you studied with David Gillingham and José-Luis Maúrtua. What would you say are your biggest takeaways from those professors or how they influenced your compositional style?

DB: Great question. David was my first composition teacher. I actually studied with him a little bit in high school, as a senior. I grew up in Mount Pleasant, where Central Michigan is, and his kids were in the band program with me. My first piece was for my high school band, and I got to conduct the premiere and took that piece to David. I started working with him early on. I think in terms of working with David, there were a number of things. One is that I was just enamored by his music and his approach early on. My view of contemporary music was through the lens of my high school band and then college band, and he loomed large. I mean, I was very inspired by his music. He also helped me expand my perspective early on by recommending and checking out a lot of American music: Sam Barber, Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, William Schumann. Those were some of the names I remember him recommending to me. He was really formative for me, you know, first teacher and everything. He was always very supportive. One of the things I really got from David was warmth and supportiveness, and that's one of the things that I've taken with me as I've grown my own sense of pedagogy. He's just an incredibly generous person.

As far as José-Luis, he was a much more intense person. We spent a lot of time on details. He was my theory teacher as well, so I took a number of theory courses from him. One of the reasons that Enigma is really an elegy for him is that we spent a lot of time looking at Bach. Some of the analytical insights that I have into Bach are things that I learned directly from him in his classes, things that he would say sitting at the piano and playing through things. I remember my first time studying with him, I think it was my sophomore year, there was one lesson we spent an entire hour on one bar of music, contemplating different voicings. I remember specifically looking at percussion and thinking through different timbral possibilities and everything. After he ripped this one bar apart for a whole hour, he basically said take that same intensity to the rest of the piece. He just had a quiet intensity that I really admired, where he'd kick your butt, but you'd feel inspired to go do better. So, it was interesting. They were complementary teachers, in a sense, very different from each other. I learned a lot from both.

DD: That's great. I knew that you had dedicated it to José-Luis in the program notes for the piece, but knowing that you guys had studied Bach, I think, helps add another layer of context and meaning to it. That's great.

Moving on to your graduate and doctoral studies, I've seen a list of your instructors while at the University of Michigan, but it's not always clear who was your primary teacher or for which degree they taught you. Could you give me some insight on who you studied with for each degree and then, again, how they influenced your compositional style?

DB: In my master's degree, the first year I studied with Bright Sheng and in the second year, my master's thesis advisor was Michael Dougherty. For my doctorate, I studied with Kristen Custer and Evan Chambers and then Michael Dougherty again for my dissertation advisor. I got very different things from each of them.

With Bright, I was a first-year graduate student, and I had written some pieces that I think were okay, but it was really not until I got to my master's degree that I have pieces I wrote that I haven't since withdrawn. Those first pieces with him felt like they were grown-up in a way. One of those pieces is called *Images* for saxophone and piano, and it's been performed a good amount. I remember him specifically pushing me on a couple of fronts. One was to really think about formal structure and think about proportions, the duration of things, the breaking points of material, making sure that you develop your ideas and spend enough time on them. I remember there were almost six or seven lessons in a row, so a month and a half or so, where I'd bring in a section of music, thinking I'd approach the climactic moment in the piece, and he was just like, no, keep going, keep going, keep going.

One of the ways he did this was through talking about Schenker's theories in a very composer-ly approach. Not adhering strictly to the music theorist interpretation of Schenker, but rather thinking about outer voices, voice leading and horizontal motion in music, as opposed to merely vertical counterpoint. Also, thinking about which notes are most important and their arrival places. I think as an undergraduate, I had a real vertical, label-y sense of sonorities, and he really got me thinking about the horizontal voice leading. We did talk about Schenker a lot. I happened to be taking Schenkerian analysis at that time, a full year of it. It was really formative in that sense. He was another teacher who really kicked my butt every time I'd have a lesson. It was just so intense, but I'd always walk away feeling like this piece is way better. He would sit down and improvise sometimes. I'd bring in something and he would improvise the next section of the piece. I was just amazed that he could just sit at the piano and synthesize my musical language that I had spent days, weeks, months toiling over, and he could just sit down and spit out something in my style. He was a really fantastic keyboardist.

Let's see. Michael is interesting because he was the teacher from whom I learned the most what I'll call overt development techniques. This is something I teach my own students now; I have a whole list of possible development techniques. He was a real Jedi at developing a small amount of material and just taking it a long ways to see the full potential of it. He's very hands-on, so it was common for him to say, "open up your software", and he would make edits and changes. He'd show you what potential was there, transpose this, copy and paste this, and then reorchestrate it, you know. Very hands-on, showing that with one idea, this is what you can do with it. Now go do more. Again, similarly intense but a different, complimentary approach to

Bright. I learned a lot from him. I've since extrapolated and made a list of techniques. He never actually gave me a list. It was always very hands-on and never broke down the fourth wall, but I have since made a more formal approach to it. So, I learned a lot, but I also do some things differently from him. He was also very supportive. I remember taking a lesson from him on my thesis. It was a Sunday afternoon, and he was recording a piano concerto or something with the Nashville Symphony, but we had a six-hour phone lesson to help me get my thesis ready for an orchestra concert premiere.

And then Evan and Kristy. I had convinced myself that I had writer's block, and Kristen really helped me work through my compositional process, reflecting on my process, valuing myself, valuing my work, and really digging into the creativity. I mean, a lot of how I teach comes from Evan and Kristy. She really can meet students where they are, it's very relational. I just felt like I had worked myself into a knot in some ways, and she helped me untangle it. She was a really, really great teacher in that sense, and I wrote some pieces I'm really proud of with her. Great teacher.

Evan Chambers, similarly, I think I teach a lot like Evan and Kristy because I really try to see students as each individuals. I don't have a particular method or approach I'm trying to dispense. I try to meet every student where they're at and try to say the thing that's right for them. I remember with Evan, like José-Luis, working on one measure for a whole lesson. He would often say "The first millisecond of a piece is the first impression; it's got to be good. You've got to just draw people in that first second."

So, I'm really grateful that I had all these different teachers, and they were all different from each other. I could talk about that for a long time, but hopefully that gives you what you're looking for.

DD: Circling back to Bright Sheng, you talked about how, in some of those lessons he would improvise on some of your ideas a little bit. I think you had mentioned in a previous interview about using improv to generate ideas and then working on orchestration from that point. Would you maybe say that originated from your interactions with him, or maybe does that stem more from your experience in jazz?

DB: That's a good question. Probably, on some level, a little of both. For me, it felt like I was pulling more from my jazz experiences. I played in jazz groups all through college and even back in high school. Very intermittently since then, because I have less and less time to do stuff like that. It was a real revelation for me when I started thinking about composition and improvisation as being two ends of the same spectrum. There's a whole bunch of interesting ways in which they interact and intersect and meet. Composition is really improvisation that has been slowed down and edited, and improvisation is composition in real time. That was something I worked through with Kristen, because when you sit down to compose and you're asking yourself, "What note? What note do I write?" It's like there's this weight, but when you improvise, you don't really have time to think about that. You're already moving on to the next

thing. You just have to choose the thing that sounds good, and if it doesn't sound good, you make it sound good. There's some Thelonious Monk quote about play the right note, or if you play a wrong note, play it until it becomes the right note or something like that. So that's become a big part of the process for me is framing things in terms of improvisation. I'm not entirely sure that it's that much different from composers long ago, sitting down and improvisation being a huge part of this process. So, I've invented nothing, but for some reason, taking the weight off felt like a personal revelation.

DD: Very good. Just wrapping this section of the interview up, from either institution, is there anyone that you would like to give credit to that has influenced your career? This could be an instrumental professor, ensemble directors, theory or history professors, etc.?

DB: Yeah, I mean, there's a bunch of folks. I was really fortunate to have a lot of great mentors. In undergrad, John Williamson was the director of the Wind Ensemble at Central Michigan. I started listening to his bands back in middle school or high school because I'd go to concerts. He played with a true wind ensemble. He grew up in Chicago, listening to the Chicago Symphony; he had that sound in his ears. He admired Fred Fennell and the Eastman Wind Ensemble model, so he played with the true one-on-a-part wind ensemble. That sound of band was in my ears way back in the beginning. In fact, my directors in high school, similarly, had the same approach. That seems much more common these days to play with smaller bands. Even the military bands and a lot of college bands that were historically pretty big are much closer to a wind ensemble now, maybe some doublings here and there. Twenty-five years ago, it felt like a lot of people still played with really big groups. Wind ensembles seem a little more common now, or something closer to it. So anyway, Williamson was a real great mentor to me. His tenacity and approach to musicianship and interpretation had high levels of expectation, but also incredible encouragement. I remember leaving the stage and there was nothing quite like feeling like you had really made some great music with Jack Williamson. Because if you felt that way, you must have done it at a pretty high level. It took a lot to get to that mountaintop with him. You expected a lot, but it was worth it. I think his nuance and interpretation and striving for excellence really made an impact on me.

Let's see. I also studied electronic music with Erik Santos at Michigan. Eric has subsequently written more for band and is really inventive. He's just a wildly creative person. His *(The) Seer* for tenor and band is remarkable. He just had a piece premiere with Louisiana State. It's fantastic. I've really enjoyed working with Eric.

I also studied Shanker with Wayne Petty and Kevin Korsyn at University of Michigan; they were hugely formative for me. Karen Fournier was my advisor. I did some work in theory pedagogy with her. She was hugely formative. Chris Lees is another person I would mention. Chris is a conductor, and I did a doctoral cognate in conducting with him. I studied with him and did a recital and everything. There are many other folks along the way. I met Lindsay Kesselman

back when I was doing my doctorate and have since collaborated with her a number of times. But from school days, those are the folks, I guess.

DD: Excellent! I appreciate you sharing a little about your background. One of the main components of my paper is looking at your compositional voice, figuring out what I can infer from your different works to see how you treat the various elements of music. I'd love to talk with you about a few of those and hear some of your ideas, starting with ornamentation. I can see in *Enigma* and other works like *River of Time* or *Kairos* where you'll have a melody with grace notes and ornamentation on almost every single note in the phrase. It gives an interesting, flourishing, sometimes ethereal-like feeling. Tell me a little bit more about your use of ornamentation.

DB: I think the first piece where I really explored this was *Images*, that piece for saxophone and piano. I don't know exactly what I was listening to or playing that had me into it, but maybe I was just thinking a lot about the fact that ornamentation in different styles has different affects. Ornamentation often charges melodies; they have motion and direction, and then the big notes, the non-grace notes have a weight to them. So, I've been interested in them from different musical traditions because of the affect. In *Kairos*, it's really from the tradition of Byzantine chant. There's a great album called *Voices of Hagia Sophia* by Cappella Romana. There's a musicologist and art historian at Stanford who studied and made recordings in the Hagia Sophia. The reverb in there is tremendous, so they modeled using her recordings. My understanding is that they modeled that space at Stanford using a really amazing acoustic modeling hall, and then they made this recording. It's like you're hearing this singing in the Hagia Sophia with this tremendous reverb. Anyway, because of the Byzantine tradition, they're singing with this ornamentation, and it's just beautiful. It reminds me of another approach to singing, which was the first time I heard Guillaume de Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame*, performed specifically by the Ensemble Organum and Marcel Pérès. Many of the recordings of the Machaut Mass, like the Hilliard Ensemble are the typical early music with a really pure, gorgeous sound; I love it. Marcel Pérès and a number of other groups have since done this. Their working theory, I guess, of early music is that maybe the singers weren't trained like we are now. Maybe they had a more nasal, folk quality. Maybe, given the proximity to northern Africa, there was more influence of the Moors and different chant traditions coming from that part of the world. So, they perform it with this unwritten ornamentation. It's very striking to hear the Marcel Perez interpretation alongside like the Hilliard. I remember hearing that for the first time and thinking it was just so strange. It was like I was hearing that entire piece for the very first time. The second movement of my reed quintet *Refraction*, the Kyrie is for Machaut and for Arvo Pärt, and it uses a similar approach to ornamentation. *Kairos* is tied to that, although it's really thinking about the Byzantine tradition.

I've been interested in ornamentation for a while, and when it came time to write *Enigma*, it just felt right because ornamentation is such a huge part of the Baroque tradition. The way I

approached it in the piece was that I used a neo-Baroque, or loosely Baroque approach. It was all very intuitive. I'm sure I've broken some rules and stuff, and I don't really care because the idea is to take Bach's musical world and make it my own. The ornamentation is supposed to sound like it's Baroque; it's supposed to be charged with that same energy and expressiveness but do something a little bit new.

A note, especially for conductors, is that when I originally wrote this it was for a brass choir with organ. As such, a lot of the melodic lines written with grace notes were performed by one player at a time. Something I took for granted in the orchestrating of it is that those same lines would be played by larger groups of people, and a number of conductors that I really admire, and trust have pointed out that it's hard to unify some of those grace notes. So, there's been a question of, do you place them on the beat, which helps unify them? Do you place them before? I really had wanted them to be before the beat, but we've experimented in different performances and rehearsals with placing them in different places. Basically, the way I pushed it originally was grace notes before the beat, and then I used thirty-second notes to place a strong, almost accented-on-the-beat grace note effect, where I really want it unified. Some conductors have taken certain grace notes and put them more on the beat to help unify and clean them up, and I've since realized that it's okay. Part of me thinks, "Should I go back and re-notate?" I don't love the idea of putting thirty-second notes everywhere. It just doesn't feel quite right, especially in the solos, where the feeling is more free, you know? Anyway, that's something my thoughts are evolving on, paying attention to good musicians, seeing how they react and respond, and getting their feedback. Maybe there's a revised version of Enigma coming at some point, but I'm a little more squishy on what I think those grace notes should be. I think that some people have had interesting ideas with them, stretching them, putting them before or on the beat and I'm open to possibilities.

DD: I think it's interesting you mentioned how adding those ornaments creates direction. It adds a charge to it. The base melody without ornaments is very parsimonious, very stepwise in motion, but then ornaments add a layer of duality to it. It keeps that smoothness but also a little bit of energy. I think it does a really good job accomplishing both.

I've seen in some prior interviews how you'll describe your process as starting with maybe just the title or one single motive and then developing outwardly from there. In this process, or just in your musical process overall, when do you begin to consider what the overall form or structure might be?

DB: It's really different for each piece. In fact, I have a whole presentation I give on my musical process, and one of the things that's an essential part of that presentation is that different tools have different biases, as I frame it. Early on, I used to work a lot at the piano, but I'm not a great keyboardist, so I would find myself limited by that. I also worked early on in software, something that previous generations may not have been able to do. I grew up using NoteWorthy Composer and then Finale.

Some of my teachers, like Michael Dougherty and Anders Hilborg, have used Digital Performer, although I think some of them have moved away from that into newer softwares. I've realized that using a digital audio workstation can help with rhythmic layering and complexities. I've also sketched on melodica. I sometimes use pencil and paper. I audiate. I sing. I leave myself voice memos. I'll record stuff on different instruments, put it into Logic, then loop over it and improvise over it. There's a lot of different things that I use to start the compositional process.

In terms of form, what I often tell my students, and this is true for me, not everybody works this way, but I often think about the beginning process as building a bunch of puzzle pieces. I want to understand all of the different puzzle pieces, set out on the table, and then I figure out how they fit together. It's a process of developing an idea, or two or three, and realizing their potential through development techniques. Then I determine how I'm going to lay them out, what order, what are their relationships to each other, and so on.

Enigma is a little bit different. I wrote it really quickly, in a week. The original version was for brass choir and organ, and I think part of that is owed to the timeline. My brass colleagues were having a concert dedicating the new organ at MSU's Alumni Chapel. It was about a month before the concert, and they said, hey, do you have anything? I said no, but I would really like to write something, and they were like, are you crazy? I said, give me a week and just let me see if I've got this piece in me. I had been wanting to write a piece on the *Passacaglia and Fugue* for a while, not knowing exactly what that might look like. So, I went home and basically just said, okay, well, I'm going to write a piece based on that passacaglia because I love passacaglias.

I've written a number of pieces based on passacaglias. *Shell and Wing* has a passacaglia. I'm trying to think of other loose passacaglias, *Red Vesper*. There's actually a bunch of pieces that are loosely inspired by the idea of a passacaglia. So, to take Bach's theme was something I was really excited about. Then I had this idea of revealing it, hiding it. I decided that *Enigma* wasn't too close to the Elgar. If I took away the variations and made it sound different that it would work, and I thought that was a good title. So, my idea was then to start with my own material and embed the Passacaglia theme in there and then reveal it very, very clearly midway through. It turned out to be about the three-minute mark. Then, I wanted to stick to Bach's form. I wanted to take and follow his structure, using twenty-one variations starting at the rehearsal ninety. So, I committed to that. I wonder if there's any numerological significance there. Seven and three, those are very holy numbers. For a Lutheran, that feels appropriate.

I guess I would have abandoned it if it didn't work, but it seemed to work. *Enigma* was much more planned out and intentional in the form than other pieces. It's unique in that sense, too, because I so rarely overtly take someone else's material and build a piece out of it. But, yeah, I wrote it in about a week. The orchestrating of it took a much longer, two or three months, because there's so many decisions to make color-wise.

DD: You hinted a little bit about Christian symbolism in there. I've read a few articles that talk about how there is the twenty-one variations, and then for the final variation, built on a fugue

theme, there was 12 statements of that. Together makes thirty-three, which is often symbolic for the length of Christ's life. I'm curious, are there any elements in *Enigma* that are maybe symbolic to you?

DB: Other than the same number of variations as Bach, no, nothing. Nothing conscious, at least. I tend not to have a lot of recomposed, methodical things. I'm much more based on intuition, and whatever feels right, then I'll make adjustments from there. So yeah, no numbers for me.

DD: Interesting. Pivoting back into another element of music, when it comes to harmonization, I've read a few things where you credit your experience with jazz or your interest in rock/metal music as a basis for your harmonic language. How might you describe your language today and how it's changed over the past twenty years?

DB: Good question. I mean, that's much more so in certain pieces than others. You know, *Enigma*, probably less so. Although, I was thinking about this recently with a conductor. One of the things that they actually described *Enigma* as being, was a little bit metal-influenced. I think some of it's just the power chords, especially later on, and the voicings of fifths in the passacaglia theme.

To me, I was thinking more about the organ registration, how really powerful organ registration sometimes has that fifth in there. So, I was thinking about trying to emulate that. Also thinking about resultant tones that you sometimes get with a really in-tune organ. When I was in wind ensemble, we would play around with the tubas and euphoniums, playing so in-tune that you get resultant low pedal tones. So that's what I was really thinking of, but it does have parallel fifth voicings, which is, you know, Bach's killing all of the kittens. I think he would dig it. So that power chord aspect is present, but it's much more apparent in other pieces.

I mean, I have a piece called *Schism*, another called *Stomp*. Certain pieces are really metal-influenced, but those ones are more influenced by jazz. Certain pieces I think that are really metal-influenced are like "Death Metal Chicken" from my reed quintet, *Refraction*. Let's see, *Cerulean* is a sax quartet. There's a movement called "Goof Groove" that's very metal-influenced. My favorite metal band is Meshuggah. I also really love Car Bomb and there's a number of other groups. I'm really into complicated rhythmic metal. I could go on about metal for a while. I often tell my students, you know, to start with what you love.

That seems like a simple question, but sometimes we lose our way in the course of our lives. Especially in school, I tend to find students will lose their way in terms of feeling certain pressure, stylistically, aesthetically, what's in the air, or the peer pressure to write in certain ways. I tell them, and also myself, as a reminder to revisit the things that really got you into this, that you feel passionate about, that you just love so much, that make you want to get out of bed in the morning and start there.

I try to really have a clear sense of myself, what I love, and my influences. Those are the things that I revisit often, an eternal well of inspiration. My relationship to some of those

influences changes over time as I get to know them better. I hear new bands, or I hear new artists that show me different possibilities. I've been much more into Bluegrass in the last few years, though I don't know that that's coming through in super overt ways. The Punch Brothers have been like a “desert island” group for me. I love them.

I also think this is related; as you were asking about evolution of style, I really admire composers like Stravinsky and Beethoven who, over the course of their entire lives, transform artistically. I don't like the idea of sitting still, of writing the same music in thirty years, or writing the same music now that I wrote twenty years ago. I think it would have been so tempting to write the Rite of Spring and then to keep trying to write it better, but he just didn't; he moved on to other things. And Beethoven changed, similarly.

Whether or not you like the Neo-Baroque or the serial Stravinsky as much as or better than the early stuff, I admire an artist always pursuing something new. Sometimes composers talk about finding your voice, and I do not think of that as a static destination. I think about voice as a self, a sense of self-confidence and self-worth, but not a static arrival point. I think that's exciting, that hopefully I'll be writing music that's different. I trust myself enough now to know that there will be threads of me, or things that sound similar. *Enigma* sounds pretty different than a lot of things I've ever written, but I know there's elements that are connected. I do like the idea that someone might hear *Enigma* and *Schism* and have no idea these composers are the same person. I really revel in that.

DD: In a very similar vein to your harmonic language, when it comes to your process for harmonization, do you feel like you tend to write that concurrently with your melodies? Do you feel like you write out a melodic phrase and then go back and contextualize it? How does that process physically take place?

DB: It's really different for every piece. Sometimes I'm not really thinking about melody and harmony initially. For *Enigma*, the passacaglia theme was there, so it was just a matter of putting things on top of it, essentially, or underneath it in some cases. In other pieces, the conception is much more textural, like I'm thinking about setting up a vibe.

I guess I often write harmony first and then melody later, because sometimes it gets me a good melody. There are some really good melodies out there, right? But I think some of the melodies that I really, really gravitate toward are very context-based. It's as if there's this melody, but it's doing this thing over this harmony, or over a counter melody. It's the relationship of everything together that really gets me and makes me feel things. I often will come up with them at the same time. Maybe harmony leads a little bit if I were to pick an aggregate, because writing some harmonies can help me pick a melody and do things with it that I wouldn't think of if I was just writing melody on its own.

I often think about the different elements of music, melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, timbre, register, and I'll try to emphasize different things. I don't want every single piece to just

be about melody or just be about harmony. I want to turn up and down the layers on a mixing board, if you will, of the different musical elements.

DD: When it comes to orchestration, I know that sometimes when I'm listening to certain composers, there are trends that I can see where there are characteristic ways that they use certain instruments, as if those instruments have a role that they serve for the ensemble or a writing style that brings out like a characteristic sound. Do you find that you have certain sounds or timbres you find yourself utilizing more often?

DB: Absolutely, yeah. This is an aspirational goal, but I always want the audience to think, wow, the instrument I'm hearing right now is just the coolest instrument. It just sounds amazing. I know performers feel great when they feel that as well, that the thing they're playing makes them sound great, or the audience thinks I sound great. Now, that's a very subjective thing. I just wrote a piece that's going to be premiering in two days that has some multiphonics and jazz inflected things in it. Some people don't think those things sound good; I think they sound whimsical and fun.

I'm always looking for the instruments to sound good, to sound characteristic. Let's make the oboe sound reedier and let's make the bass trombone sound grittier and let's make the trumpet sound brighter and bolder, but also darker. I love contrast. I love digging into the most characteristic registers and colors of the instruments.

I've taken my kids to see Star Wars in person many times. The thing I revel in, in John Williams scores, is just the degree to which he's able to make every instrument in the orchestra have something where you just go, oh my god, the English horn, you know? A lot of that is writing for those instruments in their most characteristic registers in a way that really lets them shine. That's something I aspire to. I mean, have I written mediocre oboe two parts? I'm sure I have, but I'm always aiming to let the instruments shine. I have certain fixations, or things that I gravitate toward. As a low brass player, I probably love writing big, heavy, bold, low brass and low reed parts. If you're going to have a contrabass clarinet and a contrabassoon, I feel like you've got to give them the meaty notes. But it depends on the piece, the context, and what I'm into at the time. So, they vary.

When I write a piece, I usually have a big piece of paper that has all kinds of ideas on it. With this piece that I recently finished, it was a list of all these timbres and things that I wanted to incorporate. This new piece has a bunch of xylophone in it, whereas *Enigma* has none. Whatever I feel like the vibe is, there's orchestration choices that I start mulling over. This piece is going to have a ton of crotales squared with vibraphone and glockenspiel and piccolo, you know.

DD: Yeah, I can definitely see that in *Enigma*, as far as highlighting the different instruments and giving them a moment in the spotlight. There's the tuba solo, the oboe solo with the flourishing

ornaments, or the way that horn and trombone are used. I can see that across the whole piece for sure; everyone has something.

On that note, I'd love to pivot on to some questions specific about *Enigma* and the Bach *Passacaglia*. I've seen from a couple of sources that you love moving across different instrument mediums and not staying in one too long. Prior to *Enigma*, in 2022 you wrote a piece for solo viola called *Refuge*, brass quintet, *Sacred Geometry*, and then a duo piano, *Symmetry Breaking*. With those pieces or others, I'm curious if there are any aspects of other genres that may have influenced the direction of *Enigma* when you're writing it.

DB: Good question. So, a couple thoughts. One is that I often tell my students that band is a medium, not a genre. One of the things I really admire and try to be aware of when writing in other mediums is that there's different repertoire, different questions, different fundamental assumptions, different composers, and different ways of thinking; all of them are related to each other. I feel like I'll only be a better composer if I write in all these different ways, broadening my experiences. It's like being multilingual, you know. Being multilingual causes you to think in different, interesting ways. It's a superpower. I feel similarly about writing in different mediums; I'll write a better band piece if I've written for choir and written for strings and written for electronics.

In terms of *Enigma*, there are many great Baroque transcriptions for band. I've played the Bach *Fantasia in G Major*; I believe it was. I've played the *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor* by Hunsberger. Those were definitely in my mind, brilliantly orchestrated. They treat the band simultaneously as chamber ensembles and soloists, but also, when it counts, they really treat it like an organ with all the stops out and everything.

I remember tuning some of the *Tocatta and Fugue* when we played it in undergrad and adjusting them slightly to be tuned more like an organ. So, we were using a tempered tuning or aiming for a tempered tuning in a few spots. I mean, I played euphonium as one of my primary instruments, so I've never played Baroque music written for me; I've always played transcriptions. I've played the Bach flute partita and the cello suites. I think the process of transcription and transcribing from different time periods is in my DNA as a performer, because I never got to play Baroque music on the instruments for which those composers wrote originally.

DD: When it comes to the variations, I think that the pacing in *Enigma* is really great, how fluidly it moves through the different intricate motor rhythms that build momentum and followed by moments of reprieve and stillness. When you were writing the variations and putting those puzzle pieces together, how did you go about managing the pacing?

DB: Good question. I often tell my students that intuition is automatized knowledge. This is a quote from a composer named Marcos Balter, who teaches at Columbia. He put it on social media one day and I've since put it on my door. Some may say we like to think that we know things, but if you can't track down how you know them, then you don't know them or something.

But intuition is built on things you know so well that they become subconscious, that they become totally automatic. This is all a really long way of saying intuition. I had studied the form of the original. I knew I wanted a climactic moment, then for the smoke to clear revealing the passacaglia theme really clearly.

I don't remember exactly off the top of my head all the different variations in the scope of the Bach, but his passacaglia ends pretty big. It's almost the biggest thing at the very end and then it clears the way for the fugue. One of my favorite variations is the one that's very, very light, where the whole the theme embedded in light arpeggiations; it's very haunting. I was trying to imitate those contrasts like Bach. He takes this form and repeats it over and over again, but somehow it feels like one journey. It doesn't feel like chunk-chunk-chunk and the beauty of it is often in the elisions. A couple bars before the cadence, there's something stirring, to transport us into the next world. That's something I thought about a lot; how do I take something that's literally repeating over and over again, but make it feel like it's on one continuous journey? A lot of it is orchestration, controlling the energy by ramping it up into the next variation or bringing it down

DD: The opening section of *Enigma*, the first eighty–nine measures, really sets the tone and hints at the devices and motives that will be used or revealed later. Structurally, how do you picture this first section? How might you describe the function that it serves for setting up the Passacaglia?

DB: Expository, in a way. I've long been enamored by this idea of a reverse theme and variations, where you have the most obscure version of a theme at the beginning, then the most clear version at the very end. While that's not entirely the premise of this, it was something that was embedded in the title and the concept of the piece. I wanted to embed the theme in hidden ways and then reveal it very clearly later. It's all over the piece, and it's not that hard to find. In terms of presenting it in a clear way, I wait until a little later. That portion of the piece, the first three minutes or so, is the most me in the piece. There's less Bach in there. Texturally, I'm using things that are more me and the material is more free. So, it's just a fantasia. I've written pieces before where fantasias “unbox” themes. *Luminescence* is a fantasia on his chorale *Break Forth O Beauteous Heavenly Light*. This is similar treatment, taking his material and developing it in my own way.

DD: That reminds me, there was an interview you did a ways back where you described your music as “I love what you did, here here's my response.” I can definitely see *Enigma* as that kind of response.

Within the first section of the piece, measure fifty–three is obviously significant because it's the first major statement of the passacaglia theme. What I love about it is the different devices that are used to somewhat shroud it and obscure it's meaning. It's expressed at whole, which removes the triple field. There's the different cross rhythms in some of the high woodwind parts.

As far as the function of this section, how do you envision the clarity of the theme here? Is it meant to be fairly recognizable to the listener or would you prefer it to be a little bit more hidden until the reveal later?

DB: I have mixed feelings. I reckon that anybody who's played the *Passacaglia* or knows it well, thinks it's here. I also really wanted there to be this moment where everybody is "in" on the joke. I wanted there to be an unaltered, absolutely clear, nothing-else-happening version of what you possibly call the theme. Lots of people will hear it very clearly here, but I wanted the audience everybody in the audience to really be in on it when it's just played on its own (m. 90).

For someone that doesn't know the *Passacaglia* very well, it may not be recognizable because I think there's too many things going on (m. 53). For musicians that know it well, they're starting to hear it. I often think about different audiences, what would my mom hear versus what Jack Williamson, or my colleagues would hear. I'm sure many hear it at fifty-three or maybe even earlier, I mean, it's embedded all over all over, even just the opening.

DD: I'd love to hear your insights on measures 71 to 89 which are the climax of the exposition section. It's incredibly dramatic, but I think it's also written in a way where you can clearly hear the composite line. You can hear all these different motives as they're added in. Will you walk me through your process with this section in regard to the orchestration and the pacing? What goals or vision did you have for concluding the exposition and introducing the *Passacaglia*?

DB: I teach an orchestration class and one of the things we look at is Samuel Barber's Symphony No. 1. There's this passage, a big tutti moment in the orchestra with a lot of composite, multiple layers working in tandem. At the end of the day, there's really only three or four voices at a given time. Back to me, there's really three things happening; there is the "reverb delay", which has been going on for a little while now in woodwinds and the trumpets. There's the pedal point. And there's the horn, trombone euphonium, alto/tenor saxophone melody. So, it's just really three voices. It looks chaotic, but I think the reverb delay is like an echo. It becomes a composite texture and then the other things are a little more clear.

DD: Jumping ahead a little, measure 219 is unique because the entire variation is made up of these overlapping brass swells with flared crescendos, which creates this interesting web of changing harmonies and timbres. Is it safe to say this is intended to replicate a Doppler-like sound, or no? Tell me a little bit more about this variation.

DB: The way I was thinking about it stems from composers like Anders Hilborg back in 2012, or Viet Cuong, essentially using swells to recreate electronic music playback effects. The piece that I heard Anders use it in is his brass quintet; there's a passage in it where basically he takes the material that you've been hearing for a minute and a half and it sounds as though if it's being played in reverse. All of the attacks become swells. Very, very cool. I love this idea of emulating

an electronic music effect with acoustic instruments. Reverse playback is used in all kinds of music; the Beatles use it in Sgt. Pepper's. The Who use it in an intro to a song. There's a lot of pop songs that use reverse cymbal hits as an intensifying technique. I wanted to use it here a little bit differently.

Conceptually, this is not something I think the audience like needs to know and that's fine, but to me this is a moment where we're conceptually listening to the entire piece in reverse but in fast motion. Imagine watching a movie and you get to the end of someone's life, and you literally play the whole thing from death to birth in 20 seconds. This is trying to emulate that musically. To me, it's the emotional climax. The climactic moment is obviously 219, but to me, emotionally, there's this air being slowly sucked out of the room for the entire variation. It's emulating the entire piece thus far in reverse. It doesn't literally do that, but that's the gesture

DD: I hadn't consider thinking about that section as an emotional arrival point but yeah, I think it does a really good job of conveying that. The life in reverse analogy perfectly describes it. That's fascinating.

At the end in measure 252 we have a very somber statement of the theme accompanied by tubular bells that are inscribed "as if out a time and from a distance." Tell me a little bit more about this final variation and what your thoughts were as you were writing the conclusion of this piece.

DB: This was not in the original, it's one of a number of things throughout that were added or changed substantively. For example, the whole opening is translating an organ texture that was really not playable effectively by any one particular instrument in the band. Orchestrationally, I added this in the band version because every instrument has a connotative meaning. When you hear a trumpet playing a solemn tune, we think of taps. John Williams does a great job of this; he uses the most characteristic sounds of each instrument in moments to associate Darth Vader with either being a villain or being your father, depending on whether it's flutes or trombones playing it. To me, the tubular bells are church bells; it's a funeral. I feel like when you hear it, there is an emotional impact and a shared cultural experience that there's a church in the distance.

At least to me that that's what this is doing, other people may have different reactions, but to me that's what those notes on that instrument accomplish.

DD: Finally, as I go about finishing my thesis on *Enigma*, is there anything that you would like me include as in terms of the content or emotional appeal? Maybe things you haven't covered in other interviews or articles that you'd like to tell the world. I'd like to give you the floor to brag about the piece a bit.

DB: I'm absolutely delighted that it's connected with people. While I have very specific meaning for me in the piece, one of the things that I just absolutely adore is when other people find their own way into it. When a conductor, performer or an audience tells me that it means something to

them. We don't necessarily have to have the shared a shared meaning. I can tell you that the ending is church bells and I can tell you measure 219 is reverse playback and maybe you find that interesting, but maybe this piece is means something entirely different to you emotionally. If it resonates with you and gets your empathetic creative imagination thinking about what it means, then it has power. That's one of the, I'm going to tease this word, but one of the universal powers of music is its ability to communicate something not concrete, not clear, and not in the same sense that language does, but still elicit a response. That's human, it may not be the same from everyone, but it can be similarly powerful. That's a really long way of saying I'm delighted if people get something from it and it can be different for everybody. I just love if something gets people's imagination going. I hope that answers your question?

DD: Absolutely, I think that's great. I know that while I haven't been on a podium yet with this piece, that won't start until the middle of March after my graduate recital, I feel like I've already gotten a lot out of it. I think that our performers will as well, and our audience, too. I think that it's going to achieve the desired effect here in Fort Collins for sure.

APPENDIX G: AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

David Davis, originally from Boise Idaho, served as a graduate teaching assistant at Colorado State University from 2024–2026, where he assisted with all aspects of a comprehensive band program and as guest conductor with the Wind Symphony, Symphonic Band, Concert Band, and Tuba–Euphonium ensemble. In addition, he worked with the CSU Marching Band, Presidential Pep Band, and Rampage Pep Band. His primary conducting teachers include Dr. Rebecca Phillips and Professor Marcellus Brown. Mr. Davis has performed internationally in Spain, England, France, Switzerland, Germany, and Austria. During their 2024 tour of Spain, Mr. Davis guest conducted the CSU Wind Symphony at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Málaga. Mr. Davis has participated in several workshops, receiving instruction from Dr. Michael Votta, Dr. Andrea Brown, retired Col. Jason Fettig, Professor Jerry Junkin, and Dr. Dennis Llinas.

Mr. Davis earned a Bachelor of Music in Music Education, graduating with honors from Boise State University. During his undergraduate years he performed with the Symphonic Winds and All–Campus Band. He was a member of the BSU Blue Thunder Marching Band in their sousaphone section, served in multiple leadership positions, and was selected for the 2019 Living Legacy Award for distinguished service. His final year he was a soloist in the exhibition performance at the District 3 Mel Shelton marching competition. Additionally, he has traveled and performed with the Seattle Cascades drum and bugle corps during their 2018 season as well as with Boise’s first independent WGI winds group, Armada Winds.

After graduating from Boise State in 2019, Mr. Davis was director of bands at Middleton High School in Idaho where he taught the wind ensemble, symphonic band, jazz band, and athletic bands. During his tenure, the bands consistently received high ratings at district festivals. Under

his direction, the program collaborated with community and collegiate ensembles and had strong representation in local and regional events. The Middleton High School band was invited to performed in Logan, Utah for the Music in the Parks Festival in 2022.

Mr. Davis has been active as a performer on both clarinet and tuba. At BSU he studied clarinet under Dr. Leslie Moreau. His private instructors for tuba include Professor Adam Snider, Dr. Bill Waterman, Dr. Christopher Bloom, and Dr. Brian Sugrue. In Spring 2025, he performed internationally with the CSU Wind Symphony (tuba) on their concert tour of Spain (Madrid, Granada, and Malaga). In 2024, he collaborated with the BSU Tuba–Euphonium ensemble at the International Tuba Euphonium Association regional conference in Eugene, Oregon. He has performed on tuba with the Brass Band of the Treasure Valley under the direction of Dr. Bill Waterman and the Treasure Valley Concert Band under Professor Marcellus Brown. Additionally, Mr. Davis was also invited to guest conduct at the TVCB closing concert during the 2024 Boise Music Week.

Mr. Davis current professional affiliations include the National Band Association and the College Band Directors National Association. From 2021 to 2023, Mr. Davis served as president of the Treasure Valley Honor Meet, a group created in the 1970's to provide smaller programs, outside the immediate Boise area, with the opportunity to play in a large ensemble. As a high school director, he served on marching band committees for the District 3 Idaho Music Educators Association.