

# A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO WORKS FOR HORN AND PIANO BY DANA WILSON

by

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(Under the Direction of Jean Martin-Williams)

## ABSTRACT

Dana Wilson (b. 1946) is a contemporary American composer. His compositions encompass a variety of ensembles including works for orchestra, band, chorus, chamber ensembles, and solo instruments. Due to his jazz background and interest in non-Western rhythms and tonalities, Wilson's unique compositional voice provides both a challenge for the performer and a provocative listening experience for the audience.

This document focuses on Wilson's works for horn and piano, with its goal being to describe the characteristic Dana Wilson horn sound in terms of the elements of music. It will also provide a guide to performance practice specifically for his works involving horn and piano. The pieces to be examined in this document are *Deep Remembering* (1995) for horn and piano; *Musings* (2003) for horn and piano; and *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* (2007) for horn, violin, and piano. It is the intent that the resultant information will provide horn players and teachers with a resource that will help facilitate a greater knowledge and understanding of Dana Wilson's music as well as promote thoughtful and satisfying performances of that literature.

INDEX WORDS: horn, Dana Wilson, Gail Williams, Adam Unsworth, horn and piano, Deep Remembering, Musings, Shallow Streams Deep Rivers, American composers, horn trio, horn solo, extended techniques for horn

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by

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DEDICATION

For Joe, JoAnne, and Tom Hranac.

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## CHAPTER 1

### PROSPECTUS

#### Introduction

The modern horn repertoire is both extensive and diverse. The horn is capable of producing many musical colors, and with the increased virtuosity of today's horn players, composers often choose the horn as their vehicle for musical expression. One such modern composer is Dana Wilson (b. 1946). Recorded commercially and often performed, the compositions of Dana Wilson are vibrant additions to the modern musical repertoire. Praised as being a composer of "uncommon depth and insight,"<sup>1</sup> his compositions encompass a variety of ensembles including pieces for orchestra, band, chorus, chamber ensembles, and solo instruments. Wilson's unique compositional voice provides both a challenge for the performer and a provocative listening experience for the audience. British wind band conductor Tim Reynish describes Wilson as having

a great ear for sonorities, a feel for the innate lyricism of the wind and brass instruments, a punchy quirky humour, great energy and above all a sense of structure, so that no section or movement outstays its welcome.<sup>2</sup>

Dana Wilson is a prominent member of the musical community and currently serves as the Charles A. Dana Professor of Music at Ithaca College. He is the co-author of the textbook *Contemporary Choral Arranging* published by Prentice Hall/Simon and Schuster, a text that is used in choral arranging classes at universities and conservatories around the country. His works

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<sup>1</sup> Kirchoff, Craig. Liner notes, *Vortex*.

<sup>2</sup> Reynish, Tim. *Repertoire: Dana Wilson*. Tim Reynish Website.

<http://www.timreynish.com/repcompwilson.html> (accessed August 5, 2010).

are heard on record labels such as Klavier, Albany, Summit, Centaur, and the Musical Heritage Society, and in 2003 a compact disc entitled *Vortex* was released dedicated solely to his compositions. His pieces have received many awards including the Sudler International Composition Prize, the Ostwald Composition Prize, and Second Prize in the 2007 International Horn Society Composition Contest. Wilson's compositions are in high demand and have been commissioned by ensembles such as the Chicago Chamber Musicians, the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Memphis Symphony, several United States military bands, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, the Syracuse Symphony, and the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra. He has also received commissions from individual musicians including Gail Williams, Adam Unsworth, Larry Combs, James Thompson, Rex Richardson, and David Weiss.<sup>3</sup> Wilson's unique musical voice has attracted attention from the academic world as well. In addition to appearing in six volumes of the *Teaching Music through Performance in Band* series and *Composers on Composing*, his works are the subjects of theoretical, musicological, and stylistic study, appearing in publications such as *The Instrumentalist*, *Journal of Band Research*, and numerous doctoral dissertations.

Because Wilson is well known for music written for the band medium, much of the previous research on his works is directed towards conductors. These documents describe the backgrounds of his band pieces, their form, and how to produce a successful ensemble performance of that repertoire. The focus of other research is more theoretically based, and describes in detail the motivic, harmonic, and tonal characteristics, again, of his band music.

The compositional output of Dana Wilson contains a sizable amount of horn repertoire that has not yet been explored by academia. Specifically, he has written six pieces that feature

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<sup>3</sup> Wilson, *Dana Wilson Website Biography*, Dana Wilson Website, <http://www.danawilson.org/bio> (accessed August 3, 2010).

the horn in a prominent role: *This Ain't a Straight Sentimental Marvel* (1986) for eight horns; *Deep Remembering* (1995) for horn and piano; *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra or Wind Ensemble* (1997 / 2001); *Musings* (2003) for horn and piano; *Graham's Crackers* (2005) for solo horn; *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* (2007) for horn, violin, and piano; and *Antico* (2009) for four horns.

### Purpose

Wilson's large number of recordings and commissions, his compositional accolades, and his substantial amount of repertoire for horn confirm that he is a composer worthy of study. Currently, there are no resources available that address the horn works of Dana Wilson. The lack of such a resource leaves a large gap in the knowledge of modern horn repertoire. The goal of this document is to describe the characteristic Dana Wilson horn sound in terms of the elements of music, and to provide a guide to performance practice for his works involving horn and piano. The pieces to be examined in this document are *Deep Remembering* (1995) for horn and piano; *Musings* (2003) for horn and piano; and *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* (2007) for horn, violin, and piano. It is my intent that the resultant information will provide horn players and teachers with a resource that will help facilitate a greater knowledge and understanding of Dana Wilson's music as well as promote thoughtful and satisfying performances of that literature.

### Delimitations

The scope of this study only includes works by Dana Wilson involving the horn and piano that feature the horn as a prominent solo voice. Literature where the horn does not take a

primary role including works for band, orchestra, and chamber ensembles are not discussed, but are mentioned because Wilson is perhaps known most predominantly for his compositions in the band medium. Although Wilson has written works for horn as a solo voice that do not involve the piano, these compositions will not be discussed in this document and thus constitute a need for further study. For each piece, brief theoretical information that functions to improve performance is included. This information is not meant to be a full theoretical analysis, but merely a brief overview in order to better understand the piece.

### Organization

Following the introduction, this document presents a brief biography of the composer. The purpose of the bibliography is to explore Wilson's early experiences with music, as well as his influences in order to better understand the context of his compositional point of view.

The main body of the document presents a detailed description of the general attributes of Dana Wilson's music specifically related to the horn. The goal of this section is to provide a helpful guide that describes Wilson's musical style in terms of how he deals with the horn. To achieve this goal, the discussion includes elements of melody, harmony, dynamics, rhythm, and timbre in order to create a portrait of Wilson's characteristic horn sound. The discussion of melody addresses melodic contour, range, musical character, and recurring motives and intervals. Harmonic interests include key centers, tonality, and scales. The section on rhythm focuses on the use of syncopation, fluid meters, and changing subdivisions. Timbre is the element of music that defines Wilson's unique horn voice, and horn produces a variety of sounds in Wilson's compositions. These sounds include stopped horn, muted passages, sections of open and strident sounds as well as more introspective playing, and the utilization of many extended

techniques. This section also speaks to Wilson's usage of the piano as both a solo voice and accompaniment. Musical examples for each section are chosen from the three pieces within the scope of this document.

The next inclusion is a performer's guide for each of Wilson's pieces involving horn and piano, with the goal of providing helpful, practical information to facilitate successful performances of Wilson's music. Each composition constitutes one chapter, containing specific historical and technical details about the piece. These details include the date of composition, publisher, length, number of movements, commissioning entity, first performance, and any other pertinent information. With a firm foundation of basic background information established, the focus turns to the performance considerations for the horn player. These include the difficulties involving range, technique, musical phrasing, extended techniques, stamina, collaborating with the accompaniment, rhythms, and articulation. Relevant performance-related theoretical issues conclude the main body of the document and include recurring motives, key centers, tonal schemes, referential collections, and Indian scales.

The final chapter of this document functions as a conclusion to summarize the most important aspects of Dana Wilson's works for horn and piano including how to perform and teach them successfully. Included as appendices are a bibliography, transcriptions of all interviews conducted, a complete list of Dana Wilson's compositions for horn, a discography of his work, and a bibliography of performance reviews.

### Methodology

The body of information contained in this document represents a combination of detailed description and personal interviews with prominent musical authorities on the music of Dana

Wilson. A detailed musical description of the horn sound Dana Wilson creates in his compositions and the subsequent performance practice guide are grounded in intense score study, comparisons of recordings by different horn players, and personal experience in preparing and performing these pieces. Interviews with three musical authorities on Dana Wilson's pieces, chosen due to their personal insights and experiences supplement and corroborate the musical descriptions. The aforementioned musical authorities are:

- Dana Wilson: Composer and Professor of Music at Ithaca College.
- Gail Williams: Professor of Horn at Northwestern University, former associate principal horn of the Chicago Symphony, and commissioning and premiering hornist.
- Adam Unsworth: Professor of Horn at The University of Michigan, formerly of the Philadelphia Orchestra and Detroit Symphony, and commissioning and premiering hornist.

The combination of detailed musical descriptions with the thoughts and opinions of these horn pedagogues creates a document that is a helpful resource for horn players and teachers concerning the music of Dana Wilson.

#### Biography of Dana Wilson

Dana Wilson's path towards becoming a composer was unconventional. Born in Connecticut, Wilson's first experiences with music came from listening to his mother sing and his own participation in church choirs. As he grew older, he started playing the piano in jazz groups and the guitar in rock bands. His interest in music during his formative years was intense, but growing up in the 1960s, Wilson came to believe that to enter the world of "serious" composing, he had to compose within the confines of serialism and forget the pop and jazz mediums that had dominated his life so far. Uninterested in this prospect, Wilson enrolled at

Bowdoin College and earned a degree in psychology. Consequently, it may be his background in jazz, pop, and psychology that make Wilson's compositions so attractive in their uniqueness. Very few works in the horn repertoire contain such a combination of musical influences. After graduating from college, he enlisted in the military near the end of the Vietnam conflict. As a musician, he was sent to Heidelberg, Germany, where he played piano in a military band. During his service, he had the chance to perform and interact with many outstanding musicians who had been classically trained at the top universities and conservatories in the United States. It was because of this experience that he rediscovered his passion for music; he realized that his point of view, influenced by jazz and pop, had afforded him a unique compositional voice. With a new understanding of what music was really about, he returned home and achieved degrees in composition from the University of Connecticut and Eastman School of Music. After earning his doctorate, he immediately took a position at Ithaca College teaching music theory and composition. Despite these successes, it took Wilson a long time to actually consider himself a composer. Because of his non-traditional career path, he felt behind in his training and lack of networking.<sup>4</sup> However non-traditional his start in music seems to be, it was exactly this unconventional beginning that helped create his compositional individuality and carve a niche for his work in the musical world. In his own words,

My musical interests continue to be eclectic and reflect the various layers that comprise my background, and I'm grateful for this. The longer I live, the more conscious I am of drawing upon a breadth of experiences to help give life meaning and, I hope, to inform my music.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dana Wilson. "Dana Wilson." In *Composers on Composing for Band*, Vol. 2, edited by Mark Camphouse, 269-293. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Wilson counts jazz pianist and pedagogue John Mehegan, composer and mentor Samuel Adler, and all of his peers and colleagues as the “most influential”<sup>6</sup> musical figures in his life. At the current time, he continues to maintain an active career of teaching and composing.

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<sup>6</sup> Personal Interview with Dana Wilson.

## CHAPTER 2

### GENERATION OF WORKS

Throughout history, many great pieces of music have been written for a specific virtuoso soloist. We owe the existence of a large portion of the body of musical repertoire to certain gifted players who inspired great composers to compose for them. Notable virtuoso muses during history include Gottfried Reiche, Bach's trumpet player; Anton Stadler, the inspiration for Mozart's clarinet concerto; Joseph Joachim, a violinist credited with inspiring the great Romantic composers including Johannes Brahms; and in more modern times, cellist Yo-Yo Ma continues to be a champion of new music. The same relationship between the virtuoso and the composer has existed in the horn world for hundreds of years. Among the notable early horn players are Sweda and Röllig, the very first horn players in the 1600s; Leutgeb, the muse of Mozart and part-time cheese monger; Beethoven's Giovanni Punto; the Levy brothers in Dresden who inspired Schubert; and Dennis Brain who is responsible for the existence of much of the horn's modern repertoire. Because of their virtuosity, these horn players inspired notable composers to write for the horn.

This long-standing tradition continues to the present day, and remains a vital process to the growth of the music profession. Wilson offers this opinion on the importance of commissioning new pieces:

Obviously, the commissioning of art has profoundly nurtured Western culture. It is what allowed Michelangelo to pay someone else to paint his house so that he could paint the

Sistine Chapel. But commissioning serves other functions as well. In an age when we tend to revere icons who have been dead for centuries (not always this way!), this reminds us that art is a living and interactive process that can involve an entire community. Furthermore, because a concert is a ritual whereby we are nurtured and refreshed, commissioning and performing a new work are key to maintaining the vitality of the concert experience.<sup>7</sup>

For the purposes of this document, the commissioning process can be exemplified in the relationship between Dana Wilson, Gail Williams, and Adam Unsworth. A world-renowned player and pedagogue, Gail Williams currently serves as Professor of Horn at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. In 1984, she was appointed by Sir Georg Solti as Associate Principal Horn of the Chicago Symphony. She has since stepped down from her position in the symphony in order to devote more time to her teaching, and to more fully pursue her personal musical interests. She maintains an active performance schedule around the world with ensembles such as the Chicago Chamber Musicians, Summit Brass, and the World Orchestra for Peace. Williams is one of the most influential commissioning artists for new compositions for horn. Because of her interest in performing new works, the modern horn repertoire continues to expand.

Wilson and Williams first met each other through their mutual experiences at the Ithaca College School of Music. Wilson describes their unceremonious first meeting:

[Williams graduated] before I started teaching there, though we had heard of each other's professional work. As I recall, she came back one year to perform and heard one of my pieces, and we began talking. That led to my writing "Deep Remembering."<sup>8</sup>

Williams recalls hearing one of Wilson's pieces for wind ensemble at Ithaca College's graduation exercises. She was immediately drawn to Wilson's incredible sense of musical line and decided to commission his talents for a piece for horn. This first interaction would grow into

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<sup>7</sup> Dana Wilson, "Dana Wilson," in *Composers on Composing for Band*, 281.

<sup>8</sup> Personal Interview with Dana Wilson.

a close personal and professional relationship that spawned the composition of at least five works involving the horn. All three of the compositions within the scope of this document are dedicated to Gail Williams. In fact, all three of these works were commissioned solely by her.<sup>9</sup> It is with Williams' sound in mind that Wilson composed these pieces. They specifically reflect her own musical values, and Wilson composed with the goal to tailor the works to the musical abilities and proclivities<sup>10</sup> of her horn playing. Their close bond continues to the present day. Wilson describes his current relationship with Williams:

We have spent so much time together professionally, and this has led to a deep friendship. We know a lot about each other's personal life and family, have shared lots of meals at each other's home and often talk just to touch base. [. . .] Personal relationships are very important to me in conceiving a work, and I have to say, Gail has been my horn muse over the years.<sup>11</sup>

It was the relationship between Dana Wilson and Gail Williams that precipitated the musical collaboration between Wilson and Adam Unsworth. Unsworth was a student of Williams at Northwestern University and it was through her direct influence that he became introduced to Wilson's compositions:

I learned of Dana's music while studying with Gail Williams at Northwestern. I believe the first piece I heard Gail play was 'Deep Remembering.' It left a strong impression on me, and I was eager to learn it and explore his subsequent music for horn.<sup>12</sup>

Unsworth's explorations of Wilson's horn music led to the commissioning of *Graham's Crackers*, a work for solo horn. A shared love for jazz exists between Unsworth<sup>13</sup> and Wilson,

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<sup>9</sup> Wilson's *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra (or Wind Ensemble)* was also commissioned by Ms. Williams.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Grantham, "Donald Grantham," in *Composers on Composing for Band*, 106.

<sup>11</sup> Personal Interview with Dana Wilson.

<sup>12</sup> Personal Interview with Adam Unsworth.

<sup>13</sup> Unsworth grew up playing the upright bass in jazz ensembles. As a music student at Northwestern University, he continued to play in both jazz and classical genres, and eventually had to make a difficult choice between a career in jazz or classical music.

and in this piece he showcases the jazz capabilities of the horn. Of Unsworth and *Graham's Crackers* Wilson comments:

He [Unsworth] is a phenomenal jazz horn player, and I tailor-made the piece for him. (The optional second movement even calls for jazz-style improvisation.) For that reason and the fact that it's generally virtuosic, I thought no one else would play it any time soon. I'm pleased to report that I've had many requests for the piece (I sell it directly) over the past couple of years.<sup>14</sup>

The compliments are reciprocated towards the composer as Unsworth praises Wilson's jazz-style, saying:

His [Wilson's] phrases have a symmetry that makes sense to me as an improvising musician. His sense of jazz voicing creates many beautiful, poignant moments in his lyrical passages. I feel Dana's understanding of jazz rhythmic drive and group interaction enhance the excitement and energy of his faster music.<sup>15</sup>

The teacher-student relationship between Williams and Unsworth resulted in commissions and commercial recordings of Wilson's music. In the often surprisingly small world of music, word of mouth is a fast and effective means of sharing quality repertoire. A similar circumstance exists in my own personal experience. This document is a direct result of a teacher-student relationship.<sup>16</sup>

Williams hopes to collaborate with Wilson again with the goal to add more mixed chamber ensemble repertoire for the horn. She also hopes to produce a commercial recording dedicated solely to the music of Dana Wilson involving the horn. Wilson shares Williams' dream for continued collaboration in the future. Although he is not currently working on any new

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Happily, Unsworth has successfully created a niche for himself that combines the jazz and horn worlds.

<sup>14</sup> Personal Interview with Dana Wilson.

<sup>15</sup> Personal interview with Adam Unsworth.

<sup>16</sup> It was through my relationship as a student of Adam Unsworth that I first learned of Wilson's music, and like those before me, I became interested in performing and studying his compositions for horn.

compositions for the horn as a solo instrument, he hopes to be writing for the instrument again soon: “I’ve loved writing for the horn, and, in turn, horn players have been so appreciative and enthusiastic about the pieces. For a composer, that’s the *raison d’être*.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Personal Interview with Dana Wilson.

## CHAPTER 3

## MELODY

Range and Dynamics

One of the most challenging features of Dana Wilson's compositions for horn is the wide range of the horn part. One of the greatest assets of the horn is that its useable range covers all but the lowest tuba notes and the highest trumpet notes.<sup>18</sup> Well-aware of this ability, Wilson makes use of the entire tessitura. He frequently writes for a range of notes that spans three and one-half octaves—almost the entire range of the horn itself. (See Fig. 1.) Adam Unsworth cites this fact as the most difficult aspect of Wilson's compositions.

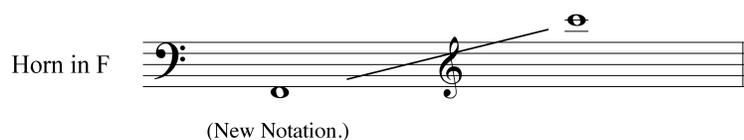


Figure 1

Range of the horn part. (Summarily in *Deep Remembering*, *Musings*, and *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*.)<sup>19</sup>

Although some *ossias* are included for the very highest pitches, Dana Wilson asks the horn player to traverse quite a wide span. The challenge for the horn player, besides being able to simply produce all of the notes, becomes producing all the notes with a good tone quality.

Younger players may be able to play in the high range, but where they succeed in highest notes,

<sup>18</sup> Barry Tuckwell, *Horn*, xvi.

<sup>19</sup> When discussing issues of pitch, terminology is used in terms of the transposed horn part, i.e. in Concert F.

the difficulty comes in producing the lowest notes and shifting quickly between the two registers. Learning how to produce a good sound in all octaves of the horn—especially the low range—is a feat that takes most horn players years to accomplish. Young, under-developed horn players will find extreme difficulty in performing Dana Wilson’s horn and piano pieces, simply for the fact that they cannot accurately or correctly produce all the notes the score requires. Because of the large range, that Gail Williams believes that most undergraduate horn players are not capable of successfully performing Wilson’s pieces.

Another issue of range occurs in regards to the dynamics. Not only does Wilson challenge the horn player in terms of merely producing notes in all possible ranges, he also presents added difficulty in the written dynamics. Every range must be played at every dynamic: high and loud, high and soft, low and loud, and low and soft. Similar to note production in all ranges, note production at *any* dynamic in these ranges is a constant challenge for the horn player. The execution of the range of notes at the proper dynamic requires a concerted and systematic practice routine. The notes in Dana Wilson’s pieces are not simply learned and then easily performed; the technique and skill required to play the notes must be developed.

Stately previously, this music calls for a developed horn player who possesses great control of the instrument. Ever the thoughtful horn pedagogue, Williams describes the difficulties in the high range:

It’s a blow because of the high stuff with diminuendos. If you can’t really be in control without smashing your face, don’t do it.<sup>20</sup>

To better improve facility in the extreme ranges of the horn, the hornist should incorporate long tones in the high and low ranges daily, especially exercises that involve crescendos and decrescendos. This type of practice will greatly improve control of the tone

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<sup>20</sup> Personal interview with Gail Williams.

quality in the high and low ranges. The horn player should strive to incorporate high and low notes into daily practice. In order to improve one's range on the instrument, hornists cannot ignore these difficulties with range and simply hope that the notes will magically appear on their own. Players should actively challenge themselves through etudes and solos that stretch the range. These challenges may include the utilization of high and low range etude books such as those written by Martin Hackleman, by playing certain exercises such as the Kopprasch or Clarke etudes an octave (or octaves) lower or higher in which they are written, or working on music not written specifically for the horn such as the Bach Cello Suites, Boris Grigoriev's *24 Etudes for Bass Trombone with F Attachment*, or the famous Arban Method written originally for trumpet.

Although Wilson writes in every range for the horn, he generally does not linger too long in either of the extreme ends of the tessitura. Most of the horn part lies within the mid to high range of the horn, approximately the horn's middle C to the G on top of the staff. Extended passages in the high and low ranges are few and far between, although players must have both the skill and stamina to remain in these ranges, because there are a limited number of passages in a sustained range. Each range has a specific musical color, and thus a different role in Wilson's compositions. The middle range (approximately middle C to third space C) is where most of the horn part lies, and this range is used as the main vehicle for conveying agile melodies in fast tempos. Similar usage of the middle range can be found in the horn concerti of Mozart, as well as more modern solos such as *España* by Vitaly Buyanovsky, *En Foret* by Eugene Bozza, and Lowell Shaw's jazz-inspired *Just Desserts*. The use of the middle range in technically challenging passages is a well-conceived feature of Wilson's pieces, because the faster tempos usually involve complex rhythmic subdivisions and rapidly changing meters. The horn player

may find that trying to navigate the rhythmic difficulties is enough of a challenge without having to worry about playing in the extreme ranges of the instrument. Besides this aspect, the usage of the middle range for longer, extended melodies is, above all, practical. The middle range is a comfortable tessitura for the horn where pitches are easily produced, so it is very idiomatic that most of Wilson's melodic passages lie in this range. Additionally, the use of the middle range makes Wilson's compositions more accessible to all levels of hornists, as even younger players can create and sustain these notes.

There are definite roles for the low and high ranges. The low range is hard to project while the piano is playing, so it is used sparingly. Its main occurrences are in unaccompanied solo sections where the horn does not compete to be heard. Lower notes are also found at the beginnings of phrases. When this is the case, the effect is that of the music rising from some mysterious depths. Similarly, a single low note may act as a springboard for higher notes. This is a very common trait of Wilson's melodies; it is found in all of the pieces discussed in the scope of this document. (See Fig. 2.)

Because of the low range's projection difficulties, Wilson calls for something both unusual and ingenious. In order to get the middle to low register of the horn to stand out against the accompaniment, he sometimes calls for these notes to be played with a brass mute (meaning stopped). (See Fig. 3.)



Figure 2  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 1: mm. 12-15.  
 Low springboard used as melodic content.



Figure 3  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 2, mm. 66-69.  
 Low passage played with a brass mute.

The sound of the horn with a brass mute has a very striking—and different—sound. The use of the brass mute allows the horn player to more easily center and tune the notes in the lower register while still achieving the characteristic stopped sound. Its nasal, almost unnatural timbre is easily distinguished from the piano or the violin. By applying this technique, places where the horn may have difficulty projecting due to range become more easily heard if the horn player successfully utilizes the stop mute.<sup>21</sup> It is not practical for the horn player to use hand stopping in these instances. Because the stopped notes are low in the horn’s register, hand stopping will make the pitches sharp, harder to center, more difficult to project, and lacking in the desired nasal quality. The use of a brass mute will go far to alleviate these difficulties.

The horn’s high range also has a specific role. The frequency and degree of difficulty in the high range is greater than many horn solos with piano, but this fact is never flaunted in the ears of the audience. The use of the high range is organic: higher notes flow logically out of the melody without drawing attention to themselves. If the horn player sounds free and uninhibited in the high range, the listener may not even realize that there are “high notes” in the score, and they will certainly not realize that the range presents a challenge to the performer. Of course making the high range sound effortless is the constant goal of any horn player, and in the preparation of Wilson’s pieces, dedicated practice can make this goal come into fruition. The

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<sup>21</sup> Further discussion of the successful use of the stop mute can be found in Chapter 8.

high range is also used as musical punctuation, often ending particularly intense phrases with the bright, piercing sound of the high tessitura. This range becomes useful when the dynamic is *forte* or higher, as it is easily heard and more easily executed at a loud dynamic. But as was previously mentioned, the harder task of playing high at a soft dynamic level also occurs. In these sections, the accompaniment offers little to no help for the horn player; there is no place to hide and the soloist must rely on strong, practiced high range technique to accomplish these passages. With so many permutations of range and dynamics, it can be concluded that Wilson's use of all the notes of the horn can be an effective means of creating musical character.

#### Lyrical and Technical Aspects

It is easy to pigeonhole the middle, low, and high ranges in terms of their specific roles in Wilson's music, but it is the utilization of the entire range as a whole that best describes the melodic language of Wilson's compositions. In fact, the most striking melodic feature is disjunct lyricism. (See Fig. 4.) The lyrical melodies in these pieces often feature leaps of a perfect fifth or greater and may even span more than an octave. The leaps add tension, agitation, and a sense of motion to the melodic line. The disjointed quality of his melodies is a common thread in not only the horn part, but also the parts of the piano and the violin as well.



Figure 4  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 2, mm. 193-196.  
 Disjunct lyricism.

The lines in m. 196, seen throughout Wilson's compositions for horn, are how he indicates a slide or gliss between pitches.

These large leaps are meant to be fluid-sounding and all of the notes should be of the same tone quality. This again presents a major challenge to the horn player both in terms of the accuracy of notes and their sound, especially when the large leaps are slurred. Very often the wider intervals are dissonant in nature (tritones, major sevenths, minor ninths, etc.), which presents an extra test of the horn player's aural skills and pitch accuracy. Since these disjunct melodies are a common characteristic of Wilson's works, any horn player attempting to play his music must have a good ear and the proper technical prowess to execute wide intervals, always maintaining consistent tone quality on the horn.

The treatment of range can definitely be used to describe the character of Wilson's compositions, but it provides only partial insight to the musical elements of the melodic lines. There is much to be said about the specific lyrical and technical qualities of Wilson's melodies. The disjunct lyricism of Wilson's melodies was alluded to earlier, but there is more to describe in terms of the lyrical lines. The disjointed nature—the frequent use of wide and often dissonant intervals—is a common trait in the lyrical sections, but there are others as well. The lyrical lines, such as in the first movement of *Deep Remembering*, several movements in *Musings*, and the opening movement of *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, share common characteristics in regards to tempo, meter, and articulation. The most lyrical moments are in simple meter with the quarter note receiving the pulse. The meter changes often, but the subdivision of the beat does not change. These sections are often marked “freely” and are intended to be played in a *rubato* style. It is in these unaccompanied lyrical soliloquies that the horn soloist can flex his or her interpretive muscles and exhibit sensitive musicianship. The articulation is generally smooth and filled with long, slurred phrases. It is tone quality and musicality, not technique, which are at the forefront. Wilson may incorporate two extended techniques in these sections: the application of

echo horn and the hand-gliss effect that creates a dropping of the pitch by one half-step. These techniques, provide unexpected timbral contrasts and almost primitive sounding effects to the melodic line.<sup>22</sup>

The technically challenging passages in these three pieces have notable similarities as well. The most technically difficult sections occur in fast tempos, and it is the tempo that makes these sections difficult. In addition to requiring note accuracy, quick fingers, and correct articulation, Wilson adds another dimension to the challenge: the uncommon and frequently changing meters. This style is exemplified in the second movement of *Deep Remembering*. Gone for the most part is the disjointed character of the melody; the main lines are mercifully scalar, which lessen the problems with note accuracy. Accidentals reflecting scalar alterations and embellishments add spice to the melodies, which are far more tonal than the lyrical sections. In the technical passages, there are key centers that provide a foundation for the melody to grow. Often these tonalities fall into the category of jazz or blues scales. Wilson's own background as a jazz pianist enables him to compose his own brand of jazz for the horn: a style that embodies jazz's tonal idioms and rhythms, but takes on a stylized form instead. In addition to these jazz elements, there is also a non-Western element in his technical passages. Wilson describes in his program notes to *Deep Remembering* that some of the "musical relationships are not rooted in European chords."<sup>23</sup> This references his use of Indian scales. The Indian scales "attempt to conjure the expanse of human experience,"<sup>24</sup> not just Western tonality. Another facet to the technical challenges of Wilson's pieces for horn piano is the use of uncommon techniques and tone colors. Quick hand-gliss falls, wild flutter glisses, trills, rips, *ad lib* vibrato, and sections

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<sup>22</sup> See further discussion of these techniques in Chapter 8.

<sup>23</sup> Dana Wilson, Program Note for *Deep Remembering*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.

using a brass mute are common in technical passages. The execution of these techniques requires additional preparation and strategy so that they sound logical within the melody, and do not make the passages sound difficult, cliché, or awkward.<sup>25</sup>

### Motives

Dana Wilson's compositions are very motive-based. Common dissonant intervals, rhythms, and melodic fragments create strong connections not only in each individual piece, but also through the three pieces in the scope of this document. His small melodic and harmonic cells are presented in a simple manner, but then are combined and transformed to create longer, motive-based phrases. The use of common motives is the main vehicle for unity and coherence within the larger work; motives from previous movements and sections recur in other locations to connect the different sound worlds Wilson creates. These sound worlds utilize octatonic, acoustic, and diatonic collections in addition to dabbling in atonality and a blues-inspired jazz idiom. Specifically, Wilson's music is saturated with the falling half-step interval. *Deep Remembering* begins with a solitary statement of the interval. The interval of a minor second becomes embellished, as the motive expands to the length of a full phrase. (See Fig 5.)

*Prologue* ♩ = 72  
solo (to m.16): freely declamatory

Horn in F

*mf*

Figure 5  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 1, mm. 1-4.<sup>26</sup>  
Motivic development of the half-step motive.

<sup>25</sup> An explanation of how to execute these techniques is found in Chapter 8.

<sup>26</sup> This Figure is reminiscent of Bernhard Krol's solo horn work *Laudatio*, which begins similarly with the descending minor second interval.

Throughout the remainder of both movements, this falling half-step can be heard everywhere. It takes on different permutations in the forms of the major seventh (the complimentary interval to the minor second) and minor ninth (minor second plus an octave) intervals. The interval is hidden within the extended technique Wilson calls for: to perform the hand-gliss falls, the act of closing the bell with the hand lowers the pitch one half-step. The two final pitches of the entire composition end the piece as it began with a falling half-step between D-flat and C, thus representing the final utterance of the falling half-step motive. This motive permeates *Musings* and *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* as well, both through omnipresent half-steps in the melodies and the use of the hand in the bell to lower the pitch.

Wilson uses what can be described as the fanfare motive as a musical building block. This motive consists of a short lower note that immediately leaps up a sizeable interval to a higher note. The fanfare motive takes many forms, but the rhythmic content and melodic contour remain similar. The following examples exhibit the permutations of the fanfare motive. (See Fig. 6a-c.)

This motive constitutes a very traditional sound for the horn that is reinterpreted in a new manner. The horn was originally conceived as a hunting instrument that performed calls and fanfares that projected across the countryside. Thus Wilson's fanfare motives can be seen as a modern rendition of a very old practice. These old traditions transformed by modern tonality align with Wilson's compositional impetuses in these three pieces: *Deep Remembering* is meant to remember all of human existence, and "contemporary" techniques are, ironically, also the most ancient, dating back centuries, even millennia, in other cultures.<sup>27</sup> The fanfare motive fits

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<sup>27</sup> Dana Wilson, Program Note for *Deep Remembering*, 1995.

logically with *Musings* as well; each movement represents a traditional muse from antiquity, where a brass instrument or animal horn would only be able to produce fanfare-type melodies. With a single length of tubing to work with and no valves, these forerunners to the modern horn were only capable of producing notes within the overtone series. The instrument was not capable of producing a scale in its modern form, and instead produced notes more widely spaced into perfect intervals. Because these notes were the easiest to play and project across long distances, they became the basis of the earliest fanfare-type melodies. In *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, the fanfare theme exists as representative of the horn's character and distinguishes the instrument from the violin and piano.

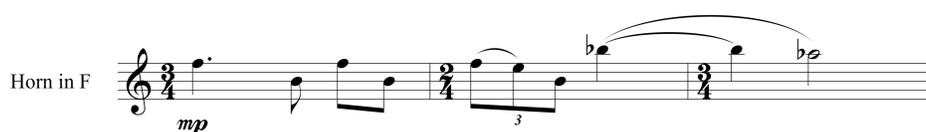


Figure 6a  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 1, mm. 41-43

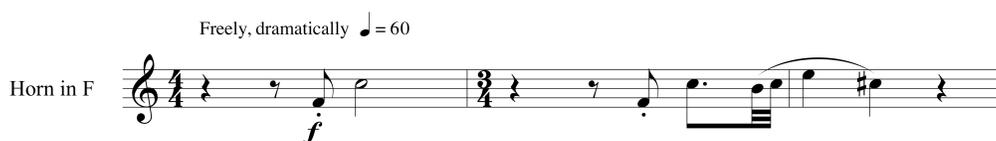


Figure 6b  
*Musings: Calliope*, mm. 1-3.



Figure 6c  
*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt. 1, mm. 31-35.

## CHAPTER 4

### HARMONY

#### Tonal Centers

The issues of harmony and tonality produce an interesting discussion in regards to the music of Dana Wilson. His music does not clearly fall into a tonal or atonal classification. At times the music can sound atonal, but utilize familiar major and minor tonalities in the very next measure. Like earlier composers of horn music such as Verne Reynolds, Paul Hindemith, and Douglas Hill, Wilson very rarely conforms to the standards of common practice. He instead finds a way to create his own interpretation of harmonic progressions to create central key areas and a feeling of tonic for the listener. Wilson does this by creating important notes that return frequently within the melodic and harmonic lines.

Before embarking on the examination of Wilson's tonal ambiguity, it is helpful to identify his moments of clearer tonality in order to establish a foundation upon which to make comparisons. The term "tonality" is a loose connotation in these examples. There are no identifiable harmonic progressions (no I-IV-V-I here!). Instead, the term "tonality" is used to denote that the music seems to be working within a certain scale or key area where one note can be deemed more important than the surrounding notes. The sections of tonality occur in a predictable manner. When the tempo is fast and the individual parts are technically challenging, there is a clear key center. This is, perhaps, an advantage to the performers who can take solace

in the existence of a tonal goal as they simultaneously navigate through a myriad of other musical difficulties.

The feeling of a tonal center can be facilitated by both the melody and the accompaniment. In the accompaniment, whether it be piano, violin, or horn, *ostinato* passages and repeated intervals (especially perfect intervals) are the biggest indicators of a tonal center. The repetition of perfect fifth intervals in the piano part and the frequent appearance of concert D (the horn's A) in the following excerpt from *Deep Remembering* imply D as a tonal center. (See Fig. 7.)

This ostinato pattern of repeated fifths returns later in the movement to establish a clear tonal center after a section of *rubato* meter and free atonality. The perfect fifth also occurs melodically in several places, commonly within the fanfare theme (see Figure 6a-c). By using the perfect fifth interval, Wilson draws on the traditional usage of the perfect fifth as an indicator of a modified tonic to dominant relationship. The listener is accustomed to hearing a perfect fifth and immediately identifying a pitch hierarchy. The use of this interval contributes to some sort of a tonic feeling for the audience as a byproduct. The perfect fifth has historical implications for the horn, again dating back to when the instrument was valve-less. Capable of only producing notes within the harmonic series, the perfect fifth was a frequently heard interval between two or more horns playing together. Although different in their construction and function, Wilson's use of the perfect fifth harkens back to the "horn fifths" that appeared in the works of Mozart and Beethoven, to name a few.

The image shows a musical score for Horn in F and Piano, measures 151-159. The Horn part is in the treble clef, and the Piano part is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The time signature is 9/8. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*. A specific annotation in the piano part reads: "wild oscillating ascent (valve flutter gliss-- notated pitches suggest contour)".

Figure 7  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 2, mm. 151-159.  
 D as implied tonal center.

In *Musings*, “Melpomene” and “Erato” also feature *ostinato* patterns in the piano that work to establish a tonal center. The fast sextuplets in “Melpomene” outline triads that establish tonal centers. The repeated chords in “Euterpe” are tonal in their familiar triadic construction in closed spacing.

### Scalar Elements

The horn’s melodic line can function within an identifiable scale that further implies the existence of a tonic. Wilson’s characteristic half-step motives still exist in this case, but they are used more traditionally as tendency tones that resolve to tonic. This is a different usage than

earlier in the piece (see Fig. 5), where the non-scalar half-steps in the melodic line obscure the tonic. In general, the more the melodic line remains within an identifiable scale, the clearer the tonal center becomes. Wilson's scalar vocabulary, however, is certainly exotic. The major and minor scales are notably absent, although certain sections do sound reminiscent of these tonalities. Wilson instead turns to Phrygian, octatonic, and Indian scales. These three scales have similar construction of the pattern of half and whole steps. The construction of Phrygian and octatonic scales are probably familiar to those with experience in modern music composition, but the Indian scale may not be so familiar. The Indian scale comprises seven notes similar to Western scales, but the pattern of half-steps and whole steps is slightly different, often moving by quarter-tones. These scales are the building blocks of Indian *ragas* and even found favor in the compositions of The Beatles' John Lennon, minimalist composer Terry Riley, and Grammy award winner Béla Fleck. The combination of these three scale types (Phrygian, octatonic, and Indian) creates a distinct Dana Wilson melodic sound as well as creating a tonal center through the resulting hierarchy of pitches. The use of modal, octatonic, and non-Western scales is a characteristic found throughout the compositional output of Dana Wilson.

### Dissonance

There is much to be said about the sections that exist outside of any scalar confines or tonal hierarchy. A large portion of Dana Wilson's music lacks a tonal center. These sections occur mostly within slower tempos and passages that are unmeasured or *rubato*. The slower tempos, in turn, are frequently the very first sections of his works, and therefore many of his pieces begin with harmonic ambiguity. The character of these sections is lyrical with wide leaps and slurs. The serenity of the musical character belies the dissonant harmonic language. (See

Fig. 4.) With no clear sense of where tonic might be, the audience is drawn in to the music as one may perhaps wonder exactly where the melodic line is going. The freely atonal sections in a sense find their “tonic” or possibly their resolution as the entirety of the piece plays out. *Deep Remembering* exemplifies the process of the tonally ambiguous beginning that finds a more definite harmonic resolution in the final measures of the piece.

A sense of tonal hierarchy can be obscured by the use of dissonant intervals such as the minor second, tritone, major seventh, and minor ninth. Without the intervals that are more familiar and traditionally signify a tonic in common practice tonality (thirds, sixths, perfect fourths, and perfect fifths), any sense of key centrality may become elusive and fleeting. Dissonance and accidentals are frequent in these sections. Without an established harmonic pattern the performer must possess a well-developed sense of musicality to interpret the musical phrases. Important pitches may be chosen based on their repetition, longer duration, or their existence as a common beginning or ending note to a phrase. The responsibility for making these sections musically interesting lies strongly with the performer.

The lack of tonal triadic harmony means that the performer must engage a different, and perhaps unfamiliar, type of aural skills to perfect intonation. Specifically, the horn player must focus on the tuning of dissonant intervals. Care must be given to the pitches so that half-steps are indeed half-steps and are not too close together. (The tendency for the playing of half-steps may be to place them too close together intonation-wise.) The tuning of tritones, sevenths, and ninths is a new skill for many performers, and Wilson’s music forces the players’ ear to not just disregard intervals as dissonant and thus ignore intonation. This is a challenge for even the mature horn player. In order to improve the tuning of dissonant intervals, the horn player must become familiar with playing outside of common practice tonality. Exercises such as Verne

Reynolds' *Intonation Exercises for Two Horns* as well as his 48 *Etudes*, which are built upon each interval from the minor second through the octave, and Gunther Schuller's *Unaccompanied Etudes* work well to build atonal aural skills on the horn. Working through these studies will help to engrain the sound of dissonant intervals into the horn player's ear and thus improve intonation and accuracy in performing Dana Wilson's works.

### Form

The coexistence of both tonality and atonality in a single piece is a very powerful musical tool. Different sections of tonality can create contrast and form because they are so identifiable to the listener. This is the case in all of Wilson's music for piano and horn. The most obvious indicator of form in addition to the melodic content is the tonality. The difference between slow, lyrical, atonal sections and faster, more tonal sections is striking. By using tonality as a device for creating distinct sections of music, a simple form for each of the pieces can be created. (Themes and motives often coincide with a certain quality of tonality, so form is partially derived from the pattern of theme appearances.) However, form is not a driving force in Wilson's music; it is merely an outside imposition upon the music. It is not the driving force in Wilson's pieces for piano and horn. This is especially the case in *Deep Remembering* in which the form resembles a stream of consciousness. The music moves from phrase to phrase in a similar manner to the way mental processes flit from thought to thought. This concept coincides with the title and theme for the piece, as the act of remembrance is a nebulous concept that cannot be specifically assigned to a formal scheme.

## CHAPTER 5

### RHYTHM

#### Tempo

Issues of tempo, meter, and syncopation are especially important to discuss in the music of Dana Wilson. These three features are strong distinguishing characteristics of Wilson's music and function to create his unique style.

Throughout Wilson's body of work, a wide range of tempos can be expected. They span the range from very slow, to very fast, to free and unmeasured, sometimes within the same movement of a piece. Specific metronome markings are given at the beginning of each movement or section, but these markings may be altered to better improve the performance. This is especially pertinent in the faster tempos where difficult technical passages, alternating subdivisions, and ensemble challenges may necessitate a slightly slower tempo than marked. Slower than marked tempos may be taken, as long as the musical impetus is preserved and the performer can execute the long phrases in one breath.

The players must identify sections in which the tempo must remain absolutely constant and, alternatively, sections where liberties can be taken. A passage that is played out of tempo where it is not indicated to do so may possibly contradict the composer's musical intent. Wilson indicates tempo very specifically in the score. He often writes "freely" above passages to indicate the tempo is fluid. As is to be expected, the free passages are usually for an unaccompanied solo instrument. However, there is an instance in *Deep Remembering* where the

parts are unmeasured and completely free of time between the piano and horn. This creates an improvisatory-sounding dialogue between the two performers. In a situation such as this, calculated coordination and a perfect understanding of how both parts interact is required.

In direct opposition to the free tempo sections, there exist passages that require strict adherence to tempo as a direct conveyance of the musical affect. These sections happen specifically in the first movement of *Deep Remembering* and in certain movements of *Musings*. In these sections, the tempo marking “pulsing” must be respected. The “pulsing” may conjure up different images for the performer: the beating of the human heart, the strumming of a lyre, or the chanting of an ancient choir. These musical allusions require a constant and unchanging tempo. It is interesting to note that although there are many sections where the tempo can be freely interpreted, in his pieces for horn and piano, he rarely indicates a *ritardando* or *accelerando*. Upon examination of other compositions by Dana Wilson, it seems that perhaps the lack of these musical techniques is unique to these pieces.

### Meter

Meter presents interesting (and sometimes unexpected) challenges in Wilson’s pieces for horn and piano. Meters can be described as fluid in Wilson’s music. The meter is constantly changing, both in the number of beats per measure and sometimes in the subdivisions of each beat. The meter hardly stays constant for more than four measures at a time, and the ever-changing meter keeps the performers alert at all times. This reflects the use of non-Western rhythms. These characteristics are important for a successful performance, as noted by Williams who instructs “you have to know about his sense of African rhythms.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Personal interview with Gail Williams.

The nature of the meter is determined by both the tempo and the character of the music. In the slow, lyrical sections, the time signature is usually a simple meter with the quarter note receiving the beat. The number of beats per measure varies between two, three, four, or five quarter notes to the bar. The lyrical quality and atonal harmony in these sections perpetuate the melodic line as the single most important feature. Thus, the changing meters are dictated by the ebb and flow of the melody; the number of beats per measure is secondary to the contour of the solo line.

The meter comes to the forefront in faster tempos. The quick-paced technical sections rapidly cycle through meters, but also alter the subdivisions of the beat as well. Whereas the slow lyrical passages are generally confined to simple meter, the fast technical sections are often in variants of complex meter. This is exemplified in a rhythmically complex section of *Deep Remembering*, where the meter and subdivisions of the beat undergo many changes and take the form of many unusual time signatures. (See Fig. 18.) The complex metrical operations continue with the main theme of the movement, which features an alternation of eighth note subdivisions in a combination of duples and triples. With an uncommon meter such as  $23/8$  or  $19/8$ , the players must decipher exactly which beats are subdivided into three and which are subdivided into two. The matter of subdivision is never a matter of interpretation. Wilson always provides a constant pulse at the eighth note level (always the level of subdivision) that clearly defines the subdivision. (See Fig. 18.) This is exactly the case in the previous example, where the subdivision of the beat is clearly outlined by the piano's constant eighth-notes. It is hardly ever the case that the parts contain different subdivisions of the beat. This is a huge help for the performers, because the difficulties that exist in the complex fluid meters are alleviated in the synchronization of rhythms in the individual parts. In the performance of these pieces there is

almost always a line to listen for that can provide the subdivision on the eighth-note level; the performer just needs to know where to listen.

### Syncopation

Syncopation plays a minor role in Wilson's music. This is a logical conclusion because, in a sense, the changing meters and subdivisions create built-in syncopations. Although dots and ties do exist in his compositions, Wilson chooses to reflect the complicated rhythmic impulse by frequently changing the meter instead of writing the music in a constant meter and using ties and dots in the notation. This "written out" syncopation highlights the importance of subdividing the eighth-note mentally when performing these works. Accents and specific articulations are meticulously included in the score to add to the jazzy feel. Syncopation very rarely occurs at a level smaller than the eighth note, which lessens some of the rhythmic challenges the performers may face.

In regards to rhythm, the jazz idiom plays an important role in Wilson's compositions. As a trained jazz pianist, Wilson incorporates jazz and blues into his pieces for horn. This is especially apparent in two movements of *Musings* ("Erato" and "Terpsichore") and in the final movement of *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*. In these passages, common jazz rhythms are utilized, and the performers must be aware of how to stylistically execute these sections. These passages represent a form of stylized jazz that is adapted for the horn. What sets the stylized jazz passages apart from the rest of his work is the fast, simple meter with sixteenth note subdivisions and syncopations on the level of those sixteenth notes. This is very different from his other fast tempo styles where the meter is most often complex with many shifting subdivisions on the eighth note level. In other sections, the rhythmic vitality is at the forefront and cannot be ignored

by the audience. In the jazz-like passages however, rhythm takes a secondary role. There are still meter changes to be dealt with and subdividing remains extremely important, but the style allows the performers to somewhat relax and let the beat fall into a more relaxed feel and a “supple rhythmic approach.”<sup>29</sup> The integrity of rhythms and pulse must not be compromised; it is only the musical effect that changes to a less rhythmically rigid character.

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<sup>29</sup> Mark Tucker and Travis A. Jackson, “Jazz” in *Grove Online*, (accessed September 3, 2010).

## CHAPTER 6

### TIMBRE AND TEXTURE

Of all the elements of music, timbre is the feature that Wilson varies to the greatest degree. Most of the musical decisions in regards to melody, harmony, and rhythm were made with the goal of creating a certain interesting timbre. The horn with its wide playable range has the unique ability to utilize many different timbres. The horn can sound bright and strident in the high register, almost identical to a trombone in the low register, and any combination of tone quality and range in between. This is both the gift and the curse of the horn: with the incredible capability of creating so many different timbres comes the responsibility of being able to control tone production. Control must be constant throughout all ranges and dynamics and during the use of extended techniques. This may be the greatest challenge of Dana Wilson's music, for he asks the performers to do many things on their instruments, and it requires great skill and maturity to execute the written notes. Wilson describes the many timbres in terms of food:

Because the rich color and intense lyricism are so characteristic, a piece needs a break from time to time, just as one who loves butterscotch can't eat a jar of it (though I've come close). So pacing the shape and timbre of the horn lines so that they don't get "used up" too soon is [a] big challenge.<sup>30</sup>

It is not just the horn that faces daunting challenges in the performance of Wilson's music. Although the piano part may not quite reach the equal solo quality of the instrumental sonata, the piano is certainly not an inferior musical voice. In fact, Wilson describes his piano

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<sup>30</sup> Personal interview with Dana Wilson.

part as virtuosic,<sup>31</sup> and Williams states that it is often difficult to find a pianist who is willing to work hard enough to put together such difficult pieces.<sup>32</sup> A pianist should undertake the preparation of Wilson's compositions with this knowledge in mind.

Much of the piano's duties are rhythmic. The piano provides a pulsing accompaniment, defines the shifting subdivisions, or responds freely in unmeasured sections. The horn (and violin) rely on the piano to maintain a steady pulse and correctly perform the subdivisions. The piano is the rhythmic glue of Wilson's pieces, so the pianist must have a strong understanding of rhythms, changing meters, and be able to maintain a steady eighth note pulse. No voice in Wilson's compositions is straight-forward, so all players involved must be skilled and musically mature musicians.

The utilized range of the piano spans the entire length of the keyboard. Sections occur so low that the pitches are almost indistinct and go as high as the highest keys. Of course, this is not as big of a challenge to the pianist as it is to the horn player, but the pianist must be prepared to move across the entire span of the keyboard. Good finger technique is required for fast passages as well as the ability to play melodies in octaves in one hand. (See Fig. 8.)

A melody that is orchestrated in octaves is a very characteristic feature of Wilson's piano parts. It occurs often when the other parts are silent and the piano carries the melody, and also in sections of loud dynamics and great emotion, such as in the excerpt from *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*. The left and right hands of the pianist require a degree of independence, as often they are executing very different sets of notes.

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<sup>31</sup> Personal interview with Dana Wilson.

<sup>32</sup> Personal interview with Gail Williams.

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two systems. The first system is in 4/4 time and features a treble clef staff with a triplet of eighth notes and a bass clef staff with a continuous eighth-note pattern. The second system continues the piece with various chords and melodic lines in both staves.

Figure 8  
*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt. 3, mm. 53-59.  
 Piano octaves.

Beyond merely playing the notes indicated in the score, there is also a sizeable amount of extended techniques the piano is asked to perform. Because of these features, it is highly suggested that a full grand piano (or baby grand) be used. An upright piano will not be able to produce the required notes that are played inside the piano. Many of the extended techniques written for the piano player involve the use of the strings inside the piano, including the strumming and scraping of the strings. In *Musings*, the strumming effects are used to simulate the sound of the lyre and harp—two instruments that are fitting for the musical allusion of the Greek muses. Another frequently used extended technique for the piano is the cluster chord. When indicated in the score, the pianist is asked to play any cluster of either white or black notes. This technique occurs in both *Deep Remembering* and *Musings*. These figures keep the pulse and rhythm clear, but make the pitches fuzzy and indistinct. The effect is a dissonant rhythmic rumble. Besides the aforementioned techniques, the pianist should also be ready to sing, play tremolos, pluck strings inside the piano, perform rips on the strings, play gestural bursts of notes on the keys, and pedal freely for dramatic effect.

Piano

*p* Hands (flat fingers) alternate on strings (on the keys--clusters--as a last resort) in this general area

scrape strings quickly and violently in second quadrant (fingernails)(1.v.)

*f*

Figure 9  
*Musings: Terpsichore*, mm. 153-156.  
 Piano extended techniques.

The violin is also called upon to execute extended techniques, although these techniques are fewer in number. The tonal language of *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* lies outside of common practice harmony, so the violinist needs to exercise a discerning ear in order to play dissonant melodic and harmonic intervals in tune. The violinist will encounter *pizzicato*, high harmonics, slides between individual notes, and harmonic slides. Wilson indicates in the program note that each instrument's basic nature interacts with and influences the other's.<sup>33</sup> This is realized within the music as a large degree of imitation between all three players. Thus, it is a challenge for everyone—not just the violin—to imitate the sounds of the other instruments. As Wilson describes, “each instrument has a unique musical personality and technical approach to articulation, sustain[ed notes], dynamics, and movement from one pitch to the next.”<sup>34</sup> A concerted effort must be made to blend and match to the other very different sounding instruments.

There are, of course, a large amount of extended techniques present in Dana Wilson's compositions to challenge the horn player. These techniques include echo horn, hand-gliss falls, distinct “wah-oo” sounds with a stop mute, half-valved notes, wild flutter glisses, rips, high harmonics, pitch bends, pitches sung through the horn, wind-like sounds, notes along the natural

<sup>33</sup> Dana Wilson, Program Note for *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

harmonic series, wide vibrato, and trills. It is a metaphorical musical decathlon for the horn player in terms of extended techniques. The horn is asked to create almost every timbre imaginable on the instrument, which can be a fun (but daunting!) undertaking. Descriptions of how to successfully execute the techniques are contained in Chapter 9.

## CHAPTER 7

### ENSEMBLE CONSIDERATIONS

It is a great challenge to prepare each individual part in these pieces by Dana Wilson, but the challenge is multiplied when other players are involved. The most obvious difficulty to overcome is the complex rhythm. With so many changing meters and subdivisions, no player can be complacent when counting rhythms. All of the performers must be proactive in knowing the locations of downbeats, keeping track of the meter, and, above all, subdividing. Mentally maintaining the constant pattern of subdivisions is vital, because very few sections of music are straightforward metrically. A complete understanding of how the meters work is required; each performer must be confident with one's own part before attempting collaboration with others. Helpful cues are provided in the individual parts to help the musicians keep track of what is going on in sections of rest. Players should not, however, rely only on the written cues. It is highly recommended that all involved prepare for rehearsals with thoughtful score study and by listening to a recording of the piece.<sup>35</sup> The greater each individual musician's understanding of the work, the more smoothly rehearsals will progress. Ample rehearsal time is definitely a must, especially with less seasoned musicians. Wilson's pieces are not works that can be thrown together at the last minute. One should allow plenty of rehearsals for the music to successfully come together. Beyond adequate preparation and knowledge of the score, the performers will

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<sup>35</sup> Recordings of many of Dana Wilson's compositions for horn and piano are available on recording. See the appendices for a complete list. If no commercial recording is available, Wilson has a few free recordings available for online streaming on his personal website. Otherwise, contact the composer and he may be able to provide one.

find additional challenges involving intonation, articulation, matching style, close imitation of the collaborating instruments, and producing a consistent interpretation of the extended techniques. Although Wilson's more dissonant concept of harmony means that players will not have to worry about tuning the thirds, fifths, and seventh of triads, intonation challenges exist in the form of unisons. These unisons most often occur at the beginnings and endings of phrases as melodic lines trade between parts. Care must be taken to make sure the tunable instruments (horn and violin) stay honest in terms of pitch. Although infrequent, there are instances where two instruments may have a melody in unison octaves (See Fig. 10). The usual techniques of blending and tuning can be utilized in these instances.

Rhythm was cited by Gail Williams as the most challenging aspect of Dana Wilson's compositions. The cohesion of Wilson's intricate musical lines is the greatest difficulty for the chamber ensemble. Williams emphatically states that "each performer must have good time. Period."<sup>36</sup> A successful performance of Wilson's work requires an outstanding effort on the part of all the players to commit to the maintenance of the Wilson's characteristic rhythmic scheme.

Wilson is very specific in terms of the articulation markings (e.g. *staccato*, slurs, accents, etc.). The horn, piano, and violin produce sounds in very different ways, so each musician must know how to create a variety of articulations so that a similar sound can be produced despite the very different idiosyncrasies of the individual instruments. This concept becomes especially pertinent in the stylized jazz sections. Interpretation of the jazz style must be synchronized throughout the ensemble in order to make these passages sound authentic and not like bad attempts by classical musicians to play in a jazz style.

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<sup>36</sup> Personal interview with Gail Williams.

Violin  
Horn in F  
Vln.  
Hn.

Figure 10  
*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt. 1, mm. 244-256.  
 Horn and violin melody in unison octaves.

A complete understanding of how each instrument produces sound is needed for the issue of imitation. Many times in *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* there exist passages of imitation or unison of melodies between parts. These sections stand out from the other passages where the individual character of each instrument is the most important. Instead, the instruments must strive to sound as similar as possible. (See Figs. 11 and 12.) This can be achieved through careful listening, rehearsing, and trial and error work.

Violin

Slowly, dramatically (♩ = 72)  
 always intense  
 non vib.

*p* *mf*

Figure 11  
*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt. 3, mm. 1-4.  
 The violin presents an initial melodic idea.



Figure 12

*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt 3, mm. 9-14.

The horn imitates the violin's initial melodic idea with the glisses. In this instance, it should be the horn player's goal to sound as similar to the violin's initial glisses as possible. (This presents a challenge due to the sheer physical differences in sound production between a violin and horn.)

The musicians must also agree on how to unify the sound of the extended techniques.

With respect for how each instrument produces sounds, an effort must be made to ensure that each fall, gliss, or rip sound similar within each part. This too can only result from focused rehearsal and careful listening.

Balance should be considered. The range of dynamics in these compositions is quite wide, so balance between parts must be considered at both very soft and very loud dynamic levels. Wilson is an experienced composer, and the way in which he wrote the music does much to solve any balance issues that may arise. In general, melodies are written for each instrument in a range where the instrument will project well and the accompaniment will not distract from the melody. Since each part has important solo lines, each instrument must be positioned in such a way that its voice can be heard. The piano should be set up with the stick all the way up, both to facilitate the plucked and strummed string effects inside the body, as well as to make sure that the rhythmic pulse the piano often maintains can be clearly heard by the players and the audience. When the violin is involved, make sure that the violin F-hole is facing *towards* the audience and that the horn player's bell is facing *away* from the audience. This is a common practice that takes into account the horn's reflected sound. It will ensure that the more powerful horn sounds will not cover the violin.

CHAPTER 8  
COMPOSITIONS FOR HORN AND PIANO

*Deep Remembering*

*Deep Remembering* for Horn and Piano

- I. Prologue / Where there was silence . . .
- II. . . . Stepped into fire / Epilogue

Date of Composition: 1995.

Length: Approximately 15:00.

Publisher: Available from the composer.

Range: 

Commissioning Party: Gail Williams

Dedication: Written for Gail Williams (horn) and Mary Ann Covert (piano).

Premiere: First performed by Gail Williams and Mary Ann Covert at the International Horn Society Symposium, Hammamatsu, Japan, 1995.

Dana Wilson found compositional inspiration for this piece in a poem entitled *Kiss* by contemporary American poet Anne Sexton. Stanzas from the poem are used directly in the movement titles.

My nerves are turned on. I hear them  
musical instruments. Where there was silence  
the drums, the strings are incurably playing. You did this.

Pure genius at work. Darling, the composer has stepped into fire.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to this literary inspiration, Wilson writes in his program note that, when composing *Deep Remembering*, he was trying to musically reflect the shared human consciousness forged over centuries of existence. The result is a piece filled with an eclectic collection of techniques for the performers to master:

The work draws upon musical relationships that are not rooted in European chords, and so forth. What may seem on first hearing to be “contemporary” techniques are, ironically, also the most ancient, dating back centuries, even millennia, in other cultures.<sup>38</sup>

The abstract concept of the composition requires a thoughtful approach and mature performers.

*Deep Remembering* is arguably Dana Wilson’s most demanding piece for horn and piano. The musical, technical, and rhythmic requirements for the horn player are extreme, and require a fundamentally solid and musically mature hornist. The opening of the first movement presents both interpretive and technical challenges. The beginning of the piece features the unaccompanied voice of the horn and thus requires carefully thought-out phrasing and proactive musicianship.<sup>39</sup>

The disjunct lyricism that is characteristic of Wilson’s compositional style and begins from the onset, with large leaps from the mid-low register into the higher register. (See Fig. 13.) To preserve a good tone quality of the notes, the low notes must center immediately upon the attack, be low enough in intonation, and dark in sound quality. A difficult passage featuring major seventh leaps and covering the range of three octaves ends the opening solo section.

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<sup>37</sup> Anne Sexton, “The Kiss,” in *The Complete Poems: Anne Sexton* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1999), 174.

<sup>38</sup> Dana Wilson, Program Note for *Deep Remembering*, 1995.

<sup>39</sup> Bill VerMuelen, *Horn Recital Preparation*.



Figure 13  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt, 1, mm. 16-20.  
 Major seventh leaps covering a large range.

These large leaps to and from the low register are challenging and merit dedicated practice time to the low register. The low range of the horn comes into play throughout the entirety of *Deep Remembering*, so any issues of execution must be confronted and resolved. In addition to the occasional fanfare motive where the melodic line dips momentarily into the low register, there is an extended passage covering what some horn players consider “the break” between the low and middle ranges. This occurs in the second movement in measures 64-101, where the melodic materials remain below the horn’s written middle C. As mentioned earlier, it becomes very important in these sections that intonation is respected and that the sound does not become bright and pinched. It is suggested that the hornist wishing to master *Deep Remembering* develop flexibility in the low range through arpeggios and exercises involving large slurs and leaps involving low notes. Long tones in the low register will help build sound quality and better intonation, as will a general plan to just play more in the low register, be it through second horn etudes and orchestral excerpts, or simply by playing selected etudes an octave lower. Because *Wilson* involves the low range at both soft and loud dynamic levels, it is recommended that exercises in the low range be successfully played at both *pianissimo* and *fortissimo* dynamic levels. The horn’s high register must also be well-controlled in *Deep Remembering*. There are soft, delicate entrances in the high register, loud bombastic passages, as well as large slurs to notes higher than G. Confidence and a good ear for hearing the pitches before they are played are important skills to have at these occasions, especially because the harmonic language borders on

atonality. The horn player must strive, as always, to produce a beautiful and tension-free sound in the upper register. If high notes cannot be produced in an efficient manner, the soloist may encounter difficulties regarding stamina, as the piece is long and demanding in terms of range and dynamics. To summarize the difficulties in terms of range, the horn player must have (or develop) command of both the low and high registers of the horn at any dynamic in both lyrical and technical capacities. This alone makes *Deep Remembering* a piece that is beyond the ability of most undergraduate horn players.

A unique challenge exists in *Deep Remembering* regarding the amount of extended techniques asked for by the composer. The opening passage calls for echo horn, a technique where the horn player covers the bell and each note is fingered one half-step higher. This technique is similar to the act of stopping, but without “the harsh brassy sound, thus creating an unforced misty tone quality. It is a very unusual effect, giving the impression of a sound coming from a distance, a sort of echo effect.”<sup>40</sup> This technique is famously heard in Paul Dukas’ horn solo *Villanelle*, where the opening call is played and then repeated a second time using the echo horn technique. For this example and other uses of echo horn in Wilson’s pieces, the player must use his or her ear to make sure the pitches remain in tune. (See Fig. 14). This will require careful practice time with a tuner, and may call for the use of alternate fingerings in order to make sure intonation remains honest. It may be necessary to experiment with playing notes on either the F or B-flat side of the horn to attain a good centered sound.

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<sup>40</sup> Gunther Schuller, *Horn Technique*, 58.



Figure 14

*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 1, m. 5.

Wilson's use of echo horn. It is important to note that he specifically indicates "echo horn" in the score instead of using stopped notation (+) at a soft dynamic level.

Within the echo horn section and at other instances, Wilson indicates that certain pitches need to "slide" into each other. The execution of these slides depends on the context and the surrounding notes. For some passages, the interval between the notes is large enough that the slide can be performed either by depressing the valves half-way and using the embouchure to gliss between notes, or by fully depressing the valves in a fast, random manner to produce a gliss-like sound. As Wilson says in his performance note to *Deep Remembering*:

They are intended to lend a sensuousness that results naturally from the shape of the line, and should not draw attention to themselves as "effects" or halt the overall sweep of the larger gesture. Any bending and sliding that proves ineffective should not be employed.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, the production of the slides is a rather individualized matter. What may work for one player may not work for another. Experimentation with these techniques is necessary. For slides between notes which are closer together, for example, one half-step, the slide can be executed by simply closing the hand in the bell so the pitch goes down by one half-step—no change of fingering is required. This is expressly indicated in some passages and is easy to perform as it is very idiomatic to the horn. (See Fig. 15.)

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<sup>41</sup> Dana Wilson, Performance Note for *Deep Remembering*.



Figure 15  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 2, mm. 109-110.  
 Idiomatic use of the hand in the bell to lower the pitch by one half-step.

Wilson also indicates in the score the use of techniques such as flutter tonguing, valve glisses, and rips. These techniques are not uncommon to most horn players, and should not present difficulties in their execution.

There is one technique in *Deep Remembering*, however, that may be completely new to most horn players. This effect, which is found in the second movement, calls for the use of a brass (stop) mute in combination with additional hand stopping to create the sound “oo-wa-oo.” (See Fig. 16.) The effect produces a very distinct and almost comical sound. This sound is created by partially covering the flare of the stop mute. The flare must not be completely covered by the hand, or no sound will come out. This technique requires a fair amount of experimentation and practice in order to produce the desired sound. As not all stop mutes are built the same way, the horn player must tailor his or her technique depending on the stop mute. It may be difficult to ensure that the stop mute stays firmly in the bell without being held in by the hand, because the hand must be available to open and close the flare of the stop mute. If this solo is performed standing, the stability of the stop mute in the bell becomes a bigger concern. Indeed, it may be necessary to use only one or two fingers to keep the stop mute in place. The horn player must figure out the individual balancing act so that the “oo-wa-oo” sound can be created without also creating an inadvertent crashing sound from the stop mute hitting the floor.

Previously indicated to be played with brass mute  
 ("stop" sound with palm of right hand: "oo-wa-oo")

Horn in F

Figure 16  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 2, mm. 77-81.  
 Brass (stop) mute used in conjunction with additional hand-stopping.

There is an interesting feature of the very last note of *Deep Remembering*: a written harmonic above a high C in which Wilson indicates that the harmonic should be held for as long as comfortable. (See Fig. 17.)

(harmonic: hold as long as comfortable)

Horn in F

Piano

Figure 17  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 2, mm. 198-202.  
 The optional harmonic at the end of the piece.

An octave leap up to a high C after such a demanding piece is daunting in itself, but the harmonic can be truly perplexing. This technique came about as Williams was practicing *Deep Remembering*. Upon reaching the piece's final notes, Williams' musical experimentation brought about the harmonic. The ability to play a high C harmonic is one of the tricks of the Conn 8D horn model. On this particular type of horn, if the player slowly depresses the first valve while playing a C in the staff, a high C will be produced. However, Williams was performing the piece

on a Geyer and was able to play the harmonic. Through personal experience, Williams admits that not all horns are capable of playing the harmonic, and she believes the ability to execute the harmonic is dependant on how air moves through each individual model of horn.<sup>42</sup> If the performer finds that his or her horn is not able to play the harmonic, ending the piece on a long C in the staff that fades away is quite acceptable, and definitely easier than attempting the high C or the written harmonic.

The aspect of rhythm and meter is also an important challenge in *Deep Remembering*. As per Wilson's compositional style, the meters are extremely fluid and may change subdivisions frequently. This is especially the case in *Deep Remembering*, where the rhythmic feel—especially in the second movement, poses a challenge to both the horn player and the pianist. The subdivision of the beat must be at the forefront of both performers' minds as the piece progresses; there are very few straight-forward rhythmic passages. In mm. 24-41, the horn plays a long, sustained melody amid pulsing eighth notes in the piano and a frequently changing subdivision. (See Fig. 18.) The hornist must resist the urge to relax and lay back rhythmically during this section. Instead, he or she needs to constantly maintain the mental subdivisions, or the ensemble will certainly fall apart.

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<sup>42</sup> Personal interview with Gail Williams.

The image displays a musical score for Horn in F and Piano. It is divided into three systems. The first system covers measures 19 and 20. The Horn in F part (top staff) begins at measure 19 with a dynamic marking of *mf* and features a melodic line with a slur over measures 19 and 20. The Piano part (bottom two staves) starts at measure 19 with a dynamic marking of *mp* and consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The second system covers measures 20 and 21. The Horn in F part continues its melodic line from measure 20 to 21. The Piano part continues its accompaniment, with a change in the bass line at measure 21. The third system covers measures 19 and 21. The Horn in F part has a rest in measure 19 and then plays a melodic line from measure 20 to 21. The Piano part continues its accompaniment, with a change in the bass line at measure 21.

(continued)

Figure 18  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 2, mm. 26-35  
Changing rhythmic subdivisions

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Horn (Hn.) and Piano (Pno.). Each system consists of a single staff for the Horn and two staves for the Piano. The time signature changes from 12/8 to 10/8 and back to 12/8. The piano part features a steady eighth-note pulse in the bass clef, while the horn part has a more complex melodic line with various rhythmic values and phrasing.

Figure 18  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 2, mm. 26-35  
 Changing rhythmic subdivisions.

At mm. 64-89, the horn and piano both function within a constant eighth note pulse, but there is no meter indicated. Both players must keep a good pulse and be aware of how their part fits in with the other part. This is especially difficult for the horn player, who must remain rhythmically honest while trying to execute difficult stopped horn effects. To prepare this section, the horn player must master each aspect individually: first become comfortable with just the stopped effects, next become rhythmically accurate, and then once both of these concepts are solid, begin playing the stopped section in tempo. This technique of isolating each concept individually is a proven way to practice almost anything. One final rhythmically challenging passage occurs at in mm. 168-176. In this section, there is intentional melodic and rhythmic phasing between the horn

and the piano. Both parts play the same melodic line, but as the time progresses, the parts rhythmically diverge from each other by an eighth note. (See Fig. 19.) The first plan of attack for this section is for both players to realize that they should not be playing together. The piano and horn must stubbornly maintain a steady eighth note pulse despite how uncomfortable it seems. Each eighth note must be articulated simultaneously between the parts to make this section sound effective, otherwise the audience may write it off as a mistake.

Because the harmonic language of *Deep Remembering* lies somewhere between the realms of tonality and atonality, the horn player may struggle with pitch accuracy. Without the easily identifiable chordal thirds and fifths to anticipate, the hornist will need to have a strong ear to hear and accurately play pitches that sound dissonant. Minor seconds, tritones, major sevenths, and minor ninths are all common intervals in *Deep Remembering*, and the horn player must know how these intervals sound. This requires extra practice time and possibly the buzzing and singing of the part before it is attempted on the horn. The pitches must be internalized in the mind of the horn player; guessing the location of pitches and playing by feel are two practices that will make performing Dana Wilson's horn music difficult. The process of learning *Deep Remembering* is, in fact, a great ear training exercise: it will help the hornist build stronger (atonal) aural skills. Wilson's use of octatonic, Phrygian, and Indian scales translates to the horn as the occurrence of many cross fingerings. The horn part will utilize the 2-3 valve combination often, and thus finger technique must be strong. Care must be taken so that the tongue and fingers work simultaneously and that the fingers also work rhythmically. Exercises using the chromatic scale such as the first two etudes in Verne Reynolds' *48 Etudes* will be helpful preparation to help the horn player's fingers so that slow finger technique does not inhibit a successful performance.

multiple tonguing or flutter;  
rough: rapidly varying stopped and unstopped

Horn in F

*mp* (sim.) *poco a poco cresc.*

Piano

*p* (bring out accents) *poco a poco cresc.*

Hn.

regular tonguing;  
less stopping

Pno.

Hn.

no stopping

Pno.

Figure 19  
*Deep Remembering*, Mvt. 2, mm. 168-176.  
 Intentional melodic and rhythmic phasing between horn and piano.

*Musings: An Ode to the Greek Muses*

*Musings: An Ode to the Greek Muses* for Horn and Piano

- I. Calliope—Muse of Eloquence and Epic Poetry
- II. Polyhymnia—Muse of Sacred Song
- III. Thalia—Muse of Comedy
- IV. Melpomene—Muse of Tragedy
- V. Euterpe—Muse of Lyric Poetry
- VI. Erato—Muse of Erotic Love
- VII. Clio—Muse of History
- VIII. Urania—Muse of Astronomy
- IX. Terpsichore—Muse of Whirling Dance

Date of Composition: 2003

Length: Approximately 21:00.

Publisher: Available from the composer.

Range: 

Commissioning Party: Gail Williams.<sup>43</sup>

Dedications: For Gail Williams, Thomas Bacon, William Bernatis, Lisa Bontrager, Cynthia Carr, Bryan Kennedy, William Klinghoffer, Peter Kurau, William Purvis, Alex Shuhan, Virginia Thompson, Thomas Tittle, and Adam Unsworth. (Wilson explains the large number of dedicatees, saying that “granting organizations are more enthusiastic about pieces where several performances are guaranteed. I can’t recall any of the details, but certainly most of those people ended up performing the piece.”)<sup>44</sup>

Premiere: First performed by Gail Williams at a solo recital at Northwestern University in May of 2003.

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<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, this piece was commissioned at no charge. Williams applied for a grant to commission this work, but the grant never went through. Wilson still composed the piece – completely out of his friendship for Williams.

<sup>44</sup> Personal interview with Dana Wilson.

*Musings* is a set of short character pieces with each movement representing one of the ancient Greek muses. The ancient Greek Muses have long “been credited with inspiring artists to create great works, with each Muse reigning over a certain domain.”<sup>45</sup> Since each movement is a musical depiction of nine very different personalities, it is not surprising that each section has its own individual musical characteristics and challenges. It is the great task of the performers to create nine different moods and musical affects that establish the unique character of each movement. In terms of performance practice, Wilson writes that

While it is preferred that all nine muses be represented in performance, the movements can be performed in any combination and order deemed appropriate by the performers.<sup>46</sup>

Each movement is short in duration, with no particular section lasting more than four minutes. It is very possible to create a suite consisting of three or more of the movements of *Musings*. Because each musical muse has such a different character, a variety of smaller suites could be created for performance depending on the taste and talent of the players.

The movements that may be considered more lyrical in nature are “Calliope,” “Polyhymnia,” “Melponeme,” “Euterpe,” “Clio,” and “Urania,” although no one movement particularly resembles another in its quality of lyricism. “Calliope” presents many instances of Wilson’s “fanfare motive,” which creates a fitting opening statement for the entire piece. “Polyhymnia” sounds very much like its namesake muse’s realm: it resembles a sacred song. Its long, sustained note values and simple rhythms can be interpreted as resembling an ancient chant. “Melponeme” features a very active piano part, but the horn’s line is very sustained and tragic sounding. The opening statement is an “anti-fanfare” as the horn part descends into the low register, signaling a possible descent into despair. After the opening section, the horn takes

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<sup>45</sup> Dana Wilson, Program Note for *Musings*.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

on a lyrical style as it executes fast slurred half-steps that may sound like grace notes. The overall dissonance of the line contributes to the feeling of tragedy and sadness, and the movement ends as it began, fading off into the horn's low register. "Euterpe" musically represents lyric poetry. As such, the horn plays smooth scalar patterns starting in the mid to low range that gradually build in intensity and dynamic, also going higher in range as if to simulate the plotline of an epic poem. The horn line reaches the climax at a high B-flat and then relaxes down the tessitura and in dynamic range to a *pianissimo* first-line G. "Clio," which represents the Muse of History, interestingly references the history of the horn itself. Wilson instructs the horn player to perform the opening and closing passages in the style of the natural horn by taking the hand out of the bell and playing along the overtone series with no valves depressed. In between these natural horn statements, Wilson again makes use of the fanfare motive, which harkens back to the original purpose of the horn as an instrument that played certain fanfare-like calls during a hunt. The final lyrical movement is "Urania," the Muse of Astronomy. Its serpentine melodic line moves with an upward trajectory, as if the horn is beckoning the audience to look overhead to the stars. All of these movements that can be considered lyrical in nature showcase the large range, dark tone color of the horn, and the musicality of the performers. Tone quality and musical phrasing should be the foci when preparing these movements.

The movements of *Musings* that may be considered more technical in nature are "Thalia," "Erato," and "Terpsichore." These three character pieces are quite different from one another in terms of style. "Thalia" is the Muse of Comedy, which is reflected in the music by many staccato articulations, rips, grace notes, and a general playful feel. The movement ends with a punctuated high C for the horn player on an offbeat, which will sound comical whether or not the horn plays the right note. "Erato," as the name sounds, is the Muse of Erotic Love. Wilson indicates

“Bluesy” at the beginning and also tells the horn player to feel free to bend into and slur pitches.<sup>47</sup> The use of these techniques can add to the suggestive nature of the music. The quasi-blues style of “Erato” features syncopated sixteenth notes, specific stylistic accents and articulations, and a slow, sultry<sup>48</sup> ending where the horn player is encouraged to utilize a slow vibrato effect. The final movement of the *Musing* is “Terpsichore,” the Muse of Whirling Dance. A time signature of 6/8 and a quick tempo perpetuate the dance feeling. Accents and syncopations which mimic a 3/4 time within the 6/8 meter create a whirling sensation as do the rips, glisses, and fall-offs in the horn part.

Although this work is simpler to perform than *Deep Remembering* in terms of rhythm, meter, and extended techniques, it still presents challenges in its wide range. In the more lyrical movements, the horn player will again encounter Wilson’s disjointed melodies filled with wide leaps. The horn player’s low range ability is tested through the duration of the piece, beginning with the accompanimental figures in “Calliope” that sit in the low range. (See Fig. 20.)

In “Clio,” the horn player must be able to cleanly start on a low C at a strong dynamic level, and then demonstrate great flexibility throughout the tessitura in slurred overtones that span three octaves. The final note of *Musings* is a *fortissimo* low E, which may be difficult both to execute and to project over the piano. A strong low range is required.<sup>49</sup> The high range of the horn player must also be well-developed. Lyrical lines frequently go up to high Bs and B-flats at all dynamic levels, and high notes often appear unprepared thus necessitating clean attacks. A horn player wishing to perform any of Dana Wilson’s works for horn and piano should be prepared to face difficult challenges in terms of range. It is therefore highly recommended that

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<sup>47</sup> Dana Wilson, “Erato,” *Musings*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Acknowledging the difficulty of this passage, Wilson includes an *ossia* where the notes can be played two octaves higher.

only those players who possess control of both the low and high ranges of the horn attempt to publicly perform his music.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Calliope" from the work *Musings*. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system features a Horn in F part (labeled "accompaniment") and a Piano part (labeled "melody"). The Horn part is written in 4/4 time and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The Piano part is also in 4/4 time and includes a "pedal freely" instruction. The second system features a Horn part (labeled "Hn.") and a Piano part (labeled "Pno."). Both parts in the second system include a "cresc." (crescendo) instruction. The Horn part in the second system shows a triplet of eighth notes and a change in time signature to 3/4. The Piano part in the second system shows a change in time signature to 3/4 and includes a double bar line.

Figure 20  
*Musings*: “Calliope,” mm. 8-13.  
 Accompanimental horn figure in the low range.

There exist in *Musings* a fair amount of extended techniques for the horn and piano players. The horn player can expect what have come to be standard Dana Wilson horn techniques such as rips, glisses, flutter-tonguing, falls, and half-valve wild glisses. These techniques are more common to the technical movements (“Thalia,” “Erato,” and “Terpsichore”), but may be found in lyrical passages as well. There are a few new techniques, however, that merit discussion. In “Polyhymnia,” both the piano and the horn player are asked to sing their parts, as one would sing an ancient chant. At these moments, neither player can be shy about their singing voice and will need to project at a good volume so that the audience can tell that the performers

are actually singing. Use good vocal technique in these passages and open the mouth wide to create good “oo” and “ah” vocalizations. (See Fig. 21.) “Clio” presents some challenges as it asks the hornist to use the overtone series, both with no valves depressed and with the horn stopped using the 1-2 valve combination. The horn player who includes flexibility exercises using the overtone series in the daily practice routine will find success performing these passages. In the final movement, “Terpsichore,” Wilson includes a cadenza for the horn in the mid to low register. (See Fig. 22.) Notably, this passage is marked stopped. The notes in this range of the horn are infamously difficult to play stopped with good intonation, so usually it is recommended to use a brass stop mute. However, Wilson quickly alternates stopped and open notes, making the use of a stop mute impossible.

(singing part is transposed to match horn pitch)

*p* sing (or play): (slide into pitch and syllable)

Horn in F

*rit.*

ah - - - - - ooh.

ah - - - - - ooh.

*ppp*

play:

Piano

*p rit.*

sing (or play):

ah - - - - - ooh.

ah - - - - - ooh.

Figure 21  
*Musings*: “Polyhymnia,” mm. 24-26.  
 Vocalizations in the horn and piano part.

Horn in F

The musical score for Horn in F consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (F), and a 6/8 time signature. It starts with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The first two measures are marked "cadenza (maintain tempo)" and contain eighth notes with fingerings (+, +, +, +, +, +). The next two measures are marked "(maintain same 'A' fingering)" and contain eighth notes with a slur and a fermata. The third staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It starts with a dynamic marking of *mf* and contains a whole rest followed by eighth notes with a slur and a fermata, marked "stopped". The final staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains eighth notes with a slur and a fermata, marked "(finger A; open gradually)".

Figure 22  
*Musings*: “Terpsichore,” mm. 133-144.  
 Stopped horn effects.

The goal at this point is to create a “wah-wah” sound<sup>50</sup> and getting the desired effect will take a bit of practice.

Although the horn player encounters fewer extended techniques in *Musings* than in *Deep Remembering*, the piano player will encounter far more. The pianist will be asked to pluck the strings, scrape the strings, play cluster chords, and depress keys silently. (See Fig. 9.) Because the pianist must have access to the inside of the piano to properly execute these techniques, it is vital that this piece not be performed on an upright piano, but instead a concert grand. In addition, the horn is often asked to play into the body of piano to create an echo effect, which cannot be produced using an upright

<sup>50</sup> Not to be confused with the “wa-oo” sound in *Deep Remembering*.

*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*

*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* for Violin, Horn, and Piano

- I. Freely; strict time
- II. With great warmth and intimacy
- III. Slowly; with energy

Date of Composition: 2007

Length: Approximately 16:00.

Publisher: Available from the composer.

Range: 

Commissioning Party: Gail Williams.

Dedications: For Gail Williams, in order to honor [our] friendship in some way, and to her past, present and future horn students.<sup>51</sup>

Premiere: First performed in Chicago, Illinois by the Chicago Chamber Musicians on November 18, 2007. Performed by Gail Williams, horn; Joseph Genualdi, violin; and Alan Chow, piano.

*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* is the fourth work commissioned from Dana Wilson by Gail Williams. In 2005, Northwestern University awarded her the Charles Deering McCormick Teaching Professorship, and with the award, she decided to commission three new pieces for mixed chamber ensembles involving the horn. The composers from whom she commissioned works were Dana Wilson, Douglas Hill, and Augusta Reed Thomas.

The horn, violin, and piano chamber ensemble represents a popular instrumentation for composers in the past 150 years. The ensemble is colloquially referred to as the “horn trio.” Dennis Brain can be given credit for popularizing the horn trio; he frequently performed and

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<sup>51</sup> Dana Wilson, Program Note for *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*.

commissioned new works for this ensemble such as the Berkeley, Ligeti, and Carter Trios. He also commissioned Arnold Cooke to rescore his *Arioso and Scherzo* for violin, horn, and piano, but this was never realized.<sup>52</sup> It was Brain who popularized Brahms' Trio in E-flat Major for Violin, Horn, and Piano, op. 40 in the horn's repertoire, and it is Brahms' Horn Trio that remains the standard upon which all horn trios are measured. Wilson wrote his horn trio with the Brahms in mind, and even includes a musical imitation of the Brahms Horn Trio in the first movement of *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*. (See Figs. 23 and 24.) Wilson has also released a version of this piece for horn, flute, and piano.

Composed in 2007, *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* is the most recently written work of the three pieces within this discussion. (*Deep Remembering* was composed in 1995 and *Musings* in 2003.) Over this time period, it seems as if Wilson has better developed his compositional technique for the horn, partially due to his friendship and continued interaction with virtuoso hornist Gail Williams. This fact is reflected in a more idiomatic horn part in *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*. Wilson still maintains his compositional style through the use of disjunct lyricism, dissonant intervals, sections of stylized jazz, and great rhythmic interest, but the horn player will find significantly fewer notes in the extremes of the tessitura and fewer wide, dissonant intervals within the melody. A more idiomatic horn part does not imply an easier one, however, as there are still many challenges for the hornist to encounter as this piece is prepared and performed.

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<sup>52</sup> Stephen J. Petitt, *Dennis Brain: A Biography*, (London: Robert Hale, 1989), 145.

Figure 23  
Trio in E-flat Major for Violin, Horn, and Piano. 40, Mvt. 4: “Finale,” mm. 61-67.  
The original passage from Brahms’ Horn Trio.

Figure 24  
*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt. 1, mm. 283-287.  
Wilson’s re-interpretation and imitation of the Brahms’ composition.

*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* comprises three movements. The first movement intersperses solo soliloquy moments for each instrument with fast, quirky 6/8 *tutti* sections. The second movement is a slower and more lyrical movement Wilson indicates should be performed

with great warmth and intensity.<sup>53</sup> The final movement is upbeat in jazz style that features rapidly changing meters, syncopation, and extended techniques for all three players.

The first movement begins murkily in the depths of the piano and in the low register of the horn. This builds to the first melodic solo soliloquy of the violin, which appears in the form of Wilson’s characteristic “fanfare motive” that was also observed in *Deep Remembering* and *Musings*. The horn echoes this fanfare motive after its presentation in the violin. (See Fig. 25.)

The image shows a musical score for Violin and Horn in F. The Violin part is on the top staff, marked '(solo: freely, fragile)' and 'p'. It begins with a melodic line in 3/4 time, followed by a 4/4 section, and then a 3/4 section. The Horn in F part is on the bottom staff, marked 'p'. It begins with a rest in 3/4 time, followed by a 4/4 section, and then a 3/4 section. The Horn in F part imitates the Violin's melodic line.

Figure 25  
*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt. 1, mm. 7-10.  
 Imitation of the fanfare motive between violin and horn.

The fanfare and echo return later in the movement, where the horn takes over the main melodic material. The imitation between violin and horn is a very significant musical aspect not just in the first movement, but throughout the piece. Wilson highlights the importance of the musical dialogue between parts as one instrument’s “basic nature interacts with and influences the other’s.”<sup>54</sup> Not only do the violin, piano, and horn share and exchange melodic lines, they also imitate each other in terms of extended techniques. The violin is easily capable of sliding between pitches, and the horn is able to imitate this sound by either a combination of half-valve fingerings and glisses, or by simply using the hand in the bell to alter the pitch. (See Fig. 26.) This can easily be seen in the following example where the violin slides between harmonics and the horn alternates between stopped and open notes. A similar instance occurs in the third

<sup>53</sup> Dana Wilson, *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*

<sup>54</sup> Dana Wilson, Program Note for *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*.

movement, where a quasi-gliss on the violin's A string mimics a slow half-valve gliss on the horn. (See Fig. 27.)

Some techniques do not exactly translate between violin, horn, and piano, however, but each player can use similar-sounding instrument specific techniques to create complimentary musical effects. This is the case in the first movement where the violin plays *pizzicato*, the piano *staccato*, and the horn short stopped notes. The sounds that are created are very similar, although different enough to maintain the individuality of each instrument. (See Fig. 28.)

Violin

Horn in F

Piano

Figure 26  
*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt 1, mm. 184-186.  
 Imitation between violin and horn using extended techniques.

Violin

Horn in F

Piano

Figure 27  
*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt 1, mm. 32-33.  
 Imitation using quasi-gliss and half-valve techniques.

The image displays a musical score for a chamber ensemble. It consists of six staves: Violin, Horn in F, Piano, Violin (Vln.), Horn (Hn.), and Piano (Pno.). The top system (Violin, Horn in F, Piano) shows the Violin playing a pizzicato line, the Horn in F playing a sustained chord, and the Piano playing a melodic line with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The bottom system (Vln., Hn., Pno.) shows the Violin playing an arco line, the Horn playing a rhythmic pattern with a piano (p) dynamic, and the Piano playing a melodic line with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Figure 28  
*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*, Mvt 1, mm. 174-183.  
 Timbre imitation.

It is Wilson's musical juxtaposition of similar and unique timbres of each instrument that gave the piece its title. As Wilson describes in his program note for *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*:

The rapid movement from one sound world to the other suggested to me the rippled vitality of water in a shallow stream versus the gentle meandering of a deep river, and how the course of a water body can move rather suddenly from one to another, depending on the terrain.<sup>55</sup>

With these words in mind, it can be said that one of the great musical challenges of not only this piece, but all chamber ensemble repertoire, is to decide as a group how to navigate the musical

<sup>55</sup> Dana Wilson, Program Note for *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*.

“terrain” per se. Despite Wilson’s use of extended techniques, the players must form one unified moving stream (or river) of sound.

In regards to the individual execution of the parts, all three players will find technical challenges. For the horn player, Wilson draws from his usual arsenal of extended techniques: pitch bends, rips, glisses, wild half-valve trills, low stopped passages, and flutter tonguing. The successful performance of these techniques has already been addressed in previous chapters and thus will not be covered here. The hornist will need to spend time in the practice room refining, tweaking, and perfecting the bends and trills, with special attention given to the fact that the horn and the violin must (at times) sound similar in the execution of such figures. Preparing *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* may require a concerted effort from the violinist, especially if he or she is unfamiliar with some of the instrument’s extended techniques. Wilson asks the violinist to perform falls, harmonics, slides between pitches, slides between harmonics, *pizzicato*, snap *pizzicato*, and *sul ponticello* passages. A strong ear for playing dissonant intervals is also necessary. Although Wilson drew inspiration from Brahms’ Horn Trio, the harmonic language of Wilson’s Horn Trio in no way resembles its predecessor. An abundance of half-steps, tritones, and the lack of common practice harmonic progressions makes it necessary for all the players involved to more finely tune their aural skills in the areas of dissonance and atonality. The piano player will not find many extended techniques. However, because Wilson himself is a talented piano player, the part is quite difficult. Practice will be necessary to negotiate fast arpeggios and scales that lie outside the realm of common practice tonality. In addition, since the piano is usually the rhythmic motor, the player must make sure to maintain a steady tempo at all times. Wilson often composes the piano melodies in octaves in one hand as well as calling for many

open spaced chords, so the pianist must be prepared to span wide intervals quickly and accurately.

*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* is a piece that will require a good deal of rehearsal time, even for the most experienced players. The changing meters and rhythmic feels require that all three players be constantly subdividing and never guessing as to where the beat is. It is always recommended that each individual procure a score and develop an understanding of how the parts fit together, and this is especially vital for Dana Wilson's compositions. All of the players must know when and how the parts line up and what to listen for in each section. It may also be helpful to listen to a recording of the piece, and also to other recordings of Wilson's compositions in order to gain a better understanding of his compositional style. Although there are not many triads to tune, there are extended passages of unison melodies and melodic trade offs stemming from a unison note. The dissonant quality of the music is not an excuse for bad intonation; dissonant intervals must be respected in terms of pitch and good group tuning must be maintained.

In terms of balance, the instrument that is most likely to be overpowered is the violin. Wilson combats this by writing the violin solo melodies in the uppermost register in order to better project, and he also keeps the texture thin when the violin is in a less powerful range. For setting up the ensemble, the violin should be placed so its f-hole faces the audience, and the horn should face so its bell is away from the audience and into the crook of the piano. This is a traditional setup for the horn trio, and will most allow all voices to be heard. The piano may be setup at full or half stick, depending on the proclivities of the pianist, the piano itself, the desired musical effect, and the resonance of the hall.

## CHAPTER 9

## SUMMARY

When asked what he liked most about the sound of the horn, Dana Wilson simply replied: “everything.”<sup>56</sup> His universal interest in all the colors of the horn can clearly be seen in his demanding compositions for the instrument. Wilson is aware of the horn’s capabilities both musically and technically, and, to either the player’s delight or dismay, his compositions challenge the performer to his or her very limits of horn playing ability.

With so many challenges awaiting the hornist in the preparation of Wilson’s music, one may wonder what precipitated the difficulty of these works. A fiendishly difficult horn part can be composed when the composer has a virtuoso soloist who has commissioned such a composition. *Deep Remembering* and *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* were both dedicated solely to Gail Williams, and *Musings* includes Ms. Williams on the list of dedicatees. As an undisputed horn virtuoso, there is very little she cannot accomplish on the horn. This is the ideal situation for a composer, for with such a musician as the commissioning artist, the composer can feel free to write incredibly difficult music without fear that the artist will be unable to play it. It is probably not an exaggeration to state that both Gail Williams and Adam Unsworth can play any piece of music that is placed in front of them. In short, Dana Wilson wrote a virtuosic horn part simply because he could. With such an advantage, Wilson composed these pieces to take advantage of the many colors the horn can produce. One of the most unique characteristics of the horn is its

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<sup>56</sup> Dana Wilson, *Personal Interview*.

ability to play four or more octaves—one of the largest ranges of any wind instrument—and each range can produce a different tone color and quality. Different colors produce different musical affects. Thus the horn in its many ranges can be quite versatile in creating many musical moods. There are many characters created in Wilson’s pieces for horn and piano, and this is due in part to the wide range of the horn part.

While it may be true that Wilson’s horn music is challenging, this should not deter a hornist from playing it. The musical and emotional value of his works for horn and piano are worth the effort. Both Gail Williams and Adam Unsworth stated in their interviews that Wilson’s music is certainly accessible to the average horn player. Williams “actually asked him to think about when composing: don’t make it so difficult that no one can play it”<sup>57</sup> and Unsworth explained that “Dana knows the horn very well and won’t write passages that are impossible to play.”<sup>58</sup>

The rapidly growing reputation of Wilson’s horn music is largely due to the continued patronage and promotion of his works by horn virtuosos Gail Williams and Adam Unsworth. The commercial recordings and frequent solo performances of his works by not only these two artists, but by a growing number of horn players around the world, is evidence towards his increasing popularity as a composer of horn music. Wilson’s compositions have been performed at International Horn Symposia, regional horn workshops, and many graduate and faculty recitals. As what may be considered an official heralded arrival to the horn world, an entire evening concert was devoted to Wilson’s horn music at the 2009 Northeast Horn Workshop, with Williams, Unsworth, and the American Horn Quartet as featured performers. The concert received an enthusiastic reception with the composer in attendance. As horn players continue to

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<sup>57</sup> Personal interview with Gail Williams.

<sup>58</sup> Personal interview with Adam Unsworth.

look for unique and challenging repertoire, Wilson's compositions may begin to appear on the top of their "to do" lists.

Wilson manipulates the musical elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre to achieve his characteristic compositional voice. His melodies span the entire range of the horn, from the murky lowest notes to the very top of the register. His disjunct lyricism creates an angular sound that can be, at times, bewildering, yet also inviting in such a way that the melodies resonate something more personal in the "deep-seated psycho-acoustical relationships"<sup>59</sup> between human existence and musical expression. At every dynamic level and tone color, and from ancient chant to the jazz idiom, the horn music of Dana Wilson often straddles the line between tonality and atonality. By utilizing a variety of extended techniques for the horn (and also the piano and violin), he embellishes upon the very manner in which sound is produced. The results are compositions that present as much variety in tone color as there exists in musical affect. With thoughtful preparation and concentrated rehearsal, the performance of Wilson's compositions can be musically and personally fulfilling experiences.

A discussion of only three pieces, *Deep Remembering*, *Musings*, and *Shallow Streams*, *Deep Rivers*, provides merely a brief glimpse into the compositional world of Dana Wilson. The scope of this discussion focuses on a small portion of Wilson's compositional output for the horn, and other works still exist to be considered for academic and pedagogical study. As Wilson continues to mature as a composer and maintain strong personal relationships with horn players such as Gail Williams, the horn world can expect a steady stream of quality repertoire from this composer.

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<sup>59</sup> Dana Wilson, *Composers on Composing for Band*, 276.

From early musical beginnings in rock bands, jazz ensembles, and choirs, to a degree in psychology, and finally a distinguished professorship at the Ithaca College School of Music, Wilson's compositions encompass a variety of styles and different ensembles, as well as express a wide range of musical affects. He describes his own compositional voice as one of a kind:

My musical interests continue to be eclectic and reflect the various layers that comprise my background, and I'm grateful for this. The longer I live, the more conscious I am of drawing upon a breadth of experiences to help give life meaning and, I hope, to inform my music. . . . I'm also relieved that eclecticism in composition is currently valued. The challenge now—in life as in art—is to make a cohesive whole out of all the diverse input.<sup>60</sup>

Through a detailed musical description of his compositions for horn and piano, as well as interviews with the composer and prominent horn players, it is clear that Wilson is a composer who brings much to the musical world. In regards to the horn, it is much appreciated that “he understands how to write a horn part that is derived from a close understanding, intuitive and intellectual, of the intrinsic nature of the horn, and that is a part which could not be anything but a horn part.”<sup>61</sup> Dana Wilson has a recognized talent for composing for the horn. In his own words, “a crucial part of composing is learning what excites your players,”<sup>62</sup> and indeed, there is much to be excited about in his compositions for horn and piano. Hornists can be grateful to discover in Wilson's compositions a new and refreshing musical style of composition—a style that can be infinitely challenging, but equally rewarding in its meaningful performance. Williams explains:

[Wilson's music is] exciting as all get-out . . . he explores different colors and it's exciting to learn. It's not boring, but everybody gets it. I mean, the audience gets it. It's not something so esoteric that they don't ever want to hear it again. . . . It's something that I want to play again.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Dana Wilson, *Composers on Composing for Band*, 271.

<sup>61</sup> Gunther Schuller, *Horn Technique*, 82.

<sup>62</sup> Dana Wilson, *Composers on Composing for Band*, 286.

<sup>63</sup> Personal interview with Gail Williams.

My personal experience with Dana Wilson's music began when I played *Deep Remembering* on a doctoral recital program. I can honestly state that I have never been so thoroughly challenged by a piece. The technical, rhythmic, and musical hurdles would have been enough for me to cast the work aside as too difficult, too time-consuming, and too hard to put together. However, there is something within Wilson's compositions that so strongly draws me in that I take on the challenges without hesitation. My own opinions are shared by Gail Williams who so eloquently described his pieces as speaking to her "soul."<sup>64</sup> Even after the performance, Wilson's compositions have continued to resonate with me and have inspired me to undertake further study. It is my hope that in writing this document I have inspired horn players to seek out music that challenges their technical and expressive abilities, but is, above all, meaningful to the performer. Dana Wilson's thoughtfully written compositions are full of musical expressions of human experience. Through continued performance, Wilson's works will challenge and resonate with musicians and audiences well into the future.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

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#### Scores:

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APPENDIX A  
TRANSCRIPTION OF CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

Dana Wilson

Conducted via email.

Sarah Hranac: What is your experience with the horn?

Dana Wilson:<sup>65</sup> Of course I have been around horn players for a long time, but it wasn't until my association with Gail Williams began in the early '90's that I started to focus on writing for horn. Since then I've written seven works for Gail—for her alone or with other members of the Chicago Chamber Musicians, of which she is a founding member.

SH: What do you like about the sound of the horn?

DW: Everything. Of course the ability to "sing" a line in a vocal way is perhaps most important, but with such an incredible range of expression, from warm to rich to intense. Plus, if the "vocal" analogy holds, it's important to note that the horn is everything from bass to soprano.

SH: When composing for the horn, what do you find most challenging?

DW: Because the rich color and intense lyricism are so characteristic, a piece needs a break from them from time to time, just as one who loves butterscotch can't eat a jar of it (though I've come close). So pacing the shape and timbre of the horn lines so that they don't get "used up" too soon

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<sup>65</sup> From this point onward, "Sarah Hranac" shall be abbreviated as "SH" and "Dana Wilson" will be abbreviated as "DW."

is the biggest challenge. I also need to find ways to achieve and maintain a sense of drama without relying too much on technical virtuosity.

SH: When composing for the horn, what do you find most fun?

DW: If you're asking what's most satisfying, it's picturing and hearing in my head the person I'm writing for playing the line I've just written. What's fun is finding ways to ask the horn to take on personalities I don't usually associate with the instrument.

SH: How did you meet Gail Williams? How did it come about that she commissioned a piece from you?

DW: Gail graduated from the Ithaca College School of Music before I started teaching there, though we had heard of each other's professional work. As I recall, she came back one year to perform and heard one of my pieces, and we began talking. That led to my writing "Deep Remembering," which she premiered in Japan, and subsequently recorded.

SH: Describe your current relationship with Gail Williams.

DW: We have spent so much time together professionally, and this has led to a deep friendship. We know a lot about each other's personal life and family, have shared lots of meals at each other's home and often talk just to touch base. (Also, Gail's husband, Larry Combs, who just retired as principal clarinetist with the Chicago Symphony, has performed some of the pieces I wrote for the Chicago Chamber Musicians, and in 2003, he premiered "Liquid Ebony," for clarinet and piano, which I wrote especially for him. So I've also come to know him rather well.) Personal relationships are very important to me in conceiving a work, and I have to say, Gail has

been my horn muse over the years. She and Larry will both perform pieces I wrote for them when I'm in residence with the Chicago Chamber Musicians next spring.

SH: How did you meet Adam Unsworth? How did it come about that he commissioned a piece from you?

DW: Adam is a former student of Gail's (the music world is rather incestuous, as you know). I think what happened is that he heard some of my horn music, and invited me to Temple University (where he was teaching, while also playing in the Philadelphia Orchestra) when he performed my horn concerto there. He sensed in the music and our conversations our mutual background in and love of jazz, and that led to his commissioning "Graham's Crackers" for solo horn. He is a phenomenal jazz horn player, and I tailor-made the piece for him. (The optional second movement even calls for jazz-style improvisation.) For that reason and the fact that it's generally virtuosic, I thought no one else would play it any time soon. I'm pleased to report that I've had many requests for the piece (I sell it directly) over the past couple of years.

SH: Describe your current relationship with Adam Unsworth.

DW: Adam is a remarkable person—gentle, thoughtful, committed, industrious and excited about new musical possibilities. He is now the principal horn teacher at the University of Michigan, and I went out to hear him perform my concerto with the Michigan Band. It was great to see him again and spend time with his wonderful young family.

SH: What are the difficulties for the horn player and accompanist when performing your compositions?

DW: You probably should talk to players (perhaps you know from personal experience), as often by the time I get there, the music sounds rather easy. Having said that, I think the horn writing is generally challenging on virtually every level. Technically, it involves complex rhythms (usually jazz-oriented syncopations rather than septuplets and the like); angular melodies (including wide leaps often not in a given overtone series); timbral and pitch alterations (stopping, bending); sometimes all of these at one time. Having said that, I am aware of the horn's idiomatic concerns, and never write gratuitously. I hope the musical results are worth the practice!

The piano writing can be virtuosic from time to time, but I think it lays rather well for the hands, and its demands are generally short-lived. (But, again, a pianist might have a very different view.)

SH: What level of horn playing is required to successfully perform your compositions?

DW: As suggested above, I haven't written any easy horn pieces per se, though often I write long, lyrical lines that are typical of much horn writing and therefore very accessible to the player. Pieces (particularly *Musings*) get played often on college senior recitals, in case that's any indication.

SH: What would you tell a horn player trying to prepare and perform your compositions?

DW: Above all, try to get inside the music. What I love about jazz is that players instinctively, for example, alter the timbre and pitch to create a certain emotion such as moaning, grunting, crying, joy and the like. And at its best, it lives only in the moment. This is really what all music has to do: it is a spontaneous, emotional human utterance—nothing less, nothing more.

The problem is that when you go to notate these gestures, in order to "pull" them beyond conventional notation, you have to put a fair amount of ink on the page and suddenly it looks daunting, and the player might back up from it (at least emotionally) rather than moving into it. Furthermore, simply by notating it, the music gains the weight of hundreds of years of tradition and interpretation, and the fear of spontaneity can easily set in.

So I want players to practice the music, of course, but whatever level of preparation has been reached by the concert, at that point the sense of creative joy and spontaneity must prevail, and are more important than specific pitches, rhythms, or timbral manipulation. (I'd rather have them bypassed than called attention to.) Without this sense of spontaneity, the pitches, rhythms, and manipulations—even if technically correct—are meaningless anyway.

SH: Where did you get the idea for half-valve and sliding?

DW: I am intrigued by mimes, modern dancers, and the like, because through very limited means they can broaden our experience by taking the body to a place that we wouldn't normally associate with its conventional posture or ability. This is true of "extended techniques" that broaden our experience of the horn while, more importantly, broadening the musical experience. The manipulation of pitch in jazz through bending and sliding for expressive purposes is also imbedded in my brain.

SH: Why do you compose so much in the low register of the horn? What do you like about the low, stopped sound?

DW: I haven't consciously focused on the horn's low register, other than through the recognition that it's such a beautiful sound (and the very low register has an "out of the depths" quality that is

rarely explored.) I am conscious, however, of wanting to pace the music, and don't want to "use up" any given register—particularly the bright upper register—to keep the music always fresh and interesting. Also, while my horn music is very challenging, I try to be cognizant of endurance issues for the performer.

SH: Why does the horn part utilize such a wide range?

DW: Why not? I feel a piece is like a meal, and the instrument provides several flavors, and even courses. One of the things I love about the horn is that the various registers are dramatically different from each other, allowing the meal to have enormous variety and scope.

SH: Why was *Musings* written? Why so many dedications?

DW: *Musings* was initially commissioned by Gail. As I recall and is common, granting organizations are more enthusiastic about pieces where several performances are guaranteed. I can't recall any of the details, but certainly most of those people ended up performing the piece.

SH: What led you to draw upon Brahms' Horn Trio Op. 40 in composing *Shallow Streams*, *Deep Rivers*?

DW: The Brahms Trio is, of course, the gold standard for this instrumentation. Because of this, and in part because I think it's a great piece, I thought it would be fun if I could pay some slight homage to it in some way. Sure enough, the first movement section (of *Shallow Streams...*) in 6/8 grew to a climax that just cried out for a reference to the climax of the last Brahms movement. It's a little inside joke, to which I hope in 300 years someone will devote an entire musicology article.

SH: How does your jazz background influence your horn writing?

DW: The history of jazz explores all kinds of styles, but the elements that are rather consistent through all of them are pitch manipulation and a wide timbral palette—all for expressive purposes. Of course, jazz is also about rhythmic complexity (though usually within a simple metric framework, since it's traditionally linked to dance music) and I often draw upon syncopation and the like to drive the music. And it's about improvisation, and I try to written lines that rhythmically and timbrally sound "made up" in the moment. Finally, it's about grabbing life (or at least dealing with it), and I want my music to express that.

SH: What is your opinion on the horn as a jazz instrument?

DW: As mentioned above, the timbral possibilities of the horn suggest a potential link to jazz. And it certainly can create exuberant, dynamic gestures. Traditionally, however, the horn has not worked so well due to its limited range and speed of articulation (which relate to its limited ability to swing) and its slower rate of pitch change (compared to, say, the saxophone or trumpet). I say "traditionally", however, because there is now a handful of players—with Adam Unsworth perhaps at the front of that group—who belie everything I just said.

SH: Do you anticipate writing more works for horn?

DW: I certainly hope so. I've loved writing for the horn, and, in turn, horn players have been so appreciative and enthusiastic about the pieces. For a composer, that's the *raison d'être*.

SH: Are there any more upcoming recordings of your horn works?

DW: Adam just recorded the wind ensemble version of the concerto with the Michigan Band. Gail has recorded *Musings* with pianist Jennifer Hayghe, and *Shallow Streams* with other members of the Chicago Chamber Musicians—Violinist Joe Genualdi, and pianist Alan Chow. Both recordings will likely be released soon. There is talk of other projects but nothing set in stone.

#### Gail Williams

Conducted on October 15, 2010 in Evanston, Illinois.

SH: How did you meet Dana Wilson and how did your collaboration come about?

Gail Williams:<sup>66</sup> I first met Dana Wilson when I went back to Ithaca College to get an honorary doctorate. I took part in the concert the night before graduation, which he organizes. I remember sitting there listening to the wind ensemble playing one of his pieces and thinking to myself, “Wait a second, this is really a cool piece! Who wrote this music?” Mary Ann Covert [accompanist and friend] said “That’s Dana.” I had been asked to go to Japan to play at the horn workshop in [1995] so this must have been May of 1994. Mary Ann and I always like to play *Alpha* by Jean Michel Defaye. We love playing that piece, and I decided that if I was going to go to Japan, being one of only a few Americans to go, I would play an all-American program and

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<sup>66</sup> From this point onward, “Gail Williams” will be abbreviated as “GW.”

commission some works. I talked to Dana because I liked his music and I'd never heard it before. He was the first composer I worked with that asked "What do you like to play? What is some of your favorite music?" We gave him this music [*Alpha*] and told him what we liked about it—what it did, and how the parts collaborated. He used our recommendations and that's when he came up with *Deep Remembering*. I remember being down in the recital hall practicing with Mary Ann and thinking "Oh no, we're never going to get this thing together. Oh crap!" Adam [Unsworth] was a former student and he was here visiting sitting in the hall a week before we went to Japan, and he said thought it was a great piece. We played it in Japan, and Greg Hustis came up to me and told me he too thought it was a great piece. That's how that got started. When Dana was starting to write it, I made the mistake of sending him Doug [Hill]'s book about extended techniques. I think I'll never make that mistake again of sending that to a composer. Dana used many, many different things [from the book], and I think that's why it's so interesting. It makes a horn player think and do new things and work things out. They have to say to themselves, "Oh that fingering didn't work that time, I'm using a different horn, or the piano's tuned differently." That was the first collaboration with Dana.

SH: The performance went well and was well-received, so you decided to keep commissioning from Wilson?

GW: The next thing I commissioned was the *Concerto* because I was going to play a piece with the Syracuse Symphony. They were honoring (I believe) New York state people, and I said "Well you've got a fine composer down in Ithaca, so let's do a commission." That's how it worked out. He used the technique of something I've never figured out: wah-wah with a brass mute. I had previously just played loud brass mute—whatever I needed to do—[and coming across

this new technique] I said “wow that’s really cool” and I had never played with the hand drum like that. Those were very interesting colors.

The next piece I commissioned from Dana was *All Our Yesterdays* (1999). We [the Chicago Chamber Musicians] were commissioning a new piece for the millennium and he wrote this phenomenal chamber music piece for violin, cello, piano, flute, clarinet, horn, and percussion. It was a really good performance and then we put it on a regular program at Northwestern University a couple of years later. Larry Combs played the Mozart Concerto and I played the Brahms Trio, and everybody dug Dana’s piece. Then we played it again at Jackson Hole, where the audience is made up of people from there and also the musicians who play there, and I had so many people come up to me saying “Oh my gosh what a cool piece! Where can I get this music?” It has a written out jazz piano solo in it. It’s just a really really wonderful piece.

Then the next piece that came along was *Musings*. That came out of nowhere. We tried to get a grant for him to write something and it didn’t go through, but it [*Musings*] appeared at my door step. I wrote a letter for the grant and I don’t believe it went through and all of a sudden this music appeared in my mailbox. I picked it up and I remember looking at it, and I picked up the phone, called Dana and told him that , Mary Ann and we going to put on a recital in three weeks, and that the piece was going on there. The piece is spectacular. He got the music to Mary Ann and we premiered it and he came out for the premiere. Everywhere I’ve played it everyone says compliments the piece. I’ve had students play two or three of the movements or all of them, but whatever they do, everybody always comments on what a cool piece it is.

I received this teaching award from Northwestern University called the Charles Deering McCormick Excellence in Teaching Award and you receive not a lot of money, but you do get some money. I wondered what I’d do with the money. It was \$9000–\$3000 per year over 3 years,

so I thought I would find people to write new pieces for horn in different settings, because that's what we need. So Doug [Hill] wrote a piece for clarinet, horn, vibes/percussion, and bass—a set of dances. Augusta Reed Thomas wrote a little fanfare for brass quartet, and Dana wrote the violin, horn, piano trio *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* about relationships. The first time we read it my husband was sitting there and he said “Hmm, I believe you have a winner here.” That's sort of my deal with Wilson: exciting as all get-out. It's not easy music. He explores the whole range of the instrument. He explores different colors and it's exciting to learn. It's not boring, but everybody gets it. I mean, the audience gets it. It's not something that's so esoteric that they don't ever want to hear it again. And I told Dana, somebody had gotten a grant over in London to have some composers compose pieces, and the composer would get paid the second time it was performed. It had to be good enough that people wanted to hear it again.

SH: How often do you perform his music? Is it something you program all the time?

GW: If I can, yes. *Deep Remembering* doesn't get performed very much because it's difficult. It's hard to put together and there's not a lot of pianists that are willing to work that hard. I've only had a couple students do it. I haven't learned it with anybody else since Mary Ann has retired - so I haven't played it. I'm now working with a pianist who's willing to learn anything so it's going to come out again. I have done the *Musings* a couple of times with different pianists here [at Northwestern University]. I have played the violin, horn, and piano trio mostly with one pianist here at NU. I did it at Ithaca at a horn workshop and *Musings* as well a year ago in March. I did the violin, horn, and piano trio at another horn workshop and it's almost too hard to put together when people don't know how to play Dana's music. At Ithaca it was fine because Linda Case had played Dana's music before; she had rehearsed with him there.

SH: What do people have to “know” about Wilson’s music as you suggested?

GW: I think you have to know that he does have a jazz background. I think it helps, not that I’m a jazzer. You have to know he knows the idiom. I think you have to understand he wants certain colors. In *Musings*, look at all the different colors he gets and how he explores the range. There are different kinds of hand stopping—not always buzzy—which I think is great. You have to know about his sense of African rhythms. Because I think that you have to understand that, you have to go listen to his wind ensemble music. In some ways, maybe I shouldn’t say this, his concerto was really, really fun with orchestra, but absolutely more fun with band. I’ve played it a couple of times with different orchestras, but it really goes well with wind ensemble.

SH: What do you think are the most fun aspects of performing his music?

GW: His sense of phrase. His energy. His rhythmic pulse. The phrase—his line—his slow movement of the trio is great. The slow movements in some of *Musings* [are great]. In *Deep Remembering* I love that very beginning. It’s really beautiful. It’s interesting how he lined it up with the end. He’s also willing to adapt. You say to him that “this doesn’t really work very well - it’s really difficult” and he’ll say “well let’s change it.” Not a lot of people are willing to do that. I premiered his brass quintet. I’ve never played the woodwind quintet but I’ve had students play it and I think that’s a really good piece. I did his brass ensemble piece here at school. It is an exciting piece.

SH: What do you think is the most challenging aspect of playing his music?

GW: The rhythmic aspect. It is challenging to make it fit with everything because it's pretty intricate.

SH: How would you recommend navigating and practicing the extended techniques Wilson calls for?

GW: Take a lot of time. Don't be in a hurry to learn it. You won't be able to explore all of the possibilities if you go too fast. When I go back to the trio, which I've done and played, I go back to it months and years later and I find something new. I ask, "Hey Dana, do you want to do this?" Those are the types of things I find. "How about this? Would you like this?" "Oh yeah try it!" So, I think be ready to explore anything.

SH: What technical/musical skills are required to successfully perform Dana's pieces?

GW: I don't think much of his music should be played by young college kids because the endurance aspect. In *Musings* alone, if you do all of them it's a blow because of the high stuff with the diminuendos. If you can't really be in control without smashing your face, don't do it. Or take those movements out. I think his brass quintet is very cool and very doable by a lot of student groups. That's something we actually asked him to think about when composing: don't make it so difficult that no one can play it.

SH: At the end of *Deep Remembering*, there is a written high C harmonic. How did that come about and how do you play it?

GW: Not all the horns can do it. I played it on my Geyer. I said to him "Hey Dana did you know you could do this?" He said no, so I played it over the phone. It's written in a couple of places [in

the horn repertoire]. It's in a piece for Frøydis.<sup>67</sup> [The high C harmonic] came about because I was just going off and I did it and thought "hey that's kind of cool." But a lot of horns can't do it. To be honest, I didn't know some horns couldn't do it. I had a Conn 28D and my Geyer and they both can do it. Norman Schweikert told me his horn couldn't do it so I grabbed his horn. No, his horn couldn't do it and he had a piston Schmidt. It's just how the air goes through the horn I guess.

SH: How did you set up for *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* on stage?

GW: In the regular trio setup—just like the Brahms trio.

SH: How would you describe the sound of Dana Wilson's music?

GW: Hmm. Thoughtful. That's the word that comes to me when I think of Dana. Expressive. Out there.

SH: His personality traits or his music?

GW: Could be both, but I think in the music. In the music there are parts that are very, very expressive and thoughtful in the way you play it.

SH: Do you have a favorite piece of his?

GW: I don't know if I do. I probably would say *Musings* because I've played it the most, but I really like the violin, horn, and piano trio. It's very special and I hope I can get the CD out soon because people should be playing it. People talk about trios and they say the only thing they have

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<sup>67</sup> Frøydis Ree Wekre is a Norwegian horn player known for both her outstanding horn playing and pedagogical talents.

is the Brahms and I find that hard to believe. What about this piece and this piece? Have you heard this one? No? Try it.

SH: What pieces are on the CD?

GW: The CD will be all of these new pieces. Doug [Hill]'s pieces, Tony Plog's horn quartet, the trio [*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*], and probably *Musings* now. I think to be honest, *Musings* fits much better on the CD. [Bill] Barnewitz and I played the Reynolds call, and it turned out wonderfully, but it doesn't fit—it was written a long time ago and these were all commissions. Musically, I didn't want to have two Wilson pieces, but it ended up fitting together much better. I hope it's out before Christmas. That's my goal.

The reason I commissioned the music was to have it played, not to have it sit and do nothing. I have another whole CD of John McCabe's [works] and pieces with horn and percussion that sits in a box. I'm not going to have this happen again. These are pieces that no one knows. They're great pieces! And no one knows them. The same thing applies to Dana's music. I think they're getting to be known a lot more because they're being played at horn workshops.

SH: Do you anticipate continued collaboration with Dana Wilson?

GW: Yes. Things are bubbling in my head. He's going to be here in May and I'll play *Musings* then and we'll see. I think he'd write a fantastic piece for horn and strings. That's what I would like to play, because when you go out on tour with string quartet you play Arnold Cooke and Mozart. And what else? Reicha? I don't think it's a very good piece. It's too repetitive. I think Dana would write a great piece.

SH: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of “good” horn music?

GW: Something that I want to play again. I’ve played a lot of contemporary music and there are just some things that I hate to hear - pieces that do nothing for my soul, and I’m past that point. I don’t need to play something that does nothing for my soul any more, so I don’t do it. If it doesn’t get me turned on, let someone else do it, because I don’t need to waste my time learning it. In the Chicago Symphony I had to play a lot of things I didn’t like, but that was my job. And now I don’t have to.

SH: How important is it to promote, perform, and commission new music?

GW: I think it’s terribly important. I’ve been doing it for many years. I’ve premiered a lot of Tony Plog’s music. He’s written things for me for not even a commission. That’s another composer I think that’s writing more and more interesting material. I love it. For a long time when I was going to workshops I was playing contemporary music and someone said “do you ever play any ‘normal’ music?” Yes, but I think [new] music is really important. I think it’s important to do the Brahms or the Ligeti or the Harbison because that’s our future and that’s what happened two or three hundred years ago. The Stich concertos, they’re pretty good. Do they survive? No. Will some of this material survive? No, but some of it will. Through the years, ages, the decades, it will get filtered out and we’ll see what happens. Will John Corigliano’s music be around? Yes. Will some of the other electronic music be around? I really don’t think so. I think music that has emotional content is going to stick with you.

SH: Do you think Dana’s work will stick around?

GW: Oh absolutely. I really do. Because it has line, interest, contrast, where some music that's being written today is politically correct and that's about it. Unfortunately because Dana doesn't teach at the University of Chicago he's not going to get some of the public interest. It's really a shame because I think he is such a genuine person, and that comes through in his music.

SH: Is there anything else you want to add about Wilson's music?

GW: Ask him [Wilson] questions: "How do you want certain sounds?" I certainly have. Over the years I'll pick up the phone and say "Do you really want this or this?" because everybody approaches certain things in music differently. "Do you want more of a gliss? A half-stop? What works for you?" In *Musings* I always question a couple of things in the hand stop passages. "Are you sure you want this? Or do you want this?"

It's a very open conversation with mutual respect between us. He's written a beautiful piece for clarinet [*Liquid Ebony*] and it's different. It depends on where he is, but that's really interesting and I think it's great—different times in his life. That's the emotional content that comes through. Someone will say it sounds like Dana Wilson, and I will respond that Bartok sounds like Bartok and Beethoven sounds like Beethoven. You're supposed to find your voice, and I think it [Wilson's voice] is changing but I think it's still his voice. He's not totally dropping things. Very interesting.

*All My Yesterdays*—that is a really cool piece if you don't know it. A very interesting piece. It keeps everyone busy. The piano is very difficult because you really have to understand the jazz idiom. It's written out but you need someone with good time. Period. And there are some pianists that can play very beautiful Brahms but have no time. I feel very honored to have premiered that piece. We've always thought of putting a Dana Wilson CD together with our

chamber group and do the brass quintet and the other chamber music because we've premiered it. Larry [Combs] did the clarinet piece, and it's played a lot. All those chamber music pieces—I think it's really neat.

Adam Unsworth

Conducted via email.

SH: How did you discover Dana Wilson's music?

Adam Unsworth:<sup>68</sup>I learned of Dana's music while studying with Gail Williams at Northwestern. I believe the first piece I heard Gail play was 'Deep Remembering'. It left a strong impression on me, and I was eager to learn it and explore his subsequent music for horn.

SH: What is your performing and pedagogical experience with Dana Wilson's music?

AU: My experience in performing Dana's music has been overwhelmingly positive. The music is challenging, yet because of Dana's understanding of the horn, it lies well on the instrument. The music has a lot of energy and rhythmic drive. It sounds contemporary because of his interval choices and use of extended techniques, but has very natural phrasing and clear harmonies. These qualities make Dana's music quite audience accessible, and his works always get an enthusiastic response.

SH: What is the most challenging aspect of performing Dana Wilson's music?

AU: Dana generally has a very advanced player in mind (most often Gail) when writing for the horn. He doesn't hold back in terms of writing challenging music, and seems to push the

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<sup>68</sup> From this point onward, "Adam Unsworth" will be abbreviated as "AU."

boundaries of his previous pieces in his new works. He expects a horn player to have complete command of the entire range of the horn, and writes challenging technical and lyrical passages in all registers.

SH: What is the most fun aspect of performing his music?

AU: For me, most enjoyable is Dana's innate feel of jazz harmonies, voicing, and phrasing. I think his jazz background positively affects the way he spins a melodic line through a phrase. His phrases have a symmetry that makes sense to me as an improvising musician. His sense of jazz voicing creates many beautiful, poignant moments in his lyrical passages. I feel Dana's understanding of jazz rhythmic drive and group interaction enhances the excitement and energy of his faster music.

SH: Do you enjoy playing/teaching Dana Wilson's music? Why?

AU: I would list Dana as one of my favorite composers to perform. He writes serious music that is challenging, uses contemporary language, and is audience accessible. This is not a combination of abilities often found in today's composers. Teaching Dana's music is just as fun, but doesn't happen very often because of its advanced nature. Occasionally an older student might be interested in 'Deep Remembering' because of Gail's CD, or someone with a jazz interest might bring in 'Graham's Crackers'.

SH: Describe your interactions with Dana Wilson. In your opinion, how important is the collaboration between composer and performer?

AU: Dana and I worked quite closely together during the composition of ‘Graham’s Crackers’. I was impressed with how much interaction there was, and how he brought my musical and technical suggestions into his revisions. The revisions were always entirely his own, but showed great respect and thoughtfulness to my input. It was a pleasure to work with him, and I think the interaction produced a very good final result. As a performer, I worked closely with him getting ready to play and record his ‘Concerto for Horn and Wind Ensemble’ with the University of Michigan Symphony Band, with very similar feeling and results.

SH: How would you describe Dana Wilson as a person?

AU: I would describe Dana as someone with a gentle demeanor who is humble, calm, soft-spoken, and very intelligent.

SH: In your opinion, how important is it to promote, perform, and commission “new” music?

AU: Commissioning new works is very important to keep the creative spirit alive in classical music. New works by great craftsman like Dana are always welcome and needed.

SH: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of “good” horn music?

AU: Good melody, harmony and structure. Then it’s all about the composer’s vision and creativity. All of these things are needed to make pieces interesting, and hold them together so they make sense to a performer and listener. This seems simple, but the whole package is something that only a true compositional craftsman can do with great effectiveness. In my opinion, too much of today’s new music (for the horn and otherwise) is written by relative amateurs, and mimics movie music. I would describe this music as light on the melodic and

harmonic substance and heavy on gimmicks and flash. Perhaps this music has audience appeal to the untrained listener, but it's not my idea of quality composition. We are fortunate to have Dana, and benefit from his interest and skill in writing for the horn.

SH: What technical and musical skills are required to successfully perform Dana Wilson's music?

AU: A player needs to be technically advanced, with great flexibility, and close to a 4-octave range. A solid working knowledge of extended techniques on the horn is also necessary, as is an ability to play beautiful lyrical passages. Basically, one needs to be a complete horn player to play Dana's music effectively.

SH: How would you describe the sound of Dana Wilson's music?

AU: I would describe it as melodically contemporary as a result of his tendency to use more angular intervals - tri-tones, major sevenths, and minor ninths - with regularity. At the same time Dana is able to create harmonies and structures underneath these melodies that give his works a familiar, listenable feel.

SH: How do you recommend executing the extended techniques Wilson calls for? (i.e. hand-glisses, falls, harmonics, low stopped horn effects).

AU: I recommend much practice and much experimentation in one's practice sessions. The horn has many sound possibilities if one is interested in experimenting. Dana knows the horn very well and won't write passages that are impossible to play. Owning Doug Hill's extended techniques book is also a good idea.

SH: What advice do you have for a horn player trying to prepare and perform Dana Wilson's music?

AU: Just as with any music, practice a lot, listen to recordings, etc., be open to new sounds and methods of creating effective gestures.

SH: Do you have a favorite piece written by Dana Wilson for horn? Why?

AU: 'Graham's Crackers'—it was written for me and was completed on the day my son Graham was born—hence the name.

SH: Do you anticipate continued collaboration with Dana Wilson?

AU: Yes, but nothing confirmed at this time.

SH: How important is it to commission new pieces for horn?

AU: Very important, as long the music is high quality.

## APPENDIX B

## WORKS LIST

The following are the compositions by Dana Wilson in which the horn takes a prominent role. All are available for purchase from the composer.

*All Our Yesterdays* (1999) for flute, clarinet, horn, violin, cello, piano, and percussion.

*Antico* (2009) for four horns.

*Concerto for Horn and Wind Ensemble or Orchestra* (1997/2001). A piano transcription of the accompaniment is also available.

*Daylight at Midnight* (2005) for brass quintet.

*Deep Remembering* (1995) for horn and piano.

*Graham's Crackers* (2005) for solo horn.

*Io Rising* (1993) for brass quintet.

*Mirrors* (1994) for woodwind quintet.

*Musings* (2003) for horn and piano.

*Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* (2007) for horn, violin (or flute), and piano.

*This Ain't a Straight Sentimental Marvel* (1986) for eight horns, bass, and drum set.

## APPENDIX C

## DISCOGRAPHY

*Concerto for Horn and Wind Ensemble (or Orchestra)*

Haithcock, Michael. *Classic Structures*. The University of Michigan Symphony Band. Equilibrium, 2010. CD. (Adam Unsworth, horn.)

Wilson, Dana. *Vortex: The Music of Dana Wilson*. The Ithaca College Wind Ensemble, dir. Stephen Peterson. Mark Records, 2003. CD. (Gail Williams, horn.)

*Deep Remembering*

Williams, Gail. *Deep Remembering*. Summit Classical, 2001. CD.

*Musings and Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers*

Williams, Gail. Upcoming Recording Project. Summit Classical, (forthcoming). CD.

*Graham's Crackers*

Unsworth, Adam. *Excerpt This!* Adam Unsworth, 2006. CD.

## APPENDIX D

## REVIEWS

- Agrell, Jeffrey. "Recording Reviews." *The Horn Call* 36, no. 3 (May 2006): 82.
- Berryman, Don. "Excerpt This!" By the Man with a Horn, Adam Unsworth." *Jazz Police*.  
<http://www.jazzpolice.com/content/view/5836/2/>, published March 15, 2006. (accessed September 30, 2010).
- Dressler, John. "Gail Williams: 'Deep Remembering.'" *The Horn Call* 32, no. 2 (February 2002): 93.
- Kase, Ken. "Adam Unsworth: Excerpt This!" *All About Jazz*.  
<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=21956>, published June 3, 2006.  
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- Kilpatrick, Barry. "Classic Structures." *American Record Guide* 73, issue 5 (September/October 2010): 274.
- Oteri, Frank J. "Excerpt This!" *The New Music Box*.  
<http://www.newmusicbox.org/eartrack.nmbx?id=3031>. (accessed September 30, 2010).
- Petit, Heather. "IHS News and Reports: Member News." *The Horn Call* 34, no. 1 (October 1993): 18.

## APPENDIX E

## HELPFUL SOLOS AND ETUDES

These compositions are specifically mentioned within the preceding document. It is, of course, not an exhaustive list. It does provide suggestions for repertoire with which to prepare to perform Wilson's pieces.

## Etudes

Arban, Jean Baptiste. *The Arban Method*.

Bach, Johann Sebastian. *Cello Suites*.

Clarke, Herbert. *Technical Studies for Cornet or Trumpet*.

Grigoriev, Boris. *24 Etudes for Bass Trombone with F Attachment*.

Hackleman, Martin. *21 Characteristic Etudes for High Horn Playing*.

———. *34 Characteristic Etudes for Low Horn Playing*.

Kopprasch, Georg. *60 Selected Studies*.

Reynolds, Verne. *48 Etudes*.

———. *Intonation Exercises for Two Horns*.

Schuller, Gunther. *Studies for Unaccompanied Horn*.

## Solos

Berkeley, Lennox. *Trio for Horn, Violin, and Piano*.

Bozza, Eugène. *En Forêt*.

Brahms, Johannes. *Trio in E-flat Major for Violin, Horn, and Piano, Op. 40*.

Buyanovsky, Vitaly. *España*.

Carter, Elliot. *Horn Trio*.

Dukas, Paul. *Villanelle*.

Hill, Douglas. *Jazz Set for Solo Horn*.

Hindemith, Paul. *Sonata for Horn in Eb and Piano*.

———. *Sonata for Horn in F and Piano*.

Ligeti, György. *Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano*.

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Horn Concerti*.

Reynolds, Verne. *Calls for 2 Horns*.

———. *Partita*.

Shaw, Lowell. *Just Desserts*.