

THE MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS FOR UNACCOMPANIED SOLO TUBA BY FOUR  
AMERICAN PERFORMER-COMPOSERS

by

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(Under the Direction of DAVID ZERKEL)

ABSTRACT

The solo repertoire for tuba is characterized by its small size and lack of stylistic diversity. As with other instruments in Western Art music, a solution to this dearth of repertoire has involved the work of performer-composers, virtuoso instrumentalists who have created new works for their instrument. This study examines the solo tuba compositions of four American performer-composers: Mike Forbes, Grant Harville, Benjamin Miles, and John Stevens. Each composer's compositional style and approach is discussed, followed by a musical analysis of their music for tuba alone. As some of these compositions are already staples in the solo tuba repertoire, this study provides a resource to performers and teachers who will perform, study, or teach these compositions. Furthermore, composers and other performer-composers will benefit from the analysis of each performer-composer's musical style.

INDEX WORDS: Mike Forbes, Grant Harville, Benjamin Miles, John Stevens, Music, Tuba, Unaccompanied, Solo, Composer, Performer-Composer

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The solo repertoire for the tuba is far younger and smaller than that of most other instruments in western art music. This is a result of the tuba's relatively young age, having been invented in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the lack of solo works for tuba prior to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1954 and 1955 the first major tuba sonata and concerto were published, respectively Paul Hindemith's *Sonata for Tuba and Piano* and Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Concerto for Bass Tuba in F minor*. These compositions marked the first time that well-known composers in western art music treated the tuba as a legitimate solo instrument. Following these publications, composers began to take an interest in the tuba as a viable solo voice but, at only 60 years of age, the solo repertoire for tuba remains among the youngest and smallest among the orchestral wind instruments in western art music.

Naturally, this places limitations on the stylistic breadth of solo repertoire available to the tubist. The repertoire does not have the benefit of shifting stylistic periods which generate a considerable variety of musical material in the solo repertoire of other instruments. The horn, for instance, possesses a solo repertoire spanning several stylistic periods in western music, including the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Contemporary periods. The tuba, by comparison, only occupies the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century going forward, meaning that tuba players wanting to perform works in the Baroque, Classical, or Romantic styles must either perform either solo works written for tuba that imitate earlier periods, or transcribed works originally written for other instruments or voices which originate from earlier musical periods.

This problem, of course, isn't unique to the tuba; many instruments in western art music have dealt with a relative lack of repertoire at some point, either in terms of a lack of stylistic diversity or a scarcity of solo compositions in general. Musicians on various instruments, like modern tubists, have transcribed music as one method for solving this issue. However, virtuoso performers in particular developed another method for broadening the repertoire: composing new music themselves for their instrument or voice. The contributions by these performer-composers to solo repertoire for their instruments constitute an interesting aspect of the history of western art music, one relevant in the discussion of limitations to said repertoire.

There are numerous examples of performer-composers in music history who made substantial and noteworthy additions to the repertoire of their instrument. Franz Liszt and Frederick Chopin were Romantic era composers as well as virtuoso pianists; their works for solo piano constitute their compositional output as performer-composers. Franz Liszt was a Romantic piano virtuoso and composer who expanded the piano solo repertoire in two ways: by creating original compositions for piano in a virtuosic style, and by crafting piano transcriptions and of earlier orchestral and operatic works, such as the symphonies of Beethoven. Likewise, Chopin's compositional output favors the piano, expanding the piano repertoire through the composition of mazurkas, ballades, nocturnes, and concert etudes, which had earlier been developed by Liszt.

Niccolo Paganini was a violin virtuoso who composed original compositions for himself to play in concerts, such as the *24 Caprices*. These compositions not only expanded the solo repertoire for violin but in fact caused violin technique to evolve; this was due to the extensive technical requirements and varied timbres called for in Paganini's violin compositions.<sup>1</sup> For the

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<sup>1</sup> Neill, Edward, "Paganini, Nicolò," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online* Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/40008> (accessed October 16, 2014).

horn, Franz Strauss is a noteworthy performer-composer, having simultaneously performed as a virtuoso and composed works for the horn's solo repertoire, such as the *Nocturno*. J.S. Bach and Beethoven were themselves also performer-composers, with regards to particular subsets of their compositional output. The organ and keyboard works of Bach, including numerous toccatas, preludes, chorale preludes, fantasias, and fugues, were likely informed by his experience performing as a church organist. In the case of Beethoven, his sonatas, concertos, and other compositions for piano were likely informed by his experience of playing the piano as a child, specifically with regards to his knowledge of the instrument's capabilities.

Similarly to the examples listed above, tuba performers have also augmented the solo repertoire for their instrument by composing new works, effectively becoming performer-composers. The relative lack of solo repertoire has provided an opportunity for performers whom are also skilled at music composition to contribute to the tuba's solo repertoire. In this paper, I will examine the work of four American performer-composers and their unaccompanied compositions for solo tuba: Mike Forbes, Grant Harville, Benjamin Miles, and John Stevens. These four tubists have each composed multiple works for the tuba alone, some of which are already staples within the solo repertoire. By composing original works for their instrument, they continue a traditional element within western art music: the expansion of solo repertoire through new works created by performers.

### Need for Study

This study is necessary for several reasons, not the least of which is to expand the academic literature discussing performer-composers and their compositions. While there exists much scholarship pertaining to performer-composers for other instruments, there are no dissertations which address the topic of unaccompanied solo tuba compositions by American

performer-composers; in fact, there aren't even dissertations which discuss unaccompanied tuba compositions in more general terms. Of the four American performer-composers discussed in this paper, only one appears in the existing scholarly literature: John Stevens. However, the dissertation literature addressing Stevens pertains to his compositions for solo euphonium, for brass quintet, and for tuba with orchestra, but not to those for solo alone.<sup>2</sup> This dissertation will address these performer-composers, their contributions to the solo repertoire for tuba, their process and approach to writing music, and how their experience as a performer informs their approach as a composer. At the same time, this paper will also expand the existing, well-established literature on performer-composers.

As was mentioned previously, some of the pieces examined in this study are already popular staples in the solo tuba repertoire, while others are relatively new compositions just now being introduced to the tuba community. Tubists seeking to perform these works have traditionally been left to their own devices in analyzing and understanding the compositions, since virtually none of these works are discussed in existing academic literature. This paper presents an opportunity both to examine established and new solo tuba works by performer-composers, and to compare the pieces and their associated compositional styles and characteristics. In doing so, this dissertation will serve as a resource for performers seeking to perform these works from an informed, musical perspective. At the same time, composers looking to write for the tuba and tubists considering composing for the tuba themselves will also

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<sup>2</sup> Springer, Mark Alan, "A performance and rehearsal guide to two contemporary brass quintets: 'Colchester Fantasy' Dr. Eric Ewazen, 'Seasons: A Symphony for Brass Quintet' John D. Stevens," DMA dissertation, The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999. Daussat, David M., "Birth of a modern concerto: An explication of musical design and intention in Journey: Concerto for Contrabass Tuba and Orchestra," DMA dissertation, University of North Texas, 2008. Mirales, Matthew, "Premiere euphonium recordings of solo music composed by John Stevens," DMA dissertation, The University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2013.

find this to be a valuable resource, as it highlights the processes and considerations these four performer-composers consider when writing music for unaccompanied tuba.

The methodology for this paper consisted of two parts: interviewing the four performer-composers, and then analyzing their compositions for solo tuba. The interviews occurred either in person, over telephone, or via Skype, depending upon the preference of each composer. In each case, the interview was recorded so that a written transcript could be produced afterwards. The composers were asked a variety of questions pertaining to their unaccompanied tuba compositions and their compositional style, in general and with regard to these pieces. The musical analysis of each composer's unaccompanied compositions was general in approach, focusing on important elements of each performer-composer's musical style. These stylistic traits sometimes, though not always, confirmed composer's self-descriptions regarding compositional approach and characteristics.

The following sections will address each performer-composer individually. Each composer's compositional approach for the tuba will be analyzed and discussed, with relevant musical examples drawn from their compositions.

## CHAPTER 2

### MIKE FORBES

Mike Forbes, is an accomplished musician and composer with a multifaceted career as a tubist, performing in both large and chamber ensembles. Forbes began his performance career playing with the United States Army Band (“Pershing’s Own”), and later founded the Isthmus Brass, a prominent large brass ensemble based in Wisconsin. He is also a co-founder of Sotto Voce, one of the premiere American professional tuba-euphonium quartets. Forbes is currently principal tubist with the La Crosse Symphony, and is also in demand as a soloist and clinician. Forbes has served as guest lecturer in residencies in Spain and Portugal, and frequently performs at colleges and conferences domestically and internationally. He has released two solo albums, *Forbes Plays Koetsier* and *Forbes Plays Forbes*; the latter features his own solo compositions for the tuba.<sup>3</sup>

As a composer, Forbes is regularly commissioned and has written compositions for various mediums, ranging from solo works for tuba and other instruments to works for wind bands and orchestras of varying skill levels. He works as a low brass specialist for Kendor Music, as well as a middle and high school band and orchestra composer for Carl Fischer and FJH Music. Forbes has won the Dallas Wind Symphony Fanfare Composition Contest multiple times.<sup>4</sup> He has written two unaccompanied solos for tuba: *The Grumpy Troll*, published in 2013, and *Polar Vortex for Unaccompanied Contrabass Solo Tuba*, published in 2014.

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<sup>3</sup> “Biography,” MikeForbesMusic.com, <http://www.MikeForbesMusic.com/biography.html/> (accessed October 16, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Forbes considers several composers to be influences on his compositional approach. He cites the music of Bela Bartok, Igor Stravinsky, Steve Reich, and to a lesser extent Pat Metheny as influential in terms of style and sound. Referring specifically to writing for brass instruments, he cites Edward Gregson and Phillip Sparke as influences, asserting that though he doesn't intentionally emulate Gregson or Sparke, as a brass player in the 21<sup>st</sup> century he is inevitably effected by their compositional style for brass instruments<sup>5</sup>. Forbes also makes a point to listen to newer orchestral music, citing the Milwaukee composer Michael Torke as an example of a contemporary composer whose sound he enjoys and wants to emulate on some level.<sup>6</sup>

With specific regards to his unaccompanied tuba compositions, Forbes cites specific composers and compositions as influences. For *The Grumpy Troll*, Forbes claims two compositions as specific influences: *Capriccio for Solo Tuba* by Krzysztof Penderecki and *Fnugg* by Norwegian tuba virtuoso Oystein Baadsvik. In the case of *Polar Vortex*, the music of John Stevens is cited as an influence, specifically *Triumph of the Demon Gods*, as well as Fred Clinard's *Sonata for Unaccompanied Euphonium*.<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that other performer-composers, Baadsvik and Stevens, are themselves influences upon Forbes and his unaccompanied pieces for tuba.

Forbes describes his compositional style as being linear in approach, one in which important motivic intervals and pitch cells are used as a kernel from which to develop the entirety of a composition. In particular, he emphasizes counterpoint and the importance of the rules counterpoint entails as a useful framework for his compositional approach. This is not the case for diatonic scales and tonalities; as a general rule Forbes avoids writing pieces with a

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Forbes, interview by author, Bloomington, IN, May 22, 2014 (Appendix A, p. 89-90).

<sup>6</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 79).

<sup>7</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 89-90).

particular concern for diatonic collections, because he finds this to be too restricting in his process of composing. He finds that if he is writing in a specific key, he tends to stay in that key and is never able to stray from it.<sup>8</sup> Thus, he employs a freer compositional approach, one emphasizing cells of intervallic and pitch content rather than harmonic pitch collections.

These motivic kernels are subjected to a process of compositional improvisation, which help Forbes to examine the resources available and draw them out; this improvisation is how Forbes expands the motivic cells into the entire composition. For the purposes of his solo tuba compositions, Forbes' improvisational development tends to employ the tuba exclusively, improvising musical ideas based upon the kernel while playing the tuba rather than the keyboard.<sup>9</sup> He does have experience playing the piano, and will use the piano or even the voice to improvise and develop musical cells, though typically in the case of larger compositions for band or orchestra. As a general rule, Forbes feels less limited by technique when playing at the tuba, and thus prefers to compose at the tuba when writing for the instrument.

Forbes' approach to creating form and structure in his music is organic in nature; he strives to generate form out of the same forward-building process that transforms his pitch cells into large-scale musical structures. As with diatonic collections, he avoids writing music in a specific formal structure such as rondo or sonata form, because he feels that this would restrict his compositional process.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, Forbes views musical structure as a vital aspect of a successful piece of music, and so maintains a peripheral awareness of form while developing his musical kernels. The end goal is to create music possessing a structural framework without imposing or creating that framework at the outset of the composition. Forbes asserts that musical

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<sup>8</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 80).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 91-92).



structure is vital for a composition to be successful, and that musical structure is analogous to the structure beneficial when raising an infant child. People tend to crave structure in their human existence, and for Forbes form is the musical analogue to our general need for imposed order.<sup>11</sup>

Programmatic content is another prominent feature in Forbes' music, appearing in both of his unaccompanied works for tuba. His programs tend not to be literal in nature, such as that of Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, but rather suggest the mood or atmosphere of an extra-musical idea.<sup>12</sup> In *The Grumpy Troll*, Forbes is trying to express the aggression and weight of a grumpy troll, whereas in *Polar Vortex* he sought to musically express his reaction to the Polar Vortex storms that affected the Midwestern United States in the winter of 2013, especially the bitter cold associated with them. More generally, one of Forbes' goals as a composer is to communicate emotions and feelings through his music, and to elicit emotional reactions from his audience.<sup>13</sup> This lends itself very much to the suggestive extra-musical ideas he employs, which inform the listener of the mood and atmosphere Forbes is attempting to portray musically.

A concern for the audience and performer is another key characteristic in Forbes' approach to composing. As was discussed previously with regards to form and programmatic content, his goal as a composer is to appeal to the audience musically, and does so through the use of musical structure and programs. In writing *The Grumpy Troll*, for example, Forbes wanted to captivate the audience, in much the same way that Oystein Baadsvik's composition *Fnugg* appeals to and is popular with audiences. Forbes avoids through-composed writing devoid of form partially because he himself dislikes it, but also because he feels it wouldn't appeal to his audience. At the same time, Forbes is also concerned with the performer's perspective,

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<sup>11</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 92-93).

<sup>12</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 93).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

specifically whether or not his music is idiomatic for the performer. He asserts that the most successful music is usually written by composers with an intimate knowledge of the instrument for which they are composing and its capabilities, as well as knowledge of the intended performers and their limitations. For example, when Forbes composes music for middle school bands, he will limit himself to the first 4 or 5 notes that each instrumentalist can play at that level; though this is a considerable limitation on himself as a composer, it ensures that his music is playable for the performers for whom he is writing.<sup>14</sup>

Forbes describes a triangle of considerations for himself as a composer, each corner representing a different perspective. At one corner is himself, the interests he has as a composer and what he is attempting to express through a piece of music. At the second corner is the interest of the audience, his concern for being able to convey emotions to the audience through music that has a discernable structure. And in the third corner the performer's perspective comes into play, specifically Forbes' consideration of what is idiomatic and playable for the performers of his compositions.<sup>15</sup> Forbes argues that successful compositions balance these three considerations rather than focusing on one or two exclusively, to the detriment of the third.

The next section will presents analytical observations from Forbes' unaccompanied compositions for tuba: *The Grumpy Troll* and *Polar Vortex*. Some of these observations reinforce Forbes' own description of his style, while others do not; the latter case reflects the reality that composers are not necessarily consciously aware of every analytical feature of their music.

#### Analytical observations from *The Grumpy Troll* and *Polar Vortex*

One of the more interesting aspects of Mike Forbes' compositional approach is his use of a specific interval to create an entire composition. For each of his unaccompanied works for

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<sup>14</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 84-85).

<sup>15</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 98).

**Dark and Mysterious** ♩=54

*Example 1:* Forbes, *The Grumpy Troll* – measures 1-2

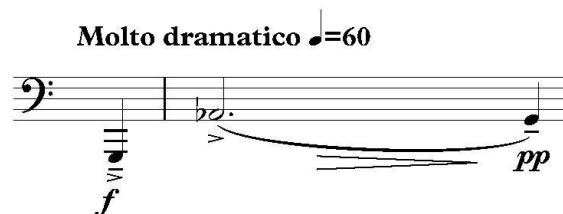
tuba, a single interval is used to derive the vast majority of musical content on the surface and within the structure. In the case of *The Grumpy Troll*, this governing interval is the minor 3<sup>rd</sup> or [03]; for *Polar Vortex* the interval is the minor 9<sup>th</sup> or [01].

*The Grumpy Troll* begins with a presentation of two pairs of minor thirds; the first ascends from D to F, while the second descends from E-flat to C (Example 1). These four pitches together form a [0235] tetrachord, literally a combination of two minor 3<sup>rd</sup> intervals a whole step apart; much of the musical content found in *The Grumpy Troll* can be explained in terms of this [0235] tetrachord. For example, throughout the piece Forbes makes occasional use of the tritone melodically, such as in measures 19-21. This [06] tritone can be seen as an augmentation of the minor third, since two minor thirds stacked atop one another will yield the interval of the tritone. In several passages Forbes writes chromatic passages outlining a [0123] tetrachord, which can be seen as a chromatic embellishment of the minor third (Example 2). Melodic [0257] tetrachords appear occasionally, a quartal harmony seemingly having little to do with the minor third (Example 3). However, the [0235] structural tetrachord is outlined by [05], an interval that can be stacked upon itself to yield the [0257] tetrachord. The whole and half steps appearing in the

*Example 2:* Forbes, *The Grumpy Troll* – measure 4



Example 3: Forbes, *The Grumpy Troll* – measure 14



Example 4: Forbes, *Polar Vortex* – measure 1

music can also be explained by their being a part of [0235], and by extension the chromaticism used by Forbes is itself a result of compositional augmentation of the [01] semitone.

Similarly, *Polar Vortex* also features a single interval that is of particular melodic and structural importance, namely the minor 9<sup>th</sup> (Example 4). This interval is used by Forbes throughout the music, both in its original form as well as in transformed versions. For instance, several passages emphasize the major 7<sup>th</sup> as much as the minor 9<sup>th</sup>; the major 7<sup>th</sup> is, of course, an inversion of the minor 9<sup>th</sup>. Chromatic half steps appear throughout the music as well, which is explained by the fact that the minor 9<sup>th</sup> is a semitone combined with an octave displacement (Example 5). All of these intervals express an underlying [01] dyad that Forbes uses within the musical structure. Forbes also emphasizes other intervals in this work, in particular the tritone and perfect 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>, though they do not necessarily relate to the interval of a semitone. Forbes combines these intervals within the composition, yielding frequently recurring pitch class sets such as [016], [0167], and [0156]. *Polar Vortex* is less homogenous than *The Grumpy Troll* in terms of its intervallic material; the materials employed by Forbes in *Polar Vortex* are more



Example 5: Forbes, *Polar Vortex* – measure 16

**Allegro moderato** (♩ = c. 96)

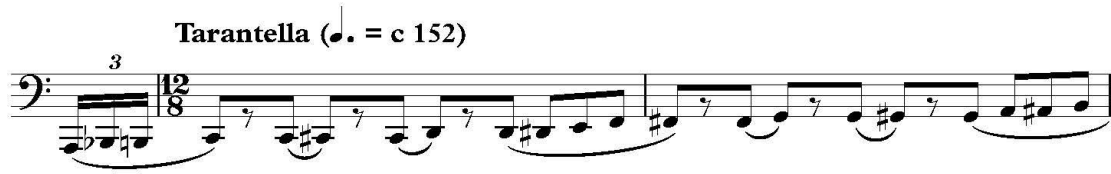


*Examples 6a & 6b:* Forbes, *The Grumpy Troll* – measures 88-89 & 97-98, respectively

varied and less easily relatable to the minor 9<sup>th</sup> than those in *The Grumpy Troll* are relatable to the minor 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Forbes employs particular intervals not only to provide melodic material, but also to govern structural relations within sequences and between different phrases. In measure 88 of *The Grumpy Troll*, a new section begins that emphasizes F as a pitch center (Example 6A). This new motivic idea is stated in measure 88, and repeated several times in the following measures. In measure 97, the motive is shifted up a perfect 4<sup>th</sup>, momentarily emphasizing B-flat as a pitch center before returning to F in measure 101 (Example 6B). This motivic sequence outlines a [05] interval, which was discussed previously as being part of the [0235] tetrachord at the beginning of the piece. Similarly, in measures 15-18 of *Polar Vortex*, a chromatic idea outlining a [0123] tetrachord is subjected to sequence governed by intervallic sequence. First, the [0123] is subjected to a structural [05] interval, in this case an ascending perfect 5<sup>th</sup> (Example 5). The figure is further expanded upon and reflects a structural use of the tertian major triad [037].

Although Forbes avoids writing in terms of specific scales such as diatonic collections, his unaccompanied music for tuba does imply certain harmonic collections. The chromatic scale, for example, is heavily implied in his music, particularly in *Polar Vortex* but also to a lesser extent in *The Grumpy Troll*. The importance of the semitone/minor 9<sup>th</sup> in *Polar Vortex* guarantees a degree of chromaticism will be present, but at several points in the music Forbes presents motivic and structural presentations of the full chromatic scale. This is demonstrated by



*Example 7:* Forbes, *Polar Vortex* – measures 102-103

the passage from Example 5, where Forbes subjects ascending [0123] figures to sequence controlled by particular intervals; the section closes in measure 23 with a descending presentation of a complete chromatic scale. Measures 85-123 of *Polar Vortex* are also saturated with melodic and structural presentations of the chromatic scale (Example 7). Chromatic figures are occasionally found in *The Grumpy Troll*, usually in transitional and sequential passages and most notably in the material introduced at measure 88.

Octatonic collections arise frequently in *The Grumpy Troll*, owing largely to the fact that the [0235] tetrachord generating musical material is a 4-note subset of the octatonic collection. Unlike chromatic scales in *Polar Vortex*, octatonic collections in this piece are heavily implied but not used explicitly. In the section from measures 23-61, the opening [0235] material is repeated in various octaves and with increasing levels of rhythmic syncopation; accompanying this figure is a repeating B-natural in the upper register (Example 8). Combining this pitch with the four tones of the [0235] figure {C, D, E-flat, F} yields an [01346] pentachord, which is itself a five-note subset of the octatonic collection. The melodic and structural usage of [03] and [06] also helps to generate a sense of octatonicism, due to the minor 3<sup>rd</sup> and tritone being constituent intervals in the octatonic scale. It is worth noting that diatonic and whole-tone scales also make appearances in both of Forbes' solo tuba compositions, though not with the same frequency as



*Example 8:* Forbes, *The Grumpy Troll* – measures 49-51

the chromatic and octatonic collections. For example, measures 42-43 of *Polar Vortex* outlines a descending diatonic scale set against a pedal tone in a lower register (Example 9).

The appearance of these various harmonic collections would seem to contradict Forbes' description of his compositional style, specifically the idea that he avoids writing with regards to specific keys or scales, instead developing his music from intervallic material. However, we can understand the previously discussed harmonic collections as arising organically from Forbes' intervallic kernels, the results of composing out these pitch and intervallic materials. In *The Grumpy Troll*, the [0235] tetrachord is a subset of both octatonic and diatonic collections, and the [0257] tetrachord is a diatonic subset as well; these harmonic collections occur in the composition not because of a conscious choice to include them from the composer, but rather as a function of intervallic choices and development by the composer. Chromatic, diatonic, and whole-tone scales in *Polar Vortex* can similarly be understood as arising from Forbes' composing out of particular intervals and pitch cells. Also, it is worth noting that harmonic collections are, with the exception of the chromatic scale, implied and not explicitly stated. Forbes employs notable pitch class subsets and intervals that suggest diatonic, octatonic, whole tone, and even hexatonic collections; however, these collections are, for the most part, not presented in their entirety on the musical surface. Though Forbes is consciously avoiding the use of harmonic collections in his compositional process, many scales ultimately appear in his music as unconscious elements of his musical style.

In terms of pitch centricity and tonality, Mike Forbes' solo works for tuba are best described as harmonically centric. Forbes emphasizes particular pitches as being more important



*Example 9:* Forbes, *Polar Vortex* – measures 40-43

than others, and despite his usage of chromaticism the music is neither serial nor atonal. Pitch centricity is created primarily through repetition and pedal point. Consider the intervallic kernel in *The Grumpy Troll*, the [0235] tetrachord presented at the outset with the pitches {C, D, E-flat, F}. This pitch cell occurs frequently throughout the composition, always outlining the same four pitches. This is best exemplified in measures 22-61 of *The Grumpy Troll*, where the [0235] tetrachord is developed via octave displacement and rhythmic syncopation; Throughout this section the [0235] is consistently represented as a pair of minor thirds, the first one ascending from D to F and the second descending from E-flat to C (Example 8). Furthermore, the pairs always start with the pitches D and E-flat, implying a structural neighbor-tone relation between D and E-flat. In measures 88 – 102, Forbes again uses repetition to create centricity, this time around the pitch F. The two measure figure in measures 88-89 is repeated over and over again, eventually rising via sequence but ultimately returning to F as a center; within the figure itself, the pitch F occurs more frequently than the other notes and is emphasized rhythmically with accents. Although not functional in a traditional sense, *The Grumpy Troll* features a high degree of pitch and melodic repetition which provides a clear sense of pitch centricity throughout the music.

In *Polar Vortex* Forbes establishes centricity through use of repetition but also with pedal point. Beginning at measure 13, chromatic [0123] figures occur repeatedly at the pitch levels of A, E, and eventually C-sharp. The motive introduced at measure 24 utilizes literal repetition of particular pitches, in this specific case C. At the same time, Forbes creates momentary centricity through pedal point in two-part textures. This is exemplified by the motive introduced in measure 40, and repeated later in the composition, where Forbes creates a two-part texture with the tuba (Example 9). The upper voice typically outlines a descending scale



fragment, sometimes diatonic, other times chromatic or whole-tone; the lower voice, on the other hand, is often stationary on a single repeated pitch, creating the sense of an accompanying pedal tone to the upper, descending line.

Though *The Grumpy Troll* and *Polar Vortex* are essentially centric compositions lacking traditional tonal function, with Forbes employing intervals within musical structure. The pitches which Forbes emphasizes as pitch centers in different sections of music tend to relate to each other by the intervals of minor thirds or tritones. For example, in *The Grumpy Troll* Forbes emphasizes three particular pitches as important: D, F, and B-natural. These three pitches relate to each other by the interval of a minor 3<sup>rd</sup>, with F and B-natural outlining a tritone. Similarly, *Polar Vortex* contains examples of structural [03] and [06] relations. The section from measure 13 to 23 emphasizes A as a pitch center, whereas the section immediately following in 24 emphasizes C; the interval between these pitch centers is a minor 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Tarantella material introduced in measure 102 features the tritone structurally, emphasizing F-sharp almost as strongly as C in terms of pitch centricity. These intervallic relations between pitch centers reinforce the notion of Forbes as an intervallic composer, who highlights particularly important intervals in his music. They lend the music a sense of structural octatonicism, resulting from [03] and [06] intervals imbued in the structure by the composer.

One interesting technique employed by Mike Forbes is the creation of polyphonic structures within an unaccompanied composition. He writes music that contains multiple structural voices, and in doing so creates the illusion of polyphony for the listener. These structural lines typically occur in differing registers of the tuba and feature contrasting melodic motion. Consider the aforementioned example of pedal point in *Polar Vortex*, Example 9; these figures contain two structural lines which contrast in register and motion. The upper voice is

accented in articulation and descending towards the lower voice in a pattern outlining diatonic or whole-tone collections. The lower voice is a pedal tone consisting of a single repeated tone. These two structural lines, when combined at sufficient velocity, create the aural sense of multiple musical lines sounding simultaneously, which is a polyphonic texture. Forbes does the same in *The Grumpy Troll* starting in measure 23 through use of contrasting timbres of the instrument; the [0235] kernel motive is repeated in several octaves while a repeated B-natural in the upper register provides a rhythmic pulse and contrasting tone color. The B-naturals are notated with diamond shaped notes that call for the 4<sup>th</sup> valve slide to be removed, resulting in a thin, airy sound that contrasts with the full, resonant sound of the tuba played normally. This extended technique involving the removed 4<sup>th</sup> valve slide and contrasting tone colors allows Forbes to clearly and effectively create two contrasting musical lines.

In terms of extended techniques, *The Grumpy Troll* and *Polar Vortex* make several different demands of the tubist. Forbes calls for half valved pitches, glissandi and trills in *Polar Vortex*, all standard extended techniques. In *The Grumpy Troll*, Forbes calls for more challenging and unorthodox extended techniques. In measure 46, Forbes calls for multiphonics in the ascending [0257] statement, harmonizing the played pitches on the tuba with sung pitches a major 10<sup>th</sup> higher (Example 10). This is the one and only instance of multiphonics in Forbes' unaccompanied tuba works. A tongue-stop technique is also called for at several points, calling for the player to blow air through the tuba at increasing velocity before stopping the flow of air with the tongue; this results in a percussive pop (Example 11). Both tongue-stopping and



**Example 10:** Forbes, *The Grumpy Troll* – measure 46



**Example 11:** Forbes, *The Grumpy Troll* – measure 37

multiphonics are extended techniques present in Baadsvik’s *Fnugg*, one of the compositions which inspired Forbes as he wrote *The Grumpy Troll*.

The most notable extended technique employed by Mike Forbes, employed extensively in *The Grumpy Troll*, is having the 4<sup>th</sup> valve tuning slide removed for the entire composition. When the tuning slide is removed and the 4<sup>th</sup> valve on the tuba is depressed, the sound comes out of the tuning slide rather than the bell, producing a hollow, airy, contrasting tone color. This technique is not unique to Forbes, having been previously used by other composers for other brass instruments, such as William Penn in his *Three Essays for Solo Tuba*<sup>16</sup>. Forbes’ use of this technique, however, wasn’t a conscious attempt to emulate these earlier works. The extended technique resulted from an accident early in his compositional process, while improvising at the tuba. “The horn sits on the bell and so, one day, it fell out onto the carpet so I didn’t hear it. And then I picked up my tuba and just started playing a scale or whatever it was, and when I hit the note that was missing the slide you get, it made such an interesting sound and I started to mess around and improvise with that. And then kinda figure out where to go from there. So, kind of an accidental situation.” Forbes ultimately made the pulled fourth valve slide a prominent aspect of *The Grumpy Troll*. This technique allowed Forbes to create clear polyphonic textures in the piece, and represents an expansion of the tone color possibilities available to the tuba; of the four performer-composers examined in this paper, he is the only composer to exploit this technique.

<sup>16</sup> William Penn, *Three Essays: For Solo Tuba* (New York: Seesaw Music Corp., 1975).

Forbes' compositions for solo tuba reflect a range of difficulty levels, audiences, and type of tuba called for. *Polar Vortex* was the result of a commission Forbes received from an adult amateur tubist in Wyoming. Forbes was tasked with writing an unaccompanied work for contrabass (CC) tuba, and he designed the piece to be playable by advanced high school students and young undergraduate students. Relative to his abilities as a tubist, *Polar Vortex* is not a particularly difficult solo composition for Forbes, though for its intended audience the composition is quite challenging. *The Grumpy Troll* is a solo work for bass tuba, with versions specific to the E-flat and F bass tubas. Unlike *Polar Vortex*, this composition was written for Forbes himself, with specific regards to his abilities as a performer. This is particularly evident from Forbes' extensive usage of the aforementioned pulled 4<sup>th</sup> valve slide extended technique. The technique is particularly difficult for several reasons, the first being that pitches produced with the open 4<sup>th</sup> valve slide are inconsistent and difficult to control. Adding to this difficulty is the fact that Forbes requires the performer to shift between regular pitches and the 4<sup>th</sup> slide pitches very rapidly, leaving very little time for adjustment by the performer.

Formally, the unaccompanied tuba solos of Mike Forbes are very clear in their formal divisions; they are one-movement works with multiple sections. He often employs fermati and grand pauses to create clear, audible divisions between contrasting sections of music. Both *The Grumpy Troll* and *Polar Vortex* feature sections of music that are highly consistent in terms of tempo, character, and intervallic/pitch content; the repetition of small amounts of musical material generates this consistency. Later sections in Forbes' compositions tend to take the various, contrasting motives he creates and combine them in various ways. Though the structure is clearly delineated to the composer, it is worth stating that Forbes' works for solo tuba are in many ways through-composed; in spite of their clear sectional divisions, these compositions lack

simple binary or ternary forms. The architectures of the compositions are a result of the forward-building organic process with which the compositions were created. Forbes consciously creates clear delineations of musical sections through the use of pauses and fermati, and derides through-composed music as lacking clear formal plans.<sup>17</sup> Ironically, his two compositions for solo tuba can be described as through-composed; they are constructed in an organic, forward building manner, and possess clear sectional distinctions, but lack a clearly discernable formal plan such as sonata, rondo, variation, or binary/ternary form.

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<sup>17</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 93-94).

## CHAPTER 3

### GRANT HARVILLE

Grant Harville is a multi-faceted musician with a diverse performance background, equally at home performing on tuba, violin, and as a vocalist. Harville has won multiple tuba solo competitions, including the Leonard Falcone Tuba Euphonium Festival and the University of Michigan concerto competition. As a vocalist, he has sung solo and section tenor with multiple churches and professional choruses in the Atlanta area. More recently, Harville's musical career has focused on conducting, currently serving as Artistic Director and Conductor of the Idaho State-Civic Symphony; previously he served as Associate Conductor with the Georgia Symphony.<sup>18</sup> As an educator, Harville has taught conducting, music theory and applied tuba/euphonium at the collegiate level. From 2006-2010 he served as Instructor of Tuba/Euphonium at Luther College, and he is currently an Assistant Professor of Music at Idaho State University.<sup>19</sup>

As a composer, Grant Harville has written numerous orchestra, vocal, chamber, and instrumental solo compositions. These works have been written for a variety of ensembles, including the Georgia Symphony, Wisconsin Brass Quintet, University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra, and the United States Army Band Tuba-Euphonium ensemble. His *Sonata for Tuba and Piano* was a finalist for the International Tuba-Euphonium Association (ITEA) Harvey Phillips Award for Excellence in Composition; he also won the University of Michigan's

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<sup>18</sup> "About," grantharville.com. <http://www.grantharville.com/about/> (accessed October 16, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

concerto competition by performing his own *Concerto for Tuba and Orchestra*.<sup>20</sup> Harville has written three unaccompanied works for tuba, two of which are published. The first, written in 1997 but never published, was *Dithyramb*.<sup>21</sup> The other two solo tuba works, published in 2003 and 2006 respectively, are his *Suite in B-flat Minor* and *Caprice for Solo Tuba*.

With regards to his compositional influences, Harville emphasizes that he has no specific composers whom are particular influences; everything he has ever heard has influenced his compositional style in one way or another, even if he isn't conscious of the influence. Harville discusses a hypothetical instance where he would write a composition, only to later hear an older musical composition from a different composer that contained very similar musical ideas;<sup>22</sup> this highlights the phenomenon of subconsciously and unintentionally mimicking other composers in some way. Even though Harville writes in his own personal style and doesn't seek to consciously emulate other styles, he nonetheless asserts that other composer's styles and approaches integrate themselves into his personal style.<sup>23</sup>

When Harville begins the process of composing a new piece, he finds the most challenging and important aspect to be starting a composition. He asserts that "the hardest part is getting past the blank page, you know, once you've got something written down, you can make it better. But it's much easier to make a bad thing good than nothing into something. So for me at first it's all about getting past the blank page, and that means having as many inspirations, as many things trigger ideas as possible."<sup>24</sup> One method he employs for getting past this initial hurdle is finding as many inspirations as possible pertaining to the piece he wants to write. For

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<sup>20</sup> "About," grantharville.com. <http://www.grantharville.com/about/> (accessed October 16, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Grant Harville, interview by author, Athens, GA, May 27, 2014 (Appendix B, p. 102).

<sup>22</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 105-106).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 100).

commissioned works, Harville will often have lunch with the commissioner and ask various musical questions, such as:

- What do you like/not like to do on the instrument?
- Are there particularly bad notes or techniques for you to execute?
- What composers and pieces do you like?
- Is there anything you want to do musically but haven't yet?

Harville finds that these conversations will often enough get him “through the door” and allow him to put some musical ideas to the page.<sup>25</sup> Once there, an organic development of the music ensues, where the composition begins to take on a life of its own and the number of comprehensible or sensible possibilities for future notes and sections are gradually reduced. This is a double-edged sword for Harville, as this reduction simultaneously makes the compositional process easier in some ways and more difficult in others.<sup>26</sup> Pre-planning is fairly minimal in his compositional process, beyond the aforementioned process of accruing inspirations which help to generate initial compositional parameters. Harville sometimes will have vague senses of formal structure but these inclinations are very general and non-specific; furthermore, he often finds that initial considerations for the music almost always get changed or altered as the composition develops.<sup>27</sup>

Sometimes programmatic content is employed within Harville's music, though only in a general and non-specific sense. Harville, much like Mike Forbes, avoids a descriptive, literal musical program to be depicted exactly by the music, preferring a general mood or emotion to be expressed. He prefers this vagueness because it does not infringe too much on compositional

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<sup>25</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 100).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 108-109).



freedom; writing with a specific program is too constraining for Harville, because he feels like he would have to hit certain important plot or dramatic high points and somehow reflect them in the musical narrative.<sup>28</sup> In the specific case of his unaccompanied works for tuba, Harville's writing is strictly absolute, with no programmatic content whatsoever. Both the *Caprice* and *Suite in B-flat Minor* were compositions he was inspired to write, but this inspiration involved things he wanted to try as a composer, rather than extra-musical ideas he wanted to depict.<sup>29</sup>

Grant Harville does not play the tuba as part of his compositional process, even when writing solo works for the instrument. He describes himself as being more comfortable composing and improvising at the piano or keyboard. The process of improvisation occurs at the piano, with Harville very freely playing around with musical materials; when he finds something which sounds good to him, he develops it to explore what musical content is made available to him by it.<sup>30</sup> Though he doesn't physically utilize the tuba in his process, Harville's experience as a performer on tuba nonetheless is an important part of the process. Harville states that, though the majority of his works are written for others, his unaccompanied compositions were written specifically for him to premiere. When composing these works, Harville benefited from his subconscious awareness of what is idiomatic or difficult on the instrument, specifically with regards to his own abilities on the instrument.<sup>31</sup>

Generally speaking, Harville demonstrates an awareness of difficulty and consideration for the performer. When composing a piece of music, Harville employs a technique where multiple versions of a musical figure are examined with respect to two criteria, both on a scale from 0 to 100: how closely the figure reflects the original compositional motive/intent, and the

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<sup>28</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 102).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 107).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

odds of the figure being performed successfully.<sup>32</sup> Harville admits that sometimes he will incorporate musical ideas that are difficult and challenging for the performer, perhaps even unidiomatic. As a general rule however, he will select the more playable version of a given figure, even if it doesn't completely reflect his compositional goals, because the overall "score" of the figure would be higher.<sup>33</sup> This concern for the performer and avoiding excessive difficulty is reflected in both of his works for solo tuba. Though aspects of the music are challenging, the writing in general is idiomatic and mostly conservative in range, only occasionally calling for pitches above the bass clef staff.

Grant Harville describes his compositional style as essentially consisting of musical elements he thinks sound good. His musical decisions reflect his personal preferences, formed by his musical experiences and compositional influences. One specific musical element he enjoys and utilizes is "chromatic tonality."<sup>34</sup> His compositions employ diatonic collections, in particular triadic harmony, but they are obscured through the use of chromatically altered tones and non-diatonic collections. Harville hears clear tonal centers in his music but admits these may not be clear to his audience. When diatonic triads and harmonies appear in Harville's music, they typically contain chromatic embellishments not belonging to the underlying tonality; at the same time, the underlying tonal center seldom disappears completely from the music.<sup>35</sup>

Octatonicism is a particularly important harmonic collection that Harville employs, particularly in his *Suite in B-flat Minor*, and one particularly related to his chromatic style of tonality. Harville writes music that seems to allude to B-flat minor as a harmonic tonal center

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<sup>32</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 103-104).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 101-102).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

while the pitches actually outline octatonic collections, particularly OCT<sub>1</sub><sup>36</sup>. The source of chromatic embellishments that color the underlying B-flat minor tonality are pitches belonging to octatonic collections but not B-flat minor. Harville himself said that “*Suite in B-flat Octatonic*” would possibly be a better title for the composition; at the time the piece was written, he enjoyed the sound of octatonic collections, and as a result they appear prominently.<sup>37</sup> However, not all of Harville’s music utilizes chromatic tonality created through octatonic and other non-diatonic collection. The *Caprice for Solo Tuba* is an example of his non-tonal repertoire, music that is constructed in an intervallic manner without harmonic function. Though centricity and harmonic collections are at times implied in this composition, it is constructed in an intervallic manner that yields pitch class cells which are developed and expanded upon.

*Suite in B-flat Minor* and *Caprice for Solo Tuba* are both compositions that illustrate Grant Harville’s compositional style for the tuba, and in many ways demonstrate the aforementioned compositional traits. Analysis of these works elaborates and clarifies his compositional language, as it applies to compositions for the tuba.

#### Analytical observations from *Caprice* and *Suite in B-flat Minor*

As described previously with Mike Forbes, intervallic writing is an important aspect of Grant Harville’s compositional approach, particularly in his *Caprice for Solo Tuba*. Compositional unity and structure arise through a consistent emphasis upon particular intervals and pitch class sets; in this composition, the important intervals are the half-step, major and minor third, and tritone (Example 12). Similarly, the [016], [013], and [037] trichords are important in *Caprice* and can be expressed in terms of the previous intervals. These intervals and

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<sup>36</sup> For the purposes of this paper OCT<sub>1</sub> refers to the octatonic scale consisting of {C-sharp, D, E, F, G, G-sharp, A-sharp, B}. OCT<sub>0</sub> refers to the octatonic scale consisting of {C, C-sharp, D-sharp, E, F-sharp, G, A, B-flat}. OCT<sub>2</sub> refers to the octatonic collection consisting of {C, D, E-flat, F, G-flat, A-flat, A-natural, B}

<sup>37</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 106).



*Example 12:* Harville, *Caprice for solo tuba* – measures 1-5

pitch cells permeate the entire composition, unifying the various contrasting sections. It is worth noting that Harville does suggest harmonic collections in the *Caprice*; in the third formal section chromaticism is suggested strongly (Example 13). Measures 29-32 also suggest octatonic collections, particularly  $OCT_0$ . However, these collections can be understood as the composing out of particular intervallic and pitch class material Harville is using. The chromatic scale is an augmentation of the semitone, while the octatonic scale is an augmentation of the [013] trichord.

Interestingly, the *Suite in B-flat Minor* contrasts from the *Caprice* in that it is constructed tonally, with Harville deliberately composing within particular harmonic collections (octatonic, diatonic, acoustic and chromatic scales) in order to evoke a particular tertian harmony. This marks a considerable contrast to the unaccompanied works of Mike Forbes; In the *Suite* Harville deliberately writes in a particular key and with specific scales that highlight that key, whereas with Forbes these collections arose not deliberately but rather as a function of the composer developing important intervals and pitch cells. That being said, intervallic writing is still important to understanding the deeper structure of the *Suite*. Though octatonicism predominates in this composition, Harville also employs the acoustic scale. The reason he is able to effectively switch between the two collections is because of underlying pitch sets common to both collections, such as [0134] and [023568]. The two collections are very similar in terms of



*Example 13:* Harville, *Caprice* – measure 25

intervallic content, allowing Harville to switch between the two in order to create formal distinctions, particularly in the third and fifth movements of the *Suite*.

The fifth movement of the *Suite* is in ternary form, with OCT<sub>1</sub> predominating in the A section. The B section consists of a conflict between acoustic and octatonic harmony; measures 27 – 36 mostly outline acoustic scales, while measures 37-50 largely suggest octatonic collections. The two collections share a common [023568] hexachord consisting of the following pitches: {E, D, C-sharp, B, A-sharp, G-sharp}; Harville suggests acoustic collections by adding the pitch F-sharp to this collection, and transitions back to OCT<sub>1</sub> by replacing it with the pitches F-natural and G-natural. It is also worth noting that Harville frequently employs structural [03] and [06] intervals when moving between phrases within the same musical section. We also see this in the fifth movement of the *Suite*, where the A section emphasizes B-flat as a pitch center while the B section emphasizes E-natural; the interval between these two sections is a tritone and reflects Harville's use of it within musical structure.

Harville creates pitch centrality to varying degrees in both works. As mentioned previously, the *Caprice* is constructed in an intervallic manner and does not function harmonically or try to evoke a particular key center. That being said, momentary pitch centrality is created through techniques like pedal point and repetition. In the second section of *Caprice*, Harville employs multiphonics where the tubist plays a sustained F while singing melodic content above; in this case, the drone pitch creates a sense of centrality for the listener (Example 14). Similarly, in the third section of the piece Harville will create moments of centrality by

**Meno Mosso** ♩=60

*pp* (sing upper notes)

**Example 14:** Harville, *Caprice* – measures 7-10

repeating particular pitches or phrases in which a particular pitch is emphasized. In measures 25-32, there are clearly four phrases, each two measures in length. The first two phrases emphasize A as an important pitch while the last two emphasize E. Therefore, even in the *Caprice* Harville is creating pitch centricity, even if there is no underlying harmonic function with it.

The *Suite in B-flat Minor* is clearly understood by Harville as being a tonal piece, where pitch centricity exists within a functional context, though it is worth noting that this harmonic function is not necessarily traditional. For example, in the first movement Harville is largely alternating between two octatonic collections, OCT<sub>1</sub> and OCT<sub>2</sub>. In measures 1-12, the music is largely in OCT<sub>1</sub>, occasionally moving to OCT<sub>2</sub>, but always returning to OCT<sub>1</sub>. After measure 13, OCT<sub>2</sub> takes over as a harmonic center, though there is a greater harmonic instability towards the end of this movement. The music ends ambiguously with a diatonic/octatonic mixture that mostly belongs to OCT<sub>2</sub>, the exception being the B-flat which falls outside OCT<sub>2</sub>. The deeper structure of the movement outlines a shift from OCT<sub>1</sub> to OCT<sub>2</sub>. Likewise, the last movement begins in an octatonic scale, transitions to an acoustic scale in the B section, and the returns to octatonicism and the opening A section; Though the pitch E also falls in the OCT<sub>1</sub> collection, the shift from octatonic to acoustic back to octatonic collections helps to create a sense of departure and return, or tension and release.

Harville occasionally breaks up the monotony of single-line monophony found in much unaccompanied music for tuba by introducing second musical lines, either implied or explicit. In the *Caprice for Solo Tuba* we clearly see the latter in extended sections of music where multiphonics are employed to produce two distinct musical lines: a melody in the sung voice and a drone produced by the tuba. In the *Suite* Harville occasionally creates polyphony differently, through the illusion of multiple structural lines operating on the musical surface. This technique



**Example 15:** Harville, *Suite in B-flat Minor*, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement – measures 16-17

occurs frequently in Mike Forbes' works for unaccompanied tuba, but Harville limits its use to a few movements of his *Suite*. The most robust example of this technique is found in measures 13-25 of the second movement, where the tuba rapidly slurs between two lines, one of which is a pedal and the other which outlines an octatonic scale (Example 15). Harville alternates the position of the two melodic ideas; sometimes the pedal note is below the octatonic melody, while other times it is above. In either case, the result is a two-voice texture that contrasts from the surrounding sections of largely monophonic music.

Harville's usage of extended techniques for the tuba is quite limited, occurring only in *Caprice*. Unlike Mike Forbes, who employs a wide range of extended techniques, Harville's use of these techniques is limited to multiphonics. This use of multiphonics occurs in the second section in *Caprice*; the *Suite in B-flat Minor* contains no extended techniques. It is worth noting that Harville's approach to multiphonics is much different than that of Forbes. Whereas Forbes uses the technique once in *The Grumpy Troll*, specifically measure 46, Harville uses the technique at several points in the *Caprice* (measures 7-10, 21-24, 49-50). More importantly, his use of multiphonics emphasizes the sung pitch in particular, with the tuba sustaining a single pedal tone below. This creates the sense of two distinct lines, and forces the player to sing multiple intervals against the pedal tone in tune; this can be challenging for the performer because some of the intervals are considerably dissonant and therefore difficult to tune by ear, such as the tritone, major 7<sup>th</sup> and minor 9<sup>th</sup>. Forbes, on the other hand, treats the voice and tuba as one homophonic voice, moving in the same rhythm and maintaining a constant interval of a major 10<sup>th</sup>.

Grant Harville's music for solo tuba demonstrates a clarity of formal design; the music consistently has clear and distinct sections which are defined by changes in style, character, tempo, rhythm, motive, and even underlying harmonic collection. Combined with this is a high degree of musical consistency and repetition, the result of Harville's desire to base music upon a relatively small amount of musical material that is extensively developed.<sup>38</sup> This combination of contrast and unity is very effectively utilized in both his works for solo tuba.

The *Suite in B-flat Minor* is a composition based to a certain extent upon the Baroque suite, insofar as the *Suite* consists of multiple movements, all of which are in the same key and develop a limited amount of musical material.<sup>39</sup> Like the Baroque suite, each movement in Harville's *Suite* has a unique, dance-like character. Hence, there is a wide range of time signatures and tempo indications within the work, much like a Baroque dance suite. The forms in each movement are fairly simple and straightforward, such as ABA and ABCBA. The fifth movement of the *Suite*, for example, is a very clear ternary form and is essentially a *bourree*: at the end of the B section the marking *D. C. al fine* appears, telling the performer to repeat the A section. A unifying motivic idea in the *Suite in B-flat Minor* is the B-flat minor triad, which appears in some fashion in every movement of the composition. Harville tends to move directly from one section to the next without extended pauses or fermata; ritardandos or accelerandos are often used immediately before a new section to help transition to the new tempo.

The *Caprice for Solo Tuba* differs from the *Suite*, insofar that it is a through-composed single movement composition not overtly inspired by the Baroque suite. However, the underlying sectional contrasts created through variation of tempo, pitch, motive, and style remain. The underlying consistency of musical content also remains, though in the case of the

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<sup>38</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 106).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



*Caprice* this refers to a consistency of intervallic and pitch class content throughout the composition. The music consists of three contrasting sections, each with distinct tempi, textures and styles; the overall form is more complicated than those seen in the movements of the *Suite*, but essentially it is a nested binary form with a codetta at the end. The composition can be divided into two large sections, measures 1-24, and 25-48; measures 49-51. Within the first section we see two distinct sections of music, forming another ABAB pattern within the larger binary composition. Harville moves between sections in a variety of ways, transitioning via pauses, breathe marks, as well as moving directly from one section to the next without a pause.

## CHAPTER 4

### BENJAMIN MILES

Dr. Benjamin Miles is an accomplished performer and educator, currently serving as Associate Professor of Tuba at Middle Tennessee State University. Prior teaching appointments include Wright State University and the University of Central Arkansas. Dr. Miles enjoys an active performing career as a soloist and ensemble musician. He won the 2005 Falcone Artist Tuba Solo Competition and regularly performs in the United States and abroad, such as the International Tuba-Euphonium Association's regional and international conferences. As an ensemble musician, Miles has performed with symphony orchestras such as the Nashville and Chattanooga Symphonies, as well as numerous brass quintets. He released his first commercial CD, titled "Contraptions," which feature several of his own works for tuba.<sup>40</sup>

Miles' compositional output consists largely of solo works for the tuba. These include accompanied works with orchestral or piano accompaniment, such as his *Three Sketches for Tuba and Piano* (2002), *Sonatina for Tuba and Piano* (2004) and the *Concerto A La Mode for Tuba and Orchestra* (2013). Miles has also written two pieces for unaccompanied tuba: *Perspectives for Solo Tuba* (2004) and *Contraptions for Solo Tuba* (2009).<sup>41</sup>

Ben Miles cites numerous composers as general and specific compositional influences, even though he doesn't try to emulate any particular composer as he writes and prefers to write according to his own personal style.<sup>42</sup> He cites several compositional influences in general,

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<sup>40</sup> "Bio," benmiletuba.com, <http://www.benmiletuba.com/live/> (accessed October 16, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Benjamin Miles, interview by David McLemore, Athens, GA, June 27th, 2014 (Appendix C, p.117-118).

including John Stevens, Mike Forbes, Walter Hartley, Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, and Peter Ilytch Tchaikovsky. Walter Hartley is a particularly important influence to Miles, as Hartley was composer-in-residence at SUNY Fredonia while he attended the school. Miles performed a great deal of Hartley's tuba music as a result, and the study of these works influenced his notion of how to write for the tuba.<sup>43</sup>

More specific to his unaccompanied tuba works, Miles cites influences from Hartley, Vincent Persichetti, Malcolm Arnold, William Kraft, and James Grant. When writing *Perspectives for Solo Tuba*, Miles emulated aspects of several unaccompanied tuba compositions playable on the contrabass tuba, specifically Walter Hartley's *Suite for Unaccompanied Tuba*, Vincent Persichetti's *Serenade No. 12 for Solo Tuba*, and Malcolm Arnold's *Fantasy for Solo Tuba*. Another influence of note was Jere Hutcheson, Professor of Composition at Michigan State University where Miles was studying when he wrote *Perspectives*. Miles took composition lessons from Hutcheson, so his *Sonatina for Tuba and Piano* and *Perspectives* were both compositions guided by his work with Hutcheson. Miles' *Contraptions for Solo Tuba* isn't modeled on any particular composer or piece, but he did keep some of his favorite unaccompanied tuba compositions in mind as he wrote it, specifically James Grant's *Three Furies for Solo Tuba* and William Kraft's *Encounters II for Tuba Solo*.<sup>44</sup>

Miles describes his compositional process as being very free in approach, taking a small amount of musical material and expanding it into a complete composition through compositional improvisation. These basic materials include short motives, ideas of pitch and intervallic content, and sometimes a vague sense of form; intervals are a particularly important component in Miles' early musical materials. Much like the compositional styles of Forbes and Harville, Miles tends

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<sup>43</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 117-118).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

to favor particular intervals in his works, which are composed out to produce harmonic collections. Miles tends to favor tritones and minor thirds, intervals that permeate the melodies and structure of his music.<sup>45</sup>

When Ben Miles develops musical ideas through improvisation, he primarily employs the keyboard but also incorporates the tuba in later stages of composition. This is partially a result of practical considerations: he works at the keyboard because he can use a headphone with the keyboard, and therefore no one will hear the music he is writing until it is already mostly developed. He also employs Finale music notation software, as it offers instantaneous playback and provides an approximate idea of what the music sounds like at the specified tempo. Once a composition has been fleshed out in notation software, Miles will then play it on the tuba to check how the music actually plays on the instrument.<sup>46</sup> This allows him to examine the idiomatic characteristics of his composition and make changes as necessary. In short, Miles' compositional process begins at the keyboard and music notation software, only employing the tuba at the end to check for idiomatic issues. This contrasts from Mike Forbes, who primarily employs the tuba in his process, and Grant Harville, who uses keyboards and music notation software exclusively without employing the tuba.

Miles also utilizes extra-musical content to generate programmatic compositions. Like the extra-musical ideas employed by Mike Forbes, which are generally vague and suggest the mood or character of an extra-musical idea, Miles' programmatic content is also suggesting the character of various extra-musical elements. As demonstrated in *Contraptions*, Miles attempts to musically depict various "contraptions" including roller coasters, conveyor belts, bulldozers, and

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<sup>45</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 111).

<sup>46</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 119).

hot air balloons.<sup>47</sup> These extra-musical ideas inform his choices with regards to tempo, style, character, and form. Miles describes his inspiration for the 5<sup>th</sup> movement of *Contraptions*, “Conveyor Belt,” as the result of a job in a potato chip factory: “I had a job working at a potato chip factory for one week when I was 19, and that movement, Conveyor Belt, is my idea of how a potato becomes a chip. You know, it was this huge, huge conveyor belt that would go all the way through the factory. So it would start with this potato, and they would chop it up and it would roam around, and the potato chips ended up going in a bag. So that was the image in my head for that particular conveyor belt, it’s a little more exciting.”<sup>48</sup>

Though *Contraptions* is a programmatic composition for solo tuba, Miles also writes purely absolute compositions without extra-musical connotations. *Perspectives* is an example of his absolute music, a piece of music consisting of several contrasting musical sections and written with a pedagogical intent. Miles wrote *Perspectives* as part of his doctoral dissertation, *A Study of Intermediate Tuba Literature*; the intent of this composition and dissertation was to address a perceived gap in the solo repertoire for advanced high school and early college level tuba players. The name *Perspectives* doesn’t carry any extra-musical connotations, it simply reflects Miles’ impression of the different styles contained within the music.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to programmatic content, *Perspectives* and *Contraptions* demonstrate other shifts in Ben Miles’ compositional style over time. In terms of harmonic language, he has progressively become more tonal over time, increasingly favoring harmonic collections and clear pitch centricity and moving away from non-tonal intervallic music.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Miles’ treatment of and approach to musical form has changed over time, becoming more transparent and simple

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<sup>47</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 114-115).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 113).

<sup>50</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 112).

over time. *Perspectives* is a single movement work with 4 contrasting sections and transitional material between sections; formal divisions are present but not clear-cut, as the interlude sections create a degree of formal ambiguity. The harmonic language in this composition is occasionally centric but not tonal, as the music is constructed in an intervallic manner. *Contraptions*, on the other hand, is a work in five distinct movements, each employing a high degree of repetition and motivic consistency; form in this work is more transparent and straight forward. The harmonic language is far more tonal in this piece, with clear use of non-chromatic collections including octatonic and diatonic scales.

Miles composes music for a range of different audiences and performers. Some works, such as *Perspectives*, are written for other players. As discussed previously, this work was designed for advanced high school and early college tubists and intended to address perceived gaps in the solo tuba repertoire. Composing this work was difficult for Miles, as it required him to carefully consider the technical limitations of his target audience. He has to determine what the limits of dynamics, range, and speed would be for younger players and not exceed them.<sup>51</sup> Other compositions, such as *Contraptions*, were written as solo vehicles for Miles himself. Rather than writing to the level of younger players, in these compositions Miles writes to his own abilities on the instrument, utilizing techniques he excels at and avoiding those he does not. For instance, particular movements in *Contraptions* highlight Miles' proficiency with multiple tonguing (fifth movement) and loud pedal tones (fourth movement). At the same time, he avoided writing excessively high music as he considered this less of a strength in his playing.<sup>52</sup>

The next section will examine *Perspectives for Solo Tuba* and *Contraptions for Solo Tuba* more closely, elaborating on the aforementioned observations and introducing new ones.

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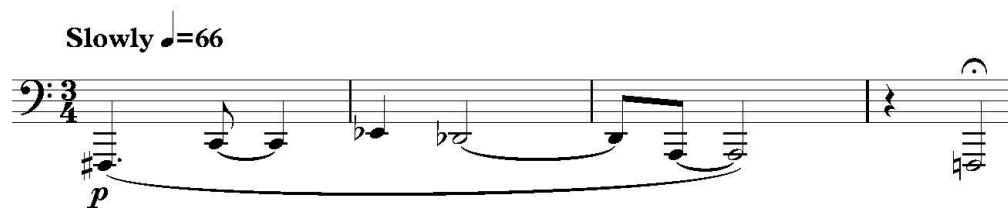
<sup>51</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 117).

<sup>52</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 117).

Analytical observations from *Perspectives* and *Contraptions*


An intervallic approach to composition is evident in both of Ben Miles' pieces for unaccompanied tuba, but particularly so in *Perspectives*. This piece uses particular intervals and pitch classes to create melodic and structural consistency, many of which are established in the first four measures (Example 16). This short introduction serves as a tone bank, outlining intervals, trichords, and tetrachords which will be employed in each of the four musical sections. Miles favors half steps and tritones as intervals, but thirds and whole steps also occur frequently; Miles employs [036], [013], [026], and [048] trichords, which often appear on the musical surface and incorporate some of his preferred intervals. Though *Contraptions* is a far more tonal composition, Miles still employs intervallic writing on the musical surface and within the structure. An example of this is found in the third movement, "Roller Coaster," which begins with an aggressive descending [014] trichord (Example 17). This figure returns throughout the movement and highlights Miles' interest in the half step and minor third as intervals. This figure itself occurs at four different pitch levels, outlining an [0145] tetrachord, which is a superset of [014] resulting from the combination of two [014] trichords holding two tones in common. In other words, the pitch levels of the melodic [014] trichord statements are governed by a

Slowly ♩=66



Example 16: Miles, *Perspectives* – measures 1-4

Dramatic



Example 17: Miles, *Contraptions*, "Roller Coaster" – Measures 1-2



**Example 18:** Miles, *Contraptions*, “Conveyor Belt” – Measures 21-23

structural use of [014]. This use of intervals melodically and structurally demonstrates that, even in a tonal harmonic context, Miles employs an intervallic approach to composition.

At the same time, Miles also employs harmonic collections in his music, particularly in *Contraptions*. Octatonic, diatonic and chromatic collections account for a majority of the musical content; acoustic, whole tone and hexatonic collections are implied as well, though to a lesser extent. The fifth movement of *Contraptions*, “Conveyor Belt” can be described as a combination of octatonic, diatonic, and chromatic collections, with Miles continually shifting between them. In measures 21-23, the music is clearly outlining a subset of OCT<sub>1</sub>, with the exception of the chromatic grace notes introducing the figure (Example 18). Movement two, “Hot Air Balloon,” consists primarily of diatonic collections, though this is muddled through borrowed tones that result in mode alteration (Example 19). The latter three movements similarly imply octatonic, diatonic, and chromatic scales, as well as hexatonic and whole tone scales. Though a non-tonal composition, *Perspectives* makes use of harmonic collections as well, though in a limited and implied manner. The pitches in measures 38-49 imply octatonic collections, while passages in measures 23-28 and 35-37 suggest chromaticism via chromatic subsets (Example 20).

Centricity and tonality occur to varying degrees in Miles’ compositions, with his later compositions generally employing greater degrees of tonal function than earlier works. As



**Example 19:** Miles, *Contraptions*, “Hot Air Balloon” – Measures 1-2

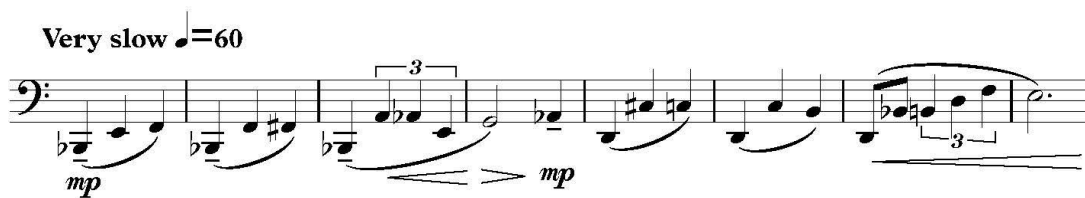




Example 20: Miles, *Perspectives* – Measures 38-45

discussed earlier, *Perspectives* employs momentary centricity but without underlying tonal function; centricity is created both through pedal point and repetition. Measures 23-26 and 27-29 demonstrate Miles' uses of pedal point via recurring pitches (B-flat and D, respectively) (Example 21). Miles introduces a figure at measure 96 which creates momentary centricity around the pitch C; in this case the sense of pitch center is created by repetition of a single pitch (Example 22). Occasionally other pitches sound, but they quickly return to the emphasized pitch. Thus, even though *Perspectives* lacks a tonal center, Miles does temporarily emphasize particular pitches as being important, through pedal point and repetition.

*Contraptions* is far more tonal, and therefore contains a much stronger sense of pitch centricity throughout. As in *Perspectives*, repetition and pedal point are used to emphasize particular pitches and create centricity, though to a far greater extent. Repetition of particular pitches and entire phrases occurs with far greater regularity in this composition. In movement 1, the first 32 measures consist of four measure phrases that are each repeated once with no



Example 21: Miles, *Perspectives* – Measures 23-30



Example 22: Miles, *Perspectives* – Measures 98-101

variation; in other words, every even numbered four measure phrase in this section is an exact repetition of the preceding four measure phrase. Furthermore, within these phrases particular pitches are emphasized via repetition; measures 1-8 exemplify this, emphasizing D and F as important pitches via repetition. In the fifth movement, the first 20 measures constitute an A section that is repeated twice within the AA'BA'' form; each subsequent statement of the A material develops and embellishes the original A material, only interrupted by a twelve measure contrasting B section which develops a fragment of the A motive at a lower pitch level and lower tempo.

Beyond formal repetition, Miles creates tonality and centrality in *Contraptions* through structural perfect fifth relations, neighbor tone relations, and structural octatonicism. In the first movement, the first motivic idea introduced in measures 1-8 suggests D as a pitch center; the motivic material in measures 9-16 suggests A as a pitch center, and measures 17-24 suggests E-natural as a pitch center. This pattern is repeated in measures 53-64, this time shifting from D to A to E every four measures, outlining an ascending perfect 5<sup>th</sup> pattern. The fourth movement of *Contraptions* outlines a symmetrical ABCBA form, in which the outer sections suggest C as a pitch center, while the middle section suggests D as a center; in terms of deeper musical structure, this movement can then be seen as a neighbor tone, moving from C up to D and then resolving back to C.

The ending of the first movement presents a particular challenge in light of the structural emphasis on D as a pitch center at the outset of the piece and at the recapitulation. The last two measures, however, seem to resolve to A-flat as a pitch center, descending a perfect fifth from the pitch E-flat. Considering that E-flat is a tritone away from A and A-flat is a tritone away from the D, this passage can be considered an example of tritone substitution. In other words, the

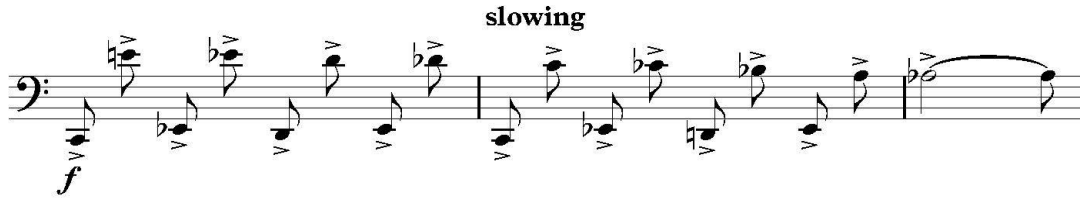
resolution from E-flat to A-flat is functionally equivalent to a resolution from A to D because the two resolutions are related by the interval of a tritone. These underlying patterns of pitch centricity demonstrate the various ways that Ben Miles imbues *Contraptions* with a degree of structural tonal function.

Ben Miles’ approach to form in his music has evolved over time, becoming simpler and more transparent in his later compositions. This is reflected in *Contraptions* by the aforementioned usage of high degrees of pitch and phrase repetition, as well as the simple forms employed. The first three movements are ternary ABA forms, with recapitulations of the opening material. The fourth movement employs a symmetrical ABCBA form, while the last movement is an AABA form. *Perspectives*, representing an earlier period in Miles’ compositional style, is a single-movement work with multiple distinct sections. This four-in-one form features sections that are clearly defined in terms of tempo, style, and register, but the boundaries between formal sections are obscured by brief transitional interludes. Compared with the formal structures present in *Contraptions*, this piece features a more complex, ambiguous form with a far lesser degree of repetition.

As observed with the compositions of Mike Forbes and Grant Harville, the creation of polyphony through multiple structural lines is employed by Ben Miles. One method is through the use of pedal tone passages, which emphasize a particular tone in one register which quickly alternates with pitches in a different register, creating a second musical voice. In addition to its usage in *Perspectives*, in *Contraptions* this technique appears in measure 16 of the second movement as well as measures 16-19 and 26-29 in the fourth movement (Example 23). These



**Example 23:** Miles, *Contraptions*, “Hot Air Balloon” – Measures 16



**Example 24:** Miles, *Contraptions*, “Conveyor Belt” – Measures 49-50

examples all feature the tuba producing two simultaneous lines in different registers, one a single repeated pitch and the other an ascending or descending motive, outlining a particular harmonic collection and moving in contrasting motion to the pedal. In addition, the outer movements of *Contraptions* also feature polyphonic passages consisting of two melodic lines outlining similar or contrasting pitch class or harmonic content. In measures 41-47 of the first movement, ascending [012] figures occur in two different registers, typically at the interval of a tritone or major third ([06] and [04]). Similarly, measures 49-50 of the fifth movement outline two distinct melodic ideas in two registers; the upper voice outlines a descending chromatic scale, whereas the bottom line outlines an [013] trichord (Example 24).

Miles makes use of extended techniques in *Contraptions*, but they are absent from *Perspectives*. This is likely a function of Miles considering the target audience for each piece. In *Contraptions*, trills are employed in the third movement and flutter tonguing is utilized in the third and fourth movements. As with Mike Forbes’ *The Grumpy Troll*, there is one single measure of multiphonics in *Contraptions*: measure 52 of the fifth movement (Example 25). Generally speaking, Miles emphasizes more traditional virtuosic techniques in this piece. Multiple tonguing, for instance, appears prominently in the fifth movement, while the fourth movement requires the player to produce loud pitches in the pedal register of the instrument.



**Example 25:** Miles, *Contraptions*, “Conveyor Belt” – Measure 52

## CHAPTER 5

### JOHN STEVENS

John Stevens is an internationally renowned brass pedagogue, tubist, and composer, responsible for numerous contributions to the solo and ensemble repertoire of brass instruments in particular. Stevens enjoyed an active career as a freelance tubist in New York City, performing with every major orchestra in New York as well as the New York tuba quartet. He eventually transitioned to life as an academic professor, starting out at the University of Miami before taking the Professor of Tuba and Euphonium position at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1985, a position he held until his retirement in 2014.<sup>53</sup> While at UW-Madison, Stevens served as tubist with the Wisconsin Brass Quintet, the brass chamber ensemble in residence at the university.<sup>54</sup>

As a composer, John Stevens has achieved wide acclaim for his transcriptions and original works for brass; of particular note are his compositions for solo tuba, solo euphonium, tuba/euphonium quartet and ensemble, brass quintet and other brass chamber groupings. He has won numerous ASCAP awards and has been commissioned by a wide range of organizations, including: the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the International Tuba-Euphonium Association, the International Trumpet Guild, the Madison Symphony Orchestra, the Denver Brass, and the Sotto Voce tuba-euphonium quartet. Additionally, numerous tuba and euphonium soloists have

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<sup>53</sup> “John Stevens,” editions-bim.com, <http://www.editions-bim.com/composers/stevens-john/> (accessed October 16, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> “John Stevens,” potenzamusic.com, <http://www.potenzamusic.com/john-stevens-118912.cfm/> (accessed October 16, 2014).

commissioned works from Stevens for their instruments.<sup>55</sup> Given the prolific contributions he has made to music for tuba and euphonium, it should come as no surprise that Stevens has written the most unaccompanied tuba compositions of the performer-composers addressed in this paper. His five works for solo tuba are: *Suite No. 1 in Five Movements for Tuba Solo* (1974/1997); *Triumph of the Demon Gods* (1981); *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* (1995); *Remembrance for Tuba Alone* (1995); and *Elegy for Solo Tuba or Euphonium* (2004).

In discussing his influences as a composer, Stevens echoes a sentiment expressed by another performer-composer discussed previously, Grant Harville. Stevens states that everything a composer hears will have an influence with regards to compositional style; furthermore, different composers are going to influence different styles and genres for which he writes. The goal of a composer, according to Stevens, is to sound like his or herself, generating a style that doesn't sound like any other composer. Generally speaking, he cites the music of Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Dmitri Shostakovich, Igor Stravinsky, Gustav Mahler, Paul Hindemith, and Chuck Mangione as influences. Depending on the instrumentation and genre he is writing in, some of these composers will exert greater influence than others. With specific regards to writing for the solo tuba, Stevens cites the music of Vincent Persichetti as a particular influence, particularly his *Serenade No. 12 for Solo Tuba*. He also asserts that he, by and large, hasn't been influenced by other tubists' works for the tuba.<sup>56</sup>

John Stevens describes his compositional style as having evolved over time, not in a manner suggesting strict stylistic periods so much as a gradual continuous change. That being said, a unifying element of his style in general is his focus on establishing several key musical

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<sup>55</sup> "John Stevens," potenzamusic.com, <http://www.potenzamusic.com/john-stevens-118912.cfm/> (accessed October 16, 2014).

<sup>56</sup> John Stevens, interview by David McLemore, Bloomington, IN, May 21, 2014 (Appendix D, p. 126-127).

elements. Stevens states that his compositional approach is “based upon energy, motion, emotion, contrast, drama, a story, setting a mood, creating excitement, and trying to achieve great beauty.”<sup>57</sup> The analogy to drama is particularly apt for his unaccompanied works; he considers acting to be a considerable influence on how he writes music. His works for solo instrument are essentially monologues or soliloquys, in that it is insufficient for the performer to simply perform the pitches, rhythms, and expressive markings notated in the music. Stevens intends for his music to be interpreted and performed in the same manner as an actor would perform a dramatic monologue. He asserts that his “markings are more guidelines than rules. An actor can’t just read a monologue – it has to be acted – much like the way we play a cadenza. In the same way, someone performing an unaccompanied work has to pay attention to what’s on the page, but also go beyond it to bring it to life.”<sup>58</sup>

John Stevens considers compositional techniques as means to an end rather than an end in and of themselves, and so isn’t especially concerned with them. His goal is to create musical drama, and he employs whatever techniques allow him to do so. That being said, he does employ a couple of noteworthy procedures, namely the obscuring of musical elements and the use of starkly contrasting musical elements. Stevens’ obscuring procedure involves the disruption and restoration of particular elements in his compositions. He sends the music “off the rails” in some regard and then brings it back, creating a sense of tension and release. Stevens tends to obscure both harmonic and rhythmic content in his compositions. Tonal obscuring occurs through the disruption of tertian harmony through quartal harmonies and whole-tone scales. Rhythmic obscuring involves the use of mixed meters and unusual metric subdivisions.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 122).

<sup>58</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 128).

<sup>59</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 122-123).

Stevens' music is also characterized by the juxtaposition of starkly contrasting musical and extra-musical content. When music repeatedly alternates between extremely soft and loud terraced dynamics, this is an example of juxtaposed contrasting dynamics. Similarly, when Stevens repeatedly calls for huge intervallic leaps between the low and upper registers of an instrument, this creates a juxtaposition of pitch register. Stylistically, Stevens' music can be categorized into two groups: songs and dances; the contrast between these differing styles creates another dimension of stark contrast in his music. In Stevens' programmatic music, his extra-musical elements will sometimes themselves reflect a juxtaposition of contrasting or contradictory ideas. *Salve Venere, Salve Marte (Hail Venus, Hail Mars)* employs the programmatic juxtaposition between stereotypical masculinity and femininity, while *Triumph of the Demon Gods* depicts a conflict between gods and demons. These contrasts of musical and extra-musical content constitute an important aspect of Stevens' style, particularly in musical sections where the contrasting elements are juxtaposed or otherwise brought into opposition with one another.<sup>60</sup>

Another feature of Stevens' approach is his concern with idiomatic characteristics of his music. Stevens, much like Mike Forbes, takes the performer and audience into consideration when composing. "One of my goals is for a work to be idiomatic to the point where the music sounds very challenging but lies really well on the instrument so it's actually easier to perform than it sounds. From the day I began composing, my main goal was to write music that players would like to play and audiences would like to hear."<sup>61</sup> Stevens wants his audience to enjoy his compositions, and to do that he creates music for the performer that sounds difficult but which is ultimately quite idiomatic.

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<sup>60</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 124).

<sup>61</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 125).



John Stevens' compositional process, like many of the performer-composers discussed previously, is organic in character, insofar as he starts at the beginning of the composition and writes to the end. Stevens compares composition to writing literature and the spinning out a story one sentence at a time, with everything he writes being informed by that which came before. He doesn't make extensive pre-compositional sketches, and doesn't compose movements or sections out of order. Like Grant Harville, Stevens considers the most difficult part of the compositional process to be the beginning. Once a piece is underway, he finds that the music begins to develop naturally, with forms and structures spinning themselves out naturally without having to be imposed. Though Stevens avoids excessive pre-planning, in the case of programmatic pieces he does flesh out the extra-musical content prior to beginning the compositional process. His approach primarily relies on the keyboard rather than the tuba, although he has occasionally used the tuba when composing, specifically for works that feature the tuba in a solo capacity. Stevens' use of tuba is limited to checking how music worked out on the keyboard feels on the tuba; in this sense Stevens' approach parallels Miles, who likewise uses the tuba mainly to check for idiomatic issues in the music he has written at the keyboard.<sup>62</sup>

As mentioned above, John Stevens' categorizes his music into two basic groups: songs and dances. For his song music, the melodic content takes precedence over rhythmic concerns; Stevens explains that the rhythm in this type of music is somewhat arbitrary and flexible. The focus of the music is the pitch and intervallic content, rather than the rhythm. With his dance music, the opposite is true; the pitches and intervals could be altered without changing the underlying focus of the music, which is the rhythmic structure created by Stevens.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 128).

<sup>63</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 123).

Much like Ben Miles, John Stevens composes both programmatic and absolute music; it is worth noting, however, that most of Stevens' compositions are programmatic in nature. The *Suite No. 1 for Tuba Solo*, despite its title, is in fact a programmatic composition. Originally entitled *To Be a Child*, this five-movement work musically depicts different aspects of a day in the life of a child. Stevens withdrew the programmatic title before publishing because he wanted a more "standard" title and realized the music could stand on its own without the program. *Triumph of the Demon Gods* is a programmatic work which musically depicts two juxtaposed programmatic ideas: gods and demons. After each is introduced, the music presents a battle between the gods and demons, in which the demons ultimately win. The contrasting programmatic ideas are likewise represented by contrasting musical elements. The gods are represented by music that is in the upper register, fast in tempo and soft in dynamic; the demons are represented by slow, loud music in the low register.<sup>64</sup>

*Salve Venere, Salve Marte* is another of Stevens' programmatic solo tuba pieces, in many ways similar to *Triumph*. Stevens explains that "the music is meant to loosely depict the strength and power of Mars juxtaposed with the beauty and lyricism of Venus, as I said previously, stereotypical masculinity and femininity."<sup>65</sup> This work features several dialogues between the contrasting musical and programmatic ideas, ultimately resulting in a battle of sorts resembling that depicted in *Triumph of the Demon Gods*. *Remembrance for Tuba Alone* is Stevens' fourth programmatic work for solo tuba, and was commissioned by John Tuinstra as a dedication to his friend and colleague Jerry Bramblett, who died of cancer. The music depicts Jerry's battle with cancer, including his death, but also reflects the joy and contributions of his life. Stevens' programmatic composition places the program at the forefront of compositional development. He

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<sup>64</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 124).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

is writing music to fit the programmatic concepts he has in mind, not fitting a programmatic concept to music he has already written.<sup>66</sup>

Whereas the previous four works are programmatic, suggesting the character and mood of various extra-musical concepts, *Elegy for Solo Tuba or Euphonium* is a strictly absolute piece of music. Though the term elegy carries certain programmatic connotations, this work has no specific extra-musical connotations, and was written simply to be a beautiful melody that emphasizes the lyrical singing qualities of the tuba and euphonium.<sup>67</sup>

Stevens uses his knowledge of the tuba to inform his writing for the instrument, but he also tries not to be limited by his own abilities as a composer. He strives to create music that sounds difficult but is, in fact, quite idiomatic for the tuba. The *Suite No. 1* was his first unaccompanied tuba composition, written specifically for himself and with his playing abilities in mind. *Triumph of the Demon Gods* was composed by Stevens with tubist Mike Thornton in mind. The piece's style was influenced by Thornton's personality, demeanor, and even appearance. *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* was written specifically for tuba virtuoso Roger Bobo, with Stevens tailoring the piece to Bobo's playing abilities, musical approach, and sound. As such, the piece was informed to a far greater extent by Bobo's tuba playing than Stevens'. Similarly, *Remembrance* was written expressly for the commissioner John Tuinstra and so Stevens took Tuinstra's playing abilities into account when creating the piece. *Elegy* was specifically composed for the ITEA journal, as part of the Gem series. The target audience for this piece was essentially everyone, any tuba or euphonium player who might wish to perform it. Therefore, Stevens was very conservative with his technical demands in this work.

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<sup>66</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 125).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

The next section will examine his unaccompanied works for tuba in detail and draw further conclusions upon his compositional approach.

#### Analytical observations from Stevens' solo tuba compositions

John Stevens' description of his compositional style highlights the use of whole-tone and quartal/quintal materials to obscure an underlying tonality, but analysis of his compositions reveals that he employs a wide range of harmonic collections, including diatonic collections, octatonic collections, the acoustic scale, and the whole-tone scale. *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* is in many ways defined by a conflict between chromatic and diatonic/octatonic collections; the former is associated with the aggressive, masculine "Mars" materials, whereas the latter is associated with the lyrical, feminine "Venus" motives. *Elegy* is easily the most harmonically conservative of Stevens' solo tuba music, consisting largely of diatonic collections. The *Suite No. 1 for Solo Tuba* implies chromatic and octatonic collections, while *Remembrance* implies octatonic, diatonic, acoustic, and whole-tone collections at various points. However, with the exception of *Elegy*, these harmonic collections generally emerge as a result of the underlying intervallic approach Stevens utilizes. He often moves freely and quickly from one collection to the next, incorporating multiple collections into relatively few measures of music. Consider the Venus music from *Salve Venere, Salve Marte*, which begins by suggesting diatonicism before shifting to octatonicism and then chromaticism. This fluidity of harmonic collection is possible because of the consistent usage of particular intervals and pitch class sets.

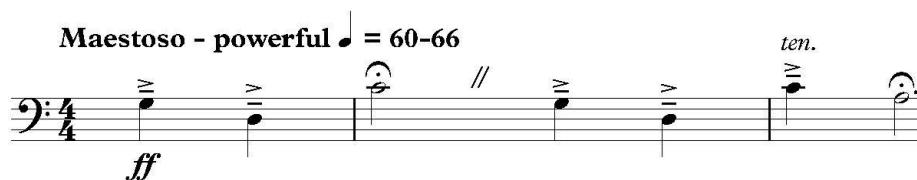
An intervallic approach to composition is evident throughout Stevens' solo works for tuba; he demonstrates a preference for particular intervals which are employed melodically and structurally. He shows a particular interest in the semitone and tritone, as well as the minor third to a lesser extent. This is demonstrated particularly well in *Triumph of the Demon Gods*, where



**Example 26:** Stevens, *Remembrance* – Measures 1-4

the two contrasting musical sections are each characterized by a particular interval. The low and loud “demonic” music is characterized by a preponderance of semitones, while the higher and softer “god” music employs the tritone melodically. It is worth noting that the semitone also appears frequently in the contrasting upper music; this could be deliberate foreshadowing on Stevens’ part that the “bad guys” will win in the end, or it could simply be a reflection of Stevens’ preference for chromaticism in his writing. Similarly, the fourth movement of *Suite No. 1* exhibits a considerable emphasis on semitones and tritones, throughout the musical surface and structure. *Remembrance* emphasizes the [013] trichord prominently (Example 26). These trichords are, of course, composed of the intervals listed above: semitones, tritones, and minor thirds. Stevens also occasionally uses stacked perfect fourths or fifths, producing quartel or quintel harmonies such as [0257]; the opening and closing material in *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* clearly exemplifies this, in that Stevens begins with an [027] trichord which expands outwards to an [0257] tetrachord before being answered by descending sequential chromatic materials (Example 27).

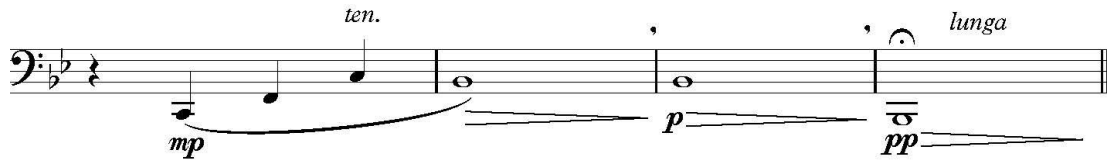
Perhaps resulting from the sheer volume of unaccompanied compositions John Stevens has written for tuba, his use of pitch centricity and harmonic function varies considerably among the different compositions. *Salve, Triumph*, and *Suite No. 1* are essentially non-tonal



**Example 27:** Stevens, *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* – Measures 1-3

compositions; Stevens will create temporary pitch centers but these pitch centers do not necessarily relate to each other in a functional manner. The beginning of *Salve Venere, Salve Marte*, as mentioned before, starts out with melodic presentations of quartal/quintal material which are answered with chromatic material. The section ends the measure before rehearsal A with a B-flat whole note marked with a fermata and marked with the text *lunga*. Stevens similarly creates momentary pitch centrality elsewhere in the piece by calling for single pitches of considerable duration relative to the surrounding musical material, typically at the end of a musical phrase or idea. This occurs the measure before rehearsal B on the pitch C, four measures before rehearsal C on the pitch E-flat, and three measures before rehearsal D on the pitch F. Rehearsal F marks the first statement of the Venus material, which very strongly implies E as a pitch center, but even this material isn't functioning in a traditional tonal sense. Similar sustained pitches at the ends of phrase are found in *Triumph of the Demon Gods* and the *Suite No. 1*, further demonstrating Stevens' employment of pitch centrality even in music that is intervallic in construction as well as highly chromatic.

Some of Stevens' compositions, however, do seem to exhibit a degree of function, or at least a considerable degree of harmonic centrality. *Elegy* is the most straight forward example of his writing functionally, a composition that features diatonic collections almost exclusively and even utilizes a key signature; This is Stevens' only composition to employ a notated key signature, and in fact one of only two unaccompanied tuba composition in this study to use a key signature (the other being the second movement of Miles' *Contraptions*). Stevens uses quartal/quintal harmonies in a linear fashion throughout this work, though in a way that supports the underlying diatonic tonality. The music is essentially ternary in construction, with the opening material returning towards the end of the composition. In the last eight measures

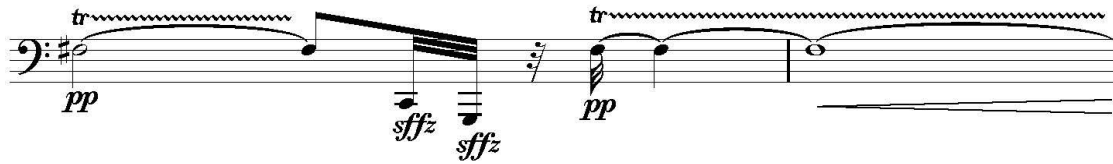


**Example 28:** Stevens, *Elegy* – Measures 56-59

Stevens outlines a [027] trichord consisting of {C, F, B-flat}. The way this passage is written strongly implies a dominant-tonic resolution ending the piece, despite outlining a quintal [027] pitch class (Example 28).

Form in John Stevens’ music is similarly varied between the different works for solo tuba. Three of his unaccompanied works are single movement, through-composed works: *Salve Venere*, *Salve Marte*; *Triumph of the Demon Gods*; and *Remembrance*. None of these works conform to a particular formal model, but rather emerge organically as the intervallic and pitch content develops. All three works use thematic and stylistic contrast to create formal sections of music. *Triumph of the Demon Gods* is defined by two contrasting musical sections that reflect the underlying juxtaposition of extra-musical content. Each section is defined as occurring in a particular register of the instrument, at a specific speed and tempo, and in a particular character. Furthermore, these contrasting elements are eventually thrust together, resulting in a musically depicted battle; this combination of the juxtaposed materials creates a new, third formal section in the music. This formal pattern occurs in *Remembrance* and *Salve Venere*, *Salve Marte* as well; Stevens initially defines form through the use of separate, contrasting sections of music reflecting different programmatic ideas. Eventually, Stevens develops this ideas by combining them into a new, third formal section. Thus, form in these works arises out of Stevens’ usage of contradictory materials.

Not all of Stevens’ compositions share this structure, however. *Elegy* continues to prove itself an outlier, in that it is a single-movement work without the aforementioned juxtaposed

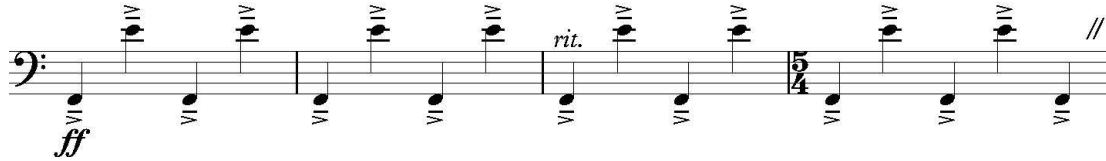


Example 29: Stevens, *Triumph of the Demon Gods* – Measure 53

elements. Rather, the music is straightforward in its formal design as an arch. The diatonic beautiful melody is introduced, then Stevens takes the music “off the rails” by suggesting different diatonic keys, altering the rhythmic content and calling for fluctuations in tempo. The music then winds down and returns to the opening material, creating a clear, ternary ABA form. Similarly, *Suite No. 1* is not a single movement through composed work but rather five short movements. As such, each movement tends to have a more clearly discernable structure, along the same lines as *Elegy*. *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* also features musical materials that serve as bookends, opening and closing the composition with the aforementioned quartel/quintal material.

John Stevens exploits the different registers of the tuba in a manner than can create polyphony, as has been shown previously with the other performer-composers examined. A crucial difference, however, is the reason for Stevens’ use of the technique. Whereas composers like Forbes and Miles create momentary polyphony through structural lines and do so to establish a contrasting texture for the solo tuba, I would argue that Stevens’ usage of the technique reflects his compositional preference for stark contrasts that create excitement. Measures 52-55 of *Triumph*, for instance, suggests two different voices in differing registers, but rather than coming off as polyphony, the music is simply a juxtaposition of extremely soft and loud music in different registers, evoking contrasting characters (Example 29). The “battle” scene in *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* starts at rehearsal I and, similarly, employs extreme intervallic leaps not to create a sense of two independent lines but rather to musical depict aggression within the context of a single melodic line (Example 30).





**Example 30:** Stevens, *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* - 9-6 measures before rehearsal letter L

One of John Stevens' most unique and interesting compositional techniques is his obscuring procedure, particularly as it applies to rhythm. In all five of his solo tuba compositions, he requires the tubist to perform quintuplet and septuplet rhythmic figures which obstruct the prevailing duple or triple meters. This is an example of what Stevens meant when he described taking the music "off the rails;" he establishes a somewhat stable sense of meter and then obscures it through these asymmetrical meters. Furthermore, he often juxtaposes metric subdivisions by requiring the play to perform one immediately after the other. Measure 46 of *Remembrance* illustrates this technique very well (Example 31). In 4/4 time, Stevens asks the tubist to shift from quintuplet eighth notes (with the first note omitted as a rest), then play three triplet eighth notes, followed by four sixteenth note. This is essentially a notated accelerando that is used to build excitement and disrupt the prevailing, simple triple meter. Stevens also achieves this disruption of meter and pulse by frequently changing meters and time signatures, especially in the developmental sections of his music.

Another tool used by Stevens to obscure rhythm is feathered beaming, a technique where the rhythmic values of repeated pitches are gradually shortened, in much the same manner that a crescendo gradually increases the volume of a pitch. The notation for feathered beaming is



**Example 31:** Stevens, *Remembrance* – Measure 46



*Example 32:* Stevens, *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* – Rehearsal G

itself very similar to that of crescendos and diminuendo, in essence functioning as a kind of rhythmic crescendo and diminuendo. This technique is employed in *Remembrance* as well as *Salve Venere, Salve Marte*; the feathered beaming in *Salve* occurs in the cadenza at letter G, very effectively creating a sense of “dialogue,” as Stevens marked in the score (Example 32). Of the four performer-composers examined in this study, John Stevens is the only composer to obscure rhythm so regularly and to employ feathered beams. The result of this approach is a fluid-like musical character where the music distinctly lacks a sense of metric stability present in works for solo tuba by other performer-composers.

Various extended techniques are called for in Stevens’ writing, though he limits himself to only a few for each composition. *Salve* requires the tubist to execute extended trills, while *Triumph of the Demon Gods* is more conservative in terms of extended techniques, only calling for trills. *Elegy* calls for no extended techniques whatsoever, likely owing to its conservative approach and target audience. Stevens’ *Suite No. 1 in Five Movements* calls for mutes,  $\frac{1}{2}$  valved tones, and glissandi, while *Remembrance* calls for glissandi and multiphonics (Example 33). The multiphonics employed in *Remembrance* in many ways correspond to Grant Harville’s use of the technique. In both instances, an extended section of music is comprised of multiphonics, as opposed to being limited to a single measure. Like Harville, Stevens treats the sung voice with a



*Example 33:* Stevens, *Remembrance* – Measures 112-117

degree of independence from the tuba, but unlike Harville the tuba itself is changing pitch as well, instead of functioning as a harmonic pedal.

## CHAPTER 6

### COMMONALITIES AND DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE PERFORMER-COMPOSERS

Having discussed each of the four American performer-composers (Mike Forbes, Grant Harville, Ben Miles, and John Stevens) in detail, the next step is to compare them to one another in terms of their compositional approaches, the musical techniques and devices they employ, and how their experiences as performers influence their approach to composition.

Compositional influences vary considerably among the different composers, with some composers listing more influences than others, and some not naming any compositional influences at all. Nevertheless, commonalities do exist between the four composers. Forbes, Miles, and Stevens all cite Igor Stravinsky as a general compositional influence, and both Stevens and Miles cite Vincent Persichetti's *Serenade No. 12 for Solo Tuba* as a particular influence on their approach to writing music for unaccompanied tuba. Another interesting similarity is found between Grant Harville and John Stevens, both of whom assert that they are influenced by everything they hear and hesitate to point out particular compositional influences. All four composers generally strive to write music in their own personal style, rather than mimicking that of other composers exclusively. They all share the trait of being conscious of some, but not all, of their compositional characteristics.

There is considerable variety in how the different performer-composers approach writing music for tuba alone, in terms of compositional process and tools used. All four composers generally engage in limited pre-planning before composing a piece. This pre-planning varies from composer to composer but can involve a vague sense of important intervallic or

motivic content, musical structure form, as well as clear extra-musical ideas in the specific case of programmatic pieces. Intervallic writing is prevalent in most of the unaccompanied tuba music examined, with each composer highlighting particular intervals and pitch class cells that saturate the musical surface and structure. The tritone is important in the works by Stevens, Harville, and Miles; while Mike Forbes also utilizes the tritone melodically and structurally, he shows a particular interest in the minor third in *The Grumpy Troll* and the semitone in *Polar Vortex*.

Structurally, each composer demonstrates a concern for form and musical structure. This sometimes entails a pre-conceived notion of large-scale structure, such as Grant Harville emulating the Baroque suite in his *Suite in B-flat Minor*. That being said, the form of a finished work typically results of an organic compositional approach where the music is composed from one note to the next, moving from the beginning to the end of a piece. All four of the performer-composers describe avoiding the imposition of musical structure at the outset; instead, form emerges naturally as a result of the composers' process and general sense for where they want the music to go. Mike Forbes asserts that much of his music formally resembles a rondo, even though he does not set out to write in rondo form; it is a function of compositional and musical influences from his youth, particularly popular genres like 80s rock that utilized song and verse form, which is a type of rondo.<sup>68</sup> John Stevens describes form in his music emerging naturally out of his forward-building compositional process, rather than through the selection of a particular form to write in.<sup>69</sup>

For several of the composers, the forward-building, organic approach to composing entails the use of a very specific technique when they compose: improvisation. Forbes, Harville, and Miles all describe the process of fleshing out a few pre-determined musical materials into the

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<sup>68</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 95).

<sup>69</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 129-130).

broader composition. The medium of this improvisation varies between the tuba, the keyboard, and notation software, but the underlying commonality is that these composers develop pre-determined intervallic and pitch content into larger motivic and structural ideas within their musical compositions.

Interestingly, though each performer-composer is an accomplished performer on the tuba, they differ considerably in terms of how they use the tuba in their compositional process, though their experiences as tubists generally influence their approach in a similar way. Each performer-composer, when writing for the tuba, naturally benefits from the experience of playing the tuba; their experiences performing on the instrument provide a contextual knowledge of difficulty and idiomatic concerns for the tuba. Several composers describe their compositional approaches as being concerned with the “player’s perspective.” John Stevens asserts that he tries to think like a performer when composing, and likewise think like a composer when he performs. He has an intimate knowledge of the tuba and particularly what it feels like to play the instrument; when writing music for tuba alone, he uses this knowledge to inform his writing.<sup>70</sup> Mike Forbes described similar concerns, approaching writing for the tuba from his personal perspective as a performer and understanding the idiomatic dimensions of the music he writes for it.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, even when they aren’t consciously aware of it, these tuba players utilize their knowledge as a performer on the tuba when they create music for the tuba.

Despite these underlying commonalities, several particular approaches to writing for solo tuba have been described in this paper. One approach is exemplified by Mike Forbes, who composes almost completely at the tuba before moving to notation software. When writing for the tuba, Forbes favors the tuba in his compositional process because of the freedom it allows in

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<sup>70</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 126).

<sup>71</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 83-84).

his improvisational process and the way it informs his approach of what notes and figures sound good on the instrument. His technical ability as a tubist is greater than his ability as a pianist, thus it makes sense for him to improvise at the tuba. On the other hand, Grant Harville's approach, while also entailing improvisation, occurs exclusively at the keyboard and notation software; he has never composed at the tuba, even when writing his solo works for the instrument. He states that, for him, the improvisational process is easier at the piano than at the tuba, and that he doesn't have to have the tuba in hand to understand the idiomatic and technical limitations of the instrument.<sup>72</sup> Ben Miles describes his process as beginning at the keyboard, followed by notation software, though unlike Harville he utilizes the tuba towards the end of his process in order to check for idiomatic issues.<sup>73</sup> Despite each composer's common background and knowledge as a performer on the tuba, their personal approaches to composition utilize the tuba in different ways.

There are several different audiences and reasons for composing evident by this group of performer-composers. Some compositions are written by the performer-composer for themselves, so serve as a solo vehicle and written with specific regards to their own capabilities as a performer. Examples of this include Forbes' *The Grumpy Troll*, Miles' *Contraptions*, Harville's *Suite in B-flat Minor*, and Stevens' *Suite no. 1 for Solo Tuba*. Other compositions are written as commissions, with other players in mind. *Polar Vortex* by Mike Forbes is an example of this, written for an adult amateur performer in Wisconsin and composed with his abilities in mind;<sup>74</sup> this is evidenced by Forbes' composing the work for contrabass tuba rather than bass tuba, and with a markedly lower difficulty level than that of *The Grumpy Troll*. Several of John

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<sup>72</sup> Harville, interview (Appendix B, p. 107).

<sup>73</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 116).

<sup>74</sup> Forbes, interview (Appendix A, p. 81).

Stevens' solo tuba compositions (*Salve Venere*, *Salve Marte*; *Triumph of the Demon Gods*; and *Remembrance*) are commissions as well, written with specific regards to other performers. *Salve Venere*, *Salve Marte*, for example, was written specifically for Roger Bobo and his capabilities as a tubist.<sup>75</sup>

In other cases, unaccompanied tuba solos are written for an academic or scholarly context. Grant Harville's *Caprice for Solo Tuba* originated as an assignment from a composition class, to write a short composition with contrasting sections. He returned to the work subsequently and worked to improve it, eventually publishing it in the ITEA journal as part of the Gem series. Similarly, John Stevens' *Elegy* was written specifically for the ITEA journal and featured in the Gem series. Ben Miles' *Perspectives* was written as part of his dissertation, meant to address an underrepresented portion of the tuba's solo repertoire: solos for advanced high school and young undergraduate tubists.<sup>76</sup> As such, Miles constructed the composition with particular technical limitations in mind, unlike his *Contraptions* which were written with himself in mind and reflected his abilities as a performer.

Both programmatic and absolute music is evident in the unaccompanied compositions for tuba by these four American performer-composers. Some composers demonstrate a preference for programmatic content in their music, particularly Mike Forbes and John Stevens. Both Forbes and Stevens tend to write music for the solo tuba that is meant to express clear extra-musical ideas, though both composers emphasize that this program is not a literal, descriptive program in the tradition of Hector Berlioz. They aren't depicting an extra-musical narrative that the listener can follow, but rather are suggesting the moods and characters of extra-musical ideas such as grumpy trolls, polar vortexes, or battles between angels and demons. Grant

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<sup>75</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 126).

<sup>76</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 113).



Harville, on the other hand, writes strictly absolute music for the solo tuba. This isn't to say that he doesn't write programmatically, because he certainly does; it's just that his unaccompanied solos for the tuba happen to be absolute compositions, written out of a desire to try new things compositionally and not to express any particular extra-musical content.

Ben Miles demonstrates flexibility in his solo works for tuba, composing both programmatic and absolute works. Like Forbes and Stevens, his programmatic work *Contraptions* is meant to suggest the moods and characters of extra-musical ideas, specifically five contraptions including hot air balloons, roller coasters, bulldozers, and conveyor belts.<sup>77</sup> The first movement of *Contraptions*, "Pulleys, Gears, Cogs and Levers," was the first movement Miles wrote and was inspired by a life-sized recreation of the game Mousetrap. Also like Stevens and Forbes, Miles is not depicting a specific narrative that the audience can follow via text; he is simply creating music that reflects the emotions and character of each contraption being depicted. It is worth noting that John Stevens technically has written both programmatic and absolute music, as his *Elegy* is a strictly absolute composition; the music expresses no programmatic content and is meant simply to be a beautiful melody.<sup>78</sup> However, this composition is something of an outlier, as his other four works for solo tuba are programmatic in nature and arguably better reflect his compositional style in general.

In terms of musical analysis, these unaccompanied compositions lend themselves to set-class theory first and foremost. Harmonic collections and centricity do occur in many of the works, but generally speaking the compositions are constructed in an intervallic manner, with particular intervals and pitch-class trichords and tetrachords featuring prominently on the musical surface and within the musical structure. The solo tuba compositions by Ben Miles and

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<sup>77</sup> Miles, interview (Appendix C, p. 114-115).

<sup>78</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 124).

Grant Harville, particularly *Contraptions* and *Suite in B-flat Minor*, also contain significant usage of structural octatonicism.

Harmonic collections of various types are present in these unaccompanied works for tuba, with chromaticism being a particularly prominent example. Though none of the music is serial or even freely atonal (as discussed previously, pitch centricity features prominently in this music), chromatic subsets and even complete scales appear in many of the works discussed. Chromaticism is prominent in Mike Forbes' *Polar Vortex*, owing to the role of the minor 9<sup>th</sup> as a kernel interval from which the music is constructed; this interval is an [01] semitone displaced by an octave, and the chromatic scales employed by Forbes can be understood as resulting from compositional augmentation of this structural semitone. Grant Harville's *Caprice for Solo Tuba* employs notable chromatic subsets in third section, particularly in measures 25-33, despite being constructed mostly in an intervallic, non-tonal manner. Ben Miles' use of the chromatic scale is more subtle than either Forbes or Harville. *Perspectives* features some notable chromatic subsets that are created structurally via sequence, and the final section of music does emphasize the interval of the semitone. Chromatic scales appear melodically throughout *Contraptions* but most notably in the middle sections of the first and fourth movements. Generally speaking, Miles uses the chromatic scale in *Contraptions* to interrupt what is a largely diatonic and octatonic harmonic texture. John Stevens' compositional language is highly chromatic, with chromatic subsets appearing melodically and structurally. The Mars sections in *Salve Venere*, *Salve Marte* demonstrate melodic chromaticism, featuring notable chromatic subsets which result from continuous motion by half-step. In *Suite No. 1* and *Remembrance*, however, we see musical passages consisting of a mixture of semitones and other melodic intervals, and in particular frequent leaps into different registers of the instrument. Looking at the total pitch content in the

musical structure of these passages, however, reveals substantial subsets of the aggregate operating underneath the musical surface.

Octatonicism and diatonicism also appear frequently in these compositions, both individually and as a pair. For example, Forbes' *The Grumpy Troll* strongly implies octatonicism through the development of the [0235] kernel tetrachord, which is a four-note octatonic subset later expanded to a five-note subset with the [01346] pentachord material beginning in measure 26. On the other hand, Harville combines octatonicism and diatonicism quite effectively in his *Suite in B-flat Minor*. Harville deliberately evokes a sense of tonality by emphasizing the tertian, diatonic B-flat minor triad throughout the work. However, this sense of the piece being in the diatonic key of B-flat minor is obstructed by frequent mode alteration that create pitches outside of the expected diatonic scale. This alternation is the result of Harville's use of octatonic collections; in his own words, the title "*Suite in B-flat Octatonic*" would have been more apt. Harville is utilizing octatonic collections, but in a manner that deliberately evokes a tertian sense of harmonic centrality. Thus, Harville's octatonicism is quite unique in that it deliberately suggests tertian diatonicism.

Ben Miles' *Contraptions* makes interesting usage of the octatonic and diatonic collections, employing pitch-class subsets common to both collections to create a sense of conflict between the two. The first eight measures of the first movement, for instance, highlight the conflicting harmonic collections through chromatic instability of the pitches A and E. The shifting back and forth between A-flat and A-natural, and to a lesser extent E-flat and E-natural, determines whether the music is octatonic or diatonic at a given moment. Similarly, scale passages in the third movement freely alternate between suggesting octatonic and diatonic collections, again benefiting from the pitch class subsets common to both collections. John

Stevens employs octatonicism and diatonicism at various points in his solo tuba compositions, typically in a very fluid-like manner. He is able to move very quickly between harmonic collections, as previously discussed in the Venus section of *Salve Venere, Salve Marte*. That being said, Stevens does also establish octatonic and diatonic passages that are somewhat stable and consistent. The first twelve measures of *Remembrance*, for instance, strongly suggest octatonicism through his development of the opening [013] trichord. *Elegy*, on the other hand, is predominantly diatonic in its construction.

Another harmonic collection utilized in some of these works, albeit to a lesser extent, is the acoustic scale. This collection is implied particularly strongly in Harville's *Suite in B-flat Minor*, but also is notably present in the second movement of Miles' *Contraptions*. The collection arises differently with each composer. In the *Suite*, Harville employs the acoustic scale as a contrasting structural element to the octatonic diatonicism discussed previously. For example, the fifth movement is a clear ternary form, where the A section is octatonic and the B section is acoustic. The reason Harville pairs these two collections together, not surprisingly, is their shared intervallic content. The octatonic and acoustic scales share a [023568] hexachord, and it is this underlying intervallic overlap that helps explain why the two collections work so well together, particularly in the third movement of the *Suite*. In the case of Miles and *Contraptions*, the appearance of the acoustic collection might not be what it seems to be. In his construction of the second movement, Miles described being limited by the diatonic collection he was composing within. He found the music to be too tonal, and decided to try and obscure this tonality through the use of borrowed tones which appear throughout the movement, most importantly the raised 4<sup>th</sup>, flat 7<sup>th</sup> and sometimes flat 3<sup>rd</sup> scale degrees. Thus, the acoustic collections which appear in this movement can be explained as a result of Miles' usage of mode

alteration and his desire to obscure diatonic tonality to which he found himself cohering to too strongly.

In terms of linear process, John Stevens' music stands somewhat apart from the other performer-composers. His music is almost exclusively monophonic, consisting of a single melodic and structural line. This reflects Stevens' desire to create music that resembles a dramatic monologue or soliloquy;<sup>79</sup> his music for solo tuba is always meant to convey a single melodic line, rather than multiple voices competing for the listener's attention. When Stevens juxtaposes contrasting musical or extra-musical elements, this conflict is never intended to suggest the functioning of different melodies simultaneously but rather than rapid alternation between these contrasting idioms. The extended section of multiphonics at the end of *Remembrance* is largely monophonic in texture, reinforcing the idea that there is still only one melody functioning in the music. Stevens' disruption of rhythm is another characteristic unique to his music, achieved through a combination of quintuplet/septuplet rhythmic notation, metric modulation, and, most importantly, feathered beaming.

With the music of Forbes, Harville, and Miles, there is a deliberate attempt to create textural variety through specific linear techniques. One of the most important linear techniques employed by these three performer-composers is multiple-line technique, wherein the illusion of polyphony is created through the use of multiple contrasting structural lines in the music. Typically this will entail music that is leaping between two different registers, outlining a distinct musical line in each voice. For example, Harville, Miles, and Forbes all imply polyphony through the juxtaposition of a moving voice that outlines some sort of harmonic collection with another voice functioning as a pedal. In *Contraptions*, Miles also momentarily creates a two-

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<sup>79</sup> Stevens, interview (Appendix D, p. 127).

voice texture where both voices are moving; in measures 49-50 of the fifth movement, he alternates between a descending chromatic scale in the upper voice and a lower voice emphasizing the [013] trichord. It is worth noting that Stevens' unaccompanied works feature passages with frequently occurring wide intervallic leaps as well. The difference, however, is that Stevens is not implying separate musical lines that juxtapose to one another. Rather, the intervallic leaps function to emphasize a single important interval, often the semitone, through the use of octave displacement.

Another method for creating polyphony, employed exclusively by Mike Forbes, is the removal of the 4<sup>th</sup> valve slide to create a secondary timbre. This extended technique, utilized extensively in *The Grumpy Troll*, expands upon the previously discussed multiple line technique by introducing a variance of timbre. As seen at measure 23, the two structural lines are separated not only by register and counterpoint (pedal point vs [0235] statements) but also by tone color and volume. Starting in measure 88 the alternate timbre is employed within a monophonic context as well, allowing Forbes to continue to highlight the minor third interval within a largely chromatic melodic context.

The use of extended techniques is quite varied in the works by these performer composers. Some utilize a multiple of extended techniques, whereas others focus solely on one or two. In addition to the aforementioned slide removal technique, Mike Forbes also calls for tongue-stopped pitches in *The Grumpy Troll*, as well as trills, glissandi and half-valved pitches in *Polar Vortex*; Forbes is also the only performer-composer in this group to employ the tongue-stop technique. Grant Harville, with the exception of multiphonics, doesn't employ extended techniques at all in his writing for solo tuba. Ben Miles' solo tuba compositions demonstrate an emphasis on more traditional techniques rather than experimental one; his music calls for trills,

flutter tonguing, limited multiphonics, and multiple tonguing. John Stevens, by virtue of the sheer number of solo compositions for tuba he has written, calls for numerous extended techniques. These include multiphonics, glissandi and half-valved pitches, trills, and mutes. Though not extended techniques, Stevens' use of feathered beaming is particularly noteworthy, as he is the only performer-composer in this study to employ it and uses it quite frequently to disrupt and obscure rhythm in his music.

Multiphonics are treated in several distinct ways by performer-composers on the tuba. Ben Miles and Mike Forbes limit their use of multiphonics to a single measure in one of their compositions, specifically *Contraptions* and *The Grumpy Troll*. Stevens and Harville, on the other hand, write extended sections calling for multiphonics in *Remembrance* and *Caprice*, respectively. Beyond this, each composer's treatment of multiphonics as a technique differs slightly. Ben Miles calls for a single note to be harmonized via multiphonics; an A-flat is played, with a C sung at the interval of a major 10<sup>th</sup> above. Similarly, Forbes also calls for multiphonics at the interval of a major 10<sup>th</sup>, but does so to emphasize the ascending quartel [0257] figure that occurs repeatedly in *The Grumpy Troll*. Thus, Forbes creates a homophonic texture where the tuba and voice move in parallel motion. When Stevens calls for multiphonics at the end of *Remembrance*, the texture created is mostly homophonic, but the intervals between the played and sung pitch are not consistent. Thus, Stevens creates a greater sense of independence between the tuba and the voice while maintaining an essentially monophonic texture with one melody. Grant Harville's approach to multiphonics differs from the other three composers in that he emphasizes the voice over the tuba in terms of importance. In the numerous multi-phonics sections of *Caprice*, Harville has the tubist produce a drone on F while singing motivic material above. In the texture that results, the tuba is clearly subordinate to the voice. The tubist is forced

to sing against the drone at a variety of intervals, many of which are quite dissonant and therefore difficult to produce.

Formally speaking, there are some interesting commonalities and differences between the four performer-composers of tuba repertoire. All four composers generally indicate transitions from one musical section to another explicitly, through pauses or fermate, as well as through changes in tempo, character and dynamic. Stevens, Harville, and Miles have all written compositions in multiple movements (*Suite No. 1*, *Suite in B-flat Minor*, and *Contraptions*, respectively); these works tend to employ simple formal structures such as variation, ternary and symmetrical forms. Even *Perspectives* by Ben Miles is simply a four-in-one form, with short interludes between certain sections. The unaccompanied works of Forbes and some by Stevens (*Salve*, *Triumph*, and *Remembrance*), on the other hand, are through-composed in their construction, and belie simple formal classifications. Though these compositions also feature clear musical pauses, the overall shape of the compositions are more opaque and difficult to discern; they are more dramatic and improvisatory in character.

#### Concluding Remarks

Performer-composers in Western art music have greatly contributed to the solo repertoire of numerous instruments, and this paper demonstrates that the tuba is one of them. The four American performer-composers addressed – Mike Forbes, Grant Harville, Ben Miles, and John Stevens – have created new additions to the unaccompanied repertoire for tuba, each of which reflects the concerns and considerations of tuba players. Some of these compositions are directed at a particular skill level and audience within the community of tuba players, while others are vehicles for the virtuoso composer themselves. The former are conservative in approach and designed to appeal to younger players, whereas the latter deliberately “push the



envelope” of what is possible on the instrument, and are influenced by the composer’s experience as a performer.

The examinations of the compositions in this document will be useful to tuba players and composers alike. For performers, this paper contains information useful for developing an informed musical interpretation of these works. For tuba pedagogues with students studying this repertoire, the aforementioned information will prove useful in guiding the student. For tuba players who are themselves interested in writing compositions for the tuba, this paper documents the approaches four different tubists have used when composing for the tuba. Composers at large can benefit from the information presented in this document, as several compositional techniques employed by tubists are discussed, with particular regards to how each composer employs the same techniques in similar or different ways. This paper demonstrates that the tuba is one of the numerous instruments in western art music to have benefitted from the contributions of performer-composers to solo repertoire for their instrument.

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## **Appendix A: Interview with Mike Forbes**

ITEC Conference, Bloomington Indiana – 5/22/2014

David McLemore: **How would you describe your compositional approach in general terms?**

Mike Forbes: Let me get my gears going this morning, think a little bit. I've been in player mode here for so long, and I guess that is part of it is, my compositional approach is that of, and John Stevens may have said very similar things, from the player's perspective. Maybe he did, maybe he didn't. I think so often some composers, especially ones not necessarily in our discipline but, you know, the big lofty composers in the world, they maybe took piano lessons or they can play the guitar, but for the most part they've been removed from a large ensemble. They don't play in a band, they don't play in an orchestra, they don't play chamber music. And they literally compose music based on their thoughts and ideas. With that comes great originality, but with that often comes great impracticality. And I like to think of myself as writing stuff that people can really relate to and play with a certain degree of ease. Of course I want to push the envelope and everything, but I definitely come at my composition from a player's perspective.

Compositionally, just like I tell my composition students, I'm trying to communicate emotions, in some way or another. Those non-verbal communications is what this is all about. Now if I'm a player, I'm gonna communicate that emotion through the art that's already been written on the page. If I'm a composer, well then I'm writing the script, and that script to me is both very liberating, in that you get to do whatever you want, and also incredibly difficult, because it is sort of this blank slate. And there are days where I don't feel anything, I literally maybe dealt with my kids in the morning, taking them to school, and I ran some errands, took care of some

groceries, some laundry, and I'm like "I don't have any feelings to write today, it's just a terrible day of errand running." And no one wants to hear the music that comes out of that. And then there are days, my wife works very early, she gets up at 4:45 and is out the door and sometimes I'm right up there with her. She leaves, I get my cup of coffee and I'm off, and the next 6 hours is writing bliss and I have all kinds of feelings and emotions that come about for who knows what reason, it could be the weather, like that storm we had last night for example, that's inspiring, or just the hot sunny days sometimes, it writes a certain sort of sound with me. Weather really influences my writing, I've discovered this actually more recently than ever. So yeah, I would say my compositional process and practice is to relate to audiences and to players right away, and give people something that they can, in some concrete way, really feel the emotion of what I'm trying to deliver through my communication through art. That's the goal.

**DB: Gotcha. Can you elaborate a little bit on your specific process, particularly at the outset of a piece?**

MF: Sure. Well first of all, most of the writing I do these days I do on commission, rarely do I write a piece just because I feel like it. I used to all the time, not anymore. I just have too many projects to do something I really want to do. Now that's not to say it doesn't happen. Just two days ago I was talking with Sergio Carolino, I'm gonna, just for fun, write a one minute fanfare type thing for Gene Pokorny with the Wild Bones Gang, just to showcase that sound. So there is a project I'm doing just for fun.

Back to the original question, my normal composition process starts with a commission, and that commission usually has some sort of parameters, whether it be a deadline, what type of ensemble I'm writing for, what type of instrument I'm writing for, and maybe what the style of the piece

is. If someone wants me to memorialize their dead mother, that's gonna be one type of piece; if they want me to write a fanfare, that's a totally different type of piece. So, a lot of the parameters are already setup from the outset, and then it's a matter of delivering. It's funny, you can have too many parameters and you can have not enough, you have to be right in that perfect window. I've had commissions where people were very specific about what they wanted, and sometimes the piece that results is just not me. I think a perfect example of that is one of my first commissions, a piece called *Tapestries*, which won the Harvey Phillips tuba solo composition award, and it was written for Andy Carlson. He just wanted a medieval tuba sonata. I like Renaissance music, I felt it was something I could write, and I did it, I think it was a pretty successful piece. But the piece, it's not ME; it's me in this cloak of medieval times, surrounded by castles and knights and kings, and trying to portray myself as sort of an actor as a composer. It's an interesting thing, if you are a player, you are an actor reading a script. But if you're a composer, in that cloak, in that different world, that's a strange place to be. So I don't think the art I created was 100% Mike Forbes, I think the art I created was this character that I stepped into. And that was a totally different process.

The majority of what I write is, usually, wind band commissions and they say "okay, my band is a grade 2 band, I want a piece that really features our percussion, please stay away from our double reads." So, then I'm really free artistically to do whatever I want, and that is pretty liberating. And then what happens for me is, I usually sit down at the piano, often, and I just improvise, I fool around for sometimes a good 4 hours, trying to come up with ideas and even start to develop them a little bit. So that's very important for my process, is that improvisation or "fiddling" around as I call it, but even before that, I gotta say it's very important for me to listen to new music written by other composers and not necessarily that of tuba music; we often listen

to a lot of tuba music, a lot of brass music, I try to definitely stretch out of that and listen to more orchestral stuff. My latest one is this guy named Michael Torke, he's a composer in Milwaukee. He has a number of orchestral pieces, he was in residence with the Baltimore Symphony. I just discovered him recently and his music just totally inspires me, makes me think "I wanna write like that." Or, I'll see a movie and I'll hear a soundtrack by Hans Zimmer and think "I wanna do that." So much of my music definitely has its cells in stuff I've heard, rarely do I get this sublime, singular, original thought that came from nowhere, I don't know if that happens for any composer. I think a lot of us reach out of what our influences are and then we try to develop those influences. A piece we're playing today with the Sotta Voce quartet, *Bridge*, this is a requiem for countertenor, the middle movement starts with an opening lick that comes from a Phillip Sparke brass band piece, and I just love that little lick. Now my piece is completely different harmonically and everything else, but that motive was sort of the cell that made the piece happen.

I guess what I'm saying is there is a whole different elements of process that goes into this, it's very much like cooking in the kitchen. There are so many things you can do and different influences, whether you saw this dessert on the tv or this thanksgiving dinner you heard on the radio, you are influenced by all these different ideas in the recipe for what you create.

**DM: Do you favor any particular harmonic structures, linear techniques, etc.?**

MF: Well, at the heart of everything, which is weird from the perspective of an unaccompanied tuba composition, my complete sort of compositional discovery and initial writing and teachings comes from counterpoint, hands down. Fux counterpoint is where I started, and unlike my colleagues in my theory classes who couldn't stand writing counterpoint, I loved it! There was something about it that just made sense, all these rules, which I didn't mind the rules, the rules

were actually nice because I could work in this framework of what it was. For me, counterpoint was really the beginning of my compositional process, in terms of how I'm gonna come up with lines. Now, when you write an unaccompanied piece you can't do counterpoint necessarily, unless you use multiphonics or something like that, which I have been known to do. But, the best part about that is thinking of multiple lines at the same time in an unaccompanied framework, and that is I think what makes a piece really interesting. If you think purely about one line or one scale, when you are talking about linear writing, you've gotta go somewhere with this and you have to have contrast. And the only place to find contrast is, in my mind, if I'm thinking of multiple voices, and I'm usually thinking two, sometimes three; never four as that gets too schizophrenic for me.

In terms of scales, well ... umm, no [laughs]. I'm not, I know there are composers who do that pretty successfully, my problem with writing of course in any kind of diatonic scale is that I automatically gravitate to keys. My theory knowledge is, I taught theory for years, and it is so strong in me that it's pretty restricting. If I'm in a key, if I'm in a scale, man, I can't leave that scale, I have a very difficult time being liberated from the scale. And even if the scale is a non-traditional scale, I still cohere to it too strongly for my own personal preference. So, I like to be a little bit freer and go more based, in *The Grumpy Troll*, for instance, that I didn't compose at the piano, I completely composed that at the tuba, because I wanted to be very much within the framework of what the F tuba can do, particularly my Yamaha, or any Yamaha for that matter. I have actually begun writing another unaccompanied piece, this time for the CC tuba. And again, I am composing at the CC tuba and picking essentially, the notes I choose initially come from what I think are my favorite notes on the instrument. Then, the intervals I want to portray, and I would say that intervallic writing is really what is at the heart of my music, whether it be



the minor third, the perfect fourth, the minor second, I develop these intervals. If I'm writing a piece about the minor second there will also be a major seventh as well, so the interval and its counterpart are huge in my writing. And I think that, if there were any theoretical analysis down the line, if you applied any kind of set theory, that might work because you are looking at intervals and set theory really identifies that element. And I wouldn't necessarily say they are pitch class sets, but if you look at the intervallic writing you will see a definite consistency in my writing. In *The Grumpy Troll* it is the minor 3<sup>rd</sup> in particular that is really prolific

**DM: With this new composition for CC tuba, is there an interval you have in mind with that as a kernel?**

MF: Yes, in that it is sort of a minor second with an octave displacement, so like a minor ninth. That seems to be the interval of choice in this one, and the name of this piece is called *Polar Vortex*, written for our wonderful winter. It was actually commissioned by this guy in Wyoming, who also commissioned this piece we're playing today, *Bridge*, this is the second time he's commissioned me. And this piece, it, you know, that polar vortex, you kind of imagine this cold, glacier-type air moving into, and it's very dramatic and haunting kind of experience, so that minor ninth has this intensity to it that is pretty cool. But then vortex is circular and spinning, and so there is a lot of whirlwindy-ish stuff going on in this storm of a piece. I'm about halfway done and it's coming along kind of slowly, I've run into a bunch of different projects this Spring. I gotta say, this is not normally how I like to do things, once I commit to a piece I like to go for it and get most of it finished in a shorter period of time. I find if I take a lot of breaks and stretch a piece out, it becomes too spread out, the ideas aren't so consistent, for me, maybe I'm too scatterbrained. Once I get some ideas, I wanna get those ideas on the page, develop those ideas, crank the piece out and within 2-3 days at most I'm done with it. So this one's a little weird, a

little different process for me. *Grumpy Troll* I wouldn't say I wrote in 2-3 days, but I had the general overall framework for the piece definitely in 2-3 days, and then it was a matter of coloring in the picture.

**DM: With both of these unaccompanied compositions, would you say that they are programmatic music or absolute music?**

MF: Let me start with absolute music. I did write an absolute piece once called *Four Miniatures*, you may have played it, for tuba quartet. It was on the ITEC 2004 competition, I wrote it for Roland and we just recorded it as well with Sotto Voce. It's definitely an absolute piece, no program, just writing music for music's sake, and I personally like it. I think from a compositional standpoint it makes a lot of sense compositionally, like how everything is developed, it's a Rubix Cube that just makes sense to me as the composer and hopefully to other composers and theoreticians. My colleagues in the quartet, however, say this is not one of my stronger pieces, so I think they feel like they need that program, or they would like that, because so much of my music is based on, again, communicating emotion. You take away a program, it's difficult to always communicate some kind of emotion that would mean something to somebody. But now, back to these two pieces. Definitely, I think an unaccompanied piece had darned well better be somewhat programmatic. Now, I think of the Penderecki *Capriccio*, and that's maybe not programmatic but you can put your own program in there, the middle section in particular, that waltz, has to mean something to somebody. So, I don't think that was absolute music necessarily, but there is no clear program. And a capriccio means to go where you want when you want, so it's sort of at your whim. And I think that piece has a lot of whimsical elements to it, but there is, of course, lots of good theoretical stuff going on in terms of the consistency of intervals.

Anyway, so I would say with my pieces, definitely. *The Grumpy Troll*, you can't help but think of this grumpy troll, I mean, that one, it may have started off as an idea where I ... I guess I came up with the low pedal stuff, I think I came up with that first, and then it reminded me of what a grumpy troll would sound like. With *Polar Vortex*, that started with the Polar Vortex, it was a bitter cold winter and I wanted to write something to express my feelings about that cold, and it was just so cold I couldn't believe it. And also the storms that go along with it.

**DM: Given your status as a composer of music for unaccompanied tuba and as a performer on tuba, what is the relationship between your compositional instincts and your experience as a performer? In other words, how do your experiences as a performer on tuba influence your compositional approach generally, and specifically with regards to your unaccompanied tuba compositions?**

MF: Right, I already touched on this in the very first question, I kinda talked about it. That is definitely how I compose, when I'm writing for tuba, I gotta stay, I start from the player's perspective right behind the mouthpiece. There are occasional times where I'm at the piano, trying to work out a motive or something like this, but then I'll even still bring that back to the tuba and make sure it's playable, make sure that it's idiomatic. Sometimes, if I just shift that a half step down, it lies a heck of a lot better, so we're gonna figure out a way to make that motive shift a half step down. So definitely coming at it from the player's perspective. And, you know, I think the most successful music, not always but for many instruments, is written by people who at least have a pretty close and intimate familiarity with that instrument. If I were to write, right now, a harp concerto that would be pretty much a disaster. I mean, I don't know anything about the harp, actually in many ways I'm struggling in many ways, right now I'm writing a piece for the Alabama Wind Ensemble right now that wants, he really wants a guitar in this thing. And I

don't know anything about guitar, so I've really had to kind of learn guitar. Of course you can write notes for a guitar, and a guitarist can play it, but if there's gonna be strumming, I've gotta know if it's going to be idiomatic to the fingers.

So a lot of learning going into that, and I think, in a way, if I can get on a soapbox again, there are so many young composers today who write these pieces and they have no clue what the strings are on the violin, they don't even know what the strings are. And they write these cross-bowings that don't work! They're writing these crazy notes because who knows why, maybe their scale determined that they had to write this note because of, maybe it's a double stop, and it's crossing a string. You can't do that doublestop! It's things like this that young composers do, even old composers, and it drives me crazy, because again you just have to step into the player's position for a second and you realize that this is impossible. Um, a classic example of this is Bela Bartok, writing that trombone gliss in the Concerto for Orchestra and it's impossible! Now, an octave higher, B to F, totally works! In that low range of the bass trombone, doesn't work, you can't get a B-natural to an F as a gliss.

Now, that's a perfect example we like to point out of a composer not knowing, but now we've got all kinds of different trombonists trying to figure out ways to get around that issue, but I think knowing the parts and knowing the instruments is crucial. I know it's hugely important to my band writing in particular. When I'm writing for middle school band in particular, I gotta know not only where these instruments, what these kid's, what these instrument's ranges are but what these kids can do on these instruments, in particular what are the first five notes that they learn. So I have literally an Essential Elements book for every instrument and I literally know what the first five notes are that they learn. So, I can write a piece that only plays those first five notes, and it's challenging but, it I then all of the sudden write a note the flute player has never

learned to finger, like a D-flat, they don't know how to finger a D-flat. So I leave that one out. Or a B natural for a brass instrument, oh my gosh, trombones in 7<sup>th</sup> position, this is a disaster. So I would say I come at my writing 100% from the player's side, and perhaps people down the road will say "I wish he would have liberated himself from that thought more" but tough, that's how I write, I definitely come at it from the player's perspective. And I think that that's really very successful.

The only other caveat is that, my great friend and colleague Roland Szentpali also comes at it from a player's perspective, and let's just face it, he is one hell of a player. And uh, so the stuff he writes HE can play, but not many others can play. Over the years I've gotten much better, and I continue to get better, at writing at the level, you know, if it's gonna be grade 6 or grade 5 or whatever, I'm gonna write that level. And there are times, like with *Grumpy Troll*, where I'm just going all out, but even then I don't find *Grumpy Troll* to be very difficult. There are some challenging parts you have to figure out, but it's not something where you don't have the chops for it. I mean there is a high B in there but it's optional, I think I put in there. And when you take the pipe out anyway it's easy to pop that high B. I'm not trying to write music that is trying to stretch anybody out, my goal is completely, again, emotional communication, and that moment is meant to be haunting and this sort of distant hunting call, off in the distance of a tritone. It's really soft, and you know if it's not gonna be really soft, and if it's gonna be a struggle for the player then I would just rather not have that note come out. So we won't even attempt it, that's why I put in parenthesis if possible. So, yeah, from the player's perspective 100%

**DM: Do you compose music for unaccompanied tuba with specific regards to your own capabilities as a performer?**

MF: Yes, yes. Of course we want to push the envelope, and this *Polar Vortex* piece is definitely not pushing the envelope, in terms of overall, this is not gonna be the world's hardest CC tuba piece, unlike Roland's *Visions* which he performed yesterday, that was pretty difficult. My piece was meant to be written for this guy in Wyoming, again who is an older gentleman, who wants to play in concerts and things, but the idea is that I'm going to publish it with Kendor music and it will be for high school kids. My goal in some ways with Kendor, my relationship with them is, I've taken over from where David Uber and Art Frackenpohl left off, they were their low brass guys. So, I'm trying to fill those shoes, it's very big shoes to fill, but one of the things I thought Frackenpohl did very well was to write unaccompanied tuba pieces that high school students would enjoy, that were still somewhat challenging, and somewhat interesting, but not beyond the realm of possibility. I remember being in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade and playing a Frackenpohl piece, I don't remember which one, it's an unaccompanied piece in five movements, there's a rag in it, it's a bunch of different light type pieces, but it's not easy, not a walk in the park for a high school kid. So, this *Polar Vortex* is very much the same level, and I'm actually writing it very much influenced by the Clinard unaccompanied work for solo euphonium, the sonata for unaccompanied euphonium by Fred Clinard. It's a three movement work, but it's at this level that is perfect for a freshman or sophomore jury, it's just perfect for that. And I like that piece a lot, and I want a tuba piece that is similar to that and that is sorta what I'm going for.

**DM: Do you compose these pieces for yourself as a performer, or for others?**

MF: Right, definitely everything I write for tuba I am going to play at some point, I'm never writing anything that I would not play. That would be kinda weird. You know, we all need repertoire, why not play my own. I was actually, I have an idea for a sonata, and I hadn't had a commission yet and I really wanna, I've never written a sonata so I thought maybe I should write

it and I was just gonna say commissioned by Mike Forbes. I thought that'd be pretty funny. So, no, I had a nice chat with both Sergio and Pat Sheridan recently, so there is a sonata in the works and it'll probably be for one of those two guys. We'll figure out how that's gonna work. Yeah, I definitely write to my own ability but also to that player, you know, if I'm writing a piece for Sergio I know what Sergio can do, and so, and I know what Pat Sheridan can do, and I also know what Pat Sheridan does very well. There are certain elements of his playing that I really, really admire, so I'm gonna write my piece to really show those elements.

Back to this idea of writing to your level though. I do, of course, have to come up with piano writing to go along with tuba solos, not in unaccompanied stuff but in regular pieces. Yeah, I play piano and took piano lessons for 12 years, back in high school, so I have a definite, I'm not by any means a great pianist, but I can make it work. I gotta say though, for the most part, my piano accompaniment writing is severely limited by my own piano technique. It's so hard to break free, that is a challenge I am currently working on. I wanna write a piece that sounds more pianistic, and what I end up writing is stuff I can play, because I am literally playing it as I compose it. Now um, one way around this is I often write, like in the case of *Tapestries*, I wrote the piece for band and then I reduced the band to piano, and then I got, I think, slightly more pianistic type writing because I'm covering a flute part here, that's a challenge. Yeah, that's a trick though, to be able to write for an instrument that, you know, I don't really play at a professional level, and yet I wanna write at a professional level. But, that said, like anything else you work at it, you can do it. That's kinda where I'm at with my piano writing, I'm really getting much better at it. And I gotta say, every pianist I've worked with, whose played my stuff, has been very complimentary about my writing, about how pianistic it is, and how it fits the hand really well, and they say you must play piano, because of the way my writing is. I think

Hindemith played piano too, but my goodness, what did he do?! Or Alec Wilder, there's another one, my God that Effie suite! That piano part is insane, there's no way Alec coulda played that. So there's a thing, where he just went overboard, it's just crazy. Vaughan Williams is another piano accompaniment, you know, that is insane, but that's just a reduction. But boy, wouldn't it be nice if there were an actual piano accompaniment, but who knows, I don't think Vaughan Williams probably wrote that; it was probably done for him by an orchestrator, or nowadays people just use a program to make the reduction, which is insane.

That's a thing, in our world, that we need to get a little better at. Trumpet players I've noticed are doing this, you know Tony Plog wrote a trumpet, must have been a concerto, and then there was a reduction, and then players have made an arrangement of the reduction. And this is the new trend, and I think the Vaughan Williams should be done like that as well. The Vaughan Williams is so difficult, there's a version out there for woodwind quintet, by an anonymous arrangement. But it's a great way around that issue of having to even do, and let's face it, when is the Vaughan Williams being played? It's not being played at this conference for the most part, and if it is it's gonna be played with the orchestra or band. So, if it's gonna be played, it's probably gonna be played by a college student who is surrounded by other college students; why not do a woodwind quintet reduction, or something like this, and get some friends involved, make chamber music. It's so much more energizing, more fun, the audience enjoys it, they get to hear the Bassoon play the basslines, and you know it's just a totally different experience than hearing just another piano and tuba piece. So, I try to do that as well, most of my pieces that aren't unaccompanied, I usually have multiple accompaniments. The *David and Goliath* is a perfect example, dear God, I have it now for string quintet, which is chamber orchestra essentially, trombone choir, for euphonium with tuba ensemble, for tuba with tuba ensemble, and now tuba and piano. And the



tuba and piano version, I think, works pretty well, I'm pretty happy with it. Whereas John Stevens' *Sisyphus*, you know, his is more of a reduction, he kinda just took the tuba and euphonium parts and put them in the piano, and it almost works more in a rehearsal scenario rather than in a performance scenario, I think he would say the same thing I'm saying now. I've talked to him about it, he's not convinced of the success of that piano reduction.

**DM: Which composers do you feel have influenced your work?**

MF: Well, the *Grumpy Troll*, definitely the Penderecki. And specifically talking about my unaccompanied stuff, um yeah, I hear a lot of Penderecki in there, I hear not necessarily *Fnugg* but there's a, man, *Fnugg* is so captivating, from a listener's perspective. I definitely wanted the *Grumpy Troll* to be just as captivating, and I think it more or less is. Umm, the valve out, empty thing, you know, there is a trumpet piece that does this as well, never heard it so that was not an influence on me, I don't even remember the name of the composer who did that, but there is a piece for trumpet that involves not playing with the 2<sup>nd</sup> valve slide. So it exists, but that was just a completely fresh and new idea, well by accident, the tube fell out haha.

**DM: I was gonna ask you this, so that was the origin of having the slide pulled in *The Grumpy Troll*? Was that your tuning slide fell out?**

MF: Right, fell out, yeah because they're very loose, you know, and the horn sits on the bell and so, one day, it fell out onto the carpet so I didn't hear it. And then I picked up my tuba and just started playing a scale or whatever it was, and when I hit the note that was missing the slide you get, it made such an interesting sound and I started to mess around and improvise with that. And then kinda figure out where to go from there. So, kind of an accidental situation. But yeah, Penderecki for sure in that case. In general, oh and *Polar Vortex* is definitely influenced by John Stevens by the way, it kinda has that *Triumph of the Demon Gods* sound to it at times. Not

because I wanted to but just, you know, John of course a huge influence on me and my writing, so yeah I hear many influence from him.

But my huge influences, like many other composers, are Stravinsky and Bartok and those guys. Also, huge influence from Steve Reich; minimalism and that kinda vibe is definitely in my music. Kind of much further out, and more distant, is Pat Metheny; that type of style and sound is definitely in my ear as well. Edward Gregson, the British brass band scene, for the most part, Phillip Sparke, these guys, you know, you can't not have that influence if you're a brass player in this day and age. You're gonna hear that stuff and its gonna affect you. So, those are my main influences I'd say, at this stage in the game, in 2014.

**DM: With regards to each of your unaccompanied tuba compositions, what was your compositional process?**

MF: The kernel, I always start with a cell and I develop from there. I mean, I teach that in my composition lessons, I've worked with high school and middle school kids on composition, the main thing we worked on was getting cells, getting developed ideas, or rather getting very simple ideas and then developing those ideas. Putting them upside down, putting them up high, putting them down low, putting them very slow, augmented rhythm, putting them very close, diminutive rhythms, changing that cell and then developing from these is definitely my M.O. as a composer. Um, so, with *Grumpy Troll* I was more governed then by, as you said, a program. In my mind, I wasn't specifically depicting a troll being grumpy, that's, how do you define that? You know, so it's not like a Berlioz program, but instead just a general idea and different portrayals of that emotion.

**DM: How do you go about selecting the musical ideas and constructs employed in each composition?**

MF: So, yeah, we did kinda hit on this already. I would say two things. One: I would say improvising on the tuba, coming up with motives that way. I can't say enough about the importance of fiddling around and improvising at your instrument, or at the piano perhaps, or at the voice. There is another little process I guess I should mention that I, often, you get ideas that, for the craziest times in the day and you don't know why, sometimes I'm driving my car and I get this idea, I'll whip out my phone and I'll record it on a voice message, you know in a voice text or recording. And I just sing it, sometimes there's no pitch, sometimes it's just rhythm. Or sometime there is pitch but it's not specific pitches. Definitely do that a lot, actually on my phone I probably have 8 or 10 of these sitting there, of ideas that I wanna get across that I think have some potential for growth. That's a real tool I think, back in the old days they did this too, you just had to grab a piece of parchment and a quill and quickly write down their idea. For us, we just grab our iPhone and sing it, you know, but that idea I think is crucial, to start with that cell and get it in any way that it comes.

**DM: Do you favor particular musical forms or formal elements? If so, at what point in the compositional process do you generate these components?**

MF: Yes! That's a great question, and when I was a student I dealt with this a lot. Like, do composers say "okay, I'm gonna set out to write a rondo form or a binary" you know, do composers think like that? Well, of course back in the olden days they did. I mean, they knew "okay, I'm writing a dance form" piece, it's gonna be this, this, it's all scripted, what their forms are gonna be. Obviously in the 21<sup>st</sup> century now, we write at our whims, you know, most everything we write are capriccios these days, because the form is much, you know, I'm generalizing. There are people who still write sonatas and they still more or less subscribe to sonata form in some obscure kind of way. Personally, for me, I love form. I think form is crucial.

You know, to relate this to being a parent by the way, when you have babies, babies crave a schedule, they wanna know that they're taking a nap at 8:30 in the morning. They get up at 5 or 6, they're down for their nap at 8:30, they're up at 9:20, and they must eat at this time, and they have this nap at this time. You know, the quicker you can get your babies on a schedule, the easier life becomes and the happier your kids are. And to me, that's the same with music.

If, if the music has a form, then an audience member who doesn't know your piece, hearing it for the first time, can sit back and hear the form of the piece. Oh I remember that theme, oh this is the B theme, oh it's coming back to relate to the A theme, and now, oh I can hear the development. You know, if an audience member can do that, they are thrilled, they are happy, and that's how I listen to music, I listen for form. When I go to check out a recital or whatever, I'm listening to the player to hear how beautiful they play, but I'm also listening to the piece, and I'm listening in terms of form. You know, I don't have perfect pitch, so I can't tell what key areas are in, but I can definitely hear motives and ideas, and I must admit, if I'm listening to a through-composed piece, it can be attractive in its own right, but it doesn't have the same, for me, I don't enjoy it as much. In terms of, I wanna hear some kind of form in the piece come about from the listener's perspective. And there are people who, you know back to the baby analogy, the babies born, is the baby hungry? Give it milk. Are they tired? Put them to bed. And you can go throughout your days like this, and you will find, this is not an easy life, for you or the baby. The baby isn't happy, they love structure. We crave structure in our human existence I think, and I think form is one of those things that, I think, usually is a result of my composition. I'm not setting out to write in a form, I'm setting out to write this motive. And then as I develop it, it just sometimes makes sense to go and do the inverse of it, or to go back to it in some way or another. If you just keep changing your ideas, constantly moving forward with new ideas. We're

doing a piece today with the quartet called *Titan*, it's from Jersey band so it's a rock-and-roll type piece. It's pretty much through-composed, every new ideas comes along, and I think it's a really attractive piece, it's really fun to play, and I think audiences are gonna like it. Because each new section is this kaleidoscope of new ideas, it's a pretty cool thing. But, it definitely is not a form per-say, where something comes back and you understand what's going on. So um, I guess, that's a very important element to me. We joke a lot in the Sotto Voce quartet about the newest euphonium concerto to come out, and it goes, it goes like this, and we can make up the whole damn thing because every single euphonium concerto sounds like this, wiggling and blowing, and then there's no form, it's just the next hard thing that comes along and the next hard passage that comes along. And I think, maybe composes like to write this way, but to me, if you are writing this way, you are confusing the heck out of your audience. Now, you know, I'm also a movie guy, you know, I go to a movie because I wanna be entertained, I wanna understand the story, I wanna be involved with the plot, and if you don't have elements which set up the story, if the plot is constantly changing, you're kinda lost as an audience member, end up thinking I didn't really like that movie. Now, you can be really creative, in the movie *Memento* for example, where the movie goes backwards, and yet you get these snippets, man, there's still a form to the movie, you could re-arrange all those segments and put them in order if you wanted to, and I've heard that it's not so successful, it's meant to go the way it goes. So I'm saying, you can still be very creative in terms of form, but I fell like, man, if a composition is lacking some kind of form, especially if you're a student, and of mine, I'm gonna beat you up for that. Because it needs to have some sort of relatable element to the audience, and the audience craves form just like a baby craves structure in their life. So, you know, I'm pretty adamant about that one, that's a big topic for me. And I gotta say, I, almost to a fault, if a piece has no form and it's just one

fascinating idea after another, I have a bias against that piece. So yeah, I'm trying to think of any pieces I play that don't have any form whatsoever... So um, yeah I'd say the *Grumpy Troll* definitely has a lot of elements that tie itself together, including pretty much a recap of the second section in the fourth section, I mean that definitely just comes right back.

**DM: So a follow-up question then, so you don't go into a piece with an idea of it being AB or ABC? But the form does come out, just naturally?**

MF: Yes, Hopefully! Yeah, I think organically you want, and you've gotta keep your eye on the prize as well, down the line. I mean, when I'm writing, yes, organically is it developing itself into a form? Yes, but am I also hoping and pushing perhaps that it goes into a form? Yes. It's a two-sided street, you know, it would be great if a piece were just so organic that it just does it automatically, and Mozart would perhaps say well, of course, this is the way it would work. I've tried, actually, to use the scaffolding, to write in sonata form, and it's not good. It's not good.

Well, perfect example is trying to telling a joke. If you ever try to tell a joke, it's hard. Holy cow it's hard. I'm sure, comedians tell the same jokes over and over, night after night at different clubs, the same joke, and the timing has to be perfect. And that timing comes from the organic delivery of the joke. So if you're now telling a joke that has to subscribe to this timing element, that's the form, you're trying to fit that joke into that form, it doesn't work. You really just have to deliver the joke in a way, with the timing being organic and it just hits.

So yeah, if you're trying, I don't know of any real composers ... of course, we gotta negate the Baroque and Classical era where they did write in these forms, and they did very successfully. But today, I think, you know, well, great example is *Cosmic Voyage*, this tuba piece I wrote for Kenyon Wilson. I mean, that thing, I had no idea what the form was gonna be, I was just literally writing at my whim and, sure enough, it turned into pretty much a textbook rondo form. It's

pretty much a rondo, I mean, and not because I wanted it to be. The other thing is, I grew up listening to 80's rock, so if you listen to 80's rock, there's always an introduction, there's the main theme, err, first verse, chorus, second verse, chorus, instrumental verse, chorus, out. That's a rondo form, So, you know, rondos are huge in my upbringing just because of listening to rock and roll, and um Michael Jackson and all this. So, that I think is part of the reason. And that's another thing, I mean, listen to any popular music today, it's all got form, even hip-hop has form. Everything's got a form to it for the most part, and for composers today to be writing literally without form, it's very peculiar to me. That that would be a way to go about it. But, to each their own, we need different colors and different tastes in this world.

I'm trying to think of any tuba, like popular tuba repertoire that's completely through-composed. Nothing that jumps out at me, I'd have to really contemplate that a great deal. It all kinda comes, everything has a return, everything's got a recap, you know. And I think we want that, I think it comes from, I mean, look at all our books and movies and our life has a recap, right before you die you often see some of the people who were influences on you and your life, everything has a circle. A flashback, right. Boy, that's an interesting question though, what tuba pieces are through-composed, that work. You know, but yeah, I'm definitely in agreement with John, and perhaps he articulated it better than I did, and that's not necessarily something John and I have discussed, I think it's just one of those things that, as a composer, we feel, you know. You don't try to put something into a framework, you create something and hope that, hey look, there's a framework.

**DM: One other additional question not on the list. You've mentioned movies a couple of times, and you talk frequently about an audience. So, I get the sense that, as a composer,**

**you are very concerned with how your music is going to be received, particularly with these compositions but also in general?**

MF: Yeah, yup. Yes, exactly. Man, we debate this in the Sotto Voce quartet at length. Yes, because we play a bunch of different audiences. Essentially we play four different audiences. Um, today we're gonna play for a bunch of tuba players who've heard six zillion tuba quartets. And while we are heralded as one of the finest, we gotta do something special, we've gotta do something different because you guys, you've heard everything. So we're gonna do something special. We're gonna use drums, we're gonna use our trombone abilities, we got everything going on. So then we have our middle school, high school educational type audience, where we play things again that they can really grasp but mostly we're there just to blow their pants off. To get them so excited, wow, virtuoso playing you know. Then we've got our college residencies, where we're working again with more academics. You know, here we can be definitely much more into playing our more, I would say, extreme repertoire, our more aleatoric stuff, our stuff that really challenges the listener perhaps. And then, most importantly, we have our concert series and those different concert series performances we give are definitely for small towns, generally, for a population of 4 to 8 thousand people. They maybe have four musical groups come in throughout the year, we're one of four, the other ones are maybe a string quartet, a juggler, a magician, and a comedian you know. So if we're taking the role of the string quartet, um, we darn well better be engaging, and that is not a time to play, in my opinion, um very, music that's gonna challenge an audience.

My colleagues and I, we bang heads on this because they feel very strongly "no we are here to challenge an audience, you know, we've gotta, we can't just play lollipops and bon-bons as they say." Now, I'm not trying to do that either, I think though that there is a place for really



engaging, contemporary music, that is just simply really engaging. Perfect example is your Peter Smalley piece that you guys played, I thought that was a really engaging piece. Um, you know, and the Brian Balmages, great piece, very engaging, challenges the listener but, the last movement is maybe a nod towards being more fun. So, I think there are definitely those pieces in our repertoire. Now, a Gunther Schuler piece, man, that has no business being on a concert series, you're not making any friends, you're not gonna be invited back, you could play the living snot outta that Gunther Schuller piece, or Walter Hartley piece, nobody in the audience is gonna wanna hear that. Now, here, sure! At a tuba conference, play that stuff. At a university, play that stuff, that's fine. But, so my colleagues and I we fought with this quite a bit, because we don't wanna ... obviously, tuba quartets, you know, have this thing of being lollipops and bon-bons, and we often play these, what we call five minute wonders. A bunch of five minute pieces, that are all this arrangement of this Mozart thing and this arrangement of this Bach fugue. You know, and those are great things, in the Canadian Brass style is what we call it. And that's fine, but you have to also then be a step more engaging. And I think the Boston Brass did a great job of this, I thought they, they kinda covered the Canadian Brass thing a little bit, but then man, that second half is what they do, and that was fantastic. I mean, that was just awe inspiring, and to hear Sam play down there, just amazing stuff. And his time is unreal, and his sound is fantastic, on this little tiny f tuba that you know so well haha.

Anyway that's an aside, the point is that we have talked about this in the quartet, and we often say alright are we here to make friends or just play for us. Cause sometimes, let's face it, we're gonna play for a college audience, sometimes, the tuba studio will show up, that's 18, 12, 6 people. Um, why are we giving this concert? Man, we might as well challenge ourselves and play some repertoire that we really feel passionate about, that may not be audience friendly. So

we'll do that in those times, and you really gotta choose your audience. When I'm writing a piece of music, um, I'm not like Schoenberg who says "aw, who cares what the audience thinks? I have to be true to my art." Now, that's not me, I DEFINITELY wanna be engaging to the audience, I think of it as a triangle; the composer at the top, kind of creating this whole thing that's about to happen. The performer, who takes the composer's idea and then kinda communicates that composer's idea to the audience. And that audience, has that relationship to the composer, through the performer, that you know, it's this really cool triangle, that makes everything work. And it is a three-way triangle, Schoenberg, composer, one dot. That's it. Maybe performer, this day and age, probably wouldn't use a performer, honestly I bet Schoenberg, if he'd stuck around a little bit longer, I bet he would be writing almost completely now for computers and for you know, digital creation of his music, because it would be flawless. It would be serialized to the point that every element was being controlled, you know, and I'm guessing, maybe not. Maybe Milton Babbitt and those sorts of things, Frank Zappa did this. Frank Zappa, you know we kinda think of him as this rock guy from the 70's, but he was really interested in Stravinsky and Bartok and he wrote a lot of this music that's multi-meter and interesting. From his early days of, let's face it, doing a lot of hippie kinda crazy rock stuff, to then into the 80s where he got much more into this sort of Bartok/Stravinsky thing, and then he even started writing things for orchestra, I don't know if people know that about Zappa. Then, in his later days, near the late 80s and into the 90s, before he died, he was only writing for computers, cause only those could really, sort of, convey his meaning in his music, musicians got in the way of what he truly wanted to say. Now, I think that's a natural progression for someone who wants to control all those elements, well maybe Wagner would have been similar.

But no, actually, I love the player interpretive aspect of things. Hearing the quartet competition, hearing the Japanese guys, they did my four miniatures, and hearing their interpretation was just so cool. You know, it's not necessarily how I would have done it, but man they did it great! In their own way. And you guys, doing, um what'd you do in the first round? Right that's it, Take This Hammer, I didn't write Take This Hammer, but your interpretation is a little bit different than Sotto Voce's interpretation, in terms of how that piece rolls on. And I love that, man, I don't wanna hear the Sotto Voce performance every time I hear this piece, I wanna hear all these different ideas. But yeah, man, you're talking to a huge advocate for playing for an audience on this side of the table, because let's look at the economy, let's look at the world that we're in here, you know, especially in America, where we don't have grants and funding from our government to support the arts. Now I'm not saying we need to go all out capitalism, and come out juggling while standing on our heads while playing the tuba at the same time. I think there's a limit to everything, and that's perhaps a bit too far. You know, everyone's gotta find their own way, but the day and age of just playing for audiences, stuff that's gonna challenge these audiences or just, completely serious art form that is un-relatable, I think those days, to me, are over. You have to know your audience.

**DM: Well that is all the questions I have for you, thank you for taking the time to talk with me this morning.**

MF: Thank you.

## **Appendix B – Interview with Grant Harville**

Telephone interview – 5/27/2014

David McLemore: **How would you describe your compositional approach in general terms?**

Grant Harville: Basically, the hardest part is getting past the blank page, you know, once you've got something written down, you can make it better. But it's much easier to make a bad thing good than nothing into something. So for me at first it's all about getting past the blank page, and that means having as many inspirations, as many things that trigger ideas as possible. So, if I'm writing for somebody, I'll usually take them out to lunch and we'll just talk. I'll ask them questions like, what do they like to do on the instrument? What don't they like to do on the instrument? Are there notes that I'm really bad at trying to play? Composers they really like, pieces they really like. If there's anything that they wanted to do but haven't. And then, sort of throwing those all into a pot and seeing what happens. Usually that at least will get me through the door somehow, and allow me to get started on something. Once something goes down on the page, then the music takes on a life of its own, where, you know, every note you write reduces the number of comprehensible or sensible possibilities for the future notes that you write. So, in some ways it gets both harder and easier at the same time, it gets harder because you have fewer options or it gets easier because you have fewer options.

Yeah, but once you get things written down it gets easier. For me, practically, I go back and forth between the piano and the computer; so, I'll sit down at the piano and sort of play and improvise and get, sort of, basic sketches, fragments, melodies, anything, and, you know, those sort of

ideas, just little chunks of ideas. And then when I sit down at the computer I start to, sort of incorporate those and flush them out and edit. I suppose, so writing for the tuba, it's not that different, I can be perhaps a little bit more cognoscente of difficulty than I can with some other instruments, although I mean, as a conductor I spend a lot of time examining orchestration, so I feel like I usually have a pretty good sense of what's hard, what's easy, what's playable and not for, at least, most conventional instruments, orchestral instruments. But with tuba, I mean it's much, it's mostly specific from a note for note, you know, I know exactly how those three notes are gonna feel on the horn, that kinda thing. Then, if I'm writing for like myself, essentially the same process, so I have certain things that I wanna do with the piece, certain inspirations that I can find, so I have the same kind of conversation as I would have with other people, I have with myself.

**DM: Do you favor any particular harmonic structures, linear techniques, etc.?**

GH: You know, I'll rarely sort of pick something, but I mean the best and the worst answer is I write stuff that sounds good to me. I mean, which isn't particularly enlightening but, ultimately, that's the question I have to ask myself, do I like the way that sounds? And if I do, I go with it, and if I don't, I don't. I find that what I really like tends to be really chromatic, tonal, so I can hear tonal centers in works that I write, scale degrees if you wanna call them that, solfege, in much of what I write. But it is very chromatic, so that may not be clear to listeners the way it is to me. Um, in my music I tend to write very few unadorned triads, but it's also rare for the tonal center to disappear completely. But again, this may not be as clear to the listener. And it's, in terms of formal structure and things like that, it's all about making the shape from beginning to end. I do find that I'm sensitive enough to key that, if I don't end where I begin that matters, doesn't mean that I have to, but if tonal center is a trump at the beginning of the piece, I kinda

like to use it at the end of the piece. Or, if there's the effect of incompleteness to it that's fine, if that's what I want, but I typically notice that. Yeah, I'm a little laddish about the sort of energy of the piece, both the peaks and the valleys and the shape overall, and the tension involved, through whatever means.

**DM: Are your unaccompanied compositions absolute or programmatic in nature?**

GH: These works were certainly NOT programmatic. You know I was sort of saying before, when you write something the notes and cells tend to sort of take over and go certain places, so even when I do write programmatically it's more of, it's musical inspiration, sort of, I prefer it to be vague so that I can sort of run with it rather than feeling like I'm constrained, like I have to hit certain beats in order for it to follow a particular script. So, or like if it's inspired a mood or some sort of emotional qualities in the music, that's easier for me, than trying to tell a very specific, extra-musical narrative. But this again, uh these pieces were both sort of things I wanted to try as a composer, um, rather than having extra-musical influences. The first piece I ever wrote for solo tuba, I never published it, but it was called Dithyramb, and you know that name carries with it certain programmatic connotations. But this was something I came up with after the piece was written, um though the title does work well for that piece, the music is absolute and not programmatic.

**DM: Given your status as a composer of music for unaccompanied tuba and as a performer on tuba what is the relationship between your compositional instincts and your experience as a performer? In other words, how do your experiences as a performer on tuba influence your compositional approach generally, and specifically with regards to your unaccompanied tuba compositions?**

GH: Yeah, I wouldn't say that that's on the, sort of, conscious fore front of what I do when I write. At the same time, if I'm writing for tuba I'm gonna know immediately how difficult or idiomatic a certain passage is going to be. So, sometimes this happens at the subconscious level, that might influence choices that I make if I want this to be easier or harder, something like that. Um, if I want something to be really sort of climactic, I can say, well, that's a note or something that I can try up to, with heavy Fs and really sing, but maybe a half step higher or lower is something that isn't so easy for me to be on. In that regard, if I know what my intent is, it's easy to sort of make that work, to know as I'm writing it that that will be easy or hard to do when I have to pick the instrument up. But you know I've certainly written passages knowing that they would be really annoying to play and decided to do it anyway. For other pieces, you know every, it's different for everything I write but if you have two ways of writing something, and one is going to be really easy to play, and one is really difficult to play or even a slight difference there, I always try to take the easier way. Sometimes I'm surprised by the things I think should be easy and they turn out not to be, but at the end of the day, you know if you really want something to go a certain way, the performer has to play it that way. So if your vision for a certain piece requires something to be played in a certain way, and the player can't play it, then they're not gonna hear it anyway. So if you write something that's playable, even if it's slightly different, you're going to get, in practice, in performance, something that's a lot closer to what you want than the things you originally wrote, which may be technically a little closer to what you prefer but nobody's gonna play it that way anyway. So, then it's just a question of whether the more playable version get you what you want, and if it is, there's no reason not to go for that.

One thing I talk about with composition students sometimes is this sort of, um, you know, if you scale something on, from 0 to 100 on how close is it to what you want artistically, and maybe it's

exactly what you want, give it 100. And then you scale it from 0 to 100 on the odds of someone actually playing it, and maybe they'll hit it right half the time. That gives you a total score of 150. And then, maybe there's something that is a 95 on the sort of artistic side of things, you know, and a 95 on the playability side of the scale, and that'll give you a total of 190. And, maybe just cause the number's higher doesn't mean you have to go with it, but if it is higher, maybe that's something you consider in terms of the choice that you made. The only difference, actually, when I write for tuba is that, when I was writing for tuba a lot, it was very important to me that pieces had a somewhat virtuosic character to them, and I wanted these to be, um, to show off some of the technical capability of the instrument, usually. Very few of my tuba solos are easy, I would say, by most standards of what that means. Yeah, my tuba concerto, I definitely wanted it to be noticeably challenging, but at the same time, you know in the third movement of the concerto there are some passages that I wrote based on a particular, that I wrote a certain way, and then I realized if I changed just a few notes in that, the thing just came off so easily. So yeah, that's one of those things that, I guess technically I would have liked the other pitches, but I can get something that's much easier to play and virtually exactly what I want. And so, making those changes was a pretty easy decision.

**DM: Do you composer music for unaccompanied tuba with specific regards to your own capabilities as a performer?**

GH: Yeah, in the sense that, umm, of course. Because, in every case I was writing something that I knew I would have to play. So sometimes there would be things that I would deliberately make challenging for me, because it was supposed to be for me to practice that part of my playing, but, you know, I would write it with the horn I owned in mind, cause some things just feel really good to do on my axe. There are certain things that, you know, just feel really good to play for



me, so I'm certainly not going to avoid those knowing that I'm going to have to do them. So like the, I mean, both the Suite and the Caprice don't spend a huge amount of time in the low register because I knew that I would be playing those on my bass tuba, not my contrabass. So that, that kind of thing certainly. At the same time it's important to me that, I do want other people, if they want to play them, to be able to. I didn't wanna make it too specifically to my regard, but yeah absolutely, generally speaking I'm not gonna make my life difficult by writing something I hate doing.

**DM: Do you composer these pieces for yourself as a performer, or for others?**

GH: Yeah, I mean I certainly have in general, and I enjoy that, just fine doing that. I'm trying to think. I don't know what the exact ratio is but I'd say at least 60, 70 percent of the pieces I've written have been written for people besides me. Yeah I mean it's basically, as I said, I knew that I was gonna be at least premiering these pieces, I'd write them for my recitals and things like that. So I wanted it to be, again, something I felt comfortable playing. But it was never my intent that I be the only person to play them.

**DM: Which composers do you feel have influenced your work?**

GH: Well again the sort of lame answer is probably most accurate which is, everything you've ever heard influences you, whether you like it or not. And it's one of those things where, you know, I'll write something and think man that sounds great, and then 2 years later I'll hear a piece that I realize I knew 10 years ago, and that I totally ripped that older piece off without even realizing it. Yeah I mean, it's just, the music you listen you sort of seeps into your brain and it starts to become a part of your style, and again even if you're not consciously imitating something, you'll find all this other music in your own music, if you look for it. Umm, yeah you

know I actually don't think I would give a name, I mean I have some favorite composers in that regard, on specific pieces I might be sort of emulating the style of a certain piece very cautiously. But in terms of my overall output, I wouldn't pick any composers in that regard. So, I don't know if I said this earlier but, the composers I really admire, in some sense I want to do as well as they do; it's not because I want to be like them, it's because I want to write as well as they do, if you know what I mean.

**DM: With regards to each of your unaccompanied tuba compositions, what was your compositional process?**

GH: Well, the Suite, I mean anybody that looks at that for any kind of length of time will realize that, you know, that was definitely modeled upon the Baroque Suite. A Baroque suite, yeah. No, especially like the 5<sup>th</sup> movement is a Bouree and it's got the same ABA form that the 5<sup>th</sup> movements of suites do. Um, it's all, all the music is in the same key, the way the Baroque suites tend to be. The thing with that piece is that, prior to that point the music I'd written tended to be really sort of scattered, which is okay, it didn't, doesn't make it bad music. It would just go from place to place, um, in a very sort of capricious kind of way, I had a tendency to throw everything and the kitchen sink into the same piece. And so for that piece, the Suite, I kind of wanted to do not the same, so the piece is based on a very small amount of musical material, to the point where it's probably a little claustrophobic. At the time, I really liked the sound of octatonic collections, which, you know, should be obvious. "Suite in B-flat Octatonic" would probably be a better title for the piece. But yeah so, I guess in terms of what I'm thinking about when I was writing that piece, one was to sort of model an unaccompanied suite for tuba on some of these Baroque suites. And the other was, sort of, economy, using very little material to spin the movements out of.

**DM: What about the *Caprice*? What was your process for that?**

GH: Uh, the *Caprice* was, I took a composition class back in graduate school and that was an assignment. Yeah it was, write a piece that, a short piece, I forget what the length was but it was a time restriction, and it had to have contrasting sections. And basically, I mean there's really three different ideas in that one, and then the sort of challenge was to take those three kinds of things; In that case there's the sort of beautiful melody that starts, there's the drones stuff with multiphonics and then the sort of syncopated, rhythmic passages. And you've taken those three themes and putting it together into a piece that has a decent shape.

**DM: How do you go about selecting the musical ideas and constructs employed in each composition? You mentioned using the computer and piano, do you use the tuba at all?**

GH: You know, I've never written at the tuba, I think for some reason I'm just more comfortable improvising on piano. And, it's also easier, it's somehow just an easier process, I don't feel like I have to have the tuba in hand to understand how something I'm playing at the piano will sound on the tuba, or how it will feel to play on the tuba. I mean, I've played enough tuba in my life to make that kind of determination pretty easily. Yeah, and maybe another side of it is that, while it's important that everything I write be playable, it doesn't mean that I can necessarily play it without practicing. So there are things I can do on the piano, there are things I can't, but there are things I can do fairly easily on the piano that I would have to practice on the tuba. Again, I just feel like I have a little bit more flexibility writing at the piano than at the tuba.

**DM: Do you favor particular musical forms or formal elements? If so, at what point in the compositional process do you generate these components?**

GH: Yeah, in the case of the *Suite*, although I'll say the piece itself surely isn't very Baroque, it's much more, I mean if you look at how the phrase structure works, it's a little bit more Romantic than Baroque, and the tonality is more contemporary than Baroque. And not intentionally so, it's just, that wasn't what I was going for in that regard. The rhythms and styles of the various dance types, that was really where it began and ended, as much as anything. Some key relationship things as well, the consistency of key throughout. But yeah beyond those things, beyond the keys and beyond the rhythmic and stylistic features of the dances themselves, I wasn't really trying to structure them the way Baroque Suite's would structure them. Yeah as I said, there are absolutely things, musical materials which I favor, which I like, but yeah I start by writing something that I like, and it ends up with characteristics of the way that I like to write. So, yeah I think I already said, I tend to like really chromatic tonal syntax, but again that's just me writing things that sound good and then, sort of as it happens, those are things that I tend to think sound good.

**DM: You've described a concern for form and architecture in your works. Do you think architecture in your music comes about through a pre-determined plan or organically as you write from measure to measure?**

GH: Um there is very little in terms of pre-planning. I'm certainly not thinking "I'm going to write this in modified sonata form," or something like that. What I'll do is, I'll know, in terms of what I'm writing, whether certain passages will be a climactic point or if it will be a low energy point, and that, that'll tell me how I need to get into and out of it, roughly where it might be during the course of a piece. So, you know one of the last pieces I wrote was a trio for violin, cello, and percussion, and as I was writing it, it became very clear that I was going to have one sort of slow build to a certain place, and then a real drop, and then another build to the end. And

that sort of emerged during the process of the composition. Yeah, that's roughly it. I mean, in the really large scale like, I might have an idea of how many movements it'll be, I might know in advance whether it's going to end softly or loudly. But the thing about doing that kind of pre-planning is that it almost always changes mid-way through, so any sort of vision I have for the large scale stuff is almost certainly not where the piece ends up.

**DM: I have a follow-up question for you, when you conceive of a melody, are you thinking of it like a pianist, or are you thinking of it in your head like a vocalist? Maybe both? I've gotten the sense that, when you are writing for the tuba, you don't need to have the tuba handy. You're aware of what is or is not idiomatic, so you write at the keyboard or the computer. I guess what I'm trying to ask is, when you write are you approaching it from the standpoint of a keyboard player? Or do you hear the melodies in your head or sing them, do you approach them from a more vocal standpoint?**

GH: Umm, if I'm writing something and I'm sitting at the piano, I mean when I'm at the piano it's usually very , very sort of free. It's a judgment-free, brainstorming kind of thing, where I'm sort of playing along and if I catch something that I like, then I'll sort of play around with that for awhile, and if I determine that it's something I REALLY like then I'll start writing it down. So, if I know I'm writing for a tuba, then it's really all part of the same process, every, evaluating it as music, evaluating it as a piece for tuba. I'm writing a piece for orchestra right now and, as I write it I'm evaluating it, not just evaluating it as sort of disembodied pitches, but as something that has a certain character and a certain sound, and how does this work for the different instruments of the orchestra. It has a certain emotional content. I'm very aware of the orchestration as it's going on. So, it's very rare that I'll write a note that I'm thinking of for a

certain piece without simultaneously being aware of how it works out on the instrument that I'm writing it for.

**DM: Well I think that covers about everything, thanks so much for taking the time to talk with me today!**

GH: Your welcome, I hope the project goes well for you.

## Appendix C – Interview with Benjamin Miles

Skype interview – 6/25/2014

**DM: How would you describe your compositional approach in general terms?**

BM: You know, my compositional approach, when I get to writing I'm actually very sporadic with what I do. Sometimes I'll just be inspired to write something, and usually it's just a little theme that's going around in my head. And that's where I do all my writing. I'm in the room where I do my writing, and I have an electronic keyboard just set up, and I just go to it and really just start playing around. Most of the time with an idea, I don't have anything in mind as far as what I'm gonna do, and once I start playing around with pitch then I can figure out where I wanna go. So my approach is very free, you know I didn't take many lessons, I had about a year of formal lessons in composition. And even for that, that was for my dissertation, which I'll tell you about a little bit. Even for that it was really just sort of experimenting, that was his style, that was with Jere Hutcheson up at Michigan State. So with his style, it was really about finding the pitches, and I think that's where I start, with finding pitches and maybe I'll have an idea in mind for a little bit of form, but it's really just sort of free flowing. I hope that makes sense, what I just said. I just start with a basic idea of pitches, and probably intervals, that I want to use, I take these fragments, and I expand them. With *Contraptions*, that piece was one of those, I was just sitting in my house, and just thinking about this first movement, and I wrote it. And that piece was written super-fast, I mean it's incredibly fast how, how much I didn't have to change. So I, really for me, it's about being inspired to write, to write the pieces.

**DM: Do you favor any particular harmonic structures, linear techniques, etc.?**

BM: You know what's kinda fun, I don't think about a key, maybe I will, I wanna think about people, you know, playing it on f tuba or, I play on E-flat, there's some crossover there.

Everybody complains about the 1<sup>st</sup> movement of *Contraptions*, about how hard it is on F tuba, the first one to complain about it was David Zerkel. He was doing it in recital and asked 'can we adjust something in here?' He wanted to leave a note out for breathing and I was like that's a piece of cake.

I think that, you know, as far as what I deal with, it's more about certain intervals that I like.

Yeah, minor thirds, lots of tritones, I think I use that approach, an intervallic approach. My use of tritones is a sound preference more than anything else, but I will use the tritone to try to evade tonality at times. I haven't really done any, the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement of *Contraptions* has a little bit of hidden stuff, has some hidden stuff where I reverse the intervals at one point, or maybe it's pitches, maybe about 2 or 3 lines down. But it's not something that I do a lot. For me, as far as pitch goes, I've become progressively more tonal over time. My first piece that I wrote was with piano, and that was when I was studying at Michigan State, and it's really not very tonal at all.

And just through the years of doing this, I've decided that I like repetition and I think the audience does too, so I've sort of come back to that. Maybe not even tonality, just familiar figures. Pitch centers if not tonal centers. So, even though *Contraptions* is more technically difficult, it is quite a bit more tonal than *Perspectives*, as a kinda had an idea of a pitch, a tonal center for each of the five movements.

**DM: Are your unaccompanied compositions absolute or programmatic in nature?**



BM: Yeah, umm, obviously with *Contraptions* I had something in mind every time I was gonna write a movement, so that definitely is programmatic. Whether it's just an idea of what something might sound like, or, you know like *roller coaster* was my idea of actually being on a roller coaster, exactly what that would be like. So that's very programmatic. Umm, *Perspectives* is not, it was just several small sections of music linked together, you know that's more motivic than anything else.

**DM: A couple of follow-up questions. So with *Perspectives*, you said it is absolute music, with some contrasting sections of music. Are these sections related at all? Or just contrasting sections of music?**

BM: Yeah I don't think there's any relationship at all. That piece was written as part of my doctoral dissertation, so that was the first time I'd written anything unaccompanied. That dissertation is titled *A Study of Intermediate Tuba Literature*, literature that can be played by good high school and early college, because I feel there's a gap there. I believe that the tuba repertoire starts very basic and then gets quite advanced, leaving a bit of a gap. So that and my *Sonatina* were written for CC tuba, someone who is student-level Falcone, that's sort of what I had in mind for that. So I, took into consideration to plan out a large form, range, and giving some rest in there, and so the contrasting sections are just for pacing. You know, it was titled afterwards, does "Perspectives" have much to do with what I wrote? I don't, I don't know. It's sorta my view of different styles. But, it doesn't follow a program.

**DM: Regarding *Contraptions*, just to follow-up, you mentioned having programmatic ideas, but also having motivic ideas and formal ideas at the outset of your compositional process. Did these programmatic ideas inform the motivic and formal ideas, or did the motives already in your head lend themselves to programmatic descriptions?**

BM: I think that one, actually what it's based off of is a life-sized version of the game Mousetrap. That's what I was thinking, and they actually have one in, or they used to have one in San Francisco. Now obviously I'm not gonna use that title for it, so I was just like "what would that be like?" You know, the ball going through all these different things and I just sorta came up with that 7/8 idea from the first movement. I had that motive from there, and so that was really based on the image of that. You know, the second movement was originally titled maze, then it turned into hot air balloon. I started writing and thought, that doesn't sound like a maze anymore, so yeah that changed into that.

You know the third movement is called roller coaster, I was like, once I figured out I was gonna call the second movement hot air balloon, I was like what are these? These are contraptions. So it all grew from that first movement that was the one where I really had the motive floating around in my head. Roller Coaster took um, that was a significant amount of time. The fourth movement Bulldozer, I started playing the other movements, that was actually the last movement that I wrote and I felt like I needed a break, a chop break. That one took me, maybe, 10-15 minutes to write. I just came out and I didn't change much on it. Really super-fast, that Bulldozer. I'm always nervous playing my music for people. When I played Bulldozer I was like, man what is this gonna be like, and I played it on a faculty recital and everybody loved that movement. The last movement, which is Conveyor Belt. Yeah, the publisher changed some of the titles so I think even the last movement is spelled wrong. It's not someone who conveys, but a conveyor belt. The last three letters should be yor, not yer. That slipped through me, that slipped through the Falcone competition on which the music was played.

Anyway, by the time I got to that last movement, I'll tell you the spiel I tell everyone on that movement. I had a job working at a potato chip factory for one week when I was 19, and that

movement, Conveyor Belt, is my idea of how a potato becomes a chip. You know, it was this huge, huge conveyor belt that would go all the way through the factory. So it would start with this potato, and they would chop it up and it would roam around, and the potato chips ended up going in the bag. So that image was in my head for that particular conveyor belt, it's a little more exciting. Marty Erickson, when he first played it, was picturing the I Love Lucy scene where the officers are going in front of her. I'm glad that people get different images of it, but that's where it came from. With all five of those movements, my idea was to use lots of repetition, you know what does a contraption, what does a machine do, it does the same thing over and over again. So that's why there is quite a bit of repetition in that piece. For the odd numbered movements, I guess I would say I was describing what I see when I think of those contraptions, and put that into sounds. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> movements, I was describing, more or less, what it must feel like to be in or behind one of those machines, a hot air balloon or a bulldozer.

**DM: Given your status as a composer of music for unaccompanied tuba and as a performer on tuba, what is the relationship between your compositional instincts and your experience as a performer? In other words, how do your experiences as a performer on tuba influence your compositional approach generally, and specifically with regards to your unaccompanied tuba compositions?**

BM: Yeah, that's a good question. Obviously I have more experience now than when I was first starting out, because you know I know what we can do on the instrument, I know what we can slur and what we can't slur, or what's difficult as far as leaps. But I also, especially with *Contraptions*, I wanted to put something in there as far as, a strength of mine is double tonguing, so that last movement obviously shows off double tonguing. I did the same kind of thing on my new concerto, I have a triple tonguing section in there. It's like I wanted to show off a specific

skill, so you know that really comes into play quite a bit. Umm, I wanna consider my high range as solid as some of the other players out there, you know did you, at ITEC, hear the European Tuba Quintet? So you know, I went out and bought a couple of Roland's pieces, I bought his Carmen fantasy, and I can't play that! That's really, REALLY high! So I took that into account obviously, I can't remember what the highest pitch that I gave myself in *Contraptions*, there's a G-flat in the second movement. You know, so at least with range, I was like okay, my strength is not to play A, B-flat above the staff the whole time, or for extended periods. So, I know at least there that that's gonna be pretty common with many tuba players, though clearly not all.

**DM: To follow-up, you mentioned earlier that you compose in the room you're in now and that you have an electric keyboard. Other players I've talked with have described starting the compositional process at the tuba, while others instead have the ideas in their heads or work primarily from the keyboard and computer. So, do you use the tuba at all when you're writing solo tuba works, or do you work primarily with the keyboard?**

BM: You know, most of it is at the keyboard, and I say keyboard because I don't want my wife to hear what I'm playing so, so I do it in private. I don't want anybody to hear anything until I'm really ready to get it out there, but once I get an idea that I really like on keyboard, my next step is I'll plug it into Finale, and Finale gives us that instantaneous playback, so I can hear what it sounds like at least closer to tempo. And then from there I'll go to tuba and say, okay, how's this gonna feel on the face, is it gonna work? So the tuba is usually the last step for me. Ah, I think I remember with *Bulldozer* in *Contraptions*, that was one of those, well what can I do with these low D's? And it's like, Oh, I can do quite a bit, okay, so I may have used the horn a little more on that movement. But I don't use it very much at all, the instrument, until much later when I'm ready to learn it.

**DM: Do you compose music for unaccompanied tuba with specific regards to your own capabilities as a performer?**

BM: Yeah, obviously the *Contraptions* yes, but the *Perspectives* wasn't. I was actually worried, it's like what is the level that I'm writing at, and that's a hard level to write for. My *Sonatina* as written at that level too, and it's really difficult to know, okay, what's too fast, what's too high, what's too loud. You know, so with that I was really conservative, on *Perspectives*, at least in my mind I was. I wrote *Contraptions* for me, I thought it'd be fun. I had no idea if anybody was ever gonna play it, so I just, I wrote what I wanted to, and broke every rule that I could as far as composing it, I just did what I wanted on it. I tried to show off everything I could do, mixed-meter technique, low range chops, double-tonging.

**DM: Do you compose these pieces for yourself as a performer, or for others?**

BM: Yeah, most of the stuff has been for myself. As I said before, *Contraptions* was written for myself, *Perspectives* with others in mind, namely high school and early college players.

**DM: Which composers do you feel have influenced your work?**

BM: Well, you've mentioned a couple already, John Stevens and Mike Forbes. As far as the tuba composers, I grew up, well I went to school at SUNY Fredonia and our composer-in-residence was Walter Hartley, so I got to play a lot off his music. He's got a, you know, big contribution to our repertoire, his sonatas, sonatina. His suite for unaccompanied tuba is pretty complex for a simple piece. So yeah he was a bit of an influence. Anyways, as far as tuba composers, you know I would say Alec Wilder, Roland Szentpali, Barbara York, James Grant, William Kraft many others.. Outside, I listen to, always enjoyed Bernstein or Gershwin, Stravinsky is great, Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky as well. I always enjoyed that style of music. As far as composing, I really just

try to do my own thing, obviously we're stealing from everybody. John Williams, the greatest compositional thief of all, I love his music, it's great. He gets it from everywhere else. You know, those are some of my influences. If I could write movie music, I would haha. Um, for *Perspectives* I think that Hartley's unaccompanied suite was a bit of an influence, and also Persichetti's *Serenade* and Arnold's *Fantasy*. Kraft's *Encounters II* and Grant's *Three Furies* were inspirations when I wrote *Contraptions*, I wasn't basing it on any particular piece or composer, but I always kept the nature of Kraft and Grant's music in mind. Those are my favorite works for unaccompanied tuba.

**DM: With regards to each of your unaccompanied tuba compositions, what was your compositional process?**

BM: *Perspectives* was, I was a college student at that time, I think I took lessons on it. So, writing that I wanted something with, what is it 4 sections, 5 sections to that? Yeah I wanted to get some different styles. I was inspired a little bit by Walter Hartley there, I think it's the second page has a theme in 3/4, I wanted to emulate a waltz in Hartley's Suite where it's almost like two instruments playing at the same time. So I wrote a little bit of that into it, and I wanted that, you know I think it's a skill that a younger player needs to know. That one was really just getting a motive and going with it in *Perspectives*, like I said, less experienced back then as far as writing, didn't have any clue what I was doing, basically, is what it comes down to. Putting sections together, that's what I wanted, what do we want out of an unaccompanied piece for a high school kid? Something that will show some lyrical playing, some low stuff and a little bit of fast playing at the end. And we already discussed a lot of this regarding *Contraptions* already, its genesis and process.

**DM: How do you go about selecting the musical ideas and constructs employed in each composition?**

BM: There'll be times where I'm driving in the car and I start just, I don't have the radio on, and I start singing something to myself. And it's like, where's my phone, I have to try and record that. I lose a lot of good ideas on the car floor if I don't write them down or record them. You know, some of it is accidental, some it is like, well that worked out quite well, I guess I'll keep that. And other times I'll come up with something, you know the last piece I worked on was, not unaccompanied, but it was my concerto that I just wrote. And I'd write a whole section and be like, yeah I like this, and then I'd go and play it on the tuba and be like, no I don't like this. And then something else, I just write something down and was like, well that actually worked. In fact, one section of that piece, I was writing the slow movement to that, and this actually happened in *Contraptions* as well, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement; I started playing it, and everything sounded way, way, almost too tonal, too predictable, and I changed one note, maybe a G-natural instead of a G-flat. And it just changed the whole flavor of the piece, well that's an example of an accident that really worked out well. I struggle with slow music writing, because it ends up either to be really strange, it doesn't make sense, or it ends up being really tonal, which I don't wanna completely go that route. So, in both those examples, I changed one note and it changed the flavor of the whole movement. You know, one of my favorite sounds is, for example from *Westside Story*, A major chord with that augmented fourth in there, you know C, E, F-sharp and G, that is a sound I go for. My first piece, *Three Sketches for tuba and piano*, really obscure work, but I was really going for specific chords in that. So I think that's what I try to do, try to keep it tonal but add that bite in there, that's why I favor adding tritones, or sevenths, or minor thirds, these specific intervals.

**DM: Do you favor particular musical forms or formal elements? If so, at what point in the compositional process do you generate these components?**

BM: Form, form was not that big of a deal to me. *Perspectives*, the way I wrote that, was like, okay I think I have a section that I like, now where do I go next, well I need to go to a slow section. You know, so as far as form, that's what that's about. Fast-slow, medium fast, slow, super-fast. As far as a specific movement I could do that more with *Contraptions*, I was a little more conscious of form. I mean that last movement, I guess you could almost call that a rondo, you know because it keeps coming back to that same theme, the conveyor belt. Roller Coaster's form was based on a ride, so that's where I got that from. And most of the other ones it's just two sections, ABA and something will come back, especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> movements I wrote with that in mind. With *Contraptions*, yeah I think I was a little more into form because I wanted that repetition, for music to come back

**DM: In both pieces, I noticed that you create clear contrasts between movements/sections through changes in style and tempo. Was this an intentional or conscious decision on your part?**

BM: I like music that is exciting and ends exciting, so I certainly wanted to put that into those pieces. But pacing is a big part of it, you know I wanted to put a little pacing in *Contraptions*, the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement is slow, that's why I put them in that particular order that they're in. With *Perspectives* it really was based on, what do I want a player to at least practice, you know even if this isn't a performable piece, it's like working on an etude, what do they need to work on. So I think that one is less specifically about the sections and more about the ideas, the different techniques a tuba player has to do within those sections.



**DM: Great, well thanks so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I appreciate it!**

BM: Thank you.

## Appendix D – Interview with John Stevens

ITEC Conference, Bloomington Indiana – 5/21/2014

David McLemore: **How would you describe your compositional approach in general terms?**

John Stevens: My compositional style has evolved a lot, and it continues to evolve. Um, I wouldn't say I could break the past 40 years into distinct periods, I don't discern particular stylistic periods or something like that. As I've composed more and more I find that my writing has taken on more stylistic nuance and, I suppose, my writing has developed a sophistication in terms of techniques and styles. To me it's all been a part of the continuing journey of a composer finding his own voice. I've always considered myself to be something of a film composer, only without the film. I am trying to write in different styles, but always within my own Stevens language.

My composing is based on energy, motion, emotion, contrast, drama, a story. Setting a mood, creating excitement, trying to achieve great beauty. While I use certain techniques to achieve these ends, it is the ends that are important to me, not the means so much. Nevertheless, there are some things that frequently make it into much of my work. I often obscure the tonality of a piece through the use of stacked 4ths, whole tone scales. Similarly obscuring the rhythm through mixed meter, quintuplets, and septuplets, I also change tempos quite frequently. The goal of doing these things, the obscuring I've described, is to send the music off the rails and then bring it back on. In other words, to create and then release tension. I will often highlight contrasting programmatic concepts, such as in *Salve* where both power and beauty, stereotypical masculinity

and femininity, essentially, are highlighted. This is done for contrast and for dramatic interest. Um, I'll also juxtapose different kinds of songs and dances in my music, for the same reason.

Often I find that I create wide dynamic and pitch ranges for the tuba, I'm exploiting what the instrument, what the tuba is capable of. In my unaccompanied works, slow lyrical music tends to be melody based, where the rhythm could be different, I could change the rhythm but the message, the notes would be essentially the same. And the fast, more dance-like music is largely rhythm based, where the pitches could change but the message would still be there because of the rhythmic continuity.

**DM: Do you favor any particular harmonic structures, linear techniques, etc.?**

JS: Well, as I said previously, I'm concerned with the ends, the story, it's not so important to me how we get there. That being said, I do tend to obscure musical elements, of pitch, of rhythm, tonality, even tempo. The goal is to, as I said earlier, throw the music off the rails, and then bring it back. Basically creating and resolving tension, that's what my music is about. With rhythm, I'll start with straight duple or triple rhythms but then start to introduce faster, mixed rhythms, quintuplets, septuplets. The same is true of pitch and tonality, I muddy the waters by adding whole tone scales or stacked fourths into the tonal music.

**DM: Are your unaccompanied compositions absolute or programmatic in nature?**

JS: For these particular works for solo tuba, each piece kind of has its own flavor, but they are all somewhat programmatic, with the notable exception of the *Elegy*. The *Suite No. 1* started out being very programmatic, but I ended up changing the title to something more "standard" when I realized that the music stood on its own without the program. This was my very first original composition and, as such, my earliest work for unaccompanied tuba. The original title was *To*

*Be a Child*, and the titles and music of the five movements depicted a day in the life of a child. It was originally published already with the title changed to *Suite No. 1*, first in 1974 and then again in 1997 by the current published, and I recorded it on my *POWER LP*.

Um, the next piece I wrote for tuba alone was *Triumph of the Demon Gods*, which is quite programmatic. The slow, loud music in the low register is “the bad guys”, while the high, fast soft music is “the good guys” and, in the end, following a sort of musical “battle”, the bad guys win. This work was composed in 1980 for Michael Thornton, he was the Principal Tubist with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra at that time, Mike and I were also in grad school together at Yale. It was published in 1981 and I recorded this, again on my *POWER LP*. Um I think it has been recorded by Benjamin Pierce as well.

*Salve Venere, Salve Marte* is similar to *Triumph*, in that the music is meant to loosely depict the strength and power of Mars juxtaposed with the beauty and lyricism of Venus, as I said previously, stereotypical masculinity and femininity. This work was published by Editions BIM in 1995, and it was written for Roger Bobo as a “thank you” for his friendship and support of my work. Unfortunately Roger never performed it, he stopped playing right about at the time I composed it, but it has been recorded by Velvet Brown. *Remembrance* was also composed in 1995, also published by Editions BIM in the same year. It was commissioned by a former student of mine, John Tuinstra, in memory of his friend and colleague Jerry Bramblett. The music is intended to depict some of the aspects of the Jerry’s battle with cancer, which ultimately killed him, but also the joy of his life and contributions.

The *Elegy*, unlike my other unaccompanied works for tuba, is simply meant to be a beautiful melody that emphasizes the lyrical, singing beauty of the tuba. It is absolute music, with no program. *Elegy* was composed for the ITEA Journal Gem Series and was published in the Fall of

2004, and it was recorded by myself on my *REVERIE* CD. Generally speaking, when I write programmatically, definitely the program is driving the music. I am creating music to reflect a program, not creating a program to fit music.

**DM: Given your status as a composer of music for unaccompanied tuba and as a performer on tuba, what is the relationship between your compositional instincts and your experience as a performer? In other words, how do your experiences as a performer on tuba influence your compositional approach generally, and specifically with regards to your unaccompanied tuba compositions?**

JS: I often, I often say that I think like a composer when I perform and like a performer when I compose. As a composer, and certainly in these unaccompanied works, I am always mindful of what it feels like to play the music. There are many reasons I have composed a lot for my own instrument, not the least of which has been the need for expansion of our repertoire, but one of the main ones is that I have such a strong, intimate relationship to and understanding of the tuba and euphonium. This is why I encourage players to stick their toes into the waters of composing by writing for their own instrument, whatever it is. One of my goals is for a work to be idiomatic to the point where the music sounds very challenging but lies really well on the instrument so it's actually easier to perform than it sounds. From the day I began composing, my main goal was to write music that players would like to play and audiences would like to hear. I'm not especially interested in challenging the player or audience with the "Avant Gardeness" of my music, but to excite and entertain an audience. I also can't deny that I have always had a secondary goal of showing the world what a tuba is capable of in terms of sound, vocalness, agility, technique, range, etc.

**DM: Do you compose music for unaccompanied tuba with specific regards to your own capabilities as a performer?**

JS: I try not to be limited my own playing abilities, only by what I can conceive of musically. However, I have certainly used my playing abilities to help create the music. *Suite No. 1* was really composed for myself. *Triumph of the Demon Gods* was very much influenced by Mike Thornton's personality and even his looks and demeanor. In our grad school days Mike looked like a Viking, you know the perfect guy to play Hagar the Horrible in the comics. *Salve* was definitely inspired by Roger's playing abilities, sound and approach to music and playing the tuba, not my own.

*Remembrance* was to be premiered by the commissioner, so I had his abilities in mind more than anyone else's. *Elegy* was specifically composed to be playable by "everyone" – with technical demands taking a back seat to musical and dramatic elements.

**DM: Do you compose these pieces for yourself as a performer, or for others?**

JS: Yeah, basically along the lines of what we just discussed, I have written works for myself but also written music for others, taking their musical personality, their abilities, into consideration. The *Suite* was composed for myself, the other works were written with others in mind.

**DM: Which composers do you feel have influenced your work?**

JS: My answer to your question would be quite different if we were talking about my compositional output in general, or especially wondering about the unaccompanied works. I haven't really been influenced by other tuba players who compose, but certainly by other tuba works, such as the Persichetti Serenade. I believe that as a composer I am influenced by all the music I've ever heard. Also, any composer's primary task is to work at finding one's own voice

– trying to develop a style that doesn't sound like someone else. I've studied the music of Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Bernstein, Copland, and many others, but only to help me sound like...me. Some composers who were big influences on my ensemble works (jazz composers and the jazz/pop music of the 1970s) were not really influential in my unaccompanied works. A more influential "thing" is acting. In my unaccompanied works I'm try to create monologues, or soliloquies for the performer. I put a lot on the page, but my marking are more guidelines than rules. An actor can't just read a monologue – it has to be acted – much like the way we play a cadenza. In the same way, someone performing an unaccompanied work has to pay attention to what's on the page, but also go beyond that to bring it to life. When performing an unaccompanied work, 100% of the drama and musical impact is up to that one person. No help. From accompanists or collaborators.

Umm, in a broader sense, just names of composers who've been an influence, in no particular order, the ones who immediately come to mind that might stand out over everyone else:

Bernstein, Copland, Shostakovich, Stravinsky. I mean who hasn't been influenced by Stravinsky! Chuck Mangione, Mahler, Hindemith, um also Libby Larsen and Tony Plog. Touching on what I said earlier about my compositional style and voice, I believe that find one's compositional voice entails using the influence and inspiration of others to create something that sounds like me and not just like someone else.

**DM: With regards to each of your unaccompanied tuba compositions, what was your compositional process?**

JS: When I compose I start at the beginning and write to the end. I know that seems rather obvious at first, but my point is that I don't make sketches, or compose the third movement first, or that sort of thing. Everything I write is informed by what came before it. I liken it to writing

a story. I want to spin out my tale, one phrase and gesture after another in a way that makes sense and takes the music in a direction that tells the story I want to tell musically. This applies to everything I compose, not just programmatic works. I have the reputation of being a very organized person, and I find that forms and structures of pieces naturally spin out as I write, as opposed to me choosing a form or structure ahead of time and composing the music to fit that preconceived notion. If I repeat something exactly, or refer to it once or twice after the original statement, or alter it in some way to make the music interesting while still maintaining a unity and musical purpose, that's all by design, but not ahead of time. It happens AS I compose.

You know, I have no recollection of how long it took me to write these pieces. That depended on how much time I had to write during a given period versus my teaching, performing, and family/personal life. I constantly strive to seek a balance among all these things that allows me to be productive and efficient and still keep all the balls in the air, as it were. I can tell you that composing an unaccompanied work goes much faster than anything else for many reasons, mostly because the element of orchestration is taken away. There are simply way fewer decisions to make. I orchestrate as I go when I compose, the instrument a line is composed for is just as important as the line itself. A chamber or large ensemble work has elements of harmony, blend and balance, color, texture, etc. that an unaccompanied piece doesn't have.

**DM: Do you use the tuba at all in your compositional process?**

JS: I would say, I primarily compose at the keyboard. I have used the tuba on a few occasions over the years, but usually this was just to check to see how licks work and fell, and only when I was writing for solo tuba in, in some capacity. Now that I am no longer playing the tuba, I guess that my compositional process now involves the keyboard exclusively.



**DM: How do you go about selecting the musical ideas and constructs employed in each composition?**

JS: I think I pretty much answered this before. When I write, when I compose I start at the beginning and write to the end. My music spins out forward, from note to note, phrase to phrase. Everything has to be informed by what came before it. I am writing film music without a film, I want to tell a story, moving forward from one sentence to the next. I use certain techniques, certain materials to achieve these ends, but ultimately it is the story that I'm interested in telling, not the means so much. The evolution of my style over time is, I think, reflected in the chronology of my unaccompanied works for tuba, with the exception of Elegy. These pieces are written in different styles, but always with my own voice as a composer

**DM: Do you favor particular musical forms or formal elements? If so, at what point in the compositional process do you generate these components?**

JS: One of the most challenging aspects of composing for me is starting a piece. Once the engine is running and the car is moving, so to speak, things seem to flow one to another. If there is a programmatic aspect to the work, that program is usually quite firmly in my head before I begin, a basic structural plan to implement the program is there. I often want to begin a work by introducing the sound, kind of like introducing a person to someone else. I began my euphonium concerto with the solo euphonium alone, because I thought it was important for the audience to have that sound and presence firmly in their ear before the orchestra joined in to potentially make it harder to discern the solo sound. I have also, on at least two occasions for big pieces, taken simple tunes that have some appropriateness and "reworked" them (mostly rhythmic and octave changes) so that they are no longer really recognizable at all, but they provide me with opening material that I can build on. In my tuba concerto, Journey, I wanted to pay some homage to Gene

Pokorny's love of the three stooges, so the opening material in the solo part is actually a reworking of "three blind mice", the stooges theme music. Instrumentation is always pre-planned, I want to know what my color palette is before I start.

**DM: Great! Thank you so much for taking time to speak with me today, I appreciate it!**

**Hope you enjoy the rest of the conference!**

JS: Thank you.

## Appendix E – Lecture Recital Script

David McLemore: Welcome, good evening everyone! I want to thank you all for coming. Of the standard instruments in western art music, the tuba has one of the youngest and smallest solo repertoires. The tuba was only invented recently, in 1835, and solos for the instrument were not written until 1954 and 1955, with the publications of Paul Hindemith's *Sonata for Tuba and Piano* and R. Vaughan Williams' *Concerto in F Minor for Bass Tuba and Orchestra*. This limits the stylistic variety and breadth of solo material available to the tubist, forcing the player to either transcribe earlier works for other instruments or perform works that imitate earlier stylistic periods.

This problem isn't unique to the tuba; in fact many instruments in western music have at some point dealt with either a lack of stylistic diversity in solo repertoire or a scarcity of solo repertoire itself. One solution has traditionally been to transcribe works for other instruments or voices. Another solution involved the work of performer-composers, virtuoso performers who created new solo repertoire for their instrument. Franz Liszt and Frederick Chopin were virtuoso pianists and composers who greatly expanded the solo repertoire for the piano. Niccolò Paganini was, likewise, a virtuoso violinist and composer who both expanded the violin's solo repertoire and in doing so evolved violin technique. Franz Strauss was a performer-composer for the horn, expanding the repertoire through compositions like the *Nocturno*.

Not surprisingly, certain performers of the tuba have also expanded the solo repertoire for their instrument by creating new works, effectively becoming performer composers. In this lecture recital I will discuss the work of four American performer-composers and their

unaccompanied works for solo tuba: Mike Forbes, Grant Harville, Benjamin Miles, and John Stevens. These four tuba players have each composed multiple works for the tuba alone, many of which are already staples within the solo repertoire, and by composing works for their own instrument they are continuing a traditional element of western art music: the expansion of solo repertoire through the work of performer-composers.

There is a notable lack of scholarship regarding this subject. While there exists much scholarship pertaining to performer-composers on other instruments, there are no dissertations which address unaccompanied works for tuba by American performer-composers, or even discussing unaccompanied works for tuba in general. Of the four performer-composers I examined, only John Stevens appears in existing scholarship, specifically with regards to his compositions for euphonium, for tuba with orchestra, and for brass quintet. In this dissertation I've examined each composer in terms of their compositional style, their contributions to the unaccompanied solo repertoire for tuba, and how their experience as a performer informs their approach as a composer. At the same time, this is also an expansion of existing scholarly literature on performer-composers.

Some of these compositions are already popular staples in the solo repertoire, while others are lesser known or newer works. In either case, tubists will likely find themselves performing or studying these compositions at some point, and teachers will have to teach them to students. This dissertation examines these compositions and places them within the context of the composer's compositional style, and in doing so provides a resource for these performers and teachers. Likewise, tubists interesting in composing for the tuba will benefit from the examination of each performer-composer's compositional approach and characteristics.

The methodology for this project consisted of two parts. The first was to interview each performer-composer, either in person, over telephone, or via Skype. In every case, the interview was recorded so that I could later generate a written transcript. The second step was to analyze each performer-composer's works for unaccompanied tuba in a general manner and make observations regarding each composer's compositional approach and traits.

### Mike Forbes

The first tubist and American performer-composer I'll be discussing is Mike Forbes. He has written two unaccompanied solo compositions for tuba: *The Grumpy Troll for Solo Tuba*, which was published in 2013, and *Polar Vortex for Unaccompanied Contrabass Solo Tuba*, which was published in 2014.

Forbes' compositional approach is characterized by several important characteristics, such as his use of compositional improvisation. Forbes begins his compositions with relatively little pre-determined material. He typically has a musical kernel, a cell of pitch and intervallic content, and perhaps a sense for form and structure. This cell is expanded into the entire composition through the use of free improvisation, and in Forbes' case improvisation at the tuba. Though he uses the keyboard as well, Forbes is more technically adept at the tuba than the piano, and feels more comfortable developing musical ideas on the tuba when he is composing solo works for the instrument. This improvisational approach to composing is very free and organic, and he uses this both to expand his musical kernels and to create musical form and structure.

Forbes avoids imposing certain harmonic and formal elements on himself as a composer. Harmonically, he avoids writing in diatonic keys, because he finds that he often coheres too strongly to them. Similarly, he avoids imposing particular forms, such as sonata or rondo form, as compositional scaffolding. This isn't to suggest Forbes doesn't care about form, but rather that

he wants form in his music to emerge as a result of his forward building and organic compositional approach. He asserts that musical structure is vital to a successful piece of music, likening it to the schedule needed when raising an infant baby. Ironically, Forbes derides through-composed music as lacking this form which he deems vital; this is ironic because Forbes' unaccompanied works could both be described as through-composed. Forbes tends to develop a limited number of contrasting motivic ideas in these works, and towards the end will combine and juxtapose these elements to create new musical sections.

Another important characteristic of Forbes' approach is his consideration of the performer and the audience. One of his goals as a composer is to communicate emotion to the listener, through the use of musical structure and programmatic content. At the same time, Forbes is writing from the perspective of the performer and wants to write music that, while sometimes pushing the envelope for the performer, is idiomatic and not exceedingly difficult. As a composer he is trying to balance a triangle of considerations; one point represents his interests as a composer, the second those of the audience, and the third those of the performer.

Both of Forbes' works for unaccompanied tuba are programmatic in nature. The extra-musical content in these works is not explicit or literal, such as the program to Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Rather, Forbes is suggesting the emotions and character of his programmatic content. In *The Grumpy Troll*, he is depicting the grumpiness and anger of a troll through music; in *Polar Vortex*, he is musically describing his own feelings about the Polar Vortex that struck the upper Midwestern United States in the winter of 2014.

An intervallic approach is evident in both works for unaccompanied tuba by Forbes. Each piece has a single interval that spawns much of the musical content and kernel material. In *The Grumpy Troll* this interval is the minor third, while in *Polar Vortex* this interval is the minor

ninth. In each piece these intervals are developed and expanded to generate additional musical materials. For example, the underlying pitch cell in *The Grumpy Troll* is an [0235] tetrachord consisting of two minor thirds: an ascending minor third from D to F, and a descending minor third which moves from E-flat to C.

Despite his claims to the contrary, harmonic collections are evident in Forbes' writing. *Polar Vortex* strongly implies chromaticism at several points on the musical surface, though this can be understood as a result of compositional augmentation of the minor ninth intervallic cell underlying the music. In other words, Forbes is composing out the semitone to produce chromatic scales. Similarly, *The Grumpy Troll* implies octatonic collections at several points through the prominent use of octatonic pitch-class subsets. Again, this octatonicism is a result of Forbes' intervallic approach and his expansion of the minor third. Just to be clear, octatonicism in this context simply means a prevalence of octatonic scales within the music, and octatonic scales are 8 note scales where stepwise motion alternates between half steps and whole steps.

Pitch centricity is implied in Forbes' music for solo tuba, through the use of repetition and pedal point. Forbes will draw our attention to particular pitches simply by repeating them over and over again. For example, the [0235] pitch cell in *The Grumpy Troll* almost always consists of the same four pitches: D, F, E-flat, and C. Forbes will also create the illusion of polyphony by creating multiple lines of music that sound simultaneously in different registers. Often one of these voices will repeat the same pitch while the other voice moves against it; this creates momentary centricity through a kind of pedal point. Though traditional tonal function is absent, these compositions both have a degree of structural octatonicism, minor thirds, and tritones which operate within the deeper musical structure.

One of the most interesting aspects of Forbes' unaccompanied tuba compositions is his use of extended techniques, and particularly the pulling out of the 4<sup>th</sup> valve tuning slide used in *The Grumpy Troll*. This technique has appeared in other works for brass instrument, such as Brad Edwards' *Lone Wolf for Solo Tenor Trombone* and Stanley Friedman's *Solus for Trumpet Unaccompanied*. It has also appeared in the unaccompanied tuba repertoire before, in William Penn's *Three Essays for Solo Tuba*, but was new to Forbes as a performer and composer. He discovered it by accident during his compositional improvisation process, when his tuning slide fell out and he failed to notice. Forbes exploits this technique extensively in *The Grumpy Troll*, creating clear contrasts of timbre that suggest polyphonic musical textures.

Now that we've discussed Forbes and his approach to composing for the tuba, I will perform his work *The Grumpy Troll*. Despite Forbes' considerations for the performer and idiomatic concerns, this is a very challenging work requiring a litany of extended techniques.

Perform *The Grumpy Troll* – approximate duration: 7'

#### Grant Harville

The second performer-composer I've examined is Grant Harville. He has written three compositions for solo tuba, two of which are published: they are the *Suite in B-Flat Minor for Solo Tuba*, published in 2003, and the *Caprice for Solo Tuba*, published in 2006.

Harville's approach to composing is characterized by the composer as organic, where one note leads to the next and the music seems to take on a life of its own. As this occurs, the number of sensible possibilities for future pitches and sections is reduced, which simultaneously makes composing easier in some ways and more difficult in others. Harville finds the most difficult aspect of composing to be the outset of the process, particularly getting past the blank page. Once he has musical ideas written down, he can subject them to compositional improvisation and



improve them. Harville will often seek out inspirations in order to get past the blank page, for example by talking to the person for whom the music is being written and asking them questions about their musical strengths, weaknesses, and preferences.

Besides his initial inspirations, Harville tends to employ very little pre-planning when he composes. He will have basic ideas of pitches and intervals he may want to highlight, and sometimes a vague sense of form and shape, but beyond that he is letting the music grow organically forward. His pre-conceptions, particularly with regards to form, are subject to revision and almost always change over the course of his compositional process.

Harville tends to compose at the keyboard and computer exclusively, having never used the tuba to help with composing. For him it is more natural to compose at the piano because he feels less limited by technique on the keyboard, and he has spent enough time playing tuba to consciously or subconsciously be aware of the idiomatic characteristics of the music he composes.

A defining characteristic of Harville's compositional style, evident most clearly in his *Suite in B-flat Minor*, is his use of chromatic tonality. Harville writes music in this piece that he considers tonal, and which clearly alludes to tertian harmony and specifically a B-flat minor triad. However, the underlying harmonic collection in this music is not diatonic, but rather octatonic. Harville uses octatonicism to suggest a chromatic diatonicism, with frequently occurring borrowed tones. Very few unadorned triads appear in the music, but the sense of harmonic centrality never completely goes away. That being said, Harville concedes that the listener may not hear the piece as tonal, at least not in the way that he does.

Intervallic writing is prominent in the *Caprice*, as it is a non-tonal composition consisting of three distinct sections; compositional unity between the three sections arises from a

consistency of intervallic content and pitch class sets, established in the first six measures. That being said, Harville does employ octatonic and chromatic scales in this composition.

Pitch centricity is created to varying degrees in Harville's music. For the *Caprice*, there is no tonal function present but momentary centricity does occur, resulting from the repetition or sustaining of particular pitches. The *Suite in B-flat Minor* is, as its name implies, a much more tonal composition, strongly hinting at neo-Riemannian tonal function. Harville will shift between different harmonic collections, and in doing so create a sense of departure and return suggesting tonic and dominant relationships. Sometimes this shift occurs between different octatonic collections, other times this occurs between octatonic and acoustic scales; in each case, one exhibits tonic function while the other exhibits dominant function.

Both of Harville's works for solo tuba are absolute compositions that lack any extra-musical programmatic content. When writing these pieces he was not inspired by any kind of programmatic idea, and he did not want to be constrained by a self-imposed program which would make the compositional process more difficult. Both of his compositions are very clear in terms of form, with clear formal boundaries established by changes in tempo, style, texture, and motive.

Harville's compositional approach has changed over time, as illustrated by the differences between the *Caprice* and the *Suite*. Despite being published later, the *Caprice* actually represents an earlier compositional period for Harville, when his writing was non-tonal and intervallic in approach, consisting of numerous contrasting musical elements combined within single movement compositions. The *Suite* reflects a more mature style in Harville, one in which he uses octatonic scales to create a chromatic tertian sound, as well as acoustic scales. The writing in this style is much more tonal and centric, with implications of neo-Riemannian

function, and consists of far fewer musical materials which are intensely developed. For example Harville based the *Suite* upon the B-flat minor triad and the formal design of a Baroque Dance Suite.

Harville occasionally creates polyphonic textures in his music, either by having the tuba play two contrasting musical lines simultaneously or through the use of multiphonics.

Multiphonics is a technique where a performer sings while playing the instrument; the result is two distinct pitches and timbres which are discernable to the audience. Harville's usage of multiphonics is limited to the *Caprice*, and this is in fact the only extended technique the composer employs. His use of multiphonics emphasizes the sung pitches, with the tuba producing pedal tones that sustain underneath the vocal melody. It occurs at multiple points in the composition, and is particularly notable for the degree of freedom the voice is given relative to the tuba's drone pitch underneath.

I will now perform Harville's *Caprice for Solo Tuba*. This composition, though published in 2006, actually predates the *Suite*, and represents an earlier compositional period for Harville, when he tended to employ a wide range of contrasting musical materials within non-tonal compositions.

Perform *Caprice for solo tuba* – approximate duration: 4'

#### Ben Miles

The next performer-composer I examined is Benjamin Miles. He has written two compositions for solo tuba, *Perspectives for Solo Tuba* and *Contraptions for Solo Tuba*, published in 2004 and 2009, respectively.

Much like Forbes and Harville, Miles' compositional approach is free-flowing and relies upon compositional improvisation. He begins the compositional process with basic ideas of

motives, pitches, and intervals, and then builds these ideas into the larger composition. Miles charts something of a middle ground between Forbes and Harville; he begins his compositional process at the keyboard, but will use the tuba in later stages of the process to check for idiomatic issues.

Miles' compositional approach has changed over time, with regards to harmonic language as well as his approach to form. Harmonically, his music has become progressively more tonal and harmonically centric over time, and this change is reflected in his unaccompanied compositions. *Perspectives* is a non-tonal composition constructed largely in an intervallic manner, though moments of pitch centricity are implied through the use of repetition and pedal point. *Contraptions* is a far more tonal composition that implies centricity as well as neo-Riemannian function. Miles' use of intervallic construction is fairly consistent, even within the more tonal context of *Contraptions* he is clearly favoring particular intervals and pitch class subsets. The tritone and minor third tend to appear prominently in Miles' solo tuba work, both on the musical surface and within the deeper levels of structure.

Comparing *Perspectives* and *Contraptions* in terms of form reveals another shift in Miles' style: he has become more concerned with form over time. *Perspectives* is a single movement composition with four distinct sections in terms of tempo and character. However, the boundaries between sections are sometimes muddled with transitional passages in the low register, obscuring the sense of form. In *Contraptions*, Miles employs very simple formal designs in each of the five movements; these include ternary, symmetrical, and variation forms. The music in this composition is also highly repetitive, much more so than in *Perspectives*.

Repetition is a particularly interesting aspect of Miles' compositional style, specifically in *Contraptions*. Beyond the repetition of specific pitches to create harmonic centricity, and the

repetition inherent to passages of pedal point, he also uses the exact, unvaried repetition of formal sections to musically depict the extra-musical idea of a mechanical contraption. In the first movement of *Contraptions*, Miles repeats the first four measures in measures 5-8, exactly and without any variation. The same is true for the next two 8 measure phrases as well, Miles is presenting a four measure melodic idea and then repeating it without embellishment or alteration of any kind.

As I just alluded to, Miles is musically depicting extra-musical, programmatic content in *Contraptions*. Each of the five movements is named after a contraption, be it a roller coaster, a bulldozer, a conveyor belt, or a hot air balloon, and he is attempting to musically depict either the character of the contraption, or what it would feel like to drive it. Miles, like Forbes, is not creating a literal program in the tradition of Berlioz, but rather is suggesting the mood and character of the programmatic idea. *Perspectives*, on the other hand, isn't a programmatic composition, it is absolute music. Miles wrote it as part of his dissertation, to specifically address what he sees as a gap in the solo tuba repertoire for advanced high school and young undergraduate tuba players. The name "Perspectives" was arbitrarily selected because Miles thought it reflected the fact that *Perspectives* consists of multiple contrasting sections, but there is no extra-musical idea underlying the composition.

Miles composes for a range of audiences, and to a variety of skill levels. As mentioned previously, *Perspectives* was written as part of his dissertation and is meant to be playable at the advanced high school and early undergraduate level. This was a challenge for Miles as a composer, because he had to establish technical limitations and define what was too loud, too high, too low, and too fast for players of that level. He couldn't rely on his knowledge as a performer as much because he plays at a far higher level of technical proficiency. *Contraptions*,

on the other hand, was written specifically for himself as a solo vehicle, although Miles certainly doesn't intend for this work to be playable by himself only. He deliberately emphasizes stronger aspects of his technique, such as multiple tonguing and low pedal register playing, and avoids weaker areas such as sustained extreme upper register playing.

Miles employs extended techniques in some, but not all, of his unaccompanied works for tuba. *Contraptions* requires the player to execute multiple tonguing, flutter tonguing, trills, and the occasional measure of multiphonics; *Perspectives* lacks extended techniques of any kind, reflecting Miles' concern for the playing abilities of his target audience. The extended techniques called for by Miles are far more standard and well-established than those called for by Mike Forbes, almost to the point of not being extended techniques. Miles' usage of multiphonics, like that of Forbes, is limited to a single measure of music.

Next on the program will be selections from *Contraptions for Solo Tuba*, specifically the first, second, and fifth movements. The first movement is titled "Pulleys, Gears, Cogs, and Levers" and is a musical depiction of a life-sized version of the game Mousetrap. The second movement, "Hot Air Balloon," depicts the experience of piloting a hot air balloon, and the last movement, titled "Conveyor Belt," depicts the idea of a factory with products and items being shifted around with these conveyor belts.

Perform three movements from *Contraptions* – approximate duration: 6'

### John Stevens

The final performer-composer I'll be discussing is John Stevens. He has written numerous works for brass instruments and ensembles, including five works for unaccompanied tuba: *Suite No. 1 in Five Movements for Tuba Solo* (1974/1997); *Triumph of the Demon Gods*

(1981); *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* (1995); *Remembrance for Tuba Alone* (1995); and *Elegy for Solo Tuba or Euphonium* (2004).

Stevens' approach to composition is in many ways similar to the previous performer-composers we've discussed, and in fact he taught applied tuba to two of these composers at the University of Wisconsin – Madison: Mike Forbes and Grant Harville. Stevens composes from the beginning to the end of a piece, rather than writing sections out of order and combining them later. He compares composing music to writing literature, in that he is creating the musical story one sentence at a time, and everything that happens going forward is a result of the preceding material. Like Harville, Stevens finds the beginning of a composition to be the most difficult part of the process. He asserts that once the engine is running and the music is proceeding forward, the music begins to develop naturally with form and structure occurring organically rather than being imposed at the outset. Like Miles, Stevens composes primarily at the keyboard, only occasionally using the tuba to check for idiomatic issues.

In terms of compositional style, Stevens describes his music as having evolved over time and continuing to do so. This evolution is reflected in his works for unaccompanied tuba, with the exception of the *Elegy* which is something of a compositional outlier, written specifically for a pedagogical purpose. His compositional style is based upon numerous elements, including “energy, motion, emotion, contrast, drama, a story, setting a mood, and creating an environment”.

In many ways Stevens' music is defined by drama. As mentioned previously, he composes in the manner of a literary author, and he asserts that his unaccompanied works in particular need to be acted by the performer. He considers his music to essentially be film music, only without a film. These works are monologues and soliloquies, and therefore cannot simply

be acted or read. The music has to be brought to life by the performer. Stevens not only expects the performer to follow his musical instructions, but also to interpret and add elements to his music.

Stevens describes his music as falling into two general categories: melodic music, and fast music. The former is music that is based primarily on a melody and emphasizes particular pitches and intervals. In this music, the rhythm is of secondary importance and could be altered without impacting the message Stevens is attempting to convey. Conversely, his dance music is more focused upon rhythmic elements and could feature different pitches without affecting the mood and character he is trying to convey.

As a composer, Stevens is concerned with creating musical elements through various techniques, which are means to an end rather than an end in and of themselves. That being said, two techniques are of particular importance: obscuring technique, and the use of stark contrasts. Stevens obscures musical elements in his compositions, for the purpose of sending the music “off the rails” and then bringing it back on. He is creating and then resolving musical tension. Tonality and pitch centricity will be obstructed through the use of whole tone collections and quartel/quintal ideas, while rhythm will be obscured through the use of unusual mixed meters, unusual note groupings, and feathered beaming. Feathered beaming is a method for notating accelerandos and ritardandos, in much the same manner as crescendi and decrescendi. In feathered beaming, the number of beams gradually increases or decreases, depending upon whether the rhythmic values are being shortened or lengthened. Stevens’ obscuring of rhythm is a particularly noteworthy element to his music, one which sets him clearly apart from the previous performer-composers I’ve discussed; he is the only composer in the group to consistently disrupt rhythm with quintuplet and septuplet rhythm, as well as the only one to



employ feathered beaming. This approach to rhythm lends his music a particularly fluidic character, in that it often lacks a clear stability of meter and pulse.

Stevens also employs stark contrasts in his music, introducing differing musical elements which are eventually juxtaposed and come into musical conflict. This can be seen with the aforementioned song and dance music; when Stevens writes music it is either melody-based or rhythmically-based, and he will often juxtapose melodic and rhythmic musical ideas to create contrast. He also juxtaposes extremes of dynamic and pitch, asking the player to quickly alternate between extremely loud and soft dynamics or extremely high and low notes. This contrast also frequently applies to Stevens' programmatic content, which often juxtaposes contrasting and conflicting ideas. *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* is defined by a programmatic conflict between stereotypical masculinity and femininity; *Triumph of the Demon Gods* depicts a musical battle between gods and demons, in which the bad guys ultimately win.

Most compositions by Stevens are programmatic in nature, with *Elegy* again constituting an outlier that is, surprisingly, an absolute composition. His other works, including the *Suite No. 1 for Solo Tuba*, are programmatic and describe specific extra-musical ideas. When crafting these works, Stevens had a clear idea for the programs he was creating, and composed the music to express these extra-musical ideas.

Generally, Stevens' compositions are very chromatic in nature, both melodically and structurally. He employs a wide range of other harmonic collections, including diatonic, octatonic, whole tone, and occasionally acoustic collections. What makes Stevens' approach unique is how impermanent these harmonic collections are. With the other performer-composers I examined, harmonic collections tend to be employed somewhat consistently. Harville consistently uses octatonicism in the *Suite in B-flat Minor*. Miles' *Contraptions* prominently

features diatonic and octatonic collections, often in conflict with one another. Stevens, on the other hand, seems to slip in and out of harmonic collections fairly rapidly; he is able to do this because of the underlying chromatic instability in his music.

That being said, Stevens does establish pitch centricity to varying degrees, through repetition and also by extending the durations of particular pitches. When Stevens wants to emphasize the end of a section of music, he will frequently end on a single pitch that is sustained for a considerable length of time. As a result, this creates a sense of arrival and pitch centricity. *Elegy*, which is something of an outlier, is almost entirely diatonic and is easily the most tonal composition by Stevens for solo tuba.

Having discussed Stevens' music, I will now perform *Salve Venere, Salve Marte*. This work was originally composed for Roger Bobo and written specifically with his abilities as a performer in mind. The work is programmatic, depicting a conflict between stereotypical masculinity and femininity. Each programmatic idea is introduced, then there is a dialogue between the juxtaposed ideas, and the composition ends with an aggressive, accelerating section of music that can best be described as a battle.

Perform *Salve Venere, Salve Marte* – approximate duration: 10'

#### Commonalities & Distinctions between the performer-composers

These performer-composers clearly have a lot in common, they are all tubists who have composed works for their instrument and in doing so expanded the solo repertoire, and as composers they've all been influenced by their experiences as performers. Each of the four performer-composers I interview expressed a concern for the perspective of the performer in their compositional approach. They also have a fairly well established knowledge for idiomatic

concerns; they each have played the tuba extensively, and this has granted each of them what Mike Forbes would call an intimate knowledge of the instrument they are writing for.

That being said, their approaches do differ. When writing for the tuba Forbes uses the tuba almost exclusively, whereas Harville never uses the tuba, relying instead upon the keyboard. Miles and Stevens predominantly employ the keyboard when they compose, but will use the tuba late in the process of composing.

These composers each create music for a wide variety of audiences and skill levels. For example, some of these compositions are written for other performers, usually as the result of a commission. Most of Stevens' unaccompanied tuba repertoire falls into this category, as does Forbes' *Polar Vortex*. In other instances, these composers are creating works for themselves as solo vehicles for their playing. This includes Forbes' *The Grumpy Troll*, Harville's *Suite in B-flat Minor*, Miles' *Contraptions for Solo Tuba*, and Stevens' *Suite No. 1 for Solo Tuba*. In other cases, these composers will create works with a pedagogical end in mind, such as Harville's *Caprice for Solo Tuba*, Miles' *Perspectives for Solo Tuba*, and Stevens' *Elegy*.

Intervallic writing is evident in every composition these performer-composers have written for unaccompanied tuba. Whether with regards to particular melodic intervals which function as kernels, or to particular intervals the composer uses melodically and structurally, all four composers write music that tends to favor particular intervals and pitch class sets. Even tonal compositions such as Stevens' *Elegy* and Harville's *Suite* can be better understood when approached from an intervallic standpoint. Therefore, set-class theory is the most useful analytical approach to understanding these works, particularly at the outset of musical analysis. Examining these works through the lens of set-class theory allows the performer to understand

the underlying connections between the musical surface and structure in these works, as well as suggest the presence of neo-Riemannian harmonic function in some of the compositions.

These four performer-composers each present a variety of harmonic collections in their solo tuba works, which arise and are deployed in differing ways. All four composers use chromatic scales and octatonic scales frequently, typically far more than diatonic collections. Forbes' compositions tend to imply octatonicism and chromaticism, though it is worth noting that the octatonic implications are largely a result of Forbes' intervallic development of the minor third in *The Grumpy Troll*. Harville, on the other hand, quite deliberately employs octatonic collections to create a personalized approach to tertian tonality which is highly chromatic. Octatonicism in Harville's music appears not because it is composed out from a particular pitch-class set, but because Harville specifically enjoyed the sound of the octatonic scale when he composed the music and therefore incorporated it.

Miles employs a combination of diatonic, octatonic and chromatic scales in his compositions, often juxtaposing diatonicism and octatonicism. Like Harville, Miles also uses the acoustic collection, although in the case of Miles this likely doesn't reflect a deliberate choice to include the acoustic collection so much as it reflects an attempt by the composer to break himself of the diatonicism to which he was cohering too closely. Miles incorporated borrowed tones such as the raised 4<sup>th</sup> scale degree and the flat 7<sup>th</sup>, as well as the minor 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. Stevens employs a wide range of harmonic collections, and is able to chromatically slide from one to the next fairly quickly. The collections he employs are a means to his ends as a composer, and so the scales he uses are to an extent arbitrary.

All four performer-composers demonstrate a concern for expanding the texture possibilities of music for solo tuba. Each composer occasionally creates multiple contrasting

melodic lines that sound simultaneously, creating the illusion of polyphonic texture within a solo tuba composition. This can manifest as a pedal tone in one register set against a melodic line moving in contrasting motion in another register, or as two independent lines in different registers and which outline different musical ideas. Forbes takes this a step further by incorporating his pulled tuning slide technique, which allows him to assign different timbres to each structural line of music and more clearly suggest a polyphonic texture for the listener.

Extended techniques are in many ways a litmus test for these composers. By examining and comparing which techniques each composer employs, we have an objective measurement of comparison between the composers; we are comparing apples to apples, essentially. Each composer uses a unique combination of extended techniques in their solo compositions for tuba. Some use a litany of extended techniques, while others focus on one or two of them. Even within the context of a single extended technique, multiphonics, there are literally 4 different approaches exemplified by these composers. Forbes and Miles each use multiphonics sparingly, within a single measure, whereas Harville and Stevens employ the technique in extended passages of music. Forbes uses multiphonics to harmonize an ascending [0257] pattern, while Miles harmonizes a single tone with a single sung pitch. Stevens creates a largely monophonic texture with his multiphonics, with the voice occasionally moving in contrasting motion to the played pitches on the tuba. Harville's approach emphasizes the sung voice, calling for the player to produce a sustained a single pedal tone on the tuba while singing melodic content above and in effect creating two distinct musical lines.

#### Concluding Remarks

Performer-composers have traditionally served an important function in western art music, expanding the solo repertoire for their instruments. These composers were able to do so

because of their knowledge as performers; as I've shown in this lecture, performer-composers are able to draw upon their intimate knowledge of their instrument and create idiomatic music that expands the repertoire. Depending upon whom they are writing for, they may impose technical limitations on themselves as a composer and informed by their experience as a performer. Alternatively, if they are writing solo vehicles for themselves, they may push the envelope and develop new techniques that ultimately become a part of the standard technique for their instrument. The four American composers I've discussed have done these things, and in doing so constitute a modern example of a common thread found in western art music: virtuoso performers exploiting their experience and knowledge to create new repertoire. Thank you all very much for coming out tonight.