THE WIND MUSIC OF KRISTIN KUSTER:
A COMPARISON AND CONDUCTOR’S GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE OF
INTERIOR AND LOST GULCH LOOKOUT

by

CHESTER BRYANT PHILLIPS

(Under the direction of John P. Lynch)

ABSTRACT

Kristin Kuster is a significant young American composer. On the composition faculty of
the University of Michigan School of Music, Theater, and Dance, Kuster has written for groups
ranging from solo voice to full orchestra with chorus. With a background in vocal music, Kuster
has recently written two significant works for wind band, Interior (2006) and Lost Gulch
Lookout (2008).

This document serves as a resource for the conductor of these two compositions by
Kuster. It contains a biography of Kristin Kuster, the genesis of each of her works for wind band,
and a comparison of these two pieces, as it relates to Kuster’s use of timbre, texture, and
harmony. This comparison reveals Kuster’s salient compositional characteristics common to
both pieces and may provide insight to other works by her, as well. Additionally, a conductor’s
guide for Interior and Lost Gulch Lookout is included and offers insights to performance from
the author of this document, the composer, and the premiering conductor of each work—Michael
Haithcock and John P. Lynch, respectively. This document is intended to help facilitate a
successful performance of these two works and to advocate future compositions for wind band
by talented composers. Appendices recount conversations between the author of this document
and Kuster, program notes for each work, specific rehearsal considerations, and a complete catalogue of her works.

INDEX WORDS:   Kristin Kuster, Interior, Lost Gulch Lookout, Michael Haithcock, John Lynch, wind ensemble, wind band, timbre, texture, harmony.
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by

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B. Mus. Ed., The University of Georgia, 1998
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

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DEDICATION

For the glory of the Lord.
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There is a list of people whom I would like to thank for making this document possible. First and foremost, I must acknowledge Kristin Kuster. Without her wonderful music, keen insight, and open discussions none of this would be possible. Kristin is a talented composer who brings new and wonderful music to us all.

I would like to thank John Lynch, my advisor and mentor, for his help and guidance through this process. I am, without a doubt, a better musician, conductor, and teacher today because of the things I have learned from him. Also on the list of mentors is my great friend and colleague, David Vandewalker. I would like to thank David for taking me under his wings, all these years ago. He taught me, through example, what it means to be a great musician and teacher. He is an amazing friend and a wonderful man. Likewise, I would like to thank Robert Ambrose for taking a chance on me and welcoming me in to the Georgia State University faculty. In a short amount of time, he has influenced me as a teacher and shown me the ropes during my first year as a college professor. I look forward to a long career of shared music making.

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During my time at the University of Georgia, I had the privilege to work with some of the hardest working and most wonderful people I have ever known. I would not have made it through had it not been for their encouragement and support. To Josh Byrd, Amy Knopps, and Jake Wallace, I say thank you. I wish you all the best as our lives take divergent paths and hope our paths cross often in the future.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF EXAMPLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography of Kristin Kuster</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis of <em>Interior</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis of <em>Lost Gulch Lookout</em></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 CHARACTERISTICS OF KUSTER’S WIND BAND MUSIC</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timbre</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texture</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 CONDUCTOR’S GUIDE TO <em>INTERIOR</em></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 CONDUCTOR’S GUIDE TO <em>LOST GULCH LOOKOUT</em></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 CONCLUSION AND NEED FOR FURTHER STUDY</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDICES

A  TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH KRISTIN KUSTER...........................................85
B  COMPOSER’S PROGRAM NOTES FOR INTERIOR .....................................................103
C  COMPOSER’S PROGRAM NOTES FOR LOST GULCH LOOKOUT ..........................104
D  LIST OF CONDUCTING CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERIOR ..............................105
E  LIST OF CONDUCTING CONSIDERATIONS FOR LOST GULCH LOOKOUT ......108
F  CATALOGUE OF WORKS BY KRISTIN KUSTER......................................................112
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1: Instrumentation of Interior .................................................................12
Table 1-2: Instrumentation of Lost Gulch Lookout ..................................................15
Table 2-1: Larger set class and their derivatives .....................................................48
Table 3-1: Brass mutes required in Interior ..............................................................58
Table 3-2: Form of Interior ......................................................................................62
Table 4-1: Layers between mm. 9–39 .....................................................................67
Table 4-2: Brass mutes required in Lost Gulch Lookout .........................................70
Table 4-3: Form of Lost Gulch Lookout .................................................................79
Table D-1: Rehearsal suggestions for Interior .........................................................105
Table E-1: Rehearsal suggestions for Lost Gulch Lookout ......................................108
Table F-1: Catalogue of works by Kuster ...............................................................112
Example 2-1: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 1–4: trumpet trio

Example 2-2: *Interior*, mm. 1–4: flute trio fades into clarinet trio

Example 2-3: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 40–44: English horn fades in and out of texture

Example 2-4: *Interior*, mm. 9–15: alto flute fading into English horn. Shift from dense texture to thin scoring

Example 2-5: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 1–3: trumpet trio, echo fanfare

Example 2-6: *Interior*, mm. 9–11: Woodwind timbre verse brass timbre

Example 2-7. *Interior*, mm. 107–111: Mixture of timpani/contrabass and trumpet/double reed

Example 2-8: *Interior*, mm. 107–111: Mixture of marimba, bass clarinet, and brass sustains

Example 2-9: *Interior*, mm. 43–47: Mixing of sounds on a two-note figure

Example 2-10: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 118–127: Bass clarinet solo

Example 2-11: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 18–21: sample of layers between mm. 9–39

Example 2-12: *Interior*, mm. 43–47: use of echo as a texture

Example 2-13: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 85–87: Contrast between dense and thin textures

Example 2-14: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 25–27: A) C♯ and C♭ clash between DIA±1 and DIA±2; B) Layers 1-4

Example 2-15: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 1–3: Clarinet 1 solo in DIA±5

Example 2-16: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 42–44: English horn clash between DIA±4 and DIA±5

Example 2-17: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, m. 1: sc [016] and sc [0167] in melodic presentation and sc [0167] in harmonic presentation on the first beat

Example 2-18: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, m. 1: V-I relationship in the bass voices
Example 2-19: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 20–22: motive 4 trumpet/double reeds; sc [016], [015], [013], [015], [016], [027], [015], and [015].

Example 2-20: *Interior*, m. 1: Opening motive of *Interior*; sc [025] and sc [016].

Example 2-21: *Interior*, m. 75: sc [016], [016], [036], [025] based of the opening motive of *Interior*.

Example 3-1: *Interior*, mm. 43–51: (rhythmic diversity).

Example 3-2: *Interior*, m. 19.

Example 3-3: *Interior*, mm. 12–15: continuous lines.

Example 3-4: *Interior*, mm. 16–21: continuous lines.

Example 4-1: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 1–2: “Echo-fanfare”.

Example 4-2: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 40–44: placement of GoS.

Example 4-3: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 106–111: Antiphonal bass drum writing.

Example 4-4: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 120–129: composite rhythm of clarinet, harp, bass clarinet, and flute.

Example 4-5: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, last page of score—original.

Example 4-6: *Lost Gulch Lookout*, last page of score—revised.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

Purpose of Study

Among the eminent new composers for wind band in the twenty-first century, Kristin Kuster (born 1973) brings a distinct voice through her variety of timbre, texture, and harmonic language. From her catalogue of works, only two of Kuster’s compositions are written for wind band, *Interior* (2006) and *Lost Gulch Lookout* (2008).¹ The goal of this document is to examine Kuster’s music for wind band and to shed light on the distinguishable characteristics of timbre, texture, and harmony identified in these works. For the conductor, this document will serve as a resource to help navigate the challenges inherent in Kuster’s works.

Need for Study

Over the last century, music for wind band changed significantly as each generation of composers contributed to the medium their own definable thumbprint and steered the genre through a path of maturation and evolution. Today, the composers of the early twenty-first century are blazing a trail of musical exploration through a variety of styles, textures, and colors. With over thirty works in her compositional output in the last ten years, and over twenty of those in the last five, Kuster stands as one of the more prolific composers of her generation. She has

won numerous accolades and commissions and recently joined the composition faculty at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theater, and Dance. Kuster’s 2009-2010 season is highlighted by five premieres, over ten performances, guest lectures, and one CD release. Her popularity steadily grows as audiences are exposed to her music.

Having been touted as writing “commandingly for the orchestra” with an “invitingly tart edge,” it is with great excitement that we receive Kuster into the catalogue of composers writing works for wind band. Kuster’s orchestral compositions reveal “a deft control of instrumentation, with sparkly writing for woodwinds and percussion.” Other works by Kuster “unquestionably demonstrated [her] expertise in crafting unique timbres.” Given that her establishment as an award winning and sought after composer is a recent occurrence, there is no existing comprehensive literature about Kuster or her compositions. Identifying the principal characteristics of the Kuster sound found through her use of timbre, texture and harmony will provide musicians valuable insight into Kuster’s compositions.

A conductor’s guide to

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7 Some limited performance reviews exist; however, no in depth studies of her music or her compositional style are available.
performance of *Interior* and *Lost Gulch Lookout* will provide conductors with a resource for understanding and approaching these and other works by Kuster. These valuable tools alone justify the need for this study.

In addition to the need for scholarship enhancing the accessibility of her music, it is the hope of the author that this document will further promote one of today’s rising composers and her compositions. Finally, research such as this is intended to advocate the need for more wind band pieces by talented composers.

**Methodology**

Due to the lack of literature about Kuster or her works, a great deal of the material for this study propagates from observations gained through analysis of the works and interviews with the composer and the commissioning conductors. An interview with the composer provides a biographical perspective and much of the needed background information on the genesis of the works.

The bulk of the material in chapter two comes from the author’s analysis of the works in question. Chapter two largely focuses on discerning the commonalities present in both works specifically related to timbre, texture, and harmony. Observations drawn from a detailed analysis by the author highlights the attributes that characterize Kuster’s sound in her works for winds.

Chapters three and four provide a conductor’s guide to both pieces in the study. A resource of technical and stylistic considerations for the conductor is developed based on score study by the author. Additional material for chapter three comes from an interview with the premiering conductor and organizer of the consortium for *Interior* and Director of Bands at the University of Michigan, Michael Haithcock. Source material for chapter four comes from
personal experience of the author as a performer of the work and from conversations with Dr. John P. Lynch, Director of Bands at The University of Georgia, who commissioned and premiered *Lost Gulch Lookout*. As chapters three and four deal with conducting implications, input from the premiering conductors helps shed further light on considerations for conductors and proves an invaluable addition to the document. Having attended countless rehearsals of her own works, Kuster’s input also serves as a valuable resource for chapters three and four.

**Review of Related Literature**

Due to the nature of the wind band and its almost exclusive association with scholastic institutions, the bulk of scholarly writing about band works is found in doctoral dissertations and educational publications. Currently there is no existing scholarly research about either of the works covered in this study or the composer; however, there are several existing dissertations that follow a similar model by focusing on works for winds, style traits of a composer, or conducting implications for performance. As this research seeks to highlight specific style traits of Kuster’s compositions and to provide conductors with a guide to performance of these two works, writings such as these affirm the proposed methodology and layout of this document.

Several dissertations take on the subject of a single work for winds. These documents are often filled with musical analysis and seek to justify the significance of a piece among other band works. Dissertations by Victor Aguilar, Robert Ambrose, Stephen Bolstad, John Brooks, Joan de Albuquerque, Sarah McKoin, Catherine Rand, Angela Schroeder, James Tapia, Angela Tam,

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8 A limited number of published reviews from concert performances in newspapers, blogs, and programs exist; however, there is a void of profound analysis or discerning literature such as dissertations or published articles.
Jacob Wallace, Kraig Williams, and Andrew Wolverton address a single work for winds and set precedence for the study of band literature.⁹

As the wind band medium is relatively new, the research and study of music in this genre is essential to identifying those traits and characteristics that distinguish a composer’s sound as they tackle this medium. Several dissertations have taken on previously unexamined composers and provided in-depth examination of the characteristics of the composers and their music. McKoin’s 1997 dissertation about Dan Welcher provided conductors “with the first extensive reference to the composer’s wind music and method of composition.”¹⁰ Wallace’s D.M.A. document provided the first extant literature about the works of John Mackey, one of today’s most prominent wind band composers. In addition to providing conductors a resource for performance, one of Tapia’s stated purposes in his dissertation was to place the work “in its proper historical perspective, especially with respect to the relatively brief history of wind bands and wind band literature.”¹¹ Following the model of these and other authors, a portion of this document seeks to provide initial study identifying the traits that characterize Kuster’s sound in her wind-band compositions.

Chapters three and four of this document serve to aid the conductor in preparation and performance of Interior and Lost Gulch Lookout. Several dissertations include conducting implications and rehearsal strategies as a major focus of the research. In her abstract to her dissertation about Susan Botti’s Cosmosis, Schroeder states that her “research provides a

⁹ Complete citations of each dissertation are found in the bibliography.


contextual framework from which the conductor may begin study of the work, and which may lead to an informed performance of the work.”\textsuperscript{12} It is the intent of this author to follow a similar path providing the reader information towards an informed performance of the works of Kristin Kuster. Additional documents providing resources for conductors were written by Bolstad, McKoin, Rand, Adam Spurlin, Tapia, Wallace, Williams, and Wolverton. In reviewing each of these documents, a commonality of collaboration with the composer was discovered. One aspect of this document separating it from all but one of those previously mentioned is the inclusion of interviews with the premiering conductors of the compositions being studied. After reviewing other models, it is the conclusion of the author that the insight of the premiering conductors provides a distinct and invaluable additional resource to the reader of this document.

The review of related literature provides a justifiable model for both the organization and content of the document, as it is proposed, and reveals the unique element of obtaining the perspective of the premiering conductors. With no scholarly literature in existence concerning Kuster or her music, it is the intent of the author to enhance the resources available to conductors by providing a comparison and conductor’s guide to performance of \textit{Interior} and \textit{Lost Gulch Lookout}.

\textbf{Delimitations}

The primary focus of this document is to examine \textit{Interior} and \textit{Lost Gulch Lookout} from the perspective of the conductor, highlighting compositional characteristics common to both works. Thorough analysis of both works was completed by the author but is not included in the document, as the focus of this document is on her use of timbre, texture, and harmony rather than

\textsuperscript{12} Angela Schroeder, “Susan Botti’s \textit{Cosmosis}: A Conductor’s Analysis with Performance Considerations” (D.M.A. diss., University of North Texas, 2007), i.
a detailed formal analysis. Descriptions of the analysis only seek to reveal characteristics of Kuster’s distinctive compositional voice and are not exhaustive or the primary focus of this document. Reference to other works by Kuster is made only for the purpose of pointing out commonalities with other works from her oeuvre and those being detailed in this document.

Biography of Kristin Kuster

Trained as a pianist from a very early age, Kristin Kuster (b. 1973) grew up in Boulder, Colorado with her parents and two older sisters. While listening to her sisters play piano, Kuster showed an early interest in music through copying her sisters and playing piano by ear. By age ten her musical propensity had thrust her into early endeavors as a competitive soloist in local and regional piano competitions. In eighth grade, Kuster’s solo piano career took a turn when a conductor in the Boulder public schools asked her if she would be an accompanist for the school choirs. Serving as an accompanist to the choirs throughout high school paved the way for her acceptance into the University of San Diego’s endowed choir, the Choral Scholars. While a member of the Choral Scholars, Kuster was the assistant conductor of the group and had the opportunity to launch her composing career:

From midway though my sophomore year through my senior year, I had this group at my disposal. I was writing original choral pieces and doing pop arrangements and Christmas carols and everything you can imagine. It was amazing because it was like a lab. I could write something and bring it in the next day and try it out in rehearsal, see what works, record it, take it home, and change it. It was an amazing amount of feedback and experiences that I know I never would have gotten had I gone to a large music school. It was really one of a kind.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^\text{13}\) Kristin Kuster, telephone interview with author, tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, February 1, 2010. All subsequent quotes in this section and biographical information comes from this interview unless otherwise noted.
After her undergraduate days, Kuster attended the University of Colorado – Boulder for her master’s degree in composition. Having spent the bulk of her life as a very melodic composer, Richard Toensing, Kuster’s composition teacher, worked to emancipate her from composing at the piano in an effort to enable her to explore the music she was hearing in her head. She attributes her development of gesture, rhythm, and pacing to her studies with Toensing. While earning her degree at the University of Colorado, Kuster began to discover her own style of composition:

I went through my first two years at Colorado in a totally atonal phase. Everything I wrote was atonal and crunchy. I think it was extremely ugly, but there were little bits of Kristy that kind of pop out when I listen to that music; little gestures or a chord here or there. I think I was just struggling to sound like I knew how to compose; yet it was stifling me. I clearly wasn’t comfortable in the idiom. I think the music reflects that.

Following her master’s degree, Kuster attended the University of Michigan where she planned to study with William Albright. Though professor Albright (1944–1998) unexpectedly passed away in the first week of her first year at Michigan, Kuster received incredible training in a musically diverse composition studio. Kuster recalls the first composers’ concert she attended in the following way:

I remember sitting at the first composers’ concert thinking, “Okay, now I’m going to find out where I fit into this school.” The first piece was like a big band piece, then there was a thorny string quartet, then there was a guy who played a couple solo rags on the piano and just this real eclectic collection of top-notch musicians. I realized “there really isn’t a place to fit, I’m just supposed to be myself. I just need to find who I’m going to be.”

Though her experiences with Albright were limited, Kuster describes his music as visceral, witty, colorful and imaginative—attributes permeating her music as well. A direct effect of Albright’s influence on Kuster is the descriptive language she uses in the score to describe the mood or way in which she wants the music to sound:

Also, I had one lesson with him before he passed away, and I was writing a piano duo. It was this really low kind of slow mucky music and he said, “What do you want to be
happening here? Describe this music to me.” I said, “Well, it’s as if you are trudging through six feet of mud. He said, “Well, write that in your score; put that, ‘as if trudging through six feet of mud.’” It never occurred to me that you could just put these descriptive terms in the music. That’s where he really shifted all of the descriptive terms in my music. That is all attributed to him because he gave the license for me to do that. His music has wonderful descriptive words all throughout it.

After Albright passed away, Kuster spent the next four years studying with Evan Chambers, Michael Daugherty, and William Bolcom. Chambers challenged her to think deeply and dig into the details of her music, sometimes spending a month on three measures of music. Daugherty worked with Kuster on her pacing. She recalls, “What I realized when I listened to music that I wrote with him, after the fact, is that my pacing got so much better. He is just phenomenal at knowing how long something should last.” Bolcom acted as an amalgamation of Chambers and Daugherty by encouraging Kuster to look at both the detail and the big picture at the same time.

Other major influences on Kuster’s music are Igor Stravinsky, Frédéric Chopin, Johannes Brahms, and Heinrich Schütz. With a strong choral background, Kuster notes the prominent influence of the often-overlooked Schütz on her writing. She notes, “His vocal music is a huge influence on me. I don’t think there is anything better in the world. It’s my favorite music.” The lyrical and contrapuntal writing of Schütz surely manifests itself in Kuster’s works.

Today, Kuster is on the composition faculty of the University of Michigan School of Music, Theater, and Dance. In addition to her teaching duties, she receives frequent accolades and continues to accept commissions to actively compose for a variety of ensembles.\(^{14}\) Kuster lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan with her husband Andrew and son Odin.

\(^{14}\) Her music has received support from such organizations as the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Sons of Norway, American Composers Orchestra, League of American Orchestras, Meet The Composer, the Jerome Foundation through the American Composers Forum, the Argosy Foundation, the Jack L. Adams Foundation, the Composers Conference at
Genesis of Interior

Interior (2006) was commissioned by a three-ensemble consortium organized by Michael Haithcock and was premiered on February 2, 2007 in Hill Auditorium by the University of Michigan Symphony Band conducted by Haithcock, Director of Instrumental Studies and University Bands. The idea for the commission developed from Haithcock’s initiative to champion emerging composers for band, specifically those studying at the University of Michigan. Following his arrival at the University of Michigan, Haithcock began using the Symphony Band as a lab band for doctoral composition students, encouraging new music for band from emerging composers. Haithcock said that if these student composers would write for band, he would “give their dissertation pieces at least one run up the flagpole.” Among these composers were Susan Botti, Roshanne Etezady, Carter Pann, and Joel Puckett, all flourishing composers in a variety of mediums including wind band. Though Kuster was too far along in her studies when Haithcock arrived at Michigan to take advantage of his offer to have the Symphony Band perform a work, an encounter in New York a few years later paved the way for her first wind band piece.

On May 3, 2006 the American Composers Orchestra performed Kuster’s Myrrha in Carnegie Hall, a piece for three sopranos, chorus, and orchestra. Haithcock was in the audience.

Wellesley College, and the Larson Family Foundation. She has received commissions from ensembles such as the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra, the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, the PRISM Saxophone Quartet, Cantori New York, the New York Central City Chorus, the Heartland Opera Troupe, the Summerfest Chamber Series, 45th Parallel, and Vox Early Music Ensemble. Information accessed from the composer’s website. (accessed October 8, 2009).

Additional participation in the consortium was by the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory (Steven D. Davis), and the State University of New York Potsdam Crane School of Music (Brian K. Doyle).

Michael Haithcock, telephone interview with author, tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, February 4, 2010.
and was struck by the personality of the piece. Following the concert, Haithcock spoke with Kuster and encouraged her to write a work for winds. She agreed, and Haithcock assembled the consortium with Steve Davis (UMKC) and Brian Doyle (Crane School of Music). Not sure where to go with the commission and relatively unfamiliar with the band medium, Kuster asked Haithcock what the instrumentation and character of the piece should be. This is Kuster’s account of the conversation:

I had no commissions at the time and I was ready to get going on something new. I was also really nervous because I don’t know any thing about the band world. Even still today, it perplexes me greatly. I haven’t yet written a piece for massive band, and there’s a reason for that. It’s because I find it really daunting. It makes me nervous, but I’m looking forward to it. At some point, I hope to do so. Michael [Haithcock] is really into this modular band idea anyway, so he was saying for this concert he had coming up in about a year that he needed something. Why not start small, start with twenty players. What I do when I have a commission for some kind of ensemble that I haven’t written for is ask, “What are the gaping holes in the repertoire. What does the band world need, that I can provide?” He made a couple of suggestions and then he said, “We don’t have a lot of music that is just entirely slow unless it’s like a movement of a larger piece; just a slow ten minute piece.” I said, “Okay, done.” That’s how it came about.\(^\text{17}\)

Haithcock’s response led Kuster to compose a work that was entirely slow and lyrical in nature. The tempo of *Interior* is marked at a range of 42 beats per minute up to 56 bpm with the quarter-note getting the beat throughout. Based on the marked tempos, the work should take just over eleven minutes to perform. The instrumentation for *Interior* was left completely up to Kuster’s discretion. Having written for most wind instruments before, but not without strings, the idea of composing for only winds was, as Kuster recalls it, “a big, big, big challenge.”\(^\text{18}\) She decided to compose for reduced forces and remained fixed with orchestral winds, omitting saxophone and euphonium. The instrumentation of *Interior* is seen in table 1-1:

\(^{\text{17}}\) Kuster, interview.

\(^{\text{18}}\) Ibid.
Table 1-1. Instrumentation of \textit{Interior}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodwinds</th>
<th>Brass</th>
<th>Percussion and Auxiliary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flute: 2 + alto</td>
<td>Horn: 4</td>
<td>Double Bass: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboes: 1</td>
<td>Trumpet: 2 in C</td>
<td>Harp: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English horns: 1</td>
<td>Trombones: 1</td>
<td>Percussion: Crotales, Glockenspiel, Vibraphone, Marimba, Triangle (medium), 2 Suspended Cymbals (c. 12”, c. 22”), 2 Tam-Tams (small, large), 4 Tom-Toms, Bass Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassoon: 2</td>
<td>Bass Trombone: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinet: E♭ + B♭ + bass cl.</td>
<td>Tubas: 1</td>
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</table>

Since its premiere, \textit{Interior} has received several performances by university ensembles around the United States. Steve Davis and the University of Missouri Kansas City Conservatory Wind Ensemble recorded the piece on a CD scheduled for commercial release in 2010. In 2007, Davis invited Dr. John Lynch to assist with the recording sessions for the upcoming CD. It was during these recording sessions that Lynch was first introduced to Kuster and her works. This encounter paved the way for her second work for band, \textit{Lost Gulch Lookout}. 
Genesis of *Lost Gulch Lookout*

Kuster’s second work for wind band, *Lost Gulch Lookout* (2008), was commissioned by Dr. John P. Lynch and the University of Georgia Wind Ensemble for performance at the 2008 neXt Festival in Athens, GA. The premiere performance was given on February 26, 2008 in Hugh Hodgson Hall on the campus of the University of Georgia with the composer in attendance. First acquainted with Kuster’s works while assisting Steve Davis and the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory Wind Ensemble on a recording project, Lynch was “immediately struck by the fantastic colors and textures that she was creating.” In the summer of 2007, Lynch contacted Kuster and asked her to compose a new work for winds to be premiered at the 2008 neXt Festival. Like Haithcock, Lynch is a pioneer who seeks out new voices to compose music for the band medium. Raymond Bisha says of Lynch, “This passion to help create new music for band shines through all the work he does.” Intrigued by the sounds he heard in her first work, Lynch asked Kuster to write a second work for band.

Lynch described to her his envisioned theme for the concert and upcoming CD as man and modern urban society versus nature and asked her to compose a work in accordance with that theme. However, not wanting to lead Kuster in any particular direction with the work, Lynch encouraged her to write whatever she wanted:


20 The neXt Festival is a music festival intended to promote the works of living composers and encourage the creation of new works for band. This festival is hosted by the University of Georgia Bands biannually and often brings composers to campus to interact with students and audience members through clinics and preconcert discussions.

We kept in touch and he got in touch with me in the fall of 2007 and told me about his neXt festival and asked if I would like to write a piece. I said, “Absolutely.” This was really different because I asked again if there were any gaping holes in the band repertoire that he thought needed to be filled and he said, “No. I think you already did that with Interior. Now I think you should just do whatever you want to do.” He was very much unwilling to tell me what to write. He was really great about it. He told me about the theme for the concert, the man versus nature idea. He said, “Have at it. Just do what you want to do.”

In keeping with the theme of man versus nature, Kuster drew on a scenic spot from her hometown of Boulder, Colorado for inspiration. Lost Gulch Lookout provides a picturesque view atop Flagstaff Mountain just west of Boulder. From Lost Gulch Lookout, one can see the beauty of the Rocky Mountains to the west and the encroaching urban sprawl from the city of Boulder to the east. These contrasting forces provided the muse for her work, befitting Lynch’s vision for the program.

Having written a slow and lyrical piece for band already, Kuster took on a more driving approach and a slightly larger instrumentation in her second endeavor. Kuster recounts, “I thought with this piece I would add a couple more instruments. Again, I still am not totally comfortable in this ensemble, so I didn’t want to put too many more because I am nervous about it. I am still trying to work out how to get a handle on how this sounds.” Though she only made a slight increase in forces, the instrumentation was augmented from twenty-three players in Interior to twenty-nine in Lost Gulch Lookout. One of the most notable increases is the percussion instrumentation. Where her first piece called for two players on mostly mallet and accessory instruments, Lost Gulch Lookout requires three percussionists and a battery of

22 Kuster, interview.


24 Kuster, interview.
percussion, including two sets of bongos, a set of congas and two bass drums. The instrumentation for *Lost Gulch Lookout* is seen in table 1-2:

**Table 1-2. Instrumentation of *Lost Gulch Lookout***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodwind</th>
<th>Brass</th>
<th>Percussion and Auxiliary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flutes: 3 + piccolo</td>
<td>Horns: 4</td>
<td>Double Bass: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe: 1</td>
<td>Trumpets: 3 in C</td>
<td>Harp: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English horns: 1</td>
<td>Trombones: 3</td>
<td>Timpani: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinets: 3 in B♭ (3rd Doubles on Bass Clarinet in B♭)</td>
<td>Tubas: 1</td>
<td>Percussion: Crotales, Vibraphone, Marimba, 2 Triangles (small, large), 3 Suspended Cymbals (c. 12”, c. 16”, c. 22”), Tam-Tam (large), 5 Woodblocks, 4 Bongos (2 sets of 2), 2 Congas, 4 Tom-Toms, 2 Bass Drums (small, large)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassoons: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since its premiere, several ensembles have performed *Lost Gulch Lookout*. Lynch and The University of Georgia Wind Ensemble programmed the piece to open their performance at the 2009 CBDNA National Convention in Austin Texas.²⁵ Composer Tim Reynish recalls:

> There were two pieces of Americana in this programme which American bands are sure to enjoy. I enjoyed *Lost Gulch Lookout* which opened the programme. Jake Wallace writes about the piece: “Boulder's Lost Gulch Lookout is an outcropping of rock on the razor edge of civilization--set atop precipices overlooking Boulder to the East, and beneath the great expanse of the Rocky Mountains from the West. The visceral, gritty energy of the very canyons themselves are, perhaps, nature's response to the incessant imposition of humanity into our few remaining unspoiled areas of nature.” His description is apt and if you are looking for a miniature tone-poem with a huge range of colour and movement, this is a piece well worth considering for next season.²⁶

²⁵ CBDNA is the acronym for the College Band Director’s National Association.

Lynch continued to champion the work by including it on the CD *Millennium Canons: Looking forward, Looking Back* that was released in the summer of 2009 for international distribution by Naxos. The work is also scheduled for inclusion in the GIA Publications, Inc. resource *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band, Volume 8*.  

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CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF KUSTER’S WIND BAND MUSIC

Webster’s defines a characteristic as a feature or quality belonging to a person, place, or thing that serves to identify it.¹ This document seeks to reveal the compositional traits that characterize Kuster’s band music. There are definable features that allow an observer to instantly recognize the works of a given painter, poet, or musician. For instance, one may quickly distinguish a painting by Claude Monet. His use of blurry colors, light and shadows, and a moment captured in time identify the essence of his works.² At the sight of a fourteen-line lyric poem in iambic pentameter written in English, one may quickly recognize a Shakespearian sonnet. Just as these artists have definable characteristics, so too does Kristin Kuster. Her works are filled with marvelous timbres, textures and harmonic language that combine to create the essence of her sound.

Timbre

Kuster’s wind music is filled with creative combinations of instruments that result in striking tone colors or timbres. In its most simple context, timbre refers to “the character of a sound, as distinct from pitch; hence the quality of sound that distinguishes one instrument from

¹ The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, s.v. “Characteristic.”

another.” For the sake of this document, timbre will reference not only the sound of a singular instrument but also the quality created through the combination of instruments, thus generating unique characteristic colors. It is the nature of the sounds created by Kuster’s instrument combinations that fill her works with a colorful and distinctive quality. Kuster’s discernable timbres are created though color-fading, familial-groupings, non-familial instrument combinations, and special effects. Timbres created by Kuster characterize a distinctive quality to her works for winds.

**Color-Fading**

If one closely examines a painting by the Impressionist artist Monet, one will discover a vast array of colors faintly blurred by fading from one hue to the next. In a similar fashion, the score becomes Kuster’s canvas upon which she paints brushstroke over brushstroke fading between instrument colors and blurring lines of distinction. Fading one sound, or color, into the subsequent sound blurs the lines of instrument timbres and leaves the listener with the impression of one sound morphing into another through some ambiguous point in time. This color-fading technique is present throughout Kuster’s wind works and serves as one of her characteristic instrumental timbres.

The opening measures of *Interior* and *Lost Gulch Lookout* highlight Kuster’s affinity for color-fading. In measures 3–4 of *Lost Gulch Lookout*, the trumpets sustain a cluster of half steps from which the clarinet color emerges. As the trumpets *diminuendo* the first clarinet rises and lands on the same pitch as the principal trumpet. It is from this unison that the clarinet sound emerges to the foreground as the trumpet color seemingly washes away (example 2-1). Similarly,

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in the opening measures of *Interior* (seen in example 2-2, mm. 3–4), the flute trio fades to *niente* \([n]\) as the clarinet trio rises to the foreground and takes over the sound.

Example 2-1. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 1–4: trumpet trio.\(^4\)

Example 2-2. *Interior*, mm. 1–4: flute trio fades into clarinet trio.

\(^4\) All musical examples excerpted from Kristin Kuster, *Interior* and *Lost Gulch Lookout* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Kuster, 2006 and 2008). Reprinted with permission of publisher. All examples are in written (i.e. transposing, not sounding) pitch. Pitches referenced in the text are sounding pitches.
In measures 40–44 of *Lost Gulch Lookout*, Kuster fades through successive colors as if one is looking through a slowly revolving kaleidoscope. At the start of the passage, the English horn is the lead voice, yet as soon as the English horn lands on G-sharp in measure 40, the clarinets wash over the sustaining English horn in successive waves of a five-note motif. The once prevailing English horn fades into the sustained clarinet pitch and disappears only to re-emerge at the conclusion of the flutes’ descending scalar passage. Following the descending flute scales, the English horn acts as the lead melodic voice until its melody comes to rest on the same pitch as the trilling oboe—fading away once again. The written narrative from the composer at measure 40 describes a “hovering mist.” It is in this mist that passing glimpses of contrasting instrumental timbres fade in and out of view for the listener. These four measures, seen in example 2-3, exemplify Kuster’s ability to color-fade between contrasting timbres.

Kuster uses the same color-fading technique in *Interior* across measures 11–15 (example 2-4). To begin this section, the alto flute sound emerges from the dissipating tutti cluster chord. In measure 13, the alto flute and clarinet trio timbres briefly mesh together before the alto flute sound reemerges to the fore. In measure 14, the alto flute comes to rest in unison with the first note of the ascending English horn line. The colors fade, and a new timbre takes over the texture. Similar to the aforementioned “hovering mist” description in measure 40 of *Lost Gulch Lookout*, the narrative marking in the score of *Interior* describes a “fog-drenched” sound at measure twelve.


Color-fading pervades Kuster’s works and serves as a signature compositional technique as it relates to her exploration of timbre in music. Kuster admits not having thought about her music in that way but says, “I do see it. I know it pervades my music. That concept pervades all my music and I really like the term color-fading.”\(^7\) The examples shown are representative of this technique found in her wind works and are in no way an exhaustive list of the occurrences contained in *Interior* and *Lost Gulch Lookout*.

\(^7\) Kristin Kuster, telephone interview with author, tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, February 1, 2010.
Example 2-4. *Interior*, mm. 9–15: alto flute fading into English horn. Shift from dense texture to thin scoring.
Familial Groupings

A second timbral technique that pervades Kuster’s music is writing for instruments in familial groupings. The tradition of grouping instruments together in families dates back to the Renaissance (c. 1400–1600) and became known in England as consorts. The consort model put instruments into families “so that one uniform timbre was available throughout the entire range from soprano to bass.”8 Kuster often assembles instruments in families to create transparent choir-like sounds. On the micro level, the timbre explored in these instances is a pure sound that is true to the quality of a given instrument family, such as flute choir or trumpet trio. On a macro level, Kuster often pits the entire woodwind choir in contrast to the brass choir.

The opening of both Kuster works for wind band highlights the idea of familial groupings in trios. Interior begins with a trio of two C-flutes and an alto flute playing tight harmonies in the low register that fade into a trio of clarinets (example 2-2). The characteristic timbre of the flute and clarinet families is highlighted. Similarly, the beginning of Lost Gulch Lookout starts with a trumpet trio proclaiming a repeated three-note pattern. Seen in example 2-5, Kuster spotlights the brilliant tone of an upper register trumpet trio. The exposed nature of the opening serves to further draw attention to the trumpet timbre.

In contrast to thinly scored and transparent familial groupings, Kuster also uses the entire woodwind and brass families to create timbre. In measures 76–77 and 85–86 of Lost Gulch Lookout, the entire woodwind family combines in unison rhythm to create a bright and piercing timbre. In measures 9–11 and 22–24 of Interior, Kuster pits the brass timbre in opposition to the woodwind sound, highlighting the brass by writing sustained pitches as the woodwinds dance

through a myriad of rhythms and scalar figures (example 2-6). Each family embraces its own character and sound.

Example 2-5. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 1–3: trumpet trio, echo fanfare.

Example 2-6. *Interior*, mm. 9–11: Woodwind timbre verse brass timbre.
Non-familial Groupings

A third timbral technique explored by Kuster is the combination of non-familial instruments or mixed consorts. Throughout her works, Kuster mixes instrument colors to generate an entirely new timbre. A technique such as this is similar to a painter mixing different colors to get an exclusively new color. The tag line “yellow and blue makes green” comes to mind. By joining together instruments with entirely different timbre characteristics, Kuster is able to meld the essential qualities from a combination of instruments to create unique sounds.

Taking the percussive qualities of timpani mixed with the resonance of two contrabasses, Kuster creates a bass ostinato in Lost Gulch Lookout that seems almost contradictory by being both buoyant and weighty at the same time (example 2-7). Kuster also mixes the reedy quality of oboe, English horn, and bassoon with the brassy edge of muted-trumpet (example 2-7). As muted trumpet and oboe share certain characteristics, the combination of these two instruments joins and leaves neither instrument distinguishable on its own. In Interior, Kuster combines muted trumpet and muted trombone, respectively, with the right and left hands of the harp to get a new sound. The harp provides a plucked articulation with a resonant presence at the front of the note while the muted brass offer a sustained quality to the sound. Without the sustaining ability of the brass, the harp pitches would decay before the subsequent note change, yet with the brass, the harp melodic line becomes seemingly endless.
Example 2-7. *Interior*, mm. 107–111: Mixture of timpani/contrabass and trumpet/double reed.
Another combination of articulation and sustain is found at measure 110 in *Interior* seen in example 2-8. Here the marimba and bass clarinet play a rising passage that is augmented by the sustaining quality of muted brass. The marimba and bass clarinet ascend while the muted brass resonate each pitch like the strings of a piano with the sustain pedal down. In measures 46 and 47 of *Interior*, Kuster repeats a two-note figure, sounding B to C$. The colors continually shift as new instruments add to the sound: oboe, alto flute, English horn, bass clarinet, E-flat clarinet, and finally bassoon. Each instrument, in the same octave, adds to the conglomerate its own quality, some in high and some in low tessitura. The resulting sound is an entirely new timbre formed from low flute, E-flat clarinet, and oboe and high bass clarinet and bassoon.

Example 2-8. *Interior*, mm. 107–111: Mixture of marimba, bass clarinet, and brass sustains.
Example 2-9. *Interior*, mm. 43–47: Mixing of sounds on a two-note figure.

**Effect Colors**

Inherent in Kuster’s music is the use of effect colors such as muted-brass, extended techniques on percussion instruments, and exposed use of “color” instruments. Kuster explores multiple sounds out of a single instrument. Brass players can expect to use mutes to alter the timbre of the instrument. Between her two works for wind band, the trumpets are asked to use straight and harmon mute. All brass are muted at some point in both pieces (Tables 3-1 and 4-2). Another effect color explored by Kuster is bowed percussion. In these two works cymbal, tam-tam, crotale, and vibes are all played with a bow. Bowing these percussion instruments changes the character of the sound expected by the listener. Instead of beginning with an impact, the sound emerges ringing with a myriad of overtones producing a shimmering quality to the sound.

Other effect colors found in Kuster’s works are the unique instruments that play a prominent role. Bass clarinet, harp, alto flute, and English horn are each used by Kuster in
significant ways. They become iconic to her sound through frequent use throughout her works for winds. Kuster states:

Yes. I really just like those sounds. […] So because I was dealing with a limited ensemble and had all the solo passages, I could use these instruments. I love the bass clarinet and I love the alto flute.\(^9\)

Rarely does the bass clarinet receive such attention as it does in Kuster’s works. Usually a supporting instrument in wind band pieces, the bass clarinet takes on a much higher melodic priority in *Lost Gulch Lookout* and *Interior*. From measures 119–153 of *Lost Gulch Lookout*, the third clarinet player switches to bass clarinet. Seen in example 2-10 is an exposed virtuosic solo seldom found in bass clarinet literature. Throughout *Interior* the bass clarinet is treated with equal demand to its more nimble family members, B-flat and E-flat clarinet. Exposed melodic statements by the bass clarinet pervade *Interior*.

![Example 2-10. Lost Gulch Lookout, mm. 118–127: Bass clarinet solo.](image)

Harp, known for its harmonic support and ethereal glissandos, is another instrument that receives melodic prestige beyond its normal use in band music. In both works, the harp timbre frequently dominates the sound. From measures 30–56 in *Interior*, the harp provides a ground

\(^9\) Kuster, interview.
bass upon which multiple layers are added. The timbre of the harp is a clean and clear sound upon which woodwind lines are gradually layered. In addition to the natural sound of the harp, Kuster uses harmonics and bisbigliando techniques.\textsuperscript{10} In fact, the last note of \textit{Interior} is a single D natural played as a harmonic on the harp.

Alto flute and English horn both have prominent use in Kuster’s works. These distinct instrumental timbres are frequently used as solo voices. The flute and oboe, being the higher pitched instruments of their respective families, usually receive the bulk of the solo material from composers. Kuster uses both the low and upper tessituras of the alto flute and English horn as a predominant timbre throughout her works. She says, “I like to have high instruments play low and low instruments play high. I like to put them out of their meatiest range because I think those sounds are so beautiful.”\textsuperscript{11} Each instrument traverses its full range and displays extreme virtuosity in Kuster’s writing.

In contrast to her use of these instruments, it should be noted that Kuster’s works for wind band omit two commonly used instrument families, the saxophone and euphonium. Because of her familiarity with and affinity for the orchestra, Kuster’s two works for band use the instrumentation of orchestral winds. The absence of these two familiar wind band instruments does as much to define Kuster’s sound as the inclusion of the aforementioned timbres.

\textsuperscript{10} Harmonics are produced by "stopping" the string at its midpoint and plucking the string just above that point, producing a note an octave higher than normal, with a clear, bell-like tone. Harmonics are notated on the string where they are played, not where they sound. http://www.harpspectrum.org/harpworks/composing_for_harp/composing_for_harp.shtml (accessed December 26, 2009).

\textsuperscript{11} Kuster, interview.
Texture

Texture is a complicated term with an array of meanings. For the sake of this document, texture will be referred to as “the vertical build of the music—the relationship between its simultaneously sounding parts—over a short period of time.”\(^{12}\) At the two extremes of music’s vertical build are homophony, “in which all the parts are rhythmically dependent on one another or there is a clear-cut distinction between the melodic part and the accompanying parts carrying the harmonic progression,” and polyphony, “in which several parts move independently or in imitation of one another.”\(^{13}\) Between homophony and polyphony exist infinite varieties of texture, many of which have no clear or definable label. Much of Kuster’s music is polyphonic in nature while other parts are based on some variation of homophonic texture; however, it is through the contrast between and the interaction of these two extremes that identify the characteristic qualities of texture in Kuster’s music. Soloistic textures, strata-like layering, echo, and sudden shifts typify Kuster’s salient characteristic use of texture.

Soloistic Textures

Appearing twenty-one times in the *Lost Gulch Lookout* score and thirteen times in the *Interior* score, the word ‘solo’ is closely associated with Kuster’s music. In addition to the labeled solos, there are countless moments of soloistic and chamber-like textures spread throughout Kuster’s works. Solo voice with accompaniment is often referred to as a type of


homophonic texture; however, many of Kuster’s solo moments are contrapuntal in nature. In these instances, instruments interact conversationally with independent thoughts exchanged line by line in the score. Kuster takes great care to craft textures that allow each voice to be heard clearly.

One way Kuster facilitates clarity of the solo line is by thinning out the texture. The beginning of *Lost Gulch Lookout* starts with a flash of sound and a fanfare of echoing trumpets, but in measures 3–4 a solo clarinet ascends to prominence as all other voices fade away. For three beats the clarinet is the only sounding instrument (example 2-1). Measures 11–17 of *Interior* display a similar quality by placing the solo voice against a thinned or silent background, which can be seen in example 2-4. The alto flute plays moving lines atop minimal supporting material and sustains while other voices interject. Measures 65–69 of *Interior* are thought of as a cadenza by Kuster and epitomize her use of thinned texture for solo clarity. The alto flute is given the freedom to play *molto rubato* while accompanied by three bowed vibraphone pitches.

Kuster’s melodic lines possess an angular quality. They are filled with rhythmic vitality while still maintaining a sense of lyricism. Her melodic lines often have an undulating feel rather than steady pulse and even rhythms. Though they must be precise in order for voices to line up and connect, these lines often have an improvisatory feel. Rhythmic ambiguity and expressive lyricism are Kuster’s key characteristics in soloistic textures.
Layering

Kuster often stacks motives to create strata of musical textures. “In an effort to juxtapose a different feeling than those more soloistic passages,” Kuster frequently establishes strict-rhythm bedrock with layers of musical activity stacked on top.\textsuperscript{14} It is in the vertical build of music that Kuster displays her ingenuity for constructing polyphonic textures that are transparent and afford the listener access to each layer in the strata of the music she builds.

Between measures 9 and 39 of *Lost Gulch Lookout*, Kuster builds a dense texture by stacking layers. With clear entrances of each motive, the listener can actually perceive the architectural musical strata in a diachronic manner when hearing the work. The flutes, later enhanced by the clarinets and bassoons, create a wash of sound by independently weaving sixteenth-note patterns that stack on one another—identified in example 2-11 as motive 1. To the first layer the timpani and contrabass add a repeated ostinato pattern that spans three and a half measures, motive 2. This low-voice pattern acts as a bass line wandering along without strict adherence to the notated meter. Layer three is an irregular rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, sixteenth notes and rests on the marimba that sustains a single pitch almost like Morse code, motive 3. Though the marimba does not add much to the harmonic layering it does create and enhance the rhythmic vigor.

Layers one through three of measures 9–39 create constant motion and complex rhythmic intensity while developing perceivable emancipation of the barline. The muted-trumpets and double reeds, motive 4, provide the listener with a perceivable meter through constant eighth notes that conclude on the downbeat of the measure. As seen in example 2-11, Kuster constructs

\textsuperscript{14} Kuster, interview. These type of sections are found throughout her music: mm. 9–39, mm. 49–74, mm. 78–96, and mm. 130–178 in *Lost Gulch Lookout* and mm. 30-55 and mm. 70-92 in *Interior*. 
and deconstructs layers of complexity. In reverse order, layers three and four drop out of the composite and by the end of measure 39 only layers one and two remain. It is the layering and compounding of so many different voices that creates such a complex texture. The staggered entrance of each layer allows the listener to register each new sound and codify its place within the growing complexity of the texture.
Example 2-11. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 18–21: sample of layers between mm. 9–39.
Echo

One additional compositional device Kuster uses in her music is echo. In the first two measures of *Lost Gulch Lookout*, the trumpets call in echo a repeated figure as if one person were playing atop a mountain with nature’s echo sounding the response (example 2-5). Similar moments are seen at measure 76 and measure 199 in the same piece, both times in the trumpets. Seen in example 2-3, three clarinets play similar ascending figures one after another in measures 40 and 44. The second clarinet plays an exact repetition of the first while the third clarinet plays a similar figure with slight alterations.

At a later point in the same piece, Kuster uses echo to create a background texture. From measures 58–74 the flutes play a low repeated figure that seems both an echo to one another and a reference to the original trumpet call. The effect is a haunting and relentless wash of sound. After the echo texture is established, Kuster adds other voices and layers over it. As ambiguity is one of Kuster’s major characteristics, it comes as no surprise that her echoing texture begins to create metric ambiguity. After a few repetitions of the echoing figure, the listener loses all sense of meter.

The echo effect is more subtle but still very present in *Interior*. In this piece, there is one moment that uses strict repetition of a two-note figure similar to the way it is done in *Lost Gulch Lookout*. Measures 46–47 contain a two-note figure, B natural to C sharp, that echoes through the oboe, alto flute, English horn, bass clarinet, E-flat clarinet, and bassoon 2 (example 2-12). Another similarity between this figure and many of the echoing figures in *Lost Gulch Lookout* is
the use of grace notes.\textsuperscript{15} Between the two pieces in this study, it is clear that Kuster’s use of echo as a texture is one of her compositional characteristics.

Example 2-12. \textit{Interior}, mm. 43-47: use of echo as a texture.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example2-12}
\caption{Example 2-12. \textit{Interior}, mm. 43-47: use of echo as a texture.}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Contrast in Texture}

Another iconic characteristic of Kuster’s music is her use of tension and release by way of the texture. While many composers build tension and resolve through harmonic function, Kuster builds tension in her music through creating dense musical textures and contrasting those moments by thinning the texture. It is common for Kuster to build to the conclusion of the phrase with a tutti statement and follow it with a small complement of instruments, sometimes just a solo line. These sudden shifts in textural density create striking moments throughout her music.

In \textit{Interior}, Kuster follows a tutti moment with a thinned texture four times. Each of these moments (mm. 11–12, 24–25, 64–65 [woodwind tutti to alto flute cadenza] and 96–97)

\begin{footnote}{\textsuperscript{15} As noted in the conductor’s guide, Kuster’s rule for grace notes is that the grace note is always played before the beat.}\end{footnote}
represents a dramatic mood change in the music. From the beginning of the piece to measure 8, Kuster builds from a three-voice texture to a tutti twenty-one-member declaration. The tutti texture is sustained for four measures until it thins to a solitary alto flute (example 2-4).

Contrast between dense and thin musical scoring is also prevalent in *Lost Gulch Lookout*. The first measure of the piece starts with a resounding tutti figure followed by the aforementioned echoing trumpets. Measures 85–86 have a tutti statement in homophonic texture played by all eleven woodwinds followed by a rhythmically unison figure by only three flutes. As seen in example 2-13, the shift from dense textures to thinner scoring creates contrast in Kuster’s music.

Harmony

Comparison of Kuster’s wind works reveals consistency in her tonal language, both harmonically and melodically. These works are post-tonal, falling outside the realm of traditional common-practice tonality. In fact, there are scarcely any major or minor triads found in these works at all. Those that are present do not adhere to a traditional dominate-tonic relationship. Though the works are not functional in a common-practice sense of the word, there are certain sonorities that seem to serve as a foundation for her works. Kuster’s tonal vocabulary is derived from referential collections, discrete pitch class sets, and ambiguity created by chromatic outliers.

Referential Collections

Many sections of Kuster’s music fall within referential collections. A referential collection is a large set of pitches that provide source material for the tonal vocabulary of a passage. The most common referential collections are diatonic, octatonic, whole-tone, and hexatonic. Of these, the diatonic collection is the referential collection most often found in Kuster’s music. A diatonic collection is a set of seven pitches, or any transposition thereof, that falls within the major scale and any of its modal derivatives, \{C, D, E, F, G, A, B\}. The label for a diatonic collection is DIA with a subscript number indicating the number of flats or sharps in the collection. A diatonic collection with two sharps would be notated DIA\(_{+2}\) and would contain the pitches \{D, E, F\#, G, A, B, C\#\}. “By drawing all or most of the smaller sets from a single

\[16 \text{ The hexatonic collection is made up of sc [014589] or three sets of half steps each separated by a minor third.}\]
large referential set, composers can unify entire sections of music.”**17** Again, much of Kuster’s music is unified by diatonic collections.

Both *Interior* and *Lost Gulch Lookout* have many sections where the bulk of the music remains grounded in diatonic collections with melodic and harmonic material constructed outside the scope of traditional triadic harmony. Most of *Interior* is rooted in DIA+2 while *Lost Gulch Lookout* moves between DIA+2 and DIA-5. The stability of a consistent set of pitches for a long period of time allows the listener to recognize a certain pitch area in much the same way as sitting at a piano and playing only the “white keys.” Kuster’s use of diatonic collections provides the listener with a group of pitches to which they become accustomed. While Kuster composes in diatonic collections, her harmonies and melodies rarely follow traditional conventions.

*Lost Gulch Lookout* is composed of large referential collections that create a sense of unity to many areas of the work. These “tonal” areas also generate contrasts between sections of the work that manifest opposing ideas. As stated previously, one of the most prominent referential collections at work in this piece is DIA+2. The first appearance begins in measure 9 and continues through measure 39. As seen in example 2-14, the flutes play sweeping sixteenth-note figures that provide a wash of sound clearly in DIA+2. The trumpets and double reeds are also in DIA+2 and further the stability of the pitch area without providing any sense of tonic. The bass line in this section acts as an exception to the DIA+2 tonal area. A repeated figure in the timpani and contrabass begins on C and moves through the pitches {C, D, F♯} in an ostinato bass figure. Many of the diatonic collections used throughout these two works have similar instances of chromatic outliers that create ambiguity. In this case, the implications are both DIA+2 and DIA-1, yet DIA+2 seems to have the stronger hold on the area (example 2-14).

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Example 2-14. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 25–27: A) C# and C♯ clash between DIA+1 and DIA+2; B) Layers 1-4
Another referential collection used several times throughout the piece is DIA₅. While the fast driving sections of the work are predominately rooted in DIA⁺₂, the lyrical soloistic sections, by contrast, are often centered in the DIA₅ sonority. Looking at the beginning of the piece, one can see the clarinet solo beginning in measure 3 deeply rooted in DIA₅ (example 2-15).

Example 2-15. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 1–3: Clarinet 1 in m. 3 solo in DIA₅.

Following the completion of measures 9–39 in DIA⁺₂, the English horn plays an extended solo between measures 40 and 49 that wanders in and out of DIA⁻₄ and DIA₅. Within these eight measures, there is an alternation between solos in the DIA₅ collection and interjections from motive 4 in DIA⁺₂.¹⁸ Seen in example 2-16, the English-horn melody has both D natural and D flat in the descending line, creating ambiguity between DIA⁻₄ and DIA₅.

Example 2-16. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 42–44: English-horn clash between DIA⁻₄ and DIA₅

¹⁸ Motive 4 can be seen in examples 2-14 and 2-19 and is discussed in greater detail in the “Discrete Set Class” section of this document.
A similar opposition of collections takes place in measures 72–75 as the English horn plays a solo in DIA₅ and the upper woodwinds play ascending sextuplets to the arrival of measure 76 in DIA₂. Like the start of the piece, measures 120–129 has soloistic writing in DIA₅; only this time, there are several outliers in play as some melodic lines contain both G♭ and G♮ in close proximity and sometimes consecutively. Like measure 8, measure 130 ushers in a return of a flurry of activity and the DIA₂ collection. The last ten measures of the piece are thickly scored and solidly grounded in DIA₂. The only outlier to the DIA₂ collection in the last ten measures is a recurrent F natural in the timpani and contrabass ostinato, DIA₀. The last sonority of the piece is made up of six of the seven notes of DIA₂ with only G natural missing.

Throughout *Interior*, Kuster demonstrates the same propensity for writing in diatonic collections. The first six measures of *Interior* are entirely in DIA₂. Only occasional melodic outliers from DIA₀, F♮ and C♯, exist in the first thirty-two measures of the piece. Similar to measures 9–39 in *Lost Gulch Lookout*, measures 86–93 of *Interior* create a cascade of sound by stacking layers of scalar figures exclusively in DIA₂. The restricted use of DIA₂ for these eight measures provides the listener a clear harmonic area. It is not until measure 94 when G♯ is added that the harmonic area changes. Just as the piece began, the last thirty measures of the work are in DIA₂ with the exception of four isolated chromatic passing tones in the bassoon.

**Discrete Set Classes**

Though Kuster does not think of her music in terms of set theory, much of her melodic material contains smaller pitch-class sets that serve as building blocks of her language. Shying away from triads, Kuster’s harmonic language draws from a combination of dissonant and consonant sounds. Rather than harmonies of stacked major and minor thirds, her sound is derived from the half step, tritone and perfect fourth/fifth. Made up of a tritone, half step and perfect
fourth/fifth, the set class most iconic to Kuster’s music is sc [016]. The most recurrent building block of all other sets in her music is sc [016]. When asked about it, Kuster admits she does not plan in terms of set class but said, “Evidently, [016] is a favorite of mine. I just really like the sound.”\textsuperscript{19} As noted in the Straus text, one can see that “by moving from set to set within a single set class, [Kuster] creates[s] a sense of coherent, directed musical movement.”\textsuperscript{20} Melodic and harmonic manifestations of sc [016] pervade her music and create one of her most salient sounds. The first beat of \textit{Lost Gulch Lookout} serves as a germ for the sonic world she develops throughout the work. The vertical sonority heard from the entire woodwind family on the downbeat of the piece is sc [0167] (example 2-17). An even smaller subset of the woodwind [0167] is found in both the trumpets and the low brass with timpani, [016]. Both of these sets reveal the essence of the work—contrast. The defining sound in these sets is most easily found by looking at the interval vectors.

The interval vector for sc [016] is <100011> and the interval vector for sc [0167] is <200022>.\textsuperscript{21} The interval vectors predict that the most prominent intervals in the work will be the half step, the fourth/fifth, and the tritone. One interesting thing about the relationship between sc [0167] and sc [016] is the way two overlapping [016] sets create sc [0167]. In essence, the [016] sound is the driving force behind the work. Not only is the [016] sonority found in vertical or harmonic instances, but it is also prominent in melodic manifestations as well. The opening figure—example 2-17—is a melodic presentation of sc [016] through a descending sixteenth note figure by all but two of the eleven woodwind instruments. The oboe

\textsuperscript{19} Kuster, interview.

\textsuperscript{20} Straus, \textit{Post-Tonal Theory}, 53.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 14–15. For explanations of interval-class vector in greater detail see pages 14–15.
plays the [0167] figure in the same rhythmic proportions as all other woodwinds. Example 2-17 is an instance of both the melodic and harmonic germ of the work, sc [016] and sc [0167].

Example 2-17. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, m. 1: sc [016] and sc [0167] in melodic presentation and sc [0167] in harmonic presentation on the first beat.

Set class [016] contains two highly dissonant sonorities, interval class 1 and interval class 6, but also contains the more consonant interval class 5. In the first two eighth notes of the piece, the tuba and timpani play C to F as if to start the work with a V – I motion (example 2-18). To claim a true tonic feel is more than a stretch, but it seems clear that Kuster works to highlight both the chromatic and the consonant in the opening figure by bringing to the musical surface
both sides of the tonal potential found in sc [016]. Harmonic ambiguity is important throughout her works.

Example 2-18. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, m. 1: V-I relationship in the bass voices.

A few prominent and distinct appearances of the [016] collection are worth examining. In measure 20, the muted trumpets and double reeds play an eighth-note figure that begins with an [016] (from now on referred to as motive 4). Motive 4 is a recurrent theme throughout the piece. In most instances, motive 4 is a succession of sc [016], [015], [013], [015], [016], [027], [015], and ending on [015] (example 2-19).

Example 2-19. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 20–22: motive 4 trumpet/double reeds; sc [016], [015], [013], [015], [016], [027], [015], and [015]
In measure 45, the clarinets sustain an [016] in the upper register while the flutes and muted trumpets play motive 4. The lyrical lines of the English horn and French horn contain a few prominent realizations of sc [016]. In measures 66–67, 157–160, and 173–176 the French horn has long sustained lines an ostinato. In each instance, the melodic material is derived from the same tonal cell that started the piece. In measure 69, the English horn echoes the French horn with a sc [016] melodic fragment. As the work progresses, much of the material becomes denser and more exceptions to the rule arise, but the origins in sc [016] remain apparent. Near the end of the work, the trumpets sustain long powerful sc [0156]. This set shares much of the sound of sc [016] and sc [0167] found earlier in the work. In fact, the interval vector for sc [0156] is strikingly similar to sc [0167], <200121> as opposed to <200022>.

Kuster’s affinity to sc [016] is also apparent in Interior. Seen in example 2-20, the opening motive of the piece is made of two trichords, sc [025] and sc [016], with the greatest durational value resting on the [016]. Later in the piece, this same two-chord motive, played in retrograde, is altered into consecutive sc [016] trichords creating the harmonic progression sc [016], [016], [036], and [025] (example 2-21). The opening melodic figure of the highest sounding voice in both pieces is also the exact same pitch-class set [C♯,F♯,G], sc [016]. Just as in Lost Gulch Lookout, sc [016] acts as a building block for much of the harmonic and melodic language of Interior.

Example 2-20. Interior, m. 1: Opening motive of Interior; sc [025] and sc [016].
Example 2-21. *Interior*, m. 75: sc [016], [016], [036], [025] based of the opening motive of *Interior*.

Set class [016] also serves as a building block for larger set-classes throughout her works. Many of the harmonic sonorities in Kuster’s music can be derived from sc [016]. The most prominent larger set classes in her music are seen in table 2-1.

Table 2-1. Larger set classes and their derivatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set Class</th>
<th>Construction of larger set class used in Kuster’s music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[0156]</td>
<td>Two inversionally related sc [016]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0157]</td>
<td>Overlapping sc [016] and sc [015].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0167]</td>
<td>Two transpositionally related sc [016]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[01267]</td>
<td>Three sc [016] related by transpositions $T_0$, $T_1$, and $T_5$.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An identifying element of sc [016] is the melodic half-step and tritone. The glue of Kuster’s melodies becomes apparent in these two intervals. As described earlier, the opening melodic figures of both works are built from the half-step and tritone. Just a moment later in measure 5 of *Interior*, the solo clarinet plays a sequence of predominantly half steps and tritones, interval class
6,6,6,5,1,6,1.\textsuperscript{22} Instances such as these pervade her music and become the accepted melodic sound.

In measure 43 of \textit{Lost Gulch Lookout}, the English horn plays a descending line with the ordered pitch intervals -6,-1,-1,-4,-1, and in \textit{Interior} at measures 19–20 the oboe and bass clarinet share a descending line that contains the exact same collection of ordered pitch intervals. Though the English-horn melody is largely in DIA\textsubscript{5} and the oboe-bass clarinet line is mostly in DIA\textsubscript{+2}, the overall sound is the same because of the ordered pitch intervals. These two examples act as the norm rather than the exception in Kuster’s works and reveal an affinity for the melodic tritone and half step, both contained in sc [016]. Intervallic consistency within her works gives her melodic lines a characteristic sound.

Though her music has some observable harmonic characteristics, Kuster does not subscribe to any functional tonal organization in her music. Large-scale diatonic collections provide pitch center while chromatic outliers create tonal ambiguities that color her music with dissonance. Though there is only one tritone and two half steps contained in a diatonic collection, Kuster builds much of her melodic material on half-steps, tritones, and fourths/fifths. Added chromatic tones fill her works with tonal ambiguities that break from a specific harmonic language or even a single strict referential collection. Kuster summarized her use of tonality by saying:

\begin{quote}
I tend to think of my music as pitch centered, rather than any kind of tonal function. I’m certainly not thinking of I–IV–V–I or any kind of functional harmony, as we know it. Rather, I think more of a kind of “pitched-centeredness.” […] To me, that’s what it’s all about, just making something that I like the sound.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22} Interval class is a numeric representation for intervals. 1=half step, 2=whole step, 3=minor third, […] 6=tritone.

\textsuperscript{23} Kuster, interview.
On the surface, *Interior* is a simple piece with slow moving lines and lyrical melodies, yet as one seeks to expose the concealed architecture contained within, numerous technical considerations emerge. There are many things for the conductor and performer to take into account in order to achieve a successful performance of the work. For the conductor, commanding the subtle while releasing freedom to the performer is crucial. For the performer, expressive and accurate playing in the solo and tutti moments is key. The conductor’s guide that follows is complied from insights and observations from the composer, the conductor of the premiere, and the author of this document. Its content is intended to aid in an informed and artistic performance of *Interior* without in any way restraining the unique artistry of the conductor or performer.

When becoming familiar with the score of *Interior* the conductor will quickly notice there is no key signature. Kuster prefers to compose without a key signature; instead she uses accidentals throughout her music to allow a greater sense of tonal ambiguity:

That’s what I tend to do. That’s why I never actually put a key signature in my music. I very easily could. I could put almost all of my music in a key signature, and I’ve had people tell me that I should. I don’t because I feel like that implies functional harmony. […] I don’t want you to think that way.¹

¹ Kristin Kuster, telephone interview with author, tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, February 1, 2010.
*Interior* has a transposed score with a preferred instrumentation of one person per part, twenty-three total players (table 1-1).² Kuster prefers the piece be performed without doubling parts. She recalls, “I did hear a performance with a bunch of the winds doubled, and I was not fond of it. I’ve only heard that one time and the balance was all over the place. I wasn’t terribly excited about that.”³ It is within the grasp of two skilled performers to cover the percussion parts; however, if needed, a distribution of the music to more than two players would not detract from a successful performance of the piece as long as it was only a breaking-up of the parts rather than a doubling of them.

Written for modular band, the instrumentation is for expanded orchestral winds.⁴ Notable inclusions outside the standard band instrumentation are alto flute, English horn, E-flat clarinet, C trumpets, harp, and contrabass. All other instruments are standard in most wind band works. Reflective of the composer’s background in orchestra writing, the horn parts appear above the trumpets in the score. The score has descriptive terms in English as well as Italian, a characteristic Kuster attributes to her composition teacher, William Albright. The terms are meant to give the conductor and performer a deeper insight to the mood desired by the composer.

Starting the work may be one of the greatest gestural challenges for the conductor. A trio of flutes decorated by triangle and harp delicately begin the work. *Interior* feels like a chamber piece much of the time, and it may be in the conductor’s best interest to treat it as such by getting

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² A transposed score is one where the written pitches of each instrument rather than the sounding (concert) pitches are included.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Modular band is a term used by Micheal Haithcock describing the phenomenon of composing with instrumentation that breaks from standard scoring. In this case, the term refers to scoring for wind band while using abnormal instrumentation.
out of the way. Michael Haithcock, Director of Bands at the University of Michigan, said this of the beginning:

In terms of gesturing, I found that I would just gesture to the harp and the triangle to initiate the sound and then the flutes would just kind of emerge out of that, as opposed to trying to put a stranglehold on the flutes to play at some ephemeral response to my physicality. That was just a waste of time. [...] You can’t squeeze it out of them. You have to release it to them. [...] You just have to make clear by as little motion as possible where these things go and then get the hell out of their way.\(^5\)

Because of the slow and lyrical nature of the piece, the conductor is called on to demonstrate mastery of a legato pattern free of subdivision. Smooth and continuous gestures are needed to best reflect the horizontal nature of the work. A pattern that shows time through the speed of the baton and perceived resistance is preferred over a pattern filled with angular rhythmic pulse. As such, the conductor will want to utilize the horizontal plane more than the vertical plane. Though there may be moments when subdividing the beat could be helpful for accuracy and timing, the essence of the continuous lines created by Kuster would be sacrificed in some way by an overly subdivided pattern. Haithcock recalls, “I don’t remember subdividing at all. Unless you understand the purpose of those figures there would be a tendency to try to lock it in by over clarifying it.”\(^6\)

\textit{Interior} is filled with irregular phrase lengths and changing meter. It becomes the responsibility of the conductor to navigate the meter changes while showing the overall shape of the phrases. Haithcock said:

I think the hardest thing about this piece for a conductor is that you have to be able to give time clearly but subtly. If you announce the bar lines in a way that is divisive of the shapes then you lose the point. Meter here is not so much a unit of organization as much

\(^{5}\) Michael Haithcock, telephone interview with author, tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, February 4, 2010.

\(^{6}\) Ibid.
as it is a unit of space. So, a lot of the gestures play across the group of measures in a non-traditional way of writing, as opposed to the way a sequence plays out over a four-bar phrase.

In the 132-measure piece, there are only 25 times where consecutive measures are in the same meter. The entire work is uses eighth note division and alternates between 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, and 6/4 frequently. Kuster writes the musical line as she hears it. It becomes the job of the conductor to highlight the phrase despite its changing meter:

When I write these little gestures with sextuplets, septuplets, or all these varied rhythms, I write the gesture how I want it to sound first and then I bar it afterwards. That’s why I have so many meter changes in this kind of music. It’s about where I want to put the emphasis of the line. I want to make sure the downbeat sounds like a downbeat. You could possibly rebar all of this stuff into 4/4, but then downbeats wouldn’t sound like downbeats. It wouldn’t look nor would it play the way I want it to sound.

For the ensemble, Kuster believes the greatest obstacle to a successful performance is playing with “restrained virtuosity” as it applies to dynamics and playing in tune.

That’s number one. What that entails is precision, precision, precision in nuance of the gesture, in dynamics, and playing in tune. Playing in tune is a big one because [Interior] has so many overlapping notes. Making sure they’re in tune when they merge onto the same pitch as someone in a different instrument family is critical. That’s a big one.

Playing in tune is essential for performing this piece. Because there are many instances where the winds play in unison with the fixed pitch instruments, such as mallet percussion and harp, an approach of equal-temperament tuning may best serve the ensemble for much of the piece. The lack of triadic harmonies, well suited for just intonation, also supports an equal tempering of the pitch from the wind instruments. Asking the performers to listen to the fixed

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7 Ibid.

8 Kuster, interview.

9 Restrained virtuosity is a term Kuster attributes to Steve Davis of UMKC.

10 Ibid.
pitch instruments should help with intonation issues greatly. In more exposed wind-focused moments, Haithcock suggests to “help them identify what is consonant and what is dissonant and that what is consonant may not be their 1-3-5 expectation.”¹¹ Two of the prominent sounds of the work are sc [016] and sc [015]. When played without fixed pitch accompaniment, the perfect fourth of these two sets should be tuned first. Next, the third voice should be added, the minor second of the three voices. Tuning the fourth is often easier for players and can serve as a point of reference for the listening responsibilities of the trio. When the textures become denser than a three-voice harmony, an equal-tempered approach may best serve the ensemble.

In addition to tuning, dynamics seem to be the greatest concern of the composer. Kuster was meticulous and extreme with the dynamic markings throughout the work. The dynamic range of the piece is from ppp to fff, with an occasional n, niente.¹² Both Kuster and Haithcock mentioned dynamic contrast as one of the factors most essential to a convincing performance of the piece.

Again, precision in notes and dynamics is very important. In both pieces, the nuance of dynamics is really important. The softest softs have to be softer than you think and the loudest louds have to be louder than you think. The extremes of dynamics are imperative. That’s number one.¹³

With performers reaching for the softest and loudest dynamic ranges, some risks have to be taken. Haithcock suggests allowing the performers to determine how far to stretch the dynamic range:

Even with the players we have here at Michigan, in the very first bar there is diminishing returns if you don’t let the players decide how they can play and then shape [sic] the

¹¹ Haithcock, interview.

¹² The n (niente) marking is always found at an entrance or release and directs the performer to gradually fade from nothing or to nothing.

¹³ Kuster, interview.
niente. You can tweak it, but they are the ones who have to make the sound. […] I remember the difference between ppp to pp and f and ff. I had to get to a point where I allowed the players to decide how soft it was going to be. And then we went from there. I think the dynamic instructions are a signal to the players and to the conductor to take risks in establishing this range. It is a little bit impressionistic in that sense and I think that is a part of her mood.\textsuperscript{14}

Tempo and rhythmic control must be precise when performing Interior. The marked tempos of 42 and 56 beats per minute are deceptively challenging. The contrasting tempos of the piece could be thought of as largo and larghetto, respectively. The challenge for the conductor is to hit these two tempos on the mark and maintain the contrast between them. It would be just as easy for one to take the sections at 42 bpm slower than marked, as it would be to push it ahead and rush the tempo. Continuously thinking the division of the beat and even the subdivision of the beat will aid the conductor and performer in maintaining a steady pulse. The conductor may find it helpful to remind those performers with slower moving parts to divide the beat to keep from dragging the tempo and those with faster moving parts to subdivide to avoid allowing the tempo to rush. Because 42 and 56 bpm are slower than the norm for tempo markings in most works, it is suggested both conductor and performer frequently reference a metronome in preparation and practice until the tempos become engrained.

The rhythmic control of the individual part will help maintain a steady tempo of the overall ensemble. Performers of the work need a familiarity with playing all subdivisions of the quarter note from eighth notes to thirty-second notes and all groupings of three, four, five, six and seven in between (example 3-1). A careful balance comes between achieving accurate rhythmic control and stifling the artistic quality of the piece. Many of the rapidly moving lines in the work are intended to sound like flourishes or independent interweaving lines, yet rhythmic precision is a must.

\textsuperscript{14} Haithcock, interview.
Example 3-1. *Interior*, mm. 43–51: (rhythmic diversity).
A few other considerations in the work are range, key, articulations and muting. Range is only an issue for a few woodwind instruments and is fairly conservative for brass throughout. Several times the flutes are called on to play to and above high G-natural. Fortunately most of these instances are in the louder dynamic markings. Clarinets are asked to play as high as written G-sharp an octave above the staff. Most instances are in the louder dynamic markings. One moment that breaks from the norm is measure 19 where the E-flat clarinet ascends to written high E while executing a decrescendo from the written piano marking (example 3-2). Kuster recalls this as a particularly troublesome spot:

You know that’s really high for the E-flat clarinet. That’s really high. When we were recording that at UMKC, it was getting a little “squawky.” We actually, I believe it was that very lick, asked the student to actually go to the back of the room and turn around because we couldn’t get it quiet enough.15

Example 3-2. *Interior*, m. 19.

As noted earlier, Kuster does not write with a key signature; however, in *Interior* the key of D major, or its modal derivatives, is clearly at play. In preparing for the work, performers should be familiarized with playing in concert C, D, G, and A. Kuster often takes away one or two sharps or adds one to achieve a certain tonal ambiguity. There are numerous chromatic

15 Kuster, interview.
alterations throughout the score. As mentioned earlier, Kuster’s music does not hold to functional harmony. If a conductor uses scales as a tool for ensemble development, it may serve the group well to refresh modal scales in warm up rather than major scales.

All wind players are expected to execute a full arsenal of articulations when performing Interior. Kuster is meticulous in marking the score with specific articulations. It may serve the ensemble well to define each type of articulation on some variety of unison-pitch exercise and then associate the defined style to its corresponding place in the piece. Woodwinds are frequently asked to articulate rapid figures with a staccato articulation; however, maintaining lightness to the line and richness to the tone should be a higher priority than creating an over-separation to each note. An example of these rapid-fire articulations can be seen in the flutes in measure 50 of example 3-1.

Table 3-1. Brass mutes required in Interior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Mutes Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horn</td>
<td>Straight Mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpet in C</td>
<td>Straight Mute, Harmon Mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trombone</td>
<td>Straight Mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Trombone</td>
<td>Straight Mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuba</td>
<td>Mute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In her exploration of color, Kuster utilizes several of the sounds possible by muting the brass. To achieve homogeneous sounds that create pleasing combinations, mutes should be carefully selected among each section and between sections. Asking each member of the section
to play on the same brand of mute will often provide a more matched sound across the section.

At times the brass mutes serve a dual role by changing the color of the sound and by helping the brass play softer in accompaniment roles. A list of all mutes needed in Interior is seen in table 3-1.

Achieving a chamber sound in a full band piece may be the greatest challenge in Interior. Because of the soloistic textures, Interior conveys “a delicacy that feels like a collection of chamber music sounds” rather than a tutti band piece. The conductor should allow the players the freedom to work within each chamber section. There are often interweaving lines that seamlessly pass from one instrument to the next. It is the responsibility of the performer to take over each melodic line with the same energy as the person passing it off. Measures 12–20 can been seen in examples 3-3 and 3-4 and are a prime example of soloistic lines that pass from performer to performer. In measures 13–14 and 16–17, the alto flute line passes to the bassoon in a continuous motion as if both measures were one single melodic line. In measure 18, the E-flat clarinet passes the melodic line to the bass clarinet giving the illusion of an almost three octave descent. In measures 19–20, the oboe exchanges with the bass clarinet, and the bass clarinet’s arrival is echoed by the bassoons—descending again for a three-octave interlaced descending line. Though much of the piece can be rehearsed in a full ensemble setting, it could serve the players well to allow for sectional time on some of the more exposed chamber-like sections of the piece. Without a conductor, the players are forced to listen to one another for balance, intonation, and time.

16 Haithcock, interview.
Example 3-3. Interior, mm. 12–15: continuous lines.
Example 3-4. *Interior*, mm. 16–21: continuous lines.
*Interior* has a loose formal organization. There are however, clearly identifiable sections and repeated thematic material that provide balance and order to the work. Kuster prescribes to a generalized organization of A-B-C-A’. A more detailed formal analysis can be seen in table 3-2.

Table 3-2. Form of *Interior*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a theme</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>Melodic germ in flutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>solo texture</td>
<td>5–6</td>
<td>Introduction of soloistic timbre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>b theme</td>
<td>7–8</td>
<td>Build and tutti statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c theme</td>
<td>9–11</td>
<td>Woodwinds verse brass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>solo texture</td>
<td>12–21</td>
<td>Chamber-like solos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e theme</td>
<td>22–24</td>
<td>Woodwinds verse brass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a theme</td>
<td>25–26</td>
<td>Oboe, English horn, Bassoon play a theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d theme</td>
<td>27–29</td>
<td>Virtuosic flute trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ostinato</td>
<td>30–35</td>
<td>Harp solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>solo texture</td>
<td>36–45</td>
<td>Clarinet solo over harp ostinato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>echo</td>
<td>46–48</td>
<td>Echoing effect in woodwinds over ostinato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d theme</td>
<td>49–51</td>
<td>Virtuosic flute trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52–55</td>
<td>Homophonic texture of brass and woodwind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>b theme</td>
<td>56–57</td>
<td>Build to tutti statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58–64</td>
<td>Exchange between brass and woodwinds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadenza</td>
<td>Alto flute Cadenza</td>
<td>65–69</td>
<td>Alto flute cadenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>a theme</td>
<td>75–92</td>
<td>Manipulation of the a theme in a contrapuntal manner; melodic layering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b theme</td>
<td>93–96</td>
<td>Build and tutti statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>97–98</td>
<td>Repose after tutti statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a theme</td>
<td>99–103</td>
<td>Melodic germ in clarinets followed by flutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>solo texture</td>
<td>104–106</td>
<td>Bassoon solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>107–108</td>
<td>Homophonic brass texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>109–111</td>
<td>Marimba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>solo texture</td>
<td>112–115</td>
<td>Solo textures in the woodwinds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>116–119</td>
<td>Active woodwind textures derived from a theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>120–123</td>
<td>Solo woodwind figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>124–126</td>
<td>Thinned texture. Active flute trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a theme</td>
<td>127–132</td>
<td>a theme in retrograde</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

CONDUCTOR’S GUIDE TO *LOST GULCH LOOKOUT*

There are several factors to be considered by the conductor before programming, rehearsing, and subsequently performing Kristin Kuster’s *Lost Gulch Lookout*. The author of this document had the unique opportunity to experience the piece from its origin as a performer in the premiering ensemble. Insights in this guide are derived from interviews with the composer and premiering conductor as well as the author’s participation in numerous rehearsals and performances.

*Lost Gulch Lookout* is a tour de force that demands agility and extreme technical proficiency, as well as a restrained virtuosity in subtle moments. The piece, reflective of urban encroachment on the Rocky Mountains, is characterized by a dichotomy of pungent dissonances and rhythmic ferocity versus lyrical solos and subtle nuance. It is the responsibility of the conductor to highlight and bring out the contrasting elements contained within the piece.

Because of Kuster’s compositional style discussed earlier in this document, it is most ideal for the composer’s instrumentation, seen in table 1-2, to be strictly observed. Doublings in sections would likely skew the intended balance of the work and distort the array of layers constructed throughout the piece. John Lynch, Director of Bands at the University of Georgia, believes “it is written really well so there is never a balance problem between the woodwinds and
brass.” As both of Kuster’s works for band are for orchestral winds only, another factor for programming is the absence of saxophone and euphonium, two standard instrument families in the modern wind band.

The inclusion of two contrabasses and harp add an additional factor to instrumentation considerations. Providing a 16’ stop or lower octave, contrabass has long been an accepted color-instrument in wind band works and is commonly included in standard instrumentation. In this piece, Kuster adds a second contrabass to the typical forces. Conductors should keep this in mind when deciding whether or not to program the work, as the two parts are independent from one another and no suitable substitute is available.

Another factor in instrumentation is the availability of a skilled harpist. The work should not be performed without a harp, as it provides unique elements to the overall texture and melodic scheme. An exquisite sense of time, familiarity with playing harmonics, and soloistic abilities are a must for the harpist on this piece. From measures 62 to 74, the right hand of the harp plays an alternation of quarter-note triplets over 4/4 measures and quarter-note quadruplets over 3/4 measures while the left hand maintains a pedal-point figure. From measures 120 to 129, the harp is called on as a melodic instrument equal in importance with the solo clarinet and bass clarinet and requires that the performer to have mastery of complex rhythms and harmonics.

1 John Lynch, telephone interview with author, tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, February 19, 2010.

2 Kuster mentioned the possibility of substituting a piano for harp, but if at all possible harp should be used over any substitution.

3 Harpists can play harmonics with their left hand by stopping the string with the side of the hand (near the little finger) and plucking with the thumb or finger. Up to three harmonics can be played by the left hand. They can play harmonics with the right hand by stopping the string with the upper knuckle of the second finger and plucking with the thumb. Only one harmonic note can be played by the right hand. Harmonics on the harp sound very beautiful.
Beyond these special considerations, each member of the ensemble must be able to act as a soloist. Few parts are doubled within the work and equal range and virtuosity is required of each performer within a given section.

Like Interior, Lost Gulch Lookout has a transposed score free of key signature. Though there is no key signature, there are certain definable tonal areas at play throughout the work. Kuster derives most of her harmonic vocabulary through a non-functional use of diatonic collections. In this piece, Kuster fluctuates between a diatonic collection with five flats (DIA+) and its closely related tonal areas with one or two fewer flats (DIA− and DIA+) and a diatonic collection with two sharps (DIA+) and its closely related tonal areas one sharp more or less (DIA+ and DIA+). The DIA− tone area, with some mixing of DIA−, is most often seen in the lyrical solos such as the clarinet from mm. 3 to 8, the English horn from measures 40 to 49, and the clarinet, bass clarinet, and harp in measures 120–129. DIA+ is the dominant tonal area for much of work, especially the quick-paced areas. A command of D major and its modal derivatives is a must for this highly virtuosic piece.

The work begins with a burst of energy followed by an echo-fanfare in the trumpets (Example 4-1). One significant challenge in the opening measures is getting the trumpets to match tone and quality of sound. The three-note figure played by each trumpet is the same and should sound as if one person were playing it on top of a mountain with the figure merely echoing through a valley. Getting each performer to match energy, rhythm of the grace notes, and quality of sound is essential to a successful performance of the introduction. The same

4 As discussed in chapter 3, Kuster avoids the use of key signature to keep emancipation from perceived functional harmony.

5 A detailed description of diatonic collections can be seen in the harmonic language section of Chapter 2.
concepts apply when similar figures are played in measures 76–78 and 199–202. To assist the trumpets in achieving rhythmic accuracy of the echo-fanfare, the conductor may consider rehearsing with the trumpets playing the entrance of each pitch without sustain or grace notes. Once the composite rhythm is solidly established, the trumpets should add the grace notes and play the rhythms as written. Focusing on accurately releasing the sustained pitch will help each player execute a timely entrance after each written rest in the echo-fanfare. As noted in chapter 3, grace notes are played before the beat in all of Kuster’s works unless stated otherwise.

Example 4-1. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 1–2: “Echo-fanfare.”

Measures 9–39 are a juxtaposition of layers where the conductor and ensemble must pay careful attention to building the texture. Kuster states, “The flutes and the clarinets in that bit are just supposed to be a wash. It should be like a fluttery kind of wash, like the wind or some rain.”6 Bringing out the accent at the beginning of each group of sixteenth notes will help establish pulse and tempo. The bass ostinato from measures 15–39 should add to the wash of upper woodwinds more so than taking over. Because of the distance between the two parts in tessitura the ground bass has no problem speaking clearly; thus, Lynch urges, “It should be more felt than heard.”7

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6 Kristin Kuster, telephone interview with author, tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, February 1, 2010.

7 Lynch, interview.
The vertical alignment of the timpani and contrabass can be particularly troublesome due to lack of proximity of the instruments in the ensemble. Asking the players to precede the sound with the breath and to initiate the sound with the ictus of the baton will help with timing and accuracy. In measures 18–34, the marimba should simply add rhythmic support and vitality to the texture. Motive 4, the muted-trumpet and double-reed figure from measures 20–30 seen in example 2-11, is intended to dominate the established texture. The informed performer will highlight the difference between tenuto and staccato articulations. A slow-moving English horn adds the fifth and final layer to this section. Table 4-1 illustrates the layers contained in measures 9–39. Measures 130–178 present similar compositional elements and should be considered in a corresponding manner.

Table 4-1. Layers between mm. 9–39.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodwind wash -motive 1</th>
<th>Trumpet/Double Reed -motive 4</th>
<th>Marimba rhythm -motive 3</th>
<th>English horn melody -A theme</th>
<th>Bass ostinato -motive 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure number</td>
<td>9 15 18 20 22 24 27 29 30 33 35 36 37 38 39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transition from measures 39 to 40 is troublesome in regards to tempo. The pace in measure 39 should still be 132 bpm while measure 40 must lock in at 54 bpm. A direct halving of the tempo would leave the conductor at 66 bpm—12 beats per minute over the written tempo. In this instance there is no trick for picking out the new tempo other than tempo-memory. The
bongos and congas can assist with the tempo change, by providing players a point of reference. Lynch suggests the clarinets use the bongo/conga sixteenth notes at the end of measure 39 as a reference for the thirty-second notes in measure 40:

> It’s really cool the way the bongos and congas hand things over to the clarinets. Because the tempo has pulled way back you have to make it feel like the sixteenth notes of the percussion become the thirty-second notes of the clarinet.  

To establish accurate timing of the new tempo and to highlight the energy of the ascending clarinet figures in measure 40, the conductor may consider using a gesture of syncopation (GoS) on each beat. In this instance, the GoS would involve a slight but sudden stop of motion on each beat of the measure with a subtle flick of the baton on each up-beat pulse to further clarify the point of articulation. This motion may also be thought of as a type of double-click subdivision. A down arrow is marked in example 4-2 at each ictus point of the GoS, the moment of sudden pause. The descending figure played by the flutes in measure 41 could be aided by a legato (looped) subdivision. The conductor may decide—because the new tempo is established in the first measures of the new section—a return of the GoS is not needed for rhythmic clarity in measure 44, but may be inclined to use it to highlight the accented and syncopated clarinet figures, anyway.

Measure 49 is the point of lowest energy in the entire piece and should be reflected by the conductor in a subdued and placid manner. The oscillating eighth notes of the pedaled-vibraphone enhanced by irregular bass drum hits with a big fluffy mallet create an eerie mood. Give careful attention to the crescendo in the vibraphone from *ppp to piano*. The ending

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8 Ibid.

dynamic, *piano*, should still be very soft and calm. Lynch believes measure 49 is “the most calm and peaceful” moment in the piece, if not “one of the quietest moments in the entire wind repertoire.”

Example 4-2. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 40–44: placement of GoS.

Muted brass help color the eeriness of the section following measure 49. The mutes used by Kuster help to create colors as well as aiding the performer in playing at softer dynamics. The

10 Lynch, interview.
conductor will have to work to balance the muted-brass parts from measures 55 to 75. Because of extreme low range, muted tuba will likely have a more difficult time projecting than the muted trumpets, horns, and trombones. Dynamics of the muted-tuba may need to be adjusted to compensate. Mutes should be carefully selected among each section and between sections to achieve homogeneous sounds that create pleasing combinations. Though challenging, asking each member of the section to play on the same brand of mute will often provide a more matched sound across the section. A list of all mutes needed in *Lost Gulch Lookout* is seen in table 4-2.

Table 4-2. Brass mutes required in *Lost Gulch Lookout*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Mutes Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horn</td>
<td>Straight Mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpet in C</td>
<td>Straight Mute, Harmon Mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trombone</td>
<td>Straight Mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Trombone</td>
<td>Straight Mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuba</td>
<td>Mute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the conductor, one of the most challenging spots in the piece is measures 85–96. Across these twelve measures, the ensemble is asked to speed up little by little from 54 bpm to 96 bpm while performing some of the most elaborate contrapuntal material in the work. In recalling his preparation of the piece, Lynch says the challenge of this section is keeping the lines together while maintaining “a constant sense of forward motion accelerating gradually.”\(^{11}\)

The conductor must lead the pacing of the *accelerando* at an increasing rate of 3.5 beats per

\(^{11}\) Ibid.
Because of the demanding unison rhythms in measure 87 and measure 88 in the flutes and clarinets respectively, the conductor should take special care to avoid speeding up too quickly. One aid to the ensemble during this section is the constant eighth notes in the muted-horn and pizzicato-contrabass. Those performers with complex moving lines, who may be less able to look up, should listen to the tempo change from the metronomic eighth notes as a point of reference for the tempo and seek to link up their sextuplet figures. Lynch paints a visual image for the progression:

It’s traveling music. It’s music that is going somewhere. It’s marching across the plains. It can be thought of as the march of civilization as an intrusion upon nature. There is a feeling through this entire section of something surging forward gradually.

The *accelerando poco a poco* section of measures 85–96 builds to one of the most aggressive and striking moments in the piece at measure 97. Kuster feels that hitting the marked tempo is vital to the successful performance of this section. Lynch recalls her saying if the tempo is too slow it doesn’t have the right energy and if it is too fast it seems hurried.\(^\text{12}\) The marking at the top of the score gives a great description of how this section should be played—“heavy, craggy cavern.”\(^\text{13}\) Heavy describes the weight with which the percussionists should play. The timpani and bongo must create as big a sound as possible. Craggy describes the rugged and rough sounds to be created by the percussion and subsequently the brass in measure 106–115. Rhythmically speaking, the antiphonal bass drum figures in measures 103–119 may require some work (example 4-3). If the part were written for one percussionist on a single drum it would be fairly simple, but the splitting of the part to two performers with spatial separation on stage creates an added obstacle for performance. These two performers may want to set up so they can

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid.

see each another across the stage and will likely need time to work on putting the part together outside the normal rehearsal time. It may be time well spent to allow the percussionists to work on measures 97–119 in a section rehearsal while the winds work on some of the more intricate interweaving solo lines from a different spot in the piece. The antiphonal bass drum effect is a unique sonic effect in the work.


Following the drumming section of the piece, as Kuster referred to measures 97–119, is one of the most intricate and challenging places in the entire work. The interplay of the clarinet, harp, bass clarinet, and flute from measures 120–129 creates a canvas of musical lines that connect and play off one another. It is important for each of these instruments to be in sync with the others. The fused lines create a web of rhythmically ambiguous yet constant motion. A composite rhythm of the melodic lines from measures 120–129 can be seen in example 4-4. This section should have the feel of a chamber work and come as a delicate contrast to the preceding percussive eruption. In these measures, the role of the conductor is that of a facilitator rather than a dictator. Subtle gestures should merely help the players connect one line to the next and aid the auxiliary instruments in playing together in measures 125–126. Once exact rhythmic precision is achieved, the players should free themselves to play with an improvisatory sounding virtuosity.
Example 4-4. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, mm. 120–129: composite rhythm of clarinet, harp, bass clarinet, and flute.

From a construction standpoint, measures 130–178 are a creative variation of the opening allegro (mm. 9–39) built with manipulations of the material and reordering of events. This section, marked “vistas rising, fog lifting,” carries with it a greater sense of urgency and forward motion than before. Lynch said, “There is something about it that sounds more urgent and is a notch more intense.” That “something” can be attributed to the rising direction of the clarinet line from measures 132 to 152 and to motive 4 being transposed up a step from earlier in the piece. An increased rhythmic vitality in the marimba and bowed crotales also add energy and timbral interest to the return. Though the section begins at measure 130, the real return of the opening allegro does not happen until measure 148. From the flute entrance at measure 148 to the conclusion of the section at measure 179 the events are paced in nearly exact repetition of the opening allegro. The exceptions are: a fading out of the material that began in measure 130 from

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15 Lynch, interview.
measure 148 to measure 153; a slight alteration to the bass ostinato (motive 2) from the opening; added triangle and tam-tam, marimba on a higher pitch; a stronger conclusion of the phrase over measures 172–178; and, most notably, the A theme from the English horn is expanded into a more extensive horn soli.

Kuster claims an affinity for bringing back thematic material within a work, but usually in a different way because, as she believes, “it gives a sense that we have been somewhere and we are back again, but maybe it has changed a little bit as if we never really left.” At measure 150, the horn solo reintroduces the English horn A-theme from measure 36. In measure 36 the theme is three and a half measures long; however, at measure 150 the horn solo builds and eventually adds players, becoming a horn soli of three players, over twenty-seven measures. In an earlier version of the score, the horn line was a solo throughout, but because of balance and projection issues, Kuster decided to add an additional horn at measure 165 and two additional horns at measure 173. Though the projection problems of the horn line are likely fixed with the marked doublings in the score, based on her willingness to double the line in this thicker texture, another possibility for forces through this section is: one horn at measure 150, two at measure 157, three at measure 165, and all four at measure 173.

Because of a quickened tempo from a similar section at measure 103, clarity of articulations becomes an even greater concern at measure 179 and measure 194 to the end. The long-short articulations of the tenuto–staccato brass eighth notes should have an almost jazz, swing-like feel—“do-bop.” Asking the players to “lean into” the tenuto eighths may give the performers an idea of the weightiness needed in this section. It is easy for the tempo to push ahead from measure 179 to the end, but it is the desire of the composer for the tempo to remain

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16 Kuster, interview.
steady without additional *accelerando*. Maintaining tempo allows for clarity in the rhythms and articulations. A natural build of energy is created through the strata of textures Kuster constructed and concludes the work powerfully.

Seeking a conclusion with greater impact, Kuster reworked the ending from the first version to what is now in the score. The day before the premier performance Kuster attended a rehearsal at the University of Georgia. When she heard the ending for the first time, she jumped up and talked to Lynch about how to make it stronger and more conclusive. After Kuster and Lynch conferred for a few minutes, she asked the ensemble to try a few different things. She added a measure to the piece—now measure 211—and changed the brass parts to a *forte-piano crescendo* over measures 211–212. The last figure of the work was shifted over one eighth note to conclude on beat two rather than on the up beat of one. The results of those experiments are now reflected in the score. The last page of the score as it was and as it is now can been seen in examples 4-5 and 4-6 respectively.
Example 4-5. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, last page of score—original.
Example 4-6. *Lost Gulch Lookout*, last page of score—revised.
Lost Gulch Lookout has a loose formal organization. There are however, clearly identifiable sections and repeated thematic material that provide balance and order to the work. Though many of the sections seem to repeat, Kuster never does a direct repetition. While there is something from before, there is always something new added. A prescribed organization of the work can be seen in table 4-3.
### Table 4-3. Form of *Lost Gulch Lookout.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Echo-fanfare</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>Trumpet trio in echo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solo Textures</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>Solo textures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>motive 1</td>
<td>9-39</td>
<td>Wispy sixteenth note upper woodwind layer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 2</td>
<td>15-39</td>
<td>Bass ostinato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 3</td>
<td>18-34</td>
<td>Marimba rhythmic figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 4</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Trumpet/double reed figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A theme</td>
<td>36-39</td>
<td>English horn solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>solo texture</td>
<td>40-41</td>
<td>Clarinet figure in echo; falling flute 32nd notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 4</td>
<td>45-46</td>
<td>Trumpet/double reed figure in augmentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46-48</td>
<td>English horn solo with echoing flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>motive 5</td>
<td>49-75</td>
<td>Vibrphone oscillating eighth notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 6</td>
<td>55-58</td>
<td>Clarinet trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 7</td>
<td>58-74</td>
<td>Flute echo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 6</td>
<td>62-66</td>
<td>Clarinet trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A theme</td>
<td>66-68</td>
<td>Horn solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A theme</td>
<td>69-70</td>
<td>English horn solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A theme</td>
<td>71-74</td>
<td>Horn solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solo texture</td>
<td>74-75</td>
<td>English horn solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>dramatic build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Echo-fanfare + motive 5</td>
<td>76-78</td>
<td>View expanding; echo-fanfare, B theme in horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 8</td>
<td>79-84</td>
<td>Flutes and clarinetos introduce rhythmically driven melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 6 + motive 5</td>
<td>85-86</td>
<td>Much like m. 76, “view expanding”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 8</td>
<td>87-88</td>
<td>accel. poco a poco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solo textures + motive 5</td>
<td>89-94</td>
<td>Contrapuntal layering (Schütz-like)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>95-96</td>
<td>build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Percussion</td>
<td>97-102</td>
<td>Antiphonal percussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C Theme</td>
<td>103-114</td>
<td>Low brass chord and articulated rhythms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percussion</td>
<td>115-119</td>
<td>Antiphonal percussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Solo textures</td>
<td>120-129</td>
<td>Solo textures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A&lt;sup&gt;‘&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>motive 3&lt;sup&gt;‘&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>130-152</td>
<td>Marimba rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 1&lt;sup&gt;‘&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>132-178</td>
<td>Sixteenth-note figures in upper woodwinds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 4&lt;sup&gt;‘&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>140-148</td>
<td>Trumpet/double reed eighth-note figure (up a step)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 1</td>
<td>148-178</td>
<td>Flutes play exactly m. 9-39 others vary towards the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A theme&lt;sup&gt;‘&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>150-176</td>
<td>Horn solo line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 2&lt;sup&gt;‘&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>153-178</td>
<td>Bass ostinato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motive 4</td>
<td>159-169</td>
<td>Trumpet/double reed eighth-note figure (original pitches)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C Theme&lt;sup&gt;‘&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>174-178</td>
<td>Pulsating brass ostinato based on C theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>C Theme</td>
<td>179-193</td>
<td>Pulsating brass ostinato based on C theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C Theme fragment</td>
<td>194-198</td>
<td>Melody in trombone and timpani, based on C theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Echo-fanfare, B theme, C theme chord</td>
<td>199-202</td>
<td>Echo-fanfare and horn oscillating eighth notes with low brass chord from C theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>203-213</td>
<td>Coda: B theme + C theme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION AND NEED FOR FURTHER STUDY

The wind band is fortunate to have a composer such as Kristin Kuster making contributions to its growing and evolving repertoire. Her works have a fresh and distinct sound in a variety of mediums and receive performances in venues around the world. It is the desire of the author that this document serves as a resource for those who wish to study and perform these and other works by Kuster. The insights discussed in chapter two of this document highlight Kuster’s primary compositional characteristics found in her works for winds, but they may also be applied to other works in her oeuvre.

Kuster’s two compositions for wind band are filled with unique sounds and striking architecture. Both *Interior* and *Lost Gulch Lookout* break from the norms of instrumentation, texture, and harmony found in many band pieces. Tonal ambiguities, rhythmic complexity, and melodic counterpoint are salient characteristics of Kuster’s music. Her works demand a high level of sensitivity, virtuosity, and intellect from both performer and conductor. True musical maturity is needed when approaching these works.

Though this document seeks to codify Kuster’s music, she sets the record straight:

I mean, really, at the end of the day you’re just trying to write something that sounds cool. I’m just trying to come up with something that sounds pretty and that’s beautiful and can give the listener a delightful listening experience for “x” number of minutes in their evening.¹

¹ Kristin Kuster, telephone interview with author, tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, February 1, 2010.
It is the belief of the author that Kuster has done just that. She has written two pieces for winds that sound fresh and unique and give the listener a variety of moods and experiences.

A second goal of this document is to highlight the importance of quality works being composed to further enrich the band repertoire. Band music in the United States, with the support of schools and universities around the country, has made great strides over the last sixty years. Gifted composers who write for a plethora of genres beyond band music continue to add music to the wind repertoire. Scholarship such as this seeks to draw attention to a composer who writes commandingly for band. As a teacher of composers, her influence is sure to be felt not only through her musical output, but also through her guidance of emerging composers.

As this document seeks to compare her works and codify her overall sound, Kuster seems reluctant to subscribe to any one definition of her music:

I know it’s strange, but I feel like I also am a little bit allergic to coming up with a label for my sound because I feel like it’s ever evolving. I certainly hope that ten or twenty years from now, I’m not writing the same music. I hope it evolves further and gets more and more interesting because, if I’m writing the same music two decades from now that I’m writing now, that’s going to be really boring for me. That would not be good.²

Though there is no way to know where her music will lead, it is the belief of the author that Kuster’s music already sets her apart from her peers. Her music is logically constructed and musically intriguing. It is with great enthusiasm that we receive her current works into the band repertoire and with anticipation that we look forward to her future works for winds.

² Ibid.

81


Haithcock, Michael. Telephone interview by author. 4 February 2010. Tape recording. Atlanta, Georgia.


——. Lost Gulch Lookout. Ann Arbor, MI: Self Published, 2008.

——. Telephone interview by author. 1 February 2010. Tape recording. Atlanta, Georgia.


——. Telephone interview by author. 19 February 2010. Tape recording. Atlanta, Georgia.


APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH KRISTIN KUSTER

The following is a transcript of an interview with the author of the document conducted with composer Kristin Kuster via telephone on 1 February 2010.

Chester Phillips: I’m really excited about doing this document that is just focused on you and specifically your band music. Thank you for being a part of it. Your music is wonderful, and it’s going to be great to have some literary resource for other people.

Kristin Kuster: Well, I really appreciate this, Chester. I’m immensely flattered. It’s fun for me, and I’m sure you’re going to point out some things that I’m not even aware of, which is cool.

CP: Feel free to speak as floridly about anything I ask about, and I will grab as much conciseness out of it as I can. The first thing I am going to do in the document is talk about your background. I’ve seen your bio on the website and was wondering if you could talk about how you got started in music and what lead you to being a composer. It seems like you did some stuff with studying voice when you were out in California.

KK: Yeah, actually it was kind of a circuitous path in some ways for me. I grew up with two older sisters. My mom tells the story, which may or may not be true, they were both taking piano lessons and evidently at some young age, I just started copying them and playing by ear. She got me into piano lessons as a young kid, and I was really into it. When I was about ten, I simultaneously started playing competitive softball. I had these two worlds going on. I kept them separate. I can’t tell you why, but I did.

When I was in junior high school, I was really fortunate. In Boulder, music is a big deal in schools. When I was in 8th grade, I remember one of the conductors asked if I wanted to be an accompanist for one the choirs. Because I was in choir all the time anyway, I said yes. I really got hooked on that. Around 9th grade, age 14 or 15, I lost interest in the solo piano competitions. It was so much pressure, and I wasn’t performing up to capacity because I wasn’t practicing enough. I really became an accompanist at that age. Then I went to high school that had eleven choirs. I immersed myself in that. I played for choirs, more than one choir every year. Then, in my senior year in high school, I wrote a little piece for a quartet for a talent show. That was really my first piece. It had a beginning and an end. It had a shape, and so on and so forth. Before that, when I was taking lessons as a kid, I was always messing around with the music. I would turn it upside down or try to play it backwards, or just really experimenting with the written page. That probably is where the creative seed was planted beyond just learning the notes on the
page and playing them perfectly. I think I was always more interested in messing with it and seeing what else I could do with it on my own.

In my senior year, I had to make a decision between going to school for softball or doing something else. I was dating a guy who auditioned for a brand new endowed choir at the University of San Diego, which is a tiny little Catholic school in San Diego. He said, “Well if you can accompany my audition, why don’t you audition while you’re down there anyway.” I thought, “Okay, why not?” The night before the audition I got a call from the conductor saying that his accompanist had the flu. He had seen that I had been an accompanist for a couple years and asked if I would sight read 25 auditions in Denver the next day. I thought he paid me $100. When your eighteen, that sounds like a lot of money. He got a good deal, nonetheless. So I did that, and they accepted me into this group at USD as the 11th member as the accompanist.

It ended up being this amazing experience. I was really only one of three music majors. It’s a tiny liberal arts college. I got a Bachelor of Arts degree, not a Bachelor of Music degree. What I lacked in that school with academic training, I got ten fold in practical training. This group was called the University of San Diego Choral Scholars. They still exist today although they look a little different now. They don’t have full scholarships like we did and they perform a little bit less. When I was there, 1991–1995, we were created to be ambassadors for the university. So what we did was, we performed at black-tie functions for very wealthy owners two or three times a week. We would go to these dinners. They would place one of us at these big tables with adults in their 50s and 60s that they wanted us to just schmooze and be the young faces to which the owners could put their money. Four solid years of that is incredible training at how to be a musician outside the practice of music, but rather, how to behave as a musician.

So whether we like it or not, especially as composers, we spend a lot of our time alone. 90% of the time is creating our music alone; however, our profession exists in the public sphere. We have to know how to behave in that sphere. On top of that, our conductor was fired in my sophomore and they brought in another guy who was an adjunct. He thought he was not getting paid enough to do that amount of work, so he made me the assistant conductor of the group and gave me half of the rehearsals every week. From mid way through my sophomore year to my senior year, I had this group at my disposal. I was writing original choral pieces and doing pop arrangements and Christmas carols and everything you can imagine. It was amazing because it was like a lab. I could write something and bring it in the next day to try it out in rehearsal to see what works, record it, take it home, change it. It was an amazing amount of feedback and experience that I know I never would have gotten had I gone to a large music school. It was really one of a kind.

I still wasn’t positive that I wanted to be a composer, but I knew I didn’t want to go into the work force right away, so I decided to go to grad school. My portfolio was very thin compared to now, on the faculty at Michigan, I’m looking at these students who are applying for a master’s degree, and it’s amazing. I was leagues behind some of these kids. Somehow the stars aligned, and they let me into the University of Colorado at Boulder for my master’s degree. It was tremendous. It was really great. Because I had focused on other things, like being on the beach, in my undergraduate, I had to do a three-year master’s degree at CU and make up a lot of my undergraduate work. At the time, it was painful and difficult for me, but now looking back, it was good for me. I think until my master’s degree, I wasn’t really serious about being a
musician. I wasn’t really able to learn as well as I could until I finally decided to devote myself to this for my career.

I went through my first two years at Colorado in a totally atonal phase. Everything I wrote was atonal and crunchy. I think it was extremely ugly, but there were little bits of Kristy that kind of pop out when I listen to that music; little gestures or a chord here or there. I think I was just struggling to sound like I knew how to compose; yet it was stifling me. I clearly wasn’t comfortable in the idiom. I think the music reflects that.

When I decided to apply to Michigan for my doctorate, I quickly wrote five short pieces over the summer, all on my own, and recorded them myself and put them together for my application. Somehow they let me into school at Michigan. I’m still not sure how that happened. I think it was William Albright. I think he had something to do with it. I met him one time, and I was just totally stuck by his music. I love his music. I really came to Michigan to study with him. He ended up passing away the first week I was here in the fall of 1998. It ended up being a good fit anyway and I got incredible training here. I was with these students that had been winning awards and writing music from very young ages. The thing that’s so great about our school and student body is that it’s very musically diverse. I remember sitting at the first composers’ concert thinking “alright, now I’m going to find out where I fit into this school.” The first piece was like a big band piece, then there was a thorny string quartet, then there was a guy who played a couple solo rags on the piano and just this real eclectic collection of top-notch musicians. I realized “there really isn’t a place to fit, I’m just supposed to be myself. I just need to find who I’m going to be.” That was really terrific as well. That’s my long synopsis.

CP: That seems like a great journey. I know you went to school at Michigan to study with William Albright. Who are the composition teachers that most influenced you? How do you attribute your style to them; or do you?

KK: A little yes and a little no. Richard Toensing, who is now retired from the University of Colorado – Boulder, was really influential on me at CU simply because he got me away from the piano. He gave me an assignment to stop writing at the piano and try to imagine what I wanted to hear, write it down, and then go check it at the piano. That changed my writing completely. It worked throughout my atonal phase beautifully because then I was focused on other things. I was focused on gesture and rhythm and pacing and leaving pitch out. Which was really good because at that age I was already a really melodic composer. Everything had a melodic shape. By getting away from the piano, I was forced to explore all these other aspects of making a piece. He was the one who really pushed me to apply to Michigan. I really didn’t think I had any chance of getting in. He encouraged me and helped me get my stuff together. He is a pivotal figure in my life today. I wouldn’t be here now with this job had it not been for him.

At Michigan, Albright is still a big influence on me in a couple ways. First, I think his music is really visceral and also a little witty, colorful and imaginative. His music is dripping with really subtle nuance, which I hope to achieve someday. Also, I had one lesson with him before he passed away, and I was writing a piano duo. It was this really low kind of slow mucky music and he said, “What do you want to be happening here? Describe this music to me.” I said, “Well it’s as if you are trudging through six feet of mud.” He said, “Well write that in your score; put that, ‘as if trudging through six feet of mud’.” It never occurred to me that you could just put these descriptive terms in the music. That’s where he really shifted all of the descriptive terms in
my music. That is all attributed to him because he gave the license for me to do that. His music has wonderful descriptive words all throughout it; it’s just delightful.

When Albirght died, they assigned me to Evan Chamber’s studio, and I studied with Evan for a year. He is amazing and would ask me question after question that I didn’t have answers for. It was frustrating to me because I felt like I wasn’t being a good student, but at the same time, he was getting me to think on a level that I hadn’t yet thought. He can pay so much attention to detail. We could spend a whole month on three measures making it sound exactly right. I studied with Michael Daugherty the second year. That was a totally different experience in a great way because he is a broad “bird’s eye view” kind of teacher. What I realized when I listened to music I wrote with him, after the fact, is that my pacing got so much better. He is just phenomenal at knowing how long something should last. We worked on that a great deal. Then I studied my last two years with Bill [William] Bolcom, which was really fun. He is thinking on a level that the rest of us will probably never access. It’s like the piano is an extension of his body. He knows so much music. I think he has a photographic memory. He could talk about detail, really specific details, and do the broad picture at the same time. It was kind of a combination of Evan [Chambers] and Michael [Daugherty] coming to full form as I studied with him my last two years.

Also, I’ve sung so much vocal music throughout all my years in choir. Now listening to my music and knowing what grabs me, I clearly like Stravinsky a lot. I think he seeps in there. Heinrich Schütz, who is a precursor to Bach, is also a big influence on me. I don’t think we pay enough attention to Schütz. He gets the short end of the stick. I think we leap right to Bach in our history classes. Schütz’s vocal music is a huge influence on me. I don’t think there is anything better in the world. It’s my favorite music. Then, there is all the piano music from when I was a kid. I was really into the slow Chopin and slow Brahms, the really dramatic and subtle, sad music.

**CP:** Maybe you can see some of that influence in Interior, especially.

**KK:** Yeah, a little bit, I think so.

**CP:** You got your start in vocal music, and it seems composers love to write for orchestra and strings. How did you get into writing your first piece for band? What were the origins of Interior?

**KK:** I am ashamed to say that while I was a student here for four years, the band was not on my radar. Which is ridiculous because it’s a great band. I was focused on all these other things. I was two years out of school and I had been adjunct at Michigan for two years from 2002–2004. Then from 2004–2005, I taught at Denison University. In the fall of 2005, I had my child Oden. Somewhere in there, I went to a band concert and spoke with Michael Haithcock. I knew who he was, but we had never really talked. He said, “We should work out a piece. I want you to write me something.” I said, “Okay.” At the time we had this discussion, I was working on my piece for the American Composer’s Orchestra. Michael [Haithcock] and I got talking over coffee, and I got him tickets to see the concert. He happened to be in New York that week in May and came to the concert and the reception afterwards. We chatted a little bit there as well.
When we got back over the summer, he put together this consortium with UMKC and Steve Davis and SUNY Potsdam with Bryan Doyle. I was thrilled. I had no commissions at the time and I was ready to get going on something new. I was also really nervous because I don’t know anything about the band world. Even still today, it perplexes me greatly. I haven’t yet written a piece for massive band, and there’s a reason for that. It’s because I find it really daunting. It makes me nervous, but I’m looking forward to it. At some point, I hope to do so. Michael [Haithcock] is really into this modular band idea anyway, so he was saying for this concert he had coming up in about a year that he needed something. Why not start small, start with twenty players. What I do when I have a commission for some kind of ensemble that I haven’t written for is ask, “What are the gaping holes in the repertoire. What does the band world need, that I can provide?” He made a couple of suggestions and then he said, “We don’t have a lot of music that is just entirely slow unless it’s like a movement of a larger piece; just a slow ten minute piece.” I said, “Okay, done.” That’s how it came about.

It was great because sometimes it helps me to have limitations. The limit in the number of instruments and the knowledge that this is not going to be a loud and fast piece helped immensely. Then, I just dove in. I really and honestly felt like I had no idea what I was doing. It was a brand new thing for me. I thought, “Well, we’ll just see what comes out.” I’d written for all these instruments before but not without strings or in a chamber situation. Actually, I’ve never even written a woodwind quintet, so it was really a big, big, big challenge for me. But, I’m happy with it. I wasn’t really happy with it when I first finished or when I first heard it. I tend to do that with my music. I tend to not like it until a couple months have passed.

**CP:** Well, I like it. That’s why I’m writing about it. Let me ask you some broad concept things. The second chapter of the document I’m writing attempts to characterize your sound. Throughout, I refer to it as “The Kuster sound.” As everyone has their own thumbprint or DNA to what they do, the big thrust of my document is focused on your characteristics. I have narrowed in on talking about your use of timbre, texture and harmony. Before I get more specific, I was wondering if you would, in a broad sense, discuss if you have something that you think of as characterizing your sound.

**KK:** Oh, gosh. Yes and no, but mostly no. I mean, really, at the end of the day you’re just trying to write something that sounds cool. I’m just trying to come up with something that sounds pretty and that’s beautiful and can give the listener a delightful listening experience for “x” number of minutes in their evening. When I set out to write a piece, I also have the full understanding that there are things that seep into each piece whether I like it or not. I think that is true for every composer. I grew up in the eighties. I was all about Madonna. I was all about Michael Jackson. That stuff has got to be in there somewhere. I can’t pinpoint it exactly, but it’s there. When I was a child, I really loved Linda Ronstadt. All of that was combined with all the piano music I was playing. So it’s all in there.

When I sit down to write, I know there are certain chords that I tend toward, certain sonorities like a lot of added seconds and minor ninths. I love major sevenths and things like that. Those harmonies are in there, but I don’t, by any means, have a conscious sense of what my sound is. When I listen to all my music, I can hear things that are in common or the material that I recycle, sometimes.
I know it’s strange, but I feel like I also am a little bit allergic to coming up with a label for my sound because I feel like it’s ever evolving. I certainly hope that ten or twenty years from now, I’m not writing the same music. I hope it evolves further and gets more and more interesting because, if I’m writing the same music two decades from now that I’m writing now, that’s going to be really boring for me. That would not be good.

**CP:** I’m sure your style will continue to evolve. It seems like we can take many composers and look back on their lives and sectionalize their compositional output. For now, I’m only dealing with this three-year period from 2006 to 2008 with these two pieces.

**KK:** When I sat down to write my first band piece for this consortium, I, on purpose, did not go and listen to a bunch of band music because it was going to all be in my ears and I wouldn’t be able to keep it out. I do that with everything. A lot of people, if they’re going to write a string quartet, a set of piano pieces, or something, go and listen to a bunch of rep. I can’t do that because it will not leave my brain. I try to save my listening time for things that I’m not writing in that idiom. When I listen during the week to different things, I tend to not listen to whatever ensemble I’m writing for at the time.

**CP:** That makes sense.

I’d like to talk about timbre within your music. I think there’s a certain sound to your music and the way you create colors. I’ve isolated it down to several different things that I see you do. I’m curious to see what your thoughts are. One is a term that, I don’t even know if it’s an official term that we can use, but I’ve called it “color-fading.” I find that, in your music, often times you will finish an idea by literally letting it bleed right into the next idea. At times, you almost can’t even hear where one instrument fades out and the next one comes in.

**KK:** I love that.

**CP:** If you look at the beginning of *Interior*, you start with the flutes, they fade out, and all of the sudden, the clarinets emerge. For a brief moment, you don’t even know which instrument you’re listening to until you realize, “Oh, okay, now the clarinets have taken over.” This is something you also do at the beginning of *Lost Gulch Lookout* when you have the trumpets hit an [012], the three half steps, and then the clarinet comes into prominence as they fade out. You seem to do this as a trait. Not to say you do it in the same way every time.

**KK:** I think that’s fair, absolutely. I hadn’t really though about that, but I do see it. I know it pervades my music. That concept pervades all my music and I really like the term “color-fading.” I think that’s interesting. I’m trying to wrack my brain to see when I came up with that, and I can’t pinpoint it. Did I send you the chamber piece, *Ando: Light against Shade*?

**CP:** Yes, you did.

**KK:** That’s probably the pivotal piece for that idea, particularly the first minute and a half of that piece. That’s where I really started experimenting with that. It worked so well, and I liked it so much, that I think I just built on that. I’m still building on it. I’m still trying to find new ways to do it. Also, what that does is, by writing sections that have a lot of fading in and out of timbre and color it leaves me an opportunity later to make a striking moment by not doing that, by an immediate juxtaposition of colors back to back. I’m never consciously saying, “Okay, five
minutes in, I’m going to stop fading in and out of timbres.” I don’t plan that way at all. It’s a tool. That’s something I do when I’m working and am struggling to figure out what needs to happen in whatever section I’m working on. I look at what I’ve already done and say, “Okay, well, what’s missing? What do I not have? What can I use?”

With Interior, I think part of it was just because I knew it was going to be slow. I knew it was going to mostly be quiet. Aside from writing just a little nice melody with a little bit of accompaniment, I search for how to make this a little bit more interesting than that. That is what I was trying to do. The layering of melodies really started in that Ando piece as well. I still do that a lot. I really like the way it sounds.

CP: That’s something that I talk about in your textures, this strata-like layering where you keep adding one thing to the next. I see that in both these pieces. That’s a little reminiscent of some moments in Stravinsky’s works.

KK: Yes, and also Schütz. I’m sitting here right now, flipping through Interior, and I’m looking at the top of page 17 with the flutes up there. If you just look at beats two and three of that bar, the second flute coming down a half step, and in beat three flute one and alto flute move into a wider chord and then flute two moves. That’s straight out of Schütz. It’s not exactly. It’s not an exact quote. That kind of counterpoint amongst families of voices is something I absolutely learned from Schütz. At the top of page 19 in the last bar of the flutes, the second flute moves on the inside of the outer two. That’s definitely where that comes from.

The strata idea pervades Stravinsky for sure. What did they used to say in our history classes about Stravinsky and manufactured parts? He used this idea of a little rhythmic cell or melodic cell that shifts all over the score in different places and in different instruments as a way to generate material. I think he does that beautifully.

CP: Right, he lets things spin off an idea and grow. With your use of timbre, especially in Interior, you score really interesting colors within the same family. An example is how you start with the flutes and then go to the clarinets. In contrast, there are times when you completely mix sounds. It’s almost as if you are going back to this idea of consorts and mix consorts by the way that you group by family and then sometimes decide to mix families. I think the colors you pull out of the flute trio are really pretty and then you have a big moment where it’s the entire woodwind consort versus the entire brass consort in totally contrasting ideas. I see that on page three of Interior. You get totally different colors out of the woodwinds and brass doing two different things.

KK: Yeah, I really like that moment. I’ve been trying to find a way to do something similar to that in a couple pieces I’ve written since then, and it’s never quite worked as well as that; that dappling rain effect. I think that moment really sticks out when it happens there and when it happens later in the piece. That’s something I was reminded of studying with Michael Dougherty; his music has all of that layering all of the time, and it works great. There are just things that he does with the band that sound like a million bucks.

He was also really good at encouraging me to strip stuff down and get rid of the stuff that I didn’t need. That was a really good lesson for me: when you’re done or when you think you’re done with a piece, take another look and see if there’s anything you can simplify. His band music and
orchestra music is so clear in that way. It’s so clear. When he has more than one layer going on at a time, they compliment each other beautifully, and when he’s got up to five layers, there’s a reason for it. Now that I’m teaching, I’m becoming more aware of the epidemic of the “kitchen sink” in young composers. They often write a piece that’s nine minutes long that actually could be seventeen pieces there are so many ideas. Everybody’s playing all the time! It’s really difficult to strip and get down to the nitty-gritty and the bare bones. Michael was great about that, and I think that really shows in this piece, Interior.

I think it was Steve Davis that said, “This is piece is like restrained virtuosity.” I’ve had people say that to me about a couple of my other pieces too because it’s so slow and so exposed. There’s a virtuosic quality to the act of performing it beautifully. You can’t just sit in the back of the band and wail away in this piece; you’ve got to be really precise. I think the same is true for Lost Gulch Lookout too.

**CP:** Yes, both are true. The starting tempo is 54 bpm and it really requires people to hold back. Speaking of layering, from measures 8 to 40 in Lost Gulch Lookout, there is a really cool sequence of layering. You introduce the flutes; then you add the timpani with contrabass on an ostinato; then you bring in the trumpets; and eventually, when it’s all said and done, the English horn solo takes over. With all those layers you think, “Oh my gosh, this is going to be so dense, you can’t hear anything,” but you hear it all.

**KK:** Good. Good. [Laughing]

**CP:** It works really well. As a performer, it’s one of my favorite moments in the piece.

Another thing that is characteristic to both of the pieces is your soloistic textures and the rhythms you put into these moments that are beyond the norm. If you look at the beginning of Lost Gulch Lookout, you’ve got eighth notes with dotted eighths and with sextuplets. It has an asymmetric feel to the rhythm while being balanced overall. It fits right in with the meter. There is such variety in the soloistic texture. How do you approach that? Do you see what I’m talking about?

**KK:** I do. Are you looking at page two in the clarinets?

**CP:** Yes. Every time we come back to the idea around page 15 with the soloistic textures, the rhythms and the solos are very intriguing to me.

**KK:** Well, thank you. I think a good example of that is on page two with the clarinet, then second clarinet takes over and then the third clarinet. I like when you can start a gesture in one color and then end it in another color. That’s kind of like the color fading that you’re talking
about. I’m trying to find an analogous place in the other piece. Hold on a second. Well, for instance, if you look at page 5–6 of Interior, there is someone swooping down and someone taking over and still swooping down starting on the same pitch. In measure 17, the bassoon takes over for the alto flute. On page 6, the English horn goes up and the oboe takes over going down. Then the clarinet takes over and then the bassoon. That kind of thing I just find beautiful and lovely.

But, this idea of the rhythm, the soloistic rhythm, I guess I can’t really say where that comes from other than that I think it sounds cool. I think it’s more improvisatory that way, a little bit more organic and natural. Oh, gosh! I can’t believe I just said organic and natural. I kind of don’t like those words because they don’t really mean anything, but they kind of do though. Undulating rhythm versus strict rhythm leaves room if you start a strict rhythm or some kind of groove to play off of those. In page fifteen of Lost Gulch Lookout, I start the groove; the oscillating eight notes in the vibraphone and then the flutes entering in sequence. That’s all in an effort to juxtapose a different feeling than those more soloistic passages. I think each of those type things become more affective when they’re set next to each other.

When I write these little gestures with sextuplets, septuplets, or all these varied rhythms, I write the gesture how I want it to sound first and then I bar it afterwards. That’s why I have so many meter changes in this kind of music. It’s about where I want to put the emphasis of the line. I want to make sure the downbeat sounds like a downbeat. You could possibly rebar all of this stuff into 4/4, but then downbeats wouldn’t sound like downbeats. It wouldn’t look nor would it play the way I want it to sound.

**CP:** I found a figure used in both pieces. They are harmonically different but very similar through rhythm and contour. You will see it if you look on page six of Interior and then on page two of Lost Gulch Lookout. I knew Lost Gulch Lookout before I knew Interior, but the first time I saw the score of Interior and listened to it, I thought, “Wow, check it out…” The two are similar and I think it’s a neat gesture.

**KK:** Yeah, I like that lick. I really like that lick. You know what’s funny? Do you notice how it appears in Lost Gulch Lookout in the flutes? I think in Interior it happens in the flutes later, maybe. Does it? Am I making that up?

You know that’s really high for the E-flat clarinet. That’s really high. When we were recording that at UMKC, it was getting a little “squawky.” We actually, I believe it was that very lick, asked the student to actually go to the back of the room and turn around because we couldn’t get it quiet enough. So, I think that’s why I redid it in Lost Gulch Lookout, to get it in the right instrument where they could play it that high and have it sound right the second time around.

This is because I’m not a reviser. I almost never revise pieces. I do small changes, cosmetic things like mutes or dynamics or mallets or things like that. I never do giant chunks of surgery on my pieces after the fact because I’m much more interested in working out problems in the next piece. So, that’s what you’re seeing. You’re seeing me work out the fact that that gesture didn’t sound as awesome as it could in those clarinets in Interior, so I had to do it again and do it right, so it sounded really good in Lost Gulch Lookout.
CP: That’s great. I like the lick, and it was just fun to hear that little piece of DNA crossing over the two works.

KK: It’s really funny. That’s extremely funny. This is why this is a pleasure for me because I have no memory of saying that to myself; “Now I can put that lick and actually put it in the right instruments.” I didn’t consciously think that, but clearly, that’s what I did. That’s funny.

CP: The third element to your music that I’m really fascinated to hear how you view it is your harmony. You’ve been written and described as having an “edgy sound” or the term you use is “crunchy.” As I dig into the music, I find that you use a lot of what I would, from my theory training, call diatonic collections with outliers here and there. A lot of times you stay pretty much within a diatonic collection, but you tend to lean towards the [016] set class type of sound. The half step and tritone are very prominent.

KK: I tend to think of my music as pitch centered, rather than any kind of tonal function. I’m certainly not thinking of I–IV–V–I or any kind of functional harmony, as we know it. Rather, I think more of a kind of “pitched-centeredness.” I do lean on a kind of V-I relationship on a broad scale, a sectional scale. All throughout Interior, pitch is oscillating between D and G and a little bit of B, so we’re kind of in “G-ness.” That’s the way I tend to write. I pick a pitch center and focus on that in the bass and then go from there.

CP: Do you think in terms of chords? Do you think in terms of chords even though you don’t think of them functionally or do you think in terms of pitch class or set classes?

KK: Not really either. It’s really just by the seat of my pants of what I think sounds good. That’s really funny because as you were saying [016] and you used the term pitch class, I was remembering how into set theory I was during my master’s degree. Went through my big atonal phase; which actually wasn’t that big, it was just like a year and a half or two years, I was writing that kind of music. I was really into that kind of planning and that kind of set theory type planning. So, that’s another thing. It’s like all the pop music in my life and like Schütz and Stravinsky and Debussy and Brahms and Chopin. All that stuff seeps in whether I like it or not. Evidently, [016] is a favorite of mine. I just really like the sound.

To me, that’s what it’s all about, just making something that I like the sound. Because I’m not very well versed in the band world, it’s fun for me to try stuff and see what happens, timbrally and pitch-wise, because it’s a really unique ensemble. It has a particular sound. You can say, throughout a lot of the traditional rep and even a lot of the rep that’s more popular today by composers, “They’ve mastered the band sound.” I really don’t feel like I have, and sort of hope that I never do because I want to just keep on experimenting and see what happens.

CP: Well, I wouldn’t say you haven’t mastered it. What I like is that your sound is unique. That’s what I appreciate about your music in the band world.

KK: Thank you. That may be because I’m naïve. That very well could be. I’m admitting a lot here, but if I knew more about it, my music might be a lot different. I’m sort of glad that I don’t. I’m glad that I am able to add something unique, even if it’s by virtue of just coming to this ensemble later in my life.
**CP:** I would like to refer to your earlier comment about how you felt you use a kind of a V–I relationship. If I were going to claim a pitch centricity to Interior, F-sharp and C-sharp are often present and in some ways it feels like you start and end on D. Is there some leaning towards the idea of D, or do you feel it’s more in G?

**KK:** Yeah, well, that’s the fun part. That’s what I tend to do. That’s why I never actually put a key signature in my music. I very easily could. I could put almost all of my music in a key signature, and I’ve had people tell me that I should. I don’t because I feel like that implies functional harmony. That tells a performer and a conductor, and myself too, “I am in D major because you will play these notes sharped.” I don’t want you to think that way. It is fun to pick a “key-ish” and sharp all the C’s or sharp all the F’s and then actually give a bass line that’s not that key. It might be in the key, like G is in the key of D major. Something becomes tonic feeling if you hear it enough. If you give a bass line that’s really centered on G, and yet you’re sort of playing D major above it, it has a G sort of feeling, but there’s an ambiguity there, which I find really attractive. So yes, there’s “D-ness” in the piece Interior. I was playing through this before you called. In measures 4–5, you have the repeated G in the vibraphone, but then you sort of cadence on D in measure nine. Also, I’ve un-sharped some of the F’s so that it gives an air of ambiguity. The bass line tells us that we’re kind of in “D-ness”, but we’re not really.

**CP:** And then it cadences on G in measure eleven, from the bass line. The ambiguity is certainly there. The kind of mixing the two worlds is nice.

**KK:** Now that I’m thinking about it, creating ambiguity, particularly at the beginning of a piece, is really important because you have to draw the listener in somehow. I think that’s my way of saying, “I’m here now, but you don’t know where I’m going to go.” Even though where I go might not be totally surprising or may feel inevitable, it’s not clear from the beginning exactly where we are harmonically. I really like that a lot because then it gives a clear downbeat to start a new section.

Sometimes what I tend to do at the beginning of a piece is start something on a pitch-centered kind of thing and then give a big downbeat a fifth below. It’s as if you thought we were on tonic, or the home key, but in fact, that was five. It’s like a surprising shift.

However, now that I’m looking at Lost Gulch Lookout, that’s not what I did at all. I’ve got all kinds of F going on with the bass and the timpani, and then, all of a sudden at eight, that’s the C sharp again.

**CP:** The bass line that comes in at measure 8 centers around, C, D, and F-sharp. It keeps landing back on C-natural while you have C sharps above it. That duality again is very present.

**KK:** Again, this is essentially D major. Right?

**CP:** Yeah. I’ve been referring to it as diatonic plus two, a diatonic collection not necessarily holding to D major but holding to the two sharp accidentals being used.

**KK:** There you go. Yeah, that’s good.

**CP:** And it’s almost exclusive, other than the bass line, which has C natural.
KK: Which I think sounds cool.

CP: In *Lost Gulch Lookout*, the program talks about it reflecting a contrast between the natural world and the urban sprawl. I’ve kind of equated the diatonic plus two [DIA_+2] tonal area as the urban sprawl and the diatonic minus five [DIA_-5], where you landed most of the slow soloistic things, as the natural world. I wonder if you were going into two harmonically distinct worlds that are really only a half step apart to represent these two different elements of the program of the piece.

KK: Gosh, well, I think that’s a brilliant observation, and I might appropriate it now. I wasn’t thinking about that when I wrote it at all. I don’t do that kind of planning. I don’t say to myself, “This harmonic world has this meaning, this kind of metaphor and this section has this metaphor.” I just write as I go, and it comes out as it comes out.

CP: Cool. It’s fun to look at it and speculate, but it almost seems ironic that I’m spending so much time scrutinizing over it and you’re kind of like, “Yeah.”

KK: I’m sorry that I can’t say, “Exactly, you came up with it. You found me out.”

CP: I would like to shift my questions now to very pointed and specific questions to both of the pieces. I had a couple questions about some specific things like note accuracy, etc. Let’s talk specifically about *Interior* because the last two chapters of my document are going to be focused on things for the conductor to consider, conducting considerations. What are the important compositional features of the piece that are critical to putting on a successful performance of *Interior?* You’ve seen it performed several times and recorded as well. What does this piece require? You talked a little bit about restrained virtuosity.

KK: That’s number one. What that entails is precision, precision, precision in nuance of the gesture, in dynamics, and playing in tune. Playing in tune is a big one because it has so many overlapping notes. Making sure they’re in tune when they merge onto the same pitch as someone in a different instrument family is critical. That’s a big one.

Also, what tends to happen in this piece is that for some reason people tend to slow down at measure thirty. It gets too slow. The harp ostinato that’s happening gets too slow. I wonder if it’s because it feels like maybe there should be a change in tempo from measure 25, but there shouldn’t be. It shouldn’t be too fast either. That’s happened, too. Really, the best that I’ve heard was when we did the recording, and I was able to tell Steve, “It’s too fast,” or “It’s too slow” at thirty. That’s a big one. Also, all these lines really are solos, each lick when they merge out of a texture by themselves. They should be treated as such.

CP: Do you have a definable form for the piece when you look at it? I think on a really broad, zoomed back scope, you can say it’s A-B-A. Do you think about it in terms of form?

KK: Yeah, I think so. I think A-B-A is about right, with maybe an interruption at measure 65 on page fourteen.

CP: The alto flute cadenza?

KK: Measure seventy is basically the beginning of the end.
CP: I feel like measure 99 is like starting the piece over, almost.

KK: Yeah. Hold on, I’m looking at the end. Did you notice anything, Chester, about measure 127? I will now ask you.

CP: Yes, it’s a reverse of measure one and two.

KK: Thank you. I just wanted to be sure.

CP: It’s the retrograde. You did it completely retrograded.

KK: I like doing that. Little tricks.

Now that I’m looking at it… That’s funny because I always hear measure 70 as the beginning of the end, but you’ve still got a couple minutes left, and you’ve still got the big build. Page 22–23, that’s all Schütz right there. The big melodic layering, that’s very choral. Yeah, I guess you could say A-B-A with the B maybe having two parts to it.

CP: I see where measure 70 is very different from measure 30 where the harp solo started.

KK: Exactly. So, you might be better off with A-B-C-A.

CP: Cool. If I’m going to put it in writing, I want to make sure it has your blessing on my analysis of it.

Okay, I have a couple questions about errata, and I don’t in any way want to insult you by asking. They are just a few things that are particularly minute that are really interesting if you chose to do it or maybe they are errata. In measure 32 in the harp, the left hand is a C sharp on beat one, but every other time this figure comes around, such as in measure 36, it’s B natural.

KK: Ah ha. That is not an erratum. That is as it should be. That’s another one of those things that I tend to do when I do an ostinato. Like the thing in Lost Gulch Lookout in the basses at the wispy part [mm. 8-39], my pretty standard kind of ostinato ties over bar lines. Let’s see, what is this? It’s one, two, three, four, five, six…that’s a six-note ostinato. I tend to make those odd numbers, but that one is not, anyway. Again, it’s to start this ambiguously so that it’s not clear when you get to measure 36. It’s not like an obvious repetition. Do you know what I mean? Just by doing that first note differently. I’m guessing I probably just liked the way the C sharp sounded in that sonority with the F sharp and the E.

CP: On the same page in the clarinet septuplet figure in the last measure, measure 42, is the B natural correct? I’m just curious. It’s a concert A, whereas you’ve not used an A natural in while. Again, I’m just being really picky, and if you’re thinking, “Shut up, Chester,” that’s fine.

KK: Gosh. Here’s my hunch.

CP: I’m sure you write it the way you hear it.

KK: In this kind of situation, I don’t know the answer to your question, but my hunch is that it’s right, and here’s why: If that were at the beginning of the bar and it were the first D, I would imagine I had made a mistake in entering the music into Finale and had missed the sharp in
someway, but because it happens later in the bar and it’s a natural from being sharp, I think it’s right.

**CP:** Great. In measure 59, is the E-flat clarinet trill from G sharp to A natural or A sharp?

**KK:** That should be a trilled G sharp to A natural, written.

**CP:** Okay, good. That’s the ambiguity between C natural and C sharp again.

**KK:** Right. Yeah.

**CP:** I’m going to put notes like that in the conductor’s guide portion of the document to trust the A natural or whatever.

Oh, here’s one. I just think this one’s interesting, so I wanted to ask you about it. In measure 94 there’s this huge moment going on where everybody is in the exact same rhythm, and then the alto flute moves to A-sharp on the and-of-six.

**KK:** Whoa! That’s unusual because I really dislike A-sharps. I almost never use A-sharp or B-sharp or E-sharp. That’s weird. It’s the right note, but I would probably prefer that it was a B-flat in the score going down to A in measure 95.

**CP:** Okay.

**KK:** But you’re thinking it doesn’t fit the harmony?

**CP:** Well, it’s the only instrument on a concert E-flat or F-natural, out of everybody else. Everybody else is on F-sharp and E. It was the only instrument on a concert F.

**KK:** Yeah, I think what I’m going for is that cluster with the three flutes.

**CP:** Okay, you’re getting the [012].

**KK:** Yes.

**CP:** And then, this is the real question. The next note in the alto flute is the only voice out of all the instruments to change pitch. Everybody else plays the exact same note at measure 95 as they did at the end of measure 94.

**KK:** Oh, my God, that’s weird. That’s weird.

**CP:** Because it was the only voice that changed, that’s what made me think, “Is one of the two an errata”. Sorry, I’ve combed over this music.

**KK:** That’s terrific. That’s a great observation. Yeah, I have no answer for that, so I’m going to let the music stand. I’m going to trust that I knew what I was doing and that I mean it, but that’s really weird.

**CP:** My other thought is that because of the sound mass, you probably won’t pick that one note change out.
KK: I know. Yeah, why am I just moving, of all people, the alto flute and not even in its meatiest range. Right? It’s not like I switched a trumpet or something that you would actually hear switch. We are both looking at the most updated scores, so that’s really funny. I’m going to trust that I meant it. I’m not entirely convinced that I did. How’s that for ambiguity. See, I’m all about ambiguity today.

CP: Seriously, I don’t mean to ask anything that offends you in any way, though.

KK: Please no, not at all, not at all. It’s actually fun. It’s fun for me to see this stuff. It’s fun for me to look at a mirror of how my mind was working in 2006.

CP: This is random, but I really like how you use the trumpet on the right hand of the harp and the trombones on the left hand of the harp to reinforcing it. That is just really interesting; the muted trumpet and muted trombone following the harp line.

KK: Actually, that probably came the other way around.

CP: Oh, okay.

KK: I’m pretty sure that came the other way around. That’s interesting.

CP: I’m looking on page seventeen of the score in measure 76.

KK: No. That one would not come the other way around because that ostinato already existed in the harp. Interesting. Yeah, that’s pretty. I’ll have to do that again somewhere.

CP: Yes, I like it too.

Speaking of harp, if someone were to play this piece and didn’t have harp, how do you feel about substitutions: piano, synthesized harp; don’t play the piece if you don’t have a harpist?

KK: No, I think that Andy Mast, out at Lawrence University did it with piano. I didn’t hear it, so I have no idea.

Before I forget, I will tell you, I did hear a performance with a bunch of the winds doubled, and I was not fond of it. I’ve only heard that one time and the balance was all over the place. I wasn’t terribly excited about that. I agreed to it because, of course, I hadn’t ever heard it before. The flutes sounded really cool at eight, and then it all got mucky. That’s the next thing I have to do. I have to write a piece that has versatile doubling possibilities because it will get more play, right?

CP: It will. So, as far as the harp goes, do you have a preference? Clearly, use the harp.

KK: Yes, the preference is get a harp. I guess a piano might work. It won’t sound as cool, but it might work.

CP: The piece certainly doesn’t work without anything covering the part.

KK: No, no, no.
CP: What is your interpretation of the grace notes in the harp? Are they to be played on or before the beat, specifically measure 35?

KK: My grace-note usage, forever and always, is before the beat.

CP: Great. That was easy.

CP: Can we switch to *Lost Gulch Lookout* now? We talked a little bit about how you got your start with *Interior*. Can you tell me about how the *Lost Gulch Lookout* project came about and what your interactions were with Dr. Lynch?

KK: I met John at the recording session of *Interior*. He was asked by Steve Davis to be the funnel voice in the booth. We had a bunch of us up there in the booth listening and taking notes and John’s job was to get on the phone down to the stage to Steve so that he would only have one voice in his ear throughout the session. John really liked the piece. He liked *Interior* a lot. We kept in touch and he got in touch with me in the fall of 2007, told me about his neXt festival, and asked if I would like to write a piece. I said, “Absolutely.” This was really different because I asked again if there were any gaping holes in the band repertoire that he thought needed to be filled, and he said, “No. I think you already did that with *Interior*. Now I think you should just do whatever you want to do.” He was very much unwilling to tell me what to write. He was really great about it. He told me about the theme for the concert, the man versus nature idea. He said, “Have at it. Just do what you want to do.” So I thought with this piece I would add a couple more instruments. Again, I still am not totally comfortable in this ensemble, so I didn’t want to put too many more because I am nervous about it. I am still trying to work out how to get a handle on how this sounds. It was really great. As you know, it was a really fun experience. He is just terrific and so open and so great, one of the biggest champions of living composers that you guys have. He’s just terrific.

CP: What do you think are the important compositional features of this piece that are critical for a successful performance?

KK: Again, precision in notes and dynamics is very important. In both pieces, the nuance of dynamics is really important. The softest softs have to be softer than you think and the loudest louds have to be louder than you think. The extremes of dynamics are imperative. That’s number one. Number two is making sure each one of these little solo lines where they emerge out of the texture that they really come out and that they are really expressive. When there is something subtle, like at measure 49 the vibraphone, having the tempo really steady makes everything that happens against that groove even cooler. And having a good harpist is important.

CP: It is for both of these pieces, right?

KK: Yeah. [Laughing]

CP: When I think about form in *Lost Gulch Lookout*, I see that it has form. It has clearly definable sections. Do you prescribe that there is an overall architecture to it? Do you try to put it into a standard form?

KK: I think of a B section happening at measure 49 with the vibraphone. All of this music keeps going until the percussion at measure 97 acts as an interruption and then measure 120 is another
sort of rest, like the flute cadenza in *Interior*, before beginning the end at measure 130. You could essentially say it is A-B-interruption-A.

**CP:** Could you look at measure 120 as almost starting the piece over? If you look at the third measure of the clarinet solo back in measure 3, this is very similar in characteristic back to measure 3 and then measure 130 harkens to measure 8 again. I found that both pieces have the similarity of introducing all the ideas and then rehashing them at a later part. Not to say or try to put it into sonata form, but the idea of return seems present in both pieces.

**KK:** I tend to do that a lot. I like having an arch form, not always, but often. It gives a sense that we have been somewhere and we are back again, but maybe it has changed a little bit as if we never really left. It is the giant arch idea.

**CP:** Yes. I see that in both pieces. Both pieces are written for wind band with the exception of two standard families, the saxophone and euphonium. Was there a particular reason you went with orchestral winds over standard wind band instrumentation?

**KK:** No. Maybe. When I started *Interior*, like I said, Haithcock and I talked about doing a modular band. And when he said pick about twenty players, I went with what I went with because it was what I was most familiar with. I do have some music for saxophone, but having saxophones in a larger ensemble is something that I have never done. I am looking forward to exploring that later. Then in *Lost Gulch Lookout*, it was a bigger opportunity with the possibility for a CD recording. I thought, “I know what worked in *Interior*. If I can expand on that a little bit and write with essentially the same ensemble a totally different piece, it would allow me to focus on the notes and the music without worrying about instruments I am uncomfortable with.” I have never written for euphonium before. So I need to learn about that instrument and that is going to take some time. I just needed to knock this thing out. So it was really just for the practical purposes of my writing time that I had. I was living in New York and taking care of my child when I was writing *Lost Gulch Lookout* and had really limited writing time. It was more out of practical reasons and the limited time that I had that I chose the instrumentation.

**CP:** There seem to be some features that sound like you or are uniquely you. It seems as if you like to feature some instruments that are rarely featured in the band world: the English horn, alto flute, and bass clarinet. You write some great bass clarinet sounds. Those three instruments get prominence from you that they rarely receive from other composers. Do you just like those sounds?

**KK:** Yes. I really just like those sounds. When you are writing for an orchestra, an alto flute or bass clarinet is going to cost more if they don’t have a doubler already there. They might bring in a bass clarinet specialist, which costs to pay for another person for that service. The same is true for alto flute. It is also really difficult to get an alto flute to sound in an orchestra unless you just wipe everybody else out. So because I was dealing with a limited ensemble and had all the solo passages, I could use these instruments. I love the bass clarinet and I love the alto flute. I like to have high instruments play low and low instruments play high. I like to put them out of their meatiest range because I think those sounds are so beautiful.
**CP:** I know the bass clarinetist in our ensemble loved getting to play your piece. You also use the bass clarinet prominently in you piece for orchestra and voice, *Myrrha*. Didn’t you use bass clarinet in that as well.

**KK:** Yes, and alto flute as well.

**CP:** How can people get your music? Do you self-publish?

**KK:** I am self-published. They can just email me. I can get them information about pricing and can email pdf perusal scores as well. One thing I love about the band world is you can email parts. I love that.

**CP:** Do you have any projects for the wind band in the horizon?

**KK:** Nothing that is solidified. I am talking with a couple people about a few projects, but what I want to do is something for solo singer and band. Maybe it would be for soprano and band or soprano, baritone, and band. That is what I want to do next. It may end up being another scaled down ensemble by virtue of needing to leave space for the singers to resonate. We will see. After that, I would like to do a full band piece.

**CP:** Your music is fantastic and extremely challenging. Do you think you will write something that is more accessible to a wider range of skill levels?

**KK:** Something I am really proud of with both of these pieces is that they provide something that is challenging to these young players but that has payoff. From when they practice it alone and then get the ensemble together and realize where they fit in these layers and the overall, with little wispy licks here and there, it enhances their soloistic playing and sense of ensemble. That is a pleasure. I didn’t have that goal in mind, but when I got to the universities and started working with the conductors, I realized what a good exercise it is for a lot of these players. This is not easy stuff. I always tell my students, “There is a difference between good hard and stupid hard.” Stupid hard is basically not knowing how to write idiomatically for an instrument. Writing a lick that is hard because you put it in five sharps for violin is stupid hard. Whereas, this music, which I think is hard, is a good hard with payoff. That is why I have not written for euphonium yet. I really don’t know a lot about the instrument and I want to be sure to learn about it and sit down with a player before I write for it.

**CP:** Thank you so much for talking with me about your music.

**KK:** It was my pleasure. If there is anything else you want to follow up with, please contact me again.
APPENDIX B

COMPOSER’S PROGRAM NOTES FOR INTERIOR

Interior (2006)

Wind ensemble (3232 4221, 2 perc, hp, cb) 11 minutes, commissioned by a three-ensemble consortium organized by conductor Michael Haithcock

Premiere: 2 February 2007, Hill Auditorium, University of Michigan Symphony Band conducted by Michael Haithcock

The music of Interior reflects ideas or thoughts that lie, occur, or function within limiting boundaries. Just as we project our imagination onto the architectural space in which we live in order to find solace in our environment, so we also ponder the thoughts and memories that decorate our lives. Interior is intended as a subtle window into the concealed nature of those thoughts and memories.

Interior was commissioned by a consortium of wind ensembles organized by conductor Michael Haithcock, University of Michigan Director of Instrumental Studies and University Bands; with additional participation by the University of Missouri Kansas City Conservatory (Steven D. Davis), and the State University of New York Potsdam Crane School of Music (Brian K. Doyle).1

Lost Gulch Lookout (2008)

Wind ensemble (4232 4331, 3 perc, hp, 2 cb) 10 minutes, commissioned by conductor John Lynch and the University of Georgia Wind Ensemble

Premiere: 26 February 2008, Hugh Hodgson Hall, Athens, GA

Lost Gulch Lookout was commissioned by conductor John Lynch and received its premiere by the University of Georgia Wind Ensemble in February 2008. The music of Lost Gulch Lookout is reflective of the craggy, colorful landscape of Kristin Kuster's upbringing in Boulder, Colorado. Far from merely nostalgic, however, her forcefully lean and athletic writing style evokes the jagged nature of the raw terrain. Sounds consist simultaneously of hauntingly beautiful sonorities and tense dissonances. Kuster achieves this dichotomy by pairing open-sounding perfect intervals (such as fourths and fifths) with a decorating semitone that clashes with both members of the initial intervals. The piece has a modified binary structure, with the unfurling events of the opening repeated again at the work's midpoint, with even greater fervor. A cadre of percussion batter away unrelentingly, driving the work through its permutations until finally the piece implodes, shattering itself on the very rocks it had so immaculately colored.

Boulder's Lost Gulch Lookout is an outcropping of rock on the razor edge of civilization--set atop precipices overlooking Boulder to the East, and beneath the great expanse of the Rocky Mountains from the West. The visceral, gritty energy of the very canyons themselves are, perhaps, nature's response to the incessant imposition of humanity into our few remaining unspoiled areas of nature.

--program note by Jake Wallace

Several specific rehearsal suggestions were pointed out in the interviews with the composer and the premiering conductor. Table D-1 below catalogues those suggestions sequentially through the piece.

Table D-1. Rehearsal suggestions for *Interior*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Contributor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There should be a treble clef sign in the score before the glockenspiel entrance in the Percussion 2 part.</td>
<td>Phillips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Don’t slow down. There is no change of tempo between m. 25 and m. 30</td>
<td>Kuster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Allow the harp to set the piano dynamic and all others must adjust to the harp.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>The harp grace notes happen before the beat. All grace notes in Kuster’s music happen before the beat.</td>
<td>Kuster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Make room for the harp at the beginning of the measures.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>“With the trill activity the flutes always wanted to bump that. I remember having them play the F-sharp as quietly as they could and then gradually begin to trill. Same thing with the oboe and English horn and that seemed to work as opposed to hitting it with a full on trill at the beginning. And they sort of took their cue from the harp. Once the harp got moving, they gradually began to ring the trill.”</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>The second sixteenth note is marked accent-short. She really wants the second sixteenth sliced off, very short.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Trumpets should “flourish.”</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Put a little space after the tie in the brass. It should have a lifted feel coming off beat two before playing the and-of-two.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td>Alto flute should treat mm. 65–69 as a cadenza. Really stretch the last beat going into m. 70. Hold back.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>72</strong></td>
<td>Consider raising the dynamic of contrabass to <em>mezzo-forte</em> if needed.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>81</strong></td>
<td>Kuster changed the mutes from straight to harmon for the trumpets when she was at the premiere at Michigan.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td>Toms stay quiet. “She is deadly serious about having the toms be very quiet.”</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td>“I think the <em>crescendo poco a poco</em> instruction at m. 88, if it were me, I would move that over toward beat two because I have written at the top of my score on page 22, ‘Stay quiet.’ Because I think people see the moving lines and they want to crescendo faster that she articulated. So who leads the crescendo? I think what we wound up settling on was the flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon group with their flourishes again would lead the crescendo and everybody else needed to feel less responsibility for that.”</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td>Change harp dynamic <em>fortissimo</em> to a crescendo from <em>forte</em> to <em>fortissimo</em>.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td>Put a little space after the tie in the brass going to beat two. It should have a lifted feel coming off beat two before playing the and-of-two.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>96</strong></td>
<td>It is suggested to change the l.v., let vibrate, marking of the tam-tam to match the choke of the suspended cymbal.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>97</strong></td>
<td>Kuster added a <em>rallentando</em> in mm. 97–98 when working with the Michigan Band. The glockenspiel should slow as if coming to a halt.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>105</strong></td>
<td>The clarinets should delay their crescendo until after they hear the bass.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>108</strong></td>
<td>All brass should have a <em>tenuto</em> marking on beat two. It was left off horn 1 and horn 3.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>110</strong></td>
<td>Winds should be careful not to cover the marimba line.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>113</strong></td>
<td>Add a crescendo from m. 113–115 in the harp that arrives at <em>forte</em> on the beat-three half note.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
<td>Kuster changed the horns to being without mute.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>The staccato marking indicates choking for triangle.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Allow time for the bassoon to flourish on the moving line.</td>
<td>Haithcock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several specific rehearsal suggestions were pointed out in the interviews with the composer and the premiering conductor. Table E-1 below catalogues those suggestions sequentially through the piece.

Table E-1. Rehearsal suggestions for *Lost Gulch Lookout*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Set up the weighty, aggressive sound in the first two eighth-notes from the horns, low brass, timpani, and contrabass; long – short.</th>
<th>Lynch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In the 3rd clarinet part, the third note is correct as written G sharp (sounding concert F sharp). This sound highlights the sc [012] in the three clarinet voices.</td>
<td>Phillips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bongo and conga thirty-second note figure becomes the clarinet figure and should ignite the clarinet.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In the 3rd clarinet part, the third note is correct as written G sharp (sounding concert F sharp). This sound highlights the sc [012] in the three clarinet voices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bass drum roll sets up the activity of the flute at m. 9. The accent on the downbeat of m. 9 should ignite the flute lines.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kuster is insistent about the accents being present at the beginning of each flute lick.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Timpani and contrabass should sneak in rather than entering in a pronounced manner.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Pay careful attention to the different articulations in the trumpet and double reed eighth-note figure. The <em>tenuto</em> markings should create contrast to the staccato notes.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Bassoons should stand out. Others are to get softer, but bassoons should remain strong.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>One cannot use the sixteenth notes of the bongos and congas to find the tempo at m. 40. A direct correlation of tempos would put the tempo too fast, at 66 bpm.</td>
<td>Phillips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Flutes should play sexy. Imagine you are wearing a red dress. Get a really big, rich, and sultry sound.</td>
<td>Kuster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Lowest energy of the entire piece. This should be quietest moment in the entire piece.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Bass drum should be more felt than heard – big fluffy mallets</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Bowed cymbal should lead to the brass in m. 55</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Clarinets must emerge from the brass downbeat as if to come from nowhere.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Bongos and congas may need to play a little stronger than <em>pianissimo</em> in order to be heard.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Bongos and congas should come out of the texture</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Note</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The accelerando poco a poco</em> from m. 85–97 must be paced well. If the <em>accelerando</em> is kept metrically even over these twelve measures, the tempo should increase 3.5 bpm each measure or 7 bpm every two measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kuster really wants the tempo to be 96 bpm. She feels that if it is too slow it loses energy and if it is faster it becomes frantic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
<td>Timpani and bongos must get a really big sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bass drums should be set antiphonally to highlight the contrast of sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure the long notes are long and the short notes are short in the low brass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
<td>It should feel like the percussion disappeared. They then build to an explosion at m. 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marimba should be very soft, almost inaudible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flutes may need to accent the first note of the figure to highlight the fact that the same thing is being played one beat apart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brass should highlight the long-short feel between the trumpets and trombones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trumpets do not join the low brass in the crescendo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td></td>
<td>Written G, F♯, C is correct in the trumpets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bring back the volume a notch in order to leave room for growth to the end of the work.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper woodwinds avoid playing too short. If it is too short the notes will not have enough impact.</td>
<td>Lynch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX F

**CATALOGUE OF WORKS BY KRISTIN KUSTER**

Table F-1, Catalogue of works by Kuster.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orchestra</td>
<td><em>Beneath This Stone</em> (2007)</td>
<td>(3222 4231 timp, 2 perc, hp, str)</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestra</td>
<td><em>Iron Diamond</em> (2005)</td>
<td>(3222 4321 timp, 3 perc, str)</td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestra</td>
<td><em>The Narrows</em> (2003)</td>
<td>(3233 4331 timp, 3 perc, str)</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestra with voices:</td>
<td><em>The Trickster &amp; the Troll</em> (2008)</td>
<td>soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, narrator &amp; chamber orchestra (1110 1000 timp, 1 perc, pno, str)</td>
<td>60 minutes (w/40-minute version available)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voices: chamber opera in two acts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestra with voices</td>
<td><em>Myrrha</em> (2006)</td>
<td>three sopranos, tbb choir &amp; orchestra (3121 4020 timp, 3 perc, hp, str)</td>
<td>16 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestra with voices</td>
<td><em>The Wind Will Gather</em> (2002)</td>
<td>sixteen voices &amp; orchestra (2222 2220 timp, 2 perc, pno, str)</td>
<td>18 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind ensemble</td>
<td><em>Lost Gulch Lookout</em> (2008)</td>
<td>(4232 4331, 3 perc, hp, 2 cb)</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind ensemble</td>
<td><em>Interior</em> (2006)</td>
<td>(3232 4221, 2 perc, hp, cb)</td>
<td>11 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ensemble</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Here, Leaving</td>
<td>solo cello, 2 violin, viola, contrabass, 1 percussion</td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Midnight Mirror</td>
<td>string quartet</td>
<td>18 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Perpetual Afternoon</td>
<td>flute &amp; piano</td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Little Trees</td>
<td>percussion quartet</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Ribbon Earth</td>
<td>flute, clarinet, bassoon &amp; string quartet</td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Perpetual Noon</td>
<td>flute &amp; piano</td>
<td>11 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Ando: wind beneath rain</td>
<td>clarinet &amp; violin</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>fzg drzl; ptchs fog</td>
<td>clarinet &amp; piano</td>
<td>9 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Jellyfish</td>
<td>alto saxophone &amp; piano clarinet in A &amp; piano score also available</td>
<td>11 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Breath Beneath</td>
<td>saxophone quartet</td>
<td>9 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Ando: light against shade</td>
<td>flute, clarinet, violin, 'cello, piano &amp; percussion</td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>Wright Spaces</td>
<td>string quartet</td>
<td>11 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal ensemble</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>choir (satb)</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal ensemble</td>
<td>Zephyrus</td>
<td>choir (satb w/divisi), saxophone quartet</td>
<td>8 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal ensemble</td>
<td>Redness</td>
<td>choir (satb w/divisi)</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal ensemble</td>
<td>Bleed</td>
<td>choir (satb w/divisi), 1 percussion, harp, string quartet</td>
<td>11 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal ensemble</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Choral/Instrumental Details</td>
<td>Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal ensemble</td>
<td>Lux fulgebit (2004)</td>
<td>unaccompanied choir (satb)</td>
<td>6 minutes 30 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal ensemble</td>
<td>Rorate caeli (2003)</td>
<td>unaccompanied choir (sssatbb)</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal solo</td>
<td>Long Ago (2008)</td>
<td>mezzo soprano, piano</td>
<td>3 minutes 45 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal solo</td>
<td>How About It? (2008)</td>
<td>bass, piano</td>
<td>4 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal solo</td>
<td>No (2008)</td>
<td>tenor, piano</td>
<td>4 minutes 30 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal solo</td>
<td>Silken Branches (2007)</td>
<td>baritone, piano</td>
<td>3 minutes 30 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal solo</td>
<td>Soon (2007)</td>
<td>soprano, piano</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal solo</td>
<td>Sorrow (2007)</td>
<td>soprano, piano</td>
<td>3 minutes 15 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal solo</td>
<td>Dream Black Night (2007)</td>
<td>soprano, piano</td>
<td>5 minutes 30 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal solo</td>
<td>Indoors Again (2001)</td>
<td>soprano, piano</td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>