

Style and Performance Considerations in Three Works Involving Flute by Joan Tower:

Snow Dreams, Valentine Trills, and A Little Gift

by

TAMMY EVANS YONCE

(Under the Direction of Angela Jones-Reus and David Haas)

ABSTRACT

Joan Tower is a highly regarded contemporary composer who is known for her early serial style and subsequent organic style. Her compositional process is most frequently a collaborative one; a performer herself, she prefers to work with the musicians for whom she is writing. In addition to her *Hexachords* for solo flute (1972) and *Flute Concerto* (1989), which are her most commonly studied flute works, she has also written seventeen other chamber or solo works involving flute. This document contains a biography of the composer and an analysis of three chamber and solo works involving flute: *Snow Dreams, Valentine Trills, and A Little Gift*. A listing of Tower's chamber and solo works involving flute and an interview with the composer are included as appendices.

In addition to identifying formal aspects of the works, specific musical elements that are most salient to each work will be discussed. One of these elements in particular, density, will be analyzed in relation to how it creates or dispels intensity.

Tower often employs the same compositional features in all three works to create this feeling of motion versus stasis, which is well illuminated through the analysis of the most salient musical elements.

INDEX WORDS: Joan Tower, *Snow Dreams*, *Valentine Trills*, *A Little Gift*, *A Gift*,
Flute, Chamber Music, Solo Music

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Dedicated to my husband, Coy W. Yonce, III

and to my daughter, Audrey Maren Yonce

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G. Schirmer, Inc. and Associated Music Publishers, Inc. have graciously granted me permission to quote musical examples from the three works considered in this document:

A GIFT (A LITTLE GIFT)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate three works of the contemporary composer Joan Tower which involve the flute: *Snow Dreams* for flute and guitar, *Valentine Trills* for solo flute, and *A Little Gift* for flute and clarinet. This document will provide a biography of the composer, an overview of Tower's chamber and solo works involving flute, and an analysis of each of the three aforementioned works. Special attention will be placed on identifying certain musical gestures which can be found in all three of the aforementioned works. Furthermore, each work will be considered for the particular performance challenges that it presents to the flutist.

This study consists of three parts: historical overview, stylistic context, and analysis. The historical portion outlines the life and career of Joan Tower. This includes discussion of her early career, which essentially includes serial works, and her works since 1975, which are clearly not serial. The historical portion of this document also includes a discussion of Tower's chamber and solo works involving flute, placed into context with regard to her compositional style (pre-1975 or later). Finally, the analyses of the three works which serve as the focus of this document will include a description

focused around Tower's use of particular musical elements as well as provide practical performance strategies for flutists.

The analytical portion of this study will focus on a discussion of style and structure intended to provide flutists with a better context for preparing one or more of the selected works. For each work, a brief description of the form will be offered, followed by a closer look at the musical factors that create contrasting types of linear motion. This sort of motion or action analysis is consistent with suggestions made by Tower herself. At issue are the aspects of the musical line that suggest motion: passages that create motion toward a point of arrival in the piece, away from such point, or that establish a temporary stasis. Joan Tower has raised the issue of linear motion in a comment on her compositional process:

I am working on the energy line of a phrase, of an action, of a motive, whatever you want to call it, and I'm working on continuity or which could better in more detail be described as motivated music; music that has a motivation rather than music that is just constructed. Music that has impulse, energy reason for being there at that phase at that level. That's what I work at.¹

To gain insight into her works, then, it seems appropriate to consider the "energy line" of a piece during analysis. When asked about a methodology for studying her later works, Tower has offered the following general guidelines:

¹ Nancy E. Leckie Bonds, "An Analysis of Joan Tower's *Wings* for Solo Clarinet" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 1992), 199.

Energy line analysis. There are not tools for that, and as far as I know it hasn't been explored in theory books or anything. But that would be a way of getting to my music. If I were doing an analysis of my music, I would start with something like a physics point of view. What direction is it going? There are three directions: one is up, one is staying, and one is down. There are three energy lines: one is up, one is staying, one is down. In other words, music can get more intense, get less intense, or it can stay the same. Those are your choices. That's it. I would take that as the bottom line. Then I would go "okay, this is energy line one, increasing in intensity how? Well, it's getting louder, it's getting higher, the instruments are multiplying, the rhythm is getting slower." There's different ways of creating intensity. How is that intensity increasing?²

Before proceeding with any sort of energy line analysis, it will first be necessary to identify and describe the motives, gestures, or melodic material that characterize a movement. After doing so, I will then discuss how such musical elements are used to create or dispel energy within a passage and to create motion to or from a point outside of the passage. The analysis of *Snow Dreams* will take into account the articulation of form based on patterns of musical contrast, the development of a "fate" motive alluding to Beethoven, and patterns of density change. In *Valentine Trills*, I will evaluate the use of trills, motive and melodic development, and density changes, as well as the melodic

² Bonds, 211.

material borrowed from the song “My Funny Valentine.” Finally, in *A Little Gift*, I will examine patterns of density change, durational rhythms, and metrical change.

This consistent use of certain musical features in the three works is of particular interest for a general understanding of Tower’s compositional style. Effective treatment of changes in density, in particular, can be found throughout all three works. My analysis of them will draw upon ideas explored in Wallace Berry’s *Structural Functions in Music*.³ Discussion of density, linear processes, and specific musical gestures will give a basis for understanding the unique style of Joan Tower in her post-1975 chamber works for flute.

Need for the Study

There is little analytical coverage of Joan Tower’s compositional style. Twenty-two dissertations and theses treat various aspects of Joan Tower’s life and works. Only one is dedicated to flute works. None of these examined the particular works that are the focus of this document. Since such a large portion of Tower’s output is chamber music, and the flute is a prominent member of the chamber ensemble for which many of her works are written (the Da Capo Chamber Players), it is important that these works be considered for their stylistic content within the context of Joan Tower’s prolific career.

³ Wallace Berry, *Structural Functions in Music*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976.

Musical Context

From the last decade of the 19th century until the end of the 20th, composers have written important music for the flute that has stretched the flutist's technique and musical interpretation. Very often a new work for flute calls on new efforts from the flutist in order to understand the technical and stylistic requirements. While Claude Debussy's *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune* and *Syrinx* feature the flute in its traditional melodic role, the composer's unusual musical language heralds a change in the use of the flute. This is also evidenced in Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, where the flute is used almost as non-traditionally as the voice's *Sprechstimme*, e.g., by playing in extreme registers and employing unusually diverse articulations and dynamics.⁴

Other notable twentieth-century works call for other more unusual techniques. Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Assobio a jato* (The Jet Whistle) requires the flutist to blow directly into the embouchure hole. Pierre Boulez's *Sonatine* includes flutter tonguing, as well as contrasts in dynamics, register, and rhythm. Luciano Berio's *Sequenza I* uses unusual notation and requires the flutist to make multiphonic sounds.⁵

Robert Dick (b.1950) has emerged as an influential figure in the development of the avant-garde flute technique. In addition to his book *The Other Flute*, which details how to produce quarter-tone scales, multiphonics, whisper tones, and other extended

⁴ Ardal Powell, *The Flute* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 272.

⁵ Ibid.

techniques, he is also a composer who has produced at least seventy works for the C flute and other members of the flute family.⁶

Early music revivals have also been an influence on the flute scene in the twentieth-century. Frans Vester is a notable figure in this movement, and encouraged musicians to understand the historical context in which early works were written. Jaap Frank, in a 1994 article, does not propose that all music be played on the instruments for which they were originally written, but he does believe that performers should take the time to understand appropriate performance practice.⁷

Into this rich diversity of styles, of which she was aware, Joan Tower started her career as a composer. This study focuses on three chamber music compositions written by the prominent American composer between 1983 and 2006. All of these works involve flute, for which Joan Tower was, and is interested in composing. According to the composer, “When the 20th century is over, I believe statistics will show that the flute repertoire has increased substantially over any other instrumental area.”⁸ *Snow Dreams* (1983) was commissioned by the Schubert Club, whose mission is to promote music through recitals and commissions. *Valentine Trills* (1996) was commissioned directly by the flutist Carol Wincenc for a recital she was presenting. *A Little Gift* (2006) was commissioned as a birthday gift (to be performed specifically by Chamber Music

⁶ Ibid., 273.

⁷ Ibid., 275-80. It is also interesting to note the specific reasons why musical works were written. In the 20th century, it was common for flute works to be commissioned by various flute clubs. Besides commissioning new works, these clubs also allowed information to be gathered and exchanged from a wide variety of sources. Experts in early music, contemporary music, and ethnic musics, for example, shared their experience and knowledge, resulting in a more educated population of flutists. The involvement of the flute clubs resulted in a large catalogue of contemporary music for the instrument.

⁸ G. Schirmer, Inc., “Valentine Trills, Joan Tower,” <http://www.schirmer.com>.

Northwest). How can we describe the compositional style of these three works in a composer who was aware of so many divergent compositional trends?

One path to an answer might be to investigate the compositional trends represented in the music of Tower's teachers. Louis Calabro was her teacher at Bennington College during the years 1958 through 1961 and was known for encouraging and promoting contemporary music. Henry Brant, an experimental composer, is also known for writing spatial music.⁹ Tower studied with him at Bennington College. Otto Luening, at Columbia University, was fascinated with the idea of musical color acting as a formal element, as well as with tape and electronic music.¹⁰ Jack Beeson, also at Columbia University, focused mainly on the composition of opera,¹¹ and Tower studied with him during her time at Columbia University.¹² The merging of Eastern and Western musical styles is evident in the music of Chou Wen-chung, with whom Tower also studied at Columbia University.¹³ Darius Milhaud, with whom Tower privately studied briefly during her Columbia University days, experimented with a wide variety of idioms, including jazz, polytonality, aleatoric techniques, and a pioneering use of percussion.¹⁴

⁹ Kyle Gann and Kurt Stone, "Brant, Henry," In *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

¹⁰ Lester Trimble and Severine Neff, "Luening, Otto," In *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

¹¹ Howard Shanet, "Beeson, Jack," In *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

¹² Ellen K. Grolman, *Joan Tower: The Comprehensive Bio-Bibliography* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 8.

¹³ Joanna C. Lee, "Chou Wen-chung," In *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

¹⁴ Jeremy Drake, "Milhaud, Darius," In *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

Wallingford Riegger turned to a dodecaphonic aesthetic¹⁵, and Ralph Shapey combines disparate stylistic elements, which results in “radical traditionalism.”¹⁶ All of these influences created the environment in which Joan Tower developed her particular musical voice; any of them might offer clues about her approach to writing for flute. Yet Tower herself has indicated that very little about her musical style can be found in the music of her teachers:

What I learned from my composing teachers was outside information. Henry Brant helped me develop notationally and to think about instruments. Otto Luening taught me what the world of music was all about – he’s the kind of person that has an overview that is unbelievable. But the material that I developed was very much my own turf and had very little to do with what I was learning in school or from any of the people I was studying with.¹⁷

Despite the many teachers with whom Joan Tower has studied, it is difficult to relate her music to any specific compositional style. As she states, her music does not clearly adhere to any style used by any of her teachers. However, in this author’s opinion, her works for flute are important contributions to the repertoire and merit further study.

¹⁵ Stephen Spackman, “Riegger, Wallingford,” In *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

¹⁶ Steven Johnson, “Shapey, Ralph,” In *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

¹⁷ Jane Weiner LePage, *Women Composers, Conductors, and Musicians of the Twentieth Century: Selected Biographies* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980).

Delimitations

Each of the three works to be discussed is either an example of chamber music involving flute or is written for flute alone. Each is published and readily available. *Hexachords*, for solo flute, and the Flute Concerto will be excluded from this study, as they were considered in Margo S. Jones' 1993 dissertation.¹⁸ In addition, Carol Wincenc, for whom the Flute Concerto was written, contributed a performance guide for that piece in the November 1999 issue of *Flute Talk*.¹⁹ These two works are among the most popular flute works of Joan Tower; seventeen other works involving flute exist.

Other larger chamber works including flute will not be covered in this study. Some of them feature a soloist other than the flute, such as *Black Topaz* for piano solo, flute, clarinet (bass clarinet), trumpet, trombone, and percussion; *Breakfast Rhythms I and II* for clarinet solo, flute (piccolo), violin, cello, piano, and percussion; and *Island Prelude* for oboe solo, flute, clarinet, horn, and bassoon. Other works, without a solo focus, include *Amazon I* for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano; *A Gift* for flute (piccolo), clarinet, bassoon, horn, and piano; *Noon Dance* for flute (alto flute, piccolo), clarinet, percussion, piano, violin, and cello; and *Petroushskates* for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano.²⁰

Scientific pitch notation will be used to label pitches in this document.

¹⁸ Margo S. Jones, "Joan Tower's *Hexachords* for Solo Flute: An Analysis and Comparison of Its Flute Writing to Tower's *Flute Concerto*" (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 1993).

¹⁹ Carol Wincenc, "Performing Tower's [Flute] *Concerto*," *Flute Talk* 19 (November 1999): 8-15.

²⁰ See literature review on pages 16-18.

Background Information on Composer

Joan Tower (born 1938) is a contemporary American composer. Her early compositions are in the serial method; however, she made a decision to reject this style in the mid-1970s and developed her own voice from that time forward. She asserted that, early in her career, she felt the need to rely on the serial technique because she was an insecure composer. Once she developed more confidence, she realized that this technique was working against her inherent talents.²¹ Tower, who grew up studying piano, gleaned inspiration from the countries in which her family lived during her childhood: the United States, Bolivia, and Peru. Her parents, who were musicians themselves, made music-making a family event after dinner each evening. Her mother would play piano, her father would sing or play violin, and Joan would play some type of South American percussion instrument.²²

Tower indicated South America was a substantial influence on her developing musical aesthetic. She specifically named the percussion instruments, as well as the culture of dancing, as being two of the main interests she took from her days in South America.²³

After returning to the United States, Tower finished high school and enrolled at Bennington College in Vermont. Her early foray into composition happened when she

²¹ Barbara Jepson, "For an Uncommon Woman, *Fanfare* Comes Full Circle," *New York Times*, January 2, 1994, 30.

²² Rochelle Oddo, "Joan Tower's Compositional Style, Use of the Clarinet, and Collaboration in *Turning Points for Clarinet and String Quartet*" (DMA diss., Rice University, 2003).

²³ Ellen K. Grolman, *Joan Tower: The Comprehensive Bio-Bibliography* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007).

was asked to compose a piece for one of her classes. She stated that she never intended to become a composer; instead there was “so much wrong with the piece” that she had to “fix it.”²⁴ After graduating from Bennington College, she went on to earn the Master of Music degree (in music theory and music history) from Columbia University in 1964; she earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the same institution in 1978.

As stated, during the early part of her career Tower composed using serial techniques. She referred to precompositional “maps” that she created to help her make musical decisions. She relied on them to help her make pitch choices, and spent more time thinking about other aspects of the composition.²⁵

The year 1975 was a turning point in Joan Tower’s career. At that time she made a conscious decision to turn away from the serial style of composition. Her new style, which has been described by Nancy Bonds as “organic,” is apparent in her piece *Breakfast Rhythms I and II*.²⁶ The first movement of this work is in her older, serial style. After setting aside the work for a year, she returned to it and wrote the second movement. According to Nancy Bonds, the later movement is “less dissonant, more colorful, and slightly impressionistic. [It is] unified by strong directional motion and

²⁴ Oddo, 5.

²⁵ Nancy E. Leckie Bonds, “An Analysis of Joan Tower’s *Wings* for Solo Clarinet” (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 1992).

²⁶ Ibid.

balancing of gestures.” The composer also made this work the subject of her doctoral dissertation, in which she provided an analysis.²⁷

Tower’s compositions since the 1980s have been described as containing “musical contrasts, rhythmic urgency, balanced gestures, and colorful impressionistic swirls.”²⁸ Her titles have changed from generic ones to those that are more evocative.²⁹ It is important to note that she has not returned to serialism or embraced any compositional trends such as expressionism, aleatoric music, or electronic styles. Her independent style makes it difficult to label her as a composer. However, it is possible to consider her music in the context of her suggested mode of analysis. Her music gives the listener, performer, and analyst the sense that it is either building intensity, static, or receding in intensity. This document will also reveal certain musical gestures and compositional practices such as changing meter and changes in note duration that can be found in all three of the works that make up the focus of the present study.

In order to have a performance outlet and a standing group on which to test her compositions, Tower founded the Da Capo Chamber Players in 1969. Currently in residence at Bard College in New York, she has been associated with the group as a composer and a pianist. In addition to Tower’s works, the ensemble had the goals of commissioning new works and performing contemporary music.³⁰ The ensemble featured piano, flute, clarinet, violin, and cello; Tower served as pianist until 1984. This

²⁷ Joan Tower, “On ‘Breakfast Rhythms I and II’” (DMA diss., Columbia University, 1978).

²⁸ Ibid., 23.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Grolman.

award-winning group³¹ informs the audience as they entertain them. They make a practice of repeating pieces later in their concerts in order to give the audience a second hearing.³²

As resident composer for and pianist with the Da Capo Chamber Players, Tower was able to collaborate with the other performers. She took into account their particular technical strengths when writing for them, and worked closely with them during the actual compositional process. This allowed the composer to create works that are particularly idiomatic for each instrument.³³

Around the time that Tower retired from performing with the Da Capo Chamber Players, her compositional focus took an orchestral turn. She was commissioned to write *Sequoia*, which eventually led to her becoming the composer-in-residence of the St. Louis Symphony for three years, beginning in 1985.³⁴

Joan Tower has taught at Bard College in New York since 1972. Her significant awards include the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition (1990), the Delaware Symphony's Alfred I. DuPont Award for Distinguished American Composer (1998), the Lancaster Symphony's Annual Composer's Award (2002), and an Honorary Doctor of Music degree from the New England Conservatory (2006). She has been inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters and into the Academy of Arts and Sciences at

³¹ The Da Capo Chamber Players won the Naumberg Award for Chamber Music in 1973.

³² Janet Nichols, *Women Music Makers: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996).

³³ Valerie O'Brien, "Joan Tower: Musician of the Month," *High Fidelity/Musical America* XXXII/9 (September 1982), 6, 8, 40.

³⁴ Nichols.

Harvard University. She won a Grammy for Best Classical Contemporary Composition for her orchestral work, *Made in America*.

Tower has served as composer-in-residence for the Orchestra of St. Luke's, based in New York City. She has also branched out as a conductor, appearing with the American Symphony, Hudson Valley Philharmonic, Scotia Festival Orchestra, Anchorage Symphony, Kalisto Chamber Orchestra, and others.³⁵

Background Information on Works

The first work studied in this document, *Snow Dreams*, is for flute and guitar, and was completed in 1983, eight years after Tower's rejection of serialism. It was commissioned by flutist Carol Wincenc and guitarist Sharon Isbin through a grant from the Schubert Club. This is a work with diverse musical material, including solos by each instrument and episodes of contrasting ideas. The composer offers the following insight:

There are many different images of snow, its forms and its movements: light snow flakes, pockets of swirls of snow, rounded drifts, long white plains of blankets of snow, light and heavy snowfalls, etc. Many of these images can be found in the piece, if in fact, they need to be found at all. The listener will determine that choice.³⁶

³⁵ The Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, "Press Releases," <http://fishercenter.bard.edu>.

³⁶ Schirmer, "Snow Dreams, Joan Tower," <http://www.schirmer.com>.

Herman Trotter, writing for *The Buffalo News*, gave a complimentary review of Tower's work in a 1993 article:

It's a rather episodic work that continually reveals new and not necessarily connected ideas. Opening with a contemplative solo statement for each instrument, the duo then dug intently into a four-note motif... reminiscent of the so-called "fate theme" of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. This developed into some wonderfully chatty interplay for the two instruments before going on to such other expressions as a series of separate expostulations on different ideas segued together very artfully.³⁷

Valentine Trills is a work for solo flute. It is published in a collection edited by the flutist Carol Wincenc as a result of her 1998 Naumburg Retrospective Concert.³⁸ As the concert was scheduled for Valentine's Day, she decided to organize a program around this theme. Therefore, Joan Tower's *Valentine Trills* was commissioned for this project and is dedicated to Carol Wincenc. According to the program notes: "[Tower's] *Valentine* is somewhat reminiscent of certain movements which appear in *Snow Dreams*, the flute and guitar duo commissioned by Ms. Wincenc and Sharon Isbin in 1983." Furthermore, Wincenc explained:

Valentine Trills is one of the most effective solo pieces I play. Audiences are awed by the continuous trilling, turning, spinning and seemingly breathless quality in the piece - all which builds to a thrilling climax. Keep the pace "on the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Carol Wincenc was the First Prize winner of the 1978 Walter W. Naumburg Solo Flute Competition.

edge” right up to the last few trilling statements. The articulation needs to be brilliantly clear, and all the dynamic changes exaggerated from the surging *fff* to the hushed *ppp* at the end. If you can circular breathe, all the better!³⁹

This is a very short work, lasting approximately one-and-a-half minutes. The composer stated that the piece is “mostly about trills (and runs), which flutists do better and faster than almost any other instrument.”⁴⁰

A Little Gift is a short work for flute and clarinet and lasts approximately two-and-a-half minutes. The inspiration for this piece was the song “My Funny Valentine” by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart; this song, written in 1937 for the musical *Babes in Arms*, is today considered a jazz standard. Tower’s work was privately commissioned as a birthday present. It was later expanded into a twenty-minute, four movement work for a larger ensemble, including flute (piccolo), clarinet, bassoon, horn, and piano. This longer, more substantial version is entitled *A Gift*.⁴¹

Survey of Related Literature

While there is much information related to Joan Tower’s biography, there is less information that specifically analyzes her compositions. To learn the context in which Joan Tower’s music is written, there exist sources describing modern flute techniques and literature. Several books give good overviews of the flute and flute performance throughout history. Ardal Powell’s 2002 book *The Flute* begins with prehistoric

³⁹ Carol Wincenc, ed., *Valentines* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1999).

⁴⁰ Schirmer.

⁴¹ Schirmer, “A Gift, Joan Tower,” <http://www.schirmer.com>.

instruments and traces their development (and uses) through the present day. His chapter on the modern twentieth-century flute gives a good overview of the disparate trends in the flute world, but does not give specific mention of the music of Joan Tower. Nancy Toff's *The Flute Book* gives good descriptions of various aspects of flute technique, including: breathing, tone, vibrato, articulation, finger technique, style, and performance. She also gives descriptions of flute music in the various stylistic periods, and she provides a repertoire catalog. Three of Joan Tower's works are included in her repertoire: the Concerto, *Hexachords*, and *Snow Dreams*.

In 2007, Ellen Grolman published *Joan Tower: The Comprehensive Bio-Bibliography*. In addition to being an excellent biography, her book also included a discussion of Tower's compositional style; a list of each of Tower's compositions, including works in progress; a discography; and peer reflections. She also listed twenty-two dissertations and theses which treat various aspects of Joan Tower's life and career. Of these, only one is solely dedicated to the topic of Tower's flute works; Margo S. Jones analyzes *Hexachords* and compares it to the Flute Concerto in her 1993 dissertation. She considers the dodecaphonic compositional procedures used in the creation of *Hexachords*, and focuses on idiomatic writing in the Flute Concerto. She gives practical performance considerations for both works. Of the remaining dissertations, seven focus on band or orchestral works, two on solo works, six on chamber works, and three on concertos. Another provides a perspective of a feminine aesthetic and includes the works of Joan Tower.

Most sources which make mention of Joan Tower or her works include interviews, reviews of her compositions, or biographies. She is included in several anthologies which profile women composers; these entries are primarily biographical and do not provide detailed analyses of her works. Many of the newspaper features and journal articles also include biographical content. Many reviews of her compositions can be found, ranging from her early works (including her flute work *Hexachords*) to her most recent projects. These reviews include coverage of recordings which feature her works and live performances. Other published items highlight the various awards she has won throughout the years, residencies she has held, or explorations of her career from a feminist perspective.

There is little analytical coverage of Joan Tower's compositional style, save for the dissertations and theses mentioned above. None of these evaluates the particular chamber works including flute that are the focus of this document. Since such a large portion of Tower's output is chamber music, and the flute is a prominent member of the chamber ensemble for which many of her works are written (Da Capo Chamber Players), it is important that these works are considered for their stylistic content and within the context of Joan Tower's prolific career.

Methodology

The researcher consulted Ellen K. Grolman's *Joan Tower: The Comprehensive Bio-Bibliography* to get an overview of the composer's life. It was also a useful resource for exploring how life experiences influenced her compositions, and it served as the main

source to compile the list of chamber and solo works by Joan Tower involving flute. This list can be found in Appendix 1. Books on the history of the flute, including Ardal Powell's *The Flute* and Nancy Toff's *The Flute Book*, were read in order to provide a historical context for Joan Tower's flute works.

The researcher studied the scores of the works that are included in the present study as well as additional pieces by Joan Tower. This was done to identify salient stylistic characteristics that seem to be common in all of the studied works. Recordings of these works were also reviewed, in order to further understand how the pieces are put together.

Organization of the Study

This document is divided into seven chapters:

Chapter

1. Introduction
 - a. Purpose of the Study
 - b. Need for the Study
 - c. Musical Context
 - d. Delimitations
 - e. Background Information on Composer
 - f. Background Information on Works
 - g. Survey of Related Literature

- h. Methodology
 - i. Organization of the Study
- 2. Biographical Background, Influences, and Musical Styles
- 3. *Snow Dreams*
 - a. The Articulation of Form Based on Patterns of Musical Contrast
 - b. The Development of a “Fate” Motive Alluding to Beethoven
 - c. Patterns of Density Change
- 4. *Valentine Trills*
 - a. The Use of Trills
 - b. Motives and Motivic Development
 - c. Density Changes
- 5. *A Little Gift*
 - a. Patterns of Density Change
 - b. Durational Rhythms
 - c. Metrical Change
 - d. Song Source and Results
- 6. Performance Considerations
- 7. Summary and Conclusions

Appendix 1 – Catalogue of Tower’s Chamber and Solo Works Involving Flute

Appendix 2 – Diagram of Time Signatures in *A Little Gift*

Chapter one serves as the Introduction to this document. It gives an introduction to Joan Tower and her music, and lists the purpose for the study,

delimitations, the organization of the document, methodology, and review of related literature. Chapter two gives historical background about Joan Tower, including her biography, as well as an explanation of her compositional styles (pre-1974 and post-1974). Chapters three through five provide analyses of *Snow Dreams*, *Valentine Trills*, and *A Little Gift*, respectively. One chapter is dedicated to each composition. Each chapter lists premiere information, including dates and performers; publication information; reviews of the works; and salient musical characteristics, including general formal divisions. Chapter six provides a performance guide for flutists, and chapter seven contains conclusions of the document, as well as a discussion of commonly-used musical gestures throughout all three of the studied works.

Appendix 1 provides a catalogue of chamber and solo works involving flute by Joan Tower as well as program notes, when they are available. This will help students of her works accurately place the three works that make up the focus of this document into the larger context of her entire oeuvre. It will also allow flutists to further explore additional works of Joan Tower which involve the flute. Appendix 2 consists of a diagram showing the extensive time signature changes in *A Little Gift*.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND, INFLUENCES, AND MUSICAL STYLES

As a child, Joan Tower (b. 1938) did not plan to become a composer. It seemed more likely that she would become a professional pianist.⁴² She is from a musical family; her father, George Warren Tower, was a mining engineer who sang and played piano. Her mother, Anna Peabody Robinson Tower, also sang and played piano. During her early childhood in Larchmont, New York, Joan followed her parents' example and studied piano.

Her musical studies were somewhat interrupted when her father took a job as a mine supervisor in South America. At age nine, Joan and most of her family moved to La Paz, Bolivia. Her sister, nine years Joan's senior, stayed in the United States to attend college, and her brother, who was a baby, remained with the family. In Bolivia, Joan quickly learned Spanish and then Aymara, which is the local Indian language of their servants. She spent a considerable amount of time with one particular servant named Aida, accompanying her to the market and religious festivals. At these places, she absorbed knowledge of much of the local culture, including their costumes, food, and dances. She was given percussion instruments to play during these occasions, since she

⁴² Oddo, 4.

wanted to participate. She further absorbed the atmosphere of South America when accompanying her father, who frequently travelled across the countryside in connection with his work.

Joan's parents continued to support her musical education through piano lessons, which she had begun in the United States at the age of 6. No matter where the family was living, her father made sure that she had access to a piano as well as lessons. Her teacher in Bolivia was the ex-wife of a silent-movie star who lived in what Joan considered to be a "haunted" house. As Joan was her best student, her teacher was very demanding of her. Joan's parents also made music into a family event in the Tower household. After dinner, the Tower family would gather around the piano and play music together. Her mother played piano, her father sang or played violin, and Joan played some type of South American percussion instrument, frequently the maracas or castanets. In an interview with Nancy Bonds for her 1992 dissertation, Tower attributes her later fondness for percussion to her days in South America:

I've always wondered where my interest in percussion came from and I think it came from South America because I was around a lot of different percussion there... And also I like to dance a lot and in South America you danced a lot... I think [the percussion and dance rhythms] were the main things that came out of South America.⁴³

⁴³ Bonds, 195.

Joan attended a strict private high school for girls called Santiago College, since her parents felt that she needed more discipline. She had a difficult time adjusting there and eventually returned to her parents' household after two years. At this point, the family had relocated to Lima, Peru. Since they intended to return to the United States in a short time, Joan didn't enroll in school. Instead, she took typing classes and horseback-riding and piano lessons. Upon her return to the United States, Tower finished her last two years of high school at a boarding school called Walnut Hill in Natick, Massachusetts. She enrolled at Bennington College in Vermont in 1957. Her musical activities at this time included playing a lot of Beethoven, and the beginnings of composition. She states that becoming a composer only resulted from being asked to write a piece scored for thirteen instruments for a class.

[I decided to become a composer] when I was 18, and when I heard my first piece. Actually, I didn't decide to become a composer. There was so much wrong with the piece that I had to fix it. And so it was the beginning of a trap, actually, because I wanted to write something that made some sense, that had something interesting about it. There is a lot of guesswork. The reality of the page versus the sound is always different.⁴⁴

Her compositional style, at this time, was similar to that of her teachers.

Tower went on to earn the Master of Music degree (with a focus on music theory and music history) in 1964 and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1978, both

⁴⁴ Oddo, 5.

from Columbia University. Her teachers included Louis Calabro, Otto Luening, Jack Beeson, Chou Wen-Chung, Henry Brant, Darius Milhaud, Wallingford Riegger, and Ralph Shapey. However, despite this phalanx of teachers, she considers herself to be a self-taught composer:

What I learned from my composing teachers was outside information. Henry Brant helped me develop notationally and to think about instruments. Otto Luening taught me what the world of music was all about – he’s the kind of person that has an overview that is unbelievable. But the material that I developed was very much my own turf and had very little to do with what I was learning in school or from any of the people I was studying with.

Tower’s early compositional style was primarily influenced by serialism, which was in vogue at the time. The people with whom she associated, including Milton Babbitt, Charles Wuorinen, and Benjamin Boretz, also composed in this style. To describe her early compositional style, Nancy Bonds states:

In her compositions dating from before 1974, Tower relied on what she refers to as “maps” as guides when composing, charts of serial procedures and complex structures. She claims that as a young composer, the insecurity and infinity of choices she had to make when composing forced her to create precompositional maps for the pitch (and sometimes for the time structures) of a piece. This gave her more time to spend on the decision-making process of rhythm, register, texture, and spacing.

In 1975, her music took a decidedly tonal turn, and she decided that she didn't like the aesthetic of twelve-tone composition. As she became more confident as a composer, she relied less on her precompositional maps. Her work *Breakfast Rhythms* is an excellent representation of how her style transitioned from serial to more tonal. The first movement is clearly serial, as it is based on a chromatic cluster of six pitches centered on B natural. After setting the work aside for a year, she returned to write the second movement. This movement is more fluid and is written in her organic style. According to Bonds, it is "less dissonant, more colorful, and slightly impressionistic. The work is unified by strong directional motion and balancing of gestures."⁴⁵ Tower's doctoral dissertation is an analysis of this work, and she further elaborates on her new style:

At first I was interested primarily in the energy of a musical line but then I became fascinated with how lines acquire direction and shape. Music has to be counterbalanced. It's like physics – if you throw a ball at a certain angle and speed, it will fall a certain way.⁴⁶

Tower finds it important to balance musical gestures. She considers the line of the music to determine its direction, its speed, what happens to it after it ascends and descends, and so forth. She continues to apply ideas from physics by applying the concepts of action and reaction to her music.

⁴⁵ Bonds, 19.

⁴⁶ Mary Lou Humphrey, "Lively Musicmaker," *Saint Louis Symphony Stagebill* (January 1987), 74.

Since the 1980s, her works have been described as containing “musical contrasts, rhythmic urgency, balanced gestures, and colorful impressionistic swirls.” Her titles have changed in character, as well. Instead of generic titles, they are more descriptive and evocative. This practice began at the urging of her publisher, with *Breakfast Rhythms*. Her goal in choosing titles is to name it something that is helpful to the listener, but not so specific that it leads the listener by the hand.

She considers her style to be organic, which means that she eschews the precompositional plans she once relied on. She composes at the piano (her preference) or the synthesizer. She starts with a small musical idea and works from it very slowly. She improvises bit by bit, and when she finds something she likes, she develops it. At that point, she writes it down. Later, she makes revisions. For orchestral music, she makes cosmetic revisions to the dynamics, articulation, and orchestration. For solo music, she often makes changes after it has been performed, and collaborates with the soloist to make the piece more idiomatic.⁴⁷

In spite of the multitude of influences, Tower still didn’t feel that she had developed her own compositional style by the time she had completed the DMA. She started the Greenwich House Series of Contemporary Music Concerts in order to hire good musicians to play new music. She also founded the Da Capo Chamber Players in 1969. This ensemble has the goal of commissioning new works and performing contemporary music. It includes flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano; Tower served as its pianist until 1984, when she retired to concentrate on composition. The ensemble is

⁴⁷ Bonds, 195-96.

interested in engaging with their audience; the name comes from their practice of repeating a piece later in the concert to help the audience become better acquainted with it. They are in residence at Bard College (New York) and give frequent concerts. The group has been recognized through several awards, including the prestigious Naumberg Award for Chamber Music in 1973. While serving as a bridge between contemporary music and the audience, the group also has served as a learning opportunity for Joan Tower. She has written works specifically for the players in the group, highlighting what they do well. She is able to work very closely with them during the actual compositional process, which allows her to make changes before the work is completed.

Chamber music was Tower's primary focus until 1981. At this point, she was commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra to write an orchestral piece. This resulted in *Sequoia*, and it represented her entry into the world of orchestral composition. It was performed by several other orchestras and eventually was recorded by the St. Louis Symphony in 1984. At the request of conductor Leonard Slatkin, beginning in 1985 she became the composer-in-residence with the St. Louis Symphony for three years. While there, she attended rehearsals and performances, gave lectures on new music, and was responsible for choosing the new music to be performed by the orchestra. She also organized a chamber music series, and was active in promoting works by other women composers. During her time there, she also completed two works for orchestra – *Island Rhythms* and *Silver Ladders* – as well as other chamber works.

Joan Tower has taught at Bard College since 1972, and was granted the Asher Edelman Endowed Chair of Music in 1988. She teaches, composes, and is still active as a promoter of new music. She was the composer-in-residence for the orchestra at St. Luke's for a three year term beginning in 1999, and has won many awards and fellowships, including the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition; she was also inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters for her outstanding achievements in music in May 1998. She has received many commissions from groups such as the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Naumberg Foundation, various orchestras, the Carnegie Hall Centennial Commission, Milwaukee Ballet, Absolut Vodka, Carnegie Hall, and Aspen Music Festival. She has also served on boards and panels for contemporary music.

CHAPTER 3

SNOW DREAMS

Snow Dreams is scored for flute and guitar. It was published in 1983 and lasts approximately 9 minutes. It was dedicated to flutist Carol Wincenc and guitarist Sharon Isbin. The commission of the work originated from the Schubert Club, an organization which primarily promotes recital music through education, performance, and museum programs.⁴⁸

Snow Dreams consists of many differing sections, which can be interpreted as representing the different varieties of snow referenced in Tower's program note.⁴⁹ The work features a variety of textures throughout and does not follow a standard form. However, important formal and textural changes are frequently demarcated by written tempo markings:

⁴⁸ The Schubert Club, <http://www.schubert.org>

⁴⁹ Please see the program note provided by the composer on p. 14.

Measure Number	Tempo Marking
1	Quarter note = ca. 50
20	Quarter note = ca. 72
37	Quarter note = ca. 48
56	Quarter note = 108 – 116
83	Quarter note = 132
132	Quarter note = ca. 138
166	Quarter note = 126 – 136
186	Quarter note = 142 – 146
247	Quarter note = ca. 100
256	Quarter note = ca. 132
261	Half note = ca. 85 – 90
279	Quarter note = ca. 140
284	Quarter note = 76

Table of Tempo Markings found in Tower's *Snow Dreams*.

The following comments will address three issues pertaining to the style and structure of *Snow Dreams*: 1) the articulation of form based on patterns of musical contrast; 2) the development of a "Fate" motive alluding to Beethoven; and 3) patterns of density change.

The Articulation of Form Based on Patterns of Musical Contrast

This section will provide a description of each discrete portion of *Snow Dreams*, emphasizing the features that distinguish them. Joan Tower creates form in this work by arranging contrasting sections of music. This process also relates to her explanatory note describing different images of snow. The first section of the piece begins a slow tempo and establishes a free, improvisatory nature. It builds in intensity until the arrival of the guitar solo at m. 20; this compositional technique of building intensity in each discrete section is used throughout the entire work. The guitar begins by decorating the written

pitch G (g4) with quick thirty-second notes. After several measures, the flute enters on a very low B (b3), while the guitar continues with more complicated figuration. After the flute drops out, the guitar continues to climb in register and increase the rhythmic complexity of the music. A double-dotted eighth-note/thirty-second note figure increases the forward momentum, and the rhythm in the guitar switches to even quicker sixteenth-notes. The flute enters at this point and begins to crescendo as the guitar material rises in register. As we reach the first fortissimo marking of the piece, the guitar is playing eighth notes decorated by grace notes, and the flute is playing a syncopated rhythm that further builds intensity until the arrival of the guitar solo beginning in m. 20 (Example 3.1).

Tempo (♩=50, ♭=100)

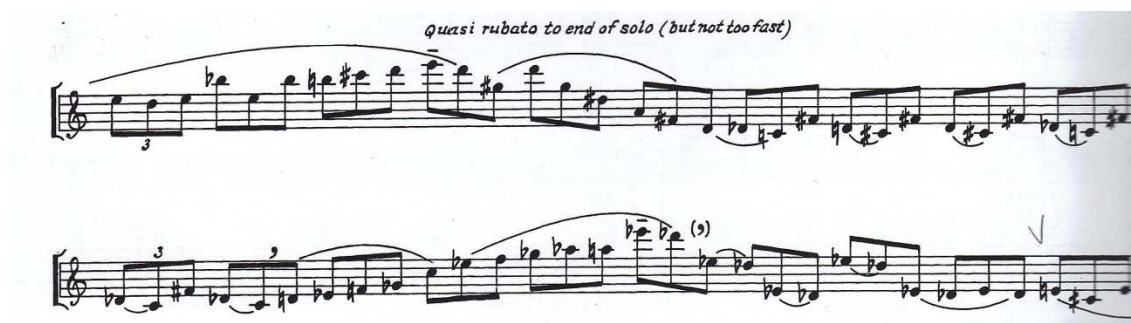
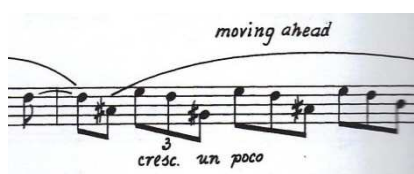
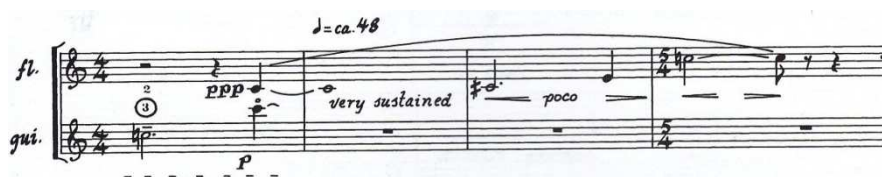
♩ = ca. 72

*tempo indications in parentheses are only suggestions to the player.

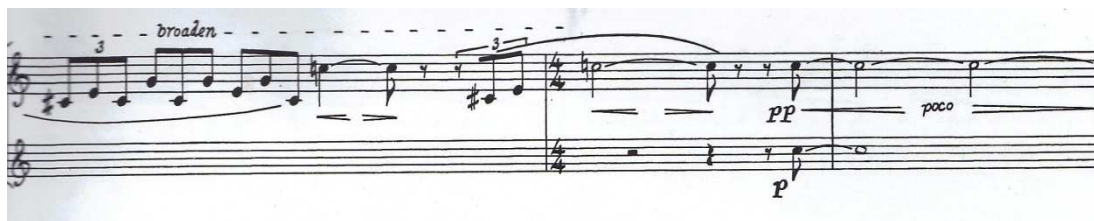
Example 3.1: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 18 - 21

In m. 20, the guitar continues solo for five measures unified by the flourishes on beat one of each measure. This leads into a long passage of sixteenth-notes, which make up the majority of the solo. They ascend to C-sharp (C-sharp6) and then descend

and broaden until m. 34. At this point, the guitar reaches the pitch C and, after some embellishment, sustains it. The flute then takes the pitch C from the guitar and begins a solo (Example 3.2). The beginning of the solo is sustained and includes long notes. It also ascends and features crescendos and decrescendos to create swells. The note lengths are shortened to quarter notes; then eighth notes and triplets are introduced. The majority of the rest of the solo is made up of triplets. This section is marked “quasi rubato (but not too fast).” The solo ends as it began, on pitch C an octave higher, and the guitar joins the flute, one octave apart. In both parts of this section, the guitar solo and the flute solo, each instrument begins with notes of longer durations; these notes become shorter as the solo progresses. Each section builds intensity in this way.



Example 3.2: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 36 – 46, beginning.



Example 3.2: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 36 – 46, continued.

The section beginning in m. 83 is marked with a quicker tempo than the previous sections. It is also marked by a change in texture. The flute's role is minimal and really serves to punctuate the guitar line. The guitar material includes a harmonic interval on the downbeat followed by sixteenth notes. At m. 92, the flute joins the guitar, and they continue to play the sixteenth-note material (Example 3.3). This continues until the next textural change at m. 117.



Example 3.3: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 92 – 94.

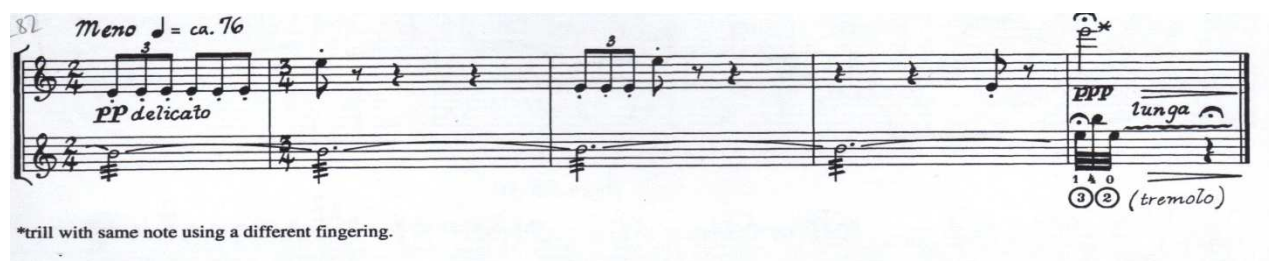
Sixteenth notes, another flute solo, and triplets are featured in the next section. Only the guitar plays at the beginning of this section, which begins in m. 117 and ends at m. 140. This part alternates between sixteenth notes and syncopated rhythms, and the flute enters later. After trills, the flute plays a second solo which consists of long runs and has an improvisatory nature (Example 3.4).

Handwritten musical score for a piece in 4/4 time, featuring a piano and flute. The score includes various performance instructions such as "rit.", "mf dim.", "p", "tr.", "accel.", "broaden", "poco accel.", and "f". It also includes tempo markings like "d = ca. 60 (freely)" and "d = ca. 116-126". The score is divided into several systems, with measures numbered 15, 6, 8, and 3. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

Example 3.4: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 142 – 145.

Freely played triplets follow these runs, which alternate between accelerating and broadening motion. The guitar joins in m. 144 with similar triplets, and the two instruments alternate playing. These triplets turn into sixteenth notes at m. 164, and the two instruments play together beginning in m. 170.

The beginning of the next section of this work relaxes the homorhythmic texture of the previous sections. M. 186 features the flute and guitar alternating musical gestures in a conversational way. At m. 210, the instruments again come together in homorhythm to play constant sixteenth notes. This texture continues until the last section of the work, which begins at m. 245. While the two instruments play simultaneous triplets at the beginning of this section, it soon changes. The flute continues with the triplets, but the guitar plays eighth notes. At m. 259, the guitar switches to a thick chordal accompaniment as the flute continues with triplets. The final ten measures of the piece find the two instruments alternating between sustained trills and triplet figures. The dynamics lessen and the tempo slows progressively until the final gesture, which includes a two-octave leap in the flute and a tremolo in the guitar at pianississimo. They are held under a fermata and a gradual diminuendo (Example 3.5).



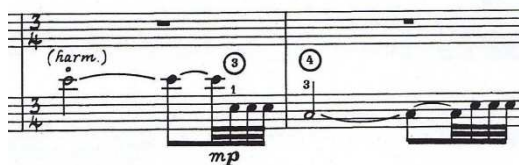
Example 3.5: *Snow Dreams*, mm. 284 – 288.

The Development of a “Fate” Motive Alluding to Beethoven

Music critic Herman Trotter of the *Buffalo News* was likely the first to claim a possible allusion to the “fate theme” from Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony:

[*Snow Dreams*] is a rather episodic work that continually reveals new and not necessarily connected ideas. Opening with a contemplative solo statement for each instrument, the duo then dug intently into a four-note motif... reminiscent of the so-called “fate theme” of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. This developed into some wonderfully chattery interplay for the two instruments before going on to such other expressions as a series of separate expostulations on different ideas segued together very artfully.⁵⁰

The motive that alludes to the “fate theme,” consisting of three short notes followed by one long note, first appears in the guitar part in m. 49 (Example 3.6). This motive anticipates the section that is marked by a double bar at m. 56.



Example 3.6: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 49 – 50.

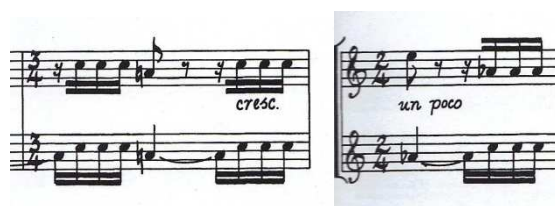
The guitar continues with the solo line until the entrance of the flute in m. 56. At this point, both instruments play in unison. The only difference between the two parts is that the flute plays a staccato pitch on the arrival note of the theme, while the guitar sustains through until the beginning of the next instance of the “fate theme” (Example 3.7).

⁵⁰ Schirmer, “*Snow Dreams*, Joan Tower,” <http://www.schirmer.com>.



Example 3.7: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 56 – 58.

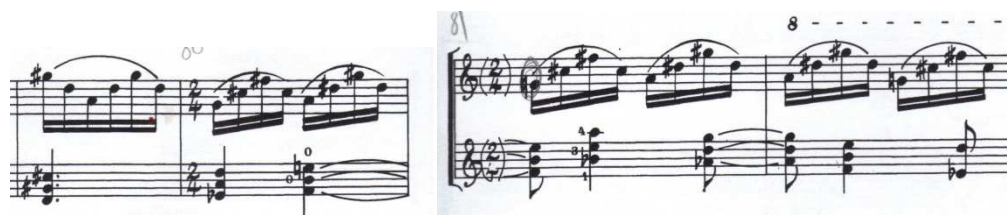
The music alternates between various meters here; 4/4, 2/4, 3/4, and 3/8 time signatures all take place within the few measures of this mostly-homorhythmic section. In m. 63, we switch to a 3/8 time signature and remain there through m. 80. While the time signature remains constant in these seventeen measures, the texture begins to change. The homorhythm is broken; while the flute continues with the “fate theme,” the guitar does not play for two measures and then reenters with a long, sustained accompanimental figure in m. 69. The shape of the motive also changes within this section. Previously, the notes moved from high to low; in m. 61, the notes suddenly move from low to high in the guitar (Example 3.8).



Example 3.8: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 61 – 62.

Tower begins to develop the “fate motive” beginning in m. 75. This motive, which originally consisted of staccato, articulated pitches, begins to incorporate slurs.

At first, the first two pitches of the “fate theme” are slurred. Then the first three pitches are slurred, and the arrival pitch is lengthened. After four short bars, the “fate theme” has been extended from its original form to a stream of steady, slurred sixteenth notes (Example 3.9).



Example 3.9: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 79 – 82.

As the time signature changes from 3/8 to 2/4 between mm. 79 and 80, the pattern of the sixteenth notes changes. The accompaniment in the guitar continues with sustained chords. As we reach the new section, which begins at m. 83, we still hear sixteenth notes, but there is no longer a link to the previously-established “fate theme” other than the use of sixteenth notes. The sixteenth note continues to be an important durational value throughout the remainder of the piece, albeit in a different pattern.

Patterns of Density Change

Techniques of gradual changes in texture and register are hallmarks of Joan Tower’s musical style after *Hexachords*. In *Snow Dreams* the duet scoring gave her opportunities to create contrasts between the different timbres and registers of the flute and guitar. She is also able to show contrasts between solo sections (both for flute

and guitar) as well as homorhythmic and homophonic sections when both instruments are playing simultaneously. According to Wallace Berry in *Structural Functions in Music*, “Density may be seen as the quantitative aspect of texture – the number of concurrent events (the thickness of the fabric) as well as the degree of “compression” of events within a given intervallic space.”⁵¹

In *Snow Dreams* there are three general cases of concurrent events to consider for a particular intervallic space: 1) no voice being heard; 2) one voice alone; or 3) two voices being heard. For this study, I am excluding the first case, to concentrate on instances when there are either one or two voices occurring simultaneously to see how it contributes to the overall form of the piece. There are several solos played by either the flute or the guitar. Between those solos, the two instruments play together in frequent homorhythmic or homophonic sections.

The first section of the work begins with the guitar. However, the section is not played solo. In the fourth measure the flute enters with long sustained notes, which acts to punctuate the guitar line for two measures. In m. 13, the flute reenters and continues to accompany the guitar until m. 20. So far, the flute has been used only for this accompanimental purpose; the main melodic line has been found in the guitar. While there are two simultaneous lines here, this section does not result in as much intensity as if we had a polyphonic texture with two equally important lines. M. 20 signals the beginning of an extended guitar solo. There is no flute accompaniment here at all. In m. 36, there is an overlap between the flute and the guitar for one beat, and

⁵¹ Wallace Berry, *Structural Functions in Music*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976, 184.

then the flute has an extended solo. As in the guitar solo, there is absolutely no accompaniment in this section.

As discussed above, a new section is delineated by a new tempo marking in m. 47. The flute and guitar both play in two short measures leading up to this new section (mm. 45 – 47) until the guitar has a brief solo section which concludes at m. 56. While there are two instruments sounding in this transition into the guitar solo, increasing the quantitative aspect of the texture, its brevity diminishes any intensity it otherwise might have contributed.

In the section beginning at m. 56, both instruments play in a generally homorhythmic fashion. There is a brief two measure interlude of solo flute between mm. 67 and 68, and then both instruments again play together at m. 69. This texture continues through m. 83, at which point both instruments continue to play, but the flute simply plays downbeats until m. 90. This has the effect of accentuating the meter. There is a single bar, m. 91, where the guitar plays alone, and then both instruments again play in a homorhythmic fashion beginning in m. 92. In m. 117, the flute drops out and the guitar continues with the same material, but accents it with slightly syncopated chords. The flute enters again in m. 127, and again the two parts play homorhythmically. The two instrumental lines mostly exhibit parallel motion, but there are instances of contrary motion.

The section beginning in m. 142 commences with an extended flute solo, which is marked by long, trilled notes as well as a new tempo marking. It is free and cadenza-

like in nature. A new section, marked with another tempo marking, begins in m. 145. The flute and guitar have alternating gestures which usually overlap by one beat, resulting in either one or two voices being heard. The instances of overlapping are more intense than the solitary lines. This section continues for quite some time until the two instruments converge in a homorhythmic section at m. 172.

In the section beginning in m. 186, the primary line can be found in the guitar, while the flute punctuates the texture with occasional ascending triplets. The instruments switch roles in m. 197, at which point the flute takes the primary line and the guitar accompanies with accented chords and interjected sixteenth notes.

M. 212, contained within the section beginning in m. 186, again finds the instruments playing in a homorhythmic fashion. This section continues for an extended period until we reach m. 244. Here the guitar plays a short three measure transition until the new section marked “poco meno mosso.” Both instruments play at this point, first in homorhythm and then in divergent (and often conflicting) rhythmic patterns until m. 288, the last measure.

If we consider Berry’s second quality when considering density, the “degree of ‘compression’ of events within a given intervallic space,” we can better understand how Joan Tower uses density in order to create a sense of form as well as to create intensity. Berry states:

Like dissonance, rhythmic acceleration, *ascent in pitch* (emphasis mine), etc., the progressive complication and diversification of musical texture are assumed to

be evocative of the impression of rising intensity, an intensity which increases the more the progression is prolonged.⁵²

We can also apply this same concept to the reverse idea: a descent in pitch can indicate a reduction in intensity.

At the beginning of the work, the flute and guitar parts are sounding in unison, as the guitar sounds an octave lower than written. This tight orchestration continues through the first portion of the piece, until the solo material is reached. After the guitar solo, the flute plays a solo part; the four-note “fate motive” appears in a few introductory solo guitar measures before the flute enters again at m. 56. At this point, the two instruments sound an octave apart.

At m. 83, the texture opens up quite a bit, and the two parts are now playing several octaves apart. After this short section, the distance between the flute and guitar becomes only an octave and later both instruments begin to share the same octave. At m. 127, the two players yet again play within the same octave, but they continue to move farther apart as the music progresses. Soon, by m. 129, they are playing several octaves apart, creating a lot of musical space and intensity. The extended flute solo begins in m. 142, and the subsequent overlapping section beginning at m. 145 finds the two instruments an octave apart.

The texture becomes very compressed at m. 172, where the instruments again play within the same octave. As they progress, both players move upwards in register,

⁵² Ibid., 190.

but we find them playing some contrary motion leading into the next major section marked “Più Mosso.” At this point, the flute and guitar are playing three full octaves apart. The parts yet again contract as they reach m. 208 and the texture is quite compacted. The parts begin to expand again and become less compacted until the arrival at m. 261. Here the flute is in the upper octave, and the guitar is playing very thick chords. Both parts contract and move closer together until the end of the work, indicating a reversal in the intensity created earlier.

Joan Tower uses patterns of musical contrasts, a “fate” motive alluding to Beethoven, and patterns of density change in order to create an effective work. The development and interaction of these elements create, maintain, and dispel intensity in dramatic ways. The composer is continually building intensity within each formal section as well as on a larger scale that encompasses the entire piece.

CHAPTER 4

VALENTINE TRILLS

Valentine Trills is a work for solo flute. It is published in a collection edited by the flutist Carol Wincenc as a result of her putting together her Naumburg Retrospective Concert.⁵³ As the concert was scheduled for Valentine's Day, she decided to organize a program around this theme. Joan Tower's *Valentine Trills* was commissioned, therefore, for this project and is dedicated to Carol Wincenc. According to Wincenc's program note: "[Tower's] Valentine is somewhat reminiscent of certain movements which appear in *Snow Dreams*, the flute and guitar duo commissioned by Ms. Wincenc and Sharon Isbin in 1983." Furthermore, Wincenc explains:

Valentine Trills is one of the most effective solo pieces I play. Audiences are awed by the continuous trilling, turning, spinning and seemingly breathless quality in the piece - all which builds to a thrilling climax. Keep the pace "on the edge" right up to the last few trilling statements. The articulation needs to be brilliantly clear, and all the dynamic changes exaggerated from the surging *fff* to the hushed *ppp* at the end. If you can circular breathe, all the better!⁵⁴

This is a very short work, lasting approximately one-and-a-half minutes. As with many of Tower's other works, it is possible to begin analyzing this piece by determining

⁵³ Carol Wincenc was the First Prize winner of the 1978 Walter W. Naumburg Solo Flute Competition.

⁵⁴ Carol Wincenc, ed., *Valentines*, New York: Carl Fischer, 1999.

if the music is “going somewhere” or “staying somewhere.” This element of Tower’s style has also been described as “holding,” “intensifying,” and “de-intensifying.”⁵⁵ From the beginning, this work builds from a middle-range G, which is trilled up by a half-step. It builds up in dynamics, rhythmic complexity, and range until the climax is reached on the upper-register A, which is trilled up by half-step to B-flat. After this point, the music moves down with respect to range, dynamics, and rhythmic complexity. Very soon after, the work ends on a *ppp* dynamic and with a G to A-flat movement. However, in this instance, the interval has been expanded to a minor ninth instead of the original minor second. In this way, *Valentine Trills* can be described as having somewhat of an arc form.

As the title suggests, trills are indeed prominent in this work. Creative use of trills in the shaping of form will be explored below. Two other issues to be investigated are motivic development and, yet again, the use of density change as a structural element. Since this work is not divided into measures, aspects of the work will be identified in relation to which line they fall within.

The Use of Trills

Trills are used, along with duration, to emphasize certain pitches. Besides this function, they produce momentum. They are also used to sustain pitches and add color. A significant change in the music occurs when the trills disappear, just before the end of

⁵⁵ Rochelle Oddo, “Joan Tower’s Compositional Profile, Use of the Clarinet, and Collaboration in *Turning Points for Clarinet and String Quartet*” (DMA diss., Rice University, 2003), 39.

the piece in line 12. These notes are marked “no trill” and are tied to the end of a trilled pitch.

Many trills can be found at the beginning of this work (Example 4.1). The very first pitch of the piece, a g₂, is trilled up by half-step to an A-flat. It is sustained for three beats. After a quarter note rest, the same pitch is again trilled for the duration of a quarter note. A flourish of pitches, barred as a group of ten, connects this quarter note trill to the next trilled pitch. After another flourish, we find eight trilled pitches, which can be described as four eighth notes, followed by an eighth note triplet, and then a quarter note. The pitches alternate between G and F-sharp, and they are always trilled up by half-step. After the quarter note, there is a short flourish that leads to another trill, which is one and a half beats in duration. It is an F-sharp, trilled up by half-step.

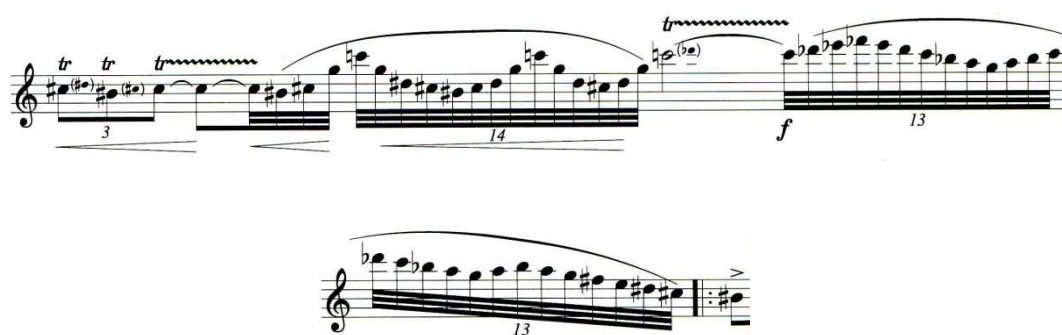


Example 4.1: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, line 1 – first half of line 2.

The first trills of the piece both sustain the pitch and provide momentum. Besides simply extending the pitch G, the timbral effect of the trill provides a more intense and active sound than an unornamented pitch. This activity captures the listener’s interest and sets the tone for what is to follow. At the end of the first line,

where the eighth notes alternate between the pitches G and F-sharp, we see the trill applied to faster-moving notes. These pitches are also marked with an accent, ensuring that they stand out from the surrounding texture. This figure continues to the beginning of line 2, where the pitches continue to be emphasized through trills and accents.

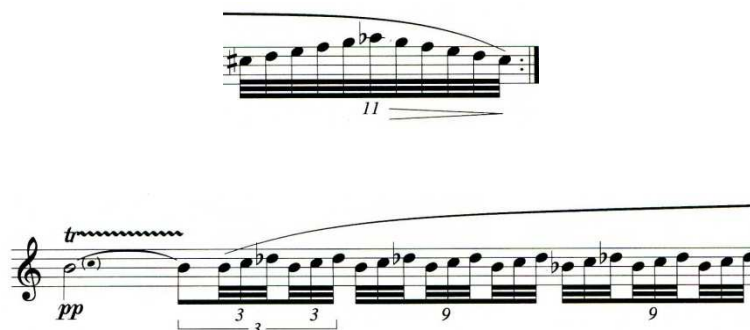
Near the end of the third line, we find the pitch c2 sustained through a half note. It is trilled by half-step and is tied to the following group of thirteen pitches. This trill seems to function much like the ones at the beginning of the piece. It sustains the pitch, adds timbral interest, and keeps the momentum going between two quick flourishes of notes, groups of fourteen and thirteen pitches, respectively. It resolves by landing on a B-sharp after a second thirteen-note flourish (Example 4.2).



Example 4.2: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, line 3 – first half of line 4.

This situation also occurs at the beginning of line 5. The pitch b1 is sustained for two beats and is trilled up a half step to the pitch C. It similarly is tied to the next beat, where a flourish of quickly-moving thirty-second notes begins. Here the momentum is

maintained, as the trilled pitch occurs between groups of eleven pitches and the following series of thirty-second note triplets (Example 4.3).



Example 4.3: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, end of line 4 – first half of line 5.

While the next instance of the use of a trill is shorter in duration, it still fulfills a similar function as the previous trills. At the beginning of line 6, the pitch E is trilled up a half-step to F. It lasts only the length of a quarter note, compared with previous half note trills. However, it still sustains the pitch and provides the momentum required to connect two flourishes of notes – a group of seven pitches before the trill, and an eighth note triplet after. Looking forward, this trill also connects to the next trilled pitch E, two octaves higher, near the end of line 6 (Example 4.4).



Example 4.4: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, first $\frac{3}{4}$ of line 6.

The trill near the end of line 6 is configured a bit differently. This one is sustained for one and a half beats. The pitch is E and it trills up by a half-step to F. This

dotted quarter note is followed by an eighth note pitch F. Both of these notes are accented and stand out from the surrounding texture and the *molto* crescendo to *ff*. These notes also represent the peak of the crescendo that begins earlier in line 6. While this trilled pitch connects two flourishes (of eight notes and twelve notes, respectively), it sounds more like an arrival point than the previous instances of trills in this work. This can be attributed to the previously mentioned accents and dynamic levels, as well as the higher register. This pitch is the highest sustained pitch so far in the work. An enharmonic F-flat was heard previously in the piece, but it occurred as a neighbor tone and within the quick context of a group of thirteen pitches.

This same pair of pitches, a dotted quarter note E followed by an eighth note F, occurs at the beginning of line 7. In this case, however, the intensity has been changed somewhat. While these pitches are not accented, they still occur at the fortissimo volume that was introduced with the arrival of the previous E-F dyad. This pair also connects two flourishes (of twelve notes and ten notes, respectively). They also remain the highest pitches of the work so far, with the exception of the previously mentioned neighboring tone. However, both pitches are trilled in this case, instead of the first pitch E (Example 4.5).



Example 4.5: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, end of line 6 and beginning of line 7.

The next trilled pitch can be found in line 9, the arrival point of the extended chromatic run which starts at the beginning of line eight. This pitch, a half note g-sharp⁶, represents the highest pitch found in the work up to this point and is marked by a *fff* dynamic level. This pitch follows the same pattern and is trilled up by half-step to the pitch A. This trilled pitch is very intense at such a high place in the flute tessitura and at such a loud dynamic. It connects the extended chromatic run to a flourish of fourteen pitches. In the next line, after the flourish of fourteen pitches and the subsequent flourish of twelve pitches, we arrive at the trilled pitch A, a half-step higher than the previously trilled pitch. Such an arrival increases the intensity created partly by the previously trilled pitch. This A is trilled up by half-step to B-flat, and it connects two flourishes of twelve pitches.

The last instances of trilled pitches in *Valentine Trills* occur at the very end of the work. In line 12, after a descending flourish of grace notes, we arrive on the half-note pitch g¹ in the lower register of the flute. It is trilled up by half-step to a-flat¹. The grace notes decrescendo, but the trilled pitch is marked with a *fp* accent. This trilled half-note is tied to a dotted quarter note. However, Tower specifically marks the dotted quarter note as “no trill” (Example 4.6).



Example 4.6: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, second half of line 12.

After the intense energy created around the previous trills, this “no trill” indication has important implications. After being tied to an accented, trilled pitch, this quiet, sustained sound is striking. It serves to dissipate the energy of the work and indicate to the listener that the end of the work is near. After a sixteenth note triplet, again marked *diminuendo*, we hear another trilled g1, marked with a *fp*. Then, a *ppp* trilled pitch g1 is heard, followed by a g1 marked “no trill.” The combination of the low register, very quiet dynamic level, and relatively “still” pitch indicate that the energy of this piece is quickly dwindling.

Motives and Motivic Development

Rhythmic motives and the manipulation of these motives are prominent in Joan Tower’s *Valentine Trills*. Of these the triplet is used as a referential rhythm. The first instance of the triplet occurs at the beginning of line 2. However, it seems to develop out of the eighth notes found at the end of line 1, where four eighth notes alternate between the pitches g1 and f-sharp1, the same pitches in the triplet. In addition the two sets of notes are further linked by their trills and accentuation. Tower is here developing the half-step motive, which can be found throughout the works studied in this document, by speeding up the alternation of the pitches through the use of the quicker-moving triplet notes.

The next instances of the use of the triplet occur in lines 3 and 4. After a flourish of twelve pitches at the end of line 2, this figure is abruptly stopped by an eighth-note triplet. Like the previous one, it is embellished with trills. The same idea occurs in line

4. After a flourish of thirteen pitches, an eighth-note triplet is suddenly introduced. This one is emphasized with accents instead of trills.

The triplet motive is again featured in line 5, but in a new way. After a long pitch, there is a series of thirty-second note triplets. These occur consistently over four beats. The succession of pitches in the first two beats remains the same, but the first note of the triplet is lowered by a half-step in the third beat. This new set of pitches is retained through the fourth beat. These triplets are faster than the previous triplets encountered in this piece, and slightly altering the pitches gives the entire section more motion and a more dynamic feel. A flourish of a group of seven pitches follows these quickly-moving triplets, and we arrive at the next instance of a triplet near the beginning of line 6.

A trilled quarter note begins this line. It is tied to the next beat, which includes an eighth note triplet. Like previous triplets, this one features pitches a half-step apart, E and D-sharp. These same pitches, E and D-sharp, are retained into the next measure with the addition of the pitch F, but they are speeded up into sixteenth-note triplets. Instead of a neighbor motion, we now find a scalar pattern. These sixteenth-note triplets are then followed by the slower-moving eighth-note triplets with the same pitches. We then again see a group of six pitches in the next beat, but, instead of a triplet configuration, it is more scalar in nature. This upward motion continues into a fast moving run (Example 4.7).



Example 4.7: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, first three-quarters of line 6.

Triplets can also be found at the end of line 11 and the beginning of line 12, but they will be discussed in connection with density, later in this chapter. The last instance of the triplet figure to be discussed here can be found at the end of the work, near the end of line 12. This triplet does not develop into a faster- or slower-moving triplet, but it does articulate the trilled note to follow. It features half-step motion through the pitches A-flat and G. The triplet is followed by a trilled quarter note tied to a half note.

Density Changes

Density usage in Joan Tower's *Valentine Trills* can be explored in several ways. If we consider the number of notes that are used within a given space, this work is relatively dense, although it alternates between more dense and less dense portions. The beginning of the work is relatively thin, and features few notes. Similarly, the very end of the work features few notes. This use of density creates an arch form, with the most density occurring in the middle portion of the work.

In *Structural Functions in Music*, Berry describes several aspects of density that are especially pertinent here. He states that density can be seen as a quantitative measure of a musical piece: “the number of concurrent events (the thickness of the fabric) as well as the degree of “compression” of events within a given intervallic

space.”⁵⁶ This concept is applicable to Tower’s work when we discuss the monophonic nature of the piece and the abrupt shift to a polyphonic texture at the end of the piece. The second aspect of Berry’s definition is less applicable here. Even though we eventually have the suggestion of a polyphonic texture for a short while, there is still only one instrument playing. Therefore, we cannot talk about the compression of events within a given intervallic space as explained by Berry. However, we can modify Berry’s concept to apply to the number of notes within each beat of music. As the number of notes per beat increases, so does the intensity of the work.

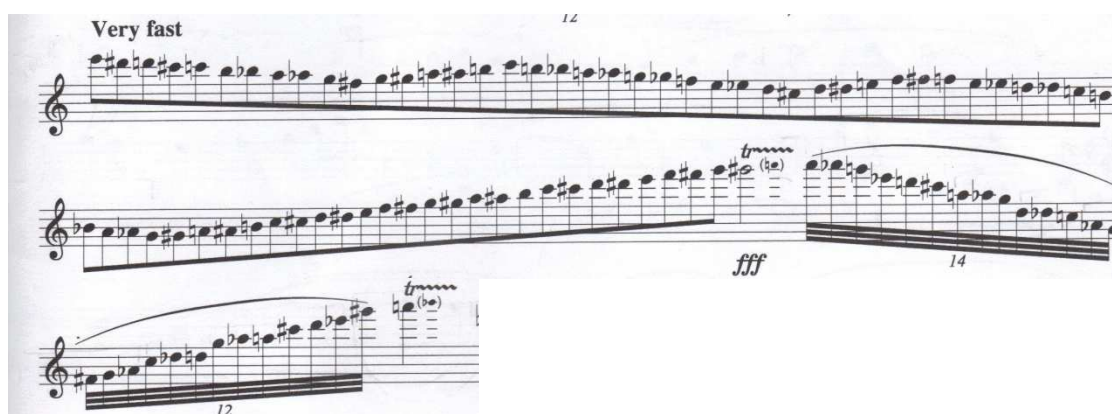
The work features many flourishes, which are made up of many notes per beat. Because of this, sections with less density stand out as unique. At the beginning of the work, the pitch g2 is quite prominent. It is the only pitch for the first five beats, and is embellished by a flourish of ten pitches before occurring again for two beats. A similar flourish of eight pitches connects the sustained pitch g2 to g1, one octave lower. The following pitches, the previously discussed eighth notes on pitches G and F-sharp, can be considered in terms of their relative density as well. These pitch strings, as well as the following triplet figure, feature fewer notes per beat than the preceding and following musical material. After the triplet, there are flourishes of nine, seven, and twelve notes per beat, until the next eighth note triplet is reached at the beginning of line 3. After this triplet, made up of relatively long notes, we yet again encounter very dense single-beat durations. For example, in line 3, a dense group of fourteen pitches is

⁵⁶ Wallace Berry, *Structural Functions in Music*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976, 184.

followed by a half note. This sustained pitch is then followed by two dense beats: two groups of thirteen notes. A single uncompressed triplet interrupts the flurry, after which follows flourishes of ten and eleven notes, respectively.

Line 5 begins with a half note followed by thirty-second note triplets. Increased density follows as the scalar triplet figure is repeated for three additional beats. While dense with rapid notes, these beats are not as compacted as previous flourishes of thirteen and fourteen notes per beat. Those sweeping gestures primarily feature scalar and arpeggiated material, and these triplet figures repeat the first figure of the section and then lower the first pitch by a half-step. This section is followed by a beat of seven notes, which ends on a quarter note at the beginning of line 6. Similar to the previous line, this line is more focused on the manipulation of the triplet figure as opposed to very dense scalar flourishes of pitches. As previously discussed, the eighth note triplets alternate with sixteenth note triplets, which eventually are followed by a flourish of eight notes, culminating on a dotted quarter note. At this point, the texture is similar to the beginning of the piece: quick flurries of notes with occasional resting spots on longer sustained pitches. At the end of line 6, there is a sweeping gesture of twelve pitches, followed by a dotted quarter note and an eighth note at the beginning of line 7. The rest of this line includes very dense beats, which are also marked "accelerando." Beats of ten, twelve, seven, and ten notes arrive at a cadenza-like section at the beginning of line 8 marked "Very fast."

The "Very fast" section is primarily chromatic, although it does undulate. It is a very dense section and showcases the dazzling technique of the performer. It culminates in a half-note pitch g-sharp³ near the end of line 9, which is connected to the next sustained pitch in line 10 by two beats of fourteen and twelve notes, respectively (Example 4.8).



Example 4.8: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, line 8 – first half of line 10.

After this sustained quarter note pitch a₃, we again see two connective beats of twelve and thirteen notes. At this point, however, the texture changes.

At the very end of line 10, we find a beat which includes four sixteenth notes. This is a rhythm that has not been used in the work so far. It is marked at a forte dynamic, and it is indicated that all notes should be played in a staccato fashion. This separated style continues through much of the remaining two lines of the work. Notes which are not marked staccato are instead slurred. These two disparate articulation styles represent two different voices. At this point in the work, we have arrived at a

polyphonic style as opposed to the single-voiced style we have had up to this point (Example 4.9).



Example 4.9: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, end of line 10 – first half of line 12.

The first voice, which is represented by the staccato pitches, mainly plays in an arpeggiated style. Sometimes the line ascends, sometimes it descends, and sometimes it includes a combination of both, but there is a complete absence of conjunct motion in this voice. It culminates on the high pitch g3 near the middle of line 12, at which point it returns to the sustained pitches reminiscent of the beginning of the work. We return to a single-line texture here and remain until the end of the piece. The second voice, which enters at the beginning of line 11, slurs pitches that are a half-step apart in a decorative figure. This "mini trill" interrupts the staccato arpeggiated line and adds intensity to the line. While there are a variety of mini trills used, the half-step motion remains constant, and reinforces the importance of the half-step as a recurring motive in the entire work. The combination of pitches F-sharp and G mimics the trills on the same pitches that were found at the beginning of the piece. The entire polyphonic section in lines 11 and 12 is played at a forte dynamic. While this is not as loud as the

preceding *fff* section, it is louder than the following section, which is marked *diminuendo* and eventually *ppp*.

This is not the first time Joan Tower has used a polyphonic texture in a solo flute work. In her dissertation, she names an influence in connection with *Hexachords*:

The one thing that struck me as a powerful tool in projecting pitch content in shaping a piece (by way of Webern) was the use of register – something I had always been concerned with in other ways... (Also, in the flute piece [Hexachords] I wanted to create a sense of “polyphonic” texture through the use of different registers.) So, in these two pieces I already had other intrinsic reasons – other than the projection of pitch content – for giving register a strong articulative function in shaping the total structure of these pieces.⁵⁷

It is clear that she creates a brand new polyphonic texture at the end of *Valentine Trills*, and she does this much as she does in *Hexachords*. She places one “voice” in a high register and the other “voice” in a lower register in this polyphonic section that takes place in lines 10 through 12. Differing articulations are another distinguishing factor in the two lines. Also, as in *Hexachords*, this practice does give a “strong articulative function” in creating the form of the work. In this case, the polyphonic section occurs at the very end of the piece and signals a very high-energy preparation for the conclusion.

⁵⁷ Joan Tower, “On ‘Breakfast Rhythms I and II’ (DMA diss., Columbia University, 1978), 7.

CHAPTER 5

A LITTLE GIFT

A Little Gift is a work for flute and clarinet in B-flat. It is a short two-minute work and was published in 2008. According to Peter G. Davis, writing for MusicalAmerica.com, "The piece was originally conceived as a privately commissioned birthday offering, a modest duo for flute and clarinet based on 'My Funny Valentine.'"⁵⁸ Later, this piece was expanded into a much longer, twenty-minute work titled *A Gift*. This second work features a larger ensemble, including flute (piccolo), clarinet, bassoon, horn, and piano; has four movements; and, according to the composer, it is "based loosely on a song which floats up to the top of the music now and then."⁵⁹ Despite the fact that *A Little Gift* is based on a song, it is not a theme and variations form. It is also useful to notice that this is not a tonal work, and it is also not in a serial style. For these reasons, it is a typical post-1975 Joan Tower work.

The form of this work does not adhere to a standard form such as sonata-allegro, nor, as previously mentioned, represent a theme and variations approach. The beginning section of the work (mm. 1 – 14) is quite slow, with a tempo marking of quarter note = ca. 40. It features very slow-moving notes, and the two instruments frequently move in oblique motion. The more active middle section (mm. 15 – 33) is

⁵⁸ Schirmer, "A Gift, Joan Tower," <http://www.schirmer.com>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

demarcated by a new tempo indication: quarter note = ca. 50 (eighth note = ca. 100). This section also includes much faster notes, due to shorter note values, which, with the faster tempo, lends a feeling of progressive intensity when compared to the first section. While the use of oblique motion is still in use here, there is also quite a bit of parallel motion. The tessitura is also higher in this section for both instruments than in the previous section. The short final section (mm. 34 – 37), which consists of four measures, is again indicated by a return to the first tempo (quarter note = ca. 40). Its texture, register, and use of sustained notes are similar to that of the first section, featuring oblique motion until the final unison pitch.

This work is entirely composed, despite the fact that it often has an improvisatory character. That improvisatory character results from the combination of trills and extensive flourishes of notes. Even though the two instrumental parts are interactive and rather conversational, they still maintain their independence. They are always distinct lines, which often contain contrasting simultaneous rhythms, registers, and complexity.

Like the works discussed previously, the music of *A Little Gift* is unified by aspects of style. The commentary will focus on three issues that make the work distinctive: 1) patterns of change in textural density; 2) large-scale sectional contrast in note durations; and 3) metrical change. At the end, a comment on how Tower's work relates to "My Funny Valentine," which served as the inspiration for this piece, will be offered.

Patterns of Density Change

Density change has been an important component in *Snow Dreams* and *Valentine Trills*. It is also an applicable music element in *A Little Gift*, and is used in similar ways to the previously studied works as well as new applications. As in *Snow Dreams* and *Valentine Trills*, we can examine the number of concurrent events in this work. A new aspect of density that can also be investigated is the relative diversity and reduced interlinear independence of the separate lines.

When we inspect the number of concurrent events in *A Little Gift* (“density-number,” according to Berry), we find that there are usually two events occurring simultaneously. There are only two instances where the clarinet plays alone: mm. 9 - 10, and the last eighth note of m. 29. The flute does not play in these places, but the two instruments play concurrently in the remainder of the piece. The flute never plays without the clarinet.

The changing interrelationship of two instrumental lines serves to create and then dispel intensity. Berry provides a helpful approach:

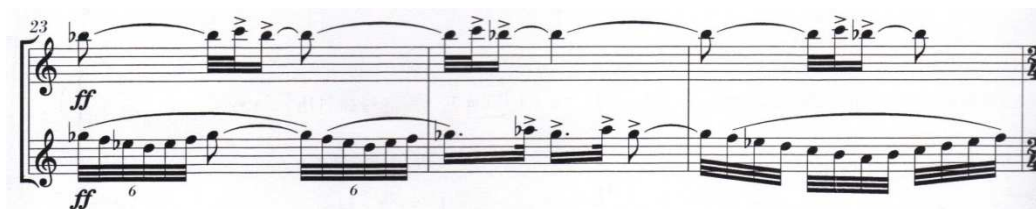
It seems clear that what we have described as textural “diversity” (complexity, activity – like density an aspect of intensity in the texture) seeks release in what we have described as reduced interlinear independence (i.e., textural interdependence, accord, homogeneity, simplicity, inactivity). Thus, progression

toward increased levels of diversity and interaction creates the sense of need for reconformity, an expectation that the trend toward complexity will be reversed in cadential expression.⁶⁰

In the beginning of *A Little Gift*, the flute and clarinet lines are rhythmically similar, consisting of long notes, including many half notes and even whole notes tied across the measure. For the clarinet this results in a sustained pitch of seven-and-a-half beats. Diversity in the lines begins to appear in m. 4, when the clarinet begins to play faster-moving notes. After a brief return to a shared rhythm in m. 6, the lines again split into diverse ones. The flute holds a single pitch then rests in mm. 7 - 9, while the clarinet plays a relatively complex, undulating line. The clarinet continues with this material until the arrival of the next section in m. 15. When the flute line reenters in m. 11, it consists of the same rhythmic material as in the clarinet line. However, the lines are staggered and their rhythms do not coincide.

In the new section beginning in m. 15, the two lines initially play separate material. However, the two lines come together in the same rhythm in the next measure before again dividing. The flute carries the active material, while the clarinet sustains a pitch. The flute's racing, serpentine line ends in a trill in m. 21, where the clarinet assumes the moving line. This culminates at m. 23, which features the most diversity in the piece so far. The flute plays a fanfare-like line, while the clarinet continues with the undulating line that the flute started in m. 18 (Example 5.1).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 190.



Example 5.1: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 23 – 25.

The disparity of these lines is highlighted by written accents, which are staggered between the parts, the relatively linear independence of the two lines, and the use of quickly-moving notes, which are staggered between the two parts.

The diversity of the lines continues through m. 27, and then we begin to see “reduced interlinear independence.” The lines simplify significantly. M. 28 begins with trills in both parts, which leads to a final flourish in the clarinet part. Eighth-note triplets are the fastest moving notes in the next two measures, and alternate between the two parts. The note values continue to lengthen until the end of the work, with the exception of a slowly rising line in the clarinet part beginning in m. 34 (Example 5.2).

Example 5.2: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 31 – 37.

As we approach the final cadence of the work, we find that the complexity of the two lines has been reversed. The note lengths become longer, the register lowers, the tempo slows, and the dynamic levels decrease. Berry's description of textural diversity, according to which intensity is increased and then dispelled through these musical elements, tallies exactly with Tower's work.

Durational Rhythms

In her dissertation, Joan Tower has the following comments about the shaping role of rhythm and duration:

... [T]he role that durational rhythms play in any musical structure is one that breathes life into the content(s) – gives it its special internal and general pacing that carves out the particular (real time) characteristics of the thematic material, and establishes with the content the unique musical rhythmic identity of that piece.⁶¹

We can see a correlation between note length and intensity in the current work. The first section features very long notes, which are often tied across the barlines. The fastest notes in the first section are the occasional sixteenth notes.

⁶¹ Joan Tower, "On 'Breakfast Rhythms I and II'" (DMA diss., Columbia University, 1978), 66.

Note length is not only used to create intensity in this work, it is also used to create form. The slower-moving notes occur at the beginning and the end of the piece; the faster-moving notes appear in the middle of the work. This creates an arch form, although the final section is significantly shorter than the opening portion. The beginning of *A Little Gift* includes a very long seven-and-one-half beats in the clarinet part and a half note in the flute, followed by two quarter notes and a dotted half note tied to an eighth note (Example 5.3).

Flute

Clarinet in Bb

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 40$

pp espr.

ppp

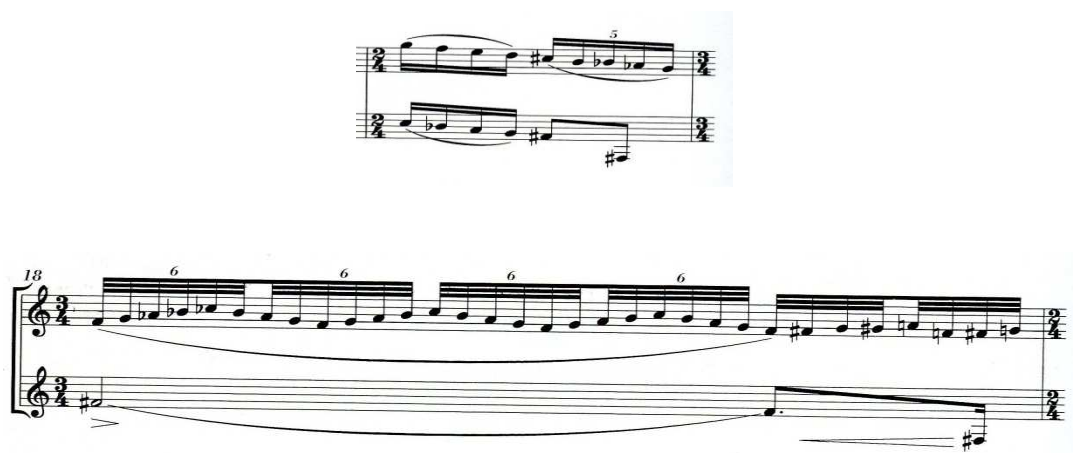
Example 5.3: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 1 – 2.

These long notes continue through m. 3; in m. 4, we begin to see faster quarter and eighth notes. The flute line primarily consists of longer notes, while the clarinet, by contrast, plays faster moving notes. These shorter note values continue and are featured in both parts beginning in m. 11, as we transition into the next section, which begins at m. 15. Instead of many half notes, we see more quarter notes, quarter note triplets, and eighth notes in this transitional section (Example 5.4).



Example 5.4: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 11 – 14.

The middle section features the introduction of still faster notes, including groups of sixteenth notes and more complex groupings of five, twelve, and eight notes per beat (Example 5.5).



Example 5.5: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 17 – 18.

The flute and clarinet take turns playing the fast-moving notes, while the other plays sustained pitches. The sustaining instrument is instructed to use dynamics to create swells under the flurry of pitches. This arrangement continues until m. 23, when the rate of alternation of the moving notes between the flute and the clarinet quickens (Example 5.6).



Example 5.6: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 23 – 25.

This measure represents the culmination of the piece, with respect to register, dynamics, and quickly-moving notes in both parts. Beginning in m. 26, the note values start to again lengthen. As in the first section, there are instances of quicker moving notes⁶², but primarily the note values are longer. In the last four measures of the work, the note values are similar to the opening of the work, but the parts are reversed. Instead of the flute playing the primary line with the clarinet playing a long sustained pitch, we find the primary line featured in the clarinet with the flute playing a sustained pitch. The work ends with a whole note in both parts, which is extended by a fermata (Example 5.7).



Example 5.7: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 35 – 37.

⁶² Sextuplets can be found in m. 27, and a descending flurry of notes can be found in m. 29.

Metrical Change

Metrical change is another musical aspect that Tower employs to make *A Little Gift* distinctive. It is helpful to consider Wallace Berry's thoughts on rhythm and meter when examining these musical elements in this work of Joan Tower:

It may well be that rhythm and meter, seen as a part of rhythm, constitute the most persuasive and immediately perceptible quality within the range of musical effect. The rates at which events (changes) take place within the various structural parameters, and the patterns into which events group themselves, are of decisive significance in expressive effect in the musical experience.⁶³

Berry's conception of rhythm has much to do with processes of change, not unlike those that he identified for textural density:

It has been suggested ... that contrasts in the operations of various structural elements (the element-structures) and the progressive and recessive lines of change in those elements underly morphology and meaning in music in one important sense. Rhythm too undergoes changes with functional consequences for music's intensity scale, playing an essential and telling role in the delineation of processes of growth and decline, climax and subsidence, stability and flux. In this sense, it is no absurdity to speak, for example, of a *metric rhythm* as the rate and pattern of metric change...⁶⁴

⁶³ Wallace Berry, *Structural Functions in Music* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), 301.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 302.

In the case of *A Little Gift*, it is clear that Joan Tower employs a very fast metric rhythm. While metric shift occurs consistently throughout the work, the rate of change increases as the piece intensifies.⁶⁵ The result here is that the pattern of strong and weak beats is constantly in flux. The beginning and end of the piece include mostly simple time signatures such as 4/4 and 3/4 and an occasional composite 5/4.

The second section of the work, which begins at m. 15, is demarcated metrically by the introduction of the irregular 7/8. This is the first instance that we have seen of this particular time signature. This entire second section features changing time signatures every single measure until m. 22. This contrasts with the first section, which includes many time signature changes, but not at a per-measure rate. At m. 22, 3/8 is introduced and retained for four measures. This is the longest stretch of music with only one consistent time signature and coincides with the high point of the piece at m. 23. This, along with other musical elements such as linear independence between the two parts, higher register, louder dynamic levels, and quickly-moving notes, work together to increase the level of intensity.

The rate of metric change immediately slows beginning at m. 22 and continues through the end of the work. This final section includes eight time signatures within fifteen measures of music, as opposed to nine time signatures in fourteen measures in the first section and eight time signatures in as many measures in the second section. (See Appendix 2.)

⁶⁵ The “poco accelerando” found at the end of m. 14 also helps add to the rising intensity level.

Song Source and Results

When we compare Joan Tower's work with the original 1937 score of "My Funny Valentine" by Lorenz Hart and Richard Rodgers, we can see how Tower made creative use of the song tune that she incorporated. Tower's work is much more metrically active. "My Funny Valentine" begins in 4/4 time and never deviates from it. *A Little Gift* also uses a more extensive range; the work includes notes that are higher and lower than those in the original song. Tower also decided to alter the key of the work, transposing the original melody from a starting pitch of C to a starting pitch of D (Example 5.8).

Example 5.8: Rodgers and Hart, "My Funny Valentine," mm. 21 – 23.

My Funny Valentine

from BABES IN ARMS

Words by Lorenz Hart

Music by Richard Rodgers

Copyright (c) 1937 (Renewed) by Chappell & Co.

Rights for the Extended Renewal Term in the U.S. Controlled by Williamson Music and WB Music Corp. o/b/o The Estate Of Lorenz Hart

This arrangement Copyright (c) 2010 by Williamson Music and WB Music Corp. o/b/o The Estate Of Lorenz Hart

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The original work does not feature an accented section, as the middle section of the Tower work does. In the original song, there are no notes faster than an eighth note. Tower employs much faster notes in her work, with the fastest being sextuplets. *A Little Gift* also includes frequent triplets, which is a rhythm found nowhere in the original song.

A Little Gift is a free and creative response comprised of three sections. After hinting at the chorus of “My Funny Valentine,” Joan Tower uses three musical elements throughout the three contrasting sections to either build intensity or dispel it. The combination of patterns of change in textural density, large-scale contrast in note durations, and metrical change all serve to shape the energy of this work.

CHAPTER 6

PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

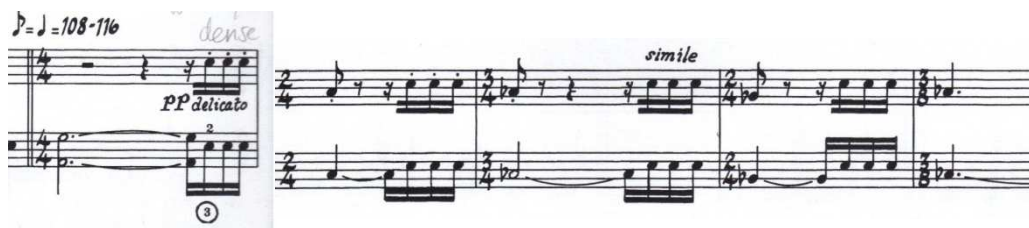
When approaching any new work, it is important to consider aspects of performance that may be particularly difficult in the flute part. In *Snow Dreams*, four features emerge worthy of further discussion: ensemble, the solo aspect, dynamics, and articulation.

As in all chamber music, it is necessary to determine which instrument is playing the primary line in the duet sections of *Snow Dreams*. At the beginning of the work, while it is not a strictly solo section for the guitar, the flute part is accompanimental and should be played at a very low dynamic level. In fact, the flute part is marked *ppp*, while the guitar is given and should play at a louder dynamic.

The guitar solo begins to emerge at m. 20 and runs through m. 36. A flute solo immediately begins in m. 36, overlapping the guitar line by a quarter note. There is a short solitary guitar section after the flute solo, and then both instruments play together at m. 56. Neither instrument is primary, as they have the same material, so they should be balanced. When the guitar part changes to a more accompanimental role in m. 69, the flute line should emerge as primary. In m. 83, the guitar part is predominant, as it has a rhythmic, repetitive line. The flute only punctuates here, until both instruments play the same material beginning in m. 92. Again, they should be balanced here.

Another flute solo emerges beginning in m. 140, and then a conversational, alternating line between the two instruments begins in m. 144. The two lines should overlap in a blended way so that the line is not disrupted and sounds seamless. In the pickup to m. 171, both instruments come together again and a balanced sound is needed. The texture at m. 184 is yet again conversational, with alternating lines. A long section of homorhythmic texture follows, requiring balance between the two lines. The final section of this work, beginning in 259, features a quickly-moving line in the flute part and an accompanimental line in the guitar part. There is a slight amount of conversational material between the two instruments beginning in m. 277 until the end of the work.

In the frequent homorhythmic sections of this work, it is important to make sure that the articulation is matching in both parts. The different modes of sound production between the flute and the guitar make this a challenge. The flutist should strive to match both the length and the character of the guitar part. M. 56 is a good example of this: the flute line is marked with staccato marks and is marked “*delicato*,” while the guitar line is not marked with any specific indication as to the proper articulation (Example 6.1).



Example 6.1: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 56 – 60.

Dynamics are another aspect of ensemble playing that must be carefully balanced. Since the guitar is a relatively quiet instrument, it would be easy for the flute to overpower it. The flutist should adjust his or her dynamic levels to play within the context of the guitar's dynamic range. A *forte* dynamic in the flute part in this piece may not be quite as loud as a *forte* in a solo flute piece or within an orchestral context.

A triplet motive appears beginning in m. 184. It first appears in the guitar part, and is featured in the flute part two bars later. It is important to create motivic continuity by matching the style of the triplets between the guitar and the flute. This back-and-forth texture continues through m. 199. This same idea begins at m. 199, substituting sixteenth notes for the triplets.

Highly contrasting rhythmic figures between the two instrumental lines occur in the section which begins in m. 245. While the two parts play in homorhythm for the first four bars of this section, they quickly diverge. The flute part continues playing the triplet figure, and the guitar changes to an eighth-note pattern (Example 6.2). It is important for each player to maintain the rhythmic integrity of his or her line, since they

do not line up. This rhythmically contrasting section is relatively short and lasts through m. 258.

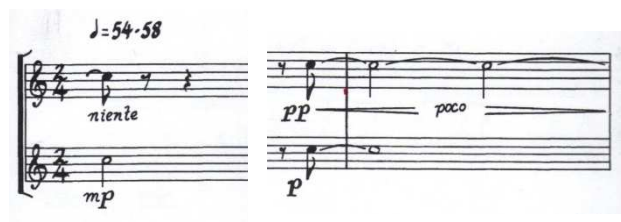


Example 6.2: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, mm. 249 – 253.

Finally, it is important for the two instruments to match the character of the accented notes that occur in the section beginning at m. 259. The flute and guitar don't have the same musical material here; the flute plays a triplet rhythm and the guitar plays sustained chords. However, they both have accents on beats one and three of this section. Despite the disparate lines, the accents occur at the same time. The players must be aware of this, and respond accordingly.

The solo sections of *Snow Dreams* must be approached carefully. This is a virtuosic, episodic work, and the solo sections are some of the most virtuosic sections of the piece. While there are both flute and guitar solos, only the flute solos will be considered in this document.

The first flute solo, which is improvisatory in character, begins in the pickup to m. 37. It starts out at a very quiet dynamic and increases slightly in dynamics before the final decrescendo to “niente” in m. 47 (Example 6.3).



Example 6.3: Tower, *Snow Dreams*, pickup to m. 46 – m. 47.

The beginning of the solo features very long rhythmic values such as a quarter note tied to a whole note; as the solo progresses, the rhythmic values become shorter, with the shortest notes being eighth note triplets. The marking “quasi rubato” adds to the improvisatory character of the work.

The next flute solo begins in m. 140. It is also improvisatory in character and should be played “freely.” It differs from the first solo in that it is more virtuosic, including very fast runs framed by sustained trills.⁶⁶ There is a cadenza-like passage marked “very fast” which includes some chromatic sections. There is a meter change part of the way through this section, and the sixteenth note triplets highlight this change to a 3/8 time signature. While this solo should be played freely, the composer does provide specific directions to shape this section, including “accelerando,” “broaden,” and “poco accelerando.” Several of these markings are enclosed within parenthesis, meaning that they are suggested by the composer but not mandatory.

Dynamics have been explored earlier in this chapter within the context of ensemble playing. It is also important to consider the overall dynamic palette that Joan Tower is creating in this work. In her program notes, the composer describes a variety

⁶⁶ This passage is similar to the beginning of *Valentine Trills*, where trills frame very fast flourishes of notes.

of types of snow, of which “light snow flakes” and “heavy snowfalls” are two. Consequently, the performers should create an overall quiet dynamic level, which is reinforced with many quiet dynamic markings. There are occasional forays into louder dynamic territory with dynamic markings such as *f* and *ff*. However, these are the exception and should fit within the overall quiet dynamic scheme. Combined with the overall quiet sound of the guitar, the flutist should be careful to fit within the appropriate dynamic level at all time.

Articulation is another interesting musical aspect of this work for flute and guitar. There are a variety of articulation markings which are specifically indicated by the composer. There are very long tied and slurred passages, especially in the solo sections. Accents appear frequently and must be matched with the guitar line. Tenuto and staccato marks can be found in the flute part. Tongue-one, slur-two patterns as well as slur-two, tongue-one patterns occur in the flute part, and it is important to differentiate between them. All of the flute articulations must be considered within the context of the guitar sound.

Valentine Trills is a highly virtuosic work. It is written in standard notation and requires no extended techniques, but it pushes the flutist by requiring advanced technical abilities and superior breath control. Four particularly difficult aspects of this work will be considered: trills, runs, articulation, and breathing.

As implied by the title of this work, trills appear frequently throughout the piece. The very first note of the piece is trilled, which sets the tone for the rest of the

work. These trills occur at all dynamic levels, including through crescendos and decrescendos. The quietest trill is at a *ppp* dynamic, and the loudest is at a *fff* dynamic. They also occur in all registers of the flute. The lowest trilled pitch is an e1 and the highest is an a3. It is important that the trills be done very quickly to add to the "turning, spinning and seemingly breathless" quality of the piece. When combined with the fast runs and constant forward momentum, the effect is indeed breathless.

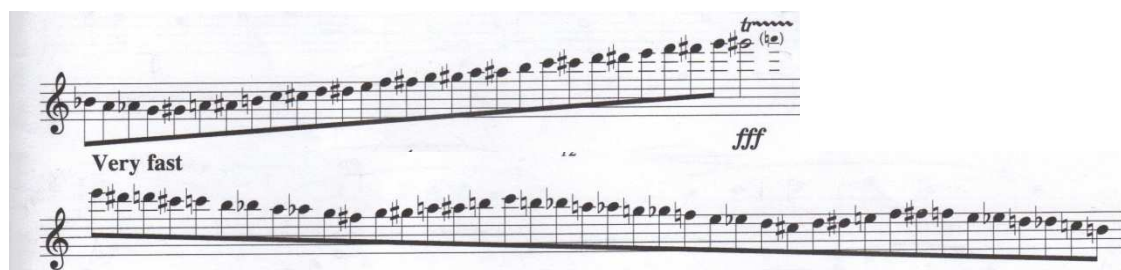
While the trills are a significant part of the musical texture of this piece, it is equally essential to consider where the trills do not occur. Near the end of the work, where the notes are marked "no trill," the flutist has to carefully change from a trilled note to one that is not. These notes are tied in the first instance in the middle of line 12, so the change should be subtle and smooth. In the second instance, the second note, which is not trilled, should be articulated. Still, it is important that the trilling stops when the new note is articulated.

Runs make up a large portion of this piece. Frequently there are repeated patterns, which is helpful to the flutist as he or she practices this work. However, the flutist must be aware that these repeated patterns are not always exactly rhythmically the same. In line 6, there is an alternation between the pitches E and D-sharp, which is then expanded to include the pitch F. The note lengths range from a quarter note to eighth-note triplets and sextuplets within a few short beats. The pattern of pitches remains the same, but the rhythm is manipulated. (Example 6.4)



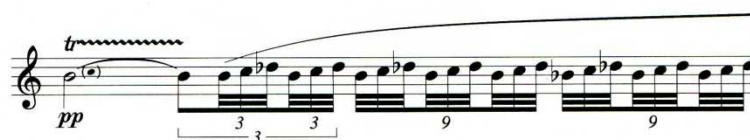
Example 6.4: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, line 6.

This is also the case in the section marked "very fast." This is a chromatic section, but it is constantly descending and then ascending (Example 6.5).



Example 6.5: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, line 8 – first half of line 9.

It is also essential to pay careful attention to the accidentals. *Valentine Trills* does not make use of a key signature, instead providing the appropriate accidentals as they occur. Sometimes these accidentals are used within the context of one run, but are cancelled out in the next one. This occurs in line 5, where the group of the pitches b1, c2, and d-flat2 changes to b-flat1, c2, d-flat2 a few beats later (Example 6.6).



Example 6.6: Tower, *Valentine Trills*, line 5.

There are also abrupt and extended dynamic changes that are required throughout these runs. A crescendo is marked near the end of line 2, affecting the two last beats of that line. There is a series of crescendo markings immediately following at the beginning of line 3. After reaching a forte dynamic near the end of line 3, this volume is retained throughout most of line 4, but very quickly decreases at the end of

the line. The beginning of line 5 is marked *pp*, which is quite a change from the forte immediately preceding it.

The most extensive run is the one that begins the "Very fast" section in line 8. It is entirely chromatic, featuring an unpredictable pattern of ascending and descending lines. This section is prepared by two beats at the end of line 7, which are chromatic, ascending, and marked "accelerando." It is played at a very loud dynamic, ranging from *ff* at the beginning to *fff* at the culmination of the extended chromatic run. Because of this, it is important for the flutist to manage his or her air very carefully and use excellent breath control in order to maintain this dynamic level and technique required to successfully execute the passage.

Articulation is another aspect of this work that must be carefully practiced. A variety of articulations must be used to create the virtuosic character required by the composer. Slurs are abundant; they usually connect the runs that appear so often in this work. It is important to make sure that the runs aren't hurried and are even within each beat. It is also important to maintain a good tone throughout the run and use enough air to allow each note underneath the slur to speak. While they are not used frequently, there are places where accented notes occur. These are usually placed over longer notes and should be played with a heavier articulation than the surrounding pitches. These accents are used at the end of line 1 into line 2, over the trilled eighth notes and triplets, in the section surrounded by repeat signs in line 4, and at the arrivals of the high E near the end of line 6. These are all important arrivals and the accents should help distinguish these notes from those around them.

Staccato marks are also used to distinguish certain pitches from those surrounding them. While they are used at the beginning of line 6 between slurred pitches and standard articulation, they are most frequently seen at the very end of the work. In this complex polyphonic section, the staccato notes are used to differentiate one voice from the second, slurred voice. Playing these notes in such a separated fashion also adds to the exciting momentum that has built up near the end of this work.

Breathing is the final challenge that will be discussed relating to this work. When we consider Carol Wincenc's suggestion that circular breathing is useful in this work, we know that we are dealing with a piece that presents unique breathing challenges. If the flutist has mastered the technique of circular breathing, this is certainly an option. Otherwise, the flutist must make other arrangements. There is one rest in this piece, which is a quarter rest that appears after the first three beats of the piece. There is also one specific place that is marked to facilitate breathing. After the first repeat sign that appears in line 4, the flutist is instructed to omit the pitch C during the first statement; this gives the flutist an opportunity to take a quick breath. Besides those more obvious places to breathe, it is best to breathe at the end of one musical idea before the next one begins. The flutist should make sure that he or she tapers the end of the first phrase before taking a quick breath and beginning the next idea. However, it is essential that these breaths are taken quickly, as the entire work should always feel like it is being propelled forward with a lot of momentum.

A Little Gift, scored for flute and clarinet, has its own musical characteristics that must be considered when approaching this work. Four of these will be considered in this document: intonation, timbre, dynamics, and ensemble.

Intonation is a challenging subject in this work. The clarinet and flute frequently play unison pitches, most obviously at the beginning and the very end of the piece (Example 6.7).



Example 6.7: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 1 – 2.

It is also common to hear very tight intervals such as dissonant minor seconds and diminished fifths. It is important to practice these intervals out of the context of the work to make sure that they are properly tuned and balanced. Other consonant intervals must be carefully tuned as well to highlight the contrast to the dissonant intervals.

Timbre is an interesting consideration in *A Little Gift*. The smooth, warm sound of the clarinet should be matched as closely as possible by the flute sound. It is easy for the flutist to produce a cool, bright sound, but a warmer, darker one should be attempted. It is also helpful to play without vibrato at the beginning of the work. This

helps the flutist match the timbre of the clarinet and has the additional benefit of helping with intonation.

Both instruments ascend in pitch as the piece progresses; consequently, the overall color changes to something brighter (Example 6.8). When the clarinet tone becomes more strident as it enters the altissimo register, the flute can accordingly use a brighter, cooler sound. However, it is still advisable to avoid excessive vibrato in order to highlight the interesting intervallic interaction that takes place throughout this section. In fact, the flutist may decide to avoid using vibrato at all.



Example 6.8: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 23- 25.

Dynamic markings are prevalent throughout this entire work and are carefully indicated by the composer. Overall, there is a wide range of dynamics from *ppp* to *ff*. Usually the dynamic markings for each instrument coincide, such as the opening six measures of the work, but there are shadings which occur in one instrument and not in the other. In one case, found in mm. 7 – 9, the flute sustains a *pp* dynamic while the clarinet plays at a *mp* dynamic. It is important to follow the dynamic markings carefully, as they contribute to the interesting dissonances found throughout the work.

There are several difficulties which present themselves as the flutist and clarinetist rehearse this piece. The first section of this work is very slow, with the quarter note at circa 40 beats per minute. It is important to line up simultaneous attacks between the two instruments; eye contact and a slight cue from either instrument would be helpful. Another difficulty inherent in this work comes from the disparate lines of the flute and clarinet. The integrity of the two lines must be maintained, especially when they include conflicting rhythms. It is common to find quarter note triplets in one part being played against quarter notes in the other, or eighth note triplets played against eighth notes (Example 6.9).



Example 6.9: Tower, *A Little Gift*, mm. 13 – 14.

During tempo changes, such as the “poco accelerando” in m. 14, both players must be aggressive at this point and push the accelerando. In the case of m. 14, each musician plays alternating downbeats. Both players acting as leaders through the acceleration will result in a clearer ensemble than if one person relied entirely on the other. This constant forward motion in both parts also helps drive the tempo into the faster-moving next section that arrives in m. 15.

These three works by Joan Tower are difficult, and each one presents its own set of performance difficulties. By evaluating each one independently, flutists can make more educated musical decisions to contribute to a successful, well-informed performance.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The compositional influences on Joan Tower are substantial and varied; they include Louis Calabro, Otto Luening, Jack Beeson, Chou Wen-chung, Henry Brant, Darius Milhaud, Wallingford Riegger, and Ralph Shapey. However, Tower insists that she mainly learned more about the mechanics of composition as opposed to musical material from these teachers. It is true that she has developed a unique voice, and, by studying three of her works involving flute (*Snow Dreams*, *Valentine Trills*, and *A Little Gift*), it is possible to find musical elements that are consistent from one piece to the next.

While the discussion of *Snow Dreams* focused on Tower's use of discrete sections, a motive reminiscent of the "fate theme" in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and density, we can still find similarities beyond these specific elements in the other two works. *Valentine Trills* is more fantasy-like. While it has definite peaks along the way, it is generally an arch-form and doesn't include the contrasting sections that are found in *Snow Dreams*. *A Little Gift* has more obvious sections than *Valentine Trills*, but these different sections are more closely related in their musical content than those in *Snow Dreams*. However, when we look at the musical material found in *Snow Dreams*, we see that it is similar to that in *Valentine Trills* and *A Little Gift*. There are frequent flourishes of very quickly-moving notes that connect one idea to the next. Trills are also figures

that persistently appear throughout all three works. Improvisatory-sounding sections, while carefully notated, also appear in all three works. The solo sections of *Snow Dreams*, the highly-chromatic middle section of *Valentine Trills*, and the middle section (in both the flute and clarinet parts) of *A Little Gift* all sound free and spontaneous.

Valentine Trills features a pervasive use of trills, a use of rhythmic motives, and density. Trills are not as omnipresent in *Snow Dreams* and *A Little Gift* as they are in *Valentine Trills*, which might be suspected when one considers the title of the latter composition. However, they are still featured in the other two compositions. Trills introduce the flute solo that begins at m. 140 in *Snow Dreams*, and trills can be found throughout the entire solo. They are also found near the end of the work, with trills written for the flute part and a tremolo written for the guitar. A trill also appears on the last note of the piece in the flute part. While trills do not appear as frequently as in *Valentine Trills*, their strategic placement in *Snow Dreams* suggests their importance. Trills are also used throughout *A Little Gift*. They appear extensively on the sustained pitches in the flute part in mm. 15 through 16 and 21 through 22. They are found in both parts in m. 28, after which the flute sustains the trill through to m. 29.

In *Valentine Trills*, rhythmic motives and the manipulation of those motives is frequently seen. The triplet is frequently the rhythmic motive used. Such motives are not used in the same way in *A Little Gift*, but we can find the same compositional technique in use in *Snow Dreams*. The section beginning in the flute solo in m. 144 makes almost constant use of the eighth-note triplet. The guitar joins in with this

motive in m. 146. Eventually, in m. 166, this motive turns into sixteenth notes. Quite a bit of changing meter takes place here as well, further shifting the emphasis in the rhythmic motive. In m. 212, both parts play continuous sixteenth notes, which are affected by the extensive metric changes that take place throughout this entire section. As the meter changes, so does the number of sixteenth notes found in the measures of each particular time signature. The strong beats are seemingly displaced and it is difficult to predict where the strong beats will fall from one measure to the next.

In *A Little Gift*, duration is used to help Tower create form. The beginning of the work features sustained pitches. The middle section features quick-moving notes. The end of the work yet again features sustained pitches. Note lengths are not used in the same way in *Valentine Trills*. Most of the time, the notes in this work are quite fast. They are often surrounded by relatively sustained pitches which act as arrival points, but we cannot say that these delineate formal sections as in *A Little Gift*. Similarly, in *Snow Dreams*, note lengths themselves are not used to create form. Instead, the composer uses different rhythmic motives to help distinguish between one section and the next.

Changing meter occurs consistently throughout *A Little Gift*. In *Valentine Trills*, there is no changing meter at all. In fact, there is no indication of a meter. There is no time signature nor groupings of regularly accented beats to suggest a meter. *Snow Dreams* features changing meter similar to that in *A Little Gift*. While there are sections that remain in one time signature, it is more common to see many time signature changes throughout the work.

Density is a significant musical element in all three of the studied works of Joan Tower. The ideas that Wallace Berry puts forth in *Structural Functions in Music* can be applied successfully to Tower's use of density. It is useful to consider the number of concurrent events as well as the degree of compression in each work.

In *Snow Dreams*, one or two voices are sounding at all times, aside from several rests where both are silent. When both play, the combined voices often produce homophonic, homorhythmic textures. The patterns of expansion and contraction from the pairs of lines produce sensations of intensification and relaxation respectively.

Valentine Trills, a solo flute work, does not always just consist of a single line. There is a switch from a monophonic texture to a polyphonic one at the end of the work. We can also apply the idea of compression here as well. While we cannot consider compression between multiple instrumental lines, we can consider how many notes occur within a given linear space. Generally speaking, there are fewer notes at the beginning and the end of the work. It is more dense linearly in the middle of the work. We can make the correlation between the number of notes per beat and the intensity of the piece; as the number of notes per beat increases, so does the intensity.

Usually two concurrent events are taking place in *A Little Gift*. We can also consider the following idea from Wallace Berry: increased diversity creates the need for a reversal in cadential expression. We see this in Tower's use of long notes at the beginning of the work in both the flute and clarinet parts. The parts diverge shortly after the work begins, and intensity is created. We see "reduced interlinear

independence” as we move towards the last portion of the work, and intensity is dispelled.

Joan Tower consistently used the same compositional techniques in works that vary significantly. However, these techniques are used to create color, momentum, intensity, or to create form within the work. This consistent use of these musical elements helps to create Joan Tower’s signature “sound.” It is hoped that this document will help disseminate information about these three works involving flute, and that they will become part of the standard flute repertoire.

APPENDIX 1

CATALOGUE OF TOWER'S CHAMBER AND SOLO WORKS INVOLVING FLUTE⁶⁷

Quintet (1960s)

Instrumentation includes 2 flutes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet

This work is early and unpublished.

Brimset (1965)

Duration is 6 minutes

Instrumentation includes 2 flutes and percussion

Movements (1967)

Duration is 10 minutes

Instrumentation includes flute and piano

Octet (1968)

Duration is 8 minutes

Instrumentation includes flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, bass, vibraphone or marimba, and piano

This work is early and unpublished.

⁶⁷ Much of the information in this Appendix was taken from Ellen K. Grolman's *Joan Tower: The Comprehensive Bio-Bibliography* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press), 2007. Other details were taken from Schirmer's website: (<http://www.schirmer.com>).

Prelude for Five Players (1970)

Duration is 6 minutes

Instrumentation includes flute, oboe/violin, clarinet, bassoon/cello, piano

This work is early and unpublished.

Hexachords (1972)

Duration is 6 minutes

Written for Patricia Spencer

Instrumentation includes solo flute

Program note from Joan Tower:

The title refers to the basic harmony of the piece, which is based on a six-note, unordered chromatic collection of pitches. The use of different vibrato speeds as applied to individual notes (or groups of notes) combined with different rhythmic-dynamic articulations place in different registers, creates a counterpoint of tunes that hopefully keeps the listener's attention moving through all the registers. The piece is divided into five sections which are most easily differentiated by a sense of either going somewhere or staying somewhere.

Breakfast Rhythms I and II (1974-1975)

Duration is 15 minutes

Dedicated to Anand Devendra (Allen Blustine)

Commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts

Instrumentation includes clarinet, flute (piccolo), violin, cello, piano, percussion (including vibraphone, marimba, 3 tom-toms (high, medium, low), woodblock (large))

Program note by Joan Tower:

The different energies unfolding through both movements are generated by narrowly circumscribed pitch contests which interact in various ways to produce different at-home and away-from-home-rhythms which cooperate with rhythmic, registral, and dynamic articulations in such a

way that there is a sense of local as well as large-scale balancing of gestures – an idea very much influenced by Beethoven’s use of textural and rhythmic contrast.

Black Topaz (1976)

Duration is 13 minutes

Dedicated to Robert Miller and the Group for Contemporary Music

Commissioned by the Group for Contemporary Music with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

Instrumentation includes piano, flute, clarinet (bass clarinet), trumpet, trombone, 2 percussion (2 marimbas, 2 vibraphones, temple blocks, and tomtoms)

Program note by Mary Lou Humphrey:

Joan Tower’s *Black Topaz* derives from a drawing she once did of color rays emanating from a black, piano-like object. This single-movement work examines a similar projection of color from its focal point, the solo piano (black), to a six-member supporting instrumental ensemble. *Black Topaz* was one of Joan Tower’s first compositions to move away from an earlier quasi-serial style in favor of a more fluid, organic style. Here a large-scale musical architecture reigns, emphasizing metamorphosis of color and musical time, and an ever-increasing level of harmonic consonance.

Amazon I (1977)

Duration is 13 minutes

Written for and dedicated to the Da Capo Chamber Players

Commissioned by the Contemporary Music Society

Instrumentation includes flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano.

Program note by Joan Tower:

Amazon was written for the Da Capo Chamber Players with a commission from the Contemporary Music Society. The great Brazilian river, the Amazon, provides some of the images reflected in the piece.

There is a generally consistent background flow that is interrupted only occasionally by “static” events or by silence, and which undergoes change in speed and width through the pacing of notes and the type of texture being articulated. Some different kinds of associations with the river will be evident in the trill passages (ripples of water) and in the fast unison passages (which have the effect of a waterfall and water turbulence). An orchestral version of this piece, *Amazon II*, was premiered by the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. *Amazon III*, a chamber orchestra version, was later premiered by the Houston Symphony.

Petroushskates (1980)

Duration is 5 minutes

Written for the Da Capo Chamber Players

Commissioned by the Da Capo Chamber Players and the New York State Council on the Arts in celebration of the group’s 10th anniversary

Instrumentations include:

- Flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano
- 2003 arrangement by Allen Otte with added percussion

Program note by Joan Tower:

The title *Petroushskates* combines two ideas that are related to the piece. One refers to Stravinsky’s *Petroushka* and the opening Shrovetide Fair scene which is very similar to the opening of my piece. The celebratory character and the busy colorful atmosphere of this fair provides one of the images for this piece. The other is associated with ice skating and the basic kind of flowing motion that is inherent to that sport. While watching the figure skating event at the recent winter Olympics, I became fascinated with the way the curving, twirling, and jumping figure [sic] are woven around a singular continuous flowing action. Combining these two ideas creates a kind of carnival on ice – a possible subtitle for the piece.

Noon Dance (1982)

Duration is 17 minutes

Commissioned by the Massachusetts State Arts Council

Instrumentation includes flute (alto flute, piccolo), clarinet in A, violin, cello, piano, and percussion

Program note by Joan Tower:

Noon Dance (1982), is dedicated to Collage, who commissioned it with the support of a grant from the Massachusetts State Arts Council. The word “noon” in the title refers to this piece as a sequel to an earlier piece *Breakfast Rhythms*, written in 1974, which has the same instrumentation. Although there are some dance-type rhythms in the piece, such as square dance and folk dance motifs, the real impetus for the word “dance” in the title comes from my idea of how close chamber music is to dancing; how players “move” with each other, sometimes following or leading, other times blending different kind of energies in the pacing of sections; in toto, learning the “choreography” of the piece. *Noon Dance* is a piece that explores some of those “movements.”

Snow Dreams (1983)

Duration is 9 minutes

Dedicated to Carol Wincenc and Sharon Isbin

Commissioned by the Schubert Club

Instrumentation includes flute and guitar

Program note by Joan Tower:

There are many different images of snow, its forms and its movements: light snow flakes, pockets of swirls of snow, rounded drifts, long white plains of blankets of snow, light and heavy snowfalls, etc. Many of these images can be found in the piece, if in fact, they need to be found at all. The listener will determine that choice.

Concerto for Flute (1989)

Duration is 15 minutes

Dedicated to Carol Wincenc

Commissioned by the Fromm Foundation

Instrumentation includes solo flute, flute (piccolo), oboe, clarinet (bass clarinet), bassoon, trumpet, bass trombone. Percussion 1 includes glockenspiel, temple blocks, low tom-toms, bass drum, medium

cymbal. Percussion 2 includes xylophone, vibraphone, small triangle, tenor drum, tam-tam, 3 cymbals (high, medium, and low). Strings.

Island Prelude (1989)

Duration is 10 minutes

Dedicated “with love to Jeff Litfin”

Commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts for Quintessence and the Dorian and Dakota quintets

Instrumentations include:

- Oboe soloist and wind quartet (flute, clarinet, horn, bassoon)
- Oboe soloist and string quintet (2 violins, viola, cello, bass)

Program note by Joan Tower:

This work starts with a very slow-moving consonant landscape that gradually becomes more active and dissonant. Above this terrain, the oboe emerges as a slightly more prominent and melismatic line which in turn activates the surrounding chords. Finally, the oboe releases its contained energy in two short cadenzas ruling upwards in a burst of fast notes that lead into a final, quiet coda. This last section is again very slow, sustained, high and distant.⁶⁸

An additional program note by the composer:

I tried for something with love and sensuousness, and thought of the setting as a tropical island somewhere in the Bahamas. The island is remote, lush, tropical with stretches of white beach interspersed with thick green jungle. Above is a large, powerful, and brightly colored bird which soars and glides, spirals up, and plummets with folded wings as it dominates but lives in complete harmony with its island home. The wind quintet version is a heavier piece because of the weight of the different timbres under the oboe. The counterpoint, however, is more easily heard in this version.⁶⁹

Valentine Trills (1996)

Duration is 1.5 minutes

⁶⁸ Schirmer

⁶⁹ Grolman.

Dedicated to and commissioned by Carol Wincenc

Instrumentation includes solo flute

Program note by Joan Tower:

Valentine Trills was commissioned by flutist Carol Wincenc for her solo recital on Valentine's Day (February 14, 1998) at Merkin Hall in NYC. She wanted something very short, and this work is the shortest work I have, [lasting] one-and-a-half minutes. It is mostly about trills (and runs), which flutists do better and faster than almost any other instrument. (They also commission more pieces than any instrument. When the 20th century is over, I believe statistics will show that the flute repertoire has increased substantially over any other instrumental area.)

A Little Gift (2006)

Duration is 5 minutes

Commissioned by Chamber Music Northwest

Instrumentation includes flute and clarinet

Chamber Dance (2006)

Duration is 16 minutes

Dedicated to and commissioned by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

Instrumentation includes 2 (2nd doubles pic)222/2200, timpani/percussion, strings

Program note by Joan Tower:

Chamber Dance is dedicated to the intrepid and wonderful Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. It is chamber music in the sense that I always thought of Orpheus as a large chamber group, interacting and "dancing" with one another in the way smaller chamber groups do. Like dancers, the members of this large group have to be very much in touch with what everyone else is doing, and allow for changing leadership to guide the smaller and bigger ensembles. *Chamber Dance* weaves through a tapestry of solos, duets, and ensembles where the oboe, flute, and violin are featured as solos and the violin and clarinet, cello and bassoon, two trumpets, and unison horns step out of the texture as duets. The

ensemble writing is fairly vertical and rhythmic in its profile, thereby creating an ensemble that has to “dance” well together. I am very honored that Orpheus commissioned me to write this piece.

A Gift (2007)

Duration is 20 minutes

Commissioned for Chamber Music Northwest by Paul L. King in honor of the 60th birthday of Mary-Claire King

Instrumentation includes flute (piccolo), clarinet, bassoon, horn, piano

Program note by Joan Tower:

A Gift was commissioned for Chamber Music Northwest by Paul L. King for his sister’s birthday. The other consortium members performing *A Gift* are the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, who premiered the work on February 12, 2008, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and Music for Angel Fire.

The work is scored for four winds and piano and is based loosely on a song which floats up to the top of the music now and then. The piece is divided into four movements – “With Memories,” “With Song,” “With Feeling,” and “To Dance With” – and lasts about 20 minutes.

APPENDIX 2

DIAGRAM OF TIME SIGNATURES IN A *LITTLE GIFT*Appendix 2 : Diagram of Time Signatures in A Little Gift

Measure	time signature
1	4
2	5
3	4
4	4
5	3
6	2
7	5
8	4
9	3
10	4
11	3
12	4
13	4
14	7
15	3
16	8
17	4
18	2
19	3
20	4
21	2
22	5
23	8
24	2
25	3
26	8
27	2
28	4
29	3
30	2
31	4
32	4
33	4
34	5
35	4
36	4
37	6
	4

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