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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF JODIE BLACKSHAW, JENNIFER JOLLEY, AND ERIKA  
SVANOE TO THE WIND BAND REPERTOIRE—COMPOSITIONAL STYLE, ANALYSIS  
OF SELECTED WORKS, AND IMPACT AS UNDERREPRESENTED COMPOSERS

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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF JODIE BLACKSHAW, JENNIFER JOLLEY, AND ERIKA  
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THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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## **Dedication**

*This document is dedicated to my beautiful and perfect children, who have given my existence in this world more meaning than I ever thought possible. May you always dream big and never give up on your dreams, no matter how challenging the path becomes in reaching them.*

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## Abstract

### THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF JODIE BLACKSHAW, JENNIFER JOLLEY, AND ERIKA SVANOE TO THE WIND BAND REPERTOIRE - COMPOSITIONAL STYLE, ANALYSIS OF SELECTED WORKS, AND IMPACT AS UNDERREPRESENTED COMPOSERS

This document presents biographical sketches, outlines compositional styles, and analyzes a major work written for advanced ensembles by Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe, highlighting their impact in the wind band as underrepresented contemporary composers. The principal focus of this research is to examine each composer and their contributions to the repertoire. A comprehensive biographical portrait is made of each to include formative experiences, educational backgrounds, career trajectories, personal beliefs, and philosophies. Through analysis of their music, this research provides a thorough examination of how each composer's unique compositional influences manifest in their individual works.

The second purpose of this study is to investigate the role of gender biases in music, with special attention given to how women composers have been viewed and treated throughout music's history. A brief history of women in music is presented to contextualize each composer's experience within a broader narrative of the marginalization of women in music.

The final purpose of this document is to provide musicians, educators, and conductors with a resource for studying each composer's music. A detailed analytical guide—outlining form, harmony, melodic and rhythmic content, orchestration decisions of tone color and timbre, and stylistic choices—is provided for Jodie Blackshaw's *Soulström*, Jennifer Jolley's *MARCH!*, and Erika Svanoe's *Symphony in Blue and Gold*. This work serves to amplify and promote the voices of each composer and to inspire a more inclusive, equitable, and representative future in music.

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

My graduate studies began in 2017 as a master's student at the University of South Florida, where I was introduced to the works of Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe through submissions of their music to the William D. Revelli Composition Contest. My major professor, Director of Bands Dr. Matthew McCutchen, served as the chair of the selection committee—a panel of around fifteen active and retired professionals in the field who meet at the annual Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, IL to review, listen, discuss, and select the winning composition each year. Matt placed me on the screening committee at the onset of my master's degree, simultaneously utilizing the contest as a core component of my literature curriculum and tasking me and other members of the committee with determining the six to eight finalists to be presented to the Selection Committee in Chicago. I was fortunate to serve on the screening committee for three years—two years during my master's coursework and one year as faculty.

The William D. Revelli Memorial Composition Contest was established in 1977 with the express aim to honor and promote outstanding new works for wind band. The National Band Association, which sponsors the event, states that the winning piece of the competition should be “not only of significant structural, analytical, and technical quality, but also of such nature that will allow bands to program them as part of their standard repertoire.”<sup>1</sup> Each year, 50–80 submissions are received from across the world, from new to established composers in the field. Finalists are selected and brought to the Midwest Clinic in Chicago, held annually each December, where a panel of judges, consisting of public school, collegiate, and military band

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<sup>1</sup> “NBA/William D. Revelli Memorial Composition Contest,” National Band Association Composition Contests, accessed May 1, 2025, <https://nationalbandassociation.org/composition-contests/>.

directors, determines a winner. A key element of this competition is the anonymity of the composer throughout the entire screening and selection process. Each score and recording must be submitted without the composer's name, and entries are identified solely by their title.<sup>2</sup>

While their works did not prevail as winners during my three years of service on the screening committee, the pieces written by Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe resonated with me. I recall being particularly intrigued with each of their unique compositional sounds and equally fascinated that they could be so vastly different from each other. I became highly interested in their music, especially the pieces that I gained exposure to through the Revelli contest: Blackshaw's *Peace Dancer*, Jolley's *Lichtweg/Lightway*, and Svanoe's *Steampunk Suite*. Throughout my graduate studies, I began curating a "wish list" of pieces I hope to teach and conduct one day, and all three earned a spot on that list. At the time, my interest was piqued by Svanoe's *Steampunk Suite*, in which I found great joy discovering her use of wit and humor through a serious medium such as the wind band. For my final master's conducting recital, I was afforded the opportunity to present a full-band concert with repertoire of my choosing. Naturally, I jumped at the chance to program *Steampunk Suite* and built the rest of my selections around it. My mild obsession with the piece lingered, and when the time came for me to audition for a doctoral graduate conducting assistantship with the University of Oklahoma, I chose to give a presentation to the top ensemble on the intricacies and inventiveness of *Steampunk Suite*—even going as far to interview Erika Svanoe as part of my preparation.

My time at the University of Oklahoma was filled with the highest level of music-making and conducting. When asked by my professors Dr. Shanti Simon and Dr. Caroline Hand

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew G. McCutchen, "An Examination of the History and Winning Pieces of the National Band Association's Composition Contest: 1977–2008" (Ph.D., United States -- Florida, The Florida State University, 2009), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304880910/abstract/D6715B5A7E5D48F2PQ/1>.

(directors of the OU Wind Symphony and Symphony Band, respectively) to submit a list of compositions I would like to conduct, I included many pieces by Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe, including the same three already above. In the spring of 2022, I was selected to conduct *Lichtweg/Lightway* with the OU Wind Symphony to correspond with a week-long residency with Jennifer Jolley, where I was afforded the unique opportunity to rehearse the piece in her presence. With the OU Symphony Band, I conducted Blackshaw's *Peace Dancer* in the fall of 2022, followed by Jolley's *MARCH!* in the spring of 2023. The Symphony Band also performed Svanoe's *Steampunk Suite* that same year under the direction of Dr. Hand, and I was once again able to present my knowledge of the piece to the students.

While I feel fortunate that I was able to teach these pieces of music, I discovered in my study and score analysis that resources on Blackshaw, Jolley, Svanoe, and their music were few and far between. The more I researched, the more I noticed the apparent disparity between the vast number of performances and commissions they received and the minimal amount of scholarly material discussing their lives, careers, compositional styles, or their impact on the wind band repertoire. Beyond miscellaneous program notes, blogs, podcasts, and a handful of *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band* articles, no such comprehensive resource existed to help me teach, conduct, and perform their music.

The absence of readily available information on such prominent and highly programmed composers, based on major national and international conference performances and commissions, is a disservice not only to the composers themselves but also to performers, educators, and researchers who wish to engage with their music. The same absence of scholarly work begs the question of “why” they have not been written about, and if that “why” stems from a historical marginalization of women in music. It would remain a failure of the wind band

industry not to document and analyze the substantive works of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe, as it would place them and their music in the grips of historically perpetual cycles of undermining music written by women, obfuscating how future generations may view their work.

The selection of analyzed works for this project is the result of early conversations with each composer who made suggestions which they felt would be highly representative of their works for advanced ensembles. I approached Jodie Blackshaw about writing about her *Symphony No. 1*, only to learn that another doctoral candidate had already begun their research and planned to use her symphony as their core material. She suggested that I consider *Soulström*, even though the work is not one of her newer works, but felt it was great representation of her style. With Jennifer Jolley, I hoped to write about *MARCH!* as it was one of her newer pieces and was a finalist of the Revelli Composition Contest a few years prior, which I continued to follow very closely. The seminal idea for this research was an examination of *Steampunk Suite*; however I met with Erika Svanoe at her booth during the Midwest Clinic in December 2022 soon after she completed her *Symphony in Blue and Gold* and suggested I consider that stating “It is my most proud work.”

My research aims to fill some of the gaps between each composer, their music, and the overall repertoire by offering more intimate insights into their backgrounds, philosophies, and compositional styles while also examining each aspect through the lens of gender biases that have likely impacted their careers in some way. Further, I aim to provide a valuable and comprehensive resource for musicians and conductors to utilize to study Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe’s music. Lastly, through a scholarly approach, I will discuss why I believe their music to be of great substance and high artistic merit, with the hope that this research will further elevate their careers through increased performances and commissions.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive examination of the distinctive compositional styles, notable works, and experiences of three accomplished contemporary composers of wind band music: Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe. I seek to shed light on these composers' artistic contributions and innovative approaches within the realm of contemporary wind band composition and to add to much-needed analyses of high-quality works by female composers.

Drs. Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe have made and continue to make significant contributions to the wind band literature and are a part of the ever-growing number of contemporary women composers. They each possess compositional styles unique to their personality and have influences from their heritage, home country, political and social beliefs, and various life interests. Their musical output represents significant pieces of wind band literature, as well as three individual sound palettes and styles indicative of their varied experiences.

Throughout my graduate work, I have been fortunate to study, teach, and conduct the music of these three remarkable composers for whom I have a great professional admiration and appreciation for their music. I was initially exposed to their music while serving on the National William D. Revelli Composition Contest screening committee during my master's degree, where each composer submitted one of their compositions.

Like many living and contemporary composers today, each of their works deserves more attention and scholarly research due to the quality of music they write, the awards they have earned, the commissions they receive, and the frequency with which their music is played by elite band programs nationally and internationally. The levels of success that each has attained in

their careers are key indicators that their music and compositional backgrounds are worthy of significant study.

This study of these three highly accomplished composers aims to explore challenges and opportunities encountered as women composers and will emphasize the significance of gender diversity in wind band repertoire. Analysis of their music and an in-depth view of their compositional processes and influences will be examined, as well as a look into the broader sociocultural context with which they identify. While I intend to shed light on their creative achievements as significant composers of wind band music, I also hope to contribute an in-depth understanding of their role in shaping the modern repertoire.

Each composer has created their own voice and sound within the contemporary wind band medium and exhibits unique compositional devices. Through exceptional writing, each woman has garnered national and international acclaim and recognition for their music through notable composition contests, frequent commission requests, and programming at conventions throughout the world including but not limited to the American Band Masters Association (ABA), College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA), the National Band Association (NBA), The Midwest Clinic (Midwest), and the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE).

Through extensive interviews and study of their distinctive musical styles, I aim to examine the compositional styles of Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe to discover and define each woman's artistic innovations that define their work. This study will include an analysis of one piece of music by each composer written for an advanced ensemble. Elements of analysis will include significant melodic ideas, instrumentation, rhythmic and harmonic complexities, and other unique compositional signatures that contribute to each

composer's musical character and identity. Additionally, this study will explore how each composer draws from their diverse cultural, historical, and personal influences and how their backgrounds play a role in their creative expressions. A look into each composer's creative process and compositional philosophies will be dissected to unveil the unique intricacies of their craftsmanship and help place their work as standard pieces in the overall repertoire.

Part of this study will investigate the experiences of Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe as women composers to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities they may or may not have encountered throughout their careers by identifying as such. To understand the broader context of underrepresented composers and women composers in particular, this study will also delve into historical biases, societal norms, and how institutional structures have shaped their experiences in the profession of composition and their overall oeuvre.

Lastly, I aim to shed light on the success of these three outstanding composers' music on the national and international stages by highlighting their participation in various organizations, composition contests, and the many commission and consortium opportunities that continue to shape their careers. This study will discuss the inclusion of their music at prestigious conventions, conferences, and festivals to highlight the national and global reach their works have received.

The accomplishments and frequency of performances around the world serve as compelling indicators that their works and compositional backgrounds warrant significant study. As initiatives like the Institute for Composer Diversity continue to shed light on the visibility and representation of minority and underrepresented composers, it becomes increasingly important to

recognize and amplify the contributions of these three women as prominent and influential composers of wind band music.

## Awards and Recognitions

Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe have each been awarded honors in prominent wind band composition contests. Recognition from such composition contests allows for greater exposure for composers, as awards often come with incentives such as recordings, publication of the work, and professional performances. When backed by influential figures and organizations like Frank Ticheli and the National Band Association, exposure after winning a prestigious award can significantly elevate a composer's profile to conductors and educators looking to program new music.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1.** Composition Awards by Composer

| Composer  | Composition Title           | Year | Grade | Contest Name                                        | Award     |
|-----------|-----------------------------|------|-------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Blackshaw | <i>Whirlwind</i>            | 2017 | 1     | Frank Ticheli Composition Contest                   | 1st Prize |
| Blackshaw | <i>Terpsichorean Dances</i> | 2017 | 3     | Frank Ticheli Composition Contest                   | 2nd Prize |
| Jolley    | <i>MARCH!</i>               | 2021 | 5     | NBA William D. Revelli Memorial Composition Contest | Finalist  |
| Svanoe    | <i>The Haunted Carousel</i> | 2014 | 3     | NBA Young Band Composition Contest                  | Winner    |

## National and International Conference Performances

The following is a list of performances of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe's music at major National and International Conferences dating back to 2017. Conferences included are the

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<sup>3</sup> Dominick DiOrio, "Why We Need Composition Competitions — And How To Make Them Better," IFCM Choral Magazine, January 1, 2024, <https://www.internationalchoralmagazine.com/post/why-we-need-composition-competitions-and-how-to-make-them-better>.

American Bandmasters Association (ABA), College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) Regional and National conferences, the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Conference, and the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 2.** Conference Performances for Jodie Blackshaw

| Composition Title            | Conference                    | Performing Ensemble                          | Year |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------|
| <i>Belah Sun Woman</i>       | The Midwest Clinic            | Youth Performing Arts School Wind Ensemble   | 2023 |
| <i>Symphony No. 1</i>        | CBDNA Southwestern Conference | Texas Women's University Wind Symphony       | 2024 |
| <i>The Blessing of Light</i> | CBDNA National Conference     | Texas State University                       | 2025 |
| <i>Peace Dancer</i>          | ABA National Conference       | United States Army Band                      | 2024 |
| <i>Peace Dancer</i>          | CBDNA Eastern Division        | CBDNA East Intercollegiate Band              | 2020 |
| <i>Peace Dancer</i>          | CBDNA North Central Division  | DePaul University Wind Symphony              | 2020 |
| <i>Peace Dancer</i>          | CBDNA National Conference     | University of Georgia Hodgson Wind Ensemble  | 2023 |
| <i>Twist</i>                 | CBDNA Southwestern Division   | Texas Woman's University Wind Symphony       | 2020 |
| <i>Soulström</i>             | CBDNA Southwestern Division   | Arkansas State University Wind Ensemble      | 2020 |
| <i>Symphony No. 1</i>        | WASBE                         | Sydney Conservatorium of Music Wind Symphony | 2019 |

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<sup>4</sup> "Wind Repertory Project," *Wind Repertory Project*, n.d., [http://www.windrep.org/Main\\_Page](http://www.windrep.org/Main_Page).

**Table 3.** Conference Performances for Jennifer Jolley

| Composition Title                         | Conference                     | Performing Ensemble                          | Year |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------|
| <i>Protector of the East Sea</i>          | WASBE                          | United States Navy Band                      | 2024 |
| <i>MARCH!</i>                             | CBDNA Northern Division        | University of Nebraska-Lincoln Wind Ensemble | 2022 |
| <i>MARCH!</i>                             | WASBE                          | Saratoga High School Concert Band            | 2022 |
| <i>Lichtweg/Lightway</i>                  | CBDNA Southern Division        | The Florida State University Symphonic Band  | 2018 |
| <i>Lichtweg/Lightway</i>                  | CBDNA Southern Division        | Randolph-Macon College Ensemble              | 2022 |
| <i>Ash</i>                                | CBDNA North Central Division   | Libertyville High School Band                | 2020 |
| <i>Never Forget, Never Remember</i>       | CBDNA Southwestern Conference  | Texas Tech University Symphonic Band         | 2020 |
| <i>The Eyes of the World Are Upon You</i> | CBDNA National Conference      | University of Texas Wind Ensemble            | 2017 |
| <i>The Eyes of the World Are Upon You</i> | CBDNA North Central Conference | Miami University Wind Ensemble               | 2018 |

**Table 4.** Conference Performances for Erika Svanoë

| Composition Title                      | Conference                | Performing Ensemble                               | Year |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------|
| <i>Fairest of the Renaissance Fair</i> | The Midwest Clinic        | James W. Robinson Secondary School Symphonic Band | 2024 |
| <i>Steampunk Suite</i>                 | The Midwest Clinic        | Tyler Junior College Wind Ensemble                | 2023 |
| <i>Haunted Carousel</i>                | CBDNA Southern Conference | Riverwatch Middle School Symphonic Band           | 2016 |
| <i>Haunted Carousel</i>                | The Midwest Clinic        | Riverwatch Middle School Symphonic Band           | 2017 |
| <i>Steampunk Suite</i>                 | ABA National Conference   | The Ohio State University Wind Symphony           | 2017 |
| <i>Steampunk Suite</i>                 | CBDNA Northern Conference | University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Wind Symphony  | 2022 |

## Commissions

The following tables provide a comprehensive list of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoë's commissioned works.

**Table 5.** Commissioned Works of Jodie Blackshaw

| Composition Title                            | Ensemble   | Grade   | Year | Commissioning Body                                                                | Location                                          |
|----------------------------------------------|------------|---------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <i>13 Moons</i>                              | Wind Band  | 1-4     | 2018 | W.J. Mouat Secondary School; Mulgrave School; UBC Conducting Symposium Consortium | Abbotsford, BC; West Vancouver, BC; Vancouver, BC |
| <i>Catango 5</i>                             | Wind Band  | 4       | 2022 | International Grammar School, Sydney                                              | New South Wales, Australia                        |
| <i>Earthshine</i>                            | Wind Band  | 2       | 2014 | Derby Sixth Grade Center Bands                                                    | Derby, KS                                         |
| <i>Feathered Angels</i>                      | Wind Band  | 3       | 2025 | Caulfield Grammar School                                                          | Melbourne, Australia                              |
| <i>For there is nothing lost</i>             | Brass Band | C-Grade | 2024 | Daylesford Community Brass Band                                                   | Victoria, Australia                               |
| <i>..into the blue stretch of light..</i>    | Wind Band  | 2.5     | 2022 | Marist College                                                                    | Canberra, Australia                               |
| <i>Into the Sun</i>                          | Wind Band  | 3.5     | 2017 | Western Sydney Public School Concert Band                                         | Sydney, Australia                                 |
| <i>Lessons from Mother Earth</i>             | Wind Band  | 2       | 2022 | UBC Conducting Symposium Consortium                                               | Vancouver, BC                                     |
| <i>Letter from Sado</i>                      | Wind Band  | 3       | 2006 | American Composers Forum                                                          | St. Paul, MN                                      |
| <i>Living Wild on a Tamed Planet</i>         | Wind Band  | 2       | 2024 | Florida Bandmasters Association                                                   | Florida                                           |
| <i>Peace Dancer</i>                          | Wind Band  | 5       | 2022 | UBC Conducting Symposium                                                          | Vancouver, BC                                     |
| <i>Salon Morisot</i>                         | Wind Band  | 2       | 2019 | Clarkston Schools Instrumental Music Association                                  | Clarkston, MI                                     |
| <i>Symphony No. 1 "Leunig's Prayer Book"</i> | Wind Band  | 5       | 2020 | Australian Wind Band Commissioning Consortium                                     | Australia                                         |
| <i>The Little Bush Buddha</i>                | Wind Band  | 2.5     | 2022 | Intermediate Band of St. Joseph's College                                         | Geelong, Australia                                |
| <i>Twist</i>                                 | Wind Band  | 5       | 2012 | Australian Band and Orchestra Directors' Association                              | Australia                                         |
| <i>Vulnerable Joy</i>                        | Wind Band  | 4       | 2022 | Jodie Blackshaw Commission Consortium                                             | Australia                                         |
| <i>Wind of Life</i>                          | Wind Band  | N/A     | 2024 | Brisbane Girls Grammar School Symphonic Winds                                     | Brisbane, Australia                               |

**Table 6.** Commissioned Works of Jennifer Jolley

| Composition Title                      | Ensemble                      | Grade | Year | Commissioning Body                                                        | Location               |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>88 Exploding Ninjas</i>             | Cello and Piano               | N/A   | 2009 | Mike Nowicki                                                              | N/A                    |
| <i>Ash</i>                             | Wind Band                     | 4     | 2018 | A consortium of Wind Ensembles                                            | N/A                    |
| <i>Blue Glacier Decoy</i>              | Chamber Winds                 | N/A   | 2018 | Grand Valley State University New Music Ensemble                          | Allendale, MI          |
| <i>Democracy Dies in Darkness</i>      | Solo Piano                    | N/A   | N/A  | Nick Phillips (#45miniatures project)                                     | N/A                    |
| <i>Drei Brücken</i>                    | Choir and Synthesizer/Piano   | N/A   | 2012 | Contemporary Arts Center (2012 Gala)                                      | Cincinnati, OH         |
| <i>Dust</i>                            | Wind Band                     | 4     | 2023 | Seraph Brass & a consortium of wind ensembles                             | N/A                    |
| <i>Her Speed Left the Winds Behind</i> | Treble Voices                 | N/A   | 2021 | Voices of Ascension & Trio Triumphatrix                                   | N/A                    |
| <i>Last Stage to Redrock</i>           | Wind Band                     | 1     | 2016 | Mason Schools Foundation                                                  | Mason, OH              |
| <i>Lichtweg/Lightway</i>               | Orchestra                     | N/A   |      | Georgia Tech Concert Band                                                 | Atlanta, GA            |
| <i>Lichtweg/Lightway</i>               | Wind Band                     | 4     | 2017 | Georgia Tech Concert Band                                                 | Atlanta, GA            |
| <i>Lilac Tears</i>                     | Alto Saxophone and Piano      | N/A   | 2022 | Timothy McAllister                                                        | N/A                    |
| <i>MARCH!</i>                          | Wind Band                     | 5     | 2021 | American Bandmasters Association & University of Florida                  | Florida, United States |
| <i>Motorodom</i>                       | Wind Band                     | 4     | 2009 | Xavier University Symphonic Wind Ensemble                                 | Cincinnati, OH         |
| <i>Neoncore</i>                        | Flex Ensemble and Electronics | 3-4   | 2021 | Composers & Schools for the Rio Americano High School Honors Concert Band | Sacramento, CA         |
| <i>Never Forget, Never Remember</i>    | Wind Band                     | 4.5   | 2017 | Bowling Green State University Wind Symphony (MidAmerican Center support) | Bowling Green, OH      |
| <i>Prisoner of Conscience</i>          | Treble Voices                 | N/A   | 2015 | Quince Ensemble                                                           | N/A                    |
| <i>Protector of the East Sea</i>       | Wind Band                     | N/A   | 2024 | United States Navy Band                                                   | Washington, D.C.       |
| <i>Questions to Heaven</i>             | Wind Band                     | 4     | 2021 | A consortium of wind ensembles                                            | N/A                    |
| <i>Recomposed Scriabin</i>             | Solo Piano                    | N/A   | 2017 | Kristofer Rucinski                                                        | N/A                    |

| Composition Title                              | Ensemble                                        | Grade | Year | Commissioning Body                                                               | Location                     |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Son of a Gun</i>                            | Wind Band, Flex Ensemble                        | 1     | 2019 | Center Grove Middle School Central Bands and Zionsville Middle School Orchestras | Greenwood and Zionsville, IN |
| <i>Sounds from the Grey Goo 2.0</i>            | Solo Bass Clarinet and Electronics              | 4     | 2010 | Rebecca Danard                                                                   | N/A                          |
| <i>The Eyes of the World Are Upon You</i>      | Wind Band                                       | 5     | 2017 | Kappa Kappa Psi/ University of Texas at Austin Wind Ensemble                     | Austin, TX                   |
| <i>The Ferry Crossing</i>                      | Chamber Orchestra                               | N/A   | 2015 | Vermont Symphony Orchestra                                                       | Vermont                      |
| <i>The Lives and Opinions of Literary Cats</i> | Piano Trio                                      | N/A   | 2017 | Left Coast Chamber Ensemble (Kurt Rohde Commission Fund)                         | San Francisco, CA            |
| <i>The Walkup</i>                              | Wind Band                                       | 2     | 2018 | Van Wert Middle School Bands                                                     | Van Wert, OH                 |
| <i>Think About It</i>                          | Wind Band                                       | 2.5   | 2019 | Institute for the Advancement of Secondary & Primary Repertoire Excellence       | N/A                          |
| <i>Through the Looking Glass Falls</i>         | Wind Band                                       | 5     | 2014 | Transylvania County Schools Ed. Foundation & Brevard College Wind Ensemble       | Brevard, NC                  |
| <i>Tiny Dancer</i>                             | Solo Percussion                                 | N/A   | 2022 | Emily Salgado (Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History Project)                   | N/A                          |
| <i>You Are Not Alone</i>                       | Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Violoncello, and Piano | N/A   | 2019 | Johnstone Fund for New Music & Women Composers Festival of Hartford              | West Hartford, CT            |

**Table 7.** Commissioned Works of Erika Svanoë

| Composition Title           | Ensemble  | Grade | Year | Commissioning Body                          | Location        |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-------|------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>A Journey in Time</i>    | Wind Band | 2.5   | 2020 | Patrick Marsh Middle School Band            | Sun Prairie, WI |
| <i>Ascendant</i>            | Wind Band | 4     | 2025 | McHenry County Honor Band                   | Illinois        |
| <i>Band of Heroes</i>       | Wind Band | 3     | 2018 | Olentangy Hyatts and Liberty Middle Schools | Columbus, OH    |
| <i>Bandwidth Radio Hour</i> | Wind Band | 4     | 2024 | Minnesota Junior Winds                      | Minnesota       |
| <i>Bolérobot</i>            | Wind Band | 4     | 2025 | Wisconsin Concert Band Association          | Wisconsin       |
| <i>Category 4</i>           | Wind Band | 3     | 2021 | Kingwood Park High School Symphonic Band    | Houston, TX     |

| Composition Title                                                 | Ensemble            | Grade | Year | Commissioning Body                                                        | Location                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <i>A Christmas Carol</i>                                          | Wind Band           | 4     | 2026 | Bowling Green State University and Partners                               | Bowling Green, OH                         |
| <i>Clocktower Fanfare</i>                                         | Wind Band           | 3     | 2016 | University of Wisconsin–Stout                                             | Menomonie, WI                             |
| <i>Determined Hearts</i>                                          | Wind Band           | 4     | 2025 | Middlesex Concert Band                                                    | Wakefield, MA                             |
| <i>Echoes</i>                                                     | Wind Band           | 4     | 2018 | Fergus Falls Area School District                                         | Fergus Falls, MN                          |
| <i>Fairest of the Renaissance Faire</i>                           | Wind Band           | 4     | 2023 | Ohio Private College Instrumental Conductors Association                  | Ohio                                      |
| <i>First Suite Fanfare</i>                                        | Wind Band           | 5     | 2020 | Eagan High School Wind Ensemble                                           | Eagan, MN                                 |
| <i>Florence and Alica</i>                                         | Wind Band           | 3     | 2021 | River Valley Band                                                         | Hastings, MN                              |
| <i>Kindred Spirits</i>                                            | Wind Band           | 5     | 2023 | Viewmont High School                                                      | Bountiful, UT                             |
| <i>Like the Wind</i>                                              | SATB and Piano      | N/A   | 2023 | Wisconsin Arts Board                                                      | Wisconsin                                 |
| <i>Like the Wind</i>                                              | String Orchestra    | N/A   | 2023 | Wisconsin Arts Board                                                      | Wisconsin                                 |
| <i>Like the Wind</i>                                              | Wind Band           | 2.5   | 2023 | Wisconsin Arts Board                                                      | Wisconsin                                 |
| <i>Mary Shelley Meets Frankenstein: A Modern Promethean Tango</i> | Wind Band           | 5     | 2019 | University of New Hampshire Wind Symphony                                 | Durham, NH                                |
| <i>My Dearest Jane</i>                                            | Piano and Wind Band | 5     | 2023 | Bradley University                                                        | Peoria, IL                                |
| <i>She Dares, She Leaps</i>                                       | Wind Band           | 4     | 2022 | Mahtomedi Zephyr Wind Ensemble                                            | Mahtomedi, MN                             |
| <i>Slow Burn</i>                                                  | Wind Band           | 4     | 2025 | Lakeland Union High School Band                                           | Minocqua, WI                              |
| <i>Springtime Ride</i>                                            | Wind Band           | 2.5   | 2018 | Minnesota Band Directors Association                                      | Minnesota                                 |
| <i>Steampunk Suite</i>                                            | Full Orchestra      | N/A   | 2024 | Mankato Area Youth Symphony Orchestra                                     | Mankato, MN                               |
| <i>Symphony in Blue and Gold</i>                                  | Wind Band           | 5     | 2023 | University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire                                        | Eau Claire, WI                            |
| <i>The Authors Suite</i>                                          | Wind Band           | 5     | 2024 | Viewmont High School<br>Bradley University<br>University of New Hampshire | Bountiful, UT<br>Peoria, IL<br>Durham, NH |
| <i>The Candy Factory</i>                                          | Wind Band           | 2.5   | 2024 | Fergus Falls 7th Grade Band                                               | Fergus Falls, MN                          |
| <i>The Town Band</i>                                              | Wind Band           | 4     | 2022 | Chelmsford Community Band                                                 | Chelmsford, MA                            |
| <i>Tutued Toucan Can-can</i>                                      | Wind Band           | 4     | 2021 | Spartan Youth Wind Symphony,<br>Michigan State University                 | East Lansing, MI                          |
| <i>Where No One Has Gone Before</i>                               | Wind Band           | 4     | 2023 | Atlanta Freedom Bands                                                     | Atlanta, GA                               |
| <i>Winter's Revel</i>                                             | Wind Band           | 4     | 2024 | Buffalo High School                                                       | Buffalo, MN                               |

## Procedures

The works of composers Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe have garnered attention and acclaim in the wind band community. Despite the widespread programming of their compositions across the globe, there is a notable scarcity of research and literature available to support the numerous musicians and conductors who seek to study their music.

With IRB approval, each composer underwent an individual semi-structured interview conducted via the online platform Zoom in a secure and private location. These sessions were recorded using both video and audio recorders and subsequently transcribed for further analysis. The interview centered on their background and encompassed their musical inspirations, accolades, and experiences related to gender issues they have encountered throughout their careers. Additionally, each interview spurred conversations about their approach to composing for band and further exploration of the broader themes and emotional impact of their music.

A thorough examination of one composition for wind band by each composer has been analyzed to discern their distinct musical styles and compositional sounds. The pieces chosen for analysis include Jodie Blackshaw's *Soulström*, Jennifer Jolley's *MARCH!*, and Erika Svanoe's *Symphony in Blue and Gold*. Written for an advanced ensemble, these pieces of music offer a glimpse into each composer's unique orchestration, compositional techniques, and expressive nuances that, in part, characterize their works.

*Soulström*, *MARCH!*, and *Symphony in Blue and Gold* contain innovative approaches to writing for wind band and offer valuable insights into how each composer's background plays a role in their overall composition process. The selected repertoire reflects the composer's personal artistic philosophies and visions and provides valuable insights into their individual style, thematic preoccupations, and innovative approaches to writing for the wind band.

Insights and methodologies outlined in the book *Guide to Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor* by Frank Battisti and Robert Garofalo were used to analyze each piece. The authors outline eight main ideas to lead to an informed score study: melody, harmony, form, rhythm, orchestration, texture, dynamics, and articulations and expressive terminology. These steps of score study were utilized to achieve a comprehensive look at each score to gain deeper insights into the composers' intentions, intricacies, and insights that define their individual sounds.

### **Methodology**

The following semi-structured interview questions are designed to explore the composers' backgrounds, artistic identities, compositional styles, and the significance of their selected works.

#### *Background*

1. Please share any insights into your background, musical training, and early influences shaping your compositional journey. Include any specific composers that significantly influenced your work and artistic visions.
2. What personal anecdotes or experiences related to your music have profoundly impacted your artistic identity?
3. In your experience, what role has your identity as a woman played in shaping your career as a composer, and how have you navigated the challenges or opportunities associated with it?
4. Please share your perspective on the representation of women composers of wind band music and the importance of promoting diversity in composition.
5. What challenges have you faced as a composer, and how have you overcome them in your creative journey?
6. What is the significance of awards and recognitions in your career, and have they influenced your trajectory as a composer? Did any awards or recognitions (or lack thereof) influence any subsequent work?

### *Compositional Style*

7. How would you describe your compositional style and the unique elements that define your music?
8. What considerations did you have in mind when writing for a wind ensemble? How does the instrumentation shape the composition?
9. What is the role of storytelling or narrative in your compositions, and how does it connect with your artistic vision?
10. What specific social or cultural themes do you aim to explore through your music, and how do you use composition as a means of expression for these themes?
11. Can you discuss any ongoing projects or future directions in your composition career that you are particularly excited about?
12. What lasting impact do you hope your compositions will have on audiences and listeners? What do you want people to know and remember about you and your music?

### *Piece-Specific Questions*

13. How do you approach the use of timbre and orchestration in "*Soulström/ MARCH!/ Symphony in Blue and Gold*" to achieve your desired musical effects?
14. How do you envision the audience's experience when listening to "*Soulström/ MARCH!/ Symphony in Blue and Gold*"? What emotions or reactions do you hope to evoke?
15. Please share any anecdotes or interesting stories related to the creation or performances of "*Soulström/ MARCH!/ Symphony in Blue and Gold*" that might provide additional context or insights into the piece.
16. How do you see "*Soulström/ MARCH!/ Symphony in Blue and Gold*" contributing to the broader repertoire of wind ensemble music, and what impact do you hope it has on future generations of composers and performers?

### **Limitations**

This study provides a comprehensive picture of the backgrounds, experiences, and compositional styles of composers Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoë through interviews and in-depth analysis of one composition of each written for advanced ensembles. The focus on a singular piece of their entire portfolio of music for this research will inevitably

exclude other pieces of music worthy of study from their catalogs and potentially other compositional devices and interesting facets of their works. Inherently, this study will not represent their extensive compositional output of music for younger bands, orchestras, voice, or any other musical outlet for which they have written.

The study's focus on select compositions may leave out significant contributions to the repertoire worthy of scholarly consideration, especially pieces that have won awards for young ensembles. Each composer's ability to craft engaging music for young musicians is a substantial part of their artistic identities. Thus, while the chosen compositions offer valuable insights into their broader creative processes and thematic explorations for higher-performing ensembles, it is important to recognize that their work for younger ensembles forms a vital component of their oeuvres.

Additionally, the study relies on available data, interviews, and documentation, which may not capture every nuance of the composers' experiences. The ever-evolving nature of contemporary music indicates that new compositions and developments may have emerged since the study's data collection period. As a result, the study may not fully capture the most recent facets of their work and their continued contributions to compositions for wind bands.

Lastly, while this study aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the compositional styles of each composer, it does not delve into the specific types of occasions, commissions, consortiums, or financial investments involved in the inception of their compositions.

While the study touches on the impact of commissions and consortiums on their creative processes and careers, it does not undertake a detailed financial analysis or categorization of these commissions. Understanding these subtleties would require a more specialized study

focusing solely on the economics of music composition, which falls outside the scope of this research.

In addition, as this research focuses on the contributions of Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe, I acknowledge that other extraordinary women composers equally deserving of study will be excluded. The field of wind band composition boasts a wealth of talented women composers, each with unique artistic perspectives and contributions. As such, concentrating on this select group inherently overlooks other diverse voices and innovative works by many others. While this research aims to shed light on the works and achievements of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe, their experiences play only a small role in the broader perspective of underrepresented composers.

## **Chapter 2 Survey of Related Literature**

This literature review examines the lives and careers of composers Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe through the lens of existing research on select contemporary composers with special attention to the use of orchestration and biographical influences, as well as the historical and often biased perceptions of women in music.

Five other contemporary composers with notable prominence in the wind band repertoire will be examined to construct a basis for exploring and analyzing the methods of composition used by Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe. Those included are composers Julie Giroux, Chen Yi, John Mackey, David Maslanka, and Frank Ticheli, who each possess unique and distinctive qualities that greatly define their music. Additionally, this review investigates the limited resources currently available on Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe that will be used to help outline and identify their distinctive compositional techniques, uses of orchestration, sources of inspiration, and biographical aspects that tie into their music. Tables of any awards, recognitions, commissions, and notable performances, both nationally and internationally, are presented to demonstrate some of the external factors that have propelled each to a level of prominence in the field of composition.

A brief history of women in music will be given to tie historical patterns of exclusion and preconceived norms to present-day composers who continually push the boundaries of wind band repertoire while challenging longstanding gender expectations. Lastly, highly regarded and canonical orchestration and score study resources are examined and utilized to provide a practical framework for musical analysis of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe's works. This literature review offers foundational research used to connect each composer's compositional

style to the analysis of their music, ultimately illustrating how they have achieved prominence through significant musical contributions to the wind band repertoire as underrepresented voices.

### **Dissertations on Contemporary Composers of Wind Band Music**

This section aims to identify distinctive artistic qualities, distinctive compositional approaches, as well as biographical and culturally relevant information that have shaped the styles and voices of five prominent contemporary composers—Julie Giroux, Chen Yi, John Mackey, David Maslanka, and Frank Ticheli—whose individualized sounds and techniques have contributed to their level of prominence within the wind band. Their status as highly regarded and widely programmed composers is closely tied to the unique qualities, innovative methods, and formative influences embedded in their music. By highlighting the signature artistic qualities and approaches to composition of Giroux, Chen, Mackey, Maslanka, and Ticheli, a framework can be established to contextualize the innovative techniques and musical identities of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe as they relate to their growing presence in the wind band repertoire.

Dr. Zack Deininger writes of composer Julie Giroux and her music in his doctoral document titled *Symphony No. V: Elements (Julie Giroux, 2018); An Overview of Programmatic Elements and Performance Devices*. Julie Giroux is a widely known American contemporary composer of wind band music who has written over 125 works for wind bands and is frequently performed by ensembles spanning from beginning middle school bands through top university and professional ensembles. Known for a composing career in film, television, and wind band, she has dedicated herself to elevating the latter to promote the wind band and its repertoire as a serious artistic medium. Her works are largely programmatic and often attached to social, cultural, or historical themes.

The quality, accessibility, and sheer volume of her catalog have led to the appearance of her music on state repertoire lists and concert programs at major conventions more than any other woman composer. As a woman and member of the LGBTQ+ community, Giroux has been an advocate for inclusion within the wind band repertoire, as she has faced a multitude of challenges and barriers solely based on her gender and identity.<sup>5</sup> She was the first woman composer to be inducted into the American Bandmasters Association and the first woman to have her music played at a United States presidential inauguration, when the President's Own Marine Band performed *Integrity March*—the first movement of her third Symphony—as the vice-president elect was introduced to the nation.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond her compositional output, Giroux prides herself in creating space for every person, marginalized or not, within the wind band world by promoting adaptable music through the Creative Repertoire Initiative. This organization, of which she is a founding member, produces flexible arrangements of her works and consistently advocates for inclusive programming of underrepresented composers of all backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations.<sup>7</sup> Giroux's significant contributions to the wind band repertoire, her advocacy efforts, and her storytelling approach toward social, cultural, and environmental issues through composition draw direct parallels to the music and compositional processes of Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe.

In her doctoral essay titled *Fusion of Chinese and Western Musical Styles in Chen Yi's From the Path of Beauty*, Jingwen Xu outlines Chen Yi as a contemporary composer of multiple

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<sup>5</sup> Zackery Augustus Deininger, "Symphony No. V: Elements (Julie Giroux, 2018); An Overview of Programmatic Elements and Performance Devices" (D.M.A., United States -- South Carolina, University of South Carolina, 2023), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2840948488/abstract/29423390F4D849ADPQ/1>.

<sup>6</sup> Julie Giroux, "Bio & Discography of Julie Giroux," Julie Giroux, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.juliegiroux.org/bio-discs>.

<sup>7</sup> Deininger, "Symphony No. V."

genres, including orchestra, vocal, chamber, and wind band, and a leading figure in the field of modern composition. Jingwen establishes Chen's cultural heritage as a driving force of her compositional style, as most of her works display various aspects of Chinese culture that draw from folk songs, poetry, and philosophy as she masterfully blends ancient culture into the modern and fuses it with Western compositional influences. Chen Yi "I have to think into my cultural roots very deeply in order to find my own voice."

Chen's compositions are deeply immersed in her firsthand experiences and her culture, including a period of forced farming in her teenage years by the Chinese government in 1968. During this time of forced labor, she was able to smuggle in her violin, but policies at the time only permitted the performance of Chinese revolutionary songs. Due in part to the limited scope of music she could practice, Chen began adding extended techniques to the songs, which later would become a signature feature of her compositions, along with using explicitly Western instruments to imitate the timbre of Chinese instruments. Due to this period of forced manual labor, Chen claims to have a better understanding of farmers and the earth, all while becoming deeply inspired by the Chinese folksongs sung along the countryside—concepts that would later influence her compositional philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

Chen's compositional style is characterized by the fusion of Chinese and Western musical traditions, a distinctive feature of her work. Central to her style is the utilization of Chinese scales and traditional instruments such as the guzheng and pipa, which she seamlessly integrates with Western instruments like the piano and string quartet. Her compositions often incorporate Chinese folk melodies and rhythms, serving as an homage to her Chinese heritage.

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<sup>8</sup> Jingwen Xu, "Fusion of Chinese and Western Musical Styles in Chen Yi's 'From the Path of Beauty.'" (2019).

Notably, Chen's music can be characterized by her use of complex rhythms and irregular time signatures, including poly-meters.<sup>9</sup>

Jingwin's research into Chen demonstrates a precedent of creating compositional techniques and experimentation of color and timbre to achieve a desired musical effect. Like Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe, Chen is also known to relate her music to her cultural and lived experiences.

Dr. Rebecca Phillips' doctoral paper on modern composer John Mackey, titled *John Mackey: The Composer, His Compositional Style, and a Conductor's Analysis of Redline Tango and Turbine*. She focuses on exploring Mackey's innovative approach to composition, particularly his utilization of computer-based methods. Phillips utilizes Mackey's seminal work for the wind band *Red Line Tango* and his rhythmically intricate composition, *Turbine*. Employing an analytical framework derived from Mark Camphouse's *Composers on Composing for Band*, she analyzes the form, melody, rhythm, harmony, and texture of Mackey's music. Notably, Phillips investigates the elements that distinguish Mackey's compositional style, including his incorporation of non-traditional percussion instruments and a compositional signature of balancing repetition and contrast.<sup>10</sup> Mackey's approach to writing can be described, at best, as "unorthodox" when viewed through the most traditional lens of composition. Additionally, his music is characterized by a particular timbre unique to him alone. Innovative in his methods and soundscape, John Mackey's music is programmed and performed with widespread frequency all over the world. Lastly, Phillip's study provides an example of how

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<sup>9</sup> Xu.

<sup>10</sup> Rebecca Leigh Phillips, "John Mackey: The Composer, His Compositional Style and a Conductor's Analysis of Redline Tango and Turbine" (Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2007).

Camphouse's methodology can be effectively applied to the composers and works utilized in this study.

An in-depth study into David Maslanka's compositional approach can be found in Lane Weaver's doctoral essay *David Maslanka's Symphony No. 7: An Examination of Analytical, Emotional, and Spiritual Connections Through a "Maslankian" Approach*. In his paper, Weaver discussed what can be conceived as Maslanka's holistic approach to composing. His process of music writing ideas is delivered to him through his meditative dreams and the belief that all composition begins below the unconscious level and then flows to the conscious. Weaver focuses heavily on Maslanka's spiritual influences on composition by outlining the composer's belief that his job is to "listen internally as closely and faithfully" as possible and then "accept what happens." The author writes that the spiritual aspect of Maslanka's compositional process allows him to be open to ideas whenever they might emerge. Regarding compositional design, Weaver states that Maslanka's music is born out of tonality and melody, as he prefers tonal settings with a strong root and clear, well-defined melodies often influenced by Bach chorales. He also makes note of Maslanka's reliance on the repetition of melodic material "to engage the listener's conscious and unconscious minds."<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Tina DiMeglio, in her doctoral essay *David Maslanka's Compositional Process Examined Through Correspondence with Conductor and Collaborator Gary Green*, outlines that Maslanka's most important compositional aspects derive from his sense of spirituality. Maslanka's compositional process is greatly influenced by his formative years of religious upbringing, his eventual rejection of religion, and subsequent experimentation with spirituality in

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<sup>11</sup> Lane Weaver, "David Maslanka's Symphony No. 7: An Examination of Analytical, Emotional, and Spiritual Connections Through a 'Maslankian' Approach" (2011).

his adult life.<sup>12</sup> DiMeglio's research gives evidence, albeit anecdotal, that a composer's upbringing and background can have considerable and meaningful significance to their compositional voice. Maslanka's music reflects a deeply personal and spiritual journey shaped by life experiences. Similarly, the individual backgrounds, beliefs, and values are embedded within the creative process of the composers involved in this study.

John Darling's doctoral essay, *A Study of the Wind-Band Music of Frank Ticheli with an Analysis of Fortress, Postcard, and Vesuvius*, spotlights Frank Ticheli as a prominent and modern composer for wind band. Many of Ticheli's pieces are now deemed core literature and serve as a valuable tool in establishing other new and contemporary pieces of similar stature. Darling's analysis of Ticheli's music follows the framework of score study outlined in Frank Battisti and Robert Garofalo's *Guide to Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor*. Although the authors outline steps for a comprehensive analysis of a musical score, which includes the study of a piece's melody, harmony, form, rhythm, orchestration, and texture, as well as dynamics, articulations, and expressive terminology, Darling's research into the three Ticheli pieces focus on melody, form, rhythm, and orchestration.

With Battisti and Garofalo's structured approach score study process, Darling discovered identifying and distinguishing features of Ticheli's music, including the development and manipulation of short melodic/motivic ideas, layered rhythmic schemes involving written and implied metrical stress, a distinct form unique to each piece, and a utilization of atypical orchestration.<sup>13</sup> This approach to analyzing and determining a composer's identifiable compositional signatures will serve as a springboard to finding similar unique devices in the

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<sup>12</sup> Christina DiMeglio Vafiadis, "David Maslanka's Compositional Process Examined Through Correspondence with Conductor and Collaborator Gary Green" (Dissertation, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> John A. Darling, "A Study of the Wind-Band Music of Frank Ticheli with an Analysis of Fortress, Postcard, and Vesuvius" (2001).

works of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe. The discovery and examination of the compositional signatures of Ticheli's music highlights the value of such tools in establishing a composer's unique and distinguishable voice.

The careers of Julie Giroux, Chen Yi, John Mackey, David Maslanka, and Frank Ticheli draw clear parallels to the works of Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe. Like Chen and Maslanka, Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe each demonstrate a commitment to storytelling based on a combination of factors related to their lived experiences, personal identities, and cultural connections. Giroux's social advocacy mirrors the moral and social philosophies of both Blackshaw and Jolley, while Mackey's forward-thinking approach to timbre and unconventional methods manifest in unique ways in each of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe's music. Lastly, much like Ticheli, Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe also write music with an overall distinctive sound based on their unique orchestrational signatures. The comparisons made to Giroux, Chen, Mackey, Maslanka, and Ticheli assist in positioning Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe as significant composers of high artistic merit and individuality who will have a lasting impact as composers of contemporary wind band music.

### **Existing Studies on Research Participants**

In her dissertation titled *Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses: a "Colour-First" Compositional Approach to the Modern Wind Band*, Jodie Blackshaw attributes her fascination to her early experiences in music to learning the organ at a young age, playing clarinet in the school band, being raised in a rural location, and traveling along through the open country—all aspects she links to having developed a "spatial aspect" in her music.<sup>14</sup> Part of her training on the

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<sup>14</sup> Richard B. Miles et al., "Peace Dancer," in *Essay. In Teaching Music through Performance in Band 12*, vol. 12 (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2021), 588–97.

organ included improvisatory experimentation—a feature that also presents in her compositions. Blackshaw creates a detailed framework to justify her “colour-first” approach to composing in which tone color is the germinal idea (versus melody or rhythm) that guides all musical decisions throughout her entire process stating: “A composer’s creative approach is guided by an overarching fascination with instrumental tone colors from the outset of their creative process.” She continues by stating that the development of the wind band and its repertoire is justification for her self-proclaimed color-first approach. She states:

Most composers who write for apprenticing wind bands adhere to globally established educational parameters pertaining to the musical elements of rhythm, instrumentation, harmonic considerations including key signature, form, phrase length and orchestration. The result is a plethora of similar-sounding material, with limited exploration in new timbres. Additionally, external studies into the composer’s timbral exploration of the wind band at the apprenticing level are virtually non-existent.<sup>15</sup>

For this reason, the composer aims to create an educationally sound repertoire that uses a wide variety of tone colors within the wind band medium so that young players can explore their own creative nature.<sup>16</sup> In her own words, Blackshaw states: “My main goal was to contribute a body of work written for the wind band that explored timbral blends for a range of ensembles with differing capability.”<sup>17</sup>

Like Chen Yi, Blackshaw is known for creating unique timbres and effects within a concert band while drawing inspiration from worldly issues and cultural surroundings. While Blackshaw’s thesis will be used in greater detail later in this research, it serves not only as a

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<sup>15</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses: A ‘Colour-First’ Compositional Approach to the Modern Wind Band” (Australian National University, 2020), <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/items/71dbd75e-7834-475c-ab83-8b742ae1b68b>.

<sup>16</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, “About Jodie,” Jodie Blackshaw | Composer, 2022, <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/about>.

<sup>17</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

firsthand guide to interpreting her music but also as a resource demonstrating the blending of visual and aural imagery with music, a device used by all three composers involved in this study.

In his dissertation entitled *The Composer-Conductor: An Examination of the Relationship and Connection between Two Disciplines*, Zachary Friedman interviews 16 composer/conductors about the relationship between the two media, for which he interviewed Erika Svanoe about her career as a conductor and composer.<sup>18</sup> Svanoe believes that her training in conducting has informed her composing, as the composers she studied in conducting have influenced her writing.

Friedman and Svanoe discussed the extent of a conductor's artistic license when conducting another composer's piece. Svanoe mentions that if a composer wants something done a certain way, they must put it on the page. However, if the composer does not specify something, the conductor can make artistic decisions. They also discuss the differences between the priorities of a composer and a conductor. While a conductor's priority is to get the best live performance of a piece in one take, a composer can edit and make changes until a deadline. They compare the relationship between a composer and a conductor to that between a choreographer and dancer, or a playwright and director.<sup>19</sup> By exploring the relationship between conducting and composing, Svanoe's practical approach to writing is grounded in years of experience in knowing what students and an ensemble can play. Blackshaw's and Jolley's approaches to composition are equally informed by pedagogical experiences and a practical awareness of the intended performers while maintaining their own timbral identities that challenge the traditional wind band sound.

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<sup>18</sup> Zachary Jacob Friedland, "The Composer-Conductor: An Examination of the Relationship and Connection between Two Disciplines" (2018).

<sup>19</sup> Friedland.

## Women in Music

"If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make any sound? If women composers wrote beautiful music throughout history but were ignored or suppressed by society, did they exist?" Derived from an article about women composers, Julia Brummel uses this quote in her paper titled, *The Woman Composer: Culture and Social Ideologies Behind Her Success in Music Composition*, to capture the vast historical underrepresentation and marginalization of women in music composition. The quote highlights that while many female composers may have created exceptional music in the past, their work often went unnoticed or was deliberately stifled, resulting in a lack of evidence to validate their contributions. The paper acknowledges women composers' numerous challenges, including societal expectations that discouraged them from pursuing careers in composition, limited access to education and training, and gender biases they had to overcome.

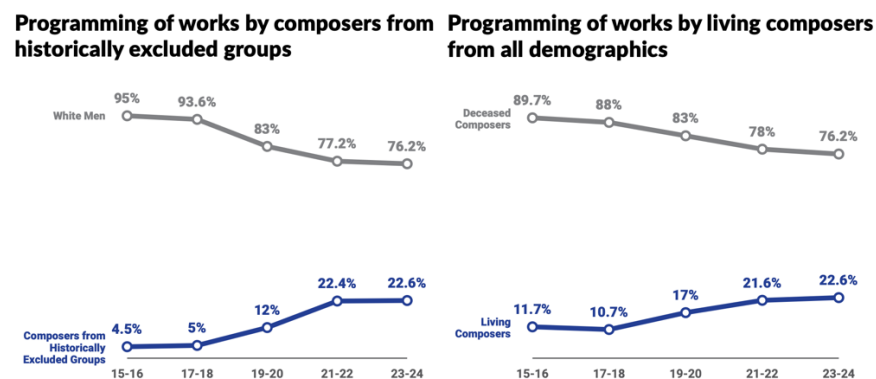
However, despite these obstacles, the paper also emphasizes women's progress in music. It acknowledges that women from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities have strived for recognition and equality in music composition. With an ever-evolving society, gender and cultural norms have gradually increased opportunities for women in music over time to allow women to slowly overcome historical biases and stereotypes.<sup>20</sup> The historical progress of women in composition has evolved not because of men paving the way, but rather by women who have carved their path by rejecting societal and compositional norms and inserting their unique voices into the repertoire regardless of barriers.

To gauge the visibility and significance of minority and underrepresented composers, the Institute for Composer Diversity (ICD) annually releases two sets of data—one that outlines the

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<sup>20</sup> Julia K. Brummel, "The Woman Composer: Culture and Social Ideologies Behind Her Success in Music Composition" (The Research and Scholarship Symposium, Cedarville University, 2015).

performance frequency of orchestral compositions across the nation and the other the presence of minority and underrepresented composers on state repertoire lists for secondary schools. The 2023-2024 Orchestra Repertoire report states that programming of historically marginalized and excluded composers—women, non-binary individuals, and composers of color—within professional orchestras nationwide increased from 22.4% in the 2021-2022 report to 22.6% in the 2023-2024 season. This most recent report also indicates that, of the 212 U.S. orchestras surveyed during this season, the percentage of living composers is 22.6%, the highest since 2015. Of all works performed nationwide, 5.9% were composed by women of color and 6% by white women, whereas men of color were programmed at 10.7%. The stark difference in percentage between men of color and the group of women composers alone further illustrates a continued disparity in programming.<sup>21</sup>

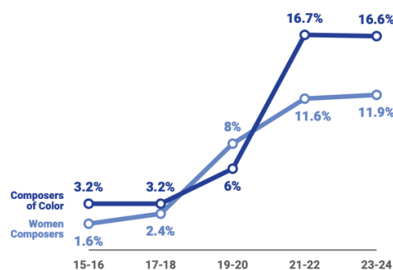


**Figure 2:** The programming of works by composers from historically excluded groups has persisted at over 22% for the third year in a row.

**Figure 3:** The programming of works by living composers has continued to rise since 2017, and the 23-24 season stands out as including the highest percentage of total works by living composers since 2015.

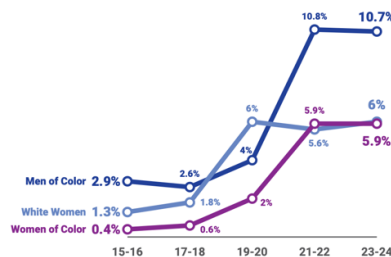
<sup>21</sup> Rob Deemer and Cory Meals, “Orchestra Repertoire Reports,” Institute for Composer Diversity, 2023, <https://www.composerdiversity.com/nfhs-reports>.

**Programming of works by composers of color and women composers**



**Figure 4:** The percentage of programming works by composers of color and women composers has stayed steady since 2021 after a dramatic rise since 2015.

**Programming of works by men of color, women of color, and white women**



**Figure 5:** The dramatic shift of programming since 2015 is tempered by the static programming of white women composers since 2019 and women composers of color since 2021.

**Figure 1.** ICD Orchestra Repertoire Report – 9-year season comparisons

The ICD also published an analyzed list of 27,446 wind band works from 17 state repertoire lists for the 2022-2023 school year. These lists of approved music for secondary bands to perform at festivals or assessments totaled 15,528 unique works by 1,671 composers. On these state repertoire lists for wind band, women composers made up only 3.7% of the pieces approved for assessment, while compositions by men made up 90.7% of the lists. Further data reflect that women of color created less than one percent (0.23%) of the composite lists. The three women composers participating in this research each have selections of their music listed as being on a state band repertoire list: Jodie Blackshaw has eleven selections, Jennifer Jolley has two, and Erika Svanoe has only one.<sup>22</sup>

To date, one of the most prolific studies that has helped define quality wind band compositions was Clifford Towner’s 2011 study titled *An Evaluation of Compositions for Wind Band According to Specific Criteria of Serious Artistic Merit - A Second Update*. Towner’s research is the third of its type (following Acton Eric Ostling’s 1978 study and Jay Warren

<sup>22</sup> Rob Deemer and Cory Meals, “NFHS State Repertoire List Reports,” Institute for Composer Diversity, 2023, <https://www.composerdiversity.com/orchestra-repertoire-reports>.

Gilbert's 1993 study) and examined a total of 1,680 pieces of original wind band literature, finding only 144 pieces that attained a score of 80.0% or higher according to specific artistic criteria, and evaluated by numerous respected figures in the field.<sup>23</sup> Of the 1,680 pieces of music included in this study, only 30 women composers are represented, contributing just 53 compositions, or 3.15% of the total repertoire evaluated. Among the 144 compositions discovered by Towner as having high artistic merit, a mere two pieces were composed by women (Susan Botti's *Cosmosis* [2005] and Sofia Gubaidulina's *Poem for Large Wind Orchestra and Mezzo-Soprano* [1976]), meaning that just 0.12% of the highest-rated works were composed by women while the remaining 99.88% were composed by men. While the purpose of this study is not to evaluate the works of Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoë against the metrics outlined by Ostling, Gilbert, and Towner, it aims to demonstrate a continued underrepresentation of women composers by contributing much needed scholarly attention to the artistry and achievements of these three contemporary composers.

While the presence of women in music, specifically women composers, has consistently increased over time, the discrepancy in gender representation remains highly unequal as systemic biases continue to linger in programming, awards and accolades, publishing, commissions, and academic discourse. Such tracing can be seen dating as far back as the medieval period of music history.<sup>24</sup> While the road to equity and equality remains an uphill climb, this upward trend is a promising start.

In Caitlin Beth McKinney's paper *In the Forest I Wound My Horn: Studies in the Gender Semiotics of Horn in Classical and Romantic Orchestral Literature*, McKinney explores the

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<sup>23</sup> Clifford Towner, "An Evaluation of Compositions for Wind Band According to Specific Criteria of Serious Artistic Merit: A Second Update" (2011), <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/musicstudent/44>.

<sup>24</sup> "Women Composers by Time Period," Oxford Music Online, accessed February 10, 2024, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/page/1900>.

complex relationship between gender and music. The research examines the historical marginalization of women in music, discussing how societal expectations and gender roles have discouraged women from pursuing careers in composition.

The concept of femininity and, at times, women themselves have not always been welcome in the world of music. Traditionally, women have been excluded from the musical canon, professional performance spaces, and both the composition and publishing spheres; this is merely a reflection of the treatment of women in Western society at large. Such patriarchal tendencies naturally extended to musical works.<sup>25</sup>

To further state her point, McKinney quotes musicologist Leo Treitler from his 1993 article, *Gender and Other Dualities of History*, where he states, “the genderization of music... has been inescapably associated with the pejoration and oppression of the feminine, however that is identified.”<sup>26</sup> Gendered terms were frequently used, especially during the Romantic era, in association with compositional traits. Such descriptors have only reinforced stereotypes that diminish music written by women as a lesser form of artistic expression, ultimately implying that female composers are inferior to their male counterparts.<sup>27</sup> Author Jill Halstead outlines such traits in her book *The Woman Composer*. Halstead characterizes “classes” or groupings of musical traits historically associated with gendered norms of masculinity and femininity. Descriptive terms associated with pitch, timbre, movement, and form have carried inherent gendered meanings of masculinity and femininity and are derived from conventional biological traits of males and females. For example, “low pitch” and “slow tempo” have been attributed to the male gender due to culturally generalized traits of dominance, strength, and largeness. In

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<sup>25</sup> Caitlin Beth McKinney, “‘In the Forest I Wound My Horn:’ Studies in the Gender Semiotics of Horn in Classical and Romantic Orchestral Literature,” in *Studies in the Gender Semiotics of Horn in Classical and Romantic Orchestral Literature* [Doctoral Essay, University of Miami, 2020, <https://scholarship.miami.edu/esploro/outputs/doctoral/In-the-Forest-I-Wound-My/991031456082402976/filesAndLinks?index=0>].

<sup>26</sup> McKinney.

<sup>27</sup> McKinney.

contrast, descriptions such as “high pitch” or “softness” are more aligned with the female gender and the assumed correlations to delicacy, lightness, or emotional sensitivity. Such classifications demonstrate how the perception of musical sounds can be subconsciously ingrained as societal expectations of masculinity and femininity. Figure 2 outlines Halstead’s gender classes and various musical characteristics historically linked to binary gender associations.

| Source          | Male             | Female         |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Body size       | Large            | Small          |
| Body size       | Dominant         | Submissive     |
| Body size/voice | Harsh sounds     | Mild sounds    |
| Body size/voice | Booming sonority | Soft sonority  |
| Body size       | Large gestures   | Small gestures |
| Body size       | Slow, sluggish   | Quick, agile   |
| Body Type       | Hard, angular    | Soft, rounded  |
| Body Type       | Strong           | Weak           |
| Sexuality       | Active           | Passive        |
| Sexuality       | Striving         | Yielding       |
| Sexuality       | External         | Internal       |
| Psychology      | Complex          | Simple         |
| Psychology      | Transcendent     | Bodily         |
| Psychology      | Separation       | Continuance    |
| Psychology      | Abstract         | Tangible       |
| Tradition       | Norm             | Other          |

**Figure 2.** Halstead's gender equivalence classes in music

McKinney’s paper takes the concept of emotionality in music that became prominent during the Romantic era and how expressing emotion posed challenges to the established patriarchy, with feminization seen as a threat. The creation of absolute music was a response by male composers and musicologists to give themselves validity to write emotionally charged music and to avoid the label of being too feminine. The term “absolute music” is attributed to music critic Eduard Hanslick, who states in his 1854 treatise *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, or *The Musically Beautiful*, that music cannot represent feelings.

The initial force of a composition is the invention of some definite theme, and not the desire to describe a given emotion by musical means...The beauty of an independent and

simple theme appeals to our aesthetic feeling with that directness, which tolerates no explanation, except, perhaps, that of its inherent fitness and the harmony of parts, to the exclusion of any alien factor. It pleases for its own sake, like an arabesque, a column, or some spontaneous product of nature—a leaf or a flower.<sup>28</sup>

Absolute music strove to establish the idea of music being written for its own sake, whereas composition was a means of working through formal problems.<sup>29</sup> Composers and proponents of absolute music would argue that any form of expression in composition should come from the music's form and structure, not from one's emotionality connected to a story.

Philosophically, the theory of absolute music would set composers of the genre apart by putting them at the highest and ultimate level of thinking. A problematic basis of idealism was created that put the male composers of absolute music in a position of higher power and transcendence. Absolute music became a consecrated ideal, putting those capable of producing music of such sophistication akin to godliness, further separating male and female composers of the time, as only men could be elevated to the status in line with godhood.<sup>30</sup>

As the twentieth century began, new styles of music like Neoclassicism and atonality became popular. As these new styles emerged, music moved further away from the intense emotionality of the Romantic Era. In this new modernist era of music, public attitudes and perceptions of both women in music and feminine qualities became increasingly ambivalent. While there was increased support, many displayed a strong disdain for the changing landscape. As compositional practices (and composition, in general) expanded with experimentation into

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<sup>28</sup> McKinney.  
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Sanna Pederson, "Defining the Term 'Absolute Music' Historically," *Music and Letters* 90, no. 2 (2009): 240–62, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcp009>.

<sup>30</sup> McKinney, "'In the Forest I Wound My Horn:' Studies in the Gender Semiotics of Horn in Classical and Romantic Orchestral Literature."

Neoclassicism, so did the opportunities for women to compose, further challenging gender stereotypes found in the Romantic Era.<sup>31</sup>

McKinney's research into the inherent bias and genderization found in classical music outlines the exclusion of women, based in part on their emotionality, which was viewed as a feminine (and therefore negative) trait in music. At the height of the Romantic period, the response of male composers was to create their own new genre—absolute music—to write emotionally charged music without being viewed as feminine. In their eyes, absolute music lacked femininity because expression was the result of form and structure, versus a composer's emotional (feminine) journey through storytelling. The significance of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe's works demonstrates that music can be emotive, with storytelling serving as a powerful tool of musical expression. Their heavily narrative-driven compositions demonstrate clear form and structure without sounding "feminine," ultimately pushing back against the historical patriarchal expectations of women in music.

In her book *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, author Heather Laing discussed the man's soul compared to that of a woman's in the nineteenth century. According to Laing, a man's soul was split into two categories—masculinity and femininity. While men, by their natural physiology, were masculine, they could have a feminine side; yet they must be in complete control of their feminine soul by displaying masculine qualities of strength, rigor, and virility. "Masculine strength allowed the male artist to experience the most extreme perceptions of a feminine soul. He was, therefore, seen to transcend and sublimate the denigrated biology that still bound women inextricably to "procreative and domestic duties which would take up all their (limited) energy." Laing further states, "Patriarchy

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<sup>31</sup> McKinney.

must take control of subversive elements of femininity in order to define its own superior power.”<sup>32</sup> Laing’s findings lend permission to contemporary composers—especially female composers— by allowing expressivity and emotional narratives without the gendered assumptions that would have historically excluded them from being considered a serious voice in the industry.

The longstanding masculine dominance over art underscores the importance of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe’s work, in part due to their expressive and emotionally compelling narrative concepts. Their “subversive elements” and aspects of femininity found within their music include deep expressive ranges, drama, and lyrical sensitivities, among others: traits that would have conventionally dismissed their music as too feminine and artistically inferior. As society’s expectations of gendered norms continue to evolve and become more accepting of works by women composers, Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe have been able to challenge patriarchal assumptions with their collection of serious and widely recognized works for wind band.

In a Music Educator’s Journal article from May 1984 titled *The Uphill Climb of Women in American Music: Conductors and Composers*, Mary Hinley outlines difficulties encountered by women as conductors and composers throughout history. Hinley states, “Females were taught traditionally to exhibit less aggressive, more sedate behavior.” She continues by stating that many women had to compensate and began to adopt overly masculine personalities to be respected in the same light as their male counterparts. Her article outlines that women have faced formidable challenges in the music field, notably in conducting, where the scarcity of opportunities presented a significant obstacle. History shows that some women scaled this barrier

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<sup>32</sup> Heather Laing, *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman’s Film* (Ashgate Publishing, 2007).

by establishing and leading their own orchestras rather than trying to establish themselves among organizations that had always been run by men.

Hinley's article states that although major symphonic orchestras lacked female conductors, there were encouraging signs throughout the industry. Women began to be admitted as doctoral conducting candidates in prestigious programs such as Juilliard, and women began to be offered guest invitations to major symphonic orchestras in the United States. The presence of women conductors began to gain traction, as demonstrated by the front-page headlines in the *New York Times* when conductor Margaret Hill substitute-conducted in Carnegie Hall for an ailing George Solti in 1977. Her point that women had fewer opportunities than men is further exacerbated by stating that at the time of publication of her article in *MEJ* in 1984, no major symphonic orchestras at the time had lead women conductors, although few had associate conductors.

In her article, Hinley distinguishes conductors from composers to emphasize that while many have shared experiences in the field of music, there are varying challenges posed by the two fields. "Women composers, of all female music careerists, had the most frustrating problems in their struggle toward achievement and recognition," states Hinley. Challenges faced by women composers included access to education, securing financial support for commissions of their music, and, above all, having their music performed. Music composed by women was excluded by mainstream orchestras and conductors, as evidenced by the New York Philharmonic which, prior to 1975, had performed only three works written by a woman composer.

The lack of performances of women's compositions further hindered the progress of women composers. While efforts were made throughout the 1970s to increase recognition, the challenges of combating hundreds of years of resistance and prejudice remained embedded in the

societal fabric, preventing and discouraging many women from achieving status as professional musicians. Even when afforded positions, women conductors and composers have historically suffered in status, salary, and opportunities compared to their male counterparts.<sup>33</sup>

### Orchestration

“You could not expand the melodic process more than it has been already, but the harmonic process is standing there waiting for everybody to do anything they can with it.” – a quote by Frederick Fennell from a 2003 interview with Thomas Dvorak regarding his views on contemporary band compositions and how they relate to orchestration.<sup>34</sup> Fennell’s statement suggests that the harmonic potential of wind band music maintains endless possibilities it has not come close to reaching. Just as geographical frontiers need to be explored, this statement grants permission and encourages composers to be innovative beyond the traditional functional harmony. In a few words, Fennell hopes that new tonalities, harmonies, and soundscapes are explored to keep wind band music a fresh, interesting, and desirable outlet for composers to pursue.

Chris Sharp’s dissertation, titled *A Study of Orchestration Techniques for the Wind Ensemble/Wind Band as Demonstrated in Seminal Works*, focuses on examining orchestration techniques employed in works for wind band. The selected pieces for study in his essay were chosen for their unique orchestration and historical significance in the wind band repertoire. He examines the composer’s innovative approaches to the wind band and how those composers have added previously unheard sounds and textures. The methodology used by Sharp to analyze

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<sup>33</sup> Mary Brown Hinely, “The Uphill Climb of Women in American Music: Conductors and Composers,” *Music Educators Journal* 70, no. 9 (May 1984): 42–45, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3400740>.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Dvorak, “Frederick Fennell Looks Back on 51 Years of Wind Ensembles,” *The Instrumentalist (The Instrumentalist Publishing Co)* 58, no. 2 (September 2003): 14–18.

includes a phrasal dissection to show how each composer uses the orchestration to show structure and variety throughout each piece. Sharp suggests that composers who contribute significantly to the wind band repertoire draw inspiration and ideas from musical genres beyond the traditional realm of wind band music. He further indicates that composers who are innovative and think creatively often incorporate elements from diverse musical styles, which in turn have had a lasting impact on the wind band repertoire.<sup>35</sup> Sharp's methodology demonstrates that form and structure are the result of expert orchestration. This method has aided my analysis of Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe's music by dissecting the music phrase by phrase, which, in turn, provided me with a much clearer picture of the composers' intent within each piece.

Frank Erickson, in his book *Arranging for the Concert Band*, outlines a comprehensive guide with detailed instructions and guidance on the process of arranging for wind bands. Erickson covers various aspects of arranging, including instrumentation, voicing, scoring techniques, and stylistic considerations. Additionally, Erickson discussed the roles and responsibilities of different sections within the band, how different instruments interact with others to produce the best sounds, and pitfalls for composers and arrangers to avoid. Such statements include, "The most effective uses of the bassoon are as a solo instrument and in combination with other double reeds. In soft passages, it can be used unsupported, but it is easily covered by the ensemble. Like the oboe, the bassoon's most forceful range is in the low register, and it tends to become thin in the high register." Another example regarding orchestrating the trombone, "trombones can be used on melodic lines, both rhythmic and lyric in style, their main

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<sup>35</sup> Chris Sharp, "A Study of Orchestration Techniques for the Wind Ensemble/Wind Band as Demonstrated in Seminal Works" (2011), <https://login.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fstudy-orchestration-techniques-wind-ensemble-band%2Fdocview%2F883387060%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12964>.

function is to supply sonority to the ensemble on the lower parts in harmony. One of the most powerful sounds in the band comes from the trombones playing in unison.” Erickson provides comprehensive insights into the interplay among different sections of the wind band, detailing how each instrument contributes to the ensemble's overall sound and effectiveness.<sup>36</sup> The author’s guidance provides a practical starting point for musical analysis used to examine *Soulström*, *MARCH!*, and *Symphony in Blue and Gold*.

The book *Guide to Score Study* by Frank Battisti and Robert Garofalo is a resource for conductors and musicians offering guidance on the process of studying and interpreting wind band scores. It breaks down interpreting a score into eight categories: identifying melodic ideas, analyzing harmonic architecture, understanding musical form, examining rhythm, analyzing orchestration, exploring musical textures, evaluating dynamics, and exploring stylistic articulations and expressive terms. Battisti and Garofalo propose that these steps are essential for thoroughly analyzing a score. This method involves deconstructing the score to understand its components fully, which is then followed by a process they term "synthesis analysis," where the pieces are reassembled to allow a broader understanding of those aspects that contribute to the expressive mood of the composition. The authors proceed to reference American poet John Ciardi, who underscores the reader's role in restoring the vitality and intrigue of the poetic structure after completing the analysis. According to the authors, Ciardi stated that the purpose of dissecting a poem is to enable its reconstruction and ultimately enhance the reader's appreciation of its simultaneous elements.

The best any analysis can do is to prepare the reader to enter the poem more perceptively. By isolating for special consideration some of the many simultaneous elements of the poem, analysis makes them more visible in one sense, and less interesting in another. It is up to the reader, once the analysis is completed, to re-read the poem in a way that will

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<sup>36</sup> Frank Erickson, *Arranging for the Concert Band* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co, 1983).

restore the simultaneity and therefore the liveliness and interest of the poetic structure. The only reason for taking a poem apart is that it may then be put back together again more richly.<sup>37</sup>

After completing a musical score analysis, the musician should be able to discern the distinctive or captivating aspects of the composition and develop a clear understanding of the composer's intended message or expression.<sup>38</sup> *Guide to Score Study*, similar to Erickson's book, serves as a foundational tool that aided and informed both my score study process and analyses of the selected works for this project.

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<sup>37</sup> Frank Battisti and Robert Garofalo, *Guide to Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor*, vol. 1 (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Meredith Music Publications, 1990).

<sup>38</sup> Battisti and Garofalo.

## Chapter 3 – Role of Gender in Music Composition

### Historical Context

The role of gender in music composition has been a topic of discussion and analysis for many years. The conversation surrounding gender bias, absenteeism, representation, and discrimination against women musicians aligns with many of the first recorded feminist movements and subsequent legislation beginning in the late nineteenth century. In 1893, New Zealand became the first nation to formally allow women to vote, while in the United States, women's voting rights were not granted until almost 30 years later in 1920.<sup>39</sup> In a study of English women composers, author Jill Halstead makes note of the significant legislation for women's rights in England:

Married women gained the right to control their own earnings in 1878 and the right to own their own property in 1882. Women over 30 were granted the right to vote in 1918. In 1878 the University of London became the first university in England to award degrees to women; subsequently, in 1919, women were allowed to become lawyers, jurors, judges, and members of Parliament. In 1925 women gained equal rights over child custody. [...] Women obtained the right to gain a divorce only in 1923 – but it must be remembered that divorces were very difficult to obtain right up to the late 1960s.<sup>40</sup>

Historically, classical music—its composers, conductors, and performers—has been predominantly male-dominated. Compared to men, relatively few women composers have gained recognition or opportunities to compose and have their works performed throughout music's history. Few names of women composers are known from the earliest onset of recorded musical history, from the Medieval period through the Baroque. The number of prominent and

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<sup>39</sup> Katherine Schaeffer, "Key Facts about Women's Suffrage around the World, a Century after U.S. Ratified 19th Amendment," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed February 22, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/10/05/key-facts-about-womens-suffrage-around-the-world-a-century-after-u-s-ratified-19th-amendment/>.

<sup>40</sup> Jill Halstead, *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition*, 2016th ed. (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1997).

successful women composers continues to increase throughout each musical era. Oxford Music Online provides a timeline with linked biographies of women composers. While not an all-encompassing list of every known historical and modern composer, the list shows a consistent increase in the frequency of women composers from the onset of the twentieth century through the present day.<sup>41</sup> The rise in prominence of women composers correlates closely with the milestones in women's rights movements and legislative reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This correlation would suggest that as societal attitudes towards gender equality began to evolve and opportunities for women began to expand, there was a concurrent increase in the participation of women in the field of composition.

The research gathered and published by Jill Halstead in her book, *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition*, indicates that many factors have influenced the degree to which women are able to fulfill their musical potential. Research and theories that separate and distinguish women from men as a lower class of humans can be seen as early as Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC). Aristotle was the first to propose that the male brain was larger than the female brain, which meant that the male species was the more intelligent of the two.<sup>42</sup> His theory set a neurologically based assumption that men are biologically superior to women. For hundreds of years, this theory has underscored the restrictions on female education and opportunities and has denied the capabilities of women of many intellectual abilities. Halstead quotes a prominent Frenchman from 1879 to drive home this theory:

In the most intelligent races [...] there are a large number of women whose brains are closer in size to those of gorillas than to the most developed male brains [...] All psychologists who have studied the intelligence of women [...] recognize that they

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<sup>41</sup> "Women Composers by Time Period."

<sup>42</sup> Halstead, *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition*, 4.

represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and that they are closer to children and savages than to an adult, civilized man.<sup>43</sup>

This theory that women were less intelligent than men began to deteriorate in the early 1900s when documented academic records showed that women achieved comparable academic success to men. Consequently, as scientists and researchers noted that brain weight and cerebral dimensions did not affect the intelligence of men and women, the idea of biological differences slowly became less widely accepted.<sup>44</sup>

Some scholars have attributed disparities between men and women in music and other professional fields to hormonal differences and traditionally held views of women's roles as inherently nurturing and maternal. For example, it has been suggested that "given externally, progesterone and its relatives induce calmness. And estradiol and its relatives seem to promote a sense of well-being. This may be somehow connected to the woman's essential role as a mother."<sup>45</sup>

According to Halstead, there are common personality traits observed by men and women that further separate them from each other. Halstead outlines the perceived feminine and masculine attributes generally viewed by Western culture in Figure 3 below.

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<sup>43</sup> Halstead, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Halstead, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Halstead, 14.

| <b>Masculine</b> | <b>Feminine</b> |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Aggressive       | Passive         |
| Unemotional      | Sympathetic     |
| Brave            | Nurturant       |
| Decisive         | Friendly        |
| Independent      | Yielding        |
| Assertive        | Shy             |
| Strong           | Childlike       |
| Analytical       | Intuitive       |
| Dominant         | Submissive      |
| Initiative       | Sensitive       |

**Figure 3.** Commonly perceived male/female personality traits<sup>46</sup>

In the Romantic era, musical discourse attributed certain qualities to compositions based on gendered associations. Male-associated terms like "clarity, system, understandability, strength, vigor, power, reason, manliness" contrasted with feminine traits such as "softness, roundedness, elegance, charm, and grace." Female-linked compositions often showcased characteristics like chromaticism, ornamentation, elaboration, improvisation, and variation, implying that stylistic differences and aesthetic language have historically minimized compositions written by women as decorative or less serious than their male counterparts. Melodies deemed feminine were commonly described as tuneful, simple, and employing "modest scales" within contemporary musical discussions.<sup>47</sup> With its departure from conventional harmony and melody, chromaticism mirrored the complexities of human emotion and expression, qualities commonly linked to femininity, while ornamentations added elegance,

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<sup>46</sup> Halstead, 37.

<sup>47</sup> McKinney, "'In the Forest I Wound My Horn:’ Studies in the Gender Semiotics of Horn in Classical and Romantic Orchestral Literature."

charm, and refinement to compositions. Gendered descriptors used in musical analysis have only reinforced stereotypes about women's roles as nurturing, expressive, and emotionally sensitive beings, perpetuating the perception of women as inferior to men in music.

The implications of gender-related personality characteristics imply that women musicians may need to exhibit behaviors similar to those of men and diverge from societal expectations of gender to fully realize their potential as musicians or be recognized as musicians of the same caliber as men.<sup>48</sup> Traditional explanations of physical and physiological differences between the two sexes have long been accepted as the fundamental reason for men's greater success, as many of the masculine characteristics are linked to achievement and greatness.

If a woman composer writes delicate, refined, melodic music in a small form, this immediately “confirms” beliefs about her feminine temperament of which such musical expression and content is an extension. However, if a woman composes music that is dramatic, large-scale, and intellectual in character, this only “proves” that she was adopting a masculine style in order to step beyond the limitations of her sex. Either way, the composer reinforces her “natural” position as inferior.<sup>49</sup>

Women’s conventional role as mothers and nurturers has played a significant role in the notion of male superiority in music. For centuries, theorists have attempted to explain the scarcity of published and performed music by women, and explanations often revolve around the notion of women's inherent inferiority. Gaps in the frequency of compositions or performances are attributed to the fact that fewer compositions exist by women than by men. Recent decades of scientific research suggest there is zero evidence that supports claims that women are genetically, biologically, physiologically, or psychologically inferior to men in music composition.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Halstead, *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition*, 42.

<sup>49</sup> Halstead, 143.

<sup>50</sup> Jeffrey Boeckman, “Labels, Inequity, and Advocacy: The ‘Woman Composer’ in the Wind Band World,” *Music Educator’s Journal*, December 2019, 45–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432119870572>.

Traditional gender expectations tied to motherhood and fatherhood suggest that women are perceived as nurturing and dependent due to their role in bearing and raising children while men are seen as providers and protectors. These stereotypes are reinforced by evolutionary theories and societal norms (especially in Western culture) and have historically limited opportunities for women in music. “Music, when it lies in the hands of those who hold power and authority, reinforces their cultural superiority; yet when it comes into the hands of those without power, it is rendered of little worth.”<sup>51</sup>

Motherhood, or just the potential to bear children, has been assumed to impose upon women certain instincts: gentleness, nurturance, self-sacrifice, vulnerability and dependence on others. In evolutionary terms, female dependence has been viewed as an extension of the imperative that a female should find a reliable long-term mate to protect and provide for her and her children; this situation, coupled with less physical strength than the male, has reinforced the idea of the female as vulnerable and in need of male protection. On the other hand, the reproductive role of men has always been presumed to be quite different and much less involved with rearing children. The male role has been viewed as that of provider and protector, the male's greater physical strength predisposing him towards greater adventurousness and independence.<sup>52</sup>

A woman composer's perceived innate inferiority to men transcends societal ideologies and gendered characteristics. This bias has permeated both societal norms as well as the fields of musical analysis and musicology. One such example can be found in the 1970 version of the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, which defined cadences as either masculine or feminine. A cadence was deemed masculine when the final chord of the phrase coincided with a strong beat, representing the perceived "correct" and conventional conclusion to a musical idea. Conversely, a cadence was considered feminine if it fell on a weak beat.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Halstead, *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition*, 172.

<sup>52</sup> Halstead, 47.

<sup>53</sup> Boeckman, “Labels, Inequity, and Advocacy: The ‘Woman Composer’ in the Wind Band World,” 47.

Music critic and theorist Adolf Bernhard Marx published *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition (The School of Musical Composition, Practical and Theoretical)* in 1838. In it, he was the first to write about the gendered features of sonata form. He refers to the opening theme of a piece as “masculine,” whereas the subsidiary theme is labeled as “feminine.”

The second theme, on the other hand, serves as a contrast to the first, energetic statement, though dependent on and determined by it. It is of a more tender nature, flexibly rather than emphatically constructed—in a way, the feminine as opposed to the preceding masculine. In this sense each of the two themes is different, and only together do they form something of a higher, more perfect order.<sup>54</sup>

Within sonata form, the convention of defining such themes as masculine and feminine was a common language used in critical analysis of music and pedagogy through the 1960s.<sup>55</sup> Binary depictions used in sonata form are further exacerbated within tonic and secondary key areas. Marx characterized the tonic key, housing the main theme, as “masculine,” while the subsequent developmental section, often featuring more lyrical material in a new key, was labeled “feminine.” This conceptualization depicted a struggle for dominance between the two, ultimately culminating in the absorption of the new key area by the tonic.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout history, women and their work have been greatly diminished by longstanding beliefs based on biological factors—more specifically, the idea that the presence of female sex hormones renders women inherently inferior to all men. This belief is often associated with traits of femininity, such as sympathy, friendliness, shyness, and submissiveness, among others, and has been used for many years to justify excluding women from the musical canon. These antiquated beliefs not only reduced women to gendered stereotypes but also hindered women

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<sup>54</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991), <https://www-fulcrum-org.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/epubs/fx719q24n?locale=en#page=4>.

<sup>55</sup> McClary.

<sup>56</sup> McKinney, “‘In the Forest I Wound My Horn:’ Studies in the Gender Semiotics of Horn in Classical and Romantic Orchestral Literature.”

from gaining equal recognition and opportunities. In music, gender bias has further filtered into analysis and pedagogy by characterizing musical elements as “masculine” and “feminine” cadences, musical form, and key centers. Due to traditions shaped by patriarchal authority and misconceptions of a woman’s intellect, women have historically had to adopt traditional masculine behaviors— those characterized as aggressive, strong, assertive, decisive, and analytical—to be viewed as competent or to gain any recognition. The lingering effects of centuries-old practices and gendered views on women, femininity, and biology have led to severe underrepresentation of women in music and the continual uphill climb of seeking legitimacy and respect even in modern times. Despite the aforementioned barriers, the visibility of women in music, especially women composers, has seen gradual and consistent increases throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, signaling a shift towards a more pronounced movement of gender equality and representation.

## Chapter 4 – Jodie Blackshaw

### Biography and Background

Jodie Blackshaw is an Australian composer who writes exclusively for wind band. Born in 1971 in Collingullie, New South Wales (NSW), she was the youngest of three children. Early exposures to music would stem from her father and paternal grandmother, a school principal and a gifted musician and teacher, respectively. One of her earliest memories involving music was listening to records of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, which led her to begin associating specific colors with musical characters. Blackshaw began learning the organ at the age of five. Her teacher, Vicky Foster, encouraged exploration of the instrument and had a way of making lessons fun yet challenging, creating a deep connection and love for music. The organ was equipped with octave pedals, multiple drumbeats, and analogue tones for the upper and lower keyboards activated by sliding toggles, allowing Blackshaw to experiment from the onset of her musical training with a variety of tones, colors, and timbres. She recalls that learning the organ, along with early exploration of all the toggles and switches, was paramount to the development of her compositional voice and harmonic language.

That instrument has shaped my compositional voice and my approach because I was able to sit in isolation in my own sound universe with headphones on, and I would disappear. I learned that the oboe was nasal, trombone was warm, and tuba gave depth. Sometimes they were a little bit flat or a little bit sharp, and that gave [it] an edge, vibrato, or wobble to the sound. My harmonic language was developed very strongly at that time. My color-first language was shaped by that influence.<sup>57</sup>

Organ lessons continued with a new teacher, Lois Johnson, where lessons turned more towards studying and performing challenging repertoire, along with experimentation in composition with a greater understanding of how to build chords. Now playing on a more

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<sup>57</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, Interview by the author, Zoom, May 6, 2024.

expansive organ with a third keyboard, more pedals, and extra toggles, Blackshaw was introduced to complex harmonies and timbral variations, coinciding with her quickly growing musical knowledge and broadening skill set. In her thesis, she states, “With Lois, I grew from being a child who played an instrument because she loved her teacher, into a young musician who was developing a passion for tone colour and extended harmonies through performance and arranging.”<sup>58</sup> As her interest in color and sound continued to evolve through greater musical exposures, she began to associate colors with instruments, then chords, voicings, and eventually harmonic extensions. A teacher in high school introduced her to ninths, elevenths, thirteenth, and altered chords using lead sheets. Accustomed to lead sheets, she claims to have a pseudo-jazz influence, naturally leading her to begin her composition process by improvising at the keyboard, stating, “I was taught to introduce myself to music, and to realize [that] music was a lead sheet of melody and a set of chords.”<sup>59</sup>

In 1981, in year five of school, Blackshaw’s family moved to the slightly larger small town of Griffith in New South Wales, where she joined a local youth concert band. After experimenting with the tenor horn and cornet, Blackshaw landed on playing the clarinet in her first year of high school in 1983. Because she grew up in rural regions of Australia, Blackshaw emphasizes the remote nature in which she lived. Many schools in the area had only one teacher, with no instrumental teachers from which to learn. Students in the community youth band were primarily self-taught, though they could attend annual instrumental music camps funded by the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education. Through these camps, Blackshaw became exposed to more refined wind band music, including works by fellow Australian composer Percy Grainger, and orchestral transcriptions. During her high school years, Blackshaw continued

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<sup>58</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

<sup>59</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

experimenting with composition, with her first full band piece titled *I Had To Do It*—a project to complete her final coursework.<sup>60</sup>

Blackshaw earned a bachelor's degree in composition from the Australian National University, where she studied with Larry Sitsky. Born in Australia, Sitsky's ethnographic background (half Russian and half Chinese) was as distinctive as his approach to teaching composition. In his own words, he "likes to blow them up."<sup>61</sup> In essence, he aimed to provide his students with a wide variety of music to expose them to methods, styles, and sounds profoundly different from their own intrinsic sound universe and compositional style, to witness what happens as the students pull the pieces back together. Blackshaw states of Sitsky:

He said, 'Sometimes the shell you've built around yourself in terms of your sound universe has become so staid and so safe that you can't really know what your own voice is, and all you're going to do is sound like someone else. The only way to find what your voice is to blow things up and let the inner voice speak. And that's exactly what he did to me.'<sup>62</sup>

Breaking down her musical preconceptions encouraged greater experimentation, resulting in a rebuild of her compositional process from a natural and more honest place of creativity.

Blackshaw would go on to teach music in remote communities of Australia. Due to the nature of small and isolated music programs, Blackshaw began composing custom-made scores for her limited instrumentation, again leading her to experiment with various orchestration techniques. As a teacher, she takes pride in her student-first approach and aims to provide students with an environment and tools that foster self-esteem and a love of self through music. She states, "I want to put the students first and not my own ego."<sup>63</sup> Her compositions reflect as much, as her catalog contains music for students of all ages and abilities. Her music also

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<sup>60</sup> Blackshaw, "Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses."

<sup>61</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

<sup>62</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>63</sup> Blackshaw.

incorporates opportunities for players (young, novice, or experienced) to make decisions and to be creative within their music, empowering students to take ownership of their own parts.<sup>64</sup> Blackshaw believes that much wind band writing, especially for young bands, includes a compositional method of doubling parts—a device she prefers to avoid. Instead, she sets out to write more independent parts and to orchestrate the instruments in a way that provides similar melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic support. Blackshaw states, “Performers must be invested in what the music is doing, and that means making their own creative decisions about what was going on in the music. They are forced to be part of it, and not just as an automaton, not just a button pusher. They have to be involved.”<sup>65</sup>

Blackshaw came onto the international scene with wind bands in 2006 when her work titled *Whirlwind*, a grade one wind band piece, won the inaugural Frank Ticheli Composition Contest. Renowned music educator Cheryl Floyd then premiered the piece at the annual Midwest Band and Orchestra Conference in Chicago, Illinois. Blackshaw describes this experience of winning the Ticheli award and watching the premiere of *Whirlwind* as a life-changing event. She recalls sitting next to Ticheli during the performance when the first performer came onto the stage with a whirly tube. “She starts spinning it and the whole audience goes ‘Ooh...’ [and] Frank leans over [to me] and says, ‘There you go. You just sold a thousand copies.’”<sup>66</sup>

As such, Blackshaw is unequivocal about how awards and recognitions have shaped her musical career. She states, “I wouldn't have a career if I didn't win the Ticheli competition.” This pivotal moment served not only as a platform for her voice to be heard, but also, and perhaps more importantly, associated her name with that of one of the most trusted and influential voices

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<sup>64</sup> “Jodie Blackshaw,” Music For All, accessed March 29, 2025, <https://education.musicforall.org/clinician/jodie-blackshaw/>.

<sup>65</sup> “Jodie Blackshaw.”

<sup>66</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

in the wind band community. “There needs to be a bubble of trust that becomes developed around your name,” she states. This trust is often hard-won for new and emerging composers, particularly for composers described by Blackshaw as having a “different compositional approach to our usual happy band sound.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, external validation and recognition from prominent and established voices are often key to breaking through. She respectfully relates her experience of recognition to similarities with peers like Jennifer Jolley, acknowledging how both have benefited from the support of highly respected and influential members of the field, referring to the endorsement Jolley and her music received from conductor Jerry Junkin. Winning the Ticheli competition and receiving that acknowledgement played a key role in legitimizing Blackshaw’s work for wider audiences. However, Blackshaw also notes the challenges of sustaining that momentum and visibility after receiving such recognition, particularly at a time when the wind band was making substantial and notable advancements toward amplifying underrepresented voices. While she remains proud of the trail she has helped to blaze, particularly for women composers, she admits that she now finds herself on the periphery of diversity conversations, as she is no longer the “new voice” that institutions are seeking.

### **Identity as a Woman Composer**

Influenced greatly by both her parents and especially her paternal grandmother, Blackshaw was raised to recognize and speak out against injustices in the world around her. Her grandmother was highly outspoken about women’s rights and the rights of indigenous peoples of the First Nations. As an educator herself, she also strongly advocated for equal pay for women

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<sup>67</sup> Blackshaw.

and fair compensation for teachers. Blackshaw is proud to have inherited her grandmother's courage and recognizes that her upbringing deeply informs her views of the world. Values of equality and the courage to be outspoken on such matters become central to her identity as a composer and teacher.

After completing her undergraduate degree, she began teaching in a rural town of New South Wales, where she worked tirelessly to give quality musical experiences to students of schools like the ones she attended as a child—schools with few students, few resources, and little opportunity. The early years of Blackshaw's career are shaped by an optimistic and, perhaps, naive worldview inherently shaped by her childhood. She even describes herself as “green” and one with an innate ability to see beauty in everything, holding steadfast to the belief that if she worked hard enough, she could accomplish anything. By her late twenties, however, some of the idealistic beliefs she held began to dim as real-world experiences tested her previously unchallenged assumptions, challenging her to acknowledge the complexities and barriers of being an underrepresented voice in a field historically dominated by men.

Much of Blackshaw's career has been dedicated to advocacy for diversity and equity within the wind band repertoire. She founded the Female Band Composer Database in 2017 and is the creator of ColourFULL Music—both widely used and well-known resources to help directors choose more inclusive repertoire. Both initiatives stem from Blackshaw's frustration over the lack of representation of women composers in wind band music. On the ColourFULL Music's website, she states that in early 2017, a male colleague shared that he knew of conductors who refused to listen to or program works by women composers. A short time later, Blackshaw recalls reviewing the repertoire to be performed at the upcoming national CBDNA conference, only to discover a massive disparity of works programmed, with only a single work

written by a woman throughout the entire event. In Blackshaw's view, despite CBDNA having a panel dedicated to the importance of programming women composers, the glaring lack of representation prompted her to question her own identity as a woman composer and whether her career was being limited by her gender. Unafraid of ruffling feathers, Blackshaw utilized social media to publicly critique the highly disproportionate display of programming, sparking widespread dialogue within the wind band community. Her actionable response was the inception of the Female Band Composer Database, as well as mentoring emerging female composers to help make their music known and accessible for band programs all over the world. ColourFULL Music has a similar mission to the Female Composer Database, and according to their website, "promotes all underrepresented voices of composers within the wind band world." Blackshaw dreams of a future where such resources are no longer needed—where conductors naturally program diverse and inclusive pieces to create purposeful and equitable music-making experiences for all.<sup>68</sup>

Jodie Blackshaw's identity as a woman composer of contemporary wind band music has profoundly impacted the trajectory of her career. Found at an intersection of personal, artistic, and societal expectations, she has found that her identity as a woman often places her in situations where she must navigate the burden of representation and the desire to create works of art that challenge compositional norms, all while remaining true to her artistic voice. At the top of her webpage and database of female band composers, Blackshaw makes the following statements to reinforce this sentiment. "Women composers are just that, composers. They think, feel, and hear the world in their own unique way."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, "ColourFULL Music | Our Mission," ColourFULL Music, accessed March 29, 2025, <https://www.colourfullmusic.com/our-mission>.

<sup>69</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, "Female Band Composers," Jodie Blackshaw | Composer, accessed March 30, 2025, <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/female-band-composers>.

*“Men compose symphonies, women compose babies.”*

This quote from *TIME Magazine* in 1975 reflects the historical stereotype that reserves the creation of art as a man’s role while all domestic and childbearing roles are left to women.<sup>70</sup> The notion that motherhood and creative intellect are mutually exclusive has diminished over time; however, much like other outdated views of gender, this belief remains subtle and unspoken, with only anecdotal evidence among women. Blackshaw’s career challenges this diminishing rhetoric, as she identifies as both a mother and a composer.

Above all, Blackshaw is a proud and loving mother. She recounts how motherhood has presented the most beautiful moments and incredible barriers in her career as a composer. She candidly states, “The Mummy thing is huge, and we shouldn’t discount it. It’s enormous to try and balance that with everything else.” Often viewed as a footnote in a woman’s career, Blackshaw believes that motherhood brings a significant weight of emotional labor that deserves acknowledgement instead of dismissal in professional and creative spaces. She shares a comedic and relatable anecdote of her young daughter interrupting her first Skype session with a middle school band in 2006 to ask for a snack. “[The director] is asking me in-depth questions about *Whirlwind* and I’m trying to sound intellectual and composer-like, when [my daughter] walks in and says, ‘Mom, I’m hungry,’ completely oblivious of the importance of what I’m doing.” Blackshaw recounts how the innocent comment from her daughter resulted in laughter and applause from the ensemble. She speaks of this moment as one that allowed her to connect with the students in an unexpected way. She was no longer just a composer to these students but a mom, too. “It gave me a lot of street cred,” she recalls. The exchange uniquely humanized her

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<sup>70</sup> “Music: A Matter of Art, Not Sex,” *Time*, November 10, 1975, <https://time.com/archive/6847432/music-a-matter-of-art-not-sex/>.

identity as both a mother and professional, as the presence of motherhood was not only visible but celebrated, as the students likely related to the sentiment of wanting a snack.

Beyond frequent disruptions while working, Blackshaw outlines other barriers of motherhood and life as a professional composer, including having limited time to write, as well as emotional and professional sacrifices that she has faced over time. In 2024, she had an extensive six-week tour with various performances and residencies planned throughout the United States that she ultimately had to cancel, prioritizing the needs and health of her family at that time. The decision to turn down a career-defining opportunity was multifaceted. Not only did she choose her family over her profession, but turning down a rare international engagement was especially difficult given the isolation she experienced due to her geographic location and limited access to live music and professional collaboration. She states, “I’m lucky if I hear a live band once or twice a year.”<sup>71</sup> While she recalls feeling supported by all parties involved in the tour, when it came time to revisit international travel, nearly every invitation had been rescinded.

This experience prompted her to reevaluate both familial and professional priorities. While she expresses no regret in the decision to cancel, she implies that if a male composer and father faced the same choice, the professional repercussions would likely be different. This only furthers her belief that the demands and emotional labor of maternal responsibilities have unequal consequences for women compared to how similar responsibilities are typically perceived and accommodated for male counterparts. This belief relates to the research of Jill Halstead, who outlines the domestic role of women as a collective group and the disparities and inequalities felt in familial roles between men and women. Halstead states, “It is clear that women from many occupations have had to (and still do) balance their careers and family life.

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<sup>71</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

The difficulty of choosing between having a family and concentrating on composition is a dilemma from which male composers are spared.”<sup>72</sup> Blackshaw is an example of how the role of motherhood and a successful career as a composer can coexist. Yet, her story, though anecdotal, demonstrates lingering inequalities of gender roles as it relates to parental involvement.

Championing a career dedicated to creating greater equity, she discussed the emotional toll of her advocacy efforts being met with resistance, and in some cases, hostility. She states: “I have some valuable things to say and I’m not afraid to push that envelope to challenge norms and [to] get people thinking.” Even though many support her initiatives, her advocacy and ideals have not always been met with enthusiastic reception. “I’ve worked so hard with ColourFULL Music and my Women Composer Database [and] I’ve copped a lot of abuse to those ideals [of inclusion], but I’ve certainly made things a lot easier for some people.”

Like other women composers throughout history, Blackshaw has faced incredible barriers despite her many successes as a talented teacher and composer, to which she draws a direct correlation to her identity as a woman. Gender disparity remains a driving force and sentiment of Blackshaw’s career in both overt displays of exclusion and subtle and invisible forms of marginalization. She remarks that she never considered that her gender would put her at a disadvantage in the field of composition. That realization began to shift in her fourth year of her bachelor’s degree when her professors threatened to fail her, believing she had not done enough to pass. From her perspective, she had completed and accomplished significantly more than her male counterpart, who was not subjected to the same level of evaluation or scrutiny. She states, “They said to me, ‘Being a woman composer is really hard, and we are trying to teach you how hard you’re going to have to work if you really want to make it in this job.’”<sup>73</sup> She describes how

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<sup>72</sup> Halstead, *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition.*, 75

<sup>73</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

her colleague was regularly given advantages when he was afforded placements with Australian orchestras to have his music played, while she was overlooked for similar opportunities despite comparable effort and output. Many years and a great deal of professional success later, Blackshaw realized that exclusion from such opportunities was likely due to an ingrained gender bias. Even in modern times, she recognizes that women still face the same barrier of getting things across the line, approved, and supported because of their gender.

The complexities of identity and visibility of an already marginalized group of women are highlighted by composer Catherine Likhuta's recent global attention. Likhuta, a Ukrainian Australian composer, has received international recognition in recent years, partly due to the increased conflict between Russia and Ukraine.<sup>74</sup> Likhuta's music has been performed all over the world, and she has received acclaimed commissions and numerous paid visits to the United States from leading university band programs. Blackshaw sings Likhuta's praises and celebrates her global recognition, describing her music as "extraordinary and absolutely fantastic," and prefaces her following comment by stating that she holds no animosity or resentment towards Likhuta. Ultimately, she believes Likhuta's recent popularity is significantly linked directly to the outbreak of a war in Ukraine, a point that Likhuta herself has acknowledged. Blackshaw observes that it took a war to elevate Likhuta's voice, although Likhuta's music is worthy enough to stand on its own. Blackshaw alludes to the troubling dynamic illustrated by Likhuta's story, demonstrating how women are rewarded and praised because they represent a particular look, demographic, or culture with a compelling narrative, deducing their success to their inherent identity, and their music as a mere soundtrack of the most recent and traumatic sensationalized news event. In Blackshaw's opinion, the reward of having her music played is no

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<sup>74</sup> Catherine Likhuta, "Biography," Catherine Likhuta, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://www.catherinelikhuta.com/Biography.htm>.

longer purely about her incredible artistry, and likely in part due to her connection to a highly politicized war in a different country. Ultimately, Blackshaw believes it should not take a war for a woman's music (or any marginalized composer) to be played and celebrated.

Jodie Blackshaw's makeup as a woman composer reveals an artist with deep and personal convictions, innovative compositions, and persistent advocacy. Significantly shaped by her upbringing and familial influences, her innovative colorful music and advocacy efforts have opened the doors for others in the field of composition in terms of diversity in underrepresented voices and compositional sounds, all while showing incredible resilience as others have disparaged her music, efforts, and identity as both a woman and artist. Blackshaw is a composer who continues to push musical and social boundaries while constantly challenging longstanding biases of women in music.

### **Compositional Style**

Blackshaw embraces the fact that her compositional approach and ensemble sound defy convention. As such, she acknowledges the skepticism and resistance her work has received, though she feels primarily misunderstood by those who criticize her. Rather than conforming, she leans heavily into her distinct sound that prioritizes tone colors over melodic, harmonic, or orchestration norms. She states of her own music, "I don't play the mainstream game. I never will. I couldn't sleep at night if I did."<sup>75</sup> She describes her sound as one based on tone and timbre with less regard to maintaining constant melodic lines. Her style displays a sense of restraint, space, and openness, representing the geographic nature of the land where she lives. Shaped by

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<sup>75</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

quiet and expansive landscapes in rural Australia, her style draws a clear connection to the vast openness, remote, and often vulnerable solitude of living in a quiet world.

Blackshaw believes herself to work within an industry that, in her view, has systemically and historically resisted changes to anything considered “different” or “out of the ordinary”, stating, “I have this incredibly different compositional approach that a lot of people don't understand.”<sup>76</sup> To understand her views on composition and begin to grapple with the resistance and misunderstanding that she has felt, it is vital to consider the wind band's history and her views behind its standardization and expectations of sound.

### **Evolution of the Wind Band**

The focus of this research is not on defining and outlining the evolution of the wind band in its entirety. Therefore, I will be drawing information directly from Blackshaw's own thesis regarding the development of ensemble structure and sound over the last century. This context is intended to offer insight into her perspective on the development of the wind band and how it has influenced and informed her compositional process.

Blackshaw writes of the progression of the modern-day wind ensemble as it stems from chamber ensembles to brass and military bands, and then to the present-day makeup of instruments greatly influenced by the work of Frederick Fennell. Educational music found within the present model is the result of the school band movement that began in the 1920s.<sup>77</sup> As the school band movement gained momentum, so did the need for music teachers. Freshly out of World War I in 1918, numerous military musicians were given jobs leading a school or community band. At a time when the craftsmanship of wind instruments was unreliable and

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<sup>76</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>77</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

inconsistent in their design and tuning, achieving a good and cohesive sound was incredibly difficult. Arthur Clappé's book *The Principles of Wind Band Transcription* was published in 1921 and was a welcome addition to many band programs throughout the United States, offering a practical and formulaic guide to composing and arranging for wind band. Clappé's book allowed non-composers to produce music for their ensembles that was both playable and balanced. Clappé's writings hold significant value in early band literature and compositional practices throughout the last century by providing untrained composers and arrangers a formulaic tool for providing accessible music to their students. While an effective guidebook, Blackshaw feels that the band world has dramatically changed over the last century. Yet many current works have followed Clappé's prescribed principles of instrumentation and orchestration written in the early days of the wind band's history.

The following is a passage from Chapter VIII, "Groupings of Instruments for Transcription," from Clappé's *The Principles of Wind-Band Transcription*, outlining effective orchestration techniques.

Two, three, or four instruments of the same family are always effective played together in music suited to their character; light, graceful, even florid works for the flute, single and double reed families; song-like and broader forms for the cupped mouthpiece tribe. Mixtures of the different families may also be made with good results, providing the essentials above pointed out be regarded. The flute, clarinet, oboe, and bassoon combine well, and may be employed in connection with the French horn. Saxophones should not be used as voices in a quartet with clarionets, but the flute may be joined with them. They are suitable for mixture with brass, affording contrast, but not too great. Cornets are best adapted for combination with E-flat altos and baritone, or euphonium. Trumpets unite well with tenor and bass trombones, all being of the same family. French horns form a quartet themselves, complete and effective, but there is something so accommodating in their tones as to place them on friendly relation at once with any group into which they may enter.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Arthur A. Clappé, *The Principles of Wind-Band Transcription* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1921).

Blackshaw cites Clappé as a leading figure in creating what she refers to today as the traditional “American band sound”—a style characterized by heavy reliance on melody, having a rich and balanced ensemble sound, and utilizing full ensemble participation with minimal use of silence. Blackshaw’s critique of the traditional band sound, as she defines it, is surmised as complacency rooted in 1920s methodologies, claiming that this contributes to a much larger conversation of industry stagnation. While instruments, technology, pedagogy, music theory, and so much more have evolved over the last hundred years, Blackshaw attributes Clappé’s widely regarded orchestration methods to the creation of an “ideal band sound” over a century ago. The implication, in broad terms, is her view that the wind band profession has become ingrained in expecting this standard sound and use of orchestration as *the* band sound. Blackshaw believes steadfastly that any music that falls outside the traditional sound, such as her own, is viewed as “different” or novel, rather than being embraced and celebrated as an equal and legitimate timbre of the wind band.

According to Blackshaw, the connotation of having a widely accepted method of wind band orchestration suggests passivity in composition. From her perspective, when composers subscribe to such standardization, creativity and innovation in writing become limited, ultimately impeding the overall development of the genre. Blackshaw believes that such use of this predetermined wind band sound has the potential to become engrained in musicians from a young age when it becomes the only band sound in which they become familiar—in turn creating inherent and unintended biases from performers and audiences alike who have only ever had exposure to this one particular sound outlined by Clappé. She describes how such biases remain with those who advocate for new music and emerging composers, as they may

unknowingly maintain their predispositions, having been shaped by a single standardized approach to learning and experiencing music.

Blackshaw outlines characteristics of a North American band sound as one that takes a melody-first approach, where there is constant melodic activity. She says the “American sound” gives little opportunity for rest, keeps the musicians playing constantly, and is grounded in a militaristic tradition, often lending to a highly demanding level of technical playing. The history of the wind band has also categorized the genre into two groups with two distinct purposes: functional music (ceremonial or educational purposes) or concert music (artistic expression and entertainment), with both forms dictated by their traditional roles within the fabric of the military or academic institutions.<sup>79</sup>

Contrary to the sound established by the Clappé method of orchestration, Blackshaw’s music requires performers to “step into a different sound universe,” which she believes is a place many are uncomfortable, and sometimes unwilling to immerse themselves. Blackshaw speaks candidly about being an Australian-based composer writing within a historically North American-dominated genre defined by melody, perpetual sound, density, and volume. “My music is so different from the American sound.” Given her view of her own music as markedly distinct in aesthetic, it is unsurprising that Blackshaw feels at odds with wind band music that fits more mainstream and conventional uses of sound. In turn, Blackshaw has found herself navigating compositional traditions that are not built for her voice.<sup>80</sup>

According to Blackshaw, the wind band tradition is caught in a cycle of a melody-first approach to music, which has created what she previously described as the expected “band sound.” She believes that “we have become a musical society that is obsessed with melody;”

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<sup>79</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

<sup>80</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

however, she does not discount the importance of melody within composition.<sup>81</sup> In fact, she believes that melody-first music is what hooks and inspires young musicians to pursue music. At the same time, Blackshaw believes that composition and music-making should involve more holistic strategies, which is why she incorporates improvisation and exploration beyond “traditional” textures and timbres within her music. To her, if students are primarily (or solely) exposed to a melody-first framework, so begins the self-perpetuating cycle and development of a narrow view towards alternate approaches to composition.

In jest, Blackshaw gives a name to this thought, calling it a cycle of “self-licking ice-cream.” She continues, “We need to ensure that as [students] go through middle school that they are exposed to a wide berth of music. Not just one sound and one melody. Because otherwise... All we do is get the same music from the same composers because that's what they've played. So they produce more of it, and then more of it, and then more of it, then more of it.”<sup>82</sup> Ultimately, she believes these young students will go on to teach, conduct, and compose—likely providing and producing the same scope of composition that they experienced in their adolescence.

Blackshaw believes that reimagining diversity in repertoire begins with pedagogy and that representation will follow. Reconceptualizing diversity first requires dismantling centuries-old norms and assumptions of what qualifies music as “quality” or “worthy” of study and performance. The concept of pedagogical diversity involves teaching in ways that aim to challenge rather than reproduce the status quo, which goes beyond representational considerations of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. Blackshaw suggests that diversity begins with compositional pedagogy. She suggests that those studying the art form should be introduced to works that differ from Western traditions, as exposure to non-traditional

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<sup>81</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>82</sup> Blackshaw.

compositional methods will legitimize a different creative process and produce a world with more eclectic voices. While most modern composition curricula expose students to a wide range of music, Blackshaw asserts that such diversity should be equitable and incorporated from the onset of a musician's training.

### **Color-First Composer**

Jodie Blackshaw's identity as a color-first composer is a major addition to the diversity of both gender and compositional voices in the wind band world. Based in tone color, her music has elevated the wind ensemble and its repertoire by providing and instilling an alternative method of composition—a color-first approach. Color-first is her self-coined method of using timbre as a guide to provide the atmosphere of the music, affording performers and audiences alike a perspective well outside the realms of a mainstream and conventional band sound. Describing her music as existing in “a different sound universe,” she explains her more unconventional writing style and identity as such:

A colour-first composer is demarcated to be one who actively composes *with* timbre from the onset of their process, as opposed to propagating pitch material and then retrospectively orchestrating that material for a specific instrumental ensemble or electro-acoustic medium.<sup>83</sup>

A melody-first composer prioritizes the creation and implementation of melodic or rhythmic ideas first. Simply put, melody-first is the most traditional method of composing. Reduced to its most basic building blocks, a melody-first model is a logical approach to composition that relies on tools from Western music theory traditions, including prominence of linear motion, classical orchestration techniques, harmonic organization, and structural forms.

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<sup>83</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

Driven by an inspired motif, the melody-first approach subsequently places the importance of formal structures, harmonic progression, orchestration, and timbral qualities secondary to the development of pitch-based material. Over time, this compositional approach has become codified in a way that has led composers to a prescribed method of sequencing their ideas, allowing a familiar trajectory for the music to develop and resolve. In many ways, once inspiration of a melody exists, composers are then given a blueprint to follow, and while there may be endless variations of floor plans to choose from and customizations that can be made, the tried-and-true, reliable guide (form) provides a clear path forward to a structurally sound and complete product.

Rather than following a self-replicating and melody-first framework to composing, Blackshaw proposes her philosophy of a color-first approach. While not the first composer in the history of music believed to have written in a color-first approach, Blackshaw is perhaps the first to define the term as a formal process and philosophy of composition. Notable composers of tone color before Blackshaw include Alexander Scriabin, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Modest Mussorgsky, and Igor Stravinsky, to name a few.<sup>84</sup>

A color-first composer builds their music around timbre. Contrary to the aforementioned melodic approach, a composer with a color-first mindset does not begin their creative process with ideas of melody or harmony. Rather, they possess a deep understanding of instrumental tone qualities for which they are writing and visions for how those colors work with timbre to mix, interweave, and interact to create varied textures and soundscapes. Unlike traditional compositional practices, a color-first composer does not begin by writing a melodic or rhythmic idea. Instead of writing music first and subsequently deciding on instruments and orchestration,

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<sup>84</sup> Alan Wells, "Music and Visual Color: A Proposed Correlation," *Leonardo* 13, no. 2 (1980): 101–7, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1577978>.

they are guided by tone color from the very beginning of their creative process. Tone colors evolve into textures, and textures then unfold to reveal melodic and harmonic ideas. Most importantly, the colors lead to the character of the piece.

Paramount to interpreting Blackshaw's color-first method is establishing a clear distinction between "timbre" and "tone color"—terms commonly and historically used interchangeably, yet their definitions possess highly nuanced differences. Nineteenth-century German polymaths Hermann Helmholtz (physicist and physician) and Carl Stumpf (philosopher, psychologist, and musicologist) provided research into sound theory, laying the groundwork for subsequent study involving perceptions of sound.<sup>85</sup> Timbre is a more scientific term formed out of acoustic factors such as overtones and resonance. According to Helmholtz and Stumpf, timbre refers to the perceived characteristics of sound, such as bright, dark, warm, nasal, and harsh, and how their individual qualities allow the ear and brain to identify and categorize such perceptions. Timbre is the character that makes one instrument sound different from another, even if those instruments are playing at the same pitch and volume. For example, when an oboe and trumpet are playing the same note in unison at the same volume, their individual timbres allow the human ear to recognize and categorize the two perceived instrument sounds based on tone characteristics. Each tone played by each instrument has a distinct identity and unique qualities that form how that sound is perceived.

While closely related to timbre, tone color has a more nuanced and artistic definition. The defining features of "tone color" are not based in science or on physical attributes, meaning that tone color is *not* a term used to identify or describe an instrument's sound. The term refers to how sounds (timbres) interact and work together to elicit mood and atmosphere within music.

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<sup>85</sup> Blackshaw, "Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses."

Further, “tone color” should be considered a compositional approach demonstrating *how* composers choose to show combinations of varying timbres. Composers of tone color focus on blending, combining, contrasting, and layering instrumental timbres to create texture; textures that, in turn, reflect the expressive intent and emotional landscape of their music. This approach to composition allows composers to paint with sound, much like an artist uses colors to create the same concepts of mood, atmosphere, and landscape through visual art forms.

Blackshaw traced the etymology of “tone color” to identify how the term has evolved and changed over time. “Tone color” began as a descriptive term in the nineteenth century and went through many iterations before eventually becoming known as a core compositional tool. Musicologist Gustav Schilling in 1837 was the first to introduce the term “klangfarbe”—meaning “sound tint” or “tone color”—as a quality or character of a musical sound. In modern terminology, Schilling is more or less describing timbre. Hermann Helmholtz’s study of sound qualities in 1863 provides scientific evidence that “klangfarbe” explains why instruments sound different regardless of playing the same pitch, with the distinction lying in how strong (or weak) the overtones are for each instrument. Phonetician Alexander Ellis translated “klangfarbe” to English in 1885, establishing the word “tone color.”

Moving into the twentieth century, Arnold Schoenberg published his treatise of harmonic theory, *Harmonielehre*, in 1911, outlining the concept of “Klangfarbenmelodie” (tone color melody). Proposing that in place of traditional melody, composers could explore composing “melodically” with varying tone colors, manipulating instrumental sounds into colors and, in turn, the colors into melody. According to Blackshaw, Schoenberg wrote, “I had thought of progressions of tone colors equaling harmonic progressions in terms of inner logic,”<sup>86</sup> suggesting

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<sup>86</sup> Blackshaw.

the term “tone color” was more than an expressive term or ornamentation, and that it could stand in place of traditional harmonic structures and progressions. Composer Edgard Varèse was deeply fascinated by timbre in the early 1900s. Varèse discovered Helmholtz’s findings in 1905, leading him to approach sound experimentation through a scientific and experimental lens. He treated sound as a mass shaped by pitch and physical properties—interference patterns, frequencies, interaction of timbres—rather than defining sound with expressive characteristics. Although Varèse began his composition process with timbre in mind, Blackshaw has classified him as a “color experimenter,” and not a “color-first” composer. Meanwhile, on the opposite end of the philosophical spectrum of composing, Gustav Mahler argues against a color approach, referring to the method as “mood music” and referring to it as “dangerous ground.” Mahler instead pushed composers to focus on writing themes and harmonies that are strong and clear, much like his own approach to composition, yet ultimately recognized the validity of both as a personal preference of the composer.<sup>87</sup> This highly “Western” view of composition stated by Mahler is one that Blackshaw consistently pushes back and argues against, and would in no way consider his view of a color approach as “dangerous ground.”

Tracing the etymology of “timbre” and “tone color” demonstrates how the terms began as synonyms to each other, used to describe how sounds differ from one another, but have since evolved into representing two conceptually different ideas of musical expression and sound. Both terms remain closely related, with “timbre” maintaining its likeness to a quality or character of a sound based on the scientific and physical attributes related to overtones and resonance, and “tone color” encapsulating an entire compositional approach that combines timbre in varying ways to allow for creative interaction of those sounds as they form a larger musical structure.

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<sup>87</sup> Blackshaw.

Timbre is perceptual, while tone color refers to the expressive use and combination of timbres in the context of an entire piece of music.

A core belief of Blackshaw's definition of a color-first composer is one whose early life experiences with music play an inherent role in their use of instrumental timbres. "The *inherent* aspects of a composer, combined with domain-relevant skills, do indeed impact a composer's initial thought processes."<sup>88</sup> For Blackshaw, formative exposures came from learning to play the organ with its many electronic-instrument sounds and toggles, providing endless experimentation with tone colors, and the introduction to classical music and composers through her father's records. "The introduction to classical composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz and Delius by my father, informed my juvenile composition processes."<sup>89</sup>

Blackshaw provides an expansive list of familial, professional, and pedagogical influences from which she believes to have drawn inspiration throughout her life. Reflecting on her early influences, she says, "I have learned in hindsight that subconsciously I've been drawn to tone color-oriented composers like Rimsky-Korsakoff and Berlioz."<sup>90</sup> Blackshaw was drawn to the likes of Berlioz, whose nonconformity and refusal to follow conventional methods of composing and orchestration in the Romantic era resonated with her, and eventually gave affirmation to her own creative process. She states, "I loved everything about Hector Berlioz. I loved that he was such a rebel. He went against all conformity of the time. [and] I loved that any instrument that was invented at the time, he'd written a piece for it within a week."<sup>91</sup> But it was Berlioz's vivid use of instrumental color that correlated directly with his emotional expression

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<sup>88</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>89</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>90</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

<sup>91</sup> Blackshaw.

that she would identify the most as a color-first composer. “His emotions were very much linked to the colors that he chose.”<sup>92</sup>

Rather than being recognized as a visionary composer, Berlioz’s music was viewed as ill-informed, unrefined, unpleasant, and chaotic, and was widely rejected for not conforming to compositional conventions of the time. An article from “Dramatic and Musical Review” in 1843 provides a glimpse into how Berlioz and his unconventional music were perceived.

Berlioz, musically speaking, is a lunatic; a classical composer only in Paris, the great city of quacks. His music is simply and undisguisedly nonsense. He is a kind of orchestral Liszt, that which I could name nothing more intensely disagreeable.<sup>93</sup>

Like Berlioz, Blackshaw has experienced her music being passed over and misunderstood because she offers an unfamiliar wind band sound.

Nearing the end of her PhD, and after having composed music for many years, she recalls having an existential moment while considering the direction of her final thesis in composition. In the final year of her terminal degree, Blackshaw came across a quote from Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov that she claims changed not only her trajectory of research but also her entire approach to composition. She had previously understood her creative impulse as one that experiments with color yet came to discover a more nuanced explanation of color itself. “It was a single quote from Rimsky-Korsakov that made me [recognize that I was a color-first composer.]”<sup>94</sup>

It is a great mistake to say: this composer scores well, or, that composition is well orchestrated, for orchestration is part of the very soul of the work. A work is thought out

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<sup>92</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>93</sup> Gordon Thomas Sandford, “The Overtures of Hector Berlioz: A Study in Musical Style.” (United States -- California, University of Southern California, 1964), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/302130880/citation/40948577F3194D22PQ/1>.

<sup>94</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

in terms of the orchestra, certain tone colors being inseparable from it in the mind of its creator and native to it from the hour of its birth.<sup>95</sup>

Her visceral reaction was both validating and transformative, marking a pivotal moment of personal and artistic clarity and identity as a composer. “I read that quote and went, ‘Oh my God! I’m actually composing with color first!’ [And] it was that Rimsky Korsakov quote that really set me apart.”<sup>96</sup> Blackshaw’s recollection of this moment was a turning point in her approach to writing music, validating her instincts as someone who begins with color and timbre rather than melody. At this time in her career, she had already premiered her most significant work to date—her *Symphony No. 1 - ‘Leunig’s Prayer Book’*—earlier that same year. She expresses a desire to have discovered this color-first approach while writing the symphony, admitting, “I wish I had known about it (color-first) when I was writing the symphony, because it would’ve made it easier. I thought, ‘Why is this so hard? Why is writing this piece so hard?’” Upon further reflection on her writing, she also admits that “The easiest movement to write [in my symphony] was the last one because it was a color-first approach.”<sup>97</sup>

Other professional influences that have fostered and reinforced Blackshaw’s color-first approach include Anton Webern, George Crumb, John Cage, Olivier Messiaen, Harry Partch, and Roberto Gerhard (of whom she candidly credits as an underrated genius). A lesser-known name in North American wind band music, Blackshaw also identifies Sarah Hopkins, an Australian composer of solo, ensemble, choral, and orchestral music,<sup>98</sup> as someone she admires for her colorful use of voice throughout her choral compositions. Yet another source of

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<sup>95</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

<sup>96</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

<sup>97</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>98</sup> Sarah Hopkins, “Biography,” Sarah Hopkins - Music for the Soul, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://www.sarahhopkins.com.au/bio.html>.

inspiration comes from Alan Hovhaness, a North American composer of twentieth-century music, whom she admires for his eclectic compositional approach and “use of free time.”<sup>99</sup> Other significant names mentioned that were studied in her undergraduate degree include Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luciano Berio, Luigi Nono, and lastly, the Australian avant-garde group “Machine for Making Sense.”<sup>100</sup>

Blackshaw’s former university teacher, Larry Sitsky, has remained a profound influence throughout her career. During her time as a student, Sitsky encouraged Blackshaw to explore not only various composers and styles of music but also various art forms and prose.

Sitsky often encouraged me to read texts by new authors/poets, attend different events including art exhibitions, plays and sound installations. For some time, I wondered what studying different art forms and prose had to do with composing music, but now I clearly see that Sitsky was offering a broad range of stimuli to see what would provide that all important spark. Whether he was aware of it or not, he was stimulating aspects of my (limited) life experience and then building upon those components to draw an original compositional voice from the inside out.<sup>101</sup>

During Blackshaw’s third year of university, she began to see the effects of Sitsky’s inward approach and teaching style.

By the time the third year of my four-year degree transpired, I had the beginnings of my very own, unique compositional voice. The works composed in third year differed greatly to those created in the first two years, and each one possessed a very specific purpose. I see the works created in the third year as a new set of “firsts”; namely, the first time my own unique musical voice was heard. Aspects of my current compositional approach can be drawn back to the composition portfolio created during the third year of university.<sup>102</sup>

While her third year offered new perspectives and a more mature compositional voice, Blackshaw recounts how the same year was her most musically productive while also being “some of the unhappiest periods. She draws a connection between emotionally tumultuous

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<sup>99</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

<sup>100</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

<sup>101</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>102</sup> Blackshaw.

periods of her life and the output of new compositions, placing a link between personal struggles and heightened creativity as a recurring theme, one that she can recall since the age of ten.<sup>103</sup> In her first-ever composition as a ten-year-old child, she recalls feeling extreme sadness when her sister moved to New Zealand. “It really struck me that I seemed to write my best when it comes from this really dark place. I’ve been working very hard to move away from that because I can’t live in that dark place anymore—I don’t want to live in that dark place anymore.”<sup>104</sup>

Altogether, Blackshaw’s musical identity has been shaped by a wide variety of factors, including familial experiences, formative experiences with varied repertoire, learning the organ in her formative years, and an ability to draw inspiration from a breadth of diverse styles and composers throughout her adolescence and beyond. The vast array of influence throughout her career as a musician has manifested not only in her compositional voice but also in her values as an educator and advocate who similarly champions diversity in music in a multifaceted way.

Blackshaw’s music, based on tone color, is closely related to the concept of story. She states that *Soulström* is her only programmatic piece due to its deliberate representation of a story and specific allusions of imagery from Edgar Allan Poe’s *A Descent into the Maelström*. Programmatic effects of *Soulström* include a mirrored structure to Poe’s short story, starting off calm and distant, and picking up in pace and intensity before turning to complete chaos as storm-like forces aggressively pull in the listener as the whirlpool draws near. Blackshaw’s works, outside of *Soulström*, are non-programmatic, instead relying on more abstract ideas such as musical textures and human emotions to create a story arc.

In his book *What to Listen for in Music*, Aaron Copland defines program music as music connected to a story, scene, or poetic idea. He further delineates program music into two

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<sup>103</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>104</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

categories: literal programmatic music (something being imitated realistically, such as sheep bleating) and poetic programmatic music (no literal imitation of a scene or event, instead conveys the composer's emotional response to external circumstances or stimuli such as clouds, the sea, a country fair, or an airplane). Copland believes the latter to be a higher form, as it allows for greater artistic expression. He states, "The bleating of sheep will always sound like the bleating of sheep, but a cloud portrayed in music allows the imagination more freedom." However, he stressed that regardless of any programmatic content, the music must be able to "stand on its own" and that while a narrative or story can enhance the listener's experience, it cannot justify weak musical content or substitute compositional integrity. "In other words, the story must never be more than an added attraction." Music should remain at the forefront and be compelling on its own accord, even without knowledge of any story behind it.<sup>105</sup>

To distinguish between the programmatic storytelling style associated with *Soulström* and the abstract, trajectory-based storytelling found in Blackshaw's other works, I will use "programmatic" to describe the former and "narrative" to describe the latter style.

Blackshaw believes that humans are intuitively storytellers. "We grow up on stories, learn through stories, and develop our perspective of the world through stories and other people's stories. [Storytelling] informs everything, particularly at the start when I'm working out what the piece is going to say." From the outset of her process, Blackshaw begins by answering questions for herself, such as, "What's the story of this piece? What do I want this piece to say? What's the goal of this piece? And when I sit down at the end, what do I want this piece to achieve, and what do I want the audience to take away?"<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Aaron Copland, *What to Listen for in Music*, revised edition, Signet Classic (Penguin Group, 2002).

<sup>106</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

The answers to these questions are twofold. First, it allows her to outline, map, and visualize the direction of the music from the beginning. Second, the answers inform and clarify the overarching purpose or message she hopes to convey. Blackshaw states, “It’s important that there is a purpose to the music. Why else am I going to ask a band to spend hours of their life on a piece? It has to have something to say, and it has to have a purpose.”<sup>107</sup> Through her philosophy that all music must tell a story, she approaches composition with a sense of intentionality tied to a deeper purpose of creating an emotional impact.

From the outset it is important to me that each piece of music I compose has a purpose. The purpose is either aimed at the performers themselves (usually when writing for students), or at the listening audience. I am keen that the work’s purpose be linked to an underlying message or offer the performer and/or listener the opportunity to come to some kind of realisation, whether that be about themselves or an aspect of humanity.

Every musical and non-musical concept for a new piece is connected to its purpose, and its purpose is fused, from the very beginning, with an overarching impression of tone colour.

If this is the case, then an encounter with an image, poem, quote, or even simply a glimpse of a beautiful moment in nature may instigate a creative response because they mirror constituent parts of the subconscious mind. For example, when composing works for apprenticing musicians, particularly children, I seek a purpose that I believe is relevant to the target age group. What I believe is relevant has been formulated through a series of life experiences concerning the teaching and mentoring of children.<sup>108</sup>

Her Conservation Series demonstrates her innate ability to tell an expressive story without relying on programmatic themes. Although cemented in a narrative dealing with real-world ecological issues, she focuses on creating imagery through timbre that evokes emotional arcs. In her piece *Vulnerable Joy*, about a mother humpback whale and her calf, Blackshaw focuses on capturing the audience’s heartstrings through painting the emotional weight of a yearly migration taken by the mother whale who travels up to 6,500 km (4,000 miles) from her

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<sup>107</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>108</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

home to birth her calf in warmer waters. Her journey entails not feeding for 8-9 months until she returns to the cooler waters of Antarctica, all the while nursing her newborn calf with up to 600 liters (132 gallons) of milk per day.<sup>109</sup>

Through a resource on her website, Blackshaw aligns four distinct sections of the music with the mother whale's journey to demonstrate the strength, vulnerability, and resilience endured while navigating the vast expanses of the ocean.<sup>110</sup> Rather than narrating each scene, Blackshaw invites the audience to emotionally relate to the whale's experience through the lens of the extraordinary lengths a mother will go to birth and care for her baby.<sup>111</sup> While a narrative exists, a fixed storyline does not. The fundamental message lies in the expression of musical line, alongside the evocative message and shared experience of love and perseverance.

With storytelling remaining at the forefront, Blackshaw describes a different method for getting a narrative on paper. She refers to engaging with a mental process known as a stream of consciousness.<sup>112</sup> Stream of consciousness is a narrative style of writing (a term originating in literary works) that captures a thought process in a realistic way that mimics the non-linear flow of human thought. One writing with a stream of consciousness allows the mental process to flow continually, opening the door for fragmented and spontaneous thoughts to appear. Stream of consciousness is likened to imagining if you could dip into a person or character's stream of consciousness, as if you were "a fly on the wall of their mind."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, *Vulnerable Joy* (Baranduda, Victoria: ColourFULL Music, 2022), <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/catalogue/vulnerable-joy>.

<sup>110</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, "Vulnerable Joy Exclusive Materials," Jodie Blackshaw | Composer, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/vulnerable-joy-exclusive-materials>.

<sup>111</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

<sup>112</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>113</sup> Liz Delf, "What Is Stream of Consciousness? || Oregon State Guide to Literary Terms," Oregon State University, November 22, 2019, <https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/wlf/what-stream-consciousness>.

In writing her symphony, Blackshaw details a painful and agonizing process while writing the first movement, “The Blessing of Light,” as she unintentionally (and unbeknownst to herself at the time) began writing from a rhythm-first standpoint. The second movement, “Bitter and the Sweet,” illustrates a sense of improvisation and flow, allowing her ideas to unfold intuitively, yet subconsciously. Movement II of Blackshaw’s *Symphony No. 1* carries with it an emotionally heavy undertone reflecting the sacrifice of life made by thousands of men and women from the Great War (1914-1918). The score to *Symphony No. 1* includes a photograph of an unknown soldier, a man of whom Blackshaw lovingly states, “I have come to call him Sam.”<sup>114</sup>



**Figure 4.** “Sam,” the unknown soldier

Blackshaw describes Sam as a figure of profound sorrow—a symbol representative of all who perished, and those who returned home to find unrecognizable versions of themselves and their lives.

His silent grief became a symbol of all who perished unnamed, as well as those who returned home from war altered beyond recognition, to a homeland that felt just as

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<sup>114</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, *Symphony No. 1* “Leunig’s Prayer Book” (ColourFULL Music, 2020), <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/catalogue/symphony-no-1>.

foreign as the battlefield they left behind. His eyes depict great sadness and his pain and sorrow has sat deep inside my heart for many months now. I considered Leunig's words "fade and die", with countless soldiers lying in unmarked graves. I also considered those who returned home. How bitter and sweet it must have seemed for these men and women returning home from the war without all of their comrades, transformed in every conceivable way to a country and a home that in itself, would now appear as foreign as the place they left behind.<sup>115</sup>

Like *Vulnerable Joy*, Blackshaw again invites the listener on an emotional journey without a fixed narrative. Descriptors of each section of music are provided to help paint emotive colors along the way, allowing her stream of consciousness to be seen through a string of mood words found at the beginning of each section. "Mellow (m. 1-36), with frailty and sadness (m. 37-48), broad and proud (m. 49-61), warm, mellow, exposed (m. 62-73), and with unrelenting passion (m. 73-79)."<sup>116</sup> Mapping the emotional progression allows the music to reflect in a similar way to how one's own thoughts might fluidly and organically shift through the complex feelings of grief, pride, vulnerability, and hope. "You allow yourself to completely get into a state of flow," she reflects, "and you allow something to speak that you don't even really know is there."<sup>117</sup> A quote that affirms both a string of consciousness method and her emotionally guided writing.

Unlike her programmatic approach to storytelling in *Soulström*, which largely follows a linear stream of thought, Blackshaw's narrative writing allows her stories to unfold organically through lived and relatable emotions, moods, and images. This non-linear method allows space for abstract thoughts to reveal themselves as the purpose behind the music in which she writes. She believes that students have incredible emotional capacity and intelligence that should be fostered in creating music, not suppressed. Therefore, Blackshaw is unafraid to put complex

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<sup>115</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>116</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>117</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

thoughts and abstract concepts in her writing for young ensembles. “School children have an emotional capacity that is so profound and so raw and so honest, yet we seem to treat them like they don't have that emotional capacity.”<sup>118</sup>

Blackshaw’s catalog for school bands includes a collection of pieces known as her Color Wheel Scores. A Color Wheel Score is created for budding musicians to encourage listening outside of their section to enhance their developing skills of intonation, balance, and tone. The score is divided into teams that consist of timbres of instruments they may not usually play with, allowing for experimentation with sound and timbres.<sup>119</sup> By allowing alternate timbral blends through a student’s creative choices, the ensemble's timbral qualities can change with each performance. As Blackshaw mentions in her thesis, this practice has become an integral aspect of her works for apprenticing musicians.<sup>120</sup> The score for *Letter from Sado* is a lesson in her color-first philosophy, allowing students to experience a different sound world while giving them autonomy in the decision and timbre-making process. “I want students themselves to have experiences where they are playing [and experimenting] with color and making different decisions,” she states.<sup>121</sup>

“Sado” refers to Sado Island; “Heaven’s River” is a Japanese phrase referring to the Milky Way. Also, Sado (as in Sado Island, located off the western coast of the Northern Island of Japan) is a place known for its natural beauty, rich cultural history, Taiko drumming groups, gold mining, as well as a place where religious and military leaders were sent into exile. It was often said that people “found themselves” during their solitary confinement on Sado Island.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>119</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, “Letter from Sado - Conductor’s Notes,” Jodie Blackshaw | Composer, accessed April 6, 2025, <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/letter-from-sado-conductors-notes>.

<sup>120</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

<sup>121</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

<sup>122</sup> Blackshaw, “Letter from Sado - Conductor’s Notes.”

*Letter from Sado* is based on a Haiku poem by Matsuo Bashō (translated by David Landis Barnhill) where language may offer a variety of interpretations beyond the literal translation from the Japanese to English.

*Stormy sea:  
Stretching over Sado  
Heaven's River*

In *Letter from Sado*, Blackshaw was inspired by the depth of Haiku poetry and how it could be interpreted at various levels saying, “The more you understand the framework of this delicate art form, the more revealing it became.”<sup>123</sup> Blackshaw explicitly states how the structure of the music relates to the Haiku and to Sado Island with its striking landscapes, people, culture, and history, and uses poetic imagery and autonomy of musical decision-making to engage and connect students to the emotions and narrative of the piece. To fully understand her intent with this method of composition demonstrated in *Letter from Sado*, this section of her program notes should be revealing:

To capture the idea of interpretation and the concept of “reading between the lines,” the students are invited to become decision makers about particular sections in the music. For example, the opening and closing sections of the piece use the same material, which is a selection of repeated melodic figures. The students themselves decide how to play these figures as individuals, in small teams and then as a whole band. Their decisions include ideas regarding tempo (how fast?), dynamics (how loud?), and articulation (smooth, short, or hard?). To inspire them, we use the Haiku poem; i.e., the opening section invites the students to play the material as if it were a “stormy, wild sea” and the closing section invites the students to play the same melodic figures but this time, draw their inspiration from “Heaven’s River,” or as we know it, the Milky Way. In between, there is an elaborate, heavily textured section that becomes increasingly powerful. The music doesn’t rest harmonically until the whole band plays in unison. These multiple layers of sound represent the many thoughts and ideas that would have surrounded those individuals sent to Sado Island in exile, the final unison is representative of their own

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<sup>123</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, “Letter from Sado,” Jodie Blackshaw | Composer, accessed April 6, 2025, <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/catalogue/letter-from-sado>.

breakthrough experience sending them on a pathway to inner peace and acceptance.<sup>124</sup>

In part, a significant philosophical piece of Jodie Blackshaw's career in music as both a teacher and composer is the pedagogical approach to playing and learning music. For this reason, she typically provides within each of her compositions extensive program notes, as well as conductor notes in her scores with suggestions on how to approach the music, and even resources online through her webpage, including videos, charts, pictures, blogs and more, plus detailed explanations of her music and process of composing that are useful for teachers and students alike. Evidenced with *Letter from Sado*, her blog "Compose with music concepts in rehearsal using 'Letter from Sado'" captures how deeply she desires for teachers and students to experience music in a different way by providing practical steps for teaching the piece and giving physical resources to help guide the process of involving students in the creative process."<sup>125</sup> *Letter from Sado* and other works in her Color Wheel series "enables students to see that they're part of a blended, not a homogenous color. I think that is something we can explore so much more."<sup>126</sup>

She lists four steps, each with substantial accompanying questions, ideas, and resources, to approach teaching creative soundscapes.

1. Compose with form
2. Consider texture
3. Consider timbre

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<sup>124</sup> Blackshaw, "Letter from Sado - Conductor's Notes."

<sup>125</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, "Compose with Music Concepts in Rehearsal Using 'Letter from Sado'." *Compose with Music Concepts in Rehearsal Using "Letter from Sado"*. (blog), accessed May 2, 2025, <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/blog/compose-with-music-concepts>.

<sup>126</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

4. Consider expressive techniques (such as articulation, dynamics, tempo, style)

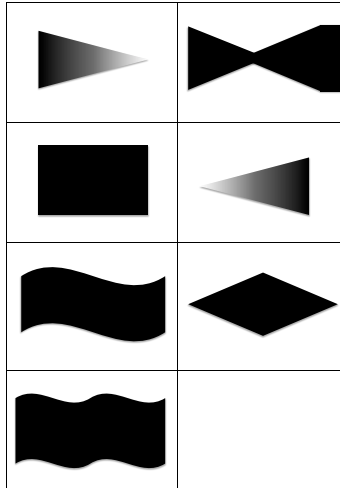
In step 1, Blackshaw writes that the first item to consider when dealing with form is to determine what you are trying to emulate. She poses the following questions:

- Where are we going to start? Are we in the middle of the storm? Are we at the beginning and the clouds are just rolling in?
- Where are you placed in this storm? Are you on a ship in the ocean? Or are you watching from the coastline?
- What shape is our storm?

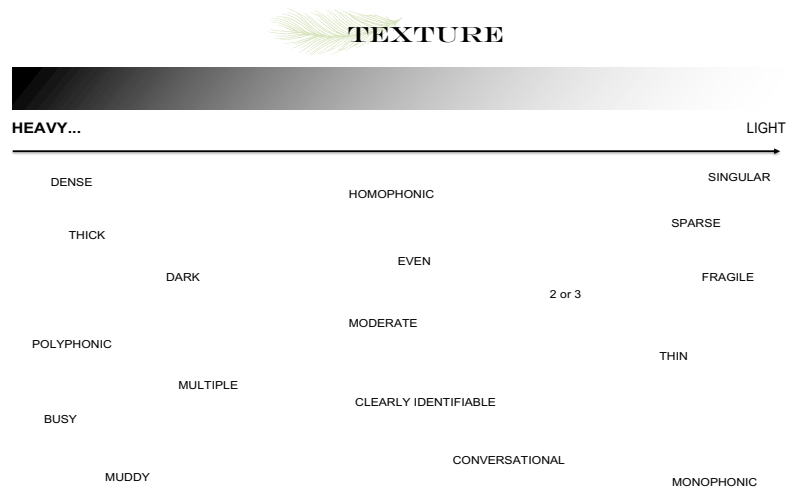
In conjunction with the last bullet point and question, she offers a free worksheet and visual aid of potential shapes of a storm, as seen in Figure 5.

In step 2, advice is offered one how to approach the boxed sections found in *Letter from Sado* and reminds players that not everyone needs to play all of the time—hence a lesson is texture—again providing a handout (seen in Figure 6) geared towards generating the discussion of texture through descriptive vocabulary. Blackshaw lists three questions to stimulate discussion of texture:

- When we are at height of the storm, what sort of texture should we have?
- How do we achieve this – who should be playing when?
- Explore vocabulary words related to Texture.



**Figure 5.** Handout – Diagram of storm shape



**Figure 6.** Handout – Texture vocabulary

Emotional expression and abstract imagery are foundational components of Jodie Blackshaw’s use of storytelling through music. Through her narrative music, Blackshaw connects purpose to the stories her music tells by depicting real-world issues and other art forms, such as poetry, as a guide to build mood, atmosphere, and emotional maturity. Techniques such as a stream of consciousness and built-in performer autonomy provide a student-centered

approach to music-making, inviting players and audiences to engage in an expressive and colorful journey through music.

Blackshaw's approach to writing for a wind band is one of excited curiosity, wonderfully captured with an immediate response: "Oh fun! What can we explore?" When approaching a new composition, she takes into consideration three overarching themes: tone color exploration, emotionality, and pedagogical inclusivity. At the core of Blackshaw's identity as a musician, and the thread that connects every facet of her compositional, pedagogical, and educational philosophies, is the relentless curiosity of tone color. "Music is very much related to the color for me. They're all intrinsically linked."<sup>127</sup> With an inherent fascination of color, conventional orchestration practices are not a part of Blackshaw's music. Rather, she is captivated by the endless potential of instrumental blend within a wind band and questions traditional pairings, likening herself to Heston Blumenthal, "a gastronomic alchemist who sees the kitchen as a laboratory... [and an] enthusiastic, self-taught genius who turned the world of cuisine on its head."<sup>128</sup> She elaborates with a brief anecdote of someone saying to her, regarding disrupting standard instrumentation, "No, no, no—You always [should] double oboe with trumpet—you always do!" Her response: "Why? What happens if I double this with the trumpet? Or do this? Or make it do this? Or challenge this, in this way? Let's explore that color and see what happens!"<sup>129</sup>

She takes tone color exploration even further and looks beyond pairings or groupings of instruments in her music to viewing each ensemble as a palette of interchangeable colors. When she finds a tone color that she likes, she avoids recreating that same sound in that piece or even

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<sup>127</sup> Blackshaw.

<sup>128</sup> Chas Newkey-Burden, *Heston Blumenthal: The Biography of the World's Most Brilliant Master Chef*, Reprint (Bonnie Books UK, 2012).

<sup>129</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

in other compositions. This idea of a flexible palette is evidenced by the instrumentation found throughout *Symphony No. 1*, where each of the four movements is written for a different instrumentation.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Blackshaw, *Symphony No. 1*.

## INSTRUMENTATION

The instrumentation of Symphony No. 1, *Leunig's Prayer book*, varies with each movement. Please refer to the following table:

| MOVEMENT I<br><i>The Blessing of Light</i>                                        | MOVEMENT II<br><i>Bitter and the Sweet</i>                        | MOVEMENT III<br><i>Reflection &amp; Resonance</i>  | MOVEMENT IV<br><i>The Creation of Faith</i>                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TACET                                                                             | TACET                                                             | SOLO BARITONE VOICE                                | TACET                                                                |
| TACET                                                                             | TACET                                                             | SOLO ACOUSTIC GUITAR (AMPLIFIED)                   | TACET                                                                |
| PICCOLO                                                                           | TACET                                                             | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | PICCOLO                                                              |
| 1ST FLUTE (+ PICCOLO)                                                             | 1ST FLUTE                                                         | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 1ST FLUTE                                                            |
| 2ND FLUTE                                                                         | 2ND FLUTE                                                         | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 2ND FLUTE                                                            |
| 1ST OBOE                                                                          | 1ST OBOE                                                          | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 1ST OBOE                                                             |
| 2ND OBOE                                                                          | 2ND OBOE                                                          | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 2ND OBOE                                                             |
| TACET                                                                             | COR ANGLAIS                                                       | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | TACET                                                                |
| E <sup>b</sup> CLARINET                                                           | TACET                                                             | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | E <sup>b</sup> CLARINET                                              |
| 1 <sup>ST</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                        | 1 <sup>ST</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                        | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 1 <sup>ST</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                           |
| 2 <sup>ND</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                        | 2 <sup>ND</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                        | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 2 <sup>ND</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                           |
| 3 <sup>RD</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                        | TACET                                                             | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 3 <sup>RD</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                           |
| 4 <sup>TH</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                        | TACET                                                             | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 4 <sup>TH</sup> CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                           |
| BASS CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                                   | BASS CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                   | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | BASS CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                      |
| CONTRABASS CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                             | TACET                                                             | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | CONTRABASS CLARINET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                |
| BASSOON 1                                                                         | BASSOON 1                                                         | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | BASSOON 1                                                            |
| BASSOON 2                                                                         | BASSOON 2                                                         | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | BASSOON 2                                                            |
| CONTRA BASSOON                                                                    | CONTRA BASSOON                                                    | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | CONTRA BASSOON                                                       |
| SOPRANO SAXOPHONE IN B <sup>b</sup>                                               | TACET                                                             | SOPRANO SAXOPHONE IN B <sup>b</sup>                | SOPRANO SAXOPHONE IN B <sup>b</sup>                                  |
| ALTO SAXOPHONE IN E <sup>b</sup>                                                  | TACET                                                             | ALTO SAXOPHONE IN E <sup>b</sup>                   | ALTO SAXOPHONE IN E <sup>b</sup>                                     |
| TENOR SAXOPHONE IN B <sup>b</sup>                                                 | TACET                                                             | TENOR SAXOPHONE IN B <sup>b</sup>                  | TENOR SAXOPHONE IN B <sup>b</sup>                                    |
| BARITONE SAXOPHONE IN E <sup>b</sup>                                              | TACET                                                             | BARITONE SAXOPHONE IN E <sup>b</sup>               | BARITONE SAXOPHONE IN E <sup>b</sup>                                 |
| 1 <sup>ST</sup> TRUMPET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                         | 1 <sup>ST</sup> TRUMPET IN B <sup>b</sup>                         | 1 <sup>ST</sup> FLUGELHORN IN B <sup>b</sup>       | 1 <sup>ST</sup> TRUMPET IN B <sup>b</sup>                            |
| 2 <sup>ND</sup> TRUMPET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                         | TACET                                                             | 2 <sup>ND</sup> FLUGELHORN IN B <sup>b</sup>       | 2 <sup>ND</sup> TRUMPET IN B <sup>b</sup>                            |
| 3 <sup>RD</sup> TRUMPET IN B <sup>b</sup>                                         | TACET                                                             | 3 <sup>RD</sup> FLUGELHORN IN B <sup>b</sup>       | 3 <sup>RD</sup> TRUMPET IN B <sup>b</sup>                            |
| 1 <sup>ST</sup> & 2 <sup>ND</sup> HORN IN F                                       | 1 <sup>ST</sup> & 2 <sup>ND</sup> HORN IN F                       | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 1 <sup>ST</sup> & 2 <sup>ND</sup> HORN IN F                          |
| 3 <sup>RD</sup> & 4 <sup>TH</sup> HORN IN F                                       | 3 <sup>RD</sup> & 4 <sup>TH</sup> HORN IN F                       | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | 3 <sup>RD</sup> & 4 <sup>TH</sup> HORN IN F                          |
| TROMBONE 1                                                                        | TROMBONE 1                                                        | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | TROMBONE 1                                                           |
| TROMBONE 2                                                                        | TROMBONE 2                                                        | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | TROMBONE 2                                                           |
| BASS TROMBONE                                                                     | TACET                                                             | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | BASS TROMBONE                                                        |
| EUPHONIUM                                                                         | EUPHONIUM                                                         | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | EUPHONIUM                                                            |
| TUBA                                                                              | TUBA                                                              | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | TUBA                                                                 |
| DOUBLE BASS                                                                       | DOUBLE BASS                                                       | S.A.T.B. ENSEMBLE CHOIR                            | DOUBLE BASS                                                          |
| PERCUSSION 1: XYLOPHONE, VIBRAPHONE, HIGH & LOW CONGA                             | PERCUSSION 1: VIBRAPHONE                                          | PERCUSSION 1: VIBRAPHONE                           | PERCUSSION 1: XYLOPHONE, VIBRAPHONE, CLAVES                          |
| PERCUSSION 2: GLOCKENSPIEL, BONGO, LARGE CONGA, SMALL & MEDIUM TOM, CRASH CYMBALS | PERCUSSION 2: GLOCKENSPIEL                                        | PERCUSSION 2: PEDAL GLOCKENSPIEL                   | PERCUSSION 2: GLOCKENSPIEL, MARIMBA, CONCERT BASS DRUM               |
| PERCUSSION 3: SUSPENDED CYMBAL, MEDIUM & LOW TOM, TAMBOURINE                      | PERCUSSION 3: 28" TIMPANI, CROTALES (WITH BOW)*, SUSPENDED CYMBAL | PERCUSSION 3: MARIMBA                              | PERCUSSION 3: MARIMBA, SUSPENDED CYMBAL, CRASH CYMBALS               |
| PERCUSSION 4: TAM TAM, CONCERT BASS DRUM, SUSPENDED CYMBAL                        | PERCUSSION 4: TACET                                               | PERCUSSION 4: VIBRAPHONE                           | PERCUSSION 4: VIBRAPHONE, GLOCKENSPIEL, TAMBOURINE                   |
| TACET                                                                             | TACET                                                             | PERCUSSION 5: TAM-TAM                              | TACET                                                                |
| TIMPANI                                                                           | TIMPANI, CROTALES (WITH BOW)*                                     | TIMPANI, SUSPENDED CYMBAL                          | TIMPANI, SUSPENDED CYMBAL, CROTALES (WITH BOW & MALLETS), SNARE DRUM |
|                                                                                   | *SAME SET OF CROTALES USED BY BOTH PLAYERS                        | AN ENSEMBLE MEMBER IS RECOMMENDED FOR PERCUSSION 5 |                                                                      |

**Figure 7.** Instrumentation of *Symphony No. 1* “Leunig’s Prayer Book”

Experimenting with and innovating new tone colors is not reserved only for higher-level ensembles. Blackshaw uses the same techniques when writing for young bands. She prides herself on taking the same sophisticated approach to writing for apprenticing and advanced ensembles, making all her compositions an experiment in color *and* educationally sound, treating both components equally from a pedagogical standpoint. Her Color Wheel scores are designed to divide the ensemble into teams designated by specific colors (red, yellow, blue, etc.); teams sit in small circular groups during the rehearsal process as they explore alternating timbral blends.<sup>131</sup> This concept leans into her belief that sections of a wind band can, and should, be broken apart. She draws comparisons to her experiences playing third clarinet in ensembles because she got to enjoy playing many instruments. “Sometimes you're with trombones, sometimes with tenor saxophones, and sometimes you're with clarinets. Sometimes you're with the whole woodwind section, but other times, you might be with horns.” She enthusiastically says, “I *love* smashing apart the clarinet section!”<sup>132</sup> To Blackshaw, the wind band is an untapped resource of timbral experimentation.

Emotional expression is another prevailing theme found in her approach to writing for wind bands. Blackshaw’s music always has a purpose and a message designed to resonate with lived or shared experiences of both the performers and audiences. All timbral considerations are intrinsically linked to the feelings involved, linking the piece’s overarching message directly to the intended sentiment, such as sacrifices made by a mother humpback whale. Her music aims to elicit empathy and retrospection, emphasizing that all she wants is for people to feel something.

Putting [the narrative] through the eyes of a whale seems to connect with people, as it did with me. I want to make sure that [my music] impacts the player [and] the audience at the

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<sup>131</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

<sup>132</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

same time, with whatever the message is. There's so much to talk about. There's so much hurt in the world, so much misinformation, [and] so many people trying to hurt or take power over others through blatant lies, purely for their own power and greed. We have to keep injecting love into the world any way that we possibly can so that people remain kind to each other and keep seeing each other.<sup>133</sup>

Blackshaw refers to “pure” music—music without a message—and maintains that no such thing exists in the world, asserting her belief that a composer of “pure” music is ultimately saying nothing at all. If they believe otherwise, they are, in her opinion, “really out of touch with themselves.” While many composers aim to portray emotionality as a feature of their composition, the conceptualization of emotion is foundational to Blackshaw’s creativity that sculpts the emotive atmosphere of her music. Where others miss the mark with emotional expression, Blackshaw hits the target every time, as composing to her means tapping into the human psyche and universal connection.

Pedagogical inclusivity is the third common thread found throughout Blackshaw’s compositions. With a background in music education and years of teaching experience, Blackshaw’s innate awareness of the needs and limitations of young students reflects a pedagogically sound style of composing, and her works reflect ways to make music an inclusive experience for all. Through her Color Wheel series, she provides opportunities for students to be involved in the creative process. Other formats written for educational purposes in young ensembles are her “Composing” and “Collaborative” pieces. The composing series is designed to have the students and director compose using musical elements of structure, texture, timbre, and expressive techniques. Composing pieces were created to lead students through a compositional approach focused on timbre through experimentation with instrumental blends and placement of

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<sup>133</sup> Blackshaw.

pitch material in differing octaves. Titles in the composing series include *13 Moons* and *Sculpturesque*.

Collaborative pieces such as *Lessons from Mother Earth* and *Catango Five* provide mentoring opportunities for musicians of differing capabilities within the same ensemble. In her piece *Lessons from Mother Earth*, which is inspired by a children's book of the same name, she invites collaboration with a neighboring band or ensemble within their school to share the piece with a group of young children ages 5-7. With a singable melody meant for children embedded within the composition, the intent was that the older students would become familiar with the text song, and ultimately all parties involved would share a musical experience together.<sup>134</sup>

Adding to her already extensive list of advocacy efforts, Blackshaw is a proponent of including more musicians whose main instrument falls outside the standard instrumentation of the wind band. Particularly in scoring for young bands, she envisions a space where instruments such as piano, soprano saxophone, and multiple vibraphones are included—instruments often discouraged for young bands. “Because Clappé said not to,” she digresses. If a student in the school plays that instrument, she argues there is no reason to exclude them, adding that the tone color of those instruments has the potential to enrich the ensemble's sound.

The core of Jodie Blackshaw's compositional style is her commitment to communicating ideas and stories through her color-first philosophy that prioritizes tone color and less-conventional uses of timbre that guide the form of her music. She believes that music must have a purposeful story to tell, and she creates narratives that are tied closely to her personal experiences and worldviews. Such purposes relate to cultural themes of indigenous people, environmental topics such as endangered species or spatial Australian landscapes, and

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<sup>134</sup> Blackshaw, “Wearing Tone Coloured Glasses.”

humanistic stories of grief and motherhood. Blackshaw’s compositional style is also reflective of her pedagogical belief in creating music that fosters emotional intelligence as well as works that allow performers to experiment with music through timbral explorations, collaborative exercises, composing, and improvisation. Her approach to composing is multifaceted and abstract, but ultimately a vehicle for storytelling that fills a niche place in the repertoire—a bridge between high artistic expression and emotionality with educational purposes.

### **Impact and Contributions**

*“If we don’t blow it up...it will die...”*

Advocacy for diversity and equity in wind band music is a central aspect of Blackshaw’s contributions to the wind band and is deeply intertwined with her compositional philosophy. According to Blackshaw, century-old institutional foundations have produced prescribed structures for composition, resulting in a predictable and singular soundscape within the wind band genre. Her career has largely been shaped by pushing for a reimagined “normal” where diversity exists not only in skin color and background but also in compositional styles and sound universes. Taking a page out of her mentor’s playbook, she frames the issue in terms of blowing it up. “If we don’t embrace diversity and compositional approach—if we don’t blow it up, like Larry Sitsky would say—if we don’t make it grow, then it will die because it will become irrelevant to education and society. Without intentional change, the genre risks becoming irrelevant to both.”

Erroneous assumptions of Blackshaw’s geographical location have contributed to challenges and misunderstandings that have impacted the reception of her music and artistic identity. She describes being perceived as a novelty as a blonde woman from Australia. “I have

blockages—all these different barriers. I think being a woman is one of them [and] being Australian is another.” Preconceptions of her physical location demonstrate a sense of cultural marginalization not often faced by American women composers, creating an additional layer of complexity to existing biases. She has received questions such as “Do they even have music in Australia?” and comments that Australians are “just a bunch of convicts”—a stereotype that stems from Great Britain creating penal colonies in Australia and exiling hundreds of thousands of felons for petty crimes.<sup>135</sup>

Subsequently, a component of Blackshaw’s advocacy efforts has been that of a cultural ambassador of Australia, both vocally and through composition. When speaking of her Conservation Series and her desire to be embedded into the fabric of Australian music, she states:

I’m coming home to Australia in a rampaging way and really to make sure that my voice stays embedded in the country [in which] I live. I am a regionally based musician and always have been, [and] I embrace that. Let’s use that, and let’s write pieces for Australian bands to play. If people want to learn about Australia or this region, play this piece. It’s not all about this opera house—there’s a lot more to Australia, so let’s celebrate that.

This statement reflects Blackshaw’s commitment to remaining true to her unique compositional style and desire to write music that represents Australia in an authentic and holistic way, despite any hesitancy or misunderstandings that come with how others perceive her music.

Blackshaw’s music serves as a vehicle for artistic citizenship—a commitment to use art to advance social change. In their book *Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility, and Ethical Praxis*, authors David J. Elliott, Marissa Silverman, and Wayne D. Bowman outline the

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<sup>135</sup> Suemedha Sood, “Australia’s Penal Colony Roots,” BBC, January 26, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20120126-travelwise-australias-penal-colony-roots>.

term as a social and ethical responsibility, regardless of the artistic medium, professional status, or experience of the artist. Amateurs and professionals alike hold a divine responsibility to promote and enact change by supporting social, cultural, political, and environmental reforms through core humanistic traits of empathy, compassion, and connection. Artistic citizenship emphasizes collaboration and community engagement to challenge inequities, elevate marginalized voices, and inspire communal action.<sup>136</sup>

Deeply anchored in her homeland, Blackshaw's ancestral ties date back to the year 1790, as her family was among the first settlers. Having lived most of her life in the Wiradjuri Nation, Blackshaw feels connected to the land and its spirit. She even states that she has tried to leave the Wiradjuri Nation but finds herself coming right back. In a more recent initiative coined the "Conservation Series," Blackshaw brings her fervor of music and environmental activism together by creating a set of compositions dedicated to raising funds and awareness of environmental issues such as climate change and endangered species. Ensembles are encouraged to "perform for the planet!" and in doing so, ten percent of all royalties earned through the purchase of the pieces within the series are donated to research and charities to help such causes. Blackshaw also encourages ensembles performing the pieces to consider their own fundraising efforts.

Stories in the Conservation Series include *Feathered Angels*, celebrating the successful conservation of the Little Penguin at Phillip Island in Victoria, and *Living Wild on a Tamed Planet*—a suite based on endangered animals in Florida, including sea turtles, the Florida panther, and Schaus' Swallowtail Butterfly. Also included in the series is one of Blackshaw's

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<sup>136</sup> David Elliot, Marissa Silverman, and Wayne Bowman, *Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility, and Ethical Praxis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199393749.001.0001>.

most popular and relatable pieces, *Vulnerable Joy*, depicting challenges faced by the humpback whale population in the Southern Ocean, and focuses on a mother whale's efforts to protect her calf. The last two pieces in the series are *The Little Bush Buddha*, which brings attention to the habitat destruction that has caused the koala to become endangered, and *..into the blue stretch of light..* which is focused on the habitat destruction of the Gang Gang Cockatoo and other native bird nesting sites.<sup>137</sup>

Blackshaw's visceral feelings about her homeland and culture have produced a catalog of wind band works representative of such artistic citizenship. Other works outside of her conservation series that demonstrate this include her grade 3 work *Into the Sun*, which was commissioned by the Western Sydney Public School Concert Band in 2017. The composer began by surveying the band's students to understand their personalities and backgrounds. Through this process, she learned that many had parents or grandparents who were refugees in Australia following World War II. Blackshaw describes feeling embarrassed to only have a vague understanding of this aspect of her country's history. She became deeply compelled to write a piece of music that represented the emotional journey felt by the families of these students. *Into the Sun* became a vignette of displaced people throughout the world learning to adapt to new cultures, but especially that of the First Nation for which she was writing. She states: "There will always be displaced people in the world, and there will always be people who have to be assimilated into a new culture if they're going to survive. What does that look like, how does that feel, and how do they navigate that?" Through artistic citizenship, Blackshaw invites all children to learn the challenging, urgent, and often heartbreaking realities faced by refugees and the importance of offering support and compassion to those in need. She writes in

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<sup>137</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, "Conservation Series," Jodie Blackshaw | Composer, accessed March 30, 2025, <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/conservation-series>.

the program notes: “*Into the Sun* was written to raise awareness regarding the plight of refugees. Whilst the stories used pertain to people gaining residency in Australia, they remain universal. Tolerance comes from understanding, and it is the composer’s desire for all people to love one another.”

To Blackshaw, her music represents her identity as an Australian woman and artist who is unafraid to challenge reductive narratives of her homeland and traditional expectations of the wind band. More than just a collection in her catalog, her music reflects narratives of the land and its people as well as the lived experiences of quiet, space, and openness that define regional Australia. Though she has faced many obstacles in her career, perhaps the most enduring has been a paradox of advocating for inclusive practices while simultaneously enduring exclusion herself. Geographically isolated, the exclusion she feels is twofold as she resides in a rural region of Australia, rarely able to interact with many people or attend live music performances, and a world away from the center of the wind band world in the United States.

When asked to speak about representation and the importance of promoting diversity, Blackshaw offered her ideas for reimagining repertoire and composition pedagogy. She addresses issues such as falling into prescribed forms and timbres, with many resistant to breaking tradition, leading to repetitive cycles of stagnation within composition. She states, “We have become a very traditional genre very quickly.”

While recent initiatives and various composition contests have called for greater diversity in new music for the wind band, representation is not keeping pace. Dr. Cory Meals published his article *Composer Diversity in State Music Lists: An Exploratory Analysis* in The Journal of Research in Music Education in January 2025, outlining his study on how repertoire has expanded and diversified in recent history. His findings show an exponential increase in

repertoire and naturally, an increase in living composers of wind band music, with a staggering 17,281 works total written by 1,221 composers across the ten state-prescribed music lists for secondary band programs that were reviewed in this study. Data shows an overwhelming 92.63% of composers included in the survey are listed as white males, accounting for approximately 15,900 of the total pieces. The data further identifies that 95% of all composers were male, regardless of race, and only 51% of the total list consists of living composers at the time of publication.<sup>138</sup> State-approved educational literature represents only a portion of all music written for wind band; however, Meals' data demonstrates that despite exponential growth, little has changed in terms of composer representation. Blackshaw makes a plea for even more extensive representation of underrepresented and marginalized composers *and* ensemble sound—a call supported by the most recent data.

Reflecting on the unfortunate irony of her advocacy efforts in a deeply personal way, Blackshaw discussed a potential move away from composing. After dedicating much of her career to pushing for systemic change to representation within the repertoire, and witnessing great strides and meaningful progress, she has more recently found herself in a position of being a minority composer who no longer fits in the much larger and younger pool of emerging minority voices. While she continues to navigate her career as an underrepresented composer, her identity as a white, cisgender woman associates her as one who comes from great privilege. Her perceived privilege, even unintentional, has complicated her visibility among the greater diversity movement. She makes note of the increasing difficulty of maintaining relevance, as she is no longer “bright, shiny, and new.” Her sentiment is reflective of an industry that favors emerging diverse voices *and* one that has embraced the ideals of diversity for which she has long

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<sup>138</sup> Cory Meals, “Composer Diversity in State Music Lists: An Exploratory Analysis,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 72, no. 4 (January 1, 2025): 471–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00224294231218272>.

championed. Caught in a catch-22, Blackshaw recognizes the valuable step forward while also accepting that her longevity and relevance have diminished—a difficult realization, knowing that her contributions have, in some ways, contributed to her own professional decline in visibility.

Championing a career dedicated to creating greater equity and equality, her unapologetic and unequivocal determination to “blow things up” through her advocacy efforts has unsurprisingly been met with resistance and in some cases, hostility. Even though many are receptive to her initiatives, her advocacy and ideals have not always been met with enthusiastic support. The emotional toll of enduring a career challenging conventional paradigms is significant. “I’ve worked so hard with ColourFULL Music and my Women Composer Database, [and] I’ve copped a lot of abuse to those ideals [of inclusion], but I’ve certainly made things a lot easier for some people. I have valuable things to say and I’m not afraid to push that envelope to challenge norms and [to] get people thinking.”

### **Blackshaw on *Soulström***

*Soulström*—derived from “soul” and the Swedish word “ström,” meaning “stream” or “current.”<sup>139</sup> The coined title can be understood as a “stream of the soul,” suggesting an emotional and inward flow or reflection shaped by recollections of internal turmoil and grief.

Jodie Blackshaw’s *Soulström* is a sixteen-minute programmatic work written for advanced band. *Soulström* was composed and premiered in 2009 and published by Manhattan Beach Music in 2020. The version of *Soulström* that premiered in 2009 is not the version available today, as, according to Blackshaw, the piece has gone through many iterations. The original version has an entirely different second half and initially ended the way it now begins.

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<sup>139</sup> “Ström,” April 2, 2025, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/swedish-english/strom>.

Blackshaw decided to rewrite the piece after conductor Dennis Fisher contacted her, wanting to organize a concert featuring all international composers. Upon the realization that *Soulström* would be premiered in the United States by the University of North Texas and what she considers a prominent and top-tier ensemble in the United States, she committed to making it the best writing she could do, pushing herself to rewrite large portions of the work.

A hallmark of Blackshaw's is the use of unconventional or homemade instruments, and *Soulström* is no exception, requiring ensemble members to make and play "the nailenspiel"—a percussive instrument made of striking one suspended non-galvanized ¼ inch nail with another. When played, the nailenspiel should sing. A second unconventional instrument featured in the work is a hand-crank industrial siren, performed by the percussion section.

*Soulström* is riddled with extended techniques across the ensemble and includes such skills as:

- Flutes - roll head joint to alter pitch on held tone
- Clarinet - cross left ankle over right knee, gently push bell of clarinet into left calf muscle to gradually alter pitch
- Saxophone - jaw/lip bends
- Brass - mouthpiece buzzing, double tonguing
- String Bass – "seagull" effect (from Peter Sculthorpe)
- Timpani - directed and ad-lib glissandi with pedal
- Woodwinds - foot stamping whilst playing<sup>140</sup>

*Soulström* was intended to be a narrated story of a lost and desperate soul caught in the middle of an otherworldly storm as he searched for his lost love. Blackshaw abandoned the plot and narration halfway through writing the piece at the realization that her original story was, in fact, representative of her own trauma and grief over the loss of her father in 1997. Over ten

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<sup>140</sup> Ingrid Martin, "Soulström" (Graduate Seminar Presentation, University of Minnesota, September 11, 2012), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6114483ff8096333e8cb65a9/t/62413cb2ddee2d421e176243/1648442546502/Martin%2Bconducting%2Bseminar%2Barticle.pdf>.

years in the making, the individual's lost love was her life, and the storm—the deep depression and suffering endured since his passing.

In the midst of composing the piece, Blackshaw found herself stuck. She consulted her former composition teacher, Larry Sitsky, who directed her to Edgar Allan Poe's short story, *A Descent into the Maelström*. Sitsky's advice encapsulated his teaching philosophy of seeking inspiration through and engaging with literature and visual art. To him, this was the key to unlocking the creative space in which she felt trapped.

In her initial story intended for *Soulström*, Blackshaw recalls a fictional tale with graphic and disturbing images of a man searching for his lost love. Upon finding her grave, the man is sucked into a powerful and massive storm, becoming completely lost, representing the black hole of intense shock and grief following the loss of a loved one. She further explains her vision of this man being trapped inside the storm when he sees his loved one. He experiences a brief flicker of hope that his love is not dead, that the name found etched in the graveyard was perhaps simply an illusion and he can still save her. Perhaps she had only been swept away into the storm and not into death. Images present in Blackshaw's psyche was that of gray people with big lines on their faces, just having had the life sucked out of them as they were affixed to the inside wall of the storm. Thousands of these people are bound on the inside, so near death or already departed, and unable to escape. The man reaches his lost love, wrenches her free from the storm, and they escape together.

Poe's *A Descent into the Maelström* reveals striking similarities to Blackshaw's narrative. Published in 1841, *A Descent into the Maelström* is a tale of a Norwegian fisherman who survives a massive and terrifying whirlpool off the coast of Norway, a Maelström, a known natural phenomenon to the residents. The fisherman, telling his tale to a traveler as they reach the

summit of a cliff, recounts his experience of being sucked into the vortex of the *Maelström* while on a fishing trip with his brothers. The traveler describes witnessing the phenomenon from a distance.

I became aware of a loud and gradually increasing sound, like the moaning of a vast herd of buffaloes upon an American prairie; and at the same moment I perceived that what seamen term the chopping character of the ocean beneath us was rapidly changing into a current which set to the eastward. Even while I gazed, this current acquired a monstrous velocity. Each moment added to its speed—to its headlong impetuosity. In five minutes the whole sea, as far as Vurrgh, was lashed into ungovernable fury; but it was between Moskoe [Maelström] and the coast that the main uproar held its sway. Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into phrensied convulsion - heaving, boiling, hissing - gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes except in precipitous descents.<sup>141</sup>

The unnamed fisherman continues his story, recounting his trauma and experience as the only known survivor of such folklore. As a resident of the local town, the fisherman and his brothers knew of Maelström's predictable patterns, closely tracking their path and times while out on the ocean to avoid the occurrence altogether. Unbeknownst to the fisherman, his watch gives out and the brothers make their trek home, only to discover a whirlpool forming ahead. The wrath of the current inevitable, panic sets in as the boat is pulled into the swirling waters. The narrator describes seeing the destruction and remains of other ships, trees, and other objects as the whirlpool opens more and the graveyard of previous casualties of the storm is revealed. Regaining his composure, the fisherman observes the behavior of objects caught in the pool and learns that cylindrical objects descend more slowly into the current. Unable to communicate with his brother through the heaving and hissing of the Maelström's fury, he throws himself overboard to a barrel and remains floating on the outer rim of the churning spiral, bearing

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<sup>141</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, *A Descent into the Maelström* (Read Books Ltd., n.d.).

witness as his brother succumbs to the power of the sea. Though he survives, the encounter with the Maelström ages him dramatically, leaving him changed forever physically, mentally, and emotionally.

In Poe's story, as the boat is facing imminent destruction, one brother desperately clings to the boat as it descends into an abyss, consumed with his own survival; the other accepts the fate thrust upon them with clarity and composure, diving headfirst into the Maelström unsure if he will make it out alive. The psychology of acceptance observed between the two brothers struck Blackshaw, as she drew parallels between this moment of Poe's characters and her acceptance of death and grief. "What struck me [most was how the fisherman] found beauty in the darkest of places. He found peace, and he found acceptance [in that darkness]. The fisherman's mindset shifts from panic to peaceful awareness, allowing him to find composure and acceptance while faced with death, allowing him to observe his surroundings with a sense of wonder and curiosity. He chose not to resist and instead recognized a possible path to survival, letting go of his fear and embracing the uncertain waters below.

An impactful correlation was drawn to her own life and experience of losing her beloved father—that true insight and healing come from embracing and accepting the things in front of you, not through resistance or avoidance of life's difficulties. A shift in focus from a fear of addressing her grief to embracing the uncertain and difficult path toward acceptance allowed her to escape her own Maelström and live to tell the tale.

Throughout her tumultuous compositional process, faced with writer's block and subsequent emotional self-epiphanies, Blackshaw was introduced to a book by Australian author Shaun Tan, a picture book entitled *The Red Tree*. In what looks like a children's book (but is most certainly not meant for children), the author presents a series of his own artwork and

minimalistic pieces of narrative to explore emotional states of loneliness, depression, and uncertainty. Tan's nontraditional narrative involves a young, nameless girl who goes about her day passing through dark moments, surrounded by scenes meant to evoke despair and disorientation, but who eventually finds hope at the end of the day as a small red tree blooms in her bedroom. Images throughout the book draw parallels to the impulse children and adults alike use metaphors of monsters, storms, or sunshine to express their complex emotions that are difficult to articulate in words.<sup>142</sup> For Blackshaw, already in the throes of her own grief and depression, the images found in Tan's book resonated with her by providing a visualization of her raw emotions. The book became a metaphor and reflection of her lived experience through darkness, with only occasional glimpses of hope beyond grief.

The influences found in Poe's *A Descent into the Maelström* and Tan's *The Red Tree* allowed Blackshaw to not only discover her emotional state and path forward in her personal life, but—as Larry Sitsky's philosophy prevails once again—embrace literary works as a catalyst for the emotionally charged musical expression found in *Soulström*. By openly voicing her own struggles, Blackshaw has, in turn, created a work of art that deeply resonates with others who have found themselves in any emotional upheaval, particularly those who also have felt ill-prepared to face the vastness and enormity of grief.

Blackshaw describes *Soulström* as one of her most raw and emotionally vulnerable works that unintentionally yet profoundly mirrored her own life, in a way making her the protagonist of the work. In writing *Soulström*, she was overwhelmed by the unfamiliar territory of dealing with her grief, which she always failed to understand or articulate. "I was really angry. Where did this emotion come from? I know what anger is, I know what laughter is, I know what the joy is, [and]

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<sup>142</sup> Shaun Tan, *The Red Tree*, accessed April 7, 2025, <https://www.shauntan.net/red-tree-book>.

I know what sadness is, but what is this grief thing? No one's ever talked about this before. It's massive emotion and I knew nothing about it, how to process it, or what to do with it.” The shock and confusion of being confronted with this grief was paralyzing for her. While she knew how to navigate familiar emotions, this felt more complex, deep, and enduring. She notes how we as a human race are not taught this feeling, much less how to recognize and navigate through the vastness and isolation that it brings. Blackshaw hopes that *Soulström* may help others make sense of their own grief.

Although she does not typically identify as a composer of programmatic music, Blackshaw admits that *Soulström* is a programmatic work and likely the only work of its kind in her catalog of music. In writing *Soulström*, Blackshaw was discovering her identity, personally and artistically, describing herself as “quite green.” She had yet to realize that she was a color-first composer while writing *Soulström* in 2009—a discovery she would not make until after it was published and premiered in 2020. Instead, she wrote music out of emotional necessity, attempting to express the thoughts, stories, and emotions she was feeling, resulting in what she describes as “a very honest take on suffering and a very heavy depression.” In hindsight, Blackshaw acknowledges that the toll of writing such a piece of great emotionality and vulnerability is likely not a place she may ever write again.

Notably, the emotional resonance of *Soulström* has become part of the fabric of the Eltham High School band program in Victoria, Australia. Ingrid Martin, the director at the time, discovered Blackshaw’s *Soulström* through a review in the MBM (Manhattan Beach Music) Times. Having met Blackshaw previously while attending the Midwest Clinic in Chicago, she wanted to program a challenging piece of music of substance that her students could relate to and

make “priceless musical moments” together. *Soulström* fit the bill and checked all the boxes she was searching for in this programming.

The potential for creating priceless emotional experiences, along with all the other concepts I wanted to foster in their playing made the search for “The Piece” very difficult. Certain criteria befitting the performance of a major work at these festivals also had to be taken into consideration – a work must be of advanced difficulty and lasting 15-20 minutes long.<sup>143</sup>

At the same time in Victoria, the community was coping with the aftermath of devastating and catastrophic bushfires that took the lives of loved ones and homes of students in the band. Martin states, “I had (mostly sub-consciously) been searching for something to help them through this, too. Perhaps *Soulström* could provide an outlet for their grief.”

Martin writes of the transformative experience during the rehearsal process, describing how she and her students collectively felt a deep connection with the music. Blackshaw herself decided to attend the performance, and through a series of fortunate events and surprises, so did Blackshaw’s mother, sister, and brother, all of whom had never heard the work written about their beloved dad.<sup>144</sup> Deep in conversation the night before the performance, Martin shared with Blackshaw a quote she planned to share with her students before they took the stage. The quote, first said by author Martha Graham—but found in the book “The Art of Possibility” by Ben Zander— captured the sentiments she wished to convey to the musicians before such a performance of a highly emotionally charged piece of music.

There is a vitality, a life-force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor

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<sup>143</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

<sup>144</sup> Ingrid Martin, “Million Dollar Moments,” *Musings of a Young Conductor* (blog), April 12, 2011, [https://ihaverehearsal.blogspot.com/2011\\_04\\_01\\_archive.html](https://ihaverehearsal.blogspot.com/2011_04_01_archive.html).

how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open."<sup>145</sup>

In a moment of astonishment to both women, Blackshaw shared with Martin that she had used that very quote throughout the writing of *Soulström*, revealing that not only had she taped it to her wall, but also placed it within the confines of her composition notebook.

The study and performance of *Soulström* given by the Eltham High School band gave space for not only the students involved in the program to express and process their grief of the catastrophe the year prior, but also allowed a moment for the school and community to do the same. After such a profound and cathartic experience through Blackshaw's music, the students created "*Soulström* Day" to commemorate the anniversary of the performance. Blackshaw herself recalls the performance as the most powerful one she has witnessed, so much so that those high school students, now grown, keep in contact with her and continue to celebrate *Soulström* Day each September.

### ***Soulström* Analysis**

This final section presents a detailed analysis of Jodie Blackshaw's *Soulström*. Compositional techniques, both formal and unique to the composer, are presented, along with any formal structures that lend way to the emotionality, story, and impact of the piece. Much of this analysis will focus on Blackshaw's writing style with special attention given to her use of timbre and orchestration. I recognize that Jodie Blackshaw stated in our interview together that she came to know herself as a color-first composer after the completion and premiere of *Soulström*; however, I hope to demonstrate that even without her now-established color-first

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<sup>145</sup> Martin.

philosophy and the compositional parameters of such approach, her style of writing signals an inherent use of tone color. This analysis will further examine Blackshaw's use of extended techniques and the two aleatoric sections of the work and how the use of these less common tools contributes to the overall emotional impact, narratives, and texture. Through this analysis, along with the extensive background information presented, and study into Jodie Blackshaw as a composer, I am to affirm *Soulström* as a significant contribution to the wind band repertoire and to spark curiosity about the composer and her music as a compelling and innovative voice of contemporary wind band music.

*Soulström* is a through-composed work written into three sections (A, B, and C) separated through the use of two aleatoric episodes (between A and B, and B and C), and concludes with a coda. Written mainly in the key of G-minor, *Soulström* maintains tonal stasis throughout A and B sections. Section C brings a change in key signature, although audibly obscured by remaining aleatoric sound and the siren. Tonality shifts back to its original G-minor in measure 165 as the music builds and pushes to the end. A coda signals the closing moments, firmly planting and reinforcing the home key before releasing a final and triumphant D-Major chord, emphasized through a fermata, and performed by the high brass. As the sound releases, listeners are left with a sense of hope and inspiration after enduring sixteen minutes of emotional turmoil, pain, and grief.

Section A spans measure 1-53 and includes an Introduction, initial melodic material, a bridge, and the first aleatoric section. Blackshaw begins the piece with an introduction (m. 1-4) and the use of the nailenspiel—a small homemade instrument made from two ¼ inch non-galvanized nails, dental floss, and clothespins that suspend from the player's music stands—intended to create an atmosphere of a still, misty morning. The timbre of the nailenspiel may

initiate different feelings in the listeners. Reminiscent of wind chimes, the sound may evoke a sense of peace and beauty, as if waking up in the morning to the sun shining through a cloudless sky on a spring day. The same sound may evoke a feeling of otherworldliness in a desolate landscape, or the light, cold wind felt before the arrival of a catastrophic storm.

Most of the ensemble will need their own nailenspiel. Players are instructed to remain as still as possible on stage and not to begin playing their homemade instrument at the same time as others in their section when cued, as the sound should never be busy. Blackshaw notates in the score that the graphic used to indicate playing of the nailenspiel only demonstrates the approximate start and end points for those playing the instrument. According to Blackshaw, the beginning starts as if you are in the middle of someone's thought, but a stagnant thought with no real beginning, middle, end, or climax moment. "You walk into this story, and then out again, and you see part of someone's life. Subconsciously, the spiel was, 'How do we peer into someone's life?' As if we're an observer."<sup>146</sup> It is noteworthy here to add that, according to Blackshaw, the opening material of *Soulström* was the original ending, but was changed when she later revised the piece.

Blackshaw has been criticized for staying in the same key for so long. *Soulström* begins in the key of G-minor and remains there until approximately 14 minutes into a 16-minute piece. Even then, the shift in tonality is almost non-existent due to the timbre created by the ensemble. The key signature changes from G-Minor to C-Minor at measure 133 (the start of Section C), but the first instance of anything related to C-Minor is not found until measure 150 in a fleeting moment of eighth and sixteenth notes, many of which happen in the middle of the passage. Notably, the ambiguity in tonality from measures 133-150 is approximately another minute of

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<sup>146</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

music, indicating that the static key has now lasted nearly 15 minutes into the music. The woodwinds play a series of swirling passages for 15 measures from m.150-164, as the brass begin to enter in measure 155 with a powerful and forceful energy. The key changes back to G-minor at measure 165, leaving a mere 32 measures placed in a different tonality, although only 15 of those even slightly resemble a change in sound, and in total amount of time, less than 30 seconds of music.

The prolonged use of a single key in *Soulström* is reflective of Blackshaw's emotional state during the composition process. She explains that the decision to stay in one key was not actually a decision at all, but rather a subconscious choice. The static quality of tonality represents the immobility of depression, unable to emerge from the fog surrounding you. While everything changes around you, you remain stuck in one place, and often those who continue on may not notice that you've been in that one place for a very long time. "If you've ever had depression, your life stays in the same key—it doesn't change. You can't make it change. You're stuck in one place, and you can't move. It's going to take an enormous shift to make it move."<sup>147</sup>

Measure 6 brings the start of melodic material—a solo bass clarinet, warmly and somberly sustaining a pitch of G—and the first indication of a potential tonal center as it ambiguously alternates between G and D. It is also here that Blackshaw begins establishing thematic material. Ideas of them usually illicit thoughts of a melodic cell or line that is predicted to be heard throughout a piece, but to Blackshaw, who is not a melody-first composer, the idea of theme is more textural, as evidenced here. The Bass clarinet sets up Theme 1 in measure 6 with melodic material representing tension and release. Theme 1 is a constant cycle of the G (tonic) and D (dominant) pitches, accentuated by using a C to create tension as it rises to the pitch of D.

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<sup>147</sup> Blackshaw.



**Figure 8.** *Soulström*, m.6-9 – Theme 1

Theme 2 presents itself in the flute in measure 9, layering on top of the first. Again textural, this theme is another form of tension and release, this time beginning with a D (dominant) followed by an A-flat that falls to a G (tonic) as seen in Figure 9. Tonic and dominant notes are texturally important here, as they provide a sense of stability, while the pitch in the middle (the C or A-flat in Themes 1 and 2) causes the tension. The effect signals that things are stable, but not stable enough, even as each move forward with deliberate smoothness and expressivity, nearly overshadowing any tension with the lyrical quality of the line.<sup>148</sup>



**Figure 9.** *Soulström*, m.9-13 – Theme 2

The nailenspiels continue creating atmosphere as the cornet and trumpet parts enter in measure 8 by giving a staggered entrance and first moment of harmony—a G-minor chord. The staggered entrance, written to sound as if the players missed their tutti entrance, will become a prevalent motif throughout the work. As the nailenspiels begin to fade, attention turns to a brass texture created by a single horn, trombone, bass trombone, and tuba, this time with staggered entrances of their lines, now descending to a new color in measure 20. The horn line that begins in measure 18 recalls the pitch scheme found in Theme 2, but this time the textured theme is

<sup>148</sup> Alan Lourens, “Soulström: Traveling a Colorful Road,” *MBM Times*, no. 5 (July 1, 2012): 16–18.

floating between pitches of A (in place of A-flat) and G every few notes, and further emphasized as the entire phrase begins on an A and concludes with a G.

Beginning in measure 23, Blackshaw uses a layering technique with brief melodic cells. Each motive begins as a clear 2-measure entity, each outlining a structure of pitches including: A-G (Figure 10), G-D (Figure 11), or D-G (Figure 12). Up to this point in the music, we have already been introduced to the pitch material of melodic cells 1 and 2, but through rhythmic variations. At measure 24, the solo flute and glockenspiel prevail in sound, as their timbral registers at that moment allow them to be easily heard, but also because they are introducing the melodic material of D-G for the first time.



**Figure 10.** *Soulström* – Melodic cell 1 (A-G)



**Figure 11.** *Soulström* – Melodic cell 2 (G-D)



**Figure 12.** *Soulström* – Melodic cell 3 (D-G)

The initial melodic content that begins in measure 23 is written in lyrical lines by a different pairing of instrumental colors each time. The first cell's entrance is by the horn and alto saxophone, the second cell by the clarinet and flute, and the third by the solo flute supported by

the glockenspiel. Meanwhile, the horn, which began their melodic material in measure 18, continues to play the same A-D through measure 23, but switches colors to play the next phrase beginning at measure 24 with an overarching G-D line.

Throughout the eight measures of layering, the texture thickens and builds towards measure 32, yet, instead of a satisfying resolve, the momentum that was previously building dissipates into an ensemble-wide sustained chord of stacked fifths (C/G/D). The openness of the chord throughout the ensemble leaves a sense of ambiguity as it hovers between major and minor, as if the moment itself is uncertain and emotionally undefined. What initially feels like progress—a glimmer of light at the end—is instead a fleeting moment and a reminder that we are stuck and unable to escape that feeling. As the moment fades along, so does the stacked fifths as the ensemble thins out, and eventually settling on a single open fifth (G/D) with the contra-bassoon, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, tuba, and string bass, eventually leading once again to the solo bass clarinet in measure 38 with a final resolve of G-D.

Echoing the mood of measure 4 but with a less somber tone, the bass clarinet regains sole control of the melodic material in measure 38 as they begin a cadenza-like passage. Below the bass clarinet are churning sounds from the percussion section as the timpani navigate glissandi and the xylophone plays a frantic and unorganized single pitch. For a moment, it feels as though the ensemble is about to lose control with the inner turmoil of the percussion, but the warmth of the bass clarinet keeps everything together before giving the first moment of true resolve in measure 42—a leading tone F-sharp to the tonic, G.

Once again, any moment of hope or resolve is immediately taken away. In the same moment that the bass clarinet resolves its leading tone, the trumpet section enters with a staggered, slightly cascading use of a G-minor chord above the clarinet in measure 43, ruling out

any feelings of certainty that may have existed. Measures 42-48 serve as a bridge between the melodic content of Section A and the first aleatoric soundscape in measure 49 as it weaves through a brief series of chords revolving around the tonic pitch.

Approaching the end of Section A, measure 49 signals the first use of aleatoric writing in *Soulström* (referred to going forward as “Soundscapes”), marking a shift from tightly controlled textures to moments of performative freedom. Blackshaw’s instructions in the score read, “This section had no specific time signature or tempo. The conductor cues each entry, with each individual playing in their own style at different times. Performers are to play the passage as written – *ad lib* only with tempo and dynamics. Continue to repeat the figure until measure 50.”<sup>149</sup> She also requests here that “conductors do not overindulge and allow this section to take too long. 50 seconds maximum please.” Soundscape 1 parallels the layered construction of Section A by providing melodic cells to each instrument, although now performed with more compressed ranges and free from time constraints. As more players are added in, the tension in sound rises and builds through measure 51. The slow and pounding heartbeat of the bass drum leads the ensemble to a near-breaking point. In a moment of drama and anxiety of sound, the ensemble lands yet again on a harmonically ambiguous chord, sinking into a sense of resignation and forlorn.

The central section of *Soulström* is referred to by Blackshaw as “grief” and spans measures 52-108. This section may also be referred to as the “chorale,” or Section B. The initial material of this section began with a simple idea before becoming more and more complex, but was later reworked to add many more lines, layers, and textures. In the published version of *Soulström*, the chorale begins with space—space to breathe after the tension and turmoil of the

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<sup>149</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, *Soulström* (Victoria, Australia: Manhattan Beach Music, 2009).

previous section has faded, and a reluctant acceptance that begins to settle in. Blackshaw's chorale of grief is evident in the pace and singing quality of each line. Still in the tonal center of G-minor, the solo flute and trumpet are instructed to play "with a broken heart" and "clingingly" upon their entrances.

While Section A is characterized by independent, yet highly layered lines, irregular phrases, and off-beat entrances, the chorale is nearly opposite in approach and structure from the onset, yet remains within the same sonic character and sound world despite a different style. Up to this point in the piece, any concept of existing phrasal structure was layered over and smothered out by other instrumental lines. "Grief" presents itself musically here through a more inward and restrained style, including subdued dynamics, simple and non-layered musical lines, 8-bar phrases, and melodic content on downbeats. The only exception to the stillness of the chorale section is Blackshaw's use of tubular bells, or wind chimes, in measures 54-62, which perform on the offbeat of beat 2, each measure. Indignant and at a forte volume, the chimes are meant to displace the bit of peace and moment of respite as they ring out-of-sync among the rest of the ensemble and are even given permission by the composer to not be perfectly in time. Her notes to the conductor say, "Tubular bells should not be played too 'high' on the beat. A little late is just right."

The flute and trumpet soloists enter in measures 59 and 63 and recall the same G-D (again—a signal of stability through use of the tonic and dominant pitches) contour of Theme 1. Much of the melodic material written throughout the chorale follows that G-D phrase structure, although each utilizes various rhythmic possibilities. Blackshaw adds more textures at the beginning of each phrase until nearly all performers are playing by measure 87. At this moment,

intensity once again begins to build, and no singular line should overpower another until measure 94, where both triplet figures take precedence with fanfare-like clarity.

The phrase at measure 95 produces a massive sound with melodic material still following their own G-D line. Blackshaw describes listening back on this section and surprising herself by its density. The texture has become so thick, rich, and incredibly busy with multiple lines layered over each other, but incredibly heavy in character and color—a mirror of her subconscious state of grief. When talking about this moment and the layers upon layers she wrote, she states, “That’s because there’s so much going on in your head when you’re grieving. When you’re in a depression, you can’t make sense of any of it, and sometimes it all runs together, and you don’t even really know where you are—you keep coming back to the same thing again and again and again and again—you don’t burst out of that bubble.” After such heightened intensity, and with every layer adding more and more tension (both narratively and musically), the bubble must pop as the music reaches measure 102. In an equally beautiful and haunting juxtaposition of sound, Blackshaw creates a bright and shining ray of hope with a massive G-Major chord. Yet, reminiscent of every other moment of potential clarity or resolve, that hope is immediately stripped, this time through the diminishing of sound.

Without a break, measure 104 begins with the piccolo and flute reintroducing independent uses of Theme 1 once more. However, after such a questionable and fleeting moment of light, the pair sound vulnerable and unsure if they belong in a major or minor key (Figure 13). In the following note for each, Blackshaw masterfully answers that question as she writes the piccolo resolving up to an E-flat and the flute resolving down to a B-flat, firmly placing everything back in G-Minor. The central chorale comes to an end in measure 108 with another sustained open-fifth chord with dramatic hairpins underneath.



**Figure 13.** *Soulström*, m.104-105 – Ambiguous major or minor tonality

Without a break, Blackshaw launches into measure 109 with an outburst of anger, which I will refer to as an “episode.” Beginning with “great intensity,” this episode, which is only 11 measures long, is the most technically demanding of the entire piece. As Blackshaw mentioned before, “I love smashing apart a clarinet section,” and that is precisely what she does in this episode. The clarinets are split into five parts with rapid eighth and sixteenth notes, each independent from the other. Blackshaw’s rehearsal notes instruct, “HUGE percussion, HUGE brass, and ugly woodwinds. Let loose!” The episode is volatile and intense with raw anger. Her instruction goes beyond the technical and timbral qualities requests of the music; what Blackshaw is saying to an ensemble with her note of “Let Loose!” is to unleash their own raw emotions. The music reaches its largest climactic point in measure 119, and just as quickly as it comes, the episode disappears.<sup>150</sup>

When explaining the emotive scene with the nailenspiels at the beginning of the work, Blackshaw describes the scene as one where you are dropped in the middle of someone’s thought, where you can walk in and right back out, having gained a glimpse into someone’s life. While there is no climax involved with the character’s thought in the beginning, there is space within the music for the listener to leave. By the time *Soulström* reaches its musical climax,

<sup>150</sup> Lourens, “Soulström: Traveling a Colorful Road.”

Blackshaw believes that the listener is no longer an observer or onlooker of such a phenomenon; in this moment, they are a participant and there is no retreat. Blackshaw speaks of this moment, “*Soulström* has a big climax, but when you enter it, it’s like you just walk in.”<sup>151</sup>

Measure 121-131 is the second and final bridge section. Like the last, the bridge begins thin and airy in texture as it builds into another soundscape. Certain instruments must perform extended techniques here and through Soundscape 2, such as flutes rolling their head joints to alter pitch, clarinets placing their bells into their calf to alter pitch and also removing the mouthpiece/ barrel to create a siren, saxophones jaw/ lip bending, brass mouthpiece buzzing, timpani using glissandi with pedal, and woodwinds to “trill and stamp feet as rapidly as possible.” The most interesting among the extended techniques written is the “seagull sounds” in the string bass. Mournful cries are heard by the brass in measures 125-131 once again around a series of G chords. Blackshaw is not a composer who reuses material often, but in measure 131, the vibraphone replicates the exact melodic cell found in the piccolo in measure 86.

Soundscape 2 is only one measure of free-time music. The oboe becomes the main character of the music with a mournful and *molto rubato* solo. Unlike Soundscape 1, the oboe is the only ensemble member who plays melodic material (Theme 1). All others sustain a singular pitch and stagger breathing or add their extended technique into the sound mix. Soundscape 2, albeit one measure, may take an ensemble up to 2 minutes to perform, leaving a lot of room for sound exploration and timbre changes within the ensemble.

Section C begins at measure 133 and is the most programmatic segment found in *Soulström* with direct ties and correlations to Blackshaw and Edgar Allan Poe’s *A Descent into the Maelström*. The Maelström, or “Moskoe-ström” as the Norwegians would call it in Poe’s

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<sup>151</sup> Blackshaw, interview.

short story, begins forming in the ocean as winds start to howl and the waters swirl and rise. The various instrument sound effects and extended techniques that lead into Section C evoke this growing chaos—beyond the extended techniques, the clarinets and alto saxophones oscillate between E-flats and F-double-flats, creating a churning effect that starts slow, but everything quickly and dramatically uptick in pace as the *Maelström* opens up, revealing the swirling waters below as it begins to churn faster and faster. By measure 150, the *Maelström* has pulled more into its quickening waters as the flutes begin playing as part of the woodwind texture. Blackshaw wrote in the rehearsal notes, “These lines must be played as smooth as possible but with the irregularities providing agitation and apprehension.”

The tenor saxophone and horn appear together in measure 155 in unison pitch and rhythm, emphasizing quarter note Cs, allowing the audience to notice this slight change in tonality. Woodwinds continue to swirl, brass and percussion increase in strength and power with each measure, and time becomes faster both in tempo and through unpredictable time changes—a compositional technique employed by Blackshaw to further disorient the listener through layered momentum. These final five measures leading into measure 162 are tumultuous and full of rhythmic chaos, massive and carefully paced dynamic swells, unstable harmonic centers, and time that is spinning out of control. In measure 160, she requests the brass emerge from the busy texture without entering by surprise. Beginning on the syncopated upbeat of measure 160, every third beat (or as close to 3 if syncopation is present) provides a hidden, yet tangible bit of vertical rhythmic stability that should be found through the pandemonium. The vertical stability on every “third” beat also provides an equally stable and secure harmonic foundation, alternating between various forms of chords based on the tonic and dominant—the most prevalent connecting theme throughout the piece—of G and D. Harmonically the vertical structure moves from D-minor<sup>7</sup>, to

G-minor<sup>9</sup>, to G-minor<sup>7</sup>, to D-Major<sup>7</sup>, to D-minor, and finally back to G-minor on beat two of measure 165. Worthy of note is the stacked open fifths present again on beat one of measure 165, allowing the brass to end the previous section on beat one and continue without break into the key change and closing sections of the music.

Marked “suddenly slower, full of rage” at measure 165 is the final descent into the vortex of the *Maelström*—a collapse into the depths and grips of depression and despair. The sudden shift in tempo, mood, and atmosphere offers nothing but violence and anguish, as there appears to be no way out, and death is likely imminent. As life as you know it is spiraling out of control, the music arrives at measure 168 where Blackshaw indicates to the brass to play quarter notes as loudly as possible. This is the moment of clarity found by the fisherman and the psychology of acceptance, and a shift from panic to peacefulness. While not peaceful in texture or timbre, the thunderous quarter notes serve as a metaphorical lifeline—a barrel caught in the current, refusing to sink further into the abyss. Amidst the churning and hissing waters, mirrored by intensifying tempo beginning in measure 178, the pounding brass offers a chance for survival. If one can hold on through the chaos and darkest of times, there is a chance to escape the darkness and make it out alive.

“Crack the whip!” is Blackshaw’s instruction at measure 181. Marked as *defiantly*, this measure serves as a coda with the brass firmly planted in strong and obvious G-Minor chords. The music has now reached its fastest tempo at 160 beats per minute as the woodwinds move upward in a flurried, excited frenzy. Measure 184 establishes the most stable harmonic shift yet with an A-Major chord in the low brass that launches directly into the upper brass’ final fanfare statement beginning with an A-Major<sup>7</sup> chord. Measure 184 becomes the dominant of *Soulström*’s finale at measure 185, providing a V-I motion into a new tonal center of D-Major.

Marked *Jubilantly*, the last nine measures radiate joy and light after exhausting and often defeating moments of turmoil, angst, and complete despair. The texture is wide open, as dissonance has resolved, all ambiguity has been left behind, and the will to live prevails as the music ends with a final and glorious exhalation found in a D-minor chord. The release of the final brilliant chord became Blackshaw's way of releasing the grief of losing her dad.

Jodie Blackshaw's *Soulström* is a deeply personal and emotionally profound composition for wind band. Influences for *Soulström* were drawn from Edgar Allan Poe's *A Descent into the Maelström*, Shaun Tan's *The Red Tree*, and some encouragement from a quote by author Martha Graham, which states that everyone has their own unique voice and our only responsibility in life is to express that part of ourselves authentically. Her sixteen-minute work, which she struggled to compose, became clear to her once she realized she was writing an allegory of her own life as she fought through grief and depression after the loss of her father. Her own feelings and images within her creative psyche mirrored much of Poe's short story *A Descent into the Maelström*. In turn, *Soulström*'s programmatic narrative became one of parallel stories reflective of her own life alongside literary images of the fictional Norwegian natural phenomenon.

*Soulström* depicts the inner dialogue of someone caught in a violent emotional storm, unable to find a way out. Through textural layering, extended techniques, and carefully crafted timbral shifts, *Soulström* traces a journey from fog and paralysis to despair and rage, culminating in a cathartic, radiant conclusion representative of the composer releasing the grief of losing her dad.

The work's structure is fluid and through-composed in three distinct sections separated by two aleatoric soundscapes. Blackshaw creates melody not through melodic motives but through small melodic cells of contour. Three themes of melodic contour are present throughout

the work, and while they do overlap at times, the majority of the textural and timbral qualities present in *Soulström* result from only one theme layered in various instrumental colors, rhythms, and lengths of phrase. Though not fully realized at the time, Blackshaw's color-first compositional approach becomes evident as an internalized fascination and ability to understand and effectively use instrumental tone color to tell stories through her music.

## **Conclusions**

Jodie Blackshaw is an Australian composer of wind band music whose compositions have been internationally recognized for their unique and colorful qualities. Blackshaw is a composer exclusively of wind band music and identifies her compositional approach as one that is color-first, emphasizing timbre and texture over traditional melody and harmony. She takes great pride in writing both educational and artistic works for musicians at every developmental level. Her works encourage heightened emotional expression, inclusivity, creativity, and performer autonomy, and often involve extended techniques, improvisation, homemade instruments, and a pedagogical approach to playing and learning music.

Beyond her music, Blackshaw is a passionate advocate for many subjects, but especially for equity and representation in music for women and other marginalized voices. She founded the Female Band Composer Database and ColourFULL Music to help promote diversity in repertoire. She has also become an advocate for Australia by default and uses her platform to write music dealing with social and environmental issues, particularly those of her homeland.

Her identity as a mother, educator, and advocate has shaped her artistic identity and mission around creating meaningful, accessible, and empowering works for all students. She is unapologetically herself when it comes to standing up for inequities and breaking traditional molds and models, stating, "It doesn't all have to be about running a race or rocket ships." She

believes that her music is a vehicle for storytelling, healing, and social change, and strives to always create music with purpose.

Blackshaw and her music are significant to the wind band genre and its repertoire, as she represents a compositional voice and style that is not reflected elsewhere. Her music has redefined what wind band music can be—a purposeful avenue to a greater connection to humanity and the world in which we live.

## Chapter 5 – Jennifer Jolley

### Biography and Background

Jennifer Jolley is a Korean American contemporary composer whose compositional output spans the wind band, orchestra, chamber, vocal, and adaptable ensembles. Her innovative works are bold and provocative yet poignant in storytelling. With a keen sense of narrative, Jolley's compositions are often tied to the complexities of the human experience, whether in her own personal life or that of others. Jolley is not afraid to challenge the status quo through her compositions and uses topics such as climate change, the *#MeToo* movement, feminist history, as well as campus shootings and gun control to tell a story and make a statement through her music. She masterfully weaves narrative threads and vivid images into her compositions, creating music that engages ensembles and audiences alike on both emotional and intellectual levels.

Jennifer Jolley was born on January 7, 1981. She began playing the piano at the age of six and began to take her practice more seriously in high school upon her acceptance into the Orange County School of the Arts in Santa Ana, California. Although her primary focus was the piano, she also explored courses in music theory, conducting, and composition, where she began writing music. Jolley attributes her introduction to new music to Christopher Russell, one of her teachers and head of the music department at the School of the Arts. With a background in composition, Russell played a pivotal role in exposing his students to various composers and new music, and it was around this time that Jolley first recalls wanting to be a composer, specifically a composer of film music. Jolley's lessons in composition and interest in composing during her senior year of high school also coincided with the release of *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*. Jolley recalls, "I couldn't wait for Episode 1 to drop...which was a huge

disappointment. I ditched class to see this movie.”<sup>152</sup> This experience only further solidified her desire to go into film composing.

Jolley began her formal education in composition at the University of Southern California, where there was a program emphasizing film composition. After sitting in on a few spotting sessions where the composer, director, and members of the production team meet to discuss how the score should enhance the film, Jolley concluded that film composers typically have little control over what they write and are more commonly only a small part of the post-production process. While studying with Frank Ticheli during her junior year at Southern California, Jolley decided to change her focus from film to concert composition.

Upon her graduation from the University of Southern California, and after switching her focus to composing, she took four years off, during which time she held various positions in Vermont, such as church choir director and staff accompanist. In 2007, Jolley began studying composition at the University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music. She graduated with her master’s degree in 2009, and subsequently her Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition in 2012.

Jolley’s vast catalog of music and ability to write quality music in various genres stems from her fascination with a myriad of musical interests and influences. Composers such as Aaron Copland (and specifically his *Appalachian Spring*), John Adams, and John Luther Adams, as well as her composition teacher and Grammy award winner Stephen Hartke, were early influences during high school and through her various degrees. Jolley also credits the music of Hungarian contemporary classical composer György Kurtág and recalls her fascination with playing the airhorn while in high school on his *Grabstein Für Stephan* for guitar, whistles, and

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<sup>152</sup> Jennifer Jolley, Interview by the author, Zoom, March 30, 2024.

airhorn. Jolley also makes note of Benjamin Britten as an influence, specifically in terms of his abilities as an orchestrator and composer of operas, with which she has always been fascinated. She mentions spending a lot of time looking at scores of Britten's and that the first opera performance she attended was his *Billy Budd* at the LA Opera. Additional influences regarding orchestration encompass the works of Ligeti, Shostakovich, and Stravinsky.

Jolley cites a cultivated interest in minimalist composers Steve Reich and Philip Glass as sources of inspiration for her compositional techniques. Her varied interests greatly expanded during her graduate work to include composers Jennifer Higdon (specifically her piece *Blue Cathedral*), Kaija Saariaho, Louis Andriessen (whom her teacher at Cincinnati studied with), and Annea Lockwood. Lockwood, whom she met while in graduate school, is credited with Jolley's interest in experimental music through her piece titled *Piano Transplants – Burning Piano*, where directions in the score state the following:

- Set upright piano (not a grand) in an open space with the lid closed.
- Spill a little lighter fluid on a twist of paper and place inside, near the pedals.
- Light it.
- Balloons may be stapled to the piano.
- Play whatever pleases you for as long as you can.<sup>153</sup>

In response to questions about external validation through awards and institutional recognition, Jolley alludes to having a complicated opinion on the matter. She acknowledges that her career as a composer is entangled with tangible achievements, such as being named a finalist in the NBA's Revelli Composition Contest with her composition *MARCH!*, and earning a vote of confidence by Jerry Junkin who commissioned and promoted her *Eyes of the World Are Upon You*, but that she also maintains a do-it-yourself mentality of creating her own opportunities such as repurposing children's tape recorders for her Press Play sound art piece. Over time, Jolley

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<sup>153</sup> Annea Lockwood, "Piano Transplants," Annea Lockwood, accessed April 20, 2024, <https://www.annealockwood.com/compositions/piano-transplants/>.

states that she has, in turn, learned to prioritize collaborative projects with meaningful musical experiences over pursuing accolades and winning contests.

Although she has never won a composition competition, she does not view that as a limitation in her career or a marker of her success, or lack thereof, within the industry. She reflects on the subjective nature of such contests, further stating that she now serves on several panels as an adjudicator for similar composition awards. Jolley rarely enters composition contests, and while she admits that winning does carry meaningful recognition and validation, she has found more rewarding experiences and greater success through connecting with others with whom she enjoys making music. She profoundly states, “Committees are not people, and art is subjective,” implying that validation and success should not be solely measured through accolades based on committee decisions, and that art is personal to each individual, therefore navigating how art should be evaluated can become a complicated, nuanced, and even biased form of assessment.

Outside of physical awards, Jolley does make note of the recognition brought to her music after Jerry Junkin commissioned and premiered *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You* in 2017. As a trusted and respected voice in the field, Jolley believes that his endorsement elevated her professional visibility and likely contributed to commissions that followed, as well as an increase in the overall programming of her music.

### **Identity as a Woman Composer**

As one who promotes composer diversity and representation and does not shy away from writing music that supports feminism, Jolley states the following on gender and her professional identity in an interview from September 2020.

Yes, I'm a woman, yes, I'm a composer, and historically these categories didn't overlap. But it's not just an acknowledgement of past exclusion; it's still necessary today. The title makes gender a modifier. 'Woman' is an adjective that must be applied to the noun "composer" before it recognizes me. It's a reminder that I always come in a shape that doesn't match the definition of composer for a lot of people today. (...) I identify and present as a woman, and this alters how I am received as a composer. (...) I suppose what gender has to do with my professional identity is that it's always there. Whether it's a benefit or a liability—it's rarely neutral—it just is.<sup>154</sup>

When asked how being a woman has shaped her career as a composer, her response was equally multifaceted and convoluted. She recalls 2017 as the year she became more known in wind band circles. The commission of *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You* became a launching point for her career as a composer of wind band music. The Alpha Tau chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi at the University of Texas at Austin commissioned Jolley to write a piece in honor of Professor Jerry Junkin to be performed at the National CBDNA in March, 2017 in Kansas City, MI.<sup>155</sup> Jolley recounts a conversation with Junkin, who observed that *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You* was the only piece of music composed by a woman programmed at the conference, which spanned eleven concerts and forty-seven pieces in total.<sup>156</sup>

The performance of her music at the national CBDNA conference provided her with a certain level of validation as an emerging composer through extensive praise for her work, whose premiere came during the prestigious finale concert of the convention. Jolley describes her initial experience at CBDNA as "magical," a formative moment of professional affirmation and an important shift towards her music being taken seriously within the wind band genre.

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<sup>154</sup> Brianna Matzke, "5 Questions to Jennifer Jolley (Composer)," Text, I Care If You Listen, September 2, 2020, World, <https://icareifyoulisten.com/2020/09/5-questions-to-jennifer-jolley-composer/>.

<sup>155</sup> "The Eyes of the World Are Upon You," accessed April 20, 2024, <https://www.jenniferjolley.com/works/the-eyes-of-the-world-are-upon-you-first-performance>.

<sup>156</sup> "CBDNA 2017 National Conference," Wind Repertory Project, accessed April 20, 2024, [https://www.windrep.org/Concerts:CBDNA\\_2017\\_National\\_Conference](https://www.windrep.org/Concerts:CBDNA_2017_National_Conference).

However, her elated feelings over this highly positive experience began to shift upon the realization that some viewed her not just as a composer, but as a *woman* composer.

Along with the realization that she was the only women programmed throughout the conference, Jolley describes a sense of second-guessing herself and the value of her work: Was she being commissioned and programmed due to the high merit of her compositions, or was her work reduced to her gender, making her the tokenized women composer on a program. She recalls instances throughout the conference of being referred to as “the women composer,” and having a casual introduction with a male colleague whose tone shifted upon reading her nametag and responding with “Oh, you’re *that* Jennifer.” In these moments of self-doubt and second-guessing, Jolley realized that because of her female-appearing identity, she would always be seen as a woman first before anything else. She states, “Because of the way I look, [that is] how I’m always going to be seen.”

This seemingly pivotal moment of recognizing that her work was inseparable from her gender led Jolley to embrace that identity with a sense of purpose to further normalize women as composers for young girls.

I want young girls to see what I do, and that it's normal. I want [young girls] to see that I'm a person, that composers come in all different shapes and sizes, and that I dress as a composer because I am one. And now, [my mentality is] I'll just own it. I am a woman composer because I identify as one. I think there's a social responsibility [and] it's my service to the field [to give] opportunities to young girls and women as much as I can.

When asked about challenges she’s faced as a woman composer, Jolley recalls a commission involving a chamber ensemble and a dispute over eighty measures being cut by one of the male ensemble members. Jolley recalls an initial reaction of disbelief and confusion, as such a substantial alteration would significantly affect the integrity and structure of the piece. This reaction was compounded by the fact that the trombonist's decision seemed arbitrary and

unsupported by valid musical reasons, and his assertion that the cuts were necessary without consultation or discussion with the composer. The entire interaction left Jolley questioning the performer's lack of respect for her music and artistic vision and whether the same lack of respect would have been afforded to a piece written by a male composer.

The core of Jolley's artistic identity is a willingness to challenge the status quo through music as sound-art, storytelling, and any gendered assumptions about her and her music. She embraces her role as a woman composer and hopes to help normalize the idea of women being in prominent roles as a composer, one who receives accolades and major commissions and performances all over the world and remains true to their voice. Jolley's music is often described as "bold" and "daring," qualities historically labeled as masculine. Yet, Jolley embraces femininity and rebukes the notion that her works should reflect anything other than her unapologetic social, political, and emotional commentary through her music.

### **Compositional Style**

What sets Jennifer Jolley apart from many contemporary composers is her unapologetic and uncanny ability to challenge the status quo through her music and the messages and themes they portray. Jolley believes that the traditional view of art movements always begins with the visual arts, then literature, before ever reaching music. Unsurprisingly, her views on art and composition also challenge this traditional way of thinking. She cites influences ranging from singing in choirs, popular culture and movies, bluegrass, interest in operas, teachers such as Stephen Hartke, Rolf Kent, and Frank Ticheli, and a vast array of composers. Her compositional influences span the musical spectrum as she lists composers such as Aaron Copland, Igor Stravinsky, Maurice Ravel, John Adams, John Luther Adams, György Kurtág, Benjamin Britten, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Jennifer Higdon, Kaija Saariaho, Annea Lockwood, and Louis

Andriessen. The influences mentioned by Jolley exhibit a range of compositional styles, including minimalism, postminimalism, modernism, spectralism, opera, ballet, sound art, avant-garde, experimental, and spatial music—all of which are greatly reflected in Jolley’s overall portfolio of compositions. Her current output of music greatly demonstrates many of these compositional devices, and will often combine such stylistic idioms, creating a hybrid of contemporary styles and aesthetic characteristics.

Jolley describes herself as a composer of minimalistic tendencies. Although many theorists and musicologists would hesitate to state a single definition, minimalism can generally be defined and characterized by highly repetitive melodic or rhythmic figures that undergo gradual shifts and changes, often in the absence of any formal musical structure. Post-minimalism retains the core beliefs of minimalism but allows for more expanded melodic and rhythmic development, greater use of structure, and more complex harmonies.<sup>157</sup> For the purposes of this research, I will reference Jolley’s compositional style and innovations as “contemporary compositional devices.”

Jolley’s minimalist and postminimalist influences can be found throughout her compositions, especially through her use of repeated melodic and rhythmic cells. While melody and harmony are important to Jolley, she finds herself more fascinated with texture, timbre, and orchestration now than when she initially began writing music for wind bands. Her oldest published work for wind band, *Motordom* (2009), is based on artist Keith Sonnier’s neon light installation in downtown Los Angeles titled “Motordom,” and is intended to evoke taillights streaming down the freeway.<sup>158</sup> While the piece shows a clear connection to

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<sup>157</sup> Keith Potter and Kyle Gann, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music* (London: Routledge, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315613260>.

<sup>158</sup> Jennifer Jolley, *Motordom* (Jennifer Jolley (BMI), 2009), <https://www.jenniferjolley.com/works/motordom-wind-ensemble>.

minimalist/postminimalist characteristics of repeated rhythmic cells and development through texture, it also maintains a more grounded tonal center with fewer changes in orchestration, features less common in Jolley's more recent works.

Evidence of minimalist and postminimalist tendencies of repeated melodic and rhythmic cells, exploration of timbres, and subtle shifts can be found in her grade four composition *Lichtweg/Lightway* (2017)—coincidentally, also inspired by a neon light installation by artist Keith Sonnier, but this time, found at airport in Munich, Germany. Neon (Ne) is a dull and invisible noble gas that only becomes bright and vibrant when put into a glass tube and sparked with electricity. When neon is mixed with other gases such as hydrogen, mercury, or helium, it produces various colors of neon lights, such as red, blue, and yellow.<sup>159</sup>

*Lichtweg/Lightway* becomes an aurally immersive experience of Sonnier's bright and colorful neon fixtures that Jolley translates into sound. "I musically portray the rhythmic placement of red and blue light emanating from this neon installation by creating a constant eighth-note ostinato that is heard throughout the piece. Just as the panes of glass, mirrors, and aluminum sheets refract and scatter the colorful neon light, this ostinato is diffused amongst the different colors in the ensemble."<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> "A Blaze of Crimson Light: The Story of Neon," Science History Institute, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://www.sciencehistory.org/stories/magazine/a-blaze-of-crimson-light-the-story-of-neon/>.

<sup>160</sup> Jennifer Jolley, *Lichtweg/Lightway* (Jennifer Jolley (BMI), 2017).

## LICHTWEG/LIGHTWAY

**Fast Moving Walkway** ♩ = 152 ♪ = ♩ sempre

**Figure 14.** *Lichtweg/Lightway* – Eighth-note ostinato<sup>161</sup>

*Lichtweg/Lightway* is one of many examples of Jolley's compositions that demonstrate her use of contemporary compositional devices. Postminimalist ideas in *Lichtweg/Lightway* include her treatment of combining rhythm and melody into motivic cells, shifting timbres that represent the blue and red neon lights throughout the installation, and subtle changes to the motivic material as it weaves through various time signatures. Motivic cells would generally provide stability for a piece of music; however, between the constant shifting of time and timbre, *Lichtweg/Lightway* is anything but predictable with no landmarks—a hallmark of postminimalist music.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Jolley.

<sup>162</sup> Potter and Gann, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music*.

Other stylistic choices in *Lichtweg/Lightway* include elements of spectral music, which relies on the treatment of sound to inform musical decisions through emphasis on timbre, resonance, and how the sound evolves over time, allowing the transformation of textures to guide the structure of the piece.<sup>163</sup> The persistent eighth-note ostinato that permeates the piece appears in various timbres throughout the piece to elicit the blue and red neon lights of the exhibit as you walk through the art. The treatment of the timbres changes throughout, representing both the conceptual energy of constant and quick-moving neon gases through glass tubes and the physical motion of being on a fast-moving walkway surrounded by Sonnier's art installation.

Like *MARCH!*, another of Jolley's politically charged wind band compositions, entitled *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You*, is written to protest conservative gun laws in Texas that allowed students and teachers to carry concealed weapons at public and private universities. The new law would go into effect on the anniversary of the 1966 University of Texas Tower Shootings. As one of the nation's first mass shootings at an educational institution, Jolley describes the disturbing timing of the law as a "grim coincidence" to be enacted over such a tragic event.

Yet another key feature of Jennifer Jolley's compositional output is the use of storytelling, which serves as the keystone for imbuing her music with meaning and purpose. Jolley emphasizes the importance of narrative in her compositional process, stating, "I need some kind of story [that] helps dictate my form."<sup>164</sup> She believes that embedding a narrative within her music is essential, as she always aims to convey a message. Jolley contends that humans are inherently drawn to stories. She asserts, "Music isn't as meaningful unless it comes from a story,

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<sup>163</sup> Joshua Fineberg, "Guide to the Basic Concepts and Techniques of Spectral Music," *Contemporary Music Review* 19, no. Part 2 (August 20, 2000): 81–113, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494460000640271>.

<sup>164</sup> Jolley, Interview.

or [unless] it comes from a personal place."<sup>165</sup> For Jolley, sharing her beliefs and the stories she wishes to convey to her audience is paramount. She explains, "I want to share [with] my audience how I'm feeling and what story I would like to tell, and through that, that actually gives me a structure of which to write my piece."<sup>166</sup> The use of narrative facilitates her artistic vision, and in turn becomes the framework for guiding the form of her compositions.

Narrative, to Jolley, does not imply programmatic music, but more closely resembles Jodie Blackshaw's use of the word, and one that does not follow a literal or concrete storyline. According to Aaron Copland's definition of program music and the use of story, Jolley's music falls into the category of poetic programmatic music, which musically conveys outside sources as they appear in the composer's mind.<sup>167</sup> Jolley's use of narrative can also be linked to the various contemporary compositional devices used in her music—a concept that extends well beyond traditional musical narratives. Her personal interests in operatic forms and ballet contribute to greater drama within her compositions and can even be traced to her use of physical space and placement of not only sound, but also performers. The latter concept blends seamlessly into contemporary elements of spatial music (the physical placement of sound in a given space)<sup>168</sup>, and even sound art. The ending of *MARCH!* is one example of heightened drama and spatial concepts when she asks the performers to leave the performance space when the melody of *Aeguka*, South Korea's national anthem, transitions from being heard by the wind instruments to being sung by the members of the ensemble with a gentle and neutral syllable of "loo." Jolley writes in the score, "Please start to leave the performance space. Repeat this until everyone has

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<sup>165</sup> Jolley.

<sup>166</sup> Jolley.

<sup>167</sup> Copland, *What to Listen for in Music*.

<sup>168</sup> Mareike Dobewall, "Voicelanding - Exploring the Scenographic Potential of Acoustic Sound in Site-Sensitive Performance" (Stockholm University of the Arts, 2021), <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uniarts:diva-986>.

left.” The shifting of instrumental to vocal timbres, juxtaposed with the physical shift of bodies exiting the stage, combines a theatrical trait with a spatial concept.

The final, and perhaps most notable element of storytelling involved in Jolley’s compositional style is the integration of her moral, social, and political commentary. A core philosophy of her compositional process is the desire to share with performers and audiences her feelings and reactions to her lived experiences. “I want to share [with] my audience how I’m feeling, and what story I would like to tell through that.”<sup>169</sup> In a sense, her music reflects events happening in her life in real time. Jolley does not shy away from complex issues and difficult topics. She hopes that her music will inspire dialogue and reflection among performers and listeners that may not have existed without the presence of her music. Her sociopolitical narratives intend to transform sound into dialogue, dialogue into activism, and activism into tangible change.

As a composer guided by progressive values and innovative compositional thought, Jolley challenges the way art movements are traditionally valued, particularly why music, in her view, has generally resisted fully embracing new and abstract ideas. In contrast to traditional/classical music that relies on prescribed forms and harmonic and motivic development, she views sound art as a form that allows for a more open-ended style of music that could (and should) be used more frequently by the wind band. Jolley expresses a string of thoughts when considering her views on sound art and its incorporation into the wind band medium. She reflects, “How can I create an effect? How do I create three-dimensional music, [such as] having the horns play one thing and the trumpets play another? I’m purposefully imaging movements through space and sound.”<sup>170</sup> Instead of focusing on writing melody and

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<sup>169</sup> Jolley, Interview.

<sup>170</sup> Jolley.

harmony from the onset of her compositional process, Jolley hopes to create a more immersive experience for the listener by exploring how different instrumental timbres can interact less through linear musical lines and more through the placement of instruments and sound in a performance space. She envisions how the wind band can become “surround sound” to an audience and intentionally places musical material in ways that emulate timbral movement through space. This concept, influenced by sound art, translates the physical placement of sound into an artistic quality and expressive tool that aims to create music that is not only heard, but experienced. As found in Lockwood’s *Burning Piano*, this idea of sound art does not rely on motives or development of musical line, but rather, an experience of the unknown for listeners.

Jolley emphasizes exploring counterpoint and harmonic dissonance in her compositions and believes both to be key aspects that define her music. “I do like a little bit of crunch in there. I always like a little bit of dissonance.” While her compositions reflect an amalgamation of influences, she turns to both Ravel and Ligeti for orchestration. While composing *Questions to Heaven*, Jolley mentions looking to Ravel’s *Bolero* and his use of orchestration, voice pairings, and treatment of variation. Ligeti, whom she admires for his use of microcanons, is also a source of inspiration for his more minimalistic and unique orchestration techniques. While listening to Ligeti’s *Piano Concerto* she notes the treatment of the piccolo at its lowest range, and the bassoon at its extreme high range. The timbre created by Ligeti is experimental and creates a new sound that Jolley describes as “reedy” and states, “I find that fascinating, and I want to play with that.”

Jolley views the wind band as a fluid, not fixed ensemble, and enjoys formatting each new commission she receives to fit the ensemble's needs, instrumentation, and abilities rather than writing for a prescribed arrangement of instruments. She enjoys the challenge of writing

each new piece for varied groupings, as each wind ensemble has its own timbral mix. The challenge of catering to each ensemble presents her with new opportunities to achieve a desirable balance and cohesive ensemble sound. Jolley prides herself on her abilities as an orchestrator and on knowing the boundaries and limitations of each instrument and claims that “knowing the individual instruments [is] the glue that keeps everything together.” She states that her confidence in this aspect of her composition process reaches back to her undergraduate studies at USC, where composition students are required to take two full years of orchestration classes. While composing each new piece and constantly experimenting with texture, timbre, and orchestration, she also prides herself on the amount of research that goes into making certain sound atmosphere choices. A Spotify playlist with accompanying scores is created for each new project she works on. Jolley emphasizes that each timbre, texture, and orchestration choice made has a methodical approach through the practice of studying a specific set of compositions as models for her own work. She describes each playlist and set of scores as her orchestration texts that allow her to examine and understand techniques other composers have employed and adapt those techniques to create her own interpretations of them. She claims this is a crucial part of her composition process in creating interesting and informed creative decisions.

### **Impact and Contributions**

Jennifer Jolley has emerged as a prominent and influential voice in the wind band world, making significant contributions to the repertoire. Her catalog of compositions reflects bold stories addressing topics that require immense bravery to write about. Her perspectives on such topics are thoughtful commentaries grounded in human emotions and lived experiences, including social and political activism, environmental awareness, heritage and identity, experimental concepts, and art forms.

Jolley does not write music simply to put out a product. She believes deeply that her music must have a purpose, which has driven her to intentional narratives that challenge injustices in the world. She also doesn't write music for the sake of beauty. "Music isn't just there to be pretty," she explains. Pieces such as *Ash* and *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You* are responses to real-world issues of environmental destruction and school shootings and are meant to challenge people and their belief systems. *Ash*, inspired by a California wildfire and the visualization of actual remnants of ashes falling from the sky, inspired a narrative about the environmental devastation caused by climate change, while *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You* was written to honor the victims as well as to celebrate the resilience of survivors of such a tragic and careless act of violence. These are two examples of many in her catalog demonstrating how Jolley views her music as a platform for advocacy, action, dialogue, reflection, and empathy.

Jolley's music not only deals with present-day issues but also reflects a more expressive style with deeper and more introspective themes. In her grade four composition *Questions to Heaven*, Jolley expresses deeply relatable experiences of isolation felt by many in the wake of the worldwide shutdown at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and connects her own lived experience to the reflections written by astronaut Scott Kelly about the isolation he felt while living in space for a year. *Questions to Heaven* draws inspiration from a number of cosmic endeavors and literature, including Jolley's childhood fascination with space. At the time, many countries were setting out to explore Mars—NASA launched a rover in 2020, the United Arab Emirates launched a spacecraft explorer, and China launched its own orbiter named "Tianwen-1" which directly translates to "Questions in Heaven."<sup>171</sup> *Tianwen*, by Chinese poet Qu Yuan, is a poem that poses 170 unanswerable philosophical, mythological, and cosmological questions

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<sup>171</sup> Jennifer Jolley, "Questions to Heaven," Works, 2021, <https://www.jenniferjolley.com/works/questions-to-heaven>.

directed towards the heavens. Considered a classical Chinese poem, the work explores existential questions such as the origins of the universe, supernatural beings, and religious narratives and skepticism such as why gods arbitrarily inflict punishment or rewards or why certain sacrifices fail to please the gods.<sup>172</sup> Jolley's *Questions to Heaven* is reflective and meditative in nature and draws direct parallels between the search for meaning in human existence and the uncertainties of space and its exploration. The contemplative nature of Jolley's musical language with "sounds of the cosmos,"<sup>173</sup> allows the piece to explore life's unanswered questions in the vast unknown and humanity's ability to find beauty in our most isolated moments—we are never truly alone, whether in a shared solitude during a pandemic, or in search of a higher and greater meaning of life.

Jolley's impact on the wind band lies in the stories that she dares to tell, as she has carved out a space for music that challenges societal norms, confronts political injustices, and offers deep, emotional reflection—all through a lens of a minimalist writing style rarely explored in the wind band repertoire. Her compositional voice is distinct—it is generally bright, open, and uses subtle alterations in thematic content and color that gradually shift the trajectory of a piece without abrupt or noticeable changes. In turn, Jolley has given the wind band a platform for meaningful cultural commentary along with music of aesthetic innovation.

### **Jolley on *MARCH!***

Simply titled *MARCH!*, Jolley hopes that her composition will serve as a commentary on the genre, which parallels the historical trajectory of the wind band movement. The title is

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<sup>172</sup> "Tian Wen 天問," 2022,

<https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubccommunityandpartnerspublicati/52387/items/1.0422106>.

<sup>173</sup> Jolley, "Questions to Heaven."

purposefully in capital letters and followed by an exclamation point in a deliberate attempt to exaggerate an artificial grandeur—a sentiment that she associates with the march’s history.

The exclamation point is important, and I do want it in all capitals. It's this fake grandeur and fake patriotism that I want [the title] to scream at you. I'm orchestrating how you hear the title. The exclamation point is the equivalent of the desk bell in this piece. [Without] that punctuation, you're not going carry the seriousness and the simultaneous silliness of this piece.<sup>174</sup>

She draws parallels to the American Bandmasters Association (ABA), whose goal has been to elevate the wind ensemble from its traditional role as an outdoor performance group to a respected indoor concert ensemble. She sees *MARCH!* as a piece that reflects the same goal—one that elevates the repertoire and specifically elevates the genre of marches. She states, “It's not a traditional march. It's longer than three minutes. So again, I'm just playing with that [idea]. I *just* titled it ‘*MARCH!*’ because, again, what is a march? I wanted to question that, [and] I like to think that this is my march contribution to the wind ensemble.”<sup>175</sup>

*MARCH!* draws on political satire that aims to critique the totalitarian nature of state-controlled music in North Korea and uses it to subvert traditional expectations of a march. North Korea, officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), is a tightly controlled dictatorship dominated by a system of propaganda that glorifies the Kim family as not only supreme, but as completely infallible and benevolent rulers. All music in North Korea is created, commissioned, and controlled by the government to ensure that it aligns with its objectives, ideologies, and principles. The march genre is a heavily used form in North Korean music as it underscores their militaristic culture and sense of nationalism.

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<sup>174</sup> Jolley, Interview.

<sup>175</sup> Jolley.

To create her own march, Jolley draws from existing music of the march genre with highly different political connotations. She states that *MARCH!* is “an investigation of different types of music and how music is used functionally through our lives and as ritual.”<sup>176</sup> The first borrowed piece of music found is Dmitri Shostakovich’s *March of the Soviet Militia, Opus 139*—a parody march commissioned for the Soviet police to glorify the state-run institution. She then borrows from four North Korean political songs used to reinforce state ideology and to glorify its leaders. The tunes include: *Korea Does What It Is Determined To Do, No Motherland Without You, The Soldiers Answered*, and *Where Are You, Dear General?* Typical of North Korean music, the lyrics of the songs take precedence over the melody, while the melody serves primarily as a vehicle to deliver an intended message.<sup>177</sup>

Jolley’s claims of being a composer of timbre, texture, and orchestration are expertly demonstrated in *MARCH!* Once again drawing inspiration from Shostakovich, Jolley directly quotes his parody march titled *March of the Soviet Militia*. She states, “The beginning is a parody of a parody,”<sup>178</sup> as she constructs the main theme found in *MARCH!* from Shostakovich’s satirical style. “I’m basically creating satire, right? Shostakovich is my guide for satire. The beginning is very much like an Eastern European march... This is how they would orchestrate it.” She also states that the beginning of her composition is meant “to make fun of the grandiose line of patriotism; the march has a fascinating history because it’s pageantry, right?”

As *MARCH!* progresses, Jolley’s intent is to meticulously deconstruct the traditional march form by introducing elements that disrupt the expected status quo. Expected harmonic or rhythmic motions are often interrupted by the ringing of a desk bell and followed by

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<sup>176</sup> Jolley.

<sup>177</sup> Jungmin Heo, “Juche Realist Music : The Politicization of Music in North Korea” (Master’s Degree, Bangkok, Thailand, Chulalongkorn University, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.58837/CHULA.THE.2018.315>.

<sup>178</sup> Jolley, Interview.

uncomfortable silences. “They would not have a desk bell. I purposefully keep pausing it so that it’s awkward. It erodes the façade of the pageantry that these governments have.”<sup>179</sup> Another element used by Jolley is a palette of low-voiced instruments unable to maintain tempo and only capable of producing unison and ominous drone-like passages that cause a sense of unease.

Electronic tracks are added in measure 117 of *MARCH!* which are loosely pulled from the tune *Where Are You, Dear General*—a song is broadcast daily throughout the capital city of Pyongyang, North Korea over loudspeakers beginning at 6:00 A.M. each day as a presumptive alarm clock for its citizens. Jolley recognizes the psychological implications of the added North Korean tune within her composition, as those familiar with Pyongyang have described the broadcast as heavily distorted, barely recognizable, and sounds more like an antiquated synthesizer or theremin.<sup>180</sup> She states, “It [has] a psychological effect, hence the use of electronics, which has a timbral effect, too. When I first heard the *Where Are You, Dear Leader?* that's played on the loudspeakers, [it] has a very specific timbre to it and a very specific psychological implication.”<sup>181</sup>

Jolley capitalizes on the already distorted tune used by the communist leader of North Korea and uses the leader’s beloved song to further distort and deconstruct the famous tune. In a unique signature compositional device, Jolley uses *Where Are You, Dear General* as mockery and satire against the communist regime. This is only one of many examples of Jolley using her music as an avenue to demonstrate a gesture of contempt and defiance against political injustice.

When it comes to integrating electronics with a wind band, Jolley considers audio to be an additional instrument. In her words, “If I use electronics, I want to make it so that it is part of

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<sup>179</sup> Jolley.

<sup>180</sup> Oliver Hotham, “Morning Chorus: Pyongyang’s 6 Am Wake up Call | NK News,” NK News - North Korea News, July 28, 2017, <https://www.nknews.org/2017/07/morning-chorus-pyongyangs-6-am-wake-up-call/>.

<sup>181</sup> Jolley, Interview.

the ensemble. [The ensemble] is an instrument too, and it's not just [an] ensemble *plus* electronics. I wanted the recipe [of] instruments to melt into it.”<sup>182</sup>

As another gesture of musical defiance, Jolley expertly juxtaposes the South Korean National Anthem, *Aeguka*, directly after fully deconstructing a march and mocking a famous North Korean propaganda-filled song. Jolley’s orchestration of *Aeguka* aims to create a sense of warmth between the tension created by the distorted electronics, heavy dissonance, and microtones found in the B-section and the incisive militaristic snare drums that soon enter after the first full statement of the anthem. *Aeguka* begins with a four-voice saxophone quartet and the first and only use of a major key found in *MARCH!* The use of a traditional saxophone quartet is strategically orchestrated as the saxophones are commonly placed centrally in an ensemble. The South Korean anthem provides a sense of comfort, invoking a reverse psychological effect from *Where Are You, Dear Leader*.

The counterpoint found in this *Aeguka* section at measure 174 relies on borrowed material from her own music. After musically experiencing the trauma and turmoil of a campus mass shooting in her *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You*, Jolley turned to counterpoint to encapsulate a change of pace and character from destruction and horror to something of comfort and warmth. To create this effect in *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You*, she initially wrote the trumpets’ chordal legato call-and-response figure with a straight mute. Jolley recounts a rehearsal leading up to the premiere of the work in which the trumpet players suggested the use of a cup mute. After hearing the sound of the cup mute, she says it was the exact dark sound she envisioned when writing this section, and later edited the score to reflect the change.

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<sup>182</sup> Jolley.

**Figure 15.** *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You, m. 67-71* – Trumpet cup mute effect

The discovery of this effect to create warmth through the use of a cup mute led Jolley to recreate the same effect in *MARCH!*, but this time with chordal triplet figures. The muted trumpets weave in and out with the South Korean national anthem, creating a similar sense of surrounding warmth and comfort that sharply contrasts the intensity of the preceding section.

**Figure 16.** *MARCH!* – Trumpet cup mute effect

The use of a call-and-response motives, in conjunction with a timbre effect created in the middle register of the trumpets using cup mutes, aims to create a sense of warmth—a welcomed and much needed embrace around the performers and members of the audience. Enveloping timbres used in both *MARCH!* and *The Eyes of the World Are Upon You* intend to activate the listener's senses not only through sound, but through touch; rather, the aural equivalent of a physical embrace. This method is another example of Jolley incorporating an element of spectralism.

The warmth and beauty provided by the *Aeguka* is instilled with fear again by the impending unison snare drums that attempt to drown out the beauty and purity of the South Korean Anthem. Jolley's ability to intellectually engage the audience while also emotionally challenging the listener is a testament to her masterful manipulation of orchestration and timbre to assist in creating art that tells a story. Her use of orchestration is designed to evoke an emotional response in the performers and listeners alike, with emotions ranging from unease, discomfort, and pure beauty.

Upon reflecting on the reception of *MARCH!*, Jolley chronicles the varied reactions the piece has evoked. While composing, Jolley's mom was at the forefront of her mind, as she feared disappointment in writing this piece. As a child, Jolley's mom was orphaned during the Korean War. Years later, Jolley's parents would meet in Korea while her dad was there as a Mormon missionary. From the onset of composing *MARCH!*, Jolley knew that the piece needed to end on an uplifting note. Jolley values her Korean heritage and particularly her mother's perception of her music. She desired to make it clear to both her mother and audiences alike that the intent of *MARCH!* was not to glorify North Korean patriotic music, but rather to oppose political injustices displayed by North Korea and others around the world.

The varied reactions and reception that Jolley has received have become part of the piece's narrative. The complexities between the composer's artistic intent, familial experiences, cultural heritage, and audience interpretation are each part of the story Jolley hopes to portray. One particularly notable interaction was with a performer who held high reverence for a former clarinet teacher from North Korea. The performer felt strong reservations towards performing *MARCH!*, expressing concerns about disrespecting a former teacher. Jolley empathetically acknowledged the student's predicament, as she understood the respect felt towards teachers and elders in Asian culture. Conversely, Jolley found individuals with Korean heritage resonated with the piece, particularly through the incorporation of the South Korean National Anthem.

In a traditionally conservative audience, a United States veteran once approached Jolley at the end of a performance to express gratitude for writing a piece of music with material that takes a stance against tyranny and oppressive governments. In another instance, a Chinese national student pointed out the irony that an entire audience left humming the beautiful South Korean Anthem. The most profound and unexpected reaction she received to a performance of *MARCH!* was one that came from Jolley's own father. With mixed reactions and emotions, he shared that the piece left him in tears and was incredibly touching, as it made him recall his own time in Korea as a missionary and the location where he met Jolley's mother. He then proceeded to question her about deconstructing and destroying a march. He strongly believed that we need marches, which are celebratory and meant to be in parades. In turn, her response to him was, "I love marches! I was trying to show that the march is complicated."<sup>183</sup> The array of responses further highlights the composer's narrative intent to portray the complicated history related to this specific type of composition.

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<sup>183</sup> Jolley.

While *MARCH!* was published in 2020, it became well known after being named a finalist in the NBA's William D. Revelli Composition Contest in December 2021. In the wake of the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Jolley expected *MARCH!* to be programmed less due to its politically driven nature and nationalistic symbolism of authoritarian rule amidst a current and very real and ongoing military conflict. She believed that choices in programming a satirical or subversive march might have been viewed as politically sensitive or even inappropriate and that ensembles may have been hesitant to engage with a work that could be perceived as controversial or misaligned with the gravity of current global events.

Much to her surprise, *MARCH!* had had the opposite effect and resonated with many who recognized its themes of pushing back against oppressive governments. In turn, her satirical march became a piece that mirrored the sentiments of a sociopolitical movement of a culture it was not intended for. Reflecting on her own reaction to the piece, she states, "I didn't think I could move myself with my music. It's a weird experience. [When] we finally come to the end of this piece [and] we heard a lot of ugly things, and yet, there's still hope in the end, and it's really meaningful."<sup>184</sup>

### ***MARCH!* Analysis**

*MARCH!* was commissioned by the American Bandmasters Association and the University of Florida and was premiered on August 7, 2021, by the World Youth Wind Symphony in Interlochen, MI, with Steven Davis Conducting.<sup>185</sup> The piece embodies Jolley's conviction that storytelling is a central part of her compositional process. As a Korean American composer whose mother was orphaned during the Korean War and whose parents met in the

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<sup>184</sup> Jolley.

<sup>185</sup> Jennifer Jolley, "MARCH! - Composer's Note," Jennifer Jolley, 2021, <https://www.jenniferjolley.com/works/march-first-performance>.

country while her father was engaged in mission work there, Jolley leans into her heritage to skillfully weave in a socio-political commentary of government oppression during the Kim dynasty. Jolley states in her program notes that her intention is to diminish a march's often bold and energetic qualities and style by interrupting the status-quo of a march-form and quotations of North Korean patriotic tunes with flippant percussion and sputtering tempos. Jolley further states, "The selection of North Korean marches should ultimately be understood as representative of our contemporary moment. One where dictatorships and backsliding democracies embrace repression, ethno-nationalism, and brutality to thunderous cheers and fanfare."<sup>186</sup>

To understand Jolley's *MARCH!*, it is imperative also to understand her inspiration in creating this piece of music. In her program notes, Jolley highlights how marches have long been used to reinforce government power and to glorify rulers and elected officials. Across the globe, marches continue to be written for corrupt politicians and dictators as a form of self-serving, egotistical propaganda. These nationalistic marches are designed to glorify their rule and authority while manipulating public opinion through these grand patriotic spectacles. Although drawn to marches, Jolley critiques the form with its historical ambitions of promoting imperialism, nationalism, and authoritarianism, and how the genre remains a tool for political influence. She aims to challenge listeners to consider the complex and often troubling history of the march form with its political implications.

To challenge the status quo, Jolley draws from Dmitri Shostakovich's *March of the Soviet Militia, Opus 139*, written in 1970 near the end of the composer's life. Initially an avid and enthusiastic supporter of Stalin's regime, Shostakovich's musical output and artistic

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<sup>186</sup> Jolley.

expression was subverted by the Soviet government who aimed to control artists through “official culture” by enforcing social realism—a Stalinist demand that art be understandable, uplifting, and heroic, in turn denouncing modern or experimental compositional techniques. Any artists who deviated from such government-approved themes faced censorship, persecution, exile, or death.<sup>187</sup>

The formalism campaign of 1948 in Soviet Russia required composers to conform to the party line to help tighten ideological control. Formalism aimed to confine composers to writing music that represented beauty. According to Andrei Zhdanov, a Russian politician, master of Soviet propaganda and chairman of the committee in charge of running all party and government activities, “The Central Committee demands beauty and refinement from music. The goal of music is to give pleasure.” Shostakovich states his views on the formalist movement. “From now unto forever, music had to be refined, harmonious, and melodious. They wanted particular attention devoted to singing with words, since singing without words satisfied only the perverted tastes of a few aesthetes and individuals.”<sup>188</sup>

To survive both artistically and for his very life, Shostakovich compromised with himself. Publicly, he would compose state-approved music; in private he would embed anti-Soviet, anti-Stalinist, and themes critical of Soviet antisemitism. In his posthumously published memoir titled *Testimony*, Shostakovich reveals his internal conflict in conforming to the Stalinist regime despite his public acquiescence as a Soviet composer. His stance on the imposed formalism guidelines becomes evident through his sarcastic and subversive remarks dismissing the campaign as “the delirium of a purple cow,” mocking the absurdity of artistic suppression.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Dmitri Shostakovich and Solomon Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, Seventh Limelight Edition, May 2000 (Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1979).

<sup>188</sup> Shostakovich and Volkov.

<sup>189</sup> Shostakovich and Volkov.

Shostakovich further takes aim at the hypocrisy of Stalin's regime, noting, "The Party has saved music from liquidation. It turned out that Shostakovich and Prokofiev had wanted to liquidate music, and Stalin and Zhdanov didn't let them,"<sup>190</sup> implying that it was the government, not the composers, who were destroying Soviet music. Most tellingly of his satirical views and hidden defiance is his bold statement "Why go on talking about it? I have a musical composition on that theme, and it says it all," referring to his satirical cantata *The Anti-Formalist Rayok* that critiques soviet culture, policy, and censorship—a work that remained unpublished during the composer's lifetime due to its blatant mockery and portrayal of Stalinist beliefs.<sup>191</sup>

Shostakovich's *March of the Soviet Militia* stands as a testament to the composer's complicated role in the Soviet Union. The march was composed at the request of the Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR, and according to Shostakovich's son, Maxim Shostakovich, the piece was dedicated to his late friend and poker buddy, Mikhail Zoshchenko. Zoshchenko was a Soviet playwright and satirist whose literary style of satirical, dry, compressed, and short sentences would later influence Shostakovich's composition.<sup>192</sup> Shostakovich states of Zoshchenko:

"I was always drawn to Zoshchenko, I found him very simpatico. We were very different men, but we had the same point of view on many things. It sometimes seemed that Zoshchenko left all his anger on paper; he liked to appear gentle, he liked to pretend shyness. You see that sometimes, the humorist trying to be sad, a gentle person trying to be cruel. It's easier to live that way."<sup>193</sup>

In his *March of the Soviet Militia*, Shostakovich aimed to expose the pompous and brutal police force by writing a march embedded with dark undertones and exaggerated grandeur. The

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<sup>190</sup> Shostakovich and Volkov.

<sup>191</sup> Larry Blocher et al., *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*, vol. 12 (GIA Publications, 2021).

<sup>192</sup> Shostakovich and Volkov, *Testimony*.

<sup>193</sup> Shostakovich and Volkov.

Soviet Police had threatened Shostakovich's very existence and artistic expression since he was first condemned by the Soviet state in 1936. Although composed after the death of Stalin, the short piece of occasional music is a parody of a traditional military march aimed at praising and honoring a form of higher power.

Jennifer Jolley follows the precedent modeled by Shostakovich to create her own march parody. She not only uses quotations of Shostakovich's satirical march but also takes it further by deconstructing the traditional march format and tearing apart North Korean political songs and marches along the way. The music becomes a form of not-so-subtle protest against the Communist rule of the Kim dynasty and government repression found all around the world. In fact, Jolley states in her program notes, "The selection of North Korean marches should ultimately be understood as representative of our contemporary moment. One where dictatorships and backsliding democracies embrace repression, ethno-nationalism, and brutality to thunderous cheers and fanfare."<sup>194</sup>

*MARCH!* is a through-composed piece of music with distinctive A, B, and C sections. As the title suggests, the composition contains material reminiscent of a traditional military march. With bravado unison trills and familiar brass fanfare, Jolley wastes no time in introducing Shostakovich's *March of the Soviet Militia*. Section A of *MARCH!* is the "march" section and spans measures 1-116, beginning in the key of F-Minor with immediate quotes from Shostakovich's *March of the Soviet Militia* as seen in the figure below.

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<sup>194</sup> Jolley, "MARCH! - Composer's Note."

Transposed Score

MARCH!

6 JENNIFER JOLLEY (2020)

March! ♩ = 96

Piccolo

Flute 1,2

Oboe 1,2

Bassoon 1,2

Clarinet in E♭

Clarinet in B♭ 1,2

Clarinet in B♭ 3

Bass Clarinet in B♭

Alto Saxophone 1,2

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

Trumpet in B♭ 1,2

Trumpet in B♭ 3

Horn in F 1,2

Horn in F 3,4

Trombone 1,2

Bass Trombone

Euphonium

Tuba

Double Bass

Timpani

Tracks

Percussion 1

Triangle, Desk Bell, Rachet, Xylophone, Anvil, Tam-tam, Snare Drum

Percussion 2

Snare Drum

Percussion 3

Cymbals

Percussion 4

Snare Drum, Glockenspiel, Bass Drum, Snare Drum

1 2 3 4 5 6

Figure 17. *MARCH!* – Opening use of Shostakovich’s *March of the Soviet Militia*

Throughout this section, Jolley blends elements of Soviet and North Korean musical propaganda and patriotic melodies, reinforcing themes of power and ideological unity. The word propaganda has two meanings in North Korea. The first is defined as a logical and systematic explanation of ideology, theory, or policy to help the public understand the government's core ideas. The second describes propaganda as a message intended to spread ideology and mobilize for action (war). The term serves as a tool for ideological instruction and a directive for citizens to follow the Party's policies. North Korea has used music as a delivery method of propaganda since the early years of Kim Sung Il's rule in the mid-1940s. Song lyrics and melodies are intended to glorify the regime and reinforce *Juche* ideology (a country of self-reliance, authoritarianism, socialism, and one who worships their leader) to promote nationalism, and to militarize the population in support of state policies.<sup>195</sup>

Jolley subverts traditional march expectations from the onset of the composition by extending the introduction to 12 measures instead of the prescribed 4 or 8. In the introduction alone, Jolley further destabilizes the momentum of a traditional march with a *molto ritardando* in measures 10-12 before interrupting the flow and character of the music with an interjecting desk bell. As mentioned in her program notes, she intends to use this "irreverent" percussion to assist in her efforts to deconstruct the march form.<sup>196</sup> The insertion of the desk bell, along with a *molto ritardando*, provides an element of comic relief and discomfort to the listener. Both aspects also assist Jolley in undermining the formality traditionally associated with marches. The use of a caesura also gives an unexpected disruption by creating a moment of silence to further insinuate a break in the expected continuity of a familiar genre.

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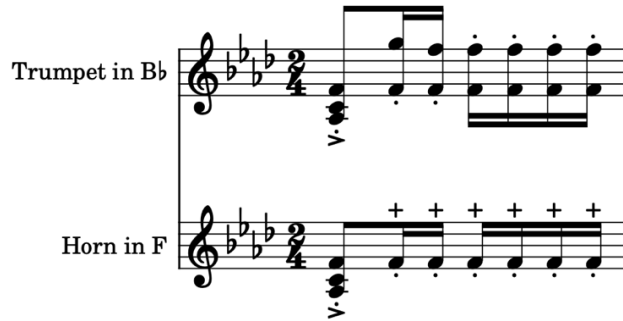
<sup>195</sup> Heo, "Juche Realist Music."

<sup>196</sup> Jolley, "MARCH! - Composer's Note."

The A section continues in measure 13 and continues to feature the main melodic content from Shostakovich's march (Figure 18). Jolley uses *March of the Soviet Militia* as the foundational material in the first strain of *MARCH!* Unconventionally, the first strain shifts to Bb Dorian while maintaining strong ties to the fifth (F) and the tonality of the home key, once again already deviating from traditional and accepted march forms. Phrases in the first strain are generally six measures in length with each phrase beginning with first strain material from the Shostakovich march. The end of each *March of the Soviet Militia* Theme (I will refer to this as the MSM Theme) is once again interrupted by the unsettling, yet comical ringing of the desk bell followed by a caesura in *MARCH!*

**Figure 18.** Shostakovich’s *March of the Soviet Militia* – Theme

To create her own sense of satire, Jolley manipulates both tonality and orchestration of Shostakovich’s music to create a parody statement of the already established parody march. Jolley uses the following statement from Shostakovich’s march as a brass fanfare-like statement presented by the trumpets and horns in measure 22. The orchestration resembles Shostakovich’s and is in a comfortable tessitura and outlines a tonal F-Minor chord.



**Figure 19.** *MARCH!* m.22

The proud and regal-sounding fanfare is immediately followed by mockery in Jolley's *MARCH!* when the highest woodwinds (piccolo, flute, Eb clarinet, and Bb clarinet) contrast the tonal and root chord of the piece of F-minor with a shrill and dissonant setting of an F against an E in the highest tessitura.

The image shows four staves of music for measure 23. The top staff is for the Piccolo, the second for the Flute, the third for the Clarinet in Eb, and the bottom for the Clarinet in Bb. All staves are in 2/4 time and F minor (three flats). The Piccolo part begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth notes: F5, G5, A5, Bb5, C6, Bb5, A5, G5, F5. The Flute part begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth notes: F5, G5, A5, Bb5, C6, Bb5, A5, G5, F5. The Clarinet in Eb part begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth notes: F5, G5, A5, Bb5, C6, Bb5, A5, G5, F5. The Clarinet in Bb part begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth notes: F5, G5, A5, Bb5, C6, Bb5, A5, G5, F5. The notes are written in a way that suggests a high, shrill, and dissonant sound.

**Figure 20.** *MARCH!* m.23

The effect creates a stark contrast between stability and chaos, as the triumphant fanfare moment in measure 22 is immediately undercut by the shrill and dissonant mockery in measure 23. While this moment is fleeting, it serves as a strong indication of Jolley's satirical approach and a reminder that she is writing a parody of a parody.

Jolley does not use any repeat signs that one would find in a typical march. However, her composition continues into measure 25 with what initially appears to be a repetition of the first

strain. While she maintains the same material from the MSM Theme, she slightly reorchestrates the harmony and rhythm, giving the “repeated” section a variance in timbre. Jolley subtly continues to deconstruct the march by making each phrase of Shostakovich’s material shorter and shorter. Measure 25 begins with a six-bar phrase as previously established, followed by irregular phrases of four, six, four, and three-measure phrases. Creating another level of instability and irregularity, Jolley only utilizes the desk bell twice throughout measures 25-45, while the first half of her first strain uses the interrupting percussion a total of three times. The first strain ends with the entire ensemble playing a B-flat minor chord as it crescendos, leading into Jolley’s version of a second strain.

The “second strain” of *MARCH!* begins at the anacrusis to measure 45 and ends in measure 64. Traditional of a second strain, Jolley introduces a change in both timbre and tune and maintains familiar 8-bar phrases. While higher voices carried the melodic material in the first strain, the low voices are now highlighted as Jolley introduces the first North Korean patriotic tune: *Korea Does What It Is Determined To Do!* The song is bold, declarative, and rooted in nationalistic pride with lyrics such as “How do we defend our socialist system...we safeguard it with arms. Following the leadership of our General...Korea does what it is determined to do, Korea does what it says it will do.”<sup>197</sup> This patriotic and propagandistic song emphasizes loyalty to their authoritarian leader and defending socialism through the use of arms.

Although Jolley does not utilize a change in key signature, the second strain of *MARCH!* is multi-modal giving the music a sense of harmonic instability. Jolley introduces the section with a shift in the tonal center from f-minor to E-flat, although no change in key signature is indicated. The shift to an E-flat tonal center is demonstrated through the consistent use of D-

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<sup>197</sup> “Where Are You, Dear General?,” Explore DPRK, accessed March 20, 2025, <http://exploredprk.com/music/where-are-you-dear-general/>.

natural instead of D-flat as indicated in the key signature. She begins this new section with an ensemble-wide anacrusis of a B-flat dominant seventh chord to tonicize a shift to an E-flat. She cleverly creates this shift in tonality by using the previous section's B-flat Dorian tonic triad in measure 44 and shifts the third scale degree (D-flat) up one half-step to a D-natural, creating a V<sup>7</sup> – I (Bb – Eb) tonicization to the new tonal center. The subtle and inventive harmonic pivot is further proof of instability and deconstruction within Jolley's version of a march.

As established from the first strain, Jolley uses no repeat sign, yet where the listener may expect to hear a repeat in the music, she creates another shift in tonality to C. This is established through a G-Major chord on the anacrusis in measure 60 that leads into a C-minor chord in measure 61. Harmonically, the music alternates between C-minor and G-major chords. Measures 65-66 sit on G-major before the second strain comes to an end in measures 67-68 with C-minor in measure 67, and a unison C in measure 68, and although unresolved as to whether the section ends in a major or minor tonality, the unison pitch gives a brief sense of closure and familiarity to the listener with a modified V-I harmonic motion.

Forgoing an expected trio section, Jolley moves directly into a break strain in measures 69-84. Borrowing once again from Shostakovich's *March of the Soviet Militia*, this section is a mirror image of Shostakovich's march. Its militaristic character reflects music written for the Soviet Union and the DPRK and serves as another subtle reminder of the satirical nature of Shostakovich and Jolley's marches. The tonal center of E-flat is used once again throughout this section, beginning in E-flat minor and gradually shifts to E-flat major after the *molto ritardando*. The section concludes with an E-flat major chord in measure 84, followed by an F major chord to create a seamless harmonic transition into the next section.

The final section of the “march” begins in measure 85 with a false D.S. al Coda. Spanning measures 85-116, this false ending to Jolley’s march is defined by tonal conflict, layered quotations from Shostakovich’s march and North Korean marches, and overall deconstruction of the standard march form. Measure 85 reintroduces *March of the Soviet Militia* as first heard in measure 13. The first four measures appear to be a D.S. al Coda and are identical to its introduction.

Simultaneously, Jolley introduces another North Korean tune, “*No Motherland Without You*.” The song is another tool of state indoctrination meant to exalt Kim Jong Il with lyrics that reinforce the idea that the country’s existence and survival are inseparable from their leader.<sup>198</sup>

You pushed away the severe storm  
You made us believe, comrade Kim Jong Il  
We cannot live without you  
Our country cannot exist without you

Our future and hope depend on you  
People’s fate depends on you, comrade Kim Jong Il  
Even if the world changes hundreds of times  
People believe in you, comrade Kim Jong Il

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<sup>198</sup> Heo, “Juche Realist Music.”

The figure displays two side-by-side musical score excerpts. The left excerpt, labeled '13', is for the march 'Korea Does What It Is Determined To Do!' and spans measures 13 through 18. The right excerpt, labeled '85', is for the march 'No Motherland Without You!' and spans measures 85 through 90. Both excerpts are written for a large band ensemble, including Piccolo, Flutes (1, 2), Oboes (1, 2), Bassoons (1, 2), Euphoniums (1, 2), Clarinets (1, 2, 3), Bass Clarinet, Alto Saxophones (1, 2), Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone, Trumpets (1, 2, 3), Horns (1, 2, 3, 4), Trombones (1, 2), Euphonium, Tuba, Double Bass, Timpani, and Percussion (1-4). The percussion section includes a Desk Bell in measure 18 and a Arecil in measure 90. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 96. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, dynamics (f, sf), and articulation marks.

**Figure 21.** *MARCH! m.13-18 and m.85-90* – Side-by-side comparison

Measure 85 further establishes a strict four-bar phrase structure, with the only exception happening in measure 89 with a fermata that momentarily suspends the march's forward momentum. The pause in time is also used to pit the tonalities of E and F against each other, which Jolley introduced for the first time in measure 23, as previously mentioned. This harmonic instability and disruption of an otherwise rigid structure is yet another indication of Jolley's attempt to deconstruct the march.

The four measure phrases alternate between Shostakovich's march (in B-flat minor) and *No Motherland Without You* (in F-minor) in the following order: Four measures of *March of the Soviet Militia* (m. 85-88), four measures of *No Motherland Without You* (m. 90-93), and then four measures of both tunes layered over each other (m. 94-97). In measures 98–101, Jolley introduces a third North Korean military march, creating an additional layer of ideological and musical juxtaposition within *MARCH! The Soldiers Answered* is another propagandistic song whose lyrics portray the strength of the military and the deep bond they share with their leadership.<sup>199</sup>

As a formation of troops, hard as iron, marched down the Imperial Guards' line of march,  
the one who revered them called upon them:  
"Are you confident of yourselves in battle?"  
When the Dear General kindly asked that,  
the soldiers answered "we shall always triumph".

As the soldiers looked up at the Dear General who had uttered  
"As I look at my soldiers, I feel power well forth," they answered:  
"Your health, Dear General, is our victory -  
your peace, Dear General, is our destiny."  
This, the soldiers cordially answered.

Are even the Army Corps' guns this loud?  
The soldiers powerfully vowed, letting only victory resound.  
When He had said "The Fatherland believes in you",  
the soldiers received that glory  
and answered "Dear General, you are our Fatherland.

Ah... The soldiers, ah... answered:  
"Dear General, Dear General,  
you are our Fatherland".

This new material begins a battle for dominance between the Shostakovich melody and the North Korean song. Even at its introduction in measure 98, the flutes and oboes hold on to the same dissonant tones of E versus F left over from the previous Shostakovich statement. The

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<sup>199</sup> "Korean People's Army State Merited Chorus - 병사들은 대답했네 (Pyöngsadürün Taetap-Haetne) (English Translation)," accessed March 16, 2025, <https://lyricstranslate.com/soldiersanswered>.

pitches are sustained over almost the entirety of the introduction of *The Soldiers Answered*. The overhanging dissonance by the flutes and oboes only establishes the power struggle between the two tunes, for as *The Soldiers Answered* attempts to continue, the *March of the Soviet Militia* persistently interjects in brief statements as it tries to maintain control as it has up to this point in the music. Harmonically, *The Soldiers Answered* begins in F-minor while *March of the Soviet Militia* is consistent with a tonal center of B-flat, further deepening the harmonic conflict and Jolley's deconstruction of the march style.

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18 "The Soldiers Answered"

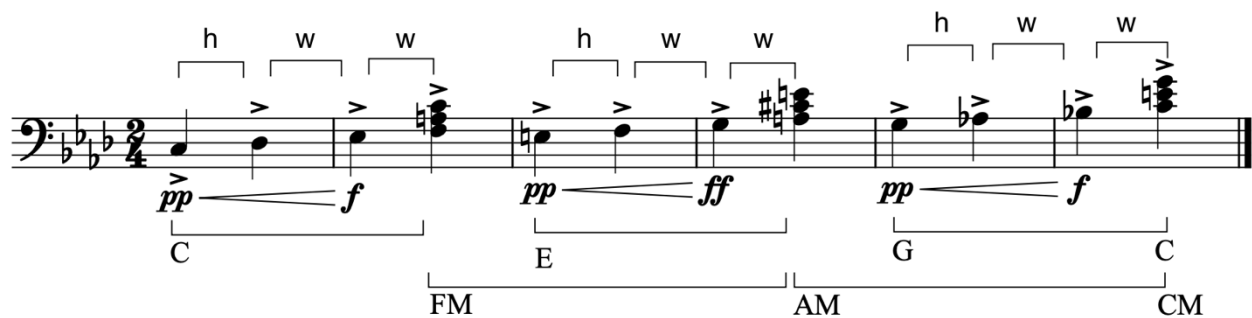
The musical score for "The Soldiers Answered" spans measures 98 to 103. Measures 98-101 feature a dissonant E/F over the main melody. Measures 102-103 show a change in the music with a new melody and dynamics. The score includes staves for Piccolo, Flute 1 & 2, Oboe 1 & 2, Bassoon 1 & 2, E♭ Clarinet, Clarinet 1 & 2, Clarinet 3, Bass Clarinet, Alto Saxophone 1 & 2, Tenor Saxophone, and Baritone Saxophone. Dynamics include *p subito* and *f*.

**Figure 22.** *MARCH! m.98-101* – Dissonant E/F over *The Soldiers Answered*

In measure 110, the music is interrupted by an ensemble-wide fermata of silence, followed by another single strike of the desk bell, which has not been heard since early in the piece. The unexpected return of the desk bell momentarily brings the audience back to the same

awkward and comedic discomfort felt in the beginning of *MARCH!* The desk bell is employed to break the tension of the previous heavy militaristic marches while also cutting out the North Korean songs—the satirical nature of Shostakovich’s march won the battle.

The A-section of *MARCH!* ends in measures 111-116 with a unison chromatic build by all winds and the snare drum that creates a sense of urgency with quick and extreme dynamic shifts (*pp* – *f*) in rapid succession every two measures. This six-measure phrase introduces an interesting sequence every two bars, following a half-step, whole-step, whole-step (h – w – w) pattern. While following this sequence, the final six measures of the march section also outlines a C Major chord on each down beat (C – E – G) while outlining an F Major structure on the upbeat at the end of each two-bar sequence (F Major, A Major, C Major), as seen below in Figure 23. The harmonic layering suggests the arrival of a grand and definitive ending to Jolley’s march with a resolution of an F-tonic that unfortunately never arrives. Instead of culminating in a decisive cadence, measure 117 delivers Jolley’s final compositional blow that disintegrates the march entirely, without resolution, without stability, and without the traditional grandeur expected of the genre.



**Figure 23.** *MARCH! m.111-116* – Reduction of harmonic structure

The B-section of *MARCH!*, subtitled NK Tanks, begins in measure 117 and marks a stark departure from the more tuneful (albeit propaganda-coated) march-like melodies from the previous section. Now more abstract and fragmented, the B-section has now completely disintegrated the march form. The sound world found here is meant to destabilize both tonality and time with the use of an electronic audio track, sputtering tempos, and woodwind microtones. The sounds in NK Tanks are intense and are intended to portray the omnipresent threat of North Korean military force. Heard throughout this section is static noise accompanied by various additional elements—non-descript distant talking and yelling from the audio tracks; booming and crashing from the tam-tam, cymbals, and bass drum; heavy, ominous, and unrelenting drones by low-timbre instruments on a unison F signaling impending doom; chaotic and unnerving microtones by the upper woodwinds; and lastly, a battalion of snare drums marching forward with militant precision.

The content of the audio tracks used in *MARCH!* is a combination of the North Korean tune *Where Are You, Dear General* and audio derived from sounds heard around the North Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), including military personnel, military equipment such as tanks, and audio from North Korean loudspeakers. Established in 1953 after the Korean War, the DMZ is a 250-kilometer long (155 miles) and 4-kilometer wide (2.5 miles) buffer of land between North and South Korea. Despite its name, the DMZ is one of the most militarized borders in the world and remains to this day a military zone of high tensions.<sup>200</sup>

While this strip of land is designed as a buffer of neutrality between North and South Korea, the two countries take vastly different approaches to maintaining diplomacy at the border. North Korea maintains a larger military presence and is constantly prepped and ready to be on

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<sup>200</sup> Arthur H Westing, “The Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) as a Bridge Between the Two Koreas,” n.d.

the offensive, while South Korea remains postured to defend. South Korea uses less personnel, as they are supported by allying countries that help provide them with the highest technology while the North has more outdated technology. Since the annexation of each country with the 1953 Korean War Armistice Agreement, a ceasefire agreement between the two sides that ended the Korean War, North Korea has heavily used loudspeakers to blast anti-South Korean and anti-Western propaganda over the border, as well as North Korean patriotic music. North Korea began the practice of using the loudspeakers in the late 1950s to target South Korean soldiers to defect to the North.<sup>201</sup>

*Where Are You, Dear General* was written and composed by Kim Jong-Il in 2001. The words portray his father (Kim Il Sung) who died in 1994, as the eternal leader of North Korea and depicts himself as merely the successor and steward of his father's work.<sup>202</sup> The song is melancholic and somber in nature as it paints Kim Il Sung as an eternal leader with God-like status whose leadership transcends death. The English translation of *Where Are You, Dear General* are as follows.

When the bright Big Dipper in the sky we see Fatherly General  
We ask ourselves where are you now?  
Light shines in the window of the Supreme Headquarters  
Where you are now, General? Where are you sure to be?

In this dark forest, far behind enemy lines  
Our General we wonder where he is  
Cold autumn wind blows to us  
We are yearning constantly for his warm care

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<sup>201</sup> Young Joon Lim and Jennifer L. Lemanski, "Psychological Words in Music and Propagandistic Communication in Two Koreas over the DMZ," *Journal of Creative Communications* 12, no. 3 (November 2017): 159–70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973258617722002>.

<sup>202</sup> Heo, "Juche Realist Music."

The North Korean government has played *Where Are You Dear Leader* over loudspeakers daily beginning at 6:00 A.M. as an alarm clock to the residents of the capital city since the year 2008.<sup>203</sup> The cover of the song is by the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble—North Korea’s first electronic pop music group established in 1985. The recording itself is a clear and simplistic electronic ballad,<sup>204</sup> though when played through the outdated loudspeakers throughout Pyongyang each morning, the otherwise pleasant-sounding tune is described an eerie and distorted electronic sound, reminiscent of an antiquated synthesizer or theremin, and “mind control music.”<sup>205</sup>

At its core, this section of music is cemented together by a sustained F-concert by the lowest timbre instruments found in the score. The ever-present pedal is foundational to the music yet wavers in its strength as it is destabilized repeatedly by shrill microtones and incessant snare drums. *Where Are You, Dear General* is originally pitched in the key of A, but in the context of a wind band setting and within the overtone series of woodwind and brass instruments, Jolley knew that the key of A would not work as naturally with a wind band as the key of F would. She states, “The F overtone series will accommodate everyone... plus detuning [*Where Are You, Dear General*] to concert F made it sound even creepier, which I wasn't anticipating.” In turn, the shift in tonality created a more dramatic effect than she anticipated, adding another layer to the piece’s anti-regime and satirical monologue.

Jolley begins the B-section begins with an explosive strike of the tam-tam, cymbal, and bass drum at a *fff* dynamic, in conjunction with the introduction of the first audio track containing only static noise and ambient voices. The rumbling and slow marching drones of the

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<sup>203</sup> Peter Moody and James Banfill, “Yanggak Island Discs: Seeing and Hearing North Korea Through Eight Songs,” *North Korean Review* 17, no. No. 1 (2021): 121–30, <https://doi.org/10.2307/NKR.17.1.121>.

<sup>204</sup> “Where Are You, Dear General?”

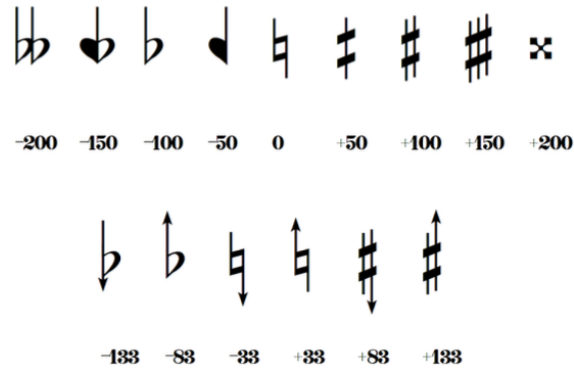
<sup>205</sup> Hotham, “Morning Chorus.”

low brass playing a unison F-Concert are introduced in measure 119. The baritone saxophone, tuba, string bass, and timpani play four accented quarter note F's, reminiscent of a military cadence as they try to puncture the stable drone but are quickly absorbed and fade into the mass of sound. Microtones begin stumbling into the sound mass in measure 120 ascending in pitch, and each with different microtone indications to signal how flat or sharp the player must go to achieve the sound. Grove Dictionary Online defines the word microtone as any musical interval or difference of pitch distinctly smaller than a semitone.<sup>206</sup> The addition of microtones furthers Jolley's intentions of deconstruction, as she destabilizes any traditional harmonic or chordal expectations. The intended effect is a precursor to the upcoming electronic sounds found in the audio tracks—a fitting transitional tool, as microtones frequently appear in electronic music—and further amplifies the current state of unease. Jolley states the following of this section:

When I disintegrate the march, instruments begin struggling to stay in time. I was thinking – what would make someone feel uneasy? I thought about what sounds unnerving, and that's where the microtones fit in. [The pitches are] rounded to the closest quartertone following the actual overtone system. Even though keyboards and computers use equal temperament, equal temperament doesn't exist in nature. So, when using the microtones, you notice in the higher registers that the microtonal content is more prominent – because it is so far removed from [the fundamental pitch].

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<sup>206</sup> Paul Griffiths, Mark Lindley, and Ioannis Zannos, "Microtone," Grove Music Online, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000018616>.



**Figure 24.** *MARCH!* – Microtone performance note

Now completely deconstructed, an unyielding vanguard of snare drums enters as the microtones settle into the soundscape in measure 121 with aggressive militaristic force. Measure 123 introduces the second audio track with distorted electronic sounds evocative of *Where Are You, Dear General* as played through the loudspeakers in Pyongyang. According to Jolley, “There is almost a psychological effect to it, hence the use of electronics. I felt that electronics introduce a temporal element as well. The loudspeaker has a very specific timbre and psychological implication, and I wanted to use that, and I wanted the instruments to melt into it.” With the addition of the twice-over distorted electronic sounds, the rest of the B-section of *MARCH!* is veiled with an artificial coldness of a mechanical and disembodied voice.

A pattern is followed with the repetition of the distorted audio. After the introductory track in measure 117, the pattern of the F-drone/ 4 “marching” quarter notes, ascending microtones, rudimentary snare drums, followed by the eerie and distorted “Where Are You, Dear Leader” continue throughout the B-section. The final audio track is cued in measure 167. As the track fades along with the ensemble, players should fall out as needed, leaving the timpani and

bass drum as the last members to sustain the F-drone before a final and niente release in measure 173.

The various elements of this section—audio tracks/ electronics, drones, microtones, and snare drums—battle constantly for dominance. Tempos throughout are unstable and shift unpredictably to dissipate any sense of rhythmic consistency, which stalls any forward momentum gained by the impending militaristic forces and North Korean tanks. The intentional use of staggering tempos creates not only a sense of unease and instability, but mockery of one of North Korea’s most popular and wildly used political tunes. In conjunction with suspenseful drones, erratic tempo changes, and persistent snare drums, the section remains in turmoil and is intended to inflict the same kind of psychological distress on the listener that one might experience in North Korea.

The dramatic, unstable, and unpredictable A and B sections finally arrive at a moment of respite at the arrival of measure 174. “*Aeguka*,” is the South Korean national anthem and serves as a stark contrast against the rigid *March of the Soviet Militia* and propaganda-driven music of North Korea. *Aeguka* translates to “Patriotic Song” or “Song of Loving the Country,” and its lyrics reflect that of beauty, love for country, and resilience.<sup>207</sup>

1. Until that day when the waters of the East Sea run dry and Mount Baekdusan is worn away, God protect and preserve our nation; Hurray to Korea.
2. As the pine atop the near mountain stands firm, unchanged through wind and frost, as if wrapped in armor, so shall our resilient spirit.
3. The autumn sky is void and vast, high and cloudless; the bright moon is our heart, undivided and true.
4. With this spirit and this mind, give all loyalty, in suffering or in joy, to the love of country.

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<sup>207</sup> Jirasin Tinbang, “The Dissemination of Korean Values: From the ‘National Anthem’ to ‘Cultural Exports,’” *NIDA Development Journal* 62, no. 2 (2022), <https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/NDJ/article/view/257977>.

Refrain: Three thousand ri of splendid rivers and mountains covered with mugunghwa blossoms. Great Korean people, stay true to the Great Korean way!<sup>208</sup>

Following the final disconcerting drone, the music takes a dramatic turn and has now blossomed into a full and lush final C-section. Firmly anchored in the first major tonality of the piece: F major, the parallel key to the opening. After much uncertainty and discomfort, the harmony decisively shifts to the first major tonality of the piece—F-major. The shift in tonality provides a sense of stability for the first time and serves as a cathartic release from the preceding sections. With harmonic clarity also comes more balanced phrases. While the phrase structure maintains an unconventional seven measures, it holds a sense of symmetry and balance as the first and last four bars overlap. In the fourth measure of the melodic South Korean national anthem, a soft and delicate chordal accompaniment emerges. Gentle triplet figures swell and recede like soft ocean waves for four measures, creating the second half of each statement. The resulting phrase, although asymmetric, feels proportional and complete.

The use of asymmetrical phrases that feel symmetrical is a subtle and effective compositional tool of Jolley's that allows her to compress or stretch time without disrupting the flow of the music. It is a mature and nuanced tool used in her compositions that allows her to blur the lines of formal phrase structure and pacing while creating phrases that feel organic and intentional. This seven-measure structure is repeated 3 times from measures 174-195.

On the third iteration, in measure 188, Jolley introduces a vocal line that accompanies the saxophone quartet's playing of the South Korean national anthem. The vocal line uses a neutral syllable of "loo" through the end of the piece, allowing the focus of the tune's beauty to remain within the wind band rather than through language or text, making it universally attainable for all

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<sup>208</sup> "National Administration> National Symbols of the Republic of Korea> The National Anthem - Aegukga," accessed March 23, 2025, [https://www.mois.go.kr/eng/sub/a03/nationalSymbol\\_2/screen.do](https://www.mois.go.kr/eng/sub/a03/nationalSymbol_2/screen.do).

to sing. Jolley reinforces this sentiment by instructing that the players sing in their appropriate octave, further emphasizing the composers' anti-socialist and anti-regime intentions behind *MARCH!* The music becomes inclusive, where each performer contributes with their voice, and their voices are equal, no matter their status or role within the ensemble. The use of *Aeguka* becomes a symbol of freedom, unity, and shared humanity, standing in direct opposition to the political ideology of North Korea.

Measures 195 to the end are constructed into three 5-measure phrases. The first (measure 195-199) utilizes the same asymmetrical-symmetry previously used in the seven-measure structure. This time, however, the undulating accompaniment in the second half of the phrase is replaced by the return of the rudimental army of snare drums. *Aeguka* is expanded to nearly every member of the ensemble, apart from the double bass and timpani as they complete a sustained and unison "C" to complete the final accompaniment line,. A sense of instability returns in measure 198 as sputtering tempos reemerge as the opposing ideas alternate between 52 and 92 bpm. Demanding and persistent, the battery plays two dynamic levels above the rest of the ensemble, inserting a sense of control and urgency as they try to overtake the peace and beauty of *Aeguka*.

The national anthem persists nonetheless into measure 200 as the double bass and timpani players abandon their instruments and contribute their voices. Now completely divided, the ensemble consists of two distinct groups—choir and battery. The opposing forces—peaceful versus regimental, democratic versus authoritarian, and human expression versus mechanized rigidity—are representative of a polarized North and South Korea. Tempos now overlap, creating a temporal discord between the two groups with the national anthem remaining at a lyrical 52 bpm while the snares move forward with militaristic rigidity at 92 bpm. The unyielding and

relentless snare drums now cut through the texture, perhaps recalling the imagery of North Korean tanks from the DMZ, founding the deconstructed B-section of the piece.

Performers are instructed in measure 200 to begin gradually leaving the performance space until the only remaining members on stage are the four snare drummers. Any traditional ensemble, wind band or otherwise, typically remained firmly in place through the end of a piece to reinforce a sense of unity and closure for both the performers and audience alike. This highly unconventional staging maneuver at the end of *MARCH!* uses the physical departure of the performers as a final act of resistance. Those walking away refuse to yield to the authoritarian power of the militaristic snare drums as they continue singing the anthem of a peaceful and democratic nation. Their absence of physical presence is not an act of submission, but rather a powerful rejection of a communist regime that has stripped its citizens of their individualistic voices and connection to the outside world. What remains on stage is not symbolic of triumph, but rather of displacement and the utter abandonment of an oppressive regime.

*MARCH!* presents listeners with a complex and complicated legacy of the march genre. While Western music would paint the genre as arduous art-music usually meant for pomp and circumstance, the dark history of the march has been, and is still used to this day, by power-hungry rulers to justify their power, inflame nationalistic pride, and promote violence. *MARCH!* challenges the listener to critique and consider the historical duality of the genre and to consider the perception of both the musical tradition and political implications of a march and ultimately, to reject political manipulation, authoritarian power, and blatant propaganda.

Jolley expertly uses several compositional devices to deconstruct the march form. Satire and irony are on full display as she uses an already satirical march as the basis for her new march, one that seamlessly blends Shostakovich with North Korean patriotic tunes. She then

takes an already parodied *March of the Soviet Militia* and utilizes various methods to distort and interrupt the expected flow of music with a recurring ringing of a desk bell, awkward silences after phrases, inconsistent, and unpredictable tempos. In a form that is historically symmetrical, she mocks the predictability of the genre by creating asymmetrical, yet balanced phrases. She further utilizes layered tempos and rhythms, juxtaposing the beauty of a democratic South Korea in stark contrast to regimented and militarized sounding snare drums. Jolley then utilizes the physical bodies of the ensemble as a form of symbolism as members gradually leave the performance space—a peaceful protest, and representative of the dismantling of a previously unified force.

An examination of Jolley’s compositional methods, combined with critical and historical reflections of an entire genre, results in a piece of music that propels the wind band medium as a powerful tool of social critique and political awareness. Viewed through this lens, *MARCH!* becomes a study into how composers can create music that challenges the status quo. *MARCH!*, along with many others in Jolley’s catalog, are used to illuminate the complex relationship between music, politics, and one’s own identity.

## **Conclusions**

Jennifer Jolley has situated herself as a bold, fearless, and forward-thinking voice, whose music demonstrates a commitment to storytelling through innovative compositional devices marginally found elsewhere in the wind band repertoire. A highly distinctive quality found in her compositions is the use of sociopolitical narratives to inform the structural basis of her writing. Her works are largely defined by their unapologetic commentary on real-world issues. As both a storyteller and composer, Jolley uses her music as a platform to amplify narratives often untold within the canon of repertoire. From her commentary on tragedy and the disturbing and grim

juxtaposition of an open-carry law passing on an anniversary of the state and nation's first major mass shooting on a college campus, to satirizing an entire authoritarian nation and their overt use of propaganda, her works have added an unmatched depth to the overall repertoire.

Jolley's music draws greatly from minimalist and postminimalist concepts; she is not a composer who fits very well into any one style of writing. Her music often incorporates techniques such as repetition to indicate structural clarity and timbral shifts and compelling narratives intended to spark conversation. Jolley is a composer who always has the performers in mind throughout her writing process and believes those performers to be her first audience. She writes with those performers at the forefront and believes that to be a central piece of her compositional approach. She takes pride in having a deep awareness of the physical and technical demands of performers at varying levels and aims to write music that is both challenging for the intended group and engaging by giving every part something substantial and worthwhile.

What sets Jolley apart from other contemporary wind band composers is her unique use of an eclectic mix of compositional tools and styles. Drawn from an array of contemporary techniques, particularly from minimalism, postminimalism, and other modernist concepts, Jolley is skillful in her ability to merge these approaches with her narrative-driven music. She often blurs the boundaries of traditional concert repertoire and conventional expectations with more experimental ideas of sound art, spectralism, and spatial music. This is achieved by using tools such as extended techniques, microtonalities, electronics, and polytempos in conjunction with functional tonality, melodic lyricism, or conventional orchestration. For example, the ending of *MARCH!* is a moment where Jolley blurs those boundaries of conventional with nonconventional with a tonally stable harmonic frame, with a lyrical melody on top at a tempo of 52 bpm. Add in

polytempos with the percussion section at 92 bpm (a modernist, avant-garde, or experimental music technique) followed by a physical departure of the ensemble members (a spatial element) while the tonal lyricism is still happening. The result is one that, despite its complexity, feels remarkably natural. The way in which Jolley integrates these contemporary compositional techniques with more conventional ideas allows for a continual flow to her music, rather than allowing such tools to appear as harsh, jarring, or disruptive to the listener's ear. She masterfully demonstrates that even more complex contemporary tools can increase the emotional impact of a piece rather than detract from the overall effect of the music.

Perhaps most significant of her work is how greatly Jolley has broadened the definition of a wind band composer and how one can compose music true to oneself. Her gendered identity as a women composer is embraced, yet her dual identity as a Korean American woman composer provides her with a unique lens into the world and a platform unlike many others, allowing space to advocate for visibility and confront injustices while normalizing both diversity in music and socially conscious narratives in the wind band medium. Jolley's growing presence in the wind band world and extensive catalog stands as a model for music that can be deeply personal, politically and socially engaged, and aurally inventive, positioning her as one of the most compelling and influential contemporary composers of modern-day repertoire.

## Chapter 6 – Erika Svanoe

### Biography and Background

Erika Svanoe is a North American contemporary composer of wind band, orchestral, chamber, choral, and flexible ensemble music. Born in 1976 in Whitewater, Wisconsin, Svanoe began taking piano lessons around age seven, and received a digital keyboard from her parents at the age of ten, a gift she regarded as a catalyst for her interest in composing and arranging. She described the instrument as having “a lot of bells and whistles,” and one that had arranging capabilities that allowed her to change chord progressions and to experiment with various sounds and combinations of instruments.”<sup>209</sup> Svanoe claims to have a similar piano in her studio to this day.

Svanoe’s compositional output reflects a link to many popular culture references—a link also drawn from her childhood experiences of melodic arrangements. She recalls watching the *Cosby Show*, and while she acknowledges the many social issues associated with the main actor, she was fascinated by the transformation of the theme song from season to season and would anxiously wait to hear each new arrangement every year. The melodic transformation and arranging used throughout the show resonated with her and was something she looked forward to discovering with each new season.

Her avenue to composing began by arranging TV show theme songs on the piano, such as *Doogie Howser, M.D.*, which she performed for her seventh-grade band class, as well as a boogie-woogie version of *The Munsters*. Her interest in arranging continued as she began creating arrangements of jazz and pep band charts. She found joy in transforming and reshaping existing music, a theme that has continued to permeate her catalog as a composer. Based on her

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<sup>209</sup> Erika Svanoe, Interview by the author, Zoom, April 5, 2024.

early experiences with music, especially her electronic keyboard and interest in arranging popular culture theme songs, Svanoe states, “I came to composition through the doorway of arranging.”<sup>210</sup> She began composing original music at age 12 but continued to lean heavily into her arranging knowledge, where she began reimagining her own ideas. In her words, “The idea of arranging and transforming things that [already] existed was really cool.”

A pivotal moment in wanting to compose music came during her high school years when she performed Barber's *First Essay for Orchestra, Op. 12* as a member of the all-state orchestra. Despite having an extended period of rest at the onset as a clarinet player, Svanoe describes the slow, but striking introductory material by the bass, cello, and viola that created such richness with their sounds. It was in this moment that she recalls feeling a profound source of inspiration—a culmination of all the musical experiences throughout her life and the point at which she decided to pursue a career in music.

Svanoe received a bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire in 1999, a master's degree in Wind Conducting from Oklahoma State University in 2003, and a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Conducting from Ohio State University in 2009.<sup>211</sup> She states that her interest in composition was not at the forefront of her mind, and not something she took seriously until 2013.<sup>212</sup> Up to that point in her career, Svanoe's focus had primarily been arranging, including pep band, marching band, and jazz band arrangements, among others, all for a functional purpose. While earning her master's degree, Svanoe's focus on arranging shifted from writing functional music to creating for the sake of artistry when she took

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<sup>210</sup> Svanoe.

<sup>211</sup> Erika Svanoe, “CV,” Erika Svanoe - Conductor and Composer, accessed May 21, 2024, <https://www.erikasvanoe.com/cv.html>.

<sup>212</sup> Friedland, “The Composer-Conductor: An Examination of the Relationship and Connection between Two Disciplines.”

on her now-arrangement of *Four Grainger Songs* for chamber ensemble and soprano vocalist. She went on to create a band arrangement of Aaron Copland's *El Salón México* for her doctoral project, and while the Copland Estate granted permission for the arrangement, performance, and recording of the project, the arrangement remains unpublished at the request of the Copland estate.<sup>213</sup> Upon the completion of her doctoral project of *El Salón México*, and the realization of the limitations placed on arranging due to licensing and copyright permissions, Svanoe determined that any further compositions, if not her own original material, that she would borrow from music within the public domain to avoid the hurdles and red tape needed for anything with a copyright. Such examples of her use of music in the public domain includes Charles Ives' *Country Band March*, Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic horror novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Karl King's *Barnum and Bailey's Favorite* march, Harry Dacre's 1892 song, *Daisy Bell*,<sup>214</sup> Darius Milhaud's *La Création du monde*, and George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*.<sup>215</sup>

After graduating from the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, Svanoe began her music career as the band director for Mukwonago High School & Middle School in Mukwonago, WI before earning instrumental conducting degrees in both her master's from Oklahoma State University and doctorate from Ohio State University. Svanoe's collegiate teaching experience includes appointments at the University of New Hampshire, Bemidji State University, Augsburg University, and the University of Wisconsin – Stout.<sup>216</sup> In May 2023, Svanoe transitioned from her career in teaching full-time as a band director to composing full-time. Along with her career

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<sup>213</sup> Erika Svanoe, "Compositions," Erika Svanoe - Conductor and Composer, accessed May 14, 2024, <https://www.erikasvanoe.com/compositions.html>.

<sup>214</sup> Erika Svanoe, *Steampunk Suite in Four Movements for Wind Ensemble* (Swan Maiden Press, 2017).

<sup>215</sup> Erika Svanoe, *Symphony in Blue and Gold, a Symphony for Wind Band* (Erika Svanoe, 2023).

<sup>216</sup> Svanoe, "CV."

transition, came a new set of challenges. Svanoe shares dealing with feelings of self-doubt, imposter syndrome, procrastination, having creativity blocks, and balancing the workload, all while attempting to maintain a fresh perspective on her own creative process. She shares that with each new piece, she remains in a constant state of personal growth and self-improvement, with a desire to create works that also force her to evolve as an artist. Svanoe challenges her own thinking and process by asking herself questions such as, “Did I learn anything? Did I take any risks? Did I develop as a composer while writing this piece?”<sup>217</sup>

Svanoe’s first significant compositional accolade came in 2014 when her *Haunted Carousel*, her debut work, was named the NBA’s Young Band Composition Contest winner.<sup>218</sup> Along with the recognition, Svanoe notes that the award created a sense of affirmation and validation in her decision to “go all in”<sup>219</sup> with composition, as respected figures in the wind band world found value in her work. Svanoe believes that she has reaped many benefits from this recognition of her music, including the ins and outs of the publication and editing process. Part of the award was the guarantee of publication through Alfred Music. Upon being picked up by the publishing company, Svanoe was informed that *The Haunted Carousel* needed to be shortened by 40-50 measures, simply so that it would fit onto an 11x17 piece of paper. After her initial shock, she consulted with her trusted friend and fellow composer Andrew Boysen, who provided feedback that the piece was slightly repetitive, and could benefit from pairing it down. Ultimately Svanoe agreed and made necessary revisions, and although she had to alter her initial artistic vision, she concludes that the published version is better representative of her works, although shorter than the original contest winner.

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<sup>217</sup> Svanoe, Interview.

<sup>218</sup> “NBA Young Band Composition Contest Winners,” accessed April 14, 2025, <https://nationalbandassociation.org/composition-contests/>.

<sup>219</sup> Svanoe, Interview.

Svanoe has continued to enter her pieces in various contests, becoming immune to the presumed rejection of not winning. Reflecting on how these contests have shaped her career, she notes that the true value in submission lies not in winning but in knowing that someone is forced to listen to her music, regardless of the competition's outcome. When not labeled as an award recipient in a contest, Svanoe expresses indifference, as she is not bothered by the rejection or lack of recognition. Instead, she enjoys listening to the winning pieces, stating, “That was fun!” and, “Yeah, that's [the piece] I would have picked.”<sup>220</sup> She remains assured in her own music, in part due to other meaningful experiences and performances of her music, such as having her mentor Russel Mikkelson at Ohio State University not only believe in her works but program it at national conventions. Other noteworthy moments of assurance have come through a few high-profile performances by “The President’s Own” Marine Band on the steps of the Capital building, the United States Navy and Air Force bands, and the National Concert Band of America, among others.<sup>221</sup>

Svanoe’s music is characterized by her unique artistry based on intellect, melodic storytelling, and humor demonstrated through a deep understanding of arranging both original and borrowed melodic material, as well as a deep philosophical belief in providing compositions that gives both performer and audience a joyful musical experience. She approaches composition through a lens of practicality based on years of experience as an educator and conductor of ensembles and aims to give every performer “something to chew on” in hopes of making players feel valued and that the time invested into her music is a worthwhile endeavor. Often based on music in the public domain, her style is a fusion of classical styles and forms, intertwined with

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<sup>220</sup> Svanoe.

<sup>221</sup> Erika Svanoe, “Erika Svanoe Bio,” Erika Svanoe, About, accessed April 15, 2025, <https://www.erikasvanoe.com/about.html>.

heavy melodic development, popular culture, and imagery through pastiche storytelling and character arcs. Her transition to composing full-time in the last few years marks the latest major evolution in her career and serves as a strong indication of her prominence and success as a composer within the contemporary wind band repertoire.

### **Identity as a Woman Composer**

When asked about her experience as a woman composer, Svanoe admits that she has mixed feelings about the topic. While she has only been seriously composing for approximately a decade, she acknowledges that her entry into the field coincided with a significant cultural shift towards programming music from underrepresented composers. The timing of these two events, she admits, has likely significantly and directly impacted the success of her compositional career. While Svanoe is a proponent of promoting diversity in music— especially as a conductor responsible for choosing repertoire for students—she expressed ambivalence towards the notion that although she has reaped the benefits of being an underrepresented composer amid a diversity movement, she wrestles with an internal conflict of wondering if her music is being programmed for its merit, or because someone aims to check off a box by including a woman composer. This uncertainty causes her to question if the selection of her music on any given program is reflective of a genuine appreciation of her work, asking herself, “Are you programming me because I’m a lady? How much do you actually like my music?”<sup>222</sup> Svanoe’s perspective as a conductor is to prioritize programming minority voices, but most important to her philosophy is programming works that resonate and speak to her and her students, while also meeting artistic and educational objectives. Ultimately, she believes that, “It’s tricky, [but] I have to assume that they program

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<sup>222</sup> Svanoe, Interview.

[my music] because they like it, but I also know that I get programmed because I [am a woman], and that's just how it is." Even through moments of doubt, she aims to remind herself that her work is well crafted and respected beyond her identity as a woman.<sup>223</sup>

Though Svanoe remains conflicted about her role as a woman composer, she recognizes that her visibility in the field can be a source of inspiration for young musicians. She considers her own window of limited diversity and female role models throughout her own musical training and career, as most of her own teachers and mentors have been men. Aware of the privilege associated with her position as an accomplished woman in the field, she feels a reinforced sense of responsibility to serve as a role model for other young women in music.<sup>224</sup>

She asserts, "Not all music speaks to all people," and warns against creating overly generalized music and art, which she compares to "the most inoffensive hotel painting on the wall," suggesting it lacks any substantive value.<sup>225</sup> While trying to appeal to all audiences, the analogy of the hotel art, in turn, reflects a broader depiction of bland and uninspiring art. Svanoe believes that music and art are not one-size-fits-all and that no single piece can and should appeal to all audiences. Her belief remains that everyone's unique experiences in life should contribute to the richness and diversity of all art. She argues for the promotion of new and varied perspectives and that diversity is essential to the vitality and survival of the art. Svanoe further doubles down on her values of diversity in artistic expression, proclaiming, "The more voices there are, the more art there is, and the more different that art is [the better]. More art is always the answer."<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Svanoe.

<sup>224</sup> Svanoe.

<sup>225</sup> Svanoe.

<sup>226</sup> Svanoe.

## Compositional Style

Svanoe's creative output is largely based in transforming material (original or borrowed) into something new and exciting. She acknowledges that her strength as a composer lies within arranging, as she chooses to focus on this highly developed skill she has acquired throughout her career—a superpower, of sorts. She describes herself as a melodic composer who leans heavily into arranging to create catchy melodies, with many of her works characterized by constant melodic transformation. Her compositional style is playful and based in storytelling with creative and vivid imagery usually associated. The role of storytelling in Svanoe's compositions is often an immersive experience that portrays specific characters, scenes, colors, and events.

An Example of such creativity and storytelling can be found in her grade two composition titled *The Candy Factory*, inspired by the 1971 film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, which depicts a scene from the movie that shows the colorful machine used to create the highly sought-after Everlasting Gobstopper.<sup>227</sup> Another example includes her award-winning grade three piece titled *The Haunted Carousel*, which won first prize in the NBA's Young Band Composition Contest in 2014. The piece utilizes an iPad to duplicate the sound of a theremin—the electronic instrument used in old science fiction and horror movies to create an eerie, mysterious, ghostly, and otherworldly Halloween-like atmosphere.<sup>228</sup> In her grade five composition titled *Steampunk Suite* (transcribed and adapted by the composer from her chamber ensemble score, *Steampunk Scenes*), Svanoe weaves the sub-genre of science fiction, along with fantasy, to depict non-fictional characters from the Victorian Era into an alternative fictional history.

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<sup>227</sup> Erika Svanoe, "The Candy Factory," *The Candy Factory*, accessed April 13, 2025, <https://www.erikasvanoe.com/the-candy-factory.html>.

<sup>228</sup> "The Haunted Carousel," accessed April 13, 2025, <https://www.alfred.com/the-haunted-carousel/p/00-44192/>.

*Steampunk Suite* attempts to depict various scenes that take place in a fictional alternate history that features notable people alive in the Victorian era, including Charles Ives, Marie Curie, H.G. Wells, Jules Verne, P.T. Barnum and Nikola Tesla. It borrows from popular music of the era, including the cakewalk, march, and waltz, and combines them with sounds of clockwork and imagined steam technology. It also borrows various musical elements from numerous composers of time, including Ives, Sousa, Satie, Karl King, Stravinsky, and Weill, with some Khachaturian and Danny Elfman thrown in for good measure.<sup>229</sup>

“I write a pretty good earworm—I love a catchy melody,” she states.<sup>230</sup> As a self-proclaimed melodic composer, the emphasis on melody reflects her belief that music should be engaging, enjoyable, and often infused with humor. Svanoe claims to lean heavily into her arranging skills as one of the best tools in her compositional toolbox. Her ability to arrange is showcased in many ways throughout her compositions, as she especially loves to find inspiration from music in the public domain.

Svanoe describes her compositional process as multifaceted and “messy” and begins with writing a short score with occasional notes for timbre or color. Decisions on orchestration come after a composition has been completed, and a piece often ends up in a different key than what was written in the original short score. Based in pedagogy from her years of experience as a band director, Svanoe’s thought process embedded within her compositions demonstrates a level of practicality. She carefully considers what she believes will work both technically and in terms of orchestration for all instruments, as she maintains a level of awareness and understanding of what will be challenging to rehearse and perform for ensembles of all abilities. “The Band is really my instrument, [and] I really understand it.”

Regarding tempo, Svanoe reflects on the importance of pacing to shape a piece's musical character and that even slight deviations can significantly alter the mood of a movement or

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<sup>229</sup> Svanoe, *Steampunk Suite*.

<sup>230</sup> Svanoe, Interview.

section. As both a composer and conductor, she admits that finding the right tempo is one of the more difficult concepts she faces. As a composer, she becomes attached to a specific tempo due to the limitations of listening to the music through notation software. Yet, as a conductor, she believes that the physicality of conducting also plays a contributing factor in finding the proper metronomic marking. In addition, she understands the added complexities placed on performers and various performance spaces by written tempos and the necessity to alter them when needed. She often does not find the right tempo on a piece she has written until she conducts it herself, stating, “In a time-based art form, pace is everything.” Ultimately, Svanoe finds the interpretation of tempi in her music acceptable but stresses the delicate balance between achieving precision and making decisions that drastically alter the pacing, groove, and feel of the music and closes out this thought by advising, “Check your metronome, but do what feels right.”

When beginning a new composition, Svanoe approaches the process from a research perspective, often turning towards studying others’ creative processes, specifically through reading blogs and other publicly shared reflections on creativity, to help refine her creativity. She has found this form of investigative research into others’ workflow has especially helped her in overcoming any artistic blocks. She states, “Learning about the creative process itself—when I feel stuck and trying to identify [an issue]—research is my go-to.” Specifically, Svanoe credits a blog on procrastination and the idea of “procrastiworking”, also known as “productive procrastination”, as a tool that has helped her get past aspects of procrastination and learning to reframe a delay in her process as a period of creative incubation.<sup>231</sup> Svanoe also credits comedian and co-founder of Monty Python John Cleese’s “Five Keys to Creativity,” who writes that creativity can thrive through a combination of confidence, patience, uninterrupted time, quiet

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<sup>231</sup> “Productive Procrastination: Surprising Benefits (Plus Useful Strategies),” accessed April 19, 2025, <https://www.usemotion.com/blog/productive-procrastination>.

space, and humor to assist in her compositional process.<sup>232</sup> According to Svanoe, these resources, among others, have reinforced her resolve to avoid churning out music merely for the sake of a product and have, in turn, affirmed the need to balance production with deliberate periods of rest, ensuring that each piece comes from a thoughtful space rather than a schedule-driven mindset.

Unsurprisingly, Svanoe's compositional influences include composers such as Gustav Holst and Dmitri Shostakovich—composers known for their skillful development and recurrent use of motivic ideas throughout their works. As a high school clarinet player, Svanoe recalls learning *First Suite in E-flat*, and how her band director demonstrated Holst's use of the initial chaconne throughout the entire piece of music with various transformations. She recalls learning about Holst's four-note motive in the Chaconne, and how she felt completely floored, yet intrigued by such a concept. A similar epiphany came while attending a professional symphony orchestra concert as a high school student. Svanoe recalls the conductor of the visiting symphony discussing the use of Shostakovich's personal monogram, known as the D-S-C-H motif that is used frequently in the composers' music, where the letters reflect the German note names of D, E-flat, B, and C.<sup>233</sup> As an impressionable high school musician, Svanoe's recalls the conductor's educational talk where he instructed the students to listen for the motif and had the orchestra demonstrate such moments. Once again completely captivated, she recalls hearing all the letters outlined by the conductor. The concept of using minimal material and transforming it over and over again stuck with her, and while her arranging skills have always been masterful, she had not fully realized her potential with this skill until deeply into writing *Symphony in Blue and Gold*.

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<sup>232</sup> Ben Garfinkel, "Five Keys to Creativity," November 1, 2013, <https://industrialbrand.com/5-keys-to-creativity-from-john-cleese-of-monty-python-fame>.

<sup>233</sup> Anna Meehan, "Shostakovich Quartet No. 8," *Intertext* 31, no. Article 10 (April 28, 2023): 28–33.

Svanoe acknowledges a significant compositional influence of the iconic popular culture composer John Williams. She enthusiastically praises Williams before asking rhetorically, "Who doesn't love a good John Williams melody?"<sup>234</sup> She characterizes the composer's melodic content as one with long, arcing themes that tend to linger in the listener's mind long after they are heard. Born in 1976, she grew up in the middle of the cultural phenomenon known as the Star Wars saga and rightfully claims that part of her cultural existence was, in part, the music of John Williams. She credits his music as a foundational element of her endeavor to create lasting and memorable melodies.

In terms of arranging, Svanoe's music is full of borrowed melodies and motives in which she transforms short melodies into motives that are then re-invented and re-orchestrated multiple times throughout a singular composition. Svanoe proudly and confidently labels her music as pastiche, as she enjoys combining various musical influences and incorporating slapstick comedy and embedded musical jokes in her compositions. She describes one of her newest Grade 4 pieces for wind band titled *Fairest of the Renaissance Faire*, in which she takes melodic themes and motives from John Philip Sousa's march *Fairest of the Fair* and transforms these melodic materials into a Renaissance context, with inspiration explicitly drawn from William Byrd's *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* and Tielman Susato's *Danserye*.<sup>235</sup> She goes on further, describing her pastiche style by describing another Grade 4 piece from her wind band catalog titled *Tutued Toucan Can-can*, as "a transformed Froot Loops commercial, *Firebird Suite*, and the can-can from *Orpheus and the Underworld*, and another can-can from *Dance of the Hours*—from Amilcare Ponchielli's opera *La Gioconda*, of which Svanoe notes was depicted in Disney's

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<sup>234</sup> Svanoe, Interview.

<sup>235</sup> Erika Svanoe, "Fairest of the Renaissance Faire," Erika Svanoe - Conductor and Composer, accessed September 28, 2024, <https://www.erikasvanoe.com/fairest-of-the-renaissance-faire.html>.

*Fantasia* with animated ostriches.<sup>236</sup> She is masterful in not only borrowing music, but borrowing from something already borrowed (i.e. Ponchielli's can-can, borrowed by Disney—only to borrow it again and include it because of Disney's depiction of an ostrich—all in an attempt by Svanoe to maintain the schtick in a piece of music about a Toucan doing the Can-can).

Svanoe fully commits herself to these seemingly unconventional and humorous ideas (i.e., turning a Sousa march into a Renaissance piece), often doubling down on such ideas. This quirky aspect of her music is perhaps her most unique and notable compositional signature, as she revels in taking “the absurd” and finding ways to refine those ideas and turn them into high art. “I’m not afraid to double down on a stupid idea. [I will] put as much craft as possible into executing it to the highest degree. I go all in and [aim] to make the most serious piece of art out of a really stupid idea.”

She cites looking at the music of Charles Ives and his style of blending various materials and genres as a source of inspiration in her writing, particularly through the study of his *Country Band March*. Ives' music is known for using frequent quotations and imitation of largely familiar tunes and literature to evoke imagery and language of the common man rather than portraying a strict narrative throughout his music. When using borrowed material, Ives felt no scholarly obligation to quote his source material strictly and rarely uses exact quotations. Instead, he would alter melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic aspects of the original material in a manner reflective of his own voice. The concept of using borrowed materials became a composition tool for arranging and transforming musical ideas to symbolize specific impressions of culture, memory, or place. The evolution of Ives' music shows an increased sophistication and utilization of quoted ideas

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<sup>236</sup> Erika Svanoe, “Tutued Toucan Can-Can,” Erika Svanoe - Conductor and Composer, accessed September 28, 2024, <https://www.erikasvanoe.com/tutued-toucan-can-can.html>.

throughout his compositional career as he began using such material with experimental techniques such as polytonality, polyrhythms, and layering of borrowed material to create a “musical collage,” ultimately creating his own distinctive and unique compositional language.<sup>237</sup>

Svanoe specifically points to Ives’ *Country Band March* as a source that she has invested a lot of time in while studying his style. Composed in its original form for theater orchestra between 1902 and 1905, the piece parodies the amateur bands that Ives grew up with, including the imperfections of missed entrances, out-of-tune sounds, and other quirks reminiscent of such ensembles. Ives demonstrates his technique of musical collage in *Country Band March* by layering a multitude of popular and well-known North American folk songs of the time, including “London Bridge,” “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” “Arkansas Traveler,” “Massa’s in de Cold Ground,” “Marching Through Georgia,” “Semper Fidelis,” “The Battle Cry of Freedom,” “Yankee Doodle,” and the “Indiana State Band March.” The tunes appear in the score simultaneously and in conflicting keys and meters to each other. Ives intentionally misaligns and distorts the melodies to mimic the sound of amateur musicians, often inebriated, and a generally unpolished sound of a community band, providing both playful and humorous depictions of the tunes. Densely layered, this style, championed by Ives, shows how simplistic and preexisting musical ideas can be transformed into nuanced artistry.

Many parallels can be drawn between Ives and Svanoe’s approach to writing, particularly their use of borrowed music to anchor entirely new compositions. Both draw from music familiar to the common listener and use that material to create a foundation that supports the rest of their writing. The same concept of borrowing a fixed melody employed by Ives and Svanoe can be

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<sup>237</sup> Clayton Wilson Henderson, “Quotation as a Style Element in the Music of Charles Ives” (United States -- Missouri, Washington University in St. Louis, 1969), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/302444188/citation/C8710CA42E024CA1PQ/1>.

traced to the earliest compositional method of using a cantus firmus, in which a preexisting tune becomes the central pillar of a new work.<sup>238</sup> Like Ives, Svanoe also uses innovative techniques to define her style by turning absurdity into art and humor into substantive musical ideas. The concept of borrowing is central to Svanoe's voice in the same way it was to Charles Ives and has always deeply resonated with her as a composer.

A guiding principle of her process is also considering the performers' experience and ensuring that each player in the ensemble has a meaningful part to play. Her process further involves considerations of the audience's experience beyond how the piece will sound, but what their experience is before, during, and after hearing her music performed. Storytelling is central to her compositions, even if not strictly programmatic, and ties into the experience of the ensemble and audience, which she deeply values. Svanoe believes that storytelling is part of her compositional voice, stating, "Who doesn't love a good story?" She believes that stories add to the human experience of both performers and listeners. Creative titles like *The Haunted Carousel* and *Tutued Toucan Can-can* help set the stage from the onset for both the performers and audiences' imaginations alike.

In the book *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band, Volume 12*, Ken Thompson offers an insightful characterization of Svanoe's compositional style in his article on *Steampunk Suite*. He writes, "When coupled with the exceptional compositional craft, layers of humor and intelligent programmatic plots, and an encompassing musicological ethos, *Steampunk Suite* certainly demands consideration from high school and collegiate ensembles."<sup>239</sup> This statement perfectly encapsulates Svanoe's compositional style present throughout her work, one that eloquently fuses her extraordinary technical skills with clever and witty narrative depth. Even in

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<sup>238</sup> Henderson.

<sup>239</sup> Blocher et al., *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*.

*Symphony in Blue and Gold*, which lacks her normal programmatic element, Svanoe still finds opportunities to insert her humor and wit amidst carefully crafted motivic ideas. One such example is giving multiple clarinet glissandos that resemble Gershwin's opening smear in his *Rhapsody in Blue* rather than simply writing one single glissando, which would have greatly sufficed in tying the two works together. Instead, Svanoe once again doubles down and writes multiple smears, drawing attention to the absurdity of the length and range of which Gershwin wrote.

Svanoe's remarkable technical skills and wit translate well into an equally distinctive quality of her music: the manipulation of time within a musical line. Once a melodic idea has been established, Svanoe will often disturb the flow of the line by truncating or elongating the expected phrase by interpolating a sudden yet brief change in time signature or hemiola. Her use of time manipulation is brief and used to surprise or throw off the listener's expectation of phrasing. This deliberate alteration of time, coupled with her penchant for pastiche and levity, is a purposeful and deliberate compositional method and signature device used by Svanoe to create greater interest for both performer and audience.

The use of storytelling has become a central element in Svanoe's compositions. While she states that not all of her compositions follow a specific narrative, many are titled in a way that evokes a programmatic and narrative idea within the listener. Such titles include *The Candy Factory*, *The Haunted Carousel*, and *Steampunk Suite/Scenes*—intentionally titled to spark the listener's imagination. In *Steampunk Suite/Scenes* Svanoe explores storytelling through concepts drawn from Joseph Campbell's monomyth of a hero's journey—a framework of storytelling that involves a hero who is called to adventure, faces a central ordeal or crisis (such as death, illness, or other ailments) that they must overcome to then be rewarded in some way. The hero is

transformed in a life-altering way throughout their journey, before returning home healthy, happy, and victorious.<sup>240</sup> Svanoe incorporates concepts from the hero's journey throughout *Steampunk Suite/Scenes* as a narrative technique to follow the evolution of each character depicted in each movement, even though she never explicitly states as much in her program notes or throughout the score.

A clear example of her utilization of a hero's journey can be found in *Steampunk Suite*, Movement. II "The Strange Case of Dr. Curie and Madame Hyde." In a direct riff from the novel, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Dr. Curie (Marie Curie – physicist, chemist, Nobel Prize winner, and scientist credited with discovering radium and polonium)<sup>241</sup> is the protagonist of the movement. "The Strange Case of Dr. Curie and Madame Hyde" begins with her own "Marie Curie melody" in the solo alto saxophone, spelling out her name using a combination of solfège and letter names (Figure 25). The music turns into a waltz that becomes increasingly frantic and eventually out of control as Dr. Curie begins to lose her mental state due to experimentation with radioactive materials. The character starts transforming into Madame Hyde through none other than Svanoe's musical transformation of the opening melody. Accompanied by increasing tempos, the "Marie Curie melody" begins to modulate by tri-tones before time begins to feel unstable, and eventually the melodic material is inverted as now-Madame Hyde has lost all control as seen in Figure 26, and eventually tries to claw her way back to her way back to the mental state and consciousness of Dr. Curie through the use of a chromatic, repetitive, and off-set four-note motive (based on the original Marie Curie melody)

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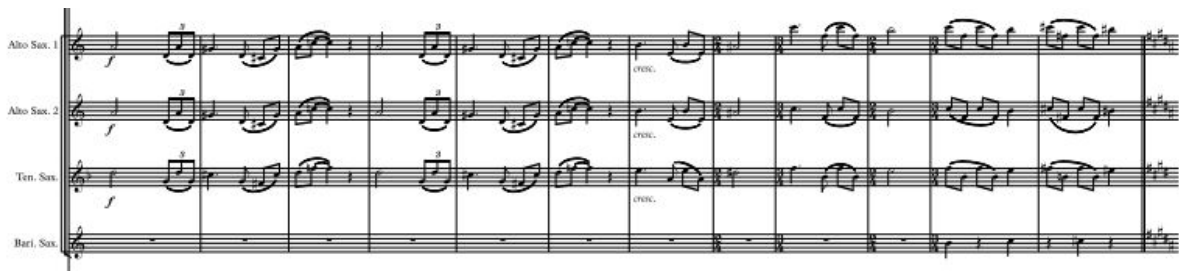
<sup>240</sup> Michael Viega, "From Orphan to Sage: The Hero's Journey as an Assessment Tool for Hip Hop Songs Created in Music Therapy," *Journal of Genius and Eminence* 2 (December 1, 2017): 78–87, <https://doi.org/10.18536/jge.2017.02.2.2.08>.

<sup>241</sup> "Marie Curie – Biographical," NobelPrize.org, accessed April 14, 2025, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/physics/1903/marie-curie/biographical/>.

found in Figure 27. Marie Curie fights her way back to her normal self, and her hero's journey comes to an end as the alto saxophone plays a slightly altered, but stable and clear "Marie Curie melody" (Figure 28).<sup>242</sup>



**Figure 25.** *Steampunk Suite*, Mvt. II, m.9-16 – Marie Curie melody



**Figure 26.** *Steampunk Suite*, Mvt. II, m.33-44 – Dr. Curie losing control



**Figure 27.** *Steampunk Suite*, Mvt. II, m.43-44 – Marie Curie four-note motive

<sup>242</sup> Svanoe, *Steampunk Suite*.



**Figure 28.** *Steampunk Suite, Mvt. II, m.96-103* – Recapitulation of Marie Curie melody

Svanoe is a musical illustrator with an innate ability to convey characters, stories, and images through sound. While narrative does not define every piece of music she writes, it is a tool she frequently utilizes to enrich the imagery and experiences of performers and audience members.

The use of humor has been a keystone of her work. She credits North American composer, musical comedian, and satirist Peter Schickele (with his fictional alter-ego P.D.Q. Bach) as another influence in her compositions.<sup>243</sup> Schickele’s work, characterized by wit and a refusal to take things too seriously, gave Svanoe validation to incorporate humor and jest into her music. “[The] idea of humor in music is something that I carried through, and not taking yourself too seriously—Peter Schickele made that okay for me.”<sup>244</sup> Such examples can be found in *Steampunk Suite* with the use of a desk bell, used to engage the audience’s imaginations and remind them that the performance space doesn’t always have to be taken seriously. The desk bell further provides a space for the music to breathe before beginning on a quirky and unstable march (which ironically also utilizes a “marching machine” in the percussion section to accompany the comedic-sounding march).<sup>245</sup>

<sup>243</sup> Margalit Fox, “Peter Schickele, Composer and Gleeeful Sire of P.D.Q. Bach, Dies at 88,” *The New York Times*, January 17, 2024, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/17/arts/music/peter-schickele-dead.html>.

<sup>244</sup> Svanoe, Interview.

<sup>245</sup> Svanoe, *Steampunk Suite*.

Score

# Steampunk Scenes

## 1. Charlie and the Mechanical Man Marching Band

E. Svanoe

$\text{♩} = 104$

Violin

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Alto Sax

Trumpet in B $\flat$

Trombone

Tuba

Percussion 1 (Mallets/Auxiliary)

Percussion 2 (Drum Set)

Percussion 3 (Auxiliary)

Accordion (opt. keyboard)

©2015

**Figure 29.** First page of *Steampunk Scenes* score – Hotel desk bell and marching machine

Svanoe emphasizes that active engagement in the music-making process, as opposed to passive listening or participation, is far more important to her. She seldom listens to music passively at home; instead, her listening is almost exclusively linked to research purposes of conducting or composing, implying that she views the creation of her music primarily through the lens of being an active participant in the music-making process of performing or conducting her own music. The value placed in being an active participant in a musical process has become a primary component of her philosophy as a composer and overall style.

She envisions the experience of the performers who bring her music to life, and she takes on a performer-centered approach, aiming to ensure that every player feels valued, challenged, and musically fulfilled. One of her main goals in writing is to create enjoyment—to find joy—in

performing music. To achieve this, she takes care during her composition process to ensure that every performer has something meaningful to play, leading players to feel valued in their role within the ensemble and that a worthy investment of time is being made. Svanoe is known for distributing important melodic material across sections, giving traditional supporting roles, such as tuba, a chance to be in the spotlight. “I try to give everybody something a little bit outside. The tubas [are going to] get the bassline but let me give them something else too,”<sup>246</sup> evidenced by much of her writing for the instrument in both *Steampunk Suite* and *Symphony in Blue and Gold* where the tuba is given lengthy and primary melodic material (Figure 30 and Figure 31 below). Svanoe's attention to creating music in which players are active participants has become a defining characteristic and compositional signature of her works.



**Figure 30.** *Steampunk Suite*, Mvt. IV, m.77-107 – *Daisy Bell* melody



**Figure 31.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Mvt. I, m.92-98 – “Blues and Fugues”

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<sup>246</sup> Svanoe, Interview.

Svanoe's compositional style is characterized by a clear intent of imagery and story that balances playfulness, innovation, and accessibility. Her entire catalog of music can fit into this style, and yet, each piece carries its own sound and character. The only piece in her collection that strays from the expected playful imagery and programmatic elements is her *Symphony in Blue and Gold*. The symphony maintains elements known to Svanoe's music—great technical skill and humor, albeit a more refined approach. Wit and lightheartedness are not only key themes throughout her music, but defining elements that demonstrates her desire to bring joy into the music-making and music-listening experience for all. Her works showcase highly crafted transformations of melodic and motivic material—frequently drawn from music and literary works held in the public domain—through deliberate manipulation of time and phrase structure into something distinctly her own. Similarities in style can be drawn to a known inspiration of Charles Ives with his use of juxtaposing familiar and preexisting melodies with humor and wit, all while layering and transforming the tunes to fit her own compositional voice. Svanoe's commitment to creating music for both the performer and audience results in works that are not only accessible and engaging, but also music that provides a wealth of artistry through thoughtful placement and arrangement of melody and harmony laced with playful inventiveness and charm.

### **Impact and Contributions**

Svanoe's *Symphony in Blue and Gold* represents a distinctive shift in her compositional style from mostly programmatic and narrative-based, and is a significant addition to her oeuvre as her first Symphony for wind band. By embracing a more abstract approach to writing, she states that the effort of composing the symphony stretched and challenged her process. She claims of the symphony, "It is my most proud work." She further explains, "I'm not trained as a

composer. Most of my score study is from being a conductor and other musical experiences [I've had]."

With a focus on groove, mood, and stylistic shifts within the realm of jazz, Svanoe aimed to provide the feel of a jazz concert, where each movement offers a different musical experience in the same way that various tunes throughout a jazz set would provide. Beginning with a slow blues that gradually expands and intensifies, the symphony provides a fresh and innovative approach to blending jazz elements within the confines of the traditional orchestration of the modern wind band. Her writing often challenges common expectations of both jazz and wind band, such as featuring double-reed instruments to play the blues. *Symphony in Blue and Gold* should be viewed not only as an intricately detailed contemporary symphony but also as a significant addition to jazz and blues-inspired works for the wind band that includes the likes of *Rhapsody in Blue* and *La Création du Monde*, among many others.

Svanoe envisions *Symphony in Blue and Gold* to be a valuable contribution to the wind band repertoire by providing a piece of music that appropriately balances playability, accessibility, and length. Having a practical approach to composition, Svanoe hopes to carve her music into a niche place of repertoire that is both accessible, challenging, and enjoyable to work on. She recognizes that the symphony is designed for higher-performing ensembles, such as advanced high school bands or college programs. Labeled as a grade-five piece of music, Svanoe hopes that her nineteen-minute symphony provides an engaging and substantial musical experience for players, conductors, and audiences alike.

An aspect of Svanoe's compositional approach consistently maintains a level of practicality shaped by her years of experience as a band director. She embraces a flexible approach to the performance of her music, often writing in cues for solos or less commonly used

instruments. She also understands that various ensembles may need to make adaptations such as using a keyboard in place of a double bass or playing a celeste part on the piano. This openness to flexibility in performance further highlights her desire to create music that is both approachable and rewarding to program.

Unlike her other lengthy and challenging multi-movement work for the wind band, *Steampunk Suite*, part of the symphony's impact lies in its unified structure, where the entire work builds toward the final movement. *Symphony in Blue and Gold* is more cohesive in nature and, in turn, less modular than *Steampunk Suite*, in which movements could easily stand on their own. By challenging herself to use limited materials, she pushed the boundaries of her own creativity and compositional skills to extensively develop those ideas throughout the symphony. Resulting in her most mature work to date, Svanoe claims that through her process of composing *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, she has gained a deeper understanding of how to transform simple ideas into a complex and extensive piece of music.

### **Svanoe on *Symphony in Blue and Gold***

*Symphony in Blue and Gold* was commissioned to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, the composer's alma mater. Svanoe aimed to embody wind band literature composed around the same time as the inception of the university band program. Darius Milhaud's *La création du monde* and George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, specifically the band version orchestrated by Ferde Grofé. In her program notes, the composer notes that both pieces from the early 1920s use a combination of classical and jazz influences and reflect her own undergraduate experience.<sup>247</sup> Commissioned by Dr. John R. Stewart, the current Director of

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<sup>247</sup> Svanoe, *Symphony in Blue and Gold, a Symphony for Wind Band*.

Bands at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, along with thirty-one other consortium members, *Symphony in Blue and Gold* was premiered by the commissioning body on April 30, 2023.

In composing a jazz-influenced piece, Svanoe carefully considered instrumentation for the wind band but also aimed to include common instruments found in a big band, including four trumpet and trombone parts, piano, double bass, and drum set. She opted against using a fifth saxophone, fearful that the use of a second tenor saxophone part would make the piece less accessible for many ensembles, and with the number of woodwinds in a full wind band she could find another way to voice that fifth saxophone part somewhere else. Svanoe envisioned *Symphony in Blue and Gold* as a symphonic jazz band—essentially a big band with extra instruments and layers.

During early communications with Stewart, Svanoe recalls discussing a previous commission written for the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, in which the composer wrote a narrative around the city of Eau Claire that included local landmarks and history. Notably, the piece has struggled to gain performances due to its specificity to the region, making it less appealing to ensembles outside of Eau Claire. Wary of creating a similar narrative, Svanoe chose to take a more abstract approach to avoid being overly connected to a single place or theme.

*Symphony in Blue and Gold* deviates from Svanoe's other works as a non-programmatic piece. While the element of storytelling is set aside, Svanoe leans heavily into her arranging abilities to create motivic development in her most abstract work to date. At approximately nineteen minutes in length, Svanoe relies on only two main motives throughout the entire symphony, similar to Holst's transformation of the chaconne and Shostakovich's D-S-C-H inscription.

The motives created for *Symphony in Blue and Gold* pay tribute to the University's colors, mascot, and history while also reflecting the composer's affinity to her alma mater. The UWEC (University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire) motive (shown in Figure 32) is both a rhythmic and pitch-based motive.

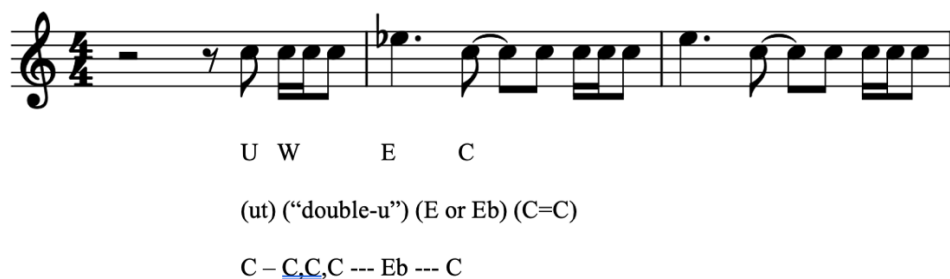


**Figure 32.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Full statement of UWEC motive

To create the second motive, Svanoe utilizes the Guidonian hand—a tool invented by Medieval Italian music theorist Guido of Arezzo—in which diatonic steps in music were indicated for the first time by means of letters, to help spell out melodies. The steps are indicated by the six syllables ut, re, mi, fa, sol, and la which name the first six steps of the hexachordal series, indicating pitches of C-D-E-F-G-A.<sup>248</sup>

The spelling of the rhythmic motive is a combination of literal translations and syllables derived from the Guidonian hand. In the Guidonian hand, the letter U=ut, and is the first syllable in the sequence of pitches and indicates the concert pitch of “C.” Svanoe states that W = “ut-ut-ut” when stated rhythmically, sounds “double-u,” translating to a rhythm of two sixteenth notes and an eighth note. The letter “E” in UWEC remains an “E” but can be written as an E-flat or an E-natural, and C=C. A breakdown of the spelling of the rhythmic UWEC motive is outlined below.

<sup>248</sup> Carol Berger, “The Hand and the Art of Memory,” *Musica Disciplina* 35, no. 1981 (1981): 87–120.



**Figure 33.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Spelling of the UWEC motive

It is important to note the pitch material contained in the entirety of the UWEC motive is based on alternating patterns of minor and major thirds (m3M3), which will become a primary focus of motivic development throughout. The pattern of alternating m3M3 eighth notes in the second half of the UWEC motive will also become material used to demarcate melodic ideas throughout. Svanoe will utilize the m3M3 idea and its inverse (M3m3) to transform both halves of the UWEC motive into various melodic content across each movement.

The UWEC motive in its entirety is the basis for most fugal information throughout the symphony. At times, the composer will utilize only the first half of the motive and, in other instances, only the second half, but rarely uses both together until much later in the symphony. The first half of the UWEC motive will most commonly be used in canonic effects and will further be referred to as the “UWEC Fugal subject” or “Fugal subject” and the second half of the full motive will further be referred to as the “UWEC m3M3 Motive” or “m3M3/M3m3 Motive.” While the rhythmic and pitch material of the full UWEC motive will be altered and transposed in many ways, the formula of major and minor thirds remains constant throughout.



**Figure 34.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Fugue theme



**Figure 35.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – m3M3 theme

Representing the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire’s school colors, the second primary motive used throughout represents blue and gold. Svanoe also notes that the university’s mascot, adopted in 2013, is a mythical bird named Blugold, or Blu for short. The outlined motive is spelled “BLUGLD” and consists of the following pitches: The “B” is a literal translation to the pitch B. Svanoe states that the letter “L” is also pulled from the Guidonian hand, where “L” comes from “la” and in turn translates to the pitch of A. “G” is another literal translation and provides the pitch of G, “L” is once again “la” as used in the UWEC motive and represents the pitch of A, and finally D is another literal translation, as seen in Figure 36.



**Figure 36.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – BLUGLD motive

In essence, the BLUGLD is strictly a pitch-based motive and will be spelled out using the pitches B-A-C-G-A-D. Rhythmically, the BLUGLD motive maintains some similarities

throughout the symphony but is never attached to a particular rhythmic idea. The BLUGLD motive presents in various forms, sometimes spelled out in full, other times as partial statements of BLU or GLD. Occasionally the colors are reversed to read GLDBLU. Svanoe further allows for flexibility in the motive by utilizing sharps or flats on any given note and will also allow it to transpose, enabling her to stretch the limits of the six pitches while still maintaining the integrity of the material.

Further, Svanoe's use of a motive with "blue" not only reflects the colors of the commissioning university's colors but also draws a direct link to the same word used in George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, further emphasizing the jazz influences to be uncovered. The word "blue" becomes a cohesive and symbolic tool used throughout *Symphony in Blue and Gold* that connects idioms and sources of inspiration. In a deliberate deviation from her narrative style, she acknowledges that, unlike much of her catalog, *Symphony in Blue and Gold* is more abstract and unlikely to evoke vivid imagery in the listener's mind. In place of an in-depth narrative, Svanoe hopes to transport the listener's aural image to an early 1920s symphonic jazz feel as well as to evoke imagery of colors blue and gold throughout. Regarding the two motives of UWEC and BLUGLD, Svanoe explains, "I [wanted] to take these limited materials and stretch them out as long as I possibly could." The two basic motives undergo multiple variations, transpositions, elongations, augmentations, and fragmented statements that develop and intertwine throughout the nineteen-minute symphony.

Reflecting on her creative process behind the symphony, Svanoe notes that structuring and solidifying each movement required considerable time and experimentation with moving material around until she found the best fit. From the onset, she knew that she would follow a four-movement plan. Rather than mapping out rigid and traditional forms ahead of time, she

states that she loosely had a plan for each movement but allowed herself the freedom and flexibility to use material from different motives as needed until it “felt right.” Throughout her process, she would occasionally map out the form when feeling stuck to help her continue moving forward.

### ***Symphony in Blue and Gold Analysis***

#### **Movement 1 – “Blues and Fugues”**

Appropriately titled *Blues and Fugues*, the first movement follows a structure of alternating sections of blues and fugal material and will share UWEC Motive as the core of all melodic ideas. Breaking away from traditional sonata forms commonly found in the first movement of a symphony, *Blues, and Fugues* use the following structure: Introduction, Blues, Fugue, Blues, Fugue, and Blues, with transitions between each section. Initially based on a tonal center of C, Svanoë introduces the UWEC Motive, also built upon the same pitch, through the tenor saxophone in measures 4-8. In a symphony inspired by 1920s blues, the composer’s choice of the tenor saxophone—a key instrument widely used in playing the blues—to introduce this bluesy motive is particularly noteworthy. The tenor saxophone provides the first full iteration of the motive in a sultry fashion, giving the listener plenty of time to absorb this melodic content before it undergoes extensive motivic development. While Svanoë does not overtly introduce other melodic material throughout Movement 1, she does utilize the flutes to foreshadow the pitch material used to form the melodic theme found Movement 2 (Figure 37).



**Figure 37.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Mvt. 1, m.15-18 – Foreshadowing of “gold motive”

The pace picks up quickly in terms of tempo and motive transformation as the music modulates to a new tonal center of G using a blues progression before arriving at the first “Blues” section at measure 26. With support from the alto saxophone, the four-part trumpet section is handed the first half of the UWEC motive, previously mentioned as the UWEC Fugal subject. Although not always the common 12-bar blues, Svanoe will follow a blues progression throughout each “Blues” section, along with many added flats (particularly flat-thirds) to maintain the soulful quality of the style throughout each line. Measure 30 introduces the first instance of a reconfigured UWEC m3M3 motive. Using a series of sixteenth notes while also reversing the motive to read M3m3, this version serves as an audible cue that a transition to a new section is about to happen throughout movement one.



**Figure 38.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – 16th note M3m3 motive, based on UWEC

In a clear tie to the iconic opening of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, Svanoe writes three massive clarinet smears in this opening Blues section. The third smear leads into a clarinet solo

of the same M3m3 sixteenth-note motive established a few bars earlier. Measures 38-43 is used as transitional material into the first fugue section in measure 44 and feature the M3m3 idea, while the saxophones, brass, and rhythm sections—instruments of a big band—emphasize in quick rhythmic succession, a IV-I before resolving to the tonic of G again at the new section.



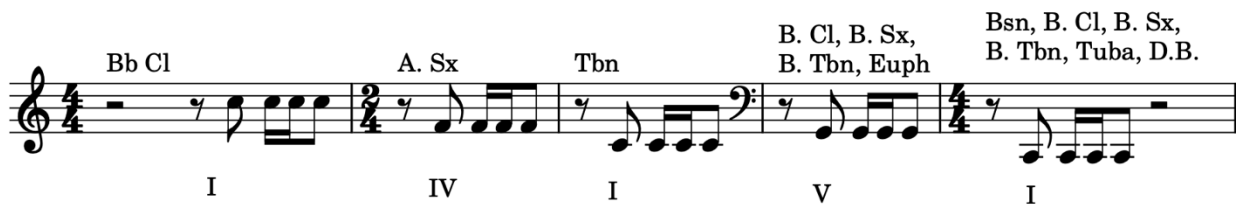
**Figure 39.** *Rhapsody in Blue* – Clarinet trill and glissando

The first fugue section begins with a transposed UWEC Fugue theme that begins on “G” in the trombones. Four bars later, the fugal subject is picked up by the alto and tenor saxophones and transposed up again to the pitch of “A” and then again traded off four bars later to the low reeds, bass trombone, and euphonium, now transposed to “D.” The three entrances of the fugal subject cleverly spell out G-A-D, also known as the second half (GLD) of the BLUGLD motive introduced later in the symphony. Another important piece of melodic material is introduced by the trombones in this initial fugue section with the addition of the fugue countersubject, which will also reappear at various times throughout the four movements. The countersubject appears in movement one only after statements of the initial UWEC motive. Fugal material is created in this section when the fugal subject and countersubject are layered over each other, as seen in measures 55-58. The sixteenth-note M3m3 motive reappears in measures 59-62, indicating another transition back to a blues section.





**Figure 41.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Combination UWEC motive and countersubject



**Figure 42.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Blues progression through fugue entrances

The short fugal subject becomes the driving force in measures 92-97 as the figure is presented nine times over the course of six bars, building towards a climactic peak in measure 98 while also initiating the final transition of movement. Svanoe handles this transition differently than the previous ones by adding other melodic content sandwiched in between and on top of the M3m3 sixteenth-note motives. In measures 100-101, Svanoe offers another hint of what's to come with another preview of what will become the *Gold Theme* in movement two, while the brass underlines a minor-third motion through their chordal structure. Beginning in measure 101, Svanoe transforms the UWEC Fugal subject for the first time by elongating its rhythm.



**Figure 43.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – First altered rhythmic transformation of UWEC fugal subject

Measure 106 begins the final blues section of movement one. It also serves as a form of recapitulation through the lens of a traditional sonata form, reinforcing the thematic materials while also in the home tonal center of "C." The horns and trombones begin another iteration of the augmented fugal subject in measures 105-115 while all surrounding voices play through a series of ascending and descending blues scales.

The final phrase at measure 116 can be viewed as a sort of coda, as it repetitively emphasizes the tonal center of "C" through elongated fugal subjects, M3m3 sixteenth-note motives, and C-scales performed by the tuba and double bass. As Svanoe winds down movement one, the ending pitches of the fugal subject are heard by the bassoons and clarinets in measure 123 and 126 and lastly by the clarinets, alto saxophone, tuba, and double bass in measure 130. The rhythmic de-acceleration sets a sense of anticipation towards a resolution of movement one, as it gradually slows the pace to set up for the next movement. *Blues and Fugues* ends with quick arpeggios of C-minor and C-major before concluding with a satisfying C<sup>9</sup> chord, whose ninth scale degree will become a leading tone to the new tonal center of E-flat in the following movement.

## **Movement 2 – "in Gold"**

As noted previously, Movement Two, *in Gold* is composed a minor-third above the home key of movement one and establishes a tonal center of E-flat (E<sup>b</sup>). While *Blues and Fugues* centered on motivic development, *in Gold* will focus on manipulating timbre. Svanoe explains that her primary goal throughout movement two is "to make it sound gold." Metallic instruments such as flutes, crotales, and bells are orchestrated to create a "gold" sound. To create a shimmering gold sound, Svanoe considered leaving out non-metallic instruments like the oboe, clarinet, bassoon, marimba, and double bass completely but instead used the wooden and more reedy

instruments to create a stark contrast throughout. To contrast the brighter, metallic sounds, Svanoe skillfully orchestrated the non-metallic instruments to highlight their mellow and darker timbres throughout the middle allegro section. Inspiration for the gold metallic sounds was drawn from the composer’s experience hearing music by jazz composer and pianist Bill Evans, who used flutes and muted trumpets—an idea that became central to the development of the movement’s overall sound. Svanoe relies heavily on the muted trumpets in conjunction with the outer staves of the score—those with bright and resonating timbres—to help achieve the desired “gold” sound. Percussion instruments such as the bells, crotales, vibraphone, and cymbals from the drum set help create additional shimmer.

The form of movement two emulates a classical symphonic form, where the second movement is typically slower, contrasting the first movement, and in a ternary form of A-B-A. The opening of *in Gold* gives an official introduction to the “Gold Theme,” which was briefly foreshadowed three times in the first movement. The Gold Theme is based on the UWEC motive through its use of major and minor thirds.



**Figure 44.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Gold theme

Section “A” of *in Gold* begins by establishing the gold theme in measure one. Svanoe orchestrates the most metallic version of the gold theme here with the piccolo, flutes, and crotales. In measure nine, the trombone introduces the first example of the BLUGLD motive as a variation that reads GLDBLU. The notion of highlighting “gold” is apparent with an inverted

BLUGLD motive, bringing “GLD” to the forefront. The now-GLDBLU motive is played in conjunction at measure 17 with the recurring metallic gold theme found in the bells and celeste.



**Figure 45.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – GLDBLU, based on BLUGLD motive

Section “A” continues into measure 17 with similar timbral qualities from the “metallic” instruments. The flute, alto saxophone, bells, and crotales present a rhythmic variation of GLDBLU in measures 17-20, establishing the continuation of GLD in conjunction with the quality in timbre. Looking at a literal translation without accidentals, measure 17-20 reads GLD-BLU-BLUGLD-BLUBLU. Meanwhile, the opposing voices of the tenor saxophone, trumpet, euphonium, and tuba interject the high timbres with a low-voiced motive in canon with each other—reminiscent of the fugue style of movement one. This lower-timbre motive is suggestive of the Guidonian Hand (from which much of the BLUGLD motive is derived) and the pitches of the hexachord associated with it. The initial Guidonian motive reads C-D-E<sup>b</sup>-G-A in ascending order, altering the third pitch from its natural state to an E<sup>b</sup>, and omitting the pitch of F entirely.



**Figure 46.** *Symphony in Gold and Blue* – Guidonian motive

Svanoe is indifferent to the use of flats or sharps in the Guidonian motive, much like previously used BLUGLD or UWEC motifs. Along with this new motive, Svanoe also creates a harmonized version based on stacking thirds, first seen in higher-pitched metallic instruments in measure 25 by the alto saxophone and celeste. The harmonized motive will begin using the pitch of “E” or E<sup>b</sup>—a major or minor third away from the Guidonian motive itself. While the harmonized version will appear succinct in the following section of the music, the material is introduced on its own entity in this final phrase of the A-section.



**Figure 47.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold, Mvt. 2, m.25-26* – Harmonized Guidonian motive

The high and low voices battle for dominance in measures 25-32 using a combination of the Guidonian motive, the harmonized motive before the highest metallic-sounding instruments (bells, crotales, and celeste) deliver the final statement of a fugal GLD in the last two measures, creating a layered rhythmic de-acceleration of the motive.



**Figure 48.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Mvt. 2, m.31-32 – Metallic GLD

The B-Section of this ABA form arrives in measure 33 with a change in pace and timbre. Like the rest of the movement, the B-section remains focused on creating effects of timbre. Appropriately orchestrated, the B-section provides contrast by highlighting the non-metallic instruments carrying darker, warmer, and more resonant sounds. Notably, the change in pace also comes with a shift in how the drum set is playing—now having the performer playing predominantly on the cymbals—Svanoe’s creative way of maintaining a “Gold” sound throughout.

The first melodic content produced by the clarinets and celeste delivers the marriage of the Guidonian Motive and its harmonized form.



**Figure 49.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold, Mvt. 2, m.37* – Guidonian and harmonized Guidonian motives

Saving the wooden-timbered instruments for this middle section of the movement, the clarinet decisively leads the line, complimented by a recurring descending eighth-note statement of G-C (or v-i) in the bassoon, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone and double bass, as well as a sixteenth-note statement presented by the bass clarinet and marimba in the bass clef. This low-timbre motive is predominantly reserved for bass voices throughout the B-section.



**Figure 50.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold, Mvt. 2, m.39* – Low timbre motive

Adjacent to the flowing lyricism of the A-section, the B-section is lively, energetic, and more aggressive in character with highly articulate, pointed, and quick-moving motives. An added sense of energy is introduced in measure 44 with a harmonized ostinato in the saxophone section and vibraphone that revolves around the tonality of E<sup>b</sup>. Notably, throughout the ostinato figures, the tenor saxophone and baritone saxophone maintain a pitch of “G” with the baritone saxophone alternating to a “G-sharp” in measures 44-59. The use of “G” is once again relevant to maintaining “gold” throughout.

Beginning in measure 49, Svanoe begins blending previously used material from both *in Gold* and *Blues and Fugues*. Previously, she has delineated high and low timbres through distinctive motives (i.e., The gold theme in the high-metallic instruments, the Guidonian motives in the lower/wooden instruments, etc.). However, she begins to fuse the opposing instrument families together to expand the timbral qualities of the movement by blending the metallic instruments with a higher tessitura of the darker-toned instruments.

The texture at measure 49 is full but transparent, with a foundation of the ostinato and an appearance of the gold theme two bars later, performed by the flute, oboe, and clarinet. The gold theme uses the exact same pitches and harmony found in measures 1-2 of the movement, now written in the style of accented tenutos instead of its previous slurred, cantabile style.

The clarinet restates the Guidonian motives in measure 53 before recalling the sixteenth-note M3m3 motive established in movement one in conjunction with the oboe and marimba. The motive is placed in a higher tessitura for this combination of reedy and wooden instruments, creating an illusion of metallic and gold timbres. The saxophone family is joined by the trombones in measure 54 on the E<sup>b</sup> ostinato, again in a higher tessitura for all. In measure 56, the flute, clarinets, alto and tenor saxophone, euphonium, and marimba play a descending sixteenth-note figure of A-G-E<sup>b</sup>-C. The pitches of A-G-E<sup>b</sup>-C represent an inverse of the Guidonian motive of C-D-E<sup>b</sup>-G-A (the pitch of “D” is omitted) which was previously introduced by the euphonium and tuba and was predominantly performed by instruments of lower and more mellow timbres.

The inverse motive adds to the blending of a new timbre and creates a complete reversal of not only pitch but also motion, as well as the inclusion of higher-pitched instruments. The flute no longer serves the overall timbre as a metallic sound as it descends into a lower and more

mellow range of the instrument. At the same time, the reedy and warm tones known to the clarinet voice this now-reversed motive in a higher and more nasal range of the instrument.

Texturally, the B-section becomes thicker and less transparent beginning in measure 60 with another statement of the Guidonian motives, this time voiced by groups of instruments (clarinet 1/ clarinet 2-3, alto/ tenor saxophone, and right and left hand of the piano). By measure 61, previously stated material appears in rapid succession while Svanoe continues to masterfully blend timbres of high and low with metallic and woody sounds. A variation of the gold theme happens in the flute, trumpet, and trombone, followed by a variation of the ostinato by the same grouping of instruments. Yet another variation is found in measure 63 with the addition of a sixteenth note M3m3 motive.

The business of the music is amplified by a quick sixteenth-note figure performed by the clarinets, alto and tenor saxophones, and marimba, in conjunction with a descending eighth-note motion by the tuba, double bass, and left-hand piano—a motive that previously occurred only on the final upbeat but now appears on every first and fourth beat.

After mixing timbres, Svanoe transitions back to distinct highs and lows as the B-section begins to wind down in measures 67-70. The M3m3 motive, initially found in movement one, was primarily used to indicate that a musical transition was happening, while its use up to this point in movement two has been a means of blending timbral sounds. The motive becomes transitional material again, aurally indicating an upcoming change back to the primary sounds of “gold.” The piccolo, clarinet, trumpet, and cymbals of the drum set make the first M3m3 statement in a higher and brighter tessitura, followed immediately by the saxophones, horns, euphoniums, and toms in a lower and deeper register in measure 68. Svanoe continues the deliberate registral shift in measure 69 with an elongated M3m3 statement performed by the

contrabassoon, trombone family, and tuba.



**Figure 51.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Elongated M3m3 motive

The four-measure transition is completed by the harmonized version of the Guidonian Hand Motive, originally intended for lower voices and in lower registers, and is played with the same timbral intentions by the bassoon, clarinet, horn, euphonium, marimba in bass clef, and left hand of the piano.

The B-section continues to unwind and become less busy in measures 71-79. The texture is clear once again as the ostinato returns in the saxophone section, and the flute and oboe once again provide the gold theme in their bright and shimmering registers. The drum set has also returned to a clear and predictable beat played on the cymbals. The trumpets join the flutes in measure 76-78 in the gold theme, while the trombones take over the ostinato, providing another registral shift down from the saxophones.

One last contrasting metallic/mellow M3m3 statement is made in measure 79-80—first by the flute and trumpet, followed by the low horn and euphonium, while the reversed Guidonian motive provides closure and completes the M3m3 idea (as seen in



**Figure 52.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Mvt. 2, m. 79-81 – M3m3 with reversed guidonian

) before the arrival of a true golden-sounding GLD in the flute and bells in measure 82-84. The B-section of *in Gold* concludes with a final and augmented octave statement of GLD in measure 86-87 by the right hand of the piano as the tempo slows with a *rallentando* back to 60 beats per minute (bpm).



**Figure 52.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Mvt. 2, m.79-81 – M3m3 with reversed guidonian

### **Movement 3 – “Waltz”**

Movement 3 *Waltz* welcomes a change of pace, timbre, and orchestration in this moderately paced jazz waltz. Texturally, Svanoe uses the double reeds to contrast the lack of non-metallic instruments from the previous movement where they were featured much less prominently. Double reed instruments are traditionally excluded from jazz ensembles, as their tonal qualities are less suited to the bright timbres of the brass and other single-reed instruments commonly used. In addition to giving the double reeds a bit more substance, *Waltz* pays tribute to the Director of Bands at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and commissioning director Dr. John Stewart, who is also an oboist.

Adhering to classical symphonic form, movement three is a moderate dance set in 3/4 time. However, the form of the waltz itself strays from classical expectations of a minuet and trio or scherzo and is instead a through-composed movement with sections A-B-C. Section A begins in measure 1 where Svanoe creates a bluesy melody based on the UWEC motive for the oboe. The double bass introduces the movement by establishing alternating major and minor thirds before presenting the waltz theme in the oboe in measure 5 as seen in Figure 53.



**Figure 53.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Waltz theme in C

Section “A” continues with two full statements and phrases of the waltz theme. In the second phrase Svanoë includes a unison counter melody voiced by the English horn and 1<sup>st</sup> clarinet, creating a bright and reedy timbre absent from the second movement. The “B” section begins in measure 47, although the melodic content is subtly introduced two measures earlier with a lead-in from the bells. Once again derived from one of the two main ideas found within the symphony, this “B-melody” is based on the BLUGLD motive, utilizing the same pitches of B-A-C-G-A-D with a variation of accidentals throughout.

Svanoë’s knack for doubling down on an idea is evident at the onset of the “B-melody,” where she employs the BLUGLD motive in the alto saxophone. Simultaneously, the saxophone sounds an echo from the bells lead-in as they both use the same rhythmic melody, offset by one beat. This interplay between the saxophone and bells mirrors the alternating major and minor thirds from the UWEC motive and further emphasizes the M3m3 device now showcased in a vertical structure between the two instruments. Figure 54 demonstrates the vertical M3m3 motive created by both instruments.



**Figure 54.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – “B Theme” in C with vertical juxtaposition of M3m3 from UWEC motive

Section C of the waltz begins at measure 92 where the composer intertwines both melodic statements introduced in movement 3 (as seen below in Figure 55). Combining previously used melodic material into one melody is a compositional signature of Svanoe’s, as witnessed in movement one of her *Steampunk Suite*.<sup>249</sup> As the third movement winds down, the piano delivers a slightly elongated statement of the “waltz melody” creating a natural rhythmic deceleration. The final four measures provide the final statement of the combined melodies, which once again feature the double reeds—reminiscent of how the movement began. This leads into the final “B-melody” of BLUGLD, played in unison by the English horn and vibraphone and strategically placed on beat two to enhance the overall *ritardando* effect. *Waltz* concludes with an F-major seventh chord, returning full-circle to the very same chord that opened the movement.



**Figure 55.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Combined movement 3 melodic material in C

<sup>249</sup> Blocher et al., *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*.

## Movement 4 – “Finale”

Following classical expectations, movement 4 *Finale* delivers a fast, energetic, and lively conclusion to Svanoe’s *Symphony in Blue and Gold*. While Svanoe consciously decided to envelop a classical style of a fourth movement in a symphony, she chose not to focus on adhering to a particular form. Instead, she chose to allow the motives and material from previous movements to guide the structure of this concluding movement. The resulting form consists of three sections, with the first two prominently featuring the two main motivic ideas of the UWEC Fugue Theme and statements of BLUGLD. The third section serves as a culmination of melodic and motivic material presented throughout the symphony with the addition of a motivic coda based on “GLD”.

It is fitting that the finale to a symphony in “blue and gold” begins with a reintroduction of the BLUGLD motive, which the composer rhythmically alters to create a new, jazzy BLUGLD Finale Theme, first displayed by the alto saxophone.



**Figure 56.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – BLUGLD finale theme in C

After a 14-measure introduction to the movement, the BLUGLD finale theme is well-established by measure 15 when it is passed to the trumpets with the full force of a jazz ensemble surrounding it with the entire saxophone and trombone sections, supporting double bass, and drum set accompaniment. The bass line, with the addition of the tuba, recalls the UWEC motive by using alternating major and minor third motion. Measure 25 continues using BLUGLD,

although less obvious as “GLD” is embedded within the middle of the melodic material (as seen in the composer’s own words, “[It is] still BLUGLD, but mixed-up.”



**Figure 57.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – “Mixed-up” BLUGLD in C

This first section of the *finale* reiterates the BLUGLD motive with mostly “BLU” in measures 37-48. Svanoe chose this phrase to gently reintroduce the gold theme from movement two through the woodwinds and vibraphone in measures 45-48, subtly preparing the listener for the return of thematic material to come. Measure 49 welcomes a change in texture and places the full BLUGLD motive, now elongated, in the horns and euphonium. At the same time, Svanoe provides the first glimpse of the return of the UWEC motive again in the woodwinds and marimba, using major and minor thirds in measures 50-52. She continues to utilize most of the woodwind and mallet instruments as a vehicle for reintroducing previously used material by interjecting the elongated BLUGLD motive with a transposed fugue countersubject from movement one in measures 57-64. The trumpets take over the elongated BLUGLD melody and develops the idea by transposing up one chromatic step—B, C, C#, D, Eb, E, F, and F# across measures 65-79. Simultaneously, Svanoe introduces a metric modulation by rhythmically condensing the motive and altering the meter. The rhythmic acceleration provides a sense of forward momentum that propels the music into the next section.

Layered with multiple motives and melodic content, section two begins in measure 80 with canons of GLD passed around from measure to measure, along with another notable change

in texture with the sudden absence of the drum set. Up to this point in the music, the melodic material has primarily focused around BLUGLD themes with occasional interjections from other motives. While the melodic content begins to develop quickly, the predominant material in this second section is pulled from UWEC motives from *Blues and Fugues*. Svanoe turns the narrative on its head and once again uses the fugue's countersubject from movement one as a new fugue of its own. The UWEC fugue theme reappears in clarinet and vibraphone in measure 84 and now becomes the countersubject. Thinly veiled beneath the prevailing fugue countersubject and statements of GLD, the UWEC fugue remains a secondary idea as Svanoe builds, develops, and intertwines other motives before returning to its dominance in measure 109. The Fugue countersubject-subject carries into the next phrase at measure 97, where Svanoe rapidly interweaves previously used material, much of it in a transposed form. The gold theme from movement two appears in the upper woodwinds and brass sections and is transposed up a major second from its original form. Measure 100 contains a quarter-note statement of GLD followed by a simultaneous motivic development of BLUGLD and GLD in measure 101. Transposed up a fifth from its original form, BLUGLD is stated in F and then again in E-flat, while GLD is repeated four times over four measures, each time transposed by a perfect fourth—G-C-F-Bb. While BLUGLD happens twice and GLD happens four times, Svanoe juxtaposes both over 3/4 times, demonstrating a masterful manipulation of time. In the final four measures of this phrase, Svanoe continues to develop the GLD motive in measures 105-108, this time transposing the motive down a perfect fifth on each statement, the inverse of the previous—A#-D#-G#. She again turns an elongated version of GLD into a fugal idea with the bassoons, bass trombone, tuba, and double bass against trombones and euphoniums while the saxophone sections perform four measures of an elongated BLU.

In rapid pace, Svanoe begins to re-introduce the original pitches of the piece's main motives, although rhythmically different. Measure 109 is a kickstart to familiarity as the flutes, oboes, and clarinet sections call back the UWEC fugue theme while the trumpets and horns recall BLUGLD in two rhythmically different ways. The low voices complete each four-bar phrase from measure 109-124 as the ensemble trades off playing BLUGLD in the shorter rhythmic form (Figure 58) before harmonically and rhythmically altering the motive yet again in measures 117-124 (Figure 59). The music at measure 109 uses the tonality of D, which is reinforced by the woodwinds and marimba as they repeat the UWEC fugal subject with a blues progression stated in D-G-D-A (I-IV-I-V-I) before resolving back to D in measure 125. The third and final layer of this phrase in measures 109-127 is emphasis once again on GLD in the bass voices, first in its original form using G<sup>#</sup>-A-D, then transposed up a perfect fourth, back to the original form, then transposed down a perfect fourth, harmonically allowing the fugue theme to follow the same blues progression presented by the woodwinds and marimba. The final three measures of the phrase allow for a transposed and harmonized statement of the Gold Theme in measures before one final iteration of GLD presented by the flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, horn, and euphonium in measures 125-127.



**Figure 58.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Mvt. 4, m.109-116 – Combined BLUGLD motive in C



**Figure 59.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Mvt. 4, m.117-120 – Combined BLUGLD motive in C

The next eight-measure phrase (measure 128-135) acts as a short transitional phrase full of rapid succession of ideas and motives with a transposed BLUGLD finale theme in the high brass and a fugal GLD motive in the low woodwinds and low brass voices.

In the final phrase of section two, beginning at measure 136, Svanoe writes a transposed UWEC fugue theme, now centered around a tonal center of D-flat, which appears in the clarinet and alto saxophone with an altered second half of the phrase to include a new and quick iteration of BLUGLD in a succession of eighth notes.



**Figure 60.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Mvt. 4, m.136-139 – Combined UWEC fugue and BLUGLD motive in C

The trumpets, low brass, and double bass provide support for the UWEC fugue theme in measures 136-149 by outlining the m3M3 motion of the melodic line. Once again, the UWEC fugue theme will harmonically follow a blues progression of I-IV-I-V-I, beginning with a D-flat. Further, Svanoe uses the same progression in this closing phrase to create a harmonic acceleration into the piece's final section in conjunction with another manipulation of time of 3/4 in measures 146-149. The UWEC fugue theme is condensed and then followed by a pattern of

|                       |                       |                      |                      |                      |                     |                     |                  |                   |                   |                   |                |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Db <sup>7</sup> ----- | Gb <sup>7</sup> ----- | Db <sup>7</sup> ---- | Ab <sup>7</sup> ---- | Gb <sup>7</sup> ---- | E <sup>7</sup> ---- | D <sup>7</sup> ---- | C <sup>7</sup> - | Bb <sup>7</sup> - | Ab <sup>7</sup> - | Gb <sup>7</sup> - | F <sup>7</sup> |
| I                     | IV                    | I                    | V                    | Descending -----     |                     |                     | Major -----      | 2nds              |                   |                   |                |
| 4 measures            | 2 m. -----            |                      | 1 m. -----           |                      |                     | ½ m. -----          |                  |                   |                   |                   |                |

The final section of *Symphony in Blue and Gold* continues to revisit and reinvent key musical ideas from earlier movements. Pulling from the UWEC motive, measure 150 begins with the major and minor third patterns first found in movement one, measure 38, reestablishing one of the symphony's core elements. The waltz theme from movement three follows this and uses the exact same pitches but in 4/4 time at measure 156. As Svanoe begins to pull the music

back to its original forms, the waltz theme then shifts back into its original rhythm in 3/4 time at measure 164 but is now transposed up a major third. A variation of the BLUGLD motive appears in measure 158 but differs by one pitch. In a final manipulation of time, Svanoe creates a brief hemiola at measure 172 as she uses the waltz theme in a strict quarter-note rhythm with the original pitches against a sequence of ascending dotted quarter-notes. All the while, the xylophone and marimba continue to reinforce the M3m3 motive.

As the music transitions back to the home key—a tonal center of C—measures 180-183 feature variations of C-scales in the woodwinds as it builds momentum toward statements of BLUGLD and UWEC in their purest-pitched forms in measure 184. BLUGLD is elongated while UWEC is paired down to a simplified rhythm. The two motives should be equally heard as the music builds towards a climactic moment at measure 204 with repeated canonic statements of GLD over and over again. Reminiscent of a shout section of big band music, measure 204 can also be viewed as a sort of coda, emphasizing the home tonic of F from movement three instead of the tonic of movement one. Indicative of Svanoe's compositional style, she swiftly incorporates two more instances of UWEC and BLUGLD motives in measures 212-215. While Svanoe could have ended the piece simply with the last grandiose *molto allargando* F-major chord, she slips in three more witty and intricate details that add finality to the jazz-inspired symphony for wind band. As a nod to Darius Milhaud's *La Création du Monde*, the trombones play a transposed version of the violin's introduction from *Scene V* in measure 216-218 in which both lines follow a M2-M2-m3 pattern.<sup>250</sup> Translating Milhaud's gentler violin line to a far more aggressive double forte in the trombone is found to be another clever insertion of Svanoe's wit and sense of parody.

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<sup>250</sup> Milhaud, *La Création Du Monde* (Éditions Max Eschig, 1929).

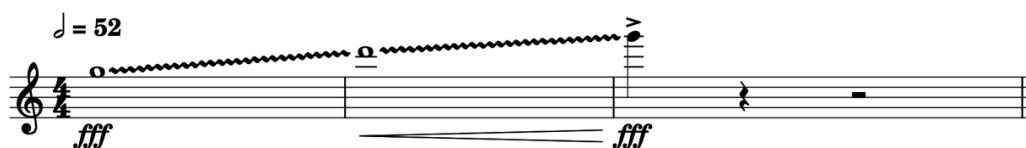
Figure 63 is a musical score for the beginning of scene V of *La Création du Monde* by Darius Milhaud. The score is written for a large ensemble including Flute (Fl.), Horn (Hb.), Clarinet (Cl.), Trombone (Trb.), Piano, Violon, Saxophone (Sax), Violoncelle (Vclle), and Contrabass (C.B.). The tempo is marked "Très rall." and the movement is "V. Mouvt. ♩ = 62". A red box highlights the "arco" instruction on the Violon staff, indicating that the strings should play with the bow.

Figure 63. *La Création du Monde* by Darius Milhaud – Beginning of scene V

Figure 64 is a musical score for the Trombone 1 part of *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Movement IV, measures 216-220. The score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of ♩ = 52. The dynamics are marked "ff" (fortissimo) and "fff" (fortississimo).

Figure 64. *Symphony in Blue and Gold*, Mvt. IV, m.216-220 – Trombone 1

The B-flat clarinet initiates a final wailing glissando in measure 218 as seen in Figure 65, tying the entire work back to the main borrowed source material in the most obvious way by once again using the famous clarinet glissando at the onset of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*.



**Figure 65.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* – Final clarinet smear

In signature Svanoe fashion, she doubles down on the finality of the entire piece and with the use of quoted material by utilizing the very last thematic idea written by Gershwin and performed by the piano—grand and glorious major chords, each emphasized with an accent to show incredible weight. Layered underneath the ensemble-wide F-Major chord and clarinet glissando in Svanoe’s score are similar grandiose chords in the piano, reminiscent of the piano’s ending in *Rhapsody in Blue* (Figure 66 and Figure 67). The piano relentlessly reinforces the tonality through a series of ascending F-Major chords as it builds excitement and drama all the way to the ensemble’s final and exhilarating F-Major tag, ending Svanoe’s largescale symphonic work with a bold and resonate flourish.



**Figure 66.** *Rhapsody in Blue* - Piano finale



**Figure 67.** *Symphony in Blue and Gold* - Piano finale

This concluding section of *Symphony in Blue and Gold* not only reaffirms the symphony's two central motives of UWEC and BLUGLD, but also offers an extreme sense of closure, connecting it to the sources that in part, inspired its creation. The elements in which Svanoe uses to tie everything together are expounded beyond the use of motives such as imitating a big band shout chorus, additional fugal statements of the motives, and one final blues progression, bringing her masterwork to a satisfying and decisive end.

### Conclusions

The works of Erika Svanoe demonstrate incredible musical intellect and ability to depict vivid imagery through her writing. Her strengths as a melodic composer are leaned into heavily through a constant use of arranging and transforming both original content and borrowed materials in a way that uniquely represent her voice among wind band composers. Beginning with her earliest explorations of arranging on a digital keyboard as a child to having her major symphonic works performed on the steps of the Nation's Capital, she keeps her music in a state of reimagining and curiosity, setting out to constantly challenge her own creativity and to never be complacent in her own work. Her greatest compositional distinction lies in her ability to create sophisticated levels of artistry through arranging, and ability to infuse such writing with imagery and humor. Known for compositions that widely uses not only borrowed material, but a

clever pastiche style to depict specific images, characters, and narratives, including that of a “hero’s journey”.

Svanoe’s background as a band director and conductor have greatly contributed to her understanding of instrumentation, orchestration, and playability in her compositions. The practicality of her compositional process and resulting pieces of music ensure that every part and instrument throughout an ensemble offer engagement and challenges for all performers. The core of Svanoe’s compositional identity lies in her commitment to transforming music into something new and original. She maintains an innate ability to write ideas that are unexpected, and follows an example set by Charles Ives with his use of layering thematic ideas. Svanoe embraces absurdity as part of her compositional mantra and turns each unconventional idea into a well-crafted and multi-layered structure and piece of music. Much of her compositional style is marked by her ability to fully commit and “double down” on such ideas, eventually turning them into quirky and refined works of art.

Svanoe, like many other women composers of the past and present, has felt that her gender has likely had an impact on her career. At the same time, she candidly acknowledges that her entrance into the composition world coincides with initiatives aimed at increasing diversity in music and outlines the complexities and mixed feelings associated with being a woman composer amid such a movement. Ultimately, she believes her music offers value and can stand on its own merit and is performed with great frequency for more reasons than simply filling a slot as the token woman composer on a program. Her music aims to provide every performer in an ensemble meaningful engagement through fun and interesting storytelling and thoughtfully crafted musical lines. With a catalog of wind band pieces that span ability levels ranging from grade 2 through grade 6, her music fills a niche within the repertoire that balances playability and

practicality with depth and development of ideas. Her music is innovative without being obscure, clever without being pretentious, and fun without being gimmicky or sacrificing artistic value. Svanoë's contributions to the modern wind band repertoire offers a unique voice to the profession who has helped to expand the language of contemporary writing. Her techniques used to arrange and transform melodic material reveal a tremendous compositional talent for motivic development, laying the foundation for her to reimagine melodic lines in fresh and compelling ways.

*Symphony in Blue and Gold* represents Svanoë's most mature writing to-date. Departing from her programmatic storytelling and format, Svanoë instead takes a more abstract approach through use of motivic development in place of melodic development featured prominently in previous works. The 20-minutes symphony demonstrates her advanced knowledge and handling of thematic development by utilizing two core motives throughout all four movements. The BLUGLD and UWEC motives transform through inversion, transposition, rhythmic variation, fragmentation, harmonic elongation, timbre, and various textures throughout multiple layers—all while juxtaposed against various musical styles including blues, a waltz, and a shuffle. Svanoë's use of orchestration is equally refined as showcased by building a standard jazz band within the full wind bands. *Symphony in Blue and Gold* demonstrates her ability to maintain balance throughout each movement, regardless of the embedded big-band sound. She expertly uses tone painting to create and reflect sounds of what "gold" might sound like. Displayed in the symphony is a heightened use of form and structure with a fusion of jazz and classical elements that are guided by the motivic development—marking a clear distinction from the more modular approach found in her other large-scale, multi-movement work, *Steampunk Suite*. The result of such writing is not necessarily a departure from a previous compositional style, but reflective of

a more nuanced approach and refined technique with a clear and artistic vision from beginning to end.

Erika Svanoe's music provides a distinctive and original voice within the wind band repertoire—a voice that bridges innovation, humor, intellect, and constant arranging of melodic and motivic material. Her music challenges performers both musically and technically by providing something substantive for everyone and engages audiences with layered and inventive stories and imagery, along with various compositional techniques such as manipulation of time that encourages active listening. *Symphony in Blue and Gold* contributes to the wind band repertoire by providing a work that is both accessible *and* substantial, as well as meaningful and enjoyable for all involved in the music-making and music-listening process. With evidence of an evolving and creative compositional style, Svanoe continues to expand not only her own creative voice but also the boundaries of the wind band genre through works that are imaginative and substantial in artistry.

## **Chapter 7 – Conclusions**

Composers Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe have each made significant contributions to the wind band through their individual compositional voices and distinctive approaches to writing. This study set out to provide the most extensive bibliographical information and compositional style to date, demonstrating how their backgrounds and lived experiences have shaped their identities as a prominent composer of contemporary wind band music, and in turn how their compositions have pushed the boundaries of the genre through their innovative methods of orchestration and storytelling, and ultimately how each have added substance and breadth to the repertoire. To create a comprehensive overview of each composer and their music, a multifaceted framework was implemented to analyze their identity as a woman composer, along with their individual compositional techniques, philosophical influences, and narrative motivations and objectives.

### **Biographical Information**

Early life experiences, familial influences, and musical inspirations has demonstrated prevailing themes that have greatly shaped their individualistic compositional voices. Despite significant differences in upbringing and geographic location, Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe share one common thread—each had early exposures to music, along with tools and parental support in their learning and performing of music. Blackshaw, whose music is known for its spatial qualities and nuanced use of tone color, grew up in rural and isolated regions of Australia where she began learning organ at the age of five—an instrument that encouraged exploration of color and timbre with its many toggles and switches. Jolley, a Korean American composer who grew up in southern California, began playing piano at six and received an arts education where she developed a keen interest in film music and its storytelling capabilities. Known for its

commentary on social and political issues, Jolley's music mirrors issues tied to her cultural and moral identity. She addresses a range of sociopolitical topics in her music ranging from global warming and its destructive effects in the aftermath of California wildfires where she lived, to anti-communist rhetoric tied to the Korean War—a political conflict that orphaned her mother. Her compositional style also explores a vast array of modern techniques that display innovative uses of timbre, texture, dissonance, as well as a musical collage of classical and contemporary devices. Svanoe, a North American composer from Wisconsin whose music is largely based on arranging and transforming melodies and known for playful storytelling and witty imagery, began taking piano lessons at age seven. When gifted a digital keyboard by her parents at age ten, Svanoe began experimenting with arranging tunes from popular culture, particularly themes from comedic television shows.

Familial influences emerge as another significant theme found in each composer's adolescence. Blackshaw's parents and paternal grandmother were socially conscious role models who placed value in raising their children to speak out against injustices in the world. Her grandmother, in particular, was outspoken on issues such as women's rights, equal pay, fair compensation for teachers, and the rights of the indigenous people of the First Nations—laying the foundation for Blackshaw's advocacy and ability to voice her social values through music. Part of Jolley's identity as a composer lies in her multicultural heritage and familial ties to Korea, including her mother being orphaned as a child during the Korean War, and her parents meeting in Korea while her father was serving as a missionary. Svanoe's familial influence stems from her parents' investment in piano lessons and purchase of her first keyboard, which served as a catalyst for her creativity and experimentation into adapting theme songs from the comedies

and sitcom shows watched at home, in turn laying the groundwork for her music to reflect both reimagining of ideas and humorous writing.

## **Underrepresentation**

Gender remains a vital and ongoing conversation in all areas of music and performance. Historical assumptions of a woman's biology, intellect, or associated emotions have diminished and squandered the achievements and voices of women throughout time. In terms of being an underrepresented woman composer, Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe have acknowledged difficulties faced, including limited visibility in programming and being put in a position of wondering if their talents are appreciated or being tokenized when performed on concert programs. Each composer, in their own ways, has also had experiences where they have had to navigate a complex landscape of gender expectations. Whether that was through assumed incompetence or biases based on motherhood, their individual experiences relate directly to the research provided by Jill Halstead that discussed how a woman's work is either dismissed for being too emotionally driven, or scrutinized for not being good enough, or "masculine" enough.

Seen as inferior, women have not only been denied a musical education equal to that of men and pushed out of performance opportunities, and as a result have been greatly excluded from the musical canon over time. While the visibility of women in music has increased, the most recent data still shows an alarming disparity in the number of compositions written by women on state music lists at only 3.7% of the 15,528 original works for band. This comes out to approximately 575 works written by women that have been approved for educational programming. It should come as no surprise that women of color are showing up on such lists at an abysmal 0.23%, equaling approximately 36 works total out of the over 15,000.

Although the numbers representing women's music on state repertoire lists for band are significantly lower than that of men, the numbers have seen consistent increases over time. Women have always composed powerful and meaningful music—music deserving of far more recognition than historically gendered norms have allowed. All three composers in this study—Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe have similarly composed music of high artistic merit and have added three valuable and innovative voices to the growing number of women represented through that data.

Regardless of any challenges faced, Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe are composers with exceptional works and unique voices. Each has taken no issue with inserting themselves and their music into the contemporary genre, and have greatly paved their own ways despite any barriers and rejection they have faced by rejecting any preconceived societal and compositional norms.

### **Compositional Style**

Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe each exhibit a nontraditional path to composing. Blackshaw relies on her color-first style of writing, allowing timbre to guide both form and atmosphere while melody, harmony, and rhythm are subsequent considerations. Jolley's approaches composition from an often-provocative angle on contemporary subjects, intending to engage audiences and performers alike by offering sociopolitical discourse on issues such as gun violence, gender-based injustices, climate change, and abuses of authoritarian governments. Svanoe, on the other end of the compositional spectrum, repurposes preexisting material—generally older music in the public domain—with clever and inventive arrangements that showcase her distinctive use of pastiche and humor.

Despite having highly contrasting approaches to composition, Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe display a shared interest in the role of stories and narratives in their music. Storytelling is a core component to each and is directly linked not only to their musical expression but also to their individual voices and overall compositional sounds. Although the use of story is a primary commonality among each, the manner in which they use embed narrative in their music varies significantly in purpose and technique.

Blackshaw utilizes storytelling in her music to convey messages that explore broader themes of humanity such as vulnerability, empathy, solitude, self-discovery, and emotional growth through a broader narrative such as following a whale's migration journey, bringing attention to habitat destruction of koalas, or learning how to navigate grief. The arc of the stories she chooses to tell are symbolic of a higher understanding of human nature and the world that surrounds us. For Blackshaw, storytelling serves an overarching purpose of fostering meaningful engagement with performers and audiences alike, creating a connection to the human experience and a vehicle for dialogue relating to worldly topics that align with her philosophies and personal realities.

In contrast to Blackshaw's introspective methods of storytelling, Jolley's approach is generally more bold and forthright in confronting social, political, and worldly issues. At the same time, her breadth of storytelling also spans into environment-driven narratives and art forms that relate to human emotions and inward reflection, such as confronting existential questions of the unknown found in her *Questions to Heaven* or translating environmental stimuli into musical textures in *Lichtweg/Lightway*. Jolley is an expert at imploring contemporary compositional devices in her music, and often combines such elements with both classical post-minimalist style. Similarly to Blackshaw, Jolley believes her music serves a higher purpose—

engaging both performer and listener through introspective life reflection and confronting complex and difficult issues. Jolley believes that composers have an inherent responsibility to communicate purposeful and intentional messages through their music. For Jolley, this obligation presents in creating a space for thoughtful and critical dialogue and intellectual engagement that addresses global advocacy and relatable human experiences. No matter the story, Jolley's music is strictly based in the contemporary, drawing from present-day events, personal and lived experiences, and timely cultural commentary.

Both Blackshaw and Jolley engage with storytelling in their music through real-world issues and abstract thought processes intended to elicit engagement, intellectual conversation and emotional responses, although they utilize vastly different approaches to achieve these goals. Svanoe is not a composer who has explored writing social or cultural narratives but instead focuses on creating music that brings a joyful experience to those performing and to those listening in an audience. To Svanoe, music is about having fun, and her music consistently reflects this philosophy by telling stories with vivid scenery, quirky characters, inventive and creative melodic and motivic development, and a blending of old and new music ideas and styles. Her approach to storytelling results in an often-humorous conglomeration of stylistic references and cleverly reimagined materials.

Though their methods differ, each composer relies on narrative ideas to connect with the performers of their music and audiences alike. Fundamental to each, the use of storytelling through their compositions is viewed as an opportunity to provide an experience in music that is both meaningful and immersive. Storytelling becomes an expressive quality and a tool for Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe that not only provides imagery and commentary, but also shapes each of their individual processes. It is more than a feature; it is central to the content and

structure of their work. The narrative framework established for each piece of music they write informs decisions of form, orchestration, pacing, and thematic development—a unifying theme among all three that has greatly defined their creative identities.

## **Musical Analysis**

Their unique compositional processes showcase their individual craftsmanship, in line with concepts displayed by other contemporary composers listed earlier in this study. I feel confident that if similar levels of artistry were displayed for the first time in the five comparative composers (Julie Giroux, Chen Yi, John Mackey, Frank Ticheli, and David Maslanka) that there would be no hesitation in accepting their names and works into the repertoire.

In Blackshaw, an unparalleled emotional and philosophical depth is displayed through her writing, as well as advanced use of form and structure guided by her imagery and color. Jolley’s music contains a level of narrative complexity that is multi-layered and filled with incredible amounts of meaning and irony. Her intellect in building such structures with musical line is unmatched, along with her sophisticated use of texture and timbre throughout all works. Svanoe and her music have become a guiding light for narrative inventiveness, pushing the boundaries of storytelling through music with fresh perspectives. Her technical skills in crafting and transforming motivic ideas in conjunction with stylistic conglomerations demonstrates a deep compositional and theoretical command.

Chris Sharp, who wrote on pieces of wind band music, ultimately raising those pieces to a higher esteem within the repertoire, believes the following, “Composers who contribute significantly to the wind band repertoire draw inspiration and ideas from musical genres beyond the traditional realm of wind band music.” Composers Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe have greatly drawn from genres beyond traditional wind band music, and not only

have they already contributed significantly to the field of composition, but they continue to find new stories and new methods to express their talents with each new composition.

The examination of the three composers and their respective compositional approaches underscores the value they each bring to the wind band and its repertoire. Three underrepresented yet increasingly influential composers who bring a distinct voice to the musical canon shaped by their backgrounds, cultural influences, geographical locations, moral and social philosophies, pedagogical views, intellect, and humor. Their works are artistically significant not only for the uniqueness of their individual voices but the way each demonstrates the incredible new depths of what music can represent.

### **Final Thoughts**

I began this research with the intent of bringing to light three composers whose music I came to admire during my graduate studies. I longed for more resources on their backgrounds, compositional styles, and especially a guide to studying their music. When such resources did not exist, I set out to create them myself. At the end of this project, I expected to have a clear idea of the things that shape and influence their music while taking an intimate look at one piece of music by each. In reality, I believe I have accomplished those goals though what I have learned through this process goes much deeper.

I previously held a personal conviction that Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe were composers of high artistic merit, and after deeply analyzing their music and gaining intimate insights into how they think, I am even more firmly convinced. Blackshaw's music is truly so rich and colorful, and the ways in which she creates musical line is fascinating. It is not melodic development, although there are moments of melody, and it is not variations, but ideas do change and evolve over long stretches of musical line—lines that don't follow traditional phrase

structures but instead allow the movement of various timbres to determine the form. Jolley's craftsmanship became apparent through the way she blends so many unique elements, such as narrative, sounds of a specific location, timbral shifts, use of extended techniques, and classical conventions, into one idea. Every bit of her music is layered with multiple devices, and yet, she manages to create her own version of sound art through all of the various intellectual levels and compositional tools, that can be found. The study of Svanoe's music revealed to me an intellect that I never fully appreciated until I made a deep dive into her scores and her background of various influences. She believes her greatest strengths lie in arranging and developing motivic material, but I would argue that her true superpower lies in her uncanny ability to disguise intellect and wit beneath layers of pastiche and humor.

The most revealing aspect that I uncovered of each composers' music is how heavily their music relies on story. Prior knowledge and experience with their music provided me with what I believed to be a foundational understanding of how each composer approached narratives within their music. But what I discovered was a far more nuanced and intentional conviction. Most interesting to me was the strikingly different methods of each composer to portray story through their music. While all three prioritize narrative as a core component, the means of illustrating their ideas through music present in three unique ways. Blackshaw's methods reflect her color-first compositional style. Whether through overt programmatic ideas of *Soulström* or the philosophical reflections of human behavior found in *Peace Dancer*, Blackshaw uses timbre in an equally sensitive manner. She is able to use timbre to suggest delicate moments of love and humility as powerfully as it elicits a fierce and deadly storm. Jolley's use of storytelling appears in more literal ways through layered inventive textures combined with contemporary compositional devices, such as climbing microtones suspended over low-timbred drones, both

leading to an electronic instrument and timbre. The sounds evoke purposeful imagery of military tanks, a sense of unease, and eventually the literal sound of noise projected through North Korean loudspeakers. Swanoe on the other hand, provides vivid and distinct imagery through orchestration as her means of storytelling. Even in *Symphony in Blue and Gold*—a departure from her expected programmatic plots—she uses orchestration to generate the tangible hues of blue and gold. Perhaps the most compelling and blatant use of orchestration as a pillar of storytelling in the symphony is the incorporation of standard jazz band instrumentation meant to showcase the jazz styles and influences on which the work is based.

Throughout the process of documenting and analyzing the voices and compositions of each composer, I have not only reaffirmed my personal belief in the genius of their craftsmanship but have also come to understand the incredible depth of technique and intelligence crafted into their music. Imbued in everything they write is a sense of intentionality of timbres, orchestration, and overall expression. Their compositions are carefully crafted in ways they tell stories, relay messages, and provide emotional, thought-provoking musical experiences for performers and audiences alike.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The limitations of this study leave several avenues open for further exploration into areas of underrepresented composers, women/gender inequalities and issues in music, and compositional devices used for storytelling, to name a few. The greatest service to the industry would be an expansion of the composer sample to include other women composers, as well as a more diverse pool of underrepresented composers with differing nationalities, races, and gender identities beyond cisgender women. Other underrepresented composers should be viewed with

the same or greater level of detail to document extensive background information and to outline other valuable compositional styles.

A continuation into the works of Jodie Blackshaw, Jennifer Jolley, and Erika Svanoe would also prove beneficial from a lens of examining with as much scrutiny their works for younger, apprenticing ensembles, as well as works geared towards high-school level musicians. Further, a study that investigates the publishing side of music could prove useful, as many composers, including Blackshaw, Jolley, and Svanoe, remain mostly self-published. While publishing companies and catalogs are geared towards the most mainstream music, data on how frequently women and other underrepresented composers appear on such resources could not only uncover additional repertoire, but provide an untapped source also show a greater need for equitable representation.

Lastly, because of this study, a look into storytelling of wind band music and how it is perceived by both performers and audiences would offer insight into the effectiveness of the intended narrative and level of engagement by the composer to how it is interpreted by those who hear it. To learn how to effectively communicate an intended message, story, image, to an audience/performer, as well as what compositional tools resonate and align with those listeners would provide valuable insight between artistic intent and reception, allowing for a greater understanding of musical storytelling.

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