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Story Telling: A Comparative Analysis of Three Works by Michael Colgrass, Joseph Schwantner and Ross Lee Finney

Erick C. Von Sas

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Story Telling:

**A Comparative Analysis of Three Works
by Michael Colgrass, Joseph Schwantner
and Ross Lee Finney**



Honors Thesis

Erick C. Von Sas

Department: Music

Advisor: Patrick Reynolds, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Music

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Abstract

This research project examines music by twentieth-century American composers Michael Colgrass, Joseph Schwantner, and Ross Lee Finney in order to compare how different composers present an aural conception to their audience through the wind ensemble medium. An aural conception is the subject upon which the music is commenting; sight (subject) through sound. The study includes an analysis of soundscapes- collections of sounds that form an acoustic representation of an action or object- in works created by Colgrass, Schwantner, and Finney. The project involves analyses of form, orchestration, and of the text, or story, about which the composer is writing. The works analyzed are *Winds of Nagual* by Michael Colgrass, *...and the Mountains Rising Nowhere* by Joseph Schwantner, and *Skating on the Shyenne* by Ross Lee Finney. Based on these analyses of the works, interviews with conductors and composers, and an examination of other works by each composer, the process of creating each work's unique soundscape can be discovered.

Key Terms: Soundscape, Aural Conception.

Dedication or Acknowledgements

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Introduction:

Music provides a unique vehicle for expression. In other artistic mediums, mood or emotion is expressed in canvas, clay, or the written word. Notated music is not realized until it is placed before living, breathing musicians. Rehearsal and performance brings music to life in a tactile, visual, auditory whirlwind of art. Music for winds, brass, and percussion in America over the past one hundred years has grown and developed into a viable medium for artistic expression. With such a rich literature that continues to unfold, one can take time to not only perform these works, but examine them and their characteristics of sonic expression.

The works examined in this paper are each pillars of the repertoire for winds, brass, and percussion. All three composers, Michael Colgrass, Joseph Schwantner, and Ross Lee Finney, are Pulitzer Prize Winners and come from different educational and performance backgrounds. Their experiences, recollections, and reflections make clear impressions on each composition. Through an examination of each work's first movement or opening section, a clear picture develops of each composer's musical voice and of their aural conception for each work. An aural conception is the subject upon which the music is commenting; sight (subject) through sound. The study includes an analysis of soundscapes- collections of sounds that form an acoustic representation of an action or object- in works created by Colgrass, Schwantner, and Finney. The project involves analyses of form, orchestration, and of the text, or story, about which the composer is writing. The works analyzed are Winds of Nagual by Michael Colgrass, ...and the Mountains Rising Nowhere by Joseph Schwantner, and Skating on the Sheyenne by Ross Lee Finney. Based on these analyses of the works, interviews with

conductors and composers, and an examination of other works by each composer, the process of creating each work's unique soundscape can be discovered.

About the Composers:

Michael Colgrass (b. 1932) is a Chicago native and a graduate of the University of Illinois. He holds degrees in composition and percussion performance and additionally studied composition with Darius Milhaud at the Aspen Music Festival (Aspen, CO) and Lukas Foss at the Tanglewood Music Festival (Lenox, MA). His work as a percussionist in New York City provided him with many performing opportunities with composers such as Igor Stravinsky, John Cage, Elliot Carter, Edgar Varese, and Leonard Bernstein. Along with these Western art music experiences, Colgrass was also a prominent jazz drum-set player. These multi-faceted performance opportunities influenced his unique compositional voice. A Pulitzer Prize winner for his piece *Déjà vu* (1977), commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Colgrass is one of the most prominent living composers in North America (Colgrass 2010, Biography). He lives in Toronto making a living composing and writing. His works for wind ensemble total five original compositions and one transcription, along with five additional works for high school band and junior high band (Colgrass 2010, Compositions). The primary composition examined in this project will be *Winds of Nagual: A Musical Fable on the Writings of Carlos Castaneda* (1985). The work was commissioned by the New England Conservatory Wind Ensemble and is dedicated to its director, Frank Battisti (Colgrass 1987, p. iii).

Joseph Schwantner (b. 1943) won the Pulitzer Prize in 1979 for his orchestral composition *Aftertones of Infinity*, and has served on the faculty of the Juilliard School, the Eastman School of Music, and Yale University. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in 2012, the Nashville Symphony won a Grammy for

their recording of Schwantner's Concerto for percussion and Orchestra in 2012 (Schwantner Bio). Born in Chicago in 1943, he received his musical training from the Chicago Conservatory at Roosevelt University and at Northwestern University. The primary work that this project will examine is ...*and the mountains rising nowhere* (1977). The piece was commissioned by Donald Hunsberger and the Eastman Wind Ensemble, and is based on a poem by Carol Adler, entitled *Arioso* (Renshaw, 1998, pp. 529-530).

Ross Lee Finney (1906-1997) was appointed Professor of Composition and Composer-in-Residence at the University of Michigan in 1949, and eventually established the Department of Composition at the University of Michigan School of Music. He held this position until 1973, when he retired to compose full-time. He began his studies at the University of Minnesota and finished his degree in 1927 at Carleton College. After his graduation, he received a scholarship to study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, and would later return to Europe to study with Alban Berg in Vienna. Upon his return, he applied for a Guggenheim Fellowship to focus on composition, and additionally received a Pulitzer Scholarship in music. His 1973 work, *Skating on the Sheyenne*, was commissioned by the Brooklyn College Symphonic Band and is based on scenes from his childhood in North Dakota (Lundahl, 2001, pp. 735-736).

Analyses of Pieces:

Winds of Nagual: A Musical Fable on the Writings of Carlos Castaneda (1985)

Colgrass' work for wind ensemble comes directly from the tradition of the orchestral tone poem. A tone poem, or symphonic poem, is a piece of music in which a poem, program, or theme gives the music a narrative basis. The tradition began with Franz Liszt's adaptation of several of his programmatic works for piano, and the tradition carried on throughout Europe and is still quite popular today (Macdonald). There is specific thematic material for the characters present throughout *Winds of Nagual*. The piece is based, primarily, on the book *Tales of Power* by Carlos Castaneda. The book describes Castaneda's fourteen-year relationship with Don Juan Matis, a Native American from the Yaqui tribe in northwestern Mexico. Castaneda's relationship with Matis began when Castaneda was researching hallucinogenic plants for his master's thesis in Anthropology. He and Matis explored methods of pre-Columbian sorcery, with the goal of finding Castaneda's creative self, or *nagual*. The tone poem contains several themes or motifs which represent its three central characters; Don Juan, Carlos, and Don Genero. Juan's theme is dark and ominous, but at the same time gentle and kind. This portrays a duality of Juan's character in a way that creates distance between the two major characters. Carlos' theme is presented in different forms, depending upon the movement. At points, it is disjunct to show insecurity; other times it is robust and confident to show his grasp of the situation. The *nagual* theme represents Don Juan's vision of Carlos' new creative self. Don Genero's theme is comic relief in the piece, as he taunts and clowns Carlos with fantastic tricks (Fennell, 1998, p. 645).

Harmonically, *Winds of Nagual* provides to the listener and performer an extremely diverse palette of colors and textures. There is a mixture of tonal and atonal harmony, along with several unique orchestration techniques. Common practice period harmonic language is often juxtaposed with pentatonic harmonization, bitonality, sound mass harmonization, cluster chords, and *klangfarbenmelodie* techniques. The melodic material is also a lush mix of traditional major and minor scales, modes, pentatonic scales, whole tone scales, and synthetic scales. Another important feature of *Winds of Nagual* is its rhythmic diversity. Incessant meter changes, the use of the hemiola, and complicated rhythmic divisions (including quintuplets, sextuplets, septuplets, etc.) present a major performance challenge to the ensemble (Fennell, 1998, 647).

Movement one, entitled “The Desert,” begins with solo E-flat clarinet and crotales. The percussionists are instructed to use plastic xylophone sticks on the crotales. The score also indicates that this section is “Quasi recitative,” so the E-flat clarinet and crotales can deviate slightly from the metronome marking of quarter note equals 72 beats per minute (bpm). This introduction evokes the desert at sunrise. Bright daggers of light glisten through the crest of the horizon, as the desert awakens from its restless slumber. The primary interval in this duet is the descending minor third (G to E). In the first five measures, there is very little deviation from these two notes. In m. 2, trumpets I, II, and III enter in stacked minor seconds (G-flat, G, and A-flat) with whisper mutes, with a crescendo from pianissimo to piano followed by a diminuendo down to pianissimo, sustaining for two measures. A similar dynamic statement occurs in mm. 5-6, this time adding trumpet IV. The harmonic material changes from a cluster chord to a perfect fourth (E-flat to A-flat) in trumpets 1 and 2 and a perfect fourth in trumpets 3 and 4 (A to

D), creating the intervals of a minor second, two perfect fourths, two diminished fifths, and a diminished octave. These quiet swells of sound shift in the dunes, as the morning breeze removes the last vestiges of moisture from the ground.

The rhythmic language becomes more diverse as the movement progresses. Agitated rhythmic activities in the E-flat clarinet and crotales, coupled with additional brass sound masses, lead to interjections from other woodwind and pitched-percussion instruments. (See Example 1)

Ex 1(mm.1-6)

WINDS OF NAGUAL

Recit
Arabic recitative The Desert MICHAEL COLGRASS

♩ = 72 (but freely) 2 3 4 5 6 *poco meno mosso* (♩ = 66)

Fl. I
Fl. II
Ob. I
Ob. II
Cl. I
Cl. II
Bsn. I
Bsn. II
Sax. I
Sax. II
Trp. I
Trp. II
Trb. I
Trb. II
Perc.
Cym.

Whisper mutes Echoing into the mountains
Whisper mutes (iii) pp < p > pp pp < p > pp
Whisper mutes (iv) pp < p > pp

Crotales (Plastic Xylo. sticks)

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One after the other at m. 14, beginning with B-flat clarinet, the interjections are stated in a fortissimo dynamic marking, and rarely occur on an agogically appropriate beat. From m. 14 to m. 25, there is a steady increase in dynamics, brought about by a thickening of instrumentation. With the exception of the contra bass, each instrument has a dynamic marking of fortissimo at their entrance, and the colors of the instruments included (piccolo, E-flat and B-flat soprano clarinets, bass clarinets, soprano saxophone, trumpets with metal straight mutes, parsifal bells, crotales, vibraphone, and chimes) are very bright in timbre and cause aural tension before the next formal section. Each of these individual interjections is a new moment of genesis. Colgrass's desert is not a desolate place, but a vibrant and lively space, with life and terrain constantly in flux (Colgrass, 1987).

The second section of "The Desert" is completely different from the preceding section. There is a sudden crash as "Don Juan Emerges from the Mountains" (Colgrass 1987). Ensemble color becomes suddenly dark with the entrance of low voices, B-flat contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon, cornets, flugelhorn, horns in the low register, trombones (six parts total), euphonium, tuba, contrabass, gong, and bass drum, with a brief interjection from the E-flat clarinet and crotales once again. The music pulsates in a slow, steady manner. There is a pedal point in the low woodwinds, tuba, and contrabass, emphasizing D, B-flat, G, and F in turn. The general harmonic language of this section (mm. 26-58) is in the aeolian mode, with tonal centers including D, F, E-flat, and E. (See Example 2)

Ex. 2 (mm. 26-29)

Don Juan emerges from the Mountains

The musical score for Ex. 2 (mm. 26-29) is titled "Don Juan emerges from the Mountains". It is a full orchestral score with the following parts: Picc., Eb Cl., Bb Cb. Cl., Cbn., Tpt. I, Flug. Hr., Hns. I and II, Tbn. V and VI, Euph., Tuba I, Contra-bass 2, Crot., Gong, and B.D. The score is in 4/4 time and features a melodic theme in the horns and euphonium, with a solo e-flat contra-alto clarinet. Dynamics range from piano (p) to fortissimo (ff). The score includes various markings such as "a 6", "a 2", "st. mutes", "p", "pp", "mf", "f", and "ff".

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This section has a wide melodic and harmonic contour. Don Juan's theme is first presented in the horns (all six, playing in the low register) and euphonium. This orchestration gives the melody a round, dark, almost ominous character. Solo e-flat contra-alto clarinet brings this section to a close, with its tonal center being E aeolian, a

similar tonal center to the beginning of the movement. The rest of the ensemble is marked piano or less, and dynamic contrast is only written in the contra-alto clarinet solo line.

This entire section has a very noble feeling to it, with references to many Central-American musical styles (Colgrass, 1987).

Castaneda's theme appears in m. 59 in the b-flat soprano clarinet, with multiple tempo changes, to give a feeling of unsteadiness. Cluster chords, as well as rhythmic interjections, recalling the opening of the movement, follow Castaneda's theme, with a brief return of the e-flat contra-alto solo ten measures previous. (See Example 3)

EX. 3 (mm.58-62)

Carlos approaches Don Juan

58 $\text{♩} = 116$ 60 $\text{♩} = 66$ 61 $\text{♩} = 108$ 62 $\text{♩} = 66$

Picc. mf

Fl. mf

Bb Cl. *Sola* mf

Eb C. alto Cl. pp

Bb Cb. Cl. pp

Cbn. pp mf pp

Tpt. I, II, III, IV *Whisper mutes* pp

Hn. I, II, III, IV *Sord.* pp *Metal st. mts.* pp mf pp

Tbn. I, II, III, IV *Whisper mt.* pp *Metal st. mts.* pp mf pp

Pars. Bells *Plastic* mf

Crot. *Plastic* mf

Vibra. $\frac{3}{4}$ hard rubber mf

Hp. mf

Pf. *arco* *celesta* mf

Cb. mf

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Castaneda's theme is played again, this time even more unsure and supported by sparse orchestration. There is also great dissonance underneath the theme, and the use of

This is a gentle response to Carlos's repeated questions that were unanswered until now. It is clear that Carlos must go on a journey of mind and body to find his true self. The final notes of the movement are one more hesitant assertion of Castaneda's theme over an A minor suspended 6th chord, leaving the harmonic tension unresolved (Colgrass, 1987).

Skating on the Sheyenne

Ross Lee Finney's *Skating on the Sheyenne* was commissioned by the Brooklyn College Symphonic Band in 1977. The work draws its thematic material from Finney's North Dakota upbringing. The first movement, "Figure Eights," evokes the image of a skater on the ice of the Sheyenne River, which freezes over most winters. The second movement, "Northern Lights," paints a picture of the beautiful, shimmering Aurora Borealis. The final movement, "Crack the Whip," takes the listener on a sleigh ride over the frozen North Dakota plains. Finney is known to have strong opinions about the power and musicality of bands, and the variety of sonic colors available in them (Lundahl, 2001, pp. 736).

"The first movement, 'Figure Eights,' is filled with all kinds of musical circles, right side up and upside down, like one skates a figure eight. The second movement, 'Northern Lights,' tries to capture that awesome experience. 'Crack the Whip,' which ends the work, is funny." (Finney, 1992)

As professor of composition at the University of Michigan, Finney had a large number of quality ensembles (both orchestral and wind) at his disposal, with willing conductors and musicians capable of taking on the challenges of his music. It is clear that Finney's study with Berg influenced his choices in harmonic structure, form, as well as orchestration. Finney explored a unique brand of composition known as complementarity, a principal of quantum mechanics borrowed from physicist Niels Bohr, which states that when objects governed by quantum mechanics are measured, the results of the measurement depend on the device used to collect data (Faye, 2002) Finney uses this term to describe himself as a tonalist composer who writes atonal music (Hunt,

2014). Sonic explosions with flurries of sound rising from the blast area frequently pervade *Skating on the Sheyenne*.

“Figure Eights” opens with a rhythmic motive, which is a musical palindrome. This motive asserts itself at first as vertically stacked perfect fourths. The pitches in the sonority are, from the bottom up, C, G, D, A, B, E. The assumption can be made that the B occurs before the E in order to keep the tessitura of the sonority low. Coupled with the rhythmic motif, this first statement sets the mood for the entire movement of a skater swerving in and out of figure eights. This rhythmic motive, which occurs throughout the piece, gives a feeling of excitement and activity that one can only experience on a brisk day. The muted first horn interrupts the steady ostinato, and has an ascending line, based on whole steps with a leap of a minor third after the fourth note. This same ascending scale occurs with different tonal centers later in the clarinet in m. 6. Mm. 1-12 all contain the original ostinato, or an augmentation, diminution, or inversion of the rhythmic theme. Though the initial timbres of the piece are dark, (bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, bassoon, contrabassoon, contrabass, timpani, bass drum, etc.), bright colors soon enter the texture, including trumpet with straight mute, piccolo, flute, B-flat clarinets, glockenspiel, and xylophone. This juxtaposition of bright and dark timbre prevails throughout the movement, and suggests the variety of personalities of the skaters (Finney, 1977).

The prevailing idea that occurs throughout this movement of *Skating on the Sheyenne* is the skating “trick.” Each cadenza section is a different skater, some more graceful than others, either alone or in small groups, performing different maneuvers on the ice. Each trick is initiated by a drum roll. In mm. 11-12, the dynamics of the piece decrease, followed by a snare drum punctuation. This takes us to a cadenza section,

where the bass clarinet plays a passage that contains every single chromatic pitch. (When analyzed as a tone row, the rest of the cadenza does not line up with any prime form, retrograde, inversion, or retrograde-inversion of the original tone row.) This cadenza is based on intervals of seconds and thirds, and each set of twelve pitches. Despite the fact that the row has no repeated chromatic pitch, it is not strictly atonal. The clarinet and oboe then enter and bring us back to a diatonic tonal area. The duet has a great deal of interplay, with one voice moving while the other sustains, and vice versa.

The music returns to the original tempo with a flutter of woodwinds and a colorful depiction of falling icicles from the brass, as the trumpet and trombone descend in perfect fourths and fifths. There is another statement of the figure eight motive, and then the snare drum again announces the arrival of a cadenza. The piccolo's cadenza is in G Dorian, with a convex melodic line fading into the sound of a solo tuba. The tuba remains in G Dorian, and has the first articulation markings to be used in either of the previous cadenza sections, as well as the first quarter notes to appear. Until now notes were written as either eighth notes for moving notes, or half notes to indicate sustain. These articulations are intended to be rather disjunct and possibly indicate the skater stumbling over himself (Finney, 1977). The horns then enter in a mode centered in G, shown in Example 5.

Ex. 5 (Rehearsal 4-Rehearsal 6)

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The duet shown above brings a feeling of tonal instability between the horns. The bass clarinet then brings the tonality back to G Dorian, but is interrupted by the B-flat clarinet with a new assertion of D Lydian. With a final trill, the cadenza section is brought to a close, with a new proclamation of the “figure eight” theme. At m. 20, the trumpets have an augmentation of the original motif, followed by a diminution of the motif by the middle and lower instruments of the ensemble (horn, trombone, baritone, tuba, and contrabass).

At m. 25, there is a contrasting section in 6/8 with the occasional 5/8 bar, with shifting key centers (A-flat, G, D-flat, and E-flat). There is interplay between the trumpet, horn, and the bass clarinets. At m. 36, the “figure eight” theme is restated, but this time juxtaposed against shimmering trills of upper woodwinds. At m. 40, there is another six-eight transition, with ascending woodwinds (G, C, D, Bb, A, C). The downbeat of the third cadenza section begins with a first inversion D-flat major triad in all of the winds,

except the saxophones and bassoons. The alto saxophone then plays a cadenza of ascending melodic material, based in synthetic scales in six note fragments, moving from D-flat (as set up by the winds) to E natural, to G, to F-sharp, to D, to B natural, resting on D-flat again. This show-off (the alto saxophone) is performing as many tricks as possible, as quickly as possible. The B-flat clarinets play a duet based in parallel minor thirds (Finney, 1997). The melodic patterns of the individual lines are illustrated in Example 6.

Ex. 6 (Rehearsal 3)

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This depicts a slightly more stable embrace than the similar horn duet that preceded it. This third cadenza leads to a waltz section, beginning at m. 47, which could be described as a large group dance with the participation of almost all of the skaters. This section alternates between C and C-sharp, with interruptions from the saxophones in the key centers of B-flat and F. The key center in the upper woodwinds moves from C/C-sharp to E-flat and then A-flat, which sets up the fourth cadenza section. Trilling trumpets accompany the timpani, bongos, and tuba in this cadenza section. The timpani's pitch center is around C, and the tuba's material is built on the notes F, B-flat, and E-flat, A-flat, and D-flat, which create intervals of perfect fourths. The timpani, trumpets, and bongos suggest some sort of struggle, perhaps boys rough-housing or fighting. The tuba

then enters to quiet the struggle. Another transition section brings flurries of woodwind runs, with brass underpinnings. Large sweeping movements are made in the upper woodwinds, while the brass continues the activity of the figure eight motive (Finney, 1977).

At m. 69 there is a return of the palindromic theme, along with further variation and continuous woodwind runs, of numerous scale systems. A rhythmically unison variation of the theme is stated from mm. 74-79, with additional variations from mm. 80-89. The final cadenza of the movement begins with a lightning-speed xylophone, with contributions from the E-flat clarinet, piccolo, flutes, alto flute, oboes, and English horn. To complete the cadenza, bongos, cowbells, tom-toms, suspended cymbal, and snare drum propels the listener into the coda (Finney, 1977).

The coda begins at m. 90, and signals the end of a long day of skating. The ringing of church bells announces the end of the day, and a great musical climax is reached through use of bell-tones in the brass. There are ascending runs in the bassoons, baritone saxophone, tenor saxophone, E-flat contra bass clarinet, bass clarinet, and B-flat clarinets, with the eventual addition of alto saxophone. By the end of m. 91, only the B-flat clarinet and alto saxophone are left sounding a concert C. (See Example 7)

Ex.7 (MM. 91-96)

The image shows a page of a musical score for an orchestral work, specifically measures 91 through 96. The score is written for a large ensemble, including Piccolo, Flutes (Fl.), Oboes (Ob.), English Horn (Eng. Horn), Trumpets (Trp.), Trombones (Tbn.), and Percussion (Perc.). The percussion part includes a section for 'Tuba bells' and 'as floor'. The score is in 6/8 time and features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *ff*. The notation includes various articulations and phrasing slurs. The page number '21' is visible in the top right corner.

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At m. 94 the piccolo, flutes, alto flute, oboes, English horn, trumpets, chimes, and crash cymbals abruptly arrive at an unsure sonority. From the lowest octave, with no repeated pitches, the notes are as follows: C-sharp, G-Sharp, D-sharp, and B-flat. Within this

quintal harmonic structure, are two tetrads (B-flat minor seventh chord and a C minor seventh chord). The poly-chord sonority gradually fades as there is a cessation of pitch from the lower-pitched voices up. By beat 2 of m. 96, glockenspiel, B-flat clarinet I, English horn, and alto flute are all that are left, with the clarinet releasing on beat 4 of m. 97, glockenspiel and English horn on beat 4 of m. 98 and the alto flute sustaining to end the movement (Finney, 1977).

Adler's use of space within the text gives an impression of openness and vast horizons that can be heard in Schwantner's work. ... *and the mountains rising nowhere* is divided into three sections, with two related sections framing a contrasting section (Rensahw, 1998, 529-530).

Schwantner's specific reactions to particular words in the poem are described below.

arioso- "in a melodic style" i.e., the aggressive monophonic line at m 108, for example"

bells- "the piano is the important agent here in projecting the many of the "bell-like" sonorities"

sepia- "the color brown suggests dark rich color of the low brass and winds"

moonbeams- "I was thinking of a sonic landscape of ghostly images and spectral worlds (i. e., vocal textures, sustained crystal goblets)!"

an afternoon sun blanked by rain- "suggested foggy, misty musical textures"

and the mountains rising nowhere- "the clearest aural image here is employed by the rising brass chorale with the ascending register (m 83-)"

the sound returns- "recurring elements appear throughout the work- sonorities, motives, textures, etc."

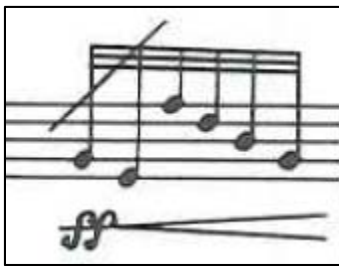
the sound and the silence- "again this refers to "bells" and the final ending where there is no clear cutoff, the singing continues 'al niente.'" (Schwantner 2014)

Schwantner utilizes many unique spatial-notational techniques in his composition. There are sections of the piece which are free from meter, using durations of time to indicate phrase length. Written notes often utilize extended beams which continue on for

a certain number of measures to indicate sustain. Within the piece, many of the instrumentalists are required to fulfill non-traditional roles, including performance on glass crystals, singing, and whistling throughout the piece. Along with notations, score instructions are generally non-traditional, asking the pianist to “catch resonance” by depressing the sostenuto pedal, as the winds and other percussion instruments are sounding (Pilato, 2007, 11-12).

The first section, which I will refer to as the introduction, opens with the first motive, performed by three of the six required percussionists. (See example 8)

Ex. 8 (First Motive)



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This is a rhythmic motive, employing six tom-toms for each percussionist, as fast as possible. The dynamic level of the motive is fortissimo, and it crescendos to a sforzando (*sffz*), followed ten seconds of decay (Renshaw, 1998, p. 533-534). The second motive is presented by the glass crystals played by the four oboists in the ensemble, in a cluster of all of the pitches in the B aeolian mode, which is the pitch class set [0,1,3,5,6,8,10], or 7-35. (See Example 9)

Ex. 9 (Second Motive)

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff has a large 'X' above it with a bracket indicating a 10" duration. The bottom staff has a dynamic marking '(p)' and a '4.' marking. Both staves have notes with stems that converge into a single line on the right, labeled 'sempre tenuto'. A '35"' marking is at the top right of the score.

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This motive is used as a drone in the introduction until m. 8. The third motive is a derivative of the second motive and also appears in Schwantner's work *Sparrows*, a chamber work with solo soprano. (See example 10)

Ex. 10 (Third Motive)

The image shows a musical score for a single staff. It includes performance instructions: 'intenso assai' at the top, 'legg.' below it, and 'pppp sub.' below that. A '4"' marking is above a note. At the bottom, there is a note with the instruction '(catch resonance)' and a 'DP' marking with an arrow.

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The chord appears repeatedly on the word "bell" in *Sparrows*, which is associated with

the first line of Adler's poem. This motive first appears in the piano and composes the pitch class set of 5-20 [0, 1, 3, 7, 8] (Renshaw, 1998, p. 534). The fourth motive is a quintuplet motive, based on an octatonic scale, or pitch class set of 8-28. (See example 11)

Ex. 11 (Fourth Motive)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for two staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a quintuplet of notes: B4, C#4, D4, E4, and F#4. Above this staff is the word "delicato" and a bracket labeled "5". The bottom staff is a piano part with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. It features a quintuplet of notes: B3, C#3, D3, E3, and F#3. Above this staff is a bracket labeled "5" and the dynamic marking "sub.ppp". To the right of the piano part, there is a handwritten note "p" and a bracket labeled "5".

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It first appears in the piano, but is later transformed and used by multiple instruments (Renshaw, 1998, p. 534-535). The fifth motive has multiple forms, but first appears as a B dorian mode outlined in perfect fifths. (See example 12)

Ex. 12 (Fifth Motive)

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This is to be played as fast as possible by the pianist, as indicated by the composer (Renshaw, 1998, p. 535). The sixth motive is a hybrid scale, with B-flat as its root (Bb, C, D, E, F-sharp, G, A). (See example 13)

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This introduces the third important pitch class set of 7-34 (Renshaw, 1998, p. 535). The C is placed in the highest tessitura, and is played quickly in repetition, which gradually decreases, as indicated by the composer. All six of these motives appear within the first forty-five seconds of the piece, which allows us a glimpse of each motive in an unaltered state (Schwantner, 1977).

The introduction juxtaposes B aeolian/dorian against a B-based octatonic scale. All six of the motives are initially stated by: first the percussion, second the crystal glasses, and third through sixth times, the piano. Underneath the third motive, two bowed tam tams and two watergongs add color and an atmosphere of vastness, with the instructions to “let vibrate” (l.v.). The second assertion of the third motive is accompanied by three sets of two triangles, allowed to vibrate after they are struck. The fourth motive is accompanied only by minute vibrations of the percussion instruments used in the prior motives. The fifth motive includes an upward glissando from two watergongs, which are struck while they are submerged, and then removed from the water. In addition, a bowed tam-tam, and two vibraphones played with four mallets, perform a glissando through the entire range of the instrument with no motor. Again, the percussionists are instructed to let the instruments vibrate after playing. A variation of the fourth motive is then presented with A-flat as the lowest note, rather than C-sharp (an enharmonic perfect fourth), and is accompanied by the lingering vibration of percussion. The sixth motive is accompanied by bowed tam tams (l.v.), and propels the piece from the introduction to the first main structural division of the piece (Schwantner, 1977).

Section one employs the power of the brass, contrabass, and percussion, as well as the tension of motivic augmentation in the piano as a driving force into the next section.

The piano repeatedly asserts the third motive in a dramatic, *sforzando*, and increases its subdivision as the section progresses. M. 6 brings the tension to its maximum, as the piano plays the pitch class set 8-28 at multiple pitch levels and crescendos from *fortissimo* to *fortississimo*. The brass and contrabass begin from a dynamic indication of *niente* (“nothing”), and gradually crescendo and *diminuendo* over six bars to *sforzando* (*sffz*). While the brass are executing their crescendo, the percussion, along with the drone of the crystal glasses, are playing the second motive on the downbeat of each bar until m. 5, where the rhythm changes to dotted eighth, quarter, sixteenth. This is shown in example 14.

Ex. 14 (m. 6)

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In m. 6, a hybrid of the third motive appears in the vibraphone, marimba, and xylophone; tremolo from the pitches C-sharp and D to E and F-sharp and crescendo. In m. 7, tom toms and bass drum add to the brass crescendo and propel us into four seconds of resonant silence. Motives 2 and 3 are left ringing in our ears, in an incredibly tense effect (Schwantner, 1977).

After the silence, Schwantner switches to a contrasting, lower-dynamic section. This multi-layer delicate texture is intended to evoke an “ethereal, distant” feeling (Schwantner p. 2, 1977). The string bass is playing B on the E string, which produces a darker tone quality than alternate fingerings. The crystal glasses continue their assertion of the second motive, while all of the wind players (except oboe, and shortly thereafter horn and trombone) sing a B-natural on the syllable “n”, gradually opening to “ah” by m. 11. However, by m. 11, the pitches begin to change. First it is repeated B-natural to C-Sharp, then B-natural, D-natural, C-sharp, and E-natural. This develops into imitative counterpoint, with only the woodwind players singing on “ah.” In m. 10, the horns sequentially descend by performing half step glissandos over a period of four measures.

Halfway through, the trombones join in, and create an overlap effect. At m. 16, the brass section begins the same pattern introduced in the woodwinds, trumpets, and tuba at m. 11, but this time it is whistled. They eventually form a similar imitative theme that occurs in the woodwind players, but the whistling lasts longer (to m. 30). During these two dueling counterpoints, the piano and percussion are stating several motives and derivatives thereof. An augmentation of the second motive is presented in the piano and two vibraphones with the pitch class set of 7-35 in B aeolian. Motive 2A is presented five times in this orchestration, with watergongs and bowed tam-tam adding color within the

singing canon and whistling canon. The vibraphone also adds two more layers of color by utilizing a tremolo on B-natural and performing glissandos over the entire range of the instrument to further cloud the texture. The fifth motive is also presented in this section by the piano, glockenspiel, and crotales. This juxtaposition of bright and dark colors alongside piano creates a feeling of space and vastness, referring to the openness of mountains in Alder's poem. The fourth motive is the last piece of motivic material heard before the second half of section two, asserted by the piano, glockenspiel, and crotales. This motive is an octatonic scale, with its lowest note as B-natural, omitting the third (Schwantner, 1997).

The second half of section two is a gradual rise from the delicate texture of the first half of section two. At this point, m. 27, the crystal glasses have left the texture, but the whistlers continue. B-flat clarinets and flutes perform bell-tones, landing on a particular note of the altered form of the second motive, with the piano vibraphone, glockenspiel, and crotales playing the full motive. There is a five note statement from the timpani, and the fourth motive is presented four times, three times in the piano and once in the vibraphone and glockenspiel. The derivative of the second motive returns in m. 30, but a new texture is added: the third motive, the "bell" motive, returns in the bassoons, brass, and contrabass in a vertical form. There is a two bar *crescendo-diminuendo* sequence, and then a four bar *crescendo-diminuendo* sequence, with note changes within each voice as the motive progresses. Rising from this powerful statement of motive 3, is the continuous vacillation of the upper woodwinds, piano, and pitched percussion of the derivative of the second motive, the third motive, and the fourth motive. The brass leave the texture briefly, before we arrive abruptly at the downbeat of section three, which is

marked as a *sforzando*, with B-natural as the pedal point, and a flam downbeat in the bass drum and timpani. As the vibraphone, marimba, and tubular bells performing a glissando over the full playing range of their instruments, the brass and piano assert the fourth motive, against the B-natural pedal, and a development of the first motive in the bass drum, tom toms, and timpani. There is a gradual increase in tempo and a crescendo from the brass, which leads us to the contrasting section at m. 38 (Schwantner, 1977).

Comparison of Compositions

Colgrass: The music of Michael Colgrass gives the listener a rich palette of colors and textures. His use of Common practice period tonality and 20th C. harmonization, orchestration techniques, sound masses, and soundscapes create a unique sound to his music. At the same time, Colgrass is not a “band” composer in the traditional sense. He utilizes only the instruments he wants for the moment, and there are very few moments when the entire ensemble is playing at once. This only occurs at particularly climactic moments.

His works *Artic Dreams* and *Urban Requiem* were examined in this project. Colgrass uses the soloistic qualities of wind and percussion instruments to his full advantage. *Urban Requiem* is written for a saxophone quartet, and accompanied by an orchestral wind section, which is different from the other two pieces. Colgrass also incorporates jazz sonorities and techniques into his music, including improvised sections for the saxophones in *Urban Requiem*.

Finney: Ross Lee Finney’s music can be best described as a reflection of his memories. *Skating on the Sheyenne* is a work of great emotion which pays homage to his childhood. The project also examined his work for band *Summer in Valley City* (1971), another reflection of Finney’s younger days, along with his Symphony No. 1 “*Communique 1943*” (1963). His music follows many traditions of the romantic era, but with beautiful glimpses of modernism. It is clear that the influence of Alban Berg penetrated Finney’s musical language. There are great flashes of chaotic movement in his music which are meticulously notated. Finney uses free chromatic expression or complementarity, rich diatonic harmonization, and colorful orchestration. Another

compositional device seen across his body of work is the use of block orchestral scoring. He utilizes sections sounds (Low brass, saxophones, clarinet choir, etc.) to their full potential, as well as combining different sections to create unique sonic moments.

Schwantner: Joseph Schwantner's music comes from some of the rawest emotional material within the human spirit. We hear jagged peaks and valleys, moments of intense contemplations, and gradual swells that propel his music forward. Along with *...and the mountains rising nowhere*, I examined *From a Dark Millennium* (1981) and *In Evenings Stillness* (1996) as part of this research project, looking for similar compositional devices. There are two primary compositional devices in works by Schwantner: motives and pitch class sets. Motivic material serves as individual ideas, connective material between sections and as multiple ideas at once. This layering effect is also apparent in Schwantner's scoring and orchestration. He uses multiple timbres at once to create a block of sonic tension, which is generally fleeting. Pitch class sets are present in any analysis of Schwantner's work. Whether they are intentional by the composer is another question, but his use of theoretical and hybrid scales and sonorities are easily analyzed by using set theory. The piano, an instrument not usually associated with "band music," is often the center of Schwantner's compositions. He places critical thematic material in the piano, and gives it a place of importance in a textural sense, consistently throughout *...and the mountains rising nowhere*, as well as in the other two works examined.

Conclusions

The works examined in this project are just a snapshot of the musical output of each of these composers. My primary goal was to discover what makes each composer's soundscape unique and how they utilize their own techniques to create a musical image. It is clear that each of the compositions I examined is uniquely Colgrass, or uniquely Schwantner, or uniquely Finney. They write using the same alphabet, but their syntax, pace, tone, pitch, and gestures differ greatly. This makes for a unique, exciting sonic experience when listening to each of the pieces involved.

However, I discovered similarities between these composers' approaches as well. Each of the three composers present incredible technical challenges to the ensemble for which they write. In particular, the percussion parts of each of these pieces are soloistic and unique in their own right. The three pieces I examined were written during a time of transition in the wind band world. Beginning with Vincent Persichetti's *Symphony No. 6* (1956), percussion parts began to expand out of the basic set up of timpani, snare drum, bass drum, crash cymbals, and glockenspiel. Composers made use of auxiliary instruments as well as expanded colors from mallet instruments, including vibraphone, marimba, and tubular bells. Similarly, the works I studied utilize an expanded percussion section, and extended techniques for the percussion, including the use of string bass bows, water to bend the pitch of gongs, prepared piano, and antiphonal percussion instruments.

All three pieces also have non-standard instrumentation. In the middle of the 20th Century, there were two schools of thought about high school and college bands; the symphonic band model of the University of Michigan and the wind ensemble model of

the Eastman School of Music. While the symphonic band promoted the aspect of fixed instrumentation, the wind ensemble promoted flexible instrumentation, which allowed the ensemble to perform both large scale works as well as chamber works for winds. Finney's work is the closest to the University of Michigan Symphony Band instrumentation, but even he includes alto flute, English horn, and contra bass clarinet.

Each composer examined in this research project gives the listener a unique impression of musical ideas. They express this impression not only through the wind band medium, but through the orchestral, choral, and chamber music mediums as well. These are distinguished, respected American composers whose contributions to American culture are significant and lasting.

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