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# Program Notes for Graduate Recital

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PROGRAM NOTES FOR GRADUATE RECITAL

by

Season Cowley

B.M., University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2013

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Music Degree.

School of Music

in the Graduate School

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

PROGRAM NOTES FOR GRADUATE RECITAL

By

Season Cowley

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Music

in the field of Music Performance

Approved by:

Dr. Eric P. Mandat, Chair

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Professor Edward Benyas

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
April 16, 2015

AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

Season Cowley, for the Master of Music degree in MUSIC PERFORMANCE, presented on April 16, 2015, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: PROGRAM NOTES FOR GRADUATE RECITAL

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Eric P. Mandat

The purpose of this research paper is to provide scholarly program notes to accompany the Graduate Recital of Season Cowley, which took place on May 9, 2015. Program notes for John Adams' *Gnarly Buttons* (1996), Eric P. Mandat's *Tricolor Capers* (1980), Krzysztof Penderecki's *Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio* (1993), and Derek Bermel's *Theme and Absurdities* (1993) are included.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Eric P. Mandat, Dr. Douglas Worthen, and Professor Edward Benyas for their support and guidance in composing these program notes. I would like to extend my gratitude towards Dr. Mandat for his help, encouragement, and perspective with my preparation for this document and my Graduate Recital. I would also like to thank my parents, Jennifer and Hubert Hickman, my family, and my partner, Zachary Pischnotte, for their unwavering support during the duration of my degree at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

## PREFACE

The idiom of contemporary clarinet music has a diversity of techniques, colors, and soundscapes unlike any other time in the history of the instrument. It was my goal in programming this recital to explore the many facets of the current realm of clarinet playing. All four chosen works were written within the latter part of the twentieth century; while they are not necessarily part of the standard repertoire for the clarinet, they are certainly an active part of the current conversation.

I believe that it is my duty as a musician to carry on the torch of tradition, but to also be an active member in the music that is happening in the world around me. It is imperative to the posterity of our art that musicians be participants in this way. The chosen program is intended to be a step towards this goal.

In assembling this program, I also thoughtfully chose works that I connected to as a listener—I believe it is important to love to listen to the music you invest your time in. Additionally, it is a challenge to not alienate the audience while still exploring new sound worlds. Each piece examined in this document utilizes some aspect of traditional forms and motivic development. In this way any listener, in what they may otherwise consider a wave of indiscernible chaos, can find some semblance of order.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
PREFACE .....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	v
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1: <i>Gnarly Buttons</i> by John Adams .....	1
CHAPTER 2: <i>Tricolor Capers</i> by Eric P. Mandat .....	9
CHAPTER 3: <i>Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio</i> by Krzysztof Penderecki .....	16
CHAPTER 4: <i>Theme and Absurdities</i> by Derek Bermel .....	22
WORKS CITED .....	26
VITA .....	28

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Figure 1 .....	5
Figure 2 .....	6
Figure 3 .....	7
Figure 4 .....	8
Figure 5 .....	10–11
Figure 6 .....	12
Figure 7 .....	13
Figure 8 .....	14
Figure 9 .....	14–15
Figure 10 .....	19
Figure 11 .....	20
Figure 12 .....	21
Figure 13 .....	23
Figure 14 .....	24
Figure 15 .....	24
Figure 16 .....	25

## CHAPTER 1

*GNARLY BUTTONS* BY JOHN ADAMS

John Adams is a San Francisco-based composer and conductor. He was born in Worcester, Massachusetts on February 15, 1947. He began composing around age 10, writing his first work, a minuet, for a family friend. Adams said “the idea of being a composer started in 1956.” He was inspired upon learning about Mozart’s life as a composer, not just as a performing musician.<sup>1</sup> His father, who taught Adams to play the clarinet as a child, was a great inspiration to him.

Adams attended Harvard University from 1965–72, earning both Bachelor and Master of Music degrees. His primary composition teacher was Leon Kirchner, a student of Arnold Schönberg. While there, he occasionally performed as a substitute clarinetist with the Boston Symphony and Boston Opera Company. He also conducted the Bach Society Orchestra. After graduating, he moved to San Francisco in 1971 and taught at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music from 1972–85.

Initially Adams was labeled as a minimalist composer. Although he was enamored with this style of music, especially that of Steve Reich and Philip Glass, he stated that he “would have to find a way to make it more expressive and less bound to its procedures.”<sup>2</sup> He has developed his own unique voice, his works steeped with a “certain kind of Mark Twain American wit.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas May, “John Adams Reflects on His Career,” in *The John Adams Reader*, ed. Thomas May (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2006), 2–3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Adams described the common thread in his music as “a wryness that . . . is very much unique to American culture.”<sup>4</sup>

*Gnarly Buttons* was included in Adams’ list of works that share this “wryness,” which is reflected in the title and the way rhythms and melodies are twisted. The London Sinfonietta and Present Music commissioned this work. It was premiered on October 19, 1996 by clarinetist Michael Collins and the London Sinfonietta under the direction of Adams. It was written for solo clarinet and a chamber ensemble comprised of thirteen musicians. The instrumentation is unusually eclectic and includes banjo, mandolin, guitar, trombone, english horn, bassoon, strings, piano, and two keyboard samplers.

This piece was inspired by his father’s struggle with Alzheimer’s disease and his death.

Adams said of this experience:

My dad had . . . become obsessed with the clarinet. And he did funny, strange things with it. One time, my mother was emptying out a load of laundry into the washing machine, and she heard this strange noise and looked and saw that my father had taken the clarinet apart piece by piece and hid it in the laundry. And somehow, this suggested a strange, slightly berserk piece that had both charm and humor, but also a certain personal poignance.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the writing process he used his father’s clarinets, and “the intimate history they embodied . . . became deeply embedded in the piece.”<sup>6</sup> The double entendre “gnarly” means both awesome and gnarled. “Buttons” describes how our lives now have become about just “pressing

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> “John Adams: Grand and ‘Gnarly’ in Concert,” *Discoveries at Walt Disney Concert Hall*, aired August 1, 2008, on NPR, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93150310>.

<sup>6</sup> John Adams, “John Adams on Gnarly Buttons,” John Adams Official Website, last modified 2015, accessed December 25, 2014, <http://www.earbox.com/gnarly-buttons/>.

buttons.” Adams also explained that he was subconsciously thinking of the book *Tender Buttons*, a book of poetry labeled verbal Cubism, by Gertrude Stein.<sup>7</sup>

Three movements make up this work: “The Perilous Shore,” “Hoedown (Mad Cow),” and “Put Your Loving Arms Around Me.” Each movement is based on an “imagined musical model.” The first movement is the hardest, or most “gnarly” of the three. It utilizes thematic transformation, morphing the main theme from measures 1–23.<sup>8</sup> “Mad Cow” is the cheery interjection between the solemn outer movements. It is based on a “traditional Western hoedown [and] addresses the fault lines of international commerce from a distinctly American perspective.”<sup>9</sup> The third movement is autobiographical, a tribute to his father’s struggle with Alzheimer’s.<sup>10</sup> Adams described it as a “simple song, tender and quiet up front, gnarled and crabbed at the end.”<sup>11</sup>

In his program notes Adams wrote that “The Perilous Shore” is based on a trope of a Protestant shape-note hymn from *The Footsteps of Jesus*. He included the first four lines:

O lord Steer me from that Perilous Shore  
Ease my soul through tempest’s roar.  
Satan’s leering help me firmly turn away  
Hurl me singing into that tremulous day!<sup>12</sup>

However, he later said that this book in fact does not exist. The melody, played in monody at the beginning of this movement, is instead a folk melody of his creation.<sup>13</sup> The original version of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Gordon Taylor, “John Adams’s *Gnarly Buttons*: Issues of Performance, History, and Style,” DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2007, 74.

<sup>9</sup> Adams, “John Adams on Gnarly Buttons.”

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, “John Adams’s *Gnarly Buttons*,” 14.

<sup>11</sup> Adams, “John Adams on Gnarly Buttons.”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

the first movement has the keyboard 1 part with an accordion patch doubling the clarinet solo in unison for the opening statement of the melody. The composer later heard Collins play the opening alone in rehearsal and decided that it was more effective without the keyboard part. He said that it “gave more freedom to the clarinet.” Collins agreed, stating that it was incredibly challenging trying to match rhythms and play exactly in tune with the keyboard.<sup>14</sup> In both CD recordings of *Gnarly Buttons*, the clarinet part is still doubled by the keyboard part despite this change.<sup>15</sup>

The opening clarinet solo is the main theme of this movement and is comprised of three “melodic fragments” (see figure 1 and footnote). Even in the statement of the primary theme, Adams includes embellishments around the melody through the use of register changes and 32<sup>nd</sup> notes. This material transforms throughout the movement and occasionally returns to the jaunty dotted rhythms found within the theme. The entire movement builds in intensity, tension, and speed from the beginning up through the final tempo marking in measure 134. Intensity builds through the section marked *scherzando* in measure 246 and the pounding chords starting in measure 275 peter away to silence.

The second movement is a hoedown that was influenced by the mad cow disease scare and incorporates a cow’s “moo” in the middle of the movement. A hoedown is a type of social gathering and a fast paced American folk dance or square dance in duple meter. It is traditionally in binary form with both sections repeated (AABB). Fiddling and dancing contests often

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<sup>13</sup> Taylor, “John Adams’s *Gnarly Buttons*,” 160.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–13.

<sup>15</sup> John Adams, *Gnarly Buttons and John’s Book of Alleged Dances*, London Sinfonietta and Kronos Quartet, Nonesuch Records 075597946529, 1998, CD; John Adams, *Gnarly Buttons*, From *The American Clarinet*, André Trouette and Ensemble Intercontemporain, Virgin Classics 724354535123, 1999, CD.



marked “light staccato, not too short” and the B sections “legato tongue.” Adams marked the end of the initial statements of A and B with a double bar between measures 91 and 92. The majority of this movement is in simple meter but the ends of the B sections and the codetta are in compound meter, which is uncharacteristic of a traditional hoedown.

Section	A	B	A'	B'	Codetta	(A'')	Coda
Measures	1–49	49–91	92–140	140–187	188–246	247–280	280–end

Figure 2. The Formal Divisions of “Hoedown (Mad Cow).”

The A sections are pointed and aggressive in style. They feature strings *pizzicato* and mandolin with the clarinet part mimicking this plucked quality of sound. This timbre mimics traditional bluegrass instruments, which include banjo, mandolin, guitar, and fiddle. Adams incorporated a blues progression within the first seven measures of this movement: the bass line in measures 1–5 highlight I, measure 6 highlights IV, and measure 7 highlights I. The harmonic motion I-IV-I is an integral element of the blues progression and is incorporated throughout this movement.

The B sections are legato, bluesy, and syncopated. A blues style riff from measures 155–60 interrupts the B' section. This riff is in B-flat mixolydian with a flat third added. The half step between the added flat third and the natural third of the scale along with the seventh scale degree (a flat seventh when compared to a major scale) give it a jazzy sound (see figure 3).

The codetta is a playful development of the end of the B section in measures 87–91. It explores and develops the material found in the orchestra part in the aforementioned section. The syncopated line in measures 88–91 is the basis for this development. By measure 242, the rhythmic orientation to the meter signature becomes skewed, the compound meter continuing into the 2/4 in measure 244. The A section returns for the last time in measure 247, but offset by

an eighth note. When the clarinet joins the ensemble, a hemiola is created in measures 247–49 and further skews the sense of pulse. The coda uses material from the codetta and ends with a duet between the clarinet and mandolin. The final three measures are derived from a melodic fragment played by the mandolin throughout the movement, first found in measures 22–24.



Figure 3. A Blues Riff from “Hoedown (Mad Cow)” in Measures 155–60.<sup>19</sup>

The third movement, “Put Your Loving Arms Around Me,” is like an autobiographical song. The melody played by the clarinet that first appears in measures 5–8 matches the rhythm of spoken title “Put Your Loving Arms Around Me” (see figure 4). Sean Osborn described his interpretation of the last movement:

He depicts the anger and confusion of his father, unable to comprehend what is happening to his brain, and in the coda, when the opening material returns, seems to be about some point late in his father’s life when his fear and paranoia have passed but has been replaced with a sort of vacancy. I personally feel that it is the greatest depiction of the passing of a human being, even better than Strauss’s *Death and Transfiguration*.<sup>20</sup>

At the end of the movement, measures 177–93, is a delicate duet between the solo clarinet and cello. Adams composed this specifically with the cellist Christopher van Kampen in mind. Collins and van Kampen had been very close, and while he was writing *Gnarly Buttons* van Kampen was very ill. In honor of their relationship, he wrote the duet for them.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> John Adams, *Gnarly Buttons* (Milwaukee, WI: Hendon Music Inc., 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, “John Adams’s *Gnarly Buttons*,” 147–48.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 164–65.



## CHAPTER 2

*TRICOLOR CAPERS* BY ERIC P. MANDAT

Eric P. Mandat is an influential composer and performer in the realm of contemporary clarinet music. He was born near Denver, Colorado in 1957. Growing up, he studied clarinet with Richard Joiner, the principal clarinetist of the Denver Symphony. Joiner introduced him to extended techniques through Gene Saucier's *Three Pieces for Clarinet*. Mandat earned a Bachelor of Music at the University of North Texas, Master of Music at Yale University, and Doctor of Musical Arts at the Eastman School of Music. His primary teachers included Lee Gibson, Keith Wilson, Stanley Hasty, and Charles Neidich. He started teaching at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1981, where he is currently a Professor and Distinguished Scholar. Mandat is active as a soloist and chamber musician, performing with groups such as the Tone Road Ramblers, Transatlantic Trio, and Chicago Symphony's MusicNOW series.

*Tricolor Capers*, Mandat's first published work, was composed in 1980 and premiered at his Graduate Recital at Yale University on January 22, 1981.<sup>23</sup> It includes three movements titled *Portent*, *Sway*, and *Bop*. While his compositions are widely performed and celebrated, Mandat said that he composes mainly for himself. He also stated, "sometimes I don't realize how hard it is because I am writing it with my clarinet in hand and I am also practicing it measure by measure as I am writing it."<sup>24</sup> Like his other works, the motivic ideas in *Tricolor Capers* are guided by jazz and his own improvisations:

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<sup>23</sup> Eric P. Mandat, *Tricolor Capers*, rev. ed. (Carbondale, IL: Cirrus Music, 1980).

<sup>24</sup> John Masserini, "The Compositional Techniques of Eric Mandat and an Analysis of *Tricolor Capers* and *Folk Songs*," DMA diss., Michigan State University, 1999, 73–74.

I like to improvise a lot and so ideas are always flying by . . . and sometimes I like to catch those ideas. . . . I like order and architecture and building things so when I get a little fleeting improvisational snippet, then I enjoy the process of building something out of it. It is just the process of letting my fingers go wherever they go and something cool comes along and grabbing it and trying to build something on it.<sup>25</sup>

In the program note of the revised edition of this work, Mandat explained that *Tricolor Capers* was written as a commentary on his dissatisfaction with the materialism he witnessed in and around New York City.<sup>26</sup> Mandat described in a clarinet lesson that the piece is called “Tricolor” because there are three movements and “Capers” because it is like a game. He originally composed speaking parts and stage directions to accompany this piece, but ultimately decided against it.<sup>27</sup>

*Tricolor Capers* utilizes extended techniques for the clarinet that include quarter tones, multiphonics, pitch bends, and glissandi. It also includes instances of wide vibrato and a “muffled tone.”<sup>28</sup> While intervals are systematically treated throughout the piece, quarter tones are not used in this manner. Mandat used them as “decorations or ornaments of regular equal tempered pitches.”<sup>29</sup> Quarter tones are used in all three movements in this manner (see figure 5).



a) *Portent*, Page 2, Line 3.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>26</sup> Mandat, *Tricolor Capers*.

<sup>27</sup> Masserini, “Compositional Techniques of Eric Mandat,” 13–14.

<sup>28</sup> Mandat, *Tricolor Capers*.

<sup>29</sup> Masserini, “Compositional Techniques of Eric Mandat,” 77.



b) *Sway*, m. 10.



c) *Bop*, m. 77.

Figure 5. Examples of Quarter tones as Ornaments in *Portent*, *Sway*, and *Bop*.<sup>30</sup>

The same intervallic and motivic material, originating from *Portent*, is used throughout all three movements of *Tricolor Capers*. The intervals that are utilized in this way include the minor second, major seventh, perfect fourth, and perfect fifth. He also incorporates the tritone to change the pattern. Mandat explains, “usually if I make one little change somewhere in what otherwise looks like a restatement, you can bet that I’m going to do something with that interval on a kind of regular basis, long-range basis.”<sup>31</sup> One example of this “long-range” motion appears in the first and final melodic ideas of *Portent*. There are two consecutive metered trills, emphasizing A and E, in the first two lines of the movement and a metered tremolo in the final line of the movement from F to B-flat (see figure 6). These gestures emphasize all of the intervals Mandat systematically utilized throughout this work. A/E are a perfect fourth apart and F/B-flat are a perfect fifth apart. The motion from E to F is down a minor second, while the motion from A to B-flat is down a minor ninth.

<sup>30</sup> Mandat, *Tricolor Capers*.

<sup>31</sup> Masserini, “Compositional Techniques of Eric Mandat,” 78–79.



a) *Portent*, Emphasis of A on Page 1, Line 1.



b) *Portent*, Emphasis of E on Page 1, Line 2.



c) *Portent*, Emphasis of F/B-flat and the End Goal on Page 2, Line 8.

Figure 6. Example of “Long-range” Motion in *Portent*.<sup>32</sup>

Another example of “long-range” motion occurs in the B” section of *Bop* described later in this chapter. This chromatic motion begins in measure 80 with E, which moves to F in measure 81, F# in measure 86, G in measure 91, A-flat in measure 93, A is omitted, B-flat in measure 94, and B in measure 95, creating a perfect fifth relationship. The descent from B begins in measure 97 with C# falling to A-flat in measure 99, resolving to a G displaced two octaves in measure 101. The final note of the slur from measures 91-96 is E, again emphasizing the E/B relationship, which chromatically works itself up to C# in measure 99, ultimately resolving to D in measure 101. It is worth noting that in measure 99, the interval from A-flat to C# makes a perfect fourth displaced by an octave. This resolves to G and D, making the “long-range” motion from E and B complete. Through this manipulation of tones, the perfect fourth/fifth descends two half steps, B/E to A-flat/D-flat to G/D.

<sup>32</sup> Mandat, *Tricolor Capers*.

Motivic unity is also a concept that is used throughout each movement. The first of these is a quarter/half step oscillation. It first appears in the opening of *Portent* and is used throughout the rest of the movement. This idea returns in measure 7 and the last measure of *Sway*. This oscillation is shrunk into a neighbor note figure that is used in sequence in the 2/4 section on the third and fourth lines of the final page of *Bop*. Much of the material in *Bop* is also generated from an arpeggiated figure from the third line of *Portent*. This figure is slightly altered and used as part of the A theme for *Bop* (see figure 7).



a) *Portent*, Page 2, Line 3.



b) *Bop*, m. 1.

Figure 7. Motive from *Portent* that is Transformed into Thematic Material in *Bop*.<sup>33</sup>

While *Sway* is broken into sections (see figure 8) and uses two motives, it does not follow a traditional form. The “A” motive occurs from measures 1–5 and the “B” motive from measures 16-19.<sup>34</sup> The A section employs the “A” motive and the B section employs the “B” motive. This movement is a “parody on the concept of being drunk on fads of the times.”<sup>35</sup> Mandat quotes the theme from “The Twilight Zone” in measures 47–52 to help achieve this goal.

<sup>33</sup> Mandat, *Tricolor Capers*.

<sup>34</sup> Masserini, “Compositional Techniques of Eric Mandat,” 20–21.

Section	A	B	C	A'	B'	D (A''/B'')
Measures	1–14	16–22	23–52	53–58	59–72	73–80

Figure 8. The Delineated Sections in *Sway*.<sup>36</sup>

The number seven is important to the second movement. The “A” theme begins the piece with a major seventh, which is an inversion of the minor second emphasized in *Portent*. The “B” theme also begins with a major seventh. Additionally, interval class 5 and its inversion, seven semitones, continue to be important intervallic figures. Mandat also incorporates seven 7/16 measures, one 7/8 measure, and one 7/32 measure. The tempo “112” is used in different capacities seven times and there are 7 other tempi used throughout the movement.

In addition to motivic unity and “long-range” intervallic motion, Mandat utilized a traditional form in the final movement. *Bop* is in a modified rondo form, each section characterized by its own motive (see figure 9). This movement is meant to be a joke about how people danced about, or “bopp[ed] around,” during the disco era when this piece was written.<sup>37</sup> The “bopping” characteristic is achieved through the constant changes in meter. For example, the meter is different for each bar in the first twelve measures of the movement.

Section	A	B	A'	B'	A''	C	B''	A'''	Coda
Measures	1–17	18–29	30–43	44–63	64–68	69–80	81–100	101–09	110–end

a) The Form of *Bop*.



b) “A” Theme, m. 2 of *Bop*.

<sup>35</sup> Mandat, *Tricolor Capers*.

<sup>36</sup> Masserini, “Compositional Techniques of Eric Mandat,” 20–23.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.



c) “B” Theme, m. 18 of *Bop*.



d) “C” Theme, m. 69 of *Bop*.

Figure 9. The Form and Motives for Each Rondo Section in *Bop*.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 24–34; Mandat, *Tricolor Capers*.

## CHAPTER 3

*QUARTET FOR CLARINET AND STRING TRIO* BY KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI

Krzysztof Penderecki is a Polish composer and conductor, born on November 23, 1933 in Dębica, Poland. He grew up in a musical household and learned to play the violin as a child. In 1954 he began his schooling at the State Academy of Music in Kraków, studying composition with Artur Malawski and Stanisław Wiechowicz. His views of music in his youth were limited and censored by Poland's Communist government, which came to power in 1947 and placed restrictions on the arts.<sup>39</sup>

Penderecki's first experience with Western contemporary music was at the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music in 1956. The festival occurred again in 1958; at these festivals he heard works by composers such as Stravinsky, Honegger, Schoenberg, Webern, Boulez, Berio, Nono, and Stockhausen. It was by 1958 that Poland's xenophobic restrictions on contemporary music loosened.<sup>40</sup>

The following year his works *Psalms of David*, *Emanations*, and *Strophes* won the Young Composers Competition through the Polish Composers Union. Penderecki rose to the forefront of contemporary composition through these pieces. After the conception of these works, he began to experiment with new notational methods and the use of quarter tones, tone clusters, cluster glissandi, and unusual performance techniques. In fact, Penderecki innovated his own notational method, writing durations in seconds rather than in a time signature and even creating new methods of playing string instruments with non-traditional notation to accompany

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<sup>39</sup> Cindy Bylander, *Krzysztof Penderecki: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2004) 7–8.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

them.<sup>41</sup> Through the development of his career, Penderecki explored exotic soundscapes, some more accessible to the average listener than others.

*Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio* was composed in the latter, more conservative stage of his career. It was commissioned in 1993 for the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival and dedicated to Åke Holmquist. It was premiered on August 13, 1993 by clarinetist Sharon Kam, violinist Christoph Poppen, violist Kim Kashkashian, and cellist Boris Pergamenschikow in Lübeck, Germany.<sup>42</sup> In a seminar meeting at the conference held for his sixtieth birthday, Penderecki contradicted this information listed in the score of this piece, stating, “it was neither written for a special occasion nor commissioned, I just simply wanted to compose it.”<sup>43</sup>

It is divided into four movements, *Notturmo*, *Scherzo*, *Serenade*, and *Abschied*, which translates to “farewell.” Penderecki explained that it was originally meant to be seven movements, which is why the last movement is longer than the rest of the work combined. He was inspired to write the piece after hearing the Emerson Quartet perform Franz Schubert’s String Quintet in C Major. He said, “I realized it was the greatest chamber music that could be and I felt the urge to write a piece of chamber music, too.” Penderecki further explains the intimate nature of this work:

I think that the *Quartet* could be described as a “dinner for four,” an intimate meeting of four friends, where each of them has something to say, but they know one another so well that they do not need to be fully explicit. The *Scherzo*, *Serenade*, *Farewell* — this is perhaps a farewell to a heroic type of music.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 8–9.

<sup>42</sup> Krzysztof Penderecki, *Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio* (Mainz, Germany: Schott, 1993).

<sup>43</sup> “The Seminar Meeting with Penderecki,” in *The Music of Krzysztof Penderecki: Poetics and Reception*, ed. Mieczysław Tomaszewski (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 1995), 119.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

The *Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio* functions as a whole; it could almost be seen as being in binary form with the first movement functioning as an introduction. The only movement that has its own traditional form is the *Scherzo*, which is ternary. The last three movements are to be played *attaca* and the inner two movements are so similar in style that the transition between the two is nearly indiscernible. The first and last movements are slow and written for clarinet in A and the fast inner two for clarinet in B-flat; Penderecki wanted the timber of the clarinet and viola to meld together in their duets in the outer movements.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, *Abschied* was unfinished when Penderecki brought the *Quartet* to the publisher and he wrote the final three or four pages at their office.

A common characteristic of Penderecki's music that is heavily employed throughout this piece is the overlapping of major and minor tonalities, or scoring both a major and minor third within a triad. This feature appears in the final chord of the first movement: the cello sustains a B-flat, viola a D, violin an A, and clarinet a C-sharp. The chord partially returns at the end of the fourth movement, this time appearing as a B-flat major triad in second inversion. Although this chord is clearly B-flat major, the fact that it is in an unstable inversion lends itself to Penderecki's goal of obscuring tonality. A unique feature of these two chords that end both movements, more specifically the sustained pitches in the cello, is their function as a long-range harmonic motion, unifying the piece as a whole. In measure 20 of the first movement the cello plays a *scordatura* B-flat, requiring a tuned down C string, that resolves up a perfect fifth to an F in measure 41 of the fourth movement. This operates as long-range V-I motion and aids the notion that this piece is to be considered as a whole, resolving the tension left from the first movement.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 120.

*Notturmo* is primarily a duet between the viola and clarinet. The violin and cello do not enter until the movement is nearly finished and merely emphasize B-flat minor. The violin reiterates the minor third oscillation from the clarinet's first measure and the cello sustains a *scordatura* B-flat. The movement begins with a clarinet solo that introduces two motives of this piece, an oscillating minor third and a descending half step (see figure 10a).<sup>46</sup> These intervals are often inverted to a major sixth or major seventh to expand the range of the melodic line. The opening clarinet solo returns slightly altered in measure 34 of *Abscheid* (see figure 10b).<sup>47</sup> The written F to A-flat oscillation stays the same in the clarinet part, but some of the large intervals are altered. This example also reinforces the notion that this piece be considered as a whole.



a) Clarinet, mm. 1–3 of *Notturmo*.



b) Clarinet, mm. 34–36 of *Abschied*.

Figure 10. The Main Motives of *Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio* in Movements I and IV.<sup>48</sup>

For the second movement, Penderecki “transform[ed] a typical Beethoven-style scherzo, although without quotations.”<sup>49</sup> He combined the two previously mentioned motives, featuring

<sup>46</sup> Peter L. Cain, “A ‘Farewell’ to His Past: Krzysztof Penderecki’s Clarinet Quartet and Sextet,” DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2012, accessed December 25, 2014, [http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc\\_num=ucin1336683462](http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ucin1336683462), 25–27.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>48</sup> Penderecki, *Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio*.

<sup>49</sup> “The Seminar Meeting with Penderecki,” 119.

an oscillating half step and also a descending chromatic line (see figure 11a). These ideas are used in both A sections of the *Scherzo*, marked *vivacissimo*. The A section is from measures 1–111, the B section is from measures 112–42, and the A' section is from measures 144–end. The B section utilizes a “bouncing” motive that returns in the *Serenade* (see figure 11b). These motives still maintain the systematic use of the half step and minor third.<sup>50</sup> The *Serenade* is brief, more or less a continuation of the second movement. Although it is notated slower, the triplets mimic the meter from the previous movement. By the end of the movement the texture thins out, transitioning into *Abschied*.

This musical score shows measures 9 through 16 of the Scherzo. It features three staves: Violin (top), Viola (middle), and Cello (bottom). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music consists of rhythmic patterns with half steps and minor thirds, as described in the text. The notation includes various note values and rests across the six measures.

a) Violin, viola, and cello, mm. 9–16 of *Scherzo*.

This musical score shows measures 1 through 6 of the Serenade. It features four staves: Clarinet (top), Violin (second), Viola (third), and Cello (bottom). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music includes various performance instructions such as *p* (piano), *arco*, *ord. p*, *pizz.*, and *grazioso*. The notation includes triplets and other rhythmic figures.

b) Clarinet, violin, viola, and cello, mm. 1–6 of *Serenade*.

Figure 11. The Main Motives of *Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio* in Movements II and III.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Cain, “A ‘Farewell’ to his Past,” 31.

The third movement begins with two musical lines happening simultaneously, breaking away from each other in measure 12. The clarinet and viola play an oscillating half step in unison, this time emphasizing the upper note rather than the lower, that ends in a sustained A-flat. The violin and cello play the melodic line an octave apart through this section (see figure 12). This transitions back to the clarinet as the melodic focal point from measures 13–31. Measure 33 features a violin cadenza that transitions into the return of the melody from the first movement. The movement continues on reworking the motivic ideas used throughout the piece.

The image shows a musical score for measures 1-4 of the third movement of 'Abschied' by Penderecki. The score is in 4/8 time and features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Cello, and Double Bass. The Violin I and II parts play a melodic line with triplets and a sustained note. The Cello and Double Bass parts play a rhythmic accompaniment with triplets. The score includes dynamic markings like 'f' and 'arco'.

Figure 12. The Two Doubled Musical Lines from *Abschied*, mm. 1–4.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Penderecki, *Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio*.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

*THEME AND ABSURDITIES* BY DEREK BERMEL

Derek Bermel, born in New York in 1967, is an American clarinetist and composer. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University and a Master of Music in clarinet performance and Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition from the University of Michigan. His primary composition teachers include William Albright, Lois Andriessen, William Bolcom, Henri Dutilleux, André Hajdu, and Michael Tenzer. He also studied clarinet with Ben Armato and Keith Wilson. Bermel has traveled around the world to study ethnomusicology with André Hajdu in Jerusalem, Nikola Iliev in Bulgaria, Julio Góes in Brazil, and Ngmen Baaru in Ghana.<sup>53</sup>

Bermel is currently the Artist in Residence at the Institute for Advanced Study and also the Artistic Director for the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. He has been awarded the Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowship and won the Alpert Award in the Arts, Rome Prize, Trailblazer Award, and Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.<sup>54</sup> He is an active performer and composer, having works commissioned by such prestigious ensembles as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Saint Louis Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, eighth blackbird, and Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.<sup>55</sup>

His compositional style is influenced by genres such as jazz, blues, folk, gospel, pop, and rock.<sup>56</sup> *Theme and Absurdities*, composed for solo clarinet in 1993, is no exception. This piece is

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<sup>53</sup> Derek Bermel, "Full Compositional Biography," Derek Bermel Official Website, accessed April 3, 2015, <http://www.derekbermel.com/compositional-biography/>.

<sup>54</sup> Derek Bermel, "Biography," Derek Bermel Official Website, accessed April 3, 2015, <http://www.derekbermel.com/biography/>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Bermel, "Full Compositional Biography."

a humorous take on the traditional form of theme and variations, thus the title *Theme and Absurdities*. The form is continuous rather than sectional, each variation becoming more disjunct and bizarre. It is a “particularly nightmarish tribute to the genre: the variations are served up in eight-bar chunks, growing steadily in ridiculousness.”<sup>57</sup> However, it should be noted that not all of the variations are eight bars, but they are approximately in eight bar “chunks.” It includes extended techniques including flutter tonguing, quarter tones, pitch bends, glissandi, and timbre changes.

The theme is eight measures long (see figure 13) and each variation is consequently labeled. The theme and eleven variations are highly chromatic and feature wide intervallic leaps. Bermel also incorporates *rubato* and temporal changes throughout this work. For example, he specifically notated sections “moving ahead,” “move,” “catching up with yourself,” and “slowly.” This work is littered with specific directions for these temporal changes and style. He uses descriptors such as “triumphantly,” “floating,” “obnoxious,” “bluesy,” “laughing,” and “drunkenly dizzy.”<sup>58</sup>



Figure 13. The Theme of *Theme and Absurdities*, mm. 1–8.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Mic Howlen, “Solo Instrument – Theme and Absurdities (1993) – Program Notes,” Derek Bermel Official Website, accessed December 25, 2014, <http://www.derekbemel.com/compositional-biography/>.

<sup>58</sup> Derek Bermel, *Theme and Absurdities* (New York: Peer Music, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

*Theme and Absurdities* stays in compound meter the entire work, the majority being in 6/8 with occasional areas in 9/8. Bermel alters the feeling of time through his note groupings and use of quintuplets. At times he even turns 6/8 measures into feeling as though they are in 2/4 (see figure 14). He also incorporates 4:3 and 8:6 groupings in measures 77 and 81. Additionally, each metric shift is sudden and short lived, often lasting for only two to three measures at a time. This adds to the constant shifts in character previously described.



Figure 14. 6/8 Meter Signature Transformed into 2/4, mm. 32–35.<sup>60</sup>

A hallmark of Bermel's compositional style is the use of wide intervals, often fanning out from the first two pitches (see figure 15). Throughout this work these wide intervals are occasionally connected by a glissando. These glissandi occur both in ascending and descending intervals and are a challenging feature of this work. Again, these disjunct intervals add to the persistent character changes.

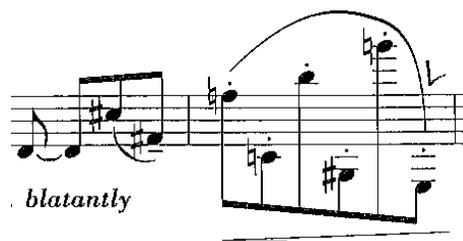


Figure 15. Use of Wide Intervals, mm. 26–27.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

The coda section asks the performer to “wave [their] clarinet from side to side” and play “fast and irregular crescendos and diminuendos” through the areas that chromatically embellish a clarion register D. The piece “absurdly” ends with a quotation of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss (see figure 16). Although it only blatantly states motivic material from the theme once in measures 122–25, the coda emphasizes the same note, D. The coda begins with a chromatic turn around D and the quotation from *Also Sprach Zarathustra* occurs in D.



Figure 16. Quotation from *Also Sprach Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

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