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## Jennifer Higdon's Oboe Concerto: the composition, transformation, and a performer's analysis

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**JENNIFER HIGDON'S *OBOE CONCERTO*: THE COMPOSITION,  
TRANSFORMATION, AND A PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS**

A Monograph

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agriculture and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by

Janice Elizabeth Crews  
B.Mus. Ed., The University of Georgia, 2002  
M.M., The University of Georgia, 2006  
August, 2010

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With great appreciation, I thank Jennifer Higdon for her genuine friendliness and patience in our correspondence. I am forever grateful to her for becoming a source of inspiration in my musical life, and look forward to playing and studying more of her music for many years to come. I would be remiss if I did not also thank Cheryl Lawson, who graciously responded to my constant stream of email inquiries and special requests throughout this process.

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for Lynea

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## ABSTRACT

This monograph presents a formal examination of Jennifer Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* in its various forms. Jennifer Higdon has garnered international success, yet few in-depth studies of her music exist. In this document, personal accounts from commissioners illustrate the unusual commission of *Oboe Concerto*. Likewise, the composer, a conductor, and soloists for premiere performances highlight unique aspects of the concerto, particularly its unusual form, multiple versions, and the potential challenges in preparing the work. Higdon's concerto showcases the lyrical capabilities of the oboe, with an emphasis on melody and sustained tone. The transformation of the concerto illustrates Higdon's skills of self-promotion, as she is willing to adapt her works to meet new demands from commissioners and audiences alike. *Oboe Concerto* is a strong example of the composer's distinctive compositional style, which is detailed in this monograph.

## CHAPTER ONE: JENNIFER HIGDON, AN INTRODUCTION

### Rationale and Purpose

The purpose of this monograph is to investigate Jennifer Higdon's *Oboe Concerto*, the circumstances of the commission and composition, its transformation from the original form to current arrangements as a result of Higdon's ongoing collaboration with performers, and to study the work from performers' perspectives. For the following reasons, an in-depth study of this work is needed. First, Higdon's compositions have thrust her into international fame, yet few scholarly publications on her compositions currently exist. Only three of the published documents are in-depth studies, and those remaining are brief articles. The three exhaustive studies are doctoral dissertations, two of which are centered on Higdon's compositions for flute<sup>1</sup>, and one on her general compositional style in orchestral works.<sup>2</sup> Second, there are currently no scholarly writings on Higdon's *Oboe Concerto*. Aside from a limited number of magazine and newspaper reviews, there is nothing written about the concerto as a resource to would-be performers.

Jennifer Higdon's growing popularity, through her current body of work and an increasing number of commissions and worldwide performances, has led her to become one of America's most frequently performed composers. The League of American Orchestras' most recent "Orchestra Repertoire Report" from the 2007-2008 season confirms this statement by listing Jennifer Higdon as the third most performed living

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<sup>1</sup> Brenda R. Phillips, "Jennifer Higdon: A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Flute and Orchestral Works" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2005).

Deena K. Reedy, "A Performer's Guide to Creating a Listening Road Map: Applications to Late Twentieth-Century Solo Flute Compositions by American Women Composers Joyce Mekeel and Jennifer Higdon" (DMA diss., University of Nebraska, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Christina L. Reitz, "Comprehensive Analysis of Selected Orchestral Works by Jennifer Higdon" (PhD. diss., University of Florida, 2007).

American composer, after John Corigliano and John Adams. Higdon's orchestral work *blue cathedral*<sup>3</sup> was the most performed contemporary orchestral work of all compositions written within the last twenty-five years.<sup>4</sup> According to Cheryl Lawson, Higdon's partner and Vice President of their publishing company Lawdon Press<sup>5</sup>, 171 orchestras worldwide have performed *blue cathedral*, and over 140 conductors have performed Higdon's music. Finally, several significant premieres of the *Oboe Concerto* in its various forms have taken place since its conception, yet the concerto was relatively unknown to the oboe community<sup>6</sup> until its first international performance at the International Double Reed Society Conference in Birmingham, England, on July 21, 2009. In attendance were prominent members of the double reed community including many renowned oboe teachers and performers. This document will provide a detailed analysis of Jennifer Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* as well as documentation of the evolution of the concerto from its genesis to the current forms.

### Chapter Overview

Chapter One, *Jennifer Higdon, An Introduction*, will include a biographical overview of Jennifer Higdon's life and accomplishments, with a focus on her upbringing and development as a musician and composer. The chapter will serve as a concise update to Christina L. Reitz's 2007 dissertation, in which a lengthy biography on Jennifer

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<sup>3</sup> The composer intends the use of lower case in the title of this work.

<sup>4</sup> League of American Orchestras, "2007-2008 Season Orchestral Repertoire Report," [http://www.americanorchestras.org/images/stories/ORR\\_0708/ORR\\_summary\\_0708.pdf](http://www.americanorchestras.org/images/stories/ORR_0708/ORR_summary_0708.pdf) (accessed 11 September 2009).

<sup>5</sup> "Lawdon" is a combination of the names Higdon and Lawson.

<sup>6</sup> Cheryl Lawson, email correspondence with the author, 3 September, 2009. As of February, 2010, the Higdon Oboe concerto was performed only eight times for limited audiences. There is currently no recording of the work available to the general public.

Higdon can be found.<sup>7</sup> Chapter Two, *Compositional Style*, will discuss Higdon's "intuitive" compositional style. Chapter Three, *Original Commission* will provide a detailed account of how the piece was conceived, including personal commentary from the parties involved, the composer's initial ideas for the work, and the development of the concerto up to its premiere. Chapter Four, *The Transformation*, will reveal Jennifer Higdon's practical skill of self-promotion, as demonstrated by the concerto's evolution from its original form with solo oboe and orchestra to current adaptations including the piano reduction of the orchestral score, solo oboe and wind ensemble arrangement, and solo soprano saxophone with orchestra arrangement. Chapter Five, *Structural Analysis* will include a formal analysis of the oboe concerto. Chapter Six, *Performers' Perspectives*, will include personal accounts from the premiere performers and a conductor of the work, through which the challenges involved in preparing and performing the concerto will be explored. Finally, appendices will include a listing of Jennifer Higdon's complete works, a complete discography of Higdon's recorded pieces, the composer's permission for use of copyrighted materials, and any other information not found in citations.

### The Interview Process

The primary sources of this paper include interviews with the composer, two of the original commissioning board members, three of the concerto's premiere soloists, and a conductor of the work. All but one of the interviews were carried out in a general, open-ended interview style: questions were predetermined by the author, but not asked in any specific order, allowing the subjects to speak freely and the interviews to progress with

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<sup>7</sup> Christina L. Reitz, "Comprehensive Analysis of Selected Orchestral Works by Jennifer Higdon," (PhD. diss., University of Florida, 2007).

conversational flexibility. A personal interview with Jennifer Higdon took place in Philadelphia on April 7, 2009, from which most of the information regarding the compositional process of the concerto was gathered.<sup>8</sup> The interview was a two-hour conversation, in which Higdon first gave verbal permission to be recorded. She then spoke freely about her life, her compositional style, and the *Oboe Concerto* specifically. The composer also answered a number of preselected questions from the author.<sup>9</sup> Higdon's demeanor was extremely friendly and charming throughout the interview, and, despite the complexity of her music, her comments were modest, straightforward, and often humorous.

In June of 2009, an interview took place via email with Kathryn Greenbank, the oboist who premiered the original orchestral version of the concerto with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra on September 9, 2005.<sup>10</sup> Greenbank indicated that she preferred the email format to a telephone interview. All statements made by Kathryn Greenbank in this document are taken directly from that interview unless otherwise cited. Also in June of 2009, a phone interview via conference call took place with David and Judy Ranheim, members of the Minnesota Commissioning Club.<sup>11</sup> The MCC is a unique private organization that originally commissioned Higdon's *Oboe Concerto*. The Ranheims both agreed to be recorded and were eager to share their thoughts on the organization as well as their role in facilitating in the commission of the oboe concerto.

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<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Higdon, interview with the author (recorded for reference), Philadelphia, PA: 7 April, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> The interview was recorded and has been cited as a reference; all quotations by Jennifer Higdon in this document are direct transcriptions from that recording unless otherwise noted.

<sup>10</sup> Kathryn Greenbank, email interview with the author, Baton Rouge, LA: 18 June, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> David and Judy Ranheim, phone interview with the author (recorded for reference), Baton Rouge, LA: 28 June, 2009.



Phone interviews with oboist Nancy Ambrose King and conductor/commissioner Michael Haithcock were conducted separately in May of 2009 in order to gather information on the commission and premiere of Higdon's wind ensemble arrangement of *Oboe Concerto*, which took place at The University of Michigan in March of 2009.<sup>12</sup> Both King and Haithcock agreed to be recorded and their statements were transcribed for quotations. A similar follow-up phone interview with Nancy Ambrose King took place in August of 2009, after her return from performing the concerto again, this time with orchestral accompaniment, at the 2009 International Double Reed Society (IDRS) Conference in England.<sup>13</sup> King, who is the President of the IDRS, had spoken with this author about possibly publishing an article on the Higdon concerto in the IDRS quarterly journal. Finally, an interview in September of 2009 took place with Dr. Timothy McAllister, who was the premiere soloist for the soprano saxophone version, published by Higdon under the title *Soprano Sax Concerto (Version 2)*.<sup>14</sup> This version of the concerto was first performed at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in Santa Cruz, California. McAllister, who also agreed to be recorded, freely discussed his interactions with Jennifer Higdon and his experiences in premiering the newly arranged setting of her *Oboe Concerto*.

### Biographical Information

Jennifer Higdon was born December 31, 1962 in Brooklyn, New York. Just six months later, her family relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, where Higdon spent her early

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<sup>12</sup> Nancy Ambrose King, phone interview with the author (recorded for reference), Baton Rouge, LA: 5 May, 2009.

Michael Haithcock, phone interview with the author (recorded for reference), Baton Rouge LA: 4 May, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> King interview, May, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> McAllister interview.

years discovering the arts, creative writing, photography, and film. Her father was a freelance artist and instructor at the Atlanta College of Art, and her mother was an abstract quilter. Both parents encouraged Jennifer and her brother Andrew to explore various means of expression. At the age of 10, Higdon moved closer to her maternal and paternal grandparents in the rural mountains of Tennessee, a very different culture than the one she had experienced in urban Atlanta.<sup>15</sup> As a result, Higdon's musical background included very little exposure to classical music; she believes that she was most influenced by popular music, including The Beatles, Simon & Garfunkel, bluegrass, and country.<sup>16</sup> Higdon began playing percussion in her high school's band at the age of 14. One year later, at age 15, she taught herself to play the flute, which became her primary instrument. She then learned of a flute camp at Bowling Green State University with flute professor Judith Bentley, and began formal studies with Bentley as a flute performance major at BGSU at age 18.<sup>17</sup> It was Bentley who later suggested that Higdon attempt to compose a short, solo piece for flute that would be performed in an upcoming masterclass. Higdon was 21 years old when she created her first composition, the two-minute *Night Creatures*.<sup>18</sup> Like many of her earlier works, the composer has removed this piece from her canon; it does not appear in the complete listing of compositions on [jenniferhigdon.com](http://jenniferhigdon.com) and is not available for purchase.<sup>19</sup> Like *Night Creatures*, many of Higdon's earliest works were composition assignments for which she was required to use formulaic composition methods such as twelve-tone systems; these works are not

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<sup>15</sup> Reitz, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Reitz, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Reitz, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Reitz, 20.

<sup>19</sup> Cheryl Lawson, email correspondence with the author, February 18, 2010.

included because Higdon has abandoned these constructs in her established compositional style.

During her time at Bowling Green State University, Higdon continued to investigate her newfound passion for composition, despite not being allowed to enroll in composition courses as a flute major.<sup>20</sup> She created a small collection of works in secret.<sup>21</sup> During her final year at BGSU (1985), Robert Spano<sup>22</sup> joined the faculty, and Higdon obtained special permission to join his graduate conducting course. At this time, Higdon used her portfolio to apply to graduate composition programs, and was accepted to a number of music schools including Julliard, the Curtis Institute, and the University of Michigan. When Spano learned of this, he reportedly locked the budding composer in his office until she agreed to study composition at his alma mater, the Curtis Institute.<sup>23</sup> A longtime friendship formed between student and teacher at that time, which has been profitable for Higdon; Spano is presently the conductor of the Atlanta Symphony and a champion of Higdon's music. He has led several commissions and award-winning recording projects of Higdon's works. Spano also formed the Atlanta School of Composers, which "evolved from a continuing commitment by Robert Spano and the ASO to nurture, commission and record contemporary music through multi-year partnerships with a new generation of American composers, including Jennifer Higdon,

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<sup>20</sup> Reitz, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Reitz, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Spano (b. 1961) has been the music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra since 2001, with a previous appointment as director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic. He holds degrees from Oberlin and the Curtis Institute and honorary doctorates from Curtis and Bowling Green State University. He currently serves on the faculty at the Oberlin Conservatory and is widely known as an advocate of contemporary music. <http://www.robertspanomusic.com/artist.php?view=bio> (accessed March 5, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Reitz, 20.

Christopher Theofanidis, Osvaldo Golijov, and Michael Gandolfi, with other prospective composers on the horizon.”<sup>24</sup>

Higdon began formal composition studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where she earned an Artist Diploma. She then obtained a Master of Arts in Composition and a Ph.D. in Composition from the University of Pennsylvania as a student of George Crumb. The composer has made Philadelphia her home and currently resides there with her partner Cheryl Lawson, who is also her manager, with the official title of “Artist Representative.” Higdon currently holds the position of Milton L. Rock Chair of Composition Studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and is on the board of the American Composers Forum.<sup>25</sup>

Higdon has been actively involved with the Philadelphia Orchestra since its 2002 commission and premiere of *Concerto for Orchestra*. She served as the orchestra’s Composer-in-Residence during the 2007-2008 season. She appears frequently in interviews for local newspapers and on both local and national radio regarding compositions and upcoming premieres of her works. This is one of the many ways in which this particular composer has mastered the art of self-promotion, which has contributed to her success. Higdon also publishes and rents all of her own music through Lawdon Press, which allows her to eliminate unnecessary expenses and remain in control of the release of her music, ultimately increasing her profit. Being self-published and primarily offering rental-only parts allows Higdon to keep an accurate count of the performances of each of her pieces. The cost of renting Higdon’s orchestral works is comparable to that of other publishing companies. For example, parts for *blue cathedral*

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<sup>24</sup> <http://atlantasymphony.org/TheMusic/Artist.aspx?performer=conductor-Robert-Spano> (accessed March 3, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> [jenniferhigdon.com/biography](http://jenniferhigdon.com/biography) (accessed November 4, 2009).

costs two hundred dollars to rent, and the score is sixty dollars. In addition to the attraction of affordability, potential performers or commissioners who access the composer's website, [www.jenniferhigdon.com](http://www.jenniferhigdon.com), will find an abundance of information on the composer. The website is frequently updated and includes Higdon's biography, upcoming performances and residencies, lists of recordings, reviews, a complete list of published canon organized by title and genre, and a list of coming fully contracted commissions. Sound clips of the majority of her works can also be found and may aid the listener in discovering a piece to perform or conduct. Single page score samples are also available for instant download.

Perhaps one of the most obvious ways that Higdon makes her music accessible to performers is by adapting works to create multiple versions. *Soliloquy*, for example, has six published scorings in various combinations of instruments, with cello, flute, English horn, or clarinet as soloist and a choice of string quartet or string orchestra for the accompaniment. Likewise, the three-minute *Lullaby* has eight extremely versatile published scorings, including a setting for flute quartet (version C) and an unusual orchestration for alto saxophone, soprano, and piano (version G). Higdon is known for experimenting with tone color and atypical instrument combinations<sup>26</sup>, so it is not surprising that she might exchange instruments to create new adaptations of her works. This compositional flexibility is found primarily in Higdon's shorter chamber works with smaller instrumentations.<sup>27</sup> Aside from concerti transcriptions, there are no multiple versions of any large-scale symphonic works.

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<sup>26</sup> Reitz, 38.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix II for a complete list of Jennifer Higdon's compositions.

Higdon's success is ultimately a result of the quality of her music. Public opinion is clearly influenced by the way she skillfully promotes herself by exposing people to her music through various forms of media, transforming her existing works, and maintaining personal connections with renowned performers and conductors. With numerous commissions and premieres from major ensembles worldwide, Higdon has won several significant awards and has upcoming commissions that extend through the year 2015.

#### Awards and Forthcoming Commissions

There are more than two hundred performances of Jennifer Higdon's works per year.<sup>28</sup> Higdon has been commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chicago Symphony, The Atlanta Symphony, The National Symphony, The Minnesota Orchestra, The Pittsburgh Symphony, The Indianapolis Symphony, The Dallas Symphony, The Oregon Symphony, and "The President's Own" Marine Band, among others, as well as numerous university and conservatory ensembles. Higdon has received the following awards: a Pew Fellowship in the Arts (1999), a fellowship from the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (1997), two Charles Ives Fellowships from the American Academy of Arts & Letters (1992, 1997). She also received five awarded commissions and a Chamber Music Institute residency from Meet-the-Composer, including the commissions *Light* and *Concerto 4-3*. Higdon has also received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) Foundation as well as grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

Higdon has been a featured composer at festivals including Tanglewood, Vail, Norfolk, Winnipeg, and Cabrillo. She has served as Composer-in-Residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (2005-06 season), the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra

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<sup>28</sup> Cheryl Lawson, email correspondence with the Author, January 18, 2010.

(2006-07 season), and the Philadelphia Orchestra (2007-08 season). Higdon will appear as the Composer-in-Residence at the University of Wyoming during its 2010-11 academic year.<sup>29</sup>

Higdon's works have been recorded on over thirty compact disc recordings.<sup>30</sup> In 2003, Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra recorded *blue cathedral* for the album *Rainbow Body*, a disc that made the Classical Billboard charts. The following year, the ASO released the critically acclaimed and Grammy-award-winning recording *Higdon: Concerto for Orchestra/City Scape*. In 2006, NAXOS Music Library released Higdon's chamber music compact disc, which includes the string quartets *Voices* and *Impressions* along with *Piano Trio* for violin, cello, and piano. Later that year, *eighth blackbird*<sup>31</sup> recorded its album *strange imaginary animals*, which won a Grammy in the category of Best Chamber Music Performance. The album includes Higdon's sextet *Zaka*.<sup>32</sup>

In 2008, the London Philharmonic released a recording of Higdon's *Percussion Concerto* with Colin Currie as soloist and Marin Alsop at the podium on the album *Marin Alsop Conducts MacMillan, Adès, and Higdon. Percussion Concerto* was co-commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, and The Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Contributors also included the Philadelphia Music Project, an artistic initiative of The Pew Charitable Trusts, administered by The University of the Arts and through gifts from LDI, Ltd. and the Lacy Foundation. The album earned Jennifer Higdon a 2010 Grammy in the category of Best Classical

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> see Appendix III, Discography.

<sup>31</sup> lower case intended.

<sup>32</sup> [www.jenniferhigdon.com/biography.html](http://www.jenniferhigdon.com/biography.html) (accessed January 16, 2010).

Contemporary Composition. Interestingly, her *Percussion Concerto* defeated a composition by her former teacher, George Crumb, entitled *The Winds of Destiny*. As is characteristic of Higdon, she will arrange her *Percussion Concerto*, which was originally accompanied by orchestra, for “The President’s Own” Marine Band to be premiered in 2010. The 2009-10 season will also feature two releases from Telarc, Higdon’s *Dooryard Bloom* and *The Singing Rooms*.<sup>33</sup>

Also in 2008, Higdon wrote a violin concerto for former student and longtime colleague, virtuoso Hilary Hahn, as co-commissioned by the Indianapolis Symphony, Toronto Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and the Curtis Institute Symphony Orchestra.<sup>34</sup> The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic recorded Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* with Hahn during its 2008-2009 season, and the recording will be released by Deutsche Grammophon in fall 2010.<sup>35</sup> For her *Violin Concerto*, Higdon received a most prestigious award, the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

Higdon addressed her success and growing popularity by describing her experiences after a premiere in Philadelphia. Newspaper articles that included her picture and several radio spots promoting the Philadelphia Orchestra, which mentioned her name and compositions, preceded this particular performance. Higdon described the experience as follows:

I’ve noticed a lot more people coming up to me on the street. It’s sometimes startling when you’re trying to have a conversation and people are coming up. It spooks me out every once in a while.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> [www.jenniferhigdon.com/biography.html](http://www.jenniferhigdon.com/biography.html) (accessed January 12, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> American Hilary Hahn (b. 1979) is a two-time Grammy Award-winning violin virtuoso who attended the Curtis Institute of Music, where she was a student of Jennifer Higdon as a teenager in Higdon’s 20<sup>th</sup> Century Music History course in 1995.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.hilaryhahn.com/bio.shtml> (accessed March 5, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Jennifer Higdon, interview with the author (recorded for reference), Philadelphia, PA: 7 April, 2009.



The composer also mentioned in passing that she had four interviews scheduled for the same day as the interview with this author, an example of her increasingly busy and demanding schedule.

Higdon's most recently completed commissions include a wide variety of orchestrations. Figure 1.1 includes a list of the new commissions written since 2007:

Title	Organization (Year)	Instrumentation
somewhere i have never traveled, gladly beyond	The Orlando Chorale (2007)	SATB chorus, vibraphone, piano
Light	Green Bay Symphony Orchestra (2007)	orchestra
Spirit	Virginia Symphony (2007)	orchestral brass, percussion
Soprano Sax Concerto	Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music (2007)	soprano saxophone solo, orchestra
Concerto 4-3	Philadelphia Orchestra (2008)	two solo violins, solo double bass, orchestra
The Singing Rooms	Philadelphia Singers, Philadelphia Orchestra (2008)	solo violin, SATB chorus, orchestra
Violin Concerto	Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (2009)	violin solo, orchestra
On the Death of the Righteous	Mendelssohn Club (2009)	SATB chorus, orchestra
Piano Concerto	National Symphony Orchestra (2009)	piano solo, orchestra

Figure 1.1. Commissions since 2007

Jennifer Higdon has commissions scheduled through the year 2015. Her newest completed work, the concerto *On a Wire*, will premiere with the sextet *eight blackbird* and the Atlanta Symphony in June of 2010, with Robert Spano on the podium. A new, currently untitled symphonic work was commissioned and will be premiered by the Grand Tetons Music Festival with conductor Donald Runnicles in August, 2011. In addition, the San Francisco Opera Company has also commissioned a full-scale opera by Jennifer Higdon and librettist Gene Scheer that will premiere in October, 2013.<sup>37</sup>

Higdon's commissions for the Grand Tetons Festival and the San Francisco Opera are no

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<sup>37</sup> [www.jenniferhigdon.com](http://www.jenniferhigdon.com) (accessed March 1, 2010).

coincidence; maestro Donald Runnicles is in his ninth year as Principal Guest Conductor of the Atlanta Symphony, the current director of the Grand Tetons Music Festival, and the former director of the San Francisco Opera (1992-2009). Like his colleague Robert Spano, Donald Runnicles has become a champion of Higdon's music and has facilitated commissions of her works for each of his past and present major ensembles. This is another example of how Jennifer Higdon has forged and sustained positive relationships with influential conductors and performers over many years, which have lead to numerous commissions. Other future commissions are scheduled to premiere in 2014 and 2015. However, their titles, genres, and commissioning organizations will not be released until contract negotiations are finalized.

## CHAPTER TWO: COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

### Intuitive Style

Higdon describes her compositional style as “intuitive” and “instinctive.”<sup>38</sup> She composes “by ear” at a piano, improvising with pitch, harmony, and rhythm. She records her ideas with pencil and manuscript paper. She then inputs the material into computerized music software for publication.<sup>39</sup> Higdon struggled with formal music theory in college, so she readily admits to ignoring any and all constraints of traditional compositional methods, abandoning the systems she learned in her belated formal music theory courses. Higdon stated:

I had to take theory for dummies and learn what an interval is.... I didn’t grow up around classical music, and I’m sure that has influenced my choices in musical language and also my love for melody.<sup>40</sup>

Because Higdon uses instinct to compose music, she considers each new piece to be an unknown journey without boundaries. In the Public Broadcasting Service documentary film “Being Creative in Philadelphia”, Higdon describes the compositional process as follows:

There’s a certain element that’s not explainable. I’ve never been able to figure out what it is, and you don’t ever know from piece to piece which one’s going to work.... Sometimes it’s like going into a dark room with your hands out in front of you and kind of feeling your way around, and you’re not sure what you’re going to find. You’re also not sure if you’re going to stumble. If the piece works, at some point you find the light in the room, and I always think of it as magic.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Jennifer Higdon, interview with the author (recorded for reference), Philadelphia, PA: 7 April, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Higdon uses Finale music notation software.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Anthony, “Composing an Ode to the Oboe; Prolific Composer Jennifer Higdon Muses on Writing Her Latest Concerto, a Premiere by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.” *Minneapolis Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), 24 September 2005, Metro Edition, 2F

<sup>41</sup> *Being Creative in Philadelphia* [Video] (2008). Retrieved February 8, 2010 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c25lmEH0zZw>. Higdon was featured as one of eight prominent artists in Philadelphia, where she resides.

Higdon enjoys the freedom to write music as she has poetry, with a focus on the rhythmic flow, melodic tension, and instrument timbres rather than on the traditions of music theory rules, scales, and structure. Regarding these common constraints, Higdon remarked:

It's easy to write music with systems where you don't care what the player or the audience thinks. That's easy. I think there's enough of that kind of music in the world. I find it harder to write my kind of music than the other. This is harder because there's no net under the tightrope. If you're following instinct, you're just trying to figure out what works, but there's never a right answer.<sup>42</sup>

Marin Alsop, a close personal friend to the composer, has compared the rhythmic structure of Higdon's lyrical melodies to the "flow" of spoken language.<sup>43</sup> Alsop states concisely that Higdon "is far less concerned with formality and technique than she is with the final test of a piece: how it sounds."<sup>44</sup> Higdon has stated repeatedly that she would never analyze anything in her own music and that she simply "lets imagination run."<sup>45</sup> During this author's initial contact with the composer, Higdon made it clear that she would not participate in analyzing any of her own music. Higdon expressed her disregard of harmonic progressions:

Theorists always think composers are planning everything out meticulously with chord progressions, but I really have no idea what the chords are. I tell people that you don't have to know any theory to write music. Writing music is just combining sounds with sounds, and that's all it is. That's a very simple way to look at it, but the truth is, you get the best pieces that way.<sup>46</sup>

While this is clearly an opinionated statement, Higdon then defined the "best pieces" as

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<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Higdon, interview with the author.

<sup>43</sup> Marin Alsop, "Jennifer Higdon and Me: A Musical Friendship," National Public Radio, 23 May: 2009. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104464863> (accessed July 24, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Alsop, NPR interview.

<sup>45</sup> Higdon interview.

<sup>46</sup> Higdon interview.

music that can impact all listeners in a positive way. Equally important is the desire that performers of her compositions become inspired in a way that is both musically and emotionally satisfying. Higdon reflected on her personal experiences as an accomplished flutist and frequent performer of contemporary music as follows:

Having practiced a lot of new music myself, I can remember the pieces that felt rewarding and those that didn't. It's so devastating to spend hours and hours practicing things that didn't have an emotional payoff as a performer. I knew that if the emotion wasn't there for the performer, it wouldn't be there for the audience.<sup>47</sup>

### Writing Process

Higdon typically writes for four to six hours a day, drafting and redrafting before finally concluding with fifteen to twenty seconds of polished music.<sup>48</sup> Her works are generally written without regard for key area, overall structure, or thematic schemes. Higdon frequently consults with instrumentalists or conductors when one of her pieces is nearing completion, and she considers herself to be very receptive to suggested changes. She attempts to complete a single section in its entirety before moving on to the next. This usually results in little need for further editing until the first live hearing. Higdon is a particularly involved composer, attempting to either attend or hear rehearsal recordings of all of her new works, and giving her immediate suggestions for adjustments before pieces are premiered. Higdon states that she is primarily able to hear necessary changes from live rehearsals, but also listens to feedback from performers:

I want to learn from the musicians. I always go back and adjust something if it makes it better as a performance, in the piece and the comfort level of the musicians, because I've found that if the musicians are convinced, they do a convincing performance, and that means everything to me."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Alsop, NPR interview.

Higdon often makes multiple changes upon hearing the music for the first time, since her compositional style relies singularly on how the music sounds. When asked to describe the experience of hearing her music played live by musicians for the first time, Higdon stated, “It’s thrilling, it’s terrifying, and I have to admit, it’s like watching something come into magnificent three-dimensional Technicolor.” Higdon attributes much of her success to her positive rapport and long-time friendships with performers and conductors. Their feedback is critical to the success of her pieces from the standpoint of overall sound and emotional payoff for the performers.<sup>50</sup>

Higdon also writes all of the arrangements and piano reductions of her works, although she acknowledges she is not a very good pianist and wouldn’t be able to play her accompaniments at all.<sup>51</sup> Higdon credits using music software to play back all of her works in progress, but she also relies on collaboration with accomplished instrumentalists for input to make sure that she has not “gone completely haywire” in her scoring.<sup>52</sup> Higdon does all of her own copying and arranging without assistance, although she stated that she may eventually need to hire an arranger due to her increasingly demanding schedule.<sup>53</sup>

Higdon’s new works have typically been commissioned based on two main criteria: overall length and instrumentation. These criteria most directly influence the time it will take her to write a new piece and, therefore, the fee. In her interview with this author, Higdon did not disclose the fees for her various commissions, but she did state that the demands of commissions and success became so great that her partner, Cheryl

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<sup>50</sup> Higdon, interview with the author.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

Lawson, had to quit her job in order to become Higdon's full time "artist representative". This is primarily because Higdon publishes her music through their publishing company, Lawdon Press.

Although she may have many upcoming commissions, some scheduled years in advance, Higdon works on only one piece at a time in order to give it her undivided attention.<sup>54</sup> She explains:

When I'm working on a piece with orchestra, that particular piece stays constantly in my head, even in my dreams, which can be a little bit haunting. The music stays. In fact, I have to be careful when I cross the street, because, occasionally, I've stepped out into traffic because I was listening to something in my head."<sup>55</sup>

Higdon has written works in a wide variety of instrumentations, from unaccompanied solo pieces to concerti, chamber, and large-scale symphonic compositions. She has also written both programmatic and absolute music, although her programmatic and often cleverly titled works heavily outnumber the absolute pieces. Her mood-setting titles, such as *running the edgeE*, *rapid♦fire*<sup>56</sup>, *An Exaltation of Larks*, *DASH*, and *Lullaby*, certainly summon musical expectations from the listener. While the composer may play on words and their capitalization, she does not mislead audiences with her titles; her works consistently evoke the expected mood or aesthetic implied by their titles. For example, *rapid♦fire*<sup>57</sup> is a frantic six-minute piece for solo flute in which the flute depicts the violence of an inner-city battle scene, imitating gunshots and cries of the wounded innocent.<sup>58</sup> Like many of Higdon's compositions, this work includes in its score an

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<sup>54</sup> Higdon denied Michael Anthony's claim in the article "Composing an Ode to the Oboe" that she was writing eight pieces at one time.

<sup>55</sup> Alsop, interview.

<sup>56</sup> Capitalization and punctuation intended by the composer.

<sup>57</sup> Lower case and symbol in title intended by the composer.

<sup>58</sup> Jennifer Higdon, *rapid♦fire* program notes (cover page of score).

explanation of the title, program notes, and explicit instructions for the performer. The composer describes *rapid♦fire* as a musical representation of the “violence of the cities; more specifically, the innocent young who are cut down in their homes and on the streets. It is an expression of rage, of pain, and of disbelief. It is the fear and the terror. It is an inner city cry.”<sup>59</sup> Higdon adds that the work for solo flute is “supposed to be brutal and raucous.”<sup>60</sup> The score includes thirty-nine detailed instructions that direct the solo flutist to use a variety of extended techniques including pitch bending, harmonics, alternate fingerings, overblowing, and triple tonguing, at corresponding points in the score. The final instruction tells the flutist to throw a small firecracker upon reaching the last note of the piece, an explosive punctuation to the violence found throughout the work.

Though few of Higdon’s works are absolute, it is interesting to note Higdon’s trend of using simple titles for her concerti, which, like *Oboe Concerto*, have no programmatic or descriptive qualities in their titles and are strictly absolute. This includes her large-scale symphonic work entitled *Concerto for Orchestra* and her six concerti for oboe, violin, soprano saxophone (Version 2), piano, trombone, and percussion. Regarding these simple titles, Higdon stated that she was primarily focused on the individual soloist or ensemble involved in the commission rather than on any intended programmatic content.<sup>61</sup> This is particularly true regarding the titles of Higdon’s more recent concerti, such as *Concerto 4-3* (2008) and *On a Wire* (2010). The former work is written as a concerto for string trio (two soli violins and double bass) and was co-commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony, and the Wheeling Symphony for the Philadelphia-based trio Time for Three. This unique group of classically trained Curtis

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Higdon, interview with the author.



Institute graduates performs a fusion of styles including Classical, bluegrass, rock, and popular music. The title *Concerto 4-3* refers to the “Time for Three” name, cleverly replacing the words “for Three” with numbers, yet still offers no programmatic implication.<sup>62</sup> The concerto *On a Wire* was commissioned by the Atlanta Symphony for the new music sextet *eighth blackbird* (flute, clarinet, violin/viola, cello, piano, percussion). Like *Concerto 4-3*, it plays on the name of the ensemble without creating a programmatic expectation.

### Unifying Characteristics

Although Higdon describes her compositional style as “intuitive”, her music nevertheless demonstrates several unifying characteristics. Higdon explained that these traits result from a cycling “stream of consciousness” and that they are not deliberate.<sup>63</sup> However, certain traits appear so consistently that they may be regarded as part of her style. Her works primarily employ parallel fifths and lyrical melodies, are free in form, and have a wide range of dynamics and textures. Higdon also experiments with tone color, often employing uncommon combinations of instruments, extended techniques, and interesting timbres like Chinese bells, prepared piano, and crystal glasses in order to add to her sound palette, much like her former teacher, George Crumb.<sup>64</sup> The composer typically writes primary melodies that form a dialogue in a lyrical, contrapuntal style.<sup>65</sup> These solo or soli voices trade off short lyrical lines and often share subtle rhythmic or imitative motives that are not readily audible but can be identified through score study.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Jennifer Higdon, *Concerto 4-3* program notes.

<sup>63</sup> Reitz, 32.

<sup>64</sup> Chinese bells, prepared piano, and crystal glasses were used in Higdon’s orchestral work *blue cathedral*.

<sup>65</sup> Examples of this compositional device will be demonstrated in Chapter Five.

<sup>66</sup> Reitz, 36.

Homorhythmic accompanying lines propel the undercurrent of Higdon's contrapuntal writing.

Rhythmic irregularity is perhaps one of Higdon's most defining characteristics as a composer—her works often contain unpredictable rhythms and phrase lengths, which can often add to the difficulty of her pieces for both performers and conductors.

Examples of a contrapuntal style can be seen in Higdon's most widely known piece, *blue cathedral* in Example 2.1. The clarinet and flute have a lengthy dialogue, and are later joined by the English horn, all accompanied by a thin homorhythmic texture in the strings. All three woodwind voices are equal primary melodies, each marked with a *mezzo piano* dynamic, crescendos that reflect the peaks and most rhythmically complex parts of phrases, and decrescendos that mark the ends of phrases. Rhythmic activity oscillates between parts, appearing on alternating beats or points in each measure. The three parts have been extracted from the full score for clarity in the following example. The dialogue between flute and clarinet throughout *blue cathedral* is significant; the score is marked "In loving memory of Andrew Blue Higdon", Jennifer Higdon's brother who died of cancer at the age of 33. The "blue" in the title *blue cathedral* comes from his middle name and the flute and clarinet represent Higdon and her brother, who played these instruments, respectively.<sup>67</sup>

Another commonly found trend is Higdon's combination of increased rhythmic motion, louder dynamics, and thicker texture. As phrases rise in pitch, corresponding rhythms also become more active and complex. Meanwhile, the scoring becomes significantly thicker with the addition of more instruments, leading to seemingly natural climaxes. Higdon also uses pentatonic and octatonic scales. The most frequently

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<sup>67</sup> *blue cathedral* score, program notes.

131 Solo  
FLUTE 1 *mp* *p*  
ENGLISH HORN  
CLARINET 1 *mp*

133  
FL. 1  
E.H. Solo 3 *mp*  
CL. 1 *mp*

136  
FL. 1 *mp* *p*  
E.H. 3  
CL. 1 *mp*

138  
FL. 1 *mp*  
E.H. *p*  
CL. 1 *mp*

Example 2.1. *blue cathedral* (mm. 131-140), flute, English horn, and clarinet

recurring compositional device in Higdon's work, however, is the prevalence of parallel perfect fifths.<sup>68</sup> With so many common traits in the work of a composer who proceeds on intuition, it is likely that Higdon's intuition is based on past experience and subconscious influences.

<sup>68</sup> Reitz, 33. Reitz observed that *blue cathedral* (1999) was the first significant example of parallel fifths in Higdon's music.

All of the aforementioned compositional devices can be found in an excerpt from *Summer Shimmers* (2008), a short piece for woodwind quintet (flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon) and piano in Example 2.2. In this particular excerpt, the oboe has a solo at measure 14 and is accompanied by Higdon's trademark parallel fifths in the piano, horn, and bassoon. The solo contains irregular rhythms that result in a sense of melodic freedom, characteristic of Higdon's lyrical solo lines. Likewise, the excerpt demonstrates the composer's typical driving rhythmic accompaniment, played first in measure 14 by the flute and clarinet, and joined in measure 15 by the horn and piano. Measures 16 through 19 have a similar organization. At measure 19, the piano joins the melody of the oboe in unison and octaves. The intensity rises into measure 20, where a dramatic rising scale is fueled by a crescendo and paired with the ever-present parallel fifths. What immediately follows the excerpt is a sudden change in texture, harmony, and character as the ensemble continues with slow moving, homorhythmic chords. This abrupt style change is marked by a double bar. The excerpt demonstrates the stylistic traits that are found throughout Higdon's music. Although her compositional style is intuitive, she uses a natural progression of sound development and recycles "what works," resulting in common characteristics throughout her canon.

### Critical Reception

In American media, reviews have generally been more positive than in other countries. Higdon's most widely performed piece, *blue cathedral*, was described by an English music critic from *The Guardian* as "pure new-age fluff; undemanding, unadventurous tonality dressed up as a quasi-mystical experience by the addition of bells

14

FLUTE *a tempo*  
*mp sub.*

OBOE *a tempo*  
*mp*

CLARINET *a tempo*  
*mp sub.*

HORN *a tempo*  
*mp sub.*

BASSOON *a tempo*  
*mp sub.*

PIANO *a tempo*  
*mp sub.*

18

FL. *f*

OB. *mf* *f*

CL. *f*

HN. *mp*

BN. *mp*

PN. *mf* *f*

Example 2.2. *Summer Shimmers* (mm. 14-20), full score.

and chimes.”<sup>69</sup> This criticism came after a 2007 performance by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra of *blue cathedral*, despite the fact that the work had topped the Classical Billboard charts after its 2003 Telarc recording by the Atlanta Symphony and had nearly 150 performances at that date. Likewise, the composer’s *Concerto for Orchestra*, also recorded by the Atlanta Symphony, was criticized for having “plundered” Bartok’s work by the same name, and was called “an example of American contemporary music at its most vacuous, a noisy mishmash of early 20th-century styles.”<sup>70</sup> In the same CD review, Higdon’s large symphonic work *City Scape* was described as “a score that would fit painlessly into many Hollywood movies, providing an anodyne background to something more interesting on screen.”<sup>71</sup> The criticism surrounding Higdon’s music seems to center around her compositional aesthetic, her avoidance of traditional forms, and the simplicity and accessibility of her writing. It is the same aesthetic that has earned Higdon’s acclaim and propelled her success in America, as cited by a *New York Times* reviewer, who praises Higdon:

The recent orchestral works of the popular Philadelphia composer Jennifer Higdon are certainly primarily tonal, as well as imaginative, richly orchestrated and accessible, which presumably explains why ‘blue cathedral’ is one of the most frequently performed new works in the United States.<sup>72</sup>

Critical receptions of Higdon’s music are clearly influenced by personal taste and regional expectations. In an interview with Marin Alsop on National Public Radio,

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<sup>69</sup> Rowena Smith, Concert Review, Denve Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow. *The Guardian*, 16 April, 2007. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2007/apr/16/classicalmusicandopera2>> (accessed 19 January, 2010)

<sup>70</sup> Andrew Clements, CD Review, Higdon: *Concerto for Orchestra*; *City Scape*: Atlanta Symphony/Spano. *The Guardian*, 30 April, 2004. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2004/apr/30/classicalmusicandopera.shopping4>> (accessed 19 January, 2010)

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Vivien Schweitzer, “Yes, tonal. Have a problem with that?” *The New York Times*, 29 January: 2007. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/29/arts/music/29ober.html>> (accessed 23 February, 2010)

Higdon was asked by Alsop how she felt about her music being frequently called “accessible,” a term that is often interpreted as negative when describing contemporary music. Higdon replied:

I actually consider it the ultimate compliment. I think of music as a communicative art. Most art is, but there’s something about music that just goes straight to a person’s heart, or it has the ability to. “Accessible” to me means that you’re doing your job as a composer, and I think about that a lot when I’m writing.<sup>73</sup>

Higdon’s perspective on this topic reflects her down-to-earth personality, as this author also experienced during our face-to-face interview.<sup>74</sup> As is evident in the quotations of Higdon in this monograph, her manner of communicating is easy to understand, personal, and relaxed with an undercurrent of intensity, all of which are traits that are found in her compositions.

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<sup>73</sup> Alsop interview.

<sup>74</sup> Higdon interview

### CHAPTER THREE: ORIGINAL COMMISSION

Jennifer Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* was commissioned in 2005 by The Minnesota Commissioning Club for oboist Kathryn Greenbank and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra of St. Paul, Minnesota. The Minnesota Commissioning Club consists of only twelve members who form a committee, pooling resources in order to commission new works with their own private funds. Members of the Commissioning Club contacted Higdon in late 2004, requesting a fifteen- to twenty-minute concerto for oboe and orchestra that would feature Greenbank, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra's principal oboist. Higdon was immediately interested; she had attempted to write an oboe concerto several years prior, but threw out her early sketches.<sup>75</sup>

Higdon met with a few members of the Minnesota Commissioning Club in Philadelphia, including David and Judy Ranheim, and the parties involved discussed the terms of the commission. At this time, Higdon had never heard Greenbank play, and she recalled commissioning board members describing Greenbank's sound: "They said, 'She sounds great. Even when she tunes the orchestra, she sounds great.' That statement really stuck in my head."<sup>76</sup> By coincidence, Higdon had a meeting in Minnesota shortly thereafter, and she was able to hear Greenbank play for the first time in a St. Paul Chamber Orchestra concert. Higdon thought Greenbank was "incredible," and spent the next seven months finishing other commissioned pieces and thinking about the best way to feature Greenbank in her new work, never forgetting the statement that "Kathy sounds

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<sup>75</sup> The slow movement of Higdon's original oboe concerto still exists in a rewritten form as *Soliloquy*, first published for English horn and strings. There is no musical connection between the original oboe concerto sketches and the published oboe concerto, aside from Higdon's characteristic musical language.

<sup>76</sup> Higdon interview.



incredible, even while tuning the orchestra.” This poignant statement inspired Higdon to begin the concerto with a long, sustained pitch in the solo oboe accompanied by slow moving chords in the strings. The piece comes full-circle with a similar ending.

In spite of her early enthusiasm for writing an oboe concerto, Higdon was somewhat apprehensive about the limited instrumentation of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, which is considerably smaller than that of a standard orchestra.<sup>77</sup> Her primary concern was the small number of brass players. However, she was able to manage with the smaller instrumentation, scoring for only two trumpets and two horns for the SPCO brass section.<sup>78</sup> It took Higdon roughly three and a half months to complete the concerto. Higdon also wrote the piano reduction for *Oboe Concerto* during this period at times when she needed a rest from writing new material.<sup>79</sup>

Higdon met with Greenbank in Philadelphia to discuss the concerto when it was nearing completion. Performer and composer had varying accounts of their interaction. Higdon recalls a positive interaction in which she was receptive to Greenbank’s feedback, but described Greenbank as kind but somewhat shy. However, the pair maintained a positive rapport; Higdon described Greenbank as “amazing,” and Greenbank said of Higdon, “She is full of life, gregarious, and outgoing. There’s a joy in her music, just as there’s a joy in her.”<sup>80</sup> In an interview via email with this author, Greenbank also stated: “I did not remember [Higdon] being receptive to any comments or changes. I did request a few changes but they did not happen. The run at the end was the

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<sup>77</sup> Higdon typically scores for unusually large orchestras, often including several additional brass and multiple percussion parts. The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra is limited to ten violins, four violas, four celli, two basses, paired woodwinds, paired horns and trumpets, and percussion. The piano reduction will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

<sup>78</sup> The orchestration of the *Oboe Concerto* will be further described in Chapter 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Anthony.

only change she made after asking her a number of times.”<sup>81</sup> Greenbank recalled her impressions of the piece in more detail:

We were looking for an American woman composer and her music had been getting quite a lot of attention, so we were hoping for a strong work from her. Generally, the piece was well received; however, it was a little disappointing in the development and amount of material. I found it to be repetitive and wandering. A light-hearted piece. Not exactly what we had been hoping for. It has been performed recently on Soprano Sax, which I think is a better venue for the piece.<sup>82</sup>

Although Greenbank’s lack of enthusiasm could have potentially influenced the audience’s reaction, the response from audience members and critics immediately following the concerto’s premiere remained positive.<sup>83</sup> However, Greenbank was not the only critical voice among those who were interviewed for this monograph. Although David and Judy Ranheim and the other members of the Minnesota Commissioning Club were pleased with the success of their commission, they shared Greenbank’s opinion that the concerto was underdeveloped. Judy Ranheim stated:

I wasn’t struck by repetitiveness or redundancy when I heard it, but I did think that it could have been expanded a little bit. It was a little short on some materials that I would have liked to have heard more of. There were pieces I would like to have had expanded more. However, the piece has become very successful both as a saxophone piece and as a wind band piece.<sup>84</sup>

David Ranheim concurred. When asked whether the members of the MCC were surprised to learn of *Version 2* for soprano saxophone, he elaborated on the transformation of the work:

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<sup>81</sup> Kathryn Greenbank, email interview with the author, June 18, 2009. All quotations from Kathryn Greenbank are from this interview unless otherwise noted. The “run at the end” refers to a passage that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>82</sup> Greenbank interview.

<sup>83</sup> The premiere performance received a standing ovation, and the few existing concert reviews are positive.

<sup>84</sup> David and Judy Ranheim, phone interview with the author (recorded for reference), 28 June, 2009.

The soprano saxophone version actually seems to have taken on more of a life than the oboe version. In our commissioning club, we always like to see a piece get multiple performances and not just be a shot in the night that everybody forgets about. Not all of the composers that we commission keep us so well informed about what's happening with our commissioned pieces, so we were quite pleased.<sup>85</sup>

The Club members were content that Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* was able to "move forward" no matter what the arrangement or adaptation.

### The Minnesota Commissioning Club

The Minnesota Commissioning Club (MCC) was solely responsible for conceiving Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* for Kathryn Greenbank and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. Founded in 1990 in St. Paul, Minnesota, The MCC is modeled after an unincorporated investment club, with the backing of the American Composers Forum as its fiscal agent. The American Composers Forum handles the organization's financial records, contributions, and payouts. The Club is limited to six married couples who were invited for exclusive membership. The members hold quarterly meetings to discuss "what music ought to be written, choice of composers and ensembles, identification of suitable venues, and promotion of projects, current and past."<sup>86</sup> These couples must support the collaborative effort and pledge to contribute to the Club's commissioning fund annually for five years. At its inception in 1990, the members of the Club were asked to contribute \$2,000 annually per couple, but this amount was raised to \$3,000 annually in 2005 in order to "allow a broader range of projects."<sup>87</sup> This gives the Club a current annual budget of \$18,000. All of the members are opinionated, knowledgeable musicians and advocates of the arts, although not all are career musicians. These individuals have

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<sup>85</sup> Ranheim interview.

<sup>86</sup> David Ranheim, *Commissioning New Music: A Club Model (Or How a Commissioning Club Can Make a Difference)*, 2005.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

assumed a unique responsibility as entrepreneurs in the future of contemporary music, self-appointed champions of new works, and advocates for outstanding up-and-coming composers.

As found in its mission statement, one of the primary goals of the Minnesota Commissioning Club (MCC) is “to create and promote serious music written by primarily American composers.” An initial focus on regional younger or mid-career composers has since widened in scope. The MCC has funded works by well-known American composers such as Libby Larsen, Paul Schoenfield, Stephen Paulus, and Eric Whitacre. Another stated goal of the MCC is “to spark the creation of new serious music in a variety of genres”.<sup>88</sup> Due to its limited private funding, the organization can afford to request only one or two new pieces per year, with about fifteen commissioned since 1990. The list of commissions includes a wide variety of instrumentations including works for chamber ensembles, wind ensemble, orchestra, choir, and solo pieces. The MCC selects not only the composer, but also the potential performers of their commissions, with the following criteria: “excellence of performance, commitment to promoting the piece, and recording potential.”<sup>89</sup> The members also insist upon collaboration between the organization, the composer, and the performers, which “produces a superior and more effective product.”<sup>90</sup> The esteem of the MCC and its close association with the American Composers Forum has attracted numerous up-and-coming composers to send scores and drafts of their new works to Club members in hopes of a commission.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Linda Hoeschler, Minnesota Commissioning Club Synopsis, 2005.

<sup>89</sup> Ranheim.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Ranheim interview.

The Minnesota Commissioning Club's current members are founders Linda and Jack Hoeschler, Hella Mears and Bill Hueg, Thelma and Sam Hunter, Cathie and Jerry Fischer, Gloria and Fred Sewell, and Judith and David Ranheim.<sup>92</sup> During a commission for the MCC, one couple is typically appointed to lead the project and is responsible for most of the work associated with the commission. David and Judy Ranheim were selected to lead the commission for Jennifer Higdon's *Oboe Concerto*. The Ranheims had known of Jennifer Higdon as a flutist for many years prior to her success as a composer. Around the year 2000, the MCC planned to commission a work for the Bergen Woodwind Quintet of Bergen, Norway, by a female American composer that would premiere in 2002. Judy Ranheim nominated Higdon as the composer for that commission. However, the members of the Club were reluctant to select Higdon for their commission because she was as not widely known as a composer at that time, and instead selected Judith Lang Zaimont. David Ranheim described the time frame of selecting Higdon for her *Oboe Concerto*:

There's a gestation period. Sometimes from the first time we start talking about something and lining up a composer, it might even be a couple of years before the premiere, depending on people's calendars and the schedules of some organizations. It would have been at least a year for the oboe concerto to get onto the calendar for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra's performance schedule. But this concerto was quite fast compared to other commissions. We actually got it before it was needed. Jennifer is very particular about sticking to deadlines.<sup>93</sup>

By 2003, Higdon had become a prominent American composer, and the other members of the MCC became interested in requesting one of her works. As previously mentioned, the Ranheims were interviewed simultaneously by phone in order to allow them to describe their experiences and contributions to the commission of Higdon's *Oboe*

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<sup>92</sup> Member as of 2009.

<sup>93</sup> Ranheim interview.

*Concerto*. Both were extremely passionate about their participation in commissioning new works, particularly at this level of involvement. David Ranheim commented on the Club's interaction with the composer:

A lot of people support commissioning new music, but it's usually just writing the check and sending it off to some orchestra or somebody who is then going to use the money for the commission, but it's not this "ground up" kind of involvement.<sup>94</sup>

Higdon did not disclose the fee associated with the commission of *Oboe Concerto*. The Club commissioned two works in 2005, Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* and a trio for flute, cello, and piano, entitled *Slow Structures* by Libby Larsen. According to David Ranheim, the requested length of the concerto was determined from a "monetary standpoint due to limited funds." The MCC has commissioned works for between \$5,000 and \$20,000, depending on length, instrumentation, level of difficulty, and available funds leftover from previous years. Both David and Judy Ranheim stated that Higdon's commission fell into the upper end of the Club's range of expenses, although neither would disclose a specific amount.<sup>95</sup>

David and Judy Ranheim commented on Greenbank's performance of Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* with great admiration. They perceived the audience and critics in the media to be generally appreciative of the delivery of the piece by Greenbank and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and of the composition itself. Despite a standing ovation at its premiere, however, they both concurred that the work was not as well received as some of the Club's previously commissioned compositions.<sup>96</sup> The only known review of the *Oboe Concerto* premiere is a review from the *Star Tribune* of Minneapolis, which states

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> David and Judy Ranheim, phone interview with the author (recorded for reference), Baton Rouge, LA: 28 June, 2009.

<sup>96</sup> Ranheim interview.

the following:

[Higdon's] *Oboe Concerto* shares the shimmering beauty and rhythmic playfulness of many of her other works. The concerto, in fact, seems infused with the beauty of its solo instrument. Higdon seems to address that quality. She opens and closes the work with a sustained note in the oboe's middle register. It's a striking opening, as if to say just a single note on this instrument can enchant—and it does.<sup>97</sup>

The concerto did not receive significant media attention, however, until its premiere as *Soprano Sax Concerto (Version 2)* with the Cabrillo Festival and Timothy McAllister as soloist.

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<sup>97</sup> Anthony, 2F.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE TRANSFORMATION

### *Soprano Sax Concerto (Version 2)*

Jennifer Higdon has achieved international recognition through a wide variety of commissioned pieces. Her success is arguably a result of a compositional style that has been deemed “accessible” to general audiences. It also relies heavily on her willingness to experiment with new timbres and arrange her own works for various instrumentations. Although she originally wrote the *Oboe Concerto* in 2005 for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and oboist Kathy Greenbank, Higdon was commissioned to rewrite the solo part for soprano saxophone two years later. This widened the scope of potential performances of the work; the new version was published under the title *Soprano Sax Concerto*<sup>98</sup> in 2007. The transcription is subtitled *Version 2*, but still shows an erroneous 2005 publication date from its original version.<sup>99</sup> The *Soprano Sax Concerto* was commissioned for the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in Santa Cruz, California, with Timothy McAllister as soprano saxophone soloist and Marin Alsop on the podium.<sup>100</sup> McAllister is Associate Professor of Saxophone at Arizona State University and a significant advocate of contemporary music, with over one hundred premieres of new works in addition to a successful solo and chamber career.<sup>101</sup> Alsop is the first female Music Director of a major American symphony orchestra in her position with the

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<sup>98</sup> Higdon intentionally abbreviated “saxophone” as “sax” in the title of this piece.

<sup>99</sup> This date discrepancy is an error.

<sup>100</sup> Alsop interview. Higdon and Alsop have been friends for so many years that neither of them remembers when or where they met.

<sup>101</sup> Timothy McAllister is an internationally renowned, award-winning saxophonist. He was appointed Associate Professor of Saxophone at Arizona State University in 2008 after previous faculty appointments at The University of Arizona and the Crane School of Music (SUNY). <http://www.timothymcallister.com/biography> (accessed January 14, 2010)



Baltimore Symphony.<sup>102</sup> Like Alsop, McAllister also has a long-standing friendship with Higdon; she was once the composer-in-residence for his award-winning saxophone quartet, PRISM.<sup>103</sup> At that time, McAllister had recently joined PRISM, which sustains its own Philadelphia Residency Program. This program is supported by government grants and endowed funds and offers a variety of outreach programs, including composer forums.<sup>104</sup> Higdon became a part of this residency program and later joined the board of the PRISM saxophone quartet as composer-in-residence. McAllister described how the friendship between composer and performer began:

Jennifer would accompany us when we were traveling to inner city Philadelphia where PRISM was doing residencies with the Philadelphia Free Library System and speaking with young kids. We would play her music, especially the fantastic saxophone quartet *Short Stories*. She would talk to the students about the composition process and what it means to be a composer. That experience formed a friendship which, years later, turned into a “who you know” type of thing regarding this version of the concerto. Jennifer asked for my advice on finding a saxophonist from the West coast to play the concerto, but I said I’d do it.<sup>105</sup>

McAllister would later premiere the *Soprano Sax Concerto* with the Cabrillo Festival, followed by encore performances with the Round Top Festival Orchestra (Round Top, Texas) and the University of South Carolina Symphony. A recording of the work with the Northern Sinfonia of Wales and McAllister as soloist is scheduled for late 2010.

McAllister described his involvement with the arrangement of *Version 2* for soprano saxophone:

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<sup>102</sup> Marin Alsop was appointed Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in 2007. Her previous appointments include the Colorado Symphony and the Bournemouth Symphony. She is currently in her twelfth year as Music Director for the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music and is well known for commissioning new works. <http://www.marinalsop.com/shortbio.php> (accessed February 5, 2010).

<sup>103</sup> Timothy McAllister, phone interview with the Author (recorded for reference), September 12, 2009. All quotations from Timothy McAllister are from this interview unless otherwise noted. McAllister recalls that his interaction with Jennifer Higdon began around the year 2000 or 2001.

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.prismquartet.com/residencies.html> (accessed on March 2, 2010).

<sup>105</sup> McAllister interview.

It was something that fell into my lap, and it was a wonderful privilege for me, but I didn't get involved in the commissioning itself. She had it in her mind that she wanted to create this version, at the request of many saxophone players. I knew about the possibility of this version early on, but I wasn't prepared to be involved financially, so the Cabrillo festival accounted for it. It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, and I'm privileged to have been a part of it.<sup>106</sup>

As demonstrated here and elsewhere, Higdon is a master of promoting her works by a variety of means, including seeking out new commissions, as well as arrangements and transcriptions of her existing works, through her friendships with influential members of festivals, professional orchestras, and commissioning organizations.

The similar ranges of the oboe and soprano saxophone made Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* ideal to transcribe for soprano saxophone. The transcription simply involved transposing the oboe part up one step for the soprano saxophone, which is pitched in B-flat. The two respective parts are identical aside from the change of printed pitch level. *Soprano Sax Concerto* was well received at its premiere and garnered much media attention. Reviews include a complimentary assessment from music critic Jeff Dunn of the *San Francisco Classical Voice* after the Cabrillo Festival performance:

The concert's highlight concluded its first half: Jennifer Higdon's *Soprano Sax Concerto*. This was a rewrite of her 2005 *Oboe Concerto* (which I have not heard), and it was superbly realized by soloist Timothy McAllister. The single-movement concerto consisted of long stretches of ever-evolving melisma, with phrases cleverly imitated by other solo instruments in a way that seemed to weave a tapestry to the glory of melody. This work, and perhaps the oboe concerto as well, is a significant testament to beauty.<sup>107</sup>

Another reviewer, of the Cabrillo performance, praised *Soprano Sax Concerto* as follows:

It was Higdon's concerto that offered the most sublime musical moments on the program.... Her saxophone concerto is an extremely lyrical piece

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<sup>106</sup> McAllister interview.

<sup>107</sup> Jeff Dunn, "The allure of premieres," *San Francisco Classical Voice*, San Francisco, CA: August 7, 2007.

whose ideas are clear and free of musical meandering.... The work was played with warmth and agility by saxophonist Timothy McAllister, and Higdon smartly capitalized on the subtle power of the soprano sax as counterpoint to a small orchestra. What resulted was a tasty balance, with an almost pastoral feel to the work. In the realm of contemporary music, finding a jewel amid the programmed mix is a rare music moment. And this concert delivered it with Higdon's concerto.<sup>108</sup>

McAllister performed the work again on April 16, 2008 during the opening night concert for the North American Saxophone Alliance's Biennial Conference. The concert was held at the University of South Carolina and accompanied by the USC Symphony Orchestra, which also participated in commissioning the soprano saxophone version of the concerto.

The performance was praised by the audience of saxophonists and music critics alike:

In Jennifer Higdon's 2007 Soprano Saxophone Concerto, Tim McAllister was equally amazing. He produced a clearly focused sound in all registers—and some were very extreme. Introspective, complex chords at the opening were quite satisfying and led to lengthy, florid solo passages and clever interchanges with orchestral solos.... Higdon's formal organization also is quite free, but her single-movement concept kept musical ideas fairly compact. McAllister's artistry helped.<sup>109</sup>

These statements demonstrate the positive critical response to both McAllister's convincing performance and Higdon's concerto in this adaptation.

### Wind Ensemble Arrangement

In 2008, Higdon was commissioned to reorchestrate the *Oboe Concerto* yet again, this time for solo oboe and wind ensemble. Michael Haithcock, Director of Bands and Professor of Conducting at the University of Michigan, spearheaded the project after a chain of events that led him to the concerto.<sup>110</sup> Haithcock had met Higdon a few years

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<sup>108</sup> Edward Oriz, "Gem found in new works at Cabrillo," *The Sacramento Bee*, 6 August 2007, E5.

<sup>109</sup> Greg Barnes, Concert Review, *The State*, 17 March 2008, D3.

<sup>110</sup> Michael Haithcock became Director of Bands and Professor of Conducting at the University of Michigan in 2001 after twenty-three years on the faculty of Baylor University. He is widely known for commissioning and premiering new works for wind ensemble and for his "innovative approaches to developing the wind ensemble repertoire and programming."  
[http://www.music.umich.edu/faculty\\_staff/bio.php?u=mlhaith](http://www.music.umich.edu/faculty_staff/bio.php?u=mlhaith) (accessed January 27, 2010)

earlier at a convention for the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP). Haithcock stated that he had several recordings of Higdon's works and found her music to be "very clean, very expressive, and very colorful."<sup>111</sup> His fondness for Higdon's compositions ultimately led to an attempted commission of a new work for wind ensemble.

Haithcock is a board member of the National Wind Ensemble Consortium Guild, an organization that originally proposed the commission of a new ten- to twenty-minute work for concert band by Higdon. However, Higdon had just started writing an opera at the time,<sup>112</sup> so she postponed the commission of a new composition<sup>113</sup> and offered instead to arrange one of her existing concerti for a smaller fee. When the Consortium rejected her offer in favor of a new composition by another composer, Haithcock "asked her to send directly the information about the oboe piece, because there's such a limited amount of repertoire for oboe and winds."<sup>114</sup> Haithcock said of Greenbank's recording, "I was blown away by it. I think it's extremely beautiful, and the contrast between slow-fast-slow is really exceptional. I liked the way it has different sections within one movement."<sup>115</sup> Haithcock offered to pay Higdon \$10,000 for the arrangement, getting partial funding from the University of Michigan Commissioning Budget, an endowed fund. He completed the fundraising by pooling resources from the band departments of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the Hartt School of Music.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Haithcock interview.

<sup>112</sup> Haithcock interview. This opera is commissioned by the San Francisco Opera and will be premiered in the fall of 2010.

<sup>113</sup> The National Wind Ensemble Consortium has commissioned a new work by Higdon to be premiered in 2011, according to [jenniferhigdon.com/works.html](http://jenniferhigdon.com/works.html) (accessed December 4, 2009).

<sup>114</sup> Haithcock interview.

<sup>115</sup> Haithcock interview.

<sup>116</sup> Performances of Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* took place at both the Hartt School and UNC Greensboro with faculty soloists.

Higdon's flexibility as a composer is demonstrated by the four distinct versions of this concerto, with oboe or saxophone combined alternately with wind ensemble or orchestral accompaniment.

After Higdon agreed to the terms of the commission, Haithcock then contacted Nancy Ambrose King, Professor of Oboe at the University of Michigan, and asked her to premiere the arrangement. King was not familiar at all with Higdon's works but stated that she "had heard that the concerto was spectacularly gorgeous," though she had not yet heard a recording or performance of the work.<sup>117</sup> Upon hearing Greenbank's recording, King immediately found the concerto to be "such a beautiful piece" and became excited about her involvement.<sup>118</sup> The University of Michigan Symphony Band, the university's top wind ensemble, premiered the concert band arrangement of the *Oboe Concerto* on March 6, 2009, with King as soloist. The concerto was recorded in several sessions and will appear on the ensemble's upcoming album.

Higdon arranged the wind version of her *Oboe Concerto* and published the score and parts in 2008. The printed score shows the curious subtitle *Version 2*; it is the second version of *Oboe Concerto*, but is actually the third version of the piece, including the transcription for soprano saxophone. She scored the work for piccolo, three flutes, two oboes (second doubles English horn), four clarinets in B-flat, two bassoons, two alto saxophones in E-flat, one tenor saxophone in B-flat, one baritone saxophone in E-flat, three trumpets in B-flat, four horns in F, two tenor trombones, one bass trombone, one tuba, and two double basses. While the oboe part remains identical to the original, there are many differences between the orchestral and band versions of the work due to the

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<sup>117</sup> Nancy Ambrose King, phone interview with the author, June 18, 2009.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

obvious natural tendencies and timbres of their respective instruments. Haithcock influenced the scoring of the wind ensemble arrangement, suggesting more dynamic markings throughout the accompaniment parts of the slow sections, the removal of heavy instruments from soft sections, and other minor changes. Likewise, King requested changes, particularly in sections that involved doubling between soloist and band. For example, unisons between the soloist and the ensemble's three oboes on the "screeching high" pitches d3, e3, and f3 were reduced to one on a part to improve intonation.<sup>119</sup> King found that the accompaniment was too loud and heavy at times, making it difficult to project her sound; McAllister shared this experience in his performance with orchestra. King and Haithcock requested reduced scoring in the soft, lyrical sections. Both soloist and conductor stated in their separate accounts that Higdon was very receptive to their suggestions and that the changes improved the overall effect of the arrangement. Recommended alterations to dynamics and doubling were applied directly to the published score. However, typical of Higdon, some of the changes were made instinctively at the last rehearsal, and those changes were not recorded or transferred to the printed parts.<sup>120</sup>

At measure 274 in the wind arrangement, second clarinet and bassoon have cues that double their principal counterparts at a dynamic of *mezzo piano*, and the score is marked "at discretion of conductor." Motivic interjections of eighth notes or triplets are found throughout the fast sections of the concerto and were previously played by the strings in the orchestral accompaniment, also marked *mezzo piano*. A similar instance

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<sup>119</sup> King interview. 5 May, 2009.

<sup>120</sup> Higdon interview.

occurs at measure 290 in the second clarinet and in the second and third flutes. These parts were exactly the same as the original orchestral version, but they were not written as cues. All flutes and clarinets played their corresponding motives at *mezzo forte* in the orchestral version. However, only the principal players play these parts in the wind arrangement, and the score is marked at a lower dynamic, *mezzo piano*. These subtle changes demonstrate Higdon's receptiveness to performer feedback and her desire to refine her pieces after hearing them and as new concerns emerge from different instrumental settings.

### Performance Preparation

Higdon relies heavily on feedback from performers and conductors in putting the final touches on her compositions. She is typically very active in the rehearsal process of her music, making last-minute changes after hearing it performed live for the first time.<sup>121</sup> However, her involvement with the premiere of the wind ensemble arrangement was rather atypical. Higdon was unable to attend any of the rehearsals or the performance at the University of Michigan due to an important premiere with the Atlanta Symphony of her large orchestral/choral work entitled *The Singing Rooms*. She commented on the conflict as follows:

I wasn't there for the recording session of the premiere because it was also in that week. It was great, though—[Michael Haithcock] sent me recordings, and FedExed the CD's to me wherever I was at the time, because I'd been travelling so much, and I'd make changes, and then I'd send him the PDF's of the changes, so I think we got it all set.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Higdon does not believe that she has truly heard her music until it is played by a live ensemble, despite computerized playback of her scores or her ability to hear music in her head.

<sup>122</sup> Higdon interview. The Atlanta Symphony and soloist Hilary Hahn were recording Higdon's *Violin Concerto* at this time.

In addition to her performance with the University of Michigan Symphony Band, King was also the oboe soloist for the first international performance of the *Oboe Concerto* in its original orchestral form. The performance took place on 21 July, 2009, at the annual International Double Reed Society Conference in Birmingham, England. King programmed the concerto for one of the conference's concerts. Most importantly, King had the opportunity to expand her understanding of Higdon's concerto and gain a new and unique perspective. King also hoped to expose more people to Higdon's music, which she has grown to greatly admire.<sup>123</sup> Britain's Orchestra of the Swan, a regional professional orchestra, accompanied King at the Town Hall in Birmingham.

In a follow-up interview held shortly after her second performance of the concerto, King discussed her perspective as the only performer thus far to have played both the original orchestral and the wind ensemble versions of Higdon's *Oboe Concerto*. She asserted that there were no changes whatsoever to the original oboe part between the versions. In her second performance of the work, the inherent balance problems that she previously experienced with wind ensemble were non-existent in the orchestral setting. Regarding the improved balance between ensemble and soloist, King stated, "I didn't have to play louder than I felt comfortable playing at any time in order to be heard." King described her experience as the only performer of both forms of the concerto:

The versions are more different than I had expected, or maybe it's just that with the instrumentation, different lines come out. There were a couple of entrances that I really didn't count anymore because I was so comfortable with the [wind ensemble] piece. Then, all of a sudden, I was hearing different things [from the orchestra]. I really had to hear it a couple of times before I was comfortable knowing where to come in. It was interesting, because maybe [Higdon] wrote it exactly the same, but I was hearing different things.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Nancy Ambrose King, second phone interview with the Author, August 30, 2009.

<sup>124</sup> King interview. 30 August, 2009.



Another interesting phenomenon mentioned by King was the tendency for the wind ensemble to drag the tempo, in contrast to the orchestra's tendency to "run away" with the tempo. This was particularly evident in the two fast sections and was a major adjustment for King while performing the work for the second time. She attributed this difference to the wind players' need to breathe and the general lack of response in wind instruments when compared to their string counterparts.<sup>125</sup> Both Haithcock and King observed that the piece felt more comfortable and consistent at a slightly slower tempo than marked. Higdon responded to this issue by adjusting the tempo markings in the wind ensemble score. The orchestral tempo marking for the fast sections is ♩ = 142, but the tempo in the wind ensemble arrangement is marked ♩ = 134-142. Regarding this change, Higdon stated that she frequently changes tempo markings after hearing her music played by live musicians.<sup>126</sup> She commented on the phenomenon:

I always have the tempo too high. It's like I have an ideal sound of an ideal ensemble in an ideal hall, and it changes dramatically when you get into a live situation.... Tempo is a big thing for me. I never nail the tempo. Ever.<sup>127</sup>

At the International Double Reed Society performance, the response of the highly discerning audience would be important to the future success and popularity of the *Oboe Concerto*. King claimed that there were many positive comments after the performance:

Countless people [gave praise], including many members of the orchestra, and that means a lot when it's something that they haven't played before, especially something so difficult. I thought it was really wonderful how many orchestra members commented on how much they enjoyed working on it. I don't think that anyone over there had even heard of Jennifer Higdon. Some people who had seen that I was going to play [the concerto]

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Higdon interview.

<sup>127</sup> Alsop NPR interview.

had taken the trouble to look at her website on the internet... but overseas her name is not familiar. Some people said, “Oh, she’s done a lot! Why haven’t I heard of her before?” and I said, “Well, you will!”

Cheryl Lawson of Lawdon Press predicts that the longevity of the *Oboe/Soprano Sax Concerto* will be evident by late spring of 2010, when major symphonies will begin establishing their concert repertoire for the following season.<sup>128</sup> This could result in a measurable increase of requests for concerto scores and rental parts, a trend seen after successful performances of previous works by Higdon. Since her 2010 Grammy for Best Contemporary Classical Composition, orders for Higdon’s orchestral scores and chamber works have doubled.<sup>129</sup> There are currently no future scheduled performances of Higdon’s *Oboe Concerto* with orchestra; the parts are only available for rent from Lawdon Press and no orders have been placed for upcoming seasons as of March 1, 2010. Since the scores and parts for the wind ensemble arrangement of the *Oboe Concerto/Soprano Sax Concerto* are available for purchase, it is difficult to determine the number of times the wind version has been recently scheduled or performed.

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<sup>128</sup> Cheryl Lawson, email correspondence with the author, 5 September 2009.

<sup>129</sup> Cheryl Lawson, email correspondence with the author, 18 February 2010.

## CHAPTER FIVE: STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* was analyzed by from the standpoint of the work's formal design, harmonic centers, texture, orchestration, melody, and rhythmic devices. Higdon framed the seventeen-minute piece around the lyrical opening, which is later mirrored in the center and final sections. Once the composer decided on this overall form, she wrote the piece from start to finish, saying, "one thing suggested another thing."<sup>130</sup> Higdon claimed that her use of a predetermined form is not her typical compositional method, and that she prefers to write pieces in a freer manner.<sup>131</sup> The concerto was written in one movement with five distinct parts, unlike the standard three-movement concerto form. The sections are distinguishable by clearly indicated changes in both tempo (slow-fast-slow-fast-slow) and style, and they are separated in the score by double bars. This analysis is organized by sections.

In contrast to Higdon's typical large scoring for orchestra, the ensemble is moderate sized due to the limitations of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra: two flutes (second flute doubles piccolo), oboe, English horn, two Bb clarinets, two bassoons, two horns in F, two trumpets in C, strings, and percussion, which includes vibraphone, suspended cymbal, sizzle cymbal, snare drum, high bongo, brake drum, tambourine, triangle, castanet, woodblock, and three temple blocks. Significant solo parts in the orchestral accompaniment are written for principal clarinet, bassoon, two violins (both separate and simultaneous soli), trumpet, flute, English horn, viola, violoncello, and horn. These solos typically imitate the oboist's melodic line, and are found primarily in the slow sections of the concerto. Tutti accompaniment passages transition the soloist into each new section.

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<sup>130</sup> Higdon interview.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

## Form

Higdon stated multiple times that she intentionally chose to begin the concerto with a slow section rather than a traditional fast movement in order to showcase the lyrical capabilities of the oboe.<sup>132</sup> The first and third sections are slow and have recognizable similarities in texture, melodic content, and style. Therefore, these sections will be called A and A'. The two most similar sections are the second and fourth sections, which will be called B and B'. These fast parts are nearly identical in their musical material, particularly in the solo oboe, which has recurring themes and motives in the same key areas with only subtle differences between them. Higdon repeated the fast section in its entirety with infrequent alterations of pitches and voice exchange in the accompanying instruments. She also added nineteen measures of transitional material.<sup>133</sup> Although it is similar in tempo and aesthetic to the other slow sections, the fifth and final section of the work introduces new material, and will therefore be called section C. The sections are organized as follows:






<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A'</b>	<b>B'</b>	<b>C</b>
 = 60	 = 142	 = 60	 = 142	 = 60
mm. 1-80	mm. 81-183	mm. 184-227	mm. 228-349	mm. 350-411
Tonal Center: B-flat major	Tonal Center: b minor	Tonal Center: C major	Tonal Center: b-flat minor, b minor	Tonal Center: b-flat minor B-flat major

Figure 5.1. Overall form of *Oboe Concerto*.

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<sup>132</sup> Higdon interview.

<sup>133</sup> This reinforces Kathryn Greenbank's opinion that Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* lacked material and was also repetitive.

The tonal centers listed in figure 5.1 are based loosely on the overall harmonic framework of each section, although Higdon's intuitive method of composition often obscures one's perception of a tonal center. The final slow Section C is not as similar to sections A and A' in musical content. However, it shares the other slow sections' aesthetic. Therefore, the tempi and tonal centers present from section to section make the concerto a mirror image of itself, with sections A, A', and C sharing a similar aesthetic, and sections B and B' sharing a significant amount of material.

### SECTION A

Section A is eighty measures long and lacks any introductory material; after only a single eighth rest, the solo oboe sounds immediately, sustaining a B-flat (Bb4) for eight and a half beats at a slow tempo ( $\text{♩} = 60$ ). Higdon joked, "I thought, I shouldn't do an A!" stating that the use of an A-natural, the standard tuning note played by the oboe for tuning orchestras, would be "too obvious."<sup>134</sup> The concerto begins comfortably for the oboist, who can enter confidently at the printed *mezzo forte* dynamic in a very responsive and reliable middle register. A slight *decrescendo* followed by a swell to *mezzo forte* creates suspense and quickly establishes the ethereal effect desired by Higdon, as seen in Example 5.1.



Example 5.1. *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 1-4), solo oboe part

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<sup>134</sup> Higdon interview.

While the soloist is sustaining, the strings envelop the oboe's sound with blocked major chords. Higdon commented on how she began the concerto:

Listening to that tuning note made me decide that, instead of the standard concerto, where you have fast-slow-fast, I would actually show off more of the lyrical side of the instrument. That was a big decision for me. So, I basically sat down at the piano and just started improvising and thought, "Well, if you have a B-flat holding in the oboe, what kind of chords would sound interesting around it, and how do I make that move to whatever the next thing is?" It was literally just feeling things out on the piano, and I used a lot of major chords, if I remember correctly, which I do a lot, major chords juxtaposed next to major chords.<sup>135</sup>

Because the triads are primarily in root position and do not follow a traditional chord progression, continuous parallel perfect fifths are present. The major chords are simply an expansion of parallel fifths. Characteristic of Higdon's works, parallel fifths drive the underlying harmonic current of this concerto, creating shifts in harmony that are unpredictable and somewhat unconventional in Western art music. As a result, the intervals that follow in the solo oboe are also unpredictable.

Although there is no key signature (a trait typical of Higdon), the concerto begins in the key of B-flat major, which is also the key area at the end of the concerto in Section C. Aside from the strings and solo oboe, all other parts are tacet until after the first fermata at measure 15; the thin texture adds to the calm, ethereal atmosphere intended by the composer. A second tutti fermata over a rest on beat 3 of the same measure creates a moment of silent suspense. The oboe then enters for a dramatic measure alone before the block chords and orchestral solos resume at measure 21. The following excerpt shows the opening five measures of the concerto in full score—the block chords in the strings accompanying the solo oboe on its sustained B-flat, small swells of sound within a

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<sup>135</sup> Higdon interview. The major chords discussed will be analyzed in the following excerpts.

transparent atmosphere, and a 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 metric cycle. As seen in Example 5.2, downbeats are disguised by ties over the bar lines at measure 3 and measure 5. When combined, the use of metric obscurity, lack of functional harmony, and thin texture create a delicate, mysterious quality in this passage.

Example 5.2. *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 1-5), orchestra score

The block chords are perhaps easier to decipher and analyze when approached in their condensed form as they are seen in the piano reduction. Due to a lack of functional harmony, no Roman numeral analysis will be included. The sustained B-flat in the solo oboe, which Higdon also doubled at times in the accompaniment, will be considered a non-chord tone when applicable; Higdon indicated that she considered the major chords underlying the B-flat to be separate entities while composing the opening passage.<sup>136</sup> The

<sup>136</sup> Higdon interview.

composer merely doubled the B-flat in the accompaniment and added suspensions to increase dissonance. The B-flat occurs regularly as a non-chord tone, even when the soloist is playing other pitches, and the soloist often plays dissonant tones against an otherwise consonant accompaniment. In addition, Higdon occasionally wrote contrasting chords between upper and lower strings (right and left hand in the piano)<sup>137</sup>, as can be seen in Example 5.3 on the following page. The 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 measure cycle adds to the unpredictable quality of the passage; Higdon stated that this method made the beginning of the concerto sound “less square” without adding too much difficulty.<sup>138</sup> Lyrical lines built upon unpredictable intervals and asymmetrical rhythms in the solo oboe part enhance this effect.

While Higdon had never before used a metric cycle, she had juxtaposed a solo oboe melody against major chords in a previous orchestral work. In 2002, Higdon was commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra to write *Concerto for Orchestra*. Movement III of the five-movement work features solos for all the principal players of the orchestra. The oboe solo appears early in the movement at measure 42 and is accompanied by major chords. Higdon remarked on reusing this concept in her *Oboe Concerto*:

The major chords came from my *Concerto for Orchestra*, from the third movement, where the oboe solo is featured against three trombones. It’s a line that Dick Woodhams<sup>139</sup> played in the oboe where the three trombones move in major chords. That was a little solo, only a one-minute segment, and when I started the oboe concerto and its opening chord progression, I thought to myself, “What have I done for oboe that works?” Then, I remembered the major chords with suspensions [from *Concerto for Orchestra*] and thought, “I should do that again.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> The solo oboe part is not included in the chord analysis.

<sup>138</sup> Jennifer Higdon, interview with the author (recorded for reference), Philadelphia, PA: 7 April, 2009.

<sup>139</sup> Richard “Dick” Woodhams has been principal oboist of the Philadelphia Orchestra since 1971 and serves on the faculties of the Curtis Institute of Music and Temple University. <http://www.philorch.org/bios.php?page=woodhamsrichard> (accessed February 25, 2010).

<sup>140</sup> Higdon interview.



1  $\text{♩} = 60$

SOLO OBOE

*mf* *mp* *mf*

PIANO

*legato* *mp*

*\* Leave out voices, if necessary*

$B\flat M$   $C\flat M$   $A\flat M$   $A\flat M$   $(fm)$   $B\flat M$

5

SOLO OB.

PN.

$B\flat M$   $G\flat M$   $A\flat M$   $G\flat M A\flat M$   $E\flat m7$   $fm A\flat M$

$(fm/7)$

9

SOLO OB.

PN.

$B\flat M$   $D\flat M$   $C\flat M$   $fm$   $A\flat M$   $fm7$

$G\flat M$   $e\flat m$

12

SOLO OB.

PN.

$G\flat M7$   $E\flat M$   $fm7$   $G\flat M(7)$   $D\flat 7 e\flat m$   $B\flat M$

$A\flat M$   $e\flat m$   $p$

Example 5.3. *Oboe Concerto* piano reduction (mm. 1-15) with chord analysis

Higdon frequently uses the phrase “what works”, and it is clear by this statement that she is comfortable reusing past successful musical material in new settings. The solo from *Concerto for Orchestra* begins in the oboe’s lowest register and is paired with chordal accompaniment in the trombones, creating an unusual timbral effect. Although it appears as though Higdon employed a similar metric cycle of two 4/4 and one 5/4 bars, the pattern does not continue beyond these measures. Example 5.4 shows the oboe solo and trombone accompaniment from Higdon’s *Concerto for Orchestra*, Movement III.

The image displays a musical score for Example 5.4, which is a section from the *Concerto for Orchestra*, Movement III, measures 42-47. The score is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 42-47) includes staves for OBOE 1, TROMBONE 1, TROMBONE 2, BASS TROMBONE, CELLO, and BASS. The OBOE 1 part is marked 'Solo' and 'mf'. The TROMBONE parts provide a chordal accompaniment. The BASS part is marked 'pizz.' and 'mp L.v. sempre'. The second system (measures 49-54) includes staves for OB. 1, TB. 1, TB. 2, B. TB., VC., and CB. The OB. 1 part continues the solo. The TB. parts continue the accompaniment. The VC. part is marked 'pizz.' and 'mp L.v. sempre'. The CB. part is marked 'rit.'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'pizz.' and 'rit.'.

Example 5.4. *Concerto for Orchestra*, Mvt. III (mm.42-47), full score

The brief oboe solo quickly expands into a choir of three oboes. Meanwhile, the major chords in the trombone accompaniment are transferred to the violas. There are clear similarities between this passage in *Concerto for Orchestra* (Example 5.4) and the measures following the oboe's initial sustained pitch in *Oboe Concerto* (Example 5.3), but the lyrical melody in the oboe concerto solo is more complex in rhythm and phrasing than that of the *Concerto for Orchestra*.

In the concerto's solo oboe part, intervals of recurring major and minor sevenths occur throughout, with the inclusion of passing tones and suspensions that disguise the simplicity of Higdon's melodic design. She sought to create solo material in the accompanying parts that would best complement the oboe's material, a defining characteristic of the composer. Higdon remarked, "I always let people in the orchestra solo along. I do that in all my concerti."<sup>141</sup> Significant orchestral solos in the *Oboe Concerto* are present in the English horn, violin, flute, bassoon, and clarinet. These parts are marked "solo" in both the score and the individual parts. The soloists from the orchestra interact with the oboe soloist on equal terms in Higdon's typical imitative style to create a counterpoint of contrasting motion on alternating beats of the measure. This often occurs with two or more accompanying solos. For example, orchestral solos first appear in conjunction with a homorhythmic chordal texture in the strings at measure 17 and 18, where continuous, contrapuntal lines appear in the solo bassoon and clarinet, respectively, as seen in Example 5.5. All three solo parts (oboe, clarinet, and bassoon) are marked with an equal *mezzo forte* dynamic, and the bassoon and clarinet are marked "Soli." The descending oboe line moves in contrary motion against the bassoon. The

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<sup>141</sup> Higdon interview.

oboe stops playing momentarily after the clarinet enters at measure 18, and then all three voices are present and increasingly active when the oboe reenters at measure 22. Example 5.5 demonstrates Higdon's compositional device of alternating equal solo voices.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for measures 15-20 of an orchestral score. The top system covers measures 15 through 18, and the bottom system covers measures 19 through 20. The instruments involved are Clarinet 1 (CL. 1), Bassoon 1 (BN. 1), and Solo Oboe (SOLO OB.). The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *Soli*. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. The Solo Oboe part shows a significant increase in rhythmic activity and dynamics starting in measure 19.

Example 5.5. *Oboe Concerto* (mm.15-20) orchestral score

As the solo oboe line begins to intensify with greater dynamics and more rhythmic activity in measure 22, the solo clarinet and bassoon follow suit. Meanwhile, the block chords in the strings gradually develop into faster moving eighth notes, then more scalar sixteenth and thirty-second notes, which suddenly parallel the oboe line and rise to a sweeping climax at measure 28. At this peak, the solo oboe is marked at a *fortissimo* dynamic and is accompanied by divisi first and second violins, viola, violoncello, solo bassoon and clarinet, and the first entrance by the flute at a *forte* dynamic. Measure 28 is a significant climax because it marks the first point in the

concerto where Higdon's contrapuntal soli texture gives way to rhythmic unisons between the oboe solo and most of the accompanying instruments. The unified instrumental lines quickly part, and by measure 33, the slow-moving block chords in the strings have returned with the flute and oboe continuing in an alternating dialogue.

Measure 42 marks a transition point with another fermata in the strings and solo oboe. This fermata has yet another sustained B-flat from the oboe. This time, however, the oboe descends to the oboe's lowest note, Bb2. This pitch is certainly reminiscent of the reoccurring B-flat that the oboe presents an octave higher. In this case, however, the chord implied includes the pitches E-flat, G-flat, B-flat, and D-flat, with the oboe carrying a 6-5 suspension from C to B-flat. This e-flat minor seventh chord is not the B-flat major chord the listener is accustomed to at this point in the piece. However, the soft dynamics of *piano* for oboe and *pianissimo* in the strings provide a moment of clarity and serenity much like the previous fermata at measure 15. The fermata at measure 42 is followed by an eight-measure tutti passage without the soloist. In these few measures, motivic fragments are scattered throughout the orchestra. The texture significantly changes as the strings are separated with rhythms that are no longer moving in unison. Despite the divided parts, the texture remains thin due to the sparse placement of the fragments. Dissonant seventh and ninth chords are prevalent in these measures and obscure the tonality.

At measure 52, the solo oboe enters as it did at the beginning of the concerto, with another sustained, albeit shorter, B-flat (Bb4). Once again, we see the solo oboe line accompanied by block chords in the strings, this time moving by quarter note instead of longer half notes. As before, solo instruments (trumpet, clarinet, and bassoon) accompany

the solo oboe, until more rapidly moving rhythms and larger instrumentation add to the texture and lead to another major climax at measure 69. In this measure, the oboe and orchestra are marked *fortissimo*, while the oboe ends the passage dramatically on its highest F (f6). This is the end of Section A for the solo oboe. The orchestra continues with a very active tutti passage for eleven measures, with fast-moving sixteenth and thirty-second notes scalar patterns that build intensity until a sudden texture, dynamic, and tempo change occurs at the start of Section B at measure 81.

### SECTION B

A brief orchestra tutti passage ends Section A and immediately segues to Section B at a brisk tempo. Section B encompasses measures 81-183. Since she sought a significant contrast from section A, Higdon abandoned the predetermined meter scheme, for a “straight up 4/4 in kind of a scherzo sort of feel.”<sup>142</sup> The two fast sections (Section B and Section B') are very similar; their subtle differences in phrase length and the occasional pitch variation will be discussed later in this chapter.

Section B is comprised of recurring themes in the oboe as well as recurring accompanimental material. The oboe soloist rests for ten measures during a brief introduction in which recurring fragments of eighth notes and triplets pass playfully around the orchestra. At times, eighth notes are placed against triplets to create a light-hearted rhythmic contrast. Measures 85 and 86 are particularly interesting, with the presence of nine different percussion instruments on alternating eighth notes and a variety of effects in the strings, including harmonics in the first violins, eighth notes played *col legno* by the second violins and violas, and *pizzicato* quarter notes played *portamento* in

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<sup>142</sup> Higdon interview.

sevenths by the violoncellos and basses.<sup>143</sup> These two measures are repeated at measures 95 and 96 with only slight variation in the percussion, and again from measures 111-112 and 113-114 with an equally driving effect. Example 5.6 shows a portion of the opening tutti introduction before the oboe entrance.

Example 5.6. *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 84-88), percussion and strings

At measure 91, the oboe presents the first theme of Section B with two scalar lines, followed by the introduction of a bold triplet motive in the oboe's low register. Triplets and eighth notes occur regularly throughout Section B in both solo oboe and orchestra, and they drive the entire section with rhythmic intensity. Also particularly prevalent is Higdon's use of short, compact phrases in the solo part. At times, these

<sup>143</sup> *Col legno* instructs the string player to strike the wood of the bow onto the strings. *Portamento* is a finger slide up to the higher pitch, which, according to this score, should also be plucked.

phrases seem disjunctive and choppy. Example 5.7 shows the oboe's entrance at measure 91. The triplet figure is heard three times, overlapping measures 92-93, 94-95, and 95-96. These figures all begin the same, although in one instance displaced by an octave. When the oboe reenters in measure 99, the same material occurs but is preceded by three additional beats.

Example 5.7. *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 91-96), solo oboe part

At measure 102, the oboe finishes its phrase with accompanying clarinets and bassoon alternating with a trill motive on beats 1 and 3 in the oboe, as well as 2 and 4 in the clarinet and bassoon, respectively. The woodwinds continue with two scalar beats followed by triplets, imitating the solo oboe's first entrance. The scale, trill, and triplet motives are altered and imitated in the orchestra throughout Section B. Example 5.8 demonstrates these motives as they appear at measure 102. At measure 111, the soloist plays two half-note trills, reminiscent of those shorter trill values in measure 102. The solo oboe presents a new figure that is subsequently echoed by the flutes and principal clarinet. The oboe repeats the motive again, with sixteenth note pick-ups and an altered final note. The sizable leaps in this figure reflect those from Section A, with the



Fl. 1

Fl. 2/Picc.

Ob./EH.

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Perc.

SOLO

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

(to D)

(to C#)

(to D)

(to C#)

(to C)

(to B)

(to C)

(to B)

101

102

103

Example 5.8. *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 101-103), full score

occurrence of minor sevenths in measure 112 and repeated at measure 114. From measures 115-132, the oboe is tacet. The orchestration in these measures gradually increases, adding to the intensity with more continuous, driving triplets in the woodwinds and strings. The brass section has its first real presence in the work at this point, with two syncopated, ascending lines (mm. 121-122 and mm. 124-125) that build in dynamic until reaching a *forte* dynamic. The woodwinds and strings take over the momentum and build to an intense climax at measure 126, at which time the previously dispersed triplets in the accompaniment suddenly form a cohesive, unified rhythm, driving to a *fortissimo* climax at measure 129. This is arguably the most powerful point in the accompaniment thus far. The homorhythmic texture continues from measures 126-132, with the swell at measure 129 followed by a gradual decrescendo. At measure 133, the entire orchestra rests except for the percussion's reoccurring eighth note motive, which was taken directly from measure 95. Measure 134 returns to the alternating trills motive (previously heard in measure 102) between the solo oboe, clarinets, and bassoon, as seen in Example 5.9 on the following page.

What immediately follows Example 5.9 is another presentation of the triplet motive in the solo oboe, placed against eighth notes in the percussion for two measures in 135 and 136. The strings join to reinforce the triplets, before playing tremolos and trills that reflect those previously heard in this section. From measures 142-148, the solo oboe plays fragments of its motives, trading ascending scalar quintuplets on alternating beats with the clarinets and bassoons. In the next few measures, the oboe plays the triplet motive twice more, only to be echoed by the strings. Measure 149 marks another significant point in Section B. There are four rhythmic motives occurring

131

Fl. 1

Fl. 2/Picc.

Ob./EH.

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Perc.

SOLO

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

TO FL.

*p*

*mf*

*mp*

*pp*

*f*

*p*

[Drum Sticks]

(same pattern)

(to D)

(to C#)

(to D)

(to C#)

(to C)

(to B)

*loco*

*ff*

*mp*

131

132

133

134

Example 5.9. *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 131-134), full score

simultaneously: The triplet motive is present in the principal flute, clarinets, and first violins while the trill motive is augmented into half notes and passed between the second violins and violoncellos. Meanwhile, the driving eighth notes motive heard previously in percussion and *col legno* strings are expanded into wider intervals in the bassoon, viola, and bass parts. Juxtaposed against this variety of rhythmic elements is a new melodic idea- the solo oboe, doubled by the second flute and orchestral oboe, soars above the orchestra with half and dotted half notes, on a very high E (e6), D (d6), A (a5), and then ultimately a high F-sharp (f#6) in measure 152. This marks one of the few times in the concerto that members of the orchestra double the solo oboe part exactly. The second flute joins the first flute in measure 154, but the ensemble oboe continues to double the solo oboe until the end of the phrase at measure 160, as seen in Example 5.10 on the following page.

At measure 160, the solo oboe rests for eighteen measures, during which time Higdon reused many of the compositional devices that occurred just before the orchestral climax in measure 129. For example, the fragmented motives that were passed between members of the ensemble begin to unify once again with more continuous triplets and eighths in each part, while the brass have a syncopated, ascending line much like before. The orchestra reaches total homorhythmic texture in measure 168, driving to a *fortissimo* climax in measure 174. As before, the unified rhythms in all parts continue through a *decrescendo*, from which the solo oboe emerges with a sustained pitch. This time, however, the oboe holds an unexpected B-natural (b4) for five and a half beats, gradually  
idea- the solo oboe, doubled by the second flute and orchestral oboe, soars above the orchestra with half and dotted half notes, on a very high E (e6), D (d6), A (a5), and then

ultimately a high F-sharp (f#6) in measure 152. This marks one of the few times in the concerto that members of the orchestra double the solo oboe part exactly. The second flute joins the first flute in measure 154, but the ensemble oboe continues to double the solo oboe until the end of the phrase at measure 160, as seen in Example 5.10 on the following page. The oboe's B-natural resolves to a C, and the key area implied in this section is C major. Once again, strings accompany the oboe with block chords on half notes and eighth notes, transitioning seamlessly with a *ritardando* into the third section of *Oboe Concerto*.

### SECTION A'

The third section of Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* is the shortest of the five parts of the work. Section A' begins at measure 184 and is comprised of only forty-four measures. This section has strong ties to the first section of the work. As in Section A, this section contains a repeating metric cycle of 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 measures that continues for the entire passage. The overall aesthetic is the same, with the solo oboe melody accompanied by blocked chords. However, the slow-moving, chordal accompaniment previously found in the strings three measures before the start of Section A' is immediately transferred to the clarinets, bassoons, and horns in measure 184, creating a refreshing combination of timbres despite the occurrence of repeated material.

In measures 187-198, the solo oboe melody is essentially the same as in Section A, measures 4-15 (after the sustained B-flat); it is merely transposed up a step with slightly altered rhythms, an added passing tone at measure 187, and a subtle embellishment at measure 191. Aside from these alterations, the melody as it progresses to the fermata is identical in these two sections. A side-by-side comparison of these two

Fl. 1

Fl. 2/Picc.

Ob./EH.

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Perc.

SOLO

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

149

150

151

152

Example 5.10 *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 149-152), full score

oboe melodies from Sections A and A' can be seen in the following example. The oboe melody in Section A' begins almost identically to Section A, but is simply transposed and reorchestrated. Higdon uses this technique quite well, adapting and recycling old material to make it sound almost unrecognizable, as seen in Example 5.11.

SOLO OBOE

SOLO OBOE

SOLO OB.

SOLO OB.

SOLO OB.

SOLO OB.

*mf*

*mp*

*p*

*p*

Example 5.11 *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 4-15 and mm. 187-198), oboe solo

The composer employs this technique frequently, and always reorchestrates recycled material the second time in order to offer a “sparkle of originality and freshness.”<sup>144</sup> For

<sup>144</sup> Reitz, 124.

example, in *Concerto for Orchestra*, the aforementioned oboe solo with trombone chordal accompaniment in measure 42 is later transferred to an alternating trumpet and trombone solos with string accompaniment at measure 177.<sup>145</sup> Higdon reused much of the melodic material from Sections A and B of the oboe concerto in sections A' and B', respectively.

Section A' continues from 199-218 with developmental material. This section includes increasingly melismatic lines in both the solo oboe and the orchestra. Flourishing sixteenth and thirty-second notes build the rhythmic intensity and suspense with limited swells to *mezzo forte*. A gradual *decrescendo* to *piano* and slowing rhythmic motion lead to measure 219, where the blocked major chords return, this time in the strings (not the woodwinds), reminiscent of Section A. Meanwhile, a dialogue of lyrical melodies takes place between the solo oboe, horn, and flute. Section A' ends softly and with little motion, making Section B' a surprising change in activity.

#### SECTION B'

Section B begins at measure 228 and has a tempo marking of  $\text{♩} = 142$  beats per minute. A developmental section from measures 228-262 has alternating measures of 4/4 and 3/4 meters. As in the previous fast section, Section B begins with triplet and eighth note fragments passed around the orchestra. However, this section also has a two-measure sustained B-flat (Bb5) in the principal flute, a subtle reminder of the oboe's first entrance. The flute's B-flats occur in measures 228-229, 234-235, 242-243, and 247-248. At measure 246, the solo oboe enters with a contrasting sustained high C (C6), and continues with a fragmented melody that includes sporadic half notes and rests. Measure

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*



252 marks the first appearance of a familiar triplet figure in the oboe. An accented melody of quarter notes and triplet figures continues in the solo part until measure 261. At measure 262, material from Section B returns, with a four-measure introduction of scattered motives and trills in first and second violins. However, the tonal center of this section has temporarily shifted down a half step to B-flat minor. The harmonic shift does not occur in the key signature, but rather with accidentals in the orchestral and solo parts.

The oboe enters with the opening melody at measure 266, but rather than the two-beat scale pattern found in Section B, it begins with the triplet figure directly. From measures 266-269, the melodic material is extremely similar to that of measures 135-138 (Section B), with accidentals and a few altered pitches. However, the measures that follow in these two excerpts are very dissimilar. In Section B, the triplet motive continues in the solo, but in Section B', flourishing quintuplets offer a change to the recycled material. However, the similar aesthetic and orchestration between sections B and B' makes it difficult to discern these minor changes upon an initial hearing.

Measure 274 marks an abrupt shift in tonal center from B-flat minor to B-minor, and the oboe enters with the identical triplet melody from Section B, measure 99. Measures 274-289 of Section B' are almost identical to measures 99-114 heard previously in Section B; both the solo oboe and the accompaniment are the same, with only altered percussion and the occasional added pickup notes in the solo oboe. In Section B, the oboe rests after this passage, but in Section B', the soloist continues with more quintuplets and scalar figures. At measure 295, the oboe returns to the identical triplet theme found in measure 145. Likewise, the soaring high half-note melody in the solo oboe, second flute, and orchestral oboe that was previously heard in Section B also appears in Section B'

from measures 299-302. The oboe completes the section in measure 310 with transitional material, and the orchestra continues with a lengthy tutti passage of continuous triplets and contrasting eighth notes. At measure 334, Higdon utilized the alternating 4/4 and 3/4 meters from the beginning of Section B', and gradually decreased the texture and rhythmic activity found in the orchestra. The first violin has an ascending solo that imitates the oboe (measures 335-345), and a much slower-moving solo in the viola at measure 346 follows. Sustained, dissonant pitches in the flutes and first clarinet accompany the viola. By measure 349, all other instruments have gradually faded from the orchestration except the viola—which ends its solo on a concert G-flat—and the horn, which joins the viola in unison and transitions seamlessly into Section C.

### SECTION C

The final, fifth section of the *Oboe Concerto* ends exactly as the concerto began, with a similar aesthetic and a mixed meter cycle of 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. Section C begins at measure 350 and continues to the end of the concerto at measure 411. Although the material is reminiscent of Section A, no exact repetitions or elaborations of past material are identifiable. The G-flat from measure 349 is sustained by the first and second horn (alternating) and principal flute through measure 360, where they begin oscillating between G-flat and E-flat. As in Section A, the sustained pitch is a non-chord tone, and is accompanied by unrelated major chords in the strings.

At measure 355, the English horn enters with a lyrical solo, presenting new musical material. After the soloist enters at measure 358, the English horn imitates it. Both instruments and their underlying chordal accompaniment in the strings loosely imply b-flat natural minor and D-flat major interchangeably. The English horn and oboe

continue their dialogue through measure 364 and demonstrate Higdon's style of alternating melodies. The two parts have been extracted from the full score for clarity in Example 5.12.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled '357' in a box, features an 'ENGLISH HORN' staff and a 'SOLO OBOE' staff. The English Horn part begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a series of eighth notes: B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The Solo Oboe part starts with a half rest, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a series of eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The second system, labeled '361' in a box, continues the English Horn part with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a series of eighth notes: B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The Solo Oboe part starts with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a series of eighth notes: B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The Solo Oboe part ends with a half note G4. The dynamic marking 'mf' is present under the Solo Oboe staff in the first system, and 'f' is present under the Solo Oboe staff in the second system.

Example 5.12. *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 357-364), English horn and solo oboe

From measure 365 to 385, the texture thickens as more instruments are added to the score and rhythmic activity heightens slightly. The strings continue homorhythmic blocked chords with half and quarter notes. Meanwhile, the solo oboe line is doubled in the second flute and also is joined by the English horn in measure 370. Two counter melodies are also present, one played by the principal flute and clarinets (joined by the principal violin at measure 380) and the other by the horns. All of the wind parts are increasingly active, with sixteenth and thirty-second notes permeating the texture. At measure 385, the orchestration immediately disperses, making way for a scalar, quasi-cadenza in the solo oboe that is supported by sustained pitches in the strings and sixteenth note interjections from the horns, principal flute, and principal clarinet. This section

includes the “run” referred to by Kathryn Greenbank, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

At measure 389, a similar content returns from before the scalar passage; the solo oboe is doubled by flute in measure 389 only, then by English horn from 390-393, while the strings sustain. The activity is dramatically increasing in this section in all parts; beats two and three of measure 393 (a 3/4 measure) contain a huge climax. These beats pair a descending and ascending dodecuplet scale in all strings and upper winds with a descending dodecuplet in the oboe.<sup>146</sup> The oboe ends on a D-natural, marking an immediate shift to B-flat major. While the solo oboe rests for one measure, the orchestra has a surge in pitch level and dynamic up to *fortissimo* on beat 1 of measure 395 (2/4 measure). At the exact same time, the solo oboe reenters at a *pianissimo* dynamic on a sustained B-flat (Bb4). From measures 395-396, the oboe emerges from the texture with a *crescendo* while the orchestra has a *decrescendo* to *pianissimo*, creating a mesmerizing effect, as seen in Example 5.13 on the following page.

In measure 396, the orchestra is reduced to blocked major chords in the strings, which parallel the beginning of the concerto in Section A, as well as the center movement, Section A'. As in the beginning of the concerto, the solo oboe plays a minor seventh to A-flat, before beginning a series of fragmented lines with sustained pitches. Each time the oboe sustains, contrapuntal solo lines appear in principal violin and trumpet. These parts are marked “solo” and are equal to or greater in dynamic than the oboe solo part. Both solo violin and trumpet lines contain intervals of sevenths. In measure 401, the principal violin joins the strings’ blocked chords. The oboe and trumpet continue their dialogue until measure 409, where the oboe’s lyrical melody comes to rest

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<sup>146</sup> The term dodecuplet indicates twelve notes per beat.

Fl. 1 *f* *ff* *mp*

Fl. 2/Picc. *f* *ff* *mp*

Ob./EH. *ff*

Cl. 1 *f* *ff* *mp*

Cl. 2 *ff* *p*

Bsn. 1 *ff* *pp*

Bsn. 2 *ff* *pp*

Hn. 1 *ff* *pp*

Hn. 2 *ff* *pp*

Tpt. 1 *f* *ff* *p*

Tpt. 2 *f* *ff* *p*

Perc. *f* *ped.* *Lv.*

SOLO *pp*

Vln. 1 *div.* *ff* *mp*

Vln. 2 *div.* *ff* *mp* *Solo* *f*

Vla. *unis.* *ff* *div.* *mp* *f* *2 Soloists*

Vc. *ff* *mp* *f*

Cb. *ff* *mp*

Example 5.13, *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 394-396), full score

on a final sustained B-flat, surrounded by lush chords in the strings that finally resolve to a sustained B-flat major chord. This final statement from the oboe and strings is accompanied by a twinkling vibraphone, struck with triangle beaters and allowed to continue vibrating (marked *l.v.* in score). The oboe holds through a *pizzicato* B-flat chord in the strings, alone over a fermata, and through a final *pizzicato*, as can be seen in Example 5.14 on the following page.

The concerto does not have the typical showy, technical ending that one might expect in traditional concerto form. In this author's opinion, the lyrical solo melodies and sustained tones found at the conclusion of Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* leaves listeners with a lasting impression of the oboe's resonant sound.

#### Piano Reduction

Higdon wrote the piano reduction for her *Oboe Concerto* with collaboration from several pianists at the Curtis Institute. Naturally, the piano reduction does not capture the unique timbres of the various ensemble instruments, particularly the wide variety of percussion found in the concerto score. However, it does provide another avenue of performance for oboists or saxophonists who do not have the opportunity to play with a large ensemble. Higdon expressed that she intended for the piano reduction to be performed and not used merely for purposes of rehearsal, which greatly expands the potential number of performers of the concerto.<sup>147</sup>

The piano reduction instructs the accompanist to "leave out voices if necessary," due to dense scoring.<sup>148</sup> The thick, often closed-position scoring makes it difficult to bring out the accompanying lyrical melodies in the slow sections. Out of necessity, the

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<sup>147</sup> Higdon interview.

<sup>148</sup> Piano reduction score.



parts of unpitched percussion instruments are changed to notes, but this adds confusion to the fast sections of the work. In addition, the contrasting eighth notes and triplet figures found throughout the fast sections, previously found in independent parts, are difficult for the accompanist to perform alone. These instances make the piano reduction somewhat difficult for the pianist to play convincingly. Overall, the piano reduction gives an adequate impression of Higdon's concerto, though it lacks the color and dramatic effect of the full orchestral or wind ensemble scores.



## CHAPTER SIX: PERFORMERS' PERSPECTIVES

As previously stated, Jennifer Higdon used formulaic meter patterns and unpredictable rhythms and harmonies when composing her single-movement *Oboe Concerto*. These characteristics, among others, certainly make the piece more complex and unusual, yet they may also add to the difficulty of the piece for conductor and performers alike. Similarly, Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* introduces a variety of obstacles to performers and, therefore, was transformed over time in response to performer and conductor feedback. During their respective interviews, conductor Michael Haithcock, oboists Kathryn Greenbank and Nancy Ambrose King, and saxophonist Timothy McAllister revealed the challenges they faced while rehearsing and performing Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* in its various forms.

Throughout the concerto, wide intervals are present in the solo oboe and accompanying solo instruments, which could potentially lead to intonation problems, particularly when doubling occurs between the soloist and orchestra. Large intervals in the fast sections can also be difficult to articulate in the low register. The solo part contains the full range for the oboe from its lowest B-flat (Bb3) to its highest F-sharp (F#6); these extremes in register challenge the performer, particularly in the low register, where the composer often marks the score *piano* or *pianissimo*. The unusual harmonic motion and unpredictable phrase lengths can add difficulty to performer interpretation.

Michael Haithcock, University of Michigan Director of Bands, discussed the process of preparing the concerto from a conductor's perspective in a phone interview with the author on May 4, 2009. He also enumerated the challenges faced by the Symphony Band and described his contributions to the final edition of the wind ensemble

arrangement of Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* in detail. According to Haithcock, The University of Michigan's Symphony Band had two initial rehearsals of the arrangement's earliest drafts, one in mid-December of 2008 and one in mid-January of 2009. After both rehearsals, Haithcock sent rehearsal recordings and suggestions to Higdon. He elaborated:

There were things that I didn't think worked very well in the original version I got from her, like how she wrote for contrabass clarinet instead of double bass. Playing the contrabass clarinet pianissimo at the beginning of each of those slow sections is a squeak waiting to happen.

The natural response of the various bowed orchestral string instruments allows reliable entrances at soft dynamics. However, for wind instruments, particularly low reed instruments, response is unreliable and often louder than intended. In Haithcock's opinion, the opening slow accompaniment passage in the orchestral version would be relatively easy for stringed instruments, but that sustained breath support, intonation, and extended phrasing were a major challenge for wind instruments. To help support the winds, Haithcock asked Higdon to "add a marimba to the bass line because the poor clarinet section was just hanging out to dry."<sup>149</sup> The marimba doubles the clarinets or low reeds, depending on the slow section accompaniment, playing the original cello line.<sup>150</sup> The score instructs the player to "roll" the mallets in order to sustain its sound and make greater dynamic changes, while avoiding a rhythmic, percussive effect. With this alteration to the score, the marimba could sustain the accompanying sound even while the clarinets or other members of the wind ensemble were breathing between phrases.

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<sup>149</sup> Michael Haithcock, phone interview with the author (recorded for reference), Baton Rouge LA: 4 May, 2009.

<sup>150</sup> The marimba doubles the clarinets in the first slow section from measures 1-70, then the low reeds (bassoon or bass clarinet) from measures 184-227. There is no marimba scored in the final slow section.

Haithcock also requested that phrase markings and more specific dynamics be added to the accompaniment parts and score throughout the slow sections. Higdon made corrections to the parts according to his suggestions. Haithcock explained:

All those dynamics and shapings in the parts are things I asked her to put in there based on what we rehearsed, because if you can just imagine the notes on a blank page, there's no sense for the clarinets of what the strings might do naturally.

He also suggested that several low, soft saxophone and contrabass clarinet lines be omitted from the slow sections due to uncontrollable volume. In addition, the low, exposed eighth note and triplet motives in the flutes were doubled by muted trumpets for clarity of articulation at Haithcock's request (measures 87-93). The changes Haithcock suggested were somewhat subtle but offered, as he stated, "some sense of musical flow to the ideas that are needed to make the piece work" for this particular ensemble's instrumentation in regards to expression, phrasing, and consistency.<sup>151</sup> Similar minor alterations are found throughout the wind ensemble score.

Haithcock also commented on the difficulty of the wind ensemble arrangement from the ensemble's perspective, and found the greatest challenge to be stylistic. For his Symphony Band, the top wind ensemble at The University of Michigan, Haithcock described the piece as "rather difficult":

This piece is not very technically demanding, but what is hard is the sensitivity and subtlety that it requires. Not just any group could sit down and play this just because the notes don't look hard. You have to have great sounds and people who can adjust quickly to tuning in a chamber music style. Playing it together was not a problem for our players. Playing it in tune with Dr. King was what we had to work on, and also absolutely matching all of her articulations.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Michael Haithcock, phone interview with the author (recorded for reference), Baton Rouge LA: 4 May, 2009.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

Haithcock described his rehearsal schedule, which included a rotation of players depending on the amount they played in the piece. For example, the third horn player plays only twenty-five of 411 measures. Therefore, Haithcock divided the time up into sectionals so that only the most involved players had lengthy rehearsals. He would then combine the full Symphony Band, which would be joined by soloist Nancy Ambrose King for the last hour of rehearsal.

As a conductor, Haithcock faced significant challenges in preparing *Oboe Concerto*. He described the experience of conducting Higdon's opening metric cycle of 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 measures:

Trying to make the meter changes flow in the shape of the phrases is a challenge, because if you get stuck being "precise" then there's no music, but if you go too far to the other extreme in terms of being all about the shape of the phrase, then you wind up getting yourself and everybody else turned around about the pattern and counting their rests.

Similarly, the unpredictable rhythms, phrase climaxes, intervals, and frequent meter changes would also be difficult for the soloist to perform, particularly from memory.<sup>153</sup> Finally, Haithcock described the challenge of drawing a high quality of sound from the ensemble, while still maintaining a dynamic that did not overpower the soloist. Among those who were interviewed for this monograph, the issue of balance between the ensemble and soloist was the most frequently cited problem in preparing Higdon's concerto.

Although Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* is presented in a single seventeen-minute movement, it does not present a significant challenge to the endurance of an experienced soloist because of the frequent and often lengthy tutti passages in the accompaniment. In fact, there are six evenly spaced tutti passages that constitute roughly five-and-a-half

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<sup>153</sup> No known soloist has played the Higdon concerto from memory as of March 1, 2010.

minutes of music, nearly one third of the piece. The shortest of these tutti passages is about thirty seconds, and the longest roughly one minute, forty seconds, giving the soloist adequate time to rest throughout the piece. As with many contemporary pieces, however, there are passages in the work that are uncomfortable for the oboe soloist due to a lack of idiomatic fingerings. Both Kathryn Greenbank and Nancy Ambrose King found the concerto to be technically challenging in Section C at measure 385. An ascending, extended B-flat natural minor scale starts on low B-flat (Bb3), the oboe's lowest note, and rises two-and-a-half octaves through the entire range of the oboe. The scale is repeated twice, the first time up to a high E-flat (Eb3) at the end of measure 385 and the second time up to a high F (F3) at measure 387. This particular set of pitches requires awkward finger combinations in the lowest, most unresponsive range of the oboe as well as in the highest four pitches, and appears in the oboe score in Example 6.1.

385 \*Soloist Ossia, leave out first 6 notes of run\*

387 [\*Ossia Same]

Example 6.1. *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 385-389), solo oboe part

At Greenbank's request, Higdon marked the first six notes of the passage as "Soloist Ossia, leave out first six notes of run" in both the full score and the oboe solo part. In the original premiere recording with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Greenbank observed the option to omit the first six notes, but she also omitted the second sextuplet,

leaving out everything but the last six pitches of the scale. In this premiere performance, the pitches from the solo part were assigned to the English horn (in F); after being transposed, the scale would be significantly more idiomatic on the English horn than it is on the oboe. For the oboe, the finger combinations in this “run” include sliding from low C (C3) to low D-flat (Db3), and the use of left E-flat and forked F in both octaves. For the English horn, however, the G-flat is removed from the scale, which begins comfortably in the treble clef staff on an F-natural after transposition. Interestingly, Higdon did not include this passage in the English horn part in her final published edition of the concerto. Instead, she placed the first twelve notes of the scalar passage in the violin, but she specified that the “run” should be played by the first stand only, and “only if Soloist leaves out notes of run.” This appears in the score as seen in Example 6.2.

Example 6.2. *Oboe Concerto* (mm. 385-386), solo oboe and first violin

As with its orchestral counterpart, the wind ensemble arrangement includes the option for the soloist to omit the first set of notes in the scalar passage at measure 385. However, those notes are not replaced by cues in the English horn, but are instead assigned to the principal oboe in the ensemble. This seems peculiar considering that the difficulty of the passage would simply be transferred from one oboist to another. Regarding the difficulty of the concerto, King stated:

I didn't find it challenging at all, except for that B-flat run. I think that's what I enjoyed about it. There's virtually nothing that seemed tricky at all to me. The B-flat run wasn't even really a problem. The hardest part for me was the low C-sharps, and getting them in tune. Of course, the oboe's C-sharp is so low, and I noticed that the clarinets that are paired with the oboe in the opening tended to be high, so we did have to do a few takes. That was the hardest part for me, getting the low notes in tune with the wind ensemble. The concerto is not that difficult, though. It really relies on the beauty and sonority of the instrument more than technique. Everything lays very well under your fingers.<sup>154</sup>

McAllister shared King's opinion that Higdon's concerto is not overly difficult when compared to other contemporary works. This was particularly true for McAllister, who pointed out that much of the concerto is in C major or minor after being transposed for the B-flat soprano saxophone. McAllister stated simply that the concerto is "quite comfortable for the saxophone."<sup>155</sup> However, he did elaborate on some of the inherent difficulties of the piece:

Any time you transpose a piece from oboe to saxophone at pitch or from any instrument to saxophone at pitch, you're pushing the saxophone out of its comfortable, standard range. This piece pushes the saxophone up to G, making it difficult to play some of those delicate and lyrical high parts. The piece is not for everybody; if you were a relatively inexperienced soprano saxophonist, it would present some serious problems because of control issues up in that register. On the other hand, the piece doesn't push the saxophone down to its lowest B-flat, which is good.<sup>156</sup>

McAllister also described in detail the difficulties of this piece regarding phrasing and musicality:

My biggest challenge was developing the huge phrases and melismatic quality of the piece. With the saxophone, you have less resistance in the response of the instrument when compared to the oboe, so your breath doesn't go a long way sometimes. I had to experiment with reed strengths to make it all balance out. I really found, in a wonderful way, that this

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<sup>154</sup> Nancy Ambrose King, phone interview with the author (recorded for reference), Baton Rouge, LA: 5 May, 2009.

<sup>155</sup> Timothy McAllister, phone interview with the Author (recorded for reference), Baton Rouge, LA: 12 September, 2009.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

piece marks an interesting shift in my playing. At that point, I had never played a full-length concerto just for soprano saxophone. I really credit my endurance and my personal work ethic to the Higdon concerto. Near the end, you've just played your guts out, and the piece returns to the pastoral section but you still have to project your sound. I've always tried to model my soprano saxophone sound after the focus of the oboe tone, and that was really challenging for my endurance. This piece was the first one to particularly address that in my own playing, and it was a very powerful experience.<sup>157</sup>

The experiences shared by the performers and conductors of Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* underscore the challenging aspects of the piece and the admiration they have for it.

### Concluding Remarks

Higdon's *Oboe Concerto* and its various arrangements for orchestra, wind ensemble, and soprano saxophone soloist demonstrate the composer's ability to transform her music in order to increase the number of potential performances. The concerto includes many of the compositional traits that are hallmarks of the composer's style, and is unified by recurring material in its contrasting slow and fast sections. The atypical single-movement work, with its five sections, metric cycles and unusual aesthetics, reflects Higdon's ingenuity and lack of conscious influences. While the concerto does not initially appear to be particularly difficult, it nevertheless presents significant challenges to the soloist, conductor, and ensemble in aspects of sustained phrasing and balance. In future commissions, Higdon will undoubtedly continue to enchant audiences with her unique music.

### Future Research

Continued research from this topic may include cognitive studies into the concept of intuition in music composition, which could help to better explain and define Higdon's compositional style. An investigation of Higdon's teaching methods as composition

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<sup>157</sup> McAllister interview.



faculty at the Curtis Institute may also aid in the understanding of her thought processes when composing instinctively. Finally, an in-depth comparative analysis of Higdon and her contemporaries—particularly those who write in a similar manner—could perhaps reveal more about Higdon’s subconscious influences.

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**APPENDIX I**  
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Jennifer Higdon  
Cheryl Lawson, Artist Representative  
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Dear Janice,

As requested, a *gratis* is hereby granted for the use of musical examples from the following compositions of Jennifer Higdon, solely for educational purposes as included in your doctoral monograph entitled *Jennifer Higdon's Oboe Concerto: The Composition, Transformation, and a Performer's Analysis*. Please retain a copy of this letter as evidence of this permission.

Thank you,

Jennifer Higdon

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## APPENDIX II

### JENNIFER HIGDON: COMPLETE LIST OF PUBLISHED WORKS

The following is a complete list of Jennifer Higdon's published works as of March 1, 2010. These works are categorized by instrumentation. Some of the pieces appear in multiple categories and all existing versions are listed. This information is taken directly from [jenniferhigdon.com](http://jenniferhigdon.com) with the composer's permission.

#### ***FLUTE***

<b>Title (Publishing Date)</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>
Amazing Grace	7 minutes	flute choir
Autumn Reflection	5 minutes	flute, piano
DASH (4 scorings)	5 minutes	clarinet, violin, piano (version A) flute, clarinet, piano (version B) flute, soprano saxophone, piano (version C) soprano saxophone, violin, piano (version D)
The Jeffrey Mode	5 minutes	flute, piano
Legacy (2 scorings)	8 minutes	flute, piano (version A) violin, piano (version B)
Lullaby (8 scorings)	3 minutes	mezzo soprano, flute, piano (version A) 2 flutes, piano (version B) flute quartet (version C) soprano saxophone, flute, piano (version D) 2 alto saxophones, piano (version E) soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, piano (F) soprano, alto saxophone, piano (version G) flute, clarinet, piano (version H)
Mountain Songs	8 minutes	flute choir
rapid.fire	6 minutes	solo flute
running the edgeE	6 minutes	2 flutes, piano
Song	5 minutes	solo flute
Steeley Pause	4 minutes	4 flutes in C
Trio Song	3 minutes	2 flutes in C, cello
Wedding Hymn (4 scorings)	5 minutes	soprano, flute, piano (version A) 2 flutes, piano (version B) flute, clarinet, piano (version C) soprano saxophone, violin, piano (version D)

#### ***MIXED INSTRUMENTATION***

<b>Title (Publishing Date)</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>
Autumn Music	13 minutes	woodwind quintet
Ceremonies	32 minutes	organ, brass
Dark Wood	10 minutes	bassoon, violin, cello, piano
Piano Trio	14 minutes	violin, cello, piano
Quiet Art	8 minutes	4 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos
Scenes from the Poet's Dreams	24 minutes	piano left hand, string quartet
Smash (2 scorings)	5 minutes	flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano (version A) flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano (version B)
Soliloquy (6 scorings)	7 minutes	cello, string orchestra (version A) clarinet, string orchestra (version B) clarinet, string quartet (version C) English horn, string quartet (version D)

		English horn, string orchestra (version E) flute, string quartet (version F)
Sonata for Viola and Piano	22 minutes	viola, piano
Splendid Wood	11 minutes	marimba ensemble (3 marimba, 6 players)
String Poetic	20 minutes	violin, piano
String Trio	17 minutes	violin, viola, cello
Summer Shimmers	6 minutes	woodwind quintet, piano
Trio Songs	3 minutes	2 C flutes, cello
Trumpet Songs	11 minutes	trumpet, piano
wissahickon poeTrees	20 minutes	flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion
Zaka	15 minutes	flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion
Zango Bandango	4 minutes	flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, marimba
ZONES (2 scorings)	17 minutes	percussion quartet, CD (version A) percussion quintet, CD (version B)

### ***STRING QUARTETS***

<b>Title (Publishing Date)</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>
Amazing Grace	7 minutes	two violins, viola, cello
An Exaltation of Larks	15 minutes	two violins, viola, cello
Impressions	26 minutes	two violins, viola, cello
Sky Quartet	24 minutes	two violins, viola, cello
Southern Harmony	15 minutes	two violins, viola, cello
Voices	18 minutes	two violins, viola, cello

### ***CHORAL***

<b>Title (Publishing Date)</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>
Deep in the Night	6 minutes	SATB chorus
Imagine	minutes	
O magnum mysterium (3 scorings)	6 minutes	SATB chorus, 2 flutes, 2 crystal glasses, chimes (A) SATB chorus, organ (version B) SATB chorus, a cappella (version C)
A Quiet Moment (3 scorings)	3 minutes	TTBB chorus (version A) SSAA chorus (version B) SATB chorus (version C)
Sanctus	4 minutes	SSAATTBB chorus (text in English and Latin)
Sing, Sing	3 minutes	SATB chorus
The Singing Rooms	37 minutes	solo violin, SATB chorus, orchestra
somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond	5 minutes	SATB chorus, vibraphone, piano
Southern Grace	24 minutes	SATB chorus
The Singing Art	5 minutes	SATB chorus, chimes, organ
Voice of the Bard	4 minutes	TTBB chorus

### ***VOCAL***

<b>Title (Publishing Date)</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>
Bentley Roses (4 songs may be performed independently)	14 minutes	mezzo soprano, flute, piano
breaking	3 minutes	soprano, piano
Dooryard Bloom	24 minutes	baritone, orchestra
Falling	2 minutes	voice, piano
Falling Deeper	2 minutes	voice, piano

Hope and Toe Dance	2 minutes	soprano, piano
In Our Quiet	4 minutes	soprano or mezzo soprano, piano
Lullaby (2 scorings)	3 minutes	mezzo soprano, flute, piano soprano, alto saxophone, piano
Morning Opens	3 minutes	soprano, piano
Notes on Love (8 songs may be performed individually or in any combination)	24 minutes	soprano, flute, piano
Red	3 minutes	bass-baritone, piano
The Solid Rock Song	2 minutes	voice, piano
Threaded	2 minutes	mezzo soprano, piano
To Home	3 minutes	soprano, piano
Wedding Hymn (2 scorings)	5 minutes	soprano, flute, piano (version A) 2 flutes, piano (version B)

#### ***CLARINET AND ENSEMBLE***

<b>Title (Publishing Date)</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>
Celestial Hymns	11 minutes	clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano
DASH (4 scorings)	5 minutes	clarinet, violin, piano (version A) flute, clarinet, piano (version B) flute, soprano saxophone, piano (version C) soprano saxophone, violin, piano (version D)
Light Refracted	20 minutes	clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano
Soliloquy (6 scorings)	7 minutes	cello, string orchestra (version A) clarinet, string orchestra (version B) clarinet, string quartet (version C) English horn, string quartet (version D) English horn, string orchestra (version E) flute, string quartet (version F)

#### ***PIANO or PIANO ENSEMBLE***

<b>Title (Publishing Date)</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>
Piano Trio	14 minutes	violin, cello, piano
Scenes from the Poet's Dreams	24 minutes	piano left hand, string quartet
Secret & Glass Gardens	8 minutes	solo piano
Summer Shimmers	6 minutes	piano, woodwind quintet

#### ***STRING ORCHESTRA***

<b>Title (Publishing Date)</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>
Celebration Fanfare	3 minutes	string orchestra
"String" from Concerto for Orchestra	4 minutes	string orchestra
To The Point	4 minutes	string orchestra

#### ***SAXOPHONE***

<b>Title (Publishing Date)</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>
Bop	1 minute	saxophone quartet
Lullaby (8 scorings)	3 minutes	mezzo soprano, flute, piano (version A) 2 flutes, piano (version B) flute quartet (version C) soprano saxophone, flute, piano (version D) 2 alto saxophones, piano (version E) soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, piano (version F)

		soprano, alto saxophone, piano (version G) flute, clarinet, piano (version H)
Short Stories	25 minutes	saxophone quartet

#### WIND ENSEMBLE AND BAND

Title (Publishing Date)	Duration	Instrumentation
Fanfare Ritmico (2002)	6 minutes	wind ensemble (arranged from orchestra)
Kelly's Field (2006)	7 minutes	concert band
Rhythm Stand (2004)	3 minutes	young concert band (Published by Hal Leonard Publishing)

#### ORCHESTRAL

Title (Publishing Date)	Duration	Instrumentation
Blue Cathedral (1999)	13 minutes	orchestra
Celebration Fanfare (2003)	3 minutes	string orchestra
City Scape (2002)	30 minutes	orchestra
Concerto 4-3 (2007)	20 minutes	string trio (2 violins and double bass) and orchestra
Concerto for Orchestra (2002)	35 minutes	orchestra
Dooryard Bloom (2004)	23 minutes	baritone solo, orchestra
Fanfare Ritmico (1999)	6 minutes	orchestra
Light (2006)	4 minutes	orchestra
Loco (2004)	8 minutes	orchestra
Machine (2002)	2 minutes	orchestra
Oboe Concerto (2005)	17 minutes	oboe solo, orchestra
On the Death of the Righteous	12 minutes	SATB chorus, orchestra
Percussion Concerto (2005)	23 minutes	percussion solo, orchestra
Piano Concerto (2006)	30 minutes	piano solo, orchestra
Shine (1995)	12 minutes	orchestra
The Singing Rooms (2007)	37 minutes	solo violin, SATB chorus, orchestra
Soliloquy (1989) (8 scorings)	7 minutes	cello, string orchestra (version A) clarinet, string orchestra (version B) clarinet, string quartet (version C) English horn, string quartet (version D) English horn, string orchestra (version E) flute, string quartet (version F)
Soprano Sax Concerto (2007)	17 minutes	soprano saxophone solo, orchestra
Spirit (2006)	5 minutes	orchestral brass, percussion
To the Point (2004)	4 minutes	string orchestra
Trombone Concerto (2005)	15 minutes	trombone solo, orchestra
Violin Concerto (2008)	33 minutes	violin solo, orchestra
Wind Shear (2000)	3 minutes	orchestral winds and horns



### APPENDIX III

#### JENNIFER HIGDON: COMPLETE DISCOGRAPHY

The following is a complete discography of the existing published recordings that include works by Jennifer Higdon as of March 1, 2010. The works are listed alphabetically by title. This information was taken directly from [jenniferhigdon.com](http://jenniferhigdon.com) with the composer's permission.

##### *Autumn Music*

**Performers:** Moran Quintet  
**Album Title:** "Postcards from the Center"  
**Year of Release:** 1998  
**Record Label:** Crystal Records - CD754  
**Available for Purchase from:** [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

##### *Autumn Reflection*

**Performers:** Jennifer Higdon (flute), Hugh Sung (piano)  
**Album Title:** "rapid.fire"  
**Year of Release:** 1995  
**Record Label:** I Virtuosi - IVR 501  
**Available for Purchase from:** Lawdon Press and at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

##### *Autumn Reflection*

**Performers:** Christina Jennings (flute), Rodney Waters (piano)  
**Album Title:** "Winter Spirits"  
**Year of Release:** 2001  
**Available for Purchase from:** Christina Jennings and at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

##### *Autumn Reflection*

**Performers:** Jeffrey Khaner (principal flute, The Philadelphia Orchestra), Hugh Sung (piano)  
**Album Title:** "American Flute Music"  
**Year of Release:** 2002  
**Record Label:** Avie - AVI 0004  
**Available for Purchase from:** Jeffrey Khaner, the gift shop in The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts (Philadelphia, PA), and at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

##### *Autumn Reflection*

**Album Performers:** Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)  
**Album Title:** "Summer Shimmers"  
**Year of Release:** 2008  
**Record Label:** Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M  
**Available for Purchase from:** [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

##### *blue cathedral*

**Performer:** Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)  
**Album Title:** "The Rainbow Body"  
**Year of Release:** 2003  
**Record Label:** Telarc CD-80596  
**Available for Purchase from:** [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

***City Scape***

**Performer:** Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)

**Album Title:** "Jennifer Higdon: *City Scape* and *Concerto for Orchestra*"

**Year of Release:** 2004

**Record Label:** Telarc CD-80620

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

*Read a review of this recording [here](#).*

***Concerto for Orchestra***

**Performer:** Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)

**Album Title:** "Jennifer Higdon: *City Scape* and *Concerto for Orchestra*"

**Year of Release:** 2004

**Record Label:** Telarc CD-80620

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

*Read a review of this recording [here](#).*

***DASH***

**Performers:** Verdehr Trio

**Album Title:** "International Connections"

**Year of Release:** 2006

**Record Label:** Crystal Records - CD946

**Available for Purchase from:** Verdehr Trio and amazon.com

*Read a review of this recording [here](#).*

***DASH***

**Album Performers:** Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)

**Album Title:** "Summer Shimmers"

**Year of Release:** 2008

**Record Label:** Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Deep In The Night***

**Performers:** The New York Concert Singers (Judith Clurman, cond.)

**Album Title:** "A Season's Promise"

**Year of Release:** 2001

**Record Label:** New World Records - 80592

**Available for Purchase from:** New World Records and at amazon.com

***Deep In The Night***

**Performers:** The Philadelphia Singers

**Album Title:** "The Best of Christmas on Logan Square"

**Year of Release:** 1998

**Archival Recording; Not Currently Available for Purchase**

***Dooryard Bloom***

**Performers:** Nmon Ford (baritone), Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)

**Year of Release:** 2009

**Record Label:** Telarc - B002I4XCOM

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Imagine***

**Performers:** Potomac Fever

**Album Title:** "Sometimes I Wish..."

**Year of Release:** 2000  
**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Impressions***

**Performers:** Cypress String Quartet, Anne Akiko Meyers, Alisa Weilerstein, Adam Neiman, Nick Kitchen, Melissa Kleinbart, Hsin-Yun Huang, and Mina Smith  
**Album Title:** "Jennifer Higdon: *Piano Trio / Voices / Impressions*"  
**Year of Release:** 2006  
**Record Label:** NAXOS 8.559298  
**Available for Purchase from:** NAXOS and amazon.com

***The Jeffrey Mode***

**Performers:** Jennifer Higdon (flute), Hugh Sung (piano)  
**Album Title:** "rapid.fire"  
**Year of Release:** 1995  
**Record Label:** I Virtuosi - IVR 501  
**Available for Purchase from:** Lawdon Press and at amazon.com

***Legacy***

**Performers:** Laurel Ann Maurer (flute), Joanne Pearce Martin (piano)  
**Album Title:** "Legacy of the American Woman Composer"  
**Year of Release:** 2000  
**Record Label:** 4 Tay - 4018  
**Available for Purchase from:** Laurel Ann Maurer and amazon.com

***Legacy***

**Album Performers:** Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)  
**Album Title:** "Summer Shimmers"  
**Year of Release:** 2008  
**Record Label:** Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M  
**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Lullaby***

**Performers:** Jennifer Higdon (flute), Hugh Sung (piano)  
**Album Title:** "rapid.fire"  
**Year of Release:** 1995  
**Record Label:** I Virtuosi - IVR 501  
**Available for Purchase from:** Lawdon Press and at amazon.com

***Mountain Songs***

**Performers:** Flutes Unlimited  
**Album Title:** "Music in Our House"  
**Record Label:** The Women's Chorus of Dallas  
**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Mountain Songs***

**Performers:** James Madison University Flute Choir  
**Album Title:** "Sounds and Colors"  
**Record Label:** FC 356  
**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***My True Love's Hair***

**Performers:** Anna Crusis Women's Choir (Jane K. Hulting, cond.)

**Album Title:** "Spaces Between the Stars"  
**Year of Release:** 2000  
**Available for Purchase from:** Anna Crusis Women's Choir

***O Magnum Mysterium***

**Performers:** Handel and Haydn Society Chorus (Grant Llewellyn, cond.)  
**Album Title:** "All is Bright"  
**Year of Release:** 2005  
**Record Label:** Avie - AVI 2078  
**Available for Purchase from:** the Handel and Haydn Society and amazon.com

***Percussion Concerto***

**Performers:** Colin Currie (percussion soloist), with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (Marin Alsop, cond.)  
**Album Title:** "Marin Alsop Conducts MacMillan, Adès, and Higdon"  
**Year of Release:** 2008  
**Available for Purchase from:** LPO's Online Store

***Piano Trio***

**Performers:** Cypress String Quartet, Anne Akiko Meyers, Alisa Weilerstein, Adam Neiman, Nick Kitchen, Melissa Kleinbart, Hsin-Yun Huang, and Mina Smith  
**Album Title:** "Jennifer Higdon: *Piano Trio / Voices / Impressions*"  
**Year of Release:** 2006  
**Record Label:** NAXOS 8.559298  
**Available for Purchase from:** NAXOS and amazon.com

***A Quiet Moment***

**Performers:** Potomac Fever  
**Album Title:** "Sometimes I Wish..."  
**Year of Release:** 2000  
**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***rapid.fire***

**Performer:** Jennifer Higdon (flute)  
**Album Title:** "rapid.fire"  
**Year of Release:** 1995  
**Record Label:** I Virtuosi - IVR 501  
**Available for Purchase from:** Lawdon Press and at amazon.com  
*Read a review of this recording [here](#).*

***rapid.fire***

**Performer:** Patti Monson (flute)  
**Album Title:** "Conspirare: Chamber Music for Solo Flute"  
**Year of Release:** 2000  
**Record Label:** CRI - CD867  
**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***rapid.fire***

**Album Performers:** Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)  
**Album Title:** "Summer Shimmers"  
**Year of Release:** 2008  
**Record Label:** Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M  
**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***running the edge***

**Performers:** ZAWA! (Claudia Anderson & Jill Felber)

**Album Title:** "ZAWA! Landmark Duos for Flutes"

**Year of Release:** 2002

**Record Label:** Neuma Records - 450101

**Available for Purchase from:** ZAWA!, Flute World and at amazon.com

***Short Stories***

**Performers:** Anicia Saxophone Quartet

**Album Title:** *Short Stories: American Music for Saxophone Quartet*

**Year of Release:** 2009

**Record Label:** NAXOS American - B002AT469U

**Available for Purchase from:** Anicia Saxophone Quartet and at amazon.com

***Soliloquy***

**Album Performers:** Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)

**Album Title:** "Summer Shimmers"

**Year of Release:** 2008

**Record Label:** Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Soliloquy***

**Performers:** Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Sean O'Boyle, cond.

**Album Title:** "Soliloquy"

**Year of Release:** 2007

**Record Label:** ABC Classics 2006

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com and TSO | Master Series

***Sonata for Viola and Piano***

**Performers:** Michael Isaac Strauss (viola), Hugh Sung (piano)

**Album Title:** "rapid.fire"

**Year of Release:** 1995

**Record Label:** I Virtuosi - IVR 501

**Available for Purchase from:** Lawdon Press and at amazon.com

***Sonata for Viola and Piano***

**Performers:** Michael Isaac Strauss (viola), Hugh Sung (piano)

**Album Title:** "I Virtuosi, Volume 1"

**Record Label:** I Virtuosi - IVR 505

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Song***

**Performer:** Laurel Zucker (flute)

**Album Title:** "Inflorescence II-Music for Solo Flute"

**Year of Release:** 2003

**Record Label:** Cantilena Records

**Available for Purchase from:** Cantilena Records, Flute World, and at amazon.com

***Song***

**Album Performers:** Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis

(conductor)

**Album Title:** "Summer Shimmers"

**Year of Release:** 2008

**Record Label:** Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Southern Harmony***

**Performers:** The Ying Quartet

**Album Title:** "United States Life Music 2"

**Year of Release:** 2007

**Record Label:** Quartz

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Steeley Pause***

**Performers:** Claudia Anderson, Julianna Moore, Jill Felber, Karen Yonovitz (flutes)

**Album Title:** "American Flute"

**Year of Release:** 1994

**Record Label:** Centaur - CRC 2203

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Steeley Pause***

**Performers:** Pat Spencer, Jayn Rosenfeld, Jennifer Higdon, Stephanie Starin (flutes)

**Album Title:** "rapid.fire"

**Year of Release:** 1995

**Record Label:** I Virtuosi - IVR 501

**Available for Purchase from:** Lawdon Press and at amazon.com

***Steeley Pause***

**Performers:** Pat Spencer, Jayn Rosenfeld, Jennifer Higdon, Stephanie Starin (flutes)

**Album Title:** "I Virtuosi, Volume 1"

**Record Label:** I Virtuosi - IVR 505

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***String Poetic***

**Performers:** Jennifer Koh (violin), Reiko Uchida (piano)

**Album Title:** "String Poetic"

**Year of Release:** 2007

**Record Label:** Cedille B0015P2FMA

**Available for Purchase from:** Cedille Records and amazon.com

***Summer Shimmers***

**Album Performers:** Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)

**Album Title:** "Summer Shimmers"

**Year of Release:** 2008

**Record Label:** Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

***Voice of the Bard***

**Performers:** Rutgers University Glee Club

**Album Title:** "Hear the Voice"

**Year of Release:** 2009

**Available for Purchase from:** The Rutgers University Glee Club

*Voices*

**Performers:** Nicholas Kitchen (violin), Melissa Kleinbart (violin), Hsin-Yun Huang (viola), Wilhelmina Smith (cello)

**Album Title:** "rapid.fire"

**Year of Release:** 1995

**Record Label:** I Virtuosi - IVR 501

**Available for Purchase from:** Lawdon Press and at amazon.com

*Voices*

**Album Title:** "An American Sampler: New Music from NACUSA"

**Record Label:** ERM 6662

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

*Voices*

**Performers:** Cypress String Quartet, Anne Akiko Meyers, Alisa Weilerstein, Adam Neiman, Nick Kitchen, Melissa Kleinbart, Hsin-Yun Huang, and Mina Smith

**Album Title:** "Jennifer Higdon: *Piano Trio / Voices / Impressions*"

**Year of Release:** 2006

**Record Label:** NAXOS 8.559298

**Available for Purchase from:** NAXOS and amazon.com

*wissahickon poeTrees*

**Performers:** Network for New Music (Jan Krzywicki, cond.)

**Album Title:** "Dream Journal"

**Year of Release:** 2002

**Record Label:** Albany Records (Troy 488)

**Available for Purchase from:** Albany Records and at amazon.com

*Zaka*

**Performers:** eighth blackbird

**Album Title:** "Strange Imaginary Animals"

**Year of Release:** 2006

**Record Label:** Cedille 9000 094

**Available for Purchase from:** eighth blackbird and amazon.com

*Zaka*

**Album Performers:** Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)

**Album Title:** "Summer Shimmers"

**Year of Release:** 2008

**Record Label:** Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**Available for Purchase from:** amazon.com

## VITA

Janice Crews is a native of Athens, Georgia, where she began her early oboe studies with University of Georgia Professor Emeritus John Corina. She received a bachelor's degree in music education (2002) and a master's degree in oboe performance (2006) from the University of Georgia in the studio of Dwight Manning. As an undergraduate, Crews was principal oboist in the UGA Wind Symphony, and she was awarded the Adora Mills Scholarship for Academic and Musical Excellence. She was principal oboist of the UGA Symphony Orchestra as both an undergraduate and graduate student. She has played in masterclasses with Marc Fink, Ashley Barrett, Leo Driehuys, Peter Veale, Mark Ostoich, Elizabeth Camus, Stephen Caplan, Robert Atherholt, Anne Leek, Rebecca Henderson, and John Mack. Crews has performed as a freelance oboist with the Rome Symphony (GA), Acadiana Symphony (LA), Augusta Symphony (GA), Louisiana Sinfonietta, Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra (LA), Gulf Coast Symphony (MS), and Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. In the summer of 2005, Crews was invited to play oboe and English horn with Orquesta Sinfónica de la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León in Monterrey, Mexico, in the farewell concert of the Three Tenors for an audience of 45,000. Miss Crews has performed as a soloist as a winner of the 2005 UGA Concerto Competition, with the Rome Symphony in 2006, and with the Louisiana Sinfonietta in 2008. Crews also performed at the 2006 International Double Reed Society conference with the Georgia Double Reed Ensemble. As a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Georgia, she received the university-wide Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award in 2006. Crews is a doctoral candidate in oboe performance in the studio of James Ryon at Louisiana State University, where she was principal oboe of the LSU



Symphony and LSU Wind Ensemble. An active music educator, Crews has extensive experience in private studio instruction and has taught at the elementary, middle school, high school, and college levels. She is currently employed by the East Baton Rouge Parish Talented Music Program, teaching music at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in five public schools.