From Distant Shores

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FROM DISTANT SHORES

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Music

in

The Department of Music

by
Jamie Laurance Phillips
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ABSTRACT

*From Distant Shores* is a three movement symphony for full orchestra.

Each movement follows an ABA form, with an initial statement of important thematic material, followed by a development section, and some restatement of the original material to complete the movement. The composition is divided into the following movements: Adagio, Largo, and Allegro.
INTRODUCTION

*From Distant Shores* was written over the course of two semesters during my second year as a graduate student at Louisiana State University. I feel that this piece captures my compositional style and shows the influences from the following musical idioms: 19th century German Romanticism, minimalism, and impressionism. This style has been shaped during my time studying with composer and mentor, Dinos Constantinides. *From Distant Shores* is a three movement symphony for full orchestra. The inspiration for this work comes from the composer Maurice Ravel, specifically through two pieces. The first piece, Ravel’s arrangement of Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, drew me in with its rich and beautiful orchestration and the variety of colors that Ravel is able to get through his use of extended chords. Wanting to learn more about the original composition that Ravel had arranged, I researched Mussorgsky’s original composition and discovered that it had been written as a tribute to his friend, the Russian architect and painter, Viktor Hartmann. Mussorgsky based his musical content on the drawings and watercolors of Hartmann. I found this attractive specifically because I’m interested in design and colors in music. As in architecture, I find that starting with a design is the first step to constructing a musical piece. I believe that design is the most important aspect of the compositional process, because this helps to provide a shape to the melodies and harmonies chosen. I think that there is a correlation between Mussorgsky’s design with his original composition and the way Ravel wrote music. Ravel’s use of extended chord tones beyond just a triad with a seventh provides additional colors in the music, sometimes creating dissonance. In my work, *From Distant Shores*, I tried to use dissonance to build tension, leading up to climaxes throughout each
movement. I was able to coordinate these climaxes through the use of graphs, which provided a design for the rise and fall of the musical phrasing.

The second work that greatly influenced my piece, *From Distant Shores*, is Maurice Ravel’s *Bolero*. This piece interests me because Ravel focuses on using the orchestra to reiterate the same melody throughout the entire work, but then builds the piece slowly through added density. The idea of using as many instruments for playing a main theme was interesting to me, which you will see in my first movement. The first melody from the introduction of the horn and trumpet is slightly changed and then passed along to the violins. This melody is then repeated throughout the first movement by almost all of the pitched instruments, minus the timpani, percussion, and contrabassoon. In the second and third movements, I used minimal percussion, particularly focusing on the snare drum, like Ravel did in *Bolero*. While this does have the feel of a march, I thought that the staccato sound of the snare drum kept the piece moving.

The last thing that I would like to mention about my piece regards the form. Each of the three movements is in a type of sonata form. I say type because they do not have the traditional development section held in the dominant key. Rather, I focus on presenting initial content, followed by a contrasting section, and then some restatement of the initial theme to conclude each movement. For example, in the first movement, the contrasting section begins with the introduction of the crotales and a neoclassical section highlighted by the continuous flow of sixteenth notes in the upper strings. While there is a change of key center, it is more of chromatic one than a tonic to dominant relationship. In the second movement, a second section begins with a new key area of E major, followed by chordal movement that is more similar to musical planing than
traditional modulation. In the final movement, there is a change of tempo at measure sixty-six as well as a repeat of the original theme in a new key. In this section I also used some accidentals to create a type of bi-tonality. This use of dissonance creates a contrast with the Romantic feel of the theme in the first and final sections.

Overall, my goal was to incorporate tonal colors through using dissimilar combinations of instrument groupings, create unity through form and restatement of themes in multiple movements, and use orchestral density as a compositional tool to create rising and falling motion to enhance the overall shape of the piece. I hope you enjoy this work, as I am very proud to present it to you.
INSTRUMENTATION

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in Bb
Bass Clarinet in Bb
Bassoon
Contrabassoon
Horn in F
Trumpet in C
Trombone
Tuba
Timpani
Percussion 1 – Bass Drum, Snare, Suspended Cymbal, Crotales
Percussion 2 – Suspended Cymbal, Bass Drum, Snare
Harp
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Contrabass
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
C. Bn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Tuba
Timp.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

$\sum_{i=1}^{18}$
$q = 76$

Suspended Cymbal (Mute Release)
II. LARGO
III. ALLEGRO
VITA

Jamie Laurance Phillips, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, received his Bachelor of Music from Louisiana State University (LSU). During his undergraduate degree, he had several performances of his compositions by LSU students at the LSU weekly recital hour and musical concerts affiliated with the LSU School of Music. He has had his composition *Expressions* premiered by the Louisiana Sinfonietta in January of 2015. In addition, he was commissioned to write a string orchestra piece, titled *Themes from Afar* by the Andover Public Schools, which was then premiered at their all strings concert in May 2015. He has worked at LSU for the Information Technology Services department since 2013 as a Digital Media Consultant, managing video resources for academic technology. In addition, he has continued to perform live music, sharpen his arranging skills, and merge his music and compositional training with technology. He was accepted into the LSU School of Music Graduate program for composition. He anticipates graduating with his Masters degree in May 2016. Jamie is a proud LSU alumnus and plans to continue promoting LSU for many years to come.