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## Jeff Scott's "Startin' Sumthin', Composed for the Monmouth Winds," Transcribed for Full Wind Band

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***STARTIN' SUMTHIN', COMPOSED FOR THE MONMOUTH  
WINDS:***  
**TRANSCRIBED FOR FULL WIND BAND**

A Dissertation

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  
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B.S., University of South Florida, 2014  
M.M., University of South Florida, 2020  
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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Chapter 1. Composer Background.....	1
Chapter 2. Overview of Original Composition.....	4
Chapter 3. Composition Decisions in Transcription.....	6
Chapter 4. Conclusion.....	9
Chapter 5. Transcription of Interview with Jeff Scott.....	11
Bibliography.....	37
Vita.....	38

## **Abstract**

The goal of this project is to create a wind band transcription of a work for a chamber music ensemble by Jeff Scott. Jeff Scott creates works that he considers “Urban Classical Music”. These works are rooted in European traditions and informed by his African American culture. His music is unapologetically influenced by the cultural experiences of his diverse, urban environment upbringing.

This project is intended to contribute to the overall body of wind band literature, specifically the body of wind band literature composed by underrepresented composers. There has been a lack of representation of African American composers throughout the history of western classical music, including the wind band medium, and this trend has continued into the twenty first century twenty-first century. The intention of this project is to take the work of a wonderful composer in our medium, and one who has not written for the wind band and create a transcription of his work in hopes to expose his voice and musical language to the wind band medium.

## Chapter 1. Composer Background

French Hornist, Composer, and Educator Jeff Scott is a native of Queens New York. At an early age, Jeff Scott was musically influenced by his mother, who would sing daily in their house.<sup>1</sup> At the young age of 14 Jeff Scott selected to play the French Horn in his middle school band. Scott's band director put pictures of the school instruments up in the band room and had his students select the instrument they would like to play. Scott decided to play the French horn due the rest of his classmates not picking the French horn.<sup>2</sup> When the band director pulled out all the instruments for the students, most of the instruments were shiny and new, except the French horn. Scott stated that the instrument looked like a piece of aluminum foil that had been crumbled up and tried to be smoothed out. When his friends saw the instrument that was handed to Jeff, they all laughed at his selection. This fueled his fire to play French horn and make that instrument sound like something.<sup>3</sup>

During his time in high school, Scott's band director was having lunch with an administrator one day and mentioned that he had a student with the real potential of being a great musician. Within that same year, Scott received an anonymous scholarship to attend the Brooklyn College Preparatory division for four years to take private horn lessons and theory classes. After this scholarship ran out, Carolyn Clark, Scott's first horn teacher, continued to give him the opportunity to study music when resources were not available to him. Scott considers this act of kindness by Carolyn his greatest influence to pursue music.

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<sup>1</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

<sup>2</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

<sup>3</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

After graduating from high school Scott pursued music at the Manhattan School of Music where he studied with David Jolly. He would go on to receive his masters at the State University of New York at Stony Brook under William Purvis. Scott would then go on to continue his studies with Scott Brubaker, who was the second horn player for the Metropolitan Opera, and the late Jerome Ashby, who was the associate principal horn player for the New York Philharmonic.<sup>4</sup> According to Scott, he had the best teachers at the best schools and that there was no reason for him to be bad at the French horn.<sup>5</sup>

Jeff Scott's performance credits are many and varied. They include being a part of the orchestra for Broadway shows which include the revival of *Showboat* from 1994 to 1997, *The Lion King*, from 1997 to 2005 and *On the Town*. Scott was also a member of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Dance Theater of Harlem since 1995.<sup>6</sup> He can be heard on movie soundtracks by Terence Blanchard and Tan Dun. Has collaborated with the late Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter, Chris Brubeck, Jimmy Heath, Freddy Cole, Chico O'Farill and Robin Eubanks. Jeff has also performed numerous times under the direction of Wynton Marsalis with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and has toured with the backing ensembles of Barbra Streisand and Luther Vandross.<sup>7</sup> Scott served as the French hornist of the Oberlin-founded ensemble Imani Winds for more than 20 years, just recently retiring. This position allowed Jeff to perform in venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Kennedy Center, and countless other prominent stages.

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<sup>4</sup> *Jeff Scott*. Yale School of Music. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2023, from <https://music.yale.edu/people/jeff-scott>

<sup>5</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

<sup>6</sup> *Jeff Scott*. Yale School of Music. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2023, from <https://music.yale.edu/people/jeff-scott>

<sup>7</sup> *Jeff Scott*. Oberlin College and Conservatory. (2022, March 14). Retrieved January 16, 2023, from <https://www.oberlin.edu/jeff-scott>

As an educator, Scott has led masterclasses and performances to hundreds of students during his time with the Imani Winds and the Mercury Brass Quintet. He is currently the Associate Professor of Horn at Oberlin College & Conservatory of Music. At Oberlin, Scott teaches private horn lessons, chamber music, a contemporary chamber ensemble and the Oberlin horn ensemble. Before being awarded the Associate Professor of Horn at Oberlin, Scott was on faculty of the music department at Montclair State University

When talking about Jeff Scott's compositions, Scott creates works that he considers are "Urban Classical Music".<sup>8</sup> These works are rooted in European traditions and informed by his African American culture. His music is unapologetically influenced by the cultural experiences of his diverse, urban environment upbringing living in an Jamaican neighborhood in Queens New York. Scott has many arrangements and original works for wind, brass, and horn quintets as well as jazz ensembles. Scott has served as a composer or arranger for a multitude of projects that include scoring an off Broadway production of "Becoming Something", "The Canada Lee Story", and a stage production of "Josephine Baker: A Life of Le Jazz HOT!".<sup>9</sup> Scott's mission with his compositions and arrangements is to broaden the scope of American music theory and composition, with the intention of introducing performers, teachers, students and audiences to the richness and value of our very own, American music.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Urban Classical Chamber Music: Music by Jeff Scott*. My Site. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2023, from <https://www.musicbyjeffreyscott.com/>

<sup>9</sup> *Jeff Scott*. Oberlin College and Conservatory. (2022, March 14). Retrieved January 16, 2023, from <https://www.oberlin.edu/jeff-scott>

<sup>10</sup> *Scott, J. (n.d.). Jeff Scott, French Hornist, Composer, Arranger and Educator. Urban Classical Chamber Music.* <https://www.musicbyjeffreyscott.com/>

## Chapter 2. Overview of Original Composition

*Startin' Sumthin'* for the Monmouth Winds is a five-minute original composition scored for wind quintet. The complete instrumentation includes flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and horn. This piece was written and premiered in 2012 as part of a fundraiser for the Imani Winds Quintet. When approached by the Monmouth Wind Quintet, Jeff decided to write something that wasn't status-quo for a wind quintet. Keeping in mind that the Monmouth Wind Quintet was made up of performers whose main profession was not music, Scott wanted to break out of the mold of the "basic canon or Hindemith style" way of composing for the wind quintet. Jeff Scott decided to take this opportunity to compose a piece that would be out of the comfort zone that the quintet is used to playing. This was Scott's way of introducing a swing era influenced work into the wind quintet repertoire. When preparing this work and deciding the interpretation of the work, it is important not to swing the eighth notes as in the Bop Era. This piece should have the feeling of a light shuffle and the eighths should have a subtle lilt. The style of the piece should resemble jazz music of the 1930's or 1940's and should be consistent with third stream music. The term "third-stream", coined by the American composer Gunther Schuller in the 1960s has by now been largely accepted by the musical world as a useful and valid description of a style which is a fusion between jazz and "serious" music. As the repertoire for band grew throughout the twentieth century, composers looked for ways to be innovative and add their own distinctive voice to the literature. This attempt for a unique sound led many composers to incorporate elements of jazz into their music. Jeff Scott chose this style of jazz because to him, this style of jazz would be easier to absorb for the musicians and audiences.<sup>11</sup> The style of *Startin' Sumthin'*

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<sup>11</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.



would be most consistent with Billy Mays or Count Basie in the big band era and not Dizzy Gillespie or John Coltrane.

The title *Startin' Sumthin'* for the Monmouth Winds originated from not being able to come up with a melody for the piece. Jeff took the original opening motif and played with it rhythmically by starting and stopping it over and over until something happened and made the motif become the melody. Jeff states that it came about because he couldn't get something starting.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

### **Chapter 3. Composition Decisions in Transcription**

When transcribing a piece from its original form, there are multiple decisions one must make throughout the process. The first decision I had to make was to decide which type of ensemble I wanted to use as the medium for the transcription. In the beginning stages of this transcription, I started thinking about transcribing *Startin' Sumthin'* for orchestral winds and percussion section. I decided against this because of the lack of saxophones in an orchestral winds section, which I wanted to include the color of the saxophone section. In mm. 192 – mm. 204, Jeff Scott writes a difficult oboe solo. In my interview with Jeff, he stated that Toyin, oboe performer in the Imani Winds, always mentioned how he never wrote solos for the oboe in his compositions. When working on the transcription it was my intent to keep all solos in the original instrument from the original composition but after transcribing the oboe solo, it seemed more achievable when placed in the soprano saxophone. After many discussions it came apparent that more ensembles would have a better saxophone section than they would an oboe section so in hopes that the level of playability would be improved, I moved the oboe solo into the soprano saxophone.

Since the original composition was written for a group with a high skill level, the piece pushes the ability of each performer. The original parts explore the upper and lower range of each instrument included. In transcribing this piece to full wind band and keeping the level of playability in mind, using the majority of the instruments in a wind band allowed me to break up certain passages within the original composition and place them in instruments that best fit the range of that passage. One great example of this is at mm. 80 – mm. 82 of the original composition where the horns are asked to play low f and e below the staff. In the transcription, these notes are in the trombone and tuba section.

In a standard wind quintet composition, there are five separate parts; in my transcription there are 29 different parts, including the percussion. With the dramatic difference in number of parts, I paid close attention to how Scott utilized tutti scoring and soloistic scoring within his original composition. In doing so, the transcription mimics the original composition in terms of scoring. For example, when Scott has the full wind quintet playing, the entire wind ensemble is playing and when the original composition is thinly scored, the transcription is also thinly scored.

One of the biggest concerns and obstacles I had to face was composing original percussion writing into a piece that did not include percussion parts. As a trumpet player with little to no percussion experience, this step of the process was the most daunting part due to lack of knowledge. Throughout the transcription process I spent extended time studying the percussion writing of Donald Grantham's pieces' *Southern Harmony*, *Baron Cimetiere's Mambo*, and *J'ai été au bal*. Grantham's percussion writing helped me compose parts for the percussion that complimented the wind level of playability would be improved sections and was also not overbearing. After speaking to percussionist, they mentioned that the best percussion writing, in their opinion, is when their parts are written as soli sections or as a way to complement the wind parts. Some mentioned that most times, composers ask percussionist to play parts that would be considered percussion concertos but due to the wind writing, they cannot be heard. With this comment in mind, any time percussion is playing their part emphasizes what is happening in the wind section, or they are a part of the soli writing in which the color of their instrument should be heard. One major example of this is in measure 180 when the marimba, timpani, and string bass set up the Latin dance groove to introduce the soprano saxophone soloist. In the process of writing for percussion, I also spent time in the percussion studio where I had access to many different percussive instruments. This allowed me to

experiment with different sounds which helped me decide which instruments I wanted to add into the transcription.

In the original composition, Scott builds the intensity leading to the final two chords by utilizing D minor arpeggios which land on a D minor 7 chord on the down beat of the last measure. He then adds a final F minor 7 chord with an added 9<sup>th</sup> in which according to our interview together is his way of ending the piece saying “jazz”. When transcribing the last couple of measures for the full wind ensemble, the piece builds with great intensity with full tutti scoring and then the last chord didn’t seem to fit well with this type of ensemble. After struggling with the last note and feeling like it might not be the best way to end the transcription, I emailed Scott asking for his permission to end the piece on the down beat. He immediately responded stating “of course,” and that the last note was not in the original piece. It was only after a recording session did Scott feel as if the ending needed something more.

## Chapter 4. Conclusion

While progress of including underrepresented composers in concert programs has been made in certain mediums over the last few decades, the wind band medium has just started to move in this direction. With new inclusive initiatives being created, a number of universities are starting to prioritize works by underrepresented composers in their concert programming. By increasing the inclusion of underrepresented composers in the wind band repertoire this trend has the potential to experience exponential growth over the next few years.

For my final project, I chose to contribute to the wind ensemble repertoire by transcribing a chamber work by an underrepresented composer. When trying to choose a piece to transcribe, several factors were considered when selecting the composer and piece. The biggest factor was that I wanted to transcribe a piece by a living underrepresented composer and one that has not written for the wind band medium yet. Transcribing a piece by a living composer allowed me the availability during the process for guidance and insight. It was also my hope that once the transcription is published, the living composer would be commissioned to write an original piece for the wind band. For these reasons and more, I chose to transcribe a wind quintet piece by Jeff Scott. His compositional style is rooted in European traditions and informed by his African American cultural experiences of his diverse, urban environment upbringing living in an Jamaican neighborhood in Queens New York. Scott's catalogue includes many arrangements and original works for wind, brass, and horn quintets well as jazz ensembles. Scott has also served as a composer and arranger for a multitude of projects for Broadway productions. Choosing Scott's wind quintet composition, *Startin' Sumthin'*, allowed for many musical decisions in terms of color and voice placement due to expanding a piece with five instruments into a piece for twenty-nine different voices.

The rehearsal process for this transcription began on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, for the LSU Wind Ensemble. I have the privilege to conduct this group in two rehearsals and their final performance of the transcription. The wind ensemble rehearsed for an average of twenty-five minutes a week leading up to the final concert. Throughout the first cycle, I was sent recordings and comments on the layout of the physical parts and score. These comments and recordings helped make revisions as the piece evolved throughout the rehearsal process. *Startin' Sumthin'* was performed on Wednesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 by the LSU Wind Ensemble at the Student Union Theater. The piece was included in the concert with *Magnolia Star* by Steve Danyew, *Reliable Sources* by Nico Muhly featuring Dr. Nancy Belmont on Bassoon, *Second March from Gustave III* transcribed and conducted by Col. John R. Bourgeois and *Come Sunday* by Omar Thomas. While the performance of my transcription wasn't perfect, there were moments that genuinely embodied the spirit of the piece. The performance was well received, and I have since been approached by conductors of other ensembles interested in programming the work for their ensembles on upcoming concerts. The day after the concert I was approached by a director at another university asking to purchase my transcription for their next concert.

Through the creation of this transcription, I've learned a great deal about Jeff Scott and his compositions, orchestration techniques for wind band, writing percussion parts, and how to expand individual melodic lines in a chamber setting to allow them to project within the wind band while maintaining appropriate balance with the other countermelodic and harmonic lines. These skills have allowed me to write a transcription that maintains the integrity of Scott's original piece.

## **Chapter 5. Transcription of interview with Jeff Scott**

Trevor Butts (TB): I first want to thank you for taking the time out of your day to meet with me. I have been looking forward to this meeting for a long time! So, you know, I've read all of your biographies on all the websites that you're on. And they all talk a lot about you growing up in Queens. So, if you could just start with that, and how you got into music and why you chose the French horn, and maybe not the trumpet!

Jeff Scott (JS): Right, right. Well, first, what do you play?

TB: I'm a trumpet player.

JS: Your trumpet, so obviously your bias. Y'all, with all of those high notes. I don't know. Um, I chose the horn, mainly because no one else did. When I was in sixth grade, yeah, we're in sixth grade, we had already gone through like recorder and stuff like that. And the band director put pictures, little cut out, like designs of the instruments on the bulletin board, and went in alphabetical order. And folks got to choose an instrument, just by pointing at it. None of us knew any of the instruments, you know, we were young and we didn't know anything. And what folks were doing in my class, where they were choosing, like, if your friend chose flute, you chose flute if your friend chose clarinet, you chose clarinet.

JS: And I had a lot of friends, but I just thought that was a dumb reason to choose an instrument, you know, I want to play because you're playing it. So, I literally chose the French horn because it was the only one no one chose. I had no idea what it was. And the funniest part about it was

that in my in my band closet, the band room, instrument closet, they had fairly new instruments, except for the French horn. And so the band director brought them all out. And then he opened up the case for the French horn, and it looked like, I told this to everybody, it looked like aluminum foil that had been crushed and then somebody tried to move stretch and smooth it out. It looked horrible. And the kids just laughed and laughed and laughed, because they all had shiny trumpets, and, you know, then this came out. So, I think that was a little bit of an incentive. To make it sound like something.<sup>13</sup>

JS: And moving on from there. It was interested in Queens in the 80s. So, you know, there was no real music program, like we had music, but it wasn't, you know, music had already been sort of, extricated from the budgets there. And so, my band director when he saw that I had some, some talent. The way I got into music which was just a blessing. He was having lunch one day with an administrator at my school. And he said, I have this kid that has got some talent, I really wanted to get some theory lessons or something like that, and private lessons. And he basically said he has got no bread. And so, this woman anonymously, called Brooklyn College, which had a Saturday program for kids that wanted to learn, and donated four years of lessons, and theory and everything to be in the Saturday program. And she wanted it to be anonymous. And my band director came to me the next day and he says, I want you to go to Brooklyn College, they have auditions for like a young person's program. And I went there and audition and they said, You're in and you got a free ride. And I thought, Oh, of course, you know, I'm in because I'm great. You know, and it was because of this woman. And the only way I found out was because she passed away.

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<sup>13</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.



JS: By the time I was in the conservatory at Manhattan School of Music, the Brooklyn college Division got in touch with me. Don't know how and they said you don't know this woman but she's passed away and you would want to know the story. And that's how I found out. I was 21 or 22 at that point. So, you know, some eight years later that she was the reason why I got these private lessons.

TB: You never think of those things would ever happen to anybody. And then it just does randomly. That's awesome.

JS: She just out of the kindness of her heart. Never anyone to know. Didn't tell anyone. Yeah. And, you know, it's important to say these days because that's the way the world is, was a white woman. She just out of the kindness of her heart, she had no reason other than because she was just a good person and wanted to do good.

TB: That's amazing. And we wish more people were like that, you know?

JS: So that's, that's how I got started. For sure.

TB: That's great. And then, you know, I saw Manhattan School music and then Stony Brook. And then now at Oberlin, could you talk about going into your masters and your time at Stony Brook and where you are today?

JS: Yeah, well I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the other blessing I had, because I don't get into Manhattan School of Music unless it was for the teacher who was at that Saturday program with me, Carolyn Clark.

JS: When that scholarship ran out, I was still in high school, and I had to audition for college. And that woman taught me for free for the next three years. Every Saturday until I got into school. I had no money to afford lessons for free. So, she got me into Manhattan School music. I studied there with David Jolly, the great David Jolly. I then went and did my Master's at Stony Brook University, studied with Bill Purvis. And I actually started a doctoral program. I didn't finish it because I ended up getting work pretty much right in the middle of that. But during that time, I spent with the late Jerome Ashby, who was associate principal New York Philharmonic, and with Scott Brubaker, who's retired now, but he was second horn in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. So, I tell everybody, I have zero reason to suck. If I sound bad it's nobody's fault but my own. I literally had all the best teachers and the best schools. Brother you better know how to play!

TB: That's awesome. Now, the person that was teaching you for free, that was your high school band director or just somebody that you knew.<sup>14</sup>

JS: That was when I went to that Saturday program, the preparatory, it was a preparatory division. We had theory classes and you had to have private lessons. The woman who gave me the private lessons that ended up being my teacher all through high school, junior high and high school. That scholarship ran out. I was in 10th grade, right? It was just a four-year thing. And I

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<sup>14</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

had no bread! So she said, hey, just keep coming. Because she saw that I was really into it. I was getting into Youth Orchestra and stuff like that. So just keep coming. And even when she couldn't give me a lesson, her husband who was a trombone teacher, gave me a lesson, you know, he didn't know horn, but he was like, we'll figure it out. Don't worry. And now I'm godfather to one of their sons. It's like, she's mine. You can't get into these schools without lessons. She held my hand all the way through.

TB: So, when did you realize that you were wanting to compose or do half and half compose and perform?

JS: I knew I wanted to compose when I was just started on the instrument, I told my mother, I was going to be the Michael Jackson of French horn. I was not kidding, either. Then I was arranging, like thriller, like I could play when I was like, 13.

JS: I could play that on horn because I wanted to be a rock and roll solo music horn player, and I was doing all of these arrangements of all of these like, rock and roll, hip hop tunes. And I figured, I don't know, I'm sure they're horrible. I don't know where they are. But they're horrible arrangements. But I would do that. And then I would write my own songs. I didn't know if I was going to be a r&b singer. I had delusions that I somehow sang and played French horn. I'd be the only one and in that sense, I'd be a novelty and make 50 bucks.

TB: More than the rest of us!

JS: So, I always knew that, you know, the music that I grew up on was a huge influence on me wanting to be in the music business. That said, you know, I grew up learning traditional European pedagogy. So, the Mozart concertos and all that stuff, you know, where not what my<sup>15</sup> heart wanted, you know, I was I grew up on in the 80s, with hip hop and soul and funk and my<sup>16</sup> mom listened into, like, Otis Redding, and Sam Cooke, and stuff like that and Little Richard. So, you know, it was this weird mix of musical tastes that I had. Unfortunately, once I got to conservatory, you know, you had to stop with all of that.

JS: But that's kind of when the influence started, learning how to play the horn, but still wanting to do the music I grew up on.

TB: And one of my questions was going to be about how you explained yourself as an “urban classical music” writing and how that influences your writing? And you explained it perfectly.

TB: And just mixing in your, you know, background and history with what we're learning in academia, I mean it's probably why you were drawn to the piece.

JS: And I'm sure drawn to a lot of other pieces that incorporate blues and jazz pedagogy but it is changing, I don't mean changing so much as it's, it's not the focus anymore. But it's expanding. And it's about being more inclusive of more music, not just jazz and blues. But it's really important I think that, especially when you're talking about American pedagogy, when it comes

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<sup>16</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

to theory in the history of music, that it is this music that is our very own I mean, you can want to not talk about the history of it and why but the bottom line is the baby is here. You know, you yell about why you shouldn't mess around with it or whatever, but the baby's here, and we got to deal with it, because it's our very own and it's it everyone else in the world is making gazillions of dollars and teaching it. And for some reason, we're just now getting to it. You know?

JS: Exactly. Yeah, I know, I jumped, I probably jumped like 10 questions.

TB: No, this is great. I mean, we're talking about your compositional style. I read where you re orchestrated things for Broadway shows. Can you talk about your experience in that?

JS: Yeah, I mean, it all started with me wanting to arrange when I was really young. When I was at Stony Brook University, we'd have these hangs after concerts. Guys from the band and from the orchestra would get together and we just like, you know, we have beer, we're not supposed to, but we have beer, and we'd hang out in one of the one lounge rooms for the students and I would arrange Earth, Wind and Fire or for famous Broadway tunes. And we had one of the flute players this woman she famous flute player now name is Tara Helen O'Connor and she would sing. And there's guys like, man, some of the guys that were in this band. One of the guys is like I can't remember his name, something Stewart. But anyway, he's, he's been with Paul Simon for like, years. Anyway, I was arranging these two for these guys that we would just jam and create like this funk school band, you know, it would be like they use clarinet horn, and oboe and a guitar to make it funky.

JS: But that's, you know, that's what I would do. I would do that and that was the kind of the stuff I did when I got out of school, I hooked up with these guys that had this band called No, no, nonet. It was all brass percussion, funk, and jazz band, and kind of experimental and since we didn't have a traditional rhythm section, you had to write out everything. And we all brought new music to the table and that really is where I started cutting my teeth because I was listening to how these guys who had the same European pedagogy but played jazz.

JS: We had the same European pedagogies I but they were jazz musicians. And they were doing that with the music. That's, I mean, like, you know, chilling with like Rob Sussman, Lynn Maples. They were just like playing, I mean, just tasty, yummy music. And I didn't compose at that point, but I was checking out what they were doing.

JS: And then when I finally got into my wind quintet, Imani winds. I specifically remember, where we started, the band it was like 97. And I was still doing commercial stuff in New York. And the first couple of times we got together, we were playing like, Donzetti and Lizst. And I said, Oh, listen, y'all are fun and all but if this is what we play, I just can't do this!

JS: But the bottom line was when I was, you know, when I was in my 20s, the last thing I want to do is play some Donzetti. Man, I want to something more, you know, and something more<sup>17</sup> meat to it that was influenced by my background. And so, that's what the group was really about you know, focusing on that kind of music, music from the African diasporic, and, man, that's why the group took off, because it just, you know, we had Valerie Coleman, who's like super,

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<sup>17</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

super-duper star now, composing, and she was writing stuff and bringing it in. And then I was listening to what she was doing. And making the way she made the winds sound so good and soulful. And I couldn't do that. Of course, I had these great musicians, you know, who could play anything. And so, that's where I cut my teeth with that other brass group. And then I honed everything with the wind quintet. And, man, you know, they're going out there. And if your music can't sound good with a band like that, it's bad music. It's just, it's just bad and you might as well just take it back and redo it.

JS: And that's when I had the great opportunity of going into rehearsal, we rehearse three, four times a week. And I'd bring it in 20 bars, and they say, Ah, this works, this is great and this doesn't. You know, and next thing, you know, we're playing it on these big stages. And, you know, that's really how it all started. Because you hear the music and say, wow, who wrote that? Me. Yeah, that's how it all started.

TB: That's awesome. At LSU last semester we just finished playing Coleman's *Roma* and it was just spectacular!

JS: You should have been around when she was in the experimental stage. And those kinds of big sounds were inside the wind quintet! Oh, man. But she had so much going on, and so much creativity. And the way the band could take could contain it, you know, just needed to blast out.

TB: Right. That's awesome. So have you felt like your compositional style, and we talked about a little bit has changed since you've begun to today. So now, you know, after you've honed in

your skills with the Imani Winds? You know, where did you see your compositional style change?

JS: Oh, the more I started taking on and being offered commissions for ensembles that included other instruments. Yeah, I really knew brass, I knew woodwinds and I knew nothing about piano. I knew nothing about strings. But I had to learn because folks were taking a risk with me. They say Hey, I like what you did with the wind group. Can you write something for this orchestra, this chamber group? And so really, like once I started learning the language of the other instruments, you can sort of incorporate that into your score. Now the beauty of it and I think this comes this is something that you will, if you really study composition, you get this all the time that certain composers, especially if they are instrumentalists, you can hear their expertise come through in certain scores. You know, when their wind writing is so much better or so great it'll be really good and streamlined, but their writing for strings is fantastic, I had to learn, I got to get this string thing happening. And then more and more and more as I got more commissions that really started to change. You know, you pull in some good friends to read your music. You take a lot of advice.

JS: You listen to a lot of really great compositions, you know about how I love to move away from European pedagogy. But, you know, I listen to them man, I listen to Shostakovich and I listen to Scriabin man, I can't tell you how much music I've like literally taken and used inside my music. Thank you.



JS: I mean, these cats knew voicing it, you know, and so it's a combination. I mean, you know, Wynton Marsalis says it best man. It's like, it's like a gumbo. You know, composition is like a good gumbo. And everybody makes it different, you know?

TB: Yep, and now you're making me want gumbo.

JS: You know, I was just down in Louisiana twice this past year. The horn professor is a dear friend. And his quintet commissioned me for a piece. It was for quintet and narrator and they asked me to come and do the narration. Im surprised I didn't see or meet you when I was there. <sup>18</sup>

TB: I'm actually in Tampa now. I am ABD and trying to finish up my final year at LSU but virtually. I just got hired at the beginning of the school year as the Director of Athletic Bands at the University of South Florida.

JS: Got it! You don't have to be on campus now. I was down at LSU in November! Funny story my wife got real jealous because she couldn't make the trip. <sup>19</sup> And she said, what are we going to do for Christmas? And she had this look on her face. I was like, you want to go to New Orleans? So, we made a road trip. She had never been to New Orleans and we did really sort of a historical trip, you know, we have a six year old so we could really do like the you know, the New Orleans like that. It really was a sort of American history, sort of road trips that we went

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<sup>18</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

down to Nashville, Selma, Alabama, went to the bridge. And we went to New Orleans. We did like Congo Square and you know, just all the historical stuff. Because that history is amazing!

TB: That sounds like a fun road trip! I'll be making the trip up there at the end of February for the premier of the transcription. So, you know, talking about the actual piece that you wrote, and I transcribed *Startin Sumthin* which premiered/written 2012. Can you talk about the Monmouth Winds.

JS: Yeah, when I was in the Imani Winds, we would have these fundraisers. And the one of the ways that we raised money was that Valerie Coleman and myself would offer our skills as composers. So, if you if you donated 500 bucks, we'd write your piece. If you donated 700 bucks we would write you a longer piece, that sort of thing. And so, we did this fundraiser thing and the people with the Monmouth wind quintet were there, and they chose to donate a certain amount of money for me to write a piece. So, I knew the flute player in the ensemble. I didn't know the rest of the band, but I did know that it was a mostly an amateur or, you know, music wasn't their first profession, let's put it that way. And so it was a real great opportunity, I thought, to break away from the, you know, the sort of basic canon, the Hindemith style or the, you know, whatever the wind quartet is known for. So, I specifically wrote a piece that they would have no idea how to play.

JS: You know, I mean, because it's, first of all, jazz and very specifically, jazz shuffle of the 30s or the 40s, like I don't know how to play. Like, most wind quintets don't know how to play, but it was, it's actually a style I knew at that point, and I subscribed to now, but it allows musicians

to experience the feel of swing without literally having to swing per say. And it goes into this style of writing.

JS: You might be familiar with this term, it was called third stream. And there were a bunch of composers, Gunther Schuller was one who wrote in this style, where they did a combination of classical, really American classical, and jazz, and they were not doing hard jazz, they were not doing like, bop. They were doing like, you know, 1940s or 1930s.

TB: So almost like jazz lite?

JS: Exactly. And that's what I said I was going to do. Im going to take the jazz idiom, you know, really, from the first time that all of America is starting to get familiar with the swing era and put that into a wind quintet setting because I knew it would be easier to absorb for the musicians and also for the audiences. And so that's, that's, yeah, that was the whole idea.

TB: That's awesome. Do you have any recommendations on pieces to listen to? Pieces that conductors can get into that style? I know, we talked about some composers, any pieces that you had in mind, if you can think back that far. And I know, it's 11 years ago now.

JS: Definitely a long time ago but I still had gray hair then to. You know, I didn't have a specific composer that I was thinking of. You know, if I could think of anything it was like a piece from the big band era. And so, I would think of big bands. And so, Count Basie would be a good place

to start, because it was swing, but it wasn't like hard bop, you know, it wasn't the Dizzy Gillespie era.<sup>20</sup>

JS: And if you want to really sort of cross over groups, like Billy Mays big band's, you know, those kinds of swing, where it was swing and everybody could swing, it was tight, but it wasn't really like, you know, it wasn't 1955 swing. So, not John Coltrane. And so that era that sort of 30s 40s and not it doesn't go all the way back. You're not talking like 1915 or 1920 .You know with you know with the hot five, you know. It was a little later. So, a shuffle is, I mean, jazz Shuffle was such a hot thing, I mean, it was the predecessor to swing, and it was like the hot music of the time, you know, because it just made you want to dance.

JS: The whole thing was about thinking about dancing and sort of the swing era. And you know, during that time, and this is really true heart of it all. There used to be something called juke joints you know; you go in the south especially and you'd go dancing at night. It was mostly in the black areas, although white folks would go because they knew where to go to have a good time, right?

JS: Anyway, you go to these you go to juke joints, and that's really where I was honing in, and that style, real sort of dance, swing shuffle era that everybody could relate to. And it would be a great entry for classical musicians into the jazz era.

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<sup>20</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

TB: That's great. Now, did you use any, like nuggets from other pieces? Or is this an all-original composition?

JS: No, this is all original music. Yeah. It doesn't even use blues it was all original and the whole the idea of this the title was that starting something just so you know that the piece starts and then stops. But the title came about because I couldn't come up with a melody. So, I figured I just take this motif and then play with it rhythmically starting and stopping starting and stopping until something happened and make that be the thing.

JS: So, starting something really was kind of like I just couldn't get started. Just go keep start over and over. But it's a danceable sort of thing. Yeah, that's what I really tried to go for, dancing music.

TB: Perfect, my next question was about the way the title was came about? So, you answered that perfectly.

JS: I remember also, Valerie. She was like, you really going to call it that? Yeah, I'm going to call it that! She was like you really should think about your titles.

TB: As far as I mean, when I was trying to add percussion. I'm not a percussionist. I never spent that much time writing for percussion. And Dr. Talley was like, Yeah, you need to put something in the middle of the silent measures. You know no, I think that was intentional. So, we're going to leave it silent.

JS: Well, it's funny you say that because in rehearsing it, you know, it's hard to keep the time when there's nothing going on in the measures of silence. You want to have percussion playing literally anything. So, you want to hear percussion but without that it's like where do we come in? Oh, and I can't tell you how much how many YouTube recordings where we just crashed and burned.

TB: You really want to have a conductor right in front of you. I mean the entrances on the upbeats and everything. But the piece is great, because you know, the piece allows you to do so many different variations and adding so many little jazz idioms into it. I was listening to one of the recordings the other day and the clarinet player, was adding scoops and adding you know everything else. Yes, that's, that's what this piece needs and it's great.

JS: And your transcription man, I just played that for my wife. And she was like, wow! Because I've never heard of a wind vision with wind quintet, you know. And so hearing that was even the digital thing that kept me just like wanting to hear it more.<sup>21</sup>

TB: I can't wait to, you know, get in front of the ensemble and hear it live with the LSU ensemble, you know, listening to it from a MIDI. Oh, you know, everything's perfectly aligned. But you know, when that grit comes in, and we can add some “jazz” to it I can't wait.

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<sup>21</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

JS: I'm anxious to! So yeah, you know, definitely one of the things that this year, particularly for me, is a focus on repurposing a lot of my music. I spent so many in the last, I'd say, seven, eight years composing. And a lot of people have asked, Hey, is this music available for blah, blah, blah ensemble? And I just, no, I don't have it, you know, so this is a good year for me to, to start repurposing and this, is a great initiative to have, you know, stuff out there

JS: When you're when you're speaking along those lines, when you're happy with the arrangement, I'm sure you're going to want to tweak or whatever you got to do. We should definitely talk to get it to get it out there.

TB: And I would love that. Yeah, it's all yours.

JS: I'm well, you know, scores. You know, I gladly share the royalties, you know, because I think, I think that is going to, you know, I'll say especially if you're interested in doing more variations on that arrangement. You know I was just here with the trumpet Professor Roy Cooper, just yesterday and we were thumbing through some of this horrible Brass Ensemble. I mean, just like, man just heavy pieces. Some of its good, but it's just like, oh, can we just lighten it a little bit? Can we have some fun?

JS: Yeah. Like if you wanted to do a brass ensemble arrangement of this, as well as a wind band thing. You know, I'm all about that. Yeah. I hope you can get it out there, man.

TB: The good thing about my job, you know, I'm Director of Athletic Bands here. So most of my job is in the fall semester. So in the spring, the only thing I have to worry about is pep band and I run a concert ensemble too, but it only meets on Tuesday, Thursday. So Monday Wednesday Friday, I'm sitting in my office answering emails, so there definitely might be some time that I can carve out to transcribe it for a brass ensemble!

JS: Well, go for it really, really, because it just sounds so good. And it definitely wasn't an idea I had and I'd say just run with it. I'd happily supportive. Yeah.

TB: You know, there were two things I was really worried about the entire time when I was transcribing this piece, and I believe I sent you questions about it to you, but one of them was getting the oboe solo out of the oboe and into the soprano sax. I was worried about it but when talking with Dr. Talley and then the final note of the piece.

JS: You know, the funny part about that, and I really shouldn't even be saying this online because she'll probably kill me. But Toyin the oboe player, right behind me.

JS: The reason that's an oboe solo is because she used to complain to me. She was like, Why do you always leave out the oboe? You never write oboe solos. I was like, Oh, okay. And so when I wrote this, I made a point, that was supposed to be a clarinet solo, it swings like a clarinet solo. So, that was supposed to be clarinet. Then I said, You know what? You're killing me. So I wrote it as an oboe solo. So you know if you're putting it sax, its supposed to work in the Sax?



TB: Well, I see that and that's why, one of the reasons why I put it in soprano sax, I wanted to get that timbre of, you know, some kind of an oboe timbre. But Dr. Talley mentioned, you'll probably nine times out of ten you'll have a better saxophone player than you will an oboe player. And you so he says, the playability that you'll get more people to play the piece if you put it in an a section that will have better players.

JS: Yeah, no, that's, that's 100% for sure. Yeah, there's so few really good young oboe players, you know, they just mature a little later. So, he's spot on with that. And just in a general sense, you know, you're going to have everybody that has a killing sax player in their band. Everyone has at least one if not at least one. Yeah.<sup>22</sup>

TB: And then my second thing was the very ending. I think I emailed you about it as well but the very last note, I was like I don't know about it with the full wind ensemble setting. And I wrote it out exactly how I wanted to with the last note. And I played it for Dr. Talley, and he was like, this is great except what about the last note. We didn't understand the last note.

TB: Do you remember about writing the last note by chance?

JS: So, you know, I honestly don't remember what you ended up doing. And I don't know if we had this conversation but the last chord but wasn't on the original recording. It ended with the final run up but something in me wanted the piece to end with it going, "jazz"! It was already

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<sup>22</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

recorded; it was in the can. I said well let's call the recording studio to see if we can get an hour in the studio to just record the last note

JS: Literally, I ended it. But I wanted to do it right. And something said I wanted to go check.

JS: Like I said, the thing was already recorded and was in the can. And I said, well, let's call the recording the engineer and see we can get like, an hour, half hour of audio, and time in the studio. Just to run the very last note. And our flute player, and somebody else couldn't do it. So, we literally all had to get subs to come in and play. That's not even like the whole band playing on the recording, we all had to get subs. And the funniest part. I won't say who the flute player was recorded. But we did it and it was perfect. Every time. And every time we finished, she was like, Oh, I could do it better. I was like, NO!

JS: We must have been there for an hour and a half just for one note. We were like they can't be serious. So, it took an hour and a half to play the last count of the piece. I mean, anyways, but it ended up being fine. But yeah, I mean, it's one.

TB: But yea that one note was on the album and has won awards and everything. Which is awesome.

JS: Yeah, no, it's just we got lucky with that one. You take what you get!

TB: Now, you're not with the Imani Winds anymore, right?

JS: Correct. I retired, two and a half years ago. You know, and in fact, they're out doing probably more than we were doing, you know, for many years. But it was so crazy. The schedule that being. We were out of town at minimum half the year and most times we were gone 60-65% of the year we're on the road. And, you know, my kid had just been born and it was just too much to be away from him and my wife.

JS: And I didn't know I was going to get this job, but who can really know which job they are and are not going to get? You know, when it came available, I really was like you go for it. I'm sure how you went for your gig now. When you apply for a gig you're 100% in and I got lucky. And there was no way I just could say no when I was offered it. It's just like stability and health insurance that come with the job.

TB: The real reasons why we take jobs, health insurance!

JS: Yeah, but they're out there still doing their thing, man. And I mean, big time. Big time. They're really out there making it happen. So that's awesome.

TB: Now speaking of Valerie, she's not with it anymore either, right?

JS: No, she was the first to leave the group. And I want to say it was like, no, she wasn't the first, clarinet player was the first. Miriam left in 2014. And then Valerie left after the clarinet player did. Soon after though she was actually down in Florida, for a while. She was down at the Frost School of Music down in Miami. She taught there for a couple of years. And then she left the

Frost school and now she's up in New York at her new school. But really, her thing is, she's just<sup>23</sup>like a super-duper composer, you know, like, everywhere, with every orchestra, and they do residencies and that sort of thing. So, she's kind of wearing that composition hat right now.

TB: Well, I mean, I really want to thank you again, for meeting with me. This has been awesome.

JS: Likewise. And thank you for you know, first of all, not just like, choosing my music as a project but just bringing all of this up for a thesis, like every now and it's real humbling, I have to say it's really humbling. And I'm just honored that you would think that highly of my music and what I do that you would dedicate this time to my stuff.

TB: This has been an absolute blast. I mean, I did your sacred, Sacred Woman with the LSU Chamber Ensemble.

JS: Oh yeah?

TB: I had the Alto flute player and I was like I have to do it. I also had the bass clarinet player for it. The crazy thing is, I had to work that piece up in four rehearsals. How it works, you know, at LSU is we get to do a chamber recital every semester with the wind ensemble students, which is great, but we only get a week with the wind ensemble to prepare our pieces. And so, the three conducting grads get to divide and conquer. And so, my first year I did Viet Cuong's *Bullseye*

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<sup>23</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

and in three rehearsals I told them that was a I was going to look down and I'll see you see guys at the end.

JS: Exactly.

TB: And yeah I got to perform your piece *Sacred Woman* in the spring last year. And it I mean, loved every moment of it. Funny story actually. You know, the offstage horn solo. Well, bless his heart, the horn player got up and was trying to get out of the door on the stage. And it was a push door, but you had to push the door a little bit harder than you probably would a normal door. And so he started pushing, it didn't go, so he started pulling it for about 20 seconds before he slowly backed up into his seat, and just played it on stage.

JS: I was glad you said that. I thought you were going to say that he pulled it and he bang the horn on the door.

TB: On the video, you could just see me laughing silently on the inside, which made the rest of the ensemble start laughing at that point, you know, what can you do? Its live music!

JS: Wow. Well, that's, you know, to me, that was my very first big commission. Okay. First big commission that was from the University of Utah in Logan.

JS: The faculty approached me and they said they wanted a piece that they could play with the top students, you know and make sure that you give solos to everybody. And they had a great

alto flute player. And so I made sure that everybody got a chance to shine in all the movements and everything. And they wanted a substantial piece. So, its like 30 minutes long. Yeah, that was my very first big commission.

TB: That was that was a great piece to workup. And that was actually the first piece I brought to Dr. Talley. Because you know, at the beginning of the semester, we sat down and talked about figuring out what my transcription project was going to be and that was one piece I brought him. Before that I brought in some random pieces and he was like nope, nope. And I said, wait a minute, what about Jeff Scott's *Sacred Woman*. And I brought it to him, he goes its great but it's too long. So the next day it was one of my weekly lessons and I brought him your *Startin Sumthin*.

JS: You know, speaking about *Sacred Women*, it's a hard piece to put together you need like, a bunch of time.<sup>24</sup>

TB: Oh yeah, I was with LSU wind ensemble which is full of doctoral students and Master's students. So, the first rehearsal, I was like, Oh no, what have I done? Then by the second rehearsal we got to more of the music making rather than the fixing notes stage.

JS: A little inside scoop. They did it at Julliard. And the first time we did it, the friend Alan Kay, said, Hey, you got to send me the recording. He's like, I'm not giving it to you. I mean its

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<sup>24</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.

Julliard! He said we'll do it better next time and they just again, did it like two to three years later. And he said, Okay, this time. It's good. Ill send it to you!

TB: Well, I haven't found anything within your music that I haven't loved.

JS: Well, thank you. Well, listen, man, I can't tell you how, again, how honored I am. And if you need anything else, supportively you know, to get you over the over the hump for this. Let me know and you know, when you have a moment to you know, concentrate, on getting the score ready for publishing let me know well get it up on my site and I'll gladly support it in any kind of way I can.

TB: That'd be that'd be great. I know the wind ensemble at LSU is actually like going through it right now marking it and so once I get that, I think once its done, according to Dr. Talley he just said just send it to you and your publishing company does everything.

JS: Yup, Publishing guys, they'll do it up. And then we'll, we'll just get, are you affiliated with ASCAP or BMI?

TB: Nope.

JS: Make an affiliation. Okay. It'll cost you nothing. And that way when, I publish it, I'll give you the 50% royalties. I'll get my 50 for composition and you get your 50 for arranging.

TB: I appreciate that. <sup>25</sup>

JS: It'll be 20 bucks anyway, it's not much anyways!

TB: Hey, that's a cup of coffee for the week!

JS: Though you know what, since it's a band piece, bands will play it Right? And if you do a brass ensemble, yeah. That's where people will start really playing it, you'll get everybody playing that. So again, leave that to you but well put it on my site and all that whole thing and yeah, that's where that's where we'll go.

TB: That would be awesome.

JS: All right now I'm going to let you go and again I appreciate it.

TB: Have a great rest of your day!

JS: Likewise. Thank you have a good one.

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<sup>25</sup> Butts, T. A. (2023, January 28). Interview with Jeff Scott. personal.



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## **Vita**

Trevor Alexander Butts is originally from Tampa, Florida. He earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in music education from the University of South Florida. Before enrolling in graduate programs, Trevor was a band and orchestra teacher in the Hillsborough County School District in Tampa, Florida.

Trevor is pursuing his DMA in Wind Band Conducting with a minor in music education under the supervision of Dr. Damon Talley and Dr. Ann Marie Stanley. Trevor anticipates receiving the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Wind Band Conducting in August of 2023.