Americana Suite: A Composition for Full Orchestra, Big Band, and Jazz Chamber Ensembles Inspired by American Master Paintings

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AMERICANA SUITE: A COMPOSITION FOR FULL ORCHESTRA, BIG BAND, AND JAZZ CHAMBER ENSEMBLES INSPIRED BY AMERICAN MASTER PAINTINGS

By
Scott Kevin Routenberg

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida
May 2008
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

An essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

AMERICANA SUITE: A COMPOSITION FOR FULL ORCHESTRA, BIG BAND, AND JAZZ CHAMBER ENSEMBLES INSPIRED BY AMERICAN MASTER PAINTINGS

Scott Kevin Routenberg

Approved:

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Gary M. Lindsay                                                                  Terri A. Scandura
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Professor of Instrumental Performance and Director of Orchestral Activities
Americana Suite is a seven movement musical composition inspired by nineteenth and early twentieth century American master paintings. Representative artists from each of the major schools of American painting include Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, Mary Cassatt, Childe Hassam, George Bellows, Edward Hopper and Georgia O’Keeffe. Essentially pluralist in style, the suite is written for ensembles of varying size and genre, spanning from full orchestra and contemporary big band to intimate jazz chamber ensembles and electro-acoustic hybrids. Four of the seven movements are written for jazz ensembles and incorporate improvisation, while the other three orchestral movements explore romantic, impressionist and cinematic idioms. Historical summaries of each school, artist and painting are followed by detailed aesthetic and theoretical analyses of the respective movements. Harmonica virtuoso Howard Levy performs as a special guest artist.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF EXAMPLES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF COLOR PLATES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHOD</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL:</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICAGARA, AFTER FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 NINETEENTH CENTURY REALISM:</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOME SWEET HOME, AFTER WINSLOW HOMER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM:</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMBRACE, AFTER MARY CASSATT’S BREAKFAST IN BED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM:</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNSET AT SEA, AFTER CHILDE HASSAM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 THE ASHCAN SCHOOL:</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAG AT SHARKEY’S, AFTER GEORGE BELLows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 AMERICAN REALISM:</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOCTURNE, AFTER EDWARD HOPPER’S Nighthawks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 THE AVANT-GARDE:</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW YORK NIGHT, AFTER GEORGIA O’KEEFFE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: LIST OF RECORDING PERSONNEL</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B: FULL SCORES</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ROUTENBERG,</th>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>NIAGARA,</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>HOME SWEET HOME</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>EMBRACE,</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>SUNSET AT SEA</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>STAG AT SHARKEY'S</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>NOCTURNE,</td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>NEW YORK NIGHT</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF EXAMPLES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. ROUTENBERG, NIAGARA, MAIN THEMES AND MOTIVES</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. ROUTENBERG, EMBRACE, HARMONIC DEVICES AND INFLUENCES</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. ROUTENBERG, EMBRACE, MELODIC VARIATIONS</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1. ROUTENBERG, SUNSET AT SEA, REDUCTION OF MM. 4-5, POLYRHYTHMIC TEXTURE</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. ROUTENBERG, SUNSET AT SEA, REDUCTION, ROMANTIC HARMONY, MM. 78-79</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3. ROUTENBERG, SUNSET AT SEA, THEME A, MM. 11-14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1. ROUTENBERG, STAG AT SHARKEY’S, MOTIVES AND THEMES</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 ROUTENBERG, STAG AT SHARKEY’S, CLASSICAL SEQUENCE</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1. ROUTENBERG, NOCTURNE, PRIMARY MELODY, MM. 11-18</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2. ROUTENBERG, NOCTURNE, DIMINISHED CHORD REDUCTION, MM. 27-30</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3. ROUTENBERG, NOCTURNE, CLUSTER VOICINGS REDUCTION, MM. 57-64</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1. ROUTENBERG, NEW YORK NIGHT, THEMES AND MOTIVES</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2. ROUTENBERG, NEW YORK NIGHT, COUNTERMELODY MM. 26-28</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF COLOR PLATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH</td>
<td>NIAGARA</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WINSLOW HOMER</td>
<td>HOME SWEET HOME</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARY CASSATT</td>
<td>BREAKFAST IN BED</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILDE HASSAM</td>
<td>SUNSET AT SEA</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGE BELLOWS</td>
<td>STAG AT SHARKEY’S</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDWARD HOPPER</td>
<td>Nighthawks</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGIA O’KEEFFE</td>
<td>NEW YORK NIGHT</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

I owe my most profound moments of aesthetic fulfillment to those noble and timeless forms of human artistic expression, music and the visual arts. The act of creation is certainly considered among the most powerful abilities of the human mind. To hear music not heard by another ear; to create in the mind’s eye a work of visual artistry yet to be seen—this is the finely honed, often misunderstood craft of the artist. The creation of a “work of art” applies to both music and the visual arts, and while both endeavors allow the artist freedom to conjure up an intensely personal composition, the magic also lies in the artwork’s ability to further transform in the ears and eyes of its audiences. It is this transformative property of music and art, coupled with the art forms’ timeless ability to affect an infinite number of people, which attract me to a life in the arts and provide the inspiration for this doctoral essay.

Music’s communicative abilities and emotional affect have sparked debate for centuries. For the greater part of Western music history, beginning with the Gregorian chants of the Catholic church and continuing roughly until the onset of Romanticism, religious and secular music essentially served two masters, respectively: God and mankind. Music’s powerful emotive qualities were certainly seized upon by the authoritative grip of the church during the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods of Western music history, and the compositions of the time, from Leonin and Josquin des Prez to Johann Sebastian Bach, reflected this sacred overseer. Though the secular music of everyday life was always present in one form or another, the function of this music changed symbiotically with society as well. With the French Revolution (1789-1799) and Ludwig von Beethoven’s legacy as bridge between Classical and Romantic music,
the aesthetic and utilitarian functions of music were forever changed. Free from the requisite service of religion and developing along the lines of the Industrial Revolution, nineteenth century European music blossomed and spread its roots into the larger garden of the liberal arts, commingling with literary and visual arts as highly narrative “programmatic” music, among other incarnations.

It is the author’s belief that programmatic music represents one of the most comprehensive and effective forms of artistic expression and communication available to the modern composer. As a visual artist with a formal background in portraiture and landscapes, I have always wanted to combine the art of music with the art of painting in a programmatic fashion, similar to Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874) and Ottorino Respighi’s *Botticelli Triptych* (1927). However, rather than incorporating the paintings of the European masters into a large programmatic work, my doctoral project explores a series of nineteenth and early twentieth century American master paintings in the form of an extended suite for various instrumental ensembles, ranging from full orchestra and big band to jazz chamber ensembles and electro-acoustic music. As a matter of note, Gunther Schuller’s (b. 1925) orchestral suite *Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee* (1959), which borrows liberally from the jazz vocabulary, provides

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2 Ibid., 385.


a successful example of the incorporation of American painting into a modern musical composition.\(^5\)

This project is titled *Americana Suite: A Composition for Full Orchestra, Big Band, and Jazz Chamber Ensembles Inspired by American Master Paintings*. As a composer, I feel that my individual “sound” and talents are best expressed in this eclectic suite. The total approximate time of the suite is thirty minutes. All of the big band and small ensemble vignettes were recorded live at the University of Miami. Orchestral compositions that could not be recorded are included on the accompanying CD as MIDI mock-ups.\(^6\)

The compositional scope of this project is large, but I feel that the breadth of the ensembles and musical genres proposed herein is warranted by my recent experience and growth as a composer, jazz pianist, and audio programmer. Along these lines, I have earned two Master of Music degrees in Jazz Piano Performance (2003) and Media Writing and Production (2005) at the University of Miami Frost School of Music. This project represents the culmination of a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Jazz Composition (supervised by Professor Gary Lindsay) at the University of Miami. Over the past seven years as a graduate student at the University of Miami, my composition, orchestration, and performance and business skills have developed considerably.

Recent commissions and premières include *Fanfare for a New Year*, premièred by

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\(^6\) A mock-up is a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) realization of an acoustic score using software-based virtual instruments.
the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra on New Year’s Eve 2007, and premières at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in 2008—both of which constitute movements of *Americana Suite*. I was also recently able to explore my fascination with film and television music at the 2007 ASCAP Television and Film Scoring Workshop in Los Angeles, where I wrote a three minute cue to an action movie and conducted a forty piece A-list Hollywood orchestra at the Fox Newman Scoring Stage. Based on the quality of this work, I later received the ASCAP Foundation David Rose Scholarship.

It should be noted that Howard Levy, the virtuoso Chicagoan jazz harmonica player who was an original member of the eclectic jazz group *Bela Fleck and the Flecktones*, recorded on three of these movements as a special guest on November 13, 2007. These movements include *New York Night, Home, Sweet Home* and *Embrace*. Howard has the distinction of developing a series of “overblows” and “overdraws” on the diatonic blues harmonica that allow him to bend the notes in such a way as to produce the entire chromatic scale (on an instrument that is technically missing these notes).

Nevertheless, Howard still carries with him a full set of diatonic harmonicas in every key, since some notes and chords are easier to play on specific “harps.” The harmonica is universally identified with American music, and I have incorporated it into *Americana Suite* with this purpose in mind.
METHOD

Since my doctoral project focuses on the creative and subjective act of musical composition, my method differs substantially from dissertations based on standard scientific, quantitative, and statistical analysis (no interviews or human studies were conducted for this project).

My compositional method began with thorough background research into the history of American painting and in-depth historical and aesthetic analysis of the chosen paintings. The majority of background research focused on the major schools of nineteenth and early twentieth century American painting, including the following: the Hudson River School, Nineteenth Century American Realism, American Impressionism, the Ashcan School, American Realism (also known as the American Scene) and the early twentieth century Avant-Garde. Each chapter is devoted to one movement of the suite, the title of which is drawn from that of its corresponding painting (in most cases).

After compiling this artistic background information, I began writing the individual movements of the suite. I did not plan on writing the music in any particular order—chronological, categorical, or otherwise. However, I found that after having completed a composition in a given style, it was refreshing and motivating to write the next piece in a different style or instrumentation. One might say that this sort of stylistic polarization affords the composer a welcome new timbral palette, which in itself often provides ample creative inspiration. *Americana Suite* is not unified by style or instrumentation, so I had a certain freedom of choice that the composer of a stylistically unified work\(^7\) would not. In the absence of motivic, stylistic, and orchestrational

\(^7\) For example, the mass and the symphony, where recurring motives exist out of structural necessity.
unification, the individual movements of *Americana Suite* are unified by their relation to the shared aesthetics of American art.

Each chapter begins with pertinent historical background on the artists and their respective paintings, including brief aesthetic analysis of the movements as they relate to their “parent” paintings. This discussion is followed by theoretical analysis of form, harmonic and melodic content, motivic development and orchestration.

Due to the highly visual and programmatic nature of *Americana Suite*, I have included high quality digital images of each painting within the body of this essay for quick reference. *Rights and Reproduction* permissions have been secured for all works other than those already in the public domain.

Returning to the subject of contrasting ensembles, the amount of time spent writing for a full orchestra as opposed to a jazz chamber ensemble must be considered. Time management is a very real issue, and I find that writing at least some music every day is a tremendous help, since the peaks and troughs of creative inspiration rarely grace artists’ pens or brushes in predictable patterns. Inspiration is ephemeral and flighty, and likely the reason why many refrain from theoretical analysis until finishing the “inspired,” stream-of-consciousness process of writing.

As stated previously, my compositional method does not utilize scientific processes; instead, I have attempted to synthesize within each movement the whole of my musical and artistic knowledge, as this information relates to the chosen paintings. Hopefully this method will lend insight into certain conscious and unconscious decisions that characterize my compositional process. My conception of form varies from piece to
piece, but interestingly, I began writing several of these movements in a through-composed manner, and after finishing writing, I found that I often subconsciously imposed a sort of formal structure on the piece. For example, the impressionist orchestral movement *Sunset at Sea* began as a through-composed piece, but gradually transformed into a modified ABA form (which reflected my later desire to evoke a symmetrical “arch” form, mimicking the cyclical patterns of sunrise and sunset). I very rarely sketch out the general form of a composition first, as many composers advocate. In most cases, I simply choose a theme or motive that befits the mood of the composition and then work in a rather stream-of-consciousness manner. Though I often play harmonically dense passages on the piano before orchestrating, I have recently been working away from the piano more and more, as this practice forces one to think in terms of orchestral color, and the timbral and registral palette almost certainly expands as a result.
Chapter 1

The Hudson River School: *Niagara*, after Frederic Edwin Church

Plate 1. Frederic Edwin Church, American, 1826-1900, *Niagara*, 1857, Oil on canvas, 42.5 x 90.5 inches, 76.15, In the Collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund

In the mid-nineteenth century there arose “a new pride in the American wilderness, and artists began flocking outdoors to record it.” 8 Romanticism in music was mirrored in American art by a newfound reverence for nature marked by breathtaking detail and vast panoramic scenes—a patriotic homage to the American landscape subtly infused with the nineteenth century ideology of Manifest Destiny. The Hudson River School, the first “school” of American painting that did not simply borrow the styles of its European counterparts, flourished from the 1830s to the 1880s. The founder of the movement was Thomas Cole, who first traveled along the Hudson River in 1825 to sketch the Catskills. 9 His disciples included Asher Brown Durand and John


9 Ibid., 70.
Frederick Kensett; the second generation of Hudson River School artists featured even more detailed masterpieces by Albert Bierstadt and Connecticut native Frederic Edwin Church.\(^{10}\)

Considered one of the preeminent painters of the second generation of the Hudson River School, Connecticut born Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900) captured the “truth” in nature like no other artist of his time.\(^{11}\) A devoted pupil of Thomas Cole, Church traveled the world painting exotic, grandiose scenes, often *en plein air* (painting outdoors as opposed to working inside of a studio and attempting to recapture natural light and color from memory).

Church’s teacher, Thomas Cole, was very familiar with Niagara Falls after years of repeated travel to the well-known location. Over the years, Cole completed at least twenty-three studies of the falls, and produced several smaller scale oil paintings, though he never met much commercial success for his depiction of the oft-rendered attraction.\(^{12}\) Church more than likely became familiar with the landmark through Cole’s paintings.

As Gail Davidson discusses in her essay, “Landscape Icons, Tourism, and Land Development in the Northeast,” Niagara Falls was considered America’s greatest natural wonder since the eighteenth century, “attracting, as early as 1838, around 20,000 visitors per year.”\(^{13}\) By 1850, Niagara was visited by approximately 50,000 to 60,000 tourists annually, prompting one *New-York Daily* Times travel critic to exclaim, “Niagara…is

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\(^{12}\) Ibid., 69.

overrun with savages of the bore kind…[who] pursue you relentless from the moment your eager foot descends from the [railroad] car.”

The embodiment of the sublime and “the eternal expression of God’s presence in nature,” Niagara Falls regrettably became “the tritest single item of subject matter to appear in eighteenth and nineteenth century European and American landscape painting.”  However, this pedestrian association did not deter Church. He became fascinated with the power and beauty of the place, and traveled to the Niagara region in July of 1856 as a guest of the Sturges family, whose daughter Amelia wrote of Church’s preliminary sketches:

Our cottage is now decorated by a charming sketch of Niagara from Mr. Church’s brush. He is intoxicated with Niagara. He rises at sunrise and we only see him at meal times. He is so restless away from the Falls that he cannot keep still, always feeling as if he were losing some new effect of light. Often in the evening when listening to that delightful band of music he will get up and say, ‘well good night, I am going down to see the effect of moonlight and shadow.’ His picture must be beautiful I think, and the sketch is quite true to nature.

Church worked through the winter of 1856, producing various sketches of the great falls; he eventually compiled the best of these and several miniature oil studies into his final oversized canvas, titled *Niagara Falls*, which measured 42½ inches high by 90½ inches wide. The painting was first exhibited in New York on May 1, 1857. A review of the exhibition in *The Crayon* lauded: “…we have never before seen it [the falls] so

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16 Ibid., 69.

17 Ibid., 72.
perfectly represented.”\textsuperscript{18} The painting’s unusual horizontal point of view, teetering above the Canadian side of the horseshoe-shaped falls, proved enormously popular with both American and European audiences and connoisseurs. A \textit{New York Times} writer confirmed the artist’s mastery of perspective, stating, “Mr. Church has shown himself the great artist in his selection of his point of view.”\textsuperscript{19} In London, the well-known critic John Ruskin described Church’s unique handling of light and color: “[I] found effects in it which [I] had been waiting for years to find. I am sorry that it is shown by gas-light, in a darkened room. Church’s pictures will all bear the daylight; he needs no artificial trickeries of this kind.”\textsuperscript{20}

My composition, also entitled \textit{Niagara} after Church’s painting, is written for full orchestra in a romantic style. Nineteenth century romanticism in music and its aesthetic counterpart in painting both embrace the ideals of the times, including reverence for nature and hyperbolic, exaggerated details. It is the composer’s belief that the natural grandeur of Niagara Falls and its overwhelming presence both in real life and in Church’s painting call for a lushly orchestrated, evocative composition. The instrumentation is as follows: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, 3 trumpets in B♭, 2 tenor trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, suspended cymbal, harp, 1\textsuperscript{st} violins, 2\textsuperscript{nd} violins, violas, celli and double basses.

At approximately three minutes in length, \textit{Niagara} does not fall under the category of an extended composition—it can more accurately be described as a succinct

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Howat, John K. \textit{Frederic Church}. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, 72.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 72.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 73.
\end{itemize}
tone poem. The majority of the piece is written in common time with the occasional \textit{ritard}. Table 1.1 below details the form of \textit{Niagara}, including its formal sections, subsections, and major key centers.

Table 1.1. Routenberg, \textit{Niagara}, Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Subsections</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys/Modes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>1-6</td>
<td>A Mixolydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme A</td>
<td>antecedent/consequent</td>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>A Mixolydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude/Motive B</td>
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<td>15-24</td>
<td>A Mixolydian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme A</td>
<td>antecedent/consequent</td>
<td>25-32</td>
<td>A Mixolydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme B</td>
<td>aab phrase structure</td>
<td>33-46</td>
<td>D Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td></td>
<td>47-49</td>
<td>D Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>dev. of theme B</td>
<td>50-66</td>
<td>B Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>climax (dev. Motive B)</td>
<td>67-80</td>
<td>D Major/D Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>brass fanfare</td>
<td>81-82</td>
<td>D Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme B</td>
<td>Truncated phrase structure</td>
<td>83-87</td>
<td>D Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extended canonic phrase</td>
<td>88-90</td>
<td>D Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td></td>
<td>91-94</td>
<td>D Major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major thematic sections and developmental passages detailed above do not follow a preconceived formal structure. \textit{Niagara} was written in a stream of consciousness process, which some might label through-composition. The melodic and
harmonic materials are fairly simple, with only two main themes and a handful of motives. Metaphorically, the power and magnificence of Niagara Falls is personified by both the dense, bright orchestration techniques and the use of rhythmic hemiolas, which suggest the constant flow and pulsation of the natural wonder’s watery undercurrents.

Theme A attempts to capture the initial awe-stricken moments when one sees Niagara for the first time (either in person or on Church’s ultra-realistic canvas). Its melodic contour traces the mode of A Mixolydian while each note of the melody is harmonized by the brass in cluster chords. Underneath the melody is the constant pulsation of Motive A, which is rhythmically displaced in regular patterns across bar lines (also known as a hemiola).

Example 1.1. Routenberg, Niagara, Main Themes and Motives
After the relatively lighter orchestration of the interlude and Motive B (mm.15-24), Theme A returns once more and builds momentum towards the soaring Theme B, which is inspired by the renowned consequent phrase of London’s Big Ben clock tower. High strings, brass and woodwinds present Theme B over a stepwise ascending bass line that is reminiscent of Aaron Copland. This bass line moves linearly from the tonic (D) to the subdominant scale degree (G), a common harmonic trait of modern Americana. Moreover, the second phrase of Theme B has been reharmonized with a vi chord where the IV chord stood before. After a closing descending scale based on the D Ionian mode, Theme B returns in the woodwinds as a brief canon (mm.47-49).

Measures 50-80 comprise the development section of the composition, which largely expands upon Theme B. A succinct transitory brass fanfare in measures 81-82 leads back to the final tutti statement of Theme B, after which a similar canonical/imitative presentation of the theme appears in the woodwinds. Niagara closes with rhythmic timpani hits on the tonic, followed by stately chords played by the strings and low brass: GM9 (no 3rd)-A (no 3rd)-D.

In terms of orchestration, Niagara is most heavily influenced by the Italian composer Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936), whose colorful orchestrations are often imitated in Hollywood film music (ex. John Williams). Bright doublings of high woodwinds and harp and timbral hybrids of pizzicato strings and muted brass are most characteristic. The rhythmic ostinato and hemiola figures that comprise Motive A are inspired by English composer Gustav Holst’s (1874-1934) Jupiter, from the well-known suite The Planets. In both this movement from Holst’s work and Niagara, similar rhythmic displacement occurs.
In mid-nineteenth century America, when artists like Frederic Edwin Church and his fellow Hudson River School proponents were at the height of their popularity, other artists like the young Winslow Homer (1836-1910) began painting in a stylistically and ideologically different style. Homer was a gifted artist with a natural talent for capturing the immediacy of realist scenes, figures, and everyday situations. He never indulged in the hyperbolic landscapes of vast natural grandeur that fueled the Hudson River aesthetic. Homer’s proclivity for realist scenes and quick sketches landed him a job at the age of 19

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with Harper’s Weekly as a magazine illustrator and one of the first “artist-correspondents” to cover the Civil War. Specifically, Homer was sent to cover Lincoln’s inauguration and then the Army of the Potomac. As expected, Homer did not offer any fantastical scenes of battle or bravery; instead, he chose to focus on camp scenes and the everyday life of the soldiers. It is during this period in 1863 that Homer painted Home, Sweet Home, which depicts two Union soldiers pausing “while a military band plays the familiar ballad, reminding them poignantly that their campsite is neither sweet nor home.”

After the war Homer preferred painting scenes of family life and New England landscapes, especially coastal views near his home in Prout’s Neck, Maine. He became increasingly reclusive and remained a bachelor the rest of his life (though a friend notes him as having “the usual number of love affairs”), hanging a sign reading “COAL BIN” on his studio door to deter the public at large.

My interpretation of Homer’s Home, Sweet Home combines nineteenth century American musical elements (acoustic violin, acoustic guitar, harmonica, and the blues) with late twentieth century musical elements (tremolo guitar, pre-recorded guitar played in reverse, and programmed electronic beats) in an attempt to place a modern twist on a classic painting. On a macro level, Home Sweet Home frames a more extensive up-tempo section in triple meter with two medium tempo sections in common time, creating a large

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scale ternary form (ABA). The main melody, which begins at section B, is based on a sixteen-bar modified blues form (twelve-bar blues form is the more common). Table 2.1 below details the form of the song and its subdivisions.

Table 2.1. Routenberg, *Home Sweet Home, Form*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Subsections</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction (medium tempo, 4/4)</td>
<td>acoustic guitar chords</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>antecedent phrase</td>
<td>9-16</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consequent phrase</td>
<td>17-24</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude</td>
<td>electronic beat enters</td>
<td>25-36</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (acoustic-electric, Up-tempo, 3/4)</td>
<td>modified 16 bar blues form (AA'B phrase structure)</td>
<td>44-58 : 58</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude</td>
<td>lead-in to violin solo</td>
<td>59-64</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin solo (B modified)</td>
<td></td>
<td>65-90</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude</td>
<td>lead-in to harmonica solo</td>
<td>91-96</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonica solo (B modified)</td>
<td></td>
<td>97-112</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>harmonica Solo w/violin backgrounds</td>
<td>113-134</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude (tempo I)</td>
<td>end harmonica solo</td>
<td>135-136</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>guitar chords and harmonica ad lib</td>
<td>137-144</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though *Home Sweet Home* displays a large-scale ternary form, the detailed analysis above reveals that several interludes and transitional sections break up the
predictability of the larger formal sections. Still, the song can be considered a “vamp” or “groove tune” due to its prominent beats and stable tonal center of E minor. It should be noted that the melody was composed first in this case, and the basic “bluesy” harmonic structure and beats added later.

All programming and sequencing of electronic beats was executed using Sony’s Acid Pro DAW (Digital Audio Workstation). Acid Pro began as an easy way for DJs and electronic producers to loop samples and perform quick cut and paste edits, but it now functions as a full-fledged DAW like Digidesign’s Pro Tools. Some of the raw material for the electronic beats was derived from Spectrasonics’ Stylus RMX Drum Groove Module. Stylus RMX is essentially a high quality software plug-in comprised of a collection of percussion samples with a digital drum machine interface that allows real-time manipulation of looped samples to any tempo specified by the host DAW.

*Home Sweet Home* is quite simple harmonically, as Homer’s painting does not suggest anything otherwise; the arpeggiated guitar chords in measures 9-24 of the A section (C-D-Em, or VI, VII, i) are meant to evoke folk and blues guitar playing of the era. The up-tempo triple meter of the B section, in a loose modified 16-bar blues form, employs the same basic harmonies as the blues: i, IV and V.

The B section is unexpectedly difficult due to its asymmetric phrase endings and quarter-note quadruplet rhythms, which imply underlying metric modulations. The asymmetric phrase endings, which change on almost every chorus of improvisation, require extra concentration on the part of the performer, so as not to revert back to conventional blues form and phrasing. I took this more unconventional approach to writing in order to “stretch” the soloists and to avoid predictable musical gestures.
Other than electronically programmed tracks, *Home Sweet Home* is written for the following instrumentation: diatonic harmonica in D (played by Howard Levy), acoustic violin, acoustic and electric guitar, and acoustic bass. The acoustic bass lines were sequenced using MIDI samples from Spectrasonics’ Trilogy Bass Module, which are incredibly realistic. It should be noted that no quantization\(^{25}\) was used on the sequenced bass line in post-production; I simply played in the part in real-time.

I must admit that when writing the main melody (section B) I had in mind the sound and style of Jimi Hendrix and his classic *Purple Haze*. The melody has a bluesy “call and response” phrase structure that makes extensive use of the E blues and E minor pentatonic scales. *Home Sweet Home* also explores the many possibilities of comping\(^{26}\) and backgrounds on the harmonica, a very versatile instrument that is often underappreciated in this capacity. The arrangement is written allowing Howard to play rhythmic chordal comping figures during the violin solo, interspersed with fragments of the original melody. Howard plays a diatonic harmonica in D for the majority of the tune, which translates best to E Dorian and E blues scale material. The key of E minor also works particularly well for the violin due to the availability of the open strings G, D, A and E, which can be played as double stops to create the 3\(^{rd}\), 7\(^{th}\), 11\(^{th}\) and root scale tones of the tonic. The violin part is also written to exploit the open strings A and E when the harmony shifts to A during the improvisation section (IV), creating a bluesy folk/fiddle interpretation.

\(^{25}\) Within a digital sequencer, a mathematical function that lines up (“maps”) MIDI rhythms performed live—which display the usual errors in human rhythm—with predetermined note values (eighth-notes, sixteenth-notes, etc.) in order to perfect the “time” of the performance.

\(^{26}\) In jazz terminology, comping refers to accompanying.
Chapter 3

American Impressionism: *Embrace*, after Mary Cassatt’s *Breakfast in Bed*


The term French Impressionism traces back to 1874, when a group of young artists who called themselves the *Societe anonyme des artistes, peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, etc...* exhibited at a studio in Paris. There was no mention of the term “Impressionism” until afterwards, when the critic Louis Leroy penned the happening “Exhibition of the Impressionists.”\(^{27}\) The term was in turn “derived from the title of

Claude Monet’s 1872 port scene *Impression—Sunrise.* The new school of painting was coalesced by a modern, non-academic stylistic approach, as described by Professor William Gerdts:

The Impressionists, both the French originators of the style and their American followers, used, to varying extents, pure, prismatic colors unmixed on the palette and laid directly on the canvas. Under close analysis each hue is separately visible; at a distance they fuse on the retina to give the illusion of flickering light and vibrating atmosphere, qualities abetted by replacing firm outlines and smooth surfaces with thick impastoes. The intense colorism is heightened by abolishing neutral tones and the blacks and grays used for shadows. These effects, antithetical to academic practice, deny conventional illusionism with its attendant suggestion of three-dimensional modeling.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century after the Civil War, thousands of Americans traveled abroad in order to study in Paris, which was the center of the art world at the time (largely due to the yearly Paris Salon Exhibition), though most seemed uninterested in the burgeoning Impressionist movement until the late 1870s.

Though she spent the majority of her life honing her craft in Paris alongside Impressionist masters like Degas, Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) is still considered one of the greatest American Impressionists of the late nineteenth century. Her work met critical review in the Paris Salons and Exhibitions during the 1870s and 1880s, where she often exhibited with the French Impressionist masters. Early in her career, Cassatt was drawn to the new Impressionist aesthetic, which emphasized the “dissolution of form into light and color.”

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29 Ibid., 29.

30 Ibid., 29.

31 Ibid., 35.

32 Ibid., 40.
Perhaps one of the most pervasive themes in American Impressionism is the subject of women. Around the turn of the century, the portrayal of women in American Impressionist art often centered on traditional domestic roles and placement of female figures within idyllic landscapes.\(^{33}\)

As she found her creative niche, Cassatt focused more and more consistently on maternal and childhood themes. Her 1897 painting entitled *Breakfast in Bed* (plate 3) serves as a fine example of Cassatt’s Impressionist maternal imagery. Here, a mother calmly holds her vivacious daughter in her arms; the mother is lying sedately in bed while her daughter is sitting up, alert. To their right, atop a white plate with white cup and saucer, sits breakfast on a greenish-brown night stand. The prevailing color in Cassatt’s palette is white, and one might say that this unifying color represents a sense of peace and calm between mother and child. Cassatt’s brush strokes are generous and conspicuous, yet seen from afar, they masterfully define the shape of the central figures and the texture and substance of the surrounding furniture. One might also notice that the flesh tones are created through the comingling of pink, orange, red, white, green, and other brush strokes.

In lieu of borrowing Cassatt’s title *Breakfast in Bed*, I renamed this composition *Embrace* after the emotional tone of the painting. *Embrace* is an intimate duet written for harmonica and piano; the two musicians mirror the relationship between mother and daughter in the painting. The French-inspired melodic and harmonic overtones in this piece are meant to reflect Cassatt’s lifelong association with Paris; these gestures were not preplanned, but rather, naturally emerged during the writing process.

Special guest artist Howard Levy performs on harmonica, and I am playing piano. After playing through the piece a few times, Howard determined that the first half of the composition (mm.1-11) would sound best on a diatonic harmonica in B♭; a quick switch in measure 11 to an A harmonica finishes the second half of the piece (mm.12-23). Measures 22-23 provide just enough time to return to the B♭ harmonica for the solo section (mm.24-46).

*Embrace* is a ballad (tempo *adagio*) in triple meter organized in a repeating twenty-three bar simple binary form (song form). The melody, or *head* in jazz terminology, is played once at the outset, followed by the improvisation section, which has the same twenty-three bar form, harmonic structure and harmonic rhythm as the *head*. After the solo section, the melody is repeated *da capo* with slight embellishments in the piano part, ending with a brief coda (mm.47-49).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Subsections</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme I (A)</td>
<td>antecedent phrase</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>D♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consequent phrase</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>D♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme II (B)</td>
<td>antecedent phrase</td>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consequent phrase</td>
<td>17-23</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvisation (AB)</td>
<td>Harmonica solo</td>
<td>24-46</td>
<td>D♭ Major/A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Piano solo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Out (AB)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1-23</td>
<td>D♭ Major/A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td></td>
<td>47-49</td>
<td>A Major/F minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As any composer knows, some pieces begin with a melodic idea; some with harmonic inspiration; and some with a compelling rhythmic impetus, or any combination of the above. In the case of *Embrace*, I initially explored various harmonies out of context—from these chords, a melody eventually emerged. For this reason, I will begin with a general harmonic analysis of the composition. The subtly changing “color tones” that characterize the harmonic progression of *Embrace* are directly inspired by both Impressionist French composers of the late nineteenth century and modern early twentieth century composers like Igor Stravinsky. The influence of Claude Debussy can be seen in the use of whole tone scale relationships, parallel harmonic motion and non-diatonic mediant modulations. On the other hand, the influence of Igor Stravinsky reveals itself through the use of diminished (octatonic) scale relationships and bitonality (see Example 3.1).

**Example 3.1. Routenberg, *Embrace, Harmonic Devices and Influences***

The piece begins in the key of D♭ Major on a Major ninth chord in first inversion (I6). In measure 3 the D♭ tonality is briefly upset by an AM9/C♯ chord (♭VI), which
chromatically descends to AbM9/C, a modal mixture chord acting as a surrogate dominant. This Major V6 chord is then modified slightly, raising the E♭ to an E♮ to form an A+5. As expected, the augmented fifth (E) resolves to F—the third of the tonic, D♭M7(#11) in measure 7. Two measures of tonic in the Lydian mode (mm.7-8) progress to Bm7 (vi) in measure 9, ultimately ending on an inconclusive cadence in measures 10 and 11, where a brief instance of C Major (VII) becomes offset by B♭m/C (C Phrygian), completing the A section.

Measure 12 and the first two beats of measure 13 abruptly shift to the key of A Major (♭VI in the original key of D♭ Major). The third beat of measure 13 contains the tritone substitution\(^{34}\) for A7, Eb7(#11)/G, which resolves to DM9/F♯. Measures 14 and 15 remain in D Major (IV) until the transitional E♭ diminished chord in measures 16-17. As detailed in Example 3.1, the melody at measure 17 is harmonized using Major triads whose root movement is related to the E♭ diminished scale through symmetric minor third intervals (F Major, A♭ Major and B Major). Measure 18, the dynamic and registral climax of the piece, initiates a sequence of parallel Major 9\(^{th}\) chords in first inversion whose roots move in non-diatomic Major third intervals (based on the whole tone scale). These chords (see Example 3.1) progress to a Dm11 sonority (iv) on the third beat of measure 19, which leads to the first real cadence of the piece at the downbeat of measure 20—a bitonal resting point combining A Major and F minor tonalities (mm.20-23).

Embrace exhibits a much simpler melodic conception than the previously discussed harmonic scheme. In fact, the opening melody and its variations largely

\(^{34}\) In jazz theory, the substitution of the root of any dominant chord with the root of its related dominant the interval of a diminished 5\(^{th}\) (tritone) away. This substitution often creates the chord progression ♭I7-I from the more traditional movement of V7-I.
conform to basic scalar movement, with the occasional chromatic passing tone. The initial melodic statement (mm.1-4) consists of a descending F melodic minor scale beginning on the 3rd scale degree (A♭-G-F-E). Measures 7-9 present a similar phrase, this time outlining a stepwise descent in the form of an A♭ Major scale. Interestingly enough, measures 9-12 contain the same pitches as the original melodic statement, yet they are completely reharmonized and rhythmically augmented. In contrast, the first two measures of section B (mm.12-13) present an ascending Major variation of the melody before restating the descending line once again in the key of A Major (mm.14-16). Lastly, analysis of the bass in measures 1-8 reveals a melodic kinship to the shape and pitch content of the primary theme (F-E♭-D♭-C-D♭).

Example 3.2. Routenberg, *Embrace, Melodic Variations*

Reharmonization is a technique in jazz composition and arranging that substitutes varying chordal structures underneath a preexisting melody based on common chord tones shared between the melody and its supporting harmony.
See the full score of *Embrace* in the Appendix for the chord progressions used during the improvisation section, which follow the same simple binary form. The solo section purposely avoids simplifying either the form of the original tune or the harmonic content in an attempt to challenge and inspire the soloists to push the usual limits of jazz improvisation (which are often confined to ii-V-I progressions and a handful of standard chord/scale types). That having been said, each of the scale types employed over these chords still conform to jazz conventions, including the following: Ionian, Dorian, Lydian, Mixolydian, melodic minor and diminished.
In 1898 a group of ten American painters exhibited together at Durand-Ruel in New York; committed to the Impressionist aesthetic, this artistic “academy” lasted twenty years and was known as The Ten. Members of The Ten included Childe Hassam, J. Alden Weir, John Twachtman, Willard Metcalf, Edmund Tarbell, Frank Benson, Joseph De Camp, Thomas Dewing, Edward Simmons and Robert Reid (after Twachtman’s death in 1902 William Merritt Chase took his place). Childe Hassam (1859-1935) became known for urban scenes of New York City and Gloucester in New

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37 Ibid., 171.
England, as well as his extremely popular Flag series, which depicted patriotic metropolitan scenes in Paris and New York City. Though many critics charged that Hassam’s brand of Impressionism stagnated in the decades after the formation of The Ten, these were in fact “rich and productive years in which he began fresh interpretations of a tremendous variety of themes.”

One of the most striking compositions of Hassam’s later oeuvre is *Sunset at Sea*, painted in the summer of 1911 among the Isles of Shoals after returning from his last trip to Europe. In his 2001 opus *American Impressionism*, William H. Gerdts describes the painting as follows:

> Hassam carried these tendencies toward the decorative and the abstract to a brilliant extreme in his 1911 *Sunset at Sea*, a square canvas of two unequal planes of flickering color: a reddish purple sky and a flaming yellow sunset reflecting in the blue-green water. Except for the single black shape of a tiny boat, the canvas is a totally nonrepresentational field of colorist abstraction.

My composition, named after Hassam’s work, attempts to evoke the mood of the painting and the aesthetic ideals of early twentieth century American Impressionism. The warmth of Hassam’s colors and his treatment of light and form immediately attracted me, suggesting the shimmering colors/timbres of musical Impressionists like Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. I felt in particular that *Sunset at Sea* called for a lush orchestral setting in the spirit of Debussy’s 1905 *La Mer* (The Sea). *Sunset at Sea* was commissioned by the Florida Youth Orchestra (a high school-level orchestra) and premièred on March 23, 2008 in Carnegie Hall. I wrote the piece with the abilities of this ensemble in mind; thus, the score avoids extensive use of divided strings, extreme

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39 Ibid., 187.

40 Ibid., 189.

41 Ibid., 188-189.
instrumental registers and virtuosic group and solo passages. In addition to the orchestral mock-up of *Sunset at Sea*, the accompanying CD also includes the rehearsal run-through of the piece at the Grand Hyatt in New York City, March 22, 2008.

The orchestral instrumentation is as follows: in the woodwind choir, two flutes, two oboes, three clarinets, one bassoon; in the brass choir, three French horns, two B♭ trumpets, one tenor trombone and one tuba; in the percussion section, timpani and glockenspiel; and in the string section, harp, violin I, violin II, violas, violoncellos, and contrabasses. The approximate performance time of the piece is five minutes.

In her *Concise History of Western Music*, Barbara Russano Hanning contrasts earlier program music with the goals of the French Impressionists:

Unlike earlier program music, impressionism did not seek to express deeply felt emotion or tell a story but to elicit a mood, a passing sentiment, an atmosphere. It used enigmatic titles, reminiscences of natural sounds, dance rhythms, characteristic bits of melody, limpid harmonies, shimmering orchestral colors, and the like to suggest the subject. Musical impressionism relies on allusion and understatement in contrast to the forthright, energetic, and sometimes overstated outpourings of the Romantics. Because it depends on subtlety and nuance for effect, and often asks listeners to suspend their sense of direction and their expectations of narrative, impressionism is for many an acquired taste. For others, it is the ultimate in sensuous “mood music.”

*Sunset at Sea* employs many of the same Impressionist techniques cited above. Colorful instruments like glockenspiel and harp create shimmering orchestral effects; swells in strings and timpani suggest the natural ebb and flow of the ocean waves; strings perform dance-like rhythms emulating the play of wind and water; subtle rhythmic nuance and juxtaposition of polyrhythmic phrases create an undulating rhythmic flow like that of the sea, (though the majority of the piece is either in simple 4/4 or 3/4 time).

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As mentioned previously, the large scale form of the piece resembles a modified arch form, where the introduction (mm.1-10) roughly mirrors that of the ending (mm.82-95). The thematic, harmonic and orchestrational commonalities between the opening and ending of the piece also reflect the cyclical patterns of sunrise and sunset, an added narrative on my part.

Table 4.1. Routenberg, *Sunset at Sea, Form*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Subsections</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys/Modal Centers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>motive A in w.w.</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>E♭ Major/Ionian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme A</td>
<td>antecedent phrase</td>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>E♭ Major/Ionian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consequent phrase</td>
<td>15-17</td>
<td>G Mixolydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consequent phrase cont.</td>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>E Lydian Dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme B</td>
<td>antecedent phrase</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>B♭ Ionian/D♭, mel. minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consequent phrase, repeated twice</td>
<td>23-26</td>
<td>G♭ Lydian Dominant/A Lydian Dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>variation motive A</td>
<td>27-30</td>
<td>D♭ Ionian (no 3rd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation, Theme A</td>
<td></td>
<td>31-38</td>
<td>F Lydian Dominant/ D♭ Lydian Dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme A</td>
<td>reorchestrated</td>
<td>39-42</td>
<td>F Lydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>motive B, strings</td>
<td>43-49</td>
<td>to B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climax and release</td>
<td>motive C, full orch.</td>
<td>50-62</td>
<td>B Mixolydian 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation, Theme A</td>
<td>adagio, reharmonized</td>
<td>63-68</td>
<td>B Ionian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition, secondary climax (mm. 71-72)</td>
<td>Var. Themes A and B</td>
<td>64-81</td>
<td>A♭ Major/G minor/E♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recap. Introduction</td>
<td>with melodic &amp; harmonic variations</td>
<td>82-95</td>
<td>E♭ Major/Ionian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 reveals that *Sunset at Sea* does not conform to conventional diatonic key structure and tonic-dominant relationships. Instead, modal sections set in motion unprepared modulations to distantly related keys, often in mediant and chromatic relationships to the initial key of E♭ Major.

It is also possible to see these key areas as modal centers, each of which has a specific parent scale and varying levels of “brightness” and “darkness.” In his book *Modal Jazz Composition and Harmony*, Ron Miller reinforces the idea of modal “contour” in terms of brightness and darkness, as well as other emotions. This approach to modality essentially reinforces the ancient Greek doctrine of *ethos*, “the belief that music possessed moral qualities and could affect a person’s character and behavior.”

For example, the Greeks believed that the Phrygian mode could incite belligerence in the listener (today, the Phrygian mode is still considered to be a “dark” scale by Miller and other composers, due to its dissonant intervallic relationships). I do not assert that the modes within *Sunset at Sea* have this sort of definitive and profound emotional affect on the listener, but I maintain that the tone of Hassam’s painting led me to choose certain brighter modalities over their darker counterparts. In particular, the use of the Lydian

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43 Similar to a key center, except the traditional harmonic relationships associated with key centers do not apply to a modal center. The “mode of the moment” simply defines its surrounding harmonic and melodic content, without a sense of imminent tonic-dominant resolution.

44 In jazz theory, a parent scale is the scale whose constituent notes correspond to the harmony of its underlying chord (ex. Gmin7=G Dorian scale)


mode and the Lydian Dominant scale (1-2-3-♯4-5-6-♭7) in Sunset at Sea reinforce the composition’s bright yet mysterious mood.

For the most part, the orchestration of Sunset at Sea follows the Impressionist aesthetic of Claude Debussy, placing particular emphasis on sonority, colorful timbral combinations, textural subtlety, and functional yet unobtrusive counterpoint. Brass are generally either muted or very soft, and the harp and glockenspiel provide a “silver lining.” The orchestration is intentionally clear in the differentiation between foreground, middle ground and background elements; for example, solo woodwinds are featured in sympathetically orchestrated passages.\(^{47}\) For a brief moment in measures 69-79, intimations of Wagner can be heard in the Romanticized tutti gestures (see Example 4.2). In this passage, lush romantic chords almost seem to embrace an operatic voice. This effect is achieved through operatic orchestration techniques like doubling the violins with the flutes for melodic reinforcement (which would more than likely be paired with the human voice in an operatic setting).

The use of rhythm in Sunset at Sea is malleable and suggests the natural plasticity of water. For example, in the first four measures of the composition, rhythmic diminution is employed, introducing smaller (faster) note values in each progressive measure. When superimposed in measure 4, the quarter note rhythms in the second violins over the dotted quarter note rhythms in the violas create a polyrhythmic texture of 3/4 time over 4/4 time, similar to the syncopations of jazz and African music (see Example 4.1 below). Over the top of this rhythmized texture floats a solo flute, playing a wave-like rising and then falling motive in eighth-note triplets.

\(^{47}\) Whenever a solo woodwind is featured, the surrounding orchestration, dynamics, and densities are reduced to avoid covering up the delicate solo part.
Example 4.1. Routenberg, *Sunset at Sea, Reduction of mm. 4-5, Polyrhythmic Texture*

Similar rhythms abound throughout the piece, and like Debussy, they are regularly obscured over bar lines to throw off the sense of regular pulse and downbeat. Though rhythm, texture and orchestration have a great deal to do with the overall sound of the piece, melody and harmony are also of utmost importance. The harmonic palette of the piece is largely defined by the modal centers discussed previously, though some Romantic chromatic relationships are exploited (see Example 4.2).

Example 4.2. Routenberg, *Sunset at Sea, Reduction, Romantic Harmony, mm.78-79*
The large-scale melodic structures, main themes and variations of those themes, and smaller motives have been laid out in Table 4.1, but the most important melodic elements will be discussed in further detail. It should be noted that both “themes” and “motives” are presented within the piece, yet these two terms are often used interchangeably. However, a marked difference exists between the two—themes are generally longer, complete melodic statements that can be divided into substructures like antecedent phrases and consequent phrases, and motives are considered to be the smallest melodic unit available to the composer.

The first real theme of *Sunset at Sea* (Theme A) begins in measure 11, presented by the French horns and doubled in unison and at the octave by violas and celli, respectively. Both intervallic and rhythmic elements of this theme are developed later in the composition (see Example 4.2). The chromatic descent in measure 13 from C♮ to B♭ appears again in measures 63-68 in the key of B Major, both rhythmically augmented and reharmonized. The interval of a perfect fourth in Theme A compliments the harmonic palette of *Sunset at Sea*, which relies heavily on P4th and P5th intervals to create a characteristic “open” sound.

Example 4.3. Routenberg, *Sunset at Sea*, Theme A, mm.11-14
Theme A continues to develop and work its way through the surrounding textures until measure 20, when Theme B is introduced in the violins. This contrasting theme (mm. 20-26) provides a sense of forward movement and contains larger intervallic leaps of octaves, Major sevenths and minor sixths. The intervallic leaps of Theme B return in measures 74-77, where they undergo a brief orchestral transformation in the style of Wagner. Measures 27-30, essentially a transitional section leading to a variation of Theme A, echo motive A from the introduction, this time harmonized in the clarinets first, then the flutes. Once again, the rhythm also progresses from longer note values to shorter notes values, which simulates a sort of accelerando (the progression of note values is as follows: quarter notes—quarter note triplets—eighth note triplets—sixteenth notes). Theme A is repeated using brighter orchestration beginning in measure 39 (staccato flutes doubled with glockenspiel, along with high trills in the violins), which then leads to another transitional section at measure 43. Measure 50 is the principal climax of the piece, though the motivic cell G-F♯-D♯-B does not have much relation to the previous themes or motives. This section is primarily based on texture instead, slowly dissolving into a trance like modal passage in B Mixolydian ♭6, which leads to the variation of the chromatic cell found in Theme A at measure 63. The Wagnerian statement at measures 74-78 combines several motives and thematic fragments (Theme A and Theme B, mostly) to create a secondary climax and transition back to the introductory material at measure 82. Whereas the harmonic progression of the Introduction remains largely in E♭ Major, the “recapitulation” of the Introduction beginning at measure 82 follows a more resolute harmonic path, at first stating similar E♭ Major (I) and C minor (vi) chords, but then descending to a rich A♭ Major chord (IV)
and finally resolving on E♭ Major to end as the piece began, with low strings and timpani performing quiet swells. It should be noted that the symmetry of the opening and ending is also reflected in a subtle *portamento* slide in the strings, which is performed by the first violins in measure 9 as an ascending whole-step slide, and then “resolved” by the basses and celli in measure 91 with a descending whole-step slide.
Chapter 5

The Ashcan School: *Stag at Sharkey’s*, after George Bellows

Plate 5. George Bellows, American, 1882-1925, *Stag at Sharkey’s*, 1909, Oil on canvas, 92 x 122.6 cm, © Cleveland Museum of Art, Hinman B. Hurlbut Collection, 1133.1922

The first years of the twentieth century saw the formation of a revolutionary group of American realist painters who fought for artistic freedom, denounced the academic style [of painting], and “pushed American art into the quickened tempo of the modern age.”

Their leader was the painter, philosopher, and consummate pedagogue Robert Henri, who taught at the Art Students League of New York from 1915-1928, where he advocated modernism in painting and directly influenced artists such as Edward

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Hopper and George Bellows. Henri’s band of iconoclastic painters was known as “The Eight,” and their stark realism, use of everyday city life as subject matter, and predominantly dark canvases stood in direct contrast to the idyllic output of the American Impressionists, earning the group the off-putting moniker “the Revolutionary Black Gang,” which later became “The Ashcan School.” In *Three Hundred Years of American Painting*, Alexander Eliot also suggests that “their lavish use of black actually was a conservative throwback to Rembrandt, Frans Hals, and Goya.”

George Bellows (1882-1925) was not one of the original members of “The Eight,” though he became associated with The Ashcan School through his studies with Robert Henri at the Art Students League. Bellows’ technical facility and fervor for painting realistic city scenes led him to become Henri’s favorite student; Bellows would go on to teach at the Art Students League himself in 1910. The collected words, teachings and letters of Robert Henri were represented in an influential 1923 book entitled *The Art Spirit*; Bellows describes the book as follows: “I would give anything to have come by this book years ago. It is in my opinion comparable only to the notes of Leonardo and Sir Joshua…One of the finest voices which express the philosophy of modern men in painting.” Throughout his life, Bellows’ loves included baseball, beer, and beauty—the first two were abundant in everyday American life, while the need for

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the last, in the artist’s view, could only be assuaged through art. Justifiably, Bellows proclaims: “what this world needs is art…art and more art.”53

While living in New York City and studying at the Art Students League, Bellows, fascinated by all sports, frequently visited Tom Sharkey’s boxing club across Lincoln Square from his studio.54 “Between 1900 and 1911, organized boxing matches were against the law in New York, but in private arenas like Tom Sharkey’s club those who could afford the steep admission price could witness clandestine matches.”55 It was here that Bellows’ celebrated painting Stag at Sharkey’s was born in 1909, a canvas that came to define urban realism. “The entangled fighters, muscles tense and bodies twisting under the force of the blows, the press of the crowd, the referee leaning to one side as he observes the match, along with the vigorous brushstrokes, give this image a sense of action and dramatic, vital energy.”56 The distorted, sardonic faces of the crowd and the pitch black background intensify the illicit, shadowy nature of the event, while the bold motion of Bellows’ brush strokes defines the power and movement of the fighters. It should be noted that this more antiquated definition of “stag” refers to a gathering of men only.

My interpretation of Bellows’ painting is written for a studio orchestra with the following instrumentation: piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet in B♭, bassoon, three French horns, two trumpets in B♭, tenor trombone, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, suspended

53 Ibid., 290.
56 Ibid., 167.
cymbal, snare drum, triangle, harp, piano, 1st violins, 2nd violins, violas, celli and contrabasses. This composition has an interesting story behind it, since it was originally written as a film cue during my participation in the 2007 ASCAP Television and Film Scoring Workshop in Los Angeles. There, the piece was recorded by a 40 piece A-list Hollywood orchestra comprised of some of the best session musicians in the city, who regularly record movie scores for John Williams, Hans Zimmer, and the like. I conducted the score at the legendary Fox Newman Scoring Stage (where dozens of hit movie scores have been recorded, like the Matrix trilogy) to a click track\(^57\) programmed in Auricle (the industry standard software for custom click tracks). The concertmaster was Endre Grenat, who regularly performs as concertmaster on blockbuster film scores and Hollywood events like the Academy Awards. I was also honored to have legendary score mixer Armin Steiner in the control room, who not only mixed the orchestra perfectly in real-time, but also applied his signature “John Williams reverb” (the reverb\(^58\) Williams actually uses on his soundtracks).

My piece, later named *Stag at Sharkey’s* after Bellows’ painting, was originally a three minute cue from the 2006 film *Annapolis*. The formal structure of the piece follows the action of the cue—which happens to also be a boxing scene—in the form of pre-

\(^{57}\) Studio musicians often record to a click track, a prerecorded digital “click” heard in headphones which outlines the tempo and meter of the music with metronomic precision. Tracks recorded with a “click” can then be easily synchronized in sequencing programs like Pro Tools for further editing. In this case, my music was synchronized to the film cue using a preprogrammed click track in order to line up all of the hits in the visual action with musical hits, timed down to the split second.

\(^{58}\) Reverberation is the reflection of sound off of hard surfaces, a sonic phenomenon that defines the size of every acoustic space. In the modern studio, natural reverberation can be replicated digitally using complex mathematical algorithms to produce the illusion of any size space.
calculated musical hits. The mood of Bellows’ painting and the boxing scene from *Annapolis* is largely one and the same. Divorced from the visual picture, the music still stands on its own, and I believe that it also captures the spirit of Bellows’ *Stag at Sharkey’s*.

As previously mentioned, *Stag at Sharkey’s* does not follow a standard or “classical” form, though it can be divided into two larger dramatic sections (AB) based on the narrative and tone of the film cue. Since the musical hits had to align perfectly with the action of the film cue, tempo and meter changes were methodically and meticulously calculated. At times these calculations were stumbled upon through trial and error experimentation; but for the most part, I employed specific formulas to calculate the placement of hits in the score. It should also be noted that the video cue to which this music was originally written will not be included in any form due to copyright issues.

The art of writing music to picture tests the composer’s ability to maintain musical integrity and direction while under many formal constraints. My experience at the ASCAP Television and Film Scoring Workshop removed many of these common impediments, though the three minute cue had to be completed from start to finish in one week’s time. The cue begins towards the end of the movie, when the hero, Jake, fights his nemesis in a boxing match. Jake honorably loses the fight and walks out of the

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59 In film and television scoring, “hits” are specific musical gestures that accentuate the action in the cue. For example, a punch in a boxing scene might be accompanied by an accented staccato chord in the brass and percussion.

60 See Fred Karlin and Rayburn Wright’s *On the Track: A Guide to Contemporary Film Scoring*.

61 These creative hurdles usually include conflicting demands from the director and the producers, and last minute editing changes, which almost always occur, and often demand completely rewritten cues.
ring, where his girlfriend offers a few words of encouragement. At this point, Jake receives a standing ovation from the crowd. The tempo chosen for the majority of the A section (the fight music) follows the “tempo” of the fight, which can be discerned from the rhythmic flow of the punches and the speed of the editing from one shot to the next (mm.1-64). After watching the scene through a few times, I instinctively chose the tempo \( \frac{4}{4} = 127 \), which happened to line up with most of the important hits during the fight scene (placing hits on downbeats is ideal). After the referee disappointingly raises Jake’s opponent’s hand in victory and Jake walks out of the ring (beginning at m.73), the music and the mood shift dramatically from the rhythmic and aggressive “fight music” to a more subdued heroic style supported largely by sustained chords (or “pads”) in the strings. Table 5.1 below describes the form of *Stag at Sharkey’s*, as well as major key centers and melodic organization.

**Table 5.1. Routenberg, *Stag at Sharkey’s*, Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Melodic Materials</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (fight sequence)</td>
<td>primary Motive (A) in strings</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction (lead-in to fight sequence)</td>
<td>&quot;Fight&quot;</td>
<td>9-14</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motive B (fight begins)</td>
<td>Detached ( \sharp ) notes</td>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme A, strings Jake knocks down opponent</td>
<td>var. Motive A, mm.27-28, descending</td>
<td>21-28</td>
<td>“Classical” sequence climaxing on E( \flat ) Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>dev. Motive A</td>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>Transition to A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to 2( ^{nd} ) fight sequence</td>
<td>tremolo strings</td>
<td>29-33</td>
<td>Transition to A minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One might consider the form of *Stag at Sharkey’s* to be through-composed if not for the many filmic references written into the music, detailed above. Armed with this knowledge, it becomes clear that the form follows in step with the action and narrative of the cue. However, one could easily imagine the same music accompanying George Bellows’ pugilistic painting, since the themes and general tone are basically identical.

A handful of motives and themes, developed according to the narrative’s needs, form the foundation of *Stag at Sharkey’s*. Motive A is comprised of an ascending stepwise line that outlines the first four tones of a minor scale; it repeats all but the first tone twice (see...
Example 5.1). In measures 3-4, Motive A outlines a diminished scale, a scale whose symmetric intervallic relationships of minor 3\textsuperscript{rd}s plays an important role in the harmonic scheme of the composition. This motive is further developed as the piece progresses; for example, in measures 15-18 it becomes more rhythmicized in the form of aggressive sixteenth-note cells. Motive B (“Fight”, mm 9-12) is derived from the stepwise motion of the first three pitches of Motive A, though the rhythms have been altered in a militaristic manner (and orchestrated with staccato brass and snare drum) and the resultant motivic cells are separated by longer rests. In contrapuntal terms, Motive B displays oblique motion in measures 9-12 (the trombone repeats D while the French horns move in a contrasting direction, playing the first three tones of an ascending D minor scale).

Example 5.1. Routenberg, *Stag at Sharkey’s, Motives and Themes*

The somewhat romantic (due to its larger intervallic leaps of minor sixths) Theme A appears twice in the composition, always accompanied by a “Classical” harmonic
sequence. This sequence begins on a minor chord and then modulates in successive minor 3rd intervals via secondary dominant chords based on the 7th scale degree of the original chord (ex. Am-G-Cm-B♭-E♭, or i-V/iii- iii- V/V- V). Theme B appears for the first time in incomplete form roughly halfway through the piece as a trumpet solo (mm.38-39). In the tradition of Wagnerian leitmotifs, this theme represents the protagonist, and as such, I have labeled it the Heroic Theme. It also (expectedly) utilizes fanfare-like intervallic jumps of a perfect fifth, an interval traditionally associated with heroism. Theme B reappears in complete form at the end of the piece as successive woodwind and brass soloists state its balanced antecedent and consequent phrases.

Many passages within Stag at Sharkey’s are harmonically simple, reinforcing insistent ostinati with basic triadic harmonies. The Classical sequence described above, which appears twice, displays a more sophisticated chord progression through the use of mediant chromatic relationships and secondary dominants. Its voice leading also creates a strong rising countermelody consisting of traditionally resolved 9-8 and 4-3 suspensions (see Example 5.2).

Example 5.2. Routenberg, Stag at Sharkey’s, Classical Sequence

The introduction (mm.1-8) employs a more modern chord progression that also makes several appearances throughout the composition. Here, the opening D minor
chord (i) shifts chromatically downward by a half step to D♭7♯11 (Lydian Dominant).
In measures 5-8 the harmonic rhythm is doubled, with one chord per measure instead of two. The same chromatic chord progression is repeated in measures 5-6, and then sequenced a tritone (diminished fifth) away with A♭ minor resolving to G Lydian, eventually leading back to a basic D minor tonality at measure 9. This harmonic concept of a minor chord moving downward by half step to a Major chord reappears throughout the composition, most notably at the climax of the fight scene in measures 64-65, where the E♭ minor chord from the extended Classical sequence in measures 57-64 resolves unexpectedly to D Major, in the same manner as the opening. The most dissonant harmonic moments occur during the tense fight scene, largely as punctuations to the visual action. One especially dissonant example can be found at measure 45, where the French horns perform an upward glissando from middle C to B (a Major 7th), while the remaining brass instruments form a C altered diminished chord (C-E♭-A♭-B, or A♭m/C).

The importance of the diminished scale in *Stag at Sharkey’s* cannot be underestimated, for it is not only employed harmonically through the characteristic use of minor 3rd and tritone modulations, but also melodically, in scalar form.

As in all of my orchestral endeavors, orchestration and balance is of paramount importance. A thorough understanding of each instrument’s range, registral characteristics, and timbre, both in a solo capacity and in combination with other instruments from similar and contrasting choirs, is necessary in order to fully exploit the amazing power of the symphony orchestra. In Samuel Adler’s *The Study of Orchestration*, the author touches on this subject with a quote from Adam Carse:

“Orchestration has been many things to many composers. It has been a servant of the
great, a support to the mediocre, and a cloak for the feeble." Adler also has helpful advice for the bourgeoning composer, relating his experience at Tanglewood studying orchestration with Aaron Copland:

These lessons consisted of listening first and then analyzing various composers’ orchestrations. Copland claimed that if you had a composer’s idiosyncratic orchestral sound firmly fixed in your mind, you could take any non-orchestral piece by that composer and orchestrate it as he would have done. Similarly, by exposing yourself to a multitude of styles and internalizing their sounds, you will be able to realize on paper anything you can hear in your mind or inner ear.

Even before reading about Adler’s advice from Copland, I was interested in doing just this. More than just an exercise in orchestration, I regularly listened to my favorite orchestral pieces from various periods and made a note of any timbral or harmonic combination that caught my ear. These very specific colors, extracted from their contextual homes, formed the roots of my personal orchestrational language. For *Stag at Sharkey’s*, I was inspired by the colorful and effective orchestration of the legendary Hollywood film composer John Williams, whose music in turn rests upon the shoulders of master orchestrators like Stravinsky, Ravel, Debussy, Respighi, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky, and many others.

Some techniques, like the pairing of trumpets and percussion, are centuries old; others, like the use of stopped French horns combined with muted trumpets in measures 3-4, have a more recent history. Other more contemporary orchestral techniques include the use of bisbigliando, or “whispering,” in the harp at measures 5-6 and flutter tonguing in the flute and piccolo at measure 47. Another modern timbral pairing can be found in measures 34-39, where the staccato ostinato pattern in the low strings and bassoon is

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63 Ibid., xii.
doubled in the bass register of the piano, a prevalent technique found in action-oriented Hollywood film scores. Other than these timbral combinations, a general orchestral balance was achieved traditionally through the scoring of each instrument in its most effective register, taking into consideration the surrounding dynamics, textural densities, and melodic/harmonic hierarchies.
Chapter 6

American Realism: *Nocturne*, after Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks*

After the Jazz Age in the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression of the 1930s, America found itself on the brink of a Second World War in the early 1940s. The increasingly hurried pace of urban life and the specter of the war found new expression in a revolutionary new style of New York jazz called bebop and the canvases of a new generation of artists like Thomas Hart Benton. Contrary to this aesthetic was the New Yorker Edward Hopper (1882-1967), whose paintings fixated on the less apparent emotional byproducts of city life: solitude and alienation.

At the age of seventeen Hopper enrolled in art classes under the tutelage of Robert Henri, alongside classmate George Bellows. Whereas Bellows rose to fame fairly quickly through his strenuous lifestyle, Hopper preferred the simple life, and even after
studying in Paris in 1906, he could not find recognition or even manage to sell his paintings for a decade.”\textsuperscript{64} Contemplating back on the issue, Hopper later states dismissively, “Recognition doesn’t mean so much…you never get it when you need it.”\textsuperscript{65} Paris did instill in the artist a fascination with the natural play of light on buildings and other structures, however. “Light, in fact, is the protagonist in all of Hopper’s art—not the soft, refulgent light of Paris, but America’s clean glare slanting from high blue skies.”\textsuperscript{66}

Hopper’s most famous scene is \textit{Nighthawks} (1942), “a stark equation, with brick, asphalt, night, and loneliness on the one hand, and light, food, and casual, quiet fellowship on the other.”\textsuperscript{67} This painting means many things to many people, but most concur that it exudes solitude, isolation, and a glimmer of hope. The pale artificial light emanating from the diner falls onto an empty city street. Four figures seem to be “trapped” inside the glass at the bar, for there is no visual exit or doorway. The man and woman sitting next to each other at the bar seem to be lost in their own thoughts, with a palpable lack of communication between them. Some critics have described \textit{Nighthawks} as reminiscent of “film noir,” a popular genre of dark detective films in the 1940s. One could certainly impose several narratives on the scene, due to the ambiguous body language of the central figures. Hopper became well known for these themes of isolation and loneliness—“figures gazing out windows, figures alone within the urban setting,


\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 297.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 297.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 298.
isolated buildings set down in landscapes”—all symptomatic of modern life. In the 1950s, when Hopper was in his seventies, he eloquently discussed his method of painting from what he sees:

I look all the time for something that suggests something to me. I think about it. Just to paint a representation or a design is not hard, but to express a thought in painting is. Thought is fluid. What you put on canvas is concrete, and it tends to direct the thought. The more you put on canvas the more you lose control of the thought. I’ve never been able to paint what I set out to paint.

Hopper later became associated with the school of painting known as the American scene (though he always denied the association), “a movement dedicated to the most realistic and accurate representations of American life and American experience in its many different aspects.” Today he stands as one of the most original of America’s painters, with a unique style that expressly captures the zeitgeist of the country in the first half of the twentieth century.

My interpretation of Hopper’s Nighthawks is written for big band with the addition of a soprano vocalise. I titled the piece Nocturne, or “night piece,” to reflect the tone and setting of the painting. The time period of the early 1940s easily lends itself to a jazz interpretation, though the style of big band writing presented here is more contemporary. I chose to incorporate the softer, more colorful sounds of auxiliary woodwinds in the saxophone section—flute, alto flute, B♭ clarinet, tenor saxophone, and

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71 A wordless vocal part sung using only syllables like “ahh” and “ohh.”
bass clarinet. Other than mollifying the often strident sound of five saxophones, the use of these orchestral woodwinds expands both the registral range of the saxophone section and its potential timbral combinations, both within the section itself and in concert with the brass and rhythm sections. The alto flute doubles an exposed solo melody with the vocalise in measures 11-18 and 97-103, creating a new hybrid “instrument” that personifies Hopper’s themes of isolation and loneliness. The trumpet section is scored for four flugelhorns due to the instrument’s darker, more mellifluous tone (and natural doubling with woodwinds like flutes) and the trombones are softened at times with cup mutes. The rhythm section is comprised of guitar, acoustic piano, double bass and drums, with the drummer playing with brushes initially and then switching to sticks for more climactic passages.

*Nocturne* essentially follows a ternary form. Section A (the main theme, in G minor) leads to the longer B section, which provides melodic contrast and is largely set in its relative Major key of B♭. The B section is followed by a tutti restatement of the A section with the addition of a phrase extension/coda. Similar to many jazz arrangements, the overall formal structure of *head-improvisation-head out* follows a macro ternary form. However, *Nocturne* diverts from the three-part ternary form during the tenor saxophone solo section, where only sections A and B are heard, and the head out (recapitulation), where a truncated B section leads to the final statement of A along with a brief coda. In these respects one might say that *Nocturne* displays varied formal structure after the initial statement of the melody.

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72 A three-part form divided into distinct sections (ex. ABA)
Nocturne is written in slow triple meter with an adagio tempo (approximately \( \dot{\text{c}}=70 \)). Melodic analysis reveals a melancholic theme that undergoes various transformations throughout the piece. This melody, first stated in its entirety in measures 11-18, echoes Hopper’s themes of isolation and loneliness in its unusual doubling of soprano vocalise and alto flute, a rather delicate and exposed pairing. One may go so far as to say that the vocalise represents the “voice” of the female figure in the painting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Subsections</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>B♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (main theme in</td>
<td>antecedent phrase</td>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocalise &amp; alto fl.)</td>
<td>consequent phrase</td>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>phrase extension</td>
<td>19-26</td>
<td>B♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(accelerando)</td>
<td>27-33</td>
<td>B♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retransition</td>
<td>climax with written</td>
<td>34-40</td>
<td>B♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tenor sax solo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>tutti</td>
<td>41-48</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>phrase extension/coda</td>
<td>49-56</td>
<td>B♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor sax solo</td>
<td>based on chord</td>
<td>57-74</td>
<td>B♭ Major/ G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(w/ backgrounds)</td>
<td>progressions of A &amp; B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>backgrounds w/vocalise</td>
<td>75-86</td>
<td>to B♭ Mixolydian 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retransition</td>
<td>tutti with ten. sax solo</td>
<td>87-96</td>
<td>B♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (Recapitulation)</td>
<td>alto flute/vocalise</td>
<td>97-104</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>tutti with fermatas</td>
<td>105-106</td>
<td>B♭ Major, B♭/G♭</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Certainly, the inclusion of the vocalise diminishes the otherwise sterile elements of the scene in this musical interpretation, lending a degree of “humanity.” The main theme found in measures 11-18 of section A is presented with chord symbol reductions below.

Example 6.1. Routenberg, *Nocturne*, Primary Melody, mm. 11-18

This melody displays a classic antecedent/consequent phrase structure in four-bar groupings. Notice how the descending motive C-B♭ in the 3rd and 4th bars of this example is balanced by the ascending pitches D-E♭ in bars 7-8. One of the most colorful harmonic moments of the composition is the unexpected chord progression Gm9-G♭Maj7(♯11) in measures 13-14, a recurring harmonic figure that exploits the strong voice leading tendency in the bass G-G♭-F. This descending bass line, which continues its stepwise descent to E♭ min(Maj)7, was a primary harmonic impetus for the piece. In fact, many of *Nocturne’s* harmonic structures are derived from modal mixture chords; for example, E♭ min(Maj)7 borrows from the darker B♭ Mixolydian ♯6 mode.

The melody at section B (measures 19-26) matches the pace of the harmonic rhythm (dotted half notes), consequently shifting the listener’s attention toward the harmonic interests on beats two and three of each measure. Measures 27-30 provide contrasting melodic, harmonic and rhythmic material, introducing a transitory chromatic melody harmonized with altered diminished chords (while performing an *accelerando*).
The harmonized melody in Example 6.2 makes use of chromatic approach techniques as indicated, as well as altered diminished chords containing the dissonant extensions of the diminished scale (♮9, ♭11, and ♭13). These four bars act as a dominant pedal, wherein the tritone relationship emphasizes B7 and F7 sonorities simultaneously. It should also be noted that the last chord, F7(♭9♭5), resolves to Gm9—a classic deceptive cadence from V7 to vi.

Bars 34-40 constitute a retransition to the last A section. This passage features one of the climactic moments of the composition, where the tutti ensemble, playing at a forte dynamic, joins the solo tenor saxophone. The tenor sax is written in an improvisational style characterized by successive ascending and descending arpeggiated figures; this passage then leads naturally into the tenor sax solo section.

Soft cluster voicings\(^{73}\) are employed in the first half of the tenor sax solo in measures 57-74 (see Example 6.3). These voicings, which also appear in the introduction, exhibit colorful doublings of flugelhorns, lead trombones and woodwinds.

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\(^{73}\) Modern, dense voicings with prevalent adjacent intervallic relationships of Major 2\(^{nd}\)s and minor 2\(^{nd}\)s, with occasional larger intervals of 3\(^{rd}\)s
like flute, alto flute, clarinet and bass clarinet. The instruments are scored in their low to mid registers so as not to cover up the tenor sax solo.

Example 6.3. Routenberg, *Nocturne, Cluster Voicings Reduction, mm. 57-64*

Here, the cluster chords form a harmonic counterpoint to the foreground tenor sax solo while the rhythm section reinforces a syncopated eighth-note ostinato figure in the background. From measures 75-86, the density and dynamic of the backgrounds increases alongside the staccato contrapuntal figures in the woodwinds and guitar. At this point the soprano vocalise enters once again for timbral variety, doubling two flugelhorns in unison to form a breathy countermelody. The backgrounds climax in the middle of measure 83 on a B♭ Mixolydian ♭6 modality, gently tapering off before returning to the truncated final statement of the melody at measure 87.

Measures 87-96 are an almost exact repeat of measures 34-40, except the tenor sax has a brief solo feature in measures 94-96. The sparse melody is stated once again in measures 97-104 (doubled by soprano vocalise and alto flute in its characteristic lower register), followed by a brief coda in measures 105-106. The coda consists of two cluster voicings, each separated by a fermata. The first chord is based on the tonic, B♭ Maj7, while the bitonal ending chord B♭/G♭ leaves the listener on an unresolved, ambiguous harmony—similar to the predominant tone in Hopper’s *Nighthawks*. 
In terms of orchestration, *Nocturne* follows more modern big band writing conventions, like those employed by Maria Schneider, Bob Brookmeyer, and Vince Mendoza. These orchestration techniques include the use of cross-section doublings, modern classically influenced harmonies and voicings, and more colorful auxiliary woodwind doubles, which tone down the often overwhelming sound of the big band. One might say as well, especially in the case of Maria Schneider, that these softer woodwind colors are an attempt to make the big band more orchestral in scope. This is certainly the case with *Nocturne*, where conventional big band scoring techniques are purposely avoided—though it should be noted that the same attention to register, balance and timbre still apply.

Scoring the “modern” rhythm section is very different from traditional rhythm section scoring. Of course, “groove” indications must be as specific as possible for the drummer, and hits and fills must be meticulously notated. If the modern composer/arranger wishes to have more control over the integration of the rhythm section into the often extremely complex horn section writing, he or she must notate as much as is necessary in the bass and piano parts. For instance, the bass part in *Nocturne* is completely written out instead of leaving certain passages to chance with chord symbols alone. Likewise, the piano part is notated for the most part, so as to match specific harmonies and double melodic lines exactly. It is my experience that the more exactly the piano part is notated, the more modern the composition will sound. This occurs because pianists, no matter how harmonically sophisticated, can never “hear” all of the complex harmonies and rhythms that characterize modern big band charts. The result is often harmonic and rhythmic clutter, reducing the clarity of thought and line. The guitar
is written in the same manner as the piano, with many melodic doubles and rhythmic notation set to specific harmonies. Unless the composer is a guitarist, it is safest to let the players themselves figure out how to voice a chord, given the proper lead note and extensions. Lastly, the integration of the rhythm section with the horns goes a long way in creating a more modern big band sound. The drummer plays the largest part in this equation, for the style of the drum groove immediately sets the piece in a specific time and place. It is the composer’s preference to leave the majority of drum-specific details to the drummer, though it never hurts to have a few one-on-one conversations to make sure that you are both seeing eye to eye.
In 1905, the young Wisconsinite Georgia O’Keeffe took up study at the Art Institute of Chicago, where she stayed for two years, then travelled to New York City to study at the Art Students League, where so many of her generation began stellar artistic
careers. O’Keeffe was one of the first American painters to wholeheartedly embrace abstractionism, a revolutionary approach to painting that focused on intrinsic form rather than narrative or pictorial content. She is also considered to be the best woman painter that America has produced, next to Mary Cassatt. While studying in New York, O’Keeffe became acquainted with the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who advocated the works of the French post-modernists Cézanne, Toulouse-Lautrec, Rodin, and Matisse through exhibitions at his art gallery. It just so happened that the public took little notice of Stieglitz’s modernist exhibitions until the same artists appeared at the well publicized New York Armory Show of 1913. Eventually though, Stieglitz formed a tightly-knit group of painters around him who would epitomize the beginnings of abstractionism and the avant-garde in American painting, including artists like Arthur Dove and Georgia O’Keeffe.

When he first saw O’Keeffe’s abstract drawings in 1916, Stieglitz declared: “Finally, a woman on paper.” O’Keeffe was a 29 year old art teacher when Stieglitz decided to put on an exhibition of her abstract drawings. She protested the exhibition though, stating that her abstractions “were a private matter which the public would find incomprehensible.” Eight years later, the two were married. Stieglitz was much older.

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76 Ibid., 183.

77 Ibid., 183.

78 Ibid., 188.

79 Ibid., 188.
than O'Keeffe, and he passed away in the mid 1940s, after which Georgia moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she spent the rest of her days. O’Keeffe was profoundly influenced by the intrinsic workings of the camera lens and photography in general during her time with Stieglitz. She began incorporating photographic techniques like extreme close-ups into her still life paintings of flowers, creating abstract yet innately beautiful dissolutions of nature, form, and color. O’Keeffe also relates her painting to music: “Singing has always seemed to me the most perfect means of expression. Since I cannot sing, I paint.”

When she was living in New York City, O’Keeffe often painted views of the city from her studio and other vantage points. These urban paintings invariably displayed O’Keeffe’s signature use of clean colors, sharp edges, and strong patterns. New York, Night was painted in 1929 from the artist’s high-rise apartment in New York City. The view is of the Berkeley Hotel, with the traffic and street lights of Lexington Avenue glowing in the background.

My composition is also titled New York Night after O’Keeffe’s painting. Here, I attempt to evoke the energy of the “city that never sleeps” and the history of New York City as the modern center of the jazz world. The composition is written for a contemporary big band augmented by solo harmonica (played by special guest Howard Levy). New York Night was commissioned in 2007 by the New York Youth Symphony’s

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81 Ibid., 190.

82 Contemporary refers here to both the manner of writing and the instrumentation of 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, and 5 woodwind doubles of saxophones, accompanied by a standard four piece rhythm section.
First Music 24 series and premièred by Jazz Band Classic on May 22, 2008 at Lincoln Center’s Allen Room in New York City.

The instrumentation of *New York Night* is as follows: harmonica soloist, soprano sax, alto sax, flute, tenor sax, bass clarinet, 4 trumpets, 3 tenor trombones, bass trombone, guitar, piano, bass and drums. The majority of the composition is written in fast triple meter, though interspersed passages of 5/8 occur, and the second harmonica solo section (measures 185-216) transitions to 4/4 time via metric modulation (\(\frac{\text{crotchet}}{\text{crotchet}}\)).\(^{83}\) This 4/4 solo section is the only part of the composition with swing feeling; the rest of the piece is played with a straight-eighth “feel.”

Many sections of *New York Night* take advantage of the contrast between rhythm section writing and tutti orchestration, a modern big band scoring technique that calls attention to the intimate sound of the small jazz combo in addition to the complex sonorities of ensemble passages. This approach to orchestration also affords the brass players some extra time to rest between difficult or extended passages. Table 7.1 below outlines the form, subsections, and major key centers of the composition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Subsections</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme A</td>
<td>antecedent phrase</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consequent phrase</td>
<td>9-17</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to B</td>
<td>syncopated melody</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>doubled in bass line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme B</td>
<td>angular motive in</td>
<td>26-41</td>
<td>D minor/B, minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{83}\) Metric modulation is a twentieth-century method of changing tempo through the equation of one note value with another proportional note value in the next measure.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme C</td>
<td>angular motive in 5/4</td>
<td>42-65</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>climax and extended phrase</td>
<td>58-65</td>
<td>A♭ minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonica solo</td>
<td>return to 3/4 time</td>
<td>66-81</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme A chord changes</td>
<td>82-97</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme B chord changes</td>
<td>98-114</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutti/Ensemble</td>
<td>Development Section</td>
<td>115-132</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dev. of Transition to B and Theme B</td>
<td>133-148</td>
<td>G minor/E♭ minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dev., Theme B</td>
<td>149-156</td>
<td>C minor/A♭ minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme C</td>
<td>157-180</td>
<td>A minor/A♭ minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>transition to harmonica solo section</td>
<td>181-184</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second harmonica solo</td>
<td>metric modulation to 4/4 swing time</td>
<td>185-216</td>
<td>E minor/A♭ minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>transition, end solo</td>
<td>217-224</td>
<td>B Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>tutti climax</td>
<td>225-232</td>
<td>B Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transition to B theme</td>
<td>233-240</td>
<td>B minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fade out, arpeggiated motive w/harm. solo</td>
<td>241-247</td>
<td>B minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this formal outline it can be determined that *New York Night* does not follow a standard popular form like AABA, binary form, ternary form, or otherwise. One might say that the return of the syncopated material in measures 18-25 (the transition to Theme B) indicates a modified rondo form, though this example stretches the traditional definition of the rondo (ABACADA…). Perhaps the more prudent label for *New York*
Night would be sectional form, since the piece’s sundry themes and motives fall into relatively regular structural components. Example 7.1 below details the major themes and motives found in New York Night, which will be discussed in further detail:

Example 7.1. Routenberg, New York Night, Themes and Motives
The large intervallic leaps and angular themes found throughout *New York Night* are largely derived from similar formal elements in Georgia O’Keeffe’s painting. The well-defined geometric structures of the buildings in this scene suggested similar melodic shapes to me. Moreover, the effulgent light emanating from building windows, street lights and car headlights inspired complementary “colorful” orchestration. Theme A begins on a subdued note over a suspended minor ostinato figure in the piano (Motive A). This theme and its supporting ostinato gradually build in intensity until reaching measure 18, where a syncopated bass line is introduced and the groove becomes less spacious and more rhythmic (all with a straight-eighths feel). Theme B (mm.26-41) is an angular three-note cell in D minor beginning on the 3rd, jumping downward to the 5th, and leaping back up to the 9th. The 5th is heard more as a passing tone, highlighting the minor 2nd interval from F to E. The same melody is then transposed to B♭ minor, or vi in the original key of D minor. Parallel minor 9th chords transposed downward by the interval of a Major 3rd provide a common harmonic thread throughout the piece (ex. Cm9 to A♭m9). This relationship is also commonly used in film music to create a “darker” sound. Measures 26-30 also feature a simple syncopated countermelody in the tenor sax, 2nd trumpet and lead trombone consisting of unison line that splits into contrary motion, ending on the 3rd and 7th degrees of the resultant minor 9th chord. It should be noted that this countermelody does not overlap with Theme B; rather, it punctuates the empty space in between phrases as a good accompanist might.
Example 7.2. Routenberg, *New York Night*, *Countermelody*, mm.26-28

The motive of the minor 2nd interval undergoes various permutations in Theme B and Theme C, as well as the development of these themes in measures 133-184. For example, the first three notes of Theme C (G-C-F♯) are derived from similar intervallic relationships as Theme B, and the ascending minor second interval from F♯ to G towards the end of the phrase lends the melody a sense of symmetry. Moreover, the minor 2nd interval formed between F and E in the D minor arpeggiated figure in measures 1-4 (Motive A) reinforces this dark intervallic quality.

Traditional voice leading, counterpoint and polyphony play more of a role in *New York Night* than other compositions in *Americana Suite*. This linear writing style forms an aesthetic counterpoint to O’Keeffe’s linear forms in the painting.

The first harmonica solo section (measures 66-114) is written to spacious rhythm section comping, recalling the small group feel of the opening. Though not exactly replicated, the general harmonic movement of the opening is followed in this section. A more complex tutti (full ensemble) developmental section follows the harmonica solo. Here, development of central themes and motives takes center stage. Measures 115-118 build into the tutti section using a pyramid technique (rhythmically offset harmonic stacking of notes). One of the few areas to use the “thickened line” technique of jazz arranging, measures 123-124 harmonize every note of the angular melody to create a
Measures 126-132 present a transposition of Theme B in augmented rhythmic form (the previous eighth-note rhythm has now become dotted quarter notes and dotted half notes), coupled with a countermelody doubled in flute, soprano sax, guitar and piano. The pickups to measure 141 present another instance of contrary motion between the lead melody in harmonica, upper woodwinds and trumpets, and its countermelody in tenor sax, lead trombone and guitar. During this variation of Theme B in measures 145-146 and 153-154, the trombones provide background harmonies in the form of 4-Way Close, minor-Major 7th voicings connected through idiomatic glissandi.

When Theme C returns at measure 157, the orchestration matches its first statement, but now a transitory extension in measures 181-184 leads to the second harmonica solo. There is an unexpected metric modulation at measure 185, where the dotted quarter note in the old 3/4 time becomes the quarter note in the new 4/4 swing time. This solo section has a very different feel and tone than the rest of the composition due to its swing feeling and 4/4 meter. One might notice that the sparse background figures, comprised of woodwind lines and brass kicks (accented, staccato chords), derive from the thematic material of section B. At measure 217 the meter changes back to 3/4 and a second metric modulation reverts back to the faster triple-meter tempo (where the quarter note in 4/4 time becomes the dotted quarter note in 3/4 time). This passage from measures 217-232 establishes B Major as tonic, which immediately transforms via modal mixture to B minor at the coda (m.233). Measures 225-232 also make use of Motive A.

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84 Thickened line is a term used to describe the harmonization of every melodic note to create an overall “thick” or dense texture. The darkness of this sound is due to the use of melodic minor and diminished voicings with many adjacent minor 2nd intervals.
(what used to be an arpeggiated background figure), except now it has become foreground material, building into a climactic B Mixolydian \( \flat 6 \) chord at measure 230.

Similar to the truncated ending of *Nocturne*, *New York Night* does not present a complete recapitulation after the development and solo sections. Instead, the transitory figure that began as a bass line in measures 18-25 is now presented as the main melody in the woodwinds and set in two-part harmony with contrary motion. Measures 237-240 present the melody once more in the trumpets with the addition of trombone cluster harmonies. Measures 241-247 end the piece as it began with a small group sound centered on the piano ostinato figure and spacious cymbal rhythms. Harmonica improvises once more over the airy texture until all instruments naturally fade out.

In terms of orchestration, some highlights of the piece include the singular sound of acoustic bass doubled with bass clarinet; doubles of soprano sax, flute and piano, which offer another unique sonority; doublings of tenor sax and guitar; and the sundry timbres created through instrumental doublings with harmonica, an instrument whose unique attributes in big band scoring are rarely explored.
Bibliography


APPENDIX A
List of Recording Personnel
CD TRACK

1. *Niagara* (mock-up)
   Scott Routenberg, sequencing

2. *Home Sweet Home*
   Scott Routenberg, programming and keyboards
   Howard Levy, harmonica
   John Raveneau, violin
   Chris Whiteman, guitar

3. *Embrace*
   Scott Routenberg, piano; Howard Levy, harmonica

4. *Sunset at Sea* (mock-up)
   Scott Routenberg, sequencing

5. *Stag at Sharkey’s*
   Scott Routenberg, conductor
   Endre Granat, concertmaster
   ASCAP Television and Film Scoring Workshop 40-piece orchestra, Los Angeles
   Armin Steiner, score mixer

6. *Nocturne*
   University of Miami Frost School of Music Concert Jazz Band
   Scott Routenberg, conductor, mixing, mastering
   Muriel Urquidi, soprano vocalise
   Saxes: David Palma, Mike Thomas, Troy Roberts, Jesse McGinty, Pete Brewer
   Trumpets: Augie Haas, Rodrigo Gallardo, Cisco Dimas, Matt White
   Trombones: Chad Bernstein, Garett Arrowood, Miles Fielder, Brian Keegan
   Rhythm: Gabe Evens, piano; Joe Rehmer, bass; Sam Petitti, guitar; Adam Piccoli, drums
   Troy Roberts, tenor sax solo

7. *New York Night*
   University of Miami Frost School of Music Concert Jazz Band
   Dante Luciani, conductor; Scott Routenberg, mixing and mastering
   Howard Levy, harmonica soloist
   Personnel are the same as track #6 except: Tivon Pennicott replaces Troy Roberts

   Florida Youth Orchestra; Thomas Sleeper, director; Huifang Chen, conductor
APPENDIX B
Full Scores
Bluesy Americana (♩ = c. 100)

(acoustic strumming)
Embrace
(after the painting *Breakfast in Bed*, by Mary Cassatt, 1897)

Adagio, Delicately \( \frac{\text{d}}{\text{c}} = 70 \)

SCOTT ROUTENBERG
©2007 Denmaster Music (ASCAP)
A harmonica

(last time only)

(half pedal)

(sostenuto pedal)
Sunset at Sea
(after the painting by Childe Hassam, 1911)
Commissioned by the Florida Youth Orchestra, 2007

Scott Routenberg (b. 1978)

©2007 Deenmaster Music (ASCAP)
Sunset at Sea
Sunset at Sea
Nocturne