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Blurred Distinctions; Beyond Third Stream – A Study in Composition of Confluent Hybrid Musical Styles: The Amalgam of Jazz and Classical Concert Music

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BLURRED DISTINCTIONS; BEYOND THIRD STREAM – A STUDY IN COMPOSITION OF CONFLUENT HYBRID MUSICAL STYLES: THE AMALGAM OF JAZZ AND CLASSICAL CONCERT MUSIC

By

Rafael Piccolotto de Lima

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

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BLURRED DISTINCTIONS; BEYOND THIRD STREAM – A STUDY IN COMPOSITION OF CONFLUENT HYBRID MUSICAL STYLES: THE AMALGAM OF JAZZ AND CLASSICAL CONCERT MUSIC

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Categorizations are very necessary as shortcuts to facilitate teaching, academic discourse, and for publicizing, but they are also very dangerous in the attempt to put absolute values on unquantifiable concepts, such as styles, ideas, or eras. This essay presents dividing lines of musical genres as they are: blurred and open to crossovers. The discussion focuses on both musical and historical elements of jazz and classical music, particularly from the perspective of their mutual influence during the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century. Departing from the Third Stream concept, the purpose of this research is to discuss the importance of the hybridization processes in music evolution through the examination of the blurred lines that separate styles of music. Three distinct contemporary composers recognized by their hybrid work were used as a case of study–Maria Schneider, Vince Mendoza and John Psathas. An original confluent suite–Seven Masks–was created as a result of the research. Three movements of this new composition were analyzed with a focus on the hybridization processes used in its fabric.
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Categorizations are very necessary as shortcuts to facilitate teaching, academic discourse, and for publicizing, but they are also very dangerous in the attempt to put absolute values on unquantifiable concepts, such as styles, ideas, or eras. Most subject matters can have multiple interpretations in a relative and not absolute manner. Departing from those premises, this dissertation presents dividing lines as they are: blurred and open to crossovers.

This study discusses how selected contemporary composers have crossed stylistic distinctions and demonstrates various compositional concepts and techniques that can be used to create confluent music. Those ideas are also exemplified in the composition and analysis of the original hybrid suite *Seven Masks*, presenting one of the endless possibilities within this musical concept.
1.1. Background, Problem Statement and Need for Study

The process of influence and amalgamation between styles is a broad phenomenon that happened throughout history. All musical genres emerge as a result of multiple influences and a constant process of transformation. Although hybrid genres are an integral part of the musical evolution process, limited research and analysis has been done about this musical process of transformation, especially in the twenty-first century.

This paper intends to contribute to the emerging literature on this topic by focusing on the use of musical elements associated with jazz in conjunction with concert art music, particularly in the creation of confluent styles for large ensembles. The departure point for this research is “Third Stream,” a term coined in 1957 by Gunther Schuller to describe the synthesis of jazz and classical music; it is the derivation of the streams of classical music and jazz, which have converged with each other during the 20th century, maintaining the “improvisational spontaneity and rhythmic vitality of jazz”¹ along with the compositional refinement of classical music developed throughout centuries of Western European music development.

The possibility to incorporate rhythmic processes and other musical elements of jazz and folk traditions in concert music has fascinated many composers of concert art music, but the art of combining those universes raises a number of problems.² During the twentieth century most classical composers had a substantial background and knowledge of the classical traditions, but not so much in jazz vocabulary; therefore “their

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compositions tend to be stiff\textsuperscript{3} by jazz standards, taking few elements related to those styles and putting them in a classical context, such as in many nationalistic works. From the other side, many attempts by early jazz composers to extend their range using classical forms were also not considered very successful by critics, and only too often displayed an inadequate grasp of the classical techniques of composition.

Towards the end of the twentieth century a new profile of composer was emerging; usually trained in conservatories/universities in classical music and jazz, they had the tools to create a more natural fusion between those musical universes. This paper will focus on three of those composers – Maria Schneider, Vince Mendoza and John Psathas – analyzing, describing and discussing their musical outcomes on selected pieces.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to discuss the importance of the hybridization processes in music evolution through the examination of the blurred lines that separate styles of music. This research intends to update the \textit{third stream} concept, describing how it has developed and influenced a portion of the jazz and classical music produced in the twentieth century. Though the analysis of three selected pieces, this essay can serve as a reference of study on how three different relevant contemporary composers merged elements of classical, jazz and other genres in the creation of hybrid styles.

This study will contribute to the body of literature on this topic from the theoretical and creative perspectives. It analyses the orchestral writing of contemporary

\textsuperscript{3} Maria Schneider quoted in Elizabeth McKinney, \textit{Maria Schneider’s ‘Hang Gliding’: Dual Analyses for a Hybrid Musical Style}, (M.M. Thesis, Duquesne University, 2008), 67.
composers John Psathas, Vince Mendoza and Maria Schneider. An original confluent orchestral suite titled “Seven Masks” was composed and recorded incorporating some of the techniques used by these composers. Various interviews recorded during the research will serve as a primary source for future researchers interested in similar topics.

1.3. Research Questions

Four main questions provided focus and guidance for this research:

• What are the commonalities and differences jazz and classical music?

• How have jazz and classical music influenced each other during modern history?

• What are the techniques used and results achieved by contemporary composers Maria Schneider, Vince Mendoza, and John Psathas while crossing the boundaries of classical music and jazz?

• How might the author incorporate this research into a new extended composition for studio large ensemble?
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Here it seems as though the historian of music had stumbled on a law of nature: the root is modest, the foliage is profuse; the root though scarcely visible, endures; the foliage we admire falls to the ground to be renewed.4

Essential musical attributes, although subject to significant historical influences, remain rooted in the emotional nature of human beings: namely our urge to create social identification, to express thoughts and feelings, and to generate aesthetic provocation and delight.

Despite being affected by various styles and genres over the course of musical evolution, the inextricable roots of music making endure. Throughout this chapter significant characteristics of these roots will be addressed, revealing the shared traits found within varying styles of music. The discussion focuses also on both musical and historical elements of jazz and classical music, particularly from the perspective of their mutual influence during the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century.

The ever-present discussion and distinction between “art music” and “popular music” will be addressed along with role of music notation, performance practices and improvisation. An overview of the 20th century cultural characteristics is used as the starting point to portray musical movements related to the hybridization processes, such as Nationalism, Modernism, Postmodernism, and Third Stream.

2.1. Art Music and Popular Music

The primary distinction in music relates to a hierarchy of cultural value, high art versus low art, separating music written for a serious purpose in opposition to functional music used primarily to entertain a broader public. Those distinctions happened throughout history and continue to be used today as fundamental marketing tools for music.

In antiquity Aristotle wrote that certain rhythms “are noticeably vulgar in their emotional effects while others better suit free-born persons.”5 Sixteen centuries later Johannes de Grocheo, writing around 1300, recommended that the motet “not be performed in the presence of common people, for they would not perceive its subtlety, not take pleasure in its sound,”6 and that it should be performed only “in the presence of learned persons and those who seek after subtleties in art.”7 During the classicism while opera seria dealt with gods and ancient heroes to portray the virtues of the nobility, opera buffa involved the predominant use of comic scenes to entertain the generally less educated public. In today’s society, while styles and works recognized as high art are studied in universities and are supported by grants, popular music is predominant in most entertainment medias, such as radio and television, appealing to a much larger audience and being responsible for most of the revenue in the music business.

Even though this discussion spans millennia, the distinctions between popular and art music are conceptually unclear and impossible to define in a consistent way. Just because a work of music is popular does not mean it cannot be a work of art, and just

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
because it is a work of art does not mean it cannot be popular. Bonds defines art music as “Music that has survived the test of time, for example, or music with some serious purpose, or music written for an elite audience – we have no clear way to distinguish it stylistically from popular music. Works can easily shift from one category to the other over time.”

Much of the music presented in concert halls as part of the classical canon of European art music was at some point used as pure entertainment; *troubadours songs*, *opera buffa, minuets* and *waltzes* are a few examples of those works that shifted category over time. Jazz is another music form that shifted from being a marginalized genre associated with the lower class in the turn of the 19th to the 20th centuries, to a popular dance style in the first half of the 20th century, to a form of expression of freedom in the 1950s and 1960s, to music studied in universities and presented in some of the most prestigious concert halls today, such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, which has its own in-house big band led by Winton Marsalis.

### 2.2. Classical Music

There is no really adequate general name for this lady of music, 'classical' being merely broader and less offensive than terms like 'symphonic' or 'serious' music, which are either too narrow or misleading.

Gunther Schuller.

The term "classical music" did not appear in the literature until the early 19th century; it appeared in an attempt to distinctly canonize the period from Johann Sebastian Bach to Beethoven as a golden age. Since then it has been used as a very general term to

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8 Ibid.
label art music produced or rooted in the traditions of Western European music, starting at the medieval period.

Even though the term classical music covers a huge range of styles, and is hard to define as a whole, one particular trait differentiates between European art music and most other non-European and popular musical forms: the system of staff notation in use since the 16th and its musical implications in the performance practice. The possibility to notate music allowed composers to develop highly sophisticated forms such as the concerto, symphony, sonata, and opera. The development of those complex forms in fully notated score resulted in less freedom for practices such as improvisation and ad libitum ornamentation in classical music, which are frequently heard in non-European art music and in popular music styles such as jazz and many Latin-American styles.

Classical music today is a world of education and training where set methods, techniques and ideals are passed down from one generation to the next, keeping alive a canon of works recognized by the musical community as concert masterpieces. Although new generations of composers are always emerging and experimenting with new ideas, most of the classical music performed in concert halls reflects a reverence and preference to old practices and standard literature.

2.3. Folk Music

The terms “folk” comes from the term “folklore,” coined in 1846 by the English antiquarian William Thoms to describe “the traditions, customs, and superstitions of the uncultured classes.”10 The term is derived from the German expression Volk, “the people

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10 Percy Scholes, The Oxford Companion to Music, OUP 1977, article "Folk Song".
as a whole,” which was applied to popular and national music by Johann Gottfried Herder and the German Romantics at the beginning of the century. The folk music concept is usually related to a particular region or culture, often expressing values of the people and being used for social practices, such as festivities and community events.

Like classical music, folk is a very broad term that encompasses a huge range of different types and styles of music. The term itself makes more sense when put in opposition to classical music, since its purpose, function and social role are different. While classical music – usually produced for the dominant elite – is fully notated and derives from the composer, folk music – generated by the community – is passed down orally and usually has no identifiable composers.

The questions presented by the relationship between folk music and classical music are so multifarious and intricate that any survey will, at its best, be a simplification of the core problems. Folk music is marked by typicalness; it flourishes in forms similar to each other, in groups, unattached not aspire to the finality characteristic of individual artistic achievement; moreover, it is known in multitudes of variations in time and space alike, its true life being manifested by these variations. It is preserved by oral tradition and not in writing being averse to all fixation. […] These contradictions have, however, mostly proved to be superficial and exaggerated. Folk music and art music are in many respects connected and related with each other. They are related, because the elements accumulated in one are ceaselessly in the process of reaching the other.

The term “folk music” has been used in so many different ways that the original concept created in the 19th century became somehow diluted. In the United States, for

13 Ibid. p. 172.
example, a broad range of styles is labeled as being folk, including bluegrass, country music, Appalachian folk, and native American music, many of which are now notated and have identifiable composers and arrangers. Jazz, in its origins, can also be considered a type of folk music, developed as part of a community practice based on an oral tradition. It then developed into a much broader and complex style during the 20th century, transforming itself in a category of its own.

2.4. Jazz

This was the first time such a concert had ever been given in New York City. The whole idea was brand new, since up to this time American dance music had always been regarded as a sort of bastard child of "real" music – considered as a merely functional kind of music, good enough to be danced to but hardly to be taken seriously as anything to listen to. Here, for the first time [...] there was this rather revolutionary concept – that "swing" music, as an American idiom, was something to be listened to for itself. Not the words, not the tune, not the popular melody – but the jazz idiom, as played by the musician who took the tune itself only as a point of departure for his own inventive, improvisational creativeness [...] The result was something entirely different from the kind of popular music it stemmed from [...] stressing the ability of the improviser, rather than the composer, and demanding an entirely different kind of audience from that which is interested in hearing popular music per se.

Artie Shaw.14

Today it is commonplace that jazz is a music of complexity and virtuosity, deserving the undivided attention and respect of concert performance, but it was not always the case.15 Jazz assumed many forms throughout the twentieth century, not only in musical terms, but also in its social function and understanding: from the streets and brothels to the ballrooms, from the bars and clubs to the concert halls. Once perceived as

a low class type of entertainment, today jazz is considered by many as the American classic music, a serious art form that deserves to be studied at universities.

Just as in classical and folk music, jazz is a broad term that encompasses a wide spectrum of genres and styles. The term ‘jazz’ has always been hard to define and it has been used in widely different ways.  

Jazz is not a musical form; it is a method of treatment.  

Sigmund Spaeth

It is the spirit of the music, not the mechanics of its frame or the characteristics of the superstructure built upon that frame, that determines whether or not it is jazz.  

Henry Osgood

To some it means the whole cocktail-swilling deportment of the post-war era. To others it suggests loud and rowdy dance music. Many people go so far as to divide all music into ‘jazz’ and ‘classical.’ By ‘classical,’ they mean any music which sounds reasonably serious [...]  

Wilder Hobson

Jazz is a very big word; it covers a multitude of sounds, all the way from the earliest Blues to Dixieland bands, to Charleston bands, to Swing bands, to Boogie-Woogie, to crazy Bop, to cool Bop, to Mambo-and much more. It is all jazz [...] A popular song doesn't become jazz until it is improvised on, and there you have the real core of all jazz: improvisation.  

Leonard Bernstein

Jazz differs from European music in three basic elements: 1. a special relationship to time, defined as ‘swing’ 2. a spontaneity and vitality of musical production in which improvisation plays a role 3. a sonority and manner of phrasing which mirror the individuality of the performing jazz musician [...] three basic elements of jazz temporarily achieve varying degrees of importance, and that the relationship between them is constantly changing.

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Jazz is a twentieth century music originated in America by black Americans and characterized by improvisation and a strong projection of rhythm.  

Henry Martin

Jazz is not as yet the thing said; it is the manner of saying it.  

Paul Whiteman

Any single musical element associated with jazz as a defining trait can be contradicted. Even two of the biggest characteristics used to classify jazz can be questioned: improvisation and swing feel. Improvisation can be found in almost every other folk style of music around the world. The “swing feel” is something that is not present in all pieces that are considered jazz, including Latin-jazz, jazz-rock fusion and all other “straight feel” pieces presented in jazz clubs, concert halls and festivals today.

The label “jazz” is target of numerous discussions and generates much disagreement among musicians, musicologists and critics. So, for the premise of this study, jazz will be defined by its historical roots: as a musical art form originated as the North-American amalgam of the European and African musical traditions. It originated as a folk musical style—in the sense that it was primarily a low class music style transmitted orally—and transformed itself into a complex and sophisticated art form with many ramifications. The improvisatory element is a very important characteristic of jazz, as well as the groove, most of which has a swing feel.

It must be emphasized that jazz itself, along with many other pan American

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musical styles such as Cuban salsa and Brazilian samba, are a result of the fusion of European classical music and African rhythms. Ted Gioia states in his book\textsuperscript{25} that “Jazz has always been a music of fusion […] In its earliest form, jazz showed an ability to assimilate the blues, the rag, the march and other idioms: as it evolved, it transformed a host of even more disparate sounds and styles. […] Jazz in its contemporary form bears traces of all these passages.” Any discussion about the purity of jazz and its essence must take into consideration that jazz itself is a hybrid style.

It is also important to highlight that the post-1970 period of jazz history has been considered the “eclectic era” by many prominent jazz scholars.\textsuperscript{26} During that period many new labels started to be used in an attempt to classify those new hybrid works, such as “jazz-rock,” “funk fusion,” and “Latin jazz.” This stylistic symbiosis exemplifies the ability of jazz (and other styles) to evolve through adaptation, continually absorbing contemporary musical currents.

Jazz musicologists Maurice Gerow, David Megill and Paul Tanner stated, “The collective impact of these various fusion effects—whether the sources of inspiration were rock, ethnic, or classical music had succeeded in tremendously expanding the boundaries of jazz.”\textsuperscript{27} The resulting hybrids created through fusion can be sometimes so distant from the origins that we might question whether the results can really be called jazz.\textsuperscript{28}

2.5. Jazz Large Ensemble

“Those things we have to say, we try to express musically with the greatest possible degree of freedom of inspirations and individuality. We thus attempt to achieve a form of individual expressiveness presented by the entire band, both as individuals and as a whole.”

Duke Ellington²⁹

Jazz was originally performed mostly by small ensembles, improvised as an oral tradition, but it soon gained new forms and expanded to larger ensembles: the big band. The small ensemble practice continues at the core of this musical form, but those emerging larger ensembles also represent an important part of the jazz scene and evolution. Big bands made necessary various adjustments in musical practices and social interactions; jazz musicians became more interested in composition and arrangement, and a new collaborative relationship between improvisers and composers was created.³⁰ Although jazz continued to be celebrated for its emphasis on “personal freedom […] at the service of group conception,”³¹ composers, arrangers and notated music started to have a bigger role in large ensemble practices.

The larger the number of performers involved, the more complicate it is to balance individual-versus-group tension. If all performers in a large ensemble decide to play at the same time, creating ornaments to the melodies and improvising, chances are the result will be somewhat chaotic. In this new expanded scenario, the composer and

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arranger had to create a score to organize the performance, a similar process to what happened in the baroque and classicism periods of classical music. This process of transference of creative power from the performer-improviser to the composer is what made classical music a genre much more rigid in its performance practice than jazz and other folk genres. So it is important to make clear that although the composer has a bigger role in large ensemble jazz, the improvised aspect continues to be of vital importance and relevance for the style; rhythm section parts are often improvised following the form and harmonic structure, and improvised solo sections are present in most big band works.

The challenge faced by every jazz arranger is how to combine composed and improvised sections. A fundamental concern for composers is the framework of the solo section itself. Traditionally, small ensemble jazz musicians favored the original frameworks of the songs on which to improvise. Very often solos are based on the repetition of blues or 32-bar popular song forms. In big bands, many composers try to include the solo sections into the fabric of the piece, using the solo as a way to move the piece forward, many times in a very similar manner as the development section in the sonata form of classical music.

The big band experience also changes the way performers think about improvisation. They begin to shape their solos according to the way the backgrounds are written; “the arrangement provides a point of departure and a clear destination, and, often background figures to feed off.”

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As we analyze the evolution of the big bands we can state that many bands – particularly the ones led by inventive composers such as Claude Thornhill, Gil Evans, Bob Brookmeyer and Maria Schneider – follow an aesthetic similar to that of the classical symphony tradition. Instrumentalists cultivate a darker tone that is easily blended and work obsessively to correct the intonation of their instruments. Precision of attacks and releases becomes a very important trait, as well as the interpretation rhythms.

Large jazz ensembles offer composers and arrangers the possibility to combine and juxtapose individual and collective expression, providing the fullest range of resources available in jazz. Ideally, it combines the best of two words: the possibility to create and control very complex musical ideas thru carefully written scores, and also to give performers freedom to be spontaneous and creative in their improvised solo sections.

2.6. Technological Influences in the Twentieth Century Culture

To understand the music produced in the twentieth century we must understand the big picture of the culture, especially related to the technological advancements in communication and distribution.

Due to the emergence and fast evolution of those new technologies in sound recording, radio and television broadcasting, and most recently computers and smartphones, composers from all over the world could now have easy access to an enormous range of idioms to draw from. By the end of the century the musical scene was
so completely diverse in its stylistic pluralism that there was no sense of a musical mainstream.³³

The twentieth century was marked by an enormous diversity of musical styles: a source of anxiety and pleasure for composers and listeners. The phenomenon of proliferation of styles reflected broader trends in society. The United States for example, at the beginning of the century “proudly proclaimed itself a social melting pot in which people from all over the world could blend into an already established homogeneous society.”³⁴

In the beginning of the century, music that did not conform to the mainstream idiom was widely condemned. The tonally unconventional works of Arnold Schoenberg and the rhythmically uneven works of Igor Stravinsky were perceived as contradicting the social status quo; that music was not well received by listeners because of its lack of familiarity and dissonant sounds. Other emerging music styles with new rhythmic traits like ragtime (in the 1900s and 1910s), jazz (1920s and 1930s), and rock and roll (1950s and 1960s) were also motives for controversy. This resistance to new music was very common in the beginning of the 20th century.

The reception of new styles of music changed over the course of the century, and by its end audiences became more inclined to take a pluralistic attitude, embracing the music they liked and simply ignoring what they found objectionable. As a result, performances of innovative music stopped being a matter of controversy. In the last decades of the century it was very difficult for composers to shock listeners at all. Only

the content of lyrics or stage antics would move listeners to call for a ban on performances or sales of recordings. Rap music, for example, was criticized in the 1990s by the general audience mostly because of its words, not so much for the musical style.

Towards the turn of the millennium Western society was embracing the greatest musical diversity available; from country music to rock (the two most popular in America at the time), from rhythm & blues (encompassing soul, hip-hop, and traditional blues), gospel, jazz to classical, from Broadway songs and operettas to ethnic and world music.\textsuperscript{35}

New medias, especially television, invented in the mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century, help to shape the transformation of attitudes toward music. In the 1950s, most Americans had very few TV options, two or three national networks; and any other channels were likely to be local. Most viewers, from children to adults, were likely to see any new artists who appeared on a major TV channel. Weekly shows usually offered a huge range of things: comedians, acrobats, magicians, and musicians of all kinds, from Maria Callas performing Puccini’s \textit{Tosca} to the newest pop or rock artist. Bonds states that “Not everyone approved of the latest developments in music, but almost everyone knew what they were.”\textsuperscript{36}

That scene changed by the mid 1980s, when TV channels, following the example of radio stations, started to develop highly focused niche audiences. Viewers now could choose from entire networks devoted to specialized interests, such as sports, cooking, comedy, etc. Such diversity gave a greater freedom of choice to the audience and also

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, p. 499-500.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, p. 500.
dissolved a sense of shared culture. The emerging cable television made the concept of
the network variety show obsolete.

With so many television and radio broadcasts available, artists were now focused
on their particular audience. In this new media era it was relatively easy for listeners of
one generation to be unaware of the music of another. And at the end of the century, the
Internet had further pushed apart traditional notions of shared culture;\(^{37}\) artists were now
able to share their work directly to a global audience. As a result, the cultural pluralism
replaced the idea of a dominant culture with a dominant set of norms. The technological
advancements of the 20\(^{th}\) century also accelerated the process of an inevitable confluence
of different musical traditions. The convergence of various musical philosophies
continues to exert “a role in producing the new syntheses that are increasingly important
in late twentieth century art.”\(^{38}\) The result is a hybrid music characterized by a fusion of
diverse influences. Inevitably, this phenomenon makes it difficult to assign a specific
genre to the resulting musical outcome.

The history of Western music in this era follows a trajectory of ever-expanding
possibilities. Any composer in this era could choose from an unprecedented number of
options and recur to all sorts of cultural inspirations around the globe. Indeed, “styles
varied so markedly from genre to genre, within genres, and even within the work of many
individual composers that it is no longer possible to identify a lowest common
denominator of style.”\(^{39}\)

\(^{39}\) Bonds. p. 512-513.
A mosaic has now substituted the image of the melting pot, which represented the American cultural scene as understood by scholars in the beginning of the century; now many individually distinct units are assembled to create a larger picture.\textsuperscript{40} The diversity that had previously been seen as fragmentation—a source of weakness that should be homogenized into a single mainstream—now is recognized as a source of strength in its plurality, generating a huge number of new artistic streams.

Music in the twenty-first century is becoming more diverse than ever for many reasons, one of which is the ever-increasing contact individuals have with a variety of styles and traditions. Whether in an elevator, shopping mall, or movie theater, individuals are exposed to a broad range of music. Either consciously or subconsciously, musicians are influenced by this constant exposure. The assimilation of diverse elements not only expanded the resources, but also unchained genres of traditional constraints.\textsuperscript{41}

2.7. Third Stream

Gunther Schuller first presented the term “Third Stream” in a lecture at Brandeis University in 1957, and since then it has been accepted by the musical world as a style that is a result of attempts to fuse jazz and concert music. According to Schuller’s Third Stream is “the result of two tributaries—one from the stream of classical music and one from the other stream, jazz—that have recently flowed out toward each other in the space between the two main streams

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p. 499.
undisturbed, or mostly so.” For Schuller, it fused “the improvisational spontaneity and rhythmic vitality of jazz with the compositional procedures and techniques acquired in Western music during 700 years of musical development.”

As the limits of jazz and concert music are blurred, the limits of third-stream music, then, are ill defined as well, both stylistically and in terms of instrumentation. Third Stream can be music played by a symphony orchestra with jazz soloists, or played by a group of jazz musicians incorporating the refinement of the composition and performance associated with classical concert music.

New England Conservatory, the school where Schuller was a professor for many years, released in 1981 a promotional brochure citing what Third Stream is not. This list serves as a guide to understand the complicated definitions of the genre:

1. It is not jazz with strings.
2. It is not jazz played on “classical” instruments.
3. It is not classical music played by jazz players.
4. It is not inserting a bit of Ravel or Schoenberg between bebop changes—nor the reverse.
5. It is not jazz in fugal form.
6. It is not a fugue performed by jazz players.
7. It is not designed to do away with jazz or classical music; it is just another option amongst many for today’s creative musicians.

The fact that Schuller published a list of what he considered not being Third Stream reveals that there were many misunderstandings of his original intentions. Third Stream

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Stream was a very broad concept that various composers took into different directions. Each composer adopted his own individual methods to achieve a confluence of jazz and classical elements. As a result no particular schools or groups emerged.\footnote{Robert Paul Washut Jr., \textit{Excursions for Jazz Quartet and Orchestra with Preliminary Research and Analysis} (D.M.A. Essay, University of Northern Colorado, 1986). p. 26-27.}

The term itself had been applied in various and sometimes controversial ways, and therefore received a lot of criticism as a result of this misunderstanding, both from classical and jazz musicians, scholars, and enthusiasts. Schuller defended himself saying that he was not trying to improve or replace jazz or classical music, but using the essential elements of two traditions within his experience.\footnote{Gunther Schuller, "'Third Stream' Redefined," p. 54.}

This musical phenomenon was also discussed and described by a few other important musicians and scholars even before the term Third Stream was coined, as illustrated by composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein, “Jazz has begun to be a kind of chamber music, an advanced sophisticated art mainly for listening, full of influences of Bartók and Stravinsky, and very, very serious.”\footnote{Quoted in Leon Crickmore, “Third Stream or Third Programme?” \textit{The Musical Times}, Vol. 102, No. 1425 (Nov., 1961): 701-702.}

Jazz compositions by artists such as Stan Kenton and Dave Brubeck in the late 1940s and 1950s were becoming extended and complex. Such pieces intended to be taken seriously as works of art and not merely commercial entertainment. Gregg Akkerman states in his doctoral essay that it was during this period that Schuller began composing his fusions of serial music and jazz, eventually coining the label for his creations.\footnote{Gregg Akkerman, \textit{An Original Composition in a Postmodern Confluent Style for Orchestra and an Analysis of Escapades for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra by John Williams} (D.M.A. Essay, University of Northern Colorado, 2004). p. 3.} At no time did Schuller intended to have Third Stream as a replacement for jazz or classical
music. Schuller made it clear when he wrote: “The idea embedded in the basic philosophy of Third Stream was its concept of an offspring begotten from the marriage of two equal mainstreams–and I emphasize the word equal.”

Schuller was not the first to recognize the possibilities generated by confluence of these styles. Classical composers Satie, Ravel, Stravinsky, and Milhaud were already attempting to infuse jazz traits into symphonic music in the first decades of the early twentieth-century. Those composers were attracted by jazz for the same reasons composers have always been attracted to folk music. The main intent was to provide a reference that could be understood by the listener, not necessarily to re-create a true idiomatic replication. Copland's Clarinet Concerto and Stravinsky's Ebony Concerto are examples. These were essentially classical works with jazz flavoring. Various classical composers of the early twentieth century were captivated by this emerging American folk music called jazz. For them its vigor and syncopated dance rhythms were fascinating traits of this type of music.

George Gershwin represents an early relationship between classical and jazz composers involved with the first confluent experiments, being the most important American composer in the area. Gershwin, differently than other composers previously discussed, had his roots in Broadway writing the music for shows such as Porgy and Bess. His works produced a much more natural approach to confluence.

Coming from the opposite side, jazz composer Scott Joplin composed in 1903 the first ragtime “opera,” A Guest of Honor.\(^5\)\(^1\) Another early jazz composer experimenting

with confluent composition is Duke Ellington, many of his works attempted to cross boundaries of style. Billy Strayhorn was a great collaborator of Ellington in those endeavors. Different than Ellington, Strayhorn was schooled in the European masters. He helped Ellington to write music for the orchestra and also contributed with many ideas, particularly in harmony.\footnote{http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentsgallery/exhibitions/ellington_strayhorn_3.html (accessed March 21st, 2016)}

The interest in confluent composition by many classical composers decreased near the mid-century. Partially because the early confluent experiments commonly shared criticism as being a diluted jazz or “jazzed up” classical music.\footnote{Robert Paul Washut Jr., \textit{Excursions for Jazz Quartet and Orchestra with Preliminary Research and Analysis} (D.M.A. Essay, University of Northern Colorado, 1986), p. 17.} Classical composers were then more involved into the exploration of modernists ideals and techniques. The interest in jazz as a compositional resource in conjunction with classical music reemerged with Schuller’s ideas, but the criticism continued.

Third stream experiments were the target of controversy and debate. Both classical and jazz “purists” objected to the diluted effect they perceived as result of any type of stylistic fusion. According to critics while classical composers lacked familiarity and understanding of the jazz idiom, jazz composers and arrangers didn’t have the technique and knowledge to deal with the extended forms of classical music. An example of such criticism is in David Joyner’s article \textit{Analyzing Third Stream}: “Third Stream ultimately failed to realize the often lofty goals of its most vigorous proponents due its tendency not to “swing” and to its strong attenuation of improvisatory freedom that jazz traditionally allots to soloists.”\footnote{David Joyner, “Analyzing Third Stream,” \textit{Contemporary Music Review}, 19:1 (2000), p. 63,73.} Joyner continued stating that Third Stream was a mutt,
“a dangerous half-breed that threatened the pedigree of each musical tradition.”\(^{55}\)

Third stream proponents, conversely, continued to defend their experiments. They advocated that the resulting music should be judged on its own terms and not be compared to its tributaries. Most attempts to justify Third Stream experiments based their argumentation on the problem of labeling. Schuller said, “Speaking for myself, I can only say that the possibilities (of third stream) seem to me […] limitless and it seems irrelevant to worry whether this will be jazz or not.”\(^{56}\) Schuller and his disciples defended the Third Stream ideas and potential beyond the past achieved results; they saw Third Stream concept as a process that continues to this day. Forty-three years after Schuller coined the term, he wrote:

> When I first coined the term back in the late 1950s, I did so to at least have a handy descriptive for a category of music that had already existed for at least half a century, namely compositions that in one way or another attempted a rapprochement between classical music and jazz (or ragtime). These included Debussy’s “Golliwog’s Cakewalk,” Stravinsky’s and Ives’ several flirtations with American ragtime, jazz-fascinated and jazz-influenced works by composers as diverse as Ravel, Milhaud, Schulhoff, Copland, Gruenberg, Hindemith, and Weill, as well as the ultimate masterpiece of this early 20\(^{th}\) century genre, Milhaud’s “Creation du Monde.”\(^{57}\)

Schuller also points out that much of the critique to Third Stream pieces as being failure attempts relates to the performers’ inability to interpret it. According to him, most musicians did not understand Third Stream or were not prepared for its demands.

Schuller explains in his article:

> If there were some failures in the 1960s, it was not much the fault of the composition per se as it was because at the time there was only a small cadre of “bilingual” musicians who could perform on both sides of the music stylistic

\(^{55}\) Ibid. p. 73.
fence. Those who could swing and improvise couldn’t read too well (and certainly not complex atonal scores), while those who could read well couldn’t swing or improvise. But today this is no longer a problem, since scores of musicians fluent in both classical and jazz traditions abound, not only in the United States but in Europe and beyond.58

Composer Don Banks, one of the biggest collaborators in the first Third Stream attempts, refers to the difficulties of having jazz and classical musicians playing together. Banks also points out to the difficulties of balancing the improvisatory aspect with written music in his article “Third-Stream Music.”

I find that I tend to use orchestral forces to stress, in rhythmic passages, those beats which fall on prime accents in the bar, thus allowing the jazz musicians the freedom of interpreting the notes in between in their own individual way. Let each party do what he can best achieve […] One must try to exploit to the full the improvising abilities of the soloist, yet at the same time to impose a measure of harmonic control […] try to give them a maximum freedom for their improvising ability, but this must still take second place within the contours of the piece as a whole […] I would not claim that third-stream music is, at the moment, more than a fascinating part of the complex of music of our time. But it shows signs of becoming more than an isolated phenomenon, especially in America. There, in the birthplace of jazz as we know it, it is rapidly becoming absorbed into the blood stream of composers, so that it no longer requires a conscious effort on their part to produce a piece employing jazz elements. Instead it will naturally fall into place with the other techniques of composition that a composer has developed in his lifetime.59

Schuller defends that the classical community can learn much about timing, rhythmic accuracy and subtlety from jazz musicians, the same way as jazz musicians can improve their dynamics abilities, and utilize extended structures from the classical

58 Ibid.
music.⁶⁰ Due to the improvisatory aspect of this new stream of music, the classically trained musician has to shift his attitude and incorporate a new practice, acknowledging improvisation as a powerful expressive tool. The musician’s relationship to rhythm is also something that requires a particular approach; all those rhythmic features related to the Afro-American music require a new orientation regarding the traditional classically trained musician. Even after the symphonic jazz movement in the 1920’s and 30’s, and the emergence of important symphonic works such as Rhapsody in Blue by Gershwin incorporating jazz syncopations, African “polyrhythm” was still a foreign element for most orchestral musicians.⁶¹

This technical and idiomatical difficulty was pointed out as early as 1941 by philosopher Louis Harap, according to him the contemporary musician must have greater flexibility to respond to this accumulation of styles.⁶² In the same line of thought, Schuller’s teaching colleague Ran Blake comments that to compose and perform Third Stream, jazz and concert art music traditions had to occur simultaneously rather than be linked alternately.⁶³ Musicians had to be equally trained in classical and jazz traditions.

As we look at contemporary production of original compositions and the emergence of new ensembles it is easy to realize that the concept proposed in 1957 can be a natural phenomenon, and that Leon Crickmore 1961’s vision was very assertive if we consider the update proposed by Schuller in 1970. Schuller proposed that the Third

⁶² Ibid. p. 56.
Stream concept should include a multiplicity of other styles of music, such as new emerging popular musical styles besides Jazz.⁶⁴

To assert that the future of music lies in such a third stream would be to be guilty of starry-eyed idealism: it is realism, however, to suggest that no serious musician (composer, performer, critic, teacher or music-lover) can any longer afford to neglect the phenomenon of jazz, except at the peril of his own survival.

Crickmore⁶⁵

Schuller confirms Crickmore vision in his article in the turn of the millennium:

Many young or youngish musicians are already Third Streaming, even if they don’t realize it, or call it that. The field is wide open; so are musicians’ ears and minds. […] The Original concept of Third Stream—now called by any number of other marketable commercial labels: world music, fusion, crossover; even New Age—is, at its best, not only alive and well, but has broadened from a single stream to a veritable delta of tributary, rivers, accurately projecting my original utopian ideal of a brotherhood—a sisterhood—of music’s, all influencing and fructifying each other in wondrous and unpredictable ways.⁶⁶

Even though much of the music created today follow some of Schuller’s premises, the term itself is seldom used, as he states, “Although the term Third Stream is not used as much nowadays as it was 40 years ago, what it was meant to describe and define is still very much alive and well, indeed, in the finest realizations.”⁶⁷

The Third Stream’s inability to replicate itself originally seen as a sign of weakness, today can be considered strength. Larry Austin once critiqued Schuller’s concept stating that it was like a mule sterile to reproduction, “one is forced to go back to

⁶⁴ Schuller, Gunther. Liner notes to Mirage.
the horse and donkey each time and start over.” Now many musicians consider this trait to be one of the great characteristics about the hybridization process, an inexhaustible spring of variety that many composers are drinking, including the new generations of conservatory and university trained musicians.

### 2.8. The Twenty-First Century Trained Musician

Universities and conservatories are an important factor to the growing convergence between jazz and classical music. Since the time jazz was recognized by scholars as a genre of music that deserves to be in academia, many young musicians became exposed and trained in both jazz and classical traditions. According to Maurice Gerow, David Megill and Paul Tanner, “The University was a major factor in that experimentation process, and jazz was working its way into the university. Its ascendancy to art form status promoted its alliance with the experimental activities in the avant-garde in classical music.”

It is noteworthy that the activity in the confluent domain after 1970 gained momentum in part because of the jazz education movement, that started in the late fifties. Since then, the separation of jazz and classical music has gradually transformed into a blurred distinction. Now many students enter the field of music without the prejudice that may have characterized past generations. John T. Emche discusses this issue in his 1980

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doctoral essay.

It is not uncommon today to find musicians well-schooled in aspects of our Western European musical heritage and well versed in the jazz language. Most importantly, these musicians have had first hand experiences with both idioms which greatly increases the chances for a musically convincing fusion. There is less deliberateness of fusion resulting in a more natural and satisfying piece of music.  

The emergence of musicians trained in both idioms allowed composers to further explore confluent styles, facilitating the union of the previously separate genres. Many young musicians were then equally comfortable crossing and blurring lines of jazz and classical music. Gunther Schuller talks about the emergence of this new type of musician in the turn of the century:

Let me offer just one hypothetical example [. . .] Imagine, say, an American-born musician of Greek parentage, growing up in a Greek-American community and becoming at an early age involved and deeply familiar with [. . .] Greek (and Byzantine) vernacular tradition. But then, in his mid-teen years, he also starts hearing and becomes involved with jazz: modern jazz, post-bebop, free jazz, etc., and, of course, jazz improvisation. Somewhere along the line, he also discovers modern classical music, and studies [. . .] a wide range of 20th century techniques, styles, and languages (atonal, 12-tone, polymodal, aleatory, etc.). Now, by his early twenties, this musician has absorbed the width, breath, and depth of these three diverse traditions. It is now very likely—if not inevitable—that this talented young composer (creator) and performer (re-creator) will want to express himself creatively, fusing and cross-fertilizing these diverse elements, styles, and languages into a new original identity, one probably never heard before, then you have a striking example of the future possibilities and capacities of Third Stream—call it by any name you wish.

The history and background of the composers researched in this doctoral essay are very similar to hypothetical example created by Schuller. My personal history and background are equally comparable; I grew up in Brazil dancing, writing and performing

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various Brazilian genres, then I graduated in classical composition at the Campinas State University (UNICAMP, São Paulo) and came to the US to continue my studies in jazz composition and studio writing.

2.9. Musicological Conclusions and Perspectives

At the end of this literature review it appears that the ongoing synthesis of musical styles seems to be inevitable. From the early flirtations with jazz by renowned classical composers through the experiments of Third Stream, the amalgamation of the spontaneity of jazz with classical forms and techniques continues to be a fascinating challenge. To the composer trained and skilled in both traditions, the amalgam of styles represents a viable and natural means of musical expression.

Neither jazz nor classical music has ever been “pure.” Both traditions have always thrived on absorbing the new and fantastic. In a similar way, music in the twenty-first century will follow the evolution of our society promising many new and, most likely, exciting changes. In that context we must realize that nobody lives in a vacuum or create out of nothing. Renewal itself, whether careful or radical, consists of the gradual idiomatic transformation, adopting the contemporary and relevant while discarding the old and irrelevant.

As we project to the future, the absorption of influence and amalgamation of styles are the most probable ways that art music will stay alive, incorporating elements

from various styles and bringing interest to new audiences in our contemporary globalized society.
3.1. Selected Works and Composers

This study analyses “Poem of the Moon”\textsuperscript{76} by Vince Mendoza for solo trumpet, rhythm section and orchestra, “Choro Dançado,”\textsuperscript{77} by Maria Schneider for big band, featuring tenor saxophone and piano, and “Omnifenix”\textsuperscript{78} by John Psathas for solo tenor saxophone, drum kit and orchestra.

Composers and pieces were chosen based on two main principles:

1. A strong personality and a high level of compositional complexity. The pieces are distinctive representatives of works produced in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, incorporating elements of folk, jazz and classical music. Each composer has a different background: Mendoza has extensive work as an arranger for large orchestra, writing and conducting artists from various cultures; Schneider has broad background and production of original music for jazz orchestra (big band) and a particular interest in Latin genres; and Psathas is a contemporary classical composer who incorporates folk music (particularly from Greece, his country of origin) in his compositions.

2. A personal affinity and admiration for those works. This personal identification to the musical material is also of great importance because the final objective of this project is to produce an original work inspired by the research.

\textsuperscript{76} Vince Mendoza. \textit{Nights on Earth.} (Art of Groove. Germany. MIG 80122. CD. 2010).
\textsuperscript{78} John Psathas. \textit{View from Olympus.} (Rattle. New Zealand. RATDV015. CD. 2007).
3.2. Methodology

Scores and recordings were used as primary sources for analyses. Based on the investigation of that material, this study presents and discusses the techniques used by Mendoza, Schneider, and Psathas regarding form, harmonic vocabulary, orchestration and use of improvisation. The main focus of this section is on the unique features that each piece presents and how these composers combined elements of folk, jazz and concert music to create their unique style.

During the analytical process three main resources were be used as points of reference:

1. Literature on composition theory, orchestration and arrangement will serve as models regarding general aspects of writing, particularly: Jazz Arranging Techniques: from Quartet to Big Band\textsuperscript{79}, Modern Jazz Voicings: Arranging for Small and Medium Ensembles\textsuperscript{80}, Arranging for Large Jazz Ensemble\textsuperscript{81}, The Contemporary Arranger\textsuperscript{82}, and The Complete Arranger\textsuperscript{83} regarding jazz arranging techniques, The Study of Orchestration\textsuperscript{84} and Sounds and Scores: A practical guide to professional orchestration\textsuperscript{85} regarding orchestration techniques, Inside the Score\textsuperscript{86} as a model for big band jazz analysis, and New Structures in Jazz and

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\textsuperscript{79} Gary Lindsay, \textit{Jazz Arranging Techniques: From Quartet to Big Band} (2005).
\textsuperscript{81} Dick Lowell, Ken Pullig, and Michael J. Gold, \textit{Arranging for Large Jazz Ensemble} (Boston, MA: Berklee Press, 2003).
\textsuperscript{84} Samuel Adler, \textit{The Study of Orchestration} (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).
\textsuperscript{86} Rayburn Wright, Sammy Nestico, Thad Jones, and Bob Brookmeyer, \textit{Inside the Score: A Detailed Analysis of 8 Classic Jazz Ensemble Charts by Sammy Nestico, Thad Jones and Bob Brookmeyer} (Delevan, NY: Kendor Music, 1982).
Improvised Music Since 1960\textsuperscript{87} regarding the use of improvisation as part of compositions.

2. Doctoral essays related to the subject of study, particularly: An Original Composition in a Postmodern Confluent Style for Orchestra and an Analysis of Escapades for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra by John Williams\textsuperscript{88} and Excursions for Jazz Quartet and Orchestra with Preliminary Research and Analysis\textsuperscript{89} as both bibliographical and musicological references on the subject and as examples of DMA projects including the creation of original confluent compositions, The Respective Influence of Jazz and Classical Music on Each Other, the Evolution of Third Stream and Fusion and the Effects Thereof into the 21st Century\textsuperscript{90} as bibliographical and musicological reference on the subject, The Aslan Suite: A Doctoral Essay\textsuperscript{91} as an example of a DMA project including the composition of an original programmatic jazz piece, Six Arrangements for Vocalist and Large Ensemble Informed by Compositional Styles of Selected Studio Orchestra and Big Band Arrangers\textsuperscript{92} as a reference of a DMA project including the arrangement and recording of a studio orchestra, and Maria Schneider’s ‘Hang Gliding’: Dual

\textsuperscript{88} Gregg Akkerman, An Original Composition in a Postmodern Confluent Style for Orchestra and an Analysis of Escapades for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra by John Williams (D.M.A. Essay, University of Northern Colorado, 2004).
\textsuperscript{89} Robert Paul Washut Jr., Excursions for Jazz Quartet and Orchestra with Preliminary Research and Analysis (D.M.A. Essay, University of Northern Colorado, 1986).
\textsuperscript{92} Jeremy Fox, Six Arrangements for Vocalist and Large Ensemble Informed by Compositional Styles of Selected Studio Orchestra and Big Band Arrangers (D.M.A. Essay, University of Miami, 2013).
Analyses for a Hybrid Musical Style\textsuperscript{93} as a reference on an analysis of Schneider’s work;

3. The empirical experience of the author as a composer, arranger and conductor.

3.3. Interviews

Interviews with John Psathas, Vince Mendoza and Maria Schneider served as an important element of discussion. A series of questions were asked to all composers regarding their understating about the major differences between jazz, folk, and classical music, their technical approach writing for musicians of different backgrounds and the use of syncopated grooves in large ensemble compositions. Besides the core questions used as a starting point, additional related subjects were addressed by focusing on their work and experiences. Those interviews helped to understand their musical perspective and compositional choices.

Three complementary interviews served to broaden the spectrum of the discussion. Once each composer has a different perspective and acts a channeler of his own musical experiences, those additional interviews with Gary Lindsay, Terence Blanchard and André Mehmari (Brazil) helped to bring new perspectives to the study.

All the recorded interviews were transcribed and included in the appendix to serve as a source for future researchers. After the verbatim transcriptions, all interviews were adapted to the written format to facilitate reading and clarify ideas. Those edited transcriptions were sent to the composers for revision, ensuring that all the ideas were kept intact and truthful to the source.

\textsuperscript{93} Elizabeth McKinney, \textit{Maria Schneider’s ‘Hang Gliding’: Dual Analyses for a Hybrid Musical Style} (M.M. Thesis, Duquesne University, 2008).
3.4. Vince Mendoza

Born in the US in 1961, Mendoza is one of the most versatile and prolific composers, arrangers, and conductors working with jazz and world music in the last two decades. Multi-Grammy Award winner, Mendoza has written arrangements for a wide variety of artists: from pop to classical, from world music to jazz. His list of collaborations includes Joni Mitchell, Sting, Bjork, Joe Zawinul, John Scofield, Charlie Haden, Dave Liebman, Randy Brecker, and the GRP All-Stars. As a leader, Mendoza has released 10 recordings including 1997’s *Epiphany* (with the London Symphony Orchestra) and 2011’s *Nights on Earth*, featuring an all-star cast and members of the Metropole Orkest, which Mendoza has led as chief conductor for many years.

According to Mendoza his beginnings were with the big band, but he resonates musically with the possibilities put in front of him by a symphonic orchestration, not necessarily the symphonic vocabulary or tradition, but the colors available. Besides his major interest in orchestral writing, the wide scope of his works demonstrates an extraordinary understanding of many musical languages and the ability to seemingly cross styles. He has written scores of compositions and arrangements for big band, and extended compositions for chamber and symphonic orchestra settings.

3.5. Poem of the Moon

“Poem of the Moon,” Mendoza’s composition chosen for this analysis, is the only one of the three selected pieces for this study that has a swing feel, but in a not so usual

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94 V. Mendoza, personal communication, October 24, 2013.
meter, it is in 6/8. It was written for a chamber orchestra on Mendoza’s album *Nights on Earth*, and then expanded to the studio orchestra for a concert at University of Miami with the Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra.  

Mendoza’s writing reflects his experiences with studio orchestras. There is not much time to rehearse and experiment in the studio, musical ideas have to be very clear and direct; the arrangement has to be idiomatic to instruments in order to optimize time. His orchestral parts tend to be simple from the technical perspective, enabling him to have great musical results even if the orchestra is sight-reading the music for the first time.

3.5.1. Instrumentation

The instrumentation used in this composition is similar to the modern classical orchestra with the addition of the trumpet soloist and jazz rhythm section, as listed below:

- 2 Alto flutes
- Oboe
- 2 Clarinets in B♭
- 2 Bassoons
- Contrabassoon
- 3 Horns in F
- 2 Trumpets in B♭
- 2 Trombones
- Tuba
- 1 Percussionist (glockenspiel and timpani)
- Celesta
- Harp
- Piano
- Electric guitar
- Upright bass

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96 This second version will be used for the analysis.
3.5.2. Orchestration

As an experienced arranger having worked with ensembles around the world, Mendoza points out during the interview that “there needs to be a certain understanding between the players of different traditions on how something is going to be done,” he continues emphasizing that the composer and arranger need to take that into account and also have a clear understanding about what is expected from the performer, to know “how to get a player to do what you want him to do”\(^\text{97}\) by using proper notation.

Mendoza plays on the strengths of the performers, relying on the soloist and rhythms sections to perform most of the grooving parts, and the orchestra to play the melodic lines, counterpoint and harmonic pads. Mendoza overcomes the challenging acoustic balance of his instrumentation by asking the drummer to play with brushes for most of the time. During the climatic sections of the trumpet solo where the drums is using sticks and is playing louder, the orchestra functions as background and the dynamic imbalance is partially overcome by *tutti* writing.

The differences between the two musical heritages in the ensemble – jazz and classical – are also used to Mendoza’s advantage; orchestral sections without groove serve as an effective resource to create contrast and interest in the form. After the

\(^{97}\) V. Mendoza, personal communication, October 24, 2013.
dynamic climax of the improvised solo sections Mendoza changes completely the texture to an orchestral feature without groove. This compositional decision results in a clear punctuation in terms of form, but also in a release of the tension built during the solo.

3.5.3. Form

Rehearsal marks were used as the smallest unity of form.

1. Theme.
   1.1. A (mm. 1-18) – Presentation of the pedal point structure that is used for most of the piece. This sections serves to create the mood for the composition.
   1.2. B (mm. 19-32) – Glockenspiel, piano and celesta present the main melody over the pedal structure.
   1.3. C (mm. 33-38) – Transition to the entrance of the trumpet soloist, still over the pedal structure.
   1.4. D (mm. 39-57) – Trumpet plays the theme, similar to the section of bar 19.
   1.5. E (mm. 58-76) – Trumpet presents the second part of the theme (B section). The harmony changes and the pedal structure is abandoned.
   1.6. F (mm. 77-84) – resolution of the theme and transition to the trumpet solo.

2. Solo.
   2.1. G (mm. 85-94) – Open repeats (until 92), trumpet solo over rhythm section, no orchestral backgrounds. There is no crescendo marked, but in the recording there is a clear build up culminating at the end of the solo.

3. Transition, new musical episode.
   3.1. H (mm. 95-104) – This section is the resolution of the solo climax, using a new orchestral texture as a transition to back to a very sparse and soft pedal section. Drums stops groove and orchestra takes lead from bar 95 to 99. Orchestra resolves at bar 100 and fade out at the same time that drums starts to imply the swing. Guitar and piano start a B♭ pedal.
   3.2. I (mm. 105-120) – Piano presents a new melody based on thematic material. Oboe joins piano at bar 113 doubling the melody and high strings (violins and violas) enter playing the B♭ pedal and doubling the melody towards the end. Solo improvised trumpet also enters again.

4. Trumpet solo
4.1. J (mm. 121-136) – Trumpet solo section similar to bar 85-92, but with orchestral background. This section is repeated 3 times, the orchestra enters on the second time propelling the solo and building up and each time.

4.2. K (mm. 137-152) – Solo continues over an evolving orchestral background, still over the B♭ pedal until climax and fermata at bat 152. There is no crescendo marked to the soloist or rhythm section, but in the recording there is a clear build up culminating at the end of the solo.

5. Transition, new musical episode.

5.1. L (mm. 153-161) – Drastic change of texture to a soft piano feature in the high register. Slower tempo, without any sense of groove. Strings play pads in the high register, gradually descending towards end of this interlude. Guitar joins piano in the middle of the section. At bar 160 the swing comes back at the original tempo with the drums and bass pedal point.


6.1. M (mm. 162-end) – Recapitulation of the pedal motive at a soft dynamic. It is now presented as a theme with added notes.

3.5.4. Melodic and Harmonic Material

Mendoza avoids complete chords for most of the piece. The incompleteness of the chord structures – in opposition to the traditional jazz structure that includes the fundamental, third, fifth, seven and alterations or substitution – brings an openness and instability to the harmonic pallet, creating the mood of the piece. By contrast, when Mendoza uses complete triads or extended chords, it sounds refreshing and brings a sense of resolution. In the example below the third of a chord is used only in the last bar as a resolution to B♭ minor.

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98 This was originally an improvised guitar solo section in the version recorded at the *Nights on Earth* album, it was modified to extend Brian Lynch feature with the Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra.

99 Excerpt extracted from the PDF submitted by Vince Mendoza to the Henry Mancini Institute. August 2013.
Example 1, Poem of the Moon, mm. 153-156. Piano solo using incomplete chords. (no key signature)

A particularly dark, yet ambiguous, harmonic pallet is presented throughout most of the composition. The piece is almost entirely written over a pedal tone – C for the first half of the piece, and B♭ for the second half. Incomplete moving chords create the illusion of motion over the steady pitch.

Example 2, Poem of the Moon, mm. 1-5. Homophonic structure played by woodwinds over acoustic bass pedal.

This structure is broken for short periods in pivotal sections of the form: the second part of the theme (B section), the transition between the two improvised solos and the transition between the second solo and the final thematic statement. None of those sections is repeated or uses the same harmony. Each one of those events happens as a different episode, serving at the same time a resolution of the long pedal section that precedes it, and as a transition back to the pedal.
The top line of this harmonic pattern represents also a strong melodic statement, perhaps even more attached to the identity of this piece than the theme itself, which is not repeated in the composition. Most of the melodic lines are through-composed and emulate the spontaneity of an improvised line. Mendoza points out during the interview that it “is important to realize that a jazz composer writes from the perspective of the player.”\(^{100}\) He emphasizes that the composer must go beyond the development of the motive, he has to anticipate “whatever the player would have played.” Mendoza believes that it is the function of the composer to blur the line between what is improvised and what is written, composing in an “improvised way.”

### 3.5.5. Improvisation

Improvisation has a major role in this piece. Approximately half of the total time of the piece has an improvised solo as a feature. During the interview, Mendoza mentioned that the featured soloists in his works are a major interest and inspiration for him. He relies on the improvisers to shape and propel most of the solo sections. Besides the trumpet soloist, the drum kit, bass, piano and guitar parts are also very much improvised. Mendoza reiterates the importance of the musician chosen to improvise on a particular piece; he points out that much of the outcome relies on the ability of the soloists to create on a given musical structure. He continues: “I don’t think you can throw chord changes just to anybody and expect them to make something out of it that is going to continue your vision of what the form should be.”\(^{101}\) Mendoza also highlights that as a

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\(^{100}\) V. Mendoza, personal communication, October 24, 2013.
\(^{101}\) Ibid.
composer it is his function to inspire someone to improvise upon the piece; he has to create the conditions for the improviser to take his musical ideas further. The soloist must be able to do what a classical composer would have done in a completely written out piece during the development section. Mendoza compares the function of improvised sections in jazz pieces to the middle part of the sonata form in classical music.

You have to understand that the tradition of jazz musicians is to use the popular tune as a vehicle for improvisation and that is probably, for me, one of the more dissatisfying aspects of jazz in general, because I feel that the compositional aspect of the piece that is being played tends to stop when the improvisers begin. There is a disconnect between what is written and what is improvised, in contrast to classical music which has a sense of development of a piece from the beginning to the end.

Mendoza.\textsuperscript{102}

Orchestral backgrounds are used to shape the development of the solo sections and reinforce the unity of the piece by presenting thematic material in its fabric. Those background figures and pads are used mostly towards the end of the solo sections to enhance the buildup, helping the featured improviser to reach a climatic ending. The second solo section uses more of the orchestra earlier in its structure, making this second climax even more intense. Mendoza also uses an unusual resource to guide the soloist, he wrote the first phrase of the solo, as can be seen in the example below.

Example 3, Poem of the Moon, mm. 77-78. Introductory written line for trumpet solo.

\textit{\textbf{Example 3, Poem of the Moon, mm. 77-78. Introductory written line for trumpet solo.}}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example3.png}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
Besides the traditional harmonic notation with chord symbols, Mendoza decided to write guidelines of the background figures during part of the pedal section (see example 4). This decision regarding notation helps to guide the soloist throughout an ambiguous harmony. A simple chord notation (D minor) would not express precisely the musical idea and could misguide the improviser.

Example 4, Poem of the Moon, mm. 85-94. Trumpet solo part with orchestral guides.
(6/8 time signature, no key signature)

3.5.6. Final Considerations

Vince Mendoza achieves a good balance between the orchestra and rhythm section, utilizing the soloist to its full potential and writing interesting parts for the ensemble. He writes idiomatically for all the instruments and accomplishes a natural flow between jazz and classical elements. According to Mendoza “the best of both traditions would be to use the improvisational nature of jazz and the expansive forms of classical music to develop a composition.”103 Different than other composers who had difficulties while mixing those traditions, Mendoza blurs the frontiers in a seemly effective way.

103 Ibid.
3.6. Maria Schneider

Born in the US in 1961, Maria Schneider is one of the most important contemporary composers and bandleaders in the large ensemble jazz scene. She has a distinguished recording career with twelve GRAMMY nominations and five GRAMMY awards, spanning both jazz and classical categories. Schneider and her orchestra begin to gain recognition in 1994 when they released their first recording, *Evanescence*. In that recording she began to develop her personal way of writing for her 17-member collective, made up of some of the finest musicians in jazz today, tailoring her compositions to highlight the creative individual voices of the group.

Schneider’s music blurs the lines between genres, and as a result, her long list of commissioners have increasingly become more diverse, stretching from the Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra, Monterey Jazz Festival, The American Dance Festival, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, Kronos Quartet, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, to a collaboration with David Bowie.¹⁰⁴ She has also received numerous guest-conducting invites to perform her compositions, working with more than 85 groups from over 30 countries.

When asked about the lines that divide classical music and jazz, Schneider responded that for her such clear definitions don’t exist.¹⁰⁵ She believes that there is no necessity to have a strong allegiance to ‘jazz being jazz,’ nor a need to replicate formulas or blindly follow the tradition. Similarly, she revealed skepticism about the uptightness and limiting position of many classical musicians who do not acknowledge the world of improvisation and groove. Schneider pointed out that the musicians she likes to

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¹⁰⁵ M. Schneider, personal communication, March 8, 2014.
collaborate with the most are the ones who have both jazz and classical backgrounds: performers who have the technical proficiency and expressivity that comes from the classical tradition and the creative spontaneity and sense of groove that comes from jazz.

When questioned about her compositions, Schneider responded that she tends to just think of her music as her music. She continued describing how she grew up having an instructor who taught her stride and classical piano at the same time. This teacher shared with Schneider a passion for Beethoven, Mozart and Bach, in the same way as she did for Cole Porter. From an early age Schneider was exposed to a mix of jazz songs and classical music through the lens of someone who loved both. Those two musical universes were analyzed and presented to her without much distinction between them.

3.7. Choro Dançado

“Choro Dançado” is the first movement of the “Three Romances” suite, commissioned by the University of Miami in 2001 and recorded on the *Concert in the Garden* album by Maria Schneider and her jazz orchestra. This album was selected in the 2004 Grammy award as the winner in the “Best Large Ensemble” category. This piece is, according to Schneider, “influenced by Brazilian *choro* – an early music that is very light and full of counterpoint.” The Brazilian singer Luciana Souza is a special guest for this recording, not just singing but also playing *pandeiro*, the Brazilian tambourine. Her collaboration in this recording enhanced the cultural exchange between the American jazz orchestra tradition and the Brazilian *choro* tradition.

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106 M. Schneider, personal communication, March 8, 2014.
The following analysis of this piece is focused on the unique features of Schneider’s big band writing. It includes discussions about highly elaborate ensemble writing for big band instrumentation, the use of extensive improvised solo sections as part of the form development, and the use of Brazilian influenced rhythm along with Spanish influenced harmonies.

3.7.1. Instrumentation

Schneider uses the traditional big band setup – 5 reeds, 4 trombones, 4 trumpets and rhythm section – but uses woodwinds instead of saxophones for 3 of the 5 reeds. She uses flugelhorns and muted trumpets and trombones to vary the sonic spectrum in the brass sections. Schneider also adds a Brazilian female vocalist singing without lyrics and a pandeiro to evoke a Brazilian flair.

- Reed 1 - Flute
- Reed 2 – Clarinet in B♭
- Reed 3 – Tenor saxophone
- Reed 4 – Tenor saxophone (solo)
- Reed 5 – Bass clarinet
- 4 Trumpets (doubling flugelhorn and using cup mutes)
- 3 Tenor trombones (using bucket mutes)
- Bass trombone (using bucket mute)
- Piano
- Electric guitar
- Upright bass
- Drum set
- Pandeiro
- Female voice
Alto saxophonist and woodwind doubler Tim Ries observed during an interview with Schneider that her woodwind writing is much more difficult to perform than usual doubler parts. According to Ries, the flute part recorded by him in “Choro Dançado” requires a classical expertise. Ries revealed that he performed many classical flute pieces in a duet with his wife (who is a harpist) to gain fluency and confidence to record Schneider’s works.

Example 5, Choro Dançado, mm. 57-78. Flute melody. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

3.7.2. Orchestration

Maria Schneider has an orchestral approach to the big band. She uses a considerable amount of cross section writing to expand the timbre spectrum. This particular technique helps define one of her mentors, Gil Evans, who developed a very unique ensemble sound by the use of different instrumentations in his arrangements. When questioned about the relationship of Gil Evans and the Third Stream, Schneider stated, “He didn’t need the title Third Stream. He was the Third Stream. Gil was both. He

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108 Tim Ries interview available as additional material for purchase with the “Choro Dançado” study score at http://www.artistshare.com/ (accessed Friday March 11th, 2016)
was the first and second stream combined, you know, just natural.\textsuperscript{109}

Like Evans, Schneider explores various instrumental sonorities within the big band. Instead of using five saxophones as most other traditional big band arrangers do, Schneider takes advantage that members of her band are proficient at various instruments. In “Choro Dançado” for example, the majority of the saxophone section is playing doubles (flute, clarinet and bass clarinet). Once Schneider decided to use those woodwinds, she then had to be especially careful with the brass writing. Since any brass instrument can easily overpower a flute or clarinet, she had to be attentive to acoustic balance. During soft sections, Schneider avoided the extreme high register of trumpets and used mutes in the entire brass section. The use of a lighter instrumentation is a good match for the musical style that she is drawing from, \textit{choro}. \textit{Choro} is a Brazilian style usually performed with acoustic guitars, \textit{cavaquinho},\textsuperscript{110} \textit{bandolim},\textsuperscript{111} flute, clarinet and \textit{pandeiro}.

The use of voice as part of the ensemble is also a not so usual element in big band writing. It was very common for big bands to accompany singers, specially in the middle of the twentieth century, but to use the voice as an instrument (example 6) – not singing lyrics but being part of the ensemble – is something much less common; it differentiates the sonic pallet of her orchestration and brings a different character to resulting timbres.

Example 6, Choro Dançado, mm. bars 51-53. Full orchestration (transposed score, (4/4 time signature, no key signature).

\textsuperscript{109} M. Schneider, personal communication, March 8, 2014.
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Cavaquinho} is a Brazilian \textit{piccolo} acoustic guitar with only 4 strings.
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Bandolim} is the Brazilian versions of the mandolin.
3.7.3. Melodic and Harmonic Material

Schneider uses a continuous flow of melodic and harmonic material. The music rarely resolves or stays at one place for a long time. For most of the piece one melodic idea leads to the next in an almost endless sequence. Similarly, the harmony is constantly modulating. This technique creates the feeling of constant evolution in the composition.

Melodically, Schneider also uses a lot of counterpoint, often times in an adjacent register. So, although there is a principal line, the listener can easily perceive it as a composite melody (example 7). This impression is enhanced due to the fact that Schneider switches back and forth the function of the lines, crossing registers. Because of this shift in focus and role, the attention of the listener is also constantly moving from one instrument to the other.

Example 7, *Choro Dançado*, mm. 9-16. Melodic counterpoint. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

The above excerpt is the only section in the entire piece where a line is played twice without variations, but when it is repeated, the secondary line is introduced in a contiguous register; this counterpoint suggests the perception that the principal line is
varied. This phenomenon is particularly evident at moments when the second line is above the melody, being perceived as the actual melody.

Similar to Mendoza, Schneider creates her melodies in a through-composed way. Although motives and musical gestures are repeated throughout the piece bringing a sense of unity, most of Schneider lines are not paired in a classical manner. This compositional decision brings an improvisational character and a level of instability to the melodies, creating a sense of forward motion.

Harmonically, Schneider creates a continuous flow by changing chords every bar for most of the piece and rarely resolving back to the beginning of the progression. When she decelerates the harmonic progression, it has a big impact on the listener. She chooses pivotal points to use this musical resource, emphasizing a particular event, such as the transition to the tenor saxophone solo. She uses those static moments to transform the choro groove into a more dissolved section; pandeiro stops and bass play an irregular suspended figure.

Schneider pointed out during the interview that she is “always trying to find harmony that either generates or resists motion.” The contrast between those two harmonic forces brings interest to the composition, helping the creation of momentum. The piano solo section is a good example of this change in character; after the prolonged saxophone solo over a harmony full of dominant chords, the static G Ionian at the beginning of the piano solo sounds very invigorating. This also has to do with the theory of “shadows and light” discussed by Schneider on a master class at University of Miami.

According to Schneider, each mode derivate from the major scale has a different

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level of light, being the Lydian the brightest and Locrian the darkest. She likes to play with that harmonic element to create different moods for sections of her pieces. In “Choro Dançado” she uses Aeolian (natural minor) as a central mode, then modulates to Phrygian – a darker mode – for most of the saxophone solo, to Ionian (major) – a brighter mode – for the piano solo, and finishes going back to the Aeolian.

3.7.4. Form

[...] It’s all about looking for inevitability, and spending time on every single pitch and every single rhythm and every single bar to just say: does this feel like, oh, this has to happen.

Schneider.¹¹³

Schneider presented form as one of the most important aspects of her writing, not just as how musical events are organized, but also as how to keep the interest and focus during extended periods. She understands it as being her responsibility to grab the audience’s attention and establish a sense of artistic trust. According to Schneider, when her audience is listening to her music she wants them to let go of their day and be taken away by the music.¹¹⁴

The duration of a particular section seems to be also a very important factor for Schneider. There is a delicate threshold between something being short and not fulfilling, and being long and boring. Schneider is very aware of this important aspect of form and expressed during the interview that deciding the length of sections is one of the hardest compositional decision she has to make. Related to this topic, Schneider pointed out to one musical phenomenon that she calls as “inevitable surprise;” according to her, she is

¹¹³ M. Schneider, personal communication, March 8, 2014.
¹¹⁴ Ibid.
always trying to write in a way that at the same time fulfills the listeners desire for resolution, and is also not predictable, sounding like a surprise.

“Choro Dançado” is a good example of the formal discussed elements. It follows the traditional structure of “theme–solos–theme,” but does it in a very particular manner as can be seen in the following structural analysis.

1. Exposition (mm. 1-87). This entire section is a through-composed build up. It starts with the melody sung by the vocalist and evolves to the entire ensemble playing an intricate counterpoint over the choro groove. During the whole section, Schneider plays with the level of complexity in the counterpoint, oscillating between a simple homophonic line and an involved four-part texture.

2. Tenor saxophone solo (mm. 88-190). This section starts at the dissolution of the exposition climax. Schneider changes the overall mood by making the harmonic progression move slower and disguising the choro groove under a freer pedal structure. The ensemble tutti texture slowly dissipated until bar 120. The following bars of the solo comprises of a big build up until a new climax at bar 188. It then dissolves to piano solo, similarly to bar 83-87.

3. Piano solo (mm. 197-228). This section works as a counter-balance to the saxophone solo; it is the brightest section of the piece, in great part over G Ionian. The ensemble backgrounds gradually take the focus and become the feature.

4. Ensemble “re-exposition” (mm. 229-294). This section is an ensemble feature similar to the second part of the exposition section. The entire band plays an intricate counterpoint. A short tenor saxophone improvised solo is featured in the middle and brings back the harmonic pedal idea. This section culminates at bar 281 and prepares the coda.

5. Coda (mm. 295-317). Schneider achieves a dramatic conclusion by reducing the tempo and repeating melodic material from the end of the exposition. The entire ensemble converges toward a last statement in an even more dramatic ritardando.

3.7.5. Improvisation

Improvisation has a major role and is embedded in the fabric of the piece. Approximately half of the composition’s total time has an improvised solo as the feature; tenor saxophone improvises first, then the piano improvises, and towards the end the
tenor saxophone comes back for a shorter solo. Differently than Mendoza, who creates the improvisational sections over similar structures as the theme, Schneider uses the soloists to move the form to other places, including completely new harmonies and modal centers.

Schneider comments on the compositional choices for the creation of solo sections emphasizing there she is always looking for a continuum in terms of structure. She mentions that a repetitive form used for improvisation takes away the focus from the music to the musician. In that situation there is a danger of losing the listeners’ attention. Schneider comment that she had pieces using this traditional jazz formula – to improvise over the theme’s structure – and the results were not as satisfying. Her arrangement of “Giant Steps,” recorded in the Coming About album is an example.

Discussing the flow of the form, Schneider brought to attention the fact that it is much harder to create the feeling of inevitability during improvised sections. In those sections the composer has to rely on the musical vision and ability of the improviser to create momentum. As the arranger, Schneider points out that it is her responsibility to inspire and guide the improviser. According to her, written backgrounds can help the soloist to create directionality and keep the momentum. Schneider uses thematic material in the fabric of the accompaniment, creating unity in a through-composed way. This results in a very organic structure that feels like it is always evolving.

Tenor saxophone soloist Rich Perry revealed during an interview\(^{115}\) with Schneider that her solo structures present a very different challenge compared to standard

\(^{115}\) Rich Perry interview available as additional material for purchase with the “Choro Dançado” study score at http://www.artistshare.com/ (accessed Friday March 11th, 2016)
jazz improvisation. Perry points out that because she uses unusual harmonies, he has to create original melodic materials and cannot rely on jazz licks that he uses over standards. Perry and Schneider agree that there must be a balance between understanding the written background and responding to it intuitively. This balance helps the creation of an organic solo. Schneider also reveals that she alters part of her compositions influenced by the performance of her band during reading sessions. The maturation of a piece often times happens through revisions made after rehearsals.

Besides the featured soloist, the rhythm section also has an important improvised role. Piano soloist Frank Kimbrough revealed during an interview\textsuperscript{116} with Schneider that the rhythm section must be very attentive to what the band is playing. While creating their parts, the rhythm section players need to understand the piece as a whole. According to Kimbrough, this is the only way to be able to highlight the musical intent of the composer.

All musicians in the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra are often changing roles, from the standard section player, to the soloist improver. One moment a given musician is playing written parts and being asked to perform his instrument with a classical proficiency, another moment this same musician must be improvising creatively over challenging harmonies. Schneider points out that her music requires a class of musicians, who, like herself, are trained in various musical traditions.

\textsuperscript{116} Frank Kimbrough interview available as additional material for purchase with the “Choro Dançado” study score at http://www.artistshare.com/ (accessed Friday March 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2016)
3.7.6. Brazilian Influences

My composition is far from being authentic. Its harmony differs for sure. At moments the harmony has something from Spain and something from Argentina. But nonetheless, I can say it would have never been written had it not been for my falling in love with choro and with the music of many Brazilian composers for whom it is a strong base, especially Egberto Gismonti. One sideline: choro is not music for dancing, so to call a piece “Choro Dançado” is by nature to take it directly into my world, which is strongly influenced by dance.

Maria Schneider.\[117\]

“Choro Dançado” is a great example of the “third streaming process” discussed in the musicology review. Schneider makes an uncompromised use of Brazilian choro elements acknowledging the fact that her composition, although influenced by the style, is far from being traditional. The pandeiro groove, the continuous syncopated rhythm, and the accent on the second half of the bar are symbolic elements that Schneider uses in her very own way to reference the Brazilian tradition. She mixes her big band writing expertise and Spanish influences with her interpretation and understanding of choro. The result is a very original work that respectfully references to the cultures from which she draws.

Beyond the direct musical influences, Schneider also revealed during the interview that the cultural exchange with Brazil had a big conceptual impact in her work. According to her, Brazil changed her life.\[118\] She described how her music tended to be darker before. Then she went to Brazil and was captivated by choro. Schneider connected instantly with the sense of joy of Brazilian people, a feeling that is imbedded in the Brazilian harmony that she had experienced. At that moment there was a paradigm shift.

\[118\] Ibid.
and she decided to give herself permission to write music that evokes a sense of joy and beauty. Schneider started to realize that there was no need to prove anything with her music. The first outcome of this new musical period in her life was “Hang Gliding.”

3.7.7. Final Considerations

Schneider revealed during the interview that her principal focus is to connect with the audience through her music.\textsuperscript{119} She commented that her main intent was never to write complex pieces for the sake of doing, nor to be considered a cutting-edge composer by her peers and critics. Even though she did not consciously attempt to create something new, the result of various influences in her music produced a body of work that has influenced tremendously the contemporary big band scene. She developed a unique jazz compositional style that is influencing a generation of young composers.

\textsuperscript{119} M. Schneider, personal communication, March 8, 2014.
3.8. John Psathas

Born in Greece in 1966, John Psathas moved to New Zealand at a very young age with his family and is now widely considered one of the three most important living composers of the Greek Diaspora.\(^{120}\) He has a busy schedule of commissions, being one of the most frequently performed classical composers of New Zealand. Psathas relates very much the hypothetical description given by Gunther Schuller of a musician equally experienced in various idioms, being himself versed in classical, jazz and Greek folk music.

I’m not a jazz musician, I don’t think in myself as a jazz musician at all. Also, I don’t think in myself as a classical composer. Unfortunately though, if you write for orchestra, from that point on everybody will think of you as a classical composer, there is no way of escaping it afterwards. So even when I do projects that are not classical, like I did recently with Serj Tankian – from System of a Down – people still see me as a classical composer.

Psathas.\(^{121}\)

While asked about the “jazz” and “classical” labels, Psathas brought up a series of relevant issues: “if you use the word “jazz” now, it covers so many possibilities, that you can’t figure out from that one word what a person specifically means anymore. Are they at the extreme end of free jazz or are they playing big band charts by Duke Ellington? What does it mean anymore?” He points out that jazz is now a cluster of genres, and that the same happens with classical music, “what does the term ‘classical music’ mean anymore? Am I a classical composer? Am I a contemporary classical composer?”\(^{122}\)

Psathas brings an important and different perspective to this study since his roots and primary studies are in the classical tradition, being a professor of composition at the

\(^{120}\) http://www.nzsm.ac.nz/about-us/our-people/staff-profile?staff=122901 (accessed march 6\(^{th}\), 2016)

\(^{121}\) J. Psathas, personal communication, April 2\(^{nd}\), 2013.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.
New Zealand School of Music, as well as a composer immersed in the world of Greek
traditional folk music.

Psathas career crosses the boundaries of styles, as exemplified by the composition
of the ceremonial music for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, *Zeibikiko*: an entire
program celebrating the heritage of Greek music from antiquity to present day, and
*Omnifenix*, the piece analyzed in this research, borrowing from jazz and classical idioms.

3.9. Omnifenix

*Omnifenix* is an unusual concerto in that the majority of the two concertante parts
(tenor saxophone and drum kit) consist of instructions for improvisation. Very few pieces
in the musical literature give so much liberty to soloists during such extended periods.
*Focus*, an extended composition in seven movements for tenor saxophone, string
orchestra and rhythm section is one of the only other pieces that gives so much freedom
to the soloist. It was composed and arranged by Eddie Sauter specifically for Stan Getz.
Similarly, *Omnifenix* was commissioned by *Concorso Internazionale ‘2 Agosto’* for the
*Fabrizio Festa* to feature the legendary saxophone skills of Michael Brecker with the
*Orchestra Sinfonica dell’Emilia Romagna ‘Toscanini’*, conducted by Marcello Rota.
Brecker premiered the piece in August 2000, and it was officially recorded by Joshua
Redman\(^{123}\) (tenor saxophone), Lance Philip (drum set) and the New Zealand Symphony
Orchestra conducted by Marc Taddei in 2006.\(^{124}\)

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\(^{123}\) Brecker’s health was not good by the time that Psathas decided to do the recording, so Redman was invited to be the soloist.

According to Psathas, the piece “achieves a compelling synthesis of jazz and art music streams, and allows plenty of space for the individuality of the saxophone soloist. The drum set player functions as a translator, both reinforcing the rhythms of the orchestra as well as responding to the soloist.” In his introductory notes to the piece he states that “the title ‘Omnifenix’ refers to jazz and classical music being ‘Omni-genres,’ sustained more by philosophies of music and culture than by any specific concepts of style. It describes a piece of music that is reborn differently each time. Like a phoenix, the improviser will continue to emerge anew and redefine the rules of their dynamic dialogue with the orchestra each time the work is performed.”

3.9.1. Instrumentation

The instrumentation used in this composition is similar to the modern classical orchestra with the addition of the soloists, as listed below:

- 2 Flutes (both doubling piccolo)
- 2 Oboes
- 2 Clarinets in B♭ (optional: Clarinet 1 doubling clarinet in E♭)
- 2 Bassoons
- 4 Horns in F
- 3 Trumpets in B♭
- 2 Tenor trombones
- Bass trombone
- Tuba
- Timpani (4 drums)
- Percussion 1: bass drum, tubular bells, cowbell, snare drum, drums stations (4 tom toms, snare ‘high’ and crash cymbal)
- Percussion 2: wind chimes, bass drum, triangle, drum station (4 tom toms, snare ‘high’ and crash cymbal) and vibraphone

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126 Ibid.
• Percussion 3: tam-tam, triangle, vibraphone and wind chimes
• Solo tenor saxophone
• Drum kit
• Tradition orchestral string section

3.9.2. Orchestration

Psathas’ approach to the orchestra draws from the “spectral” musical idea, focusing on gradual transitions and using processes of smooth textural shifts through interpolation. Different harmonic blocks are interleaved with the use of crescendos and decrescendos in the entire orchestra, creating this spectral effect. Timbre and harmonic color change during the entire piece in a subtle way for most of the time as can be seen in the example 8.

The orchestra functions mostly as a morphing harmonic pad, being an ever-changing background for the saxophone. Psathas’ orchestration approach is different than the ones used by Mendoza and Schneider; while Mendoza and Schneider have a more traditional approach to orchestration, using mostly melodic counterpoint or homophonic pads for the backgrounds and accompaniment figures, Psathas draws from twentieth century orchestration techniques associated with “spectral” music and to some extent “minimalism” and “sound mass.”
Example 8, Omnifenix, mm. 364-374. Spectral influenced orchestration (transposed score).
Psathas uses multiple *divisi* for the strings to perform an intricate harmony. Slow glissandos are also an important element in his string writing, contributing to the morphing texture used throughout the piece. Besides the harmonic pads, Psathas uses the string section – particularly cellos and basses – to double rhythmic patterns and accents reinforcing the drum kit figures.

Example 9, Omnifenix, mm. 72-74. Rhythmic line played by string section, cellos and basses doubling kick drum.

During the interview, Psathas pointed out that the orchestra serves mostly to punctuate and sustain the musical material. He doesn’t put expectations on the orchestra to “play like jazz musicians.” Psathas comments that “this is the reality; this is the musicians who they are,”\(^{127}\) and later continued pointing out that he is not saying that an

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\(^{127}\) J. Psathas, personal communication, April 2\(^{nd}\), 2013.
orchestra can’t swing, but that they don’t have the required rehearsal time to develop it as a group, especially considering that this is not part of their standard repertoire.

According to Psathas, the time feel is the greatest challenge in an orchestral setting. During the interview he described his solution to bringing the classical orchestra and the jazz soloists together; the top and the bottom of the orchestra are used differently. He explained this approach as being “the key that unlocks it all [...] the drummer gets instructions ‘play time,’ ‘respond to the soloist,’ ‘intensify,’ [...] but most of the time, it’s the kick drum part that is written out.” The drummer assumes a pivotal function in this piece as the point of connection with the orchestra. Psathas points out that the kick drum part is doubled by most of the low instruments in the orchestra and is subdivided at the eighth note level. According to him, it makes all the performers “on the same set of tracks.” This solution allows the upper section of the orchestra to play more complex rhythms, including sixteen note subdivisions. Psathas concludes on this technique affirming that if he would do a similar project again, he would “probably use that as a really effective tool.”

The percussion section of the orchestra also has a great responsibility in the piece, playing for long periods and reinforcing the rhythmic aspect of the composition. Psathas has an extensive list of works for percussion ensembles and explores its potentiality beyond the usual classical writing. An example is the use of glissandos in addition to a rhythmically intense part for timpani.
Brass and woodwinds serve mostly as a timbre and dynamic extension of the string parts. The exception is the use of runs in the woodwinds serving as an additional textural element, as can be seen in the next example.

Example 11, Omnifenix, mm. 6-7. Woodwinds playing fast scales as a textural element.
3.9.3. Thematic Material

Differently than the other two pieces analyzed in this study, “Omnifenix” puts almost no emphasis on the written melodic content. Most of the melodies that can be heard in the recording are improvised by the soloist. This compositional decision emphasizes the importance of improvisation in the piece. Occasional melodic figures appear as part of the orchestral texture, but they are not meant to be the primary focus, nor can be defined as a complete theme by jazz or classical standards. Instead of melodies, Psathas uses musical gestures – such as the slow glissandos in the strings, scalar shapes in the woodwinds (example 11), or syncopated rhythmic figures performed by section of the ensemble (examples 9 and 10) – as the core thematic material of his composition.

3.9.4. Rhythm, Groove and Momentum

Rhythm is really just a means to achieve something else, which is momentum. In the context of contemporary art music; I am very old fashioned in the sense that I’m still very attracted to the ideal of momentum, and goal oriented composition. And I’m also very attracted to high energy, high intensity, pulse based music, a perceptible pulse.

Psathas.

Psathas tells that when he was a young student composer, his impulse to write rhythm based music was going against everything that he was being taught. His professors used to advocate that in the same way that in contemporary classical music “tonality was dead, […] pulse was also dead.” He emphasized that those modernist

\textsuperscript{128} J. Psathas, personal communication, April 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2013.
concepts were being pushed quite hard on him, but that he never really accepted them.

Rhythm was for him a powerful tool to connect with people. Those connections “beyond words” made possible by music are, in his opinion, the reason to music own existence.

I found that if you develop a rhythmic drive, a momentum, it’s like you have grabbed the audience by the hand, and you start running with them, and they go, “Oh, I’m with you, I’m with you, I’m with you,” and you go “it is just over there” and they are running and it’s really exciting and they see all this amazing stuff. And you take them, and you get them to this place, and you go, “isn’t it amazing here?” And they go, “Yeah!” and they clap. That’s the experience that you can create with rhythmically driven music. That’s the core of what I do.

Psathas.\(^{129}\)

3.9.5. Harmony

Psathas uses a modal harmony for most of the piece, in great part based on diminish octatonic structures. During the interview he revealed that the choice for that particular harmonic pallet happened after he studied transcription of Michael Brecker solos; Psathas realized that Brecker had great affinity with those modes and was very proficient and creative while improvising in that environment.

Once he had chosen to base his composition on those modes, he decided to use a technique in which diminished chords are constantly modulating chromatically up. Because there are only three transpositions of the octatonic diminished mode, when it modulates for the third time, it is back to the first scale. And although the scales are always the same, the listener perception is that it continues to rise. Psathas also points out that in using this technique the instruments don’t actually have to climb in register to fulfill the impression of ascension.

\(^{129}\) Ibid.
Psathas liked to use this harmonic approach because although there are not many chords involved, there is an obvious feeling of harmonic motion. He revealed that he is not particularly fond of complex harmonic progressions; he prefers to use a slower progression with fewer chords and let a harmonic color rest and develop.

Example 12, Omnifenix, mm. 25-62. Harmonic chord symbols used as a guide in the solo saxophone part. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

Most of the harmonies are the result of superimposed triads using voicings that include seconds and small diatonic clusters. Looking at the saxophone part it is easier to understand his approach to harmony. Psathas creates a clear and simplified notation of what is happening harmonically in the orchestra, as can be seen in example 12.

3.9.6. Form

I really love those moments when everything comes together in a piece of music. But you have to earn those moments, you can’t get them cheaply. At the end of most of my pieces, there is an ending moment, where everything comes together.

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130 J. Psathas, personal communication, April 2nd, 2013.
Psathas pointed out the importance to recognize the power of the playoff between musical elements, discussing how to make them converged or diverged. He revealed that although his music can be considered very progressive by the confluence of distinct musical vocabularies, he is very attracted to some traditional ideals, such as the development of a dramatic emotional arch. In “Omnifenix” he uses a form that is similar to the classical 3 movements suite: fast – slow – fast. This structure allowed him to create a big impact in the beginning, release the tension in the middle and build up to a climatic ending, as further described in the following analysis.131

1. Opening theme.
   1.1. (mm. 1-14) Introductory motive with tutti hits. This is a very impactful section that serves as a strong first musical statement.
   1.2. A (mm. 15-22) and B (b. 23-55) – These two sections are based on sustained chords with crescendos and decrescendos over the drum groove. It works as a partial relaxation from the introductory section.
   1.3. C (mm. 56-71) – This is a transitional section, a rhythmic bass line (using a pedal note) is added to the sustained chords in the middle and high register instruments.
   1.4. D (mm. 72-85) – This is the most rhythmic driven section in the piece. This is also the only section that the bass line is not a sustained note or a rhythmic pedal point. This section leads towards a climax point at the beginning of E.
   1.5. E (mm. 86-104) This is a climatic section using the tutti hits motive from the introduction; but differently than the introduction, this section has more space in between his, opening space for the saxophone soloist to fill. It ends by dissolving the rhythmic aspect until the next section.
   1.6. F (mm. 105-120), G (mm.121-140) and H (mm. 141-148) – The sustained chords idea is recapitulated with the addition of glissandos. A new musical idea is presented in the bass: it is now rhythmically sparser and plays larger intervallic leaps along with diatonic lines.
   1.7. J (mm. 149-164), K (mm. 165-177) and L (mm. 178-189) – This is a rhythmic build up that culminates at L using musical ideas from previous sections, especially C.
   1.8. M (mm. 190-197) – This is the resolution of the first section of the piece, dissolving into N.

131 Rehearsal marks were used as the smallest unity of form.
2. Slow section, the drum kit doesn’t play in this part, resulting in a much less subdivided rhythmic structure in contrast to the previous section.
   2.1. N (mm. 198-231) – The orchestra plays simple harmonic pads.
   2.2. O (mm. 232-257) and P (mm. 258-277) – The same texture continues with the entrance of the solo saxophone.
   2.3. Q (mm. 278-301), R (mm. 302-325) and S (mm. 326-352) – Glissandos are added to the texture.

3. T (mm. 353-355) – Sax cadenza.

4. Transition, drums enter gradually playing the original time feel.
   4.1. U (mm. 356-391) – This section is a buildup (drums enter soft), it is a varied recapitulation of A and B.
   4.2. V (mm. 392-407) – This section is a varied recapitulation of C.
   4.3. W (mm. 408-421) – This section is a varied recapitulation of D leading to the climax of this section of the piece.
   4.4. X (mm. 422-429) – This section is similar to a shout chorus of a jazz piece. The entire orchestra and soloists play accented hits in a *tutti* style. The drummer plays fills in between.

5. Y (mm. 430-432) – Drums cadenza.

6. Z (mm. 433-448), A1 (mm. 449-461) and B1 (mm. 462-end) – This section is a short re-exposition. It serves as a coda and uses a rhythmic bass line leading to a climatic ending. The introductory motive is used as a final statement in the last two bars.

3.9.7. Improvisation

[...] The one thing I can say is that even I’m not an improviser, 80% of everything I’ve listened to, including now, is improvised music. One way or another. I think it’s because it is the essence of the impulse, it’s the spontaneous impulse. It connects with what I do in my own work. I want to create music with as few filters as possible. So, “it’s direct from me to you.” And when I hear your music, I want to be “direct from you to me,” as possible. I think improvised music is when you experience that in the strongest way. Because there is no “pre” thing. It’s happening as it happens.

Psathas.\(^{132}\)

Psathas talks about improvisation as a core element in jazz that he admires a lot. He continues stating that “jazz is an art form that is motivated by improvisation,” and

\(^{132}\) J. Psathas, personal communication, April 2\(^{nd}\), 2013.
points out that “the closer you take jazz musicians to completely written out scores, the more you start to lose some kind of a central spirit.” With that in mind, he wrote the solo saxophone part intending to include this element of indeterminacy and spontaneity. Mostly it is comprised of vague directions for improvisation, in opposition to the classical concerto, where most – if not all – the concertante part is fully notated.

When Psathas started to conceptualize the concerto to feature Michael Brecker, he realized – especially after they spoke – that Brecker didn’t want twenty pages of notated music. Psathas knew straightaway that it would be a waste of resource to collaborate with one of the greatest jazz improvisers of his time and not give him space to be creative. Even though Brecker would be capable of performing a completely written out piece, Psathas decided to not limit Brecker to the notes on the page. Once that decision was made, a new questions appeared: how to transcend generic improvisation within that context? How to guide Brecker to improvise something that is really specific and works with the piece? So then Psathas came to the solution that the piece itself should be specific to the player. Now the whole process was about understanding and highlighting Brecker’s characteristics as a soloist in front of an orchestra. Psathas then researched Brecker and his playing, studied many transcriptions and made others of his own. Psathas was looking for what he considered to be Brecker’s strengths, within all his strengths.

Once the piece was complete, they met after the first rehearsal and Psathas asked Brecker about his impressions of the piece. Brecker responded saying that it’s was a very strange feeling, and compared it to a tailored glove that fitted perfectly to what he does. Psathas felt very accomplished in the sense that he could enable Brecker to be himself within a very structured environment.
During the interview Psathas points out the importance for the soloist to be mentally ahead of the structure. According to him the improviser must internalize and understand the large form of the piece. So, as things are coming up, it is possible to anticipate and play in way that makes the directionality of the composition feel inevitable. Psathas quoted Joshua Redman in an interview about the recording, saying that playing this piece “is like walking through a house: you know all the rooms, and you know what is in the rooms, but you are kind of free to walk through in your own way.” Psathas also warned about the danger of having someone who doesn’t have that level of musical understanding improvise on a piece like “Omnifenix,” which he also had. If the performer reacts to the music after it happens, the overall musical outcome sounds much weaker; it feels like the solos are just trailing behind the actual structure of the work.

Psathas uses many different techniques to indicate what he envisions as the basis for the saxophone part and the improvisation. Most of the improvised solo part comprises harmonic guidelines, either with chord symbols or giving a specific scale to be used. Open indications such as “intensify to m. 86,” “freak-out, no key” and “wind down (with drums)” are also present during the entire saxophone part.

Example 13, Omnifenix, mm. bars 63-77. Solo saxophone part including chord notation and modal indication. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)
Psathas also uses an unusual notation for the improvised part: he gives very specific and intricate written parts followed by the instruction “example only – play this or something similar.”

Example 14, Omnifenix, mm. 120-133. Saxophone part for improvisation with chord notation and modal indication. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

Few sections are completely written out and have very specific instructions for the soloist, as can be seen in the example 15. “L.D” stands for “lip down,” “L.D.1” for “lip down one,” “S.B.” for “slow bend” and “M.1” for “multiphonic number 1” (played with the fingering for an “E,” plus the low “C” key).
Psathas brought up an aspect related to the recording process with Redman that is unknown to the public. He described how the final solo version registered in the album ended up being a re-composition of Redman’s solo part by him. Redman recorded all day with the orchestra, and Psathas ended up with many takes of sections of the work. Then he had to actually construct a solo performance from all of the performances that Redman did. Psathas described the process a “fantastic puzzle to bring it to hear.” He mentioned that although Redman and he never talked about it, Redman probably anticipated this. He improvised through various parts of the piece in such a way that it was possible to cut between improvised takes. This process in itself is a whole world of thought, including the possibility to create and manipulate an improvised solo by using current recording technology.
3.9.8. Final Considerations

When I met Michael Brecker in Bologna and we were working on the rehearsals for this piece, I ask him what he thought of it as a hybrid piece, and he said that “it was one of the few pieces he felt that worked as it bringing together classical and jazz,” which was great for me to hear. But he said that “attempts to bring together jazz and classical has left a lot of musical corpses in its wake” [laugh].

Psathas.133

This piece is very unique regarding the use of the jazz soloists in conjunction with the orchestra, one of the very few compositions of its kind. It differs from most jazz works that incorporate orchestra and also from most classical works that incorporate elements of jazz. It is a true hybrid piece, using improvisation, rhythmic and harmonic vocabulary from modern jazz styles paired with the extended form and refined orchestration from modern classical music. Differently than the other two analyzed pieces in this study, “Omnifenix” uses more elements of 20th century classical music, such as the spectral approach to orchestration, and has the longest improvised solo of the three, being almost the full duration of the piece.

John Psathas finishes his interview stressing that there are no boundaries to the music that he is doing. He points out that being a composer today “is like being in the best sweet shop in the world.” According to him, everything is accessible and possible. And he concludes stating that now it is a great time be a composer, with so many different things to explore and so many ways to build your own audience.

133 J. Psathas, personal communication, April 2nd, 2013.
Chapter 4

ORIGINAL WORK: SEVEN MASKS

A multi-movement suite titled Seven Masks was conceptualized and composed as a result of this study. The analysis and discussion of three movements from this extended work is used to address and exemplify hybrid processes in composition. Henry Mancini Institute Fellows and other top Frost School of Music students participated in the recording of these movements. The rehearsals and recording sessions were used as a practical element to the musical investigation. This pragmatic component of the study put to the test important aspects related to the research, such as the challenges in mixing classical and jazz musicians.

4.1. Programmatic Inspiration

The purpose of the program is merely to indicate, in a preliminary sort of way, those spiritual states of mind that drove the composer to the creation of his work, the ideas that he sought to embody in this work.

Franz Liszt\textsuperscript{134}

Christopher Vogler’s book, The Writer’s Journey\textsuperscript{135}, was chosen as the programmatic background for this composition. The archetypes that he describes as being recurring figures of most stories are the inspiration for the suite. Each one of the one of avatars suggested by Vogler led to the exploration of a different set of musical moods and

\textsuperscript{134} Franz Liszt, “Perlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie,” Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik (1855): 51-52.

techniques. Soloists were used to portray the forces behind the archetypes and to explore improvisational possibilities in the jazz symphonic context. The solos were partially written and partially open to improvisation, relaying on the performer’s ability to create music rooted in the classical, jazz and folk traditions.

Seven of the most recurring archetypes\(^{136}\) served as titles and inspiration for the composition, each one represented in a separate movement: herald, mentor, trickster, shape-shifter, threshold guardian, shadow and hero. “Mentor,” “Trickster” and “Threshold Guardians” are the selected movements for this analysis.

The “Mentor,” represented by the tenor saxophone, uses established tradition and conventions to symbolize the existent canon of knowledge. The soloist leads the listeners through a journey between sections influenced by impressionistic music and cool jazz. In opposition, the “Trickster,” represented by a trombone duo, defies the status quo and relates to the early works of Third Stream; it utilizes twelve-tone rows in its fabric and experiments with unusual orchestration techniques. Finally, the “Threshold Guardians,” represented by an alto saxophone and a distorted guitar, utilizes the full strength of the ensemble to portray the aggressiveness attributed to the archetype; dissonant harmonies combined with heavy percussion grooves create the tone for this movement.

4.2. Instrumentation

All movements use the same instrumentation, as described below.

- 2 Flutes (doubling piccolo and alto flute)
- 2 Oboes (doubling English horn)
- 2 Clarinets in B♭
- Bass Clarinet in B♭
- 2 Bassoons (doubling contrabassoon)
- 2 Alto saxophones (doubling soprano saxophone)
- 2 Tenor saxophones
- Baritone saxophone
- 4 Horns in F
- 4 Trumpets in B♭ (doubling flugelhorn)
- 3 Tenor trombones
- Bass trombone
- Tuba
- Timpani (4 drums)
- 4 percussionists
- Piano
- Electric guitar
- Upright bass
- Drum kit
- Traditional orchestral string section
4.3. Mentor

“In the anatomy of the human psyche, Mentors represent the Self, the god within us, the aspect of personality that is connected with all things. This Higher Self is the wiser, nobler, more godlike part of us.”137

The mentor is usually a positive figure who aids or trains the hero, standing for the hero's highest aspirations. This archetype is expressed in all those characters who teach, protect and give gifts to heroes. The mentor is the most mature figure, being often a former hero who have survived life's early trials and is now passing on the gift of his knowledge and wisdom.

4.3.1. Concept

Established tradition and conventions are used in this movement to symbolize the existent canon of knowledge. A slow tempo was chosen to portray the calm and stable nature associated with this archetype. Impressionist composers such as Debussy and Ravel were important references for this creation along with classical influenced jazz from the 1940 and 1950. Gil Evans, one of the most important arrangers associated with the movement was a major influence for the “Mentor.” He often employed well-crafted arrangements and incorporated elements of classical music, being in a way a precedent to the Third Stream. According to Schuller, Evans was one of the few composers who succeeded in “preserving the essential spontaneity and improvisatory nature of jazz, achieving a rare symbiosis between composed and improvised elements.” Reeves add

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that Evans had a special ability to “create arrangements that blur the line between composed music and improvisation, his judicious use of dissonance and unique chord voicings, as well as the fresh timbres he elicits from the jazz orchestra.” Maria Schneider’s approach to modulation was also an important influence in the creation of the improvised solo section.

4.3.2. Melodic and Harmonic Material

Two main themes were created for this piece. The first theme has an overall descending structure and uses chromatic approaches to shape the line. This theme intends to represent maturity and wisdom, evoking a sense of sophistication. The second theme has an overall ascending structure and uses big melodic leaps to portray the heroic aspect of the archetype.

Example 16, Mentor, mm. 10-14. First theme, violin and violoncello are featured. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

Example 17, Mentor, mm. 20-30. Second theme, tenor saxophone is featured. (transposed part, (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

Aeolian is the central mode used for this movement. This mode paired with chromatic alterations helps to evoke a sense of depth and uncertainty. In the re-exposition, a completely new harmonic color is presented: the harmonic major mode. This alteration brightens up the modal tone and symbolizes a victorious side of the archetype, teaching and leading the hero to succeed in his battle.

Example 18, Mentor, mm. 162-172. Modal variation on the second theme played by French horn 1. (transposed part, 4/4 time signature, no key signature)
A chromatic descending line starting at the root and played over a stationary minor chord is a classic harmonic device from jazz idiom that is used throughout the composition.

Example 19, Mentor, mm. 90-95. Harmonic progression motive represented by the violin 1 line with addition of chord symbols. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

This harmonic tool is used many times over different harmonic centers during the solo section. In contrast to the exposition and re-exposition which occur over harmonic center in E, the solo section modulates in a circle of minor thirds, from E to G, B♭ and D♭. The return to the original key center is delayed during the shout chorus with the addition of an unexpected F, breaking the cycle. When the E finally arrives, it has now a different color, harmonic major.

Juxtaposed augmented triads are use at the beginning and end of the piece to suggest the unknown, the endless universe of knowledge that the mentor archetype represents. Metaphorically, after a long journey that concludes at measure 172, the piece returns to the openness and ambiguity of the beginning.

Example 20, Mentor, mm. 6-7. Juxtaposed augmented triads represented by the vibraphone line (B+ and C+). (no key signature)
4.3.3. Orchestration

The orchestration used in the fabric of this movement is the most idiomatic of the suite; it explores conventions and plays to the strengths of the instruments. As a result, much less rehearsal with the orchestra was needed to achieve satisfactory results.

While strings and woodwinds are used in the creation of pads, melodies and textural runs, brass and percussion are used to expand the dynamic pallet, punctuate and delineate important melodies. The rhythm section is used mostly to accompany the solo during the swing section.

4.3.4. Soloists

The mentor is mainly represented by the tenor saxophone. The lower tone of the instrument, which can have vocal quality, is used as a metaphor for the archetype’s voice. A solo violoncello and violin are used as secondary soloists, evoking a symbolic relationship between jazz and classical. Similarly to the tenor saxophone, the violoncello’s dark tone can evoke a very mature sound, portraying the figure of the wise mentor. While written solos are used to present the main themes, improvisation is used during the development section.

4.3.5. Form

This movement starts out very transparent and delicate, and then develops through a heroic build up to a climax at the conclusion of the exposition of themes. This section fades out into the jazz infused section with the improvised tenor saxophone solo. The
solo section builds to a new climax that resolves into the recapitulation. The
recapitulation is an orchestral feature. The overall form can be summarized by an “ABA”
structure, “A” being mostly symphonic and *rubato*, and “B” being a slow swing with
rhythm section, as represented below.

1. (mm. 1-9) Introduction.
2. (mm. 10-19) First theme. Solo violin and cello feature over light string pads.
3. (mm. 20-35) Second theme. Tenor saxophone feature
4. (mm. 35-43) Variation on the second theme. Orchestral feature in a *crescendo*.
5. (mm. 44-51) Climax of exposition, first theme. Tutti orchestral feature, fading
   out.
6. (mm. 52-56) Transition. *Crescendo* preparing the entrance of the *jazz* influenced
   section.
7. (mm. 57-69) First theme is varied as a transition to saxophone solo. Drum set
   enters at the peak helps to shape the *decrescendo*. This section is also used to
   accelerate to the new tempo.
8. (mm. 70-37) Introduction of the new mood. This is a very delicate section.
9. (mm. 74-137) Saxophone solo over modulations. Orchestra plays light
   backgrounds.
10. (mm. 138-149) Climax of the saxophone solo over a *tutti* shout chorus.
11. (mm. 150-153) Resolution of the Climax.
12. (mm. 154-161) First theme is used as background for the end of the saxophone
    solo and as transition to a symphonic section.
13. (mm. 162-171). Orchestral feature recapitulating the second theme, similar to
    measures 35-43.
14. (mm. 172-end) Coda. Cello is featured in a condensed re-exposition of measures
    10-19, it concludes the piece through the reiteration of material from the
    introduction.
4.4. Trickster

“By provoking healthy laughter they help us realize our common bonds, and they point out folly and hypocrisy.”139

Mischief and desire for change are the driving forces embodied by this archetype. The tricksters usually cut big egos down to size and bring heroes down to earth. Above all, they strive for healthy transformation, commonly drawing attention to the imbalance or absurdity of various situations.

Usually disguised under a fool’s appearance, the trickster can be one of the wisest archetypes, bringing humor and new perspectives when things are taken too seriously. They are the natural enemies of the status quo.

4.4.1. Concept

The “Trickster” is the movement that closely relates to the origins of Third Stream. It shares Gunther Schuller’s propositions and is influenced directly by Milton Babbit’s All Set composition. Similar to Babbit’s work, the Trickster mixes twelve-tone techniques with a swing feel. The playfulness of mid-tempo swing combined with the center-less essence of twelve-tone harmony evokes the mischief associated with the archetype. Although not aiming to be overly comical, this movement intends to bring a sense of humor to the suite. Disguised under a simplistic first impression, the Trickster strives to be a provocative movement bringing different perspectives to a traditional style.

Intending to portray the nature of the trickster archetype as the enemy of the status quo, various unusual orchestration techniques were applied to create a piece that challenges conventions of orchestral swing writing. Django Bates, a very creative English composer, was one of the major influences in the exploration of unexpected sonorities. Bob Brookmeyer’s work with development of small motives was also influential in the creation of this movement. Known predominantly as a jazz writer, Brookmeyer can also be considered a third stream composer. Neal Slater, former director of jazz studies at the University of North Texas, stated in 1996 that Brookmeyer “is a real master who has gone almost classical in recent years.” Brookmeyer’s collaborations with the Metropole Orkest are a good example.

4.4.2. Orchestration

Two conceptually opposite approaches were used for different sections in the orchestration of this movement. A traditional big band approach was used in the creation of *tutti* passages, and a more contemporary symphonic approach was used in the creation of lighter sections. The traditional approach proved to be very effective and optimize rehearsal time. The symphonic approach proved to be also musically interesting when performed properly, but required much more rehearsal time to work.

The traditional big band approach can be summarized by the use of rhythm section as the source of pulse and swing feel, and the remaining players being used to play themes, counterpoint, hits and pads on top of the rhythm section.

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Example 21, Trickster, mm. 215-221. Big band approach (reduced concert score (4/4 time signature, no key signature).
The symphonic approach depends on the sense rhythm of individual players to generate pulse. The use of thematic material as a groove by the clarinets is one example. This particular technique proved to be challenging for the musicians, mainly because the time feel is created by the combination of melodic lines performed by different players.

Example 22, Trickster, mm. 59-62. Clarinets playing lines as a source of groove. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

Pyramids were utilized to create harmony and establish grooves in a non-conventional orchestration technique. This technique is used by big band arrangers and contemporary classical composers, but mostly as a punctuation effect. The attempt to use this technique in the fabric of a groove resulted in a unique musical outcome: a moving harmonic texture that added a spatial rhythm to the ensemble. The performance of sections using this orchestral technique proved to be challenging for the musicians, particularly the string section.

Example 23, Trickster, mm. 59-62. Strings playing pyramids as a source of groove. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)
Another unusual orchestration approach used in this piece is inspired by Django Bates “Tightrope.” During most of the last section of the Trickster, the traditional approach of melody and harmony as being the center of focus is substituted by a conceptual approach influenced by spectral music. The orchestration and use of register become the most important musical elements in this section. A quarter-note walking line moves from the extreme high to low register of the orchestra dictating the form and providing directionality to the section between bars 250 and 296. A similar process happens between bars 309 and 358: the walking line starts at the extreme low register, goes high peaking at bar 340, and then returns.

4.4.3. Melodic and Harmonic Material

Two distinctive melodic materials are used in the fabric of “Trickster.” One is a descending minor third motive and the other is a twelve-tone derived melody. Most lines used in this composition originate from this source. Each melodic material represents a harmonic device used in the composition of this movement. The minor third motive relates to the octatonic modal structure, the melody is derived from a twelve-tone row, and both are treated differently. The two-note motive is used as a building block to create more complex lines (example 24) and textures (example 25); the twelve-tone melody is presented either in its entire form, or segmented (example 26).
Example 24, Trickster, mm. 43-49. Violin 1 melody derived from the two-note motive.

Example 25, Trickster, mm. 71-73. Woodwinds texture based on two-note motive. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

Example 26, Trickster, mm. 237-238. Violoncello melody. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)
The twelve-tone row is also used as roots for the harmonic progression during the improvised trombone duo. Based on those roots, a chord quality was chosen. Most chords used during this section were derived from melodic minor scales (example 27). Since this non-functional harmony lacks a sense of direction, dominant chords were added over pedals towards the end of the solo to create more direction and suspension until a final resolution at bar 235.

Example 27, Trickster, mm. 180-191. Upright bass harmonic progression using the twelve-tone row as fundamentals. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

The twelve-tone row is also used as the cornerstone of the final section. It is used in various transposed forms as the walking line (example 28). All other lines, hits and sustained notes derive from this basic quarter-note figure. The unison saxophone soli, for example, was generated by adding notes between the walking line. The added notes are always at an interval of a minor third from the quarter note line, implying the original two-note motive.
4.4.4. Soloists and Improvisation

Historically, the trombone was used largely to represent power and the unknown dimensions of darkness. In famous requiems, for example, the trombone section was assigned to evoke the fear of crossing over to the hereafter. In opposition, the increase number of techniques developed in the 20th century – mostly inspired by jazz – empowered the instrument to assume entirely new roles. Effects such as glissando, flutter tonguing and the use of different mutes enabled the trombone with new expressive possibilities, including a comic personality. This duality in character made the trombone a good choice to represent the trickster.

A duet was chosen to increase the expectancy element. The tension created by the convergence and divergence of the soloists helps to portray the conflict of ideas.
represented by this archetype. The functions and relationship between the two Trombones is constantly changing. Agreement and disagreement are represented by the opposition between unison and dissonance, melodically (example 29) and rhythmically (example 30).

Example 29, Trickster, mm. 6-7. Trombone duet, melodic convergence and divergence. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)

Example 30, Trickster, mm. 32-37. Trombone duet, rhythmic convergence and divergence. (4/4 time signature, no key signature)
A similar relationship happens during the improvised solo section. For most of the first part the two soloists are trading phrases, as if debating with each other. For most of the second part, the two soloists are playing together, creating a much more complex texture that emulates a less controlled discussion.

The drum kit was chosen as a secondary feature in this piece because this is the only movement that has a prominent swing feel. The drums solo functions as a transition between the thematic exposition and the trombone duo improvisational section.

4.4.5. Form

In contrast to the other movements, the Trickster has a constant tempo for most of the piece. The only rubato section is between bars 300-305. The majority of the piece uses a medium tempo of 146 bpm, and the final sections use a very fast tempo of 340 bpm, being close to the limit of playability.

The overall form is represented below.

15. (mm. 1-26) Introduction.
16. (mm. 27-87) Exposition.
17. (mm. 88-121) Drums solo.
18. (mm. 122-125) Transition.
19. (mm. 126-234) Trombone duet solo.
20. (mm. 235-249) Melodic statement and transition.
21. (mm. 250-296) Up-tempo section.
22. (mm. 299-308) Rubato trombone interlude.
23. (mm. 309-362) Up-tempo section.
24. (mm. 363-end) Coda.
4.5. Threshold Guardians

“At each gateway to a new world there are powerful guardians at the threshold, placed to keep the unworthy from entering.”\(^{141}\)

This archetype represents the obstacles in the hero’s path. They threaten the hero, but they can be overcome, bypassed, or even turned into allies. Threshold Guardians are not the main villains or antagonists in stories, and in rare cases they may even be secret allies testing the hero’s inner force and skill.

On a deeper psychological level they stand for internal demons: the neuroses, emotional scars, and self-limitations that hold back growth and progress. Every time a major event is about to happen this force rises up, not necessarily to stop the action, but to test if the hero is really determined to accept the challenge of change.

4.5.1. Concept

This is the most aggressive movement analyzed for this study. Twentieth century modernist aesthetics and techniques are applied along with afro-based grooves and aggressive solos to portray all the power of the threshold guardians.

In contrast to the “Mentor” and “Trickster,” the “Threshold Guardians” movement don’t use or imply any swing feel. Instead, two rhythmic patterns—a binary march and a ternary Afro groove—symbolize the two original streams from which the music of the Americas derived. The distinction between episodic section and sections with a continuous flow also represent this duality of traditions.

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Example 31, Threshold Guardians, mm. 147-150. March played by bass drum and snare. (4/4 time signature)

Example 32, Threshold Guardians, mm. 103-105. Afro groove played by bass drum, tomtoms, cowbell and tam-tam. (4/4 time signature)

Much of the aggressiveness is portrayed by the dramatic use of accented *tutti* attacks and elongated pauses. Accented pedal tones also serve to enhance the hostile soundscape that represent the archetype. The rhythmic patterns—Afro groove and march—have a dual effect as a constant intimidating feel and also a call for action.

4.5.2. Orchestration

Jazz and classical instruments work together in a unified ensemble during most of the piece. Saxophones function as an integrated part of the woodwind section, the same with rhythm section and classical percussion. Although idiomatic to the instruments, the
orchestration in this movement explores the extreme dynamics and register of instruments to portray the internal demons associated with this archetype.

Various non-conventional orchestration techniques are also used in the fabric of this piece. Influences from sound mass and spectral music serve to create the unique character of the Threshold Guardians. The orchestral delay effect is an example of such a technique. In example 33 violins and violas perform a line out of phase, the result is a cumulative echo effect that becomes a blurred texture.

Example 33, Threshold Guardians, mm. 15-17. Strings playing an orchestral delay effect.
(4/4 time signature, no key signature)

A similar device appears on example 34; in this example a transposition is added to the temporal displacement and intensifies the chaotic effect. Since the line is derived from the twelve-tone row, the accumulation of echoed lines result on a moving chromatic cluster.
Example 34, Threshold Guardians, mm. 33-35. Woodwinds playing an orchestral delay effect. (Transposed score, 4/4 time signature, no key signature)

4.5.3. Melodic and Harmonic Material

Twelve-tone and modality are the principal harmonic devices used for this movement. Most of the thematic sections are based on harmonies derived from a twelve-tone technique, while much of the improvised solo sections are based on modal harmony. Intervals of fourth were used as a recurring element in the construction of the row. This interval was chosen to evoke a feel of call for action and challenge.

Example 35, Threshold Guardians, mm. 1-3. Twelve-tone row presented by alto sax and guitar as an opening statement. (Transposed score, 4/4 time signature, no key signature)
The twelve-tone row is used in different ways throughout the piece. In some cases the row is used to create target notes; extra notes are then added as ornaments (example 36). Other uses include the transposition and repetition of segments of the row (example 37).

Example 36, Threshold Guardians, mm. 56-64. Twelve-tone row used as the main melody with added passing tones. (Guitar part, 4/4 time signature, no key signature)

Example 37, Threshold Guardians, mm. 32-37. Twelve-tone row used as an orchestral effect during the also sax improvised solo. (Violin 1 part, 4/4 time signature, no key signature)
Towards the end of the piece, the melody derived from the row is repeated and evolves through a process of gradual transformation, from 12-tone to modal. Each repetition a few notes of the row are changed to create a new melody with similar shape.

Example 38, Threshold Guardians, mm. 134-163. Twelve-tone row melody transforms into a modal melody. (Violin 1 part, 4/4 time signature, no key signature)

4.5.4. Soloists

A distorted guitar and an alto saxophone were chosen to portray the threshold guardians. The distorted guitar symbolizes the aggressive power associated with the archetype. The saxophone represents a subtler function of the avatar: the preparation process for the ultimate challenge. Saxophone and guitar play together most of the
thematic material as a duet, then each has an individual solo section. Towards the end they play together again as a duet, but improvised, commenting on each other.

The saxophone is the first to improvise and leads the buildup section. The guitar enters at the climax with all its power representing the last great barrier and then leads a long and gradual deconstruction until the end.

Another kind of improvisation is used in the beginning of the composition. Similarly to some twentieth century classical works, guides are given to the soloist to improvise using limited parameters. The two soloists playing and bending a “G” create a texture. They then transition to a chopped rhythmic texture and return. This compositional device is used between strong accents in the beginning of the piece; it creates a sense of expectancy and discomfort associated with the confrontational tension of the archetype.

Example 39, Threshold Guardians, mm. 5-10. Textural improvisation by soloists. (Transposed score, 4/4 time signature, no key signature)

Drum set and percussion are a secondary feature in this movement. They help to create momentum through intense grooves and also are used to dramatize important transitions. Short orchestral soli sections function as punctuations in the form. The first soli is in the middle of the thematic exposition. The second is in between the two main soloists, preparing the entrance of the guitar.
4.5.5. Form

One of the main concepts of form in this movement is based on the shift between sections with undefined feeling of meter and section based on a march or Afro groove. Those sections are overlaid to create a gradual transition.

The piece starts very episodic with minimal march elements implied, and then transitions to continuous Afro-groove sections. It concludes through a slow transformation back to the march, fading out to the end, as represented below.

1. (mm. 1-4) The main melodic statement is performed by the two soloists (alto sax and guitar) presenting the twelve-tone row. Orchestra enters at the end to punctuate dramatically.

2. (mm. 5-18) Soloists play a dissonant texture as a cadenza. Part of the orchestra punctuate and amplify the soloists’ texture.

3. (mm. 19-21) *Tutti* accents referring to the opening.

4. (mm. 22-29) Secondary melody is presented by the two soloist and doubled by sections of the orchestra.
5. (mm. 30-50) Development of melodies and motives. This section leads to the groove based section.
6. (mm. 51-79) Thematic melodies are presented with variations over the groove. This section starts at a climax and slowly dissolves.
7. (mm. 80-110) Alto saxophone improvised solo. It starts very diluted and sparse and slowly builds to a new climax at bar 103.
8. (mm. 111-118) Drums and percussions are featured playing aggressively. Orchestra punctuates with tutti accents.
9. (mm. 119-end) Guitar solo starts a climax and slowly decreases until the soft ending. Rhythm section has the responsibility to keep the energy and dictate the dynamic shape. The piece concludes with a written fade out.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY

It is clear at the end of this essay that the creative possibilities generated by the mutual influences of styles are endless. The boundaries between genres is not much of a concern for creators as it is for musicologists, academics and business people. The range of artistic possibilities becomes apparent comparing the analysis of works by Schneider, Psathas, Mendoza, and the original music composed for this project. This amalgam of different musical traditions can potentially lead to a limitless number of creations. As André Mehmari discussed during his interview, there is not only a third stream in between classical music and jazz, “every great musical mind is a stream in itself and all these different currents flow into a great sea of musical ideas, in which new streams are born.”

The artist is like a crystal refracting the white light that arrives. Each artist has his history, tradition, preferences and all the idiosyncrasies that he brings while interpreting this white noise that is what we experience in life.
The interviews were conducted and recorded in audio and video with the consent of the participants. The recordings were then transcribed to the written format with minor linguistic adjustments to facilitate reading and understanding. The transcriptions were then sent to the participants for final edits and approval, resulting in the material presented in the following pages.
RAFAEL PICCOLOTTO DE LIMA: What is the difference for you in approaching a small and a large ensemble?

VINCE MENDOZA: Well, I think the small ensemble and the large ensemble have the same questions attached to them. You are still talking about writing melodies for players, but the interesting part comes when you are really talking about who is being invited to improvise in that ensemble, and whether the music that you are writing is somewhat improvisational. And finally, what your point of departure is, stylistically, has a lot to do with how you write for the ensembles.

So, a small ensemble obviously has a certain historical basis to how it has been used and the symphonic orchestra, the same. You have to take to account the historical basis of everything, but for me, I’m still writing melodies for instruments and still thinking about counterpoint and texture, and varying density, and form, taking care of how a piece is laid out and how are we pacing the energy. And it is really a difference in the amount of possibilities, and the amount of energy you can generate obviously is different, but the questions are the same.

LIMA: Talking about specifics, strings for example, when you have a quartet, you have one type of sound, and when you have an orchestra it is very different; or woodwinds, when you have a section, instead of a couple soloists. How does it affect the way you write for the ensemble? Or it doesn’t affect very much?

MENDOZA: It definitely, in that case makes a difference. Because I think when you have a smaller ensemble of strings, as you would for example have one trombone versus four, the function of the trombone section is different in this case. With the string quartet, the function of the quartet is really more like a collection of four individuals that are playing lines interacting with each other, and you can’t expect to have the timbre event that you would have with twenty first violins, versus one. You start seeing that transition
really with an orchestra that has for example six violins, or even four violins, you can see that the possibilities of what you are capable of doing melodically or even texturally are quite limited. And then it becomes more a function of a solo player, the individual, instead of the section sound. So timbre is a big difference, but also in terms of the attitude of the way of the player is playing needs to be much more soloistic in a smaller group.

LIMA: You work with both classical musicians and jazz musicians, and historically they have different ways of studying, and very different vocabularies. What do you think are the major differences? And when you have in an orchestra both universes together, how do you deal with those differences?

MENDOZA: There needs to be a certain understanding between the players of different traditions, how something is going to be done, which of course is why you need to take that into account when you are writing and what the expectations are to the player, and how to get a player to do what you want him to do in terms of the notation, and how you present to the player.

There will be a phrase that you will write for a string player that will be played a certain way based on their experience, but also will be based on just the mechanics of sound production and how a string player bows a piece, bows a line or even makes the sound on their instrument. So you have to write your music in a way that uses the language that you desire, and not the language that they bring to the table. And on the other hand, you can embrace the language that they bring to the table.

If it is a saxophone section for instance, you write the same line as you would for a viola player, for the tenor, and the tenor player. If it is Sonny Rollins, he will play it entirely different. And you may choose to embrace the way that he plays it, and try to get the other players to play the way he plays it. And the question is, how? So, bridging the gap in those languages is a very important task for the composer and the conductor try to interpret that.

LIMA: I have the impression that certain musical languages, such as Latin-American rhythms and other African derivate rhythms are much more natural for jazz players than
for classical players, with all the syncopations and attacks. When you have an ensemble with classical strings and woodwinds that are not so used to playing those rhythms, how do you feel about challenging them?

MENDOZA: These days, the younger players are much more aware of other musical traditions and they like to learn how to do it. The question is: How they can understand the technique that is necessary to make it happen. Obviously you can’t get a violinist to play with jazz inflection only with notation and advice about phrasing and bowing and accents and emphasis and all that. That is something that the jazz musicians spend half of his life trying to do, and the same thing for teaching Sonny Rollins how to play Palestrina, or Monteverdi motets or something like that. It is just a stylistic thing that is part of a pattern of practice and exposure. So, for the player that is not familiar, you need to find a way to teach them how to approximate as much as you can. Obviously you can’t get an entire section of string to have a lifetime jazz education in three hours’ rehearsal you going to get, so you need to try to get to the place where you need to be with approximating.

LIMA: You have the experience of working with many different orchestras. Is there a pattern related to those musical vocabularies or does each orchestra and country have different musical responses?

MENDOZA: Basically with string players, all over the world, the mechanics of the instrument and how the sound is produced, the mechanics are the same. There is the attack, there is up, there is down, there is how many notes per bow, and just to put it crudely very simple: that is it. Like you would advise a brass section where to put a note, a jazz articulation, to put it later or earlier, you know, those kind of intangibles are added to the notion of ‘I have to play this line while going up and this other line while going down, and I need to coordinate this all with my fingers, and do it all in the right place, at the right time, to match the brass’, those are very complicated processes when you think about it, and not everybody does it well, and not everybody does it the same.

So I think you need to go in a case-by-case basis, a Brazilian orchestra versus a Viennese orchestra, or the British, where they put things in time. Music is a very personal art form.
Imagine a hundred people, all playing an instrument, and having them all play in a certain place, it is a very personal/cultural tradition. And I imagine that working with a Brazilian orchestra, they will put it exactly where you want it to be with Brazilian music, but won’t have a particular inflection that you need to have with Strauss, or to play *Porgy and Bess*, arguably they will have a better chance, since it all sort of came from the same place anyway: Africa.

Every place has its own traditions and you can’t discount how the human element colors your activities. Maybe your piece will be different everywhere you go, but to me it is a positive thing.

LIMA: How do you approach dynamic balance? How do you deal with the discrepancies in power between a *big band* and a string section in your writing?

MENDOZA: The easiest answer to that question is numbers. You need a certain number of string players to balance the big band, and just in terms of attitude of the string section, you can get four string players as angry as you want but they will never play as *fortissimo* as the brass players, right? So I think you need the number to balance it off. Lacking that, you need to keep in mind density and dynamics, and how many people are playing and for how long, and what are your expectations, and what kind of impact are you going to have with what you write.

So the impact of having a string quartet playing in the middle register, each playing a note in a four-part voicing or whatever it is, with a screaming brass playing back with them, the impact that you will have for the strings to be heard is almost nothing unless you have a sound system to amplify it. So you need to think what will have the best impact at that time and if you want to hear the strings you need to have less of the brass, fewer players, better use of dynamics, mutes and most of all *tacet*, to be able to hear the strings. It is just not a balanced affair, you know, if you have six French horns and four trombones and tuba, and you have a twenty-piece string section playing Mahler, it is not going to be balanced and as a result the impact that the strings will have on the *fortissimo* sections of the piece will be very undesirable.
So you need to think of numbers first and then think about what those numbers will mean in terms of your writing, and we are not always given a fifty-piece string section to balance of the winds, and so when you are not, then you need to decide ‘well ok, I only have ten guys, so I need to rethink my approach to the brass section, or maybe have three trumpets instead of four, or have two trumpets instead of three, and 2 trombones and a tuba, and then they should only really play *forte* when the strings are playing in unison, or octaves, or other variations in texture that may be necessary.

LIMA: Would you say that your writing in those situations is much more related to the classical approach to the orchestra than to the traditional big band techniques?

MENDOZA: Yes, absolutely. My beginnings are with the big band, but I have to say that I resonate musically with the possibilities put in front of me by a symphonic orchestration, not necessarily the symphonic vocabulary or tradition, but just talking about the orchestration; the colors and the numbers. I don’t really need four, you know, three is enough, and two might even be good with the woodwinds. I don’t need to have double or triple woodwinds. I don’t really know what to do in that context. It doesn’t necessarily make it better. It certainly doesn’t make it hipper in terms of the jazz language.

LIMA: In terms of form, studying the history, I noticed that jazz composers have the tendency to be very faithful to the form of the tune, while classical composers usually work with motives and are more open to approach form. As you have used both techniques in your works, do you have any preferences when you write?

MENDOZA: You have to understand that the tradition of jazz musicians is to use the popular tune as a vehicle for improvisation and that is probably, for me, one of the more dissatisfying aspects of jazz in general, because I feel that the compositional aspect of the piece that is being played tends to stop when the improvisers begin. There is a disconnect between what is written and what is improvised, in contrast to classical music which has a sense of development of a piece from the beginning to the end. In particular of course, the *classical* period of music, the middle section to develop a piece, and of course the pitfall of that issue is that we don’t really want to be boxed in so severely by that
requirement in classical music… We want be able to show that the piece is improvisational and that it inspires improvisation in the player, wherever it might be in the orchestra. So I think a little bit of both traditions, the best of both traditions would be to use the improvisational nature of jazz and the expansive forms of classical music to develop a composition.

LIMA: Those are the principles of Third Stream, right? To use all the refinement of writing from the classical music, side to the improvisational part of jazz.

MENDOZA: Yes, agreed. However, I think that arguably the pitfall of the Third Stream period, with due respect to the composers who wrote great music for that period, was the lack of understanding of the language by both parties involved, the jazz musicians or the classical musicians. And I think that now we are much more capable to make that happen, because the musicians are much more acquainted with jazz styles and articulations and phrasing and all the rest of that, and they are not nearly taking the jazz rhythms and making them straight up and down for the purposed of the executions of music. So I think that we are much more capable of doing it now.

LIMA: When you have large ensembles, with fifty, sixty, eighty musicians, how do you maintain the freedom of jazz in conjunction to the written parts? How much of improvisation in comparison to written parts do you think is optimal? Also how specific are you with musical notation when writing for jazz musicians? Overall, how do you approach improvisational sections in your orchestral music?

MENDOZA: I think that is important to realize that a jazz composer writes from the perspective of the player, and that is an important aspect to remember when you are writing. It is not merely the development of the motive but it is whatever the player would have played. And to blur the line between what we consider improvised and what we consider written, and that is all really on the shoulders of the composer, to write in an “improvised way.” And we inspire someone to improvise upon it, and their improvisation takes further the piece, as a classical composer would have done… in the middle section, for instance, of the sonata form to keep the piece developing in a way.
So, obviously the soloist that you chose to improvise has to have the ability to do so. I
don’t think you can throw chord changes just to anybody and expect them to make
something out of it that is going to continue your vision of what the form should be. But
certainly I’m very interested in blurring the line between what is written and what is not.
And the perspective of the composer to be that of the player is paramount to really
making that a success.
RAFAEL PICCOLOTTO DE LIMA: There is a division between classical music and jazz in most schools, as if they were different worlds, but I believe just a blurred line divide those genres, especially nowadays. Your work is an example of that. You just won a Grammy as a classical composer, and you also already won a Grammy as a jazz composer. How do you see those two universes, and how do you see those lines that ‘divide’ them?

MARIA SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it is so funny that I’m not sure I do. I hired this radio promoter, so there’s all these radio stations that are playing my music and on this guy’s website they can write in their comments and one of the people wrote in: ‘this isn’t really classical, well, it is not really jazz either’ [laughs]. I tend to just think of my music as my music, and I grew up with a piano teacher that taught me some stride and classical, and she loved Beethoven and Mozart and Bach, as much as she loved Cole Porter, so there was always this mix of a love of American song and classical music, and we analyzed the music kind of in the same way. So in my heart of hearts, you know, I think the childhood defines where your direction in life is. So I think I’ve never really had this strong allegiance to “jazz being jazz”, you know, “and I gotta follow the tradition”, you know. And the classical world I’ve always found them to be in some ways a little uptight and limiting to themselves in sort of not acknowledging, not only the word of improvisation, but the word of rhythm and time and groove, and you know, all these things. It tends to be in the classical world when they bring in, you know, influenced rock or whatever, it just feels so stiff; it is like two things coming together like this [putting one fist against the other]. Third Stream music was like that too, as opposed to “music that is just music”, music that has those natural influences of both. Gil’s music had that.

LIMA: Right, do you think we are now evolving from the Third Stream ideal? Making it more natural?
SCHNEIDER: I think Third Stream was kind of an idea, like: “let’s try to do this!” you know, as at that time things were more divided. To me Gil was… he didn’t need the title Third Stream. He was the Third Stream. Gil was both. He was the first and second stream combined, you know, just natural, you know. And I think many, many, many jazz musicians too. It is very hard to define these things. But I notice the difference when I work with the performers, you know, you may say “the music you write is a mix” but then you have to think “who is gonna play that music?” And classical musicians have a serious hard time with time [snaps fingers], you know, playing things in time, perpetual groove. And I’m not even talking about grooves like funk or swing, I’m just talking about time that grooves. Even in classical music, getting an orchestra that really grooves is not a common thing. Getting them to [snapping fingers in time] in their head, respect the almighty meter, or the tempo, you know, and just hanging on to that, and… no matter what, playing through. They tend to swoop in and out with different gestures or whatever. And oh my god, that made me a little crazy when I was working with an orchestra.

LIMA: Do you think that this relationship with time is some kind of improvisation that classical musicians do? I saw this interview with Simon Rattle and Wynton Marsalis talking about their experience putting together the Lincoln Center Big Band and the Berlin Symphony Orchestra.

SCHNEIDER: Oh wow! I know Simon, I’d be curious to hear what he had to say about it.

LIMA: It was very interesting seeing him saying that people say jazz is the music of freedom, but you have to be locked in time. While classical music all the notes are written but the time is very…

SCHNEIDER: He’s right, I agree. But I don’t think you have to be locked in time, because a lot of the music that I write that has improvisation is not locked in time. But what I would say is “when you want it locked in time, I want an orchestra that knows how to lock in time!” But Simon is doing that with Berlin. He’s invited me to come and watch some rehearsals and I noticed there were points when he was conducting that he just puts his arms down and the orchestra would just play, you know, and then I went up
to him and I said “wow, I love that”, you know, it is like someone like Whit Sidner in front of the big band, you know, like, not doing anything. Or like what Gary (Lindsay) was talking about. And he said “yeah, it’s takes some time to get to the point where the orchestra just plays and takes it” you know, and I think it is a really great thing, you know, if they listen really to each other, and you know, take that moment.

LIMA: Would you say that it also relates to the size of the ensemble?

SCHNEIDER: No.

LIMA: Because if you think, small chamber ensembles have no conductor, right?

SCHNEIDER: Right, yeah… Maybe the bigness of the orchestra… I mean, I asked an old French horn player who is long retired from the New York Phil “so why do you guys play so behind the beat?” And he laughed and said “because nobody wants to be first”.

LIMA: [laughs].

SCHNEIDER: And I thought “that’s ridiculous”, and he was serious. That’s a ridiculous reason. You are all always late because nobody wants to be first, or scared of…”, he was serious.

LIMA: Oh wow, but believe that.

SCHNEIDER: I noticed that when the orchestra plays with Gustavo Dudamel they play more to his time, and one of the people in the orchestra told me that his hair kind of shakes, because he’s got that hair, and they lock into the time of his hair.

LIMA: Why is the performing attitude so different between classical and jazz musicians?

SCHNEIDER: It has to do with the whole history. The history of classical music is not groove… I mean… Look at what Brazilian music is coming out of, look at what is jazz coming out of… it’s coming out of Africa really. You know, African rhythm. Drums, groove, you know. That is not what the European tradition is coming out of. Flamenco music too, you know, it got the clapping and the feet, and… later the cajon, but that came from Peru, again, Afro-Peruvian music. You know, the origins of the music are completely, completely different.
LIMA: It is crazy to think that we live in America that has both roots, but we still have those same problems. I did my last concert in Brazil with a big band and an orchestra playing some samba and choro arrangements, it didn’t work. The big band was tight rhythmically while the orchestra was sloppy… and if you think all those classical musicians live in a country where they are immersed in a culture with a lot of those styles everywhere.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, but they don’t practice that. If I was the dean of a school, it would be a tough thing, the classical students, everybody would have to take a year’s worth of classes in time, playing with different percussion people, you know, grooving, and it would be a chance for all the percussionists, maybe all the jazz players could use as an opportunity to play percussion instruments, learn percussion instruments, and drums, or whatever. But the classical people would have to play their instruments to time and get used to playing with groove. That would be, for me, a requirement. Because the worlds are getting closer together and these music departments are so split up, and this is a real conflict, it is really a drag when you come with music and you can’t bring those two things together, you know.

LIMA: This is somehow happening here. And I was really surprised on my first semester here. I wrote a piece based on a Brazilian rhythm called Baião for a string ensemble and they played with better time than that Brazilian ensemble I mentioned [laughs]. Because of the Henry Mancini Institute experience, they have to work with time.

SCHNEIDER: Because the foundation of this school is the jazz department. The classical department was way behind the jazz department in this school for years. In terms of quality, and think that has changed now. Now the quality has come up, and its equals, so there is respect. In a school like Julliard it is much harder because it is this classical tradition, and “the jazz, the jazz…”, “we don’t want to play in their ensembles”, “we don’t want to waste our time”, “we need to work on our excerpts…” or whatever. They don’t see the value on it. So it all comes down to respect, because I personally think that a lot of these orchestras could learn to do that if they all wanted and respected it. But there is a little bit of this thing of… I always think that… the thing of people being protective
of what they do always is a little bit about fear in exposing what they don’t know how to do, and I think that most classical musicians have a little bit of a complex about improvisation and groove, because they know that’s not their thing. And it would just be better to say “that is not my thing but I want to learn how to do this” rather than to hide saying “I don’t need to do that… urgh… that music”, you know what I mean? That kind of attitude just holds them back, you know.

LIMA: How do you approach string writing?

SCHNEIDER: Differently, differently. You know, definitely like in 4/4, syncopations over the half of the bar is two eighths tied, I wouldn’t do, you know, eighth-quarter-quarter-quarter-eighth like I would do for jazz musicians, because they just see that half of the bar divided up with the tie over the two eighths, you know what I’m talking about. But in the classical word, oh my god, it would be: eighth, quarter, eighth tied to an eighth, quarter, eight tied. And one thing interesting that happened when I did the fourth movement of the Drummond, that had the buleria rhythms, it was very much hemiola rhythms, 6/8, 3/4 [singing], that’s how I conducted, if I conduct bulerias with my band… [singing and conducting alternate time signatures] and the orchestra wanted… [singing the same passage and conducting 3/4], they wanted me to conduct this the whole time, so finally I did it, but oh my god, but it was the only way, they said “no, we have to feel the syncopations against the… [singing]”. So, I learned a lot, but I have to say a lot surprised me, so I don’t think I learned everything there is to learn about that. But definitely the notation you have to… and also in jazz sometimes I will write decrescendos and I don’t necessarily say what it decrescendos to, sometimes I do, but I don’t because the rhythms section is playing and the decrescendo is kind of...

LIMA: natural.

SCHNEIDER: yeah, you are listening and playing, and maybe the rhythm section at the end of the solo is a little bigger… In orchestral music “the decrescendo goes to mp, and then when they start again…”, you know, you have to give every single dynamic, at every opening and every closing, you have to give that. Because they are not playing
relatively… yes, they are listening but they aren’t intuitive listeners and malleable in the way they approach things in the way that, you know, a jazz or a pop person is.

LIMA: The funny thing about that is that in old times, like in Mozart music, there is not much dynamics notated, they developed a tradition by ear on how to play it. Isn’t it crazy?

SCHNEIDER: Is that true?

LIMA: Yes.

SCHNEIDER: I didn’t know. It is crazy.

LIMA: But then contemporary classical composers are super specific about notation.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, yeah. It is a weird world. Believe me, the amount of details that went into my scores… I was ready to shoot myself in the head, every time I looked I was like “oh my god, another dynamic that does not have something at the end… what did I put in the beginning?” It is intense. It is different, you know, it is just different. Different than what I am used to.

LIMA: Going back to the rhythmic aspect. Considering that percussion and wind instruments tend have a more defined articulation than strings, would you consider writing the same complex syncopated rhythms for strings as you would for percussion and winds?

SCHNEIDER: No, I wouldn’t do that for an orchestra, no way. I would not write for an orchestra what I write for my band. No, no, you have to really think about who are you writing for.

LIMA: During my research I have analyzed a few jazz pieces with orchestra. I noticed that most arrangers use the orchestra mainly as an additional color but the core is the jazz ensemble, which is not really a hybrid, they are only adding string playing pads or doubling some lines… you haven’t written yet for big band and orchestra, right?

SCHNEIDER: I have! The Metropole Orchestra.

LIMA: How was that? How was your approach in that sense?
SCHNEIDER: You know… I took some music I had written for big band and I transferred to orchestra. My approach was “I want more to write for the orchestra and then have some rhythm section”, you know. Acoustically it is not really possible to do that, because the second you have a rhythm section and then you have an amplifier with the bass and everything, then the whole acoustic balance is off, you know. Suddenly the flute… a flute in orchestra has tremendous power over an entire orchestra, the minute you put a rhythm section in there you know where the flute goes, so then imagine the strings. So the strings do become this thing that has to be like this unit… you can’t write… once you add rhythm section you can’t write for orchestra like you would write for an orchestra.

LIMA: If we analyze most classical orchestral writing, strings play most of the time, woodwinds play less than strings, brass less than woodwinds, and percussion less than brass. It is like a pyramid.

SCHNEIDER: The game changer is the rhythm section, you know, strings don’t have the power compared to a big… the brass with the rhythm section behind it. So, yeah, the hierarchy definitely changes. Now you could write something with light rhythm section and make it mainly strings, and just a little bit of brass, and I have done that. Yeah, I have done that.

LIMA: Were you pleased with the results?

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it just depends what are you playing, what you are writing. It is not going to be everything like that. I wouldn’t say that is a philosophy for approaching a studio orchestra, you know. That’s a way to approach a piece that is a softer, more string oriented thing, and the rhythm section is going to be playing lighter too, you know. If the rhythm section is really hitting, the strings… I mean… I suppose you can do that but it would just be weird to have tiny bits of brass there in moments. There is a reason studio orchestra music has evolved to be what it is, because that is what works. But you can listen to, for instance, all those Claus Ogerman arrangements, you know, with João Gilberto, and it has light drums and it is all strings and then a little bit of flute. Now you could have a little bit of, here and there, a little brass or something tiny, like you do the
flute a little line, whatever. But the second you add a big band then it would be very weird with the strings and then all of the sudden have this band come in, you know. Just imagine mastering something like that, you know, you’ve got all this here and then the brass, it peaks everything, you gotta pull it down, and now it shrinks abnormal in size and sounds distant, you know what I mean? It would be very weird.

LIMA: It is hard. I’m trying to find ways to make it work. This is part of my final project, to find ways to write the studio orchestra. It is very hard.

SCHNEIDER: You should hear Bob Brookmeyer pieces for the Metropole, the piece with string quartet. I don’t know if I have recordings of mine, I do somewhere, but I don’t know where they are.

LIMA: It is very hard to find people who did that in a creative way.

SCHNEIDER: Vince Mendoza.

LIMA: Yes, I have interviewed him.

SCHNEIDER: Ed Neumeister. I think he might have done some interesting things. He managed to approach the studio orchestra more like an orchestra.

LIMA: Listening to your CD with Dawn Upshaw I noticed that you used some extended techniques, prepared piano on some very specific spots of your pieces. How did you ended up choosing and deciding to use those techniques?

SCHNEIDER: I got together with my pianist and I said “show me some different things”, because he does some different things, we played around, we tried to put a book, and you know, put a piece of paper… [demonstrating on the piano]

LIMA: Yeah, those are very interesting sounds.

SCHNEIDER: You know, just fooling around and recording all of it. And then when I came down to sit down to write, there was a piece about birds in the barn hitting the walls that was a no brainer for this… [demonstrating on the piano] It gives that sound of something smacking against the wall [laughs]. That was fun to write.
LIMA: Often when I listen to the so called contemporary classical composers I have the impression that many of them are very focused on the production of “new” sounds, and not so interested in other elements that made classical music from previous eras so good, like melodies. It is a different approach.

SCHNEIDER: Most people that do extended techniques, they make something that is so completely extended in every kind of way that if is kind of like… It’s like doing something for the sake of doing it, as opposed to using it to get a new evocative sound. To me, what I’m interested in doing is… using everything to create something that is… very real and… what is the quote? Let me think for a second. The quote about Ted Kooser, the poet… The poems that I pick they are also very… they are not, you know, these poems that have just complex analogies and metaphors and… you know that some poetry is so heavy and I just read and I’m embarrassed to say but I have no idea what that means. Or is it supposed to mean something or am I just stupid? And Ted Kooser’s poetry… this friend of his, Jim Harrison, says… it’s something like “poetry for the common man”, you know, and it is beautiful, it’s smart and it’s intricate and it does have very unique metaphors and things in it, but the sum total of the poetry it… that it gives a message that is universal somehow and very, very human. So the poems just speak realness, and for me, my music, there is no other reason for me to do music than that. I want my music to be… that you know, there could be 200 people out here that have never heard of jazz but they would hear my music and say “wow, I like that”, and that happens all the time, just about every concert somebody comes to me and says “I never knew I liked jazz before” or “I never like jazz, but I like that”, you know. I think it is because I’m not trying to be a “heavy jazz musician”, you know, I’m not concerned if someone thinks my music is heavy, or forward looking, or groundbreaking, you know. I want my music to communicate something for my own pleasure I like to come up with things that are fresh and unique, and has different colors and sounds, but only to the end that it sounds like birds on a barn, you know, I just want to make it feel like what the poem says, you know, not because I need some new cool thing to do musically so I can impress someone and say “look how extended I am”, I don’t care about that.
LIMA: I feel that some people are trying to re-invent the wheel.

SCHNEIDER: It is the same thing too with jazz, some people think that going further and doing more makes it more developed or more cutting edge, and, you know, I don’t feel that, I mean, like jazz players “if I play more complex rhythms, if I play more notes, more chromatic, it is going to be more cutting edge”. Well, you know, maybe not. Maybe the answer is playing less, and peeling it all away and just keeping what you as a person feels is the essence of what you are trying to say, and the relative amounts of those different ingredients will make you fresh because you are unique and you being you is fresh.

LIMA: One thing that touches me a lot about your music is the sense of form.

SCHNEIDER: You’re easy to talk to because you like my music, thank you [laughter]. I’m glad this interview isn’t ‘You know, I don’t like the form so what were you trying to do?’ [laughter].

LIMA: I really like it. One thing you said once is that there must be a sense of trust in music, between audience and composer.

SCHNEIDER: Oh yeah.

LIMA: A trust that let you go with the flow, that the composer is not going to let you down… that he will lead you smoothly to places…

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it’s all about looking for inevitability, and spending time on every single pitch and every single rhythm and every single bar to just say: ‘Does this feel like, oh, this has to happen.’ And if there’s things that are happening in a very kind of…mundane or… monochromatic way, okay maybe that’s good for a while because it’s beautiful and settling, just like, relaxing, but then at a certain point you want to get up and do something. So picking the right moment for it to throw in a surprise, and then that that surprise is leading to something, you know. It’s like we were talking about before: When you throw in the whole kitchen sink of techniques, there’s no sense of inevitability, it feels like chaos. And then… nobody can trust in that and give themselves over to that because if you feel like you’re just being assaulted and inundated by… stuff…
LIMA: Information.

SCHNEIDER: Information, yeah. Then you feel just kinda like this, like [makes blank expression], and before you know it you’re numbing out and you’re thinking about your day and, ‘Wow I wonder how much longer this piece is going to be. Okay, well it’s interesting. I guess, yeah, that technique.’ You know, I don’t want people sitting there and thinking about their day or whether my music’s interesting. I see it as my job…I have to grab them, and then immediately establish that trust so they let go of their day and say ‘Yeah I wanna be taken away by this,’ you know, ‘I wanna let this take me somewhere.’ I don’t know how often I’m successful in that.

LIMA: You are very successful.

SCHNEIDER: Well, thank you. That’s what I try for. I mean, again, that’s…. what other reason is there to do this? To spend your life trying to impress people with how many notes you can write or how much you can do? There’s so many people that can write so much more impressive, more gymnastic music than I can. It’s not my….and sometimes it’s fun to hear incredibly gymnastic music. You know, I don’t even have the kind of technique to do that, and it isn’t my goal. Not to say I don’t enjoy hearing that from time to time in some kind of context, definitely.

LIMA: And I have to say that you’re probably one of the few composers, for my taste, that I don’t think about other things while I listen. Even when I’m listening to some of the masters of the past, during well-known symphonies for example, sometimes I catch myself thinking about completely unrelated things.

SCHNEIDER: Oh yeah, no, me too. There’s only been a few times, honestly, that I’ve been at live performances of symphonies where I was taken away. Simon Rattle with the Berlin Philharmonic can do it to me every time. Let them play any Mahler, or, Dudamel did it to me with Shostakovich, or was it Prokofiev? Prokofiev 5 I think it was the last time I heard him. You know, it’s like… it doesn’t happen… that’s a rare, rare thing for me. And when it does happen… oh my God there’s a singer, Alice Coote, from London, and I heard her do the opera, it was like just a staging with the orchestra on stage, it was
the Age of Enlightenment Orchestra and they did “La Clamenza de Tito” which was Mozart’s last opera. And she did the pants role, you know, they used castrati at one time you know, so, now it’s women that sing those roles. So she played this character Cesto, and Cesto is completely in love with this woman and… let me think how this works… she’s in love with the king. And the king is this very benevolent man, everybody loves the king. And she wants the king and she’s completely in love. Cesto’s in love with her and the king… I think… picks somebody else to be his wife, or something… I can’t remember what he does, but she’s not chosen. And she’s so upset and she says to Cesto: ‘If you love me, you’ll kill him. And then I’ll be yours. And Cesto is so vulnerable to her love that… he doesn’t know what to do because he’s a friend of the king and he loves the king. But he’s so obsessed with her that he decides to do it. And so there’s these arias that Cesto has to sing that are about this conflict. And then he kills the king. And the king… Cesto is sure that he kills the king, and it turns out that the king didn’t die. And then Cesto can’t live with the guilt, you know. He’s so devastated because when the king finds out it’s him, the king forgives him, and says… you know, ‘I want you to work in my court,’ and he has pity. Everybody wants the king to kill him or put him in jail or whatever and he says ‘No,’ he does the opposite. It’s very much like what Nelson Mandela did in South Africa, making the people who did the crimes face their victims and hear of their suffering and then, in hearing that, the people that did the crimes… it’s like the ultimate punishment and healing for both sides. It’s very much like that. The pain of these arias — and it’s just Mozart, generally Mozart doesn’t bring me to that place of like… forgetting everything in my life, you know? A few people can play Mozart and do that to me. This woman, man when she sang… uh! And every aria, she sang with such commitment to every note. The singers were just sitting in chairs, you know, it wasn’t like a big staging or anything, it was just them walking off and on stage. And every time she would finish, and she would sit down, the audience would not quit clapping, people went crazy. Probably more than any performance in my life, I was just like [gasps], you know, oh man. If I can do that to people — suspend them in that for two hours for a concert, or for the length of a CD — then I consider, you know, my life is worthy of something, you know? Because that’s so rare in life. I can count the times that’s
happened to me musically in concerts… maybe… 15 total where I would say that really… not even, 10… where I can just say like ‘Wow, that live performance completely flipped me out,’ you know. Not to say I haven’t heard a lot of great performances where I was like ‘Wow.’

LIMA: That level of…

SCHNEIDER: That level.

LIMA: One thing that catches my attention in your work is your use of backgrounds for the soloist. It’s almost a different concept. The solo is not detached from the music, like most big band charts where you have the head, and the solo is over the exact same changes as the head.

SCHNEIDER: See but if you do that, immediately, you lose the listener. Because you’re not creating a continuum, you know. Suddenly, it’s about ‘Oh wow, cool, he’s a great player,’ you know?

LIMA: Exactly, and it really gets my attention, the fact that the solo is also a development of the head.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah. You wanna know how I do that?

RAFAEL: Yeah, and what is the inspiration…

SCHNEIDER: That’s really hard.

RAFAEL: [Laughter].

SCHNEIDER: That’s the hardest thing to do. Because if you want your music to have inevitability, how do you create inevitability with a solo when it’s improvised? Not easy. You know, and it’s not easy to second guess what the rhythm section’s gonna do, and especially if you’re writing a solo section where the harmony is moving, moving, moving, you need to really know how long that solo section needs to be because, it’s like, you know, say you build a wall here, and the wall is gonna be this tall over here and in between it’s got this pattern… well, or these stairs. Ok, so, you know that your stairs can go from here to up there, you need to know exactly, you know, how many stairs, how
long… for [building] code, how tall a stair has to be, how wide it has to be. Figuring out the equation to make this stair begin here and go up there, have enough room for that door to open and a person to stand there, right? In a solo section, it’s the same thing. If you’re writing something and the harmony is moving, and you’re going from here to here, and you write something… you do something like… that’s stairs, and then you decide, you know, in terms of harmony… and then you decide ‘Wow, I need this to be shorter.’ Oops! Now the stairs only went to here and you have to get to here, and harmonically you’ve only gotten to here [gesturing]. You know what I mean? So it’s so hard to figure out the length. That’s the hardest for me: The length. How long do they need to build on this thing and how long is long enough, and you know…

LIMA: And I feel that’s very related to what you mentioned before, to keep the attention of the listener. Because I notice sometimes that if something gets to a point where it doesn’t change, it doesn’t evolve, you lose the tension. Your music has this balance, at the same time “it needs to go there”, it is not predictable.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, so what I call it is inevitable surprise.

LIMA: Exactly!

SCHNEIDER: You know where I first read that phrase, ‘inevitable surprise’, who talks about it? You won’t believe: Elliot Carter. Do you know Elliot Carter’s music?

RAFAEL: No, I don’t know it.

SCHNEIDER: So he’s an American composer, he could not be a more modern… he writes with something called interval chain-link theory. He’s the most opposite of mine, you know, super, super kinda atonal… you know. Very complex. You know? He’s old, he’s in his… yeah, I think… he’s still alive… he’s over a hundred. And still composing these huge orchestral things and there are a lot of Elliot Carter freaks in the world and then there’s a lot of people like ‘I don’t get Elliot Carter, I hate Elliot Carter.’ What I will say about this… about Elliot Carter, is, there was a great book written… let’s see…something and stubborn truths… something… anyway it’s interviews with him. And when he talks about music, he could be talking about pop music. That’s why I think
his music… I do like his music. Because his music, his language, is a very honest language. He really hears that language. I don’t think he’s trying to impress anybody, he seems like a very simple, very sweet man, you know. And maybe I’m wrong, I don’t know him. But I saw him once on the street, and I was going to swim, I had like, sweats on, and he was walking towards me on the street and I looked at him and I just said ‘Hi!’ [laughter]. He kinda looked at me like ‘Ahhh! Who is she?’ And I didn’t have it together to say ‘I’m a composer and you’re Elliot Carter and I think you’re amazing,’ you know, and…even though I don’t love his music and I don’t listen to his music I still think it’s amazing, you know? And I was just so taken at seeing him. But, yeah he talks about inevitability and inevitable surprise, and it’s a great way… I resonated immediately with it: That’s what I try to do.

LIMA: And the thing about the melodies, they are very, very singable, but at the same time it is very hard to memorize.

SCHNEIDER: Oh yeah?

LIMA: Because the length of things is not that predictable, and things…

SCHNEIDER: Well, they keep modulating.

LIMA: They keep modulating so it’s not predictable, but the same time it is super natural. When I put the CD on I can sing the lines, but if I take the CD….

SCHNEIDER: But I think it’s partly because… it’s kind of the Ravel concept. Like you would never sing that: [Sings and plays Ravel melody on piano]. You would never sing that melody, you know? I mean, I love the Ravel piano concerto in G, but I would never think to hum around the house [sings melody] because it’s so dependent on [plays harmony on piano]. You know? But then when I hear it with that it’s like ‘Oh, let me hear that again and again and again it’s so beautiful,’ you know? So even if I’m playing it wrong it goes something like that. But, you know, so I think my music has something of the same thing. It’s different than a melody like, let’s see… [plays melody on piano]. Do you know “You Must Believe in Spring”? [sings melody]. I mean that’s, it’s… that melody hangs on its own because it’s somehow got… [plays melody on piano].
LIMA: It’s playing out the harmony.

SCHNEIDER: It’s playing the harmony within the melody.

LIMA: Yeah.

SCHNEIDER: This is not [plays another melody on piano]. It’s like ‘What?’ You know, sing me tonic. Give me ‘do’, you know what I mean? So that’s the difference. So there are different kinds of melodies.

LIMA: Would you say that, usually when you compose, the melody doesn’t come by itself in your music, usually it’s an integral part of the harmony…

SCHNEIDER: Generally, generally yeah. There was an exception. And I know the exception. The exception is something I wrote called “The Thompson Fields”. We’re going to record it, and it’s [plays melody on piano]. So I… that melody I was just humming that in the laundry room [sings melody]. It’s more of a melody in the classic sense of what I’m talking about than some of my other stuff, you know?

LIMA: Maybe your last album with the big band has some songs that are kind of like…

SCHNEIDER: A little bit more… melody, yes. Yeah like “Sky Blue” maybe and…

LIMA: “The Pretty Road”.

SCHNEIDER: Yes. Yeah… [sings melody]. It’s not exactly… you’re not going to hum it in the shower probably but…

LIMA: I do [laughter].

SCHNEIDER: But it’s not like… my mother was always like, ‘Give me something I can hum.’ I’m trying to think of… yeah, things on there. Yeah but most of them are not really like, you know, things you really hum. On the Dawn Upshaw album, the “Walking by Flashlight”, that’s a hummer. [Plays and sings melody]. That one has a real melody… “melody” to it, you know?

LIMA: Some of your early albums also had some songs that you arranged. Giant Steps for example It’s really interesting, I love the intro, and what you did…
SCHNEIDER: You know what I did? You wanna know what I did?

LIMA: I wanna know what you did.

SCHNEIDER: Well, so, you know, ‘cause I’m not that kind of arranger that arranges like, there’s the harmony that moves you know, so, we start… [plays harmony on piano] So it modulates… there’s like 16 bars, it modulates in the first half bar… and the tune goes around in 15 seconds. That means within the first second it’s already modulated. So it’s not my style really, to write, you know, big band [sings stock big band arrangement of Giant Steps]. You know I don’t write that kind of like…

LIMA: It’s very different.

SCHNEIDER: It’s not my style really. So I thought, ‘What can I do with this? How can I expand Giant Steps?’ And I noticed that, in this movement, you know [plays bass line on piano]. So it tonicizes to G and… it tonicizes to these three keys [playing notes on the piano]. Every minor chord is a major third away, every dominant chord is a major third away, and every tonic is a major third away. And if you take all those together, you get the augmented scale. And there’s only three notes that aren’t in the bass and that’s a C augmented [triad]. And those same three notes are the three notes missing from the melody, oddly enough. So I thought, ok, so this augmented thing, so what I decided to do is, instead of voicing the tune with the 2-5-1 harmony and catching all the voicings, what I would do is use the melody and use this structure, it’s like I was talking about the DNA in there, the DNA of an idea. So the DNA, to me, of this tune is this, you know [playing augmented scale on the piano], that mode. So I decided to extract all my voicings out of that [playing harmony on the piano]. Every voicing is out of this scale. I used that as like the structure for it. So in the beginning it’s [playing piano and singing], and those little lines are also coming out of that scale. So….

LIMA: It’s really great.

SCHNEIDER: It made it easier to write that way, ‘cause I didn’t have to think, ‘Ok, what am I going to write over these changes?’ It changed the whole game. And then I was able to turn this into a pedal [playing piano], because the tune is still there, but the essence of
the tune is inside the harmony instead of inside the changes. The only thing that I don’t like in that….so Herbie Hancock heard it and he flipped out, he loved it. And he wrote me this email, he said, ‘I’m trying to do in a small group what you’re doing in that.’ I still have the email, it was like, you know…

LIMA: That’s great.

SCHNEIDER: It was…yeah I was gonna hang it above my bed, blown up, you know, it’s like, every night go to bed and go ‘Ah’. But, we talked and he said he was disappointed that, during the solos it was just back to the changes. And it’s really true, you know, it’s like I should’ve done something.

LIMA: I have to confess; I listen repeatedly to the beginning.

SCHNEIDER: And you turn it off on the solos. Yeah, that’s it. That’s it, yeah. It’s a perfect example of what we were talking about before with solos. It’s not solos that are interwoven. I did the old “hum drum” solo and look at what you do, you turn it off. Me too, I never listen to that, you know. So, and that’s what Herbie commented on too. So I should’ve done something and then maybe later on just one person just like nails the changes for a moment or something, save it for the very end or something, I don’t know.

LIMA: I always think about the limits between an arranger and a composer. I feel that even when you are arranging, you have much more of a composer’s mindset.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I don’t even arrange that much anymore. I feel bad because I win all these award for arranging and I don’t even arrange, I just, I wanna write to everybody and say ‘Hey, have you noticed I haven’t arranged anything in about a decade?’, you know. So I feel really bad, you know, ‘cause there’s a lot of people out there that are…. I mean, God Almighty, you know, Bob Brookmeyer, you should get that album, do you have his album with vocal arrangements, standards?

LIMA: No…

SCHNEIDER: Oh God, go to the Bob Brookmeyer website and buy that record. I wrote the liner notes, and I wrote very detailed liner notes about what’s great about each
arrangement. You wanna hear great, great, great arrangements, get that, and then bring it to Gary and let him…

LIMA: I love Brookmeyer.

SCHNEIDER: Oh you will flip out, these are the greatest vocal arrangements you’ll ever hear.

LIMA: Wow.

SCHNEIDER: Really. You’ll flip out.

LIMA: Is there a different approach when you take a song and arrange, then when you compose? Because usually when I compose, I think about the instruments before I have anything written. And I was wondering, what is your process? “Ok, I have this tune, and I’ll make it work for this ensemble”, or “I have this ensemble, and I’ll write something specifically for them”

SCHNEIDER: Well, I’m always writing for my big band now, you know, or I’ve got the ensemble kind of chosen for me that I’m writing for so, you know, it’s not like, ‘Ok I want to arrange this tune, who am I going to arrange it for?’ But that would be fun, and I should maybe take it upon myself sometime to do an album that’s an odd mix of…. it’s just, then, how do you perform that music, you know what I mean? The whole practical side. But just getting to your question, I don’t know which would come first or how that would figure in, I mean, yeah I might fool around with ideas and then…. I wouldn’t be apt to pick the ensemble…. well I might pick the ensemble and then say, ‘Ok, I think I would like this and I could write for this.’ Because that’s good because it sort of gives you a limitation. But I might like to first kind of fool around with a couple ideas and say, ‘Yeah I’d like to write something like this, what would be good? Well maybe vibes, you know, would be a nice kinda thing and bass clarinet and, you know, alto flute and flute and…’

LIMA: So you have the notes first, and then the instrument, it’s not the instrument and then the notes.
SCHNEIDER: It could be either but it might be just a few notes, just to kind of imagine, sort of, barely, what you want to write before you choose the instrumentation. So you’re not just sort of, choosing it… but I mean, sometimes it’s nice just to give yourself a limitation. You know what I mean? So if you choose an instrumentation then, ok, now I’m gonna write. Here’s my instrumentation. Sometimes what’s a problem is when you have every possibility in every moment, and sometimes you just need to nail one aspect down. So maybe if you’re kind of stuck and, you know, ‘I don’t know what to do’, maybe it’s best to just say, ‘Ok, I’m gonna pick an instrumentation that I can imagine wanting to write for,’ thinking about some of your other music, and the way you write, and approaches… ‘What would this piece and this piece of mine that I wrote, how would that work, what instruments in this smaller instrumentation might work?’ And then you say, ‘Ok, so I can imagine continuing in that vein, let me pick these and now go to work.’ I mean one of the things I loved about writing the Dawn Upshaw music was, once I had the poetry I had a limitation. It told me how long, I mean, I could repeat some things but basically… it gave me the rhythm. And because I wasn’t going to write [sings opening line to ‘Walking by Flashlight’ atonally], you know that kind of thing, you know that kind of crazy thing people do, you know, where they deconstruct the words and… Ted wrote to me after he heard the record and he just said, ‘Oh, so many times I hear my poetry to music and it’s so deconstructed,’ he said, ‘I don’t even discern the meaning of the words of the poems anymore.’ And he said, ‘So I appreciate that it felt like the poetry,’ you know. So: [Sings melody to ‘Walking by Flashlight’]. And that’s what I would do, I would say it: ‘My circle of light on the gravel.’ [Repeats phrase, clapping to emphasize word stress]. Maybe it’s too songy and too, you know, easy… some people have criticized that it’s… they like more, you know, tense, you know, George Crumb or, which I like too, and Webern or something like that. But, you know, what I wanted is something that was almost like pop music in a way. You know, that speaks… because I like to listen… I observe what I listen to at home. I don’t listen to [plays atonally on the piano]. You know, I don’t listen to that. I don’t want to hear that in my house, you know? It’s just it’s not my thing. Even if in college I enjoyed writing some things in those styles, I was like, ‘Wow, that’s cool’, you know. In the end, do I turn those things on in my car,
at my home? No. You know, I’ll tell you where my music changed, you’ll like this.

LIMA: Where was that?

SCHNEIDER: Brazil. Brazil changed my life.

LIMA: Wow.

SCHNEIDER: It really did. Because, if you listen to my first record, “Evanescence”, it’s got [plays “Dance You Monster to My Soft Song” on piano]. Talk about, you know, DNA. The DNA… it’s [playing piano], it’s all the same intervals in the melody and the bottom. And then “Wyrgly”, you know, it’s [playing piano]. It’s kind of a dark album, I mean it’s got some… but it’s pretty dark. It’s very minor. And then my second album, “Bombshelter Beast” and [playing piano], “El Viento”, you know, pretty intense.

LIMA: I like it.

SCHNEIDER: But then I went to Brazil, and it’s like, there was choro, and joy, and all that moving harmony, you know?

LIMA: Yeah.

SCHNEIDER: All that beauty, and I thought, ‘You know what? I gave myself permission to write joyful and beautiful music and then I wrote, you know [plays opening to “Hang Gliding” on piano]. Well that’s Brazil, you know, it’s just the rhythm and the joy. Lydian [playing piano]. You know, that was after going to Brazil. So, like it or not, Brazil changed my music.

LIMA: That’s very interesting.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah.

LIMA: Wow.

SCHNEIDER: I mean I still have a few dark pieces in there, you know, and stuff but, it was kind of like… I observed in Brazil, too, that, you know it’s kind of like… you know a lot of people have a really rough time there but there’s this joy. They don’t have this sort of simmering depression that we have. It’s kind of like people are too busy, and, I
don’t know there’s this joy and life. And I see music there as like… it’s not like how I described, it’s sustenance. It’s not like a condiment. You don’t use, like in America it’s like, ‘Oh, music education’, you know. In Brazil you sit around a table, everybody can play maracatu or, you know what I mean? Music is sustenance in the whole culture. Maybe that’s going away somewhat, I don’t know. But hopefully not. And so, you know, I started to see that I don’t have to prove something with my music. My music can give me joy and be kind of this sort of thing where I seek beauty and joy in my life through my music.
RAFAEL PICCOLOTTO DE LIMA: I want to start with a citation from you: “Jazz and classical being Omni-genres, sustained more by philosophies of music and culture than by any specific concepts of style.” What do you mean with this?

JOHN PSATHAS: What I mean is that if you ask someone what sort of musician are you and they respond, “I am a jazz musician,” you might think straightaway bebop or old school jazz standards, but in fact, if you use the word “jazz” now, it covers so many possibilities, that you can’t figure out from that one word what a person specifically means anymore. Are they at the extreme end of free jazz or are they playing big band charts by Duke Ellington? What does it mean anymore? Jazz is now a cluster of genres. And it is the same as if you say ‘classical,’ what does the term ‘classical music’ mean anymore? Am I a classical composer? Am I a contemporary classical composer? So Omni-genres are an umbrella of many genres. I think you can say the same about hip hop. These terms are now just too broad to communicate something specific.

LIMA: What would you say are the main differences between jazz and classical in the essence?

PSATHAS: Well, the obvious difference is the improvisation. Jazz is an art form that is motivated by improvisation. And what I’ve seen in various projects that I have done, the closer you take jazz musicians to completely written out scores, the more you start to lose some kind of a central spirit. And I think that’s the basic difference. In classical music there is still some fear associated with having to improvise. I mean, that’s changing, improvisation is becoming part of some classical education, where it is an intrinsic part of the learning. But in general, classical music is still mostly paper-based, notated music. It is generally supposed to be very similar every time it is performed. I think jazz has a very different aesthetic, which is about the variety, the variation when performed. I’ve had some experience working with world musicians from Greece and one of their core
principles is: “you never repeat,” ever. And so you might listen to a percussionist who is playing a two bar loop on a drum, and that two bar loop could be an extremely simple rhythm, and they had to play it maybe two hundred times, in support of a melodic instrumentalist who is improvising. If you transcribe those two hundred repetitions of that basic loop – as I have done a number of times – you find that it will be “108 variations” of that very basic rhythm. I think the impulse to not repeat is a fundamental difference between that kind of music, jazz and ‘world’ music, and classical music. I think that’s kind of a fundamental thing. And if you start from there, that means that the DNA and the core generative energy is very different. The seeds from which everything unfolds are fundamentally different.

LIMA: Isn’t interesting to think that we have this idea about classical music as been super strict? Cadenzas were improvised… Beethoven was known as a great improviser… all baroque music with the figured bass was improvised. So it’s funny because it is our contemporary invention that classical music should not be improvised [laughs].

PSATHAS: Yeah! Except, except, there is a kind of historical step which is… you have the imagined world of the composer’s idea of their piece, you have the real world which is the execution of the piece and how it sounds. So you have those two things; but in between them, there is this thing called expressivity, and that is where the performer lives, in that in-between world, where they are expressing the music. And I think that that middle part of the process went crazy in the romantic period. Performers took so many liberties with works, and at the same time the composer was gradually moving away from being the performer. I think what happened was that the composer decided “the score is my solution; I have to put as much into the score as I can to control the performance.” And you end up with (Brian John Peter) Ferneyhough, with music that is incredibly detailed in the score. So for the violin it will have things like the angle of the bow, “this angle of the bow” [gesticulating is if he was holding a violin bow], maybe five different layers of information for the violinist. You’ve got into this hyper specific place, in some cases. I think it is a kind of natural consequence of “wanting to do the undoable,” which is to control expression. And I think that’s kind of why we arrived at this idea that
classical music is really controlled and limited. I think this is the outcome of the historical process; and yes, if you go back to Beethoven and before, then they were improvising a lot. There is this amazing quote by Keith Jarrett about why does he not improvise cadenzas when he plays a Mozart concerto, (and if you think that anybody is going to do that well, that would be Keith Jarrett, right?) And he said something quite amazing, I might not remember it accurately, but he said that you start the cadenza at ‘zero’, and you have to arrive at ‘one,’ right? Because you start in one place, but you have to arrive at this other place, in a way that is logical. But with real improvisation, you start at ‘zero’ and you have to be able to end at ‘zero,’ or ‘one’ or ‘forty-seven.’ You have no idea where it is going, you have to be free. And so he, paradoxically, doesn’t do these cadenza improvisations. I think there are many dimensions in understanding this thing of improvisation versus notation. I’ll stop, that was a long answer! You cut as much as you like. [laughs]

LIMA: This is great! This is part of the core of what I am studying; “how to use improvised music in a written out orchestral setting.”

PSATHAS: I have a very specific idea about this and what I did for the saxophone concerto. When I was thinking about the saxophone concerto for Michael Brecker, I knew straightaway, especially after we spoke, that he didn’t want twenty pages of notated music. And I also knew straightaway that it would be a waste of resource; because that’s not what he does, even if he can do that. He is one of the great improvisers of his time; and so the question was: “how do I get him something that when he does his thing it will be him, and not my idea of what improvisation is?” So I started to think about the context of bringing improvisation into notated or classical music. Specifically, “how do you go beyond generic improvisation within that context, and make something that is unique and works with the piece?” And I came to a conclusion, that it has to be specific to the player. As I was writing the work, my whole process was about “this is for Michael Brecker and there is an orchestra.” That’s what I am doing. And so what I did was: I researched Michael Brecker and his playing; I studied many transcriptions and made my own transcriptions. I started to work out… even as someone who was so globally capable in
music as he is… “what are his strengths, within all his strengths?” and one of the things that I worked out was that he loves diminished environments. The octatonic scale, the diminished scale. That was something, when you hear him playing solos, whenever he goes to diminished areas, there was often a kind of a lift, he went to another space, he had something very special there. And so I found that. After all the research I wrote the saxophone concerto using a lot of diminished stuff in it. It was interesting that when I meet him finally at the rehearsals, I asked him: “what is like getting a piece like this? It’s for orchestra and it is written for you… there is improvisation…” And he said: “it’s a very strange feeling, it’s like I put it on a glove, and that glove fits so well to what I do” [laughs] “it’s really weird.” It’s like music stalking [laughs]. You need to know someone a bit too well. And there was a great affirmation for me, that I’d done good homework, I created something that worked for the situation. And so when he played, I don’t know if you have seen the video from him playing in Bologna, it feels like he wrote the piece, “it’s his piece.” I think that’s an aspect of success for this piece, of bringing improvisation into something that is also notated. Is when the performers can be themselves, that’s the big test for me. “Can this performer be free within a structured environment?” And I don’t know if there is a better way of doing that, other than getting to know the performer.

LIMA: It’s interesting because – this is personal taste – I really like the recording with Joshua Redman, [laughs] maybe even more than the one with Brecker.

PSATHAS: [laughs] So, I mean, that’s an interesting thing itself, because that piece has had multiples performances, and some of those are more successful than others. It doesn’t work every time, you listen to it and you think: “Hm, this piece doesn’t really work.” But in fact, it’s interesting because Michael and Joshua, they have this… this… awareness of music. That enables them, when playing my piece, to be ahead of the structure. If you have real musical maturity, a musical depth and sophistication, like those guys have, you can internalize the large structure of the piece. So, what I mean is, as things are coming up, you anticipate, you set them up, and it feels inevitable. If you have a less experienced player performing the work as I’ve had also, what happens is they react to the changes in
the form after they happen. And so it feels weaker, because it feels like the solos are trailing behind the structure of the work. I wrote this piece for a power player. Somebody that I knew, knew more about music than I did, and would be ahead of the work. Michael is like that, and Josh, absolutely. Joshua’s performance is also amazing. And it was very interesting having another player like that play this piece. I have to tell you about the recording though. Which is, that’s a studio recording and it was basically a re-composition of the solo part by me. In the sense that we recorded Joshua all day with the orchestra, and I ended up with many takes of individual parts of the work. What I had to do after we finished was actually construct a solo performance from all of the performances that Joshua did. And that was a fantastic puzzle to solve. I’m pretty sure that even though we never talked about it, Joshua anticipated this. And so he improvised through various parts of the piece in such a way that it was possible to cut between, improvised takes. In itself that’s a whole amazing world of thought.

LIMA: This thing you mentioned, the improver to be ahead of the music when the music is already written. It somehow relates to jazz group improvisation, because usually the improver is directing the discourse and the band is responding to it. It is really like a re-creation of what could happen in a live session, but in a much bigger setting.

PSATHAS: That’s right. The basic difference is that the orchestra is exactly the same every time. And I don’t know if you saw, there are some interviews that came with the performance of that piece, with Joshua talking about it…

LIMA: I haven’t seen that!

PSATHAS: I’ve got to send it to you. Because it’s a CD and a DVD, it’s a double package that we did. And it’s got Joshua talking about what is like to play this piece. It’d be very interesting for you, I think. I will definitely send it for you, although I’m sure they are online as well. He was asked what is it like improvising a piece that it is completely fixed, and he said, “you know, it’s like walking through a house: you know all the rooms, and you know what is in the rooms, but you are kind of free to walk through in your own way”. He talked about it in a very interesting way.
LIMA: Classical music, jazz and traditional Greek music, how did it come together to you? I mean, in your history. How do you see this different musical universes coming together in your music?

PSATHAS: Ok, before I answer that, I’m not a jazz musician, I don’t think in myself as a jazz musician at all. Also, I don’t think in myself as a classical composer. Unfortunately though, if you write for orchestra, from that point on everybody will think of you as a classical composer, there is no way of escaping it afterwards. So even when I do projects that are not classical, like I did recently with Serj Tankian – from System of a Down – people still see me as a classical composer. I don’t seem to be able to escape that perception. But for me the order of how I came together as a musician, is… hm… my parents were Greek immigrants in New Zealand, and so at home it was all Greek music, because they were living in a sad nostalgia for the homeland. I grew up listening to that music. Then at a young age, about ten or eleven, I started listening to music a lot. And I somehow came across Keith Jarrett improvisations, like the Cologne concert and the Sun Bear Concerts, which were a really big deal for me. And they’re really long, forty-minute improvised solos on the piano. He just walks out and starts playing, he goes all over the place musically, it’s incredible. I still listen to these albums thirty years later. Classical music on other hand was something that was kind of forced on me as a school student. When I went to learn piano I had to listen to classical music, but I immediately loved some things. As soon as I heard Beethoven, I loved that music, and also things like some Stravinsky. But I didn’t really like contemporary music until very late in my teens. So for instance when I was in high school, in the late years, I’d be playing chamber music, and we played Bartók, and I hated Bartók! I love Bartók now, but back then I just hated that music. It took me a really long time to start to like contemporary music. But the one thing I can say is that even I’m not an improviser, 80% of everything I’ve listened to, including now, is improvised music. One way or another. I think it’s because it is the essence of the impulse, it’s the spontaneous impulse. It connects with what I do in my own work. I want to create music with as few filters as possible. So, “it’s direct from me to you.” And when I hear your music, I want to be “direct from you to me,” as possible. I think improvised music is when you experience that in the strongest way. Because there is no “pre” thing.
It’s happening as it happens. I have some great friends in Greece, one of them is Manos Achalinotopoulos, who plays and improvises the Clarino. He is such a special improviser in that world that when he plays you forget the instrument is there. What you are aware of is that there is something inside this person that is being articulated. And that for me is an ideal. If you think about the irony: I’ve chosen to pursue that ideal in the worst possible environment, which is having to think of something, put it down on paper, give it to somebody else, and then for them to realize that in sound, through their instrument, and in a very imperfect notation system. So it’s the most kind of... I don’t know, frustrating way of approaching in this kind of thing.

LIMA: Yeah, and it’s interesting because you mentioned before that you are very specific with notation, you write very intricate rhythms and want it to be performed exactly as you wrote.

PSATHAS: Yeah! I tell you what, I had an interesting experience a few years ago, I wrote a string quartet based on a transcription by this clarinet player. I put on a score a lot of the microtones that I figured it out from the transcription, and that was one of the moments when I realized how hard is to capture those nuances with our notation system. So I decided that I would give the string quartet – that I know very well – a midi performance which I spent a lot of time on. And I said: “I refuse to give you the score until you spent a month listening to this recording”. And they were like: “what the hell …what is this? This isn’t how we do in our work?”, but then they were really up for it and got to know it very well. I knew that as soon as I gave them the score, they would be very literal about the notation. I know it is not possible – given what I write - but I would rather transfer what I’ve created within an oral tradition, then to performance. But we really don’t have that option. That would be fantastic, but when is this is going to happen?

LIMA: Let’s further discuss the performance aspect. You mentioned how improvisers deal with those oral traditions. How is your experience with classical musicians performing this kind of music?
PSATHAS: First I have to say that I’ve been very lucky, I’ve had performers playing my pieces and putting in a huge amount of time to learn it, so the results have been really good. What I’ve done in the last of decade or so is a lot of transcriptions of folk music, and I brought that into notated music, to piano trios, string quartets. And I’ve been very specific with rhythms and with tunings, writing a lot of detail. I think a really good example is when I wrote a piano trio based on transcriptions of Greek folk music, and the melodic rhythm, was very detailed. I’ve then made a version of that piece for orchestra in which I had to simplify all of those rhythms. Because I knew that an orchestral string section would never play that amount of detail that I gave to the violinist in the piano trio. And that’s not a criticism of the string section in the orchestra, it is just that they don’t rehearse as much. They don’t have that amount of time to master that kind of detail. And so I think context is really important, in terms of how… how far you can go with your notation, the level of detail and complexity you are writing for the orchestra. A big part of it is knowing who is going to play it and how much time they will to put into it.

LIMA: I had in Brazil the experience to work with a classical orchestra trying to play samba influenced music and it was kind of frustrating. That’s because when you work with performers who are used to play samba, they have this sense of groove and time for that music. But classical orchestra musicians have a different background, they are used to play Mahler or Beethoven… and even though they listen to samba everywhere in the country, they don’t have experience actually performing it.

PSATHAS: From my own experiences I feel that that’s unlikely to happen. An orchestra will very rarely groove in that way. That’s not what they’ve learnt to do. They have their own groove, which is totally unique, and totally amazing, right? But you look at my piece, the saxophone concerto, that we were talking about, I made a very conscious choice at the very beginning that I would place no expectation on the orchestra to have any kind of swing. From the very beginning I said: “the orchestra will not swing in this piece.” And the reason is that if I ask them to, they’d still probably not swing. Because that is not what they’ve learned to do. If you look at the score, the rhythmic breakdown of the score, the drum kit player is playing a swing on the ride all the way through, the sax
player is swinging all the way through, but the orchestra is playing very little
syncopation. And if there is syncopation, it’s on a large level, it’s the eighth note, or the
quarter note level. So syncopation that they can manage with strength, and syncopation
that doesn’t last very long either. Because, you mentioned Chick Corea before, he will be
able to go off the beat and stay off the beat for a really long time, without needing to
ground it on the beat, but orchestral musicians don’t have that training. My way of
working with classical musicians is – once again it’s no disrespect to the classical
tradition – but I will have syncopations, but then I will write something that is on the beat
or on the half beat, so it can be grounded, and I just found through experience that if you
do this you get way better results. So it’s syncopation with… with training wheels
[laugh]. It took a really long time for me to become realist about these things. And if you
look at the early pieces that I wrote, there is so much idealism, even fantasy, about what
you might get out of an orchestra. And once again, it’s not that I’m saying that an
orchestra can’t do it, it’s really that they don’t have the time. The economic model for an
orchestra is, you have one rehearsal, two rehearsals, and if you are really lucky, three
rehearsals, to learn a whole piece of music. And what is that, often it’s “damage control,”
meaning that’s how “we get from A to Z and sound ok”, so it is “not a disaster.” “We got
to the end and if it sounds ok, great!” “Is the composer smiling?” “Well, he looks ok”
[laugh]. Because that’s all they can afford to do. If they do what we want, which is, let’s
say, 2 weeks of full time rehearsal for our pieces, the orchestra would go broke. They
would never survive. So we are caught in that thing. But then there are other groups
like… you should check out that “Absolute ensemble” with is Kristjan Järvi, based in
Germany. That is a large chamber group, or orchestra, and they have got a whole lot of
groove and feel beautifully figured out. They did a project with Joe Zawinul from
Weather Report. It’s a fantastic project. And you can feel those are the musicians that I
am sure you would love to work with. They are great readers, really great readers, and
they have groove going on. And maybe we will arrive at that point with chamber
orchestras in the years ahead, but I don’t know if we will ever get there with symphony
orchestras.
LIMA: Listening to most of what jazz arrangers did with orchestras, I noticed that they usually make a very simple use of the orchestra. And when I talk to performers, especially string players, they don’t like to play it. Why? Because their parts are not as interesting as in classical compositions, they are usually only playing whole notes and occasional simple melodies. “Whole notes, whole notes, stop, count, little scale, whole notes.”

PSATHAS: Yeah, that’s right.

LIMA: So… as a composer, what do you…

PSATHAS: Yeah, what do you do. What you just said is absolutely true. But you think if they could swing, think about what material that they would get. If you knew that they could play those lines with the feel you want, you give them everything. [laughs] Because what would be nicer than having a whole string section capable of doing that kind of thing? Ahm… so what you give them? I mean, if you look what I have done in the sax concerto; they play like an orchestra. They play punctuation and they sustain a lot of the material. I don’t ask them to play like jazz musicians. This is the reality; this is the who they are. The other solution is to get your own orchestra together, of musicians that can do this.

But the other thing too, it is interesting that you haven’t brought it up, but there is also a dynamic of class; a class system of music and snobbery; within music as well as in taste. I saw a fantastic documentary on filmscoring, where they had revived some old films scores and were making new recordings. The conductor – who is connected to the old Hollywood sound – he said: “the biggest problem these days is that contemporary string players think it is very bad taste to play the wide portamento that was used in old string schools. It’s really hard to get them to do this exaggerated portamento,” and he said: “It is impossible to get them to do the downward portamento, because that’s just too low class” [laugh]. And when he got them to do it, you hear and think: “man, that’s a cool sound”. But you need to be open to enjoy that sound.
LIMA: Right.

LIMA: I put myself in this situation “I want to write a symphonic suite or jazz symphonic suite for orchestra and soloist…” and then I question myself, “am I crazy”? [laugh] “Am I going against the status quo?” “Is this going to be like a total failure?” Or “should I just follow the ‘recipes’ and write pads for the orchestra?”

PSATHAS: When I met Michael Brecker in Bologna and we were working on the rehearsals for this piece, I ask him what he thought of it as a hybrid piece, and he said that “it was one of the few pieces he felt that worked as it bringing together classical and jazz,” which was great for me to hear. But he said that “attempts to bring together jazz and classical has left a lot of musical corpses in its wake” [laugh]. And I think it’s really a feel thing. That’s the basic issue, the time feel. I just want to say a little about how I brought the orchestra and the jazz musicians together in this piece. Because there was a solution I thought worked well, which is, I thought about the top and the bottom of the orchestra differently. Like the lower instruments as a different thing from the upper instruments. So, what’s the point-of-connection between the jazz improvisers and the orchestra? How do they connect? I need to find a way to put them on the same set of tracks. And my solution was the kick drum of the drummer. That’s the key that unlocks it all. So, if you look at the score, you’ll see the drummer get instructions “play time”, “respond to the soloist”, “intensify”, there will be a few hits marked down where they’re going to arrive on certain things... But most of the time, it’s the kick drum part that is written out. And so he did all that stuff and had to play those rhythms with his foot, which is a challenge. If you look at the kick drum part you will notice that the timpani are doing that same rhythm. Trombones and bassoons are doing that same rhythm. And so that kick drum is the point of connection with the orchestra, which is doing the same thing. It’s the rhythm section. And it’s all happening really at the eighth note, there is no sixteenth note stuff going on down there because this is quite fast too. But what it means is that, the foundation is that low end of rhythm. There is where the two things are connected, the jazz element and the orchestra. And they are really locked together. That solution worked really well because they are on the same set of tracks. So what I mean is
that you’ve got the bottom of the orchestra playing the syncopated eight note stuff, and all of the upper section of the orchestra that’s doing the more complex rhythms with sixteenth notes and all the stuff. They are synchronized. And then the sax player is connected to the drummer, and everything the drummer is doing is feeding at the bottom end. So, it’s really like the rhythmic source that goes off into both musical worlds. And I think, if I would do something like this again, I would probably use that again as a really effective tool.

LIMA: Where you afraid when doing that the result could not be as tight as you wish? [laugh].

PSATHAS: Yes. Look, there is something else too, which is becoming part of my way of working, if you write music that has a fast tempo, the players get into a kind of “train”; they are racing along and they have to be there with the flow. If it is below a certain threshold, there is more time to think and to anticipate. And that is when you get that pizzicato on the string section that sounds like a broken chord. But if everybody is just being pushed along or carried along by the music, it is like that quantizes the performance to a certain degree.

LIMA: Do you mean having the music very sub-divided?

PSATHAS: No, I mean quite fast.

LIMA: Oh, so you think is more about the tempo itself.

PSATHAS: Yeah, absolutely. And by tempo what I really mean is momentum pushing forward. So people are caught up at that momentum. If you are playing like this [sitting back, pretending to play violin in a relaxed way] there’s more thinking time and that creates a looseness, but if you are on the chair doing this [sitting to the front of the chair pretending to play a violin very focused] and you are invested, following the conductor and all stuff going on, where you are, then everything kind of locks in a certain way. So if my piece was 20 tempo clicks slower I think the performance would be much messier.
LIMA: That’s interesting.

PSATHAS: I think you also need to define your rhythmic limitation for the different kind of players. So, for instance, you wouldn’t give the same degree of syncopation to the tuba player, that you’d give to the xylophone player. Because the instruments speak in different ways. All those basic things you need to have clear as well.

LIMA: Do you think there are differences when you write for small chamber ensemble compared to a large ensemble?

PSATHAS: Yeah, big differences, I think.

LIMA: How it changes the way you write?

PSATHAS: There are maybe two or three major differences. One of them is understanding rehearsal time. A small chamber group very often will give multiple performances of a piece. In the professional world if a small chamber group learn the piece, they probably will take it on tour and do multiple performances, which means they will invest a lot of more time in rehearsing. But also, they will rehearse more because they live by their performances, I mean, that’s how they survive. It is about being asked to come back to places to perform again, and all this sort of thing, so they have to make their programs work. Whereas in an orchestra, they play your piece once or twice, but they will really sell (and live by) the concert of Beethoven or Mahler. So they are secure in a different way. And they’re not going to give you the rehearsal time that you would like because they can’t. So when I write for orchestra, I’m really aware of the rehearsal time. And now that I’m getting into film scoring, I’m even more aware because of the recording time. That’s a whole other level of... “if I make this phrase easier; it will probably take three times less in the recording section.” And so you make it easier, but still “ok” for what you need. You really become efficient about how much time is required. So there is a big difference. But what does it mean musically when you say: “ok, I’m thinking about rehearsal time,” what does it means in terms of what you can create? You have to rethink the level of complexity you are writing. I rarely write
microtones for orchestra for example. I just won’t do it because I know that half of the rehearsal time is going to be spent dealing with that. Or things like free sections where you say: “here are five notes, just improvise on these five notes until you get a cue from the conductor to move on”, that kind of Lutoslawski aleatoric material. I shy away from that because when I’ve done it before, although it worked, so much rehearsal time went into explaining it, people are going to: “oh, I don’t understand what I’m supposed to do”, and you need to explain all that stuff. In a small group it’s different. I would do that. And then, yeah, rhythm complexity, microtones, any kind of aleatoric free things much more in the small group and less in the large group. The other aspect is performer personality. This is another thing, which is the idea of the performer as an individual. In a small group I’m always working with people that I know one way or another. And so I’m really aware of the personalities, like, at the moment I was talking with Svet (Stoyanov) about the piece in which he would be featured, right? I know him, I know the way that he plays, I’ll be thinking about that a lot, and so then when I’m writing I’ll be thinking: “how do I make the most of that personality, that person, that musician, that unique musical identity?” That doesn’t happen with an orchestra because there are twelve first violins. But if I’m writing a concerto, I’ll be thinking about the soloist, and that’s different. So those are the main differences. And the other thing I would say is that I’m more inclined to write shorter pieces for orchestra.

LIMA: Shorter?

PSATHAS: Yeah. And that might not be about the overall length of a piece. I’m writing a twenty-minute piece for example, but it will be three shorter sections, or three movements, or something like that. Because with orchestra, I’m inclined to make a big impact over a short period of time. And with chamber music I feel more comfortable opening things out, and taking more time to develop. And that’s because I know the audiences are different… I mean, they wait more for things to change, this is a different kind of experience. And it is more intimate. You got an audience that is more aware of the dynamic personalities of the individuals… it’s kind of like a film, they are aware of characters, and a dialogue. Whereas with an orchestra it’s this mass experience coming at
you…. that’s a different experience for the listener.

LIMA: How about rhythmic aspect of it? Do you have a different approach for chamber groups and orchestra?

PSATHAS: Very different. I feel less limited with rhythm in chamber music. I’ll do a lot of very challenging things with rhythm that I won’t do with an orchestra. I used to. But now I won’t.

LIMA: Is it more because of rehearsal time or more because of the “chorus effect”, that everything has a little delay in an orchestral setting?

PSATHAS: It’s both of those things. I mean, the other thing is that in chamber music people are more exposed. They can’t hide. If you are in a section in an orchestra, it’s possible to “kind of get it right…”

LIMA: Yeah, “to fake it.”

PSATHAS: Yeah. I mean, I guess that’s one of the things that I’ve worked hard to do is to write music that can’t be faked. And it’s interesting, because a lot of performers would say to me, “you know, it’s really really hard to fake your music”. And I think that’s a good thing, but often I felt this experience when people would say, “hey man, we’re programming your piece, we’re programming it next year”, “that’s fantastic, so I recommend you run the piece really early, so you get a real idea of what it is”, and they go: “yeah, yeah, yeah” [as if not giving enough importance]. Then three weeks before the concert they will read the piece, and after they do one run they go: “we’re going to program it next year with more time to prepare it” [laugh]. And the reason for that is because my music looks really simple on paper a lot of the time. But when you are trying to put it together it’s not. It’s actually a lot harder than it looks… but yeah, absolutely there is a difference.

LIMA: One thing that I noticed about your music is that you put together very traditional instruments with very modern techniques, or electronic stuff.
PSATHAS: Yeah, yeah.

LIMA: What are your thoughts behind this approach?

PSATHAS: Look, this is very much part of a frustration. And the frustration is… if you think about the orchestra, for instance, the orchestra refuses to evolve. That’s the way all orchestras are around the world. The orchestra is what it is. To amplify an orchestra is always a hard work. I wish it would be a stage now where you could say: “I want a digital delay on the first flute.” Imagine if you had that option. If you put a microphone on any instrument, and do any processing effect on that instrument that you want. That would absolutely radicalize the way we write for orchestra. The fact that if you put a drum kit in an orchestra, and a drum kit plays with energy, you can’t hear the orchestra. The orchestra has stayed in a very specific place with all of these limitations. Of course the orchestra is the most wonderful instrument there is. It’s such a privilege to write for orchestra. But in terms of evolution, and for composers who want to try new things; we are forced to accept the basic sound that an orchestra makes. It doesn’t matter if we explore contemporary techniques, it’s still a fixed sound world that we have inherited.

And so recently I’ve started doing ‘karaoke’ pieces, where I have these electronic sounds and I’m using all these new possibilities. So you can have a live player, a marimba player for instance, and he plays along with a cd. It’s all pre-recorded stuff, it may be ambient sounds, it may be electronic textures, it may be an orchestra, it may be anything. But that’s the keyword: anything. Anything can happen, and that is exactly where I want to be. Why are we supposed to accept being limited in this way? And I think that’s a very important question for anybody: “are you sure you understand why you are accepting limitations?” Very important! For instance, if you write a chamber piece for a chamber music society, let’s say you write for the Austrian Chamber Music Society for example, you’re commissioned to write a string quartet. “Ok, cool, it’s a great opportunity and endorsement…” but the thing you get with the commission whether you like it or not is the audience of that chamber music society. You’ve inherited that audience. And you have no point of connection with that audience. You haven’t met those people, you don’t know who they are, you don’t know what they like, you don’t know any of this stuff. And yet
you are going to put your piece in their world. So it’s very important to understand that you’re accepting, along with that commission, a very profound limitation on your work. I talk to my students about starting and I tell them: you have two choices, one is: you can accept the pre-existing audiences that institutions (who will commission you) have already. So they have their audiences and they ask for a piece for their audiences. You can accept that. And that’s what people do, right? It’s so prestigious to get an orchestral commission, everybody is chasing this thing. Or you can start with an audience of ‘one’, and that’s ‘you’ [laugh]. Because you have to be the first person who likes your music, right? And then you try to get an audience of two, and then five, and then ten. You build your audience, which is what pop musicians do. They write their songs, they play their local places, they develop an audience, they get followed, and they grow, grow, grow, in a best-case scenario. And then it becomes a life for them. And they’re only dealing with people who love their music. But we’re trying to get into a world where not only do people not know us, they don’t care about us, they don’t want to know us, they’re resistant to us! And so much of the energy of being a composer today is breaking through resistance. And so you have to kind of pick between those two options. I have so forgotten your question. [laugh]

LIMA: But that is a great talk! [laugh]

PSATHAS: I don’t know what I’ve started. [laugh] Yeah, sorry! Remind me, what was the question?

LIMA: The use of electronic and traditional instruments…

PSATHAS: Ok, so… that for me was me thinking “I don’t want to keep trying to fit into this world of pre-existing audiences.” I write music for people of my age and younger, from my age downward. That’s really who I think about. But I go to these concerts, and it’s my age and older. You have to really make some tough decisions about that at a young age if you can. So that you start off in the right direction. That’s why I use the electronic stuff now, because I think, “No, I want to make the sounds I want to hear.” That’s what I want to do. And so how do I do it? I found this really fantastic solution.
LIMA: My question was also about the use of these ancient instruments. This… it’s not really a clarinet, you mention this guy playing…

PSATHAS: *Clarino*. It’s in fact a clarinet, but he plays in a very… what you would call “an ancient way.” I also work with people who play the *Kanun*, which is a middle-eastern instrument, and with percussionists who play frame drums… It’s so interesting that those playing traditions, which are very old, to me seems in some way as the freshest, and the most relevant, and the most human, exciting, and meaningful.

LIMA: We talked about one side, which is the classical trained players trying to play traditional ethnic music. And I know that I have been in the opposite situations as well, when you were writing for these traditional players who are not really readers… How do you deal with this kind of situation?

PSATHAS: Well, look, you have to think about what is the source of the problem. The source of the problem is us. We have learned how to do what we do using notation. That is the source of the problem. The way we rely on notated music. In order to do our thing, right? This is at the core of what you are researching, and what you are trying to figure out right now, is how to transcend this problem? I have to tell you; I have failed spectacularly in these attempts to bring things together. And that’s where I have learned. It’s in the failure that you learn, right? And what I’ve arrived at, and absolutely believe it, is that you want to be able to put everybody that is involved in your project in a space where they can truly be themselves. That’s what you should be aiming for. And make it happen in a way that your work is realized in the best possible scenario, right? And so, for instance, when I worked with these Greek folk musicians, the most important thing to me is that when we are doing our project together they are the people that I love. They are the musicians that I love. The thing is that they are not trying to be the musicians that I want, or that, that my piece needs. But that they are bringing the things that I love about them in the first place. I’m going to Greece tomorrow to work with a group of people in a recording. I’ve got to the point with the percussionist that “I’m not telling you anything. Here is the piece, you can do what you think is the right thing for this piece”. And that for
me is a huge trauma. [laugh] I have no control. It was a lesson to me. It is about arriving in that space where you’re comfortable in giving up some control and you still are somehow working towards your goal. It’s a very interesting place to be, because you are sharing the power of the creation of the work, and that’s very hard to do. I think it’s very hard for us to give up that power, and that control. And part of this is because we do feel often very powerless. I don’t know if you had this experience, but my experience with turning up to orchestral rehearsal for a piece, is... “I have no power.” I have no control of what happens. My control goes as far as creating the score. And then I have to hand it over. I’m totally at the mercy of others at that point. Which goes back to another of your questions about the differences between small groups and large groups. You have more control over small groups because you have rehearsals where you can talk, and they want to know what you think. But yes, it’s about ‘sharing’ the control of the outcome in a way that it still feels valid to you. And it’s interesting, I mean, there should be a paper, “courage 101” [laugh].

LIMA: This is very related to the jazz universe.

PSATHAS: Yeah, absolutely. Like, you tell me your experience.

LIMA: I think I have experienced a big range of things. From super notated to just very vague directions. And I like it all, for me it is all about the musicians I’m working with.

LIMA: One thing I noticed about of most of your music is that it has a strong sense of groove and direction. I also noticed that you use static harmonies and pedal points to build up tension and then arrive at a climax presenting new ideas. It would be great if you could comment about how you approach those elements in your work.

PSATHAS: Rhythm is really just a means to achieve something else, which is momentum. In the context of contemporary art music; I am very old fashioned in the sense that I’m still very attracted to the ideal of momentum, and goal oriented composition. And I’m also very attracted to high energy, high intensity, pulse based music, a perceptible pulse. And as a student and as a young composer, that was going
against everything that I was being taught, which was… very much that in the same way that tonality was dead, pulse was also dead. All of these things were being pushed quite hard on me as a student. It all comes back to very basic thinking, which is: the point of creating music, the point of the music’s existence, for me, is the opportunity it offers for us to connect in a way that is beyond words. We can connect in a way that is beyond our filters, because we all have filters. They’re survival tools, right? And, one of the things that I am very aware of is that when you are like my son, who is seventeen, you have really, in some ways, the most intense relationship with the music you ever have, because you are adolescent, you’re really open to the world, you don’t have the defense mechanisms in place, you don’t have the filters. And so music just impacts on you, it’s like it’s too intense a lot of the time. We can often remember back to that time. And that’s why we often listen to the music of that time, you are back in the emotional space of when you heard it in your youth. But then we develop these survival tools as we become adults, these defense mechanisms, these filters, so that people can’t hurt you as much or, you are not as vulnerable as you were when you were younger. But what that means is your relationship to art, and especially to music, also changes. And what happens is… you kind of develop a scar tissue or something like a tough muscle, and it’s harder for music to get through. But music is still the thing that if you let it, will get around all of those barriers and touch your very core. And really amazing improvisers will speak from that core as well. So that for me is what music is about, it’s about that kind of communication. For me, one of the most powerful musical elements that will achieve that communication, that connection you get through music, is rhythm. Think about it, you go to a club, everybody is dancing. I mean, everybody is in a shared kind of sacred space. It’s a really amazing moment. You get a group of people singing together, any group of people singing together, and all of a sudden you are brothers and sisters, just like that. And so music has something very special. I found that if you develop a rhythmic drive, a momentum, it’s like you have grabbed the audience by the hand, and you start running with them, and they go, “Oh, I’m with you, I’m with you, I’m with you”, and you go “it is just over there” and they are running and it’s really exciting and they see all this amazing stuff. And you take them, and you get them to this place, and you go, “isn’t it
amazing here”? And they go, “Yeah!” and they clap. That’s the experience that you can create with rhythmically driven music. That’s the core of what I do.

LIMA: Besides this rhythm aspect, how do you consider your harmony to be?

PSATHAS: My approach to harmony is really basic. A lot of what I know is D-I-Y, which is, is “do it yourself”. Basically, most of what I know, I learned myself. But I’ve never been a big fan of very complex harmonic progressions. Part of this is just because I just don’t know enough in order to do it in a way that’s really interesting, and I also find that most of those very complex progressions sound very congested to me. If you compare old film scores to modern film scores, you get back to the 40s and 50s in film score, harmonic language was so dense, there are so many chords going on. Now it’s more modal, you get in a mode that’s established and it lasts a while. I prefer it when everything is slower in terms of harmonic or modal change. And of course, if your rhythm is driving a work, your harmony doesn’t need to work so hard, right? Because a lot of that momentum is being taking care of through harmony. But for me modality is really where I’m at now. And I think of the mode as a chord as well, it is vertical and horizontal. The idea of modal progressions works really well for me. So, if you look at the “Omnifenix” piece, in some places it’s a circle of the diminished scales being transposed upward for most of it. You have the diminished scale on C, then I go to diminished scale C-sharp and on D. And then it goes to E-flat and by the time we get to the E-flat, because the diminished scale is limited transposition, it repeats, right? In that particular piece there is this really cool effect which I didn’t invent, but I love using it, which is … you just keep going up in semitones with the diminished scales. And your instruments don’t actually have to climb in register, but it feels like it’s climbing all the time, because of the… it repeats every 3 steps. And so the piece is always doing this [moving his body upward], it’s always going up like this, but you don’t have your piccolos on the top notes, and the strings on the ledger lines. I have other pieces like… the third movement of my piano concerto, this basically, hm… If you look at the scores it’s really obvious because of its key signatures, and it starts with 4 sharps and then it goes to 5 sharps, then 6 sharps and then it changes to flats. And you go from like,
whatever, 4 flats, 3 flats, 2 flats, 1 flat. And it’s basically constantly getting sharper. And so, I think of modal modulation as another tool that has an effect on the listener. It makes you feel like the music is becoming more light or more dark, depending on how sharp or flat things are. This is something that Debussy does, he will sharpen on a flatten modality to bring more light into the music, or make it dark or change the color. And the other thing I like about doing that is that you don’t have to process local chord progressions, but you feel broader modal progressions, you feel like the music is moving. And another piece I had, the “View from Olympus”, the first movement of that has basically 7 steps. Its F, hm, in kind of Eastern mode, and then G Lydian dominant, and then A diminished, and then B Lydian dominant, C sharp diminished, then E flat Lydian dominant and then F, the original mode. It goes up these 7 steps and has a symmetrical structure in terms of notes. What is really amazing about it is that when you get back to the F, when you arrive back where you started, it feels completely logical and it feels like you’ve arrived at something, having gone through this fairly unusual sequence of modes. And I found that working with modes in this way creates big structure, it doesn’t cause too much need to process that stuff as a listener, and it also reveals amazing ways of moving through structures. So that is my way of working with harmony.

LIMA: And what’s your idea about polarization? This sense of tension and relief … I mean, it doesn’t need to be V-I. But this sense of arrival point, like: “this is home.”

PSATHAS: I really need that feeling.

LIMA: Yeah, because when we listen to a lot of contemporary atonal music or even some modal, you don’t have that feeling of arrival, you are all over the place and you don’t have a center.

PSATHAS: That’s right.

LIMA: And when I hear your music, although the harmony is not tonal, I have this feeling of arriving at somewhere.
PSATHAS: I would say that, even though you’re describing it as not tonal, it’s definitely modal, right? And it’s differently directional to the way harmony works. And…yeah, it’s interesting, this is how I think about it. If you take the elements. Harmony, melody, rhythm, texture, themes (if you’re working with themes), has a structural thing. Each of those elements has their own structure, right? You can have those elements in counterpoint. So you have ‘structural counter point,’ where your tonal arrivals are not in the same place as your dynamic peaks. You can pull those things out of sync so that they’re in counterpoint with each other. Or you can have them all together so that they’re all lined up. So that you’ll have the climax at the recapitulation of the sonata form, where you arrive back at the tonic key, the main theme appears, dynamically is the strongest moment, and there’s a tutti, so the texture is at its full… everything comes together, or you can have that in counterpoint. Now, that’s something I play with a lot, like the idea of bringing things together, and pulling them apart. But one thing that I really love, and it is a cliché - and it’s really old fashioned, but I love it - is that I really love those moments when everything comes together in a piece of music. But you have to earn those moments, you can’t get them cheaply. At the end of most of my pieces, there is an ending moment, where everything comes together. And in order for that to happen you need to have that rhythmic momentum that I’ve talked about, but also tonally and modally. It has to have worked towards that moment. So I’m still very old fashion in the sense of “I do have a tonal structure”, “I do have a modal structure”. And I…you often have the equivalent of a dominant to tonic cadence. Look, it may be a flat 7 to 1, or it may be the diminished scales finally arriving on a major scale. You finally get some sort of resolution. So yes, I’m a subscriber to that “polarization.”

LIMA: What is your opinion about the role of the composer, the classical concerto composer, in today’s society?

PSATHAS: I’ll tell you, it’s interesting; I’m giving a talk in a few days in Athens, and the title is “Composer without borders”, or “boundaries”. And what I think now, I really believe this now, is that, as composers we have no one to blame, other than ourselves, for being limited in our outlook. Because everything is available to us now, right? We can
tap into all of the world’s music, not really, but close enough. You can just hear something, you can “Shazam” (an iPhone app) with your phone, and you can see what it is, and you can be downloading it to your phone within a minute of having heard it. How amazing is that? And the other thing is, we can tap into the whole world as an audience. If you go on to the web, you can figure out how to find the people that will like the music that you write. So stylistically you can tap into anything and in terms of an audience base you can tap into anyone. It’s all there waiting to happen. And I really believe that the only limitation we have right now are the ones we choose. When I was a student, limitations were imposed on you, “you can’t use octaves,” “you’re not allowed to write in a key”, “you’re not allowed” we were told, “you’re not allowed to do this”. And I was lucky enough not to listen to that stuff, to those people, I’ve always only ever done what I wanted. I’m working with musicians of various styles, from a really great and well-known rock musician, to these traditional Greek musicians, jazz musicians back in New Zealand and the whole classical thing, and electronic music. There are no boundaries to my creative life other than those I invent. And of course the other thing about the work today is that you can work with anyone from a distance. So the real question you have to ask yourself as a composer is, “Why am I choosing to work within this narrow field?”. And there can be really good reasons like, “I just love this kind of music so much, I don’t care about anything else, I just want to do that”. And of course that’s totally ok. I think the other thing that I would say is, in my opinion, and this is great because history might put me wrong and you have it on a record [laugh]. Is that I think the days of the orchestra are over. I think that I would advise anybody that is starting out now, “Look elsewhere, try other things”. Because the orchestral experience, of course it’s great, it’s great for your reputation, it’s really great for that, but the truth of that experience is… you have to write music that can be learned quickly, it’s minimal rehearsal, usually performed once or twice, and it’s such a mission to get a good recording. Repeat performances are rare. And I’m somebody that’s had amazing luck with orchestras! The other thing is that sometimes it’s a negative experience for the composer? It’s a negative experience, and you leave it wishing it had been better. And the other thing is orchestras, in general, haven’t figured out what to do with contemporary music. So we have to fight so hard to have an
experience with an orchestra. So I would say: “Look elsewhere.” And go to situations where you have really positive learning experiences as a composer, where you come away feeling good about yourself. Because the other thing is that these experiences can be so few and far between for the composer that… like, how many orchestral commissions will you get in a year? How often will that happen? Which means that when you get a performance, it’s so important, right? Such a big deal for you, that… if you’ve miscalculated in your orchestration, if the orchestra hasn’t enough rehearsal, if the audience don’t like it… if no one comes… it can be an experience that actually affects your confidence very deeply. And it impacts on you for quite a while. So you have to think about making yourself that vulnerable as a composer. I mean, for me, being a composer, to put a positive spin on the whole thing, it’s like being in the best sweet shop in the world. “You can do this, you can have a bit of that, you can…” it’s so great now, there are so many things you can choose.

LIMA: That’s great, thank you so much!
RAFAEL PICCOLOTTO DE LIMA: How do you approach writing for a large ensemble compared to a small ensemble? What are the major differences in approaching these different types and sizes of ensembles?

GARY LINDSAY: Well, first of all, it really depends on the piece because I have at least two distinct approaches. One approach is really thinking of the tune as a small group tune, and then using the big band in a way that is complimentary. Therefore, I might write a tune that would feature a tenor and a trumpet in front of the band, and then write the band as an accompaniment to that. It is kind of an expanded small group that has a group of horns that are in accompaniment to the rhythm section and two horns that are really treating it as a small group. In a way, it is a combination of small group tune and big band tune. Somewhere in the development of the tune, I will feature the horns typically the way you would in a big band, but conceptually I am thinking of it as a small group tune. On other tunes that start as a big band, it is totally thinking of how am I going to use the rhythm section and the horn section to get my points across on the particular tune? Of course, it starts with finding a concept; finding a way that I want to approach the tune. What is going to be different about it? What’s going to influence me is if the tune is going to feature some specific soloist, a specific section, or a group of musicians playing the melody. Another influence on how I approach a tune is if I am doing something where I am changing the original tempo of the tune or the original time signature.

Sometimes, I put tunes in different eras in terms of the way I write. If I want to make the tune more traditional, I will think in terms of saxophone section, trombone section, and trumpet section. If I want to be less traditional with the tune, I will think of having 15 horns or 13 horns to deal with, and deliberately write cross section; not write specifically to a section, but allow the tune to grow out of combinations of instruments across the brass and reed section. It starts with a concept and the concept could be a result of finding
a different feel or tempo for the tune, it could be in a reharmonization I have done of the
tune that

sparks an idea for a way to develop a big band chart, or it could be something that is a
combination of those or something that starts as a figure that I play at the piano. I do a lot
of improvisation at the piano when I am developing a new tune or developing a new
arrangement. I do a lot of freethinking at the piano. Often times, that is where my initial
bug or virus will start getting me going.

LIMA: When you are writing for a specific group, such as a big band or a quintet, is there
any different mindset or approach regarding the size of the ensemble?

LINDSAY: I don’t know if there is a different mindset. Depending on the number of
horns, sometimes I am thinking how can I divide that? If I have five horns, what is five
horns? It’s four horns and one horn, so it is some combination of one soloist or one
person playing against four horns providing the counteraction to that. Or, it is three and
two or two and three depending on how I am dividing up the ideas. Or, it is five horns
and I am dealing with it as mostly a project of five-horn writing, five-part density,
arranging and voicing. It really depends. When it is a smaller ensemble, I am even more
concerned about the possibilities of what I can do in the rhythm section. How I can treat
the rhythm section. How the piano, the way it stands alone, can provide a lot of what you
would think of in a big band arrangement. The padding, the rhythmic pad, harmonic pad,
and the doubling that is possible with the piano provides a lot of colors. I am searching
for color whether it is five horns or a big band. I am searching for color combinations that
fit the palette of that particular tune. One of the things I try to do when I am establishing a
new composition or a new arrangement is to devise a palette; to decide what colors are
appropriate for this tune. Is this a dark tune? Do I want to go with tenor and trombone,
clarinet and tenor, bucket mute trombone, cup mute trombone, or bass clarinet? Do I
want to go on that side or am I looking to go soprano and flute, harmon mute, to show
brighter colors? This also includes everything in between. I try to come up with a palette,
and a general feeling for this palette of color. Is it more towards the bright or more
towards the dark or somewhere in-between? I also devise often because, again, because I
work at the piano. I will devise some vocabulary of specific voicing types that seem appropriate for the tune. It goes along with the re-harmonization I am doing. I will do a reharmonization,

and with the process of reharmonization I may find that “wow these three notes themselves seem to be an interesting way to deal with this part of the tune, which could be the bridge of the tune or a pedal point. That becomes part of the vocabulary of the tune from a harmonic standpoint. I have harmonic vocabulary, timbre vocabulary, and also trying to find interesting ways to use the rhythm section rather than just the typical rules of comping.

LIMA: It is very interesting what you mentioned about the rhythm section in a small ensemble, you usually have more thoughts about what different colors you use in the rhythm sections.

LINDSAY: I have more thoughts, but it also depends on the chart because there are big band charts where the rhythm section does not take on the typical role. If they take on the typical role, then there is less thought about what they are doing, besides where they need to provide the hits and what the harmonic bass is. If it is a less typical big band chart, then I could be digging just as deep into what the rhythm section could do as individuals. For example, how could the guitar function that is not your typical functions. Not the Freddie Green stuff, but instead it is playing some lines and maybe something else that is more guitaristic such as arpeggiated figures. This major crossroad deals with heading towards the more traditional or going towards something more contemporary and something new that I have not tried before. That would make me search more for what I can do in the rhythm section that might be different.

LIMA: You don’t have exactly one mindset for working with a small or large ensemble, but it is just more towards what tune and what you want to convey than what is the instrumentation.

LINDSAY: It is really the tune. I try to see what the tune is telling me. What the tune wants to do. Sometimes I get stuck and I try to push a tune in a certain direction, and I hit
a roadblock or mental block. It doesn’t seem to work. A lot of the times, the best thing to do is to back up and take another road. You are trying to force something that at least for that moment is not working. It’s that first crossroad of what direction you want to go in and if you even have a direction. It is that and concept.

LIMA: How do you approach difference of Jazz and Classical players while writing? Have you encounter any specific challenges dealing with performers from different backgrounds?

LINDSAY: I haven’t had a lot of opportunity to write in a swing style for strings. I have tended to avoid that, and I haven’t had that opportunity. However, I think the times are changing a lot; at least from what we see from the vantage point here at the Frost School. Our students are called upon to do everything. They are doing concerts with all different kinds of artists such as classical, jazz, pop, and contemporary. I think the best approach is just to expect that they will fall in line. They will figure it out. Maybe they will need a little bit of direction. The younger students, because they are listening to all different kinds of music anyway, it is less of a challenge for them. They are already familiar with the genres. Even if they haven’t played it on their instrument, they have just listened to it. Therefore, for the younger students, it is not much of a problem. As far as approaching classical and jazz players, I do approach them differently. The times when I write music that I consider being more of a classical piece rather than a jazz piece, I try to envision the difference between players on certain instruments that are classical players and jazz players. For instance, if I was writing for a brass player, some classical brass players they have a certain kind of finesse when they play melodies that you don’t always hear from jazz players. The classical brass players are more accustomed to playing soloistically with the orchestra. Therefore, I would be aware of the potential of that. A word that you hear a lot, especially from me, is writing idiomatically. In doing so, I think what is idiomatic to a brass player in an orchestra? At the same time, I think what is idiomatic to a brass player in the jazz band, and how far you crossover between those two, meaning taking the jazz brass player and putting them in a classical situation and vice versa. How far you do that, depends on your faith in what that musician is going to be able to pull off
and knowing the players. If you have very good players, then you probably have players who have experience on both sides. When I go in the studio, and I pick the best brass players for the studio date, I am picking players that actually have all of that together. I can think of a few that come to mind that I could literally have them sit in an orchestra or lead in a jazz ensemble and it would be no problem because they are that kind of a player. There are players already out there that have that kind of experience that actually do that on a daily basis. They could sit in either chair. There are other players in the jazz band that maybe have not done a lot of orchestra playing, but are so good on their instrument and have such finesse on their instrument. These players are so good that if you want them to play classical, it is not a problem. It does get down to individual players. You really need to know the individual players in professional situations where it is very demanding on the players. I might have a passage where it needs to swing on one tune and the next tune it needs to be double tonging on the trumpet. Well, not every player has that ability. We need to know whether they have it or not. I do approach it from the standpoint of understanding what the necessities are, what I am going to need from the players, and whether my jazz players can give me the classical element that I need or whether they can’t and the same thing applies to classical players applying the jazz element that I need. It used to be that we would write music out in 12/8 if it swung, but I don’t think that is necessary for anyone anymore. Everyone understands what swing means. They won’t all get the feel maybe as appropriate as others, but it is something you can work on with them. I wouldn’t hesitate to write some swing figures, for instance members of an orchestra. How much of it I write is another thing. I might only have a few passages that would have that. I would leave the heavy lifting of swing, up to the jazz players.

LIMA: That is interesting that you mention because a saxophone or a trumpet, they have both traditions, which includes the jazz tradition and the classical tradition. On the other hand, they are instruments that are just found in a classical setting like an oboe. What happens if you have an oboe in the chart?
LINDSAY: Well there might be some idiosyncrasies to that particular instrument. If this prohibits the ability to do the swing feel, then I might consider that. I am not sure that there is, but it is true. Bassoonists might not have that experience, but it just depends. It depends whether they can swing an eighth note, and make it sound authentic. I am not sure. If it got right down to it, I might write in 12/8 again and may go back to that. I might do that to make sure it is clear.

LIMA: So going to that point, let’s say we have a situation where we have a jazz symphonic orchestra with both the classical and the jazz players, and you have a situation with a saxophone soli. Would be comfortable doubling some of the lines with the classical woodwinds or would you rather have just the saxophone section playing the swing lines?

LINDSAY: I guess it depends how extended it is. If it wasn’t that extended, and we are talking about a six or eight measure passage, then I would. I would think it might require some extra rehearsal time, but being that it is only a few short measures, I can take the time to do that. If I have an extended 24 or 32 bars soli, then I would maybe think twice about it because it would take too long to get that together and it would be difficult to consistently produce that feel for some of the classical players. It does absolutely come down to individual ability and experience, and it can be hard to predict. The other thing is, with all that an orchestra does really well, they don’t need to swing the eighth notes. There is so many other things that they can do. If I were writing a piece for orchestra, swinging eighth notes would be a small percentage of what I would want to do with the orchestra. I would want to explore other things besides that. Therefore, there may not be any swing eighth notes, so if there were swing eighth notes, it just would not occur in those instruments. It would occur someplace else. Maybe it would occur in the brass. When you are writing for an orchestra, your palette has expanded and exploded way beyond what the jazz band even offers. The technique of playing classical instruments brings about another whole palette of possibilities of what you can do. With all that, you don’t need to be swinging eighth notes in the orchestra necessarily. Maybe a few swing passages possibly, but I would rather write something that really works for the orchestra
that still gets my point across than be laboring them to try to swing an eighth note line that might end up sounding kind of corny rather than effective.

LIMA: Another thing that usually is a challenge when writing for a classical orchestra and a big band is how to balance volume. I feel that in most classical pieces, some loud instruments such as percussion are used almost only in dynamic peaks. However, in a jazz band you usually have the drums playing all the time. How would you balance the volume of strings for instance in a chart with a drums kit that plays most of the time?

LINDSAY: It does depend on the environment you are playing in, and what the sound of the room is. The sound of the concert hall or rehearsal hall is definitely a factor in it. The approach that I would like to take is always acoustic, what would work acoustically. For example, if I have the drums playing, I need to be able to control the volume that the drummer plays. Is he playing with sticks or brushes? Is he playing with light sticks and a light feel? All of those things can change because when you get to the peak of an arrangement, where you have the full orchestra going and the drums has to be strong and the rhythm section has to be strong and you have a lot of brass playing, then I am not going to be dividing my strings up. If my strings are playing something, it is probably going to be a lot of unison. I am going to get as much power out of the strings as I can to compete with the brass in order to give me something, if they need to contribute to something to what is going on. Woodwinds are the same way. If the woodwinds are contributing something, it will be at a register where we can hear them, which is usually a higher register. The woodwinds will be playing in unisons where they are adding a contrapuntal figure that maybe will be supported in the saxophones acoustically. I think acoustically and do my best to make that work. In addition, being in control of the volume for the bass and the drums because that is the two places that are the most problem. A lot of people think it is just the drums, but the register of the bass covers up lots of information that we hear out of the orchestra from the mid-range down. If the bass is a little rumbly or if the bass is a little loud, and you are not hearing things or things are not clear in the orchestration because of what that bass does, it really masks out a lot of
information musically, frequency-wise. I would be very concerned as a conductor or an
arranger to listen to the volume of the bass and drums, and get that under control.

LIMA: And this the point of view of the performers right? However, what about when
you are writing?

LINDSAY: When I am writing the same thing, I am thinking at this point it needs to be
really loud. This is a climax. If it’s really loud, and I want to include everyone, what do I
give the strings? I give them a lot of unisons. What do I give the woodwinds? I might
give them a lot of unisons or I might give them some high register for a flute, piccolo,
oboe or things that are doubled in the saxophones. Not everything that you write is going
to be crystal clear and heard. You listen to an orchestra pieces and there are things inside
of Strauss where I know it’s in there, but I can’t specifically hear it yet it adds to the
texture. That is another facet. What does the audience need to perceive the most at that
dominant? Maybe what they need to hear the most is the jazz band part of the
orchestra, specifically the saxophones, the brass, and the rhythm section. Maybe that is
the most important thing anyway at that particular moment. What you give to the strings
and woodwinds could be a little bit secondary. If it is not secondary, you need to fill it up
with a lot of unison.

LIMA: Now a provocative question. Listening to some pop and studio orchestras I have
the feeling that many times the orchestra represents only a small percentage of what is
going on acoustically compared to the band. There is a huge number of musicians who
are contributing very little to the overall sound, playing only simple pads here and there.
How do you see this type of writing?

LINDSAY: I call it bad arranger.

LIMA: [laughs].

LINDSAY: I call it either not a lot of experience or not a lot of imagination for what is
possible. However, because I am in the industry I know there are a lot of factors. The
arranger might be sitting at the desk doing the work, but there is people sitting on their
shoulders. There is the producer on one shoulder and there is the artist on the other
shoulder, and the artist is saying, “I want this, I want this, I want this” and the producer is saying, “I want this, I want this, I want this”. Therefore, it is not so easy to have the luxury as an arranger to just use my imagination and do what I want because some people have expectations. The expectations might be, “look I don’t want this too busy, I just want to provide a nice color of the orchestra,” “don’t step on my lyrics and just keep it simple”. Part of the difficulty for an arranger is how do you do something that is true to you in a musical way, but satisfies the client. The job of an arranger is to satisfy the client. Bottom line, that is the job! If you have to make a compromise, it is always in the direction of the producer of the project, and the vocalist if they are part of the project. The fact is, you need to please these people. From a musical standpoint, if I have the choice, I am not going to write a lot of padding, unless if I am in the middle of a ballad and the padding is exactly what I want. As far as giving stuff for the orchestra to play that is not very interesting, I feel like I am sitting in the orchestra and saying, “Boy this is boring. I don’t want to do this either”. Therefore, make it interesting. I would be sitting in the saxophone section or the woodwind section thinking that, and I am always thinking about the musicians and trying to make it interesting for them somehow. Even if they only have a few key phrases, sometimes that’s enough to make them say, “Oh, this is a satisfying arrangement or chart”. It works out well because they have at least something to say instead of playing whole notes. String players do not enjoy playing whole notes, at least in Sinatra’s music. They had some great arrangers in Sinatra’s days, but they got to play the melody. There were times when the upper strings were playing the melody and Sinatra was singing the melody his way and the strings were playing the melody straight, and it all worked together in swing. It was amazing! In summary, something interesting for them to play, but the bottom-line is you have a producer and an artist that you have to deal with.

LIMA: In an idealistic situation when you are producing your album, and you can do your thing, what would be your approach to this palette of colors? Having strings, winds and the big band.
LINDSAY: It would be very wide. I would be doing lots of different kinds of things. Let’s say I was writing an extended such as a forty-minute piece, I would start with the skeletal idea of what is this whole piece about? What am I trying to convey in this piece? How can I divide it up into sections? What is the relationship of those sections? How do those sections create a form by how the sections evolve into one another? What other elements am I going to draw on? Am I going to draw on some jazz soloists within the orchestra? Do I have a pianist in the orchestra that is a jazz soloist who could be highlighted? I would look to those as some key points in the development of this extended work. Yet at the same time, I am trying to please me because I am lucky enough for it to be me if it is. This is all conjecture. I love to write for strings so there is going to be a place in there where I am going to do something with the strings that is going to involve hopefully some beautiful harmony and lines. I love French horns. I love clarinet and flute solos. All of the things that I like, I am going to try to incorporate whichever of those fit the concept of the piece. Overall, anything goes and anything is possible. The other thing that I am going to bring into it, which I think is really important and it is something I share with my students, is that I think in the process of your writing, you should continually take yourself back and put yourself in the audience. You should say to yourself, “what would be something interesting for the audience to hear or what would surprise the audience or how can I get the audience into this particular introspective mood. What contributes to an introspective mood? How am I going to do that? What are the colors going to be or what is the harmony going to be? How am I going to orchestrate? What is the tempo? What is the pulse that I am going to feel to get that particular mood?” At the same time, it’s all about questioning if the audience will feel that and will understand it. You have to be pretty well defined for the audience to get it. It can’t be that he is kind of doing it. You have to really do it. You have to really put that mood across to travel forty feet out into the second, third, and fifth row up there. Therefore, it is good to do that and think about that. When I am writing and I am trying to get to the exciting part of a piece, I am always thinking is this exciting? I am thinking as an audience. A lot of the time I am thinking no it is not exciting enough. I am not there yet. I am beginning to get exciting, but I need to do it. Along with that, one of the
difficulties is you have to sustain whatever you are trying to do. You have to sustain for a
certain amount of time for it to be effective. For instance, after a student comes to me
with sixteen measures and they say “here is my thing containing sixteen measures, and
this is the big climax”. I say, “that’s good and that is going to be over in four seconds”. Is
four seconds a long enough climax? That needs to be forty measures or that needs to be
sixty measures. Therefore, the constant development and stretching of the ideas and
making them play out a little bit slower on the timeline, will help you get more mileage
out of your idea, and more mileage out of the climax of the piece. This is another
challenge in writing. Writing is not easy. Never was and I think it never will be. It is a big
challenge. It is a problem. Every time you start a new piece, it is like, “wow, I need to
figure this out”. Then you get an idea and start developing it. You throw some of it way
and then you develop more and it gets longer and longer. All of this requires a lot of
work.

LIMA: Do you have any different approaches to rhythms when writing for strings in
opposition to writing for horns? Especially thinking about syncopations and hits.

LINDSAY: Yes, rhythm writing for orchestra is definitely a concern. I consider using
repetition, in other words, if I don’t widen the pallet of rhythms too much with a lot of
different rhythms in the same piece, I think that could help it for being too challenging
from a rhythmic aspect. Players can learn from listening, they can learn by hearing the
rhythm, so that’s an aspect that without a doubt can be helpful, but to naturally sound
good rhythmically takes some work. It’s important I think that in whatever project you’re
doing you have attached to that project, how much rehearsal time available because it
could influence the complexity of the writing. If you ignore it and you just write whatever
you want, and you might find that you never get your piece played to the level you would
like. Because it takes too much time to get the orchestra together. So the rhythmic aspect
of it is really important. Not just reading the rhythms, but playing tightly in the ensemble
themselves, that’s part of the rehearsal.

LIMA: Sometimes we have the chances to present a piece more than one time and with
more than one ensemble. Usually I imagine that I may have more time in the future to
rehearse a piece, and many times I end up writing more complex piece of music then a particular situation asks for. When you are writing, do you also think about the fact that people can perform your work in the future and invest more time to rehearse it, or do you usually focus just on the present event?

LINDSAY: I think every time to the situation. The dangerous part of thinking down the road I will have a better ensemble, unfortunately, with a better ensemble, let’s say you write something for a regional orchestra and then you write something for the Philadelphia Orchestra or The Los Angeles Philharmonic. The larger the orchestra, the more prestigious is the orchestra, the less time you have. Rehearsal time gets reduced because you have more concerts. So I think typically - don’t quote me exactly on this – but probably you’re lucky if you get about two hours of rehearsal time on the piece of music. And that’s over the course of two or three days maybe, or maybe one day. So, how much can you accomplish? Are you going to accomplish everything you need to in two hours? It just depends. So that reflects how long your piece can be, the amount of rehearsal time you will have and how difficult it can be. And you can predict the difficulties you are going to have and somehow keep them controlled, “ok, this sixteen measures I’ll need to work with the woodwinds, and this section I’ll need some extra time with the strings,” but if you find that every measures is like that, it is going to be an uphill battle to get it to that point where they can feel comfortable with it. Because to really come off musically they need to feel comfortable with it from a rhythmic aspect and melodic, harmonic... well, harmonic they might not feel so comfortable with it, it might be something unusual for them, but I don’t think that matters. In the orchestra they play in tune, in the string sessions there are so many string players playing the same pitches that I don’t think that the dissonances are really a problem. They can deal with that.

LIMA: Writing for single strings, like a quartet, in opposition to writing for a string section is quite different. Not just the sound, but articulation and precision. How do you approach writing for those different size ensembles?

LINDSAY: I do have a different approach. The main difference in the approach is that no matter what you are trying to achieve, a string quartet is an intimate ensemble, it’s a
chamber ensemble. It’s never going to sound like a string pad, with six or eight or ten or fifty strings. It will never sound like that. It’s a different approach. So you’re better off doing less of the long note pad devices and more of the contrapuntal multi-voice approach to it. It’s actually the label string quartet style now; even when we would talk about other instruments. So it means everyone is a single voice, and you’re trying to benefit from that. So, I’ve had opportunities, my double quartet with saxophone quartet, string quartet, I had to deal with that a lot, and think about it, sometimes it was the saxophones and strings actually coupled, playing together, the first violin and the soprano were together, the second violin and the alto, all the way down the line, but other times it was independent string quartet and independent saxophone quartet. I was really trying to think linear, lines for them. How do I make their lines important? Everything is a line, everything is important. Everything has a direction. And using devices like having them playing different rhythms at the same time, different note values moving in different directions, using different articulations to separate the lines more. So instead of trying to make them come together as a unit playing all the same thing, which is possible, but also make them play differently. Legato in the first violin and staccato in the second violin, just to give a different sound and a different direction, so the lines remain more independent. Of course they are all going to sound independent in different rhythms. Different rhythms and different directions. It is going to help to achieve that.

LIMA: When you are writing a new piece for large ensemble, do you usually approach more as if you were arranging an existing tune, using its original form as the foundation, or do you prefer to work with an open form, reminiscent from the classical music development tradition? What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of those two different approach?

LINDSAY: As far as how the form approach affects the arrangement it depends again on that first discussion we had about the crossroad between “Am I going more traditional jazz” or “Am I trying to go a different way, maybe towards the classical”. So that would be one of the major decisions that I make at the beginning. And in the same process I’m
trying to come up with what my concept is, so the concept is such that I don’t want the

tune to feel like a 32-bar-8-8-8-type tune, then the first thing I’m going do is erase those
eights and say, “no, this isn’t 8 anymore, this is 10” and that second 8 is actually now 13,
so I’m going to stretch the form so that it’s not so predictable. And allow things to
develop. That gets me to another point: pacing. It’s really important that you consider
how on the timeline of the events that are happening in your arrangement, how fast, or
how slow the story is unfolding. And so, part of the story will unfold at different tempos
and different speeds, different events will occur differently. Sometimes it’s a rapid fire
idea that you have the melody and conversations that are happening against that melody,
and is pretty quick, and that pacing creates a particular style, a particular mood to the
piece. Maybe it is agitated sounding. So it’s the result of you deciding on this timeline
and in this period of time “I’m bringing the trumpets and the saxes and the woodwinds in
you know, beats apart”. So making that decision conceptually has reflected in “ok, so this
part of the piece is supposed to be agitated, or it’s supposed to be very busy, and I’m
doing it to get that part of the point cross”. And in another place I’m going to say, “ok,
well, I get to the five chord, and if I was following to the form the five chord would be
one measure long and now at the top of the form again”. But what if the five chord
were five measures long? What I do in those five measures? What could happen in those
five measures? How could I change the mood or allow things to slow down in a way,
kind of get it suspended in those five measures instead of one measure? So it’s the
timeline that you thinking about, it’s the pacing, it’s the way things evolve, that is part of
the concept of the whole piece, part of the concept of a section of the piece, part of the
concept of a phrase, so I’m going to consider all that. To sum up, I’m not opposed to
opening up the form. I think opening up the form is a good thing if opening up the form is
the best way to tell that story.

LIMA: Would you say that your favorite approach is to use the form of a tune or create a
tune with a form and then while arranging expand it?

LINDSAY: I think that’s a good way to put it. If you go back in my writing in the earlier
days then I was very form oriented, and I didn’t step out of those boundaries of eight
measures. I guess I was afraid to... I’m becoming brave at my old age... “who cares, you
know? C’est la vie, right?” So I’m tending to want to stretch that form if it’s appropriate
for the tune, to see where it would go. And to give me a challenge, how am I going make
that five measures feel like they are the right amount of measures. And maybe it isn’t,
maybe it is three measures. So that sometime in the process of trying to realize my piece,
trying to hear my piece as it is evolving, to decide what is long enough, what is too long,
to get that to be right. But definitely in the last ten years or so, I looked more towards
opening the form when it is appropriated. But sometimes not, if it is tune, like “Take the
A train”, I might not mess with the form as much, although it’s possible.

LIMA: When writing for a particular ensemble, do you start your compositional process
thinking about the group characteristics and capabilities, or would you rather work on a
theme or a lead sheet, and then make it work for group instrumentation as an
arrangement?

LINDSAY: Most of the time I am thinking strongly about who the ensemble is. That is
definitely in the back of my mind. But there are so many musical problems to solve with
the piece of music you are trying to create that if you get bogged down in saying: “I’m
not sure this guy can play this...” or “This guy can play that...” I think it would just get in
the way of the writing. So you have to assume that whatever you write is going to be
played. You have to imagine, through listening, that you can hear the best possible
players playing it. That is what you are thinking of. Whenever I am writing for the Miami
Saxophone Quartet, since I have been writing for them for a long time and I have played
in the group, I hear those four players or those three players plus me. So that is a little bit
easier. But it does not make writing music any easier. I still have to say, “How am I going
to make this work?” In fact – I may have mentioned this to you before – writing for only
four players is a huge challenge. Give me a bass player, a drummer and a piano player,
and it is a lot easier. In general, it is a big challenge to write for four saxophones or four
whatever instruments and make it interesting and have variety. It is a huge challenge.
LIMA: While writing an original piece, does it make a difference for you if it is for a big band, a saxophone quartet, a chamber string ensemble or any other kind of ensemble? I mean, in terms of the musical material you are generating.

LINDSAY: Totally. It totally depends on who you are writing for, at least in terms of instrumentation. You can just change the key and it would already be a different approach. When you sit down with a vocalist, you come up with a key to do an arrangement, and you start to arrange it, but then the vocalist says: “No. You know, I figured out it has got to be a fourth higher.” You might as well start over in my opinion, because it really changes things a lot. So every ensemble has its challenges and has things that are going to mind: “This works well with that ensemble” or “This is a difficult thing to pull off with the ensemble.” All of those negatives and positives are going to be part of the process. But you try not to let it influence you too much. You try to stay focused on the music, on creating the music as much as you can. The good side of it is that if you know the personalities, then you have the personalities of the musicians you are writing for to bring it to life. I wrote a commission for a high school saxophone quartet, and so I wasn’t thinking of what the Miami Saxophone Quartet was going to sound on it, I knew we would eventually play it. I wrote it for the student quartet and I knew somewhat about their level. In the process of writing for them, having them rehearse it, and then bringing it to the Miami Saxophone Quartet, it took on another life from what the students would typically come up with in high school. They could maybe play the notes and kind of get it. They would sound pretty good, and I tried not to make it too overly challenging. But when you bring it into a group like the Miami Saxophone Quartet – four individuals with four distinctive voices – it is amazing how far the music goes. The music comes out of that. We just put notes on the paper, the musicians turn it into music. That is what the bottom line is, if you can imagine that and get excited about it while you are writing this run of sixteen notes: “That is nothing. Wait until you hear them play this run of sixteen notes! It’s amazing!” So that is the big part of it, getting the live musicians to play it. The ensemble? Absolutely! What the ensemble is going to be is totally going to change the direction. I have never written a piece of music not having any
idea who I was writing it for or what instrumentation I was writing it for, other than the lead sheet. But other than that, I had to know. There are too many parameters.

LIMA: One thing that I learned from you is to be as precise as possible with parts to convey the idea. But I know that there are some writers who like to give a lot of freedom to the performers, giving only guidelines. How do you feel about those different approaches?

LINDSAY: It depends on what those guidelines are. I am not opposed to it. I haven’t really written that much in that style. It is not something I gravitate towards. I think I like to have more control to some extent. I like the musicians control to be in the interpretive element of it, but I like to control other things about it. I think, in looking at all styles in music, I prefer the style where I am being pretty specific much of the time, let’s put it that way. But I also love what the rhythm section does when it turns slashes into music, what the piano player does in the comping style, and all that. I try to develop a sense of what it is I am looking for them to do while I am writing the piece, because the pallet of what the rhythm section brings to a piece of music can be so widely diverse that if you just think of your piece of music as the horn parts, and then the rhythm section is going to do their thing... Well, the rhythm section could give you a whole different approach to what it sounds like with the horns when you change the rhythm section. So I try to imagine in the rhythm section, what approach I am looking for. This often means that I might have to be real specific in a few places on the piano, or about some rhythms, or about something in the voicing’s, it just depends. But definitely a lot of what is happening is a direct result of how the rhythm section interprets it. So I guess I go more towards the “pretty specific.”

LIMA: I have the feeling that the larger the ensemble the trickier it is to have improvised parts as part of the piece. How do you deal with a situation where you have solos or rhythm section improvising in a large ensemble such as a big band or a jazz symphonic orchestra?
LINDSAY: I think that the important thing is that it needs to fit the concept of the piece. I would be afraid to try to force something in just because “in this piece I would want to try multi or extended improvisation.” Whatever it is, it has to fit the piece. If you are doing a lengthy piece then there is room to do lengthy improvisation, so that is possibility. If you mean more multi improvisation as opposed to lengthy, that is a different thing. I am not particularly fond of multiple improvisations, many people improvising at the same time that is. However, I heard some very good examples on it. It just depends on how well it is done. But it takes a certain group of musicians that are not trying to prove anything individually to make something like that work. As for extended improvisation, my approach to it would be that I would not do an extended improvisation that is continuous. If I’m going to feature this flugelhorn player at a twenty-minute piece his improvisation might be pretty extensive, but I would want him to have places where he would be resting. He wouldn’t be continuously playing. I would be willing to try to develop the form of his solo so it would have either interludes or built in conversations that would be dealing with elements of other instrumentalists. Maybe some written things that the ensemble plays, then the soloist comes in and continuous the story, and then they come back, and then he comes in some more... That dialog between improvisation and written music can take on some interesting possibilities just because of the fact that you are controlling how much the soloist plays and how little the other musicians play. As an example, let’s say I am writing an extended composition for flugelhorn. The soloist has been playing for three or four minutes, it is building and building. I know I want to inject the band into it, not as a background but as a dialog. So I inject the band in for two measures, take them off, and he continues to play. Then I inject them in again, now for six measures, then for twelve measures, and then again for 25 or 26 measures, or whatever it is. I have just created a form based on that length of conversation, on how it becomes one sided, one way and then the other. That is going to affect the pacing of the piece and how the audience perceives it just from the effect of the length of time that the horn players play against the soloist. That is just an example of something I would consider for doing a lengthy solo. I am not going to do a lengthy solo
because I want to have them do the “forty-bar form three times.” That is not going to be a reason to do it. There are going to be other reasons.

LIMA: It is interesting that you mentioned that because it is kind of a very different concept compared to when you have jazz improvisation in small ensembles. In small ensembles the musicians usually improvise over the form of the theme. The soloist starts and he only stops when his solo is over. Here, you are talking more about this conversation between the soloist and the orchestra almost in a concerto kind of form.

LINDSAY: That is true. I also like the approach – I can’t say I have used it a lot – which Maria Schneider has talked about. She says that the chord progressions that she uses for the soloist is not necessarily directly related to that of the tune. She relates – I don’t want to miss quote her, I hope I am close – something more to the fact that she gives the soloist a harmonic background to play over that would produce the kind of solo or dialog or mood that she is looking for. So she tries to give the soloist some information to get him to go in the right direction for the piece that is not necessarily a repetition of the original progression. That is a nice approach too.

LIMA: It also leads to another question. I have been listening to music from arrangers that have had different approaches. Some have had more than one soloist playing in one piece with different backgrounds but over the same changes, over the same form of the tune. Other arrangers, like Maria, have each soloist playing over a totally different section, with a different harmony and mood. How do you see those two approaches?

LINDSAY: I think she is also doing it because of the individual players. She has the same band all the time, so a lot of it has to do with that, too. It is about how the player will react to those kinds of chord changes and the type of playing he will do over them. It also goes back to the story that you are trying to tell. There is more than one way of telling a story, and if they have different sets of changes then it is going to lead it into a different direction. The rhythm element of it is also important. The energy that comes out of the rhythm section is going to have a direct influence on how they play, on how they interact. It is all going to evolve.
LIMA: One thing that I have heard and found very interesting about this is that usually when you have multiple soloists playing over the same harmonic progression it becomes kind of a competition... to see “who does the best solo.” Actually I have heard this from Maria, and she mentioned that she did not like it. She said to me once that she likes each soloist to have his own universe of sounds, telling a different part of the story and not competing with each other.

LINDSAY: That is a nice way to put it, definitely. In the old days it was literally a cutting session. That is what it was all about, showing someone that you were better by what you played on a stage. I am not fond of the competitive edge type either. I am more towards the musical story.
RAFAEL PICCOLOTTO DE LIMA: How did classical composition changed your thinking about music?

TERENCE BLANCHARD: All of it happened while I was in high school. I started with classical piano, then wound up playing jazz, then I went back to classical composition. Rodger Dickenson taught me classical composition. It influenced the jazz thing in an amazing way because it gave it structure. When I started learning how to take a kernel of an idea and developing it into a larger structure it made me realize what people like Coltrane were doing. How these Ideas could start like this and grow and really turn into a concept rather than just a musical idea. The other thing that classical and film music did was to help understand how to tell a story from beginning to end. Prior to that it was just about playing tunes, how much you could play on a tune “how many ideas and then move to the next tune.” But when I started doing this it was “no, no, no” there needs to be a definite intro, a beginning, some kind of a development within the shell of the musical story and then a conclusion. All of that came together to help me design and think about out how to perform live. Not just on every tune but the entire show.

LIMA: We were talking about your influences. How do you define them?

BLANCHARD: We could talk about it all day. The thing about it is that we all have those pivotal influences. We may have many influences along the way, but then there are a couple of people who really just turn your whole thinking around. The first two were Miles Davis and Clifford Brown. Then it was Stravinsky. I will never forget, I had just finished doing my first scene for a film and I had been studying composition. I had been listening to Rite of Spring and Bartok String quartets. However, when you study it you are listening from a different context. It’s a totally different thing when you have the opportunity to write for an orchestra. Standing there and recording a scene and listening to the orchestra play your music gives you a rush. As soon as I finished that, I walked the hall at BMG studios and someone was mastering the Rite of Spring. I’ll never forget it
man, I was standing outside the door and my rush and my energy and my high just went [from high to low gesture]. The thing I always said about that was the orchestra felt like a living thing. It wasn’t just notes. It was a living thing that had all these different colors. It was psychedelic in a way. So Stravinsky was definitely high on my list of greater influences just because of the way he approached his music, not just for orchestra. There were a lot of guys who can write for orchestra, but one of the things that got me about Stravinsky was the primal thing in addition to the Russian folk thing that resonates throughout everything he does. I think it’s powerful for me.

LIMA: Let’s talk about other cultures. So indirectly, you are influenced by Russian culture.

BLANCHARD: Ok. Right, I know. What’s funny about that is that there is on theme that I wrote that everyone loves and I’m like “man that sounds like some Hungarian shit”. And I know where it comes from comes from, it comes from my love of that music. I mean, when you listen to Stravinsky you hear the folk music in his stuff right away. There is no mistaking it. For me it’s kind of like hearing the blues in jazz in everything you play, you know. There should be some kind of blues element no matter who it is. It could be John Coltrane or Dizzy Gillespie, Ornette Coleman. It could be anyone. You still hear the blues in what they play.

LIMA: Do feel that the jazz has evolved into a more complex form than what it was originally?

BLANCHARD: Well it is always evolving; there are complexities that have arisen in the music that were not there before. The only thing about it for me is that it has arisen out of the need for things to be complex. For John Coltrane and Elvin Jones they were not trying to be complex for the sake of complexity. It was more of a means to express what was inside of them. I am the type of person, for me, I love complexity. You know, Art Blakey told me years ago that the easiest thing to do was to write something that no one could play. The hard thing is to write something that is very poignant and gets right to the point. We are inundated by all of the things that we learn. We are so busy being innovative with all of the stuff that we learn; we feel that we need to utilize it all.
Sometimes the best way to say I love you is to say, “I Love You”. Sometimes it just better to be straightforward. It is like what you [Lima] said about the piece last night. I heard it but I was not looking at the score. And I was thinking, “Why didn’t you write this in 6?” and then I was like “right.” Because the bass line would start in the wrong part of the measure and so forth. Same kind of thing.

LIMA: My research is all about breaking the difference between classical and jazz. Because I really believe that we are always crossing those invisibles boundaries. Could you define what is jazz, what is classical, and what separates them?

BLANCHARD: What’s funny about that man, Rafael, growing up in New Orleans I always saw more similarities between classical and jazz than differences because of the way I was raised. For example, when I went to Arts High school we were taught that the classical music was a deep reflection artistically of the environment from which it was created, and for me jazz is the exact same thing. I had this experience with the work with Woody Vaughan. We did this session where there was this Cellist who came in to play. He was a musicologist who had never played with a jazz band before. He said that the experience of watching us play chords and stuff reminded him of all the things he studied in figured bass and the things he was studying in classical music. Here is the similarity again in the language we create and complexities and structures and similarities that we create. The main difference is in the interpretation of rhythm. That’s the main difference, you know what I mean? Art Blakey always said that Brazilian and jazz were the same thing, just on the other side of the beat. [beat demonstration] A similar thing happens in classical music where the emphasis of the beat is somewhere else that is totally different than jazz. But when you look at the technical proficiency, it’s the same. When you look at the theoretical aspects of it in terms of how guys – especially Duke Ellington – are doing things, there are similarities. And then there’s some other things like Ornette Coleman when they are writing more linearly, like in classical music rather than tune based things. So for me I’ve always seen those similarities. The interesting thing is that they have always kind of existed in two separate arenas. That was always the bizarre part. Now we are starting to see it come together all over the place. Like I told you I have this
piece I have to write for Kronos string quartet and choir. They asked me to do that, you know what I mean? And they want me to bring my jazz influence into it. When I wrote the opera, “Champion”, for the St. Louis Opera Theater. We call it an “opera in Jazz”, we don’t call it a “jazz opera.” Because it’s not swing based stuff all the time. It is the intersection of both worlds. Sometimes the jazz orchestra takes the lead and classical elements come through. Sometimes it’s the other way around like in a night club with just trio sound. For me I always thought that the intermingling of these things should occur. And to the point that my classical composition teacher tried to make to me years ago when I was excited to be writing for film. He said that now you are getting experience writing for orchestra. Now you have to learn how to take your other world – like Stravinsky figuring out how to notate the folklore – and figure out how to notate it for orchestra. It’s the same thing, figure out how to take those rhythms and things and notate it for orchestra. That is truly, what classical music is, “classic music.” We have come to think or accept classical music as something that is relegated to our past and that is not necessarily true. It’s the same way that we think about jazz, but it’s something that is alive and well.

LIMA: Do you have any difference when approaching and writing for jazz or classical musicians?

BLANCHARD: The difference is in understanding how both things work. I have a friend, Tim Arrons, timpanist for Pittsburgh, he told me years ago that you have to learn how an orchestra moves. It does not move like a jazz band, a jazz band is nimble and can move rather quickly. An orchestra can move quickly but responds to the conductor in a different way than a jazz band moves. You physically have so many people on the stage. Sometimes those things come into consideration when I’m writing a piece for an orchestra. However, it is mostly stylistic. I know that if I write [sings confirmation opening phrase] you cannot really notate that how I sang it. If I were to write it in a jazz way it would be played super straight or with the triplet feel, but what we do is somewhere in-between. That’s the thing that we understand as jazz musicians. Jazz musicians understand how to play and phrase it, but that is their strength. So if I wanted
that feeling I would probably write for the jazz musicians, and if I wanted it from the orchestra I would have to write it a whole different way, or think of some other way to get that effect. Probably not even do it for the orchestra. Maybe even do something that would better complement the orchestra’s strengths rather than force them to do something that they don’t do naturally.

LIMA: So how would you write for a hybrid ensemble with a big band and an orchestra, like what we have here with the Henry Mancini Institute? How would you break up the syncopated and swing parts?

BLANCHARD: I would do some cross-pollination, but the thing is that when the orchestra plays triplets, they play triplets, when they play eighth-notes, they play eighth-notes, then I would find common ground where the syncopations would work.

LIMA: Ah…! That is quite smart! [laughs]

BLANCHARD: That is our secret! [laughs]

LIMA: You work with a huge variety of ensembles. Does your mindset change from project to project considering the ensemble size and nature?

BLANCHARD: Yes it does. Once you get a tonal palate, you kind of create inside that space. It’s always interesting for me when I get interviewed for film. They want to know what it will sound like right away, but that’s hard for me because I like to absorb and develop the colors. The thing that generally happens is that once I come up with that the palate of colors, I tend to stay in that framework unless I’m specifically asked for something else and I’ll throw something else in. For example, I did one film that was all rhythm section, horn, and woodwinds, and percussion. So I had bass clarinet and two other clarinets and other stuff. Right away, I have a certain tonal pallet set up in my mind. So, of course my brain starts to shift so that you can get the range of colors that you need with that group. So if you need something bright, or edgy, or dark, or sullen, “I’ll pick those instruments and write this way.” As opposed to when I had a full orchestra and had more leeway, so my brain gets more expansive. I actually like the limitations more, it makes you creative. For example, I started learning about the bassoon and all the crazy
sounds it can make, you know. This woman came up to me and asked if I had ever heard the over-blown bassoon and I said “no”. She did and I was like “Whoa! that’s some rock and roll shit!” I love those scenarios. I think with anything, the brain shifts. When I was writing for Kronos and the choirs my brain was in a totally different space, you know. It is because the first thing is “oh my god, what am I gonna write?” But then when I sit down with it, then the doors start to open because you say: “ok, this is my bottom, this is my top, this is my middle, these are the colors that I have”. It starts to reveal themselves to you, that is the way I was taught. Rodger Dickenson said to always listen, the music is gonna tell what it is.

LIMA: When you write for a large ensemble in opposition to when you write your small ensemble, how does your writing changes?

BLANCHARD: Here’s the thing, mostly when I write for large ensembles, except for commissions, it’s been for film and so the intention is to support someone else’s vision, is to support someone else’s story. For the small jazz ensemble, it is more about what it is that I want to do. In those two instances it is about the intention of the music. The intention in the film is to be supportive, the intention in the jazz ensemble is all about making a musical statement. On the flipside, now that I’ve had these commissions and I’m thinking about writing for orchestra, man, it’s crazy! I have to calm my brain down because I look at the orchestra like being a kid in a candy store. [laughs] You know what I mean? You have all these options, not just the individual instruments, but all the combinations. So I have to start to think about “ok, how I want to say things musically? What is the vibe? What is the emotion?” And that helps me to whittle it down for this part, and open it up somewhere else, [gesticulating like molding something] you know. With small jazz groups, I have the musical platform or idea that I create and I allow all the other guys to really bring their creativity to help shape it. And that is very difficult when you are writing for orchestra, as you know, you have to be very formal in terms of what you want the orchestra to do, because they need direction. You cannot just have 70 guys going for it! [laughs] It’s not gonna work! I mean, you could come up with something interesting! But it would not work for most of the time. I guess that is the main
difference. In jazz we understand so much of the phrasing that I don’t have write the articulations for jazz musicians. But with orchestra immediately I think, “oh, ok, they need to know this is staccato, this is legato, this is long or short, whatever it is.”

LIMA: Do you have any experience having your small ensemble with an orchestra? Did it change the way you approached the compositions in terms of sections and improvisation?

BLANCHARD: Oh, definitely! When I’m writing music for my quintet and orchestra, the first thing I need to think about are what are their strengths. In moments, things have to back up for other people to take the lead. My brain tends to think about how to make things flow but to give the jazz ensemble enough space to operate. I hope that makes sense. Whereas when I’m writing for just orchestra, I have to create that in all their articulations, dynamics, and all of the writing has to be there. It’s interesting being a jazz musician because we never look at one thing the same way. So it’s so hard to bog myself down hearing a phrase like this [making an upward gesture]. Tomorrow I can hear the same phrase as this [making a downward gesture]. When I was writing my opera that was the most frustrating thing for me. [laughs] I had to commit. They were telling me “dude, you need to go through this and write some dynamic.” “No, but man, it could also do this…” That is when my jazz background got in the way, so to speak, but, in the end I tried to let the story tell me what it was. That was cool about the workshops because I could start to solidify what the piece would be. I hope this is making sense. I had to allow the piece to say “no… it can be this…” but the story at this point needs “this.” You know what I mean? “That is the overall arch.” It is kind of funny because it was a reverse of what happened when I first started writing, when I was a youngster in the music business. I took this composition lesson with this great composer Hale Smith, and Hale took a listen to my music and said: “yes young man, it sounds you are trying to control this amount of space [gestures big] without having the ability to control this amount of space [gestures small]. And I said, “ok”. [laughs] That is when I had to learn how to control and develop an idea, and master the craftsmanship of it, which a lot of us take for granted.
LIMA: You said every ensemble and piece changes your approach and it reminded me of the experience we had with Chick Corea.

BLANCHARD: Ok!

LIMA: I was a little bit scared. [laughs]

BLANCHARD: [laughs] That is understandable.

LIMA: I changed some of his music. I created a new section using his motives and I was very afraid about it and he was super receptive. I believe it relates to the jazz mentality that everything is a possibility.

BLANCHARD: It definitely relates to that. Chick is the kind of person who I admire and model my life after. He is inquisitive and he’s always trying to expand. For him, it is a complement that you took his music and developed it. Moreover, what he could have appreciated would have been that he did not think of it that way. That’s what I love. I’m always like “how did you come up with that?!?” To me, that is the fascination in music. We know how the sausage is made, all the ugly side of it, so when we see people who come up with something different and new it is just totally fascinating. I’m glad you had that experience with him. If it is coming from a place that is real and honest, what more could you ask for?

LIMA: It was a great experience!

BLANCHARD: What you did was great! I remember that so vividly, you know, I know you were probably scared to death, but it was such a great experience. A cool thing to have happen, to work with one of your hero’s. I never got a chance to write for one of my heroes in college!

LIMA: It is quite interesting that when I had opportunities here to write for pop stuff, they were far more sensitive to changes in the music than the jazz guys, very similar to classical people in that sense. They get upset when I change one chord. [laughs]

BLANCHARD: [laughs] There is a reason for that. Dr. Cornell West had the best description for jazz musicians: “Jazz musicians step out on nothing expecting
something.” And when he said that I went “wow”, that makes so much sense, because it is true. We will take the leap. “We don’t know what is going to happen, let’s go!” But sometimes we deal with other musicians that don’t have that flexibility. They need the security of [snap his finger] “ok, now I know where I am,” [snap his finger] “ok, I hear that and now I know where I am.” So I think that is kind of where this thing came from. Jazz musicians like being out in the “middle of the ocean,” we love that kind of feeling, you have to sink or swim! [laughs] You gotta do something and you learn something along the way. That’s what makes it cool!

LIMA: Last thing to wrap it up is less related to music but more to how it fits into society. It’s sad that jazz and classical music has such a small percentage of the audience. How do you envision the future for those art forms, what can we do?

BLANCHARD: It’s interesting. The main thing that has to happen: The artists have to understand the predicament that we are in. The responsibilities really fall on the artist to create music that is relevant. I’ve had this argument with people many times. We keep looking at this great music as something from our past, and it is not! It is something that was born in the past but it is still relevant. And it is still growing, it is still alive. When I think about what happened to me in the opera world, you know, it blew my mind. When the opera theater of St. Louis brought me out to see a bunch of operas, it was the most uplifting experience! I wanted everybody to have the same experience. When it was time for me to premier my opera and think about it, we tried to find a story that is relevant to people now. So that is why we picked the story of Emil Griffith, a gay fighter who killed his opponent in the ring. A guy who said “I killed the man and the world forgave me, but I loved a man and the world want to kill me.” That is still a relevant story. He was also suffering from dementia, so we had that element of it as well. Those are the things that drew people into wanting to go see the opera. Writing and creating music is the same thing. I just put together the E-collective band and the album is titled “breathless” and is all about the “I can’t breathe” movement. It is our attempt to create something that is meaningful, deep, poignant, but relevant. That’s the most important thing. The music and art has to touch people’s souls and the only way to do that is to deal with issues that
concern them. You know what I mean? It is great to watch the classic operas, and there are relevant aspects even now, but that is from a long time ago. The thing is, when we deal with issues now we have to do what Stravinsky did. We have to take the folklore and go deeper into it. It could be the blues or whatever is in the culture right now. Being the craftsmen that we are as composers, it is our duty to take those things and rip it apart and go deeper into. Take that one aspect, develop and create a larger work based on something that we deal with every day!

LIMA: Awesome! Thank you so much!

BLANCHARD: Are you kidding?! Thank you!
RAFAEL PICCOLOTTO DE LIMA: Em sua opinião, quais são as maiores diferenças entre a música clássica, o jazz e a música folclórica, música regional?

MEHMARI: Hm, é difícil estabelecer os limites precisos entre cada coisa, mas eu diria que a música clássica depende totalmente do material escrito, digamos assim, e isso não acontece nas outras tradições. Mas eu sempre acredito que as melhores respostas que eu dou são sempre através da minha produção musical, que acaba aproximando coisas aparentemente distantes. É uma coisa que acontece naturalmente, então às vezes nem existe uma concepção tão prática dessas pontes, mas elas acontecem naturalmente porque eu cresci ouvindo música muito diferente, no mesmo contexto doméstico, emocional, através da minha mãe, no piano, então esses limites são todos pra mim bem sutis. Eu não divido a música em três grandes grupos como você propõe, eu acredito que existem milhões de músicas e existe uma música ao mesmo tempo, então eu tenho dificuldade de enxergar a música como três grandes grupos assim, ou muito menos ainda como dois grandes grupos que não se conversam. Pra mim isso não acontece e nunca aconteceu, e essa é uma pergunta que me é feita desde que eu tenho 12, 13 anos, “E aí, você vai seguir o clássico? Vai seguir o popular?” E eu nunca dei essa resposta de uma maneira direta e categórica, mas venho dando essa resposta através da minha própria produção, que me permite trafegar e transitar por ambientes musicais muito distintos. Eu sei a distinção desses ambientes musicais, sei que existem tradições, gestuais, culturas e modos de fazer música diferentes, porém acho que até por isso posso dizer que não são dois, não são três, são milhões e acabam sendo um, de acordo com a personalidade de cada músico. Isso aí quem define quais territórios explorar ou não explorar é o próprio músico, então acabo achando que o limite não é da música, mas mais do músico, e dos preconceitos que existem, naturalmente, nos diversos ambientes musicais, que como todo preconceito são sempre nocivos.
LIMA: Ótima resposta! Isso que você falou de não enxergar as diferenças é justamente o assunto da minha tese. Agora um desafio que eu vejo para o compositor que trabalha com esses diferentes universos juntos é lidar com músicos que vem de tradições muito distintas. De um lado você tem aquele músico que quase não lê, mas que tem o ouvido muito apurado, que toca de ouvido e domina toda aquela tradição. E de outro lado você tem músicos que leem muito bem partitura, mas que tem enorme dificuldade para improvisar ou fazer qualquer coisa que não esteja no papel. Como você lida com músicos com perfis tão distintos?

MEHMARI: Olha, falando especificamente da minha experiência, não tenho a pretensão de dar uma resposta que seja genérica pra qualquer situação. Cada compositor tem a sua forma de lidar com essas idiossincrasias musicais. Numa orquestra, numa composição orquestral, eu evito deixar informações incompletas na partitura ou deixar certos espaços para improvisos, a não ser que sejam coisas muito sucintas e muito específicas. Por exemplo, na minha suíte “Danças imaginárias”, no final eu escrevo para o primeiro fagote um “improviso livre em dó maior dentro de tais notas”, porque é um efeito blurred que eu quero, um efeito justamente que não tem uma direção de um discurso musical escrito. Mas o que eu posso dizer é que raramente eu tive que exigir de um músico improvisador que ele tivesse uma leitura impecável e vice-versa, que o músico que tem o domínio da escrita ou da leitura à primeira vista tenha uma improvisação criativa, impecável. A gente já escreve pensando pro músico que vai tocar, eu tenho muito isso. Eu recebo muitas encomendas, então eu procuro conhecer bem a fundo cada músico que me encomenda uma música: a trajetória dele, o tipo de repertório que ele toca, o que ele espera. Então, sei lá, escrevi um concerto pra fagote pro Fábio Curi. Eu sei, eu conheço o músico, eu conheço a pessoa, eu conheço o código que ele transita, o código que ele domina, digamos assim. E naturalmente não vou escrever um monte de cifras e pedir pra ele improvisar em cima porque não é exatamente o que... ninguém vai ficar feliz com aquilo. Eu tenho uma visão mais prática também, além da visão mais romântica da composição, eu procuro escrever pra quem me encomenda a música. Então uma orquestra me encomenda determinada peça, eu procuro fazer dentro dos parâmetros estilísticos...
mais ou menos nativos daquele contexto, daquele idioma. Então eu te diria que existe sim uma crescente população de músicos que estão dando conta do recado de dominar o material escrito e também de criar música em tempo real, de interagir com outros músicos de uma maneira bastante ativa, que não seja meramente uma execução impecável de um material escrito. Então existem músicos notáveis que vem de tradições estritas de música escrita e acabam virando grandes improvisadores, e mantêm as duas correntes muito fortes. Por exemplo, o Gabrieli Mirabassi, clarinetista italiano com quem eu tenho um trabalho, vem desse mundo da música contemporânea de tocar sequência de Bério e agora está tocando choro e Guinga como ninguém, é um exemplo de um músico que tem essa flexibilidade. Mas eu procuro valorizar o que cada músico tem de melhor nas minhas produções, eu sempre acho que a espontaneidade e o rigor juntos são muito fortes, e às vezes as duas coisas separadas não me dão tanta alegria.

LIMA: Outra questão relacionada a minha pesquisa é o fato de performers adicionarem outros elementos à música, especialmente em sessões abertas ou que envolvam qualquer tipo de improvisação. Como que você, como compositor, lida com isso? Com pessoas mudando parte da sua música. Qual é a sua reação a esse tipo de situação?

MEHMARI: Ótima. Eu tive algumas experiências, mas isso é raro pois como eu sou arranjador, geralmente eu escrevo e arranco. Raramente eu tenho um arranjador trabalhando no meu material temático de uma forma livre. Isso aconteceu num DVD que eu gravei com a Orquestra a Base de Sopros de Curitiba. O Davi Sartori, que é o arranjador da orquestra, pegou uma série de temas meus e fez uma fantasia; ele foi por caminhos que certamente eu não tomaria, mas eu adorei. Eu adorei, eu gostei, eu fiquei muito contente. Nunca me aconteceu de alguém levar a música pra um caminho que me causasse um impacto negativo puramente. Quer dizer, aconteceu de eu estranhar num primeiro momento, mas depois entender qual foi aquela visão, qual foi o ponto, a ideia essencial. Então eu sou bastante aberto, da mesma forma que eu gosto de trabalhar material de terceiros de uma forma livre, e que ao mesmo tempo é respeitoso. Eu acredito que as imitações e os covers é que são desrespeitosos. O respeitoso é você trabalhar aquilo com um zelo criativo, com rigor, que tenha uma ideia realmente, que não seja uma
mera repetição, que não seja uma cópia. Acho que isso não é algo que faz muito sentido pra mim. Mas músicos tocando minha música, eu sempre acho muito interessante ouvir diferentes leituras das minhas composições, e que eu me lembre nunca aconteceu de eu ter que falar, “olha, não, não é isso, não tem nada a ver”, isso nunca aconteceu.

LIMA: Outra questão que eu encontro, e que eu já tive experiências em que sinto que falhei enquanto arranjador, é sobre querer transferir a linguagem de um grupo instrumental para outro. Vou citar uma, o trabalho final que fiz lá na Unicamp. Fiz uma pesquisa em cima da banda Mantiqueira com o Proveta, analisei os arranjos dele, e falei “vou reescrever, expandir pra orquestra sinfônica”. A gente apresentou e o resultado não foi dos melhores. Existia um *flam* entre os sopros e as cordas em tudo que era síncopa. E a partir disso, toda vez que vou escrever qualquer coisa pra orquestra, eu sou muito cauteloso. Qual seu pensamento sobre isso? Sei que muito da sua música tem essa influência do choro, do samba, junto com esse refinamento formal e harmônico da música erudita. Agora, quando você escreve pra orquestra, ou pra qualquer grupo com instrumentação parecida, quais são os seus cuidados?

MEHMARI: A minha produção orquestral tem uma linguagem bastante própria, eu diria que eu exploro idiomaticamente a orquestra, e não tem tanto essa interface com o choro, com o samba, com ritmos brasileiros assim. Porque como você disse, no caso de um grupo como a banda Mantiqueira, existe uma coesão rítmica que é difícil de encontrar numa orquestra grande, mesmo de câmaras, e você não vai conseguir encontrar essa coesão rítmica que você encontra num grupo como esse. Então eu acho que a escrita é diferente mesmo. Pra cordas, por exemplo. Eu toco cordas, eu toco viola; então eu domino a coisa idiomatica de cordas, vejo que pros sopros é outro mundo de articulações e tal. E é difícil né, as células rítmicas básicas da música brasileira traduzidas para uma linguagem orquestral nem sempre funcionam. E é sempre um desafio, eu diria que é um desafio constante. Eu gostaria que as orquestras tivessem um treinamento pra isso, entendeu? Eu sei que é tabu, que é difícil, mas eu acredito que a gente deveria ter uma aula de ginga. A aula de quais são as melhores arcadas para certos ritmos brasileiros, quer dizer, tem gente que faz duas pra cima e pra baixo, outro que fica alternando, já conversei
muito a respeito e não há um consenso. Não há uma organização desse *know-how*, é uma coisa que meio que não se dá uma devida importância, então acho até que isso intimida outros compositores brasileiros, como eu, como você, a explorar esse contexto dentro do universo de uma orquestra sinfônica, de uma orquestra de câmara.

LIMA: Isso esbarra numa questão importante, às vezes existe até um certo preconceito de alguns músicos do universo da música erudita com peças que usam essa figuração da música popular, às vezes até como uma música menor.

MEHMARI: É, às vezes soa menor mesmo porque está mal tocada.

LIMA: Sim, e aí eles não estudam. Não existe essa prática de como fazer aquilo soar bem, aí como aquilo não soa bem os compositores não escrevem pra aquilo daquele jeito, então você cria um ciclo vicioso de coisas que não funcionam. Ou, outro problema que encontro, inclusive em jazz eu vejo muito isso, você vê nessas formações com cordas e sopros, as figurações interessantes são todas na big band. As cordas estão só tocando bolacha, e aí eu fico pensando, qual é que é a nossa saída, quais são as alternativas?

MEHMARI: Rapaz, é complexa essa tua pergunta. Porque acho que isso envolve uma educação mais ampla. Eu tenho sempre essa crítica, por exemplo na educação de um pianista de concerto, de ele nunca ter contato com a improvisação, com uma linguagem mais aberta que o permita por exemplo fazer uma cadência em um concerto de clássico, de Mozart ou Beethoven, enfim. Eu acho que a formação do músico clássico é moldada pra fazer com que o cara seja uma peça pra se encaixar perfeitamente ali. E muitas vezes eu acredito que faltem elementos, que faltem instrumentos pra conviver com gestuais como esse que a gente está falando, de música brasileira, ou de música cubana, ou de jazz, enfim, sei lá. Eu sinto que a formação desses músicos é toda formada pra um determinado repertório, e isso exclui certos gestuais que, não sei, às vezes são tidos como menores, às vezes não, às vezes são tidos como outra coisa que não interessa, porque “tem as pessoas que fazem aquilo bem e a gente não”, ou então porque existem preconceitos reais, que esbarram em questões racistas. Ou simplesmente porque não se tem um repertório em quantidade ou qualidade que demande a atenção necessária. É claro
que fica então numa questão do ovo e da galinha né, a gente não escreve porque sabe que não vai funcionar, e eles não estudam porque sabem que não existe repertório. Nós pensamos nas limitações, “ah, o cara das cordas, não swinga, vai ficar duro, então vamos botar pro pessoal das madeiras”. Assim como eu, você veio do interior. Nós sabemos que muitas vezes esses músicos de sopro começaram em banda de coreto, tocavam dobrado e valsas na praça, esses músicos tem um background diferente.

É uma questão ampla, complexa, e realmente não é uma resposta rápida e fácil pra essa pergunta. Mas por isso que você está estudando, né?

LIMA: Outra pergunta é em relação a questão física do instrumento. Pela sua experiência como violista, o quanto que é uma questão de estudo e de prática, e o quanto que é uma questão idiomática do instrumento trabalhar com essas síncopas?

MEHMARI: Observe um rabequeiro tocando absolutamente gingado, é um instrumento de corda. Naturalmente outra cultura, outra origem, mas ainda sim um instrumento de corda. Eu por exemplo, na minha peça “Contraponto, Ponte e Ponteio” escrita para a Petrobrás Sinfônica, escrevi uma cadência de duas rabecas para o primeiro e segundo violinos e com gestuais do baiao, gestuais de músicas populares do nordeste. Mas minha preocupação é sempre que eu não me torne aquele compositor que usa as tradições populares como objeto de curiosidade, porque isso eu não gosto. Muitas vezes a gente pode encontrar exemplos em composições nacionalistas onde o uso de tradições populares aparece quase como um exotismo, “aquele pessoal simples, que toca daquele jeitinho, que toca aquela viola caipira...” e não é bem assim. Se você vai pelo interior investigar tradições como o cururu, tradições de improviso, de viola, são extremamente complexas, elas têm um código muito complexo, muito rico, que muitas vezes é maniqueísta e simplificado pelo acadêmico de modo a traduzir aquela linguagem e padronizar, e pasteurizar ela. Pasteurizar é a palavra, porque você realmente a empacota em um negócio que fica possível de executar em outro contexto. E nesse processo de pasteurização você elimina muita informação essencial também. Sei lá, é como arroz integral e arroz refinado, você perde os nutrientes todos. Então, sei lá, (cantarola) você
vê inúmeros exemplos de repertório orquestral, onde esse gestual rico é simplificado pra se adequar ao contexto prático, que passa pelo idioma tradicional de músicos de formação orquestral. Então quer dizer, se você escreve aquela célula de uma maneira legível, o músico de orquestra vai tocar quantizado no tempo, tocar colcheias iguais; e aquilo naturalmente não vai ter o mesmo punch, o mesmo apelo, o mesmo suave que uma pessoa que cresceu ativamente naquele idioma. E justamente isso é algo que pode ser mudado, acho que pode se estimular mais, para que o músico procure sair mais do seu bairro, pra ouvir mais, pra conhecer. Acho que nunca vivemos um tempo tão propício pra isso quanto hoje, a quantidade de informações que você tem em qualquer lugar é brutal. Só não descobre quem não quer mesmo. E às vezes o estudo é feito dessa maneira, a reprimir isso no estudo do músico. Eu por exemplo no início dos meus estudos de piano clássico, o improviso era um negócio mal visto, como algo que não tinha utilidade, uma perda de tempo. E de fato pra aquele estudo direcionado pra formar um pianista de concerto era uma perda de tempo. No entanto, todo aquele exercício de improvisação, onde eu ficava horas e horas durante a adolescência improvisando, é o que gerou o músico que eu sou hoje. Foi aquela procura de personalidade musical, aquele exercício que virou também o exercício de composição pra mim.

LIMA: Você sabe que é até engraçado pensar nessa crítica que é feita aos músicos que tentam improvisar, como uma coisa que não faz parte do universo da música clássica. É uma ocupação totalmente errada né? Beethoven era um grande improvisador, Mozart era um grande improvisador, baixo contínuo de música barroca, as cadências todas eram improvisadas (risos). Então é quase uma...

MEHMARI: Eu concordo contigo. Eu acho que ainda mais com instrumento harmônico, como o piano que é um instrumento com tantas possibilidades, eu acho que o concerto clássico deveria ter cadências improvisadas sempre. Não estou falando que você tem que fazer isso em qualquer concerto de qualquer repertório, naturalmente que não. Você ainda menciona a música barroca e aí sim entramos num capítulo ainda mais especial né? Porque a ornamentação é fundamental, fundamental pelo instrumento ser de corda. Pra um flautista, pra um corneto, sei lá, o oboé barroco, voz, o cravista nem se fala, o tiorba,
o alaúde... Quer dizer, eles leem o baixo cifrado como a música popular de hoje, e aquele código escrito é bastante simples né? Quer dizer, esse aprimoramento do código escrito foi acontecendo posteriormente na história da música, até se tornar um código absolutamente fechado e que não permita qualquer dúvida a respeito de como se deve tocar aquela nota. No barroco não, se você tocar as notas exatas escritas não tem música. Se você pegar o realbook e tocar uma música do realbook nota por nota, não tem música. Então se você pegar a maior obra prima da história da ópera, o “Orfeu” de Monteverdi, a partitura é extremamente simples quando comparada a uma partitura de um Stockhausen, de um Pierre Boulez. São coisas que não se comparam. Quer dizer, esse código escrito na música barroca tinha que se ter o domínio estilístico pra tocar aquela música, como no barroco francês, por exemplo, que tem as tercinas como no jazz. O shuffle né? No barroco francês você tem um negócio que se chama “Inegale”, você tem o “Tam darim, Darom borom, Turim durum”, que está escrito colcheia, “tarara rara raram”, só que ninguém vai tocar assim. Então se você vai tocar um xote você também não vai tocar, você vai tocar “pi porou puru tirum”, você vai tocar assim naturalmente. Então é esse tipo de conhecimento que não é dado ao músico clássico. Eu sinto que falta uma atençãozinha aí, talvez uma modernizada na forma de ensinar. É lógico que existem tradições seríssimas que eu admiro muitíssimo, quando você vê um virtuoso tocar o segundo de Brahms é de tirar o fôlego, é maravilhoso e pra mim está tudo certo. Mas existem músicos com maior inquietude, de procura musical, que acabam se interessando por músicas que estão fora do perímetro de segurança, digamos assim.

LIMA: Nessa pesquisa que eu estou fazendo eu percebi que esse fenômeno que você comentou com o clarinetista e outros músicos de dupla formação é uma questão de agora, do século 21. Uma das grandes críticas ao Third Stream é sobre o fato de que os músicos de jazz não tinham uma fluência e um conhecimento formal da música clássica, que tentavam expandir as obras e se perdiam. Do outro lado, músicos do universo da música clássica europeia tentavam dar uma “jazzificada” utilizando um ou outro elemento do jazz de forma simplista no contexto da música erudita e achavam que aquilo era Third Stream... Você, assim como outros vários músicos que eu estou pesquisando, é um
exemplo desse novo tipo de músico “poliglota”, vocês são exemplos de pessoas que nasceram e se desenvolveram em universos diferentes. Isso é um fenômeno muito interessante.

MEHMARI: É interessante e acho que bem contemporâneo, porque a música vive um momento de diálogo bastante interessante. Você fala do third stream, acho que é um termo que é aceito, enfim, mas que eu também não sou muito fã desse termo, que é justamente essa coisa de ter uma terceira via, uma é clássica, uma é popular e essa terceira. Quer dizer, pra mim existe a third, a fourth, quer dizer, existe a milionésima stream. Cada grande cabeça pensante musical é um stream. Então eu diria que todas essas diferentes correntes desembocam num grande mar de ideias musicais. E nascem dali também. E acho que tem que se respeitar as idiossincrasias de cada compositor, você entrevistou a Maria Schneider, por exemplo. Ela tem um estilo altamente pessoal, e recentemente escreveu uma obra para a orquestra de Câmara com cordas e voz que você deve conhecer o...

LIMA: A gente fez aqui, eu fiquei como assistente dela.

MEHMARI: Ah, então pronto, ela me deu o disco, é maravilhoso. E você vê ali um estilo totalmente dela, e que pra mim tem coerência formal, tem coerência estilística, tem coerência idiomática, né? Pra voz, pra orquestra, tudo certo. E eu acho assim, tem músicos que fizeram isso a vida toda, Leonard Bernstein, Radamés Gnattali, o próprio Jobim em alguns casos, Luiz Eça, do Brasil também, Egberto Gismonti... Sinto que talvez seja uma nova voz musical que se emerja nos nossos tempos, e que vai ficar cada vez mais difícil de dar um nome pra ela. Vai se suar muito pra se achar um nome competente, quer dizer, nome você pode dar o que você quiser né, mas que realmente defina aquilo ali, acho difícil. E a categorização de música, que sempre foi um negócio difícil, vai ficar cada vez mais difícil. Da música boa estou dizendo, não das tendências midiáticas, naturalmente né.

LIMA: Eu li esses dias um artigo falando sobre o processo que aconteceu no século 20, agora no século 21, dizendo que no começo tinha essa ideia de dizer que era um
caldeirão, né? Até a ideia antropofágica, que é onde você põe tudo, todas as influências e vai ter um resultado homogêneo. E daí hoje em dia a gente vê que na realidade é um mosaico, tudo isso vem, mas sai de maneiras diferentes.

MEHMARI: Claro, o artista é um filtro, como um cristal que refrata aquela luz que chega, aquela luz branca. E cada artista com a sua história, a sua tradição, com as suas preferências e com todas as milhões de idiossincrasias que o artista traz, interpreta esse ruído branco que é o que a gente experimenta na vida, né? Toda essa informação e essa experiência tão ampla de música, que num dia você pode ver uma orquestra barroca, um regional de choro, um grupo de música contemporânea, um show de rock e um de Techno no mesmo dia. Então o papel do artista é justamente processar essa informação toda e devolver um discurso inteligível, e se possível bonito. Acho que música tem que ser bonita, então essa missão do artista é de tradução e de interpretação de códigos bem diferentes. Isso não tem nada a ver com world music, acho que isso está muito num outro estágio.

LIMA: Aí eu queria ver qual é a sua previsão ou projeção, como é que você vê o futuro da música de concerto.

MEHMARI: Bom, eu te digo o que para mim seria o paraíso do futuro da música de concerto. Seria que num mesmo concerto a gente pudesse ouvir uma obra de Purcell, tocadas com arcos barrocos e instrumentos de época, e na segunda parte uma sinfonia de Beethoven com um arco clássico. Depois um pássaro de fogo e depois uma composição feita contemporariamente a nós, e que fosse justamente uma música livre de estereótipos, que fosse uma reflexão sobre o tempo que a gente vive. E livre nesse sentido também de não ter que se encaixar no “a música contemporânea não pode ter um acorde perfeito, não pode ter uma melodia, não pode dialogar com nada que seja popular, tem que ser estritamente acadêmica”. Quer dizer, eu acredito que existem espaços pra essa música também e sempre existirão. Na verdade eu fiquei bastante surpreso quando eu comecei a ter um crescente volume de encomenda de composições de orquestras de grupos de câmara, de solistas, porque eu confesso que eu não me preparei pra isso no sentido de
querer virar um compositor. Eu comecei escrevendo arranjos, as pessoas gostavam da forma como eu escrevia, comecei a receber cada vez mais encomendas, e desde 2004 basicamente que eu não entrego uma obra sem ter outras esperando na fila da criação. Então hoje, por exemplo, enquanto eu falo com você eu tenho cerca de uma hora de música orquestral pra entregar daqui 2 meses. Isso me deixa também com um ritmo de escrita que é muito bom pro compositor, ter de estar sempre íntimo do seu código, íntimo do seu ambiente de composição, convivendo com a sua obra de uma maneira bastante íntima e constante. Agora eu não saberia te dizer por que eu tenho esse espaço, eu acredito que exista na minha música uma procura muito verdadeira, estética e musical que seja reconhecido por essas instituições como algo de valor. E eu realmente não tenho aquela postura que pode, por muitas vezes, ser um tanto arrogante: de que a música feita hoje não pode ser fácil de entender, não pode querer comunicar nada que não seja um código absolutamente complexo e rebuscado, que as partituras devem ser invariavelmente muito complexas e dificílimas. Quer dizer, eu acho que esses são também estereótipos que estão caducos já. Eu vejo muitas vezes orquestras cansadas desse tipo de repertório porque não rende, no sentido de que não dá prazer em tocar, não dá prazer em investir energia. Mas naturalmente existem músicos inspirados em toda parte, existem músicos que são geniais e que tem uma obra que deveria ser mais tocada, mas que não é tocada porque são obras difíceis tecnicamente, e exigem tempo de preparação muito maior do que o normal. Você pega um [György] Ligeti, por exemplo, são obras que exigem um cuidado especial pra que funcione, pra que seja executado com a competência necessária. Mas essas questões são todas muito complexas, sabe? Um tanto delicado, porque eu, por exemplo, não fui aceito numa bienal de música contemporânea dois a nos atrás, que eu escrevi uma obra, porque eu justamente não “frequento esse clube, eu não tenho essa carteirinha”. E nem quero ter. Mas eu acho interessante né, é como se eu não fizesse música contemporânea. É como se “Ah, o André faz a música popular, tem que ter harmonia...”, porque não há aquele showroom de efeito especial dos instrumentos e acho que esse é um conceito bastante reducionista de música contemporânea. A música contemporânea é a música feita hoje, pros ouvidos de hoje, pros corações de hoje. Não tem nenhum problema que ela procure um resultado que seja
bonito. Quer dizer, o conceito de beleza cada um tem o seu, mas eu diria que existem certos moldes, “certas coisas que não se pode fazer na música contemporânea”, e eu acho que nunca passou pela minha cabeça seguir uma cartilha dessas. Não sei pra você, pra outros pode ser que sim, pra outros mais ou menos, eu tive um caminho meio caótico pra chegar na minha linguagem musical, tocando em bares desde muito cedo com 11. Depois tocando jazz, estudando muito contraponto, estudando composição, orquestração, tocando muito, escrevendo muito, aprendendo com meus próprios erros... Porque eu tive desde sempre uma chance de aprender, de exercitar minha escrita, em situações muito práticas e nada acadêmicas, situações completamente práticas tipo “pra semana que vem precisa de 5 arranjos pra orquestra”, então eu fui forjando esse meu estilo de uma forma bastante idiossincrática e pessoal, e acho que isso acaba resultando na música que eu faço hoje.

LIMA: Enquanto você estava falando eu pensava que uma das críticas feitas a música tonal feita hoje para um contexto de concerto é de ser uma imitação, de se estar “tentando ser Beethoven ou Mozart”. E isso no final das contas acaba virando somente um belo exercício de composição estilística. O que não é o caso da sua música. Você tem uma linguagem harmônica parecida com a do romantismo, mas também tem toda essa outra bagagem, esse outro vocabulário que vem da sua história e aparece na sua produção. Então de maneira nenhuma essa música é uma imitação romântica, mas sim “a música do André”.

MEHMARI: É uma música mestiça, né? Uma música mestiça como era a de Ernesto Nazaré, que trouxe a música de salão europeia para encontrar os ritmos afro-brasileiros, o choro. Quer dizer, aquelas Polcas são absolutamente mestiças, acredito que existam esses elementos na minha produção. E é algo que acontece naturalmente desde muito cedo, eu tenho registros antiquíssimos dessa procura, tanto gravados quanto em música escrita. Essa é uma inquietude minha, que me levou a procurar essa linguagem. Mas acho que em nenhum momento tenho a vontade de emular nenhum mestre antigo da história da música, de forma alguma. Embora, naturalmente, como eu e como você, todo mundo já estudou os grandes mestres e estudará pra sempre, e em nenhum momento ninguém vai
querer fazer a décima de Beethoven, não se trata disso. Brahms já fez, né? A coisa é que a música é uma grande linha, uma grande tradição, não existe música nova, existe a continuidade de uma grande linha. Quando aparece um músico dizendo que achou um negócio novo que nunca ninguém fez, pô... Quer dizer, tudo que eu estudei de música eu sei de onde vem, em termos de matriz. Matrizes, não estou falando que ninguém copiou de ninguém. Você sabe de onde veio “O Pássaro de Fogo”. Você sabe de onde veio até músicas que aparentemente não vieram de lugar nenhum, sei lá, Les Noces de Stravinsky, que música esquisita. Aquilo veio das músicas dos camponeses russos. Acho isso, acho que tradição é moderno, a música é uma grande linha que tem continuidade e vai longe ainda, ainda tem muita coisa boa por vir aí.
RAFAEL PICCOLOTTO DE LIMA: In your opinion, what are the major differences between classical music, jazz and folk music/ regional music?

ANDRÉ MEHMARI: Hm, it is difficult to define precise limits, but I would say that classical music depends entirely on the written material, and this does not happen in other traditions. But I believe that my best answers are always through my music production, which approaches various things apparently distant. It's something that happens naturally to me. I grew up listening to very different types of music at home, listening to my mother at the piano, and these limits are very subtle for me. I do not divide music into three major groups as you said, I believe there are millions of kinds of music, and there is one kind of music at the same time. So I have difficulty in seeing music as three large groups like you said, or even seeing it as two large groups with no conversation with each other. For me this does not happen, it never happened. This is a question that people have been asking me since I was 12, 13 years old: "so, will you follow classical music? Will you follow popular music?" I never answered it directly and categorically, but I've been answering through my own production, which allows me to travel between those very different musical environments. I know the distinction among these musical environments; I know there are traditions, cultures and ways of doing different music. That’s why I can say there are not two, there are not three, but there are millions of kinds of music and at the same time it ends up being one, according to the personality of each musician. The musician is the one who will define which areas he can explore or not, so I think the limit is not in the music itself, but mostly in the musician himself, and also of prejudices that naturally exist in different musical environments - which like all prejudice are always harmful.

LIMA: Great answer! What you said about not seeing those musical divisions is exactly the focus of my dissertation. I see a challenge for the composer who wants to bring these various universes together: many performers have strict backgrounds. On one side you
have that musician who can barely read but has a very accurate ear and is specialized on a particular folk/popular tradition. On the other side you have musicians who can read almost anything they have in view, but they have enormous difficulty doing anything that is not on the paper. My question is: as a composer, how do you deal with musicians with such different profiles?

MEHMARI: Look, I can talk specifically about my experience; I cannot give an answer that is generic to any situation. Each composer has his own way of dealing with these musical idiosyncrasies. In an orchestral composition, I avoid leaving any incomplete notation; I avoid leaving space for improvisation, except for very brief and specific stuff. For instance, in my suit "Imaginary Dances", I write for the first bassoon "free improvisation in C major inside of “x” notes," because I want this blurred effect, an effect that has no specific direction. On the other hand, I can say that I rarely require an improvising musician to have impeccable reading, and vice versa. We write already thinking about the musician who will play it, I am like that. I get many commissions, so I try to know deeply each musician who commissions a piece: I learn about his career, the kind of repertoire he plays, what he expects. So, for example, I wrote a concerto for bassoon for Fabio Curi. I know him, I know his musical vocabulary, in what style he is proficient. And of course I will not write a bunch of chords and ask him to improvise on it because no one will be happy with that. I also have a very practical view beyond the idealistic view of composition; I try to write for who orders the music. If an orchestra orders a particular piece, I try to do it within the native stylistic parameters of that context, of that language. So I would say there is a growing population of musicians who are delivering the goods in mastering the written material and also in creating music in real time; they’re interacting with other musicians in a very active way, it is not merely a flawless execution of a written material. There are notable musicians who come from strict classical traditions who end up becoming great improvisers as well, maintaining both currents. For example, Gabriel Mirabassi, an Italian clarinetist with whom I work: he comes from this world of contemporary music, he plays the Béroio “Sequenza” and now he is playing “choro” and Guinga as no one does. He is an example of a musician who has this flexibility. In my productions I try to value the best of each musician, I
always think that spontaneity and rigor are very strong together, and sometimes these two things do not give me happiness when separated.

LIMA: Another issue (which is related to this research) concerns other people bringing other elements to your music. How do you react when improvisers come up with something very different than what you have originally conceived to your compositions? Or when other composers or arrangers give new directions to your material?

MEHMARI: I have had few experiences in that regard. As I am an arranger, I often write and arrange, so I rarely have an arranger working on my thematic material in a free way. One of those few situations happened in a DVD I recorded with the “Orquestra Base de Sopros de Curitiba”. Davi Sartori, the Orchestra’s arranger, got a set of themes of mine and made a fantasy; he went to places I have never gone, but I loved it. I enjoyed it; I was very pleased. It has never happened to me that someone arranged my music in a way that gave me a purely negative impression. I mean, it sometimes seemed odd at a first hearing, but then I realized what that vision was, what the point was, what the essential idea was. So I am quite open, I like to work with other people’s materials in a free way, but in a way that is respectful at the same time - because I believe imitations and covers are what can be disrespectful. You should work rigorously with a creative zeal, with an idea, work in a way that is not a mere repetition, that is not a copy. Copies do not make sense to me. But for me it is always interesting to listen to musicians bringing new perspectives to my music, and as far as I remember, there has never been a situation where I had to say, "look, no, not that, it has nothing to do with the piece", this has never happened to me.

LIMA: Another situation in which I've had unsuccessful experiences is concerning the transference of the language of one instrumental group to another. My final undergraduate project at Unicamp is one example. I did research on Proveta’s arrangements for the Mantiqueira band. I analyzed his arrangements and decided to re-orchestrate them for symphony orchestra plus big band. It didn’t quite work the way I envisioned. There was a rhythmic delay between the big band and the orchestra in most syncopated rhythms. Now every time I write for orchestra I am very cautious about it. I want to know about your experience in that regard, specially as most of your music has a
lot of that influence from *choro* and *samba*. When you write for orchestras how do you approach the Brazilian rhythmic element?

MEHMARI: My orchestral production has its very own language; I would say I explore the orchestra idiomatically, but without so much interface with *choro*, with *samba*, with Brazilian rhythms. As you said, in the case of a group like the *Mantiqueira* band, there is a rhythmic cohesion that is hard to find in a big orchestra, and even in chamber orchestras; you will not find the rhythmic cohesion that you find in a group like *Mantiqueira*. So I think the writing must be different. Look at strings, for example. As I play the viola, I can say that it's hard. The basic rhythmic cells of Brazilian music often do not work when translated into an orchestral language. It's always a challenge. I wish orchestral performers practiced this. I know it's a taboo, I know it's hard, but I believe we should have a class of *ginga* (Brazilian “swing” feel), in which string players discussed bowings for Brazilian styles, I mean, I have talked a lot about it with many different people and there is no consensus. There is no organization of this *know-how*, it seems like it is not important. So I think this even intimidates other Brazilian composers, like me, like you, in exploring this context inside the universe of a symphony orchestra, or a chamber orchestra.

LIMA: It relates to the prejudice you mentioned before, some classical musicians look at those Brazilian folk figures as if they come from a less important kind music.

MEHMARI: Yes, and it ends up sounding bad because they play it badly.

LIMA: That is true. I understand it as a vicious cycle of things that do not work: there is no formal training for classical players in this style, on how to make it sound better; consequently, it does not sound good, and composers avoid writing in a challenging way for classical performers. As consequence those musicians look at their less challenging music as being inferior to traditional classical music and are less interested. While looking at representative scores, specially in symphonic jazz arrangements, the most interesting figurations are performed by the big band, while strings are just playing wholes notes and little runs here and there. What should we do as composers and arrangers in that situation?
MEHMARI: Your question is very complex, because for me it involves the entire musical education system. For example, in a concert pianist’s education, he is usually not allowed or encouraged to improvise, and therefore doesn’t develop the skills to create a *cadenza* in a classical Mozart or Beethoven concerto. I see the education of classical musicians as a way to shape the individual to became a performer of preexisting material. I believe that some elements are missing in music education, there is a lack of musical training for classical musicians to properly perform various genres, such as Brazilian music, Cuban music, or jazz, whatever. I feel that the education of these musicians is focused on a particular repertoire, and this excludes certain musical vocabularies. I don’t know why that is, maybe because some musical idioms are seen as less important by the classical community, as something that does not matter because there are other people who do it well, or maybe because there are still prejudices linked with racist issues. Or simply because it does not have a repertoire in quantity or quality demanding that kind of attention. Of course, we come to that question of "the egg and the chicken"; we do not write because we know it won’t work, and they do not study because they know they will not have good written music to play. We do that because we think about the characteristics of musicians who are in most orchestras. We think about their limitations in that regard: "oh, the string players don’t swing, this line will not work for them, so let's write it for the woodwinds". As you come from the countryside as I do, we know about the bandstand culture, that wind players usually have this other background which includes various other styles. So the issue is broad and complex, and there is not really a quick and easy answer to that question. But that’s why you are studying, right?

LIMA: Continuing on the string instruments and Brazilian syncopations topic, being a string player yourself, how much do you think is a matter of lack of practice and how much it is an actual problem related to the way those instruments are built and the way they are supposed to work?

MEHMARI: Look at a Brazilian country fiddler [*rabeca*] playing in a swing style [*gingado*]. It is a stringed instrument such as the violin, so I believe that the answer is that it is possible to play these syncopations properly on string instruments. For example,
in my piece "Contraponto, Ponte e Ponteio" that I wrote for Petrobrás Sinfônica, I wrote a cadenza for two fiddles [rabeca] for the first and second violins that has baião rhythm figurations; it uses the vocabulary of popular northeastern Brazilian music. But I don’t want to be another one of those composers who uses the popular traditions only as an object of curiosity in his music – I don’t like this. You can find many examples of that in some nationalist compositions. They make use of certain popular traditions almost as a curiosity, an exoticism... and that is not my case. If you go to the countryside and investigate traditions as the Cururu, the improvisational traditions there, the Brazilian 10-string guitar, it is extremely complex and deep. Usually it is simplified by the academic in order to translate that language, to standardize it and pasteurize it. Pasteurize is the word, because they want to transform it in something that is possible to execute in another context. And you also eliminate a lot of essential information in this pasteurization process. I don’t know, it's like brown rice and refined rice, you lose all the nutrients. You see numerous examples in the orchestral repertoire in which this rich folk vocabulary is simplified to fit in the practical context and the pre-existing orchestral practice. So if you write that musical motive in a readable way, the orchestral musician will play it quantized in time, he will play even eighth notes, and of course it will not have the same feel, the same swing that a person who actively grew with that language. And this is something that can be changed; classical musicians should be encouraged to listen and experiment with other genres, to be knowledgeable in a variety of styles. I guess our time is the perfect historical moment for that to happen, there is so much information available everywhere and anyone can have access to it. If anyone doesn’t know about something, it is because he doesn’t want to, not because he doesn’t have access. But the musical training is still done in that old limiting way, suppressing anything that is considered not essential for the “classical performer”. For example, at the beginning of my classical piano studies, improvisation was seen as a bad practice, as something that was useless, a waste of time. And indeed for that study directed to mold a concert pianist it was a waste of time. But on the other hand, all that improvisation and experimentation on which I spent hours and hours when I was a teenager made me
become the musician I am today. I was searching for a musical personality of my own. Those improvisatory experimentations turned into a composing exercise for me.

LIMA: It is odd for me to think of this criticism about improvisation in classical music, as if it were something that is not part of the classical music universe. It is a totally wrong opinion: Beethoven was a great improviser, Mozart was a great improviser, the *basso continuo* in Baroque music, the *cadenzas* were all improvised [laughs].

MEHMARI: I agree with you. I think even more with harmonic instrument such as the piano, an instrument with so many possibilities, I think the classical *concerto* should always have improvised *cadenzas*. I'm not saying that you have to do it at any concert of any repertoire, of course not. You also mentioned Baroque music and then we get into an even more special chapter, because the ornamentation is fundamental, crucial for all instruments: string instruments, flute, *cornetto*, the baroque oboe, voice, harpsichordist, theorbo, lute... They read the figured bass, which is very similar to the modern popular music chord notation. That written code was quite simple. It developed over the centuries until it become an absolutely closed source that did not allow much doubt as to how to play every note. During the Baroque, if you played the exact written notes you had no music, like if you take the jazz realbook and play a song note by note as written, you have no music. So if you take the greatest masterpiece of the history of opera, “Orpheus” by Monteverdi, the score is extremely simple compared to a score of Stockhausen, or Pierre Boulez. Those were very different musical practices. During the Baroque period the musician was expected to improvise stylistically, to understand that vocabulary, as in the French Baroque, for example, having the triplets which are very similar to the swing in jazz. Like the shuffle, in the French Baroque there it something called *inegale*, [singing]. The same thing with the Brazilian *xote*. That kind of knowledge is not usually taught to classical musicians. I feel there is a lack of attention in that regard, perhaps we need a modernized way of teaching. It makes sense that there are very rigorous traditions, which I admire quite a lot, like when you listen to a *virtuosi* performing the second piano concerto by Brahms, it is breathtaking and wonderful. But there are other musicians with greater restlessness, who are interested in music that is outside the comfort zone.
LIMA: During this research process I realized that this phenomenon you mentioned about the clarinetist and other musicians with double background is something that gained strength in the 21st century. One of the major criticisms about the Third Stream is that jazz musicians who have no fluency or extensive formal knowledge of classical music were trying to expand their works without much success, and that musicians from European classical tradition were trying to make use of jazz in a very simplistic way, out of context. You and other musicians I am researching are examples of this new type of musician, artists who are immersed and developed their vocabulary in multiple universes. This is a very interesting phenomenon.

MEHMARI: I think it is interesting and very contemporary, music is experiencing a period of very interesting dialogue. I know the third stream term is widely accepted, but I'm also not a big fan of this definition, I don’t think that there is only a third way besides classical and popular. In my opinion there is the third, the fourth… I mean, there is the millionth stream; every great musical mind is a stream. So I would say that these different currents all flow into a great sea of musical ideas, in which new streams are born too. I think we have to respect the idiosyncrasies of each composer. You interviewed Maria Schneider for example, she has a highly personal style, and recently wrote a piece for chamber orchestra with strings and voice, you might know …

LIMA: Yes, we performed it here, I was her assistant with the Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra.

MEHMARI: Oh great, she gave me the disc, it’s wonderful! And there you can hear her unique style, which has formal coherence, stylistic coherence, idiomatic coherence, for voice and orchestra. There are musicians who have done that during their whole lives, such as Leonard Bernstein, Radamés Gnattali, Jobim in some cases, Luiz Eça, Egberto Gismonti… I feel that multiple new musical voices are emerging in our time, and it will become increasingly difficult to name or define. It will be hard to give it a qualified name, I mean, you can give the name you want, but finding a name that really defines it will be hard. And the categorization of music, which has always been a difficult task, will
become increasingly difficult. I'm talking about good music, not the media trends of course.

LIMA: I recently read an article discussing the process that happened in the 20th century, and also in the 21st century, saying that before there was the idea of the melting pot, similar to the anthropophagic idea, that all influences would be mixed and you will have a homogeneous result. But today we realize that it is a mosaic in fact, it all comes in together, but comes out in various different ways.

MEHMARI: Of course, the artist is like a filter, such as a crystal, which refracts the white light that arrives. And each artist has his history, his tradition, with his preferences and all the millions of idiosyncrasies that the artist brings while interpreting this white noise that is what we experience in life. You can listen to a baroque orchestra, a “choro” group, a group of contemporary concert music, a rock concert and a Techno concert, all in the same day. So the artist role is to process all this information and give it back in an intelligible way, and if possible, in a beautiful way. I think music has to be beautiful, so I think the mission of the artist is the translation and interpretation of different codes as well. And this has nothing to do with world music; I think this is in another stage.

LIMA: What is your prediction or projection about the future of concert music?

MEHMARI: Well, I'll tell you what for me would be the ideal of the future of concert music. It would be to have in the same program a Purcell's work, played with baroque bows and instruments of that time, and in the second part a Beethoven symphony with a classic bow. After that a Firebird and then a contemporary composition. A music free of stereotypes, a reflection of the time we live. And free in the sense that contemporary classical composers should not have to fit into the idea of "contemporary music cannot have a perfect chord, cannot have a melody, cannot be related to popular music, and has to be strictly academic". I believe there are spaces for this music too, and it will always exist. In fact, I was quite surprised when I started to have an increasing volume of orders for orchestral compositions for chamber groups and soloists, because I confess that I did not prepare myself for it in the sense of wanting to become a composer. I started writing arrangements, and people used to appreciate the way I write, so I began to take
commissions, increasingly since 2004, and now I do not deliver one work without having others waiting in the line. So today, for example, while I talk to you I have about an hour of orchestral music to deliver in two months. It gives me also a writing pace which is very good for the composer, living with his work in a very intimate and constant way. But I don’t know why I have so many commissions. Maybe it is because people relate to my music, and it is recognized by such institutions as something of value. And I do not have that arrogant attitude that some contemporary composers have: that music made today may not be easy to understand, it cannot communicate anything else but an absolutely complex code, and that the scores must be invariably very complex and very difficult to read. I perceive them as already obsolete stereotypes. I often see orchestras tired of this kind of repertoire because it doesn’t relate to most people, it is not pleasurable to play, and there is no reward to invest energy on it. But of course there are exceptions and inspired musicians everywhere: there are musicians who are brilliant and whose work should be played more often, but are not because of their difficulty, technically speaking, they require much more rehearsal time than usual. [György] Ligeti for example: his works require special care to be properly performed. But these issues are very complex, you know? It is very delicate. For instance, I was not accepted on a biennial of contemporary music two years ago, just because “I do not belong to this club, and I don’t have that membership card”. And I don’t want to have it. But it’s interesting, it's like if I was not making contemporary music, it's like, "Oh, Andre makes popular music, he uses traditional harmony...", because my music is not a showroom of special effects and extended techniques. This is a very reductionist concept of contemporary music in my opinion. Contemporary music is the music made in our era for the ears and hearts of our era. There is no problem if it looks for a beautiful result. I mean, the concept of beauty is personal, but I would say there are certain patterns, the idea that “certain things cannot be done in contemporary music” never crossed my mind, I would never follow a playbook like that. I don’t know how it is for you, each one has a different experience and opinion. I've had a quite chaotic path to develop my musical language, playing in bars since I was 11 years old, playing jazz, studying counterpoint, composition, orchestration, playing a lot, writing a lot, learning from my own mistakes. I
always had the chance to learn and to exercise my writing in practical situations, not academic at all, situations such as "for the next week I need 5 arrangements for orchestra", so I've been molding my style in a very idiosyncratic and personal way, and it results in the music that I do today.

LIMA: While you were talking I was thinking that one of the criticisms about classical tonal music made today is that it can sound like imitations of older periods, people “wanting to be Beethoven or Mozart”. This can be a very good composition exercise, but it is nothing artistic beyond that. That just is not the case with your music, because you have although you use a lot of the romantic harmonic vocabulary, you have also various other backgrounds which find their ways into your music. It is definitely not Romantic music, it is “Andre's music”.

MEHMARI: It is mestizo music; you know? A mestizo music as it was Ernesto Nazareth’s, who put together the European salon music and the African-Brazilian rhythms: the “choro”. I mean, his Polkas are absolutely mestizo. And this is very similar to what happens in my production. It is something that has happened naturally since my youth. I have very old records of myself experimenting with this, written music as well as audio recordings. That's a disquietude of mine which led me to search for my personal voice. I don’t want to emulate masters of the past. Although, naturally, as you and me, most composers have studied the great masters and will keep on studying them forever. And nobody will want to do the Beethoven tenth symphony, Brahms has already done that [laughs]. Music is a continuous line, a continuous tradition, there is no real new music, it is the continuation of a big line. I usually doubt when a musician comes up saying he created something musically new that no one ever did before. I mean, everything I write I know where it comes from in terms of its roots. I am not saying that everything is a copy, but we know from where “Firebird” came. Even songs that apparently came from nowhere, like Stravinsky Les Noces, it came from Russian peasant songs. I believe in that, tradition is modern, and music is a big line that has continuity and goes far, and there is still a lot of good music to come.
APPENDIX B: REDUCED SCORES

The scores had to be reduced from the original tabloid size to following format. A few instruments – particularly from the rhythm section – had to be omitted in order to fit the smaller space and still be readable.
Seven Masks

II. Mentor

This movement is dedicated to Gary Lindsay

Flute 1&2

Oboe & English Horn

Clarinet in B♭ 1&2

BassClarinet in B♭

Bassoon & Contrabassoon

Alto Saxophone 1&2

Tenor Saxophone & Baritone Saxophone

4 Horns in F

4 Trumpets in B♭

4 Trombones

Drum Set

Piano

Upright Bass

SOLO Tenor Saxophone

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

Rafael Piccolotto de Lima
Jan-Feb / 2016
Reduced Score

Seven Masks, II. Mentor
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima
Reduced Score
Seven Masks, II: Mentor
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima
Seven Masks

III. Trickster

Rafael Piccolotto de Lima
Nov/2015 - Jan/2016
Seven Masks, III. Trickster
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima

Fl. 1&2

Ob. &
E. H.

Cl. 1&2

B. Cl.
B. Cl.

A. Sax. 1&2

T. Sax. 1&2

Bari. Sax

4 Hn.

4 Tpt.

Tbn.
B. Tbn.

Dr.

Pno.

U. Bsn

SOL.
Th. 1

Solo.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

something like that, as a playful solo

drag brush

23

f

23

f

f

f

f

4

256

256
Reduced Score
Seven Masks, III. Trickster
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima

18

Fl. 1&2
Ob. E. F.
Cl. 1&2
B. Cl. B. Cl.
A. Sax. 1&2
T. Sax. 1&2
Bari. Sax.
4 Hn.
4 Tpt.
Tbn. B. Tbn.
Dr.
Pno.
U. Bass
SOLO Tbn. 1

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Va.
Cl.

116 117 118 119
Reduced Score

Seven Masks, III. Trickster
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima

Dr.

SOLO Tbn. 1

[126] Trombone Duet
play around trombones (no groove)

SOLO Tbn. 1

Bucket mute

126 127 128 129 130 131

Dr. U. Bass

SOLO Tbn. 1

G‹Œ7)/C FŒ9(b5) G‹9(b13) CŒ7(b13)

132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139

Dr. U. Bass

SOLO Tbn. 1

144

Cl. 1&2

B. Cl. Bbs.

Dr.

Bu6/6 Dy6/6 Gb6/6 A9(b5) A7(b5)

144

U. Bass

SOLO Tbn. 1

Bu6/6 Dy6/6 take lead (solo)

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147
Reduced Score

Seven Masks, III. Trickster
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima

Fl. 1&2

Ob. & E. H.

Cl. 1&2

B. Cl.

B. Bb.

Cbs.

A. Sax. 1&2

T. Sax. 1&2

4 Hn.

4 Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Dr.

Pno.

U. Bass

SOLO

Tbn. 1

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

1. 2.

-^-

1. 2.

^-

> > > >

^-

B > >

> > > ^

? > ^

mostly pads

start to use walk lines and half time, along with free accompaniment

plunger
Reduced Score

Seven Masks, III: Trickster
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima

Fl. 1&2

Ob. & E. H.

Cl. 1&2

B. Cl.

Bs.

Cbs.

A. Sax. 1&2

T. Sax. 1&2

Bari. Sax.

4 Hn.

4 Tpt.

Tbn. 1

B. Tbn.

Dr.

Pno.

U. Bass

SOLO

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.
Seven Masks, III. Trickster
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima

Reduced Score
Seven Masks, VI: Threshold Guardians

Rafael Piccolotto de Lima
Fl. 1
Ob. &
E. H.
Cl. 1&2
B. Cl.
& C.B.
4 Sax.
4 Hn.
4 Tpt.
3 Tbn.
B. Tbn.
& Tuba
B. D.
Cym.
S. D.
Vib.
Dr.
Pno.
U. Bass
SOLO
Ge. / S.
Vln. 1&2
Vla.
Vc.
& Bs.

Reduced Score
Seven Masks, VI: Threshold Guardians
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima
Reduced Score

Seven Masks, YE Threshold Guardians
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima
Reduced Score

Seven Masks, VI.Threshold Guardians

Rafael Piccolotto de Lima
Seven Masks, VII: Threshold Guardians
Rafael Piccolotto de Lima

Fl. 1

Ob. & E. H.

Cl. 1&2

B. Cl., Basson, & C.B.

4 Sax.

4 Hn.

4 Tpt.

3 Tbn.

B. Tbn. & Tuba

B. D.

T.-t.

S. D.

Vibraphone

Dr.

Pno.

U. Bass

SOLO

Vln. 1&2

Vla.

Vc. & Bs.
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DISCOGRAPHY

