Writing Music and its Role in a Conductor’s Training as a Performer

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WRITING MUSIC AND ITS ROLE IN A CONDUCTOR’S TRAINING AS A PERFORMER

By

Chee Weng Yim

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WRITING MUSIC AND ITS ROLE IN A CONDUCTOR'S TRAINING AS A PERFORMER

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Transcriptions are often deemed as less important than their original models. The accessibility to original models (in performance and listening), the perceived prestige, and the rejection of transcriptions in place of original compositions are often reasons that musicians provide when dismissing transcriptions. This paper hopes to provide an account in favor of transcriptions, through (1) the review of aesthetic writings on music (especially those related to transcriptions), (2) a brief commentary of the similarities between writing music (composing, transcribing, arranging) and performance, and (3) a transcription of Steven Stucky’s *Symphony* (2012). Through the above methods, the paper examines the benefits of transcriptions (and composing and arranging in general), considers the opposing views on transcriptions and provide counterarguments to them. The primary audience is graduate students in performance (instrumentalists, conductors, singers) and music educators at the collegiate level. However, musicians at all levels may find the discourse in this paper useful. A recommendation for further study is enclosed.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Many musicians learnt the basics of writing music (composition, arrangement, transcription) as part of their formal training. Some components of music training include studies in counterpoint, theory and harmony, composition, musicology, and performance. These modules are often offered in degree-granting institutions and community colleges that are either accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) or follow the specifications listed in the NASM handbook. Apart from writing new works, musicians often listen to, study, transcribe, and perform the music of the composers that they are studying. Transcription is hence very much a compositional art, and one that is important to Western classical music. For example, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s transcriptions helped rebuild interests in Bach’s works from the late 1820’s onwards. Mendelssohn’s performance edition of the St. Mathew Passion was especially successful. Other notable transcribers include Liszt, Tausig, Bülow, and Busoni. These transcribers borrow the original musical materials, adding extra harmonies, lengths of musical virtuosity, and extended codas. This is reflective of the aesthetic desires of the Romantic era, and represents their personal interpretations of the original compositions. The aesthetic is based on the thinking that the original composition has its own musical value apart from the choice of instrumentation, even when the composer chose it. Today, Briskier notes that musicians are more interested

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3 Ibid., 12 – 13.
4 Ibid., 8.
in expressing the original texts, to present musical materials in their original form without musical embellishments.\(^5\)

Busoni discusses the likeness between writing transcriptions and performing in his 1907 essay *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*. He says that transcriptions, like performances, are an interpretation of the original work. As interpreters, our job is to revive musical ideas that are imperfectly inscribed onto the score (a lengthier discussion of Busoni’s thoughts regarding transcriptions and aesthetic developments on the idea of transcriptions will be discussed in Chapter 2).\(^6\) It seems intuitive to me that it is important for performers to be trained in the skill of transcribing. For the purpose and scope of this paper, transcriptions are defined as musical works that are adapted from the original medium to the medium devised for the transcriptions. The musical content does not deviate from the original work, except for the change in instrumental color (timbre).\(^7\)

**Problem Statement**

Writing music is beneficial in the development of a performer’s musicianship. This is especially true for conductors. The problem is that musicians (especially classical music performers) today rarely write (compose, transcribe, and arrange) music. To describe this problem, we shall look at the expectations of the conductor as a performer. Especially in the Western classical music tradition, the conductor is the leader and the unifier behind the interpretation of musical works. A well-rounded conductor is knowledgeable in historical

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\(^5\) Ibid., 8. Apart from aesthetic reasons based on strict adherence to the text, I find that many classically trained musicians are unaware of or incapable of producing the kinds of improvisation/cadenza or *eingang* provision that were staple performance practices of works from particular periods.

\(^6\) Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*, trans. Th. Baker (New York: G. Schirmer, 1911), 15 – 18. This is one of the first documents to discuss transcriptions and variations under one aesthetic thought, through his personal practical experiences. In the essay, Busoni does not distinguish a difference between transcriptions and variations/arranging, using transcriptions as an umbrella term for these processes. This paper, however, specifically refers to transcriptions as staying faithful to the musical material in the original composition. The only change is in medium, i.e. instrumentation and timbre.

and social contexts, aesthetics and stylistic concerns, is familiar with the background of the composers whose work he is conducting, and possesses a deep understanding for the music notated in the scores.8 This is applicable to both formalists and contextualists, less so to those who take their personal philosophy to the extreme. In addition, conductors may also be attentive to the context of modern day listeners while creating their interpretations. In other words, the musical meaning that the performance conveys can be picked up and understood by a reasonably informed and attentive listener.9 These qualities are useful in helping a conductor create their interpretations. The problem of lacking composition skills is tied to the notion of ‘knowing’ the music. Without knowing the music, the performance might be mere historical verisimilitude, lacking the performer’s signature in the performance.10 In saying this, I do not claim that performers who do not compose perform at an insufficient level. My claim is that performers who do compose have an extra means to understanding the music that they perform.11 Busoni expressed strong thoughts against blind tradition, claiming that art (including music) becomes unrecognizable after passing through the work of innumerable artists over the course of many years.12 The spirit of an artwork (hence also musical art) lies in its emotional prowess and its ties with the concept of humanity, which remains unchanged no matter the amount of elapsed time. This is free from the form the artwork takes and free from the manner in which it is expressed, both of which, according to Busoni, are transient factors.13 Hence, the value of music is in itself (the music); the medium that it was originally devised for is not as important.14

11 For ease of reading, the word compose will include transcribe and arrange in this paper.
13 Ibid., 1 - 2.
Need for Study

An important reason for transcriptions is the sharing of music across multiple mediums, when the original instrumentation is not available, or when the performing group that wishes to play the music is of a different makeup than the original.\textsuperscript{15} The practice dates back centuries, from the Medieval to present day.\textsuperscript{16} The practice has allowed works to reach a broader audience. With exception to timbre, listeners are able to enjoy the same music that any other population will similarly enjoy. Updating historical scores with outdated instrumentation to fit today’s norms is also an important consideration in support of transcriptions.\textsuperscript{17} Even though period ensembles playing original scores are gaining interest, they are still relatively rare, and brings along their own unique problems and arguments that are beyond the scope of this essay.

The transcription process helps conductors understand orchestration techniques better. Although treatises on orchestration and instrumentation exist, they only serve as guidelines. They do not provide readers with a good understanding of the sounds that directly result from good orchestration practices. This realization is beneficial in two specific situations. First, in attuning our ears to the sounds that are desired (determined through performance, i.e. ensemble balance, interpretation, performance practices). Second, in identifying potential challenges when presented with new scores. Those equipped with a knowledge of orchestration can efficiently prepare for a productive rehearsal, quickly identifying problems in the scores and creating ideas for edits which might solve them. A

\textsuperscript{15} Diane Etheridge, “Classical Saxophone Transcriptions: Role and Reception” (master’s thesis, Florida State University, 2008), 1-2.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
conductor who learns to transcribe will also develop error detection skills beyond the ability to simply audiate.\textsuperscript{18}

The process of transcribing works heavily involves the transcribers’ ears. This skill is called audiation. The ability to audiate correlates positively with musical expertise, which is determined by the level of musical performance.\textsuperscript{19} Coupled with the knowledge and analytical skills acquired from gaining orchestration skills, a conductor (or any performer) may be better able to make informed choices beyond what is gained from background and historical readings.\textsuperscript{20}

**Purpose and Question**

The purpose of this study is twofold: to examine the relationship between the act of transcribing and interpretation, and to provide an account for encouraging the practice of transcribing for conductors. There are perhaps parallels to be drawn between conductors and other music performers (instrumentalists, singers), but much of the discussion in this paper will reference conductors.

I hope to explore this question in my paper: what are the similarities and differences between transcriptions and performances in regards to interpretation (i.e. performative versus critical interpretations)?\textsuperscript{2}

Given today’s easy and convenient accessibility to performances in their original media, there seems to be no reason to continue with the practice of transcription. Moreover, there are musicians who hold the opinion that transcriptions are mere copies of their

\textsuperscript{20} Etheridge, “Classical Saxophone,” 17 and 32.
model.\textsuperscript{21} If transcriptions are mere copies, there is little intrinsic value to its creation as they do little to add to our musical experience. However, we do know that transcriptions are still being created, despite opposing views that transcriptions are lesser than their models. Hence, transcriptions must possess qualities that musicians and their audiences intrinsically value, and these qualities put transcriptions and their model on equal standing.\textsuperscript{22} Living composers who transcribe their own works help support this view.\textsuperscript{23}

The second part of the paper is a transcription of Steven Stucky’s \textit{Symphony} (2012) from the orchestra to the wind band medium. An account of the transcription process is notated in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{22} Davies, “Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance,” 218.
\textsuperscript{23} Other reasons may include pragmatic reasons such as financial considerations and wider audience reach.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

A transcription is an important element of this paper. I will hence refer to transcriptions more often than music writing in general. As you will read throughout the rest of the paper, I believe that all music writing is valuable, with no distinction in terms of superiority. Composing, transcribing, and arranging are all important ways of writing music.

Transcriptions as an art are now most commonly attributed to Ferrucio Busoni (1866 –1924). Busoni and his network were a group of composers that held a profound interest in reworking musical materials of other composers’ works, which Roberge termed “creative transcription.” This term encompasses freer adaptations such as the parody technique, which involves reworking of previous musical material of another composition into a new work (similar to the parody masses of the sixteenth century). Another technique involves the translation of musical material from its original medium to a new medium.

The translation of material to a new medium can be seen as an act of admiration that pupils have for their teachers. Roberge quoted Webern as desiring to spend a large part of his creative output to create piano reductions (transcriptions) of Schonberg’s works. In essence, transcriptions are works as fundamental as compositions, of equal aesthetic standing, but simply another way of expressing the same musical thoughts themselves.

Busoni’s idea of transcriptions stems from the thought that notation is a transcription process. The translation of abstract ideas into concrete notation is an act of

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25 Ibid., 69 – 71. Roberge identified and created a network of composers linked by four relationships: first, studies with Busoni or are pupils of Busoni; second, performances; third, writings; and fourth transcriptions and editions of works.
26 Ibid., 73.
27 Ibid., 73 – 74.
transcribing music. Therefore, we can suggest that transferring written musical material from its original medium into different ones are transcriptions of the original abstract musical ideas in the form of thought. The idea that transcriptions are on equal standing as original compositions can thus be supported.

Composers who transcribe their own works further exemplify the notion of viewing transcriptions and compositions as equals. For example, the composer Arvo Pärt reworked his piece *Fratres* for several instrumentations. In doing so, Pärt allowed himself to approach the same musical idea in different contexts (soundscapes). The orchestration of original works by other composers is another approach that transcribers employ. Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* (originally for piano) is a good example. Several different composers have had orchestrated the work for larger forces — the most well known and oft heard being Ravel’s version for full orchestra.

Transcriptions as an art form have been treated seriously and held in equal aesthetics regards as works in their original form (compositions). Works can be appreciated in different contexts, often reinforcing the musical intentions that existed as abstract music thoughts in the composers’ minds. The wider reach that transcriptions afford their original musical material is also a benefit that should be seriously considered. Like compositions, transcribing works should be encouraged, as it is a legitimate aesthetic endeavor.

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Transcriptions

Busoni first writes of transcriptions in his classic essay, *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*. He transcribed music frequently, some of which is still in the repertory (e.g. Bach’s *Chaconne* for solo violin, *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*, and the Chorale Preludes). At the same time, Busoni was an accomplished piano performer. As a musician that wrote music, and about music (both *The Essence of Music* and *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music* are classic texts on music aesthetics), there is reason to consider his discussion about transcriptions. Busoni felt strongly about the value of transcriptions, as can be seen in his defense against his critics’ opposition towards them:

> The frequent antagonism which I have excited with “transcriptions,” and the opposition to which an oftentimes irrational criticism has provoked me, caused me to seek a clear understanding of this point. My final conclusion concerning it is this: Every notation is, in itself, the transcription of an abstract idea. The instant the pen seizes it, the idea loses its original form. The very intention to write down the idea, compels a choice of measure and key. The form, and the musical agency, which the composer must decide upon, still more closely defines the way and the limits.

Busoni thus considers compositions as transcriptions. This is achieved by translating abstract ideas onto the page using musical notation. This contrasts with the definition of transcriptions held in this paper, where transcription is the translation of musical material from its original medium to a medium different from the original. The definition itself dictates that a complete work must already exist for transcription to come into existence.

Busoni’s concept of transcriptions (the notation of abstract ideas into objects — scores) is a realization. Paul Thom describes realizations as an augmentation process, where an

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33 Ibid., 1 - 2.
incomplete work is brought to completion by adding in content that is absent from the original.  

A second distinction between Busoni’s theory and my definition of transcription is that the original forms of musical ideas are lost once they are ‘transcribed’ into notation. The score then is an imperfect translation of the abstract musical idea. A higher value is thus placed on the original musical idea than its physical manifestation as a music score. This contrasts with my concept of transcriptions in this paper. The original refers to not the musical idea, but the first complete score that the composer create based on those ideas. The transcription bears the same musical content, only in a different medium. Hence, there is logically no difference in value between a musical work in its specified medium and the same work specified in a substitute medium. Despite the differences in concept, it is important to acknowledge Busoni’s work in that it is the first written text where the process of transcribing is seen as valuable.

When Busoni wrote about transcription in the ordinary sense (original work to a different medium), he posits that the transcriber is transcribing to a new media based on the composer’s original abstract ideas. This logic is impossible to prove, as there are no methods to determine the existence of abstract ideas. However, the discussion of abstract ideas in the philosophy of music is still alive in writings on the ontology of music. It is unlikely that Busoni had a method of extracting Bach’s original thoughts and ideas for his own use when he transcribed the D minor Toccata and Fugue from the organ to the piano. The only link between Busoni and Bach was the musical score (a concrete object). While Busoni may not have been able to conjure the historical Bach or Bach’s original ideas, he ought to

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36 Thom, The Musician as Interpreter, 2.
37 Ibid., 3.
38 Ibid., 5.
39 Ibid., 3 – 4.
have been able to derive an informed imagination of Bach through his score. Even though a transcriber is unable to produce the exact same abstract thoughts (assuming that these exist) as the composer, Busoni argues that the transcriber can derive or recover those abstract ideas through interpreting the score.\(^{40}\) However, just as we are unable to determine the actual existence of abstract ideas, we are just as incapable of proving that acts of interpretation lead to the composers’ original abstract ideas. This supports the argument that transcriptions are based on extant complete musical works.\(^{41}\) Nevertheless, Busoni’s account provides support that first, transcriptions are as valuable as compositions. Second, the intent behind transcriptions is based on preserving the original musical content. This ties into one of the purposes of this paper, which seeks to encourage the mindset that transcriptions possess equal artistic value as original compositions when done the “right” way.

What then, makes a transcription “right?” Stephen Davies writes that the intent and goal of transcription is “to reconcile the musical content of the original work with the limitations and advantages of a medium for which that content was not designed.”\(^{42}\) Two criteria are listed in Davies’s definition. Firstly, the resulting transcription is faithful to the music content of the original. This means that other than the change in media, there are little to no other changes to the musical text. However, this is not enough to qualify a piece that was transplanted to a new medium a transcriptions. The second quality is for the resultant transcription to be effective for the new media.\(^{43}\) Alterations are therefore assumed to be unavoidable in some cases to meet the criteria of playability.\(^{44}\)


\(^{41}\) Thom, *The Musician as Interpreter*, 5 – 6.

\(^{42}\) Davies, “Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance,” 218.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 218 – 219.

\(^{44}\) Thom, *The Musician as Interpreter*, 11.
merely copies of the original, but are products of creativity. The notion that transcriptions are creative work supports my argument as an exponent for transcriptions to be viewed as works of art that are equally worthy of serious considerations as original compositions.

The second quality in Davies’s description is self-explanatory. However, the first quality is not an absolute requisite, which would mean the exact preservation of all pitch and rhythmic material. Thom believes that there can be tolerance for transcriptions that underwent changes from the original. First, the transcriber’s intent makes the understanding of the material that constitutes a work’s content subjective. For example, Liszt created two transcriptions of the Scherzo of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. In the first, he retained the exact pitch and rhythmic material from the orchestra score, even carefully labeling his transcriptions with the corresponding instrumentation in the orchestra score. This demonstrates his intent to be faithful to the original. The alternate version of the transcription takes away the certain pitches near the extreme tessiture so that it is playable on pianos with fewer than seven octaves. This demonstrates Liszt’s intention to make it accessible to various new media. In summary, the transcriber decides the criteria for the preservation of musical content so that the resultant transcription is playable and is effective in the new medium. The next section will provide an account for ways that makes a transcription effective.

Effective Transcriptions

To determine the qualities that make transcriptions effective, we first have to identify the purposes for which transcriptions are created. According to Davies, there are four ways in which transcriptions are created that are perhaps of most interest to us. He also suggested

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46 Thom, The Musician as Interpreter, 9 – 11.
47 Thom, The Musician as Interpreter, 9 – 11.
that the second of these explains the prevalence of the practice of transcriptions and the fourth explains our sustained interest in transcriptions. Table 1 provides a summary of Davies’s reasons for transcriptions.

Table 1. Summary of Stephen Davies’s reasons for the prevalence of transcriptions

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<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Short description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pedagogical</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>For training young musicians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td>To make music available to wide audience even when the original instrumentation is not available or not financially viable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcriber’s skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transcription is less accessible pragmatically. To make music available in a different medium to provide fresh listening or performing experiences that are not made available through the original.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>To show off the transcriber’s personal skills. The transcription may have value in its own right, but is subservient to the transcriber’s motivation to show off his or her compositional skills.</td>
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First, the process of transcription bears pedagogical use. This is apparent in the training of young musicians in the skill of orchestration, of counterpoint, of harmony, of form and structure, and so on (skills which teach composers to write good music and help performers learn to analyze and understand works). This is accomplished by having students work out a full orchestration from a piano reduction, and then comparing their transcription with the original fully orchestrated work by the composer. Davies suggested

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49 Ibid., 220 – 222.
50 Ibid., 220. I used the term “good music” in the sense by which performers decides what works are worth performing and what are not. The determination of what constitute good music is beyond the scope of this paper.
that J. S. Bach’s and Mozart’s transcriptions of Handel’s works are motivated by pedagogical intentions.\textsuperscript{51}

The first reason fails to account for the vast amount of transcriptions that were produced. Davies thus added that transcriptions are created to provide greater accessibility to composers’ works to a wide audience interested in music. This second reason takes into account the socio-utility function of transcriptions. Piano transcriptions were popular in the nineteenth century because pianos were commonly found in the nineteenth century homes. Likewise, the popularity of \textit{Intabulierung} (for lute) in the fifteenth century is accounted for by this utilitarian function. In the same vein of pragmatic reasons, orchestra scores for operas, ballets, concertos, choir et cetera are often transcribed to reduce the monetary pressures of hiring full orchestras in the rehearsal process, and sometimes performances.\textsuperscript{52}

Pragmatic reasons do not account for all transcriptions, nor the continued practice of transcriptions. Especially in the modern day, when the advent of technology like recording arts, the multitude of playback devices (home sound systems, personal portable devices, radio) make listening to original music possible (however, this only accounts for listening pleasure, and not performing pleasure). There are also transcriptions that do not make the original more accessible. Ravel’s orchestration of Mussorgsky’s \textit{Pictures at an Exhibition} (1874), Stokowski’s orchestral transcription of Bach’s \textit{Toccata and Fugue in D minor for Organ, BWV 565}, H. Robert Reynolds’s band transcription of Shostakovich’s \textit{Prelude no. 14, op. 34} and his transcriptions of Morten Lauridsen’s choral works (e.g. \textit{Contre qui rose} and \textit{O magnum mysterium}) take works with smaller performing forces to much larger ones. The logic of making works more accessible seems to be inapplicable. I agree with Davies that aesthetic reasons motivates these transcribers to create works that are intrinsically valuable. We as a

\textsuperscript{51} Davies, “Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance,” 220.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
musical population are interested in and are accepting of works that make it harder for us to perform or access. This is an important reason in explaining the continued efforts of transcribers to create transcriptions. The sharing of music transcends pragmatic reasons. We thus have reason to claim that transcriptions are valued creations that are equal in standing as compositions and not merely “poor substitutes for the real thing.”

The third reason that Davies suggested is for the transcriber to put on display his or her compositional skills. In this case, the interest is placed on the transcriber over the interest in the musical work itself. In this sense, the value of the transcription is subservient to the transcriber’s motives. While there may be interest created in the work because of the transcriber’s skills, it does not necessarily place interest or value in the work itself. For this reason, Davies placed little emphasis on this reasoning for the prevalence of transcriptions.

Davies’s fourth reason attempts to account for our continued interests in transcriptions. Throughout the paper so far, I have used the word ‘create’ in conjunction with the word ‘transcriptions,’ to emphasize the premise that transcriptions are works of creation. This contrasts with perspectives that transcriptions are copies of their original models, and somewhat lesser in prestige than their original counterparts. Transcriptions as creative works echo Davies’s, Busoni’s, and Thom’s writings on the subject. The musical content in the original are re-presented through the lens of a new medium, which invites “re-consideration of and comparison with the original.” This process inadvertently forces us (transcriber, performer, and audience) to think deeply and critically about the musical content, which enriches our understanding and appreciation of the work itself. We are also able to consider the work in terms of the merits and demerits of the mediums in

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54 Ibid., 220 – 221.
55 Ibid., 221.
representing the musical content. The timbral characteristics of the wind band medium of *Contre qui rose* (from Lauridsen’s *Le Chanson des Roses* song number 2) provided grounds for new experiences (and perhaps take away some – e.g. timbral homogeneity) that the choral version cannot provide. To some listeners (from any part of the audience), the contrasting soaring-horns-timbre where the music is set to the words *au contraire* provides a sense of anguished sadness more intense than what the tenor section can provide in the choral version (to some it makes little or no difference, or simply a recognition that the media is different). Through Davies’s account, we can now appreciate and understand that the continued prevalence of transcriptions is based on us intrinsically valuing the work (in its original and transcribed forms). The first, second (especially the aesthetic part) and fourth reasons are especially relevant to the purposes of this paper in discussing the influences that transcriptions can have in the training of the conductor as a performer. The conductor’s duties to solve orchestration problems, his or her roles in influencing the repertory, as well as the understanding and appreciation of musical content can be related to Davies’s reasoning behind the prevalence and our continued interest in transcriptions.

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56 Davies, “Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance,” 221.
Chapter 3: Method

The purpose of this paper is to provide support for encouraging musicians to transcribe works as part of their creative endeavors. Embedded in that goal is also an argument for the general musician population to embrace transcriptions as legitimate works of musical art by performing them alongside original works. This paper aims to address this by answering this question: what are the similarities and differences between transcriptions and performances with regards to interpretation (i.e. performative versus critical interpretations)? To answer this question, I have transcribed Steven Stucky’s Symphony (2012) and written down my thoughts during the transcription process in Chapter 4. This was performed based on my understanding of philosophical writings on transcriptions as stated in the preceding paragraphs (Busoni, Davies, and Thom). Chapter 5 contains a complete transcription of Steven Stucky’s Symphony (2012)\(^{57}\), as a presentation of the culmination of the thoughts this paper.

A brief understanding of transcriptions in the context of the band’s history is first mentioned — the importance of transcriptions and how these works were orchestrated for a different medium — to determine the ways transcriptions represents their original medium and the band as a medium.\(^{58}\) This is supplemented by data on orchestration techniques and well as information that pertain directly to transcriptions within the band medium.\(^{59}\) A discussion on traditional mapping (e.g. strings mapped to clarinets) to newer thoughts on translations (e.g. use of bowed metallophones to represent sustained strings) is included to show the development of thoughts in sonic representation between different sets of

\(^{57}\) Steven Stucky, Symphony (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2013).
\(^{58}\) David Whitwell, A Concise History of the Wind Band (Austin, TX: Whitwell Publishing, 2010); Frank Battisti, Winds of Change (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2002); and Frank Battisti, Winds of Change II (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2012).
sounds. A look into the jazz and popular genres will also reveal that jazz and pop musicians often engage in writing (usually arrangements). Though the circumstances and purposes for writing music may differ for musicians of different genres, I believe that classical musicians stand to benefit from writing music. There is merit in re-associating the various musical roles into musicians again, even as we hone our individual expertise.

Much of the foundation for my thoughts on musical transcriptions are built upon Busoni (the idea that the interpretation process and performances are similar, and that transcriptions includes genres such as arrangements, variations, and parodies for Busoni) to today’s understanding of transcriptions as pieces that are translated from the original to another medium (as described by Stephen Davies and later elaborated by Paul Thom). The latter use of the term (translating musical material to a new medium without changing it) is the definition that is relevant to this paper. However, Busoni’s broader use of the term and his views that both performances and transcriptions are interpretive acts is also important.

The final section of the paper is a transcription of Steven Stucky’s *Symphony* (2012) from the orchestra to the wind band medium. The transcription demonstrates the techniques that were discussed in the preceding sections. The data from my own transcription experience are used as examples to support the philosophical discourse on transcriptions. My aim is to provide evidence of relationships between transcriptions, performances, and interpretations. The qualities that make transcriptions good are used to provide support for the discussions found in orchestration books (based on methods used in the transcription

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61 Gary Lindsay, *Jazz Arranging Techniques*, (USA: Staff Art Publishing, 2004). I differentiate arrangements and transcriptions. Transcriptions presents the original music materials in its original form except the change in medium, while arrangements do not subscribe to the original as presented, but may take parts of the original and manipulate, augment, reorder, or represent materials in ways unlike the original.


This bridges the theoretical to the practical aspects of the transcription process. This provided viewpoints from that of composers and performers, and hopefully help bridge both composer and performer roles for musicians.
Chapter 4: The Transcription Process

When transcribing, my intention (as is most transcribers) is to faithfully re-represent the composer’s music materials in a different medium. This is the same as the intentions of the performer, to re-create what the composer had written into audible sounds. Both the performer and transcriber’s primary goal are to be faithful to the written records, and at the same time exercise license in artistic interpretation to hopefully succeed in relaying the composer’s musical intentions. I was fortunate to be in both roles when attempting this project, and the belief that both the transcriber and performer have similar goals is true at least as I transcribed and performed the *Symphony*. However, there are some differences in the degree of artistic license that the performer and the transcriber have.

The performer may have less artistic liberty than the transcriber in terms of re-creating the composer’s notated score. Notated instructions are not always definite and may be simply recommendatory. The artistic liberty hence lies in the performer’s discretion in obeying the score to varying degrees. This is especially true when considering that it is possible for the performer to re-create exactly the composer’s notations. The transcriber has more freedom to alter the score, so that the same musical intentions can be performed in the new medium to the same effect as in the original medium. This discrepancy arises due to the impossibility of creating all techniques or instructions that are idiomatic to one instrument to a different one (strings to winds and percussions). While this may seem like different approaches to interpreting the score, the transcriber and performer are working under the goal to re-represent the composer’s notation in another media (sound, instrumentation). The aim of transcribing the score and performing the score is the same, which is to mediate
between the composer and audience through a presentation of the composer’s intentions based on the successful notations on the score.\textsuperscript{64}

I would like to reiterate that both transcribers and performers are engaging in creative activities (this is compatible with the earlier discussion with regards to Busoni). As notation is not perfect, as can be seen from Busoni’s and Thom’s discourse, we can expect for instances of performances that can be different but still faithful to the composer’s score. The same can be applied to transcriptions. Merlin Patterson’s (band) orchestration\textsuperscript{65} of Mussorgsky’s \textit{Pictures} can be as important as Ravel’s transcription. This is possible through my assumption that both transcribers were similarly motivated by their intentions to transcribe the composer’s music to another media. This comparison leads me to acknowledge that performers and transcribers are more similar than dissimilar in their work, which lends support to the thought that performers can benefit from writing music (be it transcribing or composing). The performer is creative in relaying unwritten intentions from the score to audible sounds, while the transcriber attempts to reproduce the same intentions through different media.\textsuperscript{66}

License for the transcription was obtained from Carl Fisher (on behalf of Theodore Presser Company) and a copy of the contract can be found in the appendix. The transcription was premiered on November 30, 2017, performed by Frost Wind Ensemble with me conducting. The program of the concert is included below. Designed by Robert Carnochan (Director of Wind Ensemble Activities, Frost School of Music, University of Miami), the concert is titled \textit{Homage} and pays tribute to composers who have recently passed away.

\textsuperscript{64} Davies, “Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance,” 223.
\textsuperscript{65} Merlin Patterson has an orchestration for band that was worked out from the original piano version. It is distinct from the popular Ravel orchestration for orchestra.
\textsuperscript{66} Davies, “Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance,” 226.
Program

Pre-Concert Lobby Music
Serenade in C minor, K388 (1782)  W. A. Mozart (1756 – 1791)
   II. Andante

Recitation Book for Saxophone Quartet  David Maslanka (1943 – 2017)
   I. Broken Heart: Meditation on the chorale melody “Der du bist drei in Einigkeit”

Concert
A Requiem in Our Time, op. 3 (1953)  Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928 – 2016)
   I. Hymnus

Recorded commentary by Stanisław Skrowaczewski

   I. Misterioso
   II. Aria
   III. Presto Tenebroso
   IV. Molto Allegro

Recorded commentary by Steven Stucky

   I. Introduction and Hymn
   II. Outcry
   III. Flying
   IV. Hymn and Reconciliation

*Chee Weng Yim, guest conductor
World Premiere of Transcription

Recorded commentary by David Maslanka

Hosannas (2015)  Maslanka
   I. $j = 80$ Chorale – You are three in one
   II. $j = 100$
   III. $j = 60$ Chorale – O Sacred Head now wounded
   IV. $j = 100$
   V. $j = 52$ Chorale – Jesus You have rescued my soul

* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
   the Doctor of Musical Arts in Instrumental Conducting

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67 Chee Weng Yim, program booklet for Homage, Frost Wind Ensemble, Coral Gables, Florida: Maurice Gusman Concert Hall, November 30, 2017.
The motivation behind transcribing a work for winds was to provide another significant work for musicians who may not have the opportunity to play it. The transcription is from the orchestral to wind medium in this case. At the personal level, the transcription process helped me be especially aware of orchestration, timbres, and composer’s idiosyncrasies. I believe that this growth in my musicianship can be generalized to my work as a performer (conductor). This remainder of this chapter provides a record of decisions made during the transcription process. The lists of instrumentation are provided below in table 2.
Table 2. Instrumentation in the orchestral and wind versions of Stucky’s *Symphony*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orchestra</th>
<th>Wind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piccolo</td>
<td>Piccolo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Flutes (3 also Alto Flute)</td>
<td>3 Flutes (3 also Alto Flute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Oboes</td>
<td>3 Oboes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Horn</td>
<td>English Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Clarinets in B-flat</td>
<td>3 Clarinets in B-flat (2 to a part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Clarinet</td>
<td>Bass Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bassoons</td>
<td>3 Bassoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrabassoon</td>
<td>Contrabassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Horns in F</td>
<td>4 Horns in F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Trumpets in C</td>
<td>4 Trumpets in C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Trombones</td>
<td>3 Trombones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Euphonium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timpani</td>
<td>Timpani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percussion (3 players)</td>
<td>Percussion (5 players)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Vibraphone, Marimba, Suspended Cymbal, Snare Drum</td>
<td>1. Vibraphone (share with P5), Marimba (share with P5), Suspended Cymbal, Xylophone (share with P3), Snare Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Glockenspiel, Chimes, Tam-tam, Bongo</td>
<td>2. Glockenspiel, Chimes, Tam-tam, Vibraphone (share with P4), Bongo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Xylophone, Bass Drum, 2 Wood Blocks, Crotales (1 octave), 4 Tom-toms</td>
<td>3. Xylophone (share with P1), Bass Drum, Crotales (share with P4+5), 4 Tom-toms, Wood Blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Vibraphone (2nd instrument; share with P2), Marimba (2nd instrument), Crotales (share with (P3+5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Vibraphone (share with P1), Marimba (share with P1), Crotales (share with P3+4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The wind parts in the original orchestra version are extensive. This transfers well to the band setting because idiomatic writing for winds is already present. The decision to retain the wind parts was hence made. While it is convenient for me to largely retain the wind parts, this means that the string parts can rarely be transcribed to the winds. Many of the early transcriptions for band redistribute the string parts to the large clarinet sections that bands in early twentieth century had. Occasionally, the saxophones and brasses play some of the strings parts. Table 3 displays a chart by Phillip J. Lang showing the basic considerations made by transcribers.

Table 3. Basic orchestration choices for transcribing orchestra to band

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orchestra</th>
<th>Band</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First selection</td>
<td>Second selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piccolo</td>
<td>Piccolo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flutes</td>
<td>Flutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinets</td>
<td>E-flat Clarinets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboes</td>
<td>Oboes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassoons</td>
<td>Bassoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpets</td>
<td>Cornets, Trumpets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trombones</td>
<td>Trombones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horns</td>
<td>Horns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuba</td>
<td>Tuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin 1</td>
<td>1st B-flat and E-flat Clarinets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin 2</td>
<td>2nd B-flat Clarinets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viola</td>
<td>Alto. Ten. Saxophones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cello</td>
<td>3rd B-flat and Alto Clarinets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>Bass Clarinets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contra Bass Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contra Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snare Drum</td>
<td>Snare Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Drum</td>
<td>Bass Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timpani</td>
<td>Timpani</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With the original woodwind and brass parts are largely retained, I chose to largely transcribe the string parts to percussion and the saxophone sections. For the transfer to be
effective, the string colors and unique string effects (tremolo, harmonics etc.) need to be redistributed to the band instruments. As often as possible, string harmonics at low dynamics are transferred to bowed percussion (vibraphones, crotale, and glockenspiel). Muted brasses or pianissimo saxophones are used to support some of these moments (see figures 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d). This method is similar to one that Frank Erickson described in his book on arranging for concert band. He states, “this method — a far superior method — is to consider the orchestra score as a general basis for the band piece, maintaining as much of the essence of the original as possible.”

Figure 1a. Bars 98-107 of Stucky’s Symphony. © Copyright 2012 by Steven Stucky. Used with Permission.

Figure 1b. Transcription of bars 98-107 of Stucky Symphony, using pianissimo saxophones to recreate strings color.

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Figure 1c. Bars 380-395 of Stucky Symphony.

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I found bowed metallophones to be effective in creating a soft sustained color for long periods without the need to change breath as in the case of wind instruments (see figures 2a and 2b). Even with the need to change bow direction, the resonance from the bowed bars masks the moment when the bow direction changes. This creates a soft sustained sound that I find is similar to the bowed string harmonics.
When range allows for it, I find that the saxophone section is a suitable replacement for strings. The homogenous color reflects the same homogeneity in the strings (see figure 3). The soprano and first alto saxophone takes the notes of the violins, the second alto saxophone takes on the viola part, tenor saxophone on the cello part, and the baritone saxophone plays the double bass notes. When the range exceeds the soprano saxophone’s top range, the e-flat clarinet or flutes are given the high violin notes. While a large clarinet
section from the e-flat to contrabass clarinets can provide the same homogenous sound quality, I decided against doing so in this transcription. I believe that this helps create a separate third color that can help represent strings. We often find that band transcriptions of orchestra works are missing a color (strings). Reserving the string parts to a unique section helps retain some semblance of another color in contrast to woodwinds and brasses. Using mallet percussion to play the string parts also serve the same purpose.

Figure 3. Transcription of bars 311-321 of Stucky *Symphony*, saxophones as a separate choir from other woodwinds.

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The saxophone choir is also effective in representing the *forte* or louder moments in the strings. A full clarinet choir would require larger forces to play up to the dynamics that the saxophone choir can produce. The beginning of the fourth movement required this
color. A second moment where saxophones were effective in creating the strings color was at rehearsal E (see figure 4).

![Figure 4. Transcription of bars 81-87 of Stucky Symphony, saxophones used to create forte strings color. © Copyright 2012 by Steven Stucky. Used with Permission.](image)

Another pragmatic consideration was the size of the clarinet section. If most of the string parts is transcribed to the clarinet section, we will need three solo b-flat clarinet and solo bass clarinet to play the original orchestra parts, plus additional two e-flat clarinets, nine b-flat clarinets, an alto clarinet, and two bass clarinets to cover the string parts. This section requires nineteen clarinet players compared to the eight needed in my transcription. The smaller forces also mean that more bands will more likely play the transcription. Once the decisions to retain the original wind parts, and to transcribe the string parts mainly to the saxophone and mallet percussion is made, the transcription process became easier.

It was not practical to transcribe the string parts at the end of the work to the percussion section. It was possible to reinforce the percussion with pianissimo clarinets and saxophones but there was not enough of a contrast in color from the woodwinds. I hence transferred the soft strings parts to muted brasses. I believe that this decision also helps recreate the color contrasts of the original orchestral ending of the Symphony (see figure 5).
Figure 5. Transcription of bars 380-395 of Stucky *Symphony*, muted brasses used as contrast to woodwind colors. This reflects the contrast between strings and woodwinds in the orchestra version.

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Following those decisions, there were other considerations made to alter the orchestration. Towards the end of the work, Stucky scored for unison parts in the piccolo,
oboes, and flutes in a tessitura where playing in tune is challenging. My advisor and I then decided it was more practical to reduce the doubling so that these passages are less challenging in terms of intonation. Some parts were rescored to a lower octave for the same reason (see figures 6a and 6b).

Figure 6a. Bars 380-395 of Stucky Symphony.
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The most difficult tasks were probably rescoring the large tutti string color at the beginning of the fourth movement. Considerations were given to retain the balance of the original chord. To me, the scoring creates a large organ chord that uses all available string stops, and I believe that the distribution used in my transcription was effective in creating that sound (large winds sound, see figures 7a and 7b).
Both principles of juxtaposition and interlocking are used to score the chord at the beginning of the fourth movement (see figure 8). The thirty-second notes in the strings were distributed across the woodwinds (see figure 7b). It was the only logical option as it was not practical to score it for mallet percussion and the brasses are needed to provide color contrasts to the transcribed woodwind version of the original string parts. There will not be enough percussionists to cover all the notes. The sound from bowed metallophones

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will not be loud enough to match the tutti fortissimo winds, and rolls on mallet percussion will introduce the sounds from the strokes which is undesirable in this chords.

Figure 8. Transcription of bars 340-342 of Stucky *Symphony*, showing juxtaposition and interlocking in scoring chord.

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Chapter 5: Transcription of Steven Stucky’s *Symphony* (2012)

(this page is deliberately left blank, the score begins on the next page)
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Transcribing Steven Stucky’s *Symphony* is a rewarding task. It held up to Steven Davies’s ideas of the reasons for transcriptions to exist. In this project, my transcription provided an opportunity for bands to play a significant work from a major composer. Stucky did not write much for the wind band — *Funeral Music for Queen Mary* (after Purcell; 2009) and *Fanfares and Arias* (1995). I believe that adding *Symphony* to the band repertory via the transcription is a positive contribution to concert bands.

At the personal level, the transcription process provided me an opportunity to experience Busoni’s philosophy on transcriptions. While I admit that transcription and composition are different activities, there are common benefits shared between the two processes. Both activities are artistic endeavors and require high levels of craft to produce the final product, in this case the score. Both transcription and composition require the composer/transcriber to imagine the sounds that the medium is capable of. The only difference being that the composer is not working off an extant score. I felt that the experience of reimagining colors from orchestra to band media helped me be more astute to color changes and the meanings that may be present when these changes occur.

Understanding the writing process (composition and transcription) helped me grasp the architecture and logic behind the unraveling of musical materials. It also helped me relate with deeper conviction to Stucky’s intentions for the *Symphony*.

“It is an emotional piece; music is about emotions. We use technique to create these emotional situations but then it is the emotional situations that we want to share together. I try not to be too specific about what the emotional journey should be for each listener because it could be a little different for each person. But I think in general everybody will probably notice that it is a piece that begin in a fairly dark place and ends in a fairly light place. It is emotionally a success — a journey that leaves us in a better place than we started.

It took a while the organize the piece a little bit, but then I eventually understood what the form should be. With these, not movement titles
exactly… *Introduction and Hymn; Outcry* — it is kind of a turbulent, dark, emotional music; and then it kind of break through into something jubilant in *Flying*, which is a scherzo; and then *Hymn and Reconciliation*, where music from the beginning comes back, and everything and anything that we are upset about or in doubt about is supposed to get resolved at the end. And I think that it sort-of does, it is a very positive outcome I think.”

For me, transcribing the work helped me grow into a better musician. I do not have enough evidence to claim that transcribing or composing works makes better performers in general, but there is enough evidence through the transcription process for me to believe that any amount of putting thoughts in notation is helpful to provide growth in personal musicianship. While philosophy and personal experience (as in this self-report) are useful and interesting to consider and read, research based on neural-science can provide us with evidence that is tested through scientific means. The research could shed light on the processes involved in writing music, and provide more definitive evidence to deny or support Busoni’s claims about similar processes used by transcribers and performers when making music. The results may significantly impact the ways we teach music be it in private lessons or in institutions.

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Bibliography


Appendix

1. License agreement for the inclusion of the transcription of Steven Stucky’s *Symphony* in the dissertation.

September 26, 2016

Chee Weng Yim
University of Miami
Frost School of Music
5501 San Amaro Drive
Coral Gables, FL 33146

Re: Dissertation Permission

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