James Stephenson: Symphony #3 "Visions"- A Conductor's Literary Companion

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

JAMES STEPHENSON: SYMPHONY #3 “VISIONS” - A CONDUCTOR’S LITERARY COMPANION

By

Alexander Magalong

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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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

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

JAMES STEPHENSON: SYMPHONY #3 “VISIONS” -
A CONDUCTOR’S LITERARY COMPANION

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The primary purpose of this essay is to provide information and an overview for conductors and performers who are preparing a performance of Symphony #3 “Visions” by James Stephenson. Each individual movement is discussed, addressing a range of observations as discovered from extensive score study. These include theoretical observations, use of orchestration, and thematic and motivic development. Unifying elements to other movements such as thematic recurrences are identified. Each chapter also addresses performance considerations such as potential issues with balance, clarifications with articulations, considerations for ensemble precision, vital cues from the conductor, and so forth. Appendices include the composer’s program notes from the score and an interview transcript between the composer and author.

Symphony #3 “Visions” was premiered by the Frost Symphony Orchestra on April 26, 2019 at the University of Miami’s Frost School of Music in Gusman Hall, Alexander Magalong, conductor. All observations and suggestions are based upon the author’s experiences throughout the process of preparing this performance. Direct recommendations from the composer are cited.
Dedicated to

Felix Buyao Magalong, Sr.

Sandra Gloria Magalong

Valentino Alonzo Briones

Emerenciana Mañalac Briones
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Trudy Kane, for her selfless guidance to ensure the completion of this essay. I thank her for being my constant foundation throughout my entire graduate career.

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James Stephenson, for his cooperation with this project and entrusting the premiere of his excellent symphony in my hands.

The musicians of the Frost Symphony Orchestra, with whom I learned the art of conducting for five years. I am thankful for their friendships and all the knowledge they have imparted to me.

My dear wife, Christina Mainar, for patiently and unconditionally standing by me as I pursued my childhood dream of conducting.

My beloved mentor, Thomas Sleeper, for the countless opportunities he has provided me. Initially, I was to study and prepare this final project with him. Following his retirement, I applied four years of his lessons to Stephenson’s Symphony #3 and this experience became the consummation of my education as a conductor. Under his tutelage, I have learned to trust my musical instincts, both in score study and on the podium. I cannot thank him enough for his generosity and unwavering belief in me.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

James (“Jim”) Mitchell Stephenson was born on February 4, 1969 in Joliet, Illinois and received his Bachelor of Music in trumpet performance from the New England Conservatory in 1990. Previously a trumpeter in the Naples Philharmonic in Florida for seventeen seasons, he began composing full-time in 2007, relatively late in his life. He is self-taught in composition and began as an arranger for brass quintet to perform at educational concerts. He strives to be a “performer’s composer” by remaining considerate to those for whom he writes. In doing so, he prides himself that each piece is different and cannot be assumed as “another Stephenson piece.” Nearly all of these pieces are professionally recorded on over thirty compact discs.

The Boston Herald described Stephenson’s music as "straightforward, unabashedly beautiful sounds” and that “Stephenson deserves to be heard again and again!” The Minnesota Star Tribune declared, “Stephenson is a composer of real talent.” Fanfare magazine called his The Devil’s Tale “a most remarkable work.” Stephenson has written compositions for almost every instrument, justifying the nickname “The Concerto King” given to him by John Yeh, assistant principal clarinetist with the Chicago Symphony.

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2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.
has been commissioned by many symphony musicians. He has also written for musicians in Chicago, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Minnesota, Washington D.C., St. Louis, Oregon, Milwaukee, Dallas, Rhode Island, Michigan, and Florida. In addition to composing, Stephenson continues to work as an arranger; his arrangements have been performed and recorded by the Boston Pops, Cincinnati Pops, and New York Pops.

Stephenson has also conducted orchestras in Bozeman, Charleston, Ft. Myers, Modesto, Wyoming, as well as near his home in the Greater Chicago area with the Lake Forest Symphony. In 2016, he conducted the Chattanooga Symphony’s Holiday Concert. He has also traveled around the United States as an invited lecturer to many universities and colleges, including Indiana University, North Dakota State University, University of Michigan, Ball State University, University of North Texas, Wyoming University, Indiana Wesleyan University, SUNY-Fredonia, Kennesaw State University, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, and the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami.

In 2017, James Stephenson and my mentor Thomas Sleeper discussed the possibility of commissioning the composer’s first orchestral symphony for the Frost Symphony Orchestra. In that year I had been exposed to two orchestral compositions by Mr. Stephenson that sparked my interest in pursuing his work as a subject for this essay. The first was a full orchestra arrangement of *there are no words*. This work was originally conceived for concert band to commemorate the nine victims of the Charleston, South Carolina church shooting on June 17, 2015. The full orchestra version was premiered by the Frost Symphony Orchestra in January 2017. The second composition was Mr.

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Stephenson’s *Concerto for Violin “Tributes”* which I heard performed at the 2017 Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in Santa Cruz, California. At the festival, I was briefly introduced to the composer by a mutual friend. In both pieces, I was attracted to the composer’s beautiful lyrical lines, warm orchestration, and his accessible use of tonality.

James Stephenson’s first two symphonies were written for wind ensemble. *Symphony #3 “Visions”* was premiered by the Frost Symphony Orchestra on April 26, 2019 at the University of Miami’s Frost School of Music in Gusman Hall. This performance had closely preceded the world premiere commission of Stephenson’s *Concerto for Bass Trombone* for Charles Vernon and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on June 13, 2019 under the direction of Riccardo Muti.\(^8\)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Score

The score is the primary resource for this essay. James Stephenson began electronically mailing “working” drafts of the individual symphony movements to me on October 26, 2018 with the caveat that there may still be changes in the future. Each movement received included a PDF attachment of the computer generated score and an accompanying MP3 playback recording for reference. In this correspondence, the composer cautioned to listen to the playback recording “SEVERAL times before even judging”, reminding me of the poor timbre of computer reproductions and that “some percussion is almost inaudible.” As the composition of this symphony was concurrent with his Conerto for Bass Trombone for Charles Vernon and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the first two movements of Symphony #3 were completed in late October before returning to his other project. The first movement was received on October 26, 2018 and the second movement three days later. The third movement was sent on January 4, 2019 and the final score with all four movements on January 29, 2019.

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9 James Stephenson, e-mail message to author, October 26, 2018.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 James Stephenson, e-mail message to author, October 29, 2018.
13 James Stephenson, e-mail message to author, January 4, 2019.
14 James Stephenson, e-mail message to author, January 29, 2019.
Interview

Stephenson attended a rehearsal on April 19, 2019, a week prior to the performance. After the rehearsal, the composer provided specific feedback. Topics addressed were balance adjustments, articulation clarifications, and musical character. Many of the interpretive suggestions in this essay come directly from this meeting.

Appendix B contains a transcription of the electronic mail interview between myself and James Stephenson. The questions center upon the genesis of Symphony #3, comparisons of this symphony to other works, and his orchestration decisions in the third movement. This interview delves more deeply into the mind and heart of the composer. This is an invaluable component of the essay as it emphasizes what has influenced Stephenson prior to writing the symphony.

Recordings

The first performance of Stephenson’s Symphony #3 was video recorded and may be found on YouTube. Four separate videos correspond to the four individual movements. The recordings feature the University of Miami’s Frost Symphony Orchestra, Alexander Magalong conducting. Video recordings of Stephenson’s Symphony #2 “Voices” may also be found on YouTube for reference. These may be helpful to understand the composer’s response to the third interview question found in Appendix B.

Program Notes

Appendix A contains the program notes included in the inside front cover of the score. It includes the approximate duration and instrumentation of the symphony. In the composer’s own words, it further explains how the project for the symphony was
conceived, the origin of its subtitle “Visions,” and his personal intentions while writing the work. Specific passages from the program notes are referred to in Chapters 4 and 6.

For comparison with his previous symphony, program notes are available for the world premiere of “Symphony #2, “Voices” at the 2016 Midwest Clinic in Chicago performed by “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band under the direction of Colonel Jason K. Fettig.15 Symphony #2 won the 2017 National Band Association William D. Revelli Award, a prize “designed to recognize outstanding compositions that help further the cause of quality literature for bands in America.”16

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CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this essay is to serve as a literary companion for conductors and performers preparing a performance of James Stephenson’s Symphony #3 “Visions”. This guide may also be useful in preparing his other orchestral works. The essay is comprised of the following chapters:

1) Introduction (to include general background information)
2) Review of Literature
3) Method
4) Symphony #3 – I. Moderato agitato
5) Symphony #3 – II. Adagio cantabile
6) Symphony #3 – III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile
7) Symphony #3 – IV. Andante sonore – Allegro – Adagio
8) Conclusions

Bibliography

Appendices

The first chapter introduces the reader to James Stephenson and the circumstances that led to the commission of Symphony #3. The second chapter recognizes existing print, recorded, and oral sources from which portions of this essay were drawn. This (third) chapter explains the purpose of the essay, its structure, and the method chosen to approach this work.
The fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters each provide an overview of the individual movements of *Symphony #3*. Each chapter discusses a range of observations as discovered from extensive score study. These include theoretical observations, use of orchestration, and thematic and motivic development. Unifying elements to other movements such as thematic recurrences are identified. Each chapter also addresses performance considerations such as potential issues with balance, clarifications with articulations, considerations for ensemble precision, vital cues from the conductor, and so forth.

All observations and suggestions are based upon my experiences throughout the process of preparing the symphony’s world premiere performance. This performance was prepared with limited rehearsal time with a university orchestra. Direct recommendations from the composer (who was only present at the final two rehearsals) were an important part of the process and are cited here.

The eighth (and final) chapter closes the dissertation with final reflections and conclusions on the symphony.

Appendix A contains the program notes directly from the inside cover of the score. Appendix B contains a transcription of the electronic mail interview with James Stephenson.
CHAPTER 4

SYMPHONY #3 – I. MODERATO AGITATO

The symphony opens with an ethereal E-minor seventh chord in the divided second violins, preparing the entrance of the flutes with the symphony’s main theme –

Example 4.1. Symphony #3, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 1-2

In his Program Notes included in the score, Stephenson writes- “The opening E-minor 7th (Em7) chord becomes crucial, both harmonically and structurally, as does the opening flute duet…The four movements are laid out accordingly, in B minor, E major, G major, and finally, D major, spelling out the notes in the opening chord, though not in
order.” Because of the importance of this chord, it is imperative that the chord is well balanced within the second violins. This may be difficult to achieve as the notes may likely be distributed among an unequal number of players in the section. The chord is also marked as ppp (from nowhere). Individual players may overdo this indication, so each note must still be audible with even tone for the sublime effect to occur.

The principal theme quietly emerges from this texture in the flutes. Because of the alternating entrances, it is important to address the issue of rhythmic ensemble between the two players. The players may need to anticipate entrances to ensure they are not late. It is crucial that the tempo of this opening theme is firmly set between the flutes, as the tempo should generally remain consistent until the final three bars of the movement. In this opening, although the harp is marked pianissimo, its presence must be equal to the flutes so as to contribute to the ghostly texture.

In measure 6, the first violins take over the notes of the original E-minor seventh chord as the second violins slide into additional pitches creating a dissonant E-minor eleventh chord.

Example 4.2. Symphony #3, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 6

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As in the opening, the same challenge with balance presents itself, but with more players and pitches. Even so, the general effect must still be airy, as to avoid prominence over the flute line.

More performance forces enter in measure 10 all of which must be sensitive to the ongoing flute theme.

Example 4.3. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 10-12

![Musical notation image]

The highly chromatic runs in the clarinets and bassoons should be considered an effect and the players should strive to play as one line in the same manner as the flutes. The piccolo should take great care to comfortably hover above the flutes, but not overpower with its chirping grace notes. Although not indicated, an accent in the low brass after each off-beat entrance will help aid ensemble precision with the tam-tam and prevent delay.\(^\text{18}\)

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\(^{18}\) James Stephenson, interview with author, April 19, 2019.
At Rehearsal A, the conductor must ensure that the first violins start the theme together and keep the tempo established by the flute theme, especially considering the accents that occur several bars later. In the bar preceding Rehearsal A, it is necessary that the tied half notes are released together so there is no delay on the following downbeat.

Example 4.4. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 16-18

Also at Rehearsal A, special attention should be given to the entrance of the chorale material in the horns and basses, encouraging them to be precise with the pitch changes, especially the eighth notes in measures 19 and 23 and the subsequent downbeats.
In measure 26, it is important to keep the viola theme present amongst the woodwind entrances and the syncopated violin line with as clearly articulated note changes as possible. However, to create a convincing diminuendo, the violins should apply substantial weight to the front of the half notes in this passage. Collectively, the orchestra should be dynamically contained for these eight bars to effectively arrive at the first climax at Rehearsal B, measure 34 (as punctuated by a cymbal crash), taking great care not to overextend the crescendo in measure 29.
Example 4.6. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 26-33
In measure 30, the cello entrance reinforces the viola theme as the woodwinds and violins trade roles. The horns and English horn assist the dominance of the new violin line. Phrasing and articulations between the families should match the previous phrase as a one-bar crescendo propels the movement into Rehearsal B.

Although Rehearsal B is the first climax of the symphony and the brass are marked fortissimo, they must be careful not to overpower the theme in the second violins, violas, and cellos with their sustained notes. For the proper balance, these sections of the strings should also strive for clarity and intensity. In addition, as clarified by the composer, the accents in the woodwinds should not be overly detached, but rather should be treated as if both an accent and tenuto were marked.\(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\) Ibid.
Example 4.7. Symphony #3, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 34-37
Beginning at measure 38, the movement’s strength slowly diminishes, achieved by a gradual reduction in volume, performance forces, and softer timbres while the previous themes and motives continue to pass throughout the orchestra. For this effect to convincingly begin, the composer advises the brass to diminuendo past the marked forte in measure 38 to a mezzo-forte.\footnote{Ibid.}

Example 4.8. \textit{Symphony #3}, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 38-41
At measure 49, the return of the E-minor seventh chord in the second violins prepares the entrance of the incessant wood block rhythm at Rehearsal C that will serve as a seamless bridge to the movement’s next section (*l’istesso agitato*).
In addition to the wood block, two more notable motives are introduced at Rehearsal C. First, the clarinet transforms the accented, angular eighth notes from Rehearsal B into a gentle, chromatic, undulating motive slurred within the narrow range of a whole step. Added emphasis to this line is provided by the harp. This material will later be transferred to the strings beginning at Rehearsal D, with an embellished version in the second clarinet.

Example 4.10. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 58-61

The second new motive occurs at measure 52 in the pizzicato cellos and bassoons: an ascending, quasi-arpeggio figure of a bounce-like character.

Example 4.11. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, m. 52
With only one bassoon and half of the cellos playing this part pizzicato, the marked piano should be ignored in favor of a mezzo-forte to ensure it is heard, especially the first note of each grouping due to its lower pitch and placement after the downbeat.

Two complementing phrases first occur shortly after Rehearsal D, which begins the second and largest section of the movement. Here, the music shifts to a mysterious character reminiscent of a carnival funhouse. The first phrase features a light, four-part harmony in the flutes and bassoons with each voice rapidly oscillating within an interval of a minor second.

Example 4.12. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 66-70

It is important that the four voices are well-balanced with each appearance of this motive regardless of the instrumentation involved. The inner voices in particular must be strong to support the top line. This is especially true with the horn iteration at measure 102.

In its first appearance, this motive is grounded by a pedal in the first violins on the note C-sharp.

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21 Ibid.  
22 Ibid.
Example 4.13. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 65-73

There should be a spinning, increasing intensity through this tied note that will propel the violins into the second phrase beginning with an octave leap. The conductor should provide a clear downbeat for the violins to leave the tie together.

In measures 74-77, the conductor should ensure that all the first violins exaggerate the sudden crescendos at the same rate, but not drop too softly in dynamic for the following staccato piano note as it must still be clearly audible and articulated.

Example 4.14. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 74-77

At measure 94, the first violins introduce an important galloping, chromatically descending motive, a melodic version of the three-note cells in the second violins and violas.

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23 Ibid.
Example 4.15. Symphony #3, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 94-97

From Rehearsal D to Rehearsal G, all this thematic material develops through several tonal centers, traveling throughout the various sections of the orchestra. Of note is the striking fortепiano in the brass (measure 118) that builds to a dominating bass line four measures later.

Example 4.16. Symphony #3, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 118-125
In measure 126, the syncopations in the trumpets should be brought out to counteract the half notes so prominent in the rest of the orchestra.\textsuperscript{24}

Example 4.17. \textit{Symphony} \#3, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 126-129

For eight bars beginning at measure 142, overlapping entrances of the galloping theme slacken the energy to measure 150, a recollection of the wood-block material from Rehearsal C.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
Example 4.18. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 142-149

The xylophone now assumes the original flute theme at Rehearsal G.
Example 4.19. Symphony #3, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 150-161
Although it is marked pianissimo (*whisper softly*), the conductor must ensure that the xylophone theme is heard, making certain that the sustained notes in the other instruments do not intrude. Special attention should be given to the pitch of the tuba four measures before Rehearsal G.

Before the climax at Rehearsal H, the xylophone crescendos and passes off the primary theme to the trombones for a more violent expression. The trombones are accompanied by an augmentation of the second clarinet line from Rehearsal D in the bass instruments and the incessant wood block rhythm in the upper strings and snare drum. The result is a militaristic backdrop for the theme, but the conductor should encourage the ensemble to allow the pair of trombones to project.
Example 4.20. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 186-197
When the trumpets assume the theme at Rehearsal I, the bass trombone should be driving the underlying bass melody;\textsuperscript{25} this is a transformation of the horn chorale from Rehearsal A.

Example 4.21. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 206-213

Likewise, the first and second horns can help lead the diminuendo four bars before Rehearsal J.

Example 4.22. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 214-221

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
At Rehearsal J, a brilliant moment occurs in the strings and woodwinds; the previously cited bass trombone line layers upon itself in four voices.

Example 4.23. Symphony #3, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 222-229

For each voice in this passage, the composer suggests placing an accent on the first whole note of each four-bar grouping so that all entrances may be discerned.²⁶

²⁶ Ibid.
In the four-bar diminuendo before Rehearsal K, the flutes and piccolo play this motive in even further diminution. Simultaneously, the contrabassoon continues the opening flute theme. The composer suggested that the conductor disregard the marked piano in the contrabassoon in favor of a forte dynamic. The bassoons should be expected to play the downbeat of Rehearsal K in a forte dynamic as their purpose is simply to allow the contrabassoon a breath within the line. All other instruments should be kept at a soft dynamic so that the piccolo may comfortably play the melody above the texture.

Example 4.24. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 237-249

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27 Ibid.
This is followed by another soft developmental passage utilizing the movement’s themes. Attention should be given to the percussion to remain soft, with the exception of the tambourine at measure 292.

Example 4.25. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 290-293
This prepares the string fugato at Rehearsal N beginning with the first violins. The subject’s head motive is derived from the minor second oscillating phrase from Rehearsal D.

Example 4.26. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 322-329

The conductor should be certain that the bow changes in the final three bars are unaccented.28 Also, a diminuendo should be shown in the last measure of the phrase, thus ensuring this line is subservient to the next entrance of the fugato subject. This becomes increasingly important as additional voices enter.

28 Ibid.
From Rehearsal N to measure 344, the collective function of the woodwinds, brass, and percussion is to punctuate the middle of the fugato lines.

Example 4.27. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 326, 334-335, 342-344

There is one measure of interjection within the first entrance of the fugato subject (bar 326), two measures in the second entrance (bars 334 and 335), and three measures in the
third entrance (bars 342-344). The conductor should help aid the wind players to anticipate their isolated staccato notes.

The fugato erupts into a pizzicato statement of the opening theme by the strings in octaves, superimposed by a second statement of the same theme in diminution by the woodwinds.

Example 4.28. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 358-365
The conductor should demand a strong presence throughout this grotesque line and, therefore, the composer recommends the volume be raised to a fortissimo dynamic.\textsuperscript{29}

The final statement of the fugato subject occurs in octaves by the string choir at Rehearsal P. Alternating measures of crescendos in the brass drive the momentum forward.

Example 4.29. \textit{Symphony} #3, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 374-377

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
This section propels forward to Rehearsal Q. At this point the composer wishes the trumpet to be “the champion of the ensemble,” heralding above the orchestra with the bass trombone theme from Rehearsal I.

At measures 421 and 425 in the upper strings, the conductor should indicate significant weight at the beginning of the stroke before any sign of diminuendo and a stronger dynamic for the violas and cellos at bar 428 so the tessitura can project. The conductor should also take great liberty and drama with the ritardando culminating into Rehearsal R.

Example 4.30. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 420-439

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
From Rehearsal R to Rehearsal S, the composer suggested that all string dynamic markings for the half note melody lines (tremolo and non-tremolo) be raised by one full dynamic (i.e. mezzo forte becomes forte).\textsuperscript{32}

Example 4.31. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 444-459

As the excitement subsides into Rehearsal S, it is critical that the tempo continues its driving intensity. The movement’s opening theme returns in the piccolo. The composer thoughtfully inserted fragments in the first violins to allow the player to breathe.

Example 4.32. *Symphony #3*, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 477-482

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
Therefore, the conductor should demand a consistent articulation from the violins matching the piccolo. The movement concludes with final iterations of several of its motives; these appear in solo bassoons, horns, violin, harp, and glockenspiel. The final eighth note in the piccolo should have its full value.\textsuperscript{33} The wood block finally expires, both in tempo and volume, into nothingness.

Example 4.33. \textit{Symphony #3}, I. Moderato agitato, mm. 491-499

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
CHAPTER 5

SYMPHONY #3 – II. ADAGIO CANTABILE

The movement opens with a gentle chorale in the divided violins supported by a solo cello playing a single pitch. Throughout the second measures of each phrase, the harmonies become increasingly dissonant as the energy dissolves. The exception is the final phrase which builds in its first measure before decaying to an even softer dynamic than the previous phrases, allowing the English horn to emerge.

Example 5.1. Symphony #3, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 1-9

For the chords to be balanced, the top line in the first two desks of first violins should be the predominate voice so that it may be clearly heard amongst the dissonances. Also, as the diminuendos are over the span of either three beats or two beats, it is imperative that all players are consistent with the diminuendos to achieve an even effect. The hooked
bows should have length with minimal detachment; a tenuto rather than staccato should be observed.\textsuperscript{34}

During the English horn’s sustained note, an ascending sixteenth note figure enters in the bass clarinet, bearing close resemblance to the first movement’s “pizzicato” motive. The contour of this motive foreshadows the woodwind theme that will be introduced several bars later. The viola entrance in bar 11 must be heard immediately, leaning towards a mezzo-piano dynamic marking rather than the printed piano.\textsuperscript{35}

Example 5.2. \textit{Symphony} #3, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 10-15

\textsuperscript{34} James Stephenson, interview with author, April 19, 2019.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
At Rehearsal A (Example 5.3), the string chorale appears again with the addition of all cellos; the diminuendos of the original statement are abandoned in favor of crescendos at the end of the phrases. These crescendos must be modest. Although this material stood alone at the opening, a new meandering melody in the English horn, clarinets, and bassoons should prevail leading the crescendo to Rehearsal B. In addition to containing the dynamics in the strings, the conductor should also ensure that the flutes, oboes, piccolo, and crotales play exceptionally light in their accompanying figures.

At Rehearsal B (the first forte arrival point), the strings assume the woodwind melody in powerful unison and should play richly into the string (Example 5.4). As much of the brass enter at this point with sustained tones, they must be sensitive to the string line; they should relax the crescendos and exaggerate the pianos. Simultaneously, the horns and upper woodwinds alternate measures of the string chorale motive, so the articulations should match not only each other, but also mimic the bowings from the opening.

In measure 35 (Example 5.5), it is crucial to bring the entire ensemble to an exceptionally soft dynamic so that the desired result can be achieved at the Rehearsal C, the movement’s apex. Great care should be taken that the first three measures before the accelerando (bars 35-37) remain in tempo throughout, particularly with the strings releasing ties and the percussionist switching from glockenspiel to the crotales within a limited time.
Example 5.3. Symphony #3, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 16-26
Example 5.4. *Symphony #3*, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 27-34
Example 5.5. *Symphony #3*, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 34-39
Much thought should be given to the pace of the ten measure accelerando, not only with tempo, but with intensity. The strings break into two-part canon, with the first violins and cellos ahead of the second violins and violas by one beat (Example 5.6). For the listener to realize the canon is occurring, it is important that all dynamic swells are closely observed and exaggerated and that the accents are prominent. The woodwinds, brass, percussion, and harp should play in an accompanying fashion. Throughout these ten bars, there must be a slow, yet clear sense of continuous forward momentum through the ritardando with increasing weight and power (Example 5.7). As the tempo stalls, the notes must continually broaden and sustain, especially the three marcato quarter notes when the orchestra finally converges in unison, exploding into Rehearsal C (Example 5.8).

Ominous pulses of tied quarter note triplets occur in the bass instruments. This supports violins in the highest tessitura which must remain intense, pressing the whole note into the aggressive quarter notes. Only until the oboes, English horn, clarinets, and trumpet enter with the winding motive from Rehearsal A may the violins begin the descent in volume to Rehearsal D. The woodwinds respond to the violins with three iterations of the motive in eighth notes. For the fourth and final time, the piccolo plays the motive in quarter and half notes. This gently prepares the transition into Rehearsal D.
Example 5.6. *Symphony #3*, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 37-43
Example 5.7. *Symphony #3*, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 44-51
Example 5.8. *Symphony #3*, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 51-61
The dreamy character of Rehearsal D is attributed to the xylophone and harp. The previous violin quarter notes are repeated in a hypnotic manner above sustained first violins and cellos. The divided second violins should confidently enter with the fingered tremolos before decaying into the following bars.

Example 5.9. *Symphony #3*, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 62-73
Simultaneously, the flutes and oboes acquire the opening string chorale motive, but tenuto markings are clearly indicated this time. As before, the meandering motive enters several times, but in this instance, is found in the horns in a simpler version. The fourth horn plays the final statement of the motive with the same augmented note values as the piccolo had eight bars before.

Although a cello continues its solo into Rehearsal E, it is critical that it remain secondary to the bassoon’s radiant melody in G major. The bassoon’s piano should certainly be played in a soloistic context and if projection is still a concern, the composer suggested that the dynamic be increased to a mezzo-forte.\(^\text{36}\)

At measure 78 the piccolo enters (Example 5.10). Together with the oboe, English horn, and clarinet, they all must allow the solo bassoon to execute the subito piano, so these instruments should strive to play as softly as comfortably possible. Next, the cellos and second bassoon play a one bar foreshadowing of the main melody twice. At Rehearsal F, they undertake the entire main winding melody, to be played as richly as possible.\(^\text{37}\) Concurrently at Rehearsal F, the first violins take the bassoon melody from Rehearsal E, as the second violins and upper woodwinds syncopate the accented quarter notes from Rehearsal C.

\(^{36}\) Ibid.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.
Example 5.10. *Symphony* #3, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 74-85
The orchestra builds to a secondary climax in E major at Rehearsal G (Example 5.11). Here, the upper strings continue the syncopated motive in accented tremolos, the brass proclaim the opening chorale theme, and the lower strings, bassoons, and tuba revert to the canon melody from the accelerando earlier in the movement (beginning at bar 35).

Here, the composer requested that the brass, unlike the woodwinds at Rehearsal D, play the chorale theme with slight separation between repeated notes, particularly the eighth notes and quarter note triplets. For the rhythm to be clear, the articulation should be considered both a staccato and tenuto marking. Throughout this section, the conductor must ensure the melodic bass line is prominent and leads the long diminuendo into Rehearsal H amongst the other musical lines (Example 5.12).
Example 5.11. *Symphony #3*, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 86-96
Example 5.12. *Symphony #3*, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 97-106
At Rehearsal H, the intimate bassoon melody from Rehearsal E returns, this time in the oboe. A mezzo piano marking should be favored above the printed pianissimo to allow the oboe to be more soloistic; a breath may be taken after the tie in bar 113 if needed.  

Example 5.13. Symphony #3, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 106-114

This appearance of the melody is darker in character than the previous occurrence, hovering above a hollow open fifth (F-sharp and C-sharp) and a gentle sustained roll (on the note B) in the timpani. Solemn interjections of the movement’s triplet figures arise in the cellos.

39 Ibid.
In the closing section, the composer indicates in the percussion for, “the sound of a constant small waterfall, or a small running brook, executed by small rain-stick, ocean drum, or actually pouring water into a bucket- but softly.”\textsuperscript{40} For the premiere, we elected to use a small rain-stick for this crucial moment. The composer stressed that the light rain sound be continuous, free of any dynamic swells.\textsuperscript{41}

The meandering head motive reoccurs twice, first in the bassoon followed by the English horn, leading into the movement’s final measures (Example 5.14). Closing as it had begun, the bass clarinet repeats its ascending sixteenth-note figure as the harp plays the syncopated violin motive one final time in augmentation. As in the first movement, a solo violin quietly concludes the movement.

\textsuperscript{40} James Stephenson, \textit{Symphony No. 3 – Visions} ([Illinois]: Stephenson Music, Inc., 2019).

\textsuperscript{41} James Stephenson, interview with author, April 19, 2019.
Example 5.14. *Symphony #3*, II. Andante cantabile, mm. 155-122
CHAPTER 6

SYMPHONY #3 – III. VIVO SCHERZANDO – TRIO CANTABILE

The movement is a scherzo and trio that the composer describes as “fun” and should be performed lightly as if “on tiptoes, and not too intentional”. The scherzo is in quick triple meter as one may expect. Unlike the previous two movements, it opens with a raucous eight-bar introduction featuring scalar flourishes in the upper strings followed by two alternating antiphonal snare drums that must diminuendo together at the same rate (Example 6.2).

This prepares the first restless, staccato theme, with angular phrases alternating between the second bassoon and pizzicato basses, and the first bassoon and pizzicato cellos (Example 6.1).

Example 6.1. Symphony #3, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 9-24

It is of great importance that the alternating entrances speak on time and connect as one musical line.

42 James Stephenson, interview with author, April 19, 2019.
Example 6.2. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 1-8
A brief two-bar descending line in the trombones leads into Rehearsal C. The composer asked that the dotted quarter notes be played more marcato with little regard for the printed tenuto. At Rehearsal C, the clarinet introduces the primary melodic theme as the underlying staccato theme continues in the bassoons.

Example 6.3. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 39-48

The clarinet is joined by the bass clarinet in the next phrase, an energetic, galloping motive that softens as it ascends.

Example 6.4. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 49-56

Throughout the entirety of the movement and amongst all the instruments, the tempo must remain steady with each occurrence of the primary melodic theme and the galloping motive. Subdivisions should be consistently observed through the ties of the melody and the galloping rhythm should be steadfast.

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43 Ibid.
At Rehearsal E (above a light, rhythmic ostinato in the horns and trumpets), the second violins and violas begin a sweeping figure in unison. This is answered by the first violins and cellos in contrary motion (Example 6.5).

The texture continues to thicken as more musical fragments are combined; each line must remain faithful to the tempo. At Rehearsal G (Example 6.6), sudden crescendos allow the trombone color to emerge. The volume abruptly drops at Rehearsal H (Example 6.7).

Example 6.5. Symphony #3, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 73-88
Example 6.6. *Symphony* #3, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 109-117
Example 6.7. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 121-136
Great attention should be given to the first violins in measure 137 as they are to maintain the tempo alone within a piano dynamic. Concurrently, the solo woodwinds should strive to play at an equal dynamic amongst themselves.

Example 6.8. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 137-144

At measure 155, the violas must be encouraged to begin the galloping theme with a clear start and to be courageous with the dramatic crescendo (Example 6.9). Five measures before Rehearsal J, the composer felt that the stopped horn is of interest and should be brought out more than the marked mezzo forte.\(^{44}\) This is also true for the muted trumpets after Rehearsal K.

Beginning at measure 158, the pizzicato bass lines of the staccato theme must be prominent, driving the suspense to the point of arrival at Rehearsal L. The primary melodic clarinet theme majestically appears, first played by the flutes, oboes, and first violins and secondly by the trumpets. After a driving, staccato, descending scale in the

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
bass instruments, the momentum builds to a crystalline color change in E-flat major. This is achieved by the heralding trumpets and bright triangle (Example 6.10).

Example 6.9. Symphony #3, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 153-168
Example 6.10. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 227-238
This prepares the listener for Rehearsal N. The sweeping figure originally played by only the second violins and violas is now joined by the first violins and cellos. The woodwind choir and basses answer with the corresponding melodic phrase that was originally in the first violins and cellos. In this iteration, a third voice is brilliantly layered above in the piccolo, playing the sweeping figure in canon with the strings. It is important that the fortepiano in the strings is exaggerated to allow the woodwinds to be heard. The intensity through the following crescendo must then be continuous, through means of vibrato and bow pressure. Simultaneously, the composer requested that the timpani drop in dynamic from mezzo forte to piano, so as to provide an appropriate amount of support.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
After the powerful trombone statements at Rehearsal O (Example 6.12), the woodwinds enter in four-part canon separated by one measure. Again, the tempo of the quarter notes must remain in time and the articulations must match as each voice enters, to ensure that all voices properly converge to a homophonic texture.
Example 6.12. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 255-270

At Rehearsal Q, the oboe plays an extended solo that begins as an inversion of the restless, staccato theme.

Example 6.13. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 295-302

The thematic motives quietly continue into Rehearsal U (Example 6.14) where the oboe and English horn evoke the opening flute theme from the first movement. This is supported by an ostinato in the cellos derived from melodic material from Rehearsal E.
Example 6.14. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 359-374

The conductor should strive for great clarity to ensure that this ostinato can be heard.\footnote{Ibid.}

The reintroduced first movement theme continues to build to Rehearsal Z with entrances in the upper strings and trumpet. The scherzo section ends with a boisterous celebration of its many motives (Example 6.15). The third horn sustains past the final tutti notes, functioning as the bridge into the following contrasting section.
Example 6.15. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 487-495
The *Trio cantabile* is an enchanting irregular waltz that begins with bass pizzicatos, three pulsating solo cellos, and horns in typical triple meter. After these two measures, the suspended cymbal responds to the lower strings in a bar of seven quarter note beats (which the composer indicates should be grouped 2+2+3). Although marked pianissimo, the composer specified that the suspended cymbal should not be “too thin.”

This is the standard three bar pattern that is repeated, except for the final bar of the period; here the composer directs *a poco rallentando* in a bar of eight quarter note beats. This bar is accentuated by a magical held note in the flutes and English horn, hovering above syncopations in the triangle and timpani.

Example 6.16. *Symphony* #3, III. *Vivo scherzando* – *Trio cantabile*, mm. 496-513

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47 Ibid.
All of this forms the accompaniment for the lyrical melody in three-part harmony.

The composer clarifies in the program notes of the score:

NOTE from the composer: In the trio of the 3rd movement, the intent is that the 1st clarinet, 1st bassoon, and 1st trumpet parts might also be considered for performance by saxophones (soprano, alto, tenor) for orchestras that have the budget. Optional parts have been provided, and this would be the composer’s preference, when possible. They only play in this trio section of the 3rd movement, and at large tutti sections at the very ends of movements 3 and 4.

As the Frost School of Music had excellent classical saxophonists at the time of the premiere, I was able to accommodate the composer’s preference. From the conductor’s vantage point, they were originally seated to the left of the clarinets. The composer requested that they be moved in front of the first row of woodwinds for better projection in Gusman Hall.

For the three lines to be balanced, strong support in the lower two voices is necessary. The conductor should also assist the trio to phrase in agreement; this will strengthen the rhythmic consistency (particularly with the slurred quarter notes). Placing a slight tenuto and weight on the first of each quarter note grouping will further promote uniformity.

At Rehearsal DD, (Example 6.17) the harp and vibraphone enter with a quarter note line that functions as a countermelody as the trio crescendos to the height of the passage.

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Rehearsal EE (Example 6.18) stabilizes into triple meter. Although transformed into an eerie waltz, thematic material from the first movement’s *l’istesso agitato* (measure 58) is revived in the oboe, second clarinet, second bassoon, first violins, and violas *col legno.*
Example 6.18. *Symphony* #3, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 526-541
At Rehearsal GG, the top voice of the trio plays the first two bars of the transformed first movement violin melody; this is echoed by the second voice. The third voice enters with longer rhythmic values and a diminuendo in the third and fourth bars.

Example 6.19. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 562-569

Simultaneously, an underlying appearance of the scherzo’s angular, staccato theme is united with alternating ascending scales in the upper woodwinds and first violins. Great care should be taken to guarantee that the trio lines prevail above the rising scales. Adherence to the printed diminuendos will assure this will occur.
At Rehearsal HH, the opening *Trio cantabile* melody returns but is transferred to a second group of soloists: the concertmaster, principal second violinist, and principal violist. The wind (or saxophone) trio now introduces a moving countermelody with an initial leaping contour followed by an ascending scale. The composer requested that the saxophone trio crescendo to a forte in measure 582 rather than the printed mezzo forte.49

Example 6.20. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 574-585

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49 James Stephenson, interview with author, April 19, 2019.
The wind trio and harp return to their respective lines from Rehearsal DD as a solo violin assumes portions of the new countermelody.

Example 6.21. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 586-591

The violin continues at Rehearsal JJ with runs rhythmically similar to the ascending scales from Rehearsal G. This is also reminiscent of the scherzo’s sweeping gestures from Rehearsal E, only now in inversion. A solo bass answers the violin with pizzicato fragments of the restless, staccato theme: a foreshadowing of the return to the scherzo.

Example 6.22. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 598-605
The solo violin leads the decay into the fermata (marking the end of the *Trio cantabile* section) before the orchestra bursts into the truncated return of the scherzo (Example 6.23).

Example 6.23. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – Trio cantabile, mm. 610-625
Remnants of the *Trio cantabile*’s final measures are sprinkled above the staccato theme.

The violin entrances must be precisely in time and clearly articulated.

Example 6.24. *Symphony #3*, III. Vivo scherzando – *Trio cantabile*, mm. 626-637

This motive appears several more times throughout the scherzo’s recurrence as it is combined with other thematic material. The movement hurriedly reaches its exciting conclusion.
CHAPTER 7

SYMPHONY #3 – IV. ANDANTE SONORE – ADAGIO – ALLEGRO

The fourth movement is an impressive culmination of the entire symphony’s melodic and motivic material.

The string choir opens the movement with an augmented appearance of the second movement’s meandering theme (Example 7.1). Similar to the previous movement, the strings should play richly into the string. The tempo slows slightly and the strings continue quietly with a theme featuring several ties. Simultaneously, the second and third trumpets emerge with a descending melody. The composer requested more third trumpet to support the second trumpet’s higher octave. The trumpets are imitated in canon by the trombones.

At Rehearsal A (Example 7.2), the tempo returns to an Andante. A solo trumpet sings the descending melody in shorter note values. The texture is similar to the first movement’s opening section with the hovering bird-like chirps in the piccolo, highly chromatic runs in the flutes, wood block and bass drum interjections, and off-beat entrances in the low brass. As before, the composer emphasized that these entrances should be slightly accented.

The energy continues to build into Rehearsal B (Example 7.3). In measure 21, it is imperative that the conductor give a strong downbeat for the violins to release the tremolo and execute the thirty-second notes together.

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50 James Stephenson, interview with author, April 19, 2019.

51 Ibid.
Example 7.1. *Symphony* #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 1-6
Example 7.2. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 11-18
Example 7.3. *Symphony* #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 19-21
At the subito Adagio after Rehearsal B (Example 7.4), scattered rhythmic variants of the descending motive overlap in the woodwinds and brass. The composer asked for “a big brass sound with the melody.” The strings emphasize single pitches, with quarter notes in the cellos and basses and syncopations in the violins and violas. The strings should drop in volume immediately after arriving at the subito Adagio, to allow the individual overlapping melodies to be heard through the thick texture.

The pivotal transition into the Allegro at Rehearsal C occurs in the cellos, but the conductor should also be mindful to carefully place the English horn and harp entrances (Example 7.5). The downbeat of measure 34 should be clear for the cellos to spring off the tie before moving the tempo forward. The tempo should stabilize at the new Allegro tempo at least one beat prior to the double-bar line; this will allow the first flute to place the anacrusis precisely in time.

The first flute introduces the jaunty alla breve Allegro theme as the second flute counters it. The conductor should encourage both flutes to prepare and anticipate their entrances to catch the new tempo. The second flute should also be inspired to equal the volume of the first flute. With each entrance in this quiet section, the jaunty theme and countermelody must always be light and be phrased to the melody’s contour, while the underlying quarter note pulses must remain steady as it passes through the various sections.

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52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.
Example 7.4. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 24-31
Example 7.5. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 32-39

At measure 68, the jaunty theme’s first three notes become a repeated motive. It is increased in speed by converting into a triplet figure four bars later.

Example 7.6. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 68-74

At Rehearsal F, these slurred triplets surge against a turbulent version of the jaunty theme, while the first and third trumpets proclaim the descending melody from the Adagio (Example 7.7).
Example 7.7. Symphony #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 76-83
After wailing glissandos in the trombones and a thrilling triplet run in the first violins, the descending melody in the bass instruments becomes prominent (Example 7.8). The orchestra abruptly hushes at Rehearsal H (Example 7.9), but all motives must remain committed to the steady tempo. This is especially true of the three-note motive in the trumpet beginning at measure 110 (Example 7.10) and the horn in measure 128.

Above this, the oboe begins a series of grace note entrances in the woodwinds derived from the first movement’s chirping in the piccolo. Simultaneously, the isolated staccato quarter notes in the woodwinds, brass, and percussion that appear in the first movement at Rehearsal N return. As before, there is one measure of interjection with the first entrance (bar 109), two measures with the second entrance (bars 114-115), and so forth. In measure 111, the second violins, violas, and cellos swell through the texture with spiccato eighth notes. This will serve as an important motive later in the movement at Rehearsal K.
Example 7.8. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 88-95
Example 7.9. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 100-107
Example 7.10. *Symphony* #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 108-115
Throughout this section beginning at Rehearsal H, the timpani also interrupts with a succession of increasingly agitated triplet arpeggios. The composer cleverly outlines the pitches of the E minor seventh chord that opened the symphony. The composer asked that the timpani volume be lowered one dynamic marking from bars 120 through 130 and to begin a crescendo in measure 131 for proper pacing.\textsuperscript{54}

Example 7.11. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 120-129

This ingenious section explodes into Rehearsal J (Example 7.12). From Rehearsal J to Rehearsal K, screaming trill-like tremolos occur in the woodwinds and brass. \textit{Pesante} statements of the first movement bass trombone line from Rehearsal I reappear in the bass instruments.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
Example 7.12. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 134-141
This is followed by the aggressive strings in unison minus the basses. As the basses could not be heard initially at measure 142, the composer requested that they raise their line an octave higher.\textsuperscript{55}

Example 7.13. \textit{Symphony} #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 142-149

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
A glorious moment begins at Rehearsal K (Example 7.14). As in the first movement, the original bass trombone line layers upon itself in four voices, and once again the flutes and piccolo play this motive in diminution. The composer reminds the orchestra to always place an accent on the first whole note of each four-bar grouping. In this instance, the first violins substitute the wood block rhythm from the first movement with a prolonged double-eighth note line.

Example 7.14. Symphony #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 150-154

This soars into the extreme tessitura of the instrument. The line begins forte with syncopated accents, then diminuendos to a mezzo piano as the eighth notes are grouped into slurs. The eighth notes then lengthen to quarter notes to relax into Rehearsal L (Example 7.15).

\[56\] Ibid.
Example 7.15. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 154-169
At Rehearsal L, fragments of the jaunty theme in the woodwinds respond to a warm, mysterious horn chorale which alludes to the Trio cantabile of the third movement.

Example 7.16. Symphony #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 170-181
The English horn plays the meandering motive from the second movement in half notes, thus leading the ritardando to the previous Adagio tempo.

Example 7.17. Symphony #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 188-191

At Rehearsal M (Example 7.18), the themes from the beginning of the fourth movement simultaneously recur. These are combined with the first movement’s opening theme in the flute and bass trombone. Because of the thick polyphonic texture and slow tempo, the composer advised all musicians to “be confident where you change” and “believe in your change of harmony”\(^\text{57}\) to attain rhythmic precision.

The passage grows into Rehearsal P (Example 7.19), an anguished amalgam of many of the symphony’s themes. These include the tied melody in the strings, the descending trumpet melody in the piccolo and flutes, and an expanded version of the first movement opening flute theme in the horns. The accented trumpet and horn triplets echo the restless, staccato theme from the third movement. As the timpani beats throbbing triplets underneath the entire orchestra, the oboes, English horn, clarinets, and marimba recall the first movement opening flute theme. For this final theme to be heard, the composer suggested that the marimba be substituted with a xylophone and that the woodwinds play stronger.\(^\text{58}\)

\(^{57}\) Ibid.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.
Example 7.18. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 192-203
Example 7.19. Symphony #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 216-221
The piccolo, flute, and glockenspiel close the Adagio section with a soft, gentle appearance of the first movement opening flute theme in slurred quarter notes.

Example 7.20. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 224-227
At Rehearsal Q (Example 7.21), the timpani begins the exciting *poco agitato* and propels the orchestra into the symphony’s electrifying finale. Entrances of the jaunty theme’s three note head motive are scattered throughout the orchestra, some occurring as an anacrusis and others on the downbeat. Each entrance must be placed strictly in time for the composite rhythm to be steady. The first movement’s fugato theme quietly reappears in the violins in two-part canon, while the alternating measures of crescendos in the brass drive the momentum forward as before.

A wealth of quotations from the symphony’s movements build to Rehearsal T (Example 7.22). Here, the second and third trumpets and violas generate tension with the symphony’s opening theme, launching the orchestra to its final chords.
Example 7.21. Symphony #3, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 228-239
Example 7.22. *Symphony #3*, IV. Andante sonore – Adagio – Allegro, mm. 276-300
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

It is natural to experience an element of uncertainty when preparing a new composition. Until a recording exists, one could reasonably question how an original composition will resonate. There is no history of performance practice or tradition, so the conductor must collaborate with the composer to actualize the latter’s intentions.

I had thoroughly enjoyed Stephenson’s *Concerto for Violin “Tributes”* and *there are no words*. Upon receiving the first movement of *Symphony #3 “Visions”*, I was quickly attracted to his symphonic writing. His accessible harmonies, ingenious treatment of motives, complex textures, and satisfying melodies were captivating. From the first rehearsal, the musicians of the orchestra responded with great enthusiasm.

Stephenson has produced an excellent, accessible, modern work that truly deserves an unlimited number of future performances. Conducting the first performance of this symphony with a university orchestra provided challenges that may not be encountered with a professional orchestra. The complexity of the highly polyphonic passages was particularly demanding in its necessity for balance, color, and precision.
As the symphony progresses, previous themes are cleverly intertwined with new material. Pacing to the fourth movement, which is a synthesis of all the previous music, requires a clear sense of the symphonic structure. As with all great works, each period of study has brought new and exciting revelations. It is fascinating to watch the intricacy with which Stephenson develops the symphony from the simplicity of a single chord.

It is my intent that this essay proves useful to any conductor, performer, or music lover that wishes to delve into the Symphony #3 “Visions” of James Stephenson.


Stephenson, James. E-mail message to author. October 12, 2018.

________________. E-mail message to author. October 26, 2018.

________________. E-mail message to author. October 29, 2018.

________________. E-mail message to author. January 3, 2019.

________________. E-mail message to author. January 29, 2019.

________________. Interview with author. April 19, 2019, in person.

________________. E-mail interview with author. September 30, 2019.


In the summer of 2017, while in residence at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, I got the opportunity to know Thom Sleeper, who was then the conductor of the University of Miami Frost School of Music Symphony Orchestra. I had always known and admired Thom as a composer, and this opportunity to spend some time together provided a chance to “talk shop” about composing, which was something I truly enjoyed. It wasn’t long thereafter that I made a bold move and wrote to Thom, telling him that I felt I had a “major work” in me, and that I would love it if I could write it for him. Much to my delight, he put the wheels in motion and eventually had me engaged to write what would become my third symphony. One thing had changed in the intervening months however: that he would be retiring and that the job of conducting it would fall to Alexander Magalong as part of his (Alexander’s) doctoral dissertation.

The subtitle of “Visions” actually came to me in a rather humorous way. About one-quarter way through composing the piece, I found myself constantly getting really tired during my workday. However, by chance, I started wearing glasses (that were simply lying around the house), and discovered that I suddenly had boundless energy (as I wasn’t straining to see the score), and the ideas really started flowing. That being said,
the true reason for the subtitle lies in what I think about while composing, most especially while writing this monumental work.

As a young trumpeter (my first musical passion), I would always get together with friends to play through our favorite musical excerpts; that is, those passages in the repertoire which had become staple yardsticks by which to measure our technical and musical growth. At first these were very difficult, but over the years they would become fun and a great source of camaraderie. Later on, in my professional life, I would sense the music which would get me and all of my colleagues excited about a concert. You could feel it on stage. One could also see it on a conductor’s face, or get a sense of what music would really energize an audience.

Therefore, while writing this piece, all of these memories, these visions, were what I kept in the forefront of my mind. This piece is entirely composed for the players on stage, the conductor, and the audience in the hall. I would literally close my eyes, and imagine myself sitting there, in the performance space, and I would then only write music which I could envision getting colleagues, patrons, conductors, and young versions of myself at the edge of their seat, eager to play and experience.

Formally, the work is rather classical in nature. This is on purpose. I wanted to see if I could explore and make valid comment on the four-movement symphony in its most usual form. The opening E-minor 7th (Em7) chord becomes crucial, both harmonically and structurally, as does the opening flute duet. These materials are constantly in the pages of the work, whether hidden or most obvious. The four movements are laid out accordingly, in B minor, E Major, G Major, and finally, D Major, spelling out the notes in the opening chord, though not in order. The ideas in the symphony, always reworked
and revisited, appear in many guises, ranging from soaring and heroic, to quirky and fugal, to lush and sentimental, to intimate and lonely, to grand and triumphant. I really also made an effort to make sure that everyone in the orchestra would get something to do.

Again, a most sincere thank you to Thom Sleeper for allowing me to explore this vision, in almost the grandest of forms. To date, this is my largest work, and I am excited to share it with the world.

Jim Stephenson – January 29, 2019
APPENDIX B

JAMES STEPHENSON INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Participants:  James Stephenson, interviewee
               Alexander Magalong, interviewer

Date:  September 30, 2019

Time:  12:52 p.m.

Method:  Electronic mail

AM:  How has your previous experience as an orchestral musician affected your compositions? How has your experience as a conductor influenced your writing?

JS:  I can't understate the importance (to me) of both of those influences you mention. I started playing in an orchestra at the age of 10. And I distinctly remember, like it was yesterday, how I was struck by the sounds of a full orchestra. When I was 10, I had never even seen a violin!
So, from that point on, I was constantly inspired by the unique sounds I heard at a young age: whether it be "Russian Sailors' Dance" (the first piece I ever played), or "Night on Bald Mountain" (there are brass harmonies in there that I loved), and in high school - Shostakovich 1, or Dvorak 8, Firebird, Symphonic Metamorphosis, etc.) I have to confess to wondering why both Shostakovich and Hindemith would write crazy trills for brass players, but that's a different conversation.
It became a common occurrence for us young musicians to get together and discuss what was so fun (and not fun) about the music of these composers that we were playing. This occurred even into my full-time job as a professional trumpeter as well. Therefore, this is ALWAYS a part of my composing: an effort to write music that the musicians might discuss (hopefully favorably) amongst themselves, so that there is a positive energy when the piece is being performed. This translates from the stage to the audience.
Being a conductor affects my writing in the same ways; but also in a very practical way. Does the music make sense on the page? Is it legible? Is the scoring clear, so that the conductor doesn't have to search for the important stuff? Is it fun to conduct - does it make you want to dance, cry, laugh, etc? (all these things can be shown from the podium). Does it make you look forward to the next page? Or are you just going through the motions until you get to one or two good parts? Is there contrast? Some of these questions might never have even occurred to me had I never stepped on a podium.
The Symphony #3 "Visions" is your first symphony for full orchestra. How have all your previous works prepared you to write this monumental work?

My first work for symphony orchestra was actually a 20-minute "Legend of Sleepy Hollow", written when I was 27 - just starting out as a hobbyist composer. (though I did get paid $500 for it!!)

There were two things about that project that have stuck with me: 1) telling a story with music (obviously), and 2) making sure all of the music was interrelated with leitmotifs, or harmonic/melodic significance. All of this seemed obvious to me when trying to create the musical narrative for Sleepy Hollow, and I enjoyed it so much, that almost all of my works since then have followed a similar pattern, even if not a tone poem, or underscoring a well-known story.

I have also written many (over 20) large-scale, or multi-movement concertos, so even though these are different - the soloist is the focus - it has always still been important to me to keep the DNA of the piece consistent, from the very first measure to the very last. I think audiences can subconsciously feel these things, even if they are not musicians, or have not studied the piece.

Several years separate your Symphony #2 "Voices" for wind ensemble and your Symphony #3 "Visions" for full orchestra. How has your symphonic compositional style evolved between the two works? What differences (if any) did you find while writing for orchestra versus wind ensemble?

It was only three years, to be clear. If anything, Visions might be considered less "forward" than Voices, even though completed three years later. Maybe this will come back to haunt me, but I have SO much respect for all of the composers who have come before me - the masters who are still a part of the literature, who have composed symphonies - that I felt it to be MY personal challenge to compose a symphony using a familiar form, rather than to avoid it, just as a personal crutch to not "be like them". Therefore, my orchestral symphony is very traditional in its four-movement expositional first; slow second; scherzo third; Finale fourth. I wanted to see what I could do within those confines.

My 2nd symphony (VOICES) is in three movements (is half as long) and has a huge 2nd/fast movement bookended by slower outer movements. A bit un-traditional in that respect.

As far as the "difference" between orchestra and wind ensemble - I hate to deflect, but music is music. So, I just try to write the best music I can using whatever forces I have in front of me. I never think: "oh, this is a band piece, so I have to write in THIS style now". It's ironic, however, that in my orchestral symphony, I did decide to use saxophones. This is almost a NO-NO, but it was a sound I just couldn't hear any other way. And I personally love that part (trio of the scherzo) of the piece.

You had composed the Symphony #3 concurrently with the Concerto for Bass Trombone for Charles Vernon and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Is there any correlation between the two works?
**JS:** No correlation there whatsoever. Completely different pieces. The only correlation is that I had to write them both very quickly!!

**AM:** The trio of the third movement (Vivo scherzando - Trio cantabile) features three saxophones (soprano, alto, and tenor). Why did you decide to incorporate these instruments at this moment in the symphony?

**JS:** I've already spoken about this a bit - but to further explain. The trio of a scherzo, for me, has to be its own identity. I had this inkling to use saxophones somewhere in the symphony, and when I started into the trio, I knew THAT had to be the moment. It completely stands apart from the rest of that movement (and the entire piece), due to its unique color. If you're going to write saxophones into an orchestral symphony, you had better give them a place where the spotlight is on them; otherwise, it's a waste. And the trio - because of how it's meant to stand apart from the rest, worked perfectly for that approach.

**AM:** What would you like to comment about the genesis of Symphony #3?

**JS:** The entire piece is based on the opening string chord. An e minor-7th chord. I had heard that chord on TV - I can't recall which show - and in a moment, I thought to myself, there it is - there's the opening of my symphony. As previously explained, the DNA of a piece has to all be connected; so you'll notice that the first movement ends in B minor, the 2nd is E Major, the 3rd G Major, and the 4th is D Major. Those 4 keys come from the spelling of that e minor-7th chord. Furthermore, you'll notice that the 1st and 4th movements are related: b minor and D Major. As are the 2nd and 3rd (distantly): E Major and G Major. Harmonically minor 7th chords play a huge role as well. Many climaxes of various movements exploit the minor 7th chord. This is all because of that opening chord.