THREE MOVEMENTS FOR WIND ENSEMBLE

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ABSTRACT

Three Movements for Wind Ensemble, a 13-minute work for a wind ensemble consisting of twenty-five instruments, was composed in Vancouver between 1984-86. The first and third movements of this work are reminiscent stylistically of the Neo-classical tradition, while the second is a passacaglia involving a tonal ostinato juxtaposed with atonal ideas. Ideas, both thematic and structural, while entirely original, except for a 6-bar sequence in measures 59-64 of movement 1, were influenced by specific works of several composers.

Stylistically, the composition is tonal, and reflects my background in jazz composition as well as my classical training. Chords are frequently characterized by the use of major second configurations, and melodies are derived from numerous sources. The music of Bach, Stravinsky, and Ives exert strong influences on the work.

The work is difficult to categorize structurally, because the first and third movements are not traditional forms. I feel that the piece might appeal to both gifted and average listeners. The individual parts are not complex or difficult to perform, but the resulting ensemble yields an overall complexity. It is my hope that other composers will see the possibilities that I have explored as a basis for further exploration.

Supervisor
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THREE MOVEMENTS FOR WIND ENSEMBLE

Three Movements for Wind Ensemble, a 13 minute work for a wind ensemble consisting of twenty-five instruments, was composed in Vancouver between 1984 and 1986. The first and third movements of this work are reminiscent stylistically of the Neo-classical tradition, while the second is a passacaglia involving a tonal ostinato juxtaposed with atonal ideas. Ideas, both thematic and structural, while entirely original, except for a 6-bar segment from a Bach chorale (BWV:378) in measures 59-64 of Movement 1 were influenced by specific works of several composers: Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), Ives' *The Unanswered Question* (1906), Ravel's *Bolero* (1929), and Shostakovich's *5th Symphony* (1945). Stylistically the composition is tonal, and reflects my background in jazz composition as well as my classical training.

When I was preparing this document, I reread Carl Dalhaus' article on tonality from the *New Grove's Dictionary*, in order to identify techniques pertaining to my own composition. In discussing the bitonality and polytonality found in Milhaud's and Reger's early songs, Dalhaus suggests that "tonality is retained in the melodic writing as a characteristic of separate parts, but is cancelled out by the harmonic and polyphonic structure." In my piece on page 3, m. 12, the piccolo, flutes, oboes, tenor saxophone and E^b clarinet are playing melodic references to the third theme of the opening movement, while the B^b clarinets and piano are playing references to the second theme. The first melodic reference is to a tonal centre of C#m, the second BM.
Underneath, however, in the brass, is a held chord made up of the notes B, C#, G#, A#, and D#. The lowest note is a C#, but the ambiguous nature of the aggregate defies an accurate or explicit sense of key. This is a conscious attempt on my part to be ambiguous, but two things must be clear: I am definitely not thinking in terms of bitonality or polytonality, though some might wish to consider the passage in this way, and, secondly, I am trying to avoid the sort of dissonances that would lead to considerations of atonality. Throughout the entire work "chords" are characterized by the use of major seconds, in order to prevent harsh-sounding musical "events".

This section provides an example of a problem with which I had to deal throughout the work: I wanted to write a tonal work with some atonal elements, and discovered that this can be a difficult process, if not dealt with very carefully. In the twentieth century there have been many definitions of non-functional tonal works, some of which can be applied to my piece, but none that really describe it accurately. One thing I did not want to happen in creating this work was to provide another example of what some theorists have described as "wrong-note harmony"--a term used to describe some of Stravinsky's early compositions.

The first movement of my piece is constructed somewhat like the first movement of Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms, in that a chordal configuration is stated, around which various thematic elements evolve. However, the method in which tonal centres are established in my piece differs from the way in which Stravinsky establishes them. Stravinsky
is referred to as a composer who creates networks which start from one centre and search for a tonal "pole". In my piece, the opening harmony of the first movement implies C, and the piece ends in C, but in between, however, there are references to other tonal areas, which do not at all lead one to feel that C will necessarily be found at the end. Here is an example of the first vertical sonority found in my piece:

On page 10, m. 37-40, the brass are playing in BM. The opening theme, which began in A, is transposed up to B to create consonance, and then, at m. 41 a vertical sonority built from major seconds and perfect fourths ambiguously refers to either A or B, or perhaps even C. The aggregate here consists of the notes A, E, A, B, implying an AM chord, but a C in the bass and tuba, as well as the notes D and G cloud the issue. Personally, I feel that C is the primary tonal centre in this aggregate, re-establishing by sheer force the tonality implied at the beginning of the composition. In this sense the movement is reminiscent, in a slight way, of Stravinsky, but I feel what is important is that tonality is established in this section by combining harmonic configurations with melodic ideas to produce ambiguity, and not harsh contrasts. It is important to me that my work not be perceived as a conscious effort to reproduce previous ideas as to how to establish non-functional tonality.
There are three main melodic themes in the first movement, each surrounded by chordal formations. The most important is a Bach-like motif, reflecting my deep respect for the Baroque period:

![Bach-like motif](image)

The title "Collage" refers to the fact that the main themes are juxtaposed against one another. One theme evolves out of the other, while in turn the previous theme becomes a contrapuntal or accompanying line. My use of collage does not exactly parallel its use in any works that I am familiar with, though I am sure passages from works by Charles Ives could be cited as similar.

The second movement is based on a repeated harmonic progression and is permeated by an unusual melodic theme. This atonal theme is juxtaposed with a jazz-like chordal ostinato, continuously repeated below the theme. The structure of the movement is not unlike that of Charles Ives' brilliant masterpiece, *The Unanswered Question* (1906) in its use of a repeated chordal ostinato above which atonal elements are found melodically. Here is an example of the repeated chords:

![Repeated chords](image)

The predominant theme of the third movement is a variation of the Baroque-like melody of the first and it is frequently interrupted by
very ferocious chordal outbursts. These interrupting sonorities are often bitonal in nature. The tonality is constantly shifting, as in the first movement. For example, on p. 46, m. 37, F# is a tonal centre, but at m. 40 I remove the chromaticism so that F or C is the centre. By p. 48, m. 45, C# or G# appears central. In both the first and third movements the concept of traditional modulation is non-existent. For example, C and C# can be interchanged in my piece, provided the overall aggregates result in tonal areas of some kind. When I write E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#, an EM scale, as an aggregate, any combination of these tones are treated, intuitively, as an E chord, regardless of root. As well, the root could also be any one of these notes, thus opening the way to move to other tonal areas without formal modulation, and, more importantly, without creating a jarring effect.

On p. 43 (third movement) an ostinato, beginning in the percussion, forms one of the main structural elements. The use of an ostinato as a structural device is not without historical precedent, as can be observed from the study of various works, including Ravel's Bolero, Sibelius' 5th Symphony, and Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms. The ostinato and tonal language in the third movement at p. 55 bear a slight resemblance to a passage from Shostakovich's 5th Symphony. The title "March" refers to this almost always present ostinato, which though sometimes hidden, continues to the end of the piece. The use of ostinato is most like that found in Bolero, though, through orchestration, tempo changes and dynamic changes I try to minimize the obvious nature of the technique.
In reference to considerations of medium, I chose to compose a piece for wind ensemble rather than for concert band for two reasons: first, I wanted to write a composition that did not rely on the typical loud sound of a large band; second, I wanted to emphasize the delicacy possible within the more limited framework of a small wind ensemble. Though the harp is eliminated from the third movement, which is faster and louder than the others, it nevertheless adds delicate effects in orchestral colour to the opening movements. It is this delicate effect in orchestration that I have tried to employ wherever possible. Thus there are many quiet passages and an almost chamber music atmosphere is created.

To conclude, I feel I have integrated some important traditional techniques with a more contemporary tonal style. The work is difficult to categorize formally, because the first and third movements are not traditional forms. The first movement simply has three themes which are presented in different ways—the first and most important is stated clearly in m. 18-30. It is Baroque-like and similar to the first theme of the third movement. The second theme is stated most clearly at m. 31 and essentially outlines chords, beginning with a tonal centre of B. The third theme, more jagged than the first, appears in m. 66, and is not long dwelt upon before variations of the second theme appear in the brass at m. 70. There follows a held chord and quick climax in m. 80, followed by a 4-bar denouement. This conclusion is a good example of the rapid chromatic movement I find "tonally" acceptable.
The third movement, like the first, is centred in C, but the tonality is shifting and ambiguous. The first theme begins at m. 5, moving from F to F# to A to A# in a 6-bar section. The second theme appears at m. 53 and continues until the climax at m. 87. After a slight pause, material from the opening movement is restated, with some variation and augmentation, and the piece concludes with an EM aggregate. I feel that the piece might appeal to both gifted and average listeners. The individual parts are not complex or difficult to perform, but the resulting ensemble yields an overall complexity.

What makes this work interesting and important are the three key methods I have employed in order to deal with the problem of creating a tonal work with atonal elements, as mentioned in my opening description. Theses are: (1) The use of M 2nd aggregates to equate with chords, (2) the use of chromaticism in a way that does not antagonize the ears of listeners who dislike the kind of chromaticism found in earlier twentieth-century works, and (3) my ability to deal with non-functional tonality in a way which is uniquely mine. It is my hope that other composers will see the possibilities that I have explored as a basis for further exploration.
THREE MOVEMENTS

for wind ensemble

1. COLLAGE
2. PASSACAGLIA
3. MARCH

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Instrumentation

Piccolo
1st and 2nd Flute
1st and 2nd Oboe
Eb Clarinet
1st and 2nd Bb Clarinet
Bass Clarinet
1st and 2nd Bassoon
1st Alto Saxophone
1st Tenor Saxophone

1st Horn in F
2nd Horn in F
1st Trumpet in Bb
2nd Trumpet in Bb
1st and 2nd Trombone
Tuba
String Bass
Piano
Harp

Percussion 1 (vibraphone, tambourine,
suspended cymbal, glockenspiel,
tam-tam, timpani, snare drum, tom-
tom, crash cymbal)

Percussion 2 (glockenspiel, suspended cymbal,
tam-tam, tambourine, snare drum, bass drum,
tom-tom, crash cymbal, timpani)

All instruments sound as written, except piccolo,
an octave higher, glockenspiel two octaves higher, and string
bass an octave lower.

Duration: ca. 13.00"
MARCH

III

Score

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet

Alto Sax

Tenor Sax

Baritone Sax

Trombone

Tenor in Bb

Trumpet

Tuba

Strings

Piano

Timp GCF

Saxophone