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David Maslanka and the Natural World: Three Studies of Music for Wind Ensemble

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MUSIC

DAVID MASLANKA AND THE NATURAL WORLD:
THREE STUDIES OF MUSIC FOR WIND ENSEMBLE

By

KATE L. SUTTON

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ABSTRACT

The music of American composer David Maslanka (b. 1943) is informed by his deep connection to the natural world. This connection permeates his music and results in powerful works imbued with a wealth of spiritual and environmental meaning, including three of his symphonies for wind ensemble (Nos. 3, 4, and 9). Many of these natural connections emerge from Maslanka's meditation process; his ability to consciously explore dream images allows him to embrace an understanding of the Earth and his environment. In Symphony No. 3, Maslanka combines impressions of the mountains, skies, and prairies of his new Missoula, Montana environment with dream images of both animal and American Indian spirits. Symphony No. 4 was inspired by the same western Montana landscape, stemming from Maslanka's perception of a "voice of the Earth." This piece also reveals connections to nature through the recurring use of the hymn tune "Old Hundred." Maslanka identifies four concepts that guide Symphony No. 9 (nature, water, time, and grace); he also incorporates birdcalls, a story about whales, and settings of four chorales by J. S. Bach, strengthening the sense of the natural world in this piece, as well as the idea of universal spirituality.

Maslanka's connection to nature and the American landscape as revealed in his music places him in a greater tradition of American composers, including Amy Beach, Charles Ives, and Virgil Thomson. His use of borrowed melodies, especially American hymns and the chorale melodies of J. S. Bach, further roots his music in this tradition. Unlike many of these other composers, however, Maslanka's musical manifestations of the relationship between nature and the divine grow from his meditative connection with the land and his perception of its energies. Symphonies 3, 4, and 9 offer a sounding pathway into Maslanka's way of thinking, as well as the ways the natural world can influence composers.

CHAPTER ONE

**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE AND MUSIC
OF DAVID MASLANKA**

Playing in a wind band or wind ensemble has been an integral part of my life for the past twelve years. I was introduced to the music of David Maslanka in 2007, my first summer at Baylor University band camp and performed his seminal work *A Child's Garden of Dreams* as a sophomore at Baylor. I completed my undergraduate degree in 2012 by participating in a professional recording of Maslanka's Symphony No. 4. My experiences with Maslanka's wind ensemble works are some of my most memorable moments as a musician and, as a result, these experiences have developed into a fascination and a deep interest in exploring his music as a musicologist.

My interview experience with the composer shaped this thesis considerably. I have been in contact with Maslanka through e-mail since early 2013, and we continued to communicate by e-mail, on the phone, and in person throughout the next year. As I grew to know Maslanka, my appreciation for and understanding of his music deepened. His thoughtful musings and genuine answers to my questions provided a gateway to considering the music in a new light. I found myself gaining an understanding of what Lane Weaver would call a more "Maslankian" perspective. One of Weaver's goals in his dissertation on Maslanka's Symphony No. 7 was to develop "a way of relating to the music that reflects the philosophical and spiritual nature of Maslanka and his compositional methodology."¹ Having already experienced the power of his music as a performer, hearing about Maslanka's particular way of thinking allowed me to understand his music on a deeper level.

¹ Lane Weaver, "David Maslanka's Symphony No. 7: An Examination of Analytical, Emotional, and Spiritual Connections through a 'Maslankian' Approach" (DMA diss., University of Kentucky, 2011), 2.

When learning about Maslanka's meditation process and the ways it intersects with his compositional process, many people have reactions leaning towards skepticism; when meeting him and hearing the effect of his music, even the skeptics tend to conclude that there is something special about the man and his music. In reference to both Maslanka's meditation process and the time he devotes to getting to know the commissioners of his works, Weaver explains, "With such a deeply personal approach, Maslanka's music can touch the very essence of humanity and humanness."² The deeply personal characteristics of Maslanka's music seem to stem from his own open, generous personality. I found the composer to be a wise and caring individual, as interested in mentoring me as he was in explaining his music. He regularly encouraged me to interpret his works completely freely. The opening to one e-mail response in particular sums up this openness:

There will always be two aspects to study. One is objective information, which includes all aspects of knowledge in your area, as well as what other researchers have done. The second is your intuition. There is no objective proof for intuition, and this initially makes people nervous. But intuition touches the foundational truth of the thing being studied, which is finally the reason for study.³

Throughout this thesis, I have striven to trust my intuition in my analysis as well as my academic background.

This thesis is about American composer David Maslanka (b. 1943) and his music. It focuses on his deep connection to the natural world as demonstrated in three of his symphonies for wind ensemble (Nos. 3, 4, and 9). Despite the high level of esteem in which he is held by many band directors and music educators, to date there have been no musicological studies of Maslanka's works. Like many American composers before him, Maslanka has been inspired by nature and the American landscape, and he also refers to American hymns, folk songs, and

² Ibid.

³ David Maslanka, e-mail conversation with author, October 27, 2013.

popular music in his works. I explore specific aspects of Symphonies 3, 4, and 9 that were inspired by the natural world.

American wind band or wind ensemble music is often related to place, nature, and landscapes, which ties in historically to much American music, as well as other arts. Since the country's beginnings, many writers, painters, and composers have been drawn to the individuality of the American landscape. Stephen F. Mills, in the introduction to his book *The American Landscape*, points out that "one of America's distinguishing characteristics...is that it actually looks different from other countries."⁴ In the nineteenth century composers such as Anthony Philip Heinrich wrote music inspired by natural icons like Niagara Falls, while early twentieth-century American composers like Ferde Grofé and Virgil Thomson evoked the American West in works including the *Grand Canyon Suite* and *The Plow That Broke the Plains*. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, composers have continued to be inspired by the American landscape. Many of their landscape pieces can be found in the wind band genre, including Dan Welcher's explorations of America's national parks in *Arches* (1984), *The Yellowstone Fires* (1988) and *Zion* (1994); Michael Colgrass's creation of a polar soundscape in *Arctic Dreams* (1991); Michael Daugherty's own popularized take on Niagara Falls (*Niagara Falls*, 1997); and John Mackey's musical depiction of Mount McKinley in *The Frozen Cathedral* (2013), to name a few. Maslanka has composed works dealing with the natural world for orchestra, choir, and small ensembles, but most prolifically for the wind ensemble.⁵

⁴ Stephen F. Mills, *The American Landscape* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), 2.

⁵ Because the terminology for the various wind bands is historically inconsistent, I have decided to refer to the group that Maslanka writes for as the "wind ensemble" in the sense that his works generally contain specific instrumentations with little to no doubling. The wind ensemble includes percussion, and often string bass, harp, and piano. I will use the term "wind band" when referring to the general history of the band, including the wind ensemble.

David Maslanka, born in 1943 in New Bedford, Massachusetts, grew up playing the clarinet in high school bands and youth orchestras. He pursued music studies at Oberlin College, the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, and Michigan State University. His degree at Oberlin was in music education, but he also studied composition with Joseph Wood. Maslanka earned both his masters and doctorate in music theory and composition from Michigan State studying with H. Owen Reed and Paul Harder. Between 1970 and 1990 he taught at four different universities in New York: State University of New York at Geneseo, Sarah Lawrence College, New York University, and Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York. All the time he taught, he composed. He explained that his "greatest development as teacher and composer" happened at Kingsborough, which "prepared [him] to take the step into freelance work."⁶ He began working there in 1981, a year after he married his second wife, Alison, which "marked the beginning of a new life phase," and stayed there until 1990.⁷ Because of his earliest experiences as a clarinetist playing in bands, a natural choice for large ensemble pieces was the wind ensemble. His first work was the Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion (1976), but it was his piece *A Child's Garden of Dreams* (1981) that brought him to the attention of the wind band community. Over the next decade Maslanka wrote several other pieces for winds that formed the foundation for his career as a composer. Between these pieces and receiving tenure at Kingsborough, he felt a "sense of accomplishment . . . which allowed [him] actually to contemplate a life as a composer only."⁸

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, Maslanka enjoyed five residencies at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire (1974, 1975, 1978, 1979, and 1982), and

⁶ David Maslanka, "David Maslanka," in *Composers on Composing for Band vol. 2*, ed. Mark Camphouse (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2004), 198.

⁷ David Maslanka, e-mail conversation with author, January 25, 2014.

⁸ Ibid.

observed that a "special energy" existed at the artists' colony: "The peaceful surroundings at MacDowell allow the city energy to subside, and so a more undefended quality of attention can come forward. The nature energy in the woods is real, and with the release of city energy the possibility of 'direct perception' is that much higher."⁹ Memories from MacDowell have informed many of his compositions, including his Symphony No. 9 for wind ensemble (2011). In addition to the impact the Colony has had on his work, another influence of the seventies was his engagement with Jungian therapy, which Maslanka began undergoing in 1975.¹⁰ This marked the beginning of a change that affected not only his life in general, but also more specifically his compositional process.

The unique compositional process that resulted from his therapy is important because it is informed by his natural surroundings. Since 1975, when he started to explore self-hypnosis, he has engaged in a process developed by Carl Jung called "active imagining."¹¹ This process is intended "to help amplify, interpret, and integrate the contents of dreams and creative works of art."¹² *A Child's Garden of Dreams* was the first piece Maslanka wrote using this process; he meditated on specific dreams that had been written down by a child and included in Jung's *Man and His Symbols* until he could consciously explore each dream image.¹³ For later works, Maslanka used the same process to explore his own dreams. Maslanka talked to David Booth about the relevance of dreams to composing:

Dreams are the source of all our creativity. A musical composition is merely the dreaming process made conscious. In fact, all composition is the dreaming process made conscious. All

⁹ David Maslanka, e-mail message to author, April 14, 2013.

¹⁰ Carl Jung (1875-1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist. He founded analytical psychology and pioneered concepts including Jungian archetypes and the collective unconscious.

¹¹ Stephen Bolstad, "An Analytical Study of David Maslanka's Symphony No. 4" (DMA diss., University of Texas-Austin, 2002), 17.

¹² Lawrence H. Staples, "Active Imagination," Jung Society of Washington, <http://www.jung.org/Staples.html> (accessed January 5, 2014).

¹³ Weaver, "David Maslanka's Symphony No. 7," 20.

composition begins below the unconscious level, and then flows up to the conscious. That is why dreams are so vitally important to pay attention to—they are an outward manifestation of messages from your inner self and provide the composer with a unique source for musical creativity.¹⁴

Once he had mastered self-hypnosis and active imagining, Maslanka developed his own "home-grown" meditation process.¹⁵ According to the composer, he meditates on an idea or person (often through contact with an object of personal value to the individual) until an image or energy appears. Once he develops a feeling for these images and energies, he is able to receive a series of "dream images" with "strong spiritual-emotional feelings," which help him understand what kind of music he needs to write.¹⁶ Maslanka stresses that this meditation process is not "idle fantasy," although he does suggest that idle fantasy is the first step in learning to experience "powerful visions" on a more conscious level.¹⁷ He clarified to Lane Weaver, who grew to know the composer very well, that he often sees himself as the conduit through which subconscious energy flows.¹⁸ Maslanka explained that even from the first time he heard music, he was "on a path that would eventually allow [him] to perceive and use the joining of the conscious mind with the deep unconscious to develop a fuller sense of the mysteries of the other side."¹⁹ He makes clear that his meditation process is "directly related to earth energy and place."²⁰

Maslanka has been a freelance composer since 1990, which was the same year he moved from New York City to Missoula, Montana. Since this relocation, Maslanka has felt an especially deep connection to the natural world, and this connection has become an audible element of his music. In an interview with Brenton Alston, Maslanka discussed how his

¹⁴ Maslanka is quoted in David Booth, "An Analytical Study of David Maslanka's *A Child's Garden of Dreams*" (DMA diss., University of Oklahoma, 1994), 154.

¹⁵ Maslanka, "David Maslanka," 200.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Weaver, "David Maslanka's Symphony No. 7," 22.

¹⁹ Maslanka, "David Maslanka," 199.

²⁰ David Maslanka, phone conversation with author, August 16, 2013.

migration West opened his eyes to the "very big landscape" around him: "I began to come out of myself in a very particular way. I have had this strong sensation of the earth here. I will speak of it as the voice of the earth."²¹ This "voice of the earth" is present in many of his pieces composed after the move, including Symphonies Nos. 3, 4, and 9 for wind ensemble, Symphony No. 6 for symphony orchestra, and many smaller pieces including Morning Star Overture, the Concerto for Marimba and Band, and the four "Montana Music" works (Montana Music: Chorale Variations for Symphonic Wind Ensemble, Montana Music: Three Dances for Percussion, Montana Music: Fantasy on a Chorale Tune for Violin and Viola, and Montana Music: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano).

Maslanka's introductory notes for Symphony No. 6 (2003) further reveal his connection to the natural world. The work bears the subtitle "Living Earth" and demonstrates Maslanka's understanding of the earth's character. Rather than merely a planet that is used by its inhabitants, Maslanka's earth is something greater and more conscious. In the Program Notes, Maslanka explains his connection to place and his views of the earth as a living thing:

From my childhood on I have felt an extremely strong connection to place. It took a lot of years for me to understand this connection and to have the energy from it come forward in my music. I now believe that the earth is a living thing, and that humans are one part of its consciousness. I have been aware of a powerful "voice of the earth" for many years, and especially in my adopted western Montana.²²

These remarks provide a starting point from which to examine Maslanka's other works that were similarly inspired by the earth.

²¹ Brenton Franklin Alston, "David Maslanka's Symphony Number Three: A Relational Treatise on Commissioning, Composition, and Performance" (Doctoral treatise, University of Miami, 2004), 142.

²² David Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 6, <http://69.16.233.70/orchestra/symphony-no-6-living-earth/> (accessed August 14, 2013).

Unlike "Living Earth," Symphonies Nos. 3, 4, and 9 lack any sort of programmatic subtitle. However, Maslanka's notes for each indicate inspirations tied to the earth. Symphony No. 3 (1991) was partially influenced by his move from New York City to Missoula; his Program Notes include references to the mountains and the sky as well as animal and Indian spirits.²³ Similarly, Symphony No. 4 (1993) was inspired in part by the western Montana landscape, but this time Maslanka refers overtly to the "powerful voice of the Earth," which reflects the same thinking as his idea of the "Living Earth" in Symphony No. 6.²⁴ Symphony No. 9 (2011) includes a more varied set of inspirations, including nature and water, birds and whales, and the passing of time.²⁵ In this case there is no mention of Montana, but Maslanka confirmed that there are always elements of his adopted home state in the pieces composed there: "Everything comes out of this place."²⁶

As Maslanka is especially drawn to the wind ensemble, I have chosen to focus on Symphonies 3, 4, and 9 as musical manifestations of his connection to the earth. While a wind ensemble traditionally implies a smaller group with flexible instrumentation (as standardized by Frederick Fennell in 1952), Maslanka uses the designation for many of his larger works for band as well. He also uses the labels "symphonic band or wind ensemble" or "symphonic wind ensemble." Maslanka intends all his wind band works to be for the traditional one-player-per-part "wind ensemble," but he points out that as the size of the group has gradually expanded over the years, largely through the doubling of clarinets and brass instruments, not all performances of his works end up fitting the traditional definition of a wind ensemble. He explains further, "In my mind there are two basic categories, and those are concert pieces for wind ensemble, like the

²³ David Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 3 (New York: Carl Fischer, 1991).

²⁴ David Maslanka, Composer's Note to Symphony No. 4 (New York: Carl Fischer, 1994).

²⁵ David Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 9 (New York: Maslanka Press, 2011).

²⁶ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, August 16, 2013.

symphonies, where the instruments in those cases can do well with larger groupings . . . and then there are the concertos. For me, they are always smaller ensembles, strictly one on a part."²⁷ Even though the symphonies are often performed with a larger number of players, Maslanka still considers them wind ensemble pieces.

Maslanka's affinity for the wind ensemble can be observed in his works. He makes use of the idea of flexible instrumentation in his own way, setting extended sections of large works for small chamber groups (in Symphony No. 9, for example, an entire movement is scored for solo soprano saxophone and piano). These chamber sections often have clear boundaries, whether they are individual movements or just separated from the rest of the piece by silences, and are also frequently juxtaposed with larger scorings that utilize most or all of the ensemble's resources. This contrast in texture and timbre relates to the other type of juxtaposition in his music: the juxtaposition of atmospheres, which often coincides with the contrast between large and small settings. In his music, tumultuous, stormy sections often follow bright, peaceful sections (and vice versa). This contrast comes out of Maslanka's perception of earth energies. He explains that often the music follows a particular "energy line," sometimes emerging into big, powerful sections and then releasing into a different, more peaceful quality of energy.²⁸ The diverse forces of the wind ensemble are well suited to these characteristics of Maslanka's compositions.

Musical borrowing is another important aspect of Maslanka's compositional language. He feels a pull towards particular musical styles or forms in a way that is similar to his meditation process, which leads him towards certain images or energies; he describes it as being

²⁷ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, August 16, 2013.

²⁸ David Maslanka, personal interview with author, Sugar Land, TX, November 23, 2013.

"magnetically drawn to a particular channel for creative flow."²⁹ He is particularly attracted to the Catholic Mass, finding an essential quality of transformation in the ritual, "specifically the opening of the ego to receive a connection to the grace of God."³⁰ The most prominent musical references in Maslanka's works, however, are to Bach's chorales. Part of this is due to his practice of playing Bach's chorales as a kind of mental warm-up; he describes them as "miniature musical gems [that] comprise a method book for the study of composing."³¹ He commented in his notes for Symphony No. 6 about the relevance of the chorales to the natural world:

The melodies themselves are much older than Bach, having sources that go back literally thousands of years. Like all folk melodies, they are the products of generations of singers working with the same melody ideas, and finally arriving at simple tunes that embody a huge life force. These [folk melodies] are now the melodies of the earth.³²

Maslanka also often references traditional hymns including "Old Hundred" and "Shall We Gather at the River." Additionally, many of his original melodies have the characteristics of traditional American folk songs. The chorales, traditional hymns, and original hymn-like melodies and folk music are interrelated in his music; he explains, "I consider some hymn tunes like "Old Hundred" and some of the melodies that come out of the Bach chorales to be very much of the nature of folk songs."³³ He further defines folk music as having a "certain quality of melody" with a "certain level of nostalgia."³⁴ Because of his regular use of hymns, Maslanka's musical borrowing brings a spiritual element into his compositions that is difficult to ignore. Although he was raised attending an evangelical church, he is no longer a practicing Christian.

²⁹ Maslanka, "David Maslanka," 200.

³⁰ Ibid., 200-01.

³¹ Ibid., 213.

³² Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 6. When Maslanka says that the melodies are "older than Bach," he means that he senses an "ancient life" in them, while at the same time possessing an "immediate presence." He clarified that he has not done any research to know that this is true, but it resonates with him nevertheless. (Personal interview with author, Sugar Land, TX, November 23, 2013.)

³³ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, August 16, 2013.

³⁴ Ibid.

However, Maslanka uses Christian hymns and symbols in his music because they are a part of his personal cultural heritage. Today he embraces a more universal spirituality, and this is what is conveyed through his use of hymns, chorales, and folk music.

Beyond musical influences, Maslanka is inspired by the written word, both prose and poetry. He has a fascination with history, especially that which pertains to the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln. The final chapter of Carl Sandburg's massive biography of Lincoln, which describes Lincoln's funeral, played a role in the composition of Symphony No. 4. The particular scene that touched Maslanka was Sandburg's description of a brass band playing "Old Hundred" as Lincoln's coffin was put on the train to be taken to his final resting place in Springfield, Illinois. Maslanka's reference to Sandburg puts him in the context of many other American composers, including Leo Sowerby and Lukas Foss, who both composed pieces based on Sandburg's poem "Prairie."³⁵ In all three of these composers' works, Sandburg provides a starting place for connecting with the American landscape. One of the inspirations for Maslanka's Symphony No. 9 was a poem by the American poet W. S. Merwin entitled "Secrets," which deals with the passage of time. The symphony actually begins with an unaccompanied reading of the poem. Maslanka also wrote his own text for a spoken portion of the last movement of Symphony No. 9; this text, titled "Whale Story," relates to his sense of universal spirituality.

One of the recurring characteristics of Maslanka's music that relates directly to his perception of earth energies is his use of the key of C major. In an interview Maslanka explained that he finds the key of C suited to particular feelings; for example, he finds that "large and powerful statements of the awareness of a divine energy" tend to want to be in C.³⁶ After some thought, he described this tendency as a "solar glow" that happens with musical material that

³⁵ Beth Levy, *Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 161.

³⁶ Maslanka, personal interview with author, Sugar Land, TX, November 23, 2013.

"belongs" in the key of C.³⁷ He is not the only composer to make this association; Haydn's "Let there be Light" arrival point at the beginning of *The Creation* is a well-known example of a bright C-major chord that represents divine energy. Finding it difficult to explain why this pull towards C major happens, Maslanka speculated that it has something to do with "some kind of large energy which is in that vibrational space."³⁸ This perception of energies relates back to Maslanka's sensitivity to his environment; it is the same meditative awareness that allows him to pick up on the "nature" of particular keys. The key of C major often occurs in his works that are especially inspired or influenced by his natural surroundings.

Understanding these aspects of Maslanka's compositional process and style is the first step to observing the characteristics of his music that demonstrate his connection to the natural world. His ability to meditate and consciously explore dream images allows him to embrace an understanding of the Earth and his environment, and this relationship permeates his Symphonies 3, 4, and 9.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

MOUNTAINS, SKIES, AND SPIRITS OF MISSOULA, MONTANA

Symphony No. 3 was the second piece and the first symphony that Maslanka wrote after his move to Missoula, Montana in 1990.³⁹ The composer explained:

In my composing life there have been "signpost" pieces—large works that have erupted at fairly regular, though unpredictable, intervals. The impetus for this piece was in part my leaving university life a year ago, and moving from New York City to the Rocky Mountains of western Montana. The mountains and the sky are a living presence. Animal and Indian spirits still echo strongly in this land, and these elements have found their way into my music.⁴⁰

This piece is significant for many reasons, but especially so in relation to this thesis because the effects of Montana's natural environment on Maslanka's music are clear throughout the fifty-minute symphony. The piece was commissioned by the University of Connecticut Symphonic Wind Ensemble and its director, Gary Green (currently Director of Bands at the University of Miami), who played an indirect role in the compositional process. As Maslanka sometimes uses an object to aid his meditation process, he requested a personal object from Green. Green sent Maslanka the baton he used to conduct Maslanka's Symphony No. 2, and Maslanka explained that the baton allowed him to "feel some sense of his [Green's] life energy."⁴¹ From his meditations, Maslanka discovered Green's American Indian background (his great-grandmother was a full-blooded Cherokee Indian). This background, combined with the American Indian

³⁹ The first piece composed after the move was the Concerto for Marimba and Band, a twenty-minute, single-movement work.

⁴⁰ David Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 3, <http://69.16.233.70/wind-ensemble/symphony-no-3/> (accessed January 5, 2014). NB: There are two versions of Maslanka's notes to Symphony No. 3; the notes on the website are more extensive than the ones included in the score.

⁴¹ Brenton Franklin Alston, "David Maslanka's Symphony Number Three: A Relational Treatise on Commissioning, Composition, and Performance" (Doctoral treatise, University of Miami, 2004), 26.

presence in Montana, led to meditation images including Indians, horses, bison, and ancient spirits.

Symphony No. 3 has five movements, all of which are untitled except for tempo markings and the label "lament" for the final two movements. Maslanka often composes works consisting of five movements, and while the five-movement shape is important to him, he does not know why.⁴² The composer's own dreams and his meditations on them played an important role in Symphony No. 3, and Maslanka shared his meditation notes with Brenton Alston to aid in his analysis of the piece. These notes include descriptions of specific images predominantly related to the Montana landscape and Gary Green's American Indian heritage. The fourth and fifth movements are each based on one image, while the other three movements are based on a few images grouped together. The five-movement shape seems to arise out of his meditations on his dream images.

Described by Maslanka as "forceful and unrelenting" until its quiet end, the first movement is marked *moderato* and is in sonata form.⁴³ The end of the movement prepares the second movement, which is similarly untitled, but Maslanka calls it "nature music." It is mainly written in a chamber music style until the end, which "rises to a bursting climax."⁴⁴ Energetic and rhythmic, the third movement is marked "Very Fast" and is also in sonata form. The final two movements are both lamentations, though Maslanka notes that neither is "particularly slow or 'down' in spirit . . . the music is both sorrowful and joyous."⁴⁵ The first three movements are all about eight minutes long; the fourth and fifth are both slightly longer at twelve minutes and

⁴² Ibid., 145. *A Child's Garden of Dreams* also has five movements; in that case, Maslanka selected the five dreams that came through the strongest as he read about and meditated on them. Other five-movement compositions include *A Tuning Piece: Songs for Fall and Winter* (1995), *Song Book* (2001), Symphony No. 6, "Living Earth" (2003), and *David's Book: Concerto for Solo Percussionist and Wind Ensemble* (2006).

⁴³ David Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 3 (New York: Carl Fischer, 1991).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

ten minutes. The overall shape of the symphony is an arch, with the third movement providing a bridge between the first two movements and the last two movements (see Figure 1). I will focus on the beginning of the first movement, the second movement, and the fourth movement in this chapter, as they provide the strongest musical examples of Maslanka's connection with the natural world.

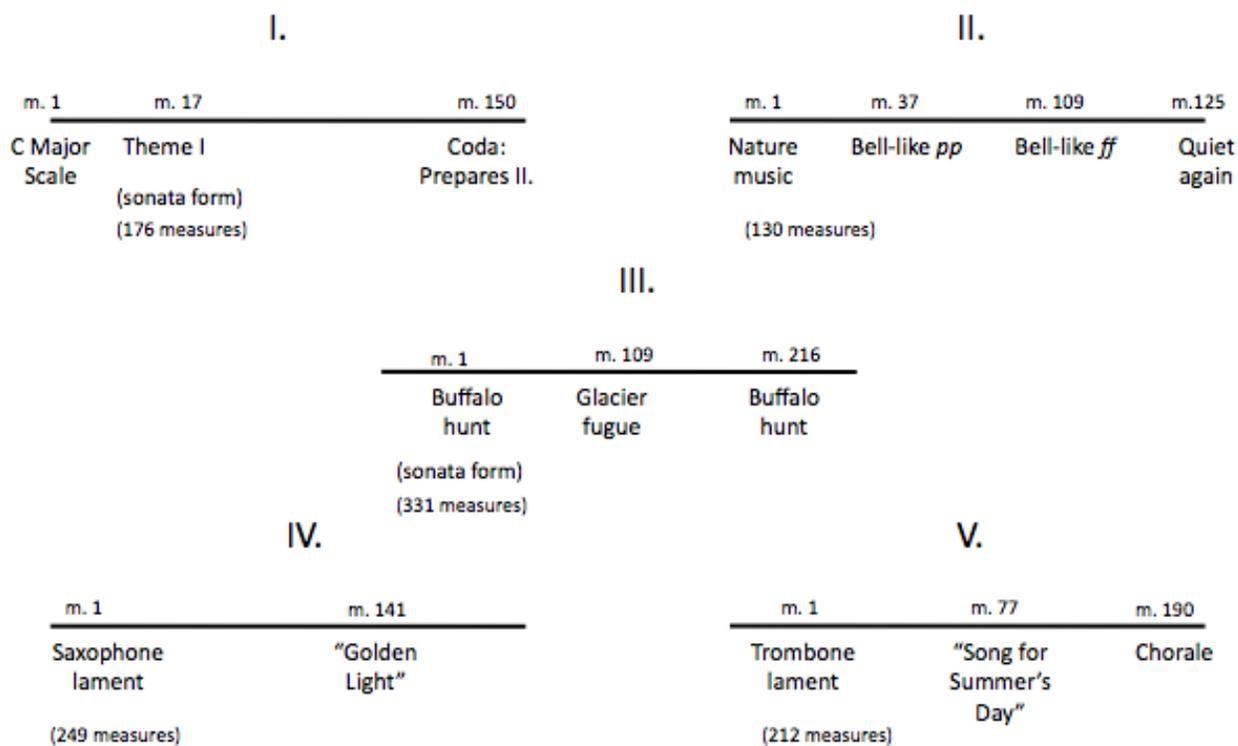


Figure 1. Diagram of Symphony No. 3

The first movement is centered in C major and begins with a unison C major scale. The scale ascends and descends in whole notes in all of the instruments in the band except for piano and percussion (who have rests), and covers four octaves of the scale. This unusual opening sounds very like a traditional school band warm-up drill and has elicited mixed reactions from performers and audience members, many of whom are familiar with this scale warm-up from

their own experiences. When used correctly in rehearsals, this warm-up drill helps band members focus on creating a unified sound; however, since this exercise is so frequently used incorrectly or without a sense of focus, the passage becomes exactly the feature that causes some band directors to dismiss the symphony.⁴⁶ Using the scale to open the piece is significant because it prepares both performers and listeners in a similar way that Maslanka's meditative process prepares him to compose. Maslanka describes meditation as "focused attention,"⁴⁷ and the use of this scale focuses the attention of the performers and listeners in the key of C. Maslanka explains that this "simplest of scale materials...evolves in a steady unbroken line from start to finish."⁴⁸

After the completion of the C major scale, the band holds a C major chord for one measure. The contrabassoon, horns, trombones, tuba, and double bass then sustain the chord in the lower octaves while the woodwinds, trumpets, and euphoniums are instructed to ad lib arpeggios in the key of C (Maslanka specifies triad tones only). At this point the first theme of the symphony emerges in a long line in the flutes, oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, and first two horns, while the remaining woodwinds and piano continue arpeggios underneath. The length of the notes in the melody suggests a wide, open space; knowing the source of Maslanka's inspiration, the scoring, predominantly in the upper woodwinds, suggests that this wide, open space is the skies of Montana. It is easy to see how this theme emerges from the introductory C major scale (see Example 1).

Much of this movement has a stormy atmosphere due to foreboding low brass lines, ominous percussion rolls, trombone glissandi, and layers of fast-paced woodwind lines. This

⁴⁶ Alston, "David Maslanka's Symphony Number Three," 34.

⁴⁷ David Maslanka, phone conversation with author, August 16, 2013.

⁴⁸ Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 3, <http://69.16.233.70/wind-ensemble/symphony-no-3/> (accessed January 5, 2014).

Example 1. Main theme from Movement I, mm. 19-30.⁴⁹

atmosphere relates to Maslanka's meditation notes for the movement, which reference herds of bison and conflict between white settlers and American Indian groups. Towards the end, however, a gentle flute solo leads into the more peaceful final two minutes of the first movement. Gentle and pensive solo lines in the flute, euphonium, English horn, oboe, clarinet, and saxophone create a sparse texture that prepares the second movement. The movement ends on the dominant, sustained in the flute and vibraphone.

The second movement, in contrast to the majority of the first movement, maintains a gentle, meditative atmosphere (except for one section). Maslanka explains its reduced orchestration and thin texture:

I am intrigued with the magical quality of sustained pure colors . . .
 I love a music that allows the listener to develop an intense reverie
 through sustained sounds, while at the same time being carried

⁴⁹ David Maslanka, *Symphony No. 3* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1991), 12-14. All examples in this thesis are notated in concert pitch.

through the structure of the piece. Time and timelessness join in a powerful way, each informing and illuminating the other.⁵⁰

This movement can be heard as a representation of Maslanka's meditation state. The sustained sounds, which he uses in both solo and accompaniment lines, create a sense of suspended time, relating to Maslanka's "dream space" and allowing for "focused attention" on the combinations of instrumental colors. In contrast to the focus created by the symphony's opening C major scale, the atmosphere of the second movement allows for freer meditative contemplation.

The majority of the movement maintains the same texture with groups of only 2-12 instruments playing. An ethereal atmosphere is created by tremolos and thirty-second note runs in the clarinets as well as percussion effects, including thirty-second note runs in the vibraphone with the motor on and soft sizzle cymbal rolls. This atmosphere prepares listeners for an oboe duet that is written in the same sustained style as the opening theme of the first movement as well as the solo lines at the end of the first movement (see Example 2). Starting in m. 6, the texture thickens slightly as sustained notes in the clarinets and alto saxophones are added, as well as continued runs and rolls in the percussion, flutter tonguing in the flutes, and quick ascending flourishes in the piano and clarinets. These layers create an organic accompaniment suggesting the ambient sounds of a natural environment. Maslanka also adds layers of glistening improvisatory solo figures, generally in the upper woodwinds, which incorporate grace notes and ascending flourishes focused around a pitch center to create a sound similar to bird song (see Example 3). These figures seem to emerge out of and coexist with the sustained texture rather than dominate it. Despite having more shape and activity than the sustained melodies, these improvisatory figures also allow for focused attention. As careful, meditative listening can help listeners become aware of sounds in their natural environment, the open texture of this

⁵⁰ Ibid.



Example 3. Bird call figure in the English horn, mm. 16-18.⁵²

movement allows the listener to focus on the more complex figures without forgetting the rest of the music.

At m. 37 a *pianissimo* bell-like melody is introduced in the piano, glockenspiel, and vibraphone. This D major melody is optimistic, each phrase rising to the tonic pitch. The timbre created by these instruments is ethereal, however, which helps to maintain the meditative atmosphere of the opening of the movement. In between phrases of this new melody there is a birdlike flute solo built of grace notes and trills centered around an A (see Example 4). The bell-like melody is heard again in the section that begins at m. 103. This section maintains a rhythmic triplet accompaniment in the bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, bassoons, contrabassoon, double bass, and piano that creates a sense of structure that has not previously been heard in this movement. In this section, sustained notes above the triplet accompaniment swell and often clash with one another. The bell-like melody appears in m. 109 in the unison upper woodwinds, this time at a forceful and exuberant *ff*. This contrasting section fades away quickly, however, and the accompaniment begins to drop out as the tempo slows. The movement ends quietly and meditatively with an alto saxophone solo, its last note marked "sustain as long as possible."⁵³ The sparse texture at the end of the movement creates a lonely and pensive mood that seems to hesitate before launching into the third movement.

⁵² Ibid., 52.

⁵³ David Maslanka, *Symphony No. 3* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1991), 71.

37

Flute

Clarinet (2.)

Piano

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

pp bell-like

Ped. sempre

Glock.

pp

Vibe - mtr. on, med. yrn

pp ped.

Crotales

pp

p

pp

p

tr. b

8va

42

a bit

a bit

8

Example 4. "Bell like" melody, mm. 37-47.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ibid., 56-57.

The second movement corresponds to a few of Maslanka's dream images, but perhaps most interestingly to the image of a grizzly bear covered in snow. The image of the bear returns in the meditation images that influenced the fourth and fifth movements.⁵⁵ Maslanka described a bear covered in snow (he perceives the snow on its back as an indication that it is from the spirit realm, which is higher up in the mountains) that attacks him; he explained that in his dream he had to allow the attack in order to access the power the bear was trying to bring forward in him.⁵⁶ The bear represents his connection to Montana, especially the mountains that surround his adopted hometown.

The third movement was also based on several different meditation images, including the image of buffalo as a "symbol of vibrant life," a buffalo hunt, the grizzly bear, and a visualization of music as mountains.⁵⁷ The exposition and recapitulation of the movement represent the buffalo hunt, while the development takes the shape of a fugue that embodies a "sharp icy ridge, a mountain spine with a vertical face that has to be mastered."⁵⁸ These images are manifested in Maslanka's layers of rhythmically driven melodic lines. Maslanka describes this energetic and hectic movement as having a "character of fierce power."⁵⁹

Forming the third main section of the piece, the fourth and fifth movements reveal the foundations of the symphony:

These movements—indeed the entire Symphony—have grown out of my perceptions of natural forces, especially the strong currents of old life that exist here in Montana. The music is a lamentation for the loss of the old direct contact with the life of the earth, yet a

⁵⁵ Maslanka often refers to his dream about this bear when discussing his meditative process; it seems to stand out to him as one of his most influential dream images.

⁵⁶ Alston, "David Maslanka's Symphony Number Three," 53.

⁵⁷ Alston, "David Maslanka's Symphony Number Three," 69-70.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 3.

recognition that these values still exist and can be brought back into meaningful focus.⁶⁰

Unlike the first and third movements, there is no traditional formal structure to these movements. They are free-flowing and song like in character, the fourth moving through a series of episodes, "much as one might move through mountain meadows and across hills, natural vistas of great beauty appearing and dissolving as one goes."⁶¹ Of the fifth movement, Maslanka writes that it "might be called 'Song for a Summer Day'." He continues, "The character of lament is there, but the creative winds rise and bring an ecstatic vision of natural beauty and life force."⁶² In both movements, simple, lyrical melodies are introduced both in solo instruments and in larger groups.

Maslanka's awareness of the natural world is effectively captured in these final two movements. His perception of life force in particular recalls his discussion of his meditative processes in which he draws attention to his awareness of "earth energy."⁶³ Maslanka is not the only contemporary composer to talk about life force in the context of the natural world; Libby Larsen also uses the term to define nature, explaining it as "the physical forces that allow those who are imbued with it to recognize their state of being."⁶⁴ Larsen's statement is well suited to describe Maslanka; his special connection with the natural world combined with his method of focused attention allows him to be aware not just of the energy of the world around him, but also its manifestation in his own life. The final two movements of Symphony No. 3 embody this awareness.

⁶⁰ Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 3, <http://69.16.233.70/wind-ensemble/symphony-no-3/> (accessed January 5, 2014).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, August 16, 2013.

⁶⁴ Larsen is quoted in Denise Von Glahn, *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 243.

The fourth movement begins with a tenor saxophone solo marked "Wailing – always forceful."⁶⁵ This introduces the "lamentation for the loss of the old direct contact with the life of the earth." The wild, leaping solo begins with two intervals that immediately create a sense of instability: a major seventh followed by a tritone (these intervals are also heard in mm. 7-9). Accompanied by sustained half-step dissonances in the woodwinds and low, staccato interjections, this is the most unsettling music heard so far in the symphony.

1 Wailing - always forceful, heavy vib.

Tenor Saxophone

6

ff

no. dim.

Example 5. Tenor saxophone solo, mm. 1-10.⁶⁶

The solo is followed by further wild lines in the trumpet section with a pounding staccato accompaniment in the low instruments. With Maslanka's own deep connection to the natural world, it is understandable that the loss of such a relationship would be a source of sorrow for him. However, the hope that the connection to the earth can be "brought back into meaningful focus" prevails. This hope is first hinted at in the section beginning at m. 67. An English horn solo that initially sounds melancholy emerges over a sustained C-sharp minor chord, but when the alto saxophone joins in the dialogue at m. 71, the key becomes major and the mood becomes more hopeful. At m. 80, after a key change to F major, a duet between two alto saxophones recalls the ethereal sustained quality of the second movement. This section is meditative and hopeful, but it does not last long before returning to the more unsettling and stormy atmosphere.

⁶⁵ Maslanka, Symphony No. 3, 143.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 143-44.

Similarly to the section at m. 67, a melancholy, "lost" English horn solo leads into a new section of the movement at m. 130. Again, the solo begins in a minor key, but suggests C major by the end of the solo. This time, however, there are two fermatas between the solo and the new section, inviting reflection. The extended silence also helps listeners prepare to focus on the new material and gives them time to reflect upon what they have just heard.

Example 6. English Horn solo, mm. 130-41.⁶⁷

The new section beginning after the fermatas is what Maslanka refers to as the song of the "Golden Light." Introduced in the clarinets and saxophones, the first part of the song is simple and gentle and in the key of C major. This introduction is not a complete statement of the song, but the slightly faster second statement, which adds oboes, English horn, bass and contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon, trumpets, double bass, and piano to the texture, is complete. The end of the statement suddenly changes to B major. In reference to Symphony No. 9, Maslanka mentioned that he finds some sort of "foundational energy" in the "crack between B and C" that seems to come out of the difference between the two keys, so he often pairs them together.⁶⁸ The same foundational energy can be heard in the shift from C to B at this moment in Symphony No. 3. The song is then heard three more times, each time adding more instruments to create a

⁶⁷ Maslanka, Symphony No. 3, 170-72.

⁶⁸ David Maslanka, personal interview with author, Sugar Land, TX, November 23, 2013.

thickening texture until the final two statements utilize all of the instruments in the ensemble except for the piccolos.

Suddenly a bit faster

Oboe 1,2 and Clar. 1,2
English Horn
Clarinet 3

mf
mf
mf *sub.*

153
158

< *f*
< *f*
< *f*

Example 7. "Golden Light" song, mm. 153-64.⁶⁹

The "Golden Light" passage is the culmination of the fourth movement (and perhaps the entire piece). Initially it is a pensive, meditative kind of culmination, and although the last two statements (beginning at m. 176) use most of the band's resources, they do not have the unrestrained power found in many of Maslanka's other climactic passages. Maslanka explains that the song is original to him, but the inspiration for the song came from his meditations:

[I] have a keen mental image of [a] she-bear standing up in a mountain woods in the golden light. The bear is radiating the essence of this music. It is an awareness of the utter beauty of the natural world, of the joy and pain of being alive; a sense of being

⁶⁹ Ibid., 174-76.

right at the center of the life force. I see through the eyes and experience of the bear.⁷⁰

This meditation experience comes through in Maslanka's music. Set off by the two fermatas that precede it at m. 141, the "Golden Light" section is isolated and conveys being "right at the center of the life force." While we hear isolation, we also understand that a sense of unity comes from Maslanka's connection with the natural world that he portrays in the unison statements of the song. The movement ends with a lament in the flute played over sustained notes, and returns to more melancholy reflection.

The fifth movement of the symphony continues the mood set by the fourth, but this movement has an overall gentler atmosphere. In this movement, a different song associated with the bear appears; this is the "Song for a Summer Day." The movement begins with a mournful trombone solo accompanied by woodwind choir in a chorale-like style; this solo, like the tenor saxophone solo in the previous movement, immediately introduces the lament character, but this time the anger is not present. The bear's song is first heard at m. 77, about halfway through the movement. This melody is quite similar in style to the opening theme of the first movement; it is diatonic and consists mainly of sustained notes creating a long line, returning to the mental image of an open landscape. The movement ends similarly to the way it began; this time solo lines first in the oboe and then the euphonium float mournfully over an unhurried accompaniment of sustained notes in the oboes, English horn, bassoons, contrabassoon, double bass, and piano. The piece ends on an A-major chord, but the melodic line in the euphonium ends on an E, leaving the symphony sounding somewhat unresolved. As this movement brings back a musical image of the Montanan landscape, the lack of finality at the end of the symphony

⁷⁰ Maslanka is quoted in Alston, "David Maslanka's Symphony Number Three," 90.

recalls Maslanka's understanding that the values relating to direct contact with the life of the earth still exist in his adopted home state.

As one of the first works written after the move to Missoula, Symphony No. 3 represents a shift in Maslanka's compositional style and creative focus. Maslanka's perception of the earth and his natural surroundings evolved in Missoula, and this awareness comes through in the music, from the spacious opening theme, to the delicate, organic second movement, to the dormant energy of the "Golden Light" song. The tension observed at several moments throughout the piece relates to two things: Maslanka's original meditation on Gary Green, who Maslanka perceived to be uncomfortable with his American Indian heritage; and the idea that we are losing our ability to connect with the natural world. Maslanka's heightened awareness of the "utter beauty of the natural world" represented in the "Golden Light" song helps listeners find their way back to this foundational relationship.

CHAPTER THREE

THE VOICE OF THE EARTH

David Maslanka describes his Symphony No. 4, composed in 1993, as having many roots. The most important of these roots is the "spontaneous rise of the impulse to shout for the joy of life," which comes from the "powerful voice of the Earth."⁷¹ This provocative statement immediately makes evident Maslanka's connection to his natural environment. Maslanka often talks about his special ability to discover the energy of particular places; according to the composer, this symphony captures the quality of the energy he perceived while driving through western Montana. There are four main ideas in this symphony that demonstrate this connection: the opening "do re mi" motive, the hymn tune "Old Hundred," the "World Force Hymn," and the climactic end of the symphony. All four of these events in some way represent the voice of the Earth. I have provided a chart that outlines the shape of the symphony, locating the appearance of each of these four events (see Figure 2).

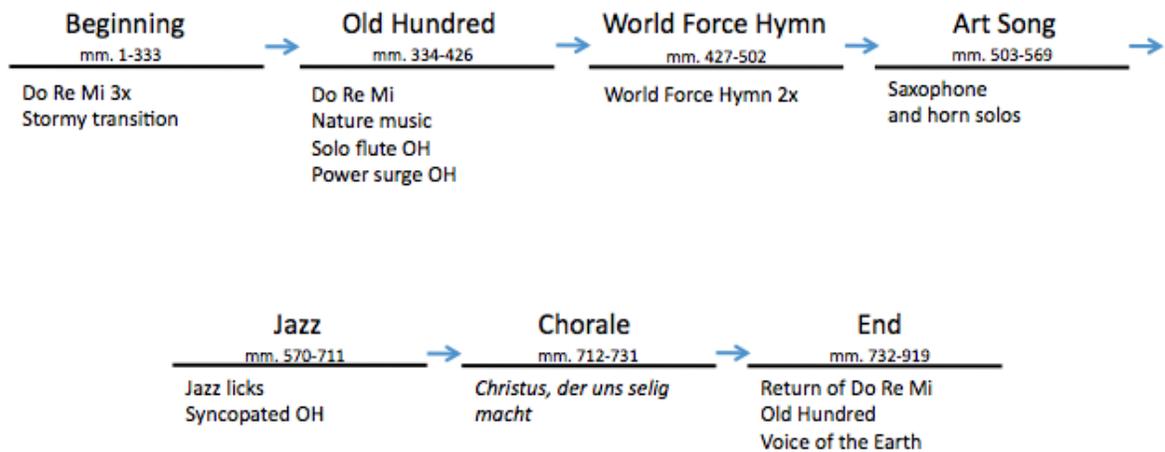


Figure 2. Diagram of Symphony No. 4

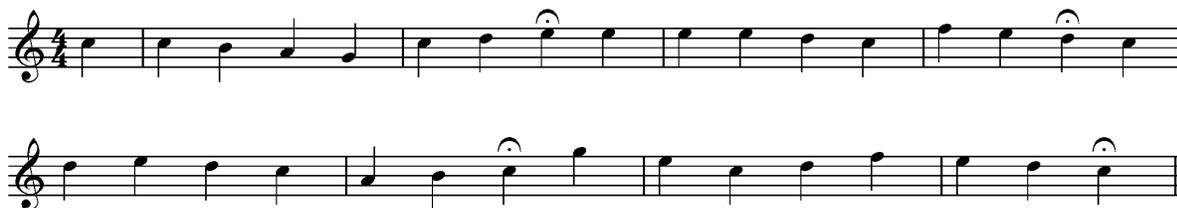
⁷¹ David Maslanka, Composer's Note to Symphony No. 4 (New York: Carl Fischer, 1994).

The "do re mi" motive, which begins the symphony and returns frequently throughout, is a simple, ascending diatonic melody. The rising shape of this motive brings to mind sunrises and the opening up of life; it is the first suggestion of the growing impulse to shout for joy. Each time this motive returns in the symphony, some sort of an opening-up occurs in texture, dynamics, or a combination of both. I will return to this idea as these moments appear in the piece.



Example 8. "Do re mi" motive, mm. 30-49.⁷²

Maslanka uses the hymn tune "Old Hundred" as a second recurring idea; it appears four times in the symphony and provides a backbone for the piece. Multiple texts have been set to this hymn tune, but it is best known for its use as the doxology hymn ("Praise God from whom all blessings flow").



Example 9. "Old Hundred" melody.

⁷² David Maslanka, *Symphony No. 4* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1994), 5-7.

Perhaps due to its familiarity to listeners, "Old Hundred" has been used by many composers. In his music for the film *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936), Virgil Thomson quotes the hymn several times.⁷³ Like Maslanka, Thomson sometimes uses snippets of the hymn that have been modally or rhythmically transformed, but the first time the hymn is heard, it is presented in half notes in its traditional four-part arrangement.⁷⁴ Thomson's use of "Old Hundred," as well as other hymns, represents what he viewed as the religious connotations of the pastoral; Beth Levy explains, "The doxology solidifies the film's status as a meditation on the care and keeping of natural resources."⁷⁵ For Maslanka, who does not engage in any sort of agricultural activities (other than helping to take care of his wife's horses), the connection is rooted in simply being in the natural world, rather than taming it. A contemporary of Maslanka's, Frank Ticheli, uses "Old Hundred" as one of several representations of light in his wind band work *Angels in the Architecture* (2009). Expressing a similar viewpoint to Maslanka, Ticheli writes that his use of the hymn is "meant to transcend any one religion, representing the more universal human ideals of peace, hope, and love."⁷⁶

Maslanka decided to use "Old Hundred" in this piece after reading Carl Sandburg's biography of Abraham Lincoln, a man with whom Maslanka has a "long-time fascination."⁷⁷ At the end of the book, Sandburg describes a brass band playing "Old Hundred" as Lincoln's coffin was put on the train to be taken to his final resting place in Springfield, Illinois. Maslanka views Lincoln as a symbol of transformation because of his dedication to unification, which changed the nation. The use of "Old Hundred" represents this idea:

⁷³ Pare Lorentz, *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, DVD, Post-Classical Ensemble, soundtrack by Virgil Thomson (Naxos, 2007).

⁷⁴ Levy, *Frontier Figures*, 184.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁷⁶ Frank Ticheli, Program Note to *Angels in the Architecture*, Manhattan Beach Music Online, http://issuu.com/manhattanbeachmusic/docs/angels_in_the_architecture_conductor_score?e=4587857/1404910#222 (accessed January 30, 2014).

⁷⁷ Maslanka, Composer's Note to Symphony No. 4.

Confirmed in the world by Lincoln was the unshakeable idea of the unity of the human race, and by extension the unity of all life, and by further extension, the unity of all life with matter, with all energy, and with the silent and seemingly empty and unfathomable mystery of our origins.

Out of chaos and the fierce joining of opposite comes new life and hope. From this impulse I used "Old Hundred," known as the Doxology—a hymn of praise to God; Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow.⁷⁸

Maslanka explains that although he usually is not concerned with the texts of hymn tunes that he uses in his compositions, he finds the idea of "praise God from whom all blessings flow" to be a "powerful and urgent message" in Symphony No. 4.⁷⁹ He clarified, however, that this message was something that the music itself wanted rather than something he intended to happen. "Old Hundred" as a symbol of transformation in relation to Lincoln is tied to Maslanka's meditative connection with his natural environment and his belief in the unity of the natural world.

Maslanka's views about hymns further explain the use of "Old Hundred" in connection with the natural environment. The statement regarding Bach chorales from his notes for Symphony No. 6, "Living Earth," is relevant here: "Like all folk melodies, they are the products of generations of singers working with the same melody ideas, and finally arriving at simple tunes that embody a huge life force. These are now the melodies of the earth."⁸⁰ This statement can be applied to the variety of chorales and hymn tunes he uses in his compositions. In addition to many Bach chorales and "Old Hundred," Maslanka has used the hymn tunes "All Creatures of Our God and King," "Deep River," and "Shall We Gather at the River" in other pieces.⁸¹

Maslanka expanded on the topic in an interview, explaining that he believes hymn tunes like

⁷⁸ Maslanka, Composer's Note to Symphony No. 4.

⁷⁹ Maslanka, e-mail conversation with author, November 4, 2013.

⁸⁰ Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 6, <http://69.16.233.70/orchestra/symphony-no-6-living-earth/> (accessed August 14, 2013).

⁸¹ The tune for "All Creatures of Our God and King" used by Maslanka was composed by Peter von Brachel in 1623 and is titled "Lasst uns Erfreuen." "Deep River" is an anonymous African American spiritual. "Shall We Gather at the River" and its tune "Hanson Place" were written by Robert Lowry in 1864.

"Old Hundred" have emerged from generations of people touching and using the music, putting generations of energy into it.⁸² This process ties the hymns to the world, making them a part of the energy of the natural environment.

The other two main ideas of this symphony each occur only once. The first is Maslanka's "World Force Hymn," which represents an important transition point in the symphony. Maslanka explains that this melody was an "intuitive response to the character of the music" and his sense of the "earth as a living thing."⁸³ Despite choosing the name "World Force Hymn" himself, Maslanka clarifies that he "had no personal intention" for this section of the piece; rather, he simply discovered it.⁸⁴ The "World Force Hymn" thus represents another voice of the Earth. The melody begins with the same figure as the "do re mi" motive, further connecting it to the living nature of the earth.



Example 10. World Force Hymn, mm. 427-45.⁸⁵

The final idea connecting Maslanka's music to the natural environment occurs at the end of the piece and is the culmination of the symphony. Maslanka writes in the program notes,

My personal experience of this voice [of the Earth] is one of being helpless and torn open by the power of the thing that wants to be expressed—the welling-up shout that cannot be denied. I am set aquiver and am forced to shout and sing. The response in the voice

⁸² Maslanka, phone conversation with author, August 16, 2013.

⁸³ Maslanka, e-mail conversation with author, October 27, 2013.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Maslanka, Symphony No. 4, 58-61.

of the Earth is the answering shout of thanksgiving, and the shout of praise.⁸⁶

The final theme represents this voice of the Earth. The second half of the new melody introduced in this section of the piece (beginning at the pick up to m. 866) is very similar to the "Golden Light" melody used in the fourth movement of Symphony No. 3, but this time Maslanka uses an entirely different orchestration and, as a result, achieves a startlingly different effect.

in one

840 $4:3$

ff

851 $4:3$

862

874

880

Example 11. Voice of the Earth/Golden Light motive, mm. 840-86.⁸⁷

The subtle orchestration of oboes, English horn, and clarinets that introduce the melody in Symphony No. 3 is much different from the lower voices of this melody in Symphony No. 4; in addition to the orchestration, the accents and *ff* dynamic in this excerpt forcefully drive the melody, unlike the gentle presentation in Symphony No. 3. Despite the almost identical melodic shapes (the melody is written a whole step down in Symphony No. 4), Maslanka did not

⁸⁶ Maslanka, Composer's Note to Symphony No. 4.

⁸⁷ Maslanka, Symphony No. 4, 127-33.

consciously reuse this melody; in fact, he was not even aware of the similarity until it was pointed out to him. The subconscious arising of this melody in two separate works may point to its ties to the earth energies that Maslanka is so in tune with.

Beyond the connections to the natural environment, Symphony No. 4 is unique for its instrumentation. Although the piece was originally intended for one-on-a-part performance, most bands today double at least the clarinet, trumpet, and horn parts (which Maslanka is not opposed to). Because of this degree of flexibility, a performance of this piece could encompass anywhere from 44 to 60 players. Augmenting the already varied group of instruments is an organ. In contrast to his first piece for wind ensemble, the Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion, which called for a small electric organ, Maslanka specifies a full-size pipe or electric organ with pedals and directions that the organ should balance with and not overpower the band.⁸⁸ Drawing a connection between the organ as a church instrument and the overt presence of Christian hymns in Symphony No. 4 is tempting, but Maslanka simply included the instrument because he had used the organ in previous works and enjoyed the sound. The percussion section is also diverse, something that has become standard for wind ensemble works in the twenty-first century, but it is important to note that Maslanka was one of the first wind band composers to begin experimenting with the percussion section in his seminal work *A Child's Garden of Dreams*. He speaks of his own percussion parts, "I will say briefly that percussion has great emotional power and that I think of it not as an add-on or decoration, but as an integral voice in the wind ensemble."⁸⁹ Maslanka's percussion parts are important because he regularly uses the instruments in unique and specific ways to create certain atmospheres in sections of his music, often by themselves (as in the middle of the fourth movement of *A Child's Garden of Dreams*).

⁸⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁹ Maslanka, "David Maslanka," 203.

The influence of Edgard Varèse can be heard in Maslanka's percussion writing; Varèse's work *Déserts* changed the way Maslanka viewed the percussion section in terms of the specificity of his instructions.⁹⁰ Varèse did his best to elicit very specific sounds and timbres from percussionists, including written directions about how to play their instruments.⁹¹ Maslanka's own specialized use of the percussion section is evident in parts of Symphony No. 4, especially in the "nature music" section of the piece.

The symphony begins with an unaccompanied horn solo. The solo is relaxed and contemplative and introduces one of the main themes of the symphony, the "do re mi" theme, in the key of G major.

Example 12. Horn solo, mm. 1-29.⁹²

When asked why he chose to write the opening of the symphony for the solo horn, Maslanka answered, "After all the mulling and fooling around with ideas, that's what wanted to happen."⁹³

Brass horns have been part of rural soundscapes since the sixteenth century, and so an

⁹⁰ J. Patrick Brooks, "An Analysis of David Maslanka's *Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion*" (DMA thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1994), 16.

⁹¹ Denise Von Glahn, "Empty Spaces': The Conceptual Origins of *Déserts*," in *Edgard Varèse: Composer, Sound Sculptor, Visionary*, eds. Felix Meyer and Heidi Zimmermann (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2006), 302.

⁹² Maslanka, Symphony No. 4, 4-5.

⁹³ Maslanka, e-mail conversation with author, October 27, 2013.

unaccompanied horn suggests a pastoral setting.⁹⁴ When considering the symphony's genesis as a result of Maslanka's meditative process and connection with the landscape around him, beginning the work with an instrument that has historic connections to the outdoors seems logical. As the solo horn continues past the "do re mi" motive, it plays a series of descending arpeggiated figures beginning at m. 17; these figures sound like a horn call.

After the horn solo, a large section of the band enters, including clarinets, bass clarinet, contra bass clarinet, bassoons, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones, horns, trombones, euphoniums, and tubas. This group restates the "do re mi" theme in C major, the key that has special importance to Maslanka because of his belief in its connection to a divine energy. The simple melody seems to rise up from the depths of the band, gaining strength and solidity as it emerges. Maslanka's reference to the "solar glow" of C major is audible in this gesture.⁹⁵ His unique orchestration preferences are evident here; the texture he builds from the combination of low woodwinds and brass is smooth and rich, creating a warm and mellow atmosphere. The rising melody sounds like an awakening, embracing the listener, and it is easy to imagine a view of wide prairies and tall mountains when listening to this section. The second statement of this theme uses the full band, including the organ, and is much brighter and louder, although the tempo remains the same.

Three consecutive statements of this theme progress from small to large in both dynamics and texture. It is easy to imagine an awakening; the way the overall timbre of the group becomes brighter, first with the addition of low reeds and brass to the solo horn line, and then increasing to the full band and organ, reenacts the literal brightening of a landscape during a sunrise. The shape of this melody is similar to the structure of hymns or folk songs, remaining diatonically

⁹⁴ R. Murray Schaefer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1977), 45-47.

⁹⁵ Maslanka, personal interview with author, Sugar Land, TX, November 23, 2013.

within the range of an octave. The singable quality of the motive connects it to Maslanka's idea of the "voice of the earth." He explains that the "voice of the earth" cannot be tied to any one particular moment or motive in the symphony; rather "the whole of the symphony, and indeed all of music, is the voice of the earth."⁹⁶ Even with this in mind, there are some moments in the work that seem to resonate more powerfully as an audible voice of the earth, including this motive. The beginning of the symphony is a moment that forms a bridge for the listener to Maslanka's ongoing perception of the natural environment around him.

As previously demonstrated in Symphony No. 3, the juxtaposition of warm, inviting melodies with stormier passages is a common feature of Maslanka's compositions, and after the initial exploration of the "do re mi" motive, the atmosphere of the symphony changes drastically into a more tumultuous section. This change in the energy line prepares what Maslanka calls the "nature music" section of the symphony. The stormy full band texture diminishes to solo horns accompanied by arpeggios in the harp; the horns reintroduce the "do re mi" motive, this time in C major. As the motive blends away into a series of long tones in the horns, clarinets, saxophones, and double bass, the continuous harp arpeggios alone mark the passage of time. The "nature music" section consists of atmospheric music arising out of the ethereal background of long tones, taken over at this point by the organ and clarinets. For this section the organ uses a mixture of reeds stops, which contributes to the pastoral and ethereal texture. The beginning of this section is marked with a xylophone interjection, which is answered by a birdlike oboe call, and continues with a series of animal-sound-like interjections in the woodwind and percussion instruments (see Example 13). This is clearly a meditative section, and time seems to slow down; with no continuous melodic line to hold onto, the interjections seem to come and go at their leisure, which creates an atmosphere that ebbs and flows organically.

⁹⁶ Maslanka, e-mail conversation with author, October 27, 2013.

♩ = 80

A. Fl.

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet

Organ

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Xyl.

Vibe mtr. on

1.

p

p

f

1. Solo

p

mp

1. v.

p

4

p

f

p

5

1. v.

Example 13. Beginning of the "nature music" section, mm. 360-64.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Maslanka, Symphony No. 4, 46.

When Maslanka talks about his meditation process, he describes entering a meditative dream space, a place that is directly related to earth energy.⁹⁸ When he enters his dream space, he is able to clear his mind, which allows him to open his consciousness. It is not a place for rapid thought, but instead for direct perception.⁹⁹ This "nature music" section seems to be a musical manifestation of Maslanka's dream space. The literal space between interjections in this music mirrors the figurative openness of the listener's mind and allows a glimpse into Maslanka's dream space.

Beyond representing his dream space, however, this atmospheric section demonstrates Maslanka's ability to write for the wind ensemble in a way that gives him a great deal of control over the sound produced. Maslanka often recombines members from the 44-player scoring into smaller groups. This "nature music" section is one of those instances; the majority of the wind ensemble is silent here. This part of the piece also highlights the percussionists: Maslanka writes interjections for xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, tam-tam, and four medium to small gongs. This type of percussion writing is the same that Maslanka used to musically depict a primitive Earth in the fourth movement of *A Child's Garden of Dreams*.

Eventually, the flute emerges from this background, at first seemingly merely adding long tones to the mixture of timbres; however, by the end of the first phrase, the flute's melody is clearly recognizable as "Old Hundred." This is an augmented version of the hymn, allowing time for each note to be contemplated, which ties into the idea of the dream space. The final phrase of the hymn is not used; instead the saxophones take over and play the final melodic phrase of the Bach chorale *Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten* (translated by Maslanka as "Only Trust in God

⁹⁸ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, August 16, 2013.

⁹⁹ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, September 8, 2013.

to Guide You").¹⁰⁰ Maslanka understands them both to be music of the earth, and one hymn is able to move seamlessly to another because the final phrase of the Bach chorale shares similar interval and pitch characteristics with the third phrase of "Old Hundred." Due to this similarity, however, the final phase of the Bach chorale does not complete "Old Hundred" with the same sense of finality that the hymn's own final phrase would; instead, it leads into the next setting of "Old Hundred."

The image displays a musical score for a wind ensemble. The top staff is for the Flute, starting at measure 390. Below it are three staves for saxophones: Alto Sax. (starting at measure 398), Tenor Sax., and Bari. Sax. (starting at measure 398). The music is in 2/4 time. The flute part features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The saxophone parts provide harmonic support, with dynamics ranging from *p* (piano) to *mp* (mezzo-piano). The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata.

Example 14. Last phrase of "Old Hundred" followed by the final phrase of "Only Trust in God to Guide You," mm. 390-405.¹⁰¹

Between the brief Bach chorale phrase and the next setting of "Old Hundred" there is a single chord that grows quickly and intensely, from *pp* to *ff* in the space of one measure (also aided by the trombones removing their mutes). It leads into what Maslanka calls the "power-surge" version of "Old Hundred," and moves from meditating and connecting with nature to becoming overcome with the urge to shout for the joy of life. This setting has three simultaneous statements: the brass, organ, timpani, and low reeds play the main layer in half notes, while the upper woodwinds and piccolo trumpet play a displaced echo four and a half beats later. A third

¹⁰⁰ Maslanka used this hymn previously in his wind ensemble piece *In Memoriam*.

¹⁰¹ Maslanka, Symphony No. 4, 51-53.

406 **Subito a tempo** ♩ = 80

411

415

419

ff

sim.

sim.

mf *mp* *p* *pp*

Example 15. Three layers of "Old Hundred" melody, mm. 406-28.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Ibid., 54-57.

layer is a delayed and augmented statement played by the horns and the saxophones (see Example 15). The three layers overlap to create a wall of sound—"Old Hundred" as it has never been heard before. In this setting Maslanka is clearly embracing his idea of "shouting for the joy of life."

After the power surge "Old Hundred," Maslanka allows more time for meditation. Three measures feature the percussion section over a single sustained clarinet note; we are able to focus on each individual sound offered by the shaker and bowed vibraphone, marimba, and crotales. A horn fanfare interrupts this ethereal atmosphere, and a different voice emerges—this is Maslanka's "World Force Hymn." His hymn is a newly composed melody, but it is built on conventions that have been around for years and long associated with hymns: it is composed diatonically, drawing on the "do re mi" figure, and despite some of the rhythmic complexity within repetitions of the same note, when looking at the overall shape of the melody, it is relatively simple. There are two statements of this hymn, each played by the tenor and baritone saxophones, horns, trombones, euphoniums, double bass, and piano. This broad, powerful melody only pauses to make way for a delicate flute duet before the entrance of the second statement. This brief 14-measure duet functions as a space for repose between the statements of the hymn. The second statement slowly gathers power, and the "shout for the joy of life" idea emerges in the melody. Stephen Bolstad draws attention to the plagal quality of this setting, which comes from an ostinato in D major (tonic) and G major (subdominant) driving the hymn.¹⁰³ Reinforcing the plagal quality, this section ends with an "Amen" cadence—not softly and reverently as it might in church, however, but in a full-blown shout. The plagal quality is important because it further establishes the function of this newly composed melody as a hymn and suggests Maslanka's spiritual attitude to the natural world. The instrumentation implies that

¹⁰³ Bolstad, "An Analytical Study of David Maslanka's Symphony No. 4," 56.

this "World Force Hymn" is a voice of the Earth. As before, the low voices arise out of the depths of the band, which represents a more ancient voice, one that is buried deeper in the Earth. Maslanka identifies this section as a hymn, and his belief that hymns represent the voices of past generations of people also contributes to an ancient character.

The third time "Old Hundred" appears in Symphony No. 4 it has been transformed through the influence of jazz. In this setting, Maslanka contrasts a syncopated version of the hymn with frantic, overlapping lines scored predominantly for saxophones. This is another instance of the juxtaposition of atmospheres that is found in many of his works. Similarly to the first appearance of the hymn, the melody emerges when it is least expected. After vigorous jazz licks and a percussion and piano break, the woodwinds and muted trumpets play a heavily syncopated arrangement of the melody that is sweetly echoed by the E-flat clarinet.

653 *sempre staccato*
Fl, Cl. 1 *f*

656

Example 16. Syncopated "Old Hundred," mm. 653-58.¹⁰⁴

The rest of this section presents various orchestrations of the jazz-tinged "Old Hundred"—first the full band, then upper woodwinds, and finally the solo flute. These statements are mixed in between jazz-influenced lines in the full band with improvised percussion accompaniment (Maslanka asks for Latin, jazz, or rock style), as well as sections with a thinner texture featuring walking bass lines in the double bass and piano that are punctuated by harmon-muted trumpets and trombones.

¹⁰⁴ Maslanka, Symphony No. 4, 99-100.

Despite the jazz characteristics present in this section, Maslanka is specific about the fact that he is not trying to write jazz; he is merely absorbing its influence and allowing it to emerge in his writing.¹⁰⁵ The juxtaposition of the syncopated "Old Hundred" with the jazz themes connects back to the Earth because, as Maslanka explained, the melody comes from the same place and has to do with the same energy and spirituality.¹⁰⁶ Despite the transformation of the theme in a more energetic setting, the "Old Hundred" melody is still central, providing focus throughout this section. The layering of jazz lines creates a sense of increased energy, but the syncopated "Old Hundred" statements emerge as playful sparks of familiarity.

Maslanka creates a kind of meditative interlude between the jazz setting of "Old Hundred" and the final section of the piece with an exploration of a second Bach chorale (*Christus, der uns selig macht*, translated by Maslanka as "Christ Who Makes Us Holy"). The beginning of this last section is announced with the return of the "do re mi" melody, this time in the full band, including organ, marked *ff sempre* with a gradual crescendo. This is the largest statement of the initial motive yet; it represents the overwhelming energy of the voice of the Earth that Maslanka is so aware of. The music grows and develops, incorporating motives introduced earlier in the piece, and culminates in a "shout" figure (mm. 798-801) that uses all of the ensemble's instruments except trombones and organ.



Example 17. Shout figure, mm. 798-801.¹⁰⁷

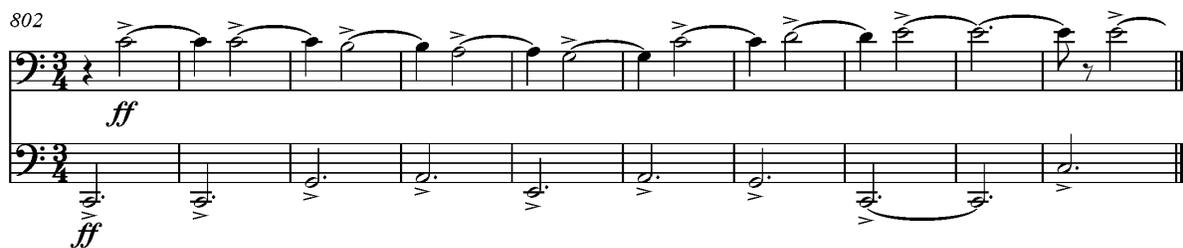
¹⁰⁵ Weaver, "David Maslanka's Symphony No. 7," 24-25.

¹⁰⁶ Maslanka, personal interview with author, Sugar Land, TX, November 23, 2013.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 121-22.

While this figure does not yet seem to be the full-blown "shout for the joy of life," it exuberantly pushes forward, crescendoing into the next section: the final statement of "Old Hundred."

The final setting of "Old Hundred" is the climax of the symphony and the most straightforward setting of the hymn. Scored in the low instruments with quick upper woodwind and trumpet runs that add motion and depth, the orchestration is huge and powerful. The bass line (contra bass clarinet, bassoons, contra bassoon, bass trombone, tuba, double bass, piano, organ, and timpani), playing dotted half notes on the downbeat of each measure, provides the impetus for the melody (played by tenor and baritone saxophones, and trombones), which is syncopated, giving it increased power, energy, and forward motion.



802

ff

ff

Example 18. First phrase of the final "Old Hundred" statement, mm. 802-11.¹⁰⁸

In contrast to the "power surge" setting of "Old Hundred," this setting never dissipates. Maslanka wanted to end the work with this final setting, but he explained that there was so much energy and forward motion that he had to continue writing.¹⁰⁹ The joyous text of "Old Hundred" is already designed to praise the creator; when Maslanka reinforces the Doxology melody with all the power of the full wind ensemble, it becomes unhesitatingly his "shout for the joy of life."

This setting of "Old Hundred" represents Maslanka's understanding of the hymn's place in the world. Maslanka's universal concept of life and spirituality is present in this belief—all people, from past and present times, are connected both to each other and to the Earth. The

¹⁰⁸ Maslanka, *Symphony No. 4*, 122-23.

¹⁰⁹ Bolstad, "An Analytical Study of David Maslanka's *Symphony No. 4*," 70.

overall message of praise that Maslanka describes as both powerful and urgent throughout the symphony is a message that further represents the connection. This final statement of the hymn tune propels the music into a new section, announcing a new voice of the Earth—what Maslanka describes as the "answering shout of thanksgiving, and the shout of praise."¹¹⁰ The idea of the Earth responding with its own expression of praise further indicates Maslanka's deep connection with the Earth, and the statement itself represents the unity achieved in the final statement of "Old Hundred."

The new melody representing this voice of the Earth is as simple as the earlier "do re mi" melody and the "World Force Hymn." The band plays in unison with the timpani, bass drum, tom-toms, suspended cymbal, and tam tam providing additional depth. The music is unhurried, taking its time to move from note to note, especially as the piece gets closer to the end. This section is particularly effective when played by the band (plus organ) because the *tutti* wind instruments create a more vocal quality than a string orchestra could, which is appropriate for representing a shout. The only instruments playing the melody here are clarinets, saxophones, horns, and euphoniums; all of these instruments are scored in a similar range where they all produce a similar mellow timbre, which contributes to the vocal quality heard here. Maslanka is not afraid to ask for the power he desires; he uses the band to its greatest effect, requesting fortissimo dynamics frequently (but never casually; he expects the band to play a true fortissimo) and even *fff* at the final measure of the piece.

The piece ends on a C major chord sustained by the full band. The piccolo, flutes, E-flat clarinet, and first trumpets approach the chord from a flat sixth, so the piece ends with a resolution of tension. It is significant that this piece ends in C major; the "solar glow" that both "Old Hundred" and the melody representing the voice of the Earth possess in this key creates

¹¹⁰ Maslanka, Composer's Note to Symphony No. 4.

what Maslanka refers to as an "awareness of a divine energy."¹¹¹ It is worth revisiting Maslanka's words about the voice of the Earth:

My personal experience of the voice is one of being helpless and torn open by the power of the thing that wants to be expressed—the welling-up shout that cannot be denied. I am set aquiver and am forced to shout and sing.¹¹²

The resonance heard in the final chord of Symphony No. 4 is an accurate representation of one "set aquiver." Maslanka's ability to capture the powerful voice of the Earth in Symphony No. 4 allows listeners to experience something similar to the composer's awareness of earth energies.

¹¹¹ Maslanka, personal interview with author, Sugar Land, TX, November 23, 2013.

¹¹² Maslanka, Composer's Note to Symphony No. 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM MACDOWELL CHICKADEES TO "PURE LAND" WHALES

As Symphony No. 4 reveals various manifestations of the voice of the Earth, Symphony No. 9 represents an even greater journey. David Maslanka describes the gigantic Symphony No. 9 as "a very large collection of instrumental songs."¹¹³ The piece, an hour and a half in duration, begins with a preface, a reading of the poem "Secrets" by W. S. Merwin.¹¹⁴ Four movements follow the preface; each movement uses one or more borrowed melodies, including chorale melodies from the 371 Four-Part Chorales by J. S. Bach (Nos. 80, 223, 242, and 343) and traditional American hymns. Regarding his inspiration for the symphony, Maslanka writes, "There are many influences and underlying elements, but most of them cannot be explained in words. Rather than try, I will simply list some of the things at work."¹¹⁵ He refers to four main concepts: time, water, nature, and grace. These concepts, combined with the "symphony of songs" form of the piece, contribute to the idea that the symphony takes the listener on a journey. The journey, along with the four main concepts, relates to Maslanka's connection to the natural world, a relationship that is especially apparent in the first and last movements of the symphony.

The American poet W. S. Merwin was born in 1927 in New York City. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he was raised in Union City, New Jersey, and Scranton, Pennsylvania. His first collection of poetry was published in 1952; since then he has published over 20 additional collections, including *The Shadow of Sirius* (2008), which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2009. "Secrets" comes from this collection. The book was Maslanka's first encounter with Merwin's poetry and he said he was "quickly taken with the directness and power of his writing."¹¹⁶ Since

¹¹³ David Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 9 (New York: Maslanka Press, 2011).

¹¹⁴ See Appendix A for the full text of Merwin's poem.

¹¹⁵ Maslanka, Program Notes to Symphony No. 9.

¹¹⁶ Maslanka, e-mail conversation with author, December 29, 2013.

then, Maslanka has read more of Merwin's poetry as well as his autobiography. Maslanka identifies with Merwin's work from his own perspective as a composer:

[Merwin's] late work, more than other things, strikes me with its powerful simplicity. It has taken him a lifetime of work to find a powerful resonance with a single word, or phrase, or briefly sketched context. I have the same feeling about composing.¹¹⁷

Maslanka selected Merwin's "Secrets," which reflects upon the deaths of the speaker's parents, to use as the preface for his symphony because the poem brings to the foreground images that will resonate with listeners in different ways based on their own "deep and varied experiences."¹¹⁸ These images collectively suggest the idea of passage or transition, a theme that recurs throughout Symphony No. 9.

The symphony is so large that I will only discuss portions of two of the movements: the chickadee calls and the setting of "Shall We Gather at the River" in the first movement, and the "Whale Story" and the setting of "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" in the last. It is important, however, to understand the layout of the symphony, so I have provided a chart outlining the piece (see Figure 3), as well as prose descriptions of the second and third movements in between my discussions of the first and fourth movements. The first two movements can be understood as a unit; the musical material introduced in the first movement continues into the second. The short third movement functions as an interlude between the first half of the symphony (the first two movements) and the second half (the last movement).

As can be observed from Figure 3, the four movements of Symphony No. 9 are not typically proportional; however, this is a result of Maslanka's compositional process and not a conscious plan. He allowed the music to happen the way it wanted to happen, although as he

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Maslanka, personal interview with author, Sugar Land, TX, November 23, 2013.

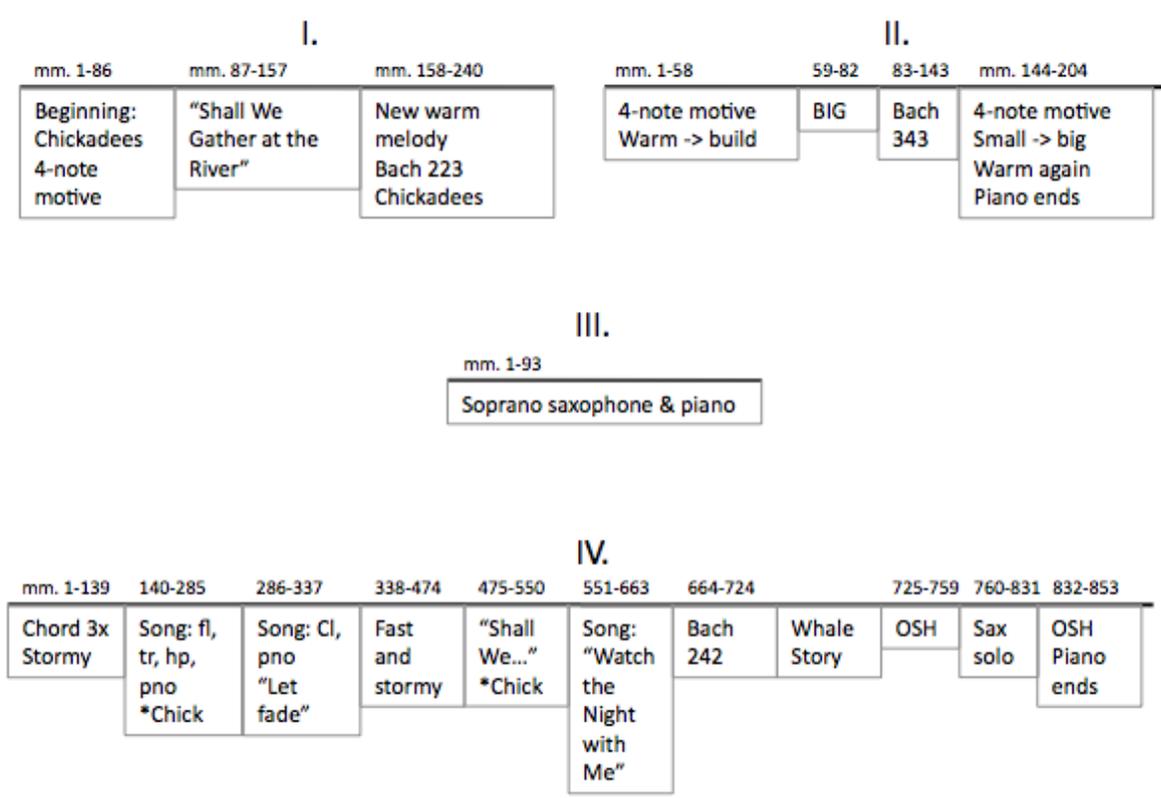


Figure 3. Diagram of Symphony No. 9

composed, he "[listened] intently to the line of it" as it developed.¹¹⁹ This process reflects his idea of focused attention. Maslanka further explained the compositional process for this particular symphony:

The first challenge was to let go of whatever I knew of other people's ninth symphonies, and then to release any expectations that I had. This was not easy to do, and required very specific "clearing" meditations. The next challenge was being patient with the conceiving process. I don't have an intellectually conceived plan when I start working, and have to trust that the piece will, over time, tell me what it wants to be. The initial conceiving process went on for a very long time, about three months. This was a lot longer than this usually takes, and I began seriously to wonder what was going on. I began to realize that I was writing a VERY large piece.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, September 8, 2013.
¹²⁰ Maslanka, e-mail conversation with author, December 27, 2013.

Even though Maslanka intentionally separated his music from the works of other composers while writing his symphony, it is possible to place this work inside the context of other large symphonies. When thinking of gigantic symphonic works, the symphonies of Gustav Mahler immediately come to mind; his Symphony No. 3 is actually approximately the same length as Maslanka's Symphony No. 9. Like Mahler, Maslanka pushes the boundaries of the ensemble in terms of composition length, and although his pieces are generally intended for one-on-a-part playing, the powerful sections of his music lend themselves to doubling, leading to ensembles that rival the size of Mahler's expanded orchestra. There are also obvious parallels to Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. Both Maslanka's and Beethoven's Ninth Symphonies are longer than any of their eight preceding symphonies, and both include new features. Maslanka's readings of "Secrets" and his "Whale Story" recall on a smaller scale Beethoven's addition of vocalists for his choral finale and his use of sections of Friedrich von Schiller's poem "Ode to Joy." Both composers' additions present programmatic connotations that express spiritual messages; Beethoven's use of Schiller's poem "gives an almost religious connotation to joy, a joy that can be found in all of nature, unifies the universe, and binds all mankind together."¹²¹ This message, very similar to the one that Maslanka embraces musically in all three of the symphonies discussed in this thesis, is also conveyed in the readings Maslanka selected for his own Symphony No. 9.

Another aspect of Symphony No. 9 worth noting is the prominence of the piano as a solo voice. Orchestral composers including Ives, Respighi, and Stravinsky have used the piano similarly in symphonic works. While the piano has become a standard instrument in the wind ensemble, it is not often used as a solo instrument within a symphony, especially for the type of

¹²¹ Preston Stedman, *The Symphony*, 2nd. ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), 75.

extended solos Maslanka writes in Symphony No. 9. Maslanka talked about his thoughts regarding his use of the piano:

The piano might be my personal signature in the piece. I think one of the strongest qualities of the Symphony is its intimacy, and the piano is often that single voice, or supporting one or a few instruments. I am not a pianist by training, but I have had a life-long love affair with the instrument.¹²²

The "symphony of songs" quality of the work gives the piano an important role both as a solo instrument and by providing accompaniment.

Shall We Gather at the River

The first movement of the symphony, "Shall We Gather at the River," is 12 minutes in duration and explores two borrowed melodies: Robert Lowry's 1864 hymn "Shall We Gather at the River" and J. S. Bach's chorale melody "I Thank You God for All Your Good Works" (chorale 223). Lowry (1816-1868) was a Baptist who wrote hymns and tunes for the Sunday School movement in American churches.¹²³ "Shall We Gather at the River" goes with the tune "Hanson Place" and was written with "contemplations of heaven and the future life" in mind, making this an appropriate choice for the symphony and its four concepts, especially referring to water and grace.¹²⁴ This movement explores the water concept through the use of "Shall We Gather at the River" as well as the nature concept through the recurring use of a chickadee call. The piece opens with about forty seconds of two-note chickadee calls introduced by the solo piccolo, flute, and trumpet with harmon mute, and joined by solo clarinet and euphonium. The flute and trumpet play together and are answered by the piccolo; the timbre created by blending the flute and muted trumpet has a warbling quality to it that sounds birdlike. However, the

¹²² Ibid. Maslanka also gave the piano an extensive solo role in his Symphony No. 7.

¹²³ Stephen W. Nance, *Sing to the Lord: A Survey of Christian Hymnody* (Shippensburg, PA: Ragged Edge Press, 1995), 120.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

piccolo sounds closest in timbre to the actual chickadee whistle, described as a "simple, pure 2 or 3-note whistled *fee bee*."¹²⁵

Example 19. Opening chickadee calls, mm. 1-11.¹²⁶

Maslanka explained his attraction to the chickadee:

At MacDowell in 1974 I first became aware of the two-note call of the Black-Capped Chickadee. That birdcall was a kind of signal to me, one that sank immediately into the deepest part of my mind. In the forty years since, that call has appeared both as itself, and as a structural feature in melodies and forms, in dozens of pieces. The

¹²⁵ The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, "The Black-Capped Chickadee," All About Birds, http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/black-capped_chickadee/sounds (accessed January 6, 2014).

¹²⁶ David Maslanka, *Symphony No. 9* (New York: Maslanka Press, 2011), 2-3.

most recent is Symphony No. 9, which opens with about a minute of chickadee calls.¹²⁷

When Maslanka left MacDowell taking with him sounds that would enter his future compositions, he joined a tradition of composers that includes Amy Beach, who borrowed the song of the hermit thrush; Marion Bauer, who titled each movement of "From the New Hampshire Woods" after a plant she knew from MacDowell; and Louise Talma, who used bird calls as a "starting place" for composing.¹²⁸

There are further connections to nature in the opening of this piece: similarly to Symphony No. 4, there are sudden appearances of powerful sounds focused in the lower ranged instruments of the band (bass and contrabass clarinets, bassoons and contrabassoon, trombones, euphoniums, tubas, and double bass), bringing to mind the "voice of the earth," although Maslanka does not refer to it as such in this symphony. When I asked him about the "voice of the earth," he explained that it was "strongly there, although that's a term without clear definition. I think 'voice of the earth' might even be foundational for the piece."¹²⁹ Establishing the voice of the earth at the beginning of the symphony, and thus, the beginning of the journey, roots the piece in Maslanka's connection to the natural world. Similar powerful moments return later in the first movement, the second movement, and multiple times in the last. The meditative "nature music" style heard in Symphony No. 3 and Symphony No. 4 is also present in the first movement. As is usual in Maslanka's work, these sections are often juxtaposed with the more powerful sections, as well as stormy, tumultuous ones. Also in this opening section a four-note

¹²⁷ Maslanka, e-mail message to author, April 14, 2013. The chickadee call can also be heard in Maslanka's Symphony No. 7 for wind ensemble.

¹²⁸ For a discussion of Amy Beach and other composers who spent time at the MacDowell Colony see Denise Von Glahn, *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 25-98.

¹²⁹ Maslanka, e-mail conversation with author, December 29, 2013.

motive is introduced that begins with the same descending whole-step interval as the chickadee call. This motive returns throughout the symphony.



Example 20. Four-note motive.¹³⁰

The hymn "Shall We Gather at the River" is first heard in a meditative arrangement about four minutes into the first movement. A solo piano and vibraphone introduce the beginning notes of the hymn's melody among gently rolling arpeggios, creating a relatively free sense of time.



Example 21. First two piano phrases of "Shall We Gather at the River," mm. 87-96.¹³¹

Borrowing from a tradition of musical gestures and nature associations, Maslanka uses arpeggiated phrases to evoke rolling waters, introducing the water concept for the first time in the symphony. Maslanka relates the sound to the "cleansing and life-giving power," and the words to the hymn convey this idea ("Gather with the saints at the river / That flows by the throne of God"). Bell-like percussion punctuate the phrases, and the piano is joined by the solo

¹³⁰ Maslanka, Symphony No. 9.

¹³¹ Ibid., 24-25.

clarinet and soprano saxophone in the third phrase of the melody. This treatment of the hymn is similar to the introduction of "Old Hundred" in the "nature music" section of Symphony No. 4; the melody emerges from a tranquil setting, this time a setting created by the same instrument that introduces the melody. The natural emergence of the hymn represents a connection to Maslanka's meditation process; the hymn appears in the music like he allows ideas to freely and naturally emerge in his meditations. The refrain of the hymn is played by the piano, flute, and saxophones alternating with the muted trumpet.

Between the first and second statements of "Shall We Gather at the River," there is a brief moment in which only the solo piano is heard playing improvisatory arpeggiated figures. These arpeggios are joined by a roll in the snare drum and bass drum, creating a quick and mighty crescendo leading into the second statement. The second statement is played at a powerful *fortissimo*, using most of the band's resources (oboes, clarinets, bass and contrabass clarinets, bassoons, contrabassoon, saxophones, horns, euphoniums, double bass, and piano) and accompanied by the bass drum, but the power quickly fades, even before the end of the statement. Only the woodwinds play the last phrase, which decrescendos into the final statement of the hymn's refrain played in a more traditional gospel style by the solo piano with lush chords and arpeggios, including dominant harmonies. The last phrase is not completed; instead chickadee calls are heard, connecting the hymn with the nature that began the movement (see Example 22).

The "Shall We Gather at the River" section of the first movement is set off from the surrounding music. The last third of the movement introduces a new melody that emerges from a first-inversion B-major chord and is warm and inviting. This key is significant because of the

"foundational energy" Maslanka senses in the "crack between B and C," as heard in the fourth movement of Symphony No. 3.¹³² This melody grows in

The image shows a musical score for piano, measures 148-157. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It shows a piano part with a melodic line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. Measure 148 is marked 'Piano' and 'Ped...'. Measure 152 is marked 'pp'.

Example 22. End of "Shall We Gather at the River" with chickadee calls, mm. 148-57.¹³³

dynamics and texture until the four-note motive from the beginning of the symphony returns, this time scored in the bass and contrabass clarinets, bassoon, contrabassoon, tenor and baritone saxophones, trombones, euphoniums, tubas, double bass, piano, and timpani. In relation to its first introduction, this motive is presented strongly and forcefully, accompanied by ascending sixteenth-note triplet runs in the woodwinds and mallet percussion, creating a wall of sound. It leads into a powerful setting of the Bach chorale "I Thank You God for All Your Good Works" that uses every instrument in the ensemble except for the piano. The use of this chorale, as well as "Shall We Gather at the River" reflects the same evocation of praise that we heard in Symphony No. 4. As the chorale setting ends and the texture fades, all that is heard is distant-sounding, gentle *piano* chickadee calls in the upper register of the piano.

The first three concepts identified by Maslanka (nature, water, and time) are all heard in the first movement, as well as the concept of memory introduced by the preface. The chickadee

¹³² Maslanka, personal interview with author, Sugar Land, TX, November 23, 2013.

¹³³ Ibid., 34.

calls represent the concept of nature, as do the moments that recall the voice of the Earth music; "Shall We Gather at the River" introduces the water concept, especially in the rolling arpeggios in the piano; and the hymn and the Bach chorale together represent time and memory. The movement demonstrates the way these concepts interact; the chickadee calls are heard at the end of "Shall We Gather at the River" and the Bach chorale emerges from the four-note motive derived from the chickadee call. Time and nature are connected in Maslanka's mind; he speaks of how "understanding the way it [the energy of the earth] manifests itself in time and in space is what music-making is all about."¹³⁴ This idea relates to his theory about chorales and hymns reaching back and representing the voices of the many people who have touched them over time.

Now All Lies Under Thee and Fantasia on "I Thank You God"

The second movement, "Now All Lies Under Thee," takes its title from the Bach chorale 343 title. The movement is about 15 minutes long and conveys a more pensive, somber atmosphere than the first movement. It begins where the first movement left off with the solo piano. There are occasional percussion punctuations, including those made by egg shakers and claves, which bring to mind those from the "nature music" section of Symphony No. 4. No other instruments enter until two minutes into the movement, creating a sparse but unhurried atmosphere. Once the winds enter, a warm, embracing sound built of sustained notes in the low woodwinds and low brass provides the foundation for improvisatory figures in the piano and solo horn motives, and for the eventual emergence of a powerful melody. This melody is scored in all of the wind instruments plus double bass and timpani with additional tam-tam accompaniment. This unison scoring and *fortissimo* dynamic level give the melody the power that the last setting of "Old Hundred" had in Symphony No. 4. After this, Maslanka introduces "Now All Lies Under

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Thee" in an arrangement that features the clarinet section and solo harp. The powerful setting of the four-note motive from the first movement returns, this time punctuated by *fortissimo* accents in the bass drum and toms. At the end of the movement, the warm atmosphere previously created by the solo horn returns, drifting away until only the piano is left.

The third movement, "Fantasia on I Thank You God," is a duet for soprano saxophone and piano and is only about five minutes in duration. Much of the melodic material is derived from the Bach chorale introduced in the first movement. The scoring is unusual, however; an entire movement featuring only the saxophone and piano is unexpected in the middle of a symphony for wind ensemble. The scoring relates back to Maslanka's discussion of energy lines and the ways that forceful music can transition to quiet music. Maslanka explains that at this point in the symphony, these two players are "required to take the full burden of the expression of that power."¹³⁵ The choice of the saxophone is significant; for Maslanka the saxophone is a special instrument. He explained to Nathan Keedy that he finds himself able to sing through the saxophone's sound due to its "quality of a human voice" and its "wide variety of colors and big intensity of emotional expression."¹³⁶ This movement conveys a more joyous atmosphere than the previous one with the saxophone singing in the manner that Maslanka is known for. Its short duration gives it the function of an interlude before the massive fourth movement.

Fantasia on O Sacred Head Now Wounded

The 40-minute fourth movement, "Fantasia on O Sacred Head Now Wounded," is a symphony of songs within a symphony of songs; it makes up almost half of the symphony in

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Nathan Andrew Keedy, "An Analysis of David Maslanka's Chamber Music for Saxophone," (DA diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2004), 225. Maslanka's solo and chamber music contributions to the saxophone repertoire are highly valued by the saxophone community.

duration. The chorale "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" (Maslanka uses Bach's setting no. 80) is a central feature of the movement; however, it is not heard until the last seven minutes. Leading up to this point, Maslanka takes the listener on a journey that includes a new setting of "Shall We Gather at the River," the introduction of his original song "Watch the Night With Me" (set for flute, trumpet, harp, and piano), and the Bach chorale no. 242, "Soul, How Have You Become So Unhappy" (set for flute, trumpet, saxophone, harp, and piano). The arrival point of the journey is marked by the reading of Maslanka's own "Whale Story," which precedes the setting of "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." The "Whale Story" and the setting of the chorale represent the culmination of the four concepts identified by Maslanka (time, water, nature, and grace).

The journey comprising the second half of the symphony takes the listener through a variety of moods, including those created by several "songs." These sections resemble songs in their lyrical qualities and often feature solo instruments accompanied by the piano, much like the third movement. The immense fourth movement requires patience; the song sections are unhurried and often create a meditative atmosphere. Maslanka explains that these songs "tend to be very discrete sections...[that] are not even necessarily connected to each other thematically."¹³⁷ What does unite this movement is the idea of the journey, as well as the four concepts identified by Maslanka. He explains that the line connecting each section of the last movement (and the symphony as a whole) together comes from the energy of the music rather than the thematic material. Maslanka used the word "revelations" to describe the musical ideas encountered throughout the piece, and this idea is especially evident in the last movement due to his use of silences between the song sections.¹³⁸ He expressed a hope that the music and the silent moments between "open a place of contemplation in the listener so that when [the music]

¹³⁷ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, September 8, 2013.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

arrives at its own silence, that is the deepest point of contemplation."¹³⁹ This point is the "dream space."

The journey's beginning (or its restarting after the third movement interlude) is marked by a bell-like sound that is surrounded by serpentine triplets in the low woodwinds, horns, euphonium, and mallet percussion. The bell-like sound is an interval of a fifth, B and F-sharp, and is heard three times, reinforcing Maslanka's sense of the importance of the key of B major. The chiming quality of the chord, created by a combination of timbres including the upper woodwinds, trumpets, trombones, piano, crotales, vibraphone, and chimes, as well as the declamatory nature of the sound suggests a herald, and the ominous atmosphere of the swarming low instruments intimates that this chord is a warning. This first section is stormy and foreboding; it continues unrelenting for the first three minutes of the piece until the atmosphere changes and leads into a passage of descending notes that decrescendo. Instruments gradually drop out until only the piano playing in its lowest register remains.

The journey continues through a series of song sections, each ending with a fermata to allow space for contemplation (see Figure 3 for an outline of the movement). Some notable features of this movement include the return of the chickadee call within the melody in the first song section and a full band restatement of "Shall We Gather at the River" in the third song section. This is the most powerful and triumphant statement of the hymn heard in the symphony; however, the last phrase is played by a greatly reduced instrumentation of only solo oboe and soprano saxophone, answered by soli clarinets. The solo piano, joined by the flute, plays the refrain of the hymn before the chickadee call is brought back in the piano and timpani. Again, this song section ends with a silence—a particularly long one this time and the first to include a

¹³⁹ Ibid.

fermata over a rest. Before the beginning of the next section, Maslanka instructs that the music should "patiently come to rest."¹⁴⁰

The fourth song section is Maslanka's original song "Watch the Night with Me," which he scores for flute, trumpet, harp, and piano. The solo piano introduces this pastoral melody, punctuated by chickadee calls in the crotales and plucked harp. Maslanka's exploration of this song lasts about seven minutes, making this one of the longer song sections in the symphony. After another long silence, the next song section begins, this one a meditation on the Bach chorale melody "Soul, How Have You Become So Unhappy" (No. 242) scored for the flute, trumpet, saxophone, harp, and piano. The solo saxophone is once again prominently featured in this section, and its melancholy sound is particularly fitting for an answer to the chorale melody. This is one of the most beautiful and pensive moments of the symphony. As the solo fades away, Maslanka requests that time is taken between this song and a reprise of the chorale melody, played by flute and trumpet with cup mute. As the piano echoes the final notes of the melody, an extended silence unfolds, preparing the arrival point of the journey.

At this point, Maslanka's "Whale Story" is read with no musical accompaniment:

*Why should God have incarnated only in human form? (A brief story about whales). In the 60 million years or so the great whales have had, both on land and in the oceans, there have been numerous, and in fact, innumerable great beings among them. In fact, it turns out now that all the great whales are either highly developed bodhisattvas or Buddhas. And in fact, it turns out that the Earth's oceans are a Buddha Pure Land, and when you pass from this existence it is to be hoped for rebirth as a god or a great whale. In fact, it turns out that the Pure Land oceans of the Earth are a training ground for Buddhas across all space and time. We are loved by the great whales, and they, serenely riding the waves of birth and death, will die for us so that we may come to our enlightenment. The end.*¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Maslanka, Symphony No. 9, 153.

¹⁴¹ Maslanka, Symphony No. 9, 164.

This story resulted from a Buddhist meditation retreat that Maslanka attended in 2009. He explained that between a series of group meditation sessions, he took twenty minutes to write down the story, which "struck [him] as oddly powerful."¹⁴² Although he did not originally intend to use it in a symphony, the story has since been used in one other composition, a piece for alto saxophone and piano called *Tone Studies*. In both that piece and the symphony, the story is connected with Bach's "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." Maslanka explained, "I made the association between the death of Christ on the cross with the willingness of the great whales [in his story] to sacrifice themselves for our life."¹⁴³ He admits that his story is a fantasy, but he believes that "there's a lot of power in it."¹⁴⁴

The impact of the story is evident when it is followed by Maslanka's peaceful and ethereal setting of "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." Scored for clarinets and harp, the harp alone takes the soprano voice of the chorale. These combined timbres take on an otherworldly atmosphere (see Example 23). The chorale is played in a meditative and unhurried manner, each phrase ending on a fermata with breath marks indicated between each phrase. This creates a fluid and unhurried sense of time similar to the "nature music" section of Symphony No. 4. As whales do not sing in human metrical time, this approach to the rhythm of the piece is appropriate; however, it is also consistent with Maslanka's meditative style of music that suggests his dream space, which is appropriate in itself as he arrived at the "Whale Story" through meditation. The chorale melody is then developed and intertwined with new melodic material in a saxophone solo. Although Maslanka explained that he had no conscious intention to use or imitate actual whale song, this setting does recall the songs of the humpback whale that were recorded in the 1960s and became popular in the 1970s, especially once whales have been referenced in the

¹⁴² Maslanka, phone conversation with author, September 8, 2013.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

symphony. The vocal quality of the saxophone is present here, and it is not a stretch to draw a connection between the saxophone timbre and whale sounds, especially in the range Maslanka uses. The final setting of "O Sacred Head" is for clarinets and piano alone. Two final notes in the piano, an E and a D-sharp, end the piece, recalling the key of B major.

725 **inward, reticent** ♩ = 68

Clarinet 1, 2

Clarinet 3

Harp

728 *slowing . . .*

Example 23. First two phrases of "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," mm. 725-31.¹⁴⁵

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¹⁴⁵ Maslanka, Symphony No. 9, 164.

metrical time, this approach to the rhythm of the piece is appropriate; however, it is also consistent with Maslanka's meditative style of music that suggests his dream space, which is appropriate in itself as he arrived at the "Whale Story" through meditation. The chorale melody is then developed and intertwined with new melodic material in a saxophone solo. Although Maslanka explained that he had no conscious intention to use or imitate actual whale song, this setting does recall the songs of the humpback whale that were recorded in the 1960s and became popular in the 1970s, especially once whales have been referenced in the symphony. The vocal quality of the saxophone is present here, and it is not a stretch to draw a connection between the saxophone timbre and whale sounds, especially in the range Maslanka uses. The final setting of "O Sacred Head" is for clarinets and piano alone. Two final notes in the piano, and E and a D-sharp, end the piece, recalling the key of B major.

The connection Maslanka draws between the whales and "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" is rooted in his belief that divine energy is "manifested in every living organism."¹⁴⁶ He explained that this idea "broadens the whole understanding of the nature of universal life," and is, in his opinion, "*the* foundation point of the entire symphony."¹⁴⁷ In a later discussion Maslanka clarified that he believes there is "no real dividing line between what we call inanimate and what we call animate, between what we call physical and what we call energetic...it's all one system. We happen to be manifestations of a fundamental, whatever that might be."¹⁴⁸ Thus, water and air stem from the same energy source as living organisms. This understanding of universal energy almost certainly emerges from Maslanka's own connection with the natural world. His perception of a universal religion based on this fundamental energy is made evident in his combining of Buddhist and Christian theology, explaining that all religious faiths have some

¹⁴⁶ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, September 8, 2013.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Italics reflect the composer's spoken emphasis.

¹⁴⁸ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, January 24, 2014.

sort of notion of universal energy at their core.¹⁴⁹ This sense of universal spirituality is an evolution of the idea expressed by the final setting of "Old Hundred" in Symphony No. 4.

The "Whale Story" and "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" together form the culmination of the symphony and unite Maslanka's four concepts. Nature and water come together in the "Whale Story," and time and grace are represented in the chorale and its connection to the whales. Whales are some of the oldest living beings on this planet; by connecting the chorale to whales, Maslanka reinforces his idea of these chorales and hymns being a part of the Earth's culture; he suggests a universal culture for the planet as a whole that does not distinguish between humans and non-human others. The concept of grace is made clear at this point through Maslanka's connection of his imagined sacrifice of the whales and the Biblical sacrifice of Christ.

With the connection between whales and Christ, the idea of environmental consciousness emerges. If whales are willing to sacrifice themselves for us, does Maslanka believe that we have a duty in turn to protect them? Like the similarity of his music to whale song, suggesting a desire to protect the whales had no part in Maslanka's conscious compositional decisions. In a conversation about my first impression of the symphony, I pointed out that the "Whale Story" and the music surrounding it could easily be used to spread a message of environmental consciousness. Maslanka responded, "The messages that might be in the music are far more and far different than I know consciously, and how they are received is going to be with a tremendous variety of responses among people."¹⁵⁰ As with the poem that begins the piece, this symphony contains many different messages based on the listener's own perspective and

¹⁴⁹ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, September 8, 2013.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

experiences; a listener hearing a message of environmental consciousness would not be incorrect.

Like Symphonies No. 3 and 4, the common thread in this symphony is Maslanka's meditative connection to the natural world. On the surface, the chickadee calls and "Whale Story" immediately help listeners make a connection to nature; when delving into Maslanka's use of chorales, especially the pairing of "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" with his "Whale Story," his personal meditative connection is clear. Perhaps his most meditative of the three works, Symphony No. 9 reflects a manifestation of a fundamental source from which all life stems. This belief suggests a message of universal spirituality.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

David Maslanka's Symphonies 3, 4, and 9 function effectively as case studies through which to view the composer's connection to the natural world. Aspects of his Missoula, Montana environment can be heard in all three of these pieces, especially Symphonies 3 and 4, as well as natural sounds from the MacDowell Colony in Symphony No. 9. Beyond specific landscapes, influences of Maslanka's belief in a universal spirituality and his meditative connection with all living things past and present permeate his music, mainly through his use of Bach chorales and traditional American hymns, which he associates with his idea of life force. Symphony No. 3 is the only one of the three that does not use borrowed materials, but it instead is tied to Maslanka's sense of life force through its connection with Gary Green's American Indian heritage. Overall, these symphonies present a variety of musical ideas that have become part of Maslanka's style and showcase what his music is valued for today.

When contextualizing Maslanka's use of borrowed music materials, especially the chorales and hymns that bring religious undertones into his music, a particular American school of thought comes to mind: the Transcendentalists, who believed that God resided in nature.¹⁵¹ Transcendentalist belief emerged simultaneously with a group of mid-nineteenth-century American painters that became known as the Hudson River School; their paintings "[reflected] the British aesthetic theory of the Sublime in nature."¹⁵² In her discussion of Charles Ives's treatment of hymns and nature in the third of his *Three Places in New England*, "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" (1921), Denise Von Glahn refers to the tradition that Ives joined as one that

¹⁵¹ Russell Goodman, "Transcendentalism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/transcendentalism/> (accessed January 26, 2014).

¹⁵² Kevin J. Avery, "The Hudson River School," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd_hurs.htm (accessed January 26, 2014).

"celebrated nature and the American place as something uniquely sacred."¹⁵³ This idea is present in Maslanka's music, especially in the most powerful settings of the hymns, like the final setting of "Old Hundred" in Symphony No. 4.

Maslanka's use of hymn tunes further places him in the context of early-twentieth-century American composers who used such songs to give their works a sense of "rootedness."¹⁵⁴ As Beth Levy explains, among these composers was Virgil Thomson, whose "vocabulary for America's middle landscape was made up primarily of Protestant hymn tunes."¹⁵⁵ Thomson's use of hymn tunes in works including *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* (1926-28) and the music for the films *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937) provides listeners with a sense of the turn-of-the-century American landscape and the people who settled and worked the land. The hymn tunes used in Thomson's film scores help to convey the sense of responsibility these people felt towards the land they lived on; this message relates to the nineteenth-century understanding of the sacred American landscape. By using American hymn tunes, Maslanka places his music in a larger American musical tradition that includes Ives and Thomson, as well as Amy Beach, Roy Harris, Aaron Copland, and many others. Unlike Thomson's music and the paintings of the Hudson River School artists, however, Maslanka's musical manifestations of the relationship between nature and the divine are not a conscious decision on his part; instead, they grow from his meditative connection with the land and his perception of its energies.¹⁵⁶

One of the ways we can observe this connection with the land in Maslanka's work is in his propensity toward huge, powerful settings of melodies. These settings embody his perception

¹⁵³ Denise Von Glahn, *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 75.

¹⁵⁴ Levy, *Frontier Figures*, 179.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Although Maslanka mentioned reading *Walden* many years ago and admitted a familiarity with Thoreau's ideas, he said that he has never returned to Thoreau as a source (phone conversation with the author, January 24, 2014).

of the stronger earth energies, including the energy he feels when he is out in the open plains of Montana. This is the energy heard at the end of Symphony No. 4, representing his "shout for the joy of life"; other moments include the powerful settings of chorale melodies and "Shall We Gather at the River" in Symphony No. 9 and to some extent the final instance of the "Golden Light" song in the fourth movement of Symphony No. 3.

The wind ensemble is well suited to deliver these forceful moments. When playing with or conducting the ensemble during one of these passages, it is possible to actually feel the energy Maslanka aims to capture in his music. We feel the air move. The force of 40-60 wind and percussion instruments all playing at intense dynamic levels is a physical sensation as well as an aural one that can be felt through the vibrating stage floor. Even from an audience member's perspective, the energy manifests itself as a wave of sound that can be felt as well as heard.

The more peaceful side of Maslanka's meditative process is also audible in all three of these symphonies, most prominently in the second movement of Symphony No. 3, the "nature music" section of Symphony No. 4, and the unhurried journey from song to song in the last movement of Symphony No. 9. The chamber-like sections of these three symphonies allow glimpses into Maslanka's "dream space," which often include silences as a space for the listener's reflection. Applying Maslanka's practice of "focused attention" when listening to his music opens new possibilities for understanding meaning. Even if the listener has no experience in meditation, simply paying attention with an open mind allows an enhanced connection with Maslanka's music (or any music). For Maslanka, this is what meditation is: "it is no more than the capacity to pay attention in a focused way."¹⁵⁷ These thoughts are similar to those of Pauline Oliveros, a composer contemporary to Maslanka who in addition to her career as a composer and virtuoso accordionist has developed a practice called "Deep Listening," which she defines as

¹⁵⁷ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, August 16, 2013.

"listening in every possible way to every thing possible to hear no matter what you are doing. Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, of nature, of one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds."¹⁵⁸ It seems that these similar ideas about the power of this sort of focused listening are the products of composers who understand their process on a deep enough level that they are able to share both the process and its benefits with their listeners.

In Maslanka's case, this sort of meditative focus is what helps him perceive earth energies, both powerful and peaceful ones. By translating these energies into musical ideas, Maslanka makes them accessible to his listeners. He often explains that the most important thing about his music (and any music) is what the experience of listening to and performing his music offers people. He believes that when we engage deeply with music, a "continuing growing process" occurs that opens and changes something in us.¹⁵⁹ The three symphonies discussed in this thesis present different topics for consideration, including the lack of present-day contact with earth energies for a large number of Westerners, the power of those energies as manifested in the "voice of the earth," and our connection to both living organisms and non-living things.

While Maslanka insists that his music contains no conscious messages relating to environmental awareness, the topics he brings up (both overtly in his program notes and more subtly in the music itself) are relevant to the field of ecomusicology. In the colloquy in a Summer 2011 issue of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, titled "Ecomusicology: Ecocriticism and Musicology," several scholars suggested definitions of ecomusicology. Two of these definitions are particularly relevant to the topic explored in this thesis. Denise Von Glahn writes, "Ecomusicology explores relationships to the natural world and questions how those relationships imprint themselves on music and scholarship . . . how select composers understand

¹⁵⁸ Von Glahn, *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World*, 103.

¹⁵⁹ Maslanka, phone conversation with author, January 24, 2014.

the essential dynamic between humanity and the rest of nature."¹⁶⁰ The last part of this definition is important; Maslanka's music embodies and represents both his understanding of his role in and connection to the natural world.

David Grimley suggests a definition of ecomusicology based on a reevaluation of the term "landscape" that takes aural components into consideration: "Ecomusicology's revised task is to address the affective qualities of particular landscapes, to examine the physical and emotional responses that music induces in listeners and how they shape our view of the world."¹⁶¹ This definition relates to Maslanka's musical depictions of the Montana landscape. Perhaps a better way to understand the influence of this landscape is to accept the composer's claim that his music captures the essence of the land's energy, which allows listeners to connect to the land on a deeper level.

Symphonies 3, 4, and 9 offer a sounding pathway into Maslanka's way of thinking, as well as the ways the natural world can influence composers. Maslanka's connection to the natural world permeates his music and results in powerful works imbued with a wealth of spiritual and environmental meaning. While Maslanka's music is available to various interpretation by individual listeners, the composer's willingness to share his own beliefs is valuable as regards understanding both his and, perhaps more importantly, our own connections to the world of which we are a part.

¹⁶⁰ Denise Von Glahn, "American Women and the Nature of Identity," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 403.

¹⁶¹ David Grimley, "Music, Landscape, Attunement: Listening to Sibelius's *Tapiola*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 395.

APPENDIX A

"SECRETS" (W. S. MERWIN)

Time unseen time our continuing fiction
however we tell it eludes our dear hope and our reason

that is a pure condition of the story
and wherever our parents came from is another century

an age which they themselves could barely remember
but carried with them as their own year after year

hidden away hardly looked at until the secret
without their noticing had faded all the details white

for my mother it came to be the lace veil covering
the front of the baby carriage where she was being

wheeled through the Garden of the Gods when her parents were
still alive as she told about it later

and for my father it was the glare bleaching the surface
of the river as he sat under the white blaze

of summer in the rowboat tied about the waterline
where he was allowed to hold the oars and imagine

leaving did he see any farther when he was
dying in summer after midnight and before the solstice

coughing saying he was not afraid and was the veil still there
when my mother turned from her own garden one evening that same year

telling a friend on the telephone that she was going
to get a little rest now and her glasses were lying

apart from her on the floor not more than an hour
later when a neighbor pushed the door open and found her

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Phone Conversation with David Maslanka - August 16, 2013, 10:00am

DM: Hello.

KS: Hi, Dr. Maslanka, this is Kate Sutton.

DM: Hi, Kate. So, what's happening with you?

KS: Well, I have my list of questions and I'm ready to go whenever you are. Oh, I guess have to ask out loud if it's ok for me to record this conversation?

DM: Yes, it is.

KS: Okay, wonderful. Well, how are you? How's your morning been so far?

DM: Well, it's [...].¹⁶² Where are you right now?

KS: I'm in Tallahassee, Florida.

DM: Well, okay. Very different world. Here there's sunshine and no rain, beautiful days.

KS: That sounds really nice...it's been raining here on and off all week.

DM: [laughs] Wonderful. So, the scope of your paper? What are you doing?

KS: Well, I think a typical master's thesis here is about 80 pages. [Tell him about this past semester and what I was most interested in - musical borrowing, Montana, landscape; Symphonies 3, 4, and 9, each will be a different chapter.

DM: Well, each is a whole thing in itself. You've chosen a lot to think about here. So, okay, how would you like to start?

KS: Well, I have one pretty basic question that I think is important from a terminology standpoint. The "wind ensemble"/"wind symphony"/"concert band" labels...they seem to be used pretty inconsistently in the band world...

DM: Oh, definitely.

KS: So I've been trying to come up with a way to just define everything right away for people who aren't familiar with that terminology. So I wanted to ask you what your own personal working definition of a wind ensemble is.

DM: Well, it has some flexibility. First off, there are those terms, and there are some things called wind orchestras, which are no different from the bands and wind ensembles, just that they've chosen to use that word. And distinguishing between bands and

¹⁶² The recording quality of my first two phone interviews was poor, and I have indicated any moments in the interview that I was unable to hear with a bracketed ellipsis. Bracketed words rely on my memory rather than direct transcription.

wind ensembles, initially when Frederick Fennell developed the modern idea of a wind ensemble, he chose orchestral winds with single players on a part, so that started the new way of thinking about arrangements of wind instruments as opposed to the military band. There were pieces written in former times that were written for wind instruments, for instance Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, for one, which is for a specific number of instruments, it's a small ensemble, so it fits that definition of wind ensemble. Over time people have worked through various sizes of ensemble under the heading of wind ensemble, from Fennell's beginning with, I don't know how many, probably let's say an ensemble numbering in the 20s. The wind ensemble concept might extend up to 50 players, so most modern wind ensembles carry probably that many players. And in that you then have a fair amount of doubling, there'll be six or seven clarinets, there'll be extra trumpets or horns or brass, maybe two euphoniums or two tubas, so it's a very flexible definition. It seems to go in a kind of wave, so that the music that was composed say in the 1950s and 60s for the smaller wind ensembles, people began to want the bigger sound on occasion, so you might put more instruments, and other composers would hear that and like that and write for more instruments, so then the ensembles were getting bigger. So you can see there is that issue. Once you get past about 50 players, you really are looking at things called bands. I know that in Europe, for instance, they don't do wind ensemble nearly as much as we do. The standards would be 80 to 90 piece bands, or bigger ensembles of up to 120. Is this too much information?

KS: No, no, this is great.

DM: But for me, it's been a variety of efforts. Symphony No. 4, for instance, was in my first thinking about it written for individual players, one on each part. But the evolution of performance of that piece has been...well, it works well with a section of clarinets, so that's commonly what is done. I just had performances of Symphony No. 4 in Europe this summer, where the bands often use a cello section, so people were asking me if I was willing to write a cello part for the piece. In my mind there are two basic categories, and those are concert pieces for wind ensemble, things like symphonies, where the instruments in those cases can do well with larger groupings, [...] and then there are the concertos. For me, they are always smaller ensembles, strictly one on a part. My most recent completed piece is for cello and 19 players, winds, brass, and percussion, cello, bass, piano and harp, so it's specific as opposed to the other kind of flexibility. So that's a very broad narrative of thought...if you wanted to make a definition you may have to simply write a paragraph to say, well, this is how this thing works.

KS: So far I have a paragraph about Fennell's wind ensemble. It's interesting because I've always been a part of the band world and played in bands and taken band literature classes, and now to take that outside to musicology and try to explain something that I just sort of understand, but don't understand well enough to put into words...

DM: Well, now you're digging into it to find that level of understanding. So bringing it to musicologists...do you know what your interest is in doing this, what your hope is, what your intention is?

KS: Well...there aren't very many musicologists studying contemporary band music. I mean, you have Sousa and Gilmore and that era, but not much, if anything...it's all being done by band directors and music educators. So it's this whole world of music that's being overlooked by musicologists.

DM: So, are you attempting to become a musicologist [who studied band music]?

KS: It's fun...band music has been really important to me since I was 11 and I like sharing it with other people.

DM: Well, I think that's a very, very useful attitude to take. People have been concerned/worried/upset, and so on, that over the years that band music has just been seen as a very distant and poor relation to any other kind of music, and a lot has been done to try to bring wind music to the attention of the...what is seen as the kind of music that people who do orchestral music and play orchestral instruments, and so on...to have it be seen as part of the grand tradition of Western music instead of this aberration, which is [...] in the form of military bands. And I think that maybe those first steps were taken by Frederick Fennell back in the 1950s for exactly those reasons. The idea of the wind ensemble as being a really [...] musical ensemble was sort of the intent to bring this music into that sense of being real music, not to be dismissed by critics. What's happened over time is that - well, first I want to tell you a little story. I was a graduate student studying H. Owen Reed at Michigan State University and he told us very seriously at our composition seminar that we were "serious composers" and as such were allowed to write one piece for band. But if you write more than one piece for band, you will no longer be a serious composer. Well, he himself broke that rule...he wrote maybe nine pieces. But however, what has happened is that people have gotten interested in band. And composers have gotten interested because bands play their music, and we now have generations of composers who have come up through bands and hearing bands play well. Now there's a huge quantity of music that has been written and continues to be written for bands. Young composers no longer experience that sense of stigma, either for themselves or about the

band. It represents opportunity and there are some really fine ensembles. So, the other end of it is that music for wind ensemble and bands reaches a very different audience than orchestral music. People who pay to go to hear professional orchestras are going to hear a certain level of modern music, but mostly they're listening to older music. People who go to wind ensemble or band concerts are most often people who don't normally go to concerts, they go because their kids are in the band. So you have a general public audience, which is experiencing this music at a grassroots level without pretense, and it can be very powerfully moving at that level. What I've discovered over a very long time is that there exists a deep-rooted appreciation and desire for good music for wind band, and there's a lot happening in the whole world around the wind band movement. It may be somewhat out of sight as far as musicologists are concerned, but this is frankly it's not in the corner if you know where to look. It simply emerges. Not that you have to make it emerge—it *is* there. It will become quite powerfully visible—it already is. There are so many very fine bands in the world. I was just made aware last month of the World Band Competition that takes place in Kerkrade, Netherlands, every year, I think it is, or every other year. Do you know about this?

KS: I may have come across it, but I'm not familiar.

DM: Well, they have bands come from all over the world to this competition. It's really interesting, we have our kind of noses down here in the United States into what we do, there's no real sense of what the rest of the world is doing. But there are some wonderful, wonderful bands performing. I'll give you one name, this is a Spanish band that played my fourth symphony at the end of July at the Kerkrade Festival. The band is called Banda de Lalín. Just look them up, see what you find, listen to what they do. It's an amazing thing. So, okay, let's move on. Hope that's useful.

KS: It's always interesting to hear different perspectives about this. I was also reading a lot about *A Child's Garden of Dreams* this past spring—I know it wasn't your first piece for wind ensemble, but it seems to be the one that grabbed everyone's attention in the band world. Did that piece change the way you viewed the ensemble at all?

DM: Oh, yeah, of course, this whole grand evolution began with that piece. Well, I was a band player, I started life as a clarinetist. I played mostly in bands, some orchestra in high school and college, but mostly it was band experience. When I first wanted to write a large ensemble piece, my first choice was wind ensemble and not orchestra for my graduate work focus. The first piece was a concerto for piano, winds, and percussion, and that got performed by Frederick Fennell and the Eastman Wind Ensemble. John Paynter was the only other one to express interest in the piece. And

from that performance he asked me to compose a piece, and that was the *Child's Garden of Dreams* piece. So to have a premiere performance by John Paynter and the Northwestern Wind Ensemble was, for a young composer, a fabulous experience. I mean, my first performance was by the Eastman Wind Ensemble and Frederick Fennell...astonishing. So, yeah...the second one by Paynter and Northwestern Wind Ensemble - that's not a bad start. It opened up a lot of possibilities with other ensembles. I had [...] tried to do this from my own background and my own interest, and to have these really powerful ensembles play my music was a huge boost for my thinking about this sort of audience.

KS: So the next thing I wanted to talk about was sort of a follow-up from the email you sent me in April when I asked about MacDowell, and you said that there was a special energy there and it was similar to the energy in Montana and you also mentioned that New York City was just as powerful. So I wondered if there were any other places that stood out along with those.

DM: Well, I have a particular response to place and earth energy. Let me ask, do you have places that are powerful to you?

KS: Yes.

DM: When you're there you have a feeling that this is a very strong place. There's a lot of speculation about earth energy and magnetic fields and all that kind of stuff and I'm not able to talk well in those terms or even to make sense of those terms, but I'd like to say simply that there is a quality of energy in certain places which is very focused, and I happen to be sensitive to it. I think I've always been sensitive to probably any place that I would go, if I stayed long enough I would feel the energy of a certain place very strongly. One of the first things I do every time I travel, every place I go is to take a long walk, specifically to find the energy of that place, to just become part of it. And there's a connection which happens - I'm struggling with words here, because these are not easy to talk about; I don't know what the right words are - well, I can give you some descriptions. In this program note I wrote for the fourth symphony about the sense of feeling the power of the land while simply driving through western Montana and Idaho, and suddenly feeling the impulse to sing that came rising through me, that's just a real experience of the place. Well, I've lived here in Western Montana now for 23 years, most of it at exactly the same spot, and there is a quality here of... connection to the Earth. I don't know, I'm kind of fumbling for words here. You asked a good question.

KS: I mean, I know what you mean...I have been struggling to put it into words, too. My advisor writes about music and place and she is really good at making me think about what I mean in words.

DM: Well, let's hold that thought. What other kinds of questions do you have? And maybe we'll come around to opening a better answer.

KS: Well, with No. 3 and 4 you have Montana mentioned in the program notes, but not with Symphony No. 9. And I wondered since you're still living there and it's a big part of your life, are there elements of Montana in that work?

DM: Well, always, yes, everything comes out of this place. What you're getting into, and I think I'm quite hesitant here, because what you're starting to inch toward is all the work of what I call meditation as it relates to music making. And this is just a foundational area of what I do. It's...oh, I have a small sense of fatigue here of having to think [laughs] of what I want to say about it. Let me ask you, have you gleaned any notion of my meditative work from what you've read and what you've studied so far, do you have any questions or thoughts about it?

KS: Well, I think I've read almost everything now, the interview transcripts and your chapter in *Composers on Composing for Band* and that especially was very helpful. I don't meditate myself, and I always have such a hard time sort of removing myself from myself, I guess.

DM: A very simple definition of meditation is paying attention. And that's it, two words. I hesitate here because meditation has a sort of aura of mysticism with it, and it is no more than the capacity to pay attention in a focused way. Does that resonate with you at all?

KS: Do you pay attention to...

DM: Everything.

KS: Even your own thoughts?

DM: Yes. So, for instance, you have found a particular focus in music—what's your instrument?

KS: Clarinet.

DM: Clarinet. Okay, so clearly you're a good enough player to have gone on in music to be doing what you're doing. The quality of focused attention when playing the clarinet, the practice sessions that you've been through and continue to go through, the quality of focus that's required in order to play well, to make a good tone, to play in an ensemble, these are highly developed qualities of focused attention. Does that make sense to you?

KS: Yes. And writing, as well, for me.

DM: One of the things that I can say to you is that [...] there is a sense of being immediately present in a sharply focused thought that you're working on, and everything else might fade into the background, something you're not concerned about [...] presence or of a mental problem that might exist, you're not thinking about

anything else except for the thought that is right in front of you, is that correct?

KS: Right.

DM: So that's it, that's focused attention, and it is a form of meditation. What happens when you do that is that you are asking by your simple presence of attention—you're not asking anything directly—you are asking for a direct connection to your unconscious and for an idea to form. And so you're opening conscious mind to all the capacities of your entire system, and that includes all the capacities of your unconscious mind, and that part of you is directly and immediately a universal thing. It is not just you as your separate body; it is you as participant and part of something universal. Now, in science, who knows where ideas come from, but insights happen because you are focused that way. Suddenly an idea about something will come, which is absolutely direct, and you'll recognize it as true as its general kind of nature. And that's the product of this kind of meditative work. So composing is exactly the same way. What I discovered myself, and this is the practice of many years, is how to remain conscious of that effect, conscious of paying attention, and of directing that consciousness in very specific ways as opposed to myself waiting and hoping something will happen. I have trained myself to direct my consciousness to enter into what I would call dream space or unconsciousness and to be able to explore. This is directly related to the things about earth energy and about place. Okay, so before I go into all that thought—did what I just said make sense to you?

KS: Yes, it reminds me of the things I read about *A Child's Garden of Dreams*.

DM: Yes. Okay. And with your own experience, you can understand?

KS: I guess...when I get into the zone, I guess, and when I lose track of time and just get absorbed with what I'm doing.

DM: Yes, that's correct. And this is a very powerful form of thinking and being, which plays directly into the category of meditation. So let's take another step in the idea of meditation. Once you understand that meditation is about focused paying attention, you can then develop that as a tool to pay attention in various ways. Now one of them, for instance, is to be able to clear your mind of whatever you're thinking about and simply to be, as opposed to, say, thinking about... You're not thinking about anything, but still wide awake. That's what it's all about—completely wide awake, but nothing human [...]. Can you conceive that idea?

KS: That's the one that's more difficult for me.

DM: Alright. But there is that potential. I'll just describe it a little bit to you. One of the things I've worked on over the years is the

idea of clearing my mind. I do a lot of walking, so to start a walk and to think, "Well, I want to think about something [...] I want to clear my mind," and to realize that my mind is a jumble, there's a lot going on, sort of like stepping into a little hornet's nest. You probably recognize the feeling. And, okay, how do you get into this, what do you do? To try to attack the whole thing is impossible; it just doesn't work. The way I'm going about it was to attempt to banish the first thought that came to mind—whatever it was, it could be trivial, it could be that I had toast for breakfast. First thought, whatever it is, I focus on that thought, and then I put it on a mental balloon and watch it float away over the horizon and—gone. And then whatever was underneath that [...] I identify that thought, it might be something else, how you're feeling, cross or grumpy or happy or whatever, identify the thought. Let it go on its balloon, watch it travel away. Next thought will arise. Next one, and suddenly you may find yourself with a deeper thought of some larger concern which you know was immediately gripping you, but it's in there. Somebody that you're concerned about, a friend or a relative who's having trouble of some sort, and you recognize your deep concern for that person, and then you put that concern on a balloon and watch it float away, and it may come back at you because it's such a fundamental thought. But you focus and you allow that to go over the horizon until it stays there. And you're walking at the same time, continuing this process of identifying thoughts until you feel fairly cleared and you pretty much don't have any thoughts left to come up. And at that point—and I do a little trick in my mind—at that point, watching myself begin my walk (and I like to go back and pretend that I can see myself starting my walk again) and I would rapidly see myself catch up to myself until the two images of myself are walking [...] and see myself catching myself suddenly coinciding. And in that instance I would think, "I'm free." And that means that at that instance that I am not beholden to any of my thoughts or to anyone else for anything. And at that moment, it is possible simply to enjoy that space because it amounts to a small mental vacation. You can imagine that, though. You can imagine that that is how that might feel, and the sense of lightness is simply being, and simply being in that place of ignoring a few thoughts, simply being alive, walking and directly perceiving the things that are around you without thinking so much. There's never any perfect in this, but you can make serious progress doing this. [Talks about how he can do this in places with a lot of noise, but it's easier without distractions.] This starts how meditation works with my composing because once I've arrived at that particular spot where my mind is clear and not thinking about anything, I can then pose a question; I can say, "Show me something I need to know about the person I'm writing

this piece of music for or show me something about myself that I need to know before I start writing this piece of music. Show me something I need to know about the music itself." I can ask one or all of these questions, and let's just ask one at a time, say people who ask me to compose music, I will go in this way to ask to see their energy directly. Now, my mind being open in this way is directly connected to every other mind that is and ever was. That's a big thought, and I don't mean to upset you with it, but this is what human capacity has to have that direct connection. And then you ask the question and then proceed with your walk; do not try to think about it because the answer, as it's so called, will come as images, of that feeling being images, it will come. You'll begin to participate directly with the energy of this other person. So that's the first step; I've tried to guide your thoughts into what meditation might be and to go a little bit deeper to understand how that might work with music making. Your aura[?] as a performer can progress using this way of thinking and understanding. You can come to a place of being really happy and powerful of a performer. You can expect the performances will be powerful as opposed to merely hope they will be powerful. Okay, you've got a lot to think about.

KS: Yes, I'll have to take some time to think about this, but it's really starting some thoughts going in my mind.

DM: Yes, the reason I bring all of this up is that is, yes, you talk about describing my piece and describing band music and so on and so on, but you need to begin to understand your direct relationship to your own life, so this allows for the powerfully deep connection to what you're doing as opposed to the general surface description of what you're doing. [Pause.] I didn't mean to become personal.

KS: [Silence, oops.] Sorry, I ran out of words.

DM: [laughs] I think it's possibly a starting point for something for you.

KS: Yes, definitely. It would be good to return to this conversation after I spend some time with my thoughts a little bit, and I might be more sure about what I want to know more about. I have one more question—do you have time? Do you need to go?

DM: Let's do one more, let's go ahead.

KS: Okay, so plenty of Bach chorales and hymns in your music...and with Symphony No. 7 you have your own melodies that sound like folk songs, and I was wondering if there were any moments when you do refer to existing folk songs?

DM: Well, in Symphony No. 9 one of the fundamental melodies is "Shall We Gather at the River."

KS: Okay, so then in my musicological mind I want to separate hymns and folk songs...

DM: Oh, okay.

KS: ...but then in your music I don't feel that they are separate.

DM: Hmmmm, well, *A Child's Garden of Dreams*, second movement, "Black is the Color."

KS: I guess my real question is do you consider hymns to be different from folk songs? I don't think I do with your music, and I just wondered if that was an accurate way of viewing it.

DM: Well, I think you're probably right. Hymn tunes like "Old Hundred" in Symphony No. 4, it's all about melodies and some... well, there are two different categories here: I consider some hymn tunes like "Old Hundred" and some of the melodies that come out of the Bach chorales to be very much of the nature of folk songs because they have arisen out of an indefinitely large and historically used by and [...] creation by any number of people, so a hymn tune like "Old Hundred" has come about by a lot of people touching it. That's what folk music is, a certain quality of melody happens in the generations that come at it again and again and again until it achieves a certain form, a certain basic form. It is a powerful place because of all that energy that generations of people have put into it. So there are certain fundamental melody shapes which can be identified as folk music, which have been discovered by this kind of pattern and form. So that's what I would call a folk song, and certain hymns have that quality about them, a certain level of nostalgia. So there's a blurred line there, definitely.

KS: Well, I think that's all I have for today. I'm really excited to ask you more about Symphony No. 9, but I know I need to wait for that.

DM: Okay, so just be in touch, let me know what you want to do, and then we can have another conversation.

KS: Well, thank you so much for your time.

DM: Sure enough. It's been a pleasure to talk with you.

KS: Thanks, have a great day! Bye!

DM: Bye.

Phone Conversation with David Maslanka - September 8, 2013, 9:00pm

DM: Hello.

KS: Hi, Dr. Maslanka, this is Kate.

DM: Hi, Kate. So, are you ready to talk about this enormous piece of music?

KS: Yes, I am. Just the last movement tonight, though, which is still enormous...

DM: Alright, that's fine. Well, what have you found out and what do you want to know?

KS: Well, my first question is a simple one—or maybe not a simple one, I'm not sure—I was wondering, you call the whole

symphony a large collection of instrumental songs, and I was wondering if the last movement is a collection of songs within the symphony?

DM: What do you think?

KS: I think it is. It seems that way...

DM: Go ahead.

KS: The silences between the different sections, where you have fermatas over where the piano fades away, it seems to me like those mark out different songs.

DM: They're very much in sections that way. I think the idea of a song is somewhat different from the idea of a developmental symphony. It's just [...] traditional sonata forms, and the expansion of those forms, some collection of themes, and then the evolution of that thematic material through something called a development. And that tends not to happen in this music. They tend to be very discrete sections which have beginnings and endings, which are not even necessarily connected to each other thematically. That leads to a very different question about how everything hangs together, what does make it turn into a single piece. So the first couple of thoughts...do you have any questions or thoughts?

KS: I still haven't thought a lot about what I think is holding the movement together. It seems like a journey to me. I haven't explored exactly what I think about that yet.

DM: I think it's really useful to think of the form like that because it is overarching, like we talked about. So tell me more about what you think when you use the word journey.

KS: I feel like it starts out a little tumultuously and then we go through all these more peaceful sections with the clarinet solos and the flute and the muted trumpets, and then ending with the whale story, it just feels like we're starting at one point and ending up somewhere very different.

DM: Well, and it's certainly—I agree with the quality of journey about it. It's a journey and I could not have guessed it would turn out that way when I started it. I think all composing is like that for me, and this one was a very broad example of that. And it is not a straight line journey, it's not one way trail with a starting point and here's the map and here's how you get to the end [...]. There are [pause] revelations, I guess, is maybe a good word for it, along the way—things appear, things show up, that I couldn't have thought of at the outset, I didn't have any way of knowing that was there until [...] and that's just what it has to be. So I am open, and I'm listening intently to what wants to unfold. I'm also listening intently to the line of it. People hearing this whole symphony say that it doesn't sound like it's 75 minutes long, they say it sounds like it's 15-20 minutes long. And what that means is it has a coherence and it has a quality of continuous attention [...] and can

generate continuous attention in the listener. Continuous attention—there's not a discontinuity anywhere, despite the fact that the last movement is all these separate songs sometimes with space between them. So how that happens—and it's a very deliberate thing, it's not accidental that it turns out this way, it is a very deliberate listening on my part that says that this is the correct way for me, and it holds my attention very deeply. What I can say about the spaces, and there are lots of spaces. I think the word patience comes up first. The music is as long as it needs to be, it's not frayed and it's not cut off at any place. So after you have the initial opening, a very powerful statement, and then you have quite a long song that is for a few instruments, and it's very soft [...]. And so it brings the listener deeply into that continuous space and opens a place of contemplation in the listener so when it arrives at its own silence, that is its deepest point of contemplation. So the silences in the piece are not negative space; they are the deepest points of contemplation that have been established by sounds that have been made. Does that make sense?

KS: Yes. [Pause.] It makes it feel more organic, too. That's what it feels like to me—the spaces are places for more organic...thought?

DM: Hmm. The interesting thing about the spaces is that when they happen, it does not induce thinking in people. You're not sitting there rapidly using your brain trying to understand what's going on. You're simply in a place where you are open and your conscience is open, and you're participating in it, and it is its own way of being. It's a dream space while you're awake. You are in it. And it's not about thinking, it's about direct perception, in the dream space. That's where the energy is, that's where the power is. [Long pause.] I've stumped you.

KS: I'm thinking. I wish you could see me because sometimes I nod and then realize, oh wait, he can't see me.

DM: [Laughs.]

KS: Well, I'll think about that a little more. What I really wanted to talk about tonight was the whales and what inspired your brief story about whales.

DM: Oh, man... Well, that story came out of a meditation retreat, Buddhist meditation practice, and the group that I work with does semi-annual retreats, residency retreats in a place for three or four days. Meditation [...] deep down meditation for a length of time. And during the course of one of those, of course there's some free time, I had the beginnings of something else on my mind, an idea, and it took me about twenty minutes to write the whole thing down. And it [pause] struck me as oddly powerful. [Pause.] I didn't rewrite anything in it, actually. It just came out that way. And [...] I had no intention for it, certainly not to put it in a symphony. It has come up twice. I've used this story in two different pieces, the first

of them [...] was a piece for alto saxophone and piano called Tone Studies.

KS: I don't know that piece.

DM: I wrote this piece for a young man named Jordan Lulloff. His father Joseph Lulloff is one of the very best saxophonists in the world; he teaches at Michigan State University. Jordan is now I think entering his junior year there and he is a fabulous [...]. Joe [...] gave the premiere performance of my saxophone concerto. And Joe asked me when Jordan was in high school [...] if I would write him a piece of music. I said, "I think we can do that." This is again a journey kind of piece. It's got six movements, I believe, and again in the middle of it the whale story shows up. It also shows up in connection with the hymn tune "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," which is the fundamental melody for the last movement of the symphony. You've gotten that far in your thinking. And so that tune shows up in its original form only at the very end of the movement. I made the association between the death of Christ on the cross with the willingness of the great whales to sacrifice themselves for our life. That's the connection that is in my mind. You might look at the whale story and think of it as fanciful, and that, well, there's no proof of this event, of course not, but it's something which came to my mind as a fantasy, I guess, and to my way of thinking there's a lot of power in it. What it implies is that the divine energy which manifests itself in Christ is not [only] manifested in Christ, it's manifested in every living organism, every living thing. It simply is.

So that in my mind at least broadens the whole understanding and the nature of universal life, and it is one of the foundational points, it is THE foundational point, of the entire symphony. You don't need to know anything about that, you can just enjoy the music.

KS: Do you ever listen to recordings of whale songs?

DM: Oh, I have in the past, yes. A lot was done years ago, say 1960s, 70s, a lot of research was done in that time into whales and dolphins especially to define the quality of their intelligence, and I've been aware of the recordings of whale songs for a long time, yes.

KS: What about other composers' pieces of whales? We studied a lot of them in my seminar last semester, John Cage's *Litany for Whales* and George Crumb's piece [*Vox Balanae*].

DM: Well, those exist. I don't know the Cage piece, there's also a piece of Alan Hovhannes with whale song. I had no intention to use actual whale song, but they're very beautiful things even though I have no idea what they are. There you go. I may have thought about it, but it was never an intention to use whale song in this piece.

KS: I've always really liked whales, so from the first time I heard

your piece and it got to the whale story, I was really excited about it.

DM: Ah. What's your take on the whale story?

KS: Well, whales have such a presence, I think. An almost mystical presence, like they're from another time. And they are, I guess.

DM: Well, if you consider they're creatures that have existed some sixty billion years [...] and they have evolved a very large brain. And there's a quality of intelligence in them that some...and I hope one day we get to find out what it is. But my sense of it, I guess I made a projection of my own feelings and my own wishes onto the whales here for the sake of the story, in a setting [...] it simply is a way for me to awaken different thinking in someone else. All the different ways I think about intelligence, about [...], about compassion, usually. There are possibly bigger hearts and bigger minds than us.

KS: Have you ever seen a whale before?

DM: Well, yes, uh huh. I grew up on the coast of Massachusetts. I've been out on boats to see the whales. And I've seen them in aquariums in New York City. The Coney Island Aquarium has two beluga whales. So, that's all I've seen.

KS: I've never seen one. I've seen porpoises, but that's it.

DM: Well, on the California coast there's a lot of whale traffic. A composer friend actually chases whales, but he does go in search of whale sharks. Do you know those?

KS: Yes

DM: Large, very large [...] creatures. So he will go places and dive with them and actually see these animals and be with them.

KS: And then moving away from whales... You kind of briefly mentioned this when you were talking about "O Sacred Head Now Wounded"...there's the two religions explored sort of back to back. Do you see those two religions as connected?

DM: Well, yes. Every religion is connected to every other religion. [...] fundamentals of the state [...] universal things. The Buddhist way of thinking [...] it is more a plan of sorts for finding out about yourself, finding the deepest parts of yourself. [...] about the nature of us all, but nobody knows what that is. Buddhist faith does not talk about God at all, does not posit the idea of a divine figure or a divine entity, but perhaps they have the notion of nirvana and of the universal energy that is there in available [...] participating directly. And so all religious faiths have that, they have at their core the realization that there is a universal source of some kind, and what it is is the possibility of mind. So the connections are there.

KS: Well, we flew through my questions this time in comparison to last time.

DM: [laughs]

KS: I did want to tell you, though, I was talking to Dr. Wilson, my undergraduate band director, and he mentioned you would be in Houston with them in November.

DM: That's correct.

KS: I may be able to come out and hear that concert. I'm from Houston.

DM: Well, that would be terrific. I'd be glad to meet you.

**In-Person Conversation with David Maslanka - November 23, 2013,
Dulles High School, Sugar Land, TX**

[Small talk; discussing how my thesis is going so far]

DM: [3:04] Well, composing can't be forced, and I can't sit down and say alright, I'm going to start from the beginning of this piece and I'm going to make this kind of piece—so you've discovered that's how that works.

KS: That's exactly what has been happening with my thesis.

DM: So in a way you're paralleling the composing process in the writing process. They're pretty much the same thing. It feels kind of breathless in a way, in a sense of "Oh my goodness, I don't know what I'm doing, and I think I'm supposed to know what I'm doing..."

KS: And it comes in bursts, too. Sometimes I switch the font to italics and just write about what I'm thinking.

DM: Good, and be patient with that. And the reality of your process is that, it is the patient realization of not knowing something, and that's alright. And after all these years of writing music I still with each piece have to come to the realization that I can't make it happen. Working on the piece that I've just completed—this is a piece for high school band—and I got a certain distance into it, and then there is a hollow kind of feeling which happens—like, this is good, [laughs] but it isn't quite whatever it needs to be. And whenever I hear that thing in my head that says that, I have to think alright, fine, let it go. You can't pursue, you can't push it. Let it go, it will be alright, it will come and show you with a surprising kind of thing what it wants to be. So your thoughts which will arise out of your work now will also be surprising. You won't know where they came from, but they'll surprise you. It's an amazing kind of feeling.

KS: I'm learning way more than I thought I would. It's been a different process. I've always told my friends in this group [the Baylor Wind Ensemble] that for me writing and learning and exploring a piece from that perspective, I get that same thrill as I do when I'm onstage performing the piece. Like I said earlier, I've

become more accepting about what musicologists do; I'm not just going to transcribe our interviews and turn it in as my thesis.

DM: [laughs]

KS: So accepting that, that opened a lot of doors with Symphony No. 4 when I stopped trying to think about what you thought all the time.

[Brief discussion of Stephen Bolstad's treatise on Symphony No. 4]

KS: I did want to talk to you some more about C major.

DM: I have to say that I have a particular drawing thing which pulls me toward C for certain kinds of feelings. They tend to be the large...two things, they are large and powerful statements of the awareness of a divine energy—you can think of in Symphony 4, the big statement where "Old Hundred" happens—and I simply just feel a kind of [pause] solar glow that that has in that key. It belongs in no other pitch area, that's where it is. There are similar feelings in No. 9, and so you can connect them in the way, and No. 3 as well. They have those moments in there.

KS: Why C major? Is it just something that happens?

DM: The only thing I can say is that there is a pull to that vibrational space. [pause] I can only say that there is some kind of large energy which is in that vibrational area that does that. Very, very interesting, and as you go further in No. 9, B major becomes an important thing. So there's the relationship between the two, the difference. So somewhere in that crack between B and C is what we're looking for [laughs]. So there's a foundational energy at some point that I am sensitive to and wants to come out and wants to be expressed... and I know that's for sure because it keeps coming back.

KS: One small question...sometimes you capitalize the word earth in program notes and sometimes you don't. And I have to ask because sometimes I capitalize it and sometimes I don't and I need to be consistent and know why I'm capitalizing it.

DM: Okay, okay...

KS: I know it's just one letter...

DM: Do you have a sense of why it should be capitalized or not?

KS: Sometimes when you talk about it, it seems like it's a living being, not just the rock we live on. In that case I feel like it should be capitalized

DM: I agree with you on that. I don't think I've ever pinned myself down with one or the other, but I think your intuition's pretty good on that...so I can't help you.

KS: But you don't mind if I capitalize it.

DM: I don't. But that will be between you and your thesis advisor...you can duke that one out. [laughs]

KS: Symphony No. 6...in the notes you talk about the melodies of

the Earth, and you mention that the melodies are older than Bach, and I was wondering if that's your intuition telling you or if you've ever traced the melodies?

DM: I haven't done any research to know that that is true, but certainly those melodies have that quality of chant about them and that's really all I can say about it. [pause] Which for me is an indication of their ancient origin. And the thing about these chorale melodies is that they've been formalized in their settings by Bach, but he got them from somewhere, and they came from somewhere, and they have assumed a kind of final form in music notation, but they grew out of a very deep place in history. It really is kind of interesting just to feel your way back there and realize these melodies have an ancient life in them. And you also are part of that ancient life, you can participate in it. These are very hard things to verbalize—very hard, maybe even impossible to verbalize. [pause] The feeling for me is to have an immediate presence with things that have no time value on them; they are truly ancient in a kind of forever and immediate presence. [pause] I don't know if any of that makes sense. I don't know if I can make sense of it. We are sitting here in the year 2013...we seem to know who we are in this time and this place, we were born on such and such a date, it's been this many years, it is now 2013, and so on, all of these place markers - you're from Houston, Texas, you now live in Tallahassee, Florida, we know all these things. But when you take a step or two back from those place markers and you simply say where is Planet Earth in the universe, and what time is it...it all turns into something very, very radically different; it is no longer those things. [pause] It's hard for me to say these things; I don't know how to say it. From the Christian perspective, and it's one that I no longer live in directly, I had my Christian upbringing and then went away from it and never fundamentally came back to it in those terms. What did happen was that—and I do recognize this now—was that the nature of Christ and Christ's sacrifice, and the nature of my relationship to that has simply matured in me over the whole course of my life without those words attached to it. It isn't about a set of words or common images of what it is, it's about the maturing of what that energy is, and that energy has nothing to do with time or space, it simply is. This is what I'm getting at—that energy *is*. And it is coming into relationship to that, understanding how it manifests itself in time and in space, is what music-making is all about, and how it is possible through music-making to give something which allows people to come into contact with that feeling themselves. So yes, there are the religious markers in my music - the use of the chorales and other things which have a Christian quality to them— but it is about the fundamental of individual awakening, just like we did on the stage right

now...that's where it is. So that's the foundation of everything to understand. So, that's a lot of words...does it raise any questions or thoughts in your mind?

KS: I think I understand where you're coming from. I've also been struggling putting it into words. In my discussion of Symphony No. 4 I've been struggling with describing the ancient character of the melody. It sounds ancient. I don't know why. I know intuitively but not cerebrally.

DM: Well, what does the word ancient mean to you?

KS: I guess to me the word ancient connotes wisdom, too, but the kind of wisdom that you gain from having seen and witnessed so many things.

DM: It doesn't really have a time value on it. It's something which then, as I think I've just tried to say, that has that quality of living nature that is. And always has been.

KS: What about the jazz influences in Symphony No. 4? That's where I'm most stuck. I'm having trouble tying the jazz setting of "Old Hundred" back to the meditative nature energy I've been writing about.

DM: Well, it's all one. Nothing different. I can tell you how it arises. A melody like "Old Hundred" that came to awareness through my reading, and I said, well, this melody, am I going to use it in the symphony, I don't know. And my process for a melody is like a dog with a chew toy. [laughs] Do you have a dog?

KS: I do. Well, my parents do at home here.

DM: So you know about dogs and chew toys. We've got a young dog at home, she's nine months old, and she is *death* on chew toys. I've never seen a dog do that. But just to take this thing and take it apart and chew on it and play with it, and that's what my play time is with things that I'm interested in. I'll fool around with it, literally fool around with a melody and see where it wants to go. So whatever thoughts come to mind, they are, to me, valid because they all come out of this central thing, and so stuff happens. Just goofing around with the melody produces those qualities. So they're sparks of the same thing. It's not that they're stylistically in another place and they don't have to do with spirituality and energy. It all has to do with the same energy, it is one other expression of the same thing. Does that help?

KS: Yes. And then - well, really I find this in all of your music - there's juxtaposition between what I perceive as the warm, inviting melodies and then the more tumultuous music. In the last movement of Symphony No. 9, too. That's something I recognize and expect in your music. Does that just emerge? I feel like that's the answer to most of my questions now...

DM: [laughs] Yeah, there isn't a plan to do that. But what I can say about Symphony No. 9, and what you've probably already

perceived—if you take a step back and feel the whole of the symphony, there is a fundamental quiet to it.

KS: It always makes me feel very pensive.

DM: And that's its foundation and in that there come moments of a big energy in various ways. Some of it is tumultuous, and some of it is a kind of expansion into a largeness that again is a manifestation of that quality of presence which I've been talking about. It is still fundamentally stable and quiet and still, and yet there is a largeness that is presented out of that. Sacred music doesn't have to be sweet and quiet and nice, I've never understood that to be the necessity. So there are various ways in which forceful music arises out of the quiet. Sometimes it is with, as in the third movement of No. 9, just the two players. And they are required to take the full burden of the expression of that power. There are other times in the other movements when the full ensemble does it. In the fourth movement when you have the opening of the movement of course that has kind of a ferocious character to it, and then partway through when you have the announcing quality of the two chords, and this big powerful music which happens for a length of time, and then it releases itself into a different quality of energy. [pause] The best I can say about it is that I am paying attention to an energy line that wants to form itself and my job is to pay full attention to it until it fuels form through me. It's not my job to analyze it...[laughs] that's your job. I can give you some thoughts about it, obviously, because that's what I'm trying to do. But frankly, I don't analyze it as I'm doing it. I'm aware of a lot of stuff, I've got all of my training and practice in doing these things—I can do harmonic analysis with the best of people, but I don't. Certainly I'm aware when strictly structural things are happening in music, but then all of a sudden things will become modal, and I'm not concerned about what modal is, it's just "does it sound right." And that's how the whole piece goes... [laughs]

KS: How does it feel when us students come along and ask you questions about your work, and we're sitting here trying to write about what your work means?

DM: Well, there is a warm sense of appreciation that you have that interest. There is also—if I have a hope here, it is that your entering the thinking process about this is also entering the feeling process, is also entering the opening process in yourself, and the exploring process of how *you* work as a human being. That, if I have a hope, is what it is. There's a bright kind of smile that comes out of your interest and the interaction that can happen, and I do have a direct and [pause] concerned interest, that it move you, that you find your way with it, in the same way with working with performers. I have to say that as I have gotten older, it has been a

progression of it being of my awareness of it being less and less and less about me, and more and more and more about the transmission of that energy, and how does this energy transmit to this other person, and what is opening in them. So it comes back to...and who are you.

KS: And then ultimately my goal is that I can express what I learn about...

DM: Yes. The whole thing moves that way. None of us is prominent, and we can look at the function of the whole thing, what is my function of writing music and so on. It really is toward the opening of awareness of consciousness in people. We're working towards that. We're constantly working in that garden of allowing that to grow in people. My understanding of the world that we live in right now is that on the surface of it, it looks horrific, and we are in a dangerous place. It is an awful place outside. And yet, I don't think it's a desperate place, and I believe that the kind of energy that is coming through me in music, the kind of awareness and perception that is coming through you in dealing with the music in this way, is a flow of new creative energy of a very clean and very pure and good sort, and it is going to be a significant part of the energy which transforms all of the troubles that we are working on. That's my bigger vision of how things are. It feels like more than a hope, it feels like this is what's going on. It's not a vain hope or a naive hope. That's what we're doing.

KS: I went to an ecomusicology listening room presentation at the musicology conference two weeks ago. They had composers presenting their music, and they all had some underlying environmental consciousness message, like birds that imitate telephone rings and where's the line separating nature. And I thought, we could pull the last movement of Symphony No. 9 and not even say anything, and there would be so many messages that people could pull out of that...whether they're there or not. When I first listened that's what I heard. Maybe just because of my own interest in whales...I'm definitely on the save the whales bus. It's interesting to me that I don't think I would be the only person to hear that and take that away, even though it wasn't intentionally put there.

DM: Understandable. The messages that might be in the music are far more and far different than I know consciously, and how they are received is a going to be with a tremendous variety of responses among people. There are certain fundamental responses which are in a similar quality, the way we feel similar things when we hear certain music, but how it unfolds in your life will be your own, and that's the joy of it all, that it isn't so narrowly specific. It's just that much more...always.

KS: Same with the poem at the beginning?

DM: Also with the poem, there is not *a* message that you're supposed to take away. There are the images which draw your own deep and varied experience from you, so your response will be not on a conscious level. So what's the function of that poem? We can talk about the story of the poem, which is about the passage of life to death of the parents and the writer's awareness of this passage, but its function—what does it do? First off it brings up the issue of passage, the issue of transition, which is bigger than the issue of simply passing from life, it is about the issue of your transitions internally now. [pause] It is a help from a person who has been through the life and death of parents and has thought about it in this deep way so that these images come forward, that you can find both help and comfort and movement in yourself. And again, that's another element of what music is all about, that's what it does. [pause] You can hint at these things in your writing, and in fact, it may well be that as you are putting out thoughts about things, say for instance, if you were simply going to focus on the poem and say well, what am I going to say about the poem, and you start this thought, that thought, this thought, that thought, and all the possible things, that you may arrive and finally feel a central issue that you want to speak about, but the simple fact that the diversity of thought and feeling which comes out of it is what you need to say about it, as opposed to coming up with a conclusion. That may well be the way of the whole piece. [pause] I don't know if that's unnerving...

KS: I think any good thesis topic probably should be unnerving...I find this topic rewarding because I have to struggle with it.

DM: So what does need to happen is that if you're going to go ahead and do a dissertation project, the preparatory work is yourself. I've watched people do things on my music, and they get a certain distance, but I also know they haven't found a fundamental of what's going on because they haven't gone there and they haven't experienced. The only way in which you can truly begin to see what's happening is your own exploration of your inner self and how it moves, and your discovery of what that is. Without that, you'll always be on the intellectual outside, as opposed to on the inside. And you've started that process.

[More discussion of my experiences with his music and how it became my thesis topic, applying for the doctorate, what I want to do with my life, etc.]

KS: It looks like they're done with rehearsal. There are a couple of smaller questions that I can just email you. One more thing—this would be easier to ask now because I can just sing it—there's sort of a pattern that I've found in all three of the pieces I'm writing about, and I'm mentally calling it the "Morning Star motive" right

now because that's where I first heard it. And this happens [sings it] and I hear that all three of the symphonies.

DM: It's one of those quirks of language that just happens, one of those identifying markers, "that's what he does." There's no intent to put it in, it just happens. It's very interesting about style, once a composer makes a certain number of consistent choices and continues to make similar choices, that's identified as that composer's style. So it can become calcified and it can become a thing of no particular value that you just do...or it can be an evolutionary element that continues to grow and become something. But I can't tell you anymore...it just is what it is.

[Dinnertime! recorder off]

Phone Conversation with David Maslanka - January 24, 2014, 9:00pm

DM: Hello.

KS: Hi, Dr. Maslanka, it's Kate.

DM: Hi, Kate, how are you doing?

KS: I'm doing well, how are you?

DM: Very well, actually. Very, very busy with a bunch of stuff, new music being composed, travel coming up. I shall be in Florida next week.

[More small talk about Florida, *Traveler*, and how I've finished my first draft of my thesis.]

KS: [3:50] Two quick, detail-oriented questions. When and where was the Buddhist retreat that you told me about when the "Whale Story" came to you?

DM: I want to say it was about four years ago, it would be in September. It was at a place near Helena, Montana, called Camp Child that was a YMCA camp that was hired for the purposes of the retreat.

KS: How close is Helena to Missoula?

DM: About 110 miles.

KS: Does it have sort of a similar landscape?

DM: It does. It's mountainous, with just the beginnings of the eastern part of Montana that goes out towards the Great Plains.

KS: The other question I had—are you involved in farming or gardening or anything like that? I know you help your wife take care of her horses.

DM: Yes, that's correct. We don't do any farming or gardening with the single exception that we have two acres of grass fields that we take care of. It amounts to spreading horse manure and taking care of weeds, pulling them occasionally. The horse care is help with feeding, with clean-up, things of that sort. We have thought about gardening, but we simply don't have the time.

KS: I was wondering if you were a member of any environmental groups.

DM: No [laughs]. I'm not a joiner in that way.

KS: Great—just like to cover all my bases and not assume anything! Those are actually all the questions I came up with when reviewing my first draft. So what I've done so far... [overview of thesis].

KS: [8:40] I found Symphony No. 9 interesting, and I'm still not completely satisfied with my conclusions for this one. I was mostly interested in the connection between human and non-human—the chickadee calls and the "Whale Story"—I looked at those as well as the settings of "Shall We Gather At The River" and "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," and I found that the way the chickadee calls and the hymns are set helps listeners make a connection to nature. Also, listening to you talk about your meditative process, I find that really comes through in this symphony.

DM: Well, those are large areas of thought. I'd be kind of curious to see the specifics that you've actually written about them. There's just so much to consider that sometimes when I begin to think about it I'm lost for useful words and how to begin. [Pause] Okay, I think I'm going to have to ask you to ask me questions!

KS: Okay! Let me pull up what I actually wrote and where I'm still messing around with words. [Pause] I'm still working out the logistics of this, but when I think about the four concepts you've identified for this symphony—nature, water, time, and grace—I really find those coming together in the "Whale Story" and "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." I was wondering if you had— I know you generally don't have conscious thoughts and plans when composing, but I was wondering if you see those four concepts coming together at the end of the piece?

DM: [12:06] Well, I have to go back to the idea that the composing starts without intention. It starts only with the intention that I'm going to write a piece. I don't start with a plan, and the plan, or the way in which the piece emerges, happens as I open to the sounds and musical elements that want to happen in the piece. It's a very—I use the word messy—it's a very loose process that does not ask at all very quickly for a straight line to form. So one of the seeming—contradictions is not the right word—the paradoxes of composing, is that it is left to right in which it's actually studied. You have a score that starts at m. 1 and finishes at a certain point. And yet it brings into being energy qualities which are not in the least a straight line. Does that make sense? It's not that you have a bigger quality of a thing which steps outside of time, as we understand it. It induces a relationship to a bigger energy, which is...a bigger energy in yourself. That's the best thing that music does, it brings that quality of both feeling and a deeper

thing than feeling, which is a sense of the living nature of the universe, into our space and time. So I can't do that by myself. I can't make a plan and say this is how it's going to work, and I'll start with m. 1 and make a straight line...it just doesn't work that way. So my process is one of feeling my way with whatever wants to come up into the accumulating quality of energetic tension around all of these musical issues until they begin to form into larger units that turn into movements and then a larger sense of the movement of the whole piece of music. So it's continually going back and forth and back and forth among all the details of this music until the whole thing feels vibrant and lively. That's an interesting way to put it—it's like bees going back and forth from plants to hives and continuously traveling out and coming back with all these pieces and finally accumulating all of this into a very sweet distillation. But I think if you asked a bee about honey, he'd say, "What?" [Laughs] Your job is to ask the "what" and try to answer it. But what I'm telling you with all that language is that what I have had come through me is something which has a powerful, vibrant energy which doesn't necessarily have a word definition in my mind. So when we get to the end of the piece, it is a perfectly wonderful conclusion to that whole journey, and it's one simple tune which of itself has taken on the whole emotional and spiritual weight of the whole journey. So, yes, everything does powerfully come to that final statement and the final tones of the piece.

KS: One of the things that the statement following the "Whale Story" suggests to me is the universal spirituality idea, which I think you've mentioned before to me in relation to your own religious beliefs. It also reminded me of what you said when you talk about perceiving the energy of being able to—I forgot the exact words you used, but you talked about being able to connect with everything that is and ever was, was how you phrased it. I thought of that when coming back and listening to the "Whale Story" and "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" after that conversation, and to me it seems that you're not just including people in that statement...is that accurate? I guess what I'm asking is how much of a dividing line do you see when talking about being able to connect to all these lives—all people, or all life?

DM: [18:44] Well, not to sound too grandiose, but it all emanates, everything in nature, from the same source. So all the things we think of as inanimate—mineral aspects of all the elements, things which are profoundly important to our lives but are not alive or human in themselves, like water and air. The nature of interplanetary space—it's not in the nature of energetic experience and understanding, as opposed to what we call physical...the fact of human existence, which is a seemingly uniquely interesting

phenomenon, and yet it is in no way separate from everything else. There is a very interesting thought that comes out of Buddhist ideas that is the world is, and it is today, every single thing in it because of what has happened, and you are here, and I am here, because all those circumstance of the past have resulted in you and me at this particular instance. Any change in any one of those circumstances would have resulted in a change in something today. A change now results in what comes out in the future. So all of it—this is, right now, because that was. What will become is, because what is now and what is changing. Everything is dependent on everything else. Does that make sense?

KS: Yes. This is actually really great because I'm sitting here and the threads that hadn't quite come together yet are starting to move again.

DM: Well, that background idea suggests not an analytical picking apart, but the unified nature of all the elements that go into the symphony, so that there is no real dividing line between what we call inanimate and what we call animate, between what we call physical and what we call energetic...it's all one system. We happen to be manifestations of a fundamental, whatever that might be. So the symphony, and all music, reflects that.

KS: That makes a lot of sense to me. What you've just said—I think it ties together the lines that I was thinking along.

DM: It is curious for a person analyzing this because you can't start there. You have to do this specific work that turns something into pieces of ideas and concepts, and at a certain point you can see and reconstruct the whole after having seen its parts. I hope that's not too vague.

KS: I mean, a lot of these concepts I suppose are vague, just by the nature of the concepts we're talking about...I mean, my whole intention with this thesis is to put into words things that are really difficult to put into words.

DM: Yes, it is. I think you do the best you can, obviously, but the important part is, first off, that you were attracted to do this, and you have evolved, I think, a substantial experience of the music having studied it as deeply as you have. That whole process opens something in you, changes something in you, and it's a continuing growing process that comes out of that. That to me is the most important part of all this.

KS: This has been a really great project to work on. It's hard to believe it's almost done.

DM: How close are you to finishing your degree?

KS: I'll graduate in May.

DM: Do you have a plan for after that?

[Talk about Ph.D. applications, etc.]

DM: Just a question for you—did you go any further with your attempts at meditation?

KS: I'm not great at it. I really can't clear my mind. I find I'm more successful when I try to use focused attention with a specific thing in mind. One of my best friends from back home in Houston is just getting into meditation now, so he's been encouraging me to keep pursuing that as well.

DM: The function of it initially is just to give yourself some open mental space, and what it does do over time is to allow a greater and greater contact with a bigger mind. That space where, say, music does come from, or at least where the impulse to make music comes from. So I encourage you in that direction because you've got a very fine intelligence, and it will become powerful as you begin to open that bigger capacity in yourself to do this. There can be a lot of seeming trouble in the process; for instance, if your mind is too active and you can't get a grip and make it slow down. You said initially that your attempts to slow your mind down were unsuccessful. Well, it opens a very different capacity to think, and it opens a feeling of being supported and being connected to the bigger forces at work, as opposed to being isolated in your own head. So, I'll just offer that as an encouragement to take whatever steps you can in that direction. There are any number of ways to do it, but there are very simple fundamentals with patiently simply working with volume and breath and so on, but maybe your friend will have some ideas and you'll have some mutual support that way.

KS: I have one more question—how much do you read, if any, of the transcendental writers? Thoreau, Emerson?

DM: I think I've read Thoreau many years ago, but I haven't actually gone back to him as a source. My reading is largely in history, and not so much in philosophy.

KS: I was just curious—my advisor mentioned *Walden* when I first started working on this and said I needed to read it.

DM: Well, I have a familiarity with those ideas...it's been a long time. Have you read it?

KS: No...I need to.

DM: Go and pick it up, maybe that will be your weekend. [laughs]

KS: Well, my weekend will be editing this thesis draft...but eventually!

DM: You will share it with me when you're done, I hope?

KS: I can send you a digital copy or a physical copy when I send you back your score.

DM: Well, if it's easy enough to do a physical copy, I would prefer reading off that.

KS: I'd be happy to do that.

DM: Well, if anything else comes up, don't hesitate to be in touch!

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL AND CONSENT FORM

Human Subjects Application - For Full IRB and Expedited Exempt Review

PI Name: Kate Lindsey Sutton

Project Title: Connection to the American Landscape in David Maslanka's Symphonies for Wind Ensemble

HSC Number: 2013.10613

Your application has been received by our office. Upon review, it has been determined that your protocol is an oral history, which in general, does not fit the definition of "research" pursuant to the federal regulations governing the protection of research subjects. Please be mindful that there may be other requirements such as releases, copyright issues, etc. that may impact your oral history endeavor, but are beyond the purview of this office.

Consent Form

I, David Maslanka, voluntarily consent to participate in the research project (master's thesis), "Connection to the American Landscape in David Maslanka's Symphonies for Wind Ensemble."

Background: This research is being conducted by Kate Sutton, a Master's student in Historical Musicology at Florida State University. I understand that the purpose of her research is to explore and better understand the connection between my music and the American landscape. I understand that if I agree to participate in this research project, I will be asked questions about my inspirations, compositional process, and my understanding of nature and the land. I understand that all comments I make will be attributed to me in writing.

Interview Procedure: I understand that I will be contacted several times over the next year, both spontaneously through e-mail and in planned interviews by phone or in person. These planned interviews will be scheduled in advance and I may cancel if necessary. I may decline to answer any question, and I may stop any interview at any time.

Confidentiality: I understand that all e-mails will be stored on Kate Sutton's password-protected computer. All phone or in-person conversations will be audio recorded and transcribed by Kate Sutton. I understand that these audio recordings and transcripts will exist so that I will be cited and quoted accurately. These audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on Kate Sutton's computer. Transcripts and e-mails may be printed verbatim in the final thesis with my approval. Copies of transcripts, recordings, and e-mails can be provided upon request.

Risks and Benefits: There are no risks to participating in this research project. While there are no specific benefits, the printed transcripts and e-mails will provide a record of my thoughts and will benefit future historians and musicians.

Contact Information: I understand that I may contact Kate Sutton by e-mail, [redacted], or phone, [redacted], with questions or comments about the project at any time. I may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Denise Von Glahn, at [redacted].

If I have further questions or concerns about the project or my rights as a participant, I may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Florida State University through the Human Subjects Office at (850) 644-8633.

I have read and understand the consent form.

Subject's signature

Date

I agree to have these conversations recorded and stored on Kate Sutton's computer.

Subject's signature

Date

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kate Sutton (b. 1989) was born in Bedford, England, and moved to Missouri City, Texas, in 1997. Sutton received a Bachelor of Music Education degree (clarinet emphasis) from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, in 2012 before moving to Tallahassee, Florida, to pursue a Master of Music degree in musicology at the Florida State University. She continues to perform as a clarinet player with the Florida State Wind Orchestra.