

FROM A DARK MILLENNIUM COMES THE MUSIC OF AMBER
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO WORKS

BY JOSEPH SCHWANTNER

James Popejoy, B.M.E., M.A.

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APPROVED:

Eugene Migliaro Corporon, Major Professor
Neil Slater, Related Field Professor
Dennis W. Fisher, Committee Member
Debbie Rohwer, Committee Member
William V. May, Interim Dean of the
College of Music
C. Neal Tate, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse
School of Graduate Studies

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The two works of Joseph Schwantner which are the focus of this study, are quite unique for this composer. These two pieces represent the only instance in which Schwantner used the same music for two different compositions. *From a Dark Millennium*, and *Sanctuary* from the *Music of Amber*, are identical in musical material, form and length. While *From a Dark Millennium* was written for a large wind ensemble, *Sanctuary* was scored for a sextet of flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion.

The comparative analysis of these pieces reveal the essence of the music, as well as explores the scoring of each version. Both the melodic and harmonic material in this music is based almost entirely on an octatonic scale of alternating whole and half steps. Very little musical material is used in these works, however the approach toward expanding this material is exceptionally creative. The music shifts abruptly from sections that are sparse and soloistic, to scoring that is very dense. While the piano is utilized as the central timbre in both versions, the wind ensemble presents a much heavier and more percussive sound throughout. The chamber version, due to its size and instrumentation, is more ethereal, and features the performers in a soloistic environment.

In examining both of these works, many of the distinctive traits found in the music of Joseph Schwantner are exhibited. The differences between these two versions help to illustrate his unique approach to composition and orchestration. The two works have also had a significant impact in their respective performance media as well. *From a Dark Millennium* has become an important part of the repertoire for wind ensembles; and *Music of Amber*, which won the 1981 Kennedy Center Friedheim Award for excellence in chamber composition, is one of Schwantner's most performed chamber pieces.

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CHAPTER I

JOSEPH SCHWANTNER: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Joseph Schwantner was born in Chicago, Illinois on March 22, 1943. Schwantner showed an early interest in music, beginning the study of guitar at seven years of age. His teacher was Robert Stein, who first introduced him to folk guitar before moving to classical study. The study of the guitar with Stein was to have a tremendous effect on Schwantner as a composer. Another early influence was Schwantner's grade school music teacher, Adeline Anderson, who invited him to play tuba in the Warren Palm School band. He entered Thornton Township High School in Harvey, Illinois in 1957 where he continued playing tuba in the band and played guitar with the jazz ensembles.

Schwantner was fortunate to be involved in a strong high school music program which included the study of music history and theory. He was also encouraged by his band director, Lyle Hopkins, to arrange and compose music for various ensembles. In an interview with the composer, Schwantner stated:

It was a suburban high school, and we had a very large music program with orchestra, band and jazz ensemble. I even had my own jazz group. It was the closest thing to being a music major in high school at that time. I also had theory courses, and studied composition with the band director. I used to write all the music for the student shows.¹

¹ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

Even as a high school student, Schwantner began receiving recognition for his music writing. One of his jazz compositions, *Offbeat*, won the National Band Camp Award in 1959. Interested in experimental or “free” jazz at this time, the composition was a twelve-tone piece written in 5/4 for his school jazz ensemble. The award allowed Schwantner the opportunity to attend the Stan Kenton Jazz Camp where he took a class in arranging and composition with Russ Garcia. Schwantner stated that it was during this time that “. . . it seemed to be clear to me, that this (composing music) is what I wanted to do.”²

Schwantner attended the Chicago Conservatory College between 1961 and 1964, studying composition with Bernard Dieter. He completed his first work for orchestra, *Sinfonia Brevis*, in 1963 and graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree in 1964. Schwantner continued his studies as a composer in graduate school at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, receiving his Master’s degree in music in 1966. Serving as a teaching assistant in music theory, he earned a doctorate in music from Northwestern University in 1968. His composition teachers during this time were Anthony Donato and Alan Stout. Schwantner was the recipient of numerous composition awards during his student days. These award-winning works were written for various soloists and small ensembles at Northwestern University.

Schwantner served on the music theory and composition faculties at both the Chicago Conservatory College and the Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington during the 1968-1969 school year. In 1969-1970 he was an assistant

² Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

professor of theory at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and guest composer and lecturer at Miami-Dade Junior College in Miami, Florida in 1971. Schwantner joined the faculty of the Eastman School of Music in 1970 where he has since remained. He served as an assistant professor of composition and theory from 1970-1973; as an assistant professor of composition from 1974-1975; an associate professor of composition in 1975; and became chairman of the composition department in 1979, achieving the rank of full professor in 1980. In 1975, while on leave from the Eastman School, he served as Lecturer in Music at the University of Texas in Austin and Guest Composer and Lecturer at the University of Houston, Texas. He was Guest Composer and Lecturer at Yale University and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1979, serving in that capacity at Yale University once again during the 1999-2000 academic year. Schwantner was also the 1987-89 Karel Husa Visiting Professor of Composition at Ithaca College.

Throughout his career, Schwantner has received numerous awards for his compositions. His first major orchestral work, *Aftertones of Infinity*, received the Pulitzer Prize in 1979. Other awards included First Prize in the Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards in 1981 for *Music of Amber* and Third Prize in 1986 for *A Sudden Rainbow*; the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1978; Composers Fellowship Grants from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1974, 1977, 1979 and 1988; the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation Grant in 1978; ISCM National Composers Competition Awards in 1978 and 1980; CAPS Grants in 1975 and 1977; first recipient of the Charles Ives Scholarship presented by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1970; the Bearn Prize in 1967; BMI Student Composer Awards in 1965, 1966 and 1968; and the William

T. Faricy Award for Creative Music in 1966. He has also been the subject of a television documentary, "Soundings," produced by WGBH of Boston for national broadcast.

Schwantner was Composer-in-Residence at the Wolf Trap Farm for the Performing Arts in Vienna, Virginia in 1979. From 1982 to 1985, he served as Composer-in-Residence with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra as part of the Meet The Composer/Orchestra Residencies Program funded by the Exxon Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. In an article about the residency program, John Duffy, founder and president of Meet The Composer, Inc., discussed Schwantner's important early participation in this program:

After the first two years of the program, I got a letter from Joan Bricetti, the manager of the Saint Louis Symphony. She was concerned about losing (Joseph) Schwantner as Composer-in-Residence. She asked 'Is there life after Schwantner?' That was nice verbal manifestation that some orchestras felt they couldn't do without a resident composer, that it was as essential as having a music director or a concertmaster.³

Duffy also discussed the impact of the experience on the composer as well:

Schwantner, who had been used to the cloistered academic life (at Eastman), suddenly found himself in demand, someone people were very interested in. They were very intrigued with the whole idea that a composer-in-residence would go on tour with the orchestra and talk to people. They begin to refer to him as the Johnny Appleseed of composers. He has a very open spirit. He's no-nonsense; people sense a warmth and openness. He found that this vastly affected his music, knowing the players, knowing the city. Music-making became much more personal. It was a very tough adjustment to go back to academic life. He wants very much to be back in the program.⁴

³ Karen Campbell, "Meet The Composer: Orchestral Residency Program," Ovation IX/8 (September 1988), 26.

⁴ Ibid.

Two recordings of Schwantner's works by the Saint Louis Symphony received Grammy nominations. His *Magabunda* "Four Poems of Agueda Pizarro," was nominated for a 1985 Grammy Award in the category "Best New Classical Composition," and his *A Sudden Rainbow* received a 1987 Grammy nomination for "Best Classical Composition."

Compositional Output

During the early part of his career, the majority of Schwantner's compositions were scored for chamber ensembles. Schwantner indicated that there were many reasons for his interest in writing for professional chamber ensembles. Unlike music directors of many orchestras, the musicians in these chamber ensembles embraced new compositions, and were dedicated to committing significant time and effort in preparation of new works for performance. These professional chamber musicians were also very comfortable in performing music for unique instrumental combinations, with unusual notation and scoring. As he searched for ways of augmenting the sounds available to him in these small ensembles, without increasing the size of the group, Schwantner began to develop many of the traits we now associate with his personal compositional style. These experiments with unique colors and effects found in his chamber compositions, led him to develop scoring techniques that he would later use in his works for wind ensembles and orchestras.

Many of these early chamber pieces were commissioned by, or written for, professional chamber ensembles such as the Da Capo Chamber Players; Boston Musica Viva; the 20th Century Consort; the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble; and the New York New Music Ensemble. Generally scored for small, mixed ensembles in various

combinations of woodwinds, strings, piano and percussion, these works include his *Consortium I* (1970); *Consortium II* (1971); *In Aeternum* (1973); *Canticle of the Evening Bells* (1975); *Elixir* (1976); *Sparrows* (1978); *Music of Amber* (1981); and *Distant Runes and Incantations* (1987). In discussing the award-winning performance of *Music of Amber* by the New York New Music Ensemble in the Kennedy Center Friedheim competition, Schwantner had this observation:

Well, after I heard these guys play, I suspected they would just blow every other ensemble off the stage, and they did! I'm telling you, it was just amazing. They were young and hot, and they cared more about playing than they did about a career. . . . That was why I was so excited about writing chamber music for these kids.⁵

Schwantner has written three important works for wind ensemble during his career. In a recent interview, Schwantner indicated his interest for the medium:

I'm just widely excited about the wind ensemble medium, even though I have only three wind ensemble pieces. People send me tapes all the time, so I hear a lot of music. I'm just very impressed with how well they are playing, especially the larger schools.⁶

His first work for wind ensemble, . . . *and the mountains rising nowhere*, was commissioned by the Eastman Wind Ensemble with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and premiered at the National Conference of the College Band Director's National Association in 1977. This work in particular has had a profound effect on the wind ensemble movement since its premiere. *And the mountains rising nowhere* is generally considered by many wind conductors as one of the most important and pivotal compositions for winds and percussion of the last 25 years, and has helped to

⁵ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

⁶ Ibid.

establish a new approach among contemporary composers in how they write for bands. Many more composers have now embraced the concept of writing for instrumental combinations and timbres that were not found in the more traditional scoring practices associated with concert bands. By allowing composers the freedom to expand the compositional boundaries available to them when writing for wind ensembles, conductors have encouraged composers to experiment and grow. This encouragement has in turn increased the available literature for the wind band medium. Schwantner's compositions for wind ensemble have been an important part of this process.

His second work for wind ensemble, *From a Dark Millennium*, was written on a commission from the Mid-America Conference Band Directors Association in 1980. This work will be explored in-depth within this dissertation. Schwantner's third work for wind ensemble, *In evening's stillness...*, was completed in 1996 on a commission by the Illinois College Band Directors Association. Upon completion of *In evening's stillness...*, Schwantner wrote:

... the piece is the third of three works that I have written for winds, brass, percussion and piano. It forms the middle movement of a trilogy of pieces that includes, ...*and the mountains rising nowhere* and *From a Dark Millennium*. In all three works, the piano is responsible for presenting the primary melodic, gestural, harmonic, and sonoric elements that unfold in the music. While each work is self contained, I always envisioned the possibility that they could be combined to form a larger and more expansive three movement formal design.⁷

Schwantner's primary compositional focus for most of his professional career has been writing for orchestras. In a recent interview, prior to the premier of his new horn

⁷ Joseph Schwantner, *In evening's stillness...*, notes in the booklet Wind Dances for the CD of the same title, performed by the North Texas Wind Symphony (Klavier Records, KCD-11084), 9.

concerto written for the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Schwantner discussed his interest in writing for this performance medium:

Basically, I've written orchestral music for well over twenty years, so I've been thinking about the orchestra a lot. Writing for orchestra continues to fascinate me because of the great range of sounds. I'm a composer who has always been interested in the timbral aspect of music. The orchestra provides this extraordinary panoply of styles, a reservoir of sounds that one can employ. I find the medium enormously rewarding for my own work, and feel that I still have something to say.⁸

Among his many works for orchestra, he has especially been active in writing concertos, or pieces which feature solo performers. These works include his *New Morning for the World* "Daybreak of Freedom" for Speaker and Orchestra (1982); *Magabunda* "Four Poems of Aguedo Pizarro" for Soprano and Orchestra (1983); *Distant Runes and Incantations* for Piano (amplified) and Orchestra (1984); *Dreamcaller* for Soprano, Violin and Orchestra (1984); ...*From Afar* – A Fantasy for Guitar and Orchestra (1987); Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1988); *A Play of Shadows* for Flute and Chamber Orchestra (1990); Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra (1994); and *Beyond Autumn* - Poem for Horn and Orchestra (1999). He is currently working on two commissions to write organ and violin concertos.

All of Schwantner's compositions written since 1974 have been the result of commissions. Schwantner has commented: "As long as people are interested, I keep writing. What I hope for is that I can continue to pursue those projects that I am interested in and have control of, and hope that other people will share those interests."⁹

⁸ Laurie Shulman, "Music Man: A Talk with Composer Joseph Schwantner," Dallas Symphony Orchestra Stagebill (Fall 1999), 14.

⁹ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

This consecutive string of commissions has served to keep Schwantner busy as he pursues dual careers as both teacher and professional composer. This has also provided him with the opportunity to continually explore and expand the musical language he has developed in his writing. Schwantner recently said about this:

... I do have a feeling that we composers are preoccupied with some general compositional issues that we keep mulling over. There's larger continuity to our pieces, and the double bar is almost a matter of convenience. Sometimes one's ideas don't come to full fruition in one work, but certain questions may be answered in subsequent pieces. That's what gives rise to a composer's voice. You deal with the raw musical material in an idiosyncratic way, and that defines who you are as a composer. I still believe those qualities are important in music.¹⁰

Characteristics of Compositional Style

As he has matured and developed as a musician, Joseph Schwantner has continually evolved as a composer. His first compositions were etudes and technical studies written for his guitar teacher. In high school, Schwantner was influenced by the jazz music of Miles Davis, Gil Evans, Stan Kenton, Duke Ellington and the Sauter-Finnegan Band. His interest eventually expanded to include the free jazz movement and the music of Charles Mingus, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and Ornette Coleman. This exposure to jazz that was more experimental in nature inspired the music he wrote during his high school years. While Schwantner does not write jazz music today, this free and experimental aspect of jazz is evident in his work.

In a recent interview, Schwantner expounded upon the subtle influence his early study of the guitar played in the development of his personal approach to composing:

I didn't realize until many years later just how important the guitar was in my thinking. . . . to get to the bottom line, when I think about my music, its absolutely clear to me the profound influence of the guitar in my music. When you look at my pieces, first of all is the preoccupation with color. The guitar is a wonderfully resonant and colorful instrument. Secondly, the guitar is a very highly articulate instrument. You don't bow it, you pluck it and so the notes are very incisive. My musical ideas, the world I seem to inhabit, is highly articulate. Lots of percussion where everything is sharply etched, and then finally, those sharply articulated ideas often hang in the air, which is exactly what happens when you play an E major chord on the guitar. There are these sharp articulations, and then this kind of sustained resonance that you can easily do in percussion - a favorite trick of mine! I think it is right in my bone marrow. I don't think there is any question about that. I think my music would look differently if I were a clarinet player. . . . So it doesn't mean I sit around thinking about the guitar when I am writing a piece. Not at all! There is something fundamental about how I think about music, that I think comes from my experiences as a young kid trying to play everything I could on the instrument.¹¹

Timbre, and the creation of unique colors and textures, is especially important in Schwantner's compositions. This unifying element among his works has proven to become a trademark of his music. Jeffrey Briggs, in his paper on the unique and essential elements of Schwantner's music, discussed the importance of orchestral color:

Orchestration is a controlling element in Schwantner's compositional technique. Most sections of his music seem to have been designed to exploit his coloristic imagination. This is accomplished by designing clear, easily perceivable pitch structures and presenting them in complex orchestrational settings. The clarity of Schwantner's pitch structures requires a rich instrumental setting to sustain interest and add variety. The orchestrations frequently are endowed with special coloristic devices which extend the capabilities of the ensemble, and add variety to the music. In short Schwantner has created clear, often simple pitch constructions and dressed them with a unique orchestrational technique to create a unified whole in which timbre, above all other parameters, is emphasized.¹²

¹⁰ Laurie Shulman, "Music Man: A Talk with Composer Joseph Schwantner," Dallas Symphony Orchestra Stagebill (Fall 1999), 15.

¹¹ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

¹² Jeffrey Lynn Briggs, The Recent Music of Joseph Schwantner: Unique and Essential Elements (D.M.A. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1984; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 8502083), 90.

Upon entering college, his first works were influenced by several different composers. Schwantner discussed how he, and composers in general, develop an individual style:

I agree that a composer begins by writing other composers' music. I admired the music of Debussy, Bartók, and Webern as a young composer, and to some degree my early work reflects their musical styles. Composers don't walk around looking for a style; it grows from experience, opportunities in writing music, and combining musical ideas in a unique way. Style is also related to the way composers hear music. The sounds that resonate in my mind are the ones that keep cropping up in my work.¹³

Many of the early compositions he composed while a student at Northwestern University were written in serial form. Cynthia Folio, in her dissertation on the music of Schwantner, discussed this earlier music, as well as additional composers who were influential to his development as a composer:

. . . the functional harmonic progressions associated with "common practice" tonal music are absent. Although many of Schwantner's materials are associated with tonal music, the structure and syntax for his compositions are determined more by the endemic structure of the musical materials themselves than by the functional progressions of tonal music. This reflects the influences of many of the "post-tonal" composers on Schwantner's musical language – he has mentioned Messiaen, Dallapiccola, Davidovsky, Boulez, Takemitsu, Ishii, Crumb, and Lutoslawski.¹⁴

Schwantner related to this author that the work of Lutoslawski, and his efforts toward developing a notational system that allowed performers to play soloistically within an ensemble, was particularly influential on him.

¹³ Jeffrey Renshaw, "Schwantner on Composition," *The Instrumentalist* XLV/10 (May 1991), 14.

¹⁴ Cynthia Jo Folio, *An Analysis and Comparison of Four Compositions by Joseph Schwantner: And The Mountains Rising Nowhere; Wild Angels of the Open Hills; Aftertones of Infinity; and Sparrows* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1985; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 8508803), 6.

In the 1970's Schwantner continued to explore serial techniques and other experimental forms of composition, while also striving to work from a more tonal framework. His search for a new sound canvas with which to work saw him continually experimenting with the timbres and textures available to him. Folio indicates the composer selected four of these early works as representative of the various phrases in his stylistic development: *Consortium I* (1970); *Modus Caelestus* (1972); *In Aeternum* (1973); and *Elixir* (1974). In American Composers: A Biographical Dictionary, one of these works in particular is discussed as an important turning point in this development:

Schwantner regards *In Aeternum*, for cello and four players (1973), as a key piece in his creative evolution. A twelve-tone composition, this is a fascinating study in sonorities and sound textures, since the orthodox instruments are combined with exotic sounds produced by rubbing the fingers on half-filled wine glasses, dipping gongs in washtubs of water, and scraping metallic percussion instruments with violin and cello bows. Such effects proved no mere gimmicks but the means of realizing eerie, haunting, shimmering effects, skillfully synchronized with the more formal sounds of the usual instruments.¹⁵

Performers in the ensembles were often asked to play small percussion instruments (crotales, triangles, crystal goblets, etc.) in addition to their regular instruments. He also requested that the musicians occasionally whistle, narrate, whisper and sing. All of this experimentation would evolve to become a trademark of his compositional language. This approach to developing an expanded ensemble, with its additional and unique sound possibilities, helped to create Schwantner's expressive and dramatic personal musical style.

¹⁵ "Joseph Schwantner," American Composers: A Biographical Dictionary, ed. David Ewen (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 577.

This experimentation with expanding the sound palette was continued as Schwantner began writing for larger ensembles. When commissioned to write his first work for wind ensemble he not only incorporated these techniques into the composition, but worked to write music that was different from most of the standard repertoire for this medium. Schwantner was interested in creating a composition for winds and percussion that allowed him to explore new instrumental colors. The work which resulted from these efforts ...*and the mountains nowhere* (1977), is scored for amplified piano, six percussionists, orchestral winds and brass, with glass crystals. While Schwantner included more parts than normal for the flute, oboe and bassoon sections, he did not write for the saxophone family or euphonium, instruments traditionally associated with the concert band. He sought to have the amplified piano, and the expanded percussion section, on equal footing with the woodwinds and brass. This work also requires the performers to sing, whistle, and play glass crystals, in addition to their other parts.

And the mountains rising nowhere combined elements of both tonal and atonal music within a single, one-movement composition. In an analysis article about the work, John Locke, Director of Bands at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, included the following information:

According to the composer, the pitch material used in the work can best be explained and understood by using Allen Forte's system on analysis for atonal music. The composer reveals that much of his music has been greatly influenced by the pitch-class set theory on which Forte's system is based. Schwantner explains that ...*and the mountains rising nowhere* is not a 12-tone serialized work but rather several sets of pitch-classes and their transpositions. . . . Schwantner views this composition as being very much a 'tonal' kind of piece. His reasoning for this position is based on the use of limited pitch-class sets rather than the use of 12-tone serial techniques as melodic and harmonic materials. The composer states that he generally tends to favor the use of pitch-class sets which have

certain unique properties – such as the closed cyclical sets he often employs in this composition.¹⁶

This composition also allowed Schwantner the opportunity to explore the musical language he had developed with his chamber ensemble works in a much larger and more expanded format. In addition, since he was composing for a university ensemble, he was given an opportunity typically not available with large professional ensembles. The Eastman Wind Ensemble allowed Schwantner to try new ideas and techniques during their initial rehearsals of the work. *And the mountains rising nowhere*, as proven in many important wind repertoire studies such as Jay Gilbert's An Evaluation of Compositions for Wind Band According to Specific Criteria of Serious Artistic Merit: A Replication and Update, has become an important addition to the list of music written for the wind ensemble.

While being a pivotal composition in Schwantner's work, *...and the mountains rising nowhere* was also an important precursor to his pulitzer prize-winning composition, *Aftertones of Infinity*, written for orchestra just two years later. His musical language became more defined as his writing showed increasing simplicity and the use of less musical material in each work. During this time, Schwantner's music seemed to develop a more transparent quality, while being very eclectic in nature. In his article about Schwantner winning the pulitzer-prize, David Patrick discusses this aspect of the composer's music:

Unlike some composers who shun outside musical influences, Schwantner thrives on them. He considers recordings a great learning experience, and when he is

¹⁶ John R. Locke, "A Performance Analysis of Joseph Schwantner's *And The Mountains Rising Nowhere*," Winds Quarterly I/3 (Summer 1981), 40.

between pieces he makes weekly trips to the libraries for stacks of scores, just out of natural curiosity. His music is quite eclectic, reflecting Webern's pointillism, George Crumb's sonorities, and modern aleatory techniques.¹⁷

In this period, the frequent use of octatonic scales as a basis for Schwantner's melodic and harmonic content is readily apparent. As his music became more tonal, the use of this alternating whole and half-step scale continued to provide a very contemporary sound. Another technique he exploited at this time is the use of something he referred to as shared monody. Schwantner describes this technique as "a single linear event melodically shared by many players, with each single player entering and sustaining a different pitch of the theme in order."¹⁸ These single notes combine to form one connected line of music with unique timbral and textural qualities.

A 1982 work of Schwantner's, *New Morning for the World: Daybreak of Freedom*, demonstrated his focus on writing in a more tonal direction. The work is scored for orchestra and narrator, and is based on the texts of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (to whom the work is dedicated). James Chute, in his dissertation The Reemergence of Tonality in Contemporary Music as Shown in the Works of David Del Tredici, Joseph Schwantner, and John Adams, considered this work to be a pivotal piece in confirming Schwantner's shift to tonal music: "*New Morning* unquestionably establishes Schwantner's new romantic credentials, not only in his embracing tonality, but also in his use of repeated figurations that reveal the influence of minimalism."¹⁹ Chute also

¹⁷ David Patrick Stearns, "Joseph Schwantner," Musical America XXIX/12 (December 1979), 7.

¹⁸ Jeffrey Renshaw, "Schwantner's First Work for Wind Ensemble," The Instrumentalist XLV/6 (January 1991), 79.

¹⁹ James E. Chute, The Reemergence of Tonality in Contemporary Music as Shown in the Works of David Del Tredici, Joseph Schwantner, and John Adams (D.M.A. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1991; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 9302359), 88.

believes that with Schwantner's work *Toward Light* (1987), his conversion to tonality was complete, "even as he began searching for ways to reintegrate some of the aspects of his earlier atonal, serial-influenced style into his new tonal vocabulary."²⁰

One final aspect that is common among many of Schwantner's compositions is his use of poetry for inspiration. He has indicated that poetry often plays an important part in generating musical ideas for him and is the source for many of the titles of his compositions. The use of poetry, written either by himself or by others, helps to form and frame the music. While he does not consider his music to be programmatic, the poetry does suggest certain kinds of music to him. The rhythm, texture, flow and tension created by the imagery that the poetry evokes, serve to generate musical thoughts and ideas. *And the mountains rising nowhere* was dedicated to Carol Adler, whose poem "Arioso" inspired the work. *Aftertones of Infinity* was Schwantner's own verse, as were the descriptive titles *From a Dark Millennium* and *Music of Amber* taken from a poem entitled "Sanctuary." *Sanctuary* is also the title for the second movement of the *Music of Amber*. Schwantner has said: "I make no pretensions of being a poet. The verse is a preliminary, pre-conscious apparatus. The title has to resonate in my ears. It has to evoke sonic images. It's not something I can explain very coherently."²¹

As this study explores the relationship between Schwantner's *From a Dark Millennium* (1980), and *Sanctuary* from the *Music of Amber* (1981), it will be observed that these works incorporate many of the characteristic style traits that have become

²⁰ James E. Chute, *The Reemergence of Tonality in Contemporary Music as Shown in the Works of David Del Tredici, Joseph Schwantner, and John Adams* (D.M.A. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1991; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 9302359), 100.

²¹ David Patrick Stearns, "Joseph Schwantner," *Musical America* XXIX/12 (December 1979), 7.

trademarks of his music. Through personal analysis, interviews with the composer, and the study of articles and analysis written by other conductors and performers, these two compositions will be explored in-depth. Written when Schwantner was establishing his unique and personal style, a comparative study of these two works should provide insight into the compositional and scoring practices of this important twentieth-century composer.

CHAPTER II

GENESIS OF MUSICAL WORKS

The two works of Joseph Schwantner which are the focus of this study are quite unique. These pieces represent the only instance in which Schwantner used the same music for two different compositions. *From a Dark Millennium*, and *Sanctuary* from the *Music of Amber*, are identical in musical material, form and length. A unique aspect of these similar works, is the use of two completely different performance mediums. This chapter will explore the circumstances surrounding the writing of these works, as well as the instrumentation and basic framework of the compositions.

From a Dark Millennium

After the success of Schwantner's first work for wind ensemble, *...and the mountains rising nowhere*, there was increased interest among band conductors to secure another work for this medium by the talented (and recent pulitzer-prize winning) composer. A consortium of college band directors from Illinois, the Mid-American Conference Band Directors Association, offered a commission to him in 1980. Schwantner was interested in writing another work for band after his initial experience working with the Eastman Wind Ensemble: "I was always positive about the wind ensemble after my experience with the first piece. . . It was such a good experience with

the response and recognition of the first piece, that I was interested in giving it another go.”¹ *From a Dark Millennium* was completed in September 1980, and first performed by the Northern Illinois University Wind Ensemble in February 1981, in DeKalb, Illinois. (It is interesting to note that Schwantner’s third work for wind ensemble, *In evening’s stillness...*, completed in 1996, was also commissioned by a consortium of conductors from Illinois, the Illinois College Band Directors Association.)

The instrumentation for this work is similar to *...and the mountains rising nowhere* as it was written for a large wind ensemble without parts for saxophones or euphonium. Schwantner has indicated the reason for his choice of scoring in these large wind ensemble works:

I do know what I had in mind. I was hoping that this piece would be not only played by wind ensembles, but potentially also by orchestras. I was really hoping that would be the case, however it has turned-out not to be the case. I have had several professional performances of it, but that has not happened (with orchestras). Orchestras will play Messiaen’s *Et Expecto Resurrectionem* which doesn’t have strings, but the worlds are really very dissimilar. The piece is certainly available, but there hasn’t been a lot of interest from professional orchestras.²

From a Dark Millennium is scored for the following instrumentation:

3 flutes
(2nd and 3rd flutes double piccolo)
2 oboes
English horn
3 Bb clarinets
(1st clarinet doubles Eb clarinet)
(2nd and 3rd clarinets double bass clarinets)
3 bassoons
4 horns in F
3 trumpets in Bb

¹ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

² Ibid.

4 trombones
 (4th bass trombone)
tuba
2 contrabasses
piano (amplified grand piano)
celeste (amplified)
5 percussionists
 timpani, 3 tom-toms, 4 timbales, 6 rototoms, 2 bass drums
 triangle, crotales, suspended cymbals, 2 tam-tams
 glockenspiel, xylophone, 2 vibraphones, marimba, tubular bells

The full score is transposed and reproduced from the composer's manuscript in open score format (individual lines of the score are left blank when a part is not playing).

Many composers and conductors believe that the use of open score style is helpful in interpreting the texture of the work. Schwantner believes that how a score is prepared is significant in presenting a composition:

The visual aspect of the score was always very important, and in that light I am very much on the same wavelength as my friend George Crumb. If you look at any of his scores, they are not only sonically elegant and beautiful, but visually stimulating works of art. He often felt that scores that looked good, sounded good.³

All of Schwantner's scores were written in his own hand until 1983. It was around this time that he felt he no longer had the time to write each score by hand due to an increase in the size and number of composition projects he was involved with.

As is the case in Schwantner's other two works for wind ensemble, the piece is written as a single movement. Performance time is approximately twelve minutes. The score and parts for *From a Dark Millennium* are published by Helicon Music Corporation and are available from European American Music Distributors Corporation, LLC.

³ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

This piece, as with many of Schwantner's compositions, also drew inspiration from poetry. Written by the composer, the poem is entitled "Sanctuary."

*Sanctuary. . .
deep forests
a play of shadows,
most ancient murmurings
from a dark millennium,
the trembling fragrance
of the music of amber. . .*

While it is important to note that Schwantner does not believe that this work is programmatic, he provides the following statement in his program notes: "The mysterious and shadowy atmosphere of *From a Dark Millennium* springs from images drawn from a brief original poem that forms the poetic backdrop for the work. The poem helped to stimulate, provoke and enhance the flow of my musical ideas."⁴

Music of Amber

The poem "Sanctuary" also provides a link to the chamber work entitled the *Music of Amber*. This piece consists of two parts, both of which came from pre-existing works.

Part I: *Wind Willow, Whisper. . .* was originally commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation. This piece was one of six short works, written by six composers, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Da Capo Chamber Players. The movement was originally published separately under the title *Wind Willow, Whisper. . .* and is

⁴ Joseph Schwantner, *From a Dark Millennium*, notes in the booklet [Dream Catchers](#) for the CD of the same title, performed by the North Texas Wind Symphony (Klavier Records, KCD-11089), 6.

approximately nine and one-half minutes in length. The piece was initially scored for the instrumentation of the Da Capo Chamber Players:

flute
clarinet
violin
cello
piano

This movement was also inspired by an original poem written by Schwantner:

*Wind Willow, Whisper. . .
a gentle breeze,
early morning mist,
dew on languid leaves,
sweet birds sing
in exultation,
a celebration. . .*

Premiered by the Da Capo Chamber Players in March of 1980, *Wind Willow, Whisper. . .* was soon altered to include percussion and became Part I of the *Music of Amber*.

As Schwantner was finishing his work on *From a Dark Millennium*, a young professional chamber ensemble, the New York New Music Ensemble, requested a work from him. Pleased with the results of his recent work for the Da Capo Chamber Players, Schwantner was interested in expanding this piece: “Then later I decided, ‘Gee I like this, I would like to write a longer piece.’ That’s when this thing came up. The idea came up when these kids in the New York New Music Ensemble asked me for a piece.”⁵

Dedicated to Paul Fromm and written for the New York New Music Ensemble, *Music of Amber* was born. Schwantner first expanded *Wind Willow, Whisper. . .* to include an

⁵ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

extensive percussion part, as this was the instrumentation of the New York New Music Ensemble. The entire work was now scored for:

- flute
- clarinet/bass clarinet
- violin
- cello
- piano
- percussion
 - 3 tom-toms, 2 timbales, bass drum
 - 2 triangles, crotales, 3 suspended cymbals, tam-tam
 - glockenspiel, vibraphone, bell tree

This scoring for a sextet of instrumentalists was a very popular combination for many composers during the twentieth-century. With the occasional inclusion of a vocalist or another instrument, this instrumentation served as the core unit for many chamber ensembles. Schwantner had written for this same (or similar) instrumental combination in many of his previous compositions. In the case of this work by Schwantner however, the selection of this instrumentation was solely based on the players available to him in the ensemble.

After adding the percussion part to *Wind Willow, Whisper*. . ., Schwantner used the new piece which he had been working on for wind ensemble, *From a Dark Millennium*, to complete the chamber work. Using the exact same musical material, Schwantner re-scored the work for sextet in order to expand and complete *Music of Amber*. When asked about why he would use the same material twice, Schwantner had this to say: “The pieces were fairly close together. I guess that sound was in my head. Something occurred to me that this might work. It was kind of an experiment to see if it

might work, to see whether or not I could make it work.”⁶ The title for Part II of the chamber version was the title of the poem Schwantner had composed for the wind ensemble work: *Sanctuary*. This new and expanded work for chamber ensemble received its title, *Music of Amber*, from the last stanza of the same poem. As is the case with *From a Dark Millennium*, piano (although not amplified in the chamber version), is the central timbre of the work: “. . . the piano presents the primary melodic, gestural, harmonic and sonoric elements supported by the percussion . . .”⁷ Compared with the version for large wind ensemble which uses five percussionists, the sextet version has all of the percussion parts performed by a single musician.

This new chamber work was premiered in New York in 1981 and was subsequently entered in the Kennedy Center Friedheim competition. Selected as a finalist, Schwantner asked the New York New Music Ensemble to go to Washington, D.C. and perform the piece at the finals concert. A panel of distinguished adjudicators announced at the conclusion of the event that *Music of Amber* was the first prize winner, thus receiving the 1981 Kennedy Center Friedheim Award for excellence in chamber composition.

In reading through the program notes for either *From a Dark Millennium* or the *Music of Amber*, there is no mention of the other work. As the use of exactly the same musical material is unique among Schwantner’s compositions, I asked him whether he wanted people to know that he had used the same material on different pieces. His

⁶ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

⁷ Joseph Schwantner, *From a Dark Millennium*, notes in the booklet *Dream Catchers* for the CD of the same title, performed by the North Texas Wind Symphony (Klavier Records, KCD-11089), 7.

response was that “It didn’t matter. I wasn’t trying to hide anything, but I also wasn’t trying to promote one over the other.”⁸

In examining both of these works, many of the distinctive traits found in the music of Joseph Schwantner are exhibited. The differences between these two versions of the same piece however, help to illustrate his unique approach to composition and orchestration. The two works have also had a significant impact in their respective performance media as well. *From a Dark Millennium* has become an important part of the repertoire for wind ensembles, and *Music of Amber* is one of Schwantner’s most performed chamber pieces.

⁸ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF SCORES

For the analysis of Joseph Schwantner's *From a Dark Millennium*, and *Sanctuary* from the *Music of Amber*, this document will study these works from a performance standpoint. Each piece will therefore be analyzed and compared using the score analysis guide developed by two respected conductors in the field of wind ensemble performance, Frank Battisti and Robert Garofalo.

After over forty-five years of teaching, Frank Battisti has recently retired as conductor of the New England Conservatory Wind Ensemble. He is considered to be one of the world's leading authorities on wind ensemble literature and conducting, and continues to be extremely active as a guest clinician and conductor. Robert Garofalo is a professor of music at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where he serves as head of the graduate programs in instrumental conducting. While active as a conductor of various professional and university wind ensembles, Dr. Garofalo is the author of numerous books and articles covering various topics of music and performance. These two conductors have combined their expertise and knowledge within the book Guide to Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor (1990). Their extensive chapter on score analysis will be used as a guide in studying these two compositions. As this document is in support of a performance degree, and is intended to be of assistance to

conductors and instrumentalists in the preparation and performance of these works, this analysis approach seemed to be the most appropriate.

This study of *From a Dark Millennium* and *Sanctuary* will be divided between the general characteristics that are essentially the same for both works and the areas that are different. While the majority of the differences are with the orchestration of the two pieces, the music within each work is the same. Both pieces share the same melodic and harmonic material, the same form and rhythms, the same relative dynamics, as well as the same expressive terminology. The primary differences occur within the categories of scoring, texture, and stylistic articulations appropriate for each instrument and/or combination of instruments. Generally, a composition maintains the essential characteristics that define it as a specific piece of music, regardless of the scoring. In this particular case, the music maintains its essence, however the scoring is so radically different that the two works may create a different response in their presentation. Since the changes in texture and timbre help to define form in Schwantner's compositions, this element of the music will be discussed first.

Form

Jeffrey Renshaw provided a thorough analysis article on *From a Dark Millennium* in the September 1989 issue of The Instrumentalist magazine. In this article, Renshaw divides the work into thirteen sections that he feels are unified in several distinct ways. He believes that many of the basic elements of music that are present in the work help to define its structure. "In *Millennium* such elements as instrumental color, tempo, dynamics, and changing densities outline the form of the piece. Schwantner uses these

elements to create moments of tension and release, propelling the work in time.”¹

Renshaw also discusses Schwantner’s use of timbral and textural changes in defining the overall form of the music. Renshaw states the following observation:

Schwantner provides additional development through changes in color as the musical lines change shape from thick to thin rather than through manipulations of musical ideas. The composer is concerned with how the sound changes from one moment to the next. In many instances, he uses the coloristic effects of the wind ensemble to emphasize these changes.²

Schwantner has stated that this particular music was an experiment of sort for him. His interest was in writing a piece that used less material, and exploring what could be done with this material.

I think it was a reaction at the time to this incredibly complicated chamber music we were all involved with. This was an attempt to make the music more direct and simple. I have always sought clarity in my music. Even when it was very complicated.³

Schwantner chose to base the majority of the melodic and harmonic material, which defines the form in this work, on an octatonic scale of alternating whole and half steps (see example 1). This scale, with its symmetrical construction, makes it very difficult to establish a tonal center within the composition.

Example 1. *From a Dark Millennium/Sanctuary*, octatonic scale.



¹ Jeffrey Renshaw, “Joseph Schwantner’s *From a Dark Millennium*,” *The Instrumentalist* XLIV/2 (September 1989), 24.

² *Ibid.*, 24-25.

³ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

The octatonic scale is also sometimes called the diminished scale, as it can be formed by combining any two nonenharmonic diminished-seventh chords. Within this scale can also be found all of the intervals from a minor second to a major seventh; all of the tertian triads except for the augmented triad; and with the exception of the major seventh, most of the standard seventh-chord types. It was Schwantner's goal to not only explore the compositional choices available to him when focusing on elements of music other than melody and harmony, but to investigate the melodic and harmonic possibilities of an octatonic pitch set.

There aren't really any big, long tunes. It's not about tunes, it's more about color. It's about obsessing over the octatonic. It's about elevating this simple device. It's about putting it in context to give it forward propulsion.⁴

Renshaw's sectional analysis of *From a Dark Millennium* will be used as a guide to study the overall form of the work, as well as provide a format for comparing Schwantner's two settings of this music.

Section I (measures 1-16): The work opens with a strong, two measure ostinato sixteenth-note figure, at eighth-note equals 56 in four-eight. Repeated eight times, this figure is altered as minor thirds are stacked upon the opening melodic line motive. This melodic alteration does nothing more than re-articulate the notes of the octatonic scale in a different order. Schwantner indicated that "the pitch ordering is important, but becomes less significant as it is repeated, due to the sustained ringing. . .the more ringing notes you have, the issue of color now comes into play."⁵ In the wind ensemble version,

⁴ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

⁵ Ibid.

this ostinato is performed by the piano, vibraphone, glockenspiel, and celeste (see example 2). The chamber version uses piano, cello and glockenspiel, with part of the ostinato included for clarinet and violin. This is different from the wind ensemble version, as no part of the ostinato is given to the winds in *From a Dark Millennium*.

Example 2. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 1-8; piano/celeste/percussion.

The image shows a musical score for measures 1-8 of 'From a Dark Millennium'. The score is written for piano, celeste, and percussion. The piano part is in the upper system, and the celeste and percussion parts are in the lower system. The tempo is marked 'Moderato' and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

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The pedal tone triplet figure on F is performed by stopped horn, vibraphone, and tubular bells and is rhythmically shadowed with triangle in the wind ensemble version. This line begins a sixteenth pulse later every other measure for sixteen measures. The pedal tone F is augmented in measure 11 with a chord cluster built on the octatonic scale. The stopped horn and tubular bell triplet line is strengthened with the addition of the first

trumpet part, while the remaining brass play the sustained chord cluster. Schwantner adjusts this scoring in the chamber version by having the flute, clarinet, violin and cello (both strings playing double stops) all play the triplet figure. The missing two notes of the octatonic chord cluster can be found in the glockenspiel part.

One unique timbre that is missing in the chamber version is the singing found in the wind ensemble version. In the setting for large ensemble, many of the musicians are asked to chant a pedal F (see example 3). Schwantner has indicated that he did this as “a way of illuminating the pedal note.”⁶

Example 3. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 1-4; singers.



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A softly rolled pedal F, found in the first four measures of the vibraphone part in the chamber version, helps to create a similar effect. This part does not, however, emphasize the accent from the triplet part as the singers do in the wind ensemble version.

Schwantner indicated that he chose not to have the performers sing in the chamber version because they all needed to be playing. If he had asked the four instrumentalists capable of doing both at the same time to sing, it would have sounded too much like

individuals singing, rather than the desired effect from what he calls the “celestial choir.”⁷

Measure 11 is also where Schwantner makes a significant change in the chamber version. He adds an *accelerando poco a poco* for the sextet, in addition to the *crescendo* found in both versions. Schwantner explained that he did this in order to add more weight to the sound in the chamber version, as the passage moves to the climax found in measure 17: “The smaller group just didn’t have the sonic power of the big group.”⁸ In writing for the wind ensemble, he was able to add trumpets, trombones and tuba to help increase the sound. The entire sextet is already playing at this point in the chamber version. He does return the sextet to *a tempo* in measure 17 in order to have the next section at the same desired tempo as the introduction.

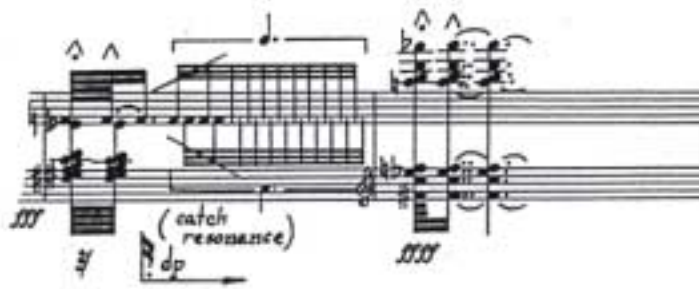
Section II (measures 17-34): This section begins with the climax from the first section. An accented, sixty-fourth note *forte* chord is sustained with a *crescendo* to the downbeat of measure 18. This chord cluster is repeated in the piano and percussion parts. Another interesting addition in the scoring for the sextet is the rapidly repeating F’s in the piano which lead to measure 18 (see example 4). Schwantner added this effect to the chamber version to help intensify the crescendo, something he was able to provide in the wind ensemble version with the brass section.

⁶ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

⁷ Jeffrey Renshaw, “Joseph Schwantner’s *From a Dark Millennium*,” The Instrumentalist XLIV/2 (September 1989), 22.

⁸ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

Example 4. *Sanctuary*, measures 17-18; piano.



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It is also interesting to note that the composer uses a struck crotale pitch in the chamber version to compensate for the ringing sounds of vibraphone, glockenspiel, and tubular bells found in the wind ensemble score. The composer makes another adjustment in the chamber version with the addition of a suspended cymbal roll in measure 19, which moves toward a tam-tam note in measure 20. The wind ensemble version features no activity that is similar. Schwantner added this part to the chamber version to compensate for the increased resonance of the piano, celeste and mallet keyboard percussion parts found in measure 18 of the wind ensemble version.

From these chords, a subito, soft, four-note motive is repeated beginning in measure 20. Similar to the triplet figure in the introduction, this motive moves over one eighth pulse and then back every two measures. Intended to create an *otherworldly* or *ethereal* effect, this part is performed by the singers in the wind ensemble version (see example 5), and presented by the cellist in the sextet version.

Example 5. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 20-23; singers.



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The four-measure figure is repeated four times, however a similar part begins opposite it in measure 27. This echo-like effect is performed by a choir of whistlers in the wind ensemble, but presented by the violinist playing harmonics in the chamber version. The use of *glissando* in each part is also very effective in helping to create the composers intended mood.

Over the top of this *ethereal* part is a short melodic fragment for solo flute (see example 6) found in both versions. Presented first in measure 21, the line is repeated and extended in measure 25. The first eight notes of the ascending motive are shadowed in the piano in both versions, along with the celeste in the wind ensemble setting. This melodic line is also based on the octatonic scale. The concluding notes of this line in measure 27, provide the opening pitches for the whistlers in the wind ensemble version or for the violin harmonics in the sextet version.

Example 6. *Sanctuary*, measures 25-27; flute.



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Underneath the singing and whistling parts (or violin and cello parts), Schwantner added a very unique percussion effect. The part, played with contrabass bows, involves pulling the bow slowly across the end of the vibraphone key-plates, or the edge of crotales, to produce the pitches desired. This creates an eerie sound effect (see examples 7a & b).

Example 7a. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 21-34; two vibraphones.

[percussionists: *use mallets (a piacere) bow slowly with deliberation*]

[percussionists: bow articulations should be coordinated but no attempt should be made to coordinate with the rest of the ensemble.]

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Example 7b. *Sanctuary*, measures 21-33; crotales.



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In the wind ensemble version, Schwantner used four percussionists on two vibraphones playing four-note chords simultaneously. In the chamber version, the one percussionist pulls the bow over nine individual crotale pitches. Both the notes of the chords, and the single note line, are derived from the octatonic scale. The passage is marked to be played by the performers *freely, at will* and *not in strict time*. This part continues in the wind ensemble version to the end of this section in measure 34. In the chamber version, the part ends in measure 33 to allow the single percussionist an opportunity to switch instruments for the coming section.

At the end of this section, the pianist in each version is asked to silently depress the lowest possible octave B-flats and D-flats and then release the keys while keeping the sostenuto pedal depressed. This is done to allow these notes to ring sympathetically when other notes are played.

Section III (measures 35-50): The third section changes meter to a time signature of three dotted-eight plus one-eight (see example 8).

Example 8. *Sanctuary*, measures 34-37; violin/cello/piano/percussion.

The image shows a musical score for measures 34-37 of the piece 'Sanctuary'. It features four staves. The top two staves are for violin and cello, both marked with a 3+1 time signature and the instruction 'dark and foreboding'. The third staff is for piano, marked with a 3+1 time signature and the instruction 'dark and foreboding'. The bottom staff is for percussion, marked with a 3+1 time signature and the instruction 'dark and foreboding'. The percussion part includes a bass drum (labeled 'bass drum') and a tam-tam (labeled 'tam-tam'). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'ppp' and 'sfz'.

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While this is essentially a meter of eleven-sixteen, Schwantner uses this unique meter sign to show the pulse and subdivision of each measure. The tempo from the previous section remains, as the eighth-note pulse of 56 is now the tempo for the dotted-eighth pulse.

Marked *dark and foreboding*, this section begins with a new ostinato presented in the piano, bassoon, tuba, contrabass, and timpani parts in the wind ensemble version, and scored for piano alone in the chamber version (with bass drum and tam-tam adding rhythmic support). This part repeats low octave B-flats and D-flats until measure 47. After the singers and whistlers (violin harmonics and cello) finish their part in measure 37, the ostinato is expanded with the addition of a new part in measure 38. An ascending,

off-beat, syncopated line in parallel fifths is added beginning in the low register voices of piano in the wind ensemble version, and the cello and bass clarinet voices in the sextet version. This part slowly ascends and crescendos through this section (see example 9). The wind ensemble version is able to add other instruments to this ascending line, beginning with bass clarinets and bassoons, and eventually adding horns, clarinet, trombones, oboes and English horn.

Example 9. *Sanctuary*, measures 41-45; clarinet/cello/piano/percussion.

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is for Clarinet, the second for Cello, the third for Piano, and the bottom for Percussion. The music features a syncopated line in parallel fifths that slowly ascends and crescendos. Dynamics include p, mp, mf, and f. The percussion part includes a steady rhythm with accents.

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The composer attaches a marking of *stringendo* for both versions in measure 46 to press the music ahead toward the climax in measure 50 with an increase in volume. A new rhythmic figure is introduced near the end of this section in measure 48, which also ascends toward the climax in measure 50 (see example 10).

Example 10. *Sanctuary*, measures 46-49; full ensemble.

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These alternating intervals of perfect fourths and fifths eventually use all twelve chromatic tones. The use of the brass section for this segment adds strength and forward

motion to the passage in the wind ensemble version. The chamber version is limited to using flute, bass clarinet, violin, cello and piano to try and duplicate the same effect. In both versions, a drum and tam-tam part continues the earlier ostinato low register rhythm, however the wind ensemble is able to use all five percussionist playing an assortment of drums and tam-tams. The wind ensemble version is also able to offer a B-flat pedal in the bassoons, contrabasses, and low register piano as well.

In both versions, the drums have the final statement in measure 50, followed by a break in the music indicated with a fermata and a comma. This break is intended to allow for the ringing sounds to dissipate while the pianist silently depresses all of the keys at the bottom of the keyboard. The pianist is instructed to add the sostenuto pedal while the keys are still depressed. This is done to allow the piano strings to ring sympathetically when the succeeding chords are played.

Section IV (measures 51-64): The intensity developed at the end of section III is built upon at the beginning of this section. Measure 51 is marked *a piacere* (freely, at will) and includes three fermatas on each of the first three pulses. On these first three beats, a fortissimo chord cluster based on the octatonic scale is presented. This is performed by the trumpets, trombones, tuba, and contrabasses in the wind ensemble version, while both woodwind and string instruments do the same in the chamber setting. In both versions, the second sixteenth is punctuated by a cluster in the piano. A unique difference between the two versions occurs on the third sixteenth pulse where the fermata is located. In the wind ensemble version, a pianissimo, octatonic chord cluster is sustained by the woodwinds on each fermata (see example 11) to enhance the

sympathetic vibrations from the sustained piano keys. In the chamber version, except for the sustained piano keys, the composer leaves silence.

Example 11. *From a Dark Millennium*, measure 51; woodwinds.

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This measure ends with a figure that leads into the next measure marked *molto aggressivo* at the faster tempo of dotted eighth-note equals 72. Led by the drums into the next measure, measure 52 presents a similar effect as was found in measure 51. This time however, there are no fermatas and an additional, punctuated drum response to each of the surging chords is included. A pedal E-flat is sustained throughout the measure by the woodwinds and horns (flute and cello in the smaller version).

In the following measure, a polyrhythmic unison figure of 5:3 is followed by a 4:3 polyrhythmic octatonic chord cluster, which ends with three descending thirty-second notes (see example 12). These thirty-second notes lead toward the return of the opening ostinato pattern in measure 54. While Schwantner uses sostenuto markings for the woodwinds and sostenuto/accents for the horns and piano in the wind ensemble version, the entire measure has only sostenuto markings for the flute, cello and piano in the sextet.

Example 12. *Sanctuary*, measure 53; flute/cello/piano.

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Measure 54 returns to a meter of four-eight with a tempo of eighth-note equals 96, a metric modulation from the previous tempo's sixteenth pulse. The ostinato from the

introduction of the piece is presented for three measures at a volume of *fortississimo*. In the wind ensemble version, the brass parts slowly die away as the woodwinds play a new part (see example 13). The chamber version includes no part similar to the brass fade or the new woodwind part found in *From a Dark Millennium*. Instead, Schwantner uses the entire resources of the sextet to present the ostinato pattern. The woodwind part in the wind ensemble version, while written to give the effect of continuous thirty-second notes, is also reminiscent of music found in measures 48-50.

Example 13. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 54-56; woodwinds.

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This three-measure section is immediately followed by a five-measure passage marked *misterioso*, where the performers are asked to play suddenly softer. The tempo remains constant, however the meter shifts to six-eight. Using similar colors, a melody is played by flute and high bassoon in the wind ensemble version, while flute and low clarinet play the same line for the sextet (see example 14). This melody foreshadows the primary and longest melody of the entire work, which will be presented in measure 78.

Example 14. *Sanctuary*, measures 57-61; flute/clarinet.



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To support this melodic material in the wind ensemble version, Schwanter uses upper woodwinds, playing without vibrato, and suspended cymbals to create a sustained sound underneath the melody. He also includes a measured tremolo part for the triangle. The sextet version uses harmonics in the violin and cello parts, which play the tremolo with the triangle. A *sforzando*, octatonic chord cluster sounds in the last measure of this passage. This is played by the brass and contrabasses in the wind ensemble version,

versus the piano in the sextet. Measure 62 presents a return of the material found in measure 54, again three measures in length.

Section V (measures 65-74): Marked *con elevazione e elegante* (eloquent, lofty, and delicate), this section begins with a similar setting as was found in the *misterioso* section at measure 57. A thirty-second note tremolo effect on a pedal F-sharp, serves as the background material. An ascending arpeggiated chord, which uses all eight notes of the octatonic scale, is passed from piano and celeste to the woodwind section (piano to clarinet in the sextet). This arpeggiated figure occurs eight times between measures 66 and 73. Beginning in measure 69, a short five-note motive, played in thirty-second notes, is interspersed six times, with each statement of the motive gradually moving closer to the previous one (see example 15).

Example 15. *Sanctuary*, measures 73-75; flute/clarinet/violin/cello.

The image shows a musical score for measures 73-75. It consists of four staves. The top staff is for the flute/clarinet, the second staff is for the violin/cello, and the bottom two staves are for the piano/celeste. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key markings include '73' in a box at the start, 'stacc.' (staccato), 'sul pont., stacc.' (sul ponticello, staccato), 'ord.' (ordine), and 'made order'. There are also some handwritten-style markings like 'mf' and 'f'.

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In the wind ensemble version this five-note motive is found in the horns and trumpets. Schwantner substitutes cello and violin to play this motive in the chamber version, with one of the last repetitions played by the flute.

Surrounding these arpeggiated chords and the five-note motive, are long tones which *crescendo* and *decrescendo* throughout this section. The wind ensemble version uses the woodwinds and trombones to play the long tones, while the chamber version only has the flute voice to present this color. A glissando effect is achieved by the trombones in measures 69 and 73 of the wind ensemble score that is not available in the chamber version.

Section VI (measures 75-91): Section VI begins with a return to the opening ostinato, this time presented in the piano, celeste, and marimba parts in the wind ensemble version, and by the piano alone in the chamber version. Percussion parts shadow the downbeats and accented notes using glockenspiel, vibraphone, crotale, and tubular bell in the wind ensemble version; the chamber version uses glockenspiel, vibraphone, and crotale. The only extended melody, first foreshadowed in measure 57, is presented beginning in measure 78. Scored for flute, English horn, E-flat clarinet, and bassoon in the wind ensemble version, this same line is written in the sextet version for flute and cello (see example 16). The melodic line is scored with two octaves between

the high and low parts. Extending to the downbeat of measure 92 (measure 91 in the chamber version), this is by far the longest melodic passage of the piece.

Example 16. *Sanctuary*, measures 78-91; flute.

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The wind ensemble version offers a special effect towards the end of this section that is only hinted at in the chamber version due to the limitation of instruments available. Beginning in measure 88, the brass section enters softly in staggered entrances creating a chord cluster that once again uses all of the notes of the octatonic scale. This chord swells into measure 90 with a glissando effect and then fades away. A similar effect is produced in the woodwinds beginning in measure 90 and swelling to measure 91, fading out to the downbeat of measure 92 (see example 17).

Example 17. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 88-92; woodwinds/brass/contrabasses.

The image displays a complex musical score for a woodwind, brass, and contrabass section. It is organized into two systems, each with multiple staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score is written for a large ensemble, with parts for woodwinds, brass, and contrabasses. The notation is dense and detailed, typical of a professional musical score.

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For the sextet, Schwantner is only able to offer one quick swell, presented at the end of measure 89 through to the downbeat of measure 91 by the woodwinds and strings.

Section VII (measures 92-94): This section sees a return to the meter sign of three dotted-eight plus one eighth, this time with a tempo marking of dotted-eighth equals

64. Marked with the descriptive phrase *con grandezza e deciso* (with grandeur; stately and forceful), the horn section in the wind ensemble presents an ostinato reminiscent of the vocal part heard in measures 19-20 (see example 18).

Example 18. *From a Dark Millennium*, m.92-94; horns.



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The wind ensemble brass section adds to this with their own fragments of the ostinato line, performed with *fortissimo-piano* bell-tone attacks (see examples 19a & b).

Example 19a. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 92-94; brass.

The image shows a musical score for a brass section. At the top, the time signature is $3\frac{1}{2}$ and the tempo/mood is marked *con grandezza e deciso*. The key signature has one flat. The score consists of multiple staves for different brass instruments: two staves for trumpets (labeled 1 and 2), two staves for trombones (labeled 1 and 2), and one staff for the tuba. Each staff shows fragments of the ostinato line, with some notes marked with accents and dynamic markings like *fortissimo* and *piano*.

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Example 19b. *Sanctuary*, measures 92-94; flute/clarinet/violin/cello.

The image shows a musical score for measures 92-94 of the piece 'Sanctuary'. It consists of four staves. The top staff is for flute/clarinet/violin/cello, marked with a 3+1 time signature, a tempo of 64, and the instruction 'con grandezza e deciso'. The second staff is for strings, marked with a 3+1 time signature, a tempo of 64, and the instruction 'con grandezza e deciso'. The third staff is for woodwinds, marked with a 3+1 time signature, a tempo of 64, and the instruction 'con grandezza e deciso'. The bottom staff is for strings, marked with a 3+1 time signature, a tempo of 64, and the instruction 'con grandezza e deciso'. The music is in 3+1 time, with a tempo of 64. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'ff' and 'sim'.

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The woodwinds and strings of the sextet perform the same music, however the effect is quite different. This ostinato passage is also based on the same octatonic scale.

Section VIII (measures 95-101): The sudden burst of energy found in measures 92-94 is immediately contrasted by this next section that is marked *subito delicatamente* (suddenly dainty and elegant). This section, written with a meter of six-eight and a tempo of eighth-note equals 96, presents a metric modulation as the sixteenth-note pulse remains the same as the previous section. Beginning with an ostinato pattern played in

thirty-second notes, this background material is similar to the opening ostinato, with the exception that each note of the pattern is doubled before moving to the next pitch.

Schwantner uses piano, celeste, marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, triangle and upper woodwinds to do this in the wind ensemble version, while relying on the piano and vibraphone in the chamber setting. The ostinato is marked *pianississimo* and uses the notes of the same octatonic scale.

Beginning in the second measure of this section, the *ethereal* whistling effect returns, repeating the original four-note motive. Performed by the entire brass section in *From a Dark Millennium*, Schwantner asks the woodwinds and strings to whistle this in *Sanctuary*, augmenting the line with a cello part and violin harmonics. This figure repeats four times before fading to *niente* (nothing). Measure 100 features two thirty-second note D's with a timpani rolled F-sharp in the wind ensemble version and a bass drum roll on the last two pulses of the measure in the chamber version. These rolls crescendo into the downbeat of the next section.

Section IX (measure 101-108): With a marking of *prorompendo* (bursting out), and a return to the meter of three dotted-eight plus one-eighth, this section explodes with an octatonic chord cluster. Presented by the woodwinds, piano and celeste in the wind ensemble version, the piano plays this cluster alone in the chamber version. A rhythmic ostinato, presented by a chorus of drums, also begins in this measure. The figure is shared by all five percussionists in the wind ensemble version, but is covered by the one percussionist in the sextet without any change of effect (see examples 20a & b).

Example 20a. *From a Dark Millennium*, measure 101; percussion.

The image shows a musical score for percussion in measure 101. The time signature is 3+1/2, with a tempo marking of [♩ = 64] and the instruction 'prerompente'. The score is written for five parts: 5 Remo Robbons (1), 4 timbales (2), 3 tam-toms (3), 3 Remo Robbons (4), and timp. (5). The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamics markings include 'mf' and 'f'.

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Example 20b. *Sanctuary*, measure 101; percussion.

The image shows a musical score for percussion in measure 101 of 'Sanctuary'. The time signature is 3+1/2, with a tempo marking of [♩ = 72] and the instruction 'prerompente'. The score is written for (tam-toms) timbales. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamics markings include 'mf', 'cresc.', and 'f'.

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This figure is presented once in measure 101, and repeated in measures 104, 107 and 108.

The tempo in the chamber version is marked to be played faster (dotted-eighth equals 72), than the tempo of dotted-eighth equals 64 indicated in the wind ensemble version.

Measure 102 features a return of the brass figure previously heard in measure 92, but for only two measures this time. The ostinato heard in measure 95 is also presented again in measure 105 for three bars, however this time it is re-scored for woodwinds, brass, contrabasses, piano and celeste (all voices except percussion play the passage in the chamber version). The percussion ostinato pattern grows in volume in measure 108 to lead towards the huge climax presented in the next section.

Section X (measure 109-120): The next four measures present a split rhythmic counterpoint. In the wind ensemble version these elements are layered to create a very thick and dense texture. While the piano plays both parts, Schwantner splits the remainder of the ensemble having the upper woodwinds, upper brass and celeste playing one part, against the low woodwinds and low brass playing the other. This is scored at a *fortissimo* or *fortississimo* level for all voices. The chamber version only includes the cello with the two rhythmic parts in the piano (see example 21). Schwantner saves the remaining resources of the ensemble for the climax of this section, which is found in measures 113 and 114 when the meter changes to five-eight.

Example 21. *Sanctuary*, measures 109-110; cello/piano.



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These four measures foreshadow the next section. The tension created during this section is slowly released as a diminuendo is combined with a less rhythmically active figure in the lower voices.

Measure 117 returns to the atypical meter of three dotted-eight plus one-eight found in measure 101, and uses the next four measures as a transition towards the upcoming section. These four transition measures grow in volume as they swell from soft to loud dynamics which increase each measure (see example 22). The wind ensemble uses the brass section and the contrabasses to play this passage, while the woodwinds and strings perform the same function in the sextet.

Example 22. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 117-120; brass/contrabasses.

The image shows a musical score for brass and contrabasses, measures 117-120. The score is written for five parts: Horns (Horn 1, Horn 2), Trumpets (Trumpet 1, Trumpet 2), Trombones (Trombone 1, Trombone 2), and Contrabasses. The time signature is 3+1/8. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The score features a variety of musical notations, including eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, with dynamic markings such as *pp*, *f*, and *ff*. The music is characterized by a steady, rhythmic pattern that builds in volume over the four measures.

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The percussion ostinato first introduced in section IX returns, growing in volume each measure while using the same effect of swelling from soft to loud dynamics found in the other voices. Schwantner presents this growth in the wind ensemble by adding a new drum part each measure, while there can obviously be only one part played in the chamber version. One interesting variance is the timbale part in the wind ensemble version, which plays through the sixteenth rests that occur in the other drum parts. This percussion ostinato foreshadows the next section in both versions.

Section XI (measures 121-132): This twelve measure section is repeated four times, with a new pattern layered on top of the existing music each time. Schwantner indicated this is “. . .like taking the ostinato idea and magnifying it.”⁹ He believes that by separating the four different layers out, each new pattern is allowed to be clearly heard.

The only way this section makes sense is to allow each layer to articulate their part, each time adding a new voice. This will give you a chance to hear each new layer. It wouldn't make sense if everyone played their part the first time. . . You can get inside this section if you do it in stages. It's like building a complicated structure. If you can see how it was built, you can better understand it. It's like stripping away the architecture of the music and then re-building it until the structure is complete.¹⁰

Labeled A, B, C, and D in the scores, this section is written with each part to be played at *fortissimo* or *fortississimo* volume levels. Only the percussion ostinato, which plays all four times, has any dynamic variance. Besides short dynamic swells built into each measure, the percussion section is asked to adjust their dynamics to a softer level on the first repeat, with each successive repeat becoming louder. This direction is not included

⁹ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

¹⁰ Ibid.

for the percussionist in the chamber version, however Schwantner has indicated that the softer dynamic on the repeat should be observed for the sextet as well. The percussion part also includes a slight variance in the pattern in the fourth and seventh measures, giving the percussion two, three-measure patterns followed by a six-measure pattern.

All of the ostinato patterns that are added during each repetition in this section, are reminiscent of the motive first presented in measure 48. The B section introduces the bass voices of the ensemble with their own ostinato pattern. This is played in the wind ensemble by the bassoons, trombones, tuba, contrabasses, and piano left-hand. The bass clarinet, cello, and piano left-hand play the same part in the chamber version. In section C, Schwantner uses the mid-range treble instruments to present another ostinato pattern. Played by the trumpets and first trombone in the wind ensemble version, the right-hand of the piano is left to play this part alone in the chamber version. Of interest in the wind ensemble version, is the addition of the horns joining the B section part, but waiting to play at the same time the section C part begins. The high-range treble instruments join the rest of the ensemble on the D section, adding their own ostinato part. Performed in the wind ensemble by all of the upper woodwinds, both hands of the piano and celeste, this part is left to the flute and violin in the sextet.

The patterns for the instruments that enter after the first time are in four-measure sections. The four-measure rhythmic ostinato remains the same, however the pitch sets change, utilizing various combinations of intervals and directions. The octatonic scale, with some variations, is the basis for each of the layers (see examples 23a & b).

Example 23a. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 121-124; full ensemble.

The following twelve measures within the repeat signs are to be played 4 times. All instrumental parts marked  are to play the first presentation; parts marked  the second time;  the third and finally  the fourth.



 percussion (12 measures)  percussion, brass, flute, horn, T.C.B. (12 measures) etc.  percussion, brass, horn, flute, horn, T.C.B., piano  fl., pic., clar., bass, horn, T.C.B., piano, cele. piano.

Example 23b. *Sanctuary*, measures 120-124; full ensemble.

The following 32 measures (within the repeat signs) are to be played 4 times.
(Flute: tacet 1st, 2nd, and 3rd times)

(Bass clarinet: tacet 1st time)

(Violins: tacet 1st, 2nd, and 3rd times)

(Celli: tacet 1st time)

(Pianos: right hand: tacet 1st time)

(Left hand: tacet 1st time; 2nd time left hand only; 3rd and 4th time both hands)
(play 4 times)

120

121

122

123

124

(Bass clarinet)

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Section XII (measures 133-138): Section XI glides into section XII, which is the final climax of the piece. Changing the meter to four dotted-eight, a unison rhythmic chord cluster, which includes all eight octatonic scale notes, is played in the wind ensemble by the brass section with interludes by the percussion section. The chamber version features the entire ensemble versus the percussionist in a similar manner (see example 24). Beginning at the same loud volume that section XI ended with, the ensemble is asked to crescendo even more to measure 135. This section ends with just percussion playing a *crescendo* with tam-tams and suspended cymbal (tam-tam alone in the chamber version) for the last two and one-half measures. This crescendo culminates with a *fortississimo* release in measure 139 of the percussion sounds. The performers are instructed to let the instruments vibrate and fade-out slowly into the coda section of the piece.

Example 24. *Sanctuary*, measures 133-136; full ensemble.

The image displays a musical score for a full ensemble, covering measures 133 through 136. The score is written for six staves, likely representing different instruments or voices. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system of staves shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes. The second system continues this pattern, with some staves showing a change in rhythm. The third system shows a more varied texture with some staves having longer notes and others having more active passages. The fourth system concludes the excerpt with a final measure. The score is written in a standard musical notation style, with a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 4/4.

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Section XIII (measures 139-159): This last section sees a return to the atypical meter sign of three dotted-eight plus one-eight that has been prevalent throughout the work. This time the tempo is slower, with a metronome marking of dotted-eighth equals

52. The rolled percussion sounds are allowed to vibrate and fade-out as the ostinato pattern from section three is re-introduced. Scored for the bass clarinets, bassoons, contrabasses and piano in the wind ensemble version, the same part is written for bass clarinet, cello and piano in the chamber version. After this one-measure ostinato has been repeated five times, the whistle motive from section two also returns. While Schwantner used the remainder of the wind ensemble to whistle this two-measure pattern, he scored this part for flute and violin harmonics with no whistlers in the sextet.

At the same time the whistle motive returns in measure 144, the bowed vibraphone part returns. The large percussion section of the wind ensemble is able to bow a different pitch on each beat of the measure (the four pitches of the motive), however the solo percussionist in the sextet can only bow two of the notes, one each on the first and fourth pulses. This percussion part rests the second measure of its pattern each time. All ensemble parts in both versions are asked to play in varying degrees of softness.

Beginning in measure 150, the ostinato changes to a two-measure pattern which sustains an F-minor triad every other measure. Fading even softer in measure 155, the meter changes one more time to four-eight, with the eighth note pulse the same tempo as the preceding dotted-eighth pulse. The work solemnly ends with four measures of softly sustained F-minor triad half notes in the lower voices, underscored by softly rolling bass drums and tam-tams in the percussion section (bass drum only in the sextet). The performers are asked to let the last notes fade away to nothing (see example 25).

Example 25. *Sanctuary*, measures 156-159; full ensemble.

[illegible]

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Rochester, NY

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Melody

The melodic material in these works, as is typical with many twentieth-century compositions, does not include themes that are easily identifiable or would be typically found in traditional tonal music. In fact, within the 159 measures of these pieces, there is only one extended, traditional melodic line. This melody is found in measure 78 and

extends for fifteen measures (fourteen measures in *Sanctuary*) to measure 92. The melody is presented as a double-octave quartet of flute/Eb clarinet and English horn/bassoon in the wind ensemble version, and a duet between flute and cello in the chamber version. As is much of the melodic and harmonic material found in this work, this melody is based on an octatonic scale of alternating whole and half steps. A fragment of the melody found in measure 78 is first introduced in measure 57 as a double octave duet between flute and clarinet in the chamber version, and flute and bassoon in the wind ensemble version.

One small passage found in the flute part in both versions has the quality of a melodic line. Presented earlier in the piece in measure 21, the line is repeated and extended in measure 25. The first eight notes of the ascending motive is shadowed in the piano in both versions, along with the celeste in the wind ensemble setting. This line is also based on the octatonic scale.

The remainder of the melodic material in this music consists of short, motivic-like melodic fragments which are introduced throughout the piece. Schwantner indicated that he is often asked about this aspect of this music: “Where’s the tune? Well, there isn’t any tune. It all derives from the melodic fragments.”¹¹ These fragments also serve harmonic and rhythmic functions, and are usually two measures in length. Often extended through repetition, these harmonic and rhythmic fragments take on a melodic role in the absence of more traditional melodic lines.

¹¹ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

A characteristic found in much of Schwantner's music, and influenced from his earlier guitar training, is a concept the composer calls shared monody. Renshaw described this concept:

He takes a single linear idea and shares it, melodically, among many players; each player enters and sustains a different pitch of the theme in order. These notes become a single line in which many participate, as differentiated from one player on a solo line.¹²

Schwantner indicated that shared monody is essentially what is known as *klangfarben* (color melody) where several voices share a single melodic entity. Quite often in Schwantner's case, several of these shared monody fragments are layered on top of each other, presenting each repetitive fragment in a somewhat minimalistic way. Schwantner does not, however, compose music in a traditional minimalistic manner.

I never thought of myself as a minimalist composer, but I certainly know those guys – John Adams and all of them. In a sense, what I was interested in doing was to take a static device like the ostinato and find a way to give it some kind of propulsive life. Not just by doing it over and over again. You will never find that in my music, ala Steve Reich. My music is always progressive in the sense that something is always changing in the texture or the dynamics or in the orchestration, even though this pattern, this rhythmical ostinato, goes on for a number of measures. The idea was to take a static device, like the ostinato, and employ it so that it had a sense of forward motion and progression to it, and that's often done through color.¹³

The ostinato-like fragments that Schwantner creates provide a rhythmic and harmonic base for the listener.

¹² Jeffrey Renshaw, "Joseph Schwantner's *From a Dark Millennium*," *The Instrumentalist* XLIV/2 (September 1989), 24.

¹³ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

Harmony

Harmony in this piece is intertwined with the melodic material. Accompaniment material, rather than presented as a traditional harmonic base for a melody, also contributes toward combining these two elements. Renshaw stated that the harmonies presented are often very static:

Schwantner uses what he calls “static pillars of harmonies,” much like the music of Varese, in which single sonorities or blocks of sound remain unchanged for a period of time. Often angular motives themselves become the harmony as they are held. While traditional melodies are scored to move above a harmonic base, the effect of suspending their sound is the same as playing a Mozart piano sonata with the pedal held down.¹⁴

The effect of articulating each note of a multi-layered chord one at a time allows the listener an opportunity to hear the harmonies clearer. As Renshaw pointed out, “these stable pillars of harmony develop their own tonal center”¹⁵ in the ears of the listener.

The octatonic scale, as it was with the melodic material, is the basis for most of the harmonies presented in this music. This scale is introduced at the beginning of the piece, and can be found in the first measure within the opening ostinato pattern played by the piano (see example 26).

Example 26. *Sanctuary*, measures 1-2; piano.



¹⁴ Jeffrey Renshaw, “Joseph Schwantner’s *From a Dark Millennium*,” *The Instrumentalist* XLIV/2 (September 1989), 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

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Introduced in the piano part in both versions, the line is doubled in the wind ensemble version by two vibraphones, glockenspiel and celeste; while the cello and glockenspiel (with some notes included within the clarinet and violin parts) double the piano in the chamber version. The ostinato pattern alternately reverses the F and F# in each measure, and accents the F-natural in each measure. Beginning in the third measure, an identical part a minor third above the opening line is added in both versions. This minor third addition is continued for succeeding measures through the fourth repetition. As is the case throughout this work, the piano (and melodic percussion) are asked to keep the sustain pedal depressed throughout. The sustained tones allow the line to serve a harmonic function as well. This figure returns for three measures beginning in measure 54 and again in measure 62, and for seventeen measures beginning in measure 75 (although not in stacked minor thirds). The repetition of this figure throughout the work helps to serve as a unifying element in the piece.

A triplet figure which begins on a pedal F is performed along with the ostinato pattern, adjusting its entrance over one sixteenth pulse every other measure. This figure is augmented harmonically beginning in measure 11 with a chord cluster based on the octatonic scale (see example 27).

Example 27. *From a Dark Millennium*, measures 11-14; brass.

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This chord cluster appears in both versions, however the chamber version includes a more rhythmic approach. The additional voices of the sextet all play the repeated triplet figure, with the two missing notes of the octatonic cluster found in the glockenspiel part. This is the first presentation of a chord cluster built on the octatonic scale, however Schwantner uses this sound often, such as at the climax of this section in measure 17.

To help create a *dark and foreboding* atmosphere in the music beginning at measure 35, Schwantner presents an ostinato figure in the bass voices. The parts are scored with a double octave spread of two notes with a major second interval, alternating with two notes spread a double octave at the interval of a minor third. On top of this ostinato pattern are syncopated, ascending parallel fifths, which evolve into alternating

open fourths and fifths utilizing all twelve possible tones. This culminates with chord clusters using the octatonic scale beginning in measure 50 (see example 28).

Example 28. *Sanctuary*, measures 50-52; full ensemble.

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Another technique Schwanter often uses is to have some instruments provide pedal notes underneath the melodic and harmonic fragments to add tension to the music. Many times he uses two pedal notes simultaneously that are scored a major second or minor third apart.

Throughout the work, Schwantner creates various melodic fragments which also serve a harmonic function as each note is repeated and sustained. The ostinato repetition also adds to the harmonic quality of these melodic fragments. Many times, these fragments are also based on the octatonic scale as found in measures 95 and 105 (see example 29).

Example 29. *Sanctuary*, measures 105-107; full ensemble.

105

(dp)

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In measure 109, a new melodic/harmonic motive appears that is unique to this work that is based mostly on octatonic melodies and harmonies. Augmented major-seventh chords are stacked in closed voicings in either root or second inversion position above open, parallel fifths in the bass voices (with occasional perfect fourth intervals included). The line which begins in measure 109 (see example 30), ascends towards a full ensemble presentation of this motive and these intervals in measure 113.

Example 30. *Sanctuary*, measures 109-110; piano.

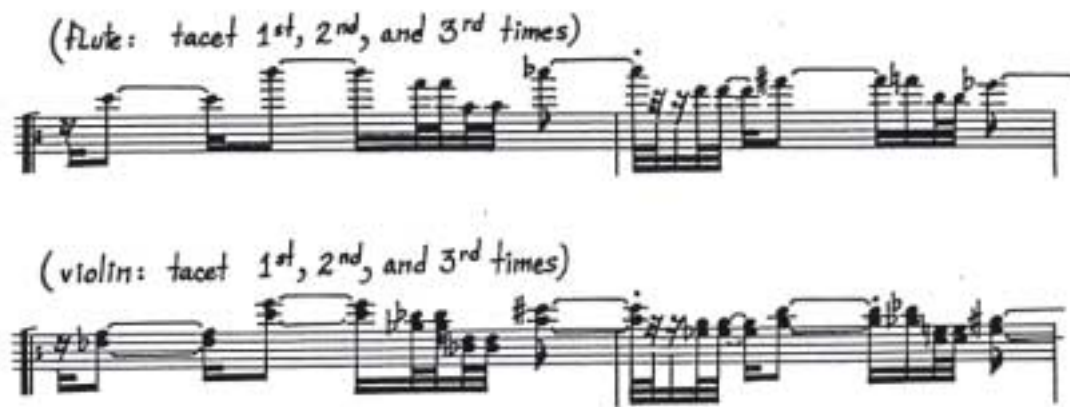


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This same line is continued and expanded beginning in measure 121 during the four repetitions of this section. Beginning with a rhythmic ostinato played by drums in the percussion part (or parts in the wind ensemble version), each successive repetition includes another element of the motive. The fourth time, a syncopated countermelody is introduced in the soprano voices that moves in parallel major-seventh chords (see

example 31). The fifth of the chord is missing in the chamber version due to the use of a smaller instrumentation, however the fifth does appear in several voices in the wind ensemble version.

Example 31. *Sanctuary*, measures 121-122; flute/violin.



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The final climax of the work occurs in measure 133 following the repeated section at measure 121. The use of strong, unison rhythms, played at a very loud volume, signal this last climactic event. Once again, Schwantner uses octatonic chord clusters, presented in a unison fashion by all voices (except for the drum parts), to add weight to this effect (see example 32).

Example 32. *Sanctuary*, measures 133-134; full ensemble.

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The coda, which begins at measure 139, features a return to the material presented earlier in the piece at measure 38. A pedal B-flat, alternating with a D-flat eighth note at the end of each measure, provides an ostinato bass pattern. Layered on top of this is a syncopated line scored in open parallel perfect fifths along with one perfect fourth interval, which ascends toward the second measure of the pattern. This pattern begins to

release tension by resolving to an F-minor triad in measure 151 (see example 33).

Marked with the word *solemn*, this two-measure pattern does three repetitions before ending with four measures of *pianississimo* F-minor triad half notes which fade away to nothing.

Example 33. *Sanctuary*, measures 150-151; piano.



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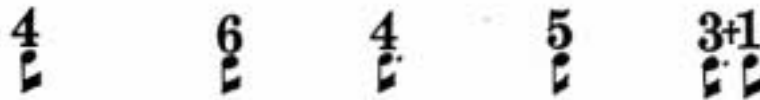
Rhythm

When observing the rhythmic elements that are found in these works, the related areas of tempo and meter must also be examined. All of these areas are contributing factors in how to interpret and perform this music. The matter of notation should also be examined, as Schwantner's use of eighth note and dotted-eighth note pulses contributes to the understanding and interpretation of the music. The issues discussed here are identical for both works.

Schwantner uses five meter signs in this piece: one simple (four-eight); two compound (six-eight and four dotted-eight); one asymmetrical (five-eight); and one

atypical (three-dotted eight plus one-eighth). A sample of these meter signs are notated in the score as follows (see example 34):

Example 34. *From a Dark Millennium/Sanctuary*; sample meter signs.



Schwantner has indicated that he chose to use these meter signs because they seemed the most appropriate for interpreting his music. “At this time, most of my music was written at the eighth-note level. I used these meter signs because they showed the subdivision and pulse of the music, as well as the note-groupings.”¹⁶ This was typical of all of his earlier works. As he began writing more pieces for orchestra, he changed his notation to use the more standard quarter note or half note as the pulse. Schwantner has indicated that he believes the eighth-note notation is a better and more exact replica of the sound he wishes to have produced, but realized that the smaller unit notation was preventing many conductors and orchestras from playing his music.

Orchestra players hate that stuff. Musicians were coming up to me at breaks and complaining about the sixteenth note and thirty-second note notation. I never had a chamber musician, or new music player, come up and question the notation. They accommodate it very easily. I desperately hated to have to do that, but it was the only way I could deal with these groups in the orchestra, without having to struggle with them all the time. So, the issue of notation changes in my scores, starting with *Magabunda*. It starts to use the quarter note as the main pulse, rather than the eighth note.¹⁷

¹⁶ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The tempo markings in this music are very specific. The tempos are generally slow to medium, although the use of thirty-second notes and sixteenth-triplet figures creates the effect of the music sounding faster. The tempos indicated in the score range from eighth note equals 52 to eighth note equals 96. Many of the tempo indications are for the dotted-eighth note pulse which ranges from 52 to 72. Schwantner indicates each section with a specific tempo marking and usually includes a word or phrase to help signify the style and mood desired. To help connect many of the sections, he will include an *accelerando* or a marking of *stringendo* to prepare the next tempo. Most of the tempo changes are more subtle rather than abrupt.

Schwantner employs several rhythmic techniques to add movement to his music. The use of ostinato-like figures is very common, as are syncopated rhythms and displaced accents within measures. Triplet figures are used throughout the work, with some polyrhythmic passages that use ratios of 4:3, 5:4 or 7:4. There is also some use of unmeasured time found in the percussion parts, as well as one section where the conductor has the freedom to add silence between short rhythmic motives and tone clusters.

Dynamics

Schwantner is very meticulous in his notation of these two works. Because his music is so strongly connected by timbral and textural elements, strict attention to the balance between instruments, and the dynamic markings assigned to each instrument, is crucial to the performance. While there are some subtle dynamic changes indicated, the more extreme changes are the very essence of the music. The music does begin and end

softly, with dynamics in both pieces written as low as *pianissississimo*. The dynamic range extends to fortississimo in both pieces as well. Many passages also ask the musicians to perform slight crescendos and decrescendos within a phrase. Making sudden changes is very important in the music, as the marking *subito* is often used. This is in addition to the dynamic markings of *forte-pianississimo*, *sforzando-pianississimo*, and *pianississimo-fortississimo* he employs. The music requires very loud playing much of the time with short, soft repose interspersed throughout.

As would be expected with the changes in scoring between the two versions, the dynamic markings are slightly different in each score. The overall dynamic scheme of the music remains the same throughout though, and the effect is generally unchanged. Obviously, a large wind ensemble with amplified instruments has the advantage of being able to produce a much louder sound, however the subtle piano dynamics are truly evident in the transparent scoring of the chamber version. Schwantner recently stated about these two versions: “The intimate soft stuff works well in both. In the larger, louder sections, I prefer the wind ensemble version.”¹⁸

Stylistic Articulations and Expressive Gestures

Schwantner makes extensive use of articulation markings and terminology to request specific sounds and moods from the performers. Besides his requests indicating the specific places he would like performers to not use vibrato, he uses a wide variety of staccato, legato, and accent marks (as well as combinations of these marks) within this

¹⁸ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

music. The precise style of attack of individual notes is obviously very important to Schwantner. In general, he prefers a very pointed attack to his figures, a reference to his early study of the guitar. He often uses percussion instruments to help augment these attacks, and also uses the percussive qualities of the piano to add to the strength of selected lines. This is especially apparent in the shared monody lines found throughout the music.

The musical terms and descriptive words used by the composer also contribute to his intention of providing the performers with as much information as possible. The collection of musical terms include: *stringendo*, *molto legato*, and *accelerando poco a poco*. The descriptive words include: *mysteriously*, *lontano* (far off, remote), *molto aggressivo*, *ethereal*, *spiritoso*, *exuberantly*, *misterioso*, *prorompendo* (bursting out), and *solemn*. The music also includes such phrases as *dark and foreboding*, *subito delicatamente*, *alato e dolce* (eloquent and gentle), *con elevazione e elegante* (eloquent, lofty, and delicate), and *con gradezza e deciso* (with grandeur, stately and forceful).

The musical terms used are generally the same for both pieces, however there are a few differences. Some terminology that is related to specific instruments in each version, for example the use of *sul tasto* (over the fingerboard) for the violin in the chamber version is to be expected.

Scoring

Chapter II provides a list of the instrumentation required to perform each version of this work. Obviously, scoring the music for a chamber ensemble of six performers is very different from a full-sized wind ensemble. Of special interest is the use of two

instruments in the chamber version which were not used in the wind ensemble version, the violin and cello. Schwantner was able to effectively use the special qualities and performance techniques of these instruments as he re-scored the work for sextet.

As was briefly discussed in Chapter II, the piano is the central timbre in both versions. The piano part is written to serve three functions in this piece: a melodic and harmonic function, as well as a percussive, rhythmic role. While the piano is amplified in the wind ensemble version (along with the celeste), it is as important in the chamber version where it is not amplified. The piano may even have a more prominent role in the smaller setting, due to the number of instruments available to play the music in the chamber version.

The use of percussion is also very important to both versions. In the wind ensemble version five percussionists, playing a wide variety of instruments, have a central role to play. In the chamber version, where all the percussion instruments are performed by one musician, the percussion part serves as a unifying element in the piece. The percussionists in both versions have very important rhythmic, harmonic and melodic material to contribute.

The wind ensemble version uses a large assortment of woodwind and brass instruments, modeled after the size and make-up of an orchestral wind section. There are also parts included for two contrabasses, in addition to the piano, celeste, and percussion parts already mentioned. The woodwind and brass instruments are generally scored utilizing the extremes of their extended range. The writing for horn especially exploits the high and low range of their instruments. The brass are asked to use mutes (horns to

play stopped) at times as well. By using these techniques, Schwantner is able to add additional colors to his sound palette.

One of the unique aspects of these works is the use of whistling and singing to provide an *ethereal* effect in the music. In both versions performers are asked to whistle, however in the chamber version, this is augmented by the violinist playing harmonics (see example 35). This effect helps to compensate for the number of whistlers available in the sextet. The string players are asked to whistle while they are playing as well.

Example 35. *Sanctuary*, measures 96-97; flute/clarinet/violin/cello.

The image shows a musical score for measures 96-97 of the piece 'Sanctuary'. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are for 'whistle:' and the bottom two are for 'play / whistle:'. The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The top staff has a 'whistle:' instruction and a 'ppp' dynamic marking. The second staff has a '(concert pitch)' instruction and a 'ppp' dynamic marking. The third staff has a 'play / whistle:' instruction and a 'ppp' dynamic marking. The fourth staff has a 'play / whistle:' instruction and a 'ppp' dynamic marking. There are various musical notations including notes, rests, and slurs. Handwritten annotations include 'ethereal' above the first staff, '(gliss.)' above the second staff, 'ethereal' above the third staff, '(gliss.)' above the fourth staff, and '(whistle in unison with the resulting harmonics)' above the fourth staff. A note at the bottom of the fourth staff reads '(cellist: whistle the cello part 2 octaves higher)'.

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The wind ensemble version asks for some of the performers to sing, but not in the chamber version where there are not enough performers to allow for this unique timbre.

Another special effect to help achieve the *dark and foreboding* atmosphere the composer desires is the use of bass bows on the vibraphones and crotales. This technique creates a very eerie and otherworldly effect in the music. An additional effect Schwantner uses to create this atmosphere are the glissandos found in the parts for trombones, whistlers, and singers in the wind ensemble version, and for the string players and whistlers in the chamber version.

Texture

At times in this work, the music takes on a monophonic texture, as one musical line is performed and shared by several performers. Overall however, there is a very polyphonic approach in the writing that is evident throughout as multiple, contrapuntal lines, are layered against each other. There is also very little of what may be described as traditional homophonic scoring, where the main melodic line is accompanied by a sustained chordal part. Due to the composer's use of many short, fragmented melodic and harmonic lines, the various textures derived from the scoring provide an important element in the music. The music is constantly shifting between sections that are very sparse to sections that have a thicker density. These shifting, motivic-like, fragments provide motion within the composition, and also contribute to the textural sound of the musical fabric through the use of various instrumental colors.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

The exploration of these two works by Joseph Schwantner, *From a Dark Millennium*, and *Sanctuary* from the *Music of Amber*, has allowed for an interesting study into the compositional and scoring practices of an important twentieth-century composer. Many of the characteristic style traits that are now associated with Schwantner's music were developed and expanded during the time period when these works were written. These pieces were also composed during a time when he was moving from writing mostly chamber ensemble literature to music for large ensembles. With the use of the same musical material, and having completed these compositions within six months of each other, these works offer a rare look into Schwantner's compositional process.

In analyzing these pieces, we find many similarities that are associated with Schwantner's music. Both the melodic and the harmonic material in this music is based almost entirely on the octatonic scale. His use of this scale, with its unique relationship of whole-steps and half-steps, provided him with a non-traditional sound, while still affording him an opportunity to write tonal music. Typical of his compositions, Schwantner was able to blend many concepts of tonal and atonal music together in these pieces. His almost total exclusion in this music of any scales other than the octatonic, helps to blur the function of the musical material. There is often no clear division between the melodic and harmonic function of the motives or fragments in these works.

Composing short motives that are continually expanded and explored is another compositional trait of Schwantner's found in these works. Very little material is used, however his approach toward expanding this material is exceptionally creative. By manipulating how the material is presented, and exploring various timbres and techniques, Schwantner is able to present music which is unique and interesting. Schwantner is also able to connect and relate these short motivic fragments in such a way as to allow each of these works to achieve a cohesive quality. One of the challenges for performers of this music is in developing an approach for connecting these melodic fragments, and the shared monody lines, into an effective whole. In examining the score, it is often possible to find phrases which have been divided among several voices, combined within the piano and percussion parts. The conductor must understand how these large sections of music are put together, along with how each of the individual parts function, in order to assist the performers in creating longer melodic lines and phrases. Schwantner does place a strong emphasis on timbre and scoring, which is helpful in defining the overall form of his music.

Another important element of Schwantner's music is how he achieves tension and release within his compositions. He often creates tension in the music through repetition of a melodic or harmonic fragment. By adding additional layers of sound, many times with contrasting rhythms, Schwantner is able to add to the tension and create forward motion in the music. In addition to his use of various colors in the ensemble, dynamics play an important role in achieving and releasing tension. He uses a wide variety of dynamic devices within the music, some very subtle, others quite dramatic. The music

tends to move, often abruptly, between sections that are very sparse and soloistic, to scoring that is very dense. Even with the composer's request for extremely loud and intense playing at times, performers must keep all of this within a reasonable range. If close attention to the balances are not observed, the essence of the music will be lost. The specific details of the dynamic markings, terminology and notation in the score must be understood by both the conductor and the performers to achieve the desired effect. While the balance problems are different in each version, the ability of the conductor to determine the relative importance of each part and convey this to the ensemble, will ultimately determine the success of a performance of either work.

Even though the pieces share the same musical material, they possess characteristics which are unique to each version. In order to judge them objectively, it is important to evaluate each work on its own merit in addition to comparing and contrasting them. *From a Dark Millennium* has a much heavier and more percussive sound. *Sanctuary*, due to its size and instrumentation, is more *ethereal*, and features the performers in a more soloistic environment. As was noted in the analysis portion of this study, there were many things that Schwantner had to approach differently in adapting the work for a smaller medium. Interestingly enough, the violin and cello, with their own unique characteristics, tend to enhance the more *ethereal* aspect of the chamber version. Schwantner recently said about these two versions: "The big difference between these two pieces is it's not about the pitches, it's about the density issues."¹ The availability of a brass section and multiple percussionists in the wind ensemble version does provide the

¹ Joseph Schwantner, interview in Dallas, Texas, October 1, 1999.

opportunity for music that is much more dense. Schwantner certainly uses these resources to the utmost in *From a Dark Millennium*.

In preparing these works for performance, musicians will encounter many of the same obstacles they would find in any music. This music may present particular problems for performers unaccustomed to reading notation written with an eighth-note or dotted eighth-note pulse. Many of the rhythms are therefore notated using sixteenth-notes and thirty-second notes, as well as various types of triplets and polyrhythmic ratios. Performers must also develop an understanding of how their individual part fits within the structure of the composition. Without the clearly defined roles of melody, harmony, and accompaniment found in more traditional music, each musician must realize that their individual part contributes toward the music in different ways. I believe the music is very accessible however, due in large part to the very clear notation and directions provided by the composer in the score. Renshaw also believes that the work is accessible if the challenges of the music are understood.

Although the work (*From a Dark Millennium*) does contain some specific challenges to the performers and conductor, both college and accomplished high school ensembles have successfully performed it. The challenges for performers include complex rhythms, changing meters, singing and whistling, and extremes of range and volume. For the conductor the challenges focus on balancing the ensemble and keeping a melodic flow within a sectional work.²

There are additional challenges for performers of the chamber version, as the responsibility level is somewhat higher when there are fewer musicians to play the music.

² Jeffrey Renshaw, "Joseph Schwantner's *From a Dark Millennium*," The Instrumentalist XLIV/2 (September 1989), 22.

From a Dark Millennium and *Sanctuary* are both successful compositions, and are very representative of Schwantner's work. Without reservation, I believe that both versions of this music easily stand on their own. The continued interest from musicians in performing these works, and the contributions these pieces have made to their respective repertoires, also attest to this.

Joseph Schwantner has developed a very unique and exciting musical language in his compositions. His creative output, which now spans two centuries, continues to enrich the music world. While it may be too early to evaluate his impact on the music of our time, it is clear that he has made significant contributions to our art. He has helped to re-define the sounds that have become a part of the music of the twenty-first century. Schwantner's efforts to express himself through his compositions may best be described in his own words:

My notions about music are naturally reflected in my work, and those notions, values, and musical issues change as the work changes, thus requiring new responses and solutions to compositional problems. This for me is a way of living my life, with each new work further defining that search for a personal voice – a voice that is an evolving continuum that seeks its identity through a compositional impulse which becomes an exciting journey filled with eager expectations of confronting the unknown. The journey raises questions that find their ultimate solution in the compositional process – a process with a multiplicity of seemingly infinite possibilities that totally engages my ear, mind, and spirit.³

³ "Joseph Schwantner," American Composers: A Biographical Dictionary, ed. David Ewen (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 578.

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