INNOVATIONS IN MUSICAL TEXTURE AND AURAL PERSPECTIVE: STEVEN MACKEY’S \textit{SEE YA THURSDAY} FOR SOLO MARIMBA

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Hall, David Porter. Innovations in Musical Texture and Aural Perspective: Steven Mackey’s See Ya Thursday for Solo Marimba. Doctor of Musical Arts (Performance), August 2013, 28 pp., 1 table, 2 figures, 10 musical examples, bibliography, 20 titles.

This dissertation and accompanying lecture recital explore the unique textural features in the works of Steven Mackey as exhibited in See Ya Thursday (1993). A rigorous formal, harmonic, and motivic analysis will highlight the compositional characteristics of textural structure and aural perspective that exist in the work. Illumination of these compositional elements can help to identify and minimize the technical complexities that exist within this piece for the performer.

In addition, this document provides brief biographical information on Steven Mackey and his works, and on See Ya Thursday as it relates to other pieces in the advanced marimba literature. Finally, it is the aim of the author to add a resource to the relatively limited amount of research on Steven Mackey with this analysis of See Ya Thursday.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks and gratitude go out to my committee members Christopher Deane, Mark Ford, and David Schwarz for their time, expertise, support, and guidance. I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to my parents, Ron and Cathy Hall, for teaching me a love of music and of lifelong learning; and for their support at every stage of my career. Finally, I want to thank my wife Elizabeth for her unending love, support, and patience.
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<td>10</td>
<td><em>See Ya Thursday</em> mm. 334-337</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Steven Mackey’s instrumental music is often defined by innovative and non-traditional
textures.\(^1\) He has expressed interest in “evocative textures” as well as the need to delineate
different “viscosities and topographies” in his compositions. Much of the structural
transformation in his music is accomplished while exploring textures that give the illusion of
aural depth and dimension. Different voices can be distinguished from one another, or
(conversely) can be heard to be working in a coordinated fashion. In the same way an observer
can shift his or her focus from one object to another in a three-dimensional visual setting, a
musical texture that allows for aural perspective and depth can be heard from several different
sonic vantages.\(^2\) A rigorous formal, harmonic, and motivic analysis of Mackey’s piece See Ya
Thursday (1993) highlights the compositional characteristics of textural structure and aural
perspective that exist in the work. Illumination of these compositional elements can help to
identify and minimize the technical complexities that exist within this piece for the performer.

There is currently only one existing dissertation that deals exclusively with the music of
Steven Mackey; it examines his award winning 1987 string quartet Fumeux Fume.\(^3\) One other
existing dissertation uses Mackey’s electric guitar concerto Tuck and Roll to illustrate the
differences in composing for electric and classical guitar.\(^4\) My research has benefited from the

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\(^1\) Caltabiano, Ronald. "Mackey, Steven." *Grove Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed
February 10, 2013.
\(^2\) Mackey, Steven. *Compositional Philosophy.* http://stevenmackey.com/composer, accessed
\(^3\) Miskell, Jerome P. *An examination of Fumeux Fume for string quartet by Steven Mackey.*
University of South Carolina, 1995.
\(^4\) Ellis, Paul. *The Creative and Technical Differences in Composing an Electric Guitar Concerto
availability of some of Mackey’s own scholarly writing, especially his 1985 dissertation on range
and octave displacement in twelve-tone music. Interestingly, one of Mackey’s “primary
intentions” in composing See Ya Thursday was to explore the range of a five-octave marimba, so
his own writing about musical range is pertinent here. There are a number of existing resources
in the form of audio, video, and print interviews with the composer. Several of these interviews
explore some of Mackey’s more recent pieces including the percussion quartet It is Time and the
piano concerto Stumble to Grace.

Apart from these resources, there is a great deal of existing research that examines other
staples of advanced modern marimba literature. I’ve consulted this research as it relates to
texture and perspective (the prevailing foci of this document) in marimba composition. The
unique textural features outlined in my analysis separate See Ya Thursday from other staples of
the marimba literature by other composers, and distinguish it from scholarly writing on other
marimba literature. For example, many solo marimba works feature primarily monophonic or
homophonic texture. Marimbists regularly perform transcriptions of J.S. Bach or other original
works that are primarily polyphonic.

The most intricate and extensive use of heterophony in the marimba literature can be
found in Alejandro Vinao’s Khan Variations (2001), which is influenced by heterophonic
Qawwali music. Vinao was also influenced by the multi-temporal player-piano music of Conlon
Nancarrow. John Roberts explores these textural developments in marimba composition in his

5 Performance Notes, See Ya Thursday, Steven Mackey 1993.
6 E.g. Schwanter: Velocities or Druckman: Reflections on the Nature of Water
7 E.g. Lansky: Hop (from Three Moves for Marimba) or Burritt: Mechanique (from Four
Movements for Marimba).
8 E.g. Serry: Passacaglia (from West Side Suite).
2010 dissertation on Vinao’s *The Khan Variations*. I similarly examine aspects of multi-temporality in *See Ya Thursday* as one voice is often moving at a seemingly unrelated pace to secondary or tertiary lines.

Before my analysis of *See Ya Thursday*, I provide some brief background on Steven Mackey, including musical influences, works, and salient compositional characteristics. This document not only adds to the body of research on Steven Mackey, but also represents *See Ya Thursday* and its textural features in the ongoing discussion of landmark works for solo marimba.

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Steven Mackey is a professor and chair of the Department of Music at Princeton University, where he teaches lessons and courses in composition, music theory, twentieth century music, and improvisation. In addition to his teaching duties, Mackey has been very active as a composer and performer, collaborating with such groups as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the BBC Philharmonic, the San Francisco and Chicago Symphonies, So Percussion, the Kronos Quartet, and the Brentano String Quartet.\textsuperscript{10}

Mackey is considered one of the leading composers of his generation and has accrued many commissions, awards, and various other accolades for his works. Recordings of his works \textit{Dreamhouse} (2010) and \textit{Lonely Motel: Music from Slide} (2011) were nominated for four Grammy Awards each, with \textit{Lonely Motel} winning a Grammy in 2011 for best small group performance.\textsuperscript{11} His other awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, several honors each from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Kennedy Center, and the Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He has been the composer-in-residence at the Tanglewood, Aspen, and Holland music festivals. Recent commissions include \textit{One Red Rose} for the Brentano String Quartet (commissioned by Carnegie Hall, the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, and the Yellow Barn Music Festival) to commemorate the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the John F.

\textsuperscript{10} Mackey, Steven. \textit{Steven Mackey} http://stevenmackey.com/composer, accessed March 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2013.
\textsuperscript{11} Years of CD release.
Kennedy assassination; and *Stumble to Grace*, a concerto for pianist Orli Shaham, jointly commissioned by several orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic.¹²

Steven Mackey’s output consists almost entirely of instrumental music. Some of his pieces include vocalists or narrators, but only one of his compositions, *The Attic Which is Desire* (2002) is a purely vocal work. Most of his works are acoustic, with electronic elements limited to amplification (especially of guitar and string quartet) or digital delay.¹³ He has written pieces for orchestra, concerti and solo works for a large number of orchestral instruments, string quartet, and many different combinations of mixed chamber ensembles. Many of his earlier works in the late twentieth century included electric guitar, often written for Mackey himself to perform the guitar part. As a result of a continued collaboration with tenor/actor Rinde Eckert, Mackey has written several staged melodramas or music theater works including *Ravenshead* (1998), *Dreamhouse* (2003), and *Slide* (2010).

Mackey has a robust output of music for percussion and regularly features percussion within his mixed chamber works. He composed his tour de force percussion quartet *It is Time* for So Percussion in 2010. He has composed three solo percussion works: *Busted* (2003) for multiple-percussion; *Beast* (2009) for solo marimba; and *See Ya Thursday* (1993), also for solo marimba. *See Ya Thursday* (the subject of this dissertation) is widely considered to be a standard in the marimba repertoire and is regularly listed on the suggested or required repertoire lists for many major marimba competitions.

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¹³ As is *String Theory* (1998) and the first movement of *It is Time* (2010).
Mackey’s compositional output is eclectic and performances of his works are widespread.

There are over a dozen CDs of his music and many more that feature individual compositions.

Table 1 is a complete list of Steven Mackey’s works:

Table 1: The Works of Steven Mackey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Genre/Instrumentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td><em>Indigenous Instruments</em></td>
<td>Flute/piccolo/alto flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td><em>Never Sing Before Breakfast</em></td>
<td>Woodwind quintet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>among the vanishing</em></td>
<td>Soprano and string quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>On All Fours</em></td>
<td>String quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>Physical Property</em></td>
<td>String quartet and electric guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>TILT</em></td>
<td>Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>Troubador Songs</em></td>
<td>String quartet and electric guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td><em>See Ya Thursday</em></td>
<td>Solo marimba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>Banana/Dump Truck</em></td>
<td>Cello solo and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>Eating Greens</em></td>
<td>Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>Feels So Baaad</em></td>
<td>Violin, marimba, guitar, percussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td><em>Deal</em></td>
<td>Improvising electric guitar soloist, optional drummer, small chamber orchestra (16 players)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td><em>No Two Breaths</em></td>
<td>Marimba, violin, percussion quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>Lost &amp; Found</em></td>
<td>Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>Sonata for Violin and Piano</em></td>
<td>Violin and piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Humble River</em></td>
<td>Flute, violin, viola, cello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td><em>Fusion Tune</em></td>
<td>Cello and electric guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td><em>Ravenshead</em></td>
<td>Staged monodrama for tenor/actor, violin, tenor saxophone, bassoon, keyboard synth, mallet kat synth, electronic drums, electric guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td><em>San Francisco</em></td>
<td>Cello and electric guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td><em>String Theory</em></td>
<td>Amplified string quartet and digital delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td><em>Micro-Concerto</em></td>
<td>Percussion and five players (flute, cello, violin, viola, piano)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td><em>Tuck and Roll</em></td>
<td>Concerto for electric guitar and orchestra</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td><em>Ars Moriendi</em></td>
<td>String quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td><em>Gaggle and Flock</em></td>
<td>String octet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td><em>Heavy Light</em></td>
<td>Flute, cello, electric guitar, percussion, piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td><em>Pedal Tones</em></td>
<td>Orchestra and pipe organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td><em>The Attic Which is Desire</em></td>
<td>Children’s chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td><em>Busted</em></td>
<td>Solo percussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td><em>Dreamhouse</em></td>
<td>Orchestra, amplified vocal quartet, performance artist, 4 electric guitars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mackey’s eclectic output can be attributed to his omnivorous approach to music and the unique combination of influences that he cites. He began playing electric guitar at a young age (he did not learn how to read music until college) and it remains his primary instrument. He often cites his background as a guitarist as a major component of his compositional style. Not only has he written a number of pieces that feature electric guitar, he continues to improvise on the instrument with his students and while composing as a sort of musical “home base.” In addition, he performs as a guitarist in the New York-based progressive rock band Big Farm. Vernacular music remains a strong influence, though Mackey doesn’t often make overt references to a particular style of music in his compositions. Mackey describes a portion of his work as “vernacular music from a culture that doesn’t actually exist.”

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Mackey’s 1985 dissertation *The Thirteenth Note* addresses the role of range and octave displacement in the twelve-tone music of Milton Babbitt. Interestingly, one of Mackey’s “primary intentions” in composing *See Ya Thursday* was to explore the range of a five-octave marimba\(^{15}\), so his own writing about musical range is pertinent here\(^6\). His study of and propensity for twelve-tone music in the early part of his career is often audibly apparent in his music. His first string quartet, written in 1983 (which he no longer lists under his works) oscillates “freely and fluidly” between a more resonant tonal language and what Mackey calls a “gnarly dissonant language.” Mackey cites this interest in seamlessly integrating tonal and twelve-tone language as something that has persisted throughout his career, but notes that this first string quartet used compositional techniques that he still considered to be borrowed from a collective compositional consciousness. After his 1985 dissertation on Milton Babbitt and since his first catalogued composition *Indigenous Instruments* (1989), Mackey has considered his music to be a synthesis between his rock/guitar background and the influences of his rigorous twelve-tone background.\(^{17}\)

Mackey has cited Thelonious Monk as an influence both for *See Ya Thursday* and his piano concerto *Stumble to Grace*. Regarding his process for writing the concerto, Mackey said: “Some of my favorite pianistic influences have a charming wrongness to them, like Thelonious Monk, who just managed to play the right ‘wrong’ notes,” and this sort of musical “stumbling” is

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\(^{15}\) Performance Notes, *See Ya Thursday*, Steven Mackey 1993.


the impetus for *Stumble to Grace*.\(^{18}\) Similarly, he cites Monk as an influence in the program notes for *See Ya Thursday*:

I also love to listen to Thelonious Monk – what a storyteller he is! Any piece he plays is more about his playing than it is about the piece. He stumbles up and down the keyboard with a kind of intelligent incompetence that reminds me a little of the way the 70s comedian Norm Crosby stumbled through the English language. Or is that a “Fig Newton” of my imagination?\(^ {19}\)

Steven Mackey’s myriad influences and musically omnivorous style have shaped his diverse compositional output, and *See Ya Thursday* exemplifies his eclectic style.


\(^{19}\) Program Notes, *See Ya Thursday*, Steven Mackey 1993.
CREATION OF *SEE YA THURSDAY*

*See Ya Thursday* was jointly commissioned by a number of individuals and entities, including New Music Marimba, the Percussive Arts Society, William Moersch, Nancy Zeltsman, and Robert Van Sice. The commission was facilitated by a grant from the Meet the Composer/Reader’s Digest Commissioning Program, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund. The piece is dedicated to Nancy Zeltsman, who Mackey was married to at the time. *See Ya Thursday* was premiered by William Moersch in November of 1993.²⁰

Moersch, Zeltsman, and Van Sice have all been major figures in the commissioning of new works for the marimba. Zeltsman, who teaches marimba at the Berklee School of Music and the Boston Conservatory, raised over $68,000 for the creation of new works for marimba and violin as part of the *Marimolin* duo.²¹ She has been involved in numerous commissioning projects since the 1980s, most recently with the two-volume collection *Intermediate Masterworks for Marimba* that includes Steven Mackey’s other marimba solo *Beast*.²²

William Moersch currently teaches percussion at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and has also created graduate degrees in marimba performance at Rutgers University and the Peabody Conservatory. Moersch founded the non-profit organization New Music Marimba and has also been commissioning new works for marimba for over twenty

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years.\textsuperscript{23} Robert Van Sice currently teaches at the Yale School of Music and has also long been a leading figure in the creation of new music. Van Sice also taught all four members of So Percussion (the premiere percussion quartet of the current century), who are responsible for commissioning one of Mackey’s other landmark works for percussion, the percussion quartet \textit{It is Time}.\textsuperscript{24}

Zeltsman, Van Sice, and Moersch have worked together on many commissioning projects over the past several decades. Steven Mackey’s collaboration with three prominent marimba performers produced a work that is completely idiomatic for the marimba and extremely clear in its notational conventions, while still demonstrating innovative thinking and writing for the instrument. In my analysis of \textit{See Ya Thursday}, I hope to illuminate the compositional characteristics that make this piece so unique within the solo marimba repertoire.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{24} Sliwinski, Adam. “Creative Collaboration: The Making of Steve Mackey’s \textit{It is Time}.” \textit{Avue Magazine}, July 2010.
\end{footnotesize}
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF *SEE YA THURSDAY*

Introduction

Mackey calls *See Ya Thursday* a set of “free episodes/variations” around a “two-tone bass pattern” of alternating major tenth and major twelfth dyads (and the harmonies these intervals imply). Much of the large-scale formal analysis for the piece as well as the analysis of small-scale motivic events can be based on how any particular section of the music is constructed around this bass pattern, and each individual passage can be evaluated as it relates to texture and aural perspective. The two-tone bass pattern is often separated from the rest of the musical texture either by dynamic marking or articulation. In Ex. 1, Mackey has separated the bass pattern from the upper line with slurs. The slurred bass pattern and the faster moving line in the upper staff could be heard either as distinct from one another or as one rhythmic unit:

Ex. 1: Mackey, *See Ya Thursday*, mm. 110-119 (slurred bass pattern in lower clef)

The slurs suggest that these bass notes should be connected regardless of the other more rhythmic music that occurs. The upper and lower voices can just as easily be heard

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independently from one another, or combined as one contiguous line. In many instances throughout the piece, a performer’s decision to emphasize the bass pattern (or not) can influence to what degree a listener perceives two discrete lines.

The well-known Necker Cube (see Fig. 1 below) represents an analogous concept from the realm of visual perspective. An observer’s points of focus determines what is perceived as the “front” of this cube.

Fig. 1: Necker Cube

For example, if an observer chooses to focus on the panel of this cube defined by points A-B-C-D, this panel appears to be the front of the cube. However, the observer can flip their perception of the cube by similarly focusing on the panel defined by points E-F-G-H. With just a little practice, the observer can determine their own perception of the cube and quickly toggle between these different versions of seeing the same object. Meanwhile, the human eye cannot
not see the Necker cube as a three-dimensional object.\(^\text{26}\)

As it specifically relates to musical texture, a shifting aural perspective and the ever-changing relationship of multiple voices is a distinguishing feature of See Ya Thursday and of much of Mackey’s music. This can be seen through the bass pattern and its relationship with the other music in Ex. 1. Focusing on different voices in the musical example can have the analogous aural affect as visually toggling foci while looking at the Necker cube. Analysis of the repeated bass pattern reveals that it defines the large-scale structure of the piece, and on a more localized level is used to achieve innovative three-dimensional musical textures. By examining the bass pattern, the aforementioned concepts of texture and perspective can be further defined.

In the following sections, I examine See Ya Thursday by way of a thorough macro and micro theoretical analysis. All aspects of this analysis (formal, harmonic, textural) can be related back to the relationship between the bass pattern and the other musical line(s). Formally, the variations can be divided by the pitch content of the bass pattern. Analysis of shorter passages helps elucidate the concepts of aural perception and texture I described in the Introduction of this chapter. As I illustrate in the following examples, musical elements like harmony and articulation can be subordinated to the bass pattern activity and the overarching concepts of texture and aural perspective.

**Macro-Scale Analysis**

The majority of the piece is a set of free variations based on a “two-tone left hand bass

\(^{26}\) Necker, L.A. "Observations on some remarkable optical phenomena seen in Switzerland; and on an optical phenomenon which occurs on viewing a figure of a crystal or geometrical solid." London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science, Issue 5 1832: 329–337.
The pattern is initially expressed as “the tritone D-Ab, then develops into an alternation between the major tenth (E-G#) and twelfth (C-G).”27 The macro-scale musical structure and the discrete sections of *See Ya Thursday* can be observed via this bass pattern activity. I have divided the piece into ten sections based on fairly clear divisions suggested by the pitch content of the bass pattern (see Fig. 2 below). These sections are further reinforced by tempo and expression indications, text that is reserved especially for new sections. Oftentimes, these sections are further delineated in the score by bars of rest (there are empty bars in between sections 1, 2, and 3 for example). Besides “Introduction” and “Coda,” the titles of each section are taken from the composer’s indications in the score:

Fig. 2: *Macro-scale musical structure*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Title</th>
<th>Measure Numbers</th>
<th>Bass Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>001 – 041</td>
<td>D–Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sweeping, spacy waves</td>
<td>043 – 086</td>
<td>E–G# / C–G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Extension/transition</td>
<td>089 – 107</td>
<td>E / D–Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Raindrops</td>
<td>139 – 206</td>
<td>E / C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Playful, exuberant</td>
<td>207 – 248</td>
<td>G–B / Eb–Bb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Halting, nervous</td>
<td>249 – 270</td>
<td>A → G → F (whole tone descent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a. Rhythmic, with</td>
<td>271 – 287</td>
<td>E → Eb → D → Db (chromatic descent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8b. (continued)</td>
<td>288 – 296</td>
<td>E–G# / C–G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8c. (continued)</td>
<td>297 – 298</td>
<td>D–G# (Ab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ostinato</td>
<td>299 – 353</td>
<td>C#–G# / F–G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Coda</td>
<td>354 – 393</td>
<td>All twelve pitches in bass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Introduction (Section 1) “sputters, falters and splinters into fragments,” the most notable of which is the first two-note bass pattern, the tritone D-Ab. This tritone reoccurs at other key structural points in the piece, such as in Section 3 and Section 8c. Section 2 is the first occurrence of the aforementioned major tenth and twelfth. A majority of the sections in the piece use a transposition or variation of these alternating dyads. In Sections 2, 3, and 8a the original iteration of E-G#/C-G is present. Section 6 represents a transposition by minor third (G-B/Eb-Bb), while Section 5 omits the second note of the original dyads in favor of the lowest note only (E/C).

In Sections 7 and 8, the metamorphosis of the bass pattern accelerates rapidly. A long stepwise motion can be observed in the bass pattern, beginning with a whole tone descent in Section 7 leading to a semitone descent in Section 8a. The decreased stability in these two sections ultimately settles on repetition of earlier bass pattern pitches in Sections 8b (E-G#/C-G) and 8c (D-Ab). In Section 9, a new pair of dyads occur that are a variation of those first seen in Section 2. The bass pattern in Section 9 forms the basis of an ostinato that persists throughout this entire section. Texturally, Section 9 is a departure from the complexity of previous sections as the ostinato presents in a much clearer, monophonic texture with the bass pattern more seamlessly integrated than before. As Mackey often does in his other instrumental works, ideas that were initially presented as somewhat obscured or only partially coherent eventually coalesce towards the end of the work, suggesting music that is through-composed, or

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28 Performance Notes, See Ya Thursday, Steven Mackey 1993.
29 The pair of dyads in Section 9 is similar to the original dyads in Section 2. The major twelfth (C#-G#) is still present but the major tenth has been replaced by a major ninth (F-G). An F7 chord is outlined in the other voices when the F-G dyad is present, so this major ninth can simply be seen as a tertian extension of this harmony (and idiomatic of jazz harmony).
what Mackey calls a “one-way trip.” This compositional technique is used most deliberately in *Stumble to Grace* but is also one of the most salient features of *See Ya Thursday*.

Section 10 of *See Ya Thursday* serves as a de facto coda for the work, quickly oscillating between motives from all previous variations, all over the top of unstable and erratic activity in the bass pattern. All twelve chromatic pitches occur in the bass at some point in Section 10, and the texture alternates between the more homogenous style of the Section 9 ostinato and the three-dimensional, multi-temporal texture from many of the other sections. The rapid quotation of previous motives combined with the fully chromatic instability of the bass pattern at once summarizes the piece and eliminates any predominant tonal center from the listener’s ear. This brief closing section seems to zoom through the entire piece once more, reiterating Mackey’s use of the bass pattern in its myriad harmonic and textural manifestations.

**Micro-Scale Analysis**

Once an initial macro-analysis (with emphasis on the bass patterns) of *See Ya Thursday* is complete and the music is examined more locally, two primary questions arise: “How closely do the melodic figures interact with the bass patterns at different points of the piece (what is the texture)?” and “What are the harmonic and rhythmic implications of each melody/bass aggregate (and what are the different ways to hear them)?” Addressing these questions in each section can be helpful in distinguishing Mackey’s compositional devices at a more local level.

Ex. 2 further demonstrates Mackey’s propensity to separate voices with incongruent dynamic markings. Here, one can also hear the interaction of the upper and lower

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voices in two different ways, just as the Necker cube can be viewed from two different visual perspectives.

Ex. 2: Mackey, *See Ya Thursday*, mm. 57-60

The upper voice begins with the pitches B and D, which fill out the top two pitches of an E7 chord. Directly after the C-G dyad is initiated in the bass, the upper voice shifts to align with the C9 chord implied by that dyad. For the rest of this excerpt, there are two primary aural perspectives that a listener might assume. Assuming a harmonic aggregate of the last two measures in the same manner as the first two measures (using the bass dyad to establish a chord) produces an altered version of the E7 chord that includes a diminished fifth (the Bb). This diminished fifth/augmented fourth alteration is a common sound in jazz harmony, and fits in this context, even if it is slightly more dissonant than the previous C9 chord.

The other interpretation of Ex. 2 takes into account the diverging dynamic markings of the two voices and puts more emphasis on texture than on harmony. In the last two measures of this example, the bass pattern remains at a *mezzo forte* level while the upper voice diminuendos to *niente*, fading away but not soon enough to avoid overlapping with the change in the bass. Perhaps the Bb and D are an echo of the C9 chord that collide and blur the next bass statement,

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32 This chord is implied by a previous statement of the E-G# dyad in the bass pattern that precedes this excerpt in the score.
or maybe the upper voice simply “forgot” to change in sync with the lower voice. I find both interpretations, the first focusing on harmony and the second on texture, to be valid. However, the clear delineation in dynamic markings in this instance might suggest that the two voices end this phrase on two separate sonic planes.

In many instances, the bass pattern is seamlessly integrated with the non-bass material. Ex. 3 demonstrates a difference between the function of the bass pattern in two adjacent measures. This example is from the opening section of the piece, shortly after the tritone D-Ab bass pattern is first introduced:

Ex. 3: Mackey, *See Ya Thursday*, mm. 17-18

![Ex. 3: Mackey, *See Ya Thursday*, mm. 17-18](image)

In terms of notation, Mackey treats the bass pattern differently in m. 17 than he does in m. 18. In m. 17, the bass pattern in not beamed together with the upper voice, while in m. 18 both voices are beamed together. Also, the voices receive separate dynamic indications in m. 17 while in m. 18 there is one dynamic level for both voices. These adjacent measures in Ex. 3 demonstrate different degrees of integration of the bass pattern with upper voice.

In Ex. 4 everything is marked at a uniform dynamic level and the decrescendo in the last measure affects both voices. This more homogenous texture shows both voices in congress to
imply a G7 chord and an Eb7 chord.\textsuperscript{33}

Ex. 4: Mackey, \textit{See Ya Thursday}, mm. 207-209 (bass pattern in lower clef)

\begin{center}
\textit{playful, exuberant}
\end{center}

\begin{music}
\begin{musicStaff}
\phrase
\end{musicStaff}
\end{music}

The one curious aspect of the music in Ex. 4 is the lone articulation markings on every upper note of the bass dyads. Mackey indicates that staccato dots in \textit{See Ya Thursday} are meant to be played as dead strokes\textsuperscript{34} or as “quasi-dead strokes.”\textsuperscript{35} Despite the more homogenous texture in this example, a performer could potentially choose to separate the lower voice by emphasizing this difference in articulation.

Ex. 5 is yet another version of how Mackey implies depth and dimension in \textit{See Ya Thursday}. This example features an alternation between two discrete musical trajectories. These two ideas are distinguished by dynamic markings as well as relative rhythmic density. The two trajectories are labeled as A and B, with B representing the bass pattern and A representing interjections of dense chromatic material:

Ex. 5: Mackey, \textit{See Ya Thursday}, mm. 271-282

\begin{music}
\begin{musicStaff}
\phrase
\end{musicStaff}
\end{music}

\textsuperscript{33} These are the basic harmonies, though in this example and in the music following this section various harmonic extensions are explored (especially the 13\textsuperscript{th} and the raised 9\textsuperscript{th}).
\textsuperscript{34} An extended technique where the implement is pressed into the playing surface.
\textsuperscript{35} Performance Notes, \textit{See Ya Thursday}, Steven Mackey 1993.
A more fleshed out version of the bass pattern (with an added minor seventh) can first be found in the fourth measure of the example above (m. 274). Each occurrence of the bass pattern is marked with a static piano indication, and then later a static mezzo piano towards the end of this excerpt. Over the course of the excerpt the bass pattern descends chromatically, slowly and quietly. Meanwhile, this descent of very tonal major/minor seventh chords is interrupted by quick bursts of rhythmically and harmonically dense material. These events follow their own trajectory, each short burst being a part of a longer crescendo of this more dense material. Mackey is able to create two separate musical planes here, distinct in their density of rhythm and harmony and in their expressive qualities.

M. 299 begins to introduce the material that will become the ostinato that had been “suggested a few times through the course of the piece but not taken up until the end.”36 The

dyad pair C#-G#/F-G are introduced in the bass pattern while the upper melodic material moves at a different speed and eventually coalesces with the bass pattern in the ostinato at m. 312. The beginning of this process is shown in Ex. 6 below:

Ex. 6: Mackey, *See Ya Thursday*, mm. 302-309

Both musical ideas in Ex. 6 are marked at the same dynamic level, but rhythmically they are moving at different speeds and are marked with different articulations. The upper Bb is moving at a completely steady, predictable, mechanical pace where the space between each attack is exactly five sixteenth notes. On the other hand, the space between each iteration of the bass pattern is somewhat more irregular and organic. The upper and lower notes of the bass pattern are always a quarter note apart, but the distance between each statement of a dyad changes. The transition shown in Ex. 6 acts as an appropriate bridge between the two distinct musical trajectories shown in Ex. 5 and the more monophonic texture of the ostinato shown in Ex. 7.

Ex. 7: Mackey, *See Ya Thursday*, mm. 314-319
In the entire Ostinato section (the penultimate section of the piece), all voices are on a unified sonic plane. For the first time in the piece, the bass pattern and the other musical material are marked at a uniform dynamic level and occur in rhythmic unison for an extended period of time. The ostinato is not only a point of convergence for previously suggested musical ideas, but a point at which the texture changes dramatically. In a piece of music where innovative textures have played such a significant structural role, the eschewing of these techniques for a more traditional texture is what makes this section remarkable, and befitting of the penultimate section that signals the impending conclusion of *See Ya Thursday*.

Although the texture becomes much more homogenous in the Ostinato section, Mackey still uses various diverging rhythmic speeds to create tension, much like in Ex. 5. A rhythmic “race to the finish” is suggested in two ways: First, a series of long *accelerando* gestures take place between mm. 312-388 that affect all voices. Second, a compression of the space between each iteration of the bass pattern. I mentioned in the description of Ex. 6 that while the distance between the two pitches in the dyad is always a quarter note, the distance between each dyad is variable. As the overall pace accelerates, the bass pattern also accelerates against the ostinato. In examples 6 and 7 this space is irregular, but the space becomes a regular half note between
each dyad in Ex. 8.

Ex. 8: Mackey, *See Ya Thursday*, mm. 320-323

As another *accelerando* is introduced, the space between the bass pattern compresses to a quarter note:

Ex. 9: Mackey, *See Ya Thursday*, mm. 324-327

This eventually gives way to further compression of the space between the bass pattern, eliminating the rests all together. A minor seventh is added to the bass dyad to suggest an extended tertian harmony, implicating the bass as the root of an F chord with an added minor seventh and major ninth. With the now fully connected (three-note) bass pattern against the persistent ostinato, an interesting hemiola is created:

Ex. 10: Mackey, *See Ya Thursday*, mm. 334-337
As I explained in the Macro-Analysis section of this dissertation, the final section (Coda) is an amalgamation of most of the sections in *See Ya Thursday*. The acceleration in the Ostinato section increases until it becomes erratic, rapidly oscillating between many different motives in the Coda section.

Each of these examples illustrates a different way in which Mackey employs various devices to create a sense of aural perspective and a unique three-dimensional musical texture.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Throughout *See Ya Thursday*, the large-scale direction of the music is outlined in the bass pattern motion while textural interest is generated by interaction with the bass pattern on a local level. As is illustrated in these musical examples, Mackey uses a large variety of colliding rhythms, articulations, and dynamic markings to give his music an evolving sense of perspective and depth. When the more homogeneous texture of the ostinato is introduced in the penultimate section, it is the *lack* of aural depth that is remarkable. After using such innovative textural techniques in every other section of the piece, Mackey withholds them in order to precipitate a dramatic conclusion.

*See Ya Thursday* has been a staple in the marimba repertoire since soon after its premiere in 1993. The piece represents the successful creation of a new masterpiece for marimba via the coordination of Nancy Zeltzman, Robert Van Sice, and William Moersch as well as New Music Marimba and the Percussive Arts Society. It is also representative of Steven Mackey’s eclectic compositional style and propensity for unique textures. The textural features in *See Ya Thursday* are some of the most difficult aspects to initially perceive and perform effectively, so it is my hope that this dissertation could aid future performers who aspire to learn the piece. Furthermore, I hope that this document adds to the extent body of research on Steven Mackey, and that other scholars might draw parallels between *See Ya Thursday* and other pieces in Mackey’s ever-expanding catalogue of instrumental works.


________. *Stumble to Grace*. Boosey and Hawkes, 2011.


Necker, L.A. "Observations on some remarkable optical phenomena seen in Switzerland; and on an optical phenomenon which occurs on viewing a figure of a crystal or geometrical solid." *London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*, No. 5, 1832: 329–337.


