A TRUMPETER’S GUIDE TO SAMUEL BARBER’S CAPRICORN CONCERTO

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Samuel Barber’s Capricorn Concerto for flute, oboe and trumpet with strings is an important though seldom performed work. The concerto is teeming with performance choices that are indicative of both historical and contemporary influences. At present, there are limited resources available to performers regarding Capricorn.

The first section of this study presents an historical and contextual examination of Capricorn both in terms of Barber’s own compositional output and that of his influences and contemporaries. The second section includes a performance analysis of the work, while the third section includes an analysis of existing recordings. Implications for the performer are outlined in last section.

The guide provides performers with pertinent background, analytical and performance information in order to facilitate informed, high-level performance.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BACKGROUND

Samuel Barber’s *Capricorn Concerto* for flute, oboe and trumpet with strings is an important though seldom performed work. The concerto is teeming with performance choices that are indicative of both historical and contemporary influences. *Capricorn* represents a rarity for trumpet players; a piece of music widely recognized as being of high quality written by a significant composer. The increasing standardization of the orchestral repertoire has led to many worthy pieces of music being excluded from regular performance; *Capricorn* is such a work. The intent of this study is to not only reintroduce *Capricorn* into the trumpet and orchestral repertoire but to investigate performance techniques utilized by trumpeters since its composition.

The composition of *Capricorn* began with Samuel Barber’s service in the United States Army during World War II. Barber, originally assigned to duty as a clerk, was granted a position at the Office of War Information (OWI) in New York City. The main benefit of this position was that Barber was allowed to compose music at his home in Mount Kisco, New York and return to the city upon its completion. The house itself, home to Barber, his partner Gian-Carlo Menotti and the poet Robert Horan, was named ‘Capricorn’ by its inhabitants due to the large amount of sunlight it received during the winter months.\(^1\) Barber, who required peace and quiet to compose, was ecstatic to once again work in his isolated country home. It was in these surroundings that Barber composed *Capricorn* in the spring and summer of 1944. The work was premiered on October 8, 1944 at Town Hall in New York City by the Saidenberg Little Symphony in a program containing both eighteenth and twentieth century compositions.\(^2\) The ensemble, under


the direction of Barber’s colleague at the OWI, Daniel Saidenberg, had been formed to “introduce as many contemporary works as possible” and to serve as “an incentive to native composers.”

_Capricorn_ received mixed reviews from contemporary critics. Noel Straus’ review in the _New York Times_ described _Capricorn_ as “modernistic in its method of treatment” but with “nothing particularly original to import.” However, Lou Harrison’s review in _Modern Music_ praised the work without reservation as “brilliant” and Barber for his “tremendous technical grasp.”

State of Research

At present, there are limited resources available to performers regarding _Capricorn_. Fortunately, a number of recordings exist from a range of periods featuring such world-renowned musicians as Howard Hanson, Christopher Hogwood, Leonard Slatkin and Reinhold Frederich. Each recording represents a unique set of performance choices which, when compared with one another, can highlight relevant aesthetic trends.

While sources concerning the life and work of Samuel Barber are plentiful, there are few specifics regarding the _Capricorn Concerto_. The most notable source for information on Barber is Barbara Heyman’s *Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music*, which provides the most thorough discussion of _Capricorn_. Heyman devotes several pages to not only the concerto itself but the circumstances of its composition and the debate over its programmatic content (or lack

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thereof). Heyman also discusses the formal and harmonic principles used by Barber throughout the work

Walter Simmons’ book, *Voices in the Wilderness*, is a survey of the lives of six American neo-romantic composers. Simmons places *Capricorn* in what he describes as Barber’s “adolescent” compositional period, lasting from 1942 to 1952.\(^6\) Though Simmons describes *Capricorn* as “one of Barber’s weakest works,”\(^7\) he discusses it through the lens of several published reviews of the premiere.

The most complete source dealing directly with the *Capricorn Concerto* is found in a dissertation by Russell Friedewald entitled *A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber*. This work examines the harmonic, melodic and formal principles utilized by Barber in *Capricorn*. In addition to the inclusion of a brief formal and harmonic outline, Friedewald describes *Capricorn* as “a sharp contrast to Barber’s first (so-called Neo-Romantic) Period.”\(^8\)

**Context**

Barber has long been considered one of America’s greatest neo-romantic composers. *Capricorn* represents an aspect of his compositional style that owes much to the languages of Stravinsky and Copland. In addition Barber pays tribute to J.S. Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in a variety of ways. The most obvious similarity is the instrumentation of the works themselves. Both Barber and Bach wrote for solo ensembles of flute, oboe and trumpet

\(^6\) Ibid., 281.

\(^7\) Walter Simmons, *Voices in the Wilderness: Six American Neo-Romantic Composers*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 286.

\(^8\) Russell Friedewald, “A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Iowa, 1957), 207.
accompanied by strings (Bach also included violin in his solo ensemble). Closer examination reveals further similarities between the two works. Barbara Heyman describes such similarities as:

...contrasting ripieno and concertante episodes, the returning rondo theme, alternation of contrapuntal and homophonic styles, fugue, “walking-bass” pizzicato accompaniments, and figurations of triadic patterns and measured trills.\(^9\)

Barber describes the influence of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 on \textit{Capricorn} in a decidedly less technical manner:

It is hard to explain, and you may find this music new for me, but it is in a sense decorative, slightly baroque a la Brandenburg Concerto, less romantic.

While a more in depth examination of these similarities (as they related to performance practice) will take place later in this study, the significance of \textit{Capricorn} in terms of Barber’s repertoire lies in its departure from his earlier compositional style. Since \textit{Capricorn}’s premiere many have pointed to the influence of Bach, Stravinsky and even fellow Americans Aaron Copland\(^{10}\) and Henry Cowell.\(^{11}\) Contemporary reviewer Lou Harrison drew several comparisons between \textit{Capricorn} and the music of Igor Stravinsky, specifically its sectional construction (referring to the lack of transitions between sections).\(^{12}\) While Stravinsky’s influence seems to permeate the rhythmic and harmonic language of \textit{Capricorn}, Barber, in a letter to his uncle Sidney Homer four years after the composition of the work, referred to Stravinsky as a musician and composer with “very definite limitations.” He further states that “Strawinsky is not a great


composer...his lack of lyricism and utter inability to work in more than small periods weigh heavily against him.”\textsuperscript{13} This would seem to indicate that Barber did not consciously use Stravinsky’s harmonic and rhythmic language as a basis for one of his own works; however the presence of so many Stravinsky-like characteristics calls his comments into question. In addition to showing Neo-Classical influence (Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 2), \textit{Capricorn} contains much of the “shifting additive rhythms, pandiatonic harmony, crisp, dry sonorities, and diminutive gestures”\textsuperscript{14} so common to Stravinsky’s works.

Barber wrote very few works for winds and even fewer featuring wind soloists. The only other example of a published solo work\textsuperscript{15} by Barber is the first movement of his unfinished oboe concerto, \textit{Canzonetta} for oboe and strings.\textsuperscript{16}

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\textsuperscript{13} Letter, Barber to Sidney Homer, 8 February 1948.

\textsuperscript{14} Simmons, \textit{Voices in the Wilderness: Six American Neo-Romantic Composers}, 286.

\textsuperscript{15} Barber’s 1954 composition \textit{Adventure} for flute, clarinet, horn and harp with ‘exotic’ instruments was never published.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to create a performance analysis for trumpet players. Such a study should discuss the harmonic, melodic, and formal construction of the work.

Movement I

The first movement of *Capricorn* centers around four motives stated within the first thirteen bars of the work (Ex. 1).

Example 1. Motives.

These motives serve as vehicles for melodic development and variation and to unify contrasting sections of the movement.\(^{17}\) Centered around an A tonality, the first movement can be divided into three primary sections. The first section, outlined below, exposes the four motives that serve as the basis for the rest of the movement.

\[^{17}\] Friedewald, “A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber,” 209.
Example 1a. Outline of section 1, movement I.\textsuperscript{18}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Motive A</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Motive B</td>
<td>ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Motive C</td>
<td>ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Motive D</td>
<td>ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-40</td>
<td>A’</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>B’</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-53</td>
<td>C’</td>
<td>C# minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fugue subject that appears from mm. 17-40 is derived from Motive A and appears in the trumpet in mm. 26-27 (Ex. 2). This fugal material is treated in the standard manner by Barber, with the initial exposition of the subject by the oboe given a real answer (a 5th above) by the flute. The subject later appears in inversion and stretto in both the string (mm. 29-37) and solo parts (mm. 37-40).\textsuperscript{19}


\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Example_2.png}
\end{center}

This use of motivic content as a basis for the work and as a means of formal articulation is an example of the influence of J.S. Bach. Composer Philip Glass explains Bach’s influence on twentieth century composers in the following manner:

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{19}Friedewald, “A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber,” 210.
\end{flushright}
the techniques you learn through the study of Bach work very well with contemporary music. If you take a look at the way fugues are written, the key of the piece and the structure of the melody will determine how the fugue is written, in other words the content and form are linked very close together. That’s a very modernist idea, you don’t have that idea so much in the classical and even the romantic periods. You have it in the baroque period and you have it in the modernist period. So the idea of form and content for Bach was almost identical, so therefore certain procedures of baroque music...turn up in contemporary music...

Performers will notice this methodology used throughout the first movement of Capricorn. In fact, this technique is also employed by Barber in his Serenade for string quartet and his First Symphony, with both pieces constructed from motivic material presented in the opening bars.21

The next section of the piece, outlined below, is based on several combinations of the four primary motives and the fugue subject from section 1.22

Example 3. Outline of section 2, movement I.23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54-90</td>
<td>A”</td>
<td>ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91-99</td>
<td>B”</td>
<td>ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-129</td>
<td>C”</td>
<td>ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130-157</td>
<td>D”</td>
<td>multiple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barber utilizes these motives in a completely different manner than in the first section. Here the lyricism of the previous section is contrasted with rhythmic and melodic gestures similar in character to those found in the introduction. The statement by the soloists of the hybrid A/C


motive in m. 54 is answered by a variant of the fugue subject from the previous section. In this manner, Barber is able to articulate and define the form of the first movement through motivic means; without this motivic unity the movement would likely lose any semblance of coherence.

While the form of the movement could be described as a rondo or even an arch form, the music can only be fitted loosely into these categories. The organization of this movement is based on motivic development rather than classical forms such as rondo. Thus, Barber is able to create continuity between sections of contrasting musical content.\textsuperscript{24}

The third section of the work, outlined below, is constructed in much the same manner as the previous two sections.

Example 4. Outline of section 3, movement I.\textsuperscript{25}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>158-163</td>
<td>A'''</td>
<td>ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164-196</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section opens with the restatement by the trumpet of the fugue subject seen in section 1. Followed by a final statement of material, based on Motive D, from the introduction by the soloists.

Movement II

The second movement of \textit{Capricorn} is constructed in a three part form with all material derived from the A section.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{24} Friedewald, “A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber,” 208.

\textsuperscript{25} Coke, “An Analysis of Some of the Purely Instrumental Works of Samuel Barber between the Years 1930 to 1950,” 61.

\textsuperscript{26} Friedewald, “A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber,” 213.
Example 5. Outline of movement II.\textsuperscript{27}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-29</td>
<td>Eb-Gb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (Codetta)</td>
<td>24-29</td>
<td>to Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>40-57</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first section of the second movement (mm. 1-29) is in ternary form. In this section Barber presents the primary melodic material at both the Eb and Gb pitch levels.\textsuperscript{28} Barber also creates shifts in timbre by alternating primary and secondary melodic lines among the solo voices (Ex. 6 and 6a).


Example 6a. Movement II, mm 8-12.

\textsuperscript{27} Coke, “An Analysis of Some of the Purely Instrumental Works of Samuel Barber between the Years 1930 to 1950,” 62.

\textsuperscript{28} Friedewald, “A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber,” 214.
Barber continues to articulate both form and musical contrast via motivic development in the second movement. The B section (mm. 30-39), with its melodic emphasis on ascending 3rds, is based on the primary theme stated in the A section.

Example 7. Movement II, mm. 31-36.

The third section of the movement is a restatement of the primary theme from the first section. This theme and its countermelody are shuffled between the three solo voices, appearing in the flute in mm. 40-43, trumpet in mm. 44-46 and oboe in mm. 47-51. The movement ends with a brief coda section similar in construction to the codetta found at the conclusion of the A section but without the accompaniment of the countermelody.

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29 Friedewald, “A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber,” 214.
Movement III

The third movement of *Capricorn* opens with Barber’s most obvious allusion to Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 2. The trumpet fanfare that opens the movement is reminiscent of the trumpet figure that opens the 3rd movement of the second Brandenburg (Ex. 7 and 7a).


Example 7a. *Capricorn Concerto*, movement III, mm. 1-5.

This melodic material is also of formal significance, as it serves as the basis of the reoccurring section which defines the movement’s rondo form.\(^{30}\)

Example 8. Form of movement III\(^ {31}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-31</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>32-60</td>
<td>ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>71-114</td>
<td>E major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 214.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 214-216.
One of the most interesting aspects of this movement occurs in section D (mm. 151-168).

Throughout *Capricorn* Barber utilizes motive as means to unify diverse musical material.

However, the material found in mm. 151-168 has no basis anywhere else in the work and is thus new material (Ex. 9). In a work where much of the music is derived from previous material this section stands apart.


While Barber’s exact reasoning will likely never be known, it is probable that this section is included to both create contrast between the last two sections (D and A”” in the outline above) and place emphasis on the last statement of the trumpet fanfare and its strong cadence in C major.

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32 Ibid., 217.
Programmatic Content

Barber never revealed any specific programmatic content for Capricorn. He did make several statements alluding to the existence of programmatic material. Prior to the premiere he stated that the title of the pieces was “...just a word, but perhaps its meaning will get across when you hear the music.” Several years later, in a letter to his uncle Sidney Homer, he writes “There is no program for Capricorn Concerto. Just cheerful noises.” While this statement seems to shut the door on the existence of programmatic content in Capricorn, they are far from a definitive statement. The appearance of an article in the now defunct Philadelphia Evening Bulletin (January of 1947) claims to expose the true meaning of the work. The article is based on a facsimile of the copyist’s score containing markings alluding to a possible program for the work. No source for this facsimile was given, and no further evidence has been found to support this assertion. The article itself states that:

the string section represents the house proper, while the solo flute, oboe and trumpet represents the two wings and a guest room, or, in that order, Barber, Menotti, and Horan.

33 Heyman, Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music, 244.
34 Ibid., 244-245.
Example 10a. Movement I, mm. 41-43, Orchestra (House).

Example 10b. Movement II, mm. 36-39, Oboe (Menotti).

Example 10c. Movement II, mm. 4-6, Trumpet (Horan).

Example 10d. Movement III, mm. 45-47, Flute (Barber).

While the accuracy of this information is questionable, it is possible that Capricorn has some degree of programmatic content.
RECORDINGS COMPARISON

There are several excellent recordings of Capricorn. Each recording represents a unique set of performance choices, influenced by both the performers and the historical era in which the recording was made. By comparing recordings, performers determine standard and non-standard interpretations of the work and become aware of a wider spectrum of musical possibilities. The recordings being studied, the ensembles, conductors and soloists are listed below.

Example 11. Examined recordings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ensemble (year of recording)</th>
<th>Conductor</th>
<th>Trumpet Soloist</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budapest Strings (2001)</td>
<td>none listed</td>
<td>Reinhold Friederich</td>
<td>BpS</td>
<td>14:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saidenberg Little Symphony (1946)</td>
<td>Daniel Saidenberg</td>
<td>Harry Freistadt</td>
<td>SLS</td>
<td>14:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastman-Rochester Philharmonic (1959)</td>
<td>Howard Hanson</td>
<td>Sidney Mears</td>
<td>ERP</td>
<td>15:11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Movement I

The tempo choices in the first movement of Capricorn, as recorded by the ensembles above, are outlined below. While comparison of tempi is a somewhat superficial basis on which to compare recordings, it is an important first step in exploring musical and performance issues. All tempi listed below should be understood as being approximate, that is taking normal fluctuations in tempo into account. Also, no effort has been made to correct the effect of tempi that differ drastically from the primary sample when calculating average tempi and performance.
duration. Performers (and statisticians) should thus note that the data below is meant only as a simple means of comparison to aid and inform performers in the development of their own personal performance concepts. Analysis of the tempi found in the recorded examples of the *Capricorn* are of interest to performers in several ways as performers must be prepared to play all sections of *Capricorn* at both the slowest and fastest recorded tempos (at least). Examples in bold represent the extant recordings that are closest to the average recorded tempo or duration, thus representing (in terms of tempo) the most standard interpretation of each particular section or movement.

Example 12. Movement I tempo chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>StL</th>
<th>BpS</th>
<th>PSO</th>
<th>RSNO</th>
<th>KoB</th>
<th>SLS</th>
<th>SDCO</th>
<th>ERP</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. 1, Allegro non Troppo $q=96$</td>
<td>$6:57$</td>
<td>$6:19$</td>
<td>$8:45$</td>
<td>$6:27$</td>
<td>$6:50$</td>
<td>$6:27$</td>
<td>$7:01$</td>
<td>$7:13$</td>
<td>$6:59$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 17, Andante con moto $q=132$</td>
<td>$76$</td>
<td>$90$</td>
<td>$80$</td>
<td>$91$</td>
<td>$87$</td>
<td>$95$</td>
<td>$90$</td>
<td>$86$</td>
<td>$86$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 54, Allegro $q=96$</td>
<td>$94$</td>
<td>$95$</td>
<td>$82$</td>
<td>$88$</td>
<td>$96$</td>
<td>$93$</td>
<td>$92$</td>
<td>$87$</td>
<td>$90$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 158, Andante con moto prima</td>
<td>$105$</td>
<td>$96$</td>
<td>$70$</td>
<td>$106$</td>
<td>$92$</td>
<td>$100$</td>
<td>$92$</td>
<td>$100$</td>
<td>$95$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 164, Allegro, con prima</td>
<td>$83$</td>
<td>$88$</td>
<td>$78$</td>
<td>$81$</td>
<td>$86$</td>
<td>$90$</td>
<td>$78$</td>
<td>$83$</td>
<td>$83$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The range of tempi in the first movement raises few technical issues. The variation in these tempi is not so great as to require changes in performance technique (i.e. switching from single to multiple tonguing) and thus does not demand much attention from the performer.
However, there are other situations that warrant consideration. Variations in tempo show the need for analysis of multiple recorded performances. Analysis of Ex. 12 reveals that the recording by the Pacific Symphony Orchestra (PSO) is nearly two minutes longer than most of the recordings. Anthony Plog, trumpet soloist on the recording, outlines possible reasons for the variation in tempi:

the session we did was a three hour session, no rehearsal before, just run through the movement and then start recording (I did a recording of L'Histoire [du Soldat] with the LA Chamber Orchestra the same way). Not the best way to learn a piece, but things went well for everybody… I remember thinking at the session that some of the tempi were much slower than I knew from [a previous] performance. That was of course the conductors idea, and since we had only three hours to rehearse and record, I doubt that anyone thought we should spend any time discussing tempi...36

Movement II

Example 13. Movement II tempo chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STL</th>
<th>BpS</th>
<th>PSO</th>
<th>RSNO</th>
<th>KoB</th>
<th>SLS</th>
<th>SDCO</th>
<th>ERP</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>3:19</td>
<td>3:28</td>
<td>3:01</td>
<td>3:18</td>
<td>2:55</td>
<td><strong>3:16</strong></td>
<td>2:57</td>
<td>3:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 1, Allegretto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 99</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 120</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 110</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 108</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 120</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 105</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 116</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 114</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 30, Molto meno mosso, tranquillo</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 72</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 62</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 56</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 55</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 58</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 58</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 67</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 57</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 40, Tempo I</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 123</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 112</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 116</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 110</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 110</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 116</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 116</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 112</td>
<td>( \text{\textfrac{3}{4}} ) = 116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Ex. 13 the second movement of Capricorn is the most homogeneous in terms of tempo. Variations between recordings are slight.

36 Anthony Plog, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>StL</th>
<th>BpS</th>
<th>PSO</th>
<th>RSNO</th>
<th>KoB</th>
<th>SLS</th>
<th>SDCO</th>
<th>ERP</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. 1, Allegro con brio</td>
<td>4:47</td>
<td>4:34</td>
<td>5:57</td>
<td>4:46</td>
<td>5:15</td>
<td>4:51</td>
<td>4:48</td>
<td><strong>5:01</strong></td>
<td>4:59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 151, Andante, un poco mosso</td>
<td>(q=112)</td>
<td>(q=105)</td>
<td>(q=96)</td>
<td>(q=110)</td>
<td>(q=108)</td>
<td>(q=114)</td>
<td>(q=110)</td>
<td>(q=100)</td>
<td>(q=106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 169, Tempo I</td>
<td>(q=67)</td>
<td>(q=66)</td>
<td>(q=40)</td>
<td>(q=63)</td>
<td>(q=53)</td>
<td>(q=56)</td>
<td>(q=60)</td>
<td>(q=58)</td>
<td>(q=58)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The recorded tempi of movement III can be interpreted in a manner quite similar to movement I. While there are variations in tempo, none (with the exception of the aforementioned recording by the PSO) require much serious attention from performers.
PERFORMANCE PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Capricorn presents performers with a number of challenges in terms of balance, technique and musicianship. In order to perform the work successfully musicians must work with these musical goals in mind.

Movement I

Every performer surveyed for this study has mentioned the challenge of maintaining a viable balance among the solo voices in the fugal sections, mm. 16-28 and mm. 158-163, of the first movement (Ex. 14).³⁷


³⁷ See Appendix.
There is no orchestral accompaniment in these bars, requiring a lower dynamic to avoid the trumpe’s overpowering the woodwinds. Performers should be prepared for a wide variety of dynamic possibilities. It should also be noted that the tempo of mm. 16-28 is treated freely in the majority of existing recordings. The lack of orchestral accompaniment in these bars gives the soloists the opportunity to take a certain liberties tempos.

M. 54 not only represents the beginning of a new section of the first movement but a drastic shift in musical character. Trumpeters should articulate the staccato figures in this passage in a dry and brittle fashion, reminiscent of the music of Stravinsky. Performers may base performances choices on the articulations called for in Stravinsky’s “Marche du Soldat” from Histoire du Soldat and the “Ballerina’s Dance” from Petrouchka.

Example 15. Movement I (trumpet), mm. 54-66.

These sorts of articulations are also representative of the choices made by performers on the available recordings of Capricorn. The articulation utilized by Harry Friestadt, soloist with the Saidenberg Little Symphony, is by far the shortest and most brittle, containing the most pronounced ‘T‘ syllable of any of the recordings examined here. Freistadt, in his article “Notes on the Schlossberg Method” recommends such articulations be used for “loud or explosive
passages”. While this sort of articulation is certainly explosive, the percussive effect it creates often obscures the characteristic sound of the trumpet and the musical line itself. Performers will be much more likely to find success making articulation choices similar to those of Sidney Mear. Mear’s articulations possess the same explosive, dry quality as Friestadt’s but with added length. His performance has proven influential to several of the performers surveyed for this study, specifically Susan Slaughter\(^39\), Anthony Plog\(^40\) and John Wilds\(^41\).

Careful attention must also be paid to articulation in mm. 100-105 and mm. 109-116.

Example 16. Movement I (trumpet), mm. 100-105.

![Example 16](image)

Example 17. Movement I (trumpet), mm. 109-115.

![Example 17](image)

Performers should carefully heed Barber’s use of accents in both figures, this is especially true at mm. 100 where the solo ensemble plays a rare unison rhythm. Accented pitches should be


\(^{39}\) Susan Slaughter, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.

\(^{40}\) Plog, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.

\(^{41}\) John Wilds, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.
executed within the established style of the movement. Performers should avoid harsh articulations and instead endeavor to add stress, weight and presence\textsuperscript{42} to accented pitches.

The material given to the trumpet part in mm. 164-169 (Ex. 18) presents a great challenge to the performer.

Example 18. Movement I (trumpet), mm. 164-169.

\begin{musicnote}
\example{18}
\end{musicnote}

First and foremost, performers must accurately execute the complex rhythmic gestures contained in these measures. Practice of such gestures should be done with a metronome. Performers might speak or clap the notated rhythm until absolute fluidity and accuracy have been achieved. At this point performers should then approach this figure on the instrument. Instrumental practice should begin by playing the figure on one note, thus allowing the ear to focus on the desired musical phrase rather than technical challenges. Once the performer has established the necessary rhythmic and gestural concepts the figure may be practiced as written.

Equipment Selection, Movements I and III

While the published version of the \textit{Capricorn} comes with parts for both B-flat and C trumpets, the use of a instrument pitched in C seems to be more idiomatic, particularly in the first and third movements. By utilizing an instrument in C, the performer avoids the comparatively awkward (in terms of both technique but perhaps more importantly intonation) key areas of B minor, F# and E found in the Bb part, instead playing in the keys (or approximations thereof) of A minor, E and D on C trumpet. The use of C trumpet provides one other advantage in this

\textsuperscript{42} Slaughter, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.
movement in that its lighter, more delicate sound in conjunction with its higher transposition level lends itself well to playing lightly and softly in the mid to upper register. Barber’s scoring of *Capricorn* requires that the trumpet play both lightly and lyrically or risk overpowering the other soloists and even the string orchestra itself. Both Anthony Plog\(^\text{43}\) as well as John Wilds\(^\text{44}\) perform the first movement of *Capricorn* on C trumpet, while Susan Slaughter\(^\text{45}\) and John Gracie\(^\text{46}\) chose to perform and record the first movement of *Capricorn* on D and E flat trumpet respectively. John Gracie explains his choice of Eb trumpet thusly:

> I used an Eb trumpet for movements 1 and 3. Mainly to make the legato phrases much easier than on the Bb instrument which we normally use over here. I also felt that the Eb would be closer to the oboe sound and also much cleaner.\(^\text{47}\)

Such choices of instruments suggest that performers choose a particular instrument in order to facilitate balance and timbreal goals.

**Movement II**

In the second movement of *Capricorn*, the trumpet serves in both melodic and accompanying roles. In both roles it is essential that performers be aware of the rhythmic and melodic composite material formed between the solo parts. Awareness of these composite gestures along with careful subdivision are essential to create a coherent performance of the movement. The chromatic material in the trumpet part at mm. 1-3 serves to accompany the melodic material played by the oboe.

\(^{43}\) Plog, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.

\(^{44}\) Wilds, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.

\(^{45}\) Slaughter, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.

\(^{46}\) John Gracie, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.

\(^{47}\) Ibid.
Trumpeters should endeavor to align unison sixteenth notes between the two soloists. The same considerations should be made at mm. 25-30 when roles between the trumpet and oboe are reversed (see Ex. 6a).

Several of the performers surveyed mentioned the challenges inherent in mm. 49-53. Barber’s use of the trumpet’s extreme low register challenges the performer on multiple levels, especially in terms of articulation and intonation.

**Equipment Selection, Movement II**

The second movement of *Capricorn* creates several challenges for trumpeters in terms of equipment selection. The most obvious of these challenges is centered around Barber’s use of low concert E in mm. 51-52, a pitch outside of the range of the C trumpet.

Example 20. Movement II (C trumpet), mm. 47-52.

While it is possible to play this pitch on C trumpet as a pedal tone or by extending slides (this technique is occasionally used in Halsey Stevens’ Trumpet Sonata and more commonly used in
the Prelude to Bizet’s opera *Carmen*), using a Bb trumpet for this movement seems the most logical technique.

This movement also requires the use of a mute that responds in the low register. Performers should keep in mind that Barber demands a wide variety of articulations and tone colors at a variety of dynamic levels. The figure at mm. 51-52 should weigh heavily on any choice of equipment, it is important that performers choose a mute that can be played articulately and in tune in the extreme low register of the Bb trumpet. John Wilds utilized a plastic Bach straight mute into which he inserted several cotton balls (3 to 4), while Susan Slaughter was able to achieve her performance goals with a Denis Wick straight mute. Ultimately, performers should base mute choices on their own personal sound characteristics and that of their colleagues in the solo ensemble.

Movement III

The third movement of *Capricorn* opens with a trumpet figure (see Ex. 7) reminiscent of the third movement of J.S. Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 (see Ex. 7a). While performers should keep this similarity in mind, this material represents more than a simple tribute to Bach. This figure articulates a strong rondo form and clearly establishes the movement’s C major tonality. Thus, performers should bring this figure and its transposition at m. 61 to the forefront of the texture.

48 Wilds, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.

49 Slaughter, personal E-mail, March 26, 2010.
CONCLUSION

Samuel Barber’s *Capricorn Concerto* represents a radical change in his compositional style from his earlier works. Gone are the warm harmonic and melodic textures that dominated much of his other early music. They are replaced by brittle sonorities, complex rhythmic gestures and disjunct melodies. This concerto occupies an important place in Barber’s development as a composer. Representing a departure from both his established and future works *Capricorn* presents a different musical language from that heard in Barber’s best known compositions (*Vanessa*, *Adagio for Strings*, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*). The better known this concerto becomes, the more likely its remarkable qualities will endear it to performers and listeners alike.
APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

(PUBLISHED WITH PERMISSION)
1. Please outline the equipment choices (instruments, mutes, etc.) you made for performance and/or recording of the Capricorn Concerto.

I used an Eb trumpet for movements 1 and 3. Mainly to make the legato phrases much easier than on the Bb instrument which we normally use over here. I also felt that the Eb would be closer to the oboe sound and also much cleaner.

In the 2nd movement I played the Bb instrument as Barber writes a low concert E staccato and muted. I chose a Vincent Bach number 1 mouthpiece with a Jo Ral straight mute. This was the best combination of instrument, mouthpiece and mute for me.

2. Did you listen to any recordings or seek any outside advice while preparing for a performance of Capricorn? If so, what sources did you explore and what did you gain from doing so?

I listened to a recording of the work played by the Budapest strings with Reinhold Friedrich on trumpet before I agreed to undertake the recording.

3. What are, in your opinion, the primary challenges of performing Capricorn?

The challenges of the piece are the legato phrases at the beginning coming in after the oboe and the flute and trying to match their sound and phrasing in the staccato passages. Letter F to the end of the slow movement is tricky to play staccato in the very low register at a quiet dynamic. In the 3rd movement after a long concert C at letter O the legato passage at P feels a long way up. It is quite a difficult piece to put together with the string sections. We performed the piece for the recording at the rear of the orchestra mainly for the separation for the recording balance etc.

4. What are your preferences, if any, with regards to tempi? Were these reflected in the specific recording in which you appear?

We agreed with Marin’s tempo which lay comfortable with all of us.

5. Please provide your general impressions of the work itself. Feel free to add any information that you feel is pertinent not addressed in the previous questions.

I enjoyed performing the piece which until the recording was scheduled I had never heard and I hope that some day we can play it in the concert hall. We had one very short
rehearsal with Marin in her dressing room a couple of days before the recording and the recording was made in one 3 hour session.
Anthony Plog  
Former Principal Trumpet  
Pacific Symphony Orchestra

1. Please outline the equipment choices (instruments, mutes, etc.) you made for performance and/or recording of the *Capricorn Concerto*.

We recorded the piece in 1983, and so I don't remember exactly what equipment I used. But I would say a Bach C trumpet for the first and last movements, and a Bach Bb for the second. No idea what mute I used.

2. Did you listen to any recordings or seek any outside advice while preparing for a performance of *Capricorn*? If so, what sources did you explore and what did you gain from doing so?

No, I didn't seek any outside advice. To give a bit of history, I remember when I was a senior at UCLA hearing just the tail-end of the piece on the radio and being totally struck by the piece (and the playing). My girlfriend and I contacted the radio station and learned about the piece and that the recording was by an Eastman group with Sidney Mear on trumpet (and I still remember how clean he sounded on the last movement, which was all I heard). Then a number of years later I was called to play the piece with the LA Chamber Orchestra (my first ever job with the orchestra - what a scary way to start!). The session we did was a three hour session, no rehearsal before, just run through the movement and then start recording (I did a recording of *L'Histoire du Soldat* with the LA Chamber Orchestra the same way). Not the best way to learn a piece, but things went well for everybody.

3. What are, in your opinion, the primary challenges of performing *Capricorn*?

For me the hardest part to playing the Concerto is the soft lyrical passages where the trumpet needs to play delicately and at times blend with the oboe or flute. The loud stuff was basically fun, but the soft stuff was the most difficult - nothing new there, at least for me.

4. What are your preferences, if any, with regards to tempi? Were these reflected in the specific recording in which you appear? The recording of *Capricorn* on which you appear is nearly 4 minutes longer than the average recording of the work. What rationale prompted this difference and what challenges (if any) does this present?

I'm not sure that I have a preference for tempi, but I remember thinking at the session that some of the tempi were much slower than I knew from the LA Chamber Orchestra performance. That was of course the conductors idea, and since we had only three hours to rehearse and record, I doubt that anyone thought we should spend any time discussing tempi. But I would imagine that faster tempi certainly would not hurt the piece.
5. Please provide your general impressions of the work itself. Feel free to add any information that you feel is pertinent not addressed in the previous questions.

Not much else to say, except that I think the Capricorn is a real masterpiece and it is a shame that hardly anyone knows of it. It has always been a puzzle for me why certain pieces stay in the repertoire and others drop out. That is a question I am sure I will never be able to answer.
1. Please outline the equipment choices (instruments, mutes, etc.) you made for performance and/or recording of the *Capricorn Concerto*.

[The] Instrument was a Yamaha D trumpet built in the 1970's. The bell is on the small side, so I had to file the corks down in order for the mute to play/respond correctly. It was a Dennis Wick straight mute.

2. Did you listen to any recordings or seek any outside advice while preparing for a performance of *Capricorn*? If so, what sources did you explore and what did you gain from doing so?

Yes, I listened to the only recording I could find. Rochester Philharmonic - Sidney Mear, Trumpet. It helped me to hear the entire piece and know how all of the voices fitted together.

3. What are, in your opinion, the primary challenges of performing *Capricorn*?

Matching the sound of the flute and oboe when together with them, and making the trumpet very present when appropriate.

4. What are your preferences, if any, with regards to tempi? Were these reflected in the specific recording in which you appear?

Tempos and many other details are always at the discretion of the music director/conductor.

5. Please provide your general impressions of the work itself. Feel free to add any information that you feel is pertinent not addressed in the previous questions.

Barber was a wonderful composer. This piece is a perfect example of his understanding of our instruments, their ability to blend with each other, and use of the rest of the orchestra. The Capricorn is a piece which deserves much more performance time from all venues - universities, professional groups.
1. Please outline the equipment choices (instruments, mutes, etc.) you made for performance and/or recording of the *Capricorn Concerto*.

Bach Large bore C trumpet 229/25H. The instrument I used was borrowed because my horn was up in Bob Malone's shop in LA. On the 2nd movement I switched to my Bach Bb trumpet for the lowest passages. (37 bell, ML bore) Mutes used: Denis Wick and an old Bach black plastic straight mute with 3 or 4 cotton balls stuffed inside.

2. Did you listen to any recordings or seek any outside advice while preparing for a performance of *Capricorn*? If so, what sources did you explore and what did you gain from doing so?

I listened to the old, original, recording with Sidney Mear performing with the Rochester Phil.

3. What are, in your opinion, the primary challenges of performing *Capricorn*?

Obviously the lyrical interval passages in the 1st movement need to be dealt with. Articulating in the same manner and sound as the flute and oboe soloists. Intonation in the low register, and maintaining an exemplary sound throughout the performance.

4. What are your preferences, if any, with regards to tempi? Were these reflected in the specific recording in which you appear?

In preparation for the work, it seemed that faster tempos in the 1st/3rd movements seemed more "trumpet-like". BUT, there are 2 other solo instruments plus the strings to consider. Maestro Donald Barra preferred slower and cleaner, and it worked well.

5. Please provide your general impressions of the work itself. Feel free to add any information that you feel is pertinent not addressed in the previous questions.

As a professional orchestral player, I love all of Samuel Barber's work. His orchestral music is oozing with sentimentality, aggression, and passion. Some of my greatest career moments have occurred playing his stuff. The Capricorn Concerto is thoughtfully written, unlike other concerto grossi. Each individual instrument has it's own personality. Interestingly enough, during the recording session for this work, the head recording engineer Michael Fine suggested that Maestro Barra listen to the orchestra back in the recording booth. The SDCO performed the whole 1st movement in one take without conductor. That was the take used on the recording. Good times!
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Copland, Aaron. “From the 20’s to the 40’s and Beyond.” Modern Music, vol. 20 (1942), 78-82.


DISCOGRAPHY


