TRIOS OF SIMON A. SARGON INCLUDING HORN

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Comparisons with precedent works of like instrumentation demonstrate that Sargon’s trios, though musically unique, merit a place alongside masterworks like Carl Reinecke’s Trio, op. 188, for oboe, horn, and piano; Franz Schubert’s *Auf dem Strom* for soprano, horn, and piano; and especially Johannes Brahms’s Trio, op. 40, for violin, horn, and piano. Other precedent, contemporary, and related works are also mentioned. Sargon’s ability to write idiomatically for the horn and other instruments is discussed, and consideration is given to some elements required to create a good performance of Sargon’s chamber music. Included are a brief biography of Simon Sargon, letters from colleagues with whom he has worked closely, lists of his instrumental music and recordings of some of these pieces, and lists of other works in the genres discussed herein.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
Current Research

Simon Sargon (b. 1938) is a renowned American composer residing in Dallas, Texas, who has written several works featuring or including the horn. Sargon is internationally recognized for numerous original and arranged sacred choral works based on Hebrew themes and written primarily for performance in his synagogue. He has composed an equally impressive body of instrumental music, including solo piano pieces, a variety of mixed instrumental ensembles, orchestral works, and two film scores. In addition, he has combined voices and instruments in large-scale settings including operas and oratorios.\(^1\) To the solo horn literature Sargon has added a concerto, *Questings* (1990) for horn and chamber orchestra, and two pieces for horn and piano, *The Weeping Shofar* (1998), and *Vermeer Portraits: Six Movements for Horn and Piano Suggested by Paintings of Jan Vermeer* (2002). This survey considers the four significant chamber trios Sargon has contributed to the horn repertoire:


Regarding existing research, a 2005 University of North Texas doctoral dissertation, Brian Nedvin’s *Holocaust Song Literature: Expressing human experience and emotions of the Holocaust through the song literature of Hirsh Glick, Mordecai*  

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\(^1\) See Appendix A for a partial works list of Sargon’s instrumental music. A complete list, including choral and vocal music, is available at http://www.simonsargon.com. Works cited herein copyright Simon A. Sargon. All rights reserved. Excerpts used by permission.
Gebertig, and Simon A. Sargon, investigates some of Sargon’s vocal compositions.

An earlier related thesis is The Holocaust, A Selective Study: The writings of Primo Levi and the music of Simon Sargon (Hebrew Union College, 1992) by Judith Meyersberg. Sargon’s Flute: A pedagogical discussion of the music for flute of Simon A. Sargon and a comparison to selected works within the current flute literature, the first in-depth study of Sargon’s instrumental writing. In addition, reviews of some of Sargon’s works and recordings can be found in genre-appropriate journals.

Historical Background

The piano trio (piano, violin, and 'cello) became a viable and important chamber music combination in the eighteenth century and has remained so to the present. Occasionally, composers have substituted wind instruments for one or both of the stringed instruments. Although Karl Heinrich Graun composed a piece for horn, violin, and basso continuo in the mid-eighteenth century, this work was likely unknown in the nineteenth century and therefore had no effect on the genre. The first recognized work composed specifically for the combination of horn, violin, and piano was the Nottorno.


3 Sargon’s orchestral works Tapestries and Symphony #1 “Holocaust” have been reviewed in Symphony; Central Opera Service Bulletin has reviewed Thirst; the choral work Shemá was reviewed in the Journal of Singing; and several recordings have been reviewed in the Journal of Singing and in The Horn Call (journal of the International Horn Society).

4 Cristoph Henzel: ‘Carl [sic] Heinrich Graun,’ Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy, (9 May 2006) http://www.grovemusic.com. K.H. Graun was known for his operas and his brother, Johann Gottlieb Graun, for his symphonies; both also wrote chamber music. The manuscript of the trio comes from Katalog Wenster Litt. I/1-17b housed in Lund, Sweden – the composer is listed only as “Graun.” There are two published editions: McCoy Music (K.H. Graun), ed. William Scharnberg, and Pizka Editions (J.G. Graun), ed. Hans Pizka.
Concertante in E-flat, op. 68/9, written in 1809 by the Czech pianist and composer Jan Ladislav Dussek. His contact in the early nineteenth century with the most famous hornist of the era, Johann Wenzel Stich, also known as Giovanni Punto, was, in all likelihood, the stimulus for substituting the horn for ’cello. Whether or not Dussek’s trio had any influence on Johannes Brahms’s significant 1865 work, Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, op. 40, is a matter of speculation. Conversely, Brahms’s Op. 40 has served as a model for at least three, and perhaps no fewer than a dozen, such subsequent trios, those of Györgi Ligeti, Trygve Madsen, and Simon Sargon.

A handful of other violin/horn trios are worthy of mention. British composer Sir Lennox Berkeley composed his Trio, op. 44, in 1953 for the twentieth century’s most recognized hornist Dennis Brain. Berkeley’s trio is rich in tranquil melodic material characterized by his neo-classical and French tendencies. In sharp stylistic contrast is Swiss serialist István Zelenka’s 1958 Trio, a challenge for performer and listener alike.

In the 1980s, American Charles Wuorinen composed two pieces for this instrumentation in his vibrant and eclectic style: Trio (1981) and Double Solo (1985). Other recently commissioned trios include John Harbison’s Twilight Music (1984) and Yehudi

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6 Robert King Music lists pieces by Barab, Chef d’Orge, D. Cox, Josephs, Kauder, Presser, Schroeder, G. Smith, Wehrli, Wiggins, and Ullrich in addition to the violin/horn works discussed herein. The on-line catalog is available at http://www.rkingmusic.com with these composers listed under the search category “Horn in Chamber Music.”


10 See http://www.schirmer.com for the composer’s own program notes to this piece.
Wyner’s Trio for Horn, Violin, and Piano (1997).¹¹ These works and others demonstrate the continuing viability of this appealing trio instrumentation.

Between the Wuorinen pieces, in 1982, Romanian-born Györgi Ligeti (1923-2006) completed his groundbreaking Trio, Hommage à Brahms. Although he explicitly refers to the work as a tribute to Brahms,¹² the relationship between Ligeti’s piece and Op. 40, other than the instrumentation, is difficult for the casual listener to discern. All three players are assigned an extensive palette of extreme technical challenges. The hornist must negotiate four octaves proficiently and perform normally unused pitches in the instrument’s harmonic series without correcting the intonation.¹³ To the listener Ligeti’s offering is enjoyably intriguing and even quirky,¹⁴ but the performers must be of the highest caliber and possess unshakable concentration.

Trygve Madsen’s Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, op. 110,¹⁵ is a recent offering to the genre recorded in 2004 by renowned horn pedagogue Frøydis Ree Wekre and her Norwegian colleagues, violinist Atle Sponberg and pianist Tor Espen Aspaas.¹⁶ Madsen claims that his greatest musical influences are Be-Bop artists, but this lovely trio is more reminiscent of the nostalgic, commercial style of popular British television and film score composer Ronnie Hazelhurst. Of his Trio, Madsen says:

¹¹ Brandeis University Professor Yehudi Wyner studied composition with Paul Hindemith and Walter Piston. See http://www.collagenewmusic.org/wyner.html for additional details. This piece was composed as the result of a consortium commission.
¹³ There are twelve possible harmonic series available on the double horn required for Ligeti’s piece. Many partials in the harmonic series are naturally out of tune. Brahms, in comparison, wrote for the waldhorn, or natural horn, in E-flat, possessing a single harmonic series with notes outside the series produced by the hand-stopping technique of the classical era.
¹⁴ Griffiths.
¹⁶ Available on the CD Ceros, 2L label # 2L25.
There is only one reason for a horn player, a violinist and a pianist to want to perform together, and that reason is the Brahms Horn Trio op. 40 [sic]. I hope that my Trio can serve as the obligatory warming up for Brahms.\textsuperscript{17}

The combination of horn, violin, and piano is not the only trio setting, however, that includes the horn. Two significant trios by German pianist and conductor Carl Reinecke are among several that retain the horn in the ’cello role while entrusting the treble duty to an oboe or clarinet as an alternative for the violin: Trio in A minor, op. 188 (1887), for oboe, horn, and piano, and Trio in B-flat, op. 274 (ca. 1905), for clarinet, horn, and piano. Hornist Frédéric Duvernoy wrote the two earliest known trios for oboe, horn, and piano in the late Napoleonic era.\textsuperscript{18} Nineteenth-century composer Heinrich von Herzogenberg, a friend of Johannes Brahms, also composed an important oboe/horn trio similar in style to Reinecke’s. The instrumental combination with oboe has been replicated close to forty times,\textsuperscript{19} as compared to approximately fifteen original works over the last two hundred years for the violin/horn combination.\textsuperscript{20}

Twentieth-century composers who have written successfully for the oboe, horn, and piano trio include Jean-Michele Damase, Alexander Arutiunian, Jan Koetsier, and Verne Reynolds. In 1915, even Claude Debussy began a similar trio for oboe, horn, and harpsichord.\textsuperscript{21} In 2003, on a commission from the Texas Music Teacher’s Association, Simon Sargon made an attractive and approachable addition to the repertoire for this genre with \textit{Sonic Portals: Trio for Oboe, Horn, and Piano}. In addition to these instrumental combinations, the voice has also been included in Sargon’s trio

\textsuperscript{17} From liner notes to \textit{Ceros}.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Cynthia Carr: “Music for Oboe, Horn, and Piano Trio.” \textit{The Horn Call}, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, February 2001; 33-42. Carr’s annotated catalogue, written prior to the publication of Sargon’s piece, lists these works alphabetically by composer. This article was subsequently reprinted in the International Double Reed Society’s \textit{The Double Reed}, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2001; 105-114.
\textsuperscript{20} The reason for this disparity is uncertain and beyond the scope of this dissertation.
\textsuperscript{21} François Lesure: ‘(Achille-)Claude Debussy,’ \textit{Grove Music Online} ed. L. Macy, (21 May 2007) http://www.grovemusic.com. This work remains unfinished and is listed as a “project.”
settings. The first important voice, horn, and piano trio was Franz Schubert’s striking work *Auf dem Strom*, D. 943 (1828), set to a poem by Ludwig Rellstab. Like Brahms’s trio, *Auf dem Strom* is well-known among several lesser-known works for its combination of performers. Although the addition of a text attaches a completely new, more intimate dimension to works with voice, they remain chamber music to the listener.

Schubert labeled the horn part in *Auf dem Strom* an obligato, but it functions integrally as both melodic commentary on the text and, alternatively, as a duet part with the vocal line. Composers from Hector Berlioz to Richard Strauss and others less well-known have written for voice and piano with the horn included in various roles. Here again, Simon Sargon has contributed to the repertoire with two moving works, “*Huntsman, What Quarry?*” for soprano and *A Clear Midnight* for baritone in which the horn is equally as prominent as the voice. The latter work is subtly reminiscent of Benjamin Britten’s Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings, op. 31(1943) in some musical details. In addition, both works were written for specific performers and both are emotionally-charged settings of the complete texts of six poems, although Britten’s choices were all by different poets while Sargon focuses solely on texts of Walt Whitman.

Intent

Although relatively infrequent in the realm of chamber music, the inclination of composers to use the horn in trio settings with piano and another instrument, whether

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22 Works of the composers mentioned here and several others have been recorded by Dallas Symphony Orchestra principal hornist Gregory Hustis with soprano Nancy Keith. Simon Sargon himself played piano on this disc, “*Huntsman, What Quarry?*” found on the Crystal Records label, CD675.

23 A piano reduction for the Britten work is available from the publisher, Hawkes & Son, Ltd.
string or wind or voice, has persisted from the Classical era to the present. Simon Sargon is a gifted, eclectic composer who has written successfully for these trio combinations. His trios are original in design and substance, and they stand among the masterpieces of mixed-instrument chamber music. The four works under consideration have each been performed numerous times, and the trios with voice have been recorded; this is the first study of these compositions both on their own merit and in light of their predecessors.

Investigation of Sargon’s compositions exposes unique structural elements and impressive musical quality. His works can generally be characterized as melodically distinctive, harmonically tonal/modal (a reflection of his cultural background), and formally conservative yet highly organic. While the specific focus of this study is his set of trios in which the horn and piano are joined by the violin, oboe, or voice, precedent works – most notably Brahms’s Trio, op. 40 – will be examined which connect Sargon’s works to a rich heritage of horn chamber music literature.

Structural analyses of Simon Sargon’s trios reveal both his adherence to and deviation from traditional forms. While his tendency in each of the four trios under consideration is to begin with standard forms, he most often works freely within them to create a unique, elastic musical tapestry. In order to more fully understand this originality in the two instrumental trios, cursory formal comparisons are made with important precedent works. The forms of the trios with voice are examined in light of their texts. Several unique aspects of Sargon’s tonal language, in addition, are highlighted in these discussions.

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24 A Clear Midnight is available on Simon Sargon: A Clear Midnight, Gasparo Records, GSCD 333.
Understanding the individual characteristics of the instruments for which he composes is an ability Simon Sargon possesses in abundance. Sargon is able to include various instrument-specific techniques and combine them to create an appealing assortment of sounds and textures. His writing for horn in particular is both idiomatic and individualistic. Moreover, balance between the voices, often an issue when performing chamber music, is intuitively integrated into Sargon’s compositions.

The collection of Simon Sargon’s trios that includes horn is a valuable addition to both the horn repertoire and chamber music genres. Sargon’s gift for composition is founded in innate musical ability that has been molded by heritage, solid training, and beneficial personal relationships. In this light, his creativity in the venue of the four trios is assessed.
CHAPTER II
INSPIRATION AND INFLUENCE

Simon Sargon’s Background

A full and diverse set of life experiences and relationships provides the rich *milieu* from which Simon Sargon draws inspiration for his compositions. Sargon was born in Bombay, India, in 1938, and his parents moved to Washington, D.C., just before the start of World War II. As a boy, he diligently practiced for his piano lessons and displayed youthful compositional creativity. Music from his father’s Sephardic-Indian lineage was an early stimulus, and when the family moved to Boston, religious schooling at Hebrew College reinforced this Jewish heritage. Initial musical training at Boston’s Longy School followed by degrees from Brandeis University and Juilliard completed his formal music education. During his college years, he spent productive summers at Tanglewood and the Aspen School. His composition teachers included Irving Fine, Darius Milhaud, and Vincent Persichetti; notable among his Juilliard classmates are Steve Reich and Philip Glass.

Prior to joining the faculty of the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University in Dallas in 1983, Simon Sargon taught at Marymount College, Sarah Lawrence College, the Rubin Academy of Music and Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and New York’s Juilliard School. In Dallas, he was also director of music at Temple Emanu-El for over a quarter century, a position in which he developed his compelling vocal compositional style.

The influences of heritage, culture, and education on an artist’s *oeuvre* can be deep and powerful. Although Sargon’s parents were traditional, practicing Jews – his
father, as has been mentioned, was a Sephardic Indian, and his mother was of
Ashkenazic-Russian descent – his musical training was a cosmopolitan blend of
Western idioms. “These two [seemingly contradictory] influences had a profound effect
on his development spiritually, mentally, and musically.”

Hornists

Relationships can also have a compelling impact on an artist’s work. Many of
Sargon’s compositions, especially his chamber works, were written for specific
players. Sargon has, for nearly two decades, worked closely with Gregory Hustis,
principal hornist of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and his friend and colleague at
Southern Methodist University. Marcia Spence – professor of horn at the University of
Missouri-Columbia, with whom Sargon has also had an enduring professional
relationship and for whom he composed Vermeer Portraits – has dubbed Hustis
“Simon’s Leutgeb.” This apt designation refers to W.A. Mozart’s relationship with
hornist Ignaz Leutgeb, for whom his celebrated concertos were composed. Similarly,
both Questings and “Huntsman, What Quarry?” are dedicated to Hustis, and the four
trios considered in this study were premiered by him with Sargon at the piano.

Death as Inspiration

Simon Sargon’s Trio for Horn, Violin, and Piano “The Legacy,” was com-
plete in 1992 and premiered the following spring. “The Legacy” is dedicated to a long-

25 Van Winkle, 17, quoting Judith Meyersberg, 49.
26 Response from Marcia Spence to the author, June 26, 2007. See Appendix E.
27 Responses from Marcia Spence, January 13 and June 26, 2007. Sargon’s challenging
Vermeer Portraits was composed as a gift for and dedicated to Spence – the enigmatic “M” in his
dedication.
time friend and colleague, Eugene Bonelli, former dean of the Meadows School of the Arts and past president of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. However, the death of Sargon’s father in 1992 was the impetus for the completion of this poignant trio.

The objective similarities and differences between this work and Johannes Brahms’s masterwork, Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, op. 40, warrant a close comparison.

Brahms’s inspirations for composing a horn trio are likely manifold. He is known to have remarked to his friend, composer and conductor Albert Dietrich,28 that a certain scenic spot in the Black Forest had brought the opening theme of the work to mind during a sunrise walk while summering near Baden-Baden in 1865.29 The breathtaking climax of the third movement and the ala chasse-inspired fourth might also be attributed to the composer’s love of the outdoors.

This trio was “the first piece [completed] after his mother’s death...[and] the last piece Brahms wrote before the German Requiem,” a work regarding which Clara Schumann asserted, “We all think he wrote [the Requiem] in her memory, though he has never expressly said so.”30 While he left no known record of his mother’s death as having affected the Trio, some scholars, among them music historian and critic Richard Specht,31 have speculated that the impact of her passing had its most immediate

29 Edwin Evans, Chamber and Orchestral Music of Johannes Brahms; London: W. Reeves, 1912; 186. Also, Jeffrey Pulver, Johannes Brahms; New York: Harper and Bros., 1926; 140.
musical manifestation in the dark, plaintive third movement of this work.\textsuperscript{32} Brahms biographer Max Kalbeck cites three indications of a possible connection: 1) Brahms was, to some lesser or greater extent, proficient on each instrument, likely having studied them with his father; 2) the theme of the finale, anticipated in the third movement, is suggestive of a folk song learned from his mother;\textsuperscript{33} and 3) the third movement has a solemn, “dirge-like quality.”\textsuperscript{34} Marked Adagio mesto (mournful, sorrowful)\textsuperscript{35} and written in the parallel key of E-flat minor, this powerful adagio can easily be heard as a lamentation. Historian Karl Geiringer maintains that the “spirit of the horn imbues the whole work with a delicate melancholy and an intense feeling for Nature. The veils are lifted only in the cheerful hunting scene of the Finale, while a faint trace of melancholy clings even to the humor of the Scherzo.”\textsuperscript{36} Even Brahms’s decision to compose for the valveless \textit{waldhorn} highlights the “Nature” aspect of the trio: he used notes of the harmonic series, typical of the horn’s traditional signaling role in the hunt, as the basis for several themes throughout the work.\textsuperscript{37} Geiringer’s “veils” can certainly refer, in part, to the fact that more hand-stopping is required in the third movement than elsewhere and that Brahms’s includes an \textit{una corda} marking in the

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Probably \textit{In den Weiden steht ein Haus} (Among the Willows Stands a House); see Garrett, Chapter 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Robert H. Schauffler, \textit{The Unknown Brahms}; Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975; 5, 56.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} This is the only instance among all Brahms’s slow movements in which this unusual marking, \textit{mesto}, is used. See Margaret Notley, \textit{Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism}; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; 221-2. Notley devotes an entire chapter to the aesthetic of adagio movements in Brahms’s chamber music.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Karl Geiringer, \textit{Brahms: His Life and Work}; Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961; 211.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} In his engrossing character study, “The Cultural World of Brahms,” Michael Musgrave frequently corroborates the influence of nature and conservative thought in Brahms’s music even though he was acquainted with the most modern literature (Brahms was exceedingly well-read and known for his substantial library), art, and science. Musgrave credits Brahms with “the creative synthesis of past with present... [in] his instrumental works.” Michael Musgrave, “The Cultural World of Brahms,” \textit{Brahms}, ed. Robert Pascall; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; 22.
\end{itemize}
opening measures of the piano – elements which further emphasize the austere mood of a movement that is clearly the emotional center of the trio. Here, perhaps, Brahms created the ultimate memorial to his mother.

As close as Brahms was to his mother, Simon Sargon was correspondingly alienated from his father. Composition of the first movement of “The Legacy” began during the spring of 1992. In it, one hears allusions to Aaron Copland’s tranquil, leaping intervals and open harmonies. Sargon’s father died that summer before the other movements had been begun. He says of the coincidence:

Although I thought I had prepared myself for my father’s passing, following his death I found myself overwhelmed by a “legacy” of powerful feelings. I experienced a profound sorrow, as well as the pain of watching him die. In addition, I felt anger at the periods of estrangement we had, the unresolved hurt on both sides. I felt a deep sense of loss for the parts of himself and his background which he never shared with me.

After the broad and expansive first movement, these conflicted feelings erupt in the middle movements of the Trio. The third movement is the focus of mourning, with the main theme in the nature of a Funeral march. The intensity of expression in these central movements arrives at a feeling of consolation only in the comforting lyrical phrases of the violin in the final moments of the third movement.38

The third movement of Sargon’s trio, as a result, parallels Brahms’s Adagio mesto in both placement and affect. The objectives for composing, then, bear some similarity, but the circumstances were different: Brahms began his trio after the death of his mother, writing for the three instruments of his youth, and including the folk tune heard at his mother’s knee. Sargon began his trio on the commission of a friend, after

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which his father died, altering the initial direction of the composition to include this tribute to his father.

Sargon’s fourth movement launches from the expressive conclusion of the third into a cathartic set of variations stylistically quite different from the inner movements. While the second movement possesses traits of Shostakovich\(^{39}\) in its relentless rhythmic drive, the third is reminiscent of the works of Benjamin Britten in its grating discord, capricious flourishes, and sudden harmonic shifts. The theme of the fourth, in contrast, encompasses a narrow range and is almost popular in style, though some later variations attempt to return, if only briefly, to the anguish expressed in the previous two movements. While “The Legacy” begins and ends in A major, the opening theme of the first movement begins with a statement from the horn in the subdominant. The final statement of the variations, also from the horn, is the incipit of the opening theme reconciled in the tonic.

Another composer thought to have written an elegiac chamber work including the horn is Franz Schubert (1797-1828). While many studies have examined both Schubert’s song cycles and his chamber music, relatively little mention is made in them of the exquisite composition for soprano and piano with horn obligato, *Auf dem Strom*, op. 119 (1828). Perhaps the genre of the piece is difficult to classify since it is not strictly a vocal solo with piano accompaniment. What has been noted was that its premiere was postponed to coincide with the first anniversary in March, 1828, of the death of Beethoven. That this was on Schubert’s mind when he penned the work may not be the case. Schubert scholars John Reed and Brian Newbould, however, both cite

\(^{39}\) Simon Sargon here cites Greg Hustis. Sargon disclosed a portion of their rehearsal discussion during a phone conversation with the author, May 5, 2006.
Rufus Hallmark’s assertions that several musical elements in Auf dem Strom seem to have been deferentially drawn from the Funeral March in Beethoven’s third symphony, Eroica.\(^{40}\) Moreover, Ludwig Rellstab’s poem recounts the sorrowful parting of lovers, which could be read as a poetic response to death. The work was, interestingly, performed again only ten months later at a memorial concert held, in part, to pay for Schubert’s own funeral services in November, 1828.\(^{41}\)

The conclusion that Brahms wrote Op. 40 – or even just the third movement – as a response to his mother’s death seems well-founded, but it is speculative: there exists no recorded mention of the event as having directly impacted his composition of the piece. Objective evidence in the case of Schubert’s Auf dem Strom seems to be more conclusive; but here too, no direct quote from the composer substantiates it as fact. In contrast, Simon Sargon has stated explicitly that he was able to express his feelings about his father’s death via a musical vehicle, “The Legacy,” even the title of which is memorial in character.

The Theory of Influence

In 1973, Yale humanities professor and literary critic Harold Bloom first published a book entitled The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry, one of several he has written on literary connections, in which he posits a “theory of influence” that has been developing since the nineteenth century. The basic premise of this esoteric offering is that every great literary work (he uses poetry as his models) is somehow a “misreading”


of some great work that precedes it. The application to music has been made somewhat persuasively by theorist Joseph N. Straus and even more so by musicologist Mark Evan Bonds, although Bonds dismisses some “aspects of Bloom’s theory of influence…[as] unconvincing or irrelevant to music,” in particular the idea that only one great work will influence a subsequent work.

Simon Sargon has asserted that any good musician faces the influence of numerous great masterworks simply because he or she has studied, performed, or at least heard them. This exposure does not diminish an artist’s creativity. Rather, for the great artist, it expands the palette of resources and emboldens the imagination, thus stimulating creativity.

This study uses the word “influence” and analogous terms occasionally with reference to sounds or techniques one finds in Sargon’s music that may seem similar to those used by other great composers. This is done for the purpose of presenting a musical reference to the reader who may be unfamiliar with Sargon’s compositions. These compositional associations are neither intentional nor coincidental on Sargon’s part – they are simply elements of the rich tonal language he has inherited through education and experience. What is more, to the listener these incidents will assuredly be subjective. Consumers of traditional Western music, with its limited harmonic and rhythmic vocabularies, will forever experience some degree of musical déjá vu. In most

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44 Bonds, 3.
45 Sargon stated this conviction in a phone conversation with the author, January 23, 2007.
instances, therefore, the term “influence” is used in the much simpler and broader
sense, without any accompanying “Bloom baggage,” of Simon Sargon’s life and
relationships coming to bear on his artistic processes.
CHAPTER III
STRUCTURE AND TONAL LANGUAGE IN BRAHMS’S TRIO, OP. 40, 
AND SARGON’S TRIO THE LEGACY

Brahms’s Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano is arguably the most important chamber work in the horn repertoire. The formal structure of Op. 40 has been investigated by several scholars, but a concise review here is essential to better understanding Op. 40 and “The Legacy” as distinct works as well as in relationship to one another. Interestingly, few striking musical similarities exist between these two masterworks: they are markedly different, each beautifully displaying the exceptional craftsmanship and unique voice of the composer.

That Brahms forgoes sonata form in the first movement of his trio has been well documented. What he produced instead is “a version of expanded ternary form or possibly a simple rondo, both diagrammed as ABA'B'A,” with the large sections clearly identified by the alternating 2/4 to 9/8 meter changes. Composed in the solo-horn key of E-flat major, the B section is tonally unsettled but hovers much of the time in G minor; B' lingers similarly around B-flat minor. A" begins clearly on the dominant seventh of G-flat major, and a retransition (marked un poco animato poi a poi) to E-flat major is established by a return of the initial dominant seventh chord at the final key change (m. 234). Brahms employs a musical decay as he fragments the principal melodic material in the coda (letter [I]) to bring the movement to its serene conclusion.

The listener may hear the compound ternary form associated with a scherzo-trio-da capo in the second movement, but it appears to have the development section

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46 Evans, 186; Geiringer, 211; Swafford, 300.
47 Garrett, Chapter 4. This is substantiated in Schauffler, 386, who references Beethoven’s Sonata in F major (for piano), op. 54, as an additional example of this form.
associated with sonata form. After wandering from E-flat major through B major (the enharmonic flat sixth), the development of primary thematic material at letter [C] extends to the recapitulation which begins, somewhat ambiguously, four bars before [E]. The somber trio, in A-flat minor and marked *Molto meno Allegro*, is preceded by a nine-bar bridge, and comprises the large B section. The trio is substantial, but its length is justifiably proportional to that of the extended scherzo.

The *Adagio mesto* is a simpler version of the same ABA'B'A" form seen in the first movement. The central melodic lines of the horn and violin in the opening A section are flanked by an austere dirge in the piano part. The B section, beginning at letter [A], is more fluid (though of related material) and almost conversational in the way that the horn and violin parts alternate, particularly in measures 27-42. The return of A at bar 43 is punctuated by two measures of primary B-section material in the violin. B' is shorter than B, and the conversational exchange reoccurs with the piano alternating with the combined horn and violin. The climax of the movement at letter [D] is immediately followed by the return of the A section, extended in that its primary melodic elements are reiterated as if to prolong an affect of anguish.

With sonata form conspicuously missing in the first movement, Brahms provides it in the finale. What one might expect upon hearing the opening 6/8 tune is a rollicking, Mozartean rondo. Edwin Evans refers to the movement as “Haydnish,” referring to its “jollity” and “fidelity to thematic material.” With no introduction, the repeated exposition moves into development of the opening material, supported with the momentary addition of related new material (violin, mm. 112-119; piano left hand, mm. 122-129, up a whole step). After a lyrically striking bridge (mm. 152-160) and an eight-bar transition

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48 Evans, 198.
(mm.161-168), the recapitulation proceeds as expected with the final expository subject (dominant, beginning m. 44) now in the anticipated tonic (beginning m. 212). The movement climaxes at the coda (letter [I]) but continues with exhilarating energy to provide a flawless finish to an extremely emotional piece.

Sargon’s trio begins more traditionally with a movement in sonata form, albeit with the harmonic language of the late twentieth century. The first movement opens without an introduction. The exposition consists of two theme groups each containing two themes. Group 1/theme 1 begins somewhat comparably to Brahms’s first-movement opening theme – the rising fifth in particular is conspicuous – (see Figures 1a and 1b), and it extends to letter [B].

![Figure 1a – Simon A. Sargon, Trio “The Legacy,” Movement I, measures 1-2.](image)

![Figure 1b – Johannes Brahms, Trio, op. 40, Movement I, measures 1-3.](image)
Statements of the opening theme are heard in the subdominant and supertonic tonal centers of the indicated key of A major. Group 1/theme 2 is related yet more restricted in its melodic range, and it drifts chromatically through more distant tonal centers. The second theme group begins at letter C with a fragmented fanfare. Group 2/theme 2, *con anima*, is suggestive of the group 1 materials, and it is followed by a restatement of the fanfare, producing a small, internal rounded binary form.

The development of the first movement, from letter [E], consists of the recycling of all previous materials via various compositional techniques, including inversion, fragmentation, diminution, superimposition, and rhythmic alteration. The recapitulation, beginning at measure 127, is in a modified tonal structure, including a partial statement of the theme in the remote lowered supertonic, B-flat major. The second theme group in the recapitulation consists of only a simple binary form, the second statement of the fanfare now supplanted by a coda built on the initial group 1/theme 1 material. Much of the harmonic material in the first movement includes quartal structures and unresolved suspensions.

The opening of the second movement, through letter [N], is assembled from toccata-like treatment of material from the first movement – the piano part in measures 5 through 8 provide a clear restatement of the trio’s opening material (see Figure 2) – set in alternating Dorian and Phrygian modes.
This section fragments and dissipates before a broader line is introduced at letter [N] in the horn part, incorporating large leaps of sevenths and ninths which are superimposed over the toccata material. At [O], the violin takes up this material to complete the section. *Tempo primo* after letter [P] is a regrouping of the fragments scattered earlier which leads back to the opening material. Letter [R] introduces completely new material (almost entirely in the piano part) of a much different character. Marked *Tutta forza, ff*, this material features a half-note triplet hemiola and a harmonic structure built on a Sargon hallmark, the rising tritone (see Figure 3).49

49 For example, Sargon’s haunting “*Huntsman, What Quarry?*” opens with a somewhat
An abridged version of the opening material returns to close the piece, though not before one final exclamation point in the form of a single tritone hemiola plus a stinger. Other harmonic structures, as in the first movement, are built primarily on seconds and fourths. The complete form of the piece is a small rondo, ABA'CA" with codetta.

While Sargon refers to the third movement as also being a rondo, it is rather freely constructed. Mapping the sections, in fact, leads to a different formal possibility:

disquieting horn fanfare built on the interval of a tritone.

50 This was discussed with Sargon in a phone conversation, May 5, 2006.
mm. 1-6, *adagio* (A); 7-24, *marcia* (B); 25-40, *lamentoso* (C); 41-46, an abbreviated *marcia* at the dominant (B'); 47-65 *agitato* (D); 66-77, *pesante* (D'); 78-86, *adagio* (A'); 87-100, *lamentoso* (C'); 101-108, *tranquillo* (C''/A, synthesized); 109-114, *marcia* (B''); 115-120, *(adagio)* with augmentation (A''). This diagram reveals a loose and expanded retrograde or arch form, simplified as ABCDDCBA.

The dissonant opening and closing statements (A) of the third movement are built on half- and whole-step tone clusters over an E pedal point (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4 – Simon A. Sargon, Trio “The Legacy,” Movement III, measures 1-3.](image)

The initial A is marked *ff* while the final is performed *piano*. The *marcia* sections fluctuate between Phrygian and Hypophrygian modes on E (B and B-flat both appear). The *lamentoso* material includes principally minor and diminished tonalities, though movement is by chord streaming rather than chord progression. The alarming D sections contain highly chromatic linear lines over polytonal chord stacks (see Figure 5). This movement displays a large variety of harmonic gestures which evoke an intense affect of anguish.
The finale is a straightforward theme and variations in which the A-major theme (see Figure 6) becomes increasingly less-recognizable. The indicated 7/8 time is typical of some Eastern dance meters; but Sargon has marked the theme mp, with gentle motion, less characteristic of this usually feverish style. The horn and violin require mutes in Variation 1, emphasizing the subdued nature of the opening. Variation 2 divides the theme, pitting the horn against combined violin and piano. Variation 3 begins with solo piano, but accidentals are introduced around [GG] which transition into Variation 4.

Variation 4 is striking for its shift to the four flats of F minor and the change from 2+2+3 (7/8) to 3+3+2 (8/8). Variation 4 also functions as the genesis of Variations 5 and 6 which are scherzo-like presentations in D Phrygian and G major/Mixolydian (F and F-sharp both appear) respectively. Variation 7 is dark in its wandering chromaticism, and Variation 8 begins with a rhythmic distortion of the original 7/8 material built on quartal harmonies. What Sargon labels as the coda is itself a variation in B-flat major that modulates back to the initial A major tonality to round off the work (see Figure 7).
Figure 6 – Simon A. Sargon, Trio “The Legacy,” Movement IV, measures 1-8.
Near the end of the finale, measures 185-200 are a simply adorned version of the theme, marked by dynamic ebb-and-flow and simple piano arpeggios. After a partial restatement of the work’s opening horn solo, a final two measures in 5/8, marked *allegro vivo*, *ff*, conclude the trio with an unexpected punch.

Formal structures in “The Legacy” are based on the traditional musical forms associated with nineteenth-century chamber music, but the melodic and harmonic language Sargon chooses has roots in several musical eras. Elements of Romanticism and Impressionism are evident, but twentieth-century techniques provide Sargon more
flexibility for his practice of spinning out melodies and modifying harmonies. Often, he reverts to the ancient church modes to assemble these same horizontal and vertical elements. The diverse palette of options Sargon employs is another element of his creative originality and one reason that his forms are so flexible.

The trios by Brahms and Sargon are both laden as much with intent as with opulent, though dissimilar, musical material. Some parallels in detail, however, can be noted. The opening statements of each work, for example, begin with rising fifths (a common signal interval for the horn) which then continue in stepwise figurations (see Figures 1a and 1b). They are both set in moderate tempos and at subdued dynamic levels, and both begin in tonal centers other than the tonic of their respective key signatures: Sargon begins in the subdominant while Brahms begins with a dominant seventh. The keys of the two trios are a tritone apart – an intervallic relationship favored by Sargon. Each trio begins with a solo voice (Sargon’s with horn and Brahms’s with violin) soon joined by one or both of the other parts in accompanying figures. In both works, each voice commands relatively equal time with the melodic material. While Brahms abandons sonata form for his first movement, Sargon, conversely, adheres to the tradition.

The second movements are both scherzos. Brahms’s is clearly marked as a scherzo and, appropriately, includes a contrasting trio with da capo. Sargon’s, labeled Allegro di molto, is a scherzo in character, though constructed as a free-form rondo (ABA’CA”) with the rhythmically broader C section mirroring Brahms’s Molto meno

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51 Van Winkle, p. 45.
53 Professor Sargon acknowledged this in a phone conversation, May 5, 2006.
Allegro trio. Both movements are, suitably, in a brisk toccata style. Brahms has not reprocessed musical material in Op. 40 to this point, but Sargon draws on material from movement I to open his Allegro di molto.

The third movements are those in which genuine affect can be most easily discerned. Substantiation for each composer’s slow movement having been written as a reaction to death has been offered; yet what is heard in a performance of each work are wholly different responses from each composer to his loss. Brahms’s Adagio mesto is a movement intimating unfathomable sorrow, musically evocative of sighs, weeping, even wailing (the ff climax at letter [D]), and concluding in unwelcome resignation. Sargon’s Adagio (Come una marcia funebre) betrays a profound angst that resolves peacefully in the closing few measures of the movement.

The composers part ways conceptually with their fourth movements. Brahms employs a jovial, classical sonata-rondo ala chasse, but Sargon chooses an andante theme and variations built on a wistful, asymmetrical tune in 7/8 time. Through the first three movements, choices for forms have been roughly parallel. While the fourth movements are dissimilar in form, both achieve a sense of resolution. Brahms’s finale is sporting and jolly while Sargon’s is serene and reassuring. The movements are vastly different in character, yet each serves to draw the listener away from tension generated in the preceding movements.

Objective substance between Brahms’s trio and Sargon’s may seem

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54 It is interesting to note that Brahms herein uses a device employed by Mozart in his horn Concerto, K. 447, but in reverse. Mozart’s lovely second movement theme (in the atypical subdominant) returns as a secondary rondo theme, at pitch, but in diminution. Brahms’s principal rondo theme, conversely, is briefly foreshadowed in his slow movement.

55 The 7/8 meter used in this movement is traditional to many Eastern European folk dances which have infused Israeli music. These traditional odd-meter dances have come with Jewish immigrants to the Mediterranean nation.
comparable, but formal connections are few and quite general. Each trio has four substantial movements: each has one movement in sonata form, and the remaining movements are types of rondo forms. The fourth movements are the most contrasting in form, yet they both bring their respective trio to a gratifying conclusion. Arguably, the few existing formal similarities between the trios are not the result of intent but of creativity.
CHAPTER IV

STRUCTURE AND TONAL LANGUAGE IN REINECKE’S TRIO, OP. 188, AND SARGON’S SONIC PORTALS

Trios including the oboe as a substitute for the violin offer completely different acoustic possibilities to a composer. Indeed, two wind parts would seem to provide a more reasonable solution to some of the inherent difficulties encountered when combining a single string player with a single wind player in a chamber setting, particularly with regard to issues of balance. Even in the symphony orchestra, wind chairs are all considered to be “solo” chairs while string sections have several players per part. Perhaps this is one reason more composers have chosen to write for a trio combination of oboe, horn, and piano than for the ensemble including violin.

Reinecke holds fast to classical forms in the movements of Op. 188, and, in the third and fourth movements most notably, he recycles his musical materials much as Brahms does. Marked Allegro moderato, movement I is in standard sonata form in the key of A minor. A theme built on a dotted eighth-sixteenth-quarter note rhythmic motive opens the first movement (see Figure 8). This motive is included in the lyrical second theme (m. 36) as well as throughout most other elements of the movement. Contrasting thematic material incorporates a broader melody characterized by complex, often overlapping duple and triple rhythmic patterns.

The development (m. 71) moves through characteristic manipulations of the thematic materials and incorporates brief a piacere passages for both oboe (mm. 98-99) and horn (mm. 116-117) as capstones to Reinecke’s creative ascending chromatic sequencing. The recapitulation (m. 133) opens with a shortened version of theme I, and theme II (m. 164) returns in the parallel major. The coda (m. 188) restores A minor, and
the movement ends quietly through thematic fragmentation. The lush character of this movement is created in part by the simultaneous use of double, triple, and quadruple subdivisions of the beat, in addition to larger hemiola.

![Figure 8 – Carl Reinecke, Trio, op. 188, Movement I, measures 1-5.](image)

Movement II is a brisk scherzo in C major. The simple two-bar modulation into the trio (at m. 74) results in a mediant modulation to A-flat major (the flat sixth), and the retransition to C major for the written-out da capo begins with the German augmented sixth chord from the original tonic (m. 112). This bright, energetic movement also has a momentary encounter with polyrhythm (mm. 98-99) that melodically predicts the Adagio.

The Adagio third movement is a large ternary form, the outer A sections of which can be sub-diagrammed as aa'b. The large B section is a development of these smaller thematic materials, and it includes the rhythmic motive from the first movement. This movement begins in the remote submediant key of F major (again, to the original tonic key, a flat sixth relationship), but the restatement of the initial theme at A' is in the refreshing mediant, A major. This new key produces the same parallel major relationship observed in movement I and foreshadows the key of the finale. As in the
first movement, the *Adagio* ends quietly as primary thematic elements are splintered away at diminishing dynamic levels.

The finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is a sonata-rondo form including several quasi-developmental passages. The opening A theme, in the key of A major, is followed by a B theme group in which the dominant is clearly outlined beneath an expressive oboe melody (m. 51). A brief retransition returns to a shorter version of A, and this is followed by C which develops fragments of both A and B material. The A theme returns in the tonic (m. 143); but B returns in the supertonic key of B minor (m. 166). The most striking element of the finale is the return of the horn’s adagio theme from the third movement which serves as a noticeably present countermelody over the quicker rondo materials (see Figures 9a and 9b).

![Figure 9a - Carl Reinecke, Trio, op. 188, Movement III, measures 1-11 (horn part).](image1)

![Figure 9b - Carl Reinecke, Trio, op. 188, Movement IV, measures 192-201 (horn part).](image2)

A new, rhythmically augmented canon is introduced (m. 239) in the wind parts to add texture and heighten tension. Concluding dynamics in the finale are built up but then tapered as if preparing a fadeout similar to the first and third movements, but a

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56 The recording by the Dallas Chamber Players includes a cut that alters the original sonata-rondo form.
subito ff in the last three bars creates a surprise ending appropriate for this substantial work.

In Sonic Portals, Simon Sargon presents four short movements in which he is deliberately frugal in his use of melodic materials. The piece is predominantly transparent in texture, equitably showcasing each instrument. Marked molto tranquillo, movement I opens with an expansive, lyrical 8-bar melody presented as a horn solo in C major while the piano floats above it with pianissimo quartal harmonies. The oboe responds in E major with the accompanying harmonies correspondingly altered, and a final canonic statement of the melody prepares the piano part for the second theme which begins in measure 26. Fragments of a sixteenth-note tune are presented in the B section until grazioso (m. 38) when they finally coalesce in the wind parts. The piano then takes over, and elements of the opening theme return as musical reflections in the wind parts.

At measure 48, as the piano reiterates the rising fifth which opens the movement, the winds present new material, decaying tutti trills, which serves to illustrate the title of the work. These impart fresh texture, and a thick, polychordal piano punctuation, a G-sharp major triad over an A major triad, provides an unexpected sonority (see Figure 10). The B section is then stated down a major third. The movement closes as quietly as it opens, though a smattering of B-section fragments obscures the actual return of the A section. The form of the first movement is an asymmetrical ABB'A' arch.
Figure 10 – Simon A. Sargon, *Sonic Portals*, Movement I, measures 48-54.

Movement II is a quick 6/8 miniature scherzo form with a contrasting 2/4 trio and an abbreviated, written-out *da capo*. Opening in F Mixolydian mode, crisply articulated motivic fragments in the wind parts grow and unite while elements borrowed from the first movement, including the descending bass line of the A' section (beginning in m. 14) and a statement of the opening horn melody heard in canon in the piano entrance at measure 24 (see Figure 11).
The trio, marked *meno mosso, comodo*, is polymetric with the winds in 2/4 and the piano continuing in 6/8. Melodic material in the wind parts is rhythmically similar to the sixteenth-note B material from the first movement, but the piano has new ascending scalar material (progressing through F and B-flat major) somewhat akin to protracted harp flourishes. The *da capo* is built principally of splintered bits of the opening material, volleyed among all three parts until the abrupt but climactic *ff* ending.

One of the more notable aspects of the third movement is the amount of linear chromatic writing it contains in contrast to the other movements, although, other than in
the middle section, the texture remains quite transparent. Regarding this ternary-form movement, Sargon states:

Emotionally, [this] is the core of the piece. The oboe sings a quiet, prayerful melody, and…the horn moves in canon to it…. But the serenity of this opening dissolves in the middle section of the movement, which becomes agitated and dissonant [m. 31, marked piú mosso, agitato]. As the music builds to its climax, the melody of the first movement is stated [in the left hand of the piano, m. 41]…now distorted in a bitonal matrix of sound. After a brief transition, the movement ends as it began, in a quiet and reassuring song.57

The finale of Sonic Portals is a larger three-part form that can be mapped generally as ||:A:|| BA' and more specifically as ||:aba'Bb':||Ba"b". (B represents a six-bar bridge anticipating B-section material.) The contrasting B section, featuring the oboe, is long (37 bars of 134) but formally suitable. Tonally, the movement begins in C major, but harmonies are open and often unresolved – even the final chord is a suspended C chord (without a third). Sargon adds successively more sharps as the movement progresses but neutralizes them quite suddenly at measure 60. Other components of the movement include multimeter, variable accents, and a borrowing of materials both from earlier in this work (the second movement in particular) and, to a lesser extent, from the 7/8 tune from the finale variations of “The Legacy” (see Figure 12; compare to Figure 6).

A head-to-head comparison of the oboe trios of Reinecke and Sargon shows some formal similarities between the two works. The principal discoveries are that the inner two movements of both oboe trios are the same forms (scherzo and ternary form, respectively), and that both composers generally adhere to the use of classical forms in these works, although Simon Sargon employs both greater brevity and elasticity. In addition, each composer reuses motivic materials throughout his composition to provide

57 From “Program Notes” to Sonic Portals.
additional structural coherence.

Figure 12 – Simon A. Sargon, *Sonic Portals*, Movement IV, measures 18-24.

Sargon’s program notes about this work state that it is his attempt to reconcile the sonic contrasts of the two wind instruments while providing a unique platform for “expressivity and emotion.” Harmonically, however, the two oboe/horn trios have little in common. In comparative regard then, Sargon’s title, *Sonic Portals*, could suggest, among other interpretations, doorways leading out of traditional harmonic practices.

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58 From “Program Notes” to *Sonic Portals*. 
Franz Schubert’s *Auf dem Strom* is an extraordinary work originally written for tenor (although it is often sung by soprano). The text recounts the thoughts of a man departing his homeland by boat on a stormy day, leaving his lover weeping on the shore. Scholar John Reed notes that “Schubert’s setting uses a pair of related strophes, the odd-numbered verses in E major and the even ones in the relative minor, so that the song, like the poem, seems to work on two emotional levels…[causing it to] take on deeper and more tragic overtones.” This tonal vacillation is a device often used by Schubert to musically suggest the changing emotions depicted in a text, one obvious method for allowing the text to direct the compositional process.

The two horn-and-voice trios that Simon Sargon has composed are intensely poignant works on texts which deal with profound life issues such as love, mortality, and death. The texts, appropriately, propel the music which is at once highly charged yet understated. Sargon avoids the ostentatious, “art for art’s sake,” in favor of a discreet, reflexively supportive union of music with poetry. The music is neither acquiescent to the texts nor does it dominate. Sargon has had a great amount of experience setting texts, and he uses his expertise to effectively enhance the implications of the poetry.

“Huntsman, What Quarry?” and “The Buck in the Snow” are two poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay that explore the controversial subject of hunting, an especially suitable topic for which to include the traditional instrument of the hunt. The history of the horn

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as a signaling instrument is well known. In “Huntsman,” Sargon takes advantage of the horn’s ability to call over great distances and echo across a forest. Conversely, in “The Buck in the Snow,” he uses the instrument’s great emotive qualities with fluid, plaintive cries. These represent, in addition to a straightforward bucolic use of the horn, the voiceless buck dying in the snow.

The text of “Huntsman” is primarily a dialogue between a lone hunter and the solitary maiden that he encounters while pursuing a fox. (See Appendix C for complete texts of “Huntsman, What Quarry?” and “The Buck in the Snow.”) Eight brief lines introduce her question (the title of the poem), and the consequent eight lines present the hunter’s reply. Sargon’s music opens with a distant signal, played three times at rising pitch levels and increasing dynamic levels, announcing the hunter’s approach, after which the dialogue begins. The first of the three signals begins in B minor, but a lowered fifth scale degree, written as a linear rising tritone, establishes an eerie atmosphere (see Figure 13). The haunting effect continues through to the third statement in B major which includes a lowered sixth scale degree. The horn introduction comprises the A section (mm. 1-28), and two verses of dialogue encompass the B section (mm. 29-62). The A and B sections return in altered format (beginning at m. 63) with the effect of creating a climax which serves to divide the first section from the second. The hunting call here also serves as an interlude before the dialogue resumes.
In the third verse, the girl presents the hunter with an opportunity to forego his hunt for a night with her. The supporting music is primarily major/minor in tonality. His answer, expressed only in his thoughts and darkly portrayed in a brief extended passage of heavily flatted tonalities (mm. 107-113), is confirmed when the fox appears and the hunter resumes his chase. The final eight measures, marked *più mosso*, serve as a coda. The basic form of the work is, to a great extent, strophic: ABA'B' coda. The A sections and coda contain the horn-signal material; the lines of poetry, presented unaltered in their irregular format, comprise the B sections.
“The Buck in the Snow” is also a quasi-strophic setting, a large two-part song form around which the horn frames the text. Two eloquently vivid six-line verses comprise the text which describes the moment of death of a buck shot by hunter. The first eleven bars, in which most of the melodic elements to follow are presented, are for horn alone. This solo line is tragic, even alarming, as Sargon has chosen a sequence of intervals which seem to illustrate agony and the final, fleeting moments of the buck’s life. The music reflects the textual meditation on the brevity of life and the cruelty of man murdering a magnificent creature for sport. The major third descending a half step to a minor third is strongly reminiscent of the “Elegy” from Benjamin Britain’s Serenade, op. 31,\(^6\) (see Figures 14a and 14b) and the effect is extremely wrenching, especially as Sargon pairs it with wide leaps and unresolved major sevenths.

![Figure 14a - Simon A. Sargon, “Huntsman, What Quarry?”; “The Buck in the Snow,” measures 1-11 (horn part).](image)

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\(^6\) Both works, additionally, are in E minor, the traditional key, according to Sargon (citing Schweitzer’s writings on Bach), for elegies. From a phone conversation, September 1, 2007.
The ensuing music is affixed to the text by reusing these opening elements in a variety of permutations and introducing very little in the way of new material other than a melancholy, *portamento* piano accompaniment. A brief interlude (mm. 32-35) separates the first five lines of the first verse from the final line which then elides into the second verse. The closing horn solo is played over the somber, throbbing accompaniment – an exceptionally moving close to a powerful and expressive setting.

Although the forms used in these two settings are strophic, Simon Sargon continuously varies the musical details, obscuring clear-cut formal demarcations in order to most effectively support the text. He responds appropriately to St. Vincent Millay’s irregular verses with a flexible approach to setting them: instead of stanzas or repeat signs, there is unanticipated musical commentary on the text, overlap and intersection of materials, melodic extension and truncation, rhythmic alteration, and variation in pitch levels.

A similar method of composition was required when setting Walt Whitman’s six equally brief and irregular poems which comprise the set for baritone, horn, and piano, *A Clear Midnight*. This cycle again showcases Sargon’s instinctive ability to write well for voice. The combination of horn and baritone is highly unusual due to a large overlap
in range. Yet the inclusion of horn provides additional color and texture as it functions as the ideal medium for text painting\textsuperscript{62} in these thought-provoking poems.

The first piece in the collection is a setting of the psalm-like “A Song of Joys,” the most buoyant, cheerful movement of the six. (See Appendix D for the complete texts of these six poems.) A brief but animated introduction (see Figure 15) and a nearly identical coda, both tonally centered in B-flat major, encase the lines of poetry.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure15.png}
\caption{Simon A. Sargon, \textit{A Clear Midnight}, “A Song of Joys,” measures 1-6.}
\end{figure}

Sargon has freely repeated and repositioned clauses and phrases of the eight-

\textsuperscript{62} Text-painting is a compositional technique in which sounds represent words (a musical \textit{onomatopoeia}, so to speak), scenes, ideas, experiences, etc.
line text (as he does to a lesser extent as well in some of the subsequent movements) throughout “A Song of Joys” in order to facilitate comprehension of the lyrics as they clip by in the brisk tempo. In addition, this less-confined approach to the text reinforces the exuberant character of the movement.

Harmonically, vertical structures are frequently built on stacked fourths with added seconds, creating bright sonorities and transparent textures. Sixteenth-note tetrachords, scales, and a brief arpeggiated section (mm. 35-38) further illuminate the texture with flashes of sound. Throughout, the musical material is interrelated, so an exact formal structure is difficult to determine; it could be described as a fluid rounded binary form, ABA', with an introduction and a coda. A' (m. 52), where Sargon repeats the first and final lines of poetry, bolsters the ebullient message of the text and produces this non-strophic form. A notable disruption to the tempo, though not containing any new musical material, occurs with the sudden rallentando into a six-bar adagio that immediately precedes the purely instrumental coda. This respite serves as the sole reflective moment in this otherwise dynamic and vibrant setting.

The accompanimental opening of “Nocturne” features the same steady portamento articulation employed in “The Buck in the Snow.” Sargon later varies this figure rhythmically at the change from the initial 4/4 to 12/8 time. Tonally centered in D-flat major, the introduction of an A natural, both in augmented tonic chords and submediant B-flat minor chords with an added major seventh, intensifies the ethereal mood of the text. This setting is an ABA' ternary form. The longer B-section has two distinct segments marked by key changes: the first of a very thin texture in D major; and the second, which contains the climax of the movement, without a key signature but
heavily flatted by accidentals and lush with thick chords in the piano. Various meter changes punctuate the movement. The A section is in simple meters, and B is in compound meters; and A', which continues the compound meter from B, ends in simple meter.

“Dirge for Two Veterans” contains six quatrains which, when combined with the relentless funeral-march tempo, makes it the longest and most despondent of the movements. The setting is of varied strophes with a musical build-up to the climactic moments in verse 4 and a dénouement, both textual and musical, following in the final two verses. An interlude of horn fanfares (see Figure 16), mimicking the bugles mentioned three times in the text, both prepares the climax and equally separates the six quatrains into two groups of three.

The texture, thickest just before this middle section of the movement, includes octaves in the lowest register of the piano and doubled triads with added seconds and sevenths. A ten-bar introduction and a six-bar postlude, replete with drum roll effects on the lowest notes of the piano, frame the somber work.

The title movement of the piece, “A Clear Midnight,” is a single quatrain of poetry, and the supporting music is a simple ABA' form. The opening A section contains a
sweet, lyrical introduction by the horn – diatonically centered in C major and C Mixolydian – in addition to the first line of poetry. Musically shorter than the flanking A sections, the B section contains the next two, longer lines of verse. The theme of death is broached serenely by both poet and composer. A slightly quicker tempo, rolled chords, and heightened dynamic levels underscore return of A – the final line of poetry, only six words – which is resigned in character. The final chord is beautifully voiced with the horn providing the tonic pedal, the baritone in falsetto, and the piano shimmering on a pentatonic cluster above them.

The fifth poem, “O You Whom I Often,” is a mere three lines long and communicates the nervous energy of an upsoken physical attraction – a text revealing “the homoeroticism underlying [Whitman’s] work.”63 In this brief, through-composed movement, the horn and piano alternate pianissimo trills which are imitative of sparks. This subdued accompaniment underlies a text that is nearly whispered (see Figure 17). The quiet vocal line is highly chromatic and compressed into a range of less than an octave, and the overall texture is fresh and intriguing. Every detail of Sargon’s music in this movement is imbued with a subtle, Webernesque economy of material. The only hint of unsuppressed emotion is the rise in pitch level of each successive line of text by a whole step.

63 From “Program Notes” to A Clear Midnight.

“The Last Invocation,” the final movement, is also a quiet, undemonstrative setting of a short poem which, like the previous movement, is through-composed. The key, diatonic B-flat major, brings the cycle harmonically full circle. Sargon creates musical coherence by continuously restating two melodic motives from the opening vocal line (mm. 3-4 and mm. 5-6) and by repeating other rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, and textual elements. Harmonies are generally widely-separated octaves with seconds or other intervals added for color. Although they are parenthetical in the text, Sargon has made the final two lines of poetry the musical climax of the piece. However, this
movement provides a noticeably restrained and solemn ending for a work that began so exuberantly.

Simon Sargon generally adheres to standard classical forms in the movements of his horn chamber trios. He typically employs forms which, with few exceptions, are fundamentally straightforward and brief. In the vocal works, a variety of forms are utilized: two- and three-part song forms, strophic, through-composed – each selected according to the dictates of the poetic form. In the instrumental works, forms include rondo, ternary, rounded binary, and sonata-allegro forms. Yet in all of these chamber works, Sargon modifies forms without hesitation to suit his creative purposes, whether artistic or practical.

Harmonically, major/minor tonalities and modes offer tonal centricity; but stacked quartal harmonies, added seconds and other non-triadic intervals, and unresolved chords (containing suspensions or sevenths), provide transparent and colorful sonorities. Contrasts in texture are created with special effects, particularly for the horn (including stopped notes, trills, and glissandi), and variations in range, most noticeable in the piano. From years composing vocal music for the synagogue, Sargon has become a master of text-painting; this is evident in the trios including voice.

Simon Sargon is intuitively creative: he knows what sounds good and what will succeed on the stage. He draws from a deep and multi-faceted tonal language for the notes on the page, and he builds freely on standard musical forms in an fluid manner. Sargon is far less concerned with symmetry and formula than with creating a musical product that is attractive, engaging, and moving.
CHAPTER VI
APPROACH TO INSTRUMENTAL WRITING IN SARGON’S TRIOS

The ability to write idiomatically for the horn is a skill that escapes many composers. Known to some as the “slippery beast”\(^{64}\) of the orchestra, the horn has gained an undeserved reputation for inaccuracy. Robert Schumann, however, dubbed the horn “the soul of the orchestra.” The horn is capable of at least as many contrasting tonal colors as any other instrument: its sound is used for heroic episodes and sorrowful moments, for rustic scenes and comic effects.

Composers whose music best exploits the horn for the greatest musical effect understand the harmonic series, hand-horn technique, how valves operate most efficiently, and basic scale and arpeggio fingering patterns. In addition, they recognize the abilities and limitations of breath and embouchure, the instrument’s characteristic tonal and dynamic capabilities across its wide range, and the sounds and effects of various types of articulation. Far fewer are those who understand and seamlessly incorporate “extended techniques”\(^{65}\) such as lip trills, stopped horn and echo horn, glissandi, flutters tongue, multiphonics, pitch bending, half-valved notes, circular breathing, various mutes, and so forth.

Robert Schumann was among the first to consistently write for the valved horn. His genius was in his recognition of the complete chromatic capability and tonal consistency that valves afforded the horn, and his compositions demonstrate this. His works are taxing for the hornist, but he set new standards in writing for horn that endure

\(^{64}\) Robert Elworthy, former principal hornist of the Minnesota Orchestra, was fond of using this phrase.

to this day. Brahms, though nearly a quarter century Schumann’s junior, in contrast, wrote music that was the pinnacle of understanding hand-horn technique. He used the instrument more sparingly than did Schumann; and nearly all passages in his works can, without much difficulty, be learned and performed without valves.

Frequently, we see extremes in what composers perceive as the hornist’s ability and what expectations composers have of hornists. The great melodist and miniaturist John Philip Sousa most often wrote simple horn parts that were little more than a harmonic counterpart to the snare drum. Ludwig Minkus’s ballets and Johann Strauss’s operettas are filled with a similar type of rhythmically supportive horn parts. The opposite extreme is found in the music of modernists like Isang Yun, István Zelenka, and Györgi Ligeti whose musical demands push every imaginable technical limit for the performer. Simon Sargon, like the composers of the other chamber works studied herein, has a thorough grasp of the horn’s capacities and limitations, and he knows how to write both appropriately and attractively for it.

Just as Sargon has learned to compose well for the horn through contact with high-caliber players and repeated composition for the instrument, his vast experience as a choral conductor, vocal coach, and opera rehearsal accompanist has enabled him to write for voice with a thorough comprehension of its abilities and restrictions. His vocal parts are highly refined, affixed to attractive melodies with phrasing that is not too long for the breath. The issue of balance is approached considerately: one of his favorite balance-control devices is a call-and-response technique wherein the horn plays answering phrases either between vocal phrases or during a sustained vocal note.

Simon Sargon’s ability to write idiomatically for the oboe is apparent in Sonic
Portals. He uses the most comfortable range of the instrument, d' to d"", with only the rarest of excursions below d' and a solitary f"" on the upper end to conclude the rollicking second movement. Articulation patterns, particularly sequences of two-note slurs, create a buoyant effect in the faster movements – which on another instrument (flute or clarinet, for example) might be performed more smoothly. Sargon often marks crescendi through rising intervals, and this is helpful for both horn and oboe. Scalar flourishes and ornamentations in the oboe part all lie well for fingerings. The only technical challenges come in movement IV, measures 45-48, 95, and 97, where there are tongued leaps, any awkwardness of which can be overcome with careful effort in the practice room. Balance also has been well thought-out. When both wind instruments are playing together, he varies registers so that the oboe is in the brighter range at the top of the staff or in the “projecting” range at the bottom, thus able to better match the horn; or, more simply, he marks disparate dynamics to equalize balance (see Figure 18).66 Sargon’s careful attention to this type of minutia is indicative of the concern he has for the player’s ease of performance.

An inspection of how Johannes Brahms and Simon Sargon treat the three instruments in their violin/horn trios further highlights Sargon’s sense for idiomatic composition. This examination must begin with the piano, for each composer performed his own piano parts in concert. Brahms, for example, is known to have performed his trio at least three times, twice in Vienna and once in Karlsruhe – and he heard it performed in Leipzig.67

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66 Thanks to Professor Jill Marchione, Messiah College, for her affirmation of these issues.
Brahms's piano parts are substantial and difficult while remaining idiomatic. While the piano in Op. 40 sometimes provides the melodic lead and sometimes supports, the speed and shape of the work are principally controlled by the piano part with the violin and horn offering melodic “color.” In movement I, for example, the piano seems primarily accompanimental, providing harmonic foundation until letter [A] while the violin and horn take turns with the melody. Yet the piano generally controls the tempo simply because it is the “busiest” part. At [A], a canon is initiated in the piano, continued in the violin, and followed by the horn. Movement II likewise sees equitable alternation between the parts, although the piano has greater responsibility in maintaining rhythmic drive. At letter [B] in the third movement, the piano assumes the role of an accompanying string orchestra, providing a soft “wash” of harmonic underpinning to the conversational material in the other two parts. With the ascending chords in quick succession that begin six bars before [D], the piano provides a powerful, mounting fullness for the impending climax. While the piano again supplies the
In the fourth movement, challenging finger work can be found between [A] and [B] and again between [F] and [G]; the first four bars of [E] require attention as well. Probably the most difficult ensemble moments in the fourth movement are the syncopated passages six measures before [C] and recurring six measures before [H]. Here, the pianist must lead for rhythmic stability.

Sargon’s piano writing, like Brahms’s, comes from a pianist and is thereby highly idiomatic, though perhaps not so physically demanding as Op. 40 owing to a predominantly lighter texture. In the first movement of “The Legacy,” the piano writing tends to be more accompanimental, providing rhythmic drive, filling in gaps melodically where the violin and horn do not play, or, as at letters [C] and [I] and at the meno mosso after [D], taking part in quick motivic volleys between the voices. In the allegro di molto, as in Brahms’s second and fourth movements, the piano is the principal rhythmic impetus, though the stream of thick chords at [R] serves to provide a climactic intensity. Volume and textural depth are found in movement III via full chords throughout. The climactic moment five bars before [BB], for example, is quite thunderous in its effect. The piano strikes nine-note chords on the downbeats then plays octava bassa chromatic passages below the ringing sonority; and the sul ponticello violin with double stops and tremolo along with the ff stopped horn intensify the tumult (see Figure 19).

For movement IV, the piano takes on a much more melodic role than it has in the previous movements. This is one reason that the fourth movement seems especially revitalizing after so many dramatic moments in the second and particularly the third movements. In most of the variations, in fact, it is the piano that is heard with the theme.
Sargon’s writing for the violin includes only standard performance techniques. The work opens with the violin on harmonics. Movement III and Variation 6 in the fourth movement include some moderately difficult double stops. Otherwise, the part is uncomplicated. The issue of balance in the ensemble has been thoughtfully considered. The violin and horn parts are often kept separate, or the texture (such as the use of pizzicato or tremolo) or range is manipulated so that the part penetrates.

While Brahms writes passages that could be considered problematic in terms of balance, especially where the violin is in the lower register (much of the first movement, in the trio of the Scherzo, and at letter [C] in the third movement), this is not a performance concern for sensitive musicians. It is also traditional for hornists to play with a “darker” sound when performing any work by Brahms – de-emphasizing the higher harmonics in the horn’s timbre also reduces its ability to project and dominate the violin.
Brahms was a master at writing for the horn, but his model was the hand horn of Beethoven’s era. He wrote exclusively for the natural horn as performed in the Classical era (with its harmonics manipulated by the right hand in the bell), even though valved instruments had existed for five decades and had been increasingly in common use since the days of Schumann. Brahms, however, was a great “traditionalist” and enjoyed the colors available between open, partially stopped, and fully stopped notes on the hand horn. In his four symphonies, Brahms wrote for two pairs of horns with the first and second pitched in tonic, usually the traditional solo keys of F, E, E-flat, and D, but sometimes in C, B-flat, and even B-natural. While this pair usually plays more of the solo and soli material for horns in his symphonies, the higher pair, third and fourth (pitched in the dominant or relative minor), are often featured in the middle sections of the outer movements and rest during the slow movement. A notable tribute to the natural horn in Brahms’s output is the Four Songs for Women’s Chorus, Two Horns, and Harp. In this enchanting work, the horns are mostly confined to the notes of the harmonic series with occasional stopped leading tones.

Leading tones and non-harmonic tones, such as appoggiaturas and suspensions, are primary examples in which a hornist would move from a stopped to an open note (or vice versa) in Brahms’s works. Theoretically, balance with the violin part would have been much easier on the natural horn since so many of the notes are closed. In the first movement of Op. 40, for example, the opening theme (to letter [A]), approximately two-thirds of the notes are open. In contrast, the second theme (to Poco più animato) is approximately two-thirds stopped. Certainly, “this is entirely appropriate,
given the [differing] characters of the two themes;¹⁶⁸ but balance with the violin part becomes less complicated when this fact is taken into consideration and applied over the course of the Trio.⁶⁹

Simon Sargon’s ongoing collaboration with Dallas Symphony Orchestra principal hornist and fellow Southern Methodist University professor Greg Hustis has given him a thorough understanding of the instrument and further enabled him to write idiomatically for it. Interestingly, the first seventeen measures of “The Legacy” can be played on the natural horn in D (first and second valves on the modern horn) with only two closed notes, the concert Bs, both in measure 12. Likewise, the corresponding call in movement II, measures 12-16, can be performed on D horn with a single flat-seventh harmonic (bar 16) needing correction, achieved typically by further opening the hand in the bell. In both Variation I (mm. 28-31) and the Coda (mm. 180-183) of movement IV, the hornist can also easily perform these statements of the theme on D horn, stopping only two concert Bs and one C-sharp. Although these instances were unintentional,⁷⁰ they reiterate the natural horn’s appeal, even after nearly two centuries with the valve.

Technically, “The Legacy” offers a few challenges for the hornist, particularly the large leaps up into the fourth octave found in movement II letter [T], movement III before letter [DD], and the end of Variation 5 in movement IV. Variation II in the same way contains descending octave leaps into the pedal register. Soft dynamics and endurance are also concerns, working hand in hand with balance. Unlike Brahms’s Op. 40 where the violinist must work to balance up to balance the weight of the horn and the thick

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¹⁶⁸ Garrett, Chapter 4.
⁶⁹ Even if performed on a modern horn, it is advisable to practice the entire piece on the E-flat natural horn for the understanding of the technique it imparts. This can be accomplished on a valved horn by keeping the first valve depressed and employing hand-horn technique.
⁷⁰ Professor Sargon confirmed this in a phone conversation, May 5, 2006.
keyboard writing, here in “The Legacy,” the hornist, for the most part, must balance down for the benefit of the ensemble.

Both Op. 40 and “The Legacy” are idiomatically well written for all three instruments. Each player is pushed technically; and each functions variously as a lead voice or as a subordinate while the pianist furnishes the rhythmic pace and general dynamic shape. Each composer’s understanding of the piano, violin, and horn, whether by personal experience or through collaboration, is evident. The results are masterpieces that bookend a century-and-a-quarter of writing for a less common but colorful instrumentation.
In preparing any musical work for performance, there are numerous general and explicit details to be considered, from the musical instructions printed on the page (symbols, foreign terminology, etc.) to more intangible aspects, such as how to convey the composer’s intentions in a way that is true to the printed details while at the same time being “interpretive.” Historically, composers through the eighteenth century tended to be vague about written details, expecting the performer to interpret the work much as a modern-day jazz player is expected to “improve” the music on the page. Beginning with Beethoven and carried to extremes with composers like Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler, the composer sought more control of a performance by providing exacting instructions. This might appear, at first, to be an attempt to standardize renditions – to suppress the artistic license of the performers. In performance, however, there is no competition between composer and performer. Musicians are given very specific guidance by many composers, but they do have the liberty to add personal touches, as the differences between recorded performances of the same work demonstrate.71

Some musicians reading Simon Sargon’s music for the first time might see him as a composer who seeks to control every musical moment, yet this is not a true picture of his approach. His is more typical of the composer-performer of the twentieth century: he takes the time to give performers clear instructions, but there is a genuine humanity in every phrase he has penned. Those who have performed his works with him attest to

71 The element not considered here is the audience. An entire musicological branch exists which is devoted to the “reception” of musical works, and this falls beyond the scope of the current discussion.
his interest in imparting affect over exact notation. He has crafted his compositions carefully and thoughtfully so that, if the details are observed and well-rehearsed, a performance should be successful. Nevertheless, Sargon would want performers to know that they are invited to bring their own musicianship and experiences to the interpretation of his works.

When performing chamber music, in particular mixed ensembles where a single violin or voice is pitted against the combined forces of horn and piano, the primary issue typically is balance. Sargon’s trios have balance built into them. Unlike Brahms, Sargon usually reserves the thickest ensemble textures only for climactic punctuation. Generally, he keeps his keyboard writing transparent to allow clarity in all voices. In his horn writing, he is reserved in his use of extremes of range and dynamics, and he expands color possibilities with such devices as stopped passages, glissandi, and trills. Often, the range of the horn fits snugly between the bass and soprano lines, whether these voices appear in the piano or in another instrument.

On occasion, he will write unaccompanied solo lines for an additional texture change (such as the opening horn solos of “The Legacy” and “The Buck in the Snow”). Sargon labors attentively to create variety in texture that is idiomatic for the instruments engaged and appropriate to the musical moment, especially when a text is involved. Specifically, the horn parts in Sargon’s trios present few real obstacles to a successful performance. Some issues for which a performer should be prepared include soft, sustained long tones (“The Legacy,” mvt. I); muted passages (“The Legacy,” mvt. IV, var. 1, and “O You Whom I Often”); hand stopping and glissandi (appearing in several

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72 Conversations with William Scharnberg and correspondence from Greg Hustis and Marcia Spence corroborate this. See Appendix E.
places throughout the four trios); high lip trills and finger trills (*Sonic Portals*, mvt. I);
awkward finger trills (“O You Whom I Often” includes several finger trills which require
cross-fingerings); multiple tonguing (bugle calls in “Dirge for Two Veterans,” particularly
mm. 174-186); large intervals (sevenths, octaves, and ninths can be found both tongued
and slurred in several places in the trios); and endurance (mvt. III in “The Legacy,”
particularly when the work is performed in its entirety). Individual performers may find
that these difficulties or others require additional preparation for a performance, but
none should prevent success for the able player.
CHAPTER VIII
OTHER PRECEDENT, CONTEMPORARY, AND RELATED WORKS

The most important nineteenth-century works in the genres under con-sideration have been cited; others stand out and merit mention as well. The massive and challenging Trio by Ligeti has become a new benchmark in this repertoire. Though not as demanding as Ligeti’s trio, Dussek’s Notturno Concertante is occasionally performed, as are the more recent works by Sir Lennox Berkeley and John Harbison. Trygve Madsen’s chic Trio, op. 110, is also certain to become a standard among horn chamber pieces.

Among musicians who regularly perform chamber music, the set of trios by Reinecke is popular. His complete trilogy includes Op. 188 discussed herein, the Trio for Clarinet, Horn and Piano, op. 274, and the Trio for Clarinet, Viola and Piano in A Major, op. 264 (ca. 1903).\(^73\) The Trio in D Major, op. 61, by Heinrich von Herzogenberg (1843-1900), is another essential work in the horn-and-oboe trio repertoire. Herzogenberg’s music teachers, according to Cynthia Carr, included two who also wrote well for the horn, Rheinberger and Lachner;\(^74\) and his close association with Brahms placed him in the “conservative” school of composers that Richard Wagner so despised.\(^75\) Written in 1889, just two years after Op. 188, the wind parts to the Trio in D Major “are more idiomatic than those of Reinecke,” and the overall effect is powerful and typically Romantic.\(^76\) Austrian Ferdinand Rebay (1889-1953), known more

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\(^{73}\) This trilogy has been recorded in its entirety on the Klavier Records label, K11050 (1995), by The Dallas Chamber Players under the title A World of Romance: Chamber Music of Carl Reinecke.

\(^{74}\) Carr, p. 36.


\(^{76}\) Carr, 36.
for his guitar pieces, also composed a piece in the Romantic style in 1925, Trio for Oboe, Horn, and Piano.\textsuperscript{77} Cynthia Carr cites several other recognizable artists who have composed for this ensemble in her annotated catalog. The list from just the last decade of the twentieth century substantiates the fact that there is a growing interest in this particular trio grouping; works, at least one from each year of the decade, include:

- Jean-Michele Damase (b. 1928), Trio (1990);
- Verne Reynolds (b. 1926), Trio for Oboe, Horn, and Piano (1990);
- Armand Russell (b. 1932), \textit{Dramatic and Lyric Dialogues} (1991);
- Richard Lane (b. 1933), Suite for Oboe, Horn, and Strings (1991), available in a piano reduction by the composer;
- Ivan Jevtic (b. 1947), \textit{Con Amore e Fuoco} (1992);
- Jan Koetsier (1911-2006), \textit{Dresdner Trio}, op. 130 (1992);
- Fritz Voeglin (b. 1943), \textit{Distributions} (1993);
- Warren Wernick (b. 1962), Trio No. 1 for Oboe, Horn, and Piano (1994);
- Jody Nagel (b. 1960), \textit{Fantasy Ballad} (1994);
- Anthony Plog (b. 1947), \textit{3 Sketches} (1995);
- Richard Wernick (b. 1934), Cassation (Music Tom Jefferson Knew) (1996);
- Paul Basler (b. 1963), \textit{Vocalise-Waltz} (1996);
- Pamela Marshall (b. 1954), \textit{Waves and Fountains} (1997);
- James Grant Code (b. 1942), \textit{Encounters II – summer storm} (1997);
- Alexander Arutiunian (b. 1920), \textit{Suite} (1998);
- Tadeusz Kassatti (b. 1948), \textit{De facto} (1998); and,

\textsuperscript{77} Recently published for the first time by Hans Pizka Editions, catalog no. CK38.
While not part of this study, over fifty trios with clarinet have been composed. For whatever reason, however, works for this grouping seem to be performed less often than those with oboe. Perhaps the lack of popularity is due to the similar ranges and tone colors of the horn and clarinet, or perhaps the clarinet’s vast chamber repertoire is satisfying enough for performers.  

In addition to Reinecke’s Op. 274, British musicologist and analyst Sir Donald Francis Tovey (1875-1940), composed a lengthy nineteenth-century style trio, Op. 8, for this combination. The Trio by George Rochberg (b. 1918) is perhaps the best-known and most-often performed work of this genre from the twentieth century. Additional highlights in the genre include works by Gustav Jenner, Franz Lachner, Gunther Schuller, and Alec Wilder. Other contributors to the genre include Philip Bezanson, Aaron Blumenfeld, Carl Byron Bowman, Daniel R. Coombs, John Cowell, A. F. von Hessen, Roger Johnson, Elliott Schwartz, Morton Subotnick, and Anthony Vazzana. Additionally, there are two works each by Heinrich Molbe and Karel Reiner, transcriptions of both of Duvernoy’s oboe/horn trios in which the clarinet substitutes for the oboe, and a sextet by Sir Lennox Berkeley for horn, clarinet, and string quartet. A University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill undergraduate music research project maintains a complete, annotated on-line listing.

With regard to trio groupings with voice, Hector Berlioz composed an elegant work for soprano, horn, and piano, Le jeune patre Breton, op. 13, no. 4. This is a simple but effective three-stanza poem in which the horn serves as a distant alphorn in the first

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78 Thanks to Jill Marchione, Adjunct Professor of Oboe, and Timothy Dixon, Orchestra Conductor, both of Messiah College, for their speculative input.
79 Available at http://www.unc.edu/~jamedlin/simplelist.htm.
and last verses, playing the last verse off-stage. Richard Strauss wrote *Alphorn* for soprano, horn, and piano while a teenager. Here again, the horn performs the role of an alphorn, framing a text that has a rather high tessitura for the soprano. In another notable work for horn and voice with piano, twentieth-century British composer Arnold Cooke set five poems by various poets for soprano, horn, and piano in *Nocturnes: A Cycle of Five Songs*. Included are “The Moon,” by Percy Bysshe Shelley; “Returning, We Hear the Larks,” by Isaac Rosenberg; “River Roses,” by D.H. Lawrence; “The Owl,” by Alfred Lord Tennyson; and “Boat Song,” by John Davidson.80

Two very modern settings for voice, horn, and piano are Steven Winteregg’s *Three City Songs*, on poems of Carl Sandburg, and pianist/composer Eric Street’s *Chocolate Kisses* on a text of his own. Winteregg uses “Ivesian layers,” impressionism, and jazz to depict the various scenes indicated by the poem titles.81 *Chocolate Kisses* compares vegetables to assorted brand-name dessert treats in a rambling, Ogden Nash-style poem set to a musical spoof of that “staple of operetta and French lyric opera – the coloratura waltz song.”82

The variety of trio groupings involving the horn is comparatively large. While most hornists would agree that the trio combination with violin includes the finest music in the repertoire, in volume that literature is surpassed by trios including clarinet or oboe. The surge in numbers of more-recently composed works indicates that these

80 This piece has been recorded by the Cantecor Trio (Linda June Snyder, Richard Chenoweth, and Eric Street) on *Nocturnes: Twentieth Century Music for Voice, Horn, and Piano* on the Equilibrium label, EQ15. The album includes several other more recent works for horn/voice trio in addition to the five-movement *Thomsonia* by Australian Peggy Glanville-Hicks for piano, soprano, horn, flute, and string quartet.

81 Winteregg’s description of the work, based on Sandburg’s texts “Eleventh Avenue Racket,” “The Skyscraper Loves Night,” and “Honky-Tonk in Cleveland, Ohio,” from the liner notes for *Nocturnes*, EQ15.

82 Street’s comments on his piece, from the liner notes for *Nocturnes*, EQ15.
instrumental trio combinations are more than just anomalies in the world of chamber music.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Simon A. Sargon’s contribution to the horn chamber trio genre includes, at present, four very attractive works in three instrumental combinations that have been proven over the decades. Sargon’s compositions are paragons of the works of a generation of well-educated, post-World War II American composers. Moreover, he allows his distinct cultural heritage, life experiences, and the performers who surround him to both serve as his inspiration and uniquely season his music. His tonal language is a vibrant blend of ancient modes and modern constructive devices, characterized by poignant melodies, quartal harmonies colored by added tones, and textures ranging from transparent to lush. Sargon’s formal structures are based on traditional forms that are treated organically, flexing freely with his tonal language and, in the case of the trios including voice, with the texts. In addition to his command of both the piano and voice, he carefully considers the abilities and limitations of other instruments for which he writes, creating parts that are playable yet challenging. His trios are at once modern and of a quality that will endure alongside the most important works of their genre.

With “The Legacy,” Sonic Portals, “Huntsman, What Quarry?” and A Clear Midnight, Sargon has established himself as a master composer of chamber music whose works are accessible, gratifying both to performer and audience, and worthy of international acclaim.
APPENDIX A

PARTIAL WORKS LIST OF THE INSTRUMENTAL COMPOSITIONS OF

SIMON A. SARGON
(Listed chronologically by category with publishers where necessary.)

Symphonic Works

Milestones (1983)
Symphony No. 1 “Holocaust” (1985), with baritone solo and male chorus
Tapestries (1997)
Icarus – Overture for Orchestra (2001)
Letters from Amherst – A Choral Symphony (2002), with chorus
The Town Musicians of Bremen (2003), with narrator

String Orchestra


Youth Orchestra

A Chorale for Martin Luther King (1969/2002)

Orchestra and Solo Instrument or Voice

After the Vietnam War (1985), solo baritone
Blue Mountain Ballads (1988), solo mezzo-soprano
Questings (1990), solo horn
Reb Mendele (1992), solo violin
Divertimento (1994), solo piano
Dusting Around With Scott’s Rag (1994), solo flute
Duo Concertante (2005), solo oboe and bassoon

Opera/Musical Theater

Thirst (1974)
Saul, King of Israel (1989)
The Singing Violin (1995)
The Story of Ruth (2000)

Wind Ensemble

Rap Sessions (2002), solo trumpet and trombone
Dusting Around With Scott’s Rag (2005), solo flute
Anatevka (2005)

Chamber Music for Four or More Performers

Flame of the Lord (1991), for soprano, baritone, flute, ‘cello, and harp
The Night of the Headless Horseman (2001), for woodwind quintet

Chamber Works with Piano

Patterns in Blue (1974), with mezzo-soprano and clarinet – Classic Vocal Reprints
The Queen’s Consort (1982), with flute – Southern Music
Sonatina (1986), with violin
Before the Ark (1987), with violin – Southern Music
Shemá (1988), with soprano, flute, clarinet, and ‘cello – Transcontinental
“Huntsman, What Quarry?” (1990), with soprano and horn – Classic Vocal Reprints

*Meditation* (1990), with ‘cello

*Deep Ellum Nights* (1991), with clarinet

*Reb Mendele* (1991), with violin

*Dusting Around With Scott’s Rag* (1993), with flute – Southern Music

“The Legacy” *Trio* (1993), with violin and horn

*KlezMuzik* (1995), with clarinet

*Struttin’* (1997), with clarinet

“Sunflowers” (1997), with flute – Southern Music

*A Clear Midnight* (1998), with baritone and horn – Classic Vocal Reprints

*The Weeping Shofar* (1998), with horn

*The Narrow Bridge* (1999), with viola

“Janus” *Quartet* (2001), with violin, viola, and ‘cello

*Vermeer Portraits* (2002), with horn

*A River of Honey* (2003), with soprano and flute

*Homage to Hafiz* (2004), with oboe

*Sonic Portals* (2004), with oboe and horn

*Tarantela* (2004), with two flutes

*Credere [to Believe]* (2005), with trombone

*Duo Concertante* (2005), with oboe and bassoon

*Sonata* (2005), with bassoon

*Sonata* (2005), with oboe
Instrumental Arrangements

Wedding Processional, for brass quintet

Lead Me Home – Two Spirituals, for brass quintet

Rock of Ages – Hanukah Song, for horn quartet

Who Can Retell – Hanukah Song, for horn octet

Movie/Television Scores


APPENDIX B

PARTIAL DISCOGRAPHY OF THE COMPOSITIONS OF SIMON A. SARGON
(Listed alphabetically by album title.)

**Cohler on Clarinet**, Ongaku Records Label, 024-101; features Sargon’s *Deep Ellum Nights* for clarinet and piano; Jonathan Cohler, clarinet, and Judith Gordon, piano

**Divine Grandeur**, New World Records Label, 80504; features Sargon’s sacred choral work *Eil Nora Alilah*; New York Concert Singers, Judith Clurman, director

**Emily Dickinson in Song: Dwell in Possibility**, Gasparo Label, GSCD 360; features Sargon’s “I Died for Beauty” on a text of Emily Dickinson; Virginia Dupuy, mezzo soprano, et al

**Gregory Hustis, Horn**, Crystal Records Label, CD 773; features Sargon’s *Questings*, concerto for horn and orchestra; Gregory Hustis, horn, with the Dallas Philharmonia, Paul Phillips, conductor, et al

**Huntsman, What Quarry?** Crystal Records Label, CD675; features Sargon’s “Huntsman, What Quarry?” and *The Buck in the Snow*; Nancy Keith, soprano, Gregory Hustis, horn, and Simon Sargon, piano

**Shemá: Music of a Jewish Heritage by Simon Sargon**, Gasparo Label, GSCD 318; vocal and instrumental chamber works by Simon Sargon; Simon Sargon, piano, with various artists


**Simon Sargon: Song Cycles**, Gasparo Label, GSCD 333; includes *A Clear Midnight*; Donnie Ray Albert, baritone, Gregory Hustis, horn, and Simon Sargon, piano, et al
The Meadows Wind Ensemble and The Meadows Symphony Orchestra, Gasparo Label, GSCD 357; features Sargon’s *Divertimento* for piano and chamber orchestra (1994); David Karp, piano, and Paul Phillips, conductor, *et al*
APPENDIX C

TEXTS OF EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY USED IN SIMON A. SARGON’S

“HUNTSMAN, WHAT QUARRY?”
I. “Huntsman, What Quarry?” (1939)

Edna St. Vincent Millay

“Huntsman, what quarry
On the dry hill
Do your hounds harry?”

When the red oak is bare
And the white oak still
Rattles its leaves
In the cold air:
What fox runs there?”

“Girl, gathering acorns
In the cold autumn,
I hunt the hot pads
That ever run before,
I hunt the pointed mask
That makes no reply;
I hunt the red brush
Of remembered joy.”

“To tame or to destroy?”

“Huntsman, hard by
In a wood of grey beeches
Whose leaves are on the ground,
Is a house with a fire;
You can see the smoke from here.
There's supper and a soft bed
And not a soul around.
Come with me there;
Bide there with me;
And let the fox run free.”

“The horse that he rode on
Reached down its neck,
Blew upon the acorns,
Nuzzled them aside;
The sun was near setting;
He thought, “Shall I take her?”
He thought, “Shall I take her
For a one-night’s bride?”

He smelled the sweet smoke,
He looked the lady over;
Her hand was on his knee;
But like a flame from cover
The red fox broke –
And “Hoick! Hoick!” cried he.
II. The Buck in the Snow (1928)

Edna St. Vincent Millay

White sky, over hemlocks bowed with snow,
Saw you not at the beginning of evening the antlered buck and his doe
Standing in the apple-orchard? I saw them. I saw them suddenly go,
Tails up, with long leaps lovely and slow,
Over the stone-wall into the wood of hemlocks bowed with snow.

Now lies he here, his wild blood scalding the snow.

How strange a thing is death, bringing to his knees, bringing to his antlers
The buck in the snow.
How strange a thing,—a mile away by now, it may be,
Under the heavy hemlocks that as the moments pass
Shift their loads a little, letting fall a feather of snow—
Life, looking out attentive from the eyes of the doe.
APPENDIX D

TEXTS OF WALT WHITMAN USED IN SIMON A. SARGON’S A CLEAR MIDNIGHT
I. A Song of Joys

O to make the most jubilant song!
Full of music – full of manhood, womanhood, infancy!
Full of common employments – full of grain and trees.

O for the voices of animals – O for the swiftness and balance of fishes!
O for the dropping of raindrops in a song!
O for the sunshine and motion of waves in a song!
O the joy of my spirit – it is uncaged – it darts like lightning!
O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys!

II. Nocturne

Press close bare-bosom’d night – press close magnetic nourishing night!
Night of south winds – night of the large few stars!
Still nodding night – mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath’d earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset – earth of the mountains misty-topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue!
Earth of the shine and dark, mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray clouds brighter and clearer for my sake!
Far-swooping elbow’d earth – rich apple-blossom’d earth!
Smile, for your lover comes.

III. Dirge for Two Veterans

The last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finish’d Sabbath,
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,
Down a new-made double grave.

I see a sad procession,
And I hear the sound of coming full-key’d bugles,
All the channels of the city streets they’re flooding,
As with voices and with tears.

For the son is brought with the father,
(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell.
Two veterans son and father dropt together,
And the double grave awaits them.)

Now nearer blow the bugles,
And the drums strike more convulsive,
And the daylight o’er the pavement quite has faded,
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

O strong dead-march you please me!
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

IV. A Clear Midnight

This is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into the wordless,
Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson done,
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the themes thou lovest best,
Night, sleep, death and the stars.

V. O You Whom I Often

O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I may be with you,
As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the same room with you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is playing within me.

VI. The Last Invocation

At the last, tenderly,
From the walls of the powerful fortress’d house,
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors,
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;
With the key of softness unlock the locks – with a whisper,
Set ope the doors O soul.
Tenderly – be not impatient,
(Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,
Strong is your hold O love.)
APPENDIX E

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS
I know Simon Sargon – fairly well, I think. I've entered every note of 72 of his compositions into the computer, including all of your chosen selections. I've engraved his operas, symphonic works, band scores, a television film score, a cantata, choral works, several concertos, untold numbers of liturgical works, chamber pieces, solo piano works and solo works featuring the flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, violin, viola, cello, piano and organ. I've worked in English, Hebrew, Ladino, Yiddish, and Portuguese. I've done tonal and less tonally-based works; traditional and jazz-style; serious and light-hearted. And all have a unique Sargon style, even if there is a brief snippet that reminds one of Gershwin or Shostakovich or Bernstein.

This man is a gifted pianist and an especially fine accompanist. He's been an opera conductor as well as director of one of the finest Jewish Temple choirs in the world. He performs with world-class musicians on an almost daily basis. He speaks several languages and even teaches French and Italian diction at SMU. His early compositional career focused on writing practical pieces he needed to fill a void in the Jewish liturgical literature, and that propelled him to widespread fame in that niche – he is considered to be one of the most important contemporary Jewish composers in the world. He turned to serious secular composition later in his career, and he's had an amazing output in an equally amazing number of genres in just the last two decades.

I do know that he must compose or he isn't happy. Mostly he chooses to write pieces for specific people, which in turn, dictates the instrumentation. When he isn't involved in one of those projects, he turns to something which strikes his current fancy.
Yes, he sets poetry of literary giants to music, but he has also set the words to funny palindromes and (one of my favorites) the word-for-word synopsis of the week's soap operas found in the Sunday paper – unbelievably clever and creative!

He has survived cancer and heart by-pass surgery and he battles Type-1 diabetes on a daily basis. Perhaps because of an unusual amount of adversity, he composes "emotional" music from the heart, with memorable melodies and interesting harmonies. He still uses structure and form, but is not strict about it.

He composes the good old-fashioned way – pencil to manuscript. He works and reworks measures. He is careful about voice-leading and truly understands instrumental colors and techniques. There is no formula he follows nor does he seek to emulate anyone or carry on a "tradition." After an initial read-through, he revises. And then there is usually another set of revisions after the premiere performance.

With regards to the four works you have selected, one of the most important elements is Greg Hustis – Simon's "Leutgeb," if you will. With a hornist such as him, Simon could write anything he wanted, knowing it would be performed at the highest artistic level. And the piano parts were really written for Simon, himself, to play, as he is the premiering pianist on all the works. That makes a huge difference – the fact that one is composing for real, known artists as opposed to composing in hopes that someone will buy your piece and play it.

Marcia Spence, DMA
Associate Professor of Horn
University of Missouri-Columbia
Sunday, June 3, 2007

Simon’s background is largely vocal. He was an accompanist for [renowned operatic mezzo-soprano] Jenny Tourel, and for many years [he] directed the choir at Temple Emanu-El. Simon’s most important influence, however, has always been his own heart and soul. In all our collaborations, performances and recordings, of his music Simon always pushed me, more than anything, to express myself – to sing. He was never bothered by technical imperfections as long as a sincere depth of emotion was the hallmark of the performance.

Greg Hustis, Principal Horn
Dallas Symphony Orchestra

Sunday, August 5, 2007

Simon has an uncanny ear for "color." When he sends me a recording of the premier performance of a new piece, I am usually surprised at how different it is from the way I conceptualized it during the engraving process. One should never approach his music with preconceived ideas. When a performer is fortunate enough to work with Simon during the compositional phase, both the piece and the performer end up undergoing a remarkable metamorphosis.

He also possesses an uncanny sense of tempo. Several years ago, I hosted him for an all-Sargon recital here at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He, along with Dr. Mark Lewis, played a three-movement piece of his for two pianos called Implosions.
The outer movements absolutely fly by, with a slower middle movement. I recorded both the rehearsal and the performance. I was stunned to find only a one-second difference between the two recordings of this 15-minute-and-24-second piece! (All the more amazing because they had only played through it a total of three times and Simon was the pianist on eight other pieces on the program, too.)

If there is a stylistic technique he routinely applies, it is that of setting a mood by hitting one chord or a couple of chords and then letting the soloist play. In his horn works, he does this at the beginning of Questings, Sonic Portals, The Weeping Shofar, Vermeer Portraits, and the 4th movement of A Clear Midnight. Or, even more treacherous, he has the soloist start a cappella as in the beginning of “The Legacy” Trio and “The Buck in the Snow” from “Huntsman, What Quarry?” This is really effective and beautiful horn writing if you can let yourself go – but it doesn't work if one has no soul or sense of line. I've heard a couple renderings of his pieces by “musical technicians” who played all the notes and rhythms perfectly, but failed to play the music!

Marcia Spence, DMA

Associate Professor of Horn

University of Missouri-Columbia
REFERENCE LIST

Scores


Reinecke, Carl. *Trio für Oboe, Horn und Klavier*, op. 188. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1887.


_________________. *Questings: Concerto for Horn and Chamber Orchestra* (piano reduction). Copyright Simon A. Sargon, Dallas, Texas, 1990.


Texts and Periodicals: Brahms


Other Texts and Periodicals


Influence Studies


Electronic and Telephone Interviews

Interviews with Simon Sargon, Professor of Music, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, April and May 2006; January, February, July, and August 2007.

Interviews with Gregory Hustis, Principal Horn, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Dallas, Texas, January and August 2007.

Interviews with Marcia Spence, Professor or Horn, University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, Missouri, January, July, and August 2007.

On-line Articles and Electronic Resources

Collage New Music (a syndicate of composers and performers), for the music of Yehudi Wyner (accessed 1 May 2006), http://www.collagenewmusic.org/wyner


