ABSTRACT

Abstraction

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Abstraction is a four-movement piece written for the Wind Ensemble. It begins with only two Baritone Saxophones and gradually adds instruments until the full ensemble is performing. Abstraction is a look at my personal travels through theistic and atheistic modes of thought and a reflection on my own conclusions. Abstraction's first movement "creation ex nihilo" was written in homage to two concepts: creation from nothing, and duality. The second movement, titled "...maybe" is orchestrated for a chamber group of clarinets and saxophones and is a look at a theistic answer to the question "Why are we here?" The third movement, "godless," is written for the wind section of a Wind Ensemble. "godless" is a translation of an evolutionary construction of music, designed to be more naturalistic. The final movement, written for the full Wind Ensemble, is an attempt to reconcile the two modes of thought explored earlier.

by

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A Thesis

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my friends, family, and the entire Baylor School of Music faculty. I would also like to thank Dr. Alexander Pruss who has given me his ear and his insight every time I have asked. I am also thankful to my mother especially, who believed in me from the beginning and has not stopped for a moment.

DEDICATION

To Jack Stewart and Laura Onwudinanti. Their exuberant and heartfelt personalities will forever be remembered and I will always cherish the moments I had with them. Their juxtaposed yet truly endearing personalities will always be with me and encourage me to strive to imitate their limitless strengths of character.

ABSTRACTION

Twenty years ago I began a journey that started with an innocent question; I asked the pastor of my local church "Do good people go to hell?" And since that moment, both actively and passively, I have poured my thoughts into religion. My wandering mind finds the subject daily and I'm always comforted when participating in dialogue on religion. In my life thus far, I have given myself the labels of Methodist, Non-Denominational Christian, Deist, Agnostic, and Atheist. At one point in my life I called myself a "Joshist," suggesting to people that everyone should have slightly different religious opinions and so, have their own specific religion. I have listened to both sides, I have read both sides, and I have been on both sides. I have seen the good and bad of both sides too, and in a world that requires labels I have been forced to bear one and with it, all of its connotations. And so, through self-interest, patience, searching, reading, writing, and hearing, I have found the label that best fits me: atheist. At no point would I call this journey a struggle; there have been hard times, harsh words, and even lost friends, but at its core it's exactly who I am.

Abstraction is a direct creation stemming from these thoughts, all revolving around the simplest yet perhaps most profound question, "Why are we here?" While not necessitating a religious answer, it is often the most common reply and so when the topic enters my mind the clashing of theism and atheism come to full fruition. The journey to finding the answer to "Why are we here?" is teeming with profound ideas, with creativity and discipline intertwined, with fearful and joyous people, and with hundreds more worthwhile questions to ask. It is hard to describe how much enjoyment and love and passion I get from this question; everything about it inspires me, even with the knowledge that the journey may have no end in sight, or that I will never have the answers. It is from within this journey that I drew the inspiration to write my thesis, Abstraction.

While working on the preliminary scheme of the piece, I originally decided it would be best to write it in five movements, with the finale having the much needed resolution to the main subject. However, as I continued working I realized that a "finale" is not applicable to a journey with no end in sight so there is no victory, only feet traveled; and so the piece is only four movements in length. The orchestration of the piece is atypical as well, with each movement adding performers, beginning with just two baritone saxophones, until a full Wind Ensemble is amassed. The intention of adding instruments as the piece progresses was two-fold and stemmed from my strong desire to write the first movement for just two voices, yet simultaneously wanting to create large soundscapes by the final movement. I also liked the concept of "physical orchestration" where the players would walk on stage as they are needed with no distinct gaps between movements, enabling the audience to visually conceptualize the orchestration on the score. While still plausible to be performed in this manner, "physical orchestration" might be more of a hindrance or distraction than an aid to the performance. Ideally the Wind Ensemble would be present for the entirety of the performance, while during rehearsal only certain groups would need to be present.

The first movement is titled "creatio ex nihilo," which is a Latin phrase meaning "creation out of nothing." The overall design and scheme of the movement is two-parted, with the first being an attempt to translate the Latin phrase into a musical form and the second to generate the primary motive of the entire piece. In my notes and conception the final motif created by the end of this movement is simply dubbed the "Why?" motif, and is a direct metaphor for the question "Why are we here?" and can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. "Why?" Motif.

The first movement's primary job is to slowly generate the motif by adding as little as possible to each phrase, beginning with a minimal amount of information. The beginning of the movement starts well before the first note in an attempt to have the sound "come from nothing." The entrance of the two Baritone parts are labeled *dal niente* and are simply small crescendos on unison D. The second phrase has the players remain on the same pitch, however using only air pressure they are instructed to pulse the sound slowly, eventually moving in and out of phase with each other. Extremely small changes occur in each phrase, with eventually tongued notes, followed by changed pitches, syncopation, and finally the "Why?" motif played at half speed, then at double speed. Each phrase is slightly indeterminate, and the players must use visual cues to indicate intention to move to the next phrase. The individual parts have both voices, ensuring that the players are aware of the intended shape of the lines.

The second movement, titled "...maybe" is an expansion of the "Why?" motif with additional layers and material emerging around it. The orchestration expands to a chamber group of clarinets and saxophones, with *divisi* parts occurring near the end. Eventually new melodic material enters in the upper voices until the layering thickens and the full ensemble plays together with the "Why?" motif playing throughout. The swell eventually devolves into syncopated harmonies, with the melody replacing the "Why?" theme briefly before the energy picks up and the running lines return. Eventually rhythmically dissipating at measure 54, the vigor remains for a few more measures before the "Why?" theme returns in all of the clarinet parts, shadowing over the previous material. The section ends at measure 66 with no resolution to the motif or the harmony. The next section begins very quietly on the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," indicating a possible "theistic" resolution to the harmony and "Why?" motif. In the second

repetition of "Mighty Fortress," the "Why?" theme returns, however the minor third motion changes to major and the atmosphere of the movement lightens up significantly. Eventually the melody even enters in, modified to fit the harmony of "Mighty Fortress." The re-harmonization of "Mighty Fortress" was written out to be slightly unconvincing, and several of the cadences are imperfect. Without a strong swell or restatement of material, the final section of the second movement ends on a D major chord at *piano*.

The overall concept of the movement was to represent the challenges that come with asking "Why are we here?" and presenting one possible answer to that question. The rises and falls in the first half of the movement to me represent the excitement of processing the information and the aggravation that can occur when no answer comes about. At some points the "Why?" question stops being asked and a flood of emotion takes over several times through ought the second movement; the primary motif loses out to louder or quicker lines before sneaking back in once the energy settles.

The third movement, "godless" was designed to answer the "Why?" motif in a different way than the second movement. "godless" was written to imitate more organic development of themes, harmony and melody. While the "Why?" motif is not present for much of the movement, it is foreshadowed by the slur and accent markings in the 16th note ostinato patterns shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. 16th note ostinato pattern.

This movement was created within the mindset of a more natural or perhaps "godless" answer to "Why are we here?" Open harmonic space in the beginning is largely unsettled and when the interactive ostinato patterns enter into the oboe voices the meter might seem unclear; all of these

things are to indicate a more disorganized beginning. Voices interact and shift around almost aimlessly until something more unique occurs, metaphorically relating back to an organic answer to "Why are we here?" The lower voices enter in measure 7 and quickly move in and out of sync with each other, their entrance also pushes the ostinato patterns above them into a new harmony. The texture thickens quickly and slurs, three against two rhythms, and staccato markings all mix together to form a sort of mass of sound where at each moment a note is occurring. The Piccolo and Flute 1 parts fill the gaps left rhythmically by Flute 2, and the clarinet sections play out of time with each other, all while the lower voices continue to move in and out of alignment. Soon additional layers enter with seventh leaps and rhythmically disjunct motion before forcing the material into another harmony and several voices drop out. By measure 19 only the Flute 1 and Piccolo parts remain playing before the next transitional section begins.

A short melodic fragment is played in the piccolo part and for the first time, the "Why?" motif sneaks into the Alto Saxophone part. The ostinato patterns, grouped to be rhythmically in sync with the "Why?" motif, moves into the lower voices while the upper voices move to upper range dissonance. The piano enters here as well, adding to the rhythmic energy until the ostinato pattern moves upward harmonically and arrives at measure 31, now playing the ostinato at half speed, preparing for the B section. The B section, beginning at measure 37 is another experiment into the creation of material in a more natural way. The same short melodic fragment played in the flute section earlier is played by the second clarinet part, and in a contrapuntal/layered construction each reiteration of the melodic fragment adds an additional beat to itself. Beginning in 4/4, the melody returns in the first clarinet with additional material. Soon the flutes join in and play a harmonized version, forcing the time signature to alter to 3/4 starting in measure 44. Each voice that enters remains playing in either the foreground or background space until the piccolo returns and the melody is fully created one beat at a time. In the antepenultimate measure of the B section, the A section material returns and the two sources play simultaneously for two measures

before the A theme wins out and a brief recapitulation occurs; however, the newly generated melody now sits on top of the voices.

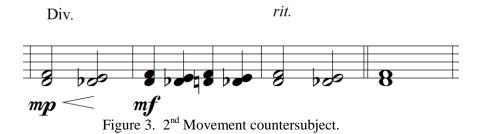
After this point the music begins to swell once again and the "Why?" motif enters into the oboe parts, and soon the new material presented in the second movement's beginning are tested again by the "Why?" motif. The lower winds have the ostinato while the upper voices begin to rally around the pitch G. The "Why?" melody is presented rhythmically slowed and accelerated in several voices at measure 69, where there is an arrival roughly centered on the pitch E. The volume maxes out for just four short measures where the second two measures repeat the first two and the rhythmic ambiguity is removed and suddenly the piece arrives on material from the Exposition. This time, however, the voices are no longer rhythmically offset and all entrances happen on downbeats, which is intended to indicate that incongruences from the beginning have been made more clear and conformed. Instead of the ostinato patterns found in the exposition, the oboes play a modified version of the melody from the B section only to have the rhythmically out of pace long tones return and general ambiguity fill the soundscape. This section, starting at measure 79 is a sort of coda, where material from the previous sections and second movement return mixed with additional new material. Voices move in and out of syncopation with quick glances into major before returning to minor sounds. Many of the harmonies are played, rhythmically accelerating or decelerating, with no clear arrivals or centers. Bassoon 1 and Contra Bassoon play the modified melody of the B section twice meanwhile and on the second iteration, the upper voices are forced to major intervals and open fifths designed to give the ending an open but potentially positive conclusion. The final section, beginning at measure 101, starts with the low voices ominously playing the "Why?" subject and the oboes returning to the ostinato patterns. The melody from the second section, the decelerating and accelerating harmonies, and the rhythmically grooved material from the previous sections all return quietly and fade out, with the "Why?" motif suspiciously left out.

Conceptually the third movement derives many ideas from minimalism. Constantly repeating ostinatos, pulsating harmonies such as those found in Reich's music, slowly modified melodic content, and constantly shifting rhythms that move in and out of sync with each other are all present in the third movement. Minimalism seems to relate back to the idea of a natural creation of life and the universe to me in many ways. Minimalism often demands extended amounts of time where independent voices move in and out of sync until a unique sound event occurs, and very often has an ethereal soundscape with open intervals and slowly changing harmonies, all things my mind relates back to the origins of the universe.

The final movement "...heathens need not participate" represents a culmination of all of the material from the earlier movements. The final movement is written for a full Wind Ensemble and begins with the Euphoniums playing the "Why?" motif; however, an extra beat is added, representing an irregularity in thought. Chords stack up over that voice and dissipate quickly, with the Clarinet playing intervals from the melody of the second movement. By measure 8, the lower winds swell and the irregularity in the rhythm is rectified and the "Why?" motif now plays at half speed in the Euphonium and Tuba parts. At many places in the final movement *divisi* parts playing staccato eighth notes occur; the intervals almost always represent one chord tone and one added 2nd pitch, giving the piece a weak sense of duress from the dissonance. The Oboes begin the common motif and the swells in the voices above the "Why?" motif increase in volume while the trumpet parts trades off an inversion of the intervals found in the oboe part. The piccolo plays the unedited version of the melody from the third movement and upon the final note the chord changes and another swell occurs in the lower winds and brass.

Throughout the entire piece, the primary harmonic structure has been chromatic-mediant motions either up or down, and each swell in the final movement is built around this progression as well. In measure 22 during the first larger swell, the voices move in harmony with the "Why?" motif playing Bb Major to Db Major back to Bb Major, then to F Major and finally to C Major, imitating both mediant motion and a plagal cadence reminiscent of church music. Immediately

after the volume dies down, the Horn part plays the second movement countersubject, simply comprised of a minor third harmony moving down half a step as shown is Figure 3.



This entrance is very dissonant and juxtaposed to the "Why?" motif and is rhythmically syncopated compared to it, causing additional voices to emerge and begin another more intense swell. The ostinato patterns of the 3rd movement now join in; however, the B natural is lowered, resembling a Dorian scale on D. At his point, at measure 31, the countersubject from the second movement, the primary ostinato from the third movement, and the "Why?" motif from the first movement play together with the brass harmonizing using added 2nd chords and chromatic mediant motion. Soon a fragment of the second movement melody comes in at full volume in the trumpets and trombones and the energy is carried to all parts at *forte*, and by measure 42 the arrival on Db occurs, resolving the tension slightly with add 2nd pulsing rhythms and large leaps into lower registers from many of the voices. The flutes play a final echo of the melodic material from the second movement before the chord quickly changes and at measure 44 switches to Gb Major. The "Why?" motif returns at half speed to the Euphonium and Tuba and similar layering from the A section of the third movement returns, this time with additional forces and a countersubject to the melodic material from the 2nd movement in the flute parts. The flutes shortly after play the 3rd movement melody and once again the final note pushes the energy back into the score and all voices begin to enter. The arrival to Db Major occurs again, however instead of finishing the phrase, the chord is extended and moves to Bb Major and the melodic material from the second movement plays again, this time in the horns, oboe, and clarinet at half speed, rallying the parts together. Some of the straight eighth notes that occurred early on morph into different

patterns and the upper voices play a three against two feel of the countersubject of the second movement. The tension finally resolves at measure 66 centered around the pitch E, preparing for the chromatic motion to C Major.

At measure 68, the voices abruptly move their energy into a thick chorale based on the previously used hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The brief chorale gives way to the actual melody of "Mighty Fortress" at measure 71 and a statement of the first phrase occurs, reharmonized to fit the common chromatic mediant motion of the earlier movements. The ostinato patterns of the 3rd movement move throughout, changing accordingly to the altered harmonies, while the staccato eighth notes of the fourth movement push through as well. The phrase ends on C Major with an add 4, leaving the cadence unfulfilled before moving on to the second phrase of "Mighty Fortress" where most voices drop out and the much calmer second phrase plays through. Several additional voices join in, including the previously used staccato eighth notes of the trumpets and oboes who play add 2nd chords underneath the melody, causing the harmony to be unfulfilled and eerie. Additionally, the lower saxophones and the contrabassoon play chords underneath that crescendo, almost enveloping the melody before dying away. In the final phrase a G# and an A clash against each other without resolving, ultimately leaving the softer side of "Mighty Fortress" without much clarity or consolation to the previous tension.

The final chord of Mighty Fortress, a C Major chord, also fits nearly perfectly to the material at the beginning of the third movement and acting as a dovetail, the 3rd movement introductory theme begins fluidly from the remnants of "Mighty Fortress." The expository material of the third movement quickly gives way to the coda material of the third movement, fleshed out considerably more in the voices. The open sounds and ethereal expanding and contracting harmonies, combined with the low patient remnants of the 2nd movement melody give an open, still searching feel, hopefully suggesting that the answer is still out there. The final moments of the piece are filled with voices dissipating and material evaporating until the final chord is all that remains, playing at *pianissimo*.

The intention of the final movement is to convey a culmination of thoughts and possible solutions to "Why are we here?" and how they shift and move together, creating moments of anxiety and floods of emotion. Each swell is meant to be "one-upped" until finally "Mighty Fortress" enters again blisteringly loud, representing the final culmination of a theistic answer to the question. The first phrase shows power and energy but ultimately resolves weakly, and the second phrase is weakened greatly by ominous dissonance and questionable harmonies. When the theistic answer seems ill-fitting, the final chord of "Mighty Fortress" ends and gives way to the opening material of the third movement, representing a naturalist solution to the question. While it doesn't answer the "Why?" motif or resolve it, it does bring back a sense of open space and hope. The final measures are meant to say "The answer might still be out there."

If I were to summarize the metaphorical meaning of the entire piece in a few short words it would be: "Why are we here? I'm not sure, but I don't think religion has the answer." The first movement strives to imitate the religious concept of the creation of the universe from nothing, while simultaneously generating the motif "Why are we here?" The second movement expands upon the harmony, rhythm, orchestration and melodic content of the first and presents a plausible response to the "Why?" motif. The third movement is an attempt to imitate a naturalist creation of the universe where random motion, phasing structures, and additive objects eventually generate more complex events slowly and randomly. While not a direct relation to the amount of time a naturalist universe would have taken to create, the music does try to reflect the idea of disorganization, eventually creating order through repetition and gradual change. The final movement is more of a mental culmination of the emotions that are stirred when considering the subject. Content derived from the previous movements is mixed together and gives rise to swells that eventually lead to the final proposition of a theistic creation. When "Mighty Fortress" finishes, the mood is unresolved and the material from the third movement returns, indicating that the answer hasn't been found, but perhaps it will be.

ABSTRACTION

Composed by

Joshua Macias

Abstraction is a four part piece in which each movement adds additional instrumentation, eventually forming a full Wind Ensemble for the finale. The overall genesis of Abstraction revolves around questioning the origins of the universe, focusing specifically on atheistic and theistic modes of thought and their influences on me personally.

Beginning with just two Baritone Saxophones, *Abstraction's* first movement "creatio ex nihilo" was written in homage to two concepts; creation from nothing and duality. More specifically it refers to creation from nothing in regards to the origins of the universe and the duality of two distinct people. The first movement is crafted to translate the idea of creation from nothing into music. Beginning with total silence, each phrase is made to only add a small amount of additional information from the last until the final phrase where the motif that dominates the soundscape in nearly every measure of all the other movements is played in full. This motif is a direct metaphor of the question "Why are we here?" A small amount of indeterminacy is left in the score to encourage the performers to communicate about how they would ideally perform the first movement.

The second movement, titled "...maybe" is orchestrated for a chamber group of clarinets and saxophones. "...maybe" expounds upon the "Why?" motif of the first movement, generating countersubjects and a melody around it, creating additional questions related back to the simplest of questions, "Why?" Eventually the layering thickens and intensifies until the climax which again devolves into the primary motif of the piece, left still unanswered and still as the engine that generates additional questions. When the answer seems unavailable and the melody and countersubjects remain unresolved a new melody enters: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Re-harmonized and played in conjunction with both the melody and "Why?" motif, the hymn potentially satisfies the melody and harmony, raising the minor motion of the primary motif to major and fitting nearly perfectly with the melody.

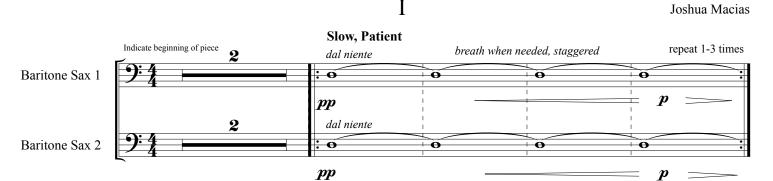
The third movement, "godless," is written out for the wind section of a Wind Ensemble, leaving out all of the brass and percussion. "godless" is a translation of an evolutionary construction of music, where open and patient space is filled with rhythmic layers that interact with each other in a more organic way than the second movement. The "Why?" motif is almost but not quite left out, hiding in the slurs and accent markings at the beginning of the piece. "godless" was made to represent an atheistic approach to answering the creation of the universe, juxtaposed to the second movement which seeks to answer the "Why?" motif with a hymn. Voices move in and out of rhythmic harmony, three against two occurs in many measures, and legato slurring mixes with staccato sounds. The middle section of "godless" generates its own melody one beat at a time, where each iteration of the melodic material adds a single beat until the full melody is created, all while the texture thickens and upon completion, returns to the A section material. Soon afterward the "Why?" motif returns in full form, sneaking into the oboe voice and leaking out into other voices, and soon the layering and melody generated by the third movement is challenged with the "Why?" motif, culminating with the climax of the piece. The final section of "godless," serves as a sort of ripple where harmonies of earlier sections meet with ethereal voicing and melody, layering, and the "Why?" motif all tangled together, again not quite satisfying the "Why?" motif.

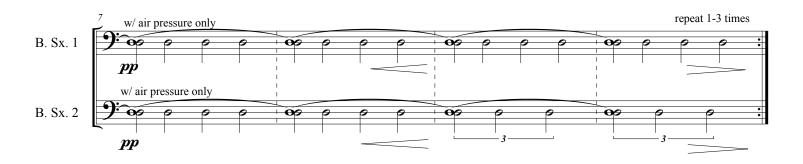
The final movement, titled "...heathens need not participate" is a quote from a family member in regards to joining in on a prayer before dinner. It is orchestrated for the full Wind Ensemble, including piano and percussion. Opening immediately with the "Why?" motif in the Euphonium part, harmonies are quickly stacked up and dissipated above the primary voice with a slight swell of voices before the faintly altered "Why?" motif is rectified and additional parts join in. Slowly the "Why?" motif moves around and strengthens, and each swell of music grows in volume and intensity, adding countersubjects, melodies, and harmonies from the previous movements. Eventually the swell maxes out and the "Why?" motif, yearning for resolution is left buried and the emotions and ideas carried in the other voices washes over the soundscape, and at full volume and orchestration a familiar Hymn joins in. "Mighty Fortress" makes its return and triumphantly, if not arrogantly, is played through the first half of

the hymn. The second half follows in a much calmer voice, although dissonant undertones move through the voices, with deep swells of sound nearly burying the melody. The final chord of "Mighty Fortress" plays, matching nearly perfectly with the first chord of the third movement, and much of the material from the third movement returns, fleshed out in additional voices. The "Why?" motif is never resolved, but the theistic answer seems no longer viable and the material from "godless" is all that remains as the piece ends quietly.

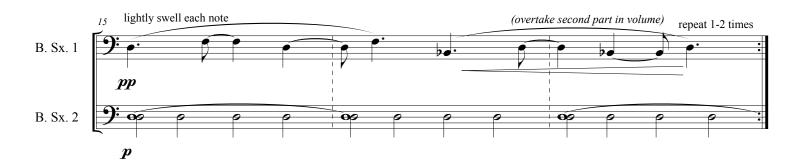
I had a dream, that I was god. And I watched the nebulas sweep across vast emptiness and give light where there was none. I watched the planets form and I watched the sunrise on every planet in the universe, all at once. I felt the wind over every sea, and I wept for every man that would never see my creation. I heard the planets move and felt every plant brush against my arm. And slowly, as I touched all things, I began to only hear the sound. I listened to the music of an entire planet all at once. I heard the land slowly move into the ocean, I heard every wave crest and every breeze float by. I heard the birds sing and the mountains form. I heard it all. And as I left the planet slowly, I saw how lonely it was. A brilliant and tiny ball of sound, ringing vibrantly through the vast silence I left it in. It lived and sang to itself as it crept through the void. And then, I heard every sound, on every planet. And only then did I realize that they were not alone, but together. They sung to each other and danced gently through time. And then I knew that all was right. Someday, all would hear and all would join together to witness my greatness. And so I made humanity. To bind the universe together and let all hear my creation. And someday, they would become me, to see and hear and love and weep all at once, together. And I would be no more. And then I awoke.

creatio ex nihilo







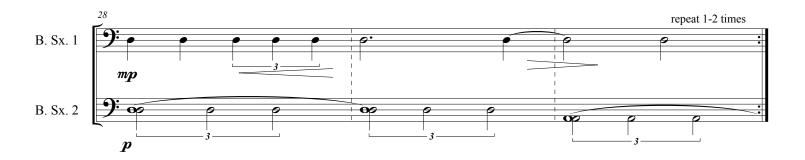


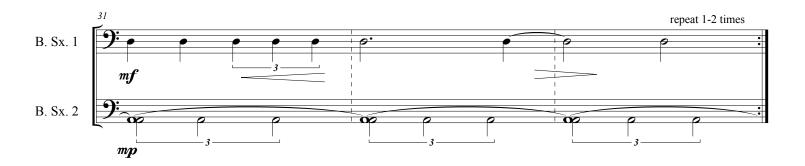


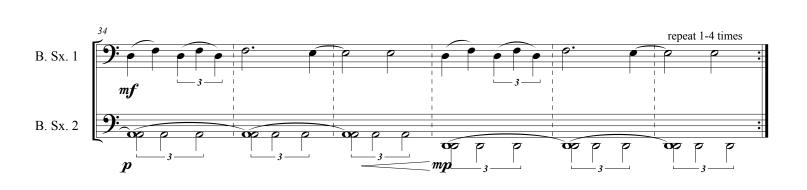


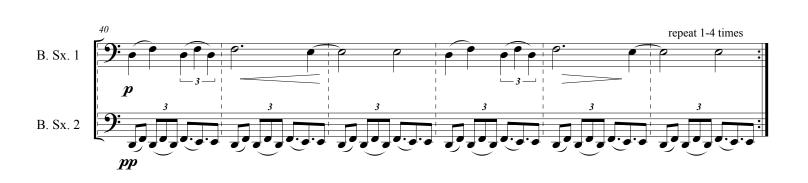
2 creatio ex nihilo











I'm ashamed of what I cannot imagine. I see so little. I could spend eternity gazing upon the universe, though it would be wasted time. My mind, shackled to my body, is so thoroughly encumbered by walls and barriers. I suppose the question is then: "Did man create physical walls in resemblance to a mind incapable of seeing beyond a single idea at a time?" Am I inherently doomed to a world of blinders? Is there anything to blame other than the human psyche? I want to see big. I want to dream big, I don't think my mind will let me. I can merely remind myself of the trillions of atoms that make me, or of the galaxy swirling all around me right now. I stare blankly at my keyboard, forgetful and uncomprehending that it is made up of such minute detail an eternity of study wouldn't warrant the loosest understanding of it. I have so much less than eternity to know something. Time rots away my body, an entity I do not understand. I just want the clairvoyance to see what things are. What would the world be like if for one single moment everyone was aware of the things around us in full detail. There would be so little to hurt for and so much to want after.

I suppose then that the reason I am a creator more than a discoverer is that I can only understand that which I create of my own system; an orb of omnipotence in an otherwise infinitely vast thickness of uncertainty and unknowing. I suppose that other creators are simply that as well...people who have realized that they can only know what comes from themselves. I suppose a creator is a person who admits a finite and miserable understanding to the world and makes their own...just for something to hold onto and feel. To connect. Maybe then, if there is a god, I can understand him better.











































...maybe 11



Meditation on the Third Movement

Here we are. Here we are aware. The universe has birthed its own consciousness. From gaseous clouds, to burning stars, to the minds within our skulls. Here we are. The universe can talk. The universe can see. It can breathe and laugh and cry, it can laugh and smile. It can gaze upon itself and now, transform itself into nearly anything. It can traverse itself purposefully, across the emptiness within. And here we are. Seeds of a new era of the universe, of matter. In cycles deep, in time long passing, we have emerged from the dirt and have become conscious.

The mistake that we have made is to think of ourselves as our bodies. We see ourselves as our hands and feet and senses. But that is not what we are. We are the universe gazing upon itself. What more could we ask for? To be infinite, expanding, immeasurably complex and elegant. Our consciousness is wasted on selfishness and vanity, on what we can control. It has fought wars, and brought what billions of years took to create, back to ashes. To see each day go on where consciousness is so utterly wasted is nearly unlivable, to see that the universe has, through processes of immense scale, generated each mind among us, only to have them destroy each other. To see the universe fight itself willingly, to take the good, the beautiful, and the fantastic produced from immense emotionless machinery, and turn it to violence and judgment and hate...we should be ashamed.

Where could we be if we saw what we were? I am the universe; an operation of unfathomable complexity, its essence is my whole being from *every* atom in my body to every atom beyond it. It is perhaps in our youth that we bicker in our static pool. Maybe someday we will overcome such immaturity to process what our existence is. There was no purpose before us, but now, we are here. *We* can take the lifeless, the silent, the lonely, and turn it into *life itself*. We can make fields of nothingness into plains of unimaginable beauty. We can spread purpose unto a meaningless world. The universe is not a life giver, but a life creator, *and here we are*. Every moment we should be grateful that we exist, that the accumulation of so many emotionless cycles has spawned our minds of immense ability and capability.

We are inevitable, as evident by our existence. The universe, through the laws of nature, the pillars of relentlessness that define everything, has made us through a gradual journey of un-purposed trial and error and here we are. I have hope for the universe's future, of turning the grey green, the silent into laughter, the impassioned wind into eloquent music. The seed of this new phase of the universe, the pinnacle and fruition of inevitability has shown itself, and here we are.

Joshua Macias

III















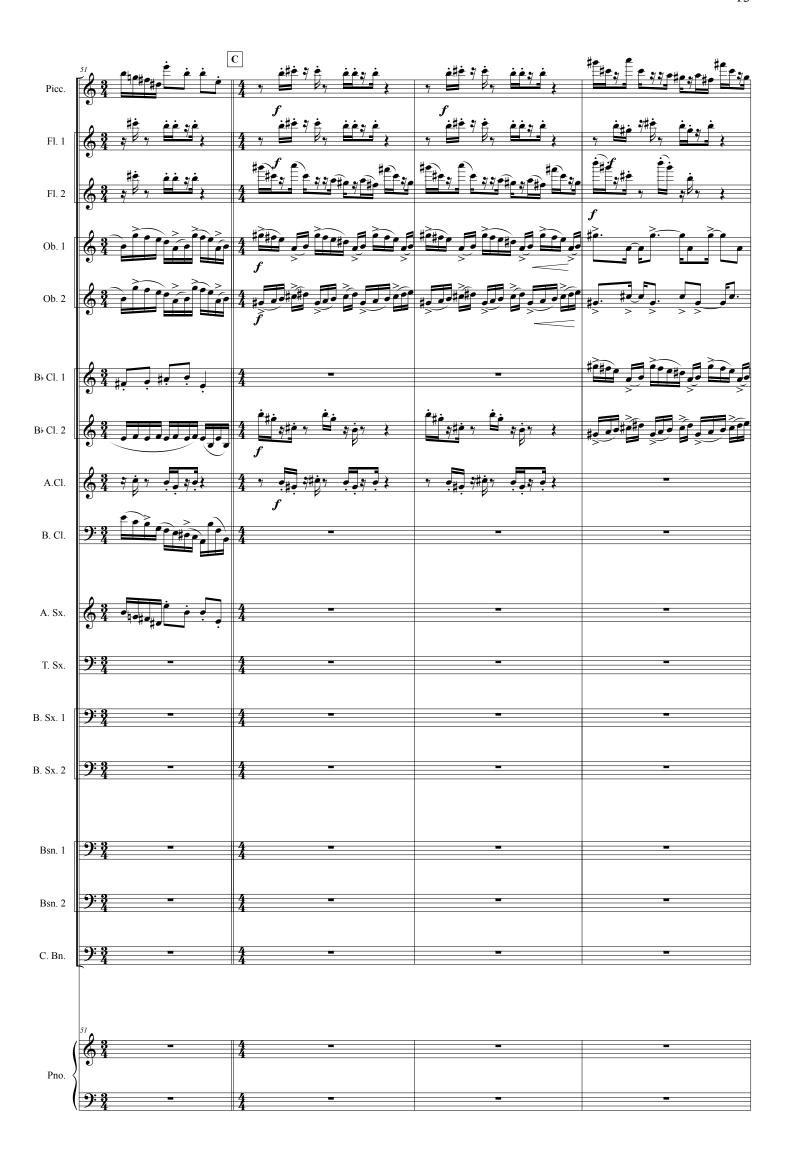




































Duality. A nature of the mind to observe opposites and to rank things in such categories. From black and white, to good and evil, to life and death. We seem so convinced that all things belong in levels to each other. Perhaps it's not wrong to do so. To see tragedy before us while simultaneously rejoicing in life, or even just having it ourselves. To rank fairness as well. To look at travesty against our own fruition and to see the wrongness of it. Not only to see it, but to feel it, live it...to let it consume your mind and body. And yet they happen and what we are left with is only a sense of injustice. Perhaps in this moment of emptiness and anguish the nature of duality blurs. When the response to grief is grief there is nothing to be done, but when the reaction is to celebrate life, a dim light flickers in the treacherous corridors of our being. There are moments that exist in the minds of everyone, where pain and sorrow bear down on our reason, where what is lost is tied to us and weighs us down. But in these moments lies a choice. The choice to let pain reap pain, or the opportunity to reshape loss and make life more vital. Within ourselves is the power to vitalize life from loss, to look into the eyes of peers and to shout out as against the treacheries that surround us. The ability to turn despair into vigor is ours alone, and if conceived, diminishes duality into acceptance. I choose to live stronger, I choose to unite with others and rejoice in life. What is there to do otherwise? Duality is ours to define, and by this, we can turn loss into resolve, pain into strength, and emptiness into fulfillment. It is our choice, and by being of this nature, we should choose redemption and not loss. And where we go from here, from these buried moments of hurt, begins an unfathomable journey of beauty and meaning. Life begins in these moments, and where it goes next has the potential to bring peace of mind to all of humanity.

"...heathens need not participate"

