

Research Lecture Notes for Performance Dissertation Project 5 (TMUS 8259)
Lecture presented at the 2014 International Horn Society Western Horn Symposium

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PREFACE

This research lecture is designed to present performance and biographical information on Andy Wolfe and provide subsequent background information describing his compositional influence throughout the Rocky Mountain Front Range. The bulk of the lecture will pertain to descriptive harmonic and orchestrational analysis by presenting several different compositional styles and techniques used Andy's brass chamber repertoire through demonstration and discussion. The lecture will end by presenting a new composition for Horn, Trombone and Piano which I commissioned Andy to write for the 2014 International Horn Society Western Horn Symposium.

INTRODUCTION

The lecture will be presented in a performance format. To convey Andy's ideas will required instrumental and pre recorded audio examples throughout the presentation. The beginning of the presentation will start with me playing the second movement from a piece titles, *Cave of Souls for Horn and Piano*. Andy wrote the piece for Susan McCullough which was premiered at the 2011 International Horn Society Convention held in San Francisco, CA. The movement is an upbeat but melancholy texture providing the listener with the feel of jollity and forward motion without being overbearing and traumatic. I have chosen this particular movement to set the palate for the listener by giving them a taste of Andy's use of non-functional harmony and athletic use of the horn in a softer texture.

BIOGRAPHY

Andy is an active freelance composer and musician in the Denver area. Andy is a member of the Greeley Philharmonic (bass trombone/euphonium), Central City Opera (trombone), The Denver Brass (trombone/bass trombone), Boulder Brass (bass trombone), Colorado Jazz Repertory Orchestra (bass trombone), and the Denver Center Attractions (trombone). Andy is becoming more and more well known for his composing and arranging. I would characterize Andy as a top composer in the brass realm putting him on the same level as Eric Ewazen and Anthony DiLorenzo. Although Andy is not as well known he is fully capable of writing and arranging similarly to those already well established. I take it upon myself to bring his wonderful gift to you and hope you are able to take it to your friends and colleagues.

SMALL ENSEMBLE

Triptych is the name of the piece to premiered at the symposium. It is one of a large collections of tunes Andy has written over the years. Elation & Agitation is a fantastic trombone trio which Dr. John Neurohr will demonstrate later in the program. The Lost City is a brass trio commissioned by the Lamont School of Music Brass Trio and Ascent is a trio for Horn, Trumpet, and Piano commissioned by Bruce Barrie and Marian Hesse members of the Grammy Award winning Chestnut Brass Company.

LARGE ENSEMBLE

It is Andy's large chamber ensemble compositions which has garnered him attention and adulation. For those of you who do not know the names Eric Ewazen and Anthony DiLorenzo they get a lot of press from small ensemble compositions. Yes, they do a lot of larger projects like movie scores and large band/orchestral works but it is their small chamber works that get

the attention of the principal players and collegiate faculty. Andy fits into this mold and through these demonstrations I hope you are willing to bring Andy Wolfe to your institutions.

DEMONSTRATIONS

RHYTHM

The first demonstration will be from the first movement of *Triptych* giving you an idea of Andy's use of asymmetry by using the compound meter. Andy uses this in order to create unease by creating a $\frac{7}{8}$ rhythmic ostinato: |12-12-123|123-12-12|. What is creative about this example is that although the initial feel is that of being unsure it is only short lived because the compound "feel" is actually presented in a simple duple meter creating an overarching phrase by using an ostinato. The repetitive nature of the line brings eventual solidarity to the listener. A wonderful effect!

Elation & Agitation is a piece originally written for trombone trio but we are bringing it to you as a solo trombone and piano work in order to illustrate a darker use of compound meters. Melodically, Andy brings a lot of semitone and tritone relationships in the solo lines and then adds a lot of harmonic semitones to bring the crunchy texture into the listeners sphere of attention.

Cave of Souls, movement 4 is a demonstration of how Andy uses the common technique of a soaring melody with a complicated underlying harmonic structure in the piano. The piano line, in Andy's writing, is treated more like wind instrument rather than an instrument capable of creating polyphonic textures. The principal creation by a wind instrument is that of a homophonic texture. What is created over a specific amount is that of one note after the other, never one note on top of each other. A wind player can take part in a harmonic moment as one component. For instance, in order for myself to "create" a harmony it must be accompanied by another instrumentalist. The piano is capable of creating both a melodic line - note after note -

and also a harmonic line - notes stacked on top of each other - and also able to use a harmonic construction as a melodic tool. In the presentations thusfar we have shown that Andy has chosen to use the piano as a tool for generating color and mood but also when the piano is presenting a melody it is generally presented as a wind melodic line. This is not to say that there are frequent usages of typical piano harmonic function he just choses to hide them.

HARMONY

Triptych Mvt. 1 (portion) Non Functional Harmony: Andy's tunes often travel throughout the circle of fifths but not necessarily around the circle of fifths. Although there are moments of what musicians and scholars call "harmonic function" or "dominant function," Andy's compositional technique generally requires the solo instruments to guide the listener rather than invoking any specific harmonic function. Direction is hidden in the harmonic but provided by the melody.

An Overture to a New Day is a large ensemble piece commissioned by the Denver Brass. It is within this idiom where Andy started to explore his true musical identity, it is here where he is incredibly special at what he does. Andy does less boundary pushing and employs more common compositional practices such as use of the rondo form and also combining functional harmony with exciting rhythmic ostinatos and his amazing strength of writing incredible solo lines for brass instruments.

They Gave All commissioned by the Colorado American Legion is an fantastic demonstration of Andy's powerful, lyrical writing. This can easily be compared to the top movie composers such as John Williams and James Horner. Simple, thick, and lush harmonic textures

ORCHESTRATION

Idiomatic part writing. Andy is able to create stand alone individual melodic ideas in each instrument and then he is able to weave these parts together to create a beautiful harmonic texture with the use of strictly melodic fragments from each instrument. To demonstrate will

require a presentation from the second movement of *Triptych*. In this movement the piano reflects a Schubert like color palate. The trombone presents a forward moving, driving melody and the horn provides a harmonic addition by soaring through the texture using simple half notes and whole notes. This “stacking” of melodic material is a very special composition technique with which Andy takes full advantage.

Ascent, a piece commissioned by Bruce Barrie and Marian Hesse, is an obscure work which uses a lot of darker tonalities in the piano but also frequently uses the mute. Composers often use the mute to “sprinkle” alternate tone colors but Andy chooses to provide a tone color change for very long periods of time.

FORM

A B A - This demonstration will consist of a small portion of the last movement of *Triptych* which is presented in rondo form. Rather than play the entire movement this demonstration will involve a small portion of the first thematic idea presented in the horn. This will be followed by a small portion of the second thematic idea presented by the entire trio. The third portion of the demonstration will include Andy’s wonderful use of overlapping melodic elements in each instrument into one idea. It happens that in this section Andy brings back melodic elements from the second movement.

PREMIER

Why? This piece hits home for me and my family. I have to thank the Mier Ramon Commissioning Fund through the International Horn Society and also my parents, Bruce and Jani Johnston. Without their help we would have been unable to bring this piece to you. Although this is personal, it is important for you to know why I decided to commission this work. The backstory involves my son, Owen. Andy wrote this for my family and my son. Andy’s music is one of the few things I was able to connect with while dealing with the tragic loss of my son. This is important, Andy’s music has a dramatic effect on my conscious, it helps. His music gives

us an opportunity to provide something that is tangible on an emotional level. This is what we do, people pay us money in order to escape from the world.

WORKING OUTLINE:

I. Introduction: The chamber music of Andy Wolfe

II. Biographical Information

A. Performance

B. Compositional

III. Andy's Brass Chamber Music

IV. Analysis Discussion

A. Rhythm

1. Syncopation and Hemiola

2. Metric Modulation

B. Harmony

1. Functional Hierarchy

a) Non functional vs. functional

2. Tertiary Relationships

C. Orchestration

1. Idiomatic Part Writing

2. Form

V. Premier

A. Composing for Brass