LIBBY LARSEN'S SEVEN GHOSTS: A STYLISTIC AND GESTURAL ANALYSIS

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LIBBY LARSEN'S *SEVEN GHOSTS*: A STYLISTIC AND GESTURAL ANALYSIS

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Thesis

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND INTRODUCTION TO LIBBY LARSEN'S SEVEN GHOSTS

Libby Larsen (b. December 24th 1950), already viewed as a premier American female composer, has achieved international status and has been included in music history anthologies. She has also been regarded as “a powerful advocate for all living composers”¹ because of her work with Stephen Paulus in co-founding the American Composers Forum. She obtained all three of her degrees from The University of Minnesota.² Tom Wine says, “Her music has been praised for its dynamic, deeply inspired, and vigorous contemporary American spirit.”³ Larsen began composing in grade-school encouraged by her teachers. It was her teachers all along who helped foster her gift for composition and who gave her venues for the performances of her pieces. Her influences include her teachers Dominick Argento, Eric Stokes, and Paul Fetler.⁴

¹ Morreau, 30
² Malitz, 46
³ Wine, 39
⁴ Boyer, Gesture, 18
Her musical taste includes Jazz and Blues, and regarding choir textures specifically, “The madrigalists [are] very important” to her style.5

Larsen's style has been studied by several authors. Douglas R. Boyer extensively describes Larsen's choral style:

Some general characteristics of her choral compositional style include the following: form derived from the structure of the text; an organic development of musical ideas, gestures, motives, or colors; use of non-functional modality; use of polytonality and polymodality; vertical sonorities, often composed of extended triads...; a strong rhythmic character; use of repetition as a means of building intensity, most often in the form of ostinatos, use of ostinatos to create environments and atmospheres; use of the voice as a timbral element by substituting text with a vowel(s) or syllable(s); use of text painting; and a personal approach to setting text for the voice.6

In 1998, Larry Smith said the following of Larsen's choral works:

Examination of the composer's works and words reveals the following common characteristics of her harmonic language: (1) Key signatures are almost never used, probably because of her preference for tonality that is not based on a single consistent tonic pitch...; (2) pedal tones in voices or accompaniment are commonly used to establish tonal centers; (3) ostinato patterns and recurring motives are commonly used to establish and extend tonal centers; (4) vocal lines generate harmonies, not standard chord progression patterns; (5) works tend to begin and end in the same tonality.7

Along these same lines, Larsen wrote in Composers on Composing for Choir, “I find I have been using and developing certain intervals, I have been fascinated with downbeat rests, I am moving away from barlines”.8

Seven Ghosts is a five-movement work premiered in 1995 inspired by the lives of people who overcame severe obstacles to achieve their lifelong goals. Of Smith's list of traits, the fifth does not hold true for any of the movements in Seven Ghosts as each

5 Smith, 182
6 Boyer, Paulus/Larsen, 30
7 Smith, 69
8 Wine, 48
movement ends in a different key than it started. Each movement begs to be analyzed differently as the styles and harmonic languages used in each differ drastically. Even with drastic textural and tonal differences, Larsen's work is united by the interval of an octave, chords with augmented or diminished fifths, ostinato figures and gestural motives. This not only reinforces several prior analyses, but provides new examples of Larsen's motivic and gestural accessibility.
CHAPTER II

MOVEMENT ONE, “GRACE AND GLORY”

Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784) was one of the greatest poets of her time, yet her background is quite different from many of her peers' backgrounds. Born in the African country of Senegal, she arrived in America in 1761 as part of a shipment of slaves. She was purchased by the Wheatley family, which educated her and freed her, at which point she led an exceptional life of poetry, family and freedom. It was also at this time in her life when she met George Washington. She wrote him a letter which contained the following poem.

To His Excellency General Washington

1 Celestial Choir! enthron'd in realms of light,  
Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.  
While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,  
She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.

5 See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,  
And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!  
See the bright beams of heaven's revolving light  
Involved in sorrows and the veil of night!

The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,

10 Olive and laurel binds her golden hair...  
Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates  
How pour her armies through a thousand gates...
In bright array they seek the work of war,
Where high unfurl'd the ensign waves the air.

15 Shall I to Washington their praise recite?
Thee, first in place and honours, —we demand
The grace and glory of thy martial band...
Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
Thy ev'ry action let the goddess guide.

20 A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! be thine. 9

Wheatley's poem forms the basis of composer Libby Larsen's first movement in her composition *Seven Ghosts*. The title of the movement, *Grace and Glory*, is derived from line 17 of the poem. Wheatley personifies America with the name “Columbia” throughout the movement. The other characters in the poem are the celestial choir (perhaps the muse referred to later), mother earth, George Washington, and, of course, the speaker or narrator, Wheatley herself. The first 12 lines abstract the meaning of the poem; had Wheatley ended her poem there, it could have been applied to many battles in human history. Were it not for the symbolism Wheatley uses with the word “Columbia,” the first 12 lines would indeed be free from the bonds of specificity. From line 13 through to the end, the Revolutionary Wars is foregrounded more directly with references to the war, the flag, Washington, and hope for victory.

In similar fashion, Larsen divides her setting of the text into two sections; therefore the form of the movement in simplest terms is Binary. The A section contains alternating motives which are modified and added to until the timbral texture is quite thick. At measure 38, the start of the B section, the instrumentation thins to a single trumpet and a snare drum. The B section is driven by a march—called *Washington's*

9 The text of this poem comes from the Oxford University Press publication of *Seven Ghosts.*
March—from the Revolutionary War, which is presented in its original form at this point. After the presentation of the entire march theme, the motives from the A section return, but this time with the march as an accompaniment. Using Wheatley as her guide, Larsen adds specificity to the second section of the movement, tying the text tangibly to the Revolutionary War. In so doing, Larsen demonstrates her knowledge of poetic form and her passion for letting a text guide composition. In this instance she adheres to the poetic form as a guide for her musical form. Figure 1 gives formal outlines, tonal areas and thematic content of each section.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section (Large)</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A'</th>
<th>B'</th>
<th>Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Small)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>1—14</td>
<td>15—26</td>
<td>27—37</td>
<td>38—47</td>
<td>48—58</td>
<td>59—70</td>
<td>71—85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keys/Tonal Areas</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>G flat</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G flat</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>D Split 5th MM7 Whole Tone</td>
<td>Polychords Bitonality</td>
<td>Quartal Expansion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>D Split 5th MM7 Whole Tone</td>
<td>Bitonality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The structural tonalities include the following key centers: D Major, F minor/Major, E Major, A-Flat Major, C Major (with a Plagal Half Cadence), and G Major. These tonal centers are established by means of pedal tones. Boyer says, “The use of pedal tones to establish tonal centers is the most common harmonic technique in Larsen's music.”¹⁰ Figure 2 demonstrates the relationships among these keys by showing important bass pedals and emphases along with the linear implications of the choral parts. The beginning is decisively in D Major, established by means of an ascending octave leap from D to D in all voices. The instruments outline a D MM7 Split Fifth with the A natural occurring in the Bass. The eighth measure begins an emphasis on E major. The focus returns to D Major in measure 11. Another type of relationship used prolifically is the mediant. In measure 15, the bass involves a pedal G-Flat, which is enharmonically the mediant of D Major. From here F minor/Major is outlined. This is another step progression. From F, Larsen steps back to E Major (measure 21), and then to A-Flat Major. A-Flat Major is enharmonically the mediant of E Major. From A-Flat, another mediant relationship follows, C Major. C Major is used as a transition as Larsen firmly establishes C, and quickly moves into harmonic obscurity. A mere four measures after Larsen establishes C, F minor/Major is reaffirmed aurally presenting a Plagal Half Cadence. Thus ends the A section. The B section begins on G Major—continuing the step progressions from D—and remains there for the rest of the movement. Figure 2 illustrates the aforementioned relationships.

¹⁰ Boyer, DMA, 70
Larsen establishes tonal centers by employing pedal tones, octaves, and on occasion traditional functionality. Of the above established tonalities, D Major (at m. 11), G-Flat Major, F Major/minor, and A-Flat Major are established using pedal tones. D Major (at m. 1), F Major/minor, and C Major are established using the opening ascending octaves discussed below. G Major is the only key center established with traditional harmonic means; however, Larsen employs non-traditional harmonies in layers on top of these harmonies.

Larsen's setting of Wheatley's text employs two main motives that are varied throughout the work. The motives divide the first line of the poem into two parts, motive A and motive B. Motive A is characterized by the upward leap of an octave from D4 followed by a descending perfect fourth and an F sharp major triad. Heard separately, the sounds have a chromatic third relationship. Heard in context, the sonority becomes a D major seventh with a split fifth scale degree (A and A-Sharp in the same chord). This half step cross relationship between the A in the bass and accompaniment and the A-sharp in the Alto voice appears throughout the movement.

![Motive A and Motive B](image)

*Figure 3: Motives unifying Grace and Glory*
The rhythmic emphases of motive A are on “les” of Ce-les-tial and on “Choir.” Larsen's concern for speech patterns is made clear when Kennicott states, “The music is derived directly from the words, following the textual, rhythmic and psychological cues.” Larsen's text setting draws from the energy inherent in the words and the rhythmic and declamatory aspects of speech patterns. Jennifer Kelly states that Larsen, “believes that the rhythm of American English is unlike that of any other language; its uneven phrases, choppy flow from one sentence to the next and emphatic statements made by pitch variation.”

In these motives, Larsen also presents two unifying rhythmic motives that are variations of rhythms in *Washington's March* discussed later.

![Rhythmic Motive 1](image1)

![Rhythmic Motive 2](image2)

*Figure 4: Unifying Rhythmic Motives of Grace and Glory*

The first is the dotted-quarter followed by an eighth. This rhythm is an augmented form of the prominent unifying rhythm of the march—a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth. The second rhythm is presented in the accompaniment, the two eighths followed by a longer note—in this case a half note. This rhythm is also derived from the march. It

---

11 Kennicott, 34.
12 Kelly, 23.
appears in the B phrase of the march after the E5 as a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth then by a quarter note. In the first appearance of rhythmic motive 2, the dot is removed, yet the purpose of the motive as commentary remains the same.

![Motive B](image)

*Figure 5: mm. 48-49 Movement 1, Seven Ghosts*

Motive A often appears in pure form; in fact the first two statements of motive A are the same. The first variance is in measure 8. The ascending octave leap in motive A appears as an ascending minor seventh in the soprano voice from E4 to D5 (hereafter “measure” will appear as m. and “measures” as mm.). Also in m. 8, Larsen re-orchestrates the final chord as a simple F sharp Major triad. Later in the B section, melodic components from *Washington's March* are added to motive A at mm. 48-49 as seen below.

Larsen applies an additive technique to motive B. Motive B is characterized by the same D octave leap as Motive A, however it it followed by a descending whole-tone scale to G-Flat or an enharmonic minor sixth. This motive is varied as soon as its second appearance. The following table illustrates the manners in which these variations appear.
**Figure 6: Variations on Motive B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Manner of variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Transposed to F sharp, Inserted Perfect fourth descending leap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Seven whole-tone scale pitches descending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>F minor scale descending, added jumps of a third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Octave leap changed to an ascending minor sixth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-26</td>
<td>Rhythmically altered, 9 whole-tone descending steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>Octave removed, first 5 pitches are in A-Flat major descending scale, remaining 3 pitches are whole-tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-35</td>
<td>Transposed, rhythmically altered, scale lengthened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>F octave leap includes an A-Flat, whole-tone scale transposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B SECTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-51</td>
<td>Transposed, Scale is bi-modal, G Major and a whole-tone scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Octave removed, occurs in conjunction with motive A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are many similarities between these unifying motives. In fact, both motive A and motive B begin with a downbeat rest, and both begin on D and end on F sharp/G-Flat. However, Larsen's monothematic opening does not lack aural contrast. Illustration 5 clarifies the monothematic nature of these motives, where shapes equate portions of the motives.
Figure 7: Monothematic Nature of Motives A and B

Pitch centricity places both motives in D Major (as a point of deviation) since the beginning pitches are tonic and the ending pitches are enharmonically the mediant. Each motive contains only two pitches that do not occur in the other motive. Both include the augmented fifth (enharmonically for motive B) of the DM7 split fifth chord. The time signature changes from A to B, giving the work metric obscurity, yet both motives end with the note of longest duration.

Another unifying theme is Washington's March, a tune from the American Revolution. It was used to garner support for then General Washington to draw support for his election. Pairing this march with Wheatley's text is not only a good choice, but shows a great deal of perception and research.

Figure 8: Washington's March: Accompaniment notes circled
Larsen repeats this tune three times, first as a solo with drum accompaniment beginning in m. 38 marking the start of the B section. The second presentation occurs in mm. 48-57; it occurs primarily in the accompaniment and occasionally the choir. The final repetition (mm. 60-69) is buried deeper in the accompaniment. After this point, it only appears in fragments and in imitation in the accompaniment. In m. 79 the bass outlines the possible framework tying the descending whole-tone scale of motive B to *Washington's March*. In this measure, the ascending triplet scale from the march is first of all inverted. Second, Larsen has turned this scale into a whole-tone scale. This one passage unifies two seemingly diverse motives, one tonal, and one whole-tone.

![Figure 9: Measure 79 Bass Line](image)

In addition, Larsen employs several tonal harmonies. Most of her chords are polychords or chords with split fifths, thirds or roots. In her quest for accessibility she has used sounds that are more familiar to the audience. The split sonorities tend to split poetic phrases in half, such as with motive A. The use of the split fifth in motive A accentuates the fact that the first line of poetry is also split. Her use of planing, such as with mm. 10 and 13, occurs with the descent of motive B and is an elaboration on the descending whole-tone scale. Her use of rhythmic motive 2 is as punctuation or commentary on the text; this mirrors how the motive is used in *Washington's March*. Libby Larsen uses the aforementioned building blocks to elaborate and bring Wheatley's poem to life.
CHAPTER III

MOVEMENT TWO, “JENNY LIND TO HARRIET BEECHER STOWE”

Jenny Lind (1820-1887) was an opera singer from Sweden known in her time as the “Swedish Nightingale.” She toured in the United States during the years 1850-52. Her trademark was to end her concerts with the song "No Place Like Home" by John Howard Payne (1791-1852). During her years in the states she supported the cause of the abolitionists and contributed to Harriet Beecher Stowe's (1811-1896) abolitionist efforts. The two exchanged letters and encouragements including the letter from Lind to Stowe below. Stowe is most famous for her book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which shed light on the atrocities of slavery and incited anger over the subject. This book was instrumental at least in opening northern eyes to the injustices, and in a small way, contributing to the tension that fueled the Civil War. Below is the text of the letter to Stowe that Larsen includes in the second movement of *Seven Ghosts*.

My Dear Madam allow me to express my sincere thanks for your (very) kind letter, …

You must... know what a deep impression 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' has made upon
every heart that can feel for the dignity of human existence: so I with my mis'rable English would not even try to say a word... but I must thank you for the great joy I have felt over that book...

I have the feeling about 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' great changes will take place by and by... and the writer of that book can fall asleep to-day... with bright, sweet conscience of having been a strong means in the Creator's hand of essential good... God bless and protect you and yours... and certainly God's hand will remain with a blessing over your head...

Yours most truly,
Jenny Goldschmidt, nee Jenny Lind.13

Larsen's setting of this letter shows considerable care for the text's form and the organic growth of thematic material; she achieves this through quotation, polychords, quartal and quintal harmonies, bitonality, and natural speech-like vocal solo lines.

The paragraph divisions in the above letter are by no means arbitrary; Larsen's devotion to interpretation and meaning drive the form of the movement. Larsen sets this letter as a soprano solo alternating with Recitative and accompaniment. Since Lind was a very well known soprano, it is only appropriate that a soprano have the solo. Larsen begins the “My Dear Madam” paragraph in m. 11, coinciding with the first section, the A section. The paragraph beginning “You must...” begins in m. 16 and ends in m. 33, which coincides with the A' section. This section is marked by tonal instability and is transitional to the tonality C. The B section begins in m. 34 and is marked by the inclusion of Payne's "No Place Like Home" in the choral accompaniment. The next solo section (“I have a feeling...essential good”) begins in m. 43, over the B and B' phrases of Payne's song. Likewise, the final solo section occurs over phrases B and B' of the same song. The text in the closing section consists of the blessing and close of the letter (“God

13 This text is found in the publication of Seven Ghosts by Oxford University Press
bless you... Jenny Lind”). The text of "No Place Like Home" is presented below followed by the formal diagram for the movement (Figure 10) and the tune's melody (Figure 11).

Mid pleasures and palaces wherever you may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home
A charm from the skies seems to hallow you there,
Which, seek through the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere.
### Figure 10: Jenny Lind Formal Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>1—32</td>
<td>33—57</td>
<td>58—75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Alternations between solo Recit. and Choral commentary Freely Tonal 3 4</td>
<td>Choir No Place Like Home Ostinato Figures Solo Recit.</td>
<td>Tune Reharmonized Solo Recit. Freely Tonal Extended Triads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal Areas</td>
<td>E flat → B Flat (Plagal)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B flat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Figure 10 illustrates, the A and A' sections are characterized by fragments of "No Place Like Home", while the B section and close are driven by the full inclusion of the tune. Figure 11 presents the phrasing of "No Place Like Home", as used by Larsen throughout the work.

![Figure 11: "No Place Like Home" Phrases](image)

![Figure 12: Tonal Relationships](image)

The tonalities affirmed by Larsen are E-Flat Major, C Major and B-Flat Major. Their relationships are step, mediant, and fifth as outlined in Figure 12. Yet these tonalities are not affirmed without some degree of uncertainty. The beginning tonal center, E-Flat Major, is quickly obscured by the presence of G-Flat in m. 4, inflecting the minor mode. Larsen then includes a short passage including planing parallel fifths on E, D, C and B-Flat (m. 6) before cadencing later in the phrase on B-Flat, the dominant of E-
Flat. Seventh chords are also prolific in Larsen's harmonic language as mm. 19-21 illustrate. Polychords or tertian harmonies above pedals are also present throughout. Even with this uncertainty, Larsen does not leave the realm of tertian harmony often, and when she does it is usually to employ quartal or quintal harmonies as in mm. 33-57 discussed later. Figure 13 illustrates several appearances of the aforementioned harmonic principles.

![Musical Notation]

*Figure 13: Harmonic Techniques*

In the B section she establishes C Major and B-Flat Major using the functional harmonic implications of Payne's tune. These implications in the choir are contrasted in the accompaniment using ostinato figures with quartal sonorities as outlined in Figure 14. The ending of the piece sustains a B-Flat Major chord over an E-Flat pedal, hearkening back the beginning tonality. The E-Flat in the Bass resolves to a B-Flat in the final measure.
The choral and instrumental accompaniments to the solo include many fragments of "No Place Like Home" leading up to the B section. A Figure 15 illustrates, the alto and soprano line often quote fragments of the melody. In fact, in mm. 10-12, the alto and soprano share a portion of the melody. As the piece progresses the quotations become longer so that by the time the tune is presented in full, one recognizes it with a home-like familiarity.

Figure 15: The growth of "No Place Like Home"

The accompaniment is where the harmonic complexity lies for the majority of the work. In addition to the harmonies mentioned above, the accompaniment employs other late romantic/early twentieth century harmonic techniques. For instance, Larsen uses planing in mm. 17-19 on parallel fifths. Planing or parallelism is also employed with MM7 chords at m. 20. Contrary motion using fragments of the melody appear liberally
as well. In m. 4, Larsen uses a Viennese Trichord. The Viennese Trichord was a favorite of Schoenberg consisting of a perfect fourth or fifth with an added tritone. In prime form as a set, a Viennese Trichord is [016]. This is the only location in this movement where this particular sonority is present. Figures 16, 17 and 18 show occurrences of these techniques. In general the texture of the A section uses these techniques and has a fairly sparse texture. The B section (m. 33) begins with a thickening of texture and an ostinato figure based on the polychords in the aforementioned Figure 15.

![Figure 16: Contrary Motion and Parallelism at m. 17-19](image1)

![Figure 17: Viennese Trichord and M7 Chords at m. 20](image2)

![Figure 18: Reduction of harmonies at mm. 67-72](image3)
The sonorities include a D pedal, quartal structures and either FMM7 or A minor triads. This ostinato figure is in place the entire time the choir presents "No Place Like Home" in C Major. This exercise in bitonality is continued through the rest of the movement.

The Ostinato figure stops in m. 56 giving way to a more contrapuntal texture as in the A section. There are several pedal B-Flats in mm. 58-65, but the work ends with the choir (minus basses) singing a B-Flat Major triad, the soloist outlining the same, and the basses singing a pedal E-Flat for 10 beats before finally resolving to B-Flat. This plagal cadence is reminiscent of the sounds of the medieval and renaissance eras, and is possibly influenced by Larsen's days singing Gregorian Chant.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this work is the soprano solo's declamatory style. Larsen's text setting places melodic and durational stress on the important syllables of the lyrics. She also illustrates the meaning of her text through transparent text painting. Her aim is for the words to be as natural as speaking or reading a letter out loud. The first example of this organic text setting occurs in mm. 29-32 in Figure 16 below. The most important words of the phrase are “thank,” “joy,” “felt,” and “book.” These words have greater emphasis in the line, whether by duration or range. The upward swoop to the E-Flat on “great joy” is illustrative of the words' meaning.

![Figure 19: Solo Line mm. 29-32](image)

A second example of text setting is from mm. 52-57. Here Larsen sets three words with the same note and nearly the same duration: “bright,” “strong,” and “good.” Words of
lesser consequence (such as “with the”) are given shorter duration or a lower note.

Words with multiple syllables are set in such a way that the syllable (i.e. the CON of conscience) flows organically with the text. When spoken, the word “conscience” naturally has a higher sound on CON, dropping for the longer syllable “science”. Larsen reflects this and much more in her settings below.

![Sheet Music](image1.png)

*Figure 20: Solo Line mm. 52-57*

Larsen has a fascination with downbeat rests. This concept so prevalent in *Grace and Glory* is also present in this movement. While the tune "No Place Like Home" begins with an anacrusis, Larsen displaces the tune metrically throughout the movement. Figure 21 illustrates the appearance of the opening notes of the tune in three different metric placements. This contributes to the non-metered or metrically ambiguous feel of the movement.

![Sheet Music](image2.png)

*Figure 21: Metric Displacement of "No Place Like Home"*
CHAPTER IV

MOVEMENT THREE, “BLINKING PLUTO”

Regarding unsung heroes, Larsen focuses on Clyde Thombaugh (1906-1996), the man who discovered the planet Pluto at the age of 23 without even having obtained a college degree. He was the only American who discovered a planet in our solar system. Thombaugh used a machine called a Blink Comparator which alternated very quickly between two photos of the same portion of the night sky taken a week apart so that the observer could distinguish if any of the light sources had moved. These alternations caused a blinking phenomenon for the observer. If a celestial body moved, it was unlikely that it was a star. Using this method for months on end, counting hundreds of thousands of stars, Thombaugh eventually discovered a far-away planet that moved ever so slowly across his plates. The painstaking time he spent counting allowed him to make a discovery of a lifetime. Larsen sets the text below from one of Thombaugh's journals in order to convey the instability of image provided by the Blink Comparator, the painstaking energy spent in counting, and the timelessness of the universe. She engages the senses with several gestures in the third movement for Seven Ghosts once by again
displaying her sensitivity to text and meaning; she achieves this through her formal outline, polychords, bitonality/bimodality, aleatoric passages and atonal inflections:

Blinking Pluto

A brilliant night,
fair, with a light wind.
I work all night long
in an unheated dome, in winter.

The objects drift
from day to day.
Aquarius and Pisces
to Aries;
Gemini and Taurus
to Scorpius
and Sagittarius

Blinking, searching
Thirty thousand,
Forty thousand,
Fifty thousand,
Sixty thousand,
One hundred thousand stars...
each day...
and more

I work all night long
in an unheated dome, in winter
Centered on the starfield Delta Geminorum,
blinking the east half-
blinking- from the south end,
Thirty thousand,
Forty thousand,
Fifty thousand,
Sixty thousand,
One hundred thousand stars...

I spied an object popping in and out.

That's it!14

14 Libby Larsen arranged this text into poetic form based on Thombaugh's Journals. The above text is
Larsen's form is determined directly from the text itself. Where there are repeated or similar words, the setting is repeated with a little variance. Figure 18 illustrates the form where the intro and interlude use the neutral syllables “Loo” and “Ah”, the A sections coincide with the first two paragraphs (“I work all night long”), the B sections are linked to the counting sections of the text, and the close is linked with the final lines of prose, or the discovery section of the text.
### Figure 22: Formal Diagram Mvt. 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Intro.</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A'</th>
<th>B'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>1—5</td>
<td>7—18</td>
<td>19—23</td>
<td>24—34</td>
<td>35—41</td>
<td>42—50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal Areas</td>
<td>D Aflat</td>
<td>F sharp vs. F D emphasis</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A ped. — d ped</td>
<td>A — F</td>
<td>C — F sharp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Signature</td>
<td>6 8</td>
<td>6 8</td>
<td>9 8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>C'</th>
<th>Interlude</th>
<th>B''</th>
<th>Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>57—64</td>
<td>65—72</td>
<td>73—77</td>
<td>78—82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Counting Quartal Extended-Harmonies</td>
<td>Counting Quartal Extended-Harmonies</td>
<td>BC Blinks</td>
<td>[01] [013] [0136] BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal Areas</td>
<td>G ped</td>
<td>D — D flat</td>
<td>D A flat C pedal</td>
<td>D Aflat C pedal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Signatures</td>
<td>6 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The gesture Larsen uses to portray the Blink Comparator is characterized by modality, thirds, fourths, and seconds. Figure 23 contains the first appearance of this gesture in the choir (motive A or Blink Comparator), and the second appearance as an enharmonic permutation in the accompaniment. The horizontal considerations of the treble voices inflect D Mixolydian while the bass voices invoke E-Flat Major. The outer voices move by thirds or fourths. Vertically, these sonorities create major seconds between the C and D, F sharp and (enharmonically) G sharp, D and C, and a tritone between the E-Flat and A natural. When heard as two chords, this gesture invokes whole-tone and then C dorian. As far as tonal establishment goes, C and D are constant throughout the intro and interlude. These are areas of tonal centricity simply because they are repeated.

![Motive A and Motive A Enharmonic Permutation](image)

*Figure 23: Motive A, Blink Comparator*
The A sections are characterized by motive A in various positions and a new vocal motive, set [0136]. See Figure 24.

![Figure 24: Set [0136]](image)

This set repeats three of the notes from motive A, F sharp, C, and A. Inherent in this motive are the same sonorities mentioned earlier including a major second between G and A, a third between F sharp and A, a tritone between F sharp and C, and a fourth between G and C. The harmonic similarities between the two motives unite *Blinking Pluto*. The C, F sharp and G create [016] or a Viennese Trichord, which is used elsewhere in the movement. Under the choral sonorities created by [0136] accompaniment continues to use motive A and add other tertian sonorities building polychords. Larsen also employs the following closely related sets: [0146] in m. 13, [0236] also in m. 13, the fragment [036] in m.12, and the fragments [03] and [01] in the close and scattered about the remainder of the movement.

Another similarity between motive A (Blink Comparator) and [0136] is that both contain downbeat rests. This comes as no surprise since each previous movement in *Seven Ghosts* has also employed downbeat rests.

The B section, or counting section, uses an additive technique to build either quartal, tertiary or polychordal sonorities. Figure 25 shows the sonorities built using the
counting theme. The voices enter in one measure intervals beginning with the lowest voices. Not only are the chords built in an additive manner, but each time this theme is heard the chord grows in complexity, range, and thickness. The first appearance of the theme is a G six-four chord over an A pedal. The second is the same. The third is a B-Flat six-four chord over G and C pedals. The final appearance of this theme is completely quartal, building from D to E-Flat.

![Figure 25: Counting Theme Additive Technique](image)

Another gesture that is present throughout the work is the blink gesture (Figure 26). It first appears in m. 3 dispersed between several instruments in the accompaniment. It spans intervals related to seconds like minor ninths, and major and minor sevenths. It is the basis for the aleatoric section in the A' section. It also bears similarity to motive A, and is in fact being sung over motive A and [0136]. The intervallic relationships between these blinks include seconds, thirds, tritones and fourths/fifths as with the other unifying motives.
Figure 26: Blinks

The closing section includes [0136], fragments of the same set such as [01], and a new motive, the popping motive linked with the discovery of Pluto [03]. This motive moves melodically either by ascending then descending half step or by ascending whole step descending minor third.

Several gestures are used symbolically in this movement. These gestures convey tired sighs as with [0136], the Blink Comparator with the Blinks and motive A, and the vast expanse of space as noted in the counting theme.
CHAPTER V

MOVEMENT FOUR, “MYSELF WITH WINGS”

Charles Lindbergh (1902-1974) fought incredible odds when he became the first person to make a Trans-Atlantic flight from New York to Paris. He was born into a poor Midwestern immigrant family. He went to engineering school in Nebraska, but dropped out in his sophomore year to pursue flight. When he started flight school he was not allowed to fly alone because he couldn't afford the liability fees. After flight school he spent time as a stunt pilot before he was recruited to join the Air Force training academy where he eventually graduated first in his class. After the Air Force he had a career as an Air Mail pilot; it was then he bought his Spirit of St. Louis. In 1927 he pursued the Orteig prize for the pilot who completed the above flight. Several famous pilots and their crews had already attempted the flight with tragic results, so it was absurd to think that an unknown pilot with an Air Mail plane could succeed, yet succeed he did! He completed the flight in 33 hours with less than ideal conditions, including several moments when he flew with zero visibility. Fame followed his epic flight, throwing him and his family into the public eye. His struggle was not yet over, however, and his family endured a tragedy
worse than the possibility of Charles dying in a crash. Lindbergh's son was kidnapped and murdered. Not long after this event Lindbergh took his family secretly to England and then to France to let public hysteria die down. In all of this his strength of character and love of flight grounded his values and focused his vision. Larsen's *Myself with Wings* incorporates the following simple words from this great man of flight: “I used to imagine myself with wings on which I could swoop down off our roof into the valley, soaring through the air from one river bank to another. Flying!” 15 From the form of the movement to contrapuntal techniques to harmonic language to the musical gestures she employs, Larsen evokes Lindbergh's experience and imagination. The movement's form is through composed as illustrated in Figure 27.

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15 The text is found in Oxford University's publication of *Seven Ghosts*. 

35
Figure 27: Myself With Wings Formal Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Intro</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A' (transition)</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A'' (transition)</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A''' Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>1—11</td>
<td>12—27</td>
<td>28—33</td>
<td>34—42</td>
<td>43—56</td>
<td>57—73</td>
<td>74—83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal Areas</td>
<td>Freely Tonal</td>
<td>C → d dorian</td>
<td>Bflat → G</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>C → F lydian</td>
<td>D dorian</td>
<td>F lydian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The rest of the work is unified by a central melody first presented by the tenors and harmonized by the basses (Figure 28). This melody is later presented by the sopranos and altos with alterations occurring after the word “swoop.”

![Figure 28: Imagine Melody](image)

The D Dorian melody is treated canonically and imitatively in the choir and in the accompaniment throughout the A section. At m. 34 (the beginning of the B section) the tonal focus shifts to G Major in the accompaniment with the melody emphasizing A. The supertonic emphasis accentuates the soaring nature of the new melody. At the anacrusis to m. 37, the basses introduce an octave leap that Larsen uses again later in the C section. They leap from A2 to A3, back to A2 and again to A3 before completing the Soaring motive as seen in Figure 29.

![Figure 29: Soaring Motive](image)

The C section has the most contrast; first and foremost, it is unaccompanied. In addition, for the first time in the movement the whole choir sustains a sonority rather than
relying on melodic devices. The sonority used at m. 57 is a pentatonic pentachord as illustrated in Figure 30.

![Figure 30: Pentatonic Pentachord Choral Entry m. 57](image)

From this sonority, Larsen employs soloists to sing the ascending octave leap first introduced by the basses in the B section. The soloists each have two motives, several ascending and descending octave leaps followed by a scalar passage. (Figure 31)

![Figure 31: Alto Solo, octaves and Scalar passage](image)

In the case of the Alto, the scale is D Dorian. The Tenor first uses F Lydian, and the Soprano uses G Mixolydian. After the soloistic *tour de force*, the choir rejoins, employing parallelism or planing on the word “flying” beginning with an F whole-tone tetrachord, which could also be rendered F Lydian except for the subsequent accidentals (Figure 32). Each voice sings descending and then ascending parallel whole-tone scales.
Figure 32: Planing or Parallelism

This is an unintentional pun using planing for the word “flying.” Lindbergh flew airplanes, therefore “planing” is the perfect compositional device to illustrate flying. The closing section of this movement is simply a reiteration of the A section melody in imitation in F Lydian.

The harmonic language of Movement IV includes polymodalism, polychords, pentachords, and whole-tone scales. Figure 33 is m. 11 from the Introduction in which Larsen employs polymodalism. Not only does Larsen employ polymodalism in this excerpt, but she superimposes modes, a synthetic scale and a major scale. The excerpt begins with a whole-tone scale from D-Flat2 to B2. The second beat is a D Dorian Scale, and beat three is based on E Phrygian. Also hidden is a C major scale that ends on the predominant from C3 to F5. This single measure illustrates the scalar and harmonic complexity hidden throughout the movement. Larsen employs this complexity while still presenting a simple sounding work that flawlessly illustrates flight.
Larsen's instantaneous use of differing tonalities and modalities “creates a definite layering of sound.”\textsuperscript{16} Another example of polymodalism exists in mm. 64, 68 and 70. Figure 34 illustrates how each soloist has his or her own collection of notes that outline different modes.

Measures 2-4 are the most harmonically complex of the work. The reduction in Figure 35 illustrates several points.

The first half of each beat originates from a D-Flat pentatonic scale. The second half of each beat could exist in any number of modes including, D Dorian, E Phrygian, G Mixolydian, F Lydian and C Major. For the pianist, this passage is white keys vs. black

\textsuperscript{16} Boyer, Gesture, 20
keys, where the left hand has black keys and the right has white keys. These sonorities occur in the introduction as broken chords as seen in Figure 36.

![Figure 36: Broken Chords of Introduction, m. 2](image)

Larsen employs several related flight gestures to enhance meaning; the introduction is highly gesturally motivated as seen in several of the preceding Figures. That Larsen is emulating flight is indisputable. She does this through sixteenth note sextuplet and septuplet figures, cadenza figures, and stratified polychords. Figure 36 above is one of many which is illustrative of flight. But Larsen uses a single motive to drive many of her ostinati throughout the movement. Figure 37 has the first appearance of this motive along with its reiterations and modifications. In one of the modifications Larsen composed an ostinato where she truncates the motive into a five-sixteenth note fragment (mm. 53-54).

![Figure 37: Flight Ostinato](image)
CHAPTER VI

MOVEMENT FIVE “UNITED HOT CLUBS OF AMERICA”

Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) was a jazz trumpeter and singer who rose to popularity in the twenties. He helped change jazz into a venue for virtuosic solo performances. As an African American in the early twentieth century, he struggled against pervasive racism. Yet Armstrong was considered successful by almost all social classes. Larsen's fifth movement United Hot Clubs of America quotes several tunes Armstrong performed and tunes by several others, including Tiger Rag, by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band; Basin Street Blues, by Spencer Williams; Lady Be Good, written by the Gershwins; Debussy's Claire de Lune, Brahms' Intermezzo in A Major from Six Pieces Clavierstuke Op. 118 No. 17, and the gospel tune When the Saints Go Marching In. According to Larsen's homepage, “In 1935, the United Hot Clubs of America was launched with six clubs to which musicians could belong for two dollars a year.”18 At these hot clubs, performers were allowed to present any piece they pleased. Larsen's eclectic tribute to Louis Armstrong presents a hot club-like experience, using several Jazz

17 Cited incorrectly as Brahms Serenade in A-Flat Major on the score and several other sources
18 http://libbylarsen.com/
harmonies, and exploring key relationships typical to the jazz idiom.

The form of this work is through composed with occasional repetitions evocative of improvisation. Figure 38 below illustrates the form of this movement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>1—14</td>
<td>14—24</td>
<td>25—38</td>
<td>39—48</td>
<td>49—69</td>
<td>70—86</td>
<td>87—103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunes</td>
<td>Basin Street Blues</td>
<td>Tiger Rag</td>
<td>Claire de Lune</td>
<td>Lady Be Good Saints</td>
<td>Tiger Rag</td>
<td>Saints</td>
<td>Tiger Rag Saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiger Rag</td>
<td>Lady Be Good Saints</td>
<td>Tiger Rag Brahms</td>
<td>Saints</td>
<td>Tiger Rag</td>
<td>Saints</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal Area</td>
<td>D E flat F C</td>
<td>B flat — D flat</td>
<td>D flat — D — A flat — F m</td>
<td>F sharp Circle of fifths G — C</td>
<td>C — B flat Circle of fifths</td>
<td>B flat Circle of fifths</td>
<td>C (F) C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Larsen incorporates the aforementioned tunes in a non-traditional manner. For example, four phrases of *Basin Street Blues* are used at the beginning of the work as outlined in Figure 39. These statements of the original tune alternate in a call-and-response texture between the instruments and the choir. Instead of repeating the trumpet's call—as would happen in the original tune—the choir responds with a vertical Dm7 sonority.

![Figure 39: Basin Street Blues](image)

**Figure 39: Basin Street Blues**

Figure 40 shows two different appearances of a phrase from the chorus of *Lady Be Good*. The first appearance of the phrase occurs in one voice ornamented in a similar fashion to Benny Goodman's ornamentation, and taken at a much faster tempo than the original tune. The second and subsequent appearances of the tune are broken between two different voices, such as in m. 39 between the Soprano and Alto.

![Figure 40: Lady Be Good](image)

**Figure 40: Lady Be Good**

Measure 63 begins a large scale quotation of a work, *Tiger Rag*. Larsen uses the upper three choral voices singing “doo-dah”s on the melody with commentary by the
basses and lower instruments. This lasts for several measures and is the closest Larsen comes to a section that could be labeled arrangement. (See Figure 41)

![Figure 41: Tiger Rag](image)

Debussy's *Claire de Lune* appears twice in different tonal levels and is a fairly straightforward quote. However, the accompanimental texture beneath this tune is tempestuous.

![Figure 42: Claire de Lune](image)

Brahms Intermezzo in A Major (Figure 43) is also quoted twice at different tonal levels. It appears after *Claire de Lune* in both instances.

![Figure 43: Brahms Intermezzo in A Major](image)
Like *Tiger Rag*, *When the Saints go Marching In* (Figure 44) is another larger quotation. Here, Larsen writes for solo choir and tutti choir and adds obligato parts over the tune. The tune appears in the tutti choir basses and tenors.

**Figure 44: When the Saints go Marching In**

The tonalities Larsen relates are reached through a few iterations of the circle of fifths—also a prominent feature of the jazz idiom. Figure 45 illustrates tonalities affirmed in various parts of the movement through traditional and other means. Apparent are instances of bitonality or bimodality. Her use of pedal tones and extended harmonies is also apparent.
Figure 45: Tonal Diagram
Larsen's harmonic language includes bitonality, extended tertian sonorities and augmented chords. Larsen employs the d7 chord present in most every movement in mm. 2 & 6 of this movement. In m. 6, the sonority sounds over an E-Flat Perfect Fifth. This half step (d-E-Flat) relationship continues the half step relationship begun in Movement 1. Measure 21 and 40 have the same sonority preset, namely a Viennese Trichord underneath an enharmonic minor sixth (G-Flat=F sharp). However, the Augmented 5th (G-Flat → D) is reminiscent of the Augmented fifth in Movement 1: D → A sharp. In m. 55 Larsen builds a d sharp minor 11th chord, another Higher order tertian sonority.

![Figure 46: Extended Triads and other Harmonic Devices](image)

Measure 47 is uniquely interesting in its combination of polytonal and polyrhythmic underpinnings (See Figure 47). The accompaniment is functional in six-four time and four-four time. The choir parts are functional in three-four time. The accompaniment right hand is an ascending whole-tone scale that becomes C major. The left hand is a C natural minor descending scale that becomes touches on C flat and returns to C major. The choral parts iterate two different sets of tritones. This complexity renders it one of the most complex collection of measures in the movement.
Several of the accompanimental gestures are derivatives of the tunes and/or stylistic traits of Jazz and Ragtime. Figure 48 includes several of these gestures. The gestures employed in m. 2, 11, 15, 17, 26, 49 and 51 relate to ragtime with their straight eighths and syncopation. Consequently, much of the movement evokes ragtime. The motive in m. 48 relates to When the Saints Go Marchin' In. When commenting on Larsen's Dirty No Gooder Blues, Kelly states:

“Larsen is not arranging the original blues song nor composing with a blues-based harmonic progression, form, or pentatonic scale. She is subtly referencing the common listening experience of the blues style to create a moment of familiarity.”

The same can be said of this movement. While Larsen distinctly utilizes familiar tunes, accompanimental gestures, and idioms, she is not arranging these tunes, nor is she using traditional jazz and ragtime progressions (aside from the Circle of Fifths which is common to many musical genres).

19 Kelly, 27
Figure 48: Accompanimental Gestures
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Jennifer Kelly sees contrast between movements as one of Larsen's compositional
techniques; she believes these stark contrasts are linked to living in the Midwest. Kelly
states, “This idea of living and working in a northern American region influences her
work. Northern states undergo a dramatic change of seasons.”\(^\text{20}\) Each movement of
Seven Ghosts provides unique analytical experiences—seasons in the development of
American history and music. While the differences in character are vast, the movements
are united by downbeat rests, ascending octaves, and augmented or diminished fifths.

Figure 49 illustrates several prominent downbeat rests in this work.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{downbeat_rests.png}
\caption{Downbeat Rests}
\end{figure}

\(^{20}\) Kelly, 22
While the second movement does not begin with a downbeat rest, the accompaniment exchanges downbeat rests and obscures the time signature in so doing. Figure 50 illustrates this phenomenon.

![Figure 50: Movement 2 Downbeat Rests](image)

Larsen consistently obscures the barline throughout the work. Larsen does this in the *Grace and Glory* by varying phrase lengths. In the second movement, Larsen's soloist seems independent of barlines. In fact, Larsen says in a personal interview, “If I were working on *Jenny Lind* again, I would take out all the barlines.”

“Non-meter” in *Blinking Pluto* is expressed by the timelessness of the contrasting sections. The entire movement explores timelessness through shifting time signatures, displaced metric emphasis, downbeat rests, and varying phrase lengths. The fourth movement, *Myself With Wings*, demonstrates an a-metric quality through constant imitation. Finally, *United Hot Clubs of America* uses much syncopation to metrically displace the beat.

Two intervals Larsen explores throughout *Seven Ghosts* are augmented or diminished fifths and ascending octaves. Figure 51 illustrates augmented sonorities throughout *Seven Ghosts*. In the first movement, the A sharp and the A natural create a split fifth against the root of the chord, D. Movement two has a diminished fifth heard

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21 Larsen, Personal Interview
simultaneously with a perfect fifth. The third and fourth movement both employ whole-tone scales, so augmented fifths are natural byproducts of the scalar harmonies. Additionally, the third movement's set [0136] has an inherent tritone as the range of the set. Movement five employs several augmented intervals, the analyses of which can also be found in Figure 51. In this movement the augmentation is not restricted to just the fifth. In m. 21, a perfect fourth and augmented fourth are juxtaposed. Larsen also splits the tonic in m. 26. These instances reinforce Larsen's unique harmonic language.

![Figure 51: Augmented Sonorities](image1)

Figure 51 illustrates prominent octave motives. Many of the octave leaps have been discussed above. Movement 5 has no prominent octave leaps.

![Figure 52: Octave Leaps](image2)

Larsen's tonalities in this work are discussed in Figure 53. As discussed in the Introduction, Larsen establishes tonal areas by pedal tones and repetition. Each of the five movements' ending tonal areas differs from its beginning tonal area. The first, third and fourth movements have mediant relationships. The third movement also employs a
step relationship as it begins somewhat ambiguously emphasizing D, D-Flat and A while ending vaguely in C. The second movement has a dominant or plagal relationship; what is common is the motion of a fifth. The final movement ends a step higher than it began. These relationships also mirror the development of music in America moving from simplicity to complexity back to simplicity. The movement of a step is quite common in popular and Jazz music.
Figure 53: Overall Tonal Progresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning Tonalcy</strong></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E flat</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Freely tonal</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D vs. D flat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D dominan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ending Tonalcy</strong></td>
<td>F sharp major/minor</td>
<td>B flat</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>F Lydian</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td>Split Mediant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Step/Mediant</td>
<td>Mediant</td>
<td>Step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
<td>These tonalities are present in most of the movements</td>
<td>This is the most simple relationship of Seven Ghosts</td>
<td>Increasing complexity</td>
<td>Modal Complexity</td>
<td>One step summary of entire work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Libby Larsen employs several gestures in this work that relate directly to their respective texts.22 These gestures paint the texts Larsen chooses; interestingly, she is “drawn to first person texts and a certain expression of spiritual struggle.”23 Each of the “underdogs” represented in this work had to struggle against social and/or economic discrimination. Larsen's compositional process when writing for choirs begins with memorizing the text. She then works with the texts “until the music that is in the words becomes the music that ends up in melody.”24

Larsen's musical form generally follows cues from poetic form. Kennicott says this of Larsen's textual/melodic relationship: “The music is derived directly from the words, following the textual, rhythmic and psychological cues.”25 While Larsen's aim is that poetic texts dictate form, she admits there is great freedom in creating the form of a movement. She searches for the poet's intent with the form; she states, “I try to discover [the intent] and then superimpose a simple musical form, such as ABA, to frame my piece.”26 Many of the forms of these movements are simple. The first two movements exhibit characteristics of Binary form. The third movement is the most complicated with a roughly three-part form || Intro A B C || A’ B’ C’ || Interlude B’’ Close ||. While it looks complicated, the sections so distinctly contrast as to leave little doubt that a new section has been entered. The fourth movement hearkens to a five part rondo, and the final movement is through-composed.

22 Summary: Duffie, 6
23 Kelly, 23
24 Unknown Author
25 Kennicott, 34
26 Smith, 171
Larsen's tonalities are, in general, built around “tonal areas that are decidedly modal and reinforced through pedal tones in the bass.”

Smith also adds, “because Larsen conceives her choral music in lines rather than chords, harmonies are often dictated by the way vocal lines combine. The resulting vertical sonorities are rarely chords in the sense of traditional part-writing and progressions.” Larsen has said, “I work with tonality, not functional harmony.” These factors hold true for many of the established tonal areas in *Seven Ghosts*. One listens to the music of Libby Larsen in much the same way one listens to Palestrina or de Victoria; Larsen's linear vocal melodies combine to make interesting and compelling vertical harmonies.

What unites *Seven Ghosts*? Larsen declares, “In any piece that I write there is a superstructure of intellectual organization that goes on first.” Larsen reiterates, “if you follow the augmented chord, you'll find the story. If you follow meter and non-meter, you'll find the story. And if you follow the basic and essential parameters of music and you'll find the piece there.” Regarding *Seven Ghosts*, Libby Larsen employs several harmonic techniques throughout her composition. Each movement, while being unique in style, is unified by downbeat rests, ascending octaves, and augmented sonorities. Also unifying this work is Larsen's distinct “energy, optimism, rhythmic diversity, colorful orchestration and pervading lyricism.”

27 Smith, 161
28 Smith, 73
29 Boyer, DMA, 29
30 Duffie, 11
31 Larsen, Personal Interview
32 Groves, 279

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CHAPTER VIII

INTERVIEW WITH LIBBY LARSEN

This interview was completed Tuesday, February 21, 2012. It was edited by myself.

Interview With Libby Larsen

Telephone Interview

Libby Larsen: LL
Laura Williams: LW

LW: Every article I've read about your vocal choral works talks about your text setting techniques. In *Grace and Glory* was it instinct, research or both that told you to include the tune *Washington's March*?

LL: Was it instinct? Is your question was instinct that told me to...

LW: Was it instinct or research, or...

LL: Oh! I see! Yeah! Well, that's an interesting question because I research all the time,
and I rely on my instincts! ...Which always leads to why I choose to write a piece about something. And so, really since college when I took a course in American music, using a Wiley Hitchcock book, I had gotten quite interested in music of the Revolutionary Period. And so I have not only researched music of that period, but also performed it and have also been quite interested in it. When I decided to write Seven Ghosts, I had thought of Phillis Wheatley in positive terms most of my life too, so when I chose her as one of the studies for the piece and I read her poem, it struck me that it and the piece, Washington's March, belonged together. Creativity, as it is, informs instinct.

LW: I like it! So instinct and research are one and the same in what you do?
LL: Yeah, well they're not the same, but they inform each other all the time.

LW: Okay, I like that!
LL: Good!
LW: Do you consider the text as poetry first, or... well actually I've read that you do consider the text as poetry first, how much of that informs the overall form of the piece?
LL: Well, I do consider the text first, and the kind of work that I do when I'm looking at a text, thinking about it musically, I do quite a bit of rhythmic work on the text, and more research basically, and so... what was your question again?
LW: Yeah, I kinda jumbled up my original question too, where is it... OH! When, yes, when you consider the text as poetry first, how much of the overall form then is determined by the overall form of the poetry?
LL: About the overall form of the piece?
LW: Yeah.
LL: Uh, not necessarily at all, actually!

LW: Huh!

LL: Because form of poetry and form of music can be quite, quite different. And so I know the form of the poetry, but then I tend to treat the poetry in a more prosaic way. So I let the flow of the words of the poetry find its way as form in the piece.

LW: That um... When I was studying *Grace and Glory*... I noticed that, Oh, I forget the exact line numbers... Okay I have the score here right now too, I should look at it! I numbered the lines... umm.. Yeah! When it's says, “In bright array, they seek the work of war,”

LL: Yep

LW: You included the tune [*Washington's March*] right before then, and what I noticed is that, right before that, if the poem hadn't included the “In bright array” through the end, it could be about any conflict in the world almost, except for the reference to “Columbia.”

LL: Right!

LW: So I found it really fascinating that you used *Washington's March* right then, and from then on in the piece. And it brought greater specificity to the musical motives, just the way that Phyllis Wheatley made it more specific right from there to the end as well. I thought that fascinating!

LL: That's good work on your part!

LW: Thanks!

LL: Because that's exactly why I did it!

LW: Oh great! HA!
LL: Really good work on your part, yeah! So that it would become specific. And I did not want to, hum... The hero of this piece is Phyllis Wheatley, not Washington. You know,

LW: Right, right, that's for sure.

LL: Her brilliance is, the fact that, never mind her circumstances, or any of that, she absolutely expressed the universality of war, and thousands of years of war. And then applied it to the situation at hand, but she, how would she know?!

LW: Yeah!

LL: When you put yourself in her place, how would she know? Except that she, like every artist, applied, read, researched, and then applied it to her instincts!

LW: Yeah! I like it! Going back to the conversation earlier!

LL: Yeah, um hm!

LW: So you're doing exactly what Phyllis Wheatley did!

LL: Yeah! I hope so!

LW: All right, so I read an interview, a 1997 interview with Larry Smith, in which you lamented the notion that being called *accessible* was still an insult. Have you seen that changing?

LL: Uh, yes... Well, no. Yes and no, it depends on who's saying it.

LW: Oh Okay! So if it's some of the “old guard” composition teachers, and they say it with murder on their voices.

LL: Yes they do, yes they do! Certain encampments... compositional encampments.

LW: Yes!

LL: However, it used to be that the critical press adopted the same attitude, and would
criticize the composers whose music actually had accessibility to it, so that the symphony orchestra audience actually felt that it could enter the piece of music, couldn't tell it was so listenable and accessible, meaning pejorative... that's all gone now.

LW: I'm glad. That's something I'm glad about too, I was hoping it was...

LL: Yeah, it's a holdover from the academic criticism that developed after World War II.

LW: Ah, yes.

LL: That was pretty much a generation and a half, and that generation is you know, um, retiring!

LW: I'm glad it's reaching that. I'm personally of the opinion that if music is not accessible, there's no way it can live!

LL: Yeah, the question of accessibility is really an interesting one, you know. Because it's the brain that receives the music, and the brain is—I don't know if you've done much music/brain research—the brain is always looking for groupings and regroupings and patternings, so that it can think. So accessibility doesn't necessarily mean pretty tunes and beats..

LW: Right.

LL: It means building into the music ways for the brain to connect and follow the discourse the composer has set up in the piece. And there is a school of composition which is really about building moments, moments of music. And building pieces which are really moment after moment after moment, but connectivity of moments is not really part of the music. So, it takes a highly specialized musical ear to appreciate a piece that has moments of connectivity, but does not allow the brain access to the piece, does that
make sense?

LW: Yes it does!

LL: Yeah, yeah, so the whole question of accessibility is one that I, actually one of the reasons I decided not to teach when I got my doctorate in 1978. [It] was that I wanted to pursue accessibility in music—that doesn't mean do you like it, or you don't like it—but a question of can my friends, who are all very smart, hear what I have to say?

LW: Yeah!

LL: Yeah, so that's the way I look at accessibility. It has been truly, truly for a while there been truly misunderstood, by the press in particular. Not by the academy, they knew what they were doing, but by the press, you know, misunderstood accessibility in music. Okay!

LW: Right, Next! Yeah, In that same interview you mentioned that Seven Ghosts hadn't caught on yet...

LL: Right.

LW: Is it catching on?

LL: No.

LW: No? Uh! It's sad, because I love it!

LL: No, it's not catching on. The Hot Clubs of America, the final movement, has caught on.

LW: Yeah?

LL: But the others, for a number of reasons, and one of them is it's purely commercial, is that Oxford published it as a set, and so it's way too expensive for choirs to buy. They really should have published them one at a time.
LW: Yeah,

LL: So um, *Jenny Lind* is performed, and the *Hot Clubs of America* is performed, but the set is rarely performed. Also because it takes brass, you know.

LW: Hmm...

LL: So that means coordinating, in colleges in particular, that means coordinating between the choral and the wind band department.

LW: Oh and so often those lines of coordination are crossed...

LL: Yes, that is true! There are very practical issues as to why it hasn't caught on, and there are probably some harmonic issues too.

LW: Yeah, I had a question about that, in fact, it goes back to um, HA! When I was taking the GRE to go to grad school, the question I was asked was, “Are Americans too specialized?”

LL: That's a good...

LW: I think about that now in that each of those movements is each so different and fascinating...

LL: Yep,

LW: Are choirs too specialized to be able to master those different styles?

LL: Yes.

LW: I like that succinct answer, “yes”.

LL: Choirs have been trained in a very specific way. You know, their ears are trained diatonically, and uh, their rhythm is trained in a very impoverished way.

LW: Yes.
LL: In general the training of choirs is about the sound of the choir, not the ability of the choir.

LW: Yeah, absolutely.

LL: So there's a great deal of contemporary musical literature which sounds “real nice.” It sounds as if I'm a player, but it lacks context. It's the same music over and over, doesn't matter what the words are.

LW: I've noticed that myself, because I am a choir member...

LL: Oh you are! Okay!

LW: Yes, I'm a vocalist, I'm a choir member, which is one reason I chose this piece.

LL: Yeah, it's a certain sort of pretty chord school...

LW: Yeah!

LL: ...which is a very specific training, but it impoverishes the singer, and I choose that word on purpose.

LW: Yes.

LL: Yeah, the singer is impoverished because you're not asked to do anything except sound good.

LW: And there's a place for sounding... different.

LL: Well, there's a place for considering what is the definition of a choir you know! And in my approach to choir is that a choir is its own audience AND it is the Bard.

LW: Ah!

LL: It delivers the music, both to itself and to the audience. And if there's a text, the text of the piece is just a part of the whole of the music. So if the singers are not trained or
even practiced in looking into the meanings of the texts, looking into the rhythmation of the poem at hand, trying to understand how meter affects—the musical meter—affects or does not affect the poetry. Very little time is spent teaching choirs how to sight read...

LW: Yeah! Oh my goodness yes! That has been one of my biggest pet peeves.

LL: Yeah! And except for very fine A Capella groups, almost everybody uses a piano to tune voice.

LW: oh yeah.

LL: And the piano is the ONLY unnaturally tuned instrument! So there's a kind of impoverished treatment of the choir, which is not malicious, it's just developed that way.

LW: Yeah.

LL: So it leaves the choir impoverished, because the choir as a whole is really not successfully able to dig into pieces which require different techniques.

LW: Yeah, like Blinking Pluto! I would love to sing that!

LL: Blink Blink!

LW: I've never had the opportunity to sing any of these pieces! I'd love to.

LL: So, um, okay. Do you have another question?

LW: Uh, yes! I'll go to the thesis advisor one! My thesis advisor Dr. Daniel McCarthy, he sends his greetings and...

LL: Oh! Oh, say “Hi” back!

LW: Yeah, I certainly will! And um, he wanted to ask, who are the people you care more about liking your piece? Other composers, the audience or performers?

LL: Performers!
LW: Ah, he said you'd say that!

LL: Yeah, yes. I care most about performers, because they're the ones putting the effort into it.

LW: Yeah, and if they can't communicate it...

LL: Yeah, you know it's a great privilege to have a piece performed. Really, it's a great privilege. Performers are you know, I'm a performer myself, you know you invest yourself, truly you invest yourself in the piece, that you are preparing.

LW: That's for sure.

LL: It may be that half the audience sitting in chairs, is actually in the hall, is in your mind. You know, and other composers, you know, come on!

LL: I have my group of friends you know, who I respect and trust, and it does matter to me if they say, “this piece is sub-standard, you can do better.” That's just, everybody has that. If you don't have a good group of friends around you who call you out... I truly care about the performers, I truly do.

LW: Well then yeah, that makes a lot of sense! Well moving to Blinking Pluto, On a humorous note, is there anything you'd change about it now that Pluto has been demoted?

LL: NO! That's just politics! Yes, astrologers and astronomers have been trying to demote pluto since Thombaugh discovered it.

LW: Well I think of it as even more of an achievement that he discovered something that is now considered smaller than a planet!

LL: Yes, it's really something. No, No I wouldn't change a thing.

LW: Great!

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LL: *Blinking Pluto* is about tenaciousness.

LW: Yes. Now um, did he... the words for that, did he put the words in the poetic form?

LL: No, I did!

LW: Ah! I was wondering about that! I was searching all over for that and I couldn't find them under his name anywhere. So how did you do that?

LL: Actually those, that, you know it's a paraphrase of prose, and I put it into poetic form.

LW: So you're a librettist as well!

LL: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

LW: Oh good! That's great. I wanted to be sure about that in my thesis when I wrote about it. That the words were arranged by...

LL: yes, or adapted.

LW: Oh adapted! I'll use that!

LL: adapted to poetic form.

LW: I will use that for sure. And for that one, the form is directly related to the poetic, how you arranged it.

LL: Yes, it is.

LW: Did you have the concept for the piece before you...

LL: Yes I did!

LW: Yeah?

LL: Yeah, the concept is, has to do with, um, well, there are so many thoughts going through my mind! Because creativity is continuous and what you're trying to do is put some continuity on it. But um, so here's what's going through my mind: Thombaugh,
every single night, sat alone mapping the sky, taking photos of the sky. Every night.

Every night.

LW: Incredible.

LL: And um, I kind of know that feeling myself because when I'm composing a large piece like an opera, it's the same thing. I'm not blinking the sky, I'm putting the dots on the page. Hundreds of thousands of dots!

LL: So when I was reading his journal—this was adapted from one of his journals—I thought, I wonder how I can express a sort of timelessness you know. There's no kind of clock time when you're doing that kind of work, and when I'm composing, there's no such thing as clock time.

LW: Yeah.

LL: And how to create a non-meter, but focused methodology at the same time.

LW: Oooh! I like it!

LL: Yeah, so it's a focused methodology blinking the sky

LW: I see that!

LL: But it's an infinite task!

LW: Yeah...

LL: I just needed to get to “That's It!”

LW: Were you thinking about the blink comparator specifically when you used the offset rhythms and syllables and tonalities at the very beginning?

LL: Yes.

LW: Yes! Hah!
LL: How do you like that answer?

LW: I love that answer! It supports my thesis, which is great! If you'd said no, I'd have to rewrite that chapter. Let's see, do I have any more questions about *Blinking Pluto*. Is there anything you'd like to say about *Blinking Pluto* in addition to those questions?

LL: Umm... Hmm... I don't think so. Oh, well, here's one thing. You know the “loo's” at the opening and at letter H, the crescendo motive, LooooOOOO!

LW: yes.

LL: I've been working on that specific motive for choirs for a while. Seeing if I could set chorally what happens when you're in a recording studio and you just push the slider up.

(sound effect)

LW: Oh yeah!

LL: To mix the mixing board dynamics. And so um, that is something I have been doing for quite a while. And um, that's really working against the grain of trained choral techniques I've learned. It's infinitely possible for the voice, but our technique uh, is needing how you make the crescendos, how your body works, uh, on dynamics, is um, takes a long time for choirs because of how we're trained.

LW: yeah, it's even harder to decrescendo, as a choir to decrescendo convincingly.

LL: Yeah, um hm.

LW: We can get a crescendo down in time,

LL: but the decrescendo is very difficult.

LW: It just drops off, or it just barely moves.

LL: Yup.
LW: Yeah. Okay, so *Myself with Wings*.

LL: Yeah.

LW: I LOVE this piece!

LL: Oh thank you!

LW: I think it's fantastic, I love all the swooping gestures and the flying that's all over in the accompaniment. I love it! Now, you like musical puns, right?

LL: I do.

LW: Were you thinking of planing specifically?

LL: Planing?

LW: Yeah. Like Planing sonorities and stuff?

LL: Would you describe this...

LW: Oh yeah, plaining. Like in Debussy's Sunken Cathedral, where he's planing, Oh I forget what the sonority is in that case..

LL: Oh you mean parallel motion?

LW: Yeah, parallel, planing... I learned it as planing.

LL: Oh you did?!

LW: Which is funny because you can take the word planing and think of an airplane... planing, flying, it just...

LL: Ah!

LW: It just struck me as fantastic, as a great musical pun.

LL: I learned it as parallel motion.

LW: Oh okay, yeah.
LL: But um, I was thinking of flying.

LW: Well that's obvious to me from the setting!

LL: Yeah, I was thinking of flying, but I don't know the word plane in relation to the contrapuntal technique of parallelism.

LW: Ah! Well, I've heard of Parallelism too, like Parallel fifths, MINUS ONE! You're not allowed to write those! But planing was something that was introduced to me as a kind of late romantic, early twentieth century technique.

LL: Oh okay!

LW: Separate from parallelism, although it's all under the same umbrella of parallelism.

LL: Yeah.

LW: Ah! So it's a pun and you didn't even intend it!

LL: No I didn't!

LW: That makes it even better to me!

LL: I did intend parallelism, I did. And I was thinking of flying.

LW: Good.

LL: Yes, In fact, I spend a lot of time watching birds.

LW: Me too!

LL: And I also to the hot air balloon, so I see things from above and below. But you know, watching the birds riding the wind, wings totally outstretched,

LW: Oh yeah,

LL: That's what I had in mind, and I guess that is planing, that is planing. So, I was really wanting to create, using parallelism, to create that feeling that the arms are always
outstretched, and then, I used to imagine myself with wings is that you actually are riding the wind.

LW: I can hear that piece, and when I imagine it, I just want to fly,

LL: I know. I've always wanted to fly. I hope I can come back as a bird next time.

LW: That would be very nice, I would like that too. Any particular kind of bird?


LW: Oh yeah!

LL: Yeah, yeah, because they can stay aloft for Sooooo long.

LW: And they can see it all! It's not blurry to them!

LL: Maybe a Peregrine, I don't know.

LW: Oh yeah, they do as well in cities as in the country.

LL: That they do!

LW: That one's going to be around for a while! Good choice! Oh, okay. Movement 2, you said that one was performed fairly often?

LL: The Jenny Lind Movement?

LW: Yeah.

LL: Yeah!

LW: Now I have... As a vocalist myself, in measures 53-57 there are three Es that are at least a half note long, on the words “bright”, “strong” and “good.” If I were to perform this solo, how would you want me to emphasize these words?

LW: So they're all right close to each other...

LL: “...With a bright clean conscience, of having been a strong means in the Creator's hand of essential good...” Um. Well, I would want you to perform them with a kind of steady confidence.

LW: okay

LL: Not to color them, if you have coloratura tendencies, I would say take those tendencies out of your voice. I would say give your voice a little more depth and it should feel as if you've got a whole octave above that you could use. Does that make sense?

LW: Yeah! So even take the brightness out on the word bright?

LL: Yep!

LW: Wow!

LL: Because you know Jenny Lind was writing this, and she was Swedish!

LW: Yes.

LL: So her definition of the word bright, isn't our definition of bright.

LW: Huh!

LL: She means illuminated.

LW: I LIKE that! Huh!

LL: Yep. Yes.

LW: I can tell you, everything I've analyzed. I can tell you put a lot of thought into each of these movements.

LL: Oh yes! Absolutely. Yes.

LW: You're not just plopping words down on pages just to...
LL: Oh yeah! I do, I really work very hard on the work.

LW: It pays off.

LL: I care very deeply about the words because someone else cared very deeply about the words.

LW: It definitely makes a difference in the, in the analysis even! I can tell.

LL: Yeah! Right there you have a nice, sweet triad with “bright” and I very rarely write triads.

LW: Yeah.

LL: In this piece I explore spirit quite a bit. That spirit.

LW: Where was I going from there. Yeah! The Recitative style,

LL: Yeah

LW: You want it to flow very speech-like, right.

LL: Yeah. If I were re-writing... If I were working on Jenny Lind again, I would take out all the barlines.

LW: Oh yeah! For the soloist!

LL: I would take them all out.

LW: Yeah, so it flows like a speech, rather than like a meter.

LL: Yup. And in fact I have been doing that quite a bit. If there is, um, I just take them out. Even if everybody else has to have them.

LW: Yeah, I've seen more of that in choir pieces I have performed lately. They're, um, getting away from the master-bar-line.

LL: Yeah
LW: Which I think is encouraging.

LL: Yeah, very encouraging.

LW: Okay, in your mind, what holds, Seven Ghosts, together, since they're so disparate in their styles.

LL: Oh Um! Well harmonically, uh, the piece moves from the augmented seventh chord at the opening, which is explored quite a lot throughout the piece.

LW: That's for sure

LL: To the major chord at the end. So metaphorically what I was looking to do was to create the feeling, if you do all the pieces together, that the country began in chaos, began unharmonically, and we moved from ungroundedness to groundedness.

LW: Yeah!

LL: That's a really macro, macro holding the piece together.

LW: That's the kind of thing I was looking for. Something big.

LL: Something macro. And we moved, of course, here's another macro thing that holds the piece together, in Grace and Glory, once Washington's March begins, we moved metrically in march time. Bu-dum bu-dum bu-dum bu-dum. That's also where music education began.

LW: Oh yeah!

LL: And it has not moved away from it. It still insists that the whole note is four beats, which is completely and patently untrue. And here's another macro, that we moved from the 1700s, which is where we got what our idea of what counting is, to Jazz.

LW: and choirs are still there!
LL: They're still there! Yup!

LW: Goodness.

LL: It can't be stopped.

LW: And you reflected that.

LL: The voice doesn't need any meter to sing. So that's another Macro. I really laid out what was going to be the macro. Because we are a nation of, of you might call it specifics, I call it we have many many cultures and attitudes, and heroes in our culture, and so what holds us together, what gives us the idea that we are one, you know, like “Good Morning America.”

LL: It's only Philosophies, not realities.

LW: Yeah.

LL: Because we aren't one. And that's a great struggle for all us everyday heroes, to make sense of what it means to be one.

LW: So that plays into another of my questions, which is how did you come to choose these particular heroes, and what I'm gathering is history, and music education plays a little into it.

LL: Yeah! It does. Let's see. Phyllis Wheatley, Jenny Lind, Clyde Thombaugh.... You know, I wonder. These are all people, who just pursued their own idea. Each one of them pursued their own idea. Um, without, regardless of the macro-system. In Wheatley's instance, slavery; in Jenny Lind's instance, poverty; Clyde Thombaugh, just a guy in a barn...

LW: Yeah, without even a college degree!
LL: Lindbergh had to fly; Louis Armstrong, you know, these are all people who had a vision of what could be, regardless of the system that said, “This is how it has to be” or “No, it's going to take too long,” you know, a macro system that doesn't allow for creativity and vision. These are all people with creativity and vision and tenacity who said, “well, I'm going to do it anyway.”

LW: Yeah, that's wonderful.

LL: Actually it's very American. It's very …. Bill Gates. You know, “I'm going to drop out of Harvard because it's not going to allow me to get to my vision.” In my own case, I would say I had a vision about how music could express what it's like to be alive. And while I was matriculating, the whole system said, “No that's not how you do that, you can't compose that way.” And and, I thought, THAT'S NUTS, because music is infinite. You can do whatever you want with it. So I'm gonna do it!

LW: Well keep on doing it! It's been fantastic!

LL: Thanks, thanks. Is this for your Masters' Thesis?

LW: This is, yes.

LL: Well good luck with it!

LW: Well thank you very much!

LL: You're welcome!

LW: It's been a lot of fun to analyze this, I've never analyzed anything quite like this. I've always had things that had clear answers and this allows for more creativity in analysis too and I love that.

LL: Well, I'm very glad to hear that, because yeah, there's a great deal of thought that's...
gone into every part of this piece. And, if you follow the augmented chord, you'll find the story. If you follow meter and non-meter, you'll find the story. And if you follow the basic and essential parameters of music and you'll find the piece there. There are no clear answers, that's true. Right, because if my research informs instinct... and I have found, working with various wonderful students like you that there is a new, there is method to my madness. It's just that it's not... I did not pre-compose it.

LW: Yeah.

LL: But the music around here, theory is retrospective. Yeah, it's a retrospective art, or it's a speculative art. Creativity and theory are not necessarily the same thing.

LW: Right, but you can creatively analyze something.

LL: You can creatively... yeah, and that's so much fun!

LW: Oh it is! And I think that part of the music theory world has lost that creativity and my aim, my goal is to help restore that.

LL: Oh good!

LW: Especially with the plight of the vocalist, because so often in a theory classroom, a vocalist is looked down upon, “Oh they can't do theory...” And I'm here to prove them wrong!

LL: That's crazy! Of course we can do theory!

LW: It's wonderful and fun!

LL: Ugh! There are so many mythologies in music education which really don't make any sense at all.

LW: Yeah.
LL: I'm a singer also. And I've run into many, uh, bigotive remarks about singers...

LW: Oh yes.

LL: I always counter it with, Well singers don't need key signature, who needs key signatures! We sing intervallcally, we sing microtonally, you know.

LW: Yeah!

LL: WE actually don't need key signatures, but instrumentalists do! Let's put the shoe on the other foot here!

LW: Yeah!

LL: Singers are improvising all the time. And there are many instrumentalists who would go running and screaming away from the thought of improvising. We could talk about that all day. I don't want to take more of your time, so, do you have any last questions?

LW: Do you have any questions for me?

LL: Um, no I don't actually. If you have more questions, give me a call. And do give my very best to Dan.

LW: It's been a pleasure talking to you.

LL: Likewise!

...

LL: Goodbye

LW: Bye!
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