AT WHICH POINT

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A Thesis

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Committee:

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ABSTRACT

Marilyn Shrude, Advisor

*At Which Point* is a composition for wind symphony approximately eight minutes in duration. The work is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 3 clarinets in Bb, bass clarinet, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, 4 horns in F, 3 trumpets in Bb, 2 trombones, bass trombone, euphonium, tuba, timpani, 5 percussion, piano, and contrabass.

Primary influences include Steven Stucky’s *Concerto for Orchestra No. 2*, Johan Meij’s *Symphony No. 1*, John Adam’s *A Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, Joseph Schwantner’s *and the mountains rising nowhere*, and Aaron Copland’s *Symphony No. 3*. The photograph *Splash* by Walter Wick as published in his book, *A Drop of Water*, provided additional musical stimuli. It helped generate harmonic structures and thematic ideas.

My interest in the unique physical properties of water relates directly to Wick’s book. Water is constantly being used and reused by natural and man-made processes. This title refers to the impossible (but hypothetically fascinating) task of tracking one single molecule of water to see where it has been and what it has done.

I also see the title relating to the piece in another way. *Splash* depicts a drop of water falling through the air and splashing on a glass surface. The forces of nature that are in competition as gravity fights surface tension are intriguing. At which point did gravity win over surface tension in order to pull the drop downward? As I composed the piece I was reflecting on these ideas and questions.
The formal structure of *At Which Point* is A-B-A'. Section A is defined by its triadic, nonfunctional harmonies and its heroic theme. The B section is a rhythmically syncopated, driving swirl of activity with moments of hocket and call and response between instrumental families. Section A' is a condensed version of the A material during which the piece reaches the climax and recapitulates themes presented during the first A section. Throughout the work, solos are given to the soprano saxophone, bassoon, piccolo, oboe, and horn in F.
INSTRUMENTATION

SCORE IS UNTRANSPOSED

(Instruments that sound at the octave or double octave are notated at their written pitch.)

Piccolo
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
English Horn
2 Bassoons
Contrabassoon
3 Clarinets in Bb
Bass Clarinet

Soprano Saxophone
Alto Saxophone
Tenor Saxophone
Baritone Saxophone

4 Horns in F
3 Trumpets in Bb
2 Trombones
Bass Trombone
Euphonium
Tuba

Timpani
5 Percussion
Piano
Contrabass

(Number of players doubling each part is at discretion of conductor in keeping with a balanced sound)

PERCUSSION

1) snare drum, splash cymbal, bongos

2) small bass drum, triangle, large tam-tam

3) sizzle cymbal, crash cymbals, hi-hat*, crotales, chimes

4) vibraphone, triangle, small suspended cymbal, large suspended cymbal

5) glockenspiel, marimba, small tam-tam

*Hi-hat: The pedal position is indicated with (o) signifying open and (+) closed. All notes not preceded by a tie are articulated by the sticks. Notes preceded by a tie are articulated by the closing of the hi-hats with the foot pedal.

Duration: 8 minutes

Performance Note
The woodwind flurries at letter F and S are intended to be heard as a chaotic, frantic cluster of sound. The effect is such that it is not metric.