ONE: PRELUDE AND PARTIAL POSTLUDE

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A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Mikel Kuehn, Advisor

One: Prelude and Partial Postlude is a five-minute piece for orchestra. The instrumentation consists of three flutes, three oboes, three Bb-clarinets, three bassoons, four horns, three C trumpets, three trombones, tuba, 2 percussionists (tam-tam and bass drum), harp, piano, twelve first violins, ten second violins, eight violas, seven cellos, and six double basses.

Informed by observations of musical perception and psychology, the piece features textures that simultaneously draw attention to the multiplicity of individual players and to the orchestra as one massive whole. The dense layering of sound constantly changes the listener’s perception of background, middle ground, and foreground material.

One consists of four sections that articulate a continuous process. A mensuration canon builds sixteen simultaneous iterations of the subject while steadily increasing in tempo. The canon creates individual meters on the smallest temporal scale and a constantly expanding polymeter on the largest scale. The harmonic language of the piece ranges from atonality to polytonality and is the direct result of harmonic relationships between canonic iterations. The canon subject consists of three voices, each based on the octatonic scale. Together, the voices encompass all twelve transpositions of the major triad and are carefully constructed so that the circle of perfect fourths emerges from their combination. The inspiration for the piece came from a sudden awareness of plentiful existence.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I will always associate this piece with a few important figures, figures who were present at important points during its two-and-a-half year process, and whom I must thank: Mikel Kuehn, Marilyn Shrude, Christopher Dietz, Steven Stucky, and John Beall.
INSTRUMENTATION

3 Flutes
3 Oboes
3 Clarinets in B-flat
3 Bassoons

4 Horns in F
3 Trumpets in C
3 Trombones
Tuba

Percussion 1: Tam-Tam (tam-tam beater)
Percussion 2: Bass Drum (large felt beaters)

Harp
Piano

12 First Violins
10 Second Violins
8 Violas
7 Cellos
6 Double-Basses
* The bigliando effect should be a flurry of sound, with each pitch articulated as often as possible but without regularity in the gesture.