On an Ellipse Around the Sun

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Fine Arts of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Music

Robert J. Lucas
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This thesis titled
On an Ellipse Around the Sun

by

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has been approved for
the School of Music
and the College of Fine Arts by

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Distinguished Professor of Music

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Interim Dean, College of Fine Arts
ABSTRACT

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On an Ellipse Around the Sun

Director of Thesis: Mark W. Phillips

My original inspiration for this piece came while reading an article in the science section of an online news site. The article was talking about the proposed existence of a new planet in our solar system that had a wildly elliptical orbit around. This meant that its perihelion (closest point to the sun during orbit) and aphelion (furthest point) were drastically different. This proposed planet would be lurking out beyond Pluto in the Kuiper Belt, but its nearest point to the sun could be somewhere closer to Earth or perhaps Mars. I found this a very engaging and interesting idea, and already had an idea for a piece by the end of the article and a title: *On an Ellipse Around the Sun*. From that moment on I entered my own world of science fiction and created a narrative to explain the title and the piece.
DEDICATION

For the Ohio University Wind Symphony: Dr. Andrew Trachsel – director
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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| On an Ellipse Around the Sun (2017)  
for wind ensemble  

Bobby Lucas
**Instrumentation:**

- Piccolo
- 2 Flutes
- 2 Oboes
- 2 Bassoons
- 3 Clarinets in Bb
- Bass Clarinet in Bb
- 2 Alto Saxophones in Eb
- Tenor Saxophone in Bb
- Baritone Saxophone in Eb

- 3 Trumpets in Bb
- 4 Horns in F
- 3 Trombones (3rd is Bass Trombone)
- Euphonium
- Tuba

Double Bass (preferably amplified)

**Piano** (doubling Celesta)

**Timpani**
- Crash cymbal (able to be placed on top of lowest timpani)

**Percussion 1**
- Suspended cymbal, tambourine, temple blocks, splash cymbal (able to be placed on top of snare), snare, glockenspiel, whip, ride cymbal, 2 bongos, 2 low toms

**Percussion 2**
- Vibraphone (bowed and struck), suspended cymbal, 2 brake drums, snare, crash cymbal, 2 congas

**Percussion 3**
- Marimba, ride cymbal, 2 high toms, large tam-tam, snare, triangle

**Percussion 4**
- Bass drum, wind chimes, 2 low toms, tambourine, super ball mallet, small tam-tam, bowed suspended cymbal, crotales (bowed and struck), large tam-tam

The score is transposed.

All trills should be marked; if not, default to half-step trills.

As a general rule, accidentals carry through the bar but not to the octave (courtesy accidentals are provided, however).

Duration ca. 14-17 minutes.
Performance Notes:

Rehearsal letters P through P12 will be given as a cue. The duration of each measure will be determined by either the conductor or the solo player, sometimes both. Suggested times have been given for some of the measures, however, the durations of measures with soloists will mostly be determined by when the player finishes their solo. After the solo, the conductor will cue the next section.

Between P and P12 the soloists are in complete control of duration, articulation, and shape of notes and the phrase within the general idea of a quiet and distant melody.

During P through P12 other instruments will be given instructions within boxes. The goal of these boxes is to create aleatoric textures that still capture the cold, distant, and quiet nature of this section. These textures start as soon as a section is cued, and last until the next section is cued. That being said, the transition between cued sections should not be jarring in any way. In any section with a soloist, the solo line takes precedence and the textures should not overpower the soloist.

Program Notes:

My original inspiration for this piece came while reading an article in the science section of an online news site. The article was talking about the proposed existence of a new planet in our solar system that had a wildly elliptical orbit around. This meant that its perihelion (closest point to the sun during orbit) and aphelion (furthest point) were drastically different. This proposed planet would be lurking out beyond Pluto in the Kuiper Belt, but its nearest point to the sun could be somewhere closer to Earth or perhaps Mars. I found this a very engaging and interesting idea, and already had an idea for a piece by the end of the article and a title: On an Ellipse Around the Sun. From that moment on I entered my own world of science fiction and created a narrative to explain the title and the piece.

The narrative I created was one of a civilization living on the proposed planet. The planet has just spent a great deal of time at its closest point to the sun, making for a warm and easy life. The piece opens with a joyous and raucous celebration. From here, the planet starts its long journey far from the sun, moving more and more distant and becoming colder. This throws the civilization into chaos and dismay, with the climax finally being the outcry of one lone citizen (the bass trombone solo), which is then answered with a full chorus before dying away into the coldest, darkest, and the most static part of the planet’s journey around the sun. While in this place we hear distant echoes of earlier themes played by soloists (bassoon, clarinet, celesta, and alto sax.) while being accompanied by icy and frozen textures. As this section ends, we are slowly brought back to life as the planets begins to finish its loop around the sun. The building texture keeps pushing as the sun draws nearer, with the Sun’s Theme, heard throughout the beginning of the piece is slowly brought back. The piece ends with a joyous celebration of the return of the Sun.
Joyously (≈110)

On an Ellipse Around the Sun

(For the Ohio University Horn Symphony, Dr. Andrew Traubel - Director)
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