Mason Bates: Rusty Air in Carolina for Wind Ensemble and Electronica

Nakia Maurice Medley

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MASON BATES:
*RUSTY AIR IN CAROLINA FOR WIND ENSEMBLE & ELECTRONICA*

by

Nakia Maurice Medley

A Research Document
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

Major: Music

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To those who Believe and Believed…
Abstract


Frederick Fennell established the standard instrumentation for the wind ensemble in 1952 with the Eastman Wind Ensemble, providing composers and conductors the option of using more or fewer instruments. As with anything new, a period of expansion and development can be expected. Development years of “The Wind Ensemble Concept” initially spanned over four decades. With the advancement of technology along with innovative composers, we are able to experience the wind ensemble with an expanded palette of sound.

During the same time period Edgard Varèse began writing Déserts (1954), a composition recognized as the first recorded work in an orchestrated setting using electronics. He composed the composition with four sections of brass and woodwinds that alternate with three sections of electronically manipulated sound on tape. Varèse began composing the acoustic portion of the work in 1949 and completed this section in 1952. Soon after the completion of the acoustic parts, he later composed, recorded, and added electronic interpolations between 1952 and 1954.

Since the premier of Déserts, composers have sought to add electronic sounds to their pieces. In 1966, composer Herbert Bielawa wrote Spectrum for mixed media, pre-recorded tape, and band. The composition like Déserts, is composed where the electronic and acoustic elements are not heard simultaneously. The latter part of the twentieth

The purpose of this study is to explore the contributions of Mason Bates to the wind band medium as a leading composer of electroacoustic music. With an emphasis on *Rusty Air in Carolina for Wind Ensemble & Electronica*, it will focus on biographical information, his development as a composer, and his compositional style. An examination of the composition along with rehearsal and setup suggestions are provided.
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Chapter One

Mason Bates

Mason Bates has received international recognition for his electro-acoustic compositions. The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra gathered programing information from twenty-one major American Orchestras during their 2014-2015 seasons and determined that Bates was one of the most-performed living composers of his generation. In 2018, *Musical America Worldwide*—a leading online source for the performing arts—named him composer of the year.¹ Through various commissions, Bates has gained attention from conductors like Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas, Leonard Slatkin, and Robert Moody. Having been composer in residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the inaugural composer in residence with the John F. Kennedy Center, Bates continues to be recognized as a successful composer with worldwide performances of his music. Bates premiered his first opera on July 22, 2017, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, with the Santa Fe Opera² and won a Grammy at the 61st annual Grammy Awards, announced February 10, 2019, by the recording academy.³

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² Ibid.

Biographical Overview and Compositional Process & Style

Mason Bates was born January 23, 1977, in Philadelphia, and was raised in Richmond, Virginia, where he attended St. Christopher’s School, an all-boys school. It was there that Bates began his formal musical training.4

Bates did not grow up in a family of musicians; however, his family was very supportive of his love for music. In an interview with the author, he recalls that one of his first encounters with music was when his father played albums from his vinyl record collection, which ranged from the music of Artie Shaw and Gershwin to Episcopal choral compositions.5

At the age of seven, Bates began studying piano with Hope Armstrong Erb, who was the music teacher at St. Christopher’s School. Erb quickly recognized Bates’s talent, while listening to him improvise at the piano. She encouraged Bates to approach the piano with more discipline. She wanted him to spend more time practicing, to improve his technique.6 Bates states:

The discipline started with just getting better at the piano, but I was translating those skills into how to get better as a composer by working at things. I don't think a lot of young artists realize you have to exert that kind of discipline, like athletes, to write a piece of music.7

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4 Thomas May, Bates: "Liquid Interface" for Orchestra and Electronica, directed by Michael Tilson Thomas, performed by San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, concert program, January 8, 2013.

5 Mason Bates, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, November 11, 2015.


7 Mason Bates, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, November 11, 2015.
By the age of thirteen, Bates began to take composition more seriously. Instead of freely improvising or, as he states, “thinking with his ten fingers,” he started to focus on form. When Bates was in his sophomore year at St. Christopher’s, Erb suggested that he attend the Brevard Music Center Summer Institute and Festival at Brevard, North Carolina, for a six-week music festival. Bates took Erb’s advice and enrolled as a piano and choir student during the summer of 1993.  

During the festival, Bates asked the Brevard Chorusmaster, Robert Moody, to take a look at his composition for young treble voices titled Timor et tremor. Moody was impressed with the piece and gathered twelve singers to record the work. They then performed the work as a surprise for Bates on a Wednesday afternoon recital. At the end of the summer, Moody left Brevard and returned to Evansville, Indiana, where he worked as the assistant conductor of the Evansville Philharmonic and conductor of the Evansville Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. He delivered the Brevard recording of Timor et tremor to his colleague Alfred Savia, who at the time was the music director of the Evansville Philharmonic. Savia was so impressed by the work that he proposed a commissioning project with Evansville Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. Bates accepted the commission and

8 Mason Bates, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, November 11, 2015.
9 Ibid.
composed a twenty-eight-minute piece in five movements titled *Free Variations for Orchestra*.\textsuperscript{10}

Moody was instrumental in the premiere and the success of *Free Variations for Orchestra*. While Bates was still in high school, the piece was performed by the Evansville Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra, Greenville Symphony in South Carolina, Oklahoma City Philharmonic, and Phoenix Symphony. The success of *Free Variations for Orchestra* created opportunities for other commissions.\textsuperscript{11} As Moody began to gain prominence as a professional conductor, he commissioned more pieces from Bates, premiering them through various symphony orchestras.\textsuperscript{12} Among those pieces are *Ode* (2002) for the Phoenix Symphony, *Rusty Air in Carolina for Orchestra and Electronica* (2006) for the Winston-Salem Symphony, and *Desert Transport* (2011) for the Arizona Music Fest.\textsuperscript{13}

As Bates continued to mature, he became interested in the music of John Corigliano, a Pulitzer Prize winning composer. When the time came to decide on a college, Bates chose to study composition at The Juilliard School because he wanted to study with Corigliano. He then called Corigliano to inquire about openings in his studio and was told that there were no available positions for the upcoming fall. Instead of turning him away completely, Corigliano encouraged Bates to apply anyway because a

\textsuperscript{10} Robert Moody, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, Memphis, TN June 25, 2016.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13} Mason Bates, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, November 11, 2015.
position could open later. Dissatisfied with the uncertainty of a future opening in his preferred studio, Bates took it upon himself to drop in unexpectedly at Corigliano’s residence while in New York City, and unknowingly interrupted a dinner party. Impressed by Bates’s tenacity, Corigliano decided to accept him as a composition student for the upcoming fall semester. Mason Bates entered the Columbia-Juilliard joint program to study English and music composition, in 1995.

As one of Corigliano’s students, Bates adopted his unique approach to form. About his mentor, Bates says the following:

He made me aware of my central challenge. He told me, “You can’t just connect the dots; as you are creating your forms, you need to discover what the forms are capable of.” What he gave me is an approach to architecture that is unique. John is a master of integrating diverse musical materials into a cohesive whole. So many of his pieces will have various exotic elements or extremely different kinds of materials that he manages to integrate.

While at The Juilliard School, Bates became interested in electronic music and spent a lot of time in the electronic music lab. He was fascinated with the equipment’s ability to create mesmerizing textures, and intricate rhythms, and the infinite ways in which sounds, and textures could be combined. After becoming familiar with the

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15 Thomas May, Bates: "Liquid Interface" for Orchestra and Electronica, directed by Michael Tilson Thomas, performed by San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, concert program, January 8, 2013.
electronic equipment, Bates began to compose and perform electronic music in the Lower East Side of New York, a popular area for electronica.\textsuperscript{16}

In 2001, Bates graduated from Columbia University and The Juilliard School with degrees in English literature and music composition. He then moved to California to study at Berkeley’s Center for New Music and Audio Technologies to begin work on his Ph.D. in composition with Edmund Campion and Jorge Liderman.\textsuperscript{17}

While living in California, Bates was a classical composer during the day and a club DJ at night. Because of this “double life,” he decided to combine his expertise in electronic and acoustic music to compose \textit{Omnivorous Furniture} (2004).\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Omnivorous Furniture} was Bates’s first electro-acoustic work for orchestra. The electronics in \textit{Omnivorous Furniture} consisted of electronic snaps, pops, and groove beats.\textsuperscript{19} The piece was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and premiered on its Green Umbrella Series at Disney Hall in 2004.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{17} Phillip Huscher, \textit{Music from Underground Spaces for orchestra and electronica}, Concert Program, Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Chicago: Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 2010).

\textsuperscript{18} Mason Bates, interview by Tamara Ikenberg, \textit{Hey DJ: symphonic - electronic superstar Mason Bates turn on the waterworks with the Mobile Symphony Orchestra}, (October 31, 2013).

\textsuperscript{19} Mason Bates, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, November 11, 2015.

\textsuperscript{20} Phillip Huscher, \textit{Music from Underground Spaces for orchestra and electronica}, Concert Program, Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Chicago: Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 2010).
As Bates worked to establish himself in the San Francisco area, he attracted the attention of conductor Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony. This interest led to a partnership that resulted in several creative projects and new compositions. One particularly interesting and innovative project was the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, which was an orchestra comprised of members who auditioned via YouTube. The project was created by the search engine company Google and 21C Media Group—a New York City-based PR and marketing firm that specializes in classical music and the performing arts—to raise the visibility of high-quality content on YouTube and promote talent around the world.\footnote{Marianna Ritchey, “Amazing Together”: Mason Bates, Classical Music, and Neoliberal Values”," Music & Politics., 2017: 18.}

For the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, Bates composed *Mothership* (2011). The piece was premiered on March 21, 2011, in the Sydney Opera House under the direction of Michael Tilson Thomas. In 2014, Thomas also launched the Beethoven and Bates Festival, which paired a number of Bates’s compositions with works by Beethoven, and on April 27, 2016, the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra premiered Bates’s *Auditorium* through social media.\footnote{San Francisco Symphony, “Michael Tilson Thomas And The San Francisco Symphony Release,” *Mason Bates: Works For Orchestra* (San Francisco, CA: SFS Media, February 9, 2016).}

In 2010, Mason Bates and Anne Clyne were named composers-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. During their residency, Bates and Clyne composed new works and curated the MusicNOW series. Under their leadership, MusicNOW
presented concerts in unconventional ways. Audience members experienced works that were created in collaboration with choreographers and visual artists. The program notes were artistically projected on the walls to provide information and enhanced the performance space with ambient lighting. As concertgoers entered the concert hall they were immersed in an artistic, creative, and educational environment.23

The MusicNOW series also allowed Bates to showcase a group he co-founded with conductor Benjamin Schwartz and visual designer Anne Patterson called Mercury Soul. Launched in San Francisco’s Mezzanine Club in 2008, Mercury Soul seeks to engage a new generation of music-lovers by combining classical and electronic music in alternative venues with creative and artistic stage productions. The performances include orchestras, solo musicians, and a combination of chamber ensembles. They also incorporate a combination of imaginative props, substantive programming, and engaging electroacoustic interludes created by Bates, who performs under the pseudonym DJ Masonic. Mercury Soul events continue to bring diverse audiences together by combining music from the concert hall and the dance club.24

Mason Bates continues to progressively move forward with new positions and commissions. In 2014, Bates was appointed to the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. During the 2015-2016 season, he was named as the inaugural composer-


in-residence at the Kennedy Center, and his three-year term was extended through the 2019–2020 season. During his first season there, Bates launched a new music series called *KC Jukebox*, which began in November 2015. On March 11, 2016, the San Francisco Symphony released an album of Bates’s compositions titled *Mason Bates: Works for Orchestra*. Included in the recording are *The B-Sides* (2009), *Liquid Interface* (2007), and *Alternative Energy* (2011), which were commissioned by the San Francisco Orchestra, the National Symphony, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra respectively. On May 9, 2016, Mason Bates released his very large acoustical work *Anthology of Fantastic Zoology*, which was conducted by Riccardo Muti. In 2017, the Santa Fe Opera premiered *R(evolution) of Steve Jobs*. This premiere took place as part of the Santa Fe Opera Company’s fifteenth world premiere and as the company’s sixty-first season. The opera won a Grammy at the sixty-first annual Grammy Awards in 2019.

**Bates’s General Use of Electronics**

The first documented use of prerecorded sound in an acoustical setting for large ensemble is observed in the orchestral composition *Pines of Rome* (1924) by Ottorino Respighi. The prerecorded track of the singing nightingale was played from Record No.

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26 Santa Fe Opera, “Mason Bates” (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Santa Fe Opera, August 5, 2015).

6105 from Gramophone Records: The Song of the Nightingale.  

When the composition is performed today, the same nightingale sound is used, but in digital format instead of a record. Respighi’s decision to use the recording came after his inability to find the right combination of instruments to resemble an authentic bird’s song.

Bates integrates moments of electronica with his compositions using sounds from nature to live electronics. This gives him infinite freedom to expand his sound and narrative, while keeping the large ensemble as the primary focus. For Bates, using electronica is another element that operates similarly to the percussion section as an entity that can come and go.

The following are examples of Bates’s most popular compositions that use electronica and narrative to support his artistic expression: Rusty Air in Carolina (2006), a tone poem that brings the sounds of nature to the concert hall; Liquid Interface (2007), a water symphony that moves through the various states of water, conceived in Berlin while fulfilling the residency for the Berlin Prize; The B-Sides (2009) uses the setting of a NASA spacewalk set to music; Desert Transport (2010), an acoustical composition that captures the Arizona landscape from the perspective of a helicopter; and Alternative Energy (2011) a piece that uses sounds from Fermilab to recreate particular textures and

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29 Ibid.

30 Mason Bates, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, November 11, 2015.
tells the story of energy unfolding over the centuries. *Mothership* (2012) imagines the orchestra as a mothership that is “docked” by several visiting soloists, who offer brief but virtuosic riffs on the work’s thematic material.

Bates tells me about what has helped influence his music:

It’s interesting what informs one’s life. Oftentimes it’s not the things that we are not aware of it when it’s happening. Here’s an example; my father’s swing band music that was always playing on his turntable in his man cave floating up through the house. Arty Shaw, Stan Kenton, Cole Porter, Gershwin, this music was a part of my growing up because my dad played it all the time. At the time I didn’t think I was paying attention to it. It absolutely seared itself into my musical imagination. I realized that jazz harmony, jazz rhythm, these are incredibly powerful musical tools. They informed a lot of my music. From explicitly jazzy pieces like the third movement of *Liquid Interface* that conjures Dixieland Swing to even a piece like *Mothership* which has a fair amount of Gershwin floating behind the surface of it. Jazz Harmony is the furthest you can go theoretically and still feel the music, still feel the harmony. You can’t really do that with 12-tone. It might be complicated, but if you can’t feel it, it doesn’t matter. I love Jazz Harmony. I think that was a very important part of forming my compositional voice. Also, some psychedelic rock like Pink Floyd. Hearing those albums like *the Final Cut*, *The Wall*, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, where these bands mixed in with orchestra backup and electronic production. That is incredibly surreal where you have voices swirling around your head and sound effects. That very much impacted me. This idea of looking at a seamless production that has everything from electronic sounds to an orchestra. That probably came from Pink Floyd, *Atom Heart Mother*. You know, huge ambitious project, early Pink Floyd. That was very formative and also of course, in counting electronica. It opened my mind to the possibilities of mixing. The idea of, you know. You have two movements. One is about giant chords exploding and melting. The other one is about little droplets of material running around. Maybe they can be connected. Instead of having two things, you have three. You have the transition. So the idea of transition can be as exciting as the thing you are leaving; the thing you are coming to. That probably came out of deejaying where the mix is very much a part of the experience.31

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31 Mason Bates, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, November 11, 2015.
The compositional process varies with each composer. In *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, John Cage states that Edgard Varèse was the first to write directly for instrumental ensembles (giving up the piano sketch and its orchestral coloration).\(^{32}\) When creating a new composition, Bates prefers to have the sounds of electronica played in his studio.\(^{33}\) Bates finds it intriguing to start the creative process before a note is written; he describes his style of imaginative writing as a musical journey allowing the listener to visualize the story being told; an impulse to tell a story.\(^{34}\) Bates offers the following during the interview:

In terms of creative process, it absolutely shifts from piece to piece. Because I want to have a very integrated compositional style with electronics kind of merging with classical instruments, I often will write with both acoustic and electronic sounds around me. My studio has a piano, guitar and it also has quite an extensive array of electronic gear. So, for me, it’s a lot of working with that stuff together. If I’m say setting a NASA space walk to music, I need to actually have that playing while I am compositing. Or if I’m writing *Rusty Air in Carolina*, I need to have those field recordings playing as I am sitting at the piano. So, it is important to have everything on your creative table if you want to mix it together.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{33}\) Mason Bates, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, November 11, 2015.


\(^{35}\) Mason Bates, interview by Nakia Maurice Medley, November 11, 2015.
In order to gain a better understanding of how Bates utilizes electronics in his compositions this paper will now further investigate Bates’s compositional approach and use of electronics in his piece Rusty Air in Carolina for Wind Ensemble and Electronica.
Chapter Two

An Overview of Rusty Air in Carolina for Wind Ensemble and Electronica

*Rusty Air in Carolina for Wind Ensemble & Electronica* is an early large ensemble work by Bates. The original work for orchestra was premiered on May 20, 2006, by the Winston-Salem Symphony, under the direction of Robert Moody, to celebrate his appointment as the music director for the Winston-Salem Symphony. The transcription was commissioned by a consortium of college wind ensembles organized by Jerry Junkin, Director of Bands at The University of Texas at Austin.

The composition is approximately 14 minutes in duration and is scored for the following instrumentation: four flutes, two oboes, two bassoons, contrabassoon, E-flat clarinet, four B-flat clarinets, two bass clarinets, soprano saxophone, two tenor saxophones, baritone saxophone, four horns in F, three C trumpets, two tenor trombones, bass trombone, euphonium, tuba, laptop, and percussion: timpani, suspended cymbal (very high, high, medium), tam tams (low, medium, high), glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, marimba, log drum, bass drum, harp (optional but preferred), piano, double bass.¹

The piece is written in four movements utilizing electronics in movements 1, 2, and 4. The movements are performed without pause, and the piece draws its inspiration from Bates’s time at Brevard Music Center Summer Institute Festival. Each of the four

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movements, Nan’s Porch, Katydid Country, Southern Midnight, and Locusts Singing in The Heat Of Dawn, has been composed to take the listener on a sonic journey of events from dusk to dawn.

**Movement I. Nan’s Porch**

Nan’s Porch recalls the experience of an early evening in the mountains of Brevard, North Carolina. The movement inhabits three different primary motives that propel the composition forward. These motives create a narrative that describes the sounds and sensations felt by Bates while sitting on “Nan’s Porch” in the mountains of Brevard. The field recordings heard within the first ten to twelve seconds of *Rusty Air in Carolina* provide background sound to set the atmosphere of a summer evening. Bates describes the integration of the electronic elements as a section that can come and go serving the larger goals of the piece. Electronics heard within Nan’s Porch are field recordings of cicadas, katydids, and crickets that layer in a similar fashion of the three acoustic motives. As the composition gains momentum, the large swatches of dynamic shadings of field recordings and overlapping acoustic motives drive the first movement forward into Katydid Country.

**Movement II. Katydid Country**

Highlighting two styles of music, blues and electronic dance music (EDM), Movement II includes the art of mixing and record scratching techniques used by a DJ. Katydid Country uses the sound of a highly processed single Katydid. The purpose of the solo katydid track is to provide a beat track on a simple tune inspired by a bluesy melody.
in combination with electronic dance music (EDM) acting as a five-note motive. The Blues Theme begins among a small chamber setting and dominates the texture of the second movement, reappearing between two sections of rhythmic dance music within this movement. The movement comes to a climax with a series of horn shouts. The Blues theme returns once more in a fragmented state accompanied by a long lyrical melody and snippets of the Blues theme, leading the listener into Southern Midnight as the rhythmic activity begins to settle down, depicting lights out over Brevard.

Movement III. Southern Midnight

In the only movement without electronics, the distinct textures represented from Nan’s Porch return as they are brought to life by portions of the long-lined melody passing through. At the close of this lyrical section, the composition begins transitioning to Movement IV, where the tranquil sounds embody that strange space between night and day.²

Movement IV. Locusts Singing in the Heat of Dawn

The final movement, Locust Singing in the Heat of Dawn, portrays an early morning as the birds begin to sing accompanied by pre-dawn rustle. The final movement brings back the three primary themes and the blues theme that is performed in the style of a laid-back slower tempo groove. Electronica is included in the final movement by using field recordings of pre-dawn rustlings, birdcalls, cicadas, crickets, and katydids.
Thematic Material and Structural Analysis

*Rusty Air* is not created using traditional melodies or broad themes, but rather through what might be best called soundscapes or atmospheres—a combination of natural sounds recorded by Bates and the acoustic instruments. Studying the score, one will find no particular key center throughout the piece, rather a constant shift of tonal centers—major, minor, and modal. The four sections in “Nan’s Porch” use an evolving palette of bright metallic sounds, chord clusters, and flutter-tonguing.

The four movements are performed without pause, and the piece’s sections can be defined by their changing textures, the use of syncopated rhythms and dance music, pure acoustic writing, and the amalgamation of previous material.

In “Nan’s Porch,” Bates has arranged sounds into two groups of three. The first are the three prerecorded sounds—cicadas, katydids, and crickets—that combine to create an insect sound screen. The second are the woodwind, brass, and percussion timbres used to emulate sounds of insects, the heat and humidity of the mountains of North Carolina, and the twinkling of stars.

“Nan’s Porch” opens with ten to twelve seconds of unmetered playback of a katydid field recording indicated by a fermata in the score and parts, occurring between square 1 and square 2. Figure 2.1 illustrates how the prerecorded sounds are notated in the score.
Figure 2.1: (mm. 4-12) Prerecorded katydid sounds.

“Nan’s Porch” can be divided into four sections, which are defined by texture and timbre. In section one, which is mm. 1-19, Bates begins with prerecorded (electronic) katydid sounds. Prerecorded insect sounds of crickets, katydids, and cicadas are all utilized within the first movement. They enter softly, crescendo, and then fade. Eventually they overlap amongst themselves similarly to the wind and percussion parts.

Next, he introduces bright metallic sounds that emulate twinkling stars. These sounds are reinforced by sustained trills in the woodwinds. Example 2.1 is an illustration of the metallic percussion sounds followed by Example 2.2, which is an example of the accompanying sustained woodwind timbres.
The final element added to section one is the flutter-tongued eighth notes in the flute and trumpet parts, which are often used to mimic crickets. The technique begins with unison pitches in the flute parts and uses harmonic intervals of P4, P5 and M7 when orchestrated with the trumpets. Example 2.3 followed by 2.4 illustrates the use of flutter-tongue music.
Example 2.3: (mm. 4-6) flutter-tongued rhythms

Example 2.4: (mm. 13-14) flutter–tongue rhythms in intervals of P5, P4 and M7.

In section two, mm. 20-28, Bates introduces sustained brass chords and undulating dynamics to represent the humidity and heat of a summer evening in North Carolina. The sustained tones from the low brass depict the summer heat. Bates composes the chords in the brass using ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords. The extended chords are a representation of Bates’s love for jazz, where extensions are often used to add color as well as to thicken texture. The brass chords will periodically drift in and out during Nan’s Porch as Bates uses the horn, euphonium, trombone, and tuba to give the theme a thick texture. The wide range of dynamics gives the impression of waves of heat pressing against the skin much like a warm and thick breeze passing across while sitting on the
porch. An example of the brass chords that Bates uses to emulate the heavy humidity of a Southern summer night can be observed in the Example 2.5.

Example 2.5: (mm. 22-28) Representation of chords in the brass

After Bates introduces the three textures that will shape “Nan’s Porch,” the cicadas enter at m. 29 for the first time. This begins section three and is where the three acoustic textures (bright metallic sounds from winds and percussion, flutter-tongue in flute and trumpet parts, and the low brass heat chords) overlap. This overlapping technique continues, as each acoustical theme appears to compete for a leading presence in the texture of the composition. Bright metallic sounds continue, but assume a different shape, incorporating woodwind tremolos. During this section, the rhythmic structure of the flutter-tongue technique begins to move at a faster pace, with the inclusion of sixteenth notes in the trumpet and clarinet parts. The brass chords re-enter and combine with the existing texture until the end of measure 46, completing the section. Example 2.6 is an example from mm. 33-40 which illustrates the layering of these textures.
In section four, the music eventually becomes a mass of sustained trills and tremolos as the movement makes its way to a climax. Swelling dynamics from electronics, woodwinds and brass reinforces the dramatic nature of this section. Each entrance of bright metallic sound is ignited with a forte-piano dynamic marking, followed by a crescendo and diminuendo, increasing in intensity until the climax. This climax is reached as the dynamics in the sustained tremolos and trills rise to triple forte. Within mm. 58-62, Bates continues to add to the climax by presenting the trumpets for the first time in three parts. Below in Example 2.7 is an example of the stark contrast in texture change presented by the trumpets.
“Katydid Country” begins in m. 69. It is divided into four sections and contains four themes. Those themes include the processed sound of a solo katydid, followed by a bluesy rhythmic melody accompanied by a flute riff, and an expressive long melody.

In section one, mm. 69-88, the electronic sounds contribute to the composition differently than in the first movement. In “Nan’s Porch” the electronics are prerecorded sounds of insects that provide more of an ambient atmosphere whereas in “Katydid Country” the electronics provide a bed of rhythmic activity patterned after electronic dance music (EDM).

Within this section Bates continues to layer and combine his themes. It can be noticed in m. 69 that the eighth notes in the electronics are layered with rhythmic sounds from the acoustical instruments. While some of those rhythms are embellished with flutter-tonguing and shorter rhythmic values, the underlying idea here is that the eighth note is the grounding rhythm in mm. 69-75. Among the busy rhythmic layering, Bates introduces a technique that resembles chord comping in mm. 80-82. This technique includes
syncopated and accented rhythmic ideas that are often associated with jazz pianists or
guitarists. Leading contributors who incorporated this skill into their music were Count
Basie and his arrangers, Neal Hefti, and Sammy Nestico.²

Bates uses the piano in comping fashion, outlining rhythmic moments of the
bluesy rhythmic melody. Surrounding figures continue in eighth and sixteenth notes. Ex-
ample 2.8 is an excerpt of comping style from the score mm. 77-82.

Example 2.8: (mm.77-82) Chord comping technique in piano

As this section ends, Bates introduces the solo katydid motive in m. 81. Ex-
ample 2.9 is an extraction of the processed solo katydid from the score.

Example 2.9: m. (81) Electronic katydid amongst electronic sounds.

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² Richard J, Hewitt, Michael P, Fonder, Mark Colwell, "The Jazz Ensemble," in The Teaching of
Instrumental Music (New York, New York: Taylor & Francis, 2018), 162.
Section two, mm 89-168, begins with an introduction of the bluesy rhythmic melody. This rhythmic melody uses pitches from the B Major scale: G#, A#, B, C#, D#, E, F#, G#.

Earlier in this movement Bates used syncopated rhythms from the melody seen in Example 2.10 to entice the listener. The developing bluesy rhythmic melody begins to establish itself between mm. 90-107. Figure 2.10 is an example of the bluesy rhythmic melody performed by the oboe.

Example 2.10: Example of Bluesy Rhythmic Tune

![Oboe Example](image)

The four-measure bluesy rhythmic melody is stated three times between mm. 90 and 107. Each time the melody is presented, the overall section is strengthened as the bluesy rhythmic tune is layered with additional acoustic and electronic material. During its second of three consecutive statements, a flute riff is layered amid the bluesy rhythmic melody. Example 2.11 is an example of the flute riff.

Figure 2.11: (mm. 99-103) Flute riff

![Flute Example](image)

The final statement of the bluesy rhythmic tune is enhanced with additional electronic music portraying high intensity dance music.
Section three can best be described as developmental music. The section contains wind passages emulating techniques and timbres associated with electronic dance music. These techniques contain syncopation, repetition of melodic fragments, layers of sound with contrasting rhythms, and phrases divided amongst different voices. In addition, snippets of fiddle music are included that may suggest a nod to bluegrass music once heard in certain areas of the North Carolina Mountains.

The first passage of dance music begins in m. 107. The section begins with clarinet 1 and 2 performing an ascending line of music that gives the effect of looping, repeating the same pattern entering on different beats. Built using the Phrygian mode between mm. 108 and 110, the musical line finishes briefly using the Lydian Mode in m. 111. The music from mm. 107 to 122 uses rhythms derived from the processed katydid five-note motive first observed in m. 81. Example 2.12 is an example of this passage below.

Example 2.12: (mm. 107-111) Sixteenth note patterns resembling looping.

The first passage of dance music comes to an end using block scoring of single eighth notes in m. 121. Two measures later in mm. 123-128 horns 1 and 2 soli join the returning bluesy rhythmic melody. Below in Example 2.13 is an excerpt of the horn soli with the return of the bluesy rhythmic melody.
Example 2.13: (mm. 123-129) Bluesy rhythmic melody with horn soli

The second passage of dance music uses a variation of the katydid five-note rhythmic motive between mm.132 and 144. The variations are presented in an overall descending fashion. Its texture is quite thin exhibiting highly syncopated moments of short quick riffs of the five-note rhythmic idea that move quickly from section to section in mm. 133-137. Variations of the five-note rhythmic motive can be observed below in Figure 2.2 in the clarinet 1-2, horn 1-2, and trombone 1-2 parts.
At m. 138 small rhythmic figures in the woodwinds, doubled in melodic percussion, begin to trade back and forth—as jazz musicians would in an improvisatory manner. The rhythmic interplay moves quickly from unison alto and tenor saxophones to clarinet, flute, and percussion 1 and 2. Figure 2.3 is an example of the rhythmic interplay featured in the composition.
The third passage of dance music occurs between mm. 145 and 169. Bates uses the soprano and alto saxophone parts to mimic fiddle music, initiating a response in flute 1 and oboe 2. Single eighth notes punctuate the texture as the intensity of dance music increases, using a series of quarter notes (4 on the floor). The elevated intensity is created by the 808 kick in the electronic part beginning in m. 149.
Figure 2.4: mm. (145-149) A. Fiddle music, B. Single eighth note punctuation, C. Four on the floor
The composition moves to a climax in m. 157. The climax is elevated by sforzandi high-energy syncopated eighth and sixteenth notes supported by electronic music that transitions into calmer music. Amongst this transition Bates continues to punctuate the texture with blocked scoring of syncopated single eighth- and sixteenth-note rhythms. Bates reduces the energy from the climax, slowing down the rhythmic activity, elongating notes to dissipate the energy. Flute 3 and 4 use a syncopated flutter-tongue rhythm that passes over longer note values. The music diminuendos as sixteenth notes in the clarinet section use descending intervals of P4 and tritones. This can be observed in Figures 2.5 and 2.6.
Figure 2.5: mm. (157-160) Climax and energy reduction of syncopated dance music
Section four of “Katydid Country,” mm. 170-199, includes a long-lined expressive melody that begins with the following parts: flutes 1-4, E-flat clarinet, and clarinet 3 and 4 parts—the alto saxophone becomes part of the melody in m. 171. The long-lined melody begins with a P5 leap observed in Example 2.14.
“Southern Midnight” is the only movement without electronics; it brings the busy and sometime chaotic nature of the night into tranquility. Bates composes this movement in three sections where the first and third are connected by the brass music, which Bates says represents the humidity originally evoked in “Nan’s Porch.”

The first section occurs between mm. 200 and 208. It is here that Bates has condensed the long-lined expressive melody for the soprano saxophone using the same pitches in the score from mm. 170-184. Surrounding the soprano saxophone melody is an abbreviated recapitulation of bright metallic sounds and flutter-tongued music from the
first movement. This music dissolves as it hovers among the soprano saxophone melody. Example 2.15, A and B is an example of the soprano saxophone within the texture and extracted from the texture. The soprano saxophone solo gently moves us into section two (Example 2.15 A and B).

Example 2.15 A: (mm. 200-208), A. Flutter-tongue, B. Bright metallic sounds, C. Compressed long-lined melody.

Figure 2.15 B: (mm. 199-208), Compressed long-lined melody in soprano saxophone

Section two, mm. 209: the brass chords continue to represent the dense heat of the south as it moves gently towards the final section of “Southern Midnight.” The music moves the listener into the early hours of the morning, anticipating the dawn soon to come as Bates composes a soaring melody composed in horn parts 1-4. The lyrical section gets underway in earnest at m. 218 with the horns and low brass, moving from the brass chords to melodic material. Beginning on beat four of measure 217 the final lyrical
statement is presented by the horns up a P4 from the soprano sax statement, producing a soaring melody, observed in Example 2.16.

Example 2.16: (mm. 217) lyrical horn statement

This section acts as a cleansing of the atmosphere and can be imagined as a state of reflection offering a refreshing start to the new day as pre-dawn rustle helps the transition to the final movement, “Locust Singing in the Heat of Dawn.”

“Locusts Singing in The Heat of Dawn,” begins with pitches sustained on an E over the span of six measures entering on different beats over prerecorded electronic sounds. Those pitches are performed by bassoon 1 and 2, E-flat clarinet, clarinet 1-4, bass clarinet 1 and 2, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone 1 and 2, trumpet, horn 1-4, trombone, bass trombone, and euphonium. Bates uses three sustained pitches entering on various beats to break up the stillness of sound. Concert pitches E, D, and C provide descending movement towards a more rapid rhythmic structure performed by trombones and horns seen in Example 2.17.
Example 2.17: (mm. 242-251) Concert pitches E, D, and C breaking up stillness

The climax of this movement is reached in m. 252 as horns 3 and 4 burst through the texture as sunlight would at daybreak, giving this passage its personality. The flutter-tongued eighth notes appear to ricochet off the surrounding sustained tones and bright metallic sounds from percussion. Figure 2.7 below shows the arrival point of the climax of this section with horn 3-4 as horns 1-4 show the ricochet diming with each statement.

Figure 2.7: (m. 252) A. Arrival point of climax showing, B. Horn ricochet
The composition closes as bright metallic sounds, flutter-tongue, and sustained tones return for the final time. Unlike the beat-less presentation of ambient music in “Nan’s Porch,” the closing moments presents the bluesy rhythmic tune from “Katydid Country” in a halftime feel, a slower and much calmer pace beginning at m. 266. Along with the halftime feel, bright metallic sounds are displayed using thirty-second notes giving the effect of a more intense metallic sound than “Nan’s Porch.” An example of the rapid moving metallic sound can be observed in Example 2.18 below.

Example 2.18: (mm. 265-268) Musical Example of bright metallic sounds

Highly processed katydids close the composition, opposite of the prerecorded katydid sound at the beginning of the composition. Ascending acoustic rhythms in m. 275 propel towards the A-flat 7 (sharp9) tonality in m. 276 that started the composition.
Chapter Three

Rehearsal and Performance Considerations for Conductors

As with any composition, a thorough knowledge of the score with an inquisitive approach to study should commence before the initial rehearsal. This portion of the document shall serve to alleviate potential problems by providing information discovered in score study, the rehearsal process, and the performance of the work.

The salient feature of this composition are the electronics. This composition may require the conductor to become familiar with the electronic equipment for setup and balance, depending on their previous experience. The following bulleted points serve as suggestions for electronic equipment and set up.

Table 3.1

Personnel and equipment needed to perform:
- Electronic performer to trigger the electronics on the laptop.
- Page-turner for the electronic performer.
- Assistant for sound and setup.
- Front of House engineer to assist with balance of sound from the ensemble.

Table 3.2

Equipment:
- Laptop
- Downloadable software, which accompanies the rental of the composition.
- 2 high-quality active stereo speakers
- Mixer console to balance sound with the ensemble
- Power for mixer
- Surge protector
- Cabling to connect the laptop, mixer, and speakers
1. Stereo Breakout Cable – 3.5mm TRS Male to Left and Right ¼-inch TS Male – Approximately 10 foot
2. 2 XLR Cables (for left and right speaker)
   • Speaker stands to position and substantially support the weight from the speakers
   • Onstage monitors (not used by me).

**Speaker Placement**

I elected to place the speakers in the rear of the ensemble (upstage speaker placement), to achieve the most organic experience, as if the sounds come from the ensemble. This also allows the musicians to hear the track better allowing them to synchronize their music with the track more accurately. Placing the speakers downstage will make it difficult for the ensemble to hear. The only instance where the speakers should be placed downstage is when it is not possible to place the speakers upstage. Monitors are beneficial to both the conductor and performers in this scenario. Monitors should be placed throughout the ensemble on the left and right sides of the conductor, so that performers may hear the electronics, and one monitor placed very close to the conductor’s stand so that he or she may control the volume. A diagram of the speaker setup can be observed in Figure 3.1 below.
Table 3.3

Installing the software on to your laptop

- Copy the folder “Rusty Air in Carolina” onto the desktop (drag and drop).
- Open the “Setup” folder and double-click the “MPD16 Installer” inside.
- In the “Rusty Air in Carolina” folder, double-click the “Sample” ghost icon.
- The program is now ready.
- This is the only file you will ever need to click; do not touch the others.
- Become familiar with the triggers associated with the software.¹

¹ Mason Bates, Rusty Air In Carolina for Wind Ensemble & Electronica (Bill Holab, 2006).
At the time of the performance I used the following setup. For the laptop you may use a Mac or PC. For the input you will need a 1/4" male to 3.5mm 1/8" male TRS Stereo Audio Cable to connect to the laptop to the mixer. Other cables needed for setup are two XLR cables to connect the two speakers to the mixer. The following is the suggested order for setting up the equipment:

Table 3.4 Speaker Set up

Basic Active Professional Speaker System Setup

- Connect the laptop and mixer using the stereo breakout cable being sure to plug the ¼” into the stereo section of the mixer and the 1/8” into the headphone section of the computer.
- Connect the XLR cables with the three prongs to each speaker’s input, left and right.
- The opposite end of the XLR cables should connect to the mixer’s left and right portals.

I elected to use the laptop version for its ease of portability during score study of the triggers. During rehearsal and performance, the conductor will need to secure a person to operate the laptop/electronic performer. The electronic performer controls the laptop during the performance. Instructions for the electronic performer are clear and easy to follow. It is preferred that the person operating the laptop be able to follow a score. During the performance the electronic performer will press “enter” on the laptop and the corresponding number printed underneath the word “enter.” A helpful note about the “enter” button, when pressing enter, it will prevent any premature sounds from the already downloaded software and acts as a safety and precision button until the actual number or letter is pressed while holding “enter” down. If this does happen, kindly give a cue
for them to stop the sound by pressing the space bar and regroup. The ideal place for the
electronic performer to sit is in or near the percussion section with a clear view of the
conductor

It is suggested to have in place two people acting as the electronic performer.
One person solely responsible for operating the triggers on the laptop while the other is
responsible for turning the pages in the score. This will make the job easier so that the
electronic performer can focus on pressing the right button combinations.

**Balance**

During rehearsal and performance, check the left and right channels to assure that
stereo sound is working in the left and right channels. The projection of every electronic
part is just as important as sound coming from the wind ensemble. The front of house en-
geineer in charge of sound, with the help of one other musician can help adjust the levels
in the hall during the performance.

Bates has indicated that acoustic instruments should remain the prominent voice
in his compositions when working with electronica. The work of the conductor and
front-of-house engineer is to create an atmosphere where the ensemble remains in the
forefront of the composition. The sound from the electronica will need to blend with the
performing ensemble being sure that the electronics do not overpower the ensemble.
The person operating the soundboard will need to make adjustments based on the acous-
tics of the performance venue and the size and strength of the ensemble.
Extended Techniques

The composition calls for flutter-tonguing from brass and woodwind players. Instrumentalists should execute the technique by quickly moving the air through their horn using fast valve action when changing pitches for the cricket sounds. Amy Cherry cited Paul Alva Smoker in her dissertation stating that the flutter-tongue can suffer because of the decreased air pressure, which is necessary to sustain the rolled tongue motion.\(^2\) One should reference Gardner Read’s book *Contemporary Instrumental Techniques* for a more practical approach to flutter-tongue techniques.\(^3\)

While this paper is not a comparison and contrast between the original orchestral version and the wind band version, the technique used in the saxophones for the glissandi should be exaggerated so that the bend comes across as intended in the strings from the original score. Steve Mauk offers techniques on pitch bending for saxophones: he suggests starting with the jaw bend using wide slow vibrato patterns, followed by the finger bend and then combining the two once the jaw and finger bends have been learned.\(^4\)

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Tempo/Transitions

To help the performers transition between the first two movements I suggest subdividing the conducting pattern. This will help with precise placement of syncopated rhythmic passages found in bassoon 1-2, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, piano and percussion 2. Conducting in 8 will also establish the new tempo for Movement II while alleviating any lagging tempo issues within horn 1-4.

In an interview, Bates has stated, “The transition can be as exciting as the idea you are leaving as the idea you are coming to.” He goes on to say that this technique of his probably came out of being a DJ, where the mix is very much part of the experience. Bates has masterfully crafted the music between mm 170-199. He mixes and layers the music that creates this dreamy experience. The music can be considered transitional music due to the construction of the long-lined melody that foreshadows its compact version in Movement III. Fragments of previous rhythmic ideas are composed among this long-lined melody that soon return in Movement III. The fragmented groove in conjunction with the flutter-tongued brass should work as one idea as it moves through the texture of electronics and the long-lined melody. Rehearsing that element alone, the conductor will realize the character of the two ideas.
**Conclusion**

A growing body of literature continues to emerge for the wind ensemble. Composers such as Alex Shapiro, Steven Bryant, along with Mason Bates have contributed to the medium by integrating the wind ensemble with electronics. With this integration, composers can explore new sounds while expanding the palette of the wind ensemble.

*Rusty Air in Carolina for Wind Ensemble & Electronica* draws on Bates’s experience as a DJ. Bates layers the sound of electronic dance music with prerecorded insect sounds, and acoustic wind instruments. Rounding out the finished product is the love Bates has for the written word, specifically magical realists’ writings, coupled with his education in composition from The Juilliard School.

The music of Mason Bates offers to his listeners an imaginative concert experience. He has a unique compositional approach which integrates his electronic compositions with nature, history, technology, and humanity, all while preserving the integrity of the acoustic instruments within the large ensemble. Through his work with Mercury Soul, he has been able to marry the presumed astute crowds of the concert halls with avid dance club audiences.

Whether one experiences Bates’s music by attending a Mercury Soul event or live in the concert hall, his music offers concert attendees a diverse listening experience. Bates, who has described his music as being a time-based journey, has often depicted musical events moving from dusk to dawn, a helicopter ride across the desert, and the power
of water changing into different forms. This style of imaginative writing allows the listener to visualize the story being told; an impulse to tell a story.\textsuperscript{5}

It is through \textit{Rusty Air in Carolina for Wind Ensemble and Electronica} that I became intimate with the music of Mason Bates. Bates is someone who understands technology and uses it as a vehicle for artistic expression to build a narrative in his music. Since this composition, Bates has added original and self-transcribed works to the wind band repertoire. The shared repertoire between the orchestra and wind band begins to demonstrate the versatility Bates has as a composer between mediums. It is my hope that this document will inspire conductors in wind band to consider the music of Mason Bates for their ensembles.

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MB: Hey Maurice. This is Mason. I am giving you some answers to your questions. I am just going to go through them and, uh, I hope I get to them all. It’s quite a list. Thanks so much for being interested and certainly, I would love to see what you put together on this. Electronica is something that I encountered in New York. It was not something that was really widely available in Virginia where I grew up. What I loved about it was its mesmerizing textures, intricate rhythms and its interesting way of articulating harmony. Because electronica doesn’t really have a vocal line or lead singer or lyrics. The music has to bump up more than you get in average pop music. You know, it’s much more intricate. I love that complexity to it. For me, the reason that it is so powerfully possible to put electronic music with the orchestra is exactly because they both don’t really have a lead singer. Sometimes both of them do. The point is when you have something that is “instrumental” then it has to have a kind of very active musical surface. An orchestra, after all, is a giant synthesizer. So, for me integrating electronics into the orchestra is an extension of orchestration. The key for me has always been to remember that the orchestra is the star of the show and that the electronics are kind of like a new section. So, the integration both sonically, logistically, and artistically compositionally is thinking about the electronics as something that like a section can come and go. It doesn’t have to play all the time and that is serving the larger goals of the piece.
In terms of creative process, it absolutely shifts from piece to piece. Because I want to have a very integrated compositional style with electronics kind of merging with classical instruments, I often will write with both acoustic and electronic sounds around me. My studio has a piano, guitar and it also has quite an extensive array of electronic gear. So, for me it’s a lot of working with that stuff together. If I’m say setting a NASA space walk to music, I need to actually have that playing while I am compositing. Or if I’m writing *Rusty Air in Carolina*, I need to have those field recordings playing as I am sitting at the piano. So, it is important to have everything on your creative table if you want to mix it together.

Just quickly about the recorded sounds in *Rusty Air in Carolina*, they are actually from Virginia. (Laughs) Close enough. I am actually from Virginia. They were from my family farm in King Queen County. But they were paying homage to Brevard, North Carolina. Even though they are a state away, they actually do sound quite similar.

Yea, *Rusty Air* and the idea of it being a time-based journey. You know, pastoral music has often been thought of in a fairly limited way. You know, often it has to do with bird song. Instruments imitating birds. What intrigued me about *Rusty Air in Carolina*, in conception, was the idea of the orchestra emulating not only on a kind of sonic level, but also on a kind of macro developmental level. The sounds of a summer night. The insects that we hear in the South. So that means that sometimes you get waves of insects, right? I mean you get katydids kind of coming and going or crickets, the frequencies kind of
change over time depending on the temperature. The cicadas obviously kind of roll in like giant weather. So, in creating the first five minutes of Rusty Air in Carolina, I wanted to begin with something that was very ambient and non-developmental. But I wanted to use the cicada swells to kind of drive the orchestra into these similarly trilling massive chordal swells that would push the piece into the second movement. So that’s an example of how, you know, not just the sounds themselves, but also the way insect sounds spread over time impacted the large-scale vision of the piece. To me, making the most of the fact that this is a timed based medium and you have an opportunity to build to things to surprise the listener. That’s such a key element that I never want to miss.

My lessons with John were private. He brings a unique skill set to composition lessons, which is immediately audible in his works. He has this incredible ability to synthesize a lot of different kinds of music into a cohesive whole. Say the Symphony No. 1 that has, you know, everything from the tarantellas to Albéniz piano music to atonal stuff to 12-tone music. He is able to do that because he thinks architecturally. He starts from the outside and works his way in. By the time he is actually creating his material—the themes, the chords; he knows that there is a reason for each bit of material. So, often John’s teaching would be focused on what are you trying to do and how are you going to do it. That was a big change from starting with my ten fingers at the piano and writing what just sounded cool. I think to many composers, it seems a little bit, you know, almost heretical to write that way because people want to be possessed by the details of the music.
The themes, the melodies, the rhythms. I am. I absolutely am. But I found that if I know what the piece is about, I am more efficient about the material I create and it can be much more successful musically to build a form if you know what you are actually doing and think about it.

I actually didn’t do a whole lot with the composers and choreographers at Juilliard, unfortunately. I played the accordion in one piece by John Mackey. (Laughs).

I think I am going to skip the Kennedy Center conversation because it looks like it’s hit on a little bit later. I’ll come back to that.

Yea, the Rome Prize, I believe...Honestly, I can’t remember what I submitted for the Rome Prize. I think it was a piece called *Ode* for the Phoenix Symphony which is a kind of a prequel to the Beethoven 9. If you can believe that. I think there was also a string quartet in there. No, actually it wasn’t because I wrote that when I was in Rome. I think there was a piece called *Omnivorous Furniture*, my first electroacoustic work.

Okay, yea, the Berlin Prize. I believe I submitted *Rusty Air in Carolina* and if I remember *Frozen*. Two pieces I wrote after Rome.

Yea, so the Chicago Symphony residency went about as beautifully as I ever could have expected. What I loved about the residency was it really allowed me to grow as a composer and a curator. As a composer, I was able to create a deep relationship with Riccardo
Muti and the musicians of the orchestra. And, what did that do to my music? It made it more dramatic. Even coming into it with a piece like *Liquid Interface*, which is all about a water symphony. You know, kind of taking on different forms. I don’t think I really completely grasped the full power of the theater of concert music. What I mean by that is when you have people listening so carefully as you do in the symphonic setting, you can really go to amazingly deep places, especially if you are willing to use interesting effects orchestrally and maybe even electronically. *Alternative Energy* brought in the sounds of a particle accelerator and told the story of energy unfolding over the centuries. That really came as a response to seeing Riccardo Muti conduct different dramatic pieces whether they be ballet, ballet suites or extractions from operas. On a curating front Chicago, it basically taught me the importance of understanding the community that you are creating concerts in and how to educate and challenge the audience in ways that are fun and also social. You know, there was a lot of ambient information, projected information on all the surfaces. You would go to Music Now concert; you would learn a lot about the music before you even sat down. We also had partnerships with local DJ collectives that would bring a lot of different people to the events. And, the key was always in the programming, making sure the programming was diverse and balanced. That’s actually not seen that often. I find that a lot of new music concerts tend to reflect one kind of aesthetic. We would have a completely ambient piece by Paola Prestini followed by a maximus piece by Georg Friedrich Haas. That kind of thing, I think, builds for concerts that a lot of different people can enjoy and it puts the pieces in greater relief.
The Conservatory, I don’t want to dwell on it too much because it’s more of a private teaching situation. Um, it looks like here.

Yea, narrative form, um, you know I majored in English at Columbia because when I went to Columbia and Juilliard in the joint program, I was fascinated with literature. I still am to this day. I actually spend a lot of time writing things on my own and loving the written word. I found at Columbia that certain kinds of literature would haunt me for many years such as *The Anthology of Fantastic Zoology* from Jorge Luis Borges. Magical realist writer who created a kind of compendium of mythological creatures. It took me 15 years to respond to that musically, but the perfect moment came when Riccardo Muti commissioned a second piece. I realized that we could create a kind of a mythological zoo at the Chicago Symphony where every single instrument was a different creature and different sections were different creatures. You could have all kinds of spectacular orchestral effects. Like for the sprite movement, every violin stand kind of becomes a soloist where the sprite music hops from stand to stand and zig zags across the orchestra. It even hops off stage...there are off stage instruments.

So, narrative to me, um, it’s a little bit of a chicken or the egg situation as it was probably with a lot of the programmatic composers. What came first the story or the music? I mean, probably I wanted to write a piece that would have a lot of colorful orchestral effects like *Pictures at an Exhibition*...and I was drawn to *Anthology of Fantastic Zoology*
as the perfect medium for that. But once I had chosen that medium, many of the musical ideas came from it, such as the palindrome. There is a palindromic creature in the book. I was fascinated with the idea of creating a kind of a musical puzzle that would go backwards. That too, with *Alternative Energy*. I think I wanted to create large, propulsive musical sonorities that would spill into the next movement that would be completely different yet somehow related and I found the vehicle to be this Energy Symphony, *Alternative Energy*. So, you know narrative and music have always been powerfully connected. I think in the 20th century, they became a lot less connected based on process music and minimalism and serialism. To me it’s a very powerful musical possibility that has a lot of new opportunity with new electronic sounds.

So, if I was going to hit 20 to 24 in one answer, um, you know I did not grow up in a musical situation, but I grew up in a very supportive situation. My family was very southern. My brother was a captain in the Marine Corps. My family runs a hunting club right now. If you want to go hunting for dove, pheasant, quail, I could hook you up. Um, I don’t think I know what to make of me making up songs on the piano instead of practicing, but that’s what I was doing. My piano teacher, Hope Armstrong Erb, played an incredibly important role in identifying that I had a vision compositionally. Most importantly, she came to me and said, “I’m going to help you learn how to have discipline artistically” which started with just getting better at piano, but I was translating those skills into how
to get better as a composer by working at things. I don’t think a lot of young artists realize that you have to put in a kind of athletic amount of energy and discipline to write a piece of music. And Mrs. Erb showed me that very early. That’s Hope Armstrong Erb—E-r-b. She suggested I go to Brevard Music Camp and I went there my sophomore year of St. Christopher’s School. It was the first time I was really around not only musicians, but women, I went to an all-boys school. So, a big eye-opening experience for me. I brought a choral piece that I had written for my school chorus to Robert Moody. He performed it; very much believed in me and commissioned me to write a piece for his youth orchestra. That piece called *Free Variations for Orchestra* ended up being played by him with a quite a lot of orchestras around the country. It was my first exposure to, how do you make music in three rehearsals with a big group of people. I was very fortunate to get that, you know in my sophomore, junior and senior year of high school. So, by the time Robert Moody began growing the field and conducting the Phoenix Symphony, conducting the Arizona Music Fest, conducting Portland Symphony, Winston-Salem Symphony, he was able to give me a platform to commission other pieces, to write other pieces. So, I wrote for him *Rusty Air in Carolina* for the Winston-Salem Symphony. I wrote *Dessert Transport* for Arizona Music Fest. Even *Ode*, my piece from 2001 about the Beethoven 9 actually came about through Bob’s connection at the Phoenix Symphony.

I can tell you the first time we met was at the Brevard Music Center. I walked up to him and said, “Hi, I’ve got this piece, Mr. Moody. It’s for chorus.” He looked at it; played
through it and he turned to me and said, “I want to do this. I wonder where this came from.” I said, “well, I’ve been singing in my church choir and I wanted to write a piece based on this Latin text I found called Timor Et Tremor. At that time, Bob was very much a senior figure to me. Ten years older is a lot when you are 16. Now he’s very much a colleague and a friend.

Okay, yes, *Free Variations* got me into Juilliard. Thank you, Bob Moody.

Yea, I think, um, I’m going to skip a couple things about like the Phoenix commissioning project because they seem maybe not to be completely as relevant as other things as I can hit in the time I have.

Great question #27 about working with orchestras. The number one thing that I took away from my first experience with an orchestra is that you need to be able to very quickly, widdle down your thoughts and communicate them in short sentences without a lot of words because musicians don’t have a lot of time. That means you often have to basically reduce your comments to louder, softer, faster, slower. If you can also do that with maybe a half sentence about the greater artistic goal, that can really can pay off musically. Orchestral musicians absolutely love to see a composer come in with a clear vision who knows how to respect their time and tell them how they can make this piece better. An example would be in *Dessert Transport* there’s a very mystical section when we hear
this field recording of Pima Indians float in. I essentially wanted to tell people to play softer, but in order to really get to the deeper place, I also reminded them that this part of the piece is sort of conjuring this spiritual place in the southwest called the Vortex, outside of Sedona. The Pima Indians seemed to intrinsically understand the kind of the spiritual quality of these red rocks, earth and monuments. If we could play on the threshold of audibility while that music rolled in, I think we could get a little closer to the space that it’s trying to conjure. So that’s just an example of the way you have to speak to the musicians that gets across what they need to do in both a poetic way and also in a nuts and bolts way.

*Rusty Air* in the band version is quite different in that we don’t have any strings. The piece has a lot of hazy humidity in it that take the form of strings having these kind of thick chords where the brass flow underneath. In order to conjure that in symphonic winds, that is actually pretty hard; particularly difficult given that was my first transcription. So, I think what you get is a lot of power in the second movement that has quite a lot of rhythmic bluesy material. I do miss in the band versions some of the haziness that we have in the strings, but we do gain something a little bit more punchy in the middle rhythmic movement.

*Omnivorous Furniture* was my first attempt using electronic beats with an orchestra. I actually have written a synthesizer concerto in 1998. If you can believe that. I played with
the Phoenix Symphony and the Atlanta Symphony. *Omnivorous Furniture* was really explicitly informed by techno. I think what I learned there was that electronics could be more than just beats. In that composition, it’s very segregated. The orchestra is pitch and texture. The electronics are like rhythm. I think it works well in that piece as a kind of head banging response to *electronica*. What I took away from that at the end is that, what if you had other sounds in electronics? What if you had recordings of cicadas swelling? Could we go to the South? So, *Rusty Air* was my breakthrough piece artistically in realizing that we can tell big stories with electronic sounds. It doesn’t just have to be rhythm.

The Kennedy Center position is fascinating because it is extends across all of the divisions of the center. It touches on not only the national symphony, but also the Washington National Opera - WNO, the national opera, the jazz center. There’s a ballet here that is phenomenal. They bring in different people in this theater. I kind of reach throughout the building to create connections between the divisions in some ways that only a composer can really touch all of these different art forms. An example of the possibilities here is an event I did last night called *Lounge Regime: 100 Years of Ambient Music* which was an exploration of music from Erik Satie, of the 1920s Paris furniture music which was a kind of the earliest background music ever created, through Music Concrete through Steve Reich and La Monte Young of the 1970s all the way through the current day with Brian Eno and Aphex Twin being deejayed. We created three giant period appropriate lounges that had different decor that we pulled from the prop shop in the opera. In short, we
created a kind of immersive artistic experience that you can only do in a place that has many different art forms living in it. I look forward to kind of creating more events like this in the future because you experience this music differently when you live inside of it.

Quickly about band, it’s really inspiring to see a realm of music making where everybody is very excited about new music. You know, there’s a ton of rehearsal time that you often get recordings of rehearsals and the pieces are played many, many times. Those are things that almost never happen in classical concert music. I think what would be interesting is to see band music continue to engage leading composers such as John Corigliano, Michael Daugherty, and beyond to other people. In order to bring the band experience to a deeper place. You know, there’s probably a bit of a cliché of certain kind of bombastic band pieces that one thinks of when thinking about band music. There is actually a huge range of stuff out there. I think that maybe pushing the boundaries a little bit more with people from outside the field who can really make use of the ensemble in new ways would be interesting. So, I can only say good things about the band world. I think it’s cool to see it explode so much.

This question about compositional voice, because I do have to go in a moment. It’s interesting what informs one’s life. Oftentimes it’s not the things that we are not aware of it when it’s happening. Here’s an example, my father’s swing band music that was always playing on his turntable in his man cave floating up through the house. Arty Shaw, Stan
Kenton, Cole Porter, Gershwin, this music was a part of my growing up because my dad played it all the time. At the time I didn’t think I was paying attention to it. It absolutely seared itself into my musical imagination. I realized that jazz harmony, jazz rhythm, these are incredibly powerful musical tools. They informed a lot of my music. From explicitly jazzy pieces like the third movement of Liquid Interface that conjures Dixieland Swing to even a piece like Mothership which has a fair amount of Gershwin floating behind the surface of it. Jazz Harmony is the furthest you can go theoretically and still feel the music, still feel the harmony. You can’t really do that with 12-tone. It might be complicated, but if you can’t feel it, it doesn’t matter. I love Jazz Harmony. I think that was a very important part of forming my compositional voice.

Also, some psychedelic rock like Pink Floyd. Hearing those albums like the Final Cut, The Wall, The Dark Side of the Moon, where these bands mixed in with orchestra backup and electronic production. That is incredibly surreal where you have voices swirling around your head and sound effects. That very much impacted me. This idea of looking at a seamless production that has everything from electronic sounds to an orchestra. That probably came from Pink Floyd, Atom Heart Mother. You know, huge ambitious project, early Pink Floyd. That was very formative and also of course, in counting electronica. It opened my mind to the possibilities of mixing. The idea of, you know. You have two movements. One is about giant chords exploding and melting. The other one is about little droplets of material running around. Maybe they can be connected. Instead of having two things, you have three. You have the transition. So the idea of transition can be as
exciting as the thing you are leaving; the thing you are coming to. That probably came out of deejaying where the mix is very much a part of the experience.

So, I’m looking down more about *Rusty Air*. How did those pitches get chosen? I was trying to find three different orchestral clouds that could cohabitate in a beautiful way. The worlds that I chose, it wasn’t me. I can give you an analysis of it harmonically that came after the fact. Working them out was very much by ear. I think the reason they can float together is they are connected by each one has a kind of a common tone. If you look in the middle of the range, you hear these kind of flutter tongue flutes on E and B. It starts out as a kind of E based scenario then it becomes like an E 4-2, D, E, F sharp, G sharp (#), B. That connects to the high sparkling material above it through the level of the mediant. A third up from E is G#. Then you have this kind of bright G sharp major floating around it. I think the kind of common tone of the G# between the two links them. On the other end, the low kind of brass chorale that kind of rolls in, sort of in C major is the lower mediant. A third lower than E and it takes that kind of E as its third. If I had designed it that way on paper and then just tried to make it, it probably wouldn’t have worked. Picking it up by ear, I think I gravitated towards sonorities that could have something in common while being quite different overall.

*Rusty Air* took me about six to nine months to write, I think. I think I did have an idea of what the piece would sound like, but it needed a lot of work to actually achieve that, to
find the notes. This is a result of studying with John Corigliano. Think about a piece that would start ambient with these different insect noises and then take one insect noise and turn that into a beat track. In the third movement those three different clouds from the beginning, all come back and they are linked by one theme. That theme was the first thing I wrote; a theme that could link those clouds. Then, a humid dawn at the end which brings all the elements back together. That was a result of thinking about what I was going to do before I did it. I owe that to John Corigliano.

Transitions. I am thinking about this question #49. I don’t know what to say about the...I can speak more generally about the transitions rather than specific chord progressions. I think as I’ve mentioned before, to me transitions have become incredibly important after deejaying and seeing that you know, you can have two records playing together and they become kind of like a third thing. I felt that that would be an important thing to do musically between movements to have them kind of blend together. The most important thing about a transition is that they should start to happen before you really realize it. It often-times metrical modulations are very important parts of a transition for me where the beat grouping of where you are coming from becomes a different unit. In the next one, but you have some kind of a constant running through. Sometimes I will have 16ths kind of running through to connect them. Or, it could be much slower rhythms. Harmonically, too, it should be that you have a kind of a new world start to mix into what you have that should like, in the beginning of Rusty Air have common tones and connections to it so that it
makes sense, but sounds different. You know, it’s a kind of challenge. How do you go into something new smoothly? I found that more and more I want the transitions to last longer and the journey to get to new material to be a very much important part of the piece.

Well, Maurice I hope this helps. I really appreciate your interest in my music and I definitely look forward to seeing the results of your dissertation. So, thanks so much and I will talk to you later.
APPENDIX B

Interviewer: N. Maurice Medley MM

Interviewee: Robert Moody RM

MM: Once again, thank you for joining me.

RM: Sure

MM: Alright. So, I do understand that you met Mason Bates at Brevard Music Camp.

RM: Yep.

MM: Would you talk to me about his approach to you with this piece that he had written for his high school chorus?

RM: Yes, sure. So, uh, I was one of the conductors at Brevard music Center which is a phenomenal summer music festival. It’s like the South’s version of a Tanglewood Festival and, uh, I was the head of the choruses. I was the main choral conductor. I was the chorus master of the opera, and we presented some major choral works each year. Usually two a year, Brahms Requiem and things like that. The chorus consisted of all of the opera singers. It’s about 50, and all of the piano students, about 50 of those. So, we ended up with about 100-voice chorus. The pianist, that in 1993, one of those piano students was this 16 year old kid named Mason Bates, and he was tenor in the chorus. I knew who he was a little bit. I certainly remember seeing him the first couple of weeks of the summer festival. It’s a six-week festival. About the third week or so of the festival, he came to me after rehearsal and had kind of a not exactly shy, but he was a 16 year old kid, but shyish. He came to me, you know, Maestro Moody. “I want to talk to you about
something.” He said, “I’m doing some composition. I’m starting to write some music. I wrote a choral piece for my school choir. He went to a private high school; St. Christopher’s in Richmond, VA, an all boys’ school. So, he had written this piece for boy choir, but including young treble voices through changed voices. So, SATB but actually more parts than SATB, but for all like a male choir. So, he showed me the piece and it was a setting of the Latin scriptural text Timor et Tremor, In fear and trembling I come before thee oh God. First of all I’m thinking, how does a 16 year old kid find Timor et Tremor. How does he find this text? Then, as I began to sort of bang through it on the piano and look at it and listen to it in my mind, I remember very clearly thinking, “Wow, this kid is ridiculously talented. So, I went back to him and I said, I’ve looked at it and actually I have a surprise for you. I’ve gotten 12 of the opera singers together and we are going to perform it on a Wednesday afternoon recital here at Brevard. So, the next Wednesday, I got 12 guys together and some of the guys did their part on countertenor and I got 12 opera singers together and we performed the piece and I got it recorded. And it was very exciting. And then that Fall, I went back to Evansville, IN. I was working as assistant conductor for the Evansville Philharmonic and conductor of the Evansville Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. And I took the recording to my boss, the music director. His name is Alfred Savia, and I said, “Al, listen to this piece.” He started listening. As he was listening, I said, “A 16-year-old kid wrote that.” Alfred was the spark of the idea. Alfred said, “Wow, 16.” He said, “That could be something cool for the youth orchestra.” He said, “Wouldn’t that be cool to have a piece premiered by the youth orchestra, teenaged
players, written by a fellow high schooler?” I said, “I think that’s a great idea. Let’s try.”

So, I got in touch with Mason and he said he was absolutely game to do it. He had his first major composition teacher, Hope Armstrong Herb, Erb was one of his teachers at school. She really jumped in with Mason. I’m sure he may have told you the story. His side of the story of his crash course in orchestration that he took on in order to make this project happen. At the end of the day, he wrote for us a very substantive piece. A 28-minute piece, a pretty lengthy piece called FREE, F-R-E-E (Free Variations for Orchestra). It was a theme and variations, a five-movement piece, you know, a really brilliant piece.

So, that was the first piece. I know that he took that piece and used it as the primary piece he submitted when he was applying to college; to get into composition programs. It was really, I think, the final movement especially of Free Variations, that was one of the keys that got him into the Juilliard program to study, you know eventually with John Corigliano. So, yea, I think first he studied with DDT, with David Del Tredici and then John. So, I was very proud of that. In the interim, Mason and I, I had written this youth concert, you know the concerts where you bus in the 5th graders during a school day. I wrote this concert called The Orchestra’s Most Excellent Adventures. We would send these two teenagers back in time to meet Gabrielli and then Bach, and then Beethoven, Dvorák, Gershwin, Shostakovich. When it came to modern time, now we are talking about 1994 or so, the teenagers would ask me, the conductor, “Hey dude is anybody still writing music for orchestras now.” I would say, yea, go to New York. I would send them to New York to Richmond, VA, at first when he was in high school, eventually New
York, to Juilliard, and they would come back and walking back on stage, instead of an actor playing Bach or Beethoven, it would be Mason. So, he came back, and he became sort of the actor in the show. I would get Mason to talk about how a composer creates a piece of music for a full orchestra. Kind of use it in very kid friendly language and then we played the finale, the 5th movement of *Free Variations*. So that piece even when Mason was in high school, that piece got performed not just by the Evansville Philharmonic, but the Louisville Orchestra, the Greenville Symphony in South Carolina, Oklahoma City Philharmonic, the Phoenix Symphony. It really sort of took on a life of its own.

**MM:** Very nice, very nice. Texture, harmony, and rhythm are the main parts of Mason Bates’ music. What other commonalities do you think are the driving forces behind Mason’s music?

**RM:** Well, a couple things come to mind. One is just, I may be influenced by knowing Mason so well. But, I do believe that I hear this in his composition and have actually from the beginning. I know the composers Mason liked when he was 16. I know the composers he was interested in and I am aware of the composers he became interested in as he moved to be 18, and 20, and 22. Early on, it was a lot of George Gershwin. Early on it was a lot of also I think his dad was a big fan of sort of the Great American Songbook. A lot of that music was really key in his own household. As he began sort of moving into Juilliard and studying with sort of such a forward composer like David Del Tredici, you know I saw Mason’s interests move to like Oliver Knussen, compositions of Knussen. Bartok for sure began to be this big figure in Mason’s listening life. Often, when I would
see his next composition start to come out and he wrote some really cool things during his Juilliard days like he wrote a piece called *Trout Fishing in America* during that time he wrote a piece called *In Bed*, during that time. Now these weren’t orchestral works they were usually like for a singer and small ensemble or something like that. I kept thinking boy am I really hearing like the pointillism of Knussen in this music. I am definitely hearing kind of a harmonic structure of Bartok in this music, so I think a very wide array of composers influenced Mason from Big Band, Great American Songbook, Gershwin, Porter to Bartok, Knussen, and Del Tredici. So, I think when you have that wide of an array, it’s going to probably push you to create something that is unique, which is what I think Mason has done. And the other thing to say is our relationship. I was 26 when we met. He was 16 and I was 26. We really became very close friends very quickly. When he graduated from high school—so the year between high school and college, he and I made a cross-country trip. We drove, just the two of us, from LA back to South Carolina and camped along the way I noticed when you hang out with Mason, that he is very fond of making noises. He just, like he and then he usually get sort of stuck on one. I wish I could give you.... well, one was like “hmmm” Well, sometimes he would be like do the thing where he would click his chin and make the water sound. He would do that all the time or make a little weird whistle. He would be ...You could tell he was experimenting with something. He would be like.., I can’t even do it. “whistle noise” And sure enough, the more… I got so tickled when he first started writing really with electronica in the mix, all of a sudden all these sounds I’d been hearing him do just sort of seemingly quasi
obsessed with a sound—going through a phase of making this one sound all of sudden they’re showing up in the electronica. So, in addition to the things you said texture and harmony, I think he hears these things in his head. I’ve seen him trying to actually create them with his mouth, with his vocal chords, with whatever. And then I see them making it into the electronic sounds.

**MM:** Very nice, very nice. That’s a nice segue into what we want to talk about with *Rusty Air.* What was your involvement with him with the commission? Were their any limitations? What did you discuss, electronics?

**RM:** Yes, so you know going back to *Free Variations,* that was kind of a very formal approach to how I think a young composer would take on a piece. Like I said he was really taking a crash course in orchestration and the pieces. I really loved the piece. It has a beauty of it that I think comes from a person who is orchestrating his first work. By the time we got to *Rusty,* I had already been involved with the commission for the Phoenix Symphony of a piece he called *Ode* which is built to be a precursor to the Beethoven 9th Symphony. I had been very involved with him in discussions with him in preparing for *Ode.* And the piece *Ode* has no electronics. He wrote it in 2002. It has no electronics, but it has a lot of percussion that creates unique sounds. He asked for an unloaded empty shotgun to be back in the percussion section because he wants the sound of the cocking of a shotgun.

**MM:** Okay
RM: We had a lot of conversations about the noises he makes. What sounds could something make. Even to this day, Mason will from time to time, he will ask me. Just for the piece he did for San Francisco.

MM: *Alternative Energy?*

RM: No, for San Francisco Symphony he wrote a piece; they just premiered it like two months ago.

MM: *Auditorium*

RM: *Auditorium.* He just will do this from time to time. He calls and asks me about either what is the practicality of writing for a certain instrument or he thinks an instrument can do this and if I had any experience especially like do players rebel if we ask a player to do XY or Z. So, back to Rusty, so when it got to Rusty, I had just won my first music director job. Music director of the Winston Salem symphony in North Carolina and programming my first full season. I called Mason and said I'd love to... what I want to do is have Winston Salem Symphony commission a work from you to celebrate my first job as a music director. So of course, he did it and he decided that he thought the piece should be evocative of how he and I met. We met at Brevard music center. Brevard is in the Western North Carolina Mountains. People call them the Smoky Mountains. They are the Blue Ridge Mountains of that part of the Appalachian Chain. You mentioned the word texture. Mason said I want to capture the texture of the air. And he said you know how we used to, and I think this is a very important part to tell you—is to talk about a woman named Nan Burt.
**MM:** Yes, I wanted to get to that, yes!

**RM:** So, Nan Burt was a major patron of the Brevard Music Center. The huge alumni facility on the campus of Brevard is called the Burt Alumni House…

**MM:** OK

**RM:** …for example. Major donors, the top, I don’t know, six or eight donors had created some deal back in the 50’s where if they donated “X” amount to Brevard they got a cabin up on this mountain just above the music festival. And they are not small, not overly elegant, but really wonderful mountain cabins and they were dotted in the mountains. Well, Nan had one of these cabins and had a big porch on the front. She had about eight rocking chairs across the porch. Sit and rock, put your feet up on the rail, look out over the mountains. So, Nan’s porch was the site. Nan lived until the year 2005. She died at age 106. She is one of the single most important influences on my life and many a musicians who has moved on to huge careers. Keith Lockhart is one example. He was a big sort of “child” of Nan’s. Mason was a “child” of Nan’s. One of her children she said. People she got really interested in their careers, bring them up to her porch for ice cream or coffee. If you were old enough a little wine or what have you. We would sort of just sit up there and solve all the problems of the world. She was a very spiritual person very thick southern accent with an amazing life of experience. So Mason said I want to capture the sound, the texture of the air—of what it felt like to be sitting on Nan’s porch on a sultry summer evening, sun’s going down, finally the bulk of the heat seems to be gone out of the day. The katydids are starting to sing. Cicada—people call them in most parts of the world but
we call them katydids. Katydid are starting to do their thing. There is a quality of noise. He said, “I want that to be the framework for the piece.” And then he moved from that into what became Rusty Air in Carolina it became this texture; the piece begins and ends with that electronic sound he creates of katydids. He takes us from sun-down to sunup. That’s the trajectory of the work. And at first, it’s the katydids and ambient sounds from the orchestra that kind of help paint the texture. Then as you move into the second movement, Katydid Country, the katydids with help from like muted trumpets and oboes have sort of now created—the katydids now seem to be locking into a rhythm.

**MM:** And he calls these like orchestral clouds.

**RM:** Yes! That’s right, that’s right! And so coming out of these clouds, coming out of this haze, becomes this identifiable rhythm and the rhythm sort of takes on this basically funk groove and now it seems the katydids are rocking in the night. That’s when this sort of bumm, bump, bump, bom, begins with the woodwinds and the percussion. And then that texture becomes this sort of funky texture for a while but then it moves into this southern midnight and like everything is beginning to settle down. Everyone is falling asleep. That's where the brass chorale comes in and again there is this, that’s the slow movement if you will, you know it’s a short work;

**MM:** Right

**RM:** …it’s 13 minutes in total. But that’s the slow movement. This southern midnight moment and then finally he gets to Locust Singing In the Dawn. Do I have the title right?

**MM:** Yes, that’s right.
RM: he has *Locust Singing in the Dawn...In the Heat of Dawn*, I think.

MM: Yes.

RM: The fourth movement, it’s like the sun is just beginning to crack the morning again and begin to hear the sort of stirring of sounds and bugs moving. The kind of things you really only hear in that humid air. Memphis is the place that everyone can relate. For example, when I did this piece in Phoenix, Arizona, I had to say, “unlike the dryness of Phoenix,” there’s a quality to the air that anybody who is from the south knows what you are talking about.

MM: Yea, I do.

RM: Yea. There’s just this quality to the stickiness of the air. It can be really oppressive in the heat of the day, but it can be somehow kind of soothing as the sun dips and it begets a little nightfall. I think he captured it perfectly. You know?

MM: I think so as well.

RM: I am overwhelmingly proud of him.

MM: Great. Great. I want to talk to you about how you go about unlocking the ideas inside the piece and go about rehearsing them with your ensemble. What commonalities do you look for in all of his pieces? Are they different in each one?

RM: Well, I will say I hear Mason in his pieces. I see a piece if, you know. I’ve been doing.... I can’t even count how many times I’ve done *Rusty Air* anymore. The same things can be said now for *Dessert Transport*, a piece I commissioned for my Arizona festival. I didn't commission *Liquid Interface*. Leonard Slatkin did with the National Symphony.
But I’ve done Liquid Interface. Again, I don’t even know how many times with orchestras. Now I’m on to Alternative Energy. That’s a big piece I’m doing this year. The Cello Concerto, I’m doing a lot this year. Garages of the Valley. I’ve just done about four times this past year. But there is not a single piece of his that I do. You know he wrote a synthesizer concerto that he played. I did it with him. The premiere was with the Atlanta Symphony and he did not play. I did the premiere with him as the keyboardist with the Phoenix Symphony. But there is not a piece of his that I have mentioned where I don’t see a connection. It’s interesting; I see an evolution, to be sure. I see an absolute evolution but there are certain chords that Mason just likes.

**MM:** Especially in those transitions into the slower sections.

**RM:** Absolutely.

**MM:** I love those!

**RM:** There is a way he has this kind of like macro harmony that I sort of latch onto that. It's like homecoming for me because I know it so well.

**MM:** Right.

**RM:** I don't know. I have a very... He and I have talked and I’ve talked with other conductors about the difficulty or lack therefore locking in to the electronica when needed on the pieces that have it. I’ve never had a hint of a moment of a problem with it.

**MM:** Gotcha

**RM:** I can only say this about Mason Bates. There is no composer that I can claim upwards of best friend status with other than Mason. Maybe it’s just because we are such
close friends. I have heard Maurice Abravanel. I got to interview him a few times before he died. He was the conductor companion to Kurt Weill. I’ve heard Abravanel talk about Weill and the special friendship they had and how easy it was for him to conduct Weill. It came so naturally to him because he knew Weill so well. I think that’s an easy one to point out. I would say Bernstein conducting Copeland. There are just certain… You know. I kid Mason a lot. I say…Look the reason I commission him so much is so that I will… This is my only chance of making it to the history. Conductors, we fade away. Composers live forever. So I will be in some footnote somewhere about this work was commissioned by Robert Moody and the Memphis Symphony, I’m sure, we will commission something here.

**MM:** Right, Exactly about Beale Street even.

**RM:** Of course. Of course. So, I see a commonality in his works. You talked about the expanse of harmonies in slower sections. He likes, Mason really likes ascending, melodic structure. If you look at *Alternative Energy*. If you look at *Garages of the Valley*. I’m thinking about his recent works. He likes these. Dee don on don dat deed da. He likes these cascading upward sounds. When I see it, I go “that’s a signature I’m used to it” and love it.

**MM:** Right. So when you are going about commissioning a piece, how do you know it’s the right piece for Mason to do rather than some other composer for you?

**RM:** In the case of Mason and only Mason, I call Mason. I will tell you. I have called Mason before and said “I have an idea for a piece “or “I want to get one of my orchestras
to do a piece. Would you be interested? Here’s the concept I have in mind.” When I explain the concept. He will be like “I just don’t see it or I’m not feeling it.” I’m like “okay.” Then other times he is like I’m all over this. This is exactly. Rusty Air was an example. Dessert Transport which is... I think it equally just a phenomenal piece. Dessert Transport came about because we wanted him to write a piece for our festival. The Arizona Music Fest. It was our 20th anniversary. It coincided with the 100th anniversary of the state of Arizona and this guy gave us a two-hour helicopter ride around the state. I mean, it was so cool. Take off from Scottsdale, fly up towards the Grand Canyon, over Sedona, over Flagstaff back down past these Native American cliff dwellings, ruins, back across Mogollon Rim. We sort of got this unbelievable view of the state that very few people get to see. That’s what inspired him in that. I said I want you to be inspired by Arizona. He said, “I don’t know how to do that.” I said, “I don’t know either.” He said what do you think. Then someone offered this, and we were like thumbs up.

MM: Well he wasn’t planning on having the helicopter.

RM: No

MM: It wasn't a part of that?

RM: No. Not until we had that trip. That trip happened and you could see the wheels turning. He was like. You can see him. It was sort of like “I got it.” I see where I am going with this.

MM: Very nice. Let’s go back to Rusty Air for one second. In regards to commissioning
that piece, did either of you have reservations about it’s longevity or performances. It’s was a new piece to the culture.

RM: Yea, sure. And it wasn’t the very first piece with electronica, but it may be the earli-est piece to have gotten as much play as it has. I think it’s the most successful in terms of how often it has been played. It’s the earliest electronic piece that has become the most successful or played the most. My thinking as a conductor and Mason has shaped this for me being his friend, I see conductors who take an approach to new music which is totally fine and that is to try and champion one piece by one thousand different composers. I ac-tually prefer the other take. There are five, maybe max composers, living composers, that I am really their fan. I am really just a huge believer in their music. What I try to do is champion their music again and again. Not just commission it, but make sure it gets mul-tiple performances. So I have taken Rusty Air all over the place. I've taken Dessert Transport all over the place. That’s one of the reasons is because, I think most composers will say getting a premiere is not actually that hard. Getting performances number two, three, four and beyond is overwhelmingly hard. I never actually went through the thought process. Certainly not when he was writing it and once the piece existed and hearing it, I thought this piece is absolutely going to have a life. It is too good and it’s too progr-ammatically. It’s so nicely programmed pieces like of Barber Knoxville in the Summer of 1919. I pair it with that quite a lot. It opens the door to a lot of good pairings. Appala-chian Spring, Copeland or something like that. It’s in at thematic genre that already
existed. That’s a help for the piece. The same way *Liquid Interface* can pair well with *La Mer* on a concert.

**RM**: If fact, I’ve done it that way. A lot of conductors have. I think Mason is clever about finding getting interested in themes. I’m doing *Alternative Energy* with Symphony fantastique because both of them are based on a Idee fixe.

**MM**: Yes

**RM**: So, there’s this, that’s a wonderful way to put those two pieces together.

**MM**: Good to hear your programming thoughts. Very nice.

**RM**: Yea

**MM**: Very nice. My final question here. Do you feel that composers have lost an audience concerning contemporary music?

**RM**: I think composers, I’m absolutely generalizing when I say what I am about to say. There are without doubt exceptions to the thing I am about to say. Everyone here me say that. There are absolute exceptions. But, in general composition took a turn that was not good for composition in the 1950s up through at least some part of the 1980s. I think it was an approach to composition and it became overwhelming intellectual and mathematical and interested in sort of the physics and the sort of just what happened. I mean, I don’t think Schoenberg is to blame. I don’t think Elliot Carter is to blame. Those two composers for example have some music that I think will absolutely last for five hundred years. Phenomenal stuff. There was just sort of this group thing it seems to be that moves composers into thinking that they had to show how intelligent they were in their writing as
opposed to making music that was touching the soul. Less to be said that I am the first person to say this. Benrstein said this. He even said it about his own compositions. He acknowledged that there were times in his career, especially in the 60’s, where he felt he wasn’t going to be taken seriously if he didn't write, you know, 12 tone, atonal music. He was always going to be thought of as the Westside Story guy. So, he had to go this way but his heart wasn’t in it. If you listen to pieces you will see like even in Kaddish the 3rd Symphony of Bernstein he starts out trying so hard to be so intellectual. So 12 Tone and by the end he is writing beautiful melodies. The piece finishes with glorious melodies. I think that happened in those decades but I think by the time Mason came along by the mid 90s when he really started to have something to say and his music started getting out there. I think by that point already music was living composers. It was, ceasing to be such a dark mark on you to actually to write a melody or to write something that had, you know God forbid a rhythmic structure that might make you think of you know, FUNK. You know or trip-hop. It was no longer the thought that you were somehow lesser if that’s what you came up with. That could still be worked into a bigger texture and a bigger piece that could be overwhelmingly substantive. Anybody who listens to the last…. I challenge anybody to listen to On the Wannsee movement, the end of the Liquid Interface and say that’s not substantive. You know, or the hurricane, kind of the Katrina nod that he gives in the middle of that piece. At one point there’s a sound of like an underwater radio playing 20’s Puttin’ on the Ritz type music. But it’s happening under this gurgle of orchestral texture. There is no way you can’t say it’s substantive. There are plenty of
other great ones out there, but Mason, I think, is going to get credit when history looks back on this era as one of the—I think he is already achieving—sort of understanding he is the John Adams of his generation. He is the Aaron Copeland of his generation. I think he is going to get a lot of credit for getting out an entire generation of people interested in orchestral music because he uses the color palette of the orchestra so well and then he adds to it. Whether it is the cocking sound of the shotgun or the electronica that he comes up with because he created some crazy noise that he builds into the texture. I’m clearly a fan, obviously.

**MM:** Of course, I am as well.

**RM:** It would be impossible not to be. I was a groomsman in his wedding for Pete’s sake. You know, I love the guy like a brother and I am proud to—among the things I am most proud of in my life one is being his friend and being able to commission a few pieces from him.

**MM:** Well this is beautiful. I’m glad I caught up with you.

**RM:** Cool. I hope this was good for your paper.

**MM:** This was very informative. Indeed I had a chance to actually see him do Mercury Soul in Pittsburgh in April of 2012 or ’13. Amazing amazing.

**RM:** When he comes here, we are either going to on the Saturday night after the Cannon Center concert. We are either going to during the 2nd half of the concert when we are playing *Pines of Rome*, either, we have done this before with a few orchestras. We are either going to turn the lobby into sort of a club. Get the lighting cool and get him set up
to spin and open the bars and sort of just have it open up into an after party there or we are going to move him to a location and we may even do some Mercury Soul. We may even bring a string quartet and let him do some of his Mercury Soul.

**MM:** I know that he is doing some educational outreaches in California with some schools. High schools around here and probably across the country, a lot of the middle school kids get to see the orchestra perform. But, there is nothing really for the older kids.

**RM:** That’s right.

**MM:** I didn’t know if that is something you are thinking about bringing here. It would be hard for him because he is not here.

**RM:** Yea, the other thing about Mason is he is married and have two young the children and he is pretty protective of his time away from his kids. I respect that very much. So, we will get him here and we will have time to build in at least one more morning day of school visits and maybe we will make it work to be like, like taking it to a high school class or something. For sure, the Saturday night thing is happening. In what iteration, I don't’ know yet. Don’t yet know.

**MM:** I can’t wait to see it.

**RM:** Yea. Cool.

**MM:** Thank you.

**RM:** So nice to meet you. Meet you again, see you again I should say.

**MM:** Likewise.
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for Mason Bates

1. What was it like growing up in Richmond, Virginia?

2. Describe for me your musical experiences in primary and secondary school including private lessons and symphony experiences.

3. As a young composer, what type of musical notation software “if any” did you first become familiar with? How has that evolved?

4. Brevard is the most talked about summer experience for you during your youth; how did you arrive there? Are there any other summer musical experiences that were significant in shaping your musical background?

5. Robert Moody is a close friend of yours. Talk to me about the first time you met and the various commissions you have with him beginning with the Evansville Philharmonic, Phoenix Symphony and the Winston Salem Symphony and Rusty Air in Carolina for orchestra & electronica.

   - Ask about the Phoenix Commissioning Project.
   - Who were the other five composers selected?
   - Do you remember any of their compositions?
   - Have you collaborated with any of the composers since?
   - You have worked with many orchestras. The Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group and the Composer Conductor Symposium, what were some of the takeaways that now serve you well in working independently with conductors, specifically with new commissions?
• With the commissioning of Rusty Air, were you given any stylistic implications? Do you prefer boundaries or suggestions from the commissioning party?

• What was different about the original commissioning project versus the transcribed commission for wind band with Rusty Air? What was your level of involvement of the two?

• Does your level of involvement differ any with other commissioning projects?

6. Free Variations for orchestra. How does this work have significance with your entry to Columbia-Juilliard?

• Describe to me your experiences with John Corigliano. David Del Tredici? Samuel Adler?

• Were lessons held weekly, individually or in groups?

• When you were studying with Corigliano, what elements did he stress most for you? Was it motivic, rhythmic, melodic construction, or clarity?

• How have the works of John Corigliano been influential in your own writings?

• Of the teachers that you’ve studied with, what are some takeaways that you have learned from them that you currently use?

7. Why do you think you ever developed an interest in electronica? Was there anything in particular that led you in that direction?

8. There are several works that you produced/composed while at Juilliard. Digital Loom marks the 100-year celebration of the school. What other works did you compose while there? Were these pieces in conjunction or separate from the Composers and Choreographers workshop at Juilliard?
9. Who were the other composers that attended Juilliard with you?

10. With your new residency at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts do you plan to collaborate with any choreographers that attended Juilliard with you?

11. If you were to classify or divide your large ensemble works into segments, how would you do that and why? For instance, compositions before Omnivorous Furniture and compositions after Omnivorous Furniture.

12. It was after you started school at UC Berkeley Center for New Music and Audio Technology that you won the Rome Prize and the Berlin Prize. What genre were the winning pieces for and what were their titles?

13. Your residency with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra commenced in 2010; how has this experience helped to increase the interest in contemporary music?

14. The Beethoven and Bates Festival with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra was not the first time that you paired other composers with works of Beethoven. Share your thoughts between the Phoenix experience and the San Francisco experience.

15. Recently appointed at San Francisco Conservatory of Music in 2014, what are your plans for the department?

16. You and John Corigliano share in being the inaugural composer in some very significant places, most recently for you, the Kennedy Center. What are the expectations in this position and how will it serve in the capacity of the performing and visual arts? What is the aim?

17. In what ways have you been able to balance the life of DJ, composer, teacher and residencies?

18. As a composer who transcribes his own orchestral works for wind band, what awareness and or standard are you communicating with the greater wind band community/classical music? Is there a standard and awareness that you feel must still be raised?
19. Do you have any thoughts on how we can help propel the wind ensemble to the level of respect of orchestras?

20. How do you feel at this moment about the promotion of your wind band music?

21. Do you have any interest in writing for the young band in the future?

22. When you were in the early stages of combining the prejudices of art music audiences with popular music and/or things popular, what obstacles did you face and have to overcome?

23. Are you still facing some obstacles whether old or new even today with your success?

24. There are some authors/critics in music that believe that some composers are less concerned about writing in a way that will enhance the sound and the execution on a particular instrument. What is your goal? Are you more concerned about the musical line and effects desired rhythmically and tonally, or whether or not the passage is actually idiomatic and comfortable on the various instruments?

25. As an accomplished composer in various genres, what is your favorite to write for?

26. Talk to me about your compositional process, I have often heard you speak about thinking ahead of the ten fingers and thinking about what the piece itself will be about. Talk to me about your process for composing a piece for large ensembles like the orchestra and wind band. Do you see much difference in scoring for them? I suppose you would first envision what the piece would be, and then you would perhaps work at the piano and computer?

27. Do you have a clear idea of the piece when writing it?

28. Is your compositional process in general any different for wind band/orchestra than what you may compose for Mercury Soul or any other genre? For example, How is the composition of a Mercury Soul set similar to composing Rusty Air. How much of your work, artistry, creativity as a DJ go hand in hand with your actual compositions?
29. What is it about the narrative form that resonates with you so strongly that you have chosen to adopt it as your compositional style for several orchestra and wind band pieces? What is your aim for the wind band medium and the audience?

30. How would you describe your compositional style?

31. When and where do you think your compositional/voice began to emerge and are there specific events circumstances around your life that may have helped propel this?

32. Did living in Berlin help develop your compositional language and creativity for orchestra, wind band, and electronica? In what ways?

33. Who or what has influenced your compositional language through electronica most? In what ways have they influenced your writing?

34. Your current residency with the Kennedy Center appears to be a platform that will propel the performing arts in the 21st century. Do you think of your compositional language as a way of breaking down walls or stereotypes?

35. How long did it take to write Rusty Air? Did you have a clear idea of what it might sound like before writing it this particular piece?

36. In Rusty Air, particularly Nan’s Porch. What was your rationale for choosing those specific pitches in the first movement?

37. Describe to me what you consider an “orchestral cloud”. Could there possibly be a fourth orchestral cloud within the first movement?

38. How did you arrive at the decision to use blues inside Rusty Air?

39. Describe the electronica elements in Rusty Air beyond what we obviously hear. Talk to me about the elements of techno and the underground elements depicted.

40. What are some suggestions on how best to perform this piece and any others like it that will help conductors study it and aid them in their rehearsal process?
41. Of the performances that you have heard of Rusty Air, are there any particular adjustments that you wish the ensemble had done that are common in most every performance?

42. Is there a particular element that you wish conductors would spend more time in rehearsal on with?