

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:      EFFECT OF MUSIC ON THE SOUL: INTENT OR  
INDIFFERENCE IN THE COMPOSITION OF EWAZEN,  
FETTER, HIDAS, HOVHANESS, PEDERSON AND  
WILDER

Karl Aubrey Wiederwohl, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2009

Dissertation directed by: Professor Gregory Miller  
School of Music

This performance dissertation completed in 2009 by bass trombonist and Doctor of Musical Arts candidate Karl Wiederwohl consists of three live recitals and a written document which serves as a complement to the performances. The document discusses the six composers whose music is performed on the recitals. The document's six chapters respectively discuss each composer's disposition with regard to their purpose in composing music. As a complement to the performances the document gives special attention to each composer's thoughts on affecting listeners through their music.

Wiederwohl creates a window into the mentality behind the artistry of Eric Ewazen, David Fetter, Frigyes Hidas, Alan Hovhaness, Tommy Pederson and Alec Wilder. The document serves to inform and enrich the experience of both performers and listeners of these six composers. This is achieved through the document's treatment of

the following four questions for each composer: How did each come to be a composer?

How did each come to compose in his particular style? Does the composer intend his

music to serve a purpose? Does the composer intend his music to serve a purpose, and, if

so, does this purpose involve reaching and/or affecting the listener at the deepest level?

© Copyright by  
Karl Aubrey Wiederwohl  
2009

Eric Ewazen

b Cleveland, 1 March 1954

To quote a reviewer of Ewazen's work, "It's understandable that his writing is enjoying its current popularity... it is colorful, accessible and engaging music."<sup>1</sup>

*"I always want people to feel something when listening to my music--both as a composer and as a pianist. I want the listener sometimes to feel like they are working out a puzzle or game in their mind as they have fun listening to a fun, contrapuntal work, or get engaged as they listen to melodies and harmonies that they simply want to hear again, and maybe;...again and again!....Or sometimes to surprise them--so that the music they are listening to is actually a story being told them where they listen along, and sometimes are surprised or amused or scared....in other words, I always am concerned with what they are experiencing at any given time."*<sup>2</sup>

Ewazen has described composing "like being a child in a candy store and looking at all the contrasting colors that can be mixed and combined. It can be compared to having a big Kaleidoscope."<sup>3</sup>

*"I loved to improvise as a youngster and played silly games on the piano, such as using only the black keys. In the short Bagatelle in B-flat major by Beethoven I once played all the E's as naturals and was extremely disappointed when my piano teacher said that they should be E-flats. To me the E-natural sounded so much better and more*

---

<sup>1</sup> Nancy Schneeloch-Bingham, "Concerto for Flute and Chamber Orchestra," *National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors Journal* 53, (Fall 2004): 24.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Ewazen, interview by author, June 24, 2009, via e-mail.

<sup>3</sup> Heather Pettit, "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 32.

*intriguing. Making up ideas and writing down melodies was always fun, and when I first heard the Samuel Barber Piano Sonata I loved it so much that I decided to one day write a piece with that same kind of majesty and grandeur."*<sup>4</sup>

As a child, young Eric played piano and cello and later took up string bass as a member of the Midpark High School Band in Middleburg Heights, Ohio. The school music program at Midpark presented many opportunities for him to develop his musical talents. Ewazen later recounted, "I played in a band under James Fudale and in an orchestra conducted by Norman Ludwig. In addition, I accompanied the choir directed by Larry Howes, and these three teachers encouraged my composing and programmed the music I wrote, including an arrangement of a rock song for band, an original orchestra work, and a piece for chorus and wind quintet."<sup>5</sup>

Ewazen went on to study music in college: Eastman School of Music (BM 1976), Juilliard School (MM 1978, DMA 1980).<sup>6</sup> His teachers have included Milton Babbitt, Samuel Adler, Warren Benson, Joseph Schwantner, and Gunther Schuller.<sup>7</sup>

*"Over the years I studied with Warren Benson, who taught me how to write idiomatically and often discussed the differences in writing for each orchestral instrument.*

---

<sup>4</sup> Heather Pettit, "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 32.

<sup>5</sup> Heather Pettit, "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 32.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey Snedeker, "The Color of Brass: An Interview with Eric Ewazen," *The Horn Call* 32, (November 2001): 33.

<sup>7</sup> *About the Composer* [article on-line] (accessed June 27, 2009); available from <http://www.ericewazen.com/new/about.php>; Internet.

*Samuel Adler offered wonderful suggestions on the structure of music and conveyed a real sense of joy in composing. Joseph Schwantner introduced me to experimenting with 20th-century styles, and from master orchestrator and composer Gunther Schuller I learned to shape, refine and balance sonorities."*<sup>8</sup>

Fortunately for those who've come to enjoy his music, Ewazen had these fine teachers to aid in the cultivation of his talent and love for composing.

*"I always enjoyed creating something from scratch--the idea of a blank paper was exciting to me--I enjoyed the process of constantly trying different chord combinations, writing different "catchy" melodies, and then to experiment with them. Much of composition, for me, is trying, and retrying--for an outside listener, listening to someone compose, it can sound kind of tedious--but I think to have made composing a career, the composer has to enjoy the process. I go back to George Sand's description about the way Chopin composed. I'm really paraphrasing here--but it was something along the lines that the inspiration would come to him suddenly, but then would come the most arduous labor she ever witnessed--that he would break his pencils, pace up and down his room, repeat and modify one bar a hundred times only to end up writing it out the first way he had it! I can identify with that! It is like a sculptor with a piece of clay--where you shape and reshape, and sometimes by the process of elimination you come up with just the shape you want. I like the music ultimately to feel effortless, but there has to be a craft to make that happen."*<sup>9</sup>

"Eric's compositions captivate the audience with their artful crafting and cohesiveness of melodic and harmonic language."<sup>10</sup> These are the words of the renowned oboist Linda

---

<sup>8</sup> Heather Pettit, "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 32.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Ewazen, interview by author, June 24, 2009, via e-mail.

<sup>10</sup> Julia Gulasy, "Intriguing New Work for the Oboe: Eric Ewazen and Linda Strommen discuss *Down a River of Time*," *The Double Reed* 24, no. 2 (2001): 133.

Strommen who commissioned Ewazen to write a concerto in honor of her late father, avid arts supporter Dean Strommen. Ms. Strommen put much thought into selecting a composer for this profound task of elegy. She eventually offered the commission to her Juilliard colleague Ewazen, who enthusiastically embraced the idea, at the time, not having an oboe concerto in his oeuvre.

Speaking of Ewazen's music, Strommen says, "I was immediately captivated by his style."<sup>11</sup> "When hearing Eric's music, I think of sweeping or soaring lines in the faster movements, often with swirling rhythmic agitation. The slow movements of his compositions seem to have a Samuel Barber-like depth and beauty with their poignancy and intensity of emotion. His final movements often speak with a sense of expectancy and uplifted spirit, leaving the listener with renewed feelings of joy."<sup>12</sup>

The majority of Ewazen's output is absolute music--not programmatic. So this concerto is a rare opportunity for listeners to experience Ewazen's music with a more concrete idea of the composer's thoughts and feelings woven into the sonic tapestry. The following program notes, written by Ewazen, are quite illuminating.

*"Down a River of Time," a concerto for oboe and string orchestra, was a work which percolated for several years before being composed and premiered by the wonderful oboist and my dear friend, Linda Strommen with the American Sinfonietta, conducted by Michael Palmer at the*

---

<sup>11</sup> Julia Gulasy, "Intriguing New Work for the Oboe: Eric Ewazen and Linda Strommen discuss *Down a River of Time*," *The Double Reed* 24, no. 2 (2001): 133.

<sup>12</sup> Julia Gulasy, "Intriguing New Work for the Oboe: Eric Ewazen and Linda Strommen discuss *Down a River of Time*," *The Double Reed* 24, no. 2 (2001): 134.

*Bellingham Summer Music Festival in Washington State in August, 1999. It was written at the suggestion of Linda, who commissioned the piece as a memorial tribute to her father. Having also recently lost my father, this piece became a very personal meditation on life and death. On Christmas Day, 1997, the day my father died in Cleveland, a beautiful essay coincidentally appeared in the Cleveland Plain Dealer by Richard Feagler in which he told poignant, funny and heartfelt stories of his relatives and parents--long since gone. Near the end of this essay, titled "Christmas Past Comes Alive at Aunt Ida's," he describes these beloved souls "Moving, though they can't feel the current, down a river of time." This became the title of the Concerto, a work which contemplates this inexorable rushing river. The first movement portrays that river of time with its ebbs and flows, hopes and dreams. The second movement portrays emotions felt during times of loss--powerful feelings running the gamut from sorrow to resignation to tenderness and peace at the remembrance of happier distant times. In the final movement, those happier memories flood the music, as feelings of strength and determination supercede all else, and the work comes to its virtuosic conclusion with a joyful intensity.<sup>13</sup>*

Ewazen's music is often criticized for its consistent aesthetic, which challenges the limited attention span of some musical highbrows. Fortunately for those of us who need a reliable source of joy and pathos, Ewazen's artistry has remained a reliable well always ready to fill a dry cup in search of sustenance.

He says, "Composers are not out-of-place when they write simple, direct music for advanced or professional-level players because even the simplest melodies can be

---

<sup>13</sup> Liner Notes to the CD "Sejong Plays Ewazen," Albany Records 2003.



meaningful. Both composers and performers should enjoy the work to make the music sound profound and not simplistic."<sup>14</sup>

Performers simply seeking a way to show off their technique should look to other composers. Ewazen has said, "I usually focus more on meaning and expression in music rather than mere virtuosity."<sup>15</sup> He tries to create a rich *musical* experience for *all* performers on stage, not just the soloist, and not just the audience. In describing his *Concerto for Bassoon and Wind Ensemble* Ewazen has said, "I wanted to make sure that all of the accompanying wind ensemble parts were interesting and enjoyable to play, while [still] making the solo bassoon part stand out."<sup>16</sup>

Ewazen has made some very telling statements with regard to his style. The following quotes contain some repeated information, but this repetition serves to emphasize the importance of certain influences.

*"There were several distinct influences on my music. I have always loved the "Americana" sound of composers such as Copland, Barber, [William] Schumann, Bernstein, and Gershwin. I have long been attracted to those great harmonies and [the] sense of exciting rhythmic drive found in their music. I also love the turn of the turn-of-the-century (the previous century that is!!) composers such as Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Bartok, Debussy, and Ravel. I am equally attracted to the composers of the current*

---

<sup>14</sup> Heather Pettit, "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 36.

<sup>15</sup> Heather Pettit, "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 36.

<sup>16</sup> Heather Pettit, "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 36.

*generation, such as Schwanter and Crumb. Another interesting influence for me was that my background is Ukrainian and Polish, and my father used to do the traditional Ukrainian dances, so I grew up listening to Slavic folk music. Sure enough, I think that is found in my music."*<sup>17</sup>

*"Early 20th-century composers, including Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Sergei Prokofiev, Igor Stravinsky, Bela Bartok, Paul Hindemith, Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, George Gershwin, and Leonard Bernstein, were important influences, as were the traditional forms Brahms and Beethoven used. I listened to the trends in contemporary music and included ethnic sounds in my compositions that can be traced back to the modality and driving rhythms of Eastern European folk music I heard while growing up. Ukrainian choral pieces, folk songs, and ballads are often written in minor keys and have harmonic shifts; the dance music is full of riveting rhythms that usually start slowly and gradually speed up. I think it is great for composers to show ethnic roots and add flavor to their works and encourage students to include familiar elements and idioms in their music. Bartok often effectively used dance rhythms in the final movements of his pieces."*<sup>18</sup>

*"Besides modality and many widely-spaced intervals, I use percussion quite heavily, especially in ensemble works. George Crumb once called percussion the basso continuo of the 20th century, and I subscribe to this idea. Joyful sonorities and an emphasis on emotion are also prevalent in my compositions, and I work hard to show off the beautiful color that sets each instrument apart from others. For woodwinds the higher register has great potential, although sometimes the flutes and clarinets sound wonderfully rich in the low range. Brass instruments are the perfect choice to play ringing open intervals, such as the ones used spectacularly in the fugue in the first movement of 'Concerto for Orchestra' by Bela Bartok. Important marimba and vibraphone parts in my works*

---

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey Snedeker, "The Color of Brass: An Interview with Eric Ewazen," *The Horn Call* 32, (November 2001): 33.

<sup>18</sup> Heather Pettit, "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 32.

*produce my favorite mallet sonorities, even in chordal passages."*<sup>19</sup>

*"The music I loved playing and listening to I really wanted to emulate. I loved the turn-of-the 20th century and early 20th century composers like Ravel, Debussy, Stravinsky, Bartok, Prokofiev, Hindemith, Gershwin, Bernstein, Copland and Barber. I identified with the music those composers wrote--and I wanted to create works like that--powerful or beautiful, tuneful or exciting. Add to the mix my fondness of Eastern European folk music, and you have my style! I should also add the pop music of my time--the modal music of the folk music I heard growing up--that finds its way into my music as well. We are all a mixture of our experiences--and as a composer, the music I was exposed to and loved playing as a pianist was a big influence on me, in creating my own style."*<sup>20</sup>

One need only spend a few minutes within earshot of Ewazen's ebullient voice to hear that the style of his music actualizes the essence of self-expression. There is a pleasant welcoming karma that exudes from him like the aroma of gingerbread still warm from the oven. And the same authenticity wafts in the ring of his music.

The author of this paper has been asked why Ewazen behaves so exuberantly in a society where such positive interface and behavior is extremely rare. Perhaps the answer can be found in the opening lines of Ewazen's answer to the following question.

Do you feel that music in general has a purpose?

---

<sup>19</sup> Heather Pettit, "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 34.

<sup>20</sup> Eric Ewazen, interview by author, June 24, 2009, via e-mail.

*"Absolutely. I am always concerned about "why do I get up in the morning" as a person. I like the idea of "doing good" whether as a teacher, a person... or as an artist! So as a composer, I like to provide experiences for the listener which are either uplifting, or enjoyable, or sometimes exciting, or sometimes very personal--as an artist I also am aware how we are a mirror of our times--we describe the feelings we have based on what is going on with us in terms of our life and times--the Vietnam War was an influence on me, recently 9/11 was an influence, the concept of world music representing a time when we are so much more aware of what is happening in far flung corners of the earth--that interest in Chinese music or Native American music, or Eastern European folk music, or African music--these are all types of music I like because it reflects people and their culture. And sometimes I want to be influenced by those different styles."*<sup>21</sup>

In closing, there is much that can be learned by musician and music lover alike through exploring the artistry of Eric Ewazen. And perhaps all *people* can learn something from this *person*, who despite having a brilliant mind--quite capable of perceiving the shadowy peril in our nature and circumstance--somehow maintains an irrefutable positiveness in his vision and appreciation for his gifts... a big kid with "a big kaleidoscope."

Only time will tell if Ewazen will be remembered in the Canon of Western Art Music. Sadly, only revolutionary artists are likely to be transfigured to marble busts. And, so many who served their art so well, as to be understood and fully appreciated in their own time, are not. An augury for his legacy however, is that he does have "the courage to go

---

<sup>21</sup> Eric Ewazen, interview by author, June 24, 2009, via e-mail.

against the pressure of the times."<sup>22</sup> He stands as a shining example to the musicians of his time, of music's *timeless* ability to do good as a communicative force.

Many professional musicians don a Disneyland-employee facade when talking about music to the masses. But when Eric Ewazen speaks, there is no hint of hypocrisy or obfuscation. When he says something as flowery as "revel in this joyful world of music making,"<sup>23</sup> it's *actually* real. If a skilled player brings this same level of sincerity to an Ewazen composition, it creates an opportunity for the precious trinity achieved between composer, performer, and audience in which all are exalted.

---

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Wilson of Ewazen in Liner Notes to the CD "Chamber Music of Eric Ewazen," Well-Tempered Productions 1995.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Snedeker, "The Color of Brass: An Interview with Eric Ewazen," *The Horn Call* 32, (November 2001): 34.

## David Fetter

b 1938

David Fetter brings the perspective of a seasoned performer to his composition. He spent two years in the Cleveland Orchestra trombone section under George Szell, and 16 years as a trombonist in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, ten of them as principal. He has also been a member of many other ensembles including the San Antonio Symphony and the U. S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own.” In his impressive career as a performer he has worked with such luminaries as Leonard Bernstein, Pierre Boulez, Bernard Haitink and Seiji Ozawa.

Fetter has spent many years as an administrator and trombone faculty member at the Peabody Conservatory. With a master's degree in musicology from American University, he has had articles published in the Journal of the International Trombone Association, Brass Bulletin, and the Maryland Medical Journal having been on the arts medicine committee of the Maryland Medical Association. He has also made considerable contributions to the Trombone-L, an online source of information on a variety of trombone related topics.

Though primarily focused on playing in his early years, Fetter was still drawn to the craft of composition. “It just seemed the natural thing to do as a performer. My first 'composition' was an arrangement made in junior high school for brass quartet of the

Stephen Foster tune *Camptown Races*. Arranging is still a large part of what I do, now mainly because I am conductor of a volunteer trombone choir based in Ellicott City, Maryland.”<sup>24</sup>

In the late 1950s there was no better place to study trombone than the Eastman School of Music in the studio of Emory Remington, and this is exactly where the young Fetter was receiving his education. Having also studied conducting with Herman H. Genhart and composition with Thomas Canning at the Eastman School, Fetter graduated with a Bachelor of Music/Education degree.

*“To me, Thomas Canning was the ideal teacher, because I thrive on encouragement. In the year I studied with him, he looked at what I was doing and simply said, “That’s good. Write some more!” There were no big turning points for me then in composition, because it was a secondary interest. As much as from anyone, I learned about composition from fellow students and my conducting teacher, Herman H. Genhart. Within their broad interests they emphasized form and analysis.”*<sup>25</sup>

Being a trombonist himself and cutting his teeth in the legendary Eastman Wind Ensemble under Frederick Fennel, it’s no surprise that Fetter’s compositions and arrangements are almost exclusively for winds, especially the trombone. His style is direct and simple by contemporary standards, and thus his music stands as an excellent example of contemporary music that audiences enjoy, and may leave the hall humming.

---

<sup>24</sup> David Fetter, interview by author, June 10, 2009, via e-mail.

<sup>25</sup> David Fetter, interview by author, June 17, 2009, via e-mail.

*"I was in my thirties when I finally centered on a conservative post-Romantic style. To me, music with emotional depth was scarce in the 1970's, especially for the trombone, so I tried to write music with poetry and drama that would allow the performer to speak to the listener. Within this I often try to offer peace and comfort to a troubled world."*<sup>26</sup>

Fetter excels in the difficult task of writing in the unaccompanied idiom, and it is here that his music has established itself in the canon of bass trombone solo literature. Bass trombonist Douglas Yeo performed with Fetter in the Baltimore Symphony prior to assuming the bass trombone position with the Boston Symphony, and his request of a slightly lower transcription of the composer's tenor trombone piece *Variations on Palestrina's Dona Nobis Pacem* resulted in what is probably the composer's most performed piece. This is because Yeo included the piece on the 1996 release of his CD "Proclamation." This was the first CD from a major American bass trombonist, and all the pieces on it essentially became mainstream overnight. Fetter's compositional eloquence--developed through a lifetime of using the trombone as an expressive tool--is manifest in his wholly appropriate and accessible writing for the solo bass trombone in this piece which is indeed a musical offering of peace and comfort.

---

<sup>26</sup> David Fetter, interview by author, June 10, 2009, via e-mail.



Conversely, Fetter's experience as a trombonist also helps him in writing music which pushes the limits of trombone technique, bringing the tension and excitement of a bullfight to his other very popular work *Spain*. Philadelphia Orchestra bass trombonist Blair Bollinger helped to popularize this work by including it on the 1998 release of his CD "Fancy Free." *Spain* and *Variations on Palestrina's Dona Nobis Pacem* are contrasting examples of unaccompanied instrumental writing at its finest.

The following e-mail correspondence explains Fetter's feelings on an important variable in the balance between the vision of the composer and the expression of the performer.

\*\*\*

Hi Mr Fetter,

My name is Boon Hua [Lien] and I'm a bass trombone student from Singapore.

I have heard some of your pieces such as *Variations on Palestrina's Dona Nobis Pacem*, *Spain* and *Trombone Opera*, and I must say I truly enjoyed them.

I myself am preparing to perform *Spain*, and I would like to seek your advice in my preparation.

Mr Bollinger's excellent rendition of *Spain* is no stranger to any bass trombonists, however, may I ask for your opinion regarding the changes to the written notes, such as adding a mordent before the second note in the opening statement, as well as the rather

fluid tempo in the first page as there is not strict indication on the score except "In One".

There are some clips on YouTube and everybody seemed to have caught on the trend from Mr Bollinger's recording.

My teacher have often stressed the importance of respecting the composer's decisions, hence I wish to seek none other than the words of the composer - you sir.

Thank you Mr Fetter for reading this email.

Cheers,

Boon Hua

Dear Boon Hua,

Some assume that unaccompanied solo music gives great freedom to the soloist. This is OK with me, when the embellishments add to the spirit of the music, as in good jazz.

But, of course, what is good is always a matter of taste. I am fortunate that my music has been recorded by sympathetic interpreters like Blair Bollinger and Doug Yeo. One can hardly argue with changes made by Mr. B, with his spirit and musicality.

What bothers me is to hear "Spain" played with such freedom that I cannot recognize it, and this has happened to me. I sense from your questions that you will very likely not

stretch it out of shape. To me, much of the fire in Spanish style is in steady rhythm. Of course, there is also rubato in Spanish music, so one can go back and forth.

I think that greater distortion sometimes results from players elaborating on recorded versions of a piece, which places them two steps away from the original. I find this in students, who will sometimes exaggerate the liberties heard in classic recordings of standard solos.

Please try to retain the shape of “Spain” while playing with lively expression. At the same time, I know that I must be flexible in my reaction to changes and embellishments that occur when the soloist, quite rightly, wants to speak to the audience with spirit and style.

[David Fetter]<sup>27</sup>

\*\*\*

In discussing the respective personal rewards of playing and composing, Fetter had this to say.

---

<sup>27</sup> This e-mail correspondence occurred on 6/24/09 the same day it was submitted as source material to the author of this paper by the composer via e-mail during the production of this paper.

*"The most rewarding aspect of playing the trombone for me was being there in the ensemble when I felt there were great performances. The first of these for me were in the Eastman Wind Ensemble. I remember a friend, an audiophile, saying that he thought the best recordings put you right in the middle of the orchestra, where he would want to sit, if he ever went to concerts. I remember thinking at the time that I had the luxury of hearing it that way every day.*

*The greatest reward from composition and arranging for me is when a piece is performed. I'm thrilled when my music resonates with musicians in a way that makes them want to express it to others."*<sup>28</sup>

In response to the question, "Do you feel that music in general has a purpose?" Fetter writes: "As a unique and central expression of the human spirit, music is its own purpose. It is so compelling that many devote their lives to it and they and many others are highly driven to seek it out.

Of course, music can be used for purposes other than pure enjoyment. It has been used for good and for bad."<sup>29</sup>

The author of this document has been an acquaintance of David Fetter for several years, with most contact happening while a member of the Peabody Conservatory student body

---

<sup>28</sup> David Fetter, interview by author, June 19, 2009, via e-mail.

<sup>29</sup> David Fetter, interview by author, June 10, 2009, via e-mail.

in the late 1990s, also in the late 2000s while collaborating on the premiere of *The Bass Trombone Wakes Up*, one of Fetter's many amiable compositions. The author has known Fetter to be a good-natured fellow, nearly always with a slight grin lying in wait for an opportunity to crescent a full smile... Fetter loves his own brand of humor, and is fond of sharing it when he sees an opening for a quip.

For instance, in response to the author's research query, "How would you like to be remembered to posterity?" Fetter responded, "I'm with the group who'd rather have it acknowledged while we're still alive that we were right all along. I don't think that what happens in the posterior matters much to the departed. :-)"

Another instance, when bass trombone soloist Jonathan Warburton approached Fetter saying, "Give me something to play." Fetter composed..... *Something to Play*.

Unlike the author of this document, Fetter does not have a penchant for flowery Romantic discourse. This made the author's job of gathering enough meritorious material for a sufficiently pleonastic paper rather difficult. Fortunately, upon reading the prospectus, Fetter kindly provided the following, which answers the fundamental question of this document.

*"I compose for the same reason that you perform, to try to communicate something meaningful. The greatest pleasure for me comes when performers and listeners connect with what I'm trying to say."<sup>30</sup>*

---

<sup>30</sup> David Fetter, interview by author, June 29, 2009, via e-mail.

## Frigyes Hidas

b Budapest, 25 May 1928; d Budapest, 7 March 2007

Frigyes Hidas when pressed for an answer described himself as “the last Hungarian Romantic composer.”<sup>31</sup> His music never fully breaks from tonality, and despite coming of age in the carnage and aftermath of World War II, Hidas never fully took on the barren, post-traumatic sound of some of his contemporaries.

Maestro Laszlo Marosi premiered the majority of Hidas’ works, collaborating with the composer for 25 years (1982-2007). When asked if Hidas believed that music has a purpose, Marosi states that Hidas “felt he must make people better living beings by opening their eyes.”<sup>32</sup>

This altruistic approach to musicianship, Marosi indicates, most likely comes from a seminal experience in 1945. In the early months of that year during the siege of Budapest, Hidas was forced to take shelter for his life in the basement of Saint Stephen’s Basilica where his father served as organist. There were five families taking shelter in the basement, and they had only three small piles of carrots to sustain them all for three months.

---

<sup>31</sup> David Manson, “Composer Profile: Frigyes Hidas” *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 16, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 13.

<sup>32</sup> Laszlo Marosi, interview by author, June 7, 2009, via e-mail.

Marosi says, "He told me the fundamental memory of him regarding the time period was that he was hungry all the time."<sup>33</sup> Hidas told Marosi of the guilt he carried for his entire life after stealing a small piece of carrot one night at 3:00 AM to abate his hunger. Though he was only 16 at the time, and the hunger must have been maddening, Hidas never shed the guilt of having deprived the others. It was during these horrible months sheltering in the basement that Hidas decided to "serve people and fight for peace," says Marosi.

Hidas studied piano with Zoltan Horusitzky in Budapest. He studied composition with Janos Viski (a former student of Kodaly<sup>34</sup>). Hidas studied conducting and sacred music with Laszlo Somogyi at the Liszt Academy of Music (1947-1952).

In 1952<sup>35</sup> (1951 according to Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians) Hidas became music director of the National Theater in Budapest, a position he held until 1966. During his tenure at the National Theater he was active composing and was awarded his first Erkel Prize in 1959 for his Oboe Concerto. It is fitting that this composition for a wind instrument brought him renown. There was a new level of skill developing at the time in Hungarian wind players, and Hidas is best known for his wind compositions despite having written in essentially all idioms of classical music.

---

<sup>33</sup> Laszlo Marosi, interview by author, June 9, 2009, via e-mail.

<sup>34</sup> David Manson, "Composer Profile: Frigyes Hidas" *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 16, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 13.

<sup>35</sup> "Frigyes Hidas," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2001.



From 1974 to 1979 Hidas was music director at the Municipal Operetta Theater in Budapest. By this time he had developed a reputation as an improviser on the piano and organ, and had experience as an ensemble performer with the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra on piano and celeste. And it was in 1979 that Hidas devoted himself solely<sup>36</sup> to composition.

In 1980 he was awarded his second Erkel prize, and in 1986 the Hungarian government named him a Merited Artist.<sup>37</sup> Hungary's socialist government had hindered Hidas' freedoms until the fall of the Eastern Bloc in 1989. Laszlo Marosi states that "for that particular reason we did not speak about [Hidas' religious beliefs] until 1989, when it became clear that he is a very strong believer in God."

Hidas was Catholic, as was his father the organist of Saint Stephan's. Saint Stephan's Basilica is renowned for its strength, in fact it was considered so sturdy that works of art were stored there during the bombings of World War II.<sup>38</sup> Little did anyone know that one of the important artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was also sheltered in the basilica during the war. And it was in the depths of this sacred place that the young Hidas "decided to stay with God with his music."<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> "Frigyes Hidas," Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> "Frigyes Hidas," Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, 2001.

<sup>38</sup> *Saint Stephen's Basilica, Budapest* [article on-line] (accessed June 11, 2009); available from <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/hungary/budapest-st-stephens-basilica>; Internet.

<sup>39</sup> Laszlo Marosi, interview by author, June 9, 2009, via e-mail.

Alan Hovhaness

b Somerville, MA, 8 March 1911; d Seattle 21 June 2000

Hovhaness once said, "I can't write about my music; I just can't... Music is music. I can write about things in nature I'm concerned about, especially the destruction of great trees. We had in America the most beautiful bird in the whole world. I haven't heard anything like it anywhere else. They call it the Hermit Thrush. It's far superior to the Nightingale in Europe. It made a marvelous song that it sang in three different keys. It used to be everywhere, in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York State, but it disappeared without anybody saying anything about it."<sup>40</sup>

This quote gives one a sense of how Hovhaness thought and what his priorities were. He did not think like most people, he didn't even think like most of his composing contemporaries. Hovhaness was not a member of a religion, but he felt actively connected to a higher power. "I feel that a higher intelligence and power are guiding me. I believe in mysticism. Once in a while I do have visions. I try to make the most of them."

The following excerpt from Richard Kostelanetz's interview with Hovhaness and his wife, the soprano Hinako Fujihara is illuminating.

*He told me of "peak experiences," as they've been called:  
"When composing was interrupted by sleep, I dreamed a  
whole section of music. A month later, while I was*

---

<sup>40</sup> Richard Kostelanetz, "Remembering Alan Hovhaness: Making the Right Connections," *21st Century Music* 7, (September 2000): 15.

*working, I again went to sleep in the same place and dreamed the music again. I realized I had written the music wrong. This is the experience of 'Mysterious Mountain.' While he sipped hot coffee, his wife recalled, "I can tell where it is. That passage is such a haunting mood. No way I can miss it." She paused, "He's in tears every time."*

*He continued, visibly choked, "It is such a cosmic experience. I can't express it. So whenever I heard that passage, I used to leave the concert hall. I was afraid people would think I was crazy"<sup>41</sup>*

Like the mountains he so loved, Hovhaness was driven by deep forces. Rather than accept other men's concept of good music, he was compelled to find it through his own pure pursuit. In 1949, when filling out an information sheet for the American Composers Biographical Survey, Hovhaness left "Education:" blank, "Scholarships and Awards:" blank, "Membership in Societies and Organizations:" blank, but after "Remarks:" *It is best that no mention be made of my scholarships or education because my direction is completely away from the approved path of any of my teachers--thus the responsibility will be inflicted on no one but myself.*<sup>42</sup>

It was almost inevitable that the nonconformist composer would have problems with his traditional teachers. "[Leo Rich Lewis] was my first composition teacher. I remember how he told me that he was going to knock every bit of originality out of my damn

---

<sup>41</sup> Richard Kostelanetz, "Remembering Alan Hovhaness: Making the Right Connections," *21st Century Music* 7, (September 2000): 17.

<sup>42</sup> Marco Shirodkar, *Alan Hovhaness Biographical Summary* [article on-line] (accessed June 30, 2009); available from <http://hovhaness.com/Hovhaness.html>; Internet.

foolish head."<sup>43</sup> "I composed English-style pieces to please Lewis. But he never heard my own real compositions. By sixteen I had already composed an awful lot of music for violin and piano."<sup>44</sup>

The following Hovhaness quotes excerpted from Jackie Abramian's book *Conversations with Contemporary Armenian Artists* (Amana Books, 1991) provides summation of the turning point of Hovhaness' journey into East-West fusion many years before the term World Music would be coined.

*"I got a scholarship to Tanglewood [in 1942]. My untraditional compositions were criticized [at Tanglewood] by Bernstein and Copland, so I quit Tanglewood. And then met my spiritual teacher ... Hermon DiGiovanno, through a painter friend of mine, Hyman Bloom. Hermon was a Greek mystic and painter and a psychic; I called him Boston's Socrates. He told me: You're going in the wrong direction, you have powerful enemies in the symphony halls, you must arch around them."*

*"Through Hermon's suggestions I began researching my Armenian heritage and ancient folk tunes. I studied with priests and played organ at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. Hyman Bloom introduced me to the music of Gomidas. I immediately learned the six dances of Gomidas and played them in public. This was the beginning of my interest in ancient folk tunes."*

*"I've been to Japan, Armenia, Korea and India researching Eastern mysticism. I'm fascinated by the spiritual and*

---

<sup>43</sup> Jackie Abramian, *Alan Hovhaness Interviewed by Jackie Abramian* [article on-line] (accessed June 30, 2009); available from <http://hovhaness.com/Hovhaness.html>; Internet.

<sup>44</sup> Jackie Abramian, *Alan Hovhaness Interviewed by Jackie Abramian* [article on-line] (accessed June 30, 2009); available from <http://hovhaness.com/Hovhaness.html>; Internet.

*ancient tunes of Soviet Georgia. I would attend church services regularly only if they had good music."*<sup>45</sup>

Hovhaness certainly did not reject Western music entirely, rather he combined its heritage with others to create a mulatto musical offering.

*"I always loved Sibelius, and I know that this came up recently, because there've been some misstatements about it[,] that I threw away my early work because it was like Sibelius. I don't think any of it was like Sibelius, or if it was, then all my music is like Sibelius in this sense: that the Armenians feel that Sibelius sounds very Armenian. And they used to...especially certain of the symphonies of Sibelius sounded Armenian; they sound somewhat oriental. And 'En Saga' and 'Swan of Tuonela,' for instance. 'Swan of Tuonela' could be played on hichiriki--it would make an excellent gagaku piece--and I studied and played gagaku in Japan. So I think he [Sibelius] was probably a reincarnation of an Oriental musician who was...sort of on the outside of Europe,... and had some European influences in [a] classical way. But...I've always loved his music very much: 'Tapiola' and the Fourth Symphony; the Third Symphony... I've always admired him. So I'm either always like Sibelius or not like him at all. I don't think I'm really like him, but perhaps we have this in common, that there's an Oriental feeling in Sibelius's music."*<sup>46</sup>

When asked which composers he was most influenced by, Hovhaness responded, "Handel and Bach. Their cantatas present a quality of cosmic complexity which is

---

<sup>45</sup> Jackie Abramian, *Alan Hovhaness Interviewed by Jackie Abramian* [article on-line] (accessed June 30, 2009); available from <http://hovhaness.com/Hovhaness.html>; Internet.

<sup>46</sup> Transcription of October 1975 Hovhaness radio interview by Charles Amirkhanian for "The World of Alan Hovhaness" first broadcast 28 January 1976, print version (accessed June 30, 2009) available from <http://www.hovhaness.com>; Internet.

beyond this world."<sup>47</sup> In December of 1998 when his health had been in decline for some time, he was asked if he had listened to any music recently, and he responded, "I hear Schubert's music in my head all the time."<sup>48</sup>

How fitting that Schubert was resonating within Hovhaness near the end. "At age seven I heard Schubert. He was instrumental in introducing melody to me. It was after this that I began composing seriously. I thought that I must write these melodies that I heard in my head. I thought everyone heard melodies in their heads."<sup>49</sup>

Sadly, everyone doesn't hear melodies in their heads. Most drone in society like a tuning A that never ripens to its rhapsodic purpose. Hovhaness is one of the lucky eccentrics who manage to survive an entire mortal life without losing connection to the soul at its center. He knew what satisfied him, and he sought it out... holding true to his motivation without compromise.

*"Nature is my great inspiration; I feel nature is, one might say, the outer clothing of God, if one can call the force of nature "God." And I always regretted so much when they began cutting down trees in a place where I lived when I was very little. We moved outside of Somerville in Boston out to Arlington, and there were a whole lot of beautiful pine trees right in the back of the house where my parents lived, and they began cutting them down ruthlessly, and*

---

<sup>47</sup> Transcription of October 1975 Hovhaness radio interview by Charles Amirkhonian for "The World of Alan Hovhaness" first broadcast 28 January 1976, print version (accessed June 30, 2009) available from <http://www.hovhaness.com>; Internet.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Gilbert, "Alan Hovhaness, 1911-2000, 'The 20th-Century Musical Avatar': an Interview with Lawrence Sobol," *The Clarinet* 28,(March 2001): 68.

<sup>49</sup> Jackie Abramian, *Alan Hovhaness Interviewed by Jackie Abramian* [article on-line] (accessed June 30, 2009); available from <http://hovhaness.com/Hovhaness.html>; Internet.

*just leaving them there. And this impression of cities taking over the beauty of nature and destroying it, was very strong, and has always been. I used to spend all my time climbing trees, and in the forest, or climbing mountains whenever I could get near mountains. And that, to me, was the most important thing.*

*Later I found an echo of my feelings so much in Oriental philosophy. And with my painter friends, who were also interested in that, we used to read the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead,' and many of the Indian philosophical sutras, and so on, the early Sanskrit works which were translated. These things were very satisfying to me. And I guess I found many things in the Armenian Church-the old Armenian Church, when I began to attend and play for the Armenian Church-I found many things there that related to Eastern religions, even more than just the usual interpretation of Christianity. So that I found that was very satisfying to me. There were many beautiful things that happened in the Armenian Mass, which are a kind of ancient theater, with symbolic meanings-metaphysical meanings."<sup>50</sup>*

\*\*\*

*"I can't do anything I'm bored with. I have to have my spirit completely absorbed by it, or I don't want to bother with it. I can't give my time to anything that doesn't really affect me deeply"<sup>51</sup>*

The truth often seems paradoxical. Hovhaness' intense focus of his energies, could be either viewed as a kind of apathy on one hand, or the deepest kind of caring on the other. This kind of focus, regardless of the care or apathy that accompany it, fosters a deep sensitivity in he who keeps it. An awareness allowing him to perceive beyond the gray

---

<sup>50</sup> Transcription of October 1975 Hovhaness radio interview by Charles Amirkhonian for "The World of Alan Hovhaness" first broadcast 28 January 1976, print version (accessed June 30, 2009) available from <http://www.hovhaness.com>; Internet.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Kostelanetz, "Remembering Alan Hovhaness: Making the Right Connections," *21st Century Music* 7, (September 2000): 17.

veil which masks most men from each other and the true cosmos. Hovhaness had a deeper understanding than most, and this understanding is shared in his music.

It could be said, that, while some men may understand a certain thing, Hovhaness understood what was behind it, or at least he was closer to real understanding than most. One can extrapolate the nature of this deeper cosmic knowing from the following quote.

*"American Indians had a religious concept of the mountains. That's why I don't like to say Mount Rainer. Who is this guy who put his name on the mountain? Its original name was Mount Tahoma. That means the mountain that was God, which signifies it was higher and had many eruptions before we knew it."<sup>52</sup>*

Similarly, the title of Hovhaness' composition *Tzaikerker* can be translated as "evening song," but it actually means "evening going into night." There is indeed a deeper meaning, in wait, beyond the gloaming, for those willing to pursue truth into the dark. This takes a bravery willing to risk abandonment and exile. It is perhaps the essence of Hovhaness.

To close, a quote from clarinetist Lawrence Sobol on the passing of his friend and colleague Alan Hovhaness:

---

<sup>52</sup>Richard Kostelanetz, "Remembering Alan Hovhaness: Making the Right Connections," *21st Century Music* 7, (September 2000): 18.



*One of the most famous comments by Alan Hovhaness was,  
"My purpose is to create music, not for snobs, but for all  
people, music which is beautiful and healing, to attempt  
what old Chinese painters called 'spirit resonance in  
melody and sound.'"*

*Dear friend, you have created music not for snobs, but for  
all people, which is beautiful and healing. Long live your  
spiritual resonance."<sup>53</sup>*

---

<sup>53</sup> Richard Gilbert, "Alan Hovhaness, 1911-2000, 'The 20th-Century Musical Avatar': an Interview with Lawrence Sobol," *The Clarinet* 28,(March 2001): 68.

## Tommy Pederson

b 15 August 1920; d 16 January 1998

Legend has it that Tommy Pederson was born in a Pullman railroad car. A fittingly colorful beginning for a colorful man. The young Pullman Gerald Pederson grew up in the small town of Watkins, Minnesota. As a harbinger of things to come, he was notorious for habitually taking his parts up an octave in high school band.

There is an account that he started writing music at age 4 and began performing with big band luminaries in his teens.<sup>54</sup> But a more scholarly source<sup>55</sup> documents Pederson's career in the big time starting with the big band of Orrin Tucker (1940-1941) followed by stints with Gene Krupa (the best man at Pederson's first wedding--he was married three times), Charlie Barnet for whom he was also an arranger, and in 1943 Tommy Dorsey. He spent some time playing with Woody Herman before rejoining Krupa in 1945.

In 1946 Pederson settled in Los Angeles. He played a series of radio broadcasts as a member of Benny Goodman's band. His section mate in the Benny Goodman band was Hoyt Bohannon. Their collaboration would soon lead to "Hoyt's Garage" which will be

---

<sup>54</sup> Anonymous, Biographical Entry [entry on-line] (accessed June 13, 2009); available from [http://www.trombone-usa.com/pederson\\_tommy\\_bio.htm](http://www.trombone-usa.com/pederson_tommy_bio.htm); Internet.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Millar, "In Memoriam: Tommy Pederson, 1920-1998," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 22.

discussed later in this section. From 1946 to 1948 Pederson led his own big band which had a regular Monday night engagement at the Palladium in Hollywood. There is also an account that the Pederson band was a fixture at The Brown Derby.<sup>56</sup> He was a powerful and virtuosic player. Milt Bernhart (1926-2004) another iconic trombonist of the West Coast jazz scene<sup>57</sup> said that Pederson “came from a school of players who couldn’t rely on a microphone in any way. To be heard you had to blow. You could hear him across the street!”<sup>58</sup>

Although many of his contemporaries took staff jobs with motion picture studios, Pederson remained independent, feeling he could do better as a freelancer. He worked for composers Nelson Riddle, Billy May, and David Rose. He performed on numerous recordings with Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Dean Martin, and Rosemary Clooney. His talents are well displayed on the *Flight of the Bumblebee* track from the Spike Jones album *Dinner Music For People Who Aren't Very Hungry*.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Anonymous, Biographical Entry [entry on-line] (accessed June 13, 2009); available from [http://www.trombone-usa.com/pederson\\_tommy\\_bio.htm](http://www.trombone-usa.com/pederson_tommy_bio.htm); Internet.

<sup>57</sup> Todd S. Jenkins, *Milt Bernhart, West Coast Trombonist, 1926-2004* [article on-line] (accessed June 16, 2009); available from <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/news.php?id=3169>; Internet.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Millar, "In Memoriam: Tommy Pederson, 1920-1998," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 22.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Millar, "In Memoriam: Tommy Pederson, 1920-1998," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 22.

Pederson's television credits include *I Love Lucy*, *The Flip Wilson Show*, *The Danny Kaye Show*, *The Jack Smith Show*, and *77 Sunset Strip*. His film work included *The Gene Krupa Story* (playing all the Tommy Dorsey solos), *Cleopatra*, and *The Music Man*.

In the late 1950s Pederson's passion for writing music led him to study composition with Mario Castell Unoevo-Tedesco. (Andre Previn happened to be one of his fellow students.) Pederson is arguably the most prolific composer of trombone music. His output of over 300 pieces ranges from etude books and duets to works for up to 21 trombones.

Pederson had the perfect outlet to exercise his passion for trombone composition. He was one of the pillars of "Hoyt's Garage," an informally rotating collective of dozens of Los Angeles trombonists (ten at a time more or less) who would meet at 8pm on Tuesdays at Hoyt Bohannon's place on Vantage Avenue.<sup>60</sup> They would read classical transcriptions by Bohannon and original compositions by Pederson. This group of very skilled players gave Pederson a laboratory in which to test the limits of trombone technique and expand the palette of trombone expressivity. The ensemble's album *All My Friends Are Trombone Players* consists entirely of Pederson compositions.

---

<sup>60</sup> Jim Boltinghouse, "Hoyt's Garage," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 32.

His trombone-playing friends speak of Pederson as an absolute, as though there was little difference, if any, between Pederson the man and Pederson the musician:

Michael Millar writes, "His style as a player and as a composer was very much like his personality. The sound and style of trombone players in his era was distinctive, and his sound and style was especially so. His sound was brash not as smooth and flowing as a Dick Nash or Lloyd Ulyate. He played [and] composed the way he heard it."<sup>61</sup>

Mike Suter writes, "It's difficult to explain Tommy Pederson in simple terms unless you know something of the era in which he grew up. Like my own father, Tommy was a child of the great American depression. One was either a success or a failure. There was no middle ground.

I had just left my gig with Stan Kenton, and my second wife (a tenor trombone player – not a very good one) and I had moved from Detroit to “Hollywood” so I could start working my way into the studios. My wife thought that taking lessons from Tommy would give her an ‘in’ to the studios. It didn’t work. Tommy cut her loose after just a few lessons. (BTW, my current–and final–wife is a psychiatric nurse: The perfect wife for me.)

---

<sup>61</sup> Michael Millar, interview by author, June 20, 2009, via e-mail.

With Tommy the music was everything. People who took shortcuts were an insult; not just to him, but more importantly, to music. Tommy wasn't unique in this attitude. While his whole generation appreciated hard work, they just shook their heads in disbelief at players who 'made it' through connections and/or gimmickry.

It was just a few weeks later that Tommy called the house asking for me. He had two offers: He wanted me to sub in the infamous Hoyt's Garage for a couple of weeks, and he offered to give me bass trombone lessons (I wish I could say at a discount. Alas no, full price). I accepted. My wife was livid. Tommy seemed oblivious to the ado he caused in our household. In private discussion he insisted he simply saw a bass trombone player who had earned an opportunity. In retrospect I believe he had no ulterior motive in helping me. He was not 'getting back' at my (then) wife. I saw it with many students that he stopped teaching for lack of effort. He didn't dislike them. He didn't take steps to hurt them. But I will say they rather ceased to exist for him."<sup>62</sup>

Alexander Iles writes, "Tommy was quite a character with a HUGE personality with some very strong and, at times controversial musical opinions. He was really one of a kind in so many ways. He was as committed to music as anyone I've known. He was incredibly in love with the trombone and got so much joy out of hearing and performing his music for anyone who was willing to listen. He could be...how shall I say?...ruthlessly honest when he conducted his music. He had a knack for singling out newer players in

---

<sup>62</sup> Mike Suter, interview by author, July 1, 2009, via e-mail.

order to bring them up to speed on what he wanted to hear stylistically (eg, vibrato, phrasing, dynamics and embellishments). However, he would usually dole out praise just as emphatically as he barked out criticism.

On my first night at Hoyt's when I was about 18 years old, I was having a whole lot of trouble with a particular technically challenging passage. He kept going back to the lick, sounding a bit like Homer Simpson--"NOOOOOOOH! Do it AGAIN!" I finally did kind of get it, and he burst out with what I later came to understand to be one of his patented pet phrases, "ATTA BOY!!!" This comment, of course was even more embarrassing to me at the time than his criticism!!! Over the years I came to really appreciate his enthusiasm and spirit and to take his criticism with a grain of salt. I've run across similar characters over the years in the music world and Tommy was the one who taught me that lesson."<sup>63</sup>

Just as in the other areas of his musical life, Pederson was an absolutist in his work as a trombone teacher. Mike Suter writes, "Tommy had a unique way of teaching. He wrote his lessons completely – every note – by hand. When you arrived for your lesson the first thing you were expected to do was to perform your previous lesson PERFECTLY! No stops. No excuses. When you were finished Tommy would find one or two small points to correct (or debate if you felt you were right). But first-things-first, you performed your previous lesson perfectly! (Let me add here that he could expect perfection because he

---

<sup>63</sup> Alexander Iles, interview by author, June 19, 2009, via e-mail.

paid close attention to his students. He wrote lessons that could be played perfectly ... providing the student stretched their personal envelope ALMOST to the breaking point. He had that knack.)

Then Tommy would give you your next lesson. He'd take you through it thoroughly, pointing out the places where you might need to use optional positions or unusual choices; and he'd talk you through it thoroughly, show you how to sing your part, or how to sneak a breath, etc. You could ask any questions you wanted. He wasn't trying to trick you in any way. He wanted to give you every opportunity possible for personal perfection. Because the next time he saw you, he expected it to be played perfectly!

Lastly – but most importantly - he might spend a half-hour to an hour just talking about life, playing music, or playing the trombone. This was “Golden Time.” Freely given from a master musician.

But if you were expecting to hear secrets or shortcuts, forget it. Tommy had neither. Tommy had repetition. Tommy had practice. “Practice it until it's right. Practice it until it's perfect. Then practice it some more.”

Tommy was a great believer in putting oneself in a position where one could not be allowed to fail. At one of our lessons, during the “Golden Time” I was complaining about the changes in the music business, how it was getting smaller and smaller with each



passing year, and how it was getting so difficult to make a living playing the bass trombone.

'You want to make money?' Tommy asked. 'It's easy. Buy a house and a couple of cars. You'll find a way to make some money.'

Of course, that way didn't work anymore. The world had changed and left Tommy behind. But he never gave in."<sup>64</sup>

Despite being a skilled teacher, and select pieces of his finding a place in the libraries of many trombonists, Pederson's pedagogical material never became widely used. Mike Suter provides a good explanation, "Tommy could read people. He was very good with students. I think that's why his books never caught on very well. For instance, in our lessons he wrote specifically for ME, the Etudes addressed specific problems with MY playing. When I prepared them properly they made musical sense and addressed MY problems. The same went for the Exercises he wrote for ME: When I prepared them properly they made musical sense and addressed my problems. For anyone else they didn't make a lot of musical sense.

In the Etudes and Exercises in his books, the Etude sections never made musical sense.

---

<sup>64</sup> Mike Suter, interview by author, July 1, 2009, via e-mail.

One line, or thought, never led to another coherently. And the Exercises seemed like just a bunch of random notes picked from the air. That's because, in my opinion, he was writing for an imaginary player with imaginary abilities and imaginary problems.

I'm sorry, but this was Tommy Pederson at his worst. He needed real, motivated students with common or above average abilities in order to work his magic. Imaginary students with unknown, made up abilities made this excellent teacher look like a fool."<sup>65</sup>

Pederson's legacy will most likely survive through his trombone duets (especially his bass trombone duets), which are virtually never performed but are played informally by many trombonists. His legacy will also likely survive through the lore of Hoyt's Garage, and the trombone ensemble pieces he composed during many years of writing for the ensemble.

Alexander Iles writes, "He was committed to his music very much. Some of it is pretty corny by our 21st century standards, but I always loved playing his big trombone ensemble pieces (he insisted never to refer to his bone arrangements as for "choir"--each part was a solo part a lot of the time). Sometimes, they were "simple" in many ways, but very often were very challenging to pull off. His arrangements were brilliant examples of how to spread out the lead among a group so that whoever was playing [the] first [tenor

---

<sup>65</sup> Mike Suter, interview by author, July 1, 2009, via e-mail.

trombone part] didn't get "hung out to dry" and if you were placed on a 5th tenor part, you might have the most critical solo in the piece."<sup>66</sup>

Pederson's most popular piece is his composition *Blue Topaz* for solo bass trombone accompanied by trombone ensemble. He wrote two pieces for solo tenor trombone accompanied by trombone ensemble: *Cogent Caprice* and *Emmanuel Gold*. He also wrote a piece in a similar format for solo tenor trombone, solo bass trombone and trombone ensemble titled *The Orators*.

His compositional style seemed to match his personality to a T... distinctive and energetic.<sup>67</sup> And his colorful writing is represented perfectly by his zany unapologetic titles such as *Adrift on a Waterbed*, *Riot of the Red Ants*, *The Walrus Ordered Waffles*, *The Whether Man*, *Look at Hoyt Ride the Green Bicycle*, and *Laughing Face of the Old Ugly Ornery Ogre*.

One gets the sense that Tommy Pederson's composition, performance and life were all motivated by gusto akin to a Bruce Willis film character: Making no apologies and

---

<sup>66</sup> Alexander Iles, interview by author, June 19, 2009, via e-mail.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Millar, "In Memoriam: Tommy Pederson, 1920-1998," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 22.

always looking cool, because “cool” is knowing what you want to do and *doing* it!

Pederson’s motto was, “It’s not what they want, it’s what we’re going to give them!”<sup>68</sup>

*All of us who knew Tommy saw a man of passion and enthusiasm. The descriptions that have come up in my discussions with others are: “strong personality,” “opinionated,” “argumentative,” “high standards,” “had decided what was right and what was wrong.” His convictions were based on his fervent love of music and his belief that his way was the right way. He despised moderation, frequently stating that “Moderation is for sissies!” To those who played with him he could be totally enthusiastic and completely supportive – or just the opposite. There were no gray areas, no middle ground – nothing in between “Atta boy!” and “Nooooo!! What are you doing?!?” Once, on a session, he gave the following “compliment:” “Why don’t you play that way all the time? You’re so damn inconsistent!”<sup>69</sup>*

Tommy Pederson was one of the most voracious musicians to ever live. He used his colorful wit and personality to create and share striking music with an audience that doubtless *must* have remembered this striking man and the instrument he lovingly championed. When talking to audiences about his composition Pederson would sometimes say, “Bach wrote for the well-tempered clavier; I write for the terrible

---

<sup>68</sup> Michael Millar, "In Memoriam: Tommy Pederson, 1920-1998," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 23.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Millar, "In Memoriam: Tommy Pederson, 1920-1998," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 23.

tempered trombone.”<sup>70</sup> What an unforgettable character! Pederson was a trombonist’s trombonist through and through, tempered for taking it up an octave and telling it like it is. Perhaps, he can be best described by another of his works’ colorful titles. In his composing, his playing and his life Tommy Pederson was *The Trombone That Ate the World*.

---

<sup>70</sup> Michael Millar, "In Memoriam: Tommy Pederson, 1920-1998," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 22.

Alec Wilder

b Rochester, 16 February 1907; d Gainesville, 24 December 1980

Alexander Lafayette Chew Wilder said he wrote music because it was the only thing that could content his spirit.<sup>71</sup> As the youngest of three children, Wilder survived a privileged but less-than-fulfilling childhood and relationship with his family. His father died very early in young Alec's life, and his mother--a heavy drinker--was not very affectionate.<sup>72</sup>

He was born into a family of bankers. "My father was a banker, my grandfathers were bankers, my two uncles were bankers. They lived that whole ambiance of voting Republican, and hating the Jews. They didn't really *hate*, of course. They just maintained the proper prejudices. My father died when I was three. My mother didn't know anything about meat bills and coal bills. She wasn't married until she was thirty, and she wasn't ready then. She had been a belle who had been spoiled by her family and by men. She was a Chew, and she had grown up in a Colonial house surrounded by English boxwood in the beautiful upstate town of Geneva. It was a conventional proper Henry James life--a safe life, where there was safe talk and cheerful people and no arguments. The Wilders, on the other hand, were eccentric and untrammelled. But my mother was a good woman. After she died, I found a letter in her pocket from me saying

---

<sup>71</sup> Multiple Authors: Gunther Schuller, Robert Levy, Loonis McGlohon, Judy Bell, *Alec Wilder Biography* [article on-line] (accessed June 18, 2009); available from <http://www.alecwildercentennial.com/Biography.html>; Internet.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Levy, interview by author, June 24, 2009, via e-mail.

a string quartet of mine might be performed. But she was embarrassed by my becoming a musician.”<sup>73</sup>

Wilder did graduate from the Collegiate School in Manhattan (one of many prep schools he attended in an unhappy adolescence), but he had a disdain for academia--never enrolling in an institution to receive musical training. He did however study composition and counterpoint briefly at the Eastman School of Music (though Wilder was *not* a bona fide Eastman student) with Edward Royce and Herman Inch.<sup>74</sup> While part of the Eastman community, Wilder formed relationships with other young musicians that turned into lifelong friendships and became important in shaping his output/career. “I got to know such students as Mitchell Miller (an oboist, who--important for the exposure of Wilder’s music--later became chief recording supervisor for Columbia Records), Goddard Lieberman and John Barrows the great French horn player, and Jimmy Carroll, as good a clarinetist as ever lived. They were my first professional friends. They made it possible for me to stop sidling in my shyness down the halls of Eastman.”<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Whitney Balliett, "Alec Wilder Remembered" (Reprint of Interview from the New Yorker Magazine titled 'President of the Derriere-Garde'), *The Instrumentalist* 46, (February 1992): 18.

<sup>74</sup> Ronald E. Prather, "The Popular Songs of Alec Wilder," *The Musical Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (1990): 523.

<sup>75</sup> Whitney Balliett, "Alec Wilder Remembered" (Reprint of Interview from the New Yorker Magazine titled 'President of the Derriere-Garde'), *The Instrumentalist* 46, (February 1992): 18.

In the mid-1930s when some of his Eastman clique moved to New York City to pursue their musical careers, Wilder went as well.<sup>76</sup> He worked in the Big Apple as a staff arranger for popular dance bands of that era and developed a rapport with important singers like Mildred Bailey, Peggy Lee, and Frank Sinatra.

In a 1973 interview with Whitney Balliett, Wilder recounted, “In the late thirties, partly at the behest of Mitchell Miller and partly because of the late Morty Palitz, an A. & R. man and songwriter, I wrote my first woodwind octet pieces. I had been fooling around with the harpsichord, and of course Mitchell was an oboist. So I added clarinet, a flute, a bass clarinet, a bassoon, a string bass, and drums, and we made some records for Columbia [Records]. It must have been around 1938. I gave the pieces nutty titles, like *A Debutante’s Diary*, *Sea Fugue Mama*, *Neurotic Goldfish*, *The House Detective Registers*, *The Children Met the Train*, and *Jack, This is My Husband*. As afterthoughts. The pieces were not program music. When the records came out, they were gunned down by the jazz boys because they had a classical flavor and they were gunned down by the classical boys because they had a jazz flavor. Now, I’m told, they are beginning to be thought of seriously, and there is even talk they may be reissued. Ha! Anyway, I kept my head above water by writing arrangements for the big bands and by arranging songs for people like Frank Sinatra and Mildred Bailey. I was hip-deep in the pop-music world, and I *hated* it.”<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Robert Levy, interview by author, June 21, 2009, via e-mail.

<sup>77</sup> Whitney Balliett, "Alec Wilder Remembered" (Reprint of Interview from the New Yorker Magazine titled 'President of the Derriere-Garde'), *The Instrumentalist* 46, (February 1992): 18.



One may simply have to chalk up Wilder's "hating it" to artistic eccentricity or perhaps the pedestrian human fault of believing the grass is always greener on the other side. Writing music for great artists such as Benny Goodman and sharing mutual respect with the likes of Frank Sinatra (In 1945, Sinatra, an avid Wilder supporter, persuaded Columbia Records to record an album of Wilder's solo wind works accompanied by string orchestra, with Old Blue Eyes himself conducting!) presumably should have made Wilder quite pleased... if not happy. At this point, Wilder had found a place in the music world without bending his integrity by having to chase his tail through the frivolous gauntlet of academic life, and without having to promote himself or seek the celebrity which he famously shunned. His talent had been recognized, by others, and brought to the attention of the powers that be and the public. This was done by *others*.

Fortunately, for Wilder (and those who have come to love his music) his talent was great enough that he did not have to promote himself in order to have a career or have his music heard by millions. Without the help of his friends--the promoters--it is quite possible that Wilder's pieces would simply be collecting dust in the attics and basements of the world. In fact, an untold number of his compositions doubtless still reside in these forgotten places today.

*"No one will ever be sure just how much music Wilder wrote. Sketches of his music--sometimes entire pieces--*

*were often written on small scraps of manuscript paper while he rode a train, sat on a park bench or waited in an airport terminal. Scattered about in private collections of Wilder's friends were many compositions that never reached performance or publication. Some may still lie in piano benches or desk drawers wherever Wilder visited, for he wrote almost entirely for friends, and most of his pieces were gifts to them or their children."*<sup>78</sup>

Aside from or perhaps coupled with his desire to create compositions as gifts for friends, Wilder did seem to be drawn to composing for the underdog instruments (Tuba, Euphonium, Bass, Marimba, etc.) which most composers ignore. He was perhaps more motivated by writing for the musician than the audience. Wilder expert Robert Levy states, "While he certainly enjoyed hearing listeners enjoyed his works I think he may have been more concerned with connecting with those performing his music."<sup>79</sup>

Wilder did indeed afford musicians a special level of appreciation. "Players tend to like what I write; composers don't. Composers think of performers as necessary evils, and it's the same with playwrights and actors. But I consider the written music only a guide. The notes suggest, they only tell part of the story. I'll take half the credit, and the rest goes to the performer. Performers! Those great, beautiful people are my saviors."<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Multiple Authors: Gunther Schuller, Robert Levy, Loonis McGlohon, Judy Bell, *Alec Wilder Biography* [article on-line] (accessed June 18, 2009); available from <http://www.alecwildercentennial.com/Biography.html>; Internet.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Levy, interview by author, June 21, 2009, via e-mail.

<sup>80</sup> Whitney Balliett, "Alec Wilder Remembered" (Reprint of Interview from the New Yorker Magazine titled 'President of the Derriere-Garde'), *The Instrumentalist* 46, (February 1992): 20.

Levy further illuminates, “Since he was largely self taught, his chamber music in particular is notated rather sparsely in terms of notations like ritardandos, dynamics, and accelerandos, etc. The typically trained classical musician might read through a movement of a Wilder Suite or Sonata strictly adhering to exactly what is on the printed page and feel the music lacking. Others, including some of New York’s great musicians: John Barrows, Samuel Barron, James Buffington, Bernard Garfield, Gunther Schuller, Milton Kaye, Harvey Phillips, Marian McPartland, Jackie and Roy, and the NY Woodwind Quintet sensed something unique and personal with Wilder’s compositions and brought more of themselves to the music bringing it to life and Wilder was thrilled with their interpretations and performances. Time and time again, to show his appreciation he would immediately compose new works for them both individually and collectively.”<sup>81</sup>

In the early 1950s Wilder had begun to turn away from the world of popular song to chamber and orchestral music and opera. His more than 300 compositions, written for almost every conceivable instrumental combination, are characterized by his unique melodic gift, a harmonic language alternating between French Impressionism and modal (often fugal) writing, and a preference for loosely linked suite forms. Although his works

---

<sup>81</sup> Robert Levy, interview by author, June 21, 2009, via e-mail.

were much admired and performed by certain musicians in both jazz and classical music, Wilder's style was largely rejected by both musical establishments.<sup>82</sup>

At the time Wilder began to blend his unique sonic flavor, the two mainstreams of western art music (jazz and classical) had no pigeonhole to fit Wilder's music, but fortunately for neurotic musicologists, Gunther Schuller coined the term "third stream" in 1957, essentially meaning a mixture of classical and jazz traditions. (Like most musical terms, "third stream" is difficult to precisely define, and it means specifically different things to different people.) The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians gives Wilder's *Jazz Suite* as an example of third stream music, as well as Red Norvo's *Dance of the Octopus*, Robert Graettinger's *City of Glass*, and Rolf Liebermann's *Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra* among others.

In response to the question, "How did Wilder come to compose in his particular style?" Robert Levy wrote:

*"Melody and Song have always been at the heart of Wilder's music. He composed songs for a musical revue at Eastman which (Mitchell) Miller and others performed during Miller's student days at the school. Wilder was captivated by Ethel Water's voice, Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and the jazz world. Changing compositional*

---

<sup>82</sup> "Alec Wilder," Grove Music Online [entry on-line] (accessed 6/23/09); available from <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>; Internet.

*trends never were of interest to Wilder; in fact he had trouble with the modern world and society. I once sat with him during a performance of a work by Gunther Schuller. Afterwards he told me he didn't understand the music at all, but he marveled at the brilliant orchestration. He preferred the simple things in life--gardens, books and friends while rarely watching TV, a movie or concerts. The changing modern world wasn't for him! He kept almost no possessions, gave away probably thousands of books to friends and lived life on his own terms."*<sup>83</sup>

Wilder did indeed live life on his own terms. But no man is an island... His work and lifestyle were made possible (at least in part) by the efforts and contributions of others. At age 21 he inherited the sum of \$175,000 from his family. When adjusted for inflation this is a tremendous amount of money which according to Levy "enabled him to live life freely most of his adult life[,] and once he ran out of money he received financial support from Dr. Sibley Watson of Rochester off and on while collecting royalties mostly from his popular songs."<sup>84</sup>

Wilder was essentially free to live out the artistic dream and fundamental human desire to do what you want when you want, without the obligation to conform to anyone's preconceived notion of perfection.

---

<sup>83</sup> Robert Levy, interview by author, June 21, 2009, via e-mail.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Levy, interview by author, June 24, 2009, via e-mail.

*"I personally believe Wilder received more self-gratification from expressing himself through composing than from any other aspect in his life. He was truly happiest when composing works for friends as he felt "safe" writing for them. His difficult childhood led him to withdraw socially from others, led him to fear rejection, and live largely in isolation, reading books in solitude in hotel rooms, on trains, and while sitting on park benches at a pace few others ever achieved, and to compose prolifically.*

*I would say he composed because he had to. It was his greatest sense of personal expression and he was happiest while writing music and depressed while going through "dry spells" when he couldn't be composing. If he simply found a captivating lyric or wrote his own, he had to set it to music. Few people know he wrote hundreds of poems, designed crossword puzzles, and was totally taken with words and language."<sup>85</sup>*

Did Wilder feel that music in general has a purpose?

*"In my opinion (and I know a view shared by others who were his friends), for him, composing was just a given and something he HAD to do as it was his need for personal self expression. He rarely spoke of other classical composers although his heroes were Ravel, Debussy, and Faure. I don't think he listened to classical music and he certainly never tried to be fashionable or to follow any changing trends in 20th century compositional styles. He just went his own way throughout life writing music for friends and composing because he had this greater inner need to do so. I know he had the greatest respect for the art form--Mozart,*

---

<sup>85</sup> Robert Levy, interview by author, June 21, 2009, via e-mail.

*Beethoven, Brahms, Hindemith and never felt he was anywhere near their level, repeatedly "putting himself down" due to his lack of confidence and fear of rejection among the musical establishment. Yet he was an unclassifiable original who didn't fit in any one slot while living in a society which labels artists. While I know it bothered him not to have received greater recognition in his lifetime, he went out of his way to avoid publicity or promotion of any sort, repeatedly running away from opportunities to further himself and reputation time and time again. If it weren't for a core of devoted musician friends, few of his works would have ever been published, and most of his chamber music wasn't until the last years of his life. While his popular songs are best known, there are dozens of lesser known gems being discovered and recorded by a host of younger generation singers. And, among his chamber music some works have become staples and part of the 'standard repertoire' for flute, bassoon, horn and tuba.*<sup>86</sup>

Wilder's composing was apparently not motivated by an altruistic vision of feeding the world's gaunt soul through music, but rather he composed because he enjoyed the process--like a retiree who loves to garden. The hours of cultivation produce a product which could be shared with a friend, or simply appreciated by the cultivator himself before moving on to the next seeds he is compelled to bring to harvest.

*"I love the act of composing, but when I finish a piece that's it. I don't really care if it's performed; I can't stand listening to many of my pieces more than once. I put the*

---

<sup>86</sup> Robert Levy, interview by author, June 21, 2009, via e-mail.

*piece out of my mind. If I'm told it's not good, I don't pay any attention. Self-adulation would just get in my way. So it's a clearing-house process in which I make continual room for new things. If I was protective of my work, storing it all up in my head, I'd probably stop writing. I'd be too busy contemplating my navel."*<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Whitney Balliett, "Alec Wilder Remembered" (Reprint of Interview from the New Yorker Magazine titled 'President of the Derriere-Garde'), *The Instrumentalist* 46, (February 1992): 20.



## Bibliography

Abramian, Jackie. "Alan Hovhaness Interviewed by Jackie Abramian," [article on-line] available from <http://hovhaness.com/Hovhaness.html>; (accessed June 30, 2009).

Amirkhanian, Charles. "The World of Alan Hovhaness," [article on-line] available from <http://www.hovhaness.com>; (accessed June 30, 2009).

Anonymous. "About the Composer," [article on-line] available from <http://www.ericewazen.com/new/about.php>; (accessed June 27, 2009).

Anonymous, "Biographical Entry," [article on-line] available from [http://www.trombone-usa.com/pederson\\_tommy\\_bio.htm](http://www.trombone-usa.com/pederson_tommy_bio.htm); (accessed June 13, 2009).

Anonymous. "Saint Stephen's Basilica, Budapest," [article on-line] available from <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/hungary/budapest-st-stephens-basilica> (accessed June 11, 2009).

Balliett, Whitney. "Alec Wilder Remembered," *The Instrumentalist* 46, (February 1992): 18.

Boltinghouse, Jim. "Hoyt's Garage," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 32.

Gilbert, Richard. "Alan Hovhaness, 1911-2000, 'The 20th-Century Musical Avatar': an Interview with Lawrence Sobol," *The Clarinet* 28, (March 2001): 68.

Gulasy, Julia. "Intriguing New Work for the Oboe: Eric Ewazen and Linda Strommen discuss *Down a River of Time*," *The Double Reed* 24, no. 2 (2001): 133.

Kostelanetz, Richard. "Remembering Alan Hovhaness: Making the Right Connections," *21st Century Music* 7, (September 2000): 17.

Manson, David. "Composer Profile: Frigyes Hidas," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 16, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 13.

Millar, Michael. "In Memoriam: Tommy Pederson, 1920-1998," *Journal of the International Trombone Association* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 22.

Pettit, Heather. "With Band Music Eric Ewazen Is Like a Child In a Candy Store," *The Instrumentalist* 57, (April 2003): 32.

Prather, Ronald. "The Popular Songs of Alec Wilder," *The Musical Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (1990): 523.

Schneeloch-Bingham, Nancy. "Concerto for Flute and Chamber Orchestra," *National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors Journal* 53, (Fall 2004): 24.

Shirodkar, Marco. "Alan Hovhaness Biographical Summary," [article on-line] available from <http://hovhaness.com/Hovhaness.html>; (accessed June 30, 2009).

Snedeker, Jeffrey. "The Color of Brass: An Interview with Eric Ewazen," *The Horn Call* 32, (November 2001): 33.