AMERICAN PRIMITIVE
for Wind Ensemble

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music Composition

Approved April 2014 by the Graduate Supervisory Committee:

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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
May 2014
ABSTRACT

*American Primitive* is a composition written for wind ensemble with an instrumentation of flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones, trumpet, horn, trombone, euphonium, tuba, piano, and percussion. The piece is approximately twelve minutes in duration and was written September – December 2013.

*American Primitive* is absolute music (i.e. it does not follow a specific narrative) comprising blocks of distinct, contrasting gestures which bookend a central region of delicate textural layering and minimal gestural contrast. Though three gestures (a descending interval followed by a smaller ascending interval, a dynamic swell, and a chordal “chop”) were consciously employed throughout, it is the first gesture of the three that creates a sense of unification and overall coherence to the work.

Additionally, the work challenges listeners' expectations of traditional wind ensemble music by featuring the trumpet as a quasi-soloist whose material is predominately inspired by transcriptions of jazz solos. This jazz-inspired material is at times mimicked and further developed by the ensemble, also often in a soloistic manner while the trumpet maintains its role throughout. This interplay of dialogue between the “soloists” and the “ensemble” further skews listeners' conceptions of traditional wind ensemble music by featuring almost every instrument in the ensemble.

Though the term “American Primitive” is usually associated with the “naïve art” movement, it bears no association to the music presented in this work. Instead, the term refers to the author's own compositional attitudes, education, and aesthetic interests.
I would like to thank the faculty at Arizona State University with whom I have been privileged to work, including Jody Rockmaker, Rodney Rogers, James DeMars, Amy Holbrook, Sabine Feisst, Catherine Saucier, Ellen Carpenter, Doug Harbin, and Timothy Russell.

I am grateful to my friends and colleagues who have been supportive and helpful through my studies, including Brian Hernandez, Elliott Sneider, Gil Dori, Justin Kennedy, Chris Lamb, and Benjamin Cox. I am especially indebted to Nicole Landry for her patience, wisdom, and unconditional support, both near and far.
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NOTATION KEY

+ triangle mute, stopped horn, closed plunger mute

° triangle open, open horn, open plunger mute

gradually change from closed to open position with plunger mute

open and close plunger mute at rate comparable to curves of line

gradually accelerate within the indicated duration

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

INSTRUMENTATION

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in Bb

Bass Clarinet

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

Trumpet in Bb

Horn in F

Trombone

Euphonium

Tuba

Piano

Timpani

Percussion 1

Triangle, Suspended Cymbal, Cowbell,
High-Low Woodblocks, High-Med-Low-Very Low Toms

Percussion 2

Suspended Cymbal*, Tamtam,
Snare Drum, Bass Drum

*may share with Percussion I

Transposed Score

Duration ca. 12'
Tempo I

Sub.

T mid.

Timp.

Timp.

B. Sx.

A. Sx.

Fl.

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

Tuba

Perc.

Perc.

Perc.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

Horn

Trumpet

Euphonium

Tuba

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

Horn

Trumpet

Euphonium

Tuba

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

Horn

Trumpet

Euphonium

Tuba

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

A. Sx.

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Perc. 1

Perc. 2

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B. Sx.

Horn

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Euphonium

Tuba

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

T. Cl.

A. Sx.
[Sheet Music Image]
transition as smoothly as possible

ff π

ff π

ff π