

BIRTH OF A MODERN CONCERTO: AN EXPLICATION OF MUSICAL DESIGN
AND INTENTION IN *JOURNEY: CONCERTO FOR
CONTRABASS TUBA AND ORCHESTRA*

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John Stevens was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and the Edward F. Schmidt Family Commissioning Fund to compose a concerto for its principal tubist, Gene Pokorny. The piece began with multiple conversations between composer and performer and from these meetings actualized the influences that shaped the work. The most important influences that the performer mentioned were his passions for American steam locomotives and the Three Stooges, both of which were used by Stevens in his rendering of the composition.

This concerto was designed to be played on the famous CC York tuba that was played by the former principal tubist of the CSO, Arnold Jacobs, the same instrument used today. Insight into the history of the York tuba will be given as well as their influence on contemporary manufacturing and design. Focus is given to how Stevens writes the piece idiomatically to the CC tuba and potential performance problems when a performer uses tubas of a different key.

Conversations with both gentlemen will display the non-musical influences on *Journey* and how this effects the composition. Stevens' compositional language is explored and discussed in respect to the challenges and idiosyncrasies within the work. Collegiate tuba professors provide explanation for works level of interest within their respective schools and experiences.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1994, Gene Pokorny, principal tubist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO), approached John Stevens, noted composer and Assistant Professor of Tuba and Euphonium at the University of Wisconsin, concerning the possibility of composing a tuba concerto for him and the CSO. This piece is part of an existing series of works commissioned by the Edward F. Schmidt Family Commissioning Fund, the largest endowment in the orchestra, a project that promotes brass concertos for members of the CSO.

There have been other composers of prominence who have written significant concertos for the tuba and although there are approximately one hundred total compositions for tuba and orchestra, only a small number of works are as specific in instrument type as *Journey* for contrabass tuba and orchestra.¹ As part of the commissioning project, Pokorny wanted the piece composed with the CC tuba in mind, and in particular the legendary York tuba that was used regularly by Arnold Jacobs, former principal tubist of the CSO, an instrument that is still used in today's performances.² Because this is the first concerto written for the principal tuba in the CSO, he thought it was best represented by this historic horn.

¹ Winston Morris and Edward R. Goldstein, *The Tuba Source Book* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 137.

² Phillip Huscher, "*Notebook: The Program of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra*," (Chicago, IL: Performance Media Press, 2000), 35.

The title *Journey* comes from Stevens' symbolic description of the journey of the tuba from inception until now, with further consideration to the journey from the back of the orchestra to the front as well as the musical journey the performer takes the listeners during the course of the piece.³ The specification of contrabass tuba in the title of this work is important because few works call for a specific instrument, let alone a specific instrument performed by a specific person in a specific orchestra.

John Stevens has a distinguished career in the world of music as both performer and composer. He is an accomplished musician in all genres of musical performance. His experiences vary from principal tubist with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Florida and the Greater Miami Opera, while serving on the faculty of the University of Miami from 1981 to 1985, to the diverse schedule while a free-lance musician in New York City, performing in Broadway, orchestral and jazz venues. His present position is Professor of Tuba and Euphonium at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which he has held since 1985, where he teaches the tuba/euphonium studio as well as the tuba/euphonium ensemble. He is also active as a soloist, composer/arranger and conductor at colleges around the U.S. as well as at national and international conferences. Stevens is a feature soloist on more than forty recordings, including his first recording titled "Power" and his recent recording titled "Reverie" is a collection of arrangements and transcriptions of Romantic compositions along with original works.⁴

³ Huscher, 35.

⁴ Stevens, John, "UW School of Music: John Stevens," *Faculty and Staff*, http://www.music.wisc.edu/faculty/facultybio.jsp?faculty_id=2 (1 Oct. 2007).

John Stevens' compositions are staples of the brass repertoire. Among his more than fifty original compositions, he has written works for solo tuba, solo euphonium, as well as tuba/euphonium ensembles and brass quintets. Many of his pieces are known internationally and have been required works on many competitions, including ones where he has been on the judging panel. Stevens' music has also been heard on National Public Radio in addition to local television and radio programming. He has also won two ASCAP Composers awards and is presently working on a commission from fourteen universities on a piece for band.⁵

Gene Pokorny is a landmark figure in the world of brass playing. He is the Principal Tuba in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and has filled this position since 1988. Pokorny was the first tubist to fill this position after its former Principal Tuba player, Arnold Jacobs, resigned after a forty-four year career.⁶ A native of California, Pokorny attended the University of Redlands and graduated from the University of Southern California where he studied with Tommy Johnson, Jeffrey Reynolds, Roger Bobo and Arnold Jacobs. He has played in the Utah Symphony, the Israel Philharmonic, the Saint Louis Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra before he was offered the CSO position. In addition to his extensive orchestral background, Pokorny can be heard playing on several soundtracks such as *The Fugitive*, *Jurassic Park* and *Nightmare Before Christmas*. Pokorny has produced three solo recordings, one of these

⁵ Spies, David, "Journey, a Conversation with John Stevens," *Tubists Universal Brotherhood Association Journal* Vol. 27 No. 1 (Fall 1999), 37.

⁶ Fredericksen, Brian, ed. John Taylor, *Arnold Jacobs: Song and Wind*, (Gurnee, IL: Wind Song Press Ltd., 1997), 28.

dealing exclusively with orchestral tuba repertoire along with audition and practical information for the aspiring instrumentalist.⁷

Outside of the music world, he is well known as a “foamer,” a railroad fan who watches and chases trains and is a member of the Union Pacific Historical Society. His recent recording entitled “Big Boy,” features a picture of Pokorny beside the Union Pacific locomotive that was given the name “Big Boy” during World War II. Of particular interest to this work is another Union Pacific locomotive, the 844, that is one of the key elements in the design of the concerto. This train was also featured on the cover of his album “Tuba Tracks.”⁸

Another item of interest concerns the tuba for which the piece was expressly written. This instrument was originally built by the John Warren York Band Instrument Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1933, done so on the request of Philip Donatelli, tubist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Donatelli made the request under the urgings of Leopold Stokowski, conductor of the Philadelphia orchestra who wanted to create an organ-like quality of sound in the orchestra and therefore desired a large contrabass tuba. The result of this effort was two large CC (double C) tubas; one was kept at the factory while the other was for Donatelli.⁹

Because of Donatelli’s husky stature, he had a difficult time playing the instrument because of its unique design and he ultimately warranted had to sell the instrument because he could not breathe deeply without pushing the

⁷ Huscher, 72.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bevan, Clifford, *The Tuba Family*, (Piccolo Press; Winchester, 2000), 363.

instrument away from his body.¹⁰ Characteristics of this design include: A short lead pipe that leads directly into the first valve where the size of the bore was 19.05 mm; the tubing flared rapidly after the valves, and especially the bottom bow to a bell that measured 508 mm (20 inches); the metals for the York were the highest quality and composition available.¹¹

Jacobs bought this first York tuba for a price of \$175.00; Donatelli, who was also his teacher at the Curtis Institute, allowed him to pay five dollars a week until the debt was paid. The second tuba made by the J.W. York Company was later found by Donatelli at the University of Oklahoma and was soon purchased through a trade of instruments by Jacobs. He remained in possession of both instruments throughout his tenure in the orchestra and eventually sold both horns to the CSO, the first in 1988 and the second in 1996.¹²

These York contrabass tubas are revered by nearly every tuba player not only because of their legendary status, but also because of their distinct tone color. These factors are indicative of the instrument's design: Premium metallic composition, rapid flares at the bottom bow and after the valve set and also with the shortened lead pipe. Because of this horns' reputation for dramatic tone color, many companies have tried to copy the success of the York. The Holton Company designed large tubas reminiscent of Jacobs' horns in the 1950s, during a collaboration the Chicago Brass Quintet had with the company. More copies of this horn were designed through the years, but one of the best occurred in Switzerland at the factory of Peter Hirshbrunner. This horn is known

¹⁰ Frederiksen, 183.

¹¹ Bevan, 363.

¹² Frederiksen, 185.

conventionally as the “Yorkbrunner” and is used by many fine players around the world. Most recently, Walter Nirschl of Geretsried, Germany made a copy of Jacobs’ York tuba in 1994 with success equal to that of the Hirshbrunner. Despite these manufacturers attempts to duplicate the famous horns made by the J.W. York Company in the 1930’s, these instruments are revered for their sonority and historical value that is unmatched.¹³

The York tubas owned by Jacobs were his primary instruments in the CSO. “There is a great tradition in the Chicago Symphony of using the big York tuba for just about everything. Arnold Jacobs used it extensively.”¹⁴ Although the York tuba has become famous, the man playing the instrument brought it to new heights. Jacobs was a consummate musician and teacher, teaching not only brass players, but also woodwinds and vocalists as well. His incredible knowledge of the human body and its makeup allowed him to help so many individuals improve as musicians, not just as a tuba player or trumpet player. It is through his legacy as a fine teacher and musician that the world will savor and remember him.¹⁵

¹³ Bevan, 365.

¹⁴ Pokorny, Eugene, Interview by David Daussat, 13 March 2005, Interview 1P, Daussat Dissertation Collection, Satellite Library, Chicago, Illinois.

¹⁵ Frederiksen, 91.

CHAPTER 2

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The beginnings of the composition of *Journey* occurred in 1994, some six years before the first performance on June 8, 2000. At this time, Pokorny contacted Stevens about composing a concerto and asked him, along with other potential candidates, to submit examples of their music to CSO Music Director Daniel Barenboim for review.¹⁶ It was nearly two years later that Stevens received a call from Pokorny hearing that he had received the commission for the tuba concerto over Joseph Schwantner, David Sampson, Jerry Goldsmith and Jeffrey Reynolds.¹⁷

Since the Schmidt Family Commissioning Fund's inception, several other works have been completed by noteworthy composers: Donald Erb's *Concerto for Brass and Orchestra* (1987), *Concerto for Trumpet* (1987) by Karel Husa and two works by Ellen Taffe Zwilich, *Concerto for Bass Trombone* (1989), *Concerto for Trombone* (1988) and John Williams' *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra* (2003).¹⁸

Before the composer had written a note, the two men met several times and also corresponded with one another concerning the piece. During these conversations, they discussed ideas that were important for a work of this size,

¹⁶ Spies, David, "Journey, a Conversation with John Stevens," p. 38.

¹⁷ Spies, "Journey, a Conversation with Eugene Pokorny," in *Tubists Universal Brotherhood Association Journal* Vol. 28 No. 1 (Fall 2000), p. 34.

¹⁸ Ibid.

anywhere from eighteen to twenty five minutes, and scope. One of the primary ideas the two gentlemen agreed on concerned the legacy of the former principal tuba of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Arnold Jacobs.

With the nearly constant use of the famous York CC tubas on practically every recording and performance over the past half-century, it would seem inconsistent to have anything less than a piece written for the contrabass tuba.¹⁹

Another aspect of the piece that both men desired was a composition that did not have an abundance of technical hurdles that would impede the most important consideration, the music. In regards to the CC York tuba, Stevens was able to listen to Pokorny play on the horns in Orchestra Hall alone, after the commission had been established, to determine what the performer and the instrument were able to do best.²⁰

In their conversations together, the composer asked Pokorny to write down his thoughts and ideas on music, life, love and hobbies.

It was kind of a biographical portrayal of what I am and then he could go ahead and take whatever he wanted from that, blend it in with [Stevens'] ideas he has from the other components like the CSO tradition and his makeup as a player and composer.²¹

"I wanted to start with something pretty personal. That to me is one of the thoughtful aspects of composing, in writing for the person who is performing."²²

What was most inspirational to the development of the piece was his interest outside of music. Stevens knew his fascination with the "Three Stooges" prior to their conversations, but an additional influence was his love of American steam

¹⁹ Spies, "Journey, a Conversation with Eugene Pokorny," p. 35.

²⁰ Spies, "Journey, a Conversation with Eugene Pokorny," p. 35.

²¹ Pokorny, Interview by Dausat.

²² Stevens, Interview by Dausat, 15 July 2006.

locomotives, and most particularly the Union Pacific 844.²³ “This particular locomotive is a high-speed asteroid that has 80 inch drive wheels and cruises at 100 miles per hour and they can get up to 126 miles per hour.”²⁴ This same train also weighs a million pounds and evaporates between 150 and 180 gallons of water per mile and is the only train never to be decommissioned by a North American Class I railroad.²⁵ Stevens’ mentioned in the interview that people “thought this piece was about trains, but it is not. The movement titles are inspired by Gene’s love of trains and the general pattern of the music is inspired by this, but it was never my intent to write a film score about trains.”²⁶ Despite Stevens’ thoughts on his piece, Pokorny commented on how he felt the piece was more of a programmatic work, using this mental image of the 844 locomotive while playing.²⁷

The other aspect of Pokorny’s interests was with “The Three Stooges”, a fan club that he is a card-carrying member. Stevens used this theme, also known as “Three Blind Mice,” as inspiration for the opening of the concerto.

You would never know it by just listening to it. You have to alter the rhythm, you have to alter the tempo and alter some of the octaves. John said he wanted to get it [Three Stooges Theme] out the way. I guess that kind of says what he thinks about it.²⁸

²³ Stevens, Interview by Dausat, 7 July 2006.

²⁴ Pokorny, Interview by Dausat.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Stevens, Interview by Dausat, 15 July 2006.

²⁷ Pokorny, Interview by Dausat.

²⁸ Pokorny, Interview by Dausat.

It was never my intent for audiences listening to this go, “Hey, that’s Three Blind Mice.” This was definitely a little thing between Gene and I. It was a way for me to incorporate the Three Stooges into the piece somehow, just for a little wink or nod between performer and composer, but it also actually served as a way for me to concoct an opening thematic line that I was pleased with and got the piece off to the kind of musical start I wanted.²⁹

After this initial phase of communication between the two gentlemen, Stevens determined several facets of the concerto he felt were imperative: The piece should be serious; the proportions should be similar to other instrumental concertos; the piece should contrast lyricism with exciting passages of power, range and agility of the tuba. Their discussions were reminiscent of the past and from these conversations, he determined that the form of the concerto would be in a traditional three-movement format, although he approached it differently.³⁰ One item that Stevens mentions is that Pokorny had very few specific things that he wanted in the piece.

The one thing he felt strongly about was that he really wanted something [a concerto] that he could perform on the instrument he uses every day in the CSO. He wanted to bring that tuba from the back to the front [of the orchestra] and really showcase the instrument.³¹

The first movement, “Morning in the yard” clearly speaks to the beginning of the day in a train yard. Although not as clear, the second movement titled “Midnight in the mountains” speaks of the history of the Union Pacific 844 train and its legendary treks across the continental divide from Cheyenne to Laramie,

²⁹ Stevens, Interview by Daussat, 15 July 2006.

³⁰ Spies, David, “Journey, Concerto for Contrabass Tuba and Orchestra-A Review,” in *Tubists Universal Brotherhood Association Journal* Vol. 28 No. 1 (Fall 2000), p. 38.

³¹ Stevens, Interview by Daussat, 7 July 2006.

Wyoming over Sherman Hill.³² An additional metaphor for this movement comes from the composer's family experience and the children's novel, *Polar Express* where he recalled seeing a picture of a train in the mountains at night, and it was this image that he portrays in the movement.³³

The term "high ball" in train lore refers to an arrangement of three balls that were hung as a train entered a town. The lowest ball was green and signaled that traffic was ahead and the engineer should slow down, while a yellow ball signaled that the train should proceed with caution as it goes through the town. The term that was used for this movement was the high ball. "Highballing through town" refers to the practice of a locomotive to proceed as fast as possible; safety was not an issue, getting to the destination faster than the competitor was the goal.³⁴

With this information in hand, Stevens went about to work in the winter of 1996 on the concerto for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He concocted the title from the concept Pokorny had used in bringing the tuba from the back of the room to the front, and used this as a metaphor for a "journey" that one can take musically. As in all his music, Stevens' goal is to write music that is meaningful to both the audience and to the performers; music the performers will enjoy playing and that will provide them with challenges.³⁵

One of the challenges that exist in Stevens' music is the element of rhythm. His sense of rhythm was "influenced while an undergraduate studying

³² Pokorny, Interview by Dausat.

³³ Stevens, Interview by Dausat, 15 July 2006.

³⁴ Pokorny, Interview by Dausat.

³⁵ Stevens, Interview by Dausat, 7 July 2006.

jazz. I was also influenced by rock, popular music and even classical music.”³⁶

One of his goals as a composer is to not be predictable in the music and one of the ways he manages this is through the use of quintuplets, septuplets and odd meters, because he does not want the listener to become complacent. “It’s a way to give the music a certain life, kind of a jolt, by changing the groove over a bar or a period of bars.”³⁷

Just as he alters the rhythmic aspect of the music to maintain the listeners’ awareness, Stevens uses similar practices harmonically. “I use a lot of seconds, fourths and whole tone scales in my music because I’m trying to obscure the tonality.”³⁸ This harmonic language is not the easiest to grasp. Stevens’ finds that brass players today are in a “conservative period” in that people are used to playing traditional melodic and harmonic works and they subsequently find Stevens’ music “modern,” while Stevens himself thinks his music is quite tonal.³⁹

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Stevens, Interview by Daussat, 7 July 2006.

³⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

HOW IS *Journey* IDIOMATIC TO THE CC TUBA?

The previous chapter of this dissertation discusses the desire for the CC tuba in this concerto. Are there no other major works in the repertoire that call for a specific instrument and why does it matter that the composer wrote specifically for a contrabass tuba? Also, how did the composer make the piece idiomatic to this CC tuba and what happens if one tries to play the work on a tuba in a different key?

Within the tuba repertoire, several pieces have been composed for a specific performer. Most notable are: Ralph Vaughan Williams *Concerto for Bass tuba* written for Philip Catelinet; John Williams' *Tuba Concerto* written for Chester Schmitt; Edward Gregson's *Tuba Concerto*; Eugène Bozza's *Concertino* for Paul Bernard to name but a few. *Journey* is additionally composed for a specific performer, Gene Pokorny, but a truly unique fact that distinguishes this piece from others is its designation for the tuba that is used by the principal tubist in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra every day.

The CC tuba is the most common tuba found in the American orchestra today.⁴⁰ Because of the number of tuba manufacturers, there is no standard size for tubas, with the only fact holding true among all is the use of the contrabass

⁴⁰ Bevan, 361.

tuba in an ensemble setting. The bass tuba, usually pitched in F, is rarely found in an American orchestral setting, but instead is typically used in solo works, brass quintets and other chamber works. It should be easy to discern that contrabass tubas are used in ensembles where volume and quantity of sound are required of the tubist in a symphonic setting as the foundation of the brass section. The same generalization can be made of the higher-pitched bass tuba where the tubist wants and needs to play with more agility, less volume and a lighter, singing quality to the music.

The majority of tubists today play their solo music on F tuba because it's an easier instrument to play and hold a musical line as compared to its contrabass counterpart. One of the key factors in its ease of playing is its higher fundamental open-sounding pitch.⁴¹ The biggest determinant is the smaller bore size of the lead pipe, allowing the performer to expel less air at a slower rate of speed. However, because it's easier to use performance on some occasions, this does not predicate that one will or should always use what makes the job easiest. David Zerkel advises in his article title "Do You C What I C?" for young students to practice playing solos and making music on the big horn [CC tuba], instead of only using the contrabass tuba for orchestra or band playing alone.⁴² Pokorny said, "It's very difficult to write for an instrument that is basically made to be the core and fundamental of the orchestra. That's what it's supposed to do and because its a big instrument, it's very difficult to get different types of tone

⁴¹ Zerkel, David, "Do You C What I C?" *International Tuba Euphonium Association* Vol. 30 No. 2 (Winter 2003): 66.

⁴² Ibid.

colors, because its a monochromatic instrument”⁴³ The smaller F tuba however, is a far easier instrument to manipulate and create different colors in the sound, all that makes for a more interesting performance.

Because of the designation for CC tuba in *Journey*, the composer was asked if it could be played on other keyed instruments, where he responded “my concerto is playable by any of the other keyed tubas, but I wrote the piece idiomatically for the CSO tuba.”⁴⁴ The fingerings for the instrument are one of the key components of this idiomatic nature. (See Appendix B for a list of the CC and F tubas and their respective fingering charts for the range requirements of *Journey*.) In analyzing the piece, phrases best representing the idiomatic nature of his tuba writing in this piece will be indicated and compared to their performance on the other tubas. Another factor in the idiomatic nature of this piece is the key of the tuba and its fundamental pitch: The fundamental pitch of a CC tuba is low C, C₁; the fundamental pitch for an F tuba is the F below the bass clef staff, F. The designation of pitches that will be used for the remainder of this document is as follows (see example A).⁴⁵

Example A.

Example A shows a musical staff in bass clef with a common time signature 'c'. Below the staff, eight notes are shown with their corresponding fingerings (represented by three horizontal lines) and labels: B₂, C₁, C, B, c, b, c', and c''.

⁴³ Pokorny, Interview by Dausat.

⁴⁴ Stevens, Interview by Dausat, 7 July 2006.

⁴⁵ Morris and Goldstein, v.

Though the most common instrument used in solo performances in the United States is the F tuba, this instrument has inherent flaws that a piece like *Journey* would potentially expose. On the F tuba, notes written below the bass clef staff, approximately D to F₁, cause problems sonically for the tuba player. These notes generally sound “stuffy” and make the performer work harder in this lower range as compared to the performance of the same music on the CC tuba. The CC tuba is quite comfortable in this range and Daniel Perantoni of Indiana University has colorfully called this range of the tuba the “cash register.”⁴⁶

The first entrance of the tuba in the concerto is in the “cash register,” starting on A₁ and only ascending to a b^b once. All melodic material remains either in or below the bass clef staff and is a pleasant and relaxing portion to perform. However, if someone were to try a performance on the bass tuba in F, this would be a difficult section to play musically because of the range and challenges an F tuba has sonically below the staff.

At measure 45 the tempo becomes faster and the solo line hovers in the middle of the staff, like most of the concerto, but what makes the writing specific to the CC tuba here are the low notes. An F tuba could play the same pitches and does have nearly the same range as the contrabass instrument, but it lacks the tonal presence on notes below C. Adding to this fact is the dynamic. When an F tuba tries to play loud and low, the result is less pleasing, and yet more challenging, than on the big tuba. A prime example of this fact occurs between measures 69 and 72. The melody travels from c[#] to a loud F[#]₁ at fortissimo. The ideal instrument would have the ability to play with the agility of the F and the low

⁴⁶ Bevan, 276.

range and sonority of the big CC tuba. Since that is not the case here, the choice is for the CC, because although the range is not as low as the opening section, the big tuba can still sing phrases such as this quite well.

The majority of this movement lies in this middle of the bass clef and fingering is relatively comfortable on any keyed tuba. A key moment in “Morning in the yard” occurs at m. 153. The tuba plays one of the largest jumps of the entire piece in the course of two beats, a leap of two octaves and a perfect fifth, between C_1 and g' . This “primal scream” as Stevens puts it, works remarkably well on the CC tuba. True, the high note would be easier to play on a bass tuba, but once a performer can hear the perfect fifth and is capable of playing high register notes on the big horn, this passage becomes fun and impressive sounding. Another aspect of this excerpt is the starting pitch. The low C is the fundamental sounding pitch on the CC tuba and one that sounds easily under loud or soft volumes, and acts as a “ground” between the high notes.

Another pivotal example of the idiomatic nature of the piece occurs in the last phrase of the cadenza prior to the second movement; the solo music emulates the opening of the piece in the same range as the string basses. The tuba starts on a low F, F_1 , and proceeds “slowly,” as the marking indicates, with dotted half and whole notes to the final note of the movement, another low F. This may seem like easy music on an F tuba, but playing with a steady consistent sound at a slow tempo is made more difficult on this bass tuba because of all the fingers that must be used to negotiate the passage. The same

passage on CC requires two fingers at most through the same phrase.

The second movement of the piece contains music considered not idiomatic to the CC tuba because of the high range of the melodic line. For this, a tubist would frequently choose the bass tuba if this movement did not include the extended cadenza before the third movement. There are however, three instances that are identifiable with the contrabass tuba because of the range they cover and the volume demands placed on the performer by the music. The first entrance of “Midnight in the mountains” is playable on CC, with the range staying within the staff until the return of the melody down a major second at letter C. Although this music would be easier on the F tuba, the melodic line would not have the darker, heavier sound that the contrabass tuba projects, but rather a lighter sound not emblematic of the train metaphor.

At measure 65, the solo line has increased intensity, along with the number of orchestra parts. The orchestration here would have to be less active and smaller in number if the F tuba were used here. Furthermore, Stevens has composed a musical line that is somewhat repetitive in that the figure low G to A^b, precedes an intervallic jump of at least a major tenth, but on three occasions the interval is a major fourteenth. With this wide jump, the CC tuba is the instrument that will make it easier and well sounding. As mentioned before, the high notes would be easier to play on the bass tuba, but it is the relentless repetition of the G to A^b fragment that warrants the CC tuba. There are high notes in this phrase, d^{b1} and e^{b1}, between mm. 65-8, but the nature of the melodic line

makes it easier because these low notes act as a springboard to these higher pitches.

The last portion of the second movement that will receive attention is the 7/8 material, three measures after letter H. Although neither tuba would make the execution of this section any easier, the broader tone of the CC is what is necessary here, especially when it reaches measure 104. The musical concept of this section depicts this massive train trying to get over the peak of this mountain and it has to expel more energy to do so, related through the music by a more active solo line with the zenith of the phrase. The tuba sounds this through the loudest notes of the movement, an A to an A^b, at *fortississimo* above the loud accompaniment. A bass tuba could play the part well, but it could not produce the power necessary for this significant moment.

The cadenza bridging the second and third movement is the first real chance for the tubist to play in the extreme low register where the music descends to the lowest pitch of the entire concerto, a pedal A, A₂. In the interview with Stevens he recalled how Pokorny “wanted something really low” because of its nonexistence in tuba literature. This low passage, as is every passage in the piece, is possible on an F tuba, but the characteristics of the smaller instrument do not allow it to portray the image of a train that weighed five hundred tons. The cadenza material is straightforward in that it remains in the staff and foreshadows the music of the coming movement. Trills are included for the first time, and they are well placed and easily playable on the CC tuba.

Further, sixteenth note passages are used as foreshadowing and they are also easy to negotiate, almost exclusively using the first and second fingers.

Unlike the first two movements, “Highballing through town” is music designed to be fast and reckless. Having anything less than a tuba that is massive in size and sonority, portraying a massive train traveling at 100 miles per hour is unfair to the music, yet the music in this movement does not call for the tuba to just play incredibly loud and low. Instead, it feeds off the energy of the accompaniment and enters playing a fast rhythmic melody that covers nearly two octaves in its two measures, a passage that is feasible on the bass tuba, but one that would be easier and more agile on the big tuba. The music is not easy, because it still possesses many large jumps, not unlike previous phrases or excerpts. These intervallic jumps are part of Stevens’ compositional language and part of what makes the solo line here or the in the previous movements idiomatic in nature. This third movement is the first time where the actual fingerings for the notes are easiest on the CC tuba.

The first 125 measures of “Highballing” is an exercise in speed and agility of technique on the CC tuba where Pokorny said, “You’re not supposed to operate the Titanic like a speed boat.”⁴⁷ The only exception to this nimbleness in the tuba part occurs at letter G where one can really display the dynamic capacity between a low D and C[#] below the staff at *fortissimo*.

Stevens likes to use wide leaps to increase the energy of his music as noted previously. One of his favorite gestures appears at m. 275 between a D^b above the staff to a C below the staff, whether in the pattern of long to short, like

⁴⁷ Pokorny, Interview by Daussat.

this group of measures or the end where he uses these same two pitches five times in successive quarter notes. Fortunately for performers on CC tuba, it lends itself fairly well to the horn because of the “grounding” low C. This musical gesture is not easy, but trying to play the jumps from D^b to C on the smaller tuba would be quite difficult.

The last cadenza is a challenge on the CC tuba in that it requires the performer to play in the middle register of the horn, at a fast tempo, at a loud dynamic with a tritone leap to a high note. This is an instance a performer would prefer to play on the F tuba in order to better execute the high notes. Unfortunately, one cannot change horns in the middle of a phrase because after these high notes preceded by the quintuplets, the solo line drops again into the low register. The last phrase of the cadenza combines the shape of the melody, but continues the pattern of triplet eights jumping between high and low before it returns to the opening tempo.

The original tempo lasts for only a few measures before the tuba takes over and plays a chromatic scale starting on low C and ending on a high C and precedes one of the more challenging phrases of the entire piece. Like so much of the melody of the piece, it is comprised primarily of half steps, but the variety of intervals separating these minor seconds makes it difficult to hear; that, and the octave displacement. Between every pair of eighth notes (half-step intervals) there is at least an octave and a major third difference between successive pairs, ending on a chromatic scale terminating on a high c.

The last forty measures, starting at m. 413, are obviously for the CC tuba. The tuba is marked at *fortississimo* playing a D to C[#] below the staff, D and C respectively, and is playing in a great range for this instrument to work at its most efficient. The F tuba would not be able to supply the desirable volume because it is in this “stuffy” range and the bore size and size of the tuba would be insufficient. This play between D and C[#] goes on for eight measures, with all but one being below the staff.

The piece begins its finish with a two octave descending scale from C above the staff along with another helping of half-step eighths followed by a large leap of more than an octave. Like the passages before, it has a D as its base. One of the fastest passages of the piece has running sixteenth notes for three measures from low A₁ to d^{b1}. This phrase works well on the CC, but would be problematic at the beginning on another horn. The final gesture of the piece recalls the music from m. 275 and the large leaps from d^{b1} to C, with solo line culminating on a two octave and perfect fifth jump down from high G to low C, proving the necessity of the contrabass tuba. Many performers could make these last notes speak well on the smaller tuba, but the use of the larger tuba would give the piece the finality and presence that a composition this size and magnitude requires for the effective performance.

CHAPTER 4

WHY AREN'T PEOPLE PLAYING IT?

There are many facets the soloist must overcome to prepare *Journey* for a performance at a high level. The soloist must first take on the responsibility of being courageous enough to perform a nearly thirty-minute work without pause. This takes immense concentration and endurance, both physically and mentally.

The tuba concerto has a very short history. With the invention of the tuba in 1835, it took more than one hundred years for a composer to write a concerto for the instrument.⁴⁸ This work was the *Concerto for Bass tuba* by Ralph Vaughan Williams and was first performed in 1954.⁴⁹ Since then, there have been more than one hundred and twenty-five concertos written for the tuba, with only a select few of these pieces making into the standard repertoire.⁵⁰ Pieces such as the Edward Gregson *Tuba Concerto*, Eugène Bozza *Concertino*, Bruce Broughton *Concerto*, John Williams *Tuba Concerto* and Arild Plau *Concerto for Tuba and Strings*, are all pieces that are performed regularly. The most recent of these works, the Arild Plau, was pioneered by Øystein Baadsvik, tuba virtuoso from Norway who was the first to champion this work several years ago and it has become a popular work since, appearing on the music list for the Leonard Falcone International Euphonium/Tuba Competition in 2004. It has also

⁴⁸ Bevan, 202.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 426.

⁵⁰ Morris and Goldstien, 125.

resurfaced this year on the International Tuba Euphonium Associations (ITEA) bi-annual competition music list alongside many others from those mentioned above.

Did *Journey* make any of these competition lists? The answer would be a resounding no. The explanation for this goes back to previously mentioned items of length, difficulty and familiarity. The only list on which it did appear on was a select list of music chosen for the second round of a Washington, D.C. military band audition, and this list was unfortunately not published.⁵¹ This is unfortunate because *Journey* has received such little publicity and performance outside of those by Pokorny and students of John Stevens that a prestigious band would ask selected applicants to prepare this piece for an audition would give it its necessary credibility.

With the level of tuba playing ever increasing, difficulty in a piece shouldn't be an issue. The challenges that face these musicians lie in multiple layers: Finger and tongue technique; range; rhythm; athletic or angular nature of the melody; and length. The primary focus thus far has leaned towards the length of the piece being the biggest hurdle, but that has never stopped performers on recitals from playing only one movement of a major work; Stevens includes instructions on the first page of the piece for just this type of occasion. If a person were to prepare only one movement, the timing would be approximately ten minutes, certainly accessible by advanced undergrads or graduate students.

Another difficulty of *Journey* is the athletic nature of the melodic line. Ever- frequent jumps to the interval of a second, both minor and major, and their

⁵¹ Zerkel, David. "Hello." Personal e-mail. (25 October 2007).

octave counterparts, make this piece awkward to learn and get through in practice. These intervals require diligence and constant attention no matter what tuba the performer is using. The CC tuba is prone to more mistakes on this type music because of the mid-to-high range of this piece, making high notes closer together in the harmonic series as compared to the higher pitched F bass tuba.

The interval of the second and its derivations comprise only a small portion of those that are inherent to this piece. The interval of the fourth, be it the perfect or the tritone, is present in nearly all melodic material not including the opening “Three Stooges” theme. There are larger intervals that Stevens uses in the work with the greatest one being nearly three octaves, G^1 to $f^{\#1}$, a feat that occurs in the course of one beat in the final movement. The intervallic jumps are challenging at first but this piece has its own unique language that takes time comprehending it and once mastered, Stevens’ concept of a minor ninth sounding identical to half steps become realistic.⁵² These intervallic jumps would be a poor excuse for not performing *Journey* because an unaccompanied piece titled *Capriccio* by Krzysztof Penderecki uses intervals similar to Stevens’ work, yet it appears on competition lists on a regular basis and is standard literature in the repertoire. It was featured on the Leonard Falcone competition last summer and will be required music for this summer’s ITEA competition as well. The range for *Capriccio* is from D^1 to b^{b1} , almost identical to *Journey* and it also uses a similar compositional language of half steps, tritones and wide intervallic leaps. The same angular nature can be said of the *Bozza*, a work also on two competition lists within the last year.

⁵² Stevens, Interview by Daussat, 15 July 2006.

Much of the discussion in the previous chapters has centered on Stevens' use of rhythm in this concerto. Any performance of this piece will require very strong rhythmic skills by the performer and the freedom to line up patterns of 2 versus 3 or 3 versus 4 or 5 with the accompaniment. The quintuplet is perhaps the most daunting because it is rare in tuba literature that is not composed by John Stevens. He writes them to cover anywhere from one, two, three or four beats, as well as syncopating them within the framework of a 7/8 bar. This combination of rhythmic flexibility is intimidating and could deter potential performers from spending the necessary time to learn it.

To further determine why people aren't performing *Journey*, several university professors were asked two simple questions.

1. Have you had any students prepare or perform *Journey*?
2. If the answer to question number one is no, please explain why?

All responses were helpful in determining the cause for the apathy in performing this work. David Zerkel, Professor of Tuba and Euphonium at the University of Georgia, has had only brief experience with the piece because of its appearance on an audition list. He goes on mention how the piano part is quite difficult and felt that finding an accompanist to agree to put in the work to play the piece would be a daunting task. His last comments remark that the music in *Journey* is not the most melodically accessible and for someone to take on this work, one needs to like it, especially a piece that encompasses so many difficulties.⁵³

Another response came from Scott Watson, Professor of Tuba and Euphonium at the University of Kansas. Watson was fortunate enough to have a

⁵³ Zerkel, David. Personal e-mail.

student who selected a movement from *Journey* for a recital. The main problems that his student encountered were those of rhythm and ensemble execution with the pianist. He did note that the solo part is hard and it's hard music to listen to, and perhaps this piece that takes several hearings to accustomed to the harmonies and melodic content. What he felt lacking was the "catchy" melody that music like the Gregson [Tuba Concerto] or Vaughan Williams [Concerto] contain throughout their respective work.⁵⁴

Dr. Joseph Skillen from Louisiana State University responded that he has not had any of his students play the piece yet and his reasoning rested in that Stevens wrote the work for the CSO York tuba, an instrument that not many people possess and therefore shy away from it because they are unable to produce this sound. A suggestion lent by Skillen that might assist in the frequency of performance is for Stevens or the publisher, Editions Bim, to send out sample scores of *Journey* to prominent university professors.⁵⁵

Kevin Wass, Professor of Tuba and Euphonium at Texas Tech University divulged one of the most helpful responses. To date, he did not have any students prepare *Journey* for a performance. He was taken aback by this fact because it was performed by one of the best proponents of the tuba in the world, by one of the best orchestras in the world and "it was written by one of our own, a tuba player who is also a composer."⁵⁶ Said Wass, had the piece been written forty years ago, everyone would own a copy, but there are many other concertos

⁵⁴ Watson, Scott, Interview by David Daussat, 15 October 2007, Interview 24AW, Daussat Dissertation Collection, Satellite Library, Edinburg, Texas.

⁵⁵ Skillen, Joseph. "Hello." Personal e-mail. (29 October 2007).

⁵⁶ Wass, Kevin. "Tuba Question." Personal e-mail. (24 October 2007).

and sonata type pieces actually written for piano that he does not have time to learn, let alone something difficult like this. Perhaps most importantly, Wass noted the lack of a professional recording. The Plau was virtually unknown for many years until Baadsvik recorded it, and within a few years, it became a popular item, appearing on multiple competition lists. He concluded by saying that he assigns repertoire based on what his students want to play and to date, none of his students have expressed interest in this piece.⁵⁷

Each of the reasons concerning the standing of *Journey* in the tuba repertoire by the aforementioned professors is valid. The sentiments expressed by Scott Watson's comment about lack of a melody might be one of the keys for its lack of popularity. The melodies that appear in *Journey*, except for those that occur twice, are generally short in nature and this quantity of melodic material makes it a challenge to remember after one or two hearings. The most obvious example would be the opening "Three Stooges" theme, but Stevens reworks this infamous melody by octave displacements, rhythmic and tempo alterations, so it is virtually undetectable without prior knowledge and a score present. The next factor in identifying melodies is its angular nature. After living with the piece for many months, the melodies become familiar, but they do not approach the tunefulness of the Gregson, Vaughan Williams or even the Penderecki. Also, because the piece is lengthy, perhaps a shorter composition would have created a more desirable product to the general public.

It is easy to understand why people avoid this work at first sight and first hearing. The music is overwhelming at first, with a vast array of uneven rhythms

⁵⁷ Wass, Kevin. Personal e-mail.

and groupings that do not appear in traditional tuba method books. *Journey* takes time to learn and great patience to put together with an accompanist. Although some would see the aforementioned as a deterrent, it is surprising that more students have not taken this piece on as a challenge of their musicianship.

Journey is an enjoyable and challenging piece of music. All of the aforementioned reasons for not playing or teaching the piece are valid: No student has inquired about playing it; there are too many pieces already in the repertoire; the chances to performing *Journey* with an orchestra are remote, if the conductor even decides to program a concerto as lengthy as this. Additionally, if any tuba player gets the chance to play a concerto with orchestra, the Vaughan Williams would probably be the tubists' first choice because of its history. Playing *Journey* with an orchestra would be a wonderful opportunity, but until this occurs, it will be a personal goal to perform this piece in many different venues with the piano reduction, with the intent of educating audiences.

Creating excitement in a piece could easily be initiated by the advent of a professional recording. To date, there is no plan to start a project like this, but having this option available to the general public would benefit many; the piece would get more public performances; the musical language of Stevens would become more common; students would learn of the history surrounding the piece and the people involved. It would give credit to the work and effort of both men, although Pokorny still promotes and performs this piece in both the orchestral and piano reduction regularly. Having one of the greatest performers on the

planet play this music and display the idiosyncrasies of the tuba and the music of John Stevens to new audiences will help *Journey* gain its due notoriety one concert venue at a time.

APPENDIX
FINGERING CHARTS FOR CC AND F TUBA

CC Tuba

The musical score for CC Tuba is written in bass clef with a common time signature (C). It consists of seven staves of music. Each staff contains six measures of music, with notes and articulation markings. The notes are half notes, and the articulation markings include slurs and accents. The notes are as follows:

- Staff 1: Open, 12345, 1345, 1245, 234, 45
- Staff 2: 24, 4, 23, 12, 1, 2
- Staff 3: Open, 24, 4, 23, 12, 1
- Staff 4: 2, Open, 23, 12, 1, 2
- Staff 5: Open, 12, 1, 2, Open, 1
- Staff 6: 2, Open, 23, 12, 1, 2, Open
- Staff 7: 12, Open, 2, Open, 1, 2, Open

F Tuba

F Tuba

1 2 Open 12345 2345 1245

245 45 24 4 23 12

1 2 Open 24 4 23

12 1 2 Open 23 12

1 2 Open 12 1

2 Open 1 2 Open 23

12 1 2 Open 12 Open

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