

Sociopolitical Influences In Three Works
For The Saxophone By Shrude, Hindman, And Olson

by

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DEDICATION

This essay is dedicated to my mum and dad. Without you both, this adventure would not have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

This essay will study works for the saxophone by three composers, living and working in the U.S.A., that present a social, cultural, or political commentary: *Trope* (2007) by Marilyn Shrude (b. 1964), *13 for 3 Through 5* (2014) by Dorothy Hindman (b. 1966), and *Supreme* (2019) by Tawnie Olson (b. 1974). It will investigate the specific sociopolitical issue that inspired each composition and consider how the issue has informed and influenced the compositional process. It will identify similarities between the pieces and seek to bring more attention to this ever-expanding category of music for the saxophone by contemporary composers.

In these selected works, each composer has explicitly stated that their music is in response to a political, cultural, or social issue. Shrude's composition considers universal themes of struggle and emancipation through the use of the protest song, "We Shall Overcome" which serves as source material; Hindman includes fragments of the *Sesame Street* Theme Song in a work that is inspired by the ways in which *Sesame Street* portrays changing childhood experiences through the creation of characters who deal with issues including food insecurity, parental incarceration, and military deployment; Olson comments on issues of gender equality and representation by encoding the names of three female Supreme Court Justices within her work. In this study, I will examine the compositional processes used by the composers to explore the ways in which the sociopolitical issues have influenced the works.

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Introduction

Trope (2007) by Marilyn Shrude (b. 1946), *13 for 3 Through 5* (2014) by Dorothy Hindman (b. 1966), and *Supreme* (2019) by Tawnie Olson (b. 1974) are all works that are connected to a social, cultural, or political issue. This study will investigate the specific sociopolitical issues that inspired these pieces and how those issues have informed and influenced the composers' compositional processes. It will consider similarities between these works and serve a broader goal of bringing more attention to this ever-expanding category of saxophone music by contemporary composers.

In these selected works, each composer has explicitly stated that their music responds to a political, cultural, or social issue. Shrude's composition considers universal themes of struggle and emancipation through the protest song, "We Shall Overcome," which serves as source material; Hindman includes fragments of the *Sesame Street* Theme Song in a work that is inspired by the ways in which *Sesame Street* portrays changing childhood experiences through the creation of characters who deal with issues including food insecurity, parental incarceration, and military deployment; Olson comments on issues of gender equality and representation by encoding the names of three female Supreme Court Justices within her work. Therefore, it seems appropriate that an exploration of these pieces should include a discussion of the sociopolitical themes that are addressed and explore how these issues contributed to the creation of these works.

The use of musical expression as a means to make a political statement has an extensive history. A common objective of sociopolitical movements is to attract participation and action from other people, and music is a popular means to achieve this

goal.¹ Even an unpitched, rhythmic chant such as, “no ifs, no buts, no education cuts!” can propel a collective message and strengthen a sociopolitical movement.² Preachers and orators often use talking and singing as a means of rhetoric and persuasion, by using emotional energy, vocal range, and rhythmic control to convey their perspective. Music has proved to be such a powerful political influence that lawmakers have sought to suppress it. As one example, in 1794, George Danton attempted to ban all singing of political songs from the National Convention of revolutionary France.³ Such restrictions signal an understanding by political leaders that music has the ability to provoke a range of behaviors in people. In the best cases, it can inspire, stimulate, and open one’s mind to new issues or perspectives. In other cases, it can provoke dangerous, more extreme collective behaviors.

A political song acts as a form of rebellion against hegemony and plays an important social function. Songs of dissent are often transmitted through the oral tradition and are adapted to different social protests with the intention of uniting or influencing people. In 1966, Serge Denisoff categorized the ways that protest music can help to achieve a movement’s political goals. He states, songs of persuasion can:

1. Solicit or arouse support for a movement.
2. Reinforce the value structure of individuals who support this movement.
3. Create cohesion, solidarity, and morale for members of this movement.
4. Recruit individuals into a specific social movement.
5. Evoke solutions to a social problem via action.
6. Describe a social problem, in emotional terms.⁴

¹ Noriko Manabe, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Protest Music after Fukushima* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12.

² James Garratt, *Music and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 18.

³ For more on Danton’s musical restrictions, see Garratt, *Music and Politics: A Critical Introduction*, 14.

⁴ Serge Denisoff, “Songs of Persuasion and Their Entrepreneurs,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 79, no. 314 (1966): 582.

By reflecting on Denisoff's categories, it is clear that his final category – the emotive description of social problems – is particularly relevant in this study. Hindman's work, *13 for 3 Through 5*, was inspired by sociopolitical issues and explores their effect on children whilst referencing her personal history. Similarly, Olson's piece, *Supreme*, seeks to describe and draw attention to the issue of gender inequality in response to her own experiences of representation. Shrude's work, *Trope*, utilizes a well-known protest song which has powerful implications for social behavior.

***Trope* by Marilyn Shrude**

In order to emphasize a sociopolitical message – a discrete call to overcome oppression and dissent wherever possible – Marilyn Shrude’s *Trope* (2007) uses an external musical source associated with that message to generate intervallic and structural material. *Trope* is based on the civil rights protest song, “We Shall Overcome,”⁵ which is fragmented, disjointed, and ultimately embedded into the music to the point it is unrecognizable. *Trope* is inspired by the “tropes” of the Middle Ages, where melodic figures that were added to an embellish an existing chant without changing the meaning of the text. Tropes were created by adding new text to a melisma, or by adding new music between existing sections of melody and text.⁶ Shrude follows the same procedure in creating her work by using an altered and simplified version of “We Shall Overcome” as a cantus firmus and adding tropes, melodic figures based on whole or half step intervals, in between every two notes of it.

Marilyn Shrude is a Distinguished Artist Professor of Composition at Bowling Green State University who is dedicated to the advancement of contemporary music through composition and performance. Her works have been recognized by significant organizations including the Kennedy Center, Chamber Music America, and the American

⁵ Marilyn Shrude, *Trope* (self-published, 2007).

⁶ Alejandro Enrique Planchart, “Trope (i)” *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed January 10, 2021, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.⁷ Shrude's catalogue includes works for orchestra, wind ensemble, vocal ensemble, educational groups, and chamber ensembles.⁸

Shrude was born in Chicago, Illinois, on 6 July 1946 to a blue-collar family. Even though no one in her family was involved with music, she signed herself up for piano lessons in the second grade whilst attending a Catholic elementary school. Shrude subsequently attended Alvernia High School, a Catholic school for girls, which was established by the School Sisters of St. Francis in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.⁹ The Sisters of St. Francis educated Shrude throughout grade school, and during her time at St. Joseph Convent and Alverno College. In 1961, Shrude decided to become a nun and entered St. Joseph Convent. During this time, Shrude continued to take piano and organ lessons with the intention of becoming a music teacher in the Catholic school system.¹⁰ She also had training in music theory but did not receive any formal composition instruction at this time. In conversation with saxophonist Bobbi Thompson, Shrude said she was, “very discouraged [from composing, because] you didn’t want to be *proud*. So, you had to play down those kinds of things.”¹¹ Shrude decided to leave the convent and her life as a nun in 1969 upon graduating from Alverno College with a Bachelor of Music degree.

⁷ Mary Natvig, “Shrude, Marilyn,” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed February 4, 2021, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

⁸ “Works: Saxophone,” Marilyn Shrude, accessed January 9, 2021, <https://www.marilynshrude.com/works/instrument/saxophone>.

⁹ “The History of Chicago Alvernia Catholic High School,” Illinois High School Glory Days, accessed February 4, 2021, <http://illinoishsglorydays.com>.

¹⁰ Bobbi Amanda Thompson, “The Integration of Sound, Resonance, and Color in *Lacrimosa* for Alto Saxophone and Piano by Marilyn Shrude” (DMA diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2016), 15.

¹¹ Ibid.

Shrude completed her Masters and Doctoral degrees at Northwestern University where her teachers were Alan B. Stout and M. William Karlins.¹² Her Masters degree was in Music Education which she chose in the hope that it would help “to get her in the ‘back door’ of the composition department.”¹³ In 1984, Shrude accepted a tenure-track appointment to teach Music Theory and Composition at Bowling Green State University. She was named a Distinguished Artist Professor of Music in 2001 and on four occasions received the Dean’s Award for Service and for the Promotion of Contemporary Music at BGSU (1994, 1999, 2005, 2011).¹⁴

Shrude’s first work for the saxophone, *Quartet for Saxophones* (1972), was commissioned by fellow Northwestern graduate student, John Sampen. Sampen studied under Frederick Hemke, Professor of Saxophone at Northwestern University between 1962–2012, who recommended the piece for publication through his series with Southern Music.¹⁵ Hemke observed that, “there was a need for contemporary American saxophone music. Marilyn and John stepped into that void. John’s ability to play the techniques informed Marilyn, and her creative genius transformed that into some wonderful music for contemporary saxophone.”¹⁶

Shrude describes herself as someone with a “predisposition to write statements” in her music, something that she attributes to working in urban schools in the beginning of her career.¹⁷ For example, in 1982, she composed *Solidarnosc... a meditation for solo*

¹² Natvig, “Shrude, Marilyn.”

¹³ Andrew Wright, “A Survey of Selected, Original Chamber Music for Saxophone” (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2016), 1.

¹⁴ “Biography,” Marilyn Shrude, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://www.marilynshrude.com/biography>.

¹⁵ Thompson, “The Integration of Sound,” 2.

¹⁶ Mary Natvig, “Guggenheim Fellow Marilyn Shrude: Memorials and Memories,” *Journal of the International Alliance for Women in Music* 18, no. 2 (2012) 1-5.

¹⁷ Marilyn Shrude, interview by Eleanor Parker, video conference, January 30, 2021.

piano in response to the factions and protests between Polish workers and the Communist Party in 1981. The piece uses the Polish national anthem, *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego* meaning “Poland is not yet lost” as the main musical theme. Shrude’s maternal family is Polish and she felt “aligned” to the political events which unfolded.¹⁸ Shrude says that she takes “occasion to comment on world events.” This is demonstrated in works such as *La chanson de printemps* (1999) for string orchestra which commemorates Jan Palach, a student and activist who burned himself in Wenceslas Square in protest against the loss of freedom following the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia,¹⁹ and *Recit* (2005) for flute and piano which was commissioned in memory of Daniel Pearl, a violinist and journalist who was kidnapped and killed by terrorists in Pakistan in 2002.²⁰ Shrude states that “a lot of times there is a little political message embedded” throughout her music.²¹

Shrude has a long history of mentoring and teaching other young composers, primarily through her position at Bowling Green State University. Although she does not specifically encourage or dissuade her students from creating works on political themes, she does “encourage them to get in contact with their own ethnicity and culture.”²² Shrude recognizes that many composers are reluctant or fearful to connect with some social or cultural issues, and others have a credible fear of musical censorship. On the possible suppression of her own music Shrude recalled, “a little feeling when we did the *Postcard* in Poland that maybe there was some quizzical, “why is she doing that?” But

¹⁸ Shrude, interview.

¹⁹ Anna J. Stoneman, “Socialism with a Human Face: The Leadership and Legacy of the Prague Spring,” *The History Teacher* 49, no. 1 (2015).

²⁰ “Daniel Pearl Foundation,” *Alfred Friendly Press Partners*, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://presspartners.org/partners/partnerships/daniel-pearl-foundation>.

²¹ Shrude, interview.

²² Ibid.

they weren't that attuned to any contemporary music anyway, so it might have been that more than anything.”²³

Shrude's extensive catalogue of works for the saxophone amounts to over thirty pieces, many of them referencing political or social topics. For example, *Lacrimosa for alto saxophone* (2006) is inspired by the Latin word for “tears” and “deplores the senseless loss of human life.”²⁴ *Quiet Hearts: A Kaddish* (2017) in which, “the violent and deadly anti-Semitic attack in Pennsylvania last November reminds us that hate, and hostility remains even in this second decade of the twenty-first century...the music serves as a reminder for the many Jewish people who have perished in so many tragic ways.”²⁵ *River Song: A Postcard from the Sichuan Provence* (2010) reflects on the growth of the human population, and the need for clean, safe water. Shrude explains that this work, “considers the history and vulnerability of the Yellow River in China, reminding us of the fragility of our natural resources.”²⁶ These examples demonstrate that throughout her career, Shrude has had a predilection and commitment to creating works that respond to social, political, or cultural themes.

Trope was premiered on 26 February 2007 at the Moore Musical Arts Center at Bowling Green State University by Marilyn Shrude and John Sampen. The concert entitled “Voices of Dissent” was presented on the following principle:

For centuries, the poet, author, musician, and painter have addressed social and political concerns in their own respective artistic voices, providing a reflective image of society. “Voices of Dissent” is a thematic concert presentation encapsulating the current voices of the twenty-first century composer and

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ “Voices of Dissent” Concert program, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH, February 26, 2007, in John Sampen’s personal collection).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

performer as they struggle with the issues of war, global warming, pollution, and famine.²⁷

Four faculty composers from BGSU each presented a new work using “We Shall Overcome” as a cantus firmus. These works were *Wedge* (2007) by Elainie Lillios for alto saxophone and piano; *Trope* (2007) by Marilyn Shrude for alto saxophone and piano; *Resonances* (2007) by Mikel Kuehn for soprano saxophone and piano; and *Beginnings* (2007) by Burton Beerman for alto saxophone and piano.²⁸

Trope is a work for any group of instruments (flexible ensemble) in the key of C, Eb, Bb, and its duration is determined by the performers. After the premiere of the work, in which the instrumentation used was alto saxophone and piano, there have been several reconstructions of the piece, including a version for pre-recorded and acoustic saxophones featuring John Sampen, James Fusik, and Jeffrey Heisler. This micropolyphonic version was recorded on the CDCM Computer Music Series.²⁹ The same saxophonists feature in a performance by the 2015 BGSU saxophone studio with the addition of a kinetic light installation by Erwin Redl, and videography by Michiko Saiki.³⁰ There is also a version for solo saxophone and animation developed by John Sampen and Marilyn Shrude.

Shrude’s *Trope* seeks to promote broad sociopolitical issues and discretely encourage resistance to oppression wherever it occurs. Shrude acknowledges that *Trope* is not about a single issue or event, explaining that “it’s not just about one thing; it’s

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. *Voices of Dissent* was commissioned and premiered by Marilyn Shrude and John Sampen.

²⁹ Shrude, *Trope*.

³⁰ “Trope (collaborative video)” Marilyn Shrude, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://www.marilynshrude.com/works/trope-collaborative-video>.

about many things.”³¹ The work was created during a period of political transition in the U.S.A. Shrude wanted to create a work that, “addressed controversial issues... [at that time] George Bush was leaving office; Barack Obama would be elected in 2008.”³² Shrude comments on how some works that have an explicit message can sometimes be considered controversial by an audience, but the “subtle” nature of *Trope* has made it more broadly programmable.³³ In a review, Jim Phelps wrote, “it is difficult to ascertain whether ‘we have overcome’ or not. Therein lies the mystery of this work...this is a strikingly careful, well-studied expression of a very complex real-world situation, a struggle perhaps experiencing some measure of victory, with cautious optimism toward the future.”³⁴

The song “We Shall Overcome” is an established anthem for the civil rights movement and has been used as a protest song, hymn, and labor movement anthem across the world.³⁵ Through oral tradition, it developed from a folk song with African and European ancestry to become a song for enslaved people entitled, “I’ll Be All Right Someday.”³⁶ It was published by Methodist minister Charles Albert Tindley in 1901 with the title, “I’ll Overcome Someday.” The song was altered over time so that “I” became “we.”³⁷ It was first used as part of a political protest in 1945, when the song was sung by

³¹ Shrude, interview.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Jim Phelps, “Music from Bowling Green State University, MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music by Burton Beerman, Gregory Cornelius, Shane Hoose, Mikel Kuehn, Elaine Lillios, Marilyn Shrude, Michael Thompson and Dan Tramte,” *Computer Music Journal* 35, no. 1 (2011): 106.

³⁵ Victor V. Bobetsky, “The Complex Ancestry of ‘We Shall Overcome,’” *The Choral Journal* 54, no. 7 (2014) 28.

³⁶ Ibid, 29.

³⁷ Tammy L. Kernodle, “Civil Rights Movement,” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed February 4, 2021, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

African American demonstrators during a tobacco workers' strike in Charleston, South Carolina.³⁸ In 1963, "We Shall Overcome" was published by Ludlow Music with Zilphia Horton, Frank Hamilton, Guy Carawan, and Pete Seeger, credited as authors of the new lyrics and music adaptation. All royalties from that publication were donated to the Freedom Movement.³⁹ In August 1963, marchers sang "We Shall Overcome" beside the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech.⁴⁰ In recent years "We Shall Overcome" has been sung at multiple political demonstrations including the "Free the People" movement in Northern Ireland which protested against mass arrests and internment in 1971,⁴¹ and by Bruce Springsteen at a memorial concert for victims of the 2011 terror attacks in Norway.⁴² By using "We Shall Overcome" as source material, Shrude associates her composition with these historic events, as well as future events that include this song. Shrude acknowledges these associations as one of the strengths of this work and credits this feature as one of the reasons it has been performed so frequently; "it's performed a lot and has a far reach... it's been played all over the world— China, Israel, Canada, Europe, the US. I like that aspect about it."⁴³

³⁸ Bobetsky, "The Complex Ancestry," 33.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Carlyle Murphy, "The Rise of the Rights Anthem," *Washington Post*, January 17, 1988, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1988/01/17/the-rise-of-the-rights-anthem/91eff26a-c193-4403-bd60-4e0301909f4c>.

⁴¹ "Internment Explained: When Was It Introduced and Why?" The Irish Times, August 9, 2019, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/internment-explained-when-was-it-introduced-and-why-1.3981598>.

⁴² Richard Orange, "Bruce Springsteen Tells Utoya Survivors: We Shall Overcome," The Telegraph, July 23, 2012, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/norway/9419467/Bruce-Springsteen-tells-Utoya-survivors-we-shall-overcome.html>.

⁴³ Shrude, interview.

The title, *Trope*, implies a significant personal and musical contexts. The use of tropes also reflects Shrude's personal history as a member of the Catholic Church, and her extensive knowledge of liturgical music which has influenced and informed her compositional style.⁴⁴ In Shrude's program note for *Trope*, she indicates a preference for a "resonant" space with two seconds of reverberation and specifies that "one should not lose the overall resonance."⁴⁵ These instructions surely originate from her experience of performing and listening to music in large spaces, such as a church. The preference for holding notes over the bar line in *Trope* reflects the accumulation and density of sound when instruments play in a large, reverberating space.

Musically, the title references the sacred music tradition that occurred after the standardization of the Roman Liturgy in the ninth century that allowed church musicians to add to and elaborate on the existing repertoire. A trope was an expressive device that expanded an existing chant in one of three different ways:

1. Addition of new words and music before the chant and often between the phrases.
2. Additions to the melody only, by extending the melisma or adding a new one.
3. The addition of new text only set to existing melisma.⁴⁶

Musicians at this time believed that expanding and enlarging the standardized chant would increase the solemnity of the music.⁴⁷ This practice offered musicians an important opportunity for creativity within the confines of the authorized repertoire.

⁴⁴ Shrude attended Catholic grade schools where singing and playing the organ in daily masses became a regular part of her life. In 1961, Shrude made the decision to become a nun and entered St. Joseph Convent in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Here she continued taking piano and organ lessons throughout her training, with the ambition to become a music teacher in a Catholic school.

⁴⁵ Shrude, *Trope*.

⁴⁶ Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *Norton Anthology of Western Music*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 61.

⁴⁷ For more information on the *trope* style see Alejandro Enrique Planchart, "Trope (i)."

Tropes were usually sung by soloists and set to fit within the existing chant to which they were attached. Melodic tropes are only found in the Introit and the Gloria sections of a Mass, however there is also a repertoire of melismatic additions found in the Office responsories.⁴⁸ Hundreds of tropes were composed in France, Germany, Italy, and England before the practice declined in the twelfth century. It was banned by the Council of Trent (1545–63) which sought to clarify sacred beliefs and practices in response to the Protestant Reformation.⁴⁹ The Council established a uniformed liturgy and sought to eliminate polyphonic music, including tropes, which they felt made religious texts unintelligible. This historic censorship may have bearing on the power of tropes as a vehicle for sociopolitical protest. The use of the trope by Shrude could be read as encouragement for musicians to express themselves and the message behind the cantus firmus, “We Shall Overcome.”

Trope follows the ninth century liturgical practice of adding tropes to existing chants. In Shrude’s work, her altered and simplified version of “We Shall Overcome” serves as a cantus firmus. She inserts tropes in between every two notes of the cantus firmus, which enlarges the source melody and increases its solemnity. These elaborate melismas are textless but are based on the same interval content found in the source melody; whole steps and half steps.

Control of pitch is highly significant in *Trope* as it carefully mimics the work’s political message which seeks to promote equality and resistance to oppression. Shrude seeks equality between pitches and performers by stating that octave transpositions are

⁴⁸ Alejandro Enrique Planchart, “Trope (i).”

⁴⁹ Burkholder, Grout and Palisca, 61.

not permitted, any instrument that plays this piece must have a sounding range of F#3 to A#4, and the final note of the work must be B3 for all musicians.⁵⁰ The melodic line only moves by a half-step or whole step, no other melodic intervals are permitted. In the score, Shrude states that after playing page one for the first time, “one can also skip from fragment to fragment, but must always “link” fragments by a half or whole step.”⁵¹ The only rule, in terms of creating a larger form, is that you must begin and end with page one, you must play page two at least once, but not more times than you play page one. Such a large amount of musical choice requires both creativity and independence from the musicians, qualities which when applied to sociopolitical change could manifest as self-governance, liberation, and emancipation.

Shrude uses parentheses to highlight multiple two pitch motifs that represent her interpretation of the source material, illustrated in Example 1. When combined, these pitches follow a similar contour to the melody of “We Shall Overcome,” although in the work they are separated by tropes. In the score, Shrude describes how these two pitch motifs should be played to contrast with the other pitches using an effect such as a change in dynamics or articulations and can also be repeated *ad libitum*. Shrude describes how the two pitch motifs “are the notes that you have more freedom to interpret. They gain a little attention.”⁵² The alteration of the melodic content, combined with the inclusion of tropes, makes the original song almost unidentifiable when heard in context. Shrude explains, “I purposely embedded those notes in there the way I did so that I could give a

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

macro structure of the tune.”⁵³ The use of the “We Shall Overcome” source material is extremely subtle, but integral to the structure of the piece, acting as a frame for each melodic gesture.

Example 1: Shrude, *Trope*, Pitches derived from “We Shall Overcome” creates a macro structure.

There are other significant harmonic and melodic structures present in *Trope* not related to “We Shall Overcome.” Shrude uses three different fermatas in *Trope*; the long, traditional, and short fermatas are intended to contrast each other, although the performers are instructed not to coordinate length. The fermatas are significant as they provide another macro structure for the work which frames each musical gesture, shown in Example 2.

Example 2: Shrude, *Trope*, mm. 1–3.

⁵³ Shrude, interview.

By drawing large-scale connections between the traditional fermatas, a twelve-tone row is revealed shown in Example 3. The row is heard in its entirety twice, once on the first page, then again on the second page. This tone row is another significant intervallic structure for the piece, in addition to the melodic lines which connect the fermatas by whole and half steps. It is therefore notable that this twelve-tone row is not constricted to whole and half steps but includes melodic intervals of a minor third (F–A#), compound augmented second (A#–G), and diminished fifth (F#–C).

Example 3: Shrude, *Trope*, 12-Tone row embedded in traditional fermatas.



There is a second, incomplete, tone row embedded within the short fermatas shown in Example 4. The missing pitch, B3, is significant in its absence because of its importance within the rest of the score. The work begins on B3, and Shrude specifies that the final note of the piece must be a unison B3. These different constructions which control the pitches and intervals in this work, could be read as Shrude seeking to musically express a larger political message of restriction and overcoming. By allowing deviations and non-conformity within the tone row, she invites the performer to consider the ways in which they can break away from prescribed rules and expectations. The pitch missing from the incomplete tone row, B3, played in unison at the end of the work could symbolize unity and success in overcoming constraints.

Example 4: Shrude, *Trope*, Incomplete tone row embedded in short fermatas.



I believe there are parallels to be made between the message of “We Shall Overcome” and the contrast of musical restraint and freedom that Shrude includes in *Trope*. “We Shall Overcome” delivers a message of hope, courage, and resolve to overcome oppression in search of a more equitable future. When playing each musical gesture, I find that despite having a lot of freedom in regard to my use of durations and dynamics, the pitch range of F#3 to A#4 feels restrictive. As the melodic lines can only move by small intervals, and many of the gestures between the short fermatas do not have a wide arch, the times when there are significant moments of climax seem extremely expressive. For example, playing an ascending line to the highest note of the piece (A#4) in m. 30, having until now been constrained to the mid-range of the instrument, feels like a substantial shift in expression and timbre. Breaking through to the upper range of the instrument feels liberating and emancipating, as though you are *overcoming* the melodic restrictions. There is also a possibility of a hidden metaphor in the fact that Shrude only uses whole or half step intervals. This perhaps invites the question: will you take whole steps, half steps, or any steps at all to overcome injustices wherever you find them?

Although the “We Shall Overcome” melody is deeply fragmented and embedded within the music, to the point that it is not easily identifiable, it nevertheless delineates significant, large scale musical structures. The rising arch of the “We Shall Overcome” melody marked in parenthesis from mm. 1–13 slowly, and meticulously ascends forming the *overcoming gesture*. The lines between the notes in parenthesis ascend through small

intervallic increments, which represents the struggle for political and personal freedoms, won over long periods of time, little by little. The overcoming gesture embodies a larger meaning that utilizes individual structures to support and drive a message of universal sociopolitical change.

Trope offers performers considerable opportunities for different interpretations through the use of articulations, rhythms, and dynamics that may be determined by the performer, which supports the call for freedom. Musicians must devise a general form and duration of the work in advance in order to produce a cohesive and expressive performance. This reflects the source material's political message, that collective action is required to overcome adversity, by emphasizing the "We" in "We Shall Overcome." Shrude reinforces this need for collaboration by stating, "some people don't plan very well, they're just not very creative with it, they just play it. This isn't a plug and play kind of piece, you really have to shape the performance."⁵⁴

Marilyn Shrude's *Trope* seeks to promote sociopolitical change through a discrete call to overcome oppression wherever it exists. The protest song "We Shall Overcome" serves as a cantus firmus and as a source for the primary melodic intervals, whilst two independent tropes made up of one complete, and one incomplete tone-row serve to equalize pitches. While Shrude asserts tight control over the pitch material to symbolize a long-term struggle, she offers the performers extensive liberties in their choice of tempo, structure, and phrasing, giving them the freedom that "We Shall Overcome" is seeking.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

13 for 3 Through 5 by Dorothy Hindman

13 for 3 Through 5 (2019) by Dorothy Hindman is one in a series of compositions that considers commercial objects and explores the social issues that created them. This work was inspired by stories and characters from the television show *Sesame Street*, which present issues such as food insecurity, parental incarceration, living with HIV, military deployment, and autism, among others. Hindman reinvents the *Sesame Street* theme song to create a new work for alto saxophone and percussion through a creative process that involves electronic manipulation of audio samples and acoustic composition as an “homage to a show that gave me so much comfort as a young child, and continues to do so for many in distress.”⁵⁵ In Hindman’s work, the fragmentation and timbral changes of the theme song reflects the chronic distress felt by some young children who depend on *Sesame Street* for comfort and guidance.

Dorothy Hindman (1966) is an Associate Professor of Composition at the University of Miami, whose music often deals with political themes and individual perception. She was born on 13 March 1966 in Miami, Florida. Her mother was a talented classical pianist and scientist, and her father was an actor and manager of Miami’s local classical music radio station, WTMF.⁵⁶ During her early life, the works of Chopin, Beethoven, and Brahms were often heard within her household, either being played by her mother, or on records. In upper elementary school, Hindman became interested in rock and popular music, particularly that of the Beatles. At the age of ten,

⁵⁵ Dorothy Hindman, *13 for 3 Through 5 for alto saxophone and percussion* (self-published, 2014).

⁵⁶ Hindman, interview by Eleanor Parker, January 22, 2021.

Hindman's father introduced her to an album of Moog synthesizer music, and she became increasingly interested in electronic and experimental music.⁵⁷

Hindman began her formal musical studies at the age of sixteen when she enrolled herself in the Miami-Dade Community College. She took lessons in rock keyboard and synthesizer, playing mostly top 40 and popular music. Hindman describes being introduced to avant-garde electronic music at the age of nineteen, as feeling like she had found herself.⁵⁸ She transferred to the University of Miami in her junior year to study with Dennis Kam, graduating with a Bachelor of Music in 1988.⁵⁹ Hindman received a Master of Arts at Duke University in 1989, studying with Stephen Jaffe and Thomas Oboe Lee. In 1990, she returned to the University of Miami where she earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree. Hindman also studied with Louis Andriessen at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in 1994.⁶⁰

Hindman's extensive catalogue of over seventy-five works is characterized by imitation, fragmentation, spectral timbres, driving rhythms, and complex structures.⁶¹ Hindman's music is deeply autobiographical and focuses on her own experiences and relationships. She has direct involvement with the sociopolitical issues that inspire her music. She writes:

My purpose as a composer is to present my unique human perspective, challenge assumptions, and expand one's understanding of themselves and others. Inspired by local history and personal experience, I explore my mis/understanding of past and current events, and the cultural, social, and economic legacies I have inherited. I want to captivate my listener, to reach and touch their humanity, to

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Mindy Pyle, "A Compact Disc Recording of Four Contemporary Works for Clarinet by American Women Composers" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2008), 6.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁶¹ "Biography," Dorothy Hindman, accessed February 4, 2021. <http://www.dorothyhindman.com/bio>.

place a demand on their attention that is rewarded. My music is provocative, but also engaging, memorable, and ultimately meant to affect positive change.⁶²

A number of Hindman's works are directly influenced by sociopolitical themes. In particular, *Bystander* (2016) written for speaking cellist uses audio from bystander cell phone videos as a source material. It references events such as the 2017 Las Vegas shooting, racist rants, and "BBQ Becky," a white woman from Oakland, California who called the police complaining about a black family's barbecue. *Prothalamia: A Celebration of Marriage for All* (2010) for men's chorus and organ reflects on discussions around marriage equality. Of that work Hindman commented, "the purpose of art is to reflect society; that [society] must be revisited through a new lens with a new perspective, and that lens is art."⁶³ Hindman's compositions are often autobiographical with works such as *Needlepoint* (2004), *Magic City* (1999), and *Setting Century* (2003 rev. 2015) all reflecting on major life events such as the illness and death of her parents, and the birth of her son. Hindman has discussed how writing pieces with such a heavy subject matter can be difficult. She said, "my sax quartet is a piece, where I sat down and said, I want to write something fun because I'm tired of writing all these wrenching pieces, in response to my life."⁶⁴ These examples show that Hindman has an extensive history of creating works inspired by personal experiences as well as social, political, or cultural issues that are relevant in her own life.

Hindman has a significant series of compositions that are all inspired by objects which encapsulate a single social justice issue. These works focus on an item, usually a

⁶² "Biography," Dorothy Hindman, accessed February 4, 2021.

⁶³ "Prothalamia," Dorothy Hindman, accessed February 4, 2021.

⁶⁴ Hindman, interview.

commodity, which speaks to injustice and oppression (see Appendix 1). *R.I.P.T.* (2014) for speaking saxophonist and percussionist was inspired by a Miami Herald article which discussed how local businesses were prospering by selling memorial T-shirts, which are popular in the African American community as an expression of grief.⁶⁵ An article by Nadege Green described how one month a T-shirt with twenty faces was made because there had been so many deaths within one community.⁶⁶ *What's It Worth to You?* (2018) for chamber ensemble, was inspired by a \$1.05 price tag created by survivors of the Parkland massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, to symbolize the value of the life of each student in Florida by dividing each student death from gun violence by the donations made by the National Rifle Association to Senator Marco Rubio's election campaign.⁶⁷ *Mutatis Mutandis* (2019) for alto saxophone was inspired by the "Pussy Hat," an object designed to advance women's rights through education and dialogue.⁶⁸ Images of these objects are processed in Photoshop by Hindman, and then electronically realized as sound. The "sound" of these images becomes the base material for an acoustic chamber work.

13 for 3 Through 5 (2019) for alto saxophone and percussion is part of Hindman's "object" series.⁶⁹ It was commissioned by Stuart Gerber and Jan Berry-Baker for the Bent Frequency Duo Project. Hindman had worked with Gerber previously and explained that,

⁶⁵ "R.I.P.T.," Dorothy Hindman, accessed February 9, 2021, <http://dorothyhindman.com/works/chamber-music/r-i-p-t>.

⁶⁶ Nadege Green, "Remembering Fallen Young Men with 'RIP T-shirts,'" *WLRN 91.3 FM*, June 12, 2014, <https://www.wlrn.org/culture/2014-06-12/remembering-fallen-young-men-with-rip-t-shirts>.

⁶⁷ "What's It Worth to You?" Dorothy Hindman, accessed February 9, 2021, <http://dorothyhindman.com/whats-it-worth-to-you>.

⁶⁸ "Mutatis Mutandis," Dorothy Hindman, accessed February 9, 2021, <http://dorothyhindman.com/mutatis-mutandis>.

⁶⁹ Hindman's "object" series explores commercial objects that symbolize a social issue that created them.

“anytime a performer of that level contacts you and says, “I would like a piece,” you jump at it, because you know that creatively you can do anything.”⁷⁰ *13 for 3 Through 5* was premiered on 7 September 2019 during the Justly Tuned Concert Series at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami.

13 for 3 Through 5 was inspired by a 2013 article by Chris Higgins entitled “13 Sesame Street Characters Making a Difference in the World,” which described some of the new and original characters on *Sesame Street* who help young children to understand major social issues.⁷¹ For example, it discusses how the Cookie Monster began to emphasize the importance of handwashing and healthy eating. In 2005 he sang a song called “A Cookie is a Sometimes Food” in a bid to combat childhood obesity. The show introduced several other characters with similar functions including Lily, the first Muppet on the show to deal with food insecurity; Zobi, who teaches children watching the Nigerian version of *Sesame Street* about malaria; and Alex, a Muppet who, like an estimated 2.4 million children in the U.S.A., has a parent incarcerated. Hindman dealt with some of the experiences addressed by the *Sesame Street* characters in her own childhood. She explains, “I also went through a lot of issues when I was young. I had food insecurity and those kinds of things; and so for me the Muppets are very nostalgic. I would go into my room when I was a very small child and just watch *Sesame Street*.⁷² The autobiographical nature of *13 for 3 Through 5* is something that makes this work a significant part of her catalogue. She states, “this one was very near to my heart. I felt

⁷⁰ Hindman, interview.

⁷¹ Chris Higgin, “13 Sesame Street Characters Making a Difference in the World,” Mental Floss, October 16, 2013, <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/53165/13-sesame-street-muppets-make-difference>.

⁷² Hindman, interview.

like this one tells my story more authentically than the reflections I was having on other people's stories.”⁷³

Sesame Street was conceived in 1966 by Joan Ganz Cooney and Lloyd Morrisett. The show was created in response to social and political changes in the U.S. such as the Civil Rights movement and the War on Poverty. Cooney and Lloyd devised a television show that would, “help prepare all children for school” and “to pay special attention to the needs of underprivileged children.”⁷⁴ In the first season, producers prepared an educational curriculum to address five subjects: language and reading; mathematics; reasoning and problem solving; social, moral, and affective development; and perception.⁷⁵

Sesame Street uses story lines and characters to help teach children crucial social and emotional topics. In 1983 when Will Lee, the actor who portrayed the shopkeeper, passed away, instead of creating a fictitious story about him “moving away” or replacing him with another actor, *Sesame Street* carefully told millions of preschool children about death.⁷⁶ In 1985, in response to several high-profile child abuse cases, *Sesame Street* developed an episode where Big Bird acknowledges that his imaginary friend Mr. Snuffleupagus is in fact real, in an attempt to encourage children to share important information with their parents and caregivers.⁷⁷ Some episodes sought to promote empathy and cultural understanding through segments entitled, “I Love My Hair,” and

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Shalom Fisch, *Children’s Learning from Educational Television: Sesame Street and Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 17.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ “Who We Are: Our History,” Sesame Workshop, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://www.sesameworkshop.org/who-we-are/our-history>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

“Lupita Nyong’o Loves Her Skin” where characters compare the color and texture of their skin and fur to encourage positive race-relations. In the late 1990s, when an estimated one in four children in South Africa were either infected or orphaned by the HIV/AIDS crisis, *Sesame Street* introduced a new Muppet called Kami who was HIV+. In fifty years of episodes, *Sesame Street* estimates that it has reached 150 million viewers and has developed over forty international co-productions in countries such as Mexico (Sesamo Apriti), China (Zhima Jie), and Bangladesh (Sisimpur).⁷⁸ Each of these international co-productions has incorporated their own characters in order to make meaningful cultural connections with their audiences.⁷⁹ Hindman acknowledges, “I always knew that I wanted to use the music from *Sesame Street*, because it’s just such a trigger for so many people. When they hear that, everybody sort of goes into their childhood and is happy for a moment.”⁸⁰ By using iconic musical references to a television show that has a long history, and personal memory for so many, Hindman is able to bring attention to the support and comfort that *Sesame Street* brings and elicit feelings of nostalgia among many.

Hindman began developing *13 for 3 Through 5* by listening to different recordings of the theme song, “Can You Tell Me How to Get to Sesame Street?” that have been used since the program first aired. She identified three versions of the *Sesame Street* theme song which held significant personal meaning for her. The original version that she heard as a child in 1969, the 1998 version that was playing the year her son was

⁷⁸ “International Sesame Street,” Muppet Wiki, accessed March 8, 2021, https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/International_Sesame_Street.

⁷⁹ “Meet Sesame Street’s Global Cast of Characters,” Smithsonian Magazine, November 6, 2009, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/meet-sesame-streets-global-cast-of-characters/>.

⁸⁰ Hindman, interview.

born, and the 2016 version which was being used by the show when she wrote this piece. The three versions of the song are quite different, with varying instrumentations, tempos, and electronic sounds, but the work remains recognizable. Hindman sampled the opening chords of all three versions and the “Sunny Day” motif as source material for this piece.

The title of the work, *13 for 3 Through 5*, prefaced the composition of the piece. It represents the thirteen characters discussed in the Higgins article, and the age range of the target audience for *Sesame Street*, children aged three to five. Hindman began to manipulate audio samples from the different versions of the theme song, by stretching each track three, five, and thirteen times, which created a unique and rich sound world which Hindman describes as a “sonic model.” Hindman continued this process of layering and stretching the audio samples by using different numbers dictated by Fibonacci proportions.⁸¹ She explained, “I’m not a big Fibonacci person really. I could care less actually about the golden mean. But it was because I had this title and I realized that these were Fibonacci numbers.”⁸² This process of creating a sonic model has been creatively stimulating for Hindman. She states, “to me it’s incredible. You can really hear into the sound and hear all the wavering and all the different frequencies.”⁸³ Hindman’s sonic model of distorted samples from the *Sesame Street* theme became the departure point towards writing an acoustic chamber work for saxophone and percussion. She describes “recomposing” the sonic model to create the acoustic piece saying, “I think you

⁸¹ The Fibonacci sequence, or Fibonacci numbers, is a mathematical sequence where each number in the sequence is the sum of the two numbers that precede it. The Fibonacci sequence is strongly related to the Golden Ratio occurs when the ratio of a quantity is the same as the ratio of their sum of the two quantities. The Golden Ratio has been used as a means of analysis in music, and composers such as Eric Satie and Claude Debussy have used the technique in their own work.

⁸² Hindman, interview.

⁸³ Ibid.

can hear it's a really different piece, but at the same time, the all the details and everything come from the tape piece that I made. Also, there's still this sort of underlying *Sesame Street*-ness about it."

The enlargement of the original *Sesame Street* theme song that Hindman achieved through electronic manipulation is still present in the acoustic work for saxophone and percussion. This connection to the source material is one of the significant ways in which the issues that inspired this work has informed Hindman's compositional process. The original *Sesame Street* theme tune is characterized by a driving quarter-note pattern with a repeating four chord progression (C–Dm7/C–Cmaj7–Dm7/C). This harmonic progression is simple, catchy, and forms the harmonic structure of the rest of the song. In Hindman's piece, the same harmonic framework remains in the glockenspiel part, except now the driving rhythm has been removed, and the chords progress slowly over a fourteen-measure section as opposed to just two measures in the original.

Example 5: Hindman, *13 for 3 Through 5*, mm. 1–14, glockenspiel.

Nostalgic, slow, and soulful, ♩ = 72

9 **A** Dm⁷/C C Dm⁷/C G **B**

Hindman's motivation for using the source material as a slow-moving progression was to create a “reverent, nostalgic homage” to *Sesame Street* by attempting to trigger certain childhood memories in the listener through the recognition of this popular theme.

⁸⁴ As previously discussed, many of the new characters developed by *Sesame Street* were created to help children through long term events such as parental incarceration, living with HIV, and military deployment. Hindman's use of a slowly unfolding harmonic progression, and slow tempo could read as a reflection of the chronic distress felt by some young children who depend on *Sesame Street* for comfort and guidance.

The main thematic saxophone gesture of this work originates from the “Sunny Day” lyric from the original *Sesame Street* theme song. The motif is a descending major triad with a subtle syncopated rhythm illustrated in Example 6. Throughout the work Hindman uses fragmented contours of the original motif to imply the “Sunny Day” melody. That same motif is distorted to create a series of rhetorical gestures that disrupt and deflect the musical discourse. In m. 9, the descending melody is distorted through the use of quarter tone pitches and an instruction to gradually change the timbre to an “airtone.” In m. 27, the motif gets a little closer to the original, through the use of the descending minor third interval, but again Hindman distorts the instrument timbre so that gesture is incomplete. In m. 44 the minor third further descends by a major second, disrupting the triadic motif. Similarly, in m. 58 there is a descending minor third, but the interval oversteps by a perfect fourth and then rises by a minor third. The root of the triad is carefully evaded so that the arpeggio remains incomplete. The thematic gesture is finally revealed at m. 81, where we hear the full triad for the first time in unison between the saxophone and glockenspiel.

⁸⁴ Dorothy Hindman, *13 for 3 Through 5*.

Example 6: Hindman, *13 for 3 Through 5*, “Sunny Day” gesture.

Hindman gradually exposes the “Sunny Day” gesture to reflect the sociopolitical message of the television show and represent the changing experience of children who depend on *Sesame Street* characters as a source of compassion and guidance. For many children the notion of a “Sunny Day” free from distress, anxiety, and trauma might seem unobtainable or fleeting. This feeling of insecurity is reflected in the music as a distorted and transient musical motif, which is only heard in its entirety at the climax of the piece.

The “Sunny Day” motif, as well as being a distinct collection of pitch material derived from the original theme song, is also a significant gesture towards *optimism* that

steers the narrative of this work. It represents *Sesame Street's* ultimate message of representation and hopefulness, through the ways that it presents fair and equitable education for all children regardless of personal circumstances. Hindman's use of "Sunny Day," although initially distorted and eluded is ultimately revealed in unison between the saxophone and glockenspiel to embody *Sesame Street's* continued optimism for children. The use of "Sunny Day" can be analyzed as simple a pitch motif, but because of its association with the television program and its causes, it is also a significant gesture that reinforces the works connection with the sociopolitical ideals that inspired the work.

13 for 3 Through 5 by Dorothy Hindman seeks to raise awareness of changing childhood experiences and recognize the new *Sesame Street* characters that have been created to highlight sociopolitical issues. Hindman uses the opening chords of the *Sesame Street* theme and the "Sunny Day" triad as source materials to create her thematic musical reference and connect her work to the television program and the issues that inspired it. Hindman reinvents the *Sesame Street* theme song through a creative process that alters the source material through electronic manipulation and traditional composition, to reflect the distress felt by children who rely on the television show for consistency and recognition.

***Supreme* by Tawnie Olson**

Tawnie Olson's *Supreme* (2019) for solo alto saxophone considers issues surrounding the role of women on the United States Supreme Court alongside broader issues of representation and gender equality. Olson encodes the names of the three female Justices on the Supreme Court in 2019, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Justice Sonia Sotomayor, and Justice Elana Kagan through a mixture of pitch letter names and solfège. In addition, she seeks to musically represent qualities of each Justice, contrast their "upbeat confidence...[with] introspection, and struggle," and invite the listener to consider, "how each of those things might relate to the Justices, their lives, their time on the court."⁸⁵

Tawnie Olson is a Canadian composer living in Connecticut, whose music is inspired by politics, the natural world, and the people she composes for.⁸⁶ Olson was born on 19 November 1974 in Calgary, Alberta. She began experimenting with music at a young age, playing a piano which once belonged to her great grandparents. She started piano lessons at the age of nine and began playing flute in the school band at the age of twelve, before taking flute lessons at fourteen. She described herself as "very single minded" in the pursuit of a musical education.⁸⁷

Olson entered the University of Calgary as a flute performance major, however soon had to abandon ambitions of becoming a professional flutist when she developed a

⁸⁵ Tawnie Olson, *Supreme* (self-published, 2019).

⁸⁶ "Noteworthy," Tawnie Olson, accessed March 8, 2021, <http://www.tawnieolson.com/noteworthy.html>.

⁸⁷ Musicaintima, "Composer Spotlight: Tawnie Olson in Conversation," December 3, 2020, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wv7ow4vvPm0>.

severe injury. She describes how at one time her physical therapist would only allow her to practice for five minutes, three times a day, and still suffers from pain when playing piano.⁸⁸ On the recommendation of her Music Theory professor, Olson became a composition major. In 1999, she received a Masters from the Yale School of Music and then, in 2000, an Artist Diploma from the Yale Institute of Sacred Music. Olson earned a Doctor of Music from the University of Toronto in 2009. Whilst studying at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, she was a member of the Yale Camerata, a vocal chamber ensemble directed by Marguarite Brooks, who commissioned many of her vocal works.⁸⁹ Olson was the 2015 winner of the Iron Composer Competition, the 2018 winner of the Barlow Prize, and she has participated in residencies at the Women Composers Festival of Hartford, and Copland House. Olson's music has been recorded by the Yale Schola Cantorum, Chronos Vocal Ensemble, and BBC Radio 3.⁹⁰

Olson describes how the incorporation of political themes in her music is usually triggered by how, "the political situation touches on something in my own life, and my own issues."⁹¹ Several of her works are inspired by political themes including *No Capacity for Consent* (2016) for vocal soloists, percussion, continuo organ, and cello. This work is a musical setting of a pregnant woman's legal complaint, where she describes how she was raped by a corrections officer after being stopped for a minor traffic violation.⁹² In *Something to Say* (2014) for tabla, spoken word and fixed media,

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ "Noteworthy," Tawnie Olson, accessed March 8, 2021.

⁹¹ Tawnie Olson, interview by Eleanor Parker, video conference, March 2, 2021.

⁹² "No Capacity To Consent," *New Music USA*, accessed March 8, 2021,
<https://www.newmusicusa.org/projects/no-capacity-to-consent-2>.

Olson responds to John Cage's declaration, "I have nothing to say, and I am saying it," by stating, "I have something to say, but I am not saying it." In this work, Olson considers things that people don't say because of fear of overreaction, being too upset to speak, or choosing to remain silent.⁹³

The 2019 composition, *Supreme*, is Olson's first major solo work for the saxophone and was commissioned by and dedicated to Carrie Koffman. Olson describes how *Supreme* had a "long and tortured evolution" before its completion. Originally, she had proposed a work that considered the decline of songbirds in North America. Olson conducted extensive research at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and collected field recordings of the Cerulean Warbler, a bird whose population has declined by over 70%.⁹⁴ However, time constraints meant the project was abandoned for several years. When Olson and Koffman reconnected on the piece, Koffman suggested a new work that was about Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Olson describes how, "there's always been a lot of love for her among many circles in the U.S., and she was a remarkable woman. But I felt like at that time, there are also a number of pieces being written specifically about Justice Ginsburg, and I felt a little late to the party."⁹⁵ During that same period, Olson attended a lecture given by Justice Sonia Sotomayor at Yale University and was "really impressed by her as a human."⁹⁶ *Supreme* pays tribute to the three female Justices sitting on the Supreme Court at the time of its composition and was premiered by Carrie Koffman on 10 January 2020 at George Mason University, Fairfax, VA.

⁹³ "Something to Say" Shawn Mativetsky, accessed March 9, 2021
<https://shawnmativetsky.com/track/687406/something-to-say>.

⁹⁴ Olson, interview.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

By focusing this work on Justices Ginsburg, Kagan, and Sotomayor, Olson invites the listener to consider issues surrounding the role of women on the Supreme Court, alongside broader issues of representation and gender equality. In the program note, Olson includes a quote by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg; “people ask me sometimes, when – when do you think it will be enough? When will there be enough women on the court? And my answer is when there are nine.”⁹⁷ Since the establishment of the United States Supreme Court in 1789, there have been 114 Justices, all but six have been white men. A woman was first considered for a seat in 1930, and nine other women have appeared on presidential short lists. However, it was not until 1981 that a woman, Sandra Day O’Connor, was appointed to the Court.⁹⁸ As of 2021, there have been five women appointed to the Supreme Court; Sandra Day O’Connor (nominated by Ronald Reagan, in office 1981– 2006), Ruth Bader Ginsburg (nominated by Bill Clinton, in office 1993– 2020), Sonia Sotomayor (nominated by Barack Obama, in office 2009–present), Elena Kagan (nominated by Barack Obama, in office 2010–present), and Amy Coney Barrett (nominated by Donald Trump, in office 2020–present).⁹⁹

By encoding the names of three Supreme Court Justices, Olson’s work *Supreme* inherits certain associations and connotations. Justices Ginsburg, Kagan, and Sotomayor have been described as having a liberal leaning ideology and were all confirmed by a president from the Democratic party. Ideologically left-leaning Justices typically make decisions that favor unions, people claiming acts of discrimination, violations of civil

⁹⁷ Tawnie Olson, *Supreme*.

⁹⁸ Renee Newman Knake and Hannah Brenner Johnson, *Shortlisted: Women in the Shadows of the Supreme Court* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 14.

⁹⁹ “Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics,” Rutgers University New Brunswick, accessed March 21, 2021. <https://eagleton.rutgers.edu>.

rights, and criminal defendants.¹⁰⁰ By using these Justices names in *Supreme*, Olson aligns the work with liberal ideologies and agendas.

There is some commentary suggesting that women judges help to strengthen the judicial system and increase the public's trust in the legal process. Judge Venessa Ruiz explains:

The judiciary will not be trusted if it is viewed as a bastion of entrenched elitism, exclusivity, and privilege, oblivious to changes in society and to the needs of the most vulnerable. Indeed, citizens will find it hard to accept the judiciary as the guarantor of law and human rights if judges themselves act in a discriminatory manner. That is why the presence of women is essential to the legitimacy of the judiciary...they contribute to quality decision-making and thus to the quality of justice itself.¹⁰¹

By using the Justices as a stimulus for the work *Supreme*, Olson asks the audience to consider the ways that female Justices are perceived on the Supreme Court, and to reflect on the ways in which women are represented in society.

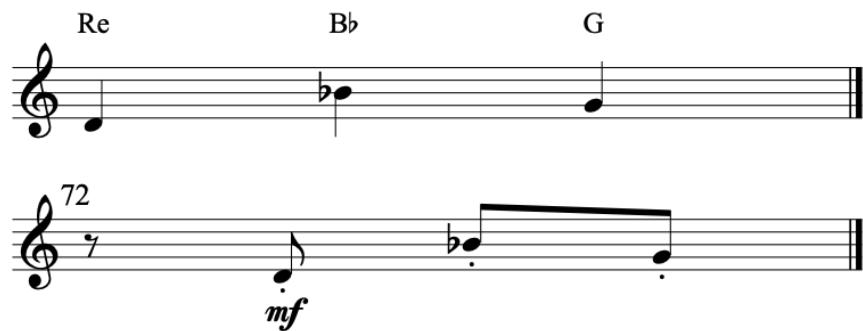
In *Supreme*, the names of the three female Justices are encoded through a mixture of pitch letter names and solfège. Olsen uses Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg's initials (R.B.G.) and converts them to Re–Bb–G. The first complete use of Ginsberg's initials, which occurs between mm. 71–72, is part of a highly rhythmic, accented groove as shown in Example 7.

¹⁰⁰ "The Supreme Court Database," Washington University Law, accessed March 8, 2021, <http://scdb.wustl.edu>.

¹⁰¹ Venessa Ruiz, "The Role of Women Judges and a Gender Perspective in Ensuring Judicial Independence and Integrity," *The Doha Declaration: Promoting A Culture of Lawfulness*, Global Judicial Integrity Network, accessed March 8, 2019, <https://www.unodc.org/dohadeclaration/en/news/2019/01/the-role-of-women-judges-and-a-gender-perspective-in-ensuring-judicial-independence-and-integrity.html>.

Example 7: Olson, *Supreme*, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg's name encoded in concert pitch.

RBG

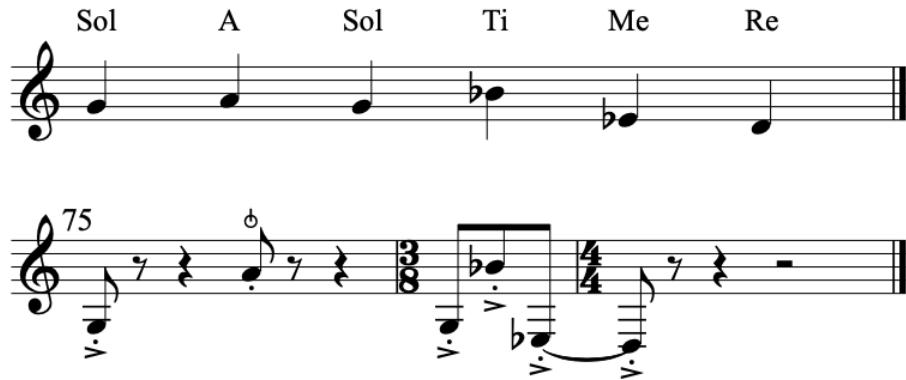


The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff shows three notes: a quarter note on the middle line labeled 'Re', a half note on the fourth line labeled 'B♭', and a quarter note on the fifth line labeled 'G'. The bottom staff begins with a measure number '72' and a '7' time signature. It contains a single note on the middle line followed by a dynamic marking 'mf'. The music then continues with a measure containing a quarter note on the middle line, a half note on the fourth line, and a quarter note on the fifth line.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor's initials are used for the first time in the same section of music. Her name is transfigured into the pitches Sol–A–Sol–Ti–Me–Re. This setting of the judge's name features octave displacement, irregular rhythms, and the use of slap tongue shown in Example 8.

Example 8: Olson, *Supreme*, Justice Sonia Sotomayor's name encoded in concert pitch.

SOniA SOToMAYor



The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff shows six notes labeled 'Sol', 'A', 'Sol', 'Ti', 'Me', and 'Re' from left to right. The bottom staff begins with a measure number '75' and a '7' time signature. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with various note heads and stems, including a grace note, a dotted eighth note, and a sustained note. The time signature changes to '3' and then '4' at different points. A 'v.' (vibrato) mark is placed under several notes.

Justice Elena Kagan's name does not occur until much later in the piece after the sustained multiphonic section. Olson uses Kagan's name to begin a new section of music

marked, “somewhat freely” at m. 171. Kagan’s name is musically encoded using the pitches, E–A–E–A–A–G–A is shown in Example 9.

Example 9: Olson, Supreme, Justice Elena Kagan’s name encoded in concert pitch.

ELEnA kAGAn

The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff is a single line of notes labeled E, A, E, A, A, G, A above them. The bottom staff begins with a treble clef, a dynamic marking **ff**, and a short vertical line. It then continues with a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, a short three-note theme (E, A, E), a measure of rest, and finally a sustained note G with a dynamic marking **p sub.** below it.

The construction of these musical gestures may also be read as Olson’s attempt to capture different aspects of each Justice’s character. For example, the short three-note theme may reflect Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s diminutive size; she stood at just 5 feet 1 inch. Elena Kagan’s motif is built on a perfect fourth interval which could represent Kagan’s reputation as an “inscrutable” Justice who, despite being known as a left-leaning judge, has been the author of several politically neutral decisions.¹⁰² The perfect fourth could reflect this neutrality, because it is an interval that occurs in both major and minor triads,

¹⁰² Taylor Kate Brown, “Ruth Bader Ginsburg: Who Are the Justices on the US Supreme Court?” BBC News Magazine, September 19, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33103973>.

and therefore does not give an indication of tonality. It could also be read as being just below the point where one could split the octave in half, referencing some of Kagan’s “left of center” votes and opinions.

Olson did not intend for the music to suggest a “linear narrative” that describes the Justices. Instead, she references the Justices by musically encoding their names and then submerging them within the music, in a way that resembles the “B-A-C-H” motif in Alban Berg’s music.¹⁰³ Like the deep, fragmented embedding of “We Shall Overcome” in Shrude’s *Trope*, this reference to the Justices is subtle, even ambiguous, and Olson recognizes that they won’t be immediately identified by the listener.

No, I’m not sure that anyone would really know this was about the Supreme Court Justices. I think they [the audience] would probably need the program note. But... there’s sort of a clear emotional character. There’s opposition between these two very different musical ideas and that sort of gets resolved at the end. I hope that it works as abstract music. But I think if you wanted to connect it with this idea of women succeeding, and also the ongoing struggle, and all the extra obstacles that one has to face when one is a woman versus a man attempting to operate in a public sphere. I think you can hear that in the piece.¹⁰⁴

Olson explains that the primary way she depicts the Justices is by juxtaposing tightly constructed, rhythmic sections marked “with attitude” against a much more introspective multiphonic sections (see Appendix 2). She created these contrasts to reflect the different identities and responsibilities that the Justices carry: “I feel like Justice Ginsburg in particular, although she was very formal, she definitely had an oversized personality. There’s a combination of swaggering confidence or optimism, and then there are these,

¹⁰³ Olson, interview.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

more contemplative multiphonic sounds with silences in between that interrupt the forward rhythmic drive of the piece.”¹⁰⁵

Olson’s description of the slower, introspective section places the performer at the heart of the music. Rather than prescribing a certain number of beats or seconds for each multiphonic, she explains that “each multiphonic should last about the length of one breath.”¹⁰⁶ Olson also invites the performer’s own musical perception to govern the timing of this section and encourages them to “let your innate musicality determine the precise length of each gesture.”¹⁰⁷ These instructions give each gesture an organic quality so that each performance of this piece becomes a unique reflection of the musician.

Olson also favors multiphonics that do not precisely conform to the pitches that are notated. She explains, “I really like imperfect multiphonics. I like it when different overtones fade in and fade out and you can kind of hear the breathy attack and you can hear the breath [in the sound].”¹⁰⁸ This acceptance of imperfection could be read as Olson reflecting on the scrutiny and limitations set upon the Justices. The Justices are often viewed through a perfectionist lens, as leaders with the highest standards of intellect, morality, and integrity. Olson seeks to remind us that the Justices are imperfect people with their own unique interests and identities. Whilst women in positions of power are often faced with higher levels of scrutiny than their male counterparts, Olson presents the Justices as distinct and imperfect beings capable of contemplation and self-doubt. Olson invites the listener to consider how the back and forth between music that reflects

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Olson, *Supreme*.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Olson, interview.

swagger and confidence, and music which suggests introspection and imperfection, represents the Justices. She invites the audience to consider, “how each of those things might relate to the Justices, their lives, their time on the court, is up to you, the listener, to decide.”¹⁰⁹

The formal structure of this work is created by alternating and contrasting between signals of *precision* and of *imperfection*. The signifiers of precision are found in sections marked quarter note equal 96 (or “in tempo”), which are characterized by strict rhythmic motifs that are nuanced and intricate. In these sections the melody carefully navigates changes in meter, angular rhythms, and fast fluctuations of range. This demands a level of precision, control, and confidence in execution that reflects the fastidious and challenging expectations put on the Justices because of their position on the Supreme Court. These signals of precision dominate the music, and Olson requires the performer to fully internalize and embody the constant forward motion of time and rhythm inviting the saxophonist to, “feel that pulse in your gut.”¹¹⁰

In contrast, the sections of music marked “freely” are composed of signifiers of imperfection through the use of multiphonics. These sections slow down the perceived tempo by relying on the performer’s lung capacity to mark time. The timbral nature of the multiphonic is transient, highly contrasting, and at times alarming. Olson uses contrasting dynamic levels which drastically changes the timbral effect of the multiphonic. This musical representation of imperfection resonates with the Justices’ humanity, their own personal shortcomings, and moments of doubt and hesitation.

¹⁰⁹ Olson, *Supreme*.

¹¹⁰ Olson, interview.

Between mm. 144–160, signals of precision and imperfection are juxtaposed and represent the dichotomy of the Justices who, whilst armed with significant power, experience self-doubt and uncertainty. These contrasting signifiers resonate with the broader feminist social movement, reflecting some women's efforts to appear perfect and in control whilst also dealing with crippling self-doubt and insecurity.

Tawnie Olson's *Supreme* is inspired by the three female Justices on the Supreme Court, at the time of composition, and seeks to explores issues related to the perception of professional women. The Justices names are embedded into the work and contrasting musical sections reflect on their personal qualities on and off the Court. *Supreme* focuses on perception and representation of women, ultimately calling for the audience to consider their own conclusion about the ways professional women operate under scrutiny.

Conclusion

Despite the disparate nature of these works, a study of compositional procedures has exposed several commonalities and differences. The three works in this study each take an external source connected to a social, political, or cultural issue and use it to generate musical material. Hindman and Shrude both deconstruct and fragment an existing musical work, with its own identity, context, and perspective, whereas Olson musically symbolizes the Justices personalities through different musical signals and uses their names as a way to generate melodic material. In each case the sociopolitical issue has influenced the compositional process and the composer seeks to bring attention to a specific social, political, or cultural issue through their piece.

While each composer has used an external source material to generate pitch material, manipulation of that pitch material differs greatly between each work. In *Trope*, Shrude *fragments* and *alters* “We Shall Overcome” to develop a series of motifs based on the interval of a half or whole step which create a macro structure. In Hindman’s *13 for 3 Through 5*, the external material is *stretched* by Fibonacci proportions and *altered* to obscure and develop the original motif. In Olson’s *Supreme*, the Justices’ names, are used to *generate* the pitch material and their personal attributes *inform* the character and quality of musical gestures. In each case, an external source with sociopolitical associations influenced the development of the pitch material.

Shrude, Hindman, and Olson all discuss their use of political, cultural or social issues as an extension of their own personal expression. Rather than presenting an issue for provocative or confrontational reasons, they each describe a personal relationship

with the sociopolitical issues they present. Shrude discusses how she guides her students to engage with social or political themes in their music as a way to connect with a person's ethnicity or culture.¹¹¹ Hindman describes engaging with social justice issues because it is part of her own life experience, seeking to present sociopolitical issues from a perspective that is personal, unique, and centered on the ways in which she views the world.

I have always believed that I'm composing about my own life... I just respond to the world. Some people write music and they're just moving notes around on paper and that's enough for them. But for me, music is where I have to process things that I'm struggling with in my life. I do struggle with social injustice. It does affect me when people can get away with killing other people... I've just sort of tempered what I'm thinking about, or found a way to contemplate the issues, and make it even more: "I'm the only one who can say this, this way." And that's because my personal perspective is even more, very intentionally, personal.¹¹²

For Olson, the engagement with sociopolitical issues within her music has been a cathartic and liberating process. She explains:

I have a very different political outlook from my family. I love them and they love me, but it's a source of friction. My role growing up in our family was to be the good kid... that meant I didn't get really good at... asserting my views. Some things kind of got squished down and I think those things just came out when I started composing. I think I reached this boiling point of all the sexist garbage that I'd been putting up with... I'm going to exorcise that demon by writing a piece about it. When I write pieces that are more political, it's often the kind of combination of something in my personal psychology, whatever needs to be worked out, but also how the political situation touches on something in my own life, and my own issues.¹¹³

Of course, in the case of *Supreme*, Olson is not herself a Supreme Court Justice, but she does work in a male dominated profession and draws a personal parallel between the

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Hindman, interview.

¹¹³ Olson, interview.

Justices need to exude confidence whilst dealing with moments of doubt and introspection. For all three of the composers in this essay, the connection with social issues has come as a result of personal expression, rather than promoting an arbitrary political cause.

Another observation is that although each composer has intentionally used external material that is connected to a sociopolitical theme, the compositional treatment of that material makes it frequently unidentifiable when heard in the context of the piece. The listener needs to be informed through a program-note to be able to understand the connection with the sociopolitical issue. In each case, it is unlikely to be identified only by listening. Hindman acknowledges, “I can communicate through a piece of music, but if I don’t tell you what I was thinking about it, well, you’ll never know.”¹¹⁴ Music is an abstract art, and it is difficult to make explicit statements through music. Despite this, each composer has tied their work to a sociopolitical issue even though you cannot always hear the reference. Further investigations of these pieces might consider if this is simply an intellectual experiment for the composer, or if the impact of the political message is lessened because it is delivered through abstract instrumental music.

It is worth reflecting on the fact that in many cases the performer commissioning the work asked for a piece that focused on sociopolitical themes. In the case of *Supreme*, Olson describes Carrie Koffman’s influence as highly significant stating that, “the piece starts with Carrie.”¹¹⁵ It was Koffman who initially suggested the work should focus on Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. This shows that musicians are equally engaged in

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Olson, interview.

presenting sociopolitical issues to audiences and are proactively commissioning works on these kinds of themes. Composers are attracted to writing sociopolitical works for the saxophone because of the instrument's versatility, virtuosity, and because it is a distinctly modern instrument.¹¹⁶ Hindman comments that the saxophone is like, "the violin of the twentieth and twenty-first century...you have this homogeneity of sound, and you have these virtuosic players." Indeed, the number of works for the saxophone that are inspired by a social, political, or cultural issues continues to grow. In Appendix 6, there is an annotated bibliography of over forty other works for the saxophone that are inspired by sociopolitical issues showing that they are becoming a significant contribution to the instrument's repertoire.

Despite the contrasting nature of these works, a study of compositional procedures has highlighted several commonalities. By exploring the ways that external material is used, as well as investigating the issues that inspired these works, I believe that this study brings greater understanding to those who seek to interpret these compositions. I hope that bringing attention to these works and the ways in which a performer can interact with music that presents a social, political, or cultural message might encourage further performance and research.

¹¹⁶ A brief annotated bibliography of other works for saxophone which are inspired by social, cultural, or political events are listed in Appendix 6 of this document.

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Appendix 1: Commodities connected to social justice issues that have inspired Dorothy Hindman's compositions.



Appendix 2: Formal structure of Tawnie Olson's *Supreme*.

With Attitude	Freely, without a sense of pulse	A tempo	Freely, without a sense of pulse	A tempo	Somewhat freely	In tempo, rhythmic	A tempo
ca. $\text{♩} = 96$	Each multiphonic should last about the length of one breath.	ca. $\text{♩} = 96$		ca. $\text{♩} = 96$			ca. $\text{♩} = 96$
m. 1	m. 47	m. 57	m. 139	m. 144	m. 171	m. 185	m. 194

Appendix 3: Interview with Marilyn Shrude on 30 January 2021

EP: Can you tell me about *Trope*? How it came to be composed and the “Voices of Dissent” concert?

MS: In 2007 my husband, John Sampen, and I wanted to plan a concert that addressed controversial issues such as the Iraq War. George Bush was leaving office; Barack Obama would be elected in 2008. The concert was called “Voices of Dissent” and we commissioned each one of our four faculty composers to write a piece based on the civil rights tune, “We Shall Overcome.” We each wrote a piece for saxophone and piano—mine was *Trope*—and John and I premiered them on that concert. Composer/flutist Janice Misurell-Mitchell was also on the concert, and she had written a lot of music about women and civil rights. Another faculty member played Frederic Rzewski, whose music also addresses a lot of human rights issues. That was the gist of the concert. The premiere performance of *Trope* was on alto saxophone and piano, but from that point forward the work has had many iterations.

EP: The three saxophones pre-recorded, and the kinetic light show, saxophone, and piano.

MS: Yes, but you can perform *Trope* with a variable ensemble, not just with saxophone and piano. That’s why the score is in Bb, F, C, Eb, etc. As long as the instrument fits within the range restrictions (I use a compressed range). There have been some really interesting performances.

EP: Do you have any recordings of the variable ensemble?

MS: Yes, one by Noa Even, who taught at Kent State and is now at Rowan University in New Jersey. She put together a concert of my music a couple of years ago, and she did a great version of *Trope* for mixed ensemble. My husband also does a version for solo saxophone and animation. I created a little animation that traces the melodic line in real time, so you see the line moving behind him on the screen while he plays. One of my students helped me put the animation together.

EP: Do you remember the audience’s reaction to political pieces like *Trope* at the “Voices of Dissent” concert?

MS: Not to my piece specifically, but I think to the whole concert. It was obvious that we were trying to send a message. John performed a controversial piece about George Bush and the Iraq War by Australian composer Martin Wesley Smith. If anything was controversial, it was that piece because it is so explicit. *Trope* is more subtle.

EP: Do you think subtlety helps deliver the political message to the audience?

MS: I like the flexibility of *Trope*. It’s not just about one thing; it’s about many things. It’s such a deceptively easy piece to put together, so it’s performed a lot and has a far

reach. A piece with a more specific message might be performed fewer times. *Trope* has a long history. It's been played all over the world—China, Israel, Canada, Europe, the US. I like that aspect about it.

EP: Why do you think it is programmed so much? Is it because of the political message? Does that attract performers?

MS: There are many reasons. I think that if a performer is looking for something that is pretty flexible, it fits that model. It's also by a woman composer. It's a piece that addresses a political issue or concern. It's also not that difficult to put together. Of course, it can have better or less better performances too. I've heard some that fall flat because people don't get it. But I've heard some stunning ones as well.

EP: What do you think it is that some performers don't get?

MS: I think some performers are very stiff with the improvisational element. *Trope* is not really that improvisational, but you have to move through the score on your own plan and some people don't plan very well. They're just not very creative with the parameters; they just play it, and this isn't a plug and play kind of piece. You really have to shape the performance. When Noa did *Trope* at Kent State with the variable ensemble, she rehearsed it a lot. She was running the New Music Ensemble and she rehearsed for hours and hours; she prepared over a long period of time. Everyone felt familiar with their own part and listened to each other. It was not just—"ok, I'm playing my part and amen." She positioned the performers around the hall, so that a surround sound was created. I think those kinds of performances leave an impression. You can lose yourself in the sonic environment as an audience member. When that happens, I think it's really effective.

EP: You mentioned the phrase "woman composer," how do you feel about being regarded in that way?

MS: For the longest time, I said I wanted to be considered a composer—not woman, not man, just composer. But I think with the women's movement and other recent events, I feel a little more compelled to make sure that I program women's music when I'm planning a concert. This semester I'm teaching the first-year composers, who are taught as a group. We're currently writing piano pieces, and I've created extensive listening lists that I give them twice a week. I've made an effort to include a woman composer on each list, and I do this on purpose. There is so much piano music that people have only discovered in recent years. I'm trying to be a little more pro-active in that way—to empower younger women, and just to make a point.

EP: And this is a recent development in your thinking?

MS: Not that I didn't think about it before. For example, if I won a competition, I'd like to hope that I won because I was a "good" composer, not because I was a "woman" composer. But lately, especially in the orchestral world, the programming is horrible for any living composer, let alone women composers. There are lists published of what's

been programmed in the seasons of major orchestras, and living composers are woefully underrepresented.

EP: Did you have any significant musical mentors?

MS: I think many, because I went to a Catholic school and was taught by the nuns. So in some ways all my teachers were my collective mentors. I had some fabulous piano teachers. I wasn't a composer when I was seven years old, but I did make up little pieces on the piano. I think those women reinforced great instruction. I went to an all-girls high school and an all-women's college, so throughout my education I was mentored by women, and it made a big difference. Especially going to an all-women's college. At Northwestern University, that wasn't the case. My composition teacher was my mentor, a very important person in my life, Alan Stout.

EP: How important is it to you that the audience hears and understands the political message within a piece?

MS: For *Trope*, it's hard because the source material, "We Shall Overcome," is so deeply embedded. But it is an integral part of the piece. In 1982 I wrote *Solidarnosc* (1982) for the solidarity movement in Poland. My maternal side of the family is Polish, and I felt very aligned to what was going in the country. There was a big uprising, and the workers stood up to the government. I took the Polish national anthem, which translates, "Poland will not die while we are still alive." Everybody knows it. I used that as a theme in this piano piece. I always had the predisposition to make statements with my music, and that goes back to my background of working in the Chicago inner city when I was in college. I've always done those kinds of things. I take occasion to draw attention to world events. In 1999 I was doing a concert in Prague with the Czech Philharmonic. I needed to write a small piece for them, and I used the famous Czech anthem that commemorates a young activist who burned himself in Prague to protest the government. I called it *Le chanson du printemps* (1999), "The Song of the Spring," because it recalled Prague Spring. Later I wrote a few pieces about 9/11. I wrote a piece about the killing of Daniel Pearl in the Middle East. I wrote a "Postcard from Poland," when we gave a concert there in 2018. It's based on another Polish anthem and was written just for the occasion of being there. But a lot of times there is a little political message embedded.

EP: Have you ever received any push back from audiences or programmers?

MS: I got a little feeling when we did the Postcard in Poland that maybe there was some quizzical, "why is she doing that?" But they weren't that attuned to any contemporary music, so it might have been that more than anything. And the piece isn't really that contemporary.

EP: As you mentor students and young composers, do you encourage or dissuade them from exploring political or social themes in their music?

MS: I try to encourage them to get in contact with their own ethnicity and culture, and that's hard at times because some of them are a little reluctant to do so. I think it's important to own your roots, but some people aren't ready for that. Or they're afraid. I think now there is some fear of government and censorship.

EP: Can we look closer at the score of *Trope*?

MS: The notes in parenthesis are the notes from the tune "We Shall Overcome." I embedded them in the structure. I also have a tone row that grew out of this material. All the notes in the linear material are a half-step or whole step apart. But I purposely embedded the "We Shall Overcome" notes into the structure in a prominent way to create a macro structure with the tune. These are the notes that can be interpreted more freely. They gain a little more attention that way.

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Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Ellie Parker from the University of Houston. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about your compositions for saxophone and your artistic interest in social, political, and cultural issues.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.
2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by Ellie Parker from the University of Houston. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. A transcript of our conversation will be published in the interviewer's DMA dissertation.
4. I understand that the researcher will identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview.
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6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Participant Signature

Marilyn Shrude

Printed Name

Marilyn Shrude

Date

2/23/21

Appendix 4: Interview with Dorothy Hindman on 22 January 2021

DH: [Shows a PPT slide with an image of person with t-shirt, a phone taking a video, a selection of knit hats, an orange price tag] I think I told you before a little bit about this series that I have been doing about objects that encapsulated these social justice stories, and that I had gotten in a little trouble with the first one of those, because of the object that I used. But this was not the object I used; this was my inspiration for the whole thing, which were these memorial t-shirts that are very common among the African American community as a form of grief, where the person who has passed away, their face is put on a t-shirt. I heard this story on NPR and it just really drove this – the extent of this tragedy in this community – it drove it home in such a powerful way that I became interested in some things, some object, very often a commodity, that was a product of these social justice problems. I've done one composition on bystander videos, and the pussy hat, which was, you maybe recall this, they were originally pink hats, and then there was a lot of pushback on that because it didn't represent women of color. It didn't represent their anatomy. And so now, there are all these different colors of hats, which I put in Photoshop, and then I sonified, and used the sounds as the material for that piece. This is a price tag that the Parkland students created when they did their March on Washington. They each came up with the amount of money they were worth to Marco Rubio by dividing all of the NRA donations he had received during his career by the number of private and public K through 12 students in Florida. They came up with this number: that they were each worth \$1.05. They actually did that for the entire country, and so I used these numbers as frequencies. So, 105 Hertz. I came up with whatever those pitches were and made a piece out of that.

[Shows new slide with numerous images of Muppets] This one is about the Muppets. The Muppets say that since 2000, they have created 13 different Muppets who represent social justice issues. I think I found more like 15 who did. You have a Muppet who is a war veteran who was paralyzed from the war. You have a Muppet who was born HIV positive. This is an autistic Muppet. This is a Muppet who has food and shelter insecurity. This is a blind Muppet. This is a Muppet whose parents are incarcerated. It was stunning to me that a child aged three through five would have to be struggling with these issues, to the point where Sesame Street would create a sympathetic character for them to see as a reflection of themselves. I also went through a lot of issues when I was young. I had food insecurity and those kinds of things, and so for me the Muppets are very nostalgic. I would go into my room when I was a very small child and just watch Sesame Street. It was very much of an escape for me, and it's sort of a safe place for me. This piece, *13 for 3 Through 5*, was very near to my heart. I felt like this one tells my story more authentically maybe than the reflections I was having on other people's stories.

I started doing this initial research, and I always knew that I wanted to use the music from Sesame Street, because it's just such a trigger for so many people. When they hear that, everybody sort of goes into their childhood and is happy for a moment. I started finding the theme songs, not just for Sesame Street in the U.S., but for all over the world. It turned out that there were 39 – I basically stopped at 39 different theme songs for affiliated Sesame Street programs, because I was like, "this is way too much material." I focused just on the U.S. and discovered there are still eight versions of the U.S.'s. I

narrowed it down to three that had personal relationships for me: in 1969, I was three years old and started watching the show; in 1998, my son was born; 2016 is the version that's currently playing, or at least was last year, when I wrote the piece.

[Shows new slide with musical clips] I'm going to play a few versions, play just little clips of each one for you, and let me know if you can hear it. [Plays music] This was my version. It's very sort of jazzy, has Jean Thilemans on the Harmonica. Then, when my children started watching it, it was all tricked out. [Plays music] It's the same song, but it's got a lot more sounds to it. The version, today, you may not even recognize. I don't know if you've... when's the last time you heard this? [Plays music] It's really different from the version I grew up with, but of course recognizable.

Even with these three versions, even with just the opening, there's still too much material for me to write an original piece from. I began sampling things and I definitely decided I was just going to limit it to the very opening chords, and to when they sing, "sunny day." Those are the clips I used from each version.

[Shows new slides of different sketches and spreadsheets]. I do a lot of data crunching. I said no, no, this is my original group, no that didn't work, nothing there, and none of this is right. That was my creative process.

[Shows new slide with new clips] Then, this is what I've settled on, and you can hear just a chord from my version, and then this part. [Plays music].

Because I knew this was the title *13 for 3 Through 5*, meaning 13 Muppets for ages three through five, I stretched the sounds of these clips by three times, by five times, and by thirteen times. I think this is the thirteen stretch. [Plays music] To me it's incredible. You can really hear into the sound too and hear all the wavering and all the different frequencies. Then what I did... since this is a piece for sax and percussion, it wasn't really thick enough to make a piece. The 1970s theme is stretched thirteen times, then the other ones will be stretched as well, and I layered them all three times. I did this at Fibonacci proportions. It's basically canons. I take the length of this clip and I find the one third part, and the one fifth moment. That's where I put these canons. I did the same thing really to just about everything. Here is "sunny day," and it's at a Fibonacci now. I'm not a big Fibonacci person really. I could care less actually about the golden mean. But it was because I had this title, and I realized that these were Fibonacci numbers. Still, three and five. I probably would have done it anyway, even if I hadn't made that connection. You can hear what the juxtapositions sound like. And what I did with the opening chords, I also did with the "sunny day" fragment, and then added those on. [Points cursor at the timeline of the soundfile] Here's eight, so that's the next Fibonacci. To quote Sesame Street, "one of these things is not like the other!" The ones that are layered are all from the same date; it's not the three different dates. Here is what this sonic model ended up sounding like. [Plays music].

Obviously, I'm not going to get that thick sound from sax and percussion. so part of this process for me is that it's not really transcription or arrangement. It's still a lot of composition, because, while I have composed this electronic version of it, I then have to re-compose it and make choices about what's going to go into this other chamber piece. But there are similarities, and so I will play that for you now. So, let's just listen to a little bit of it. The score is glockenspiel, splash cymbal, triangle and hi hat, and saxophone. [Plays music].

I think you can hear it's a really different piece, but at the same time, that all the details and everything come from the tape piece that I made. Also, there's still this sort of underlying Sesame Street-ness about it. Even though I avoided... until the climax of the piece, I avoid ... the full descending triad of the "sunny day."

EP: I have never seen that, going from an electronic manipulation of audio back to Chamber music. Do you have any thoughts or feelings that you can do more with kind of sonic manipulation or more with Chamber musicians?

DH: I think it's funny, because I don't really know anybody who does it either.

EP: Has it been part of your process for a while?

DH: Well, since this series, since about 2014, but like, really in earnest in a new series that I've been doing, where I actually take old pieces and then I smear them rather heavily. They're recordings of my old works, and then I process them in a lot of different ways, like using echo for memory or reverb for distance. Then, I put the original recording in 180-degree phase, and it erases tiny little bits of this new thing, and then I transcribe that into a chamber piece. That is ... sort of my statement of... because I was called out, and told, "well you can't tell these stories." Being told that, you go through a lot of soul searching, and also a lot of, "but wait a minute, what is what is mine?" Why can't I tell certain stories? I have certain histories that the other person doesn't know about.

This new series I call "Untitled," even though I'm very clear on exactly what I'm doing and the intimate aspects of it for me, and the messaging. The overall message of the series is sort of calling into relief the fact that you don't know me, unless I tell you about myself. This piece is *untitled*, and that's the messaging behind it. It's not just an entirely abstract untitled piece, it's about how we don't really know each other, unless we communicate with each other. I can communicate through a piece of music, but if I don't tell you what I was thinking about it, well, you'll never know. You can guess all you want, but most likely you'll get it wrong. That's my new series, and with that series, because it begins with an existing recording of a piece, it's so integral, this new process. And it's fast. I've just finished my fifth "Untitled" piece within a year. I feel like I've hit my life's work. I'm very passionate about it. I have heard there is one of our students who does it too, makes a sonic mock mock-up, but this is just something I came to myself. It's a combination of my interest in spectral music, and the fact that I came up as an electronic musician, and the fact that I fell in love with Chamber music when I was an undergrad. I've always written very deeply timbral music, so now it's like I get to indulge all of my passions in this process.

EP: Have those five all ended up as acoustic chamber works?

DH: Oh yes.

EP: Have any of them remained electronic or have they always made the transition?

DH: No, although I'm perfectly happy with those electronic versions too; I would put those out as actual pieces, but for me right now they're studies. But to me, they could be stand-alone pieces. I think they're pretty cool. I mean, you heard the beginning of one, right? And that, I could listen to that as just as a standalone.

EP: It's so interesting because all of the sound is already there. You're not changing anything, just how quickly the sound moves.

DH: Yeah, and that's the whole spectral aspect, which I really started getting into in 2009 when I took a sabbatical and really read quite a bit about it. Since I had always been a synthesizer person and dealing with frequencies all the time and very interested in timbre, then there are the spectralists' whole background and philosophy made so much sense to me. I'm composing with sound. I don't really think about pitch. Pitch is an expedient that I can use to transcribe the sounds and get the musician to play them. You hear in the saxophone all the subtleties of the ups and downs, and that's all notated. Do this, bend to this quarter tone, whatever it is. For me, it's a perfect fit, but it also enables me to step outside of 12 chromatic notes and really just be crafting sounds. It's so exciting, all my passions that are coming together. If I can just stay out of trouble, that would be good. What can I say?

EP: I want to ask you a little bit about writing for saxophone. How did the saxophone and percussion combination come about? Was it from Bent Frequency?

DH: Yes.

EP: Was the combination inspiring to you? How did you feel about writing for this combination?

DH: Well, I was totally thrilled when Stuart [Gerber] reached out to me at the beginning of the Bent Frequency Duo Project, because Stuart is a genius. He's brilliant, and he played my solo percussion piece, which is very demanding. Anytime a performer of that level contacts you and says, "I would like a piece," you jump at it, because you know that creatively you can do anything. I didn't know Jan [Berry Baker] at the time, but obviously have gotten to know her quite well. I feel a little bit like I overstayed my welcome with them, because I ended up turning it into three pieces for them, and more also for members of the ensemble. I had written already two works - a saxophone quartet and soprano saxophone and piano piece - so I was happy and comfortable with that instrument, and then, as I say, having Stuart as the percussion side of it was quite thrilling. The instruments that I tended to pick came from the first piece I wrote for them [*R.I.P.T.*]. I wanted to make sure that the same percussion setup would work. Then it's also listening, though, and saying okay that sounds exactly like this and that sounds like that when deciding on instrumentation combinations.

EP: Do you like to try to integrate the saxophone sound with the percussion? Or do you like them to stand independently?

DH: I think, it's dependent on the piece. I think in this last one, there was the most integration of the sounds.

EP: In *13 for 3 Through 5*?

DH: Yes. Partly because I was using these big cymbal hits and scrapes and things to fill in frequencies, as well as the quarter tones to fill in the slow frequencies. I think in *R.I.P.T.* it was definitely more of a separation of things: thinking in terms of the percussion as skins and woods and metals, and the saxophone as the sort of melodic soloist. There's also a lot of speaking in that too, which Stuart does in my other piece [*Tapping the Furnace*]. The most recent one, that they just wrote me and said they're going to premiere, is the pussy hat piece called *mutatis mutandis*, and that is really very traditionally kind of post-minimal. It's about slow change of things. The idea behind it, *mutatis mutandis*, means, we're going to make the necessary changes to something, - some document, or some idea. It needs to be changed in this way, - like, for example, the past tense needs to be changed to present tense in this document or something – but ultimately the content remains the same. That, to me, sums up the (pink) pussy hat thing, which is, the content is about women being sexually assaulted and exploited. However, the pink color needs to be changed to be inclusive of all women's stories. Whether they are trans women or women of color, it can't just be about white women's genitalia. But the message is still the same in terms of the real problems. *mutatis mutandis*, then, is about this material, which I got from the pictures of the different hats and made into frequency reservoirs... With that I just sort of use those frequencies, like the way another composer might use a scale or a set. That piece has a lot of the really cool kinds of things you can do when you blend those instruments. That piece has a lot of the cool timbres that you get when you have them play in unison or octaves. But they are playing in a more traditional way. In that one, it's not really a transcription of a song. That's something, though, that I do constantly now. I would say, maybe, that *mutatis mutandis* is the last piece I've written in a more traditional way of just working with pitches and rhythms. But it's always about timbre for me.

EP: Do you think that saxophone has any particular strengths or weaknesses sonically?

DH: The only thing I struggle with on the saxophone is the dynamic level being a level higher than most of the other instruments in a typical chamber ensemble group. I have also used saxophone in a chamber song cycle. So, this is what I'm talking about: the other instruments were violin, cello, and piano. Piano can do it, [match the saxophone dynamically] but violin really can't. In terms of the balance, I would say that's the only obstacle that I've ever come across. I love the saxophone. I have now a 10-piece sax ensemble piece, I have a baritone and piano piece, I have all these pieces I've written for Jan and Stuart, and the Chamber pieces also that include saxophone. To me, the saxophone is the violin of the 20th and 21st century. You have this incredible family, and you have this homogeneity of sound, and you have these virtuosic players. The sound is one of these richer timbres. It's capable of being less bright. It's capable of muting the frequencies. It's capable of all these extended techniques. I freakin' love the saxophone. I mean, I don't know if you want to quote that. It is one of my very favorite instruments,

and I will always jump on the opportunity. I've also written a clarinet and saxophone piece that does this sort of timbral back and forth between those two instruments, including the different overblowing, of the one that does the 8va and one that does the 12th. I will always jump on writing a saxophone piece. I don't find weaknesses with it, other than making sure the balance is right. It's nice to have a family of instruments, like strings, as this other family where you can just go, "this is all going to work. I'm not even worried about it, this will work."

EP: Do you mind who plays your music?

DH: No, I love it. One thing in particular that I love is a performer who brings something to it that I didn't imagine. I strongly believe that performers should make whatever decisions they want to make. It's not up to me... it shouldn't be about being "recreated." or trying to second guess what I want. I've pretty much put everything in the score that I can, to tell the performer how the music goes. But I love it when I'm sitting in the audience and somebody does something new. I just go, "ah, that was incredible." I want it out of my hands, and I'm thrilled if it's something somebody else will play. When I'm writing though, I almost always know who I'm writing for, so they are in my head the whole time. I'm thinking about them physically, and them personally, and so that's kind of cool. But it's thrilling when somebody else picks up the piece.

EP: Do you think there is a particular type of analysis that is useful for performers to understand your piece?

DH: Well, all of my pieces are super organized, and I keep a lot of notes, too. So, like I just showed you, that's one type of analysis that could be done on this piece. It's not really descriptive, though, of what the piece sounds like or ended up being. What I just showed you was about my creative process. But I think, just gestural analysis is probably the most important thing for my pieces. I do think there are usually multiple sections, so understanding the kind of sweep of events from one section to the next, or the ebb and flow, is probably one way into the music. I usually create a new form with each piece. I guess starting from that formal aspect and kind of seeing the big picture, and then moving into the small picture rather than the other way. Maybe for performers, it does start with the small picture, like note to note to note. With my work it's about working your way in, then working your way out.

EP: Research into musical gesture is an integral part of my research here.

DH: I use the word gesture almost all the time. I don't want to say phrase. You know, there's a lot of jargon that we use in analysis that really can't comprehensively describe what happens in new music, the further we move away from the restrictions of common practice notation, even. I've always felt that, with music, one of the reasons we respond to it in the ways that we do is that it has a simulation of our bodily gestures, or the gestures of our feelings, and the arcs of those things. We can move quickly, and music can move quickly somehow, or we can raise tension in our bodies. Gesture: it's pretty important.

EP: Musical gesture is relatively undefined in musical analysis, so maybe it can be a helpful way to look at music that is reacting to something else undefined.

DH: This is what I think music is: I think it's pre-linguistic. So, everything I just said to you is post-linguistic, and there is some slippage, right from the piece itself, to the way I can talk about the piece with you in an analysis. Well, for me, music is pre-linguistic, and so are physical gestures. That's why I see the analogous relationship between that kind of analytical terminology. But, as soon as we *call* it a gesture, there's slippage. So, what in our lives doesn't need language, to experience it? Music is one of those things.

EP: Could you tell me just a little bit about your early life, where you were born, how you came to be involved in music, as a young person?

DH: I was born in Miami. I've lived here most of my life. My mother was a scientist, but she was classically trained in piano. In my very early life, I fell asleep to Chopin, Beethoven, Brahms every night. My father was an actor and, at this time in my early life, he was the manager of the local classical music station, so basically until I was six or seven, I just heard a lot of classical music. Then, when I was in upper elementary school, I heard rock music and, frankly, had to learn it because it was foreign to me, but I fell in love with the Beatles. My father had brought home this Moog album of early electronic music, and I was like, "wow, that's amazing! That's what I want to do," from a pretty early age, like maybe nine or ten. These things combined, and I learned a lot of music by ear. I picked up the guitar. I was a pianist, although not really.

EP: Did your mother teach you or did you take lessons outside of the house?

DH: No to both. I just played by ear. I actually had some music books, but I would count [the lines and spaces] to try to find what the note was, because I knew where middle C was. It was an incredibly slow process, and I still feel like I can't read music, even though I can. It's still a challenge for me if I'm at a keyboard, to put it in my fingers and such, although I know immediately: okay, that's a blah blah blah chord, and it's going to go to here. I had my first lessons in college, and at that time I was a rock keyboardist. I took synthesis lessons there at a Community College that I was putting myself through. I could play the guitar, and we played a lot of top 40 music and such. As I was taking these electronic music lessons, it was a grad student from the University of Miami who said, "you should come to us for composition," and frankly, I didn't know you could be a composer. I thought, you were a film music composer, you wrote for commercials, or rock bands. And then when I found out you could write classical music, I was like, "Wow! I've found myself." I transferred over there in my junior year, to UM, and then got a Composition degree and the rest is history. I had a lot of exposure to classical music I knew early on, was drawn to timbral music, and I was self-taught until college. I entered college at 16.

EP: Which composers or pieces most stood out to you as a young musician?

DH: Well, I think, early on, it was Chopin, because I think that just my mother played a ton of Chopin. But I still love Chopin. I think he was an amazing composer very far ahead of his time. And then some Brahms I like very much. This is when I was little, and I loved Peter And The Wolf. Kind of the same childish enjoyment things. I did learn the theme from Sesame Street, learned Gilligan's Island theme songs, and all of the TV, songs are still all in my head. I discovered new music at the Community College in my... I was actually in my third year, because in the first year, I didn't get advised properly, and all I got were piano lessons. So, I had to start the music curriculum a year later, so in my second year of music history and my fourth semester theory, we did 20th century music and I just was like, 'This is cool!' I liked it, I found it far more interesting. I found set theory and I was just like, "totally cool." Plus, I was writing. The electronic music teacher I had was making me do projects. He sent me to listen to music, and it was the Princeton recordings, which are from the 1950s, and it's all like "bleep bleep" and I was like, "what is this?" I was always this kind of person who was looking for the progressive rock or the jazz fusion, with the new kinds of sounds. I think it was just in my nature.

EP: Can you discuss your ideas about composing and social issues?

DH: I have always believed that I'm composing about my own life. I do think that we are capable of feeling things deeply and resonating with things that are not part of our personal experience, but my personal experience includes quite a lot of shocking things. But basically, I just respond to the world. Some people write music and they're just moving notes around on paper and that's enough for them. But for me, music is where I have to process things that I'm struggling with in my life. I do struggle with social injustice. It does affect me when people can get away with killing other people. I've written extensively about a very long period where my mother was struggling with cancer on and off, and I was dealing with what she would tell me. So, I have a lot of pieces... in fact, my Sax Quartet is a piece where I sat down and said, "I want to write something fun because I'm tired of writing all these wrenching pieces, in response to my life." I wrote an orchestra piece that was about the birth of my son. So, I've always been doing this, and part of my life is: "oh, we have this furnace here that used convict labor that I drive past every day." I'm not a convict, but I am seeing that story every time I see that place. I'm looking at the city that prospered from that steel mill, and I'm thinking about the people who were maimed or killed in that steel mill, and I'm conflicted about the whole thing, and so I write a piece. More recently, I just want to be respectful of the people who feel like, if I write a piece about that, I may be taking away something from the people who, maybe, that was their relative. I'm just, I think, more cognizant now of when I'm struggling with something and putting it down as a piece of music, I'm asking myself also, "what is my personal experience here?" and, "am I coming to it from my own experience?" I know I've always come at it through my own perspective, and I've always recognized that my own perspective is quite possibly skewed or wrong. I've always recognized that. That's been a part of my aesthetic statement for years. But I think I've just sort of tempered what I'm thinking about, or found a way to contemplate the issues, and make it even more: "I'm the only one who can say this, this way." And that's because my personal perspective is even more, very intentionally, personal.

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Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Ellie Parker from the University of Houston. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about your compositions for saxophone and your artistic interest in social, political, and cultural issues.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.
2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by Ellie Parker from the University of Houston. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. A transcript of our conversation will be published in the interviewer's DMA dissertation.
4. I understand that the researcher will identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview.
5. Faculty and administrators from my campus will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Participant Signature



Printed Name

Dorothy Hindman

Date

2/23/21

Appendix 5: Interview with Tawnie Olson on 2 March 2021

EP: I'd like to start by talking a little bit about *Supreme* and how it came to be composed, and how you came to work with Carrie Koffman.

TO: The piece started with Carrie. She is, as you know, a saxophone goddess. She's completely amazing - a wonderful performer, and an amazing human. For several years I was an adjunct professor of composition at the Hartt School where she teaches. So, I knew her through Hartt. She heard a piece of mine for tabla, spoken word and electronics called *Something To Say*. That work is very forceful and feminist in its character. I think she liked that piece, and she wanted me to write something for saxophone.

Supreme had a very long and tortured evolution. Initially I wanted to write something to do with birdsong, because songbird populations are shrinking in terrifying ways. I wanted to talk about the cerulean warbler, which has had its population dive by 70% in 50 years. It's really not ok. I did a workshop on field recording at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and I had field recordings I'd made of the cerulean warbler. But when it came down to it, the piece just kind of didn't come together. It was actually very sad; I was in the middle of a really, really packed composing schedule and I couldn't get it done. Carrie said, "that's ok, you can write it two months later, do it in the fall," and I said, "no, I can't write the piece for a year." It was *horrible* to miss a deadline, but I just wasn't going to give her something that I didn't feel was a good piece.

Six months later, Carrie contacted me again and suggested that we drop the bird idea and write a piece about Justice Ginsburg instead. At that time, the documentary *RBG* had just come out and there were a number of pieces being written specifically about Justice Ginsburg. There's always been a lot of love for her among many circles in the US, and she was a remarkable woman. But I felt that - at that time - there were so many pieces being written specifically about Justice Ginsburg, I'd be a little late to the party. Then I went to a talk that Sonia Sotomayor gave at Yale, and I was just really impressed by her as a human. I thought it would be great to think about all of the three [women] Justices that were on the Supreme Court at the time. So I added Elena Kagan as well and wrote the piece as a tribute to them. I toyed with using audio from Supreme Court decisions or using text and making an electronic piece. But I ended up writing this piece for solo saxophone with no quotations. Carrie put a couple of different slideshows together to go with the piece that include images and quotations, provide a visual element, and also tie it into a larger project that she's doing called "Voiced." I'm completely fine with that, but I also hope that the piece can stand on its own without any visual aids.

One of the ways I tried to pay tribute to the Justices was that I buried their names in the score. (Although since the names or their initials are stuck in there using concert pitch rather than transposed, they don't jump out at you.) There's also a kind of a swagger to the piece because, I feel like Justice Ginsburg in particular, although she was very formal, she definitely had an oversized personality. There's a combination of swaggering confidence or optimism, and then there are these more contemplative multiphonic sounds with silences in between that interrupt the forward rhythmic drive of the piece.

EP: Have you written for saxophone before this solo piece?

TO: I've written for saxophone in the context of band pieces, but I had not written any solo saxophone music before this, no.

EP: What was it like to write for the saxophone?

TO: It's a wonderful instrument. I used to be a flutist, which is, you know, a different animal than the saxophone, but it's at least a woodwind instrument. I have a fondness for woodwind instruments and sympathy for the search for repertoire. I mean, flutes have more repertoire because they've been around longer than saxophones. But, in terms of quality repertoire, a lot of it tends to be from the last 40 or 50 years; before that there's a lot of stuff that could be described as "flashy and trashy." There are some great pieces, but there's also a lot of trash. I feel like it's the same for the saxophone.

If you're not a saxophonist, you could have a very oversimplified way of thinking about writing for saxophone: you can either run with the jazz, rock, minimalist music associations, or you can completely deny them and say "no, I will make no reference to that and I'm going to write something that's completely different and unrelated in character." There are pieces on that end of the spectrum that completely deny those other associations that are very effective, but there are a lot that aren't. I really like the Jacob Ter Veldhuis pieces. Even though a lot of them were not originally written for saxophone, they just work really well on the saxophone, and they sort of embrace that character and that wonderful bold attack. The very bright timbre, the loudness, they just celebrate it. That is the style of saxophone writing that I like to listen to, so when I wrote this piece, I went in that direction.

EP: How important is it to you that the audience know that you are writing about the Supreme Court Justices? Do you think it's possible to make that connection without the program note?

TO: No, I'm not sure that anyone would really know this was about the Supreme Court Justices; I think they would probably need the program note. But once you have the program note, there's a clear emotional character. There's opposition between these two very different musical ideas that somewhat gets resolved at the end. I hope that it works as abstract music. But I think if you wanted to you could hear this idea of women succeeding, and also the ongoing struggle and all the extra obstacles that one has to face when one is a woman (versus a man) attempting to operate in a public sphere. I think you can hear that in the piece.

EP: Do you mind who plays your music or the kind of venues it is played in?

TO: Well, I'm not a big fan of being stuck in a "ghetto." I would hope that the piece could be performed in a variety of contexts by a variety of people. I would hope that any performer who liked the piece and had a context where they thought the piece would make sense would feel free to perform it. Later this month, Carrie Koffman has the piece on a virtual women composers festival. That's fine, but I have mixed feelings about my

music being on concerts that are exclusively about women. When I started studying composition as an undergraduate, I was the only woman in the program. All the other students were male. I had wonderful professors who made it clear to me that if my male colleagues gave me any trouble that they would take care of them. They were hugely supportive, and it was a wonderful environment, but you walk into a seminar room and everyone there is a dude and you're *not* a dude... for me, it made me feel a bit isolated. To have that continuously underscored by having the word "woman" attached to "composer" is a little frustrating. I would much rather just be a "composer" with no extra adjectives except maybe "good" - or "not terrible." I would prefer "not completely mediocre composer who occasionally writes a good piece" to "white woman composer." But, on the other hand, I do think that as long as we're still dealing with discrimination, there need to be efforts from time to time to promote the music of women and of people of color - anybody who's been traditionally excluded from classical music. I think there need to be opportunities to make sure that those people have a chance to be celebrated and honored.

EP: What advice would you give to saxophonists interpreting your music for the first time?

TO: Well, in the case of this particular piece, I would say that the rhythmic sections need to be really rhythmic. You should always really feel that pulse in your gut. I'm the kind of composer who almost always has a pulse going somewhere when I write. You should really deeply feel the pulse, especially when there's a rest. Sometimes rests can be a little scary, but you need to embrace those rests and not try to cut them short. I think the temptation might be for the multiphonic section to be too careful and static. I really like imperfect multiphonics. I actually kind of like it when different overtones fade in and fade out and you can hear the breathy attack and you can hear the breath. I find that really beautiful and interesting. I'd also say don't be afraid to have fun, and don't be afraid to send me an email and ask a question. If you have a comment or an idea, we can talk about and I might say, "oh yeah, you're totally right, it sounds great that way" or I'll say, "I'm not sure that's the solution, but maybe we can find a different solution" and then we can work on something else until till it's something that works for us both. That kind of collaborative work makes things stronger, and Carrie and I did have conversations like that about different slurs and different slap tonguing.

EP: Can we look at the score together? Where are the Justice's names?

TO: Measure 72, that's an RBG. That's right before Sonia Sotomayor, kind of amusingly. Sotomayor is measure 75, and Elana Kagan doesn't show up until after the sustained section at measure 171. So, they're in there, buried in an Alban Berg kind of way. I would say the primary ways they're in there are as I said: the contrast between the swaggering, confident, energetic music and the pensive or angry multiphonics.

EP: What do you think is the role of composers and performers as an instigator of political or social change?

TO: I have a very different political outlook from my family. I love them and they love me, but it's a source of friction. My role growing up in our family was to be the good kid. My sister was a little more challenging to raise, and so I try to always make it up to my parents for her by being ok, and always doing well at everything. But that meant I didn't get very good at standing up for myself or asking for what I needed or asserting my views. Some things kind of got squished down and those things just came out when I started composing. I think I reached this boiling point with all the sexist garbage that I'd been putting up with my whole life and was like, "you know, what, no. I'm done with this. I'm done with letting this weigh me down. I'm done with being haunted by stupid things people have said to me. I'm going to exorcise that demon by writing a piece about it."

When I write pieces that are more political, it's often that kind of combination of something in my personal psychology, something that needs to be worked out, but also how the political situation touches on something in my own life, and my own issues. Then my way of dealing with it and resolving it, is to write a piece about it. Usually if it's something that has very deep emotional roots, the piece will come out pretty quickly although, it's not necessarily easy to write. It's usually pretty hellish emotionally to write, but in terms of figuring out the pitches and getting from bar to bar, those pieces often turn out to be quite strong. There is a strong emotional character to the music and most people pick up on the emotion that I'm trying to express. It's a kind of organic process that has deep roots in whatever my emotional state of being is, and how that is reacting to politics.

I can't really speak for other people, but I think if I were a performer, I would be very excited about the work that's being done uncovering for music by women, music by racialized composers. There's just a lot of great music that has been pushed to the sidelines, literally for centuries. We're in a really exciting time now as we excavate and discover for ourselves. On Sunday at our Virtual Church service, our organist performed the finale from Florence Price's Sonata. My *Lord* was that an amazing postlude, it was fantastic! I feel angry about the fact that I didn't get to hear this piece until now. You just need to go to the trouble of digging out pieces and learning them and then playing the heck out of them. There's a lot of great repertoire by composers, living or dead, that's out there waiting to be uncovered and shared with a wider audience. If you're in a chamber group, or if you have an orchestra; look around and ask yourself, "are we all similar in some way in terms of identity? Is there a way that we could reach out to somebody who has a different perspective? A different life experience? Either for a short- or long-term collaboration, or to commission?"

EP: Have you ever been asked not to deliver a piece with a social or political sentiment?

TO: No, not as such. I did have a very high-profile commission, that I that I just finished, my first idea for that was one that could have raised a lot of controversy. Some of my consortium said "yeah, go for it!" and one member said, "I'm not so sure this is gonna fly, I don't think my audience will go for this." I was respectful of that and I looked around until I found another idea that I got excited about, and I wrote a different piece.

A lot of what I'm doing is writing music for people I already have a relationship with, so I have a lot of freedom. I wrote for Shawn Mativetsky, for example; he's a tabla soloist and has a lot of control over his recital programs. We were both terrified by that piece [*Something To Say*], because we really didn't know how the audiences were going to react to it. But the audience response has always been really good, and it's been performed a lot.

EP: Do you have any final comments about *Supreme*?

TO: There's one thing I should mention, I am working on a slightly different version of the climax of the piece to make it easier to breathe. If the circular breathing doesn't carry you all the way through the phrase there is going to be another version, and you can decide which one you like best.

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Moores School of Music

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Ellie Parker from the University of Houston. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about your composition for saxophone and your artistic interest in social, political, and cultural issues.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.
2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by Ellie Parker from the University of Houston. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. A transcript of our conversation will be published in the interviewers DMA dissertation.
4. I understand that the researcher will identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview.
5. Faculty and administrators from my campus will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Participant Signature  _____

Printed Name Tawnie Olson _____

Date March 8, 2021 _____

Appendix 6: Brief annotated bibliography of other works for saxophone inspired by social, cultural, or political events.

Amram, David. *Greenwich Village Portraits for alto saxophone and piano*. New York: C.F. Peters, 2014.

This work is an elegy for three Americans: playwright Arthur Miller, singer and civil rights activist Odetta Holmes, and writer Frank McCourt.

Arias, Spencer. *What is Your World? for alto saxophone and electronics*. Just a Theory Press, 2020.

This work is written in collaboration with Queer saxophonists and the wider Queer community to give voice and agency to those often silenced.

Baker, Claude. *Lamentations our la fin du monde*. Saint Louis: Keiser Southern Music, 2006.

This work is a response to the unending series of disasters that have occurred since the millennium both natural and man-made.

Beglarian, Eve. *From the Same Melancholy Fate for any instrument and pre-recorded sound*. Self-published, 2015.

This piece considers the life of Houston based artist, Cleveland Turner aka Flower Man, who dealt with homelessness.

Boone, Ben. *Election Year for solo saxophone*. Self-published, 1994/2001.

This work is a parody of political campaigns which depicts the mudslinging, sex scandals, debates, and behind the scenes maneuverings.

_____. *Remembrance for soprano saxophone*. Self-published, 2001.

This work is a memorial for the victims of 9-11.

Busch, Ashlee. *Unam aeternam for alto saxophone and stereo playback*. Self-published, 2020.

This work reflects on the refugee experience.

Dietz, Chris. *My Manifesto and Me for alto and tenor saxophones*. Self-published, 2016.

This work is based on the Rifleman's Creed where soldiers anthropomorphize their rifles in order to better understand and handle their weapons.

Fuchs, Lowell. *MAYA for alto saxophone and electronics*. Self-published, 2017.

This work comments on womens equality and prevalent domestic abuse.

Gay, Curtis Allen. *That's Rather Unpleasant Mr. President for baritone saxophone and fixed media*. Self-published, 2020.

This work highlights the sexist and racist remarks of former president Donald Trump.

Green, Anthony. *A Single Voice: Solitary, Unified for alto saxophone and fixed media and projections*. Self-published, 2017.

This work is inspired by activists, politicians and historic figures that have worked toward achieve social equity.

Grill, Stanley. *The Children are Crying for saxophone quartet*. Self-published, 2018.

This work was written in response to migrant families separated at the US-Mexico border by the Trump administration.

_____. *The Children are Still Crying for saxophone quartet*. Self-published, 2018.

This work is a sequel to *The Children are Crying* in response the failure of the Trump administration to reunite separated families.

Hindman, Dorothy. *mutatis mutandis for alto saxophone and vibraphone*. Self-published, 2020.

This work comments on the iconic image of the Pussy Hat of the Me, Too movement which protested misogyny, assault, gender-based discrimination, and sexual objectification after President Donald Trump's inauguration.

_____. *R.I.P.T. for speaking saxophonist and speaking percussionist*. Self-published, 2014.

This work was inspired by the memorial T-shirts popular within the African American community and also on the legal and illegal use of guns.

_____. *Stay In Your Lane for chamber ensemble*. Self-published, 2018.

This work comments on dashcam and body cam videos used by law enforcement to document on-duty officers' actions.

_____. *What's it worth to you? for chamber ensemble*. Self-published, 2019.

This work was inspired by the \$1.05 price tag used at the March for Our Lives following the Parkland massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

Koh, Emily. *b(locked.orders) for soprano saxophone, electronics, and video*. Self-published, 2019.

This work is a response to Executive Order 13769 of early 2017, also knowns as the travel ban.

Loveday, Clare. *Saxophone Octet 2: previously Revolution Envy*. Self-published, 2016.

This work was written in response to student protests at South African universities.

Moroz, Dan. *Machine Men for alto saxophone and electronics*. Self-published, 2014.

This work is a commentary on blindly following political leaders.

Munn, Zae. *Gnashing of Teeth for alto saxophone and bass trombone*. Self-published, 2019.

This work is a reflection on gun control during the Trump administration.

Noda, Ryo. *Les Oiseaux for saxophone and piano*. 1977.

This work considers the problem of nature and pollution.

Olson, Tawnie. *Supreme for alto saxophone*. Self-published, 2019.

This work is a tribute to three Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States; Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Elena Kagan, and Sonia Sotomayor.

Oteri, Frank. *Fair & Balanced? A political saxophone quartet in ¼ tones*. Self-published, 2004.

This work is a response to the conservative-leaning FOX News Network.

Rudman, Jessica. *Dangerous Coat for baritone saxophone and piano*. Transfigured Lady Publishing, 2020.

This work is inspired by gender equality and political activism.

Secunde, John. *Different Arks for solo saxophone*. Self-published, 2017.

This work comment on the Syrian refugee crisis.

Sharafyan, Vache. *Sonata for alto saxophone, violin and piano*. Self-published, 2000.

This work presents an image of Armenia, a country stark, landlocked, and haunted by invasion, war, and holocaust.

Shrude, Marilyn. *Quiet Hearts: A Kaddish for solo saxophone*. New York: American Composers Alliance Inc., 2017.

This work reflects the violent and deadly anti-Semitic attack in Pennsylvania reminds us that hate, and hostility remains even in this second decade of the twenty-first century.

_____. *Lacrimosa for alto saxophone and piano*. Leipzig: Edition Peters, 2006.

This work inspired by the Latin word for “tears” and reflects on the senseless loss of human life.

_____. *River Song: A Postcard from the Sichuan Provence for alto saxophone and piano*. Self-published, 2010.

This work reflects on the growth of the human population, and the growing need for clean, safe water to sustain us.

Siedky, Ryan. *HUMAN for saxophone quartet*. Self-published, 2020.

This work comments on issues surrounding modern slavery.

Spratlan, Lewis. *Charlottesville: Summer of 2017 for mixed chamber ensemble*. Oxigale Music, 2017.

This work is not about a single event, but instead on the current state of racial and nationalist movement in the U.S.A.

Ter Veldhuis, Jacob. *Garden of Love for soprano saxophone and boombox*. Holland: Boombox, 2002.

This work considers religious discourse through the poem “The Garden of Love” by William Blake.

_____. *GRAB IT! for tenor saxophone and boombox*. Holland: Boombox, 1999.

This work is created from voice samples of prisoners sentenced to life in prison.

_____. *Jesus is Coming for saxophone quartet and tape*. Holland: Boombox, 2003.

This work deals with the collective feeling of trauma post 9-11, and the role of religion in the history of mankind.

_____. *Postnuclear Winterscenario No. 10 for saxophone quartet*. Holland: Boombox, 2004.

This work reflects on the devastation that occurred on first day of the Gulf War on January 23, 1991.

_____. *Ticking Time for tenor saxophone, boombox, and video*. Holland: Boombox, 2015.

This work was written in response to the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Turnage, Mark Anthony. *Testament for solo soprano saxophone and orchestra*. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 2017.

This work is a cry of defiance against the oppression suffered by Ukraine by the Russians.

Washington, Shelley. *Big Talk for two baritone saxophones*. Self-published, 2018.

This work deals with the prevalence of rape culture including catcalling and harassment that is endured by female-identifying people daily.

Washka, Rodney. *Saint Ambrose: The Definitions Aria for soprano saxophonist/actor and recorded media*. Self-published, 1998.

This work examines the prevalence of immoral and hypocritical politicians and religious leaders through a twelve-scene opera for speaking saxophonist and pre-recorded media.

Wesley-Smith, Martin. *Merry Go Round for saxophone or clarinet and electronics*. Self-published, 2003.

This work considers the experiences of Afghan refugees in the face of Arab atrocities.

_____. *Papua for saxophone or clarinet and electronics*. Self-published.

This work considers the ways in which colonization and destruction has destroyed the West Papuan way of life.

_____. *Tekee Tokee for saxophone or clarinet and electronics*. Self-published, 2003.
This work considers life and conditions in East Timor.

_____. *Weapons of Mass Distortion for saxophone or clarinet and electronics*. Self-published, 2003.
This work considers the role of propaganda, doublespeak, lies in relation to the Iraq War.

White, LJ. *Bodies Immutable for alto saxophone and video*. Self-published, 2019.
This work is inspired by the increasingly visible transgender community in the USA, and in thanks for the support shown by allies.

Yackiw, Jared. *Rubble/Resolve for saxophone and piano*. Self-published, 2020.
This work comments on conflict and suffering during the Syrian civil war.