Two Pieces for Bassoon by Dan Welcher: a Guide to Performance and Analysis, Including a Survey of Welcher’s Chamber Music with Bassoon

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TWO PIECES FOR BASSOON BY DAN WELCHER: A GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE AND ANALYSIS, INCLUDING A SURVEY OF WELCHER’S CHAMBER MUSIC WITH BASSOON

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ABSTRACT

This study is a performance guide that traces the compositional style of Dan Welcher, a well-known composer and former principal bassoonist of the Louisville Symphony and professor of bassoon at the University of Texas, through an examination of two works in which the bassoon is a prominent solo instrument: *Concerto da Camera* (1975) and *The Wind Won’t Listen* (2002). These works, a concerto and a chamber piece, span a period of almost 30 years in Welcher’s career. The study also includes a survey of other chamber music by Welcher involving the bassoon. It relates the two focal pieces to the greater bassoon repertoire by examining elements of form, style, harmonic language, and those of a programmatic nature. Suggestions for performance are included based upon their relevance to these considerations. Also included in this document are a discography of recordings of each piece and a collection of available program notes.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to examine two pieces for bassoon by Dan Welcher that, to this date, have not been analyzed and evaluated for their value to the bassoonist as performer, pedagogue, and chamber musician. These are *Concerto da Camera* (1975) for bassoon and chamber orchestra, an early composition, and *The Wind Won’t Listen* (2002) for bassoon and string quartet, a more recent work. The study will provide a resource for performers to use in their analysis and performance preparation of these major works. Additionally, a representative sampling of chamber music involving the bassoon including (i) small chamber ensembles and (ii) woodwind quintets will be examined in order to highlight similar stylistic characteristics. Finally, this resource will serve as an introductory reference material for the study of any other music by Dan Welcher, highlighting important biographical information as well as stylistic hallmarks that occur throughout his works. In order to effectively and comprehensively complete this study, the following criteria must be addressed:

1. What are the hallmarks of Welcher’s style as a composer, and what stylistic trends are displayed in the works in this study?

2. What (if any) are the programmatic constituents, large-scale formal/structural components, and unexpected elements (instrumentation, duration, extended instrumental
technique, complex harmonic language, nonstandard formal structure, etc.) in the basic composition of each piece? Furthermore, how do these concerns contribute to an informed performance of Welcher’s music?

3. What is the availability of scores and recordings of each of these works? (See also: BIBLIOGRAPHY, APPENDIX A: LIST OF WORKS BY DAN WELCHER, APPENDIX B: DISCOGRAPHY)

4. How are each of the pieces related to the standard bassoon repertoire in the aforementioned categories [(i) concerti, (ii) small chamber ensembles, and (iii) woodwind quintets] with regard to composition technique, form, and instrumentation? Are there certain qualities that make them unique?

5. What technical demands do these works provide for the bassoonist (and other performers), and how do they affect the accessibility of each piece?

6. In addition to his career as a composer and professor of composition at the University of Texas (UT), Welcher has worked as a professional bassoonist in the Louisville Symphony and as the conductor of a contemporary music ensemble at UT that he founded. In what ways are these experiences reflected in his compositions, specifically in his writing for bassoon?

1.2 PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

Following an overview of the career and compositional style of composer and bassoonist Dan Welcher, this study will examine two works by the composer featuring the bassoon as a soloist: Concerto da Camera and The Wind Won’t Listen. A study of
each piece will highlight individual areas of special concern for the performer, including (but not limited to) areas of technical difficulty, overall formal structure, harmonic structure, and related repertoire by other composers. Written nearly 30 years apart, the works provide snapshots of Welcher’s compositional style at two different periods in his career. A survey of other pieces of chamber music with bassoon by Dan Welcher is included to highlight similar areas of interest to the bassoonist in Welcher’s works and to provide further insight to the study of *Concerto da Camera* and *The Wind Won’t Listen*. These pieces are addressed in chronological order, many filling in the gap between *Concerto da Camera* and *The Wind Won’t Listen*, and represent the following genres: (i) small chamber ensembles, and (ii) woodwind quintets. For each piece in this study, when appropriate, I will provide a form diagram and employ the most appropriate method(s) of harmonic analysis with which to specifically address concerns within the overall context of the piece.

Correspondence with composers is an invaluable primary source for the performer and the historian alike. In this study I contribute to previously existing correspondence with Welcher (See Chapter 1.5) concerning his works by providing an edited transcript of all correspondence between us as an addendum to the document. The focus of this correspondence will primarily be information concerning Welcher’s compositional process as it pertains to the pieces included within this study.

1.3 NEED FOR THE STUDY

This study is designed to aid bassoonists as well as those involved in the performances in their preparation of these pieces. Frequently, gems of new repertoire fall
by the wayside of more well-known (and so-called) “standard” repertoire, only to be later forgotten. I believe that many, if not all, of the pieces included in this study have the potential to be held with equal merit to those pieces already labeled as “standards” in their respective genres. This study will provide performers and educators with a practical resource with which to enrich their understanding of the scores and further enliven any subsequent performances of these pieces. More frequent and more informed performances may lead to these works being considered among the respective “standard” repertoire, which includes 20\textsuperscript{th} Century concerti with chamber orchestra of Franҫaix, Jolivet, and Tomasi, and the often performed woodwind quintets of Paul Hindemith, Carl Neilsen and Samuel Barber.

The duality of bassoonists who are also composers is an ongoing trend spanning well over a century in the United States and elsewhere, many of whom are mentioned in Michael Burns’ study of concerti by American bassoonist-composers.\footnote{Burns, “Bassoon Concertos Written by Contemporary Principal Bassoonists,” 1997.} As a bassoonist and composer myself, I have a personal interest in this trend. It is intriguing to me that so many successful contemporary bassoonists have also been successful as composers and within other fields in music, notably Arthur Weisberg (1931-2009), John Steinmetz (b. 1951), Mathieu Lussier (b. 1973), and of course Dan Welcher. This builds upon an earlier tradition of the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries in which bassoonists were often composers in addition to being performers. Early examples of this tradition are evident in the works of Giovanni Bertoli (c. 1600-1645), Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (1689-1755), and Antoine Dard (1715-1784). Franҫois Devienne (1753-1803), known by bassoonists for his six sonatas, performed both as a flutist and bassoonist. Devienne was a contemporary of
Etienne Ozi (1754-1813), another French bassoonist-composer, and played bassoon in the Paris Opera.²

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to works by composer Dan Welcher that involve the bassoon in a central or significant role. Large orchestral works, wind ensemble pieces and any pieces by Welcher of similar scope—while equally worthy of close examination—are not considered as a part of this study. The goal of this study is to inform the performance of these pieces, therefore, any theoretical or formal analyses of pieces included within this study are not intended to be extensive or exhaustive.

1.5 SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

In his 1997 doctoral document, “Bassoon Concertos Written by Contemporary Principal Bassoonists,” Michael Burns writes in detail about Welcher’s career (until 1996) and the Concerto da Camera for bassoon and chamber orchestra. Burns’ document includes reference to the concerto’s program note as well as some interesting correspondence between Burns and Welcher.³ Due to the nature of Burns’ study, he make little reference to Welcher’s compositional style. Burns’ document also lists Welcher’s entire œuvre,⁴ which includes some of the pieces in this study (the first three woodwind quintets) but lacks those which have been composed since (The Wind Won’t Listen, Mill Songs, The Moerae). Burns also mentions the possible existence of a piece entitled

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² Ibid.
³ Burns, 104.
⁴ Burns, 40-44.
*Pisces*, a “symphony for bassoon and orchestra”.\(^5\) The reader gets the impression that *Pisces* was later rescinded by the composer or left incomplete, and Welcher had no comment on the piece in Burns’ study. Two more woodwind quintets, yet unpublished, have also been composed since Burns’ study. These are *Teaching the Wind to Sing* (2010) and *Spring Music* (2015).

Vanessa Ferrari’s doctoral document, written 10 years after Burn’s survey, is a smaller study of a similar nature. Ferrari examines five bassoon concerti by American composers, including Welcher’s *Concerto da Camera*, but does not limit her study to concertos by composers who are also bassoonists as Burns does. However, two of the five pieces in Ferrari’s study meet this criterion: Welcher’s concerto and John Steinmetz’s *Concerto for Bassoon* (2003). Her writing focuses on each piece’s place within the concerto repertoire of the bassoon and includes biographical information about each composer. Though the section about Welcher’s *Concerto da Camera* contains biographical information on the composer and Ferrari’s commentary on an extensive program note for the *Concerto* written by Welcher himself, it is by no means exhaustive.

An interview with Welcher concerning his compositional process, from the impetus to compose a piece through its inception into the catalogue of works, appears in *The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak about the Creative Process*, by Ann McCutchan.\(^6\) This is an invaluable resource for research on all of the composers interviewed in her book, and I will seek to elaborate on certain topics of this 1996

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\(^5\) Burns, 45.

\(^6\) McCutchan, *The Muse that Sings*, 87-96.
interview to provide insight into Welcher’s music to aid players in their performance preparation and analysis.

Several studies have been written focusing on technical demands of \textit{x-instrument} within the context of the woodwind quintet literature. Most of these studies, such as David Pierce’s 1986 dissertation “The Bassoon in the Woodwind Quintet: Performance and Technical Demands and their Solutions,” and Lori Wooden’s 1996 dissertation “Excerpts of Woodwind Quintet Music for Bassoon: Selections, Pedagogy, and Practice,” focus specifically on bassoon technique and “difficult passages” that require the use of special fingering patterns or similar fundamental control issues of the instrument. While those studies seek to find difficult passages within the greater repertoire, this study is structured as an examination of two pieces by Welcher and focuses on the performance and overall interpretation of the piece by the bassoonist and ensemble, not an orchestral excerpt-like treatment of difficult passages within the respective pieces. It is the author’s goal to provide insight into the pieces by examining large-scale forms, extra-musical concerns (programmatic features, source material), and certain composition techniques used by Welcher (e.g. his blending of serial and non-serial technique, or quoting melodies or styles of other composers and their work) to enhance the performance.

\footnote{Pierce gives a broad overview of the literature in this genre whereas Wooden speaks in more detail about fewer pieces. Darius Milhaud’s \textit{La Cheminée du Roi René} is the only piece unique to Wooden’s document.}

\footnote{Other studies include: Daniel McAninch’s “The Technical Problems of the Oboe in the Woodwind Quintet,” Walsh 2010, Specht 1996, et. al.}
CHAPTER 2: WELCHER AS BASSOONIST AND COMPOSER

“I think composers should be the best-educated, best-read, and most music-loving of musicians…we are the people who should be able to bring music across the footlights: to invent new ways of saying deep truths about life and art, to be the conduit between thought and action, to be able to induce states of pleasure, horror, arousal, tears—the whole gamut of emotions.”

-Dan Welcher

2.1 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Daniel Edward Welcher was born March 2nd, 1948 in Rochester, NY. He would later attend the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester and the Manhattan School of Music, primarily studying bassoon, piano, and composition. His composition teachers were Samuel Adler, Warren Benson (Eastman) Ludmila Ulehla, and Nicholas Flagello (Manhattan). In 1972 he became the principal bassoonist of the Louisville Symphony Orchestra and began teaching music theory and composition at the University of Louisville. It is during this time that he also began playing bassoon with the Aspen Music Festival, performing next to renowned bassoonist and pedagogue Leonard Sharrow. In 1978 Welcher became Professor of Bassoon at the University of Texas – Austin and began performing regularly with the Austin Symphony Orchestra. It was during this period that Welcher founded the UT New Music Ensemble. From 1980-1990 he served as Assistant Conductor of the Austin Symphony, but then left UT as well as his position as Artist—Faculty at the Aspen Festival in 1990 to serve as

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9 Personal correspondence with the composer.
Composer-in-Residence of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra, a position he would hold through 1993. Following this residency Welcher returned to the University of Texas in a new role as Professor of Composition and Director of the New Music Ensemble. Welcher is an acclaimed speaker on music and “is known for making contemporary music intelligible to lay listeners.” Between 1999 and 2009 he hosted a weekly radio broadcast called “Knowing the Score” on KMFA-FM in Austin, and now hosts another weekly broadcast on the same station, “From the Butler School of Music,” highlighting student performances from the University of Texas – Austin.

Pieces for concert band/wind ensemble are among Welcher’s best known works. The most popular of these seem to be *Four Places in the West* (a collection of four separate pieces for wind ensemble written over a period that spans almost twenty years: *Glacier, The Yellowstone Fires, Arches,* and *Zion*) and Symphonies No. 3 (“Shaker Life,” 1998) and No. 4 (“American Visionary,” 2005). Welcher has written much other music, including operas, symphonies and other pieces for orchestra, and more. It is a diverse collection of chamber music—much of which includes woodwinds—that is the primary interest in this study both because I am a bassoonist and because little research has been done on those pieces to date. Welcher seems to write almost exclusively for traditionally important chamber ensembles such as woodwind and brass quintet, string quartet, and a quintet for clarinet and strings a la Brahms. This counters the less standard ensembles used by many 20th Century modernist composers.

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10 From Theodore Presser website. [http://www.presser.com/Composers/info.cfm?Name=DANWELCHER](http://www.presser.com/Composers/info.cfm?Name=DANWELCHER)

11 Transcripts and/or archival recordings of “Knowing the Score” do not exist, according to KMFA-FM and Welcher.
Welcher himself acknowledges that he has become known as “an orchestra and band guy,” perhaps due to his relative success and subsequent recordings of works in those genres. He has a passion for writing for large instrumental forces, but enjoys writing chamber music and eagerly awaits the opportunity to write a “big opera.” He also enjoys the other theatrical arts as well as literature and poetry. “I’m a big theatre nut,” says Welcher when asked about his other interests and influences that may serve as potential influences to his compositions, “and when I go to New York City, I rarely attend concerts if I can attend plays. I’m also big on the outdoors, and on the study of foreign cultures.”

2.2 WELCHER AS BASSOONIST AND COMPOSER

As a bassoonist and enthusiast of Welcher’s music, I have frequently asked myself why Welcher didn’t follow the compositional path of many other composers who play the bassoon, a path with an output that usually utilizes the bassoon to a high degree. Welcher’s response to this very question comes in the program note for The Wind Won’t Listen: Fantasy for Bassoon and String Quartet, describing what can appear to be a conscious avoidance of the bassoon in order to evade a very bassoon-centric audience of critics as well as bassoonists themselves, hungry for solo repertoire and orchestral obligato lines. Welcher writes “Perhaps I was so aware that people were looking at me as a ‘bassoonist/composer’ that I was determined to remove that stigma.”

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12 Personal correspondence with the composer.
13 Ibid.
14 Michael Burn’s 1997 document references many bassoonists of the past and present who were also composers, beginning with Bertolomé de Selma y Salaverde and Giovanni Bertoli in the 17th Century. See Burns, 9-32. His Appendix A in the same document provides a very comprehensive catalogue of pieces for bassoon by bassoonists. See Burns, 65-103.
15 Program note from The Wind Won’t Listen. See Appendix B for full program note.
In 1975, Welcher composed a concerto of massive breadth with a unique formal appeal and idiomatic bassoon writing that simultaneously conveys a sense of sentimentality and virtuosity, the *Concerto da Camera*. It was not until more than 25 years later that he wrote the second piece in his oeuvre to feature the bassoon as a prominent solo instrument, *The Wind Won’t Listen*. This piece is a 15-minute fantasy for bassoon and string quartet that is very concerto-like but is essentially chamber music. The decision by Welcher to avoid the bassoon represents an early distinction of himself as primarily a composer (who also plays the bassoon), which is unlike most bassoonist-composers throughout history, whose compositions often included many pieces of solo repertoire and pedagogical materials.\(^{16}\) This decision is in no way meant as a denunciation of the bassoon’s soloistic capabilities, for Welcher continues: “*The Wind Won’t Listen* represents my return to the bassoon as the highly expressive, poetic soul that it is.”\(^{17}\)

When I asked Welcher about the transition from performing to composing, he replied that he didn’t simply stop performing, but due to the lack of practice time caused by time devoted to composing, the frequency of his performing as a bassoonist “tapered off gradually.”\(^{18}\) On bassoon playing, Welcher said to me, “I do miss performing, but I wouldn’t have been able to keep my standards up if I had continued.”\(^{19}\)

Welcher’s experience as a bassoonist has been influential in his writing, and this influence can be seen in all of his chamber music including the bassoon as well as the *Concerto da Camera*. Certainly, his writing for the instrument speaks to an awareness of

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\(^{16}\) See Footnote 14.

\(^{17}\) Program note from *The Wind Won’t Listen*.

\(^{18}\) Personal correspondence with the composer.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.
the instrument’s strengths and facility that can only come from the perspective of a player. This influence will be seen in later examinations Welcher’s music through his evident knowledge of the versatility of the instrument in different ensembles and its idiomatic ability to move freely and rapidly between registers. Welcher utilizes the bassoon’s wide and malleable spectrum of tone colors, ranging from bright and intrepid writing, as in the woodwind quintets, to sensitive, lyrical writing modeled after singing, as in the *Concerto da Camera* and *The Wind Won’t Listen*.

### 2.3 SURVEY OF WELCHER’S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

One of the most notable characteristics of Welcher’s music is a stylistic eclecticism, a trend found throughout his entire oeuvre. Concerning Welcher’s compositional process, it is clear that he always tries to begin with a goal of the piece’s audience or occasion in mind, a “let the piece fit the purpose” approach. This wide variety of styles can leave an analyst of his music who is looking for common compositional threads perplexed at the onset. Welcher states that if he were to have to choose one element that defines a piece of his music, it would be that each piece has a clearly-perceptible form. Through this study, I have found that it is often most helpful to begin with an analysis or diagram of the formal structure of each piece. He notes that such a form might be his take on a well-known traditional form (such as “rondo” or “arch” forms) but would not necessarily be named in the title, and that this preference developed over time and may not be a characteristic of some of his earlier works like the *Concerto da Camera*. He likes his pieces to have “a sense of return,” which is most often

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20 Ibid.
seen through restatement of larger sections of musical material.\textsuperscript{21} A methodical composer, he often retains ideas for pieces in what one might call an “idea bank” until he finds the proper musical outlet within which he can develop the idea. Rather than approaching a blank score with a capricious hand, these ideas are subject to planning, diagramming, and outside research (and much trial and error at the keyboard!).\textsuperscript{22} Welcher says in some of his earlier works he often approached composing in the latter, stream-of-consciousness method, where he “just sat down and started writing.”\textsuperscript{23} He comments on formal perception in his music:

“I think about Wagner and the \textit{Ring Cycle}, about how someone could write something that takes twenty years to finish, and then when you sit there and hear all four of those operas in a row it’s clear that there is a complete progression from beginning to end, and it’s the same composer. Rhinegold is perhaps a little more simple, and \textit{Gotterdammerung} is a step backward—but it’s the same composer, and if it wasn’t for his systematic approach and his leitmotifs those four operas could have been four wildly different styles. I like to do that too—to plan it out, to have a sense of a roadmap and sometimes leitmotifs and themes that I can cycle and will connect things together.”\textsuperscript{24}

He cites having been “profoundly moved” by certain composers: Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler, John Corigliano, and Benjamin Britten. The influence of many of these composers can be seen in Welcher’s compositional style, especially when considering formal and harmonic structure. “Mahler’s Fifth Symphony, Britten’s \textit{War Requiem} and \textit{Peter Grimes} (and several of his other operas), and Corigliano’s \textit{Pied Piper Fantasy} are all pieces that have shaken me to the core. Those pieces are huge—they provide me more

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{22} McCutchan, 88-92. \\
\textsuperscript{23} McCutchan, 91. \\
\textsuperscript{24} Personal correspondence with the composer.
\end{flushright}
with structural advice and a route to study than actual emulation.”

The music of Shostakovich also had a profound influence on *Concerto da Camera*, to be seen later.

“I’ve been told that my music often tells a story” states Welcher. Even if the piece in question doesn’t have a programmatic aspect, listeners feel a sense of programmatic unity and progression which Welcher attributes to the formal organization of his music. Many of his pieces do have a program, often provided by Welcher in program notes. In some cases the pieces simply have programmatic titles but no notes. Welcher’s most accessible formal construct is his ability to write recognizable themes and motives, and then use these melodic devices within formal sections that have a distinct musical “mood” or emotional affect associated with them, often representative of recognizable compositional styles such as dance forms and fugues. Dance forms are particularly important in Welcher’s *The Wind Won’t Listen*, because they are the basis for a set of variations in the second movement.

Traditional harmonic analysis (i.e. Roman numeral analysis) is not often the best tool to use when examining the harmonic structure of Welcher’s music. Welcher states that “my harmonic systems for pieces are individual entities…you have to adapt whatever [tonality] system you’re using for your own needs, and temper the means to meet your end.” Welcher feels that his choice of harmonic organizational system can help express the mood of the piece, an aspect of the piece’s design that he often has in mind from its inception. As is often the case with late 20th Century and contemporary music,

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25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 McCutchan, 92-93.
29 Personal correspondence with the composer.
harmonic systems are not an all-inclusive schema for a piece, or even a movement of a piece, as would be the case with the tonal framework of the common practice period, or the serialism of Arnold Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School. Contemporary composers frequently use varying means to express a wide range of musical ideas. Welcher is no stranger to devices like bitonality, and he even has employed tritonality in his *Partita for Horn, Violin and Piano* (1980).\(^{30}\) In some pieces, the system can vary even within the separate movements/large sections. A single movement may contain elements of tonality, atonality, bitonality, serialism, or other systems. With any harmonic system (or combination of systems) Welcher employs, it seems as though his use of these systems within pieces is not mutually exclusive: a piece is not “bitonal,” but “contains instances of bitonality.” The same can be said for serial devices. In his song “Everyone is Crying,” which became the primary inspiration for *The Wind Won’t Listen*, he uses two different hexachords to define significant harmonic areas within the piece and create continuity. Welcher specifically notes the combination of serial and non-serial technique in pieces like his Concerto for Piano, Concerto for Violin, and many others.\(^{31}\) He states that his “‘tonal ear’ seems to be taking stage more and more”\(^{32}\) whereas earlier pieces in his oeuvre tended toward atonality and serialism. No matter the harmony system employed, Welcher states that his music “always has a sense of an underpinning of key” and that there is “always a sense of ‘home’ or ‘root,’ harmonically.”\(^{33}\) This is an important detail to consider when analyzing or performing Welcher’s music, as often pitch collections will be reminiscent of tonality but will not function in his piece in the

\(^{30}\) Ibid.
\(^{31}\) Ibid.
\(^{32}\) Ibid.
\(^{33}\) Ibid.
same manner that they would in a more traditional tonal framework. Welcher’s music continues to move further away from Charles Wuorinen’s serial-centric 1970’s view on music composition, evident in the popular 1979 textbook *Simple Composition*. Welcher mentions that most composers of the time ascribed to Wuorinen’s writing. “When I was in grad school in the 1970’s, the rule of thumb was that we all had to write 12-tone music. That was a given” states Welcher. “You could never get a grant, or a job teaching, or win the Rome Prize if you were writing anything but 12-tone music, and for about twenty years that was the rule.” Serialism as the pinnacle achievement in academic music has been replaced now by things like spectral music, says Welcher, but he notes there is now “more room for diversity of style than there used to be.”

Another interesting point about Welcher’s initial planning and diagramming of a piece is his awareness of the time duration of sections of music and pieces overall. He feels that this awareness helps to “balance the proportions” of his music. This kind of planning shows Welcher’s awareness of role of the audience (and the performers) of his music, knowing when a musical idea has been completely wrung out of potential or becomes boring to the audience.

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34 The opening of Charles Wuorinen’s *Simple Composition* reads: “Most of the Western music we know from the past is representative of the tonal system…but while the tonal system, in an atrophied or vestigial form, is still used in popular and commercial music, and even occasionally in the backward-looking works of serious composers, it is no longer employed by serious composers of the mainstream.” Wuorinen, *Simple Composition*, 3.

In personal correspondence with Welcher, he noted this popular philosophy on music composition and remarked “I made a photocopy of that page, and hung it on my office door. I circled that sentence in red and over to the side I made a little thought bubble where I wrote ‘Oh yeah???’” See APPENDIX E for full correspondence.

35 McCutchan, 93-94.
Use of polyrhythmic figures and rhythmic complexity in general is a notable characteristic of Welcher’s music, evident both in early pieces such as *Concerto da Camera* and more recent ones like *The Moerae* (2008), a fantasy for flute, oboe, bassoon and piano. Welcher likes this high level of rhythmic complexity in his music because it sets his music apart from the more “forgettable” music of mid-20th Century composers whose works were written in a more traditional tonal idiom. Welcher also likes to manipulate meter and metric devices, and notably uses isorhythm in pieces, as he does extensively in the final movement of his first symphony.

The key to a study of Welcher’s music is an awareness of his characteristic stylistic eclecticism. Each piece in Welcher’s oeuvre is unique, and depends upon the parameters that he chooses to use for that particular piece. If the piece was written for professionals or amateurs, some insight might be gained toward the level of virtuosity in the instrumental technique or how challenging the piece may be for the ensemble to perform. Because he tailors the level of difficulty to the ensemble for whom he is writing. Welcher’s second woodwind quintet was written for the Blair Woodwind Quintet, who would have less difficulty navigating that piece’s intricate rhythms and technical passages than a non-professional ensemble. If the piece was written as the result of a prestigious recognition, honorarium, or prize, as String Quartet No. 1, attention can be called to elements of innovation and artistic license. About this piece Welcher states “As any ambitious young composer with such a prestigious opportunity would do, I aimed very high in this piece: it is a work of symphonic proportions, with a huge emotional

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36 Personal correspondence with the composer.
37 Ibid.
range.” Clearly the 1987 commission by the National Endowment for the Arts for the Cleveland Quartet inspired Welcher to push his harmonic boundaries for his first string quartet, evident in a tone-row that is not serialized but “affects rhythmic durations, pitches, and meters, but also melodies, harmonies and colors.” Sometimes, the choice of a specific harmonic language or device is simply an effort to create a certain “mood” that reflects an extra-musical program, as in Zion or String Quartet No. 3. On Zion, Welcher states, “I invented a ‘looping pentatonic’ scale that builds each new 5-note set on top of the previous one, which creates a system that can provide virtually all the chromatic notes if one goes high enough. Once I discovered this scale, I was able to use it a lot in other pieces, like my Violin Concerto and Zion.” Formal structure, harmonic systems, and extra-musical/programmatic concerns should be among the first considerations when examining Welcher’s music, and are some of the first that will be addressed in the analytical sections of this study.

2.4 AN APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF WELCHER’S MUSIC

Welcher states that form is a particularly important and perceptible aspect of his music, so a diagram of the form of the Concerto da Camera and The Wind Won’t Listen and other works will be included as an integral part of the analytical study of each piece, and is an important place to begin each analysis. The harmonic system(s) utilized in the piece under consideration should be identified and—when applicable—both formal and harmonic elements must be contextualized in relation to any programmatic concerns.

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38 Liner notes from Cassatt recording.
39 Ibid.
40 Personal correspondence with the composer.
Often the programs in Welcher’s pieces are cause for interesting derivations from a seemingly typical formal structure or harmonic schema.

“My second string quartet, Harbor Music, uses [arch form]” states Welcher. “I wrote the piece in three weeks. I laid out the form first: it was going to be all about this place in Sydney, Australia where the boat leaves from the dock, then goes to this location, and then back to the dock, and then another location. You can’t go from point B to point C, you always have to go back to point A first. I thought ‘this is sort of like a Rondo, but I’m going to make it into an Arch—Rondo.’ So it has this high point and comes back via circuitous route, but every time we hear the ‘da da dumm, da da dumm’ it’s a step higher and a different orchestration so that there’s a sense of heightened excitement as the piece progresses.”

Welcher freely uses elements from any harmonic system of organization. It is important to determine when significant elements of these systems are employed, being careful not to cloak entire sections under the guise of “free atonality with tonal gestures.” Often when Welcher uses serial, polytonal or other harmonic devices, he uses them as vast extensions of an underlying implied tonal context. Frequently the connective tissue between tonal and non-tonal sections contains harmonic collections that can function simultaneously in multiple harmonic areas (tonal or otherwise), such as whole tone and pentatonic collections.

Once formal structure and harmonic systems have been identified—in relation to any programmatic elements—an area of interest is Welcher’s use of themes and motives. Thematic consideration in analysis is especially important in Welcher’s earlier works, as they can lack the careful formal structure of his later pieces and are guided more by thematic development. “When I wrote the Concerto da Camera the first time I didn’t [plan out a perceptible form]” states Welcher. “I just started out with a sense of ‘first

41 Ibid.
theme’ and ‘second theme’ and let things progress the way they wanted to.”^42 Welcher manipulates thematic material to suit his needs—especially when there is a programmatic element to the piece—and often writes themes with recognizable head motives so that the listener can immediately identify the thematic material from its onset. In highly programmatic works, like The Moerae, themes and motives often represent different characters or ideas and are manipulated to reflect the program. In The Moerae, specific themes do not represent the specific characters of the three Fates, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, but rather their particular duties of spinning, measuring, and cutting the thread of life.

^42 Ibid.

3.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INSTRUMENTAL CONCERTI OF DAN WELCHER

Composers in the late 20th Century tend to treat the idiom of the “concerto” with a great deal of freedom, formal and otherwise. Some utilize the old three movement concerto form of the late 18th Century, complete with a full orchestral accompaniment and cadenzas in all the right places. Others prefer a looser definition that includes pieces which feature any instrument or collection of instruments in a soloist role, often with large displays of virtuosity. Such pieces of varying instrumentation may also have a more open-ended formal structure than more traditional concerti. Each of these depictions of “concerto” can be seen in the bassoon repertoire since the late Baroque era, including standards such as Vivaldi’s 39 bassoon concerti, Mozart’s Concerto in B flat Major, K. 191, Sinfonia Concertante, K. 297b, and Carl Maria von Weber’s Concerto in F and Andante und Rondo Ongarese. The 20th Century saw no shortage of bassoon concerti, such as Jean Françaix’s Concerto pour bassoon et 11 instruments à cordes, and concertos with full orchestra by Henri Tomasi (1961), Ray Luke (1965) and Nino Rota (1977). This short list does not even investigate the possibility for less standard ensembles, seen in contemporary pieces such as Sofia Gubaidulina’s Concerto for the Bassoon and Low Strings (1975), Michael Daugherty’s Dead Elvis (1993, bassoon with an ensemble a la Stravinsky’s L’Histoire du Soldat), Philippe Hersant’s Huit Pieces for bassoon and chamber ensemble (1995), Marjan Mozetich’s Concerto for Bassoon, Strings and
Marimba (2003), and Dana Wilson’s Avatar (2005, bassoon and chamber winds). For the purpose of this study, a concerto will be defined as a piece of considerable length featuring an instrumentalist in a soloist role with a standard, large accompanying ensemble such as a wind ensemble, string or chamber orchestra, or full symphony orchestra. Welcher’s output of instrumental concerti is quite substantial, with concerti for many different instruments including clarinet, bassoon, piano, flute, timpani, and violin. Even though some of Welcher’s chamber pieces are very concerto-like in the way they feature a solo instrument, like the thirty-minute Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet (2001) and The Wind Won’t Listen, a fantasy for bassoon and string quartet (2002), they are still chamber pieces, not conducted and with one performer on each part. Welcher’s two pieces featuring the bassoon as a soloist mirror this established tradition of instrumental concerti in many ways, even though one is a concerto and one is a chamber piece. Some formal and stylistic aspects that the two pieces share are: (i) a lack of separation between movements, (ii) a tendency toward lyrical (as opposed to virtuosic) bassoon writing, and (iii) direct reference to other composers that involves musical quotation.

It is unlikely that Welcher will revisit the bassoon concerto unless commissioned to do so. He states “Every piece should have a reason…perhaps one of your sonatas is profoundly romantic…the next might be a scientific piece…each has its own reason for existence. Beethoven knew this better than anyone. Although he produced nine

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43 Other bassoon concerti are also among the “new standards,” including those by: Gordon Jacob (1947), Ellen Taaffe Zwilich (1992), John Williams (1995), Eric Ewazen (2002, for bassoon and band), Augusta Read Thomas (Concertino, 2013, for bassoon and small chamber ensemble), Christopher Theofanidis (2002), and Joan Tower (Red Maple, 2013, for bassoon and strings).
symphonies, seventeen string quartets, and thirty-two piano sonatas, he managed to make each piece unique.”

If a new concerto is composed it will likely be written at the request of a specific player, and their personal musical taste and strengths as a performer will be represented in the final product. He notes “If someone commissions me to write for bassoon, I’ll write for bassoon. It’s more external than internal, the choice of what to write and when.”

3.2 CONCERTO DA CAMERA FOR BASSOON AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA (1975, rev. 2006)

Concerto da Camera (1975) for bassoon and chamber orchestra is one of Welcher’s earliest instrumental concerti. The instrumentation of the orchestra includes one each of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, trumpet, piano, and one percussionist, as well as a full string section. This instrumentation works well for bassoon because it doesn’t cause problematic balance issues, allowing the bassoon to be heard clearly at all times without amplification. The avoidance of other bassoon-like instrumental timbres, such as bass clarinet, trombone, or other bassoons, is similarly beneficial. Being employed as a bassoonist himself at the time, one might assume that Welcher composed the piece for himself to perform. This was not the case: the concerto was written for well-known 20th century bassoonist and pedagogue Leonard Sharrow, to whom Welcher played second bassoon in the Aspen Music Festival. Sharrow premiered the concerto on September 12th, 1975 with the Louisville Symphony, conducted by Welcher, and recorded the piece the following year on his album Leonard Sharrow Plays Works for Bassoon. Sharrow and

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44 McCutchan, 94-95.
45 Personal correspondence with the composer.
46 Leonard Sharrow played with several major U.S. orchestras including the Chicago Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, and the Aspen Music Festival Orchestra. He also taught at Indiana University.
Welcher had more of a collegial relationship than a student—teacher relationship, having
played together in the Aspen Festival. Welcher states that when he was playing in
Louisville, Sharrow was teaching at Indiana University in Bloomington. Sharrow
remarked at that time that Welcher was “pretty much a formed bassoonist now” and said
to him “you’re comfortable and you sound good so I’m going to let it alone.”

The album booklet from Sharrow’s recording contains a lengthy program note for
the concerto written by Welcher:

*Concerto da Camera* began its existence as “Sonata for Bassoon and Piano” while
I was playing second bassoon in the Aspen Festival Orchestra during the summer of
1972. It was my intention to express in the piece my admiration and appreciation to
Leonard Sharrow, with whom I had been privileged to work in the Orchestra for the
entire season. The first and second movements were completed, in bassoon-and-piano
form, during the fall of 1972.

Other projects intervened during the next two years, and the Sonata somehow
metamorphosed during that time into a vague plan for a Concerto. The changes that two
years can bring to one’s compositional style, however, caused the *Concerto da Camera* to
emerge as a kind of hybrid when I finally was able to finish and orchestrate the piece in
the spring of 1975. Some of the atonal harmonic language I had come to employ had to
be suppressed for the completion of the work, and the orchestration, so easily arranged
for a pianist’s hands when the piece was called “Sonata,” proved quite hazardous when
spread out in the denser sonorities afforded by an orchestral group. Indeed, the sonority
of the piano, and the flexibility of execution that instrument possesses, proved
indispensable for the Scherzo; and it was from this realization that the final orchestration
sprung: quintets of winds and strings to sustain and highlight the essentially rhythmic
writing; a “one-man-band” percussionist playing a score of instruments; and the
aforementioned *sine qua non*, the piano.

The piece pays musical homage in a special way to a great composer, whose
recent death makes these words necessary. Dmitri Shostakovich has always seemed to me
curiously more contemporary than he is often given credit for being. Certain
psychological traits illuminate even his lesser works, especially a juxtapositioning of the
serious with the banal which (as musicologists are fond of pointing out) closely aligns
him with Mahler. There is also a facility in handling long melodies within a very lean
texture, and the use of recitatives as expositional devices rather than cadenzas that also
aligns Shostakovich with the earlier composer and which may be seen to have been
assimilated into my *Concerto*. In any event, the unifying motive of the *Concerto da

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47 Personal correspondence with the composer.
Camera is the ubiquitous four-note setting of Dmitri’s musical initials (D, E-flat, C and B in the German equivalent) which he used so often in his own “autobiographical” works, such as the tenth symphony and the eighth string quartet.

The Concerto da Camera is in three movements and an interlude. The first is a free sonata form with an introduction and coda, employing three unaccompanied passages for the bassoon. The second movement, Scherzo, is a fierce display for this least fierce (shall I also say “and least virtuous”?) of instruments. It leads to a stretto of the D.S.C.H. motive which relaxes into the Interlude, a recitative for solo violin with comments by the bassoon over a pedal B-natural in the timpani. The interlude proceeds without pause into the last movement, in a slowly undulating 5/8 meter. There is considerable rhythmic development within the movement, culminating in an extensive double fugue for the orchestra in which the bassoon does not participate. At the height of the fugue, the bassoon cries out alone the three-note figure of the opening, only to be shouted down by the onrushing orchestra. In the end, it is calm that prevails, with the bassoon’s soothing melody accompanied by the pizzicato repetitions of the unifying motive, singing the piece to a gentle close.\footnote{Liner notes from Sharrow recording.}

Sharrow’s recording received due praise and remains the only commercially available recording of the *Concerto da Camera* at the time of this document’s publication. One review compares Welcher’s concerto with the other concerto on the recording performed by Sharrow, Ray Luke’s *Concerto* (1965). The reviewer writes “Ray Luke’s concerto…speaks of a different era. In 1965, the language of music was responding to different politics, social movements, and academic thought. Dan Welcher’s concerto…stems from nearly a decade later, but reflects the exploratory ethos of composers and performers of that era.”\footnote{Schwartz, “Harvest of 20th Century Bassoon,” 179-180.} The program note indicates that Welcher himself was writing mostly in an atonal idiom at the time, though he avoided employing a great deal of atonality in the concerto because the original framework (in its original conception as a Sonata for bassoon and piano) was evidently much less atonal.\footnote{Liner notes from Sharrow recording.} The work is highly lyrical, which Welcher states is mostly due to Sharrow’s preference for
playing lyrical pieces, but also due to a programmatic aspect concerning the death of
Dmitri Shostakovich, discussed below. Features of the lyrical style are a predominance
of broad, sustained melodies in a singing style, and a relative lack of technical virtuosity
for the sake of showcasing the performer’s abilities in that area. The virtuosity of the
performer is seen in the artistry and control of these singing lines, and in the broad palate
of tone colors and timbral nuance employed. When asked whether the title was an
allusion to historical forms (or perhaps a point of influence), he responded: “The title
Concerto da Camera really just means ‘chamber concerto,’ which implies a small
orchestra rather than a big one. Nothing more than that. As for other historical forms, I do
sometimes use forms with names like rondo, sonata-allegro, theme-and-variations, etc.,
but I’m not academic about it, and wouldn’t name these forms in the titles of the
pieces.” Two exceptions to this statement are the Passacaglia in Woodwind Quintet #2
and the Toccata—Finale of Listen Up!.

The Concerto da Camera is quite accessible despite the often atonal harmonic
language Welcher frequently employs, owing much to tonal references in his lyrical
writing. The work is not entirely atonal, but in keeping with the adventurous,
experimental spirit of composers of the 1960’s and 70’s is definitely far from both the
standard progressions and triadic harmony of the common practice period, and the
rigorous application of serial technique of the post-war years (50’s and 60’s) which still
held prominence in academia in the 70’s. Many sections throughout the concerto are
“key-like” and are defined by iterations of certain scalar figures, tonal/intervalic

51 Personal correspondence with the composer.
52 Ibid.
collections, thematic sequences, and drones, but do not always contain the same overt tonal underpinning as Welcher’s later works. These areas always occur in support of a particular theme or motive, and Welcher’s ability to create distinct musical “moods” to accompany this recognizable material is often a result of momentary tonal gestures within a larger musical passage with mixed harmonic idioms, which helps to define an aurally perceptible formal structure. In the concerto and other early works, harmony is often a subsidiary tool used to embellish and transform motivic material. One such motive that is treated in this manner throughout the piece is the D-S-C-H motive of Shostakovich, which Welcher himself describes as “the unifying motive of the Concerto da Camera,” though he sometimes presents this motive subtly or as part of a larger theme (see Example 3.1). He notes that sometimes analyses are not as helpful as they could be. “I remember reading a review of the Concerto da Camera after the recording came out in a well-known scholarly journal. This ten-page analysis got it wrong: they said it was all based on B-A-C-H. I had already written program notes, and it was pretty clear what I was doing but this author just got on his academic horse and didn’t stop. Through ten pages he was talking about homage to Bach. Well, he got the C-H part right…”

Example 3.1: Shostakovich’s Musical Signature, the D-S-C-H Motive.

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53 Liner notes from Sharrow recording.
54 Personal correspondence with the composer.
The use of Shostakovich’s D-S-C-H motive is not a product of Welcher’s fascination with the pitch collection itself, but rather (as the program note states) an homage to the composer and his works and musical achievement. Welcher mentions with a note of reverence that he was deeply moved by Shostakovich’s failing health (and later death) and could not believe that he and Shostakovich were alive and composing at the same time, one at the end of his career and the other at the beginning. He notes Shostakovich’s skill in bassoon writing in all genres, especially in the symphonies. Sharrow and Welcher had played Shostakovich’s Ninth Symphony together at Aspen\textsuperscript{55}, and Shostakovich’s lyrical use of the bassoon in the fourth movement is not unlike Welcher’s own bassoon writing in \textit{Concerto da Camera}, especially in the recitatives. Shostakovich’s music was important to Welcher before he played it at Aspen. On Shostakovich and \textit{Concerto da Camera}, Welcher states:

“I was one of those people…who was pigeon-holed early on as “a guy who works in tonal music, we’ll just forget him because he doesn’t count” and the reason that \textit{Concerto da Camera} is, in the end, about Shostakovich is that I did a paper in grad school about Shostakovich’s Tenth [Symphony] and then had to stand up and defend it in front of my class. All but one person in that class said that ‘this music is meaningless because it is tonal’ and that ‘Shostakovich is going to be in the dustbin of history—you should be studying Webern.’ I like to think now that Shostakovich got the last laugh—so did Britten. These people who, when I was in grad school were made fun of, and are [now] the ones who are the most played and most likely to survive”\textsuperscript{56}

Welcher revised \textit{Concerto da Camera} in 2006 because he thought the piece needed to flow better from beginning to end. He thought that some of the music seemed to go on longer than necessary.\textsuperscript{57} Most of the changes and cuts were in the third movement. Several of these occur around the double fugue, which in the original version

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
of the concerto was a section that the bassoon remained tacet. Welcher made the transition into the double fugue more dramatic, cutting out some material and leading into the fugue with a sweeping gesture. He also added several interjections of melodic material for the bassoon during the fugue itself. Other adjustments to the piece are minimal, and involve mostly tweaks in transition material or orchestration. The 1975 version of Concerto da Camera was used for this study to show Welcher’s original musical material, though the 2006 version will likely be used more often in future performances of this piece with orchestra.

The Concerto da Camera begins with an unaccompanied recitative for the bassoon, an unusual opening for a bassoon concerto in 1972 and even to this day. Welcher uses recitatives to his advantage throughout, including three unaccompanied recitatives in the first movement alone. The piece lies in a gray area between tonality and atonality, though Welcher doesn’t utilize what Schwartz refers to as the “exploratory ethos” of 1970’s composers, and it is likely that Schwartz is using this term specifically in reference to harmonic language and the dominance of serial composition (or for some a return to tonality), as well as free forms and experimentalism. Welcher’s Concerto explores more radical elements of form and expression than more traditional composers by his use of recitatives and predominantly lyrical writing for the bassoon.

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58 Other bassoon concerti that begin in this manner include John William’s The Five Sacred Trees (1995) and Christopher Theofanidis’s Bassoon Concerto (2002).
59 Schwartz.
### Movement 1

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<th>Thematic Area B</th>
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<td>75-96</td>
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<td>Polyrhythmic figures, principal theme defined by a head motive</td>
<td>Waltz inspired by Shostakovich, 3 statements of waltz theme</td>
<td>Organic outgrowth of waltz, 2 orch. Statements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recap. of motives</td>
<td>“A” theme, interrupted by recit-like figures</td>
<td>Bassoon has new lyrical chromatic line over orch. “B” theme</td>
<td>Accomp. By DSCH in vibraphone</td>
<td>Material from head motive of opening recit. with DSCH</td>
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<tr>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A/B reprise</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Trans.</th>
<th>A’</th>
<th>B’</th>
<th>Bridge</th>
<th>Cadenza</th>
<th>Coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-12</td>
<td></td>
<td>13-34</td>
<td>35-49</td>
<td>50-68</td>
<td>69-75</td>
<td>76-91</td>
<td>92-105</td>
<td>106-124</td>
<td>125-129</td>
<td>130-142</td>
<td>143-182 (end)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>DSCH infused theme</td>
<td>Isorhythmic figures, DSCH in retrograde</td>
<td>Orchestra recaps material from A and B</td>
<td>New theme in bsn.</td>
<td>Second statement of new theme</td>
<td>Chromatic lines, frequent unis. Between bsn./orch.</td>
<td>Lower pitch level, down whole step</td>
<td>Same lowered pitch level as A’</td>
<td>Fortissimo “chattering”</td>
<td>Sparse accomp.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interlude

Dodecaphonic collection with B sustain. Head motive from opening recit.

Movement 3 – “Finale”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Measure Nos.</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Double Fugue</th>
<th>Recit.</th>
<th>Coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-25</td>
<td>26-37</td>
<td>38-43</td>
<td>44-56</td>
<td>57-75</td>
<td>76-133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Primary theme in bassoon</td>
<td>Secondary theme and PT in orchestra</td>
<td>ST in bassoon, PT in orchestra</td>
<td>New theme in bsn, same head motive as PT 2 statements, DSCH accomp in orch.</td>
<td>Trans., Bsn. plays material that foreshadows double fugue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1: Form Diagram of *Concerto da Camera*. 
In some ways, Welcher’s affinity for and rhetorical capability in writing unaccompanied passages for bassoon have the same evocative and melodic power usually found in songs, though bassoon passages lack the additional advantage of text. These characteristics draw an interesting parallel to ideologies within the Free Jazz subgenre of jazz during the 1960’s, where harmony was often a secondary consideration to the melodic lines of the soloist, and where formal construction to maximize the expressive potential of the soloist would be a natural response.60

Welcher’s choice of lyricism was a product of the performer for whom the piece was written: Leonard Sharrow. “I also knew what kind of music [Sharrow] liked to play—lyrical music—so the piece is mostly long soliloquies and long solo passages that are pretty (or at least melodic) and without a whole lot of competition; the scherzo being the one thing that goes further than that.”61

The first movement of the concerto introduces some important traits in Welcher’s writing that are found throughout the entire concerto, and continue to be important in later works. Welcher’s harmonic language in this piece lies on a shifting spectrum between tonality and atonality, and he tends to state thematic material in a very clear manner. He often uses points of imitation with memorable tonal gestures as reinforcement of these themes, as he does with the head motive of the first theme of the concerto (see Example 3.2). These gestures are characterized by a rising-and-falling major third with major and minor inflection, and both hint at a tonal context though are otherwise unrelated. Every time the head motive of a theme appears, regardless of the

60 Borgo, “Free Jazz.”
61 Personal correspondence with the composer.
melodic material that follows, it usually signals the beginning of a line that is formally important.

Example 3.2: Head-motives in the Opening Recitative and “A” Section, mm. 1, 3

Opening Recitative:

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Freely \( \frac{d}{\text{56}} \)

Bassoon
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“A” Section:

Welcher’s use of recognizable head motives is paramount for underpinning the movement’s so-called “free sonata form,” because they serve as musical gestures that Welcher can—and does—refer back to later in the piece (see Example 3.2). The “A” theme section, characterized by material that begins with the rising-and-falling thirds head motive seen above, has a lot of rhythmic complexity. Welcher freely moves between duple and triple divisions of the beat and often layers these in a polyrhythmic structure, further increasing the importance of the recognizable head motives as an aurally perceptible unit because of the complexity of the musical material that follows
(see Example 3.3). Head motives are also the most interesting and unpredictable melodic element of the “A” section, as they are often sequenced and only occasionally develop into free counterpoint.

Example 3.3: Layered Rhythmic Structure of “A” Section, mm. 16-18.

Performers of the Concerto da Camera will want to emphasize the head motives in the “A” section and ensure that the dynamic balance of the ensemble is such that they can be heard as the primary thematic material of the section, especially when developed into more intricate contrapuntal writing. Welcher’s sparse orchestration of the chamber orchestra helps with this delicate balance, though in a resonant hall the bass pizzicato notes could become momentarily overpowering to the texture.

The “B” section of Concerto da Camera is a waltz inspired by the first movement of Shostakovich’s Tenth Symphony. To increase thematic recognition, Wecher frequently presents a theme in the orchestra and then follows it with a statement in the solo part, a technique with roots in the more traditional concerto double-exposition form of the 18th Century. The “B” section begins in this manner, with two statements of the

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62 Personal correspondence with the composer.
waltz theme played by the clarinet with viola (see Example 3.4). This is another nod to Shostakovich, as the waltz from the first movement of the Tenth Symphony also appears in the clarinet.

Example 3.4: Waltz Theme from “B” Section, Mvt. 1, mm. 28-38.

The second statement of the waltz theme is interrupted by a short bassoon recitative in mm. 43-49, after which the bassoon begins a statement of the theme which is more elaborate than either of the two orchestral statements that precede it. The bassoonist and clarinetist need to work together to achieve a unified stylistic interpretation of the waltz theme.

After the bassoon statement of the waltz theme, a new section begins that is more driving and energetic than the “A” and “B” sections. The theme in the “C” section (beginning at m. 76) is similar to the waltz theme in contour and intervallic content, like a transformation of the waltz. It is sometimes stated polytonally and is infused with the D-S-C-H motive (a rising minor second, followed by a falling minor third then minor second), the unifying motive of the concerto (see Example 3.1).

The meter of 5/4 helps this theme, played by the clarinet, to stand out because for the first six measures (mm. 75-80) the bass voices of the orchestration clearly reflect a
quintuple meter. Beginning in m. 90 Welcher uses the bass figure of four quarters followed by a quarter rest, played by the xylophone as a pointed motive that cuts through the texture. The metric ambiguity adds excitement to and focuses the listener’s attention on that which remains constant, the D-S-C-H-infused theme in the trumpet.63 The “C” section theme is then presented in canon, which by m. 98 becomes a three-voice homorhythmic harmonization of the theme, and also the first statement by the bassoon (See Example 3.4). Just as in the “B” section, the “C” section includes multiple statements of the theme—first in clarinet, then trumpet, then in canon between violin and viola—before the soloist plays the theme. Also, as before, the bassoonist’s statement of the theme is developed differently than those of the orchestra and includes different melodic material in the tail section that is reinforced by the orchestra. This music also serves as a transition to the next musical material of the “C” section. It is important that the ensemble not retain traditional dynamic balance of a concerto, where the soloist is the most prominently audible line, in sections such as this. After the canonic entrances of the theme the soloist and orchestra blend to create interesting harmonies when they simultaneously play the theme at different pitch levels (see below).

Measures 128-151 are the most dramatic of the “C” section, identifiable by loud chromatic music at the beginning with a new trumpet melody (this is the only instance of this melody), several statements of the D-S-C-H motive by the xylophone and stopped horn, and the head motive from the “C” theme.

63 The score indicates C trumpet, so the pitches appear in the score as D-Eb-C-B.
Example 3.5: “C” Section Theme, Mvt. 1, mm. 96-101.

This section ends with a rhythmically augmented version of “C”, played by the cello, which the bassoon echoes to serve as a lead-in to the third and final recitative of the first movement. This dramatic section is intentionally like a controlled chaos, and statements of each of the different thematic elements need to be clearly identifiable within the ensemble texture. All performers should bring out isolated statements of the D-S-C-H motive throughout the movement, but should refrain from emphasizing statements that are part of a larger melodic gesture in favor of a broader lyrical approach. This interpretation helps to articulate the formal structure defined by lyricism and pointed statements of the D-S-C-H motive.

The section following the final recitative is an extended denouement consisting of musical material from the “A” and “B” sections of the movement. The piece tries to begin again in m. 165, where the “A” music begins but is interrupted by brief recitative-like figures in the bassoon, so that the “A” music cannot fully regain its original momentum. This stop-and-go treatment of the “A” theme, identifiable by repeated iterations of the rising third of the head motive, morphs into a recapitulation of the waltz-theme in m. 175, again played by the clarinet. The flute takes over the waltz theme when
the bassoon begins a snakelike chromatic countermelody in m. 184. The flute, aware of the stylistic nuance from previous iterations of the waltz theme, is a timbre easily heard through the orchestration texture, so the ensemble should balance to the new musical material played by the bassoon. Before a brief codetta of material from the opening cadenza presented in both the orchestral and solo parts, a short unmetered measure stands in place of a recapitulation of the “C” section, and Welcher opts to use the harmony created by sustaining all the pitches of the D-S-C-H motive (with octave displacement) in the vibraphone while the bassoon continues its lyrical recitation (see Example 3.6).

Example 3.6: Unmetered Recitative Accompanied by D-S-C-H Sustain, Mvt. 1, m. 205.

This brief recitative is a unique section within the piece because of its vibraphone accompaniment. The bassoonist will want to wait to enter until the sound of the vibraphone sustain has filled the hall, giving the audience time to reconcile this new
timbre. Similarly, the bassoonist will want to take due time with the fermata. The coda uses the head motive of the opening recitative at its original pitch level—on B—which creates a dominant—tonic relationship between the final recitative and the coda sections, adding a sense of closure to the movement as it ends where it began. The final pitches of the bassoon in the coda are the D-S-C-H motive, fading away into the quiet, dissonant accompaniment. The final pitch in the orchestra—a string sustain—is the same B3 that the bassoon plays at the start of the movement. This gives the movement a sense of having come full-circle without a direct recapitulation of themes.

The second movement of Welcher’s Concerto da Camera is a vivacious scherzo. Key features of this movement are creative incorporation of the D-S-C-H motive, and juxtaposition of scherzando and lyrical lines. The orchestration is primarily light and sparse, and despite the rapid tempo of the ten measure first thematic area “A,” listeners cannot miss obvious statements of the D-S-C-H motive from the onset. The piano is essential to the characterization of the “A” music, seen below, as is the skittering orchestration and hidden scoring of the D-S-C-H which must be brought out of the texture (see Example 3.7). This section rather comically comes to an end on a sustained *forte* low D in the bassoon part, an obvious joke that the bassoonist can exaggerate by articulating as strongly as possible without compromising response, and using a wider than normal vibrato.

Welcher continues the bassoon line in the “B” music with a 7-eighth note figure that is similar in character to the opening of the movement. The quick, light scherzo pattering continues in the bassoon and orchestra parts, and should not become heavy or ponderous.
Example 3.7: “A” section of the Scherzo, Mvt. 2, mm. 1-4.

Beginning in mm. 19, Welcher juxtaposes a lyrical bassoon line that utilizes large melodic leaps and extends through the entire range of the instrument with the lighter pattering that continues in the orchestra. The bassoonist must decide whether to treat the two statements of the lyrical melody as either serious or comical, as Welcher’s only written indication in the score is cantabile. Because of the serious tone of the outer movements of the concerto, a comical treatment of this line seems to balance the moods of the movements and fits well in the context of the scherzo, where the bassoonist exaggerates the extreme changes in register and large leaps, adding crescendo into the low B flat and molto vibrato. The orchestral accompaniment to the first of these soaring bassoon melismas begins with the D-S-C-H motive in retrograde.

The scherzo contains perhaps some of the most virtuosic writing of the piece, though none of the more rapid technical passages in this movement or the piece in its entirety are outside the spectrum of what is attainable by the well-trained bassoonist. One of the most virtuosic bassoon lines in the piece appears in mm. 32-35, after which the orchestra reprises both “A” and “B” material while the bassoonist rests (see Example 3.8).
Example 3.8: Virtuosic Bassoon Writing in the Scherzo, Mvt. 2, mm. 32-35.

The entire concerto contains no extended techniques, not surprising as that trend in bassoon writing was really just coming into fruition, evident in the 1967 publication of Bruno Bartelozzi’s *New Sounds for Woodwinds*. Extended techniques like those would not catch on as a prevalent vein in the bassoon repertoire until the late 1970’s at the earliest. Sofia Gubaidulina’s *Concerto for the Bassoon and Low Strings* (1975) and *Duo Sonata* for two bassoons (1977) are two contemporary pieces of *Concerto da Camera* that utilized Bartelozzi’s techniques. Welcher knew about Bartelozzi’s text, but states “multiphonics, etc., would have sounded ridiculous” in the *Concerto da Camera* because it is a lyrical piece. The true character in a performance of Welcher’s concerto can be found in the lyricism and the expressive quality laden throughout the piece. None of the pieces in this study utilize extended techniques for the bassoon.

The “C” section of the scherzo also involves the juxtaposition of pizzicato and lyrical accompaniment under a new lyrical theme in the bassoon that is stated twice. The second statement dissolves into a transition section that begins in m. 76. This transition is

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64 Personal correspondence with the composer.
65 Burns, 44.
marked by frequent interjections of short, sforzando brass hits with rim-shots in the snare drum. The D-S-C-H motive that appears in the low strings in mm. 90-91 is the signal for the recapitulation of the “A” and “B” sections, each with slightly altered musical material and transposed down a whole step from their first iteration. The performance considerations for these sections can be translated to accompany their respective reprises, again emphasizing comical treatment of material without becoming aggressive in style.

A significant change occurs in m. 125 of the scherzo, where a diminutive rhythmic figure serves as a transition to a metered, accompanied cadenza (see Example 3.9). The highly chromatic transition figure is like a “countdown to the cadenza,” where it first has a duration of six eighths, then five, counting all the way down to one. The ensemble should be aware of this figure, placing a heavier emphasis on the beginning of each gesture in the diminutive figure. After the cadenza, the scherzo movement has a brief coda section that includes pervasive use of the D-S-C-H motive. This motive is stated at various pitch levels and in multiple instruments of the orchestra, occasionally used in canon, in augmentation, and with octave displacement. The coda gradually slows as it comes to a close, as if the motive has become weary and exhausted, and segues into the interlude movement of the concerto.
Example 3.9: Transition “Countdown to the Cadenza,” Mvt. 2, mm. 125-130.

The brief (18 measures total) interlude section is a curious addition to the *Concerto da Camera* and reveals more of Welcher’s capability for expressive, lyrical writing in a dramatic context. He uses material from the opening bassoon recitative at the beginning of the interlude, specifically the now-recognizable head motive of the opening recitative, played by a solo violin (see Example 3.2). The interlude cannot be described as either in “B minor” or “B major” because it is based on a dodecaphonic collection where the most prevalent pitches are B, F#, F, D#, D, and C#. The pitches A# and C are mostly absent in the interlude because they function in relation to B as leading tones and would lead to a more tonally contextualized hearing of the movement. These ambiguous aspects are built into the head-motive of the opening recitative, though Welcher alters it for this section to exclude C for that reason. The dodecaphonic collection creates a serious, dark ethos in the interlude that is in many ways an overarching aspect of the piece as a whole. The interlude would not be complete without a clear iteration of the D-S-C-H motive, as appears in measures 14-15, before another statement of the head motive from the opening bassoon recitative of the first movement.
The third movement of *Concerto da Camera* marks two unique treatments of thematic material within the piece: a single theme pervades much of the movement, and the bassoon introduces new thematic material first, where previously the orchestra marked the first entrances of thematic material. The main theme is the most prevalent musical material of the movement, except for a very fast double fugue for the orchestra that appears mid-movement where the bassoon is tacet. After the bassoon’s statement of the main theme, the orchestra states the same theme paired with a secondary, more scherzando theme. The bassoon adds a third level of counterpoint beginning in m. 38, and it is important that this music (mm. 29-43) be about the interaction between equally important contrapuntal lines, where one theme does not dominate the others.

Example 3.10: Thematic Material in the Finale of *Concerto da Camera*, Mvt. 3, mm. 29-37
Finally, beginning in m. 44 a variation of the main theme returns in the bassoon, accompanied by the D-S-C-H in the orchestra, played by pizzicato strings. Very little of the original main theme music returns in the bassoon part here, but the audience recognizes this as the main theme due to Welcher’s consistent use of the main theme’s head motive at the beginnings of phrases. This motive can be seen in the oboe line (see Example 3.10), characterized by two sixteenth notes that outline a minor second that resembles a DO-TI-DO tonal relationship. In example 3.10, this motive is prolonged with a second statement in the oboe that has a double quaver. Gradually, the orchestra takes over the main theme material as the bassoon reverts back to its melody from the three-theme contrapuntal section previously examined (mm. 29-43). This is not a random choice by Welcher, as the head motive of this music foreshadows the subject of the orchestral double fugue. This confusion and lack of thematic focus is rather anticlimactic and is one of the main revisions made by Welcher in 2006. He altered the musical material just before the double fugue, and added a bassoon line within the fugue, making instances of motivic material more easily recognizable.

The double fugue (mm. 76-133) and its coda (mm. 134-141) are the most virtuosic and most bombastic sections of the entire piece, and sections in which the bassoon does not participate. On the double fugue, Welcher states “When I revised the piece in 2006, I tightened up the fugue in the last movement so that it makes a little bit

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66 Welcher alters the transition to the double fugue in the revised version so that the bassoon line leads into the onset of the fugue, without extra material in the orchestral accompaniment.
67 Welcher alters the double fugue in the revised version so that the bassoon has a few prominent interjections.
more sense. It’s still kind of strange to have two fugues on top of each other, but that part I didn’t take away.”

The fugue subject is seen below in Example 3.11.

Example 3.11: Fugue Subject from Double Fugue, Mvt. 3, mm. 76-79.

The orchestral fugue ends with the bassoon stating the head motive of the main theme from the third movement at a fortissimo dynamic. This is a short codetta to the fugal exposition, where after this exclamation by the bassoon, the orchestra plays a cacophonous descending gesture that ends on a sustained F# in the low strings. This begins the final recitative section of the piece, in m.142. The final recitative states thematic material in the following order: main theme from the finale, “A” material from the first movement, “A” material from the scherzo, “B” material from the scherzo, “C” material from the finale, and music with the intervallic structure that resembles the waltz from the first movement, but which turns out to be a statement of the D-S-C-H motive (mm. 156-157). The bassoonist should clearly emulate the styles of each of these themes from their original statements in context, playing them as if dropping a needle on a record (that just happened to land on the specific grooves in the vinyl which contain major thematic material!). Welcher is specific about his indications of the amount of space he intends between each of these iterations, using different values of rests with or without

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68 Personal correspondence with the composer.
fermatas, and the bassoonist should adhere to his indications in these spots. With so much thematic material from such a lengthy piece, it is important that the audience have time to remember the original context of the themes after they’ve been recapitulated.

The piece ends quietly in a coda that uses the main theme of the third movement, this time paired with the D-S-C-H motive at the very end. This coda begins “on F,” having no harmonic structure other than the DO-TI-DO relationship inherent in the theme, but after a brief swell of activity in mm. 171-172, the piece cadences in F major. The bassoon fades away in two final statements of the head motive of the third movement’s main theme (now actually DO-TI-DO in the new context of F major), while pizzicato strings pluck out the D-S-C-H motive. In F major Welcher’s choice of pitches with which to state the D-S-C-H motive outline ME-MI-DI-DO, which is a tonal progression through minor to major, but still recalls the minor mode with the final half-step resolution.

_Concerto da Camera_ is as much a concerto for the orchestra as it is for bassoon, owing to Welcher’s chamber orchestra scoring with frequent obligato lines for the other woodwinds and strings. The bassoon often represents a lyrical musical character, while the orchestra plays virtuosic music that balances out the lyrical bassoon writing. Several sections of the scherzo are particularly virtuosic for the orchestra, as is the double fugue at the end of the piece. With Welcher’s highly chromatic harmonic language that gravitates freely between tonality and atonality, precise intonation and attention to tone color as it pertains to style is imperative to an effective performance. Performers need to highlight the stylistic nuance of themes and motives due to their nature as the most prevalent formal device, and stylistic unification becomes especially important when
other wind instruments in the orchestra function more soloistically. Often the clarinet is treated as a secondary soloist, but usually fulfills this role when the bassoon is resting, rarely interacting with the bassoon in simultaneity. Otherwise, subtleties in harmonic language and modest changes in motivic material will be lost in the often dense harmonies and polyrhythmic figures without clear statements of obligato lines within the orchestra. Recognition of thematic material—notably head motives of these themes—is essential for the audience perception of form and formal progression in the piece. These too can be lost within a dense harmonic and rhythmic texture, or in the orchestral musician’s unawareness of their importance as thematic material that is not stated by the soloist.

Welcher’s *Concerto da Camera* is a bassoon concerto that exploits the solo instrument in a lyrical manner rather than being a showpiece for virtuosic technique. So often in the orchestral repertoire the bassoon takes on the role of the somber characters, the ugly, magical, or (I’m sorry to have to say) the comical buffoon. The intriguing programmatic aspects of the piece, its unique harmonies and form, stylistic eclecticism, and its practical instrumentation that does not require the bassoon to be amplified make *Concerto da Camera* a strong piece that can withstand the test of time, and one day it may be considered among the most important concerti in the bassoon repertoire.

### 3.3 SURVEY OF RELATED REPertoire

Bassoon concerti written in late 20\textsuperscript{th} Century and early 21\textsuperscript{st} display a wide variety of compositional styles. As mentioned before, Sofia Gubaidulina’s eerie and mysterious *Concerto for the Bassoon and Low Strings* (1975), Jean Françaix’s virtuosic *Concerto*
pour bassoon et 11 instruments à cordes (1979), and Nino Rota’s cinematic-sounding Bassoon Concerto (1977) represent the wide variety of styles in this idiom. John William’s The Five Sacred Trees (1995) and Christopher Theofanidis’s Bassoon Concerto (2002) begin with cadenza-like sections for bassoon alone, much like the recitatives in Welcher’s concerto, though that is perhaps the extent of their similarities. The bassoon concerti of Ray Luke (1965), David Amram (1970), and Nino Rota (1977) are all close contemporaries of Concerto da Camera. While all are markedly different pieces in terms of musical content, they can be grouped together as having a similar style and overall affect. Rota’s concerto69 is relatively the least adventurous and innovative of these pieces in its general adherence to tonal idiom, while Amram’s concerto is the most melodically angular and harmonically dissonant. These pieces represent the dying off of a trend for bassoon concerti with full orchestra, as scoring for less standard ensembles became more prevalent toward the end of the century. Some later concerti do use full orchestra, as do those by Ellen Taaffe Zwillich (1992), Peter Maxwell Davies (1993), and John Steinmetz (2002), whereas Concerto da Camera uses a smaller “chamber orchestra” with strings, a few select winds, piano and percussion. These pieces with full or chamber orchestra are less frequently played then some of their contemporaries, perhaps due to an increasing trend that favors smaller accompanying ensembles. Welcher’s Concerto da Camera represents a middle ground between the extreme changes in preference of style and instrumentation in bassoon concerti of the 20th Century, functioning within the repertoire neither as part of a traditional nor as a new style of concerto, but as a hybrid of

69 Nino Rota’s bassoon concerto is a lesser-known work with catchy themes and cinematic orchestrations. Despite a sizable oeuvre, Rota (1911-1979) is most well-known for his scores for The Godfather and The Godfather Part II. The concerto, composed later in that same decade, has the recognizable zeal of film scores.
the two. By using unique formal constructs, harmonic and rhythmic language, and a smaller ensemble, it can be seen among the frontrunners of new concerti of its time while still retaining many elements of traditional concerti.
CHAPTER 4: THE WIND WON’T LISTEN

4.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAMBER MUSIC OF DAN WELCHER

Dan Welcher has written many chamber pieces that utilize the bassoon. Only one of these, The Wind Won’t Listen for bassoon and string quartet (2002), features the bassoon as a prominent soloist. The analysis in Chapters 4.2 and 4.3 examines a song used as source material, and a chamber piece that displays Welcher’s concerto-like use of the bassoon as a soloist. These two aspects set The Wind Won’t Listen apart from Welcher’s other chamber works with bassoon. Other notable pieces in Welcher’s chamber music oeuvre are his three string quartets and five woodwind quintets, though he has written for various mixed chamber ensembles as well. The woodwind quintets, as well as two mixed chamber pieces that involve the bassoon (Mill Songs: Four Metamorphoses After Schubert for oboe and bassoon, The Moerae: Fantasy for Flute, Oboe, Bassoon and Piano) are discussed in more detail in a survey of Welcher’s other chamber music with bassoon in a subsequent chapter (see Chapter 5: OTHER CHAMBER MUSIC BY DAN WELCHER WITH BASSOON).

His three published string quartets (String Quartet No. 1, Harbor Music, and String Quartet No. 3) are some of Welcher’s best-known chamber works. This fact is most likely due to the commercially available recording of all three of these pieces by
the Cassatt String Quartet. He has explored chamber music with strings in several other works: *Museon Polemos* (2012) for two antiphonal string quartets, Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet, and the previously discussed *The Wind Won’t Listen* for bassoon and string quartet. Welcher notes that chamber music can be more challenging to write than larger ensemble music. For example, he states that *Museon Polemos* was “one of the most difficult pieces to write that I’ve ever experienced.”

From its beginnings in the early 19th Century, the woodwind quintet is among the most common instrumental groupings in chamber music to utilize the bassoon. The piano quintets of Mozart (K. 452, 1784) and Beethoven (Op. 16, 1796) are notable predecessors to the modern wind quintet: they omit the flute, and are for oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon and piano. Much of the early success of the woodwind quintet as a prominent chamber music genre is owed to Anton Reicha (1770-1836), who believed that his quintets would someday be viewed with the same prestige as the highly revered string quartet and other well-established genres. His 24 woodwind quintets were written between 1810-1820, when Reicha would have been in his fifties and had already established a considerable reputation as a progressive composer. Unfortunately, outside those devotees of wind chamber music and the woodwind quintet, to contemporary audiences the works of Reicha are relatively unknown. Reicha’s woodwind quintets and those of Franz Danzi (1763-1826) have been largely forgotten, as are many of the earliest works of this genre. The genre of woodwind quintet continued to grow in popularity

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70 Naxos American Classics recording 8.559384
71 Personal correspondence with the composer.
73 Laing, Millard Myron. “Anton Reicha’s Quintets for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Horn and Bassoon.”
throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries, evident in the quintets by composers such as Paul Hindemith, Carl Nielsen, Samuel Barber, Györgi Ligeti, and Darius Milhaud, who seemed to revive the genre for post-Romantic style.

Welcher has written five pieces for woodwind quintet: Woodwind Quintet No. 1 (1967, rev. 1972), Woodwind Quintet No. 2 (1977), Listen Up! An Introduction to Melody, Harmony, Rhythm, Tone-color, and Counterpoint (1986), Teaching the Wind to Sing (2010), and Spring Music (2015).74 The revised version Woodwind Quintet No. 1 and Woodwind Quintet No. 2 appear in Welcher’s oeuvre during his tenure as principal bassoonist of the Louisville Symphony Orchestra.75 Listen Up!, his third woodwind quintet, is unique and can be seen as both an educational tool and a concert piece in the same vein as Benjamin Britten’s The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra (1946).

While Britten’s work introduces instrumental families and some aspects of musical form, Listen Up! follows a text by author and music critic Ann McCutchan that introduces aspects of basic musicianship: melody, harmony, rhythm, tone-color, and counterpoint. Due to its educational function it uses more traditional harmonies and stylistic gestures than Woodwind Quintet Nos. 1 and 2, though a more detailed exploration will illuminate less traditional elements such as narration by members of the ensemble, Broadway-like vamps, and use of percussion instruments.

Welcher’s most recent woodwind quintets are unpublished at the time of this writing, though Welcher notes that he plans to publish both Teaching the Wind to Sing

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74 Woodwind Quintet No. 1 and 2 and Listen Up! are published by Elkan-Vogel, Inc. and are available for purchase. Teaching the Wind to Sing and Spring Music are currently unpublished, though study scores were provided by the composer for research related to this document.

75 In 1967 Welcher was 19 years old, and an undergraduate at the Eastman School of Music.
(2010) and Spring Music (2015). Teaching the Wind to Sing is a shorter piece than the first three quintets, and has a program derived from a Robert Frost poem. It has more tonal underpinnings than its predecessors, and also contains several aleatoric/ unmetered sections that represent the untamed wind. Spring Music was premiered in March 2015 by faculty members at the University of Texas, and is notably different than Teaching the Wind to Sing. Here Welcher pulls out all the stops by combining elements of polytonality, serialism, and musical quotation and homage to other composers. The program note for Spring Music mentions his experience as a bassoonist playing in woodwind quintets and his admiration for Samuel Barber. Both of these quintets are notably virtuosic.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF SOURCE MATERIAL: WELCHER’S SETTING OF A POEM BY BETH GYLYS

As inspiration and source material for The Wind Won’t Listen, Welcher’s fantasy for bassoon and string quartet (2001), he turned to an unpublished song he had previously composed. Everyone is Crying (2001), Welcher’s setting of the poem “Split,” by Beth Gylys, is scored for mezzo-soprano and piano. His score actually indicates that the song is for “voice” and piano, presumably also able to be performed by a male singer (tenor or high baritone) at the lower octave as the range of the vocal part is only an 11th and does not exceed a high F, well within the range of a tenor. “Split” is published in a 1999 collection of poems by Gylys called Bodies That Hum.76 Welcher’s song is through-composed, more accurately defined by its use of motive and correlating harmonic language than any larger formal sections. Everyone is Crying is an instance where a through-composed form is delineated by pre-existing material—the text—a consideration

76 Gylys, Bodies that Hum, 46.
applicable to many of Welcher’s songs but not to the other pieces in this study. Because of this consideration, harmonic changes take on a more central role in an analysis of the song, as the harmony and motives are all in service of the text. Welcher’s only alteration of the text is an additional statement of the line “they are simply growing” toward the center of the piece, a choice that bears no added formal significance. A complete score of *Everyone is Crying* is included in APPENDIX F.

Harmonic regions in *Everyone is Crying* are characterized by two different hexachords, seen below in Example 4.1, each of which is used in such a way that they have distinct tonal implications. These hexachords are constructed of a similar intervallic structure (two half steps, two whole steps, and two minor thirds). A harmonic analysis of this song must account for areas constructed using hexachords. Only then can the function of pitches in these sections be labelled in a more traditional manner to show instances of appoggiatura, passing tones, et. al in both the melody and accompaniment.

Example 4.1: Hexachord collections from *Everyone is Crying*.

![Hexachord collections from *Everyone is Crying*](image)

Welcher leaves out certain pitches of the hexachords (mm. 1-2) and uses octave displacement (m. 3) to create harmonies that reflect the feeling of anguish and uncertainty in the song’s text. His choice of pitches and scoring are specific due to the combinatorial value of the two hexachords, which share four common pitches and could easily lose their distinction as separate harmonies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Harmonic Device</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Hexachords A and B</td>
<td>“Everyone I know is crying”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Shifting major/minor chords</td>
<td>“Why do I do this?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-20</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Hex. A and B</td>
<td>“Neither will these two birds”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Cascading major chords</td>
<td>“They neither hover…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>A’</td>
<td>Hex. A and B, sequencing</td>
<td>“They are simply growing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-33</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Cascading major chords</td>
<td>“Don’t let me tell you how”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-38</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Bitonality</td>
<td>“And a boy…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-41</td>
<td>B’</td>
<td>Shifting chords with Wind Won’t Listen motive</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-44 (end)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Hex. A and B</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1: Form Diagram of *Everyone is Crying*. (See Chapter 4.2 for detailed information on harmonic devices).
Each hexachord is commonly stated within the context of its own recurrent motive (see Example 4.2). This correlation between hexachord collection and motive allow the motives to be identified as being within the harmonic area of its hexachord.

Example 4.2: Use of Hexachord Collections in *Everyone is Crying*, mm. 4-6 (non-hexachord tones shown in parentheses).

Welcher uses two other notable harmonic devices in *Everyone is Crying*: (i) groups of triads that continually change quality, rarely pausing at length on a major- or minor-sounding sonority, and (ii) a succession of major chords that descends the range of an entire octave, chromatically (See example 4.3). Both of these devices are a means of text painting. The groups of triads represent the ambiguity present in the text “Everyone I know is crying, or should be crying,” as if those who are not crying (but should be) are represented by the fleeting major sounds, tinged with overcast gloominess. The falling major chords seem to depict the idea of growth without true change from the text “they [the naked tree branches] are simply growing.” The poem’s speaker is depicting in this section a rather banal existence combined with feelings of confusion and uncertainty. The entire text of the poem has an air of detachment, which gives greater
meaning to Welcher’s evocative choice of harmonic language and non-traditional use of the tonal idiom.

Example 4.3: Cascading major triads in *Everyone is Crying*, mm. 23-25.

Welcher uses a harmonically ambiguous language in the song’s “D” section, a treatment that sets this section apart from the rest of the song. This text-painting is a reflection of the suspended feeling implied by the text “And a boy bounces his bright red ball along the sidewalk, not quite one of us” where the speaker is observing life without having an emotional reaction. The piano sustains G minor followed by A minor in this section, each with the dissonance of a major seventh added. Triplets in the extreme high register of the piano do not function within the tonal underpinning, but simply add colorful chromatic filigree that floats over melody and piano sustain. The melody in the voice part is tonally ambiguous, outlining minor thirds that suggest either major or minor key inflection. Both a major and minor reading of these melodic gestures functions as a dissonance to the underlying sustains in the piano, which creates a feeling of uneasiness for the listener.
4.3 THE WIND WON’T LISTEN FOR BASSOON AND STRING QUARTET (2002)

The Wind Won’t Listen joins Concerto da Camera as one of the two pieces in Welcher’s oeuvre that features the bassoon as a soloist. Both share common traits, even with one being a concerto and the other a piece of chamber music. These are serious, lyrical pieces for the bassoon, an instrument which Welcher describes as a “highly expressive, poetic soul.”\(^{77}\) A focus on the expressive quality of the bassoon in The Wind Won’t Listen is to be expected when one considers Welcher’s choice of source material, examined previously in Chapter 4.1. Both pieces were written for and dedicated to bassoonists: the Concerto da Camera as a gift to Leonard Sharrow and The Wind Won’t Listen as the product of a commission by Steven Dibner, bassoonist in the San Francisco Symphony. An informed performance of The Wind Won’t Listen rests on the understanding of Welcher’s use of two forms, arch form and theme-and-variations form, and an understanding of his treatment of thematic elements derived from the source material. The performer should also recognize specific instances of quotation and homage to composer Richard Wagner. Finally, two areas of rhythmic concern are significant: isorhythmic passages and use of simultaneous meter. The harmonic language of The Wind Won’t Listen is highly chromatic, and is addressed as it relates to these larger formal elements.

The Wind Won’t Listen is a two-movement work with a seamless transition between movements. Welcher refers to the form of the first movement as a “loose formal arch structure of A—B—C—B—A.”\(^{78}\) The beginning and ending sections of this

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\(^{77}\) Program note from The Wind Won’t Listen.

\(^{78}\) Program note for The Wind Won’t Listen.
### 1st Movement – Romanza

“Everyone I Know is Crying”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
<th>Trans.</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Cadenza</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Lamenting music</td>
<td>Accel. “Unsettled” music begins</td>
<td>“Unsettled” music; motor figure</td>
<td>“Pathetic” music; pizz. strings</td>
<td>“Unsettled” music; 2/4 meter</td>
<td>2/2 meter (bsn.), 2/4 meter (stgs.)</td>
<td>Tristan Quote</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2nd Movement – Recitative and Variations

“Life makes itself without us”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
<th>Meter</th>
<th>Intro.</th>
<th>Recit.</th>
<th>Var. 1</th>
<th>Var. 2</th>
<th>Trans.</th>
<th>Var. 3</th>
<th>Trans.</th>
<th>Var. 1 Recap.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Pizz. Strings</td>
<td>Violin 1 and Bassoon recit.</td>
<td>Isorhythm</td>
<td>Motor figure</td>
<td>Homorhythmic strings; isorhythmic bsn. motor figure</td>
<td>Spontaneous recap. of Var. 2, Var. 3; Isorhythm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2: Form Diagram of *The Wind Won’t Listen.*
movement are marked by interesting, often dissonant harmonies that accompany a lyrical melody in the bassoon part, referred to as the “lamenting music” by Welcher. The melody is truly lamenting (Welcher even indicates “singing mournfully” in the score), and contains many downward intervallic leaps and a gesture of a rising major second characteristic of sighing motives (see example 4.4). It floats over the dissonant harmonies in the accompaniment that seem pointedly banal, sinking below or rising above the original pitch collection of (C#-C-G-E). This collection of pitches is tonally suggestive when viewed as a major chord in open orchestration with a minor ninth voiced below, seemingly unresolved to the nearby C and suggestive of the simultaneous statement of C major and C# dim. triads. These collections are derived from the hexachord collections that serve as the harmonic basis for much of Welcher’s song Everyone is Crying (see Example 4.1) that inspired the piece, and programmatically reflect the detached, stagnant mood of the text. They are very similar to the opening piano part of the song, and remain relatively unchanged in an ostinato-like manner under the bassoon and violin duet (see Example 4.5 and 4.6).

The accompaniment in these sections often contains tonal implications, but it is as if Welcher has consciously avoided a correlation between the bassoon’s melody and the accompaniment. This choice uses dissonance to maximize the effect of an uneasy mood. The bassoon is primarily the highest pitched voice in the texture of these sections, as all of the strings are scored low in their respective tessituras. The “A” music is heavily

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79 Ibid.
Example 4.4: Juxtaposition of Opening Melodies from *Everyone is Crying* and *The Wind Won’t Listen*.

Bassoon

Voice

Ev’ry-one I know is crying

Ev’ry-one— I know is (passionately)

Bsn.

Voice

crying, or should be crying

mf
Example 4.5: Opening Measures of *The Wind Won’t Listen*, mm. 1-4.

Example 4.6: Opening Measures of *Everyone is Crying*, mm. 1-2.
peppered with a sighing motive in either of two iterations, an upward and/or downward gesture, both of which accompany the word “crying” in the original song. These should be played with a stress—release inflection, where the first pitch has more agogic accent than the second. The sigh motive also serves as a formal device in the transition between “A” and “B” sections, and functions programmatically to increasingly communicate the idea of “crying.” While the beginning of the “A” section primarily progresses with a steady, slow quarter note pulse, in m. 12 the sigh motive increases the awareness of the simple division of the beat. At m. 24 an accelerando begins, so the eighth note division of the beat speeds up, eventually becoming a sixteenth subdivision in m. 28. This sixteenth note subdivision will become a motor rhythm for the faster “B” section that follows. The effect works well with the program of the piece, because the lamenting section is filled with an increasingly pervasive “crying” gesture that speeds up and become more insistent as the section progresses. This multi-faceted accelerando should be as seamless as possible.

The “B” section, marked “unsettled,” is characterized by a motor rhythm figure passed between two instruments, often the viola and the second violin as seen below in Example 4.7.
Example 4.7: Motor Figure from B Section, mm. 33-35.

This motor figure is largely a product of the accelerando that appears at the end of the “A” music, and combined with the opening melody in the cello’s high register creates the feeling of uneasiness and urgency that characterizes this section. This music is also complimented by glissando between string harmonics that cry out above the rest of the texture. As the cello melody and first violin harmonics subside, the audience has a chance to once again grasp onto the motive, but Welcher abruptly interrupts with a brief double canon of two figures (mm. 46-49), the cello and second violin playing *sul ponticello* and the viola and first violin *pizzicato*. This canon, at the quarter note, temporarily confuses the listener and serves as bridge material between the first two statements of “B” music. The ostinato in its original form quickly regains importance, though *sul pont.* interjections become more frequent as the section progresses. Occasionally Welcher
offsets the motor figure to the second beat of the 2/4 measures, as in m. 72-78, which creates a structural dissonance and moments of increased rhythmic complexity. To maximize these effects, it is important that the performers strictly abide by and exaggerate Welcher’s indication of written accents (>) and Bartok pizzicato. Finally, Welcher transposes everything up a whole step (m. 64) in a shift not unlike that of the opening accompaniment figure of the “A” section, a technique Welcher uses frequently in this piece and others. The change is announced here by the bassoon playing a fortissimo pedal low D. Welcher changes the orchestration so that the motor figure is scored in the first violin and cello, then passed to the second violin and viola as before (mm. 72-77), then to the two violins (mm. 78-85). Intervals of a major second become increasingly prominent throughout this shifting orchestration, which creates harmonic tension between those and the motor figure, which is constructed of a prolongation of a minor second then a minor third.

Throughout the entire section the string quartet should try to pass the motor figure as seamlessly as possible while remaining subsidiary to the bassoon’s melody. The most interesting parts of the “B” music are when the motor figure is changed or veiled by other musical material. The section ends in an 11-measure wash of continuous sixteenth notes (mm. 92-102) followed by a stark, sustained A in the bassoon that serves as a bridge to the “C” section. This A could be treated as a quasi-fermata to emphasize the sudden lack of musical motion. It should be noted that while the bassoon part contains moments of virtuosity in the “B” section, the string parts are much more technically demanding.

The “C” section music (mm. 104-130) is lighter and at a more relaxed tempo than the “B” music that surrounds it, where a more playful bassoon line is accompanied by
pizzicato strings. Welcher’s bassoon writing is highly idiomatic, often utilizing broad melodic gestures that span multiple octaves and a vast array of articulations and colors. Measures 104-109 are written in triple meter, which is heard in the bassoon, but the viola/cello accompaniment reflects an ever changing metric pulse. This metric duality reflects how the character of the poem continues through life in a removed state of existence, seemingly unaware of the changes happening around him/her. It is important that the string players bring out the implied meters in these measures to show this programmatic relationship, and the bassoon melody should be inflected to bring out the written meter. Accents are written in the viola part, and the cellist should accentuate the three low F’s, even though are already structurally more accented as the lowest and first pitches of the figures. The shifting metric groupings are shown below in a reduced score (see Example 4.8). This is a section where the performers can take advantage of a lighter musical style, playing less aggressively to achieve a more whimsical mood. This contrast makes the “C” music unique to the more urgent music that surrounds it. The bassoonist can choose to employ rubato within the triple meter, but the subsidiary string accompaniment should remain steady.

At the end of this section the bassoon descends to a low B-flat pedal, which underscores a frenetic figure (mm. 131-134) derived from material from mm. 92-93, transposed down a whole step. Welcher uses this arco figure as a transition to increase the significance of the sudden change back to the louder, faster “B” music, characterized by the motor figure as before, though when it begins in m. 137 it is at a pitch level an augmented second higher than its first iteration in m. 33.
Example 4.8: Metric Duality in *The Wind Won't Listen*, mm. 103-110.

This is a pitch level that the motor figure had previously gravitated around (with presentations on G, A and B#, and an inversion on A) but had never been presented in. This iteration of the motor figure is perceptually more significant because it is the first time that the pitch of the accompanying bassoon pedal is the same as the first pitch of the motor figure (B flat/A sharp); previously, the bassoon pedal was a fifth lower. Unison and fifth drones are both examples of Welcher’s tonal underpinnings, but the unison pitch has more of a punch. “I’ll do that with a pedal note, an open fifth on the bottom” states
Welcher, “or something so that even if the rest of the music sounds completely serialized or otherwise not tonal, one still feels like it has a sense of root.”

Welcher adds formal impact to the beginning of what is essentially an uneasy, energized-but-quiet recap by beginning the bassoon pedal and the motor figure simultaneously in the “B” recapitulation, not waiting until after the motor figure picks up momentum to sound the drone as in previous iterations. The effect he creates is like a cannonball into a swimming pool, where the waves and splash created at m. 131 slowly dissipate the further they move from the center of the impact, grounded by the bassoon’s pedal B flat. This arrival should have as much accent as can be added (by all instruments) without distorting the tone or employing rubato. A major difference in the “B” material in its recapitulation is seen at m. 152, where two simultaneous meter signatures (bassoon 2/2, strings 2/4) are employed. The bassoon’s broad 2/2 meter highlights Welcher’s lyrical, expressive writing in the tenor register of the instrument. The accompaniment, now in harmonics with occasional interjections of the motor figure, maintains its established level of energy in the 2/4 meter. Here the metric duality is similarly programmatic to the “C” music, as the bassoon continues a song-like figure even amidst the energized activity around it. Each instance of the motor figure in the closing of the “B” recap is at a lower pitch level (G, F#, and F, respectively), a descent which implies a feeling of despair.

An accompanied cadenza (mm. 182-189) serves as a transition back to the “A” music in Welcher’s “formal arch structure.” The harmonies in the accompaniment are

80 Personal correspondence with the composer.
very dramatic, comprised of mostly triads with both major and minor thirds and, notably, the so-called Tristan chord borrowed from Richard Wagner’s Prelude to Tristan and Isolde. This drama is mostly built into the harmonic association of the Tristan chord (m. 182, 185) and the melodic lead-in beginning three measures prior in the cello voice. The Tristan chord is perhaps the pinnacle cliché of unresolved yearning and indecision in the Western canon. This device is programmatically appropriate to the emotional world of The Wind Won’t Listen when considering the original source material of Everyone is Crying, and functions well as underscoring to the bassoon’s cadenza where most of the melodic pitches grind against the sustained chord. The bassoonist should not rush through the first rising gesture in m. 182, and should bring out dissonances, rising to D3 with marked intensity. Only after this ascent should the tempo and intensity be relaxed allowing the rubato to reflect the melodic consonance. Interestingly, Welcher doesn’t follow the Tristan chord with the same subsequent harmony as Wagner (see example 4.9). It would be convenient to say that Welcher “doesn’t resolve the Tristan chord in the same manner as Wagner,” but the definitive characteristic of the Tristan chord is its failure to resolve. Perhaps a better way of saying this is that Welcher resolves the chord differently, but with an effect similar to Wagner’s: a feeling of painful incompletion. Welcher leads instead to an Am/C# chord in both appearances of the Tristan chord.

Moving to a chord that is simultaneously major and minor (instead of the more Wagnerian, seemingly sine qua non resolution to a dominant seventh chord with appoggiatura) allows the feeling of prolonged dissonance and lack of resolution to continue through the cadenza. The bassoonist should not relax the intensity, but to push through the end of measure as the G# creates tension by adding a major seventh to a
chord that is already both major and minor. This G# also functions with the first violin part to create a lovely melodic suspension at the end of the measure.

Example 4.9: Wagner’s and Welcher’s Treatments of the *Tristan* Chord.

Measures 184-186 mark a continuation of the *Tristan* quote, and the bassoonist should emphasize the first seven pitches of m. 184 in order to maximize the tension created by melodic dissonance and high register, relaxing intensity and perhaps reflecting more of Welcher’s indication of *meno f* only upon the arrival of the C#3. The third pitch of this quarter note triplet (A) is the beginning of the melodic lead-in to another *Tristan* chord in m. 185, so the bassoonist would be wise to employ rubato in withholding the arrival on the downbeat of m. 185. This way, the audience knows another *Tristan* chord is coming and can experience the whole gesture, rather than retrospectively identifying it as a second *Tristan* quote only after the arrival at the chord. Use of rubato by the bassoonist will also give contextual purpose to the indicated breath mark in the string parts, because the brief lift allows focus on the *Tristan* melody and adds accent and emphasis to the second *Tristan* chord by putting space before it.

The final section of the cadenza (mm. 186-188) involves a prolongation of the A min./C# chord. This chord is perhaps more easily expressed as [0347] due to its lack of tonal context, though considering its use as the “resolution” of the *Tristan* chord, it makes
more sense to highlight the dissonance between major and minor sounding simultaneously by referencing tonal implications. The head motive in the bassoon part in m. 188 (seen below in Example 4.10) is remarkably similar to the horn call from the opening section of Claude Debussy’s *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*. This gesture functions much in the same annunciatory fashion as Debussy’s, in this case heralding the recapitulation of the lamenting “A” music.  

Example 4.10: Bassoon Cadenza in *The Wind Won’t Listen*, m. 188.

The bassoonist can maximize the effect of the three separate segments to call attention to its relationship to the “A” music by taking extra time between the different parts and adding dynamic nuance to each. The first and third segments contain the same intervallic structure as the *Everyone is Crying* head motive from the beginning of the movement, and the second statement is more hesitant and removed, as if to question the return statement of the head motive. The bassoonist should employ crescendo in the head motive (and its lead-in), and play *subito pianissimo* in the second statement with a more veiled tone color.  

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81 Welcher’s quote of Wagner (and perhaps unintentional nod to Debussy) is not a lone instance of quote in his music, though overtly referencing other composers in this manner seems to be a later stylistic trend in his music, whereas *Concerto da Camera* was more of an homage. Another prominent example is in String Quartet #3, where he quotes two French composers: two selections from Gounod’s *Faust* in the second movement and the song “Green” from Debussy’s *Ariettes Oubliées* in the third movement.
The recapitulation of the “A” music is more emotionally removed than that of the first measures of the movement because Welcher uses an inversion of the orchestration, which places the strings at a pitch level two octaves higher and the bassoon in a lower register. This change in orchestration is effective for conveying what Welcher marks as “Tempo I, but as if from a great distance.” The texture becomes a more open scoring in m. 196, designated here as “very sweetly” in the first violin part. The effect is that the recapitulation of “A” sounds more fleeting and exhausted than the original statement, which has a feeling of trepidation and passionate lament. At m. 196 the string players should make a distinction in their articulation from the pointed attack of the accents to a more gentle attack when Welcher indicates accent with tenuto. The bassoonist should avoid a strident sounding tone color in this section.

The second movement of The Wind Won’t Listen, “Life makes itself without us,” is a theme-and-variations that begins without pause after the first movement. The initial statement of the theme occurs in a recitative—duet for bassoon and first violin, and is subjected to variation in three “dances.” Each of these variations is characterized by complex rhythmic writing, using rhythmic devices such as metric duality, isorhythm, motor figures, and other intricate rhythmic figures. The primary thematic material in the second movement is also from Everyone is Crying, seen below in Example 4.11.

The opening measures of the second movement begin with softly plucked chords that grow to fortissimo before gradually dying away. A traditional harmonic analysis.

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82 The Wind Won’t Listen score, 25.
would be rife with labels that include B11, A11/C#, Dm13 (maj7), and a chord that includes all the pitches of a G major triad and F7 chord combined!

Example 4.11: Thematic material use in 2nd movement of The Wind Won’t Listen; “Life makes itself without us” from Everyone is Crying, mm.31-33.

However, it is not helpful to classify this recitative—duet using the chord symbols above, traditional Roman numeral analysis, or serial composition because the harmony is a product of programmatic writing. Instead, it is most appropriate to describe this section as “chromatic harmony that becomes increasingly dissonant as the section progresses.” The tonal underpinning of this section lies in the framework of the “Life makes itself without us” melody that the movement is based upon, which is constructed using the first tetrachord of a minor scale (see Example 4.11, m. 33). Also, the recitative section ends in a harmonic area “on E” with a sustained E4 in the first violin part creating a dominant—tonic relationship with the opening of the following section which is A minor-like. About the chord progression that opens the second movement, Welcher states: “I took the last chord of the first movement, changed a note one at a time, and allowed the chord to morph toward a new region.” The violin and bassoon writing over these chords is in a singing quality, though the preponderance of accents, forte dynamic, and overall lack of
slur/legato in both voices is representative of a more painfully emotional, raw style of singing, a style that is programmatic effective when examined with the text of the poem. This opening section (mm. 1-22) is marked as “recitative” by Welcher, though it is clearly more metrically regular than traditional operatic recitative and should be played in a steady tempo. The bassoonist and solo violinist should attempt to channel their most angry and aggressive style of playing. It is appropriate in this dramatic style for the violinist to add no dynamic inflection, remaining *piu forte* throughout until the bassoon enters in m. 11. Welcher makes a distinction between accent (>) and tenuto (−) markings in the bassoon part, and the bassoonist should differentiate between the two by playing the accents with heavier articulation of the tongue and playing the tenuto by employing rubato. These markings do not delineate a particular note length, as both bassoonist and violinist should play in a *sostenuto* style. In m. 16 the soloists can begin to add dynamic nuance that reflects the melodic contour of the lines, as well as a sensitivity to the other member of the duet.

As Welcher writes in his program note, the following section is a “set of variations [that] consists of three dances, each faster than the previous.”

There are two prominent aspects about the first of these variations: the meter of 5/8+3/4 (where 5/8 is almost ubiquitously stated as 2+3 eighths) outlined by a rhythmic ostinato figure (see Example 4.12) and the new, strikingly simple harmonic language of the movement. Welcher uses a repeating eight-measure phrase structure—with occasional truncations and extensions—that balances out the irregularity of the meter. These phrases are the prominent structural element of this variation, keeping with the idea of regularity in

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83 Program note from The Wind Won’t Listen.
dance forms. Phrasing concerns in performance should default to symmetrical structures and changes in the accompaniment harmony. Also related is Welcher’s simplified treatment of texture and the harmonic stability of the passages. The texture is primarily a melody-dominated and homophonic, and the accompaniment ostinatos usually remain in the same harmonic area for the entire phrase, which is unlike previous sections in *The Wind Won’t Listen*.

Example 4.12: Rhythmic Ostinato (strings) and Thematic Material (bassoon) from Mvt. 2, Var. 1, mm. 29-32.

The progression of harmonic areas is A minor, B flat minor, E major, and B minor. Welcher’s choice of harmony (which is not to say “key areas,” though these are highly “key-like”) seems more practical than systematic, because he keeps the rhythmic ostinato in an accessible register for the string instrumentalists and is able to have the bassoon melody remain in an easily perceptible register of the homophonic texture so dynamic balance is not an issue. The consistently tight orchestration of this variation allows Welcher to create a textural contrast with the second variation, which begins with a more widely spaced orchestration scored in a higher tessitura of the strings. In each variation the theme is introduced first in the solo part, rather than a different voice in the
accompaniment voices. This happens in each of the variations shortly after the new dance style has been established in the strings. This treatment is different from the Concerto da Camera, where new prominent thematic material is usually introduced in the ensemble and subsequently in the solo part. The first variation is also the lightest texture in the piece; Welcher writes a melody in one voice and uses two instruments to articulate the ostinato figure, a texture that remains through the introduction and first two complete phrases of the variation. Viola and cello can maximize the effect of the lighter texture by playing less aggressively, and the bassoon should consider the lighter texture when interpreting Welcher’s dynamic indications as balance is not an issue in this section. The music naturally gains excitement as the violins are added in m. 47, and at this point the performers should play with more vivacity.

The second variation is rhythmically complex. It is notated with a time signature of 3/8 (felt in one), but the form of the variation is often dictated by instances of isorhythm and hypermeter. These metric intricacies are much more complex than a Brahmsian interplay between related meters like 3/4 and 6/8 or simultaneous use of duple and triple meter, as is so often seen in much late Romantic repertoire. Welcher superimposes an isorhythmic figure that is ten eighths in duration over a characteristic 3/8 melody, and what results are two 10-measure sections in 3/8 meter that are trisected by groups of ten eighth notes. For an informed performance of this section, performers must be aware of the formal structure created by the isorhythmic grouping (See Example 4.13 and Figure 4.3).
Example 4.13: Isorhythmic Grouping as Structural Device, mm. 63-72.

The ostinato should be easily perceived in groupings of 3+3+4 eighth notes, while still retaining the integrity of the other metric groupings: 3/8 in the cello and hypermetric 3/4 in the bassoon. The resulting dissonance created between the ostinato and 3/8 meter increases the significance of the bassoon entrance, which is a lead-in that climaxes on the downbeat of what would be a third 10-measure grouping. Here, Welcher writes a two-measure extension, poignantly adding an exclamation point to the metric dissonance by superimposing a measure of 3/4 over two measures of 3/8, after which the interplay between these figures begins anew (See Example 4.14). The string players should accent the downbeats in mm. 83-84 to emphasize the hemiola with the bassoon. All players
should continue the crescendo through these two measures to ensure that the downbeat of m. 85 sounds as a true arrival at a new formal section.

One of the most exciting moments in the second movement of *The Wind Won’t Listen* is in the second dance at m. 122, in a sudden change to an aggressive homorhythmic figure in the string accompaniment. It is this moment that begins both the climax of the second dance/variation as well as a transition to the third dance. Measures 122-131 are perhaps the most intense section of the entire movement and can be described in traditional harmonic terms as an F minor chord with added G and C#. This section utilizes bitonality to create programmatic tension, combining F minor-like harmonies in the strings and statement of the now familiar “life makes itself without us” motive in the bassoon in a G minor framework, reinforced by the open G string sounding in the first violin (see Example 4.15).

Welcher uses a thick orchestration of percussively-articulated double stops, many pitches of which are open strings, to help create drama. The tonal implications of the string accompaniment add tension to the melody line, which climbs to a screaming high D flat in the bassoon part and then cascades to a low E in m. 134. D flat is a dissonance in both keys, making the D flat in the bassoon in measures 129-130 a point of dramatic focus for the bassoonist. Upon the bassoon’s arrival on a low E the strings begin a more subdued version of the double-stop figure seen previously, and the 3/8 cello melody that was previously layered with the isorhythmic ostinato returns briefly, this time unhindered by metric layering. The bassoon echoes the same melody in canon beginning in the next measure (m. 137), rhythmically augmented at three times the durational value of the cello.
Example 4.15: Bitonality in the Climax of the Second Variation, mm. 122-131.

The music that appears between mm. 145 and 154 is transitional material that bridges the second and third variations. This music is clearly in the key area of C minor, and is a more tonal reinforcement of the percussive climax and ending to the second variation. It also serves as a preface to the third variation, which is also in a harmonic area that is very close to C minor. The intensity continues to increase despite the less dissonant harmonies due to an accelerando and change from fortissimo to pianissimo dynamic. The tonal transition is a way for Welcher to gradually move from the highly chromatic harmony of the second variation to the more tonal third variation.

The third and last variation in the second movement is very fast, and introduces a new theme from the song *Everyone is Crying*. This theme is the climax and namesake of the entire piece, because the text that accompanies this melody in the song is “Why do I do this? The wind won’t listen” (see Example 4.16).
Example 4.16: “Why do I do this?” Motive from Everyone is Crying, mm. 11-13.

An informed performance of this variation will highlight all three themes from Everyone is Crying while maintaining the energy of the “scurrying” sixteenth note ostinato that is almost omnipresent throughout the variation (see Example 4.17). The first two entrances of the bassoon in this variation (in mm. 163 and 178, respectively) are ostinato figures that reflect meters that oppose the written 2/4. The first of these ostinatos reflects a meter of 7/8, while the second is in 9/8. These ostinatos are paired with new or transformed thematic material in the string parts, as seen below with an inversion of the “life makes itself without us” motive. In these instances, the soloist is subsidiary to the strings.

The quiet climax of the second movement—and perhaps the entire piece—happens in m. 210, where the “the wind won’t listen” theme appears in the violins, played in octaves. It is interesting that the climax of the piece is both quiet and does not showcase the bassoon, and important that violinists be aware that they have the theme (see Example 4.18). The scurrying sixteenth note motor figure that is passed between string instruments throughout much of the third variation moves to the bassoon a few
Example 4.17: Ostinato and Thematic Development in Mvt. 2, mm. 163-167.

Example 4.17:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bassoon</th>
<th>Violin I</th>
<th>Violin II</th>
<th>Viola</th>
<th>Cello</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

measures prior, where it remains during the entirety of the statement of the “the wind won’t listen” theme. The bassoon only plays this theme once—in mm. 275-279 during the recapitulation of the first variation—not at all during the third variation. The pitches of the melody in the violins are the same as those used in *Everyone is Crying*, though it is harmonized differently in *The Wind Won’t Listen*, as Welcher uses the characteristic simultaneous major/minor combination that is prevalent throughout the piece.

The broad 3/2 meter that begins in m. 210 reflects the soaring, song-like quality of the melody. The “why do I do this…” motive in the violins is laden with tonal implication: first the outline of a minor third, followed by an appoggiatura figure that winds around D minor but cadences on the minor sixth of D and F# implying duality of major and minor modes. (See Example 4.18, m. 214). Polytonal treatment of motives continues in the return statement of the “Everyone I know is crying” motive in the
Example 4.18: “Why do I do this?” motive in violins, mm. 210-214.

Bassoon beginning in m. 216, which grinds dissonantly against the pitches of the “Why do I do this” motive in the violins. These motives occur concurrently, and the viola and cello should remain *sotto voce* in the texture.

The end of the second movement of *The Wind Won’t Listen* is a combination of new thematic material and recapitulations of material from each of the variations of the
second movement, respectively. This section functions more like an introspective coda than a finale. The absence of the murmuring sixteenth notes in two seemingly endless measures (m. 230-231) cues the audience to an upcoming formal change, which in m. 232 they recognize as the beginning of a recapitulation of the first variation. The pitch level of the recapitulation is a major sixth lower than the first iteration of this material, outlining a C minor-like tonal area. This section feels much more “grounded” than its first statement, in part due to Welcher’s choice of a lower pitch level and because the cello can now play on open strings. Whereas in the first variation Welcher punctuates the area between phrases of the bassoon theme with small sections of the melody played in a string voice, during the recap he uses this space to “spontaneously” bring back material from the other two variations. The scurrying sixteenth note figure is frantically passed between the violins (played *sul ponticello*) and pointedly plucked out in the viola in an augmentation of twice the rhythmic duration (eighth notes). These spontaneous recapitulations are in mm. 244-245 and 256-257, respectively, and the string players must immediately revert to the style of those variations to maximize the effect of the gestures.

It is programmatically essential that the bassoonist *not* react to this stylistic change while holding the sustained pitches, much like the speaker in the text of “Everyone is Crying” is in a removed state from the changes in life around him/her (See Example 4.19).

The final measures of *The Wind Won’t Listen* reflect the text of the poem “Split” by using metric duality. Beginning in m. 271, the written meter is 3/4, but the viola and cello continue in the 5/8+3/4 pattern that they have already been playing in. The violins, as a duo, articulate a meter of 3/4 that begins on the upbeat of the written meter. The performers should bring out these implied meters.
The bassoon, which also begins on the upbeat for added metric ambiguity, plays the “Why do I do this?” motive over the 5/8+3/4 pattern. Just as this motive in the bassoon ends, the violins change to a 2/4 pattern that simplifies the metric dissonance to a basic 2-against-3 hemiola pattern (see Example 4.20). As the bassoon sustains its final pitch the viola-cello ostinato begins again, this time plucking out four measures of the 5/8 section of the pattern. The piece ends with a loud pizzicato D minor (major seventh) chord in the viola and cello which is an effectively poignant close to the piece. It is important that the performers play this music with extreme precision and regard to meter and harmony. The metric changes in this final section are forward-looking in a programmatic sense. They display how, even amidst turmoil and uncertainty in life, things tend to sort themselves out and move from complex to simple as time progresses. The harmony displays a similar sense of closure by finally coming to rest in D minor, in both the bassoon’s statement of the “Why do I do this?” motive and the accompaniment. Poignantly, D minor is slightly marred by a persistent C#. This slight dissonance created by the addition of a major seventh to D minor is a reminder of the turbulent past: while it may fade with time, it can never completely disappear.

4.4 SURVEY OF RELATED REPERTOIRE

Scoring for a solo woodwind instrument with string quartet has become increasingly popular today, and has roots that extend back more than a century. Of all the woodwinds, the bassoon is perhaps under-represented in this genre, having been utilized less with strings than other woodwind instruments such as the clarinet, which received favorable treatment by Brahms and other composers.
Example 4.19: Variation 3 appears within Variation 1 Recapitulation, mm. 242-247.
Example 4.20: Programmatic Use of Metric Duality in the Final Section of *The Wind Won’t Listen*, mm. 273-281.
Welcher’s *The Wind Won’t Listen* is one of the most notable contemporary pieces for bassoon and string quartet. Other works include Jean Francaix’s *Divertissement*, Miguel del Aguila’s *Nostalgica*, Bill Douglas’s *Celebration V*, Willard Elliot’s *Poem* and *Quintet*, and Gordon Jacob’s *Suite*.

A related genre uses the bassoon in place of the first violin in a string quartet (bassoon/violin/viola/cello). “Bassoon quartets” have roots in the 18th century with Johann Stamitz’s (1717-1757) op. 19 quartets (nos. 5-6), Franz Anton Pfeiffer’s (1752-1787) ten quartets for this instrumentation, and similar quartets by Franz Danzi, François Devienne, and François Rene Gebauer. Of these composers, many were also bassoonists, though in the 20th Century “bassoon quartets” had fallen by the wayside of the more favored string quartet and small string orchestra by most composers. A notable exception to this change in instrumentation are the “bassoon quartets” by prominent 20th Century bassoonist Bernard Garfield, who played in the Philadelphia Orchestra for more than 40 years.
CHAPTER 5: SURVEY OF WELCHER’S OTHER CHAMBER MUSIC WITH BASSOON

5.1 OTHER CHAMBER MUSIC BY DAN WELCHER WITH BASSOON

While *The Wind Won’t Listen* is a chamber piece that uses a previously composed song used as source material and features the bassoon as a prominent soloist, seven other chamber works by Welcher utilize the bassoon in a lesser capacity. These are his five woodwind quintets (Woodwind Quintet Nos. 1 and 2, *Listen Up! A Guide to Melody, Harmony, Rhythm, Tone-Color and Counterpoint, Teaching the Wind to Sing*, and *Spring Music*) and two mixed chamber pieces (*Mill Songs: Four Metamorphoses After Schubert* for oboe and bassoon, and *The Moerae: Fantasy for Flute, Oboe, Bassoon and Piano*). A survey of these seven pieces highlights important aspects that are relevant to preparing an informed performance of each. This survey is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis or comprehensive performance guide, but rather shows interesting elements of Welcher’s compositional style that may be different from those seen in *Concerto da Camera* and *The Wind Won’t Listen*. It is the author’s intention to provide an introductory guide to these seven pieces, as well as supplementary analysis to use as an expanded lens with which to examine *Concerto da Camera* and *The Wind Won’t Listen*. Welcher’s other chamber pieces can often create a fuller picture of his compositional style in the intermediary years between these two very different large works that were written almost 30 years apart.
Woodwind Quintet No. 1 is one of Welcher’s earliest published compositions. It was written while Welcher was still a student, and is a charming gem of a piece that follows a traditional three movement form (fast—slow—fast) and requires the performers to be stylistically and dynamically versatile to create a wide palate of musical moods. Welcher displays an ability to write idiomatically for woodwinds and effectively orchestrate within the woodwind quintet genre. The movements are often in a melody-dominated homophonic texture with recurring thematic material that is easily recognizable by the listener.

Woodwind Quintet No. 1 is typical of Welcher’s early chamber music in that it is not programmatic or based on pre-existing material. This absolute music exemplifies Welcher’s ability to manipulate thematic material as well as his early penchant toward coloristic harmony—at times even bitonality—and sensitive orchestration that maximizes the coloristic capabilities of the five instruments. The first movement contains an orchestration technique frequently used by Welcher in his woodwind quintets: the statement of material—melodic or accompaniment—in pairs of instruments. More specifically, he uses pairs in two distinct ways, where two instruments work together playing different parts in the same rhythm, or they double a single line (in unison or in different octaves). This device is seen at the very opening of the piece, where the accompaniment is paired in the flute and oboe staccato eighth notes and the melody is played by the clarinet. Pairing appears again shortly thereafter with the clarinet and bassoon playing a homorhythmic accompaniment in thirds (see Examples 5.1 and 5.2).
Examples 5.1 and 5.2: Instrument Pairing in Welcher’s Woodwind Quintets, Woodwind Quintet No. 1, Mvt. 1, mm. 1-6 and mm. 24-31.

5.1:

The first movement is bookended by a quirky, syncopated principal theme first seen in the clarinet at the beginning of the piece, and the entire movement is diagrammed below in relation to iterations of this theme (see Figure 5.1). This movement is tonal, but freely moves between key areas.
### 1st Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Quirky principal theme (PT)</td>
<td>Syncopated second theme over ostinato</td>
<td>Mixed meter, often homorhythmic, pianissimo</td>
<td>Lyrical melody, very soft dynamic</td>
<td>Loud and boisterous, melodic material suggests PT</td>
<td>Statements of head motive of PT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meas. Nos.</td>
<td>1-59</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>65-83</td>
<td>84-92</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>102-120</td>
<td>121-141</td>
<td>134-141 (end)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2nd Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Meas. Nos.</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A'</th>
<th>C'</th>
<th>B'</th>
<th>(A'')</th>
<th>A'''</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Recit.-like music</td>
<td>Soft-shoe</td>
<td>Rhythmically active transition music, no significant “themes”</td>
<td>Recit.-like music, only one measure</td>
<td>Rhythmically active transition music, no significant “themes”</td>
<td>Begins with “B” music, then uses “A” melody from Example 5.2c.</td>
<td>Recit.-like music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meas. Nos.</td>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>21-42</td>
<td>43-53</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>61-80</td>
<td>81-89 (end)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2.1: Form diagram of Woodwind Quintet No. 1, Mvts. 1 and 2.
The second movement, marked Lento (quarter = 72) is very lyrical, with long melodies that are sometimes stated in a phrase-by-phrase manner, as if each phrase is its own independent musical entity. Welcher favors a two-voice texture in this movement, and bookends the movement with passages containing an orchestration texture of only two instruments. Welcher often has two instruments play a single line, either in unison or at the octave. The timbres of the flute and bassoon combine in a melody that might be referred to as the “flasoon” timbre. By pairing instrument timbres (perhaps not only “flasoon,” but also “floboe” and “cl-orn!”) Welcher uses many of the timbral combinatorial possibilities in both the melody and accompaniment (see example 5.3). This is a challenging aspect of playing in the woodwind quintet, and an instance of where blending of instrumental timbres is appropriate in an ensemble where the five instruments are not easily or necessarily intended to be blended. Performers should adjust their tone color appropriately to attain the “group timbres.”

Example 5.3: Use of Instrument Pairings to Create a Wider Timbral Spectrum, Mvt. 2, mm. 13-20. (Tacet instruments removed in mm. 16-20).
Unlike his later compositions, replete with stylistic indications, the opening (and closing) melody of the second movement of this quintet is simply marked *doloroso*. The melody contains frequent interruptions, separating each eight measure phrase into small gestures. Beginning in m. 21, the texture changes from pairs of instruments and doubled pairs to a melody-dominated homophonic texture that resembles a soft-shoe dance style of the vaudeville era, with frequent silences. The dynamics of this “B” section also reflect the more graceful, relaxed manner of the soft-shoe, often not straying far from the *piano* and *pianissimo* dynamics. The “C” section is transitional music that doesn’t remain in key areas for very long. The second movement is a varied palindrome form that can be diagrammed as A—B—C—A—C′—[B′—]A′—A′′. “A” is the opening *doloroso* section and most prominent musical material of the movement, “B” is the soft shoe-like section, and “C” is rhythmically active transitional music. Rather than simply a banal reversal of thematic material, Welcher varies the melodic material of the “B” section. The first iteration of “B” contains melodic material over the soft accompaniment, whereas the second iteration hints at “B” music but contains mostly melodic material from “A” and very little of the soft-shoe music. This is the major deviation from a cut-and-dry formal palindrome structure.
The third movement of Woodwind Quintet No. 1 is the most interesting and adventurous of the three movements due to Welcher’s use of harsh dissonance and thematic development. The most notable instance of dissonance occurs in a prominent fanfare-like figure that is stated six times throughout the first half of the movement, including the first measure (see Example 5.4).

Example 5.4: Complex Harmonic Language, Mvt. 3, mm. 1-7.
Thematic development is evident throughout the entire movement, most notably in the latter half. In fact, much of the movement’s musical material is derived from the opening five measures. These opening five measures consist of the aforementioned dissonant fanfare-like figure (see Example 5.4) which will be restated again several times, sometimes re-orchestrated and/or transposed. The music in mm. 2-5 of the opening is characterized by a snakelike melodic figure that appears a total of six times throughout the movement, each time played by a pair of instruments. The table below shows the location each iteration of this melody and the pairs of instruments playing it, so that players can identify this music in their performance preparation. Players can interpret this material so that each iteration sounds similar, though it is recommended that they adjust their stylistic interpretation based upon which instrumental pair is playing the material.

The ensemble must be sensitive to the “group timbre” of the pairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>Flute and Clarinet</td>
<td>Original form of the melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-20</td>
<td>Clarinet and Bassoon</td>
<td>Orig. form (cl.) and inversion (bsn.) played simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-46</td>
<td>Clarinet and Horn (38-39) Flute and Bassoon (41-43) Oboe and Clarinet (44-46)</td>
<td>Entire melody, segmented, transposed up at different intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79-82</td>
<td>Oboe and Clarinet</td>
<td>Segment of melody, Begins transposed down an aug. 4th, tonally adjusted (m. 80) to continue at a transposition down a perfect 4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122-124</td>
<td>Clarinet and Bassoon</td>
<td>Sequencing of the head motive of the melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125-130</td>
<td>Flute and Clarinet</td>
<td>Transposition is adjusted at various points in the melody to correlate with a rhythmic augmentation of the figure that begins in the horn in m. 126 and a rhythmic double augmentation that begins in the bassoon in the same measure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2: Melodic Variation Using Instrument Pairs in Movement 3.
Woodwind Quintet No. 1 is a traditional three-movement woodwind quintet written in a progressive tonal language that is easily performed by a student or amateur ensemble. It contains limited technical virtuosity—most of which is in the third movement—and the greatest challenges in performing the piece are sections of mixed meter, and intonation in dissonant lyrical sections. The thematic writing is fun and accessible for both the performers and audience. Attention to themes is the most important consideration for an informed performance of the piece, along with manipulation tone colors to create different timbre combinations within the ensemble.

5.3 WOODWIND QUINTET NO. 2 (1977)

Welcher’s “Woodwind Quintet No. 2” was written in 1977 for the Blair Woodwind Quintet, the faculty woodwind quintet in residence at the Blair School of Music of Vanderbilt University. The Blair Quintet has been performing and commissioning works since it was established in 1971. They have commissioned and performed works by many notable composers, including Welcher and Peter Schickele. According to Welcher, “the Blair Quintet wanted a BIG piece, so I wrote them one.” They asked for nothing else specific aside from the scale of piece to be written, a request which Welcher answered with a quintet in the traditional three movement fast—slow—fast structure of many woodwind quintets and instrumental concerti, and not unlike that of his first woodwind quintet. As with the other commissioned pieces in this study, the then-members of the Blair Quintet had already been acquainted with Welcher and his music at the time of their commission of Woodwind Quintet No. 2. It is likely that the

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84 Personal correspondence with the composer.
85 Ibid.
combination of Welcher’s primary employment as a bassoonist at the time, as well as his
desire to counter his distaste for the “pastorale” mood common in woodwind quintet
repertoire,\textsuperscript{86} gave him the freedom to develop the unique harmonic language that is
characteristic of his early and middle works, including this quintet.

The piece begins with a rhythmically intense eight measure unison figure in all
five voices of the ensemble, separated by an octave (Motive A). All instruments are in
unison in both pitch and rhythm until the ninth measure, where all voices arrive at a
recurrent harmony, labeled as an [01478] chord.\textsuperscript{87} The recurrence of this particular
harmony and its transpositions, as well as of Motive A, are the most notable harmonic
and motivic underpinnings of the first movement (see Example 5.5). Welcher later
presents a thinner texture of free counterpoint based on Motive A, and recaps the motive
twice at the end of the movement (mm. 127-135 and mm. 162-169), each time with slight
variations. The movement ends with a sustained [0139] tetrachord, a chord which shares
the same simultaneous major/minor inflection of the [01478] pentachord.

The first movement is rhythmically challenging, laden with polyrhythmic figures,
syncopations, ties across the bar line, and frequently changing meter signatures. The
abundance of rhythm dissonance mirrors the dissonances inherent in Motive A and the
[01478] chord of the opening. A quieter section with an equal preponderance of harmonic

\textsuperscript{86} See program note for Woodwind Quintet No. 2, Appendix D.1.
\textsuperscript{87} While labeled with the nomenclature of set theory out of convenience and ease of reference, this chord is
not a product of serial technique, nor is it appropriate to label it as EmΔ7 (#4). This polytonal harmony of
E flat major and E minor, where G is a common tone, represents what Russell Brown refers to as a
“consistent pitch scheme throughout [that] helps sustain the unity in a large scale piece” (in this case a
movement of a large scale piece). See Brown, “The Use of Pitch Scheme Commonalities in ‘Circus
Maximus’: an Analysis of John Corigliano’s Symphony No. 3,” 103.
Example 5.5: Motive A and [01478] Pentachord, Mvt. 1, mm. 1-9.

Dissonance (mm. 82-126) balances out the sections that bookend the movement, creating a ternary form (see Figure 5.3). This form is perceptible due to the audible differences in musical material and tempo, so performers should adhere closely to indicated tempo markings and differences in stylistic character in sections that make up the “sound world” of the movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meas. Nos.</td>
<td>1-81</td>
<td>82-126</td>
<td>127-181 (end)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Motive A, fast tempo, loud</td>
<td>Slow tempo, loud, thinner texture</td>
<td>Motive A (with variation), fast tempo, loud</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.3: Form Diagram of Woodwind Quintet No. 2, Mvt. 1.

The second movement of Woodwind Quintet No. 2 is also a ternary form, and begins with an unmetered lyrical oboe solo marked quasi recitando. The “A” section is in 5/4, though few aspects of the music in this section reflect a quintuple meter after the first two measures of the melody. The “A” music is a combination of long, lyrical melodies
over quavering pulsations in the dissonant accompaniment. The oboe solo and the melody that follows it do not use serial technique, but their quavering accompaniment does. This is an interesting combination of two typically exclusive composition techniques (see Example 5.6).

Example 5.6: Combination of Serial and Non-Serial Technique, Mvt. 2, mm. 2-4.

Often the accompaniment material is stated in pairs of instruments, as in Woodwind Quintet No. 1. The “B” section of the second movement is a waltz, and the pulsating figure from the “A” section becomes a traditional weak-beat waltz figure. The waltz, like the beginning of the “B” section, also uses some 12-tone technique in the melodic writing. The “B” section slowly dwindles away in both dynamic and texture, and the “A” music returns, orchestrated differently than in its previous statement. The accompaniment for the second statement contains droning half notes and trills that occasionally provide a tonal-sounding framework for the melody, albeit a dissonant one. The melody in the “A” recap follows the 5/4 meter more clearly than the first “A” section, and the movement ends with oboe restating some material from the opening solo.
The third movement, a passacaglia, is the most contrapuntally and rhythmically complex of the three movements. It is also the section of Welcher’s three published woodwind quintets that is most virtuosic because of difficult instrumental technique, intricate rhythms, and many changes in tempo. Here Welcher presents many variations on a ground-bass figure, initially played by all five instruments in unison in an unmetered section at the beginning of the movement (mm. 1-5). The well-constructed ground bass, which can be divided into four distinct parts, has a great deal of inherent melodic and rhythmic diversity (see Example 5.7).

Example 5.7: Ground-bass Figure from “Passacaglia,” Mvt. 3, mm. 1-5.

The movement begins and ends on the unison pitch D, and D is used as an integral pitch throughout the movement, but to analyze this movement as being “in the key of D” would be incorrect. It would be more accurately described as “on D” or “in an
altered form of D minor,” as traditional tonal relationships and progressions associated with key are usually not present. The passacaglia figure consistently begins and ends on the same pitch, which is often D, and the movement’s coda is clearly in D minor. Performers need to be aware of this, as D represents a pitch class that becomes a foundational point of reference in the movement, and even functions as a kind of “tonic” albeit not in a tonal setting. Welcher’s choice to state most of the variations of the ground bass at the original pitch level (on D) adds to the ease of perception of the ground bass for the listener, but simultaneously limits Welcher in one of the means with which he can manipulate that figure: by changes in pitch level. Because of this limitation Welcher maximizes the potential of changes in orchestration and texture, which vary widely throughout the movement. He also manipulates the ground bass using rhythmic modification and intervallic inversion.

Woodwind Quintet No. 2 is definitely a “BIG piece,” (as commissioned!) and it reflects a mature style of composition that combines tonal, atonal, and serial languages. Welcher’s use of simple, easy-to-digest forms makes a relatively difficult harmonic language more accessible by containing specific sounds within large formal units that are often recapitulated for added emphasis. This piece is representative of Welcher’s move away from serialism and free atonality in favor of harmonic languages and devices of his own creation, even while those early and mid-20th Century trends were still academically in vogue.
5.4 LISTEN UP! A GUIDE TO MELODY, HARMONY, RHYTHM, TONE-COLOR AND COUNTERPOINT FOR WOODWIND QUINTET (1986)

*Listen Up! An Introduction to Melody, Harmony, Rhythm, Tone-Color and Counterpoint for Woodwind Quintet* was written in 1986 for the Cimmaron Wind Quintet. According to Welcher, “the Cimmaron Quintet was working with Young Audiences, Inc. at the time and wanted a ‘teaching piece’.” Despite the programmatic nature, he considers the work his third woodwind quintet. This type of piece is not unprecedented in the woodwind quintet literature, having a similar performance dynamic to Luciano Berio’s *Opus Number Zoo: Children’s Play* (1951, rev. 1970). What sets *Listen Up!* apart from Welcher’s first two quintets is its clear intention to be performed as educational outreach for any age group, adults or children. The text, written by poet and author Ann McCutchan, is lively and fun but does not use a language that seems “specifically for children” in a way that might feel patronizing to adult audiences.

In *Listen Up!* the members of the woodwind quintet are required to speak the narration throughout the piece. Often, multiple members speak the same text simultaneously. As the piece progresses the narration becomes more a part of the music itself, frequently including specific timings and written out rhythmic notation for the words. *Listen Up!* is through-composed in seven large sections governed by musical topics: an introduction, sections on melody, harmony, rhythm, tone-color, counterpoint, and a final section labeled Toccata—Finale that combines musical material from the

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88 Young Audiences, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide arts education to children.
89 Personal correspondence with the composer.
previous sections (see Figure 5.5). Welcher includes markings so that the piece can be performed with or without narration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Melody</th>
<th>Trans.</th>
<th>Harmony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Nos.</td>
<td>1-47</td>
<td>48-70</td>
<td>71-88</td>
<td>89-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Narration prompts audience with questions about music, explains process of the piece</td>
<td>Played 1 instrument at a time</td>
<td>Full Orchestration w/ accomp.</td>
<td>Common-tone chord progressions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Rhythm</th>
<th>Cadenza</th>
<th>Tone Color</th>
<th>Counterpoint</th>
<th>Toccata—Finale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Nos.</td>
<td>129-181</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>183-238</td>
<td>239-277</td>
<td>278-364 (end)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Rapping by Fl. Ob. And Cl., Tambourine, Horn solo</td>
<td>Each instrument participates</td>
<td>Virtuosic writing, sudden dynamic changes.</td>
<td>Contrapuntal treatment of the melody w/ a ground bass</td>
<td>Segmentation and manipulation of the melody</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.5: Form Diagram of Listen Up!

Welcher’s harmonic language is ingenious, interesting, and effective in Listen Up!. The music is organized around functional tonality and balanced formal sections due to the educational nature of the piece, serving as an introduction to the fundamental elements of Western classical music. The introduction begins with the instruments entering one at a time. Each of their respective pitches is preceded by a lower chromatic neighbor which adds an exciting proclamation-like quality to each entrance, as well as suggesting tonal inflection for each pitch. The pitches, once all instruments enter, is a collection of fourths which sounds (and is!) harmonically stable, while not suggesting any particular key area. This avoidance of strong cadence in any key area continues and the introduction arrives at a whole tone collection figure, which Welcher uses throughout.
the introduction in Broadway-like vamps that occur as underscoring for the narration.

The whole tone collections do not suggest any tonal progression but still have a sense of forward motion. However, once the introduction concludes the piece remains largely centered around B flat major.

To teach melody, Welcher uses a sixteen measure monophonic melody presented in four-measure sections that outline two phrases. Each of these sections is played by a different instrument: oboe, bassoon, horn, clarinet, then flute (see Example 5.8).

Example 5.8: Score Image of the Melody, mm. 48-63.

These sections of the melody can be labelled as ABA’B’, and the difference in material occurs beginning in the tenth measure (m. 57) where the melody is presented in intervallic inversion (then modified slightly at the end to cadence on the fundamental tone of B flat). The melody clearly lies in the tonality of B flat major, and seems to meander on for 16 measures until finally reaching a cadence, all the while without “losing” the listener along the way. This meandering or “stringing along” effect is
The Melody

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>1st Phrase</th>
<th>2nd Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure Numbers</td>
<td>48-51</td>
<td>51-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>Oboe</td>
<td>Bassoon (51-54), Horn (54-55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inversion begins in m. 57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.6: Diagram of the Melody

enhanced by the septuple meter, expressed in the score as 4/4 + 3/4 (See Example 5.8 and Figure 5.6). Passing the melody through each instrument shows the instrument’s distinct tone-color, prefacing the tone-color section and allowing Welcher to use that area of the piece to elaborate on the combination of instrumental timbres. Performers should work on passing the melody seamlessly between instruments, as if played by one instrument. A transition in mm. 64-68 includes a series of hums and sizzles based on the opening motif of the full melody. Welcher moves the harmony to the dominant key area (F major), setting up a fully-orchestrated iteration of the entire sixteen measure melody with accompaniment that completes the section.

The introduction to the harmony section (mm. 89-100) shows different chord progressions within a key area that can be created using a common tone. Welcher uses B flat as the common tone, which was previously the tonic pitch from the melody. The performers can play each harmonic progression as a separate gesture, each in its own tempo and style to help draw attention to its unique sound and function around the common tone. The oboist will want to pantomime running out of breath throughout this entire section, not just after the final progression, to maximize comic effect.
Example 5.9: Common-Tone Chord Progressions in the Introduction to Harmony, mm. 88-100 (shown in reduced scoring).

After this introduction to the capabilities of harmony and chord progressions, harmony is demonstrated in context with a very expressive, Romantic harmonization of the melody. The harmonization uses key areas closely related to the tonic of B flat, secondary functioning chords, and the interchange of major and minor modes. This section finishes with a colorful modal cadence in C major that shows the power of cadence at the end of a section, seen below in Example 5.10, though it is not explicitly stated in the narration.

Example 5.10: An Emphatic Cadence in the Harmony Section, mm. 125-128.

The section teaching rhythm in *Listen Up!* is marked “Solid 4—Rock Feel” at the beginning of the section. Every instrumentalist except the bassoonist engages in an
extended rhythmic “rap” about rhythm. Specific performance instructions from Welcher follow:

The vocal inflections in this variation to be stylized, like a “rap” song. Instruments not needed except for horn and bassoon. Flute, oboe, and clarinet need their hands free for clapping; one must also play the tambourine.

The horn part is the most musically interesting line in this section, and the bassoon part is perhaps relatively the easiest depending on the rapping and tambourine-playing skills of the upper woodwinds. This section presents some of the biggest performance difficulties of the piece: tongue-twisting vocal lines for the upper woodwinds, a virtuosic French horn solo, and the challenge of balancing the dynamics of all three elements (vocals, tambourine, and instrumental lines) so that the audience can hear each clearly. The bassoon has a rock bass line to be played “a la bass guitar (no vib., resonant, hard acc.)” and later “funky!” The hornist begins by rapping with the upper woodwind players, but about a third of the way through (m. 141) a rather impressive sounding horn line begins that has a lot of lip slurs and glissandos, as well as an effect marked in the score “a la “fuzz pedal” that imitates guitar riffs. Though Welcher was himself a bassoonist, and the bassoon part is pretty neat, it’s clear that this section of Listen Up! is intended to showcase the horn player! Both lines benefit from being performed with an improvisatory aesthetic, one that compliments any vocal inflections made by the “rappers.”

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91 The text of the rap is as follows:
“Rhythm! Gotta have it strong, even take it weak, ‘cause we gotta have a beat. We’ve got to have a beat, or the music will go falling apart and we’ll lose our places from the very start. Clap your hands! Click your heels! Rhythm!”
Also notated in this vocalization are scat-syllable like figures. (i.e. “ch-ka-ch-ka-ch-kong-kong.”)
92 From the score of Listen Up!.
93 On this figure, Welcher writes in the score “with apologies (and thanks) to Bill Douglas.” Welcher provides notation for the desired horn effect, but writes in the score “open and close at will – this pattern is merely a suggestion.”
The transition from the section that teaches rhythm to that on tone-color is a cadenza in which every instrument participates. The cadenza is peppered with narration about the tone color of each instrument, where players interject commentary that relates instrumental timbres to actual colors. This not only helps to give the horn and bassoon a much needed rest, but also to showcase the technical capabilities of the upper woodwinds. While Welcher didn’t include a section called “technique,” with a tempo marked at quarter = 144-152, the “color” section could easily be renamed as such. It is clear that this section is as much about the color of instrumental timbres as well as orchestration “colors” (see Example 5.11). The cadenza ends with the clarinet and bassoon holding a trilled unison E4, which resolves like a leading tone to the entire ensemble articulating different iterations of the pitch F4. This shows the audience how the tone color changes when different instruments play the same pitch. The primary devices Welcher uses to show different instrumental and orchestration timbres are: passing a unison pitch through the ensemble one instrument at a time, using different scalar patterns (whole-tone, pentatonic, chromatic, etc.), use of trills, and leaps to and from extreme instrumental registers.

The final two sections of Listen Up! are about counterpoint, and a vivacious toccata, respectively. The counterpoint section presents the melody in canon over a cantus firmus, played by the bassoon throughout. In the middle of the section, Welcher uses two canons simultaneously over the cantus firmus: the melody, played by clarinet and horn, and a spoken canon in the flute and oboe parts. The text of the spoken part poetically describes the process of counterpoint, and its presentation within the context of
Example 5.11: Excerpt from Tone-Color Section, mm. 206-210.

the section is a nice change from previous narration, spoken over fermatas or vamps. The counterpoint text is:

Counterpoint weaves in and out
curly patterns round about.
Ornamental, ostentatious,
Filigreed with lyric laces
Makes other parts more intense,
Because they have competitors
To move against. 94

The toccata presents segments from each of the prior sections and transforms them in a section of free composition that creates an exciting ending to the piece.

Listen Up! is a great piece addition to almost any woodwind quintet program because it is simultaneously interesting and entertaining. It is also an effective piece for an advanced student group to perform, because the piece includes atypical elements of narration, pantomime, and educational intent. Student musicians benefit from this piece

94 Listen Up! score.
by learning how to phrase long melodies, recognize common-tone chord progressions, and most importantly how to maximize the effectiveness of entertaining aspects within a piece. The latter of these is often overshadowed by considerations of instrumental technique and ensemble precision, though all are important skills to develop and \textit{Listen Up!} is a piece that has such duality in educational potential.

\section*{5.5 MILL SONGS: FOUR METAMORPHOSES AFTER SCHUBERT (1997)}

\textit{Mill Songs: Four Metamorphoses after Schubert} for oboe and bassoon was written in 1997 for oboist John Snow and bassoonist Kristen Wolfe-Jensen, Welcher’s colleagues at the University of Texas. The duo premiered the piece on June, 19th, 2007 at the International Double Reed Society (IDRS) annual conference, held that year at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL.\footnote{From a pamphlet on Welcher provided by Elkan-Vogel, Inc.} These two later recorded the piece on an album titled \textit{Shadings}.

\textit{Mill Songs} is unique in Welcher’s chamber music oeuvre because it is the only work that is a large-scale reinterpretation of music by another composer, in this case Franz Schubert (1797-1828). It is also his only duo for oboe and bassoon. When asked about the impetus for \textit{Mill Songs}, Welcher noted “Kristin and John wanted a duo-without-piano.” He then elaborated more thoroughly:

I love \textit{Die Schöne Müllerin} deeply. I played the piano for a baritone when I was twenty, which was my first exposure to the cycle as a cycle (though I knew some of the songs before). When this commission came about, it happened to be a historic year for Schubert, and I just asked John and Kristin if it would be okay if I did a “\textit{Pulcinella}-type” gloss on Schubert. I took Stravinsky as my model; he used Pergolesi tunes and put them through his own kind of process, so they sound like Stravinsky visiting the Old Country. I wanted \textit{Mill Songs} to be like that.\footnote{Personal correspondence with the composer.}
This fifteen minute tour de force for the two instruments has four separate, self-contained songs (movements), each based on a different song from Schubert’s *Die Schöne Müllerin*, D. 795. The movements could conceivably be performed separately or in a smaller collection to facilitate programming considerations. They could also be reordered, though the order which they appear in publication is appealing because it follows the same sequence of the source material, and is reminiscent of the “fast—slow—dance—fast” structure of traditional symphonic form. Welcher’s writing allows the performers to display their technical and lyrical playing in this fun duet while still adhering to much of Schubert’s musical material.

The first of Welcher’s *Mill Songs*, “Wandering,” is a 24 measure theme-and-variations on the first song in Schubert’s cycle, *Das Wandern*. Schubert’s song is essentially theme-and-variations because it is in strophic form, but Welcher changes musical material whereas Schubert only changes the text. Following the relatively unadorned presentation of the theme in the same key as the source material, B flat major, Welcher then presents three variations on the *Wandern* tune. Each variation is separated by the introductory four measures, mimicking the original song’s structure and strophic form. The first variation begins immediately in D flat major, a minor third relationship to the original key and a very Romantic harmonic transition indeed. This sweeping section requires the oboe and bassoon to work together to perform what is often a composite figure separated between the two parts (see Example 5.12). Mixed and irregular meter is a hallmark feature of the first variation, perhaps to reflect the “wandering” theme of the

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98 An English translation of the four songs used as source material for *Mill Songs* can be found in the program note for *Mill Songs*, APPENDIX D.2.
movement’s text. The players should try to achieve an uninterrupted quality when performing composite lines, as seen in mm. 25-26, 29, and 33-34 and similar places throughout the movement, as if mimicking a piano. Vertical accents should be interpreted in the same manner as a horizontal accent with staccato marking.

Example 5.12: Oboe and Bassoon Orchestration, Mvt. 1, mm. 25-34.

The second variation of “Wandering” is a lyrical variation where the oboe is primarily featured and the bassoon plays accompaniment material. It begins in G major, but Welcher quickly embraces the modal mixture of Romantic harmony and moves to the parallel minor. The oboe plays a melody rich with lush suspensions and expressive melodic leaps while the bassoon lies sotto voce beneath, playing a sextuplet accompanying figure that outlines the harmonic progression. Though this progression wanders away from tonic—mostly via secondary function—the variation ends on a half cadence in its original key of G major. The final variation presents Schubert’s tune in
canon, though the movement pauses briefly before the conclusion to recall the four measure introduction of the song in the wrong key, D major. This quirky figure, marked *pianissimo* and “distant” causes the audience to feel as though they’ve been tricked once they hear the same four measures presented immediately thereafter in B flat major. This makes a very satisfying ending to the first of the *Mill Songs*, and the performers can maximize its effect by emphasizing Welcher’s indication of *morendo*, adding as much diminuendo as possible and a slight *rallentando*. They should also pause briefly on the rest in m. 85 to allow any reverberation to clear the performance space, setting up the false ending with momentary silence. A similar silence should not be added in the rest at the end of these four measures (m. 89) so that the final statement comes as a surprise to the audience.

Schubert’s *Der Neugierige* (“The Inquisitive Man”), the sixth song of *Die Schöne Müllerin*, is the source material for the second of Welcher’s *Mill Songs*. Schubert’s melodic material remains much intact, and the oboe and bassoon both share the responsibility of carrying the tune, alternating melodic and arpeggiatic accompaniment figures. Welcher keeps the accompaniment texture in the first section of this variation sparse (mm. 1-23) which contrasts nicely with the following section (mm. 24-34) where Schubert’s melody opens up over lush harmonies that shift between the relative major and minor. The texture in most of the variation, from m. 24 onward, is dominated by melody with an alberti bass accompaniment. Welcher indicates that the beginning melodies be played “simply,” allowing contrast with the fuller sonorities of mm. 24. However, he does not adorn the latter with dynamic markings, only an indication of “very expressive,” allowing the performers to inflect the line as they choose. The melodic
figures before m. 24 should not be played without inflection, but rather should be modeled after that of a vocalist singing Schubert’s song.

Examples 5.13 and 5.14: Treatment of Source Material, Mvt. 2, mm. 5-10 and mm. 24-27.

5.13: mm. 5-10.

5.14: mm. 24-27.

While one’s inner romantic might yearn for the powerful piano sonority of Schubert’s original, Welcher—through a modulation to C major—scores in a manner that allows both instruments to play the singing melody with ease as well as execute the virtuosic accompaniment. The original key of Schubert’s song, B major, would create awkward and problematic technique for both instruments. The original key works in the
beginning section, but C major better facilitates the extended legato passages that begin in m. 24 (See Example 5.14). The movement ends with a brief modulatory section (mm. 35-42) scored in F sharp major, and a codetta in C major.

The Scherzo-like third movement of Mill Songs is based upon Der Jäger, “The Hunter.” This is the only movement that does not begin in the original key of its source material, starting in F minor instead of the original C minor. This could be because of the range of the instruments. Welcher would have had to score his piece in a much higher tessitura to begin in C minor, making the oboe line unnecessarily difficult, much more petite-sounding, and less in the character of a hunter. His key also enables him to use the full range of the bassoon, a scoring choice that would have been less effective in C minor. Due to C being one the lowest pitches of both instruments, all statements of the dominant would need to be above the tonic pitch if used in the low register, and any subsequent modulations would need to be scored in a higher range.

“The Hunter” is otherwise a simple arrangement of Schubert’s song. Welcher leaves out Schubert’s introductory figure, beginning his movement where the melody of Schubert’s song starts. The rest of the movement is rather straight-forward; the oboe plays the light, staccato melody in F minor, then the bassoon gets its turn to do the same in D minor. The accompaniment figures for each are light and sparse, used to outline the harmony and for formal punctuation of phrases. The third statement of the melody, in B minor, presents the melody in a canon at the unison offset by two beats. This canon is like a race to the finish—or perhaps a chase through the woods—with sweeping crescendos, scalar figures, and arpeggio figures that soar through multiple registers of the
instruments. This movement is fun to play and very entertaining for the audience. The most important performance consideration is clarity and unified style of articulation.

The fourth of the *Mill Songs* is called “The Miller and the Brook” and is based on Schubert’s song of the same name, the penultimate song of *Die Schöne Müllerin*. Of Welcher’s four metamorphoses, this movement contains the most significant derivations from the source material. The text of Schubert’s song is a dialogue between two characters, the wanderer and the babbling brook. They are personified in the burbling piano accompaniment, and the text reflects upon love at the end of one’s life (in the final song of Schubert’s *Die Schöne Müllerin*, “The Brook’s Lullaby,” the wanderer has died). Welcher begins in 5/8 meter, but reverts back to Schubert’s meter of 3/8 as the movement progresses. These meters and their corresponding music represent the two characters of the Miller and the Brook. The 5/8 sections are regularly undulating as the water in the brook, occasionally becoming more rocky and burbling. The 3/8 sections represent the distraught Miller, who questions love, and the music changes style frequently in these passages to represent the ever-changing mood of the Miller. The final measures of the movement (mm.85-96) represent the Miller’s recognition of the “cool repose” of the Brook, and the tranquility he receives from his observation. The performers should only employ rubato where Welcher indicates in the score, so the 5/8 meter remains clear in its asymmetry. Tremolo figures in both instruments should be played as quietly as possible while still achieving adequate response from the

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99 Ibid.
reed/instrument. These tremolos should be played quickly but evenly, and the two distinct pitches of each should be clearly audible.

5.6 THE MOERAE: FANTASY FOR FLUTE, OBOE, BASSOON AND PIANO (2006)

“Moerae” is the Latin spelling of the Greek “Moirai” which refers to the three goddesses of fate in Classical Greek Mythology: Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. These goddesses are often referred to in the literature collectively as “the moerae/moirai” or “the Fates.” According to the Oxford Companion to World Mythology:

The Greek Moirai (“Fates,” Roman Parcae) were seen as three spinning crones—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos—who, as their names indicate, spun out life, measured it, and cut it. They are often depicted carrying various instruments of spinning. To indicate their dominion over life, they sometimes carry scepters. The Fates are sometimes thought of as goddesses of both birth and death because of the linear aspect of their spun thread of life. They present a theological problem in relation to the question of whether they or Zeus—or in modern terms, Fate or God—has ultimate control over life and death.  

Each of the Fates had a particular role in their collective control over the destiny of humanity. Clotho spins the metaphorical thread of life. Lachesis measures the thread of life with a measuring rod. The duty of cutting the thread of life falls upon Atropos, the cutter.

The Moerae “was written as a gift for Dr. Robert Freeman, Dean of the College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas, in recognition of his lifelong advocacy and support of music by living composers.” Apparently either intrigued by the Fates or simply having more to say on the matter, Welcher revisited the subject of the Muses in a 2012

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101 Program note for The Moerae.
102 Ibid.
piece for two antiphonal string quartets, *Museon Polemos* (“The War of the Muses”). He gives a brief reflection in the program note on how the story might manifest itself through the music, though without going into overt description.\textsuperscript{103}

*The Moerae* has a loose program that does not follow a specific play-by-play narrative, so the audience is given the freedom to interpret Welcher’s musical gestures and larger formal sections as they choose. The composer does give clues in his extensive program note as to how the three characters of the Fates might be represented, which adds to the appeal of the piece. This implied program, following the thread of life from beginning to end, determines a formal structure defined by five distinct sections. They are “nervous music,” “spinning music,” “cutting music,” a bassoon cadenza, and a coda.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Intro.</td>
<td>1-28</td>
<td>Nervous music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>29-69</td>
<td>Spinning music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>70-139</td>
<td>Cutting music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>140-166</td>
<td>Spinning Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>167-172</td>
<td>Bassoon Cadenzas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A”</td>
<td>173-193</td>
<td>Nervous music Recap. and Trans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>194-229</td>
<td>“Dreamy” version of spinning music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Form Diagram of The Moerae.](image)

The introduction section of *The Moerae* is two statements of what Welcher refers to as “nervous music,”\textsuperscript{104} which represents how the thread of life is fragile and how those whose thread is in question are unaware of when it is to be cut (a predetermined attribute). The second iteration of the nervous music (mm. 13-28) is almost an exact replica of the first (mm. 1-12), but transposed up a half step. Snappy rhythms in the wind

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\textsuperscript{103} To read Wecher’s entire program note for *The Moerae*, see Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{104} Program note for *The Moerae*.
parts and trill-like figures help this section to feel “nervous” and unresolved, and
performers must play with utmost precision due to the intricate rhythmic writing. The
bassoonist should make *molto crescendo* during the held G# in m. 12, using an increasing
amount of vibrato, as this held pitch is the only connective musical device between the
two statements of the nervous music.

The second of these sections is “spinning music”\(^\text{105}\) which represents both the
imagery of the spinning wheel and the progression of the thread of life through time. The
spinning music is the most prevalent music of the piece, and appears at three separate
iterations. Together these have the longest combined time duration, and thus represent the
never-ending spinning of the thread of life by Clotho.\(^\text{106}\) The spinning music is
characterized by three musical devices, inherent in each iteration (see Example 5.15).
They are: a 9/8 accompaniment in the piano part that rises-then-falls in two measure
segments; a sustained melody in the oboe (and later flute and oboe in octaves, articulating
a “floboe” group timbre) that often reflects a meter of 3/4 instead of 9/8;\(^\text{107}\) and a unique
harmony defined by the use of a major chord built upon the leading tone played over
sustained tonic harmony (depending on the key area of the section in question). The
listener feels suspended, as the combined harmonies of B flat major and A major spin
through measures of 9/8 and never seem to resolve the dissonance created between the
two. This music is tonal, though in the first “spinning” (A) section Welcher doesn’t

\(^{105}\) Ibid.
\(^{106}\) This section creates an interesting comparison of form defined by “clock time,” or how music is
experienced in relation to the reading of a clock, and “gestural time,” how music is experienced through
significant gestures within a section/movement/piece. The spinning music accounts for the longest duration
of music in *The Moerae*, but is goal-directed toward gestures and harmonic changes within the spinning
sections, helping to maintain the flow of progression. For further reading on “gestural time” in music, see
\(^{107}\) Program note for *The Moerae*.  

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progress through different key areas in the way of traditional tonal key progressions, but rather slides through the key areas of B flat major, A minor, G minor, then modulates to A flat major via a deceptive cadence-like transition. The key areas of the second “spinning” section (A’) are C major, E flat major, D flat major and A minor. The D flat major section is quite resplendent because the woodwinds play a unison melody in three separate octaves. What Welcher labels A” in his formal diagram is more like the musical material of the introductory section with elements of the “spinning” music interspersed, as he describes it; “an agitated transition reminiscent of the beginning.” Welcher doesn’t give an overt description of what specifically is happening in the dramatic action of this depiction of the three fates, but it’s fun to imagine this post-cadenza section as either the point where the thread is cut by Atropos, or a moment of doubt along the constant spinning of the thread of life.

Example 5.15: Spinning Music with Measuring Melody, mm. 34-40.
Example 5.16: Cutting Music, mm. 71-75.

The most dramatic music is the “cutting music”\textsuperscript{108} of Atropos, which Welcher states is “oddly cheerful, as the goddesses feel no emotion when they end a human life”\textsuperscript{109} (see Example 5.16). According to the program note there are two forms of “measuring music,”\textsuperscript{110} which appear as (i) long melodies played by the wind instruments

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
during the spinning music and (ii) two bassoon cadenzas (mm.167 and 172). These cadenzas represent more of a close-up perspective of Lachesis measuring the thread of life than do the soaring wind melodies of the spinning music, which seem to depict a more banal representation of the measuring as day-to-day work for Lachesis. At the end of each cadenza, the audience can imagine that a thread of life has just been cut by Clotho. The cadenzas span a range of more than three octaves, each time accompanied by trills in the flute and oboe part that Welcher marks to be played “piano but boiling, furiously!”\textsuperscript{111} The accompaniment trills sustain a whole tone collection (Gb-Ab-Bb-C), and Welcher’s careful choice of pitches in the bassoon line emphasizes dissonant pitches that grind against the sustained collection, elevating the dramatic tension in this cadenza. The pitch level of the second cadenza is raised by a half step, so the audience is kept on the edge of their seats. This transposition is much like that of the two statements of the introduction section of the piece. Meanwhile, the sustain (again, articulated through trills in the two upper woodwinds, this time with help from the piano sustaining a C#1) is derived of the opposite whole-tone collection. The bassoon’s passages in the cadenza project easily through the ensemble. The first passage is scored so that when the bassoon plays the most dissonant pitches they are in the same register as the sustained trills of the other instruments, while the second passage seems more dramatic because of the C#1 held by the piano and the rise in pitch level. The woodwinds provide similar coloring in the second cadenza by sustaining the whole-tone collection, this time in a higher register. This scoring is not only the mark of a good composer from a dramatic standpoint, but a composer who understands that the bassoon can be easily covered (even in smaller

\textsuperscript{111} The Moerae score.
chamber ensembles) by the combination of certain textures and/or registers. In the cadenzas, Welcher indicates that the bassoon play “portentous,” meaning ominous and threatening, which the bassoonist can maximize with loud dynamics in lowest register and employing rubato where Welcher indicates tenuto markings (—).

The coda section of *The Moerae* follows the bassoon cadenzas (mm. 194-229). This section involves a recapitulation of the musical material from the introduction section. The audience must interpret this section in relation to the program at their own discretion, dependent upon what they feel happens after the thread of life is cut. Just after the thread is cut Welcher first uses the “nervous” music from the introduction, which creates a feeling of unease. A bell-like proclamation in the piano part, seen in mm. 189-193, is new material that is a combination of dissonant chords and ominous-sounding bass tones and helps this passage take on added dramatic weight. The music that follows this transition feels like new material, but it is actually derived from previously stated musical ideas. It is harmonically and metrically similar to the “spinning music,” though it is stated in a broader 9/4 meter (where earlier the spinning music was in 9/8) and is in the key of A major, with selective instances of chromatic inflection and bitonality.

*The Moerae* is a terrifically effective piece, though it is paramount that the audience be aware of the programmatic aspects of the piece. The audience benefits from knowing the role of each of the fates, and knowing that some musical material is related to those characters. An open-ended interpretation of the coda section allows the audience to decide for themselves what is happening in the piece after the thread of life is cut—a nice philosophical touch. While Welcher writes challenging, virtuosic passages for all the instruments (especially passages of alternating whole tone collections!) and indicates
occasional harmonic fingerings, the most challenging aspect of this piece in performance is navigating the frequent instances of long sustains where the meter is often ambiguous. This is especially challenging when sustains are precluded by polyrhythmic figures. The most important aspect of preparing a performance of *The Moerae* is the preparation of each player’s individual part so that it reflects what is happening in the score. It is easy for players to get lost in long, sustained passages where the pulse is not easily perceived, therefore each will need to write in cues for other instruments to help them navigate through these sections. Even after these markings have been added to the individual parts a great deal of physical movement and cueing will be necessary in certain sections during performance, notably the coda.


I asked Welcher if he had plans to revisit the woodwind quintet genre, only to discover that he has also written two other woodwind quintets that have not yet been published. These are *Teaching the Wind to Sing* (2010) and *Spring Music* (2015), the latter of which is “a sequel to Samuel Barber’s woodwind quintet *Summer Music.*”¹¹² Due to the relative inaccessibility of these scores for purchase commercially or through the composer’s website, these pieces are not included in this study. Welcher says that he has played the first three woodwind quintets, but not these two most recent pieces.¹¹³ The pieces are undoubtedly influenced by Welcher’s experience as a bassoonist, also shown by his nod to Barber in *Spring Music.*

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¹¹² Ibid.
¹¹³ Ibid.
Teaching the Wind to Sing was written for amateur musicians, though Welcher mentions in the program note that the performers were very skilled\textsuperscript{114}, which is evident in the virtuosic instrumental technique required of the players. Welcher writes unmetered, aleatoric sections like those seen in his work for wind ensemble Zion (and a few of his other pieces) but Teaching the Wind to Sing is the only wind quintet to use this device.

Example 5.17: Aleatoric Writing in Teaching the Wind to Sing, m. 107.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{teaching_the_wind_to_sing_ex5_17.png}
\end{figure}

This device is used for programmatic reasons. On this writing, Welcher states:

That device appears in that piece because of the Robert Frost poem that it’s based on called “The Aim was Song.” It’s a short poem, but it’s about “before the wind could be ‘taught’ to calm itself down it had to be contained” and the first half of the poem is about this wild, chaotic wind. Then man comes along and teaches the wind to be controllable, and to me that’s like Frost talking about the beginning of music. Specifically the earliest possible music—which would be singing—and how we go from this wild opening (well, for a woodwind quintet it’s kind of wild!) which ultimately focuses down and down until just one melody comes out, and then the rest of the instruments support

\textsuperscript{114} Program note for Teaching the Wind to Sing.
the melody. The second half of the piece becomes more and more tonal as the wind is taught to sing, so the reason for the aleatoric music is to mirror Frost’s description of what the wind was like before man came along: wild and uncontrollable.115

Spring Music was written for oboist Rebecca Henderson, Welcher’s colleague at the University of Texas, and was premiered on a program with Samuel Barber’s Summer Music and two other woodwind quintet premieres: Donald Grantham’s Winter Music and Yevgeniy Sharlat’s Herbstmusik.116 Welcher’s work is a free-standing piece that uses a twelve-tone row based on the name Rebecca Anne Henderson. As chance would have it, the name has exactly 12 letters that can typically be translated into musical notation, a la the B-A-C-H and D-S-C-H motives, to name only a few. The piece also quotes the “Spring” movement of Antonio Vivaldi’s The Four Seasons in a very obvious statement toward the conclusion.

Example 5.18: Tone Row Used in Spring Music.

“I had originally wanted my piece to segue into the Barber, and I had an alternate ending worked out for it that ends on the very same tri-tone that starts Summer Music” states Welcher. “I had it all worked out so that the tri-tone was a new sound that effortlessly flows into the Barber. The premiere performance didn’t program the pieces in that order so I changed the ending. I might publish it with two endings, in case it is used just before Summer Music.” This is the only direct reference to Barber that Welcher

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115 Personal correspondence with the composer.
116 Ibid.
makes, intentionally avoiding quotation from *Summer Music* and even stylistic similarities.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{117} Program note for *Summer Music.*
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study has examined nine pieces of chamber music by Dan Welcher—focusing specifically on two that involve the bassoon as a featured soloist—spanning the entirety of his career from the late 1960’s to the present. The majority of these works are published and available commercially; a few await publication in the near future and as of this writing are only available via the composer. A limited number of recordings of most of the pieces in this study are commercially available. In the case of Concerto da Camera, the only available recording features Welcher conducting the orchestra, the solo played by the bassoonist for whom it was written: acclaimed bassoonist and pedagogue Leonard Sharrow. Having held many different positions throughout his career, notably a principal bassoonist and professor of bassoon, Welcher’s diverse musical experiences show in his work, and are perhaps reflected by the creation of pieces that fulfill a certain need within the genre.

Welcher’s writing for woodwind instruments is highly idiomatic and does not include expansive sections of virtuosity, therein making many of the pieces accessible to both amateur and professional players. His music is intended primarily for the entertainment of the audience, and includes virtuosic writing only when it is needed for programmatic efficacy or at the request of a commission.
This is not to say that Welcher’s music is “easy to perform,” as the stylistic eclecticism in his writing allows for the use of a wide range of harmonic and rhythmic devices that are intricately woven throughout his scores. The breadth of his harmonic and rhythmic vocabulary shows the influence of many composers and compositional styles, and may juxtapose many compositional devices (e.g. polytonality, serial technique, aleatoric passages, musical quote) in the same piece, or use them to convey a certain aspect of the work’s program or meaning. Welcher’s music would be considerably more difficult to understand were it not for the clarity of his formal structures—often dictated by programmatic elements—that make the inclusion of such a complex vocabulary of styles seem like a natural, organic outgrowth of the music. Performers of Welcher’s music must be aware of each of these elements so that they may in turn play an informed and effective performance.

Very little of Welcher’s chamber music for woodwinds utilizes extended instrumental techniques such as multiphonics, flutter tonguing, and microtonality. This is a conscious choice by Welcher, as he is aware of past and current developments in and publications about extended techniques. His bassoon music is often written in a lyrical style, where extended techniques would seem out of place and inappropriate. Bassoonists performing Welcher’s Concerto da Camera and The Wind Won’t Listen are challenged to employ a wide palate of tone colors and a variety of articulation styles in their playing, which will appropriately and effectively convey different musical moods and/or characters, frequently expressed within music written in a lyrical, singing style.

118 Personal correspondence with the composer.
Welcher’s works for bassoon, as well as his wind quintets, have been slow to gain a permanent status in the standard repertoire. This is most likely due to their tendency toward lyrical writing and their lengthy duration, though they lie in the limelight of a lesser-explored area of the repertoire. Welcher’s music is intelligent and entertaining, and accessible by student musicians and professionals alike. These works are a great addition to a recital or chamber music concert, and sure to be a gratifying musical experience for the performer and listener alike. Many of his overtly programmatic works benefit from the inclusion of program notes.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The two unpublished woodwind quintets (*Teaching the Wind to Sing* and *Spring Music*) could be examined under similar criterion as the pieces in this study, should they be published and readily available to performers. *Spring Music*, according to Welcher, is considered a sequel to Samuel Barber’s woodwind quintet *Summer Music* (1956), and the relationship between these two pieces could be also be examined.

An interesting study for those wishing to examine Welcher’s works for larger ensembles would be an in-depth study of *Four Places in the West: Glacier, The Yellowstone Fires, Arches*, and *Zion* for concert band to note stylistic and idiomatic changes in Welcher’s writing for band from different points within his career, not without consideration to changes in harmonic language and expressive compositional devices such as aleatoric sections, atonality and polytonality, and dissonance created by the simultaneous use of multiple meters. Most important in such a consideration would be an analysis of large scale forms of each of the works, both separately and as one large scale
symphonic work, where each piece serves as a “movement.” One might also consider if and how Welcher writes for winds in a wind band setting compared to his chamber music.

Welcher’s three numbered string quartets could be examined for their stylistic differences and their relationship to the great repertoire of the string quartet, both standard and contemporary. A study of this nature might also include a comparison between Welcher’s use of the ensemble in his quartets to his use of it as an accompanying ensemble in the quintets with wind instruments, such as *The Wind Won’t Listen*.

Finally, those interested in Welcher’s compositions may want to directly compare his writing style to that of his contemporaries, such as Christopher Rouse or John Corigliano. A comparison of this nature would most likely include genres that each of the composers have in common, such as orchestral and wind ensemble pieces, or string quartets.
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APPENDIX A: LIST OF WORKS BY DAN WELCHER

Listed chronologically.

* denotes unpublished composition

ORCHESTRA

Dervishes (1976)
The Visions of Merlin (1980)
Prairie Light: Three Texas Water Colors of Georgia O’Keeffe (1985)
Castle Creek Fanfare/Overture (1989)
Bridges (1991)
Haleakala: How Maui Snared the Sun (1991)
Symphony No. 1 (1992)
Night Watchers (Symphony No. 2) (1994)
Bright Wings: A Valediction (1996)
Spumante (1998)
Beyond Sight (1999)
Zion (1999)
Jackpot: A Celebratory Overture (2005)
Symphony No. 5 (2009)

WIND ENSEMBLE/CONCERT BAND

Arches: An Impression for Concert Band (1984)
The Yellowstone Fires (1988)
Castle Creek Overture (1989)
Zion (1994)
Circular Marches (1997)
Laboring Songs (1997)
Spumante (1999)
Perpetual Song (2000)
Songs Without Words: Five Mood Pieces for Wind Ensemble (2001)
Minstrels of the Kells (2002)
Glacier (2003)
Symphony No. 4, “American Visionary” (2005)
INSTRUMENTAL CONCERTI

Concerto for Flute and Orchestra (1974)
Concerto da Camera for Bassoon and Chamber Orchestra (1975)
Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra (1989)
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, “Shiva’s Drum” (1993)
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1993)
Venti di Mare (“Sea Winds”), Concerto for Oboe and Chamber Orchestra (1999)
Concerto for Timpani and Orchestra (2004)

MIXED CHAMBER MUSIC

Nocturne and Dance, for trumpet and piano (1966)
Elizabethan Variations, for four recorders (1968)
Firewing: The Flame and the Moth, for oboe and percussion (1968)
Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1975)
Partita for Horn, Violin and Piano (1980)
Brass Quintet (1982)
A Rag for Rags, for brass sextet and percussion (1984)
Hauntings, for tuba ensemble (1986)
White Mares of the Moon, for flute and harp (1986)
Chameleon Music, for ten percussionists (1987)
Reversible Jackets: Exercises in Conjugal Counterpoint, for flute and clarinet (1987)
Stigma, for contrabass and piano (1990)
Zephyrus, for flute, violin, viola and cello (1990)
Tsunami, for cello, percussion and piano (1991)
Dante Dances, for clarinet and piano (1995)
Phaedrus, for violin, clarinet and piano (1995)
All the Words to All the Songs, for flute and piano (1996)
Spirit Realms (Three Meditations), for flute and percussion (1996)
Mill Songs: Four Metamorphoses after Schubert, for oboe and bassoon (1997)
Another Rag for Rags, for violin and piano (2001)
Quintet, for clarinet and string quartet (2001)
Florestan’s Falcon, for flute and piano (2002)
The Wind Won’t Listen, for bassoon and string quartet (2002)
The Moerae: Fantasy for Flute, Oboe, Bassoon and Piano (2006)*
You Can Fool..., for percussion quartet (2009)
Romanza—Duettino, for clarinet, violin, cello and piano (2011)
The Need to See: A Musical Fable for Children, for narrator and chamber ensemble
(2012)

WOODWIND QUINTET

Woodwind Quintet No. 1 (1967)
Woodwind Quintet No. 2 (1977)
Listen Up! A Guide to Melody, Harmony, Rhythm, Tone Color and Counterpoint
(Woodwind Quintet No. 3) (1986)
*Teaching the Wind to Sing (2010)*
*Spring Music (2015)*

**STRING QUARTET**

String Quartet No. 1 (1988)
String Quartet No. 3, “Cassatt” (2008)
*Lone Star Sinfonietta*, for three string quartets (2011)
*Museon Polemos*, for two string quartets (2012)

**OPERA**

*Della’s Gift* (1986)
*The Yellow Wallpaper* (2010)

**CHORAL/VOCAL**

*The Bequest*, for soprano and flute (1976)
*Abeja Blanca*, for mezzo-soprano, english horn and piano (1979)
*Vox Femina: A Cycle of Poems by and about Women*, for soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano (1984)
*Tickets for a Prayer Wheel*, for baritone and viola (1997)
*JFK: The Voice of Peace*, for chorus, orchestra and speakers (1999)
*Canticle of the Sun*, for mezzo-soprano, mixed chorus and organ (2000)
*Remembrance in Black and White*, for mezzo-soprano and chamber ensemble (2001)
*How to Make Coq au Vin*, for medium voice and piano (2005)
*Four Personal Ads*, for soprano and piano (2007)
*Four More Personal Ads*, for tenor and piano (2009)

**PIANO**

Sonatina (1972)
*Dance Variations* (1979)
*Dreaming of Goldberg* (1979)
*A Rag for Rags* (1984)
*Pachel’s Bells* (1986)
*The Birth of Shiva* (1999)
APPENDIX B: DISCOGRAPHY OF PIECES INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY

Concerto da Camera


The Moerae: Fantasy for Flute, Oboe, Bassoon and Piano


Mill Songs: Four Metamorphoses After Schubert

C.1: THE MOERAE (program note by the composer)

I chose the subject of The Three Fates, from Greek Mythology. The Fates, called “Moerae” in Greek, spin the thread of life, measure it, and cut it when they please. The one who cuts the thread (ending the life) is the most dangerous of the three, of course, but all three are involved—and no one is spared their influence. They have names: the Spinner is Clotho (from which we get our word for “cloth”), the Measurer is Lachesis, and the Cutter is Atropos. Zeus is the only one who can step in and alter the decision of the fates, and can interpose when the thread of life (spun on Clothos’ spindle, and measured by the rod of Lachesis) is about to be snipped by Atropos. There is a secondary myth about these three women, which holds that they are all Moon-like goddesses, (the Greek word Moera means “a share” or “a phase”): the maiden-goddess of the Spring, the Nymph-goddess of the Summer, and the Crone-goddess of autumn.

My piece is in seven continuous sections: a rather nervous introduction, which tries twice to get things going in that nervous direction, but fails; a long first “spinning” section in 9/8, which mimes the spinning wheel but also contains a very long “measuring” melody in the oboe; a very fast section in 2/4 with sharp-edged “cutting” motives in the flute and bassoon over a skittery motive in the piano; a return to the spinning section, which rises this time to a rather dramatic climax; a cadenza for bassoon in two parts that stops the progress of time altogether; an agitated transition reminiscent of the beginning, and a slow, dreamy coda. It can be diagrammed this way:

Introduction—A—B—A’—C—A”—Coda

The mood of the work alters as it progresses, suggesting the unknowable changes that occur in life: the “spinning” music (A) begins rather passively, but takes on various guises in its re-appearances. The “cutting” music (B) is oddly cheerful, as the goddesses feel no emotion when they end a human life. The “measuring” music of the triple-cadenza (C) is dramatic and portentous. The Introduction leads us to a rather unsettled feeling, but the Coda holds out hope for an almost infinitely long life, perhaps in Elysium.

The Moerae was written as a gift for Dr. Robert Freeman, Dean of the College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas, in recognition of his lifelong advocacy and support of music by living composers.
C.2: THE WIND WON’T LISTEN (program note by the composer)

Since the bassoon is my own instrument, many people have asked me why I’ve written so little for the instrument. Beyond my early *Concerto da Camera* for bassoon and small orchestra, written for Leonard Sharrow in 1975, I’ve not written a single piece that features the bassoon as a solo vehicle (though I have written three woodwind quintets). When I first began composing seriously, critics were quick to point out that my orchestral writing revealed nothing of my roots as a woodwind player—and bassoonists asked why my pieces didn’t have “more bassoon solos.” Perhaps I was so aware that people were looking at me as a “bassoonist/composer” that I was determined to remove that stigma. Now that my transformation from performer to composer is complete, however, it’s time to re-address my instrument. I wanted this new piece to be serious rather than whimsical. *The Wind Won’t Listen* represents my return to the bassoon as the highly expressive, poetic soul that it is.

As such, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that the piece is based on a poem, and that the title of the piece as well as both its movement titles come from lines in that poem. I first read Beth Gylys’ poem “Split” at the MacDowell Colony in the summer of 2001, and it made a big impression on me. My personal life had been ruptured by divorce in the preceding year. This poem, with its dry insistence on observation rather than feeling, expressed the wrung-out state of my emotions at the time better than any I had seen. I set it to music, as a song, immediately. In this format, for voice and piano, I was able to put a musical note on every word of the poem. The first lines of the poem, “Everyone I know is crying, or should be crying,” became a melody that haunted me even without the words.

The work for bassoon and string quartet is an outgrowth of the song. The first movement is labeled “Romanza” and has a loose formal arch structure of A-B-C-B-A, with B and C being fast sections framed by the lamenting “A” music. In addition to hearing the bassoon’s first notes attached to the lines “Everyone I know is crying,” there’s a sense of agitation, of loss, of longing, and at times of desperation in the music. At one point, the opening theme from *Tristan* even appears in the strings.

The second movement follows, without a real pause—the pizzicato final chords of the first movement becoming the increasingly aggressive opening chords of the second. The recitative is actually a foreshadowing of the basic theme that will be varied, again to the words of the song: “Life makes itself without us. Don’t let me tell you how it is. Go out. Look.” The recitative begins in an anguished state, but subsides into more gentle singing by the end, when it simply falls into an ostinato 5/8-3/4 pattern to begin the variations. Marked “Very steady tempo; Dancing,” this set of variations consists of three dances, each faster than the previous. The first, in the aforementioned 5/8-3/4 meter, gives way to a 3/8 scherzo, which in turn takes on a furious 2/4 “scurrying” motion.
The music becomes breathless, almost pulse-less, and an ethereal theme appears in the violins while the “rushing” music continues, sotto voce in the bassoon. This new theme is also from the song: “Why do I do this? The wind won’t listen.” The bassoon re-states its “Everyone I know is crying” melody from the first movement, and at length the 5/8-3/4 music returns, more subdued this time. The piece ends on a major-minor chord, suspended.

*The Wind Won’t Listen* is dedicated to the man who commissioned it, bassoonist Steven Dibner—who shares my passion for poetry and language.

[the poem “Split” by Beth Gyllys is printed in the program note]
APPENDIX D: PROGRAM NOTES FOR UNPUBLISHED PIECES OR THOSE NOT PUBLISHED BUT PROVIDED BY WELCHER

D.1: WOODWIND QUINTET #2 (Provided by the composer)

My second woodwind quintet was the result of a commission from the Blair Quintet in Nashville, Tennessee. I had written an earlier quintet during my undergraduate days (which is my second oldest published piece, composed when I was nineteen!) that this excellent group had played, and I wanted to write a much larger and more mature work for them. I was, at the time, a full-time professional bassoonist---Principal Bassoonist in the Louisville Orchestra, professor of bassoon at the University of Louisville, and (of course) bassoonist in the Louisville Woodwind Quintet. The genre was familiar to me: most works in this idiom are French, either in reality or in nature, and seem mostly to be of the "pastorale" mood that has been assigned to wind instruments since the invention of sheep.

I determined to write a non-pastorale quintet that would stand alongside the two wonderful quintets of Alvin Etler, the Partita of Irving Fine, Barber's lushly nostalgic Summer Music, and the ever-present Kleine Kammermusik of Hindemith---serious, if sometimes lighthearted, works. I discarded my serial language in this piece (except for the central episode of the second movement and the accompaniment to the non-serial oboe solo that begins that movement)---instead, I created a language that I felt could work well for wind instruments that don't, after all, blend together all that easily.

The first movement, marked "driven, intense", is an extended A-B-A form in which all the music springs from the angular melody of the beginning three bars. Changing meters and sudden shifts of color create an atmosphere of tension and unresolved conflict. The second movement begins with an oboe recitative, melancholy and wistful, which becomes gradually accompanied and forms a songlike theme. A little waltz begins in the flute, forming the central section of the movement, which is developed in its own ternary fashion. A climactic statement over a rising pedal point leads to a recapitulation in canon of the opening melody, with the bassoon answering the oboe's phrases over an insistent texture of horn, flute and clarinet chords.

The final movement is as long as the previous two combined. Marked "Passacaglia", it begins in unmetered but strictly notated time, and progresses into 5/4 after the initial statement. Six versions of the ground-theme follow, with increasingly complex counterpoint and tempo changes.
A meno mosso section follows, with two slower statements of the theme in conjunction with a new melody (formed by the music signatures of Dmitri Shostakovich, Benjamin Britten and myself---a musical conceit only possible in one's twenties!). The three statements of the ground theme that follow this are increasingly intense, and climax in another beginning---of a three-voice fugue, with the signature melody riding on top as a cantus firmus. At its height, the opening passacaglia theme returns, unison, and the work ends with a tonal coda-statement of the theme, now positively identified in d minor.

D.2: MILL SONGS: FOUR METAMORPHOSES AFTER SCHUBERT (provided by the composer)

Oboists and bassoonists have relatively little music to play in duet form that allows either instrument to sing. Most duet pieces are in canon or in counterpoint, with the result being a vague sense that "something is missing", or "if only there were a piano part". When Kristin Wolf-Jensen and John Snow approached me about writing a duo piece for them, my first determination was to make a piece that would allow each instrument to participate in full-throated song.

Franz Schubert, considered by most people to be the best composer of art songs who ever lived, had a major birthday at the time of this commission---the 200th anniversary of his birth, in 1797, was being celebrated as I started work on this piece. It seemed fortuitous to combine my effort with a celebration of Schubert's masterpiece, a piece I have loved since my teens. *Die Schöne Müllerin*, as everyone knows, tells in twenty songs the story of a young miller's apprentice, and of his infatuation with the miller's daughter. In the course of the cycle, we follow this naive lad and his confidant, the brook, through a series of episodes depicting the growth of young love, the rejection of the lover in favor of someone else (the Hunter), and his suicide by drowning in his beloved brook.

While it's impossible without words to completely tell the story using only an oboe and a bassoon, the music itself can do a lot. I have chosen four pivotal songs that take the story from introduction (Wandering) to the primal question "does she love me?" (The Inquisitive Man), to the introduction of the rival (The Hunter) and the ultimate decision to destroy himself despite the brook's pleading (The Miller and The Brook). Each movement preserves much of Schubert's melodic and harmonic work, but adds a twentieth century perspective in the way Stravinsky "refocused" Pergolesi and Tchaikovsky in his ballets *Pulcinella* and *The Fairy's Kiss*---square corners are rounded off, modulations are suddenly introduced, rhythms are altered, and (most importantly here), pianistic chordal writing is replaced by arpeggios and tremolos. The result, I hope, is a bit like hearing these four songs sung by a singer---with the added dimension of woodwind virtuosity.
The poems of the four songs can be summarized as follows:

I. Wandering ("Das Wandern")

Wandering is the miller's pleasure...We have learned it from the water, from the millstones and millwheels; ever restless, always moving about and never still.

II. The Inquisitive Man ("Der Neugierige")

I do not ask the flowers, nor the stars. They cannot tell me what I want to know. I can only ask my brook whether my heart has deceived me or not:
Oh brook, my love, how silent you are today! I need to know only one thing; one little word, for or against.
"Yes" is the first word, the other word is "No".
Those two little words comprise my entire world.
Oh brook, my love, how strange you are!
I won't tell anyone else...tell me, little stream, does she love me?

III. The Hunter ("Der Jäger")

What is the hunter doing here at the mill? There is no prey for him here, except one little tame doe--and she belongs to me! If you want to impress her, though, leave your stupid gun and yelping dogs in the woods,

shave the bristling hair from your chin, or you're going to frighten her off.
If you want to really do something for her, go back into the woods and shoot the boars that uproot her gardens at night---leave the mill and the millers in peace, you hunter-hero!

IV. The Miller and The Brook ("Der Müller und der Bach")

(a dialogue: the Miller speaks, then the Brook, then finally the Miller again)

The Miller: When a true heart perishes for love, all the lilies fade in their bed, and the full moon must hide in the clouds. The angels cover their eyes, and they sob and sing the soul to rest.

The Brook: And when love tears itself free of sorrow, a new star twinkles in the sky! Three roses, half-red and half-white, appear from the thorn twig, and the angels cut off their wings and come down to earth each morning.

The Miller: Ah, dear little stream, you mean so well! But do you know, little stream, what love can do? Ah, down under--in your water is sweet, cool repose. Oh stream, dear stream---just sing to me.
D.3: TEACHING THE WIND TO SING (provided by the composer)

This short work was commissioned by the Chamber Music Conference and Composer's Forum of Bennington College, Vermont. The task was to write a work for the participants, who are "amateurs" in that they make their living as doctors, lawyers or professionals rather than musicians---but they were all superb players nonetheless. I decided to base the piece on a poem by Vermont's most famous poet, Robert Frost. It didn't hurt that the poem itself was about song, and about man's rather dubious role in "teaching the wind to sing".

The Aim Was Song

Before man came to blow it right
The wind once blew itself untaught,
And did its loudest day and night
In any rough place where it caught.

Man came to tell it what was wrong:
It hadn't found the place to blow;
It blew too hard - the aim was song.
And listen - how it ought to go!

He took a little in his mouth,
And held it long enough for north
To be converted into south,
And then by measure blew it forth.

By measure. It was word and note,
The wind the wind had meant to be -
A little through the lips and throat.
The aim was song - the wind could see.

Robert Frost
D.4: SPRING MUSIC (provided by the composer)

In my previous life as a professional bassoonist for many years, I must have played over one hundred woodwind quintet pieces of various sizes. Several great compositions come to mind as milestones in the genre: Anton Reicha, of course, wrote dozens of them, but Franz Danzi was close behind. And after them came wonderful works by Paul Taffanel, Paul Hindemith, Jacques Ibert, Darius Milhaud, Arnold Schönberg, Alvin Etler, Ingolf Dahl, and many other composers including myself: I have written four woodwind quintets prior to this new one. But for me, the masterpiece of the genre is Samuel Barber’s incomparable Summer Music, written as the original “kickstarter” commission, with individual donors contributing to the good of the whole. Summer Music, laid out as a lazy rondo (or ritornello) form, manages to make five instruments sound like an orchestra—and does so without sacrificing seriousness of purpose or structural ingenuity. The piece is, quite simply, the perfect woodwind quintet.

Being asked to write a “sequel” to it (or in this case, perhaps, “prequel”, with Spring coming before Summer) was daunting. I didn’t think I should attempt Barber’s broad lyricism in my new work, and I wanted to stay away from Americana-tinged harmonies. Anything but having to compete with Barber! Instead, I made a seven minute piece that percolates rather than singing (most of the time), and which suggests incipient blooming and just-about-to-hatch little creatures. At the same time, it anticipates the departure of a dear friend: oboist Rebecca Henderson is retiring, and this piece was commissioned in her honor.

My piece springs (pardon the pun) from a twelve-tone row, but that row was chosen for its built-in polytonality that gives a sense of three keys at once, related by thirds: E major, G major, and Bb major. Additionally, it introduces a melody midway through that is not related to any of these keys. This tune, first heard in the flute, is the name REBECCA ANNE HENDERSON in musical notation (only those letters which are musical notes are used, hence E-Bb-E-C-C-A A-E-B-D-E-Eb. Poignantly, the oboe is resting while this tune is played for the first time---with the words “Life Without Becky” inserted in the score.

Toward the end of the composition, an older and very famous musical rendition of Spring emerges as a layered quotation, allowing the birds to chirp and the breezes to blow. Our little springtime dream is over, and we await the ripening fruit and hothouse passion of summer.
APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPT OF PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE WITH DAN WELCHER

This interview took place on March 18th, 2015 via live streaming video, after a lengthy email correspondence between he and I that spanned several months. Dan Welcher spoke to me from his home composition studio in Bastrop, TX and I (Reed Hanna) was in Columbia, SC.

REED HANNA: What musical elements does a piece by Dan Welcher have to include? What makes “a piece by Dan Welcher” a piece by Dan Welcher?

DAN WELCHER: That’s a tough question. The structure of a piece is important, and I’m very much about having a form that can be perceived by a listener. It doesn’t have to be a form that you have a name for (like Rondo or Sonata—Allegro) but there needs to be a sense of “return,” a sense of pillars and doors and windows, but also a sense of the whole building. That’s how I write now, but I didn’t always write that way when I was younger. When I wrote the Concerto da Camera the first time I didn’t do that. I just started out with a sense of “first theme” and “second theme” and let things progress the way they wanted to.

Structure is one hallmark of my music. Another is: no matter whether I’m working in an atonal or tonal idiom (or a bitonal or tritonal idiom), there is always a sense of underpinning key. There is a sense that there is a “home.” I’ll do that with a pedal note, an open fifth on the bottom, or something so that even if the rest of the music sounds completely serialized or otherwise not tonal, still feel like it has a sense of root. Those things are always there. I’m told, though I’m not sure that I’m convinced of this myself, that all of my music “tells a story.” A lot of my music has programmatic titles but not all of them are organized in a real narrative way, but that’s what people tell me—maybe it’s because my titles are colorful. Except for Concerto da Camera. That’s not a very colorful title.

HANNA: Yes, but that’s a very colorful piece.

WELCHER: It is, and it does have an unwritten story about Shostakovich dying. That sort of happened in the act of writing it, that I realized that his initials [D-S-C-H] were already embedded in the music and then I read that he was dying so I made the last movement really be about his dying.
HANNA: That’s very interesting! Tell me more about how that works.

WELCHER: It’s the D-S-C-H motive that goes all the way through the finale of the *Concerto da Camera* because I was sort of obsessing on this composer—I couldn’t believe that he was still alive and I was still alive, but he was soon to depart. He wrote so much great bassoon music, as you know, and it was always fun to play Shostakovich because you knew that you were going to have a great solo somewhere in the piece.

The second theme in the first movement of *Concerto da Camera* comes from the first movement of Shostakovich Tenth. If you remember, the clarinets play this melody [he sings this melody]. It’s a waltz. A lot of Shostakovich’s music was influenced by Mahler. Shostakovich loved Mahler’s music.

HANNA: Did you play any Shostakovich with Leonard Sharrow at Aspen?

WELCHER: Oh, yeah. I sat next to him during a performance week of the Ninth Symphony when I was still playing second to him. I watched him get ready for that solo, and he was nervous! He had this little thing that I thought was reed water right next to his left shoe, and he told me before for the performance “You’re going to see me reach down and take this thing and drink it. Don’t be alarmed because nothing is wrong, but I would like you to hold this B at the end of the solo. I’ll pass it off to you so that you can make that big swell because I’ll be exhausted by then, and then I’ll take it back in the middle and move to the B flat. But don’t make it look like you’re playing.” He did things like that. What was in the reed water thing was vodka! A shot and a half of vodka which he downed in ten seconds. He told me that he learned to do that in the Chicago Symphony, because Fritz Reiner was such a tyrant that he scared everybody, and whenever Sharrow had to play a long solo like the Pathetique or something like that he would take a vodka shot just before the thing started. It wouldn’t be enough to make him drunk, but if he did it just before the solo it would take the edge off.

Sharrow was teaching at Indiana University when I was in Louisville and I used to go up to IU, not for lessons because I was really finished studying by then. My final teacher, Arthur Weisberg, had been so charismatic and so unique that I didn’t want to mess with what he had taught me. Sharrow told me the one time that I did have a lesson with him “Well, you’re pretty much a formed bassoonist now, and I shouldn’t mess with that. There are some things that I perhaps would not have taught you, but you’re comfortable and you sound good so I’m going to let it alone.” He and I were just colleagues, we were never student—teacher.

I wrote the *Concerto da Camera* for him because he was such an important person in my life, and for two summers in Aspen I was sitting next to him in the orchestra. I also knew what kind of music he liked to play—lyrical music—so the piece is mostly long soliloquies and long solo passages that are pretty (or at least melodic) and without a
whole lot of competition; the scherzo being the one thing that goes further than that. Most of the music is lyrical and that’s why the piece is so long and kind of “strung-out.” To me, it kind of sounds that way now. When I hear that piece—even after my revisions—there are places that I think now when I hear it “What were you thinking? Why did that just go so long?” and I know it was because I didn’t quite have my “structural chops” together as a composer when I wrote that piece. When I revised the piece in 2006, I tightened up the fugue in the last movement so that it makes a little bit more sense. It’s still kind of strange to have two fugues on top of each other, but that part I didn’t take away. I made some cuts and revisions, and even did a transposition. The third movement has the most changes in it.

**HANNA:** Can you describe your use of polyrhythmic figures in your music, specifically the *Concerto da Camera*?

**WELCHER:** I like that level of rhythmic complexity because if I didn’t do that, with my tonal idiom my music might sound hopelessly “old-fashioned.” That is one way I can elevate it out of the 1950’s mainstream academic American music that is so “forgettable.” [He sings a generic rhythmic pattern that he describes as “horrible”] I didn’t want so sound like that, but I guess my tonal underpinnings are still enough like that music that I wanted to find a way to bring me music out of that world and one way is polyrhythm.

I also like metric things like an isorhythm—I do that a lot in my music. In fact, the last movement of my first symphony is an isorhythmic movement. It’s in rondo form, but the isorhythm never disappears. Sometimes it’s twice as fast, once it’s four times as fast, and at the final climax it’s twice as slow. But it’s always there, and I put the entire movement together with the isorhythm, imposing the rondo form on top of it. I do the same thing in *The Wind Won’t Listen*. [we were specifically discussing the music that begins at m. 63 in the second movement of *The Wind Won’t Listen*]

In *Mill Songs*, “The Hunter” is all four bar phrases in Schubert, but I move the theme around into different patterns and overlapping patterns. That kind of metric play is fun for me. Theoretical writings on metric play make it sound dry as dust, but pieces like Fred Lerdahl’s *Marches* and *Waltzes* are really clever in the way they use the concepts outlined in theoretical texts on meter. They’re also really fun to play!

**HANNA:** How do you feel about pieces with golden proportions, or other highly idealized forms like that?

**WELCHER:** I think they’re wonderful for people who do that, like Bela Bartok, but I don’t do that. I’ve never written a golden proportion piece. For one thing, it’s too much of a “theorist’s idea.” Bartok himself hated it when people talked to him about this kind of thing. Occasionally when theorists or musicologists analyze your music, they’re telling you things that you know to be not true, or that you didn’t intend. I remember reading a
review of the *Concerto da Camera* after the recording came out in a well-known scholarly journal [The Musical Quarterly]. This ten-page analysis got it wrong: they said it was all based on B-A-C-H. I had already written program notes, and it was pretty clear what I was doing but this author just got on his academic horse and didn’t stop. Through ten pages he was talking about homage to Bach. Well, he got the C-H part right…

I have written pieces in arch form. My second string quartet, *Harbor Music*, uses that form. I wrote the piece in three weeks. I laid out the form first: it was going to be all about this place in Sydney, Australia where the boat leaves from the dock, then goes to this location, and then back to the dock, and then another location. You can’t go from point B to point C, you always have to go back to point A first. I thought “this is sort of like a Rondo, but I’m going to make it into an Arch—Rondo. So it has this high point and comes back via circuitous route, but every time we hear the “da da dumm, da da dumm” it’s a step higher and a different orchestration so that there’s a sense of heightened excitement as the piece progresses.

**HANNA:** Is that treatment like the introduction section of *The Moerae*?

**WELCHER:** Sort of, but a lot of that is just parallel phrases and you want people to remember the music. This is one of the things that I sometimes get lambasted for by critics and/or other composers: that he’s so well-made that the music is just boring. These are all so well-made and clear forms that people can hear, and my answer to that is “So, What?” Aren’t we trying to bring an audience along with us instead of just having them scratch their head and listen moment to moment? I’m not embarrassed that I do that.

**HANNA:** The title of your *Concerto da Camera* seems to be inspired by the historical traditions of Sonata da Camera/Sonata da Chiesa. Is this the case? If so, are any of your other pieces inspired by historical forms/genres?

**WELCHER:** The title *Concerto da Camera* really just means “chamber concerto”, which implies a small orchestra rather than a big one. Nothing more than that. As for other historical forms, I do sometimes use forms with names like rondo, sonata-allegro, theme-and-variations, etc. But I’m not academic about it, and wouldn’t name these forms in the titles of the pieces.

**HANNA:** Have you noticed any significant stylistic changes in your writing over the course of your career that could be described like “style periods”?

**WELCHER:** I was much more inclined to be atonal or serial in my stylistic choices thirty years ago. Now, I tend to treat each new piece separately---but my “tonal ear” seems to be taking center stage more and more.

**HANNA:** Who are your most important musical influences?
**WELCHER:** I usually answer this question by saying: “My teachers were Mozart, Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and Benjamin Britten---but I never met any of them”.

**HANNA:** Are there any specific pieces that were very influential to you as a composer?

**WELCHER:** Let’s just say that I have been profoundly moved by certain composers like Mahler, Britten, and John Corigliano, and carry certain pieces by them around in my head all the time. I haven’t been directly influenced by these pieces in a way that someone else would notice. Mahler’s Fifth Symphony, Britten’s *War Requiem* and *Peter Grimes* (and several of his other operas), and Corigliano’s *Pied Piper Fantasy* are all pieces that have shaken me to the core. Those pieces are huge—they provide me more with structural advice and a route to study than actual emulation.

**HANNA:** Do you have any non-musical mentors or influences outside of music that serve as inspiration for you as a composer?

**WELCHER:** Shakespeare, John Updike, Yeats, Philip Roth, Tolstoy. Literature and poetry and theatre are very influential to me. I’m a big theatre nut, and when I go to New York City I rarely attend concerts if I can attend plays. I’m also big on the outdoors, and on the study of foreign cultures.

**HANNA:** Mill Songs seems to be a unique piece in your catalogue, because it’s based on themes of a renowned historical composer. Why Schubert’s *Die Schöne Müllerin*?

**WELCHER:** I love *Die Schöne Müllerin* deeply. I played the piano for a baritone when I was twenty, which was my first exposure to the cycle as a cycle, though I knew some of the songs before. When this commission came about, it happened to be Schubert’s 200th birthday, and I just asked John and Kristin if it would be okay if I did a “Pulcinella-type” gloss on Schubert. I took Stravinsky as my model; he used Pergolesi tunes and put them through his own kind of process, so they sound like Stravinsky visiting the Old Country. I wanted *Mill Songs* to be like that.

**HANNA:** As a composer, what do you view is the role of the audience?

**WELCHER:** That’s who I’m writing for! When I was in school in the 1970’s the rule of thumb was we all had to write 12-tone music, regardless of anyone’s opinion. You could never get a grant, or a job teaching, or win the Rome prize if you were writing anything but 12-tone music. For about twenty years, that was the rule, and that rule is finally gone. Now there’s a different kind of academic pursuit, and you have to do spectral music. At least it’s opened up a bit since then and there’s more room for diversity of style than there used to be. And I was one of those people, like John Corigliano, who was pigeon-holed early on as “this is a guy who works in tonal music, we’ll just forget him because he
doesn’t count.” One of the reasons that Concerto da Camera is, in the end, about
Shostakovich is that I did a paper in grad school about Shostakovich Tenth and then had
to stand up and defend it in front of my class. All but one person in that class said that
“this music is meaningless because it is tonal, and that Shostakovich is going to be in the
dustbin of history, you should be studying Webern.” I like to think now that Shostakovich
got the last laugh—so did Britten. All of these composers that, when I was in grad school,
were made fun of are the ones who are the most played and the most likely to survive.

There is a book called Simple Composition by Charles Wuorinen, a living composer, and
the first sentence of the books says that anyone in this day in age who is not writing serial
music should be confined to the dustbin of history. I make a photocopy of that page and
circled that sentence in red and put it on my door. Over to the side of it I made a thought
bubble where I wrote “Oh, yeah???” That book came out in the 1970’s and it has been
completely disavowed since. None of the young composers that I know who are getting
any sort of attention are writing serial music—they’re writing complicated music—but
it’s not just that kind.

HANNA: Can you talk about the Tristan quote in The Wind Won’t Listen?

WELCHER: I was just looking at that quote. It’s in the cello part, but it doesn’t resolve
the way that Wagner resolves it. Wagner doesn’t resolve the Tristan chord either, until
the very end of the opera. That’s the genius of it. The quote in The Wind Won’t Listen just
sort of “happened,” I didn’t plan it. I was already in that extended chromatic harmony of
the Tristan chord—that Wagner resolves to a dominant seventh chord in a different
key—and what I was doing with the bassoon music was leading me to a chord like that
for a soliloquy. I was playing around with what chord that should be, and one day “Pow!”
there it was, and I liked it because it really played into the narrative of the piece that is
about splitting up and unhappiness and everyone crying, and I just thought “Why not?
Tristan is the most unfulfilled longing there ever was, you know.”

HANNA: The chord progression at the beginning of the second movement of The Wind
Won’t Listen is really neat. Can you explain this progression to me, and its genesis?

WELCHER: I took the last chord of the first movement, changed a note one at a time,
and allowed the chord to morph toward a new region. It’s not any kind of process or
rocket-science compositional process. But that whole piece is based on a song I had
written earlier, to a poem called “Split” by Beth Gylys. The poem moved me intensely;
it’s about a relationship coming apart and what that feels like. I had just been divorced
after eighteen years of marriage when I encountered the poem, and couldn’t get it out of
my head. So I set it to music, and then used the song as the basis for the bassoon-and-
strings piece. It’s far more haunting and visceral to me than to other people, I guess.

HANNA: How would you describe the style of your music?
WELCHER: I like to play with combining tonal and non-tonal, combining quote with original, combining pentatonic with serial, not so much in the *Concerto da Camera* and *The Wind Won’t Listen* but in a lot of my other music, especially band music. I have a piece for horn, violin and piano in which the horn plays pentatonic music, the violin and the piano play 12-tone music, and they fight for twenty minutes about who is right. In the final toccata they all decide to play in the horn’s style, and the only unison bar of the piece is the last bar—so they finally stop fighting. Those are all things that I do to get myself going and to stay interested in a project and keep compositional focus while working on something that is really long and takes a long time to write.

I think about Wagner and the *Ring Cycle*, about how someone could write something that takes twenty years to finish, and then when you sit there and hear all four of those operas in a row it’s clear that there is a complete progression from beginning to end, and it’s the same composer. Rhinegold is perhaps a little more simple, and Gotterdammerung is a step backward—but it’s the same composer, and if it wasn’t for his systematic approach and his leitmotifs those four operas could have been four wildly different styles. I like to do that too—to plan it out, to have a sense of a roadmap and sometimes leitmotifs and themes that I can cycle and will connect things together.

HANNA: You mention mixing tonality and atonality. What other kinds of “harmonic systems” have you employed, and where?

WELCHER: For *Haleakala: How Maui Snared the Sun*, I invented a “looping pentatonic” scale that builds each new 5-note set on top of the previous one, which creates a system that can provide virtually all the chromatic notes if one goes high enough. Once I discovered this scale, I was able to use it a lot in other pieces, like my Violin Concerto and *Zion*. I’ve done a lot of work with bitonality and even tritonality, too, and the combining of serial technique with non-serial in the same piece like in my Piano Concerto, *Venti Di Mare*, and many others.

HANNA: Do you consider “level of difficulty” when composing a piece?

WELCHER: Yes, especially if it’s a commission. That’s a paramount question if someone is paying me to write.

HANNA: You’ve written music in many different genres. Is one genre a favorite?

WELCHER: I’d love to be able to write big operas, but so far the opera world hasn’t really discovered me. Despite my three operas (all chamber operas, to be sure), I’m still seen as an “orchestra and band guy”. I love all these genres, though—and chamber music can be the most challenging of all. My big double string quartet *Museon Polemos* was one of the most difficult pieces to write that I’ve ever experienced.
HANNA: Your most recent woodwind quintet, *Spring Music*, is much more technically virtuosic than the first three woodwind quintets.

WELCHER: It needed to be perky, in opposition to Samuel Barber’s *Summer Music*. I knew that it was going to be played alongside that piece, so I didn’t want to dwell too much on lyrical writing. There is some, but it is mostly about quirky and perky staccato gestures. It’s being premiered on a program that is “the four seasons of wind quintet.” With *Spring Music* and Barber’s *Summer Music*, the other two pieces are Donald Grantham’s *Winter Music* and Yevgeniy Sharlat’s *Herbstmusik*. Jennifer Higdon already has a piece for wind quintet called “Autumn Music.”

HANNA: Is it your intention to have *Spring Music* be programmed with Barber’s quintet?

WELCHER: No, it’s a free-standing piece. I had originally wanted my piece to segue into the Barber, and I had an alternate ending worked out for it that ends on the very same tri-tone that starts *Summer Music*. I had it all worked out so that the tri-tone was a new sound that effortlessly flows into the Barber. The premiere performance didn’t program the pieces in that order so I changed the ending. I might publish it with two endings, in case it is used just before *Summer Music*.

HANNA: *Teaching the Wind to Sing* has unmetered, aleatoric sections like *Zion* (and a few of your other pieces) but it’s the only wind quintet to use this device. Is there a particular reason you used it in that particular quintet?

WELCHER: That device appears in that piece because of the Robert Frost poem that it’s based on called “The Aim was Song.” It’s a short poem, but it’s about “before the wind could be ‘taught’ to calm itself down it had to be contained” and the first half of the poem is about this wild, chaotic wind. Then man comes along and teaches the wind to be controllable, and to me that’s like Frost talking about the beginning of music. Specifically the earliest possible music—which would be singing—and how we go from this wild opening (well, for a woodwind quintet it’s kind of wild!) which ultimately focuses down and down until just one melody comes out, and then the rest of the instruments support the melody. The second half of the piece becomes more and more tonal as the wind is taught to sing, so the reason for the aleatoric music is to mirror Frost’s description of the what the wind was like before man came along: wild and uncontrollable.

HANNA: Does conducting an ensemble devoted to new music influence your compositions?

WELCHER: Definitely. I find more inspiration in conducting new works by both famous and emerging composers than from anywhere else these days. Because I conduct six concerts a year or new chamber music by some really great composers, I learn
something every concert and I use it all in my music. I’ll discover notational tricks, instrumentation ideas, or even composition techniques that I didn’t know about by putting my hands directly on new pieces. It’s more effective than passive listening, certainly.

**HANNA:** How would you define the term “interpretation”? How important is it for you to closely work together with the artists performing your work?

**WELCHER:** I like to think that my scores speak for themselves. Having said that, I find more and more that conductors and younger musicians don’t really pay enough attention to the printed page, and want to “hear” a MIDI version first, or to ask me what I meant by something. They ignore metronome marks, articulations—even stylistic instructions—if I’m not there to insist on it, But that’s not the way it should be.

**HANNA:** How do you view the role of the composer/musician in the 21st century?

**WELCHER:** I think composers should be the best-educated, best-read, and most music-loving of musicians. Sadly, they aren’t always. I try to instill in my students a love of the canon, especially if they’re not performers with orchestral experience. Trying to be a composer and not knowing Beethoven, for instance, is for me a non-starter. We are the people who should be able to bring music across the footlights: to invent new ways of saying deep truths about life and art, to be the conduit between thought and action, to be able to induce states of pleasure, horror, arousal, tears—the whole gamut of emotions.

**HANNA:** When did you decide to pursue composition instead of a career as a performer?

**WELCHER:** It wasn’t exactly a decision; I simply realized that I wasn’t able to spend enough time practicing anymore because of my increasing work as a composer. And I didn’t stop playing all at once; it tapered off gradually. I do miss performing, but I wouldn’t have been able to keep my standards up if I had continued.

**HANNA:** Can you speak briefly about your experience at the MacDowell Colony? Do you feel that being there (or “elsewhere”) influences your compositions?

**WELCHER:** I’ve been to art colonies—MacDowell, Yaddo, Atlantic Center, Bellagio, Bogliasco, Camargo, and others many times now—and I always find that I get three or four times as much done at them as I can produce at home. There’s something about the lack of domestic distraction, the foreign-ness of a new place, and even the loneliness that sometimes happens in art colonies that makes the work just pour out of me.

**HANNA:** Do you anticipate revisiting the bassoon in a prominent role in future pieces, considering *The Wind Won’t Listen* as a “return to the genre,” as you say?
**WELCHER:** If someone commissions me to write for the bassoon, I’ll write for the bassoon. It’s more external than internal, my choice of what to write and when. Twenty years ago I was making as much in commissions and royalties as I was teaching, and that just isn’t the case anymore. Nobody is making that.

**HANNA:** Can you comment on the commission process for any of these pieces: Woodwind Quintet No. 2 (Blair Quintet), *Listen Up!* (Cimmaron Quintet), *The Wind Won’t Listen* (Steven Dibner), *Mill Songs* (Snow/Wolfe-Jensen)?

**WELCHER:** In every case, the players knew me and knew my music already. The Blair Quintet wanted a BIG piece, so I wrote them one. The Cimmaron Quintet was working with Young Audiences, Inc. at the time and wanted a “teaching piece” for children’s concerts. Steve Dibner asked for bassoon-and-string quartet, and Kristin and John wanted a duo-without-piano. Only Steve Dibner asked for something specific—he said “make the bassoon sing”. The others more or less told me to use my imagination and to surprise them!

**HANNA:** When you were composing in the 1970’s, were you aware of Bruno Bartelozzi’s book *New Sounds for Woodwinds*?

**WELCHER:** Yes, of course! I never bought it, but used it as a reference. Quite honestly, that book has caused more damage than good. Too many composers read it and tried writing multiphonics with specific fingerings, without ever asking a player to test it. Half those fingerings don’t even work!
APPENDIX F: SCORE IMAGES

F.1: EVERYONE IS CRYING

A sketch of *Everyone is Crying* has been provided by Dan Welcher and included as an appendix to this document with his permission for the purposes of examining the source material of other pieces in this study.