Musical Stories:
Gesture and Texture in Jennifer Higdon's Music 1998-2003

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> *My music is known for being audience-friendly. You don't have to know anything about classical music to enjoy it. You don't need to have any kind of basic knowledge. It seems to appeal to a wide variety of individuals, even the older crowd, which is sometimes a tricky crowd to please…"*[1]
> —Jennifer Higdon

According to the League of American Orchestras, Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962) is one of the most frequently performed American composers of contemporary orchestral music. Higdon enjoys more than two hundred performances of her works a year, and she has won many awards, including a Pulitzer Prize for her *Violin Concerto* (2009)*,* and a Grammy for *Best Contemporary Classical Composition* for her *Percussion Concerto* (2010). In addition, her orchestral work, *blue cathedral,* is one of the most performed contemporary orchestral works in the United States, having been performed by more than 200 orchestras since its premiere in 2000.[2]

This essay explores Higdon's musical style in the years surrounding her break-out composition of *blue cathedral*. When I first heard *blue cathedral*, I was struck by its vivid sound colors, contrasting imagistic gestures, and visceral and immediate appeal. I also was struck by how ill suited these initial reactions were for building an interpretation based on traditional tools of analysis. Whereas my reactions focused on timbre, texture, and ephemeral gestures, traditional analysis typically subordinates these events to a grander, overarching system of sustained coherence based upon pitch and form. Whereas my reactions featured a listener-oriented perspective based upon immediately perceived events, traditional analytic techniques tend towards objectifying the music as an autonomous entity and valuing hidden structures revealed by prolonged study. In recognition of these incongruities, I sought an analytic method that not only prioritized texture and gesture, but also accounted for the work's appeal to general audiences.

A narrative approach that interprets *musical gestures* as the building blocks of a story provides a valuable method for delving into such under explored aspects of the music in an analytically rich way. Furthermore, with its memorable sound colors, distinct gestures, and layered textures, Higdon's music has a high degree of narrativity. This essay begins with an explanation of my narrative method, which builds upon Robert Hatten's

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1   Jason Victor Serinus, "Interview: The Award-Winning Jennifer Higdon," *Secrets of Home Theater and High Fidelity*, June 2005, http://www.hometheaterhifi.com/volume_12_2/feature-interview-jennifer-higdon-6-2005.html.

2   League of American Orchestras, *Orchestra Repertoire Report 2007-2008* (New York, NY, 2008), http://www.americanorchestras.org/knowledge_research_and_innovation/orr_current. html; League of American Orchestras, *Orchestra Repertoire Report 2008-2009* (New York, NY, 2009), http://www.americanorchestras.org/knowledge_research_and_innovation/orr_2008-2009.html.

seminal work, yet adapts it for 21st-century repertoire. The middle section of the essay demonstrates small-scale applications of the analytic method, focusing on gestures and phrases from two of Higdon's chamber works: *wissahickon poeTrees (1998),* and *Impressions* (2003). The essay concludes with a more extended narrative analysis of *blue cathedral* (2000), which features many gestures similar to those found in the chamber works.

Narrativity in Neo-Tonal Music

        In 1994, Robert Hatten published, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, an influential book relating semiotic and narrative theories to the music of Beethoven.[3] A decade later, he expanded the theory and his focus to other composers, including Mozart and Schubert.[4] According to Hatten, musical meaning results from a rhetorical opposition between a *marked* musical gesture and a listener's expectations, which are built from familiarity with 18th-century practice. A gesture is *marked* if it has distinctive, notable, elements that stand out from its context.[5] In Hatten's words, "Markedness. . .is dependent not solely on distinctive features of the type itself, but also on the oppositional positioning of the type in a larger paradigm of types (such as a functional system of chord relationships.)"[6] His focus on music of the Viennese Classical composers is notable because this was a time when musical expectations were strongly circumscribed by tonal and generic conventions. Consequently, in this repertoire there are strong expectations of what might happen in a given musical context, allowing any foil to those predictions to assume rhetorical significance. Since expectations are generally more constrained for tonal music compared to post-tonal music, most narrative analyses have been applied to music that is either tonal or in dialogue with tonal conventions.[7]

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[3]   Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

[4]   Robert Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[5]   For an introduction to markedness see: Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 29-64.

[6]   Ibid., 46.

[7]   Of the nearly 300 main records produced by a subject search for "narrative" in RILM, I found only eleven citations that focused on a piece of music from the 20th- or 21st century. Several of them discuss music by Debussy: Richard Hoffman, "Debussy's Canope as Narrative Form," *College Music Symposium* 42 (2002): 103; Rebecca Leydon, "Narrative Strategies and Debussy's Late Style" (Ph.D, McGill University, 1997); Susan Youens, "To Tell a Tale: Symbolist Narrative in Debussy's Fêtes Galantes II," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 16, no. 1 (1987): 180-191; a couple explored narratives in electronic music: Marco Ligabue and Francesco Giomi, "Understanding Electroacoustic Music: Analysis of Narrative Strategies in Six Early Compositions," *Organised Sound: An International Journal of Music Technology* 3, no. 1 (April 1, 1998): 45-49; Katharine Norman, "Stepping Outside for a Moment: Narrative Space in Two Works for Sound Alone," in *Music, Electronic Media, and Culture*, ed. Simon Emmerson (United States: Ashgate Aldershot, 2000), 217-244; the remaining ones explored diverse topics: Candace Brower, "Pathway, Blockage, and Containment in Density 21.5," *Theory and Practice* 22 (1997): 35-54; Cynthia Folio, "Analysis and Performance: A Study in Contrasts," *Intégral: The Journal of Applied Musical Thought* 7 (1993): 1-37; Vincent Meelberg, *New Sounds, New Stories: Narrativity in Contemporary Music* (Amsterdam University Press, 2006); John W. Parks, "Musical Levels and Narrative in Andrew Thomas's Merlin," *Percussive Notes* 39, no. 4 (August 2001): 67-73; Eric

For music like Higdon's, which is not in significant dialogue with 18th-century genres, forms or tonal syntax, expectations are hard to define, and thus they are not a good basis for rhetorical inquiry. Instead, I construct meaning by associating musical gestures with everyday experiences, using tools developed by cognitive psychologists and linguists to explain general reasoning and comprehension. Whereas Hatten constructs meaning by comparing a *marked* musical event to a correlated accepted norm, I construct meaning by comparing a *marked* musical event to an *image schema*, which Mark Johnson defines as a common and collective conceptual framework that people share based upon repeated patterns of bodily experience.[8] In the following paragraphs, I will explain *markedness*, and *image schema*; I will also introduce *cross-domain mapping*, and *conceptual blends*, concepts related to *image schema* that can be used to explain musical narratives in post-tonal music. This narrative strategy allows me to focus on the most salient aspects of Higdon's style (e.g., sound color, texture, and pictorial gestures) while also attending to its populist appeal among musicians and non-musicians alike.

Markedness

How can a musical gesture be *marked* without the contextualizing backdrop of common-practice conventions? In Higdon's case, gestures are *marked* by situational contrast with their surroundings. The opening of *blue cathedral* provides a good example. Example 1 is an annotated short score of the first two gestures of the piece. The work begins with quiet entrances of a triangle, vibraphone, crotales, chimes, and celeste. Although the parts are notated in a quintuple meter, the effect sounds non-metric, like an assortment of distant wind chimes. About 15 seconds later, the lower strings enter (m. 3) with a descending line of planed triads that begin and end on C. This second gesture illustrates typical characteristics of Higdon's style of centricity; there are triads, it is clearly directional towards a centric pitch, and it uses consonance and dissonance to shape the tension and release of musical energy.

Despite these centric characteristics, *blue cathedral*, does not follow tonal conventions well enough to illicit clear expectations of what should happen next. Instead, Higdon maximizes the narrativity of her gestures by using stark internal oppositions to create a sense of *markedness*. In other words, the low-string gesture is *marked* as "low" compared to the high chime gesture, and *vice versa*. Example 2 shows how these two opening gestures are almost antithetical in their characteristics. Their opposition to one another in terms of register, articulation, rhythm, pitch and dynamics is quite stark.

Prieto, "Listening in: Musical Models for Narrative in the Twentieth Century" (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1997); Anne Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, "Narrating with Twelve Tones: Einojuhani Rautavaara's Cantos I-Ii," *Les universaux en musique: Actes du quatrième congrès international sur la signification musicale* (1998): 519-530.

[8]   Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 2.

Example 1: Opening gestures in Jennifer Higdon's *blue cathedral*, mm. 1-7
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	Chime gesture	Low String gesture
Register	High register	Low register
Articulation	Percussive attack	Legato
Rhythmic grouping	Grouped in threes	Grouped in twos
Pitch	Non-centric, nondirectional	Highly-directional towards C; C centric
Dynamics	Consistent *piano*	Hairpin swells from *piano* to *mezzoforte*

Example 2: Stark contrasts between the opening two gestures, mm. 1-7.

If musical gestures are to be the building blocks of a narrative, then they should not only be easily distinguished from one another, but also easily perceptible and memorable. Consequently, Higdon's musical gestures tend to be short, 10-15 seconds long, which is well within short-term memory limits. In addition to situational contrast, Higdon's gestures maximize *markedness* by their innovative timbres and combinations of instruments.

Image Schema

Markedness alone, however, cannot sustain a narrative. Two important critics of narrative, Carolyn Abbate and Lawrence Kramer, claim that narrativity requires disruption from an understood typical framework. Abbate limits the applicability of narrative to a voice with a characteristic way of speaking, confining music's ability to narrate to rare moments that can be identified by their bizarre and disruptive effect.[9] Lawrence Kramer shares Abbatte's view that narrative in music requires unusual, disruptive processes that thwart expectation.[10] However, such a limited view of narrativity would prevent most contemporary music from expressing a narrative because explicit expectations and conventions are not typically available as narrative foils in 20th- and 21st-century music.

In the absence of clear tonal expectations or continuity, I propose that narratives can rely on metaphorical allusions that connect musical gestures to everyday experiences. To avoid falling into unmitigated subjectivity, in which any general experience could become relevant, all extra-musical associations I invoke will emanate from *image schema*, especially two related sub-types of schema: *cross-domain mapping*, and *conceptual blending*. Mark Johnson defines *image schema* as shared, embodied, and recurring frameworks within our cognitive processing that motivate patterns of understanding and reasoning.[11] Lawrence Zibikowski in *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, Analysis* explains that meaning is grounded in repeated patterns of bodily experience that most people share. These patterns give rise to *image schema*, which provide a basis for the concepts and relationships essential to metaphor.[12] One example of an *image schema* is VERTICALITY. We grasp this structure repeatedly in thousands of perceptions and activities we experience every day, such as perceiving a tree, feeling upright, climbing stairs, thinking of a flagpole, or watching the level of water rise in the bathtub.[13]

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[9]   Carolyn Abbate, "What the Sorcerer Said," *19th-Century Music* 12, no. 3 (1989): 221-230; Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3-29.

[10]   Lawrence Kramer, "'As If a Voice Were in Them': Music, Narrative, and Deconstruction," in *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900*, California Studies in 19th-Century Music 8 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 176-213.

[11]   Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 2.

[12]   Lawrence M. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, Analysis*, AMS Studies in Music (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2002), 68. This book won the Society of Music Theory's 2004 Wallace Berry Award for distinguished book .

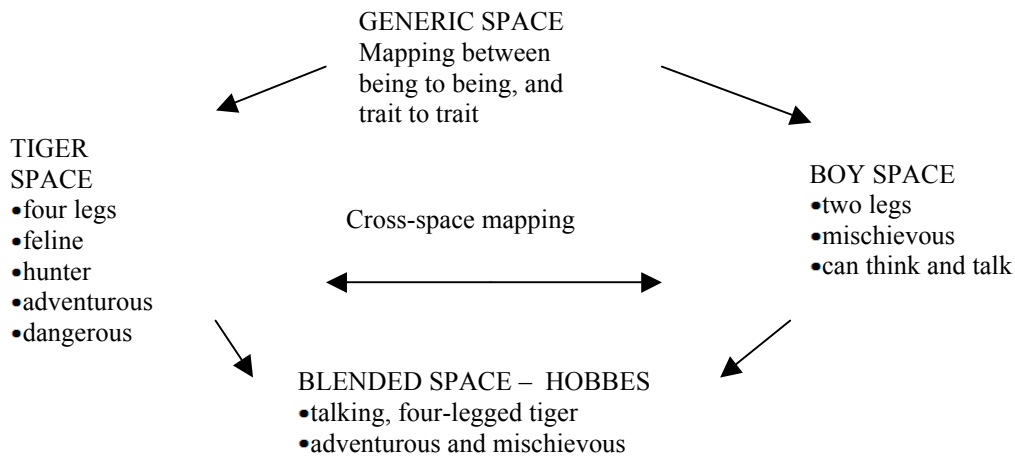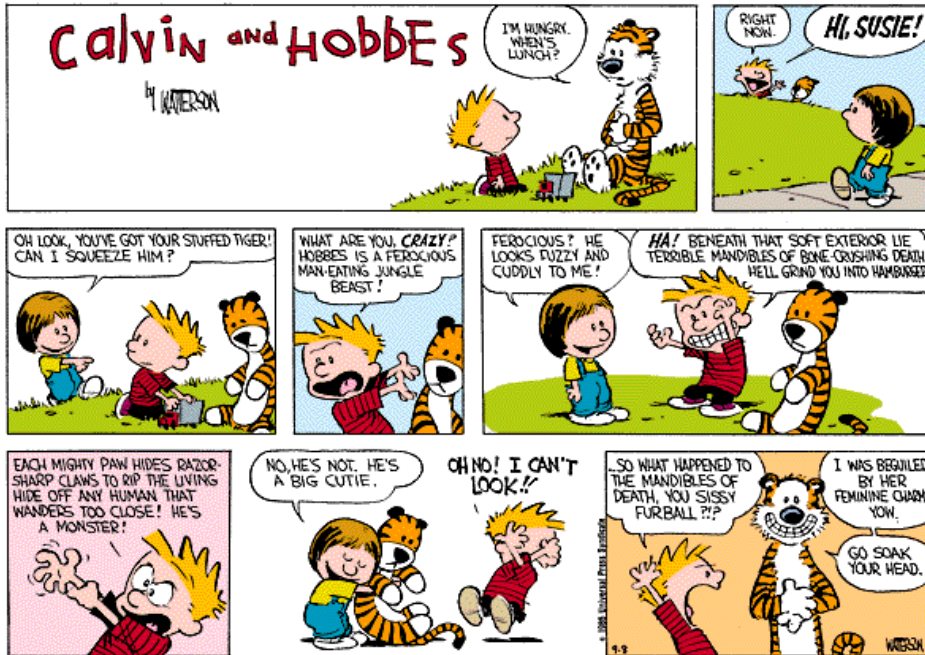[13]   These examples and explanation derive from Ibid., 68-69.

Through a process of *cross-domain mapping*, we can relate familiar and experiential schema to unfamiliar and abstract concepts, creating another mental space. In other words, we structure our understanding of the unfamiliar in terms of more familiar and concrete concepts. A lucrative *cross-domain mapping* for music studies posits pitch relationships as relationships in vertical space. In this space, the abstract concept of musical pitch can be understood in terms of our embodied experience of VERTICALITY. For example, we use this space when understanding Handel's text painting in the Messiah for the tenor phrase: "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low" (Isaiah 40:4). Not only does Handel use low pitches for the words "valley" and "low," but he also uses a rising figure for "exalted," and a melodic peak for "mountain." Understanding correspondences like these requires the listener to construe pitch relationships in terms of our embodied experience of VERTICALITY.[14]

Conceptual blending is a particular kind of *cross-domain mapping*, in which selective traits from two different input spaces are partially matched to create a novel, blended mental space.[15] *Conceptual blending* plays an important role in musical narrative because it provides a way to connect musical concepts with concepts from other domains. Example 3 illustrates a simple conceptual blend for the cartoon character, Hobbes, from *Calvin and Hobbes*. There are four mental spaces in a conceptual blend: the generic space, two inputs, and the blend. The generic space guides the mapping of the blend, defining the elements that will be correlated. In this example, the two input spaces are the "tiger" and "boy" spaces. Notice that the blended space takes only some traits from each input to create a new structure that is not found within either of the inputs. As an amalgamated construct, Hobbes borrows his feline form and adventurous spirit from the tiger space, and his ability to talk and create mischief from the boy space. However, Hobbes is not a dangerous wild animal, nor a two-legged human.

I chose this example because Hobbes is only a fully-blended entity to the main character of the comic strip, Calvin. It is only Calvin, the young boy protagonist, who perceives Hobbes as a thinking, talking, animate tiger. On the rare occassions when Hobbes is seen through the eyes of others in the comic strip, Hobbes is presented as an inanimate stuffed animal, completely devoid of his blended traits. Thus, the comic strip calls attention to Calvin's "imaginary friend" by accentuating the importance of the perceiver's role in *conceptual blending*.

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[14]   Lawrence Zibikowski has explored other narrative possibilities with this space to explain 18th- and 19th-century descriptions of tonality, as well as early-childhood music learning. See Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music*.

[15]   For a brief introduction to conceptual blending see Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, "Conceptual Integration Networks," *Cognitive Science* 22, no. 2 (1998): 1-14; For explanations of its use and relevance in music analysis see Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing music*, 78-95; and Elizabeth P. Sayrs, "Narrative, Metaphor, and Conceptual Blending in "The Hanging Tree"," *Music Theory Online* 9, no. 1 (March 2003), http://mto.societymusictheory.org/issues/mto.03.9.1/mto.03.9.1.sayrs_frames.html; See also, George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 203.

GENERIC SPACE
Mapping between
being to being, and
trait to trait

TIGER
SPACE
• four legs
• feline
• hunter
• adventurous
• dangerous

Cross-space mapping

BOY SPACE
• two legs
• mischievous
• can think and talk

BLENDED SPACE – HOBBES
• talking, four-legged tiger
• adventurous and mischievous

Example 3: *Calvin and Hobbes* Excerpt[16] with Model of Conceptual Blend

For our purposes, *conceptual blending* not only models the complex and nuanced metaphors a listener uses to construct a music narrative, but it also accounts for the immediacy of the listening experience. In Fauconnier and Turner's words, "Conceptual integration— 'blending'. . .is dynamic, supple, and active in the moment of thinking . . .it is for the most part a routine, workaday process."[17] Consequently, *conceptual blends* provide an ideal model for a post-tonal narrative, in which traits from musical spaces, programmatic spaces, and *image schema* are correlated, in experiential time, to create an engaging and meaningful story.

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[16]   Bill Watterson, *The Essential Calvin and Hobbes* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews and McMeel, Universal Press Syndicate Co.), 1988, p. 156.

[17]   Fauconnier and Turner, "Conceptual Integration Networks," 133.

Common *Conceptual Blends in* Higdon's Music

In the years just before and just after the composition of *blue cathedral*, Higdon's music features some recurring, common *conceptual blends.* In this middle section of the essay, I will introduce some of these *blends*, which are the building blocks of a post-tonal narrative.

Time

In several works from this period, Higdon has an imaginative and distinctive way of representing the passage of time. The most concrete example is from *wissahickon poeTrees* (1998), a sextet for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion. The piece is an homage to Wissahickon Park, which lies within the city of Philadelphia, where Higdon lives. Four of the movements are named for the seasons (spring, summer, autumn, and winter). Higdon writes,

> And since time and nature consistently march along, irregardless of man's attempts to mark or defame, I have connected the season movements with "progressing clock" movements. The music has been composed to proceed without breaks, as nature's seasons never cease to blend from one into another.[18]

In an interview, she explains, "[The piece is] about 20 minutes long, with these one-minute clock movements between the major movements. They sound like time going by."[19] Example 4 shows the opening of the first of the clock movements.

It begins with a piano striking bell tones on the pitch B5.[20] This pitch is one of three on the keyboard that has been prepared with a screw placed between the strings of the piano about two inches from the hammer. This preparation creates a chiming, bell-like effect. After this initial gesture, the piano continues with constant sixteenth notes on unprepared pitches. Throughout the movement, the percussionist provides another textural layer, featuring large and small triangles, a wood block, and trilled notes on the vibraphone. This percussion layer sounds like an assortment of unmetered, quiet, high, tinkling, and ringing sounds. Example 5 illustrates a *conceptual blend* that explains how a listener might associate these sounds as a representation of TIME.

By correlating the piano's opening strikes on B5 to the chiming of a clock, a listener likely understands this aural event as a symbol of time. This metaphorical association is strengthened by the running sixteenth notes, which function like a metronome measuring a consistent pulse. In addition, the variety of tinkling sounds in the percussion layer is associated with distant bells, chimes, or the ticking of clocks. Together, these timbres and textures combine to create a strong association with time. Although a programmatic association would not be necessary to invoke this *conceptual blend*, in this piece the "…clock…" movement is a one-minute interlude between "spring" and "summer," suggesting the passing of time between the seasons. The descriptive titles of the

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[18]   Higdon wrote her own program notes for the liner of this recording: Network for New Music, Richard Woodhams, and Scott Kluksdahl, *Dream Journal* (Albany, NY: Albany Records, 2002).

[19]   Serinus, "Interview: The Award-Winning Jennifer Higdon."

[20]   Middle C = C4.

movements, which would be available to a listener in the program notes, add to the likelihood of a listener associating these sounds with the abstract concept of TIME.
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Example 4: *wissahickon poeTrees*, "…clock…", mm. 1-11.
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GENERIC SPACE
Mapping traits to traits

TIME INPUT SPACE
• Perception of temporal duration
•Perception of tempo and speed
• Clock chimes account for passing time
• Ticking and tocking of clock mechanisms.

Cross-space mapping

MUSIC INPUT SPACE
•Solo prepared piano strikes B5 with pedal depressed, letting the overtones ring
• Percussive idiophones layer = triangles, vibes, wood block.
•Constant sixteenth-note motion in piano.

BLENDED SPACE
•The prepared piano strikes on B5 sound like a large clock chime announcing the passage of time.
• The piano's running sixteenth-notes mark a consistent measurement of duration and speed; they are like a ruler for perceived time.
• The high tinkling sounds of the idiophones represent the ticking and tocking of watches and clocks.

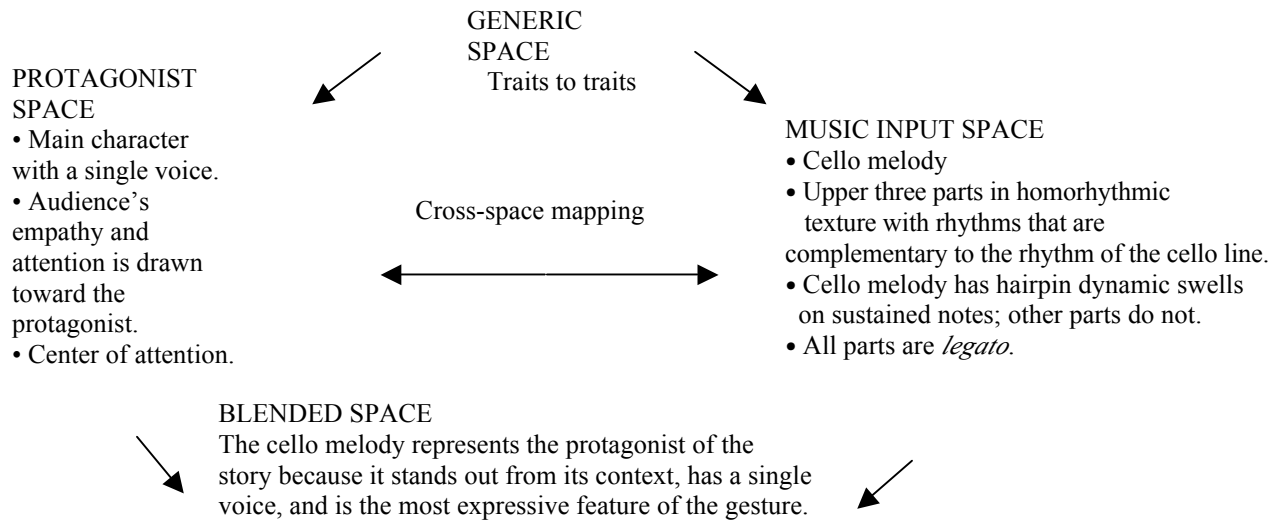**Example 5:** Conceptual blend for "…clock…", *wissahickon poeTrees*

<u>Main Character</u>

Another *conceptual blend* that Higdon uses is that of a MAIN CHARACTER, a protagonist figure in the narrative. Typically, this character is represented by a solo instrument that contrasts with a fuller, *tutti*, texture. Example 6 provides the opening of "Quiet Art," the second movement of *Impressions* (2003), which features a MAIN CHARACTER *conceptual blend.*

Because it is a solo melody, the cello's theme embodies a character's voice, especially because it contrasts with a tight-knit community of upper parts that move together in a homorhythmic texture. Significantly, the cello melody not only is more expressive than its surroundings, with its hairpin dynamics on sustained notes, but it also features complementary rhythms compared to the others. Consequently, a listener's attention is drawn to the cello melody, ascribing singular importance to the line. This is similar to how a reader empathizes with the main character of a story, whose point of view is the central focus of the narrative and receives the most attention, breadth, and detail. Nonetheless, the melody belongs with its community in that it shares some characteristics—it is not a complete outcast. The upper parts present a syncopated rhythm of pentatonic subsets ([025] trichords), shown by the dotted ovals on the example. Also, the outer range of a perfect fourth is featured in the beginning and ending trichords of the first measure between the viola and first violin, (C4-F4 in the first chord, and A3-D4 in the last one). When the cello enters in m. 2, the upper strings repeat their motive and the cello begins on a sustained A4, which is not a pitch of the chord. However, the cello's pitch is related by a fourth to the second violin's D, creating two pairs of fourths in m. 2. In addition, the cello's first pitches, (A4 and D5) are octave displacements of salient pitches in the opening communal gesture of the movement, shown in doubled circles on the example. Metaphorically, the cello melody is distinctive with its own voice, yet shares characteristics with its community. This kind of portrayal of a protagonist's voice, as distinctive yet belonging to its community, is a common feature of Higdon's music.

{C, D, F} {A, C, D} {C, F} + {D, A}
 [025]   [025]   [05] + [05]

GENERIC
SPACE
Traits to traits

PROTAGONIST
SPACE
• Main character
with a single voice.
• Audience's
empathy and
attention is drawn
toward the
protagonist.
• Center of attention.

Cross-space mapping

MUSIC INPUT SPACE
• Cello melody
• Upper three parts in homorhythmic
  texture with rhythms that are
complementary to the rhythm of the cello line.
• Cello melody has hairpin dynamic swells
  on sustained notes; other parts do not.
• All parts are *legato*.

BLENDED SPACE
The cello melody represents the protagonist of the
story because it stands out from its context, has a single
voice, and is the most expressive feature of the gesture.

Example 6: *Impressions*, "Quiet Art," mm. 1-6 and a MAIN CHARACTER conceptual blend.
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Once again, a programmatic reference is not essential to the *conceptual blend,* yet it can bolster the metaphorical associations. In the liner notes for the recording of this work, Higdon writes, "The second movement, *Quiet Art*, is about the solitude in which artists work, and the passion and consistency that help to create a work of art." At the opening, the cello—playing alone, or in "solitude"—represents the main character, the artist.

Growth

The last *conceptual blend* I will introduce in this section is GROWTH, a correlation that shows increased intensity, complexity, and change. Returning to *wissahickon poeTrees*, Example 7 shows the opening measures of the clock movement between "summer" and "autumn," which is the next clock movement after the one discussed previously in Examples 4 and 5.

This movement begins with the same chiming bell effect in the prepared piano; and, both the sixteenth-note layer and the high, tinkling, percussion layer also recur, this time with a new timbre added to the percussion - a crotales hit with a metal mallet. In addition to this reprise of previous clock gestures, a new layer is added comprised of alternating, short harmonics in the cello and violin. Compared to the first clock movement, this subsequent movement displays some growth. Example 8 presents the *conceptual blend*. The added crotales in the percussion represents growth similar to that of a child getting taller. The added harmonics also represent growth, this time similar to an increase in complexity—like a child's thought processes reaching a new stage of development.

Example 7: *wissahickon poeTrees,* "…clocking…", mm. 1-3
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GENERIC SPACE
Traits to traits

GROWTH INPUT SPACE
• Size gets bigger
• Organisms increase in complexity
• New developmental stages are
achieved.

Cross-space mapping

MUSIC INPUT SPACE
• High, tinkly percussion layer adds a new
  Instrument - crotales
• A new textural layer is added – alternating
  harmonics between violin and cello

BLENDED SPACE
• Added instruments within a textural layer represents growth of the
  layer, like a a child getting taller.
• Added layer of texture represents a growth in complexity.New sounds
  are like a new stage of development.

Example 8: Conceptual blend for GROWTH in "…clocking…", *wissahickon poeTrees*

     This growth process continues in later clock movements. Example 9 shows the opening measures of the clock movement between "autumn" and "winter," which is called, "…clocking through…"

     A grace-note flourish is added to the opening bell tones of the prepared piano. The constant sixteenth notes of the piano also reappear, but now the vibraphone is added to this layer creating an interesting timbral combination, as well as a more complex imitative

Example 9: *wissahickon poeTrees*, "…clocking through…", mm. 1-6
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texture. Sometimes the vibraphone accompanies the piano in unison; other times, it adds its own stream of sixteenth notes. Nonetheless, between the two instruments, there is an attack on every sixteenth-note pulse. Noticeably absent is the tinkling, high percussion layer; however, other sounds have been added in the strings. The string harmonics have become double-stops, and the violin adds a *col legno* stutter and intermittent *pizzicato* sixteenth notes. In addition, the bell-like chimes of the prepared piano, which had begun

and ended each of the clock movements, now occur in the middle as well. Using the same *conceptual blend* as before, this movement demonstrates even more growth than its predecessor.

Beyond *Conceptual Blends* – Building a Narrative

        Conceptual blends are the building blocks of a narrative, providing metaphorical snapshots that relate musical events to everyday experiences and concepts. By themselves, however, they cannot create a sustained narrative arc. To create a story, the accumulated associations of multiple *conceptual blends* need to coalesce into a comprehensible whole. In *blue cathedral*, this coalescence is accomplished by a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL *image schema*, one of the foundational schemas described by Mark Johnson and George Lakoff.[21] Janna Saslaw explains, in relation to music analyzed in this manner:

> …the [SOURCE-PATH-GOAL] schema has a grounding in bodily experience; when we move anywhere there is a place from which we start out, a sequence of contiguous locations connecting the starting and ending points, and a direction. Thus, the structural elements of the schema include: (1) a source or starting point, (2) a destination or end point (or goal), (3) a path or sequence of contiguous locations connecting the source and the destination, and (4) a direction toward the destination. The basic logic of the schema is that in proceeding from a source to a destination along a path, one must go through all the intermediate points on the path; moreover, the further along the path you are, the more time has passed since starting.[22]

In the following section of the essay, I will describe some *conceptual blends* that Higdon uses in *blue cathedral*, and demonstrate how they combine into a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL narrative. In *blue cathedral*, TIME, MAIN CHARACTER, and GROWTH *blends* participate in a story about a journey. In the program notes written for the premier of *blue cathedral*, Higdon makes an explicit reference to the metaphor of a journey:

> When I began *blue cathedral*, it was the one-year anniversary of my (younger) brother's death, so I was pondering a lot of things about the journey we make after death…I was imagining a traveler on a journey through a glass cathedral in the sky (therefore making it a blue color)…I wanted the music to sound like it was progressing into this constantly opening space, feeling more and more celebratory…As the journey progresses, the individual would float higher and higher above the floor, soaring towards an expanding ceiling where the heart would feel free and joyful.[23]

Although this piece is not programmatic in a strict sense, the composer's explanation of the title provides insight into the story. The source, or starting point, is her brother, Andrew's, death; the path is both his journey and the journey of those who loved him; the goal is the attainment of freedom and joy.

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[21]   Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 2; George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 275-278.
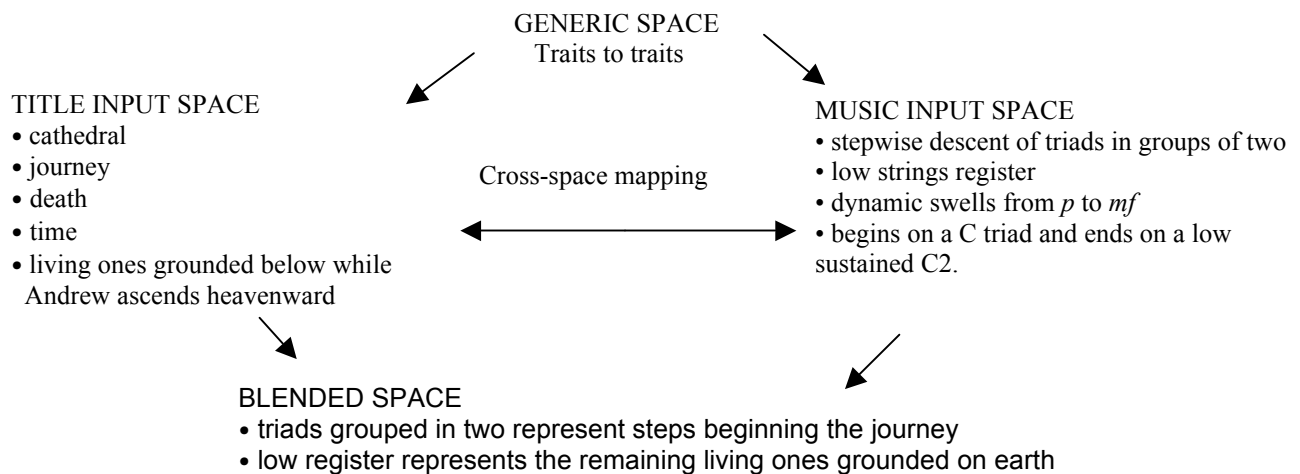
[22]   Janna Saslaw, "Forces, Containers, and Paths: The Role of Body-Derived Image Schemas in the Conceptualization of Music," *Journal of Music Theory* 40, no. 2 (1996): 220. Later, in a footnote Saslaw contends that all narrativity is dependent to some degree upon the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema (p. 237, footnote #5).

[23]   The program notes can be found on the composer's website: Jennifer Higdon, "blue cathedral," *Jennifer Higdon - Orchestral Works*, n.d., http://www.jenniferhigdon.com/orchestralworks.html.

Blue Cathedral – The Beginning

Returning to the opening gesture of the piece, *conceptual blends* help provide the setting of the narrative analysis. The chimes and bells of the first gesture (shown in Example 1) are cross-mapped with church bells to evoke a spiritual setting, perhaps the cathedral in the evocative title of the piece. A cathedral also could be invoked by the grouping of the percussion attacks into threes, which could be correlated to the importance of the number three in Catholic liturgy. Notice the similarity of this first gesture to the clock movements in *wissahickon poeTrees*; this opening gesture not only evokes the setting of a cathedral, but it also marks the passage of time. In a blog for the Pittsburgh orchestra, which performed the piece in October 2005, Higdon explains that there are 33 chimes in this piece, which was the age of Andrew Blue, her brother, when he died.[24] As the chimes ring at the very opening, the acknowledgement of these years begins. Later in the same blog, she comments: "It is a very colorful piece, with lots of chiming sounds…I was thinking of clocks and the passage of time when I was creating these textures."

Example 10 shows a *conceptual blend* for the second gesture of the piece, by partially matching two input spaces—the title content and the musical content. (See Example 1 for a score of the excerpt.) In the blended space, the descending triads grouped in twos become the opening steps of a journey, and the low register represents the ones remaining grounded on earth who witness to Andrew's ascent upward to the sky.[25] As the descent continues, the time between triads, or steps, gets shorter, which helps create a sense of direction and momentum that leads to the arrival point in measure 7.

GENERIC SPACE
Traits to traits

TITLE INPUT SPACE
• cathedral
• journey
• death
• time
• living ones grounded below while
  Andrew ascends heavenward

Cross-space mapping

MUSIC INPUT SPACE
• stepwise descent of triads in groups of two
• low strings register
• dynamic swells from *p* to *mf*
• begins on a C triad and ends on a low sustained C2.

BLENDED SPACE
• triads grouped in two represent steps beginning the journey
• low register represents the remaining living ones grounded on earth

Example 10: Conceptual blend of the second gesture of *blue cathedral*

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[24]   Serinus, "Interview: The Award-Winning Jennifer Higdon."

[25]   In the remainder of this essay, *conceptual blends* will be described in prose, rather than depicted graphically.

The Path: Measure 7-39

        The contemplative mood and registral extremes of the opening give way in measure 7 to a new section that features solo woodwind melodies supported by a lush orchestral accompaniment, as shown in Example 11. There is some continuity with the introduction in that the upper-string chords of this section derive from the low-string triads of the opening, including the hairpin dynamics and sustained rhythm. A fuller sound is created as more instruments present the gesture in this section. The lush sound of the orchestral accompaniment is reinforced by a third layer (not shown in Example 11) consisting of sustained neighbor figures in the lowest strings. The harmonic language of the orchestral accompaniment expands from the triads of the introduction to quintal and quartal chords. The easily perceptible growth of the gesture in terms of instrumentation and harmonic complexity can be understood as moving along the PATH in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

Example 11: Flute melody and string accompaniment, *blue cathedral*, mm. 7-12.
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        In opposition to the thick string chords, the solo flute melody acquires a sense of individuality. In her 2005 blog for the Pittsburgh Symphony, Higdon equates the solo flute melodies with herself and the subsequent solo clarinet melodies with her brother. She writes, "You'll also notice that there are flute and clarinet solos galore…this is because I'm a flute player and my brother played clarinet in band while we were in high school."[26] Even without the direct cross mapping provided by the composer, it is easy to hear the flute melody as a character of the story simply because it is a solo voice pitted against a string *tutti*, similar to how a character was introduced in the string quartet movement, "Quiet Art" (Example 6).

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[26]   Jennifer Higdon, "Outside Perspective: "blue cathedral" performance - Jennifer Higdon," October 30, 2005, http://pittsburghsymphony.blogs.com/outside/2005/10/blue_cathedral_.html.

What sort of character is it? As the older sibling (Higdon), the flute melody enters first in a solid and powerful register of the flute with an ascending perfect fourth, D6-G6. The strong tonally-based associations of the fourth, the rising contour, the sustained high note, and the dynamic swell provide a sense of emergence and confidence. This first breath is answered by another one that repeats the same pitches, reaches ones step further to an A6, and then reposes in a sustained C6 at a quieter *mezzo-piano*. These first four pitches comprise an [0257] set, a subset of the upper-string quartal chords. Metaphorically, the sister draws upon her environment for her utterance. In m. 11, however, the supportive cast drops out, as she sustains the final note of her gesture, C6, unaccompanied. She perseveres through the unsupported stretch, even strengthens herself through a crescendo, joined by a 2nd flute in unison; and then, the world comes back. The orchestra resumes, including its quartal/quintal chords, yet this time on a different collection of pitch classes.

Example 12: The opening flute and clarinet gestures, *blue cathedral*, mm. 8-16.
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In terms of character, this gesture has a decidedly American feel reminiscent of music by Barber, Bernstein, Copland, Rorem, and Thomson from the 1930s and 40s. As Nadine Hubbs defines it, the American style of these composers features diatonic and syncopated melodies that give particular emphasis to a pentatonic subset. The style is also marked by relatively transparent orchestration.[27] This flute gesture ascribes to all of these

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[27]   Nadine Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound: Gay Modernists, American Music, and National Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 40-41. Other tonalist composers that ascribe to this style include Blitzstein, Bowles, Diamond, and Menotti.

characteristics. Its American attributes are strengthened by its independence, confidence and perseverance. It is independent as a solo voice, confident in its rising contour, and perseverant when the orchestra drops out in m. 11. This last moment is accentuated by an unusual timbre, when the second flute enters for only one note to double the solo at the unison. In sum, this flute gesture draws from its community (the pentatonic source material), but has its own temperament and can stand alone.

As the younger sibling (Andrew), the clarinet responds to his sister's gesture using similar materials, but alters them and adds his own distinctive elements, as shown in Example 12. In mm. 12, the clarinet begins with rising sixteenth-notes, similar in contour and gesture to the flute's initial climb to A6, but uses new pitch classes: E-flat, F, and A-flat. In the rest of the first phrase, the clarinet uses the pitches of the E-flat major diatonic collection. There are three pitch classes that are invariant with the flute's melody, the most prominent of which are the G and D of the flute's opening motive. At the melodic peak of the gesture in m. 13, the invariance is salient because the clarinet repeats D6 in the same register that the flute had used. Throughout the gesture, the clarinet maintains a strong resemblance to the flute by recreating the same [0257] pitch-class set with its salient pitches (shown in Example 12B). When taken as a whole, however, the clarinet's collection introduces a new interval class, one not present in either the flute melody or the orchestral accompaniment—[01] the half step and its inversion, the major seventh. This [01] set class is singular to Andrew. Remarkably, the two instances of the [01] interval involve one pitch that was shared with the flute and one new pitch. In both cases, the new interval class is salient as either the distance between the first and last pitches of the clarinet gesture—E-flat5 and D5, or as the endpoints of the largest leap of the clarinet melody (m. 14.)

To continue this discussion of *conceptual blend,* correlating siblings with musical gestures, the clarinet gesture, as another solo voice, is a new character of the narrative. The imitative response of the clarinet is akin to sibling correspondence. The clarinet's lower and darker timbre signals a male voice. And, the [01] motion in the clarinet gesture represents his unique character within the family.

Example 13: Flute and clarinet interplay, *blue cathedral,* mm. 16-20.
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The flute and clarinet play together for the first time in measures 16-17, and then immediately afterward the flute is affected by the clarinet; she presents a half-step for the first time in m. 18—A to G-sharp—and then another half-step a measure later. In response, the clarinet (Andrew) imitates the A–G-sharp half-step an octave lower, and then ends his gesture in m. 19-20 with another prominent half-step, B–C. Metaphorically, that half-step represents something distinctive about Andrew, his special voice. His sister is affected by that voice, recreates it in her own image, and he responds in kind. Here is how Higdon describes this process in the program notes she wrote for the premier at the Curtis Institute of Music in March 2000:

> Coming to the writing of this piece at a unique juncture in my life, I found myself pondering the question of what makes a life. The recent loss of my younger brother, Andrew Blue, made me reflect on the amazing journeys that we all make…where the pursuit of "the singing soul" is what music and life are all about. This piece represents the expression of the individual and the whole of the group...our journeys and the places our souls carry us.[28]

Even at the small-scale level of a melodic interchange over the course of a few measures, Higdon captures the essence of this program in a visceral, perceptible way. The clarinet (Andrew) presents a distinctive interval, a major seventh/half-step that stands out from the pentatonic language of its surroundings. This distinctive interval affects his sister, who picks it up at m. 18. Moments later, brother and sister exchange half-step motives back and forth. In other words, "the expression of the individual" affects the community and vice versa.

A Step Further Down the Path

About 5 minutes into this 9-minute piece, a contrasting section begins. At the opening of this section, Higdon uses timbre and instrumentation to delineate the following three distinct layers:

1. A solo melody in the English horn that begins with a scalar ascent and climaxes on a descending half-step sigh motive
2. A countermelody presented by celeste, vibes, and harp harmonics
3. An open-fifth drone presented by viola, marimba and clarinets.

I interpret the English horn melody as a variation on Andrew's original clarinet manifestation. The prominent half-step motion at the end of the English horn gesture is a strong signal of Andrew. With the help of the half-step signal, I can hear the timbre of the English horn as a marked transformation of the clarinet sound; I hear its reedier, richer, and deeper sound, as a more distant clarinet. This interpretation suggests that Andrew now is at a different stage of his journey, one further removed from where he started.

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[28]   Higdon, "Outside Perspective: "blue cathedral" performance - Jennifer Higdon."

Example 14: Three layers of the contrasting section, *blue cathedral*, beginning in m. 56
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This time, the melodic interplay is not between two similar instruments, like the clarinet and flute of the first section. Instead, the call and response is between the English horn and a trio of harp, celesta and vibes. What had been a legato flute melody earlier in the piece has changed into a percussive, hollow partner. Despite these timbral changes, I still hear layer 2 as a representation of the sister because of its imitative interaction with the English horn melody. The "sister-layer" not only has accrued more instruments compared to earlier, but also it has gained some magnitude with its melody planed in fifths. In other words, the "sister-layer" has absorbed some attributes of layer 3, the grounded, earthy layer. Compared to the earlier relationship, where the [01]-motive was an element shared by siblings, now the sister accrues signs of separation by absorbing the drone fifths of the lowest layer. The distance between brother and sister is emphasized by the change of instrumentation for the drone layer that supports each melodic gesture. Andrew receives a marimba-violin drone, while Jennifer has a clarinet drone. I also hear the pulsing of these fifths as a continuation of the chime gesture from the very opening, representing the march of time. Despite time and distance, the sister still imitates her brother's half step. After the B-flat–A in mm. 58-59 of the English horn melody, the flute answers with an A–A-flat half step. So, although the distance is greater now, there is still a tangible affect between Andrew and his community.

Like the first section of the piece, this contrasting section also features a process of growth, as shown in Example 15. There is an orderly buildup of energy by gradually augmenting the instrumental forces of each layer. At first, the melody layer is transferred to several other solo instruments, without overlapping entrances (for example, viola in m. 62, cello in m. 64, and oboe in m. 65.) Once each solo instrument has been introduced, their entrances do overlap creating a polyphonic texture. Energy builds as the time between entrances shortens and as there is more overlap between melodic voices. While the instrumental texture thickens, a solo piccolo is added to layer 2, making its correlation with the sister character more evident. When the piccolo enters, however (m. 63), it presents a descending contour that contrasts with the ascending shape of the brother's English horn gestures. For the first time, the imitative play between brother and sister involves inverted contours. The piccolo melody is also more dissonant than prior melodies in relation to its context. It begins on an F-sharp, which clashes with the G of the open-fifths in the vibes, harp, and celeste. Also, the sustained B-flat in m. 63 clashes with the B in the open-fifths of the marimba and clarinets. This time, the half step

Example 15: *blue cathedral*, mm. 60-65
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is between the sister and her environment. Perhaps, she feels more tension and less consonance with her surroundings, as her brother continues his journey upward and away.

As this timbral, dynamic and textural growth occurs, there is no corollary intensification in the pitch structure. The drone open-fifth layer vacillates between G–D and B–F-sharp; and, the melodic imitations are on D, E and B-flat. These events do not coalesce into a syntactic progression and the pitch events do not seem especially directed or goal oriented. There is not even a clear ranking of centric pitches within this section. Instead, pitch seems subsidiary to the textural events in this passage.

Formal Repetition and the Goal of Our Journey

The preceding section described how Higdon creates a formal contrast to accentuate the sense of a journey. Now, I present the final section of the piece to illustrate how Higdon creates a sense of formal return while still maintaining the metaphor of a journey, as we reach our goal. One of the criticisms of applying narratives to music is that music repeats itself in a way that literary or dramatic narratives do not. Musical repetition is an important means of creating form, yet it seems antithetical to the process-oriented trajectories of literary narratives. As Peter Kivy writes, "Music is what it is, repeats and all. The literary and organism models are what they are: "process" models that do not allow of their doubling back on themselves."[29] In this tone poem, the last section is a reminiscence of gestures presented earlier. What does the reiteration of material mean for a piece not governed by hierarchical coherence? How does it contribute to the narrative of the work?

The final section of the piece reiterates gestures from every section discussed previously: the introduction, the opening section, and the contrasting section. (See Example 16). This final section begins in m. 131, with a return of the flute and clarinet melodies of the refrain. Of the two, the flute melody is the closest to its original utterance, even repeating the same rhythmic gesture on the same pitch classes in mm. 131-33. Example 17 shows that the flute's salient pitches remain essentially unaltered; D-G-A remain the peaks and sustained pitches of both gestures. The clarinet, however, displays significant differences with its original statement. Although the contour and rhythm are similar, the salient pitches are now a half step or whole step higher than their original, shown by the lines on the lower staves of Example 17.

Another gesture from the opening that reappears in this final section is the neighbor figure, which had been presented originally by the lowest strings starting in m. 7. In this final section, the neighbor figure recurs in a higher register (violins and chimes) with faster rhythms, and a 2-against-3 pattern that creates a quivering effect. (See Example 16) Notably absent from the beginning of this final refrain are the full *tutti* string chords, those sustained quartal and quintal harmonies that had supported the melodic play of the woodwinds. Instead, the horn players sustain a lone C-G fifth by rubbing their wet fingers across crystal glasses. This is the most significant textural change of any gesture, and reflects the quiet, muted essence of the ending. The hollow, cold timbre of the crystal glass creates an otherworldly feeling compared to what had been lush *tutti* chords in the strings.

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[29]   Peter Kivy, *The Fine Art of Repetition: Essays in the Philosophy of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 338.

Example 16: *blue cathedral*, mm. 131-135.

Example 17: Comparison of flute and clarinet solo melodies, *blue cathedral,* mm. 8-15 and mm. 131-33.
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In effect, all of the gestures from the refrain have been muted and toned down compared to their first iterations. The neighbor figure has shifted from the lowest string register to the mid-range of the violins. The flute has left its strongest high register and presents its melody an octave lower. And, as mentioned, sustained *tutti* string chords have been replaced with eerie crystal glass. I interpret this overall muted effect as a sign of distance, similar to off-stage utterances in staged works. Although our travels bring us back to familiar places, these places have changed; home is now a different, muted place after the effects of our journey.

One of these effects is the accumulation of experiences. The final refrain presses together gestures from different sections. For example, the English horn melody of the contrasting section recurs in mm. 134-40, this time participating in the woodwind imitative layer of the first section. Notably, the English horn imitates the rhythmic idea of the other woodwinds, incorporating the rising sixteenth-note pattern into its theme. (See Example 16.) In other words, both the somber and playful sides of Andrew interact and respond to one another in this final section. By the end, however, it is the clarinet alone—without any melodic partners—that concludes the piece. Andrew goes the farthest, where his friends and family cannot join him.

This final section also includes the two gestures from the introduction—the chimes and planed descent of triads. Their recurrence creates another layer of return, yet they too are altered as a result of the experiences of the journey. The planed triads, which had been a sustained descent in the low strings in the introduction, occur in the middle of this gesture in three-chord segments, and they do not exclusively descend. In mm. 133-35 and 138-139, the gesture begins with a rising step, which continues to descend afterwards. The chime layer of the introduction, which initially had evoked the essence of a cathedral and the passage of time, is represented in this final section by Chinese reflex bells. One by one, orchestral players put down their instruments and gently shake Chinese reflex bells, creating a very gradual *diminuendo* into a muted and exotic chime effect. According to Higdon's blog for the Pittsburgh Symphony performance in 2005, the bells "create the sounds of stars."[30] The sense of distance is accentuated later in the excerpt by the use of a prepared piano with screws on its strings, which according to Higdon's instructions: "Should sound like a clock, chiming in the distance."

While the muting of each gesture creates a sense of distance, it does not necessarily convey direction. We know from Higdon's program notes that her vision was of an upward journey, an ascent towards a blue sky. How is this ascent conveyed musically? In some cases, a rising feeling is created simplistically by changing a descending gesture into an ascending one, like the beginning of the planed-triad gesture described previously (in mm. 134 and 138.). Another method is to present a gesture up a step compared to earlier iterations, like the clarinet melody in Example 17. There is, however, a more pervasive ascent that recurs throughout the piece, a motion from C to D presented across many layers and gestures. In the initial refrain, the first flute phrase ends on a C and the clarinet phrase a few measures later ends on a D (See Example 12). The huge cadential chord in m. 39 that ends the first section is a C major chord with an added D at the top of the register. In the largest sense, however, the piece begins with C-centricity and ends with D-centricity. When I asked Higdon about this feature of the work, she responded, "I have a feeling, trying to remember back 7 or 8 years ago when I wrote this work, that I might have been thinking about how the music in this work is always rising, and the movement from C to D would mimic that."[31]

Let us now return to the question posed earlier about the apparent incompatibility between the circularity of musical repetition necessary for formal closure and the linear trajectory of a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL narrative. Although these seem like contradictory organizing structures, I believe that Higdon accomplishes both in *blue cathedral*. Formal closure is accomplished conventionally by the repetition of the main gestures of the piece. As described previously, chimes, drones, "brother" gestures, and "sister" gestures are all reviewed. Bringing them all together at the end creates a sense of formal closure but the circularity of this repetition does not invalidate the narrative closure of the piece.

I interpret the GOAL of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL narrative to be the arrival of Andrew to the heavenly stars, while his entire community supports him in loving acceptance and tranquility. This narrative is accomplished not by the manipulation of

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[30]   Higdon, "Outside Perspective: "blue cathedral" performance - Jennifer Higdon."

[31]   Email message to author, Jennifer Higdon, "blue cathedral," August 7, 2007.

pitches or rhythms of the gestures, or by their relationships to one another. Instead it is the striking timbral and textural changes of the final section that generate the narrative goal. The last melody heard is a solo clarinet, mm. 141-146. Andrew is alone in the final stage of his journey. His community, however, is united. One by one, each orchestral player puts down their instrument and either shakes a Chinese reflex bell or rubs a wet finger around a crystal glass, creating a quiet, tranquil shimmer reminiscent of distant ringing bells. Every orchestral player participates in this final experience. To my ears, this last gesture combines two important timbres and textures of the piece. The first is the sustained, *tutti* string chords of the first section, which represented the grounded support of the community; and, the second is the chimes and bells heard throughout, which symbolize the passage of time. It is a beautiful, poetic moment, in which a single timbre is associated with previous gestures of support, community, time, and groundedness, creating a final impression of tranquility and acceptance. It is this timbral and textural effect that brings the narrative to its goal, despite the seemingly repetitive nature of the pitch and rhythm content of the gestures.

Conclusion

        In this essay, I have proposed a narrative methodology for a contemporary post-tonal piece by relating musical events to everyday experience through cognitive models of *image schema*, *cross-domain mapping*, and *conceptual blends*. This analysis breaks with traditional methods in several ways. First, the goal of the narrative study is not to demonstrate the coherence of a work, but rather to explain its meaningfulness to an audience. Second, the analysis focuses critical attention on the listener's perceptions, rather than on a supposedly autonomous musical object. There is a dialogue between the music and a community of listeners—an approach that empowers the listener more than in traditional analyses. Last, the analysis elevates musical parameters that have been traditionally subordinated in conventional analysis, such as instrumentation, dynamics, timbre, register, and gesture. In sum, *blue cathedral* is a wonderful example of an accessible, contemporary style that has at its core a respect for communication and storytelling. In an email exchange we had in 2007, the composer confirmed in words what already seemed apparent in the music:

> I do compose with communication in mind…I became so tired of pieces that didn't engage the performers and the audiences that I started to wonder what the point is…I achieve whatever I achieve by constantly asking myself in the composition process, "Is this interesting to play and listen to?" which is not an easy thing to guess. I don't actually know what achieves or defeats this purpose in the music…But I do want the music to communicate...if it's not doing that, it's not achieving its purpose.[32]

By relating vivid musical gestures, innovative sound colors, and a diverse palette of orchestral textures to everyday embodied experiences, Higdon creates compelling musical stories. If the popularity she enjoys as a contemporary composer is any indication, Higdon achieves more than mere communication with her music; she is a masterful storyteller.

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[32]   Email to author, Jennifer Higdon, "blue cathedral," August 8, 2007.