

A Compact Disc Recording of Three Works for Flute by Daniel Dorff:

April Whirlwind, Nocturne Caprice, and 9 Walks Down 7th Avenue

by

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ABSTRACT

Many musicians, both amateur and professional alike, are continuously seeking to expand and explore their performance literature and repertory. Introducing new works into the standard repertory is an exciting endeavor for any active musician. Establishing connections, commissioning new works, and collaborating on performances can all work together toward the acceptance and success of a composer's music within an instrument community. For the flute, one such composer is Daniel Dorff (b. 1956).

Dorff, a Philadelphia-based composer, has written for symphony orchestra, clarinet, contrabassoon, and others; however, his award-winning works for flute and piccolo are earning him much recognition. He has written works for such illustrious flutists as Mimi Stillman, Walfrid Kujala, and Gary Schocker; his flute works have been recorded by Laurel Zucker, Pamela Youngblood and Lois Bliss Herbine; and his pieces have been performed and premiered at each of the National Flute Association Conventions from 2004 to 2009.

Despite this success, little has been written about Dorff's life, compositional style, and contributions to the flute repertory. In order to further promote the flute works of Daniel Dorff, the primary focus of this study is the creation of a compact disc recording of Dorff's most prominent works for flute: *April Whirlwind*, *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue*, both for flute and piano, and *Nocturne Caprice* for solo flute. In support of this recording, the study also provides biographical information regarding Daniel Dorff, discusses his compositional methods and ideology, and presents background information, description, and performance notes for each piece.

Interviews with Daniel Dorff regarding biographical and compositional details serve as the primary source for this document. Suggestions for the performance of the three flute works were gathered through interviews with

prominent flutists who have studied and performed Dorff's pieces. Additional performance suggestions for *Nocturne Caprice* were gathered through a coaching session between the author and the composer. This project is meant to promote the flute works of Daniel Dorff and to help establish their role in the standard flute repertory.

To my sweet mother

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF EXAMPLES	vii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2 EARLY CHILDHOOD: 1956 – 1974.....	3
3 COLLEGE EDUCATION AND CAREER: 1974 – PRESENT	9
4 COMPOSITIONAL PHILOSOPHIES AND STYLISTIC TRAITS	14
5 <i>APRIL WHIRLWIND</i>	18
Background	18
Description	19
Performance Guide	25
6 <i>NOCTURNE CAPRICE</i>	28
Background	28
Description	30
Performance Guide	37
7 <i>9 WALKS DOWN 7TH AVENUE</i>	41
Background	41
Description	42
Performance Guide	48
8 CONCLUSION	52
WORKS CITED	53
APPENDIX	
A WORKS FOR FLUTE AND PICCOLO BY DANIEL DORFF	55
B INTERNATIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM.....	57
C CD TRACK TITLES AND RECORDING INFORMATION.....	59

APPENDIX	Page
D COPYRIGHT PERMISSION.....	61

LIST OF EXAMPLES

Example	Page
1. 5.1	20
2. 5.2	21
3. 5.3	23
4. 5.4	24
5. 6.1	30
6. 6.2	31
7. 6.3	31
8. 6.4	32
9. 6.5	32
10. 6.6	33
11. 6.7	34
12. 6.8	35
13. 6.9	35
14. 6.10	35
15. 6.11	36
16. 6.12	36
17. 6.13	37
18. 7.1	44
19. 7.2	45
20. 7.3	46
21. 7.4	47
22. 7.5	48
23. 7.6	49
24. 7.7	50

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many musicians, both amateur and professional alike, are continuously seeking to expand and explore their performance literature and repertory. Introducing new works into the standard repertory is an exciting endeavor for any active musician. Establishing connections, commissioning new works and collaborating on performances can all work together toward the acceptance and success of a composer's music within an instrument community. For the flute, one such composer is Daniel Dorff (b. 1956).

Dorff, a Philadelphia-based composer, has written for symphony orchestra, clarinet, contrabassoon, and others; however, his award-winning works for flute and piccolo are earning him much recognition.¹ He has written works for such illustrious flutists as Mimi Stillman, Walfrid Kujala, and Gary Schocker; his flute music has been recorded by Laurel Zucker, Pamela Youngblood and Lois Bliss Herbine; and his pieces have been premiered and performed at each of the National Flute Association Conventions from 2004 to 2009.² He is currently writing new works for solo piccolo, flute, clarinet, and piano and a new sonata for flute and piano, all commissioned by influential flutists and educators.³

Despite this success, little has been written about Dorff's life, compositional style, and contributions to the flute repertory. In order to further promote the flute works of Daniel Dorff, the primary focus of this study is the creation of a compact disc recording of Dorff's most prominent works for flute: *April Whirlwind*, *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue*, both for flute and piano, and

¹ Music by Daniel Dorff, "Music for Flute," Daniel Dorff, <http://www.danieldorff.com/flute.htm> (Accessed September 29, 2010).

² Ibid.

³ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, September 29, 2010.

Nocturne Caprice for solo flute. In support of this recording, biographical information regarding Daniel Dorff, a discussion of his compositional methods and ideology, and background information, description, and performance notes for each piece are also presented. At the commencement of this study, these three works were previously unrecorded; *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue* has since been recorded and released by Pamela Youngblood, in May 2010.⁴ This project is meant to promote the flute works of Daniel Dorff and to help establish their role in the standard flute repertory.

The information presented in this document was obtained through personal phone and email interviews with Daniel Dorff as well as with professional flutists who commissioned, premiered, or performed the three works. Additional performance suggestions for *Nocturne Caprice* were gathered through a coaching session between the author and the composer.

Chapters two and three contain a brief biography of the personal and professional life of Daniel Dorff: early childhood 1956 – 1974, then college education and career 1974 – present. Chapter four discusses Dorff's compositional style and ideology as it pertains to the three works, and chapters five, six and seven contain a history, description, and performance guide for each piece.

⁴ Music by Daniel Dorff, "Music for Flute," Daniel Dorff, <http://www.danieldorff.com/flute.htm> (Accessed September 29, 2010).

CHAPTER 2

EARLY CHILDHOOD: 1956 – 1974

Daniel Jay Dorff was born on March 7, 1956 in New Rochelle, New York. At the time of his birth, Dorff's parents, Richard, an attorney, and Joan, a homemaker, resided in Mt. Vernon, a suburb of New York City. Five years later, the family, which also included Dorff's younger sister Janet, moved to Roslyn, a town on Long Island, New York. Dorff spent the remainder of his formative years in Roslyn and his parents continue to live in the house where he grew up.⁵

Neither of Dorff's parents was particularly musical; however, they appreciated classical music and often played classical recordings in the home. Despite Dorff's early exposure to the genre, he was never interested in classical music as a child. He considered it dull and preferred rock-and-roll and other popular music of the era.

Dorff discovered rock-and-roll music during the first grade and quickly lost interest in more juvenile music. He spent most of his youth enthralled with popular music such as rock-and-roll, crooners, folk rock, British invasions, and rhythm & blues. Dorff was especially smitten with the Beatles and became completely enchanted by their music at age 8. He remembers watching them perform on the Ed Sullivan show and feeling surprised by the discrepancies between their live performance and recordings.

The Beatles also played a key role in Dorff's first exposure to harmony and music theory. In seventh grade, Dorff received a miniature chord organ from his parents for his birthday. The organ had 12 chord buttons for sounding sustained triads, and Dorff became completely transfixed by these chords. He bought a Beatles songbook with chord symbols and soon became preoccupied

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all biographical information in this chapter can be found in an email message to the author, obtained on March 19, 2010.

with deciphering the symbols. He quickly began learning everything he could about chords and harmony.

The chord organ was not Dorff's first experience playing a musical instrument. In second grade, his mother enrolled him in recorder lessons at the nearby North Shore Community Arts Center. Despite missing the first two weeks of lessons due to chicken pox, he quickly caught up to the class, displaying an aptitude for the instrument. He says of the experience:

When I got to class on the third week, I was shown how to read music and finger the basic notes, and it felt like I had always known this. It was a strange experience because the other kids were still trying to figure it out and it just felt obvious to me how the six fingers work on the woodwind scale, and how note heads represent pitch and rhythm, and the basic concepts of up and down regarding scales.⁶

During his second and third grade years he continued to play the recorder and thoroughly enjoyed practicing, figuring out tunes, and learning new music.

Dorff's elementary school offered formal music classes starting in fourth grade, and he used this opportunity to learn an additional instrument. Initially he wanted to play the violin; however, after viewing a picture of a big band jazz ensemble, his interest shifted to saxophone. The saxophone would prove to be Dorff's primary instrument throughout his high school and college years, and in retrospect he cannot believe the saxophone was not his first choice of instruments. In addition to the saxophone, Dorff picked up the clarinet and bass clarinet in tenth grade, and dabbled in flute and piccolo playing, but only to fill the needs of the jazz bands and obtain versatility for rock bands. Dorff claims the clarinet and bass clarinet as his primary instruments today.

Throughout his formative years, Dorff became increasingly inspired by hard rock bands like Led Zeppelin, brass/jazz groups like Blood Sweat & Tears and Chicago, artistic groups like Yes, ELP, and Steely Dan, mainstream Motown,

⁶ Daniel Dorff, email message to the author, March 19, 2010.

and grittier 60's funk. Roslyn was a short train ride away from Manhattan and Dorff would often ride into New York City to see performances by Jethro Tull, the Allman Brothers, and Yes. His compositional style today is partially influenced by the popular music that was so important to him as a young adult.

Dorff developed an interest in classical music during his mid-teenage years. In tenth grade he heard the last movement of Brahms' Symphony No. 1 and was instantly taken with the tonal richness. He hurried home to find that his mother coincidentally had an LP with the same symphony. Dorff explains this newfound passion for classical music:

It's hard to say why it happened then and there, but I later had a professor who liked the term 'relational richness,' and I think that's something special about Brahms, and probably what got me at that stage of growing development – that despite the visceral groove and excitement of rock bands and jazz ensemble, Brahms 1st reached me on a different level and satisfied an extra part of my increasingly curious musical imagination.⁷

After Dorff discovered classical music, he began to ponder the idea of a career as a classical musician. In order to make an educated decision, he decided he needed to attend a summer music camp to receive intensive exposure to life as a serious musician. He attended the Red Fox Music Camp in the Berkshire Mountains during the summer of 1972. At camp, surrounded by kids who had been playing and practicing clarinet for many years, he soon questioned his own ability to put in the required effort to be a classical musician. One afternoon while walking on campus, he heard a piece of music that was unlike anything he had ever heard. He rushed to the rehearsal hall and discovered it was the *Fantasy for Trombone and Orchestra* by Paul Creston. This moment radically changed Dorff's life. He says:

I knew instantly that if Creston's music could amaze and excite me so intensely, that I had to become a composer too so I could be just like him. I couldn't tell you why this makes any logical sense, but it was an

⁷ Ibid.

immediate decision to try becoming a composer as a possible career choice, and I started composing chamber and choral music as soon as I got home.⁸

The fall of his 11th-grade year, Dorff's parents bought him a full-size upright piano and he began composing. His admiration for Creston's music continued after he arrived home from Red Fox, and he began to search libraries and record stores trying to find as much music by Creston as he could. He wrote fan letters to Creston stating he wanted to study with him and write just like him.⁹ Creston wrote back to his enthusiastic fan, teaching him a lifelong lesson that has become one of the key philosophies behind Dorff's compositional style. Creston said, "The best advice I could ever give you is don't ever try to write like me. Channel that enthusiasm into trying to find out what you're really about."¹⁰

Dorff's high school teachers were also very supportive of his compositional aspirations. They allowed opportunities for his music to be played on concerts, and his band director, Harold Gilmore, accepted him as a private theory and composition student. Harold Gilmore had been a commercial arranger for NBC until his hearing diminished so much that he could no longer rehearse on a professional level. He was very eager to help Dorff develop as a composer, teaching him the fundamentals of each instrument in addition to private theory and composition lessons.

The summer before Dorff's senior year in high school, he was pondering the decision to make composition a career. He decided to attend the Aspen

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sean Osborne, "The New Tonality School of Composition in Young American Composers" (master's thesis, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1999), 20.

¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

Summer Music Festival in Aspen, Colorado, to study composition and saxophone. At Aspen, Dorff discovered music from all centuries and styles, expanding his knowledge and exposure to the wider symphonic and chamber music repertory. He was also enthralled with the many composers and performers, both students and famous masters, present at the festival.

Dorff was also exposed to a popular compositional trend at that time: tonality was considered archaic and not to be taken seriously. Dorff, who remains a mainly tonal composer today, was ridiculed for his use of melody and harmony. In front of his composition class, Elliott Carter specifically declared Dorff's harmonic language "obsolete in the post-war world and a feeble reckoning back to Schubert's Vienna."¹¹ Dorff stubbornly and politely replied:

...[W]hile Mr. Carter had experienced atrocities during World War II such as witnessing bombings and concentration camps and he was relevantly composing music of his shock and despair, expressing his life experience, that I was simply a suburban spoiled brat who had never suffered or witnessed trauma, and I was composing beauty because I am attracted to beauty.¹²

Despite Carter's disapproval of his compositional style, Dorff thoroughly enjoyed Aspen and returned the following summer. His composition for saxophone quartet entitled *Fantasy, Scherzo and Nocturne* won first prize in the composer's competition of the 1974 summer session. Dorff was able to quickly write this work over a weekend for his summer chamber group, rather than for his composition class at Aspen. This success taught him another valuable lesson: composing for himself and other performers obtained more genuine results than composing for the approval of his compositional colleagues.

¹¹ Daniel Dorff, email to the author, March 19, 2010.

¹²Ibid.

This theme was reinforced during his senior year of high school, when Dorff began studying privately with the composer Elie Siegmeister. Siegmeister drew from blues, jazz, and folk melodies and rhythms in his many operas, symphonies, popular theatre music, song cycles, and more. He was a master craftsman, and his textbooks on harmony and melody were used as curriculum in many universities.¹³ Dorff says of Siegmeister, “Elie encouraged me to learn about every kind of music, and to trust my own voice at the same time— this was a perfect match between teacher and student. Elie gave me the coveted ‘last lesson of the day’ time slot so we could go beyond the scheduled hour whenever it was needed.”

During this same time, Dorff was trying to decide where to attend college. His parents were supportive of his decision to study composition, and they instilled in Dorff the importance of fully researching every option, maintaining an open mind, and realizing the consequences of his decisions. By the middle of 12th grade, he was faced with the decision to study at Juilliard or Bennington College. His first choice was to study with Vincent Persichetti at Juilliard; however, if Persichetti went on sabbatical or became busy with a full teaching load he would be forced to study with Milton Babbitt or Elliott Carter, both of whom did not promote tonality. He heard a recording entitled *Music by Bennington Composers*, which featured the music of the composition teachers Vivian Fine, Henry Brant, Lionel Nowak, and Louis Calabro. Based on this recording, he decided to attend Bennington.

¹³ Bruce Duffie, “Composer Elie Siegmeister: A Conversation With Bruce Duffie,” KC Studio, <http://www.kcstudio.com/sieg2.html> (accessed October 27, 2010).

CHAPTER 3

COLLEGE EDUCATION AND CAREER: 1974 – PRESENT

Dorff spent his freshman year at Bennington College; however, the compositional learning environment proved to be too free form for him. Bennington encouraged right-brained thinking and spontaneity with regard to compositional technique, rather than teaching the architecture, craft, and repertory of influential composers in music history. After the first year, Dorff transferred to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, to gain a more traditional grounding.¹⁴

While at Cornell, Dorff studied with Robert Palmer and Karel Husa, and although both were influential in his education as a composer, Dorff felt his most important lessons came from his music history courses. He was able to study with Neal Zaslaw and Don Randel, both noted music historians. In classes, Dorff was introduced to the compositional techniques of such composers as Guillaume de Machaut, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms and other historical composers. Their examples served to be very enlightening and inspirational as Dorff developed his own compositional style.

After graduating from Cornell, Dorff chose to attend graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied with George Crumb, Ralph Shapey, George Rochberg, and Richard Wernick. Dorff considered all of these composers great teachers of the craft of musical architecture and felt they respected and appreciated the compositional masters of music history.

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania in May 1980, Dorff felt he needed to take some time away from academia. He realized he disliked

¹⁴ Unless otherwise stated, all biographical information found in this chapter was obtained in an e-mail message from Daniel Dorff to the author on March 23, 2010.

many of his college compositions; however, he was still generally fond of the compositions written during his youth. His years at Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania had provided him with an excellent foundation and understanding of compositional craft; however, the intensive scrutiny had left him feeling creatively stunted. George Crumb advised him to separate himself from the expectations of his teachers and other composers and let his imagination wander. Dorff followed this advice, entering into a professional period of great creativity, freedom, and rediscovery.

During this time, Dorff began doing small proofreading projects for Theodore Presser Company. He moved to downtown Philadelphia to be within walking distance of the Philadelphia Orchestra's performance venue and the free chamber music concerts at the Curtis Institute. He did some private teaching and other odd music-related jobs, such as music appreciation classes for senior citizens; however, the majority of his time was spent composing. This freedom allowed him to foster his creativity and further develop his compositional voice and identity.

Through a fortunate misunderstanding involving a mistaken identity, Dorff was hired by the Greenfield School, a public school in the center of Philadelphia, for the 1980-81 school year.¹⁵ His task involved developing a special musical program where students performed rock songs featuring their own song lyrics. The students began by writing lyrics based on issues surrounding teens, such as peer pressure, conflict, and self-image. From the eight hundred student submissions, Dorff chose eight to set to music. In addition to composing the songs, Dorff also accompanied the students on rock piano. The project proved

¹⁵ Osborne, 23.

to be a success not only for the school, but also as a solution to Dorff's slump in creativity. He describes the experience:

After 5 years of academic self-conscious dissection of note-by-note interval-by-interval non-spontaneous writing for school, suddenly I was thinking in 4 and 8-bar phrases. I knew right away that this was the antidote for the uncreative work habits I'd grown in school, and it loosened me up to go back to my own concert art music, with a renewed memory of how to really write music, thinking in phrases rather than in microscopic note-by-note construction.¹⁶

Dorff continued the project for the next two years, enjoying the experience of writing for the student-based rock band.

In 1982, Dorff became acquainted with a librettist named Frank McQuilkin, the poet-in-residence for a group called Young Audiences of Greater Philadelphia. The group commissioned Dorff and McQuilkin to write a 40-minute opera for school tour performances. The writers decided to base the opera on the legend of *Stone Soup*,¹⁷ a fable used to teach cooperation and generosity.¹⁸ To create the songs, Dorff spent hours pacing the street outside his apartment spontaneously singing whatever melodies emerged from his imagination. He pretended he was singing previously written songs in order to trick his subconscious into creating new catchy tunes. His creative venture worked and the musical themes materialized. Since its inception date, *Stone Soup: An Operatic Fable in One Delicious Act* has been performed over 1,000 times in schools and other professional settings.

¹⁶ Daniel Dorff, email to the author, March 23, 2010.

¹⁷ The legend of *Stone Soup* varies, however the general storyline describes the plight of starving travelers seeking food from a small village. After some trickery, each villager donates an ingredient and over time all share a delicious pot of soup.

¹⁸ Stone Soup Society, "The Fable of Stone Soup," Stone Soup Society, <http://www.stonesoupsociety.com/Stone-Soup-Fable.htm> (accessed November 2, 2010).

Dorff has continued to write for children's audiences throughout his career. During the 1990's he was commissioned by orchestras such as the Sacramento Symphony, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Orchestra to write musical programs for children's outreach. Some of his most successful works for young audiences are *Three Fun Fables*, *Billy and the Carnival: A Children's Guide to the Instruments*, *Blast Off!* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. All four works are for narrator and orchestra.¹⁹

Dorff began working for Theodore Presser Company while finishing graduate school, doing free-lance proofreading in addition to composing. After marrying the sculptor Eiko Fan Takahira in 1984, Dorff felt he needed to consider securing a more steady income. Their plans for a future family motivated a gradual increase in his involvement with the music publishing company. He helped with graphics, typesetting, editing, and other production work, and eventually he began working full time as head of their editorial department. Although he missed the free schedule for composing, he was grateful for his new role, especially after the birth of his daughter, Julia, in 1987 and his son, Michael, two years later. Dorff currently serves as vice president of publishing for Theodore Presser Company.

Dorff additionally serves as the composer-in-residence for the Symphony in C, formerly the Haddonfield Symphony, in Camden, New Jersey. Dorff became associated with the Haddonfield Symphony in the fall of 1980, while studying clarinet and bass clarinet with Ronald Reuben of the Philadelphia Orchestra. When the Haddonfield Symphony contacted Reuben for a referral for the bass clarinet position, he recommended Dorff. Dorff served as the bass

¹⁹ Daniel Dorff, "Music by Daniel Dorff," Daniel Dorff, <http://www.danieldorff.com/index.html> (accessed April 7, 2010).

clarinetist for the organization until 1998. During the 1996-97 season, conductor Alan Gilbert created a composer-in-residence program and appointed Dorff as the first resident composer. Dorff is currently in his 14th year as composer-in-residence.

Since his first commission in 1982, Dorff's compositional career has continued to blossom. He has enjoyed success writing for all mediums and continues to be highly regarded as both arranger and composer. He enjoys composing works for auxiliary instruments such as piccolo, E-flat clarinet, and contrabassoon, which have limited solo repertory. His pieces entitled *Sonatine de Giverny* and *Flash!* for piccolo and piano are among his most successful contributions in the flute/piccolo world. In addition to composing he is also an expert in music engraving and notation and frequently gives lectures on the subject.²⁰

²⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

COMPOSITIONAL PHILOSOPHIES AND STYLISTIC TRAITS

Throughout his career, despite criticism and scrutiny, Dorff has managed to preserve his chosen compositional voice. Regardless of popularity or peer approval, he has maintained a largely tonal vernacular, writing works based heavily on motivic unity, singable melodies, and rich harmonies. His music has been described by music critics as accessible, jovial, lighthearted, and beautiful.²¹ Dorff has found success composing music that celebrates beauty without the constraints of expectation or labels. He says simply, “I write what I write.”²²

When writing, Dorff hopes to create works that appeal to both performers and audiences. He feels that while every composition should be attractive on the surface, a strong underlying construction is fundamental.²³ Recurring musical ideas or small motives are important to the overall structure of Dorff’s works. Motives and modulations create web-like patterns and expectations that set up suspense, surprise, and ultimately satisfaction. Dorff uses motivic material to build a sense of commonality within his pieces, even the seemingly unrelated sections.²⁴ This provides both a feeling of unity and organicism in his works. Dorff says of this technique:

One analogy might be with standard 8-bar phrase AABA songs: sometimes the middle section of a pop song oozes out so naturally and spontaneously that it just had to be the next line of the song, and generally that’s because there is a lot in common between the A theme and the B theme; but sometimes you can tell the B section was written another day because they needed a contrasting section and the recording session was

²¹ Osborne, 23.

²² Daniel Dorff, phone interview with the author, March 17, 2010.

²³ Daniel Dorff, email message to the author, March 23, 2010.

²⁴ Ibid.

coming up. When the musical DNA is tight, one can go far afield and still keep everything very relevant.²⁵

Dorff cites Beethoven as one of the first composers to develop an entire work around a single musical cell or motive, and although many composers use this idea of musical DNA, he consciously applies it to many of his works.²⁶ He says, “I hope that in each of my pieces, there are many strands of micropatterns that help build coherence. Music is a language without pre-existing words, so the composer has to tell a story in patterns only.”²⁷

With regard to specific detail, Dorff’s music tends to include pentatonic melodies with folk-like characteristics; luscious 7th, 9th, and 13th chords; and singable melodies. He derives his rich textural and harmonic inspiration from Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy and uses similar compositional methods, such as pandiatonicism and static harmonic progressions. His tendency to use single cell motives, or recurring themes, to construct a piece stems from the architectural models of Ludwig Van Beethoven, and his seamless transitions between musical ideas can be traced to Johannes Brahms and Frédéric Chopin.²⁸

In addition to classical influences, much of Dorff’s compositional voice can be derived from rock, jazz, and popular music. He says:

A lot of my music has various jazz influences...I never resisted having an ‘eclectic cuisinart’ for my ears and imagination, whereas pop-influence has been a stigma for some composers, and a bonus for others. I just hear it as music and don’t make a big deal out of it.”²⁹

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Dorff compares his use of popular cultural influence to Beethoven and Brahms using folk tunes as symphonic material or Bach and Palestrina borrowing from popular secular songs.³⁰ Dorff's compositional voice represents a melding of various musical elements found in his own life experiences as well as the examples of great composers throughout history. This fusion gives his music a unique blend of familiarity and innovation in addition to its beauty.

Another aspect of Dorff's compositional style is his ability to write idiomatically for woodwinds. Because of his experience playing clarinet and saxophone, he intuitively writes music that is particularly accessible to the woodwind family. This fluency has proven to be both positive and negative for Dorff's musical output. While he is able to write easily for woodwinds, when composing for percussion or piano he finds it necessary to put his natural woodwind inclinations aside and write for the strengths of the instrument at hand.³¹

Whatever the medium, Dorff has remained loyal to his own harmonic language throughout his career. He admits that he never set out to radically change the musical world, he only wanted to write beautiful music that would elicit an emotional response from both performer and listener.³² He says of his music, "All my music without exception is about the beauty of music. Programs, commissions, texts, or other contexts can often inspire the writing of a piece or its specifics, but everything I write is a celebration of the beauty and my love of music itself."³³

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

CHAPTER 5
APRIL WHIRLWIND
BACKGROUND

In early 1997, Dorff was struggling to write a commission for Philadelphia's Network for New Music, an organization dedicated to commissioning new works from living composers.³⁴ His task included writing an orchestral piece for high school orchestra, and although he had written works for younger audiences, he had not yet written a work for young performers. On April 5th, frustrated by writer's block, Dorff decided to clear his head by improvising on the piano. He began with one of his favorite elements, parallel polychords, or chords derived from simultaneously sounding elements of two triads.³⁵ He soon added whirring textures, such as repeated arpeggiated figures, and in a matter of hours he incidentally composed the first 53 measures, or A theme, of *April Whirlwind*.³⁶

While contemplating characteristics of a complementary B theme, he realized his previously composed song, *Tobetara*, fit perfectly with the motivic material of this new spontaneous work. The following day he returned to the piece, and after writing a middle development section and recapitulation he completed the entire work. He entitled the piece *April Whirlwind* because of its

³³ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, March 14, 2010.

³⁴ Network for New Music, "Network for New Music: About," Network for New Music, <http://networkfornewmusic.org/about> (accessed February 28, 2010).

³⁵ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, September 15, 2010.

³⁶ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, April 21, 2010.

rapid creation as well as the recurring musical gestures evoking whirlwind imagery.³⁷

Part of the unconscious inspiration for this piece may be attributed to the music of flutist and composer Gary Schocker. During April 1997, Dorff's capacity as editor for Theodore Presser Company caused him to be deeply involved in the editing and production of Schocker's flute compositions. He had not yet written for flute and piano, nor was it his intention; however, perhaps due to the mental residue of editing Schocker's compositions, *April Whirlwind* emerged as his first work for flute and piano. In addition to the instrumentation, the A theme also employs the virtuosic *glissando* flute runs characteristic of many of Schocker's showpieces. Because of Schocker's musical influence and their personal friendship, Dorff dedicated the piece to him.³⁸

April Whirlwind was premiered on April 26, 1998, by Gary Schocker in Brooklyn, New York. The piece was part of a concert sponsored by the Long Island Composers Alliance, a collective dedicated to promoting original works by composers living or working on Long Island.³⁹ The piece was well received;⁴⁰ however, it proves to be the least performed flute work by Dorff, and the only one of his flute works to not yet receive a performance at a National Flute Association convention.⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Long Island Composers Alliance, "History and Mission," Long Island Composers Alliance, <http://www.licamusic.org/> (accessed September 15, 2010).

⁴⁰ Gary Schocker, e-mail message to the author, March 24, 2010.

⁴¹ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, April 21, 2010.

DESCRIPTION

While the construction of *April Whirlwind* roughly follows elements of sonata form, more accurately the form is ABA with a small development. It begins with an introduction, mm. 1-4, of ascending parallel arpeggiated chords in the flute part, accompanied by parallel block polychords in the piano. These polychords, made up of stacked perfect 4ths and major 3rds, introduce the major intervallic building blocks of the piece. The piano continues with these parallel arpeggiated chords, and the flute alternates between arpeggiated chords and sweeping *glissandi* both ascending and descending throughout a two-octave range. This introduction gives the listener an impression of expansion or taking flight on the wind.

In measures 5-9, Dorff transitions from the introduction to the first theme with an isorhythm, or repeated rhythmic motive independent of pitch material,⁴² consisting of nine repeating 16th notes in the flute part layered over the even numbered 4/4 melody of the piano.

The image displays a musical score for measures 4 through 9 of the piece 'April Whirlwind'. The score is written for flute and piano. The flute part (top staff) features a series of ascending parallel arpeggiated chords, marked with a box containing the number '5' and the instruction 'mf delicate, graceful'. The piano part (bottom staff) consists of parallel block polychords, marked with 'mp (background)' and 'f bring out melody'. The piano part also includes a section marked 'mf con. 3rd.' (measures 8-9). The score is written in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as arpeggios, glissandi, and dynamic markings.

Example 5.1. *April Whirlwind*, mm. 4-9, isorhythmic flute and piano line.

⁴² William Duckworth, *20/20 New Sounds of the 20th Century* (New York: Schirmer, date), 66.

Dorff borrowed this concept from the 14th-century composer Guillaume de Machaut, who developed isorhythms in his motets.⁴³ Olivier Messiaen also borrows this technique in “Crystal Liturgy” from *Quartet for the End of Time* to free rhythm, melody, and harmony from their dependence on one another.⁴⁴ Dorff says, “The main point is that this keeps the background interesting, and no listener will pick it up consciously. For example, at bar 6 the piano has the simple foreground melody, while the isorhythmic flute creates a doily-like texture with this anti-square pattern.”⁴⁵ The melody of the piano foreshadows the first theme by introducing its intervallic and rhythmic material; however, it remains undeveloped until measure 10.

In measure 10 the lyrical A theme of section A appears, providing a more relaxed feel compared with the busier introductory section. This relaxed pace is fleeting, however, and at measure 21 both the flute and piano live into another isorhythmic section. In this section the piano takes the pentatonic 16th-note line and the melody appears in the flute part. Adding further variation, the isorhythm now contains eleven 16th notes as opposed to nine in the previous statement.



⁴³Oxford Music Online, “Isorhythm,” Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t14/e3491?q=isorhythm.html> (accessed April 2, 2010).

⁴⁴ Duckworth, 66.

⁴⁵ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, April 21, 2010.

Example 5.2. *April Whirlwind*, mm. 21-23, isorhythmic piano and flute line.

The B theme of section A begins in measure 37 with another singing melody; however, this second melody is more subdued. In contrast the piano accompaniment promotes forward motion and urgency with offbeat pulses. At measure 50, as the melody tapers off, the piano abruptly interrupts with the return of the opening ascending parallel chords. The flute continues this intense gesture with a forceful trill and two-octave *glissando* in both directions. This *glissando* passage is clearly meant to evoke whirlwind imagery.

At measure 55 the contrasting B section, based on the motivic material of the first section, begins. Dorff describes the inspiration for this section:

With all the rising 4ths mixed with 3rds both in flute and piano, and the busy harmonic and rhythmic energy, and pentatonic motives in non-pentatonic settings, I thought it might be interesting to add a ‘B Section’ that also was full of rising 4ths mixed with 3rds in a different way and with a different whirring texture, but with much more relaxed harmony and less intense rhythm. That would be very germane to the first 53 bars and make a nice contrasting relaxed section. As soon as I started exploring this idea, I realized my song *Tobetara* would make a perfect B Theme.⁴⁶

Tobetara was written in February 1986. The song is based on a poem written by Dorff’s former wife, Japanese sculptor Eiko Fan Takahira, also entitled *Tobetara*, the Japanese verb “to be able to fly.” Given the flying imagery of the text and the similar motivic material of rising 4ths and 3rd intervals, Dorff considered the song a match for *April Whirlwind*.⁴⁷

The B section clearly climaxes at measure 93, emerging from a series of E-Minor, C-Minor and A-Minor chord progressions into a bright E-Major. Dorff marks *triumphant* to accentuate the arrival point, and the open 4th and 5th intervals

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

of the melody promote an exultant, proud character. The B section's climax provides a thrilling moment for both listener and performer.

The B section closes with a final E-Major chord in the piano at measure 102. Despite its finality, the first inversion voicing and high tessitura give this cadence point a sense of instability. This moment simultaneously signals closure and forward motion, and nicely dovetails the B theme into the more flexible, cadenza-like development section.

The development begins in measure 103 with the parallel ascending polychord motive of the introduction; however, in this statement the chords are voiced to create a lighter texture and the piano appears alone. In measures 103-109 the piano and flute parts display the opening motivic material in a call and response, giving each performer the freedom to utilize the composer's *relaxed* and *flexible* character markings. The piano's material remains fairly similar to its original statement; however, the flute arpeggios are now descending as opposed to the ascending detail of the opening passage.

103 Relaxed and flexible (♩ = c.126)

mf

Example 5.3. *April Whirlwind*, mm. 103-107, flute and piano call and response.

Measure 110 returns again to the rising arpeggios of the opening motive to transition into an expansive, jazz-influenced portion of the development.

114-40913

Example 5.4. *April Whirlwind*, mm. 116-127, transition into jazz-influenced development.

The end of the development transitions back into the more whirring texture in the flute and piano line and eventually settles into a reflective and subdued piano solo.

Measure 138 marks the recapitulation with a clear restatement of the A section displaying both A and B themes with minimal variance. The B section returns at measure 187, now a half step higher than its original statement. Aside from this change in key, the recapitulation is almost identical to the original A section; however, Dorff adds an additional two measures to the B section, giving it a more satisfactory ending. The piece ends in F Major with a final statement of the parallel ascending chords and one last whirlwind gesture in the flute's final flourish.

PERFORMANCE GUIDE

From a performance standpoint, *April Whirlwind* is fairly accessible;⁴⁸ however, the flutist must have strong command of technique in order to portray the whirlwind imagery with ease. Additionally a beautiful, controlled tone is necessary to accurately render the varied tone colors throughout the work.⁴⁹

The most challenging technical section of *April Whirlwind* is the isorhythmic flute line in measures 5-8 (Example 5.1 above). The inclusion of the third-octave F# combined with second-octave A# in the same passage creates an awkward fingering pattern for the flutist. The G#-A#-C# fingering pattern can be simplified using the Bb thumb fingering; however, the third-octave F# will not sound with the Bb thumb key depressed. The player is faced with the choice of either leaving the Bb thumb key off for the entire passage or finding a way to move it off and on when needed.⁵⁰ The author found it beneficial to put the Bb thumb key on at the third-octave C# to facilitate a simple second-octave A# fingering and then remove it at the following third-octave C# for the third-octave F#.

Another challenging aspect of this section is the repetition and shifting musical emphasis. For many players, a repeated pattern of complicated fingerings can be difficult because the fingers can become confused about placement in the pattern. Measures 5-8 are particularly confusing because the written isorhythm is an odd number of 16th notes resulting in a shift of musical emphasis in addition to difficult, repetitive third-octave fingerings. The author found that coordinating this finger repetition required practicing the pattern beyond its written length. For

⁴⁸ Gary Schocker. e-mail message to the author, March 24, 2010.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Lois Herbine, e-mail message to the author, March 31, 2010.

instance, the written passage is four measures. To strengthen muscle memory and coordination, it may be advantageous to practice the pattern at twice the length of the written value or eight measures without interruption. One could also work up to this repetitive practice by adding one additional measure at a time. After practicing the pattern exceeding its written length, returning to the original four-measure passage is much more simple. This passage is an example of the whirring texture and whirlwind imagery that is essential to the affect of the piece. Each additional technical passage, *glissando*, or ornament should also offer a sense of ease and lift. Without these characteristics the imagery becomes ineffective.⁵¹

In addition to ease of technical facility, a fine-tuned sense of pitch is also imperative to the affect of the work. Because the piece is filled with long melodies incorporating many rising open intervals, relative pitch is essential to the melodic integrity of the lyrical line. The 4th, 5th, and 3rd intervals of the melodies become distracting if correct pitch is not utilized. The performer should practice matching successive interval jumps within the melodies with a tuner to assure relative pitch. Recording and listening to the melody can also identify pitch weaknesses.

Varying tone color is also important in differentiating among the moods of the piece. Dorff has included specific character markings such as *full*, *proud*, *triumphant*, *suddenly innocent*, and *penetrating*, and exaggerated attention to these markings enhances the contrasting sections. The flutist should spend time exploring and developing the tone color palette in order to best portray these markings. An example of the importance of tone color occurs in the recapitulated B section in measure 188. Dorff marks *like an intimate whisper* for the opening

⁵¹ Ibid.

of this section, indicating not only a softer dynamic but also a tender and sweet color. This gentle character continues until measure 221 when Dorff marks *reawakening* to signal a blossoming in anticipation of the climactic moment, marked *triumphant*, at measure 225. The performer must have the tone control to evolve from an intimate to bold color over the lengthy span of 38 measures. The author found it beneficial to practice varying tone depth, vibrato speeds, note attacks, and dynamic contrast using Marcel Moyse's *De La Sonorite* tone studies.⁵²

Although *April Whirlwind* is the most accessible of Dorff's flute works, it still combines both technical and lyrical passages to create a challenging and musically satisfying experience. Because of technically demanding passages, the author would classify this work as suitable for advanced high school to first-and-second year college students. *April Whirlwind*'s accessibility and simple beauty qualify it as a valuable part of the flute literature.

⁵² Marcel Moyse, "De La Sonorite: Art et Technique," Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1934.

CHAPTER 6
NOCTURNE CAPRICE
BACKGROUND

The genesis of *Nocturne Caprice*, composed for solo flute, begins with the renowned flutist Mimi Stillman. At age 12, Mimi Stillman was the youngest musician ever to be admitted to the Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with Julius Baker and Jeffrey Khaner. She graduated from the Curtis Institute with a Bachelor's degree in Music in 1999 and has since pursued her graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania.⁵³

In 2001, in addition to her studies and active performance schedule, Stillman published a book of early Debussy songs transcribed for flute and piano entitled *Nuits d'Etoiles*, through Theodore Presser. Dorff, serving as editor for the project, became acquainted with Stillman and her flute playing during this time. In October 2002, while preparing for a solo concert series scheduled to begin in early November, Stillman contacted Dorff inquiring if he had written any solo flute pieces that could be programmed. Dorff seized the opportunity and, despite the short timeline, commissioned himself to quickly write a solo piece for her. *Nocturne Caprice* was composed in one week and premiered on November 2, 2002 by Mimi Stillman.⁵⁴

Because the piece was written for Stillman, Dorff took inspiration from two main characteristics of her flute playing. Having heard her perform many times, he was acquainted with Stillman's rich, big, and warm low register and

⁵³ Mimistillman.org, "Mimi Stillman: Flutist," Mimi Stillman, <http://www.mimistillman.org/mimibio.html> (accessed April 1, 2010).

⁵⁴ Daniel Dorff, e-mail to the author, March 23, 2010.

sought to highlight this strength throughout the piece. The opening theme was built with her characteristic low register in mind.⁵⁵

Dorff had also heard Stillman perform from Paganini's *24 Caprices*, and knew that she greatly admired that style of music. The two contrasting ideas of the dark, rich sound and the bright, virtuosic character of Paganini inspired an interplay between light and dark. Dorff, speaking of this concept for *Nocturne Caprice*, says, "These very opposite ideas suggested a chiaroscuro-like drama and structure where darkness and light alternate or conflict, or happily relieve each other throughout the piece..."⁵⁶

In regard to construction, Dorff used Frédéric Chopin's *Nocturnes* as a structural model for *Nocturne Caprice*. During his compositional studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Dorff became fascinated by Chopin's ability to blur the structural lines between major themes in his *Nocturnes*. Dorff elaborates, "Chopin *Nocturnes* go from a main A theme, gracefully or subtly into a B theme and somehow ooze back into the A theme again, often without a clear boundary so we just gradually notice we're back again."⁵⁷ This structural concept is the formal idea behind *Nocturne Caprice*. The title itself, *Nocturne Caprice*, describes not only the two formal ideas of the work, Chopin's *Nocturnes* and Paganini's *Caprices*, but also the contrasting concepts of light and dark: *Nocturne* represents the dark nocturnal character and *Caprice* the opposing bright, light character.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

DESCRIPTION

Nocturne Caprice is in alternating form, ABACA, with a small coda. The opening theme or primary theme of the A section, in C# minor, is voiced in the low register of the flute and employs a flatted 5th (G-natural), or lowered fifth scale degree of the diatonic scale. The lowered fifth is considered a “blue note” and is used in blues and jazz to evoke a mournful quality.⁵⁹ The combination of this lowered fifth and the flute register give this opening theme a soulful, bluesy character while it establishes the nocturnal nature. Score markings for the opening theme are *hauntingly* and *dark*, and Dorff includes the adjectives of *lazy*, *sinuous*, and *coquettish* in the compositional sketches to further describe the theme’s character.



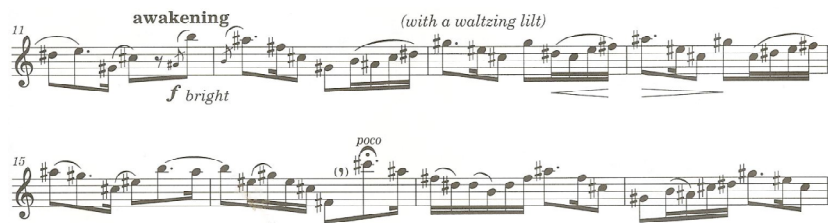
Example 6.1. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 1-5, opening theme displays flatted 5th scale degree.

The primary theme of the A section is a parallel period with the second statement cadencing in C# minor in the middle of measure 11.

The pick up into measure 12 marks the beginning of the secondary theme of the A section and also the first dramatic shift into the lighter, more lilting character. This secondary theme is labeled *awakening*, the marking that generally indicates the lighter character throughout the piece. The lazy atmosphere of the primary theme is quickly dismissed by an active ornamented opening figure containing wide intervals and a *forte* dynamic marking.

⁵⁹ Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music* (New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996), 767.

This lilting secondary theme moves forward, emphasizing a rising scalar line of G#-A#-B-C# in anticipation of the perfect cadence in F# Major at measure 20.



Example 6.2. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 11-18, secondary theme.

Measures 21-27, the transition into the B section, introduce the motive of a whole step combined with a minor third, voiced here as C#-D#-F#. This motive becomes a major building block throughout the piece.



Example 6.3. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 19-28, transition into B section and 3-note transitional motive.

The B section, mm. 28-66, begins with the same transitional motive of a whole step and a minor third, transposed up a half step to D-E-G. Measures 28-43 become more agitated, with a continually rising and falling line and tempo markings indicating an increase of *rubato* throughout. These measures are in G-Minor; however, the tonal center remains somewhat unsettled due to the absence of strong cadences and leading tone. As the melodic line approaches measure 42, it exhibits increased chromaticism, syncopated accents, and an accelerated tempo.

These added attributes increase tension and propel the line forward into a climactic release at measure 42. This climactic moment is the first Paganini-inspired passage, characterized by virtuosic arpeggios swiftly moving throughout the flute range. The moment is transitory, however, and the sprightly character quickly dissipates back into the luscious dark color of the opening theme.



Example 6.4. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 38-43, tension building toward first virtuosic Paganini-inspired passage.

At this point in the piece, Dorff uses the opening thematic material to build a transition that seems to foreshadow a restatement of the A section. However, after multiple attempts, the melodic line deceptively blossoms into an exciting cadenza in mm. 57-66. Dorff says of this passage, “As a saxophonist, I know that some fingering patterns can go very quickly without difficulty, so I love offering performers that opportunity; bars 57-59 alternate C2 with other notes, and that *accelerando* gives the flutist license to have fun with it.”⁶⁰



Example 6.5. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 57-63, cadenza passage.

⁶⁰ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to author, March 23, 2010.

The primary theme of the A section returns at measure 66, but with added drama created by frequent shifts in character and increased *rubato*. Dorff also generates more excitement and variation by elaborating or altering passages, particularly with signature Paganini characteristics such arpeggiated figures and light articulation. For example, in measures 73 and 74, Dorff elaborates the fundamental pitches of the comparable measures 6 and 7 with a staccato arpeggiated line. He also marks it *ma delicato*, giving it a dainty, Paganini-inspired character.

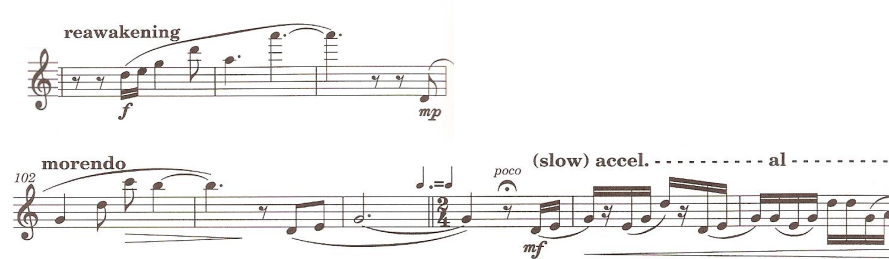


Example 6.6. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 6-7 and mm. 70-77, comparing variation between mm. 6-7 and mm. 73-74.

At measure 85, the secondary theme of the A section returns, transcribed a fifth below its original statement and with added elaboration of slurred octave jumps in measure 94.

Measures 99-106 demonstrate Dorff's intention to create an organic connection between themes as opposed to demarcating defined phrase boundaries. The transitional motive returns in the three-note figure D-E-G at measure 99. At first glance this return seems to serve as the closing of the secondary theme of the A section; however, the marking *awakening* indicates an additional purpose. The three-note motive is simultaneously introducing the opening of the C section and

displaying the intervallic building block of the following themes. Measures 99-106 serve both as closing material as well and an introduction, thus blurring the division between sections. These measures are intended to disguise the double bar and the transition into the C section, thus creating a more cohesive effect.



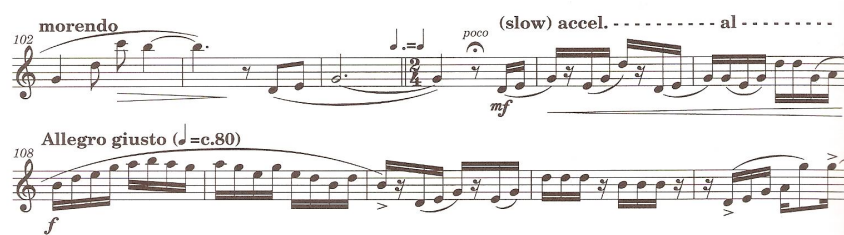
Example 6.7. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 99-107, transition into C section using 3-note transitional motive.

The C section, or “hoe-down” theme, begins to gather momentum at measure 106 and gradually opens up into a joyous middle section.⁶¹ The major thematic building block of this section is the three-note transitional motive of a whole step combined with a minor third. This motive is present throughout each melodic phrase, though its use is varied in each repetition, giving this section a unified sound and purpose. This technique, described as “musical DNA” by Dorff, is a fingerprint of his compositional style.⁶²

Evidence of this technique is displayed in three different motives made from the same intervallic structure. The pick-up to measure 106-110, mm. 112-113 and 116-119 all use the transitional motive; however, each is varied either in pitch, rhythm, or musical emphasis.

⁶¹ Kim Troler, e-mail to the author, April 3, 2010.

⁶² Daniel Dorff, e-mail to the author, March 23, 2010.



Example 6.8. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 106-110, displays use of transitional motive as a pick-up.



Example 6.9. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 112-113, transitional motive with varied rhythm.



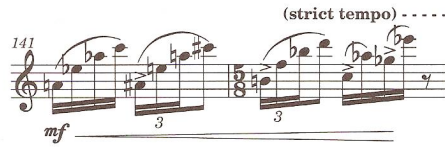
Example 6.10. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 116-119, displaying the transitional motive of the C section with varied musical emphasis and pitch.

These three versions of the motive return throughout the C section in combination with each other or other melodic material. Each melody is related to one another without becoming predictable or redundant.

The C section is filled with folk-influenced pentatonic passages mixed with jazz elements,⁶³ such as syncopated rhythms, blue notes, and emphasis on

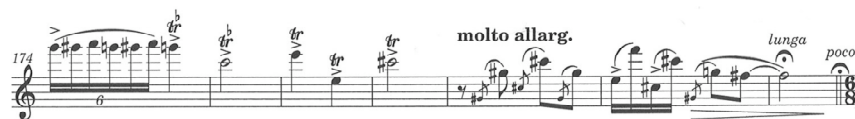
⁶³ Ibid.

weak beats,⁶⁴ and the Paganini-inspired brightness of staccato arpeggiated passages. Also present are passages of the parallel descending or ascending tetrachords, another signature of Dorff's compositional style.⁶⁵



Example 6.11. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 141-142, displaying parallel tetrachords.

The contrasting, carefree nature of the C section begins to darken at m. 165 with a transition back into the C#-minor key area. The tempo begins to move forward and the character becomes again more troubled. At measures 173-177 the flattened 5th or G-natural of the opening theme reappears as the music climbs to a frantic climax, helped along by both an accelerated tempo and an extended passage of trills. The frantic pace slows at measure 178 with an elaborated statement of the opening motive in octave jumps. Again the transition into the final statement of the A theme is blurred, as measures 178 and 179 serve as both a calming completion to the energetic C section and also as the first two measures of the restated A section.



Example 6.12. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 178-180, transition back into A section.

⁶⁴ Grout and Palisca, 768.

⁶⁵ Daniel Dorff, e-mail to the author, March 23, 2010.

After a long *fermata*, the primary themes of the A section are restated, beginning in the fourth measure of the original statement. Dorff varies this rendition by voicing the theme one octave higher and cadencing in C#-Major. As anticipated, the secondary theme of the A section follows, except now it is ornamented in another burst of virtuosic, Paganini-inspired writing.

The coda, mm. 21-27, evolves into a dramatic ending, highlighting the interplay between C#-minor and its parallel C#-Major, one last reference to the contrast between light and dark.⁶⁶ The piece concludes in C#-Major. Whether or not the major tonality can be interpreted as optimistic or bittersweet is left up to the performer and the listener.



Example 6.13. *Nocturne Caprice*, mm. 209-212, displaying interplay between C# Major and Minor.

PERFORMANCE GUIDE

At a duration of almost eight minutes, one of the challenges of performing *Nocturne Caprice*, or any solo work, is maintaining an engaging performance.⁶⁷ Because the work is for solo performer, the composer cannot switch between different instruments to provide variety of sound. The composer must rely on a wide range of dynamics, tempo fluctuations, and color changes to provide contrast.⁶⁸ In *Nocturne Caprice*, because of its duration, the player must utilize

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

these elements to the best of his or her ability, not just to keep the audiences' attention, but also to convey his or her own interpretation.⁶⁹ Dorff says:

There are lots of instructions like *calming* or *awakening* that are almost like stage directions steering you through mood changes, yet leaving you much freedom in how to pace all these nuances. I think an 8-minute one movement piece for solo flute needs to be very dramatically delivered, like a theatrical soliloquy, and I hope to have written a script that allows this."⁷⁰

Kim Trolier, a freelance flutist in the Philadelphia area, has performed many of Dorff's flute works. She says of *Nocturne Caprice*:

It is important to create as much contrast as possible in the piece through tone color and rhythmic freedom...Pacing the work is important in performance. It is a long time to play solo, without another instrument to add contrast and texture to the work. The performer must emphasize the different sounds the flute can make to alleviate a sense of sameness in the performance.⁷¹

Breath placement is another challenge of this piece. Despite the freedom of the unaccompanied genre, the flutist must be careful to maintain important phrasing and not disturb the forward motion of the line with breath breaks. Because of the concept of continuity throughout the work, the transitions often serve dual purposes. A misplaced breath can undermine the duality of the line and must be planned carefully.⁷²

Because the lighter, more playful character is portrayed by passages written after the style of Paganini, multiple virtuosic moments permeate the piece. Two more obvious moments occur at measures 42 and 195-197. Dorff uses quick

⁶⁹ Kim Trolier, e-mail message to the author, April 3, 2010.

⁷⁰ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, March 23, 2010.

⁷¹ Kim Trolier, e-mail message to the author, April 3, 2010.

⁷² Daniel Dorff, coaching session with author, March 15, 2010.

arpeggios in a variety of articulation combinations to evoke the virtuosity Paganini was so famous for.⁷³ Both of these passages require slow technical practice. The flutist may find particular double tongue articulation patterns to be appropriate for the triplet figures in measures 195-197. Each player must experiment with different articulation combinations to discover the pattern that facilitates a light and easy articulated quality. The author found it helpful to articulate the front syllable “du” on the slurs and the back syllable “gu” for the third staccato note in measure 195 and only articulate with the front syllable for the triplets in measure 196.

Another technically challenging passage occurs in measure 155. Dorff often writes fast octave slurs in his flute works and periodically, as is the case here, the octaves occur so quickly that the listener misses the timbral change. Dorff suggests slowing down the tempo and heavily accenting the bottom note of the slurs to emphasize the different octaves. This tempo change also adds variety. He also suggests purposefully slowing down at measure 162 to set up a clear *accelerando* into the frantic measures at 174.⁷⁴

The piece ends on the fourth octave C#, one of the highest notes in the flute range. Although it is not freshly marked in the score, this final note is meant to be *fortissimo* and very full. Dorff compares this moment to a peacock fanning out its beautiful tail, or an operatic soprano singing a very high and showy note.⁷⁵ It is tempting to back away from this note due to its range and speaking difficulty; however, the shift to major tonality and the intended character of the moment demand a full and powerful tone. The author suggests practicing harmonic series

⁷³ Grout and Palisca, 602.

⁷⁴ Daniel Dorff, coaching session with author, March 15, 2010.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

exercises into the upper register to develop the correct embouchure and air support needed to help the note speak.

Nocturne Caprice is a gripping performance piece worthy of a place in the standard flute repertory. Technically the piece is fairly demanding, particularly in the Paganini-inspired passages and within the C section. It demands a player with the maturity to portray contrasting tonal characters. These challenges make this piece suitable for an undergraduate college student; however, any accomplished flutist will find its nuances challenging. The contrasting characters offer endless musical possibilities and help make this work particularly enjoyable to prepare and perform.

CHAPTER 7
9 WALKS DOWN 7TH AVENUE
BACKGROUND

Since his 1980 association with the Symphony in C, formerly the Haddonfield Symphony based in Haddonfield, New Jersey, Dorff has worked with, and written for, many accomplished musicians.⁷⁶ One of these musicians is Julie Seftick-McGough, former second flutist of the Haddonfield Symphony.

After winning the Artists International Competition in 2004, Seftick-McGough approached Dorff to commission a new work for her debut recital in Carnegie Hall in New York City.⁷⁷ Dorff agreed to write the work, envisioning a piece that would capture the character and feeling of Manhattan. He used the famed 7th Avenue as his inspiration, a street that traverses New York City landmarks such as Central Park, Carnegie Hall, Times Square, Madison Square Garden, and the Fashion District. Dorff wanted to write a theme and variations work that captured the experience of walking down one busy thoroughfare at different times of day with different perspectives. His concept could be compared to the impressionist artist Claude Monet's painting the same landscape at various times of day with assorted lighting.⁷⁸

9 Walks Down 7th Avenue was written over the span of two weeks in January 2004 and premiered on June 13th, 2004, in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall by Julie Seftick-McGough playing flute and Donna Amato, piano.⁷⁹ The

⁷⁶ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, March 30, 2010.

⁷⁷ Julie Seftick-McGough, e-mail message to the author, April 1, 2010.

⁷⁸ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, March 30, 2010.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

piece appropriately fit the recital theme “Myths and Legends” and was very well received.⁸⁰ After its premiere, Seftick-McGough was invited to perform the piece at the 2004 National Flute Association Convention in Nashville, Tennessee.⁸¹ Professional flutists Pamela Youngblood and Nicole Esposito have since performed the piece at two more NFA conventions in 2006 and 2008, and Youngblood released a recording in May 2010.⁸²

DESCRIPTION

During Dorff’s education at Cornell, he was greatly influenced by his studies in music history. He learned of the compositional techniques of Beethoven, Brahms, and Mozart, techniques that have influenced much of how he constructs his music today.⁸³ Many of his compositions have been designed with similarities in technique to that of Beethoven: use of single cell motives that serve as a building block for an entire piece.⁸⁴ Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5*, for instance, is an example of a four-movement symphony based on a single motive. *Nocturne Caprice* follows this same compositional technique is an excellent example of Dorff’s propensity to develop an entire work focused on a few simple motives like the minor 3rd interval. However, when composing *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue*, Dorff consciously decided to depart from this typical approach and to compose with a different conceptual device.⁸⁵ He drew instead from Mozart’s

⁸⁰ Julie Seftick-McGough, e-mail message to the author, April 1, 2010.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The Music of Daniel Dorff, “Music for Flute,” <http://www.danieldorf.com/flute.htm> (Accessed March 10, 2010).

⁸³ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, March 23, 2010.

⁸⁴ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, March 10, 2010.

⁸⁵ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, March 30, 2010.

compositional technique of creating connections between multiple themes to create a unified work. Instead of using small motives, like an interval, he constructed the piece by connecting seemingly unrelated phrases from different themes to create new melodies. He says:

I wanted to capture the feel of Manhattan with thousands of people intensely going their own way and oblivious to each other, so I decided to try the Mozart approach, writing a driving heterogeneous ‘theme group’ that contained a whole lot of independent motives contrasting against each other. Building a set of variations allowed the many little unrelated phrases to keep coming back, unifying the whole, so the piece would be motivically tight even though it was a Mozart-like juggling game.⁸⁶

In addition, Dorff wanted to blur the divisions between variations, a technique used by both Beethoven and Brahms, sometimes even combining variations to sound like one section as opposed to multiple variations.⁸⁷

9 Walks Down 7th Avenue falls into three different formal categories.

Although the piece is technically a theme and variations, it could be conceived as a rondo because of the returning themes, as well as an overall fast-slow-fast ABA form.⁸⁸ The piece is divided into nine sections labeled as “walks,” 1st walk, 2nd walk etc., signifying the various experiences of walking down 7th Avenue. The first walk represents the theme and introduces all of the phrases that return fully, partially, slightly varied, or in different combinations throughout the piece.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

(1st Walk)

Example 7.1. 9 Walks Down 7th Avenue, mm. 1-21, 1st walk theme.

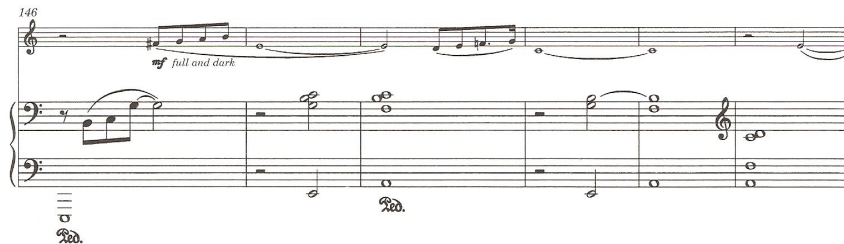
Each successive walk is a variation built from thematic material introduced in the theme. Because Dorff focused on thematic groups when composing *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue*, the main phrases often return throughout the work providing an additional sound of a rondo.⁸⁹ Dorff combines these two formal concepts and subtitles the piece *Rondo Variations for Flute and Piano*.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

In addition to the theme and variations and rondo forms, *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue* can also be described as ternary or ABA form. As previously stated, Dorff was interested in blurring the divisions between variations. To create the overall effect of an ABA form, Dorff disguises the transitions between certain variations to create larger fast-slow-fast sections.⁹⁰

The first large section, or A section, is created by walks 1 through 4 or mm. 1-139. The character of the first four walks ranges from frantic and harried to *dolce* and cautious; however, the tempo remains fairly constant between the variations, aiding in Dorff's intention to group the variations together.

The first strong break in tempo and color, signaling the beginning of the slow B section, occurs at measure 140 or the 5th walk. Meant to be more introspective, the tempo slows from eighth note equaling 200 beats per minute to quarter note equaling 72 beats per minute. The mood also radically shifts from frenetic to pensive, facilitated by sustained 7th, 9th, and 11th chord harmonies in the accompaniment.



Example 7.2. *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue*, mm. 146-151, B section and 5th Walk.

The pacing and harmonic progression of this variation also slow down substantially from the contrasting faster variations and the flute often plays alone

⁹⁰ Ibid.

or over long soft sustained piano chords. As the variation continues, the flute and piano lines take on a more singing quality and become beautifully intertwined.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, starting at measure 157, features a flute line in the upper staff and a piano line in the lower staff. The flute line contains a 'cresc.' marking. The piano line includes a 'cresc.' marking and is accompanied by a series of chords marked with a treble clef and a 'ped.' (pedal) instruction. The second system, starting at measure 161, continues the intertwined melodic lines for both instruments, with the piano line also marked with 'ped.'.

Example 7.3. *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue*, mm. 158-163, displaying intertwined flute and piano line.

The slow B section continues in this meditative quality until measure 181 when the tempo and character begin to liven into a bright transition (6th walk) back to the opening A section's return at measure 203. The 7th and 8th walks correspond to walks 1 and 2 with some variation in melodic material, articulation, and rhythm in both the flute and piano.

The 9th and final walk emerges seamlessly from the 8th walk as a culmination of the energetic and frantic pace of the piece. Not only is there a rise in energy, dynamic, and pitch level, but also complexity of rhythm. Dorff offers up heavily jazz-influenced musical lines with rhythmic groupings of four beats placed against three beats.

The image displays a musical score for measures 272 through 279. The score is written for a flute and piano. The flute part is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/8. The score shows a progression of musical ideas, with measures 272-275 building up energy and measures 276-279 showing a rapid overlap of motives and a final, intense display. Dynamics markings include *ff* (fortissimo) and *f* (forte).

Example 7.4. 9 *Walks Down 7th Avenue*, mm. 272-279, increased energy of 9th Walk.

The audience hears the now-familiar motives rapidly overlapping with a higher energy than anything thus far, drastically increasing the intensity. Rather than continue building energy and ending the piece with a bombastic display, Dorff surprisingly pulls back from this heavy texture and both flute and piano manipulate tempo and dynamics to end the piece with a bit of comedy.



Example 7.5. 9 Walks Down 7th Avenue, mm. 294-301, ending.

PERFORMANCE GUIDE

Because of the tempo, intensity, and complexity of rhythm in both the flute and piano, *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue* requires a strong sense of rhythm and attention to detail to achieve a successful ensemble.⁹¹ The flute and piano are heavily intertwined, sometimes playing difficult rhythms in unison or reacting to one another in an intricate interplay. This is particularly true of the 4th walk, which incorporates complicated rhythmic interaction between the flute and piano part. The rests may prove difficult to navigate and both players must possess a strong sense of pulse to avoid disrupting the rhythm. Significant rehearsal time may be needed to ensure a tight ensemble.⁹²

⁹¹ Lois Herbine, e-mail message to the author, March 31, 2010.

⁹² Ibid.



Example 7.6. *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue*, mm. 110-119, rhythmically intricate ensemble of 4th Walk.

Julie Seftick-McGough advises, “The most difficult aspect of this piece is the ensemble. The piano part is very jazzy and needs to be felt, to be played well. Every note has to fall exactly into place and lining it all up to get the right groove is a big part of achieving a great performance.”⁹³ In general the flutist should anticipate spending ample time studying the piano part as well as the flute line to fully understand their interaction.

One of Dorff’s compositional trademarks is his tendency to slightly vary a returning melodic line or figure. When performing his works, the performer can never assume or anticipate the return of a theme will be identical to its previous statement.⁹⁴ This is particularly true in the return of the A section, or walks 7 and 8, the restatement of walks 1 and 2. Dorff not only changes the melody and articulation, but also the rhythmic groupings and piano accompaniment.

⁹³ Julie Seftick-McGough, e-mail message to the author, April 1, 2010.

⁹⁴ Daniel Dorff, phone interview with the author, March 17, 2010.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the piece "9 Walks Down 7th Avenue". Each system consists of a vocal line (top staff) and a piano accompaniment (bottom two staves).
 - The first system (mm. 7-11) shows the vocal line with trills and a piano accompaniment with dynamics like *f*, *p sub.*, and *mf*.
 - The second system (mm. 209-218) features a vocal line with a crescendo and piano accompaniment with dynamics such as *p sub.*, *mf*, *mp*, and *f*.
 - The third system (mm. 214-218) continues the piano accompaniment with dynamic variations including *mf*, *mp*, and *f*.

Example 7.7. 9 Walks Down 7th Avenue, mm. 7-11 and mm. 209-218, displaying small variations in the recapitulation.

The performers should take particular care to anticipate, and in some cases emphasize, these changes. The author found it helpful to practice each corresponding walk in succession to identify these slight variations.

Because of the continuous high energy and tessitura throughout the piece, *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue* runs the risk of sounding loud and forced. The flutist must take advantage of the differing characters of each variation and larger sections to give the listener contrast. The 5th walk, for instance, should have a warm and rich tone quality to express the introspective nature and offer a release from the more animated character of the outer sections. Additionally, within the outer sections, the performer needs to enhance the sweetness of the *dolce* passages and take the opportunity to relax within the more intense passages. This will not only emphasize the musicality of the melodic line, but also highlight the differing thematic groups, thus increasing the overall effectiveness of the piece.

Of all his flute works, Dorff is the most proud of *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue*.⁹⁵ Because of the difficult rhythmic, technical, and ensemble challenges, the author recommends this work for advanced college students and professional flutists. It is the most frequently performed of all the flute works by Dorff, and is likely to be established as part of the standard flute repertory.⁹⁶ Seftick-McGough says of the work:

I like the excitement and intensity of it, but at the same time I like the reflective quality in the middle. It's the kind of piece that can start to feel like a part of you... It is a unique concept, 9 different walks down 7th Avenue, yes they will all be different but there is a sameness that ties it all together.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Daniel Dorff, e-mail message to the author, March 30, 2010.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Julie Seftick-McGough, e-mail message to the author, April 1, 2010.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

These three works represent only a fraction of the literature Daniel Dorff has to offer the flute world. His role as a leading composer of flute literature continues to grow, as evidenced by both his current commissions⁹⁸ and the quality and popularity found in *April Whirlwind*, *Nocturne Caprice*, and *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue*. All three works present the modern flutist with both technical and musical demands, while also providing a positive aesthetic experience for the listener.

In particular, both *Nocturne Caprice* and *9 Walks Down 7th Avenue* are complex pieces that utilize challenging rhythms, technique, tone, and musicality. These characteristics make them suitable for any advanced flutist: undergraduate, graduate, and professional. They provide not only worthy opportunities for development of advanced skill, but also enriching musical experiences as both performer and listener partake in the complex compositional design. *April Whirlwind*, though not as sophisticated as Dorff's other works, affords similar challenges more suited for a younger player.

Exploration and discovery of new works by living composers is an exciting part of musical education. Intense study of the standard literature that has withstood the test of time is of course essential, however learning new works, especially in collaboration with living composers, offers every musician a chance to develop as an independent performer while also growing the standard literature. Whether or not these three works will find a place among the existing flute repertory is yet to be determined, but the musical merit found within qualifies them for consideration.

⁹⁸ Daniel Dorff, e-mail to the author, September 29, 2010.

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APPENDIX A
WORKS FOR FLUTE AND PICCOLO BY DANIEL DORFF

Flute and Piano

9 Walks Down 7th Avenue / flute and piano / 2004 / 9'
April Whirlwind / flute and piano / 1998 / 7'

Solo Flute

August Idyll / solo flute / 2008 / 4'
Nocturne Caprice / solo flute / 2002 / 7'30
Trees (after the poem by Joyce Kilmer) / solo flute and narrator / 2009 / 5'

Piccolo and Piano

Flash! / piccolo and piano / 2009 / 6'30
Sonatine de Giverny / piccolo and piano / 2000 / 8'

Solo Piccolo

Tweet / solo piccolo / 2010 / 4'

Flute and Clarinet

Andante con Variazioni / flute and clarinet / 1975 / 7'
Dances and Canons / flute and clarinet / 1975 / 7'
Old New Borrowed Blue / flute and clarinet / 2010
Three Little Waltzes / flute and clarinet / 2010 / 6'
Three Romances / flute and clarinet / 2007 / 8'
Two Cats / flute and clarinet / 2007 / 8'

Flute and Guitar

It Takes Four to Tango / flute (violin) and guitar / 1990 (adapted 1998) / 2'30
Serenade to Eve, After Rodin / flute and guitar / 1999 / 9'

Flute Ensemble

Through a Misty Arch... for flute ensemble, optional dance and/or narrator / 1988 / 5'
The Year of the Rabbit / flute quartet or ensemble / 1999 / 7'

Chamber

Goldilocks and the Three Bears / narrator, flute, clarinet, bass trombone, harp, percussion, violin, cello and bass / 2000 / 8'
Wedding Songs / tenor, flute and piano / 14'

APPENDIX B
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APPENDIX C

CD TRACK TITLES AND RECORDING INFORMATION

THREE FLUTE WORKS BY DANIEL DORFF

Angela Rich, Flute

Gail Novak, Piano

TITLE	TRACK
<i>April Whirlwind for flute and piano</i> (7:34).....	1
<i>Nocturne Caprice for solo flute</i> (7:51).....	2
<i>9 Walks Down 7th Avenue: A Rondo Variations for flute and piano</i> (8:39).....	3

This recording was made on February 5 – 6, 2010 at The Blue Door Studios in Phoenix, Arizona. Noah Guttell served as recording engineer.

APPENDIX D
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Excerpts to be included:

"April Whirlwind" (mm. 4-9, 21-23, 103-107, 116-127)

"Nocturne Caprice" (mm. 1-5, 6-8, 11-18, 19-28, 38-43, 57-63, 70-77, 99-107, 132-113, 116-119, 141-142, 178-180, 209-212)

"9 Walks Down 7th Avenue" (mm. 1-21, 113-119, 146-151, 158-163, 209-218, 272-279, 294-301)

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