

Fantasy for Bass Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra

Although I had played bass clarinet occasionally in orchestras, it was not until my junior year at Harvard that I really discovered its potential. I was taking a class on jazz of the 1950s and 1960s when I came across the music of Eric Dolphy, a virtuoso on the flute, alto saxophone, and bass clarinet. His playing was a revelation to me; his wild solos, exploiting the entire pitch, dynamic and timbral range of the bass clarinet made me realize the incredible expressive potential of the instrument. I became fairly obsessed with the bass clarinet, practicing it often and starting to write prominent parts for it in my compositions. This work is the culmination of this trend, fully exploiting the virtuosic and expressive potential of the bass clarinet.

The *Fantasy* makes use of the instrument's wild virtuosic capabilities, its huge pitch, dynamic, and timbre range, and also its potential for lyricism. The piece consists essentially of several contrasting types and characters of music, which come back in different sequences and take us on a journey. The types of music range from the mysterious, ponderous opening, to wildly intense, manic dance-like sections, to singing lyricism. Though the listener should not attempt to take this too literally, I imagine the piece set in some sort of mysterious nocturnal landscape. The bass clarinet wanders through this landscape and the piece traces the progression of thoughts and feelings as the bass clarinet wanders through the night. There are moments of beauty, perhaps the remembrance of past loves, moments of mocking irony, and moments of near madness; but in the end it all melts back into the night landscape and the bass clarinet wanders softly along on its journey.