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Joan Tower’s Compositional Profile, Use of the Clarinet, and Collaboration in Turning Points for Clarinet and String Quartet

by

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ABSTRACT

Joan Tower's Compositional Profile, Use of the Clarinet, and Collaboration in

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Joan Tower is one of the most highly regarded and awarded composers practicing today. Her compositional "profile" has been characterized as a balance of serial and organic elements, and has been best expressed in the works in which there were collaborative efforts between her and the performers of her music. These elements of Tower's compositional profile, coupled with her great regard and affinity for the clarinet are apparent in Turning Points for Clarinet and String Quartet. This document contains a synopsis of Tower's compositional career, a discussion of her collaborative methodology, and an analysis of the aforementioned work. These were facilitated through interviews with Tower and two of her foremost interpreters on the clarinet, Laura Flax and David Shifrin; these interviews are included in their entirety as a part of the Appendix to this document.
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I wish to thank the following for their willingness to allow me to reproduce the excerpts and scores listed below:

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PREFACE

When I began to think of a topic for my dissertation, I wanted it to be on a piece that had never been analyzed, and by a living composer. I did not want to rehash a piece that had been studied time and time again. It was also very important to me to be in close contact with the composer. So often, we read about the great composers in the same critically acclaimed textbooks and do not realize that they may have changed their minds sometime between their spoken word and their passing. After all, music is a constantly evolving art. I wanted to be in touch with a composer who could explain firsthand what the thought processes were behind the music and why the clarinet as a medium was chosen to express them.

Joan Tower immediately sprang to mind. I had performed her composition for solo clarinet, Wings (1983), on one of my doctoral recitals at Rice University and enjoyed not only how the piece unfolded, but also Tower’s idiomatic writing for the clarinet. I simply wanted to learn more about her as a composer and to apply that to a relatively new clarinet piece. I also noticed that all of her compositions (including Wings) were dedicated to either a particular performer or performing group. After being encouraged by a certain composition faculty member at Rice (who shall remain nameless) that working with Joan would be a “hoot,” I immediately made arrangements to let her know of the project. To my delight, she was very excited and supportive. Thus was conceived “Joan Tower’s Compositional Profile, Use of the Clarinet, and Collaboration in Turning Points for Clarinet and String Quartet.”

This dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 1 researches Joan Tower’s compositional “profile” (a word she prefers over “style”). This chapter is meant to
describe her compositional development and some interesting approaches she takes to beginning a piece. Chapter 2 focuses mainly on some intriguing attributes unique to her as a composer, specifically her collaborative efforts and her expertise at writing for the clarinet. This chapter also discusses why her pieces are always dedicated to a particular performer or performing group. Chapter 3 applies the qualities of Tower’s compositional “profile,” the importance of collaboration, and use of the clarinet in an action analysis of *Turning Points*. Analyzed from the viewpoint of a performer, it is meant to serve as a guide for other performers who wish to learn more about how to approach this piece.

While the goal of this document is to learn how Joan Tower’s compositional profile, use of the clarinet, and collaboration affected *Turning Points*, it is also hoped that it will kindle an interest in learning more about living composers. By studying more about the thought processes of today’s composers, one can better appreciate and enjoy not only listening to, but also performing, their music.
JOAN TOWER: A COMPOSER'S BIOGRAPHY

Joan Tower’s compositions have been described as “predominantly consonant, bold, and highly colorful; she makes striking use of visual imagery and fluid, formal structures.”¹ This creative description only partly describes Tower’s style, which developed through her experiences with teachers, colleagues, and endeavors with serial music. Her post-serial compositions show “a synthesis of Tower’s early serialist concern for precise control of musical materials and her increasing concern for dynamic expression.”² Traditionally, to study a composer such as Joan Tower, one would elaborate on the definition of the composer’s style. However, Tower does not want to be classified as having a distinct compositional style:

“Profile is a better word for me. I think if you play two seconds of Copland, you know it’s Copland. If you play two seconds of Beethoven, you pretty much know it’s Beethoven. I know I have a certain kind of profile. Whether I have that degree of profile [that of Beethoven or Copland], I’m not sure. But I keep working on it, and I keep heading towards whatever that is.”³

This chapter will attempt to show “whatever that is” in more detail, by studying the biographical development of her compositional “profile.”

Tower’s constantly evolving “profile” has not hindered the playing of her pieces. Performers and performing groups continually commission and play her music while audiences esteem her talents in the concert hall. Tower has had many chamber works commissioned, especially from 1969 to 1984, when she was active as founder and pianist

³ Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
of the 1973 Naumburg Award-winning ensemble the Da Capo Chamber Players. Some works written for this group are Platinum Spirals (1976), Petroushskates (1980), and Breakfast Rhythms I + II (1974-75). Other general commissions include Snow Dreams (1983) for flutist Carol Wincenc and guitarist Sharon Isbin, Wings (1983) for clarinetist Laura Flax, Clocks (1985) for S. Isbin, Fantasy... (those harbor lights) (1983) for clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, Turning Points (1995) for clarinetist David Shifrin, and Wild Purple (1998) for violist Paul Neubauer. Tower’s Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman (No. 1) (1986) has been played by over 500 different ensembles. Four more fanfares have followed; the second, third, fourth and fifth fanfares were commissioned respectively by Absolut Vodka, Carnegie Hall, the Kansas City Symphony, and the Aspen Music Festival. Her ballet Stepping Stones (1993), was commissioned by choreographer Kathryn Posin for the Milwaukee Ballet.  

Her first orchestral piece, Sequoia (1981), was commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra and premiered in 1981 with Dennis Russell Davies conducting. In 1982, Zubin Mehta chose Sequoia for the New York Philharmonic series and also as a representative American work on the televised program the Philharmonic played in honor of United Nations Day. She received further recognition for her orchestral writing when she was composer-in-residence with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra from 1985 to 1987. She composed Island Rhythms (1985) and Silver Ladders (1986) for this group. In

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5 Sherman, Joan Tower.

April, 1990, she was awarded the Charles B. Grawemeyer Award, the largest cash prize awarded in music.\footnote{Janet Nichols, *Women Music Makers: an Introduction to Women Composers* (New York: Walker, 1992), 165.}

In 1998, she was the recipient of the Delaware Symphony’s Alfred I. DuPont Award for Distinguished American Composers and Conductors, and was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in the same year. Tower was also a featured composer at SummerFest La Jolla 2000 and at Tanglewood in 2000 and 2002. Tower’s tenure as composer-in-residence for the Orchestra of St. Luke’s began in 1999. She is also composer-in-residence of the Yale/Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, and composer-in-residence at the Muir Quartet Festival at Park City, Utah.\footnote{Sherman, *Joan Tower*.} In 1972 she began teaching at Bard College, Annadale-on-Hudson, NY, where she now occupies an endowed chair in composition.\footnote{Burns, 649.}

Many factors led to the development of Tower’s compositional “profile,” which seems to have developed in reaction to the very specific situations in which she found herself as a composer/performer. The following biographical description will attempt to trace Tower’s evolution as a composer.

Joan Peabody Tower was born on September 6, 1938, in New Rochelle, New York.\footnote{Nichols, 147-167. Unless otherwise noted, most of the biographical information is taken from Nichols.} Her father, George Warren Tower, a mining engineer, also sang and played the piano, as did her mother, Anna Peabody Robinson. Joan spent the first nine years of her life in Larchmont, New York and grew up like most normal American girls, attending public elementary school and playing jacks with her girlfriends. A dedicated piano student,
Joan claims she might have become a professional pianist had she been able to continue lessons with her teacher in Larchmont. Fate would decide otherwise when, after Joan’s ninth birthday, her father accepted a position as a mine supervisor in Bolivia, South America. Joan was whisked off to live in La Paz, a city nestled in the snowcapped Andes Mountains. Because her older sister stayed in the States to go to college, and her little brother was only a baby, Joan felt as if she had to face these new challenges alone. She quickly learned Spanish, and also Aymara, the Indian language of the servants, because she was anxious to communicate with new friends. Joan often accompanied one of the Indian servants, Aida, to the market place and to the religious festivals where she was enchanted with the traditional costumes, food, and ancient dances of the people of South America.

Joan’s happiest times in La Paz were after dinner, when her family gathered around the piano. Her father would sing, accompanied by her mother on the piano while Joan improvised on South American percussion instruments, including maracas and castanets. Her experiences in South America were to greatly influence the percussive element of her compositions:

“...I’ve always wondered where my interest in percussion came from and I think it came from South America because I was around a lot of different percussion there...And also I like to dance a lot and in South America you danced a lot...I think [the percussion and dance rhythms] were the main things that came out of South America.”11

When the Towers returned to the United States, Joan finished her last two years of high school, then, in 1957, enrolled in Bennington College in Vermont. While at Bennington, she spent several hours a day at the piano, mostly playing the works of her

favorite composer, Beethoven. She stumbled upon composing by accident when asked to write a piece for a class. The experience of hearing her own composition fascinated her:

“[I decided to become a composer] when I was 18, and when I heard my first piece. Actually, I didn’t decide to become a composer. There was so much wrong with the piece that I had to fix it. And so it was the beginning of a trap, actually, because I wanted to write something that made some sense, that had something interesting about it. There is a lot of guesswork. The reality of the page versus the sound is always different.”

Joan first composed in a “Bartokian-Hindemithian” style, modeled after her teacher, Henry Brant, and although players and audiences were enjoying her music, she still did not think of herself as a mature composer. She thought of herself as a performer: a pianist who composes. According to her, “getting involved with playing Beethoven was much easier than the elusiveness of composing a piece.”

Tower went on to earn her Master of Music degree in 1964 and her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1978, both at Columbia University. During this time, the academic classical music world was deeply involved with serial music. From 1962 to 1972, she began associating with some of the popular serial composers living in New York at the time, mainly Milton Babbit, Charles Wuorinen, and Benjamin Boretz. Nancy Bonds describes Tower’s compositional technique during this time:

“In her compositions dating from before 1974, Tower relied on what she refers to as ‘maps’ as guides when composing, charts of serial procedures and complex structures. She claims that as a young composer, the insecurity and infinity of choices she had to make when composing forced her to create precompositional maps for the pitch (and sometimes for the}

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12 Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
13 Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
14 Neuls-Bates, 345.
time structures) of a piece. This gave her more time to spend on the decision-making process of rhythm, register, texture, and spacing.\textsuperscript{15}

*Hexachords* (1972) for solo flute, written for flutist Patricia Spencer of the Da Capo Chamber Players, is a good example of Joan’s early serial style. It has a definite pre-compositional process because it involves tonal relations based on six pitches selected for the musical material. It has an abstract, or non-descriptive title, as is the case for many of her works from this period. Although *Hexachords* is dominated by the serial style, the non-serial characteristics of Tower’s mature style can be identified; she creates texture and spacing through the use of tonal relations, and by balancing above and below the middle register. This time spent on “the decision-making process of rhythm, register, texture, and spacing” helped steer Tower towards her more mature “profile,” as she was not terribly comfortable writing serial music. It was merely a detour for her:

“I met Charles Wuorinen, who became an incredible magnetic pull for me. I thought he was brilliant, and we were very close. I did everything he did. He started a series; I started a series. He played the piano; I played the piano, and I played all the music that he played. The influence was quite formidable and it wasn’t good for me. It took me ten years to get out of it.”\textsuperscript{16}

“The trouble is, when you are growing up, you’re slightly victimized by your environment. It’s hard to step out of that. You have to be willing to be very alone. For ten years I thought that was what music was about.”\textsuperscript{17}

Tower had spent her whole life involving herself with whatever circumstances came her way—whether it was learning the new languages and music of the South American culture, or learning how to compose in the “Bartokian” and serial styles. While this

\textsuperscript{15} Bonds, 19.
\textsuperscript{16} Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
\textsuperscript{17} Jane Holahan, “A Tough Road To Travel; it Took Years for Composer Joan Tower to Find Her Voice,” *Lancaster New Era* (PA), 26 September, 2002, 12.
learning approach was significant, she had to find her own voice. In 1972, Tower heard Olivier Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* (1940-41), and began to write in a simpler, more spontaneous style:

“…coming to know the Messiaen was mind-boggling. I started to write music that was more and more my own, which involved shedding the serial voice and trying to find something else—just what, I wasn’t sure, but I became more confident as I went on. *Black Topaz* (1976) was a real breakthrough…”\(^{18}\)

What was it about Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* that impressed Tower? Perhaps it had to do with what Messiaen himself wrote in the preface to the score: “He wrote of ‘dazzlement’ as his musical objective, the effect to be achieved by the brilliant colours of his harmony and instrumentation and also by the astonishment of surprise.”\(^{19}\)

While the Quartet is indeed “dazzling” and “surprising,” the real question is how Messiaen influenced Tower’s composition in a technical way.

There are many similarities between the compositional techniques of Tower and Messiaen. Like Messiaen, many of the normal functions of Tower’s harmonic vocabulary are weakened or annulled by her use of non-diatomic intervals and progressions. One aspect on which Tower unquestionably focuses is the use of the octatonic scale, or Messiaen’s second mode.\(^{20}\) “Messiaen described his modes as being ‘of limited transposition’ because, unlike major or minor scales or church modes, they can only be transposed a small number of times before the same notes are generated.”\(^{21}\)

Mode 2 has just three alternative transposed forms, making conventional harmonic or

\(^{18}\) Neils-Bates, 347.
\(^{21}\) Griffiths, 496.
melodic progression difficult. Tower’s music is not pitch dependent, and therefore not key dependent. Her use of the tritone within otherwise consonant-sounding arpeggios reduces the effect of any harmonic pull. Tower is, and Messiaen was, very concerned with time. Messiaen developed ways of marrying the eternal and the temporal “by decelerating tempo, by inserting values to unsettle regular meters, by projecting ostinato machines that are, potentially, virtually endless, and, everywhere, by jumping from one kind of motion to another.”

These technical aspects create a sense of “free-form” in Messiaen’s compositions, though they are born of a strict use of combinations of intervals, pitches, and rhythms. One could say Messiaen’s music required a balance of serial elements to achieve an organic-sounding piece. After all, the technical elements described above are used to represent birds, angels, and the end of time. Perhaps this idea of the strict use of intervals, pitches, and rhythms to create “the astonishment of surprise” is what “dazzled” Tower, for many of these traits present themselves in much of Tower’s music and will present themselves in the analysis of *Turning Points* in Chapter 3.

Returning to the piece Tower describes as “a real breakthrough,” *Black Topaz* (1976) is a far cry from the serial technique of a strict, orderly use of pitches. Instead of using preordered pitches, she lets the opening ideas of the piece develop based on what she thinks they are trying to say. Written for piano and small chamber ensemble (consisting of flute, B-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, B-flat trumpet, tenor trombone, and percussion), Tower describes the piece in the following way:

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22 Griffiths, 495.
23 Neuls-Bates, 354.
"Black Topaz begins with a single small explosion of clarinet, trumpet, and tom-tom, like a miner’s pick hitting ore. The changing colors of topaz, from gold to black, reflect in the harmonic changes from dissonance to consonance, as well as in the instrumental timbres. The virtuosic piano is balanced by the other instrumental timbres as the work explores changing sound colors. Each ensemble instrument magnifies and extends the essence of the piano: the percussion battery supports and projects the piano’s sharp articulation; tom-toms add depth to the sound; brass and woodwinds augment the piano’s lyrical and harmonic nature; trumpet and trombone emphasize chordal strength and support."24

Here, the instruments extend the essence of the piano while representing a miner’s ore and the changing colors of topaz. There is no discussion of serialistic tendencies, only the surreal representations of objects and colors. Black Topaz represents Tower’s non-serial style to the extreme. Tower describes the piece’s compositional process and first performance:

“I just threw everything out the window and said, ‘I’m going for broke here because I’ve got to find out who I am,’ and I did. Everybody there in the serial crowd in the audience sat there in horror. They were just in horror. I had totally flipped out.”25

While Black Topaz shows the extreme, Breakfast Rhythms I (1974) and Breakfast Rhythms II (1975) best illustrate a more gentle transition from strict, serial writing to Tower’s balanced, mature “profile.” Says the composer, “Breakfast Rhythms I is still in the serial mode, but II is starting to step out.”26 Nancy Bonds addresses the transition:

“In 1975 Tower’s style changed to a more richly tonal style, more fluid and organic, and filled with color. As her ideas developed, she relied less and less on the maps of her earlier works. She claims that the twelve-tone [serial] compositions turned out to be too gray for her—like dealing with the same soup all the time. Breakfast Rhythms I and II, for clarinet and five instruments written in 1974-75, is considered a transitional piece from the serial style to a more fluid and organic style. After composing the first

25 Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
26 Neuls-Bates, 347.
movement, she stopped writing for a year. She completed the second movement a year later. The first movement is based on serial thinking. It is based on a chromatic cluster of six pitches centered on B-natural. The second movement is less dissonant, more colorful, and slightly impressionistic. Both movements use strong directional motion and balancing of gestures so the whole work retains stylistic unity.  

The word “balance” has often been used to describe Tower’s music, and now the word “organic” appears twice in the above description. In order to achieve the colorful, organic balance of gestures and strong directional motion, a certain amount of serialistic writing was necessary. In Women Composers, Conductors, and Musicians of the 20th Century, Jane Weiner LePage further describes the differences between Breakfast Rhythms I and Breakfast Rhythms II:

“To [Tower], there is a different style that evolves within the two movements although they are much the same piece. [Tower says], ‘The first movement is a lean, agile work which uses a hexachord, or six notes, as the principal motive, and features various pedal points by the solo clarinet and five instruments. The second movement is like Debussy in a way; it’s more colorful and has many pentatonic scales and whole steps in it.’”

Breakfast Rhythms is the first piece described as using characteristics of serial and non-serial elements. Breakfast Rhythms I, for example, gains directional motion by using repetitions and transpositions of an opening melodic passage in the clarinet derived from the set figures \{0, 1, 3\}, or C, B, A, which is characterized by an insistent reiteration of the pitch B. This pitch class series slowly unfolds, gaining further prominence until reaching a significant moment of formal articulation when a “diversion” takes over.

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27 Bonds, 19.
28 LePage, 270.
29 J. Lochhead, “Joan Tower’s Wings and Breakfast Rhythms I + II: Some Thoughts on Form and Repetition,” Perspectives of New Music 30, no. 1 (1992), 143.
focusing on B-flat. After the relatively long "diversion" section, a concluding passage focuses on A. *Breakfast Rhythms II* begins with a reference to the diversion of the first movement; the first few notes of the diversion forming the incipit of a series of seven repetitions during the second movement. Each repetition varies the contour and intervallic relationship of the model to its own accord. Each repetition also establishes its own form of reference to the harmonic context of the model. The chords supporting the repetitions are symmetrically balanced, and while all chords are distinct, some similarities (whether by transposing or by using the same pitches) result in associations between their occurrences. Each movement relies on both serial and non-serial elements, but to a different degree. *Breakfast Rhythms I* keeps the same pitch interval relations, while *Breakfast Rhythms II* varies pitch relations much more freely. While they both use strong directional motion and a balancing of gestures, the serial style is the main focus of *Breakfast Rhythms I*, while it is a means to accomplish a certain sonority for *Breakfast Rhythms II*.

*Breakfast Rhythms I* and *II* opened the gates for Tower to begin titling her pieces more creatively. Prior to its premiere, someone suggested that *Piece for Clarinet and Five Instruments* should have a more interesting title. Tower was having breakfast at the time of the suggestion.

One might think Tower came up with the title of *Black Topaz* before writing the piece, but actually the opposite is true. Tower composes a piece, which reminds her of an

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30 Lochhead, 146.
31 Lochhead, 147.
32 Lochhead, 148.
image, which she then uses as a title. In this case, the central image of *Black Topaz* derives from one of Tower’s own drawings. The harmonic changes from dissonance to consonance reflect how topaz turns from gold to black as it is mined.

California’s majestic sequoias inspired the title of Tower’s famous *Sequoia* (1981):

“I wanted a big image for the [piece] and started to look at nature. The piece is about a balancing act, pedal points that go on each side. A lot of my music has been developed on this idea which I have been working on for a number of years. I was trying to figure out why these trees are so impressive. When you consider the height of them they defy the balance of nature. *Sequoia* suggests power-grandeur.”

Tower explains further in notes from the compact disc, *An American Celebration* (1999):

“Cast in three continuous movements (fast-slow-fast), *Sequoia* opens with a long-held pedalpoint on G with percussion punctuations. Around this central G, there begins a fanning-out (first high, then low), on both sides of harmonies symmetrically built up or down from G. This ‘balancing’ of registers like the branching of a tree, continues to develop into more complex settings, as the ‘branches’ start to grow sub-branches. The main pedalpoint (or trunk, to continue the analogy) on G eventually shifts, both downward and upward, thereby creating a larger balancing motion that has a longer-range movement throughout the piece. Because musical gestures are not confined only to registers and harmonies, the balancing principle permeates every facet of *Sequoia*—most importantly, in the areas of rhythm, tempo, dynamics, pacing, texture, and instrumental color. For example, the initial movement’s first two sections exhibit a balancing of loud dynamics with soft; of heavy and thin sound; of static (one-note) and moving harmony; of many instruments with a few; of middle-low and middle-high registers and so on.”

To keep *Sequoia* organically balanced in each of these facets (registers, harmony, rhythm, etc.), a certain amount of serial thinking is required. For instance, in order for the harmonies to “fan-out” on both sides of G, an ordered intervallic system above and below the note had to have been established. While this order may not have been “pre-

33 Nichols, 158.
34 LePage, 274.
ordered” as in serial music, some kind of arrangement was nevertheless imperative in maintaining balance.

Tower often speaks of maintaining balance in her post-serial pieces. She describes how balance in Beethoven’s music has influenced her:

“Though my own music does not sound like Beethoven’s in any obvious way, in it there is a basic idea at work which came from him. This is something I call the ‘balancing’ of musical energies.”  

In her Gravemaker Award-winning *Silver Ladders*:

“Many different melodies of scales move upward at different speeds, climbing musical ladders. Some of the lines move slowly and dreamily; others ascend quickly. In contrast to this feeling of climbing, Tower includes solos for clarinet, oboe, marimba, and trumpet. The ‘Silver’ in the title reflects both the solid and the molten states of that metal. Silver can take the form of bold, heavy blocks as well as shimmering, liquid streams.”

The image of silver is used because of the metal’s malleability. It can be used as “heavy blocks” or as “liquid streams,” terms that lend themselves to inventive imagery. *Silver Ladders* is also a balancing act. The soloists’ contrasting lines balance out the scales moving upward at different speeds. The heavy blocks of solid silver balance with the shimmering, liquid streams of molten silver. However, this piece also lends itself to some amount of serial thinking. The program notes explain:

“The first section is based on upward-moving scales (the ladder) formed largely of whole and half steps. Placing the scales in a variety of textures and contexts creates a long-range buildup of tension throughout this section. The one notable release consists of a contrasting, fluid undulation played by the clarinet. This secondary action is taken up in the second section by a long oboe solo which develops the clarinet’s material. A gradual accumulation of lines is achieved by a metamorphosis of solo violin to two violins, to string quartet, to horn quartet, to full orchestra. A

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36 Joan Tower, program notes of *Sequoia* from *An American Celebration*.
37 Nichols, 164.
marimba solo unwinds the tension and leads to a very low trio of bass, contrabassoon, and bass clarinet which closes the section. The rising-fourths motive begins the final section and becomes the basis for the harmony and the action of the lines. The scale passages from the first section eventually mingle with the rising-fourths motive. A contrasting interruption toward the end of this section recalls the clarinet and oboe solos of the two preceding movements; in this case the trumpet plays a fluid, contoured solo which has its own rising line.”

Sections one and three each begins with a different ordered technical process: the use of whole and half steps, especially in scales, and the rising fourths motive. These two outer sections balance the soloistic, improvisatory-like middle section.

The title of Wings came after the compositional process of the piece had begun:

“I started out by thinking about her [Laura Flax’s] playing, which is very seamless and sort of velvety. What happened was that the piece started out low and kind of seamless, and then began rising more and more. Eventually it took off. Originally, I was thinking of calling it Panthers, because I wanted this sort of velvet slinky motion as an image. But then as the piece started rising higher and higher the panther idea seemed to be too grounded. So that’s when I came upon the idea of something flying up high, something big. I looked up the word falcon and learned that they fly very high; they fly very slowly but they also have the capacity to dive down very fast, skittishly. So I thought that that was a perfect image. But calling a piece Falcons seemed to me to be a little strange. That’s how I segued into Wings, which is one of my best titles, because it’s general and has an action associated with it—flying.”

It is interesting that Tower mentions the word “action” again. The title came out of the action of the flying bird in conjunction with Laura Flax’s style of clarinet playing. This collaborative relationship between Tower and Flax will be discussed further in Chapter 2. Some serialistic thinking also takes place in Wings. Octatonic scales are present throughout, and like Sequoia, Wings also makes use of symmetrically balanced chords.

The piece unfolds, almost as if it is through-composed, but certain intervals, rhythms, registers, and dynamics dictate a definite form. The entire opening of the piece consists of seconds, fourths, and tritones, each interval illustrating a certain action associated with it.

Tower describes her mature approach to composing in the following quotations. The first is how she now approaches a new piece:

"[I now approach a piece] from the inside. A piece is a completely organic process, based on itself; in other words, the starting ideas provide the fuel for the form of the piece. And for me, the whole process is one of listening very patiently to what the piece is trying to do, rather than telling the piece what to do."  

Tower speaks about how she approaches the use of pitch:

"I don’t have any big secret precompositional approach to pitch that I can give you. I don’t like precompositional thinking because I think it can get you into some abstract traps that are not very musical."  

Tower explains how music needs direction, shape, and balance:

"At first I was interested primarily in the energy of a musical line but then I became fascinated with how lines acquire direction and shape. Music has to be counterbalanced. It’s like physics—if you throw a ball at a certain angle and speed, it will fall a certain way."

"I like to think that my landscape has a shape. I work very hard on the whole sense of a contour and a shape—a beginning, middle and end. My music is very organic and I won’t make a move unless I feel that it’s going somewhere and has arrived somewhere and is finishing from somewhere. So I do have a sense of endings, beginnings, and middles."  

Describing herself as a “choreographer of sound,” the composer emphasizes the three types of action found in music: 1) a “holding” or static action; 2) an action that moves

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40 Neils-Bates, 354-5.
41 Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
forward or intensifies; and 3) an action that retracts or “de-intensifies.” In order to bring direction and shape to a piece, there needs to be a choreography of these three actions throughout the piece. In order to illustrate the three actions, a series of tools must be used. Tower addresses the importance of rhythm in her music:

“Rhythm is the most important thing. The sense of moving from one place to another—within the rhythm, within the line—is very important, because the dynamics and the register all come out of that sense of flowing, driving and falling.”

While rhythm has become more and more important to Tower, she emphasizes how it cannot function alone:

“Well, you can’t have rhythm without something in it. So the something in it has to do with the action of the line, which has to do with where it is in the register and where it is going, and the dynamic of that action. All those things are tied up together.”

Tower’s descriptions are creative, but vague in terms of technique. While *Sequoia*, *Silver Ladders*, and *Wings* are in no way strict serial works, technically speaking they have some serial-like thought processes. In order to achieve the shape of a piece with “holding,” intensifying, and “de-intensifying” actions, an orderly use of intervals, rhythm, dynamics, and register is necessary. Tower’s music combines a balance of organic and serial elements.

While it may have taken some time for Joan Tower to find her unique compositional profile, the time she spent acquiring it was necessary. The ten-year serial detour helped her to develop creativity in her use of rhythm, register, and dynamics, which fostered the extreme *Black Topaz* to the more balanced *Sequoia*. All of these compositional aspects

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44 Rischin, 6.
45 Rischin, 6.
46 Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
will be discussed in Chapter 3, using *Turning Points for Clarinet and String Quartet* (1995), a piece she wrote for David Shifrin and members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, as a descriptive example.
COLLABORATION AND THE CLARINET

Joan Tower will not write a piece that is going to end up sitting on a shelf.\textsuperscript{47} All of her works are dedicated either to a particular person or to a performing group, and she has often said she cannot create a piece without the input of the dedicatee. During her three-year residency with the St. Louis Symphony, Tower had a revelation as she learned how removed some performers had become from composers. When she approached one of the musicians to ask him a few questions about his instrument, he did not understand why Tower wanted a lesson. After being summoned into the orchestra manager’s office to explain that all she wanted was to learn more about his instrument, she was advised to be careful what she asked of them because some players wouldn’t understand such a request. Tower comments:

“What an eye opener! Here were players who hadn’t played much contemporary music of any kind, who didn’t realize composers could benefit from their performing expertise!”\textsuperscript{48}

Many performers do not have the opportunity to work with composers and therefore, may have lost touch with how beneficial a relationship between the composer and performer can be. As Tower is both a composer and performer, this lack of communication is something that concerns her deeply. As a result, she values the importance of a closer musical understanding between composer, performer, and listener, and has participated on numerous boards and panels fostering new music, such as the NEA, panel member for New Music Performance, Composers, Policy Panel, and Multi Presenters; New York Council Project; Minnesota Composers Forum, Jury for Composers Awards; Massachusetts State Arts Council, Jury for Composers Awards; and

\textsuperscript{47} Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
\textsuperscript{48} Neils-Bates, 350.
Chamber Music America and the N.Y. Foundation of the Arts. Currently, she is a member of the board of the American Music Center, American Composers Orchestra, and the International Women’s Brass Advisory Board; she is also a member of the Academy of Arts and Letters and the Fromm Foundation Advisory Council.

Tower relies on the individual characteristics of the performer, and that appreciation does not go unnoticed. This has been commented upon in various articles, such as by Kristine Burns in *Women in Music in America Since 1900*:

> “Her characteristically bold and colorful works have been championed by major performers, who in turn commission music from her faster than she can compose it. In their enthusiasm for her music is found another reason for its success and appeal: the unusually high degree to which it makes reference to, and even rejoices in, the friendly and communal spirit of music making—a spirit in which Tower’s own compositional impulses were discovered and nurtured.”

Her devotion to the relationship between composer and performer is further demonstrated in her collaboration with the Da Capo Players.

Tower founded the Da Capo Players in 1969, and was their pianist until 1983. The name of the highly acclaimed ensemble, which specializes in contemporary music, came from a time when the players would go back to the beginning and repeat a piece on the same program so that the audience could become more familiar with a new work they might not have an opportunity to hear again. Tower comments on Da Capo’s formation:

> “I couldn’t wait around for people to play my music so I formed my own group...The instrumentation of the group just happened—I don’t think I

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49 LePage, 277.
50 Joan Tower (TOWER@bard.edu), “Re: One Question (again),” E-mail to recipient (RAQUEL@rice.edu), 16 September, 2003.
51 Burns, 649.
52 Nichols, 157-8.
ever consciously thought of certain instruments. I wanted to keep it small so we would be mobile, and do between fifteen and thirty concerts per year... I view Da Capo as my musical education. I wanted to make music from both a playing and a compositional point of view.”

In fact, when selecting members of Da Capo, Tower’s primary consideration was how well the performers worked together and this took precedence over any particular instrumentation. It is also interesting that she considers Da Capo to be her most important musical education. According to Burns, Da Capo was “an ideal environment for Tower’s compositional development, as her daily work with friends enabled her to write music that was not only formally sound and sonically compelling but also fun to play.” As a means for her education, she proceeded to compose a solo piece for each member of the group in order to understand better how to write for each individual instrument. Some of those pieces included *Hexachords* (1972), written for flutist Patricia Spencer, *Platinum Spirals* (1976), written for violinist Joel Lester, and *Wings* (1981), written for clarinetist Laura Flax.

While the importance of collaboration has already been mentioned, the collaborative process between Laura Flax and Joan Tower during the writing of *Wings* (1981) was particularly memorable:

“I knew her [Flax] very well because I played with her—she was in my group. It’s not always the case that you’re hanging out with the person for eight years before you write for them, but that was a special thing. I was living and working with her for a long time. So her playing had a lot of meaning for me. I was in touch with her and could call her at the drop of a

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53 LePage, 267.
54 Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
55 Burns, 649.
56 Nichols, 158.
hat. My thing with Laura was extremely unusual in my entire output. I never repeated that ever again."  

During the time Tower was writing *Wings*, Flax was playing a one-year temporary position with the San Francisco Symphony. They corresponded back and forth, discussing the piece. Flax would send Tower tapes of various sections so she could hear how the piece was sounding. The importance of Flax's input is apparent in a letter from Tower:

> "Articulation continues to be a problem—especially in this next section. Feel free to edit if you feel something would work better another way. I hope the rests work out here in terms of the breathing. I hope it won’t be too strenuous for you. If it is, let me know. Maybe we can do something else."  

Flax owns two different original manuscripts of *Wings*—one is the initial manuscript from Tower, and the other is an edited version, written after suggestions were made by Flax. The second manuscript became the one that was eventually published. After the premiere performance of the first manuscript, Flax made a few suggestions. One suggestion was the addition of some breath marks, as she has commented that the endurance called for in the piece is "radical." Examples 1 and 2 may serve as illustration of this.

Example 1 (a):  

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57 Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.  
58 Laura Flax, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Germantown, NY.  
59 Joan Tower, to Laura Flax, 1981, from Flax’s personal collection.  
60 Laura Flax, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Germantown, NY.  
61 *Wings*. By Joan Tower. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of the Composer.
Example 1 (b): 62

Example 2 (a): 63

Example 2 (b): 64

Examples 1 (a) and 2 (a) show where Flax added her own breath marks into the original manuscript. Examples 1 (b) and 2 (b) show where Tower had the breath marks added to the published manuscript.

Example 3 (a) shows a very high lengthy passage that “wasn’t working,” and Example 3 (b) shows where this passage was omitted. 65

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63 *Wings*. By Joan Tower. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of the Composer.


65 Laura Flax, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Germantown, NY.
Example 3 (a):\textsuperscript{66}

Example 3 (b):\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Wings}. By Joan Tower. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of the Composer.

In Chapter 1, Tower explained that the title developed from Flax’s “seamless and velvety” playing of the clarinet. The piece was supposed to resemble a panther, but as it went on, it “took off,” hence the title *Wings*. According to the composer:

“What influenced *Wings* more than anything was Messiaen. I played the *Quartet for the End of Time* for seven years with my group, the Da Capo Chamber Players, and every time I heard that clarinet movement I was fascinated with it. It was from this constant absorption with that piece and that instrument, and the fact that Laura played it so well, that I got some ideas.”68

The clarinet movement she mentions is *Abîme des oiseaux (Abyss of the Birds)*, the third movement of Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* (1940-41). Laura Flax comments:

“I remember when we were performing the *Quartet* that those long notes became the landmark of the movement, the notes on which the entire movement hung. Clearly Joan was affected by them. I think that she was affected by how I played *Abîme des oiseaux* and, in a sense, took the things that I did best, that she heard in my best playing, and wrote a piece that would allow me to do those things and more, to challenge me.”69

Following the initial inspiration of the work, Tower comments on its compositional process.

“After awhile, I forgot about her [Flax]. I had to write a piece. See, the strength of the piece needs to take over. I had some basic ideas, like a silky panther style, and that’s about it. The piece started to have its own life. Actually, the clarinet plays a big role in this because the clarinet, as an instrument, is defining the action and the strength, and the power or this register and that register. It is so versatile.”70

Tower mentions that the clarinet can easily define the “actions” in a piece. This is also true of *Turning Points*. When Joan Tower wrote *Turning Points* for David Shifrin in

68 Rischin, 6.
69 Rischin, 6.
70 Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
1995, she knew him only by reputation. Tower met Shifrin after enjoying his live
performance of Fantasy... (those harbor lights). Knowing Tower to be a master at writing
for the clarinet, Shifrin asked her for a clarinet quintet, as he was trying to build that
repertoire.\footnote{David Shifrin (KV622@aol.com), “Rochelle Oddo’s Dissertation,” E-mail to recipient
(RAQUEL@rice.edu), 6 August 2003.} Turning Points for Clarinet and String Quartet was commissioned by the
Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, of which Shifrin is Artistic Director, and was
did not have the same special collaborative process as Wings, the fact that Shifrin
commissioned the piece is at least suggestive of joint effort.

What links Wings and Turning Points, however, is Tower’s fascination with the
clarinet:

“The clarinet is the motivating force. That dictates everything I do in both
pieces [Turning Points and Wings]. That whole opening [of Turning
Points] is about the clarinet. The low register, the singing ability, the
punching ability, the crescendo ability. It can pull an idea from very soft
to very loud and from very low to very high, and you can sense the power
of that pull in a clarinet better than you can with other instruments. That’s
a study in what I think is so wonderful about the clarinet. So that’s the
link between Laura [Flax] and David [Shifrin]. The power of the
clarinet.”\footnote{Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.}

In general, she says of the clarinet:

“I have a special affinity for the clarinet, and that’s why I’ve written so
many pieces for the instrument. I’ve known a lot of extremely good
clarinetists. There’s something about the instrument and the people
playing it that’s been just fascinating to me...”\footnote{Rischin, 4.}

Clarinetists are fortunate to have seven of Joan Tower’s pieces featuring their instrument
(some of which have already been mentioned): Breakfast Rhythms I and Breakfast

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\footnote{David Shifrin (KV622@aol.com), “Rochelle Oddo’s Dissertation,” E-mail to recipient
(RAQUEL@rice.edu), 6 August 2003.} \footnote{Joan Tower, Turning Points, introduction, (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1995).} \footnote{Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.} \footnote{Rischin, 4.}

Richard Stoltzman commissioned Fantasy... (those harbor lights) (1983). Tower purchased some of his recordings, and there was some interaction between them during the composition of the work, but this had little effect upon the work’s composition.75 She also made some changes in both the clarinet and piano parts after hearing Stoltzman perform the work, but the changes were primarily due to the work itself, not due to his playing.76 By listening to his recordings, she recognized that Stoltzman exploited all the qualities she found fascinating about the clarinet, but any real collaboration ended there.

A similar story holds true for Charles Neidich and the Clarinet Concerto. The work was commissioned by the Walter W. Naumberg Foundation Competition to be performed by the winner, Neidich. There was little contact between Tower and Neidich during the compositional process. He premiered the work on April 10, 1988 with the American Symphony Orchestra.77 Tower had heard Neidich play Wings, and so was familiar with his ability to exploit the characteristics of the clarinet effortlessly. She made some changes after first hearing the piano score, and again after she completed the work. Changes here were also due to the work, rather than Neidich’s playing.

It is often appealing to musicians that Joan Tower is both a performer and composer, and that she values the relationship between the two. What is equally appealing is that

75 Bonds, 16.
76 Bonds, 17.
77 Bonds, 17.
Tower's love for the clarinet has helped make her a master at writing for the instrument. Professional clarinetists especially appreciate the labor Tower has put into her clarinet works. The ensuing analysis will focus on the use of the clarinet to emphasize the actions in Turning Points as well as discuss Tower's personal compositional idioms.
TURNING POINTS—AN ANALYSIS

This analysis of *Turning Points* is approached from a performer’s point of view, and is intended to help other performers understand how to approach this piece. Facts about Joan Tower’s compositional profile along with details regarding the use of the clarinet will be included in this study. Tower has commented that an action analysis, rather than a pitch analysis would be the most effective method for studying *Turning Points*, since she concentrates more on what action is taking place rather than on certain pitches or chords.°° Tower uses certain intervals to characterize the different actions. Changes in rhythm and dynamics, and the power of the clarinet also help to illustrate the three actions throughout the piece. She also uses certain serial techniques to construct an organic sounding, and at times improvisatory-like, flow to this one movement work.

The title *Turning Points* came after Joan wrote the piece and noticed how “the notes kept turning around on themselves.”°°° In mm. 1-3, the clarinet starts on a low F, which goes up a minor second to F-sharp, down a major second to E, and then up a minor second to F again (N.B. In the score, the clarinet is written as a B-flat transposing instrument. During this discussion, in order to avoid confusion with the strings, whose parts are at concert pitch, the clarinet’s pitches will also be referred to at concert pitch). See Example 4.°"°

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°° Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
°°° Joan Tower, interview by author, 7 July 2003, Red Hook, NY.
The piece's compositional process and inspiration for the title are further explained in the

Introduction to the score:

"An opening clarinet solo introduces the main thematic material for the whole of this one-movement piece. There are four distinct melodic ideas that form the basis of the piece. The first idea is a long held note which, after a crescendo, briefly touches the notes above and below and returns to itself. This idea is dramatic yet 'held' in place. The second idea ascends slowly and quietly. The third is a consonant short arpeggiation that rises, rests, and falls. Although this has the effect of an interlude, it later becomes the basis for a larger section. (For those of you who like Bartók, you might recognize this from his *Contrasts*. I never have been able to shed this particular motive!) The fourth theme is another 'held' motive, this time a wide interval (a tenth) that is slow and dolce. It appears at the end of the solo when the quartet quietly comes in, picking up the final notes of the clarinet solo. These four ideas are developed and transformed throughout the piece, taking on recognizable but different identities as they interact more and more with each other."

Each opening idea, constructed using serial techniques, generally illustrates one of the
three actions: "holding," intensifying, and "de-intensifying." Within each idea, on a
smaller scale, there may also be "holding," intensifying, and/or "de-intensifying." As the
four Melodic Ideas develop and transform, they establish sections, and then a larger form,
while bringing direction and shape to the piece. By identifying the sections and larger
form of *Turning Points*, and by learning how each section leads into the next, it is
possible to gain insight to a more meaningful performance of the piece.

The Melodic Ideas are shown and lettered in Example 5 (a-d). Melodic Idea 1 (a) shows the long held note, F, which crescendos, briefly touches the F-sharp above, and the E below before returning to itself. A pattern of minor and major seconds is necessary, since that is what keeps the notes turning around on themselves.

Example 5:\textsuperscript{82}

It is interesting to observe, however, the ascending fourth (F to B-flat) followed by the descending tritone (B-flat to E) in m. 3. Tritones often appear in Tower’s music, sometimes demonstrating characteristics of certain actions, and sometimes as structural coordinators. The use of tritones will be addressed throughout. The long crescendo gives the idea that the line is going somewhere until it abruptly and quickly turns back around.

to the original note while getting softer. Melodic Idea 1 is a “held” action in the sense
that there is no movement from the pitch center, but it has “intensifying” characteristics
in the long crescendo and the abrupt, active rhythm of the thirty-second notes, giving
Melodic Idea 1 its shape and direction. The clarinet is the perfect instrument to
crescendo on a low note from triple piano. No other woodwind instrument boasts such
case in that situation.

Melodic Idea 2 (b) (m. 4 through downbeat of m. 6) ascends slowly and quietly in a
rising pattern of alternating major and minor seconds (an incomplete octatonic scale): F-
sharp, G-sharp, A, B. Note how the turning motive from Melodic Idea 1 is already
incorporated into Melodic Idea 2 in m. 5: the turning idea (B to A-flat to B-flat) in a
quick, abrupt rhythm, followed by a descending perfect fourth (B-flat to F) and an
ascending tritone (F to B). The overall arch of Melodic Idea 2 is a slow rising motion
from F-sharp (m. 4) to B (downbeat of m. 5). The rising pattern of alternating major and
minor seconds is representative of Tower’s inclination towards octatonic scales. The
rhythmic activity is slow and steady because the pitches propel the melodic line. Melodic
Idea 2 is an intensifying action in a melodic sense, but with “held” characteristics in the
slow, sostenuto rhythm of m. 4. The slowly rising pitches, alternating between tied,
duple, and triple note values give an improvisatory-like feel. The “seamless and velvety”
quality of the clarinet Tower so admired in Flax’s playing, which inspired the opening of
Wings, is seen in Melodic Idea 2.

The first hint at Melodic Idea 3 (c) is in mm. 6-8, beginning on the low F and ending
on the low E. What make the short arpeggiations “consonant” (as described by Tower in
the program notes) are the major thirds and later, perfect fourths. There is an ascending
major third from F to A in m. 6, and a descending major third from A-sharp to F-sharp in m. 8. Major seconds accompany both major thirds—A to B in m. 6, and F-sharp to E in m. 8. As Tower describes, the arpeggio rises, rests, and falls. It is interesting to note the tritones, which span between F and B in m. 6, and between A-sharp and E in m. 8. After a brief interruption of the turning motive from Melodic Idea 1 (mm. 9-10), the arpeggiation begins again in m. 11. This time, the intervals are a tritone (E-flat to A), a perfect fourth (A to D), and a major third (D to F-sharp). Tower added the tritone to almost every otherwise “consonant” sounding arpeggio, creating chordal ambiguity and an overall sense of flow. There is a steady crescendo from the moment Melodic Idea 3 begins (m. 6) until the two thirty-second note triplets in m. 11. At this point a slow, soft descent begins, with two rising minor thirds (G-sharp to B, and F-sharp to A), followed by a rising major third (F to A), and a rising perfect fourth (E-flat to A-flat). Interspersed between these rising intervals is a descending perfect fourth (B to F-sharp) from mm. 12-13, a descending major third (A to F) in m. 13, and a descending tritone (A to E-flat) in m. 14. The main intervals associated with Melodic Idea 3 are the “consonant” perfect fourths and major thirds in conjunction with tritones and major seconds.

Measure 15 is significant in that it contains a descending enharmonic major seventh (the diminished octave A-flat to A), the widest interval thus far, foreshadowing Melodic Idea 4, which is based on the wide interval of a tenth. The last beat of m. 15 leads into m. 16 with an ascending perfect fourth (E-flat to A-flat), and a descending tritone (A-flat to D). A descending arpeggio, consisting of a perfect fourth (D to A) and a tritone (A to E-flat), follows. Tower does not describe mm. 12 through 15 specifically; however, these
sets of rising and falling intervals follow the same idea of the “consonant” arpeggio: major and minor thirds, and perfect fourths interspersed with tritones.

Melodic Idea 3 uses two different types of rhythmic activity. For the initial arpeggios in mm. 6-8, the rhythmic activity is rather brisk and punching, and for the melodically descending sets of intervals in mm. 12-15, the rhythmic activity is unhurried. Additionally, the rhythm is constructed such that most of the notes fall on the offbeats, again, giving mm. 12-15 a more improvisatory style. Melodic Idea 3 is an intensifying action in mm. 6-8, m. 11, and m. 16, and is a “de-intensifying” action in mm. 12-15. The rest after the rising arpeggio in m. 7 would appear “held” and the falling arpeggio in m. 8 would appear to be “de-intensifying,” but the crescendo combined with the active rhythm keeps the intensification. The same holds true for m. 16, where the descending arpeggio appears to be “de-intensifying,” but the crescendo continues the intensification. The clarinet’s “punching ability” in mm. 6-8 and “singing ability” in mm. 12-15 is obvious.

Melodic Idea 4 (d) begins in m. 16 on beat 3, with the interval of an ascending minor tenth (E-flat to G-flat), and is repeated in the next measure. Melodic Idea 4 is characterized by wide intervals, including the aforementioned interval of a tenth. Its rhythmic activity is generally slow, with the offbeat eighth note, again, creating rhythmic ambiguity. While Melodic Idea 4 is a “held” action, the wide interval and dynamic modifications keep it active. The clarinet’s ability to “pull an idea from very low to very high” using its wide range is apparent here.

The four Melodic Ideas show how Tower uses serial elements to manipulate traditional harmonic and rhythmic practices to create tonal and rhythmic ambiguity. The inserted tritones into the otherwise consonant-sounding arpeggios of Melodic Idea 3
abandon any idea of a harmonic pull. This is also true of the arpeggios in mm. 6-8. While each arpeggio in Melodic Idea 3 is made up of a major third and a major second, combining the major thirds and major seconds spans a tritone. The descending tritone (B to E-flat) in m. 3 of Melodic Idea 1 also resists a tonal resolution into Melodic Idea 2. Melodic Idea 2 resists harmonic pull because of the alternating major and minor seconds. Rhythmically, the downbeats are very elusive in this Idea, as they are also in Melodic Idea 1, making both of these Melodic Ideas sound improvisatory at times. Because Tower uses triplets in Melodic Idea 4, the downbeat is eluded, and rhythmic inflection is unclear. These practices, which manipulate traditional harmonic pull and rhythmic regularity, are relevant throughout this study.

*Turning Points* may be divided into two large areas, labeled “Part I” and “Part II.” These two parts may be divided into smaller sections, which may also be divided into even smaller subsections, as shown in Example 6 on the next page. Each section uses combinations of the four opening Melodic Ideas to help define what action is taking place. Specific Melodic Ideas and actions also identify the subsections. Additionally, the smaller phrases and motives contained within each subsection are derived from the four Melodic Ideas and actions. The shape and direction of the piece comes from how these actions relate to one another within their hierarchy of subsections, phrases, and motives. By using the serial elements of rhythm, intervals, and register from the melodic ideas, Tower is able to achieve an organic-sounding, one movement work.

Part I consists of the Introduction of the four Ideas, Sections A and B, and a clarinet cadenza. The Introduction (mm. 1-29, downbeat) consists of two parts: the four opening
Ideas introduced by the clarinet in mm. 1-17, and the affirmation of these Ideas in the strings in mm. 17-29, downbeat. In m. 16, the violins and the viola outline the same intervals played by the clarinet: a descending perfect fourth (D to A) between the first and second violins, and a descending tritone (A to E-flat) between the second violin and the viola. Note how in mm. 17-18, the first violin and then viola each descend a minor third. Mm. 16-18 use the same intervals in the strings as was used in mm. 12-14 in the melodic line in the clarinet. Their sustained tones have the organic effect of transforming melody into harmony while using serial elements to illustrate.

Example 6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part I: mm. 1-253, downbeat</th>
<th>Part II: mm. 253-439</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: mm. 1-29, downbeat</td>
<td>Section C: mm. 253-309, beat 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--subsection 8: mm. 253-279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--subsection 9: mm. 280-309, beat 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section A: mm. 29-130</td>
<td>Section D: mm. 309, beat 2-363(db)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--subsection 1: mm. 29-36</td>
<td>--subsection 10: mm. 309, beat 2-346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--subsection 2: mm. 37-71</td>
<td>--subsection 11: mm.347-363db.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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The cello enters in m. 17, first displaying the descending arpeggios of Melodic Idea 3 with their representative intervals: a perfect fourth (D to A) and a tritone (A to E-flat),
followed by a perfect fourth (B to F-sharp) and two tritones (F-sharp to C and C to F-sharp). Beginning with the sixteenth-note triplets in m. 18, the cello line begins to resemble Melodic Idea 1: it turns around the note F-sharp, which is preceded by an ascending perfect fourth (F-sharp to B), and is followed by a descending tritone (B to F). This is succeeded by the slowly rising, alternating major and minor second interval pattern (G, A, B-flat, C) of Melodic Idea 2. Measures 21-22 outline the ascending arpeggio of Melodic Idea 3 in the strings: a tritone (C to F-sharp) between the cello and the viola, a perfect fourth (F-sharp to B) between the viola and the second violin, and a tritone (B to F) between the second and first violins. Again, here is an example of how serial elements are used to obtain an accompanying chord.

In mm. 21-25, the second violin, the viola, and the cello each rise in the alternating major and minor seconds from Melodic Idea 2, and as they slowly ascend, they maintain the intervals characteristic of the rising arpeggios of Melodic Idea 3 between them. In m. 23, the tritone (D to G-sharp) is kept between the cello and the viola, and the perfect fourth (G-sharp to C-sharp) is kept between the viola and the second violin. In m. 25, the tritone (E-flat to A) still remains between the cello and the viola, as does the perfect fourth (A to D) between the viola and the second violin. In mm. 22-26, the clarinet states the rising and falling "consonant" sounding intervals from the "de-intensifying" section of Melodic Idea 3, with the violin accompanying. Measure 26 is the next restatement of Melodic Idea 4, containing the interval of a rising minor tenth. This first appears in the cello with the enharmonic minor tenth E-flat to F-sharp, and is answered by the clarinet using the same pitches. In mm. 26-27, the cello descends that same enharmonic minor tenth (F-sharp to E-flat), briefly touches on Melodic Idea 2 (E-flat to E) in m. 27, and
establishes another rising tenth (the major tenth E to G-sharp) in m. 28. The clarinet follows the lead of the cello, by rising a minor second (G-flat to G) in m. 27, descending a minor tenth (G to E) between mm. 27 and 28, rising another minor second (E to F) in m. 28, and then ascending a minor tenth (F to A-flat) in the same measure. The viola acts similarly by sounding an ascending minor second (E-flat to E) in m. 27, followed by a minor tenth (E to G).

Several conclusions may be drawn from these observations. Because each of the four Melodic Ideas has its own general action, combinations of these ideas are necessary to keep the direction of the phrases moving forward. For example, in m. 17, the falling arpeggios of Melodic Idea 3 bring the cello down to its lower register, where it stays by using the turning pattern of major and minor seconds of Melodic Idea 1 to turn around on the F-sharp. From mm. 20-25, the rising pattern of alternating major and minor seconds slowly ascend in the second violin, the viola, and the cello, while the first violin and the clarinet slowly descend. These opposing actions (ascending and descending) bring the clarinet and the cello into the same register, wherein they may share the wide intervals of Melodic Idea 4. When Tower leads into a “held” action, as in Melodic Idea 4, it is accompanied by either an intensifying or “de-intensifying” action, such as in Melodic Ideas 2 or 3. In other words, it is the “held,” intensifying, and “de-intensifying” actions that interact with each other, bringing direction and shape to the piece.

Intervals also help to accomplish directional motion between Melodic Ideas. For example, tritones separate each of the Melodic Ideas in the Introduction. There is a descending tritone (B-flat to E) between Melodic Ideas 1 and 2 in m. 3, an ascending tritone (F to B) between Melodic 2 and 3 in m. 5, and a descending tritone (A to E-flat)
between Melodic Ideas 3 and 4 in m. 16. When the strings enter in m. 17, the trend continues: a descending tritone (C to F-sharp) between Melodic Ideas 3 and 1 in m. 18, a descending tritone (B to F) between Melodic Ideas 1 and 2 in m. 19, an ascending tritone (B to F) between the second and first violins leading from Melodic Idea 2 to 3 in mm. 21-22, and a descending tritone (A to E-flat) in the viola between Melodic Ideas 2 and 4 in mm. 25-26. Sections and subsections are also distinguished by certain intervals, as will be discussed during the analysis.

Section A begins at m. 29 and consists of four subsections, 1 through 4. Subsection 1 varies Melodic Idea 1. Each instrumental part begins with a long note, which is abruptly interrupted by the quick rhythm of the turning motive. For example, in mm. 29-30 in the second violin, a long note, D, is interrupted by a turning motive encompassing E-flat. Notice the tritones between some of the parts, such as between the viola and second violin (A-flat to D) in m. 29, signifying a new section. An increase in rhythmic activity begins in all parts in m. 32, where the sustained notes and the quick and abrupt turning motives are no longer so distinct. Starting in m. 35 beat 3, the composite rhythm of the ensemble begins to yield continuous thirty-second notes, as between the first and second violins. In this same measure, note how the F and G encompass the F-sharp in the first violin, while the second violin sounds the tritone. While subsection 1 is based on the “held” motives of Melodic Idea 1, the subsection is intensified by crescendos and increased rhythmic activity. On beat 3 of m. 36, the subsection halts and quickly decrescendos, leading to the quiet beginning of subsection 2.
Subsection 2 is, for the most part, based on motives from Melodic Ideas 1 and 3, with hints of Melodic Idea 2. The tempo is twice as fast (MM = 48 to MM = ca.100), and the note values twice as slow (from thirty-second notes to sixteenth notes). The shift in tempo and note value gives Tower the ability to increase intensity by quickening the pulse. From mm. 37-40, the composite rhythm of the ensemble begins to yield continuous sixteenth notes using mostly the pattern of major and minor seconds conducive to the turning motive of Melodic Idea 1. Note how the tritone is often present in the second two of many of the four note groupings (for example, between the first and second violins in m. 37, and in m. 38, beat three).

Starting in m. 41, beat 3, the cello and the viola take after Melodic Idea 3 when they arpeggiate upwards in unison tritones (F to B), and perfect fourths (B to E). Here is the significant tritone, indicating a change in Melodic Idea. The clarinet enters with the same arpeggiation in m. 45 (adding an extra tritone, E to B-flat), but in m. 50, the arpeggio becomes slightly altered. It rises with a tritone (F to B), and then a minor third (B to D). After this, there are three tritones: D to A-flat in m. 51, A-flat to D in m. 52, and D-flat to G from m. 52 to m. 53. Notice how the rhythm in the clarinet becomes augmented, from quarter note triplets in m. 50 to eighth notes tied to half notes. The tritones create a certain intensity, making additional rhythmic activity superfluous. Throughout mm. 42-53, each instrument has an opportunity to arpeggiate upwards, presenting the turning motives in a fresh and higher register. See Example 7 (N.B. Unless otherwise noted, the instrumentation in each example consists of clarinet, violin I, violin II, viola, and cello).\footnote{Turning Points for Clarinet and Strings. By Joan Tower. Copyright © 1995 by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI). International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission.}
The lack of tonal center of the tritones keeps the arpeggiation moving. The parts stay in this register until the next idea supplants it; m. 54 begins to show hints of the “de-intensification.”

While the upper strings and the clarinet continue with the “held” motive of Melodic Idea 1, the cello begins a slow and general descent in m. 54, as in Melodic Idea 3 (mm. 12-15, in the Introduction). This consists of a descending tritone (B-flat to E), an ascending perfect fourth (E to A), and a descending tritone (A to E-flat). A brief use of ascending arpeggios in mm. 58-59 bring the cello and the viola back up to a higher register before returning to another slow descent in mm. 60-65. The first and second violins and the clarinet also descend beginning in m. 58. The last few active rhythmic gestures are in the first violin from mm. 60-65 (with clarinet joining briefly in mm. 64-65), before they submit to a short violin cadenza in m. 66. The violin cadenza exhibits intervals from the intensifying portion of Melodic Idea 3 (major thirds, major seconds, and tritones) in both its ascent and descent, before yielding to subsection 3.
Subsection 3 (mm. 72-90) begins after the first violin reaches the bottom of its
cadenza and starts to resemble the “de-intensifying” component of Melodic Idea 3 (mm.
12-15 of the Introduction). Notice the tritone (G to D-flat) between the second and first
violins at the beginning of this new subsection. In m. 72, the first violin spans two
ascending intervals of a minor seventh (the enharmonic seventh D-flat to B and B to A),
resembling the wide interval span from the clarinet in m. 15 of the Introduction. It uses
these sevenths to reestablish a higher register, in order to begin the slow descent of
Melodic Idea 3 at m. 73. The descending intervals this time are a tritone (A to E-flat),
and a minor third (G to E), with ascending major thirds in between (E-flat to G in mm.
73-74, and E to G-sharp in m. 75). The cello accompanies the first violin with the same
concept of Melodic Idea 3, while the second violin sounds the turning motive. The viola
foreshadows upcoming intensification by stating Melodic Idea 2: slowly rising major and
minor seconds in mm. 71-76: (F, F-sharp, G-sharp, A, B). Starting at mm. 76-79, the
descending motives continue in the first violin (this time with the viola accompanying),
while the second violin, the cello, and the clarinet maintain the turning motive.

From mm. 80-82, all instruments in the ensemble descend. The rhythmic activity “de-
intensifies,” as the combinations of quarter and eighth note triplets, tied quarter notes, and
eighth notes in the strings are slower note values and yield a slower composite rhythm.
Little rhythmic activity is necessary, since subsection 3 is based on the comparatively
intense motives derived from Melodic Ideas 2 and 3. In, the only rhythmic “busy-ness”
is in the second violin (mm. 73-74), the second violin and the cello (mm. 76), and the
clarinet (m. 78) all of which are derived from the “held” Melodic Idea 1. The clarinet
line, however, is particularly compelling, in that it descends while incorporating the
turning motives of Melodic Idea 1 (mm. 80-82). It appears especially “seamless and velvety” here as it “teasingly” turns around on certain notes while it slowly descends and fades in dynamic. Measure 83 begins with very slowly rising material, derived from Melodic Idea 2, between the viola and the first violin (although the clarinet began this ascent in m. 82). Incomplete octatonic scales are the primary materials in mm. 83-87 in the first violin and the viola. In general, the dynamic level is very quiet throughout this subsection, ranging only from pianissimo to piano, and especially in m. 87 where it is marked pianissimo and dolce, just before subsection 4.

Subsection 4 (mm. 91-130) can be thought of as a transition from the less active and quieter subsection 3; its role is to continually increase intensity until Section B. Subsection 4 accomplishes this by alternating the use of the intensifying ascending arpeggios with the “de-intensifying” descending intervals of Melodic Idea 3. As these motives are interjected with the turning motive of Melodic Idea 1, it causes a constant push and pull in intensity. In mm. 91-94, the cello and the clarinet each present Melodic Idea 1, creating intensity with the long note in the clarinet and also with the crescendo in both instruments. Measures 95-96 “de-intensify” the action just created by the previous four measures by using the descending motive of Melodic Idea 3, slowing the rhythms, and by getting softer. Similar activity occurs in mm. 97-102, wherein all the parts begin with Melodic Idea 1, building intensity through held notes with a big crescendo. The strings peak this intensity using the turning motive in m. 99, before the decreasing intensity of mm. 100-101. In m. 99, the clarinet breaks away from Melodic Idea 1 by stating the initial intensifying ascent of Melodic Idea 3.
In m. 101, the clarinet increases in intensity, first by using Melodic Idea 1, and then with Melodic Idea 3. This starts with a long, held note, which slowly crescendos (mm. 101-102), and is followed by an elongated turning motive (m. 103, beat 1) and an ascending arpeggio (m. 103, beats 2-4). Note the intervals of the arpeggio: a perfect fifth (A to E) with a tritone (B-flat to E) within it, a perfect fourth (E to A), and an enharmonic major seventh (the diminished octave A to A-flat). This pattern continues in the clarinet for two more measures (mm. 104-105) with two even more elongated turning motives (the second one transposed down a whole step), followed by an ascending arpeggio consisting of a perfect fourth (E to A), a tritone (A to E-flat), and a major seventh (E-flat to D). This arpeggio and the previous turning motive are connected by the grace note B-flat, which forms a tritone (B-flat to E) with the first note of the arpeggio. The widening intervals in the arpeggios, along with consistent crescendos, create an increase in intensity. See Example 8 (in the clarinet part only)."}

During these same measures (mm. 101-105), the strings (except the first violin, which answers the ideas of the clarinet) maintain Melodic Idea 1 until a slow descent in mm. 106-108 (this time with the first violin joining the descent). The “narrower” intervals in mm. 106-108, along with the decrescendo, “de-intensify.” The pattern continues in mm.

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109-117. This time, the clarinet only arpeggiates, no longer using the turning motives of Melodic Idea 1. Measures 109-111 begin with an ascending arpeggio in the clarinet answered by the first violin; its intervallic content consists of minor and major thirds, and major seconds (just as in mm. 6-8 of the Introduction). In mm. 112-114, the clarinet continues to expand its arpeggios, now including the tritone and perfect fourth (as in m. 11 of the Introduction), and is interrupted by two measures (m. 115-116) of descent before intensifying again. In m. 117, the arpeggio is augmented even further with two ascending major sevenths: C to B and E-flat to D.

Beginning in m. 118, the pulse doubles (MM =60 to MM =120), and the clarinet begins to play three-note groupings, foreshadowing the rhythmic grouping in the upcoming Section B. These groupings are apparent in mm. 118-123, and in mm. 126-128. The intervals of the two distinct groups of three sixteenth notes in m. 118 are a minor third (G to B-flat) coupled with a major second (B-flat to C), and a major second (G to A) coupled with a major third (A to C-sharp). The same intervals are found in the initial arpeggio in mm. 6 and 8 of the Introduction and also in the three-note groupings of Section B. While this is happening in the clarinet, the first and second violins often answer in imitation, as in mm. 119-120 and mm. 124-125 (first violin only). Unless they are imitating the clarinet, the strings continue with the "held" notes from Melodic Idea 1, as in mm. 118-121, or the descending motive from the "de-intensifying" segment of Melodic Idea 3, as in mm. 122-127.

Subsection 4 ends with a short cadenza in the clarinet, in mm. 126-127, still outlining the three-note groupings. There is a final, insistent arpeggio in mm. 128-129 (a tritone from B-flat to E, perfect fourths from E to A and A to D, a tritone from D to G-sharp, and
a perfect fourth from G-sharp to C-sharp) declared by the clarinet with help from all members of the ensemble. Sections A and B are linked by a descending octave G-sharp in the first violin. The use of octaves and unisons to connect larger sections will continue to be addressed.

Section B spends a significant amount of time with the short, "consonant" arpeggiation of Melodic Idea 3, blended with motives from Melodic Ideas 1 and 2. It contains three subsections (5, 6, and 7), and commonly builds intensity on a grander scale as tiered levels of "held" motives progress melodically. As was previewed in subsection 4, the first three three-note groupings of sixteenth note triplets in mm. 131-132 of subsection 5 display a certain intervallic relationship: a minor third (G-sharp to B) and a major second (B to C-sharp), a major second (G-sharp to A-sharp) and a minor third (A-sharp to C-sharp), a minor second (G-sharp to A) and a major third (A to C-sharp). The cello copies the same pattern in retrograde. These are all intervals unique to Melodic Idea 3, and are "held" in place by repetition of the same outer notes, G-sharp to C-sharp (a perfect fourth), and also by the turning motive of the inner notes. The second violin outlines the first and last notes of each group of three sixteenth-note triplets (G-sharp and C-sharp), while the viola follows the inner note of each group of sixteenth note triplets in the turning motive (B, A-sharp, A). See Example 9 (in the string parts only).85

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This pattern continues until m. 139, where the outer notes expand to a tritone (G to C-sharp), illustrating a change to Melodic Idea 2.

An octave jump in the first violin brings it into a higher register so that a segment of an octatonic scale (G, A-flat, B-flat, B, C-sharp, B) is shared with the cello in the second half of m. 141, before the slight descent in mm. 142-144. Note how the meter changed to 6/8 at measure 139, drawing out the "held" motive, which is accomplished by adding "extra" notes to the three-note pattern and by using longer, dotted-quarter notes. At m. 142, the meter changes again to ¾, quickening the pulse and therefore the melodic progression. In mm. 142-144, the composite rhythm of the first and second violins, and the viola and cello, equals steady sixteenth notes with a turning motive on the first three sixteenths, and either a tritone or a perfect fourth between the third and fourth sixteenth. The last note of the viola part in m. 142 is a misprint; it should read B-flat. While these are rhythmic and turning motives from the "held" Melodic Idea 1, each pattern melodically descends (and gains intensity through the crescendo). The tritones and
melodically descends (and gains intensity through the crescendo). The tritones and
perfect fourths further illustrate the interjection of dissonance with otherwise consonant
sounding intervals.

Measures 145-149 show more "held" and turning motives, but with a feeling of
intensity because of the unsettling 5/16 meter, fortissimo dynamic, and addition of parts
in the ensemble. The 6/8 at m. 150 indicates the peak in intensity before returning to the
melodic descent in mm. 151-156 (the clarinet continues the "held" motive until its peak
at m. 153 before descending). Note the intervals in mm. 151-152 in the clarinet: a minor
second (A to B-flat) and a minor third (B-flat to D-flat). These intervals, though not
necessarily in the same order, are the same as the intervals at the beginning of subsection
5. See Example 10 (in the clarinet part only).^6

Each group of sixteenth-note sextuplets is "held" and must progress melodically in tiers.
A brief ascending chromatic scale in the cello and viola in m. 157 leads back into the
initial three-note groupings and softer dynamic as in the beginning of subsection 5.
Revealed in the clarinet with the first violin a tritone below, the first and third of the
three-note groupings of sixteenth-note triplets beginning in m. 158 exhibit a certain
intervallic relationship: minor third (F to A-flat) and a major second (A-flat to B-flat),
followed by a major second (F to G) and a minor third (G to B-flat).

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^6 Turning Points for Clarinet and Strings. By Joan Tower. Copyright © 1995 by Associated Music
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Measures 161-162 "dip" down before another chromatic ascent in m. 163 in the cello and the viola, then another general descent in mm. 164-167. During the descent, the clarinet, with the first violin still a tritone below, keeps the smaller tiers of intervals within the groups of three sixteenth-note triplets consistent while descending chromatically. Measures 164-167 start softly and crescendo at the end, leading into a powerful and "held" passage beginning at m. 168. The 9/16 in m. 166-167 helps facilitate the transition into the 3/4 at m. 168. Measures 168-173 present the turning motive until the second violin and the cello take over with Melodic Idea 2 in m. 173, with the viola sounding the descending motive of Melodic Idea 3. These opposing actions, in conjunction with the crescendo, create much tension into subsection 6.

Subsection 6 (mm. 174-209, downbeat) is dominated by the ascending concept of Melodic Idea 2, and is meant to continually increase tension until subsection 7. Intensification is achieved as instruments are continually added, and as the ascending line crescendos. This subsection is a prime example of serial elements used to achieve an overall shape. Each quintuplet group exhibits a turning motive, an octatonic scale, or a chromatic scale. In mm. 174-176, each group of quintuplets in the clarinet displays the turning motive and ascends when the first notes of each quintuplet rise chromatically from B-flat to B. The first violin takes over the quintuplet group (also based on the turning motive) in mm. 177-178, ascending with a statement first on C and then on C-sharp. In m. 179, the cello usurps the first violin line an octave below, and plays two groups of quintuplets in a chromatic ascent from C-sharp to F. The clarinet enters in the same measure on a low G, a tritone above the cello, and also plays two groups of quintuplets in a chromatic ascent from G to B. From mm. 181-183, the first violin
assumes prominence with three measures of an octatonic scale pattern in two groups of A to D-sharp; the third set of quintuplets continues from E to B-flat. In m. 184, the clarinet takes over the octatonic scale commenced by the first violin, and continues the scale up to F-sharp. Note the tritone encompassing each group of quintuplets in the octatonic scale pattern.

During this section (mm. 174-186), the accompanying strings focus mostly on major and minor sixths and minor and major thirds. For example, the cello expands from an A in the last note of m. 173, down an enharmonic minor sixth to D-flat, and up a minor second to B-flat in m. 174, creating a major sixth (D-flat to B-flat). The chords in the rest of the strings are built from here: a major sixth (D-flat to B-flat) in the cello, a perfect fourth (B-flat to E-flat) between the cello and the viola, a major third (E-flat to G) in the viola, and a perfect fourth (G to C) between the viola and the second violin. As the first violin and then the clarinet begin the octatonic scale ascent in m. 181, the chords in the lower strings make up some of the pitches for the octatonic scale. For example, in m. 181: E (cello), F-sharp (viola), G (first violin), A (first violin), B-flat (second violin), C (first violin), C-sharp (cello), D-sharp (viola). The way the pitches are assembled creates major sixths in the cello (E to C-sharp) and in the viola (F-sharp to D-sharp). In m. 184, the pitches, which make up the accompanying chords, are derived from the octatonic scale in the clarinet part. See Example 11.87

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Another chromatic ascent begins in m. 187 in the viola and the second violin before yielding to the octatonic scale series in the clarinet in mm. 191-194. Again, each quintuplet of the octatonic scale series in the clarinet spans a tritone: B-flat to E (mm. 191-192), C to F-sharp (m. 193), and D-flat to G (m. 194). The intervals between the cello and the viola in m. 187-188, m. 191, m. 193, and m. 194 bridge the first and last notes of the quintuplet, also creating tritones. Measures 195-205 continue with two groups (mm. 195-198 and mm. 199-205) of tiered turning quintuplets accompanied by more chords in the lower strings. Tower adds parts to augment the volume of sound in mm. 196-198 and in mm. 203-205, and extends the second pattern by three measures (mm. 203-205). The first note of each tier of turning quintuplets (mm. 195-205) ascends while incorporating the turning motive: F, G, G-flat, G, G-sharp, G, A-flat, A. In the final three measures of subsection 6 (mm. 206-209, downbeat), the clarinet ascends with a chromatic scale and a big crescendo. The second violin and the viola accompany in the interval of a tritone, further intensifying into subsection 7 and leading into the next
Melodic Idea. The general dynamic level of subsection 6 is *forte* leading to the final destination of *fortissimo* in measure 209. The uneven time signature 5/16 gives the feeling that every measure is propelling forward, wanting to resolve. This intensification leads into subsection 7.

Before the discussion of subsection 7, a misprint in the score should be noted. In m. 249, the F in the clarinet should be F-sharp, keeping consistent with the pitches in the strings in m. 250.⁸⁸

Subsection 7 (m. 209-252, downbeat) concentrates mostly on the turning motives of Melodic Idea 1, but uses Melodic Ideas 2 and 3 to progress melodically. The first and second violins begin where the clarinet quintuplets left off on B in m. 209, while using the shape of Melodic Idea 3 (this time a minor third and a minor second), in a “held” action. They continue this through m. 212. Meanwhile, the viola and the cello punctuate with four-note chords (a tritone [B to F] in the cello, a perfect fourth [F to B-flat] between the cello and the viola, and a tritone [B-flat to E] in the viola) from the familiar arpeggio of Melodic Idea 3 with the tritones signifying a change in subsection. The measure of duple time (m. 211) gives the music a sense of moving forward, while pulling the meter back to 3/8 in m. 212 “holds.” Measure 213 also gives a sense of “holding,” as the descending arpeggio, made up of the same chords as m. 209, is elongated through the use of dotted-quarter notes. Mm. 209-235 are an excellent example of how the intervals which first formed the intensifying action of Melodic Idea 3 are now being used as chords in a “held” action.

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⁸⁸ Joan Tower, (TOWER@bard.edu), “One Question (Again),” E-mail to Rochelle Oddo (RAQUEL@rice.edu), 7 September, 2003.
The first and second violins take over with the turning motive in m. 216 again, this time with each note, except B, a minor second higher. The accompanying intervals are now expanded to a major seventh (A to G-sharp) in the cello, a tritone (C to F-sharp) in the viola, and an enharmonic major third (G-sharp to C) separating the viola and the cello. The ascending arpeggio in mm. 218-219 consists of a tritone (D to G-sharp) in the cello and the viola (although the viola arpeggiates to a G, it trills to an A-flat, giving emphasis to the G-sharp in the cello), an enharmonic major sixth (A-flat to E-sharp) in the viola, and an enharmonic major second (E-sharp to G) between the viola and the first violin. The duple meter keeps the intensity during this arpeggio. The first and second violins begin m. 220 on C-sharp, a tritone away from the previous note, G, with the "held" motive of Melodic Idea 1, and with all the intervals of the sextuplet from m. 216 shifted a major second higher. The viola and the cello accompany with interlocking tritones: A-flat to D and G to C-sharp, with a perfect fourth, D to G, between the inner voices. Once again, the duple meter in m. 222 suggests haste, but it is only to be slowed again with the return of 3/8 in mm. 223-225.

From m. 226 to the end of subsection 7, each sextuplet group progresses melodically using various intervals between each group while incorporating the turning motive. In mm. 226-229, the first notes of each sextuplet have a "Classical-sounding" chord progression of what sounds like I-IV-V-I (A, D, E, A). In mm. 229-236, the intervals between tiers of sextuplets are as follows: an ascending tritone (A to D-sharp), an ascending enharmonic major third (D-sharp to G), an ascending minor second (G to G-sharp), a descending major seventh (G-sharp to A), an ascending fourth (A to D), an ascending tritone (D to G-sharp), and a descending minor second (G-sharp to G). If the
descending major seventh is thought of as an ascending minor second in inversion, these are all intervals associated with Melodic Idea 3.

Measures 237-252, downbeat, are the final thrust to the end of subsection 7 and the end of Part I. A duple meter is established in m. 237, helping the thrust push forward, especially as each measure through m. 242 continually loses a beat. The running sixteenth notes keep the “held” Melodic Idea 1 active. In m. 237, the strings are situated on a tritone (G-sharp to D) while the clarinet enters on an E-flat. The first violin further intensifies the minor second between D and E-flat in the sixteenth notes. In m. 238, after a brief arpeggio of a tritone (A-flat to D) and a fourth (D to G) between the grace notes in the clarinet, the interval pattern from the rising arpeggios of Melodic Idea 3 continues in the strings: a tritone (G-sharp to D) between the cello and the second violin, and a perfect fourth (D to G) between the first and second violins. These are also the same intervals connecting the groups of sixteenth notes between mm. 237 and 238. The grace notes in m. 239 in the clarinet now expand the full arpeggio of Melodic Idea 3: a tritone (A-flat to D), a perfect fourth (D to G), and a tritone (G to D-flat). The strings also encompass the whole arpeggio: a tritone (G-sharp to D) between the cello and the viola, a perfect fourth (D to G) between the viola and the second violin, and a tritone (G to C-sharp) between the first and second violins.

The whole pattern is moved up a minor second in m. 240 and a perfect fourth in m. 241, intensifying as more parts are added and the crescendo continues. At m. 243, the clarinet branches off into a “preview” of the upcoming cadenza. Measures 244-246, beat 1, show the clarinet displaying ascending fragments of an octatonic scale, interrupted by descending tritones, fourths, thirds, one major sixth, and one major seventh. In m. 246,
beats 2-3, an arpeggiation upward of a tritone (G-flat to C), and perfect fourths (C to F, F to B-flat, and B-flat to E-flat) begins in the clarinet, and is finished with a tritone (E-flat in the clarinet to A in the first violin) in m. 247. The rest of the strings accompany using the same pitches as those found in the arpeggio. In m. 248, the clarinet trills up a minor second to E and crescendos into m. 249, where the entire arpeggio is repeated a minor second higher, also ending in the first violin, and also with the strings accompanying using the same pitches as in the arpeggio. This finally leads to the clarinet’s resolution to F in m. 252, and into the cadenza. The very wide range of the clarinet is exposed here and will continue to be highlighted in the cadenza.

Measure 252 stretches out for an elaborate clarinet cadenza, consisting of octatonic scales, which are interrupted by tritones and perfect fourths. For example, in the first four beats, the octatonic scales are broken up by a descending perfect fourth (G to D), and three descending tritones: F to B, D to G-sharp, and C to F-sharp. Beats 5 through 9 consist of three arpeggios with alternating perfect fourths and tritones, followed by four beats of octatonic scale fragments broken up by one descending perfect fourth (C to G), and one descending minor third (C to A). The rest of the cadenza follows this rule: the scalar passages are all octatonic fragments, and the interrupting intervals are either tritones or perfect fourths, another example of serial elements constructing the organic flow. The rhythm also develops organically throughout this cadenza. For example, in the second line, the quarter note triplets blend into eighth notes, which fuse into eighth-note triplets, then sixteenth notes, sixteenth-note triplets, and finally thirty-second notes. Tower increases the speed even further in the tenth and eleventh beats of the second line
when triplet sixteenth notes evolve into a thirty-second-note quintuplet. This cadenza is another example of Tower’s idea that music “is a completely organic process, based on itself.” She uses certain intervals to establish the melodic line, and then lets the rhythm develop from what she thinks it is trying to do. This illustrates well the clarinet’s range, punching ability (line 3, beat 4) and crescendo ability.

Part II consists of four sections, C, D, E, and F and is the first time Melodic Idea 4 is elaborated upon. Section C (mm. 253-309, beat 2) focuses mainly on Melodic Idea 4 with other Melodic Ideas inserted to help progression and consists of subsections 8 and 9. Subsection 8 (mm. 253-279) mixes the wide “holding” intervals associated with Melodic Idea 4 and the descending intervals from the “de-intensifying” segment of Melodic Idea 3. It begins with the clarinet on a low E, three octaves below the E where the clarinet left Part I in m. 251. From the low E in Part II, the wide interval of an ascending minor tenth (E to G) is established, which quickly expands to a major tenth (E to G-sharp) on beat 3. Because Melodic Idea 4 is a “held” motive, it uses fragments of Melodic Ideas 2 and 3 to keep the line active. In m. 255, the E rises a minor second to F, changing the tenth to minor (F to A-flat) and the intervals continue to collapse in m. 256 to a minor ninth (F to G-flat), and then an octave (F to F). The second half of beat 4 in m. 256 to the downbeat of m. 257 spans a descending minor tenth (F to D) before rising a minor second (D to E-flat), and rising and dropping another major tenth (E-flat to G to E-flat) in mm. 257-258. The cello begins Section C in unison with the clarinet on an E, quickly jumping an octave in m. 254, which creates a wide interval of a major tenth (E to G-sharp) with the clarinet.

89 Neuls-Bates, 354-5.
The cello then descends a minor tenth (E to C-sharp) in m. 254, still keeping the interval of a minor tenth (C-sharp to E) with the clarinet. In m. 255, the cello jumps an enharmonic major tenth (C-sharp to F, with a D in between) and then begins descending minor thirds in m. 256. The descent consists of a minor third (F to D), increasing the intervals in the off beats between the clarinet and the cello from a minor ninth (F to G-flat) to a minor tenth (D to F), before meeting in unison on the low D in m. 257. The cello rises a minor second (D to E-flat) from mm. 257-258 and then a major tenth (E-flat to G) in m. 258, mimicking the clarinet from the previous measure. At this point, the clarinet and the cello exchange prominence as the cello leads into the slow descending motive of Melodic Idea 3.

Measures 260-276 “de-intensify” with Melodic Idea 3 but with also using motives from Melodic Ideas 2, 4, and 1. Up to this point, a very authoritative *fortissimo drammatico* marking has been observed, indicating the bold-sounding “held” motive of Melodic Idea 4. From mm. 258-260, the markings change to *ritard* and *diminuendo*, leading into the “de-intensifying” Melodic Idea 3. The descending motive begins in m. 260 with a descending minor third (G to E) in the cello, “setting the stage” for the clarinet and the viola to take over in m. 261, where, through m. 263, they share unison notes in somewhat of a canon. Measures 264-265 begin with an interval of a minor tenth (C-sharp to E) in the clarinet before continuing with a descending major third (E to C), an ascending minor third (C to E-flat), a descending major second (E-flat to D-flat), and finally, a descending minor tenth (D-flat to B-flat) in m. 268. In m. 265, the viola begins a minor tenth from the clarinet (C-sharp to E), and briefly touches on a major tenth from the clarinet (C to E), before jumping up an octave to C, meeting the clarinet in its register.
From here, the viola alternates half (C to B) and whole (B to A) steps before coming to rest on B-flat in m. 267. Notice how this almost creates a turning motive around the B-flat. Also, note the alternating minor and major thirds between the viola and the clarinet in mm. 266-267: C to E-flat, B to E-flat (the enharmonic equivalent to D-sharp), A to D-flat (the enharmonic equivalent to C-sharp), and B-flat to D-flat.

From mm. 269-272, the first violin descends in alternating major and minor seconds (D, C, B, A), briefly turns around on A and B, jumps an octave, and then begins another alternating minor and major second descent in mm. 273-276: B, B-flat, A-flat, G. While this occurs in the first violin, the second violin repeats an octave jump of B-flats, creating, with the first violin, a major tenth and major third (B-flat to D), a major ninth and a major second (B-flat to C) and a minor ninth and a minor second (B-flat to B). The second violin continues by rising a perfect fifth (B-flat to F) in mm. 272-273, creating a tritone with the first violin, while turning around F and E. From mm. 269-274, the viola expands the B-flat from the bottom, to the middle, and finally to the upper octave, before rising a minor second in m. 275, creating a tritone with the second violin. The wide interval motive of Melodic Idea 4 kept each descending figure terracing upward, and that is how Tower arrived in the very high register in m. 276. To end subsection 8, the clarinet keeps the same intervalllic descending motive of Melodic Idea 3 in mm. 276-279, while the first and second violins create intensity by driving the turning motive into subsection 9. The off beats, triplets, and tied notes give rhythmic ambiguity and an improvisatory-like quality to mm. 261-179.

Subsection 9 begins much like the Introduction. It starts with a long, held note in the clarinet followed by the turning motive of Melodic Idea 1 (mm. 280-283). Note the
octave connections in the clarinet and the first violin, and in the second violin and viola. This leads into the slowly rising alternating major and minor seconds (mm. 284-285) of Melodic Idea 2, before the slowly descending intervals of the “de-intensifying” segment of Melodic Idea 3 (mm. 286-289). Note the tritone connection in the clarinet in mm. 286-287. From here, this leads into an elaboration of Melodic Idea 4. In m. 280, the first violin and the viola sound the descending minor thirds of Melodic Idea 3, while the cello mimics the clarinet, first a major seventh below (mm. 280-283) and then a major and minor tenth below (mm. 284-285). What makes the cello different from the clarinet in mm. 280-283 is its “de-intensification” while sounding Melodic Idea 1. It begins on B-flat and descends to A, A-flat, G, and G-flat, while getting softer. Measures 286-289 “de-intensify” with Melodic Idea 3, leading naturally into m. 290, beginning patterns of alternating major and minor thirds and sixths. The major and minor thirds, originally derived from Melodic Idea 3, can be thought of as the pitch class interval equivalent of the major and minor tenths of Melodic Idea 4, with the minor and major sixths as their inversions. They characterize the “held,” wide intervals of Melodic Idea 4 in that there is not much melodic progression. These patterns of alternating major and minor thirds and sixths are interrupted by the other intervals (major and minor seconds, perfect fourths and fifths, tritones, and a minor seventh). For example, as shown in the first violin part, the major second (A to B) in beats 2-3 of m. 295 allows m. 296 to begin on G-sharp, changing the emphasized notes. See Example 12 (in the first violin part only).\footnote{Turning Points for Clarinet and Strings. By Joan Tower. Copyright © 1995 by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI). International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission.}
The interjections of other intervals widen the encompassing range, eventually leading into descending minor tenths, which close subsection 9: C to A in m. 307, and D to B in m. 309.

Subsection 9 began with fairly strong dynamics in the initial turning motive (mm. 280-283) and then diminished in dynamic as the “de-intensification” of Melodic Idea 3 occurred in mm. 284-289. Measure 290 began pianissimo and cantabile, and got progressively louder and faster until the end of subsection 9 when it is marked fortissimo and pesante. Measures 290-308 can be thought of in three parts, beginning at m. 290, m. 296, and m. 301. Each part begins with a long note, pushes to the top of each “arpeggio” and lingers as the rhythm is elongated from triplets to eighths to quarters and back down. Throughout mm. 290-308, beat 2, Tower also added instruments, and made the rhythm progressively “busier,” increasing anticipation of the much more active Section D. Note the octave D (with descending minor tenth, D to B, “thrown in”) in m. 309 that is used to move into Section D. The “smooth and velvety” quality and wide range of the clarinet is apparent here.

Section D (mm. 309, beat 2 through m. 363, downbeat) has an overall intensifying effect into the next section, with several intensifying and “de-intensifying” segments within it. It contains two subsections, 10 and 11. Subsection 10 (mm. 309, beat 2-m.
leads the intensification with the "holding," but rhythmically active Melodic Ideas 1 and 4. In mm. 309-316, the clarinet enters with a long, held D, dovetailing the previous cadence and continues with the turning motive, after which the wide interval element of Melodic Idea 4 takes over with the minor third (E-flat to G-flat) in m. 312, an enharmonic minor sixth (G-flat to D) in mm. 312-313, a minor sixth (D to B-flat) in mm. 314-315, and a minor third (B-flat to D-flat) in m. 315. The clarinet continues with the turning motive again in mm. 317-318, encircling D-flat. In mm. 310-315, the cello is dominated by the turning motive, encircling B, where it finally comes to rest in m. 315. The second violin creates a turning motive on B-flat in m. 310 by outlining the corresponding notes in the cello. In mm. 312-315, the first violin creates a turning motive on B also by outlining notes in the cello.

The second violin enters with a turning motive in mm. 315-316 before transitioning to the wide interval motive of Melodic Idea 4: an ascending minor sixth (D to B-flat) in m. 317, and an ascending enharmonic minor third (B-flat to C-sharp) in mm. 319-320. At this point, all upper parts incorporate the intervals of Melodic Idea 4. From mm. 317-321, the intervals in the first violin are as follows: a major seventh (D to C-sharp [the C-sharp being an enharmonic minor third form the B-flat in the second violin]), a descending enharmonic minor third (C-sharp to B-flat), a descending minor sixth (B-flat to D), a descending and ascending minor third (D to B and B to D), and an ascending and descending minor third (D to F and F to D). From mm. 319-320, clarinet uses the same intervals the first violin uses in m. 320, but with a slight change in m. 321: a descending major seventh (F to G-flat) followed by a descending minor third (G-flat to E-flat). Even
the viola joins the Melodic Idea 4 interval motif with the descending major seventh (F to G-flat) in mm. 321-322. See Example 13.\textsuperscript{91}

The remainder of subsection 10 alternates motives from Melodic Idea 1 with motives from Melodic Idea 4. At first, the Ideas overlap as shown in mm. 327-329, where the clarinet, the first violin, and the cello illustrate Melodic Idea 4, and the second violin and the viola illustrate Melodic Idea 1. After that, the Ideas are clearly divided. Melodic Idea

4 takes place in m. 330, beats 1-2; m. 331, beat 3 through m. 332; m. 334; m. 336, the second half of beat 4 through m. 341, beat 1; and mm. 342-343. Melodic Idea 1 takes place in m. 330, beat 3 through m. 331, beat 2; m. 333; mm. 335-336, through the first half of beat 4; m. 341, beats 2-4; and m. 344 to the end of subsection 10. Notice that whenever the parts are not in unison during Melodic Idea 4, they display one of the significant intervals. For example, in m. 330, beat 2, the cello and the first violin are an enharmonic minor sixth (F to C-sharp), a minor third (D to F) and a minor sixth (G-flat to D) apart. Subsection 10 gains intensity by the added volume and instruments as it progresses. Once again, the “punching” ability and wide range of the clarinet are exploited.

Subsection 11 (mm. 347-363, downbeat) keeps the intensity set up by subsection 10 and only slightly “de-intensifies” while leading into Section E. The strings begin with the turning motive while the clarinet enters with the slowly rising motive of Melodic Idea 2. As clearly shown in m. 351, the ascending intervals in the first violin create a “held” mood significant of the inverted intervals of Melodic Idea 4: a minor third (D to F), an enharmonic minor sixth (F to C-sharp), and a minor third (C-sharp to E). These are the same intervals maintained between all string parts in the same measure. At the beginning of this subsection, Tower creates a feeling of “de-intensifying” but without losing too much intensity by starting loudly with almost an immediate decrescendo and with only a few instruments. After two measures, more instruments are added and volume is increased from piano to mezzo piano (m. 351, beat 4). At this point, the melodic line descends, but while crescendoing. In m. 356, after a unison forte exclamation, all instruments diminuendo while sounding the “held” Melodic Idea 1 (mm. 357-358), and
then finally descend melodically (mm. 359-362). Although the most noticeable melodic descent is from the last beat of m. 361 through m. 362, intensity is maintained by a sudden crescendo and increase in rhythmic activity. This leads strongly into Section E, connected by the unison D between the last note of the first violin in m. 362 and the first note of the clarinet in m. 363.

Section E (mm. 363-409) continues to intensify until the end of the piece. It contains two subsections, 12 and 13, and begins with a “holding action” of turning motives from Melodic Idea 1, shared between the clarinet and the violins. The accompanying chords are consistently a perfect fifth lodged between two minor sixths as seen, for example, in m. 364: a minor sixth (D-sharp to B) in the cello, a perfect fifth (B to F-sharp) between the cello and the viola, and a minor sixth (F-sharp to D) in the viola. See Example 14:92

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In m. 366, the “holding” action continues with the cello and the viola in unison and the first and second violins in unison with a major sixth, representing the intervals characteristic of Melodic Idea 4, between the two unison pairs. The intervals of Melodic Idea 4 continue to separate each part, while the melodic line progresses with the turning motive of Melodic Idea 1. In mm. 367, beat 3, the clarinet also continues with the turning motive until m. 369, beat 4, when it uses the wide interval motive from Melodic Idea 4 to establish itself in the upper register. It continues the turning motive in the upper register until m. 377, beat 2. In mm. 370-374, beat 1, the strings follow the “held” motive of Melodic Idea 1 with the major thirds and minor sixths of the feeling of Melodic Idea 4 in between.

Momentum is increased when all instruments play continual sixteenths together and fortissimo in mm. 372-374, beat 1, and when the strings begin an ascending action with Melodic Idea 2 in m. 374, beat 2. This rising motive continues in m. 375 with a minor second (C-sharp to D) leading from the first to the second chord in the cello, and again in m. 376 from the first to the second chord in the strings. From m. 377, beat 2 through m. 382, the clarinet begins a melodic descent. Here, the accompanying parts continue to “hold” the action with major and minor thirds and sixths of Melodic Idea 4.

In mm. 383-388, downbeat, the clarinet continues the descent characteristic of the “de-intensifying” segment of Melodic Idea 3 while incorporating the turning motive of Melodic Idea 1. The cello and the viola accompany using major and minor sixths and thirds all the way through m. 391. In m. 388, the first and second violins continue the descent into subsection 13. Up to subsection 12, the note values in Part II have been mostly eighths and triplets against duple meter. Section E begins the transition into the
quicker note values of sixteenths against mostly duple meters. The mixture of duple and triple meters from mm. 381-393 makes it difficult to distinguish the downbeat. This gives a feeling of unstopping motion, continuing the drive into subsection 13.

Subsection 13 is the final intensifying action into the closing, Section F. The clarinet begins with Melodic Idea 1 on an A, accompanied by a minor sixth (E to C) in the first violin, a minor third (A to C) in the second violin and the viola, and a tritone (C-sharp to G) in the cello, the tritone signifying a change in Melodic Idea. After the second violin and the viola change their accompanying interval to a minor second (B to C) in m. 396, the clarinet arpeggiates up in mm. 398-399 with the intervals from mm. 6-8 of Melodic Idea 3: a major third (F-flat to A-flat) and a major second (A-flat to B-flat). In m. 399, all notes in the accompaniment shift up a minor second (the cello descends a major seventh), with the cello, viola, and first violin continuing in minor sixths. In m. 402, the clarinet and the cello arpeggiate down in unison using the major third (B-flat to G-flat) and major second (G-flat to F-flat) intervals also from mm. 6-8 of Melodic Idea 3 before they finish subsection 13 with Melodic Idea 1. When the remaining strings enter again in m. 402, they keep their intervals of minor sixths and minor thirds while descending the melodic line to m. 408, beat 2. From this point, the action in the strings is “held,” but active, until Section F.

The dynamics follow this subsection characteristically. Marked pianissimo and dolce at the beginning, there is a slight swell in the dynamics to go along with the changed intervals of the accompaniment in m. 396. The pianissimo comes back and swells again with the return of Melodic Idea 3 in mm. 398-402. The final drive into Section F steadily crescendos from mm. 403 through m. 409. It is interesting to note how the driving
sixteenths continually “pick up” parts as subsection 13 makes its way into Section F. Again, the clarinet’s ability to crescendo is shown in subsection 13.

It is not surprising that Tower should choose to monopolize Section F with the strong “held” motives from Melodic Ideas 1 and 4. The “held” action of Melodic Idea 1, and the powerful, wide intervals of Melodic Idea 4 give a grandiose feeling to the end of the piece. Measure 410 consists of a long, held D in the cello and in the clarinet while the upper strings accompany with minor thirds in unison. This continues until the second half of the last beat in m. 411, when a series of alternating rising minor thirds and minor sixths, interrupted by the turning motive, begins. This turning motive progresses melodically through the use of minor and major sevenths, octaves, and minor tenths. The clarinet starts the series in the second half of the last beat of m. 411 with a minor third (D to F) followed by a minor sixth (F to D-flat) followed by an enharmonic minor third (D-flat to E) and another minor sixth (E to C). In m. 413, the descending minor seventh (C to D) allows the intervallic series (the alternating minor thirds and minor sixths) to begin on D. The descending minor seventh (G to A) in m. 414 creates a shift in the series, allowing it now to start on A. The following two sets of alternating minor thirds and minor sixths lead to the first turning motive on beats 2-3 in m. 415. The descending major seventh (A to B-flat) in m. 415, beat 4, begins a new intervallic series of alternating minor thirds and minor sixths starting on B-flat. The inserted minor and major sevenths and octaves continue to raise both the alternating minor thirds and sixths series and the turning motives. See Example 15.93

93 Turning Points for Clarinet and Strings. By Joan Tower. Copyright © 1995 by Associated Music
In m. 419, the combinations of minor sixths and minor thirds and turning motives create a progression of intervals between downbeats, allowing them to get continually higher. From the C-sharp in m. 419 and continuing through m. 430, a pattern of a descending chromatic scale interrupted by a rising minor third is established. There are six such patterns (which can be easily followed in the cello, and which outline the emphasized notes in the clarinet part): 1) C-sharp, C, B, B-flat, C-sharp (the enharmonic minor third of D-flat), D-sharp [the first pattern has an extra whole step, D-sharp]; 2) from m. 421, beat 3: D-sharp, D, C-sharp, C, B, B-flat, A, C; 3) from m. 424, beat 1: C, B, A-sharp, C-sharp; 4) from m. 425, beat 1: C-sharp, C, B, D; 5) from m. 426, beat 1: D, C-sharp, C, B, A-sharp, C-sharp, D-sharp [the extra whole step, D-sharp, will be explained]; 6) from m. 429, beat 1: D-sharp, D, C-sharp, C, E-flat. During this segment (mm. 419-430), the first and second violin and the viola follow a minor third above the cello and a minor sixth below the clarinet, while maintaining minor thirds within their own parts. The extra whole steps (C-sharp to D-sharp) emphasize the upcoming E that is especially stressed in the clarinet part in mm. 431-433. When the E is finally recognized in the cello in m. 434, it is usurped by the chords of minor thirds (F to A-flat) and major sixths (A-flat to F) in m. 435. The unison minor third (F to A-flat) between all parts in m. 436 leads to the chord made up of major and minor thirds and sixths in m. 437, and strongly encourages a resolution to E-flat. The resolution is heard in the last measure, only after being engulfed by a final turning motive in the penultimate measure.

Joan Tower describes herself as an organic composer, but technically speaking, *Turning Points* has some serial-like thought processes. The piece achieves shape by an
orderly use of the serial elements of intervals, rhythm, dynamics, and register which lead to "holding," intensifying, and "de-intensifying" actions. The ten-year serial detour helped Tower to find her unique compositional profile, showing a balance of organic and serial elements. Additionally, the commission from David Shifrin invited her to exploit her affinity towards the clarinet while incorporating the admirable qualities of Shifrin's playing.

This analysis is meant to serve as a guide for those who wish to gain a better understanding of Joan Tower's compositional style and use of the clarinet in a specific work. It is hoped that after a study of this analysis, a performer or performing group might gain a better understanding of the shape and direction of *Turning Points*, and therefore achieve a more enlightened performance.
CONCLUSIONS

It is hoped that after reading this document, readers will have attained a better understanding of how Joan Tower’s compositional profile and her interest in collaboration and the clarinet affected *Turning Points for Clarinet and String Quartet*. Tower’s endeavors with serialism allowed her to use unifying elements to create an organic and improvisatory-sounding quality to her music.

It is further hoped that an analysis from the eyes and ears of a performer will help future performers of *Turning Points* gain more insight for a meaningful performance of this piece. It is also hoped that this document has sparked an interest in music by many other living composers. While it is still important to study and perform the great composers of the past, it is equally, if not more, critical to study and perform the great composers of the present. To quote the late Michael Hammond, former Dean of the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, “Smart people know a lot of stuff, but they don’t think they do.”

It is important to continually learn and challenge oneself, realizing that involvement in music does not end with the memorization of history textbooks. One must constantly be seeking more, never abandoning the desire to learn about what has not yet been studied: the present.
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APPENDIX

Interview with Joan Tower
7 July 2003
Red Hook, NY

Rochelle Oddo: What I find interesting is how you always have a certain relationship with the people you write for. I find that as a performer really interesting, because it makes the performer seem more involved.

Joan Tower: Absolutely.

RO: When and how did you decide to become a composer?

JT: When I was 18, and when I heard my first piece. Actually, I didn’t decide to become a composer. There was so much wrong with the piece—that was at Bennington—that I had to fix it [chuckles]. And so it was sort of the beginning of a trap, actually, because I wanted to write something that made some sense, that had something interesting about it.

RO: You didn’t think that did [have something interesting about it], the first piece?

JT: No, no.

RO: After hearing your first composition, did it sound like anything you had expected?

JT: I’m sure it didn’t, and it never does, even to this day.

RO: Really?

JT: Yeah, there’s still a lot, a LOT of guesswork. The reality, no matter what a composer tells you, the reality of the page versus the sound is always different.

RO: Yeah, I always thought that music is such an interesting art because you have so many variables in between. You have this piece, and then the person who plays it and then the people, how they hear it.

JT: Right.

RO: It’s so different from a work of art, where—I guess you can look at a piece of art and have a different opinion [than someone else’s], but it [the work of art] is never going to change.

JT: Right. That’s right. And it’s right there and you can work on it, and you can say, “oh, that’s too much red, and that’s too much blue,” but you have this notational blueprint, which is sort of like an architectural blueprint because it’s so precise. That’s
very, very interesting, how that developed and why we do that in music and we don’t do that in theater or in dance. They do not have the same blueprints that we have.

RO: It’s not written down?

JT: The blueprints they have are much freer. I mean, if you’re an actor and you’re reading, “How are you?” You can say [with flighty expression], “So, how you?” or you can say [with solemn expression], “How are you?” or you can say [monotone expression], “How are you?” And there are different speeds, different dynamics, different articulations. Everything about “How are you?” So my input as an actor can change the entire meaning of the phrase, “How are you?” But in music, we tell the person how to say the phrase. We control the thing from A to Z. So notation becomes like an architectural blueprint. It’s an incredibly precise kind of thing of how to make this thing express itself. And that’s a whole long history of how that developed and why.

RO: Yeah, that’s another thing I was going to try to get into, is how we lost this collaboration that you like to do, because I think it’s fair to say that music was not always like this. I’m wondering when it started becoming so precise and if that directly correlates with when composers and performers started separating.

JT: That’s it. That’s when it happened: when they started separating. When the performers did not compose and the composers did not perform. That’s exactly what happened. Probably early part of this century.

RO: Mm hmm. Early part of this century. I wonder why.

JT: And, two separate institutions got established for these people: the university for the composer, and the conservatory for the performer. Now those get mixed up because universities now have schools of music and conservatories have attachments to a liberal arts education. It’s gotten a little more mixed up. On the faculties of universities, we now also have performers. Composers just came into the universities in the sixties, which is pretty recent, actually. Performers came about, maybe twenty years later.

RO: To university?

JT: To universities, because the composers could get in through the theory door. That’s why you have composer/theory descriptions for jobs for composers because that way they could be “scholarly” through the theory door. But performers couldn’t go through that door. Very few performers could go through that door, and so they became adjuncts. And they don’t get full professor.

RO: The first few questions are just about how you became a composer and your style, if there is one particular style that you can categorize yourself.
JT: When I first started? Or is it—the stylistic question is complex. Do you want me to talk about that?

RO: First of all, do you need to collaborate in order to compose? Do you need to compose for somebody?

JT: To have a performer? Yes. Definitely.

RO: Why?

JT: Because I was a performer and because I can’t imagine writing something that is not going to be played by somebody.

RO: [Somebody] in particular?

JT: Yeah, I mean, I’m not an electronic person and I’m certainly not somebody that’s going to write something that’s going to go on the shelf. So I just can’t imagine—I mean, that’s so much a part of my thinking.

RO: For Wings, for Laura Flax, you thought about a certain aspect of her playing that you admired so that’s how you started off.

JT: Well because I knew her very well because I played with her—she was in my group. So I knew how she played. That’s not always the case. I mean, it’s not always the case that you’re hanging out with the person for eight years before you write for them, but that was a special...I was living and working with her for a long time. So her playing had a lot of meaning for me.

RO: What about with David Shifrin for Turning Points?

JT: David Shifrin I hardly knew at all except by reputation.

RO: Interesting. He said, “Well, you should know there wasn’t a whole lot of talking involved. By then Joan knew my playing very well and knew what to write.”

JT: Actually, yeah. See the Laura thing is really special. All the clarinetists I dealt with after that were—I knew them by recordings, or sometimes I’d heard them live. But I couldn’t say I knew them as intimately as I knew Laura.

RO: Right, so that was a little different. So what would you say the main difference is between the compositional process of Wings and Turning Points in terms of collaborating? Was it that you knew Laura better?

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94 David Shifrin, (KV622@aol.com), “Re: Rochelle Oddo's Dissertation,” E-mail to Rochelle Oddo (RAQUEL@rice.edu), 27 June, 2003.
JT: Yeah. I was in touch with her and I could call her at the drop of a hat. Also I had the Messiaen *Quartet for the End of Time* for the model. I’d heard her play that for seven years. So there was a lot of that in the piece too, tied up with her playing. And there was this whole new thing I was trying to do with music. I was trying to choreograph slow motion and flying. So it was a combination of musical agendas and her Messiaen. This whole thing was in the same potpourri. But by the time I got to *Turning Points*, I had been through other clarinet pieces, and lots of other music. And so that was not so much clarinet based—what I mean is, David based/clarinet based—although I love the clarinet, it’s my favorite instrument.

RO: I have that on tape.

JT: [laughs] I LOVE the clarinet. It’s just—well that’s another thing. David had played *Harbor Lights*.

RO: David Shifrin? But you didn’t write that for him.

JT: No.

RO: You just heard him play it.

JT: I heard him play it, and so I started to get to know him that way and through recordings and through other performances I heard of his—Mozart and stuff like that. But I wasn’t tailor-making *Turning Points* for David. I wasn’t. Not the way I made *Wings* for Laura.

RO: The only information I have on *Turning Points* is what you wrote at the beginning of the score. And that is that there are four ideas introduced in the clarinet solo in the beginning and that they’re developed as they go along. Are they developed or varied or both?

JT: I don’t know the difference between those two words [laughs].

RO: Well, I guess if you say that, then [the answer is] no. There’s no significance.

JT: But at least you have a starting point for analysis and there are four ideas. [Both laugh]

RO: And that’s it.

JT: That’s it. That’s as far as I go.

RO: So those four ideas did not really come directly from David’s playing.

JT: No.
RO: You just thought of these four ideas on your own.

JT: Yes.

RO: Did you have him in mind at all when you were thinking of these four ideas?

JT: No.

RO: You just made it dedicated to him.

JT: Yes, because he commissioned it.

RO: He DID commission it. That was another question I was going to ask.

JT: It was his call about writing a piece for Chamber Music Society. I’m not sure whether he said it should be clarinet quintet or I asked for that. I don’t remember. Maybe he’ll remember that better.

RO: Did Laura Flax and David Shifrin commission the pieces that were written for them, or were you inspired by their playing? It sounds like Laura Flax inspired you...

JT: Well, with Laura, I was working with her in a group and I was writing solo pieces for each player and she was next. And it was played on her recital in New York. And no money exchanged hands. She premiered it and she made it happen.

RO: But she did not come to you and ask for a piece?

JT: Oh, I’m sure she did at some point, but she wouldn’t have played it on her recital unless she wanted a piece from me.

RO: I see. But David Shifrin did commission *Turning Points*?

JT: That was a formal commission signed agreement.

RO: So the definition of commission is: money exchanged.

JT: Mm hmm.

RO: Okay. I didn’t know that.

JT: Well, not necessarily. A person can ask you for a piece and then play it on their recital in New York; that’s a kind of a commission in a way. My publisher would disagree with that. She would say money has to exchange hands. I’ve written two pieces for friends of mine that never paid me anything because I loved their playing and I
worked with them for so long, and I loved them.

RO: So it sounds like whether or not money is exchanged depends on your personal relationship—how close you are. If I were an established professional performer like David Shifrin and I wanted a composer to write for me, I would expect there to be money exchanged—if I weren’t friends with the composer.

JT: Yeah, but the friendship can also involve money because the friend can have money and say, “Listen, I don’t want you to do this for nothing, I’m going pay you.” It’s not so much a question of friendship, it’s a question of how old you are and whether the player can afford it.

RO: Right. So it sounds like each situation is different.

JT: Yeah, very different. There are no set commissioning fees for anything.

RO: Let’s talk about how your style evolved—if you can consider yourself to have a certain style. You started off composing serial music.

JT: Well, actually, no. I started off composing Bartok-type music when I was at Bennington because that’s all I knew. I was sort of in the Bartok-Hindemith... I worked for Henry Brant who, for all his spatial stuff, was kind of “Bartokian-Hindemithian.” Then, when I went to Columbia, which was three years later, I got involved with the serial crowd. That was in 1961, but up to that point, my music was fairly—my student works were sort of “Bartokian.”

RO: How come you switched to serial style?

JT: Because I moved to New York, and that’s all the music I played and knew about. I mean, I think composers—it’s funny—they get tossed around in these seas, but a lot of it is geographical. It’s where they end up, what kind of group do they hang out with. Sometimes that can be very circumstantial because some friend of theirs asked them to come to some concert or something and they fell in love with the bass player or something or they admired the conductor or something. I mean, those kinds of dynamics are extremely accidental and coincidental, and suddenly you find yourself in this world, and that’s exactly what happened to me. I met Charles Wuorinen, who became an incredible magnetic pull for me. I thought he was brilliant, and we were very close and I did everything he did. He started a series, I started a series, he played the piano, I played the piano, and I played all the music that he played. The influence was quite formidable and it wasn’t good for me. It took me ten years to get out of it.

RO: Right. Is it just because you weren’t sure where else to start and so you thought you may as well see what everybody else is doing?
JT: Yeah. He took me under his wing and introduced me to all these interesting people who were brilliant—they were all, like, "brilliant" (makes a crazy gesture) people. And they took me in and welcomed me. So I had my new family. It was like my new family. But it was completely accidental that I wound up there. I could have wound up down with [John] Cage’s group and gone completely the other way.

RO: The Bonds dissertation said that you were using “maps” during your serial days and that it gave you “more time to spend on the decision-making processes of rhythm, register, texture, and spacing.”

JT: That’s true.

RO: So do you feel those are four things you “took out” of your serial days?

JT: Well, the maps were pitch maps. Pitch order, twelve-tone sets, and stuff like that, because I didn’t know how to think about pitch. I had no idea how to think about pitch. So there were these simple little operations that they showed me—the serialists, and so, there was the next pitch. I didn’t have to think about it—there it was.

RO: And then you just worked on these other four [rhythm, register, texture, and spacing]?

JT: And then the other four dimensions was where the creativity really came in. It’s true.

RO: Are these aspects of your style you crafted while composing serial music such as Hexachords?

JT: Yes.

RO: Although you don’t compose in a strict serial style anymore, would you say these four attributes are an important part of your style today?

JT: Oh sure. Definitely. Everything to me is about rhythm. Rhythm has become more and more and more important.

RO: In the Rischin article, you said, “rhythm is the most important thing because the dynamics and register all come out of that sense of flowing, driving, falling.” Would you say that rhythm is the most important out of rhythm, register, texture, and spacing?

JT: Well, you can’t have rhythm without something in it. So the something in it has to do with the action of the line, which has to do with where it is in the register and where is it going and the dynamic of that action. All those things are tied up together.

95 Bonds, 19.
96 Rischin, 6.
RO: Of course. In the Bonds, it says that your compositional approach is inspired by—and this is something that I understood to be inspired by Messiaen—the holding and intensifying. And you added retracting also. Is that right?

JT: No, that's her words. I would never use that word. [laughs] I think of action as having—first of all, it goes somewhere, or it stays somewhere, or it retreats from somewhere. So those are three different actions. Maybe a better word might be diminishing in intensity or de-intensifying. Retracting is sort of like, I didn't mean that in the first place! [chuckles]

RO: Do you base your compositional approach on these three kinds of actions? For instance in Wings and Turning Points?

JT: Yes. Sort of.

RO: Turning Points is going to take on a new twist because you just said that there's not really a lot of David Shifrin's personal playing involved. He commissioned it for himself.

JT: Yeah, but see, you have to understand that my thing with Laura was extremely unusual in my entire output. Very unusual because I was working with her for seven years and the Messiaen was involved and her playing of the Messiaen was involved. That's a very unusual set of circumstances. I never repeated that ever again.

RO: It sounds like Wings and Turning Points aren't really the same...

JT: They're not the same.

RO: It sounds like you didn't really collaborate with David.

JT: No. Hardly at all because he was too busy. And that's true of most of the pieces I write. People are too busy. But with Laura, I was rehearsing with her every day for seven years. I mean, not every day, but every other day. It's a very unusual set of circumstances there, with Laura. And after awhile, I forgot about her. I had to write a piece. See, the strength of the piece needs to take over. You can't—for Elmar [Oliveira], on my Violin Concerto, I knew his playing. I didn't work with him at all. But I knew his playing. I knew that he was a virtuoso of ten magnitude—he played very fast—he was also a very lyrical player. He could really sing. He does really sing; he's still alive. So I tried to incorporate those two things in my violin concerto. But that's it! Nothing beyond that. I never worked with him or anything. I created a piece. I didn't really work with Laura either on the piece. I had some ideas I wanted—basic ideas, like a silky panther style, and that's about it. Not anymore than that. The piece started to have its own life and Laura was out. I think actually, the clarinet plays a big role in this because the clarinet, as an instrument, is defining the action and the strength, and the power of
this register and that register. So that’s the link between Laura and David. The power of the clarinet.

RO: Many of your most popular works include the clarinet.

JT: Yeah, and I had written two other pieces between *Wings*—I think it’s between *Wings* and *Turning Points*. I’ve written *Fantasy, (...those harbor lights)* and didn’t I write the Concerto between there?

RO: Yes.

JT: And there’s another piece called *Breakfast Rhythms*, which was written before *Wings*. So I had invested a lot of time into the clarinet as an instrument.

RO: Why?

JT: Now, here’s where the player comes into being. It’s one because it’s so versatile. It can play loudly, and it can play softly in all registers. And it can play sharply and it can play lyrically in all registers. Some more than others. [laughs] But I was around these top-notch players in New York, starting with Laura and they could do all this. And they could do it really well. So I mean, for instance, when Richard Stoltzman called me up out of the blue and said, “I’m Richard Stoltzman and I play the clarinet.” I’m like, “Who?” No, I said, “What?!” He said, “Can I ask a piece from you?” Well somehow, I guess he—I mean, I was just surrounded with Charlie Neidich, David Shifrin, Laura Flax, Elsa Verdehr then came in, and all these top-notch players plus what this instrument could do. I mean, it’s a piece of cake. And I tell everybody that when I run into composers—young composers: clarinet, solo clarinet, clarinet and piano.

RO: Solo clarinet does work out really well out of all the wind instruments.

JT: Well because it has the power that most of them don’t have. It was partly the player and partly the instrument that made me fall in love with the instrument.

RO: How did Da Capo form, and did you specifically want a clarinet in that group?

JT: I was picking up a group as I was going through my series that I had downtown at the Greenwich House, and I had been playing with this person, playing with that person, and Alan Blustine was part of the players that came along. And he was good. So I was sort of picking up—I didn’t say, oh I want a quintet; I didn’t say that—I think I was just picking up a mixed ensemble of some kind. I don’t really remember.

RO: Is it because of the relationship you had with the people and how well you worked together?

JT: Yes, yes, exactly.
RO: I think that’s really important.

JT: That was very important.

RO: Getting back to the increasing, holding, and decreasing intensity, are there certain practices that you use to illustrate these three things, such as certain intervals? I’m talking about these two pieces specifically. You know, the form of Wings is in two big parts, and then sections, and I’m trying to show what kind of action is going on in each section. What I’m trying to show for the “holding” action sections are the ones with the long “Messiaenic” notes that start from nowhere and crescendo. Like in the beginning of Wings.

JT: But that’s not holding.

RO: That’s not holding?

JT: No, that’s growing. [laughs] That’s going somewhere. A holding pattern would be on the third page where it goes: [sings triplets]. The beginning of the fast stuff. That’s a holding pattern.

RO: So I’ve got this all backwards. I had it as if the whole beginning of the piece was going towards the low F-sharp and the high F-sharp [page 2, line 5].

JT: That’s true. But, within that, there are retreats and there are goings and there are holdings within that.

RO: Okay, so I think I have my definition of “holding” wrong. Of “holding” and intensifying and “de-intensifying.” What do you consider then? What types of rhythms...

JT: First page, where is goes: [sings grace note figure on page 1, line 3, beat 12 through page 1, line 4, beat 1] for awhile until it starts to crescendo. And then its repetition starts to become intense. Then it’s going somewhere. But for the first ten beats or so, it’s holding because it’s going back and forth. I think of it very much in terms of physics. You throw something and what happens to it? And are you throwing it? Or is it just holding? See, holding is, it could be fast and it could be furious, but it’s not going anywhere.

RO: I see. [sings triplet sixteenth rhythm on page 2, line 1] that E-flat to A-flat over and over—[is holding].

JT: Yeah, the first note is going somewhere because it’s crescendoing.
RO: Right. And it holds for awhile, but then, when it gets up into the trills, is that still holding? With, you know, the interspersed eighth notes?

JT: When it goes up into the high register and then holds? Yes, that is holding once it arrives there, but then the second trill goes up, then it goes up again, and then it goes up again, so now you’re getting the feeling of those trills are moving. But the first trill there is just holding. Because it’s sitting. So not until it moves are you going up.

RO: Okay. I think I’m trying to generalize it too much. I’m trying to show one kind of thing going on in each section and there’s really—

JT: There’s lots of things going on because if you just kept going—it’s a whole complexity of things, see it’d be interesting if somebody did a study on that Rischin. Somebody did a color-coded thing, I’ll show you. This is really interesting. [pulls out a color-coded graph with each color illustrating a different aspect of the piece: rhythm, dynamics, etc.] What she did was—this took a lot of time—she had separate graphs for dynamics (this was the first 40 measures) and she put them in time and she put them in height. So red would be dynamics, yellow would be pulse, “height” would be the register, etc., and then she put them on top of each other in the transparencies and she got this, which is really interesting to me because it kind of agrees with itself. They all [the lines] all kind of agree. It’s very interesting. This, to me, is an interesting analysis of my music. As opposed to a pitch kind of thing.

RO: That’s what I’m trying to avoid, but—

JT: Yeah.

RO: But it might be like that a little bit.

JT: I know.

RO: My whole paper isn’t just analysis, but it’s necessary. A part of the paper might end up being kind of like that.

JT: See, why force an analysis on something that’s not working? You know what I mean? She was very smart. She decided the pitch analysis was not working totally, because that’s not the way I think. I just don’t think in those terms. So it’s like wielding this kind of weird bricks and mortar stuff where as Webern, if you analyze Webern, it’s absolutely perfect, and it’s, oh, it’s just wonderful! Everything just fits, right? But not me.

RO: Maybe I should analyze it more in terms of actions.

JT: I think you’d get more interesting results.
RO: But, I have to say something about that, I have to talk about what notes are used, or what—I guess intervals are what I’ve been mostly concentrating on, because there are certain intervals that—

JT: Right, that I concentrate on, right.

RO: I’ve been saying that *Wings* is mostly about tritones, seconds, and fourths.

JT: Mm hmm. Seconds and fourths, interesting. Okay.

RO: I guess I have to figure out how they correlate with what type of action.

JT: You know, if you tried to dance to this, you would immediately get a sense of the action. This piece is eminently choreographable. If you want to do this kind of analysis, you have to think of where are we in the register, what is the action of the time—so the first part’s very slow time, right—then, how does it move up? It moves up, but very carefully and very slowly. And these little dips that it takes are kind of like “tee-off” points. It’s like I’m moving bubbles around very slowly and I’m sort of sliding them across the table and I go, “blip.” [flicks her thumb and index finger in the air] And that creates a little bit of an action.

RO: I see. Is that to get into the next section?

JT: Yes. And suddenly, in the intensity of the bubbles [sings from page 1, line 2, beat 10 to beat 14], we’ve wound up on another table of bubbles: very high, very soft; a very different kind of bubbles. They’re not even bubbles anymore. So it’s that kind of thinking that I’m always working on. The timing of that “bleep” is very important to me. I spend hours thinking, “Should that be a whole note? Should that be a double-dotted whole note? Should that be a whole note plus an eighth?” And that is completely subjective as to how I feel about the choreography of that note. I don’t do that mathematically, like, “oh, well, before I had blah blah blah and now I’m having blah blah blah.” I just do it completely intuitively.

RO: Okay. So just as an example, in this first part [of *Wings*], the form analysis of which I’ve taken from Bonds, she said there are two parts—which, I think you said you agreed with—

JT: Mm hmm. Generally, yes.

RO: She also says the first section, which she calls section R, is from the beginning up to the dotted-half note in line three.

JT: Okay.
RO: Is every idea introduced in section R? That you develop or vary through the whole piece? It seems like every rhythm is there.

JT: Really? Wow. Every rhythm is in there?

RO: That’s what I’m asking.

JT: I have no idea.

RO: Okay. [both laugh] I seem to remember reading that you introduce certain ideas in the beginning that you like to vary and develop throughout the piece.

JT: That’s more true of Turning Points than it is of this [Wings]. I think this [Wings] is a little more through-composed. But you know, who knows. Somebody may come along and say, “no it isn’t.”

RO: So the best way to go about an analysis of this piece is analyzing the type of action and how each action leads into the next one.

JT: Right.

RO: And it’s not so cut and dried as finding certain intervals which are characteristic of each section. That’s not going to be as effective.

JT: Well, you may discover them. I’m just not sure of—you know, theory is funny, because it comes after the fact. And composers are not always aware of what they’ve done. So I hesitate with that. I don’t know whether it’s all there or not [the ideas in section R].

RO: How do you think I should go about an analysis of Turning Points then? I could use some help because there’s nothing written about that.

JT: [laughs] You’re on your own!

RO: Well, I was wondering if—I mean, I don’t expect you to sit here and give me a full analysis of Turning Points—but I was wondering if you had an idea of where there are certain sections, like in Wings. I’ve jotted down where I think ideas change, or where I think certain sections might be.

JT: I’ve not analyzed it, so I can’t help you there. Sorry. I don’t analyze my music. The only thing I did analyze was Breakfast Rhythms for my dissertation.

RO: What would be the best way, then, since you said Turning Points is more about ideas in the beginning that are developed?
JT: It think that’ll be a lot easier. It’s a lot more classical than the others. And I use octatonic scales and I do play around with those sort of informally.

RO: Seems like you do in Wings too, in a few places.

JT: Yes. I don’t have any big secret precomposition approach to pitch that I can give you. I don’t like precomposition thinking because I think it can get you into some abstract traps that are not very musical. Some composers are very good at that. They’re very good at creating precompositional maps that work for them. I’m not. I don’t have that kind of brainpower. It takes a certain kind of musical brainpower to do that. But I do work with time. I am very concerned about the time I’m in. So here’s an example, and this is going to sound kind of weird. If I do 9 quarter notes for the first phrase, and I do 13 quarter notes for the next phrase, I may do 21 quarter notes for the next phrase because there’s a 4:8 difference. And then I may collapse that whole thing into a 7½-minute thing. So in actual numbers, there’s a collapse of time, or a—sometimes it goes the other way. Sometimes it goes 30, 20, 15, 60. So over the whole thing, you get a numerical increase or decrease depending on where it’s going. You may find that in Turning Points. Good luck. I’m somehow very obsessed with that. That’s the only precompositional—its not even precompositional. Well, it is. For instance, if I have two relationships or three relationships, I will base the fourth on the first three. So it is precompositional in that sense. And then I will also base the whole thing on—let’s say, that’s a minute, and the next one is going to be two minutes, and then next one is going to be four minutes—I will base whole sections on that kind of thinking.

RO: To me, that sounds like development.

JT: Well, it’s precompositional numerical time control.

RO: And whatever happens inside of that is whatever comes to you?

JT: No, no, some of the phrases can be controlled that way too. The local stuff. Sometimes. I don’t know what I did with Turning Points. I never told anybody about that.

RO: Really?

JT: Yeah, because I don’t trust it. I don’t totally trust it.

RO: Well, I don’t have to quote that if you don’t want. That idea of time…

JT: I don’t know why I’m hiding it.

RO: When you compose, are you trying to have a specific form and development, or does it [the piece] take on a form and development from the opening ideas?
JT: Mine always are organic. The form is very organic with me because I don’t, as I said, I don’t trust the abstract umbrellas of pre-[compositional] thinking.

RO: Would you say “organic” could also mean “throughcomposed”? You used that word earlier.

JT: Yes, but I like the word “organic” better than “throughcomposed” because “throughcomposed” has all kinds of baggage to it that makes it sound like, “Oh, they just didn’t know what they were doing.”

RO: Right. It’s more a theory term. “Organic” isn’t quite a theory term—yet.

JT: Yeah, so use “organic.” [laughs] Don’t use “throughcomposed.”

RO: Would you say *Turning Points* is more organic or less organic? Because you said it was more classical.

JT: Well, it’s less organic in the sense that I remember thinking: I’m going to stick to these four ideas I introduced in the opening.

RO: I see. And you didn’t think that way in *Wings*.

JT: No.

RO: With *Wings* it started and then [the piece] came out of itself.

JT: Yes.

RO: The Neuls-Bates I thought was really interesting.

JT: Yes, that is interesting.

RO: It said that if you’d stayed with your teacher in Larchmont, you may have become a pianist.

JT: That’s true. That’s probably true.

RO: That’s what we were talking about earlier. About how you sort of become wherever you wind up.

JT: That’s true. Yeah, but nobody asked me to compose until I was 18, so I didn’t even think that was part of my scenario.

RO: Is that because you had a great teacher and you would have developed a one particular way of playing?
JT: That's one aspect of it, but also I had a flair for playing the piano. I had a talent for playing the piano. And so it would have gone in that direction. I was going to do music, come hell or high water. If it was through the piano, that's the way it was going to be.

RO: You moved around a lot; you had different teachers. Do you think that affected your composing?

JT: No, it affected my piano playing.

RO: What I mean by that is, because you changed around, is that why you didn’t stay with performing?

JT: Probably. Probably I would have been a prodigy if I had stayed with the original teacher. The other people kept changing my technique and but who knows? I’m not sure that was it either. But it was a blessing in disguise, whatever it was. [chuckles] I don’t think I would have lasted very long on the solo piano circuit.

RO: Were you a piano major at Bennington the whole time?

JT: No.

RO: Performance major?

JT: No, they don’t have that. They just had music major.

RO: Oh, I see. So what did you think you were going to do?

JT: Well, first I thought I was going to major in physics because I had this great physics class.

RO: That says a lot about how you like to use time.

JT: That’s right. And this guy came in, I never forgot, he came in with a box, and he put it on a table. He pulled a ring and something happened over here on the other side of the box, and he said now I want you to go home and construct several theories of what’s going on inside this box. I was fascinated, wow; I was at home right away! Let’s see, well, if he’s pulling from there…it’s the same thing with music. It’s that kind of gravity/physics challenge. But I was doing music 24 hours a day there.

RO: But you were just a music major.

JT: Yes.

RO: There was no type of performance major or emphasis on piano.
JT: No, but see, they had a very special curriculum where they didn’t make those distinctions. The performers were supposed to compose and the composers were supposed to perform. They were constantly cross-cutting these two activities. That was part of their mission. And I just lapped that up like a dog to water. So you know, that gets back to what we were originally discussing about the problem with classical music is the separation of these two activities.

RO: Okay. I had a couple specific questions about that. In “Building Bridges for New Music,” you said, “we live in a performer’s world,” the lack of contact between performers and composers is a big problem. It is fair to say you do still feel this way?

JT: Yeah.

RO: We sort of talked about why you think the world became a performer’s world. We talked a little bit about how that separated and that was when composers started getting really precise about what they were writing. Do you think it’s because people are really turned off by contemporary music? Do you think that because we’re all wanting to hear the same old stuff and that’s why we’re also losing the relationship between the composer and the performer?

JT: I think that was much more true in the 60’s and 70’s.

RO: Not so much anymore?

JT: It’s changed a lot because first of all, the composers styles are much more accessible and the performers are starting to like this music much more. Some of the major groups are commissioning pieces like string quartets. Emerson just commissioned me, and also the Tokyo Quartet. And these are major, top of the line, traditional groups that are starting to get interested in composers. And that’s happening on a lot of levels. So this is definitely an improvement. Also in the orchestra world, because there’s some fantastic orchestra composers now who could survive any traditional concert easily.

RO: Why do you think that is? Why do you think it’s more accessible now? Why do you think more people like new music more now than in the 60’s?

JT: Because it’s more accessible. The serial style was not accessible and it still isn’t accessible. It’s very difficult music to hear.

RO: Do you think that’s because of these precompositional maps that they used?

JT: Could be.

RO: I find it hard to enjoy that type of music unless I know what they’re doing beforehand.
JT: Yeah, but I think actually not so much that it's serial, it's that the rate of information is so fast and so complex, that I can't, even as a trained composer, I can't hear it. I don't know what I'm listening for. Some of Schoenberg's music, even.

RO: Couple more questions. You've said that—and this is kind of going back to your style and how it came out of serial style—Black Topaz was a breakthrough piece for you.

JT: Yes.

RO: What about this comment that you said in Neuls-Bates, that it [Black Topaz] was about shedding your serialist skin.

JT: That's absolutely true. Actually, it started with Breakfast Rhythms [I + II] Sort of.

RO: Right. In Breakfast Rhythms, the first one is still in that style and then you had a year off, and the second one—

JT: That's right. And the second one was more Debussy-like and more color-oriented, but it's still kind of precomposed and less serialized in terms of 12-tone thinking. But then I did Black Topaz and that was—I just threw everything out the window and said, I'm going for broke here because I've got to find out who I am. And I did. Everybody there in the serial crowd in the audience sat there in horror. They were just in horror. I had totally flipped out. I was very much alone. It was a horrible feeling.

RO: Breakfast Rhythms was the first piece for which you had an image-inspired title.

JT: Mm hmm.

RO: Does that have anything to do with breaking out of your serialist skin?

JT: No, that was an accident.

RO: I read about that. You had it titled something else: Piece for Five Instruments.

JT: Mm hmm. Piece for Clarinet and Five Instruments.

RO: But did that start you on your titles referring to [the natural world]—

JT: Yes.

RO: Your titles always seem to refer to nature or the natural world. Why?
JT: Interesting. First of all, that did open the gates for me to title my pieces with something that had a little more meaning.

RO: *Breakfast Rhythms* did?

JT: Yes. It had a little more image, a little more—little windows of images into the piece. And most of the titles came out of the piece, not the other way around.

RO: Right.

JT: The title is not controlling the piece. That's very important.

RO: I think it's interesting that you first came up with ideas and then you sit back and said, "Wow, that really sounds like..." Is that true?

JT: Yeah. Some of the pieces, halfway through, I have a title, or at the end I have a title. Very, very rarely, only when I wrote my piano pieces did the title come first.

RO: There's a lot written on where the title *Wings* came from, so I'm pretty okay with that, but what about *Turning Points*? Where did that title come from?

JT: From the piece itself. It started turning around. The notes kept starting and turning around on themselves. Right from the music. [sings page 1, mm. 2-3: G-sharp, F-sharp, G] Ideas came back to the same ideas. Everything turning around on itself.

RO: You've also said that the central image of *Black Topaz* is derived from one of your drawings.

JT: Yes, I used to draw pictures of my pieces. That's me, I drew this. [points to the cover of *Wings*] Although they kind of formalized it, computerized it. [laughs] Those are very straight lines.

RO: You were just trying to illustrate to Laura something and that became the title page, right?

JT: Yeah. Yeah. *Black Topaz* was—the idea was the piano was black, and the piano was the central motivating force. And topaz changes color from—it just changes color and so the whole piece is about changing color.

RO: *Black Topaz*—did that title come from your father's profession?

JT: Yes.

RO: And what about *Silver Ladders*? Is that the same thing?
JT: Yes, it’s the same thing. I was trying to include minerals in all my titles as a tribute to him.

RO: Did you use that one because of its malleability? Silver?

JT: Silver, yes.

RO: Because you were talking about the rising up and how the wind solos were sort of the middle [of the ladder].

JT: That’s right. The silver—flexible, malleable, melting silver. Exactly.

RO: And do you think that—going back to *Black Topaz* and the drawing, does the drawing provide the germ for the piece? Somewhere you’ve used the word “germ.” And this goes back to my initial question about *Wings*. Did you set up an introduction, or germ that invades the rest of the piece? Is this a usual practice for you?

JT: It’s hard to put all that together because everything comes out of everything in a different period. I used to draw a lot. I tried to draw *Wings*. *Black Topaz* did come out of that drawing, if I remember correctly. But *Wings* didn’t. No.

RO: I’m just wondering if it’s not the title that gives you the idea for the initial ideas, what gives you those initial ideas.

JT: It’s interesting going back to Laura. Originally I was going to call the piece *Panthers* because that was coming directly out of her playing which is this very silky, seamless kind of thing. So the idea was definitely coming out of her playing. It’s just that the piece started to take off. I decided I couldn’t call it *Panthers* anymore. So I got into *Wings*. So you could say that her playing directly affected how this piece was going to go, at least initially. Yes.

RO: But I can’t say that for *Turning Points*.

JT: No, not *Turning Points*.

RO: The initial ideas just came from ideas in your head?

JT: That’s right.

RO: And then [the title] *Turning Points* came later when you noticed [the ideas returning to themselves].

JT: Yes, yes.

RO: And it just happened to be for David Shifrin because he wanted a piece?
JT: That’s right. The clarinet is the motivating force. That dictates everything I do in both pieces. That whole opening [of Turning Points] is about the clarinet. The low register, the singing ability, the punching ability. The crescendo ability. That’s a study in what I think is so wonderful about the clarinet. Collaboration is a subsidiary of the clarinet.

RO: I just have another question about the evolution of your style. In Women and Music in America Since 1900, it said, “Sequoia represents a synthesis of Tower’s early serialist concern for precise control of musical materials and her increasing concern for dynamic expression.” What do you think of that? That’s such a huge statement.

JT: In a way. Well, it’s not a serial piece at all.

RO: It says it’s [Sequoia] a synthesis of a serialist concern for precise control of materials—

JT: Well, that’s correct. I tried very hard to control the harmonic language there, but it’s not serial.

RO: —and increasing concern for dynamic expression.

JT: That’s true.

RO: So it sounds like it’s saying it’s [Sequoia] a synthesis of what was and what is. And then I’m also going to ask you what is.

JT: Okay.

RO: Do you think you’ve reached a style that you want to stay in and continue to develop? If you can categorize yourself as having a certain style…

JT: I don’t know if I have a style or not. I think other people have to decide that. Profile is a better word for me. I think if you play two seconds of Copland, you know it’s Copland. If you play two seconds of Beethoven, you pretty much know it’s Beethoven. That’s profile. I’m not sure I have that.

RO: You’re not sure you have a profile?

JT: I know I have a certain kind of profile. Whether I have that degree of profile [that of Beethoven or Copland], I’m not sure. But I keep working on it, and I keep heading towards whatever that is.

RO: But you don’t know what it is, really?

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97 Burns, 649-50.
JT: Well, I hate discussions of style, because the minute I say “Neo-Romantic,”
everybody goes, “Oh, that’s nice,” and they write it down. But what does that mean? I
don’t know what that means, really. Or if I say, “serial,” everybody says, “Oh, yes,”
because they can put me into a little box.

RO: Well, those titles come after the fact also.

JT: That’s right.

RO: I’m not sure a composer like Brahms would have considered himself to have a
certain style.

JT: That’s right. It’s a very hard question for composers to answer.

RO: But you feel like there is something—you do have a certain profile that you’re
heading towards.

JT: Yes, but I’m not sure how I would describe it stylistically.

RO: Maybe you don’t want to.

JT: I don’t. It’s too easy. It’s like saying, “what do you do for a living? Well, I’m an
insurance executive.” Oh great, that narrows your entire life down, that profile of an
insurance executive, right? “But you know what? I actually love to paint, and I hate the
insurance industry and I’m going to be getting out of it as soon as I can because I really
have a talent for painting.” All of a sudden, things get very confusing. “Oh, you like to
paint? Wait a minute, that shifts the profile.” See what I mean? These boxes are a little
too easy. Because they have so much baggage attached to them. If I say I’m an
insurance executive to you, you conjure up a million boxes right there.

RO: We talked about how audiences are stereotypically turned off, and you were talking
about how they were, but they’re not so much anymore—

JT: We are in such a pickle right now. Because first of all, the music that is there, any
audience would like. There is very powerfully strong contemporary music that is
colorful, and accessible and passionate and everything. So, it’s there; it’s available. But
you have to go through management, and the orchestra has to go through the PR
marketing world, and you have to go through the economics of the orchestra world,
which are in very bad shape right now. And you have to go through the thinking of the
soloists, who are trying to make a career and they’re not going to play this new piece
because that would destroy their career, or blah blah blah. The politics, economics, and
structural outlets for contemporary music right now are just a mess. Except in certain
chamber music circles. Anyway, we’d better go.
Interview with Laura Flax
7 July 2003
Germantown, NY

Rochelle Oddo: When did your relationship with Joan start?

Laura Flax: It started when I joined Da Capo, and so I officially joined the group in, I think it was '78. But I had started playing with them in '76. I filled in when the previous clarinetist, Alan Blustine, couldn’t.

RO: So there was somebody there before you.

LF: Yes, Alan Blustine. And she wrote Breakfast Rhythms for him.

RO: Did she choose you, or did you audition?

LF: No, no. It was just—Alan and I were friends and I had just gotten out of school. I graduated from Julliard in '75—actually, I think I played a couple of concerts with them in '75. And I was the next generation coming up. I’m ten or fifteen years younger than those guys. So I was the next generation that was interested in contemporary music. Alan called me when he couldn’t play a few concerts. So then everybody liked me and I did well, and it just seemed like it worked well together. So when he officially left, then they just invited me to play. It was nothing like a formal opening, or a formal audition. It was just something—you know we all clicked, and I was interested in doing it. That’s how that happened.

RO: Are you still playing with Da Capo?

LF: No, I retired.

RO: For Wings, you didn’t commission it, right? She was writing for everyone in the group...

LF: Well, I asked her for a piece. I don’t know what she [Joan]—

RO: Well, we talked about what commission means. And she said traditionally it means exchanging money. But from a business standpoint, it [Wings] wasn’t commissioned, right?

LF: What happened was that I was playing with San Francisco Symphony, but before I knew I was going to be doing that—it was a one-year temporary job—I had planned a recital in New York. My recital, I think, was in December, and Joan was writing Wings for that concert. It was for that specific concert.
RO: So that occasion, plus her being inspired from the Messiaen—your playing of the Messiaen—did that happen around the same time?

LF: Yes, that was 1981. And I’d been playing in the group for those five or six years, and I was doing this recital. I said, “I want an unaccompanied piece,” and she [Joan] said, “great!”

RO: Do you think that her [Joan] being inspired by someone works itself into her compositions? That it’s not just her deciding to write a piece for anyone?

LF: When we toured, most of our concerts were tour concerts, and we did Messiaen Quartet over and over again. And then Joan and I also did Debussy Rhapsody a lot together. I think it was both of those things, of hearing the Abîme des Oiseaux. That kind of slow—the juxtaposition of the slow part and the birdcalls, I think, are very clear in Wings. Even the Debussy, I think the high “floaty” stuff [in Wings], is more Debussy than Messiaen. I think that when Joan actually had to sit down and write the piece, those sounds, and those pieces that were so current in our repertoire where in her head. In terms of the things at that time that I was able to do well—the high soft stuff—I could do that really well. So I think that she thought about my playing in terms of how she exploited the instrument. That whole Messiaen thing where you start from nothing and get loud—those were all things that were very dramatic and kind of pushing—I think I took a lot of liberties and pushed the envelope on both sides. I think that those are things that Joan knew I could do well and thought, “this is for Laura.” This fits.

RO: Were you involved in the compositional process?

LF: I found this file [of originals of Wings]. I was in San Francisco as it was being written—

RO: Is that the picture [the title page of Wings] she drew?

LF: Yeah.

RO: It’s too bad it’s not in color on the actual cover.

LF: That’s pretty original, so I’m probably the only one that has it. I don’t have dates on this—

RO: Those are letters?

LF: Yes. She would send me portions. So she writes, “Here’s the beginning of section two and the transposed part from the end of last.” I guess she—I don’t think she transposed it in pitch, but she put it in a different section. Or maybe she did transpose it. “Also, articulation continues to be a problem... feel free to edit if you feel something

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98 Joan Tower, to Laura Flax, 1981, from Flax’s personal collection.
would work better another way. I hope the rest works out in terms of the breathing. There will be approximately four more pages of this and a CODA. Please forgive me for this delay.” Then here’s the next part. “I went over some of it with Jerry.” Jerry Kirkbride, who was, when I was in San Francisco, he was doing some concerts with Da Capo because I wasn’t there. “It’s probably the slowest section in the piece. Will be mostly fast notes. You’ll have a little over half the piece.” Then I think—[Laura reads some more]—oh yeah, the title: tiger, el condor, passa, puma.

RO: So this is before she figured out the title.

LF: Yeah.

RO: She wanted it to be Panthers at first?

LF: Puma, I think it was. [Reads some more] “I’m beginning to have fun with this piece after a horrible time with the opening. In fact, I’m really enjoying myself. Could you Xerox these two pages and send them back? I copied them out. Send me a tape…” Oh, that’s what I was doing. I was taping—I was playing it and sending it back so she could hear what it was sounding like.

RO: Did anything change after doing that?

LF: Yes. Some timing things. See, these are both copies of the piece before it was published [shows me two different originals]. This is probably older than this because this has no title. This [older one] has some of my markings so this might be what I played off of.

RO: At first?

LF: At the very beginning. This section [points to the older original], this must be from here. Because this was a big change [points to some material that was eventually cut].

RO: Yes, that doesn’t look familiar.

LF: Let’s follow the piece and see what we can find. There’s no rest, for example. There’s no quartet note rest. Here’s a quarter note rest [points to a spot in the newer original]. She hasn’t put 3/8 markings in yet [in the older one]. None of these [3/8] groupings are here, as are none of the breathing suggestions. That was all. I must have suggested stuff.

RO: Was there a breathing issue?

LF: I was not circular breathing at that point when I had to play this piece. I needed oxygen. Do you circular breathe?
RO: No. Joan says that she would prefer people to circular breathe when they’re playing this. I think the breathing spots bother her.

LF: This is stuff we changed a lot [points to section F of page 2. Much material was cut out of the old original after the high D-sharp on p.2/10].

RO: I wonder why she did that?

LF: It was hard and high. I mean, I don’t think it really worked. It was an extended thing. So, in terms of the collaboration, this is what would happen. I don’t think I have a tape of the first performance, but I have a feeling I must have played this [the old original] for the first performance, because I don’t have marks in this [newer one]. And I do have marks in this [older one]. And it looks like I pasted it up to be able to play. So I have a feeling that this is... Yes, and I remember this “bright and jazzy.” It wasn’t written—she didn’t write “jazzy” for a long time. But, we had so much trouble with that. That section always—we worked and changed things. So yeah, there was collaboration and input. She would send me these sections, and she would go over it, I guess, according to the letter. She would have Jerry play some stuff.

RO: Can you see your own performing style in the piece? Can you see things that you know are written for you?

LF: Yes. Definitely. At that point in my life, I think there was a lot of drama—there’s a lot of drama in the piece. A lot of extremes, and that was my strength. It was running the whole gamut of high and low, and soft and loud, and slow and fast.

RO: I wonder if after hearing your playing, especially of the Messiaen, Joan decided that she really loved the clarinet or if it was before?

LF: She had already written Breakfast Rhythms. I don’t remember her particularly loving the clarinet.

RO: Were there any challenges to your style? Rischin talked about how she [Joan] took the qualities from she liked about your playing in the Messiaen and took them to extremes.

LF: Yes. It was hard. Endurance for this piece, I think, is radical. You play Messiaen, and it’s 7 or 8 minutes, and it’s basically A-B-A. You know where you’re going and you can pace yourself. I remember being tired coming back to the ending slow stuff [of the Messiaen] and sometimes having a vibrato I really didn’t want to have from being tired. Well, multiply that by 100 with Wings because it is so many changes. And it’s not just A-B-A, it’s in and out, and it was technically hard. I felt like it was. I could trip up in one of those back-and-forth things. After a certain point I didn’t feel as though it was as technically demanding. I think Wings is very virtuosic. Yes, she took the extremes of Messiaen and she “upped” them. She made 1940 into 1980.
RO: When you were talking about how to keep the piece going endurance-wise, how do you keep the energy going?

LF: It definitely is easier circular breathing. But still, being aware of knowing how to get from here to here and everything else has to fit in, and you have to be comfortable with it. I think that’s the thing: for you to have a comfort zone with the whole piece, but still be able to project that kind of intensity and focus and direction. So even when it’s at rest, you know what you’re putting out there, and that there is still energy there. That’s hard for any kind of single-line instrument to do all by itself. Especially when it’s being taxed to those extremes. I think that Joan really did that—really taxed to the extremes.

RO: Do you think some of that stuff that was taken out was because it was just too taxing?

LF: I think maybe she felt it went on too long. For instance, that high thing we were looking at. It was just more of the same.

RO: Well, I think I have everything I need. Thank you very much for your time...
QUESTIONNAIRE FROM DAVID SHIFRIN

6 August 2003

Rochelle Oddo: When you commissioned *Turning Points*, did you ask for a clarinet quintet specifically? Was it commissioned for your Chamber Music Society?

David Shifrin: *Turning Points* was commissioned jointly by the Chamber Music Society and a consortium of presenters in the state of Wisconsin. The work was premiered in several venues in Wisconsin including Milwaukee, Madison (UW) and Appleton (Lawrence U.) and then given the NY premiere at Alice Tully Hall.

RO: Did you notice any certain theme or particular style of writing that suited your personal style of playing?

DS: I have always enjoyed the range of fluid, lyric, and virtuosic qualities in Joan’s writing for clarinet.

RO: What made you want to commission a piece from Joan?

DS: I met Joan after a performance of her *Fantasy (...those harbor lights)* with myself and pianist Ursula Oppens. I enjoyed the piece and Joan liked the performance. Realizing that Joan was a master at writing for the clarinet but had not yet written anything specifically for me, I asked her for a quintet. I had been trying to build that repertoire having recently premiered clarinet quintets by Ellen Zwillich, Bright Sheng and Bruce Adolphe. We have recorded them all, along with an adaption of the slow movement of Corigliano’s Concerto on the Delos label.

RO: What were the changes made at the end and why did you feel the end needed to be changed?

DS: It has been quite awhile and I don’t remember exactly how that happened. To the best of my recollection, the change at the end was a joint effort of all the players including Ani Kavafian, Paul Neubauer and Fred Sherry and simply involved repeating a chord or two and extending the final cadence.
JOAN TOWER

TURNING POINTS
Clarinet and String Quartet
(Score)

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PROGRAM NOTE

An opening clarinet solo introduces the main thematic material for the whole of this one-movement piece. There are four distinct melodic ideas that form the basis of the piece. The first idea is a long held note which, after a crescendo, briefly touches the notes above and below and returns to itself. This idea is dramatic yet “held” in place. The second idea ascends slowly and quietly. The third is a consonant short arpeggiation that rises, rests, and falls. Although this has the effect of an interlude, it later becomes the basis for a larger section. (For those of you who like Bartók, you might recognize this from his *Contrasts*. I never have been able to shed this particular motive!) The fourth theme is another “held” motive, this time a wide interval (a tenth) that is slow and *dolce*. It appears at the end of the solo when the quartet quietly comes in, picking up the final notes of the clarinet solo. These four ideas are developed and transformed throughout the piece, taking on recognizable but different identities as they interact more and more with each other.

—JOAN TOWER

*Turning Points* was first performed April 21, 1995
by David Shifrin, clarinet, with members of the
Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
at Alice Tully Hall, New York City

duration: ca. 16 minutes

recording: Delos DE 3183
Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center,
David Shifrin, clarinet
dedicated to David Shifrin

TURNING POINTS

\( \text{j = ca. 40} \)

Clarinet in B

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

\( \text{cresc. molto} \)

\( \text{f marc.} \)

\( \text{cresc.} \)

\( \text{poco} \)

\( \text{p, dolce} \)

\( \text{p, dolce} \)

\( \text{pp dolce} \)

\( \text{p, dolce} \)

\( \text{p, dolce} \)

\( \text{p, dolce} \)

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poco meno mosso (\textit{d} = \textit{ca. 86})

u tempo

(\textit{d} = \textit{ca. 100})
Poco meno mosso  = ca. 132

\[ \text{pp dolce} \quad \text{poco cresc.} \]

\[ \text{pp dolce} \]

\[ \text{pizz.} \quad \text{pp} \]

\[ \text{p} \]

\[ \text{pp dolce} \]

\[ \text{dim.} \]

\[ \text{pp} \]

\[ \text{mp} \quad \text{dim.} \]

\[ \text{pp} \quad \text{p} \]

\[ \text{pizz.} \quad \text{arco} \]

\[ \text{poco cresc.} \]

\[ \text{mp} \quad \text{dim.} \]

\[ \text{pp} \quad \text{p} \]

\[ \text{mp} \quad \text{dim.} \]

\[ \text{poco cresc.} \]

\[ \text{mp} \quad \text{dim.} \]