

Notes on repertoire for the recording *Treelines-The Christine Jensen Jazz Orchestra featuring Ingrid Jensen*

1. Dancing Sunlight came about from the short chorale that I wrote out for piano. I gradually stretched the bass line and melody around different sections, changing the pulse, while trying to keep a constant tempo. It took a long time for me to come to terms with an ending on this. I was eventually inspired to finish and score the composition after studying Canadian artist Emily Carr's paintings of trees, with her painting "Dancing Sunlight" becoming the focal point of this composition. It became the introductory piece to my own compositional series based on trees of the Pacific Northwest. I was lucky to debut this in a septet setting in 2007 at the Port Theatre in Nanaimo, featuring a slide show of Carr's works while I performed the piece with Geoffrey Keezer, Phil Dwyer and Ingrid as soloists.

2. Arbutus: On the inside passage of the southwest coast of Canada you know you are close to the ocean when you catch your first glimpse of an arbutus tree. I grew up staring at one across our front yard, and it towered over the ocean in front of it. I have most vivid memories of boating around the Georgia Strait, and whenever we debarked, we would be within a few feet of one of these trees, with their rust-brown crinkly thin sheets of bark rolling up, giving a view of the green skin of hardwood glowing underneath. The motion and rhythm of this composition is inspired by traveling by motorboat at a rapid rate parallel to the shoreline, where you can also get some great views of arbutus.

3. Red Cedar: Giants of the region, these trees grow so tall, that it is hard to see above the ceiling of the forest. I tried to capture my memory of attempting to climb up through the long branches of one of these trees as a child, constantly modulating to a new height while trying a new improved footing with each line. The end the piece represents me giving up, as it was always impossible to ever get to the top of one of these trees. That's where you will here a spidery alto solo by Erik Hove, exploding in frustration, and finally descending the tree after some harrowing attempts.

4. Western Yew: I was heading off to an artist residency at the Banff Centre in Alberta a few summers ago after an idyllic family vacation on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia. One night before I left, I stood outside my Uncle Ray's house in Sechelt where I was born. He asked me what I was up to, and I told him about the tree series that I was working on. He pointed to the beams holding up his house, and asked me if I was going to write about the Yew tree, while mentioning that the music he loved had lyrics. Still no lyrics from me, but this one has a country lilt that I attribute to that side of my family. My mother's family could quote any old Gene Autry or other popular hits from the 40's in a second. In true western fashion, I grew up listening to them spewing out tunes around campfire sing-a-longs in the summer, and at family gatherings around the piano in the winter.

5. Dropoff-by Joel Miller: In Joel's words, "It made a lot of sense that Christine wanted me to arrange my piece Dropoff for her giant band. In the summer of 2008 she was working in Norway and I was in Montreal. We were skypeing each other a lot. I had been

composing at the piano and I explained that I was working on a motive that musically portrayed the idea of wading into the sea and reaching a drop off point where your feet no longer feel the sand and there is the exhilarating weightlessness that you experience in taking the leap of buoyancy. When I played the idea to her over Skype there was a strange gurgling effect that made it sound underwater. By October, we were performing it every night on a tour of Mexico with the Jensen 5. Maggi Olin was also listening, and heard my "underwater" piano idea so she decided that she wanted to play it solo piano. Christine, always a step ahead, would help me if I wanted to arrange it for her big band, and at the end of January 2009 I finished the score. While most of what Christine was composing was about trees, I wanted this arrangement to be a tribute to our shared love for the ocean; hers the Pacific, mine the Atlantic of course. In terms of her set of music I thought it could be point where trees meet the ocean, like where we meet every summer at her family house on the Sunshine Coast in B.C.”

6. Dark and Stormy Blues: A reggae blues that has always been a fun jam tune for the band. After writing the basic blues of the first half, I thought that it would be fun to depart into a double time vamp that is quite opposite of the opening groove. The solos between Ingrid and Kenny are by a Joel Miller/Stravinsky-inspired shout chorus by the band.

7. Seafever: This was a sketch that started in Paris in 2002, when I missed home more than ever. I was imagining the ocean in front of my house in Cedar, while lamenting in the fact that I would miss Christmas with my family being a continent away. This piece is dedicated to my mother, and her love of being at one with the ocean.

8. Vernal Suite: I wrote the mainframe of this tune while taking a composition class at McGill. It then made it on Ingrid’s first small-group album as the title track. Eventually I expanded on it for big band, continually adding sections around the bulk of the main theme. It has been played the most, but for some reason I don’t tire of it and I have had the privilege of hearing it played by so many great bands around the world, so...it is probably the beginning chart of my foray into jazz orchestration for big band. It was initially inspired by a bus trip across Ireland with the McGill Jazz Orchestra as we headed to the Cork Jazz Festival in 1992, with a few of the members of this orchestra in tow (ouch!).