

**WINGS**

by

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## Instrumentation

3 Flutes, 3<sup>rd</sup> doubling Piccolo  
2 Oboes  
English Horn  
2 Clarinets in Bb  
Bass Clarinet in Bb  
2 Bassoons  
Contrabassoon

4 Horns in F  
3 Trumpets in C  
3 Trombones  
Tuba

4 Percussion:

1. High Triangle, Timpani (4 drums), Slapstick
2. Glockenspiel\*, Large Tom-Tom\*, Bongos (1 pair)\*, Chimes, Marimba
3. Finger Cymbal, Mark Tree, Large Suspended Cymbal, Small Tom-Tom, Anvil, Glockenspiel\*, Bongos (1 pair)\*, Large Tom-Tom\*
4. Large Tam-Tam, Small Suspended Cymbal, Tambourine, Vibe, Bass Drum

*\*Instruments shared between Percussion 2 and 3.*

Harp

Piano, doubling Celesta

Strings

## Performance Notes

The usual transpositions pertain.

The Bass Clarinet is written in the French system, sounding a major ninth lower than written.

Horns in the bass clef sound a fifth lower than written.

Unless a specific type of mallet or stick is specified for a certain percussion instrument, the appropriate, typical mallet/stick is to be used.

Accidentals are effective for one full measure.

Duration: *ca.* 11.5 minutes

## Abstract

The inspiration for *Wings*, a three-movement composition for symphony orchestra, came to me during a jet flight from Boston to Detroit, one of several that I took while a graduate student at The University of Michigan. I have attempted, in this piece, to immerse the listeners in the experience of a commercial airline flight, compressed into 11.5 minutes. While *Wings* may be considered programmatic, I intend to encourage the listeners to use imagination and wonder as the piece unfolds.

From the introductory section, as we prepare for flight, long, held tones in the strings, suggestive of sustained airplane pitches, and the fluid arpeggios of the piano, flutes and harp, reflecting motion, are interrupted by a two-measure foreshadowing of the distress yet to come in the dissonance of oboe, trombones/horns and strings. Take-off is simulated by an increase of instruments in a great crescendo. Long, expansive melodic lines, heard primarily in the violins and violas against a continually moving background, dominate the main body of the first movement, suggesting both the vast expanse of sky and the soaring nature of the aircraft.

In the second movement, turbulence arises, expressed through the use of drums, which play sporadic rhythms in canon form. The clarinets scream out the fear of anxious passengers, while the violas and cellos hold the drone of the plane and create an ominous atmosphere. An oboe plays the mournful main melody, accented by tolling chimes, vibraphone and anvil. Following a surreal, drunken section, the turbulence returns with the addition of chattering winds and strings, also in canon form, leading to the climax, punctuated by the trombones/horns that were foreshadowed in the introductory section.

A quiet, sustaining tone in the cellos at the end of Movement II carries the listeners, without pause, into the third movement where the final distress is experienced through quick changes in meter, driving rhythms, percussive strikes and melodic crescendi that express a sense of forward thrust. The broad, sweeping penultimate section, suggesting a sudden release from severe conditions, leads into the final, grand section, which conveys relief, familiarity and a safe but exciting landing.