

New Morning For The World ("Daybreak Of Freedom") By Joseph Schwantner: An Exploration
Of Trajectory As An Organizing Principle For Drama, Motive, And Structure

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This essay explores techniques found in Joseph Schwantner's 1982 composition *New Morning for the World ("Daybreak of Freedom")*. Schwantner's piece, in which a speaker performs the part of Martin Luther King, Jr. using texts from his speeches and writings, establishes dramatic, motivic, and structural trajectories¹ through the interactions of the speaker and the orchestra. Each of the three trajectories, dramatic/narrative, motivic, and structural, exert their influence continuously throughout Schwantner's piece. Simultaneously, each trajectory supports and influences the others.

Joseph Schwantner (born 1943) is an American composer² who earned composition degrees from the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago (BM, 1964) and Northwestern University (MM 1966, DM 1968). Elements that pervade his mature works include "a fascination with timbre, extreme instrumental range, juxtaposed instrumental groupings, pedal points, and a

¹ A trajectory is the directed evolution of a set of related musical parameters.

² For background and analysis on other Schwantner works, see, for example, Cynthia Folio's article "The synthesis of traditional and contemporary elements in Joseph Schwantner's 'Sparrows,'" *Perspectives of New Music*, 24/1 (1985), 184-96; J.L. Briggs, *The Recent Music of Joseph Schwantner: Unique and Essential Elements* (Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois dissertation, 1984); James Chute, *The reemergence of tonality in contemporary music as shown in the works of David Del Tredici, Joseph Schwantner, and John Adams* (Cincinnati, Ohio: University of Cincinnati dissertation, 1991); Cynthia Folio, *An analysis and comparison of four compositions by Joseph Schwantner: And the mountains rising nowhere; Wild angels of the open hills; Aftertones of infinity; and Sparrows*, 2 vols. (Rochester, New York: Eastman School of Music dissertation, 1985); and Kenneth Narducci, *An analysis of Joseph Schwantner's A sudden rainbow* (Portland, Oregon: University of Oregon dissertation, 1989).

highly personal, even idiosyncratic compositional style."³ He taught at the Chicago Conservatory College (1968-9), Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA (1968-9), and Ball State University (1968-70), as well as the faculties of the School of Music at Yale University, the Eastman School of Music and the Juilliard School.⁴ His early works, such as *Consortium I* (1970) and *Consortium II* (1971), take a free approach to serial technique. *Aftertones of Infinity* (1978), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, relies more overtly on tonal centers.

In 1982, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) commissioned Schwantner to write *New Morning for the World* ("*Daybreak of Freedom*") for the Eastman Philharmonic. Written for speaker and orchestra,⁵ the piece incorporates texts by Martin Luther King, Jr. using a melodramatic technique⁶ that includes only speaking. The first performance of the piece was by the Eastman Philharmonic with the Pittsburgh Pirates star Willie Stargell as

³ James Chute, "Joseph Schwantner," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 13 August 2002), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>. Much of the information in this biography is derived from this article.

⁴ From <<http://www.schwantner.net>>, accessed 22 August 2002.

⁵ The full instrumentation is as follows: narrator (must be amplified), 4 flutes (3 & 4 double on piccolos 1 & 2), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets in B-flat (3 doubles on bass clarinet), 3 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 3 trumpets in C, 4 trombones, tuba, amplified piano, amplified celesta, harp, timpani, strings, and 4 percussionists. The 4 percussionists perform using an extensive array of instruments: 2 sets of 3 tom-toms, 2 tamtams, small button gong, vibraphone, glockenspiel, 2 pairs of timbales, 2 triangles, 2 bass drums, 2 suspended cymbals, marimba, crotales, xylophone, and tubular bells.

⁶ The technical term for the use of spoken text with music is melodrama. The association of the term melodrama with Victorian popular drama has altered its meaning; for much of its history, melodrama referred to "the technique of using short passages of music in alternation with or accompanying the spoken word to heighten its dramatic effect, often found within opera, or as an independent genre, or as a sporadic effect in spoken drama." (Anne Dhu Shapiro, "Melodrama," *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 13 August 2002), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>). As a technique in opera, melodrama has served an important role for several centuries. For a summary of the history of melodrama, see Mark Feezell, *The Light, for Two Speakers and Chamber Orchestra* (Denton, Texas: The University of North Texas doctoral dissertation, 2003, www.drfeezell.com).

speaker.⁷ Since then, the piece has received numerous performances and recordings.⁸ Like *Afertonos of Infinity*, which Schwantner composed four years earlier, *New Morning for the World* reflects the use of tonal centers in his newer music, which has continued through recent works such as the Percussion Concerto (1995).

New Morning for the World is one continuous movement, but the structure of the texts Schwantner selected (reproduced in appendix B), divides the work into three distinct sections. The first section, from measures 1 to 204, speaks of the past struggles for racial equality. The second section, from measures 204 to 346, opens with the strings playing the first slow music of the work, and the speaker focuses on the struggles of the present. The third and final section, from measures 348-406, shifts attention to the future fulfillment of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream. In the brief coda, the piece closes with the orchestra members singing as an ethereal choir.

The dramatic or narrative trajectory is established primarily by the evolution of the action presented in the texts themselves: mood, scene, and form all relate to this trajectory. Along the way, interactions between the speaker and the orchestra also contribute to the dramatic trajectory. The orchestra may converse with the speaker, operate as a seemingly independent backdrop, play by itself, or remain silent while the speaker is speaking.

From the opening, the dramatic trajectory unfolds in a carefully controlled manner. The orchestral introduction creates an atmosphere of oppression and struggle, and the orchestra pauses while the speaker relates the frustration of the racially oppressed ("There comes a time", mm. 36-96). After the speaker calls for the people to "walk non-violently" (mm. 96-151), the

⁷ Chute, "Joseph Schwantner."

orchestra shifts through a series of tonal regions in response to the drama. The dramatic dialogue between speaker and orchestra continues in the next section: the orchestra pauses while the speaker describes the historical context of the struggle ("Before the Pilgrims"), and then responds with an extended instrumental section portraying the struggle. For the rest of the piece, the orchestra continues playing during the measures with spoken text, perhaps portraying the fact that the past is frozen in history, but the present and future are on the move and cannot be stopped.

As the dramatic context shifts from the temporal framework of the past to that of the present, the musical context also shifts, and the continuous tension and dramatic wind and percussion writing that have been present since the opening measures dissipate into a slow section for strings alone (mm. 204-253).⁹ Collecting his courage, the speaker boldly announces that "Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy."¹⁰ As the texts continue, the intensity of the orchestral writing continues to build, and the winds and percussion gradually reenter the texture. The speaker announces that the "arm of the moral universe" will "bend toward justice," and the orchestra responds with an expansive portrayal of that struggle (mm. 286-346).

The third and final section of the work begins with a restatement of the materials from the opening of the second section. This time, however, the dramatic trajectory has moved forward to look toward the future ("When the history books are written...I have a dream...Whenever it is

⁸ The score and three widely available recordings are listed in the bibliography. Appendix A is a list of performances for 1999-2002.

⁹ This formal construction obviously draws on the tradition of the slow second movement in symphonies, sonatas, and concertos.

¹⁰ Schwantner emphasizes the temporal shift from past to present by underlining the word "now" each time it occurs in the score beginning in measure 205.

fulfilled..."). In concert with this shift, the musical materials have been transfigured: the music is transposed up a half step, marked *religioso* (religiously), and reorchestrated from measure 371 to reflect the new dramatic situation. In the final spoken words, the speaker prophesies a "bright and glowing daybreak of freedom and justice for all of God's children," leading into the ethereal coda (mm. 397-406).

Throughout the piece, the orchestra interacts with the text, supporting the dramatic trajectory. In most cases, the interaction consists of the orchestra responding to dramatic elements introduced first by the speaker, but the relationship is not unidirectional. At several important points in the drama, notably the introduction and the "struggle" passage preceding the third section, the orchestra expresses dramatic ideas subsequently confirmed by the words of the speaker.

A concurrent and related motivic trajectory augments the global dramatic evolution. The motivic trajectory is the systematic development of atomic rhythmic, melodic, and/or harmonic¹¹ musical ideas¹² over the course of the composition. The dramatic and motivic trajectories maintain a close relationship. In Schwantner's composition, motives are associated with particular dramatic themes,¹³ and the relationship among various motives augments the impact of

¹¹ I use harmony here in the general sense: harmonic motives include set-classes developed motivically as well as harmonic progressions or successions.

¹² Although rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic motives occur most frequently, composers may choose to treat any musical dimension motivically.

¹³ Obviously this usage is related to Wagner's use of Leitmotif. However, I prefer to avoid that term in the present context because my idea of motivic development is a more general one. In addition to Leitmotif, motivic trajectory subsumes harmonic or sonority motives, such as Schoenberg's use of the [014] set in "Nacht" from *Pierrot Lunaire*, as well as rhythmic motives. For a history of the term Leitmotif see Arnold Whittall, "Leitmotif," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, ed L. Macy (Accessed 13 August 2002), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

the narration. In addition, motives may be combined or transformed to achieve new meaning in new dramatic situations.

To illustrate the motivic trajectory in *New Morning for the World*, I will focus on two of the many motives in the piece. These two motives, with various slight modifications, appear in each major section of *New Morning for the World*. Their interplay contributes to a motivic trajectory that is an important dimension of the organization of the piece.

The first motive makes its initial appearance during the orchestral introduction. When the speaker begins his first phrases shortly thereafter, Schwantner makes explicit the association of the motive with the forces of oppression opposing racial equality. Example 1 illustrates one incarnation of the motive immediately after the speaker says the words "...tired of being kicked about the brutal feet of oppression." Essential

Example 1. Oppression motive, m. 42, French horn section.



features of the oppression motive include a continuous sixteenth-note rhythm with a two-note pickup and a disjunct pitch profile using registral shifts.

Schwantner consistently associates the second motive, which also appears in the orchestral introduction, with the struggle for freedom. The music shown in example 2 is one example, occurring right after the paragraph closing with the words "...If the

Example 2. Freedom motive, mm. 160-162, French horns 1-2.



inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands." This motive combines motion upward by thirds and downward by step to create a rising pitch contour.

In the first part of the introduction, these two motives are stated in close proximity. The first sounds of the piece are a rhythm in the percussion section based on the oppression motive. Immediately following this harsh rhythm, the noble timbre of the horns articulates the opening notes of the freedom motive. The motives alternate, each statement lengthening until measure 15.

In measures 36-48, the oppression motive is elaborated in the entire orchestra. While the speaker is speaking ("There comes a time when people get tired..."), the motive appears only in fragments. However, after the speaker finishes the first paragraph of text, the orchestra responds with a full flourish, passing the oppression motive from section to section.

The remainder of the first major section of the piece showcases the freedom motive. Measures 68-70 include a variant of the freedom motive in the trumpets and trombones. Measures 72-85 and 152-162 also reflect the struggle for freedom. After the speaker finishes narration recalling the length of the struggle ("Before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth...") the first major section of the piece closes with a variant of the oppression motive, finally coalescing to a climax in measure 203.

As stated previously, the second section of the piece shifts the temporal focus to the present. The slow music of measures 205-244 lacks overt statements of the freedom and oppression motives, although the emphasis on descending melodic steps is perhaps reminiscent of the freedom motive. In measures 245-6 the statement of the oppression motive by the solo horn has a dreamy quality (marked *echo* in m. 246) anticipating oppression becoming a hazy memory.

In measure 286 a persistent sixteenth-note rhythm hints at the return of the oppression motive, and in measures 293-294 the percussion and strings overtly state it. The winds immediately respond with the freedom motive. This happens again in measure 295 and a third time in measures 296 and 297. However, in measure 298 the oppression motive appears once more without a reply from the freedom motive.

Measures 307-321 elaborate the oppression motive. Finally, measures 323-346 are the climax of the interaction between the oppression and freedom motives. The oppression motive develops via the repeated sixteenth note patterns of the strings and percussion and a few direct statements in the winds (esp. m. 331), while the freedom motive is hinted at in the brass section.¹⁴ After the climax at measure 346, the final section of the piece begins.

The final section focuses on the vision of a future without racial injustice. As such, it is logical that it contains neither the oppression motive nor the struggle for freedom motive. However, the transposed restatement of the slow section (mm. 205 ff.) again hints at the freedom motive through its emphasis on downward step motion. It is also possible that the rapid grace notes might hint at the oppression motive, a reformation of the former forces of oppression.

¹⁴ Cf. the emphasis on thirds in the horn part in mm. 332 ff. and the thirds in the freedom motive.

The structural trajectory delineates the musical framework of the composition, determining the large-scale progression of the piece from beginning to the end. The influence of structure manifests itself in terms of key areas, significant pitches, and, often, other surface details, but in composed pieces¹⁵ structural trajectory is more than an accumulation of musical moments. The structure of a composition is the "why" of the piece; it is the fundamental linear motions that undergird the music and empower large-scale progression.

The struggle for freedom that the narrative and motivic trajectories of *New Morning for the World* so eloquently express also undergirds the trajectory of the work's tonal structure. Although the surface texture is variegated, the fundamental tonal motion is a very simple progression, from the fifth Bb-F stated in the introduction to the fifth B-F# sung by the ethereal choir in the coda. With consummate skill, Schwantner expands this simple motion into a twenty-five minute composition, and uses the structure as a metaphor for the dramatic narrative. What seems like it should be easy to achieve fails to materialize without arduous struggle.

The lower voice¹⁶ opens with a Bb clearly articulated in the basses and cellos. The upper voice works its way up from C, reaching F when the French horns finish their first complete statement of the freedom motive in measure 15. Over the remainder of the first section of the piece the lower voice moves down by thirds, reaching Gb at measure 38, Eb at measure 96, and Cb at measure 202. Meanwhile, the upper voice reaches Gb in measure 202. This sonority (Cb-Gb) in measure 202 adumbrates the final B-F# sung by the ethereal choir without completely

¹⁵ As opposed to chance, indeterminate, or aleatoric compositions, works in moment form, or works generated strictly algorithmically.

¹⁶ This essay follows the usual Schenkerian convention of considering fundamental motions as being represented by the interaction of two fundamental lines, commonly referred to as an "upper voice" and a "lower voice." These lines are woven into the orchestral texture, not necessarily confined to a single pair of instruments.

resolving the tensions of racial struggle: the oppression motive is still present in measure 201 and the sonority is spelled enharmonically.

The slow section in measures 204-284 cadences with a statement of the goal sonority, this time spelled as B-F#. However, even here the music doesn't rest on this sonority. The music in measures 286-346 is the final struggle between the oppression motive and the freedom motive. The lower line moves from B down to G.¹⁷ Initially, this downward motion by third seems to be the beginning of a series of thirds similar to that in the first section, but the restatement in measures 348-381 of the slow section moves the lower line to C instead. After measure 382 the upper line moves to F# (384, returned to in 395) while the lower line moves eventually to B (m. 396) for the final fifth sung by the ethereal choir.

It is only at this point that all the structural tensions of the piece have been resolved. The B-F# sonority is achieved in its final chromatic spelling, and the oppression motive has dissipated into peaceful fifth arpeggiations. The piece has moved from the Bb-F sonority of the introduction to a higher pitch level. This adjustment becomes a pitch metaphor for the future attainment of a higher plane of racial equality and social justice.

In fact, Schwantner reinforces this idea simultaneously on three trajectories. First, the structural trajectory moves the music from Bb-F to B-F#, though not without a great deal of struggle. Second, the dramatic trajectory moves the piece from the past of oppression through the present struggles to a "bright and glowing daybreak of freedom" in the future. Third, the motivic trajectory focuses on a conflict between a motive associated with racial oppression and a

¹⁷ Measures 286, 288, 291, 294-5, 299, 308-321, 329-331, and 345-346 all emphasize G in the low instruments.

motive associated with the struggle for freedom. In the end, the oppression motive dissipates, and the piece moves toward its peaceful conclusion.

New Morning for the World explores new possibilities for relating the three trajectories of motive, drama, and structure. In this sense it serves as an example of the type of complexity common to many great works of musical literature. As a subtle expansion of ideas contained in the texts, Schwantner's orchestral setting is a fitting accompaniment to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of racial justice.

APPENDIX A:

PERFORMANCES OF *NEW MORNING FOR THE WORLD*, 1999-2002¹⁸

April 25/27/28, 2002	Boston Philharmonic Boston, MA
January 26/28, 2002	Richmond Symphony Richmond, VA
January 12/13/14, 2001	San Antonio Symphony San Antonio, TX
January 14, 2001	Colorado Springs Symphony Colorado Springs, CO
January 15, 2001	Charlotte Symphony Charlotte, NC
January 15, 2001	Metropolitan Youth Orchestra Manhasset, NY
March 17/18, 2001	Detroit Symphony Orchestra Detroit, MI
January 12, 2000	Louisiana Philharmonic William Warfield, narrator Timothy Moffitt, conductor New Orleans, LA
January 13 & 14, 2000	Chattanooga Symphony Roland Carter, narrator Isaiah Jackson, conductor Tivoli Theater, Chattanooga, TN
January 14, 2000	Shreveport Symphony Shreveport, LA
January 21, 2000	Oakland University Oakland, MI
January 26, 2000	Eastman Philharmonia William Warfield, conductor Mendi Rodan, conductor Eastman School of Music University of Rochester Rochester, NY
February 4, 2000	Bowling Green State University Orchestra Bowling Green University Bowling Green, OH
February 4 & 6, 2000	Manhattan School of Music

¹⁸ Source: <<http://www.schwantner.net>>, accessed 22 August 2002.

	New York, NY
February 12, 2000	Valdosta University Valdosta, GA
February 13/15, 2000	Winston-Salem Piedmont Triad Symphony Maya Angelou, narrator
February 23, 2000	Oklahoma City University Oklahoma, OK
September 23, 2000	Plymouth Philharmonic Plymouth, MA
December 10, 2000	Metroplitan Youth Orchestra Manhasset, NY
November 14, 1999	California State University Symphony Sacramento, CA
September 5, 1999	Cascade Music Festival Bend, OR
April 20, 1999	Tulsa Philharmonic Tulsa, OK
April 20, 1999	University of Hartford Hartford, CT
April 20, 1999	Colorado Symphony Marin Alsop, Music Director and Conductor Denver, CO
April 20, 1999	NW Indiana Symphony Munster, IN
January 14/15, 1999	Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Yoel Levi, Music Director and Conductor Atlanta, GA

APPENDIX B:

TEXTS¹⁹ FOR *NEW MORNING FOR THE WORLD*

*There comes a time when people get tired - tired of being segregated and humiliated, tired of being kicked about by the brutal feet of oppression.*²⁰

We are going to walk non-violently and peacefully to let the nation and the world know that we are tired now. We've lived with slavery and segregation three hundred and forty-five years. We waited a long time for freedom.²¹

*Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. For more than two centuries, our foreparents labored in this country without wages - and built the homes of their masters in the midst of brutal injustice and shameful humiliation. And yet out of a bottomless vitality, they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.*²²

Now²³ is the time to make real the promise of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality to all of God's children. We cannot walk alone. As we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. No, no, we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.²⁴

We're on the move now - neither the burning of our churches nor the beating and killing of our clergymen will stop us. We're on the move now - my people listen! The battle is in our hands - I know some of you are asking, "How long will it take?" I come to say to you however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long because truth pressed to the earth will rise again. How long? Not long because no lie can live forever. How long? Not long because

¹⁹ Italics indicates that the orchestra pauses while the text is spoken.

²⁰ From *Stride Toward Freedom* by Martin Luther King, Jr. © Copyright 1958 by Martin Luther King, Jr.

²¹ From *Behind the Selma March* by Martin Luther King, Jr. © Copyright 1965 by Martin Luther King, Jr.

²² From *Letter from Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther King, Jr. © Copyright 1963, 1964 by Martin Luther King, Jr.

²³ Schwantner has underlined these words in the score.

²⁴ Excerpts from *I Have a Dream* by Martin Luther King, Jr. © Copyright 1963 by Martin Luther King, Jr.

you will reap what you sow. How long? Not long because the arm of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.²⁵

When the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have pause and say, "There lived a great people - a black people - who injected new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization." This is our challenge and responsibility.²⁶

I have a dream.²⁷

The dream is one of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where men do not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the content of his character; a dream of a place where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of all human personality, and men will dare to live together as brothers. Whenever it is fulfilled, we will emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man into the bright and glowing daybreak of freedom and justice for all of God's children.²⁸

²⁵ From *Behind the Selma March* by Martin Luther King, Jr. © Copyright 1965 by Martin Luther King, Jr.

²⁶ From *Stride Toward Freedom* by Martin Luther King, Jr. © Copyright 1958 by Martin Luther King, Jr.

²⁷ From *I Have a Dream* by Martin Luther King, Jr. © Copyright 1963 by Martin Luther King, Jr.

²⁸ © Copyright 1958, 1963 by Martin Luther King, Jr.

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