

*THE AVATAR* BY STEVE ROUSE: A PERFORMANCE PRACTICE GUIDE

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*The Avatar* for trumpet and piano by Dr. Steve Rouse is one of the most challenging compositions in the trumpet repertoire. Due to *The Avatar's* challenges and increasing popularity, a study is necessary to aid its performance. Each movement is performed on a different instrument: *Bb* piccolo (with an optional *A* piccolo part) for *Nativity*, *Bb* Flugelhorn for *Enigma-Release* and *Bb* trumpet for *Rebirth*. In addition, the performer must convey one of the work's possible programmatic meanings: (1) The Hindu belief of an Avatar and its life cycle, (2) the life of Christ or (3) the human lifecycle.

Chapter 1 gives historical information about the work. Chapters 2-4 discuss each movement of *The Avatar* programmatically and pedagogically. Facets of each movement are analyzed including differences in programmatic choices, rehearsal techniques and sound concepts. Chapter 5 provides recording suggestions, including choosing a recording engineer, preparing and planning for a recording session, choosing a venue and the benefits of hiring a *tonmeister*.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*The Avatar* for trumpet and piano, by Dr. Steve Rouse, Professor of Composition at the University of Louisville, is one of the most challenging compositions in the trumpet repertoire. Due to *The Avatar's* challenges and increasing popularity, a study is necessary to aid in its performance. The work, completed in 1991, is in three movements: *Nativity*, *Enigma-Release* and *Rebirth*. The first movement, *Nativity*, was originally conceived in the winter of 1989 as a Christmas fanfare and premiered in February 1990 at the Potsdam Music Festival. The second and third movements, *Enigma-Release* and *Rebirth*, were added in 1991. *The Avatar* was commissioned by the League of Composers/ISCM and premiered on May 9, 1991 in New York City by Ray Mase, principal trumpet of the New York City Ballet, with Eliza Garth, instructor of piano at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

The composition was first written for Dr. Michael Tunnell, professor of trumpet at the University of Louisville, and dedicated to Tunnell and his wife Meme Tunnell, assistant professor of music at Bellarmine University. Michael and Meme Tunnell gave the first unofficial performance of the work earlier the same year. The commission from the ISCM, however, owned rights to the



premiere and the first recording, requiring the Tunnells to relinquish the premiere and delay their recording.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Rouse has also arranged *Enigma-Release* for trumpet and string orchestra (1998) as well as for alto saxophone and string orchestra (1999). The arrangement for trumpet and strings was commissioned by the Seattle Symphony and premiered by Jeff Silberschlag and the Seattle Symphony with Gerard Schwarz conducting. Silberschlag and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra later recorded the movement for his CD, *The American Trumpet*. The arrangement for string orchestra and alto saxophone was commissioned in 1999 by Mike Tracey, professor of jazz and saxophone at the University of Louisville, and premiered with the University of Louisville Orchestra in 1999. Professor Tracey went on to record the composition for his CD, *Facets*. Both of these arrangements are available from Dr. Rouse on his website, [www.steverouse.com](http://www.steverouse.com).<sup>2</sup>

Most of the current research is available on Dr. Rouse's personal website, [www.steverouse.com](http://www.steverouse.com). This website includes program notes and a discography for *The Avatar* as well as bibliographic information about Dr. Rouse. In addition to the published version of the work, available from Lauren Keiser Music

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Rouse, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 3 January 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Rouse, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 3 January 2010.

Publishing,<sup>3</sup> the original manuscript and sketches of the score are also available from Dr. Rouse. Four recordings are listed in the discography. In addition, *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Classical Musicians, Ninth Edition* (2000) provides additional background information about Dr. Rouse. Interviews with Rouse and Tunnell supplied much of the information for this document. These interviews took place in person on January 3 and 4, 2010 in Louisville, KY. Theoretical, historical and pedagogical aspects of the work were discussed.

*The Avatar* is a complex and demanding work. It requires the trumpeter to possess both superior technique and an understanding of the work's programmatic influences. Each movement has specific timbre, harmonic and rhythmical characteristics, and each movement is performed on a different instrument: *Bb* piccolo (with an optional *A* piccolo part) for *Nativity*, *Bb* Flugelhorn for *Enigma-Release* and *Bb* trumpet for *Rebirth*.<sup>4</sup> Playing multiple instruments in a single work presents considerable challenges for the performer. Intonation, timbre, endurance and extreme register changes are only some of the technical difficulties that are present in this composition.

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<sup>3</sup> Steve Rouse, *The Avatar*, (Milwaukee: Lauren Keiser Music Publishing, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Steve Rouse, *The Avatar Initial Sketch*, (The library of Steve Rouse, 1990).

In addition to mastering *The Avatar's* technical challenges, the performer must convey the work's programmatic significance. The work is influenced by the Hindu belief of an Avatar and its life cycle: "birth, the search or struggle for release through enlightenment, and eventual attainment of emancipation or second birth."<sup>5</sup> Rouse acknowledges, however, that the work could also follow two other programmatic meanings: events of Christ's life (birth, death and resurrection) or the human lifecycle (birth, teenager to adult).<sup>6</sup> The performer should choose one of these three programmatic approaches to convey to the listener.

This performance guide will discuss the programmatic meanings of *The Avatar* and provide a pedagogical analysis of each movement. A brief examination of the composition's three programmatic meanings (Hinduism's Avatar, the life of Christ, and human lifecycle) and how to convey them musically will help the performer choose which approach he or she might employ. The majority of this document will discuss *The Avatar's* performance practice intricacies and how the performer should manage them.

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<sup>5</sup> Steve Rouse, "Steve Rouse, composer," Steve Rouse personal web site, [http://web.me.com/steverouse/Site/-Steve\\_Rouse-The\\_Avatar.html](http://web.me.com/steverouse/Site/-Steve_Rouse-The_Avatar.html).

<sup>6</sup> Steve Rouse, "Steve Rouse, composer," Steve Rouse personal web site, [http://web.me.com/steverouse/Site/-Steve\\_Rouse-The\\_Avatar.html](http://web.me.com/steverouse/Site/-Steve_Rouse-The_Avatar.html).

## CHAPTER 2

### *NATIVITY*

#### Programmatic Suggestions

*Nativity* was composed in the winter of 1989. Rouse stated: “The work was originally conceived as a Christmas fanfare that celebrates the birth of Christ.”<sup>7</sup> Not until after the other two movements were composed did the idea of Avatars and the human lifecycle expand the composer’s thematic meanings.

Since there are multiple interpretations for *Nativity*’s programmatic meaning, the work can have different meanings for performers and listeners. Taken in its original conception, *Nativity* should depict the manger scene where Christ was born, including the arrival of the Three Kings and the joy and happiness that was present at Christ’s birth. These emotions should carry over into the performance so that Christ’s birth is dramatically depicted. A light staccato articulation and a dance-like feel are essential to presenting the right character to the audience. The trills and dynamics should depict the jubilation that existed at Christ’s birth.

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<sup>7</sup> Steve Rouse, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 3 January 2010.

It is also possible to perform and hear the movement in the Hindu context. In Hinduism, the Avatar is a deity that comes to earth for a specific reason. In this case, the Avatar is most likely Vishnu, a deity that Dr. Shakti M. Gupta says: “is this light which pervades in all directions. He defeats the powers of destruction and overcomes all difficulties.”<sup>8</sup> Unlike Christ’s humble birth, the Avatar usually comes to the earth disguised in the form of an animal so that he is not detected by evil. The deception that is present with the arrival of an Avatar suggests a more mysterious and ominous performance.

From a Hindu perspective, *Nativity* should be approached with a more ominous tone and style. A legato tongue should be used with a darker, fuller sound. The trills should not be exaggerated but rather regarded as suspensions of longer melodic lines instead of highlights of color. The dynamic should be exaggerated as well; however, the overall dynamic of the movement should be subdued in comparison to the Christian perspective. In addition, the A piccolo is better suited to portray the birth of the Avatar. Its darker, rounder and fuller sound would more appropriately portray the enigmatic arrival of the Avatar.

The third programmatic meaning of *Nativity* stems from the idea of human development or life cycle. Similar to the birth of Christ, *Nativity* in this sense illustrates the birth of a newborn baby and the joyful time that usually

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<sup>8</sup> Shakti M. Gupta, *Vishnu and His Incarnations* (Bombay: Somaiya Publications Pvt. Ltd, 1974), 2.

accompanies the birth of a child. The movement should be performed with a light and playful articulation, a dance-like feel and a brighter Bb piccolo timbre.

### Pedagogical Suggestions

*Nativity* is full of challenges for both trumpeter and pianist. Along with portraying the performer's chosen programmatic influence, the work requires the musicians to possess a high level of technique and musicianship. In addition, the piccolo trumpet presents a variety of challenges. The range of the first movement extends from a written F<sup>3</sup> below the treble clef staff (concert Eb<sup>3</sup>) to an optional Ab<sup>6</sup> (concert Gb<sup>6</sup>) above the treble clef staff. On piccolo trumpet this range is quite expansive and will challenge even the finest performers.

Several strategies could be used to incorporate the piccolo into the performer's daily practice. First, the performer should avoid learning the movement on either Bb or A piccolo trumpet. The piccolo is a taxing instrument both mentally and physically. By learning the movement on piccolo, the player's endurance and range will be challenged, and there will likely be a decline in practice efficiency.<sup>9</sup> It is better to use the Bb trumpet initially to learn the movement. The Bb trumpet enables the performer to practice the same fingerings except for the low F<sup>3</sup> (concert Eb<sup>3</sup>) in mm. 59 and 62, which is a pedal

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<sup>9</sup> Keith Johnson, *Brass Performance and Pedagogy* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 83-86.

tone on the Bb trumpet but can be achieved through a variety of valve combinations. The most common ways are to either use the valve combination 1-2-3 with the first and third slide extended or to use the first valve with the first slide pulled as far out as possible. Conversely, the piccolo trumpet uses the 1-4 valve combination to correctly perform the F. Even though there is a discrepancy between the proper fingerings, the overall practice benefits of the Bb trumpet make learning the *Nativity* much easier. The Bb trumpet also allows the performer to optimize his\* mental and physical endurance since the part now sounds an octave lower. This octave displacement should not be hard to overcome when the piccolo is finally added to the practice routine because it gives the performer an excellent pitch reference. The Bb trumpet will also improve the performer's mental stamina, enabling the trumpeter to focus on achieving the correct programmatic goals rather than attending to the technical problems that the piccolo trumpet can create. Additionally, the performer should avoid beginning with *Nativity* if he has not played on the piccolo trumpet recently, as the technical and physical demands of the movement are very strenuous. Long tones (flow studies), scales or simple tunes would be more appropriate beginning material.

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\* I have chosen to use masculine pronouns (he, his, him) instead the cumbersome he/she, his/her, him/her to help expedite reading. No offense is meant toward the many fine women trumpeters.

By increasing the amount of time spent playing the piccolo everyday, the trumpeter should be able to increase his stamina to about 20 minutes. Range on the piccolo should be achieved gradually and with efficient physical effort. Softly played arpeggios and scales with good air movement are the best way to gradually increase range and endurance. By keeping a consistent practice schedule, the trumpeter should be able to achieve a F<sup>6</sup> (concert Eb<sup>6</sup>) with little problem, which will allow him to perform within *Nativity's* range.<sup>10</sup>

*Nativity* uses complex metric shifts, time signatures and tempi. From the start of the movement, time is distorted. The piano enters with standard eighth-note mixed-meter patterns but, when the trumpet joins (mm. 4-8) with quarter notes, a hemiola effect is created (see Example 1). The meter is then further distorted with the addition of trills that lead into a more stable quarter-note triple feel (waltz) for both the piano and trumpet, mm. 9-24. These two contrasting ideas are the basis for the metric shifts throughout the entire composition. For practice purposes, it is best to learn *Nativity* slowly at the eighth-note level and gradually increase the tempo until the correct marking of dotted-quarter equals 116 has been achieved. However, the marked tempo of *Nativity* is very quick and the published recordings do not achieve a tempo of 116. When interviewed about this disparity, Dr. Rouse stated: "I conceive the piece as a gunslinger

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Tunnell, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 4 January 2010.



piece. I did not set out to make a virtuosic work but it ended up that way. I would just want any performance to get as close to the marked tempi as possible.”<sup>11</sup> It is important to get as close as possible to the marked tempo of *The Avatar* without sacrificing the end musical result. An acceptable range of musical tempi for *Nativity* is dotted-quarter equals 96-116. Through consistent, slow practice, it is possible to reach the marked tempo, but these tempi will give even the most accomplished players challenges.

Example 1. Steve Rouse, *The Avatar, Nativity*, mm. 1-16.

**I. Nativity** Steve Rouse

*Dancing, with energy and drive*

BB Picc. Trp.

Piano (in Eb)

not too heavy...

"Waltz"  
In "One" (♩ = 58)

<sup>11</sup> Steve Rouse, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 3 January 2010.

There are several optional articulations in *Nativity*. According to Dr. Rouse: “I prefer the optional articulations at the end of the movement but like the sixteenths to be tongued at the beginning.”<sup>12</sup> These articulations refer to mm. 9-11 and mm. 93-99. In mm. 9-11, the sixteenths should be double-tongued and performed as closely to the programmatic character as possible. The later section, mm. 93-99, should follow the optional articulation in the parentheses above the notes. This optional articulation also requires the trumpeter to double-tongue as well as slur several passages. However, both of these passages are extremely difficult, and if need be, the written articulations should be used. In addition to the optional articulations, there are many trills that must be performed quickly. The trills at m. 7 and 80 can be difficult for the trumpeter to perform quickly due to the awkwardness from F# to G# (2 to a 2-3 valve combination). To perform this trill with more facility, the trumpeter should play the F# with the alternate 1-2-3 combination (see Example 2)

Example 2. Steve Rouse, *The Avatar, Nativity*, mm. 80-81.



<sup>12</sup> Steve Rouse, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 3 January 2010.

## CHAPTER 3

### *ENIGMA-RELEASE*

#### Programmatic Suggestions

The second movement's three programmatic meanings are similar to each other in many ways. Still taking ideas from Hinduism, Christianity and the human lifecycle, the entire movement is based on the musical concept of tension and release. The movement's title, *Enigma*, refers to: "a person, thing, or situation that is mysterious, puzzling, or ambiguous."<sup>13</sup> In the programs, the Enigma would represent an Avatar (probably Vishnu) and his stories of mysterious transformations, healings and miracles; Jesus Christ and his stories of miracle healings and teaching; and lastly, it would represent the development of a human from a child to a young adult.

The *Release* portion of the title refers to the pinnacle moment for each Enigma. The Hindu Enigma might take a number of shapes or forms but the goal is ultimately to rid the world of evil.<sup>14</sup> The pinnacle of the Avatar would be the moment when it settles the conflict on Earth and sets right the injustice caused

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<sup>13</sup> *Collins English Dictionary*, online ed., s.v. "Enigma."

<sup>14</sup> Vinay Lal, "Avatar, [Incarnations or Descents] of Vishnu," UCLA Department of History, <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Religions/Avatars/Vishnu.html>.

by evil. For Christianity, the crucifixion of Christ is without question the pinnacle moment. The symbol of the cross was changed; it would no longer stand as a symbol for death but rather as a symbol for Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. The human life cycle pinnacle arrives at adulthood and self-reliance.

Each meaning represents a different idea, but the overall musical concept should be one of tension and release. What is important musically is a steady building throughout the movement that finally peaks and then relaxes. Almost all music works on this principle, but what makes this principle unique in *Enigma-Release* is the tension between the piano and trumpet parts. No part is greater than the other, and both parts must work together to achieve the right balance of timbre, time, rhythmic meter and dynamics.

### Pedagogical Suggestions

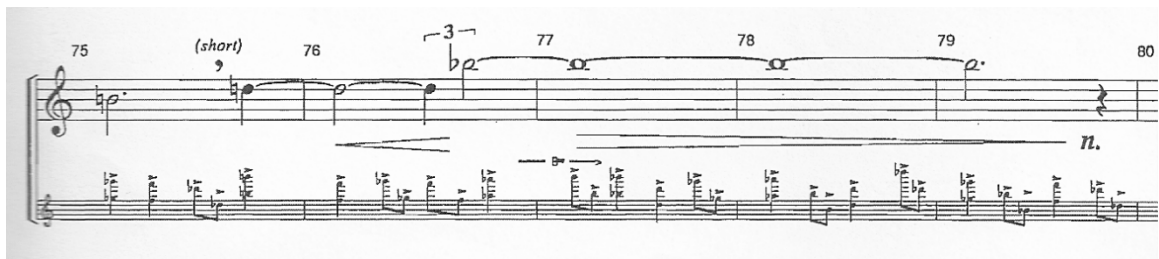
There are numerous challenges in the second movement of *The Avatar*. The first and most noticeable difference is the change in instrumentation. *Enigma-Release* was composed for Bb flugelhorn and piano. However, Rouse states in the score: "it is possible to perform the second movement on Bb trumpet or cornet if a flugelhorn is not available."<sup>15</sup> The movement requires the trumpeter to play up to a written *Bb*<sup>6</sup> (concert *Ab*<sup>6</sup>), which is difficult to play in

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<sup>15</sup> Steve Rouse, *The Avatar*, (Milwaukee, WI: Lauren Keiser Music Publishing, 1991).

tune on the flugelhorn. The Bb trumpet might be a better choice for this movement because of its extended phrases and range. However, Dr. Rouse stated: “I wanted the timbre of the flugelhorn and the tone color that you get in the upper register. I really liked the intensity that the flugelhorn has at its upper register.”<sup>16</sup> The intensity that Dr. Rouse refers to is one of the most important musical aspects of this movement. At the same time, it is vital that the trumpeter keep the flugelhorn’s characteristic sound throughout all registers. The contrast between its warm sound and expanded timbre range, give the movement added suspense. Dr. Rouse called this suspenseful moment, mm. 76-79, an “ecstatic cry” and the flugelhorn’s tonal color should imitate this (see Example 3).

Example 3. Steve Rouse, *The Avatar*, *Enigma-Release*, m. 77-79.



A crucial challenge to the performer is the ability to switch from the piccolo trumpet in the first movement to the flugelhorn. When a player needs to use multiple instruments in the same composition he must be in complete control of each instrument. A major advantage of *The Avatar* compared to other multi-

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<sup>16</sup> Steve Rouse, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 3 January 2010.

instrument compositions is that the consistent pitch sonority of Bb is common among all of the instruments. For most players the Bb sonority is used daily, and therefore is the easiest and most familiar. However, the playing characteristics will be different for each instrument. The best way to accommodate this change is to ensure that the performer plays each instrument for a period of time everyday. After a solid warm-up it would benefit the player to practice the instruments in succession, taking care to perform the same exercise on each instrument. Herbert L. Clarke's *Technical Studies for Trumpet*<sup>17</sup> or Robert Getchell's *Practical Studies for Trumpet*<sup>18</sup> are excellent etudes to use for this exercise. The trumpeter should select one or two etudes of moderate length. Beginning with the Bb piccolo trumpet, the player should perform the chosen etude(s), followed by a short rest and then perform the same etude(s) on the flugelhorn and conclude with the Bb trumpet. The goal is to simulate a live performance where the performer is not able to warm-up on the next instrument. This practice routine will help the player become more comfortable rotating among instruments.

Common pitfalls may occur when a trumpeter attempts to learn to perform on multiple trumpets on short notice. Less experienced players may not be

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<sup>17</sup> Herbert L. Clarke, *Technical Studies for Trumpet* (New York: Carl Fischer Publishing, 1970)

<sup>18</sup> Robert Getchell, *Practical Studies for Trumpet* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing, 1985)

accustomed to playing one of the required instruments. Most commonly, the piccolo trumpet can cause difficulty for inexperienced players. The reasons for much difficulty may include transposition, endurance, pitch relationships and intonation. Efficient piccolo trumpet playing can take years to acquire. The best advice for a trumpeter wanting to become more comfortable is to play simple tunes and long tones such as Vincent Cichowicz's *Flow Studies*. J.B. Arban's *Complete Conservatory Method for Trumpet* also contains several short melodies that are ideal for improving piccolo playing.<sup>19</sup>

Another common pitfall for performers is a lack of aural training and listening skills. An excellent approach to this problem is to first sing (solfege) the piece and then play it on the mouthpiece. Once the player can perform the work on the mouthpiece, the trumpet may be added. Mouthpiece playing will cause the trumpeter to use his ears to a fuller potential.<sup>20</sup>

Lastly, trumpeters often rely too much on sentient determination (feel) as a means of evaluation and guidance. Players often state that they feel "tight" or that their mouthpieces or trumpets do not feel right. Learning to play by feel is an unreliable way of learning, especially when the trumpeter is moving quickly from one instrument to another. Each trumpet has a distinct feel due the variety of

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<sup>19</sup> J. B. Arban, *Complete Conservatory Method for Trumpet* (New York: Carl Fischer Publishing, 1982), 191-245.

<sup>20</sup> Keith Johnson, "Sound and Intonation," *The International Trumpet Guild Journal* 27 (March 2003): 62.

designs. When inexperienced trumpeters switch to a different trumpet, they often try to ease into or feel their way around the trumpet by doing a small warm-up first. In *The Avatar*, there are instances where performing such a small warm-up or even a tuning note is simply not possible. Instead, the performer should concentrate on the sound and direction of the phrase. Learning to trust one's listening skills requires extensive practice. The performer should set out all of the instruments and pick an easy tune or etude and perform it on each one. This practice technique will increase confidence and listening skills.

*Enigma-Release's* tension and release motive begins in the piano at the top of the movement. The piano part begins abruptly with fortissimo (*fff*) octave Db's. By the second measure the dynamic is down to piano (*p*) and a slow building of tension begins from m. 2 that does not resolve until its climax at m. 76 (see Example 4).

Example 4. Steve Rouse, *The Avatar, Enigma-Release*, m. 1-4.

♩ = 60 *inexorable: a precise, nonfluctuating pulse - neither rushing nor dragging - yet supple*

*bring out tops a bit...* 2 3 *brilliant, sharp* *as before*

*fff* *p* *caressing, very connected, luminous, very gradually approaching from the distance...* *fff* *p*

*simile sempre*

*"One-quarter" to "one-half" pedal on each beat, blurring the harmonies and sustaining the accents.*

*as before...*

\* Grace notes should not disturb the pulse and should occur prior to the appropriate placement of the following main note.

This tension is a critical musical element in *Enigma-Release*. The entire movement is based on the idea of an Enigma going through hardships that are



finally resolved by the end of the movement. This long and suspenseful propulsion will be weakened if the performers get too loud or fast.

The flugelhorn is not an instrument that projects easily or plays well in louder dynamics. The conical bore and tone color of the instrument simply do not allow for the same type of projection and dynamics that the Bb trumpet can produce. Therefore, it is vital that the pianist not increase the dynamic too early but rather allow the trumpeter to slowly increase the dynamic intensity.

There is also a continual *accelerando* that occurs in *Enigma-Release* that supports and adds to the movement's idea of tension and release. Beginning with a tempo of quarter note = 60, the work gradually accelerates to its peak tempo of quarter note = 126 at m. 72. The work then slows and finally ends at an eighth note = 92. The *accelerando* is marked with very precise tempi that move from quarter note = 60 (m.1), 72 (m.15), 88 (m. 27), 96 (m. 57), 100 (m. 64), 107 (m. 67) and 126 (m. 72). These tempi serve as guides to help the *accelerando* grow gradually. The combination of the flugelhorn's timbre, *accelerando*, thick piano texture and dynamic contrast makes *Enigma-Release* an exciting movement for the listener.

## CHAPTER 4

### *REBIRTH*

#### Programmatic Suggestions

The last movement's programmatic meanings resemble the rebirth of the previously mentioned Enigmas. The Hindu perspective depicts the rebirth of the Avatar back into his original God form. This rebirth to his God form is a very important and exciting event for the Avatar because it symbolizes the correction of wrongdoing. *Rebirth* should resemble this exciting occurrence through its stylistic traits. The movement should be performed at an exciting tempo, eighth note = 160+, that reflects the joy that comes from vanquishing evil.<sup>21</sup> The articulation should be light and very defined, resembling the joy of ridding the Earth of an evil. In addition, the scales are almost always played in an ascending pattern and should represent the Avatar rising back to the heavens. In this style, each run does not have to be note perfect. Rather, it should sound like a burst of sound or a firework streaming up into the sky.

The Christian program is slightly different than the Hindu style. *Rebirth* in Christianity represents the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb. The movement

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<sup>21</sup> The tempo markings of *Rebirth* will be discussed in further detail in the pedagogical section below.

tells the famous story of the women going to tend to Jesus' body only to find that he has been reborn again (resurrected). This discovery is a joyous time for Christians but should be a more declamatory type of joy that makes a statement to all Christians. When Christ rose, it changed the Christian way of life forever. He not only brought happiness to people but also a message. *Rebirth* needs to be performed in a more reserved or directed way than the bursting joy that accompanies the Hindu program. While it is an exciting time for Christians, it was also a time of reflection and teaching.

Stylistically from the Christian perspective, the movement needs to have a sense of comfort and relief as well as jubilation. The tempo is a key factor in achieving the correct programmatic style. Eighth note = 160-172 is ideal because it is a tempo that is both quick and comfortable. Articulations should be broader and distinctive. Each note should have a defined attack and should be as full bodied as possible. This gives the movement a more declamatory style that reflects the message from Christ's resurrection. Unlike the more extravagant Hindu approach, the performers should play each run cleanly and clearly. Clarity in these passages will also help to support the declamatory style of playing. The movement should achieve a sense of jubilant testimony and celebration.

The last program is the human life cycle. This is the point at which someone has achieved his main goals in life. For many people, typical examples of life goals are based on personal and professional success such as marriage

and children as well as education and satisfying careers. However, the above goals are just an example and *Rebirth* needs to symbolize the resolution of an individual's trials and tribulations.

When asked about the third movement Dr. Rouse mentioned: "It really has a lot of jazz influence which was not on purpose but ended up being that way."<sup>22</sup> Dr. Tunnell added: "After my first performance Dr. Speck (Director of Band at the University of Louisville) commented that it sounded like I was improvising on stage."<sup>23</sup> There is no better style to use than jazz to reflect the human condition. Its spontaneous and free willed characteristics are the exact traits that the performers exhibit when trying to display the human rebirth. The movement's scalar runs, syncopation, extreme range, dynamic and extended techniques all represent the jazz medium. The tempo should resemble a quick pace, eighth note = 168-180, but not so frantic that it loses its syncopated feel.

### Pedagogical Suggestions

*Rebirth* is unquestionably the most difficult movement. The movement's tempi, instrumentation change (Bb trumpet), mixed meter, range, scales and ensemble considerations are what make *Rebirth* so difficult. In particular, the

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<sup>22</sup> Steve Rouse, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 3 January 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Tunnell, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 4 January 2010.

tempo is marked extremely fast at eighth note = 200. However, after reviewing recordings by both Tunnell and Mase, neither recording reaches the marked tempo. Dr. Rouse stated: "I am not upset that the work was never recorded at the marked tempo. I don't think that it has to be performed there to still be a great piece. I really liked Mike's tempo and felt that it suited the movement."<sup>24</sup> As mentioned in the programmatic section, the tempo should vary depending on what stylistic program the performer is trying to achieve. However, as an overall tempo, eighth note = 160-178 is a generally good tempo at which to perform the movement.

Initially, eighth note = 80-90 is a good practice tempo. The best way to understand the rhythmical complexities and metric shifts in the movement is to practice the movement at a slow tempo. If eighth note = 80-90 is too fast, the tempo should be slowed down even further until all of the pitches are clear and consistent.<sup>25</sup>

The scalar runs and metric shifts are very difficult to understand. Dr. Rouse uses unusual meter changes as well as rotation between duple and triple figures throughout the entire movement. This rotation, along with the quick trills, needs to be practiced at a slow tempo and gradually brought up to speed. Some

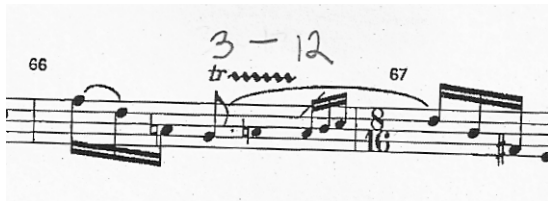
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<sup>24</sup> Steve Rouse, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 3 January 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Keith Johnson, *The Art of Trumpet Playing* (Denton, TX: Gore Publishing Company, 1994), 26-30.

of the trills are awkward but can be somewhat resolved through the use of alternate fingerings. In m. 58 and m. 70 the written F# is best played with the alternate fingering 1-2-3 instead of 2. This fingering allows the trill between the F# and G# to be quicker and more stylistic. The written A in m. 66 should be played with the 3<sup>rd</sup> valve and then switched to the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> valve on the grace note A (see Example 5).

Example 5. Steve Rouse, *The Avatar, Rebirth*, m. 66-67.



This transition between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> allows the trill to be played with the correct style and the grace notes to be heard clearly. Lastly, the E in m. 72 follows the same principles as the A in m. 66. Use 3<sup>rd</sup> valve on the trill itself and change to 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> valve on the grace note allow them to be heard clearly and stylistically.

At the end of the movement Rouse composes an ascending half-valve glissando that stretches from Ab to Ab (see Example 6). However, the upper Ab is extremely hard to play and is only a suggestion at best. Instead, the trumpeter should play to the peak of his range that fits into the chord of the piano part. This extended technique is best performed when the trumpeter clearly sounds the bottom Ab and then begins the half valve by depressing all of the valves half to

three-quarters of the way down. This technique will help the trumpeter keep air moving so that the pitch can be bent upward to the highest possible note.

Example 6. Steve Rouse, *The Avatar, Rebirth*, m. 157-160.

The image shows a musical score for trumpet and piano. The trumpet part (top staff) is marked with a tempo of *rit...* and a metronome marking of  $\text{♩} = 60$ . It features a *1/2 valve gliss...* starting at measure 157, with a crescendo leading to a *pppp* dynamic at measure 160. The piano part (bottom staff) starts with a *fff* dynamic, followed by *tutta* and *forza* markings. It includes a section labeled "catch resonance as 'and-of-one'" and ends with a *c.3"* marking. The score is annotated with various performance techniques and dynamics.

The most difficult part of *Rebirth* takes place between the pianist and trumpeter. According to Tunnell: "Meme and I spent many hours putting the last movement together. It is as challenging as anything that I have ever played."<sup>26</sup> Tunnell recommends that the pianist and trumpeter rehearse using a metronome. The movement is very rhythmic and the meter changes are switch frequently from triple to duple. Rehearsing small sections with a metronome will enable both performers to create a better ensemble.

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Tunnell, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 4 January 2010.

## CHAPTER 5

### RECORDING SUGGESTIONS

#### Hiring a Recording Engineer

When recording, ensure that you hire a quality audio engineer who uses quality equipment. A highly skilled audio engineer can make the difference between a good recording and a great recording. Even though it may be costly, do not economize on this aspect of the recording. The best way to find a highly qualified audio engineer is to find out who recorded some of the CDs that are appealing and to see if they live in your area. The next best option is to ask other colleagues and friends who have made superior recordings and contact their audio engineer.

#### Choosing a Venue

Venue is also another important factor when recording. Recording in a studio is always an option but since most recording studios are often dead spaces, it would benefit the performers to use a live venue instead. Even in a top-notch recording studio, the sound of a quality concert hall or church is often more desirable. A highly skilled audio engineer will have a list of live venues that are excellent places for recording. External influences such as traffic noise,



church bells, electric interference and other white noises are disruptive noises that a talented audio engineer should notice.

### Rehearse and Prepare Carefully

*The Avatar* is a rhythmically complex piece. It is imperative that the trumpeter and pianist are comfortable with their part. Mixed meter changes and metric shifts should be rehearsed until the end musical goal has been achieved. It would also be very helpful and cost effective if the performers spend time rehearsing the various takes in a similar venue before the actual recording date.

### Planning

Before recording begins, take time to plan where the takes for each movement should occur (see Figure 1). Plotting out these various sections will save time and money when the recording session actually begins. Strategically placed takes can also help elongate the trumpeter's endurance. In addition, begin recording a few bars before the needed segment. This will fill the recording venue with sound so that the merged sections will be easier to create.

Figure 1. Suggested Recording Takes, *Nativity*.

Take	Recorded Section
1	mm. 1-12; use the downbeat of mm. 12 as a connection point.
2	mm. 12-36; begin recording at m. 9, stop on downbeat of m.36.
3	mm. 36-62; begin recording at m. 33, stop on downbeat m.63
4	mm. 63-77; begin recording at m. 62, stop on downbeat of m. 77
5	mm. 77-85; begin recording at m. 76, stop on downbeat of m. 85.
6	mm. 85-101; begin recording at m. 82, stop on downbeat of m. 101
7	mm. 101-end; begin recording at m. 99, and finish the movement.

Suggested Recording Takes, *Enigma-Release*.

Take	Recorded Section
1	mm. 1-15; use the downbeat of m. 15 as splice point.
2	mm.15-28; begin m.14, splice m. 15, end downbeat m. 28
3	mm. 28-53; begin m. 27, splice m. 28, end downbeat m. 53
4	mm. 53-80; begin m. 52, splice m. 53, end downbeat m. 80 (taxing sec.)
5	mm. 80-95; begin m. 79 (8vb if want); splice m. 80, end downbeat m. 95
6	mm. 95-106; begin m. 94; splice m. 95, record to the end.

Suggested Recording Takes, *Rebirth*.

Take	Recorded Section
1	Beginning to m. 23; splice point downbeat of m. 23.
2	Begin m. 21; splice m. 23, end m. 34 downbeat.
3	Begin m. 30; splice m. 34, end m. 47 downbeat.
4	Begin m. 45; splice m. 47, end m. 83 downbeat (long section).
5	Begin m. 82; splice m. 83, end m. 103 downbeat.
6	Begin m. 102; splice 103, end m. 141 downbeat.
7	Begin m. 139; splice 141, record to end (m. 160).

### Use a *Tonmeister*

The *tonmeister* is a qualified musician that listens to the session with a score and gives the performers immediate, objective feedback. This job is very important and must be filled by someone that the performers trust. The *tonmeister* will be able to judge which takes are best. Moreover, the cost of the recording session will be less if the performers do not need to stop and evaluate each take.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

*The Avatar* requires the trumpeter to possess superior technique and an understanding of the work's programmatic meanings. Each movement has specific timbre, harmonic and rhythmical characteristics, and each movement is performed on a different instrument: *Bb* piccolo (with an optional *A* piccolo part) for *Nativity*, *Bb* Flugelhorn for *Enigma-Release* and *Bb* trumpet for *Rebirth*.<sup>27</sup>

The demands of playing multiple instruments in a single work create challenges for the performer. Intonation, timbre, endurance and extreme register changes are a few of the technical difficulties that ensue from this composition. In addition, the performer must choose among the possible programmatic meanings of the work: The Hindu belief of an Avatar and its lifecycle, (birth, the search or struggle for release through enlightenment, and rebirth), the life of Christ (birth, death and resurrection), or human lifecycle (birth, teenager to adult).<sup>28</sup>

*The Avatar* is more and more frequently performed. Dr. Rouse stated: "It seems to me that every year I get more and more emails telling me that they are

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<sup>27</sup> Steve Rouse, *The Avatar Initial Sketch*, (The library of Steve Rouse, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Steve Rouse, "Steve Rouse, composer," Steve Rouse personal web site, [http://web.me.com/steverouse/Site/-Steve\\_Rouse-The\\_Avatar.html](http://web.me.com/steverouse/Site/-Steve_Rouse-The_Avatar.html).

playing [*The*] *Avatar* on their recitals and want to ask me some questions about it.”<sup>29</sup> It is this author’s opinion that *The Avatar* will eventually become one the staples in the trumpet repertoire.

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<sup>29</sup> Steve Rouse, interview by author, mp3 IC recording, Louisville, KY, 3 January 2010.

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