

THE TEN PLAGUES

for Small Jazz Ensemble

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Foreword

The Ten Plagues – *the Story*

The Old Testament story of the Exodus is one of the most familiar tales in all of religious literature. Around 1300 BC,¹ the Hebrew nation resided in Egypt. Though their relations with the Egyptians had once been friendly, the Pharaoh, fearing their collective power, forced the Hebrews into slavery. God appeared before Moses, the Hebrews' redeemer, in the form of a burning bush, instructing him to go to Pharaoh and demand from him to let his people go. When the Pharaoh did not comply, God struck Egypt with Ten Plagues, or catastrophes, in order to demonstrate his might. In the wake of the plagues' destruction, the Pharaoh finally granted the Hebrews permission to flee. After the Hebrews left, the Pharaoh changed his mind and led the Egyptian army in swift

pursuit. With the Hebrews trapped against the bank of the Sea of Reeds, God had Moses raise his staff over the waters. The sea parted, allowing them to pass through safely. When the Egyptians chased them into the channel, God released his hold on the waters, drowning the Pharaoh and his army. The Hebrews, freed at last, wandered through the desert for forty years until they crossed the river Jordan into Palestine, the Promised Land.

Since Biblical times, this tale of triumph has been celebrated in Jewish tradition as an eight-day holiday known as *Pesach*, or Passover. The name Passover refers to the tenth and final plague, before which the Hebrews were instructed to sacrifice a lamb and use its shank to make a mark upon their doorposts with its blood. That night, God sent the Angel of Death over all of Egypt to kill the first-born son from every

¹ James H. Boykin, *Black Jews: A Study in Minority Experience* (Miami: J. H. Boykin, 1996), 2.

household. The homes with markings on their doorposts were spared, or “passed over.” (The Hebrew word *Pesach*, also used to describe the holiday, refers to the lamb shank used to mark the doorposts). During the holiday, families conduct a ritual meal known as a *seder* (Hebrew for “order”). The *seder* follows a specific program that governs the recitation of prayers, singing of songs, recounting the history of the Exodus, and (of course) eating and drinking. The Ten Plagues are specifically commemorated in the *seder* by chanting the Hebrew name of each plague melodically. For each plague in turn, a drop of wine is spilled from one’s glass to one’s plate, a symbol of remembrance.

The story of the Exodus has proved quite influential. In addition to Passover being one of the most important holidays in Jewish tradition, its message has been significant for other faiths as well. Sunni Muslims honor the Ten Plagues with the holiday *Ashura*. According to Sunni tradition, Moses demonstrated his gratitude to God for the Ten Plagues by fasting, and the Prophet Mohammed in turn honored Moses by fasting on this day. In Christian faith, the famous Last Supper Jesus Christ shared with his disciples was a Passover *seder*. The holiday Easter is actually referred to as *Pesach* or some derivative thereof in many other languages. The terms Passover and *Pesach* are often understood interchangeably, so much so that it is common to see Latin descriptions of Christ as “*pascha nostrum*” are translated as “Christ our Passover,” as opposed to “our offering” or “our lamb.”²

² See Karen Bellenir, *Religion Holidays and Calendars: An Encyclopedic Handbook*, 3rd Edition (Detroit, MI: 2005).

The Ten Plagues – *Cultural Context*

The decision to set the story of the Ten Plagues in a jazz idiom is not as far a reach as it might seem at first glance. The connection between Jewish culture and both African and African-American culture has a long and multi-faceted history. For starters, the Exodus story itself took place in Egypt—the very Jews who escaped from bondage were Africans themselves. According to the Torah, the Hebrews fled north through the Sinai peninsula to Palestine, where they built their kingdom. The spread of Jewry worldwide was supposed to have occurred only after the Exodus, with the Biblical home of Palestine as a centralized starting point. However, unknown to the Western world until only quite recently, there are several groups of indigenous African Jews that live to this day. Some of these populations, like the Beta Israel in Ethiopia, actually have bloodlines that are thought to date back well over 2500 years. Jewish scholars have excitedly postulated that these populations may represent the descendants of “lost” tribes that split off from the Hebrews, possibly during the Exodus itself.³

The fascinating relationship between Jewish culture and African culture really begins, however, in the place where such cross-fertilizations are usually born—America. Africans spent the first 250 years of their history in the New World as slaves, and through this plight, new vibrant forms of musical expression developed throughout the 19th century. Work

³ Boykin, *Black Jews*, 2.

songs sprang up in cotton fields and on railroad tracks; the gospel was expounded via voice and makeshift instruments at camp meetings; a substantial body of “spiritual” songs slowly gained popularity across the country. The music borne from slavery was powerfully emotive and fiercely rhythmic. Its mournful strains became the progenitor of many of America’s great home-grown traditions: ragtime, blues, Dixieland, jazz, even (arguably) hip-hop.

From the beginning, African-American musical expression was always drawn to the message of the Bible. Part of this attraction, to be sure, can be attributed to the importance of religion (specifically Christianity) in helping slaves find comfort in their lives, a notion that is corroborated by the ubiquity of Jesus Christ in spirituals from the time. That said, there are a disproportionate number of spirituals whose lyrics do not make reference to Jesus or to the notion of salvation at all. They instead evoke the Old Testament, the part of the Bible directly drawn from the Jewish Torah. Spirituals such as *Joshua Fit De Battle of Jericho*, *Li’l David Play on Your Harp*, *Who did swallow Jonah*, *Open the Window*, *Noah* and *Wrestling Jacob* all recount events from the Old Testament with great significance in Jewish tradition. The story of the Exodus was especially well-represented; it is perhaps the most important Old Testament image in spiritual literature. Some spirituals, like *Go Down Moses*, explicitly recount aspects of the Exodus tale: “Go down, Moses, / way down in Egypt land / and tell ol’ Pharaoh / to let my people go.” Others, like *O Mary Don’t You Weep*, combine imagery from the Exodus with imagery from the New Testament: “O Mary, don’t you

weep don’t you mourn, / O Mary, don’t you weep don’t you mourn, / Pharaoh’s army got drowned / O Mary, don’t you weep.”⁴ Countless spirituals make reference to the Exodus: *Pharaoh’s Army*, *Ride on Moses*, *Turn Back Pharaoh’s Army*, and many more.⁵

It is not difficult to see why the message of Exodus was so appealing to the African-American population. The Hebrews of the Old Testament accepted the outstretched hand of God and were thereby freed from bondage; they climbed over mountains and wandered through deserts to receive their Commandments and find the Promised Land. Indeed, the crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land frequently appears in these spirituals, including *Jordan River*, *March Down to Jordan*, *Sweet Canaan’s Happy Land*, and *I Stood on de River Jordan*, to name a few. The Exodus story is a powerful symbol of hope and purpose, and an especially relevant one at that to the particular plight of Africans in America.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, it was the Jews’ turn to take up African-American influences. By the turn of the century, African-American melodies and rhythms had worked themselves into discernable genres such as

⁴ It is ambiguous which Mary of the New Testament is referred to here. It could be the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Bethany, who brought Lazarus to Jesus. Regardless, there was no Mary present when Pharaoh’s army was drowned—it clearly is a reference to the New Testament.

⁵ See Newman I. White, *American Negro Folk Songs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), as well as <http://www.negrospirituals.com> for background information and indexes of spirituals with lyrics.

ragtime and the blues. They were popularized among a broader (white) audience through such media as vaudeville shows and minstrelsy. In the first couple decades of the 20th century came the rise of the American popular song, and many of its great champions rose out of a musical community known as “Tin Pan Alley.” The term Tin Pan Alley refers to a specific place where a number of music publishers happened to set up shop (Manhattan, 28th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues), but more commonly is used to describe a particular group of people and the music they produced. While Tin Pan Alley did feature some black artists, such as Scott Joplin and Fats Waller, it (along with Broadway) really represented one of the major epicenters of American Jewish musical expression. Jerome Kern, George Gershwin and Irving Berlin all came out of Tin Pan Alley, and with them came the showtune and the modern Broadway musical as we know it.⁶

Jeffrey Melnick, scholar of black-Jewish relations in the 20th century, goes as far to claim that many American Jews consciously decided that they “were in a special relationship with African-Americans.”⁷ Such a broad claim is hard to quantify; in any case, it is clear that the Jewish composers of Tin Pan Alley were especially receptive to African-American influences on music. What became known as the “Jewish” sound really implied an appropriation of ragtime and blues techniques. These songs are rife with “blue” notes (flattened thirds and sevenths

over major harmonies), swing-feel rhythm, ragtime harmonies and oom-pah textures, and other trademarks of African-American music. What’s more, many of these Jewish artists were fascinated with African-American thematic material. Jerome Kern’s musical *Showboat*, featuring the immortal ballad “Ol’ Man River,” tells the tale of black oppression along the Mississippi. Al Jolson was the country’s most famous vaudeville and blackface star, and he popularized Irving Berlin’s “Blue Skies” in the first “talkie,” *The Jazz Singer*. And George Gershwin, of course, wrote countless tunes on African-American themes (such as “Swanee”).

Jewish interest in African-American music was not restricted to the popular song genre, however. Many of the great non-black bandleaders from the early 20th century were Jewish, such as Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. Following these pioneers, Jewish presence in the jazz world has been exceptionally strong; such figures as Stan Getz, Buddy Rich, and Lee Konitz have been hugely influential as both performers and composers. Especially well-known are the attempts to fuse jazz with Western classical music. George Gershwin made ample use of jazz harmony, rhythm, and phrasing in his famous concert works *Rhapsody in Blue*, *American in Paris* and the *Concerto in F*. And the influence was not purely musical: Gershwin’s empathy for African-American plight culminated in his magnum opus, *Porgy and Bess*, the first mainstream opera to ask for black actors and deal with specifically black issues. Gershwin was the first of a large number of 20th century American Jewish composers to employ jazz and other

⁶ Jeffrey Melnick, “Tin Pan Alley and the Black-Jewish Nation,” in *American Popular Music*, Rachel Rubin and Jeffrey Melnick, eds. (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001) 29-46.

⁷ Jeffrey Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999) 16.

African American elements in their music. Marc Blitzstein (*The Cradle will Rock*), Aaron Copland (*Clarinet Concerto, Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*), Leonard Bernstein (*West Side Story, Wonderful Town*), Morton Gould (*Billion Dollar Baby, Spirituals in Five Movements*) and Gunther Schuller (*Transformation, Concertino*) have all crafted musical languages grounded in jazz and African-American influences.

Many African-American artists were reciprocally responsive to this outburst of Jewish musical expression. Fats Waller and Andy Razaf's "Ain't Misbehavin'" really represents their take on Gershwin's "The Man I Love"; in Louis Armstrong's 1929 recording of "Ain't Misbehavin'," he briefly quotes Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in his trumpet solo.⁸ Most significantly, starting in the 1920s, African-American jazz artists adopted many songs from the popular American songbook (much of which came straight out of Tin Pan Alley) into the jazz standard repertoire. Towering figures such as Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Oscar Peterson, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane all made their careers off of these tunes; the novelty was taking the recognizable melodies and recasting them as instrumental jazz. Most of jazz's defining characteristics—the swing-feel, the "blue" notes and alterations, the improvisatory and conversational elements of solo playing—came directly from ragtime and the blues, which in turn came from slave songs and spirituals. And many of jazz's defining standard songs—"How Deep is the Ocean?," "I've Got Rhythm," "Someone to Watch

Over Me," "Swanee," "All the Things You Are"—were written by Jews.

The relationship between African-American music and Jewish music continues to this day, although admittedly it has become mostly one-sided. In the realm of Western classical music, composers such as Yehudi Wyner, David Lang, Aaron Jay Kernis, and John Zorn write music significantly influenced by jazz. Jewish presence in traditionally African-American genres is quite strong as well. Artists such as Avishai Cohen, Uri Caine, and Joshua Redman are at the forefront of modern jazz. One of hip-hop's best known groups, the Beastie Boys, is all-Jewish; MTV called Rick Rubin, the founder of hip-hop label Def Jam, the most important producer of the last 20 years. In an increasingly fragmented musical scene, the connection between these two disparate cultures lives on.

It is important to recognize that the connection only goes so far. Outside of the interchange of music and culture, Jews and African-Americans have not had too much to do with one another. To be sure, Jews were quite involved in the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. But it took a long time to get there; they were conspicuously absent in abolition movements in the mid-19th century (many Southern Jews didn't particularly want to give up their slaves).⁹ Historically, both Jews and African-Americans have tended to live in insular societal structures, and with good reason—both groups are among the most

⁸ Melnick, "Tin Pan Alley and the Black-Jewish Nation," 30.

⁹ Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance: The Turbulent Times Between Blacks and Jews in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988) 21-23.

persecuted in modern history. For most of the early 20th century, Jews (even in America) were busy confronting a crush of anti-Semitism, while blacks were struggling against the pressures of Jim Crow.¹⁰ While the Jews and African-Americans might have felt a cultural kinship with one another, and even empathized with the other's oppression, that is a far cry from actually associating with one another. The Civil Rights movement really was the hey-day of Jewish-African-American cooperation, but even then, it consisted primarily of spearheading demonstrations and philanthropic endeavors for a joint cause—more the interaction of organizations, rather than individuals.¹¹ Good relations were short-lived. The fiery rhetoric of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam in the mid-1960s blamed Jews for driving Palestinians (their “Muslim Brothers”) from their homeland, sparking a rash of anti-Semitism in blacks across America.¹² In recent years, even with anti-Semitism and anti-black racism as muted as they ever have been in America, there has been very little commingling between Jews and African-American outside of the realm of music.¹³

Where, then, does this mutual attraction between Jewish music and African-American music come from? It is possible that it is purely accidental, a product of historical circumstance. African-American music was in vogue in New York City at the turn of the century, after all, and many Jews just so happened to find success writing songs that incorporated elements of their experience. This

argument ultimately does not prove satisfying. The depth and breadth of the relationship is too significant to explain away as mere accident—the groups have demonstrated not only clear attraction to one another, but furthermore a sense of identification bordering on outright empathy. The history of the Jewish people is fraught with persecution, diaspora, demonization, and genocide; the history of Africans in America encompasses slavery, Jim Crow, and effects of marginalization that linger to this day. Scholars today point to a “trope of shared oppression” between Jews and African-Americans.¹⁴ Both groups have forged their cultural identities around their difficult pasts, and instinctively recognize a kindred spirit in one another.

Still further it can be argued that out of this “shared oppression,” the actual substance of Jewish music and African-American music is inherently similar. The improvised strains of the jazz singer or instrumentalist are analogous to the mournful melodies of a cantor in synagogue. Where the African-Americans have their “blue” notes and guttural moans, the Jews have the augmented second and nonsense syllables (such as “lai dai dai”). And both musical languages are imbued with a thick sadness, an almost palpable weight, the badge of tradition borne out of hardship. Melnick points out that there was a “cantorial craze” in the late 19th and early 20th century in New York: Al Jolson, Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, and George Gershwin all attributed their sense of feeling and musical instincts to their experiences in synagogue and in

¹⁰ Kaufman, *Broken Alliance*, 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹² *Ibid.*, 135.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 267-280.

¹⁴ Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues*, 8.

Jewish faith.¹⁵ It is reasonable to assume that their attraction to African-American music was at least due in part to recognition of their own cantorial tradition in the strains of jazz, blues, gospel, and spirituals.

I am particularly sympathetic to the latter, more ambitious claim. I cannot say that it applies to all cases, or even most cases, but at the very least it aptly describes my personal relationship, as a Jew, to African-American music. Jazz music and cantorial music strike a similar chord in me, at a very primal, spiritual level. In listening to both John Coltrane and Joseph Rosenblatt, I feel the touch of God, as I do when I hear Bach or Beethoven; but even more profoundly, I feel the presence of *man*, the weight of suffering and love and personality and triumph and failure upon the divine plan. For me, this is what improvisation does—its fleetingness reminds us that we are mortal, even though sometimes we wish we are not. But that’s the whole point, isn’t it?

The Ten Plagues – *the Composition*

My project is, first and foremost, essentially musical in intent. Though it is attached to the formal constraints of the Ten Plagues, by and large it is not a programmatic work. I avoided organizational principles such as *leitmotifs* or consistent musical representations of particular events and emotions. This is partly because the narrative of the Ten Plagues is quite repetitive: in most plagues, God summons Moses, Moses goes to Pharaoh, Pharaoh rebukes Moses, Moses summons

the plague, Pharaoh asks for mercy, Moses ends the plague, Pharaoh refuses to let the Hebrews go. It is also because I wanted each movement to exist independently of programmatic allusion. There are very few places in the score that overtly suggest extra-musical events or personalities. While certain moments clearly match up with events in the scripture (most notably the introduction to the third movement, or the “loud cry” in the final movement), the piece is intended to work at a musical level alone. These moments do not directly convey extra-musical events as much as they take inspiration from these events. I do not expect the listener to map what they hear explicitly onto the narrative. Listening to this work should require no script, score, or program notes to be fully appreciated.

On the title page preceding the score, I included the melodic chants that accompany each Plague when recited at the typical *seder* table. These are not meant to be performed, but are provided to contextualize the musical tradition from which the work sprang forth (though, I admit, if a group of performers wished to make use of them to connect movements during a full performance, I would not object).

The work is hard to categorize stylistically. In terms of its sound world, it is fully in a jazz idiom. It employs a swung rhythmic feel and a traditional “walking bass” texture consistently throughout; it makes constant recourse to syncopated rhythmic gestures and interplay between soloist and ensemble. It is unlikely that performers without a heavy background in jazz would be able to render it convincingly, if at all

¹⁵ Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues*, 170.

(especially with regards to the improvisational demands made of the drummer). In terms of its form and the demands it makes of the players, the work more closely resembles Western classical music. It does not supply vast swaths of empty measures in which players are expected to improvise together over chord changes, but rather fully notates all parts. In “solo” sections, fully realized solos are provided to the players such that they can perform exactly what is written if they so desire. Many of the forms of the individual movements develop organically, a stark contrast to the strophic dance forms of traditional jazz. In terms of its musical language, the work swings between the poles of jazz, 20th century Western classical music, and cantorial music. Harmonically, “jazz voicings” with extended triadic tensions are interspersed with tightly-controlled clusters based on set intervals; melodically, blues scales and cantorial scales share the weight of responsibility.

In writing this piece, I naturally turned to scores and recordings by master musicians for guidance. The main inspiration for the work was drawn from the two great classically-minded composers in the jazz idiom: Duke Ellington and Wynton Marsalis. Duke Ellington is more responsible than anybody for putting jazz in the concert hall. He was a pioneer in applying the concepts of large-scale form and narrative to jazz, which up until his time had primarily consisted of short dance forms. He tailored his writing to the specific members of his orchestra, penning mournful ballads for Johnny Hodges’s alto sax and blistering trumpet bravura for Cootie Williams. There has never been an ear for orchestration and harmony like his in jazz, before or since. Wynton Marsalis, as controversial

as his politics may be, really has taken up Duke’s mantle in the compositional realm. His septet is the inspiration for the instrumentation of my own work; his visionary writing for the septet is at a level comparable to Duke’s mastery of the full-sized jazz band. In an age in which academic jazz has grown increasingly towards straight-8ths subdivisions and post-modern nihilism, Wynton has championed the music’s roots of swing and blues while embracing the large-scale form. Criticize him for his conservatism or love him for his passion, one thing remains indisputable—the man writes goddamned good music.

The inherent danger in attempting cross-cultural fusion in composition is the high probability that even the best effort will only scratch the surface of the traditions involved, a scenario described by Gary Giddins as an “oil-and-water confrontation.”¹⁶ Many of these efforts in the 20th century have resulted in gimmicks: empty products that superficially please based on their “exoticism.” Examples include forays into Indian music by artists such as the Beatles, much of which consisted of superimposing a tabla or sitar over standard pop forms, or jazz-classical collaborations like Chick Corea’s *Spain Concerto*, which calls for the piano soloist to riff rhythmically while the orchestra desperately tries to keep up.

Cases like Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Porgy and Bess* are more complicated. White listeners at the time widely lauded Gershwin for “dressing up” jazz and putting it in the concert hall, but

¹⁶ Gary Giddens, “A Passage to India,” *The New Yorker*, March 2, 2009, 74-75.

African-Americans had mixed reactions to Gershwin's endeavor. J. Rosamond Johnson, a popular black singer of the Harlem Renaissance, described the *Rhapsody* as the "greatest one-hundred percent exposition of Negro American idioms and characteristics." But Hall Johnson, a prominent choir conductor, called *Porgy* "an opera about Negroes rather than a Negro opera."¹⁷ As great as these works were, there was little consensus as to how much they could truly be considered "jazz" works, or even "classical" for that matter. *Porgy and Bess* was derided by critics for its formal incoherence, which might have been a rationalization for closet racism. More recent attempts at full-scale integration of disparate elements—Gunther Schuller's "Third Stream," for example—have produced lackluster results.

With this piece, I have no intent of making some sort of cross-cultural statement, nor do I wish to claim ownership of the wide range of genres I reference along the course of the work. The writing is sincere. My musical language is the product of a very eclectic body of influence, and my greatest hope is that it is sufficiently well-integrated to be coherent and meaningful in and of itself. Duke Ellington famously refused the "jazz" label for his music, and upon pressing he would only settle for "Negro" or "American" music. For him, the best music was simply "beyond category."¹⁸ I hope that *The Ten Plagues* will be heard and understood as its own musical entity, and that the listener's energy will be spent not on

the classification of its elements but on appreciating their interplay.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Biblical account of the Ten Plagues is that God intentionally prevents the Pharaoh from softening to Moses' entreaties. God repeatedly tells Moses that he "hardens the Pharaoh's heart," so that the Pharaoh can appreciate the extent of God's terrible power. The text suggests that the Pharaoh is ready to give in after the sixth plague, but God insists on inflicting the further torments of flaming hailstones, locusts, darkness, and killing the Egyptian first-born. This is not exactly the moral fortitude one would expect from an all-powerful and all-loving God (it is certainly glossed over in most retellings of the story). It suggests that God is not merely wrathful, but vindictive and petty like a human being would be (modeled after his own image, indeed). It also suggests that God has a penchant for large-scale planning: from the beginning of the first plague, the entire outcome was already foreseen and calculated.

In writing this piece, I too tried to fashion a "master plan" by planting musical interconnections between the movements. The harmonic and melodic material is consistent throughout, making especial use of the minor-third (the common thread between cantorial scales and blues scales). The penultimate movement and the final movement both recall musical moments from several different movements, as if reflecting on the events that had transpired. Though it wouldn't be apparent in a single listening, the first movement

¹⁷ Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues*, 48.

¹⁸ Mark Tucker, *Ellington: The Early Years* (New York: University of Illinois Press, 1995) 6.

foreshadows the last movement, as if bringing the work full-circle to an inevitable conclusion.

I also noticed that by folding the Ten Plagues in half (matching the first plague to the tenth, the second to the ninth, and so on) one could find symmetrical thematic connections:

1. Blood. (Bb) _____ 10. Death of the First-born. (Dm)

Mortality, frailty of the body

2. Frogs. (G) _____ 9. Darkness. (Bm)

(No real connection)

3. Lice. (Db) _____ 8. Locusts. (Fm)

Insects, swarming

4. Beasts. (Bbm) _____ 7. Flaming Hail. (F#)

Destructive, physically punishing

5. Pestilence. (Em) _____ 6. Boils. (C)

Disease, affliction

My composition highlights these thematic parallels by setting linked movements in related key signatures. Symmetrical movements are separated by major-third, with one of the pairing set in a major key and the other of the pairing in a minor key based on the 3rd scale degree of the other movement (double-common tone relation). No key region is repeated throughout the work. The thematic parallels are also highlighted by setting linked movements with similar form and/or character. Both 3.*Lice* and 8.*Locusts* are full ensemble features that employ syncopated rhythmic counterpoint and stabbing, “insect bite” interjections. Both 4.*Beasts* and 7.*Flaming Hail* are

brass features (trombone in 4. and trumpet in 7., respectively) that are set in related meters: 4. is a hard 6/8 with a superimposed 3-quarter-note polyrhythm, while 7. is a hard 3/4 with a superimposed 2-dotted-quarter polyrhythm. Both 5.*Pestilence* and 6.*Boils* are saxophone features (alto in 5. and tenor in 6.) that evoke grotesqueness and uneasiness. There is no real thematic parallel to be found between 2.*Frogs* and 9.*Darkness*; I did not push the connection farther than it could stretch. However, I could not resist continuing the pattern of symmetrical solo features, so 2. features an extended bass solo and 9. consists entirely of a piano solo. Finally, 1.*Blood* and 10.*Death of the First-born* are really companion movements, sharing most of their musical material.

The Ten Plagues – *Descriptive Outline*

The following section will summarize the Biblical account of each of the Ten Plagues, providing context and clarification for my composition. All quotations are taken from the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh, 2nd Edition*, ed. and trans. by the Jewish Publication Society. Published in Philadelphia by the Jewish Publication Society, 1999.

Leading up to the Plagues.

God sends the prophet, Moses, and his brother, Aaron, to the Pharaoh, to tell him to release the Jewish people from bondage. The Pharaoh refuses. Moses and Aaron return to God, who tells them to return to Pharaoh and demand once more. If he refuses again, God promises to “harden Pharaoh’s heart, that [He] may multiply

[His] signs and marvels in the land of Egypt.” God instructs Moses and Aaron to show Pharaoh a miraculous display, so that he can behold’s God’s power: Aaron is to throw his rod to the ground, upon which it will turn into a serpent. Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and Aaron follows the direction of God, turning his rod into a serpent. Pharaoh responds by summoning his sorcerers, who repeat the same feat. Though Aaron’s rod swallows their rods, Pharaoh is unmoved, as God had predicted.

(Exodus 7:1 – 7:13)

1. *Blood* (Dam).

God tells Moses and Aaron to go before Pharaoh while he takes his morning walk by the river Nile. Moses is to warn the Pharaoh that God wishes to demonstrate his might by turning the waters of the Nile to blood. He is then to turn to Aaron and order him to hold his rod out over the river, upon which the waters of Egypt—“its rivers, its canals, its ponds, all its bodies of water”—will turn to blood, even the water “in vessels of wood and stone.” Moses and Aaron do as God asks. The river turns to blood, and all the Nile fish die, raising up a terrible stink. But Pharaoh’s “heart stiffen[s],” and he refuses Moses’ entreaty once more.

(Exodus 7:14 – 7:24)

My setting owes its inspiration to an image of the dark, thick viscosity of blood. The opening is low and meaty, with little breathing room in the dense instrumental texture. The rhythm is heavy and plodding, as if wading through thick mire. After the introduction, a New Orleans swing feel is introduced at m.26, a musical approximation of a

heart-beat (God supplies the blood—now it must pump). The thematic material is slippery and modal, as if liquid. At m.49, the alto sax solos in a Duke Ellington manner (with a direct allusion to the *Black and Tan Fantasy*) over sustained “wash” chords in the other winds. The “wash” chords gradually worm out of their accompanimental role, pushing towards a disjointed, spluttering climax at m.77. The opening theme is then recapitulated with variation. The movement closes with a New Orleans-style vamp, in which a densely contrapuntal texture is built up piece by piece. The instruments are encouraged to improvise their figures in this section.

2. *Frogs* (Tz’fardeyah).

Seven days pass, and God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh again, this time promising a plague of frogs if he refuses once more. The frogs will rise up from the Nile, “and they shall come up and enter [the Pharaoh’s] palace, [his] bedchamber and [his] bed, the houses of [his] courtiers and [his] people, and [his] ovens and [his] kneading bowls.” The Pharaoh again refuses, and Moses has Aaron hold his staff out over the river Nile once more. A rash of frogs rises up, “cover[ing] the land of Egypt.” Pharaoh’s sorcerers are also able to conjure frogs with their spells, but are unable to remove them. Pharaoh tells Moses and Aaron that he will let the Hebrews go, if they are able to remove the frogs from Egypt. Moses pleads with God to rid the land of frogs, and God complies. The frogs die out “in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields.” The carcasses are piled up in the fields, where they make quite the stink.

(Exodus 7:25 – 8:10)

The principal feature of the movement is the plunger-mute “wah” of the trumpet and trombone. The trumpet and trombone introduce this timbre in a brief conversational introduction. The following section settles into an easy swing, in which the double-bass solos over accompanimental chord hits (alluding to Thelonious Monk’s “Evidence”). These chord hits are grounded in a repeating 13-tone row (mostly 12-tone, with one repeated A^b) and rhythmic profile. This row contracts rhythmically but expands orchestrationally as it is reiterated throughout the movement, a vector form that takes its cue from the continuing advancement of the frogs (from the riverbed, to the Pharaoh’s palace, to his chamber, to his bed). Its first iteration lasts 16 bars, (mm.6-21), and its second iteration lasts 12 bars (mm.22-33). At m.34 the ensemble joins in unison for a “shout chorus,” the melody of which recalls the trumpet/trombone introduction. The repeating row returns to accompany the piano solo at m.42 (lasting 8 bars) and then again accompanying the drum solo at m.50 (lasting 6 bars). The “shout chorus” returns at m.56 in inversion. The coda, starting at m.64, switches the rhythmic feel to straight 8th notes, as if evoking a kind of frog march from the Pharaoh’s palace to the shores of the Nile. The bouncing chords grow increasingly sparse until the final hit in m.80.

3. Lice (Kinim).

When Pharaoh sees that the plague has abated, he changes his mind, forbidding the Hebrews to leave. God instructs Moses to have Aaron plunge his rod into the “dust of the earth,” which will rise up and transform into lice. Moses and Aaron comply, and

Egypt is beset by lice. Pharaoh’s sorcerers are unable to produce the lice, and complain to Pharaoh that “this is the finger of God!” The Pharaoh’s heart hardens, however, as God had foretold, and does not listen.

(Exodus 8:11 – 8:16)

The first two bars of this movement are inspired by Aaron plunging his staff into the ground, kicking up the dust that will transform into lice. The movement is furious in mood, based off a 21-beat *ostinato* pattern first introduced in the piano at m.3. Instruments are added incrementally, building up a thick contrapuntal texture like a mounting swarm. The interjecting minor seconds in the soprano sax and trumpet (starting at m.20) suggest the stabbing bites of the lice. As the texture builds, the *ostinato* spirals further harmonically. At m.36, the texture breaks, featuring a rhythmic counterpoint between the stabbing gesture in the piano right hand and an atonal bass line. The texture again mounts as instruments continually join in and the counterpoint develops, leading to the furious climax at m.53. As the movement winds down, instruments gradually drop out, and the *ostinato* harmony continues to spiral further. At m.73, the winds come back in, leading a hard push directly into the next movement without pause.

4. Beasts (Arov).

God tells Moses to approach the Pharaoh again in the morning as he emerges from the river, this time threatening him with a swarm of wild beasts.¹⁹ These beasts will fill the fields and the

¹⁹ It is unclear in the Torah what exactly is “swarming” in the fourth plague. The Biblical Hebrew is sometimes

houses, but only where the Egyptians live—the Hebrew quarter of Goshen will be set aside and spared. And God summons the beasts, which rampage throughout the land of Egypt. Pharaoh calls for Moses and begs him to make a sacrifice to his God, to be rid of the beasts, after which the Pharaoh will free the Hebrews. Moses and Aaron go to the wilderness to make the sacrifice, and God removes the swarms from the land. But Pharaoh’s heart stiffens again, and reneges on his promise.

(Exodus 8:17 – 8:28)

This movement is set as an extended drum feature, grounded in a ferocious Afro-Cuban 6/8 (such as was originally introduced to jazz by the likes of Machito, Paquita de Rivera, and Dizzy Gillespie). This style is inherently polyrhythmic, superimposing 3 quarter-notes over the two dotted-quarters to a bar; and over *this* pattern, the drummer is responsible for maintaining a repeated two-bar “clave” figure on the ride cymbal bell. The piano is *tacet*, lending the movement a harmonic hollowness throughout. The drums are consistently interrupted by phrase fragments in the winds and bass, which come increasingly close to being heard in full but don’t quite get there by m.72. At m.73 the winds employ running legato scales accompanying the “clave” figure in the drums, contracting and expanding rhythmically. After the climax at m.97, the drums have an extended solo, first maintaining metered time and then moving into free unmeasured improvisation. The trombone joins the drums at m.150 for an

translated as “flies” and sometimes as “wild beasts.” I made the executive decision to go with “beasts,” partly to avoid thematic redundancy with the previous movement, and partly because the image of stampeding beasts is simply too good to pass up from a compositional standpoint.

improvised conversational duet with the drums. At m.178, the other winds gradually start entering on running “clave” scales, though considerably more out of phase in this iteration. This builds to a furious climax at m.206, rushing headlong to a blistering finish.

5. *Pestilence* (Dever).

God tells Moses to ask the Pharaoh once more to release the Hebrews. If he again refuses, God will cast a “very severe pestilence” upon the animals in the field: “the horses, the asses, the camels, the cattle and the sheep.” Once again, God will distinguish between Egyptian livestock and the livestock of the Hebrews, sparing the latter. Pharaoh refuses, and all the Egyptian animals are stricken with a terrible disease, from which they all perish. The Hebrew animals remain perfectly healthy. But Pharaoh is stubborn, and he does not capitulate.

(Exodus 9:1 – 9:7)

This setting evokes a deep languor, as if conjuring an image of convalescence. It features the alto sax throughout, paying tribute to the great solo ballads that Duke Ellington wrote for his lead alto player, Johnny Hodges. After a mournful introduction, the sax is joined by the bass and drums, which employ standard brush technique on the snare drum. Meanwhile, the tenor sax and trombone squirm around in a ghostly *sotto voce* whisper, creating an unsettled harmonic underpinning. Mm.18-19 provide a momentary shaft of light, but at m.20 it is back to the lugubrious wallowing. Again at m.28 a glimmer of light appears, this time culminating in a moderate climax of sorts at m.34. The alto

sax performs a brief improvised *cadenza*, and the movement concludes with a coda in the surprise key of E minor.

6. *Boils* (Sh'teyn).

God tells Moses and Aaron to grab “handfuls of soot from the kiln” and throw them “towards the sky” as Pharaoh looks on. The soot will spread out and “become a fine dust all over the land of Egypt,” upon which it will cause every Egyptian man and animal to grow inflamed boils. Moses and Aaron comply, and the Egyptians are stricken with these boils. The Pharaoh asks his sorcerers to heal the boils, but they are unable to do so because they themselves are incapacitated by the plague. Yet once again, God hardens Pharaoh’s heart, and Moses’ entreaty is refused.

(Exodus 9:8 – 9:12)

Here I set the movement as a grotesque chaos, stirred by the image of a great mayhem of bodies running around trying to soothe their afflictions. The tempo is a hard swing, and right away a frenetic double-time figure careens almost out of control in the winds. The main theme is heard at m.9, disjointed and with frequent interruptions. At m.21, the tenor sax is featured, soloing in a wobbly, grotesque manner over a fluctuating chordal texture in the piano and low winds. The theme returns at m.35, considerably more mangled and up a major third. The tenor sax solos again, this time with the chordal texture more filled out and more strained harmonically. The theme returns at m.61, again distorted and again up a major third, out of which a bumbling atonal tenor sax *cadenza* emerges. As the *cadenza* rumbles to a halt, the frenetic introduct returns, a formal

bookend to the movement. The introductory material is now clearly perceptible as an exaggerated variation of the main theme.

7. *Flaming Hail* (Barad).

God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh once more early in the morning and warn him that if he continues to refuse, there is much more (and much worse) to come. God could have struck all of the Egyptians dead, but he did not, in order to fully demonstrate the extent of his power and so that his “fame may resound throughout the world.” If the Pharaoh still does not let the Hebrews go, then God promises to rain upon Egypt a terrible hail such that has never been seen. Pharaoh again refuses, and God tells Moses to raise his hands to the sky. God unleashes a fury of thunder and hail, with streaks of fire that rain down onto the ground. The hail “[strikes] down all that [are] in the open, both man and beast” and destroys vegetation. The Hebrew quarter of Goshen is again spared. Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron, pleading for mercy and promising freedom for the Hebrews. Moses spreads his hands to the skies, and the hail abates. But Pharaoh “[reverts] to his guilty ways,” going back on his word.

(Exodus 9:13 – 9:35)

The introduction to the movement suggests the gradual onset of precipitation, with the wind instruments trading flurries of descending 16th-notes. The rhythm section enters at m.22 with a pounding 3/4 swing and a modal harmonic pedal. The alto sax and trumpet introduce the theme at m.34 in their lowest registers, blating loudly and messily. This gains intensity until its relative

climax in mm.64-67, where the “hailstones” gesture is recalled once more. A sax duet enters at m.78, obfuscating the harmony and recalling the sax sectional playing of Duke Ellington’s scores (especially in the *Far East Suite*). At m.98, the saxes start building towards a climax with a polyrhythmic line, against which the solo trumpet begins to assert itself. The textural breaks in mm.114-119 prepare the wild climax at m.120, out of which a fantastical trumpet solo emerges at m.128, accompanied only by the drums. This solo continues through the end of the movement, gaining in intensity and moving upwards to the highest squeals of the trumpet’s extended range. The winds and piano gradually enter, reintroducing the “hailstones” gesture at various levels of augmentation. The movement barrels ahead to its climactic finish at m.224, where it rumbles to a messy halt (as if the last hailstones are spilling over).

8. *Locusts* (Arbeh).

God calls Moses once more, telling him that he will continue to harden the Pharaoh’s heart, so that his fury can be displayed in all its awesome power. Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh, warning that God will send a horde of locusts that will sweep over all of Egypt. The locusts will be so thick that “no one will be able to see the land,” and will “devour the surviving remnant” of vegetation left after the hailstones. Pharaoh’s courtiers beg him to consider Moses and Aaron’s threat, but he is still unmoved. Moses holds out his rod, summoning forth a great east wind that brings with it locusts. Locusts come thick and heavy, such that the land is “darkened,” and “nothing green [is] left, of tree or grass of the field, in all the land of Egypt.”

Pharaoh pleads with Moses to stop the locusts, offering to let the Hebrews go. God sends a west wind that carries the locusts into the Sea of Reeds. But then God wrathfully hardens the Pharaoh’s heart, so that he does not grant the Hebrews freedom.

(*Exodus 10:1 – 10:20*)

The tambourine-bass duet in the introduction is inspired by the image of the east wind called forth by Moses; innocuous at first, but foreboding of the destruction to come. The drums enter at m.12 with a blistering swing, joined by the bass in m.21. The winds begin to pile up a dense trilling texture with angular rhythms at m.28. The principal motive enters at m.45, the rhythmic profile of which recalls the mysterious chord hits in Radiohead’s *Pyramid Song*. The brass interrupts at m.53 and again at m.78, creating something like a rhythmic counterpoint. At m.91, the brass take up the main voice, enjoying a long *sol* section while the saxes wail away in long flashy accompanimental lines. The saxes resume command in m.132 with a wildly syncopated *sol* section, punctuated by stabbing brass attacks. This section culminates in the movement’s biggest climax in mm.177-182. The trilling texture from the beginning is recalled starting at m.191, although expanded and rhythmically more elaborate. The instruments fade out as the drummer takes up the tambourine, ushering the locusts away with the west wind.

9. *Darkness* (Choshech).

God tells Moses to hold out his arms to the sky to call forth a darkness so thick that it “can be

touched.” Moses complies and deep darkness descends upon Egypt, lasting three days. The Egyptians cannot see their hands in front of their faces, but the Hebrews in Goshen “enjoy light in their dwellings.” The Pharaoh summons Moses, and tells him that the Hebrews may leave, though they must leave their livestock behind. Moses insists that the livestock come too. But before this can be resolved, God hardens Pharaoh’s heart a final time, so that he goes back on his word. Pharaoh banishes Moses from his presence, threatening to kill him if he ever comes near again. Moses retorts, “You have spoken rightly. I shall not see your face again!”

(Exodus 10:21 – 10:29)

I set this movement as a piano solo, reflecting the terrible aloneness of darkness (taking cue from Duke Ellington’s classic piano solo, “Solitude,” as well). The character of the movement is a slow waltz, with spiraling harmonies built up entirely of minor thirds. As in the sixth movement, the main thematic material is continually varied and transposed up, although by minor thirds. At m.39 and at m.67, the texture breaks, with the right hand riffing in a solo cantorial style. The first movement is recalled at m.45 and m.73, the seventh movement is recalled at m.72, and the fourth movement is recalled at m.69, as if to go back and remember all that has transpired (what else is there to do in the darkness?). The piece fades out on a short vamp that had been briefly foreshadowed in mm.49 and m.78, the sonorities of which are blissfully liberated from the stringent chains of minor thirds.

10. Death of the First-born (Makat b’chorot).

God summons Moses once more, and gives him lengthy instructions to pass on to the Hebrews, for this is to be the final plague. God will kill the first-born from every household in the land of Egypt: “from the first-born of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones.” God predicts a “loud cry in all the land of Egypt, such as has never been or will ever be again,” but the Hebrews shall not fear, for they will be freed from bondage untouched. Each Hebrew household must find a lamb (or share a lamb with a neighbor) and slaughter it. They will take some of its blood and smear it upon the doorposts of each dwelling; the rest will be feasted on. This sacrificial lamb is to be “a Passover offering.” When God comes in the night for the first-born children, he will “pass over” the homes with blood on their doorposts. The Hebrews are to take this day as a day of remembrance and eat no leavened bread on this day or the seven days hence. Moses gathers the Hebrew elders, and all of Goshen carries out God’s instructions. That night, God comes and smites all the first-born of Egypt. Pharaoh rises in the night, “because there [is] a loud cry in Egypt; for there [is] no house where there [is] not someone dead.” He summons Moses and Aaron to him in the middle of the night, granting the Hebrews unequivocal permission to leave, taking their children and flocks with them. After four-hundred thirty years of bondage, the Hebrews are free.

(Exodus 11:1 – 12:42)

The tenth plague represents the cornerstone of God's plan and the most complex in terms of its components. My setting reflects this complexity, with the last movement being the longest and most involved. The movement starts with a direct recollection of the very first plague, giving a sense of closure and of the "master plan" coming to fruition. But this section takes on a bit of a life of its own: rolled piano chords interject at m.7, recalling the previous movement, and the counterpoint in mm.12-15 is extended from that of its analogue in the first movement. A funeral dirge enters at m.16 in the piano and bass, over which wind chords swell in and out with staggered entrances. Mm. 38-40 is inspired by the "touch of death" as God passes over the houses of the Egyptians. The passage is borrowed from the first movement, but transposed into an uncomfortably high register. At m.41, the four winds agitatedly emulate the strains of the *shofar*, or ram's horn, an ancient instrument still used today in Jewish custom. Mm.48-59 are loud and furious, inspired by the "great cry" that goes up over all of Egypt when the dead first-born are discovered. At m.59, the New Orleans shuffle from the first movement enters in a ghostly *sotto voce*, as if whispering confirmation of God's plan.

The work concludes with an extended coda, starting at m.74, based on principles of Karnatak music (the classical tradition of Southeast India). The decision to conclude with an Indian-influenced ending was not made with any particular programmatic, cultural, or political agenda. It simply felt right at the time. I am confident that any surprise instilled in the listener by the stylistic

change will be more than mitigated by the sureness of the coda's drive to ecstatic conclusion.

The coda is grounded on a simple ostinato bass pattern in the time signature 7/8. The sultry first theme at m.80, a bit of homage to the stunning Balamuralikrishna *thatvam*, "Emi Sethura Linga," is a reworking of the New Orleans shuffle theme heard moments before. After a brief interlude at m.104, these two themes are then juxtaposed in counterpoint at m.116. At m.108, the meter switches to 7/4, introducing the third main theme of the section in the alto sax and piano. The meters and themes fit together in counterpoint at m.135. The 7/8 pattern returns at m.147, with the pitched instruments accompanying a short drum solo with the ostinato pattern. M.153 marks the beginning of a long conversational solo section. The alto sax, trumpet, and tenor sax each get four bars of solo, picking up and expanding on the material of the previous instrument. As the phrasing grows increasingly frenzied, the solo lengths are cut in half to two bars each, and then to just one bar. The inevitable climax is delayed by a furious piano solo interlude at m.195, returning to the 7/4 pattern; it is joined by the other instruments in m.198. Mm. 204-205 supply the long-awaited climax—a scalar passage in sixteenth notes, adding note by note. The ostinato is heard a final time at m.206 in a monstrous *tutti*, the final exclamation point at the end of an exhausting coda.

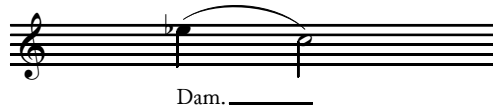
Michael Schachter
Cambridge, MA
March 2009

APPENDIX A

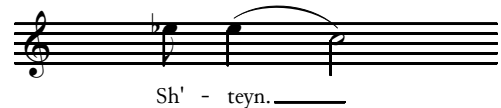
THE TEN PLAGUES

as sung at Passover seders around the globe

1. Blood.



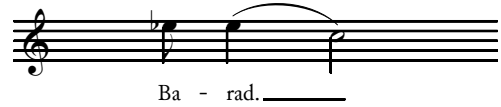
6. Boils.



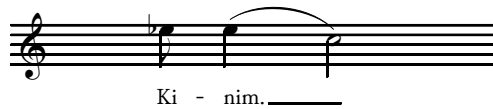
2. Frogs.



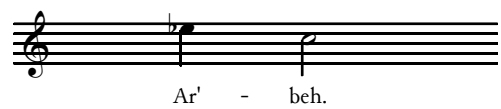
7. Flaming Hail.



3. Lice.



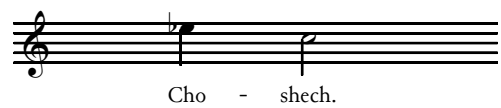
8. Locusts.



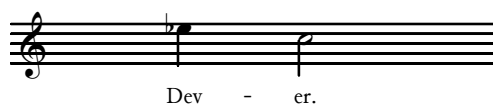
4. Beasts.



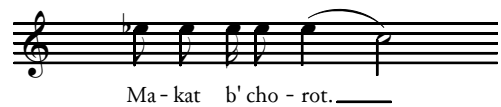
9. Darkness.



5. Pestilence.



10. Death of the First-born.



APPENDIX B

SELECT DISCOGRAPHY

Works that influenced or inspired The Ten Plagues

CLASSICAL

Leonard Bernstein

Chichester Psalms (*Songfest: Chichester Psalms*: Leonard Bernstein and the Israel Philharmonic, Deutsche Grammophon 415 965-2);
Dybbuk (*Dybbuk, Suite No.1*: Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, Deutsche Grammophon 2531 348);
West Side Story (*West Side Story*: Original Broadway Cast, Sony 53152).

Aaron Copland

Appalachian Spring (*The Essential Aaron Copland*: Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Decca 448 2612);
Piano Sonata (*Copland: Piano Music*: Benjamin Pasternack, Naxos 8.559184);
Sextet (*Copland: Vanbrugh Quartet*, ASV PLT 8504).

George Gershwin

American in Paris (*Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue, Concerto in F, American in Paris*: Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony, RCA Red Seal 82876608622);
Concerto in F (*Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue, Concerto in F, American in Paris*: Garrick Ohlsson, Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony, RCA Red Seal 82876608622);
Porgy and Bess (*Porgy and Bess*: Simon Rattle and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, EMI Classics CDCC 56220);
Rhapsody in Blue (*Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue, Concerto in F, American in Paris*: Jerome Simas, Michael Tilson Thomas and the New World Symphony, RCA Red Seal 82876608622).

George Frideric Handel

Israel in Egypt (*Israel in Egypt; The Ways of Zion*: John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir & Orchestra, Erato 2292-45399-2).

Edgar Meyer

Quintet for Strings (*Meyer, Quintet for strings; Rorem, Quartet No.4 for strings*: Edgar Meyer and the Emerson String Quartet, Deutsche Grammophon 289 453 506-2).

Olivier Messiaen

Quatour pour la fin du Temps (*Quartet for the End of Time*: Christoph Eschenbach and the Houston Symphony Chamber Players, 3-7378-2 H1 Koch International Classics).

Darius Milhaud

La Creation du Monde (*MILHAUD: La Creation du monde / Le Boeuf sur le toit / Suite provencale*: Jean-Claude Casadesus and the Lille National Orchestra, Naxos 8.557287).

Maurice Ravel

Piano Concerto in D for the Left Hand (*Concerto pour piano et orchestre; Concerto pour la main gauche; L'Éventail de Jeanne: fanfare; Menuet antique; Le tombeau de Couperin*: Michel Béroff, Claudio Abbado and the London Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Grammophon 423665);
Piano Concerto in G (*Concerto pour piano et orchestre; Concerto pour la main gauche; L'Éventail de Jeanne: fanfare; Menuet antique; Le tombeau de Couperin*: Martha Argerich, Claudio Abbado and the London Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Grammophon 423665);

Sonata for Violin and Piano (Violin Sonatas: Detlef Hahn and John York, ASV Quicksilva CD QS 6158).

Arnold Schoenberg

Five Orchestral Pieces, Op.16 (Schoenberg, Berg, Webern: Herbert von Karajan and the Berliner Philharmoniker, Deutsche Grammophon 427 424-2);
Moses und Aron (Moses und Aron: Sir Georg Solti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, London 414 264-2).

Igor Stravinsky

Octet (Stravinsky Selections: Edo de Waart and the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, Philips 6500 841);

Perséphone (Le Sacre du Printemps; Perséphone: Anne Fournet, Kent Nagano and the London Symphony Orchestra, Virgin Classics VMD 5 61249 2);
Ragtime (Stravinsky the Composer, Vol. 5: Robert Craft and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, Musicmasters Classics 67110-2);
Symphonies of Wind Instruments (Stravinsky Selections: Edo de Waart and the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, Philips 6500 841);
Symphony of Psalms (Symphony of Psalms; Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments; Pulcinella Suite: Leonard Bernstein and the London Symphony Orchestra, Sony Classical SMK 47628);
Violin Concerto (Stravinsky/Brahms: Violin Concertos: Hilary Hahn, Sir Neville Mariner and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Sony SS89649).

JAZZ

Rez Abbasi

Snake Charmer (Earth Sounds 1125).

The Bad Plus

For All I Care (Emarcy 1782164);
Give (Sony 90771);
Prog (Heads Up 3125);
Suspicious Activity? (Columbia 94740).

John Coltrane

Giant Steps (Rhino 1311);
Transition (Impulse! GRD-124);
A Love Supreme (Impulse! 155).

Chick Corea

Now he Sings, Now he Sobs (Solid State 7011);
Past, Present, and Futures (Stretch 9035).

Chick Corea and Gary Burton

Native Sense (Stretch 9014).

Chick Corea and Bela Fleck

The Enchantment (Concord 30253).

Miles Davis

Relaxin' (Prestige PRP-7129);
Miles Smiles (Columbia 9114);
Sorcerer (Columbia 65353).

Dave Douglas

The Infinite (RCA 63918);
Strange Liberation (RCA 50818);
Soul on Soul: A Celebration of Mary Lou Williams (RCA Victor 63603).

Duke Ellington and his Orchestra

Black Brown & Beige (MusicMasters Jazz 01612-65096-2);
The Far East Suite (Bluebird 7640-2-RB);
New Orleans Suite (Atlantic 1580-2);
The Second Sacred Concert (Prestige PCD-24045-2);
Such Sweet Thunder (Columbia CK 65568);
"Black and Tan Fantasy", "Creole Love Song", "Mood Indigo", "Solitude" (*The Essential Duke Ellington: Sony BMG CK 89305*);
"Concerto for Cootie", "Cottontail" (*Duke Ellington: EPM 158142*);
"Daybreak Express" (*Early Ellington (1927-1934): Bluebird 6852-1-RB*).

The Duke Ellington Trio

Money Jungle (Blue Note CDP-7-46398).

Bill Evans

Everybody Digs Bill Evans (Riverside RP-1129);

The Last Waltz (Milestone 844302);

Portrait in Jazz (Riverside 1162);

Sunday at the Village Vanguard (Riverside RS-9376);

Waltz for Debby (Riverside RS-9399).

Herbie Hancock

Empyrean Isles (Blue Note 4175);

Maiden Voyage (Blue Note 95331);

Speak Like a Child (Blue Note 9102);

Gershwin's World (Verve 557797).

Vijay Iyer

Panoptic Modes (Red Giant 11);

Reimagining (Pi 902).

Keith Jarrett

At the Blue Note (ECM 21577);

Fort Yawub (Impulse! 33122);

Inside-out (ECM 014005);

My Foolish Heart (ECM 000988702).

Charles Lloyd (with Eric Harland and Zakir Hussain)

Sangam (ECM 000616002).

Rudresh Mahanthappa

Apti (Innova 709);

Kinsmen (Pi 28);

Mother Tongue (Pi 14).

Wynton Marsalis (Septet and other small groups)

Black Codes (from the Underground) (Columbia CK 40009);

Citi Movement (Columbia C2K 53324);

In this House on this Morning (Columbia CK 57802);

Levee Low Moan (Columbia CK 47975);

Live at Blues Alley (Columbia C2K 40675);

Live at the Village Vanguard (Columbia CXX 69876);

Marsalis Plays Monk (Columbia CK 67503);

Standard Time Vol. 1 (Columbia CK 40461);

The Marciac Suite (Columbia 69877).

Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at Lincoln Center

Big Train (Columbia 69860);

Blood on the Fields (Columbia CXX 57694);

Congo Square (Shanachie 6332);

Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra: Live in Swing City (Columbia 69898).

Charles Mingus

Epitaph (Gunther Schuller conducting, Rhino 71454);

Mingus Ab Um (Sony Jazz 4504362);

Mingus Moves (Columbia C2K-45428).

The Modern Jazz Quartet, with the Jimmy Giuffre Trio

Third Stream Music (Atlantic 1345).

Thelonious Monk

“Brilliant Corners”, “Round Midnight” (*The Riverside Records Story*, Riverside Records 4RCD 4422-2);

“Evidence” (*Thelonious Monk Quartet with John Coltrane at Carnegie Hall*, Blue Note 0946 3 35173 2 5);

“Four in One”, “Ruby My Dear” (*Genius of Modern Music*, Blue Note 7243 5 32138 2 4);

“Trinkle Tinkle” (*The Complete Blue Note Recordings*, Blue Note CDP 7243 8 30364 2 4).

Miles Okazaki

Mirror (Miles Okazaki).

Chris Potter

Follow the Red Line: Live at the Village Vanguard (Sunnyside 3075);

Lift Live at the Village Vanguard (Sunnyside 3022);

Underground (Sunnyside 3034).

Gunther Schuller

Jumpin' in the Future (GM 3010).

Steve Swallow

“Hullo Bolinas” (Bill Evans, *The Tokyo Concert: Original Jazz Classics* OJCCD-345-2).

OTHER

Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna

“Emi Sethura Linga” (Live Concert in Trivandrum,
November 2005: available at
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOzbVCepY6w>>);
“Omkara”: *Maestro’s Choice, Vol. 1* (Music Today 91015).

The Beatles

Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band (Capitol C2-46442);
The White Album (Capitol C2-46443);
Revolver (Capitol C1-90452).

The Fisk Jubilee Singers, The Princely Players, et al.

African American Spirituals: The Concert Tradition
(Smithsonian/Folkways SF 40072). Includes the Fisk
Jubilee Singers: “Joshua Fit de Battle,” “Wade in the
Water”; the Howard University Chamber Choir: “Ain’t
Got Time to Die,” “Deep River”; and the Princely
Players: “Go in the Wilderness,” “Roll, Jordan, Roll.”

Josef Rosenblatt, Gershon Sirota, et al.

Legendary Cantors (Nimbus Records NI7906). Includes
Berele Chagy: “Mi Sheoso Nisim”; Joseph Rosenblatt:
“Yaaleh V’Yoveh”; Gershon Sirota: “V’shamru.”

Yo-Yo Ma, Edgar Meyer, and Mark O’Connor
Appalachian Journey (Sony Classical SK 66782);
Appalachian Waltz (Sony Classical SK 68460).

Edgar Meyer and Béla Fleck
Music for Two (Sony 92106).

Radiohead

Amnesiac (Capitol 32764);
Hail to the Thief (Capitol 84543);
In Rainbows (Radiohead);
Kid A (Capitol 27753);
OK Computer (Capitol 55229).

St. Thyagaraja

“Evvare Ramayya”, “Meru Samana”, “Rama Neeyada”
(*Carnatic Vocal*: Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna,
Geethanjali).

Stevie Wonder

Talking Book (Motown 157354).
Innervisions (Motown 157355).
Songs in the Key of Life (Motown 157357).

INSTRUMENTATION

Alto Saxophone in E^b

*(doubling on **Soprano Saxophone** in B^b)*

Tenor Saxophone in B^b

Trumpet in B^b

(straight mute, plunger mute, Harmon mute)

Tenor Trombone

(straight mute, plunger mute)

Piano

Double Bass

Drum Set (1 player)

Bass Drum, Snare Drum, 3 Tom-toms (high, medium, low), Hi-hat,
Ride Cymbal (22"), Crash Cymbal (18")

Tambourine (unmounted)

(sticks, brushes, and soft (woolen) mallets)

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

Notes for Winds

(gliss.)

Glissando: slide continuously from one note to the next (slide lasts duration of marking)

Slide briskly from one note to the next, hitting random notes in between using fingering and/or partials (slide lasts duration of marking)

Fluttertongue/"growl":
tongue trill or guttural "r" in throat

solo

Play passage as written in a soloistic manner

solo (ad lib)

Play improvised passage, following harmonic and rhythmic character of suggested notes

Fingered trill, starting on *bottom* note (trill lasts duration of marking)

Wide vibrato on written note, using lips and/or diaphragm (vibrato lasts duration of marking)

Mutes + ° +o

closed open closed to open (quick "wah")

Notes for Drum Set/Percussion

Hi-hat w/ foot-pedal w/ sticks

(Note: default position is closed)

Drums

Cymbals > () >

Tambourine (unmounted)

Slash Notation

(tom-toms)

- The individual movements of *The Ten Plagues* may be performed in any combination, alone or together, but the work is especially intended to be performed straight through. Total playing time is approximately 40 minutes.

- When a "Swing Feel" is called for, quarter-notes are to be subdivided approximately into triplets. Written eighth-notes are to be performed with respective durations of approximately a quarter-note and an eighth-note:

- Rhythmic figures are notated with the primary interest of clarity for the performer. Any breaks in notational consistency can be attributed to concerns of playability.

