Kurt Mortensen

Synergiosis I

For B_b Soprano Saxophone & Mallet Percussion

Full Score

Synergiosis I

Duration: ca. 9 minutes

First performance:
March 20, 2001
at Northern Illinois University
by:

Joren Cain: soprano saxophone Anne Carmel: vibraphone, marimba

Second performance:
October 8, 2001
at the University of North Texas
by:

Joren Cain: soprano saxophone Stephanie Carr: vibraphone, marimba

The Synergiosis Series

Synergiosis: is the collective title of a group of planned chamber pieces written for unusual instrument combinations. At the present time, the goal is to complete a new *Synergiosis* work each year with the first beginning in 2000. The number of such compositions to be written is undetermined. The title is a fusion of the words synergy and symbiosis, which together reflect the intention of these pieces. Webster's Dictionary defines synergy as "combined action or operation" and symbiosis as "a cooperative relationship" between two dissimilar groups. The "bi" in symbiosis was purposefully left out of the title to allow for larger ensembles other than duos. The *Synergiosis* works are intended to be challenging compositions with virtuoso elements. There is a thematic line which will serve as the foundation for all the works in the series although it will be most evident in *Synergiosis I*. All will explore specific strict compositional procedures and be based around a specific tonal center.

Program Notes By The Composer

Synergiosis I (2000): The first in this series is a duo scored for soprano saxophone and mallet percussion. It was written specifically for Joren Cain, to coincide with his tenure at Northern Illinois University as a guest faculty member during the Spring 2001 semester.

The compositional techniques employed in this piece include mensuration canon, tonal pitch manipulation around the note C, thematic fragmentation reassembled into new musical lines, melodic variation and polymeter.

This work is built around three different thematic ideas: the opening gesture, the synergiosis theme and the axis melody.



opening gesture

The opening gesture comprises two measures with the second being an inversion of the first, reinforcing the C aeolian tonal center which is the focus of the piece. This is presented in several different tempos throughout the work giving it a different character in various contexts.



synergiosis theme

The synergiosis theme manifests itself in many guises throughout the piece. Initially only fragments of the theme appear which are used to reconstruct new melodic lines. The theme is first presented as a whole, but in augmentation, in the middle slow section. This is a four-part mensuration canon which is achieved by use of the damper pedal on the vibraphone, thus allowing the percussionist to play three of the voices.



The axis melody does not show up until the last quarter of the piece. Essentially the notes which form this short two-measure theme work in equal intervals around the C pitch center. This concept of alternating intervalically around the note C plays an important role in this work even when the axis melody is not present.

There is also a contrasting minimalist section that is based around a marimba groove which begins in 5/4 time. After several repetitions, the percussion part becomes semi-polymetric as the left hand begins to play quarter note beats in 7/4 pitch groupings while the right hand maintains the 5/4 ostinato. The result is a specious 4/4 feel, which in actuality is more complex. The saxophone alternates between the repetitions of the 5/4 line and expansions of it which add another beat, thus 6/4, while fading in and out of the texture. Different canonic relationships result from this process. There is also a real 4/4 part which interrupts the polymetric groove.

There are several multi-meter sections based on fragments of the synergiosis theme which are played on either (depending on the section) the marimba or the vibraphone in unison with the saxophone. In a few measures the sax plays the retrograde of the percussion part and in one part they are in canon. The result is a contrast between precise synchronization and a deceptive choas. This type of interplay is one example of the intention to musically represent the concept which the title of the work evokes.

Performance Notes

Saxophone:

All explanations are indicated in the score with a footnote, however one item needs further clarification. Ideally, circular breathing is preferred for the long repetitive pattern, beginning in m. 93. If needed, notes in parenthesis may be substituted for rests. If endurance becomes an issue, the saxophone may fade out anywhere after m. 106 and fade back in before m. 110 within the area specified by dotted bracket. This will allow the performer to take as long or as short as a rest as needed. The fades should be gradual though.

Percussion:

Mallets: Hard Yarn & Medium Yarn

Bow

Pedalings: half pedaling is indicated by a ½. If nothing is listed, it can be assume that a full pedal is desired, although full pedal is often written in these areas. In some places, such as mm. 26-42 and mm. 158-173, there are no pedal markings. In these sections, the percussionist should use the pedal with discretion to prevent an overly clinkly sound, but the overall effect is to avoid any noticeable resonance.

C3 (i.e. one octave below middle C) is the lowest note on the marimba.

$\begin{array}{c} \textit{for Joren Cain} \\ \textbf{Synergiosis I} \\ \text{for B}_{\text{\tiny b}} \text{ Soprano Saxophone \& Mallet Percussion} \end{array}$



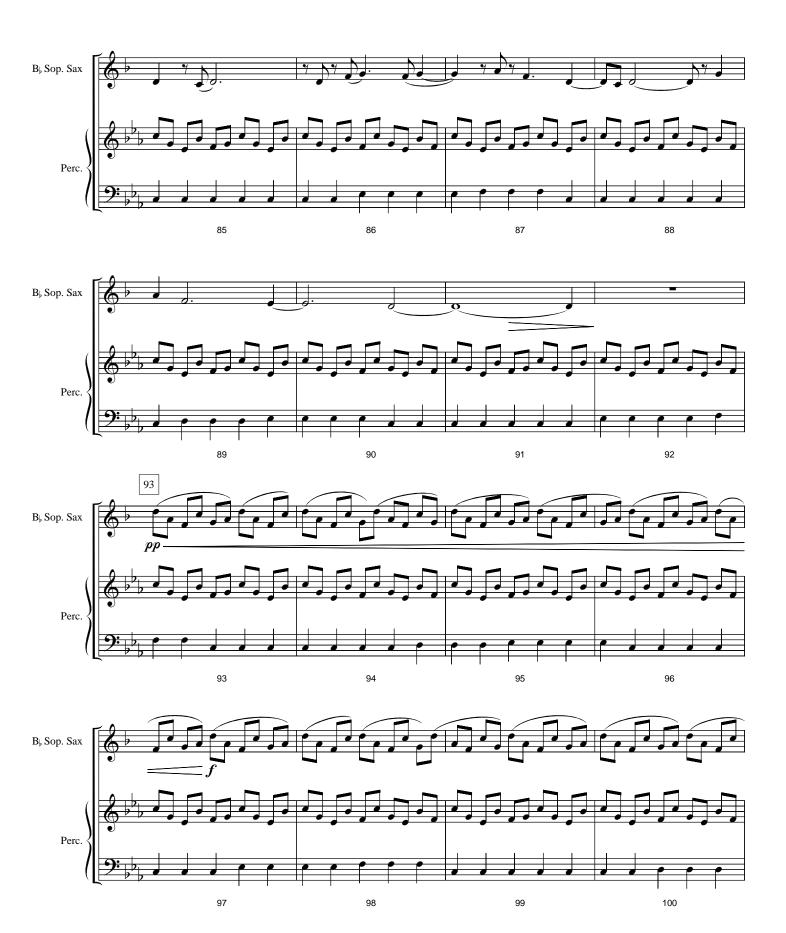
* = Flutter tongue and timbre trill using C^{\sharp} key. Match intensity of bowed vibraphone

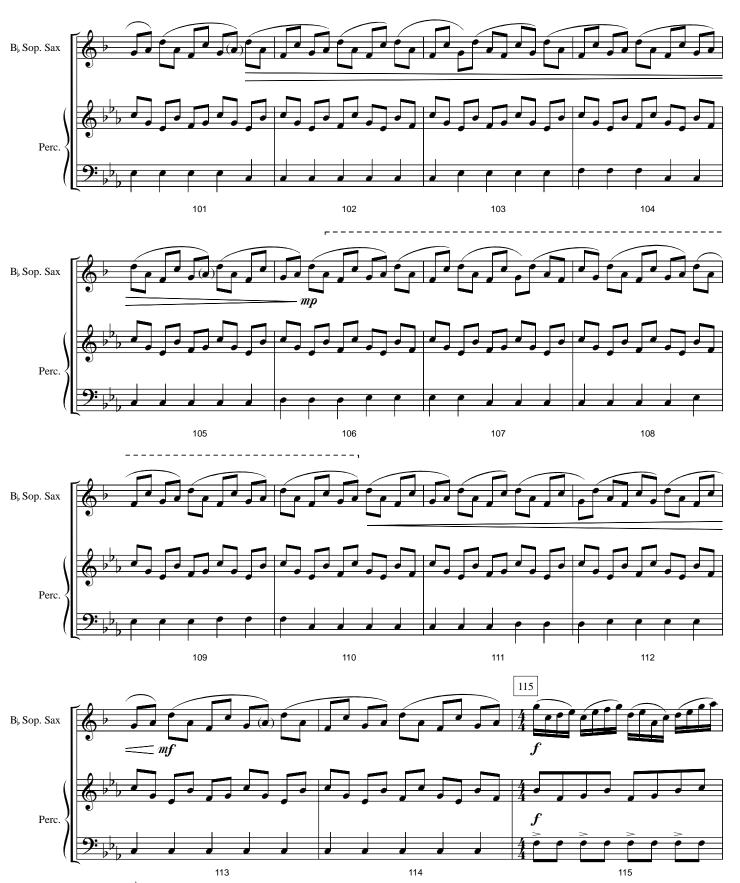
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⁽ $\stackrel{\searrow}{\circ}$) = Notes in parentheses are optional if breathes are needed $\stackrel{\frown}{\circ}$ = Optional fade out/in anywhere between measures mm.106 and 110 if rest is needed

