

## Composer Portraits

### **Music to Educate, Stimulate, and Entertain: A Portrait of, and Interview with, Composer Lynn Job**

by Nico Schüler

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Lynn Job was born an only child on May 27, 1959, in South Dakota as the daughter of dance band musicians. By age three, she had already ridden solo on horseback, could cast a rod and reel, and roll a great gutter ball (bowling). By ages five and six, she started creating songs, writing short stories for her classmates, and showed remarkable sketching ability. In fifth grade, she wrote and produced original plays for general assemblies at Jefferson Elementary School, Rapid City, S.D.. Musically, she started the song flute at seven, the clarinet at eight or nine, the piano at eleven, saxophone at thirteen, and began intensive private study at fourteen. At twelve, she decided to get fit and enrolled herself in an all-city track meet taking first place in the high jump after completing a self-designed training regimen. Thereafter, competitive individual sports remained a part of her lifestyle - swimming to fencing, track and field to racquetball.

In Fall 1977, she began continuous college enrollment until December, 1998 while working all manner of odd and career jobs to support herself. She majored in composition with a minor in German at California State University Fullerton (CSUF) receiving her Bachelor of Music in 1982 and then immediately moved to Texas and started graduate school. While, among other diversions, she worked full time as a Texas Instruments, Inc. radar logistics engineer (1988-1998) and an instructor in the U.S. Army Reserve Signal Corps (decorated during the Persian Gulf War) (1986 to 1994), she attended the University of North Texas. There she earned a Master of Music degree in composition with a minor in musicology (1988) and a Doctor of

Musical Arts in composition with a minor in music theory (1998). During all this she made a dozen trips to Europe for travel and work, then joined the 1989 Judean Desert Exploration and Excavation Team for three weeks at the Dead Sea (Qumran, Israel), where she received much inspiration for her creative projects (for example, her composition *ELATIO: Praises and Prophecies* for contralto and tenor soloists, 2 choruses, and orchestra, with texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1995-1998; and, her on-going collection of mystic poetry). After completing her doctorate, she turned professional and founded Buckthorn Studios (1999) marketing over 65 works to date through Buckthorn Music Press and accepting commissions. Since 2000, she has been in full-time administration at the University of North Texas College of Music (UNT) with frequent travels to lecture, perform poetry, make guest composer appearances; and she keeps active with local community theatre.

Many of Lynn Job's compositions are large-scale mystic works that are based on pre-compositional designs that required many years of specialized research. She has received the ASCAP Standard Award for Composition annually since 2001. For her *Eulogy for St. John* for twelve B<sup>b</sup> trumpets (1984; rev. 2000), she received the 2001 *Composer Assistance Program Award* from the American Music Center. Dr. Job has been the Board Member for Composition of the College Music Society South Central Chapter since 2001. Since 2003, she has been a review board member for the refereed journal *South Central Music Bulletin*. In 2005, she received a lifetime appointment to the Sigma Alpha Iota Composers Bureau.

Much of Lynn Job's music has been commissioned by musicians and ensembles from the United States of America, Germany, Israel, Russia and China, among others. Detailed information on her continuing work can be found at <http://www.buckthornstudios.com>.

The following telephone interview was conducted on Sunday afternoon, August 21, 2005.

Nico Schüler:

Thank you, Lynn, for taking the time for this interview. How have you been?

Lynn Job:

I'm doing very well. The studio is doing well, and I am anticipating a very exciting year 2006.

Nico Schüler:

I would like to start this interview with some questions about you growing up and your musical influences. I know you grew up in South Dakota. When did you start your musical training and what was important in your early musical training?

Lynn Job:

I had very young parents. When I was born in 1959, they were both independent dance band musicians and remained so through the early 1960s. My father was a radio disc jockey, talk show host and band leader of a South Dakota dance band called "The Star," and he had a talented group of people who went on to distinguish themselves with life-long careers in professional and military dance / swing bands. My earliest memories include crawling around over a floor of instruments, such as trumpet and drums that might be set up in the house for practice or repair. My mother started me on clarinet; that was her main instrument (and my aunt's) through school, and there was a spare one. I started on that when I was about nine years of age. I had started on song flute at about 6 or 7 for the first rudiments of music. At that time, my father was teaching music to lower grades. I was put onto piano around the age of 11. They didn't want to rush me onto instruments that I was maybe not quite ready for physically, and they took a gentle and casual approach to my music education, introducing me to it through family and then public school. This encompassed strictly reading and playing – no theory, arranging or composition.

Remarkably, none of the primary or secondary music lessons had any memorable affect on my tastes or writing style. In those early years, I credit

exposure to LPs of Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf" and Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake," along with the live swing bands, classical / sacred choirs, and 1960s cartoon scores, TV and feature film music, and all the variety of broadcast songs.

I attended traditional public schools all the way through. I didn't have any private instructors in music until High School. I had moved quite a bit, when I was in the lower grades; then things got more focused in High School. By this time I lived in Southern California – my mother had remarried, and my adopted father has the name Job (that's the name that I now use professionally). I had a big High School experience (marching bands, choruses, and after-school jobs), and by the time I was about 14 and needed to be thinking about a major in college I was very set on the sciences, the life sciences! Fascinated always with biology, marine biology, and zoology, I had done a lot of advanced studies of those fields on my own as a hobby during my pre-teens.

Between 14 and 16, I had to come to terms with the fact that I was uniquely a creative person, whatever other skills and talents I had. I had been writing since I was five – creating little musical pieces, short stories, poems, plays. I couldn't see myself spending years in the core science curriculum while I had such yearnings towards the arts, wherein I was already doing satisfying, original work. So, I had to make a decision and start prepping for college music entrance exams. I was a bit behind for that, because I had not been taking many private lessons. Having to catch-up, I quickly stopped swimming on the swim team and other extra-curricular activities and studied the piano and clarinet / saxophone seriously. I also got a touch of theory and got myself as ready as I could for a traditional public college undergraduate curriculum at California State University Fullerton.

CSUF was an excellent school for me between the years of 1977 and 1982, when I got my Bachelor's degree. They were very strong on the classical forms, the acoustic fine arts, and concert genres, which was what I was really interested in, more than jazz. It was a good fit, and I think I had a great education. I took extension credits in voice and various other lessons and classes to get every-

thing I could out of it, even though I also had to work myself through that education, working nights in the aerospace defense industry. With that I was very hard-pressed to keep all the music skills in development at that critical time of my life and catch up with my college music peers – hopefully surpass them and be ready for graduate school and beyond. Luckily, that worked out well, and I have arrived at the goal, though it took many years.

Nico Schüler:

Your major for your undergraduate studies was composition. Were you already then determined to become a composer?

Lynn Job:

Yes, I didn't consider any other course of study. That was my overriding identity as a musician. I had always been writing little songs or little instrumental pieces as just my natural way of expressing myself. While I had to do applied studies in voice and instruments, my real curiosity fell upon topics in musicology, music history, and refining my conducting skills. I had many interests, but I very conservatively stuck with composition as my main major through every one of my academic degrees.

Nico Schüler:

In one of the documents on your website, I read that you consider yourself mainly self-taught. But how would you characterize the role of your education in becoming a composer?

Lynn Job:

I was not personally introduced to any classically-trained, credentialled composer until I went to Cal State Fullerton. In the CSUF Freshman orientation session, first day of school, the faculty composers introduced themselves as “composers” – wow.

Up to that point, I wrote, because I figured that if I played music, I could write music – reverse engineering as regards the notation. That is, if I could read music, I figured I could write music – if I could play a certain instrument, I could write for it. I didn't ask anyone's permission. Very quickly, even in the lower grades and in High School, I expanded to writing for combos and various groups of

instruments that I had never played, maybe hadn't even seen, except from the other side of the band room. I was a natural song writer and strong melodist, and my approach to scoring was to simply mimic traditional idiomatic usage and rely on my sense of balance and color.

There was one private single-reeds teacher who just at the end of my Junior High School time in California (a wonderful guy, Mr. Ron Kehoe) instructed me privately on clarinet and saxophone for a little while. He talked to me about the circle of fifths and a little bit of theory and no one else ever did that again until college. So, until college writing, I had been applying mostly just my ear and my natural sense of syntax, rhythm, drama, and intuition for how to “speak” musically.

At about 14 and after a summer of going through lots of old sheet music in my Grandmother Irma King's library in Pierre, South Dakota (I decided Beethoven's “Für Elise” and “Moonlight Sonata” were especially nice – I was later amazed to find out how famous these works were), I took a step up in my composition efforts and started into a little piano sonata of my own. Back in California that Fall, I remember stumbling along trying to write another one down, as it came flooding into my inner auditorium as a seemingly complete, finished piece. I really couldn't play it, as I wasn't that advanced on piano, my aural skills were virtually nonexistent, and some of the notation subtleties seemed overwhelming in relation to the projects I'd done up to that point. I was moody and agitated, and when my mother got me to explain what I was trying to do, she later said that she noted that as a stark revelation. Within another year or so, I came to her and said: “I really think – maybe – I should be in music in college, and maybe even as a career ... and not go into the sciences.” She said simply: “I agree with you; I always thought you should be in music.” So, I guess, it was meant to be.

Nico Schüler:

From your Master's degree on, you studied at the University of North Texas. What brought you to Texas?

Lynn Job:

It was under the advice of the Cal State Fullerton faculty. Sue Harmon (for one) had been my voice instructor, she got her Master's degree at "North Texas State," as it was then called. She has had a distinguished career in film (doing vocals for Paramount Studios), and she knew composer Jerry Goldsmith very well – he often engaged her for any of his concert works requiring soprano. She had wonderful things to say about the training she had received at "North Texas State," now known as the University of North Texas. North Texas was also recommended by Lloyd Rodgers [Ph.D., UCLA], my first composition professor at CSUF.

For graduate school, I was looking at Michigan, Minnesota, UCLA, and a few others. I knew, I was going to have to finance my own education at any of those, and I would be completely on my own and did not know how I would do any of that. I looked at schools that seemed to have the kind of tuition burden, where one could arrange financing or work their way through. North Texas was all that and also excellent for the kind of composer I was at the time and still am. When I would bring up North Texas, I would always get a great reaction from professional musicians and educators alike. I looked at the affordable price versus the worldwide, world-class reputation, and I saw a real bargain there. I wrote them and inquired, and that was the school that most recruited me and most responded to me. I received recruitment letters from Martin Mailman and William Latham and everything started to fall into place.

Having never been to the state of Texas in my life, I didn't know what it looked like nor did I know a single person who lived here. I just knew that it was the place because of the curriculum, the size of the composition program ... I like to have a large library, a lot of resources, and a lot of performing ensembles, and there would be a big student body around. I was sold on it without a visit or interview. I gave up everything I had: my job, my apartment, all my relationships, came here with just a few dollars in my pocket, literally, to see if I was cut out for graduate school and if I could make it here. I took it a semester a time, and everything just eventually worked out.

Nico Schüler:

Who of your composition professors at North Texas was most influential and in what way?

Lynn Job:

For the Master's degree, Phil Winsor. He is just getting ready to retire from the institution this coming year (he has been on modified service and does a lot of work with faculty in Taiwan now). He was a Prix de Rome winner, 1967. I met him my first year when he was also newly arrived in North Texas (1982), so I have known him his entire teaching career here at UNT. I don't remember composers for what we discuss about music as much as for what we discuss about life – I am inspired by philosophy, mixed media, the creative process and by great minds. Winsor has a brilliant intellect and cutting wit (he reminds me of comedian George Carlin), and just being around him he provided me intellectual space and freedom at a time when that's exactly what I needed. I knew I was safe to explore, reach and experiment within an environment of true respect and equality. I wrote more music in more styles with him than anybody else. It was such a prolific time that some projects are still unfinished and remain among my favorite inspirations.

Nico Schüler:

Was there a similar strong influential teacher during your doctoral studies?

Lynn Job:

No, the first two phases of the doctoral program were pretty much about the practicality of just getting through all the course work and barrier exams. I was very focused on the scholarship, I went all out on the theory courses, musicology courses, principles of music research courses. Of course, I also took those topics during my Master's degree, as I had taken a minor in musicology, but as I have an overriding interest in musicology, music biography, music history, and history of the arts, I really poured myself into those courses for one last time at heavy cost to my composition work for many years (I worked full time as a radar logistics engineer and served in the U.S. Army Reserves during this time as well, so all composing effectively stopped).

In the final phase of the doctorate program, I was already a very mature writer, so I can say of the composition faculty that I was most appreciative of Cindy McTee's eye toward proofing. She was wonderful at continuing to hone an individual's attention to detail, which I already naturally have and I very much appreciated. Also, early in the degree Martin Mailman provided some very interesting insight into derivative motivic development and other details for sketching out an idea, and he was very strong in orchestration. Thomas Clark (who is now Dean of the School of Music at the North Carolina School of the Arts) was the patient enabler in the last phases of my doctorate to oversee my very large dissertation score and treatise project, which took years. He had a real interest in that piece and so I worked with him exclusively on that project to bring it to conclusion.

Nico Schüler:

You have an interest in archeology and biblical studies. Can you tell me more about that? And how does it relate to you as a composer? I believe, this interest was related to your dissertation, as well.

Lynn Job:

Yes, I've always been fascinated with biblical studies: all the various historical textology that has been done to find primary sources for ancient documents. I find that to be quite fascinating. I don't read these ancient languages, unfortunately, but I can read about the works, and it really excites me artistically. I even wanted to see if I could get directly involved, so I did that in January, 1989: I went to Israel with a team that was going to go into Qumran and look for Dead Sea scrolls for the first time since the early 1950s, when the last excavation was retired. This first team to go back (1989) was a combined effort through the Hebrew University under Joseph Patrick and California State University Long Beach under Robert Eisenman. It was a ground breaking expedition with about 12 of us formally named the *Judean Desert Exploration and Excavation Project*, or "JDEEP." We did in fact find artifacts in cave 37 south of Qumran, which they put into the Israeli Museum, Jerusalem. But we did not find any scroll material. However, I was there for more than that –

this was also my first trip to the Holy Land; I had an interest in its geography, the cultures of the migrations of peoples, ancient and modern, and history of the first century church, and fourth century politics, and the ancient tribes. This has all been fascinating history to me, and I have spent a lot of time just reading and studying that over the years, as a companion interest with all my academic studies in music.

I have taken very few academic courses that supported this interest in primary texts and theology, but my interests are fed through independent studies and are firmly rooted within a personal Judeo-Christian faith that I have had from the age of eight. This spirituality and curiosity toward the Divine has informed every creative thing I have done, and every decision I have made in life. These interests naturally go along with me when I think of new projects. In fact, I've been commissioned, based on that unusual mix of interests and experience, to write an organ piece *Anchored in Perath: an apocalypse* for the Laubach (Germany) organ festival next summer (2006), which will be a graphic score, mapping symbol / notation puzzles and evocative visual elements based on a biblical theme from one of my own original mystic poems. I will provide this commissioning composer / organist, Carson Cooman (a fellow member of the Christian Fellowship of Art Music Composers), with this graphic score that he can explore and embellish with improvisation. I was solicited to do all this based on this unusual mix of interests I have in archeology, literary form, poetry, and the discovery of ancient artifacts. There will also be an article to follow in *Living Music Journal*.

Nico Schüler:

Let me ask you about the relationship between text and music and your approach to vocal music, when you have been given a text, may it be an ancient text or modern text. What is your approach, musically, to set it to music, and what is the starting point of the composition process?

Lynn Job:

I want to use my own authored texts whenever possible – not setting my poems per se, but writing new

text in the style of the need of the musical piece. I understand very well the difference between writing poetry that stands alone and words that will be used within music or with other layered elements. I can craft various kinds of lyrics or poetry, script or free text, very idiomatically depending on the stylistic and dramatic focus of what I am going to attempt. While I strongly prefer to do my own texts, regardless of the topic, I have been commissioned to write music to existing book and lyrics for a stage musical. I have also been asked, even by way of assignment, to set a nonsensical poem (Kenneth Patchen), just to show that I could work with someone else's text, no matter how remote. I do like best to work with ancient texts, especially canonical scriptures or maybe some pseudepigrapha or other historical extra-biblical works.

More often than not, an instrumental piece of mine will also include printed text (poetry or prose), original or not. The text does not have to be sounded out at all during the presentation of the music. But it informs the piece, and it can either just be something that is known to historians / theorists / critics, or to the conductor, or it could be given to the audience in the programs (I greatly encourage that). When I set text within music, I want – unless I am doing a sound-text composition or some kind of structure in which I'm just working with texture – to do a declarative, clear presentation, where the words are well understood. I use techniques that are gentle on the voice, speech-like, very natural, so I am a blend of a songwriter along with composer. I admire Puccini's style, because he exhibited this same sensitivity toward lyricism – memorable, tuneful, and lyrically successful – while keeping to high artistic treatments with intelligence and grace. I think of him when I work, especially in my large form vocal pieces, such as *ELATIO*. I try for a similar kind of emotive, natural, memorable, lyrical expression of text within music.

Nico Schüler:

How did you originally start writing your own lyrics, your own poetry?

Lynn Job:

I was writing words from the time I was five years old or so. I actually taught myself to read, based on phonics – rudiments that my mother had already begun to teach me. Then I just applied logically what she was saying, and I started to sound out texts and I figured out very quickly how that worked, practicing on the works of Dr. Seuss. Then, very quickly, I wanted to write words: I was writing plays in grade school and producing them for class assemblies. I was writing just about every form, again just sort of mimicking: I liked stories, so I wrote stories. I would ask my grade school teacher if she could put my stories on the bookshelves with the other books. (I thought that would look really neat and I don't know where I got the idea that I could possibly ask such a thing.) I would also illustrate my books. I started off with these verbal and artistic abilities, even before the more complex musical abilities definitively showed themselves.

During the years of maybe six through nine, it appeared that maybe I would be going into the arts as an artist to draw and sketch, but I moved through that and the literary forms and pretty much settled on music by High School. Regarding poetry and writing songs: when I was five years of age, I would make up the words and then make up the tunes. I still tend to work on the texts first. As I got older and into High School, I got into creative writing classes, where they started assigning and introducing students to more mature forms of poetry and to serious literature.

Through this public school curriculum, I started to apply myself toward serious poetic forms and had great success at my very first attempts as a sophomore. I knew it was a gift that, maybe, I would look into developing (I'm still thinking about its potentials). I take years at a time in which I don't write any poetry, and then I will sit down and write a lot of serious poetry, do some readings, attend some conferences. I have an on-going manuscript collection that I am putting together as a future monograph - all the poems are based on similar themes that would make a dramatic, likely controversial book. I also have some poems that are independent from those that wouldn't belong in that collection – just ones to be used independently. They

could be published or used in other ways at any time (some already have).

I am currently writing my own text for *Black Bridge* (SATB and cello) – this is a piece in development – no commission, I just had the concept one weekend and I just had to work it out; it started with the story and the poetry and the words, and then I started the music. Generally, I will start out on a new work with the imagery, the emotions of what I am trying to go for, a programmatic element, a story, a concept ... I will think about that first, before I think about any kind of sonic sounded material that is appropriate for it. I will want to understand what I am trying to achieve dramatically and theatrically and what the point of this piece is. Then, I carefully choose instrumentation that fits the point of the piece. I go through the pre-compositional understanding of contents so deeply that I will take a last bit of time to pick the title that is most suitable, prior to writing a single sound. It gives me a mnemonic device to hang on to, to help me quickly connect with that drama, with that emotion. When I come back to that piece, which I might be working on for years, that really settles it for me and keeps me able to go right back to where I was in the piece until its conclusion, without losing that initial inspired concept.

Nico Schüler:

On your website is an article in which it is mentioned that at age 16 you were sent to Los Angeles by a top national producer to consider a songwriting career, but that you declined and that you continued to turn down most such work, including theater, jingles, and films in favor of sacred and concert projects, study, and research. Why did you decline such commercial offers, considering the strong relationship between poetry and music in your work?

Lynn Job:

Are you thinking about the article by Corcoran that is on my website?

Nico Schüler:

Yes.

Lynn Job:

I have a cinematic response to the kind of artwork I want to create: very detailed, very big, very deep. At 16 years of age and with no training, I was already writing songs that fit their respective genres very well; there was no challenge to it. I realized that if I settled for that and never explored compositions academically, intellectually, or any other way, that such a limit to my education was not going to be tolerable as a way to spend my life. I wanted to get into a larger, deeper mode of working than the visceral, innate melodicism. I wanted to work those deeper issues that you can get into within higher art – those complex designs that have been worked out in Western music up through today: deep issues of design, metaphor, coloration, and form. So, I just walked away. Economically, that may have been a very bad choice, but artistically, I have not one moment of regret that I walked away. I am amazed that I was able to, at that age, see that about myself and know what I needed to do. No one else was counseling me about that or asking me about my artistic needs or deeper curiosity: it was all soul-searching on the inside. At the conclusion of my successful interview at a Hollywood and Vine agency, which handled Elton John and Anne Murray – where I was invited to start engaging with the industry and start providing them with more songs to review by invitation of a Nashville contact – I knew, when I walked out of the office and we got in the car, that I didn't want any part of that side of the music business. I suppose I am still trying to discover what side I really do want.

Nico Schüler:

I would like to ask you more about the titles of your compositions. You mentioned a little earlier that very often you write the titles first, before you start writing the music, just after having ideas and thoughts about the project. Obviously, the title is very important for you as the composer to express what you think, but what do you think is important for you to deliver, through the title, a message to the audience?

Lynn Job:

I think that words do matter, names do matter: there is something about the sound of them, the choreography on the tongue, the way they look on the page. I think about them very carefully. An exception would be my oratorio *ELATIO: Praises and Prophecies*. There I took, on purpose, a very straight-ahead usage of all those independent movements in a very traditional, old style. Generally, I just took the first few words of the text that began the piece – an old operatic format – and I named the fragment (movement) for that first text phrase. Such is a big exception. What I would rather do is have these piece titles give the audience a little bit of insight to the kind of emotions they are going to experience or the kind of sonic expressions they will hear – maybe give away the programmatic elements a bit while using colorful language with good meter.

A good example is this one: I just finished a piece a few days ago called *Blue Graves Rising*. *Blue Graves Rising* is a delightful title for me – just the way those words flow they tell you about the piece (which is built on Ezekiel 37, verses 11-14, about the dry bones of Israel being reconstituted into a living people). I was required by the commissioner to come up with something out of the Old Testament about a “call to Israel,” – maybe a reference to the shofar (ram’s horn) to be included. There would not be a shofar in this piece for solo piano, but there should be some kind of allusion towards that instrument, or to a way that a shofar is used to sound out warfare or spiritual gatherings. In the miniature format required (I could only use between 60 and 120 seconds), I had to evoke a feeling of Israel and resurrection or gathering, plus shofar calls. This all works together in this piece to provide the sound and the title. I was thinking of the rising of a people, the rising of a spirit, a resurrection, and the color of the flag of regenerated modern Israel is blue and white – a gathering of ancient lines long disbursed being brought back to the land. So ... “*blue [Israel] graves [bones] rising [resurrection]*.” El Fine! – that’s very typical of how I fashion a title.

Nico Schüler:

Let’s talk more about the audience. What do you personally, but also in general, think is the role of the composer in our contemporary society, and how should the music reach the audience?

Lynn Job:

Well, I very much come down on this controversial topic as one who sees the composer owing honest expression not just of her own unique interior vision of humanity, but owing a gesture to shared human traits which transcend nations, politics, and eras. She must develop a voice powerful enough to serve her contemporaries with a compelling and timeless effect – to educate, stimulate, challenge and to entertain. I deeply hold that the entertainment portion of this mission cannot and must not be avoided, especially in high art, where the value of receiving the profundity of the idea is all the more serious an endeavor. I see all forms and media for communicating dramatic message as being forms that, if they are successful, will pull you into the expression itself – method will draw you to the idea or theme in a way that makes you want to receive it. You will give your attention, no matter what the content might be, what the style of the piece is, or the thought or the point of the drama being presented, because of the persuasion – even the seduction – of the presentation. The art must manifest in a way that is accessible enough, so the listener or the observer is brought into relationship, transported, and is provided as a reward some respite from the commonality and banality of everyday concerns.

When art music begins, the audience should be gratefully persuaded into an altered conscious state removed from the normal, where they can meditate through and audition various intellectual gestures, philosophy, issues of the heart, beliefs, and the drama of life. I very much believe that if any kind of art does not somehow engage a multi-layered presentation of basic humanity’s common and ageless pursuits (with style and genius), it is not going to serve to edify or meaningfully contribute to the literature or culture of its time, nor of future generations. Mere visceral expression without context, craft, or reason is a waste of artistic potential.



Nico Schüler:

That has also a lot to do with musical style. We have not talked about your style yet, so let me ask you: How would you characterize your musical style?

Lynn Job:

I am definitely a romantic – however that might be defined. My style serves the needs of the cause of my opportunities but I look to express my own personality and voice with unique gestures in any project that I accept: that is a tenet to which I keep very strongly. For example, in musical theatre, concert pieces, or even in a film or broadcast cue, if someone dictates that I must imitate the voice of someone else, such as “please write in the style of Holst” or “please write in the style of Wagner,” I will not take that project. I also do not do arrangements. As with us all, my life is very short, and I am completely dedicated to crafting my own voice in the short time I have. (There is only one me, so I don’t have time to pretend to be Wagner; we have Wagner already.)

That being said, I do write in many different styles, depending on the point of the project – I feel that music is the handmaiden to drama. I can be textural and chaotic and strident, if that is the emotive and thematic point of the scene I am creating, but more often my selected projects do not require those effects. I also make use of parody and reference, like all composers, when appropriate to advance the theme.

Since I do customize my music to fit a project, taking on too many client projects statistically modifies my catalog to be more numerous of specialty works. That can be good and bad – so I do stay mindful to try and balance it.

In the last few years, my clients and audiences wanted lyric tonal works: they wanted general audience pieces. I have accepted those sorts of projects; therefore, my catalog is overly represented by rather traditional, acoustic works for traditional acoustic instruments – a lot of pieces that maybe could have been written in the last 200 years. But they are still with my voice, so I don’t find that at all constraining for me. I can still enjoy that grammar, and I continue to accept projects in that format.

I do like the opportunity to show more range, and I certainly have a lot of inner concepts that I have never had an opportunity to share. For example, different styles of montage work with different kinds of instruments or electronic sounds for which I have either not had the tools or the project come together at the right time to allow me to produce it. Even with large form acoustic scores, I think my most important work is still in the unfinished manuscripts bin.

Nico Schüler:

You have already said much about your identity as a composer through styles, through poetry, and through your approaches. I have done a number of interviews with Texas composers, and I am interested in regional or geographic identity. You grew up in South Dakota, you lived in California for a while, and now you have been living in Texas for many years. Is there such thing, for you, as regional or geographic identity that would reflect, or be reflected, in your music?

Lynn Job:

There has not been such an effect on my music in Texas that I am aware – I have lived in a very eclectic culture. Being always in the city of Denton (which has doubled in size since I got here in 1982), I am immersed in an eclectic, two-university culture with people from all over the world coming and going.

In South Dakota, that is maybe a little different story, because I was thoroughly exposed to the Lakota Sioux Indian people while growing up. There was a Lakota Sioux woman who was my mother’s nanny, and my grandparents (who ran a store and a ranch) interacted with Sioux who would come to trade goods or to work part time – we all learned a little bit of the language. That Native American culture did have a big impact on me, and I was certainly drawn to the plight of all the native tribes – their tragic history. I have written a little poetry about the Native American Indians, but not much in the way of musical treatments. (I want to do more, and I have some projects in mind for the future.)

I just finished revising and engraving a new edition of a wind ensemble / concert band piece called *River Ranch*, originally written 23 years ago. It is very pastoral and reflective of the grasslands around the Missouri River in South Dakota, and it is very much informed by the Lakota Sioux culture and the intertwining of my own family with the prairie earth, the river, and with those tribal people. In this new edition, I enhanced the programmatic inspiration a bit more, describing on the cover and within the notes the Lakota Sioux influences. My publisher is sending it off to some schools and programs that care about this kind of interest, for example the University of Oklahoma in Norman.

In summary, if there is any sort of regional culture I lived amongst that really seems to have gotten into my music – not so much melodic or rhythmic, but rather by way of the drama of those people – it would be the plains Sioux Indians. However, the effect of my travels to Taiwan and my life-long appreciation of the aesthetics of the Far East (fed by Asian cultures I lived beside in California) has been more overt in my musical references. My curiosity about African tribes and tribal drumming has also resulted in bold quotations woven into my percussive textures. All in all, folk music of widely-divergent cultures interests me.

Nico Schüler:

I would like to expand upon my initial question on identity, thinking of a global perspective. Of course, what you just mentioned also characterizes you specifically as an American composer. Do you think, in general, that modern US-American music is established as such that it has its specific identity?

Lynn Job:

For an American sound, Aaron Copland is almost a cliché; everyone speaks of him as really having pulled together a pastoral, large-scape sound, with open intervals and distilled, folkish harmony. I agree, of course. This new sound expressed, with a kind of easy breath, an Americana that had been around with us prior to him, but which he finally coalesced and got onto the American stage within several of his works – *Rodeo*, *Appalachian Spring*, and others. I was profoundly affected by that sound

as a child – a sound that once you heard it, was distinctly memorable. I am absolutely imprinted with it.

Within serious music, modern America is a tossed salad of equivalent musical styles, lacking a prevalent school. Except for the sound of a Copland orchestra, we might be hard-pressed to argue for real distinction in comparison with the strong market and identifiable forms of America's pop genres since as far back as the swing bands. Like most American writers, my toolkit is an amalgamation of various world styles and colors that I have been exposed to (including historical recordings) and now freely draw from.

Like others, I am impressed with Wagner's *Tristan* chord, the orchestral colors of Richard Strauss's tone poems, Italian bel canto opera, baroque ecclesiastical works, and European music of all types. I am also moved by the Southwest Asia / Mediterranean decorative chanting and singing and the Semitic scales and modalities, including the derivative Klezmer bands. As mentioned above, I love the lyricism of the oriental classical style, and I have incorporated that in a recent piece. Probably, there is more of the mid-east modality and Chinese references and maybe Copeland in my music than the Lakota Sioux or some of the other things I have actually lived around. As an American composer, I am free to recraft these sonic influences and remix them, applying my commentary upon the basic humanity they express and thereby form not just a personal stylistic imprint, but a sense or imagery of this kind of blended global experience.

Nico Schüler:

I would like to get back to you as a composer. Was your life as a composer always separated from your activities to earn a living? For example, how does your current administrative work at the University of North Texas relate to you as a composer and do you like this kind of relationship?

Lynn Job:

In contrast to other professions I have had simultaneous with my writing and publishing career, my current employment at the College of Music is refreshing, because it allows me to daily interact with

musicians and guest artists. I had a career as a full-time Radar Systems logistics engineer for Texas Instruments for ten and a half years and I was a defense publications artist for four and a half years in California. These, among other jobs, were just paychecks to enable to me to keep my studio functioning and get me through my academics. I still hope toward the eventual goal that all writers dream of: the opportunity to focus 100% of my time on my life's true calling and passion. These pursuits are represented as three core business divisions of Buckthorn Studios: Buckthorn Music Press for music publishing, Buckthorn Records (which prepares demo media and is not a commercial label yet), and Buckthorn Books (which manages all manuscripts within my various literary pursuits, including screen writing, poetry, articles, essays, short stories and more). I would like to be solely taking care of those businesses (and get them profitable) and break away only for supporting appearances, lectures, and premieres, etc. While I'm grateful that I have employment that is allowing me to pursue writing in my off hours, the daytime employment, as with most writers, is a drain on my energies and can be very frustrating, troubling, and exhausting. Because of the United States economy as it is today, there is just no option for an independent art composer to be working on scores and not somehow support her basic existence through other labors. Our culture is the poorer for it.

Nico Schüler:

You are definitely an extremely productive composer, probably much more productive than most composers I know. I am looking forward to how productive you will be when you can just focus on writing some day. In any case, you mentioned at the very beginning that you look forward to a very exciting new year. What is coming up?

Lynn Job:

Well, I will have the world premiere of *Blue Graves Rising* (for solo piano) in November 2005, at Trinity Theological Seminary in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Next year (2006), I plan to launch some exciting works. There is a piece called *Bally Brew – An Irish Whimsy* (for solo alto saxophone and *bodhrán*,

the Irish folk drum, 6 minutes), commissioned to be taken to Ljubljana, Slovenia, for the 14<sup>th</sup> World Saxophone Congress. The *bodhrán* is a frame drum, which ethnomusicologically is an ancient instrument – but the use of such in Irish folk music is very modern: as recent as the 1960s, I have been told. Commissioned for summer in Laubach, Germany, there will be the new, graphic organ piece *Anchored in Perath: an apocalypse* (6 minutes), which will become only the second graphic score in my catalog (the first one was written many years ago). I might release *Woods Walker* (for solo marimba and sound track, 8.5 minutes); it has been taken on by an arts consultant as a worldwide commissioning consortium project (managed by Carson Cooman Arts Consulting). *Woods Walker* is a larger follow-on piece to *Serengeti Supper* (alto saxophone and sound track, 4.5 minutes), which has been very popular. Following that is the third, final piece in a sort of triptych collection: *Clare - Ancient Morning*, commissioned by the Christy Davila Duo of New Jersey (12 minutes, an open delivery date). *Clare - Ancient Morning* is about Ireland's County "Clare" (for acoustic piccolo, flute, and harp with sound track). That piece will be the "third iteration" of this same sort of commentary on creation that I started with in *Serengeti Supper* and further developed in *Woods Walker*. I have several pre-orders for the finished performance materials, once they become authorized for performance. For any writer, it is terribly flattering if you've got people pre-ordering and they haven't even seen the finished score yet.

Nico Schüler:

That is wonderful! It is great to talk about your creative life ...

Lynn Job:

... well, it is a big topic to open up - one's creative life. I found your questions very interesting and very compelling.

Nico Schüler:

I do have one last question. Two years ago, you published an article on how art composers get paid. Independent composers are in a financially difficult

situation. Do you think, the situation is getting better?

Lynn Job:

No, the financial situation for art music composers is not getting better. The independent American fine arts writer and composer (in this shrinking arts-supporting culture) is in an economic crisis – it is a very difficult time. The good news for the recent generation is that the independent now has superior tools due to desktop publishing, media editing, and sound synthesis, and market access (not demand) has become better in the last couple of decades with the internet. Because of the internet, and the communications options it affords, I can collaborate with and serve a global musician pool, get my product to my clients in a variety of formats, and do so with such a low distribution cost that I can actually finance much of this out of pocket (note the mention that I am underwriting my labors and production – profits are still a distant prospect). The internet, software, and photocopying technology that we now have available provide me that opportunity, along with advances in gender equality. If I had been born even 20 years earlier, I think that, personally (this might not be the case for all), I would have never been able to get even this far. I am struggling at present but making progress, because I do currently have access to these modern tools: it will be the core goal of my studio that I keep access to those tools.

A big hindrance I share with all other art composers is the lack of education among our society in general and our music clients in particular regarding remuneration – this has also not improved in recent years. How, in serving our society, do composers make our living – at what point within the process of creating new music do composers draw income? All of the different revenue streams for primary fee and follow-on income are completely unknown to my clients, as is their own important role and duties in that process (which are well established). Even sophisticated, professional, world-class musicians rarely know details about how their contemporary composers make or don't make a living, based upon the behaviors of our performer and conductor colleagues. This slows down

my own projects, because I first must stop and educate the performer clients (to whom I am trying to sell my work) about the life-cycle business details of commissioning, recording, and performing new music – and such can easily derail the project all together, until they adjust to the realities of the business requirements. This makes contract negotiations even that much more exhausting and in some cases downright unpleasant, when misinformation and bad habits have proceeded within certain careers.

Beyond passing on this knowledge one by one, I do provide seminars when asked (usually as a *pro bono* service to the field): for example, last month I spoke at UNT's College of Music *Career Night* about copyright and composer / publisher revenues; and I have already been asked to offer such topics during an upcoming composition residency at the University of Kansas. I am dismayed that music business continues to be left out of the applied teaching studios, so that crop after crop of performers keeps hitting the circuit without any more knowledge of the relationship guidelines between them and the publishers and composers who provide them their repertoire.

When students, interns, and new professionals seek me out for advice, I am more than happy to meet with them, because current field reports are critical, and I learn as much from their experiences with their own clients as they do from me.

So, how do we make our living in this culture as independent professional fine art composers? Composers are called upon today, more than ever, to embed themselves in every aspect of the process from creative concept to publication / recording to promotion and royalties collection. This lack of division of labor is exhausting and risky, but it is also exhilarating, requiring a vast and complex skill set which mirrors the frenetic pace and overload in all aspects of modern American life. These necessary distractions surely have a negative impact on philosophical abstractions within art, as well as quality of life.

The art composer's career preparation, management, and market access is something that all composers need to be reviewing – a topic they need to be engaging continuously. Our concerns need to

get out to the public, the radios, the newspapers, the journals – our cultural and social scientists and philosophers should be noting and talking about this decline of art music, because if living art music composers are not supported, they simply disappear – absorbed into some other life pursuit. Fact is, our pop culture contemporaries' revenue streams are growing boundlessly, while our's are shrinking into oblivion, there is a lot of despair without real debate, and this passiveness from writers and composers is our own worst enemy.

I am hoping for the best, of course, that this will all turn out well in the end, and without interruption in the timeline of masterpiece production. Since I have not yet seen the end of the story, it is a bit scary to live through.

Nico Schüler:

Thank you so much for this interview! It was a great pleasure talking to you! I wish you all the best with all your artistic endeavors!

Lynn Job:

You are most welcome. This interview was a lot of fun for me – to be selected for this was certainly an honor. I appreciate it very much.

### List of Selected Compositions by Lynn Job

A complete list of Lynn Job's compositions can be found at <http://www.buckthornstudios.com>.

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|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2005      | <i>Bally Brew (an Irish Whimsy)</i> for alto saxophone & bodhran, 7:00             | 1978-2003 | <i>12-Tone Flute</i> for flute and piano, 1:30                                                                                                                                        |
| 2005      | <i>Blue Graves Rising</i> for solo piano, 1:00                                     | 1978-2003 | <i>Etude in 8</i> for flute, 2:00                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1982-2005 | <i>River Ranch</i> for winds & percussion / concert band, 5:00                     | 2002      | <i>Raphael – Intercession</i> for solo B <sup>b</sup> trumpet, 3:30                                                                                                                   |
| 2004      | <i>Lily</i> for tape, 1:00                                                         | 2002      | <i>Runaway Bay: Hula Sunrise</i> for cello quartet, 4:00                                                                                                                              |
| 2004      | <i>Victory, the Gold</i> for pep band, 0:30                                        | 2002      | <i>Armiger's Gate</i> for solo viola, 3:30                                                                                                                                            |
| 2004      | <i>Yeshua, Our Dedication</i> for SATB with soprano recorder, 5:00                 | 1976-2002 | <i>Olympic Fanfare '86</i> for brass quintet, 2:00                                                                                                                                    |
| 2004      | <i>Yellowstone Blush – A Wedding Remembrance</i> for alto & tenor saxophone, 6:00  | 2002      | <i>Serengeti Supper</i> for alto saxophone & sound track, 4:35                                                                                                                        |
| 2003      | <i>Duetto Maduro</i> for two violins, 7:30                                         | 2002      | <i>O vos omnes</i> for SATBB with timpani, 2:30                                                                                                                                       |
| 2003      | <i>Arcangelo Red</i> for solo violin (transcriptions available), 7:00              | 2002      | <i>Toumai – Hope of Life</i> for 7 trumpets, 3:30                                                                                                                                     |
| 2003      | <i>By the Road to Ephrath</i> for solo organ, 5:00                                 | 2002      | <i>Iron Horse Nocturne: "of salt and grapes . . ."</i> for solo pipe organ, 2:30                                                                                                      |
| 2003      | <i>Moon Largo</i> for solo B <sup>b</sup> trumpet (transcriptions available), 3:00 | 2002      | <i>Nehemiah's Dusk</i> for solo trombone, 5:00                                                                                                                                        |
| 2003      | <i>Breathless – Joel's Fast</i> for string quartet, 4:30                           | 1982-2002 | <i>Azimuth Dance: Where is North?</i> for 8 percussionists, 3:00                                                                                                                      |
|           |                                                                                    | 2002      | <i>Shadow's Pipe</i> for solo flute (transcriptions available), 3:00                                                                                                                  |
|           |                                                                                    | 2001-2002 | <i>Systole: Book I</i> (3 songs) for soprano & piano, 12:00                                                                                                                           |
|           |                                                                                    | 2001      | <i>Chalice Hill: Ascent &amp; Elegy</i> for shofar, flute, oboe, brass ensemble with timpani & ocean drum, 4:30                                                                       |
|           |                                                                                    | 1989-2001 | <i>Petition: An A Cappella Meditation</i> (text The Community Rule) for SSAATTBB and 8 soloists, 5:00                                                                                 |
|           |                                                                                    | 2001      | <i>Boomerangst</i> for 4 choruses and ballads, stage musical, 37:00                                                                                                                   |
|           |                                                                                    | 2000      | <i>2-Part Invention in F-minor</i> for pipe organ, 1:10                                                                                                                               |
|           |                                                                                    | 2000      | <i>September Jade: A Wedding Divertimento</i> for alto saxophone, B <sup>b</sup> trumpet, and string quartet, 4:00                                                                    |
|           |                                                                                    | 2000      | <i>YOU</i> for medium voice & piano/guitar, 1:45                                                                                                                                      |
|           |                                                                                    | 1978-2000 | <i>Prelude in E minor</i> for violoncello, 2:30                                                                                                                                       |
|           |                                                                                    | 1978-2000 | <i>Sour Swig Jig</i> for two Bb clarinets, 2:00                                                                                                                                       |
|           |                                                                                    | 1978-2000 | <i>Two Sacred Motets in the style of the 16th century: I. Sancta immaculata virginitas (2-part); II. Jesu nostra redemptio (3-part)</i> , 3:00                                        |
|           |                                                                                    | 1978-2000 | <i>Theme and Variations</i> for Bb clarinet, 4:30                                                                                                                                     |
|           |                                                                                    | 2000      | <i>Kyrie eleison: trope on Titus 2:11 &amp; 1 Kings 8:28</i> for SATB a cappella, 2:30                                                                                                |
|           |                                                                                    | 1984-2000 | <i>Eulogy for St. John</i> for 12 Bb trumpets, 5:00                                                                                                                                   |
|           |                                                                                    | 1978-1999 | <i>Mandingo Weather Report</i> for prepared piano (pedagogical), 1:30                                                                                                                 |
|           |                                                                                    | 1983-1999 | <i>Jesu</i> for medium voice and piano (original text), 4:30                                                                                                                          |
|           |                                                                                    | 1979-1999 | <i>Matin</i> for a cappella men's chorus (original & public domain text), 8:00                                                                                                        |
|           |                                                                                    | 1995-1998 | <i>ELATIO: Praises and Prophecies</i> (texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls), 16 fragments of the 28 fragment scheme for contralto and tenor soloists, 2 choruses, and orchestra, 01:40:00 |
|           |                                                                                    | 1985-1988 | <i>Kidrish Fields</i> for 7 flutes, vibraphone & cello, 18:00                                                                                                                         |
|           |                                                                                    | 1985      | <i>Aviacon Columbia</i> (documentary film score) for DX-7 & piano, 3:00                                                                                                               |
|           |                                                                                    | 1983      | <i>Journey Into Oppression</i> for 3 slide projections & tape, 12:00                                                                                                                  |

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|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1983 | <i>Adagio for Synclavier</i> (SIMGO program) for synclavier on tape, 2:00                         | 01:30:00 |                                                                                                  |
| 1981 | <i>Barren</i> for 3 string basses, narrator, and designed lighting, 10:30                         | 1975     | <i>The First Blues Song</i> for alto solo, clarinet, tenor sax, trumpet, piano, percussion, 5:00 |
| 1980 | <i>Naked in the Woods with Red Cross Shoes</i> for electric piano, harpsichord, and dance, 3:00   | 1975     | <i>Introduction</i> for women's choir a cappella, 1:00                                           |
| 1980 | <i>My Pretty Animals</i> (text by Kenneth Patchen) for alto solo and piano, 2:30                  | 1975     | <i>Psalm 68</i> for choir, flute, baritone horn, guitar, 4:00                                    |
| 1980 | <i>Scenes from Rembrandt – Four Miniatures</i> for Chamber Orchestra, 25:00                       | 1972-76  | <i>Collection of Ballads</i> for solo Voice and Guitar, 45:00                                    |
| 1977 | Original improvised piano stage music for <i>Story Theater</i> , Westminster Community Playhouse, |          |                                                                                                  |

**From Continuity of Style to Universal Tonality:  
A Portrait of, and Interview with, Composer  
Wieslaw V. Rentowski**

by Nico Schüler

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Wieslaw V. Rentowski (Wieslaw Stanislaw Rentowski) was born on November 23, 1953, in Bydgoszcz and grew up in Poland. He studied psychology at the University of Lodz (M.A. degree in 1978) and organ at the Academy of Music in Lodz (M.A. degree in 1985). Already interested in composition since his childhood, he studied composition with Wlodzimierz Kotonski at the Frederic Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw and graduated with a M.A. degree in 1987. Between 1981 and 1989, he was a faculty member at the Academy of Music in Lodz, Poland. During the Spring semester of 1989, he was a Composer in Residence at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts in Canada, and during the Spring semester of 1990 he was a Visiting Composer in Residence at the Louisiana State University (LSU) School of Music in Baton Rouge. Then, under LSU scholarship, he pursued graduate studies in composition and organ performance and studied with Dinos Constantinides, Stephen D. Beck, and Herndon Spillman. He received a Master of Music degree in 1993 and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1996. Rentowski also participated in the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music

(1984) and in organ master classes in Bayreuth, Germany (1985).

W. V. Rentowski taught graduate and undergraduate music courses at Tulane University in New Orleans (1994-1996) and undergraduate composition and music theory at LSU (1993-1996). Since 1997, he lives in Dallas, Texas, where he is active as a composer, performer (organist, conductor), educator, and church musician (he is currently Music Director and Organist at St. Patrick Cathedral [RC] in Fort Worth, Texas). In 2004, W. V. Rentowski became a United States citizen.

The music of Wieslaw V. Rentowski has been performed at many international festivals and conferences in Europe, the United States, and Canada. In 1988, Rentowski was awarded first prize in the National Competition for Young Composers in Warsaw, Poland, for his *Wayang* for chamber orchestra. Numerous commissions, grants, and awards followed in Poland, Germany, Canada, and the United States. Most of his music has been published, recorded, and discussed in several countries in Europe and North America. As a soloist and chamber musician, Rentowski performed in many major cities in Poland, Germany, Canada, and the United States, often giving master classes and lecturing on his own music. He was a featured / guest composer at international music festivals and conferences in Gdansk and Lodz (Poland), Banff (Canada), Baton Rouge and Seattle (USA).

Many contemporary organ works by several American and Polish composers were premiered by W. V. Rentowski and are dedicated to him. He is a