

COMPOSITIONS FOR TUBA BY WOMEN COMPOSERS:  
A CD Recording and Commissioned Works

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## **I. Introduction & Purpose**

Throughout history women composers and performers have struggled for recognition of their works. The mid-to-late twentieth century represents the first period when women began to be generally recognized as having potential as performers and composers. Similarly, the tuba has been an instrument predominately played by men, with women performers not accepted as equally capable until approximately the last 40 years. This project showcases talented 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century women composers through the recording of selected works for the tuba that have not been recorded. Through the commissioning of composers Inez S. McComas and Asha Srinivasan, two new works have been introduced into the relatively small catalogue of music for the tuba by women composers.

The project consists of two main parts: a CD of works by women composers with liner notes about the composers and compositions, and the commissioning of two new works by women composers that appear on the CD. This document contains composer biographies, liner notes on each work, and a detailed description of the commissioning and recording process. After completion of my dissertation project, I plan to release the recording commercially through Mark Records.

## **II. Narrative of Process**

### **Composition Selection**

During the spring of 2012, I compiled a list of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century women composers using my personal music library, colleague suggestions, and the UW-Madison Mills Music

Library. Exploration of each composer's website and catalogue provided information as to who has composed for tuba and in what settings. Listening to samples of each composer's works helped determine whom to represent with this project. I contacted ten composers, inquiring about their works in general and, in some cases, about specific compositions and whether they have yet been recorded. Below is the list of composers and works that are showcased in this CD recording project, presented in track order.

- Libby Larsen – *URSA* for tuba and wind band, reduction for tuba and piano (12:53)
  - I. – *sings to the night sky* (6:58)
  - II. – *at high noon* (5:55)
- Sofia Gubaidulina – *Lamento* for tuba & piano (7:21)
- Elizabeth Raum – *Sweet Dances* for unaccompanied tuba (10:05)
  - 1. *Blew Tango* (2:57)
  - 2. *Dot Polka* (1:52)
  - 3. *Waltzin' Matuba* (2:56)
  - 4. *A Hard Knight's Day* (2:20)
- Asha Srinivasan – *Dyadic Affinities* for tuba and electroacoustic accompaniment (10:08)
- Barbara York – *Through the Tunnel* for tuba and piano (8:25)
- Elena Firsova – *Euphonisms* for tuba & piano (8:23)
  - I. *Moderato* (1:23)
  - II. *Vivo* (2:38)
  - III. *Andante cantabile* (1:59)
  - IV. *Moderato* (2:23)
- Inez S. McComas – *The Middle Pigeons* for trombone, tuba, and recorded sound (7:10)

### **CD Recording & Editing**

Throughout the recording process my collaborators included pianist Kirstin Ihde, percussionist Brett Walter, trombonist Sarah Paradis, recording engineer Marv Nonn, and tönmeisters Christopher Van Hof and Katie Johnson. All works were recorded throughout the 2012-2013 academic year. The acoustic works (tuba alone, tuba and piano) were recorded in Mills Hall at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Music. Works including

electroacoustic accompaniment or recorded sound were recorded in Marv Nonn's recording studio. Below is a detailed timeline of the recording process.

Monday, January 7, 1:00PM-4:00PM: Libby Larsen, *URSA*; Kirstin Ihde, piano and Brett Walter, percussion; Christopher Van Hof, tönmeister<sup>1</sup>.

Tuesday, January 8, 1:00PM-4:00PM: Elena Firsova, *Euphonisms* and Sofia Gubaidulina, *Lamento*; Kirstin Ihde, piano; Christopher Van Hof, tönmeister.

Wednesday, January 9, 1:00PM-4:00PM: Barbara York, *Through the Tunnel*; Kirstin Ihde, piano; Katie Johnson, tönmeister.

Thursday, January 10, 11:00AM-2:00PM: Elizabeth Raum, *Sweet Dances*, movements 1-3; Katie Johnson, tönmeister.

Saturday, March 2, 4:00PM-6:00PM: Elizabeth Raum, *Sweet Dances*, movement 4; Katie Johnson, tönmeister.

Thursday, March 7, 10:00AM-1:00PM: Inez S. McComas, *The Middle Pigeons*; Sarah Paradis, trombone; Christopher Van Hof, tönmeister.

Saturday, March 9, 11:00AM-2:00PM: Asha Srinivasan, *Dyadic Affinities*; Asha Srinivasan and Christopher Van Hof, tönmeisters.

Prior to every recording session, I divided each work into segments, generally thirty seconds to one minute (but up to two minutes) of music. Each segment was recorded a minimum of three times. After each take, the tönmeister, and occasionally the recording engineer, would make comments (both verbally and in writing) of moments that went well or needed improvement during a future take. If both the tönmeister and I believed the segment was covered in the three takes, we would move onto the next segment of music. If the segment was still unsatisfactory, additional takes of complete and/or isolated sections of the segment would be made until the segment was covered entirely.

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<sup>1</sup> Tonmeister – sound master; a person who assists the performer in the recording studio

Once a work was recorded the next phase was the multi-step process of editing. Following each recording session Marv Nonn would burn the session to a CD, making each take its own track. These tracks corresponded to the tönmeister's notes. After receiving the CD and tönmeister notes, the first round of editing began. Working segment by segment, I determined and bracketed which tracks were best for each segment of music. The brackets and track numbers were notated on a score of the piece. Once a work was complete, the notated score was sent to the recording engineer, who spliced each bracket of music together making a complete version of the piece and an updated CD. Upon receiving the second CD, the second round of editing commenced. I listened for accuracy in the edits and moments that needed review. The third and final round of editing involved balancing the CD tracks with one another. The works were recorded in two acoustically different spaces. Using volume changes and reverberation, the engineer made each piece sound acoustically the best and as similar as possible to one another.

The first round of editing took the greatest amount of time, totaling approximately forty hours of listening. The second round of editing took approximately three hours. As I progressed through the editing, an increasingly efficient process was developed. Thus, the works edited later took less time.

### **CD Funding**

The process of recording a CD requires funds to pay the expenses of collaborators and the recording engineer. A portion of these funds came from personal savings, but the majority was raised using Kickstarter, the world's largest funding platform for creative projects.

Kickstarter<sup>2</sup> is an internet and social media based source to fund creative projects. These projects may include films, music, art, games, design, and technology. The nature and funding needs of each project cover a large range, but all are brought to life through the direct support of individuals. Each Kickstarter project is independently created, with the project creator having complete control of and responsibility for their project. The company is not involved in project development, but serves as a platform and a resource. The creator of the project sets a funding goal and deadline based on how much money is needed to complete the project, and how much time will be needed to raise that money. Those interested in the project can pledge money to increase the chances of the project's success. Funding on Kickstarter is all-or-nothing; projects must reach their funding goal to receive any money. To date, approximately 44 percent of Kickstarter projects have reached their funding goal.

Backers support a project to help it come to life, but not to profit financially. Instead, project creators offer rewards to thank backers for their support. The rewards are divided into tiers, based on the amount of money given, and in general, relate to the product of the project.

My personal Kickstarter project was entitled "A Celebration of Women Composers"<sup>3</sup>. My funding goal was \$5500 over a period of one month (February 3 to March 5). The project was described in one sentence as, "the first recording of selected works for the tuba by living women composers from around the world." Included in the project description was my personal biography, information about the composers (along with links to their websites), my personal inspiration for the project, how to support the project, information describing why someone

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kickstarter.com>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1565478038/a-celebration-of-women-composers>

should support the project, why I was asking for \$5500, and risks and challenges associated with a project of this nature.

In addition to the written description, I created a three-minute video describing the project. The video included clips from three composers with whom I worked closely throughout the project: Libby Larsen, Inez S. McComas, and Asha Srinivasan. The professional quality of the video, along with the support of the mentioned composers, gave potential backers a better understanding of the project and instilled a higher level of confidence in the project's successful completion.

The rewards offered were tiered, based on the amount of money an individual pledged. They included an invitation to a live video stream of a recital presenting works represented on the recording, a personal "Thank You" on my website, a digital download of two recorded works, a digital download of the entire CD, a personally designed "tuba heart" t-shirt, an "I Support New Music" magnet, a physical copy of the CD, and a recital of the CD works at a location of the backers choosing.

"A Celebration of Women Composers" was very successful, reaching its full funding goal after only nine days. Once \$5500 was reached, a "stretch goal" was created, describing how any amount exceeding \$5500 would be used. For this project, any dollar amount over the goal went into a commissioning fund, specifically dedicated to commissioning new works from women composers. At the end of the month, the project had 113 backers and raised a total of \$6757. Since then, periodic updates have been sent to all backers, keeping them informed regarding the progress of the project.



### **Commission – Inez S. McComas**

My first exposure to the music of Inez S. McComas occurred at the 2012 International Women's Brass Conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan, June 6-10. I attended the conference as a performer in Bell(e) Collective, a low brass duo comprised of trombonist Sarah Paradis and myself. Paradis and I attended a recital featuring a work by McComas for trombone and recorded sound. Upon hearing and enjoying this work we were excited to explore more of her music. McComas writes in a fun, audience friendly language, and at that time Bell(e) Collective did not have a work of this nature in our repertoire.

In August 2012 I contacted McComas to inquire about a possible commission for trombone, tuba, and recorded sound. She was excited by the idea and eager to compose a new work for Bell(e) Collective. Throughout the fall, McComas sent periodic updates and samples of the piece in progress. She completed and sent the instrumental parts and a draft of the recorded sound part in mid-December, and completed the final version of the recorded sound in mid-January 2013.

From January 17 to January 20, Bell(e) Collective convened in Madison to rehearse, focusing the majority of that time learning the new work. On January 18, we recorded the work in progress and emailed the sound file to McComas. That same day we had a conference call to discuss the piece and receive comments and critique from the composer. In March, the work, entitled *The Middle Pigeons*, was premiered at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh as part of a Bell(e) Collective Wisconsin tour. *The Middle Pigeons* received two more performances and was recorded for this project that week.

*The Middle Pigeons* had a unique commissioning arrangement. McComas considers herself an up-and-coming composer, deeming performances of her work as more valuable than a monetary fee. For each minute of composed music, Bell(e) Collective owes McComas one performance. *The Middle Pigeons* is seven minutes and fifteen seconds long, so Bell(e) Collective owes McComas seven live performances.

### **Commission – Asha Srinivasan**

The goal of this project is showcasing less familiar works for the tuba by women composers. As a part of that goal, it seemed appropriate to commission a new work from a woman composer. During the spring 2012 semester, I researched a variety of women composers, focusing on those who were recommended by word of mouth and are lesser known in the composition world. I wanted the commission to represent not only a lesser-known composer, but also a less familiar instrumentation. In other words, I did not wish to commission a work for the common instrumentation of tuba and piano.

Asha Srinivasan joined the composition faculty of Lawrence University in the fall of 2008. Since then I have heard many great things about her compositions from students and professors at the institution. Srinivasan specializes in electronic and electroacoustic composition. I contacted her in April 2012, to inquire about her interest in composing a work for tuba and electronics. Srinivasan had never composed for tuba in a solo or chamber setting, but was very interested in the challenge.

We had our initial face-to-face meeting at the end of April 2012 at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. One purpose of this meeting was a general discussion of ideas for the work including length, type of electronics used, and nature of the instrumental part (showcasing

lyricism or technique). In addition, the meeting was used to increase Srinivasan's understanding of the tuba. By playing for her, I displayed the instrument's range, types of articulations and attacks, dynamics and other basic elements. I demonstrated a variety of musical styles as well as extended techniques such as flutter tongue and multi-phonics. We determined that the commission would be for a 10-minute work for tuba and electroacoustic accompaniment, emphasizing the lyrical and expressive qualities of the tuba. Srinivasan is Indian-American and often infuses her cultural heritage into her music. We agreed that the piece would include modal and rhythmic elements reminiscent of Indian music.

A second meeting was scheduled for October 2012, at which point Srinivasan had finished the majority of both the tuba and electronic parts. This meeting represented the first time Srinivasan would hear the work on a live instrument. Working through the tuba part, we made changes in dynamics and phrasing, and she explained her vision of the work. Using notes and ideas from this meeting she completed the rest of the piece, which I received in December 2012.

We reconvened in January and February 2013 to go through the work in its entirety. Srinivasan continued to make subtle changes to the music, reflecting both of our thoughts and ideas. The work, eventually titled *Dyadic Affinities*, was premiered at Lawrence University on March 5, 2013 and then recorded in Marv Nonn's recording studio later that week.

Funding this commission was a much different process than *The Middle Pigeons*. During our initial meeting, Srinivasan and I agreed on a commission rate of \$3000 for a 10-minute work. To cover that sum I established a consortium of tuba players. Initially I had hoped to establish a consortium of all women (minimum of eight other members), fitting with the theme of the

project. From May through June of 2012 I contacted fifteen women tuba players, explaining the project and the consortium, to determine the level of interest from each potential member (see Appendix 1 for the contact email). I received a positive reply from four women. At that point the contact list for potential members was expanded to include men. Receiving positive responses from three more individuals, a consortium of eight tuba players (including myself) was established in September 2012. The list of the other consortium members is as follows: Genevieve Clarkson (DMA Candidate, Indiana University), Marty Erickson (Professor, Lawrence University), Joanna Hersey (Professor, The University of North Carolina at Pembroke), Fritz Kaenzig (Professor, University of Michigan), Mary MacKinnon (DMA Candidate, Bowling Green State University), Deanna Swoboda (Professor, Arizona State University), and an anonymous member.

Members of the consortium contributed a fee of \$250. In return, they received a copy of the work, and participation in an exclusivity period of one year following the premiere. All members signed and returned a Commission Consortium Agreement Form (Appendix 2) with the \$250 fee.

The initial consortium goal was eight members in addition to myself, covering \$2000 of the \$3000 total consortium fee. My hope and intention was to contribute \$1000 of personal funds. When Srinivasan received the final consortium member list she noted that there were only seven other members, and graciously dropped the total consortium fee to \$2750, keeping my personal contribution at the same amount.

Collaborating with Asha Srinivasan on this project was a fantastic experience. The process of working directly with this composer and bringing a new work into the tuba's catalogue was extremely gratifying.

### III. Composer Biographies & Work Program Notes<sup>4</sup>

#### Libby Larsen

Quoted from Larsen's personal website<sup>5</sup>:

*“Music exists in an infinity of sound. I think of all music as existing in the substance of the air itself. It is the composer's task to order and make sense of sound, in time and space, to communicate something about being alive through music.”* – Libby Larsen

Libby Larsen (b. 24 December 1950, Wilmington, Delaware) is one of America's most prolific and most performed living composers. She has created a catalogue of over 400 works spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and over twelve operas. Her music has been praised for its dynamic, deeply inspired, and vigorous contemporary American spirit. Constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles, and orchestras around the world, Libby Larsen has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertory.

Larsen has been hailed as “the only English-speaking composer since Benjamin Britten who matches great verse with fine music so intelligently and expressively” (USA Today); as “a composer who has made the art of symphonic writing very much her own” (Gramophone); as “a

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<sup>4</sup> All composer biographies and program notes were quoted and/or paraphrased at the request of each composer.

<sup>5</sup> See references

mistress of orchestration” (Times Union); and for “assembling one of the most impressive bodies of music of our time” (Hartford Courant). Her music has been praised for its “clear textures, easily absorbed rhythms and appealing melodic contours that make singing seem the most natural expression imaginable.” (Philadelphia Inquirer) “Libby Larsen has come up with a way to make contemporary opera both musically current and accessible to the average audience.” (The Wall Street Journal) “Her ability to write memorable new music completely within the confines of traditional harmonic language is most impressive.” (Fanfare)

Libby Larsen has received numerous awards and accolades, including a 1994 Grammy as producer of the CD: *The Art of Arlene Augér*, an acclaimed recording that features Larsen’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Her opera *Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus* was selected as one of the eight best classical music events of 1990 by USA Today. The first woman to serve as a resident composer with a major orchestra, she has held residences with the California Institute of the Arts, the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, the Philadelphia School of the Arts, the Cincinnati Conservatory, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony. Larsen’s many commissions and recordings are testament to her fruitful collaborations with a long list of world-renowned artists, including The King’s Singers, Benita Valente, and Frederica von Stade, among others. Her works are widely recorded on such labels as Angel/EMI, Nonesuch, Decca, and Koch International.

As a past holder of the 2003-2004 Harissios Papamarkou Chair in Education at the Library of Congress and recipient of the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as well as a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Libby Larsen is a vigorous, articulate champion of the

music and musicians of our time. In 1973, she co-founded (with Stephen Paulus) the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composers Forum, which has been an invaluable advocate for composers in a difficult, transitional time for American arts. Consistently sought-after as the leader in the generation of millennium thinkers, Libby Larsen's music and ideas have refreshed the concert music tradition and the composer's role in it."

*URSA* for tuba and wind band, reduction for tuba and piano

"Growing up and living as I do in Minnesota, I've spent much of my life out of doors, running, cross country skiing, hiking, boating, and all manner of being out on the water and in the woods. Bears are a part of this world. You happen upon them and they happen upon you. Both of you are simply outside, walking around, poking your noses into things for the day. The thing is, bears are big. There is nothing else like a bear. If you happen upon a squirrel, or even a deer, you don't think much of it. But a bear is a different matter. You stop. If they don't run away from you, they pretty much let you be as they go on about their business. You watch them, mesmerized. You listen, and in the stillness of the woods, you discern their intricate language of huffs, grunts, snuffles, paw slaps, jaw clicks and growls. It is beautiful, haunting and completely bear. You are struck with their dignity. You are lonely for the want of living in their world if only for a moment.

*Ursa*, a composition in two movements, is music from the soul of the bear articulated through the tuba. The first movement imagines the bear deep in the wilderness, at night, singing to the moon. The second movement places the bear in the same wilderness but at high noon, rustling about in its habitat."

-Libby Larsen

The relationship built between Libby Larsen and myself over the past year deserves mention. My association with *URSA* and the composer began in spring 2011 with the opportunity of performing the work with a wind ensemble on the UW-Madison campus. Throughout that process, Larsen was responsive to my requests for advice and helpful with performance suggestions. In spring 2012, I contacted Larsen with interest in including the work on my dissertation project. Very excited by this prospect, she mailed a contract granting first

recording rights. I met Larsen a few months later, in June 2012, at the International Women's Brass Conference. At the conference she expressed interest in travelling to Madison to work with pianist Kirstin Ihde and myself, which took place in October 2012. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work closely with Libby Larsen and look forward to future collaborations.

### **Sofia Gubaidulina**

Compiled from Schirmer and Sikorski Publishing websites<sup>6</sup>:

Well-known Russian composer, Sofia Gubaidulina, was born in Chistopol in the Tatar Republic of the Soviet Union in 1931. She studied piano and composition at Kazan Conservatory, graduating in 1954. Moving to Moscow to pursue graduate studies, Gubaidulina graduated from the Moscow Conservatory in 1961. She remained in Moscow until 1992, and since then has made her primary residence outside of Hamburg, Germany.

Gubaidulina found much of her musical inspiration through personalization of contemporary Western musical techniques, a deep-rooted belief in the mystical properties of music, and improvisation with rare Asian, Caucasian, and Russian folk and ritual instruments collected by the Astreia ensemble (of which she was a cofounder). Much of her music explores unconventional techniques of sound production. A striking feature of Gubaidulina's works is the almost total absence of absolute music. The majority of her pieces have an extra-musical dimension, either set to music or hidden between the lines. She has composed works in almost every genre, including symphonic and choral works, two cello concerti, a viola concerto, four string quartets, a string trio, works for percussion ensemble, and many works for nonstandard instruments and distinctive combinations of instruments.

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<sup>6</sup> See references



While Gubaidulina was not a favorite of the Soviet musical establishment, her music was championed in Russia by a number of devoted performers. In 1985 she was first allowed to travel to the West, at which point her status in the world of contemporary music skyrocketed. She has been commissioned by many prestigious organizations, including the Holland, Helsinki, and Berlin Festivals, the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Library of Congress, among numerous other ensembles and organizations.

Gubaidulina has been the recipient of several awards and honors. These include the Prix de Monaco, the Premio Franco Abbiato, the Heidelberger Künstlerinnenpreis, the Russian State Prize, the Praemium Imperiale in Japan, the Sonning Prize of Denmark, the Living Composer Prize of the Cannes Classical Award, and the Great Distinguished Service Cross of the Order of Merit with Star of the Federal Republic of Germany. In the past decade, she was elected as a foreign honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and is the recipient of honorary doctorates from Yale University and the University of Chicago. In 2007, Gubaidulina was the first woman composer to be highlighted by the BBC during its annual composer weekend in London.

Major releases of her works have appeared on the DG, Chandos, Philips, Sony Classical, BIS, and Berlin Classics labels. Gubaidulina's music is available through a variety of publishers, including Hans Sikorski, G. Schirmer, and Boosey & Hawkes.

#### *Lamento* for tuba and piano

*Lamento* was composed in 1977 as a study piece for a music anthology published in Moscow. For years Gubaidulina regarded this composition as just a study, she did not want it performed in concert. Over the next decade, more and more tubists fell in love with the work. As a result she decided to release it for concert performance in 1991. With its many rubato moments, *Lamento* demands a great deal of musical maturity.

Unlike most of her works, this piece does not have an extra-musical dimension and could be considered absolute music.

-Paraphrase of email exchange with Hans Ulrich-Duffek (Sikorski Publishers, Managing Editor)

Finding information on the background of this piece was a challenge. I made contact with a number of tubists who I knew had played the piece in the United States. After a number of uninformative responses, Rex Martin, Professor of Tuba and Euphonium at Northwestern University, suggested contacting Marc Unternährer, a Swiss tubist based in Luzerne. Unternährer did not have specific information regarding the piece but recommended contacting Sikorski Music Publishers. At that point, I sent an email to the general contact address at Sikorski and received a response from Hans Ulrich-Duffek, the Managing Editor of the publishing company. Ulrich-Duffek spoke with Gubaidulina and obtained the information presented in the program notes above.

### **Elizabeth Raum**

Paraphrased from email correspondence with Raum<sup>7</sup>:

Elizabeth Raum is a Canadian composer who began her musical career as an oboist. She turned her attention to composition at the age of 35 years when she wrote her first opera, *The Final Bid*, for four singers and chamber orchestra. This was the beginning of a new direction in her musical life, which culminated in the creation of three operas (all with librettos by Raum), concertos for violin, horn, oboe, trombone, euphonium, double bass, and tuba, several ballets (including the music for a major ballet mounted by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet), a number of multi-media creations incorporating soundscape and staging, music for chorus, major orchestral

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<sup>7</sup> See references

and band works, and over 70 chamber pieces. She has also written for film and has won several awards for her writing in this genre.

Raum was awarded a Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Mt. St. Vincent University in 2004 and the Saskatchewan Order of Merit in 2010. Her chamber work, "how bodies leave ecstatic marks," won the category of Best Classical Composition in the Western Canadian Music Awards in 2008.

### Writing for Tuba

Raum has especially distinguished herself in the world of the tuba having written four concertos and many shorter works for unaccompanied tuba, tuba with electronic accompaniment, and tuba in chamber combinations. Her interest in the tuba as a solo instrument came about because of her association with the well-known tubist, John Griffiths, who performed her music all over the world and commercially recorded all of her works for the tuba.

#### *Sweet Dances* for unaccompanied tuba

“As most tuba players know, I wrote a lot of music for John Griffiths who was a good friend and like me, also played in the Regina Symphony. He did a great deal of touring as a Yamaha representative and he wanted music that he could play if there was no accompanist available, so I wrote *Sweet Dances*. I had originally given the four movements typical dance names, i.e. *Tango, Polka, Waltz, and Pop*, and the piece *Dance Suite*. John, who enjoyed word play and was also famous for his sense of humour, put his own stamp on the piece with the names you now see (*Blew Tango, Dot Polka, Waltzin’ Matuba, and A Hard Knight’s Day*).

-Elizabeth Raum

As mentioned in the program notes above, John Griffiths recorded all of Elizabeth Raum’s works, including *Sweet Dances*. Before the recording was released, however, Griffiths passed away, and as a result the release never occurred. Since all of her tuba works have been

recorded and released besides *Sweet Dances*, Raum was excited at the prospect of this CD project. After contacting Griffiths' widow, who indicated no plans to release her late husband's CD, Raum gave permission to record.

### **Asha Srinivasan**

Quoted from email correspondence<sup>8</sup> with Srinivasan:

“As an Indian-American composer, Asha Srinivasan draws from her Western musical training and her Indian heritage to create her compositional language. Her music has been presented at various national and international venues including SEAMUS, ICMC, June in Buffalo, SCI, and the National Flute Convention. Recently, she won the Ruam Samai award at the 2011 Thailand International Composition Festival for *Dviraag* (flute and cello) and she was selected for the 2012 Mizzou New Music Summer Festival, where *Svara-lila* (chamber orchestra) was premiered by Alarm Will Sound. She has also won national commissioning competitions, including the BMI Foundation's Women's Music Commission and the Flute/Cello Commissioning Circle. Other honors include: multiple ASCAP Plus Awards, the Walsum prize for *Kalpitha* (string quartet), and the Prix d'Été 2<sup>nd</sup> prize for *Alone, Dancing* (flute and electronics), which was recently released on the album *Ambiance: Collaboration IV* under the Beauport Classical label. Her studies include: D.M.A. in Composition at University of Maryland, College Park; M.Mus. in Computer Music Composition and Music Theory Pedagogy at the Peabody Conservatory, and B.A. at Goucher College. Ms. Srinivasan is currently an Assistant Professor of Music at Lawrence University in Wisconsin. More details at [www.twocomposers.org](http://www.twocomposers.org).”

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<sup>8</sup> See references

*Dyadic Affinities* for tuba and electroacoustic accompaniment

“On the tail of a blossoming gesture in the electronics, the tuba enters with a gentle, meditative dyad, Bb and C. At first these two pitches seem to have little affinity, Bb being posed as a stable tonal center and C as a contrasting unstable tone above. In the middle of the piece, however, the relationship of stable-unstable is reversed when the accompaniment poses C as the new center, making Bb an unstable tendency tone below. The other notes, first sounding above Bb and then C, are identical in each section, but shifting the tonal center creates new modal hierarchies, revealing unexpected affinities between the two regions. Thus, the simple and modest two-note opening sets up the pitch framework of the entire piece.

The piece also explores the different timbres of the tuba, its singing quality, its dark, deep bass, and its rhythmic agility. The electroacoustic accompaniment complements and contrasts these characteristics by providing a diverse soundscape in which the instrument is embedded. The accompaniment also sets the mood for each section, transforming from calm, sparse textures to a fuller, more dramatic background, and finally to a heightened melodic and rhythmic climax, before cascading back down to an unsettling tranquility.”

-Asha Srinivasan

One of the greatest challenges in learning *Dyadic Affinities* was coordinating the tuba part with the electronic part. The opening of the work builds a soundscape with both the electronics and tuba. As a result there are very few sound cues for the tubist in the electronics. Later in the piece the electronic part becomes more rhythmically intricate but due to a tempo change it is still difficult to synchronize the two parts. Srinivasan initially suggested the performer use a stopwatch or similar time-keeping device, lining up the time on the watch with time cues in the music. To make the performer even more comfortable, the composer created a software application using Max that displays the time and a metronomic LED. With the use of a multi-channel audio interface and headphones, the application can also be used to provide a click track for rehearsal and performance.

When performing the work, I used the software application displaying the time and metronomic LED without the click track. This setup provides a solid sense of time and security.

The absence of the click allows the performer to connect and react more to the electronic music playing through the speakers. The stage was set with the tuba in the middle and the speakers to the right and left, somewhat behind the performer, allowing for the greatest blend between the acoustic and electronic sounds. A computer was set on a chair to the right of the performer so the metronomic LED was clearly visible. The computer was connected to an audio interface, which was connected to the speakers. The speakers and audio interface used for each performance varied based upon what was available at the performance venue.

### **Barbara York**

Quoted from Cimarron Music website<sup>9</sup>:

“Barbara York has been working in both Canada and the U.S. for over 35 years as a concert accompanist, choral and theatrical music director, and composer. Her score and lyrics for the Canadian musical *Colette* won a Dora Mavor Moore Award in 1981. She has received commissions from two Canadian symphony orchestras, the Boise State University Symphonic Winds and the BSU Symphony Orchestra, plus numerous private groups and soloists in both the U.S. and Canada.

She has presented pieces at three World Saxophone Congresses and at the 2003 International Double Reed Symposium. Her 50-minute scripted children’s piece, *A Butterfly in Time*, was recently recorded to CD and was nominated for a Juno Award in 2006. Her first tuba piece, *Sea Dreams*, was on the required repertoire list for the International Tuba Euphonium Association’s 2004 Young Artists Competition. *Conversations*, for euphonium and alto

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<sup>9</sup> See references

saxophone, won the Harvey Philips Award for euphonium in chamber music at the 2006 International Tuba Euphonium Conference.

As an accompanist, Barbara has played at universities and concert venues throughout the United States and Canada, has recorded for CBC Radio, and has premiered numerous works for other composers at International congresses. Barbara lives in Kansas City, Missouri.”

*Through the Tunnel* for tuba and piano

*Through the Tunnel* was composed for tubist Andrew Smith following the loss of his fiancée, Gretchen Snedeker, in a car accident. The piece was written a little over a year after Gretchen’s death and was not specifically about her. Instead, it represents the year following the accident, tracing Andrew’s grieving process, from the horrible heartache and anguish and how he transitioned to some sense of personal release and resolution, hence “Through the Tunnel”.

-Paraphrase of email exchange with Barbara York

### **Elena Firsova**

Compiled from Firsova’s personal website and Sikorski Publishing website<sup>10</sup>:

Elena Firsova, sought after Russian composer and teacher, was born in Leningrad on March 21, 1950 into a family of scientists. The family moved to Moscow in 1956, where Firsova spent the remainder of her childhood. At age eleven Firsova made her first attempts at composition, focusing her musical studies in primary and secondary school for the next five years. From 1970-1975 she studied at the Moscow Conservatory, where her teachers included Alexander Pirumov (composition), Yuri Kholopov (analysis) and Nikolai Rakov (orchestration). In 1975 she received private instruction from Edison Denisov, who is known for publishing the first Russian article on the twelve-tone technique. Denisov is credited for exposing Firsova to

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<sup>10</sup> See references

contemporary music. In addition to Denissov she also studied with Philip Hershkovitz, a student of Anton Webern and Alban Berg. In 1979 Firsova and her husband, composer Dmitri Smirnov, were labeled by the Composers' Union as "not worthy of the Soviet Union." During the course of the perestroika (1980s), Firsova first received permission to travel abroad. During this time she founded a group with two colleagues, which performed contemporary music both in the Soviet Union and abroad. In 1990 she moved to England with her family.

Through the 1980s and 1990s Firsova's works began to gain popularity in the western world, receiving many performances in Europe and the USA. Since then she has received a large number of commissions, including from the BBC Proms, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Brodsky Quartet, Manchester Wind Orchestra, Freden Festival, Schubert Ensemble, and EXPO 2000 (Hanover).

Firsova has also been sought after as a teacher and professor. She has been composer in residence at Bard College (New York), St. John's College (Cambridge, UK), and Darlington Hall (Devon, UK). From 1993 to 1997 she was appointed visiting professor and composer in residence at Keele University (Staffordshire, UK), then taught composition at the Royal Northern College of Music (Manchester, UK) from 1999 to 2001.

Firsova has composed well over one hundred works in many different genres including opera, oratory, cantatas, concertos, orchestral works, chamber ensembles, and solo works. Her works are available through a variety of publishers including Boosey & Hawkes, Hans Sikorski, G. Schirmer, and Hamburg.



*Euphonisms* for tuba and piano

“The composition was written in November 2003 as a commission for the Park Lane Group. It is a cycle of four short pieces. In the first piece (Moderato) I have used a mode of five notes: c-d-e-f-a for the euphonium<sup>11</sup> and for piano a mode of seven other notes: c#-d#-f#-g-g#-a#-b. In the third and fourth pieces (Andante cantabile and Moderato) the euphonium and piano swap their modes. Moreover, in the final movement the euphonium adopts the piano part texture from the first piece. The second movement (Vivo) is a very fast and virtuosic piece, where both instruments play all 12 notes of the chromatic scale. The title EUPHONISMS means a “harmonious speech” and reflects not only a concordant dialogue between the instruments, but also hints at the name of the euphonium itself.”

-Elena Firsova

**Inez S. McComas**

Quoted from McComas’s personal website<sup>12</sup>:

“Inez S. McComas enjoys telling a story. Her music contains a robust sense of melody, and is often blended with a wide array of media including video, recorded sound, theatre, and dance. Born in Calgary, Alberta in 1977 to Dutch immigrants, Inez grew up in the small town of Labelle, Florida. She has received degrees from the University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music (DMA), University of Michigan (MM), and Florida Southern College (BM). Her compositions have been performed internationally including multiple universities, the World Saxophone Congress, concert:nova and the Cincinnati Ballet, the MusicX Festival, the Ottawa New Music Creators and Songs for the Cure. She currently teaches at Palm Beach Atlantic University.”

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<sup>11</sup>The work was originally written for euphonium. It is not clear (nor did the composer make it clear) when she created a version for the tuba, or if the versions are exactly the same. The composition works well on the tuba, though many of the fast passages in the second movement have awkward fingerings when not performed on an instrument pitched in B-flat.

<sup>12</sup> See references

*The Middle Pigeons* for trombone, tuba, and recorded sound

“Birds on a wire  
Talking with tails  
Chattering  
Chortling  
Like middle-school girls before class

Each one is a flutter  
But dare not get out of sync  
Duos  
Trios  
They trade spaces with stories while moving together

Others join  
Swaying the swayed  
Tittle  
Tattle  
These doves they squabble, but dare not move

...That is until they move together  
Birds of a feather  
Fly

*The Middle Pigeons* is an auditory journey that harmonizes the life of pigeons to the likenesses of middle-school girls. The inspiration for this piece began with observing a row of pigeons situating themselves on an electrical line, swaying their tails in tandem to counteract the effects of the wind. They were sitting two by two by four, with a small space in-between. This grouping is the opening melodic rhythm of the piece. With further thought, the above poem was born and other similarities emerged: each group is a bit odd-looking, they flock together, they strut, they are used as go-betweens, and they chatter and cry.

These musings have resulted in a piece in ABA form. The A section giggles and coos with the trombone and tuba playing along. The tuba turns to a more somber melody in the B section, but before long what was once somber becomes dramatic; worthy of a middle-school girl huddle, with all of the squawking and fluttering of wings that one should expect. As all drama eventually dies down, here too the A section returns to bring *The Middle Pigeons* to rest.”

-Inez S. McComas

Like Srinivasan's *Dyadic Affinities* the main challenge of *The Middle Pigeons* was the coordination of the electronic and instrumental parts. Unlike Srinivasan's work however, this one has a steady and continuous rhythmic groove. The early process of learning this work did not include the electronic part. A metronome was used and the instrumental parts were rehearsed until satisfaction was achieved. At that point rehearsals began with the electronic part and click track. Once that felt secure, the click track was taken away and all performances have been given using cues in the electronic part.

#### IV. References

Cimarron Music – <http://www.cimarronmusic.com/composers/bio-york.cfm>

Firsova, Elena, personal website - [http://homepage.ntlworld.com/dmitrismirnov/Elena\\_Firsova.html](http://homepage.ntlworld.com/dmitrismirnov/Elena_Firsova.html)

Larsen, Libby, personal website – <http://libbylarsen.com>

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Srinivasan, Asha – personal email correspondence, February 17, 2013

## V. Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Consortium Initial Contact Email

Subject: CD/Commission Project - 20th century women composers

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Greetings from Madison, Wisconsin! I am embarking on a project to showcase talented 20th and 21st century women composers through recording a CD of select works for tuba that have not yet been recorded. As part of this project I am very excited to commission Asha Srinivasan (<http://www.twocomposers.org/asha/about.html>), professor of composition at Lawrence University in Appleton, WI, to write a work for tuba and electronics of approximately 10 minutes in length. Professor Srinivasan is a well-known composer in the world of electronic music, and is very much looking forward to composing for tuba, as she has not yet had that chance.

In order to make this possible I am looking to create a consortium of tubists. As the lead commissioner I would make the most substantial contribution, perform the premiere (March or April 2013), and record the work. The rest of the consortium would be acknowledged in any future publication of the piece and/or recording. Each member of the consortium would receive a copy of the work and be included in an exclusivity period of one year where all the commissioners would have a chance to perform the work before it was published and made generally available. In order to be part of this consortium I am looking for members to contribute a minimum of \$250.

If you are interested in participating in a consortium of this nature, please let me know by September 30 (this is not the date I am expecting the fee, only a commitment).

This commission and recording project will serve as my dissertation for a DMA degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, but I am also hoping to release the recording commercially.

I am very excited about the project and in particular the commission. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie

## Appendix 2 – Agreement Form – Commission Consortium

It is agreed that Asha Srinivasan will compose a musical work expressly for a consortium led by Stephanie Frye. The commissioned work is to be of duration of approximately 10 minutes. The work will be written for solo tuba and electronics.

As the lead commissioner Stephanie Frye will make the most substantial monetary contribution, perform the premiere (February or March 2013), and do the first recording of the work (spring 2013).

Each member of the consortium will contribute a fee of \$250 by November 15, 2012, in the form of personal check to: Stephanie Frye.

All members will receive a copy of the work by February 1, 2013 and the consortium will have an exclusivity period of one year following the premiere to perform the work (March 2013-March 2014). The composer has requested that each member of the consortium perform the work at least twice during the exclusivity period.

A dedication to the members of the consortium shall appear on the title page of the manuscript score as worded below:

**Commissioned by:**

Stephanie Frye (lead commissioner)

Genevieve Clarkson

Marty Erickson

Joanna Hersey

Fritz Kaenzig

Mary MacKinnon

Deanna Swoboda

Anonymous

As a member of the consortium, by signing below, I agree to the above terms.

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Please mail this form along with the consortium fee to:

Stephanie Frye  
407 West Dayton Street, Apt 1  
Madison, WI 53703