

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

American Folk Music on Clarinet: Rock and Roll, Grunge and Appalachian Folk Tunes  
from Composer Scott McAllister

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For the degree of Master of Music in Music, Performance

By

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## Abstract

### American Folk Music on Clarinet: Rock and Roll, Grunge and Appalachian Folk Tunes from Composer Scott McAllister

By Anthony J. Villa

Master of Music in Music, Performance

Scott McAllister's compositions surround the listener with various cultures, experiences, and interests. His ability to write in a unique style is shown by using several influences that vary drastically, thus garnering the result of new sound combinations. He has used musical influences that vary from grunge, metal, and folk music. Along with his compositional style and his experience as an accomplished clarinetist, he creates solo works for the instrument that utilizes the extreme range of the clarinet. His music becomes a dramatic experience for the listener but also an inspiration for modern clarinetist to conquer extended techniques.

The author will analyze three of Scott McAllister's compositions: *Freebirds* for two solo clarinets and wind ensemble, *X Concerto* for solo clarinet and orchestra, and *Black Dog Rhapsody* for solo clarinet and wind ensemble. These pieces clearly demonstrate the unique and ground-breaking compositional style of Scott McAllister.

## Part 1 Scott McAllister

### Introduction

Using his unique style, Scott McAllister (b. 1969) surrounds the listener with a great variety of aural experiences, drawing on many cultures and styles of music including grunge, metal and American folk music. As an accomplished clarinetist, he creates solo works that challenge the performer while encouraging artistic freedom. His music is a dramatic experience for the listener but is also an inspiration for modern clarinetist to learn and conquer innovative sounds and a great variety of contemporary techniques. McAllister has composed three clarinet works - *Black Dog*, *X Concerto*, and *Freebirds* - that emulate a contemporary timbre on a clarinet. Written in the past twenty-two years, each of these pieces are based on an American folk tune of Appalachian music or from rock and roll and grunge music. McAllister takes the music from Lynyrd Skynyrd, and Led Zeppelin as an inspiration for conception of *Black Dog* and *Freebirds*. The adaptation of these songs in McAllister compositions show similar chord progressions. Scott McAllister writes solo clarinet music that challenges the performer allowing them to explore the extremes of the instrument.<sup>1</sup>

### The Composer

Scott McAllister was born in Vero Beach, Florida and grew up with his musician parents and grandparents. His mother played flute and grandfather played trumpet. McAllister showed an interest in composition at seven years old when he started to create chord clusters on the piano, write complete measures of music, and experimented with

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Spring, phone call with the author, April 28 2018.

improvisation. His first instrument, the recorder offered him the opportunity to attend Renaissance fairs that would predicate his interest in the clarinet. On the first day of his junior high band class, McAllister discovered that the recorder was not a major instrument in a band setting and chose the clarinet as his new instrument.<sup>2</sup>

His grandfather played a large role in his becoming a musician. He loaned him a metal clarinet that pushed him to develop air support for his big sound. During his high school years, McAllister would travel to Chautauqua, New York for summer festivals to listen to a variety of musical genres. This gave him an opportunity to study with Roger Hiller, former principal clarinetist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. During this time, he was also invited to the Florida Bandmasters Association All-State Festival where he would meet Dr. Frank Kowalsky, who judged the festival competitions and became familiar with McAllister's sound and artistry as he heard him play year after year. Later, McAllister would choose to study with Kowalsky at Florida State University.<sup>3</sup>

The All-State Festival included composition competitions in which McAllister participated. It was here that his compositional style began to formulate. He was inspired to compose clarinet quartets and clarinet choir music by recording individual parts and improvise over it. At age fifteen, he won a Florida Bandmasters Association composition contest with a piece written for clarinet and piano. In his senior year of high school, he started studying composition with Howard Buss.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tori L. Patterson, "A Performance Analysis of Stylistic Features Of Scott McAllister's Selected Works For Solo Clarinet: Four Preludes on Playthings of The Wind, Black Dog: Rhapsody For Clarinet (And Piano), And Blingbling." (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2008), DigiNole: FSU's Digital Repository.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4.

With simultaneous passions for clarinet and composition, he sought to pursue a balance of the two while attending Florida State University, studying clarinet with Kowalsky and composition with Dr. Edward Applebaum. Scott McAllister also shares when he went to FSU and increased his knowledge in band repertoire:

When I went to FSU I met the Director of Bands Jim Croft. I was in his wind ensemble and I discovered a lot of great and not so great new pieces for the band. The Hindemith Symphony was one of my favorite standards and Gunther Schuller's *In Praise of Winds* blew me away. Also Karel Husa's *Apotheosis of this Earth* and *Music for Prague*.

After completing his undergraduate degree at Florida State, he continued his education at Rice University in 1991 studying composition under Professor Paul Cooper and Professor Ellsworth Milburn. He decided to focus his degree in composition instead of clarinet. In 1994 McAllister was injured in a car accident, which left him with damaged nerves in his hand that ended his hopes of having a career as a professional clarinetist. Clarinet and composition could no longer be equal partners in life.<sup>5</sup>

McAllister's compositional style can be divided into two periods. The first began when studying at Rice University, where he was writing compositions that met with the academic rules he was studying. After Rice, he began to develop his unique style by contrasting the thought of minimalism and maximalism<sup>6</sup>. Maximalism is the concept from the modernism movement, creating an intensification of an idea to the absolute extreme, while minimalism characteristics were about simplified rhythm, melodies, and harmonies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Stacia Kay Fortune, "A master's recital in clarinet" (master's thesis., University of Northern Iowa, 2016), 26.

<sup>7</sup> Alison Latham, *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Revised First Edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Oxford Reference Premium Collection.

Folk music is one of the styles that motivates McAllister to write music and from which to borrow material. This took many forms such as rock and roll, metal and grunge music. *X Concerto* garners inspiration from the grunge music by the bands Nirvana and Alice in Chains; *Black Dog* is inspired by Led Zeppelin's song *Black Dog* and other influences of rock music such as Jimi Hendrix; and finally, *Freebirds* is based on the dueling guitars in Lynyrd Skynyrd's song *Free Bird*. American folk music is seen by McAllister as these rock and roll bands that influence him.<sup>8</sup> Folk music is defined by the International Folk Music Council as "[The] product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are: (i) continuity which links the present with the past; (ii) variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and (iii) selection by the community which determines the form or forms in which the music survives."<sup>9</sup> The variety that McAllister uses in his own creativity as a composer, blending the sound of clarinet and folk music results in new and significant sounds in the world of clarinet music.

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<sup>8</sup> Patterson, "A Performance Analysis," 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## Part II Compositions

### X Concerto

*X Concerto* was written in 1996 and along with McAllister's other works, was inspired by folk music. *X Concerto* is heavily influenced by the grunge music of Nirvana and Alice in Chains.<sup>10</sup> Grunge music, popular in the late '80s and early to mid '90s, was typically angst-filled and highlighted themes of confinement with a desire for more freedom.<sup>11</sup> The second movement is an adaptation of the melody "In the Pines" that inspired Nirvana's "Where did you Sleep Last Night". Nirvana's music had traits of not conforming to society rules and restrictions; driving them to the desire for freedom.<sup>12</sup> McAllister also shares this quote interviewed by Q.F. Wrighten, to show how much he loves to mix every inspiration together.

I think my folk music is everything...all of that music that I grew up with: Led Zeppelin. When I was older, Curt Cobain, rock, country music. There's so much choice. It's just unbelievable, being an American composer, there's so much music around us. That's why I experimented with my X concerto and it just took off. I was incorporating inspirations, beats and rhythms from music that I grew up with, and music right now even.<sup>13</sup>

McAllister wrote *X Concerto* after completing his Doctorate of Musical Arts degree at Rice in Composition in 1996 and while teaching composition at Florida Southern College.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Seattle Wind Symphony Program Notes, May 6, 2012,

[www.seattlewindsymphony.org/Concerts/2011-2012/Program-2011-2012-03.pdf](http://www.seattlewindsymphony.org/Concerts/2011-2012/Program-2011-2012-03.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Michael Boyd, "Grunge: Music and Memory." Review of *Grunge: Music and Memory*, by Catherine Strong, *Popular Music and Society*, May 2013, 289-292.

<sup>12</sup> Scott McAllister. *X Concerto*. (Waco, Texas: LYD Music, 1996)

<sup>13</sup> Q. F., Jr. Wrighten, "The Wind Band Music of Scott McAllister." (PhD diss., The University of Memphis, 2012), 8.

<sup>14</sup> Patterson, "A Performance Analysis," 5.

*X Concerto* is composed with three movements. The opening movement is in ternary form which begins with the solo clarinet playing extended technique timbre trills that create specific resonances where the difference in pitch is no larger than a quarter tone. A' returns at measure 100 to end the piece while at measure 128, the overarching material from the original A section returns. The movement begins with the solo clarinet playing extended technique timbre trills that create specific resonances where the difference of pitch is no larger than a quarter tone [See EXAMPLE 1]. This is only one of the extended techniques that McAllister has used in *X Concerto*. Others include extreme range glissandos and flutter tonguing. The A section continues with the accompaniment using sextuple, quintuple, and other complex rhythms until measure 12.

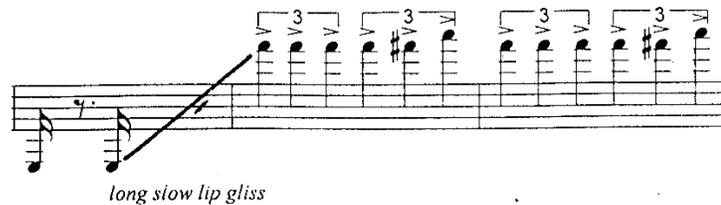
**EXAMPLE 1** *X Concerto*. Special color trill chart included in the clarinet solo music

Trill 1	Play a low “e” then trill right index finger
Trill 2	Play a low “e” then trill right middle finger
Trill 3	Play a low “e” then trill left ring finger
Trill 4	Play the “c” and trill left index finger
Trill 5	Play the “c” as in trill 4, but this time trill the A-flat side key with the left index finger
Trill 6	Trill the first two right hand side keys and play the given note.

The B section begins with the solo voice using the extended technique of flutter tongue in the chalumeaux register, that creates a well resonated sound combined with a crescendo to mark the beginning of the new section. This section differs from the A section, with soloist’s line consisting of triplets, repeated fast articulations, large intervallic leaps, chromatic runs and glissandos. The tonal stability, unclear at the

beginning but the accompaniment includes repeated B-flats and the clarinet plays the root of this G-flat chord. McAllister writes clashing notes between the wind ensemble and soloist. The grunge music feel makes an impact here as the clarinet solo voice uses its high registers, complex and changing rhythmic subdivisions, and driving style.

**EXAMPLE 2** *X Concerto*, mm. 66-67. Use of extended technique going towards the main thematic material.



The second movement titled, *To the Pines...*, contains material from Nirvana’s original song. Stacey Fortune in her master’s thesis has taken the theme from Nirvana’s song and compared it to McAllister’s material, the results show that the intervals are very similar [See EXAMPLE 4].<sup>15</sup> The thematic material based on Nirvana’s “Where Did you Sleep Last Night” was incorporated because of the loud music his neighbor played while he was trying to compose. He first saw it as a distraction but soon used the Nirvana material and created variations based on this theme.<sup>16</sup> The movement begins with an introduction featuring chromaticism in the wind ensemble while the clarinet holds a single note beginning at the midpoint. The variations, in the form of a passacaglia, begin

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 29-30

<sup>16</sup> James Parkinson, Program notes, “James Parkinson's Influence and Inspiration” (CSUN, May 17, 2009).

at measure 15 with a chord progression in the key of E-flat minor. [See EXAMPLE 4 below].

**EXAMPLE 3** Original melody and lyrics from Nirvana's *Where Did You Sleep Last Night*

(1.) My

(1., 4.) girl, my girl, don't lie \_\_\_\_\_ to me. Tell me  
 (2., 6.) girl, my girl, where will \_\_\_\_\_ you go? I'm  
 (3.) hus - band was a hard work - ing man, just a -

where did you sleep last night?  
 go - in' where the cold wind blows.  
 bout a mile from here.

*X Concerto*, mm. 95-102.

13  $\text{♩} = 108$   
 8 7  
*p*

14

**EXAMPLE 4** *X Concerto*, mm. 15-22. Chord Progression

Measures	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Relative Key of eb	i	III	iv7	iii	V	V	i	i

The theme begins in measure 20 as the harmonic progression reaches the dominant. The clarinet repeats this 10 measures later at measure 30 with a very similar

rhythm and the same chords, characteristic of a passacaglia.<sup>17</sup> Here, Scott McAllister begins using his increasing chromaticism which becomes a significant feature of this movement. Though the rhythms gain complexity and the interval leaps become extreme, the material is still in a legato style in the accompaniment. The solo clarinet also becomes increasingly ornamented and more improvisatory as the movement makes its way to its climax. McAllister states, “The great thing about improvisation is that it’s natural.”<sup>18</sup> The concluding statements of the melody are played twice by the clarinet with the first time in the extreme altissimo where C7, the highest pitch of the piece is reached and the final time in the chalumeaux register.

The third movement begins with the clarinet playing chromatically descending multiphonic trills creating an effect that is often heard on electric guitars. The tonality is set by the wind ensemble on a C7 chord clashing with an E-flat. McAllister continues to use the same rhythm pattern for the wind ensemble signaling that the tonality is unstable. The form appears to be strophic with an introduction until measure 15. Using material from the first movement, McAllister writes the melody in triplet-quarter notes. The melody is emphasized as each quarter-note triplet is accented and in a two-measure repeated pattern. The wind ensemble plays ninth chords and rapid trills creating the impression of an impending climax. Again, McAllister borrows material from the first movement but expands the initial idea with the addition of rapid staccato notes. There is a clever reference to the Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 621 by W.A Mozart played with the exact pitches but against a clashing accompaniment with an E-flat and E-natural in

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Patterson, “A Performance Analysis,” 59

the wind ensemble. He writes an Alberti-bass pattern, a common convention of the Classical style that introduces the Mozart Concerto reference. For McAllister, this was a personal joke, with the thought that it would be interesting if someone won a concerto competition using a piece quoting the most-performed clarinet concerto out of context [See EXAMPLE 5].<sup>19</sup>

**EXAMPLE 5** Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* theme



*X Concerto* mm. 68-70.



*X Concerto* is a significant work that is encompassed throughout three movements using elements based off a popular genre song and folk tunes. The inspirations from McAllister's favorite bands are shown through the use of rhythmic figures and beats as they are present in movement one and three. The addition of referencing Mozart's *Concerto for Clarinet* is taking music that was present in his life and using it in his compositions. The use of extended technique of glissandi along with repetition of chromaticism is a recurring theme for *X Concerto*. These techniques in combination with

<sup>19</sup> Amanda McCandless, "An Interview with Scott McAllister," *The Clarinet* 55, no.1 (December, 2007): 62-63

rhythm and patterns are the “grunge” sound McAllister is emulating on a classical instrument.

### Black Dog

After receiving positive response to his *X Concerto* at the 1999 Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium, McAllister was commissioned in 2001 to write a piece for solo clarinet and wind ensemble by Dr. James Croft, Director of Bands at Florida State University for then Professor of Clarinet, Dr. Frank Kowalsky.<sup>20</sup> For this piece, McAllister was inspired from Led Zeppelin’s “Black Dog” and other rock and roll music from the 1970s including Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix. Scott McAllister states in an interview with Amanda McCandless to encourage the soloist to create their own style:

My number one goal is to have the performer play my music with passion and tap into his or her own individuality...I wish more music and concerts could be more of an expression of individuality rather than a packaged, shrink-wrapped audition.<sup>21</sup>

In the work’s premiere, Kowalsky chose only to embellish certain notes with vibrato but did not use any other type of techniques. When Robert Spring, Professor of Clarinet at Arizona State University, recorded *Black Dog* in 2005, he added vibrato, *glissandi*, and other ways to imitate the sounds one would hear at a rock concert. Robert Spring first heard a McAllister piece at the CBDNA conference from one of his former students, Scott Wright, clarinet teacher at University of Kentucky. Spring first heard a work of McAllister’s while attending the College Band Directors National Association’s conference in 2003 where Scott Wright, professor of clarinet at the University of

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<sup>20</sup> Patterson, “A Performance Analysis,” 20.

<sup>21</sup> McCandless, “An Interview,” 62-63

Kentucky and one of Spring's former students performed.<sup>22</sup> He was impressed by the freedom of the performance and consulted with both Wright and McAllister when he later record both *Black Dog* and *X Concerto*.<sup>23</sup>

*Black Dog* is a rhapsody that begins with a long solo cadenza that introduces the majority of the material presented in the work. McAllister's intention was to emulate Led Zeppelin's rock piece by having the clarinet become the dual role of vocalist and guitarist.<sup>24</sup> From the beginning, the tonal center is E-flat. The cadenza leads to a slow and lyrical melody that begins first in the wind ensemble. The solo material contains extended techniques such as resonance trills, overblowing alternate fingerings, and glissandos such as the material at measure 6 [SEE EXAMPLE 6]. One section of the cadenza includes ascending sextuplets that soloists can choose to extend the duration of notes while slowing the tempo. The sextuplets start to slowly ascend to extreme altissimo notes, played freely, emulating a solo guitarist slowly playing up to the extreme range of their instrument. Combined with the rapid and repetitive nature of this material it is reflective of the guitar styles of Jimi Hendrix and Jimmy Page.<sup>25</sup> The transitional material between the cadenza and the following slow section (measures 26-28) is using color venting by using special fingerings to play the same note with a different timbre.

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<sup>22</sup> College Band Directors National Association, Program notes "University of Kentucky Wind Ensemble Concert" (University of Minnesota, March 27, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Bob Spring, phone call with the author. April 28 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher James Money, "The Clarinet as Guitar Hero: A Study of Rock Music Influences in Scott McAllister's "X", "X3", and "Black Dog"." (PhD diss., The Florida State University, 2007), 38.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

**EXAMPLE 6** *Black Dog*, mm. 7. Thematic material introduced in the cadenza.



The slow section is referred to the “Stairway to Heaven” that is set in a Phrygian mode. The wind ensemble members are instructed to sing, creating a mysterious and beautiful carpet on which the lengthy pitches of the clarinet playing in the sweet clarion range, sitting atop of the texture. Tori L. Patterson in her performance analysis of *Black Dog*, commented on McAllister’s quote of the mode, “subconsciously I have the idea in my head from all the analyses I have done.” Patterson continues with how McAllister ear picks up the mode, but he feels that analyzing the notes in that regard will ruin the mood which is to have this “ethereal moment consisting of joy and sorrow.”<sup>26</sup> At measure 36 the wind ensemble plays lightly repeated eighth notes on the dominant of E-flat while allowing the clarinet soloist to add rubato to these wide intervals. It is here that, McAllister quotes the first four notes of a hymn titled, “Grace Greater Than Our Sin” composed by Daniel B. Towner.<sup>27</sup>

The transition material from earlier returns to set the Phrygian mode. The repetition of chromaticism and extended techniques increases until a new melody begins at measure 99 [SEE EXAMPLE 7]. The melody is material inspired by the original Led Zeppelin’s “Black Dog”.<sup>28</sup>

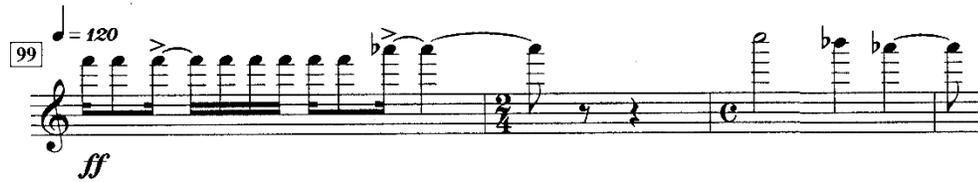
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<sup>26</sup> Patterson, “A Performance Analysis,” 94.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 27

**EXAMPLE 7** *Black Dog*, mm. 99-102. Main melodic material.



McAllister use of repetition in his pieces allows the audience to use their ear to pick up on ideas that develop throughout the piece, he states,

I take very few ideas and I develop them constantly throughout the piece. Either consciously or subconsciously, I think that helps the audience to grasp onto just a few ideas that last fifteen minutes rather than a through composed work.<sup>29</sup>

McAllister will also use material from a previous works. This happens frequently in *Black Dog* and *Freebirds*. For example, the low register syncopated, repeated rhythm used in *X Concerto* makes reappearances in both *Black Dog* and *Freebirds*. In addition, he often changed the meter or speed of the previous material when it makes its reappearance. From the rhapsody he wanted an introduction part that he also wrote for *Freebirds* and movement 1 of *X Concerto*, while in this piece he just wants a slow section to contrast that beginning and then to follow the fast-rhythmic driving section to the end. Preceding the final cadenza, the wind ensemble has material that mirrors the opening line of the original Led Zeppelin song. The wind ensemble directly mimics the first line of the lyrics, “Hey, hey mama, said the way you move, gonna make you sweat, gonna make you groove.”<sup>30</sup> [SEE EXAMPLE 8]. This final cadenza begins in the extreme altissimo on

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 28

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 30

written C7 and the performer may want to add vibrato and lip glissando.<sup>31</sup> To further McAllister's desire to have his pieces performed differently by each individual, Julia Heinen, professor of clarinet at California State University of Northridge, notes that every time she performs *Black Dog*, *X Concerto*, and *Freebirds*, the performances become much more wild than the previous ones.<sup>32</sup>

**EXAMPLE 8** *Black Dog*, mm. 193-194. Accompaniment line referencing the lyrics.



*Black Dog* is a prime example of Scott McAllister's emulation of a popular genre on a classical, western instrument. The use of techniques such as glissando and timbre trills plus exploiting the extreme altissimo range of the clarinet truly emulates the sound of an electric guitar. In addition, his inclusion of melodic and rhythmic material from Led Zeppelin's *Black Dog* builds the bridge between popular and classical in a way that has not previously been accomplished. Through the use of these elements, Scott McAllister successfully captures the thrilling personality and lively stage presence that only an electric guitar and now a clarinet can achieve on stage.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>32</sup> Julia Heinen, in discussion with the author, April 2018.

## Freebirds

Inspired by the Lynyrd Skynyrd song, *Free Bird*, Scott McAllister composed *Freebirds* for two clarinets and wind orchestra in 2009. Commissioned by Robert Spring, clarinet professor at Arizona State University, the two clarinets with a “rock and roll” attitude, emulates the two virtuoso electric guitarists from the original Skynyrd version.<sup>33</sup>

The program notes from Scott McAllister’s website states,

The work begins with a cadenza-like passage for the soloists, takes the listener through some high beautiful lyrical passages and amazing extended techniques for clarinet leading to the end in a virtuosic cadenza. This piece grabs hold of the listener by using rapid technical passages that emulates a dueling electric guitar of Lynyrd Skynyrd.<sup>34</sup>

The work begins with the soloists off stage entering from opposite sides emulating two solo guitarists placed on either side of the stage.<sup>35</sup> McAllister had been experimenting with the idea of having a clarinet emulate the timbre of an electric guitar in *Black Dog*.

Calla M. Olson writes in her master’s thesis *From Blackbirds to Lynyrd Skynyrd: Exploring the Definition and Use of Folk Music in Clarinet Literature*, “McAllister’s use of melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, timbral, and formal elements from *Free Bird* in his composition are similar to those used by Messiaen, Bartok and other composers known for utilizing traditional folk music in their works.”<sup>36</sup> Folk music can be connected to the rock music that both McAllister and Spring are inspired by in music. This piece could be separated into four main sections and a final cadenza. “Folk music is also characterized by the lack of any one ‘correct’ or ‘original’ version, which is replaced by the constant

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<sup>33</sup> “Freebirds” Lyd Music, accessed March 15 2018, <http://lydmusic.com/Lydmusic/FREEBIRDS.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Calla M. Olson, "From Blackbirds to Lynyrd Skynyrd: Exploring the Definition and Use of Folk Music in Clarinet Literature." (master’s thesis., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2016), 29.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 29.

evolution and variation.”<sup>37</sup> In this work, McAllister has expanded on the ideas of the folk music from America in *Black Dog* and *X Concerto*, by using a classical instrument to emulate sounds from other musical genres. When composing, Scott McAllister commented, “Sometimes a folk element or a form of something I am influenced by will be the inspiration and other times I use something standard or something wild I created.”<sup>38</sup>

The work begins with the two solo clarinets playing off-stage as the *Free Bird* electric guitarists did with descending glissando creating an ethereal and non-traditional sound. The glissando continue to increase in number until the soloists arrive and begin exchanging a flurry of sixty-fourth notes. The exchanging of motives and melodic lines is a common occurrence in this piece creating and continuing the idea that both soloists are equal in importance again borrowing this idea from *Skyryd*. There are three main figures in this slow section played before melodic material is introduced [See EXAMPLE 9, 10 and 11]

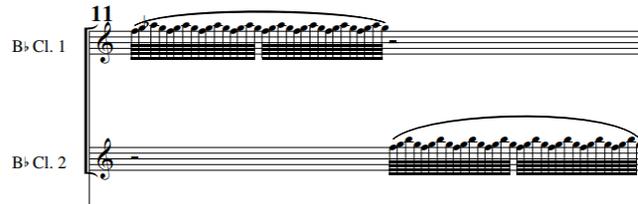
**EXAMPLE 9** *Freebirds*, mm. 5-7. *Glissandi* downwards in Clarinets 1 and 2.

The image shows a musical score for two clarinets, B♭ Cl. 1 and B♭ Cl. 2, in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The score is divided into three measures. In measure 5, the first staff (B♭ Cl. 1) has a '5' above the first measure and a 'fz' dynamic marking. Both staves show descending glissandi in the first and third measures, with rests in the second measure.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 1

<sup>38</sup> Scott McAllister, Email with the author. May 10 2018.

**EXAMPLE 10** *Freebirds*, measure 11. Clarinet lines exchanging the virtuoso figures simulating electric guitars.



For a clarinetist, a challenging extended technique is the repeated *glissandi* from  $E^3$  to  $C^7$  [SEE EXAMPLE 11]. The first occurrence that the two clarinets play in unison is measure 18 on a  $C^7$  after the prior exchanging line. After the three main figures are repeated several times, a lip glissando from both clarinets results in a unison  $C^7$ , the piece progresses to the B section.

**EXAMPLE 11** *Freebirds*. Glissando from  $E_3$  to  $C_7$  for B-flat Clarinet



The B section is marked at a very fast tempo of 160bpm. Calla M. Olson writes in her thesis, “Due to the impossibility of playing the up-tempo section at quarter note 140bpm, in live performance it is always longer (even Robert Spring, the piece’s

commissioner, performs it approximately quarter note = 140 in his recording).<sup>39</sup> In an interview, Robert Spring also commented

McAllister writes technically challenging material that requires slow metronome practice to work through. Scott McAllister is a composer that gets excited when musicians perform his music and is a great person to collaborate and create music.<sup>40</sup>

McAllister wants a very dramatic change in mood, style and tempo in contrast to the first section. The tonality is clearly changed to E-flat major [SEE EXAMPLE 12].

**EXAMPLE 12** *Freebirds*, mm. 69-75. Chord progression.

Measures	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
Relative Key of Eb	I	V	vi	vii	iv	V	I

This harmonic chord progress is very important as Olson writes, “To mimic the distinctive sound of *Free Bird* in his own work, McAllister based his harmonic structure and the scales used to construct all his original melodies on the harmonic and melodic structure of *Free Bird*.”<sup>41</sup> From Olsen’s findings, Lynyrd Skynyrd’s *Free Bird* has an underlying chord progression starting on G major as the tonic: G, D, e minor, F, C, D, G. This is the same progression that occurs in McAllister’s *Freebirds*. The difference is the transposition of keys that McAllister wrote since *Freebirds* is in E-flat, most likely as he is a clarinetist, he knows what range of notes would fit well on the instrument.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Olson, "From Blackbirds," 30.

<sup>40</sup> Bob Spring, phone call with the author. May 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Olson, "From Blackbirds," 30.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

**EXAMPLE 13** *Freebirds*, mm. 69-75. Chord progression from reduction.

The musical score for Example 13 is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 69-71) shows a piano part with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a vocal line. The second system (measures 72-75) shows a piano part with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Chord symbols are provided below the notes: I, V, vi, VII, iv, V, I.

The soloists return in unison in the transitional material in measures 81-88. In measure 89 a stable melodic line is introduced and emphasized by the unison soloists. Olson writes that McAllister “transposes it up and down various registers of the clarinet as he is able to construct a longer range melodic trajectory that in present in the rock tune.”<sup>43</sup> This main melodic figure [SEE EXAMPLE 14] will reoccur through the piece usually expanded into more material that leads the musical line to another repetition of the main melodic or transitional material.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

**EXAMPLE 14** *Freebirds*, mm. 89-90. - Original melody from *Free Bird*

The B section continues by using the main melodic figure leading to transitional material. The focus of McAllister’s writing is to “utilize many extended techniques, particularly glissandos and extreme altissimo playing, and the clarinetist must try to adopt a tone similar to that of an electric guitar.”<sup>44</sup> The main melodic line [SEE EXAMPLE 14] is played in different octaves or with added grace notes to ensure that each time it is played differently. For example, at measure 167 McAllister writes the last time the melodic figure is used for the B section by having both players play the melody at an octave apart with added grace notes.

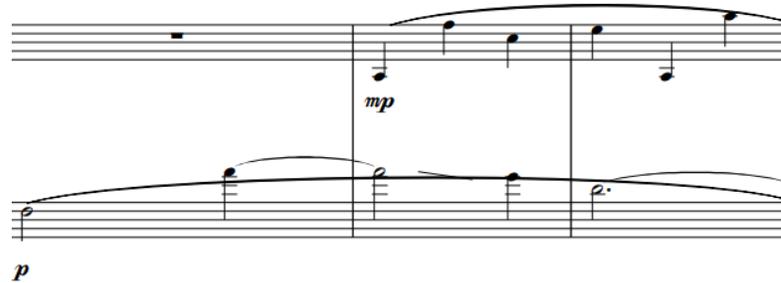
The A section returns expanding the material and using different material for the wind orchestra. Measure 171 begins with the accompaniment using syncopated rhythms which is new. The tonal and timbre shift of a softer dynamic, less harsher sounds and attacks are used here. The tonality is E-flat major as the clarinet soloists carry long phrases across the bar lines starting on a unison G and separated by octaves in the following repetition of the phrase. The phrases from the beginning of the third section is expanded by adding moving quarter notes and glissandos falling down to imitate the bird

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 29.

calls concluding the phrases [SEE EXAMPLE 15]. The only figure from the first main section are the glissando, and the other two figures do not appear.

**EXAMPLE 15** *Freebirds*, mm. 212-214. - Long phrases introducing the descending glissando



The concluding section of *Freebirds* begins at measure 238 with the wind orchestra playing transitional material. The solo voices began on triplet sixteenth notes that are exchanged with each other. McAllister builds the work the the soloist's emulated bird calls that are no longer contained but burst free into a fourteen-measure section where both soloists play these glissandi in canon. Both clarinets glissando a descending  $F_6$  never playing simultaneously. McAllister needs to keep the momentum with the main soloists, so he writes the material way back from the beginning that emulated a solo electric guitar. After this passage both clarinets are playing the second solo guitar figure in unison together and arriving at a section where the glissando from  $E_3$  to  $C_7$  appears once more. Each soloist plays the main melodic figure [SEE EXAMPLE 14] at measure 297 in the highest octave possible as it will be the last time played.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Olson, "From Blackbirds," 31.

**EXAMPLE 16** *Freebirds*, mm.258-261. Clarinet 1 plays in a syncopation.  
Clarinet 2 plays the down beats

The ending cadenza, is the A section returning but McAllister requests the soloists to use their own imaginative process. He was interviewed by Amanda McCandless in the *Clarinet Journal Volume 55 no. 1*,

My number one goal is to have the performer play my music with passion and tap into his or her own individuality. I often tell performers if they don't squeak, splat, or miss a few notes then they really are not playing my music.... a lot of my music needs to be performed on edge. I want my music to be a joy to practice and perform. I also want to challenge the performer and the audience and hopefully leave them like they have been renewed and invigorated in music and life.<sup>46</sup>

McAllister wrote this cadenza as if a rock star would be playing their last set on the concert and is dueling with another electric guitarist trying to play as many notes possible. Written in McAllister's *Freebirds*, both clarinet performers play the virtuosic guitar line as fast as they can simultaneously, but in Robert Spring's recording one added a growling extended technique.<sup>47</sup>The piece ends with both clarinets in unison playing the extreme glissando and accompaniment ending together on a unison E-flat.

<sup>46</sup> McCandless, "An Interview," 62-63

<sup>47</sup> Robert Spring, clarinet. *Oncoming Traffic*. Recorded in 2010. Summit Recordings 534, compact disc. Includes *Freebirds* featuring Josh Gardner, clarinet and ASU Wind Symphony.

The folk music in *Freebirds* is the rock music that inspired Scott McAllister. Julia Heinen comments on her views from performing McAllister's music, "Scott McAllister must have been an extremely fine clarinetist himself, that his love of American folk music permeates everything and that he seems to be a guy with a good outlook on life."<sup>48</sup> In an interview conducted by Tori L. Patterson, McAllister believed he should tap into folk and world music of today:

Our folk music is Nickelback right now, it is the people's music. It is also jazz, going to Morocco and hearing the Arabic music and rock influences.... Rock and roll music influences me, Appalachian folk music obviously odes, it is just a potpourri of everything.<sup>49</sup>

McAllister is a composer that can take multiple influences, and mix them all together that sparks musicians interest and their creative side to challenge themselves and add the player's own interpretation. Scott McAllister commented on how he balances writing these challenging extended techniques and how accessible a piece can be for a musician, "I try to write things that I can play with some work, and like that Freebirds glissando...I guess it is a balance of pushing the limits a bit but making sure it is possible and hopefully rewarding."<sup>50</sup>

*Freebirds* is a substantial work that requires the use of the extreme altissimo range from both soloists to an extent that previously had not been done. As in his previous works, the clarinet emulates an electric guitarist only by using extended techniques but combining them with traditional ones to create this unique effect. The rhythmic patterns are ones that emulate the type of rhythms that would be used in rock and roll music. While the entire composition contributes to this effect, it is the opening

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<sup>48</sup> Julia Heinen, in discussion with the author, April 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Patterson, "A Performance Analysis," 7.

<sup>50</sup> Scott McAllister, Email with the author. May 2018.

off-stage glissandi and the wild and improvised closing cadenza that are the main contributors.

## Conclusion

Scott McAllister has succeeded and perfected his compositional style to create sounds on the clarinet that emulate an electric guitar. The use of the extreme range of the clarinet, and directly and indirectly referencing material from the rock music genre while creating music that is enjoyable for the performers as well as the audience is a testament to its popularity in the clarinet community. He encourages his players to add their own improvisatory techniques such as vibrato, glissando, or other contemporary techniques that should be appropriate for his pieces. His writing in the chalumeaux range of the instrument is complimented by his rhythms and material that accentuate it, that counter with the extremes of the altissimo range. His use of motives, melodies, rhythmic and harmonic material from the referenced work and giving a platform to clarinetists for the advocacy of all genres of music as valid forms of expression is a testament to his great contribution to not only the world of works for clarinet but all music.

McAllister wants to convey the spirit of the folk music to the audience and performers through the use of signature melodies, timbres and a sense of improvisation so that every performance will be unique and the line between folk and classical traditions is blurred. Scott McAllister uses his great love for all forms of American music as a vehicle to connect popular music to the western music tradition. "Folk music may also be viewed in terms of how it functions within its society; it is often referred to as 'the music of the people'."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Olson, "From Blackbirds," 32.

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