Music for Steven Kellogg’s The Island of the Skog: Scores and Analysis

by

David Ouyang Moench
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Preface

The Island of the Skog is a work of programmatic music that accompanies Steven Kellogg’s picture book of the same name. It should be performed as a live film-score in precise synchronization with a video slideshow of the book’s images. In this paper I will analyze the compositional characteristics of The Island of the Skog and describe how they fit into and influence Steven Kellogg’s narrative.

Though the music follows the progression of a pre-written narrative, it also imposes my artistic decisions upon the listener/viewer. Their emotional response to Kellogg’s text and images is colored by my musical choices of tempo, harmonic progression, orchestration, melody, etc. At times I purposefully attempt to elicit a specific emotional response to a narrative scene by utilizing musical devices commonly used in film scores and European art music. For example, loud pounding percussion, rapid string triplets, and chromatic melodic lines in a minor mode often musically represent a sense of danger. However, much of the composition is just a musical response to what the narrative and its images represent to me, rather than an attempt to manipulate a listener’s perception of that narrative. In either case, the close integration of score, visual artwork, and text-narrative allows each to affect the others.

To contextualize this programmatic musical work, it is important to understand the narrative it accompanies. Kellogg’s narrative is the story of a group of mice that tire of a fearful life in a hostile city and decide to sail away in search of an island paradise. They happily set sail but are soon lost at sea and pummeled by an ice-storm. Just as their food supplies run out and all hope seems lost they spot The Island
of the Skog. Unsure of what a Skog is, the mice decide to scare it away and open fire upon the island with their cannons before wading ashore. Despite their frightening display, the mice find ominous footprints in the sand and decide that, since the Skog has not left, they must trap it. When they succeed the mice discover the Skog is not a giant monster but a small timid creature. They all realize the whole situation could have been avoided through better communication and everyone sings a happy song together as the sun sets.

The paper is divided into four sections: harmony, form, rhythm, and melody themes. However, because they are closely related, each section will invariably contain some discussion of the others.

Harmony

The harmonic vocabulary within *The Island of the Skog* makes heavy use of the language of traditional western functional harmony and its contemporary extensions, especially those within the jazz idiom, including modal mixture, free chromaticism, and chord extensions and alterations. In the following section I will analyze the harmonic content of my work.

Modal mixture is freely used throughout *The Island of the Skog* to the extent, in some cases, that it is difficult to pinpoint a single cohesive tonal key that unifies a given section. The intent of such tonic destabilization is to cultivate in the listener a sense of uncertainty in conjunction with sections of Steven Kellogg’s narrative, in which the protagonists are frequently faced with an uncertain future and a threatening environment. An example of this tonal destabilization is found in the opening eleven measures of “National Rodent Day”, the opening number. In this section, the solo
trumpet and the string section take turns attracting the listener’s attention; alternating between melodic motion and silence or stasis. An analysis of the trumpet’s melody reveals that it is constructed from the C Ionian mode and, as it repeatedly starts and returns to D, it would seem to firmly paint the world of *The Island of the Skog* in D Dorian. However, on measures 8 and 11 where the trumpet melody ceases its purposeful motion, the strings harmonically re-contextualizing the static trumpet note and the previous measure’s melody that is still fresh in the listener’s musical memory. In the first six measures, the strings establish C Ionian as the harmonic support to the trumpet’s melody, sounding A minor or vi, F major or IV, and C major or I. In measure 8 the trumpet sounds a G and the violin and viola both suddenly adopt a Bb, provide a supporting G minor harmony. In measure 10 the strings and trumpets all sound D in octaves before the melody makes a jarring chromatic drop of a minor second to C#, the raised fourth scale degree of the G major seventh chord that the entire ensemble explosively adopts. The tonal unsteadiness of *The Island of the Skog*’s opening section musically foreshadows the uncertain world the story’s protagonists are about to explore.

Later on, at the beginning of “Footprints”, there is a similar musical passage that continues and intensifies the use of modal mixture. Like the beginning of “National Rodent Day”, the first measures of “Footprints” pits a solo melodic line against periodic block-chord harmonies sounded by the string section every other measure. This arrangement harmonically establishes a sense of swimming uncertainty

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1 In this paper lowercase roman numerals indicate minor harmonies in relation to their numerical scale degrees. Lowercase roman numerals with the appropriate text indication indicate half or fully diminished harmonies. Uppercase roman numerals coincide with major, dominant (7), and augmented harmonies.
to an even greater extent than the opening of “National Rodent Day” for two reasons. First, the melodic figure, simple repeated five-note grouping that will later be discussed as the Skog theme, are passed between the wind instruments and only consist of one or two notes. As a result, the melody itself provides almost no tonal description. The periodic harmonies provided by the string section therefore have absolute power to re-contextualize the melody. The second reason this section creates a greater sense of uncertainty than the opening of “National Rodent Day” is that first harmonic groupings sounded by the string section are modally very different from the tonal center to which the piece is headed. In “National Rodent Day” the first three harmonic events are all constructed from the C Ionian mode. While this could not be argued to be the whole piece’s tonal center, it is at least maintained for a number of measures; long enough to hear a stable relationship between the opening harmonies and characterize the following measures’ use of modal mixture as a deviation from that stability. The first three-note harmonies of “Foot Prints” establish no such stable relationship. In measure 2 the strings sound B, D#, and F natural: the 1st, 3rd, sharped 4th of a B Lydian chord. The next harmony, after a measure space of a repeated F in the oboe, is an E major. As the string section sounds this harmony in measure 4, the oboe melody drops a step down to Eb where it is heard as the 7th scale degree of the new E major harmonic event. The flute now takes up the repeated five-note figure on D in measure 5 and holds it over into measure 6 where the strings join and create an F minor harmony. At this point, the tonal center of F minor is established in order to lead into the coming section. The melody abandons its static five-note figure and begins to move, and in measures 7 and 8 the strings play an A dominant harmony,
which leads not to its relative tonic but to F minor. This section of increasing tonal uncertainty accompanies a point in the narrative at which the mice discover they are not alone on their island, but rather face an unknown threat.

Another example of modal mixture used as a tool of destabilization is found in measures 63 to 66 of “The Island”. The preceding section of the piece is strongly in the key of E minor. However, at measure 63 the piece moves through the harmonies of C major, B minor, Bb major, and A minor (built from A melodic minor), at a harmonic rhythm of one harmony per measure. The sudden motion from a tonal center of E minor to a C major harmony sounds disjointed by its own right, however the rapid motion into B minor and Bb major harmonies seems to completely destroy any sense of connectedness between the four measures in question. The sudden change in orchestration and swirling polyrhythm also contribute to the feeling of sudden detachment as measure 62 moves into 63. Most of the ensemble drops away leaving only the celesta, piano, and drum set. The celesta sounds rolled three-note chords that understate the harmonies; sounding only the bass note, the third or seventh chord member, and a colorful chord extension (#4\textsuperscript{th}, 9\textsuperscript{th}). The piano in turn provides more modal description of each chord, however does so with a polyrhythmic layering of eighth note triplets in the left hand and quarter note triplets in the right hand. Furthermore, refocusing on the harmonic characteristics that contribute to the destabilization of measures 63 through 66 of “The Island”, the notes sounded by the piano’s polyrhythmic subdivisions fully describe the difference between each harmony’s modal construction. From the notes of C Ionian in measure 63, the piano sounds F# and C# in measure 64, Bb and F natural in measure 65, and B natural and
F# in measure 66. The pragmatic logic behind composing such a tonally ambiguous and detached progression is to musically emphasize a scene change in the video slideshow composed of Kellogg’s narrative; showcasing a high degree of synchronization between sound and picture and establishing their integration as a cohesive whole. The narrative enhancing purpose of this progression is to musically establish a feel of malaise concerning the violent way the mice arrive on the island, and towards Bouncer’s imperialistic leanings. Steven Kellogg does this himself through his animation of an island flower crushed beneath a cannon ball.

Another section of harmonic interest within The Island of the Skog is found from measure 17 through 24 of “Footprints”. This section modulates from the established key of F minor to C Ionian. The amount of modal mixture in this section is so extensive that there is no perceived tonal center from which a number of chords deviate. Rather, the entire section is a series of dominant dissonances tied together by a strong and repeating rhythmic figure and a chromatically descending bass line. The harmonies, changing at a harmonic rhythm of one per measure, are as follows: F minor, A dominant, Eb dominant, D half-diminished, C# minor with a sharp 7th, Ab dominant, F# dominant, and B dominant. In the absence of a tonal center from which to assign roman numerals to the harmonies of this progression, it is more useful to view the section as a series of dissonant resolution-seeking harmonies. At any given point along the way there exists a driving feeling of unresolved dissonance that propels the listener’s ear forward. As the majority of harmonies in this section are dominant (7th, 9th, or altered\(^2\)) much of the propulsive dissonance comes from tritones.

\(^2\) Refers to dominant harmonies with sharped or flatted 9th’s or 5th’s
between the 3rd and 7th chord members of each harmony. However, these dominant chords do not resolve to their relative tonic harmonies, as if they were secondary dominants, but rather flow effectively into each other through a chromatically descending bass line. The sense of building suspense is also harmonically enhanced by the addition of chord extensions and color tones, which are increasingly present as this section progresses. By measure 24, at the peak of this section’s mounting harmonic tension, the final harmony is B dominant with a flatted ninth. While the notes are spread over two octaves throughout the entire ensemble, the piano’s right hand fully describes the five notes of the harmony within a single octave. The result is a dissonant and close-voiced cluster consisting of A, B, C, D#, and F#.

It is not until the final two most tension-filled harmonies that the listener’s ear is given the sense resolution it expects. The B7b9 harmony discussed above is proceeded in measure 23 by an F# dominant harmony. In measure 25, the piano moves into C Ionian and sounds an E minor chord. The F# and B harmonies leading into the E minor suspension of measure 25 can therefore be respectively heard as a dominant Neapolitan sixth chord (bII7 in first inversion) and an altered dominant chord (V7b9) of E minor. This resolution, as refreshing as it is after the lengthy series of increasingly tense harmonies, is far from total or conclusive for a number of reasons. The first harmony presented by the piano in measure 25 is actually an A minor over an E in the bass, which is heard as an E minor harmony with a suspended 6th (A) and 4th (C) due to the resolution of those voices to the third and fifth of E minor later in the same measure. Furthermore, the resolution to E minor is only
temporary because the following section is actually constructed in the C Ionian mode, of which E minor is iii.

The succession of seemingly unconnected harmonies found between measures 17 and 24 of “Footprints” is saved from sounding disjointed by a cohesive chromatically-descending bass line in the absence of a home key serving as an diatonic organizational framework. Chord inversions are freely used in this section’s harmonies to maintain the integrity of the steadily plodding bass descent. Because these successive harmonies may seem arbitrary due to their lack of diatonic conformity, any weakening of individual harmonic stability caused by chord inversion is certainly secondary to maintaining the main organizational force: the bass line.

Within The Island of the Skog there are many instances, within the choral and string parts, where the technique of sliding between individual melodic notes creates an interesting harmonic effect. The beginning of “Winter Waffle” contains examples of this contrapuntal technique. It is first used solely in the solo viola voice, which slowly slides down from a G to an F# between measures 5 and 6. G sounds as the 3\(^{rd}\) and F# as the 9\(^{th}\) over the E minor harmony. As the viola line moves through the homophonic texture, it comes to the forefront of the other static string voices. It is not only perceived as a melodic line containing the 3\(^{rd}\) scale degree and a plaintive 9\(^{th}\), but rather, as it slides over the half step interval it passes through an infinite number of micro-tones which interact dynamically with the other voices in the harmonic texture. Two measures later all four voices slide simultaneously in different directions to the notes of measure 9. The resulting contrapuntal effect is similar to the oblique
sliding motion in measures 5 and 6 but simultaneously features similar and contrary motion over an un-quantized spectrum of pitches. The effect on the listener is similar to the signature “Deep Note” crescendo by THX sound in which notes traverse a large distance from an extremely high register and from an inaudibly low frequency range until they blend together and produce a unified harmony. The listener not only hears an A minor harmony in measure 8 and a Db augmented harmony in measure 9, but also everything in between; creating a different perception of how the two harmonies relate two each other. This effect is explored in measures 6 and 7 of “The Island” using choral voices all moving in similar motion and by the cello and violin melodies in the opening of “National Rodent Day.”

Another harmonically interesting technique that leaves more to the performer’s discretion than straight pitch notation is found in measures 43 to 45 of “Footprints”. The score directs the strings to play three measures of crescendoing tremolo with the text instruction, “Atonal and arrhythmic scratching.” The string performers are free to play any pitch and any rhythm. At this point in Steven Kellogg’s narrative the mice wait tensely for the Skog to fall into their trap and the Skog’s shadow looms frighteningly close. The piano plays a low, mysterious rumbling that grows increasingly ominous up until and climaxing at measure 45 with an F minor harmony with a sharped 7th (E natural). The addition of the strings in measure 43, as the video composed of Kellogg’s images zooms in on the Skog’s shadow, increases the sense of a looming threat. This is achieved not only through the increasingly frenetic energy of the unsynchronized and irregular string tremolos, and the grating timbre induced by the text note “scratching”, but also by allowing for the
inclusion of any randomly chosen pitches that are heard as dissonant in the context of
the already ominous sounding F minor harmony with a sharped 7th.

One compositional characteristic that permeates the entire score for The Island of the Skog is the chromatic alteration of dominant harmonies. This harmonic technique, derived from the jazz vocabulary, includes chromatic alteration of the 5th and 9th scale degrees of Mixolydian dominant harmonies. The addition of these chromatically altered pitches serves the aesthetic function of creating more color and variety in the harmonies, and also the narrative enhancing function of providing a greater degree of anxious tension and tonal flexibility in the creation of a sonic environment for Kellogg’s world. I will analyze 2 specific examples of this heavily used compositional device in detail.

Measure 17 of “Night Ship” is an interesting example of an altered dominant harmony that increases the emotional tension at an appropriate time in Kellogg’s narrative. While it would seem appropriate to describe the harmony in the third beat of the measure as D half-diminished, in relation to the tonal center of A minor, it functions and sounds like, despite its lack of the root note, an E dominant with flatted 9th and 5th chord alterations. The notes of D half-diminished (D, F, Ab, C) function as the 7th, altered 9th, 3rd (Ab is enharmonically equivalent to G#), and altered 5th of an E dominant harmony constructed from the E diminished-whole tone scale (E, F, G, Ab, B, C, D), or F melodic minor. The essential tritone dissonance that establishes the need for resolution and gives vii diminished and V dominant harmonies their dominant character is present in D half-diminished (IV half-diminished). The tritone interval between Ab and D has a greater effect on the listener’s perception than D’s
position as the lowest chord member. The harmony is therefore more accurately
described as dominant, and due to the presence additional tension pitches, is more
accurately described as an E (V) altered dominant than a G# (vii) diminished
harmony. A number of other tension building techniques are used in the measure in
conjunction with the harmonic to enhance the listener’s emotional reaction to the
narrative’s images. These techniques include a dramatic shift in orchestral texture.
The timpani and orchestral bass drum sound fff notes as the winds and trumpets come
in loudly. The flute trills along with the jittering tremolo of the upper strings, which
rapidly slides by portamento up into their upper range. The time signature also
changes to common time for a single measure at 17, putting it at odds with the
established musical framework.

Another harmony that functions as an altered dominant chord is found in “The
Island” where it ends a repeated eight bar phrase at measures 54 and 62. In these
instances the piano, strings, winds, and trumpet sound the pitches of a C# diminished
harmony: C#, E, G, Bb. However, the celesta and guitar melodies add A to the
mixture, combining with the ensemble’s C# diminished harmony to produce the A
dominant with a flatted 9th sonority: A, C#, G, Bb. The dominant tension of this
harmony does not serve a secondary dominant function, as it does not lead into a
relative tonic; C# and G of A7 altered do not resolve to D and F# of D major. Instead
it adds a heightened sense of unexpected chromatic tension to the harmonic landscape
as the steadily driving rhythmic figure and orchestration maintain continuity.
Form

The following section of this paper will outline the form of each piece in *The Island of the Skog* and discuss important structural characteristics.

1. “National Rodent Day”
   A. Mm. 1 - 11: Alternates between 4/4 and 5/4 time every bar.
   B. Mm. 12 – 49: 4/4 time. Variations on a repeated four-bar ostinato progression
   C. Mm. 50 – 64: 3/4 time. Through-composed.

2. “Night Ship”
   A. Mm. 1 – 25
      a. Mm. 1 – 12: 6/8 time. Variations on a repeated four-bar ostinato progression
      b. Mm. 13 - 17: Ends with a single bar in 4/4 time.
            Variation on subsection a’s four-bar ostinato progression.
   B. Mm 26 – 33: 4/4 time.
   C. Mm. 34 – 67: 4/4 time. Variations on a repeated four-bar ostinato figure.

3. “Winter Waffle”
   A. Mm. 1 – 17: 4/4 time. Through composed.
   B. Mm. 18 – 34: 4/4 time. Variations on a repeated four-bar ostinato.

3 Uppercase letters reference sections that comprise the overarching form of a piece. Lowercase letters reference notable subsections within section.
C. Mm. 35 – 70: 4/4 time. Variations on an eight-bar ostinato.

D. Mm. 71 – 86: Variations on a two-bar ostinato.

4. “The Island”

A. Mm. 1 - 47
   b. Mm. 9 – 16: Eight-bar progression.
   b. Mm. 21 – 36: 4/4 time. Variation on subsection b’s eight-bar progression.
   d. Mm. 37 – 46

B. Mm 47 – 62: Twice-repeated eight-bar progression.

C. Mm 63 – 93
   e. Mm. 63 – 70: 4/4 time. Variations on a four-bar ostinato progression
   f. Mm. 71 – 74: 3/4 time.
   e. Mm. 75 – 78: 4/4 time.
   h. Mm. 79 – 93: Twice repeated six-bar progression based on subsection e.

5. “Footprints”

A. Mm. 1 – 8: 4/4 time

B. Mm. 9 – 24
   b. Mm. 9 – 16: Variations on a two-bar progression
   c. Mm. 17 – 24: Through-composed
C. Mm. 25 – 33:
   d. Mm. 25 – 32: Variations on a twice-repeated four-bar progression.
   e. Mm. 33: 5/4 time.


E. Mm. 47 – 56
   f. Mm. 47 – 50
   g. Mm. 51 – 52
   f. Mm. 53 – 56

6. “Pulled Apart”
   A. Mm. 1 - 14: Variable time signature.
   C. Mm. 24 – 27: Repeated one-bar progression.

7. “Unmasked”
   A. Mm. 1 - 12: 4/4 time. Variations on a two bar ostinato figure.

8. “Friends Forever”
   A. Mm. 1 – 32: 4/4 time.
      a. Mm. 1 - 4: Instrumental introduction.
      b. Mm. 5 – 8
         a. Mm. 9 – 12: Vocals enter.
         b. Mm. 13 – 16
         c. Mm. 17 – 24
         a. Mm. 25 – 28
b. Mm. 29 - 32

B. Mm. 33 – 48: Instrumental bridge.

c. Mm. 33 – 48: Variations on two repetitions of subsection c.

C. Mm. 49 – 61: Vocals re-enter.

A common compositional characteristic of The Island of the Skog is the repetition of four to eight measure harmonic ostinato building blocks as the structural basis for most of the pieces. These harmonic ostinato cells are repeated for an extended period of time with subtle to drastic variation upon their melodic material, orchestration, harmonic rhythm, and harmonic pitch content. The use of ostinato progressions is found widely through all musical genres and time periods. Within The Island of the Skog, it is extremely useful in the context of an integrated musical-visual-narrative since it provides a balance between continuity and progression in conjunction with the image or set of images depicting a specific period of the narrative. The audibly recognizable repetition of a short progression provides the scene’s continuity while the various methods of musical variation upon those cells of harmonic ostinato provide the forward impetus. In addition to its structural utility, the use of harmonic ostinato also establishes a perceived tonal center in the absence of functional tonic-subdominant-dominant-tonic harmonic progressions. Instead, the short repeated cell allows the listener’s ear to maintain a memory a tonal center, usually the ostinato’s first harmony; when the incidence of non-functional chords and modal mixture in longer progressions would destroy the short term aural memory of such a tonal home.
I will discuss two of many examples of ostinato progression cells within *The Island of the Skog*. First, as an overview of the technique’s prominence in the eight pieces, I will point out its role throughout the entirety of “Winter Waffle.” I will not limit my analysis to exclude non-structural characteristics, but rather will discuss all musical elements as they relate to the underlying ostinato structural framework.

After a non-ostinato string section introduction, a four bar ostinato progression is established in measure 18: C minor, G minor, Ab major, and f minor. This cell is firmly in C Aeolian and is repeated twice between measures 18 and 25. The leading tone is not raised in measure 19, depriving the G minor chord build on the C minor’s fifth scale degree of its functional, dominant sonority. A roman numeral analysis of this cell would be / i / v / VI / iv / IV. The piano, celesta, and bassoon all vary their melodic material between the two repetitions of the ostinato cell. Measure 27 establishes a second, similar four-bar ostinato cell repetition. Still in C minor the harmonic progression is / i / VI / v / III. Over the course of the two cell repetitions an enormous sense of forward movement is created in the macro-duet between the string and wind sections by melodic variations and changing bowing techniques in the strings. In the first cell, between measures 27 and 30, the strings play the harmonic support in a hushed tremolo over which the winds and trumpet enter one by one repeating “Winter Waffle's” main theme. In measure thirty, the third bar of the first four-bar ostinato cell repetition, the bassoon plays a scalar ascent into the cell’s second repletion at measure 31. A building sense of freedom develops as the winds and trumpet all ascend into a freer polyphony climaxing with a series of

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4 Enclosure by / marks indicates one measure.
cascading flute arpeggios. The string section simultaneously contributes to the momentum, moving from a hushed tremolo into an open, arco bowing style. Measure 35 introduces the harmonically static four-bar cell that provides the following harmonic framework up until measure 68. The piano plays a solo, descending compound melody in D minor, and is joined in measure 39 by the guitar for the second D minor ostinato repetition. The ostinato cell repeats two more times with added melodic and percussive material preventing the static harmonic content from growing monotonous. In measures 49 and 50, the third and fourth D minor harmonies of the fourth ostinato repetition are substituted by Eb dominant and C# diminished harmonies. These chords strengthen the D minor tonal center by creating a new tension appropriate to the harmonic framework. Eb dominant functions as V7 of D minor, as it shares the same tritone interval dissonance (between Db/C# and G) with A7, D minor’s proper V7 harmony. This harmonic substitution of dominant chords is common within the jazz idiom where it is know as tritone substitution. Thus, the harmonies of measures 49 and 50 both function as dominant sonorities, strengthening the tonal center of D minor, and preparing for the static D minor ostinato to return. The ostinato cell does just that in measure 51, with a new sense of drama resulting from a mixture of interlocking rhythmic syncopations in the string section and oboe melodies and a 3 against 4 polyrhythmic figure in the guitar. After this the cell is repeated once more, ending again with Eb dominant and C# diminished harmonies in the third and fourth bars leading into a new D minor six-bar ostinato cell at measure 57. This cell maintains a D minor harmony for four bars before introducing modal mixture in measures 62 and 69: / i / i / i / i / iii / v V7alt /. This section of “Winter
“Waffle” features a sudden, threatening frenetic energy musical that coincides with a dangerous ice storm in the narrative. This new energetic atmosphere is achieved through rhythmic, dynamic, and melodic variation of the same D minor ostinato that permeates the piece’s calmer sections. These rhythms include wave-like, pounding quarter notes in the bass and piano, driving triplets in the other strings, and chromatic neighbor-tone melodic fragments that whip around the ensemble like icy gusts wind. Though variation techniques of the same static D minor ostinato are sufficient to create a new, stormy musical landscape, the harmonic component of this landscape is enhanced by modal mixture introduced in the fifth and sixth bars at measure 61. Measure 61 features an F minor harmony (iii of D minor) and measure 62 features an A minor harmony (v) that morphs into an A dominant (V7) as its 3rd chromatically moves between C and C#. The added harmonic variety, along with the static bass’ new melodic motion, provides the support for a new melodic variation of the chromatic neighbor tone theme. The six-bar ostinato repeats at measure 63, building up then at measure 69 the storm suddenly ends, musically and in the narrative, for an extended tonic D minor harmony with added 9th and sharped 7th scale degrees that create a underlying disquiet to the storm’s conclusion. The mice are, after all, still lost at sea without food or direction. This narrative emotion of searching hopelessness is musically developed by a two-bar, five-note melodic figure that will be referred to as the “Lost at Sea” theme and examined in greater detail later on. The figure begins in measure 71, consisting of two lines ascending in parallel sixths for four beats, and descending to a fifth, held note pair. This ostinato figure is repeated in the celesta eight times with only slight variation as the trumpet, cello, and piano weave in layers.
of countermelodies. The narrative scene ends as the mice catch sight of a misty island on the horizon. The upper trumpet melody ends “Winter Waffle” with an unresolved ninth suspension, alerting the listener that, even though the mice have survived the trials at sea, their adventure is far from over.

Rhythm and Time

There are many instances throughout the music of The Island of the Skog in which a number of the ensemble’s instruments play different but related rhythmic patterns in order to create an intricate fabric of rhythmic counterpoint. Measure 51 of “Winter Waffle” is an example of the compositional technique of using interlocking rhythms to create a driving energy. The piano and guitar play straight eighth notes, dividing the bars evenly with contrasting compound melodies in D minor. Both compound melodies are composed of straight eighth notes and pivot on A. However, the guitar melody’s pivot A occurs on the downbeats, while its ascending melodic compound melody occurs on the upbeats. The piano melody is directly out of phase with the guitar, and its descending compound melody occurs on the downbeats while the pivot A occurs on the upbeats. The result of these overlapping lines is a series of fluctuating D minor diatonic intervals rhythmically subdividing the bars into eighths. The strings and oboe further subdivide measure 51’s metrical space with an interlocking framework of static melodies on the pitches of a D minor seventh harmony. The bass establishes the basic three-note rhythmic grouping of the string and oboe framework: two dotted quarter notes and a quarter note on the fourth beat (D, A, D). The remaining strings and oboe embellish this rhythmic figure with slightly different rhythms creating an interesting texture based on where those
patterns do and don’t overlap. This density gradient of overlapping rhythms on the
notes of a D minor seventh harmony creates accents on, and reinforces, the bass’
rhythm, with which every rhythmic figure detailed so far overlaps. The celesta
melody stands out from the ensembles interlocking rhythmic super-structure by
playing a triplet, three-against-two rhythm.

Another variation of this technique, again utilizing interlocking rhythmic
figures in the ensemble’s string section, is found starting at measure 13 of
“Footprints.” The difference between this section and the previous example is that the
separate rhythmic figures create an interesting effect by occupying different time
spaces and largely avoiding overlaps. At measure 13 of “Footprints” there are two
rhythmic figures in the string section; the bass plays a melodic line in the first rhythm
and the remaining three string voices play single-pitch rhythmic figures in tutti that
anticipate the bass by sixteenth notes before overlapping for the final two notes.
Because there are only two interacting patterns, there is no gradient of relatedness in
the resultant texture, but rather a sharp contrast between anticipation and rhythmic
unison. The rapid call-and-response between the two closely related rhythms creates
the impression of a single compound melody composed of the string ensemble’s
melodic bass line and static upper string harmonies. This texture gives a strong
cohesiveness and melodic drive to the following sections of “Footprints”, including
the non-functional progression between measure 17 and 24 that was discussed earlier
on in this paper.

One widespread musical characteristic The Island of the Skog involves the
relationship between musical phrasing and sudden changes in meter. Much of the
melodic material, including many of the main themes, present in the pieces does not fit into any single-meter framework. Such melodic material is handled in two ways: they are set in a single meter and therefore accent unexpected moments within that metrical framework, or the metric framework changes fluidly to accommodate the material’s melodic phrasing. The two treatments yield interesting musical effects that can seem both organic and unexpected. Inserting melodic phrases implying one meter over another meter also creates this effect.

The oboe melody at the measure 28 of “National Rodent Day” is an example of the superimposition of a melody upon a different meter framework. The five note melodic figure implies a 5/4 signature but is imposed upon a common 4/4 time beginning at the first beat of measure 28. Each five-beat phrase of the melody is comprised of 4 beats in legato feel ending with two staccato sixteenth notes on the fifth beat. The superimposition results in phrases that start and stop in a different location in each successive measure, playing against the established framework. Later on in the same piece, starting at measure 34, the celesta takes up a three-note ascending arpeggio figure. Instead of overshooting the metrical framework, this figure cycles at a faster rate than each bar, and realigns with the meter’s first downbeat every four measures.

Often, especially in sections that feature the string or choir groups, the piece’s meter changes suddenly and briefly to accommodate a melodic phrase or draw attention through contrast from the surrounding metrical framework. This treatment is used in the opening measures of The Island of the Skog’s first piece, “National Rodent Day.” Every other measure, the time signature shifts from the 4/4 framework
of the piece, to a 5/4 signature that complements the string section’s five-note harmonized melodic phrases. Later on within the same piece during the string-section solo that extends from measure 26 through 33, the legato violin melody climaxes at a high D# that comes in only three beats after the previous phrase’s end. The time signature shifts to 3/4 for a single measure so that all the string voices enter together, accenting the anticipated melodic focal point. The unexpected tutti accent causes the note to jut out sharply from the flowing string texture and musically marks the protagonists’ escape from their oppressed city life in pursuit of their dreams. This compositional technique is also used in measures 17 and 18 of “The Island”, which contains a ten-beat musical phrase in 5/4 time and in the six-beat musical phrase found in measure 12 of “Pulled Apart”. Both of these phrases are used as a momentary pause between sections of the prevailing meter.

Melody

There is a great deal of melodic repetition in The Island of the Skog, some melodies are repeated only within the context of a single piece while other melodic themes are reused in many pieces throughout the work. The reoccurring melodic themes not only glue the eight separate pieces together in a more cohesive whole but also serve a narrative-enhancing function. The main themes musically relate narrative events to one another, and apply previous emotions to new narrative contexts. In the next paragraphs I will discuss three of the most prominent melodic themes.
“Jenny’s Theme” is the first theme to be introduced, at measure 24 of “National Rodent Day.” This bouncy major-mode theme is associated with happy times the mice share on national rodent day after escaping a hungry cat. Shortly after the same cat ruins their party the mice embark on their dangerous journey. The theme is not heard again until measure 22 of “Night Ship” in the oboe melody where it coincides with the protagonists’ escape from danger once again. The theme is taken up and varied by the string section in measure 26 as the mice sail off into the sunset.

One of the most heavily repeated themes in The Island of the Skog, which was discussed earlier in this paper, is the “Lost at Sea Theme”. It is first heard at measure 71 of “Winter Waffle” at which point in the narrative the mice are literally lost at sea and starving. This theme returns many times in later pieces to convey a sense of uncertainty towards the future. It also parallels Steven Kellogg’s thematic message-in-a-bottle illustrations. The image that coincides with measure 71 of “Winter Waffle” shows the mice tossing desperate messages out to sea in bottles. Later, as the mice discover ominous footprints in the sand of the island, their earlier cries for help wash up on shore unread and unanswered. The “Lost at Sea” theme returns as the mice find the threatening tracks and as their bottles wash back to them at measure 11 of “Footprints”. The theme returns a final time in “Unmasked” forming the ostinato figure up which the entire short piece is constructed.
“Bouncer’s Theme” is first introduced in measure 47 of “The Island” in the guitar melody. It coincides with Bouncer’s attack on the island and generally embodies his violent conquering spirit. Later on in the piece, small fragments of the theme resurface as the mice dance happily on the shore of their newly found island, gently hinting at their imperialistic methods. The theme returns again, intervally inverted, at the beginning of “Pulled Apart” in the soaring soprano voice line. This music parallels the point in the narrative at which the Skog’s monstrous costume is destroyed by the mice’s trap.

Although most pieces in The Island of the Skog make heavy use of short, repeated ostinato cells as their basic structural building blocks, melodic ostinato figures are also used. The final section of “Night Ship” uses a two-bar melodic ostinato figure, constructed in B Ionian, as the framework upon which harmonic and melodic material is built. This is similar to the ostinato figure discussed in measure 71 of “Winter Waffle”, except the ostinato figure is strictly repeated without variation, and is recontextualized in a much more harmonically descriptive manner than the “Winter Waffle” figure. The figure begins at measure 34 “Night Ship” and firmly establishes the key of B major. The tonal center is further strengthened by a syncopated B major ninth chord arpeggio figure in the celesta. The underlying ostinato cell repeats until measure 42 where it is joined by the entire ensemble as a definitive B chord. Until this point the repeated ostinato cell has strongly implied a
tonal center, but has vaguely swirled around the notes of the B major scale, including the $9^{th}$, $6^{th}$, and $7^{th}$ scale degrees. Once the bass and cello sound a low B at measure 42, and the winds and trumpets play reinforce the $1^{st}$, $5^{th}$ chord members, a true B major harmonic incident is asserted and the $9^{th}$, $6^{th}$, and $7^{th}$ degrees of the B major scale are heard as colorful chord extensions. The next strongly descriptive harmonic event occurs at measure 46, where the bass and cello play an E. The winds and trumpets all repeat their note from measure 42 except for the bassoon that moves from D to E. The pitches B, C#, and D (the $1^{st}$, $9^{th}$, and $3^{rd}$ chord members of measure 42’s B minor harmony) serve as E major’s $5^{th}$, $6^{th}$, and $7^{th}$ chord members respectively. The free use of common tones that are not the $1^{st}$, $3^{rd}$, $5^{th}$, or $7^{th}$ scale degrees that clearly identify a harmony germinates interesting relationships between the two chords and emphasizes the importance of the bass notes in harmonically contextualizing the swimming ostinato figure.
National Rodent Day

Trumpet in Bb

Sleigh Bells

Drum Set

Violin I

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

Tpt.

S.Bells

Dr.

Vln. I

Vla.

Vc.

Db.
55

Bsn.

Tpt.

Dr.

E. Gtr.

Cel.

Pno.

Vc.

Db.
Keep it crisp!
*There were murmur of surprise*
“Here we can all feel like kings”
Foot Prints

David Moench

Flute

Oboe

Bassoon

Violin I

Viola

Violoncello

Flute

Oboe

Bassoon

Violin I

Viola

Violoncello

6

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

Tpt.

Timp.

Vln. I

Vla.

Vc.
Ob. ff
Bsn. ff
Tpt. ff
Dr.
Choir open up sound during crescendo
Pno.
Vln. I ff
Vc.
Db.
Atonal and arrhythmic scratching

Atonal and arrhythmic scratching
Dr.

E. Gtr.

let notes sustain

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vc.

Db.

mf

pizz

mf

pizz

mf
Unmasked

David Moench

Trumpet in B♭

Celesta

Violin I

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass
Friends Forever!

David Moench

Flute

Oboe

Bassoon

Trumpet in B

Timpani

Drum Set

Electric Guitar

Voice

Voice

Voice

Celesta

Piano

Violoncello

Double Bass

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

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\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)
s let your voices ring to our island home we sing
Dr.

E. Gtr.

Voice

Shelter - us

Shelter - us

A - h

Shelter

Ah Ah a Ah

Shelter

Pno.

Vc.

Db.
from stormy seas

A - a -

us from stormy seas

149
Keep our kitchens - stuffed with cheese.
se save our pelts from lice and fleas Da da_ Da da_

Lice and fleas Da Da

Lice and fleas Da Da

ppp ~ f mf
30

Dr.

E. Gtr.

Voice

Voice

Voice

Pno.

Vc.

Db.

Da da Save our pelts from fleas and lice

Da Da pelts from fleas and lice

Da Da pelts from fleas and lice

p

p
Shout it once
Shout it twice
Shout it once
Shout it

mf

f

158
Friends forever skog and mice

Sing these 2

Skog and mice

Shout it once

Shout it twice
Dr. E. Gtr.

Voice

Cel.

Pno.

Vc.

Db.

shout it twice

Frie nds fo-re ver

skog and mice

once

Shout it once

Skog and mice

once

Shout it once

Skog and mice

once

Shout it once

Skog and mice

once

Shout it once

Skog and mice
Dr.

E. Gtr.

Voice

Voice

Voice

Cel.

Pno.

Vln. I

Vla.

Vc.

Db.