



BandQuest™

GHOST WALK

CHRIS BRUBECK

Performance Time: 3:30

INSTRUMENTATION

1 – Conductor	4 – B \flat Trumpet 1
4 – Flute 1	4 – B \flat Trumpet 2
4 – Flute 2	4 – B \flat Trumpet 3
4 – Flute 3	4 – F Horn
2 – Oboe	2 – Trombone 1
2 – Bassoon	2 – Trombone 2
4 – B \flat Clarinet 1	2 – Trombone 3
4 – B \flat Clarinet 2	2 – Baritone B.C
4 – B \flat Clarinet 3	2 – Baritone T.C
2 – B \flat Bass Clarinet	2 – Tuba
2 – E \flat Alto Saxophone 1	1 – String Bass
2 – E \flat Alto Saxophone 2	1 – Timpani
2 – B \flat Tenor Saxophone	2 – Percussion 1
2 – E \flat Baritone Saxophone	2 – Percussion 2
	2 – Percussion 3
	2 – Percussion 4
	1 – Piano

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PROGRAM NOTES

It is an honor and a challenge to be asked to contribute a composition to the BandQuest® series. My usual approach to creating a piece is to research the subject, keep my ears and eyes open, exchange ideas with the principals involved, and then start “composing.” I wrote *composing* in quotes because the way I think about it is that I go down to my studio and start exploring. I quickly jot down ideas, let my imagination run, and see if anything sounds like it is worth keeping the next day. Stravinsky, whom I so deeply admire, once stated that “composition is selective improvisation.” This concept is simple yet empowering in that it welcomes those of us from a jazz background (a largely improvisatory style of music) to the more formal classical composition “table.” The creative musical spark that inspires a good jazz solo is the same creative spark that causes the composer to write down his first idea. The jazz player goes on with his solo and doesn’t look back. The composer decides whether the original idea is worth pursuing and then goes about the labor-intensive process of working out all the details of notation and structure. Thus, “composition is selective improvisation.”

Part of my research was to listen to a CD that featured many of the illustrious works created for this series. It seemed to me that the influence of jazz, rock, or funk was somewhat under-represented. Probably not coincidentally, BandQuest approached me because I have been gaining a reputation as a composer with a strangely unorthodox background. After studying classical music at the Interlochen Arts Academy, I went on to record and tour with rock, funk, folk, and jazz groups. There I experienced first-hand many of these more popular forms of music.

The BandQuest goal, as I understand it, is to create music for the middle-level band that motivates the students as well as challenges

and advances their musical abilities. I attended some local middle school band rehearsals to remind myself of the instrumental skills, attention span, and concentration abilities of musicians in this age group. I discovered very quickly that if the music might be boring, the inmates were quickly going to be running the asylum. We BandQuest composers are trying to avoid that fate for all concerned! By the way, since I was in middle school band back in the early 1960s, the attention span has been culturally diminished with video games, MTV, jump cut editing, etc. You band directors out there are well aware of this and have my thanks for bravely leading from the trenches.

Freshly armed with updated band room research, I began with the concept that this piece should be infused with rhythmic momentum. Typically, the basic jazz cymbal beat is ♩ ♪♪ (swung), then another ♩ ♪♪ to complete the bar. You will notice that I reversed this core rhythm, ♪♪ ♩ ♪♪ ♩, eighth notes not swung, which I believe results in a more contemporary sounding beat.

I wanted to make sure that the theme didn’t require any advanced and frightening technical skills... a theme that anyone at the middle school band level COULD play. Then I wanted to make sure that at, one point or another, every instrument WOULD play the theme. I felt that, psychologically, the band members would be more invested in concentrating during the rehearsal process if they would end up playing the theme at some point. In addition, the theme is tossed around and rhythmically displaced. As simple as it may seem on the surface, if the student/musician isn’t paying attention and counting carefully, he will end up falling into the musical “bamboo pit” of inadvertently “soloing” incorrectly during a rest.

Also, at bars 38–40 and 78–80, the rhythmic

phrases are intentionally displaced across the bar lines. In fact, I almost wrote this passage in two different ways (it could have been written in three) to demonstrate to young musicians that the music could sound the same and look very different. Then I thought long and hard about the conductor's plight and decided the extra rehearsal time required would be cruel and unusual punishment. This piece has many sections that return, so although it may be a little harder at first, when the students realize that they are repeating a section, they already will have mastered it.

In bars 82–89, the introduction and the theme come together. I wanted to create a sense of responsibility for each player without there being many intimidating solo moments. The staggered entrances at the pyramid at bar 74 illustrate this concept.

There are plenty of details to digest, and as I listened to some of the early “read-downs,” I saw the young musicians discover how crucial articulation and dynamics were to the music. I think they were genuinely getting excited by how much better a section could sound if they all really worked as a team.

I like to write chords that are triads within each instrumental section, but when these triads are stacked they are more harmonically adventurous (e.g., bars 9–12). Once the band members learned the notes, they discovered they could command the music to “pop” to life if they really hit an accent with a staccato mark as a short and powerful note. The beauty of a unified *fp* followed by a crescendo brought out dramatic contours to musical phrases that were just sitting there. Without that crucial extra layer of articulation information (on the page but often ignored), the intention of the music doesn't come to life. By the way, for you conductors who might be reading this, when I write a tenuto mark with an accent above a note, that means the note is held its full rhythmic value but attacked at the inception of the note. It seems completely obvious and logical to me, but I have run into many interpretive discussions about this, even among pros. At bars 54–55, those who are not playing the theme are playing a background horn lick, straight out of the style of James

Brown (if students don't know who that is, he is the “Godfather of Soul,” and most rap artists worship his ground-breaking soul music).

To keep this piece from being totally immersed in more popular musical idioms, I created a contrasting, more classical section, at bars 58–65. I thought it was a good idea to have the young musicians that only have been exposed to pop musical idioms get a taste of a more traditional musical style. At a saxophone sectional rehearsal I had with a middle school band, the kids instinctively scooped some notes in bars 36 and 73 even though it wasn't written. I didn't know they had it in them stylistically, but I wrote it in, and it is a nice touch.

When I was writing the baritone saxophone part, I consulted several well-known band composers' books on the subject of range at this grade level. I was disappointed because the range demands of the theme theoretically forced me to move entire phrases up an octave. At the first rehearsal I discovered the students I dealt with had the modern baritone saxophone and the range to nail a low concert C. So it was time to throw out the book and rewrite the part with a newfound faith that it could be played. These kinds of experiences led to a bit of tweaking of the original parts and score.

I created a drum set part that is admittedly a bit simplistic. I have heard bands play this piece that happened to have a very strong drummer, and the conductor and I encouraged and allowed the player to add more to the part (I don't want a more advanced student in the band to be bored). There have been other bands where exactly what is written is about all the player could handle. Use your discretion based on the talent at hand. Perhaps because of my jazz roots, I encourage the use of this composition and its many orchestration details as a road map. If this music stimulates even more individual creativity in the student player/performer, then I feel that the BandQuest mission has been truly accomplished.

Finally, I would like to address the title. My son and his wife met at Gettysburg College and were getting married there about the time I was writing this piece. This is a town filled with people in costume at all times, and it also has an international reputation for paranormal activity

spawned by the Civil War. Gettysburg also has a rich tourist tradition where you can take a “Ghost Walk” with a tour guide at any time of the year once the sun sets. This music is a bit edgy and certainly lives in the minor mode most of the time. The chimes increase the haunting atmosphere... hence the name.

BIOGRAPHY

I had the great privilege of growing up in a household filled with the sounds of some of the finest jazz musicians of a generation. It was obvious to my parents that I loved music and had talent, so they encouraged me to start piano lessons when I was five years old. I didn't want to be a pianist, but my Dad wanted me to learn piano so I would gain knowledge of treble and bass clefs and figure out the musical notation system in the process. Despite my protests, he was right, of course. Since my Dad was on tour all the time, I did not study with him. That's a question I am frequently asked.

When I was in fourth grade, our family moved from California to Connecticut. There I took up the trombone because my oldest brother Darius already played the trumpet (yes, Darius was named after Darius Milhaud who taught my father composition at Mills College. I remember riding around on Milhaud's lap in his wheelchair when I was around three). Darius also taught me how to play guitar, and when he needed a bass player for a gig I picked that up. This was around sixth grade.

In summers, I attended the National Music Camp in Michigan and also the New England Music Camp in Maine. By ninth grade (after I was the last kid cut from the basketball team at our public high school), I persuaded my parents to send me to the Interlochen Arts Academy, which, at the time, had only been open a few years. It was a fantastic environment for a young musician. I played in an amazing youth orchestra under conductor Thor Johnson who worked us ruthlessly for two hours a day. I also played in the concert band. Luckily, I was there in 1967 when the new trombone teacher, Dave Sporny, dared to shock the administration and start the jazz band, which I immediately joined.

I also played in a small brass ensemble and, in

my spare time, played in creative rock groups. I was up to my eyeballs in music probably eight hours a day. My rock groups, New Heavenly Blue and Sky King, went on to tour and record for RCA, Atlantic, and Columbia Records. In the process I got to work with legendary producers Steve Cropper and Bob James, play and record with the Tower of Power horn section, and with Mike and Randy Brecker. I sang with Luther Vandross and wrote songs with R&B legend Bobby Womack. I had the honor of hearing Patti LaBelle record a song I wrote and watch it climb the soul charts.

In the meantime I was recording and touring the world with the Dave Brubeck Quartet as a bass player. We often collaborated with orchestras, an area that Dave pioneered with Leonard Bernstein in the early 1960s. My training in orchestration and composition came from the trenches, not from any conservatory.

In 1998, Bill Crofut and I, along with guitarist Joel Brown, had a wild idea to record with the London Symphony at Abbey Road. The resulting CD was *Bach to Brubeck* on Koch International Classics, and it included my *Concerto for Bass Trombone and Orchestra*. This was a turning point in my career. I sent a preview copy of the recording to Doug Yeo, the Boston Symphony Bass Trombonist. Doug went crazy for the concerto and convinced Keith Lockhart to let him play it. His performance was filmed and broadcast across North America on PBS. Mr. Yeo also played it at the International Trombone Association convention. I was suddenly on the map in the legitimate trombone world. Fortunately with the kind of music that comes out of me naturally, one commission has so far always led to another.

Colonel Finley Hamilton was at that Symphony Hall performance and told me he had a hunch that I could write a really cool piece for band. A few years later I was commissioned to write *On The Threshold of Liberty* for the U.S. Army Field Band, and Colonel Hamilton played it all over America. This awareness of me as a composer led to the current bass trombonist in that Army Band performing my *1st Trombone Concerto* at the Midwest Band Convention in 2008.

This was a huge honor, and, as it turned out, the

concerto's band arrangement has proven to be quite serviceable, not only as a recital piece, but also as a concerto competition vehicle at many colleges. It's even been performed as a marching band extravaganza complete with young ladies flinging their batons in 7/4 while squads of instrumentalists high-step in 5/4. Go figure!

Novus Trombone Quartet commissioned me to write a piece for them which is called *Flight of The 4 Kings*, published by Carl Fischer (as is all of my other "serious" music).

I received a commission from the Boston Pops to write a piece to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Symphony Hall. The resulting work, *Convergence*, got rave reviews and became the title piece of my second Koch International Classics CD. That disc also features my second bass trombone work, *The Prague Concerto* and "River of Song," sung by Frederica von Stade and Rachel Luxon. After hearing this CD, the Chicago Tribune reviewer, John von Rhein, wrote: "Chris is a composer with a real flair for lyrical melody—a 21st Century Lenny Bernstein."

The Boston Pops hired me to write a triple violin concerto in three different styles simultaneously for Regina Carter, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, and Eileen Ivers. *Interplay for Three Violins and Orchestra* brought the house down, was televised on PBS, and earned me the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for best original composition for television broadcast.

I've been very fortunate as I always seem to have a next commission project waiting for me. I, and others, have performed my trombone concertos and other compositions with orchestras and bands all over the world. I continue to tour and record with my groups, Triple Play and the Brubeck Brothers Quartet, plus make occasional guest appearances with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. For a complete discography, more information and streaming samples of my music, please visit www.chrisbrubeck.com.

Thank you so much for your interest in the music, and I hope *Ghost Walk* has a positive impact on the young musicians you are instructing.

