Far From Home:

Suite for Jazz Big Band

By

Alex Annan

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Chairperson: Dan Gailey

Matt Otto

Brad Osborn

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The Thesis Committee for Alex Annan certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

Far From Home:

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Far From Home: Suite for Jazz Big Band is a large scale, four movement suite for large jazz ensemble of five saxophones with various woodwind doubles, four trombones, four trumpets with flugelhorn doubles, and rhythm section consisting of bass, guitar, piano, and drums. Each movement is an original composition that can be presented as a standalone piece though collectively the piece is programmatic in nature and tells a story. The goal of this work is to present a story that each listener can take and make their own. While each movement was written with a personal interpretation in mind, the listener should use their own personal experiences to create their story using the music as a guide. The piece has a runtime of approximately 23-25 minutes and features many members of the ensemble either as presenters of the melody or improvised soloists.

Far From Home is meant to encapsulate what it is like to be on a journey, a path where one must take a leap of faith into the unknown in order to better themselves. “Home” in the title does not explicitly mean where you live. “Home” is meant to convey where you want to be, where you need to be, where you once were, or where you can be most successful, personally or professionally. Each movement takes an aspect of the journey and puts it into music. For example, the first movement Distance, is a slow and dark intro to the work. The first melody note is a minor ninth above the bass note, giving the music a heavy sense of dissonance. This movement shows the weariness and anxiousness of taking that leap of faith. The movement is in a 3/4 time signature but every fourth measure, a quarter note is added making it a 4/4 measure. This represents the unsteadiness of the start of a journey.
All movements of *Far From Home* have their own melody that is first presented by one or two members of the ensemble then by a larger group of players. While each movement has its own harmonic language, there are similarities between each movement such as open fifths in the lower horns and bass rhythm voices, or similar chord qualities such as Major 7th chords. The melodic content of each movement is meant to be clear and simple with a single challenging aspect to give the listeners a motive that is easy to grasp but is still interesting to listen to. There are also aleatoric or improvised chance music in each movement which represents the unknown aspects of a journey. This suite’s first two movements are centered in minor keys, Bb minor and E minor respectively, with the third movement being based in a major key, G major. The final movement uses harmonic elements of each of the previous movements and has heavy use of modal mixture, moving between Db major and Db minor. Collectively, these pieces tell a story and provide performers with accessible and challenging music and gives listeners a music guide to create their own story.
Analysis

I. Distance

*Distance* is a sixteen-bar, mixed-meter form that is repeated twice, as are most shorter form tunes in the jazz idiom. The melody is presented in the first twelve bars of the form and the final four are used to repeat the guitar ostinato and allow the melodic player to prepare for the restatement of the melody. It opens with an ostinato in the guitar outlining the main harmonic progression which can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Guitar ostinato in *Distance*

The harmonic progression is almost completely based off the Bb Aeolian scale until the last bar of the four-bar cycle which it moves more towards a B half-whole diminished sound due to the flat nine and flat thirteen. The progression is Bbmin9 – Gbmaj7(#11) – Dbmaj7 – B7(b9)/D#. This progression was created using a pedal point on the top as opposed to the typical bass pedal point. The note C is used as the consistent tone throughout the progression and is relied on heavily in the melodic statements as well a common tone used in the development of this chart. The melody is based on the C Phrygian scale save for the last bar in the cycle, similar to the chord progression. The alto sax presents the melody with rhythm section and bass voice accompaniment. The melody can be seen in Figure 2 transposed for alto sax.
After the melody is presented, the piece moves into a guitar solo beginning on a two-bar extension over the final chord of the progression, the B7(b9)/D# and a repeating eighth note figure in the winds as a send-off. The guitarist solos over the progression with wind backgrounds to build to the arrival point at bar 79. The piano enters with new material over a four-bar bass and bass clarinet pattern that serves as accompaniment to the alto sax solo which begins in bar 83. The pattern is shown in Figure 3.

The alto sax solo is open and offers freedom to the chart as all backgrounds are all on cue, meaning no two times that this is played will it be the exact same. This solo continues to the end of the piece and slowly morphs back into the original melody, which is stated by the alto sax. There are many textural elements happening as the alto solos. The upper pedal point is added back in and passed around between horn players, the trombones come in presenting harmonic pads, and the flugelhorns enter with a hemiola and morph into aleatoric figures to create a cloudy texture in which the alto sax emerges to present the final statement of the melody. The piece then fades out until the trombones play the final chord, a B7(b9) with no third present.
This final chord which is above in Figure 4 is unsteady and wants to resolve which gives the piece a continued sense of anxiousness. This chord also indirectly serves as a V chord to the following movement, *Danger Dance*, which tonally centered in E minor.

**II. Danger Dance**

*Danger Dance* is a fast, swing tune which has a 20 bar AB form with the A sections being over a quarter note bass ostinato. This tune is based in E minor on all of the A sections and moves modally on the B sections with all chords being minor 9th chords. The ostinato also contains a flatted ninth on beat 4, giving the tune more tension. The melody is first stated with distorted guitar followed by an interlude vamp over the initial bass ostinato. The ostinato is shown below in Figure 5.
The melody of this movement is simple when looking at the tessitura which is only a minor 7th but the melody contains difficult syncopation coupled with the fast tempo of half notes at 144 beats per minutes. The melody can be seen in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Guitar melody in the A section of *Danger Dance*

Programmatically, this movement emulates the intense moments of someone’s journey. The unknown and unease from *Distance* is transferred to this movement but evolves into a much more chaotic, and raucous feeling. Like the first movement, this piece contains aleatoric figures presented first by the trombones in the interlude between statements of the melody and also as backgrounds in trombones and upper winds (trumpets and alto saxes) behind the guitar solo towards the end of the piece. Along with the aleatoric sections, this piece also uses its non-functional harmonic elements to create the heighten sense of unease and chaos. For example, the chords to the B section of this tune do not conform to typical harmonic patterns. They move modally between different roots and only land back at the main key center, E minor, in the last four bars. The harmonic pattern is Am9 – Fm9 – Am9 – Dbm9 – Fm9 – Bm9 – Fm9 – Bm9 – Em9 – Abm9. Most of these chords have little to no common tones between their basic 7th chords, causing the melodic arch to be more disjunct in terms of voice leading paired with disjunct rhythmic syncopations.

The improvised sections of *Danger Dance* both start with a textural change where the original groove is abandoned for a freer, and more ethereal feel. This gives the soloist more freedom to build their solo, while the rhythm section slowly works back into the original groove. The baritone sax solo is very free harmonically, with the lead sheet even stating the chord is C#m9-ish. The soloist and the drummer are in control of how long and what direction this solo
goes. The solo must work up to a high point so that the backgrounds, which are bell-tone accents, can enter and continue to propel the solo forward. The backgrounds are the notes of melody in order, though on different rhythms. A composite rhythm of the bell-tone backgrounds, shown in Figure 7 is played by the guitar.

Figure 7: Composite rhythm of horn bell-tone backgrounds played by electric guitar in Danger Dance

The saxophones consistently present countermelodies throughout this movement. In the interlude section starting at H, they have a rhythmically complex line that drives the music forward while the brass plays pads outlining the harmony. This section then ends with a pyramid build in the winds and acts as a send-off to the new key center, Eb major, and the guitar solo. The guitar solo uses a very simple harmonic progression over eight measures which is essentially just Ebmaj7 but the addition of a non-chord tone bass note in the last four bars ties the guitar solo back into the programmatic element of this chart. The bass note changes from Eb to E natural in the fifth bar of the progression, which adds a high amount of dissonance and tension to the texture.

The guitar solo then has aleatoric backgrounds added to it to delve even more so in the chaotic and uneasy feel of the piece. These backgrounds are played over a bass ostinato and an echoing background played by the tenor saxophones and lower trumpets; this keeps the music grounded in something steady while other players around it can have the freedom to engage in the chance music. The piece continues with a unison statement of the A section melody in the winds, followed by the B section melody with the lead trumpet up an octave and some slight counterpoint from the mid and lower voices. Danger Dance then closes with a quiet texture over
the bass ostinato for eighteen bars with an and of four kick of the entire ensemble playing a triple forte E power chord as a surprise to catch the listeners off guard.

**III. BoTa**

*BoTa* is a mixed meter tune with a groove that resembles a funk backbeat with a more subtle touch from the drums. The melody is centered in G Lydian with a few measures based outside of that tonal center with F Lydian. The form is 16 bars with each measure alternating between 4/4 and 3/4 time signatures in lieu of 7/4 to make counting easier for the performers. The melody is first presented by the lead trombone and lead tenor playing the first eight bars and the second eight bars respectively. An E pedal point is used through the intro and under the first time through the melody which creates the sense that the tune may be based in E minor, though the second time through the melody is harmonized without the pedal point. The pedal point is shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8: Bass pedal point with chord changes in BoTa**

![Bass pedal point](image)

The melody played between two members of the ensemble are meant to resemble the programmatic elements of the movement. The title *BoTa* was created by mixing the first two letters of the names of two heroes of mine, my Dad and my Grandpa, Todd and Barry. This movement is meant to be inspirational; the listeners should use this movement to remember what drove them to succeed on their journey to get to their “home.”
Prior to the second time through the melody there is an interlude that uses the same pedal point from the beginning of the piece. Aleatoric figures are also used in this interlude to create a cloudy texture, similar to *Danger Dance*. This texture sets up the ensemble moment at E, the second time through the melody, which introduces the chord changes of the tune without the E pedal point as well as a countermelody played by the tenor saxophones and trombones 2 and 3. The melody in the soprano sax and tenor saxes’ countermelody is shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Melody and countermelody played by soprano and tenor sax in BoTa**

This movement features a soprano sax solo with simple backgrounds on the solo’s second chorus. The piece then moves into a build section that stacks with newly added parts every eight bars. Figure 10 shows the guitar ostinato that starts with and is all based around.

**Figure 10: Guitar ostinato from build section of BoTa**

After the final statement of the melody, the piece then emulates a technique that many performers use while performing jazz standards where the performers play the chord changes of the tune as an outro with little to no melodic content over the chords. Similar to *Danger Dance*, the final chord to this piece is very simple, a root position D triad with the third on top of the voicing and the lower voices covering the root and fifth.
**IV. Far From Home**

The finale of this suite is a straight eighth tune which is rooted in the style of artists associated with the ECM record label. *Far From Home* has an AABA form though it is not presented exactly that way. The piece has a piano, guitar and drum intro which sets up the melody played by the bass for the first A section. The ensemble then plays the second A section after a rhythm section interlude which introduces the countermelody, similar to *BoTa*.

*Far From Home* has the most variety in harmonic qualities of any movement of this suite. While these harmonic qualities are still quite simple, the changes of this piece make heavy use of modal mixture, essentially moving back and forth from Db major and Db minor with some enharmonic spelling for the ease of the performer. The chord changes to the first solo section can be seen in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Chord changes to bass solo in *Far From Home***

The backgrounds to the bass solo are woodwind doubles that are used to create a softer texture. Along with the drums uses brushes in lieu of sticks, the bass solo helps solidify the programmatic element of sincerity and being humble on your journey when you have reached your “home.”

As stated earlier, this piece does not present its AABA form with consecutive sections. They are instead broken up with interludes or solo sections. After the bass solo, the B section is
presented by the tenor sax, with the rest of the ensemble entering in the second half of the B section. The excerpt from the score of the B section is in Figure 12 and is in the key of Bb.

Figure 12: B section theme of Far From Home, in key of Bb

This B section melody is based completely in the C# Aeolian mode and uses different bass notes to create movement and different qualities within the mode while still staying true to the key of C# Aeolian. For example, the first chord is C# minor followed by Amaj7(#11). These two chords essentially have the same notes but by using different bass notes and harmonizing them with notes from the C# Aeolian scale, you can create movement and harmonic surprise without abandoning the base key. This same concept is used for the flugelhorn solo. The soloist can use the C# Aeolian scale for the entire progress, save for the B6/9 chord where an E# or F should be used in lieu of E natural. The changes are in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Chord changes to flugelhorn solo in Far From Home
The piece then concludes with a drum solo moving into the last statement of the melody which states the A section with slight variations and an extension into the B section which is over a Db pedal. The pedal is presented with powerful long tone hits from the bass voices and a hemiola figure in the middle voices. A piano reduction can be seen in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Piano reduction of shout section in *Far From Home*

Along with the pedal, this B section also has an extension of the form by way of a tag ending, where the final melodic statement is repeated, similar to classic jazz standards. The final ensemble statement is one of the counter lines from earlier in the piece played in augmentation, landing on a Db quintal harmony. The original counter line and its version in augmentation are in the Figures 15a and 15b below.

Figure 15a: Original counter line

![Figure 15a: Original counter line](image)

Figure 15b: Counter line augmentation

![Figure 15b: Counter line augmentation](image)
Far From Home ends with a rhythm section vamp that is the same as the intro and interludes from the piece. It ends with the guitar and piano playing a variation on the chords by stepping down a different type of second each time. The first is a minor second, the next an augmented second and finally a major second which is enharmonically spelled for the ease of reading. Below in Figure 16 is the final eight bars of the vamp played by the guitar.

Figure 16: Guitar part from ending vamp in Far From Home

Conclusion

Programmatically, this piece has a lot to offer the listener, each of whom can use the music to create their own unique story. The similarities between each movement such as the open fifths in the lower voices, simple harmonies, pedal points and ostinatos, and vocally influenced melodies allow these pieces to be played as a cohesive unit, but also can stand alone as individual pieces. The Far From Home suite is challenging yet still engaging to each member of the ensemble, and allows performers to engage in accessible music while still being able to enjoy the ability to tell a story while performing.
Distance

Play Melody very loose

Hairpins on all half notes until C

Bucket Mute

Throw in Cymbal Work Throughout Rests

Distance
Distance

A. Sx. 1

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Cl.

Flhtn. 1

Flhtn. 2

Flhtn. 3

Flhtn. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E. Gtr.

Pno.

A. B.

D. S.

\begin{align*}
\text{Play Melody exactly as written.}
\end{align*}
Distance

Play melody very loose

Play 8ths on given notes through 102

Play 8ths on given notes through 105

Play 8ths on given notes through 102
Danger Dance
Far From Home Suite - MVT. II

Score

Fast Swing \( \approx 144 \)

Alto Sax 1

Alto Sax 2

Tenor Sax 1

Tenor Sax 2

Baritone Sax

Trumpet in B- 1

Trumpet in B- 2

Trumpet in B- 3

Trumpet in B- 4

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Trombone 3

Bass Trombone

Electric Guitar

Piano

Acoustic Bass

Drum Set

©
Danger Dance

A. Sx. 1

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

Bb Tpt. 1

Bb Tpt. 2

Bb Tpt. 3

Bb Tpt. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.
Danger Dance
Danger Dance

A. Sx. 1

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

B♭ Tpt. 3

B♭ Tpt. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.

Random long tones on these notes. Do not enter the same time as other players.

Random long tones on these notes. Do not enter the same time as other players.

Random long tones on these notes. Do not enter the same time as other players.

Random long tones on these notes. Do not enter the same time as other players.

Light Solo/ Weird Sounds
Danger Dance

A. Sx. 1

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

B♭ Tpt. 3

B♭ Tpt. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.
Danger Dance
Danger Dance

A. Sx. 1

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

Bb Tpt. 1

Bb Tpt. 2

Bb Tpt. 3

Bb Tpt. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf
Danger Dance
Danger Dance

A. Sx. 1
Open

A. Sx. 2
Open

T. Sx. 1
Open

T. Sx. 2
Emi6-ab
Open Solo

B. Sx.
Open

B♭ Tpt. 1
Open

B♭ Tpt. 2
Open

B♭ Tpt. 3
Open

B♭ Tpt. 4
Open

Tbn. 1
Open

Tbn. 2
Open

Tbn. 3
Open

B. Tbn.
Open

E.Gtr.
Open, Bari Solo

Pno.
Open, Bari Solo

A.B.
Open

Float at first, then move into swing groove as solo builds

D. S.
Open, Bari Solo

Float at first, then move into swing groove as solo builds
Danger Dance

S. Sx.

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

B♭ Tpt. 3

B♭ Tpt. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S. (8)
Danger Dance
Danger Dance
Danger Dance

S. Sx.
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
B. Sx.
B♭ Tpt. 1
B♭ Tpt. 2
B♭ Tpt. 3
B♭ Tpt. 4
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tbn. 3
B. Tbn.
E. Gtr.
Pno.
A.B.
D. S.
Solo/Fill

136
Danger Dance
Slide slowly between these notes. Do not enter or line up with other players.
Danger Dance
Play these rhythm on these notes randomly. Do not line up or enter with other players.
Danger Dance

S. Sx.
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
B. Sx.
Bb Tpt. 1
Bb Tpt. 2
Bb Tpt. 3
Bb Tpt. 4
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tbn. 3
B. Tbn.

Em9

E. Gtr.

Pno.

A. B.

D. S.

Wind Down Solo

Big Fill
Danger Dance
Danger Dance

S. Sx.

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

B♭ Tpt. 3

B♭ Tpt. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.
Big hit on Beat 3 of every 4/4 measure
BoTa

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

Flgt. 1

Flgt. 2

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.

Light Soloing on E Pedal.
Sustained Notes on these pitches
Alternate between these notes. 1/4s + 8ths
BoTa

S. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

Bb Tpt. 1

Bb Tpt. 2

Bb Tpt.

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.

Sim to Original Groove. On Snare and Rims of Drums
BoTa
BoTa

S. Sx. 1

Tpt. 2

Tbn. 3

Tbn. 2

B. Sx.

Tpt. 1

D. S.

A.B.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

Gmaj7(d11)

Bm9

A\4

Fmaj7

Light Solosing

Gmaj7(d11)

Bm9

A\4

Fmaj7

Gmaj7(d11)

Bm9

A\4

Fmaj7

Gmaj7(d11)

Bm9

A\4

Fmaj7

Gmaj7(d11)

Bm9

A\4

Fmaj7
Far From Home
Far From Home

A. Sax 1

A. Sax 2

T. Sax 1

T. Sax 2

B. Sax

Flight 1

Flight 2

Flight 3

Flight 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E. Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.
Far From Home

A. Sx. 1
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
B. Sx.
Flgt. 1
Flgt. 2
Flgt. 3
Flgt. 4
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tbn. 3
B. Tbn.
E.Gtr.
Pno.
A.B.
D. S.
Far From Home

A. Sx. 1
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
B. Sx.
Flghn. 1
Flghn. 2
Flghn. 3
Flghn. 4
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tbn. 3
B. Tbn.
E.Gtr.
Pno.
A.B.
D. S.
Far From Home
Far From Home

A. Sx. 1
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
B. Sx.

Flght. 1
Flght. 2
Flght. 3
Flght. 4

Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tbn. 3
B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.
Pno.

A.B.
D. S.
Far From Home
Far From Home

A. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 1

B. Sx.

Flight. 1

Flight. 2

Flight. 3

Flight. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.
Far From Home

A. Sx. 1
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
B. Sx.

Flght. 1
Flght. 2
Flght. 3
Flght. 4

Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tbn. 3
B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.
Far From Home

A. Sx. 1
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
B. Sx.
B. Tpt.
Flgt. 2
B. Tpt.
B. Tpt.
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tbn. 3
B. Tbn.
E.Gtr.
Pno.
A.B.
D. S.

Diocletian
Diocletian
Chorician
(8)
Far From Home
Far From Home

A. Sx. 1
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
B. Sx.

B- Tpt.

Flight. 2

B- Tpt.

B- Tpt.

Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tbn. 3
B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.
Far From Home

A. Sx. 1

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

B- Tpt.

B- Tpt.

B- Tpt.

B- Tpt.

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

B. Tbn.

E.Gtr.

Pno.

A.B.

D. S.

Continue Solo. Build to L
Far From Home