

PRIME TIME, Symphonic Band
(Short note by the composer)

This is a bright, brash showpiece in quick 11/8 (“prime” time), increasingly playful with its materials and finally a little prankish. It almost never lets up. The whole piece is driven by a fast downward-leaping eighth-notes ostinato tattoo that starts with a hiccup rest. After this is established (starting in high xylophone), the band lays out three successive contrasting themes (tragic/heroic/chromatic in middle brass, soaring happy diatonic in high winds over low held fifths, bitter and infolding in reeds over quiet timpani), followed by developmental texture-variants of the tattoo under a driving buildup in trumpets repeating a chromatic motive from the end of the first theme, then close-canonic variations on the first theme, chopped-up segments of the ostinato piling up and getting increasingly crazed and dissonant, relaxing to a lyrical middle variation in the reeds with oboe solo, and a marching brass fanfare also based on the ostinato idea. A sudden caesura yields a full-band augmented chorale statement of the ostinato idea, relaxing to a slow, quiet, sleep-cycle interlude with blown-wind breath noises. The “reprise” restarts the ostinato, which then settles both above and below a now-3-part close unison canon on the first theme, repeated with each of the “voices” enriched with parallel triads, then suddenly taking a left turn via a surprise-extended free-wild melody in full unison band that slows and spreads into a full Super-Big-Band “easy swing” harmonization of the first theme with screech trumpet licks and a heavy-fermatas quadruple cadence over drum fills. Timpani soli kick it back to the quiet continuation of the “reprise” via the second happy theme, and then the ostinato-cum-chromatic-lick driving section returns and pushes the trumpets upward to a blaring high Mariachi cadence. Trickling, thinning, dropping repeats of the ostinato tattoo lead us to a hot, showy trickster ending.