

Composer's Notes

The Thurgovian Suite was composed from March through July 2005 in the order in which the parts are presented here. This was done to stay in control musically and to do justice to the biographical element and thus keep the inspiration flowing. Here is some musical background information about the individual parts:

Part I is the most comprehensive part and consists of ten different sections. Oliver starts off with a piano introduction which is written out (the melody and changes, that is, but not the way Oliver plays it!). The intro anticipates the solo changes which are to appear much later. Harmonically, it is based on two minor chords with a major seven: Gm and Fm Major⁷. But before this structure is played, a few other statements must be made. After a brief eight-bar interlude, the band switches to a 12-bar blues in C, which from the fifth bar on is characterized by a succession of minor and later dominant seven chord shifts that move us away from the original key. However, this blues is just a brief episode and purposely leads the listener on the wrong track - Part I is definitely not a blues! Three other interludes finally bring us to the melody and thus to the solo changes; an ostinato interlude leads right into the solos. Then, a densely knit shout chorus takes us all "home", to a "virtual head-out". I say "virtual" because the final phase of this part has nothing in common with the original theme. An ostinato in G and A^b with tightly structured, shifted horn chords leads into a sudden ending. By the way, the decrescendo was played exactly as it is heard here and is not the result of any mixing!

Part II is a waltz in D^b, and harmonically a real tour de force! The horns' "a cappella" intro, built on the form's last eight bars, leads to the intro and the theme. Trumpet and trombone share the A section, the B section – a bridge in D – is played by myself before another ensemble brings us to an ostinato interlude, this time one that belongs to the form, which is made up of 16-16-14-8 bars; how about counting along? A shout chorus in "Hi-Fly" style leads us back to the theme and to an "a cappella" outro.

Part III is *really* the blues, in F and C (and that's what it sounds like, huh?), but with a slightly altered harmonic structure (in the last four bars, the dominant seven chords shift down in whole tone steps). Although it might not sound that way, all lines are written out here! Derrick states the theme in a classical manner, built up – as is the entire part – on dominant seven chords with a [#]5 and a [#]9; Duke Ellington introduced this chord as early as 1937 in "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue". Here, the [#]9 can be considered a minor third on a major chord. Backed by accompaniment with a double-time feel, we enter a burning tutti section in which Adrian must play a high F[#] on trombone! After the tenor solo, another interlude leads us from the key of F into the key of C where we play a double-time blues with normal changes. After a shout theme we switch back to half-time and to the first theme in F. Part III ends with a fortissimo shout. Any questions?

Part IV is a reminiscence of the seventies, but only until the theme itself is stated. This part is built exclusively on minor 9 chords that are extensively shifted in seconds and minor and major thirds! The theme and, as a consequence, the solo form go through all twelve keys; the piece doesn't have an actual key. A series of fiery intros with collective improvisations is followed by a slow ostinato figure with bass, piano and trombone which leads into a polyphonic three-voice ensemble section. Note

Adrian's part here: he must perform a sudden jump over more than an octave from the ostinato to the ensemble! A double-time ensemble-drum interlude guides us into the theme, in which there is an alternation of eight bars in 3/4 and 4/4; very hard to play since the form is jam-packed with chords! My colleagues pass this test with flying colors: my sincere compliments!

Part V is a bass feature built on the changes of "I Got Rhythm" in B^b major - theme and solo form - and contains quite a bit of jazz history, mostly as more or less hidden quotes. After an extensive intro in B^b minor, Thomas and Adrian state the theme in unison. Then things happen in a rather regular manner until the horns move into another polyphonic, (slightly) atonal ensemble after the solos, this time "a cappella". After a drum solo, the final theme is stated.

Part VI is a nice little ballad. Once again, there is an alternation of 4/4 and 3/4 time. Note Derrick's melody, which ends on a high B. Without taking a breath, Derrick then shifts right into his solo: incredible, isn't it? Here, too, the form is rather unconventional: 8, 6, 2, and then another 8 bars (the final 8 are played in 3/4 time). We take this part home in collective 3/4 time.

Part VII is a binary piece, partly with straight eight-notes, partly with a bossa-nova feel. It is based on two different harmonic sections that are also embedded in the solo form. An ostinato figure played by piano and bass, which constantly changes according to the harmonic structure, gives a special rhythmic something to this part. A lively shout chorus leads us back to the theme and to the ostinato section.

Part VIII is THE jazz tune of the Suite! No intro, no interlude, no backgrounds, no outro – just plain blowin'! However, the form is composed very extensively with 16-16-14-8-13 bars, a total of 67 bars, that is. The switch from Afro-Latin rhythms to straight-ahead gives it a particular touch. In order to move into an extensive drum solo in this last part, there is another breathtaking shout chorus! The line is rather tricky and almost impossible to play from a technical point of view – but not for Derrick and Adrian! A very high F by Derrick Gardner ends part VIII and the Thurgovian Suite!

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Roman Schwaller
English translation by Peter Billaudelle