

A Conductor's View of *Symphony No. 1* by Donald Lee Gannon  
M. Gregory Martin

*Symphony No.1* by Donald Lee Gannon is a relatively unknown gem in the wind band repertoire due both to the untimely death of the composer along with the lack of published parts and score. Those who have had the privilege of performing the work are quick to praise the construction, depth and energy of the piece and agree to its significance in the wind band repertoire. Not only does the symphony provide the conductor with countless hours of study pleasure, but is meaningful and satisfying for the performer as well as the audience. The purpose of this article is to make those in the wind band world more aware of this gratifying work and to discuss some of the insights gained through its performance.

In order to fully appreciate the work, it is imperative that one understand the composer's background and albeit short life. Donald Lee Gannon Junior was born in Nashville, Tennessee on May 18, 1960, to parents Donald Lee and Juanita Gannon. Lee was the youngest of three siblings. From a very early age, Lee began to exhibit musical talent. Even as early as the age of three, Lee could match pitch, remember lyrics to church hymns and family songs and, according to his mother who taught piano, displayed an innate rhythmic capability. It was at this age as well that Lee began playing the piano, an instrument with which he was fascinated. According to his mother, Lee would sit at the piano and practice for hours at a time.

At the age of four, Lee, as he was called by his friends and family, composed his first melodies and at five began to display exceptional aural skills as he managed to imitate his sister's piano playing - mistakes and all. At Thurman Francis Middle School Lee joined the band and began to study the flute. Lee credited his music teacher at the time, Lenelle Marable Smithson, for generating interest in that instrument. It was also at this time that Lee was introduced to the instruments of the recorder family, an event that would provide an important outlet for his compositions later in life. During his childhood, Lee contracted histoplasmosis, a lung disease resulting from a fungal infection that had damaged his lungs. Additionally, Lee suffered from a congenital condition in which his lungs were afflicted with small pockets of useless tissue. These challenges would eventually shape Lee's life and steer him to pursue composition as a career.

At age thirteen, Lee began attending Smyrna High School where he played in the band and also began to learn the recorder. His talent was so expansive and his learning curve so celeritous that he was soon allowed to perform with the adult recorder choir at a Baptist church in Murfreesboro, TN as well as a baroque ensemble at the Peabody College of Education, located on the Vanderbilt University campus in Nashville, Tennessee. David

Wilkes, a long time friend of Lee's and the Assistant Director of Development with The Atlanta Opera in Atlanta, Georgia, described Lee's playing as follows: "Lee played every instrument he took up very beautifully with tremendous expression."<sup>1</sup>

Following high school, Lee attended Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, Tennessee where personal difficulties seemed to present insurmountable difficulties. After only six weeks of classes, Lee dropped out and returned home. The following semester, Lee lived at home and took several classes at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Unfortunately, this attempt was also unsuccessful and after only a few weeks, Lee dropped out and got a job. His next attempt at higher education occurred a year later when he attended the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky. This time, his efforts were rewarded and he successfully completed two years. From there he briefly attended the Cleveland Institute of Music in Cleveland, Ohio, but desperately missed his family so he once again returned to LaVergn, TN and continued his education at Belmont College located in Nashville. It was during this time that Lee met the love of his life. This relationship, which lasted until his partner's death from an AIDS related illness in January 1996, would have a profound affect on Lee throughout the remainder of his life. He stayed at Belmont College for two years where he found the discipline he needed to compose. "Belmont made me produce and at that point in my life that was what I needed, to produce work. And I did."<sup>2</sup>

During this time Lee was encouraged to apply to the Eastman School of Music by faculty members Glenn West and his wife Betsy Marvin West who knew Lee from his summers at the Sewanee Music Camp that he attended during high school. Betsy Marvin West, who is now an academic dean at Eastman and her husband Glen West, a composer who teaches in the Eastman Community Education Division were close friends of Lee's. It was at their urging that Lee applied and subsequently was accepted to Eastman. When he went to Eastman, Lee already knew he was HIV positive even though he did not publicize his condition. While at Eastman, the disease coupled with his already difficult respiratory issues took a severe toll on his health. Lee suffered a collapsed lung, which resulted in operations to remove the lining from both lung cavities. Conversely, it was also at Eastman that Lee enjoyed his greatest collegiate success to date. He studied flute and took composition lessons. Lee composed several works while at Eastman and worked with Dr. Robert Morris and Samuel Adler who was Chair of the Composition Department at the Eastman School during Lee's tenure. Lee also studied with Claude Baker, Professor of Composition at the Indiana School of Music in Bloomington, Indiana, and Joseph Schwantner, Professor of Composition at Yale School of Music and who was formerly on the faculties of both The Juilliard and Eastman Schools.

While at Eastman, Lee won the Sigma Alpha Iota Composer's Competition in 1986 for his

*Second Sonatine* for oboe, clarinet and horn. He repeated a win in this annual competition in 1989 with his *Third Sonatine* for clarinet, horn and bassoon. Lee was also given two other prestigious composition awards: the *Erich Katz Prize* and the *Louis Lane Prize*. The first prize was awarded to Lee by the American Recorder Society for his piece *Sonatine* for three flutes or alto recorders. The latter award, given by the Eastman School of Music, was for his final work composed at Eastman entitled *The Time Was Gold* for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, percussion and piano. This work also earned Lee a finalist berth in the ASCAP Foundation Composer's Competition in 1989.

It was also at Eastman where Lee met and studied orchestration with Dan Welcher, Professor of Composition at The University of Texas at Austin. Welcher was a visiting professor at Eastman replacing Sidney Hodkinson who was on sabbatical leave from 1985-1986. Lee, who was so impressed with Welcher and his work, applied to and was accepted at The University of Texas at Austin after he completed his time at Eastman. He was 28. The years at Texas were productive for Lee. He studied with Welcher and received his Master of Music in composition in May of 1990, and then continued to take classes at The University of Texas while contemplating a Doctor of Musical Arts in flute performance. Lee felt the doctorate in flute would allow him the time to focus on his compositions. However, increasing problems with his health forced him to give up performing on the flute in the fall of 1991. His new goal was to concentrate on composing; a decision that would yield many important works to his oeuvre. It was also during his tenure at Texas that Lee went public about his HIV status.

Lee's time in Austin was very rewarding and included another finalist award in the ASCAP Foundation Composer's competition in 1990 for *Music for Nine Players*, written for flute, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, horn, trombone, percussion and double bass. Additional awards while at Texas included the Kent Kennan Scholarship and the Effie Potts Sibley Foundation Scholarship. Also at this time, Gannon wrote his first full band work, a concert march entitled *Strength of Spirit*, commissioned by the Holy Name Band from Louisville, Kentucky. His second work for band, *Tangents*, was written for Jerry Junkin and The University of Texas Wind Ensemble, of which he had been a member since his second year at the school. His master's thesis, *Prickly Heat*, was written for the New Music Ensemble at The University of Texas. Lee was also commissioned by the ASCAP commissioning program to write a work for the Chicago Civic Orchestra in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The result was two works, *Cellophane* and *Lipstick Variations*, which were combined as individual movements of a larger work entitled *On the Surface*. The premiere took place in June of 1991 along with premieres of works by David Crumb, Edward Knight and Augusta Read Thomas.

His health problems continuing to mount, Lee decided in 1992 to return to the Nashville

area to be closer to his family and his partner. This decision would result in the final and most productive period of his life. After arriving back in Nashville, Lee was commissioned by the Metropolitan Chamber Players of Nashville. The result was *Triad-O-Rama* written in 1992 for pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons. It was this work that delivered the most recognition to Lee. Lee was awarded the Charles Ives Prize, given by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in May of 1993. The piece was recorded by the Aspen Wind Quintet upon the recommendation of Frances Richards, Director of Serious Music at ASCAP. It was subsequently released on the Catalyst label of BMG Classics entitled *Tango Bittersweet*. This compact disc featured the works of six composers who were living with AIDS (only three survived to see its release). A portion of the proceeds from album sales was donated to organizations designed to help musicians who are battling AIDS. The reviews were overwhelmingly positive.

1992 also saw the composing of *Tuff Stuff* for orchestra. It was chosen to be read by the American Composer's Orchestra in New York. In addition, a performance of *The Time Was Gold* was given at the Benson Series concerts begun by Mimi Stern-Wolfe, Director for the Downtown Music Productions. These concerts were presented as a tribute to composers living with AIDS.

1993 was particularly prolific, including *A Song of Praise*, a choral work commissioned by St. Ann's Episcopal Church of Nashville, Tennessee. Lee was also chosen as one of six from a field of fifteen respected composer applicants to win a series of private lessons with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, Karel Husa. He spent three weeks at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, studying with Husa. Lee also received an important commission from The Nashville Symphony Orchestra. It was during this year that Lee wrote his first and only symphony. The University of Texas Wind Ensemble and its conductor, Jerry Junkin, commissioned this third and final work for the modern wind band. In a letter dated September 1, 1996, the night before his death, Lee tells his former professor, Robert Morris, about this work. "I'm sending you one of my more flashy scores . . . namely my *Symphony No. 1*. I was wondering if you would mind passing it along to Donald Hunsberger? It's been played by The University of Texas and twice by the University of Kentucky as well as once at the University of Arizona in Tucson. This year I have performances lined up for Pacific Lutheran University and Gary Green of the University of Miami wants to perform it with his University group as well as a professional group in Edmonton, Canada. (Lord knows if I had written it for orchestra I wouldn't stand a chance of receiving EIGHT performances in three years!) Currently I am working on my second symphony for wind ensemble as well. I figure, why not go where I'm appreciated most?"<sup>3</sup>

Early in 1995, Lee's 1993 commission for an orchestral overture by the Nashville

Symphony Orchestra was realized with the premiere of his last major orchestral work, *Peste Noire*, written for narrator and orchestra. This sixteen-minute work was premiered in January of 1995, and is based on selected medieval texts using versions of the 14th century rhyme *Ring Around the Rosey*. His motivation for the work was based in part on the plague, a deadly epidemic that swept Europe in the fourteenth century. The texts were mostly taken from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which described people's reactions to the disease.

In the fall of 1995, Lee and John Thomas Powell celebrated their relationship with a commitment ceremony, the equivalent of marriage in the gay community. The year 1996 began with one of the most tragic events to occur in Lee's life, the death of his life partner. Tommy had been in relatively good health but had taken a turn for the worse just after Thanksgiving of the previous year. Following several short hospital stays, Tommy died suddenly on January 25, 1996, from lymphoma, a cancer associated with AIDS. The following May, Lee developed a series of lung infections. This resulted in a persistent cough, which led to several blood transfusions and intravenous antibiotics to aid in fighting the infection. Lee had also developed a resistance to codeine. Late in the summer, Lee began to show signs of recovery. It was about this time that a new combination of HIV drugs became available and the news was promising in the area of AIDS care. Lee was very hopeful. Then on Labor Day morning, September 2, Lee decided to drive himself to get something to eat. He stopped at a neighbor's house and had a long conversation. Then on his way back from the restaurant, something went terribly wrong and according to the police report, Lee crashed his car into a rock wall in front of East End United Methodist Church. It is suspected that he had some type of coughing attack and either lost control, trying to reach for some paper towels, or blacked out. Lee was actually conscious but unresponsive following the crash and was quickly taken to the Vanderbilt Hospital, however due to his compromised health, he was relegated to life support. Shortly after eight that evening, with his family and friends singing *Amazing Grace* at his side, the life support was removed and Lee passed away.

### **Symphony No. 1**

*Symphony No. 1* was completed on October 20, 1993. It is scored for wind ensemble of the following instrumentation: piccolo, flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, E flat clarinet, 3 B flat clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 alto saxophones, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, 3 C trumpets, 4 horns, 2 tenor trombones, bass trombone, euphonium, tuba, double bass, timpani and 3 percussion parts. The percussion required for a performance of the work is quite extensive, although not overly so for music of this time. The percussion I part requires xylophone, vibraphone, snare drum, and crash cymbals. Percussion I shares 5 temple blocks, 3 suspended cymbals, 2 triangles, 4 tom-toms, and 2 bongos with the Percussion II player. A note is added that the bongos and tom-toms should form a continuous scale. The Percussion II part requires a marimba, chimes, and snare drum.

Percussion II shares 3 suspended cymbals, crash cymbal, 2 wood blocks and 2 triangles with the Percussion III player. Percussion III requires a glockenspiel, crotales, snare drum and 2 timbales.

The work received its world premiere by The University of Texas Wind Ensemble on October 25, 1993 conducted by Jerry Junkin. Junkin, who was familiar with Gannon's talents, initiated the process by approaching the composer after hearing his march for concert band and asked if he would be interested in writing another work for wind ensemble. "I told him that I just wanted him to write the piece that he wanted to write, and gave him no other preferences or requests."<sup>4</sup> For the commission, the composer was paid two thousand dollars with The University of Texas paid for the extraction of the parts. The composer was in attendance at the premiere and made the following remarks:

*First of all, I want to thank this ensemble. Some of my most memorable experiences with a large ensemble were with this group. This is the group I went to Manchester, England with; this is the group that I played the Hindemith Symphony with; this is the group that I played the Candide Overture with and played the solo on and that was in fact, the last time I played the flute in public, since I had to give up playing the flute because of my health. And that's probably one of the best memories I can think of to hold on to as being my last memory of playing. So, I want to thank this ensemble for their work. So many members of this ensemble are close friends. They are all wonderful people and they have done a great job and have been very patient in putting this piece together so, thank you!*

*I also want to thank Jerry Junkin for having faith in me and for just being "true-blue" when it comes to being a friend and being a supporter and treating me with a great amount of respect as a composer.*

*Also, I want to thank Dan Welcher for bringing me here. I met Dan at Eastman and decided then and there that I had to be here and work with him for my graduate work. If it weren't for his compositional guidance, you wouldn't be hearing what you are going to hear tonight. So, he's played a very important role in my life.*

*And of course, last but not least, I want to thank my family for being here. My parents, my sister – they’ve been there all my life. My mother taught me piano when I was four so she’s got to be glad about that!*

*So, that having been said, I’ll say just a word or two about the piece. This is my first symphony. Well, gee, what can you say about a symphony? A symphony, to me, should be a substantial piece. It should have something to say. So many of my works have been programmatic in nature and fairly specifically programmatic, but this piece is not so much that way. It is more of a summation of feelings that I’ve been through, throughout my life up to this point. And believe me when I tell you my life is rather colorful. I won’t go into any details, but just trust me.*

*So what you’ll hear in this piece are some of the words I use to describe some of the sections. Some of those words are “powerful,” “noble,” “like a whirlwind” – what else is in here? “Proudly,” and “peaceful,” and there’s “anger,” and “confusion,” and all the things about life that makes life worth living. Of course, the only thing that makes life worth living is the struggle of living and so that’s what makes life so wonderful, is that we do struggle to live.*

*Other than that, I don’t know what to tell you to listen for except to mainly reflect on your own lives and think about what you’ve been through and maybe that will help. Once again, I want to thank you all and this is probably the most wonderful moment of my life, so, thank you!<sup>5</sup>*

Gannon told Richard Clary, former conductor of the University of Kentucky Wind Ensemble who also performed the work, that the symphony symbolized a capsulation of his emotional reaction to the news when he was first told he had contracted the HIV virus. According to Clary, “the piece begins with the label ‘Proudly’ which reflects Gannon’s emotional stress when he is forced to “face the music” if you will, and quickly disintegrates into tumbling chaos at the stunned realization of the gravity of his predicament. I remember him speaking of being numbed, dumbfounded, and panicked all at the same time. (Hence, his indication “like a whirlwind” in measure 14.)<sup>6</sup>

The University of Texas Wind Ensemble performed the symphony again on March 30, 1998 as a tribute to Lee following his death. It has also been performed by the University of Kentucky Wind Ensemble at the combined conventions of the Southern Division Meeting of the College Band Director's National Conference and National Band Association held in Biloxi, Mississippi on January 26, 1996. Additional documented performances include: Northwestern University Symphonic Band, Stephen G. Peterson, conductor; the University of Miami Wind Ensemble, Gary Green, conductor; the Eastman Wind Ensemble, Donald Hunsberger, conductor; and, the Florida International University Wind Ensemble, Greg Martin, guest conductor, on April 9, 2002.

### **A Conductor's Analysis and Performance Considerations**

The 322 measure symphony lasts approximately sixteen minutes and is in one-movement (see Table 1). It may be broken down into the following sections:

Introduction: measures 1-13  
Exposition: Part I – measures 14-37 - Rehearsal Letter A-B  
Transition I – measures 38-79 - Rehearsal Letter B - E  
Part II – measures 79-127 - Rehearsal Letter E - H  
Development/Fantasia: measures 128-165 - Rehearsal Letter H - J + 3  
Recapitulation: Part I – measures 166-228 - Rehearsal Letter J + 3 - O  
Transition II – measures 229-254 - Rehearsal Letter O - Q  
Part II – measures 255-276 - Rehearsal Letter Q - R  
Coda: measures 277-322. - Rehearsal Letter R - end

According to Dan Welcher artists are often pigeonholed by labeling their style using traditional verbiage such as “Impressionist” or “Neo-Classical,” when only certain aspects of their oeuvre adhere to these labels. Certainly, a composer's style often evolves and changes throughout his/her career due to influences and experiences encountered along the way. When looking at the musical oeuvre of Lee Gannon, one can identify a few unifying characteristics such as solid, identifiable forms which appear “Neo-Classical” in conception, and an almost comic thread at times as if he were composing tongue in cheek. There is substantial evidence that Lee liked to use a motivic thread related to the HIV virus as a unifying element in many of his compositions. However, in every case, the “virus” motive is either defeated or overcome by the end of the work, often by the meekest of instrumental treatment, indicating his indomitable spirit and outlook towards life.

Common rehearsal challenges that are associated with Gannon's *Symphony No. 1* occur as a result of the composer's attempt to represent a myriad of intense emotions. He achieves his goal utilizing both displaced rhythms creating a sense of timelessness and with rhythmic contrasts to represent conflicts. Due to the inherent rhythmic challenges, the performing ensemble must have a well-developed sense of time. All players must be confident, agile performers. Each section of the ensemble is challenged, with particularly difficult requirements being assigned to the woodwinds (with the quintuplet runs and extreme

ranges) and the percussion, especially the timpani player. The timpani part in measures 127 through 161 is one of the most challenging solos in band literature.

Balancing and blending the brass ensemble and some attention to the typical intonation problems inherent in an extended unison passage of this length are challenges faced in the opening section. Additionally, some of the pitches chosen by the composer create expected intonation problems with the brasses such as the opening B natural and the low D sharp in measure 3, as well as the final F natural which is problematic due to the tessitura. Beginning in measure 14, the challenge immediately turns to one of rhythm and tempo. The quintuplets in the woodwind parts are obviously demanding and it is imperative for the conductor to maintain a precise tempo. The entrance of the brass notes as they build their chords can be problematic creating a tendency to drag. Additionally, the trills in the woodwinds have a tendency to be too loud, so it is suggested that the underlying dynamics be reduced to a *mezzo forte*. As the texture thins at rehearsal letter A, the problem becomes one of security. The remaining first clarinet and flute must play their runs with confidence while the sliding quarter notes must seamlessly move from instrument to instrument. Dynamics here can be problematic; a solution would be to lower the dynamics for those with the quarter-note line or reduce the number of players on parts that are doubled.

Rehearsal letter B requires a confident and proficient saxophone section. The trombones must also display excellent technique, as they are required to perform sextuplets in duet with a pair of trumpets with mixed articulations. The tendency will be for the brass performers to become too heavy and bombastic. They must play lightly to provide the appropriate accompaniment to the intricate solo clarinet. Rhythmic security again becomes an issue in measure 53 between the saxophones and the rest of the ensemble.

Rehearsal letter D produces yet another rhythmic issue when the sixteenth triplet is traded throughout the ensemble. The tendency is for the triplet to be performed more like two thirty second notes and a sixteenth. The tempo in general can also become an issue, the tendency being to rush the more extended passages.

Rehearsal letter E provides the percussion section with the greatest challenge to this point in the work. Especially since some of the instruments are shared by different performers, the set up is critical. Once the instruments are appropriately arranged, then the performers must be able to move proficiently from one to the other as indicated in this very intricately designed part of the symphony. Balance is an additional concern. Care must be taken to insure that the percussion parts do not overwhelm the pairs of duets and soloist. The percussion must remain exactly what they are designed to be, background chatter. The trombone solo should not prove too difficult as it is written in a comfortable register and

is not technically challenging. This solo represents the composer's asking why he was singled out to become afflicted with the HIV virus and should be performed with an empathetic emotional approach.

The accompanying material in the flutes and muted trumpets is also problematic due to the scoring. Gannon creates an underlying tension in this otherwise peaceful area of the work by placing pairs of fifths in the aforementioned instruments in duet with each other. As it exists, the interval of a fifth is moderately challenging. The difficulty is elevated because the two pairs of fifths are scored a half step apart. The resulting dissonance coupled with the inherent intonation challenges make this accompaniment difficult to perform even in the best of circumstances.

The entrance of the muted horns in measure 118, in duet with the oboes, may result in intonation issues for the performance. Additionally, the texture may be too dense to allow the euphonium solo, which is in a lower tessitura, to be clearly heard. While Gannon transfers the percussion chatter to largely metallic instruments, balance and blend is still an important consideration.

The music at rehearsal letter H might present the timpanist his/her greatest challenge. Aside from the obvious technical difficulty, timing between the timpanist and the brass can prove to be problematic. The timpanist must be proficient in pedal technique as well as s/he is required to pedal first between the D-flat and E and later between the E and E-flat. Once again, the performers must place their parts within the pulse provided and not listen to one another for their cue to enter. The timpanist must be careful to not make the part even more difficult by rushing the extended solo pattern.

Rehearsal letter I involves an aleatoric section that pits one player / section against others forming a complex web of "chatter." Gannon wrote that this section references all the people throughout his life that offered him advice ranging from the caring and useful to the inane. At times, these voices would haunt him creating a cacophony of sound in his mind. He masterfully represents this period of his life through the use of solo instruments delineating the periods of repose accented by angry outburst of clusters of instruments depicting people shouting their viewpoints at him. Great care must be taken to ensure the clarity of the "sections" are apparent.

Rhythm again becomes an issue of paramount importance at rehearsal letter J. Gannon fills this section of the work with competing eighth note triplet and duplet figures. Gannon compounds the issue by placing ties between figures and by moving the pulse emphasis away from the beat. In addition, the saxophones, particularly the baritone, play in an extremely high register in this area. Beginning in measure 172, the saxophones as a family

move above C 6 and stay well above that pitch through measure 189. Many of the other woodwinds play in a high tessitura as well creating additional difficulties in regards to balance and intonation.

The passage for solo clarinet at rehearsal O is highly virtuosic with extreme register requirements, challenging rhythmic diminution, and difficult fingering combinations. The accompanying low winds must not rush.

There is a tendency at rehearsal letter P for the ensemble to play too bombastically. The clusters are important to the emotional content of this section and therefore must be clear. The resolution in measure 247 provides another challenge for the low winds, to provide a seamless undercurrent while performing the syncopated rhythms in hemiola to the melody. Rehearsal letter Q is a recapitulation of sorts presenting the same technical challenges as found earlier.

The music at rehearsal letter R features the brass choir. The tessitura and scoring are both well within a manageable range and actually aid in the production of a lush, dark brass sound. Gannon's use of extended chords and color notes in conjunction with several clusters may prove challenging for the performers who are now fifteen minutes into the work.

The final measures of the work feature a statement of dissonant fifths played by the flute and oboe with brass accompaniment. Fortunately, the tessitura chosen for this ending music by Gannon is such that the performers are given the best possible opportunity for a clear, accurate and resonant performance of this moving and wonderfully intense ending.

## **Final Thoughts**

Donald Lee Gannon was a rising figure when his life suddenly was suddenly cut short as a result of injuries sustained in a car accident. Although his life was short, he still enjoyed a prolific career, composing over forty works. He also received a number of important awards.

One can only wonder had he lived what his impact might have been on the overall musical scene generally and more specifically on wind music.. Perhaps the most remarkable feature about this gifted, young composer is that he was able to accomplish all he did while living with such a debilitating disease as AIDS. Gannon was not the type of person to accept any curve life threw him without fighting back and this admirable quality is reflected in his music. Instead of succumbing to the ravages of the disease, he turned the process into a positive by writing about it. Gannon used the disease and all the resulting problems as inspiration for much of his music, not only motivically and formally, but also often as a means for social

commentary. He always ended his works in the same manner he tried to live his life, namely upbeat, hopeful and always triumphant.

As mentioned at the onset of this article, Gannon's *Symphony No. 1* has only been performed a handful of times in the last seventeen years because of availability. Accurate editions exist at the University of Miami, The University of Texas at Austin, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Kentucky. The author also holds a set. Richard Clary, who is now at Florida State University, has offered the following commentary:

The programmatic motivation of the work provides compelling emotional empathy for the interpreter and performers. Lee was one of relatively few composers at his level of recognition that grew up actually playing in bands and wind ensembles (as a flute/piccolo player) and thus brings extra insight as a composer of wind band music through his personal familiarity with both the medium and its repertoire. In purely practical terms, the final section of the work contains what I believe to be some of the most beautiful and inspiring moments in our repertory.<sup>7</sup>

According to Clary, this view is shared not only by the conductors who have experienced this work, but also by all of the compositional community as a whole who are familiar with the symphony.

### **End Notes**

- 1 David Wilkes, e-mail to author, February 1, 2002.
- 2 Jim Ridley. "Cool and Composed," *The Nashville Scene*, July 25, 1996, p. 8.
- 3 Lee Gannon, letter to Robert Morris, September 1, 1996.
- 4 Lee Gannon, speech given at world premiere of *Symphony No. 1*, October 25, 1993.
- 5 Richard Clary, e-mail to author, March 22, 2002.
- 6 Richard Clary, e-mail letter to author, March 25, 2002.

**M. Gregory Martin** received a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Eastern Kentucky University, a Master of Musical Arts degree from James Madison University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from The University of Texas at Austin. He is currently the Associate Director of Bands at West Chester University in West Chester, PA. Dr. Martin was formerly the Director of Athletic Bands and Associate Director of Bands at Florida International University in Miami, Florida. Prior to returning to Florida, Dr. Martin was the Assistant Director for the Longhorn Band and Lecturer in the School of Music at Texas. His past teaching experience includes fourteen years in the Florida and Virginia public school system and two years as a teaching assistant at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia