

## **SANPOIL (2012)**

solo alto trombone

solo contrabass tuba

drum set & 3 groups of low brass instruments

SANPOIL was composed at the request of Sérgio Carolino, who asked several composers to write pieces based on myths and legends from their respective countries. Wishing to take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about the ancient inhabitants of the North American continent, I began reading their stories. Two things struck me immediately: The omnipresence of nature imagery as both symbol and actor (the stones, which seem no more than scenery may suddenly speak to the other characters) and the very fluid manner in which the Indian tales deal with identity. For example, the character, Wren, may be a bird (as it is in nature) in the first chapter of a legend and appear, without explanation, as an old woman in a later part of the same story.

I became intrigued by the stories of the people known as the Sanpoil (a Native American word meaning “unknown”); these people simply call themselves *Nesilextcl'n*, a reference to the language they speak. Their stories are filled not only with animal protagonists, but also with personified geographical formations and human actors braving the elements.

The musical work does not attempt to relate one story, but to capture the mutability inherent in the method of storytelling: all the musical parts are instances or versions of some essential material. It is molded into seven unique textures, Fire, Rain, River, Sand, Sky, Stone and Wind, each of which emphasizes different combinations of soloists and groups. Each element possesses its own identity for awhile, but that can change (the tuba is wind, but it is also the sky, for instance). All, however, are always present in a version of the work - they come together to create a unique realization of the musical structure. Like the great river that also bears the name Sanpoil, the form of this piece is never the same twice. In this way, the musicians share the responsibility for ensuring the music's continuity as the work's structure gives them space to listen, react and interact - to recreate a fictional reality that behaves like the stories of the *Nesilextcl'n*.