THE SHORES OF MOUNT PURGATORY

FROM INFERNO (2020)

Sherman Irby

Full Score

BLUE ENGINE RECORDS

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

THE SHORES OF MOUNT PURGATORY • INSTRUMENTATION

Reed 1 – Alto Sax

Reed 2 – Alto Sax

Reed 3 – Tenor Sax

Reed 4 – Tenor Sax

Reed 5 – Baritone Sax

Trumpet 1

Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

Trumpet 4

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Trombone 3

Piano

Bass

Drums

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer • Sherman Irby

Recorded • May 19, 2012 at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall

Original issue • Blue Engine Records BE0022

Currently available as digital download and streaming on all DSPs

Personnel • Sherman Irby, Ted Nash (alto sax), Victor Goines, Walter Blanding (tenor sax), Joe Temperley (baritone sax), Ryan Kisor, Kenny Rampton, Marcus Printup, Wynton Marsalis (trumpet), Vincent Gardner, Chris Crenshaw, Elliot Mason (trombone), Dan Nimmer (piano), Carlos Henriquez (bass), Ali Jackson (drums)

Soloists • Carlos Henriquez (bass), Dan Nimmer (piano), Joe Temperley (baritone saxophone)

"Inferno" was commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center and first performed by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis and Hope Boykin Dance at Rose Theater, Frederick P. Rose Hall on May 17, 2012.

INFERNO NOTES

That haunting trombone cry about four seconds into the overture of Sherman Irby's *Inferno*? That's some down-home blues right there. And with that bit of Southern hospitality that reflects the composer's roots, one's immediately welcomed into Irby's musical world—or rather, underworld.

After all, *Inferno* is Irby's interpretation of Dante's epic 14th-century poem of the same name, which follows the author on his imagined, harrowing journey through the nine circles of Hell.

Listen beyond that opening trombone cry to when the horns all begin scowling and barking at each other. Yes, Irby's Southern roots are immediately apparent, but so is the life he's led since leaving his hometown of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. In addition to his time with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis (JLCO), Irby has worked with Elvin Jones, James Cleveland, Roy Hargrove, Papo Vazquez, McCoy Tyner, and Marcus Roberts, and his diverse influences are on full display in the gumbo that is *Inferno*.

Art reflects the time in which it was created. Dante finished *The Divine Comedy* (of which *Inferno* was part one of three) in 1320, during a time of great political upheaval and 18 years after he was exiled from his hometown of Florence. He seems to have written many of his enemies into the work as a way of getting back at them.

While jazz certainly embodies freedom, Irby's *Inferno* represents another timely message. In today's world of division, hype, and distractions, where mankind can be manipulated by algorithms and become addicted to a phone's beep, we're constantly reminded that our basic instincts are animalistic. However, there is an intelligence and cleverness to Irby's rich, multi-layered, powerfully compelling Inferno that reminds us of what makes us human.

Of course, all kinds of music have the ability to help us transcend. But it's hard to think of another genre besides jazz that can capture so many different—and often conflicting—feelings all at the same time. Irby's *Inferno* is filled with a wide range of feelings, intelligent and dense harmonies, and thoughtful, irresistible rhythms. This isn't simply a jazz version of an old poem; this is an important musical piece that matters today.

The power of Irby's timely and compelling *Inferno* lies in its uniqueness and intelligence. And of course, its swing. This is "Irby's main goal above all else," says fellow JLCO bandmate Chris Crenshaw, whose musical interpretation of James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones* premiered on the same concert as Irby's *Inferno* in 2012.

Irby's affection for his JLCO bandmates is clear in his writing. Crenshaw comments that "Sherman cares for his brethren, and he cares about this music, and that goes a long way."

"I wrote this act for Joe Temperley," Irby remarks. "He was the band's elder statesman and musical guide for almost 30 years. It was my honor to feature his beautiful, passionate sound as the voice of the central character, Dante."

While Duke Ellington, Mary Lou Williams, and others have composed suites and religious pieces, it really is hard to find any precedent for a piece like this. After all, here we have a six-movement suite featuring a big band interpreting an epic poem.

That said, with or without Dante's story as context, Irby's *Inferno* would stand on its own…

…*Inferno's* lush, sweeping, swinging, and reflective finale, "The Shores of Mount Purgatory," marks Dante arrival at the foot of Mount Purgatory. As Irby remarks, "It's difficult to write a large work for the jazz orchestra without paying an homage to its greatest composer, Duke Ellington. I waited to do this for the finale because I wanted Joe, who was once a member of Ellington's orchestra, to be the last voice of the story."

It's a touching end to a remarkable piece, and it reflects Irby's optimistic outlook. *Inferno* reflects the unique essence of jazz that brings joy to the sadness, playfulness to the serious, and vice-versa. Just as one can only get to heaven by passing through hell, Irby's *Inferno* reminds us that there's light at the end of the tunnel.

—*Inferno* adapted liner notes by Joe Alterman, 2020

GENERAL PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

1. Rhythm Section and Balance • The rhythm section determines the style, groove, and feel of each piece. It is the section that can comfortably play alone, and regularly does. In a typical 3-piece rhythm section, there is one string instrument (bass), and two percussion instruments (piano and drums); in a 4-piece section (with the addition of guitar), there are two string and two percussion instruments. In order for the rhythm section to achieve a swinging balance, it is crucial that the string instruments are clearly audible. The voices of these instruments must be respected by the two percussionists.

The drummer acts as the 'President' of the group, with the quick power to make dramatic and definitive changes to every aspect of the music.

The bass is the 'Judiciary,' holding the responsibility of constraining the volume and power of the drums. Their second responsibility is to play the mobile, lower melody that defines the integrity of the rhythm/harmony progression.

The piano is the 'Congress,' and has the ability to function as drummer, bassist, soloist, and accompanist; weaving in, out, and in between all of these roles to represent the widest range of voices and possibilities.

In a 4-piece section, the guitar acts as the 'conscience' or integrity of the rhythm and volume of the entire ensemble. They prevent the drummer and bassist from rushing or dragging and forces them to play softer and listen more closely.

The members of the rhythm section should know exactly what the names of grooves mean: *boogaloo, 12/8 shuffle, bossa nova, 2/3 clave*, etc. Every groove has a detailed function and definition. The top and bottom parts of the groove (drums and bass) must work together; at the same time, the interlocking rhythms of the piano and guitar must cooperate, honoring the context of the groove while also not interfering with each other.

When improvising with the rest of the band, the rhythm section should create a clear, basic, and danceable groove. They should also feel a sense of accomplishment from swinging with consistency and emotion.

When accompanying, the rhythm section should not feel compelled to have a constant stream of dialogue with the band; just like a friendly conversation, the dynamic should feel natural, with give and take. The goal is not to create constant "chatter." Be proud of accompanying and swinging—they remain essential elements to any successful performance.

Members of the rhythm section must remain conscious of constraining power. For balance to be maintained, one must give up their desire to play louder than the other members of the section. As in any relationship, it is the constraint of power that creates the equilibrium within the section.

On the bandstand, each musician should be aware of balance at all times. This requires constant adjustment. The most important relationship is the drums and bass. If they are out of balance, the band does not sound or feel good. Do not let the PA system become your default 'balance' position.

Like a good democracy, the big band functions best when adhering to a system of checks and balances. Ultimately, the band should balance to the dynamic of the bass (as the softest acoustic instrument). Each section in the big band should both follow and play under their respective lead player.

2. Improvisation • A solo is an opportunity to express your personality and to exert tremendous influence on the success of a performance.

Responsibilities of the soloist:

1. Know the melody.
2. Understand the rhythm in relation to the groove.
3. Understand the harmonic progression.
4. Solo with emotional commitment and try to develop thematic material or musical ideas that relate to some aspect of the song.
5. Understand the function of background or accompanying parts.
6. Create your solo inside, outside, and alongside the arranged parts.
7. Create an ending for your solo that either leads into the next written part, hands off something good for the next soloist to play, or finishes with the right mood.
8. Do your absolute thing!

3. Follow the Lead • Within each section, know who has the lead (it isn't always in the "first" part) and always play under that part. Do not assume that the lead player can tell if you are too loud; constantly re-assess within your section, in relation to other sections, and across sections if you are under the lead. Follow their phrasing, style, articulations, dynamics, and breathing. Lead players: you have a greater responsibility than others—be definitive in your concept, but not dogmatic. You must know the arrangement, including how your part fits into the overall dramatic and thematic objectives of the piece. You have to make musical decisions that help your colleagues follow you.

4. Personalize Your Parts • When referring to the performance of parts, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton once said, "This is Duke Ellington's music; it's not written in stone. Duke always told us, 'Personalize your parts.'" When done tastefully, all of the various vocal expressions that we can muster (i.e. vibrato, bends, swoops, shakes, moans, and vocal effects) will create a warmer and more human performance. Your parts should be played with the feeling and vocal expression of an improvised solo. These elements allow an audience to feel your humanity, and also welcomes them into nuances of your feeling. (You can do this while also following the lead).

5. Internalize the Form • Form is your defense against chaos. Every member of the ensemble has a responsibility to understand the architecture of each piece they play. Ask yourself, *Is it a blues? AABA form? An extended form? Where is the coda?* Be aware of entrances, repeats, and endings in relation to the form of the piece. *Is this an interlude or a shout chorus?* Sections often hand off phrases to other sections with an almost psychic level of awareness and nuance. At the very first rehearsal, begin figuring out how the piece is structured to achieve the composer's goals. Focus on understanding the total architecture and the function of your individual part within the context of the piece. Remember, everyone in the ensemble has the responsibility of understanding and fulfilling both the most complex and most basic requirements of the arrangement.

6. Have Integrity When Rehearsing • *Your time is too valuable to waste.* Always be professional. Arrive on time and pay attention to everything—whether it's a general concept or the most minute details. Take yourself and the music seriously at all times, and you'll be shocked to see how much better you get just by changing your attitude in rehearsal. Be conscientious about playing better each day, and over time the improvement will be exponential.

7. Listen to Jazz • Go to every conceivable performance of jazz possible—whether you like it or not—so that you can develop both a feeling and understanding of the music. There is an almost infinite amount of diverse and high-quality recordings of jazz at your disposal, which create a sonic history of the music that can inform, enlighten, and inspire you. The more music you know, the more you will enjoy.

To listen to the recording from Blue Engine Records, please visit jazz.org/inferno.

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CONDUCTOR

THE SHORES OF MOUNT PURGATORY

from Inferno

Sherman Irby

Rubato ♩ = 70 **A** Walking Ballad

Reeds 1 — Alto Sax
2 — Alto Sax
3 — Tenor Sax
4 — Tenor Sax
5 — Baritone Sax
mf

Trumpets 1
2
3
4

Trombones 1
2
3
mp

Piano

Bass
mp

Drums
sticks (a la Sam Woodyard)
mp

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

The Shores of Mount Purgatory