

Program Notes

Starting the Collaboration

Director Michael Kasper contacted me in the spring of 2015 to inquire about a new and collaborative work for middle school band. We began a series of discussions on how best to incorporate all 7th graders in his school district into the writing process. The goal would be to create a work that the students could premiere in their 8th grade year. As with any new custom work, I discussed the repertoire and skillset of the ensemble. What styles and genres had the students been exposed to? What sort of musical journey did we want to create with this new work? Once Mr. Kasper and I determined these answers, we decided to incorporate the students through Skype calls, including each of the five middle schools in the district. These brainstorming sessions allowed me to introduce the concept of the modern day composer to the students. We discussed how the writing process works, the timeline for creativity, and most importantly, how the students could contribute their ideas into the music. These lively talks were extremely fruitful, especially so early on in the writing process, which can often be the hardest period of decision making for a composer.

The Story behind the Music

For weeks I contemplated the students' ideas of what sorts of musical stories we could tell. I was inspired by the overwhelming desire the students had to create not just a programmatic story, but also an emotional journey. Many wished to explore nature or battle scenes. Using this imagery as a starting point, the programmatic concept took shape in August 2016, during my visit to the Acadia National Park in Mt. Desert, Maine.

During my exploration of the park, I learned of the first known settlers to the area, the Wabanaki Indians who dated back at least 13,000 years. In their native language, "the Wabanaki," (or if you speak Passamaquoddy, *kuwaponahkiyik*), translates to "people from the land where the sun rises" or "of the Dawnland." The Wabanaki had (and still do) a deep relationship with the land and animals of their homeland, which they believed were all related. Their terrain was expansive with sweeping beauty and natural variety. The landscape included but was not limited to: rising mountains cresting beyond the clouds, a vast ocean and rocky coast, marshes with broad colors of green and yellow, and dense forests. It took only moments in this wilderness to imagine the sounds of these people and the serenity and austerity of their lives.

The Musical Narrative

The Dawnland begins with a rustling in the wind. Three characters emerge musically to set the stage: the percussion which create the calm and sparkling atmosphere, the flute and alto saxophone - the voice of the Wabanaki, and key clicks that create the rustling wind. The full enchanting melody of the Wabanki people is then presented by solo flute. Based on a pentatonic (five note) scale, the melody is adapted from actual Wabanaki flute music. This melody returns repeatedly throughout the work, often in a developed and altered form. A melodic journey thus ensues, where each change in ensemble "color" or increase and decrease of acoustical warmth, illustrates a point of arrival in the park. When the music is sparse, I imagine simpler landscapes such as a stream or the flight of birds. However when the melody is played by many instruments, I wanted to illustrate more powerful terrains like the crashing of the massive waves into *Thunder Hole* and the climactic peak of *Cadillac Mountain*. The listener is therefore carried through the park, a traveler among the Wabanaki, with the development of the first flute melody. The journey all the while moves among a vivid painted sky that musically emerges from time to time in the form of harmonic chorale-like progressions, often highlighted in the brass.

A shift in the work occurs with the entrance of a tribal drum circle. Based on present day Wabanaki drumming and chant, this section features a call and response pattern. Instead of hand drums, the band uses timpani and bass drum, while in place of voices, the wind instruments represent the chanting. A textural crescendo is created by slowly adding more instruments to the sound. This represents a joining of all tribe members in the ceremony. At the peak of the chant, the music transforms into the full melody once more, reaching its final climax. The slow fading of the Wabanaki song is then heard in the last conversation between solo flute and the flute section.

For the Conductor

Extended Techniques

The Dawnland uses extended techniques which may need to be explained to students. Please use the following explanations as a guide with your rehearsal preparations.

Key Clicks: example: Alto Sax 2, mm. 1-3

(E♭ Alto Sax 2)

p Air stream (breath as needed) 2 3 4

mf key clicks continue to finger random notes in random rhythm creating a soft clicking sound

Players should blow air through instrument without producing a pitch, however, an audible air sound should be present. Players may experiment with making air sounds louder and softer through crescendo/decrescendo. Once air stream is established, key clicks are added by “popping” keys on the instrument. A pitch should still not be produced, instead an effect of clicking and pad resonance is desired. The “x’s” in the staff represent a guide of how to finger key clicks; however, players may use any fingerings they wish. This effect represents a rustling in the wind which could represent sounds such as moving leaves, animals, or the jingling of jewelry.

Bell Taps: example: Trombone 1 & 2, mm. 6-7

(Trombone 1 & 2)

Bell taps 7 8

mf tap bell quickly with pads of fingers

Have players hold instruments in playing position (trombones slightly above stands) and tap with pads of fingers against broadest, outside part of bell. For trombones, players will reach around bell in a similar fashion to holding a plunger. Other brass players should experiment with how to produce the loudest tapping sound. This effect contributes to the rustling wind sound.

Arco: example, Vibraphone, mm. 3-8

(vibraphone)

3 4 5 6 7 8

arco until m. 18 (always l.v.)

mf Red. sim.

Using a bass bow, have player bow side of indicated bar by moving bow in an upward motion. More pressure and a faster upward bow stroke will create a crescendo and overall louder volume. This section is marked “freely” in order to give vibraphone player time to move easily between pitches. Do not rush.

The Melody

The melody is based on the pentatonic scale E♭ F G B♭ C, as shown above in the vibraphone. The main melody (shown below at m. 8) is first presented in the solo flute. Its main characteristics (which occur in fragmentation through the work) include the “turn” figure (such as C up to E♭ down to C in m. 10), the sixteenth “fall” gesture (such as B♭ down to G in m. 13), and the outline of the pentatonic scale. Note this melody returns almost exactly at m. 79 and partially at m. 107.

Main Melody: example, Flute 1, mm. 8-16



As the work progresses the melody transforms, however, it is built upon the original flute presentation shown above. The version below continues to outline the same pentatonic scale as the original melody (now with added concert Ab). The derived measures are indicated with brackets in the example below.

Developed Melody: example, F Horn, mm. 31-39



Secondary Melodic Fragment: example, Bb Clarinet 1, mm. 43-48



Also featuring the original pentatonic scale, the above extended melodic fragment uses similar note patterns to the primary melody - specifically the movement between concert pitches F, Eb and C. The above secondary melodic fragment is developed even further beginning in m. 63 and also at m. 95.

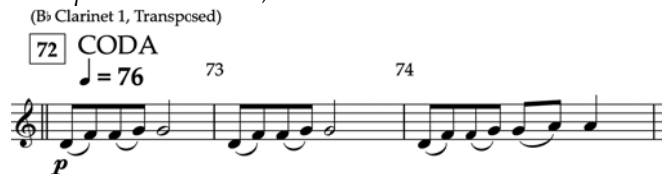
The Chant Motives

Example: Bb Clarinet 1, mm. 22-23



The idea of chanting is characterized by repeated 8th notes. The example above at measure 22 is the first presentation in the work. In this setting, the chant should be played lightly with a slight stress to the first eighth note in each 8th note grouping. Players can practice vocalizing “hey-ya, hey-ya, hey-ya” and then mimicking on their instruments.

Example: Bb Clarinet 1, mm. 72-74



Similar to the first chant example, stress should be placed on the first eighth note in the eighth note grouping. The wind instruments represent actual Wabanaki chanting. Players should strive to create a call and response effect by matching articulation and note length.