

WRITING AND ARRANGING FOR YOUR YOUNG BAND

by Randy Navarre, DMA

Presented on

Friday, December 16, 2005

8:30 A.M.

1. Set parameters before you start to imagine the composition or arrangement:
 - a. the more parameters you set before you start, the faster you will write.
 - b. less rewrites will be necessary.
2. Make a decision for which grade level you wish to write this piece.
3. Review the grading system chart.
4. Decide what style of piece you wish to write:
 - a. Overture
 - b. March
 - c. Jazz
 - d. Rock
 - e. Pop
 - f. Latin
 - g. Pavane
 - h. Other
5. Programmatic or absolute.
6. Programmatic:
 - a. Image:
Strong intervals-perfect fifth, 8va: *Distant Castles*
Effect: not reality-middle ages-open 5ths in the lower instruments. 3rds & 6ths in the upper instruments: result: a Middle Ages/Renaissance sound, but still pleasant sound that we are used to today
softer intervals-3rds -2nds *In The Valley Of Magic*
7. Absolute:
 - a. Motif.
 - b. Melody.
8. Always: When writing for school bands, what do you want to teach?
 - a. New notes.
 - b. New rhythms.
 - c. Complexity.
 - d. New or different styles.

9. Not just a pretty or exciting song: teach something.
- a. *Dragons In The Mist*-Grade ½
 1. Playable after ONLY five or six lessons.
 2. Limited range-notes from the 1st few lessons.
 3. Everyone playing together except drums.
 4. Drummers should be rhythmically slightly ahead of rest of band.
 5. Repeat without showing repeat signs.
 6. Good harmonic rhythm, but no accidentals.
 - b. *Cool It!*-Grade ½
 1. Sounds like *Woolly Bully* without the melody
 2. All dominant 7th chords
 3. Exercise in counting 8th notes in a fun style
 4. All other characteristics of NMP Grade ½
 - c. *In The Valley Of Magic*-Grade 1 classical style
 1. 1st clarinet playing low part-finger and hand position.
 2. Trumpet moving up scale wise: air support.
 3. Percussion-slightly more advanced than rest of band.
 4. Counting rest.
 5. Middle section in minor mode-contrasting section.
 6. Hearing a strong chord progression.
 - d. *Jazz Cats*-Grade 1, jazz style
 1. Introduce new sounds.
 2. Keep it very easy and within Grade 1 parameters .
 3. Sounds good with small and large instrumentation.
 4. Easy flow of notes.
 - e. *Firestorm*-Grade 1 , classical style
 1. Using only 1st 6 notes learned in most beginner books
 1. Writing interesting harmony for this grade level
 2. Writing effective percussion parts
 3. Creating musical interest for performer and listener
 - f. *Sky's The Limit*-Grade 2
 1. Creating imagery in sound
 2. Contrasting musical styles
 3. Guidelines used for effective composition

- g. *Distant Castles*-Grade 1 ½, classical style
 - 1. Contest piece.
 - 2. Clarinets above break-but only down break.
 - 3. Trumpets highest note is D-scale wise progression to high note.
 - 4. Teach syncopation-2nd trumpets play same rhythm as first.
 - 5. Percussion-grade level higher than rest of band.
 - a. Keeps them busy.
 - b. The entire piece sounds harder than it really is.
 - 6. Be careful never to have too many accidentals or new rhythms in a row.
- h. *Eagle Lake March*-Grade 1 ½, March
 - 1. Teach 16th notes-no scale patterns while playing 16th notes.
 - 2. More interesting harmonies than most young band marches (get past I, IV, V, or worse I, V).
 - 3. Key change-make it sound like a trio rather than just another melody.
 - 4. Keep within the parameters of 1 ½.
- i. *Dark Crusader*-Grade 1 ½ - 2, March
 - 1. Teachers 6/8.
 - 2. Clarinets-exercise to go over the break.
 - 3. Minor mode.
- j. *Marines Hymn*-Grade 1 - 1 ½
 - 1. Playable after only ½ of most beginner books
 - 2. Intro to cut-time
 - 3. Nothing shorter than a quarter note
 - 4. Always interesting harmonies
- k. *Penguins On Parade*-Grade 1 ½
 - 1. Great intro to cut-time
 - 2. Nothing shorter than an 8th note
 - 3. Syncopation
- l. *Over There*-Grade 1 ½
 - 1. Intro to up-beat
 - 2. Everyone gets to play the melody
 - 3. Syncopation
 - 4. Fun/patriotic
 - 5. Follow the directions
- m. Dotted quarter/eighth notes-*Mambo Mania* and *Tribute to MLK*-Grade 1 ½,

1. Everyone has the rhythm.
 2. Light Latin rock.
 3. Easy Melody
- n. Phrasing-*Lost River Overture*-Grade 1, Classical style
1. Students forget to breath in between every note.
 2. Teaches independence-easily.
- o. *Toe Tappin'* -Grade 2, Classical
1. Guidelines for Grade 2-cover ranges and rhythms.
 2. Swing style dotted 8th/16th
 3. Complexity for Grade 2
 4. Sounding more difficult than it is to play
 5. Question/answer
 6. Harmonic rhythm and harmony (real jazz harmonies)
 7. Licks and patterns
10. Form:
- a. Two themes, sometimes three, but you may be leaving the realm of young band when you add a 3rd theme or melody.
 - b. Usually ABA.
 - c. **Contrast-too many young band songs has but one basic theme and one sound-the kids can handle more than one melody and one type of sound or mode.**
 1. Be careful of too many accidentals.
 2. Be careful of too many accidentals in a row.
 3. Grade 1 and 1 ½, not more than 2 themes (for the most part).
11. Scale tendencies
- a. 2-1
 - b. 4-3
 - c. 6-5
 - d. 7-8
 - e. stable notes: 1,3,5,8
- e. Do not limit to three chords(I, IV, V)

- a. Kids can hear and play more-see *Dragons In The Mist/In The Valley Of Magic*
- b. More advanced chords: 7th, 9th, #11, etc. See *Jazz Cats*
- c. Chord chart and progression:

| Major | Minor |
|-------|-------|
| I | i |
| IV | iv |
| V | V |
| vi | VI |
| iii | III |

- rules:
- 1. I or i may go anywhere.
 - 2. You may skip a category, but not two.
 - 3. Chord substitutions function the same as the chord it is replacing.
 - 4. Exception: good sounds, but realize a weak chord progression creates a weak melody.
 - 5. When you break a rule, know you are doing it and why.
 - f. Chord substitutions function the same as the chord it represents (ex. The flatted II, Neopolitan, is a substitution for the V, known as the tri-tone sub in jazz. It functions the same as the V chord).

c. Bad intervals:

- a. Never write a minor 9th!-works fine on the piano, but you'll be sorry if you write it in a band piece, especially with beginners!
- b. Be careful of octaves . **(Intonation!)**
- c. **Resolve dissonances(unless you are doing something for effect).**
- d. **It is okay to break the rules, but you should know when, why, and what effect it will produce.**

d. Plan the arrangement

- a. Shape-form?
- b. **Build and shape a composition-*Shall We Gather At The River*:**
 - a. Start soft and crescendo to the end.
 - b. Bolero effect-not rhythm, but colors and crescendo to the end.
- c. Create an effect-*Eagle Lake March*
 - a. Like a Sousa March, but easier.
 - b. ABA form, but middle section in sub-dominant-sounds like a trio
- d. Create a teaching situation for changing styles - *Adirondack Gold*:
 - a. Different tempos.
 - b. Different styles.
- d. **Draw a map of the piece.**
- e. **Write out sketches.**
- f. **Write out all ideas on a piece of paper and keep it near you when writing.**
- g. **Most importantly, you do not have to use every idea you think of in one piece!**

b. Duration-see Grading System Chart

c.

d. Final result:

- a. **Make the composition sound harder than it is to play.**
- b. Easy to play and easy to put together.
 - 1. Don't put too many new and difficulty rhythms in one song.
 - 2. Do not put too many accidentals in a row.
- c. Voicing-full sound with the instruments you have. Use open spacing of harmonies.
- d. When to switch instruments with the melody-keep out of hard ranges.
- e. Please use more than three chords.
- f. Use extended chords: 7th, 9th, #11, etc.
- g. Make it sound good!
- h. Make it fun to play!
- i. You may rearrange any arrangement or composition to fit the your band's ability and size.
 - 1.) If your sax player is a stronger player than your trumpet student, but the original composition has a trumpet solo, rearrange it so your sax player plays the solo and your band will sound good!
 - 2.) It is your responsibility to make your band sound good. The composer may not know who are your best players.
 - 3.) The objective is to make good music, not necessarily please the composer, especially if the composer is dead!

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me during the conference, or after, please use email, phone, or old fashion letter writing.

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MUSIC PERFORMANCE GRADING SYSTEM

| GRADE | METER | KEY | TEMPO | RHYTHM | DURATION | RANGE | WHEN TO PLAY |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|-------------|--|--|
| 1 | 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 | Bb, Eb (concert pitch) | SLOW TO MODERATE | WHOLE, HALF, DOTTED HALF, QUARTER, AND SOME EIGHTH NOTES. | 1-3 MINUTES | FLUTE: G-C OBOE: E-A CLARINET: LOW E - Bb, BUT NO CLARINET CROSSES THE BREAK. SAX: E-A TRUMPET: C-C HORN: A-A TROMBONE & BARITONE: Bb-Bb TUBA: Bb-C | INTRODUCE AT ANY TIME IN THE 1 ST YEAR, BUT MOSTLY LIKELY PERFORMABLE IN THE 1 ST HALF OF THE 1 ST YEAR. HOWEVER, IF REHEARSALS ARE 1-2 TIME A WEEK, USABLE THEN ENTIRE 1 ST YEAR, AND SOME IN 2 ND YEAR. |
| 1 ½ | 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8, CUT-TIME (VERY EASY INTRODUCTION) | Bb, Eb, F (RARELY Ab) RARELY KEY CHANGE, MUST BE EASY AND CLOSELY RELATED KEY. | SLOW TO MODERATE (SLIGHTLY FASTER THAN GRADE 1) | SAME AS GRADE 1, PLUS DOTTED QUARTER NOTES, MORE USE OF EIGHTH NOTES, CAN INTRODUCE DOTTED 8 TH NOTES-16 TH . | 1-3 ½ | FLUTE: F-D OBOE: D-A CLARINET: 1 ST CLARINET MAY CROSS BREAK, 2 ND NO. SAX: D-B TRUMPET: B-D HORN: A-B TROMBONE & BARITONE: A(G)- C. TUBA: Bb-D | 2 ND HALF OF 1 ST YEAR. BANDS THAT MEET ONLY ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK, THIS WILL BE VERY GOOD IN 2 ND YEAR. |
| 2 | 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8, CUT-TIME | Bb, Eb, F, Ab, SOMETIMES C, MAY HAVE RELATED KEY CHANGE | SLOW TO FAST, BUT NOT USUALLY PAST 126. | SAME AS 1 ½ PLUS EASY SYNCOPATION. | 1-5 | FLUTE C-F OBOE-C-B CLAR: 1 ST E-A ABOVE STAFF, 2 ND CLAR BELOW BREAK. SAX: C-C TPT: A-E HORN: G-C TBN-BAR. G-D TUBA: A-D | SECOND TO 3 RD THIRD YEAR. |
| 2 ½ -easy 3 | SAME AS GR. 2 | POSSIBLY MORE KEY CHANGES | SAME AS ABOVE, COULD BE SLOWER OR SLIGHTER FASTER | SAME AS GR. 2 | 1-5 | SAME AS GR. 2, BUT ADD ONE TO TWO NOTES AT EACH END OF RANGE. THIS WOULD BE EXTREME, HOWEVER. | SECOND YEAR RHYTHMS AND RANGES, BUT WHEN PUTTING IT TOGETHER FOR A GOOD PERFORMANCE, IT IS REALLY A GRADE 3. |

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