

Erin Emery
Literature & Listening

Grade 1, Piece 1: *Forward March!* Paul Murtha

This piece was written for MusicWorks, a Hal Leonard publication. *Forward March!* was written as part of a series of marches for beginning band. It is a great introduction to march style for young musicians as it incorporates a trio that modulates, as well as the articulations and dynamic changes you would expect to hear in a march. The instrumentation is that of your typical middle school concert band. It offers an optional bell part that doubles the upper woodwinds.

The most challenging part of this piece may be the rhythms for percussionists, specifically the snare drum player. There is also a drum break in the middle that might need some attention. It requires Clarinet 1 to play above its break -- this may be something to take into consideration while programming for a concert. However, there are cues provided for the alto saxophones in case the clarinets need support. I think the biggest focus for rehearsals would be dynamic contrast, as there are abrupt changes throughout. In mm. 17 there is a forte piano in every part, so I would like to introduce this term to my students. I'd also use this piece to help instill the proper balance of an ensemble.

I chose this piece because it makes me incredibly nostalgic. I've had the opportunity to perform this piece when I was in middle school, as well as conduct it my senior year of high school when I was in Teacher Academy. I would love to conduct it again someday, and I'm sure I would do much better while preparing it in rehearsals after researching it more. I enjoy the simplicity of this march; it gets stuck in my head. The fact that it consists mostly of melody (as

well as the occasional countermelody), bassline, and percussion makes it accessible to many young musicians.

Grade 1, Piece 2: *Celtic Air and Dance*, Michael Sweeney

This piece is a band setting of two Celtic folk songs, “The Parting Glass” and “Tha Mi Sgith.” It is in single-movement form for wind band. While the oboe and horn parts are included, they’re also covered by other instruments. This makes *Celtic Air and Dance* more accessible for small beginning bands, or for those that begin on a smaller section of instruments. Percussion requires snare drum, bass drum, medium tom-tom, suspended cymbal, triangle, and orchestra bells -- this is a bit more extensive than other beginning band pieces. All of the low voices have the same part (in comfortable octaves for the respective instrument) which helps provide a solid bass.

Celtic Air and Dance does not involve dynamics lower than mezzo piano, making it more comfortable for young students. It expands to forte. “The Parting Glass” is legato while “Tha Mi Sgith” is staccato, so I would want to work on this contrast during rehearsals (especially the transition between the two). We would also rehearse balance as this piece has the opposite problem of most beginning band works: it has more voices on the low part than the high, so we have to make sure the upper melodies are able to be heard.

I had never actually heard this piece until today, and it immediately made me think of *Give Me Love* by Ed Sheeran. In his song there is a tag at the end that I never knew was actually an Irish folk song called “The Parting Glass.” The bell part right before this theme begins almost sounds like twinkling stars. The harmonies in the woodwinds immediately following are

connected and very pretty. I like how this theme is developed throughout this section of the piece. The tom-tom at the beginning of “Tha Mi Sgith” drives the music forward, and the winds then introduce a much more light, bouncy melody.

Grade 1, Piece 3: *Midnight Sky (from Midnight Suites)*, Brian Balmages

As the second movement of a larger work called *Midnight Suites*, this piece can be played on its own or in conjunction with the other installments. It was inspired by the birth of his firstborn son. Balmages wrote *Midnight Sky* because he felt as though other composers didn’t create enough lyrical pieces for beginning bands. He wanted something to enable young musicians to explore expression, so this work only uses a range of six notes on each instrument.

The focus for rehearsals should be musicality rather than technical concerns (as this piece doesn’t have anything technically challenging), such as tone, phrasing, balance, and intonation. Breath marks at the end of a phrase should be emphasized and taken by the entire ensemble. The dynamic markings, including crescendos and decrescendos, should be taken very literally. This piece comes with three chorales to use during rehearsal to enhance the students’ playing, and I would definitely take advantage of that.

While listening to this piece, I found that it sounded serene and peaceful, as if you were trying not to wake a baby. The melody is passed between brass and woodwinds. The harmonies are tertiary and very simple. I think this piece would be great for beginning bands because it allows them to play something pretty that is still accessible with their current abilities. It offers a lot of great learning opportunities when it comes to musicality, which I don’t think is included

enough in the early stages of learning an instrument. I would love to conduct this with a fifth or sixth grade band someday.

Grade 1, Piece 4: *Safari*, Michael Vertoske

Safari was written for the 2009 Midwest Clinic. It is scored for wind band and includes doubled parts to compensate for beginning bands that might not have a proper balance of instruments. The piece calls for many world percussion instruments, such as a log drum, bongos, cabasa, tambourine, suspended cymbal, and bass drum and claves, which use the style of their country of origin. This might be worth noting while planning a concert cycle.

One of the biggest challenges that this piece offers is the amount of moving lines that are included. At many points there are three different moving lines. This may be especially difficult for horn and tenor saxophone in sections when they have to sustain notes that move separately than the rest of the ensemble. We would have to work these areas in rehearsal. In mm. 43-47, we would need to rehearse the canon section to make sure it aligns correctly. Syncopated rhythms occur throughout, so it would be important to be sure the students are comfortable with this concept.

The log drum begins the piece and maintains a steady tempo that drives the rest of the band for the majority of the piece. Melodic ideas are presented and then developed through extended harmonies. This sounds like it might be a fun piece for young musicians, especially percussionists, but I was honestly a little bored while listening to multiple different recordings of it (in case one wasn't a good interpretation). It sounds like a lot of other beginning band pieces I've heard and played; there's nothing special to it.

Grade 2, Piece 1: *In the Bleak Midwinter*, Gustav Holst, arr. Robert W. Smith

This piece was originally a German text by Christina Rossetti, then set in English to music by Gustav Holst for the New English Hymnal. Robert W. Smith later arranged it for concert band, dedicated to “Ben, Chuck, and Susan” for their mother, a clarinetist named Alta Sue Hawkins. Unfortunately, she did not survive to hear the premiere of this piece, but the clarinet solo throughout is in honor of her. The use of clarinets, solo horn, solo baritone, and the addition of the second horn in the second verse is because her children Ben and Susan played horn, and Chuck played baritone.

It is important to note that this arrangement’s tempo ranges from quarter note equals 52-104, whereas Holst’s original was specifically “Moderately, quarter note = 100.” Smith has also transposed it down to E-flat, rather than the original F, in order to keep all instruments in their own comfortable range. This piece is in strophic form, with four complete statements of the melody -- one for each verse within the original text in Holst’s hymn. Even though it is only 78 measures long, it has a duration of about four and a half minutes.

A musical challenge may be finding a clarinetist, hornist, and baritone player appropriate for the solos, as it is demanding in the sense of phrasing, tonal, and musical concerns. For the most part, this piece stays in E-flat, but it does have a few accidentals that players should be sure to note. The phrasing for the ensemble may be difficult, as each phrase is rather long and demands extreme musicality. I would be sure to rehearse the opening statements of the hymn in order to create the proper balance and expression of the piece. I would also want to work on each tempo change to ensure that each transition is clean.

While listening to this piece, I felt as though I was in a winter scene -- probably because of the wind chimes at the beginning. When I first heard the solo clarinet without accompaniment, I felt very alone and exposed in comparison to the preceding fanfare. The addition of bells sounded like snow falling. When the horns and baritone came in it felt as though they were leading the clarinet back to the ensemble so it wouldn't be alone anymore. The fanfare returned after this section. The very end felt incomplete, as the solo did not finish the main theme; it almost felt like a death, which would make sense considering the dedication of this piece.

Grade 2, Piece 2: *Red River Valley*, Pierre La Plante

Red River Valley was written with young wind ensembles in mind, using the typical instrumentation for such. It is a setting of a traditional Canadian folk song in strophic form, repeated and developed three times throughout the piece to match each verse of the original tune. It might be worth noting that it is not written about the Red River that flows into Louisiana, but rather the Red River that flows into Lake Winnipeg.

One challenge may be breathing only where slurs denote the end of a phrase. As young bands are developing so is their lung capacity, which could make the long slurs difficult -- especially considering the piece is taken at quarter equals 64. I would be sure to focus on dynamic contrast in rehearsals, as this piece offers a lot of musical teaching moments. I would also want to spend some time teaching students about the function of major seventh harmonizations.

While listening to this piece I found that it is difficult to find good recordings that offer appropriate musical expressions. This might be because most bands that play it are incredibly

young. This could act as inspiration for one of my future bands to perform it with more musical intention, or it could be a warning to stay clear. I think if I spent enough time working on expression it could turn out alright. With all of this being said, I still think this piece is great for middle school bands. I found the development of the theme to help push the music forward as though it really was a river flowing. The resolution at the end feels like we have reached our destination into a larger bay.

Grade 2, Piece 3: *Three Hungarian Songs*, Bela Bartok, arr. Phillip Gordon

Three Hungarian Songs was originally written for choir by Bela Bartok, using folk music of peasants from Hungary and Romania to create his own style. It was later arranged for beginning bands by Phillip Gordon, and it was intended to be very accessible for young musicians. It is a three movement piece with the division of ABBA repeated for the first movement, CDCD for the second, and EFGHGHGH with a coda for the third.

The first movement has doubled parts with cues, and only includes one solo in the trumpets. The melody in the second movement is introduced by the horns and is later portrayed by the trumpets and upper woodwinds. In the third movement instrumentation is the usual, but the xylophone doubles the upper woodwinds. One challenge may be the low notes in the clarinet part of the second movement, as well as leaps in the horns. Something I would want to spend time in rehearsal on would be matching the length of notes in the accompaniment, as well as overall phrasing with dynamics.

I found it rather difficult to find performances of this piece. There were plenty of recordings of the choir arrangement, but the lack of band films makes me question if there's a

reason for so few performances. The first movement starts off light and separated with only a few voices, and the rest add in after the completion of the main theme. It is very short and feels rather incomplete to me. The second is smooth and connected; a nice contrast in comparison to the first movement. Again, it feels too brief. The third movement sounds like a fanfare and is my personal favorite of the entire piece. However, it is cut too short.

In my own personal opinion, I think this piece feels too incomplete to be worth rehearsal time. I wish each movement was developed more because I was left wanting more from each Hungarian song, as well as the entire piece. I had higher hopes for this piece because I am a fan of Bela Bartok. I was let down.

Grade 2, Piece 4: *Abracadabra*, Frank Ticheli

This piece is composed for full band, using the typical instrumentation for such an ensemble. Cues are included to cover important melodies and accompaniments, especially in the horn and double reed parts, in order to accommodate for ensemble with imperfect instrumentation. *Abracadabra* is in sonata-allegro form and is only one movement, lasting approximately four and a half minutes.

A special demand is that a straight mute is needed for one note in Horn 1 at mm. 39 and 40. The xylophone part may present a challenge for young percussionists as it incorporates multiple skips within the scale. This piece may be slightly difficult for clarinetists, as they have to play over their break multiple times throughout the piece. Another musical challenge are the many accidentals throughout. While they aren't particularly difficult, I might have to remind students to pay attention to each accidental and play the correct notes. Measures 49-57 might

also be difficult for young students, because they expect it to be a call-and-response between two groups, but it actually transforms into three sections instead.

In rehearsal, I would expect to spend some time on the sixteenth notes going into mm. 21, as well as mm. 79, as the upper woodwinds have an ascending B-flat major scale in sixteenth notes. I would want to work on the clarinet parts at the end, as they have a descending G minor scale, also in sixteenth notes. I might work on precision of articulations, as there needs to be contrast between staccatos, accents, marcatos, slurs, tenutos, and tenuto-staccatos in order to properly portray the character of the piece. The *accelerando* from mm. 136-150 needs to be rehearsed as well, using the eighth notes on beat four as a pickup into the next measure in order to keep the forward motion.

Listening to this piece, the beginning feels playful and curious, as if trying to creep around a house. It quickly becomes more majestic; I especially enjoy the horn part before the trumpets have their melody (a few phrases before mm. 39). This repeats and becomes more complex each time. This helps to keep it predictable but still engaging for the audience. Towards the middle/end of the piece when the flutes have a very melancholy minor melody I felt rather sad, but this mood is resolved by the trumpets and saxophones shortly after. The flutes then have a chromatic sequence that repeats a few times. This again gives me the feeling of sneaking around. The very end of the piece feels as though you've come to the end of a magic trick and the folklore-type of creatures have crept back into hiding.

Grade 3, Piece 1: *American Riversongs*, Pierre La Plante

This piece uses your typical concert band instrumentation. A special demand in this piece is the heavy use of a cornet duet, baritone, and low reeds. While most parts are doubled, there are also multiple solos and soli sections. It is a setting of four traditional American folk songs in ternary form using the B-flat, E-flat, and F major scales. It was dedicated to the 1988-89 Oberlin High School Band from Oberlin, Ohio. The style of the piece was influenced by Aaron Copland and Charles Ives.

It is important to focus on balance, precision, and clarity while rehearsing *American Riversongs* as there are multiple moving lines happening simultaneously in addition to countermelodies and accompaniments throughout most of the work. I would also like to spend time rehearsing dynamic contrast and staying very true to the written markings, as well as articulations. There are often staccato notes happening at the same time as tenutos, so I need to be sure students are articulating accurately. Since it uses the B-flat, E-flat, and F major scales, I would like to be sure my students are familiar with these keys so they can easily prepare their parts without worrying about incorrect notes to the degree that I would if the scales were foreign to them.

While this piece isn't one that I particularly wanted for my final project, I do like the way it sounds. It sounds very joyful and gets stuck in my head easily. I enjoy the many layers of the voices throughout. The sections that include *Shenandoah* sound hopeful for the future, as if longing for a new day. The use of traditional folk songs makes me feel nostalgic, which I think is one of the main goals of the work, as it is based on the waterways that helped to develop the United States into what it is today.

Grade 3, Piece 2: *Courtly Airs and Dances*, Ron Nelson

Courtly Airs and Dances is based on multiple Renaissance dances and has six movements named after each one: Intrada, Basse danse, Pavane, Saltarello, Sarabande, and Allemande. This form is based on *suite* and *sonata da camera*, Baroque dance forms. After the Intrada, each dance is meant to represent a European country: France, England, Italy, and Spain (respectively). It is dedicated to the Hill Country Middle School Band in Austin, Texas. I think this is worth noting because it helps to identify that the musicians are “late intermediate,” not true beginners.

The percussion instrumentation for this piece is somewhat extensive. In addition to the usual wind instruments, *Courtly Airs and Dances* calls for “timpani (at least three), marimba, vibraphone, glockenspiel, chimes, snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum with attached cymbal, crash cymbals, suspended cymbal, two triangles, castanets, and sleigh bells.” I think this is important to take note of because not only would I need at least five percussionists, I’d also have to make sure my school has access to all of these instruments.

This piece may be rather challenging, especially if presented to young middle school students, as it involves multiple different modes and uses accidentals rather than key changes. This is a concept I would be sure to introduce to my ensembles if I were to conduct this piece. I would want them to work on scales in different modes, specifically F mixolydian, B-flat lydian, G minor, F and E ionian, F dorian. In rehearsals I would want to spend time on the vocal section in the Sarabande; band students aren’t always familiar with proper vocal technique and that is something I would most definitely want to employ. Another thing to note is that horns have stopped notes, so I would have to make sure my students know how to use this technique. I

would spend time working on matching articulations and style because that will help portray to the stark contrast between movements.

While listening to this piece I think of my freshman year of high school when my band played it. It also makes me remember a lot of the things I learned in the music history sequence here at WMU. By listening to each movement I can hear specific characteristics of each country's musical styles coming through. Overall, this has been one of my favorite pieces to look into and I would love to work on it with one of my future bands.

Grade 3, Piece 3: *Dusk*, Steven Bryant

This piece is written for wind ensemble in arch form. It is meant to sound like a choral rendition dusk "illuminated by the fiery hues of sunset," and has been compared to works by Eric Witacre. It was commissioned for the Langley High School Wind Ensemble. Something important to note is that the breath marks are meant to signify unison breaks in the sound across the entire group to emulate the feeling of a choir. Instrumentation is rather normal, but it is crucial to have a horn player as the piece begins with a horn solo, and the section continues to play a major role throughout.

Dusk is very demanding when it comes to intonation, expression, blend, and being comfortable while feeling exposed through bare orchestration. For these reasons I would most likely save this work for more advanced ensembles -- definitely never a middle school band. It is also rather slow in comparison to most other pieces, with the written tempo at quarter equals 44. The use of a metronome at first could be beneficial to make sure we aren't pushing the tempo, of course giving a bit of leeway in order to give the rehearsal time a good sense of expression. If the

piece goes too quickly, I think it would lose a lot of its emotions. I would want to spend time working on precise articulations and matching style across the ensemble. For my own benefit, I'd rehearse the transitions between meter changes to be sure I feel comfortable leading the class.

This piece gave me many feelings while listening to it. I'm not sure I had ever heard it before. Maybe it was the horn solo at the very beginning, but I felt such a connection to the musical decisions throughout. The description of the work in the program notes are spot on -- this definitely makes me think of a sunset reflecting on the dusk. I think the bareness of the texture adds to this effect, as dusk seems to be a rather quiet time of day in my mind. I would love to have the opportunity to work on this with a future ensemble, whether I'm conducting or playing; I would be satisfied either way.

Grade 3, Piece 4: *Lux Aurumque*, Eric Whitacre

Lux Aurumque was originally composed by Eric Whitacre for choir and he later transcribed it for brass choir as commissioned by United Brass, and eventually the Texas Music Educators Association commissioned the wind band edition in dedication to Gary Green. Something interesting about the instrumentation of this piece is that there is no incorporation of percussion whatsoever.

Since this piece was first written for choir, it is very important for the conductor to do their research on proper breath placement, syllabic stress of the text, and all other vocal style characteristics in order to properly portray the appropriate musical decisions. It may be important to note that the original key is C-sharp minor, while the wind band arrangement is in C minor to

accommodate for more comprehensive playing. It also uses the key centers of C major and F minor.

One of the biggest challenges of this piece is proper phrasing, as some instruments have to sustain notes in the upper register, so breath management is incredibly important. I will have to work on balance with my ensemble in order to create the most appropriate timbre across the group, balancing from the bottom voices to the top. Something to pay attention to is the direction to “[aim] for a composite horn timbre.” Intonation is another thing that I’ll have to keep my ears peeled for; this can make or break the entire work. I would also plan to do some dynamic contrast exercises to ensure my students are aware of and conscious of using their full dynamic range.

Listening to this piece always makes me happy -- this is probably just because I’m a horn player and Whitacre pays very close attention to my instrument; he even calls for the ensemble to sound like a horn overall. *Lux Aurumque* also makes me feel nostalgic because we played it in Concert Band (before the ensemble was switched to Symphonic Band) my freshman year at Western. We have also played it in Wind Symphony for multiple instrumental conducting students. It makes me think of simpler times when I was still young and naive (or at least younger and more naive than I currently am; we are always growing and I think this piece represents that feeling well). It has been and will continue to be one of my favorites for a long time.

Grade 4, Piece 1: *The Gum-Suckers March*, Percy Aldridge Grainger

The Gum-Suckers March was first composed as the final movement of one of Grainger's orchestral works called "In a Nutshell." The "final" band version was dated during his time at Interlochen, however he never brought the piece to a final form. The term *gum-sucker* pays homage to his Australian roots. It is important to note that this piece involves a large percussion section, especially when it comes to mallet instruments. He also gives performance directions throughout the work. It calls for full double reed, saxophone, and (as mentioned) mallet-percussion sections. It also has a piano part that is not cued in others.

Although it is called a march, it is often considered to be more of a rhapsody. It lacks some of the well known characteristics of marches, such as consistent up-beats (usually dreaded by the horn section), *obligati* in the upper woodwinds, and countermelody lines in the tenor voices.

This piece demands flexibility from the musicians who are playing it. They must be capable of playing at opposite ends of all stylistic extremes. These are things I would want to incorporate into warmups and exercises to ensure my ensemble is able to perform this way. I would want to spend time working the various themes throughout the piece to make sure they are well-heard despite the swamp-like countermelodies and accompaniments. It is also lacking an introduction section.

While listening to *The Gum-Suckers March* I get the overwhelming feeling of joy. It sounds very happy -- I think that's due to the bright and perky musical choices, especially at the beginning of the work. The large percussion ensemble also plays into this emotion with the many metallic textures they add to the ensemble. Although not directly relating to this piece, I was very

intrigued to find out that Grainger was heavily involved with the National Music Camp at Interlochen in the 1940s. When I worked there last summer nobody told us this is our history lessons. I feel that if I had known this, I would have felt more connected to his pieces that they performed while I was there. In fact, I remember working on a few excerpts from *The Gum-Suckers March* for the Wind Symphony audition last fall while sitting in Interlochen practice rooms.

Grade 4, Piece 2: *From Every Horizon (A Tone Poem to New York)*, Norman Dello Joio

This piece is a three part tone poem. The first part is representative of outside of New York City; it is meant to be pastoral. The second is supposed to show the “tired out-of-towner,” and moves directly into the third, which introduces new melodies and brings back ideas from the previous two movements. The work was originally written as a film score, and was later adapted for band, dedicated to the University of North Dakota. After learning that Dello Joio studied with Paul Hindemith, his compositional style makes a lot more sense to me.

From Every Horizon involves many solos, including flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and trumpet, which is important to note while considering your own ensemble before deciding to program it for a concert. There are several exposed sections that need to be rehearsed in order to solidify balance as well as tempo; some of these sections are fast sixteenth notes, and this occurs in all parts. The percussion part is not technically difficult, whereas the wind part is.

I would want to make sure my students are aware of expanded tertian harmonies before working on this piece, as that is what this piece is based around. I’d also need to work on transitions between quick stylistic changes to ensure that my performers can confidently portray

the intended mood. Since there are artificial subdivisions as well as hemiolas and other more advanced technical requirements, I would most likely save this for especially advanced ensembles.

I was rather confused during my first listen to this piece because I was not expecting expanded tertian harmonies (even though I should have; this is Dello Joio of course) so I had to listen to it multiple times before having a clear understanding of the content. It is a very dense work with a lot of parts to pay attention to, which I think truly need multiple listens in order to fully know what is happening. However, this is truly reminiscent of New York City. There are always so many people going about doing their own thing that it would be impossible to pay attention to each individual at the same time. I think that is what Dello Joio was trying to achieve while composing this piece.

Grade 4, Piece 3: *Poem*, Scott Boerma

This piece was commissioned for the Southshore Concert Band in memory of Bernie Kurschel, Boerma's grade school trombone instructor. It ends with an off-stage trombone solo in honor of him. At first it was titled *Elegy*, but was officially named *Poem* due to the musical expression inflected within a poem. It is important to note that every marking should be taken quite literally, and breath marks should act similar to caesuras. It uses the typical instrumentation of a concert band and follows the form of a poem.

Some challenges of *Poem* include tonal blend, intonation, and exposed shifts from major to minor (and vice versa) harmonies. In order to prepare each note for proper intonation, musicians must have an aural anticipation before articulating the pitch. I would want to work on

sections with drastic dynamic changes to ensure musicians are using good air support and breath management. I'd also want to rehearse phrases connecting between instrument families to have a continuous motion despite the voice change. Another focus would be sustaining ties across barlines. I must also pay attention to the equality of both notes within a duplet to make sure students aren't clipping the second one.

This piece gave me all sorts of feelings while listening to it. The beginning sounds incredibly melancholy, but the resolution in background voices feel uplifting and hopeful. The work as an overall forward motion that give the sense of progress in acceptance and learning. The trombone solo at the end is very touching, considering its intentions. I would love to conduct this piece someday, but I think I would only feel comfortable doing so if I had the opportunity to perform it in an ensemble first. I think I'd need to have more of an awareness of each part (which I learn while listening to other sections in rehearsals) before leading it on my own.

Grade 4, Piece 4: *Shadow Rituals*, Michael Markowski

This piece was written for wind band when Markowski was only nineteen years old and was later "selected as the winner of Category 2 -- Young Band of the Frank Ticheli Composition Contest." It is meant to embody a dark and primitive dance. It has two themes throughout and includes a third theme built off of intervals of the first. It is very quick with a tempo of quarter note equals 186. It is supposed to be grouped woodwind versus brass choirs, so it may be beneficial to seat the performers as such.

One of the largest challenges is left up to the composer: deciding how to group their conducting patterns. This is crucial to helping the musicians keep accurate subdivisions and

maintain a steady tempo. Range shouldn't be an issue for performers as each part stays in the comfortable register with the exception of a few notes. A special demand is requiring clarinets and saxophones to scoop, and the flutes to flutter.

During rehearsals I would want to pay attention to balance in the canonic section at mm. 94 in order to create the proper texture. It is also important to focus on dynamics, tempos, and articulations. Accents are especially important. To help musicians feel more comfortable while reading, I would have them practice the E-flat phrygian scale as well as A-flat aeolian.

While listening to this piece I felt motivated to keep listening because the underlying rhythm is so catchy and feels natural. It took a few listens to hear all of the varying parts, and I'm glad I took the time to tear it apart. I really enjoyed the woodwind versus brass choir concept; it almost felt like an ancient dance battle with the way these families are grouped against one another.

Grade 5, Piece 1: *Adrenaline City*, Adam Gorb

This piece was commissioned by multiple military bands of the United States. It is in 10/8 time and is in sonata form. It is mostly tonal while including jazz and pop characteristics. Be sure the ensemble has musicians that play E-flat clarinet, soprano saxophone, flugelhorn, piano, and string bass. It is also important to note that you need a strong saxophone section, as well as solid flute, clarinet, and trumpet players because they have very challenging solos. You need a large percussion section, too -- both musicians and instruments.

One challenge I would find as a conductor would be my lack of jazz knowledge. Although I do have a basic understanding of jazz and have performed in a few jazz ensembles, I

think I would struggle with the integration with many other styles like we hear in this piece. I would most likely drill different rhythm patterns, meter changes, and jazz harmonies in order to feel confident in this area. When it comes to rehearsal time, I think we would have to work on transition sections the most to ensure that everyone is comfortable with their rhythms.

I really enjoyed listening to this piece. I tend to like pieces that don't use your typical time signatures, and this definitely fits the bill. The percussion part at the beginning caught my attention, and the rapid figures kept the music moving forward. The way the melodies and countermelodies interacted with each other made it feel almost dance-like. Percussion grabbed me again in the middle; I feel like they are the section that make this piece especially interesting to me, as well as the phrases that are passed around from instrument to instrument across the entire ensemble. I also appreciated that everything was more developed in the recapitulation rather than just repeated. While I think it would be really fun to conduct this piece, I think I would personally gain more by playing it in an ensemble.

Grade 5, Piece 2: *Morning Star*, David Maslanka

Morning Star was commissioned to be played at the opening of Grand Ledge High School's new concert hall in 1997. It is noted to be about new beginnings. It was premiered under the direction of Michael Kaufman, who happened to be my private horn instructor in high school. This piece is based on pentatonic scales, and although it is made up of entirely original melodies, this makes it reminiscent of folk songs. It is in rondo form. Take note that you are required to have extra musicians in certain sections: six B-flat clarinets, eight B-flat trumpets, five horns, and a very large percussion section. The score is written in concert-pitch.

There are several specific demands in this piece. Trumpets will need straight, cup, and harmon mutes; tubas will also need mutes. Maslanka requires flute and oboe to play without vibrato in a few sections, and trombones, horns, and trumpets have glissandi. Take note that Horn 1 written high Cs (concert F) in mm. 456 and 458. This is important to take into consideration in case the musicians have not yet developed such a range. In rehearsal we would need to work on the multiple time signatures and meter changes to make sure our transitions are seamless. There are spots when both duple and triple meters are present, so I would be sure to focus on those sections.

This piece is not quite what I expected when I read the title of *Morning Star*. For some reason I expected it to be calm, smooth, and connected. I was pleasantly surprised to find it very active and uplifting. I enjoy repeated rhythms and the fact that every part is constantly being developed. By the time we get to the end of the piece there is so much going on that it almost felt like I was sitting in the ensemble. I would absolutely love to conduct this someday, but I feel like it might be difficult to make it work due to how many musicians are required on parts that are usually much smaller. If I worked at a large school with multiple ensembles maybe we could combine groups to make it possible.

Grade 5, Piece 3: *Divertimento*, Leonard Bernstein, arr. Clare Grundman

This piece was written for the centennial of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and is said to be the summation of Bernstein's work. It is interesting, in my opinion, how he divided each movement to particular groups of instruments (Grundman did the same for the band arrangement). The first movement uses only woodwinds, the second only double reeds and harp

without cues, the seventh only brass band and percussion. Take into consideration that it includes E-flat clarinet, contrabassoon (no cues), harp (some cues), and six percussion parts. There are solos in almost every part. The band arrangement remains incredibly accurate to the original orchestration.

A major demand is that every musician in the ensemble must be capable of playing at both extreme ends of their range. It is the most difficult for trumpets and horns; think about this before programming the piece for a concert. A challenge may be the difficult combination of articulations, rhythms, and tempos. Musicians must also be comfortable with asymmetric meters. We would probably want to spend some time working on the more exposed movements to create proper balance. I would also want to discuss the relationship between movement titles and arpeggiation, chromaticism, and serialism.

As soon as I heard this piece I swear I could pick out tiny, unfinished fragments of multiple well-known tunes, and after reading about it I found out that I was right. I heard *Minuet in G* by Bach, Beethoven's fifth, *West Side Story*, *Candide*, and a few others. I think this made the work enjoyable; if someone was completely unfamiliar with this piece -- like I was before now -- they would still be able to find a connection to some of the most well-known quotes in our society. I would definitely have to dig into the score a lot more if I were to one day conduct this piece, but it seems like a lot of fun.

Grade 5, Piece 4: *Strange Humors*, John Mackey

This piece was commissioned by the American Bandmasters Association, originally written for a string quartet with djembe. It is specified that there should only be one player per

part, and many parts have solos -- maybe it would be good as an advanced ensemble piece in a school for this reason. It begins with an English horn solo, which has been cued in case an ensemble is missing that musician (as are several other parts). It is requested that the djembe player is in a visible location as it is the main feature. It is important to note that *Strange Humors* calls for E-flat clarinet, soprano saxophone, bass trombone, contrabass, and five percussionists on top of your typical wind ensemble.

One challenging aspect of the piece are the aleatoric sections for horn and percussion. Players need to be familiar with this concept in order to play it well. The piece requires piccolo, flute, E-flat clarinet, trumpet, and trombone use the extended upper register. It is based on the Phrygian mode of each of its tonal centers, so I would want to make sure musicians are comfortable playing in each. I would spend time in rehearsal working on the second theme because it sounds much more complex than the first. It might be best to simplify sections by eliminating extended techniques, mastering each one, and then adding the techniques in again.

While listening to this piece, I enjoyed the opening solos from English horn and multiple saxophones. When the djembe joined I couldn't help but move to beat because it's very catchy. I like that its rhythms help to drive the entire piece. Each time the brass players had glissandi I felt this drive as well. I really appreciate how this piece introduces most of its themes in one instrument and they are then developed by all the others. The fact that players weren't expected to play with the most beautiful tone throughout made me even more interested in the piece because I never quite knew what to expect next. I think it would be fun to work on this in a future ensemble that I might conduct, but it may be difficult to find the correct balance of musician capable of the high demands that *Strange Humors* requires.

Grade 6, Piece 1: *The Wrangler: Cowboy Dances*, Carter Pann

This piece is written for winds and percussion, commissioned for the James Logan High School Wind Ensemble. They premiered the piece in Carnegie Hall. It is programmatic, representing the story of a heroic cowboy in the West. There are more parts than to be expected for many instruments, such as six for flute, six for B-flat clarinet, three for bassoon, and six for B-flat trumpet. It also requires English horn, E-flat clarinet, and B-flat contrabass clarinet. *The Wrangler: Cowboy Dances* is in rounded binary form.

This piece requires musicians to play at both ends of extreme in their range, especially first horn. There is an E-flat clarinet solo that demands the ability to smear. Since it is based on scales and arpeggios, it would be helpful if performers are comfortable playing these in B-flat major, C major, D major, E-flat major, G major, as well as in their relative and parallel keys. All brass players must be capable of triple and double tonguing in order to emulate the sound of a horse galloping. In rehearsal, we would need to spend a considerable amount of time on the horn quartet from mm. 112-116 to work on intonation and balance between the parts.

When I first heard this piece I could picture the story playing out in my head. Rhythms spanning across percussion and brass sections sound like horses galloping. The middle of the music sounds almost drunk, like the cowboy is at a saloon. The slapstick sounds like he is whipping his lasso. The first listen is incredibly enjoyable, and the more I listen to it the more I find. While this piece is fun to listen to, I think would much prefer to play it rather than conduct it. I think the demands of the horn parts would be incredibly beneficial to my musicianship as a performer.

Grade 6, Piece 2: *Day Dreams*, Dana Wilson

Day Dreams is comprised of four movements: “Sunrise: an infinite expectation,” “Morning: all intelligences awake,” “Afternoon: hopes shot upward, ever so bright,” and “Sunset: having lived the life imagined.” Each time of day represents a different part of life, with sunrise being birth, morning youth, afternoon adulthood, and sunset death. A talented pianist and percussion section are essential to the success of this piece.

This piece uses jazz and funk rhythms, which I think would most likely have to be rehearsed quite a bit if the musicians haven’t studied a lot in this style. There are melodies played in canon separated only by an eighth note, which may pose as a challenge. Each musician must be confident they can play independently. Harmonies are mostly dissonant, which might make tuning, balancing, and sustaining rather difficult. I think we would have to rehearse nearly every section part by part because each one is so demanding. The only way I could expect and ensemble to play it correctly (and be musically expressive at the same time) would be to master it in bits before putting it all together.

Listening to this piece was a bit of a whirlwind, and to be completely honest, I wasn’t a very big fan of it. I think if I were to play this one day I’d grow to like it. There’s nothing wrong with it by any means; it’s a very good piece. As a listener, it just wasn’t my cup of tea. The symbolic meaning of each movement is obviously portrayed in each movement. The first sounds curious, and at some point the clarinets sound like they are crying. The second is playful, and abrupt breaks sound as if the child falls and gets back up. The third sounds stressful to me, kind of like how an adult might feel with the hustle and bustle of everyday life and responsibilities.

The fourth sounds like everything is coming to a close, like a death. There are chimes in the background that reminded me of those in a death march.

Grade 6, Piece 3: *Wolf Rounds*, Christopher Rouse

In this piece, Rouse wanted to create an absurd amount of “loops” in various parts that were continuously changing. He was originally planning to call it *Loops* but later thought of *lupus*, the Latin name for wolf, when he finally decided on the title *Wolf Rounds*. It calls for piccolo, two flutes, three oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, baritone saxophone, bass saxophone, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and five percussion parts. Note that alto and tenor saxophone are not included. This piece is a single-movement creation that lasts approximately seventeen minutes.

Since each part is so independent, it is crucial that each musician is incredibly confident in their own part, as it will be juxtaposing another for the majority of the piece. The upper register reaches the extreme in most voices, which will make intonation and balance a challenge. Most of the motion is based on minor thirds, so performers need to be aurally competent as well as comfortable playing in atonal harmonies. Some parts include box notation, so musicians will have to understand how this system of writing works.

The work begins with a main idea that is morphed a little bit each time it is repeated until it is something completely unrecognizable when compared to the original. Then another idea is added in, and another, until there are so many everchanging motives going on that you don't really know which one to listen for. I enjoy that it is constantly developing and uses a lot of atonality in addition to tonality. I don't think I had ever heard of a bass saxophone before, but I

now know that I enjoy the way they sound. The rhythmic motives in this piece keep the listener guessing and intrigued. This sounds like a very challenging piece, and I don't think I'll ever have the opportunity to work with an ensemble at the level this work requires, as I plan on working with elementary children and possibly high school bands.

Grade 6, Piece 4: *High Flight*, Joseph Turrin

High Flight was inspired by a poem of the same title by Gillespie Magee, a U.S. Air Force Pilot during the Spanish Civil War. It is a part of Boosey and Hawkes' Windependence Series. While this is still considered a wind ensemble piece, it also calls for two optional cellos, string bass, harp, and piano. Take note that there are six trumpet parts, which is a little unusual. It also lacks a key signature, so there are a lot of accidentals.

This piece is incredibly technically demanding as involves many sixteenth notes and rapid sextuplets, and is marked at quarter note equals 164. Brass players are required to double tongue in many sections of the work. I would want to work on the flute and oboe solos and they take up a somewhat large chunk of the piece. All soloists should try to match each others' style when passing a melody from one to another. We would most likely need to spend some time rehearsing the melody and ostinato patterns, especially when you take into consideration that the instrumentation is often thick in those areas.

As I listened to this piece I felt like I was in a fighter jet that you see in the movies. The repetitive multiple tonguing in the brass section sounded like guns to me. The fast tempo and dissonances reminded me of someone trying to escape from danger. After reading that this was written for the United States Air Force Band for the pilots who fought in the war, my

assumptions seem to bring some sort of truth. I really enjoyed the flute and oboe solos about four minutes into the piece. This sounds like it would be challenging to play and conduct, but would in turn be very rewarding.