

Performance Notes from the Composer

“*Symphony for Band*” was written as a showpiece for concert band. The work explores a wide variety of textures and colors from intensely loud to intimately soft and soloistic, this work was meant to show off the wide range of timbre and style within a band. Each movement is contrasting in nature and sentiment as mentioned in the notes about the work.

The first movement is meant to be exuberant and joyful, expressing the energy and optimism of youth. It should be noted that the opening introduction, *measure 1* to letter **A** can be played slightly more aggressively than the actual *A theme* that first occurs at letter **A**. I have marked the *A theme* and accompaniment at letter **A** as *poco leggiero* to indicate this subtle difference. The *A theme* should have a lightness to it while still being jubilant. Contrasting the difference between these two musical ideas will help this 1st movement be multi-dimensional. The *B theme* of this first movement, which begins at letter **G**, is meant to dramatically contrast the *A theme*. Letter **G** should be a stark contrast to the music that has come before it. For the first time, the music gets quiet and showcases the woodwind section in a chorale setting. Please note that the music slows down only slightly. The tempo markings that I have indicated in the score are really my preference. I certainly welcome your interpretation and variance of these markings, but the motion of the music is meant to flow here at letter **G**. If you slow down too much, the music will get muddy. This *B theme* is used extensively in this work and should always maintain some semblance of a hymn or chorale. For me, this melody, that represents the journey of life itself, is stated in many different orchestrations conveying different sentiments every time that it is heard. The most intimate version of this theme is here at letter **G**. From letter **G** to letter **N** this theme continues to grow in orchestration and inspiration until its climax at letter **N**. The recapitulation of this first movement begins at letter **U** with this *B theme* once again stated now in its grandest form yet. The development section begins at letter **O** with the return of a fragment of the *A theme*. This whole section should be very *leggiero* and soloistic for the woodwind section. This development section goes into a waltz at letter **Q** and is a rhythmic play of the hemiola nature of 6/8 verses 3/4. I have marked a *poco accelerando* going into letter **Q**. If you feel that the *poco accelerando* complicates the transition from 6/8/ to 3/4 you can delay this *accel.*, but I meant for this waltz to flow in one and be quite light on its feet. The switch from 6/8/ to 3/4 should, however, be seamless. You should also note that two measures before letter **U** we have a duple rhythm in those two bars that seamlessly sets up the tempo for the 12/8 section that follows at letter **U**. The recapitulation begins in reverse form with the *B theme* heard first at letter **U**. The *A theme* in this recapitulation returns at letter **W**. All of the comments that I made earlier regarding this material applies here. The *subito mezzo piano* marking at *measure 299*, as well as the same music at *measure 45*, gives the band an opportunity to show off their nimbleness and helps to keep this theme light hearted. The most extreme contrast of sound back to back occurs in the final 9 measures of this first movement. Notice that the eighth-note pattern at *measure 335* is marked *fortissimo* and *Energico* while the music, four measures later at letter **Aa**, is marked *Gentile* and *mezzo forte* which leads into the heavy short accents of

the notes in the last two measures of the movement performed with *crescendo* and *accelerando*. These final measures of the first movement encompass many of the moods heard in this opening movement to “*Symphony for Band*.” The exuberance of the descending eighth-note line (*measure 335*), which has been transition music throughout the movement, is quickly contrasted in *measure 338* by the quiet introspected statement of the *B* theme as initially heard at letter **G** and followed immediately in *measure 342* by the snappy downbeat eighth notes that opened the work in its introduction before letter **A**.

The second movement of this work showcases the band in a different light. This entire movement is more about phrases than time and should dominate your approach to the work. Feel free to stretch beats in this movement. Let the musical thought of the phrases dominate your thinking. The opening to this movement is very solemn and soft. It represents death approaching. Note that the *tenuto* markings have been accompanied with the marking of *Molto legato*. These notes need to be seamless and totally connected. The realization that death is near is represented in the music with the grace noted half notes first heard in *measure 356*. This theme is meant to portray the undeniable absoluteness of our mortality. This music is heightened by the gradual *crescendo* into this death theme. Hence, the music from letter **Cc** to one measure before letter **Dd** needs to continuously grow. As instruments enter, they need to sneak into the overall texture of the band. The full orchestration of this death theme, *measure 358-359*, needs to be overpowering but still full and dark in a blended homogeneous sound imitating a large cathedral organ. This music occurs here and at letter **Ii**, and the death theme is also stated again in *measures 369-370*. The music from letter **Ee** to three measures before letter **Hh** features the woodwind section in a solo type setting and is meant to be very expressive. This passage is reflective in nature as one reviews one’s memories of his or her life. The music at letter **Hh** represents the remorse of leaving this world. It should be noted that the most violent protest of death in the music occurs in *measures 416-417*. This theme is then quietly echoed in the last three measures of the movement implying the acceptance of man’s mortality and what lies beyond.

The final movement is very intense and in total contrast to the ending of the second movement. The entrance of the trumpets and percussion should be stunning but not overblown. While the second movement focused on phrasing, this movement requires intense rhythmic accuracy to be effective. The entire opening of this movement needs to be loud and exciting and yet there needs to be the overall architecture which gives the listener a sense of the intensity of the music continuing to increase from the opening of this movement to letter **Oo**. The largest contrast in this symphony occurs here at letter **Oo**, going from *fortissimo* tutti band orchestration to one quiet flute solo. The opening music of the final movement to letter **Oo** represents a heartless society where the individual human matters not. This cold, mechanized society is reflected in the unrelenting drive of the music’s rhythm and loud dynamics. The music at letter **Oo** is one voice speaking out for humanity. You could think of this as Nietzsche versus religion. While the melodic theme is the same as the music you just heard at the beginning of this movement the emotional message of this theme is entirely different at letter **Oo**. This flute solo takes us to letter **Pp**, which is the most tranquil moment in the symphony. Here, our life’s journeyman is at peace with the world and his life, having denounced the philosophy of a

heartless world and pleas for others to follow him in the final three phrases starting in *measure 526* marked *appassionato*. Every time the phrase is stated here it should grow in volume and expression, which leads us into the contrasting *Presto* at letter [Qq]. The music from here to the end of the work allows for the return of many themes in the work. The intent at letter [Qq] is that life goes on with its challenges and rewards. The descending transition music from the first movement returns in *measure 548-551* and *564-567* as life's interruptions that are now thrown off by our mature person, as represented by the final 4 eighth notes of *measure 569*. This music leads us into letter [Tt] where the *B theme* of the first movement returns in celebration of life itself to conclude the work.

I should comment on my articulation markings to clarify any questions that you might have. There is always some question in music regarding the ends of slurs. Should the last note of a slur be shown, i.e. shortened? If I want the last note of slur passage clipped or shortened I will mark it with a staccato articulation. Slur endings without the staccato should not be shortened. When I want a long phrase over several slurs, I will add a dotted slur over the longer passage to indicate the continuous connection of those notes under the dotted slur. As an example of this look at *measure 267* in the French horns, I want to hear the hemiola rhythm within a very sustained eighth-note pattern. Regarding various accents, the > marking means accented but not short. There are several places in this work where I have added the term *Marcato Sostenuto* to indicate specifically that I want the notes accented but totally sustained. By contrast, when I use the ^ marking the note is to be short and heavily accented. For me, the *tenuto* marking is an indication of length not accent, although there are places where the – marking is meant to indicate a slight weight to the beginning of the note. When I want no added emphasis to the note, just length, I have marked the passage as *Molto legato*. The opening of the second movement is a good example of this style. Throughout this movement where I have marked *Molto legato*, I want no weight to the attacks. In fact, this music must be very smooth and connected. I have at times also added the dotted slur line over *tenuto* markings to indicate a phrase that is connected and sung. An example of where the *tenuto* marking indicates a subtle, light weight to the beginning of the note is *measure 419-420*. Here, I have marked the *tenuto* articulation on the 3rd note of the indicated four-note phrase in the woodwinds. All four notes are connected, but the 3rd note is rearticulated. I know that much of this is obvious, but I wanted to address this issue so that there is no misunderstanding of my articulation markings.

The percussion instruments required to perform this work include the following: **snare drum, bass drum, crash cymbals, suspended cymbal, bell tree, mark tree, small triangle, gong, xylophone, bells, vibraphone, and timpani**. It is my preference that the bass drum be a large drum with a drumhead that is not too tight. The bass drum should have a deep, low sound. Also, the gong should be a large, very low, dark sounding gong. The snare drum should be crisp, not a piccolo snare, but a drum that has great clarity to it.

Regarding instrumentation, I should mention that it is possible to perform this work without the **String Bass, Contra Bass Clarinet, and English Horn**. You will note that many optional English Horn cues appear in the score and are in the appropriate parts.

Writing for band is always a challenge for composers since you never know the amount of doubling that will take place. My preference in this regard would be to not double the brass parts. Regarding the woodwinds, I would prefer that there be only one player on two Bassoon parts, English Horn, and Piccolo. Regarding the number of Flutes and Clarinets, I guess that my preference would be to have two players on a part, maybe three. I assume that in most bands there would also be one player each on Bass Clarinet and Contra Bass Clarinet. This piece, of course, was written for a large band and the amount of doubling that you chose will be fine with me.

Thank you for programming this work. I hope that these comments have helped you in your study of this piece. For me, the attention to detail is important in good music making. This work provides many opportunities for your band to go beyond the printed page and be a very expressive, in depth, musical ensemble. I hope that you enjoy performing my "*Symphony for Band.*"