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Rhythm Machine  
Timothy Broege  
Bourne Co.  
1974 and 1986

### Background Information

Timothy Broege has been an active composer of band literature since the early 70's. The student appeal in his compositions is a tribute to his early work in the Chicago Public School system (1969-1972), after which he served as an elementary school music teacher in Manasquan, New Jersey until 1980. He currently holds the positions of Organist and Director of Music at First Presbyterian Church in Belmar, a position he has held since 1972, and Organist and Director of Music at the historic Elberon Memorial Church in Elberon, New Jersey.

Rhythm Machine was composed for the Manasquan Elementary School Band. I have always known Broege was a former music teacher since a visit he made to the Wisconsin State Music Conference in the early 80's and I was well aware of the number of works he's composed for band, particularly the *Sinfonias*. It was through this research though that I learned he was such a prolific composer in other mediums. For example, a set entitled, *Songs Without Words*, ranges from a setting for chamber orchestra, one for solo marimba and 10 players, to one set for mezzo soprano, harpsichord and orchestra.

In the Distinguished Music for the Developing Band: Grade 2, by William L. Berz, I found the following review of Broege's work.

*New Jersey's own timothy Broege has composed many true gems for the young band. His music is exceptionally fresh, not filled with those elements often associated with band music. Musical structure too is often unconventional. His music offers tremendous potential for music teacher.*

In regard to Rhythm Machine, truer words were never spoken. Composed originally in 1974, this work remains fresh today. The third episode can be easily compared to the rhythmic and harmonic materials used by John Williams in his Imperial March.

Elements of Music: Presented as an overview followed by a detailed analysis

### **Form**

The work is written in a precise rondo form. The A theme is presented three times in slight variation the second and third repetitions. Each episode contrasts to a large degree both stylistically and harmonically. In his notes, Broege calls the inspiration for his for

the French rondeau, in which repetitions of a refrain are separated by a number of contrasting verses.

### **Rhythm**

An eighth note ostinato opens the work and is used in the percussion section of every A section. There are strict duple rhythmic demands of 4/4 time with divisions down to the sixteenth note at a tempo of 132. Isolated use of triplet patterns occur.

### **Melody\Harmony**

It may sound simplistic to say the piece is based on the Concert Bb scale, but in effect the first 4 measures of the opening A theme lies within a one octave Bb diatonic scale with strictly tonic, subdominant and dominant harmonization. It is this seeming simplicity of the recurring theme that sets the tone for the numerous surprises that surround it. The ascending and descending Bb scale is used verbatim throughout the work, reminding us perhaps of the diatonic inspiration.

### **Timbre**

Broege scores so well for young band. Each player is challenged by the technical demands of the melodic or accompanying material, but the scoring is perfectly suited to the ranges of young players and their ability to master the technical demands and project the parts needed to be heard.

### **Texture**

Broege senses the need for young players to feel safe and secure in block scoring, almost to a fault. There is a large amount of homophonic large block scoring except in the cases of the 1<sup>st</sup> clarinet and 1<sup>st</sup> trumpet parts.

### **Expression/Dynamics**

With the rondo form comes the contrast of style necessary to create contrast in each episode.

## Detailed Analysis of the Form (ABACADA) of Rhythm Machine

### A

m 1-2	eighth note woodblock/tambourine ostinato
m 3-6	clarinet statement of the Bb scale theme
m 7-10	brass variation on the eighth note ostinato introducing a flatted blues 7 <sup>th</sup>
m 11-14	tutti ensemble response with first statement of dotted rhythm
m 15-18	return to the clarinet statement, flutes added
m 19	descending Bb Major scale in the low ww and low brass

Essentially a 16 bar abca formula of 4 bar motifs beginning with an extremely memorable motif in the clarinets, a blues inflected brass pattern, a tutti ensemble of dotted figures that includes a reed soli of the dotted figure and a final return to the clarinet motif. The statement of the theme concludes with a descending Bb Major scale.

### B

m 20	Bb ground bass repetitive staccato quarter notes establishing Bb7
m 21-22; m 23-24; m 25; m 26; m 27 beats 1&2; m 27 beats 3&4	statement of the slurred lowered 7th motif accompanied by legato quarters

The statement is traded between two distinct sections of the ensemble each time less of the motif being stated and the responding group quicker to respond

m28-28 both groups state the motif simultaneously with a measure of ground bass quarter notes framing the end of the episode

This first episode requires a steady escalation in intensity, that intensity is created by a gradual crescendo with motivic repetition at an increasing (if not annoying) rate. When they are close to being played almost on top of each other, they finally concede and do just that, both sections play the motif at the same time which signals the return of the ground Bb bass and the A theme.

A1

m 30-35 Broege uses the first part of each abc passage from the opening statement of A to provide a shortened statement of the A theme.

m 36-38 transition material signaling the next episode. It is an inversion of the clarinet theme (a) which modulates into Eb major

This statement of A alerts us to Broege's plan to present a Rondo form. In these 9 measures he condenses 16 bars into a shortened, yet obvious repetition of the A section.

C

m 39-42 4 bar trumpet solo using legato style eighth and quarter patterns

m 43-47 5 bar trumpet solo placed in a higher tessitura

m 48-49 reminiscent of the opening m 3-4 signaling a return to A

This episode is set in Eb major and significantly different stylistically than anything we have heard to this point. The extreme block scoring of the accompaniment adds to the importance of the trumpet melody. Broege limits his melodic writing to a diatonic Eb major melody. He concludes the episode with a sustained fm7 chord signaling the return to Bb and emphasizes that return by including a slow and almost dream-like depiction of the opening clarinet theme an octave lower, much softer, and *meno mosso*.

A2

m 50-62 precise repetition of the form of m 7-19

m 63-64 another quarter ostinato in bb minor. In these two measures we hear the first sound of triplets by the percussion heard so far in the work. There always seems to be a hint about what is to come

The musical material for this passage is an exact repetition of the opening A statement, however melodic material is in tacet form and percussion (snare, bass, tambourine, timpani) rhythms are substituted. This scoring allows the percussion to participate in the melodic material even without the benefit of playing a pitched instrument. It also forces the listener to hear those melodic parts on memory alone.

D

- m 65-75      A broad and powerful melody by low brass and saxophones placed in a very angular and non-linear style to emphasize the uneasy, rigid, and explosive feel. The dotted sixteenth figure is critical to the power of each 4 bar phrase and contrast of triplets in the accompaniment adds to the powerful feeling.
- m 76            clarinets use an ascending Bb scale to return to the starting point of A

Broege scores this episode perfectly in the low register of alto sax with trombone, horns, tenor sax and baritone. These instruments were designed to do this kind of power work with minimal effort in the band. It is interesting that Broege introduces the triplet figure in the accompaniment, which is not a rhythmic element in relation to the duple meter of the piece, but merely as a motivic device of power. I liken it to the opening of Mars in the Planets by Holst.

A3

- m 77-92      An final restatement of A in the exact same setting with one very minor change of a one measure soli given to the third trumpets.
- m 93-94      more instruments are added to the final statement of the descending Bb Major scale and the final measure concludes with the V-I resolution of simple quarter notes in Bb Major

I believe this final statement of the A section demonstrates Broege's brilliance in writing for young musicians. He challenges the audience as well.

Just about the time the trumpets are wondering why everyone but them has had a critical role in the musical shape of this piece, the third trumpets are featured in an extremely short passage that reminds the audience that anything can happen. At the exact moment you wonder what else Broege might possibly do, the piece is done, and decidedly so with a fortissimo dominant tonic resolution, the grand daddy of them all!

### **The Heart**

On first study, it might be easy to believe the element of rhythm to be the heart of the piece. Using the title as an introductory element, it would be conceivable to focus instruction on the persistent eighth note ostinato and the rhythmic demands as the element which makes this machine hum. The metaphors are easy. However, with time, I have come to believe the element of form is really the heart that guides what Broege did with all the musical elements. I find the creative way he has managed the repetition of the A statement with the significant contrast in each episode to be both challenging and satisfying to both listener and performer alike.

### **Introducing the Piece**

It goes without saying that food is the motivator to most everything, particularly the growing bodies of adolescents. We have all seen 7<sup>th</sup> graders scoop food off a floor if it is something they are hungry for. With that said, a specially constructed OREO® cookie will serve as a visual metaphor for this rhythm machine. This may also provide opportunity to add some integrated content in nutritional health.

**Skill Outcome:**

Students will recognize the notation to perform contrasting articulations.

**Strategies**

- Gather articulation and dynamic examples.
- Sample sounds, discuss technique and assign descriptors.
- Employ articulations and dynamics on an eighth note continuum.
- Use student volunteers to select and demonstrate.
- Search and apply to passages in Rhythm Machine
  - Note on the continuum the measure markers of specific passages.
  - Prepare to make suggestions and guide students to specific passages
  - Display measure-by-measure articulation and dynamic inventory.

**Assessments**

- Use student volunteers to assess peer performance of articulations.
- Assess student ability to identify articulation markings and locate examples in their part.
- Ask students to supply their own two-sentence description of the skills needed to play: staccato, legato, slurs, accents, marcato and tenuto.

**Cognitive Outcome**

Students will recognize rondo form employing the language of statement and episode.

**Strategies**

- Referring to the introduction of the piece, explore the contents of a rondo form cookie.
- Sing the A statement in measures 1 – 19 and circle all matching material in measures 20 – 94. Question students regarding the amount of repetition.
- Listen to a Mozart rondo. Compare Mozart's compositional plan to Broege's. Great minds use a plan. Identify the use of repetition; return and immediately play the A statement.
- Use a graphic organizer to mark the repetitions. Do same activity in the inverse to search for the start of each episode. **USE THE TERM RONDO!**
- Return to the cookie and investigate the form comparison. Employ rondo vocabulary.
- Distribute or sample student made rondo food products and rehearse the section most evident in a taste test.

**Assessments**

- Check student parts for circled repetition.

- Using the same graphic organize used in class, ask students to assign letters, rondo vocabulary and descriptive words, phrases, designs or stories for each sections.
- Have students design their own rondo food product.

#### Affective Outcome

Students will explore the notion of familiarity and the satisfaction or frustration that comes from revisiting the familiar.

- Compare opening four bars of the A statement with the Bb scale patterns used in a warm up. Ask whether these patterns use the same 8 notes? So they have the same level of interest? Brainstorm analogies; ie., slide versus a roller coaster. Would you agree Broege's melody is better than a scale: Seek their opinion of whether Broege appreciated the likes and dislikes of a 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grader.
- Review Greig's setting of In the Hall of the Mountain King. What did Grieg do to invigorate melodic repetition? Would Broege's A statement stand alone? Discuss.
- Share thoughts on a movie you could watch many times. Why. Would you watch that movie to the exclusion of all other movies. Why or Why Not? Why are some things more acceptable in repetitive form?

#### Assessments

- Ask all students to practice and perform unison version of the A statement.
- Choose a person, place or experience that provides you with a sense of safety, comfort, or satisfaction. Tell us why?
- The *Supersize Me* experiment. With your parents' permission, eat pizza (or other permissible food product) for every meal and smack over a three-day period, to the exclusion of all other foods. Talk about the experience with the class.

#### Music Selection

I cannot deny the extreme satisfaction of programming a work that provokes the cliché "the kids love it"! It is an opportunity to provide something appealing to kids that is also quite good for them.

#### Resources

Timothy Broege

[www.timothybroege.com](http://www.timothybroege.com)

#### CMP Plan

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