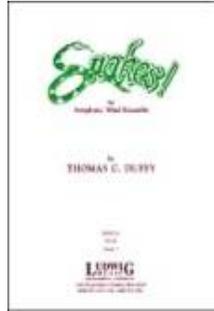


CMP Teaching Plan
CMP Workshop: June 2012
Lawrence University
Patty Schlafer



Snakes!
Thomas C. Duffy
Concert Band: Grade 2
Ludwig Music 1992

Analysis

Broad Description

Contemporary Band Composition

Type/Genre

The composition consists of short episodic snake imagery. While not directly programmatic in the story sense, the episodes can be directly related to specific snake species and their corresponding sounds and behaviors.

Background Information

Thomas C. Duffy (born June 17, 1955) is the Director of Bands at Yale University and Professor (Adj.) in the Yale School of Music. He is a member of American Bandmasters Association, American Composers Alliance, Connecticut Composers Incorporated, and BMI. An active composer with a D.M.A. in composition from Cornell University, where he was a student of Karel Husa and Steven Stucky, he has accepted commissions from the American Composers Forum, the United States Military Academy at West Point, the U.S. Army Field Band, and many bands, choruses, and orchestras. Deputy Dean of the School of Music from 1999 to 2005, he served as Acting Dean in the 2005-06 academic year. He joined the Yale faculty in 1982.

Additional Choral/Instrumental Information

Snakes! includes an aleatoric section and nontraditional sounds such as speaking, whispering, shouting, valve murmurs and soundscapes. The aleatoric music is played randomly with timed cues from the podium. Students will need to supply soundscape metallic instruments.

Elements of Music

Form

Four through composed sections: 1) Atonal introduction using tone clusters and chordal pyramids 2) Melodic layering of five different motivic themes 3) Aleatoric soundscape 4) Coda

Rhythm

Wind parts use simple divisions within mixed duple and triple meters. Percussion divisions include simple and compound subdivisions significantly more complex than the wind and brass parts. Percussion parts are independent and technically challenging for young players. A strong percussion section is a necessity to perform *Snakes!*

Melody

All melodic material is motivic in design with emphasis on use of the half step. While the half step ties the composition together, the motifs use very large intervallic leaps in the

introduction and complex combinations of half and whole steps hinting at minor modality in the layered section.

Harmony

Atonal introduction utilizing close dissonant shifting tone clusters with hints of minor modality in the layered section.

Timbre

Extreme high and low ranges used in all wind parts. *Snakes!* includes demanding performance requirements for production and control of these notes for grade 2 players.

Texture

Consistent use of tone clusters and layered motifs made interesting by the sharply contrasting timbre changes.

Expression

Expressive elements include extreme dynamic contrast; articulation variety and several tempo changes.

Additional Considerations/Reasons to Perform This Composition

After a fall residency with Michael Colgrass, the MHMS students will have additional opportunity to appreciate graphic design and formal composition using soundscapes and contemporary compositional style.

Duffy writes, *Snakes! is a short piece of program music which explores different sounds which one might associate with different snakes. Big snakes, little snakes, cute snakes, writhing piles of snakes, swaying cobras, and dangerous snakes are all represented throughout.*

The Heart Statement

Duffy’s masterful creation and combination of short motivic material allows young players to move beyond the simple (albeit intended) programmatic connection of sight (snake pictures) to sound (snake themes) to a deeper understanding of the musical elements and their use in compositional design.

Introducing the Piece (a strategy)

Play a recording of the first 46 measures prior to students seeing any score or parts. Ask students to complete the following prompt:

| What do I hear? | What image do you picture? |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| | |

Skill Outcome

Students will demonstrate chromatic comfort beyond the concert Bb octave affording chromatic fluency within dissonant harmonies.

STRATEGIES

Consonant dissonant warm-up

- Beginning with F Major tutti unison pitch, gradually allow students to expand from perfect unison to complex dissonance. Return to unison periodically to accommodate and review student knowledge of chromatic movement and range limitations.

Chromatic Worksheet: 13 boxes application to staff & Drop the Dart on the Keyboard

- Students will complete a three part worksheet including 1) solfege language of Bb chromatic 2) pitch identification 3) assorted chromatic patterns beginning somewhere other than Bb.

12 step chromatic holds

- Review Concert Bb and the consonant concept of a major arpeggios and chords.
- Number off in each row 1 through 12. Using Bb initially, stack a chromatic scale cluster asking each student to hold their note of the chromatic as their neighbors continue to add pitches.

12 step chromatic holds CHALLENGES

- Move the starting point for note 1 to a different student.
- Move the starting note to a different pitch other than Bb.
- Chose a number and ask students to balance for that note's prominence.

ASSESSMENTS

12 step chromatic holds with note name identification

- Using the strategy of 12-step chromatic holds (using Bb initially); draw numbers from a hat, 1 – 12 and ask the student playing that note to identify the actual name.

Chromatic intervallic jumps

- Give a starting pitch (using Bb initially) and without playing, ask students to determine a note any number of half steps higher or lower. Have individuals play the pitch and check (individually and large group) for accuracy from the podium.

Consonant or Dissonant?

- If you and four of your best friends were locked in a room for the rest of the day and were only allowed to produce either consonance or dissonance. . . which would you choose and why? Why do you think someone else would feel different than you?
- Look up the prefix “con” and “dis”. Apply to music.
- Perform a chromatic riff; ie Bozo Circus, Flight of the Bumble Bee, Pink Panther or search for audio samples of chromatic riffs.

Knowledge Outcome

Students will demonstrate understanding of the relationship between the elements of music and graphic art.

STRATEGIES

“Beyond the Powerpoint”

- Show power point of snake pictures suggested by Mr. Duffy. Check for agreement in regards to the photos chosen.
- Pose a more challenging art project. Schedule a presentation of non-objective art overview by Mr. Potts, MHMS art teacher. Including the following components:
 - scenes from Disney’s Fantasia
 - view Mr. Potts’ non-objective design and description for Snakes!
 - distribute chart/assignment: elements of music compared to elements of visual art

ASSESSMENTS

MHMS Band Non-objective Art Show

- Offer peer evaluation of student work with emphasis on understanding the elements of design and which element(s) of music the student features.
- Students will create one 8 ½ x 11 design for the possible new publication of Snakes! Their project must include a “sales pitch” for how their work will help future performers understand the musical elements of the piece.

Affective Outcome

Students will accept responsibility for musical balance.

STRATEGIES

Pre-performance Listening

- As students listen to the recording, hold up motif numbers for visual identification of when each motif occurs.

Pre-Duffy Performance Appreciation

- Teach the piece through tutti performance of all themes prior to distribution of individual parts. No one will see their individual part until all players experience, recognize, and understand the demands of each motif.

Recording Sessions

- Using a three-step process of pre-recording committee and goals; recording session in class; post recording critique committee, reinforce the goals of balance and “giving way to the snake”. Can you hear the motifs in the same easy way your heard them in the original recording?

ASSESSMENTS

Rounds

- Play rounds for balance. Rounds are a regular part of the curriculum so this type of work is not new. Ask players to consider these three questions as they play the rounds: Can you play one thing while something else is occurring? Can you play one thing while listening to another? How does it feel to be able to be in two places at once?

Balance Sheet

- Who is ultimately responsible for balance: audience, composer, players, conductor, recording engineer, school principal, the governor? In a one-paragraph statement, defend your position.

Music Selection

This is a very appealing piece of music for middle school musicians. Making the initial experience an aural one is probably the most important strategy to enhance motivation. The technical demands are significant but limited to short intense motivic moments. Young players can be easily overwhelmed when a challenge seems insurmountable, so the short nature of each motif affords young players the opportunity to feel successful in a challenge.

While listening to a performance piece over and over again can foster rote instruction, so the listening experiences for *Snakes!* should happen early and sparingly. When the recording is used later in the unit, it should be used as a comparison device to a recording of the work made by the students themselves.

Finally, *Snakes!* has audience appeal. The programmatic nature of the work is fun for the audience and fosters the responsibility of the musicians to create the ultimate listening experience at the performance.