

Voices of the Sky

Samuel R. Hazo
Middle School Band – Grade 3
Hal Leonard Publication



Music Selection

- Beautiful textures in f minor.
- Paints a picture of various sky formations.
- Dedication piece for Paula Crider—poem.
- Slow lyrical work with many inner lines- great for phrasing, independence, rubato.
- Features solo trumpet.

Analysis

Type: Lyrical selection resembling a “musical painting” for band.

Musical Elements

Form: ABA (Sonata Form) in great detail it would be: Intro AABAC Trans. DAABAA

- The middle section is “Driving and Sinister”
- The second A section is nearly symmetrical to the first A section.

Rhythm

- Mostly quarter and eighth note passages throughout. Some syncopated figures in the inner parts.

Melody

- The A Theme is heard throughout with a countermelody and bass line. Inner harmonies are very thick and compliment the melody line.

Harmony

- The A sections are in the key of f minor. The B section is in the key of c minor. The final chord is major – F major. Hazo uses a raised 6th scale degree in the f minor key, which gives the melody a unique sound.

Texture/Timbre

- “Voices” utilizes a wide spectrum of tone colors and ranges. The composer wants to create a musical picture of the sky from early morning to dusk. The performers even need to change dramatically for a storm in the middle. Warm sounds in the beginning and end of this piece are vital as is a biting sound in the middle section. The music is very polyphonic with mostly thick textures in the A themes. Hazo does create some contrast with a small woodwind ensemble and also a recurring trumpet solo. The B theme becomes more polyphonic as it progresses.

Expression

- This piece lends its self well to expressive playing. It gives the students an opportunity to use sound to paint pictures of extreme changes in the sky. Dynamics range from FFF to niente. Many ritardandos are used often in this work. The composer asks the performers to play the music like a chorale in a connected manner, but also offers accents and contrast in the B section.

Other Compositional Devices

- Bass Drum and Timpani rolls to resemble thunder
- Wind Chimes and Triangles to represent stars
- Vibraphone to create a clear sound.
- NOTE- Hazo intentionally omits any type of “sound effects” for the storm section. He wants to create the effect musically. This way the music is more impressionistic rather than having the sounds given to them like a photograph.

Program Notes:

“Voices of the Sky” was commissioned in the summer of 2003 by Dr. Cynthia L. Houston, conductor of the Murchison International Baccalaureate School Band in Austin, Texas. Murchison is a member of the Austin Independent School District.

Consider that we will never see the same sky twice in our lives. Therefore, each day the sky must express itself in a new way. Additionally, its colors and moods are of such a range that they reach the extremes of our comprehension. The sky holds the brightest and darkest things we will ever see. It possesses every color in the spectrum. It can be stagnant or move with swift motion. Its personality can change in an instant or remain the same all day. An overcast sky can make us feel closed in and a clear sky creates in us the feeling that we’re infinitely expansive. The morning sky gradually breathes life into us, and at sunset, the sky slowly paints all of its colors to the edge of its canvas, and then off. All day it hides its stars like secrets that can only be told in the dark. Translating the many qualities of the sky into musical moods was one of the main objectives of this piece. Please read further, as the dedication addresses the other objective.

The International Baccalaureate program in which Murchison’s curriculum is based has a component called “Homo Faber,” meaning “man the maker.” The commissioning of VOICES OF THE SKY served as an opportunity for me to work with Murchison’s students in this wonderful educational arena that encourages creativity, imagination and, most importantly, artistic expression.

Dedication

It is with tremendous honor and immeasurable gratitude that VOICES OF THE SKY is dedicated to Paula Crider, Professor Emeritus at The University of Texas at Austin, as well as dearest and most admired friend. As unequivocally special as Paula Crider is to the world, she is dearly significant to both Cindy Houston and to me.

Admired by all who meet her, she is the perfect combination of compassionate teacher, impeccable conductor, consummate musician, well-rounded intellectual and mother hen; fulfilling all of those roles with absolute grace. Moreover, those fortunate enough to know her appreciate that she will remain the truest of friends through the best and worst of times. She holds absolutely sacred her role as an educator, and she has no tolerance for those layered with fraudulence or arrogance. Just yesterday, as I congratulated her on her recent and most deserved honor as the 2004 Texas Bandmaster of the Year, she completely played it down; further embodying the derivation of her name, as the translation of Paula is “one who is humble.” When Cindy Houston called me in the summer of 2003 to commission this piece, and she told me that it would be dedicated to Paula, I was overjoyed at the opportunity.

In tribute to Professor Paula Crider, VOICES OF THE SKY holds a double interpretation. These are the interpretation of imagery and, for the dedication, the interpretation of analogy. There is a verse by the 19th century poet R. L. Sharp that holds considerable meaning to Paula, as it was recited to her by her father when she was just a young girl. In turn, she has passed it on to the members in her University of Texas Longhorn Band before their performances, and she continues to recite it to the thousands of students she guest conducts every year. It reads:

Isn't it strange that princes and kings
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings,
And common people like you and me
Are builders of eternity?

Each is given a box of tools,
A shapeless mass and a book of rules.
And each must make, ere life is flown,
A stumbling block or a stepping stone.

Each day provides all of us with challenges to contend with the positive and negative aspects of our world. Hence, we

have many opportunities to construct our own legacies of either stumbling blocks or stepping stones. Comparatively speaking, if we as individuals, or as a race, create the analogy that we are the sky, what is it that we will offer to the world? What will be our voice? Do we offer the world a storm or, like Paula, a rainbow?

Samuel R. Hazo,
Somewhere over Kansas on United Airlines
February 14, 2004

The Composer



(b. 1966) Samuel R. Hazo resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with his wife and children. In 2003, Mr. Hazo became the first composer in history to be awarded the winner of both composition contests sponsored by the National Band Association. He has composed for the professional, university and public school levels in addition to writing original scores for television, radio and the stage. His original symphonic compositions include performances with actors Brooke Shields, James Earl Jones, David Conrad and Richard Kiley. He has also written symphonic arrangements for three-time Grammy Award winning singer/songwriter Lucinda Williams. Mr. Hazo's compositions have been performed and recorded world-wide, including performances by the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra (national tour), the Birmingham Symphonic Winds (UK) and the Klavier Wind Project's recordings with Eugene Migliaro Corporon. Additionally, his music is included in the series "Teaching Music Through Performance in Band." Mr. Hazo's works have been premiered and performed at the Music Educators' National Conference, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles Convention, National Honor Band of America, National Band Association/TBA Convention, College Band Directors' National Association Convention and also aired in full-length programs on National Public Radio. He has served as composer-in-residence at Craig Kirshoff's University of Minnesota Conducting Symposium and has also lectured on music and music education at universities and high schools internationally. In 2004, Mr. Hazo's compositions were listed in a published national survey of the "Top Twenty Compositions of All Time" for wind band.

Mr. Hazo has been a music teacher at every educational grade level from kindergarten through college, including tenure as a high school and university director. Mr. Hazo was twice named "Teacher of Distinction" by the southwestern Pennsylvania Teachers' Excellence Foundation. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Duquesne University where he served on the Board of Governors and was awarded as Duquesne's Outstanding Graduate in Music Education. Mr. Hazo serves as a guest conductor and is a clinician for Hal Leonard Corporation. He is also sponsored by Sibelius Music Software. Recordings of his compositions appear on Klavier Records and Mark Records.

The Heart

The heart of the piece is the masterful juxtaposition of a beautiful melody with other harmonic and melodic material which when combined creates vivid pictures in the mind of the listener.

Objective #1 Psycho-Motor (Skill Focused)

The students will perform using ritardando, showing awareness of ritardando as an expressive element.

Strategies

1. *Twinkle Fun* [Goal: Term/Concept Introduced]

The teacher would perform Twinkle Twinkle for the class three ways: First with a strict pulse, Second with the use of a ritardando before the return of the A theme and third with the ritardando in the middle of the B theme. Without discussion, the class would vote for the version they preferred. Then a discussion about "What was the difference between the three versions? [1st=strict tempo, 2nd=rit before A theme, 3rd = rit. in B theme] What is the name given to this expressive element and how do you define it? [Ritardando – means to gradually slow down] Why did you like the second version best? [Made most musical sense] Why? [Before the return of the A theme- anticipation of the return....link to roller coaster story]

2. *Warm-up Chorales* [Goal: Practice Feeling Subdivision]

In warm-ups the director will model conducting ritardandos. Students will then conduct the warm-ups inserting ritardandos. A review of subdivision will take place.

3. **Tap In Time** [Goal: Rit. Used in Voices]

Students will tap quietly with the pulse as they listen to a recording of Voices paying attention to when the beat changes. They will mark these points in the music. The group will discuss what they heard.

4. **Placement Experiment** [Goal: Musical Placement]

Students will be given a variety of simple melodies for their instrument. Students in groups of two to four will be asked to place ritardando in the music to create the best musical effect. Volunteers will share their performance of their interpretation for the group and why they place the ritardando in a certain location. The group will vote on the version that made the most musical sense. The class will then try to identify [dominant to tonic relationship, end of phrase, or just before the return of a main melody...such as Sonata Form before the return of the A theme (ABA)]

Assessment

1. Observation of the Placement Exercise and Tap in Time will give me good feedback as to how the kids are grasping this concept.
2. Students will select a song from their lesson book to add ritardando in order to make the best musical outcome. The student will record their solo using Smart Music and verbally defend the location of the ritardando(s). This strategy helps to give me an artifact to record, it also allows me the opportunity to solidify the concept with the students in a smaller setting.

Objective #2 Cognitive (Knowledge Focused)

The students will recognize ABA form and the compositional techniques used to invoke images in the mind of the listener.

Strategies

1. **Anticipation/Reaction Guide** [Goal: To Introduce Images, Form, and Music to Students]

Students will see three pictures representing early morning, a thunderstorm and dusk. The students will be asked to anticipate what music might sound like to create this image in the mind of the listener. We will also discuss the form of the music based on the images represented. The students will then write a reaction as they listen to the music.

2. **Program Notes** [Goal: To Become Aware of Hazo's Thought Process on Imagery]

Students will read the first section of the program notes. This is like sitting down with the composer to find out more about the piece. Don't save this for just the program at the concert! Students can do this as homework with discussion in class to follow or a journal question.

3. **Analyze This** [Goal: Identify ABA Form and Techniques Used and Connect Imagery]

Students will use a predesigned worksheet to identify the ABA form and also list some of the compositional techniques the composer uses, where they occur in the piece and how it connects to the intended imagery. Students will also be asked to write two questions for Mr. Hazo about this process or another question in reference to this work. These questions can then be grouped in order to see what question was asked the most. The top 5 questions could be emailed to the composer.

4. **Impressionistic Comparison** [Goal: Understand Imagery Composer Desires]

Students will compare and contrast the musical representation (impressionistic) of real-life events in "Voices" versus a sound-effect display (photo) of a thunderstorm. They will then compare an impressionistic painting with a photo. The composer does not like using "canned effects" to create/portray an image for the audience. Rather, he wants to offer the image in musical terms only and let the audience take the next step to create the image for themselves. As the composer states, "If it can't be done musically, it should not be done at all."

Assessment

1. Use the Analyze This worksheet to see if they identified the form and techniques used.
2. Class discussion/journal questions about the composer's intentions will also help determine if they understand the concepts.
3. Student final project choice:
 - a. Create a drawing that reflects a specific location in the music and relate the drawing to the music at that point.
 - b. Take photographs of the sky that correspond to the different sections of the piece. Write how it relates to the music (defend your answers).
 - c. Create another visual representation of the form of the music and the imagery used.

Objective #3 Affective (Feeling Focused)

The students will examine their understanding of and reactions to the subject of "legacies".

Strategies

1. **R.L Sharp Poem** [Goal: Read and consider the meaning of this poem]

Students will read the poem that Paula Crider shares with her students and the dedication by the composer. I would reinforce how this is related to the music: "Each day provides all of us with challenges to contend with the positive and negative aspects of our world. Hence, we have many opportunities to construct our own legacies of either stumbling blocks or stepping stones. Comparatively speaking, if we as individuals, or as a race, create the analogy that we are the sky, what is it that we will offer to the world? What will be our voice? Do we offer the world a storm or, like Paula, a rainbow?" I would do this in class so we could have some initial comments after reading it.

2. **Student Legacy Reflection** [Goal: Create a written reflection]

Students will reflect (in writing) about the meaning of the poem and what their legacy will be. This would not be a journal entry, but rather a more significant reflection.

Assessment

1. I would read the Student Legacy Reflections and grade them using a rubric. The rubric would have categories such as submitted by due date, completeness of thought, grammar and neatness.
2. Students will be asked to research one person whose legacy you admire. Write a short paragraph about that person and their legacy and why it is meaningful to you. The same rubric could be used to score this project.

