

CMP Teaching Plan
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***The Star Spangled Banner* arr. Bill Moffit
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Broad Description

The Star Spangled Banner serves as the national anthem for the United States of America.

Analysis

Form

Eight measure sections combine for a simple setting of the 32-measure melody. There is no introduction or coda material. Consistent in each of the four sections is an opening pick up figure. The sections are in AABC form.

Rhythm

Many works that serve as stirring patriotic material (marches, fanfares, armed forces anthems) are set in duple meter. This work is interesting in that it is martial in style yet set in triple meter.

Most interesting about this work is the isolated use of the dotted eighth and sixteenth note motif in the pickups to the first measure of the piece (Oh say) and again later in measure 2 (by the dawn's). In the Moffit arrangement, this is the only instance where this rhythmic motif is used in the melodic material. Moffit does sneak the dotted figure in during the B section in the bass part as a canon with the woodwind melody. The entire rest of the work is even eighth note figures. In many other settings of *The Star Spangled Banner* the dotted figure is used repetitively in measure 5 and 7 (what so proud; at the twilight) and as a pick up to the B section (and the rockets).

Students will have varying notions about the accuracy of their work based on how the melody has embedded itself in their musical memory. This dotted figure will be an important tool to facilitate student understanding of dotted figures.

Melody

This melody is based on the chord structure of root, third, fifth and octave pitches of a diatonic scale. The opening 6 notes of the melody outline the major triad and serve as the melodic motif instantly recognized by most

Americans. What makes this melody distinctive is the frequent use of large intervallic leaps in the A sections. The B and C sections are far more linear but test the performer in the upper range.

There are small uses of chromaticism in measures 3 and 11 in the V of V progression during section A. The moving parts in measure 27 of section C also include isolated chromatic movement.

Harmony

Moffit supplied identical arrangements in the keys of Bb and Ab well known as the double-sided black and blue parts! Most performances are done in Ab to facilitate the range of the average singer. Moffit's harmonization functions primarily within traditional I, IV, V progressions with beautiful use of subdominant V of V chords, judicious use of moving inner voices, well placed inner fanfares emphasizing the triadic structure, and particularly engaging bass lines.

Timbre

There is an iconic nature to the opening drum roll. Who doesn't associate that sound with squeaking lawn chairs, hat hair, and the opening triad of our national anthem. The scoring of the A and C sections are traditional in that the lead sections of trumpets and high woodwinds to carry the melodic material, horns and saxes harmonize, low brass maintain the bass line. The B section reverses the timbre choices and hands the melody to the warmth of the horns, baritones, saxes and lower clarinets; the tuba has the melodic motif and the trumpets and trombones supply accentuating fanfares.

Texture

The work is set in homophonic texture where all the harmonizing voices move in chordal support of the melody. There is parallel movement in the melody of the B section.

Expression

The responsibility of expressing the four sections is one of the biggest challenges of this work. Many performers treat this work in very small two measure phrases. It is a challenge to carry the phrase through to the marked four bar phrases.

Additional Considerations

The triad dotted rhythm by the entire unison ensemble occurs only once at the start of the arrangement. There is also a consistent inclusion of moving parts during the sustained melodic pitches. This is a lovely choice by Moffit which may help the melodic players learn to sustain the four bar phrase.

Background Information

Most school children come with some prior knowledge regarding the history of our national anthem. Common knowledge most often includes the circumstances leading to the creation of *The Star Spangled Banner* by attorney Francis Scott Key.

Synopsis

Key's services were required to negotiate the release of an American prisoner held on a British flagship during the War of 1812 with England. While Key was successful in securing the release of the prisoner, the British forces had to protect their plan of attack. Releasing Key to shore would jeopardize the impending attack on Fort McHenry if Key were to alert the troops.

The battle ensued and Francis Scott Key could only watch the barrage of rockets launch on Baltimore from the view of the British flagship. He waited all night long to see whether the fort stood and the flag still flew. When at dawn he caught sight of the US flag still flying over Fort McHenry, he wrote the text to *The Star Spangled Banner* on the back of an envelope. His first title was *The Defense of Fort McHenry*.

Soon after it was published in *The Baltimore Patriot*, Key's brother-in-law suggested he set the words to the tune *To Anacreon in Heaven*. When the sheet music was published in 1815, the name was changed to *The Star Spangled Banner*. The song was first used by the army and navy as the national anthem and officially recognized as the United States National Anthem in 1931 by an act of Congress.

What becomes important to young musicians is that while Francis Scott Key regularly receives credit for the composition of *The Star Spangled Banner*, he only penned the lyrics. Francis Scott Key simply used a popular English pub song by John Stafford Smith to set his text. The familiarity of the melody may have influenced the quick rise in popularity of the new song.

Heart Rationale

As we know from observing the genre of American pop music, a song does not have to be compositionally worthy to become popular. While this composition has certainly withstood the test of time, I believe it's familiarity and favor are based on reasons other than the inherent musical value of the work. The melodic material is difficult to control due to the large intervallic leaps and the range of the B and C sections are placed in a particularly high tessitura.

Serving as an anthem however, this composition has become embedded in the psyche and musical memory of the American citizenry giving it value in its

function as an anthem. Part of my goal in this unit of study is to examine how students approach a work that is quite often embedded in their musical psyche long before they are capable of performing it on a wind instrument.

Heart Statement

I believe the heart of this work lies in the desire young students have to “own” and perform this melody as their own, regardless of how hard it is to play. I believe this desire will facilitate a rich and memorable educational experience.

Reasons for Performing

Clearly, my heart statement does not inform specific outcomes. The heart simply gives reason to perform. The evolution of the heart comes from 25 years of watching students trying to play the national anthem. If it were another work, the technical difficulty would deter most students on first try, however not with the Star Spangled Banner. They will persevere until they have the satisfaction of knowing and being able to play this important work.

It would be simple to treat this work as a required part of the service component music students must contend with in band. It would be easy to ignore the educational opportunities *The Star Spangled Banner* provides and treat it like required maintenance. However, the motivation factor makes it imperative that to teach the work for its musical value.

Skill Outcome

Students will be able to identify, mathematically evaluate, and accurately demonstrate a dotted eighth and sixteenth note rhythm in relation to even eighth notes.

Strategies for the Skill Outcome

- Name that Tune with Do Mi Sol using hints (6)
- Dotted pattern search for accuracy (6)
- Hand gestures indicating and controlling the dotted figure (7)
- Taped recordings of unsuspecting performers (2&6)

Assessment of Skill Outcome

- Class evaluations of taped examples (6)
- Performance based assessment using a rubric (1&2)
- Rewrite and have partners perform (4)

Knowledge Outcome

Students will understand tonality as a like set of note relations placed on any pitch/frequency.

Strategies for the Knowledge Outcome

- Major Scale comparison of Sol-Mi-Do (1)
- Explore the instrumentalist's responsibility to meet a key need through range experimentation with vocal volunteer (2)
- Discussion of key choice with regard for wind/percussion performance through use of the Black and Blue Moffit arrangement (4)

Assessment of Knowledge Outcome

- Choose a volunteer, search for a starting note, sing, identify key and have students transpose the first phrase in any specific key (1&2&4)

Affective Outcome

Students will discuss and reflect on the purpose of anthems.

Strategies for the Affective Outcome

- Students will collaboratively compile historical fact collections for The Star Spangled Banner in order to host a debate on whether this should serve as our anthem (8)
- Message of the anthem with alternative settings or text (9)
- Exploration of alternative anthems for their person, for their nation, for their school (3&5&7)

Assessment of Affective Outcome

- Note how many students have the conviction to go public with their anthem opinions and choices as opposed to those that stay in the relative comfort of historical interpretation