

Lesson Plan
University Band Rehearsal – Norse Song (Brass Ensemble)
Rehearsal #3 – April 16, 2013

I. Objectives

Students will increase musicality in the B section of *Norse Song* by including tempo and dynamic changes to affect the style of the piece.

Students will understand the tuning and chord structure of a major vs minor vs diminished chord and be able to apply this to the context of the piece.

II. Procedures

Warmup

*“First we are going to do a warmup. Just like last time, we are going to start with breathing. We are going to do the exercise 4/4, 4/8, 4/12, 4/16. I’m going to kick the tempo up, and I want you to think about energizing your air as if you are playing streams of sixteenth notes.” **Do this, quarter = 120***

*“Now, same thing, but I’m going to move the tempo down to the tempo of the piece. Your air needs to be energized the same as it was, even at this slower tempo. **Do this, quarter = 72***

*“Now we are going to do the hissing exercise. 2/8, and repeat it. Feel your stomach muscles engaged, these are the muscles you need to help support that air through the ends of your phrases. Think about getting a two-pack.” **Do this, quarter = 72***

*“Now using that quality of air, we are going to buzz a concert F. (Play pitch) 2/4, 2/4, 2/4. Work to be able to attack right on that pitch and sustain it through all 4 beats. **Do this, quarter = 72***

*“Now, we are going to play a Concert F, 5 note scale in half notes. I want you to use that same quality of air. It’s going to be a 5 bar phrase, so stagger breathe as needed but I don’t want to hear the sound or tone quality diminish. **Do this, quarter = 72***

“Now the last thing we are going to do is open up our ears a bit to balancing and tuning across the ensemble. We are going to do the F major chord like we did last time, sopranos and basses on the Concert F, altos on a concert A, and tenor on a concert C. Lets just play that chord and get the proper balance.

Play chord *Now we are going to hold that chord. I’m going to point to sections and adjust your pitch. So if I point up, go up by a half step, if I point down, go down by a half step. Breathe when you need to. **Play chords***

As we do this, I want to have them sing each chord type as they get to it, make sure that they can hear the balance and tuning.

B section of the piece

“We are going to work mostly on the B section of the piece today from measure 9 – end. First I want to run this section. Work to get all the correct notes and make this section interesting. Before we do this, trumpets, I want these high

notes to speak well. I understand that you never get a break so here is the proposition I am giving you. Before the two different B sections, one of you can drop out for a couple of measures for a short chop break. But if you drop out for that, you are responsible for making sure we get good tone on those upper notes and that they speak well. I'll let you work out how you are going to do that between the two of you."

Run 9 – end

Clarify cut offs and breaths for the bass voices.

Work out the B section and how I want the ensemble to address this section. Starting at m. 9, make a difference, make the B section sound like a B section besides the note difference. Run m. 9 – 16(ish). Try to show what I'm looking or with gestures.

"It would be really boring if we played the second B section the way we played the first one. This is the climax of the piece, so let's do something fun with it. I'm going to say that the A section follows the character of one place, and that this B section is a contrasting place. In Norse Mythology, there are nine worlds. I found this picture that I think goes particularly well with the A theme of these piece. (Home of the Gods). Now, I think we need to figure out which world we think could represent the B section. So we are going to play through the B section again, and I want you to listen to the dynamics and the tonality and then I'm going to give you a few options of worlds to represent the B section.

**Worlds: Fog/Mist, Home of the Giants, Home of the Elfs*

World I would pick: Home of the Giants. Dark, dense, imposing/grandiose Make them play like that picture. We are going to move tempo a bit, louder, more detached. Kind of heavy, like a giant.

Last phrase: write in "contemplative." Work on stretching this section out just a bit, experiment with putting in the 2 measure breath in that last phrase.

Go back to m. 9 and run these two B sections together, focusing on character.

Chromatic Chords/Tuning

"We are going to do a bit of work on tuning these chromatic chords and finding some comfort in the progressions as they occur. I want you to start at measure 9, and we are going to pin point a few of these chords to see how they fit together."

Starting in measure 9, we are going to play it. Stop in m. 12. Try to understand where you are going. This section starts major, but by the end we have tonicized a minor. Play it again so they can really listen for that progression. Ask them to build last chord of m. 10, then resolve it to m. 11. This is a strong turning point. Put it in context, chord by chord, m 10 – 11. Now put it back into m 9, see if we can really sell that change to a minor. Same idea in m. 13 – 16 working to portray this change back to F major. Same approach with the building chords and putting them into context.

Dynamic Shaping (if time)

Work on making sure that the shape of the dynamics is there.

Run/Apply

Now I want to go back to the beginning and run the piece. Focus on: overall musical performance as an ensemble. Was it interesting?

III. Assessment

Students will become more consistent with their tone and pitch accuracy through better air support.

Ensemble tuning will improve as students learn what chord qualities to listen for.

Students will improve their understanding of the piece with background of Norse Mythology and using pictures to portray sections of the piece.

IV. Evaluation/Reflection

Did I keep the students engaged in the lesson? Were they playing enough?

How were their chops today? What can I do to help keep their endurance up and be sure that they can get through the rehearsal?

Is their tone improving? What more can I do to be sure that their tone is continuing to develop and mature?

How is their dynamic range? Can we continue to expand on this?

How was my conducting? Was I more engaged in the music? Did I portray character of each section/phrase? Was I constantly on the pulse? How was my facial expression and eye contact?

Did I sensitize or desensitize the ensemble today?

Did the pictures help explain the concepts of the A vs B section?