

PICTURES OF AN OPEN PLAIN  
A SUITE FOR SYMPHONIC BAND  
A COMPENDIUM OF MUSICAL DEVICES

by 6408

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B. S., Washburn University, 1968

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Music

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

Approved by:

  
Major Professor

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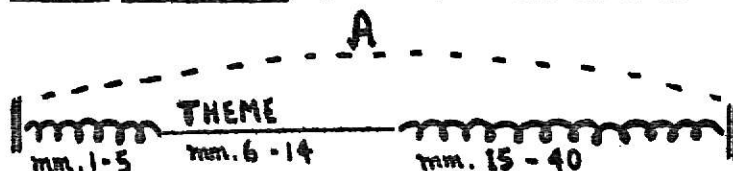
## INTRODUCTION

This Compendium is a companion to the composition Pictures Of An Open Plain, a suite of five short movements submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Science in Music Education. The suite, written with the High School Band in mind, is composed in a contemporary idiom. It has been kept technically within the reach of comparatively inexperienced players. The Compendium locates various technical devices used throughout the composition.

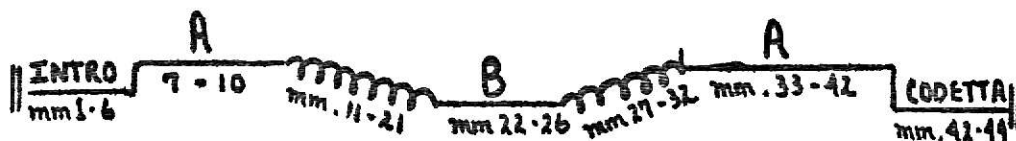
## FORMAL ELEMENT

The composition, Pictures Of An Open Plain,<sup>1</sup> is a suite of five movements written in a Neo-Classic vein. The general forms of each movement might be diagrammed as below:

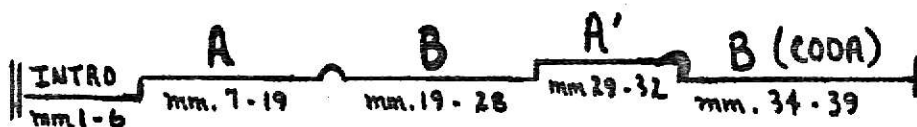
- I. Adagio espressivo, ( $\text{♩} = 60$ ) - Monothematic



- II. Moderato gioioso con moto, ( $\text{♩} = 72$ ) - Three Part Song Form (ABA)

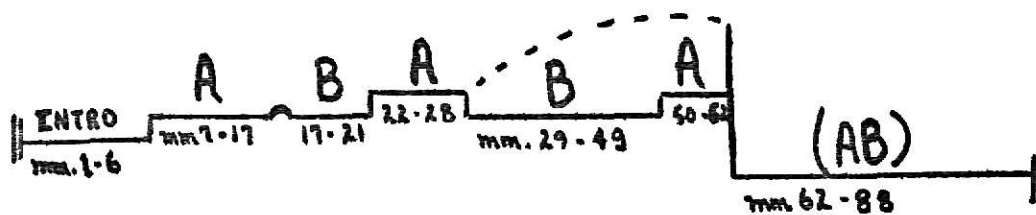


- III. Adagio, ( $\text{♩} = 56$ ) - Binary (ABA' (B) )

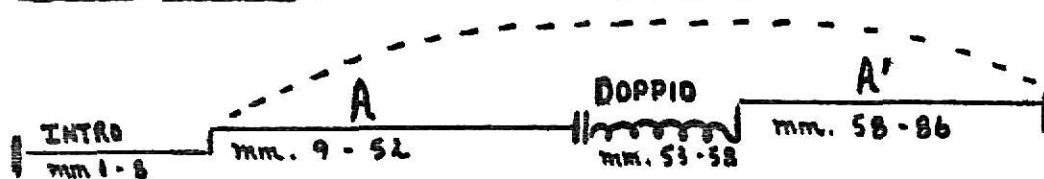


<sup>1</sup>The title and the individual movement titles are strictly pseudo-descriptive. They are merely used in hopes that it might provide an initial interest to the high school student. Actually, the music is objective and detached.

IV. Allegro moderato, ( $\text{♩} = 120$ ) - Rounded Binary



V. Allegro, martiale ( $\text{♩} = 100-112$ ) - Monothematic



## HARMONIC IDIOM

The harmonic setting is primarily one employing mildly dissonant tonality. The tonalities, or changing tonal centers are often interspersed by sections employing polychordal techniques. For example, in the third movement, mm. 19, the use of polychordal mirroring occurs. Serving in this instance as the second theme, it occurs again at mm 23. At mm. 33, the same basic polychordal element serves as a coda to the piece.

The dissonance of the polytonal harmony is often balanced both before and after by a more consonant harmonic sonority. An example of this is seen in the first movement, at mm. 42-55. The ostinato shows a tonal feeling of D# minor, while the inverted subject has a definite focus toward D. As the brass enters, a centering toward B $\flat$  is seen. Here the inverted subject is quite vague in tonal direction. Prior to this polytonal section, the sonority of quartal harmony is used (mm. 28-30), and the ostinato immediately following also employs the quartal technique (mm. 55).

In the same movement, at mm. 62, again the polychordal element is seen, and again, it is preceded by quartal harmony. The dissonance is then released by the abandonment of polytonal writing at measure 79, where the return to the quartal sonority is found.

Although the distinction between polytonality and bitonality is rather ambiguous, at certain sections of the composition, a definite bitonality is heard. For example, in the second movement,

at mm. 10-14, two distinct key centers are used, these being D minor in the lower winds, and E minor in the clarinet and flute. A similar situation is found in the fifth movement at mm. 15-21 where the ostinato in the tuba and the string bass is in A<sup>b</sup>, while the theme in the baritone and bassoon is in the region of B<sup>b</sup>.

In practically all of the polytonal sections, a wandering tonality is used. However, at mm. 29-32 in the third movement, three rather clear tonalities occur. The ostinato is in "C"; the inner voices of the winds supply a B<sup>b</sup> augmented triadic unit, and the line in the flute and oboe is tonally centered in D minor, eventually progressing to E minor at mm. 32.

Each tonal plane of the polychordal section shows an organizational center. Often, the overall tonic is gained from the bass line. The doppio movimento of the fifth movement (mm. 63 to the end of the piece) illustrates this point. For example, the triplet figure as shown in the tuba and the baritone functions as the tonal center of the entire entity. The ear tends to associate key center with the lowest bass tone, no matter how ambiguous the chordal structure might be above that tone.

Therefore, the polychordal tonic stems from the polytonal texture. The direction of the polyharmony is found through its linear movement; the harmonies, thus, are defined from a two-part linear frame of single tone lines.

Non-tertial sonorities have been also used. Chords by fourths are used for features generating underlying movement, an example being the "clarinet introduction" in the fourth movement where an ostinato is used. Quartal harmony is also employed to emphasize textural changes. In the second movement, the second theme, which is based entirely on quartal harmony, is designed to contrast the light, lyrical first theme presented by the flute and piccolo.

Other non-tertial harmonies such as clustered voices, secundal harmony, and added note chords are used also. However, these devices are used only for purposes of brief textural emphasis. They are not employed as compositional procedures in themselves, as are the techniques of polytonality, mirroring, and quartal harmony.

Perhaps the most important aspect of a composer's talent is the sensing of tension and its release. It is not subjected to purely mathematical calculations. While it is true that the composer must have the command of the techniques for manipulating tensions, he must nevertheless have both a conscious and unconscious sense for their places within the timespans of the composition.

In creating a piece of music, a composer has the opportunity to use whatever compositional disciplines are necessary to obtain his ends. The final decision depends upon which technique, style, or formula will prove most advantageous at any specific point in time.



## RHYTHMIC INTEREST

Contrapuntal techniques are used particularly in movements II, IV, and V. In the fourth movement, contrapuntal interplay is evident throughout. The theme is a sequential one, and the thematic construction is such that as one group of instruments completes the theme, another begins, creating a stretto effect.

Cross-rhythms are also seen in various sections. For example, in the fourth movement (mm. 29), a cross-rhythm develops in the timpani and percussion to heighten the rhythmic interest of the ostinato in the brasses, and the theme in the flute and clarinet.

The most obvious use of cross-rhythm occurs in the last movement at mm. 71. Here, a unit of three in the syncopated ostinato, and the duple unit of the theme is found. Added to this already displaced movement is a cross-rhythm in the timpani and percussion, along with an ascending figure in the flute and piccolo. The combination of these four rhythmic elements provides an exciting climax for the composition.

Also worthy of mention are the uses of the ostinato figures which are especially significant in the fourth and fifth movements. The ostinato which begins the fifth movement not only forms the basis for the first theme; it also provides the underlying rhythmic movement for the piece. The snare drum ostinato in the fourth movement provides the driving force behind the entire movement, and functions as the rhythmic motive for the thematic development. In

the very slow third movement, the pedalpoint and inverted pedal provide the impetus necessary to keep the piece moving.

## CONTRAST

The element of contrast is of prime importance in sustaining interest throughout a composition. From the standpoint of tempo and rhythm, each movement of Pictures Of An Open Plain is uniquely characteristic.

The first movement displays a great variation of textural color by means of quartal harmony interspersed with an intermediary contrapuntal idea often used imitatively. In the same movement, an emphasis has been placed upon the contrasting of the various sections of the band in their different registers.

The contrasting elements of varying harmonic sonorities, as well as the contrasting elements of contrapuntal and homophonic interest, have been discussed previously. The concept of contrasting sections is evident throughout the composition.

### SUMMARY

The composition is developed in such a way that each movement forms an independent musical idea. At the same time, the individual movements, when combined, work together to complement and reinforce each other as a complete musical entity.

Educationally, it is the composer's intent that the composition will serve as a learning tool for students in the high school band program. Since the work has programmatic designations, perhaps the student can become more readily involved in the music, and may develop a greater sensitivity to each movement through the imagery of the programmatic element.

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The Compendium locates various technical devices used throughout the composition. These devices are listed below:

Formal Construction and Development

Polytonality

Quartal Harmony

Bitonality

Secundal Harmony

Mirror Techniques

Contrapuntal Techniques

Textural Change

Use of Ostinatos

Use of Cross-Rhythms

Use of Pedalpoint