

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

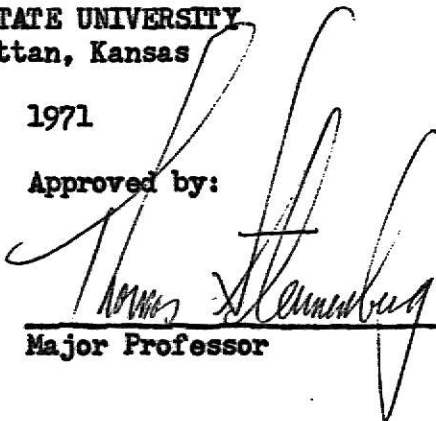
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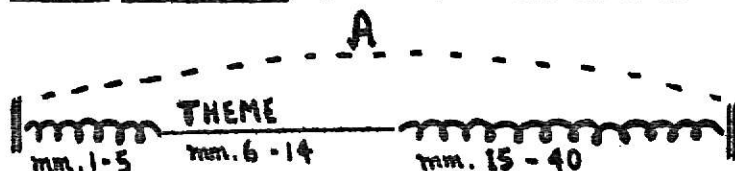
INTRODUCTION

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,¹ is a suite of five movements written in a Neo-Classic vein. The general forms of each movement might be diagrammed as below:

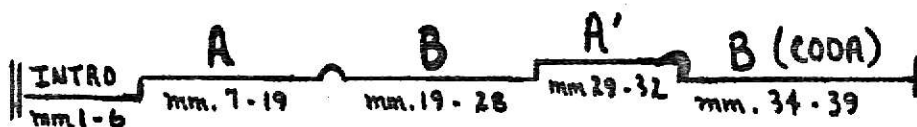
I. Adagio espressivo, ($\text{♩} = 60$) - Monothematic



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

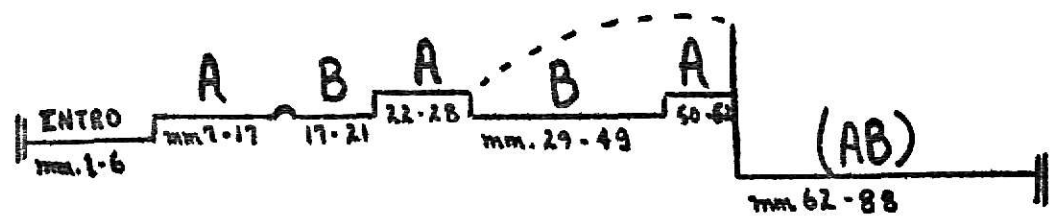


III. Adagio, ($\text{♩} = 56$) - Binary (ABA' (B))

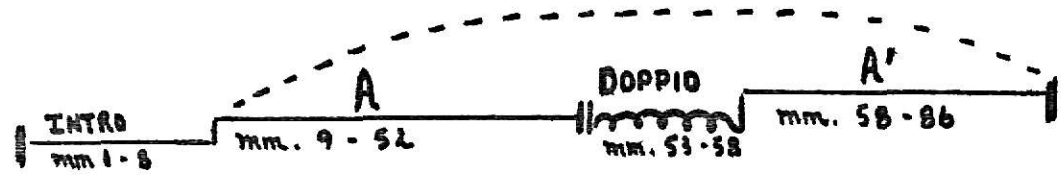


¹The title and the individual movement titles are strictly pseudo-descriptive. They are merely used in hopes that it might provide an initial interest to the high school student. Actually, the music is objective and detached.

IV. Allegro moderato, (♩ = 120) - Rounded Binary



V. Allegro, martiale (♩ = 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^b, while the theme in the baritone and bassoon is in the region of B^b.

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^b 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.