

## Lesson Plan - April 27th

Howdy SMP musicians and welcome to the final week of April! Also, today is exactly one month from when we had our final concert planned for May 27<sup>th</sup>. That means, if you think like a music teacher planning for a gig, we'll all start refining our pieces so they're "concert ready!" Just like Olympic athletes who are still conditioning and training for the postponed Olympics, we'll continue to keep our "eyes on the prize" so we all have a common goal. Having goals, especially during this pandemic, is a crucial part of maintaining a positive outlook!

### **Beginning Band:**

*#78, Minuteman March.* Last week, we worked on the important aspect of adhering to the breath marks. If you worked on this, you MIGHT be able to play the entire piece correctly now. Once you master this skill, you'll be doing something quite advanced in the band world...you'll be "phrasing" correctly! For this piece, any teacher would remind the band that this piece is in "two bar phrases." Think of the word phrases as being the same as "sentences" in your English class. This week, make sure you're playing #78 in two-bar phrases! There's one more technique to add but we'll wait until next week (hint: it's not something written in the music but audiences love it when bands do it!)

*#81, Frere Jacques.* Now we can use the proper language by saying...play this piece in two-bar phrases. What you may not have noticed after all this time is that this piece allows for a 4-part "round." You already knew that we would play it as a *round* when performed but SMP has never done it as a FOUR-part round! If you're successful with your two-bar phrasing, it's time to try all four parts. You'll need a way to record yourself – two phones would be easy. Just record yourself on one phone (*Voice Memos* is a super simple feature on phones) and then keep alternating phone recordings while adding the next part (of course, you have to wait for two measures then four measures, then six measures to make it layer correctly).

*New Orleans Strut.* This is our only piece (for now) that is written in four-bar phrases. Flute players and trombonists often run out of air during long phrases so how do we all conquer that? It's actually quite simple but takes practice. We all need to inhale MUCH more deeply (and quickly) to play our instruments. Yes, we all know how to breath but band musicians do it a bit differently when playing. Use this video as a guide to get you started (even though it's a trumpet video, it applies to all brass and woodwind instruments):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7mllsvkAM4>

### **Advanced Band:**

*Procession for a New Day.* This piece is written in four-bar phrases. Flute players and trombonists often run out of air during long phrases so how do we all conquer that? It's actually quite simple but takes practice. We all need to inhale MUCH more deeply (and quickly) to play our instruments. Yes, we all know how to breath but band musicians do it a bit differently when playing. Use this video as a guide to get you started (even though it's a trumpet video, it applies to all brass and woodwind instruments): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7mllsvkAM4>.

Although it sounds cruel, your future band directors – all the way through high school – will constantly remind you to “use more air.”

*Page 21, Montego Bay.* Last week, we began work on the bottom notes in any *divisi* section. If choosing and playing those bottom notes is becoming easier, that’s GREAT because we all will get *divisi* parts in band. In fact, every now and then, you may get THREE notes stacked together and you’ll be told by the director which to choose! It’s a bit frustrating but publishers do that to save on paper so they don’t have to print Flute 1, Flute 2, Flute 3, etc. With one month to go before our original concert date, it’s a good time to start increasing the tempo of this piece and to record yourself playing so you can put both *divisi* parts together! See if you can do all of this at 108 beats per minute (there’s a metronome on SMP’s website for you).

### **Beginning Strings:**

*#116, Song for Maria.* Were you able to increase your speed/tempo up to 100 beats per minute? If not, no worries – practicing is meant to improve so as long as you’re playing accurately and carefully, you’re fine. Remember, that “Andante” offers several different tempos. Of course, the slurs are the tricky part of this piece so continue to make those smooth. Eventually, you’ll be doing it without thinking about it!

*#125, Jingli Nona.* Our goal last week was to increase our tempo to 138. If you were able to do that, congratulations! If not, remember that “Allegro” offers several different tempos and you’re allowed to choose the slower ones for now. We have one month until our original concert date so you’ve got time!

*March of the Metro Gnome.* Last week, the band members were focusing on where to take a breath during a piece. For orchestra members, we don’t talk about that but we do need to learn how to “phrase” a piece of music. A *phrase* is similar to a *sentence*. This piece has eight-bar phrases (that’s WAY too long for band kids!). This week, see if you can make every eight measures sound like a sentence...meaning it has a beginning/middle/end with no obvious breaks or disturbances. If you can start phrasing in elementary school, your future orchestras will be AMAZING!

### **Advanced Orchestra:**

*#192, Simple Gifts.* Since you’re in Advanced Orchestra, we can add some things to the music that the composer and publisher didn’t! As the beginners are just now learning how long phrases are, you’re ready to add more *meaning* to phrases. This is similar to when we all speak – we use inflections in our voice to make things more meaningful and interesting. To do this in music, we typically look for when notes ascend (go up) or descend (go down). This week, add uphill and downhill arrows below the music in #192. For example: the first two measures generally go uphill so I’d put an arrow below the notes that shows that direction. Once you mark your music, use those arrows and turn them into crescendos and decrescendos. EASY! Your phrases are instantly more meaningful and musical!

*Dragon Hunter*. Now that we've all marked our repeated/identical measures, there's less work to do! Literature for young musicians is often quite repetitive but it makes it much more user-friendly. By now, we're hoping you're playing this at the written tempo of 112. Think about our arrows (from the paragraph above), you can make small crescendos and decrescendos in this piece as well. Most of these happen during sets of four 8<sup>th</sup> notes. These could be thought of as micro-phrases (the real phrase is either four or eight measures long) and they'll add a lot to the overall piece. Since this is a slightly more advanced piece of literature, let's simply add actual crescendos and decrescendos (not arrows this time) so we get used to adding markings that are universal for all musicians. This week, focus on those micro-phrases and, if you'd like to show me how you're doing with them, feel free to send a video or sound clip to [ward@seattlemusicpartners.org](mailto:ward@seattlemusicpartners.org).