

The Cave You Fear (2014)

Michael Markowski (1986 -)

“The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.” – Joseph Campbell

Analysis

Broad Description: A programmatic overture that depicts each individual’s struggle to find their own path, what is often identified as the “hero’s journey” in film-making

Type/Genre: Programmatic overture

Background Information:

- Michael Markowski is a young composer with a very unique and sophisticated musical voice. His approach to music composition is wholly influenced by his undergraduate training in film.
- Mr. Markowski’s compositions employ a contemporary harmonic vocabulary blended with a Neo-Romantic style. Each composition creates a singular sonic landscape, making it difficult to categorize his compositional style.
- *The Cave You Fear* draws its title from Joseph Campbell’s quotation, “The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.” The composer was inspired by Mr. Campbell’s discussion of “The Hero’s Journey” – the series of events and conflicts that arise along a character’s path as he or she fights their way to some ultimate goal.
- Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) was a widely-respected American mythologist. Campbell’s *magnum opus* was his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, in which he defines his theory of the *monomyth*: that all mythic narratives are variations of a single great story.

Unique Considerations:

- The piece calls for six percussionists. Superball mallets are required for the timpani and gong parts in the middle section.
- The alto saxophones use an alternate fingering to produce a multiphonic in the middle section.
- The composer calls for the use of an amplified lion’s roar with ample vibrato at the end of the piece. Markowski said, “It’s important to amplify the Lion’s Roar because it gives the musical effect a magical larger-than-life quality, like sound design in a movie.”

Elements of Music

Form: On a global level, *The Cave You Fear* follows a fast – slow – fast structure similar to an overture. In many ways, however, the composition is through composed, relying upon Markowski’s skillful manipulation of a minor third motive and quick, harmonic flashes. Four measure phrases pre-dominate most of the work, but it is the composer’s strategically placed 3 and 5 measure phrases that keep the listener on their toes. Most phrases consist of a two measure sub-phrase that is repeated to create the 4 measure phrase. At measures 45-52, Markowski shortens the distance between these sub-phrases to merely two beats and repeats them. This creates a heightened sense of urgency as it leads into the center section of the work.

Melody: The first three ascending notes of a minor scale form the basis of the primary motive, which first appears in measure 21:



Markowski passes this motive around the ensemble often, like random shadows appearing and re-appearing in different locations. He transposes the motive multiple times, sometimes literally (mm. 24-25 and 30-31) and other times diatonically (mm. 81-82). In all of its forms, it is almost entirely conjunct motion. At various times, Markowski creates a consequent phrase that answers this primary motive with a half step motive. This consequent phrase provides the basis for harmonic flashes as described in the next section.

The center section of the work replaces the use of the minor third with rather sparse melodic figures based on a tritone and minor sixth. It is the only part of the work that uses leaps wider than a third as part of the melody, giving it a more expansive, eerie feeling.

Harmony: *The Cave You Fear* eludes to several tonal centers, including F minor, Bb minor, and C minor, but is purposefully ambiguous overall. In fact, the piece never remains in the same tonal center for more than eight measures until the very end, which finally creates a sense of arrival. The piece ends on an open 5th, however, which seems to suggest that the hero's journey is not over. Given the large number of harmonic shifts, Markowski forgoes the use of a key signature, instead writing in all of the required accidentals throughout.

Chromatic mediant relationships are used frequently (ex. C major to Ab major) to provide harmonic flashes. (ex. 1) Normally, they appear at the distance of one measure, but sometimes, at the distance of two beats. (ex. 2)

Ex. 1



Ex. 2



This creates a continual sense of urgency and unexpectedness; it is akin to the sleight of hand used to perform magic tricks. Markowski's frequent use of half steps in both the melody and harmony also suggest the Phrygian mode. He uses this half-step effect in the low winds several times to produce a dissonant crunch, like a monster chomping its victim (ex. mm. 11-12).

Rhythm: The composer is economical and purposeful in his use of a few basic rhythms that drive the piece. Legato straight 8th notes set the stage in the introduction and are used for various transitions (mm. 28-29 and 67-70). By changing the articulation to staccato, this same stream of 8th notes creates a sense of urgency and nervous energy, particularly in the closing section (mm. 92-101).

The primary melodic motive is simply two 8th notes and a quarter note that are repeated before arriving on a longer half note. (ex.1) And for the harmonic flashes, Markowski uses half notes that stop abruptly on marcato quarter notes. (ex. 2) The center, slower section of the piece utilizes longer rhythmic values that elicit a shroud of mystery and uncertainty. (ex. 3)

Rhythmic patterns:

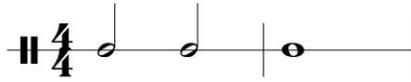
Ex. 1



Ex. 2



Ex. 3



Texture: The texture is exclusively homophonic throughout, but it is the frequency with which Markowski uses call and response that creates extraordinary interest. He uses a variety of instrument pairings and smaller choirs that alternate back and forth, which places more responsibility on individual sections to be independent and play with good, characteristic sounds. The texture is unusually thin for a composition at this grade level. Markowski uses the full ensemble judiciously, only using tutti textures at the very beginning and end of the piece, and one short section in the middle. These changing textures reinforce the feeling of being on a continual adventure, often alone, with constantly shifting landscapes.

Timbre: As a result of Markowski's unique scoring in choirs and pairings, the timbre shifts constantly after the introduction. Every instrument has interesting parts, but unlike many easier pieces, it never feels like an arbitrary attempt to do so. One pairing that is really unique is a one measure bass clarinet and baritone sax link in measure 28. Literally no other instruments in the band play there except for those two instruments!

The center section of the work introduces ethereal sounds through the use of superball mallets on timpani and gong, as well as a multiphonic note in the alto saxophones. A well-placed woodblock hit with dissipating echoes at measure 59 produces a spine-chilling effect. In the last section of the work, Markowski calls for amplified Lion's Roar and a half-valve effect in trumpets "like some kind of monster." The use of such unique timbres all in one piece would be considered trite if it weren't for Markowski's thoughtful and highly effective placement of each sound.

Markowski consistently uses the middle to lower ranges of every instrument present. And while this would be expected in an easier grade level composition, he scores the piece so effectively that it creates the needed effect: many dark, ominous colors. Markowski achieves a singular sonic experience that successfully represents the *Cave You Fear*, while sounding like no other composition.

Dynamics: Markowski creates many dramatic effects through his use of sforzandi, forte-piano, and fast one-measure crescendos. These dynamic changes are reinforced by matching articulations. This creates a lot of suspense and moments of surprise. And while there are many piano moments, conductors must ensure that their players do not overplay them, so that the wide range of dynamics that Markowski calls for are honored.

<p>Heart Statement: The heart of <i>The Cave You Fear</i> is the ever-changing timbre which evokes a sense of intrigue and exhilarating adventure, similar to when one expands their comfort zone.</p>

How to introduce the piece:

Students will view a two minute clip from the movie, *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aADEXWV1bsM> Before watching the scene, ask students to pay close attention to the music. How does the music add to the movie or storyline? Watch the beginning of the scene again with no music whatsoever. Why do you suppose I picked this movie for today? We are going to read a piece today that was written by a composer that originally studied filmmaking in college. Is there anything about this piece that reminds you of a movie soundtrack? What specific moments? The process by which composers choose the instruments they want to use for their music is called “orchestration” or scoring technique. That’s a process that I want to explore through our study of this piece. Final thought: The title of this piece is actually from a longer quote that was originally written by Joseph Campbell, a famous mythologist.

Take out the piece:

1. The title is from a quote
2. Written by a composer who studied film-making
3. Pays homage to the mythologist, Joseph Campbell
4. Uses harmonic flashes
5. Changes timbre frequently
6. Eludes to the Phrygian mode (through its abundance of half steps)
7. Uses Chromatic mediant relationships
8. Uses extended techniques to create uncommon sounds
9. The superball mallet piece!
10. The Lion’s Roar piece!

Outcomes and Strategies

Skill Outcome: Students will perform melodic motives with nuanced dynamics and phrasing that creates effective musical gestures.

- ***Skill Strategies:***
 - **To, From, At:** All music is going to, from, or at a given musical moment. Often times, simply playing the contour of the line will create this direction: crescendo when the line goes up and decrescendo when the line goes down. It also helps to identify the “target note” in a given phrase. Students will apply this principle to the primary melody in mm. 21-33 using a unison melody sheet. They will also explore how this principle can be applied to a sequence in mm. 34-36, by steadily increasing the dynamic intensity on each subsequent leg.
 - **Physical Gestures:** As a conductor, I use gestures with my hands and body to convey the meaning of the music. As people, we use physical gestures to convey how we feel at any particular moment, which we commonly call our body language. What kinds of feelings can we show simply through body language? Have students show some of the following: happy, surprised, disappointed, sad, angry, etc.
 - **Balancing Act:** In order to hear the nuance of melodic expression, all other voices must support the melody appropriately. Often times, this means “yielding” to the melodic part by adjusting your dynamic lower as needed. Have volunteers come to the front of the room to determine whether the melody can be heard in specific phrases of the piece.

- Articulations and Dynamics: How does Mr. Markowski’s use of articulations and dynamics heighten particular musical gestures? Using the introduction, explore his use of *fp*, *cresc./decresc.*, *staccato*, *marcato*, and overall dynamic shaping. How does the introduction foreshadow the rest of the piece? (in terms of articulation and dynamics)
 - The Springboard: Putting a tenuto on the first note of a slur grouping is a common expressive device. In the center section of the work (mm.63-64 and 70-71), Markowski utilizes slur markings for larger melodic intervals. Students should use the lower note like a spring board to get to the upper note. This can be accomplished by stressing the lower note dynamically and by widening its rhythmic value slightly. What about this gesture seems to contradict the “To, From, At” principle? Where are there other moments in the piece where the springboard occurs? (m. 14, 39-40, 43-44, etc.)
 - Marked Accents: The essence of musical expression is determining which notes to stress dynamically. Sometimes composers use written accents to help us with this. Students will perform the ending section of the work (mm. 79-end), being sure to bring out the accents. What is different about the composer’s use of accents in the closing measures? (every note is accented) How is this different? The *fp* effects in mm. 104-105 do not have accents – should they?
- Assessments:
 - As part of a short quiz on “Ensemble Concepts,” students will write a short essay response of 5-8 sentences describing the “To-From-At” Principle.
 - Students will apply the “To-From-At” principle and springboard effect to other pieces on the same concert cycle and beyond. They will demonstrate the ability to respond to left hand gestures from the conductor reminding them to play the contour of the line.

Knowledge Outcome: Students will identify and discuss the many ways in which orchestration can be used to produce unique timbres.

- Outcome Strategies:
 - Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark: See “How to Introduce the Piece” above
 - Instrument Families: Review the families (Woodwinds, Brass, Strings, and Percussion) as a class and take a quick Kahoot as well. Which family is basically non-existent in band? For the future: Which family does Mr. Markowski maximize his use of in this piece?
 - Scoring techniques: Using a unison melody sheet, have everybody review the “To, From, At” principle. Introduce the terms texture and timbre as musical elements and identify the distinguishing characteristics between the two. (density vs. color) Project an image of the primary color wheel and draw similarity to instrumental tone color. Define and demonstrate the following types of scoring with the unison melody sheet: doubling, tutti, choirs, and chamber. Have various students create groups.
 - Scoring detective: Using a document camera, have the students identify various examples of scoring in *The Cave You Fear*. (mm. 17-21, 24-29, etc.) What type of scoring would this be considered? (duet, trio, chamber-like) What instrument families are utilized? Investigate the introduction of the piece aurally instead of visually. What types of scoring are used here? (choirs, tutti, low winds)
 - Elements of Music: Review the seven elements of music. Which element or elements has Mr. Markowski prioritized as the most important in *The Cave You Fear*? Harmony also plays a significant role, due to Markowski’s use of chromatic mediant relationships

throughout. (ex. C major to Ab major in mm. 1-2) Have students learn the music theory behind this relationship and then identify it in the piece. Timbre and harmony work hand in hand to produce the “movie-like” quality of the piece.

- Explore the unknown: In the middle section of the work, Markowski utilizes tonal ambiguity to the greatest extent (harmony) in addition to unusual sounds (timbre). Demonstrate the extended techniques needed to produce sounds with the superball mallets, alternate fingering on saxophone, the woodblock, and spooky whisper. Re-visit the question from above: Which instrument family does Markowski maximize in this piece?
 - Bring it Home: In the closing section of the work from measures 79-end, Markowski eschews tonal ambiguity, landing clearly in Bb minor to help drive the piece home. He replaces the excitement of unclear tonality with heightened orchestration: brake drum (pg. 14), amplified Lion’s Roar, and the half-valve monster effect in trumpets (both on pg. 17). Have students identify these effects aurally again and then use the document camera to show them the score.
- **Assessments:**
 - Students will create or find another interesting way to produce a musical sound, whether it be an extended technique on their instrument or creating a musical sound (or sound effect) with a new device/instrument.
 - Students will be given a short musical excerpt from a score and identify how the composer manipulates the timbre, including the instrument families used, the corresponding scoring technique used, and the intended “color” of sound (warm, dark, bright, etc.).
 - Students will find a piece online that manipulates the orchestration in an interesting or unusual way. All students will enter their composition in a google form and write a short description about what makes their selection unique. Students may volunteer to play a recorded portion of their piece for the class.

Affective Outcome: Students will understand and explore the value of going beyond their comfort zone for the sake of helping others.

- **Affective Strategies:**
 - The Back Story: Read the program note written by Michael Markowski to *The Cave You Fear*. Discuss the questions that Markowski poses, including: What is our own story? What are we fighting for? What does it mean to be a ‘hero’ and how can we be more ‘heroic’ ourselves? Read the outer sections of the piece, skipping the middle section for now. Then ask students, how has the composer written the music to create a sense of being on an adventure?
 - New Trier’s Motto: “To commit minds to inquiry, hearts to compassion, and lives to the service of humanity.” Which of these three strands do we likely spend the most time pursuing? The least? Why? Through our study of this piece, we hope to develop the “hearts to compassion” strand in bold and brave ways. I want to push the limits of your comfort zone in the service of helping others.
 - Marks for Bravery: Share a personal anecdote with the students. What is the bravest thing you have done in your life? Is it something that brought you praise and attention, or was it a private act of courage? Are you the kind of person that would rather play it

safe or seek out new opportunities? On a google form, I want you to describe your brave moment. I will be the only person that reads it, so it will be our secret.

- “Follow your bliss”: Joseph Campbell’s most famous quote was “Follow your bliss,” which has often been misunderstood: “Follow your bliss ... If you do follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. When you can see that, you begin to meet people who are in your field of bliss, and they open doors to you. I say, follow your bliss and don’t be afraid, and doors will open where you didn’t know they were going to be.” What do you think he meant?
 - Connections: Throughout our lives, we are always meeting new people. This week, challenge yourself to begin a conversation with someone that has been on the periphery of your social circle who you wish to get to know better. Or better yet, introduce yourself to a student that you don’t know, but would like to meet.
 - Random Acts of Kindness: Consciously be kind to a stranger outside of school or home. This requires more bravery as the element of familiarity is removed. Develop a list as a class in google drive of random acts you could do for a stranger. Once complete, share the list with the class so that students can select from the list outside of school time and then report back how it went.
 - Social Service Project: Students are required to participate in various social service projects through their advisory class. What are some social service projects that you can get involved in outside of school? (Pads, Feed My Starving Children, etc.)
- Assessments:
 - Students will write two short reflections on:
 1. How their conversation went with a student that they didn’t know very well, but wanted to get to know better.
 2. Their random act of kindness.

Musical Selection

There are many excellent pieces at the grade 2 level for concert bands, typically in historical styles and/or traditional forms. It is difficult to find newer, contemporary works that are not cliché, but instead are well-constructed and worthwhile for our students’ study and subsequent performance. *The Cave You Fear* is a very welcome addition to the grade 2 catalog. In particular, it evokes the feeling of a movie soundtrack through catchy rhythmic figures, thoughtfully manipulated motives, and highly unique and alternating timbres. Markowski effectively incorporates a wide array of uncommon sounds through his peculiar orchestration that help create a piece that sounds like no other.

Score

Unison Melody Sheet

The Cave You Fear

Michael Markowski
M. Temple

The musical score is written for five instruments: C Treble, Bb, Eb, F, and C Bass. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The score consists of 8 measures. The first six measures are marked *mf* (mezzo-forte), and the final two measures are marked *f* (forte). The C Bass part includes fingerings 1 through 8. The score features a unison melody across all instruments, with some instruments playing octaves. The melody is characterized by eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and includes some slurs and accents. The final measure of the piece features a strong accent on the final note.