

piece is an adagio written in 4/4, with the climatic phrase accelerating to an allegro that shifts into 3/4. A few measures of 2/4, 3/4, and 3/2 are used to extend and connect phrase ideas.

Texture: The textures of *Elegy* are generally straight-forward and transparent. Most of the work is either homophonic or melody with accompaniment (a closely-related texture). A polyphonic section with gently overlapping motives precedes the climax of the work. The Allegro section that follows is the densest portion of the work. The number of voices sounding varies widely throughout and is always in proportion to the intensity of a given moment.

Timbre: Timbre is closely tied to the dramatic pacing of the work. The tone color shifts frequently, but subtly, in the slower sections whereas the timbre is thick, but static, in the faster sections. Lower tessituras pervade much of the work, producing a dark and somber feeling. Lo Presti reserves the use of extreme ranges (both very high treble and low bass) for the climatic moments only.

Dynamics: Lo Presti uses the full range of the dynamic spectrum, beginning at ppp in the opening with just the clarinet section and peaking at fff with the full band at rehearsal 10. All dynamic shifts are very gradual, and there are no sudden surprises. The dynamic structure of the piece clearly delineates the intended feelings of grief.

Heart: *Elegy for a Young American* is a profound and thoughtfully constructed elegy that invites performers and listeners alike to relate the tragedy of the Kennedy assassination to their own lives.

How to introduce the piece:

As students arrive to class, copies of newspaper articles with headlines from the Kennedy assassination will be posted on the classroom door. How do you imagine people reacted when they read these headlines in 1963? What controversy surrounded JFK's assassination? (conspiracy theories)

Project the following two statements on the overhead projector: "The President has been shot." How would you react to this statement if you heard this later today? What would you feel? What might you do? And then: "The President is dead." How would your reaction to this statement be different than the first? Do any of you remember September 11, 2001?

Today we are going to begin exploring a piece that was written to commemorate the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States. What do you imagine it might sound like? Let's read the piece.

Take out the piece:

1. Written to commemorate the assassination of JFK
2. Composed in 1964
3. Memorial Piece
4. Based on four rhythms
5. Piece by Ronald Lo Presti
6. Therapeutic piece
7. Manipulates tension and release
8. Portrays the stages of grief
9. Ends with a sense of acceptance or resolution
10. Ends with a Picardy third

Terms:

Augmented Fourth	Half-Diminished Seventh Chord
Caesura	Motive
Chromatic Mediant Relationship	Phrase
Diminution	Picardy Third
Elegy	Stringendo

Outcomes and Strategies

Skill Outcome: Students will refine their ability to manipulate tone color through blend and balance.

- *Play by Ear:* Students will learn the primary motives/melodies of *Elegy* by ear. Have a student volunteer from the respective sections below to lead a call and response with the full band to teach them each of the following:
 - First eight measures; Clarinet 1
 - Four measures before No. 3; Flutes or Clarinet 1
 - Rehearsal No. 5; Flute 1, Oboe 1, Clarinet 1, Alto Sax, or Horn 1/3
 - Two measure entrance after No. 7; Flute 1 or Clarinet 1For a given motive, have students echo sing it first, then play the root, and then call/response. How does familiarity with a melody strengthen your ability to blend?
- *3 Point Checklist:* Review the three point checklist used for blending with others. Students must match: 1. Tone, 2. Pitch, and 3. Volume with their neighbors on either side. Have students work on this in student-led sectionals. In the next full rehearsal, have students volunteer to come up front and evaluate each section's ability to blend the music being rehearsed on that particular day. Students should strive to identify what specific element is not being matched.
- *Tone Painting:* Prepare students for this lesson by asking them to wear a mismatched outfit to school based upon the colors of the clothing (not the pattern or style necessarily). Have students discuss why we bother to match the colors of our clothing. What other aspects of our clothing do we purposefully coordinate? What aspect of music-making is similar to matching our clothes? (Tone color, not simply blend). Have students identify various moments in the work that portray one primary tone color for a given phrase. Go further and select a phrase or two where the tone color shifts dramatically. Using their reference sheets, write down the colors to describe each moment selected and then compare answers as a class.
- *Final Synthesis:* Having previously worked on matching all elements of a given line (blend), students will carefully balance the various lines to ensure that each one is brought to the foreground at the correct moment. The percussion section will serve as the jury up front during the rehearsal, and recordings of the rehearsal will be posted online for the entire band to critique.

Knowledge Outcome: Students will analyze the compositional tools used to create intense moments of tension and release.

- *Rhythm Detective:* Using Rehearsal Nos. 4-6, students will identify the basic rhythms used to construct *Elegy*. The band will be divided into two groups: 1. woodwinds and 2. brass/percussion. The woodwinds will be asked to identify rhythmic ideas based on what they see on their parts between 4-6. The brass and percussion will then listen to the woodwinds play from 4-6, and attempt to identify the basic rhythms based upon what they hear. How many rhythms did they

find? Which do you think was easier: by sight or sound? What do you notice about the rhythms? (very basic and economy of use throughout) How does this economy of rhythmic ideas contribute to the flow of the piece?

- *Air Sculpting*: Explain that students will be sculpting the air as they listen to music. Distribute large, round rubber bands to the students and explain that this will be the tool with which they sculpt the air. Select 3-4 musical excerpts in distinctly different styles. Use *Elegy* as the last excerpt. What properties of the rubber band make it a good tool for sculpting air? (creates a sense of resistance) How is this similar to what we do in music? (tension/release as the rubber band expands/moves) If possible, have a few students (probably friends) volunteer to manipulate a larger rubber band together.
- *Note Shaping*: Review the basic tenets of the “to/from/at” concept. (All music is either moving to, from, or at a given musical place.) This provides a guide for making musical decisions, but how can we create sub-phrases? Movement from note to note? Have the ensemble experiment with crescendoing and decrescendoing on different notes in the phrases at 5-6 and 7-8. What feels more musically satisfying? Why? Or can multiple phrasings be equally effective? What makes phrasing effective? Describe it from the angle of tension and release.
- *Drop the Needle*: Play the following measures out of context: 1 measure before rehearsal No. 2, 1 measure before No. 3, 2 before No. 12. Begin by only playing the dissonant measure and ask students what they notice about it. Then play the dissonant measure followed by the resolution. How did that feel different? Finish by playing the entire phrase leading up to the climatic moments. Does this strengthen or lessen the impact of the tension and release? How so? Discuss how context provides purpose and strength for a composer’s use of dissonance.
- *Composing an Elegy*: Distribute 3 x 5 cards to students as they enter the class for rehearsal. Tell students to imagine that they are a composer and have been asked to write a piece of music commemorating the death of someone. What musical characteristics would the piece require to effectively write said piece? Extra Credit: Ask students to write their own melody for an elegy. Have students volunteer to share their melodies at the next rehearsal.

Affective Outcome: Students will examine the purpose of an elegy and connect the process of grieving to their own lives.

- *Memorials*: What are some examples of typical ways in which people can be honored when they pass? Memorial service, funeral, eulogy, sending flowers, donations to a cause, personal memento, etc.. Can you think of some examples in art? Music, poetry, statues, book dedication, etc. Can you bring in an example?
- *Life Lessons*: Begin with the following two quotes:
 - “Birds sing after a storm. Why shouldn’t people feel as free to delight in whatever sunlight remains to them?”
 - “It has been said, ‘time heals all wounds.’ I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens. But it is never gone.”
 1. Who do you think spoke these sentiments?
 2. Were they spoken by the same person or different people?
 3. If they were written by the same person, which one do you think might have been written first and why?

Tell students that both sentiments were written by Rose Kennedy, mother of John F. Kennedy. What do you know about her life? She lost several loved ones in her family unexpectedly

throughout her life. How do you imagine someone might persevere through these types of circumstances? Do either of these quotes work well for the end of *Elegy* and why?

- *Five Stages of Grief*: Post a sign on the entry door: "Please prepare for class silently today." Play a recording of a gentle rain from an atmospheric moods CD as students enter the class. What different types of moods does it evoke? Introduce students to the Five Stages of Grief theory by projecting the description file. Have students create facial expressions to match each stage. Today we're going to speculate which section of the piece evokes which emotion from the stages of grief. Play each broad section and then have students debate their guesses.
- *Personal Story*: Think of a time in your life that has involved loss. Acknowledge and discuss the "invincible" nature of youth. Have the students experienced a tragic loss in their own lives? Do you remember Sandy Hook Elementary School last year? Or the shooting at the Colorado movie theatre at the premiere of "The Dark Knight Rises?" How were those acts different than assassinating the President? Would any of the students be willing to share a portion of their own story with the class? If possible, share your own story as an instructor.

Assessment

1. Students will interview a grandparent regarding the JFK assassination. Where were they when it happened? What were they doing? How did they react? What impact did it have on their life? Students will explain how their grandparents' experience relates to their own experiences of loss.
2. Students will find a piece of music that offers solace and/or could serve as an elegy for a loved one. The music does not necessarily need to be a traditional, slow elegy, as long as it serves a similar function by providing hope or healing. Share their selections with the class – perhaps on the day of the concert during class.
3. Students will write a review of our concert performance focused on how effective we were in communicating the emotional intent of the work.

Musical Selection

Elegy for a Young American is Ronald Lo Presti's most well-known piece for band and an example of core repertoire at the grade 5 level. It demonstrates timeless elements as a profound work of art that speaks to people on a very personal level.

Program Note

The *Elegy For a Young American* was written in 1964 and is dedicated to the memory of President John F. Kennedy. The many stages of mourning can be felt as the work unfolds. A quiet *adagio* sets a tone of respect and solemnity in the beginning. Feelings of shock and denial are reflected by the dynamics and octave jumps in the melody. Anger and remorse express themselves, building to an intense *allegro* section. The *maestoso* closing reminds us of the contributions of this great American and creates a sense of acceptance and final resolution.