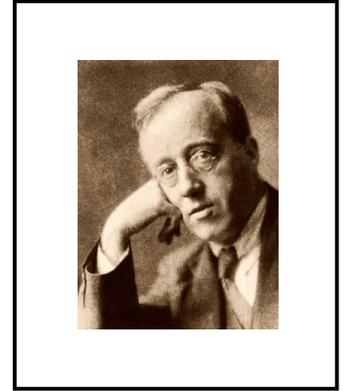




CMP Teaching Plan
Gustav Holst: March from *A Moorside Suite*
Ray Ostwald

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Title **March from *A Moorside Suite***
Composer: **Gustav Holst (1874-1934)**
Instrumentation: **String Orchestra**
Publisher **G & M Brand Publications Ltd. #30002**

Reasons to perform the piece

- Quality and depth of musical elements
- Excellent example of march form and style
- Holst as a major composer

Prior student knowledge

- Required range and technique
- Basic cut time metric and rhythmic understanding

Analysis

Broad Description: **A march, from a three movement suite for string orchestra.**

Type/Genre: **String Orchestra (also published for band, brass band and clarinet choir)**

Context:

British composer **Gustav Holst** (1874-1934) composed the *Moorside March* in 1928 as a required test piece for the National Brass Band Championships in London. The original manuscript is lost, but autographs survive of an incomplete arrangement for military band, and of this arrangement for string orchestra. This string orchestra version was done by the composer in 1932 while he was teaching composition at Harvard. He intended to send the piece to the junior orchestra at the St. Paul School for Girls in London, where he had taught for many years. However, it proved too difficult, so he wrote the *Brook Green Suite* instead the following year.

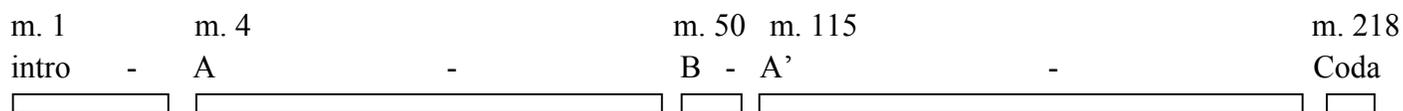
Additional Information: Holst placed the String Orchestra version is a major third higher than in the standard (Gordon Jacob, 1960, Boosey and Hawkes) band version, in a more comfortable key for strings. Gordon Jacob also arranged his own string orchestra version in 1952. Additional published band arrangements exist at various difficulty levels by Jay Bocook, James Curnow and Denis Wright. A transcription by Matt Johnston for clarinet choir with optional percussion is available.

Elements of Music

Form

The March is in ABA form, with the B section being the “Trio” (at letter C), and the modified A’ returning at measure 130. There is a short introduction (first 3 measures) consisting of the introductory motive: (two ascending perfect fourths followed by two ascending major seconds, in this rhythm: two eighth notes, a quarter and a half note), and a Coda (letter L) featuring the Trio theme. Typical March form includes various opening strains or themes, and sometimes a “break strain” or “dogfight” which is generally loud with an emphasis on simple powerful rhythm. Holst initially introduces two themes, the first (m. 4) in minor, the second (m.28) in major. Interrupting statements of the first theme (m. 10), Holst inserts a rhythmic motive that fills the role of the “break strain” or “dogfight.” The centerpiece of this march (and most British and American marches) is the Trio section (letter C), a stately legato melody accompanied by low instruments playing the bass line on each beat. The larger A’ section (m. 130) includes the first two themes and the rhythmic break strain motive, highly fragmented and developed. The last statement of the first theme literally fades away while suddenly slowing in rhythmic augmentation to half speed, giving the impression that this “character” in our drama is finished, not to be seen again. Even the rhythmic “break strain” next appears softly in only one instrument, as if weak, but when it musters up enough energy to present itself in *forte* again, it appears for the only time as a minor triad, as if summoning forces of evil in a final attempt to become the reigning theme. This attempt failing in chaotic unresolved stammering, we receive the gift of clear dominance in the arrival of the Coda (letter L). As is traditional in British marches, the Trio theme finished the piece in a glorious full sound. Holst’s frequent use of fragments, interruptions and layering of the introductory motive, first and second themes and the rhythmic “break strain” place the Trio theme on a pedestal with a strong sense of dignity and importance, and it is presented without any such distraction to a triumphant finish.

** (not to scale) **



intro motive - 1st theme, Break strain, 1st th, 2nd th - Trio - intro motive, 1st th, Break str, 2nd th, 1st-brk-Trio

Rhythm

Important rhythms in the *Moorside March* include:

The **introductory motive** (two eighth notes and a quarter, two ascending perfect fourths followed by two whole steps). This motive appears often, including measure 43, numerous times between F and G (including in rhythmic augmentation at F, m. 117 and m. 123), and in measure 188.

The **rhythmic fanfare motive** which first appears at m. 10, is usually an A major triad, but the final appearance (letter K) is a D Minor triad. The viola section plays it softly on a single pitch at m. 195. The rhythm of the Trio theme is simple with longer note values, setting it apart from the other themes. Rhythmic augmentation is dramatic as the final statement of the first theme dies away as it suddenly slows to half time in measure 194.

Melody

The **first theme** is stated first in D Minor (m. 4), marked *pesante*, and later often appears as a motivic fragment, the first 4 notes. It is in D Minor and begins on the dominant, taking some time before reaching a tonic pitch.

The **second theme** is first stated in F Major (m. 28) in the second violins. This theme is staccato, and when paired with its harmonic voice, resembles a typical classical horn pattern, based on the harmonic series of brass instruments, for whom he first wrote the piece. It begins sounding like F major, but also appears to be in D minor at times.

The **trio theme**, (letter C), typical of the British marches of Holst, Vaughan Williams and Elgar, is legato, lyrical and stately, always in D Major. This theme returns in the Coda (at L). It establishes the tonic soundly on the downbeat of the first three measures of the phrase, as well as measures five and six. These tonic downbeats give the melody its regal strength and fortitude. Holst emphasizes the importance of the Trio by making all other themes and motives more rhythmically active, jagged and staccato or marcato in style.

Harmony

Most of the first theme statements are in D Minor, with the second theme flirting with the relative F Major at times. The Trio theme is in D Major, though also flirting with its relative minor, B minor.

Some of the most startling harmonies are in the half note and whole note arrivals of the rhythmic fanfare motive (such as measures 12, 15, 197 and 200) which include Fmaj7-G Major, and other major seventh chords. These are spotlighted as significant by Holst's use of accents, used very sparingly in this movement. Those dissonances and major seventh chords give us a sense of the struggle and conflict that exist in so much of life, giving us that much more need for the stability of the Trio theme. Another harmonic surprise is the only presentation of the rhythmic "break strain" motive in a minor key (letter K). Holst also shows us that a similar dissonance in suspensions or major seventh chords can be beautiful and comforting when framed in the texture and mod of the Trio theme, such as measure 80 (vln 1) and the C sharps in measures 228 and 230.

Timbre

The March uses contrasting timbres with high instruments playing bright sounds and open strings in the rhythmic fanfare motive and dark colors in lower ranges for the initial statement of the Trio theme. Holst uses the wide range of the cello timbre to great advantage, as they often add to the bass line with a dark color (in the Trio at letter C, for example) but play very brightly at letter G as well as K in response to the rhythmic motive. Holst uses the rare accents here as well.

Texture

The texture is mostly thick, with most or all instruments playing. Exceptions include the rhythmic theme (with upper voices alone in rhythmic unison) as well as the violas in monophonic texture at measures 195 and 198. The first two themes are presented with homophonic texture that has an active bass line and harmony in the inner voices. The highlighted Trio section (letter C) is also homophonic, with less active accompaniment and more spotlight on the melody, as Holst wishes the listener to hold a clear focus on this melody longer without distraction.

Dynamics / Expression

Holst employs the full range of dynamics available in the string orchestra in this march, with more loud sections than soft. Every important theme and motive appears both in loud and soft presentations. The use of dynamics is significant in the Trio theme, where it is first presented softly (letter C), and then immediately repeated with a *crescendo* to *forte* and *fortissimo* where the theme fails to come to a complete cadence before fading into the introductory motive and the first theme. However, in the Coda (letter L) the theme begins *fortissimo* and reaches a complete final cadence at that top dynamic. Another significant contrast occurs when Holst presents the Rhythmic motive (or break strain) softly at measure 195, since this motive naturally lends itself to loud dynamics. As noted above, Holst draws attention to significant moments in harmony and timbre by adding expressive accents in just a few places.

♥ **The Heart Statement:** The Heart of *Moorside March* is the Trio melody with its repeated emphasis establishing the tonic on many early downbeats, then rising with a graceful dignity through stepwise motion with just a few tasteful leaps to create an atmosphere of calm, reassuring comfort and stability.

Introducing the Piece (a strategy):

- 1) Prior to reading this piece, I would address the following potential **friction points**:
 - I would have students play the introductory motive rhythm on a single note at a medium tempo, for articulation and the bow lift. Then, I would add string crossings (low to high), and increase tempo when correct.
 - I would study the interval of a perfect fourth and have students play and sing it, then a sequence of two consecutive fourths.
 - I would practice the C#-F#-B-C# sequence with all violins and violas (or with all instruments), with violas in ½ position and violins in 3rd or 1st, (Like at letter F)
 - I would practice these scales in warm-ups: F, B-flat, d min, g min.

Outcomes

Skill Outcome: Students will perform articulate string crossings and bow lifts at a fast tempo.

A. Strategies

1. Students will play the introductory rhythm and bowing pattern on one repeated note, reviewing bow hand flexibility. Then students will play the same pattern on each step of the daily warm up scale.
2. Students will play motives for each other “pair share” and evaluate each other for accuracy, articulation, bow placement and speed.
3. (see also “Introducing the Piece”)

B. Assessment

1. Visual assessments in class and aural assessments of sections or instrument groups will cover this skill, along with the quarterly individual playing exam.

Knowledge Outcome: Students will recognize motive (motif) as a compositional device.

A. Strategies

1. Visual: Students will view home décor and identify the motive.
2. Visual: Students will view four paintings and identify the use of motive in art.
3. Kinesthetic / Aural: Students will sing and play the opening motive in various keys, hearing, singing and playing the intervals and rhythm.
4. Visual / Aural: Students will listen to a recording while following a copy of the score, labeling each appearance of the opening motive. At this point, if not discovered, the augmented motives will be explained and noted. Students will then neatly label the motives in their own part.
5. Aural / Kinesthetic / Visual: Students will play, listen to and see other famous motives: Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, Holst's Jupiter (perfect 4ths) and Mars (5/4 rhythm)

B. Assessment

1. Aural: A recording will be played, and without following music, raise your hand when you hear the motive. (Do with Moorside March as well as Beethoven Symphony 5, Holst Mars)
2. Visual: Given pages of the score, circle appearances of the motive.
3. Aural / visual: Students will be given a different piece of music and asked to identify and circle the motives in the piece.

Affective Outcome: Students will identify a current or future “comfort place” where they enjoy a singular focus and relate this feeling to a passage of music.

A. Strategies

1. Aural: Students will listen to and analyze the beginning to letter C, noting how the intro motive, rhythmic fanfare motive, first theme and second theme contrast with the trio theme at letter C, which is more calm, consistent, comforting and stable.
2. Students will listen to other marches and pieces with a trio section and show they identify the mood by changing their hand from open to closed, sitting down or changing to a relaxed position with their eyes closed.
3. Students will discuss and write about times in their life when they are focused on one favorite thing for an extended period of time. Students will hypothesize how this may help them in life, particularly when much of their days is more chaotic or frantic.
4. Students will discuss a time when they or somebody else has intentionally created a longer period of time, hours, days, a week or more, with a notable lack of distractions. Discuss in small groups, then bring ideas back to the large group. Why did they do so? What was the result?

B. Assessment

Students will write about a smaller (daily) escape from frantic life they could adopt, as well as a longer single focus time they can imagine later in life.

Take Out the Piece

- By the British composer.
- With this rhythm (clap the rhythmic fanfare motive).
- That begins in D Minor, ends in D Major.
- By the composer of The Planets, Jupiter, St. Paul's Suite, Brook Green Suite
- By the composer who taught at the St. Paul school for girls.
- With sequential perfect fourths.
- Originally written for a Brass Band competition

additional materials:

Score pages for identifying motives while listening.

Worksheet for responses regarding comfort activities

Trio melody for all instruments score

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