

Song Without Words from Second Suite in F (1911/arr. 1999)

Gustav Holst (1874 - 1935)/arr. Michael Story

Belwin Young Band

1

Recordings

Young Band Arrangement <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxBI-pV4KWM>

Original Orchestration <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLpd6CMapeA>

Vocal <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLTqb-fMHIA>



Background

Gustav Holst was born in 1874 in Cheltenham, England and died on May 25th, 1935 in London. He received his formal musical education at the Royal College of

Music beginning in 1893. Holst was great friends with Ralph Vaughn Williams, who had a profound impact on his career. They would regularly spend time together and each would try out each others compositions before publication or performance.



Although less popular and arguably more challenging than his First Suite, the Second Suite for Military Band is composed based on English Country tunes. The suite was written in 1911; followed with vocal arrangements of "Swansea Town", "I'll Love My Love" and "Song of the Blacksmith" in 1917.

The choral text describes the story of a maiden who has been committed to an asylum by her beloved's cruel parents, who have gone so far as to send their son to sea. In the third verse, the tenors sing of the maiden's confidence that she will be rescued, but the sopranos' and altos' gently repeated phrase ("I love my love, love my love...") gives the impression that she sits alone, rocking back and forth as her patience challenges her mental faculties. The basses return to the texture as the sailor returns home and flies dramatically to his lover's aid.

Although the choral settings were written after the Second Suite for Band, the choral text and settings may reveal insights into interpreting the wind band arrangement.

Analysis

Broad Description: A textural setting of an Cornish folk song for young bands.

Style: Chorale

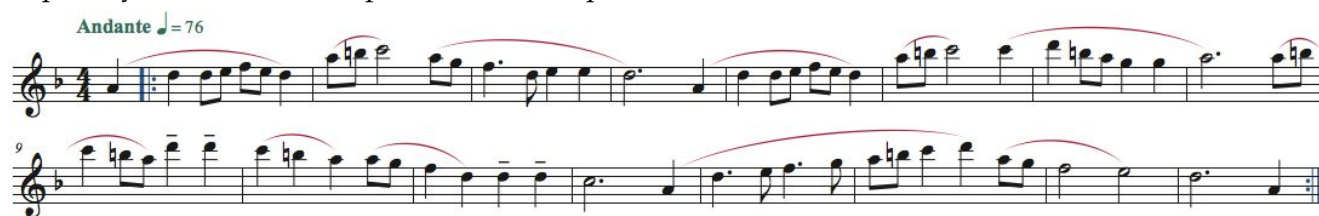
Musical Elements

Form - Song Without Words follows a simple Intro \parallel :AA'BC: \parallel Coda form. Many vocal pieces are written in this AABC or AABA form. Given the changes in the harmonic structure, it makes more sense to label the final 4 measure phrase as C, even though the melody has very similar ideas as the A melodies. What is it about the repetition and contrast that this form has to offer that makes it so popular?

Measure	Form	Measure	Form
1-2	Introduction	19-22	A
3-6	A	23-26	A'
7-10	A'	27-30	B
11-14	B	31-34	C
15-18	C	35-37	Coda

Melody

Song Without Words is set in D Dorian Minor Mode (Original is set in F dorian minor, but probably changed due to range requirements of the melody in a setting for young band). The arranger chose to use the key signature of D minor (one flat), even though every Bb is written as a B natural. This is probably done to emphasize that D is the root of the minor key. The melody moves mostly in stepwise motion with skips only of a minor third, perfect fourth or perfect fifth.






The melody starts with the leap of a fourth, giving a very firm tonicization of D, followed by an almost symmetrical rise and fall in the minor mode. The idea is repeated in the second measure of the A phrase from the dominant. Interestingly, in the Dorian mode, the melody uses a whole step-half step relationship in measure 1, which is the same relationship of the melody in the second measure, just starting on the 5th (folk songs like to use roots and fifth relationships). This would not be the case if it was in Aeolian mode, Melodic Minor or Harmonic Minor. The third measure of the A melody descends as the melody mirrors the rise in the first measure. This three note motif of a whole step followed by a half step is used (with retrograde and augmentation) quite obsessively, in fact it appears fourteen times in a sixteen measure melody.

In the A' melody, the first two measures are identical, with the exception of the anacrusis to the third measure that leads up setting up a resolution on the fifth to end the phrase. The use of the fifth to end this phrase gives the melody an unfinished quality which prepares the listener for a new idea. The B melody tonicizes the A for the first two measures before returning to the D.

The moving 8th note lines become a melodic force similar to Holst's moving 8th note lines in the Chaconne of the First Suite in Eb. This creates an arpeggio-like countermelody with a rise and fall that mimics the melody two counts later, propelling the hopeful melody forward as if a lover's heart is constantly rising and falling with anticipation and disappointment that her lover will soon return.

Rhythm

The first chorus of melodic line is set over a slower two feeling of sustained half notes. The pick-up to each phrase leads the melody forward as if the melody is searching for something. The first two measures of the A sections are symmetrical, giving the piece a wispy feeling. The  rhythm in the third measure of the A melody, makes the rhythm feel uneasy before the rhythm slows towards the end of the phrase. In the second statement of the A melody, there is a slight variation on the rhythms in measure three with the pair of eighth notes on beat four being replaced with a single quarter note. Also in the third measure of the phrase, the  rhythm is subdivided into a quarter followed by two eighths. This is probably to emphasize certain words in the melody with the rhythmic feel. The four measure B melody which begins with the anacrusis to measure 11 emphasizes a fairly consistent quarter note rhythm, with the occasional pair of eighth notes on two in measure 11 and four in measure 12. This maintains rhythmic interest, while in contrast to the symmetrical rhythms of the first phrase and the dotted quarter eighth note rhythms of the C melody. The C melody is very similar to the A melody in the construct, however the rhythms are significantly different with the use of the  rhythm in measure 15. The melodic idea of measure 17 corresponds to that in measure 5, however the rhythms are changed to two half notes, giving the melody a sense of finality.

In the second chorus, at measure 19, the melody is set against a moving eighth note line that is passed back and forth between instruments in the tenor range. Rhythmically the second statement of the melodies are identical, with the exception of the fermata placed in measure 32 on beat 3, which is halfway through the final C section. This fermata creates a climactic point. As the anacrusis restarts the melody, the eighth note line takes the rhythm through the coda to the final fermata giving the piece a sense of closure.

Harmony

The basis for this work is the Dorian mode, which gives the work a very haunting quality. The harmonic movements are very straight-forward, but not traditional in the sense of V-I progressions. As this work is based on folk music, there is more of a consistent use of the minor chord, especially as a V chord as is demonstrated in the first phrase and as the basis for the B section.

Initially it sounds as if there are quite a few suspensions in this arrangement, however the only real suspension is in measure 14 at the end of the B section, which becomes a tension point, which moves quickly back into the harmonic and melodic structure of the A and C sections.

A very interesting harmonic moment is in measures 34 and 35 where the alto saxophone imitates the clarinet arpeggiation at the interval of a fourth, however the concert Bb is raised a half step to B creating a tritone effect.

Timbre

In Holst's original work, the instrumentation was written with great flexibility. He indicates *ad lib*, for parts, which could vary, depending on the instrumentation of the ensemble. During that era, concert band instrumentation was not standardized, and it is understood that this could be performed by as little as 19 musicians. In this arrangement, the clarinet is featured as the melodic instrument, which would have been one of the options that Holst originally wrote. In some recordings of the original, we hear the oboe as the first melodic instrument, probably for the haunting hollow sound. The clarinet has a darker, woody sound

which at this age would be more appropriate for the ensemble. The first verse of the piece features this clarinet, over an accompaniment of other woodwinds and lower brass. The timbre change as measure 11 with the addition of the oboe to the melodic line. It is not until measure 19 that the melody is taken over by the flutes, oboe and trumpets. The clarinets, in the lower register, alternate with baritone, tenor sax and bassoon creating a moving 8th note line in the tenor tessitura, while the alto voice and the bass voice continue with the slower harmonic function.

Texture

The texture of this arrangement is melody driven homophony. The first half of the piece utilizes a very slow half note chord progression. In the second half of the piece, Holst utilizes arpeggiation of the chords with scalar passing tones, creating a more polyphonic sound. Although the eighth note line is not written as a counter-melody, in some instances it definitely functions as one. This eighth note line corresponds to the second verse, which may be a link to the incessant mumbling of the incarcerated young woman as her hopes rise and fall with each incoming ship. In the choral version, the texture is more closely four part homophonic.

Dynamics

Very little is written in this arrangement of Song Without Words. The opening accompaniment is marked at piano, and the melody statement is marked at mezzo piano. There is a slight crescendo before the second statement of the melody at mezzo forte. The melody returns to mezzo piano after the fermata in measure 32. The overall lack of dynamics in either this or the original score leads to the conclusion that much of the dynamic shape and phrasing are left to the musician or the conductor.

Additional Considerations

No Percussion Parts

The Heart

The heart of the *Song Without Words* is an incessant dorian melody, obsessing over a three note motif, as an incarcerated lover is desperately clinging to her sanity in hope that her true love will return.

Music Selection

Song Without Words is a wonderful introduction to British Folk music for young bands. This authentic arrangement, provides an opportunity to study a movement of only the second suite written for the modern symphonic band.

Introducing the Piece

The Waiting Game - Delayed Gratification - with Ghiradelli Chocolate Squares

- Pass out Ghiradelli Chocolate Squares but instruct students not to open them
- Have students imagine what the Chocolate Square might look like, smell like, taste like
- Begin working on warm-ups
- Have students open just a corner of the chocolate square and smell it, ask if they can use their imagination to see if it brings up any memories, then have them set the chocolate down on their stands.
- Have the students take a little nibble. Does the chocolate meet your expectations? Or does it taste even better? Why? Because you had to wait for it?

- Can you relate to this in your life?

Skill Outcome

Students will perform musical phrases with sensitivity to the shape of the melody.

Strategies

- Breathing in all the Wrong Places (Aural/Kinesthetic)
 - Utilize the text and intentionally breathe in weird places
 - Then read the text naturally with focus on breathing
- Shape It! to the Scarves/Elastic Band (Kinesthetic)
 - Scarves
 - Perform melodies based on someone's scarf motion (Kinesthetic/Visual)
- Everyone learns melody - Mark the Phrases (Aural, Visual)
 - Highest, Longest, Last (Visual/Aural)
 - Transfer to individual parts and mark phrases, shape
 - Record melody in Google Classroom with emphasis on musical phrase shape
- Scatter Drill - Sit next to (or between) students playing different SATB parts (Aural)
 - Listen for your neighbor and double check the shape of the phrases as they perform

Assessments

- Classroom Observation of Breathing Strategies
- Student Melody Worksheet - Transfer to Music
- Google Classroom recording of Melodies
- Scatter Drill - Peer Assessment

Knowledge Outcome

Students will understand the use and construction of the musical modes.

Strategies

- Solfege Scales - Ionian and Aeolian (Visual, Aural, Kinesthetic)
 - Major and Natural Minor with Curwin hand signs
 - Whole step and Half Step Construction
- Moveable Root- As a class, students will generate the sequence of whole steps and half steps which make up a major scale. This will be done by having students hold-up “W” and “H” signs. The teacher will then pose the question “If we keep the placement of the half steps the same but start and end at a different place in the scale, is it still a major scale?” A student will be asked to choose a different starting point, the student card-holders will move, and the group will play that scale. A discussion will follow about whether or not it is still a major scale...or what is it?
- Students create Mnemonic Devices to remember the Modes (Verbal, Visual)
 - Ex. ‘I Don’t Particularly Like My Advanced Literature’
- Improve and compose melodies in the Dorian Mode (Aural, Visual)
 - iReal B
 - Noteflight shared in Google Classroom
 - Focus on using motives
 - Retrograde, Inversion, Augmentation, Diminution, Compositional Devices
 - Use Noteflight to Notate and Record Compositions
- Kahoot! Review Game of Modes/Construction

Assessments

- Student Mnemonic Devices Google Classroom Question/Journal
- Student Compositions in Google Classroom
- Kahoot! Game

Affective Outcome

Students will explore the concept of delayed gratification, in terms of tension and release.

Strategies

- The Waiting Game - Delayed Gratification - with Ghirardelli Chocolate Squares
 - Pass out Ghirardelli Chocolate Squares but instruct students not to open them
 - Have students imagine what the Chocolate Square might look like, smell like, taste like
 - Begin working on warm-ups
 - Have students open just a corner of the chocolate square and smell it, ask if they can use their imagination to see if it brings up any memories, then have them set the chocolate down on their stands.
 - Have the students take a little nibble. Does the chocolate meet your expectations (release)? Or does it taste even better? Why? Because you had to wait for it (building tension)?
 - Can you relate to this in your life? Journal your response as to something that you are looking forward to, but had to wait for (building tension), and how that makes it more special to you (release).
- Journaling about the imagery in the poem of the choral arrangement
 - What musical or poetic means does the composer use to conjure images of the young lovers sadness? Hopefulness? Incessant rocking?
 - How does the composer portray delayed gratification?
- Tension and Release - The Story of My Life - Chart Your Day in terms of Tension and Release.
- After School - Princess Bride Viewing Party
 - Have a screening of the Princess Bride and relate how the concept of delayed gratification is portrayed in the movie?

Assessments

- Classroom Discussions
- Journaling in Google Classroom
- Tension and Release - The Story of My Life - Chart Your Day worksheet
- Notecards

Take Out The Piece...

- Written in the tradition of British Military Band music
- Based on a Cornish song about Star-Crossed Lovers
- Written in the Dorian mode
- Is primarily Melody Driven Homophony
- That has a choral version that was written after the instrumental version by the same composer
- Composed in AABC Form
- That utilizes a three note motif
- That utilizes an arpeggiated eighth note counter melody
- Whose composer was good friends with composer Ralph Vaughn Williams