Lessons from Mother Earth

FOR JUNIOR WIND ENSEMBLE

JODIE BLACKSHAW

INSTRUMENTATION

Flute

Clarinet in Bb

Bass Clarinet in Bb

Alto Sax in Eb

Tenor Saxophone in Bb

Baritone Saxophone in Eb

Bassoon

Trumpet in Bb

French Horn in F

Trombone

Euphonium T.C. / B.C.

Tuba

Mallet Percussion Glockenspiel

Percussion 1 8-10-12" Toms Concert Bass Drum

Percussion 2
Suspended Cymbal, Floor Tom
Tambourine, Crash Cymbals

Percussion 3
Ride Cymbal
Concert Bass Drum

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www.jodieblackshaw.com





TWO-STAGE LEARNING PROCESS

This work has been especially designed to be learned in two stages.

Stage One: Skill development, Creativity and Contextualization

<u>Skill</u>: The first stage uses a specifically designed 'Warm-up' stencil to provide your students with skill-set to play most of the notes asked of them in the main work. It will also expose them to playing in a more texturally complex musical environment. They will need this development of their own musical independence to play the work confidently.

<u>Creativity</u>: Provide your students with the opportunity to play around with the melodic material by discovering how to play all the notes by themselves (see No. 2 Notes to Know) as well as collectively composing with structure to create their own mini-performance using the main pitch material used in the work.

<u>Context</u>: Students will learn about the text on which this work is based, and link that to musical intent. Understanding *why* the music is written is often overlooked in out teaching.

Stage Two: Application of Stage One to a performance work

Now that your students have the skills to play the melody and counter-melody in varied structures, and comprehend the musical intent, these skills are now applied to the performance work that also contains soundscapes and body percussion music making opportunities.

STAGE ONE MATERIALS: Warm-Up Your Brain

Accompanying this score and parts is a warm-up stencil that introduces all students to the melodic material they are required to play in the performance work. Once students can play the material detailed on this stencil they will have the confidence and capability to play the full work.

Here is how a "Warm-Up your Brain" part looks:



How to use this stencil: Lessons from Mother Earth

1. What key are we in?

It is not expected that all students will be able to play the full scale listed here. This simply identifies one full octave of the key in which the work is based. Explain this using your own methods and take the opportunity to make key and key signature part of your regular vocabulary.

2. Notes to know

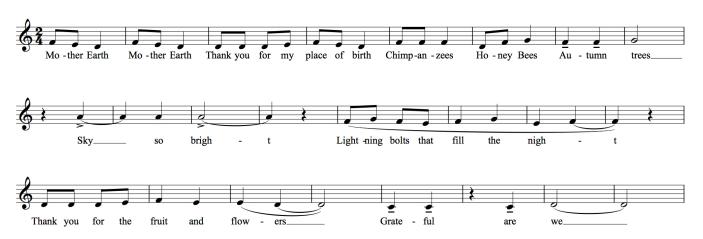
This demonstrates to students the notes they need to know *inside* the key in which the piece is composed. I strongly encourage you to invite students to explore these notes individually and with the person they sit next to on the same instrument. Using communal knowledge to work out any notes not immediately identified provides a deeper understanding for students because these are discovered not taught. Jean Piaget said:

"Children should be able to do their own experimenting and their own research. Teachers, of course, can guide them by providing appropriate materials, but the essential thing is that in order for a child to understand something, he must construct it himself, he must re-invent it. Every time we teach a child something, we keep him from inventing it himself."

"Some Aspects of Operations", Loyola University Symposium entitled 'Play and Development', 1972

3. Melody

Here is the main melody used through this work:



Directors are invited to teach the melody *aurally* at first using the lyrics that are detailed on the page. It is in an easy singing range (a 6th) and is the purpose for the addition of lyrics.

NOTE: These lyrics are used in the main score and parts and then gradually removed. These lyrics are printed there not to invite students to sing, but to help students remember which part of the melody they are playing at any given time.

SUGGESTED TEACHING STRATEGY USING WARM-UP YOUR BRAIN STENCIL

Here is an example of a teaching approach anticipating a 10-15min time-slot is allocated in each rehearsal. Consider using this approach as your rehearsal warm-up (as from Week 2):

Timeline	Activity		
	Activity		
Lesson 1	Read the text, discuss the underlying theme of biodiversity and sustainability.		
Lesson 2	Aurally introduce rhythm of the main melody.		
Lesson 3	Aurally introduce pitch of the main melody.		
Lesson 4	Introduce notated melody using the "Warm-up the brain" stencil. See above for suggestions with points 1/2 on the stencil.		
	GOAL: Students start to learn how to play the melody on their instrument.		
Lesson 5	Play the melody using this structure: TUTTI – SOLI – TUTTI		
	(i.e. explain these terms in your own way. Write on whiteboard or use Structure Cards). TEACHING TIP		
	Different ways to play SOLI:		
	 Select a section to play the whole melody by themselves. Use 3 different instrumental SOLI sections – for example woodwind, brass and percussion - to play one phrase each. GOAL: Students consolidate learning of melody on their instrument. 		
Lesson 6	Students learn to play melody in a 2-part round. Play in this structure: TUTTI – 2-part ROUND – TUTTI		
Lesson 7	Students learn to play melody in a 4-part round. Play in this structure: TUTTI – 4-part ROUND – TUTTI		
	GOAL: Students learn to play in a more texturally complex musical environment.		
Lesson 8	Learn Counter-Melody. Play Melody and Countermelody in 2-parts. Explain the looping nature of the Counter-Melody and invite students to decide when and how it should be introduced and when it should cease. Play this. Invite observations. GOAL: Students observe phrase lengths and incorporate shape into their melodic		
	playing.		
Lesson 9	Students learn to play Counter-melody in conjunction with a 2-part and/or 4-part round. GOAL: <i>Student develop musical independence and comprehend their musical purpose.</i>		
Lesson 10	Create a performance using structural elements of TUTTI, SOLI, ROUND and MELODY/COUNTER MELODY. Rehearse and record. Play back to students and invite their positive and constructive critique. (OPTION: Present an <i>Informance</i> for your students' parents, carers and broader school community.)		
	GOAL: Students compose with texture and perform/self-assess their work.		
Lesson 11+	Commence work on the performance piece "Lessons from Mother Earth".		

Stage Two: Apply learning to performance work "Lessons From Mother Earth"

SPOKEN WORDS: "Feel her heart beat"

The words listed as "Whisper" are intended to help all players feel the tempo of the work. The 'Tap' on the heart should be light enough to be audible but not a heavy thumping sound. Players who need to play directly after this (for example, bar 5: Bassoon, Horn, Euphonium and any others playing cues) should lightly tap one foot so their hands are free to hold their instrument.

Please note the distinction between saying the words aloud and in the head. This introduces your students to the concept of internal listening and remaining engaged with the music, even when they are not currently playing their instrument.

FADE OUT

I have made a distinction between decrescendo and 'fade out' in this work. The educational goal here is for students to allow their tone to fade away and blend into whatever sound is weaving over the top of their own. It builds awareness and provides a greater purpose for the change in dynamics. Many children are also aware of the term 'fade out' thanks to visual transitions provided in video editing software programs.

FREE TIME WINDY SOUNDSCAPES

The "windy soundscapes" that appear on pages 5, 8 and 29 of the score invite students to create sounds of the wind using their breath and instrument. Students who are not directly playing either side of the soundscape may rub together pieces of paper or the palms of their hands to add colour.

A different graphic is displayed in each instance and Directors are invited to use the shape of the graphic to inspire ideas that influence structure, timbre, texture and expression. I strongly encourage all Directors to compose these sections with your students and allow yourself to be guided by their ideas. Even if the initial ideas are not mature, creativity is maintained when ideas are allowed to grow and develop, even if they take an unusual direction every now and then!

The tremolo in the glockenspiel is designed to sound a little like wind chimes. Each tremolo should start slowly, accelerate and then slow down a little. Each two-note grouping should not occur for more than a few seconds. The soundscapes themselves should be no more than approximately 20-30 seconds each.

STRUCTURE

The children's book *Lessons from Mother Earth* that inspired this work shapes the day of a little girl who learns lessons about respecting the produce provided by Mother Earth from her Grandmother. Hence the overall structure of this work is shaped as a "day in the life of...".

Hence the directions in the score follow the occurrences of the day:

Bar 1	Bar 44 D	Bar 71 F	Bar 111 H	Bar 235 U
First light	Awaken	Move, stretch, embrace	Seize the day	Time to rest

KEEPING BAND REPERTOIRE RELEVANT TO AUDIENCES

A major consideration during the creation of this work is the audience that may enjoy the performance. In this instance, I encourage all directors to *connect* with early years' teachers (Grades k-2) and create a plan to simultaneously learn about this text.

In a perfect world, band students and k-2 students would simultaneously complete a unit of work surrounding the same text. The band students learn the piece and the k-2 students complete a unit of the book. This may also include learning to sing the melody (as it is in an achievable key and singing range for young people).

A wonderful resource that early years' classroom teachers can use is found here:

http://resources4rethinking.ca/en/resource/lessons-from-mother-earth

GOAL: Complete the unit with a concert for k-2 students that includes 'Lessons from Mother Earth'.

MORAL RIGHTS AND LITERACY

This work is based on the text *Lessons from Mother Earth*, written by Elaine McLeod and illustrated by Colleen Wood, published by Groundwood Books, House of Anansi, Toronto, ON, Canada. You can purchase the book directly from the publisher here:

https://houseofanansi.com/products/lessons-from-mother-earth

I am proud to state that official moral rights have been gained via the publisher to link this composition to this beautiful book aimed at children of a 5-7 year old reading age.

This text is also listed as part of the Authentic First Peoples Resources (K-9) as put together by the First Nations Education Steering Committee. To obtain a free download of this list of texts, please go here: http://www.fnesc.ca/k-7/

FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

Principles of learning focused on during the creation of this work are as follows:

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history and story
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

COMMISSION

Commissioned by the University of British Columbia Conducting Symposium Consortium hosted by Dr. Robert Taylor, Director of Bands:

- ❖ W.J. Mouat Secondary School, Janet Wade (Abbotsford, British Columbia)
- ❖ American Community School, Christopher Ward (Abu Dhabi, UAE)
- ❖ Mulgrave Schools, Mark Steffens (West Vancouver, British Columbia)
- ❖ Seaguam Secondary School, Jill Sparrow-Ng (Delta, British Columbia)
- Seycove Secondary School, Risa McDonell (North Vancouver, British Columbia)
- Tristan Roush, Kent, WA



This work has been inspired by the children's book *Lessons from Mother Earth* written by Canadian author Elaine McLeod (Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation) with illustrations by Colleen Wood. The text explores the need to love and respect the Earth and all the gifts that it affords. This occurs through the eyes of a Granddaughter as she spends a day with her Grandmother, gathering natural produce from the plants that surround her Grandmother's home.

Hence, the musical composition is shaped around the familiar happenings that occur in the life of a human child. The first light that stirs us from sleep, the moment when we awaken from our dreams, through to a full stretch and rise. The music then elevates in volume and complexity to represent activity and purpose. The piece ends as it begins; quietly and humbly as we return to our slumber and need for rejuvenation.

Early in the work you will hear 'windy soundscapes' interrupt the musical activity, representing the soul and voice of Mother Earth. Each of these soundscapes has been composed by the students themselves.

*ABOUT THE COMPOSER *

Have you ever played a 'Blackshaw' with your wind ensemble? If you have, then you know that a work by this Australian composer-educator is different from the norm. You will also know that it takes you, the Director, on an alternate educational pathway that for some, is a little uncomfortable at first. That said you would also know that it is a surprise package, an audience favourite and presents you the director with interesting conducting challenges.

Such is the work of Jodie Blackshaw.

Through her teaching, conducting and composing, Blackshaw has passionately searched for a compositional approach to band that offers Directors a product that centres on musical elements other than melody and harmony. In 2006 Jodie won the inaugural Frank Ticheli Composition Contest with her work 'Whirlwind' and since then has travelled throughout Australia, the United States, Canada and the UAE as a guest composer and creative music teaching clinician.

In 2016 Jodie launched her 'Off the Podium' professional development webinar series, connecting like-minded, creative band directors throughout the world. She is currently studying a PhD in Composition at the Australian National University.

To find out more about Jodie and her works please go to: www.jodieblackshaw.com

This work is dedicated to a warm, caring, sensitive teacher & Mother Earth spirit,

Mrs. Faye Olds

(1937-2017)

"Take care of one another".

Lessons from Mother Earth











































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