

Director's Notes from Ellie Hodder BGEHR Spring Ring 2020, Nanaimo

General notes

We will honor dynamic markings, tempo changes and key signatures. Accents matter. Know your mallets, marts, mart lifts and other “whacky, bangy” things so that you are confident as you play them.

Put a sticky note at the start of your music. On the sticky write your bells, chimes, mallets, and any other tools you need for the piece. Put parentheses around any bell/chime you share with another position such as, (Db/C#) so you are clear if sharing is required. Also, if your bells or chimes are in any order in front of you in any position other than keyboard order, draw yourself a little diagram.

Musical Risks

Please be willing to take some musical risks. Often my musicians will either fly past dynamic markings without responding or will make teeny tiny changes. I love it when my musicians go for broke—go ahead and make memorable dynamic changes at every crescendo and decrescendo. Go ahead and shape phrases with broad brush strokes even if nothing specific is marked. Most likely, the result in a room full of multiple choirs will be breath-taking! I will be delighted with your taking me up on this challenge. And, if I see opportunities for us to interpret something with a different nuance, I promise to be direct in telling you.

Personal Risks

Does your director occasionally mention that it is good to watch them? We will practice so you get to know what I mean with my conducting gestures, but, between now and May would you practice watching? Here are a few things that might help:

Make yourself look up at your first entrance. You'll have time to memorize the dynamics and your respective sharps and flats so, fiercely watch the director. If you get lost coming back in after the first few notes, make a special mark at that measure—say, highlighter on the barline or a star over the measure. Do the same at every tempo change and on every page turn. ***This is hard!*** It takes much practice and faith that directors appreciate that you might get lost but they would mostly like you to feel safe looking at them! Take the chance . . .

Notes on the Event Music

Festival Celebration

This piece is written in 4/4 but has a decidedly 8/8 feel. The number of eighth notes is exactly the same and the speed of eighth notes is exactly the same in either case. The difference is which eighth notes in each measure get the most emphasis.

Try this. Count to eight at a steady pace (repeat several times):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Now do the same thing but clap louder on the odd (red) numbers:

1 2 **3** 4 **5** 6 **7** 8

If the meter signature were 4/4 would you be likely to count each eighth note all the way to 8? Probably not. You'd likely count numbers and "ands"

1 & **2** & **3** & **4** &

Right?

Now try the exercise counting aloud and clapping on 1, 4 and 7:

1 2 3 **4** 5 6 **7** 8

Look at anyone's part in measures 1-6 and find the accented notes. This is the pattern and it is important that you feel comfortable with it even if another part goes to 4/4 as you've always played it.

In practice, many folks count the groups of notes. You should figure out what makes sense to your internal counters, but lots of folks might count it this way:

1 2 3 **1** 2 3 **1** 2

Sit together and practice both patterns. Try alternating between them. Count off by 2's and practice with the 1's doing the 4/4 pattern and the 2's doing the 8/8 pattern. Switch.

GROUP 1: **1** & **2** & **3** & **4** &

GROUP 2: **1** 2 3 **1** 2 3 **1** 2

The nitty gritty:

- Accents are critical. Be comfortable with executing them.
- Watch the dynamics
- Clean marts and mart lifts. Remember these are a kind of sound--not a "gotcha"! Be wary of banging the table.
- Ritard in m. 28 will start at beat 3 and take us to the new tempo at m. 29
- Watch out for the key change. This section is lyrical. Smooth and even matter.

- Ritard at m. 42
- We will do all the 8va's as defined throughout
- Key change at m. 46
- Be ready with your chimes at m. 47
- m. 62-78 all plus with dot symbols are mallets on the table (even the high bells).
- NO RITARD at the end (you'll see this is a theme!).
- Tasteful final mart.

Milele

"Milele' means forever in Swahili. There is an accompanying SATB choral setting by William Bryan Kyle. The words are: "Lord, God, O Father, In faith we pray for love and peace. Forever, we thank you, forever. God, thank you! Sky, earth. Valley, hill. Trees, flowers. Sun stars. O, God, thank you! Lord, O Father, In faith we pray for love and peace. Forever and ever."

- This piece is in 2. I challenge directors to avoid "caving" and practicing in 4.
- Gentle hands with chimes
- Good, clean accents
- Yes, to all 8va's. Some are just the top note. Others are all the up stems
- Give all shakes a crescendo
- Lift the bell and stop shaking on its last quarter or eighth (m. 130 lift without shaking on beat 4, etc.) This will give space between the shake and the next note.
- NO RITARD at the end!
- All malleting folks, please use a kill-damp on the final note.

Toccata on King's Weston

- This piece wants to slow down. It's very physical!! Whatever you do, keep the energy for the first 112 measures!
- Make m. 1 ff. Come out of the gate with full energy. Decrescendo m. 3-4
- Bass/battery come in forte and keep it
- Tied dotted half folks, be able to look me in the eye each time. These need to have great presence and be exactly together.
- Upper bells, honor the decrescendo in m. 14 without slowing the tempo
- Chimes, enter with strength and conviction.
- Crescendo at m. 30-33.
- Basses/battery, again, look up at m. 33+ so we are together and command much presence.
- Decrescendo in m. 39 is important.
- Pages 6-7 have some playful time experimenting with the melody backwards and forwards—mirror images. Bring out both melody lines.
- Mallets, start mf in m. 60 and crescendo through m. 63.
- Everything from here through (nearly) the end is high volume and high energy. If your heart is pounding at the end, you played it exactly right!

- Honor the accents
- Make a HUGE mark so that you can give me a breath taking subito piano at m. 99 and then “pedal to the metal” to the end.
- NO RITARD at the end! See? A theme!!

Looking forward to spending a weekend with you all in May. Questions? Please jet me an email.

All the best,

Ellie Hodder
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