**Rationale and Write-Ups:**

**Cruisin’ Bluesin’ – Carol Brittin-Chambers (Grade 1)**

This piece of music is an excellent opener to the concert. The jazz style and relative simplicity of the piece is great for piquing the audience’s interest immediately and giving the students a chance to ease into playing together for the performance. Since it is in a laid-back style too, if any students are having a hard time focusing or letting their minds wander, the joy and catchiness of this piece should get them tuned in for the rest of the concert. I programmed this piece as an opener to intrigue the audience and get the concert rolling on a positive note. I am using this to teach the ideas behind jazz style, form, and articulation. This is a great introduction to jazz style for all instruments and is a perfect opener to a memorable concert.

**Primitivo – Michael Story (Grade 1)**

“Primitivo” is a stark contrast from “Cruisin’ Bluesin’.” The dark, energetic melody and slow, hopeful lyrical segments give the audience and performers a completely different atmosphere. This piece is also commanded by the percussion section and gives them some time in the spotlight. I am programming this to teach students about the minor mode and also have them work on eighth notes, balance, and blend. The melody is quite catchy and easy to decipher, and the low winds provide a strong, rhythmic backbeat. This is an easy piece of music that has quite a lot to teach, and students and audience alike should enjoy it.

**Chorale Elega’nt – Elena Roussanova Lucas (Grade 1)**

“Chorale Eleg’ant” is a beautiful piece and functions as the beginning band’s lyrical selection. It is relatively simple to play and is perfect to teach students how to play in a smooth, legato/tenuto style. I would use this piece to also place a huge emphasis on balance, blend, and most importantly, dynamics. This is a piece where it is quite easy for students to overplay their parts, so dialing back the accompaniment and bringing out the melody is sure to leave the students with a performance that they will not soon forget. Parents will also enjoy this lyrical ballad, as it provides a great deal of contrast from the dark, thunderous “Primitivo” before it. It also sets the stage for our closer, “African Alleluia,” by ending on a pensive, almost forlorn sounding outro.

**African Alleluia – John O’Reilly (Grade 1) (Educational Composition)**

*Composer/Arranger:* John O’Reilly

*Publisher:* Alfred Music Publishing

*Year Published:* 2014

*SCSBOA Grade Level:* 1

*Length of Piece:* 2:05

*Instrumentation:* Flute/Oboe, Bb Clarinet, Bb Bass Clarinet, Eb Alto Saxophone, Bb Tenor Saxophone, Eb Baritone Saxophone, Bb Trumpet, F Horn, Trombone/Baritone/Bassoon, Tuba, Bells, Percussion 1 (Cowbell, Claves), Percussion 2 (Tom-Tom, Bass Drum)

*Form:* ABCAB

*Rhythm:* Primarily syncopated and in a traditional clave feel (3+3+2). Different combinations of sixteenth, eighth, quarter, and half notes. Lots of dotted eighth sixteenth note figures throughout.

*Melody:* Melody is primarily found in the trumpet and flute/oboe parts. During the B section, the clarinets, bells, and alto saxophones add in the melodic line playing accompanying chordal structures to the same rhythm as the melody. There is also a call and response section during C, where the flutes/oboes, clarinets, alto saxophones, and bells have the call and the bass clarinets, tenor and baritone saxophones, trumpets, horns, trombones/baritones/bassoons, and tuba have the response.

*Harmony:* Harmony in this is fairly traditional and not really peculiar or unique. Bass instruments tend to have the roots of chords, and flute and trumpet tend to have the root melodies. The horn primarily plays the fifth of most chords, while some of the harmonic instruments that have melodic rhythms such as clarinets are stacked in thirds. The alto saxophone part commonly also plays fifths or roots and tends to be in unison with the horn. The trumpets also are generally stacked in thirds, which makes sense because the initial melodic line starts on the third of the key anyway. The chord structure followed is also pretty common, following a I – I IV V – I – V progression during the A section and a IV – V – I – I I7 progression during the B section.

*Timbre:* The timbre of this piece is one commonly found in most beginning bands. There is a relatively standard instrumentation, and the melody tends to stay in the upper voices with a repetitive bass line accompanying it. The most unique aspect of timbre in this piece is probably the prominence of the cowbell and claves throughout, making the piece sound unmistakably African. The instruments blend well together and produce a very bright, uplifting timbre throughout. This piece is unmistakably one that will end the concert on a happy, positive note.

*Texture:* This piece has a homophonic texture throughout for sure. During the C section there are unison call and response lines, but aside from that there is constant harmony underlying the melody, and although the bass part is different, it isn’t necessarily a melody and doesn’t have the same importance to be considered polyphonic. The overall sound of this piece, as mentioned briefly in the above section, is very bright, happy, and culturally accurate of African folk songs. Every culture has minor folk songs, but *Wana Baraka*, the folk song that this arrangement is based off of, is joyous and celebratory. The instrumentation and harmony along with the flute and trumpet melodies do a great job translating that feeling into a concert band.

*Expression:* The expression in this piece is mainly displayed through the detached style found throughout and the accented dotted eighth sixteenth figures. There isn’t a lot of slow lyricism or solo playing in this, it is a piece that is very dependent on a cohesive ensemble and rhythmic accuracy. The students can show musicality and expression by playing the driving, rhythmic patterns found in this piece and playing syncopated rhythms separated and accented clearly. It would also be good to teach expression through melodic awareness and being sure that while a strong bass line is needed for good time and chordal integrity and inner parts are essential to the chord, they should not overpower the melodic line.

*Additional Considerations:* Percussion and low brass are the foundations of this piece. I would need to make sure that I had a strong group in those sections to be successful in this piece. If I had a group that seemed to be struggling with basic rhythms, I don’t think this piece would be for them. There are a lot of mature musical concepts in this piece, and although they repeat quite often, if the group is unable to play some of the basic syncopations together as an ensemble it would become frustrating to the students and may not be the best choice for that particular group. I would especially need to be sure that I had a percussion student that could consistently keep a quarter note pulse on the cowbell and understand how important their role is in the ensemble.

*Appropriate Teaching Concepts:* **African percussion and style**. This piece is very lifted and is driven by a syncopated bassline and the cowbell and clave. I would be able to talk about and show different examples of African folksongs and percussion pieces. A large part of this specific style is playing very accented, light, and allowing a good deal of space between the notes. This would show to the students that overplaying during fast, syncopated sections make them tend to slow down and get behind the metronome. **Syncopated rhythms, especially dotted eighth sixteenth note figures**. Almost the entire piece is syncopated and falls on different places of the sixteenth note grid throughout. This would be a great piece to teach subdivision and encourage metronome practice to allow students to be more successful with these difficult rhythmic concepts. The students have to stay focused and not only understand the rhythm but be able to feel it. Their brains shouldn’t be overloaded focusing on the rhythmic grid the whole time, but they should fall into a place where they are comfortable and can focus as playing as an ensemble as opposed to getting notes to line up on specific sixteenth note partials. **Call and response**. Although this is technically a third element, I included it nonetheless because I can argue that syncopated rhythm and African percussion and style fall under similar categories, and this is such a good piece to teach call and response that I could not pass it up. This common form is found in many folk songs, jazz, and a plethora of other genres. The C section of this piece is a perfect example of call and response, as there are two unison lines and the unpitched percussion also cuts out, leaving a true call and response. I can show the students examples of this in other music and even try some call and response improvisation exercises throughout the classroom. I can show the people who play the call how it is very important that they play the phrase the way that they want to hear it repeated, because the students playing the response are going to listen and emulate their style from note lengths to articulation.

**Kalimba Lullaby – Lauren Bernofsky (Grade 1)**

This piece is very short and sweet and makes a great introduction to the beginning string ensemble. It only utilizes pizzicato technique to emulate the kalimba, a West African instrument also known as a “thumb piano.” It is a very soft and soothing piece, and it sets the stage perfectly for the beautiful sounds of my beginning string ensemble (wishful thinking, I know). I would use this piece to teach pizzicato technique and establish a foundation for most of the rhythms we would end up seeing throughout the semester. Because this piece is entirely pizzicato, it would be a great tool to also work on ensemble timing, because there is a lot of space between plucks and mistakes are very exposed. “Kalimba Lullaby” is going to set my string ensemble up to have a great rest of the concert and intrigue the audience by having a string ensemble play in a somewhat non-traditional way.

**Autumn – Antonio Vivaldi arr. Douglas Wagner (Grade 1)**

This classical piece of music should be recognized by many and is the polar opposite of the composition before it. This piece only uses an arco style and is very simple in theory, but so much can be added to make it interesting. I would use this to teach dynamics and basic bowing styles. Because of the repetitiveness, it is great for building chops during rehearsal and allowing the students to practice basic technique without having to focus too intensely on the notes. Because of its simplicity, I would also use this piece to teach dynamics and show how swells, sudden drops in volume or increases in volume, and general dynamic contrast can make boring music interesting. This piece also exposes the students to classical music, common classical form, and classical style. This piece is much different than “Kalimba Lullaby,” and it bridges the gap between the opener and the third piece quite nicely.

**Jasmine Flower – arr. Douglas Wagner (Grade 1.5)**

This beautiful, Chinese folk song is arranged in a way that allows the violin section to soar out. It is simple in nature but can bring the students’ lyricism and blend to a whole other level. It also allows me to open up a dialogue about different cultures’ music and folk traditions from other countries. The extended instrumentation in this piece also allows me to feature a percussion section and pianist, though they are not vital to the ensemble and can be omitted if no students to cover those parts are found. This is a beautiful ballad that is completely different than the upbeat, classical piece it is preceded by. It also ends on a gentle note, allowing the closing arrangement to blast the audience off of their feet.

**The Syncopated Clock – Leroy Anderson arr. Andrew H. Dabcynski (Grade 2) (Educational Composition):**

*Composer/Arranger:* Composed by Leroy Anderson, arranged by Andrew H. Dabcynski

*Publisher:* Woodbury Music Company

*Year Published:* 2017

*SCSBOA Grade Level:* 2

*Length of Piece:* 2:15

*Instrumentation:* Violins, Viola/Violin III, Cello, String Bass, Piano, Percussion (Temple Blocks/Cowbell, Triangle/Whistle)

*Form:* AABACCAA

*Rhythm:* This piece is written in a swing style, with tripletized eighth notes and, as you can imagine from the title, frequent syncopation. This song does not contain any sixteenth notes but does contain a variety of swung eighth note rhythms along with quarter, half, and whole notes. Every instrument plays the syncopated motif and has chances to practice swung eighth notes throughout.

*Melody:* As with most orchestra pieces, the first violins have the melody throughout. During the A section, violin I has the melody while violin II and viola have harmony in the same melodic rhythm. The viola and cello have the melody during the B section while the violin II follows the melodic line with a slightly different harmony. The viola and cello take control of the melody again at C. The melodies throughout this piece are very conjunct and easy to follow and should be easy for students to identify and bring out.

*Harmony:* This piece includes some dissonant and advanced harmony. Most of the parts are stacked like they would be in a standard beginner orchestra composition, with the bass and cello playing the root, the viola playing the third, and the violin I and II playing the root and fifth, respectively. Sometimes this role will vary, but the parts are generally composed so that the bass and tenor voices are in an octave (sometimes a fifth) and that the alto and soprano voices fill out the rest of the chord. The A section follows a rough I – V – V – I – I – V – ii – II+/V I. The II+/V chord is very dissonant and would be great to teach students to trust their notes and lean into dissonance when it is presented. The B section follows a IV – I – ii V – iii vi – ii progression that continues on with some jazz harmony. This section has much more chromaticism and moving lines and can be used to teach basic jazz harmony and theory. The C section follows a similar jazz progression as in figure B but has many more stagnant chords and drones due to the repetitive figures in the viola and cello parts. This piece is harmonically challenging, and aside from style I would say it is one of the more challenging facets.

*Timbre:* This piece has an interesting timbre and incorporates a lot of really unique sounds and instrumentation. The main melody is played with arco while the bass keeps the pulse through pizzicato throughout the A section. The temple block is the heartbeat of this piece and represents the syncopated clock in the title, ticking away in quarter notes and occasional syncopations. There is a gorgeous tenuto interlude at B with a full arco string section, but it goes back to a quirky, jazzy, ticking feeling at A and C. This piece even concludes with a temple block solo and a whistle, two things not commonly found in string ensemble music.

*Texture:* This piece has a very jazzy and full texture. The bass pizzicato in the beginning along with the cute, swung melody gives it an almost zany feel. B sounds to me like a full-on jazz chart, following a common jazz progression but with beautiful, lush strings in the background. C is quirky and fun again, and it ends on a note that is sure to leave performers and audience alike with a big smile on their faces. This piece has a really interesting texture and I’m sure my students would enjoy rehearsing and performing it.

*Expression:* There is lots of room for artistic expression, especially at B. Since this piece is over the top, I would definitely have my students attempt vibrato and work on blending and balancing. Due to the jazzy nature of this piece, it is also riddled with chromaticism, something that is a perfect opportunity to teach one of the most fundamental aspects of musicality; leaning into chromaticism and naturally adding lift to different repetitions of similar phrases. The students can also learn to express themselves by playing in a jazz style, something that has always gone hand in hand with self-expression. To play swung eighth notes well, each performer must interpret them in a similar way, but there are many different ways to be correct. We might play around with different ways to swing and try different styles of playing swung eighth notes. There are a multitude of ways to practice expression in this piece.

*Additional Considerations:* This piece is somewhat difficult. It combines pizzicato with arco and also has some challenging accidentals. Also, I have noticed that string players generally have a harder time latching on to swung eighth notes and jazz style, so that would be a huge factor that I would need to consider before programming this piece. I also need to have a very reliable percussionist to play the temple block part because it is the foundation of the entire piece. I think that this piece could still be achievable by a mediocre beginning group, but it would require lots of work and practice playing swung eighth notes.

*Appropriate Teaching Concepts:* **Jazz style and harmony**. The primary concept I would teach through this piece would be jazz style and harmony. The piece is built off of swung eighths notes and also follows some common jazz chord progressions during the B section. Most string players I know struggle with playing in different styles other than classical, and I truly believe it is because they weren’t exposed to different styles early on. With this piece, we’d be able to practice swung eighth notes, accenting upbeats, and take a listen to some common chord progressions of a genre that most of the students have probably not been exposed to yet. **Syncopated rhythms in a new style**. This one is kind of a given considering the title of the piece. Most syncopated motifs in this piece are played unison by the entire ensemble, so it’s great practice for every instrument to understand and perform complex, syncopated rhythms. I can teach general syncopation through this piece, while also adding the jazz style and making it swung. Due to the emphasis on upbeats for jazz articulation anyway, I can also reinforce the idea that the middle note in a syncopated figure should have a slight accent. There are tons of ways that I can teach and rehearse syncopated rhythms in this piece, and this concept goes hand in hand with jazz style and harmony.

**Checklist and Timeline:**

**Beginning of School Year:**

8/12: *First Day of School*: Make sure auditorium is clear and check out facilities for all of the proposed concerts of the year including our spring concert on Thursday, May 14th, at 7:00 PM.

**One Month Ahead:**

4/10: Check out auditorium space for dress rehearsal the week of. Ideally rehearse in the auditorium Monday-Thursday, but if that is not possible then at least try to get access on Thursday during school or some other day that week.

4/11-4/12: Use the weekend to reach out to potential parent chaperones and to make sure that we have lighting/recording equipment available for the concert. Use these two days to also verify the length and repertoire and make any final adjustments to the concert.

4/13: Ask students for help designing concert advertisement posters (submissions due by 4/27).

**Two Weeks Ahead:**

4/29: Print out concert posters.

4/30: Ask students to share social media posts/advertisements and have a few trusted student volunteers put up posters around campus.

5/4: Set concert reminder and go over meeting location and details. Explain attire, admission costs, and all other formalities that may be included. Begin designing concert program and writing program notes.

**One Week Ahead:**

5 7: Ask for student help setting up the auditorium for the concert.

5/8: Finish designing program and notes. Get it bulk printed at FedEx or somewhere else on the way home for the weekend.

May 11: Reach out to custodians and verify their availability on Thursday. Confirm lighting and recording will be available on the day of.

**Concert Day:**

May 14: Dress rehearsal after school (3-4). Set up recording equipment and double check to make sure things are ready to go until about two hours before the start of the concert. Go grab some food and get ready to blow the audience away. Concert at 7. Have student volunteers help tear down afterwards, put instruments away, and send the students home.