

**Title:** African Folk Trilogy

**Arranger:** Anne McGinty

**Instrumentation/Voicing:** Beginning Band Grade 1½

**Analysis**

**Broad Description:**

Folk Song Trilogy is a medley of three traditional African folk songs from various parts of the continent as arranged by Anne McGinty. The first of the three songs, *Banuwa*, comprises the first half of the piece and is followed by the other two melodies, *Ditho tsa mmele* and *Sansa Kroma*. In general, the song is upbeat and very rhythmic, with a strong quarter note pulse throughout.

**Type/Genre:**

Folk/World Music

**Background Information:**

Folk song trilogy was written in 1998 by Anne McGinty and is the first of two of her compositions based on African folk songs. It was written with the research assistance of Bryan Burton, Associate Professor of Music Education at West Chester University in Pennsylvania.

The original folk melodies of this song are rooted in various African tribes. The first selection, *Banuwa*, is from western Africa and was also used by Christian missionaries who reused the melody along with the simple two word lyric, “Sing Noel.” The literal English translation of the lyrics however is “Don't cry little girl.” The second half of the song is comprised of two other African melodies, *Ditho tsa mmele* and *Sansa Kroma*. The first is a South African children's song similar in purpose to the English children's song “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” and was used to help children remember the names of body parts. *Sansa Kroma* is a children's game song, much in the same frame of reference as common Western children's games such as “Duck, Duck, Goose.” In *Sansa Kroma*, a young chick is chased around by a hawk (*sansa*) but is saved and protected by her friends.

The majority of the work is very straightforward, with common rhythms and normal instrument ranges. The *Ditho tsa mmele* section introduces a brief four part canon section, with entries staggered by two beats. The *Sansa Kroma* section introduces syncopation in two different rhythmic forms forming a complete four bar phrase. The two parts of the phrase resemble a musical question and answer.

Could be used as an introduction to African drumming and rhythmic improvisation.

**Performance Considerations:**

- Standard playing range for most beginning band students.
- Key of Concert B-Flat and E-Flat Major
- Clarinets go up to A
- Trumpets up to high C.
- Clarinets and trumpets are split into two parts for most of the song.
- All transitions are subito.

- Only the transition to *Sansa Kroma* changes key (to E-Flat)
- Utilizes stomping as a part of the music. Careful not to speed up!

#### **Additional Information:**

- Utilizes stomping
- Percussion uses Claves, Cabasa, Snare Drum, Cow Bell, and Orchestra Bells

#### **Elements of Music:**

##### **Form**

The overall form of this piece is a medley of three songs each of which presents a main theme that is followed by variations.

##### First Section:

- mm1-8 main theme and repetition of main theme
- mm 9-12 first harmony part enters in clarinets and claves
- mm13-16 second harmony part enters in saxes
- mm17-20 clarinets split and cabasa enters. Trumpets begin chant figure
- mm21-25 flute enters playing trumpet chant. Trumpet parts split to harmony
- mm25-32 bell part enters with variations. Snare drum begins variations

##### Second Section:

- mm33-36 statement of main theme in flutes and bells, cabasa ostinato
- mm37-41 four part canon of main theme, enter snare drum ostinato
- mm41-44 enter clave syncopated rhythm

##### Third Section:

- Change of key to E-Flat Major
- mm45-48 initial statement of theme in call and response between Brass and WW. Brass should listen to bass drum. All parts should listen closely to bass drum
- mm49-52 repeat of 45-48
- mm53-60 repeat of 45-48 with additional harmony and divided parts
- mm61-68 reprise of mm25-32 but in E-Flat Major

##### **Rhythm**

Straight quarters and eighths throughout most of the song for wind players.

Mm33 introduces eighth notes

mm 45 introduces dotted quarter syncopation in wind parts.

Percussion has syncopated rhythms throughout

In the first section, as each new instrument enters, so too does a new percussion instrument, although not with the same rhythm as the winds. Percussion parts utilize syncopation throughout all three parts.

##### **Melody**

B-Flat Major until measure 45, then E-Flat Major until the end

Stepwise movement predominates

Four bar phrases throughout all sections

##### **Harmony**

In the first section, as each voice entry adds another note to the chord. Starting with the third (Concert D) then the fifth (Concert F) and finally adding the tonic (Concert B-Flat)

The overall progression of the first section is I-IV-I-V-I each time the melody is restated.

## **Timbre and Texture**

The piece utilizes foot stomping in the first section, as well as extensive use of auxiliary percussion instruments including Claves, Cabasa, Snare Drum, and Cow Bell. The percussive rhythms throughout the piece push it forward through all three sections and give the song the necessary African tribal feel.

## **Expression**

No dynamic markings are given for this piece.

Four bar phrases throughout all three sections

Tempos are quarter note=152-160 for *Banuwa*, 120 for *Ditho tsa mmele*, and 152-160 for the *Sansa Kroma*.

There are no ritardandos or accelerandos. All tempo changes are subito.

## **Additional Considerations/Reasons to Perform This Composition:**

Changes in speed create contrast, while differing compositional devices such as harmony, the canon, and question and answer sections give each section of the piece unique qualities and things to listen for. There are four independent percussion parts with varying degrees of complexity. However, each of these percussion rhythms are very repetitive and accessible for most fifth grade drummers. The quarter note pulse of the bass drum rhythm is heard throughout the piece.

## **The Heart:**

The heart of this piece is the steady, rhythmic, African tribal pulse of the music. Even though the tempo changes, the steady beat holds the music together as it moves forward.

## **Skill Outcomes**

Students will be able to shift tempos (subito) and keep a steady beat without a noticeable break in the flow of the piece.

### **A. Strategies**

1. Based only on the speed of the director's upbeat, have the students play a quarter note B-flat or E-flat scale. Do not count off. Play the scales in succession (B-flat, E-flat, B-flat again) speeding up the tempo on the first note of the E-flat scale and slowing back down when the group returns to the B-flat scale.
2. Have the group count out loud (1-2-3-4) in time with the recording as they listen. Have them tap their foot in time with the beat at the same time.
3. Use a bouncing basketball to demonstrate the change in tempo. Have students try bouncing at different speeds while the other students tap their feet/clap/pat at the same tempo.

### **B. Assessment**

1. Observe and listen to the group as they transition from one section of the song to the next.
2. Observe and listen to the verbal counting during strategy #2.
3. Private and small group lesson spot checks. Are they tapping their foot in rhythm with the beat?

## **Knowledge Outcomes**

Students will understand what a four bar phrase is and how phrases are used to convey complete musical thoughts.

### **A. Strategies**

1. Have the group play the main theme of the first section in one breath. Then, chop up this phrase into two parts and breathe in the middle. Try again breathing after first measure or after third measure. How does breaking the phrase in the wrong place make the music sound different?
2. Write out the words to the Star Spangled Banner. Have the students read the words of the poem and place the pauses in the wrong place. Oh say can you, see by the dawns early, light... etc. Put them in the place that people normally breathe (after see and after light) Does this make more sense or is it still wrong? Where should the breath really go? How many bars is a phrase in the SSB?
3. On an overhead, have several different scores of well known songs such as Row Row Row Your Boat etc. Have students add breath marks to the music. Have them sight read/play the music with the breath marks as notated. Draw in phrase marks and discuss the difference between phrase marks, ties, and slurs.

### **B. Assessment**

1. Have the students write breath marks into African Folk Trilogy at the appropriate places.
2. Have the students add breath marks and phrase marks to other common melodies.
3. Observe the students as they play the songs. Watch their breathing.

## **Affective Outcome**

Students will appreciate the parallels between the songs and games of daily life of people both in Africa and the United States.

### **A. Strategies**

1. Sing the children's song "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes," and/or "The Hokey Pokey," and draw connections from this song to the Ditho tsa mmele section. Why do we sing these songs? Why do South African children sing such songs?
2. Compare recordings of other tribal rhythms and folk songs with American music that is used for similar purposes. Examples include graduation ceremonies, visiting dignitaries, etc.
3. Read from or have the students read the book, The Singing Man.

### **B. Assessment**

1. Observation of the student's verbal reflection on the importance of folk songs in society.
2. Students will write the names of folk songs that continue to have a lasting presence in our society.

## **Music Selection**

This piece is a very well written arrangement of authentic African folk songs in a format that is very accessible and interesting for beginning band musicians. The various components and compositional techniques used in the piece combine to create a piece that allows the reinforcement of existing skills while still providing avenues to teach slightly more advanced concepts and multicultural understanding during a very formative period in a student's musical training.