

SHINE

CONCERT BAND
GRADE 3

BY DR. MARC R. DICKEY

If you are familiar with Michael Markowski's previous works (*Shadow Rituals*, *Turkey in the Straw*, and *Instinctive Travels*), when you page through the score of this new Markowski score there appears to be something missing: Meter changes!! The piece is uncharacteristically in good old common time from beginning to end. But never fear, Markowski finds other ways, clever ones, with which to maintain rhythmic pulse and drive as a significant component in this new opus.

For those who teach and conduct younger players, *Shine* is Markowski's most accessible piece to date. And yet, there is content here that more mature players and audiences will be captivated by. Why captivated? For one thing, the melodic and harmonic materials are quite sparse, so that one becomes very aware of the way in which they are manipulated throughout

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clef staff, while the pitches are played melodically in the vibraphone. By m. 3, a pedal tone is added, revealing what is now an F minor tetrachord. And a colorful pedal tone it is, undulating amongst crotales and chimes, with hairpin dynamic changes in the alto saxophones and fluttering tongues in the horns. A triplet motive in the snare drum interrupts the duple feel of the piece thus far, signaling the arrival of the first real motive. This triplet device will continue to pop in on occasion, a little question mark here and there in this otherwise overwhelmingly duple work.

This motive is an expanded version of the ascending pattern from m. 1, but with two added

Figure 1: m.1 introductory pattern

♩ = 152-160

Flute 1 *one player*

Flute 2 *two players*
(hard yarn mallets)

Vibraphone *mp*

G, Ab, and Bb, which ingeniously reach your ear both melodically and harmonically at the same time [m. 1]. Three solo flutists play the pitches as a soft cluster at the top of the treble

Figure 2: mm. 8-11 first motive

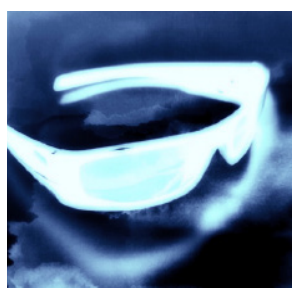
Bb Cl. 1

by this able young composer.

The piece is introduced with just three pitches,

pitches and a new, insistent melodic contour [mm. 8-11]. Syncopated accents on the "and" of beat four provide stylistic vitality, while colors provided by the cup muted trumpets in the melody and the piccolo/oboe/soprano saxophone combination in the pedal point pull in the listener. "Shine" is very much a piece about shifting, changing, emerging tone colors. If something seems a bit off-kilter since the introduction, it is

because Markowski has shifted the pedal point down to the 7th scale degree in F minor, while the melodic material is now built around F, G, and Ab. This motivic material is developed a bit more, with a nod to the Lydian mode and a bit of counterpoint developing out of the pedal point. The phrase ends back on the G, Ab, Bb in tied whole notes that crescendo mightily



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into...nothing. Nothing but a suspended cymbal left to vibrate, and a completely unexpected moment of rhythmic repose, a stub of the toe in the crack of the sidewalk. When the action returns three beats later, the motive has once again morphed, now from Lydian to whole tone in a series of imitative entrances tumbling about [m. 18-21].

At m. 25 an episodic sequence of descending quarter note bell tones slows the rhythmic drive momentarily and signals the return of the original motive, now turned upside down [mm. 29-31]. Accompanied by the whimsy of a slapstick, glockenspiel glissando, and those cup muted trumpets on a rare close position Eb chord, the first section of the piece concludes as an offbeat *tutti* entrance veers



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into an unexpected and mighty in-your-face Db major chord. This triumphant triad *crescendos* into a repetition of the entire first section of the piece.

A borrowed convention from the classical symphony perhaps, but the repetition of the entire opening section is welcome here. The events in the first section of the piece change rapidly enough, and are surprising enough upon first hearing, that the opportunity to play and hear them once again prepares us for what comes next. When the second iteration begins to veer off as before, the ear expects that mighty Db chord to reappear; the listener is both disappointed and rewarded with a shimmering *pp* upper woodwind Db chord instead.

The second section of *Shine* takes the five-note motive from m.

18 and turns it upside down. This section, again in classical tradition, is more subtle and understated than the opening of the piece. As at the beginning, the motive is first stated in the vibraphone [mm. 77-79], and then passed to growling muted trombones, and then to dark *chalmereau* woodwinds. There are some lovely moments, such as when a lone trumpet player is left exposed on a solo fourth line D in another moment of repose. There are some dark moments in the accompaniment here too, including a rhythmic motive in the low reeds and brass that may cause you to look back over your shoulder to make sure no one is chasing you down a dark alley. At m. 96 a simple stylistic detail changes the nature of a quadruple eighth note accompaniment when the accent on the “and” of four disappears [m. 93 vs. mm. 96-97].

Figure 3: mm. 18-21 motive in whole tones



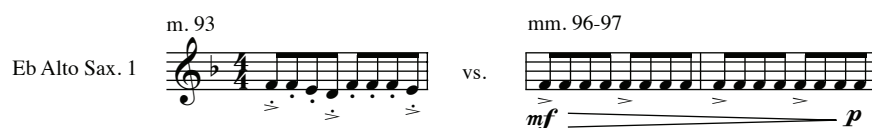
Figure 4: mm. 29-31 inverted motive



Figure 5: mm. 77-79 inverted motive from m. 18



Figure 6: m. 93 vs. mm. 96-97 stylistic change in accompaniment



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Figure 7: mm. 100-102 transition derived from motive



Various instrumental groupings overlap each other in layers of *crescendo* and *decrescendo*, all underneath an episodic ascending line in slow motion, shifting through Db Major, F minor, Ab Major and then easing us gently down into a first inversion Eb Major chord that crosses us over into new third section territory. The elegant transition adds a quicker paced soaring woodwind line that emanates from the lower voices and foreshadows what is to come in this new section [mm. 100-102], and refers ever so briefly back to the motive from m. 8 before we actually move on.

Figure 8: mm. 104-107 legato motive derived from bell tones m. 63



The third section of *Shine* begins with a new *legato* motive that reminds us of the descending bell tones from m. 63. But now they ascend back to where they came from, and then dip down to a tonic that feels at first calm and nostalgic [mm. 104-107]. And the intensity from the motive seems to increase as Markowski layers it in sequences, first at two-measure intervals and then increasing the rate of motion to one per measure toward a triumphant jolt of a Bb first inversion chord, with an accent offset to the second beat of the bar to create an even greater sense of power and awe [mm. 112-14].

As you move into this section you will begin to realize that this piece is not just a joy for the player and the listener, but a joy to conduct as well. There will be places in *Shine*, at Markowski's tempo of 152-160, that you'll want to try moving into a soaring

cut time yourself—and you should! Your choices as to where you move in and out of cut time to make the music work best and help your players the most may not be as obvious as you

first think. Determining this with your group is an added satisfaction for the conductor.

Now, back at that Bb Jolt: Markowski comes out of this climactic point with a few brief bars of really fine counterpoint that lead to a return of the quadruplet eighth note

accompaniment from m. 96. Markowski brings back the second section's syncopated, *staccato* descending motive, mixing it now with the melodic contour of the lyrical material from m. 104 [mm. 126-127]. It sparkles and crackles as he tosses it on and off the beat and creates a brief antiphonal duet with minimalistic tendencies. This unselfconscious nod to minimalism works especially well because the musical materials are so sparse and bare. And it serves as a transition to a section of summary—a development, signaled by rare triplet quartet notes in the suspended cymbal.

Here Markowski begins, from m. 132, to duck and weave the motives he's given us thus far, beginning with the ascending motive from m. 8, now combined with ascending layers of *legato* quarter notes. The once naked motive from the first section is now cloaked with sustained ascending lines from the third. The

vigorous motive from the first section disappears, and a lovely, clustery chord of Bb minor mingled with Eb Major swells into a sweet reminiscence of the little tune from the third section, with gentle entrances on beat two that remind one of the more terrifying jolt we felt back at m. 112.

Another minimalistic moment creeps in, consisting of simple repetition of quarter notes in the low brass with likewise repeated eighth notes in the saxophones, dynamically ebbing and flowing as if trying to get their engine to turn over. A delightful, quirky accompaniment pattern from m. 87 is added

Figure 9: mm. 112-114 the Bb Jolt!



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Figure 10: mm. 126–127 antiphonal duet



in the woodwinds to provide encouragement [mm. 154–157].

The engine cranks, and suddenly at m. 162 we have a subtle but totally danceable six-measure party on our hands, highly syncopated with some fun percussion writing. In the midst of this little social affair, the end of the original motive (from m. 10) is used in sequence to bring us to the beginning of a recapitulation that reminds us that to *Shine* is an aspiration, not a destination.

The original motive returns full on at this point (m. 170), accented by a crunchy, climactic chord of Eb7(b10) topped with Cb Major. From here Markowski drives *Shine* home: A line of descending quarter note triplets in the low reeds and brass plunges into a crystal clear pool of ascending whole note bell tones in saxophones and horns. This is accompanied by unruly, flailing syncopated eighth notes, soon set straight by an

offbeat fanfare figure as the trumpets come to the rescue and bring us back once again to the B♭ Jolt from m. 112, now a step lower.

The saxophones and horns interrupt with a strong reminder of material from the third section, but the Jolt, now in Ab, wrests attention back onto itself.

Staying true to the clever development of sparse motivic material throughout, the last few bars make reference to the first three pitches from m. 1, and then the pitch set from m. 8, both in augmentation. In the last six measures, ecstatic glockenspiel and chime *glissandos* set up a surprise attack on the whole tone scale by most of the winds that inspires the trombones and reeds to come in on a highly dissident A Major tri-tone chord. Rationality quickly returns though, as these rebels *glissando* and flourish to a final beat two Jolt, this time ending on a big fat Eb Major second inversion chord.



Shine is rewarding to pursue as players and listeners follow Markowski's craftsmanship, realizing the raw creativity of the three opening pitches and appreciating how they evolve from beginning to end. But be sure to take time to also step back from the piece as you would a painting, and admire the palette of shifting and emerging tone colors. There is good art here too. ♦

Figure 11: mm. 154–157 minimalistic ebb and flow with quirky woodwind accompaniment

