

The Composition

Explorations was designed to be a teaching piece for a heterogeneous beginning string orchestra. Each movement increases in difficulty, with additional techniques introduced in each movement.

The inspiration for this composition came from *The Formative Years at Atlanta's Westminster Schools* by Dr. William L. Pressly, McGuire Publishing Company, Atlanta, Georgia, 1991. The underlying theme throughout this book is that students should be given the opportunity to explore the world and its society through the curriculum of a school. Although the school guides the student down certain paths, it is incumbent upon the student to explore these paths, and to ultimately find his/her way to a complete education.

I. Preparations was written for the string student who has had approximately one month's instruction time on the instrument. All the notes are played on open strings in unison or octaves. The rhythms are primarily quarter notes, although a few half notes are also found. In this movement, the melodic interest is maintained by the piano. The primary goal is to teach students to play together as an ensemble. A secondary goal for students is to learn to make changes in dynamics and tempo to achieve a more musical effect in their performance. It is suggested that this movement be performed arco; however, it may be performed pizzicato if students' bow technique has not sufficiently developed. Another performance variation would be to play the movement twice, once pizzicato and repeated arco.

II. Charting the Course adds the dimension of left hand fingering. The violins and violas use only the first two fingers, the cellos use fingers 1 and 3, and the basses use fingers 1 and 4. The strings play in unison or octaves, while the melodic interest is maintained by the piano. Rhythms for the strings are no more complex than quarter notes. Half notes are present to teach a longer, more fluid bow stroke. Because of these longer notes, this movement should be performed arco only.

III. The Journey add these techniques: playing in harmony, using 3rd finger (violins/violas), using 4th finger (cello), 3/4 meter, and eighth note rhythms. The strings are the focus of this movement, with the piano taking a subordinate role. The key signature continues to be D Major, with no low 2nds (violin/viola) involved. This movement is a rondo, with the cellos and basses taking theme I at measure 17, while the other strings pluck a harmony part. In this movement, the viola doubles the 2nd violin part, while the cellos and basses play independent harmony parts.

IV. Somebody's Knocking brings us to the final goal of our explorations, an arrangement of a Southern spiritual. The title reflects the educational philosophy of Dr. Pressly – that opportunity always knocks for those who are astute enough to take its advantage.

The additional techniques involved in this movement are hooked bows, fingered notes on the violin E string, low second finger in violins/viola, second finger in cello and bass, and the independence of the cello and bass parts. The rhythms include eighth notes, however the music lends itself to being played *alla breve*, thus causing the eighths to be counted like sixteenths. The 2nd violin and viola parts are doubled. The strings are the focus of this movement, while the piano provides the accompaniment.

The Student Parts

Page 4 of the score features material also provided on page 4 of the string parts. The material is designed to reinforce creative thinking and exploration.

More Explorations about Explorations

Exploring our world is exciting! We can visit many places and see many things. We can meet people of all ages and backgrounds. When we want to learn new things, our opportunity to explore never stops.

You are just beginning to explore music and your instrument. It's fun to make music on your instrument and contribute your sounds to the ensemble. Participating in the orchestra is important and what you do makes a big difference in how your orchestra sounds.

A music teacher living in Georgia composed this music. His name is Mr. William Dyson and he teaches students just like you each day. After teaching for the day, he composes music. Composing music is his way to explore new musical ideas. Mr. Dyson takes pleasure in finding new ways to express various ideas through music, and he enjoys sharing his compositions with musicians around the world.

Preparations

To prepare is “to make ready,” according to the American Heritage Dictionary. When you prepare for a vacation, what do you do? Hopefully, you plan and prepare in advance of your departure. Preparing for your vacation might include choosing where you want to go, what you need to pack, and so on.

Preparing for your first performance as a string player is important, too. What do you need to do to be ready? Take a sheet of paper and write a list of things you need to do to prepare for your first concert. Here is one thing for you to think about: Do you practice your music so that you know it well?

Charting the Course

Explorers including Christopher Columbus, David Livingstone, and Neil Armstrong charted their courses before setting out on their expeditions. Since they were charting to travel in areas new to them, they had to work carefully so that they could complete their journey successfully.

You can chart your own course too. Choose one of the following activities:

- 1) Chart your course for activities occurring this Saturday. Start your course from breakfast and chart it until you go to bed at night. If you have soccer practice or dance class be sure to include that in your course. Don't forget to include walking the dog or setting the dinner table in your chart!
- 2) Select a favorite explorer and write a brief report about his or her most famous expedition. Discover what made that journey successful or not.
- 3) Select a composer and write a brief report about his/her life. Learn why your composer was successful.
- 4) This movement is called *Charting the Course*. As you play your part and listen to the ensemble, what comes to your mind? Write a story you think goes along with this piece and its title.

The Journey

A journey can be an unforgettable experience. A journey, though, doesn't have to be a trip or a vacation. Just think, you are on a journey with your music. A journey can be almost any learning experience. Hopefully, the journey you are on with your music is fun, enjoyable, and will last a lifetime. Write a report about your journey with music. Why do you enjoy music so much? Do you think you will continue playing your instrument in the future?

Somebody's Knocking

Which describes you the best:

- 1) I am eager for opportunities to learn and do new things!
- 2) I don't like to learn, but I will if I have to.

Somebody's Knocking best symbolizes the spirit of one of the above sentences. Which one do you think it best matches?

On a sheet of paper, write down five descriptive words that matches *Somebody's Knocking*. Here's an idea for your list: “happy.”

Commissioned for The Westminster Schools' Elementary Orchestras, Linda Cherniavsky and Scott Morris, Directors, in honor of the opening of Love Hall and dedicated to Judy Marine, Principal of Irene and George Woodruff School, Atlanta, Georgia.

Explorations

I. Preparations

Full Conductor Score
Approx. total time – 5:05

William Dyson

Moderato

1 2 3 4

1 2

Violins

Viola

Cello

String Bass

Piano

mf

5 6 7 8 **rit.**

1 2

Vlins.

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

mf

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a tempo

9 10 11 12

Vlns. 1 Vlns. 2 Vla. Cello Str. B. Pno.

13 14 15 16

Vlns. 1 Vlns. 2 Vla. Cello Str. B. Pno.

f

17 18 19 20

Vlns. 1 V

Vlns. 2 V

Vla. V

Cello V

Str. B. V

Pno.

21 22 23 24 rit.

Vlns. 1 mf

Vlns. 2 mf

Vla. mf

Cello mf

Str. B. mf

Pno. mf

a tempo

25 26 27 28

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

29 30 31 32

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

mp

II. Charting the Course

1 **Andante** 2 3 4

Violins 1 2

Viola

Cello

String Bass

Piano *mf*

5 6 7 8

Vlms. 1 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

9 10 11 12

Vlns. 1 V

Vlns. 2 V

Vla. V

Cello V

Str. B. V

Pno.

13 14 15 16

Vlns. 1 *f*

Vlns. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Cello *f*

Str. B. *f*

Pno. *f*

3 1 2 1 4 3

17 18 19 20 *ten.*

Vlns. 1 *mp*

Vlns. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Cello *mp*

Str. B. *mp*

Pno. *mp* *ten.* *ten.*

21 22 23 24

Vlns. 1 *mf*

Vlns. 2 *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Cello *mf*

Str. B. *mf*

Pno. *mf*

5 4 3 1 4 2 1 2 1 3 4 3 1 3

25 26 27 28

V V V V

1 Vlns.

2 Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

29 30 31 32

mp *mp* *mp* *mp*

1 Vlns.

2 Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

III. The Journey

Allegro moderato (in 3)

Violins
1
2

Viola

Cello

String Bass

Piano

Measures 5-8 are labeled with measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8. The string parts are marked with 'V' for bowing. The piano part includes fingering numbers (1-5) and dynamic markings (*f*).

9

10 11 12

Vlns. 1 *mp*

Vlns. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Cello *mp*

Str. B. *mp*

Pno. *mp*

13 14 15 16

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

17

1 Vlns. 1 *f* pizz.

2 Vlns. 2 *f* pizz.

Vla. *f* pizz.

Cello *f*

Str. B. *f*

Pno. *f*

18 19 20

21 22 23 24

1 Vlns. 1

2 Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello *v*

Str. B. *v*

Pno.

25 arco

1 Vlns. 26 27 28 29V

2 Vlns. arco V

Vla. arco V

Cello V

Str. B. V

Pno.

30 31 32 33 34

1 Vlns. V

2 Vlns. V

Vla. V

Cello V

Str. B. V

Pno.

35 36 37 38 39

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

40 41 42 43 44

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

IV. Somebody's Knocking (Spiritual)

Allegro

The score is for a string quartet and piano. It is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The first system (measures 1-4) features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes. The second system (measures 5-8) shows a melodic line in the first violin and a more active piano accompaniment. Fingerings and dynamics like *mf* and *pizz.* are indicated throughout.

Violins 1 & 2, Viola, Cello, String Bass, Piano

9 10 11 12

Vlins. 1 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

13 14 15 16

Vlins. 1 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

17 18 19 20

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

21 22 23 24

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

pizz.

mp

pizz.

mp

pizz.

mp

pizz.

mp

pizz.

mp

25

26 27 28 29

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

arco

L2

30 31 32 33 34

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. B.

Pno.

arco

L2

f arco

f arco

f

f

f

2

2

2

3 1 5 1

2 1

5 1

4 2

3 1

35 36 37 38 39

Vlns. 1 *mp*

Vlns. 2 *mp* L2

Vla. *mp* L2

Cello *mp* 2

Str. B. *mp*

Pno. *mp*

40 41 42 43 44

Vlns. 1 *cresc.*

Vlns. 2 *cresc.*

Vla. *cresc.*

Cello *cresc.* 2

Str. B. *cresc.* 2

Pno. *cresc.*

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

