
PANDEMIC PANDEMONIUM

BENJAMIN DEAN TAYLOR

for concert band in virtual performance

*Commissioned by the
MADISON WEST HIGH SCHOOL CONCERT BAND
KEVIN RHODES, director*

2020

Duration: c. 4-5 minutes

Music typeset by the composer

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Taylor, Benjamin Dean
- *PANDEMIC PANDEMONIUM*, concert band in virtual performance

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This work was designed to embrace Zoom as a new performance space. All players perform live, unmuted. Any teleconference platform will work such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Teams, though in our experimentation, Zoom gave the best audio results. The piece is setup to work with the inherent latency of these platforms by creating aleatoric textures with free flowing solo melodies on top.

Grade 2

Instrumentation

Flute/Oboe

Clarinet

Alto Sax/F Horn

Trumpet

Trombone/Bassoon/Tuba/T. Sax./B. Sax./Bs. Clar.

Percussion (all playing bells, or may substitute piano)

Duration is about 4-5 minutes

Program Note

This work is in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic and it's disruption of typical large ensemble rehearsals and performance. The students of Madison West High School, their director Kevin Rhodes, and I collaborated on this piece over the course of about five weeks. During our sessions together I led the students in creative music making games and activities to help them get comfortable making compositional decisions and playing their instruments together on Zoom unmuted. We also experimented and generated ideas for this specific collaboration. Many of the melodic fragments found in this work came directly from student's ideas. Also, as any performance on Zoom is inherently visual and essentially a music video, the visual elements in this piece also came directly from student's input. Overall, we decided that this piece is a representation of the year 2020 — all of it's hardships and losses balanced with the hope and confidence that we can endure. In our collaboration sessions we had some great discussions about the "silver lining" aspects of the pandemic; new hobbies and interests like gardening and baking bread, more time with family, more enjoyment of reading and exercise, etc. As we come together we can support each other and feel connected. These are far from ideal circumstances to make music. But we must! We all need to heal from this pandemic and this work is a symbol of hope, love and faith.

Melodic Translation Process

Performers may be interested to learn how words are translated into melodies. First, we determine where each letter lies in the alphabet with A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, etc. Then we choose a diatonic scale, in this case concert Bb. For any numbers higher than 7, we subtract 7 until we've reached a number between 1 and 7. So for example, the letter P, which is the 16th letter in the alphabet would become 2 because $16 - 7 - 7 = 2$. To illustrate with an example from this piece, the word "HOPE" would translate to 8,15,16,5 then be reduced to 1,1,2,5. Thus, at letter A you see that the bells play the word "HOPE" by playing scale degrees 1,1,2,5.

Performance Notes

Latency

This piece is aleatoric in nature in order to accommodate limitations of virtual performance. Latency makes it impossible for players to line up exactly. This is planned for and embraced in this work. All visual cues given by the conductor will be executed at the players best observation and need not line up exactly with other players execution of the same cue. It is recommended that the conductor print the included "cue cards" and hold them up to the camera to cue each rehearsal letter.

Balance

There are also very few times where everyone is playing simultaneously. This is due to the fact that once more than about 8 people are playing at the same time, it is very difficult to hear everyone, and impossible to achieve a balanced sound. Therefore, most of the piece is comprised of small subsets of the large group, usually defined by a melodic solo and some type of background texture. In order to get the best balance possible, please have players experiment with microphone settings and/or physical distance to the microphone (ie, getting closer to the microphone during a solo).

Rhythm and tempo

Anytime notes are given without stems, this is to denote that the player should choose rhythmic values to make the line as expressive as possible. These lines should feel floating and free, not metronomic or robotic. Tempo markings are occasionally given but apply only the part playing a groove. The melodic solos then float on top of the groove.

Dynamics

Very few dynamic indications are given for solo melodies. Soloists should choose their own dynamics in order to make the line as expressive as possible.

Preparation to performance

All performers will need to be wearing headphones to perform this piece. Also, please be sure to try and reduce all background noise as much as possible. No TV or music on. No loud AC or refrigerator, or dishwasher running. No siblings screaming in the other room. Silence your phone. Unless you are home alone, you will likely need to be diplomatic about this by politely asking your family to help you. Having said that, maybe you can't eliminate some background noise. That's fine. Just do your best with whatever parameters are in your control.

Reading the music

Performers need to either memorize their parts, have the printed sheet music sitting on a stand, or have a separate laptop or iPad displaying their music. My suggestion is when in doubt, keep it simple. My preference is that performers memorize it. This isn't a hard piece. Memorizing it will also allow them to get into the performance more and enhance their overall level of musical expression. Second to memorizing it, I would suggest having the printed sheet music displayed right next to the computer so that visual cues from the director will easily be seen.

Lighting

To get the best quality video, please have as much lighting as possible. In most scenarios, overhead lighting will put your face in shadow and not be ideal. If possible, please place a desk lamp next to your computer so that it illuminates your face and instrument.

Zoom audio and video settings

When possible, please have performers enable “use original sound” in the Zoom settings. Unfortunately, some platforms do not allow this including chrome books. While not required, external microphones will provide superior audio quality to most built in microphones. Prior to the performance, instruct all performers (and audience members) to “Hide non video participants” in their Zoom settings. During the performance, all audience members should be muted and have their video off. Everyone should have their display set to “gallery” mode so they can see all the performers. There are keyboard shortcuts for muting/unmuting as well as turning your video on/off. Please have performers look these up for their specific platform/system and practice in rehearsal with them. Having performers turn on/off their video adds a nice visual element to the performance so that we are only seeing the performers that are actually playing at any given moment.

Note on concert technology limitations and live streaming

Depending on a student’s home internet bandwidth, it may be impossible for the student’s parents to watch the concert live with their student playing in the adjoining room. If there is any doubt as to whether a student’s wi-fi can handle two simultaneous Zoom calls, it is suggested that the Zoom performance be recorded and live streamed either directly after the performance (for example 30 minutes later is the “watch-party” where performers and parents can watch the concert) or at another date/time. For any video use other than live streaming or a singular watch party (like posting to social media, or Youtube, or a school website) please contact the composer to inquire about a video sync license.

Props

Each performer is required to have a surgical mask and gloves for letter F. Ideally, these will all be matching blue masks and blue gloves. Then at letter H, those not playing should provide a visual background by grabbing a prop and dancing with it. The item should have personal meaning and be something that is a silver lining to the pandemic; so for example it could be a favorite book because you’ve had more time to read, or a running shoe because you’ve enjoyed more time to exercise, or a paintbrush because you’ve found a new interest in painting, or a new pet - whatever, anything that you can hold up and show the audience.

Logistics of Solos

It is recommended that students and conductor determine the order of solos in rehearsal and write players names into their music. This way individual soloists can know who precedes them and can play their solos at the appropriate time without needing individual cues from the conductor.

About the Composer



Benjamin Dean Taylor is a composer of contemporary art music. His energetic, adventurous music provides a uniquely refreshing sonic experience for performers and audiences alike. Trained as a trumpet player and pianist, he performs with and writes music for a variety of chamber ensembles, jazz combos and big bands, wind bands, orchestras, choirs, and experimental ensembles. He received degrees in music composition from Indiana University, Brigham Young University and Bowling Green State University. Dr. Taylor's prizes and honors include winner in the Frank Ticheli Composition Competition, a BMI Student Composers Award, four Barlow Endowment Commissions, and an ASCAP Young Jazz Composer Award. His music is frequently performed in the United States and abroad. Dr. Taylor resides in Bloomington, Indiana, with his wife and six children.

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PANDEMIC PANDEMONIUM

Commissioned by the Madison West High School Concert Band, Kevin Rhodes, director

Benjamin Dean Taylor

Flute/Oboe $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 48$ "Gesture of Unity" [SING] "ah" (stagger breathe) **A** $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66$ "Bells of Hope"

Clarinet div. a3 *mf* Stagger releases [Turn off video]

Alto Sax/F Horn div. *mf* Stagger releases [Turn off video]

Trumpet div. a3 *mf* Stagger releases [Turn off video]

BASSES: Tbn./Bsn./Tb./T. Sax./B. Sax./Bs. Cl. *mf* Stagger releases [Turn off video]

Bells [SING] "ah" 1 2 3 4 5 Solo "hope" All "2020" Solo "hope"

Fl./Ob. (Flutes only) div. a3 [PLAY] *mf* **B Groovy** $\text{♩} = 120$ Slowly start to trill then speed up trill. Then vary trill speed independent of others. Sometimes just hold the pitch and don't trill.

Cl. All 5 soloists turn on video after groove starts. Solo 1 "school" Solo 2 "bored"

Sx./Hn. Solo 1 "school" Solo 2 "bored"

Tpt. Solo 1 "school" Solo 2 "bored"

Basses [VIDEO ON] Solo *mp* (you may pass this off to another person after several repetitions)

Bls. Solo "heal" All "2020" [Turn off video]



These solo loops progressively overlap until eventually everyone is playing on top of each other in a chaotic mess.

FL./Ob.

Cl.

Sx./Hn.

Tpt.

Basses

Bls.

Solo 3 "twenty-twenty"

Solo 4 "election"

Solo 5 "fires"

Loop 1 "covid"

Loop 2 "corona"

Solo

FL./Ob.

Cl.

Sx./Hn.

Tpt.

Basses

Bls.

Loop 3 "this sucks"

Loop 4 "weather"

Loop 5 "covid19"

Solo loop 6 "bad"

Everyone else joins in with a solo loop of their choice.

(alternate between these two drones always one full breath in duration)

D All: Select loop of choice and play as fast as possible

Loop 1 "covid" Loop 2 "corona" Loop 3 "this sucks" Loop 4 "weather" Loop 5 "covid19"

Fl./Ob. Cl. Sx./Hn. Tpt. Basses Bls.

E Solo loop 6 "bad" **F** DIRECTOR MUTES ALL Solo "essential workers"

Wave hands in horror and turn off video (except for speakers)

Put on mask and gloves (except for soloist)

Put on mask and gloves

Wave hands in horror and turn off video (except for speakers)

div. a3 Put on mask and gloves Wave hands in horror and turn off video (except for speakers)

div. (use alt. fing. for "A" - 3rd valve) Put on mask and gloves Wave hands in horror and turn off video (except for speakers)

div. Put on mask and gloves Wave hands in horror and turn off video (except for speakers)

Solo loop 6 "bad" Put on mask and gloves Wave hands in horror and turn off video (except for speakers)

Fl./Ob. Cl. Sx./Hn. Tpt. Basses Bls.

Fl./Ob.

Cl.

Sx./Hn.

Tpt.

Basses

Bls.

Four speakers read the following paragraph as soon as they have their masks on. Speaker 2 should enter about 4 seconds after speaker 1, and so on with each speaker staggering their entrance.

"Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms include; Fever or chills, Cough, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, Fatigue, Muscle or body aches, Headache, New loss of taste or smell, Sore throat, Congestion or runny nose, Nausea or vomiting, Diarrhea. This list does not include all possible symptoms. CDC will continue to update this list as we learn more. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you."

G ♩ = c. 66 "Bells of Hope"

Fl./Ob.

Cl.

Sx./Hn.

Tpt.

Basses

Bls.

Four speakers are still reading.

Solo "hope"

All "2020"

Solo "hope"

Solo "heal"

All "2020"

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Lots of soloists may either play a short melody from the following selection, or improvise a melody from the concert G minor pentatonic scale or G blues scale. Those not soloing should grab an item that represents something positive about 2020 and show the camera.

H

Groovy

$\text{♩} = 120$

Fl./Ob. Solo lick 1 "school" Solo lick 2 "masks" Solo lick 3 "depressed" Solo lick 4 "zoom" minor pentatonic blues scale

Cl. Solo lick 1 "school" Solo lick 2 "masks" Solo lick 3 "depressed" Solo lick 4 "zoom" minor pentatonic blues scale

Sx./Hn. Solo lick 1 "school" Solo lick 2 "masks" Solo lick 3 "depressed" Solo lick 4 "zoom" minor pentatonic blues scale

Tpt. Solo lick 1 "school" Solo lick 2 "masks" Solo lick 3 "depressed" Solo lick 4 "zoom" minor pentatonic blues scale

Basses Solo

Bls. Solo lick 1 "school" Solo lick 2 "masks" Solo lick 3 "depressed" Solo lick 4 "zoom" minor pentatonic blues scale

SOLOS CONTINUE

This solo section can be optionally repeated between 2-4 times

Fl./Ob. (This solo may be passed off to others)

Cl. (This solo may be passed off to others)

Sx./Hn. (This solo may be passed off to others)

Tpt. (This solo may be passed off to others)

Basses (This solo may be passed off to others)

Bls. (This solo may be passed off to others)

I

J ♩ = c. 48 "Gesture of Unity"

Fl./Ob. [SING] "ah"

Cl. div. a3 *mf*

Sx./Hn. div. *mf*

Tpt. div. a3 *mf*

Basses Solo "depressed" *f* *mf*

Bls. [SING] "ah"

K

Fl./Ob. Solo 1 "sleeping" Solo 2 "hobbies" Solo 3 "drawings" Solo 4 "family"

Cl. Solo 1 "sleeping" Solo 2 "hobbies" Solo 3 "drawings" Solo 4 "family"

Sx./Hn. Solo 1 "sleeping" Solo 2 "hobbies" Solo 3 "drawings" Solo 4 "family"

Tpt. Solo 1 "sleeping" Solo 2 "hobbies" Solo 3 "drawings" Solo 4 "family"

Basses Solo 1 "sleeping" Solo 2 "hobbies" Solo 3 "drawings" Solo 4 "family"

Bls. Solo 1 "sleeping" Solo 2 "hobbies" Solo 3 "drawings" Solo 4 "family"

L

Fl./Ob.

Solo 5 "together"

Solo "corona"

Cl.

Sx./Hn.

Tpt.

Basses

Bls.

M

[SING]
(match pitch
of Cl. or bass)

close mouth
to "mm"

Fl./Ob.

div. "ah"

Cl.

div. "ah"

Sx./Hn.

div. "ah"

Tpt.

div. "ah"

Basses

div. [PLAY]
p

(drop out when you run out of breath)

Bls.

Solo "hope"

All "2020"

Solo "hope"

Solo "heal"

All "2020"