

ALLAIRE, G. G.

SWISS NOEL

Instrumentation: Trumpet in B-flat, Horn in F, Trombone

Source: CHS

Duration: 3'

Level: Easy

Status: Score (restricted access)

Date: Unknown

Ranges

Trumpet in B-flat: d' - d''

Horn in F: a - c''

Trombone: B-flat - b-flat

Swiss Noel is a simple setting of a familiar French Canadian Christmas folksong. The middle section captures the festive quality of the season and is more rhythmic and energetic than the outer two sections which comment on the peace and beauty of the nativity scene.

Technical Challenges

This composition is well-suited to the capabilities of beginning instrumentalists. Ranges are limited with easy upper and lower register approaches and judicious use of register extremes. However, accents and loud dynamics in low register horn passages present some minor tone control, projection, and articulation challenges. At a moderate tempo, the characteristic quarter- and eighth-note rhythmic patterns pose few dexterity challenges beyond the B-flat major - F major key signature change in the middle section. While low register accents and dynamics in the horn part necessitate a supple embouchure, the simple scalar and triadic melodic constructions pose no significant flexibility challenges. The outer two peaceful sections demand a refined, detached articulation style and the ability to slur short, eighth-note scalar patterns. In the middle section, there must be a clear distinction between the detached patterns and the accented quarter and staccato eighth patterns. Although there is the possibility of some stress in the moderately long low register phrases in the middle section, endurance challenges are minimal.

Musical Challenges

Cast in a simple ABA design, this short composition will pose very few, if any, musical challenges for young beginning students. The folk melody, based on simple scalar and triadic configurations, is marked by natural rising and falling contours. The tonal vocabulary is very straightforward. The only colourful chords of note are the secondary dominant chords in the

transition sequence preparing the return to the original B-flat major tonality. The quarter- and eighth-note vocabulary is very simple, although the tendency to rush staccato eighths must be checked throughout the B section. When phrasing the four-bar patterns of the A sections, the performers must be sensitive to the paired two-bar antecedent/consequent relationships. It is best if the four bars are played without breathing, but snatch breaths are possible in the middle of the second bar. In the B section, young performers may find some of the longer four- and six-bar phrases technically difficult, but clear notational markings and definitive cadences identify all deviations from the original theme. Interpretation of the contrasting articulation and melodic styles is the only other noteworthy expressive challenge.

Ensemble Challenges

Swiss Noel's simple textures are well-suited to the abilities of beginning ensembles. The smooth, flowing chorale-like textures of the A sections require careful balancing, particularly where the horn has moving eighths. Fermate, rests, and long-note phrase endings demand ensemble control and exacting leadership from the trumpet. Sustained passages at moderately soft dynamic levels will require tuning. Careful matching of accent and staccato articulations on the quarter and eighth combinations in the B section will ensure blend and rhythmic precision in both the homorhythmic and rhythmic melody and accompaniment passages. The rhythmic accompaniment patterns will have to be kept very light where the theme is scored in a low register that is difficult to project. Phrasing is co-ordinated throughout the ensemble. Some rhythmic independence is required in the B section, but patterns involve only eighth against quarter.

Pedagogical Value

Although melodic variation is not innovative, Swiss Noel can be a worthwhile composition for beginning brass ensembles. The smooth chorale-like textures can be effectively used to develop a warm, brass trio blend and an awareness of melodic line. The rhythmically energetic B section can be used to develop simple independence, and staccato and marcato articulations.

CROSS-REFERENCED COMPOSITIONS

CODE, JAMES

GROSS FUGUE

Instrumentation: Horn in F (Trombone), Trombone (Tuba), Tuba

Source: Composer

Duration: 2'

Level: Medium

Status: Score and Parts

Date: Unknown

Although this composition is more suited for less advanced intermediate students, advanced beginning students with a good low register technique might find it within their capabilities. For further detail see p. 11.

RIDGWAY, ALAN

SOLILOQUY

Instrumentation: Solo Trombone, 2 Fluegelhorns, Horn in F

Source: Composer

Duration: 3 ' 1 5 "

Level: Medium (Easy-Medium Ensemble, Medium Solo Trombone)

Status: Score and Parts

Date: 1 978

Although articulations and rhythms are of moderate difficulty, the three ensemble parts are really quite undemanding. Consequently, this composition might be suitable for performance by an advanced beginning ensemble with a more advanced trombone soloist. At the beginning level, the nuegelhorn instrumentation will likely be a problem, particularly in terms of intonation. For further detail see p. 19.

TERSTEEG, HUBERT

ACADIAN FROLICS

Instrumentation: 2 Trumpets in Bb, Horn in F (Trombone), Trombone (Euphonium)

Source: Composer

Duration: 5'

Level: Medium

Status: Score and Parts

Date: Unknown

This composition is well-suited to the needs and capabilities of young intermediate students. It might also be possible at the beginning level, given a strong first trumpet and a relatively mature ensemble of advanced beginners, Previous exposure to modal melodic and harmonic structures would be advantageous. For further detail see p. 25.