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Symphonic Band Conducting Practicum

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Signature Date 6-1-98

A video and audio tape of this project are available in the Honors Program office.

Allison Schmidtke
#9344627
Winter, 1998

Senior Honors Project - Conducting Practicum

Rationale

Most music education majors take a year-long sequence of conducting classes in their junior year, about two years before we student teach. Unfortunately, of necessity, these conducting classes are rather contrived. Over the period of each quarter, we conducted our ensemble of cooperative, musically mature peers through about five eight-measure exercises focusing on a specific skill. Of course, since actual technique is only one (small) aspect of work on a podium, we were also introduced to the process of score study with its multitude of layers such as consideration of harmonic structure, stylistic elements, orchestration, context (historical influences, information about the composer, significance of composition), etc. At the end of that year, then, we fulfill the conducting requirement with merely seeds of knowledge and a handful of isolated skills in our bag of tricks. Oh yeah, we have a baton to show for it, too.

So, last spring (1997), a year after I had successfully completed the conducting sequence, with my baton and bag in hand, I marched into the band room at Bellingham High School for my last practicum through the Woodring College of Education. There I was, in the face of reality. With the few opportunities I had to wave my magic wand and throw my seeds of knowledge around, I soon realized that I needed a bit more practice before I begin student teaching in the fall of 1998. With a year left on campus, I had time to find more practice opportunities. I talked to the Director of Wind Programs, Dr. Wallace, about that obscure class my eyes always skip past in the timetable, Music 451: Conducting Practicum. Familiar with my experience at Bellingham High School and future career plans, and aware of the inevitable shortcomings of the conducting classes, he graciously agreed to let me do a conducting practicum with the Symphonic Band (non-audition wind group) in which I would rehearse a piece with the group once a week (about eight hours total of rehearsal time) in preparation for performance at the concert.

with brightness round about it

I already had a piece in mind when I asked about the practicum: Nancy Galbraith's *with brightness round about it*. I first heard the piece, and of Galbraith herself, at the regional music educators' conference last February when the All-Northwest High School Honor Band rehearsed and performed it. I was moved by the combination of brilliant shimmering effects and nostalgic, almost painful, melodic ideas, and I wanted to know more about the piece. I was also attracted to the fact that it was a new composition by a woman. I was hoping that the Symphonic Band would like it and be able to play it.

The piece is basically in an arch form (ABCBA). In this symmetrical form, the themes are presented and then revisited in the opposite order so that similar music is heard in the beginning and end. Galbraith makes use of minimalist techniques such as the repetitive melodic and rhythmic cells heard throughout. The piece is tonal, though not in the conventional way; the harmony doesn't really go anywhere (progress), but instead just changes tonal centers. Just as the piece ends where it begins, the harmony doesn't take us anywhere either. She masterfully creates the illusion of forward movement through her driving themes and rhythms.

The more time I spent with this piece, the more I liked it. I always found something new each time I sat down with the score.

Rehearsal Planning

I began looking at the score and parts over Christmas break to get a basic idea about the principal thematic material and structure of the piece. By the first week of the quarter I had a rough formulation for how I wanted to approach the piece in rehearsal. In other words, I had broken the piece into its five principal sections and had decided on how much time I wanted to allocate to each. My general overview of the rehearsal time was the following:

- first three hours - the principal theme which follows the piano solo introduction and its return at the end (roughly 2/5 of the music)
- next three hours - the middle development section (about 1/5 of the piece)
- next hour - the ending section (about 1/5 of the piece)
- next half-hour - the introduction (about 1/5 of the piece)
- remaining time - run-throughs

Before each rehearsal I would spend about three hours with the score, conducting through large sections and transitions, practicing specific techniques, examining and re-examining relationships. In developing each rehearsal plan, I would review my notes from the previous week's rehearsal and brainstorm some problem-solving strategies.

I thought quite a bit about the first rehearsal. The initial presentation of a new piece of music is important with respect to the ensemble's first impression and the attitude and level of motivation that will carry through the whole quarter. I was undecided about whether to try and sight-read the whole piece or to just spend some time with the principal melodic material. I chose the latter. I wanted the ensemble to "buy into" the music and was afraid that if they saw how repetitive the motives were they would lose interest from the start. The main theme is very energetic and "catchy." I think I chose the right strategy. We sight-read the piece the following week after the members had had a chance to explore it on their own.

The Videos

First Clip

The first clip is a sample of a typical conducting class assignment. It is demonstrative of my skill level prior to beginning work with the Symphonic Band.

Second Clip

Due to discomfort with my presence in front of the ensemble, I was camera-shy for a good part of the quarter. Though I would reflect and make notes of my impressions after every rehearsal, I really didn't get the kind of objective feedback a video recording will give until about the sixth week of rehearsal, from which this segment comes. The footage is from the second half of a Thursday rehearsal. We are in the final phases of putting the piece together. As you will see, this was the first time we had rehearsed with the synthesizer. My plan was to spend some time with the introduction (the last large segment to be rehearsed), play through some transitions, and run the whole piece for the first time since the second week of the quarter when the ensemble was still basically sight-reading.

I was a bit frustrated that the ensemble wasn't shaping phrases in the introduction (I had just rehearsed the brass in a sectional the day before and had spent a lot of time on dynamic contrasts and shapes of lines). The ensemble seemed tentative with this section and I was hoping that they would make more of it when they felt more comfortable. I was very relieved that we made it all the way through the run-through.

Third Clip

The third example comes from the day before the performance. As I had the first half of rehearsal, you will see the warm-up and tuning procedure. I was principally concerned with spot-checking at this point. There were still some ideas that I wanted the ensemble to understand and successfully convey. Because of this, I tended to talk much more than was actually beneficial. I think this rehearsal would have been much more efficient if I could have shown the ensemble with my hands the kind of dynamic contrasts I wanted.

Fourth Clip

The final example is from the actual performance. As is evidenced, I never did get completely proficient at 5/4, for in the heat of the moment I screwed up and lost my place. However, the ensemble was incredibly aware and confidently played right through it. As is natural with adrenaline, I took the faster tempo way too fast!! I couldn't believe it as I watched the tape!! I am very impressed with how the ensemble just held on and played with energy. I think it was obvious that they liked the piece and I feel that it was a convincing performance.

Student Evaluations

The feedback I got from the students was honest and very valid. The areas for improvement which they indicated were precisely those I had been working on all quarter: tempo consistency, pattern accuracy, and eye contact (keeping my head out of the score). However, I was pleased to see that the fact that I cared about the music and about my work with them was obvious to the students.

Self-Evaluation

This practicum experience was perhaps one of the most difficult things I have done since beginning my college career. This was the first time I was forced to combine and apply the wealth of isolated skills (theory, ear-training, conducting, etc.) I have been accumulating over the last five years. It was a challenge every week to put it all together while I was on the podium. I was frustrated with how little I could hear while in front of the ensemble. I had great difficulty sorting the mass of sound coming at me into intelligible chunks. I was also frustrated by my lack of baton technique. Though I knew the music and could talk about it, my technique prevented me from really getting everything I could from the ensemble. I didn't feel that I improved as much as I had hoped I would; my technique was still in the way by the time of the concert.

It is amazing how complex something that appears so simple can be. Every time I stepped on the podium there were at least four things going on at the same time: interpersonal relationships, teaching, rehearsing (hearing problems and fixing them), and baton technique. Some days my head would be spinning after a rehearsal.

I am very thankful for the experience and am just beginning to see the growth that occurred as a result of such a test of my musicianship.

Student Evaluations



**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
ENSEMBLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

Please respond to as many of questions 9-20 on the standard form as you feel are appropriate, then proceed to the questions on this sheet.

21. Is well prepared for rehearsals.
22. Finds effective ways to improve the quality of the performance.
23. Conducts the rehearsals in an effective and organized manner.
24. Encourages student understanding of the interpretive process.
25. Attempts to incorporate the teaching of major musical concepts into the rehearsals.
26. Is fair and reasonable to students in the evaluation procedures.
27. Evaluation procedures accurately reflect the quality of performance.
28. Is readily available for consultation with performers.
29. Functions as a role model for the students.
30. Creates a good professional working relationship with the performers.

- 21 - Beginning of quarter, not so much (secure in transition + change of meter)
Much better at end of quarter. Please be extremely precise when 1st learning work
change of meter
- 22 - See above - Be confident & sure of meter. Also, NEVER admit your mistakes. Just go on.
- 23 - Good
- 24 - Interpretive - could have been better.
- 25 - Sometimes.
- 26 - N/A
- 27 - N/A
- 28 - Yes
- 29 - Yes, except when you admit mistakes. Conductors Never make mistakes.
(if they do, they don't admit it.)
- 30 - Yes! But see above, Don't admit mistakes, say "Let's do that again". You are
in control. Relax more, feel the power.
-

I enjoyed working with you on the piece. it is an interesting piece of music. I enjoy working on newer. music. It takes more effort and work to play the new styles of music and you prepared us very well. You were a good instructor and it was clear how you wanted us to present the music the way you wanted us to,

Your conducting is a little
difficult to follow. You
should work on using
broader arm movements
especially in tempo changes.

I thought she did fairly well. It
seemed though that sometimes she
just wasn't quite aware of
everything that was going on in
the ensemble. I'm sure that will
come with more practice

Allison.

Great Job! The Peice you picked
Is Hand And you did a great Job
with it! Thanks For Being straight
forward with us And treating us
Very Professionally
Good work!

I was surprised at how engaged you seemed.
I know that you know this music - you need
to look at us more often to ensure we
that we are following you, not the other
way around. I know you are a good
musician, translate that into being
a good conductor and make us feel
comfortable with your conducting. There
are too many basic conducting principles
that you seem to forget - eye contact w/
entire group, prep breaths, consistent
patterns, consistent tempo. Don't be
afraid to smile - you are in charge
but it can be fun also

I think that you did a very good job. You seemed prepared and to know what you were doing. My only criticism is that you could have been a little more sure on your tempo. I think that you worked well with the group and that you were always ready and willing to help us if we had any comments, questions, or concerns. Good Job!

Allison,

It has been wonderful having you in symphonic band as a director. I appreciate your choosing such a difficult piece to conduct. This is the most challenging conducting project that anyone has ever undertaken. Through at times the conducting wasn't always going your way you stuck to your guns and didn't get too frustrated with yourself. The only criticism I have is that it would have been nice if your head was out of the score a little more. Overall I admire you and all the hard work you put in

ENSEMBLE EVALUATION

② Alison ~~was~~ ^{seemed} very prepared for all rehearsals.

She not only found effective ways to improve the music, but seemed eager to do so. Understandably, there were mishaps on some days, but these were quickly smoothed over as efficiently as possible.

She was very encouraging and worked well with the group as a whole, singling out individuals when necessary, urging the entire ensemble on the rest of the time. Overall, she seemed very excited about the piece and the results of performance.

Tina Choi, Dore

she has a good start, but needs to work on being able to keep a steady tempo. She is difficult to follow. With more experience, she'll do great.

Rehearsal Plans



P. 40
Piano
start over?

P. 39
takes back to old key

G in fl 1

m 178

A is finally

melodic ideas are based on 4ths

assort of

12 → 287 - piano entrance delayed by 6 bars half as fast

The descending scale lead into B - 94 1st time + into

38 → 232

recap of piano into music @ end

12 - 287

107 → 205

38 - 232

94 → 138

94 - 138

125 → 217

107 - 205

125 - 217

p. 34 controlled quiet

p. 60 quiet, calm again

155 - new material is it repeated?

p. 33

fl seems out recalling old mat.

decrease

p. 29 sub. tempo dense

p. 29 - looks like it's gonna

cheer up, goes back, though

p. 31

fl. line trying to finish - m p 1/48

p. 55 - fl. make back

159 middle of piece

318 - 12 - m. 2 306

153 10

p. 51 or from 1st place other from 5th place

Does this piece ~~end~~ wind up to a certain point? $12 \times 4 \rightarrow 4 \times 2$

asotic accents?
3 3 4 3 3

11 3 4 general intro
picking away @ notes in Eb - establishing tonality repetition of ideas

12 4 piano motive
Eb picking away again

17 flute
1st appears

27 flute solo

38 40 48-54
182-tempo
tpt motive scalar ideas

*50 bassoon
melodic idea
Tuba Eb/jr
Bass Fan
under
Scalar curtain

56 AS cl. above piece idea
hr rhythmic motive

72 arrival tpt 1 feature

84 begin key change
return of hr rhythmic motive in tpt - new key

88 arrival
ends idea
B tonality
E-B
two diff. keys song on?

C?

102 now melodic
122 in clarinet

103 Euph solo
A?
G#

107 new motif: N1/113
TS BCI
B F#

117 A1 a/ gets melody

131 return of old idea

138 arrival build again
same as @ B

146 old melodic idea
comes back

155 rhythmic interest

169 BCI
new idea

183 sax
hr melodic idea

207 build again
key change?

205 same as 107?

217 old idea returns

223 new old idea

228 rhythmic interest

232 tpt feature from begin comes back

238 bit

240 scalar
shute
48 comes back
same key?

248 obee idea
hr rhythm

256 low brass

261 same as 72

287 tempo change
arrival
ends like beginning?

292 piano idea - new key

My 30 minutes of hell

by Allison Schmidtke, Music 451

Plan to release 5 minutes of music", he says

letter A (m. 38) to letter B (m. 92)

then m. 232 to m. 287

- almost the same music

- pitch relationship $D^b \rightarrow D$

How did we get there? We'll find out

next time

* principal motive is in tpt. (program notes)

scalar music, V is emphasized

281-287 - B minor D major
 261-287 - exact same as
 sudden key change back
 to original
 277-281 is added material to
 emphasize D


m. 261 Doing!

m. 4 - what kind of scale is this? - ask ensemble


1) tpt motive m. 40
(1-4)

2) piccolo motive m. 56

oboe, 1-3 cl., a. sax, piano, glock

3)  motive m. 45

begins in picc., tpt 1+2 / contrast w/ BCl, a. sax, hn 1+2, t

4) take some time w/ the scalar passage 
m. 48

slow down

how each part blends

5) m. 78 - combination of all parts

melodic + rhythmic fragments

tpts + horns vs. flutes + oboe
saxes

1st = pulse, clarify
A-54 → long phrase
all

establish style

85 all over

stop explain texture, ideas
go back, do again
something got better

> 15 minutes
54 →

that's right
leave it

show
read
end

instruct how to practice →
then ask tpts about parts

whole piece
Rursday
look @

it's not wrong

Hanging file
↳ Francis McBeth

1-15

Balance + Blend in
Wind Group:

1) clarify parts + notation

log drum?

crotales? m12 - understand notation

faster until hit tremolo @ 21

cymbal same as crotales

③ cymbal sounds? - roll @ 21

@ 26 play those 4 notes in that order out of time?

glockenspiel - similar deal only you start @ 14

become faster, but you also start to ascend

measured roll @ 21?

2) establish bongo rhythm @ 107

- same @ 205 - comes back and then again @ in slow te.

actually, give me the whole rhythm section to establish this ostinato pulse

again, establish pulse @ 168

3) read it

time independent

7) ♪, as promised slow

once play end, notice done sit to bar in can sit to bar end + rears back in in non by more + then play en

start @ 47 to get in

1) #48 flutes, clarinets, oboes
48-56

slow II

cl 2,3 almost unison whole way
fl + picc unison rhythm 51-53

★ tp's 1-4 trading off
48-54

prominent until 50
then drop down -
let lows take

★ running underneath
ps all underneath
like car engine
motor

★ 50 bassoon, bari, bass on, tuba, euph, most imper

★ / come out of texture

2) #56 clarinet, alto sax, piccolo, oboe, glock, piano
motive - forte

to 64

56-64

flute 1+2 just float over top

★ hear flutes + melodic line

★ add brass ostinato - under melody

run together

3) #64 bone 2, bass bone, bassoon, tuba, euph, bari
64-72, come out of texture

then flute, clarinet, oboe + picc mass
above

64

clarinet 1+2 paired ^{unison}

clarinet 3 w/ oboe

flute 1 w/ picc

flute 2 by self

4) duple against triple in 70-71
delaying arrival

Bruce recordings of
Bill NW

Trees. wind sectional

in Σ T

Jimble
is
100a

Sound in
space

family of
colors
no. of inst.

as for
100a

Bb vs D - what will
be 3-2
13
load

creating
direction
but
not
going
anywhere

harmonic web
things inside
singing area

fall for Eb
when not important
is there music
coming out of
it??

#38
horns start
quid
then
crescendo

concert Eb mpls
makes it end

isolate 5
spots
of
tension

Ab C
slide - darkest place
then put 5th place
tension
lick
C
m

rate of
change. slower
in prop.
rate of
change in
tempo

build it slowly
small motion
can affect great
change


balance
help it or
keep it.
low

also
beats

1-27 do A again - didn't feel like we left with a sense of what I was trying to get @


♪ at 48 - hear in families - wind vs. brass > then together


brass at 56
picc, oboe, clarinets + alto sax + s'look at 56

listen to brass chords - 
clusters


#64 music in low brass, low wind, bassoon + bass cl
horn, saxes

dupe against triple arrival before 72

E_b in #77  run section from 77 to 84 - new k
clarinet chor

 look @ 72 - chord - flutes run
- middle brass ↓
- low brass d.

brass in

 chromatic run slow

2-4

(B) in bass
no note

! - throughout whole piece
thinning of texture

* 107

B-107 (transition to next main section)

melody in clarinets is old tpt. from beginning

* work on the seamless passing of the

! - muted tpt and oboe

similar timbre - spatially diff

* stopped horn + glock @ 96

* euph solo @ 103

107!

new thematic material presented first

in bs clarinet + tr sax (basically 5 bar long)

clarinets + oboe play 2 bar interlude

* (113) enter log drum

* percussion groove
tbn + marimba begin their ostinato that lasts until piano solo

bongos, tom 114 - clarinets + oboe play 2 bar interlude again

117 flute 1 takes over solo

clarinets + oboe
tbn + marimba > continue ostinato pattern set up under solo

* (123) piano solo!

new thematic material (previously like stuff!)

brass still involved??
where take out

(pf) emerge out

(125) interplay between brass + a sax/horn
bones + pts since

*125 Flute motive - new - don't shy from Bb

shifting us into g minor?

clarinets enter + add to m.

next big section 131

tutti section

(trpts)

upper woodwinds state first

here + then 12 axes answer wind

brass
138 = 13-107

with added inst

★ horns instead of trpts

b's cl, bones, euph

oboe still alone

✓ not much play really quiet

transition material

fl 1 - old melody fragments

making use of old motives

come back in 146

155 - 169 more transition material

160 - cl 1 $\sqrt{3}$ motive returns

trade w/ fl 1

169 *change of style

next big section

pleno

dry, short, detached in

wood in percussion

bassoon
horns
trbns

172 - cl 1 has

bring out a bit

part that comes back

@ 256?

1st 4 notes

2 big ideas - 107 + 168

Overall comments about this middle section

except for 199-205 - holds sth

keep your motor running

* constant \uparrow 's throughout \rightarrow if you have \uparrow 's anywhere, listen to see how you fit in - it should be seamless - just getting passed around ensemble to hear color changes

keep your motor running

* here's an analogy: it's like a relay race - the \uparrow 's are the baton you need to anticipate when it will be passed to you - you would just stand there cold + let someone hit you over the head w/ it if you're pumping your arms, shake your legs - do the same thing - warm - subdivide

otherwise, each time the \uparrow gets passed to a new section, different well have a different conception of tempo \rightarrow depends on tempo \rightarrow drag \rightarrow rush

building a mystery

* lower dynamic level all around

tension sneaking on happy toes

* when you state a new ostinato - does ever know who this means for the 1st time, let it emerge gently from the texture + then sink back in

* if you notice you're repeating something, listen and see who has the more important new mel. stay underneath

this goes for the whole section

1- ... underneath first to

2-11

#155

★ dramatic style change - pointed, dry, staccato - piano

@ 169 - establish bassoon notes

trbn 1+2, horn 3+4 marking beat

add bassoon interplay

then add bass bone

then throw in percussion ostinato

★ @ 169 bass clarinet is important and alone

(171) bari sax, tuba euph, synth (1.6)

clarinet 1 - that comes back @ end:
↑ collection

tutti brass

★ interplay between horn, sax, trbn, bsn swells + w/wind answer

★ work on ritard into 205

★ go back + work on subito piano
↑ cresc. until down beat

piano (138)

↑
build suspense

dynamic con

Run it!! - 84 @ end

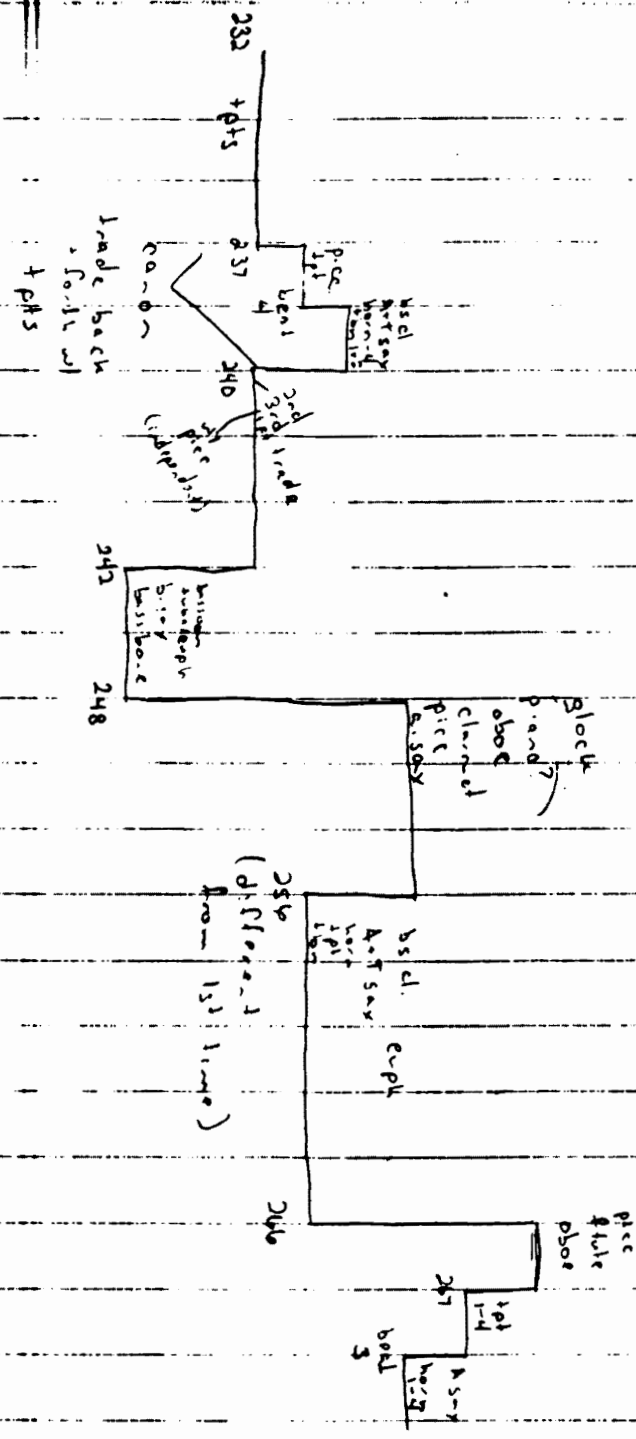
★ running eight no

271 - between
 flims + pic

+ pfs

horn + Asax
 constant F

go through
 flow so they
 can
 hear
 paper
 produce



232

248

256

266

play off each other
secondary goal - tempo consi

tempo

(B) running eighth notes

contrast
pointed articulation -
detached

- have sections listen to each other and

describe what hear

- can you match style?

* strive for seamlessness

* tuba/euph

euph ♯ - 184

don't drag

tpts 1-11 107 → horn 1+2 till 123 → hn 3+4 till 131 → tpls → tbn → horn
add tbn 113 till 123

tbn → tpt → 136 horn 1+2 till 138 → hn 3+4 till 153 → tpls till 155 → tbn 1+2
tpt and tbn 1+2

hn 3+4 till 183 → euph till 198
tbn
(missing bsn)

then add tuba → long notes + /s

beginning start in 13

spend time in 15-18

(15) slow

exaggerate shape

relative dynamics
match level of
section that
precedes you if
you are part
of line

* dynamics

hn, tpt, ^{bass}bone, tube don't line up

overall, start
loud, gets soft
as it leads

inverse dynamics
between these two

tuba → crescendo to down beat

change of
note

tuba crescendo
* maintain same dynamic throughout whole section

(17) hn, tpt, cs, bone do line up

then don't line up for rest of time

(increases)
volume
* echo

values closer together + crescendo

with
flute

different from Granger, Persichelli
where have themes - tunes
presented - entirely by one
group of instruments
, then fragmented

no antecedents
consequences
phrases - classical

larger music here is passed from
section to section, motive
to motive

final words - goal: listening to others

seamless style
decision

* better understanding of how you fit together
work to interlock between sections

* difficulty of this music - making it larger music than small motives
make connections
small motives
together to make
larger music