

Big Sky 2017 Rehearsal Notes

Feel free to email jason@jasonwkrug.com with any questions!

I Will Arise and Go to Jesus

There's a lot going on in this piece, so make sure all ringers are aware of what's coming up and don't get caught flatfooted.

The first six bars will be very slow and deliberate — watching the conductor is a must! When we reach measure 7, don't beat the notes to death with the mallets. The accompaniment should have rhythmic drive while not being overbearing, like an undercurrent. The malleted notes are NOT the focus!

Watch in measure 31 for the ritardando. Likewise watch in measures 33 through 36; we will almost take a fermata on the last notes of 34 and 36, so please don't go on to the next measures until the downbeat is given.

In 37, notice the up-stem trebles are marked TWO dynamic levels softer than the melody on the chimes.

Measures 45 through 48 will feel much like 33 through 36, just in a different key; ringers are invited to view the fermata in measure 44 as an ideal place to pick up the appropriate flats.

All of pages 6 and 7 are still at the previous tempo of 92bpm; we don't return to the initial tempo until measure 70. Despite the fact the treble bells have the melody again and we have a flowing 8th note accompaniment, don't speed up!

At measure 70, remember that A) the malleted notes are not the focus, B) there are still 4 pages left to play, and C) hitting things with sticks is not a good enough reason to let the tempo increase and get out of hand. Resist the urge to speed up.

At measure 72, bear in mind that martellato is a TECHNIQUE, not a DYNAMIC. The down-stem treble notes should have a nice stopped sound without it sounding like the ringers are trying to bludgeon a small, furry animal to death.

Please observe the *mp* in measure 93 and the nice crescendo up to *fff* in 95. Again, crescendos are not an invitation to speed up, so please don't do so.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

A nice and relatively straightforward piece, this one shouldn't give us too many problems.

Be sure to subdivide in your head in the first 16 bars, especially those playing the mallet parts — the tendency will be to rush this, and we won't let that happen.

The occasional martellatos (measures 18, 24, 65, and 71) should not be overdone — martellato is a technique, not a dynamic (that sounds familiar ...).

Always make sure the melody is at the fore — especially in the middle verse, it moves from voice to voice, so if you have it, play it for all you're worth, regardless of dynamic level; if it's too loud, I'll let you know.

The accompaniment in the battery bells starting in measure 48 should feel very much like the opening did, except rung instead of malleted. There should be the same sense of forward motion driving the piece along, but without rushing — subdividing is of the utmost importance again!

NOBODY is allowed to play in measure 77 unless they are staring at the director.

Now the Green Blade Riseth

Count, count, count, and subdivide — that's the name of the game. It goes without saying that rushing is all too likely, so make sure it doesn't happen.

Do make sure everyone is playing with a mallet in each hand, and that the hands are taking turns (for example, I would play the first measure L L-R L L-R L-R-L-R L L-R — the hands don't need to alternate EVERY note, but no one should try to play everything with one hand). The grip on the mallet should be firm, but not a death grip, and the wrist and forearms should be loose. The majority of the motion should be from the wrist, not the elbow. We will work on this in rehearsal, but the more on-board everyone is to begin with, the better.

There are dynamics EVERYWHERE, and we WILL follow them, since they make the piece far more interesting and musical.

Do make sure the melody is always at the front — yes, banging mallets on bells is fun, but people want to hear the part they sing, not a catchy malleted rhythm.

The last beat of 11, and then measure 32 on until the end of the piece, we have our old friend the martellato. By now, everyone should realize it's a technique, not a dynamic. For fast, repeated marts like we have here (and indeed all marts), the bell should start no more than 2-3 inches above the foam. Press the bell into the foam just long enough to ensure the sound is dead, then immediately raise the bell to be ready for the next mart. Delicate marts, carefully controlled, will let this section come off — beat the bell to death, and everything will drag and sound muddy. Short, crisp, and clear, if you please.

Note the *sub. p* in measure 40 — it sneaks up on you.

Again, no one is allowed to play beat 4 of measure 48 unless they're watching the director.

Appassionata

Keep the accompaniment smooth and flowing throughout, regardless of the dynamic level. We will certainly take full advantage of the ritardandos at the end of phrases (such as in measures 20 and 30), but we may add some other small ritardandos in other places as the spirit moves us.

Carefully practice the 3-against-2 feel of the last beat of measures 11 and 68. Make sure the triplets sound like triplets and the duples sound like duples.

When we reach measure 31, the intensity ramps up. Even though the dynamic is *mp*, there is still a lot of energy that will carry us through the end of page 6. Any time we reach a new dynamic (*f* in measure 39, *ff* in measure 48), do NOT decrescendo until indicated — keep the volume and the energy carrying us through.

The last three eighth notes of measure 59 will be individually dictated — do not just blow through them like you would a yellow traffic light.

The accents in the last three measures should be thought of as force/dynamic accents, not as punched or harsh accents. Each one will be dictated, so I'd suggest ringers memorize what they play and when so they can stare at the director.

What Wondrous Love Is This

The opening should be very delicate and mysterious, the softer the better — leave room to build later in the piece.

Watch for the *poco rit.* in measure 8 — it will be very *poco*, but please watch so we make it happen.

Regarding the double-dotted notes like in measures 4 and 8: these are the same length as a half note tied to a dotted quarter (so 3.5 beats).

Any time there's a dynamic change, be sure to do something with it. They're usually small, subtle changes, but the audience should be able to tell that there's been a change in energy and intensity.

Please check your notes in measure 29, then WRITE THEM IN AT THE BOTTOM OF PAGE 3. Publishers love putting those accidental-filled chords at the top of a page after a page turn. Don't get caught unawares.

We might hold measure 31 longer than 4 beats, depending on my mood when we play the piece. Please don't go to measure 32 until I do. At 32, the up-stem treble part is pretty, but the bass has the melody, so make sure it's heard.

At measure 43, we want a real, true *f*, so be ready for it. Likewise be ready in measure 46 (first measure on the page — AGAIN!!! — with a weird, accidental-filled chord).

The tenuto marks in measures 52 and 53 are only mildly for emphasis; they're mainly there so nobody tries to play them like a ring touch or other staccato note. Give them the full beat's worth on time. (We

might even slow down in those measures, so be ready for that. Likewise, nobody should play beats 3 or 4 of measure 55 unless they are watching the conductor.

One last ritardando in measures 62, 63, and 64. By now, hopefully everyone knows the drill here....

I Want Jesus to Walk With Me

This one can be a lot of fun, or it can be an awful nightmare. At the beginning, be sure to count and subdivide constantly, or else the off-beat thumb damp notes can get out of hand.

Don't telegraph accents and *sfz*s like in measures 10 and 22 — don't crescendo into them, but just hit them out of the blue.

Make a big deal out of dynamics like the crescendo in 29 and the shaken decrescendo in 30. On that shake, start with the bells held away from the body at eye level, and bring them down and in as you make your shake motion smaller — this will provide both an aural and visual cue that it's an intentional decrescendo.

There's another of those "GOTCHA!" notes on beat 2 of measure 42. Don't give away that it's coming — surprise the listener.

The LV in 49 carries through measure 50, and on the downbeat of 51, everyone except D6 and D7 cut off. Don't hold your note through if you're not supposed to.

Measure 59 has a footnote saying that if you don't like the dissonance of the F-sharp 4 and 5 against the F-natural 6 and 7, you can substitute F-sharp 6 and 7. No. No, you can't. We'll be playing the F-naturals.

Beat 3 of measure 66 is suddenly louder — again, don't telegraph that dynamic change.

The last verse — in addition to being in a different key — features a lot of syncopation. Fortunately, it's almost always the same one, with strong beats on beat 1 and beat 2& (and occasionally 4).

There's a crescendo in measure 74 that leads to a *ff* at the top of the page turn. PLEASE MARK THAT NEW DYNAMIC AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PREVIOUS PAGE. I know it's a page turn and they're hard, but we still have to hit the new dynamic.

Please note that the only thing I should hear on beat 1 of measure 78 is the air handling system in the room, or perhaps the audience shuffling their programs. This beat of silence needs to hit the audience as loud and hard as any of the accents and *sfz*s we had in the first verse ... followed by an accented chord at a *ff* dynamic.

There's a ritardando the entire last line, so please watch.

Song of Gladness

Make a big deal out of the crescendo in the first measure — this can really help start the piece off with a bang!

Notice which notes are thumb damped and which are not, and shoot for delicate yet precise TDs. When we reach measure 14, I'll reiterate (yet again) that the mart is a technique, not a dynamic. Keep the marts light — the technique itself will make it sound louder than you think it will — or else we'll drown out the melody.

Note the thumb damps that sneak back in at measure 22. Make a note of them at the bottom of the previous page!

The mart lifts that show up starting in measure 24 should also be delicate — we're not trying to kill spiders with our bells. Also be aware we have a lovely 9-bar section in a different key, so those people playing A, B, E, and F will need to change bells.

Note the diminuendo starting in 35, and keep the thumb damps light accordingly. At 37, be sure to bring the melody out — it's written two whole dynamic levels louder than either the upper treble thumb damps or the low bass chords.

Those people playing the mart-lifts in 41 and 42 — play your thumb damps close to the table so you're already in position to do the mart lifts. Hold the bells too high and you'll either beat those notes to death or play your note late (or worse, both).

At 55, play the malleted countermelody a fraction of a dynamic softer than the chime melody — it's still an important line, but it will cut through better than the chimes will, and it's not *as* important as the chimes (sorry).

There's a crescendo from 63 through 66 — make a BIG deal out of it! Also note the ritardando the last two beats of 66, as well as the fact we go a LITTLE slower at 67 (approximately 8 beats per minute — not a huge amount, but enough to be noticeable). Also bear in mind that the *ff* dynamic lasts from 67 all the way through 76 — you don't get to drop your volume at any point in that section.

The *mp* in 77 starts on beat 1&. The downbeat should be strong, then that next eighth note should be drastically softer. The shaken Gs up top should give a strong attack then drop back on the volume a little, but this section will sound better if those inner voices just rise up out of the surrounding notes.

Reflections on “Kelvingrove”

There are a lot of tempo changes throughout this piece, so when in doubt, watch the conductor!

The opening is VERY slow, almost slow enough that each eighth note will be dictated. There are no breaks after the fermatas, so don't expect them.

We move along a bit faster at 9, with a nice, flowing accompaniment. We're still heavily in “fantasia” mode here, so the rhythm of the melody doesn't fit at all with what we expect. Just go with it — you'll get the rhythm you want soon enough.

There is a gradual *accelerando* from measure 21 through 26. Don't get too fast too soon, but likewise don't try to do all the speeding up in measure 26. I know it's a long section and there are a lot of things going on (like bell changes), but try to look up at least once every measure, if not more, so we can all stay together.

Be prepared for measure 29 — *subito p* along with a key change. We now have the rhythm we want, but the speed is slower and the accompaniment is still too flowy. Don't worry — we'll get there.

Measure 59 is the Obligatory Jason Krug Minor Verse. It's suddenly a bit faster, which makes it seem agitated. Don't let the treble bells get too loud here — listen for the melody down in the bass.

We get a *ritardando* in measure 77, followed by three fermatas in measure 78. We go straight from one to the next, no cut off.

At measure 79, I intend to conduct in 3 for the first few measures, then once I feel confident we have the tempo established, I'll switch to one beat per measure. Most ringers will be so frantically and jubilantly playing their notes they won't know or care how many beats I'm putting in a measure, but that's what I'll be doing.

We're *f* at measure 79, and that dynamic can't get any softer until measure 93 ... when we start to *crescendo*. The *ff* at 95 is a true *ff*, the sort that causes ringing in the ears for days afterward. We get a bit of a reprieve in 102 when we suddenly go to *mp*, but we start a *crescendo* in 107 that gets us back to *ff*. Also note that in 110, we don't slow up going in to the fermata — we just plow ahead and hit it like a brick wall.

The ending is just like the beginning. Watch and make sure we all play together. (I'll also probably hold the fermata in 111 long enough to give everyone ample time to pick up chimes).

Morningdance

This piece has a lot of places where watching is essential, so please be sure to mark them accordingly.

Note the fermatas in measures 2 and 4 — there's a breath mark after them, so we WILL have a total cut off, although I don't plan on taking a huge break on either one. Also be aware that the tempo will be very free (as marked) for at least the first 4, and probably the first 8, measures.

Bring out the melody when it shows up in 13. It should be on top the whole way through, but make sure those nice arpeggios don't cover it up.

Watch out for the frequent ritardandos (one sneaks in at 34) and watch on all of those. Memorizing notes in those measures wouldn't go amiss.

There is no ritardando leading up to the fermata in 44, so we won't take one. Again, however, there is a breath mark, so we will have a full cut off before leaping forward into the brand new tempo and key.

Be sure to bring out the melody in the inner voices when it shows up at 65. Also spend some time practicing those plucks and pluck-lifts, even going so far as to work out the choreography of which hand needs to be doing what as far as plucking or raising a bell. This section can be a lot of fun to play, but can also be a bear if the logistics pose problems.

Note and mark the ritardando in measures 72 and 73, and likewise note that we're slowing up quite a bit at 74.

Both melodies ("Morning Has Broken" and "Simple Gifts") are playing at the same time here, but see the footnote saying that Bunessan (Morning Has Broken) should predominate — that means two things: A) those playing the inner voices again have their work cut out for them dynamic wise; B) everyone needs to listen for that melody to cut through; and C) everyone needs to know where exactly the melody notes ARE, since they also get mixed up with a lot of accompaniment notes. (Okay, that was three things, not two ... but there's a lot going on in this section!)

We have another *poco rit.* in measure 92 and a bigger *rit.* in measures 93 and 94, followed by a cut-off WITH NO FERMATA!!! Watch the director, and everything will be just fine.

Likewise, note the fermatas in 96 and 98 WITHOUT A BREATH MARK!!! This is just like the beginning, except we plow straight into the next measure.

We close out the piece with a lovely *molto rit.*, meaning we'll slow up a great deal. Anyone playing anything in the last 4 measures of the piece should memorize their notes, then be prepared to watch the director the entire time to ensure everything falls together.

Christmas Fantasia

The opening should be very delicate and mysterious — not rushed at all. Everything should have a sort of out-of-time feel, almost dream like. The first two pages are pretty straightforward.

Interesting things start happening at measure 26 — throughout the piece, “Coventry Carol” keeps trying to start, but it gets drowned out by other tunes. That being said, whenever it does show up, it needs to be played loud enough so people hear it’s there. Measure 26 is the first time this happens, underneath “Greensleeves.”

“Away In a Manger” shows up for a couple of measures starting at 37, then we’re into a fairly straightforward version of “The First Noel.” Despite the thick textures, don’t let the volume get too loud here.

“Coventry” shows up again at 59 and battles with “First Noel” for most of the page. It’s a polite fight, though, so keep it soft. Also watch for the ritardando in measure 69.

“Silent Night” — which starts in measure 72 — suddenly gives way to “Coventry” for real in measure 85 ... and the dynamic is *ff*. Let it sing out!

The ritardando in measure 89 is easy enough if everyone watches. We will go slower at 90, but not drastically so. Do pay careful attention to the dynamics throughout here, as they can really bring a lot to the piece.

One last ritardando in 96 — watch, and all will be well.