

Program Notes

Music Major (Just a Regular Day) is a comedic piece that seeks to communicate what an average day is like for a brass or percussion College Music Major. I remember my days at the University of Texas at Arlington, in which I was literally in 5-6 ensembles every semester in a wide range of genres, plus gigs and jam sessions in the evenings and on the weekends! I find this is the typical experience for most undergraduate students, and therefore the work is based around mini-arrangements of the same theme for four “ensembles”, to reflect these experiences. Part of the comedy (and communication) in the piece includes light acting, including spoken words, the use of props, set-up and tear down during the performance and non-verbal gestures.

The piece begins with the sound of an alarm clock, and then we follow our performers through their day as they run from rehearsal to rehearsal. The first ensemble features a “Marching Band” and then transitions to the second ensemble – “Wind Symphony”. “Wind Symphony” features a comedic scenario of much set-up and many instrument changes for the percussionist, intended to communicate the accompanying stress often experienced in this role! The piece then turns to the pianist, representing the string section of an “Orchestra”. As a trumpet player, I know first-hand what it feels like to count literally hundreds of rests in a rehearsal, only to have the music cut-off by the conductor just a beat or two before my entrance...many towers of brass mutes were built and cartoons drawn in my rehearsal days! After Orchestra, a familiar sound evokes the image of an evening gathering of college music students (wink). The “World Music Jazz Band” depicted in this section was built on a groove played by the djembe. In native Bambara, djé is a verb for “gather” and “bé” means “peace”. Therefore, the name of the djembe comes from the saying “Anke djé, anke bé”, meaning “everyone gather together in peace”. After a long day of rehearsals, this is exactly what jam sessions are for – to come together and make music! (and maybe have a beverage or two...)

About the Composer

Haley Woodrow loves to partner with performers in crafting musical experiences that offer listeners an active role. Her music reflects a broad range of influences and genres, and combines styles as a primary objective.

Haley’s compositions have received awards from the National Band Association, the Texas Music Educators Association, the MACRO Composition Competition and the Noteflight Big Band Composition Contest.

Haley graduated with a Bachelor’s of Music in jazz studies from the University of Texas at Arlington, and earned her Master’s of Music in composition from Texas Christian University. She is currently an Adjunct Instructor for Tarrant County and Weatherford Colleges. Please visit haleywoodrow.com

Performance Notes

If possible, the piece should begin with the lights off, and if there is a dimmer switch, turned on slowly as indicated. In this case, the tubist should plan on memorizing the first 15 measures or so. In any scenario, at the beginning, the tubist and pianist should act like they are sleeping. During this introduction and “ensemble changes” later in the piece, the tubist serves as the “protagonist” in the story, so at each instance marked “solo” the tubist should view himself or herself in the role of a narrator. Depending on how far off-stage to on-stage is, the number of percussion instruments set-up before performance can be adjusted. (If there is a partition available to use as a prop, consider putting the percussion instruments just a few feet from the performers behind the partition, and hanging a sign on the partition that says “Percussion Closet”)

The trumpet and French horn players should be off-stage at the beginning, with the trumpet player’s instruments, stands and two soda cans in their case. (If there is access and willingness to wear marching band hats and plooms through the marching band section, it makes this section especially funny!) I have marked many notes in the score, and have also created performance notes specific to each individual player. The best way to get a feel for the piece’s visual and acting elements is to watch the video of the premiere performance. The video, the performance notes specific to each performer as well as set-up and performance pictures are all available at: haleywoodrow.com/music-music-major

From the composer to the audience

Music Major is a comedic piece that aims to demonstrate what an average (hectic) day is like for a brass or percussion College Music Major. It begins with the sound of an alarm clock, a whack to make it stop, and a musical groan coming from the tuba as the day begins. We then follow our performers through their day as they run from rehearsal to rehearsal. You’ll see the performers not only play, but also act, utilize props and set-up and take apart their instruments during the performance. One personal favorite moment of mine involves a common occurrence in which the brass and percussion players count many, *many* rests only to be cut off right before they play!

Although being a music major is frequently stressful, leading often times to a unstable career, the best part of our lives is truly the community among ourselves. The djembe, a calling drum of African origin utilized at the end of the piece, derives its name from the saying “Anke dje, anke be” which translates to “everyone gather together in peace”. After a long day of rehearsals, this is exactly what jam sessions are for – to gather together, make music and maybe have a beverage or two.

Trumpet:

Note your speaking part in m.18. At m.26, consider missing the entrance for comedic effect. Visually “jump” with your body language at the missed entrance and begin playing no later than the pickups to m.32. The D6 in m.45 is optional, but in m.76 I’m hoping it’ll be doable! If all the brass players can flutter tongue than utilize it during the Wind Symphony section. If one or more players can not flutter tongue however, please utilize the alternate techniques indicated in your respective parts. Beginning at m.132 the music is very busy texturally. I have included a track on the webpage for you to practice with if you wish. I would highly recommend listening to the shaker as you play, and to large extent not focusing on what the pianist and horn player are playing.

Note the acting indications beginning at m.206. (How many times have you counted a hundred measures of rest to play a few notes, only to be cut off right before you come in? I am scarred from this myself!) From m.206 to m.227 you should act overtly bored, and escalate in activity. I would highly advise viewing the video on my website to see this section in action:

haleywoodrow.com/music-music-major

Note the acting with the props at m.241. You can see set-up pictures on my webpage. I used cold cans of carbonated water, to respect the hall – most places won’t let you have any soda (or alcohol) on stage. You’ll want to get the cans cold so that they will make a loud sound when you open them! I created “labels” that said “BEER” in really big letters for the premiere performance. Make sure and hand one to the horn player and say “cheers” loudly!

In m.250, you should utilize more of a “jazz” approach to playing! Starting in m.180 you’ll make a percussive sound by saying the syllable “tuh” in an loud, accented whisper.

French Horn:

Note your speaking part in m.18. If all the brass players can flutter tongue than utilize it during the Wind Symphony section. If one or more players can not flutter tongue however, please utilize the alternate techniques indicated in your respective parts. In pick-ups to m.136 you'll need to match the piano as close as possible.

Note the acting indications beginning at m.206. (How many times have you counted a hundred measures of rest to play a few notes, only to be cut off right before you come in? I am scarred from this myself!) From m.206 to m.227 you should act overtly bored, and escalate in activity. I would highly advise viewing the video on my website to see this section in action:

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Tuba:

You can lay down on the ground at the beginning and snore if you are up to it! The fall is the most important part of the first two notes you play – goes as low as you can.

If all the brass players can flutter tongue than utilize it during the Wind Symphony section. If one or more players can not flutter tongue however, please utilize the alternate techniques indicated in your respective parts.

Note the acting indications beginning at m.206. (How many times have you counted a hundred measures of rest to play a few notes, only to be cut off right before you come in? I am scarred from this myself!) From m.206 to m.227 you should act overtly bored, and escalate in activity. I would highly advise viewing the video on my website to see this section in action:

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In m.245 to the end, you can utilize more of a “jazz” approach to playing if you can! On beat 4 of m.245 check on this video, as I’m looking for quasi indefinite pitches similar to this:

<https://youtu.be/bqfvb7wDRug?t=54s>

The x shaped noteheads starting in m.280 is just an indefinite pitch. Check out the same video, except at the beginning:

<https://youtu.be/bqfvb7wDRug?t=54s>

Percussion:

Note that the piece calls for Glock., Concert Snare, Tamb., Wood Blocks, Gong (can be relatively small) , Shaker (relatively large, or at least relatively loud), small Suspended cymbal, Triangle and Djembe.

I am hoping we can make you look as busy as possible when you are not playing! We can adjust the amount of instruments you actually will take on and off stage for sure. The transition to (m.80) and the section entitled “Wind Symphony” is especially supposed to highlight instrument set-up and instruments changes. I would love it if you can be a little comedic in pulling the instrument on stage! Just – look stressed (ha!), as this is supposed to communicate what you go through as a percussionist. My best friend from high school played percussion in the University of Texas Wind Symphony, and she told one piece by David Maslanka called for 65 different percussion instruments (yikes!). So, during the Wind Symphony section I’ve asked you to change instruments 8 times in under 2 minutes.

Note the indication at m.227. (How many times have you counted a hundred measures of rest to play a single note on Triangle or Timpani only to be cut off right before you come in? I am scarred from this myself!)

Hold the triangle high above your head for extra comedic effect, and take care not to come in too early at m.235.

In m.249, I built this section off of the groove presented in this video:

<https://youtu.be/TWYOh-hvIRs?t=38s>

He plays it faster here:

<https://youtu.be/TWYOh-hvIRs?t=4m33s>

Piano:

m.80 calls for you to put “a sock mute filled with BBs” on A4-D5. Make sure a visit the webpage haleywoodrow.com/music-music-major to see this set-up pics. You want to make sure and be very careful to tie the sock(s) in a way that no BBs can get free and roll into the piano. You can fill one sock and tie it, and then consider putting it in another sock and tying that one as well for security. If there is a beam in the piano between the notes, you’ll need to make two sock mutes. Don’t forget to remove the sock mutes at m.172! I have put an indication in the trumpet player’s part also check and make sure these are removed in case you forget during performance.

m.192, I shift you into the spotlight to achieve the “orchestra” section, give the brass players a playing break and highlight your playing! Brahms’ *Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118, No.2* was my inspiration. In fact, I pretty blatantly “borrowed” the left hand part for my m.214-227.

M.227 is a very funny moment and the other musicians will be fidgeting, blowing air through horns, wiggling their valves, etc. in the measures leading up to it. I’ve asked them to take a HUGE breath right on the downbeat of m.227, so you’ll need to time your verbal “cut-off” with this in mind. Wave your hands in the air as you say your line, basically – do anything you can to be overt!