

Dear Members of the 2010 Maine All-State Band,

Congratulations on your successful audition! I want you to know that no matter how hard you worked in preparation for your audition, that was the “easy” part – your level of preparation affected only yourself. Now that you’ve been selected for the ensemble and have that music to prepare, you’ve become responsible for everyone else’s success – a band truly is as strong as each individual member.

As a wise teacher once told me, “You don’t come to rehearsals to learn your part, you come to rehearsals to learn everyone else’s part by listening and collaborating. How can that happen if individuals are still struggling with their music?” Said another way, your experience at All-State is like a savings account: everyone will only get out of it what each of us has already put in.

So, the sole purpose of this letter is to inspire you to be as totally and completely prepared for our rehearsals as you can possibly be. This obviously involves practicing, but I also will suggest some listening and reading you can do in your spare time. I’ve created a Facebook group for the All-State Band (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=110820235617138>), and I’d invite you to join. I’ll use this as a quick way to upload information about our repertoire, links to good recordings on YouTube, and an easy way for us to communicate.

So here are some preliminary thoughts about our repertoire, in concert order:

KIRKPATRICK FANFARE Our concert begins with this lively fanfare in 6/8. A frame drum (like the Irish bodhrán) is integral to the dance-like feel we need to create, as is the opening flute solo. Think “Riverdance.” Accented quarter and eighth notes need lots of energy and separation, and the tempo should be 126 for the dotted quarter. From 104 to 159, the woodwinds have very independent lines – make sure you’re counting carefully. The whole piece is a clever setting of the familiar Irish folk song “Danny Boy.”

EPINICION This is the most challenging piece on the concert from a musical maturity standpoint. The word “epinicion” refers to a song of victory in ancient Greece, but it can also be a song of grief for those lost in battle. In several sections, you are required to play melodic patterns at a suggested tempo but not coordinated with anyone else, creating a random, atmospheric effect. Practice these very carefully! In other places, the melodic contour and rhythm are specified, but specific pitches are up to you. In other places, you are also free to create your own rhythms. Work these out VERY carefully until you are fluent and confident at the suggested tempo. This piece will definitely stretch your ears, but it’s also very emotional and direct in its appeal.

DUSK I simply adore this music, as I do most everything Steven Byant has written. This work calls for very careful attention to the three keys to ensemble tone: balance, blend, and intonation. Good breath control is essential. When practicing the

rather “easy” notes in this piece, strive to always produce your absolutely best possible tone quality in all ranges and at all dynamic levels.

ILLYRIAN DANCES The most significant piece on our program, *Illyrian Dances* poses several technical and rhythmic challenges which require LOTS of practice now. The first movement should go at quarter note = 110, and keep the eighth note speed constant in the 6/8 measures. If you’re not sure what this means, please ask your teacher to hear you play it and see if you’ve got it. Rhythms and articulations must be absolutely 100% correct! SLOW practice with a metronome will pay huge dividends later in clean technique – PLEASE BE PATIENT AND PRACTICE SLOWLY AND EVENLY! The speed will come later if you’ve laid a solid foundation.

The second movement, like *Dusk*, requires great breath control and attention to tone quality and phrasing. It is scored very transparently, so EVERY note should be played like a solo; things which look simple and unimportant AREN’T. Dynamic shadings are vital. Tempo is very flexible, around 72.

The third movement has to be light on its feet and dance-like (dotted quarter = 84). Again, lots of slow practice with a metronome will lay the foundation for speed and lightness later. Staccato must be light and separated, not heavy and just short. Watch the key signatures!

ON PARADE This is a straight-ahead, fun march with lots of great melodies and style changes. Tempo is 120. Make sure the dotted-eighth/sixteenth rhythms are snappy, not 6/8-ish. Of course pay attention to dynamics, especially the soft levels. Accented quarter notes need lots of separation. **All flute players: if you play piccolo in your high school band, please bring your piccolo too. The section from measure 79 to the end should be played by as many piccolos as possible.**

Well, that’s it for now. I hope to see you on Facebook – remember to join the “Maine All-State Band” group so we can stay in touch. I’m looking forward to making great music together with you in May.

Sincerely,

Rob

Dr. Robert Franzblau