



Teacher Resource Guide

Hotaru Koi

arranged by Nancy Fairchild
(b. 1962)

Unit 1: Composer/Arranger

Nancy Fairchild teaches elementary general music and beginning band in the Platteville, Wisconsin public schools. She received a Bachelor of Science from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and a Master of Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is currently President of the Wisconsin Youth Band Directors Association.

In addition to the many demands of elementary school teaching, Fairchild remains active as a composer and arranger of music for young bands. In her work, she often seeks to introduce students to new performance styles or techniques, including chanting, singing, drumming, and poetry recitation. Recent works include the original composition *Brown Sugar* for beginning band and *Obwisana*, a Ghanaian children's game song arranged for band and Orff instruments (and even optional game players).

Unit 2: Composition

This arrangement of *Hotaru Koi* was originally written in 1990 as part of a course in elementary classroom music teaching.¹ Fairchild heard the song presented and sung by the instructor, noted authority on multicultural music teaching Patricia Shehan Campbell, and immediately realized its potential as an instrumental selection. The arrangement was published in 1996.

Hotaru Koi is a short, single-movement piece offering four statements of a simple melody in two contrasting settings. Extensive doubling provides teachers with opportunities to include further contrasts among sections, between instrument families, or between vocal and instrumental presentations. The

duration is published as three minutes and ten seconds but may be extended through inclusion of additional repeats.

This piece may be performed successfully by ensembles with limited instrumentation. Most of the arrangement calls for unison wind playing. In the final section, unison melodic duties are assigned to flute, oboe, first and second clarinet, alto saxophone, and first and second trumpet. (First and second clarinet and trumpet parts are identical.) A pedal is provided by bass clarinet, tenor saxophone, and horn. The bass line is carried by the baritone saxophone, trombone, baritone, bassoon, and tuba.

Unit 3: Historical Perspective

The Bon Odori festival, observed in mid-August throughout Japan, celebrates the return of ancestors' souls to earth.² It remains one of the few occasions when citizens all across the country don traditional summer dress. Music plays a central role in this festival as clearly evidenced by the prominent Taiko drum commanding the center of each town's festival stage. As evening descends, adults tend to their own music- and merry-making while the children run off in search of their own fun which, on warm summer nights, often includes chasing fireflies.

As its name, "Ho, Firefly," suggests, *Hotaru Koi* is a children's song commonly sung while in pursuit of these twinkling summer visitors. The song is thought to have originated in Akita prefecture in the northern part of Japan. The translation provided by the publisher is given as

Ho! Ho! Ho, firefly!
Bitter water you will find on that side.
Sweet water you will find on this side.
Ho! Ho! Ho, firefly! Through the mountain road.
Come, come again with your little lantern bright.

The exclamation "Ho!" is not a laugh. It is a nonsense syllable meant to entice the firefly toward the singer, an enticement further sweetened by the subsequent lyric.

Unit 4: Technical Considerations

Technical challenges are limited in this arrangement, though students will confront several new musical demands. For wind players, the range is well within reach of virtually every beginning player. Only four pitches are used in the wind parts: concert B-flat, D-flat, E-flat, and F. It will probably be necessary to introduce concert D-flat to the wind students. Similarly, the xylophone players may be unfamiliar with the G-flat that appears in their part. Fortunately, the familiar pitches surrounding these new notes along with the very accessible rhythmic context should facilitate quick success. There is little need to wait until these two pitches are introduced in the students'

method series before approaching this piece.

Percussionists will be required to play both pitched and non-pitched instruments, including bells, xylophone, high and low tenor drums, triangle, and Japanese gong. Parts are largely independent and include several exposed passages, including an eight-measure percussion interlude mid-way through the piece.

For teachers who choose to include a sung verse, a final technical consideration must be linguistic accuracy. While the syllabic transliteration provided on each of the instrument parts can serve as a helpful guide, it would be important to seek out an aural model to assist with proper pronunciation. A spoken model is available on CD from the publisher. Better yet, involving a Japanese-speaking member of the band, faculty, or community would offer students a valuable educational interaction.

Unit 5: Stylistic Considerations

As with many children's songs, *Hotaru Koi* should reflect both energy and buoyancy. Articulation should be crisp but light. The percussion should keep the momentum pushing ahead. Two particular aspects of this piece make achieving this light style difficult. First, the many sustained pitches that appear in the melody and accompaniment tend to add weight to the performance. Second, the half rests that appear within the melodic subphrases—the “Ho! Ho!” phrase, specifically—tend to interrupt the forward momentum of the song.

These difficulties may be overcome by working for clean releases that lift away from the notes (rather than taper and extend the decay) and by shortening the longer notes—releasing half notes and whole notes on the front side of the second and fourth counts, respectively. A second (and complementary) solution would be to work toward the usual performance tempo of the song. Children tend to sing this song in a cut time feel at approximately half note = 100 rather than the given quarter note = 126.

Unit 6: Musical Elements

MELODY:

The melody is very limited in pitch content, including only concert E-flat, B-flat, D-flat, and F. Nevertheless, it does present several interesting musical challenges to the young performers. First, each large phrase of the melody consists of three subphrases rather than a more familiar two or four. For students who may be expecting a typical western antecedent-consequent (usually dominant-tonic) relationship between phrases, the melody demands that the musical “thought” continue over four additional measures:

phrase 1

subphrases: 1 2 2a

phrase 2

subphrases: 1a 3 4

Second, as seen in the figure above, there is very little repetition across the entire 22-measure melody. Of the six subphrases, only two appear more than once. Given that each melodic segment contains, at most, four different pitches, students' attention will need to be directed to the small but significant differences among the segments.

HARMONY:

The tonal center of this piece is clearly E-flat. While the G-flat in the xylophone part gives the song a distinctly "minor" character, it would not be appropriate to say that the piece is actually in E-flat minor. It is, instead, strictly modal, employing an E-flat-F-G-flat-B-flat-D-flat pentatonic pitch set. Pentatonic modes such as this are a common feature of traditional music throughout much of East and Southeast Asia.

Rather than providing harmonic information, the printed key signature (two flats) is included only to maintain consistency between students' parts and corresponding exercises in their method books.

RHYTHM:

Rhythms in the wind and pitched percussion parts include only whole, half, and quarter notes. The bell and xylophone *ostinatos* (to which are added low woodwinds and low brass in the coda) are, by nature, very repetitive. It will be important to teach the performers strategies for counting repeated measures.

Eighth note patterns are introduced in the percussion interlude, an eight-measure section that layers several challenging rhythm patterns. In the score notes, Fairchild offers a series of spoken syllable patterns (often used by musicians in Japan) to be used as mnemonic aids in performing these more complex passages.

pattern 1

Cho chee - kie chee - kie chee - kie chon chon

pattern 2

Tan tan tan tan tek - ke tan ke tan tan ke tan tan

To - ro - ro

TIMBRE:

Unit 7: Form and Structure

The form of this arrangement is generally strophic, with a percussion interlude at the mid-point and a textural variation of the melody in the coda. To increase the challenge for the performers or to highlight particular sections of the ensemble, two alternative performance options are included; others are certainly possible.

| SECTION | MEASURES | EVENT | PERFORMANCE OPTIONS | | |
|---------|----------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | | OPTION 1 | OPTION 2 | OPTION 3 |
| A | 1-2 | <i>Ostinato</i> | Percussion | | |
| | 3-14 | First phrase | Unison winds | Unison winds | Sung with percussion accompaniment |
| | 15-24 | Second phrase | Unison winds | Unison winds | Sung with percussion accompaniment |
| A | 1-2 | <i>Ostinato</i> | Percussion | | |
| | 3-14 | First phrase | Woodwinds | Sung with percussion accompaniment | Unison winds |
| | 15-24 | Second phrase | Woodwinds | Sung with percussion accompaniment | Unison winds |

| SECTION | MEASURES | EVENT | PERFORMANCE OPTIONS | | |
|---------|----------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| | | | OPTION 1 | OPTION 2 | OPTION 3 |
| B | 25-26 | <i>Ostinato</i> | Percussion (with ensemble chanting) | | |
| | 27-34 | Interlude | | | |
| A | 1-2 | <i>Ostinato</i> | | | |
| | 3-14 | First phrase | Brass | Unison winds | Woodwinds |
| | 15-24 | Second phrase | Brass | Unison winds | Brass |
| A' | 35-36 | <i>Ostinato</i> | Percussion | | |
| | 37-48 | First phrase | Full ensemble | | |
| | 49-58 | Second phrase | | | |

Unit 8: Suggested Listening

Libana, "Hotaru Koi." In *The Fire Within*. Ladyslipper LR108CD, 1990.

Compact disc.

Ogura, Ro, arr. *Hotaru Koi* (for SSA choir). Bryn Mawr, PA: Theodore Presser, 1987.

Unit 9: Additional References and Resources

Higuchi, Sachiko. *101 Favorite Songs Taught in Japanese Schools*. Essay and translation by Ichiro Nakano. Tokyo: Japan Times, 1983.

Kuo-Huang, Han, Ricardo D. Trimillos, William M. Anderson, and Tatsuko Takizawa. "Music of East Asia." In *Multicultural Perspectives in Music Education*, 2nd edition. ed. William M. Anderson and Patricia Shehan Campbell, 308-348. Reston, VA: MENC, 1996.

Contributed by:

Steven J. Morrison
Assistant Professor of Music
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

1 Nancy Fairchild generously provided information on the development of this arrangement as well as many suggestions regarding the teaching of this piece to young instrumentalists (interview with the author, 26 January 2000).

2 The author gratefully acknowledges Akiko McCartney, a student at the University of Washington, for sharing her knowledge and her own memories of the musical and social traditions of Japan.