



Teacher Resource Guide

Anasazi

John Edmondson

(b. 1933)

Unit 1: Composer

John Baldwin Edmondson was born in Toledo, Ohio, and grew up in Culpepper, Virginia. He gained his early musical training as a trumpeter in his family's dance band and received degrees from the University of Florida (Bachelor of Arts) and the University of Kentucky (Master of Music in Composition). For ten years, Edmondson taught music in the public schools of Kentucky, where his compositional talents were used extensively for his own students. Eventually he was engaged as staff arranger for a number of university marching bands. He became affiliated with several major music publishing houses and was elected into the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) as a result of his compositional success. Edmondson, whose works appear in the catalogs of thirteen different publishers, has written extensively for school bands, with hundreds of publications to his credit. He is well known as a guest conductor, clinician, and lecturer. And along with his wife, Anne McGinty (who is also a composer), Edmondson owns and operates Queenwood Publications.

Unit 2: Composition

This composition was written for the 1986–87 Anasazi (pronounced “on-uh-SAH-zee”) Elementary School Band and its conductor, Mark Alexander. The school is located just blocks from the composer's Scottsdale, Arizona home.

This Grade 1 band work is fifty-six measures in length and approximately three minutes in duration. The word *Anasazi* is translated from the Navajo meaning “ancient people” or “ancient enemies.” The Anasazi lived in the

“four corners” area (New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Colorado) of the United States from about 1 A.D. to 1300. These Native Americans were cliff dwellers, building their homes in canyon walls and under rock overhangs. Due to a variety of circumstances, including incursions by the Navajo and Apache tribes and a prolonged drought, the Anasazi population declined and eventually disappeared. The modern day Hopi nation claims the Anasazi as ancestors.

Unit 3: Historical Perspective

Although an original composition, *Anasazi* shares elements often associated with Native American music, such as rhythmic and bass line *ostinati*. The use of the Dorian mode further reinforces its association with folk-like music. This piece provides tremendous potential for team-teaching or interdisciplinary study with social studies and history.

Unit 4: Technical Considerations

As with many Grade 1 elementary band compositions, *Anasazi* works with variable instrumentation. The composer has scored the bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, bassoon, trombone, baritone, and tuba in unison or octave unison stating, “Any one or more of these instruments will provide an adequate bass part.” Tenor saxophone, oboe, and horn parts are optional. Cornet and clarinet parts are divided into two parts.

Instrument ranges are modest. Clarinet parts never cross the break. The first cornet range is an octave: C below the staff to middle C. The other brass and alto saxophones have ranges less than an octave. Percussion parts (including bells) can be performed by as few as three players, although splitting up the woodblock and tambourine parts allows for a fourth player while still not doubling voicings.

The rhythmic challenges are minimal because of the tempo (*slowly*, quarter note = 72) and predominantly block scoring. Mainly, quarter and half notes with some basic eighth note rhythms characterize the selection. The bass voices employ only quarter, half, and whole notes but not eighth notes.

The key is G minor, primarily in the Dorian mode. Players read some easy accidentals.

Unit 5: Stylistic Considerations

The composer calls the style “subdued and *mysterioso*” offering a fine opportunity to develop sustained, *legato* lines at softer dynamics. Since the selection is a composer’s characterization rather than a direct quote of Anasazi or Native American music, look to slower, expressive minor folk songs for performance exemplars. In band literature, movement two of *Three Hungarian Songs* by Bela Bartok (arranged by Philip Gordon) is similar in style.



Unit 6: Musical Elements

MELODY:

The melody might be approached most expressively by following the axiom “as the melody gets higher, play louder; as the melody goes lower, play softer.” This practice works especially well in the middle section of the piece. Also, even though all notes are held for full value, every whole note should be approached with some kind of shaping strategy. If the whole note is at the end of the phrase, it can be tapered to a softer dynamic. If it is located mid-phrase, it can increase in volume.

HARMONY:

The B section of *Anasazi* is canonic in parallel thirds. Players can listen to determine if both voices are balanced. The concepts of minor tonality and the Dorian mode can be introduced by defining where the major and minor second intervals occur.

RHYTHM:

The term *ostinato*, defined as a phrase that is repeated persistently (from the Italian word for “obstinate”), characterizes the rhythm in the percussion and the bass line. The rhythms should be performed with a steady, controlled beat. Subdivision of the quarter notes to the eighth note rhythm will help prevent rushing the beat.

TIMBRE:

Since rhythmic and range challenges are so minimal, there are developmental opportunities for teaching the fundamentals of blend and balance. This piece would be an effective choice for a band capable of playing Grade 2 or 3 music to review ensemble tone production and color. Players should control individual tones and “play into” the tone produced by the group-at-large. There are opportunities for the woodwind and brass (plus saxophone) choirs to blend their sections independently and then eventually with the bass line.

Unit 7: Form and Structure

Anasazi is composed in an arch form (ABCBA with an introduction and coda).

SECTION	MEASURES	EVENT AND SCORING
Introduction	1-2	Bass line/percussion <i>ostinato</i>
A	3-10	<i>Tutti</i> ; 4+4 phrasing
B	11-18	Canon; 4+4 phrasing
C	19-34	Percussion <i>ostinato</i> stops; brass choir 4+4 phrasing; woodwind choir 4+4 phrasing
B	35-42	Identical to first B section

SECTION	MEASURES	EVENT AND SCORING
A'	43-52	<i>Tutti</i> with canonic flute part; percussion <i>ostinato</i> returns
Coda	53-56	Bass line/percussion <i>ostinato</i>

Unit 8: Suggested Listening

Various recordings of Native Americans of the Southwest are available from Canyon Records and Indian Arts, 4143 North Sixteenth Street, Phoenix, AZ 85016.

Bela Bartok, *Mikrokosmos*

Unit 9: Additional References and Resources

Anasazi: *Pueblo Dwellers of the Southwest* (website). Site address:
<http://raysweb.net/canyonlands/pages/anasazi.html>

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