

Fast~Attack

(dedicated to our sailors who patrol for freedom below the waves)

Jeffrey T. Parthun, Sr. (ASCAP)

Fast-Attack (dedicated to our sailors who patrol for freedom below the waves) is an energetic piece that is both playable and challenging for high school and more advanced middle school bands. The unique flavor of the work makes it suitable for programming as a contest, concert or patriotic piece.

THE PROGRAM

The title refers to a type of submarine known as a fast-attack. I have long been a fan of submarine novels and movies (Tom Clancy, Joe Buff, “The Enemy Below,” etc.). I am in awe of the people who serve our country in the submarine service. In the piece I used nautical images combined with the drama of a submarine patrol to propel the musical ideas.

The form of the piece loosely follows a submarine patrol. The first section (1-24) portrays the proud ship leaving port. The second section (25-58) begins the patrol. A sea chantey-like theme rides over swelling chordal currents. The sailors, ever-vigilant, are always on the lookout for danger lurking in the deep (29-32 and 37-40). The patrol finally settles into a routine as the ship continues for miles seemingly without end. The sub encounters an unknown and potentially dangerous sonar contact during the 3rd section (59-72) as the music becomes more agitated and ominous. The final section (73-end) finds the submarine triumphantly returning to port after a successful patrol.

MUSICAL ANALYSIS

Musically, the piece is full of styles and compositional techniques that offer conductors many teaching opportunities. An obvious element to point out is the use of *Anchor’s Aweigh* quotes throughout the work.

There is a unifying rhythmic motif that connects each section of the piece. The uses of mixed meter, brief moments of quartal harmony, sequential passages, dramatic style changes and melodic variations are all concepts that could be presented from the podium. Of particular note is the relationship between the sea chantey melody at 25 and the angular melody at 59. Students will be surprised to find that the melodies are the same but are presented in dramatically different ways.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The percussion writing is on an equal level to that of the winds and forms the rhythmic framework for the piece. Conductors may use additional snare drummers on all of the louder sections, especially if you have a deep-pitched field drum to add to the concert snare drum color. The sections from 25-58 should be done with only one snare drummer if possible.

Bass drummers should be aware of the articulations presented in the initial statement of the ostinato. Bass drummers at this level should be muffling the drum to get long and short articulations and changing playing areas to get legato and marcato effects.

The cowbell part may take some creativity on the part of the conductor and players. The sound that I was looking for is the sound of underwater sonar that you hear in movies. If the cowbell does not work for you, try playing on the bowl of a timpani with a hard felt or yarn mallet (you don't want to damage the kettle) or placing a cowbell on a tom-tom to get that echo effect.

The timpanist should use muffling techniques to match the low brass articulations as closely as possible.

The percussion 2 part may be divided for more than one player. If one player is doing this part he/she must think in advance to know what implement is in which hand and what is coming next.

In the wind parts, care should be taken at 25 to get the flute/oboe/bell melody in proper balance with the underlying clarinet chords.

In all parts the eighth note remains constant throughout the piece.

PERFORMANCE HISTORY

I would like to acknowledge two bands that helped greatly in the development of this piece. The Twin Lakes High School Band from Monticello, Indiana, directed by Charles Kubly, gave the first early performance of the work on February 23, 2006. The Tecumseh Middle School 8th Grade Band from Lafayette, Indiana gave a performance of the piece with revisions in their 2006 band contest performance.



Jeffrey T. Parthun, Sr. lives in Lafayette, Indiana with his wife Kim and four children. He is a band director in the Lafayette (IN) School Corporation where he currently directs the concert and jazz bands at Tecumseh Middle School and is an assistant director at Jefferson High School. During his 20+ years as a public school teacher he has taught instrumental music at every level from elementary band and orchestra through teaching applied percussion at Purdue University. Jeff holds degrees from Butler University and Northwestern University where he studied band arranging with John P. Paynter, Don Owens and Don Casey. In addition to a busy teaching schedule he is active as a freelance percussionist with many regional jazz and concert groups. He is an experienced adjudicator, clinician and arranger for concert, jazz, marching and percussion ensembles and is a member of the Central States Judges Association. He can be seen (briefly!) as the band director in the Paramount Pictures movie "Blue Chips" with Shaquille O'Neal and Nick Nolte.