

# The Hawks of Happy Hollow

SUITE FOR YOUNG BAND

by

**Matt Conaway (ASCAP)**

## **PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

**First Performance:** May 11, 2007 by the Tri-County (IN) Middle School 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Band (Pam Holt, Conductor)

**“Official” Premiere:** May 13, 2007 by the Happy Hollow Elementary School Beginning Band (Matt Conaway, Conductor)

## **GENERAL NOTES**

This one was a lot of fun to put together. I wanted to give a young/beginning band the opportunity to work on some slightly contemporary techniques. Another major motivation was to give our beginners the chance to play a pretty lengthy piece of music, while keeping movements short enough so they wouldn't run out of steam. This four-movement suite was the result. We treated each movement as a separate piece for rehearsal purposes. Feel free to perform any combination of movements from this suite – Movement 4, in particular, can stand alone as a concert opener/fanfare.

Happy Hollow Elementary School is the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade building in the West Lafayette Community School Corporation. The Hawk is the school's mascot. The piece is in tribute to all the Happy Hollow Hawks who have played in their band program (over half of each 5<sup>th</sup> grade class joins the beginning band). Some band students came up with ideas for what a young hawk would do from its first flight on, and these evolved into the movement names.

## **REHEARSAL NOTES**

### **Mvt. 1 – THE JOY OF THE FIRST FLIGHT**

The only unusual effect required here is the flute section playing mini-scales at fast speeds. Encourage the performers to get every note at whatever speed they end up with. We had some flute players that just started wiggling their fingers, and sometimes it results in a sound that “chirps” and sticks out. It is better to go slow enough to hit everything along the way – tell them that the composer said so! ☺

We used this movement to work on phrasing fundamentals with the wind sections. A good rule of thumb is to never breathe when the suspended cymbal is rolling. Even a 5<sup>th</sup> grade band is capable of doing eight measure phrases in this movement! We establish the rule of “no stupid breaths” at the very beginning (don't interrupt the crescendo, never breathe on a barline unless asked, etc), and it makes for a much more fluid sound.

## **Mvt. 2 – THE BIRD OF PREY**

I should have known that ten-year-olds would want to include a violent attack on some small woodland critter, so I gave them this brief hunt and kill movement. The beginning through m. 24 represents the hunt, with the hawk's focused method represented by the percussion section's ostinato. The pattern changes at m. 25 after our hawk locates his next meal. Measure 31 signifies a dive, with the last glissando representing the panic the victim feels before it falls to the hawk's hunger. (We're dealing with really young kids – any attempts at subtlety would go completely unnoticed ☺)

This will probably be the first time your trumpets will see a trill written in the music, and they should approach it the same way the flutes had to approach their mini-scales in Mvt. 1. Accuracy is far more important than velocity! As for the glissando, the starting and ending notes are far from mandatory. Just make sure their sounds are descending... our clarinets liked to wiggle their fingers too much, and they started squeaking like a family of mice... not quite the effect I had in mind!

## **Mvt. 3 – CIRCLING ABOVE**

Another sledgehammer musical connection – the “circling” is represented by a round. This one is simple, although some young brass groups may struggle with the arpeggio. There are no unusual techniques required to play this movement. The only thing out of the ordinary is that this is the only movement that ends softly. This ending could be a great opportunity for young students to really force themselves to play as soft as possible while maintaining a great sound.

## **Mvt. 4 – TO FOREVER SOAR**

This last movement is a reminder to our students that they should always work for greater heights, and to surpass life's little bumps and bruises and stay aloft. The beginning and end of this movement should be played with a very celebratory feel, with an eight-measure interlude of reflection in the middle.

The biggest struggle we had was maintaining tone quality on the last three chords. It's so easy to cut loose and blast away at the end of a five-minute young band composition, but those chords still require careful balance like all the others.

## **CLOSING NOTES**

I hope you enjoy working on “The Hawks...” with your students – it's always exciting to watch the youngest band students work on new music!





**Matt Conaway** is the Director of Bands for the West Lafayette Community School Corporation in West Lafayette, Indiana. Originally from Woodhaven, Michigan, Conaway completed his undergraduate degree at Indiana University-Bloomington, earning his Bachelor of Music Education-Teaching Area degree with distinction. Following graduation, he served as the Graduate Assistant Director with the Purdue University Bands. In that capacity, he served as an assistant with the "All-American" Marching Band and the concert bands. In addition, he served as a director of the "Gold and Black Sound" women's basketball pep band.

Conaway is currently on the board of directors for the Indiana University Alumni Band and was recently elected to the state board of the Indiana State School Music Association. He is a member of MENC, Indiana Bandmasters Association, Indiana Music Educators Association and Tau Beta Sigma. Matt is also active with the Lafayette Citizens Band and Lafayette Civic Theatre. He has over 150 arrangements and compositions to his credit, including works for the Bloomington "Pops" Orchestra, Indiana University, Purdue athletic bands and several high school and university ensembles in the Midwest.