Band Virtual Learning

8th Grade Percussion

May 4th, 2020

8th Grade Percussion
Lesson: May 4th, 2020

Objective/Learning Target:
Students will learn about one of the most iconic themes in cinematic history and will be given the opportunity to play it.
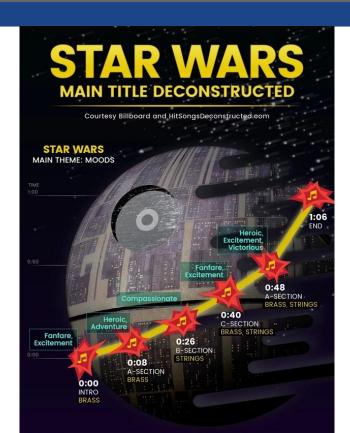
Why is today (May 4th) special???

Click HERE

Break It Down:

Intro

Length: 0:00 – 0:08

Mood: Excitement

Primary Instruments: Brass

Like a mainstream hit, the intro clocks in close to 10 seconds. After the 20th Century Fox Fanfare, *Star Wars* opens with orchestral fanfare of its own that -- even in 8 seconds -- previews the film's central storyline of this heroic (Luke), adventurous (Han) and regal (Leia) battle against a military foe.

A Section Part I

Length: 0:08 – 0:26

Mood: Heroic, Adventurous

Primary Instruments: Brass

Following the opening fanfare of the intro, the *Star Wars* main title heads directly into the A section, its equivalent of a chorus. This is similar to how mainstream hits increasingly forego a verse before the first chorus. The K.I.S.S. Principal (Keep It Simple and Singable) that works in pop choruses applies to the *Star Wars* main title's A section (only in this case "keep it hummable" is more appropriate).

A Section Part I

In the A section, rhythmic and melodic repetition abounds, with each independent melodic segment being short enough (4 to 5 notes) to encourage immediate impact and memorability. Additionally, hit songs employ "clever WOW factors" that accentuate the melody and make the song more memorable. The *Star Wars* theme has two in the A section:

1) Melodic Leaps

2) Coming Together

A Section Part I

1) Melodic Leaps

Prior to the brass instruments hitting those massive notes of victory, the melody descends down the scale for a few notes -- so when it reaches the high notes, we notice a "pronounced sense of heroism through strong melodic leaps."

A Section Part I

2) Coming Together

At the end of each melodic phrase, the orchestra unites to play the final notes together, emphasizing "a grand sense of power" as each instrument joins forces. This ties into the movie's theme of suddenly coming back together (i.e., Han Solo returning to help Luke on the Death Star run) to achieve great goals.

B Section

Length: 0:26 – 0:40

Mood: Compassionate

Primary Instruments: Strings

The B section, like the bridge to a mainstream pop hit, switches up the feeling and pace of the theme. The heroic brass punctuations of the A section are replaced by sentimental, compassionate strings in the B section. There are more notes here and they last longer, which provides a rhythmic variance from the quick-paced A/chorus section. Even within this section, repetition occurs to maximize hummability.

C Section

Length: 0:40 – 0:48

Mood: Excitement

Primary Instruments: Brass and strings

Like the pre-chorus that ushers in the return of a chorus in a mainstream hit (78 percent of top 10 hits have a pre-chorus), the C section of the *Star Wars* main title serves to "ramp up the excitement factor via fanfare/brass instrumentation." Unlike the opening intro fanfare, this also features strings, providing consistency from the B section to the return of the A section.

A Section Part II

Length: 0:48 - 1:06

Mood: Heroic, Compassionate, Victorious

Primary Instruments: Brass and strings

When the A section returns to close out the main title, it's similar to the final chorus in a pop song: The melody repeats, but with the energy level at a new peak.

Also, the background instrumentation is changed up to provide additional interest. In the case of *Star Wars*, this means not only does the brass of the A Section I return, but strings carry over from the B and C sections, melding the heroic mood with the compassionate tone of the B section.

Practice:

Mallet sight reading is still a primary focus for improvement for all ISD Percussionists in all grade levels. So, to keep with our theme for the day, here is a great melody to sight read:

May the 4th
Be With You!!!!!