



The Quirky House

Composition Brief:

The candidate chose to write an atonal piece of music to accompany a 'radio play'. The original intention was to have the narrative read over the music - this has been included in the text boxes. The candidate later rejected this idea as it was felt that the detail in the music may be detracted from by the spoken narrative. The candidate has written for a small studio ensemble consisting of:

Flute, Piano (played by four hands), Bass drum and cymbal, and violin.

Composition Tools:

The piece was composed on Sibelius after the development of individual sections. The candidate found the copy and paste and transpose functions particularly useful and preferred to realise the composition using Sibelius as opposed to Cubase as it was more suited to 'standard notational' composition, adding instrumental techniques by 'technical' text (e.g. pizz and arco), changing time signatures, and adding dynamic expression.

Analysis:

The first section describes: "a stormy night as we see a deserted house being approached by a lost stranger. He walks up a damaged path and arrives at the front door".

Flute trills and cymbal rolls are used to depict wind.

'Cluster chords' on the piano are used to depict thunder.

A pizzicato ostinato on the violin is used to depict rain.

The section ends with a fast 'scurrying' motif in the violin; this is used later in the piece (e.g. bars 20 & 21).

The second section describes: "the stranger knocks on the door repeatedly but there is no reply. Against the sound of knocking his heart beats loudly".

The bass drum plays a 'heart beat' pulse rhythm.

The piano plays 'cluster chords' to represent the knocking of the door.

"The door mysteriously opens": this is another 'scurrying' motif which is an attempt to represent perhaps the 'un-oiled hinges' of the door creaking open. This is played in 9th between the violin and flute.

A perfect cadence (V7 I) (how 'ironic!') leads us into a view of a room with a piano with a cat 'crawling' across the keys. (Bar 11 - 14).

This is a motif played in 2^{nds} between the violin and flute. The heartbeat of the bass drum continues.

The cat motif is expanded into major chords in bars 13 & 14. As the cat sees the stranger is 'scurries' away - compare the music of bar 15 with bar 10.

Bars 16 & 17 depict the stranger "curiously climbing stairs". The heart beat idea is still continued (a good way of linking sections of music). Ascending major chords describe the climb with low trills on the violin and flute (in 2nds) depict tension.

Bar 19 is a climax bar which depicts an owl diving for the man's head.

Fast written ascending glissandi (in 2nds) between the violin and flute depict the owl flying.

A cymbal roll adds to the tension of the texture.

The right hand of the piano plays semiquaver alternating chords of F# Major and C Major ('Petrushka!').

The left hand of the piano plays the 'door knocking' idea.

Bars 20 & 21 using the 'scurrying' motif from bar 6. It is first heard ff then pp (on solo flute) - very 'Tom and Jerry'!

The final section sees the stranger fleeing from the house pursued by hundreds of owls.

This section juxtaposes ideas heard through the piece.

The flying owls are depicted through the music heard in Bar 19. This time the bass drum is playing the 'heart beat' idea.

To avoid this section becoming repetitive the flute and right hand piano parts are transposed up a semitone in Bar 26 - this also heightens the tension.

The piece ends with a fast descending chromatic passage depicting the stranger falling into an abyss.

The piano plays semiquaver major chords on the chromatic scale.

The flute and violin play a descending chromatic scale in demisemiquavers in parallel 4ths with the piece ending on a final abrupt note of C.

2

Musical score for measures 2-5. The score is in 4/4 time and features five staves: Flute (Fl.), Piano (Pno), Drums (Dr.), and Violin (Vln). Measure 2 includes a trill (tr) in the Flute part. Measure 5 includes a trill (tr) in the Drums part. The Piano part has a fermata in measure 5. The Violin part has a fermata in measure 5. Dynamics include *f* (forte) in measures 4 and 5.

The stranger knocks the door repeatedly but there is no reply...
Against the sound of the knocking his heart is beating loudly

Musical score for measures 7-9. The score is in 4/4 time and features five staves: Flute (Fl.), Piano (Pno), Drums (Dr.), and Violin (Vln). The Flute, Piano, and Violin parts are silent (indicated by a horizontal line) in all three measures. The Drums part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents (>) in measures 7 and 8, and a similar pattern in measure 9. The Piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents (>) in measures 7 and 8, and a similar pattern in measure 9.

The door mysteriously opens...

10

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

arco

5/4

11

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

5/4

13

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

Musical score for measures 13-14. The Flute (Fl.) and Violin (Vln) parts are silent, indicated by whole rests. The Piano (Pno) part consists of chords in both hands, primarily triads and dyads, with some accidentals. The Drum (Dr.) part features a steady eighth-note pattern with accents. The Violin (Vln) part is silent.

15

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

arco

Musical score for measure 15. The Flute (Fl.) part has a melodic line with many accidentals. The Piano (Pno) part has a simple accompaniment with chords. The Drum (Dr.) part has a simple pattern with accents. The Violin (Vln) part is marked *arco* and has a melodic line with many accidentals. The Flute (Fl.) and Violin (Vln) parts end with a double bar line and repeat sign.

16

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

pp

pp

tr

tr

Ped.

The man is at the bottom of some stairs leading into darkness...out of curiosity he climbs them...
A strange cold wind blows causing the man to shiver...
SUDDENLY - out of nowhere an owl dives for the man's head - a symbol of DEATH!
The man falls down the stairs he so carefully climbed...
Panic stricken he gets up and runs for the door...

19

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

f

f

tr

f

20

Fl. *ff* *pp*

Pno *ff*

Dr. *tr* *ff*

Vln *ff*

The door is jammed - in a fit of sheer panic the man finally yanks the door and flees down an endless path
As he runs the windows of the house burst open and hundreds of owls fly into the night sky giving chase...
The man is running as fast as he can - the adrenalin is flowing through his body...

22

Fl.

Pno *f*

Dr. *f*

Vln *f*

23

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 23 and 24. It features five staves: Flute (Fl.), Piano (Pno), Drums (Dr.), and Violin (Vln). The Flute part consists of a melodic line with eighth notes and a final dotted quarter note. The Piano part is divided into two staves (treble and bass clef), with the right hand playing chords and the left hand playing chords with accents. The Drums part shows a rhythmic pattern with eighth notes and accents. The Violin part plays a simple eighth-note accompaniment.

24

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 24 and 25. It features five staves: Flute (Fl.), Piano (Pno), Drums (Dr.), and Violin (Vln). The Flute part continues the melodic line from measure 23. The Piano part continues with chords in both hands, including accents in the bass clef. The Drums part continues with eighth notes and accents. The Violin part continues with eighth notes.

25

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

Detailed description: This system contains measures 25 through 28. The Flute (Fl.) part is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and plays a melodic line of eighth notes. The Piano (Pno) part consists of two staves: the right hand in treble clef plays chords in F# major, and the left hand in bass clef plays chords in D major. The Drums (Dr.) part is in a 2/4 time signature, featuring a simple pattern of quarter notes on the snare and bass drums. The Violin (Vln) part is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and plays a simple eighth-note accompaniment.

26

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

Detailed description: This system contains measures 26 through 29. The Flute (Fl.) part continues its melodic line. The Piano (Pno) part shows a change in the right hand's chordal accompaniment, moving to F# minor and D minor chords. The Drums (Dr.) part maintains the same rhythmic pattern. The Violin (Vln) part continues with its eighth-note accompaniment.

27

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

28

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

In the darkness the man slips and falls into an endless abyss of darkness...
Never to be seen again...

10

29

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln

30

Fl.

Pno

Dr.

Vln