MARCHÉ DIABOLIQUE

Brian Balmages

Instrumentation

1 - Conductor's Full Score
4 - Flute 1
4 - Flute 2
2 - Oboe
2 - Bassoon
5 - B♭ Clarinet 1
5 - B♭ Clarinet 2
2 - B♭ Bass Clarinet
1 - B♭ Contrabass Clarinet
2 - E♭ Alto Saxophone 1
2 - E♭ Alto Saxophone 2
2 - B♭ Tenor Saxophone
2 - E♭ Baritone Saxophone
4 - B♭ Trumpet 1
4 - B♭ Trumpet 2
4 - F Horn
2 - Trombone 1
2 - Trombone 2
2 - Baritone / Euphonium

2 - Baritone T.C.
4 - Tuba
1 - Timpani
2 - Mallet Percussion 1
Bells
Xylophone
2 - Mallet Percussion 2
Marimba
Chimes
2 - Percussion 1
Snare Drum
Bass Drum
4 - Percussion 2
Crash Cymbals
Suspended Cymbal
China Cymbal
Splash Cymbal
Sand Blocks
Triangle
Ratchet
Bar Chimes

FJH is now using a high-speed sorting system for parts. As a result, all single page parts are collated before multiple page parts.
The Composer

Brian Balmages (b. 1975) is an award-winning composer, conductor, producer, and performer. He holds a bachelor’s degree in music from James Madison University and a master’s degree from the University of Miami in Florida. His compositions have been performed worldwide at the state, national and international level. His active schedule of commissions and premieres has incorporated groups ranging from elementary schools to professional ensembles, including the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Miami Symphony Orchestra, University of Miami Wind Ensemble, Boston Brass, and the Dominion Brass Ensemble. In 2012, Mr. Balmages received the prestigious Albert Austin Harding Award from the American School Band Directors Association. He is also a 2010 winner of the Harvey G. Phillips Award for Compositional Excellence, presented by the International Tuba-Euphonium Association.

As a conductor, Mr. Balmages enjoys engagements with numerous all-state and regional honor bands and orchestras along with university and professional groups. Notable guest conducting appearances have included the Midwest Clinic, Western International Band Clinic, National Association for Music Educators, American School Band Directors Association, CBDNA, the Kennedy Center, and Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. He has also served as an Adjunct Professor of Instrumental Conducting and Acting Symphonic Band Director at Towson University in Maryland.

Currently, Mr. Balmages is the Director of Instrumental Publications for The FJH Music Company Inc. in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He resides in Baltimore with his wife Lisa and their two sons.

About the Music

Those familiar with my music know that I often like to take traditional styles of music and rework them in a completely new way. Such is the case with Marche Diabolique, a piece that borrows elements of the traditional concert march and sets them within a contemporary framework to create a work that can actually function as a march or as a main concert piece.

The work makes extensive use of the tritone (it is the first interval in the piece other than unison and is also in the final chord). Surrounding the tritone is an expansive, dark harmonic language. Marked “menacing and deliberate,” the music comes across as direct and almost somewhat invasive. The opening rhythm in the clarinets becomes the foundation of the entire work and remains somewhat constant while material around it continuously evolves.

Loosely following the form of the march, a “trio” section begins at measure 40, where a new melody is introduced at a softer dynamic level. Rhythmic elements from the previous section are carried on, but a new rhythmic idea comes to the forefront (alto sax, measure 46). This idea is also present in the previous section, but becomes more prominent moving forward. What follows is a long, steady build toward measure 72, the “dog fight” section. This bombastic part of the piece is presented as a simple 2-part fugue while the clarines play a melody based on loose variations of the Dies Irae. This leads into the full ensemble playing the main rhythmic idea of the piece in unison before the intensity subsides (yet the unsettling character of the music continues). The final melodic statement is presented in the low reeds, sounding almost like a fading growl before one final spark ignites with the last chord.

Percussion plays an important role throughout the work. In addition to maintaining pulse, the instruments add a lot of color articulation (creating unique timbres that coincide with articulation in the winds). Players on instruments such as crash cymbals, splash cymbal, china cymbal, sand blocks, and ratchet should be extremely aware of the wind sections that play along with them— for example, if a splash cymbal is playing with trumpets, it should sound like the trumpets are articulating with a “splash” of color.

Marche Diabolique was commissioned by the North Carolina Bandmasters Association Eastern District for the 2014 All-District Middle School Symphonic Band.