

# Ritual

Vaclav Nelhybel

Rebecca Gamble  
MUS 354 – Conducting II  
Mr. Gary Speck

- I. Year published: 1979  
Year written: unknown
- II. Composer: Vaclav Nelhybel was born September 24, 1919 in Czechoslovakia. The Conservatory of Music in Prague, Prague University, and University of Fribourg were the places he completed his musical education. In He passed away March 22, 1996 while in Scranton, Pennsylvania where he was the composer in residence at University at Scranton.
- III. This version of the work was not transcribed/arranged/edited.
- IV. Duration: approx. 5:30
- V. Publisher: J. Christopher Music Company -- Very little information can be found on this publisher. However based upon JW Pepper and sheetmusicplus.com, J. Christopher Music Company appears to publish mainly Nelhybel works.
- VI. Grade:
  - a. The most common grade for this piece is a 3.
    - i. Hal Leonard defines at grade 3 piece as the following: "3 = medium, 3-4 years of playing experience
    - ii. According to the JW Pepper website *Ritual* appears on the following state lists: FL – FBA Band Grade 3, IN – ISSMA Junior Band Group 1, LA – LA Band Grade 2, OK – Concert Band Class 2A, SC – SC Band Grade 3, TN – Grade 4, VA – Concert Band Grade 3
  - b. I believe this could also be a grade 3 piece. However, I think it would be on the harder end of grade three due to the unison notes that must be matched, tricky balance and passing of style/melodies, and mature style changes.
- VII. Concepts that can be taught from the work
  - a. Form
    - i. Different sections and styles
      - 1. Argument for different letter combinations because of recurring themes throughout
  - b. Meter
    - i. All in 4/4 time
    - ii. Could feel like halftime in sections (i.e. beginning at 17)
    - iii. Feels even throughout
      - 1. Beat 4 to beat 1 is a prominent idea that happens throughout piece which both shows where beat 1 is but could also change feel if style is incorrect.
  - c. Style (historical?)
    - i. In *Program Notes for Band* written by Norman E. Smith, says this as a general statement about Nelhybel: "Interplay between dual aspects of motion and time, often spanning many measures, results in a vigorous drive which is typical of his music. Tension generated by accumulations of dissonance, increasing textural densities, exploding dynamics, and the massing of multihued sonic colors often results in a kind of whirlwind propulsion sometimes described as a 'well integrated sound and fury'"(442-443). I think this fits into *Ritual* well because *Ritual* is all about a conversation that is happening between

three voices. In this case, the three voices are the percussionists, brass players, and woodwind players.

- ii. The Wind Repertory Project online also mentions Nelhybel writing with a “strong relation to a gravitational center.” I feel that in *Ritual* the center is always there and sounds consonant for a majority of the time.
- iii. As a general overview, this piece has heavy, ‘in your face’ parts and also has contrasting sweet melodies.
- d. Source Material
  - i. I was unable to find this information. However, as it was published in the late 1970s, I feel that there can be an assumption made. Since he had been in America for more than 15 years, his influences may have had stronger American influences than his previous works although I am sure the Czech influence was in there as well.
- e. Harmonic Idiom/Scale Basis
  - i. Bb major
  - ii. Places where much emphasis is placed on dominant
  - iii. Examples of chromaticism throughout
- f. Rhythmic Patterns
  - i. Entrances on beat 2 that play quarter notes on beat 2, 3 and 4 (articulations vary)
    - 1. Examples: mm. 24, 44, 77, 110, 122 - 125, 128 - 131, 179
  - ii. SD has variations and snippets of pattern from mm 8-16 throughout piece
    - 1. However, snare drum changes to completely new rhythm at 155 and sticks with it until 173
    - 2. SD then returns to previous pattern/variations with a twist of having a roll on beat 4 as opposed to four-sixteenth notes. I believe Nelhybel did this to propel the music forward as we are reaching the end
  - iii. Variations on the idea of beat 4 to beat 1
    - 1. First hear at mm 56-57 in clarinets
    - 2. Hear variation in BSN, BCL, TSAX, BAR, and Tuba at mm 60
    - 3. Continues in timpani/SD often throughout piece
  - iv. Dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note
    - 1. First introduced in horns at mm 64 but does not reappear until mm 164 when we hear it throughout the rest of the piece
  - v. Constant stream of eighth notes
    - 1. Presented in timpani at the beginning but does not occur for any wind players until mm 53 when we hear it as a new flourish to support other aspects of music. Later it is used as melody.
- g. Pitch/Balance/Intonation/Specific Technical Considerations
  - i. Unison pitches
    - 1. There are numerous places throughout this score where many of the instruments playing have a note that is a unison or an

octave with someone else/everyone else. This could be dangerous for intonation.

- ii. In mm 64, the horns are what we need to hear but due to the number of others playing it could be hard to hear them.
- iii. Passing of lines
  - 1. Since this is intended to be a conversation, it is important for each player to understand his/her role in the conversation. When the winds come in from mm 17-26 is an example of this.
- iv. Moving notes over longer note values could be a balance issue at some points
  - 1. Example: mm 35-37 and mm 93-96 -- Different voices are playing on different beats to create one constantly moving line. Players need to match the style/articulation of those who play before them
- v. Horns in general could be a balance issue
  - 1. They have important/different parts often but are often outnumbered by others in the ensemble when playing.
- vi. Isolated entrances among numerous players
  - 1. This could have a flam effect or it could be crisp and right on time. This could be a technical issue in trying to get everyone to attack together.

#### h. Textual Issues

- i. Many mentioned above, especially in regards to balance
- ii. Since Nelhybel intended for this music to be a conversation based upon his notes to the conductor, there are both sections of tutti among sections, instrument families, and the whole ensemble. At mm 53, we hear the first isolated section. Also, there is a clarinet solo at mm 107, but this is the only solo in the piece and soon becomes a clarinet/sax tutti moment.
- iii. Dialogue happens throughout the beginning until 39 in that sections/instrument families are weaving in and out of the conversation.

#### i. Tempo Relationships and Transitions

- i. Transition 1
  - 1. mm 53
    - a. Three fermatas leading up to transition
    - b. Transition is not tempo based but is style/feel based
- ii. Transition 2
  - 1. mm 102
    - a. Allargando: getting slower and slower
    - b. Meno mosso: at a lower speed
    - c. Gradual slow down from 102-106 then maintain steady pulse at 107
- iii. Transition 3
  - 1. mm 133
    - a. Sudden change back to Tempo I

- iv. Transition 4
  - 1. mm 145
    - a. Grave: Italian for slow and serious
    - b. All notes in measure can be held like fermatas
- v. Transition 5
  - 1. mm 146
    - a. Vivo: lively
    - b. A bit quicker than before
    - c. Maintain until the end

VIII. Five things that can go wrong

- a. When the style changes at mm 107, there could be a tendency to drag due to the slower tempo and smoother articulation.
- b. The many entrances that happen on beats 2, 3 and 4 could play a mind game with me regarding where beat 1 is.
- c. As an ensemble, we may not agree on releases and this could cause issues for the next entrance. This is something that I need to show and have practiced, but I will find out how effective it is while on the podium.
- d. Balance articulations will be incorrect and not matched. This could be caused by performers not understanding the idea of Nelhybel's conversation idea.
- e. Releases of tied notes when needing to move on to the next note could be incorrect/late and therefore causing a fluctuation in time.

Resources:

<http://www.scranton.edu/academics/performance-music/nelhybel/index.shtml>

[http://www.jwpepper.com/Ritual/2042067.item#.U2hysl4\\_DA4](http://www.jwpepper.com/Ritual/2042067.item#.U2hysl4_DA4)

<http://www.halleonard.com/bandSeriesGuide.jsp?subsiteid=6>

[http://www.windrep.org/Václav\\_Nelhybel](http://www.windrep.org/Václav_Nelhybel)

*The Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music* Edited by Paul E. Bierley Volume 1: A-N

*Program Notes for Band* by Norman E. Smith

Attempted email with University of Scranton with the following correspondence:

Initial Email from me:

Hello!

My name is Rebecca Gamble, and I am a music education major at Miami University in Oxford, OH. I have been utilizing the wonderful resources available on your website in regards to Vaclav Nelhybel for a project I am working on in a conducting class.

My assigned piece to study further is *Ritual*, published in 1979, and I have not been able to find too much information on the piece. Could you please direct me to any additional resources that you are aware of that may provide me more insight on the piece?

Thank you,  
Rebecca Gamble

First response from University of Scranton:

Hello Rebecca!

I am forwarding your email to Mrs. Nelhybel, who is curator of The Nelhybel Collection at Scranton. I am sure that she will get back to you with any additional information she may have.

Enjoy Vaclav's music!

CYB

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Second response from me:

Thank you so much! I appreciate you taking the time to do that.

I have yet to hear back yet, but I look forward to any information I can still learn about this piece post this project.

*Ritual*

National Standards:

2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
5. Reading and notating music
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Ohio State Standards HS 1:

- 2CE: Identify musical terms and symbols for articulation and expression.  
2PR: Prepare and accurately perform a varied repertoire of ensemble music.  
4PR: Demonstrate technical accuracy, appropriate tone quality, articulation, intonation, and expression for the works being performed with good posture and breathe control  
5PR: Respond appropriately to the cues of the conductor or section leader

Objective:

Students will critically listen and match articulation with those around them  
Students will gain an understanding of Nelhybel's intentions for the piece and replicate them to the best of their ability  
Students will understand their role within the ensemble at all times in piece

Procedure:

*Have SB play tuba, have a cello on baritone and a cello on bassoon*

1. Check out any transitions that did not go as smoothly as intended
  - a. Show with hands before telling them what I am envisioning
  - b. Mm 145 into mm 146
    - i. How soft can mm 146 be?
  - c. Mm 98
    - i. Gradual slowing down – can the decrescendo follow that? Each beat should be a little softer than the last.
    - ii. Pass off between horns and clarinet in 106 into 107
      1. While here, continue playing to make sure that dragging is not an issue
  - d. Mm 116
    - i. Listen to the two different styles going on at once. We need to hear both clearly.
2. Mm 159
  - a. Play only when you have a figure that involves a dotted quarter note.
    - i. See how it is passed around?
  - b. Play if you have anything else (including percussion)
    - i. Other group has a lot to compete with. How can you help them out?
  - c. Put it all together!
  - d. Mm 159 (mm 146 actually) to end should be one big gradual crescendo
  - e. How is last note? All releasing together with good, round sound?

3. Address any places where group and I were not together and/or flams happened incorrectly
4. Begin at 17
  - a. Work on passing off melody between brasses and woodwinds
    - i. Who is the conversation between? [Brass and WW with percussion interjections]
  - b. Mm 26: Ensure all articulation is specific in clarinets
  - c. Mm 34: Trumpet equal voices should be heard, appropriate accents will help with the
    - i. If needed, play attacks only (bop notes) or clap rhythm
  - d. Mm 39 – 45
    - i. Accents to legato
      1. Can we hear that style change? Make all times you see contrast in this piece exact and noticeable.
5. Jump to mm 60
  - a. Listening for horns at mm 64-74 – MORE!!!!!!!
  - b. Be clear and intentional in all articulations everyone else