

Notes on "Strollin'"

This piece is great for all brass players who are looking at doing Grade 1 or looking for a piece at about this level, as it currently features on the ABRSM syllabus (up to 2020) for all brass instruments as one of the List B pieces.

These notes work best if you listen also to the audio recording, which helps you to learn the rhythms by ear.

Strollin' is a jazzy tune, which is hard to get out of your head once you have heard it! The quavers need to be swung, rather than played straight. If you haven't played swung quavers before, you may wish to look at the lesson in the ArtForms home learning resources, listed under Green Award, titled 'I can improvise in a jazz style' as this takes you through the first steps in learning how to swing quavers.

It is helpful to think of swung quavers always in groups of two, where the first quaver is made a bit longer than if it was played 'straight' and the second quaver is a bit shorter. Try saying 'Doo-ba Doo-ba Doo-ba Doo-ba'. This would be a bar of swung quavers in 4/4. I also talk through this on the audio recording, so you can listen to me say the rhythms and then you can repeat them back afterwards.

The first bar of Strollin' is shown below:

played 'straight' - WALK JOGGING JOGGING (clap)
 played 'swung' - WALK DOO-BA DOO-BA (clap)


If we played this without swinging the quavers, we could decode the rhythms by using the word 'Walk' for the crotchet and 'Jogging' for each set of two quavers. This would make the rhythm: 'Walk, Jogging Jogging'. If we replace the word 'Jogging' with our word for the swung quavers, we get 'WALK, Doo-ba Doo-ba'. Now we can decode the whole of the first phrase like this:

WALK DOO-BA DOO-BA (clap) WALK DOO-BA DOO-BA (clap) WALK DOO-BA DOO-BA WALK WALK DOO-BA WALK (clap)

See if you can decode the next phrase (bars 7-10) in the same way. Be careful with the crotchet (1-beat) rests. Try singing it through and clapping on the rests.

The next section of the music, from the last beat of bar 10 up until bar 14 can be tricky to count. There are rests on the last beat of each bar and the first beat of the next one. I think of it as saying 'and one' with the fourth beat being 'and' and the first beat being 'one'. That way we can decode the rhythm as below:

Rests : (AND ONE) (AND ONE) (AND ONE) (AND ONE)



NOTES : WALK BOO-BA WALK BOO-BA WALK BOO-BA WALK BOO-BA

Look at bars 15-18? Do you recognise these bars? You may have seen them somewhere before in the piece. The final two bars follow the same rhythm as bars 17-18 and are like a full stop at the end of the piece.

I like putting my own words to pieces. In the recording I use the words 'We could be strollin', let's all go bowling' for the first phrase of this piece. Once you have got the rhythms, why not try and write your own words to the piece? You could use mine for a starting point if you want. I find when I put words to music it really helps me to remember the rhythms.

There are two types of articulation to look for in the piece. There are tenutos (with lines, played to their full length and staccatos (with dots, played very short). If you want some practise on these, check out the worksheet in the Artforms learning materials under the yellow award, titled 'Playing slurs, staccato and legato'. There is also an accent on the last note of the piece, which means you should start this note a little stronger.

This is one of my favourite brass pieces. It always puts a smile on my face and I hope it will put one on yours too!