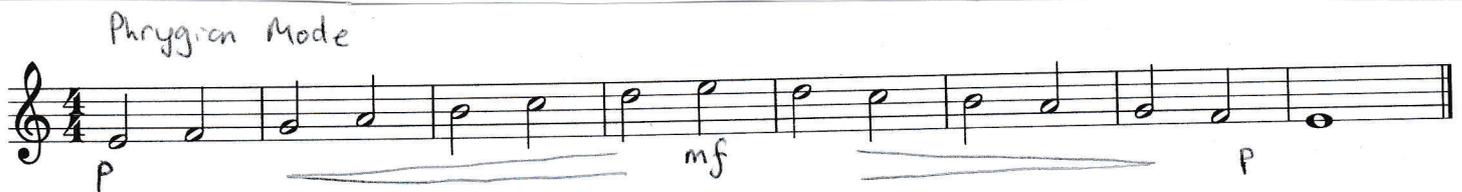


Notes on 'Reflections'

This piece is great for all brass players who are looking at doing Grade 4 or looking for a piece at about this level, as it currently features on the ABRSM syllabus (up to 2020) for all brass instruments **except** Tuba and French Horn. This piece is still suitable for Tuba and French Horn but if you're looking for Grade 4 syllabus pieces for these instruments, check out the notes on 'Open Plains' and 'Jiggedy Jig'. All of these pieces appear in 'Shining Brass Book 2', which is published by ABRSM.

Reflections are deep and meaningful thoughts about a subject or a person or place. This piece feels a little bit like someone having a daydream or lost deep in thought.

In this piece, you need to produce your smoothest and most controlled playing. There are no sharps or flats in the key signature, but the piece doesn't feel like it is in either C major or A minor. It is loosely based on what is called the Phrygian mode, which is an ancient type of scale. A good way to warm up for playing this piece is to play the Phrygian scale (see below) starting on E at a slow tempo, producing your warmest sound and connecting all the notes in a legato style, using a soft tongue to start each note. There shouldn't be any gaps between the notes. The perfect shape for a scale is to start quietly and crescendo to the top. This also mirrors the dynamics in bar 5 of the piece. Now try playing the Phrygian mode:



Now try playing bars 5-7. The crescendo feels to me like an aeroplane speeding up on the runway before taking off. The second half of the phrase is the aeroplane now up in the sky gliding gracefully. Don't forget to get quieter at the end of the phrase. Remember to split the triplet evenly across the beat. I like to think of the word 'strawberry' as it has three syllables and when said with three even syllables this helps me to play the triplet in the correct rhythm.



One of the trickiest elements of this piece is getting an even tempo despite all the different types of rhythms on show. Although the piece is in 3/4 I suggest counting with a quaver pulse. This helps to count the longer notes, which are easy to not play for long enough. There are 6 quavers in each bar so when it comes to the dotted crotchets especially, it is really helpful to count (1,2,3) in your head whilst playing them. For the minims you will have to count to 4. Double up on the length value of every note when counting this piece in quavers.

There is a tie at bar 12, which can make the rhythm a little tricky to negotiate. Play the rhythm first without the tie. Then merge the crotchet into the first semiquaver. Try singing the rhythm before playing it. If you still find the rhythm tricky there is no harm at all in keeping the tie out for the meantime.

Dynamics play a big role in this piece. As well as the crescendos that I've already touched upon, it is important to play bars 15-18 with a rich, full sound. After this, the dynamic comes down to p, which is a bit like the lull before the storm. Make sure you play this quietly with lots of diaphragm support, before crescendoing into the fanfare-like rhythm in bar 21. In bar 21 this is the only point of the piece where you can vary your articulation with slight gaps between the notes (marcato style) to bring out the drama. Don't miss the rit also in this bar, which means you should slow down as you make the crescendo, before going back to the normal tempo in the last note of bar 22.

This is a great piece to play. I hope you enjoy it!