

Dum Spiro Spero (2009)

Chris Pilsner (b.1986)

Composer:

Chris Pilsner is becoming an established name in the contemporary classical world. His music for orchestra, wind ensemble, and chamber ensembles has been acclaimed by audiences, performers and conductors world-wide. In the concert hall, Chris's music has been performed by groups as diverse as professional ensembles, universities, high schools, and all-state ensembles. He has also been commissioned by and recorded with professional orchestras across the world. As a conductor, Chris served as the Directors of Orchestras at Windsor High School in Colorado from 2014-2019. Now a full-time composer and conductor, he regularly appears as a guest conductor/clinician with schools, honor bands/orchestras across the nation. Because of his experience as a teacher, Chris is an avid supporter of music education and strives to keep creating new and original works for young individuals across the world.

Composition:

Dum Spiro Spero was commissioned by director Casey Cropp and the Rocky Mountain High School Wind Ensemble in 2009. The piece premiered on January 28th 2010 at the Colorado Music Educators Association Conference in Colorado Springs, CO with the composer conducting.

The composer wrote:

“Dum Spiro Spero takes its title from a Latin phrase meaning “While I breathe, I hope.” When I read that phrase for the first time, I was taken back by the incredible amount of power it held and immediately know it would be the basis for a new piece.

When I started writing, my goal was to write something as deeply emotional and human as the title was. The result was a series of simple melodies supported by some of the most colorful orchestration and harmonies I've ever written. From the lush opening, the gentle singing, and ultimately the triumphal climax, the human quality to the music is what I think gives Dum Spiro Spero a powerful sense of grace and splendor. ”

Musical Guidelines:

- Always play with your most beautiful sound
 - At soft volumes, and at intense volumes
 - Use your air to support your sound
 - Breathe in the character of the music (in the tempo, in the style)
 - Percussion, use a steady and even single stroke roll to create a seamless sound
- Note entrances/endings
 - Entrances = breathe together = play together
 - Endings = on the beat, with graceful precision
 - If a rest follows a whole note = -1
 - If a note follows a whole note = breath (quickly!) on 4+
- Know your musical goal
 - Whole notes and half notes need a graceful push over the barline
 - Use the moving line (quarter notes/8th notes) to create shape and motion
 - If you are part of the “inhale/exhale” motive, create movement with < >
- Stagger breathing - to create seamless phrasing and harmonic support
- Balance/Blend - listen low (timpani, tuba, bass clarinet, bari sax) and have your sound become part of our rich and beautiful ensemble sound.

Musical Guidelines (continued):

- Dynamic Markings:
 - *pp* (*pianissimo*) - very softly
 - *p* (*piano*) - softly
 - *mp* (*mezzo piano*) - medium soft
 - *mf* (*mezzo forte*) - medium loud
 - *f* (*forte*) - loud
 - *ff* (*fortissimo*) - very loudly

Opening: Adagio, molto legato a espressivo (□ = 68)

- Musical terms to know:
 - *Adagio* - played slowly
 - *molto* - very
 - *legato* - connected
 - *espressivo* - expressively
- Rehearsal Notes
 - Long notes with < > should musically embody inhale vs. exhale
 - m.10 - allow the suspended cymbal to guide your crescendo
 - m.15-16 - all hail the horn solo
 - m.25 - allow the timpani and susp cym to guide your crescendo
 - m.29 - allow the susp cym to guide the implied crescendo (moving line)
 - m.32-34 - support the trumpet solo
 - m.35 - tuba and glockenspiel solo propel the music into the next section

Rehearsal 36: Poco piu mosso (□ = 72)

- Musical terms to know:
 - *Poco piu mosso* - a little more motion
 - *poco rit* (*poco ritardando*) - slow down a little
 - *a tempo* - return to the tempo
- Rehearsal Notes
 - Follow the rules above
 - m.53-56 - clarinet choir, play with a gorgeous tone, balance to bass clarinet, erase barlines
 - m.57 - flute and low brass enter with grace and beauty
 - m.62-66 - the entire band starts a long, slow crescendo. Allow the timpani and suspended cymbal guide our bloom to forte
 - m.69 - allow the susp cym to guide the implied crescendo (moving line)
 - m.73 - End your sound gracefully on -1 of m.74
 - m.74 - clarinet choir same as above

Rehearsal 77: Meno mosso (□ = 58)

- Musical terms to know:
 - *Meno mosso* - less motion
 - *poco rit* (*poco ritardando*) - slow down a little
 - *a tempo* - return to the tempo
- Rehearsal Notes
 - Clarinet choir - stagger breathe for seamless harmonic support, balance to bass cl and timpani
 - Sing in your natural range, with your most beautiful vocal tone
 - Blend your voice - there should not be one voice heard above the rest
 - The composer requests as much volume as possible
 - Make the phrasing as seamless (as few breaths) as possible

Rehearsal 93: a tempo (□ = 72)

- Rehearsal Notes
 - m.93-101 - long notes with < > should musically embody inhale vs. exhale

- m.102-107 - each 2 bar phrase should musically embody inhale vs. exhale

Rehearsal 108: **Con molto moto** (♩ = 92)

- Musical terms to know:
 - *accel. (accelerando)* - to speed up the tempo
 - *con* - with
 - *molto* - much, very
 - *moto* - motion
- Rehearsal Notes
 - m.108-113 - low brass harmony provides a solid foundation for the melodic motion above.
No need to crescendo here, the composer adds more and more voices to achieve the ensemble forte in m.114
 - m.114-115 - allow the combined power of the timpani, susp cym, and bass drum to guide this epic crescendo to the climax of the piece!

Rehearsal 116: **a tempo, Maestoso a espressivo** (♩ = 92)

- Musical terms to know:
 - *rit. (ritardando)* - slow down the tempo
 - *a tempo* - return to the tempo
 - *Maestoso* - majestically, stately
 - *a* - with
 - *espressivo* - expression
 - *dim. (diminuendo) poco a poco* - get softer, little by little
 - *// (caesura)* = brief, silent pause
 - *fermata* = hold the note until the conductor shows the cut off
- Rehearsal Notes
 - m.116-119 - the climax of the entire piece! Needs to be balanced, powerful, and have direction. Horn melody should “soar” out over the band (bells up!).
 - m.120 - 126 - long notes should musically embody inhale vs. exhale
 - each 2 bar melodic phrase should also follow the inhale vs. exhale shape
 - note the 2 bar dynamic changes
 - all eyes up to catch the caesura //
 - m.127 - breathe together to make the final entrance graceful and beautiful, listen low to balance
 - m.128 - final fermata: stop your sound in order according to the balance pyramid (highest to lowest)