

# Murmurations

for Concert Band (grade 1.5)

Cooper Ottum

2016

# Instrumentation

*Recommended number of players listed in italics.*

Flute (*4–8 players*)

Oboe (*1–3 players*)

Clarinet 1 in B-flat (*2–6 players*)

Clarinet 2 in B-flat (*3–7 players*)

Bassoon (*1–3 players*)

Alto Saxophone (*2–6 players*)

Tenor Saxophone (*1–3 players*)

Baritone Saxophone (*1–2 players*)

Horn in F (*1–4 players*)

Trumpet in B-flat (*2–6 players*)

Trombone and Euphonium (*2–6 players*)

Tuba (*1–2 players*)

Percussion 1 (*1–2 players*)

Wind Chimes

Toms (2; medium and low)

Snare Drum

Percussion 2 (*1–2 players*)

Triangle

Concert Bass Drum

Percussion 3 (*1–2 players*)

Marimba

Suspended Cymbal

## Program Notes

*Murmurations* is a short piece for band that evokes the evening flock formations of European Starlings. The starlings come together in the thousands to make fantastic flowing shapes in the sky before they nest for the night. These formations are called “murmurations,” and the starlings are able to create them by maintaining a certain distance between each individual, and then simply following the leaders of the flock.

With that flock sensibility in mind, this piece asks members of the band to be leaders and followers, with many phrases structured by cumulative processes and imitative counterpoint.

# Structural Outline

## **m. 1 to m. 11**

Introduction: a cumulative build, led by the percussion, then taken up by the high winds, then answered by the lower winds and Horn, then pushed into [A] by the brass. Here, the most important musical detail is the difference between staccato and slurred eighth notes.

## **m. 11 to m. 26**

First statement of the melody, with low brass providing accompaniment. Then, at m. 18, Flutes and Trumpets state the melody a second time, with a countermelody (“followers”) in the Oboe, Alto Sax., Tenor Sax., and Bassoon. The phrase ends in a loud tutti statement followed by a measure of percussion break.

## **m. 26 to m. 46**

Another cumulative build, as with the introduction, but with new harmonies. Mind the split parts in the Flutes for balance. At m. 40, a broadened statement of the melody comes the low brass and Bassoon. Then, at m. 43, there is a major dynamic shift to *subito piano* with a crescendo to *forte*; this is the most dramatic dynamic effect in the piece, and should be carefully prepared.

## **m. 46 to m. 50**

A big climactic statement from the full ensemble, but somewhat broken up as “bell-tones.” Keep the full phrase in mind, avoiding big gaps from breaths and a loss of dynamic level over time.

## **m. 50 to m. 60**

Fading away effect, somewhat the opposite of the introduction, with final statements of the melody passed from section to section, and an overall diminuendo over the course of the phrase.

## **m. 60 to the end**

Final fading away of the ensemble, using the introduction motivic material. Try to keep each section confident and playing with a full sound even as the dynamics come down to *pianissimo*.

Approximate duration: 2' 40"

Commissioned by the Lincoln College Preparatory Academy Advanced Band and director Jason Bata as part of the Music for Use Project.

*Murmurations* was completed in February 2015, in Kansas City, KS, and revised for full concert band in January 2016 in Beaverton, OR.