

A Day In The Life

Dedicated to the 2009-2010 Prescott High School Wind Ensemble

Notes On The Construction of the Piece

During the months of March and April, I was honored to lead a residency with the Prescott High School Wind Ensemble. While there, I was to write a piece for the ensemble with input from the band's students while sharing with the students much of the creative process involved in composing a new work. The piece we wrote is largely based upon text messages that the wind ensemble students sent to me on February 27, 2010. These text messages documented what each individual did during that (more or less) 24 hour period. During our 5 sessions together, we discussed different compositional techniques and decisions relevant to the piece we were writing, and the students offered feedback on what I had composed and ideas on what I might write next in the piece at each step of the process. **A Day In The Life** is the result of this collaboration.

With 166 text messages from 23 separate students, it took a lot of studying and thought to find a coherent structure to which I could model the band piece. While not every text message could be reflected in the piece, nor could every text message's chronological order be exactly matched with the form of the work, the piece's three part structure (plus introduction and closing) became clear.

Below I include some of the text messages of the day, copied exactly as received, along with annotations of the progression of the music of **A Day In The Life**.

12:45 AM: Ive learned a lot from call of duty. Amazing that my laziness paid off.

The opening noise of the piece was inspired by the first message of the day from a student playing the video game Call of Duty. The band members also suggested that the opening could represent the building of the stress that occurs over the course of a school week, before being released when the weekend arrives.

7:12 AM: now im making popcorn and waking my brothers and sister up.

7:14 AM: yay pancakes for breakfast! now where is that griddle?

7:24 AM: a little nutmeg and some cinnamon just to spice the morning up,

8:10 AM: wake up. Feed edgar my pet leopard gecko.

8:13 AM: stretch to see if i'm still sore from track.

8:17 AM: make a face at my new hair color in the mirror.

8:27 AM: get dressed. Fire up the laptop to watch some hulu before i go to karate.

8:49 AM: Woke up. Skys are gray might have to cancel on rockclimbing if the weather is bad. Eating a cinnamon roll.

9:07 AM: ugh. time to go referee the boxing match in the living room.

9:24 AM: I have now woken to a great and gloomy day. creepy people walking around. its pleasant.

9:50 AM: went to pangea bakery for breakfast for the most tastiest cinnamon rolls in the world.

9:57 AM: Strange how the weather can directly affect your entire outlook.

10:05 AM: im up and going to have almond butter and rasberry jam toast. i might go to the zoo to see the peacocks too

10:16 AM: Greeted by a beautiful Saturday with chores. Thank goodness for my iPod.

The first major section of the piece is the "wake up" section, roughly inspired by the text messages from various waves of early risers. The first student to document her morning was very cheerful and content, and the musical theme representing this is stated very gently by the band.

With each successive iteration of the wake up theme, more instruments are added, representing the growing number of conscious band students. This was one of the many great ideas offered by the band members.

As the morning progresses, the level of discontent seems to rise a bit in the text messages. Similarly, as the first section of the piece unfolds, the harmonies become more complex, and the accompaniment slightly more rhythmic.

11:41 AM: I drove to walmart after showering. yup. my life is exciting

12:15 PM: funny bones are not funny when they make your arm go numb.

1:03 PM: woke up at 10 after sticky noting someones car haha! now ill get out of the house 2 apply 4 animal care job, nd listen to my nickelback w/ windows down!

1:10 PM: what's really sad is there are over 80,000 chemicals registered in the U.S. and only 200 are tested.

1:12 PM: Rockclimbing lots of cactus

2:10 PM: This cereal is getting harder and harder to eat

2:27 PM: drove down the street to check something and got stuck in the sand momentarily. Good thing have 4wd or i'd probably still be suck ha. Pretty deep sand

2:38 PM: so the people made my hair look like it crawled out of the 80s. haha. so i came home and fixed it. now its sorta cute.

2:45 PM: Dad made hamburgers for lunch. Put kimchi in it. Gross...

2:56 PM: My brothers are fighting with each other in the car but im listen to music on my phone great distraction they're my mom's problem

2:58 PM: Procrastination is fun!

3:10 PM: i pissed now b/c this town is so unorganized and i couldnt find any post offices or they'd be closed if i did! wat the flip! im gonna go home now

3:10 PM: watching the tsunami in hawaii live.

The middle section significantly contrasts with the wake up section. During this period of the day, the students text me messages related to boredom, mischief, excitement, danger, injury, disgust, and procrastination.

The music during this section uses many ideas suggested by the students, including the extensive use of the 8 tone diminished musical scale (for instability and angst), melodic fragments which repeat multiple times before completing the phrase (for procrastination), climbing scales (for rock climbing), and increasing rhythmic energy and volume.

<p>3:56 PM: yay getting ready for a date. and babysitting all at the same time!</p> <p>4:34 PM: We made paper airplanes and had a contest to see who's went the farthest. Mine came in second to Tyler's until the last throw when mine won!!</p> <p>5:14 PM: best friend is coming over :) dinner will be yummy.</p> <p>6:01 PM: A night of jazz with coffee at bada beanz, couldn't get any better.</p> <p>6:02 PM: my mom started to talk to some random guy she didnt know. she talks to every one!</p> <p>6:52 PM: Today I worked at my part-time job, looked at prom dresses, and sold a ton of Girl Scout cookies. Then this evening I went to the Blue Quintet jazz combo concert, which was awesome! Best Saturday ever.</p> <p>7:35 PM: Playing a jazz gig at bada beanz.</p> <p>8:23 PM: I took my dog outside to go to the bathroom and she stared at me and never went. She's so weird!</p> <p>8:33 PM: we're going to play twister!</p> <p>9:23 PM: I finished watching Julie and Julia. It was really good! I gave up on my chemistry homework. I was much more interested in the movie</p> <p>9:25 PM: we're knife throwing with styrofoam swords and juggling with them too.</p>	<p>By late afternoon, the text messages take a clear turn towards serenity and contentedness. The students eat dinner, play games, and watch movies. A lot of students went to a café to listen to fellow students play jazz.</p> <p>The piece's final section musically reflects on the day by bringing back the calm wake up section themes in an increasingly jazzy harmony. Even music from the "dangerous" middle section comes back in a disarmed form, reflective of the playful styrofoam sword play mentioned in the text messages.</p>
<p>11:13 PM: My quick exciting day has come to a slow uneventful end as i prolong my inevitable release to the comforting grasp of sleep. Upon my departure to the subconscious relm i bid you all good night and God bless.</p> <p>2:43 AM: i've been sitting outside in the rain and snow in a skirt and barely a jacket since 1am and havent felt a single chill. im numb all over. i dont feel a thing.</p>	<p>The frequency of the text messages dwindle as the students (presumably) go to bed, and the piece quietly closes with a duet reflective of the last two posts of the day.</p>