



Lesson: Recognize, Define, and Understanding the Musical Elements in *Letter from Sado*

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this lesson is for students to be able to visually and aurally identify the critical musical elements that are contained within the piece. Each element is defined and a guide identifies an example measure where each element is located in some of the instrumental parts.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- [Letter from Sado Musical Element Analysis](#)
- [Recording of Letter from Sado](#) (click link to download or email BandQuest@composersforum.org for a free Catalog CD)
- Score/individual parts of *Letter from Sado*
- The individual parts and/or a recording of other repertoire the students are rehearsing
- Additional print and audio examples of musical elements

LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- learn how to describe images, thoughts and feelings verbally and on their instruments.
- define and describe aleatoric music verbally and on their instruments.
- understand how to interpret and perform nontraditional musical directions at Letter A and Letter K.
- identify concepts and musical elements in their parts for *Letter From Sado* and other music they are rehearsing.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR INTRODUCING AND ASSESSING THE ELEMENTS

The following activities can be used to present the musical elements contained in *Letter from Sado*:

- Listen to other examples of aleatoric music and ask students to respond to it, identify the aleatoric techniques.
- Students identify the measure that contains a particular element in their parts after you have defined and described it.

- Pick a measure and ask the students identify all the elements and characteristics discussed in class that are contained in that one measure. (Different parts may require different responses.)
- Pick two contrasting measures where only one contains a particular element. Ask the students to identify which measure contains the element.
- Students identify selected elements in measures from other pieces they are rehearsing.
- Play an example of recorded music as an example illustrating several musical elements and characteristics. Ask students to describe what they hear.
- Students play a measure(s) that provides an example of a particular element. Have members of other sections identify what element or characteristic is being illustrated. If necessary, provide a list of choices from which to choose an answer.
- While listening to a recording of *Letter from Sado*, students graphically map the relative density of the piece as it progresses, then compare their graphic representations.
- Pick a section of the piece and play the recording of that section. Students identify the musical function (melody, accompaniment, etc.) being fulfilled by specific instruments that either you are they choose (i.e. “What is the function of the clarinets starting in measure 29?” or “What do you notice about the functions of a particular instrument in measure 44?”).
- Students mark with a pencil the function their instruments fulfill in their parts. They may also note the names of the other instruments that share that function.

LETTER FROM SADO MUSICAL ELEMENT ANALYSIS

An analysis of the musical elements contained in *Charm* is provided on the following pages, along with a definition and an indication of measures that contain each element. If measure numbers for an element are not cited for an instrument, then the element does not occur in that instrument's part.

MELODY/MOTIVE

Pitch set

The collection of pitches used for the melodic and harmonic construction of the piece

Although *LetterFrom Sado* is not a traditionally tonal piece, the pitch set that occurs in the motives is the same as a G natural minor scale.



Permutations of Motives

Various permutations of motives occur throughout the piece. The example below is a motive from the Yellow Team part at letter A that is performed in free rhythm that appears again later a Letter B performed with a specific rhythm at a specific tempo. This example represents one of the main motives in the piece.

A Wild sea!
1. FREE TIME: A wild, stormy sea, play at different times

Musical notation for Motive A: A single staff in G natural minor showing a melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, and G5. The notes are connected by a slur, indicating a continuous melodic line.

B A lone traveler, looking out to the Isle of Sado ♩=72

l Solo
p *mp*

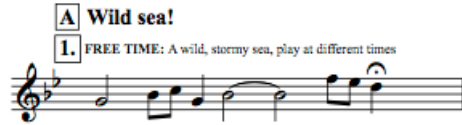
Musical notation for Motive B: A single staff in G natural minor showing a melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, and G5. The notes are connected by a slur, indicating a continuous melodic line. The notation includes a tempo marking of ♩=72, a dynamic marking of *p*, and a crescendo leading to a dynamic marking of *mp*.

Teaching strategy: Have the band members find either entire motives or fragments of motives that occur in more than one place in their parts.

Main motive

Letter D in Yellow Team Part

One of the main motives occurs in the Yellow Team part at letter D.



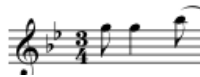
Teaching strategy: Chant “Stormy Sea stretching over Sado” to the rhythm of the main motive (Letter B in *Letter From Sado* Warm-Up) to help stabilize the thinner rhythmic structure at Letter D in the piece. When chanting, set metronome speed at quarter note = 96. After everyone chants, alternating sections of the band chanting while other sections of the band play Letter B in the Warm-Up.

RHYTHM

Syncopation

Placing stress or emphasis on what is normally a weaker part of the beat

First appears in Yellow Team part at Letter G and then in other parts at Letters H and I.



Free Rhythm

The speed and duration of notes are determined by the individual performer.

At Letter A and Letter K, band members perform the notation independently at a speed of their choosing. An excerpt from the Red Team alto saxophone part is provided below as an example.



INSTRUMENTATION

Color Wheel Teams

Rather than scoring in more traditional groupings of woodwind and brass choirs, with instruments fulfilling more traditional functions, in *Letter From Sado* the band is divided into nine “Color Teams,” which serve as smaller independent ensembles within the larger group. The band set-up for performances should be adjusted to accommodate the organization of the “Color Teams.”

TEAM YELLOW: Flute (1st); Oboe, Clarinet (1st)

TEAM ORANGE: Flute (2nd); Clarinet (2nd); Alto Saxophone (1st)

TEAM RED: Alto Saxophone (2nd); Trumpet (1st)

TEAM PURPLE: Trumpet (2nd); Horn in F

TEAM TEAL: Clarinet (3rd) *optional*, Tenor Saxophone, Bassoon, Trombone (1st)

TEAM BLUE: Trombone (2nd); Baritone (1st)

TEAM GREEN: Bass reeds, Baritone (2nd); Tuba

TEAM WHITE: Melodic & Non-melodic Percussion (all metals)

TEAM BLACK: Medium and Low Toms or homemade Taiko Tire drums

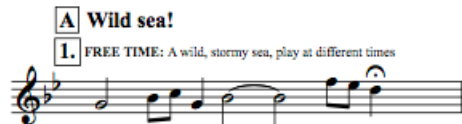
ALEATORIC TECHNIQUES

In aleatoric music, some of the musical elements are left to chance or are determined by the individual performer.

Soundscapes – In free time and representing visual imagery

Letter A; Wild Sea! And Letter K: Heaven's River

Each Color Team is given a melodic line that they are instructed to play in free time in ways that represent visual images that are provided to the students. An example of a part from the Yellow Team part is represented below.



Soundscape: Graphic Notation and Vocalization of Sounds

Between Letter J and K

Band members create a soundscape inspired by the misty mountain peaks of Sado Island by saying the word “shimmer” repeatedly, using the graphic to guide expression (e.g. when black emphasizes “sh”, when white emphasizes “mm”). Then Color Teams decide how team they will express the word in between.”

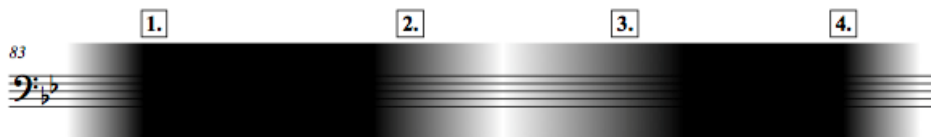
This instruction may seem incomplete, but as with everything in *Letter from Sado*, it is up to the performers to interpret. There is no ‘wrong way!

FREE TIME: As directed

SOUNDSCAPE: Create a soundscape inspired by the misty mountain peaks of Sado Island.

Say the word “Shimmer” repeatedly - use the graphic to guide your expression

(eg. when black emphasise “sh”, when white, emphasize “mm” then decide how your team will express the word in-between).



FORM

For an overview of the form, please refer to the **Listening Map** found in this curriculum.

EXPRESSION/INTERPRETATION

Free Improvisation

Rather than interpreting traditional musical symbols and notation, the aleatoric sections of the piece require that band members respond to visual and textual prompts. The performers contemplate their individual reactions to the prompts and then share with members of their Color Teams to create a team interpretation of the prompts. Directors should observe the designated markings but allow the group to explore the expression of the piece through their own interpretation.

Lyrical Style

The sections of the piece that are performed with a specified meter and tempo are intended to be played in a smooth, connected lyrical style, indicated with slur and tenuto markings.

