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(Cultural) Capital Gains: Orchestral Transcriptions for Marching Band, Exemplified Through *Scheherazade*

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Abstract

Marching and indoor concert bands have used music from the classical European repertory for many years. The benefits and drawbacks of such usage are numerous. One of the benefits of marching band transcriptions is a wider dissemination of cultural capital to more diverse audiences. To explore the implications of marching band transcriptions of orchestral music, this study compared and contrasted Scheherazade by Rimsky-Korsakov and the 2004 and 2014 Santa Clara Vanguard performances of the work. Both the arrangements of Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade exemplify both the drawbacks and benefits of orchestral appropriation. Variations in musical content, visual content, performance venue, and audience makeup, contributed to varying audience perceptions and interpretations. These changes are ways music can be used to evoke different responses from the audience. The use of orchestral music for the marching band is a benefit to both students and audience members, including both DCI audience members as well as Friday night football crowds. The often substantial changes made in adapting symphonic works to DCI ensembles or high school marching bands combined with the overt visual presentation can change the intended program if any, and audience understanding of the work.

Keywords: marching band, appropriation, culture, arrangements, cultural capital

Marching and indoor concert bands have used music from the classical European repertory for many years. The benefits and drawbacks of such usage are numerous. One of the benefits of marching band transcriptions is a wider dissemination of cultural capital to more diverse audiences. Allsup (2012) wrote that band has brought important music from the past into daily life while also expanding in new directions, and marching transcriptions are one way this has been accomplished. The Santa Clara Vanguard arrangements of *Scheherazade* can help us to explore the implications of marching band transcriptions.

Investigating the Issue

Both indoor concert bands and outdoor marching bands at all levels have been performing transcriptions of symphonic works for many years. Budiansky and Foley (2005) attributed the heavy use of transcriptions to the lack of quality compositions for band. In publishers' catalogues of wind band music, they often advertise compositions by describing the educational consideration of the piece such as range and technical aspects rather than musical characteristics. Budiansky and Foley wrote,

Many critics have noted that much of the music composed specifically for school band is formulaic, emotionally superficial, monotonously alike, dull, and didactic; that it fails to inspire students; and that by being removed from any genuine living musical tradition, classical or popular, it fails to provide students with a true musical education or the basis for further independent exploration of music, either as a performer or a listener. (p. 17)

Historically, bands have chosen to play transcriptions from significant composers; however, the current trend is to play recently composed music (Budiansky & Foley, 2005). These newly composed works often fit the negative characteristics Budiansky and Foley delineated. At a recent state music educator conference, some band directors were discussing the benefits and

drawbacks of performing transcriptions with their ensembles. The group of directors was split almost equally between those who believed that transcriptions are never as valuable as the original, in both musical content and educational value, and those who thought transcriptions were of high value, both musically and pedagogically. Budiansky and Foley noted that great musicians “have no qualms whatsoever in playing transcriptions as part of their essential music education” (p. 29) because it allows them to become familiar with different genres, styles of composition, and musical techniques. The reimagining of symphonic works for marching ensembles may be one of the few opportunities for some audiences to gain exposure to traditional symphonic literature.

The use of orchestral music for marching band is a benefit to both students and audience members, including both Drum Corps International (DCI) audience members and Friday night football crowds. The often substantial modifications made in adapting symphonic works to DCI ensembles or high school marching bands combined with the overt visual presentation can change the intended program, if any, and disseminate cultural capital to a wider audience.

Examining the Evidence

The 2004 and 2014 Santa Clara Vanguard (SCV) arrangements of Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade* exemplify both the drawbacks and benefits of orchestral appropriation by marching ensembles. The changes made to accommodate a marching ensemble include arrangement with nontraditional instruments, dynamic and temporal restriction to extremes, and addition or subtraction of musical material. Visual aspects are added through marching maneuvers, props, and color guard routines to help tell the story to the audience. Before delving into the comparison of each presentation, a brief background of both Rimsky-Korsakov’s creation of *Scheherazade* and DCI is necessary to set the stage.

A Brief History of Rimsky-Korsakov and Analysis of *Scheherazade*

Nikolay Anreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) was a Russian composer and educator who wrote a treatise on the principles of orchestration (Taruskin, 2002). Yastrebtsey (1985) wrote that “the only music of Rimsky-Korsakov which most people even hear are the three orchestral showpieces: *Scheherazade*, *Capriccio Espagnol*, and the *Russian Easter Overture*” (p. xiii). *Scheherazade* is such a prevalent part of the traditional repertoire that one of its themes is included in many band method books.

The inspiration for the musical material in *Scheherazade* was *The Arabian Nights*, a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales (Brook, 1970). Montagu-Nathan (1976) pointed out that the work has programmatic suggestions and that there are no definitive thematic associations outside of *Scheherazade*’s introductions, which serve as links between stories. Rimsky-Korsakov (1923/1942) addressed the issue as well when he wrote that the motives appear several times in different settings to express and depict different moods, images, actions, and pictures. He went on to say that the programmatic titles of each movement were there to direct the imagination of the listener rather than prescribe a specific narrative (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1923/1942). The program notes that Rimsky-Korsakov (1888/1984) wrote say,

The Sultan Schahriar, convinced of the perfidy and faithlessness of women, vowed to execute each of his wives after the first night. But the Sultana Scheherazade saved her own life by interesting him in the tales she told him through 1001 nights. Impelled by curiosity, the Sultan continually put off her execution, and at last entirely abandoned his sanguinary resolve. Many marvels did Scheherazade relate to him, citing the verses or poets and the words of songs, weaving tale into tale and story into story. (p. 1)

The four movements are:

1. The sea and Sinbad's ship
2. The story of the prince-kalandar
3. The young prince and princess
4. Festival in Baghdad. The sea. The ship breaks up against a cliff surmounted by a bronze horseman. Conclusion. (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1888/1984)

A full performance of the work takes approximately 45 minutes. *Scheherazade* is written for piccolo, 82 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in A and Bb, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 2 trumpets in A and Bb, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, violins in two parts, violas, cellos, string basses, harp, and percussion which includes timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tambourine, and tam-tam (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1888/1984). The role of the percussion in this ensemble is to support and accentuate what the winds and strings are playing—very rarely do they play on their own, and it is never for very long. The winds and strings utilize nearly the full range of their instruments technically and dynamically over the course of the work. The orchestration also utilizes the full range of textures from unaccompanied solos to full orchestra. Similarly, the tempi range from slow, subdivided sections to very fast, full-measure macrobeat sections.

The first movement, The Sea and Sinbad's Ship, has two recognizable themes: the Sultan's theme and Scheherazade's theme. The sultan's theme is ponderous and presented for the first time in the low brass (see Figure 1). A solo violin plays Scheherazade's theme, which is essentially an extended cadenza (see Figure 2). These two themes are the basis for development throughout the first movement and the entire work.



Figure 1. Sultan's theme from first movement, tuba (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1888/1984).



Figure 2. Scheherazade's theme from first movement for solo violin (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1888/1984).

The second movement, The Story of the Prince-Kalandar, contains a bassoon melody as well as a brass fanfare that are both developed through the movement and brought back in the finale. Solo bassoon first presents the melody in a moderate tempo (see Figure 3). The motive is a fanfare call and answer in the brass (see Figure 4). Both the melody and motive are developed throughout the second movement and are brought back in the fourth movement.



Figure 3. Melody from second movement, bassoon solo (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1888/1984).



Figure 4. Fanfare call and answer motive in second movement, trombone and trumpet (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1888/1984).

The third movement, *The Young Prince and Princess*, has two themes that are presented and then combined. The violins present the first legato theme, which occupies the largest sections of the movement (see Figure 5). The clarinet, accompanied by tambourine, introduces the second, *grazioso* theme, which is lighter (see Figure 6).



Figure 5. First legato theme in third movement, violin (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1888/1984).



Figure 6. Second, *grazioso* theme in third movement, clarinet (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1888/1984).

The fourth movement starts nearly identically to the first movement. Throughout the final movement, the previous melodies and motives weave together in new ways along with several passages of virtuosic runs and articulation patterns. Rimsky-Korsakov wrote several drastic and

abrupt tempo and orchestration changes in this movement. There is a very forceful false ending, followed by a very subdued actual ending and a final statement of the Scheherazade theme.

It is common practice during an orchestral performance of programmatic works to provide the composer's notes in the program. This assumes that the audience will read and understand the program notes. The notes themselves assume that readers are familiar with Arabic culture and can use the music as a signifier for a personal interpretation that matches what the composer intended. An audience member who does not read the program notes or does not have the background knowledge required to understand the musical signs may not be able to understand the music or the composer's intentions.

A Brief History of DCI and the Santa Clara Vanguard

Drum Corps International (DCI), a collective of marching bands in the United States, has propelled marching bands over time from a military tradition to a pageantry art form. These ensembles have no ties to scholastic marching ensembles, and most are nonprofit organizations (Cole, 2009). Cole (2009) noted, "The present-day drum and bugle corps was created as an extension of localized veterans' organizations, specifically the Legion and VFW" (p. 52). Over the years, the militaristic focus has relaxed and shifted to pageantry, using conceptual shows that push the boundaries of what is possible in drill design, show visuals, and music arrangements (Cole, 2009). This gradual shift from military to exhibition shows has made the drum corps ensembles resemble scholastic marching bands more than they used to, but they still retain enough uniqueness and separation to draw a large audience (Maher, 2011). DCI competitions have become one of the most popular band activities to participate in or watch during the summer.

Shows are loud and fast; ensembles use music specifically arranged for their unique instrumentation to create a presentation that unites sound with visual representation through the color guard, props, and drill design (Cole, 2009). Throughout its history, DCI ensembles have used the *Great American Songbook*, popular music, and European art music as the foundation for shows (Cole, 2009). The change in music over time has partly been precipitated by the changing instruments that corps members use. Historically, corps were using bugles, but eventually changed over to standardized and common B-flat instruments (Cole, 2009). The music and instrument changes also coincided with conceptual changes for show design: Rather than putting together a thematic group of individual songs, designers would blend their concepts with the music and visual ideas to create one larger work that encompassed all three aspects in the composition (Cole, 2009). This created presentations with few pauses and had motives running throughout the entire show.

The shows that DCI ensembles put together become musical and visual inspiration for high school bands across the country. Cole (2009) wrote that “much of the literature on drum and bugle corps has been disseminated through music education periodicals as educational tools for scholastic marching bands” (p. 11). A survey of the top corps’ staff reveals that many are also involved in scholastic bands in addition to their summer drum corps jobs.

The Santa Clara Vanguard (SCV) was founded in 1967 in Santa Clara, California (Vanguard Music & Performing Arts, 2018). The SCV has a tradition of innovation and championship performances, often placing in the top five (DCX, n.d.). The corps uses B-flat Yamaha trumpets; mellophones (a marching version of the French horn); baritones (a marching configuration); tubas; and percussion, which includes snare drums, tenor drums, bass drums, and cymbals on the field and a front ensemble of keyboard instruments, more cymbals, timpani,

accessories, and electronics. The color guard includes both men and women who use dance, flags, rifles, sabers, and props.

The Santa Clara Vanguard performed two shows using the music from Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*: a 2004 show titled "Attraction: The Music of Scheherazade" (Christensen, 2004) and a 2014 show titled "Scheherazade: Words 2 Live By" (Blair, 2014). It is not uncommon for corps to revisit musical material or show concepts. SCV performed both shows for the DCI World Championship. The 2004 show earned a 3rd place ranking and the 2014 show earned a 4th place ranking.

In both SCV adaptations of *Scheherazade*, percussion played a more integral role, often with soli features outside of the usual marching band tradition of a third movement drum break. Both shows also utilized the color guard to show the story but in slightly different ways. The two shows were around 12 minutes from start to finish. This shorter performance time required condensation of musical material, which they accomplished by focusing the adaptation on the main themes from each movement as well as by removing most of the original development sections.

"Attraction: The Music of Scheherazade" (SCV 2004 Performance)

The 2004 SCV show did not utilize many props to aid in telling their story. The guard uniforms were reminiscent of Disney's Aladdin and helped to set the stage for the show. Most of the visual representation involved a pair of color guard members who acted out some short scenes through dance. The guard members representing the sultan and Scheherazade had moments where they ran to each other across the field, framed by the brass players. During the ending, the guard member representing Scheherazade went through a flag tunnel and transformed into a white outfit, holding a scimitar, a sword often depicted in Arabian tales.

The musical material comprised mostly single or duple macrobeats with duple or triple microbeats. This style of beat emphasis makes marching maneuvers easier for corps members to count, march to, and stay with the phrases in the music. The trumpet played the Scheherazade theme at the beginning of the show. Throughout the arrangement, some liberties were taken with harmonization and voicing of melodies. The SCV arrangement utilized the six themes discussed from the original work interspersed with several front ensemble and drum line features. To create more dynamic contrast, the corps faced backfield several times and then turned around for a crescendo effect. The arrangement also utilized the false ending from the original where they played a full ensemble section followed by a backfield, subdued closing section. The tempi were either fast, at least 120 beats per minute, or slow enough that the corps members could double time march, around 60 beats per minute. The dynamics were either very loud, forte or fortissimo, or were soft enough to cause the audience to lean in, often achieved by turning the ensemble backfield. Overall, the tempo and dynamics were polarized to the extremes and there were no subtle changes.

The marching and visual aspect of the brass performance was mostly fast paced but used a mix of angular and curved designs. These shapes often mirrored what was happening musically: In more marcato sections the forms were angular, and in the legato sections they were curved. During slow sections, the corps was often marching double time to keep the shapes moving and developing. In addition to full ensemble shapes, there were several body and horn pops that created interest at a smaller level.

“Scheherazade: Words 2 Live By” (SCV 2014 Performance)

The 2014 SCV show had several backdrop pieces on the far end of the field as well as several boxes made to look like stacks of pillows for corps members to stand on throughout the

show. The color guard was again wearing Aladdin-inspired costumes, but they had pieces that would be added or removed from their uniform throughout the show to create interest, such as a robe and skirts. As in the 2004 show, they used flags, rifles, sabers, and dance, but they also added some smaller props like oversized books to signify the stories that Scheherazade was telling the Sultan as well as to separate the movements of the music. During the show, two guard members played the roles of Scheherazade and the sultan. At the end of the show, the guard covered the corps with a giant parachute and Scheherazade emerged on top with her costume transformed to white and held up a final book, similar in style to the 2004 transformation.

The music was condensed into the six themes discussed earlier with several drum line and front ensemble features. Harmonies and voicings were arranged to fit the ensemble and to create interest, exemplified by longer chords having extra chord tones not present in the original. In this arrangement, the mellophone played the Scheherazade theme. As in the 2004 show, the beat divisions were kept in duple macrobeats with either duple or triple microbeats. The difference in the 2014 arrangement was that the movements of the SCV show were less defined because there were shorter or no pauses in between sections of the show. Another major difference was the use of trombones to play the opening and closing sultan's themes in the 2014 show. Trombones are not a typical drum corps instrument, so to have them at all was dramatic, but to make it even more impressive, corps members stood on the pillow boxes on the front sideline when playing them to bring them even more into the forefront, both visually and musically. They used a false ending again in 2014: a full ensemble section, which the audience applauded as if it were the ending, followed by a subdued exit accompanied by the front ensemble. Again, similar to the 2004 performance, tempi and dynamics were polarized and there were no subtle changes.

The marching maneuvers in the 2014 show were like those in the 2004 show: a balance of curved and angular forms designed to match the music. There were sections where small groups would move at different times either to highlight what they were playing or to create varying levels of interest on the field. They utilized a lot of contrary motion to make the moves seem faster than they already were. Several times throughout the show they created the number 2 in their drill to reference the title. Similar to the 2004 version, they used horn and body visuals to add interest at a smaller level. They also utilized an arm and hand gesture throughout the show to imitate an Arabian arm shape.

Implications and Conclusion

The SCV adaptations of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* did more than just distill it down to the most recognizable themes and motives. The drum corps arrangements brought the music from the concert hall to a football field and presented it with visual aids for the audience. The visual aspects of marching band, including drill and color guard, provided real-time program notes for the audience. Those in attendance at the DCI Championships in 2004 or 2014, or those who watched the performance recording later, may or may not have heard the original work before. By pairing the reduced music with visuals that actively tell the story that Rimsky-Korsakov alluded to in his program notes, the Santa Clara Vanguard attempted to ensure that each audience member not only heard the music but understood the program.

Do the changes in venue, arrangement, and presentation style create changes in what the music signifies, often referred to as semiotics? Agawu (2009) wrote that "the final authority for any interpretation rests on present understanding. Today's listener rules" (p. 4). Change of signification is inevitable with different audiences, and marching band arrangements of

orchestral works can maximize the benefits of those changes. By combining auditory and visual signs and symbols, marching bands are expanding the potential for understanding a work.

While the marching arrangements are substantially shorter, less musically diverse, faster, and louder, they not only offer audiences an opportunity to understand the programmatic work through the visual presentation but offer cultural capital to those who might not have other avenues to acquire it. According to Dimaggio and Useem (1978), appreciation for the arts, marching band included, is trained, is contextual, enhances class cohesion, and is a form of cultural capital. Providing an audience with more cultural capital may positively affect their likelihood of long-term arts attendance and performance (Hager & Winkler, 2012).

Marching arrangements of symphonic works can also enhance the music education of students: Directors can discuss the original work with students and use the visual presentation aspects of marching band to help them communicate intent or programming to the audience. DCI already influences band directors through their publication of educational material (Cole, 2009). Utilizing techniques from DCI, band directors can create presentations based on orchestral works that will appeal to audiences. Additionally, Budiansky and Foley (2005) suggested that use of traditional repertoire can help students develop “musical imagination and taste, a feel for style and phrasing, and an ability to pursue independent music making and appreciation” (p. 23), which are often cited as desirable outcomes for scholastic music programs. If arts attendance and performance beget arts attendance and performance (Borgonovi, 2004), marching band arrangements of symphonic works could contribute to higher cultural capital for both performers and audience members alike.

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