What to Listen For

Higdon: *blue cathedral*, excerpt

Here's what to listen for in an excerpt of Jennifer Higdon's *blue cathedral*.

- **Large orchestra with many percussion instruments**
  
  *blue cathedral* is a work for *large orchestra with many percussion instruments*. Listen to the orchestra and percussion instruments in this excerpt: [0:00–0:46].

- **Lyrical melodies; no firm sense of meter**
  
  This work contains many *lyrical melodies*, flowing and singing tunes. Listen to the lyrical melody in this excerpt: [1:30–2:17].

  *blue cathedral* creates a transcendent mood with *no firm sense of meter*. Listen to an excerpt that has no sense of pulse, therefore, no firm sense of meter: [0:47–1:13].

- **Major triads with no strong sense of key center**
  
  Most of the harmonies in *blue cathedral* are *major triads with no strong sense of key center*. Listen to the major, consonant harmonies in this excerpt with no strong sense of key center: [3:07–4:11].

- **Homophonic texture; focus on individual lines and duets**
  
  The work is mostly in *homophonic texture* (melody with accompaniment) with a *focus on individual lines and duets*. Listen to the solo in this excerpt: [1:14–1:29]; and the duet in this excerpt: [1:30–2:17].

- **Sectional structure: rondo-like**
  
  This listening example is only an excerpt of *blue cathedral*. The entire work has *sectional structure*, which you can also hear in the portion of the music discussed in the textbook. The sections contrast with one another. Listen to the beginning of the A section: [0:00–0:46]; the beginning of the B section: [3:07–4:11]; and the beginning of the C section: [4:50–6:12]. The structure is *rondo-like* because the A section returns briefly after the B section. Listen to the return of A: [4:23–4:49].

  So remember to listen for *large orchestra with many percussion instruments; lyrical melodies; no firm sense of meter; major triads with no strong sense of key center; homophonic texture with a focus on individual lines and duets; and sectional, rondo-like structure*.