

"Jaws Suite" by John Williams**Instrumentation/Timbre**

Regarding the instrumentation used in the piece, Williams uses contrast to develop the main melodic line, in which there are strong juxtapositions of orchestral dark and light tones that consistently carry forward the piece's driving rhythm.

①

The beginning of the piece, bars 1-11, very gradually builds on the introduction of the main 2-note leitmotif which is played by the low-end instrumental sections of the orchestra, namely double bass, cello, piano, bass clarinet and bassoons/contrabassoons. What the low-end delegation of this slow section does is to give it a drudging, lumbering feel that, as it starts to increase in speed, builds a sense of foreboding.

②

Another conceptual idea that can be linked to the use of these instruments is the idea of depth. The low-end instruments could be tonally representative of the deep sea in which the shark lurks. This representation also lends itself further to the leitmotif, wherein not only is the melody and bassy sound representative of the shark but the deeper tones of the instruments emphasise the accompanying emotion of intense foreboding and immense fear.

In a similar vein, the use of timbre to convey emotion in the piece can also be heard in Williams' employ of the tuba. One section played by the tuba is written above the average range, giving it a strained, scream-esque quality. What this does is give the listener a feeling of desperation or struggle as the notes sound as though they require an immense struggle to play, this adds another layer to the fear associated with the darker, brooding, low strings, and low brass.

③

There is also variation in timbre in Williams' use of different instruments sustaining the main motif of the piece and thinning out the instrumentation in sections to give the piece a lighter, dreamier feeling. Each individual instrument's timbre helps to emphasise the emotions conveyed by the music as well, outside of just the tuba's struggle to play the notes.

④

The piccolo and flute's timbre being as disembodied as they are due to how high-pitched they tend to sound with no body to them as they hold none of the lower sonic spectrum to them. An example of shifting the timbre of the leitmotif is evidenced in bar 30 when the alternating E-F line is moved from the aforementioned low-end to the singular trombone, playing somewhat high within its range, such as in previous bars 16-27. At this point the lower instruments also cut out and so the density of the piece is then reduced, and the section feels lighter. This part also seems to lend itself to the idea of being dreamlike in the use of different instruments playing glissandos at different rhythms (harp at bars 31, 33-34 and 36-37, flute/piccolo at bars 31-32, clarinets at bars 33-34 and 36-37) with repeated triplets in the piano, oboe and euphonium.

⑤

This is accompanied with the fast, fluttering ascending flurries of notes from other instruments that give the section a sense of arhythmic freeness and some level of uncertainty in where the metre of the piece is. The use of only light, high-end instruments makes the section

more tonally significant. With this contrast in timbre between light, airy and deep, booming it also provides the piece with a strong feeling of fullness during the climactic section from bars 67-71.

5