

Written for the Final Year of Carpenter Middle School in Plano, TX

Chasing the Light

for String Orchestra
Grade 2.5

by Kevin Sluder

Perusal Score Only
Not for Rehearsal or Performance



About the Composer

Kevin Sluder is an orchestra director in Frisco, TX. Since 2007, he has taught at both the middle and high school levels.

In addition to writing for string orchestra, Mr. Sluder enjoys songwriting, recording his own music, getting lost in video games, camping, and co-hosting the string education podcast Rite of String. He resides in McKinney, TX with his wife (and fellow orchestra director) Bethany Hardwick.

Program Notes

Carpenter Middle School (Plano, Texas) was established 1978. It was named for Captain R.W. Carpenter, a prominent settler in the Plano area. Due to a reduction in enrollment, Plano ISD made the tough decision to close the school at the end of the 2024-2025 school year. The students were then re-zoned into three nearby middle schools.

Kathy Ngo, the final orchestra director at Carpenter, reached out to me about writing a farewell piece for the school's orchestra program. I was honored to help make this a special experience for them.

Members of the orchestra helped come up with the name "Chasing the Light". The students said orchestra had been a positive light in their life, especially when they felt surrounded by darkness. As long as they had a connection with music, they would be okay. Although the news of Carpenter's closing was hard on all of them, they still had bright futures ahead of them at their new campuses.

From director Kathy Ngo:

"I hope that these students continue to chase their dreams after they leave. What they may not know is that they ARE the light. They are the light of hope that we have in the world. At our last concert, I told them to take the seeds of kindness that they learned in orchestra and spread it around. Spread it around like wildflowers because that's how they will make a difference in the world. They are the light that is going to get us out of the darkness."

Conductor's Notes

The opening (and closing) 16ths pizzicato violin/viola lines are played in "guitar position", with the thumb, middle, and index fingers plucking the low, high, and middle notes (respectively). Then a percussive tap on the upper bout of the instrument. The piece includes gentle solos in each section, plus a phrase for just the front stand players.

In Carpenter's emotional performance, the players gradually dropped out, starting around measure 33, and it ended with only a single player from each section.

I hope you and your students enjoy *Chasing the Light*!

Score

Chasing the Light

Kevin Sluder

$\text{♩} = 64$

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

1

2

3

4

5

6

pizz. (guitar pos. - thumb, 2, 1)

p

tap front of upper bout

mp

pp

p

div.

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Violin I (Vln. I) and Violin II (Vln. II) parts are shown, featuring rapid sixteenth-note passages. The Viola (Vla.) and Violoncello (Vc.) parts feature sustained notes with dynamic markings *mf*. The Double Bass (D.B.) part is shown with a sustained note.

Measures 7, 8, and 9 are indicated below the staves.

Violin I (Vln. I) and Violin II (Vln. II) parts are shown, featuring sustained notes with dynamic markings *mf* and *f*. The Viola (Vla.) and Violoncello (Vc.) parts feature sustained notes with dynamic markings *f*. The Double Bass (D.B.) part is shown with a sustained note.

Measures 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 are indicated below the staves.

Rehearsal mark 10 is indicated at the beginning of measure 10.

Performance instructions for measures 10 and 11: (normal pos. and pick up bow) arco.

$\text{♩} = 70$
più mosso

20

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

16 17 18 19 20

p *pizz.* *arco* *solo*

24

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

21 22 23 24 25

mf *tutti* *f* *arco* *tutti* *mf* *arco* *mf*

28 ♩ = 64
*a tempo**poco rall.*

Score for measures 26-31, measures 28-29 marked *a tempo* (♩ = 64). The score includes parts for Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and D.B. Dynamics range from *ff* to *f*. Performance markings include *front stand* and *tutti*. A large diagonal watermark reads "Not for Rehearsal or Performance".

Measures 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

Score for measures 32-36, measures 36 marked *meno mosso* (♩ = 60). The score includes parts for Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and D.B. Dynamics range from *mp*. Performance markings include *guitar pos. - thumb, 2, 1*. A large diagonal watermark reads "Not for Rehearsal or Performance".

Measures 32, 33, 34, 35, 36.

Score for measures 37-39, featuring Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and D.B. The key signature is one sharp (F#). Measure 37 includes a *pizz.* instruction for the Viola and a *p* dynamic for the Double Bass. Measure 38 includes a *pizz.* instruction for the Viola and a *p* dynamic for the Double Bass. Measure 39 includes a *p* dynamic for the Double Bass.

37 38 39

Score for measures 40-43, featuring Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and D.B. The key signature is one sharp (F#). Measure 40 includes a *pizz.* instruction for the Violins and Viola. Measure 41 includes a *dim.* instruction for the Violins, Viola, and Double Bass, and a *pp* dynamic for the Viola. Measure 42 includes a *dim.* instruction for the Violins, Viola, and Double Bass, and a *pp* dynamic for the Viola. Measure 43 includes a *pp* dynamic for the Viola and Double Bass.

40 41 42 43