

## Alchemy - FMP-SK 2021



Alchemy is an ancient practice shrouded in mystery and secrecy. Its practitioners mainly sought to turn lead into gold, a quest that has captured the imaginations of people for thousands of years. “Transmutation” is the key word of characterizing alchemy, and it may be understood in several ways: in the changes that are called chemical, in physiological changes such as passing from sickness to health, in a hope for transformation from old to young, or even in passing from an earthly to a supernatural existence. Alchemy aimed at the great human “goods”; wealth, longevity, and immortality.

This show will portray a journey from rags to riches or dark to colorful. Musical inspiration is drawn from famous Mozart melodies; first presented in a straightforward manner but uniquely transformed as the show evolves. Visual inspiration is drawn from Alchemy’s process philosophy (also known as [Magnum Opus](#)) and will portray four distinct stages.

### The Four Stages of Alchemy

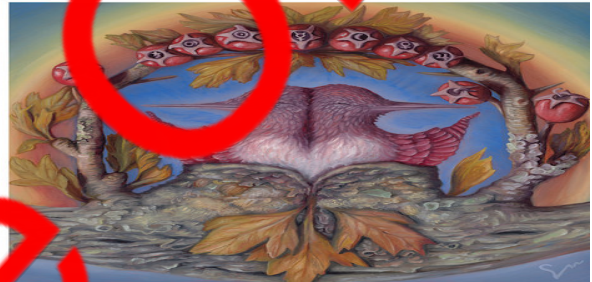
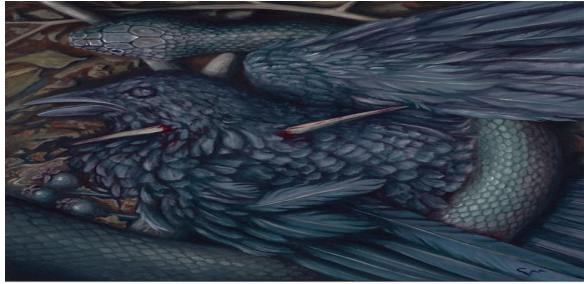
1. Nigredo - The blackening (dark emotionally)
2. Albedo - The whitening, washing away impurities (spiritual, reflective emotionally)
3. Citrinitas\* - The yellowing (uplifting emotionally)
4. Rubedo\*\* - The reddening (Alchemist’s signal of success and celebration of great work)

*\*Many writers tended to compress Citrinitas and Rubedo and consider only three stages. To that end, this show will portray Rubedo as a finale or “coda” to Part 3 Citrinitas.*

*\*\*Some mention “cauda pavonis” (peacock’s tail) in which an array of colors appear in Stage 4(Rubedo).*

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The color evolution depicted in the images below could be inspiration for the approach listed on the previous page...



### ***Simple explanation of the show for teens and judges...***

Alchemy is a transformation of look and sound. The musical layer is taking something ordinary and turning it into something unique and extraordinary! After the traditional and dark sounding intro, the show becomes modern and contemporary. Mozart themes inform this mostly composed score.

The visual layer is a color transformation going from black (dark/burned out/rotten) changing to white as if refreshing or purifying the look. It then moves to yellow as if it is a new dawn with rays of sunlight. The scale moves to shades of bright red and/or an array of vibrant colors which is celebratory and confident to portray an Alchemist's signal of success at the end of a great work!

### **Broad Visual Layout**

Intro (coming out of pre-show) - The show should look and sound very "traditional and classical" to start.

- A small woodwind chamber group begins playing what historians believe is Mozart's first composition: [Minari in A Minor for piano 10th sketch](#). This rare, dark sounding composition could actually begin in the pre-show.\* If desired, strategically time the "show announcer's" final introduction to occur right before the full band entrance at meas. 19.

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- Most of the band could be frozen and most of the guard could be hidden (possibly behind wind players) for the majority of the intro until the last few counts (@meas. 16) when the “feel” gradually changes to intense, dissonant and suspenseful?
  - Flag poles could be placed on yard lines, stripped or hidden by the guard behind musicians?
- A guard soloist or small group could be positioned near the stage when the chamber group is staged
  - Dancing, showing little or no color can be appropriate. However, sheer black “fabric” could be used to frame or highlight the chamber group if desired.
- On the 2nd time through the melody (key change) a faint dissonant digital sustained note can be heard growing in intensity with percussion and EFX voices layering in until it overtakes the chamber group leading into the full band’s intensely dark “fanfare-like” entrance
  - A fabric “flyover” could occur at this point on the last @six counts leading into the first impact to signify *Nigredo*, the blackening or melanosis. Two options depending on resources and available personnel:
    - A small black fabric flyover could occur over the chamber group. Or...
    - A large black fabric flyover could occur over the entire band

### **Part 1:**

**Nigredo** - Blackening, rotting, burning out, etc.; the feeling is dark, intense and driving

- The visual look should be dark (black) and lacking in color
  - The guard should be on mats for opening material (meas. 19-34)
    - Their costume look should be dark and lacking in color as well
      - Perhaps with a black or dark “veil-like” headpiece? See images later in this document
  - Some guard can transition to rifles (meas. 36-43) if desired
- The *Dies Ira* theme appears subtly to help portray the dark/dying aspects of the piece

### **Part 2:**

**Albedo** - whitening/washing away; the feeling is mysterious, mesmerizing, transforming, etc. This is based on [Evanescence' Lacrymosa](#) (*music licensing required*)

- The visual look goes from dark in Part 1 to white or absence of color to portray the “whitening” of the Alchemy process
  - Costume change in color and style is revealed as the piece progresses. For example; removing the black veils used in Part 1 or adding a white, sheer long skirt.
    - Most, if not all but one guard might be off stage for the intro (meas. 1-16), with a small group of mature dancers entering during meas. 17-32. They should be halted to allow for an expressive choreography moment, during the backfield full ensemble phrase at measures 33-48

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### The Look of the Show:

Set/Props This show was originally designed without traditional “props” per say instead focusing on fabric, costuming and an evolution of color to depict the theme. There are many ways to use fabric such as sheer fabric to drape, frame or highlight performers and various sized fabric flyovers to enhance and transform the look of the field.

Front panel scenes could be used to help create an overall thematic look and serve as a way to mask equipment and guard transitions. Potential design included in flag design image below.

### Guard Costuming

The guard can utilize a contemporary design incorporating many ways to change the look by adding or removing costume parts to depict the show's diverse styles and overall color transformation. For example, the addition of a headpiece with a dark veil might be used in the Intro. Part 2 might be effective by adding a skirt or shawl. A sleeve or jacket might be removed to reveal a brighter color for the contemporary feel of Part 3.

To contrast the band's costume, groups may consider incorporating brighter colors and fabric with some sort of sheen. The design could include an “essence” of the [18th century time period](#) fashion since Mozart themes are prevalent throughout. Examples include some ornamentation and an essence of formal wear as depicted in these [women's fashion images](#). Work with your design companies as they love to be creative and accommodating.

### Flag and Front Panel Designs by [Para Scoumon](#)



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## Flyovers and Fabric Outline

### Intro (pre-show) -

Sheer black fabric @ 10 yds by 10 yds.

- Small guard group drapes woodwind septet going up and over them starting at meas. 11.
- Color should match black used in Part 1 flag

### Part 1

Large black nylon fabric @ 40 yds wide by 30 yds deep

- The flyover takes place from the front sideline behind the pit over tight staged band starting at meas. 15 going over band at meas. 19
- Color of flyover should match black material used in the flag design for Part 1

### Part 2

Trombone/baritone soloist draped with sheer white fabric - "hooded poncho" style @ 3 ft. in diameter

Large sheer white drape over a very condensed wind section @ 20 yds by 20 yds

- This would be for the halted culmination phrase at meas. 59-80
- Color should match white used in Part 2 flag

### Part 3

Gold fabric flyover over the battery percussion during meas. 75 - @ 10 yds wide by 15 yds. deep

- Color/material of flyover should match gold used for Part 3 flag

Red fabric flyover over the entire band on ending notes at meas. 105 to end - @ 50 yds wide by 40 yds. Deep

- Color/material of flyover should match red used on the ending Part 3 flag

[Flyover Helpful Hint](#) by Ross Queen, FMP Designer

## Production Notes for Visual Designers

The spreadsheet at the links below are edited versions of the count by count notes that Scott Koter used for the band that commissioned FMP to create *Alchemy*. Once payment has been received and the director is in possession of the materials that accompany this SK Signature Sheet, contact Scott at [scott@fanninmusic.com](mailto:scott@fanninmusic.com) to receive access to these detailed notes. You can make a copy, give them as your own and customize them as you see fit for visual designers.

📄 Alchemy - Countsheet Master 2021