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Symphony No. 1: For a Handsome Kid

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Symphony No. 1: For a Handsome Kid is a musical realization of my feelings and experiences regarding my late grandfather, Harlan Kelsey (H. K.) Hinkley (1937-2013). I personally had not learned to appreciate classical music until after H. K. had passed, and as he was very much a connoisseur of classical music, we did not get to enjoy that appreciation together in this life. With this piece, I wanted to memorialize H. K.’s life, personality, and interests. Symphony No. 1 cultivates themes reflecting H. K.’s love of spaceflight, his decades-long church membership, and specific concert music works. The work is for wind ensemble, as H. K. played in concert bands for many years. There is also an offstage euphonium soloist, representing H. K.’s euphonium playing now separated from those who survived him.

This piece is through-composed, and though divided into distinct movements, each is performed consecutively without pause. The duration is approximately eighteen minutes. Throughout the piece, each of the three major themes are significantly developed individually and collectively, lending cohesion to the entire work. The offstage euphonium is also used in several sections of the piece for dramatic effect as well as to represent specific extramusical events in H. K.’s life. Finally, there are several smaller musical references to H. K.’s other interests that are less extensively explored than the primary themes; these other allusions add to the overall effect of depicting H. K.’s character and personality.

KEYWORDS: wind ensemble; composition; euphonium.
SYMPHONY NO. 1: FOR A HANDSOME KID

BRIAN J. HINKLEY

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Roy Magnuson, Chair

Anthony Marinello

Roger Zare
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This piece is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, H. K. Hinkley, who had the kindest soul of anyone I have ever met. I would like to thank Dr. Marinello and Dr. Zare for their continued advice on this project, as well as Dr. Magnuson for chairing my committee and offering plenty of much-needed feedback. I would also like to thank my parents for continually supporting me as I work through this difficult career field. And of course, my girlfriend Sarah, without whom I would not have the drive to succeed in music and especially in music composition.

B. J. H.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTRUMENTATION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVEMENTS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROGRAM NOTES</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYMPHONY NO. 1: FOR A HANDSOME KID</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INSTRUMENTATION

Piccolo
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
English Horn
2 Bassoons
3 B♭ Clarinets
Bass Clarinet
Soprano Saxophone
Alto Saxophone
Tenor Saxophone
Baritone Saxophone

Euphonium (offstage)

4 B♭ Trumpets
4 Horns
2 Trombones
Bass Trombone
Tuba

Contrabass
Timpani
Piano

3 Percussion:
1. Vibraphone*, Crash Cymbal, Chimes, Marimba
2. Suspended Cymbal (soft mallets, sticks, brushes), Snare Drum, Vibraphone*
3. Tam-tam, Bass Drum, Crotales (high octave only), Vibraphone*

*Vibraphone is typically a Percussion 1 instrument, but the other percussionists help to perform the vibraphone gestures in Interlude: Funeral.
MOVEMENTS

Symphony No. 1: For a Handsome Kid

Introduction: Memorial
I. Gemini 8 & 9A
   Interlude: Bygones
II. Quiet Inspiration
   Interlude: Funeral
III. To Serenity
   Epilogue: Legacy
PROGRAM NOTES

**Symphony No. 1: For a Handsome Kid** is a musical realization of my feelings and experiences regarding my late grandfather, Harlan Kelsey (H. K.) Hinkley (1937-2013). H. K. lived a long life, enough to enjoy his fiftieth anniversary with his wife Rosemary and to have several grandchildren grow into young adults. Throughout his life, H. K. was sure to tell everyone who asked that “H. K.” stood for “Handsome Kid,” directly inspiring the title of this work. Chief among his many interests were classical music (both in bands and orchestras), space exploration, attending the First United Methodist Church of Freeport, travelling, old time radio shows, and puns and jokes galore. An avid euphonium player, H. K. played in several ensembles, including with the Freeport Concert Band every season since 1979. He survived for over a year after a diagnosis with pancreatic cancer, passing away peacefully in his own home on August 12, 2013, and he was still making jokes and enjoying his family right up to the end of his life.

I consider myself very lucky to have enjoyed a relationship with my grandfather during his life. I had not yet endured the loss of a loved one until I was a young adult—at age eighteen, H. K.’s death was the first I had experienced. I was fortunate to have time to grieve and process my emotions, but I was also preparing to begin my freshman year at Augustana College just two weeks later. I knew I was going to major in music, as I had enjoyed playing in my high school band and in a small jazz combo. However, I had never really enjoyed the same kind of music that H. K. had—classical giants like Beethoven, Wagner, Holst, and Stravinsky. It was only after I had spent a year and a half in music theory and history courses that I began to truly appreciate classical composers, and that was when I realized what I had missed out on with my grandfather. If I had developed this interest sooner, we might have enjoyed discussing, playing, and listening to music CDs and live concerts together. I took a trip to see my grandmother in Freeport and to visit the
band shell where the Freeport Concert Band performed, and I resolved that somehow, at some point in the future, I would memorialize H. K. in music. I was not even a full-time composer then, but I was fortunate enough to enroll at Illinois State University as a graduate composer where I could pursue this deeply personal project with the guidance and support of several excellent faculty members. I am proud to have developed the skills to compose this work, and I hope that somehow, H. K. is looking over my shoulder at the manuscripts and making a funny yet ridiculous joke about the euphonium part.

In this piece, I wanted to focus on specific interests that H. K. had that best encapsulated his personality and life, while also including my own emotional perspective. **Symphony No. 1** is divided into multiple major movements and additional sections as follows:

- **Introduction: Memorial**
  - I. Gemini 8 & 9A
    - Interlude: Bygones
  - II. Quiet Inspiration
    - Interlude: Funeral
  - III. To Serenity
    - Epilogue: Legacy

Each of the three main movements (Gemini 8 & 9A, Quiet Inspiration, and To Serenity) uses a theme that directly relates to a part of H. K.’s life, while the Interludes are depictions of my own experiences and memories. The Introduction and Epilogue are simply bookends designed to connect the unique elements of each movement into a cohesive whole by introducing and restating all three main themes at the beginning and end of the work (respectively). Additionally, the instrumentation is a standard wind ensemble setup, with the exception of a solo euphonium player positioned offshore. As H. K. was a euphonium player, this offstage positioning quite literally removes H. K.’s musical sound from the main ensemble, reflecting his spiritual departure from the
rest of us still here on Earth. I also integrated the initials “H. K.” into the piece using Morse code (• • • • − • −, represented as four sixteenth notes followed by dotted eighth–sixteenth–quarter or a rhythmic equivalent), using at least one instance in all seven portions of the piece. In some movements the Morse code is at the forefront (as in Gemini 8 & 9A), while in others it is hidden in the background. Using this Morse code throughout the piece honors H. K.’s love for wordplay and riddles, as one could scour the score to find each puzzle piece.

Introduction: Memorial presents a soundscape designed to draw memories out of the fog of the passage of time. The themes from each movement are slowly introduced as voices fade in and out, preventing the listener from immediately getting a clear grasp of what each theme entails. After a strong buildup, the ensemble falls away to allow the offstage euphonium to state each theme in quick succession, transitioning immediately to the first full movement, Gemini 8 & 9A. The title of this movement refers to two of the spacecrafts launched by NASA as part of the Gemini spaceflight program in 1966. H. K. worked at the McDonnell Aircraft Corporation in St. Louis for seven years and worked on the electrical systems of several of the later Gemini spacecrafts, especially the ones used for the Gemini 8 and 9A missions. As a direct result of this work, H. K. developed a lifelong love of all things spaceflight and exploration, which of course included the science fiction worlds of Star Trek, Star Wars, Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, and many others. This movement, Gemini 8 & 9A, aims to capture that love of spaceflight with a short motive comprised of rising fourths. Several solo instruments develop this motive over driving, rhythmic accompaniment figures, evoking the feeling of sailing at high speed far over the bustling world below. The movement ends rather suddenly as the full ensemble evaporates away into the piccolo repeating the Morse code motive three times, as if beaming the signal out into space, where H. K.’s spirit might now be travelling the stars on his own fantastic journey.
Interlude: Bygones is the first section driven by my own experiences and feelings. The narrative in Bygones depicts how I had missed out on enjoying the same kind of music that my grandfather did while he was still alive. The mood is generally spacious and ethereal, sounding somewhat out of time. Several motives from Gustav Holst’s music are quoted by various members of the ensemble: Jupiter from *The Planets* is quoted in the piccolo and flutes, fragments of the *First Suite in E-flat* are used in the low brass, and all the winds play snippets of the *Second Suite in F*. Meanwhile, the piano plays an arrangement of “Misty” (Errol Garner, arr. Dennis Colby) in a different tempo from the rest of the ensemble. The piano represents a younger version of myself focusing on jazz music and not realizing what great music had been around me that I could have connected to H. K. with. Not to say that jazz is inferior music or that Mr. Colby’s arrangement was poor—I would in fact claim the opposite, that they are equally excellent contributions to music—I was simply too focused on the slice of music that I knew to broaden my horizons and make more connections with more art and people, including my grandfather. At the end of the Interlude, the offstage euphonium quotes the *Second Suite*, prompting the piano to pause and listen. By the time the piano realizes what other music has been playing around it, the euphonium disappears, leaving the piano alone in the hall.

The second full movement, Quiet Inspiration, centers on H. K.’s decades-long membership with the First United Methodist Church of Freeport. One of his favorite hymns to sing there was “Holy, Holy, Holy,” and that hymn forms the theme of this movement, taking several forms in a miniature version of a theme and variations. Rather than simply repeat the hymn in a new texture every stanza, a small interlude is added to maintain variety. The euphonium introduces the first line of the hymn in a slow, augmented version, disguising the hymn proper until the next variation, featuring the woodwinds in a relatively plain four-part setting. Towards the end of this variation,
the style becomes non legato, foreshadowing the third and final variation of the movement. This variation is inspired by H. K.’s favorite puns using this hymn: “Holy, holy, holy! Swiss cheese is holey!” The “holey” texture is depicted through the woodwinds playing staccato patterns with grace notes attached. Meanwhile, the melody takes on a similarly nose-thumbing character in the muted trumpet doubled by piccolo, while the percussion marches quietly in the background. The offstage euphonium declares the last tag of the hymn, referencing the opening and rounding out the movement.

Interlude: Funeral is the second portion inspired by my own experiences, reflecting my emotions during H. K.’s funeral. Quiet Inspiration transitions directly into Interlude: Funeral via the final chord, which crescendos and decrescendos. This Interlude uses that same swell technique in four disparate chords to create the backdrop for multiple obbligato instruments: piano, alto saxophone, and bass trombone. In contrast to these chaotic obligatos, the euphonium plays “Taps” from offstage—my brother, Glenn, who is also a euphonium player, played “Taps” at the funeral on euphonium. After an intense build, the swells and obbligatos cut out, leaving the euphonium to complete the last phrase of “Taps.” That moment was the most emotional of the funeral for me, and that is depicted musically by a great crescendo in the percussion leading into the third movement, To Serenity. As the title suggests, To Serenity captures the collective effort of our family moving from the pain of loss towards peace and serenity. A curious incident happened to Rosemary the day after H. K. passed. Quite often, H. K. and Rosemary would listen to classical music on shuffle, and there was a piece that Rosemary could never quite identify. H. K. would then remind her that the piece was Rimsky-Korsakov’s Scheherazade, and it became a running joke between them that she could never remember the piece. The day after H. K. died, Rosemary was listening to music in the same way, and Scheherazade came on. Immediately,
Rosemary knew that H. K. was okay, and that she could begin to heal. That story is illustrated between the euphonium and the horns (Rosemary is a hornist), and once the motive is identified, the horns triumphantly realize that H. K. is just fine and begin to accelerate into a joyful fanfare. To Serenity takes the motive from the violin cadenza at the beginning of *Scheherazade* as the main theme of the movement once the fanfare breaks into a driving 6/8 groove. After several iterations of the motive, the arpeggiated minor seventh is turned into a dominant seventh, brightening up the sound as our family works towards serenity once again. After an extended fanfare, the offstage euphonium begins the final section (Epilogue: Legacy) with a cadenza that combines the motivic material from each movement. After the cadenza, the ensemble layers each motive together in a driving fanfare marked “to the future” in anticipation of whatever joys and struggles might lie ahead in a life where H. K. is only remembered and memorialized. One final reference is hidden in the last seven measures: these hits are organized into a group of four and a group of two, representing the number 42, which has a particular significance in the world of *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, one of many science fiction universes H. K. enjoyed.