A Constant Haunting

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A CONSTANT HAUNTING

for wind ensemble and soprano

by Russ Wilcox

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music in Composition in the School of Music
Jordan College of the Arts, Butler University, Indianapolis, IN USA

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A Constant Haunting

A Constant Haunting is a three-movement work for wind ensemble and soprano soloist. Since the exact instrumentation of a typical wind ensemble is not clearly agreed upon, the instruments utilized in this work are: piccolo, flutes 1 and 2, oboes 1 and 2, clarinets 1, 2, and 3 in B-flat, bass clarinet in B-flat, bassoons 1 and 2, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, trumpets 1, 2, and 3 in B-flat, horns 1, 2, 3, and 4 in F, trombones 1 and 2, bass trombone, euphonium, tubas 1 and 2, piano, string bass, timpani, and percussion 1, 2, and 3. This work is intended to be performed with one player per part, except for clarinets which may be doubled if deemed appropriate by the conductor. The third movement of the work features a soprano soloist. I have considered orchestration and dynamics very intentionally throughout the piece, but especially so in this movement to help the soloist and the text be clearly heard without amplification. Because of this, it is important that the instrumentation not be unnecessarily doubled.

The overall aim of this piece is to tell the story of my wife, Julie, who has struggled with chronic heart failure for a majority of her adult life. When she was in her mid-20’s, Julie was an active firefighter and EMT in the greater Dayton, Ohio area. She was in excellent physical condition and took great care of herself. Unfortunately, she began experiencing chest pain and presented to the emergency room. After a cursory examination, the attending physician told her she had the flu and sent her home. Twelve hours later, at home, she experienced a massive heart attack. The blockage was so severe that it left her with only half of a functioning heart; the damage had rendered the entire bottom half of her heart useless.

What followed was a series of tests, procedures, and hospital stays that determined her only real hope would be a cardiac transplant. This once vibrant and vivacious young woman and
mother had suddenly been reduced to a person who could not carry a gallon of milk from the car into the house without help. The prospect of a heart transplant sounded wonderfully hopeful, but the reality of finding a match after working her way up the list before she died from heart failure seemed incredibly unlikely. Julie was forced to examine her own life and her own mortality at an unfortunately young age. Her biggest concerns were of her daughter Victoria. Would she be around to see Victoria graduate from high school? Would she get the opportunity to take her to college and help her move into her dorm room? Would she be able to be at her wedding? All the pleasures in life that so many of us take for granted, things even Julie had taken for granted up to this point, seemed like an impossible luxury.

Fortunately, by sheer coincidence, Julie met a phenomenal heart surgeon during one of her hospital stays. By utilizing a technique known as a “modified door,” the surgeon was able to insert plastic mannequins inside her heart that reinforced the damaged areas, but also made the volume of the heart smaller overall so that each stroke of the heart could provide more blood. Remarkably, this technology was considered experimental at the time, but is now considered somewhat outdated and newer better technologies exist. After multiple heart surgeries and chest wall reconstructions, Julie has survived without a cardiac transplant. It has been over a decade since the surgical repair and regular tests are still showing her heart function as stable. Although repaired, her heart does not function as well as a normal person’s. By blocking off the lower part of her heart with the ventricular mannequins, she was essentially left with only half of a functioning heart. Daily activities like taking a shower or climbing stairs can be absolutely exhausting. Just last week we drove from our home in Carmel to Butler’s campus to pick something up. We parked on the fourth floor of the parking garage and walked to Lilly Hall. This is something I do every day with very little thought or expenditure of energy. For her it took
considerably longer. But her positive, infectious attitude never focused on the physically difficult part of the challenge. In this situation, she just rested, took a deep breath, and we kept going after a short break. This is an incredible lesson in perspective. Things change. Although that trek to Lilly from the parking garage was a challenge, bringing the milk into the house from the car the night before was not. This is a significant improvement and that is the hopefulness that this piece is trying to explore.

Our combined goal in writing this piece was to present Julie’s story. The first two movements were designed by me from what I have heard of her story. The third movement is her own testimony and telling of the traumatic events, including how it left her feeling. As a skilled poet and author, she willingly accepted this opportunity to write a text for the soprano soloist to sing in the third movement. She knew it would not be an easy task, but after several months she finalized the text that can be seen at the beginning of the score.

In the first movement, my goal was to portray the massive heart attack musically. My own initial feelings told me that it would have to be loud and intense. This was supposed to be uncomfortable and extremely painful. Although I feel I captured much of that very well, pain was not the most serious thing Julie was feeling during this time. She knew something was seriously wrong. Skilled practitioners were telling her she was fine but ultimately, she knew she was not. That feeling of watching everything unfold around you while no one acknowledges your struggle or even tries to help you is one of the most terrifying things we can experience as humans. This event occurred because she was ignored, because someone did not listen to her, and because her voice was not loud enough to be heard by these physicians. If this had happened to you, would you consider this an isolated incident? Maybe you just slipped through the cracks? For Julie, it was not an unfortunate isolated incident. As awful as that event was, it colored every
interaction she has had with healthcare providers after that. This music does not just sum up the explosion of her heart, it carries with it the anxiety of every doctor’s appointment after that where someone would not listen to her or take a complete history. The music drips with the fear and angst that you might be left alone, uncared for, oruntended to in your absolute worst moment. This music attempts to invoke the uneasiness that you might feel if you had been forgotten just like Julie had.

The second movement is a reprieve. After the intensity of the first movement, this movement acts as a palate cleanser. At this point in the story, we are left with Julie by herself. Alone, to contemplate what has happened, but more importantly, what is going to happen. This movement is dark and full of color. Colors change quickly to show the racing of her mind. Nothing is solved here. It is way too soon for any resolution as not even she realizes there are months of struggle ahead of her. Everything that just happened is too fresh. There is no way to digest what has occurred, or what is likely to come.

The third movement of this piece utilizes Julie’s own text that explores her feelings and deepest concerns throughout the entire arc of her story. Reading her text, it is not clear which time period she is writing from. Is she writing just after the event? Is she writing years later, after knowing what she knows now? The text leaps around chronologically in a literary cubist style that leaves the listener wondering where they are in the story. The goal here is not to confuse the listener, but to point them in the direction that she wants them to go. Just as a painter would use intense colors to grab someone’s attention, Julie’s figurative language paints her emotions perfectly but understandably inconsistently. This collage of emotion leaves the listener with an overall clear view of what happened, but in a timeframe that allows them to piece together the
events in their own way, very similarly to how she had to assemble her own view of an entirely new life that was about to become a reality for her.

First Movement

In order to achieve the emotional effect that is described above, many compositional techniques were used in the first movement to create the feeling of tension and dread as Julie’s anxiety continued to increase. The first movement is in three sections. See figure 1 below for a formal diagram of the first movement. Although this movement is in three sections, it is not a traditional ternary form since the material in the third section is new and not a reprise of the original A section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
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<tr>
<td>Measure Numbers</td>
<td>mm. 1 - 28</td>
<td>mm. 29 - 58</td>
<td>mm. 59 - 61</td>
<td>mm. 62 - 114</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>Quarter = 60</td>
<td>Quarter = 160</td>
<td>Quarter = 160</td>
<td>Quarter = 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivic Material</td>
<td>Few motives – Rhythmic motive in vibraphone</td>
<td>Motive X mm. 30-40</td>
<td>Overlap of Motive Y mm. 41-58</td>
<td>Motive Z mm. 62-114 (transformed throughout by diminution and inversion)</td>
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Figure 1: Formal diagram of the first movement of A Constant Haunting.

The A section of the movement starts slowly with a tempo marking of “Timidly” with a quarter note equaling sixty beats per minute. In this section, there is little motivic material and much of the section is orchestrational texture. Half step harmonies are used throughout the opening utilizing the pitches of G and A-flat to help create tension and color among the instruments. Extreme ranges of instruments are used here to provide an added stress as both
extremely high and extremely low pitches are heard simultaneously. The introduction of an A-natural in the flute in m. 5 and E-natural in the bass clarinet, expands the harmonic language to an 0125 set class. Of interest, the subset 025 will become important in helping to create some of the orchestral color in the second movement.

As mentioned above, there is little motivic activity in the opening of the movement, however, the vibraphone does provide one rhythmic motive that helps add interest and a sense of pulse to the music. See example 1 below for this motive. This motive utilizes the pitches G and A-flat to fit with the prevailing harmony in the section but the importance of this motive is to add increased rhythmic tension. This motive is heard from the beginning of the movement through m. 17. This is intended to portray Julie’s uneasiness and feeling that something is not necessarily right. The motive implies danger. When it stops in m. 17, the concern shifts from the fear that something might be wrong to the realization that something is wrong. At this same moment, a cadence occurs in the rest of the band in mm. 18 and 19 with a long sustained note that diminuendos to triple piano. Accompanied with the stop of the vibraphone motive, this ultimately confirms that things are not right. The piece continues with a sforzando G and A-flat in the horns and piano, signifying that this is merely the beginning of a more serious problem. Sharp staccato stabs from the low voices in mm. 21, 22, and 24 attempt to show the listener the unexpected fear and pain that Julie was experiencing as the stabs interrupt the long notes being
sustained in other voices. Similar staccato notes were heard previously in the movement in mm. 14 and 16 in the flute and tenor sax. At this point the notes were used to provide stepwise approach to long notes, but also to foreshadow the impending trauma.

From mm. 23 to 28, which is the end of the A section, the G and A-flat dyad is manipulated and passed between voices. The section culminates with the first trumpet playing the notes F and G (concert pitch) as it ascends to A-flat in m. 27. In mm. 27-28, the G and A-flat dyad is heard throughout the winds at a pianissimo dynamic before launching into the B section.

The B section of the first movement explodes with a new tempo marked “Wildly” with a quarter note equaling 160 beats per minute and a tutti chord at a dynamic of forte. The first measure of the section is in the meter of 7/8 to help propel the energy forward. This section is based on two motivic ideas which are named motive X and motive Y.

Motive X can first be seen in m. 30 in the first clarinet part. See example 2 below for motive X. As shown, motive X is a series of five eighth notes that spans the interval of a minor third. This motive is seen through the opening of the B section and is utilized until m. 47. This motive is transformed throughout the section, often utilizing different pitches, but the motive is always recognizable because it maintains the same five eighth note rhythm and distinctive articulation.
Motive Y is introduced in the flutes in mm. 41-45. Compared to motive X, motive Y is longer and more lyrical in nature. Example 3 shows motive Y. Motive Y is moved through the ensemble as the bassoon plays it in mm. 45-49 and the trumpets play it in mm. 51-54. During this time, motive X is heard throughout the band in counterpoint against motive Y. The intention of this counterpoint was to show a musically elevated style. As counterpoint is often associated with education (i.e. the “learned style”) this was an opportunity to show that Julie was putting her trust in the physicians that were caring for her. This of course becomes ironic as the physicians offered poor care, but this can be seen by the fast rhythms, energetic accompaniment, and dissonance that undermine the counterpoint within this section.

Throughout the entire B section, rhythmic offbeats and accented syncopations accompany the motives. These ideas are meant to mimic the staccato stabs that were seen in the A section. In this iteration, they occur more frequently and with less regularity to help add excitement to the music but also to show an increase in stress. In mm. 59-61, a short transition helps move the listener towards the C section. These three measures decrease the thickness of the orchestration and a diminuendo leads to the third section of the movement.

The C section of the first movement starts quietly. This section is the ultimate buildup to the event that was Julie’s massive heart attack. Repeated sixteenth note ostinati are heard consistently throughout the section as the piece maintains a consistent sixteenth note pulse to add
energy. Motive Z predominates the last section of the movement. Motive Z is first heard in the string bass with an arco articulation. See example 4 for motive Z. As shown, motive Z is a long line that is sustained. Combined with the sixteenth note ostinato, this motive provides a sense of both tension and stasis to a listener who is expecting to hear energetic anxiety. This motive is transformed significantly in this section. It is shortened by the use of diminution in order to speed up the harmonic rhythm. It is inverted in places and fragmented. Example 5 shows how motive Z is both diminished and fragmented in the trombone part in mm. 78-80 to help generate new, energetic material from motive Z.

Throughout the C section, the rhythmic stabs heard from the beginning of the movement continue. These stabs have now been extended and are intended to mimic some of the sixteenth note ostinati. Although now longer, the stabs remain dissonant and occur as a syncopation in weak parts of the phrase. Example 6 shows the stabs as they have now been transformed to fit the more frenetic nature of this section. These stabs can be seen in the bass clarinet and bari sax in mm. 71-72 and in the trumpets in mm. 74-75 and mm. 76-77.
Leading up to the actual event itself, the music maintains a consistent tempo but the energy level is increased by thickening of the orchestration and continued use of the sixteenth note pulse. Motive Z continues to be heard as tension builds, both in its original form and in several of its altered states. A three-note fragmentation of motive Z is heard throughout the low brass and percussion which helps drive the music forward to the unavoidable traumatic event that is about to unfold. Tubular bells are introduced in m. 106 and the rest of the ensemble begins to fall as a unison descending sixteenth note line in the winds in m. 109 leads to an empty bar in m. 111. Nothing is heard in m. 111 except for the tubular bells which are instructed to pedal through that measure and maintain their vibration. As the sound of the bells linger for a brief moment, the ensemble enters in m. 112 with a triple forte chord which represents the explosion of Julie’s heart. This chord, played without diminuendo for three measures, can best be described as a polychord with a quartal chord in the low voices based on F and a C-sharp minor chord with an added major seventh voiced in the upper winds.

Example 6: Stab motive transformed, trumpets in B-flat
As mentioned above, the second movement of the piece is a reprieve. After the bombastic and stressful first movement, this is supposed to function as a palate cleanser. While the first movement is highly dependent on motive and motivic development, this movement utilizes orchestration and texture as a means of conveying peacefulness. As previously discussed, this is the moment in Julie’s story where the event has just occurred. At this point she has had very little time to process what has happened but she knows things will be different. As a result, this movement is intentionally short. This provides a rest, but it is a relatively short time before decisions must be made and life must go on.

Orchestrationally, this movement is also different from the first in that it does not include piano and only uses three of the four percussionists. Overall, more emphasis is placed on wind instruments in this movement and their unique ability to sustain notes to create intricately moving textures and harmonies.

This movement opens similarly to the start of the first movement. A chord in the flutes signals the start of contemplation, much like it did in the first movement. The difference here is the instruments are no longer playing in their extreme registers. The quiet dynamic level, the comfortable register, and the much more consonant 027 harmony compared to the minor seconds in the opening movement, provide a considerably more relaxed feeling immediately.

The previous discussion mentioned the importance of the set 025 in this second movement. This pitch class set is a subset of the set 0125 which was seen in the opening harmonies of the first movement. By removing the half step in the set, a similar harmony results, but it is now in a brighter, less dissonant context. The set class 025 can be seen throughout. The
first iteration comes in m. 4 in the clarinets. Example 7 shows this harmony. Assuming

![Example 7: 025 sonority, clarinets in B-flat](image)

that the written pitches of G and D function as suspensions from the previous measure, the resulting notes of C-sharp, E, and F-sharp create an inverted 025 sonority. Numerous other examples of this harmony abound in this movement. The chord in m.5 in the bass clarinet, tenor sax, bari sax, string bass, and timpani all form an 025 chord. The piccolo, flutes, and oboes in the following measures also form this same sonority.

This harmony continues until m. 16 where a mezzo forte 027 chord emerges. Based on the note D, this chord functions somewhat as a V chord in the key of G, the final chord of this movement. This V chord crescendos to a forte dynamic while other instruments are added to eventually include the entire ensemble. The music comes to a climax in m. 19, just before a quarter rest where no one in the group plays. After this brief rest, the entire band plays a G major add 4 chord at a pianissimo dynamic. This rest is intended to function as a sigh. As the music builds up to that point it corresponds to Julie’s increasing stress, the rest followed by the pianissimo chord shows a pause in her thought process, likely due not to relief, but merely because she must now focus her attention on making some difficult decisions.
Third Movement

The setting for the third movement of this piece happens years after the event. After living with the resulting heart failure for nearly a decade, Julie has written this text as a commentary of what happened and what is left to happen in her life. The text that she has written can be found at the front of the accompanying score and as discussed previously, does not follow a perfectly linear timeline. Feelings and events are explored in the sequence in which Julie experienced reminiscing about them while writing the text.

When setting this text, I had to make several decisions about how I was going to set it in order to make it most clear and how to tell the story in a concise manner. Ultimately I chose to do this by setting certain sections as recited text and some sections as sung text. A unique hybrid of recited and sung text developed in some sections as a result of this technique, which I will discuss in further detail below. The third movement opens with only recited text. The first stanza of the poem is the soprano by herself without any accompaniment from the band. I found this technique refreshing, as it will cause the audience to pay more attention to the text that is about to come since this section highlights only the text. This is a way of showing that the text in this situation takes precedence over the music.

In order to notate the different styles of text delivery in this movement, I utilized three different types of notation for setting text. Example 8 shows a section of the soprano solo that utilizes all three of these different notations. The standard notation is seen at the beginning of the

Example 8: Types of sung or recited notation
line and is simply denoted with the word “sung.” In places where precise notation was required for recited parts, the part was labeled “recited” and the rhythms were written with “x” noteheads. For the most part however, I wanted a freer recitative that I feared would sound too mechanical if it were written out precisely like this. In these instances, I used the term “recited” followed by an empty bar with the text underneath as seen in the example for the phrase “Bear witness to youth’s.” As the example shows, this still allows for the inclusion of rests to show where a phrase of text begins, but it provides a much more relaxed style of conversational text in the recited parts.

As mentioned above, a type of recitative-like singing developed from utilizing this mixture of spoken and sung texts. When transitioning from a spoken part to a sung part, I found these hybrid types of settings very helpful to integrate the two sections. Example 9 shows an example of this. Following a recited section, the repeated notes of this sung entrance give the illusion of a recited section, but it is now sung at a pitch level. The line quickly develops into a more complex, sung line but this technique allows for the merging of two different sections rather seemlessly. This device is used in this example which is in mm. 18-20 and is again later used in mm. 35-37.
This movement of the piece does not adhere to a standard form. Ultimately the text dictates the form of the movement and as a result the movement is very episodic in nature. The moods and tonalities within sections change character quickly to accompany the extreme range of emotion that the text explores.

Of the three movements, this third movement is the most tonal in nature. Each section has a specific key center and harmonies tend to function in a fairly traditional, functional way, with occasional exceptions. The piece opens in the tonal area of F. The harmony remains fairly static through the opening bars that accompany the soloist reciting text. At rehearsal letter A, the clarinets play a short contrapuntal section that is intended to be somewhat reminiscent of the contrapuntal section heard in the first movement. During this section of counterpoint, the harmony culminates on a G major chord which leads to the key center of C at letter B. During this sung section, the tenor sax and the first horn play a prominent countermelody that highlights the soprano’s melody.

The mood shifts quickly at rehearsal letter C where the tonality changes to a darker B minor to accompany the recitation of the text, “I lay still, kiss tiny fingers” in a reference to when Julie would lay with Victoria at night while she slept. Julie always had to be careful not to fall asleep in Victoria’s bed in case she were to die in the middle of the night, and Victoria would find her in the morning. This dismal imagery evaporates quickly as the piece quickly shifts back into C major at rehearsal letter D. Despite the joyous music and key, the text in this section is somewhat dark. “Cell door opens, crayon lines rush in, to find me alone, on the floor again.” Using the metaphor of her illness as a prison again, Julie paints a sad picture of collapsing from exertion on the floor. No one is around to help her. She lays there by herself and all she can see
are the markings of crayons on the wall from Victoria. This juxtaposition of horrifying text with exuberant music is a foreshadowing of positive things to come, despite the long road to get there.

At letter E we return to the key center of F. Here the tonality is less defined and considerably more dissonance is used, both harmonic and rhythmic. Fast music accompanies several harmonies that employ minor seconds and syncopated off-beats function again as stabbing motives much like they did in the first movement. This frantic music is accompanied by a graphic description of the surgery that saved Julie’s life. “Chest splayed, open, wide and elbows deep. We prayed the Lord their hands to keep.” The meter shifts frequently in this section as the tempo drives the text forward. Here the unprecise nature of the notation for the recited solo becomes beneficial as trying to line up the text with the ensemble throughout this section would prove incredibly difficult and would no doubt eat up a lot of rehearsal time. This section culminates with a powerful D9 chord in m. 65. This chord is held for several measures, but voices drop out of the chord until only a few remain and those voices tie into the next section.

The notes from the previous section that tie into letter F are from an F major chord and help maintain the key center of F in this section. The phrase in this section modulates to the key center of G and the phrase ends in m. 78 with a G9 chord. The mood again shifts very suddenly at letter G with a shift in tonality to B with a lowered fifth scale degree implying a diminished sonority. This dark change accompanies the text, “Seeking reprieve, a pardon from the sickness to come. A constant haunting by what’s left to be done.” This phrase ends on a dominant-like harmony of F-sharp half-diminished seven before moving to an E major chord in m. 90 right before the next section. Although these chords do not function normally within traditional harmony, the E, G, and B sonorities are related by thirds, suggesting the outline of a minor triad over this entire section.
The mood of the movement is lifted substantially at letter H as the previously heard E major triad resolves to the key center of G major. This phrase remains in the key of G and lands on the dominant chord of D major in m. 99 before moving into the next section. At letter I there is a reprise of the frantic section that was heard previously at letter E. This time the material is in the key center of G, but still uses minor second dissonances and rhythmic syncopation throughout as the meter changes frequently. This section builds in intensity to accompany the text reciting, “I dwell on will I die before the plans we’ve made.” At this point, the singer repeats this phrase of text, but this time sung in the same key center of G major. The phrase ends with the soloist singing a G-sharp over a B major chord in the accompaniment in an attempt to tonally confuse the listener. The lower winds descend from B down to G as the music moves to the next section which is centered in the key of G.

At letter K, the tonality is clearly in G major as the brass play a very simple chorale that accompanies the soprano singing “Bursting full, an internal clock at its last. Saved by breaching whales and redwoods breezing past.” As the last lines of the text, the listener would expect the piece to be over after this. The simple chorale accompaniment seems like an appropriately happy ending, but this setting just serves to show how Julie’s life does not conform to normal convention. The chorale is used ironically to show that everything may appear fine, but after what she has been through she is too cautious now to accept the happy ending, and must be prepared for any possible outcome. Because of this, the text, “I dwell on will I die before the plans we’ve made” is repeated, but this time sung over only a sustained pedal G in the string bass. The intention of this effect is to get the audience to notice the importance of this phrase much like in the beginning with the a capella text. The final five measures of the piece repeat the final line of the text, “Saved by breaching whales and redwoods breezing past.” This time the
text is set over quartal chords in the accompaniment to give an ambiguous tonal feeling and the vocal line ascends as though it were going to cadence in G, but ends on the F-sharp, leaving the ending purposefully unresolved and convoluted as the accompaniment and voice quietly die away.

Final Thoughts

When I set out to write this piece, it seemed like an insurmountable task. Julie had supplied me with a fantastic text and the challenge of setting it in the most convincing way seemed impossible. Although not perfect by any means, this is a piece that I am deeply proud of. Not only does it tell a wonderful story, but it gave me the opportunity to collaborate with my incredibly talented wife.

Generally I was very pleased with the orchestration of this piece from what I heard when the Butler Wind Ensemble read it. Unfortunately, the soprano was very difficult to hear over the band, despite the diminished orchestration. A properly trained opera soprano could possibly sing this part and project above the band, but I can’t always expect that the group performing this piece will employ a well-trained Wagnerian soprano. In addition, the spoken parts were covered by the band even more. It’s likely to say that even a well-trained soprano might have difficulty projecting spoken text over the entire wind ensemble. Because of this, I will amend the performance instructions to allow for amplification of the solo part. It’s possible that some singers will be able to project over the band, but in the performance notes I will leave that up to the conductor to decide. If amplification is to be used, I would request a PA system with
speakers on the stage so as to give the most natural representation of the sound coming from the stage.

Beyond balance issues with the vocalist, I felt that the rest of the reading went very well. I had an incredibly skilled conductor and he was able to navigate the different meter changes, but the ensemble struggled to catch all of them and missed many syncopations. I know this ensemble is perfectly capable of playing such things, so in the future I will simply prepare to devote a little more rehearsal time to those areas that may need more attention.

Overall the experience of writing this piece and having it performed by the Butler Wind Ensemble has been phenomenal. I have been fortunate to have the guidance of my two wonderful teachers Dr. Frank Felice and Dr. Michael Schelle who each contributed their own unique insights into the piece. In addition, the opportunity to share this experience with Julie, from beginning to end, has been a wonderful experience.

While writing this piece, my goal was to give Julie the opportunity to tell her story. Because of the generosity of so many teachers who have shared their love of music with me, willing conductors, fellow composition graduate student friends, and talented players and singers, I have been able to present this wonderful piece and have it performed by a phenomenal ensemble. This dedication to collaboration in art matches Julie’s generous spirit and her love of life. This work would not exist without her and I am eternally grateful to her for making me the person that I am today.