UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

Date: 18-Jan-2010

I, Sherry Holbrook Baker, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Musical Arts

in Horn

It is entitled:

In Memoriam: Nine Elegiac Works for Horn, 1943–2004

Student Signature: Sherry Holbrook Baker

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee Chair: bruce mcclung, PhD

Randy Gardner, BM

Alan Siebert, MM

3/4/2010 383
In Memoriam: Nine Elegiac Works for Horn, 1943–2004

A document submitted to the
Graduate School
of the University of Cincinnati
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

in the Division of Performance Studies
of the College-Conservatory of Music

by

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ABSTRACT

In Memoriam: Nine Elegiac Works for Horn, 1943–2004

September 2007 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the death of one of the twentieth century’s greatest hornists, Dennis Brain. It also marked the sixth anniversary of the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. The horrific events of 11 September stunned the nation; the death of Brain at the age of thirty-six in a car accident affected his family, music lovers, and musicians. Composers have memorialized both tragedies in elegies for horn. In fact, a wide variety of elegiac works composed during the latter half of the twentieth century feature horn.

This study investigates eight such memorial works for horn: Jeffrey Agrell’s September Elegy (2001), dedicated to the victims of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks; Hermann Baumann’s Elegia for Natural Horn (1984), dedicated to Francesco Raselli; Adrian Cruft’s Elegy for Horn and Strings (1967), dedicated to Dennis Brain; James Funkhouser’s In Memoriam (2004), dedicated to Elaine Crawford; Douglas Hill’s Elegy for Horn Alone (1998), dedicated to C. Norene Hill; Ryan Nowlin’s Elegy for Horn and Piano (2004), dedicated to Herbert Spencer; Francis Poulenc’s Elegie for Horn and Piano (1957), dedicated to Dennis Brain; and William Presser’s Elegy and Caprice (1997), dedicated to Marvin Howe. The author utilized score study, composer interviews, and musical analysis to study each work’s background, technical issues, and emotional impact. This study highlights similarities among memorial works for horn as they relate to each other and to two canonic works: the third movement of Brahms’s Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, Op. 40 (1865), which the composer wrote as a memorial to his mother, and Britten’s Serenade for Horn, Tenor and Strings (1943), which includes an “Elegy” and “Dirge” movement and has an overall theme of death. This study
also emphasizes the cathartic nature of elegies for composers, performers, and audiences as reflected in the stages of grief defined by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler in their book *On Grief and Grieving* (2005).
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been working on this document for several years, and many people have contributed to the completion of this project. First, I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Bruce McClung, who advised and diligently edited my writing for this document and my lecture-recital (18 October 2007). I would also like to thank Professors Randy Gardner and Alan Siebert, for serving as my other document committee members. My horn professors, including Mr. Gardner at CCM; Janine Gaboury at Michigan State University; David Elliott at the University of Kentucky; and Joanne Filkins of Lexington, Kentucky; have greatly influenced my horn playing, my love of music, and thus my enjoyment of life, and I thank them all profusely.

This paper has benefited from the words of the composers of these works. I would like to thank those who made themselves available for interviews: Jeffrey Agrell, Hermann Baumann, James Funkhouser, Douglas Hill, and Ryan Nowlin. I especially appreciated these composers opening up to me so I could understand the thoughts and feelings behind their pieces. I would also like to thank Randall Faust, who gave me invaluable information on the friendship between Marvin Howe and William Presser, who is now deceased. Kendell Betts deserves a thank you, as well, for getting me in touch with Hermann Baumann.

I would like to thank the publishers who have granted permission for the reprinting of examples from their pieces: Jomar Press, publishers of Jeffrey Agrell’s September Elegy; Boosey & Hawkes and Bote & Bock, publishers of Hermann Baumann’s Elegia; Boosey and Hawkes, publisher of Benjamin Britten’s Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings, Op. 31; Jocelyn Cruft, owner of the copyright for Adrian Cruft’s Elegy for Horn and Strings; Baskerville Press, publisher of James Funkhouser’s In Memoriam; Douglas Hill and Really Good Music, publishers of Douglas Hill’s Elegy for Horn Alone; McGinty Music, publisher of Ryan Nowlin’s Elegy for

My family members have been especially supportive throughout this process: my father, Jack Holbrook, has helped with editing and spent hours going through my document with me. My mother, Brenda Holbrook, has provided loving support and many days of babysitting, without which this paper would not be possible. My two children, Jack and Lucy, have given me the incentive to finish my degree and be the best example I can for them.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Dr. Michael Baker, Assistant Professor of Music Theory at the University of Kentucky. A Finale® expert, Michael created and inserted the musical examples in the document. He has edited many drafts of chapters, watched the kids, cleaned the house, cooked, encouraged, and done anything and everything he can to support the completion of my degree. Michael’s many professional accomplishments are a huge inspiration to me. I am eternally grateful.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

September 2007 marked the anniversary of two tragic events: the sixth anniversary of the September 2001 terrorist attack on the United States and the fiftieth anniversary of the death of one of the twentieth century’s greatest hornists, Dennis Brain. Although the devastating events of 11 September had a worldwide impact, and the death of Brain at the age of thirty-six in a car accident affected his family, musicians, and music lovers, composers have memorialized both tragedies in elegies for horn. In fact, a wide variety of elegiac works composed during the latter half of the twentieth century feature horn.

In this document, I examine eight twentieth-century elegies for horn. In doing so, I hope the reader attains not only an appreciation for the works of each of these composers, but also further insight into the friends, teachers, loved ones, or events eulogized in these works. The composers of the works in this study comprise Jeffrey Agrell, Hermann Baumann, Adrian Cruft, James Funkhouser, Douglas Hill, Ryan Nowlin, Francis Poulenc, and William Presser.

Malcolm Boyd defines an elegy as “a setting of a poem, or an instrumental piece, lamenting the loss of someone deceased.” The earliest musical elegies date back to the seventh-century medieval planctus. Vocal elegies from the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries represent one of two types: those commemorating patrons or those mourning the death of colleagues or mentors. Instrumental elegies date back to the seventeenth century to various pieces known as tombeaux for lute or harpsichord, by composers such as Johann Jakob Froberger

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and François Couperin. Nineteenth-century composers tended to write elegies to express their internal feelings about death in general rather than to memorialize a specific person: Mahler’s *Kindertotenlieder* and his *Das Lied von der Erde*, while clearly elegiac in quality, were not written in response to the death of a particular individual. In the twentieth century, many composers penned elegies for specific people, but did not name the works as such; for instance, Stravinsky did not title his late elegiac works for Aldous Huxley and John F. Kennedy as such.

This study highlights similarities among memorial works for horn as they relate to each other and to two canonic works: the third movement of Brahms’s Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, Op. 40 (1865), which the composer wrote as a memorial to his mother, and Britten’s *Serenade for Horn, Tenor and Strings* (1944), which includes an “Elegy” and “Dirge” movement and has an overall theme of death. I emphasize the cathartic nature of elegies for composers, performers, and audiences.

A wealth of information is available on composers Benjamin Britten and Francis Poulenc. Robin L. Dauer’s D.M.A. thesis, “Three Works for Voice and French Horn with Accompaniment,” provides a framework for evaluating the “Elegy” and “Dirge” movements of Britten’s *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* (1944). Dauer’s study discusses many musical components in these particular movements, such as Britten’s use of the descending half-step motive. Britten’s writings on Dennis Brain, such as his obituary in *Tempo*, also provide an important insight into the young hornist’s playing and work ethic, as well as the impact of his death on the composer.

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2Ibid.

3Ibid.


As for Francis Poulenc, a few sources focus some attention on the *Elegie for Horn and Piano*. Pamela Poulin’s Ph.D. dissertation, “Three Stylistic Traits in Poulenc’s Chamber Works for Wind Instruments,” provides a close analysis of the work’s form and harmonic language. Poulin points out the twelve-tone aggregate used at the opening of the piece as unusual for Poulenc.\(^6\) She also finds the form to be an exception of Poulenc’s typical penchant for ternary form. In fact, *Elegie for Horn and Piano* is the only through-composed chamber work included in her study. Mary Ann Stringer also discusses the *Elegie* in her D.M.A. thesis, “Diversity as Style in Poulenc’s Chamber Works with Piano.” She attributes those compositional traits that are unique in the *Elegie* to the programmatic impetus.\(^7\) Stringer discusses the possible explanations for each departure from Poulenc’s late style (for instance, the use of tone rows) in relation to the tragic death of Dennis Brain, to whom the work was dedicated.\(^8\)

More recent composers of elegies, such as Ryan Nowlin, receive little or no mention in scholarly writings. Some of these composers are themselves hornists of great repute, such as Hermann Baumann. The August 1998 issue of *The Horn Call* contains a brief biography of Baumann.\(^9\) This article provides some insight into the German hornist’s background, including his interest in the natural horn, but nothing specifically about his *Elegia for Natural Horn*.

Hornists Douglas Hill and Jeffrey Agrell are also well-known in the world of modern horn players.

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\(^6\) Pamela Poulin, “Three Stylistic Traits in Poulenc’s Chamber Works for Wind Instruments” (Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 1983), 86.


\(^8\) Ibid., 159.

Many of the works in this document are dedicated to the memory of specific people, and an examination of the lives and influence of those people was an important part of the research for this study. Dennis Brain is the subject of two of the elegies in this study as well as the first performer for Britten’s *Serenade*. Several articles and a book-length biography profile his life and career. Author Stephen Pettit, in *Dennis Brain: A Biography*, discusses the Britten *Serenade* as an important step in Brain’s collaborative career with composers. He mentions the Poulenc *Elegie* briefly at the end of the book, discussing its evocative qualities.\(^{10}\)

Ryan Nowlin memorializes hornist and pedagogue Herbert Spencer in his *Elegy for Horn and Piano* (2004). Bernice Schwartz penned *The Horn Call* obituary for Spencer.\(^ {11}\) Horn teacher Marvin C. Howe is the subject of William Presser’s *Elegy and Caprice for Horn and Piano* (1997) and an article in the May 1996 *Horn Call*.\(^ {12}\)

During the research for this document, I interviewed each of the living composers using a pre-determined set of questions. These interviews helped me to fill in informational gaps. In particular, as a means of generating additional information on the compositions, and in determining the subject of the elegies not given in the scores, this first-person research was indispensable. I have included transcripts of these interviews as this document’s appendices.

I have divided this study into four sections: Elegies for Dennis Brain (Poulenc and Cruft); Elegies for teachers or colleagues (Nowlin and Presser); Elegies for relatives (Funkhouser and Hill); and Elegies composed for natural horn (Agrell and Baumann).


I based the chapter on Dennis Brain upon the research for my doctoral lecture-recital, “Three Elegies for Dennis Brain,” which was presented on 18 October 2007. In the written version here, however, I was able to include more information on the composers, works, and subject that I had to omit from the lecture-recital because of time restrictions.

I relied on my own analysis of the music and interviews in my examination of the elegies for teachers and colleagues of the composers, including Ryan Nowlin’s *Elegy for Horn and Piano* (2004), dedicated to his Bowling Green University professor, Herbert A. Spencer; and William Presser’s *Elegy and Caprice for Horn and Piano* (1997), which was dedicated to Marvin C. Howe.

An interview with Jeffrey Agrell gave greater insight into the background of his *September Elegy* (2001). Interviews with James Funkhouser and Hermann Baumann were important to the research of this document as well. Finally, Douglas Hill graciously shared his thoughts on the *Elegy for Horn Alone* (1998), dedicated to his mother.

The third movement of Brahms’s Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, Op. 40 (1865) is based on a song the composer’s mother sang to him as a child and was composed soon after her death. This work, as well as Britten’s *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* (1944), had provided inspiration for several of the composers of memorial works for horn and, as a result, comparisons will be made.

In their book *On Grief and Grieving*, authors Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler discuss five stages of loss and how they relate to people experiencing grief. The authors identify these stages as denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The stages of

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14 Ibid., vii.
anger, depression, and acceptance are particularly important to the study of these memorial works, and I will be referring to Kübler-Ross and Kessler’s theory throughout the paper.

No scholarly documents focus specifically on elegies for horn and, as such, this study fills a void. It serves as a reference for hornists performing these compositions as well as makes a case for the performance of the elegy as a cathartic experience for both performers and audience members. We must all face grief and the pain of death in our lives, and as musicians we are given a special gift for expressing our emotions, either through our own compositions or those of others. I believe that the public performance of these works and a personal examination of them can lead to a powerful experience of artistic expression for the hornist and indeed be helpful as a step in the grieving process, whether the player is lamenting the loss of a loved one, a special teacher, or even coming to terms with the certainty of death itself.
Dennis Brain was born on 17 May 1921 to a horn-playing family. His father, Aubrey Brain; his uncle, Alfred Jr.; and his grandfather Alfred Sr. were all professional horn players. Brain focused his early musical studies, however, on the piano and later the organ. In 1936 he entered the Royal Academy of Music where he studied horn with his father, piano with Max Pirani, and organ with G. D. Cunningham. During World War II, Brain served in the Royal Air Force Central Band as principal horn and received acclaim both in Britain and America. After the War, he took the positions of principal horn for the Royal Philharmonic (which he retained until 1954) and for the Philharmonia Orchestra in London (which he held until his death in 1957). In the post-war period, Brain was the most sought-after hornist in the world for chamber music and as a soloist. He also founded a wind quintet, which performed at the 1957 Edinburgh Festival. Just after this performance, Brain was killed in a car accident.

Dennis Brain’s untimely demise at the age of thirty-six shocked his many admirers.

Benjamin Britten wrote of his death:

The tragic car accident of 1st September leaves a musical gap which can never be filled. It has robbed us of an artist with the unique combination of a superb technical command of his instrument, great musicianship, a lively and intelligent interest in music of all sorts, and a fine performing temperament, coupled with a charming personality. It has also robbed us of a man of rare generosity, simplicity, and charm.

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16Ibid.
17Ibid.
18Ibid.
Brain’s influence is still felt today through the important works that some of the greatest composers of his time composed for him, including Malcolm Arnold, Benjamin Britten, Paul Hindemith, and Gordon Jacob. Horn players owe much of our twentieth-century solo and chamber music literature to Brain. His many recordings of solo, chamber, and orchestral music provide a legacy of continuing inspiration for modern listeners. As Brain’s life positively affected the composers and musicians of his time, his death was a deeply felt tragedy.

On 31 August 1957, Dennis Brain played what was to become his last performance at the Edinburgh festival. The Saturday concert included a performance with the Wind Ensemble that bore his name and also as principal horn with the Philharmonia Orchestra.20 Brain left the festival with plans to drive overnight in order to spend the next day at home in London with his family. At 6:00 a.m. on Sunday, a witness saw his car take a bend too quickly, run off the road, overturn, and hit an elm tree. When an emergency team arrived, they found Brain’s dead body inside the demolished car. His horn lay smashed on the grass just a short distance from the accident.21

The news of the accident the next day stunned members of the Philharmonia Orchestra with whom Brain was scheduled to play principal for a recording session of Richard Strauss’s Capriccio with Wolfgang Sawallisch conducting. There was an uncomfortable silent moment as Alan Civil moved into the first horn chair and the rest of the section reshuffled to accommodate him.22 The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra dedicated their Monday evening concert of Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s Symphonie pathétique to Brain, and audience members were asked to withhold

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21Pettit, Dennis Brain, 157.
22Ibid., 158.
applause in his honor, which they did.\textsuperscript{23} That same Monday at the Edinburgh Festival, the Dellor Consort sang Thomas Tallis’s “Salvator Mundi” in Brain’s memory.\textsuperscript{24}

Perhaps that week’s most touching tribute also occurred at the Edinburgh Festival. Brain had been scheduled to perform Strauss’s Second Horn Concerto with Eugene Ormandy, but Franz Schubert’s \textit{Unfinished Symphony} was substituted instead. The audience again was asked not to applaud, and after the last note, twenty-five hundred audience members stood in silent tribute to the young hornist.\textsuperscript{25} Ormandy said of Brain: “[He] was a very great artist and a very great Englishman, whose loss will be felt not only in this country, but throughout the whole world. As a soloist, Dennis Brain had no peer.”\textsuperscript{26}

In their book \textit{On Grief and Grieving}, Kübler-Ross and Kessler discuss the difficulty of experiencing a sudden death:

Out of the blue our world changes when suddenly and without warning, we learn that our loved one is gone. How can this be?...They were here and now they are not. Death is hardest to comprehend without any forewarning. The news and loss are crushing. How can our world change so dramatically and without any warning? No preparation, no good-byes, just the loudest absence one could ever imagine...The sorrow of not saying good-bye hurts the most when we lose someone in the midst of a life. We wonder….What if they didn’t make that trip?\textsuperscript{27}

This chapter examines three works, one which Dennis Brain premiered and two pieces composed in his memory, in order to gain insight into Brain’s influence on these composers and his working relationship with them. Each of these works (or movements) is entitled “Elegy.” Britten composed the “Elegy” and “Dirge” movements of his \textit{Serenade for Tenor, Horn and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{24}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 159.
\item \textsuperscript{26}Eugene Ormandy, quoted in Rutland, 571.
\item \textsuperscript{27}Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 195–98.
\end{itemize}
Strings for Brain to premiere with Peter Pears. Poulenc’s Elegie for Horn and Piano premiered one year after Brain’s death and has since become a standard in the horn’s twentieth-century literature. Finally, Adrian Cruft’s Elegy for Horn and Strings, composed in 1967, remains a relatively unknown piece, but worthy of study and performance.

**Benjamin Britten’s Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings (1944)**

Britten chose the “Elegy” and “Dirge” movements for the emotional climax of his 1944 Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings. These movements are also of special retrospective interest considering Brain’s later misfortune. Britten also composed Canticle III: Still Falls the Rain (1954) for tenor, horn, and piano, which the composer dedicated to the memory of pianist Noel Mewton-Wood, and based on a tragic poem by Edith Sitwell. Brain, who had shared many recitals with Mewton-Wood, gave insightful performances of this work. According to Britten, Brain understood and conveyed the “dark, elegiac mood: the dark opening, slithering chromatic scales, and thundering low notes.”

Britten said of his experience with Brain that the young hornist had total respect for a composer’s ideas and offered suggestions only after diligent practice of challenging passages.

For the “Elegy,” the third movement in the Serenade, Britten set “The Sick Rose” by William Blake (1757–1827):

O Rose, thou art sick.  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night  
In the howling storm

\[28\text{Britten, “Dennis Brain,” 5–6.}\]
\[29\text{Ibid., 5.}\]
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.\(^{30}\)

The “rose” is a metaphor for life, which is destroyed by the “invisible worm” or death. Britten cast the poem as a free recitative, framed by the first and third sections for horn and strings, creating a ternary form. The “Elegy’s” main motive, a descending half-step, appears first in the horn part as G-sharp⁴ to G⁴ and then repeats on varying pitches.\(^{31}\) Britten repeats it again in the first two words of the vocal part, “O Rose,” again on the notes G-sharp⁴ and G⁴. The use of a descending half-step here recalls the descending chromatic tetrachord favored by Baroque composers for laments, such as the famous ground bass in “When I Am Laid in Earth” from Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*.

In his D.M.A. thesis, “Three Works for Voice and French Horn with Accompaniment,” Robin Dauer discusses Britten’s juxtaposition of the 12/8 meter of the strings to the horn’s 4/4 and refers to the resulting pulsing pattern as giving “a quality of inevitability to the approach of ‘the worm’ and its analogy, death.”\(^{32}\) Dauer also notes that the half-step motive is presented in something like a tone row, with each motive starting on a different note of the chromatic scale.\(^{33}\) The horn plays the climax for the first section of the work with a *pianissimo* entrance of the half-step motive on an F⁵, the earliest appearance of this note in the movement. This climax features one of the highest usable notes on the instrument, C⁶, for which Brain was particularly well-suited (see Example 2.1). In the seventieth birthday tribute to Brain, published in the October


\(^{31}\)Throughout this document, the author will use the pitch designation promulgated by the Acoustical Society of America in which middle C = C⁴.

\(^{32}\)Dauer, 45.

\(^{33}\)Ibid.
1991 issue, the editors of *The Horn Call* asked a group of distinguished horn players and teachers, including Philip Farkas, Louis Stout, and James Thatcher, to discuss the life, personality, and playing ability of Dennis Brain. One of them commented, “No one could make a better soft high entrance.”34 The movement concludes with the horn playing the G-sharp to G motive again, but now with the G4 as a stopped note, creating an ethereal timbre (see Example 2.2).


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The “Dirge” movement immediately follows the “Elegy” and begins with the unaccompanied voice singing a high G4 to A-flat4 to G4 to the text “This ae nighte, This ae nighte....” Britten now twists the chromatic idea from the horn part at the end of the “Elegy” into a neighboring motive, carried out by the vocalist. Britten resigns the horn player to an accompanimental role, repeating the same rhythmic pattern shown in Example 2.3. The composer based this fourth movement of the *Serenade* on the “Lyke-Wake Dirge,” by an anonymous fifteenth-century poet:

```
This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
– Every nighte and alle,
Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.

When thou from hence away art past,
– Every nighte and alle,
Sit thee down and put them on;
And Christ receive thy saule.

If hosen and shoon thou ne’er gav’st nane
– Every nighte and alle,
The whinny-muir thou com’st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.
```
If ever thou gav’st hos’n and shoon,
—Every nighte and alle,
Sit thee down and put them on;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If hos’n and shoon thou ne’er gav’st nane,
—Every nighte and alle,
The whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Whinny-muir when thou may’st pass,
—Every nighte and alle,
To Brig o’ Dread thou com’st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Brig o’ Dread when thou may’st pass,
—Every nighte and alle,
To Purgatory fire thou com’st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If ever thou gav’st meat or drink,
—Every nighte and alle,
The fire sall never make thee shrink;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If meat or drink thou ne’er gav’st nane,
Every night and alle,
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and fleet and candlelight,
And Christe receive thy saule.35

This poem is more repetitious than any other part of the work, and as a result Britten used the melody that he composed for the first stanza as a ground for the entire song.36 This poem provides a grim view of the afterlife, emphasizing the punishment of fire that waits for those who

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36Dauer, 46.
have sinned. Britten builds suspense in this repetitive movement not with the vocal melody, which repeats the same notes throughout, but with the instrumental fugue that begins soft and then builds in tension and dynamics as subsequent parts enter. It culminates with horn entrance in m. 31, which is marked *molto forte* (see Example 2.3). The key changes abruptly at this point from D minor to E minor in all parts except for the voice, which continues with the same notes from the beginning of the movement.\(^{37}\) The forcefulness of the “Dirge’s” climax contrasts with the introspective, macabre intensity of the “Elegy.”


Although Britten did not compose the *Serenade* in memory of Brain, one can not help but feel an eerie sense of foreboding when performing these two movements from the work that

\(^{37}\)Ibid., 47.
helped to propel Brain to stardom. Britten, in a moving obituary in the Winter issue of *Tempo*, recalled the last time he heard Brain perform at the Aldeburgh Festival:

What one remembers most clearly of that evening was…his playing…of the unfinished movement of Mozart’s fragmentary horn Concerto in E. The *tutti* started with its glorious richness. Delicate phrases followed with warm and intense counterpoint; brilliant passages for the violins, soothing oboe melodies. Then the solo entered—firm, heroic, and all seemed set for the best of all the wonderful Mozart horn concertos. And then suddenly in the middle of an intricate florid passage, superbly played, it stopped: silence. Dennis shrugged his shoulders and walked off the Jubilee Hall platform. That was the last time I ever heard him play, the last time I saw him. That Mozart fragment sticks in my mind as a symbol of Dennis’s own life. But it is not so easy for us to shrug our shoulders.38

**Francis Poulenc’s *Elegie for Horn and Piano* (1957)**

Francis Poulenc’s connection to Dennis Brain is not as well documented as that of Britten. However, the French composer likely met Brain through his friendship with Britten. He and Poulenc began their long association with a performance together on 6 January 1945 of Poulenc’s Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra.39 In March 1947, Poulenc performed at a Wigmore Hall concert where Brain noted that he played “very loudly, and then took all the applause.”40 None of the sources for this event document whether Brain actually met Poulenc at this concert. After several letters of invitation from Britten, Poulenc performed at Aldeburgh on 27 June 1952.41 Three years later on 16 January 1955, Poulenc and Britten performed the Concerto for Two Pianos again and arranged another trip for Poulenc to Aldeburgh for the 1956

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38 Britten, 6.


40 Pettitt, 98.

festival, where Poulenc performed as soloist in his *Aubade* for piano and orchestra. As Brain was in attendance at these Aldeburgh festivals, he may have first met Poulenc here. However, the only claim for a friendship between the two is the statement in Keith Daniel’s book *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style*. Daniel claims that Poulenc composed the *Elegie* as a “response to a friend and a performer whom he admired.” However, no direct reference to a friendship with Brain can be found in Poulenc’s published letters or in biographies of the composer, so it is not clear how close the two were, if at all.

Earlier in his life, Poulenc had lost a good friend, Pierre-Octave Ferroud, in a gruesome car accident in which he was beheaded. Poulenc, a Catholic, was greatly affected by this tragedy. He immediately set out on a pilgrimage to Rocamadour, a celebrated sanctuary of the Virgin Mary and artists’ commune in southwestern France. This proved to be a turning point in his spiritual life. Brain’s death in a car accident may have triggered for Poulenc the past feelings of loss and horror of losing a good friend. Kübler-Ross and Kessler discuss this phenomenon in *On Grief and Grieving*:

> You cannot grieve only one loss. You may have lost your beloved, but the grief brings into your awareness all the losses that have occurred in your life, past and present….What is left ungrieved remains stored in our body, heart, and soul. It can come out each time we experience loss anew.

Whatever the nature of their relationship, Poulenc felt compelled to compose the haunting *Elegie for Horn and Piano* in memory of Brain, and the piece represents a departure from his typical style. Poulenc was in attendance at the 1957 Edinburgh festival during the week

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42 Reed, 353–55.


45 Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 73.
after Brain’s death, and the memorial performances must have made an impression on him. He was moved by the tragic event to compose one of his finest chamber works. Poulenc began work on the *Elegie* in late September that year and after completing it, was said to have “wilted emotionally.”46 Poulenc intended the first performance of the *Elegie* to be broadcast on 1 January 1958 on the BBC,47 but Poulenc and hornist Neill Sanders did not premiere the work until six weeks later on 17 February.48

The *Elegie* begins with the horn alone, issuing haunting bell-tones, which create a twelve-tone row. This is the first of three twelve-tone rows throughout the *Elegie*, each stated monophonically (see Example 2.4, parts a., b., and c.). The rows are unrelated although the second and third begin with the same two pitches. In addition, they begin and end with intervals of a minor second. Poulenc does not treat these rows serially; instead, they are simply stated and then abandoned. Mellers believes that the twelve-tone rows stand for the Will of God;49 I maintain that they capture the tragic demise of a promising young musician whose life was cut short. These rows feature both minor seconds and major sevenths, the last row comprised of seconds, sevenths, and tritones. The result, according to Keith Daniel, is “one of (Poulenc’s) least pleasing works.”50 While the dissonant intervals are jarring, I assert that this departure from Poulenc’s style is meant not so much to entertain, but to express, and is quite effective in that capacity.

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46Schmidt, 420.
47Daniel, 127.
48Ibid.
49Mellers, 162.
50Ibid.

a. notes from mm. 1–8, horn part.

![Example 2.4a](image)

b. notes from mm. 18–24, piano part.

![Example 2.4b](image)

c. notes from mm. 180–88, horn part.

![Example 2.4c](image)

LIKE POULENC’S *CONCERTO FOR ORGAN*, THE ELEGIE IS IN A SINGLE MOVEMENT. IT FEATURES AN UNNERVING JUXTAPOSITION OF CALM AND INTENSE SECTIONS, PERHAPS ILLUSTRATING THE COMPLEX FEELINGS UPON THE LOSS OF A YOUNG PERSON, ESPECIALLY ONE IN THE PRIME OF HIS CAREER. THE WORK ALSO SUGGESTS A PROGRAM IN WHICH POULENC IS TRYING TO CONVEY THE ACTUAL CAR ACCIDENT, ACCORDING TO BRAIN’S BIOGRAPHER, STEPHEN PETTIT.\(^{51}\) I AGREE WITH HIM, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE RAUCOUS *AGITATO MOLTO* SECTION THAT IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWS THE OPENING BELL-TONES (SEE EXAMPLE 2.5). THE FAST TEMPO, LOUD VOLUME, AND HEAVY ACCENTS PROVIDE A SENSE OF SPEED AND BEING ON THE EDGE OF CONTROL. THE COMPOSER SEPARATES TWO OF THESE AGITATO STATEMENTS WITH A CALM SECTION IN THE

\(^{51}\)Pettitt, 164.
piano, and both end with a wild glissando in the horn. Another calm section follows, which is played pianissimo except for one subito forte outcry in the middle.

Example 2.5. Poulenc, *Elegie for Horn and Piano*, mm. 9–17, horn part (transposed for horn in F).

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The lyrical section following these opening statements presents less of the pictorial aspects of the accident and moves on to the introspective feelings of memory and depression which often accompany grief. Kübler-Ross and Kessler draw a connection between grief and depression:

The loss of a loved one is a very depressing situation, and depression is a normal and appropriate response....When a loss fully settles in your soul, the realization that your loved one...is not coming back is understandably depressing....A mourner should be allowed to experience his sorrow.52

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52Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 21–24.
The piano begins a lyrical melody, which is taken up by the horn three measures later (see Example 2.6). The pianissimo entrance on a D5 (the horn’s A5) challenges many hornists, but as established previously, could have been beautifully played by Brain himself. This song-like section continues until a strong, forceful reminder of the car accident returns. Again, the heavy accents, repeated notes, and fortissimo remind us of the violence of this tragedy. Perhaps this represents the flaring up of anger that happens often, and many times unexpectedly, after the loss of a friend or loved one. Kübler-Ross and Kessler write: “In the process of grief and grieving you will have many subsequent visits with anger in its many forms.”53 They further maintain:

We can go from feeling okay to feeling devastated in a minute without warning. We can have mood swings that are hard for anyone around us to comprehend….One minute we are okay. The next we’re in tears. This is how grief works. We can touch the pain directly for only so long until we have to back away….If we did not go back and forth emotionally, we could never have the strength to find peace in our loss.54

Example 2.6. Poulenc, Elegie for Horn and Piano, mm. 51–60, horn part (transposed for horn in F).

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ELEGIE FOR HORN AND PIANO
(In Memory of Dennis Brain)
Music by Francis Poulenc
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53 Ibid., 12.
54 Ibid., 34.
Poulenc continues to juxtapose the beautiful and melancholy with the angry and violent for the remainder of the work. At times the loud and *cuivre*, or brassy, horn part recalls the sound of ringing funeral bells. Poulenc contrasts this with a lyrical melody in the piano. The serenity does not hold for long, as it is interrupted by the use of “wrong-note” harmony, common to Poulenc’s other works. Stopped playing in the horn part is mellow, again taking up an aria-like relationship between the horn and piano. The work ends on the statement of a third tone row, this time beginning full and rich in the horn’s upper register and with a quick *decrescendo* to the final note of the row, which fades into oblivion.

Not only are many of the *Elegie*’s programmatic elements readily apparent to the informed listener, they are also unusual in Poulenc’s oeuvre. The vast majority of Poulenc’s instrumental works were so-called “absolute music,” devoid of extra-musical associations. Even other elegies, like Poulenc’s two-piano elegy for Marie-Blanche de Polignac from 1959, are quite different from this work, remaining calm, melancholy, and tonally stable throughout. The immense tragedy and sense of violence of a life unfinished can clearly be heard in this work, one of the greatest in the horn literature.

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55Daniel, 88–90.
56Mellers, 162.
57Daniel, 127.
Adrian Cruft’s Elegy for Horn and Strings (1967)

Adrian Cruft dedicated his Elegy to Brain’s memory. The composer explains his relationship with the hornist in a prefatory note to the score:

Although we were both second sons born in 1921, with oboe-playing elder brothers and fathers who were fellow principals in the earliest days of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, I did not get to know Dennis Brain until the post-war years. By then he had become an international soloist and chamber-music player, with an increasing interest in conducting, as well as being principal horn of the Philharmonia Orchestra. His sudden death in an accident on September 1, 1957, whilst driving home from Philharmonia concerts at the Edinburgh Festival, was a great loss to the whole world of music, and to his friends and colleagues in particular because of the modest charm of his personality. This short piece, written ten years later, is dedicated to his memory.58

Cruft’s most influential early musical experience was as a chorister at Westminster Abbey in the early 1930s.59 This was a time in which Tudor music, such as that of William Byrd, Thomas Tallis, and John Taverner, was extremely popular in British choirs, and this early experience greatly affected Cruft’s musical style. He studied composition at the Royal College (1938–40 and 1946–47, the intervening years being spent in war service) with Gordon Jacob and Edmund Rubbra, the latter of whom had a profound influence on his music.60 It was also at this time when he studied double bass with his father, Eugene Cruft, the leading British bassist of his generation.

Cruft’s style, in general, can be described as heavily reliant upon counterpoint61 and largely diatonic.62 His melodies typically move stepwise, with intervals of a major or minor

60Ibid.
61Ibid., 120.
The majority of his compositions are sacred choral works, including four cantatas, settings of the canticles, and many anthems and carols. Cruft also composed works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, and children and amateur groups. Although he expressed an interest in doing so, he never composed an opera. He also avoided composing a large-scale symphony or string quartet. As a result, Cruft remains relatively obscure outside of church and choral music circles.

Niall O’Laughlin discusses Cruft’s *Elegy for Horn and String Orchestra* in a *Musical Times* review of some new works for brass:

The yearning appoggiaturas, the slow, unruffled tempo, the great use of the minor 2nd, and the harsh, sometimes bitonal harmony give the work its distinctive character. Not by any means a virtuoso piece, it demands great control and flexibility from the horn player.

An examination of this work shows the influence of Britten’s *Serenade*. The most obvious parallel is the scoring for string orchestra with horn. Also, the half-step theme that dominates Cruft’s work recalls the *Serenade*’s “Elegy” and “Dirge” movements.

Cruft cast his *Elegy* in ternary form, and in the outer sections, he simply states the half-step theme, first in the strings and then in the horn, both ascending and descending (the horn part from the start of each “A” section is given in Example 2.7). The “B” section relies on this same chromatic motion to create a more compelling melody than the “A” section, sometimes displacing the chromatic melody by a ninth instead of a minor second (see Example 2.8). The duple-triplet rhythm of this motive propels this section forward.

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63 Swanston, 120.


65 Rubbra, 822.

Example 2.7. Cruft, *Elegy for Horn and Strings*, mm. 8–9 and mm. 91–92, horn part.

mm. 8–9:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{mm. 91–92:}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ELEGY FOR HORN AND STRINGS}
\text{Copyright © 1967}
\text{Permission granted by Jocelyn Cruft}
\end{array}
\]


\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ELEGY FOR HORN AND STRINGS}
\text{Copyright © 1967}
\text{Permission granted by Jocelyn Cruft}
\end{array}
\]

Cruft made another intertextual reference to Britten’s *Serenade* with his stopped notes in the “B” section. At first, the stopped and open sections are separated by a measure of rest, but eventually they change to a quickly moving triplet rhythm of open to stopped playing (see Example 2.9). This clearly recalls the end of the *Serenade*’s “Elegy” movement. The climax of Cruft’s *Elegy* occurs in this section, with the dynamics in horn and accompaniment rising to
fortissimo and of the horn reaching its highest point in this work, an E5, a note well within Brain’s range.

Example 2.9. Cruft, *Elegy for Horn and Strings*, mm. 35–49, horn part.

The remainder of the work shows Poulenc’s influence. At m. 78, the hornist is asked to play *cuivre* in the high register, which is followed by a Grand Pause (see Example 2.10). There is certainly a parallel with this moment to that after the *glissandos* in the *agitato* section at the opening of Poulenc’s *Elegie* (see Example 2.5). Cruft composed the lowest notes of the work for horn near the end of the “B” section, a D2 which leaps up a tritone to an A-flat2. The “A” section returns in m. 91 exactly as it was heard in m. 8. Cruft ended the piece soft and subdued,
nearly stagnant, except for a recollection of the melodic duplet-triplet theme from the “B” section.

Example 2.10. Cruft, *Elegy for Horn and Strings*, mm. 77–78, horn part.

Cruft’s *Elegy*, while certainly solemn and subdued, perhaps reflects the quiet acceptance of the loss of a friend ten years later. The character of this work contrasts with the sometimes angry and dissonant character of Poulenc’s *Elegie*, which was composed just months after Brain’s death. This contrast parallels the classification by Kübler-Ross and Kessler of anger as the second stage of grief and acceptance as the last.\(^67\) Although Cruft’s *Elegy* is not a virtuosic work, I do believe it has a place in the repertoire of the professional hornist. It would be effective to perform Cruft’s *Elegy* in memory of another great hornist or teacher who passes away, as it would take a limited amount of time and players to put the work together and could be both timely and appropriate.

In conclusion, Dennis Brain was a major influence on twentieth-century composers, both as a horn player and tragic musical figure. Benjamin Britten, Britain’s greatest composer of that century, composed two works for the exceptional young hornist: the *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* (1943) and *Canticle III: Still Falls the Rain* (1954). After Brain’s tragic death,

\(^{67}\) Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 7.
Francis Poulenc, another renowned mid twentieth-century composer, composed the *Elegie for Horn and Piano* (1957), a standard in the modern horn literature. Finally, Brain’s colleague Adrian Cruft composed his *Elegy for Horn and Strings* (1967) as a tribute to the great hornist. Dennis Brain inspired these composers through the exceptional qualities of his playing, but also through the tragedy of his death at a young age. He continues to fire the imaginations of young hornists today who listen to his recordings and perform those works dedicated to him.
CHAPTER 3
ELEGIES FOR TEACHERS AND COLLEAGUES

Composers have traditionally penned memorial works for former teachers and colleagues. This distinct tradition dates back to as early as the fourteenth century and has continued into modern times, for example, Josquin des Prez’s *Nymphes des bois* for Johannes Ockeghem (ca. 1497), William Byrd’s *Ye sacred muses* for Thomas Tallis (ca. 1590), Henry Purcell’s *What hope for us remains* for Matthew Locke (1677), 68 and David Diamond’s *Elegy in Memory of Maurice Ravel* (1938). 69 In many cases, these dedicatees have exposed the composers not only to the craft of their instrument or that of composition, but to the greater love of music in general. In this chapter, I will discuss Ryan Nowlin’s *Elegy for Horn and Piano* (2004) and William Presser’s *Elegy and Caprice for Horn and Piano* (1997), the former dedicated to a past teacher and the latter to a colleague.

**Ryan Nowlin’s *Elegy for Horn and Piano* for Herbert A. Spencer (2004)**

Ryan Nowlin composed his *Elegy for Horn and Piano* for his former teacher, Herbert A. Spencer, at Bowling Green State University. Spencer had studied at the Eastman School of Music with Verne Reynolds and Milan Yancich. He performed with the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra, the Eastman Wind Ensemble, the Buffalo Philharmonic, and the Rochester Philharmonic and later had played solo horn in the United States Coast Guard Band. 70 He was

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68 Boyd.


appointed to the Bowling Green State University faculty in 1971. During his lifetime, many composers, including Richard Cioffari, Thom Ritter George, Jan Segers, Marilyn Shrude, Jan Van Der Roost, and Dana Wilson, composed works for Spencer.\textsuperscript{71}

At the end of his life, when Spencer was in an assisted living facility due to his poor health, his students gathered in his honor. Former student Bernice Schwartz recalls that day:

On June 3 [2000], forty BGSU alumni, students, and colleagues assembled in Bowling Green to pay tribute to Herb Spencer. Students traveled from both coasts to honor their teacher and mentor. After three hours of rehearsal, the group traveled to the Heartland of Browning Center to perform for Herb and other residents. With Herb centered in the middle of the room, students formed a large semi-circle and fought back tears in an effort to perform beautiful music from the heart—something they had all learned from this master of the horn. Several pieces were arranged especially for this concert including compositions by students and colleagues. In the evening, the hornists presented a two-hour concert at Bowling Green State University in Herb’s honor.\textsuperscript{72}

Herbert Spencer was an inspirational teacher whose life meant a great deal to his many students, including Ryan Nowlin who recalls: “He was a big man with such a big heart. He took a chance on me. He was really a special teacher and not someone that you take for granted.”\textsuperscript{73}

In an interview, Nowlin discussed his inspiration for the \textit{Elegy}:

Right after he [Spencer] died, I sketched out a melody which is the main melody played by the horn player once and the off-stage horn (which is his [Spencer’s] voice). It took a while for me to be brave enough to write the elegy. I wrote this piece for his widow—it was several years after he died. It was October, November (2004) and I pulled out one of the sketches that I had written three years prior. I knew that I wanted emptiness, and I wanted to have something that was real that his wife could connect with.\textsuperscript{74}

Nowlin begins the work with the marking “empty” in the piano part. Starting in m. 5, the piano plays a four-note pattern (C4, D-flat4, B-flat3, C4), which recurs throughout the piece (Example 3.1). The interval of an open fifth serves as a structural element for the work. The

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., 27.

\textsuperscript{73}Ryan Nowlin, interview by author, 11 November 2008.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid.
horn begins with a leap of a fifth in m. 9 (Example 3.2). Nowlin says the following of these two themes: “The open pure fifths are there a lot. The main accompaniment pattern, that little four-note motive is just to be very empty.”75 The performer may regard this open fifth as a hollow musical element: a triad missing its third, representing the emptiness felt through loss. Kübler-Ross and Kessler write: “Everyone experiences many losses throughout life, but the death of a loved one is unmatched for its emptiness and profound sadness.”76

Example 3.1. Nowlin, Elegy for Horn and Piano, m. 5.

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75Ibid.

76Kübler-Ross, 29.
Example 3.2. Nowlin, *Elegy for Horn and Piano*, m. 9, horn part.

The four-note motive shown in Example 3.1 appears in the horn at m. 61 and leads into the powerful climax of the work in m. 66, in which the horn reaches the highest note of the work, its high C (F5 in concert pitch), and the loudest dynamic marking, fff (Example 3.3). For this section, where “the horn blows his top,” Nowlin had a very specific event from Spencer’s life in mind:

There was one time when he fell in the shower. His wife was there and she wasn’t able to lift him and his muscles wouldn’t let him get up because of the Lou Gehrig’s Disease. That terror of him falling and not being able to help himself: this represented the beginning of the end to her.78

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77Nowlin.

78Ibid.

The composer follows this section with an off-stage horn part from mm. 74–83, which is to be performed by an anonymous horn player and represents Spencer’s reassuring spirit. It plays an echo of the horn’s opening melody from m. 9, again beginning with the open fifth sonority (the form of this work is through-composed, but with this thematic recollection). Spencer’s successor at Bowling Green State University, Andrew Peletier, premiered this work at the 2005 Horn Symposium in Alabama. As intended, the anonymously performed off-stage part evoked poignant memories of the missing teacher and friend. Herb Spencer’s widow was in attendance, and there was a long, reflective pause after the final notes faded.

Nowlin describes this elegy as a departure from his typical compositions: “I primarily write band music, anything from beginning band through higher grade stuff. I do songs, church

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79Ibid.
80Ibid.
music. This was my first solo work. *It was just one of those things that had to be written.*”

This last statement emphasizes the cathartic act of composing an elegy. Not only was Nowlin influenced by his teacher’s life, illness, and death, but he also endeavored to write a work that Spencer would have appreciated: “I think this is a piece that if he were alive and he came across it that he would like to play. He liked that ‘slurpy stuff,’ [as] he called it.”

William Presser’s *Elegy and Caprice for Horn and Piano* for Marvin C. Howe (1997)

William Presser, a composer, violinist, and violist from Michigan, enjoyed a long career playing with the Rochester Philharmonic and teaching at Mississippi Southern College (now the University of Mississippi) and at the National Music Camp in Interlochen, Michigan, where he and his family had a summer home.

William Presser composed his *Elegy and Caprice for Horn and Piano* in memory of Marvin C. Howe and dedicated it to Randall Faust, one of Howe’s best friends and supporters. In his 1996 *Horn Call* article, “Marvin C. Howe (1918–1994), Singer of Smooth Melodies,” Faust describes the man who was his teacher and friend. Howe began his impressive career in 1939 as the first person to earn a baccalaureate degree in horn from Oberlin Conservatory. He spent the years 1948–1953 teaching at the University of Illinois, an important school then for the study and performance of new music. After attaining his doctorate from the University of Iowa in 1966, Howe taught at Eastern Michigan University (1966–1979) during the school year and at

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81Ibid.

82Ibid.


85Ibid., 28.

His supervising professor at the University of Iowa, Paul Anderson, had this to say about Howe:

> The main thing I remember about Marvin is his all-consuming love of the horn and of horn playing. I have known no other person so completely committed to the horn. I therefore thought that he had a purity of purpose that few others could equal. For this reason, it was always a joy to talk to him and be associated with him.  

Howe was also an active member in the International Horn Society, performing and/or presenting clinics at workshops in Provo, Utah (1987) and Potsdam, New York (1988). He was honored with the Society’s prestigious Punto Award in 1990 and was elected to Honorary Membership in 1994. Several composers penned works for Howe to perform including Ellis Kohs’s *Night Watch*, Eugene Weigel’s *Maine Sketches* (1952), and Presser’s Sonatina for Horn and Piano (1978).  

In an e-mail to the author, Faust discussed the friendship between Howe and Presser:

> The Pressers and the Howes were very good friends and neighbors: they had cabins near each other on Green Lake in Interlochen. Bill Presser would be walking down the path past the Howe cabin and Marvin would play an excerpt from one of Bill’s pieces—sometimes with his own little humorous twist or variation. Bill would stop by and inquire, “Who wrote that piece?” To which Marvin would respond with another passage—with another variation.

Presser’s *Elegy and Caprice for Horn and Piano* reflects the special friendship (and sense of humor) that these two musicians shared. In the *Elegy*, Presser makes use of the half-diminished seventh chord throughout (Example 3.4). He continues the use of this sonority in the piano part. At the end of the movement, a startling deceptive cadence occurs in the piano,
accompanying a stopped horn passage (Example 3.5). Here, the piano moves through the VI–VII progression in e minor to a I chord (E-flat major), then repeats the same VI and VII, ending on the expected e-minor chord. This deceptive cadence may symbolize the feelings of denial and then acceptance that comes after the death of a friend. Kübler-Ross and Kessler tell us that denial is the first stage of grief and as such:

[It] helps us to survive the loss….It is nature’s way of letting in only as much as we can handle….As you accept the reality of the loss...you are becoming stronger, and the denial is beginning to fade. But as you proceed, all the feelings you were denying begin to surface.91


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91Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 10–11.
Presser’s *Caprice* is in an energetic 6/8 meter with a tempo of dotted quarter = 80. The descending scale figure that opens the movement (Example 3.6) recurs several times. Also near the beginning of the work, Presser quotes the chorus of the song “Sweet Violets” (Example 3.7). According to Faust, Howe’s biographer, this piece referred to the hornist’s love of gardening.\(^92\) Parts of this song, particularly the first four notes, appear throughout the movement as well, including the ending. There is also a small fugue based on “Old McDonald Had a Farm,” another reference to Howe’s green thumb.\(^93\) Finally, the composer employs an interesting combination of techniques beginning in m. 70 (Example 3.8). He denotes flutter tonguing and stopped techniques on the same notes, which creates an angry and unusual timbre, perhaps signifying the feelings of anger that flair up during the grieving process. By placing these harsh

\(^92\) Faust, e-mail to author, 1 July 2009.

\(^93\) Ibid.
timbres within this more boisterous, light-hearted movement, Presser may have illustrated the unpredictability of feelings he encountered upon the loss of a colleague and friend.


These two works demonstrate an important connection between the composer and the hornist being memorialized. A horn professor, through hours of hard work and attention, has a profound influence on his or her student, and this is evident in Ryan Nowlin’s *Elegy* for Professor Herbert Spencer. The loss of a musical colleague can be an equally strong influence, as when William Presser was moved to compose his *Elegy and Caprice* in memory of Marvin C. Howe. This relationship is reminiscent of that mentioned earlier in this paper of that between Dennis Brain and his colleague Adrian Cruft, who composed an elegy in his memory. The act of composing, as explained by Nowlin, can be a cathartic experience for the composer, as well as for the performer and audience, and an important step in the healing process. In *On Grief and Grieving*, the authors discuss the importance of emotional release:

> The worst thing you can do is to stop short of really letting it out. Uncried tears have a way of filling the well of sadness even more deeply....Unexpressed tears do not go away; their sadness resides in our bodies and souls....[Tears] are an outward expression of inner pain.94

Finally, these elegies showcase the memorialized horn player’s abilities and musical preferences. Both Marvin C. Howe and Herbert Spencer were fond of simple, tonal melodies,

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94Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 43–45.
and the composers utilized melodies that would surely have been not only enjoyed, but played beautifully by these hornists. This is similar to Poulenc’s use of the soft, high entrance that would have been effortlessly achieved by his memorialized hornist, Dennis Brain.
CHAPTER 4

ELEGIES FOR RELATIVES

Composers are often compelled to create an elegy in memory of a relative soon after his or her death. Perhaps no death is as deeply affecting as that of a mother. The slow movement of Brahms’s Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, which he composed soon after his mother’s death, features a haunting melody that his mother sang to the composer in his youth.95 In this chapter, I will discuss James Funkhouser’s *In Memoriam* (2004), composed in memory of his mother-in-law, and Douglas Hill’s *Elegy for Horn Alone* (1998), dedicated to the memory of his mother. Both Hill and Funkhouser expressed a strong compulsion to create these works, as well as an awareness of the Brahms Trio’s connection to his mother, and the result is two deeply sad and introspective pieces.

James Funkhouser’s *In Memoriam* for Elaine Crawford (2004)

James Funkhouser played horn in the Kansas City Philharmonic from 1961–1971 and with the Kansas City Symphony from 1982–2007. He is still an active teacher and composer in the Kansas City area, where he has lived since 1960. He composed *In Memoriam* in 2004 following the death of his mother-in-law, Elaine Crawford, and performed it with his wife playing piano at the memorial service. The work later became the second movement of his *Sonata for Piano and Horn*.96 Funkhouser explains: “The melody came two days after she died. I got that down and then worked in the accompaniment as I went along. I was working on a horn

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96James Funkhouser, interview by author, 13 March 2009.
sonata at the time and this became the second movement. This movement gave me the inspiration to finish the sonata.\textsuperscript{97}

Funkhouser’s \textit{In Memoriam} is a brief work, only thirty-three measures long (Example 4.1) The horn has two very long phrases—ten measures and then nine measures, and the piano finishes the piece. The horn melody moves mostly by stepwise intervals. The piano part, on the other hand, has a very active walking bass, which includes many intervallic leaps.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
Example 4.1. Funkhouser, *In Memoriam*, complete score.
Example 4.1, continued.
This work is in the key of D-flat major (the horn’s A-flat), but the chords do not represent common-practice harmonic progressions. Rather, this piece seems more an expression of polytonality. Important chords seem to highlight points of arrival in the work. For example, the A-flat dominant seventh chord near the end of the first phrase, in m. 10, which is V7, and the D-flat chords at the climax of the work in m. 16 and at the end of that phrase in m. 19, serve as an affirmation of the tonic key.
Funkhouser includes some unexpected chords in *In Memoriam*. In m. 18 (the penultimate measure in the horn part), the pianist plays a D-major chord, over which the hornist plays a concert G-flat4 followed by an A-flat3. As mentioned previously, this harmony is resolved by m. 19. The pianist takes over for the last fourteen measures of this short work and seems to modulate to A-flat major by m. 29. The pianist ends the work on an A-flat chord in second inversion.

When asked about how this work responds to his feelings of grief, Mr. Funkhouser replied: “The melodic line is part of the sustainability of grief. I wanted to create something that was sad but beautiful.” The long, seemingly interminable melodies perhaps represent the “sustainability of grief” mentioned by the composer, and the sad and beautiful work his bittersweet feelings upon the loss of his mother-in-law.

**Douglas Hill’s *Elegy for Horn Alone* for C. Norene Hill (1998)**

Douglas Hill composed his *Elegy for Horn Alone* (1998) after the death of his mother, C. Norene Hill. Like Funkhouser, he chose to compose an introspective work that eventually led to his *Elegy for Violin and Horn* (1998), a reference to the scoring of the influential Brahms Horn Trio.

Hill has been Professor of Music-Horn at the University of Wisconsin-Madison since 1974. In addition to an active performance and teaching career, he has written several books, more than thirty articles, many compositions and pedagogical etude books for horn, as well as having served as President of the International Horn Society.99

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98Ibid.

Hill gives the following prefatory note to this work:

_Elegy for Horn Alone_ was composed in the early summer after my mother died. The disjunct and wavering melodies, as well as the sudden silences were the natural results of my meditative improvisations. Later in the summer this music expanded into a duet with violin which was premiered at a concert on February 5, 1999, one year to the day after my mother had died. In both versions the flow of melodic content remains the same: rising and falling, searching without resolution.\(^{100}\)

This brief and haunting work contains several elements that highlight the composer’s grief. Hill repeats the opening measure (Example 4.2) five times throughout the work, always on the same pitches. The large skips between the written A₄, D₄, and B-flat₄ foreshadow the disjointed intervals to come. This is the same interval, the hollow perfect fifth, which represented emptiness in Nowlin’s elegy. Also, the descending half-step of the B flat₄ to A₄ is an important interval in this work, as it was to the elegies by Britten, Poulenc, and Cruft.

Example 4.2. Hill, _Elegy for Horn Alone_, m. 1.

\[\text{Lamentfully}\]

\[\text{mp}\]

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\(^{100}\)Douglas Hill, _Elegy for Horn Alone_ (Eau Claire, Wisc.: Really Good Music, 1998), title page.
The silences that Hill mentioned in his program notes appear throughout the piece. They each last a full measure, and the composer precedes each one with *decrescendos*, such as the one in m. 14 (Example 4.4).


Hill writes instructions in the music to guide the emotional affect of the performance. Above m. 1, he writes “Lamentfully;” in m. 26, he notes “Heartfelt;” and his third such marking is above m. 37: “Agitated.” And finally, in m. 38, Hill indicates, “Lamentfully” again. Certainly these are universal emotions following the loss of a loved one, and the abrupt changes between
them signal an important aspect of this work, similar to Poulenc’s sudden changes of mood in his


> The stages [of grief] are responses to feelings that can last for minutes or hours as we flip
> in and out of one and then another. We do not enter and leave each individual stage in a
> linear fashion. We may feel one, then another, and then back again to the first one.\(^{101}\)

The “Agitated” section aligns with the stage of anger discussed in the book: “Anger is a

necessary stage of the healing process….The more you truly feel it, the more it will begin to
dissipate and the more you will heal.”\(^{102}\) The authors further advise: “Do not bottle up anger
inside. Instead explore it. The anger is just another indication of the intensity of your love.”\(^{103}\)

The section Hill names “Lamentfully” invokes the stage of depression:

> This depression is not a sign of mental illness. It is the appropriate response to a great
> loss. We withdraw from life, left in a fog of intense sadness….But in grief, depression is
> a way for nature to keep us protected by shutting down the nervous system so that we can
> adapt to something we feel we cannot handle….As difficult as it is to endure, depression
> has elements that can be helpful in grief. It slows us down and allows us to take stock of
> the loss….It takes us to a deeper place in our soul that we would not normally explore.\(^{104}\)

Hill recalls that the main technique he drew upon when composing the _Elegy for Horn Alone_ was stream-of-consciousness: “Looking at the sketches, there wasn’t an awful lot of

change, scratching out. The melodic line just started—I think I just kind of conceived of it—and
then the rest of it sort of flowed out from there.”\(^{105}\) He refers to the \(\frac{3}{4}\) stopped _glissando_ as

“sighing” or “crying.” Hill remembers that this _glissando_, along with the empty measure that

\(^{101}\)Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 18.

\(^{102}\)Ibid., 12.

\(^{103}\)Ibid., 16.

\(^{104}\)Ibid., 21–24.

follows, was “definitely a response to feelings of loss, grief, emptiness.”\textsuperscript{106} The composer halted the melody at the beginning and gave it a longer realization during the “Heartfelt” section, although it still breaks off before completion.

Hill describes this work as a departure from his typical style. His other compositions from the 1990s, such as \textit{Song Suite in a Jazz Style} (1993), \textit{To the Winter Sun for Alphorn} (1994), \textit{A Place for Hawks} (1994–95), and \textit{Americana Variations for Four Horns} (1998), were influenced by jazz, Native American music, and folk music. He also favored composing with words or a text, and using programmatic concepts. His next work after \textit{Elegy for Horn Alone}, \textit{Elegy for Violin and Horn} (1998), grew out of the previous work. “The duet came about by the end of the summer. I was working on the Brahms Trio [Op. 40]. The third movement is, of course, the elegy to his mother, and so the violin just came back into my head, and I wrote a continuation of the piece.”\textsuperscript{107} Hill concludes that this work was, for him, a “complete growing process.”\textsuperscript{108}

Both Hill and Funkhouser composed their elegies in memory of a mother or mother-in-law. Our mothers give us life and play a critical role in our formative years. When a composer loses his mother (or even a mother-in-law), the impact frequently compels him to create, as it did for these two composers and for Johannes Brahms. Each composer showed his grief in a different way. Hill composed quickly shifting moods, delineated with measures of silence. Funkhouser, on the other hand, created a long, winding melody that represented both the sadness and beauty of his deceased mother-in-law.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108}Ibid.
Perhaps the most important musical connections both these works hold is their association with Brahms’s Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, Op. 40. Brahms composed the third movement as a memorial to his recently deceased mother, and the result is one of the most deeply emotional moments in the horn literature. All three works feature a loud climax on a high note (for the Brahms, the high note is a written C6, for horn in E-flat) and then quickly *decrescendo* and end softly. Both Funkhouser and Hill were certainly aware of the Brahms’s piece when composing their own memorial works, and it deeply influenced their compositions.
CHAPTER 5

ELEGIES COMPOSED FOR NATURAL HORN

The natural horn, or “hand horn,” is the historical predecessor to the modern valve horn. The notes available to this instrument are those of the harmonic series, which are performed with the right hand resting in an open position in the bell, and those notes not in the harmonic series are produced by altering the hand position to varying degrees, usually by closing the bell off, or “stopping.” Before the right-hand options were discovered around 1750, only those notes in the harmonic series were available to the horn player.

Because of the resurgence in popularity of Baroque music in the 1950s, horn players have become increasingly interested in performing works on the natural horn. Since then, hornists have the option of performing eighteenth-century music on the natural horn as well as some works from the nineteenth century such as Brahms’s Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, Op. 40. Towards the end of the twentieth century, however, composers began producing new works for this instrument. The variety of timbres available to the natural horn has inspired many composers, including the composers of the next two works in this study.

Jeffrey Agrell’s September Elegy for Natural Horn in E-flat and Piano (2001)

The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 marked for the United States the darkest day to date since Pearl Harbor. Most Americans can easily recall where they were, what they were doing, and how they felt on that day. The magnitude of this event influenced many artistic works, such as John Adam’s Pulitzer Prize-winning On the Transmigration of Souls (2002). In Iowa, a group of twenty-one artists, writers, and musicians created works as part of “Beyond 9-
11: The Art of Renewal in Iowa.” Visual artists participating in this project included Laurie Elizabeth Talbot Hall, Janet Jart Heinicke, Elise Kendrot, Jennifer S. Otis, Nancy L. Purington, Wendy S. Rolfe, Julie Russell-Steuart, Crit Streed, Faye Tambrino, Daniel Weiss, and Margaret Whiting. The writers submitting works were Betsy Snow Hickok, Rustin Larson, Barbara Lau, Neil Nakadate, James Calvin Schaap, Ann Struthers, Mary Swander, and Marianne Taylor. Composers Renae Angeroth and Jeffrey Agrell both submitted musical compositions.110

Agrell composed the *September Elegy for Natural Horn in E-flat and Piano* for the Beyond 9-11 project. He writes about his musical response:

> It was a way, an artistic way, of expressing my sorrow and other people’s sorrow, and grief at these events that is very difficult to express any other way. I think everybody has the same feelings; I’m no different than anyone else. But I had at that point the means to express it in a way that could help people deal with those feelings and find a kind of a closure and that’s what art is supposed to do. It’s supposed to take the raw emotions and send them to a higher plane, where you attain some edification, satisfaction, and transformation of those into something positive and higher.111

Since 2000, Agrell has been the horn professor at the University of Iowa and enjoys composing and performing on natural horn. He is also a jazz guitar player.112 This diverse musical background provides a strong influence for this work, as Agrell has scored it for natural horn and employs improvisation, a technique frequently used by jazz musicians.

There are four numbered sections of *September Elegy*. Agrell composed out section II, but featured improvisation for sections I, III, and IV. Although Agrell is adept at improvisation in a jazz style, he intended for the improvisation in *September Elegy* to be in a different style:

> Improvisation is usually thought of as being either “free” or jazz in style. The improvisation required here (for both instruments) is neither. Jazz improvisation

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commonly follows a cyclic harmony. September Elegy’s improvisation is primarily guided by the mood of the piece. Where so-called “free” improvisation may often sound chaotic, the goal of the performers here is to improvise in the original sense of composing on the spot in the mood of the piece, discovering and developing rhythmic and melodic motifs.\footnote{Jeffrey Agrell, September Elegy (Austin, Tex.: Jomar Press, 2001), “Composer’s Notes.”}

In an interview, Agrell elaborated on his use of improvisation for this work:

> With improvisation, you can build atmosphere in different ways—the piano and horn play off each other. This allows a personal performance for every performer; everybody that plays it has their own personal expression, everyone can use whatever techniques they want to create their own expression of grief.\footnote{Agrell, interview.}

The composer titled section I “Prologue,” (Example 5.1) and gives the horn player the instructions, “Slow, declamatory improvisation.”\footnote{Agrell, September Elegy, 1.} He provides the pianist with low E-flats that repeat with a slow pulse, and a scale in the right hand, with the suggestion: “Piano: sparse 1–2 note stabs from this set; occasional interjections. Inside the piano sounds also possible.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Section III, “Reflection,” is an improvisation for the piano alone with no special instructions for the pianist. The final section, “Epilogue”, is similar to the first, as Agrell gives the same notes and instructions to the pianist and instructs the hornist: “a reminiscence of the Prologue,” “Epilogue should be distinctly shorter than the Prologue,” and “piece ends with abrupt stop.”\footnote{Ibid., 3.}

The composer may have wanted to express the quick and certain loss of life as well as a loss of innocence for many Americans that day. The use of a Prologue and Epilogue in this work may be a nod to Britten’s Serenade, which is flanked by movements of the same name, to be performed exclusively on the harmonic series (without valves).
Section II, “Chorale,” is the only section of the work that is not primarily improvised. The composer marked this section *Adagio* and begins with parallel perfect fifths played by the pianist’s left hand. This open sonority provides a feeling of emptiness to this section. In m. 7, the composer continues the use of open fifths, now with octave leaps in between. The piano repeats mm. 2–11 three more times, and only the fourth occurrence contains a variation, which signals the completion of this section (Example 5.2).
The horn begins its melody over the second repetition of the ground. Here again, the composer chooses to feature the hollow sonority of the perfect fifth. The horn plays its C4, G4, and D5—all open notes on the natural horn. Agrell notates a portamento slur from this D5 into a C-sharp5 (a closed note), a technique accessible to the horn through the slow closing or opening
of the right hand in the bell. Britten used the same technique at the close of the Serenade’s “Elegy” movement.

The composer continues to emphasize the difference between these open and closed sonorities of the natural horn. Most of the notes in this composed section are open, but there is a long pause on an A4 (Example 5.3), in mm. 17–20, a half-stopped note. The half-closed hand position necessary to achieve this note produces a ghostly sound.

Example 5.3. Agrell, September Elegy, “Chorale,” mm. 16–19, horn part.

Agrell notated a brief improvisatory section in the score in mm. 33–34 with an unusual directional marking (Example 5.4), presumably intending to give the horn player a precise indication of his intent that he provides in the other improvisational sections of the work. The composer begins this section on an A-flat5, one of the most challenging tones to locate in the overtone series.

The hornist performing this work should take the music from the “Chorale” section as an important influence for the overall work and should utilize similar sonorities in the “Prologue” and “Epilogue.” In turn, the pianist may find inspiration from the ethereal sounds produced by the stopped and half-stopped (or echo-stopped) horn and produce unconventional sounds on the piano, such as those produced by playing on the strings inside the instrument. These timbral effects may represent the eerie sights and sounds broadcast around the world in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks.

**Hermann Baumann’s Elegia for Natural Horn for Francesco Raselli (1984)**

*Elegia* represents Hermann Baumann’s only original composition for horn (with the exception of his cadenzas, which he always composes himself). Baumann composed this work in memory of his friend, Swiss horn player and teacher Francesco Raselli (1948–1983),

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118Hermann Baumann, interview with author, 5 March 2009.
who died of cancer at the age of thirty-five. Raselli left three children and a wife behind, and the tragedy of his death greatly effected Baumann.\textsuperscript{119}

Baumann composed \textit{Elegia} in about two hours, playing as he composed.\textsuperscript{120} He performed it for the First International Natural Horn Workshop in 1984 in Bad Harzburg, Germany. The fact that this is Baumann’s only composition indicates the great effect his friend’s death had on him. Kübler-Ross and Kessler discuss the importance of sharing the story of one’s loss:

Telling the story helps to dissipate the pain….You must get it out. Grief must be witnessed to be healed. Grief shared is grief abated….Tell your tale, because it reinforces that your loss mattered.\textsuperscript{121}

Although the work is for natural horn, a traditionally eighteenth and nineteenth-century instrument, Baumann’s composition is decidedly modern. It is for horn alone and features some passages that are quite challenging, while still making use of the special timbral effects of the instrument. The work opens with a tritone leap between the horn’s E4 and B-flat4 (see Example. 5.5). The use of a tritone as the first interval is a distinctive signal of the modern style of this work. These two notes, while part of the overtone series, are out of tune, thus emphasizing the use of this historical instrument from the beginning. The horn fills in the gaps from the harmonic series in m. 5 (Example 5.6), which it then echoes in m. 6, playing a half-step higher on stopped notes. Baumann composed a series of descending open intervals in m. 9, landing on G3 in m. 10. He then emphasizes the open to closed intervals by alternating between the open G3 and a

\textsuperscript{119}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121}Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 63.
stopped F-sharp3 (Example 5.7). He repeats the opening *moderato* section at the end, creating a
three-part form with an extended middle section.

Example 5.5. Baumann, *Elegia*, m. 1.

While the *moderato* sections are contemplative, the middle section turns quite virtuosic, particularly in mm. 15–18 (Example 5.8). These measures require a strong hand-horn technique. Baumann highlights the tritone interval again in m. 22, with the focus on F-sharp and C (Example 5.9). The composer outlines several of the open notes available to the natural horn in the staff—E₄, G₄, B-Flat₄, C₅, and D₅ in m. 25. He repeats this group three times, separating it with the F-sharp₅ (see Example 5.10). The work climaxes in mm. 34–36 where the horn soars to a *fortissimo* B₅ (a fully stopped note—Example 5.11).

Baumann notated a *portamento* motion between B₄ and C₅ (Example 5.12) in the penultimate measure of the work. This is a special effect created by the slow opening and closing of the hand. This ethereal sound is reminiscent of the final notes of Britten’s “Elegy” movement from the *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*, a work with which Baumann is most certainly aware. The final notes of Baumann’s *Elegia* are D-sharp⁵ (stopped), C-sharp⁵ (stopped), B₄ (stopped), and a *portamento* motion to the open C₅. Baumann’s choice to end the work in this manner is both a nod to the acceptance one feels at the end of the grieving process,
despite the pain of losing a good friend and an intertextual reference to Britten’s *Serenade*. As
with many of the elegies in this study, such as Poulenc’s *Elegie*, this work ends with a sense of
peace, or at the very least, closure. Here is what Kübler-Ross and Kessler write about the stage
of acceptance:

This stage is about accepting the reality that our loved one is physically gone and
recognizing that this new reality is the permanent reality. We will never like this reality
or make it okay, but eventually we accept it. We learn to live with it….Healing looks
like remembering, recollecting, and reorganizing...our journey still continues. It is not
yet time for us to die; in fact, it is time for us to heal.¹²²


Jeffrey Agrell and Hermann Baumann chose to compose memorial works for natural horn
because of the unique timbres available on this instrument. Agrell and Baumann are both
accomplished performers on this instrument, and they have a special appreciation of its
possibilities. Whereas Brahms composed his Trio for natural horn, and Britten, Poulenc, and
Hill utilized the timbral effects created through stopped notes on the valve horn in their Elegies,

thus referencing the natural horn, Agrell and Baumann showcase the modern possibilities of the valveless instrument in their works.
This study has shown that there are some important similarities among elegiac works for horn. Many of these can be traced to the influence of the Brahms’s Horn Trio, Britten’s *Serenade* and Poulenc’s *Elegie*. Thus the hornist-composers of the subsequent works must have been familiar with these three canonic pieces.

The “Elegy” movement of Britten’s *Serenade* features a descending half-step motive that is recalled throughout the other works. Britten emphasizes this motive with the use of the right hand *portamento*, a sound both Baumann and Hill used. Baumann composed a similar right-hand *portamento* in the penultimate measure of his *Elegia*. Hill creates the same effect in m. 19 of his *Elegy*. This special timbre is eerie and haunting, appropriate for an elegy, as it is the ghostly shadow of the horn’s more familiar rich, brassy sound.

Britten used the melody in the “Dirge” from the *Serenade* as a ground. Similarly, Agrell creates a ground in the piano part in mm. 2–11 of his Elegy. These composers use this repetition as a grinding, relentless representation of grief and create interest through the changes occurring in dynamics and notes in the other instruments. The root of this emotional compositional device can be found in the Baroque passacaglias, most of which are in the minor mode, such as J. S. Bach’s Passacaglia in C minor and Buxtehude’s Passacaglia in D minor, both for organ.123

Another similarity between the Britten and the Agrell works is their outer movements, titled Prologue and Epilogue in each work. Surely Agrell is familiar with the *Serenade* and its structure. In Britten’s work, these outer movements are performed without valves, using only

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the notes in the harmonic series, which creates some out-of-tune notes. That Agrell used the same titles for the outer movements of his work for natural horn is indicative of the Serenade’s influence on contemporary hornists and composers. Baumann was similarly influenced, as his work is also for natural horn, and he utilizes the *portamento* motion between stopped and open horn. Hill’s use of this sound also suggests Britten’s influence.

Modern hornists are also familiar with Poulenc’s *Elegie*. Poulenc uses the stopped horn section toward the end of his work to create an echo of the previous phrase. Nowlin, in his *Elegy*, uses an anonymous off-stage horn to create an echo of his main theme. These echoes represent the performers to which these works are dedicated. The audience can almost imagine the ghosts of these hornists performing these haunting sections of music. This may also be a nod to the “Epilogue” of Britten’s *Serenade*, which is also performed off-stage.

Nowlin and Agrell both feature the open fifth as an important element in their memorial works. Agrell creates a feeling of emptiness with the use of parallel fifths in the piano part of his “Chorale” section. Nowlin uses the open fifth throughout his work and discussed the emptiness of this sound in his interview. The interval of the fifth, without the third, represents a hollow feeling in these works: the emptiness created from death. This, according to Kübler-Ross and Kessler, is a key component of the depression stage of grief:

> Allow the sadness and emptiness to cleanse you and help you explore your loss in its entirety. When you allow yourself to experience depression, it will leave as soon as it has served its purpose in your loss.\(^{124}\)

Many of the composers in this study have chosen tonal melodies: Poulenc, Nowlin, Presser, Funkhouser, and Hill. The use of lyrical phrases may represent the feelings of these composers toward their subjects—many times, composers have fond memories of their loved ones and colleagues and have clearly expressed that through vocal-like melodies. Hill composed

\(^{124}\)Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 22.
an elegy for his mother, and Funkhouser for his mother-in-law, women for whom they have great affection. In the cases of Nowlin, Presser, and Poulenc, the composers have a hornist in mind for their works, and that person’s playing style is surely an influence for their melodies. The Brahms Horn Trio is a canonic work, of which all of these composers would be aware. David G. Elliott discusses the elegiac nature of the third movement of the Trio in his article “The Brahms Horn Trio and Hand Horn Idiom”:

The death of his mother on February 1, 1865 was probably a major factor in Brahms’s writing of the Trio. The third movement is marked adagio mesto which means sad and mournful. It is said to be an elegy to his mother. Although in six-eight time, it can be viewed as a slow funeral march. This movement is a spiritual cousin to another composition written at nearly the same time and also thought to be in memory of her. It is the second movement of the German Requiem….In the middle of the Trio’s Adagio is a passage in horn-fifths style for violin and horn which confirms the dedication of the movement. It is based on In dem Weiden steht ein Haus, a lower Rhenish folk song which his mother taught him as a child.125

Surely the beautiful, haunting melody of the third movement of the Trio has had at least a subliminal influence on the lyrical melodies of these later works. In the subsequent works, however, these melodies are juxtaposed with more intense sections, such as the fortissimo opening of the Poulenc, which recurs throughout the work, representing the flaring up of anger that often accompanies grief.126

Presser’s use of a pre-existing melody in his Caprice (“Sweet Violets”) invokes an important memory the composer has of his subject, Marvin C. Howe. Brahms composed his work for the natural horn, an instrument that his father played.127 This was a period of transition, as composers were writing for both the valved horn and the hand horn. Brahms valued the special timbres available to this instrument, as do Agrell and Baumann in their modern works.

125Elliot, 61.


127Elliott, 61.
Because of the combination of technical challenges and emotional opportunities for healing, the elegy is an important genre in student and professional repertoire. The works analyzed in this document, all composed within the past sixty years, provide technical and musical challenges for the hornist. Extended techniques can be found in nearly every work discussed, such as right-hand portamentos, stopped horn playing, echo stopping, and flutter tonguing. All of the composers stress the contrast of dynamics available on the instrument, asking for a range of at least pp to ff, if not greater. In addition, many of these works emphasize the high register of the instrument, rising to the horn’s B5 or C6. Several composers also test the player’s pedal low register. All of these compositional effects combine to create technically difficult works that can challenge even the most accomplished hornist. The two works for natural horn provide further challenges, as the player must learn an entirely different technique for altering pitches: the opening and closing of the right hand in the bell.

More important than the technical challenges of these elegies are the cathartic experiences they provided for the composer. In their interviews, many of the composers mentioned the compulsion to compose their works, saying it just had to be written and referring to melodies that just came to them. With the creation of these pieces, each composer worked through the pain and grief caused by the death of their subjects. According to Kübler-Ross: “Grief must be externalized. Our pain and sadness can be fully realized only when we release them.”128

For the performer, the elegy can also provide an important outlet for grief. Perhaps the performer is expressing the grief they feel for the subject of the work, if they knew that person. Even if the hornist was not acquainted with the person eulogized by the work they are performing, everyone must face the loss and heartache caused by the death of loved ones. When

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128 Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 143.
I last performed the Poulenc Elegie in the fall of 2008, my grandmother, to whom I was very close, was dying. It was an emotional experience for me to perform the work, and she was certainly in my mind throughout the performance. Expressing the feelings of anger, sadness, happy memories, and eventually serenity through this musical work was cathartic for me, as it could be for anyone performing this piece with a loved one in mind. The performance of elegies can be another manifestation of the externalization of grief that Kübler-Ross and Kessler discuss.

Finally, the performance of an elegy can be cathartic for audience members. Funkhouser composed his elegy for his mother-in-law and performed it with his wife at her funeral. The Poulenc Elegie was performed on the radio for the one-year anniversary of Brain’s death and surely reached the ears of many of his colleagues, friends, and family. Nowlin premiered his Elegy for Herbert Spencer at a horn workshop where many of Spencer’s former students were in attendance. Most important for Nowlin was the presence of Spencer’s widow, who was a further inspiration for the composition of the work.129 Certainly, in these cases, audience members had a direct connection to the subjects and may have been deeply affected by these works. But even if an elegy is performed in an unrelated setting, for example on a student’s recital, audience members who have recently lost a loved one may also have a similar cathartic experience.

I hope that this document will inspire readers to program and perform elegiac works not only as a way of expressing and experiencing the grief that each of these composers felt and as a tribute to the people memorialized in these pieces, but also as a way of working through the grief in their own lives. Kübler-Ross and Kessler highlight the importance of the grieving process in the Afterward to On Grief and Grieving:

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129Nowlin interview.
Grief is the intense emotional response to the pain of a loss. It is the reflection of a connection that has been broken. Most important, grief is an emotional, spiritual, and psychological journey to healing….Grief transforms the broken, wounded soul….Grief alone has the power to heal.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{130}\textsuperscript{130}Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 227.
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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Composers:

Name: Jeffrey Agrell  Date of interview: 11 November 2008

Title of Composition: September Elegy  Date composed: September 2001

Please note, you are not required to answer any of the following questions and may end this interview at any time you would like.

1. For whose memory is your elegy/memorial work dedicated?

   “9-11, the bombing of the World Trade Center.”

2. What type of musical techniques did you draw upon when composing this piece?

   “Natural horn—I had the feeling that the natural horn was a lot more expressive than the modern horn. You are not restricted to the same sounds. Portamento is available. It has a darker, more mortal sound than the regular horn. You get extreme high and low and extreme dynamic range. It’s a kind of classical improvisation.”

3. How (if at all) do these compositional techniques respond to your feelings of loss or grief (if those feelings are present)?

   “It’s not a one-to-one ratio, but more about creating an atmosphere. What was nice about this is that I felt it was easy to be very sensitive, very nuanced, sometimes very discreet expression of the natural horn. With improvisation, you can build atmosphere in different ways—the piano and horn part play off each other. Because of this, it can be a personal performance for every performer. Everybody that plays it has their own personal expression. [Through improvisation] everyone can use whatever techniques they want to create their own expression of grief. How I did it on the recording is one way frozen in there. Its different every time I play it.”

4. Is this piece similar to your other works or does it represent a departure of your typical style? Please explain.

   “It’s similar in that it uses contemporary classical improvisation. It’s different in more ways than similar. Aviary Divertimento for clarinet is my only other elegy. Most of my works have tongue in cheek. Very soon after 9/11, I suppose that faded somewhat for everyone. It was a very powerful time in history—very sorrowful for everyone in the country. At the time, I was one of the lucky ones to be able to put that expression down into art. It was just a response—a lot of my ideas, I think, are something that just had to come out. I’ve only written one other piece for natural horn, Old Wine in New Bottles. So this is, in a lot of ways, very different because, thank goodness, events like this don’t happen all the time, and I think using the natural horn turned out to be an inspired choice for this work.”
Anything to add?

“I would like everyone to write their own works. I would like to have everyone to become a composer. I use improvisation a lot in my teaching.”

Follow-up: Who did you study composition with?

“I haven’t studied composition—I learned a lot from jazz, as a jazz guitar player hearing chords, composing, learning from every source—how did they do that? Listening analytically to figure out how things are built. Country, classical, jazz—it’s a rich compost on which to draw. I just try to learn from everything I hear. I write things that I would like to hear, what [I think] an audience would like to hear.”
Appendix B

Interview Questions for Composers:

Name: Hermann Baumann       Date of interview: 5 March 2009

Title of Composition: *Elegia for Natural Horn*       Date composed: 1984

Please note, you are not required to answer any of the following questions and may end this interview at any time you would like.

1. For whose memory is your elegy/memorial work dedicated?

   “Francesco Raselli from Switzerland, who taught at Lucerne Conservatory.”

2. What type of musical techniques did you draw upon when composing this piece?

   “I wrote this in two hours, played and wrote. I composed it for [a performance at] an International Natural Horn Workshop.”

3. How (if at all) do these compositional techniques respond to your feelings of loss or grief (if those feelings are present)?

   “He died at age thirty-five of cancer. He was married with three kids, and it was very sad. He was my friend.”

4. Is this piece similar to your other works or does it represent a departure of your typical style? Please explain.

   “This is my only composition, other than my cadenzas. I always write my own cadenzas so in a way they are compositions but this is my only original composition.”

Anything to add?

   “No. Good luck with your paper.”
Appendix C

Interview Questions for Composers:

Name: James Funkhouser       Date of interview: 13 March 2009

Title of Composition: In Memoriam       Date composed: 2004

Please note, you are not required to answer any of the following questions and may end this interview at any time you would like.

1. For whose memory is your elegy/memorial work dedicated?

   “For my mother-in-law, Elaine Crawford.”

2. What type of musical techniques did you draw upon when composing this piece?

   “Basically melodic with a simple accompaniment. The melody came to me two days after she died. I got that down and then worked on the accompaniment as I went along.”

3. How (if at all) do these compositional techniques respond to your feelings of loss or grief (if those feelings are present)?

   “The melodic line represents that sustainability of grief. I wanted to create something that was, I guess, sad but beautiful.”

4. Is this piece similar to your other works or does it represent a departure of your typical style? Please explain.

   “It’s pretty much representative—melodic writing. I write this kind of melody fairly frequently.”

Anything to add?

   “I arranged this for strings and horn. It’s quite effective and I have used it several times for situations where I had an orchestra play it. I added a few notes in the horn at the end. I just thought [the strings] would sound good. I was working on a horn sonata at the time and this became the second movement. This movement gave me the inspiration to finish the sonata.”
Appendix D

Interview Questions for Composers:

Name: Douglas Hill Date of interview: 21 November 2008

Title of Composition: Elegy for Horn Alone Date composed: 1998

Please note, you are not required to answer any of the following questions and may end this interview at any time you would like.

1. For whose memory is your elegy/memorial work dedicated?

   “To my mother, C. Norene Hill, 1914–1998.”

2. What type of musical techniques did you draw upon when composing this piece?

   “That’s kind of an interesting question. Focusing on the Elegy for Horn Alone—stream of consciousness. Looking back at the sketches, there wasn’t an awful lot of change, scratching out and going away. The melodic line just started. I think I just kind of conceived of that and then the rest of it sort of flowed out from there. My mom died in February, and I wrote this after thinking about it a few months. I went to my horn and worked on it a bit more than I usually do. It was horn alone, and I felt alone and that’s sort of where it went. I kind of let it flow and that’s where I came into the ¾ stopped glissando—sighing or crying that came out in what might be considered the secondary theme and then the larger leaps representing stronger feelings works its way down into the mid-low register. ‘Heartfelt’ became a more complete realization of where the melody wanted to go. Bars 7–8 are like a memory that is not resolved and falls off. ‘Heartfelt’ continues a bit but doesn’t become a fully realized melody. The ‘Agitated’ section doesn’t look agitated. Its more of a mood or a feeling, with a darker sound winding in and out. Then it comes back to the second statement, kind of a conglomeration of melodic material. Chaotic movement towards the B-flat and glissando down to [m.] 47. This is a point of arrival, realization, then trailing off.”

3. How (if at all) do these compositional techniques respond to your feelings of loss or grief (if those feelings are present)?

   “Obviously the ¾ stopped and the falling down at the end of the phrase. Also the stringendo and rallentando—that’s very definitely a response to the feeling of loss and emptiness from grief—there’s always an empty bar after that. Then there’s a moment like that before the ‘Agitated’ section.”

4. Is this piece similar to your other works or does it represent a departure of your typical style? Please explain.

   “It’s a departure because it was coming from a different place. As far as my other compositions—I’m interested in jazz, Native American, folk music, and I like to write with
words, programmatic concepts sometimes. I’ve never been particularly concerned with creating a particular compositional style because I’m not a composer; I’m a horn teacher who happens to compose. I only do a piece or two every year. I can’t write very well when I’m full-time teaching. Almost all of my composition takes place in the summer. The duet came about by the end of the summer. I realized I was working on the Brahms Trio, the third movement is, of course, the Elegy to his mother, and so the violin just came back into my head, and I wrote a continuation of the piece. I was actually trying to remember—I don’t know whether I’ve ever performed the *Elegy Alone* but I’ve had students who have performed it.”

Anything to add?

“About the recording: it’s on *Thoughtful Wanderings* double CD—you can buy it from the University of Wisconsin. I invited former students to play on it. Zerbel’s rendition of my *Elegy* [on *Thoughtful Wanderings*] is very orchestral, very colorful, more so than I would do. All the playing on there I really didn’t coach—it’s their interpretation of what they saw on the page. It’s also available from Musician’s Showcase. Also, about how this piece deviates—the stream of consciousness. Since the late 1980s [my compositions] have been about melody. And then whatever happens. This one is more of a meandering of emotion through a somewhat melodic [line]. It follows a harmonic progression and again that’s interesting seeing where that went. It really represents a complete growing process. On my sketch, I had the word ‘Fantasy’ before I had the word ‘Elegy.’”

I asked Professor Hill about the *Elegy for Solo Horn* by Verne Reynolds, which is dedicated to him and was premiered around the time his son passed away:

“I don’t think there’s any way that Verne could have known that our son was going to die—our son was eighteen months old. I got this music in May. I don’t even know he knew our son was going into surgery. So, unless this was a subconscious thing, he just decided he wanted to write something. Because of the loss of our son, I never called back to him. I had to premiere it over in the Avignon workshop, and then David Amram wrote the *Blues and Variation for Monk*. Thelonious Monk had just died. Then there was the French Suite of Jan Bach and “Lost and Found,” the second movement of the Jazz Set—those two pieces were actually written shortly after my son died. They were my reaction to the craziness and sadness in 1982 and I was in a completely different mindset than in 1998. Because of my state of mind, I just never got back to Verne, which I would normally do.”

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Appendix E

Interview Questions for Composers:

Name: Ryan Nowlin  Date of interview: 12 November 2008

Title of Composition: *Elegy* (for Herbert A. Spencer)  Date composed: 2004

Please note, you are not required to answer any of the following questions and may end this interview at any time you would like.

1. For whose memory is your elegy/memorial work dedicated?

   “Herbert Spencer.”

2. What type of musical techniques did you draw upon when composing this piece?

   “This is one of those pieces that if I had to say a specific technique it was the crafting of a melody. I know that sounds funny but with Herb Spencer, he liked to describe melodies as chocolaty, or rich or gooey. He liked a lot of French Music—*Nacht Poella* by P. R. Van Echaute, 1963, Metropolis. Those sorts of melodies were really important for him. It took a while for me to be brave enough to write the *Elegy*. Right after he died, I sketched out a melody, which is the main melody played by the horn player once and then off-stage, which is his voice. I wrote this piece for his widow. It was several years after he died, in October and November [2004], and I pulled out one of the sketches that I had written three years prior. I knew that I wanted emptiness and I wanted to have something that was real, that his wife could connect with. I’m still close with her—she’s become like a mother to me. The open, pure fifths is there a lot. The main accompaniment pattern, that little four-note motive, is just to be very empty. At the end when the horn blows his anger top—there was one time when he [Spencer] fell in the shower. His wife was there and she wasn’t able to lift him and his muscles wouldn’t let him get up because of the Lou Gehrig’s Disease. That terror of him falling and not being able to help himself represented the beginning of the end to her. The off-stage horn is Herb trying to calm me down. You feel disoriented—you want to reach out and touch him or see him but you can’t. From that point forward, the horn player just plays the empty accompaniment. The piano player’s hands cross three notes at the end—he died at 3:00 in the afternoon. The basic technique is to have a very singable melody that Herb would have conducted from his seat. He always did that in lessons when he heard a melody he liked. I wanted to have a strong melody. It’s 100% emotional pain. Not a lot of joy in there. There’s one moment when you can hear joy, there’s a lot of sweeping slurs [m. 57], but only for three measures. But the whole piece is very dark and very empty, and it ends very alone because, again, it is for her. Also the open fifths are important. And a singable melody that he would be proud of—he would call it ‘chocolate.’”

3. How (if at all) do these compositional techniques respond to your feelings of loss or grief (if those feelings are present)?
“And they still are [present]. It has to do with that emptiness that I keep talking about. He was a big man with such a big heart. He took a chance on me. He was really a special teacher and not someone that you take for granted. The very main melody was the one that I wrote down weeks after he died, and I wanted that to be the basis of the idea. The open fifths and the piano accompaniment’s four pitches that keep coming back portray emptiness. And then the off-stage horn is a definite compositional technique to calm down the on-stage player. The off-stage player was anonymous in the premiere in Alabama. There was a seemingly endless pregnant pause after the piece was finished. It was premiered by Andrew Peletier at the 2005 Horn Workshop in Alabama.”

4. Is this piece similar to your other works or does it represent a departure of your typical style? Please explain.

“It’s a departure because I primarily write band music, anything from beginning band through higher grade stuff. I do songs and church music. This was my first solo work. It was just one of those things that had to be written. As far as the harmonic language and singable melody, that’s not a departure at all. The only departure from my style is that its for horn and piano.”

Anything to add?

“There have been several performances of this work. This isn’t officially published yet. I gave away copies at the Alabama horn convention. It is registered with ASCAP, and I know people have been playing it because I have royalties coming in. Andy Peletier’s played it. One of the professors at Indiana University has played it and some of his students. A doctoral student at Texas played it. I think its going to be an electronic publication and the royalties will go to a foundation. This was very, very personal. And again, it was written just for one person to hear and that was his wife—it was a Christmas present to her. I gave away every copy in Alabama, and she actually came to Tuscaloosa to hear the premiere. I’d rather people know more about Herb Spencer than about his Elegy, and I think this is a piece that if he were alive and he came across it, that he would like to play. He liked that ‘slurpy stuff’ [as] he called it.”