

An Analysis of James D. Thornton's *Benignus*

by

Dr. Amy Dunker

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Instrumentation:

Flute 1 - 2
Oboe
Eb Clarinet
Bb Clarinet 1 – 3
Eb Alto Clarinet
Bb Bass Clarinet
Eb Contra Alto Clarinet
Bassoon 1 - 2
Eb Alto Saxophone 1 – 2
Bb Tenor Saxophone
Eb Baritone Saxophone

Bb Trumpet 1 – 3
Bb Cornet 1 - 2
Horn in F 1 - 4
Trombone 1 – 2
Bass Trombone
Euphonium
Tuba

Timpani/Bells
Percussion I: Marimba
Percussion II: Xylophone

Harmonic Language: Tonal (F Major)

Meter: 3/4

Texture: Melody and Accompaniment, Counterpoint

Duration: 4 ½ Minutes

Grade: 4

Genre: Chaconne

Date of Composition: 1994

Publisher: Alliance Publications, Inc., AP-685 www.apimusic.org
585 County Road Z, Sinsinawa, WI 53824-0157 USA
(608) 748-4411 Ext. 124

Publisher Copyright Date: 2006

Dedication Statement: Dedicated to Donald J. Thornton

Composer Bio:

James D. Thornton was born January 23, 1953 in New Rockford, North Dakota, into a family of musicians. His father, Donald Thornton, was a band director in Dickinson, ND, where James and his five other siblings received their music education. All the children became professional musicians. James started on the cornet, then graduated to the tuba and euphonium (or whatever the band needed!). The latter instrument then became his speciality.

Thornton's professional music career began when he became a member of *The President's Own United States Marine Band* in Washington, D. C. from 1974 to 1981. With this ensemble, he performed for four U. S. Presidents, toured yearly throughout the United States, and appeared frequently as soloist on the euphonium, trombone or tuba, often performing his own compositions and arrangements.

Upon returning home from the Marines in 1981, James Thornton pursued his Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota, which he received in 1986 and his Master of Music degree from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, in 1987. For four years (1988-1992), he was the Instrumental Music Educator for grades 5-12 in the Hazen Public Schools, Hazen, ND. Following this, Thornton became the Minot State University Director of Bands from 1992-2000. His skill and artistry as a Euphonium performer have inspired many students.

Concurrent with these positions has been Thornton's involvement as a faculty music educator, since 1983, at the International Music Camp's Summer School of the Fine Arts held at the International Peace Gardens on the border of North Dakota and Manitoba, Canada, a position he continues each summer.

Thornton resides in Dickinson, North Dakota, teaching private students and enjoying the opportunity of being a freelance composer.

Notes:

Benignus for Concert Band was composed in 1994 in honor of the composer's father, Donald J. Thornton, a career instrumental music educator and the father of six professional musicians. The Latin title, pronounced *Beh-NEE-nyoos*, is the appellation of a kind and generous and fruitful person and fittingly honors Donald J. Thornton.

Benignus is a classic Chaconne with the original theme appearing as a cornet/ euphonium octave unison and the subsequent variants developing and building into a grand and heroic finale, all portraying the varied and enormous character of the dedicatee.

Form:

Statement 1	ms. 1 – 16	Bb Cornet I and II, Euphonium
Statement 2	ms. 17 – 32	Bb Clarinet I and II
Statement 3	ms. 33 – 48	Horn in F I and II
Statement 4	ms. 49 – 64	Bells, Bb Cornet II and III
Statement 5	ms. 65 – 80	Bb Trumpet I
Statement 6	ms. 81 – 96	Alto, Tenor, Baritone Saxophones
Statement 7	ms. 97 – 115	Flute, Oboe, Bb Clarinet III, Alto Saxophone
Statement 8	ms. 116 – 132	Flute, Bb Trumpet I, Bb Cornet I

Theme (Bb Cornet I, ms. 1 – 16):

Musical notation for Bb Cornet I and Cor. 1, measures 1-16. The Bb Cornet I part is marked *mp*. Both parts feature a melodic line with a slur over the first six measures and a second slur over the last six measures.

Counter Theme (Flute I and II, ms. 33 – 48):

Musical notation for Counter Theme (Flute I and II, ms. 33 – 48). The notation includes a dynamic marking *p* and a first ending bracket labeled '1'. The main staff is labeled 'Fls. 1&2' and contains measures 35-48. A second staff, also labeled 'Fls. 1&2', contains measures 44-48.

Dr. Amy Dunker is an Associate Professor of Music at Clarke College in Dubuque, IA, USA where she teaches composition, theory, aural skills, trumpet and directs the new music ensemble.

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