

An Analysis of Joel Blahnik's *From Tender Stem*

by

Dr. Amy Dunker

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Instrumentation: Flute 1 – 2
Oboe 1 – 2
Eb Clarinet
Clarinet 1 – 2
Bass Clarinet
Bassoon 1 – 2
Alto Saxophone 1 – 2
Tenor Saxophone
Baritone Saxophone

Woodwinds in C (Opt.)
Woodwinds in Eb (Opt.)
Brass and Woodwinds in Bb (Opt.)
Brass in F (Opt.)
Brass and Woodwinds in Bass Clef (Opt.)

Bb Trumpet 1 – 3
Horn in F 1 – 2
Trombone 1 – 2
Baritone
Tuba

Timpani
Mallet Percussion: Chimes
Orchestra Bells
Roto-Toms
Temple Blocks

Percussion 1: Snare Drum
Wind Chimes

Percussion 2: Tenor Drum

Percussion 3: Bass Drum
Cymbal
Gong

**From Tender Stem is designed to be performed by instrumentalists of varying ability. The work can be performed alone by a high school band (Grade 4) or with younger band students by employing the Optional Parts.*

Grade: 4 (High School Bands) + Grade 2 (Optional Parts)

Duration: 9 Minutes

Harmonic Language: Tonal (c minor)

Meter: 4/4 2/4

Texture: Melody and Accompaniment

Dedication: In Memory of Barbara Troxel

Commission Statement: Commissioned by the Riverdale School District of Muscoda, Wisconsin in memory of Barbara Troxel; Chris Simonson, Musical Director.

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Score Markings: Solemnly – Allegro con brio – Tempo I – Tempo II –
Tempo I Peacefully

Composer Bio:

Joel Blahnik is a native of Wisconsin's Door County, a graduate of Lawrence University Conservatory of Music, and above all, an instrumental music educator in the Wisconsin Public Schools from 1961-1993. During his comprehensive music career he has been a guest clinician/lecturer in over 250 of the state's schools. He has received many local, state, and national awards for his creativity and excellence in teaching during these three decades.

As a composer, his works have been featured at national composer symposiums and international festivals, and appear on state and international music education selected lists. His works have been recorded by state, national and foreign radio and TV. As an author, his writings have appeared in state, national, and international journals.

As a conductor, his student ensembles have distinguished themselves at state convention events including three performances at the celebrated Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic. He has served many years as a clinician for state adjudication workshops, related-arts festivals, music camps, and other music activities from elementary schools to world professional ensembles.

Since 1988, he has been called to a great deal of musical activity in the Czech Republic. This includes guest conducting student, amateur, and professional ensembles, co-founding the Prague Youth Wind Ensemble Festival, Music Director of Summer Music Camps, and networking with Czech musical artists and composers.

The counter melody to his teaching is the water, where he has served over 40 years as a U.S. Coast Guard licensed skipper on the Great Lakes. Since 1975, he has also been the Chambers Island Lighthouse caretaker and historian. He and his wife, Mary Ann, have a family of three children.

Performance Notes:

BACKGROUND NOTES

From Tender Stem is designed to be performed by instrumentalists with a variety of performing abilities, ie. high school, junior high, and elementary band students simultaneously!

It is a perfect vehicle for a "culmination concert" at the end of the school year bringing together the band musicians from an entire school district or as a work combining many ensembles for festival collaborations.

The composition is primarily designed to be performed alone with high school band without employing the "Optional Parts", yet the optional parts may be engaged depending upon the strengths/weaknesses of the performing musicians.

The music parts for the less experienced musicians are categorized as "Optional." These may be assigned to elementary band students or to junior high high band students of limited experience. The conductor has the privilege to make part assignments depending upon the proficiency of the talent pool.

A unique feature of **From Tender Stem** is the singing section at "J" which is optional. If singing is not rendered, the saxophones carry forth the musical idea which may be augmented by the melody line of the lower brass, depending upon the desired effect. Again, the imaginative conductor makes decisions, according to the resources on hand and the performance objectives. The human voice in song provides a refreshing change in timbre from the instrumental textures and adds another dimension of musicality.

From Tender Stem is an adaptable work that may be utilized for many types of concerts. The heart of the work lies in the pulse of the tympani. The alternating tempi of 64/128 symbolize a sensitivity contrasting with joyful abandon. The soli of the clarinet and trombone are intended representations. Allow the drama to unfold! Enjoy!

Form:

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Introduction | ms. 1 – 8 | Solemnly |
| A | ms. 8 – 40 | Solemnly |
| B | ms. 41 – 76 | Allegro con brio |
| Transition (A material) | ms. 77 – 85 | Tempo I |
| C | ms. 85 – 106 | Tempo II |
| D | ms. 117- 136 | Tempo I “Lo How a Rose”* |
| A’ | ms. 137 – 152 | Tempo I |

*At ms. 117 – 136, the saxophone section plays harmony parts (Baritone Saxophone plays sung bass line), while the remainder of the band, except percussion, sing “Lo How a Rose E’re Blooming”. The percussionists play simple supporting roles.

Theme 1 (Bb Trumpet I, ms. 8 – 13):

The image displays two musical staves for Theme 1. The first staff is a short melodic fragment with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second staff, labeled "Tpt. 1", shows the full theme starting with a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

Theme 2 (Bb Trumpet I, ms. 42 – 43):

The image displays a short melodic fragment for Theme 2, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

Theme 3 (Flute I and II, ms. 85 – 87):

Theme 4 (Bb Trumpet I, ms. 100 – 103):

“Lo How a Rose” Theme (Flute I and II, ms. 117 – 136):

Fls. 2 **Tempo I Peacefully**
Sing
Ev - bow a rose e'er bloom - ing from ten - der stem hath sprung! This flower whose

Fls. 1 2
fra - grance ten - der with sweet - ness fills the air. It came a flow - er bright and our

Fls. 1 2
liv - ing pre - sence. With glo - ry and splen - dor!

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.