

For the final part of this portfolio I chose to orchestrate the *Prelude to Hansel and Gretel* by Engelbert Humperdinck for symphonic winds for several reasons. The first reason was because I wanted to learn more about writing for wind instruments and explore the colours within the ensemble. This is an ensemble I have not written for before and I felt it was an important step in expanding my skills as a composer. I also really enjoyed this opera when I saw it performed two years ago at The University of Western Ontario and felt the prelude would be a good piece on its own. I chose to make a cut in the music and shorten it in order to make the piece more user-friendly and commercially accessible for many ensembles. However, I have also decided that a full edition would also be of value and have already begun to score the entire prelude for symphonic winds. The work I have done so far is attached in an appendix.

To begin working on this piece I had to explore other symphonic wind material in order to understand the genre and repertoire available. I also needed to listen carefully to the timbre and colours produced in order to properly apply it to the prelude. With the symphonic wind ensemble being a relatively new genre, beginning in the 1950's, I could not study such music from the time of *Hansel and Gretel* which I would have with other genres. Some of the music I studied includes John Pickerd's *Wildfire* and Philip Wilby's *Dawn Flight*. I also attended a couple rehearsals for a wind ensemble so as to see the set up and hear some live wind music. The next step taken was to understand all the instruments involved in the symphonic wind ensemble making sure I know the ranges and capabilities of the instruments in order to prevent impossible playing situations. After the genre for which I would write background research into the opera itself was followed through. I listened to a few recordings of the orchestral version of the prelude and strove to match its character with the wind ensemble.

Once I was ready to begin I had the piano and orchestral scores of the prelude on hand in order to re-enforce the original scoring of the piece and maintain the Wagnerian influenced sound Humperdinck sought to achieve in the piece. I then chose where I would cut the piece and amend it so as to produce a smooth transition and maintain a large-scale formal notion. In order to do this I needed to choose two places where the key was the same and elide them together so that the piece feels and appears as though it was originally meant to be that way. This worked quite well as I was able to preserve a substantial part at the beginning and retain a decent amount at the end while eliminating a central and slightly less important portion of music.

I retain the opening of the piece in precisely the same way Humperdinck did in the orchestral edition with a horn quartet introducing the main theme of the piece. From there I maintained most of the parts that are used in the orchestral score and, in some cases, doubled the parts to retain a good balance. When it came to using different instruments for important melodic themes and gestures, the first thing I needed to realise was that the timbre would be different from the orchestral edition. It was tough, in the beginning, working out how to replace the string parts and how to incorporate the saxophones into the score, however; these types of issues became easier to work with as I progressed and explored due to a growing exposure to the symphonic wind music and experimentation with register and placing particular lines and parts in different instruments.

When attempting to emulate string techniques in other instruments I chose instruments that would suit the range and dynamic levels first, and then looked into timbre and colour so as to achieve the appropriate balance for the passage of music. I often used clarinets and flutes to attain the desired effect, however; in some cases the saxophones were more effective. I generally used instruments of the same family so as to create a similar blend and maintain the even balance, however; the clarinets and saxophones also worked well together due to both families being single-reed woodwind instruments. The *pizzicato* at the

end of the piece were spread out over saxophones, clarinets, euphonium and string bass in order to achieve the required quality. In terms of dynamics, I generally kept to what was originally scored, although in some instances the dynamic level was augmented or diminished a notch to compensate for the natural dynamic curve of the instruments or the altered number of instruments used in a particular passage.

In conclusion, the orchestration of this piece has given me a good command of the symphonic wind genre and has developed my sense of colouristic detail. The process and deliberation of the work brought a keen insight and ease to my approach of composing for larger ensembles. The piece could be performed by various ensembles and with the shortened edition, may be appropriate for high school and community ensembles.