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One Thousand North

Amber Beams Butler University, beamsa14@gmail.com

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One Thousand North

by Amber Beams

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

Thesis Defense Date: April 29, 2016

Committee:
Frank Felice, Chair and Advisor
James Aikman, Reader and Johnson
Nick Johnson, Reader
Michael Colburn, Reader Michael & Colburn
Date of Final Thesis Approval: 5/3/20/6 Advisor:

A Reflection and the Role of Symbolism of *One Thousand North*By Amber Beams

I. Introduction

Fifty miles west of Indianapolis, Indiana lies an old country road known to the locals as West County Road 1000 North. Along this road, each passing field, barn, and house has its own story filled with family history. My family's farm is no exception to this, with the farm being in the family for over fifty years, I am proud of where I call home. Not only has it formed me as a person, but it has also led to my inspiration for my thesis. *One Thousand North* draws memories from my childhood and uses elements from nature that remind me of home. It was my goal to bring my family's farm to others through music, so they could also experience the peacefulness and simplicity that one can only find in the country.

Because of my experiences performing in wind ensembles and my current involvement with the Indianapolis Symphonic Band, it was an easy decision to write this piece for wind ensemble. I sought not to write a traditional piece that includes the entire ensemble playing at once with lots of doubling. Instead, I wanted to feature certain instrumental families at various times to create the setting and atmosphere of being on this country road. The following analysis explores the ways in which the idea of simplicity and symbolism through instrumentation and other compositional techniques aided in the creation and final result of this piece.

II. Compositional Process

The early sketches for *One Thousand North* were quite different from the final result, however it still contained moments that connected to the farm and gave inspiration to the motives that were kept. In order to create this piece I spent a short vacation at home, returning to Indianapolis with the motive that is first introduced in the piccolo solo:

Example 1: *One Thousand North*, first motive by piccolo, m. 3-5



This motive was inspired by the birdsongs heard every morning on the farm. This three-note motive became the basis of the entire piece, with variations and similar motives that reflect the original. The introduction greatly reflects the development of the original motive, as it passes down the score in the following order: flute, oboe, and clarinet. The decision to pass the motive around in this order and to these particular instruments created the allusion of the sound passing across the stage like one might hear in an 8-channel electronic piece. The remaining introduction came easily and constantly refers back to the opening motive.

The transitional section, m. 45-55, contains material that was in the original sketches of the piece. Originally this material was written to create a new theme that would later lead into a contrasting fast and intense section. In the end, the sketches turned into transitional material that leads into the A section. While the scoring for the transitional material is thick, there is no one

voice that to be heard over the other. Instead, it creates a moment of uncertainty as the brass takes over with the three-note motive and the upper woodwinds float on top with moving sixteen note figures that connect and play off of one another.

Both the transitional and A section provided great contrast to the introduction of the piece; however I did not want to venture far from the mood that the opening motive created. With this in mind, the scoring following this section gradually moves back to the introduction with upper woodwinds only. The idea of bringing back the mood of the introduction opened up an opportunity to feature a piccolo cadenza in the middle of the piece.

Introduced by a small triangle hit, m. 103 challenges the audience members to remain silent as the piccolo performer takes control of the tempo, meter, and note durations. In order to create this moment of freedom for the performer, I decided to replace the whole notes with note heads with a thick line. This thick line tells the player that the given note head should be held out to the performer's desired length. In addition, as seen in example two, there are breath marks and a suggested length of time for the cadenza to be played. While I want the performer to have a sense of freedom in this section, there were still certain phrases that needed to be formed.

Example 2: One Thousand North, piccolo solo, m. 103



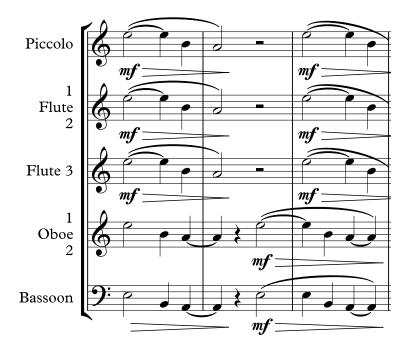
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Creating a section like this gives the audience an insight of the kind of moment that can only be experienced away from the city. Out in the country we witness moments when time seems to stand still and all that can be heard are the sounds of nature. With today's constantly occupied society, the sound and feeling of simplicity has been forgotten or has never been experienced.

Following the cadenza, an idea similar to the opening motive occurs, with many instruments on a whole note; however this time the horn in F introduces a variation on the original motive. This variation assists with bringing back the intensity that was previously created prior to the cadenza. Here, the decision was made to bring in the entire ensemble with various entrances to create a seamless moving line and to build intensity and dynamics. In addition, the instruments have been grouped together for this section based on instrument blending. For example, the flutes are paired with the oboes with all parts doubling, but the first flute playing up an octave.

In m. 113 the piccolo and flutes lead the first return of the three-note motive, but on E-B-G this time. The instruments are set apart from each other in various entrances, Example 3 shows the oboes and bassoon coming in two beats after the flute and piccolo finishes a repeat of the motive.

Example 3: One Thousand North, oboe and bassoon entrance m.115-117, concert pitch

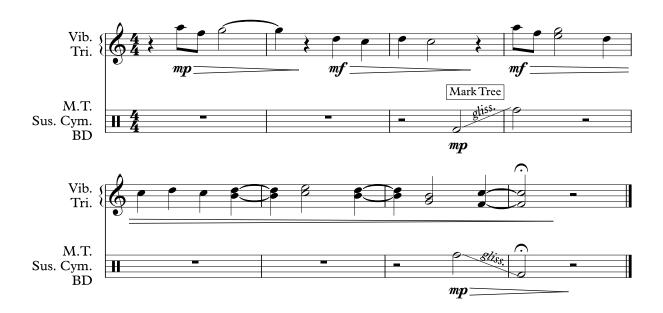


The idea of simplicity plays a great role in many of my works and *One Thousand North* is no exception. When it came to adding percussion to the piece, I decided the best approach would be to keep it simple but still effective. The decision to only use mark tree, vibraphone, triangle, suspended cymbal, timpani, and bass drum was a somewhat easy decision. These select percussion instruments aids in creating the symbolism that I wanted for the piece. In addition, the selected percussion instruments do not over power the ensemble, allowing for brief moments of an added interest and texture.

An example of this can be heard in the last eight measures of the piece, with the instrumentation only being piccolo, flutes, clarinets, with brief moments of oboe, french horn, and euphonium. To create a soft and flowing ending, I added the vibraphone to set up and echo

the flute line. This also opened up an opportunity to bring back the mark tree, making it the one instrument that begins and ends the piece.

Example 4: One Thousand North, vibraphone and mark tree, m. 144-151



III. Form

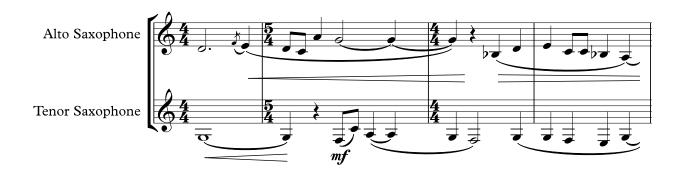
On a large scale, *One Thousand North* is in two parts, with a thirty-five measure introduction. The following chart gives a broad overview of the different sections that occur in the piece:

Chart 1: Overview of Form of One Thousand North

Introduction	mm.1-35	
A Section	mm. 36-44	A
	mm. 45-55	A' (transitional material)
	mm. 56-85	A''
B Section	mm. 86-102	В
	mm. 103	Cadenza
	mm. 104-143	B'
	mm. 144-151	Coda

The introduction brings forth the main theme that is later expanded upon rhythmically and harmonically in the two larger sections later on in the piece. The A section expands on the main theme with the saxophones playing different variations, expanding the idea through meter and rhythm. Example 5 demonstrates the beginning of the phrase and motive expansion:

Example 5: One Thousand North, alto and tenor saxophone, m. 35-38, concert pitch



The following section is referred to as transitional material since the material heard here never returns and the fact that it leads into a new version of the A section. Creating a moment of continuous motion, it pushes the piece forward into the meter, key change, and tempo change in m. 56.

The A'' section brings forth the brass players that had previously been the accompaniment to the woodwinds. In m. 65-68, for the first time the woodwinds drop out entirely, allowing the brass to shine through with a version of the original motive. However, change in texture only last for a brief moment as the brass move into half notes and the upper woodwinds bring back another chorale texture before ending the A section.

The B section brings back the original tempo, with a flute solo leading the section. The instrumentation in this section is sparse, setting up the piccolo solo. Following the solo and prior to the return of the motive, the ensemble slowly builds back up with various entrances. The last eight measures of the piece contains a coda, with a repetitive motive that slowly brings the piece to an end.

IV. Analysis: Role of Symbolism

The use of symbolism plays a great role in creating the feeling and understanding of *One Thousand North*. With the overall goal being to bring the listeners to a country road, certain motives, instrumentation, and texture were chosen to achieve this. The piece is introduced with an open C major chord by the upper woodwinds, along with a gentle sweeping of the mark tree. The mark tree represents the sound of the wind chimes that my mother hangs outside during the summer months. Along with the gentle sounds of the mark tree, I decided to open with only

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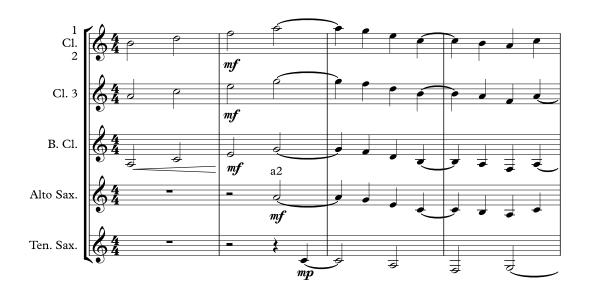
flutes and clarinets. During the opening, flutes and clarinets are asked to use vibrato in order to create the sense of a gentle breeze that stirs the wind chimes.

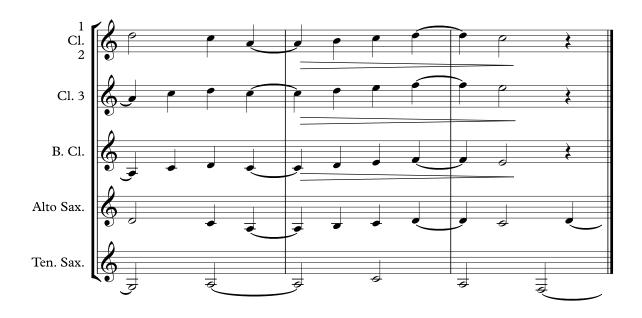
As previously mentioned, the opening three-note motive from the piccolo solo mimics a birdsong that I recall hearing when the sun first rises over the farm. The decision to place this motive in the piccolo instead of the flute was made based on the timbre of the instruments. I find that birdcalls are not always pure. With the nature of the tone of the instrument often being a little airy, it was the perfect fit.

This motive is passed around by the upper woodwinds and later is given to the brass section. The first variation on the three-note motif takes place in the clarinet solo in m. 13-17. The theme is extended upon through the use of stepwise eighth-note motion, pushing the piece forward as it rises into the oboe solo. This motion creates a connection to the idea of the introduction by representing the sun bringing light and awakening the land and the birds.

As seen in Example 6, a few measures after the oboe and clarinet motion, a chorale texture is created between the clarinets and saxophones. The rising of the melodic lines symbolizes the rising of mist in the early part of the morning. The lines gradually rise in a series of thirds until they reach a high point. This high point represents how mist will tend to linger in midair and appears to slowly come back down, as the melodic lines do. Along with this, the voices are layered into three different parts representing the layers of mist. The first layer is made up of the clarinet section, the middle layer, alto and tenor saxophone; and the bottom layer being the baritone saxophone. Each layer enters at various times with the clarinets entering and rising first, as the first layer of mist is always lighter than the bottom layer which could be seen as somewhat heavy and thick, making the baritone saxophone a good choice for this layer.

Example 6: One Thousand North, clarinet and saxophone chorale, m. 21-28, concert pitch





The mist continues to rise and more birdcalls emerge from the ensemble as the sun begins to break through. Right before this break, the original piccolo motive returns with the light touch of a triangle hit, representing that something new is coming. At this point, the trumpet solo enters representing that first strong light that hits the land.

Example 7: One Thousand North, trumpet solo, m. 36-38, concert pitch



At m. 38, the piece begins to build and push forward as more voices are added and the woodwinds begin a series of sixteenth note patterns. I view the sixteenth note patterns as the breeze slowly building up and bringing something new, in this case preparing for the beginning of new material in the B section.

As briefly mentioned before, the B section contains a piccolo solo that is left up to the performer with regard to tempo and overall expression. As was seen in Example 2, the original three note motive returns, but starts on the concert pitch "A" in the grace note instead of "G". Following the same idea, this moment symbolizes the quiet moments that can only be experienced away from the city. This feeling of almost complete silence can be unsettling for some, and when first working with the soloist for this part, I found that it made her playing very timid. To encourage her, I asked her to imagine being the bird producing this call. You are up on a tree branch looking out into the wide-open spaces, with only a gentle breeze as your sound

source. You feel alone, but you know that your family and companions are out there waiting to hear your call. You quietly begin your call with at first long pauses listening for an answer, when you don't hear an answer you call out again, this time with a longer message. Eventually, your message becomes a little stronger and you begin to fly about until you finally hear the answer you had been waiting for.

In this case the answer that the piccolo or the "bird" has been waiting for is the call from the french horn. As seen in example eight, coming in a couple of beats after the entrances of the whole notes from the upper woodwinds and lower brass, it responds to the call in a form of an answer, with a slight repetition at the beginning of the phrase. The trumpets and upper woodwinds repeat this, symbolizing how birds mimic each other's calls. An excerpt of this can been seen in example nine, displaying how the trumpets and woodwinds keep the same melodic idea, but transform it into a new idea.

Example 8: One Thousand North, Horn in F response, m. 104-107, concert pitch



Example 9: *One Thousand North*, trumpets and upper woodwinds repetition, m. 107-109, concert pitch



V. Conclusion

After the first reading of *One Thousand North* at an Indianapolis Symphonic Band rehearsal, I had several members tell me how it reminded them of an Aaron Copland work. At the time I was surprised, because I had not been listening to any Copland during the compositional process of this work. However, after working with the group on the piece for several weeks I began to see the connection. The beginning of my piece greatly resembles that of *Appalachian Spring*, with the slow introduction of instruments and a solo introducing the main theme of the piece. While I enjoy seeing this connection to such a great composer whose music evoked the American landscape, I am glad that I did not use *Appalachian Spring* as my inspiration. Using my family's farm as inspiration gives a great personal connection between my music and the place I love. A select few people have experienced the sounds and feelings of being out on the farm and it was a joy to bring this to others through music. In addition, this piece has been dedicated to my loving parents, because without them this piece would have never been created. Their support and encouragement has been endless over the years and during this piece's creation, words will never be enough to thank them.

One Thousand North

for wind ensemble

Amber Beams

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One Thousand North

Duration: ca. 10:00

Instrumentation:

Piccolo

3 Flutes

2 Oboes

Bassoon

3 Clarinets in Bb

Bass Clarinet in Bb

2 Alto Saxophone in Eb

Tenor Saxophone in Bb

Baritone Saxophone Eb

4 Trumpets in Bb

4 Horns in F

2 Trombones

2 Euphoniums

2 Tubas

Timpani

2 Percussion:

Perc. 1: Vibraphone, Triangle

Perc. 2: Mark Tree, Suspended Cymbal, Bass Drum

Program Notes

Fifty miles west of Indianapolis, Indiana lies an old country road known to the locals as West County Road 1000 North. Along this road, each passing field, barn, and house has its own story filled with family history. My family's farm is no exception to this, with the farm being in the family for over fifty years, I am proud of where I call home. Picture a place where bird songs are always heard, your nearest neighbor is down the road and around the corner, and the idea of rush hour traffic is being stuck behind a tractor; with these ideas in mind, welcome to *One Thousand North*.



































Mark Tree

Sus. Cym. BD