The Five Stages of Grief: A Composition for Brass Ensemble

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF:
A COMPOSITION FOR BRASS ENSEMBLE

A Major Qualifying Project Report

submitted to the Faculty

of the

WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Science

in Humanities and Arts, Concentration in Music

by

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Christopher R. Hango, HU

29 April 2015

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Professor Douglas G. Weeks, Advisor
Abstract

Countless composers have written music motivated by death and the grieving process. In the same way, I composed The Five Stages of Grief, a five-movement piece for brass ensemble, inspired by the Kübler-Ross Model which was proposed by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D. in On Death and Dying (1969). Each of the stages she described (denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) functioned as a catalyst in the composition of a movement. Following its completion, the work was rehearsed and by the WPI Brass Ensemble.
Acknowledgements

The help and support of Professor Douglas Weeks and the WPI Department of Humanities and Arts were greatly appreciated and essential to the success of this project. I would like to give special thanks to the members of the WPI Brass Ensemble: John Mastroianni, Ed Partlow, Greg Stockman, and Stephanie Chin (Trumpet); Peter Melander, Erik Nadel, and John Amante (French Horn); Emily Chretien (Tuba); Peter Leondires, Rachel Prescott, and Allison Kenney (Trombone); Jonathan Sawin (Baritone Horn); Greg Port, Alex Shefferman, and Heather Davis (Percussion).
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1 Introduction

*The Five Stages of Grief* is an original composition, comprised of five movements: *First Stage: Denial and Isolation, Second Stage: Anger, Third Stage: Bargaining, Fourth Stage: Depression,* and *Fifth Stage: Acceptance.* The composition of this piece was motivated by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’s five stages of grief (the *Kübler-Ross Model*), which was first presented in her book *On Death and Dying* (Kübler-Ross, 1969). Upon completion of my piece, I rehearsed and premiered the work in conjunction with the WPI Brass Ensemble.

Historically, many significant musical works have been inspired by death, dying, or the grieving process. The powerful emotions experienced by composers and artists alike have been the source of inspiration for many of the great works of art we know today. Several prominent examples are discussed in the Literature Review section (Mozart, 1792; Verdi, 1874; Duruflé, 1947; Stravinsky, 1966; Mahler, 1905; Rückert, 1872; Schubert, 1824).

The *Kübler-Ross Model* served as the vehicle for writing *The Five Stages of Grief.* Almost fifty years ago, the revolutionary ideas presented in *On Death and Dying* reshaped the field of healthcare. The U.S. National Library of Medicine, the world’s largest medical library, credited her as the woman that “pioneered the concept of providing psychological counseling to the dying” in her biography. They also stated that “[t]he topic of death had been avoided by many physicians and the book quickly became a standard text for professionals who work with terminally ill patients” (U.S. National Library of Medicine). The American Academy of Political and Social Science praised Kübler-Ross for recognizing a need for change and argued that she “simultaneously addressed a taboo topic and evoked the hostility of her medical colleagues while acting as a patient’s advocate” (Germain, 1980).
Although the Kübler-Ross Model is by far the most well-known and accepted grief model, many others have been proposed, at least one of which appeared prior to the publishing of *On Death and Dying* (Engel, 1964; Bowlby & Parkes, 1970; Worden, 1982; Sanders, 1992; Rando, 1993). These theories are discussed further and compared to the Kübler-Ross Model in the Literature Review section.

Kübler-Ross explicitly stated that the stages “are not stops on some linear timeline in grief” (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005); however, I treated them as distinct, ordered entities while composing in order to give the piece structure. In reality, a typical progression through the stages of grief is unorderly and often includes overlapping or repeated stages.

From a technical standpoint, I composed the piece for an 11-piece brass ensemble consisting of four trumpets in B flat, three horns in F, three trombones, and one tuba. In addition, there are parts for drumset (*Bargaining, Acceptance*), timpani (*Anger*), crash cymbal (*Anger*), snare drum (*Anger, Depression*), and bass drum (*Anger, Depression*). My compositional process is discussed at length in the Composition Methodology section.
2 Literature Review

2.1 The Kübler-Ross Model: The Five Stages of Grief

In *On Death and Dying*, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross summarized her findings about the grieving process patients experience after learning of their terminal illness. In the preface, she stated that the book was the result of two and half years of interviews with dying patients (Kübler-Ross, 1969). Kübler-Ross’s intent was not to present a comprehensive work on the psychology of her patients, nor was it to simplify the grieving process into a distinct progression of phases which remain constant across all grievers. Rather, she simply wanted to call attention to the needs of terminally ill patients, whose perspectives were seldom considered and voices went unheared.

In 2005, Kübler-Ross published a collaborative work with David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*, in which she applied her theory to describe the grieving process one undergoes upon the loss of a loved one. By extension, the emotions experienced in these stages might be felt in every type of loss, regardless of its severity or tangibility. Such a ‘loss’ could be the loss of a job, a divorce, an illness, or simply a bad test grade. In each of these cases, it is likely that emotions associated with some (if not all) of the stages—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—might be experienced in some way.

After interviewing two hundred patients, Dr. Kübler-Ross proposed that the emotions associated with loss could be classified into five categories, or stages. She also observed a general order in which these emotions were experienced, though stages were often revisited, overlapped, or skipped entirely. She was careful to state that there is no normal grieving process and that her stages were only meant to help identify and understand the emotions one was experiencing. She
repeatedly warned that the stages correspond to typical emotions one might feel which can be used as “tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling”, emphasizing that “there is no typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss” (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 7).

It should be noted that, despite her warnings, the stages have been wildly misinterpreted and simplified by the general population as a series of checkpoints, through which one must pass in an orderly fashion to complete the grieving process. Although commonly misunderstood by the general population, it cannot be denied that the Kübler-Ross Model has been widely accepted by medical professionals and has had a profound effect on today’s society.

2.2 Other Stage Models of Grief

Although the Kübler-Ross Model is the most prominent and accepted stage model of grief, the concept of modeling grief in this way is not unique; many others have proposed similar models. Five of these stage theories are presented and compared with Kübler-Ross Model in Table 1 below (Engel, 1964; Kübler-Ross, 1969; Bowlby & Parkes, 1970; Worden, 1982; Sanders, 1992; Rando, 1993).
The Five Stages of Grief

George Engel (1964)
- Shock and disbelief
- Developing awareness
- Restitution
- Resolution of the loss
- Recovery

Kübler-Ross (1969)
- Denial and isolation
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Bowlby & Parkes (1970)
- Numbness
- Yearning and searching
- Disorganization and disrepair
- Reorganization

William Worden (1982)
- Denial and isolation
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Catherine Sanders (1992)
- Numbness
- Yearning and searching
- Disorganization and disrepair
- Reorganization

Therese Rando (1993)
- Recognize
- React
- Recollect and reexperience
- Relinquish
- Readjust
- Reinvest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Four Tasks of Grief and Mourning</th>
<th>The Four Stages of Grief</th>
<th>The Six “R” Processes of Mourning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To accept the reality of the loss</td>
<td>1. Shock</td>
<td>1. Recognize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To process the pain of grief</td>
<td>2. Awareness of loss</td>
<td>2. React</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing</td>
<td>3. Conservation and the need to withdraw</td>
<td>3. Recollect and reexperience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life</td>
<td>4. Renewal</td>
<td>4. Relinquish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Other notable stage theories of grief compared to the Kübler-Ross Model.

While many of these other theories seem remarkably similar to the Kübler-Ross Model, none have enjoyed the same level of success. It is interesting to note that, one of the most significant models presented in Table 1, published in the American Journal of Nursing, was actually proposed before the publishing of On Death and Dying (Engel, 1964), yet the work went almost unrecognized.

Some of the authors listed in Table 1 had specific claims as to why their models were different than the others. For example, Worden stated in his book Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner that phases imply a passive movement through grief, whereas the mourning process should be more active. By considering tasks, the process is much more active, implying that there is something the griever can do about the situation (Worden, 1982).
Similarly, Rando claimed that the grieving process would be successfully completed once the griever had completed the six R’s, which stood for: recognize the loss, react to the separation, recollect and re-experience the deceased and the relationship, relinquish old attachments to the deceased and the old assumptive world, readjust to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old world, and reinvest emotional energy into new people and goals (Rando, 1993).

In contrast to the many qualitatively-based theories, it is worth mentioning that some institutions have even pursued quantitatively-based research to develop a stage model of grief, such as one recently completed at Yale University (Maciejewski, Zhang, Block, & Prigerson, 2007).

2.3 Death and the Grieving Process as Artistic Motivation

In addition to the literary works which motivated this project, several musical and artistic works provided significant influence. Throughout history, composers have regularly drawn on the phenomena of death and grief as compositional material. Perhaps most notably, many famous composers have written compositions based on the original Latin text of the Requiem Mass\(^1\), creating a new and distinct genre of music (Mozart, 1792; Verdi, 1874; Duruflé, 1947; Stravinsky, 1966). In the early 20\(^{th}\) century, Gustav Mahler composed *Kindertotenlieder*, or *Songs on the Death of Children* (Mahler, 1905), based on a collection of 428 poems written by Friedrich Rückert in the early 19\(^{th}\) century. These poems were written in reaction to and as a coping mechanism for the death of his two children, who died of scarlet fever (Rückert, 1872). In 1824, Franz Schubert wrote the famous *String Quartet No. 14*, more commonly referred to as *Death and the Maiden*. This piece was written after he became terminally ill and realized he was dying (Schubert, 1824).

---

\(^1\) The Requiem Mass, or Mass for the Dead, is a traditional Mass celebrated by the Catholic Church.
Throughout history, the massive pain, grief, and mystery associated with death have served as the driving force behind the creation of many of our greatest compositions.
3 Composition Methodology

3.1 Conception and Framework

As previously stated, I selected the Kübler-Ross Model as my basic framework. This was simply because it is the most widely-accepted, universally known stage theory, and my fundamental goal was to connect with the audience.

I chose to work with the brass ensemble for several reasons. As a trumpet player and four-year member of the WPI Brass Ensemble, it is the medium which I am most familiar with. Due to my relative inexperience in ensemble composition, there was also an obvious advantage in selecting a small ensemble. The range of textures and sounds a brass ensemble is capable of producing seemed very appropriate for this composition. I had no doubt that the powerful ferocity associated with anger and the somber lamentations of depression could be compellingly portrayed in this medium.

Although I have studied atonal music, such as the work *Gruppen* by Karlheinz Stockhausen which I performed with the WPI Orchestra in November 2013, I made the decision to write a tonal composition (Stockhausen, 1957). The primary reason for this is that tonal music is much more approachable and fit well with my goal of connecting with the audience. In a similar sense, I wrote highly programmatic music, as opposed to absolute music. Program music is written for a definite purpose with specific extra-musical ideas in mind, whereas absolute music is intended to be appreciated solely for the sounds that comprise it. Since the inspiration for my composition was psychological in nature, the piece can be clearly classified as program music.
3.2 First Stage: Denial and Isolation

Grief is triggered by a loss, whether it’s in the form of a death, the news of a terminal illness, or even something far less tragic. I chose to include this initial loss in the beginning of the Denial movement. The compositional technique I used to convey a tragic event falls under the category of aleatory music. Aleatoricism is the incorporation of chance into the creation of artwork. Chance is often precisely the force which governs when a loss occurs.

To fabricate the randomness and awfulness associated with a loss, I gave each musician the freedom to play any note during the first measure of the piece (Figure 1). Coupled with strict dynamic regulation—a fortepiano followed by a crescendo—this pick-a-note effect is unlikely to sound exactly the same twice, yet very likely to sound dramatically terrible. Similarly, no loss is exactly the same, yet all are unpleasant. Please note that all score excerpts will be shown in concert pitch.

Figure 1: Opening of the piece, representing the initial loss (*Denial*, m. 1-6).
The initial chaos of the loss lifts to reveal a single note sustaining in the first horn, which, after an additional measure of sustain, begins the melodic material of the movement. After the tragedy strikes, the griever is in a state of shock, and so the melody moves rather sluggishly. The last four bars of the main melodic theme are shown in Figure 2 below.

![Figure 2: Second half of main melodic theme (Denial, m. 7-10).](image)

At marker B, the melody shifts to the first trumpet and the tempo picks up slightly. The griever moves into a stage of denial. The mind is unable to handle the emotions all at once, and denial functions as a protective mechanism. Life attempts to continue as if nothing has happened. Also beginning at marker B, the horns and trombones have a duple figure played against the triple figure in the trumpet melody (Figure 3). This creates a sort of robotic feel, as the mind moves into autopilot.

![Figure 3: Triple melody countered by duple figure (Denial, m. 11-14).](image)
Every once in a while, however, the realization that the loss did in fact occur will come flooding back to the griever’s conscious mind. For this reason, I used the pick-a-note technique to interrupt the melody multiple times throughout the piece. The first reoccurrence happens after just four more bars—in the 9/8 bar contained in Figure 4 below.

![Figure 4: First interruption by pick-a-note technique (Denial, m. 15-18).](image)

Section C marks the introduction of a new melody, equally as ignorant to reality as the first. This new melody, carried by trumpet 3, is shown in Figure 5 below.

![Figure 5: Introduction of new melody at C (Denial, m. 27-35).](image)

At rehearsal marker D, the first trumpet introduces another similar melody, the first four bars of which are shown in Figure 6.
At E, the original melody returns, this time in the key of F minor (a half step higher). F brings a slight rhythmic variation on the melody introduced in Figure 6. Finally, at G, the original melody is stated and ends with harmonies above the melody, in the trumpet 1 part. These final four bars are shown in Figure 7.
3.3 **Second Stage: Anger**

In the second movement, the griever has finally grasped the reality of the loss and, feeling helpless, resorts to outbursts of unsolicited anger because it provides a much-desired feeling of control.

The A section functions as an introduction to the piece. The main rhythmic and harmonic motif of the movement is a four-measure line which reappears in several variations. Its first occurrence is in the first four bars of the piece, shown below in the 3rd and 4th trumpet parts (Figure 8).

![Figure 8: First occurrence of the main motif (Anger, m. 1-4).](image)

The descending pattern of two whole steps followed by a half step (trumpet 3) creates a sense of the impending doom and wrath that is associated with anger. When played in conjunction with the fourth trumpet line, which is simply a concert D repeated in the same rhythmic pattern, the evolving harmony further strengthens the sense of a downward progression of events.

After the fortissimo opening, section B is suddenly soft and sparse. Similarly, someone in the anger stage would experience periods of relative calm between outbursts of anger. The texture shifts from a full ensemble to a trumpet-horn duet, reproduced in Figure 9 below. This is the first appearance of the main melodic figure.
The other prominent feature of this section is the snare drum’s reiterated, militant pattern (Figure 10), which appears many times throughout the rest of the piece. The line keeps the piece moving forward with a kind of restless drive that someone in this stage might experience.

Another loud and fully voiced section begins at marker C. The melody from B is shifted down a scale degree and overlaid on the original motif (Figure 11), representing the previously quiet thoughts which are now being put into action.
Section D returns once again to a low dynamic level and sparse instrumentation, though this time in 5/4 rather than 3/4. By extending the distance between beat one of each measure, this section feels less frantic and slightly more relaxed, without actually being any slower in tempo. The melodic riff is split between the four trumpet parts and is accompanied by interjecting hits from the French horn section on beat 5 of each measure. Four bars of this dialogue are shown in Figure 12 below.

![Figure 12: Riff split across trumpets with interjections by horn section (Anger, m. 65-68).](image)

The scattering of melodic ideas and the horn interjections imitate the conflicting thoughts that overwhelm one’s mind during this stage. In measure 73 (see Figure 13 below), the first horn introduces a new melody above the chaos. The continual trumpet riffs aid to partially obscure the solo, mimicking loss of thought clarity experienced in this stage.
Apart from the obvious use of brass to convey power, many percussive aspects are employed throughout this piece to give it a feeling of conflict. Also highly apparent in section D is the driving figure played by the timpani (Figure 14).

Coming out of the horn solo, at rehearsal marker E, an 8 bar trombone solo begins (Figure 15), shifting into the key of C minor.

This solo, written in 4/4 time, is repeated as trumpet and horn parts are added. Leading up to marker F, the main theme returns, this time written in 4/4. The extra beat resulting from rewriting the main theme in 4/4 creates a feeling of discontinuity. Three beat fragments of frantic and fully-voiced emotion are segmented by single beats of rest, emulating the nature of outbursts which occur during this stage. The four before F are demonstrated in Figure 16 below.
Immediately following the 1/4 bar, section F returns to a last iteration of the main theme, in 3/4 time and the original key of D minor. As demonstrated by Figure 17, trumpets 3 and 4 begin playing the theme one measure after trumpets 1 and 2. The frequent occurrence of minor seconds created by this lag creates a sense of chaos. The chaotic melody, in combination with the increasing dynamic level, leads to a climatic and sudden ending in the seventeenth bar of F.

![Figure 17: Chaos created by layering the melodic theme with a one bar offset (Anger, m. 105-108).](image)

In a very general sense, I composed this movement with two basic objectives. The first was to effectively employ the capabilities of a brass ensemble to convey the rage associated with anger. Secondly, I attempted to structure the movement to accurately capture the misplaced, illogical, and even random anger the unstable griever experiences toward others during this stage.
3.4 **Third Stage: Bargaining**

In the bargaining stage, the griever tries to come up with a scenario in which the object of the loss can be retrieved. While this is clearly impossible in the case of death, where physical circumstances prevent the return of the deceased one, it is less straightforward in the case of, for example, divorce. Even in the case where a loved one has died, the griever will try to find a way out of the situation. One might make a deal with God that if it all ends up being a bad dream, he or she will become religious. The point is that the griever runs through many scenarios, trying to bargain a way out of the current situation.

I emulated the emotions of bargaining using several different methods in this movement. First, I opened the piece with a rhythmic and harmonic framework that sets a mood of panic. One would certainly feel panicked while running through endless scenarios in their mind. The first four bars of this introduction are demonstrated in Figure 18 below.

![Figure 18: Introductory material (Bargaining, m. 1-4).](image-url)
The harmonic framework of this four-bar phrase, which is repeated frequently throughout the movement, is in fact very similar to that of Anger. The tuba plays the same descending pattern while the upper voices play the same pitches in each measure. This emphasizes the connection between the two stages: while Anger involves trying to control the situation by force, Bargaining involves asking again, but nicely this time.

I represented the various bargains a griever would make with different melodies throughout this movement. The first melody is introduced in the first trumpet at marker C (Figure 19).

![Figure 19: Introduction of Theme I (Bargaining, m. 17-20).](image)

At marker D, a new four bar theme is introduced, in the third trumpet (Figure 20).

![Figure 20: Introduction of Theme II (Bargaining, m. 25-28).](image)

As you can see, these two themes are dynamically, melodically, and rhythmically quite different. In the next 8 bars, the second theme is intertwined with a variation on the first theme by splitting each into four and alternating between the two at the beginning of each bar. This is shown in Figure 21.

![Figure 21: Variation on Theme I intertwined with Theme II (Bargaining, m. 29-36).](image)
This rapid movement between melodies represents the rapid movement between thoughts and bargaining methods the griever uses. At E, this pattern abruptly stops, and the tempo moves into half-time. A brand new melody, much different in tone and texture, is carried first by the French horn for 8 bars, and then by the first trumpet. The first 8 bars are shown in Figure 22.

![Figure 22: Introduction of Theme III (Bargaining, m. 44-52).](image)

This new melody is played over complex chords containing lots of color tones, in comparison to the very simple harmonic structure of the rest of the movement. Sections F through H return to previously stated melodic material, but vary one parameter to symbolize asking for the same thing in different ways: meter. At F, Theme I has been rewritten into 3/4 time. After 8 bars, Themes I and II (now both rewritten in 3/4 time) are alternated in exactly the same way as they were in Figure 21. Eight bars of this are reproduced in Figure 23 below.

![Figure 23: Themes I and II intertwined and rewritten in 3/4 time (Bargaining, m. 69-76).](image)

By changing the time signature, each measure has been shortened by one beat. This effectively forces the melody to move more quickly, creating a more frantic feel. At G, the introductory material returns in 4/4 time, and there is a key change. The piece comes to a rapid conclusion after
passing through 3/4 at H, and finally a much quicker 2/4 at I. As before, this periodic shortening of time signature serves to create a more frantic feel, right up to the abrupt end of the movement.
3.5 **Fourth Stage: Depression**

In the fourth stage, the griever has finally abandoned all attempts to change the loss, through anger or bargaining. All energy and will to fight are rapidly replaced by feelings of sadness and indifference toward life.

Kübler-Ross identified and discussed two distinct types of depression: reactive depression and preparatory depression. Reactive depression refers to the natural sadness we experience when something bad takes place. Preparatory depression, on the other hand, refers to the emotions one experiences while preparing for the loss of everything he or she loves (in the case of a terminally ill patient). Arguably, this preparatory type of depression can be observed in any other griever dealing with a loss. The griever will experience these emotions while trying to adjust to the new reality of life without the person or thing that has been lost.

While composing, I deliberately split this movement into two distinct sections; the first (measures 1-32) representing reactive depression and the second (measures 33-88) representing preparatory depression.

The movement begins with a slow, 16-bar horn solo made up of two melodic lines. The first 8 bars are reproduced in Figure 24.

![Figure 24: Introduction of the first melodic figure (Depression, m. 1-8).](image)

This legato riff, accompanied by sustained chords in the trombone and tuba parts, contrasts greatly with the second melodic line, shown in Figure 25.
In contrast to the first melody, the notes in the second are much more separated and deliberate, rather than free-flowing. The accompanying trombone and tuba parts now consist of short, repeated chords on each beat. Equally as important as the notes in this movement are the rests, both between phrases and within them. Often, someone experiencing depression is content simply sitting in silence. Therefore, I felt it was crucial to incorporate silence into the music itself.

In section C, the solo turns into a duet between the trumpet and horn, shown in Figure 26 below.

The horn repeats the first melody (from bars 1-8), while the trumpet repeats the second melody (from bars 9-16), this time in a legato style. The caesura just before D (measure 24) serves to incorporate silence and lack of continuity into the movement.

D is essentially a restatement of C, with the exception that measures alternate between 3/4 and 4/4 time. Four bars are shown in Figure 27.
The inclusion of an extra beat in every other measure once again creates a feeling of discontinuity, or at least less uniformity. The inclusion of the 3rd trumpet part adds a cyclic tension and release profile, emulating the emotional fluctuations experienced by the griever.

The remainder of the movement, sections E through J, is written in a much different style, and describes preparatory depression. A sudden key change, increase in tempo, and time change to bars of alternating 6/8 and 3/4 establish a change in attitude of the griever. The first 8 bars, shown in Figure 28 below, introduce the main melody in the form of a horn solo.

This phase of depression is slightly more hopeful, yet certainly not happy or upbeat; however, there is more motivation behind the thoughts and actions of the person. This solo line is accompanied by long, sustained notes in the trumpet section. Throughout the remainder of the movement, this melody is in turn passed to a different instrument (trombone, horn, then trumpet), each time accompanied by a different section (horns, trombones, then horns & trombones). The changes in texture are indicative of the numerous perspectives one will contemplate when deep in the depression stage.
3.6 **Fifth Stage: Acceptance**

After experiencing depression and mourning, the griever finally comes to accept the loss and learn to live with it. Far from being a happy, the griever will never be completely fine with the loss. Rather, the acceptance stage is almost void of feelings. It is a peaceful stage. Following the tiring struggle through the first four stages, the griever can finally rest.

In contrast to the other four movements, *Acceptance* is structured much more like a pop song: verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, verse, chorus, verse. These sections correspond to rehearsal markers A-H in the appended score.

Throughout each verse, the French horn carries the melody, a four bar figure played twice in each verse (Figure 29).

![Figure 29: Verse melody written for solo horn (*Acceptance*, m. 1-4).](image)

The slow tempo, 60 beats per minute, is very relaxed, while the melody is very free, creating a very different feeling than any of the material in previous movements.

In the chorus sections, the 1st trumpet carries the melody, with the 2nd trumpet providing a harmony. The first four bars of the eight-bar chorus are shown in Figure 30.

![Figure 30: Chorus melody and harmony, carried by trumpets 1 and 2 (*Acceptance*, m. 9-12).](image)
In contrast to the relatively quickly moving verse melody, the chorus melody contains many sustained and repeated notes. The moving lines beneath the melody, in particular the horn riff (shown in Figure 31), compliment the relatively stagnant melody to create a heightened sense of emotion and energy throughout the choruses, while still maintaining the same general feeling as the verses.

![Figure 31: Horn riff underlying the chorus melody (Acceptance, m. 9-12).](image)

Section E, the bridge, comes after the second chorus and begins by modulating from concert E flat to concert G. As it progresses, three melodic phrases are layered on top of each other. The first of these riffs is essentially a G pentatonic scale, played by the second horn (see Figure 32).

![Figure 32: G pentatonic riff in 2nd horn (Acceptance, m. 32-35).](image)

Four bars later, a new riff appears in the first horn part, played in conjunction with the second horn riff (see Figure 33).

![Figure 33: 1st horn riff in bridge (Acceptance, m. 36-39).](image)

After another four bars, another new riff appears in the first trumpet part, played with both the second and first horn licks previously mentioned (see Figure 34).

![Figure 34: 1st trumpet riff (Acceptance, m. 40-43).](image)
Four bars later, the trumpet riff is echoed by the first trombone. The pentatonic nature, narrow pitch range, and crossing melodies throughout this section create dense tone clusters and make distinguishing each of the individual melodies difficult. This harmonic technique offers relief from the repetitive and simple nature of the rest of the movement. The bridge concludes by transitioning back into the key of E flat and returning to a verse (section F).

G, the final chorus, is a slight variation on the previous two choruses, in the sense that a new moving line has been added. Trumpets 3 and 4 play a sequence of 16th notes in unison above the melody played by trumpet 1. The first four bars can be seen in Figure 35.

![Figure 35: New moving figure played above melody in final chorus (Acceptance, m. 65-68).](image)

The addition of this moving line supplements the conclusion of the piece with a heightened sense of energy and emotion.

The final verse, section H, also includes a slight variation. Similar to section G, new harmonies above the horn 1 melody were added, but this time in the form of sustained notes. The first four bars are reproduced in Figure 36.
Again, these were added to create a heightened sense of emotion and closure signaling the conclusion of the piece.

Finally, the piece ends with a fading out E flat suspended four chord, rather than an E flat major chord as the listener expects. This was primarily done to catch the listener slightly off guard, while leaving the piece simultaneously resolved and unresolved. It feels almost complete, due to the presence of the E flat the ear expects, yet the nature of the suspension expects a resolution to the major chord. Just as the griever is never completely okay with the loss, the piece never really feels complete.
4 Rehearsals & Performance

Working with my composition in a live setting, as opposed to the digital setting of Sibelius, brought forth many new insights and complications. A preliminary run of the partially-finished composition was done approximately four months prior to the April 19, 2015 premiere date. Regular rehearsals took place twice a week in the month leading up to the performance.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in this phase was associated with ensemble instrumentation. The original score called for four independent French horn parts, but due to the availability of only three horn players, the horn lines had to be condensed and redistributed. Finding an adequate number of percussionists was also a challenge. In the end, I was able to find three, one of whom was able to cover the bass drum and cymbal part simultaneously during Second Stage: Anger, the movement with the most parts. Finally, the ensemble contained a baritone horn, for which no part had been written. This was solved by doubling with the tuba part.

The next significant change was accommodating individual performer ranges. Sibelius has the very useful capability of warning the composer when notes are outside the typical range an instrument. However, its predictions occasionally underestimated or overestimated certain instrumentalists. The principal horn in the ensemble was comfortable playing higher than what Sibelius considered the typical range to be. In a couple cases, doing so provided exactly the effect I desired, so I took advantage of this. On the other hand, certain sections I wrote for the trombone section were well within the predicted range, but were found to be difficult to play by the ensemble and had to be lowered significantly. In order to balance these parameters, the key had to be adjusted in most of the movements, while minimizing the number of sharps and flats in the key signatures of each transposing part.
From the standpoint of hours spent during this revision process, formatting the individual parts consumed the most time. Articulations were frequently on the wrong side of notes, tempo markings often overlapped with staff text or rehearsal markers, dynamic markings were often hidden by notes themselves, and page turns had not been facilitated. The former of these problems could have been solved automatically by editing the engraving rules, but by the time I discovered this, I had already fixed approximately half of the errors and would have had to manually undo that work.

Unrelated to the composition itself, I had the technical challenge of conducting for the first time and running several of the rehearsals on my own. While this was very shaky at first, it was likely due to a lack of confidence (having never done it before) and the ensemble's unfamiliarity with the piece, especially considering the frequent variation in meter. After a few rehearsals, things began to flow much more smoothly, and I was able to successfully conduct the premiere of my composition.

In the week immediately preceding the performance, I tackled several promotional and graphic design tasks. In addition to inviting guests I designed a poster and concert program using Microsoft Publisher. These particular files can be found in Appendix A: Promotional Materials.

The final task I undertook was ensuring adequate documentation of my performance. I recorded video and audio of the performance separately and later joined into a single file. The video was recorded in high definition, and the audio in high quality WAV format. The file, labelled Appendix C, has been submitted with this paper. Alternatively, it has been posted on YouTube at the following URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOzAJ-FKWQs.
5 Conclusions

After more than a year of hard work, it was immensely satisfying to showcase my composition to family, friends, and the broader WPI community. During the rehearsal phase, the ensemble members provided highly constructive feedback. Of equal value were the comments and reactions I received from audience members following the live performance and video posting. I found my presentation to the Humanities and Arts faculty particularly exciting because it provided an opportunity to rationalize my compositional techniques and methodology, as I have done in this paper. In general, my work was extremely well received, and I enjoyed the interdisciplinary and challenging nature of the project I undertook.
References


Duruflé, M. *Requiem*.


Mahler, G. *Kindertotenlieder*.

Mozart, W. A. *Requiem Mass in D minor*.


Rückert, F. *Kindertotenlieder*.


Schubert, F. *String Quartet No. 14*.


Stockhausen, K. *Gruppen*.

Stravinsky, I. *Requiem Canticles*.


Verdi, G. *Messa da Requiem*.

Appendix A: Promotional Materials

The Five Stages of Grief

A Humanities & Arts MQP
Featuring the WPI Brass Ensemble
Composed by Christopher R. Hango

Sunday,
April 19, 2015
2:00pm
Alden Memorial
Special Thanks to:
Professor Douglas Weeks, Advisor
WPI Brass Ensemble
Department of Humanities & Arts

The Five Stages of Grief

A Humanities & Arts MQP
Featuring the WPI Brass Ensemble
Composed by Christopher R. Hango

Sunday,
April 19, 2015
2:00pm
Alden Memorial

The Five Stages of Grief
I. First Stage: Denial and Isolation
II. Second Stage: Anger
III. Third Stage: Bargaining
IV. Fourth Stage: Depression
V. Fifth Stage: Acceptance
—Christopher R. Hango, 2015

Program Notes
Countless artists have created works inspired by death and the grieving process. For example, the Latin text from the Catholic Requiem Mass (Mass for the Dead) has been set to music by famous composers such as Mozart, Verdi, Brahms, and Stravinsky. Friedrich Rückert wrote a collection of 428 poems entitled Kindertotenlieder (Songs on the Death of Children) after his wife died of scarlet fever. This text was set to music by Gustav Mahler in 1905.

Inspired by the groundbreaking work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D., I composed The Five Stages of Grief. In her 1969 book On Death and Dying, Dr. Kübler-Ross introduced the now widely-accepted stages of grief: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Her observations regarding the emotions one experiences during these stages functioned as catalysts in the composition of the five-movements presented here.

The WPI Brass Ensemble
Trumpet
John Mastrolamni
Ed Partlow
Greg Stockman
Stephanie Chin
French Horn
Peter Melander
Erik Nadel
John Amante
Tuba
Emily Chretien
Trombone
Peter Leonides
Rachel Prescott
Allison Kenney
Baritone Horn
Jonathan Sawin
Percussion
Greg Port
Alex Shiferman
Heather Davis

Christopher R. Hango
Christopher Hango is a senior at Worcester Polytechnic Institute pursuing Bachelor of Science degrees in Chemical Engineering and Humanities & Arts with a concentration in Music. He began studying piano at the age of 8 and has subsequently studied trumpet, guitar, and voice. Chris has been a member of the WPI Brass Ensemble and WPI Concert Band for four years. Additionally, he has served as President of the WPI Music Association and Treasurer of the WPI Symphonic Association. In his hometown of West Berkshire, Vermont, Chris is actively involved in community theatre and several ensembles.

The Five Stages of Grief represents over a year of background reading and composition, fulfilling the Major Qualifying Project (MQP) requirement in Humanities & Arts with a concentration in Music.
Appendix B: Score and Individual Parts
The Five Stages of Grief
FIRST STAGE: DENIAL AND ISOLATION

Copyright © 2013
1st Trumpet in B♭

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
SECOND STAGE: ANGER

Christopher R. Hango

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1st Trumpet in B♭
THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
FIFTH STAGE: ACCEPTANCE

Christopher R. Hango

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2ND TRUMPET IN Bb

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

FIRST STAGE: DENIAL AND ISOLATION

Christopher R. Hango

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
SECOND STAGE: ANGER

2ND TRUMPET IN B♭

Copyright © 2015
2nd Trumpet in B♭

The Five Stages of Grief

Fourth Stage: Depression

Christopher R. Hango

Copyright © 2015
2ND TRUMPET IN B♭

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

FIFTH STAGE: ACCEPTANCE

CHRISTOPHER R. HANGO

Copyright © 2015
3rd Trumpet in Bb

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
FIRST STAGE: DENIAL AND ISOLATION

CHRISTOPHER R. HANGO

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
SECOND STAGE: ANGER

CHRISTOPHER R. HANGO

Copyright © 2015
3rd Trumpet in Bb

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
Third Stage: Bargaining

Christopher R. Hango

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
Fifth Stage: Acceptance

Christopher B. Hango

3rd Trumpet in B♭
THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

First Stage: Denial and Isolation

Christopher R. Hango

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
SECOND STAGE: ANGER

Christopher R. Hango

4TH TRUMPET IN B♭
4TH TRUMPET IN Bb

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
FOURTH STAGE: DEPRESSION

Christopher R. Hango

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
FIFTH STAGE: ACCEPTANCE

Christopher R. Hango

4TH TRUMPET IN Bb
1ST HORN IN F

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

FIFTH STAGE: ACCEPTANCE

CHRISTOPHER R. HANGI

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2ND HORN IN F

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

FIRST STAGE: DENIAL AND ISOLATION

CHRISTOPHER R. HANGO

Copyright © 2015
2nd Horn in F

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
SECOND STAGE: ANGER

CHRISTOPHER R. HANCO

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

THIRD STAGE: BARGAINING

CHRISTOPHER R. HANGO

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

THIRD STAGE: BARGAINING

CHRISTOPHER R. HANGO
THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

FOURTH STAGE: DEPRESSION

CHRISTOPHER B. HANGO

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

FIFTH STAGE: ACCEPTANCE

CHRISTOPHER R. HANGO

3rd Horn in F
1ST TROMBONE

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
FIRST STAGE: DENIAL AND ISOLATION

Christopher R. Hango

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1st Trombone

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

Fourth Stage: Depression

Christopher R. Hango

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1ST TROMBONE

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
FIFTH STAGE: ACCEPTANCE

Christopher R. Hango

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2ND TROMBONE

43

4

4


51

mf

61

F

200

68

74

85

Faster (in One)

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

Fourth Stage: Depression

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
FIRST STAGE: DENIAL AND ISOLATION

3rd Trombone

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Tusa

Copyright © 2015
Tuba

44

49

57

65

73

81
THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF
SECOND STAGE: ANGER

Christopher R. Hango

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THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

SECOND STAGE: ANGER

Christopher R. Hango

Snare Drum
Cymbal
Bass Drum

Copyright © 2015
Snare Drum, Cymbal, Bass Drum

\[ \text{\(\frac{5}{4}\)} \]
\[ \text{20} \]
\[ \text{\(\frac{4}{4}\)} \]
\[ \text{16} \]

\[ \text{\(\frac{3}{4}\)} \]

\[ \text{93} \]

\[ \text{97} \]

\[ \text{102} \]

\[ \text{107} \]

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Drum Set

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

Third Stage: Bargaining

Christopher R. Hango

1

4

p

8

12

16

mf

20

accel.

24

(D) 200

p

(in two)

28

mf

32

p

mf

36

p

mf

v.s.