

UNPLUGGED (2014) - FOR 8-PIECE TRUMPET ENSEMBLE (INCLUDES 8 FLUGELS)

BY JAMES M. STEPHENSON

DURATION: 8'

COMMISSIONED BY ERIC BERLIN AS A GIFT TO HIS STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, AMHERST

Unplugged - in its most immediate sense - is a study in energy. I still think it is possible to create energy in music without the use of alternative sources of power. In other words, the music can be written for just acoustic instruments and still create a pulsating and driving experience that propels the listener forward, all solely created by humans. So, in this sense, *Unplugged* should create a sonic stimulation that creates a heart-pounding and blood-sizzling experience! (for players AND audience)

In a more subtle sense, *Unplugged*, for me, is a bit of a step outside of my usual music-writing scene. I therefore had to unplug from my comfort zone. Though I've written quite a bit of trumpet solo and chamber music, the trumpet ensemble for me has always carried a bit of love/hate relationship. I am a former trumpet player, so the positive connection is obvious; yet, there is no bass voice, and there exists a somewhat reduced availability of color (my favorite thing), so I've shied away from it. Plus, there are some who already creating great pieces in this genre, so I hadn't felt the need/urge to join the party.

Ultimately, this piece is all about teamwork. This is ironic, because one could comment that it requires the performers to *plug in* (to one another), rather than *unplug*. but nonetheless, this piece cannot be performed successfully without each member of the ensemble bringing their very best to the table. This is a tribute to Eric, and a tribute to the trumpet experience we both shared at the New England Conservatory of Music, where we were both students, just a few (cough-cough) years ago.

Musically, the entire piece is derived from a 7-note pitch set outlined below. There is no other note used throughout the entirety of the 8 minute work. I enjoyed the challenge of creating a musically interesting and fulfilling piece with such limitations. Also, the opening F#-G half-step relationship becomes more significant as the work moves on.

Beyond that, the use of mutes, dynamics, trumpets and flugelhorn, articulations, spacing, and various harmonies became my palette for color and timbral effects. The 8 players should be in two groups of four (players 1-4 on one side, 5-8 on the other, perhaps separated by 4-6 feet) to enhance antiphonal effects created in the piece. Parts 1 and 8 are probably the two hardest parts.

Lastly, I would encourage those advanced groups to perform this on C trumpets (and transposing the flugel parts accordingly). I hear in concert pitch, and to me, this piece sounds better in that manner. However, Bb performances are completely acceptable, of course! The tempo markings are to be heeded, if at all possible.



Unplugged represents my third commission from Eric Berlin, professor of trumpet at UMass Amherst. The first was *Vignettes*, for trumpet and percussion; the second was *Duo Fantastique*, for solo duo trumpets and wind ensemble. This third represents one of very few works I have for trumpet ensemble. I am therefore very grateful to Eric for his continued interest in my music, and for this opportunity to share my voice with this instrumentation as a vehicle. There are a couple of very subtle references to Eric in this piece, as tributes, but I'll leave those to him to figure out...

Jim Stephenson, August 26, 2014
www.stephenmusic.com

Commissioned by Eric Berlin as a gift to his students at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst

UNPLUGGED

for 8-part trumpet ensemble

3

Score

Fast ♩ = 192

James M. Stephenson

All parts
include flugel

Musical score for 8 trumpets, measures 1-7. Each staff includes performance instructions: "Cup Mute (held in loosely)" and "pp sempre whisper-soft".

7

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tpt. 3

Tpt. 4

Tpt. 5

Tpt. 6

Tpt. 7

Tpt. 8

7

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tpt. 3

Tpt. 4

Tpt. 5

Tpt. 6

Tpt. 7

Tpt. 8



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13

A Open Mute

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tpt. 3

Tpt. 4

Tpt. 5

Tpt. 6

Tpt. 7

Tpt. 8

13

19

Mute

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tpt. 3

Tpt. 4

Tpt. 5

Tpt. 6

Tpt. 7

Tpt. 8

19

24

Tpt. 1 *f* Open Mute *pp*

Tpt. 2 *f* Open Mute *pp*

Tpt. 3 *f* *pp* Open Mute

Tpt. 4 *f* *pp* Open Mute

Tpt. 5 *f* Open Mute

Tpt. 6 *f* Open Mute

Tpt. 7 *f* Open Mute *pp*

Tpt. 8 24 *f* *pp* *pp* *pp*

30 [B]

Tpt. 1 *pp* *pp*

Tpt. 2 *pp* *pp*

Tpt. 3 *pp* *pp*

Tpt. 4 *pp* *pp*

Tpt. 5 *pp*

Tpt. 6 *pp*

Tpt. 7 *pp*

Tpt. 8 30 *pp*

45 D

Tpt. 1 *p* *pp* *pp*

Tpt. 2 *p* *pp* *pp*

Tpt. 3 *pp* *pp*

Tpt. 4 *pp* *pp*

Tpt. 5 *pp* *pp*

Tpt. 6 *pp*

Tpt. 7 *p* *pp*

Tpt. 8 45 *pp* *pp*

51 Open - in stand

Tpt. 1 *pp* *pp* Open - in stand

Tpt. 2 *pp* *pp* Open - in stand

Tpt. 3 *pp*

Tpt. 4 *pp*

Tpt. 5 *pp*

Tpt. 6 *pp* *pp* *pp* Open - in stand

Tpt. 7 *pp* *pp* *pp* Open - in stand

Tpt. 8 51 *pp* *pp* Open - in stand