

Catalog 20788-HB

3 - 6 octaves handbells

Level 3

3 - 6 octaves handchimes

A Highland Blessing

(A Highland Hymn)



Red deer stag and does above Loch Tulla - The Highlands of Scotland

Derek K. Hakes



From the Top Music

Albuquerque, NM

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A Highland Blessing

Performance Notes

Story Behind the Composition

I have never been to Scotland, although it remains as one of my top-most bucket list items. Further, even though I was not born in Scotland, its roots run in my blood. As a sort of natural consequence I find myself inherently drawn to Celtic and Irish music. One of the most unique aspects of this type of music seems to be its almost otherworldly ability to embody any given emotion.

This piece was not written over a period of several days or weeks like many of my pieces. The original idea for this piece was born approximately a year prior to the final version being completed. While the original melody for the “A” section remained mostly unchanged into the new version, nevertheless it underwent some changes to make it sound more like a Scottish or Irish air. For example, the original “B” section was in a minor key with a malleted accompaniment. When I went to work on the new “B” section, I kept the minor key intact while removing the rhythmic, percussive underscoring. However, neither of the two original “B” sections seemed to work, since they didn’t fit the character of the piece. The new “B” section is structured so that it more closely sounds like and resembles a hymn, perhaps what one might hear sung in a Highlands church. Further, the whole piece is composed so that each section contains brief echoes of Scottish tunes, with remnants of the “B” section heard during the final measures of the piece.

After the working draft was completed, I began looking for poetry that was reflective of the Highlands. One such poem/song, *My Heart's in the Highlands* (Robert Burns, 1789), provides particularly meaningful and moving sensory images of the region. Its words/lyrics, beloved by Scots both young and old, are included below:

My Heart's in the Highlands (1789)

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.

Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,
The birth-place of Valour, the country of Worth ;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

Farewell to the mountains, high-cover'd with snow,
Farewell to the straths and green vallies below;
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods,
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.

You can imagine my surprise when I discovered this poem is associated with an event that left a permanent scar on the soul of the Highlands: the *Highland Clearances*, a period in Scottish history affecting both the direction and appearance of the landscape for several decades. In total, approximately 15,000 people were displaced – sometimes through violent means – and many would never return.

Performance Suggestions

Musical Comments

Although the piece was written with a flute in mind, any treble C-instrument can be used. Optionally, any instrument that can play with a more Celtic flavor is preferred, but not required.

Measure 64 is an example of a serendipitous moment in composing. On the “and” of beat four, during the engraving process, I meant to change the E-natural back to the E-flat, but I forgot to do so. After I played this section back, I realized my “mistake.” I changed it back to E-flat, but it didn’t have the same flavor. As a result, although I prefer the E-natural to be played, I leave the choice up to the performing group.

Final Remarks

I encourage you to research more information about the *Highland Clearances*, especially some of the firsthand written accounts.

Included at the end of the score is the vocal rendition of the melody I wrote to Robert Burns’ lyrics/poem in addition to a C-instrument score of this same melody (NOTE: both scores are in different keys so the vocal is meant to be sung acapella, if used). You may wish to have the C-instrument play this melody before the piece begins, especially from a hidden location.

Finally, I leave you with this Scottish blessing:

May your past be a pleasant memory,
Your future filled with delight and mystery,
Your now a glorious moment,
That fills your life with deep contentment.

Beannachd Dia dhuit (blessings of God be with you),

Derek K. Hakes
Indianapolis, IN

Handbells Used: 3 - 6 octaves

Handchimes Used: 3 - 6 octaves

3 octaves omit ()

4 octaves omit []

3 and 4 octaves omit < >

5 octaves omit { }

G3 not used by 4-octave groups

A Highland Blessing

Cat. 20788-HB
Level 3

Alt title: *A Highland Hymn*
optional flute or C-instrument

Derek K. Hakes
ASCAP

Gently rubato ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 64\text{-}68$)

Musical notation for measures 1-4. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The tempo is 'Gently rubato' with a quarter note equal to approximately 64-68 beats per minute. The dynamics are marked 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The notation includes a treble clef and a bass clef. Measures 1-4 show a melodic line in the treble and a supporting bass line in the bass. Measure numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are indicated above the staff.

Musical notation for measures 5-8. The dynamics are marked 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The notation includes a treble clef and a bass clef. Measures 5-8 show a melodic line in the treble and a supporting bass line in the bass. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are indicated above the staff.

Flowing as the stream ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 68\text{-}72$)

Musical notation for measures 9-11. The dynamics are marked '* LV' (left hand) and 'LV' (left hand). The notation includes a treble clef and a bass clef. Measures 9-11 show a melodic line in the treble and a supporting bass line in the bass. Measure numbers 9, 10, and 11 are indicated above the staff. A double bar line with repeat dots is present at the end of measure 11. A watermark 'please return to our store to order this item.' is visible across the page.

* LV and R centered between staves applies to stems-down treble and stems-up bass notes

** *coll' 8va*: double top note, 5 & 6 octaves

Cat. 20788-HB

12 *coll' 8va*

LV LV R LV LV LV LV

15 *mp*

LV LV R LV R *mp* LV LV

18 *coll' 8va* *mf*

LV LV LV LV LV R *mf*

mf

21 22 23

LV LV LV LV LV LV

a tempo

slight rit.

24 25 26

LV slight rit. R LV LV LV LV LV

mp

27 28 29

LV LV LV LV decresc. LV mp LV LV

decresc. e rit. (tacet flute)

As a chorale (♩ = ca. 58-62)

30 LV *decresc. e rit.* R *mp*

33 3 34 3 35 3 36 3

mf *coll' 8va*

37 3 38 39 *mf* 40 LV LV

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- * 3 octave ensembles play the Bb6
- 4 octave ensembles play *both* the Bb6 and D7
- 5 octave ensembles play the Bb6 and Bb7
- 6 octave ensembles play *both* the Bb6 and Bb7 with the D7 and D8

Musical score for measures 45-47. The score is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the upper voice and accompaniment in the lower voice. Measure 45 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody begins with a triplet of eighth notes. The accompaniment consists of chords, many of which are triplets. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3. Pedal points are shown in the bass line. Performance markings include 'LV' (left hand) and 'R' (right hand) for the melody, and 'decresc.' (decrescendo) for the accompaniment in measure 47.

Musical score for measures 48-50. The score continues with the melody and accompaniment. Measure 48 is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano). Measure 49 features a long note in the melody. Measure 50 is marked *allarg.* (allargando) and includes a fermata over a chord. The accompaniment continues with chords and some melodic lines. Performance markings include *allarg.* and *mp*.

Majestic as the hills (♩ = ca. 60-64)

Musical score for measures 51-53. The score is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the upper voice and accompaniment in the lower voice. Measure 51 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The melody begins with a half note. The accompaniment consists of chords, many of which are triplets. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3. Pedal points are shown in the bass line. Performance markings include *f* (forte) and 'LV' (left hand) for the accompaniment.

Musical score system 1, measures 54-56. Includes treble and bass staves with chordal accompaniment and a melodic line above. Measure numbers 54, 55, and 56 are indicated. The bass line includes markings "LV" under measures 54, 55, and 56.

Musical score system 2, measures 57-58. Includes treble and bass staves. Measure numbers 57 and 58 are indicated. The bass line includes markings "LV" under measures 57 and 58, and "R" under measure 58. A dynamic marking *coll' 8va* is present above measure 58.

Musical score system 3, measures 59-60. Includes treble and bass staves. Measure numbers 59 and 60 are indicated. The bass line includes markings "LV" and "3" (triplets) under measures 59 and 60. A dynamic marking *ff* is present at the beginning of measure 59.

61

62

LV LV LV *decresc.* LV *f* R

63

64

LV LV LV LV *

*See Performance Notes re m.64

65 66

LV LV LV LV *molto rit. e decres. R* *mp*

molto rit.

Introspectively; freely rubato (♩ = ca. 52-56)

67 68 69

mf

70 71 72

mp *molto rit.* *p*