

CHAPTER TEN

NOSTALGIA BY BARBARA YORK

Year of Composition: 2018

Duration: ~5 minutes

Movements: Single Movement

Range: A3 - C6 (with optional 8vb, upper pitch is A5)

Instrumentation: Trumpet in Bb, Piano

Composer Biographical Background:

Barbara York was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1949 and passed away in 2020 in Pittsburg, Kansas. In 1981, she won a Dora Mavor Moore Award for her score and lyrics to the production of *Colette* and was nominated for a Canadian Juno in 2006 for her children's piece, *A Butterfly in Time*. York was posthumously awarded the International Tuba Euphonium Association Lifetime Achievement Award in 2021¹¹³ and her works were featured in a "Barbara York Tribute Concert" at the 2022 International Women's Brass Conference. Particularly renowned for her extensive contributions to low brass repertoire, York also composed several works with trumpet, including *Aspects* and *Montreal Suite* for brass quintet, *Amuses-Bouches: 10 Duets w/ Recipes* for trumpet and flute, *Wisdom of Our Fathers* for trumpet, alto saxophone, and piano, *The Lion and the Mouse* for trumpet and horn, *Nostalgia* for trumpet and piano, and *Ripples* for ten trumpets.

When York was four and a half years old, she took an interest in piano, as her two older sisters were studying keyboard. Her mother asked Mr. Lewis, their piano teacher, to take five minutes from each of the sisters' lessons and dedicate the time to York. Throughout grade school, York played cello and was inspired to begin composing at the age of seven for a school

¹¹³"The Barbara York Project," AJ Beu, 2021, <https://www.barbarayork.com/>

talent show.¹¹⁴ At the age of sixteen, she began her studies at McGill University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in school music at the age of twenty.¹¹⁵ Upon completing her undergraduate degree, York taught at the Manitoba Theater School and spent ten years working in various theater positions, including serving as a music director, composing, and arranging. Regarding the inspiration behind her compositions, creator of the Barbara York Project Andrew J. Beu, said, "Barbara started as a theater composer. You can tell in her accompaniment style that she wrote for the theater for a decade and that the soloist is telling a story."¹¹⁶

York moved to Kansas in 1993 and worked as a collaborative pianist, church musician, elementary music teacher, and accompanist for school choirs. As a composer, York was frequently sought out for commissions by orchestras and soloists and was deeply invested in the story behind each commissioned work. York's compositional process was rooted in determining the purpose of a work and why it was being commissioned—she always either met with the clients or had them write letters to inform her compositional process.¹¹⁷

During York's last decade of life, she worked as a staff accompanist at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas, and performed as a collaborative pianist at regional and international conferences, including the International Women's Brass and International Tuba Euphonium Conferences. She continued composing and spent time with her family.¹¹⁸ Regarding her family and values, Andrew J. Beu said, "Barbara loved her family, particularly her grandchildren. She loved helping people through music."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴Andrew J. Beu, email message to author, September 15, 2022.

¹¹⁵"The Barbara York Project," AJ Beu, 2021, <https://www.barbarayork.com/>

¹¹⁶Andrew J. Beu, email message to author, September 15, 2022.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸"The Barbara York Project," AJ Beu, 2021, <https://www.barbarayork.com/>

¹¹⁹Andrew J. Beu, email message to author, September 15, 2022.

Overview of Work and Pedagogical Notes:

Barbara York's *Nostalgia* is a short, tuneful piece that is especially well-suited for juries or semester performances. Showcasing a variety of different styles and fundamental demands within a short duration, *Nostalgia* provides a well-rounded challenge for any moderately advanced student. The first half of the work remains predominantly lyrical in nature, with additional technical demands, extended range, and some articulated sections occurring in the second half.

The lyrical sections, spanning most of the first half of *Nostalgia*, require a full, effortless tone and a clear idea of musical phrasing. Though the technical demands are not significant, expressive dynamics and exaggerated phrasing are necessary to perform this work effectively. Regular practice of flow etudes from *Vincent Cichowicz Flow Studies Volume 1* can assist the performer in developing the fullness of sound necessary to effectively perform the opening of *Nostalgia*. Performing these flow studies with both sound and phrasing as a primary consideration is directly transferable to phrasing York's work effectively.

Rhythmically, there are few demands in *Nostalgia*, as the entire piece remains in 3/4 time and the coordination between the trumpet and accompaniment is straightforward. The lack of rhythmic and coordination challenges allows the performer to focus on efficiency of trumpet playing and strong technique in their preparation. There are some minor flexibility demands throughout the piece, including instances of both articulated and slurred leaps. Clarity of sound in both the upper and lower registers is necessary to perform these leaps with ease, especially in passages such as measures 36 through 43 that span almost two octaves in range. Measures 50 through 51 feature a descending octave slur from concert B4 to B3, requiring both flexibility and solid intonation, as B3 is a low C# on the Bb Trumpet and has a strong tendency to be sharp,

requiring use of the third valve slide. A section with several articulated concert B octave leaps occurs a few measures later, in measure 63, and instances of B3 in the trumpet's melodic line are prominent throughout the entire piece, which remains in the key of concert G. A student preparing this piece will benefit from the attention to intonation necessary to performing *Nostalgia* accurately and in tune and it is ideal for students who need practice using their third valve slides often and effectively.

Measure 149 marks a shift to increased technical demands and a contrasting style compared to the relaxed opening section. The cadenza beginning in measure 163 provides the performer with freedom to interpret and exaggerate musical ideas. Even with the increased difficulty in this section, the range is still manageable, with upper and lower register options for higher passages that could cause issues. An effective companion etude when practicing the cadenza section of York's piece is Etude One, "Etude in form of a Cadenza," from Paolo Longinotti's *12 Studies in Classical and Modern Style*. "Etude in form of a Cadenza" features dynamic extremes, several changes in style, varied articulations, and numerous opportunities for the performer to push and pull the tempo—all aspects of musicality which will assist with an effective performance of York's *Nostalgia*. Following the cadenza, the style and demands of *Nostalgia* revert to those of the first half of the piece, making this work an effective balance of difficulty and approachability accessible to students with a wide range of abilities.

Pieces similar in style, difficulty, and potential use to York's *Nostalgia* include Joseph Turrin's *Caprice* and Bruce Broughton's *Oliver's Birthday*. York's work is effective on its own as a jury or semester performance piece, and can also fit well within the context of a recital. Students looking for a piece that will push them to improve and perform at a high level, without being overly demanding in terms of range, rhythm, or articulation, will find this piece well-suited

to their needs. *Nostalgia* is an effective exercise in exaggerating phrasing, improving intonation, and performing in a variety of styles within the context of a single work.