

Eulogy

For Soprano, Violin, Viola, and Cello

Music by John M. Tarrh

Words by Martin Luther King, Jr.



Meriam Hill Music
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(ASCAP)

Instrumentation

Soprano
Violin
Viola
Cello

Performance Notes

Performance time: approximately 8 minutes

Program Notes

Eulogy (2018) was composed for the 50th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. On February 4, 1968, Dr. King preached his final sermon at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, two months before he was assassinated on April 4th. His sermon, titled “The Drum Major Instinct,” focused on the natural desire of people to be first, to lead the parade. At the end of this sermon, Dr. King gave his own eulogy, telling the congregation what he would want said at his funeral. A recording of the eulogy portion of his sermon was played at his private funeral on April 9th at Ebenezer Baptist Church. *Eulogy* is my musical setting for soprano and string trio of this portion of Dr. King’s sermon.

Dr. King’s public funeral was held later in the day on April 9th at Morehouse College, where he had gone to school. Eight pieces of music were played at this funeral, ranging from well known, favorite hymns (such as *We Shall Overcome*, *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*, *Balm in Gilead*, *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*, and the *Morehouse College Hymn*) to spirituals (*Ain’t Got Time to Die*) to classical music (Dupré’s *Cortège* and the *Largo* from Dvořák’s *New World Symphony*). The instrumental introduction for *Eulogy* contains excerpts from all of these works, with each instrument playing a different melody at the same time.

Towards the end of his eulogy, Dr. King quotes the words to a song written in 1945 by Alma Bazel Androzzo (*If I Can Help Somebody*) that was popularized by gospel singer Mahalia Jackson. My setting of this text is very different from the various versions of Alma Androzzo’s that can be found online.

I have adhered strictly to the text of Dr. King’s sermon. A recording of “The Drum Major Instinct” sermon as delivered by Dr. King is available in its entirety on YouTube.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the wonderful collaborative process that took place during this work’s creation. As the piece was being developed, I received active participation and feedback from the premier performers: Alexandra Whitfield/soprano, Elizabeth Whitfield/violin, Lisa Kempiske/viola, and Jane Sheena/cello. Their thoughtful and musically insightful comments significantly strengthened our final result.

John M. Tarrh

Composed for the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death.

Vocal Score

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Eulogy

John M. Tarrh

Rev. 3/18/18

Andante ($\text{♩} = 80$)

Soprano

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Balm in Gilead

We Shall Overcome

mf

mf

mf

3

8

S.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Largo from New World Symphony

Ain't Got Time to Die

Morehouse College Hymn

14

S.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

*Precious Lord,
Take My Hand*

Cortège

*We Shall
Overcome (continued)*

Text to be spoken freely.

Adagio ($\bullet = 65$)

Every now and then I guess we all think realistically

con sordino

F con sordino

1. *What is the meaning of the following terms?*

pp

con sordino

pp

29

about that day when we will be victimized with what is life's final common denominator — that something that we call death. We all think about it. And every now and then I think about my own death, and I think about my own funeral. And I don't think of it in a morbid sense. And every now and then I ask myself, "What is it that I would

37

want said?" And I leave the word to you this morning. If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. Every now and then I wonder what I want them to say. Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize, that

45

Text to be sung.

mf

S. isn't important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards,
that's not important. Tell them not to mention where I went to school.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

52 **Heroically**

S. like some-bod-y to men-tion that day that Mar-tin Lu-ther King, Jr., tried to give his life serv-ing oth-ers. I'd

Vln. senza sordino

Vla. *mp*

Vc. senza sordino pizz.

S. senza sordino

Vln. *mp*

Vla. senza sordino

Vc. *mp*

56

S. like for some-bod-y to say that day that Mar-tin Lu-ther King, Jr., tried to love some-bod-y. I

Vln. *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mp*

60

S. want you to say that day____ that I tried____ to be right on the war ques-tion.____ I want you to be a - ble to say that

Vln. *mp*

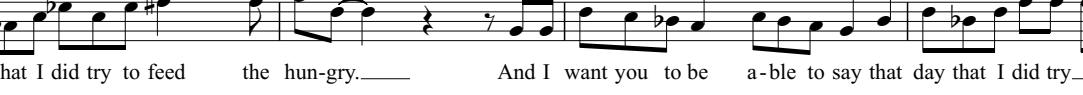
Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mp*

p *mp*

p *mp*

64

S. 

68

S. to clothe those who were na-ked. I want you to say on that day that I did try in my life to

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

73

S. vis - it those who were in pri-son. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve hu - man-i-ty.

Vln. *p* *f*

Vla. *mp* *p* *f*

Vc. *mp* *p* *f*

78

S. Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum ma-jor, say that I was a drum ma-jor for jus-tice. Say that I was a

Vln. *p* *pp* *p* *mp*

Vla. *pp* *p* *mp*

Vc. *pp* *p* *mp*

83

S. drum ma-jor for peace. I was a drum ma-jor for righ-teous-ness. And all of the oth - er shal-low

Vln. *mf* *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *mf* *pp*

87

S. things will not mat-ter. I won't have an-y mon-ey to leave be-hind. I won't have the fine and lux-u-ri-ous things of life

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

92

S. to leave be-hind. But I just want to leave a com-mit-ted life be-hind. And that's all I want to

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

97 **Andante** ($\text{♩} = 75$)

S. say. If I can help some-bod-y as I pass a-long. if I can cheer some-bod-y

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

101

S. with a word or song, if I can show some-bod-y he's tra-vel-ing wrong, then my liv-ing will not be in vain.

Vln. *mf*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

106

S. If I can do my du-t-y as a Chris-tian ought, if I can bring sal-va-tion to a world once wrought,

Vln. *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vc.

110

S. if I can spread the mes-sage as the mas-ter taught, then my liv-ing will not be in vain.

Vln. *f*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f*

Text to be spoken.

114

Freely

Marcato

S. -

Yes, Jesus, I want to be on your right or your left side, not for any selfish reason. I want to be on your right or your left side, not in terms of some political kingdom or ambition.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Text to be sung.

123

S.
But I just want to be there in love and in justice and in truth and in com-

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

127

S.
mit-ment to oth-ers, so that we can make of this

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

130

S. old world a new world,

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

133 **Furiously**

S. a new world.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.