

Transitions of the Heart – The Story

I was approached to compose a piece in honor of two transgender siblings by their parents in early 2021. I am so honored to have been given this opportunity to write what I believe is the first piece of its kind for handbells.

This piece is meant to be an anthem of strength and hope for those who have found themselves to be learning about who they truly are in the transgender community - those who have found acceptance and love through their transition, or those who might still be unsure and scared.

The piece tells the story of innocence in childhood, a noticeable change, frustration, and challenge, and then an eventual love and acceptance, not only from friends and family but also for oneself.

Throughout the piece, there are specific musical moments to reflect on that journey. The opening melody is the happiness of childhood; gentle, playful. A very noticeably out of place G natural chime indicating the first moments that something is “wrong”. There are moments of frustration and confusion through harsh and intense chords. Confusion turns to anger, frustration, and fear. Fear of being bullied. Fear of violence. Fear of using the restroom. Frustration at the lack of understanding and empathy. Frustration at the lack of acceptance. Frustration at prayers unanswered. Anger at the world. Why is the world so unjust? Why does this journey have to be so very difficult?

But eventually, there is resolution and strength in coming prior to transition to the happiness of acceptance of family and friends and the joy of living authentically. The melody returns in its fullest form, but this time with strength, confidence and newfound hope. Measures 75 -79 use every note in a G flat major chord in some capacity, indicating the many different forms of love and support surrounding them. By the end of the piece, there are no questions. The chords have no unusual notes, no 7th chords no dissonance. They are all consonant chords. This is meant to reflect their acceptance and their experience of living authentically.

It is my hope that as you play this piece, you feel the story of those in the transgender community and find a love and acceptance for those who need it and share their story with others. And for those who are a part of the trans community, it is my hope that you continue to find the love and support you need and that your voice is heard loudly! We stand with you.

With love,
Matthew Compton