



The Spirits: A Study of Katherine Hoover's Solo Flute Pieces

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Katherine Hoover Katherine Hoover was an American composer and flautist. She was born in Elkin, West Virginia, on December 2, 1937, and she died in New York City on September 21, 2018 (Genzlinger, 2018).

Background

Hoover studied at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where she graduated in 1959 with a degree in music theory and a performance certificate in flute (Genzlinger, 2018). She performed and taught flute at the Juilliard School of Music (pre-college division) throughout the following decade, before moving on to teach while simultaneously completing a master's degree in music theory at the Manhattan School of Music.

Hoover faced some obstacles in her education. At that time, women dreaming of becoming composers were all discriminated against because of their gender. There was a sense of incredulity that nothing they could contribute would ever



Eastman School of Music in Rochester (2014)

measure up to the greats such as Beethoven, or even to the works of their male contemporaries. This attitude was even worse towards women studying music, and as Hoover was the only female undergraduate in a room of male graduate students, her work was never evaluated seriously or appreciated (Genzlinger, 2018). Yet, obviously, Hoover overcame these obstacles to have a very successful career: her works are commonly played today, and she has been well recognized with a number of awards.

Hoover's composition style was largely influenced by her composition teachers, Joseph Mariano and William Kincaid (Stevenson, n. d.). The fact that her mother was an artist likely also influenced her musical works, since Hoover was known to draw inspiration from other arts into her compositions. She also took significant inspiration from indigenous American culture. For example, one of the key inspirations for her compositions *Kokopeli* (1990) and *Winter Spirits* (1997) was a painting by Maria Buchfink that depicts a Kokopeli flutist playing and producing kachinas and totem spirits from his beautiful melodies (Stevenson, n. d.).

Aesthetic Objective

Hoover's main aim in creating music was to tell stories and evoke senses and imagery through her music. She wanted to express her own creativity and pass on the emotions she felt about respecting native heritage to her listeners, to hopefully stir the same feelings in them that she felt.

Hoover composed a number of chamber, solo and vocal pieces, and even some large orchestral works. For her influence on the way that flute compositions have developed into the current century, Hoover is a composer to be remembered and respected. Her compositions leave flutists room to play and adapt the pieces to suit their own understanding. Furthermore, Hoover's music creates a bridge between musician and listener that is difficult to balance. According to another flutist, Zara Lawler, Hoover managed to create works that were "challenging and satisfying for musicians to play, and yet at the same time beautiful and meaningful for audiences to hear" (Genzlinger, 2018).

Kokopeli (Hoover, 1990)

Hoover has infused much of her inspiration from indigenous American music and culture into her works. The main musical influence for Hoover's piece *Kokopeli* is the Kokopeli figure in Hopi legends, after whom the piece is named. Kokopeli, a flute player, was a great god in Hopi legend, leading his people in their migrations through what is now the Southwest United States. The music of his flute guided his people in the right way through the maze of canyons and cliffs. As Hoover stated, this indigenous character, with his symbolism of intimacy with nature and the land, left an impression on her that she tried to capture in her work. Mimicking the spaciousness and the freedom of travel through the valleys, *Kokopeli* is meant to offer flutists personal autonomy to play with the rhythms, pauses and timing.



Winter Spirits (Hoover, 1997)

Winter Spirits was inspired by Kokopeli playing the flute in a painting by Maria Buchfink. The "Winter Spirits" are the spirits called on by the flute, who are good and positive for the indigenous people, giving them good blessings and direction (Stevenson, n. d.). This musical composition evokes the dancing and the freedom and power of the spirits, and the way that the indigenous peoples would worship them, asking for their appearance (Stevenson, n. d.).



Awards

American Academy of Arts and Letters Music Prize (1994)
National Flute Association Lifetime Achievement Award (2016)
National Flute Association's Newly Published Music Competition
National Endowment Composer's Fellowship
Academy of Arts and Letters Academy Award

Selected Flute Compositions and Associates

Kokopeli (1990) for solo flute
Reflection (1982) for solo flute
Winter Spirits (1997) for solo flute
To Greet the Sun (2004) for solo flute
Antics for Two Flutes (2002) for two flutes
Sound Bytes (1990) for two flutes
Trio for Flutes (1974)
Mountain and Mesa (2008) for flute and piano
Lytic Trio (1983) for flute, cello and piano
Divertimento (1975) for flute and strings
Seven Haiku (1973) for flute and voice
Clowning Around (2011) for multiple flutes (minimum 4) with optional percussion
Concertante Dragon Court (2005) for flute choir
Canyon Echoes, Op. 45 (1991) for flute and guitar
Kyrie, Op. 55 (1998) for 12 flutes
Qwindtet, Op. 37 (1987) (manuscript) for woodwind quintet
Homage to Bartok, Op. 7 (1975) for woodwind quartet
Etc...

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