

## **DOES SHE KNOW? In Memoriam Sam Huff**

### *Program Note*

Sam Williams Huff ( 1986 – 2005 ) was a young lady of many talents - a dancer, a flutist, a charismatic leader, and the Drum Major of the Mountain View High School marching band in Tucson, Arizona. Though petite in physical stature, Sam's presence was larger than life. Upon her graduation, Sam enlisted in the United States Army. She was resolute in her desire to proudly serve her country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. In April 2005, after only ten weeks in Iraq, Private First Class Sam Huff was killed in the line of duty.

Sam's friends will say she was tough as nails and yet, in the same breath, she was intensely compassionate and caring. She laughed easily and often, and was moved to tears just as naturally. She was a beautiful girl in the prime of her life, strong and dynamic with a host of opportunities before her. Sam Williams Huff was special, and she made everyone around her feel special too.

This composition was commissioned by the Mountain View High School Band Parents Association along with Ellen Kirkbride, Director of Bands. I am truly honored and humbled to have been asked to participate in memorializing Sam Huff.

*DOES SHE KNOW?* is an impressionistic and slightly programmatic work in three large sections.

Initially, the music attempts to capture the beauty, grace and poise of Sam as a child and young lady. The music "grows up" along with Sam, and results in a strong and powerful section combining all her personality traits with her love of dance. It culminates in a statement of triumph and passion, as Sam becomes leader of her school band, standing on top of the world.

The middle section depicts Sam's intense determination to join the armed services, the challenges she faced, the horrors of war, and, ultimately, her tragic death.

The piece concludes with a song of mourning and release, a meditation on both grief and faith, and the hope that Sam is now embarked on a spiritual adventure we cannot presume to understand.

My deepest and most sincere thanks go to Sam's parents, Bob Huff and Maggie Williams. They are an inspiration to me as an artist, a person, and as a parent. I am also indebted to all of Sam's friends who shared with me their many wonderful memories of her. And, this music would not exist without the contributions of my dear friends, Kelland Thomas and Frank Browne.

Finally, the title *DOES SHE KNOW?* comes from a beautiful poem by Jeremy Vega, a talented musician and student of mine at The University of Arizona. Jeremy was a close friend to Sam Huff and I am so pleased to be able to include his poem as a part of this work.

*Notes by the composer*

## **I wonder**

by Jeremy Vega

Is she standing in a line?  
Is she waiting to get in?  
Is she sitting on a cloud?  
Is she sitting by His side?  
Is she looking down?  
Smiling like only she can  
Does she know what we're doing?  
Can she feel our pain?  
Does she know how much we love her?  
Does she know so many cared?  
Is she greeted by a rejoicing crowd?  
Do they let her know we're all so proud?  
Does she hear our cries?  
Is she still among us?  
Watching all we do  
Does she watch from above?  
Does she brag about us as we do her?  
How does God react when one of his angels comes back to Him so soon?

I miss her