

"Hank Monk" Project Description
by David Bugli, lasted edited 9/30/2020
(saved as Hank Monk project description_v02.doc)

1. Description

The original goal of this project was to create a virtual video during the COVID-19 pandemic involving members of the Carson City Symphony utilizing the "Hank Monk Schottische," a composition written by Carson City Composer J.P. Meder (1848-1908). The piece was written to honor Hank Monk (1826-1883), a legendary stagecoach driver.

Monk, who was originally from New York, was made famous in part due to a story about his giving Horace Greeley, presidential candidate and former New York Tribune editor, a rather bumpy ride in 1859 from Carson City to Placerville. Greeley, who was on a lecture tour, was insistent about not being late to present a lecture in Placerville. Monk, a colorful storyteller, entertained many people with the story of this trip and other stories about his adventures. Several reporters and authors wrote about this famous ride; it did not portray Greeley in a favorable light.

One of those writers who picked up the story was Mark Twain (aka Samuel Clemens), who spent a period of time with his brother, Orion, in Carson City and made his own fame in Virginia City. Twain was so enamored of the Hank Monk story that he has several characters relate the same story about Monk and Greeley in chapter 20 of *Roughing It*, Twain's 1872 book about his experience as a young man in the western US and Hawaii. It was thought by some that the mocking of Greeley in this story curtailed his chances of winning the Presidency of the United States.

The project features, in my mind at least, three individuals closely associated with Carson City: Hank Monk, Mark Twain, and J.P. Meder. Ida Meacham Strobridge wrote in 1904 of Hank Monk:

Hank Monk, the incomparable! The most daring - the most reckless of drivers; and the luckiest. The oddest, the drollest of all the whimsical characters who made Western staging famous the world over. ... It was a dream come true! I'm quite sure that had anyone asked me which of the two I would rather see - hear - speak to, Hank Monk, or the President (and that I mean Abraham Lincoln), it would have been the former I unhesitatingly would have chosen. Without a doubt my youthful judgment was bias, but the fact remains."

In discussing this project during the summer of 2020, I first mentioned the idea to Carson City Symphony musicians. I have also opened this up to musicians from the Carson Valley Pops Orchestra, Carson High School band and orchestra players, Carson City Community Band, and Symphony Youth Strings (STRAZZ) musicians. Additionally, having used the dance tune to accompany the Victorian Dancers on a Carson City Symphony concert (12/15/19), I would like to see some of the dancers performing on the video.

2. The story:

This is how Mark Twain had multiple narrators tell the story in *Roughing It*:

“I can tell you a most laughable thing indeed, if you would like to listen to it. Horace Greeley went over this road once. When he was leaving Carson City he told the driver, Hank Monk, that he had an engagement to lecture at Placerville and was very anxious to go through quick. Hank Monk cracked his whip and started off at an awful pace. The coach bounced up and down in such a terrific way that it jolted the buttons all off of Horace’s coat, and finally shot his head

clean through the roof of the stage, and then he yelled at Hank Monk and begged him to go easier—said he warn't in as much of a hurry as he was awhile ago. But Hank Monk said, 'Keep your seat, Horace, and I'll get you there on time'—and you bet you he did, too, what was left of him!"

3. The tune:

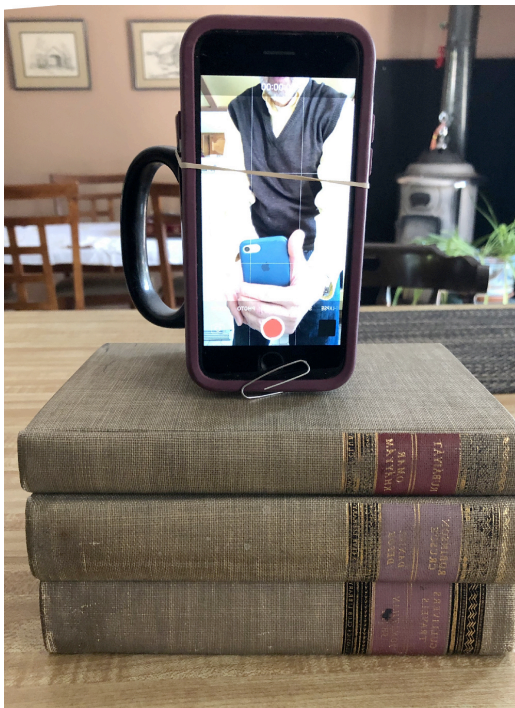
The Schottische was a popular Victorian-era polka-like ballroom round dance introduced in England in 1848, the year of J.P. Meder's birth. It was also called a German Polka, and is thought to have originated in Bohemia. Although it has no relationship to Scotland, the music for the dance often adopted a dotted rhythm called a "Scotch snap." In England the basic steps were "two sidesteps to the left and right, followed by a turn in four steps," but, in the United States, the turn was often replaced by large hopping steps, which allowed the otherwise gentile Victorians to "accidentally" bounce into a person of the opposite gender. The "hop, skip, and jump" pattern adopted by some dancers was well suited to the musical portrayal of the story of the bumpy ride given to Horace Greeley.

4. The plan of the Project:

I am setting up a project resource page on the Symphony website (ccsymphony.com/hankmonk.htm). I am revising my earlier arrangement of the "Hank Monk Schottische" for orchestra to include additional percussion parts, sax parts, and parts for bass clarinet and harp. I will have PDFs of the parts available on the webpage. I have prepared two reference recordings, one strictly audio and the other with video of me conducting. The video recording will be posted on the Symphony's YouTube page (private posting available through a link I will provide).

5. Musicians preparation:

You should practice the music. Even though some of you have performed it before, there are some changes. First, the tempo for this recording is quarter note = 126. Our last performance was at about quarter note = 116. So, this is about 9% faster than we have done it in the past. The piece is under three minutes long, but it may take some time to feel comfortable at this faster tempo. As usual, I recommend first working for accuracy at a slow tempo, and then work it up to the "126" goal.



6. Camera preparation for the serious video:

There is no need to dress formally for this. The serious file is of you in your own home. The best way to record the serious video is have two devices, in most cases two smartphones. One smartphone will be used to record yourself. If you have a stand to hold the recording phone in place, try to get the camera to be at eye level. You may need to prop it up on a stack of books to get it to the right height. If you are recording without an assistant around, you may want to record in selfie mode, because then you can see how you fit into the picture. Select a plain background (if you wish) or something that you find appropriate. For most instrumentalists, I recommend recording in portrait mode (image taller than wider). This will work best for the matrix that will be used to display the final work. Avoid having the camera on the smartphone or laptop pointing up to the ceiling. Don't be too close to the camera. Leave some empty space above your head (at least

5 inches) and include your instrument in the picture. We can always trim around the edges, but we can't add to the edges.

If you are propping up your phone in portrait mode, consider that the microphone is often at the bottom of the phone (along with the speakers). The picture shows a phone propped up on books (a way to bring the phone up to eye-level), attached upright to a solid mug with a rubber band, in selfie mode, and with a paperclip at the bottom to expose the microphone for recording the sound better. This might work for you. (Note: I have two stands that can hold certain smartphones, and you might be able to borrow one of them.)

A second device will be needed to play the reference track. That could be a second smartphone or a laptop device. Do not play the reference track out loud; listen to it through headphones. (If you are really confident of your playing and cannot get another computer or smartphone to play the reference track, then listen to a metronome set at quarter note = 126 through a set of headphones. This is more difficult, but you need to very carefully check your recording against the part after the recording is done.)

7. The individual recording process:

Do not forget to tune to A440. There is a short audio file with this tuning note on the website which you can use. You may use your own tuner, but be sure to you are on the A440 frequency. Some tuners can be set to other tunings (e.g., A442, A438). Turn on your recording device; identify yourself by stating your name and instrumental part (e.g., "This is Sally Jones playing clarinet 2"). Then turn on your reference track.

The reference recordings have a distinct click track with 12 metronome clicks prior to the actual start of the piece. In order to assist in aligning all the parts, I will ask musicians to clap their hands (or, for string players, tap a loud note on their strings) on the 5th and 6th metronome beats). There are essentially 3 measures of preparation beats for the start of the piece, with the pickup to the song on the last beat of the third measure (12th beat). If you play the pickup notes at the beginning of the piece, start on the 12th click. When you get to the end of the recording, do not move for 8 beats. After that, you can stop the recording.

8. The silly recording:

There are no special rules for the second, "silly" recording. It's strictly optional. Use your imagination. You may collaborate with other musicians, family members, pets, neighbors, farm animals, etc.

9. Sending in your files:

Jake Page will be doing audio editing, and David Bugli will be doing video editing. Your serious file video will need to be made available to both of them. Use WeTransfer.com for transfers and make sure rich3page@yahoo.com and dbugli@aol.com are set up as the recipients. The "silly" recordings only have to be sent to dbugli@aol.com.

10. References:

Hank Monk article in Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hank_Monk

Hank Monk article in Nevada Online encyclopedia: <http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/hank-monk>

True West Magazine May 2013 article on the famous ride: <https://truwestmagazine.com/article/hank-monk/>