The arrangement of In the Bleak Midwinter attempts to capture the barren and frigid feel of winter, but also the warmth of the Christmas holiday that is inherent in Holst’s original carol. Bookended by sounds of the wind, snapping branches, and minimal movement, the tune serves as a log on the fire that warms our hearts so that we may persevere against the cold that continues all around us.

Performers should take care that the piece not begin too slowly—keep it moving forward. The articulated 16th notes in the opening 13 measures should be relatively short—which is in contrast to the more smooth articulation style needed when the tune enters. Flugelhorn is recommended for the 2nd trumpet part, but it is not essential. There should be no break during the crescendo between measures 56 and 57. The piece ends with a unison exhale of air through the instruments that sends us back into the cold again.

If you have questions about the arrangement, feel free to contact the writer: dfergusn@iup.edu.