

Program Notes – 4/26/2022

Fortius – Rob Romeyn

A powerful and contemporary opening fanfare combines with a flowing melodic theme to make a strong and memorable musical statement. This concert opener conjures imagery reminiscent of a grand John Williams-style movie opener, complete with woodwind flourishes and large dynamic swells.

Celestia's Horizon – Kataj Copley

“ I have had a fascination with the sunrise. I love the way the colors appear from nowhere to brighten the world and begin the day with wonder and curiosity. I wanted to create a piece that would see the night sky turning into a new day. With Celestia's Horizon (celestia- a latin name for the heavenly sky), I was able to create that sound. Celestia's Horizon illustrates the beginning of a sunrise. Using different pairings of the ensemble, the piece transforms from a dark and cold beginning to a warm, awe-inspiring climax. The piece ends with a sense of warmth and curiosity as the day finally begins.” – Kataj Copley

<https://www.katahjcoppleymusic.com/celestia-s-horizon>

A Place in Time – Kelijah Dunton

“This work was made possible through a commission from a consortium of 51 high school and college band programs from across Minnesota. The project was formulated and implemented by Matt Dehnel and Ian McKnight, the band directors at Roseville Area High School in Roseville, Minnesota.

We currently live in a place in time where our country is at a cross roads between the America we are, and the America we want to be..

This country is divided along party lines, racial identities, and ideologies. We need to decide whether or not we are really United as Americans.

This piece has 2 contrasting moods and ideas, both represent the America we want, (peace, togetherness, harmony), and the America we currently are (Rough & Ridged, Unstable, and volatile).” – Kelijah Dunton

The Mind Electric – Joe Hawley (arr. Matteo Sohn & Stephen Cai)

The Mind Electric is a song from the album “Hawaii Part II, or “Miracle Musical.” This album is a side project headed by Joe Hawley, Ross Federman, and Bora Karaca, who are members of the band Tally Hall. The original album consists of

varying range of genres and themes, from classical string orchestra instrumentals to video game synth – to hip hop and rap. The project is a very unique and poetic movement that tries to tell a story that can be interpreted in multiple ways. It was released on 12/12/12 at 12:12:12 AM, the day some conspiracy theorists believed that the world would end. The original version of THE MIND ELECTRIC was recorded with a unique range of acoustic and electric instruments, as well as various vocal effects. In this arrangement, the poetry of its chaotic theme is expressed with wind band instruments designed for a live concert performance.

-- *Program note by Stephen Cai and Matteo Sohn.*

Undertow – John Mackey

Though many of his pieces are extremely virtuosic, *Undertow* is the first of Mackey's works written specifically for intermediate band. It was commissioned by the Hill Country Middle School Band and premiered by that ensemble with its conductor, Cheryl Floyd, in May 2008. The work is significantly different than much of Mackey's output in terms of technical difficulty, but many characteristic elements of his writing are nonetheless present, including biting semitone dissonance within a tonal context, frequent use of mixed meter, heavy percussion effects and, perhaps most importantly to this work, a pervasive ostinato. The metric pattern for the piece is an alternation of 7/8 and 4/4 time, which provides an agitated "out-of-step" pulsation throughout. The energetic opening melody cycles through several repetitions before washing away into a gentle stream of percussive eighth notes. From here, a countermelody emerges that slowly ratchets the energy back up to its original level, where the initial melody returns to round out the explosive conclusion.

- *Program note by Jake Wallace*

River Memoria – Kevin Day

“Commissioned by Dr. Jason Noble for his final performance as Director of Bands at Scarsdale High School, River Memoria is a lyrical work for band that depicts a flow of time and a remembrance of the beautiful moments we share making music with others. As the sun sets on this time, there will be a new light that shines through the dawn. The river of time continues to flow and new memories will be made. “

– *Program note by Kevin Day*

Yesterdance – Travis J. Cross

Written for the 2016 Nebraska Intercollegiate Honor Band and premiered/conducted by the composer, “Yesterdance” is a “palate cleanser” relaxed swing tune for symphonic wind ensemble that harkens to the Vaudeville era and 20th century Broadway, making great use of muted “wah wah” trombone solos, muted trumpet solos, Gershwin-style

clarinets with pitch bends, and xylophones and percussion that remind the listener of music boxes and the kind of speakeasy dances of the roaring 20s.

– *Program note by Jason Noble*

Of Our New Day Begin – Omar Thomas

“Of Our New Day Begun” was written to honor nine beautiful souls who lost their lives to a callous act of hatred and domestic terrorism on the evening of June 17, 2015 while worshipping in their beloved sanctuary, the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (affectionately referred to as “Mother Emanuel”) in Charleston, South Carolina. My greatest challenge in creating this work was walking the line between reverence for the victims and their families, and honoring my strong, bitter feelings towards both the perpetrator and the segments of our society that continue to create people like him. I realized that the most powerful musical expression I could offer incorporated elements from both sides of that line - embracing my pain and anger while being moved by the displays of grace and forgiveness demonstrated by the victims’ families.

Historically, black Americans have, in great number, turned to the church to find refuge and grounding in the most trying of times. Thus, the musical themes and ideas for “Of Our New Day Begun” are rooted in the Black American church tradition. The piece is anchored by James and John Johnson’s time-honored song, “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (known endearingly as the “Negro National Anthem”), and peppered with blues harmonies and melodies. Singing, stomping, and clapping are also prominent features of this work, as they have always been a mainstay of black music traditions, and the inclusion of the tambourine in these sections is a direct nod to black worship services.

“Of Our New Day Begun” begins with a unison statement of a melodic cell from “Lift Every Voice....” before suddenly giving way to ghostly, bluesy chords in the horns and bassoons. This section moves to a dolorous and bitter dirge presentation of the anthem in irregularly shifting 12/8 and 6/8 meter, which grows in intensity as it offers fleeting glimmers of hope and relief answered by cries of blues-inspired licks. A maddening, ostinato-driven section representing a frustration and weariness that words cannot, grows into a group singing of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” fueled by the stomping and clapping reminiscent of the black church.

In the latter half of the piece the music turns hopeful, settling into 9/8 time and modulating up a step during its ascent to a glorious statement of the final lines of “Lift Every Voice....” in 4/4, honoring the powerful display of humanity set forth by the families of the victims. There is a long and emotional decrescendo that lands

on a pensive and cathartic gospel-inspired hymnsong. Returning to 9/8 time, the piece comes to rest on a unison F that grows from a very distant hum to a thunderous roar, driven forward by march-like stomping to represent the ceaseless marching of black Americans towards equality.

The consortium assembled to create this work is led by Dr. Gary Schallert and the Western Kentucky University Wind Ensemble.

—Program note by Omar Thomas