

University Band Program Notes

Tuesday, April 25, 2023

A Prelude to the Shining Day, by Yo Goto (b. 1958)

A Prelude to the Shining Day was written for Noda Junior High School Concert Band, Kawagoe, Japan, for the 10th anniversary of their foundation, and premiered in April 1992 under the direction of Masato Sato. The title of the piece suggests that it was written as a concert opener; thus, it is designed as a fanfare. This piece requires three trumpets and three trombones on a balcony creating an antiphonal effect with the instruments on stage. The piece consists of three sections; the fanfare motif and lyrical melody of the middle section are combined in conclusion.

- Program Note from publisher

Symphonic Dance No. 3, by Clifton Williams (1923-1976)

Symphonic Dance #3 "Fiesta" is one of five symphonic dances commissioned by the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra to celebrate its 25th anniversary in 1964. Each of the five dances represents the spirit of a different time and place in the history of San Antonio. This dance reflects the excitement and color of the city's many Mexican celebrations, which Williams called "the pageantry of Latin American celebration -- street bands, bull fights, bright costumes, the colorful legacy of a proud people."

The introductory brass fanfare creates an atmosphere of tense anticipation, while the bells, solo trumpet, and woodwinds herald the arrival of an approaching festival. The brass announces the matador's arrival to the bullring, and the finale evokes a joyous climax to the festivities.

Williams rescored this work for band, and it was first performed in 1967 by the University of Miami Band, where he was chairman of theory and composition.

- Program note by California State University, Fresno, *Symphonic Band concert program*, 5 May 2013

Sleep, by Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)

In the winter of 1999, Ms. Julia Armstrong, a lawyer and professional mezzo-soprano living in Austin, Texas, contacted me. She wanted to commission a choral work from me to be premiered by the Austin Pro Chorus (Kinley Lange, conductor), a terrific chorus with whom she regularly performed.

The circumstances around the commission were amazing. She wanted to commission the piece in memory of her parents, who had died within weeks of each other after more than fifty years of marriage; and she wanted me to set her favorite poem, Robert Frost's immortal "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". I was deeply moved by the spirit and her request and agreed to take on the commission.

I took my time with the piece, crafting it note by note until I felt that it was exactly the way I wanted it. The poem is perfect, truly a gem, and my general approach was to try to get out of the way of the words and let them work their magic. We premiered the work in Austin, October 2000, and it was well received. Rene Clausen gave *Stopping By Woods* a glorious performance at the ACDA National Convention in the spring of 2001, and soon after I began receiving hundreds of letters, emails and phone calls from conductors trying to get ahold of the work.

And here was my tragic mistake: I never secured permission to use the poem. Robert Frost's poetry has been under tight control from his estate since his death, and until a few years ago only Randall Thompson (*Frostiana*) had been given permission to set his poetry. In 1997, out of the blue, the estate released a number of titles, and at least twenty composers set and published *Stopping by Woods* for chorus. When I looked online and saw all of these new and different settings, I naturally (and naively) assumed that it was open to anyone. Little did I know that, just months before, the Robert Frost Estate had taken the decision to deny ANY use of the poem, ostensibly because of this plethora of new settings.

After a LONG battle of legalities back and forth, the Estate of Robert Frost and their publisher, Henry Holt Inc., sternly and formally forbade me to use the poem for publication or performance until the poem would become public domain in 2038.

I was crushed. The piece was dead and would sit under my bed for the next 37 years as a result of rulings by heirs and lawyers. After many discussions with my wife, I decided that I would ask my friend and brilliant poet Charles Anthony Silvestri (*Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine, Lux Aurumque*) to set new words to the music I had already written. This was an enormous task, because I was asking him to not only write a poem that had the exact structure of the Frost poem, but that it would even incorporate key words from *Stopping By Woods*, like 'sleep'. Tony wrote an absolutely exquisite poem, finding a completely different (but equally beautiful) message in the music I had already written.

And there it is. My setting of Robert Frost's *Stopping By Woods* no longer exists. I am supremely proud of this new work, and my only regret in all of this was that I was way too innocent in my

assumption that lawyers and heirs would understand something as simple and delicate as choral art.

- *Program Notes by composer*

Chorale and Shaker Dance, John Zdechlik (1937-2020)

Chorale and Shaker Dance was commissioned by the Bloomington (Minn.) Jefferson High School Band. However, the community-based Medalist Concert Band, also of Bloomington, premiered the work in March 1972 at the Music Educators National Convention, with the composer conducting. The work combines an original chorale tune and the traditional Shaker song *The Gift to Be Simple*. Zdechlik transforms, varies, and juxtaposes both themes throughout the entire composition, incorporating intricate counterpoint and jazz-influenced syncopated rhythms. The Shaker melody does not appear in its entirety until near the end of the piece, when the trumpet section plays the tune over a flurry of activity in the upper woodwinds and a sonorous low-brass accompaniment. A short allegro section follows, and the work draws to a close with several dissonant whole notes that resolve into a brilliant D major chord.

- *Program Note by Travis J. Cross for the UCLA Symphonic Band concert program, 10 March 2015*

The Hounds of Spring, by Alfred Reed (1921-2005)

The Hounds of Spring was commissioned by, and dedicated to, the John L. Forster Secondary School Concert Band of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, and its director, Gerald A. N. Brown. The world premiere was in Windsor on May 8, 1980, conducted by the composer.

This exciting, rhythmic overture for band is in the fast-slow-fast format of the early 18th-century Italian opera overtures. The composer's purpose was to capture the twin elements (exuberant, youthful gaiety and the sweetness of tender love) found in the following excerpt from *Atlanta in Calydon*, written in 1865 by the English poet Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909).

*When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain; Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,*

*Fold our hands round her knees and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
And soft as lips that laugh and hide
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hin.*

- Program Note from Program Notes for Bands