

PROGRAM NOTES
OREGON SYMPHONIC BAND • MARCH 3, 2003

Country Gardens

Roughly sketched for '2 whistlers and a few instruments about 1908. Worked out for piano, spring, 1918. Birthday gift, mother, July 3, 1918'. The names of Percy Grainger and Country Gardens, based on the folk song The Vicar Of Bray, seem to be inseparable. At the ending of a concert in 1918 he played his arrangement of this tune, which had been given to him by Cecil Sharp. The audience was very pleased with it, and Grainger decided to have it published. Country Gardens broke all selling records; in the U.S. alone, more than 40,000 copies a year were sold. Until his death in 1961, Country Gardens generated a great deal of Grainger's income. Grainger eventually hated the piece, because he was always associated with it. He would rather have received the same level of enthusiasm for his Hill Songs, Lincolnshire Posy or The Warriors. He came to think of his own brilliant original music as "my wretched tone art". "The typical English country garden is not often used to grow flowers in; it is more likely to be a vegetable plot. So you can think of turnips as I play it".

Country Gardens was eventually scored for large orchestra at the request of Leopold Stokowski in 1949-50. For this version Grainger returned to the original form of the Morris Dance and his original sketches of 1908. In 1931, G.Schirmer had already published a band version by Tom Clark. But in correspondence with Graham Overgard, a band director in Detroit, Grainger learnt of Overgard's dissatisfaction with the Clark version and received a request to make a band arrangement himself. In May 1953 he finished working on the arrangement, and in reply to Overgard, Grainger wrote: 'I now have my own version for band, quite delicate and unlike the coarse-sounding score you rightly object to. The new band setting is not based on the piano version of Country Gardens, but on a chamber music sketch of 1908 and is a new piece in every way'. This 1953 version was not actually published until 1990.

A Hymn For the Lost and the Living

Ewazen writes.....

On September 11, 2001, I was teaching my music theory class at The Juilliard School, when we were notified of the catastrophe that was occurring several miles south of us in Manhattan. Gathering around a radio in the school's library, we heard the events unfold in shock and disbelief. Afterwards, walking up Broadway on the sun-filled day, the street was full of silent people, all quickly heading to their homes. During the next several days, our great city became a landscape of empty streets and impromptu, heartbreaking memorials mourning our lost citizens, friends and family. But then on Friday, a few days later, the city seemed to have been transformed. On this evening, walking up Broadway, I saw multitudes of people holding candles, singing songs, and gathering in front of those memorials, paying tribute to the lost, becoming a community of citizens of this city, of this country and of this world, leaning on each other for strength and support. A Hymn for the Lost and the Living portrays those painful days following September 11th, days of supreme sadness.

It is intended to be a memorial for those lost souls, gone from this life, but who are forever treasured in our memories.

A Hymn for the Lost and Living was commissioned by and is dedicated to the US Air Force Heritage of America Band, Langley Air Force, Virginia, Major Larry H. Lang, Director.

Tempered Steel

Cichy writes.....

As we grow stronger and more resilient through hardship, we become "tempered." Tempered Steel is a celebration of our triumph over these unavoidable hardships and obstacles that we regularly face. It rejoices in the tenacious and unrelenting resolve that is part of us all.

As the title implies, the metallic sonorities of the wind band are continually explored and developed throughout the work, while the "tempest" is a symmetric hexachord that is exposed and developed through a variety of juxtaposed gestures and themes. Tempered Steel was "forged" in 1997 as the first work to be commissioned by the Big 12 Band Association.

And Can it Be?

Gillingham writes.....

In 1981, I began my career as a college professor at Spring Arbor College, in Spring Arbor, Michigan. It was customary at this church-related college to begin the day, several times a week, with an all-campus chapel service. On one particular occasion, I came late to the service during the singing of the opening hymn, "And Can

It Be?", a hymn deeply rooted in Methodist tradition, authored by Charles Wesley to the music of Thomas Campbell. Despite my Methodist upbringing, I had never sung or heard this hymn before. With over 700 voices resounding the strains of this hymn, I was immediately taken by its beauty and grandeur. The hymn has remained a favorite of mine and that memorable day is firmly etched in my mind.

Last year, after the tragedy at Columbine, Colorado, this hymn tune immediately came to mind with its title now bearing a double meaning.

Whereas Charles Wesley wrote "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?", I asked, "How can it be that these young people should die so violently and needlessly?" One can only turn to God or a force greater than man for comfort amidst such terrible events. Hence, the inspiration for this work is taken from the affirmation of this hymn versus the escalating violence in our country, particular in our public schools.

The substance of this work is derived from the hymn, starting with a partial statement of the hymn which becomes twisted and snarled like the growing violence in our world. But, for the saving grace of God, love will always reign, and the hymn tune eventually emerges in glorious triumph. Charles Wesley's final verse aptly describes the course of this work:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.
Thine eyes diffused a quickening ray.
I woke; the dungeon flamed with light.
My chains fell off; my heart was free.
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

Amazing love! How can it be That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Cloudburst

Whitacre writes.....

Cloudburst was my second classical work, originally written for chorus in the fall of 1991; it was inspired by an astonishing thunderstorm I witnessed earlier that Spring while on Northern California.

In the fall of 2001 the Indiana All State commissioned me to write an original work for their top festival band, and I convinced them to let me adapt Cloudburst for symphonic winds. The way this new orchestration has transformed the piece is simply amazing to me: I distinctly remember being at the first rehearsal and just being completely speechless. Where the choral version is intimate and delicate, the version for winds is strong and assured, and to my ears it sounds like it's suddenly in Technicolor . . . on a 50 foot screen.

Cloudburst was premiered on March 16th, 2002, at the Indiana all-State Festival, with yours truly at the helm of that magnificent band. It is lovingly dedicated to me dear friend and mentor, Dr. Jocelyn Kaye Jensen.

Folk Festival

Folk Festival is one piece from the twelve-movement work Suite from "The Gadfly" Op 97, a Suite of music for orchestra from the film of the same name. This transcription, by Donald Hunsberger, captures the essence of the orchestral suite. While many theories exist as to the motivation behind much of Shostakovich's music, "The Gadfly", set in Australian-occupied Italy in the 1800's, embraces a freedom fighter called the "Gadfly" who continually maddened authorities. His music for the 'The Gadfly' reflects the popular touch, heroism and verve of the hero. There are also hints of Shostakovich symphonies to come. And like the 'Gadfly' himself, Shostakovich's music always had a sting in it for the authorities who tormented him.