

Program Notes, Portland Wind Symphony
October 10, 2022

American Tapestry

Liberty Fanfare (1986/2002)
John Williams, arr. Curnow

Written in 1986, *Liberty Fanfare* was commissioned to celebrate the Centennial of the Statue of Liberty on July 4 of that year. The entire piece is approximately five minutes in length and utilizes both the brass section for the main themes and the woodwinds for providing a recurring, melodious motif. Before the premiere of the piece, Williams commented that he had "tried to create a group of American Airs and tunes of my own invention that I hope will give some sense of the event and the occasion."

Festal Scenes (1986)
Yasuhide Ito

When asked about the inspiration for his piece, Ito replied that he "was inspired to write *Festal Scenes* after receiving a letter from a wandering philosophical friend in Shanghai, who said '- everything seems like Paradise blooming all together. Life is a festival, indeed.'" The piece uses four Japanese folk songs from Aomori Prefecture, home of the famous Nebuta Festival.

Peace Dancer (2017)
Jodie Blackshaw

Peace Dancer is inspired by the First Nations text of the same name by Roy Henry Vickers (Squamish Nation). In the words of the author:

"The story *Peace Dancer* is about a song and dance that is thousands of years old originating from the time of the flood. Songs have been composed for different Chiefs up and down the Pacific Northwest coast. The Chief who is chosen to do this sacred dance is recognized as a healer in each community, and the songs and dances are a reminder of the great flood and how the people lost their way and their love for all things in creation. During the dance there is a time when the dancer shakes the eagle down from their headdress to remind the people of the flood."

While this text affords many music-making opportunities, the composer chose to focus on one bit of text:

We have really lost our way, we have not taught our children love and respect.

This is achieved by dividing this short piece into "moments" of meditation, awakening, realization, and humility. It takes you, the audience, on an emotional journey, similar to realizing you have been in the wrong; maybe you have been unkind or acted in a way that does not become you. Once you realize the consequences of your actions, remorse and the understanding that there is a need to move forward with grace and humility follows. Thus is the lesson of *Peace Dancer*.

A Movement for Rosa (1994)

Mark Camphouse

A Movement for Rosa was commissioned by the Florida Bandmasters Association honoring civil rights heroine Rosa Parks and was composed and orchestrated over a three-month period: August-November, 1992. With a duration of approximately 11 1/2 minutes, this 'movement', a quasi-tone poem, contains three contrasting sections. Section I evokes Rosa's early years, from birth Feb. 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama, through her marriage in 1932 to Raymond Parks in Pine Level, Alabama. Section II portrays years of racial strife in Montgomery and the quest for social equality. Section III is one of quiet strength and serenity. The work's final measures serve as an ominous reminder of racism's lingering presence in modern American society.

Variations on America (1891/1968)

Charles Ives, orch. William Schumann, trans. William E Rhoads

Ives prepared *Variations on America* as a solo organ work for a Fourth of July celebration in 1892 at the Methodist church where he was organist in Brewster, New York. He performed it for the first time on February 17, 1892, and made revisions to the work until 1894. Although the piece is considered challenging even by modern concert organists, he spoke of playing the pedal work in the final variation as being "almost as much fun as playing baseball". In 1962 it was orchestrated by William Schuman, and was premiered by the New York Philharmonic under Andre Kostelanetz in 1964. The Schuman orchestration formed the basis of a wind band version by William E. Rhoads, published in 1968.

Trail of Tears (1989)

James Barnes

Composed in the summer of 1989, *Trail of Tears* is a tone poem that describes the 150th anniversary of one of the most cruel, unjust and embarrassing official actions in the history of the United States government. The music opens with a solo flute, intended to recall the bucolic non-aggressive nature of these "Five Civilized Tribes", who simply wished to be let alone and allowed to live in peace on their ancestral hunting grounds. The faster section portrays the strife between the Indians and the encroaching settlers, and builds to the ultimate tragic battle scene of 1838, when the U.S. Army used the cavalry to defeat the Indians. The dramatic last scene depicts the agony of the march itself and includes the recitation of a mournful poem in the Cherokee language by members of the ensemble:

Dedeeshkawnk juniyohoosa, (Let us mourn those who have died)

Dedeeshkawnk ahyoheest, (Let us mourn those who are dying)

Dedeeshkawnk daynahnohtee. (Let us mourn those who must endure)

The work concludes with a final statement of triumph for the Native Americans who survived the Trail of Tears and have managed to live and prosper in spite of all odds, and who today stand with pride and great honor as an important and integral part of our nation and its severely flawed history in the area of Native American affairs.

Mother of a Revolution (2019)

Omar Thomas

In the words of composer Omar Thomas,

“This piece is a celebration of the bravery of trans women, and in particular, Marsha “Pay It No Mind” Johnson. Marsha is credited with being one of the instigators of the famous Stonewall uprising of June 28, 1969 – one of the pivotal events of the LGBTQ liberation movement of the 20th century – which is commemorated annually during the worldwide Gay Pride celebrations. Existing as a trans woman, especially a trans woman of color, and daring to live authentically, creating space for oneself in a transphobic world is one of the bravest acts I can imagine. Over 20 trans women were murdered in the United States in 2018 alone. There is no demographic more deserving, and frankly, long overdue for highlighted heroism and bravery. The disco vibe in the latter half of the piece is meant to honor club culture, a sacred space held amongst LGBTQ persons in which to love, live, mourn, heal, strategize, connect, disconnect, and dance in defiance of those outside forces who would seek to do LGBTQ persons harm simply for daring to exist and take up space.”

“We pump our fists to honor the life, heroism, activism, and bravery of Marsha P. Johnson, to honor the legacy of the Stonewall revolution, to honor the memory of the trans lives violently ended due to fear and hatred, and in honor of trans women worldwide who continue to exist unapologetically and who demand to be seen.”

This piece was commissioned by the Desert Winds Freedom Band, under the direction of Dean McDowell, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising.

Americans We (1929)

Henry Fillmore, arr. Robert E. Foster

“Americans We, first published in 1929, is as happy a piece of music as I know. Fillmore dedicated it “to all of us,” and he meant it. It forms one third of that great triad of marches that are the basis of our patriotic inspiration in this positive and traditional source of such an elusive, personal ingredient. The three marches are, of course, Fillmore's Americans We, Bagley's National Emblem March and Sousa's The Stars and Stripes Forever.”

*Frederick Fennell, professor emeritus
Eastman Wind Ensemble*