

BICENTENNIAL COMMISSIONS VOLUME II, PROGRAM NOTES

Legacies of Honor

Legacies of Honor, by Bert Truax, was premiered in 1997 at the Military Academy's magnificent Cadet Chapel, and was one of the first of the academy's bicentennial commissions. It pays tribute to three colorful figures in the Army's history: heroic bugler Calvin P. Titus, winner of the Medal of Honor during the China Relief Expedition; Louis Bentz, beloved class bugler of the 1st Artillery Corps, who was buried at West Point after 45 years of faithful service; and illustrious Civil War General Dan Butterfield, composer of *Taps*. The original version, recorded here, is for five trumpets, tympani, field drum and organ. An alternate version with extra brass parts replacing the organ, is also available.

Bert Truax is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, and was a member of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra trumpet section from 1976 to 2000. He has been composing since 1978, and his *Legacies of Honor* was performed in Dallas by the Dallas Symphony, along with members of the Academy Band, during the fall of 1999.

Buffalo Soldiers

James Kimo Williams' *Buffalo Soldiers* was inspired by the courageous exploits of the famed 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry, all-black regiments who served in the American West following the Civil War. These troops were nicknamed "Buffalo Soldiers" by the Indians, as their curly hair, dark complexion and strength in battle reminded them of the tremendous creature. This proud symbol of respect and honor eventually became part of the unit's history and is included on its unit crest.

According to Mr. Williams:

Buffalo Soldiers includes an excerpt from a speech by Abraham Lincoln in 1857, responding to the Supreme Court's momentous Dred Scott Decision. This passage is unusually poetic, and, unfortunately, prophetic, as history proves. It would be another hundred years before those "hundred keys" began to unlock the prison of discrimination. The Civil War ended the institution of slavery, but had little effect on the institution of racism. Only through the collective efforts of individual Americans, black and white, have we been able to create a society of equal participation.

The work opens with an excerpt from Lincoln's speech which leads into the Overture, a musical depiction of a young recruit leaving home for the first time. Following that comes a series of field calls used by the cavalry to signal information to troops in camp. The three calls, taken from General Philip St. George Cooke's *Cavalry Tactic Regulations*, are: *Reveille*, *Assembly*, and *Breakfast*. After these traditional bugle calls we hear eight different drum signals: *Watering Call*, *Fatigue Call*, *Assembly of the Guard*, *Drill Call*, *Recall*, *Fatigue Call*, *Dinner Call* and a final *Fatigue Call*. The composer provides his own commentary near the end before the bugle returns for two final signals, *Drill Call* and *Retreat* (in a modern harmonization by composer Carol Williams). Thus, we have a complete musical "schedule" of a long day in the life of a young cavalry soldier.

James Kimo Williams is artist in residence at Columbia College in Chicago. His works and arrangements have been performed by the Chicago Sinfonietta, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Lincoln Symphony Orchestra and Savannah Symphony Orchestra. Williams has also been a guest lecturer at North Park College and the University of Chicago Composition Symposium, and for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In 1970, Mr. Williams joined the U.S. Army as a combat engineer. He later rejoined, serving as a Captain in administration and as a Warrant Officer/Bandmaster for the 85th Division Band, U.S. Army Reserve.

Dawn to Glory

Renowned American composer, conductor and teacher Samuel Adler (b.1928) began his formal studies with Herbert Fromm at Boston University, and continued with Walter Piston, Virgil Thomson and Paul Hindemith at Harvard. He is a product of the early years of the Tanglewood Festival, where he studied composition with Aaron Copland, and conducting with Serge Koussevitsky. In 1950 he joined the U.S. Army, organizing the Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra, which he conducted in more than seventy concerts throughout Europe. Adler returned to the United States and began his academic career as professor of composition at North Texas State University. In 1966 he joined the staff of the Eastman School of Music, eventually becoming chairman of the composition department. Samuel Adler has received many commissions and awards including grants from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. He currently serves as professor of composition at the Juilliard School.

Dawn to Glory is patterned on the traditional overture, with some bows to sonata form. Thematic material comes from three early-American songs: a hymn tune of William Billings, a modal fusing tune, and a patriotic anthem entitled *To Thee the Tuneful Anthem Soars*. These melodies, along with some fleeting references to *Reveille*, provide most of the fabric which makes up this beautifully crafted work.

Fantasy on "When Johnny Comes Marching Home"

Robert Starer (1924-2001), a long-time resident of New York's Hudson Valley region, began his musical life in Vienna. He studied at the Vienna Academy and continued his work at the Jerusalem Conservatory. Starer received a postgraduate scholarship to the Juilliard School and then remained in New York, where he served for many years as professor of composition at City University's Brooklyn College. He received two Guggenheim fellowships and a Fulbright grant, and his works have been performed by many of America's major orchestras.

The *Fantasy on "When Johnny Comes Marching Home,"* which received its premiere at West Point in October of 1998, contains many of Starer's oft used techniques: parallel chord movement, quartal harmonies and repetition of small melodic fragments. The work's clear, direct structure is the perfect vehicle for this traditional, well-known tune, providing opportunity for a wide cross section of affects from plaintive and poignant, to explosive and powerful.

Fantasia on "The Army Blue"

Hollywood film composer Ira Hearshen's contribution to the bicentennial was written for the U.S. Army Field Band and premiered by that organization in February of 1999. It is based on one of West Point's most beloved songs, *Army Blue*. The academy borrowed the melody from the popular song *Aura Lee*, which originated as a minstrel song and was published at the beginning of the Civil War. It was well-known by soldiers of both the Confederate and Union armies and in 1865 the graduating cadets adopted it as their class song. The words of the first verse refer to the graduating cadets, who will soon toss off their gray uniforms as they prepare to wear the army blue of a new 2nd lieutenant:

*We've not much longer here to stay, for in a month or two,
We'll bid farewell to "Kaydet Gray," and don the "Army Blue.
" Army Blue, Army Blue, Hurrah for the Army Blue!
We'll bid farewell to "Kaydet Gray," and don the "Army Blue."*

Sergeant Major Joël Evans