

BICENTENNIAL COMMISSIONS VOLUME IV, PROGRAM NOTES

Fanfare for Freedom

Born in Starkville, Mississippi in 1954, Quincy Hilliard received a doctorate in music from the University of Florida at the age of 40. He is an active music educator and serves frequently as an adjudicator, conductor, and clinician. He is currently composer in residence and professor of music at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette.

Fanfare for Freedom was premiered at West Point in January of 2002. It is a regal concert opener with a well-orchestrated score and optimistic style.

Scherzo, Chorale and Aria Serena

Premiered in April 2002, this progressive work by Warren Benson was commissioned for the Academy Bicentennial, but dedicated to his father, Corporal Fred W. Benson, who served in France during World War I as a motorcycle dispatch rider in the American Expeditionary Forces.

The piece is constructed in five sections: Scherzo Robusto, Chorale, Scherzo II, Chorale and Aria Serena and Scherzo III. The syncopated, nearly chaotic scherzi require intense rhythmic precision on the part of each individual musician. The chorale sections are slow, dream-like and breathy (unmistakably hymn-like, as the name would suggest) exploiting the lower tessiturae of the band. On this, Benson floats a sparse but introspective piccolo and glockenspiel countermelody. Clarinets leading, the second Chorale/Aria Serena is slightly more dissonant and severe. The final scherzo is a stylistic clone of the first, but with variances in orchestration and rhythm, building to a dramatic climax. Ever distant and solemn, a martial cadence concludes the work.

Scherzo, Chorale and Aria Serena is an exciting and substantial work that will likely find its way into the standard wind band repertoire. Interestingly, Benson, a distinguished composer of contemporary music and Professor Emeritus at the Eastman School of Music, is also a writer of poetry and humorous fiction.

Collage

Noticeably absent from the West Point Sesquicentennial commissions of 1952 were works for instrumental soloist and band. Fortunately, Turrin, Kechley, Bertolozzi, Starer, and Kessler remedied this situation in the Academy's bicentennial year with important contributions. Robert Baksa's *Collage* is another fine work of this medium. Like Turrin's *Quadrille*, the scoring is uncommon, except in this case it is for clarinet quartet and band.

The work, premiered in April 2003, provides a vehicle for three clarinets and bass clarinet to display their virtuosity in a concerto-like setting. Cast in one continuous movement, the piece is comprised of dialogues between the clarinets and the band. It begins with a brief introduction by the full ensemble followed by soloist sections. At times treated as concertino, at others as individual cadenzas, the clarinet is used to its full potential.

Notwithstanding procrustean classifications, the clarity of structural and harmonic language would classify Baksa's style as neo-Romantic. But his lyricism, his ability to turn a phrase, reflects his distinctive musical gift ingeniously, some of the soloist sections evoke Alpen horn calls. The work is optimistic, even tuneful, and will undoubtedly receive many repeat performances.

Mr. Baksa is a resident of New York's beautiful Hudson Valley. To his credit are over 500 substantial works, including two operas: *Aria da Capo* and *Red Carnations*. During the past three decades he has focused his attentions toward chamber music, writing over 70 delightful works, many receiving prestigious national awards and reviews.

In a Cause Called "Glorious"

"With exuberant exhilaration," Stephen Mellilo pens, "they set forth on the great American Adventure! From that moment on, many souls have trained to defend that first and noble principle [freedom]." In this, the composer reveals his chief inspiration for *In a Cause Called "Glorious,"* the gallant patriots of the American Revolution.

Dizzying drama, characteristic perhaps of adventure film soundtracks, is the key ingredient to this work's programmatic flavor. Like many concert overtures, the piece begins with a slow, duple section followed by a fast, almost nervous, triple section. Alluding perhaps to a soldier's solemn thoughts before battle, the introduction is serene, even contemplative. In the second section, the dovetailing of agitated 16th notes, synthesized angelic voices heralding the Glorious Cause, and even interjections of the WWI melody "Over There" all add to the piece's exuberant texture.

Melillo's output as composer is prodigious: over 900 works for orchestra, band, film, and television.

Quadrille

Internationally acclaimed composer Joseph Turrin commemorates the West Point Bicentennial with this unique work featuring three trombones and wind symphony. It is unique because of its instrumentation (one of a few works for this combination), its structural framework (based upon a particular dance) and its thematic inspiration.

Quadrille is basically an 18th century dance form of French origin. Turrin remarks, "The aspect of this form that caught my attention was that the time or meter alternates between 3/8, 6/8 and 2/4. I took this basic premise and developed these elements to my liking. The work is in three sections with a coda. The musical material is rather sparse making the most out of small fragments and motifs and developing them into larger shapes. The trombones work mostly as a unit and engage the band in a kind of dialogue throughout. In a sense there is a musical dance here between the trio and the ensemble." Much of the coda is reminiscent of Carl Orff's heart pounding *Carmina Burana*, a particularly fitting tribute to the Academy.

Turrin's prolific output includes works for orchestra, film and theatre, band, chamber, and voice. Many major orchestras and professional military bands have featured his works. Wynton Marsalis, Joseph Alessi, Carol Wincenc, Philip Smith, Kurt Masur, Erich Leinsdorf and Evelyn Glennie are among the many world-class soloists and conductors who have performed his compositions. Turrin lists among his many accomplishments film scores for Alan Alda's film *A New Life*, *Little Darlings*, *Weeds*, *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, *Verna-USO Girl*, *Nightmare on Elm Street 3*, and for the restoration of the silent film classic *Sadie Thompson*. He also wrote the orchestrations for the 1992 *Olympic Fanfare* for the Olympic ceremonies in Barcelona, Spain.

Overture 1776

Why do Americans traditionally celebrate patriotic holidays with Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, a work that takes as its inspiration a decidedly non-American topic? Is it simply a matter of tradition?

In response to this curiosity, composer Thomas C. Duffy created *Overture 1776*, a work of American and British flavor. Duffy, deputy dean of the music department at Yale University, interweaves elements of *The World Turned Upside Down* (a march purportedly played at the surrender at Yorktown), *The British Grenadiers*, *The White Cockade* and *Yankee Doodle*. From the composer who brought us *Corpus Collosum* - a musical (and neurological) marvel that calls for the conductor, with face painted white and black, to direct contrasting meters, ambidextrously - Duffy presents his Tchaikovsky motives sometimes verbatim, sometimes in an inverted form, giving the unsuspecting listener a feeling that they're hearing the same work. But, instead of a Russian victory over Napoleon, we have the American colonists defeating the British. Instead of *God Save the Czar*, we have *God Save the King*.

Like *1812 Overture*, *Overture 1776* is intended for open-air celebration with the peal of bells, the roar of cannon, and obligatory pyrotechnics. The piece is effective, well crafted, and clever. Although most traditions die hard, conductors now have a viable alternative when programming Independence Day music.

MSG William Treat