

Out of this, the hymn tune *Old Hundred*, several other hymn tunes (the Bach chorales *Only Trust in God to Guide You* and *Christ Who Makes Us Holy*), and original melodies which are hymn-like in nature, form the backbone of *Symphony No. 4*.

To explain the presence of these hymns, at least in part, and to hint at the life of the *Symphony*, I must say something about my long-time fascination with Abraham Lincoln. Carl Sandburg's monumental *Abraham Lincoln* offers a picture of Lincoln in death. Lincoln's close friend, David Locke, saw him in his coffin. According to Locke, his face had an expression of absolute content, of relief at having thrown off an unimaginable burden. The same expression had crossed Lincoln's face only a few times in life; when after a great calamity, he had come to a great victory. Sandburg goes on to describe a scene from Lincoln's journey to final rest at Springfield, Illinois. On April 28, 1865, the coffin lay on a mound of green moss and white flowers in the rotunda of the capitol building in Columbus, Ohio. Thousands of people passed by each hour to view the body. At four in the afternoon, in the red-gold of a prairie sunset, accompanied by the boom of minute guns and a brass band playing *Old Hundred*, the coffin was removed to the waiting funeral train.

For me, Lincoln's life and death are as critical today as they were more than a century ago. He remains a model for his age. Lincoln maintained in his person the tremendous struggle of opposites raging in the country in his time. He was inwardly open to the boiling chaos, out of which he forged the framework of a new unifying idea. It wore him down and killed him, as it wore and killed the hundreds of thousands of soldiers in the Civil War, as it has continued to wear and kill by the millions up to the present day. Confirmed in the world by Lincoln, for the unshakable idea of the unity of all the human race, and by extension the unity of all life, and by further extension, the unity of all life with all matter, with all energy and with the silent and seemingly empty and unfathomable mystery of our origins.

Out of chaos and the fierce joining of opposite comes new life and hope. From this impulse I used *Old Hundred*, known as the *Doxology* - a hymn to God; *Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow*; *Gloria in excelsis Deo* - the mid-sixteenth century setting of Psalm 100.

I have used Christian symbols because they are my cultural heritage, but I have tried to move through them to a depth of universal humanness, to an awareness that is not defined by religious label. My impulse through this music is to speak to the fundamental human issues of transformation and re-birth in this chaotic time. *Note by David Maslanka*

# THE CRANE WIND ENSEMBLE

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## Program Notes • 15 February 2012

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### TOCCATA MARZIALE

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#### *Ralph Vaughan Williams*

In his long and extensive career, Ralph Vaughan Williams composed music noted for its power, nobility and expressiveness, representing for many the 'true essence of Englishness'. Born in 1872 in the Cotswold village of Down Ampney, Vaughan Williams was educated at the Charterhouse school, Trinity College in Cambridge, and the Royal College of Music. He later studied with Max Bruch in Berlin and Maurice Ravel in Paris.

Although primarily a composer, Vaughan Williams was active as an organist, conductor, lecturer, teacher, editor, and writer. His interest in the preservation of English folk songs led him to journey through the country in search of songs and carols to record and transcribe. This fascination with the music of his country influenced not only his musical output, but the course of British twentieth-century music as well.

Vaughan Williams composed in all musical genres: symphonies, film scores, operas, choral works, hymns, orchestral compositions, and wind band compositions. In addition to *Toccata Marziale*, his wind-band compositions include *English Folk Song Suite*, *Flourish for Wind Band*, *The Golden Vanity March*, *Sea Songs*, *Variations for Brass Band*, and *Music for the Pageant of Abinger*.

*Toccata Marziale* was written and premiered by the Royal Military School of Music Band in 1924 as part of the British Empire Exposition at Wembley Stadium in London. The word 'toccata' is taken from the Italian word 'toccare' meaning "to touch," as it was performed on keyboard instruments. The toccata evolved throughout the baroque and classical periods, becoming more virtuosic technically, serving as a showpiece for keyboard performers and a display of contrapuntal mastery for composers.

### SONGS WITHOUT WORDS

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#### *Dan Welcher*

Since the very nature of a piece titled *Songs Without Words* would be destroyed by too many words about the music, it seems best to let the movement titles speak for themselves.

Mendelssohn's celebrated set of piano pieces in this genre established a precedent for short, mood-oriented works with simple titles (Although in Felix's case, it was the publisher who invented the titles.) I began this composition by imagining five moods that could be portrayed in wind, brass and percussion colors – then expanded on the idea by linking the separate motives together in the fifth “song.” The effect would be one of looking at separate elements of personality, then looking at the whole person.

“Manic” was originally titled “Almost Too Happy” (like Schumann's “Almost Too Serious” in *Kinderszenen*). It is very short, and over-the-top in terms of energy. The trumpets' opening motive is marked “barking, like vulgar laughter,” which is then answered by the trombones' flutter-tongue growls and snarls. It's over before it has a chance to burn itself out.

“Reflective” was inspired by a series of days in which it never stopped raining. The motion-driven craziness of the previous movement is completely taken over by an introspective mood, and the music follows an unchanging metric pattern of 5/8, 2/4, and 3/4 bars in a specific order. The effect is somewhat like sitting in a Zen garden, listening to the tiny waterfall.

“Giddy” is pure silliness and good humor. A rollicking 6/8 tune appears in low reeds and euphonium, accompanied by swinging 16<sup>th</sup> notes in the upper woodwinds. A trio section in the center allows the brass and timpani to indulge in some vaudevillian high jinks. But as the music gallops to what feels like a happy climax, it is suddenly interrupted...

“Stunned” is what happens in life when we aren't looking. The carefree mood is shattered, almost like running into a brick wall, and the music plunges deeply into tragic E-flat minor, moving “with glacial slowness” in held notes. At length, a melody in the solo saxophone mourns some unspoken loss.

The finale is “Confident,” but doesn't start quite that way. Emerging from the unsettled chord of “Stunned,” a repeated chord begins tapping at our consciousness, almost as if trying to pull us out of our despair. A trumpet intones a hopeful tune in C major as the music becomes faster, and more assured. When it has hit full speed, the music breaks...and we hear the opening bars of “Manic” again.

This time, though, it doesn't stay there...“Reflective” is heard briefly, and then “Giddy.” The personality is re-assembling itself after the tragedy. When the main theme of “Confident” returns again (marked “stately, in full command”) we sense a wholeness and healthy spirit. The piece ends in a buoyant cloud of optimism.

The College Band Directors' National Association (CBDNA) commissioned *Songs Without Words* in 2000. It is dedicated to my dear friend, Jerome Shedd. *Note by Dan Welcher*

## CONCERTINO FOR FOUR PERCUSSION AND WIND ENSEMBLE

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*David Gillingham*

The Oklahoma State University Wind Ensemble, Joseph Missal, conductor, and Wayne Bovenschen, Professor of Percussion Studies, commissioned *Concertino for Four Percussion and Wind Ensemble*. This *Concertino*, or “small concerto” seeks to exploit keyboard, membrane and auxiliary percussion instruments with the marimbas, xylophone, timpani, vibraphone and bass drums as the featured instruments assisted by crash cymbal, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, chimes, triangle and hi-hat to enhance both the wind ensemble and percussion instruments.

Two thematic motives are used as a point of departure for this work. Both appear in the slow and mysterious introduction. The first, played by the marimbas, is dramatic, and the second is haunting, and played by the vibraphone and bells. The following *allegro* is structured similar to a rondo, as both themes reoccur, separated by episodic sections. The first theme, however, is transformed into a very lively arpeggiated tune played by the xylophone and marimba. The coda is marked by a relentless rhythmic competition of two sets of bass drums which accompany the primary thematic material as first heard in the slow introduction. The work draws to a resounding conclusion when the second haunting theme is stated dramatically in tour-de-force by the brass.

*Note by David R. Gillingham*

## SYMPHONY NO. 4

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*David Maslanka*

The sources that give rise to a piece of music are many and deep. It is possible to describe the technical aspects of a work-its construction principles, its orchestration - but nearly impossible to write of its soul-nature except through hints and suggestions.

The roots of *Symphony No. 4* are many. The central driving force is the spontaneous rise of the impulse to shout for the joy of life. I feel it is the powerful voice of the Earth that comes to me from my adopted western Montana, and the high plains and mountains of central Idaho. My personal experience of the voice is one of being helpless and torn open by the power of the thing that wants to be expressed - the welling-up shout that cannot be denied. I am set aquiver and am forced to shout and sing. The response in the voice of the Earth is the answering shout of thanksgiving, and the shout of praise.