

Program Notes

American Triptych presents aspects of spiritual experience as expressed by three North American poets: Americans E. E. Cummings and W. S. Merwin, and Canadian Bliss Carman. The chosen ensemble of instruments (harp, soprano saxophone, double bass, piano and percussion) gives the work a decidedly American character.

The first movement, *i thank You God*, is an extroverted fanfare of praise to God the Creator, with liberal use of mixed meter, syncopation and minimalist rhythmic patterns. The second movement, a modern translation of the tenth-century hymn *Veni Creator*, is more lyrical in character and gives each section of the chorus a solo verse accompanied by obligato solo lines in the instrumental ensemble. The third movement, *Mariner's Carol*, uses the metaphor of a sea journey to express

a spiritual journey toward wholeness. A return to the minimalist rhythmic textures of the first movement creates a mood both calm and expectant.

American Triptych was commissioned by the Reading Choral Society, Reading, Pennsylvania, David DeVenney, conductor. The work received its premiere performance on November 13, 1999.

The original orchestration for twenty-one instruments was reduced for the West Chester State University Chorus, David DeVenney, conductor. This work can also be performed with piano four-hands alone, or with piano four-hands and any combination of the ensemble instruments, with the two pianists omitting any doublings as indicated by the cues.

—David Conte

i thank You God for most this amazing

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

"i thank You God for most this amazing".

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Instrumentation

Soprano Saxophone (I: tacet)

Percussion (3 players)

Xylophone

Marimba

Vibraphone

Glockenspiel

Suspended Cymbal

Hi-Hat Cymbals

Triangle

Bass Drum

Harp

Piano Four-hands

Contrabass

Durations

Movement I: 5:30

Movement II: 8:00

Movement III: 8:00

Total: 21:00

commissioned by the Reading Choral Society, Reading, Pennsylvania, David DeVenney, Conductor

American Triptych

for SATB Chorus and Piano Four-hands,
or Soprano Saxophone, Percussion (3 Players), Harp, Contrabass, and Piano Four-hands

I. i thank You God

E. E. Cummings

David Conte

D. C., alt.

Allegro energico ♩ = 152

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system includes Piano Four-Hands (I and II) and vocal parts (Soprano and Alto). The Piano Four-Hands part features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and sixteenth notes, marked with *fp* and *f*. The vocal parts enter at measure 8 with the lyrics "i thank You God for most this a-maz-ing day:". The Soprano and Alto parts are written in treble clef, while the Tenor and Bass parts are in bass clef. The piano accompaniment continues with intricate textures, including a *loco* section in the right hand and a *loco* section in the left hand. A large watermark "Copyrighted Material" is overlaid diagonally across the score.

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13

S
A *f* for the leap - ing green - ly spir - its of trees _____

T
B *f* for the leap - ing green - ly spir - its of trees _____

I *mf*

II *mf*

18

S
A *mf* **B** *poco sost.* and a blue true dream of sky; _____

T
B *mf* *poco sost.* and a blue true dream of sky; _____

I *loco* *mf poco sost.* (*tip.*)

II *mf poco sost.*

* Cue-sized notes should be played only in the version with accompaniment of piano-four hands alone.

24 *mf* **C** *cresc. poco a poco*

S
A and for ev - 'ry - thing _____ which is nat - u - ral _____ which is

T
B and for ev - 'ry - thing _____ which is nat - u - ral _____ which is

I *mp* *cresc. poco a poco*

II *mp* *cresc. poco a poco*

30 **D** *ff*

S
A in - fi - nite which is yes

T
B in - fi - nite which is yes

I *ff*

II *ff*

35

S
A

T
B

I

II

40

T
B

I

II

E *mf*

who have died am a - live a - again to - day, —

mp

45 *mf*

S A and this is the sun's birth-day;

T B

I *mf* (Xyl. Mar.)

II *mf*

50 *mf* of life

S A this is the birth-day, the birth-day of

T B *mf* this is the birth-day of

I *mp espr.*

II *(Hp.) mp*

56 — and of love —

S
A
T
B

life and [the birth - day] of love and —

life and [the birth - day] of love and —

I

II

62 **G**

S
A
T
B

wings;

wings;

I

II

mf *p sub.*

mf *p sub.*

Bracketed words were added by the composer.

67

S A and of the gay great hap-pen-ing il -

T B and of the gay great hap-pen-ing il -

I

II

71

S A lim - it - ab - ly earth

T B lim - it - ab - ly earth

I

II

75

S
A

T
B

I

II

loco

80

I

II

sim.

f

85

S A *mf* tast - ing

T B *mf* how should tast - ing, tast - ing

I *mp*

II *mp*

91

S A touch - ing

T B how should touch - ing, touch - ing

I

II

96

K

S
A

hear - ing _____ see - ing _____

T
B

[how should] hear - ing _____ see - ing _____ [how should]

I

II

102

L

S
A

[how should] breath - ing an - y _____ lift - ed from the no, _____

T
B

breath - ing an - y _____ lift - ed _____ from the no, _____

I

II

108

S A lift - ed from the no _____ of all noth - ing—

T B lift -

(Vib.)

(Mar.)

II (Hp.)

114

S A hu - man _____

T B hu - man _____

- ed from the no _____ of all noth - ing—

M

120 hu - man _____ mere-ly be - ing

S
A

_____ mere-ly be - ing _____ doubt un - i - mag - i - na-ble You? _____
 _____ mere-ly be - ing _____

T
B

hu - man _____ mere-ly be - ing doubt un - i - mag - i - na-ble You? _____

I

II

126

S
A

_____ how _____ doubt, You? _____ how, _____

T
B

_____ how, _____ doubt, You? _____ how, _____

I

II

132

S
A

doubt, You?

T

doubt, You?

B

doubt, You?

I

(8^{va}) *loco* (vib.)

II

139

S
A

(now the ears of my ears a-

T
B

(now the ears of my ears a-

I

II

145

S
A
wake and now the eyes of my eyes are o-pened)

T
B
wake and now the eyes of my eyes are o-pened)

I

II

f

(Hp.)

150

S
A
my ears, a-wake, (now the

T
B
my ears, a-wake (now the

I

II

156

S
A

T
B

I

II

ears of my ears a - wake and now the eyes of my eyes are o - pened)

ears of my ears a - wake and now the eyes of my eyes are o - pened)

161

S
A

T
B

I

II

(now the ears of my ears a - wake,

and now the eyes of my eyes are o - pened)

166 Q *mf espr.*

S (now the

A (now the

mf espr.

(Hp.) *loco* *mf espr.*

mp

172

S eyes of my eyes are o - pened)

A eyes, the eyes of my eyes are o - pened)

178 R

mf espr.

T (now the eyes

B *mf espr.* (now the

I *f loco*

II *f mf*

183

T of my eyes are o - pened)

B eyes of my eyes are o - pened)

I *mf*

II

188

S

mf unis.

S (and the eyes of my
 A (and the eyes of my
 T (and the eyes
 B (and the eyes

(8^{va})

loco

I
 II *mp*

193

S eyes are o - pened)
 A eyes are o - pened)
 T of my are are o - pened)
 B of my are are o - pened)

I *mf*
 II

198 *unis.* **T**

S (my ears a - wake my eyes are o - pened)

A (my ears a - wake my eyes are o - pened)

T *unis.* (my ears a - wake _ my eyes are o - pened)

B (my ears a - wake _ my eyes are o - pened)

I

II

202 **U**

S (my ears a - wake my eyes are

A (my ears a - wake _ my eyes

T (my ears a - wake _ my eyes

B (my ears a - wake my eyes _

I

II

207

S o - pened, o - - - pened, o - - - - pened,

A are o - pened, o - - - pened, o -

T are o - - - pened, o - - - pened, o -

B are o - - - pened, o - - - pened, o -

I *f* *8va*

II *f*

211

cresc.

poco allarg.

ff

S
— o - - - pened, o - - - - - pened)

cresc.

ff

A
- - - pened, — o — - - - pened, o - - - - - pened)

cresc.

ff

T
- pened, o - - - pened, — o - - - - - pened)

cresc.

ff

B
- pened, o - - - pened, — o - - - - - pened)

(8^{va})

poco allarg.

cresc.

ff

I

poco allarg.

cresc.

ff

II

24 V 215 A bit broader than Tempo I ♩ = 138

Soprano (S) and Bass (B) vocal staves. Lyrics: "i thank You God, i thank You God" (S) and "i thank you God, i thank you God" (B). Dynamics include *ff*.

A bit broader than Tempo I ♩ = 138

Piano I (I) staff. Features trills (tr) and dynamic markings *sfzp*.

A bit broader than Tempo I ♩ = 138

Piano II (II) staff. Accompanying piano part with various dynamics and articulations.

220

Soprano (S) and Bass (B) vocal staves. Lyrics: "for most this a -" (S) and "for most this a -" (B). Dynamics include *sfzp* and *p sub.*

Piano I (I) and Piano II (II) staves. Continuation of piano accompaniment with dynamics *sfzp* and *p sub.*

W Tempo I ♩ = 152

225

S A
maz - ing day! _____ this day! _____ this

T B
maz - ing day! _____ this day! _____ this

I
ff

II
ff

230

S A
day! _____

T B
day! _____
(8^{va})

I
mf _____ *ff*

II
mf _____ *ff*