



I Dream a World (2016)

Music by Roger Cichy

Words by Langston Hughes

for Mixed Choir and Orchestra

Grade 5 • 13:00

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Full score and parts - \$150.00

Score only - \$25.00

PROGRAM NOTES

The challenge of any composer setting text to music is trying to capture the essence of what is being said and transferring that to a musical soundscape. Ironically, the left hemisphere of our brain handles words and, in a sense, focuses on “what” is being said. The right hemisphere focuses on “how” it is being said, (also known as context). Therefore, a composer tends to look at what musical metaphors might be developed, and what connections might be made between the written words and the interpreted emotions and nonverbal expressions. How does this translate to the creation of this musical work? The music is providing the “how” it is being said component.

In developing this work, I found it extremely important to look beyond the poem and more into the life of the poet and the historical perspective of his esteemed poetry. Having that broader view, I approached this work philosophically, focusing on two divisions, one of a world where humankind is distanced by such things as greed, racism and wretchedness, represented in this composition by the octave, the largest distance of two notes in the musical alphabet; and a world that strives for freedom and peace of humankind, represented by the smallest musical interval, a minor 2nd. Both of these intervals play a critical role in this work both melodically and harmonically, and create a strong metaphorical connection to the text. Where the octave is considered a stable musical interval, it suggests part of our society’s “comfort” with continued greed and racism. On the other hand, the minor 2nd interval represents a “closeness” that society is capable of achieving - true peace and freedom. Although a dissonant interval, its closeness suggests a willingness of humankind to put away differences and work towards a society of peace and harmony.

Another prominent connection in much of this piece, particularly to the author of the poem, is the use of jazz textures which is evident in much of the harmonic structures. Langston Hughes lived in an amazingly rich period of jazz, and it is noted that at Hughes’ funeral, there were very few words spoken, but much jazz music performed. I find it truly fitting to transfer Hughes’ poem to a musical soundscape with an infusion of jazz flavors and colors.

INSTRUMENTATION

Winds: Flute, Oboe 1 & 2, Bb Clarinet 1 & 2, Bassoon 1 & 2

Brass: F Horn 1 & 2, Bb Trumpet 1 & 2

Percussion: Timpani, Percussion 1 (suspended cymbal, finger cymbals, snare drum, crash cymbals, bar chimes), Percussion 2 (orchestra bells, vibraphone, chimes, suspended cymbal, maracas, guiro)

Strings: Violin 1 & 2, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass

Mixed Choir: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass