



# Wings Across America (2012)

Grade 4 • 7:30

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## PROGRAM NOTES

In searching for a new subject to write a new musical composition about, composer Roger Cichy chose to draw on some aviation history that he has always been intrigued and inspired by; the story of the WASPs, the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II. Cichy comments, "I chose this topic primarily because these women were a huge inspiration during a very challenging time in U.S. history. I think this is a perfect story to put to a musical setting".

Commissioned by the Cedar Ridge High School Wind Ensemble (Hillsborough, NC), "Wings Across America" is the third such musical work created by Cichy containing an aviation theme. "There is an entirely different perspective of the world when you're in a cockpit piloting an aircraft", says Cichy from experience, "the world becomes much larger and the weight of everyday burdens all become much smaller." "I like talking about aviation and now, I guess I'm doing that through music as well," he adds.

"Wings Across America" unfolds as a dramatic musical narrative of the WASPs and episodes various stages that these inspiring women went through to serve their country. Following a celebratory fanfare to the WASPs that opens the composition, the work dramatically turns to America at war and the need for all Americans to contribute to the war effort in some form or another. The musical textures become very martial in demeanor reflecting the military training of women preparing to become WASPs. From rigorous advanced flight training, advanced ground schooling, company drills and physical conditioning, Cichy uses a variety of musical devices to portray this period. Melodies made up of bugle calls, march-like textures, and an embedded Morse code repeating strand of WASP (dit-da-da, dit-da, dit-dit-dit, dit-da-da-dit) are all employed to characterize the WASPs in training. *[It should be noted here that these women were essential in the military, to serve the military, but given "civilian" status.]* At various time during the piece, Cichy throws in short paraphrases of "The Air Force Song" (sometimes referred to as "Off We Go, Into the Wild Blue Yonder") as short reminders of the capacity these women were willing to serve in.

The passion for flying and a willingness to leave family and friends to serve a nation at war is reflected in the slower, more lyrical segment of the work. Here, the melody begins with a short strand of the tune, "The Air Force Song" again, linking these women to the Air Force.

Whether ferrying military from one location to another, test flying aircraft, flight instructing or towing target for artillery practice, the women of the WASPs carried out their assigned duties with courage, guts, and skill. This spirit is characterized in the final section of the work. The courage and commitment of these young women truly earned them the right to be called American heroines.

## INSTRUMENTATION

**Winds:** Piccolo, Flute 1 & 2, Oboe 1 & 2, Bassoon 1 & 2, Bb Clarinet 1 - 3, Bb Bass Clarinet, Bb Contrabass Clarinet, Eb Alto Saxophones 1 & 2, Bb Tenor Saxophone, Eb Baritone Saxophone

**Brass:** Bb Trumpet 1 - 3, F Horn 1 - 4, Trombone 1 - 2, Bass Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba

**Percussion:** Timpani, Percussion 1 (snare drum, bass drum, crash cymbals, tam-Tam, finger cymbals), Percussion 2 (tam-tam, crash cymbals, suspended cymbal, snare drum, woodblock, wind chimes, 4 concert toms), Percussion 3 (4 concert toms, chimes, snare drum, xylophone, orchestra bells, vibraphone)

**Strings:** String Bass