CHORAL SENSATIONS

Sarah Fleiss
Soprano

Timothy LeFebvre
Baritone

Wichita Symphony Chorus

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2024 | 7:30 PM

CENTURY II CONCERT HALL

PROGRAM NOTES

FLORENCE PRICE

Born April 9, 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas
Died June 3, 1953 in Chicago, Illinois

Nimble Feet from *Dances in the Canebrakes* (2')

This is the first performance by the Wichita Symphony.

The music of Florence Price enjoys a 21st-century revival at symphony orchestras and recital halls. Two seasons ago, the Wichita Symphony under Danial Hege performed Price's First Symphony (1932), a long-neglected masterpiece of mid-20th Century American symphonists. Tonight, we hear a small sample from another work, *Dances in the Canebrakes,* one of the last works Price composed before she died in 1953.

Born Florence Beatrice Smith in Little Rock, Arkansas, her father was the only Black dentist in the city, and her mother a music teacher. Florence began music lessons early, showed promise, and participated in her first recital at the age of four. At 14, she graduated high school as valedictorian. She enrolled at the New England Conservatory in Boston, where she studied piano, organ, and composition with George Chadwick, Frederick Converse, and others, who were primarily post-19th century followers of Antonin Dvořák and traditional European classical teaching in music.

Following graduation in 1906, her career took her to Atlanta, where she became Chair of the Music Department of what is now known as Clark Atlantic University, a historically black research university. She met and married Thomas Price, a lawyer, in 1912, returning to Little Rock, where she taught music. The family moved to Chicago in 1927 as part of the Great Migration to escape Jim Crow segregation policies in the South.

Her compositional ambitions expanded from what had previously been primarily songs and teaching pieces to works for orchestra beginning in 1931. In 1932, she completed her First Symphony, which she entered into a Wanamaker Foundation-sponsored contest for Black composers. She won a First Prize of $500 for the Symphony and an additional prize for her Piano Sonata.

The Chicago Symphony, under the direction of its Music Director Frederick Stock (1872 – 1942), performed the First Symphony in 1933, earning Price the historical recognition of being the first female Black composer to be performed by a major American orchestra.

Price composed the three short pieces of *Dances in the Canebrakes* for piano solo. William Grant Still, another mid-century Black symphonist whose first Symphony we will hear in Wichita next March, orchestrated the three pieces.

Canebrakes refer to a type of bamboo that grows in tall tickets in low, moist areas along rivers and creeks mainly in the South. Once cleared by enslaved people to prepare the ground for growing cotton, Price's dances are an homage to the Black American Experience and the music heard at social gatherings in Black communities during an earlier time.

"Nimble Feet" refers to the juba dances where arm slapping and stomping footwork were important elements. The music is cheerful, brightly orchestrated, and with offbeat syncopations in the rhythm. A brief contrasting melody appears in the cellos and the bassoon midway through the piece.

Nimble Feet from *Dances in the Canebrakes* (2')
continued

Take a quick listen just two minutes long to “Nimble Feet,” performed here by the Concordia College Orchestra.

https://youtu.be/TKh0vjWeek0?si=EnEy1YQHxG3uAJwd

FRANCIS POULENC

Born January 7, 1899 in Paris, France
Died January 30, 1963 in Paris, France

Gloria

1. Gloria (3')
2. Laudamus te (3')
3. Domine Deus (4'30")
4. Domini Fili unigenite (1'30")
5. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei (6'30")
6. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris (6'30")

Last performed by the Wichita Symphony & Wichita Symphony Chorus on November 18 and 19, 2001, with soprano Lisa Daltrius and conductor Andrew Sewall.

Outside of the choral works, a handful of concertos, and some ballet music, Poulenc's music seldom appears in the concert hall. Wichita audiences heard the Concerto for Two Pianos about ten years ago. Poulenc is best remembered today for his songs, of which there are over 150, some piano pieces, the opera, *Dialogues of the Carmélites* (1953 – 1956), and choral music, both secular and sacred. He was also an accomplished composer of chamber music. As far as large-scale symphonic works go, there is very little because, as Poulenc once replied to a request from the Boston Symphony, "composing symphonies is not my thing."

Poulenc was born to a wealthy and privileged family at the end of the 19th century. His father, Emile, was a co-owner of the family's pharmaceutical firm, which became Rhône-Poulenc, and today, after various mergers, still exists as Sanofi-Aventis. His mother, Jenny, a talented amateur pianist, was Francis' first piano teacher.

Poulenc developed as a gifted pianist under the guidance of noted Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes. Despite his father's intentions that he follow into the family's pharmaceutical business, Poulenc dreamed of attending the Paris Conservatoire to study piano and composition. He abandoned those plans after the early death of both parents, and when World War I intervened, the French army drafted Poulenc in 1918. Poulenc managed to stay out of harm's way. After three years of military service, he renewed his musical studies with the French composer Charles Koechlin to gain more studied discipline for his compositions.

After being introduced to the composer Erik Satie in 1916, Poulenc became associated with a group of young composers in Satie's circle dubbed "Les Six" by the French critic Henri Collet in 1920.[1]

Poulenc caught his big break in 1923 when Sergei Diaghilev, founder and director of the famous Ballet Russe and associate of Igor Stravinsky, invited Poulenc to compose a ballet, *Les Biches* (The House Party). The ballet enjoyed success and cemented Poulenc as one of the leading French composers in the years between the World Wars.

1. Besides Poulenc, Les Six included George Auric (1899 – 1983), Louis Durey (1888 – 1979), Arthur Honegger (1892 – 1955), Darius Milhaud (1892 – 1974), and Germaine Tailleferre (1892 – 1983). While each had an individual musical style, they were lumped together as followers of the composer Erik Satie and Jean Cocteau, one of the leaders of the avant-garde Surrealist and Dadist movements.

Poulenc's music bears a distinctive flavor characteristic of French music. Hearing the *Gloria* next to Dvorak's *Te Deum,* rooted more in the Czech nationalist style and German sound akin to Brahms, reveals some differences. Poulenc descends from the 19th-century French tradition that was the antithesis of the rich, sometimes over-blown, thickly textured Germanic music represented by Richard Wagner and Gustav Mahler. Poulenc was the musical heir to Saint-Saëns and absorbed some of the sensual elements of Fauré and Debussy, especially from their songs representing the French *mélodie* tradition.

By the 1920s, Poulenc was part of a post-WWI style known as neo-classicism that looked back to the musical transparency of Mozart (Poulenc's favorite composer) and added the harmonic and rhythmic spice of Stravinsky. It was distinctly different from the path of German composers who followed the dissonant atonality of Arnold Schoenberg and his followers. Poulenc's dissonances retained their connection to traditional harmony, often enhancing chords with added tones that a jazz musician would recognize. Poulenc's music often evokes the smokey atmosphere of a Parisian café or cabaret.

As the composer of songs, Poulenc's principal quality is his gift for melody, which is always paramount. Sometimes faintly praised for composing "pleasant" music, his tunes are often simple, pleasing, but emotionally expressive. In a retrospective, the American composer Ned Rorem, who circulated in Parisian circles in the years following WWII, wrote that Poulenc was "deeply devout and uncontrollably sensual." And yet, there was always a touch of the "naughty boy" that carried over from his years as a follower of Satie and Stravinsky. Following Poulenc's death, *The New York Times* declared that Poulenc was "the quintessence of French wit, elegance, and high spirits."

The tendency to dismiss Poulenc as "lightweight" is easily refuted by his opera *Dialogue of the Carmelites* and his late sacred music, of which this evening's *Gloria* is an excellent example. This music has a sensual element to its melodic inventiveness but remains emotionally compelling and even devastating.

The Koussevitzky Foundation commissioned Poulenc's *Gloria* to honor the memory of the long-time Music Director of the Boston Symphony, Serge Koussevitzky, and his wife, Nathalie. Koussevitzky served in Boston between 1924 and 1949 and was instrumental in supporting composers, particularly Americans, and premiering much new music.

Poulenc composed *Gloria* between May 1959 and June 1960. The Boston Symphony with the Chorus Pro Musica premiered the work on January 20, 1961. Adele Addison was the soprano, and Charles Munch conducted the performance. Poulenc, who was present, reported the performance was "very good, very fine, a success." He did allow that Munch's dress rehearsal was even better.

The text comes from the "mass ordinary," part of the Catholic service that is consistent regardless of the time of year. The text celebrates and praises God and Christ. Sacred music abounds with *Glorias,* written by many composers, beginning with chants in the 7th century and including composers like Palestrina, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Dvorak. The *Gloria* is often part of a larger composed Mass. It can also exist as a stand-alone piece, such as the ones by Vivaldi and Poulenc.

Gloria
continued

Poulenc begins his Gloria with a full orchestral fanfare repeated three times for the Trinity, each with slightly different instrumentation. The rhythms are crisp and articulate the word "Gloria" once the chorus enters. The music moves along briskly. It's celebratory music, but listen to the effect of the loud and soft dynamic contrasts.

The **second movement** finds Poulenc in one of his witty moods. He reportedly said that he was inspired by watching a game of soccer played by Benedictine monks. As the chorus exchanges their fragmented phrases, it's almost easy to imagine a ball passing among the chorus members. The off-beat accompaniment in the cellos and double basses might suggest fancy footwork dribbling. The music pauses briefly in the middle of the movement, and a calm passage allows us to catch our breaths before we return to the brisk *allegro*. Compare Poulenc's treatment of *Laudamus te* with Dvorak's in the work that follows *Gloria.*

The **third movement,** marked "very slow and calm," shifts into a minor key and changes the mood. A solo soprano sails above the subdued choral responses.

The **fourth movement** reverts to a fast and joyful mood. The strings introduce some brief motivic ideas repeated by the winds. The chorus sings in homophonic (together) harmonies that create blocks of sound.

The **fifth movement** is slow, and the opening features some of Poulenc's exquisite writing for winds. Although the tempo is marked "slow," a relatively constant eighth note accompanying rhythm that moves among instruments maintains a steady pace. The music again features the soprano soloist.

Musically, the **sixth and final movement** summarizes the musical ideas we've heard previously. It's a bit of a "mash-up" that utilizes phrases, bits, and pieces from the previous movements. The reprise of the fanfare at the beginning connects the music to the first movement. The shape of the initial Gloria theme returns in the chorus. Momentum carries the music to a loud climax marked *fortissisimo (fff).* The amen section follows a long pause, and Poulenc marks the music to be performed calmly. As the *amens* filter down from the soprano soloist through the chorus, Poulenc furthers his instructions by marking the music "with extraordinary calm." The ensuing moments are magical as the music seems to shimmer with light created by beautiful chords and orchestration.

The insertion of the initial fanfare motive by the brass and a full-voiced *amen* by the chorus breaks the mood. The soprano soloist echoes with a florid *amen* of her own, followed by a final and very hushed *amen* in the chorus as the music fades away to silence.

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Poulenc orchestrated *Gloria* for a large orchestra consisting of a piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, an English horn, two clarinets, a bass clarinet, two bassoons, and a contrabassoon. The brass section has four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, and a tuba. Poulenc uses a timpani, but no additional percussion. The usual strings also have a harp. There is a soprano soloist. The chorus consists of sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses.

A note about applause

Because the movements are relatively brief and sometimes have internal pauses, and because the piece uses a religious text, we recommend that you not applaud until the entire work is over. The full, reverential effect of the music will be much greater by observing silence between movements.

Listen to Poulenc's *Gloria* before coming to the concert in this performance by the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic.

https://youtu.be/Tdd1DNL_IjE?si=Y_dB9nyd5wzB8_Qz

Gloria
Text and Translation

I.

Gloria in excelsis Deo	Glory to God in the highest
Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.	And on earth peace, goodwill to all people.

II.

Laudamus te, Benedicimus te, Adoramus te, Glorificamus te.	We praise you, We bless you, We worship you, We glorify you.
Gratias agimus tibi Propter magnam gloriam tuam.	We give thanks to you for your great glory

III.

Domine Deus, Rex cælestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.	Lord God, heavenly King, Almighty Father.

IV.

Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe.	Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

V.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, Rex Celestis	Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, King in Heaven
Deus Qui tollis peccata mundi, Miserere nobis; suscipe deprecationem nostram.	Who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us. Receive our prayers.

VI.

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.	You who sit at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.
Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, Tu solus Dominus, Tu solus Altissimus.	Only you are holy, only you are Lord. Only you are most high.
Jesu Christe, Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.	Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK

Born September 8, 1941 in Mühlhausen, Bohemia
Died May 1, 1904 in Prague, Czech Republic

Te Deum Laudamus, Op. 103

1. Allegro moderato, maestoso
2. Lento maestoso
3. Vivace
4. Lento; poco più mosso

This is the first known performance by the Wichita Symphony.

The story behind Antonin Dvořák's *Te Deum* begins in America.

Jeannette Thurber (1850 – 1946), wife of the wealthy grocery wholesaler Francis Beatty Thurber, needed a prominent director for her National Conservatory of Music that she established in New York City in 1885, mostly with her husband's money, but with additional support from a few philanthropists like Andrew Carnegie. Ambitious in her goals, Thurber, who had studied at the Paris Conservatory, sought to create a national music spirit through her music school. She was ahead of her time in establishing a racially diverse institution that promoted women's rights and offered opportunities to impaired students.

Dvořák, recognized for creating a national style from the music of his native Bohemia (now Czech Republic), was Thurber's target for her Conservatory's directorship. He played hard to get, turning down several offers. Eventually, the lure of a $15,000 salary, an astronomical sum for the time, and some arm-twisting by his wife, probably the household's business manager, Dvořák finally accepted the proposal in 1891.

In the months leading to Dvořák's travel to America, Thurber followed up with another proposal. Thurber requested a special piece of music to celebrate Dvořák's arrival in time to begin the new school year in September 1892, and to commemorate planned celebrations of the 400th anniversary of Columbus's New World landing. She promised Dvořák a suitable text, but by July, none had arrived. Dvořák, a devout Catholic, turned to the traditional Latin text, *Te Deum Laudamus* (We Praise Thee, O God), which Thurber suggested if her celebratory text was delayed.

Dvořák worked quickly, composing *Te Deum* in a month between June 25 and July 28, 1892. The work premiered in the new magnificent auditorium known then as the Music Hall of New York that had opened in May 1891 with a concert conducted by Walter Damrosch and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The Music Hall was renamed Carnegie Hall in 1894, according to the Hall's archivist Gino Francesconi, so that European artists wouldn't confuse the venue with a vulgar music hall!

The concert occurred on October 21, 1892. Anton Seidl, Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, took the podium for the concert's first half, leading the orchestra in "My Country Tis of Thee"[1] and Liszt's tone poem *Tasso.* After intermission, Seidl turned the baton over to Dvořák, who conducted two of his tone poems, *In Nature's Realm* and *Othello,* the *Carnival Overture,* and finally, the new *Te Deum* with the 250 voices of the New York Oratorio Society.

1. The Star-Spangled Banner was not adopted as the National Anthem until 1931.

Te Deum Laudamus, Op. 103
continued

The *Te Deum Laudamus* is a prose text of thanksgiving and rejoicing of uncertain origins but generally attributed to St. Ambrose (ca. 338 – 397). Sometimes called the Ambrosian Hymn, it appears in religious services of the Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Methodist churches. Over the centuries, composers, including Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Berlioz, Bruckner, Britten, and Dvořák, have frequently used the text for festive purposes.

Dvořák wrote his *Te Deum* specifically for the concert hall, not a church service. Consequently, the structural outline of his work resembles what we would find in a symphony of four movements: fast – slow – fast (scherzo-like) – and a triumphant finale.

Perhaps anticipating the vocal skills of the sizeable amateur chorus that would premiere the work in New York, Dvořák's choral writing is straightforward and written in a homophonic style of four-part harmony, solo lines, or unison. There are no fancy fugues and contrapuntal writing here. There are moments when the chorus sings out full-voiced and times when they provide a hushed contrast to the solo voices.

To suggest that the beginning of *Te Deum* starts jubilantly is an understatement. The opening is an all-out, over-the-top celebration on a G Major harmony that lasts nearly a full minute. The timpani pounds relentlessly, The orchestra accompanies in repeated patterns. It's simple, noisy, and doesn't hold back. The music reaches a *fortissimo* (very loud) climax on a held E, and then the music shifts a step higher. We hear the opening music again in the key of A Major. This phrase doesn't last as long because Dvořák leads us back to G Major and more of the same until the music finally gets softer. For its simplicity, the music has a folk-like quality to it that looks ahead to music by Dvořák compatriot Leos Janacek and even Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana.*

A soprano soloist enters with the *Sanctus* (Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, or Hosts). Her vocal line is angelic, and the music is tranquil. Note the pastoral-like responses from the woodwinds and the quiet repetition of "Sanctus" by the tenors and basses. Soon, the jubilant opening returns, effectively giving this relatively brief movement an ABA shape.

Without pause, a brass fanfare announces the start of the **second movement.** A baritone soloist proclaims, *"Tu Rex gloriae, Christe"* (Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ). There are three repetitions of the fanfare in a symbolic reference to the Holy Trinity. Once the baritone begins to sing his longer phrases, beautiful, consonant writing for the woodwinds accompanies him. The movement ends quietly with the chorus' tenors and basses.

The **third movement,** marked *vivace* (fast), is the equivalent of a symphonic scherzo movement. Its ABA structure is simple and has a lightly scored orchestral accompaniment. The altos begin by stating the *Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari* (Make them be numbered with Thy Saints in glory everlasting.), accompanied by lightly scored repetitive chords in the orchestra. The basses repeat the line, followed by the sopranos and the tenors. Dvořák doubles each reiteration of the vocal line with an instrument: first, oboes, then horns, violins, and horns again. It's an old composer's trick of giving amateur singers "a crutch" to help them stay on pitch. The middle segment features the entire chorus singing in four-part harmony on mostly repeated notes in a chant-like fashion. The opening texture returns in softer dynamics to bring the movement to a close.

Te Deum Laudamus, Op. 103
continued

The **fourth movement** begins with a soprano solo, and shortly after, the baritone joins her in a duet. Listen for the tremolos in the strings, a technique often used to convey angel wings, and the pizzicato walking bass line. With the appearance of the *allelujas,* the music reaches a joyful climax. Melodic fragments from the opening movement begin to appear in repetition, and the return of the pounding timpani and opening bars mark the jubilant ending.

Dvořák scores *Te Deum* for soprano and bass soloist, chorus, two flutes, two oboes plus English horn, two clarinets, and two bassoons. The brass section has the usual 19th-century instrumentation of four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, and a tuba. Timpani, triangle, bass drum, and cymbals comprise the percussion section. Of course, we have the strings: first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses.

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Dvořák remained Director of Thurber's Conservatory for three years, coming into contact with many musicians who would shape the direction of American music in the early 20th century. His teaching spurred American composers to look towards the music of Native Americans and the "sorrow songs" and spirituals of Black Americans for inspiration. Dvořák enjoyed a summer vacation in Spillville, Iowa, among its Czech community. His most famous work from his American residency was the *New World Symphony,* which he premiered in New York City on December 16, 1893.

Listen to a performance of Dvorak's *Te Deum* in this performance by the WDR Symphony of Cologne, Germany, under the baton of Cristian Mâcelaru. Wouldn't it be nice to have a stage, raked seating, and a choir loft like that in Wichita?

https://youtu.be/q0DszgDaZto?si=42v7YuXm3f4aJg-o

Te Deum Laudamus, Op. 103
Text and Translation

I.

Te Deum laudamus:	We praise thee, O God:
te Dominum confitemur.	we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.
Te aeternum Patrem	All the earth doth worship Thee,
omnis terra veneratur.	the Father everlasting.
Tibi omnes Angeli;	To Thee all Angels cry aloud:
tibi caeli et universae Potestates;	the Heavens and all the powers therein.
Tibi Cherubim et Seraphim	To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim
incessabili voce proclamant:	continually do cry,
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,	Holy, Holy, Holy:
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.	Lord God of Sabaoth;
Pleni sunt caeli et terra	Heaven and earth are full of
maiestatis gloriae tuae.	the Majesty of Thy Glory.
Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus,	The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee.
Te Prophetarum laudabilis numerus,	The godly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee.
Te Martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus.	The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee.
Te per orbem terrarum	The holy Church throughout all the world doth
sancta confitetur Ecclesia,	acknowledge Thee;
Patrem immensae maiestatis:	The Father of an infinite Majesty;
Venerandum tuum verum et unicum Filium;	Thine honourable, true, and only Son;
Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum	Also the Holy Ghost: the Comforter.

II.

Tu Rex gloriae, Christe.	Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.
Tu Patris sempiternus es Filius.	Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem,	When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man:
non horruisti Virginis uterum.	Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
Tu, devicto mortis aculeo,	When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,
aperuisti credentibus regna caelorum.	Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria	Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the
Patris.	Father.
Iudex crederis esse venturus.	We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.
Te ergo quaesumus, tuis famulis subveni:	We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants
quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.	whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.

III.

Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria	Make them to be numbered with Thy Saints in glory
numerari.	everlasting.
Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine, et benedic	O Lord, save Thy people: and bless
hereditati tuae.	Thine heritage.
Et rege eos, et extolle illos usque in aeternum.	Govern them and lift them up for ever.
Per singulos dies benedicimus te;	Day by day we magnify Thee;
Et laudamus Nomen tuum in saeculum, et in	and we worship Thy Name,
saeculum saeculi.	ever world without end.

Te Deum Laudamus, Op. 103
Text and Translation

IV.

Dignare, Domine, die isto sine peccato nos custodire.	Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.
Miserere nostri Domine, miserere nostri.	O Lord, have mercy upon us.
Fiat misericordia tua,	O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us:
Domine, super nos, quemadmodum speravimus in te.	as our trust is in Thee.
In te, Domine, speravi:	O Lord, in Thee have I trusted:
non confundar in aeternum.	let me never be confounded.
Alleluia.	Alleluia.

TIM HINCK

Born in 1980 in Jellico, Tennessee

Symphony No. 1

1. Sunset
2. Night
3. Dream
4. Morning

This is the world premiere.

Are we still writing symphonies? Who does that anymore, and why?

What I love about concert music of any kind – Jazz, Classical, experimental Electronica – is how similar it is to reading a book or watching a movie. Through music, however, characters, places, and experiences can be explored in deep ways that words cannot grasp. Most new Classical music is brief and to-the-point. Like a poem or a YouTube short film, a 5 or 10-minute composition is an opportunity for a composer to grab their audience and make a powerful statement very quickly. Longer compositions also have parallels to literature and film: String Quartets are incredibly intimate and intense; they often remind me of a brainy novel or a really good biography. A Symphony, however, is as close as composers can come to creating a full-length film. No other musical form has the depth of color and range of sound, from the tiniest, most intimate solos to the most earth-shattering climaxes, and with enough duration to really take you on an epic journey. This is why Symphonies are still important, and why some people like me are still writing in this nearly 300-year-old form.

At the end of 2021, I was approached by a private commissioner to compose a four movement symphony. With a few simple prompts stemming from a conversation about Surrealism and particularly Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky", I was given full license to let my imagination loose in composing my latest symphonic work. The work began to take shape over the next 12 months, but it was only after securing a premiere with the Wichita Symphony Orchestra that the piece really came into focus. I always write for my musicians; I care deeply about their experience, and I always say that if my music isn't fun to play then the audience will never buy into it! I had the great opportunity to spend time with many of the WSO musicians while working on this Symphony. These relationships and the time I spent over two trips to Wichita were invaluable in bringing the composition to completion.

I decided to take an unexpected approach and make my very first symphonic statement a sunset. The challenge was to capture both a sense of grandeur and space (think herds of bison) but also incredible quiet and solitude. But even in the stillness of this scene, you can hear the movement of creatures stalking and chasing each other, a theme that will return in each of the movements. Sibelius was a constant influence in this movement, not only in the way that he referenced nature (in an emotional rather than painterly way), but also in his very modern and rarely imitated way with tonality. The second movement is not a sleepy night, but one full of adrenaline and pursuit. You can almost hear the waves of tall grasses whispering in the wind at the beginning, and tiny mice scattering as things go "bump" in the night. One of the only requests that Maestro Daniel Hege made of me as we discussed the composition in progress was that he would love a little "primal, rhythmic drive". I hope you'll hear that I fulfilled that wish in this second movement! The third movement is the briefest and is quite surreal. I was hugely influenced by Stravinsky's take on the ballet blanc (Apollo), but you may also catch the brief moment of rushing pursuit towards the end of the movement. Finally sunlight breaks through in the last movement and the energy of the chase is at its high point. There are also blatant leaps into the world of Big Band Jazz, Viennese Waltz, and even Musical Theatre. And I did manage to work in one final Kansas reference with one of my favorite themes of the piece, a lofty theme that is unmistakably one of soaring flight.