

Program Notes for **Breath of the Mountains: A Folk Suite**

The description of what the composer of this Idaho Continental Harmony Project was encouraged to do was “to discover Idaho and reveal it to itself”. Although it seemed like somewhat of a daunting task, Linda Tutas Haugen began this process in August of 1999 with her first visit to Idaho. She met with many area residents and did much research of local history in the McCall Library archives. “It became apparent to me early into the process that I wanted to write about the beautiful land, the wonderful people that settled and still live on the land and their life experiences in coming to Idaho,” states Haugen. *Breath of the Mountains: A Folk Suite* premiered in July of 2000 by the McCall Chamber Chorale and Chamber Orchestra.

The first movement, *Hymn to the Morning*, speaks both about the people and their relationship with the land in the Shoshoni-Bannock text. It is taken from a story about how native people got their music. After hearing the sounds of the wind in the aspens, sagebrush tops, grasses and meadows this song was born as a prayer sent in the morning to the great creator of all, Apa.

The second movement focuses on a Basque folk song, *Amona Bere Illobarekin*. The words portray a vignette between an old grandmother and her granddaughter and compare the grandmother’s age to the timeless mountains and streams. This song is set for women’s voices only and uses an ostinato in the cellos and basses.

One of the evergreen Finnish folk songs, *En Voi Sua Unhottaa Poies*, serves as the focal point for the third movement. This folk song, first published in 1876 would have probably been well known to the early Finnish settlers in Idaho. It eloquently describes how the author cannot forget the person that he loves but who can never be his. Following the first choral statement of this song is a lively instrumental interlude that uses a Scandinavian fiddle tune, *Finn Jenta* (Finnish girl), that was probably written around the turn of the century. The choir returns with another statement of *En Voi Sua Unhottaa Poies* in a modified canon to end the movement.

The fourth movement uses the Scottish folk song, *Lizzie Lindsay*, to represent the English speaking people that settled in this area. The setting of the chorus and verses builds in intensity throughout the movement as the story unfolds. The final verse, added by the

composer ties in the previous movements by returning to the importance of the beauty of the land. “I chose to set this song and to include folk musicians in this last movement because of a magical moment that I had in McCall during my first visit,” writes Haugen. “I was invited to a jam session of folk musicians where I heard *Lizzie Lindsay* for the first time while the moon came up over a Ponderosa pine- filled ravine with the roaring Payette River below. It was truly wonderful.”