

Program Notes for Memoria Tenere

Memoria Tenere, (Latin for “to hold in memory”) was commissioned by the Minnesota Youth Symphonies for their 25th Anniversary Celebration Concert and premiered at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis in 1997. The inspiration for the piece was drawn from visits to Arlington National Cemetery, and two days spent at the battlefields of Gettysburg. The music reflects the enormous sacrifice of the soldier and the legacy of that sacrifice. The work is dedicated to all those who have died for freedom.

The piece begins with motives and rhythms in the percussion that are developed throughout the composition. The horns introduce the first theme, an expression of American patriotism and conviction. The theme is developed among the brass and returns later in both its original and an altered form.

The second more lyrical theme is presented by the strings and later restated with fuller orchestration. It portrays the essence of freedom, the unbridled quality found in nature and the human spirit. Between statements of this theme is a brass chorale interlude that reflects a rich American hymn tradition.

The third theme is presented by the clarinets accompanied by string pizzicato. It is the emergence of the individual experience, the long walk to battle, the realizations and emotions along the way. Additional thematic material derived from this theme is developed as the section intensifies.

Most of the thematic material returns fragmented, altered and combined in a developmental section of growing urgency leading to the emotional climax of the work. This section portrays the full realization of battle in individual, human terms. From the climax, a passacaglia derived from the second theme emerges in the low strings, depicting the emotional aftermath.

In the final section, the piccolo introduces a dance-like section that celebrates victory and freedom. The second theme returns in its fullest orchestration. The piece ends with a trumpet solo that harkens back to “Taps,” first used during the Civil War as one regiment’s call to assemble, and ever since, as a tribute at a soldier’s final resting place.