

Notes from the Conductor

The four musical selections for this concert each embody a different aspect of the powerful, and uplifting “spirit of music.” The first two works are very close to my career as a conductor, as I had the unique opportunity to conduct the premiere of both works. Rossano Galante’s “Rays of the Spirit” captures the essence of hope in the face of despair. Rossano’s compositional style could be described as “John Williams-ish” which makes this a great opening for the concert. Arlen Clarke’s “Nocturne for Julia” captures the essence of joy in the presence of loss. The performance today of “Nocturne for Julia” is a second premiere as composer Clarke expanded the orchestration of this work for this performance. Christopher Theofanidis’ “Rainbow Body” brings us closer to cultures that believe that the spirit of a person actually turns into the colors of the rainbow. This work has many unusual elements including a remarkable cello solo, as well as lots of fun percussion parts. Perhaps, as you experience this music you will sense joy, triumph, loss, or amazement; or you might find yourself smiling, secretly wiping a tear or tapping a toe. We hope you will experience the “spirit of music.”

– Brian Norcross

Rossano Galante (1969–)

Rays of the Spirit

Buffalo-born Rossano Galante is best known as a film composer and arranger with credits including *Scary Movie 2* and *Channels*. He also has orchestrated for films such as *The Invisible*, *Elephant Tales*, *Red Eye*, *Big Fat Liar*, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, and *Interstate 60*. Some of his numerous commissions include The Nebraska Wind Symphony, Trenton State College, Erie County Wind Ensemble, Hofstra University, Franklin & Marshall College, and Allegro, the Chamber Orchestra of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Galante writes the following regarding *Rays of the Spirit*:

“On September 11, 2001, my sister-in-law, Lynn Castrianno, contacted me and said that her brother’s life might be in serious danger. His name was Leonard and he worked for Cantor Fitzgerald on the 105th floor of the World Trade Center. I was stunned by this horrific news.

I hoped that Leonard was late for work that day or vacated the building before it collapsed. Unfortunately, he arrived on time. He must have been sitting in his office when the plane hit the tower. Leonard perished that day along with thousands of others.

In 2005, Lynn told me about a composing competition that would honor the victims of 9/11. I instantly became inspired and wrote *Rays of the Spirit*. Although I didn’t win, I was very happy to have created a piece of music that pays tribute to those who were taken from us too soon. I know that it would be difficult to get a performance by a live orchestra so I put my score on the shelf and left it alone for almost four years.

In 2008, Brian Norcross, conductor of the Franklin & Marshall Orchestra, contacted me and asked if I had any orchestral works. I told him about *Rays of the Spirit* and this resulted in the premiere in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, that fall.

Rays of the Spirit is a composition that honors the courage and strength of the 9/11 victims. I believe that Leonard Castrianno, who was a bright, energetic and kind human being, inspired me to compose this work.”

Arlen Clarke (1954–)
Nocturne for Julia

American composer, conductor and performer Arlen Clarke is perhaps best known for his extensive choral compositions, but also has written numerous works for orchestra and chamber ensembles. His music has been performed throughout the country. *Nocturne for Julia* was premiered in 2007 by Allegro, the Chamber Orchestra of Lancaster, conducted by Brian Norcross. The work was commissioned in memory of Julia Oliver by her husband, Gene, and her son, Bill.

The composer has written this note about the piece:

“I met Julia a few years ago, and had the pleasure of chatting with her over lunch perhaps less than a year prior to her death. *Nocturne for Julia* is a musical description of my impression of her. Subjectivity is the artist's greatest tool for expression. And from my impressions of her, I set out to capture, in the music, what I felt was her essence—gentle, elegant, and inwardly strong. I can tell you that it was relatively easy to be inspired to write music for such a remarkable woman. Unfortunately, this piece is much too short to reflect Julia's life and impact on others. I believe that there is a whole symphony waiting to be written for her.”

Christopher Theofanidis (1967–) ***Rainbow Body***

American composer Christopher Theofanidis has had his music performed by many leading orchestras around the world, including the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as the National, Atlanta, St. Louis, and Detroit symphonies. In 2007, he was nominated for a Grammy for his composition for chorus and orchestra, *The Here and the Now*.

Christopher Theofanidis writes the following about *Rainbow Body*:

“In the past few years I have been listening to music of the medieval mystic Hildegard von Bingen a great deal. As simple and direct as this music is, I am constantly amazed by its staying power. Hildegard’s melodies have very memorably contours, which set them apart from other chants of this period. They are very sensual and intimate; a kind of communication with the divine. This work is based on one of her chants, “Ave Maria, O auctrix vite” (Hail Mary, source of life).

“*Rainbow Body* begins in an understated, mysterious manner, calling attention to some of the key intervals and motives of the piece. When the primary melody enters for the first time, about a minute into the work, I present it very directly in the strings without accompaniment. In the orchestration, I try to capture a halo around this melody, creating a wet acoustic by emphasizing the lingering reverberations one might hear in an old cathedral.

“Although the piece is built essentially around fragments of the melody, I also return to the tune in its entirety several times throughout the work, as a kind of plateau of stability within an otherwise turbulent environment. *Rainbow Body* has a very different sensibility from the Hildegard chant, with a structure that is dramatic and developmental, but I hope that it conveys at least a little of my love for the beauty and grace of her work.”

Notes by Brian Norcross