

CRI DE COEUR
euphonium and band
LIBBY LARSEN
2010

Commissioned By:

Lead Commissioner: Dr. Brian Meixner, Slippery Rock University

Co-Commissioners:

Fred J. Allen, Stephen F. Austin University

Dr. Brian Bowman, The University of North Texas

Phillip Clements, Teas A&M University-Commerce

Dr. Bradley G. Coker, The University of Tennessee at Martin

Dr. Marc Dickman, The University of North Florida

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Dr. Lois Ferrari, Southwestern University

Dr. Stephen L. Gage, Youngstown State University

Joseph D. Goble, Retired Band Director, Low Brass Teacher

Michael Grose and Dr. Timothy Paul, The University of Oregon

Danny Helseth

Dr. Leslie W. Hickman

Lance LaDuke

Derrick Logozzo, Richland College

Dr. John P. Lynch, The University of Georgia

Dr. Timothy Mahr, St. Olaf College

Dr. George Palton, The Marshall University Chapter of ITEA

Dr. Angela Schroeder, The University of Alberta

Patrick Sheridan

Dr. Scott Stewart, Emory University

Pat Stuckmeyer, Mesa College

Demondrae Thurman, The University of Alabama

Dr. Andrew Trachsel, Ohio University

Dr. Jamie VanValkenburg, Adams State College

Premiere:

January 20, 2010 by Brian Meixner, euphonium and the U.S. Army Band, Pershing's Own. Ft Meyer, Arlington, VA.

The idea behind asking Libby Larsen to write a piece for euphonium solo with band was to create a single-movement concerto that was not too incredibly difficult; for either the band or soloist. Many of the new concertos for euphonium have worked to push the boundaries of the instrument and accompanying ensemble. My personal experience has been that there are few works in the repertoire that are exciting solo works, and approachable accompaniments. The consortium, lead by Dr. Meixner, approached Ms. Larsen, and asked that she compose a piece that would be available to mid-college level soloists and bands. The piece that came out of this effort, “Cri de Coeur”, I believe, helps to fill this void.

There is an interesting story about the premiere of this piece. The premiere is listed as January 20, 2010 with Dr. Meixner and the US Army Band at the annual Tuba Euphonium Conference in Arlington, VA. While this was the intended premiere, winter weather cancelled the concert. I received a phone call from Brian on the 21st, asking if I still intended to perform the piece with the University of Oregon Symphonic band in March. This was to be the second performance, and Brian gave us the nod to go ahead and do it as the premiere. The tricky thing was that had not received parts yet, due to the scheduled premiere at the Army Band’s conference. Dr. Paul and I received the music a week later, and started to work on it. The performance that we gave on March 4, 2010 was the actual World Premiere. With only three weeks to learn and prepare the piece, thank goodness Ms. Larsen held to the commission of writing a mid-level work!

Composer's Notes:

I met euphonium performer and teacher Brian Meixner while doing a residency with the School of Music at Slippery Rock University in 2007. Brian stopped me in the hall and asked if I would ever be interested in writing a piece for euphonium. I had not written for solo Euphonium, and it struck me at the moment that I wanted to do a piece in honor of one of my dear friends and mentors, Henry Charles Smith, who was former euphonium player for the Philadelphia Orchestra and conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra the entire time while I was growing up in Minneapolis. He is one of the champions of euphonium. I was also interested because my own sound trajectory (as well as that of the common ear since the 1600s) has moved down in tessitura. A “Cri de Coeur” is from the French “cry from the heart.” It is a passionate outcry, often of protest. I am not happy with the state of things in 2010. I am worried, and my concern has been since I saw the Space Shuttle Challenger explode on television in 1986. My worry is that the arrogance of human beings is paired with a constructed spirituality that we are put on this earth to dominate, control, and make it useful to us. We seem to have an inability to stop for a moment and project what the consequences of our actions may mean. As an artist—and I think a lot of artists feel this way today—I just wanted to cry out, very much in the same way that Edvard Munch cried out with *The Scream*. This is not a

programmatic piece but rather an abstract human emotion that we all share, and music is the best way I can express it. I was more interested in writing a fiercely emotional piece, rather than one preoccupied with technique, trend, or fad. The first “audience” or “receiver” for *Cri de Coeuris* the ensemble itself as they are discovering the piece. The solo euphonium becomes the “crier,” and the solo offstage trumpet becomes the “responder” to the entreaty. The architectural form is not a “known” one (ABA, etc.), but yet it is not through-composed. A simple three-note theme permeates the entire work, taking the listener on an unpredictable journey. The introduction of the hymn “Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones” is derived from the falling action of the dramatic arch created at measure 81, and is intentionally not a Christian response to the outcry; rather it is a spiritual evocation.

Biography

“Music exists in an infinity of sound. I think of all music as existing in the substance of the air itself. It is the composer’s task to order and make sense of sound, in time and space, to communicate something about being alive through music.”

-- Libby Larsen

Libby Larsen (b. 24 December 1950, Wilmington, Delaware) is one of America’s most prolific and most performed living composers. She has created a catalogue of over 400 works spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and over twelve operas. Her music has been praised for its dynamic, deeply inspired, and vigorous contemporary American spirit. Constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles and orchestras around the world, Libby Larsen has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertory.

Larsen has been hailed as “the only English-speaking composer since Benjamin Britten who matches great verse with fine music so intelligently and expressively” (USA Today); as “a composer who has made the art of symphonic writing very much her own.” (Gramophone); as “a mistress of orchestration” (Times Union); and for “assembling one of the most impressive bodies of music of our time” (Hartford Courant). Her music has been praised for its “clear textures, easily absorbed rhythms and appealing melodic contours that make singing seem the most natural expression imaginable.” (Philadelphia Inquirer) “Libby Larsen has come up with a way to make contemporary opera both musically current and accessible to the average audience.” (The Wall Street Journal). “Her ability to write memorable new music completely within the confines of traditional harmonic language is most impressive.” (Fanfare)

Libby Larsen has received numerous awards and accolades, including a 1994 Grammy as producer of the CD: *The Art of Arlene Augér*, an acclaimed recording that features Larsen’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Her opera *Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus* was selected as one of the eight best classical music events of 1990 by USA Today. The first woman to serve as a resident composer with a major orchestra, she has held residencies with the California Institute of the Arts, the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, the Philadelphia School of the Arts, the Cincinnati Conservatory, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony. Larsen’s many commissions and recordings are a testament to her fruitful collaborations with a long list of world-renowned artists, including The King’s Singers, Benita Valente, and Frederica von Stade, among others. Her works are widely recorded on such labels as Angel/EMI, Nonesuch, Decca, and Koch International.

As a past holder of the 2003-2004 Harissios Papamarkou Chair in Education at the Library of Congress and recipient of the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as well as a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Libby Larsen is a vigorous, articulate champion of the music and musicians of our time. In 1973, she co-founded (with Stephen Paulus) the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composers Forum, which has been an invaluable advocate for composers in a difficult, transitional time for American arts. Consistently sought-after as a leader in the generation of millenium thinkers, Libby Larsen’s music and ideas have refreshed the concert music tradition and the composer’s role in it.