

Composer Notes

AUTUMN MARIA REED

I composed the *Mental Health Suite* to reflect different diagnoses of acquired mental illnesses.

The movements reflect the chronological symptoms of the various mental disorders.

- “The Origin Story” represents trauma.
- “The Persistent Past” represents the inevitable depression.
- “The Fearful Future” represents the frenetic energy of anxiety.
- “As If Nothing Happened” represents masking symptoms.

I am ecstatic to share my composition, which honors various symptoms of acquired mental illness.

I spent my early adulthood struggling, but I have found light, and I hope that others struggling will find their light. —*Autumn Maria Reed*

REGINA HARRIS BAIOCCHI

Muse for Orchestra by Regina Harris Baiocchi was inspired by the composer’s poetry. Regina often writes poetry to jumpstart composing music and vice versa. In this case, the composer’s poem titled “Message to my Muse” inspired her to write orchestral music and an art song. *Muse* debuted under the baton of Maestro Leslie Dunner and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Dedicated “to Greg.”

Message to My Muse (poem)

Send me a message through the Rains
That will glide on the birds’ wings
Let it touch me in my heart
Where the angel in me sings.

Make me your instrument of song
So, the world will ever know
That we resonate as one
That I sparkle from Your glow.

If I don’t hear from You
Today will be born without me
Who then will sing my song?
Who else can right our wrongs?

So, send me a message thru the Rains
That will glide on the birds’ wings
Let it touch me in my heart
Where the angel in me sings.

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XAVIER FOLEY

Inspired by the legendary television show *Soul Train* (1971–2006), one of the most culturally influential dance shows of all time, Xavier Foley's concerto for double bass and orchestra, *Soul Bass*, celebrates the vitality and depth of soul music. Just as *Soul Train* introduced a new musical genre and its African American artists to a national audience, *Soul Bass* introduces the voice of soul, and its gospel and R&B roots, to the concert hall, blending its rhythms and spirit with classical form.. The result is a vibrant and virtuosic work that brings listeners into a sound world infused with joy, groove, and expressive depth...and, of course, peace, love, and soul.

Soul Bass was commissioned and premiered by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in March 2022 with the composer as soloist and Jonathon Heyward conducting.

ERIC GOULD

This short triptych chronicles the development of virtually all American cities, as a map of an unfinished journey.

All communities are the result of the management and resolution of conflict. Conflicting visions and differing cultures must be tended to like a garden for the community to grow. American cities, once part of the ever expanding “wild” Western frontier of our nation, were first transformed from Native American hunting grounds to small agrarian communities of immigrant settlers from various lands. This is where our story begins—“From Native Lands”.

Then came the machines, belching fire and smoke and steam. Made of iron and steel, these behemoths outwardly seem so different from mankind. Yet these machines, and the men that created them transformed our cities, feeding families, and carrying in waves of new citizens. The dance of “Men and Machines”—of flesh and steel—is one that demonstrates the unity of dissimilar things.

“Legacy and Vision”: one looks back while the other looks forward. One is driven by the memory of things past while the other by the imagination of things to come. Yet, legacy and vision are not opposites, but points along a spectrum, each emerging from the prism of our perception to color our picture of the future. As our American city continues to move forward, both legacy and vision must guide our every step.

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OMAR THOMAS

Of Our New Day Begun was written to honor nine beautiful souls who lost their lives to a callous act of hatred and domestic terrorism on the evening of June 17, 2015 while worshipping in their beloved sanctuary, the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (affectionately referred to as “Mother Emanuel”) in Charleston, South Carolina. My greatest challenge in creating this work was walking the line between reverence for the victims and their families, and honoring my strong, bitter feelings towards both the perpetrator and the segments of our society that continue to create people like him. I realized that the most powerful musical expression I could offer incorporated elements from both sides of that line—embracing my pain and anger while being moved by the displays of grace and forgiveness demonstrated by the victims’ families.

Historically, Black Americans have turned to the church to find refuge and grounding in times of trial. Accordingly, the musical themes of *Of Our New Day Begun* are rooted in the Black church tradition. Anchored by James and John Johnson’s “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” the work is infused with blues harmonies and melodies along with the rhythmic life of singing, stomping, clapping, and tambourine.

The piece opens with a unison fragment of “Lift Every Voice...” before yielding to ghostly chords, then a dirge-like presentation of the anthem in shifting meters. The intensity grows with fleeting glimmers of hope answered by cries of blues-inspired licks before building into an *ostinato*-driven section of frustration, culminating in group singing of the anthem, fueled by the energy of Black worship.

In the latter half, the music turns hopeful, moving into 9/8 and then modulating upward to a triumphant setting of the anthem’s closing lines in 4/4, reflecting the humanity of the victims’ families. A long decrescendo leads to a gospel-inspired hymnsong, before the work concludes on a unison F that grows from a distant hum to a thunderous roar, driven forward by march-like stomping to represent the ceaseless marching of black Americans towards equality.

This consortium commission was led by Dr. Gary Schallert and the Western Kentucky University Wind Ensemble.