

Program Notes

PATRICE RUSHEN, COMPOSER

Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory was commissioned by the DETROIT SYMPHONY for one of their annual MLK celebration concerts. The adult orchestra was scheduled to be on tour but asked that their formidable youth orchestra play the annual concert in their stead. The assignment was to compose a piece in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The piece was to be for an orchestra and require no outside soloists. The orchestra was to be the centerpiece.

I chose 3 areas of Dr. King's life, which in my mind marked some of the most impactful moments of his life. I was a child during that era of the Civil Rights Movement, but I could tell from the reactions of my parents and other older people, that this man was of great significance, and his cause was important and serious. Later, as I grew up, I came to realize the significance of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the principles on which he stood.

The first movement, *Passion From The Pulpit*, speaks to Dr. King's connection to his faith and to the church. His oratory skills always harkened back to the preacher's style that I recognized from the black church. The idea that the messages, when most effective, traveled beyond the particular service in which they were offered. These messages informed so much and so much concerning the ideals of human spirit, power and passion.

The second movement, *The Dreamer Cometh*, is inspired by the idea of the push and pull that I imagined could have been part of the dilemma of what one feels when one's commitment lands them in a place where their actions have reached a point where they cannot stop or turn around. The famed, "Letter From The Birmingham Jail" were what came to my mind. Does progress have a price? What must be sacrificed for the "greater good"? Who is affected by those choices? Can I go on? Is it worth jail, beatings, injury, death? Am I helping or hurting my people?

The final movement, *Freedom Is Not Free*, offers the power of commitment and acceptance, as Dr. King chose to continue his work. It seemed to give way to a steadiness... A march... literally... towards that which represented unity and freedom and the possibilities for racial justice and equality. The triumph of those ideas were within Dr. King's grasp, although he recognized the danger. "I may not get there with you, but we as a people will get to the "promised land", he said.