

The Mystic Trumpeter

Tone Poem for SATB Chorus,
Brass Ensemble & Piano

Text by Walt Whitman
from *Leaves of Grass* (1855)

Music by Michael Pratt



Seven angels with golden trumpets (Revelation 8: 7).
England: 1st quarter of the 14th century.

Commissioned by William G. Premin
for
The Birmingham Musicale Choral Ensemble
Judith A. Premin, Director

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Duration: 32:00

The Mystic Trumpeter

from *Leaves of Grass* (1855)

by Walt Whitman

1
HARK, some wild trumpeter, some strange musician,
Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tunes to-night.
I hear thee trumpeter, listening alert I catch thy notes,
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,
Now low, subdued, now in the distance lost.

2
Come nearer bodiless one, haply in thee resounds
Some dead composer, haply thy pensive life
Was fill'd with aspirations high, unform'd ideals,
Waves, oceans musical, chaotically surging,
That now ecstatic ghost, close to me bending, thy cornet echoing,
pealing,
Gives out to no one's ears but mine, but freely gives to mine,
That I may thee translate.

3
Blow trumpeter free and clear, I follow thee,
While at thy liquid prelude, glad, serene,
The fretting world, the streets, the noisy hours of day withdraw,
A holy calm descends like dew upon me,
I walk in cool refreshing night the walks of Paradise,
I scent the grass, the moist air and the roses;
Thy song expands my numb'd imboded spirit, thou freest, launchest
me,
Floating and basking upon heaven's lake.

4
Blow again trumpeter! and for my sensuous eyes,
Bring the old pageants, show the feudal world.
What charm thy music works! thou makest pass before me,
Ladies and cavaliers long dead, barons are in their castle halls,
the troubadours are singing,
Arm'd knights go forth to redress wrongs, some in quest of the holy
Gaal;
I see the tournament, I see the contestants incased in heavy armor
seated on stately champing horses,
I hear the shouts, the sounds of blows and smiting steel;
I see the Crusaders' tumultuous armies - hark, how the cymbals clang,
Lo, where the monks walk in advance, bearing the cross on high.

5
Blow again trumpeter! and for thy theme,
Take now the enclosing theme of all, the solvent and the setting,
Love, that is pulse of all, the sustenance and the pang,
The heart of man and woman all for love,
No other theme but love - knitting, enclosing, all-diffusing love.
O how the immortal phantoms crowd around me!
I see the vast alembic ever working, I see and know the flames that
heat the world,
The glow, the blush, the beating hearts of lovers,
So blissful happy some, and some so silent, dark, and nigh to death;
Love, that is all the earth to lovers - love, that mocks time and
space,
Love, that is day and night - love, that is sun and moon and stars,
Love, that is crimson, sumptuous, sick with perfume,
No other words but words of love, no other thought but love.

6
Blow again trumpeter - conjure war's alarms.
Swift to thy spell a shuddering hum like distant thunder rolls,
Lo, where the arm'd men hasten - lo, mid the clouds of dust the glint
of bayonets,
I see the grime-faced cannoneers, I mark the rosy flash amid the
smoke, I hear the cracking of the guns;
Nor war alone - thy fearful music-song, wild player, brings every
sight of fear,
The deeds of ruthless brigands, rapine, murder-I hear the cries for
help!
I see ships foundering at sea, I behold on deck and below deck the
terrible tableaux.

7
O trumpeter, methinks I am myself the instrument thou playest,
Thou melt'st my heart, my brain - thou movest, drawest, changest
them at will;
And now thy sullen notes send darkness through me,
Thou takest away all cheering light, all hope,
I see the enslaved, the overthrown, the hurt, the opprest of the
whole earth,
I feel the measureless shame and humiliation of my race, it becomes
all mine,
Mine too the revenges of humanity, the wrongs of ages, baffled feuds
and hatreds,
Utter defeat upon me weighs - all lost - the foe victorious,
(Yet 'mid the ruins Pride colossal stands unshaken to the last,
Endurance, resolution to the last.)

8
Now trumpeter for thy close,
Vouchsafe a higher strain than any yet,
Sing to my soul, renew its languishing faith and hope,
Rouse up my slow belief, give me some vision of the future,
Give me for once its prophecy and joy.
O glad, exulting, culminating song!
A vigor more than earth's is in thy notes,
Marches of victory - man disenthral'd - the conqueror at last,
Hymns to the universal God from universal man - all joy!
A reborn race appears - a perfect world, all joy!
Women and men in wisdom innocence and health - all joy!
Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy!
War, sorrow, suffering gone-the rank earth purged - nothing but joy
left!
The ocean fill'd with joy - the atmosphere all joy!
Joy! joy! in freedom, worship, love! joy in the ecstasy of life!
Enough to merely be! enough to breathe!
Joy! joy! all over joy!

The Mystic Trumpeter is a wonderfully evocative poem by Walt Whitman which has been on my desk for many years enticing me to set it to music (as it has been several times, most notably by Howard Hanson). Being a brass player myself the initial attraction was the title itself, which has wonderful connotations. The substance of the poem conjured so many images in my mind that I knew it contained material for a major work. I know of no other poem which addresses so eloquently so many diverse topics: walking in paradise, witnessing feudal pageantry, love, war, slavery, ultimate pain, ultimate joy. Whitman lived through the most wrenching period in American history, witnessing the Civil War and slavery first-hand, and in this poem he vividly described the pain and suffering he himself felt and the joy he wished for mankind. Having wanted to set the poem to music for so many years I felt great pleasure at having been asked by William Premin to set it for the Birmingham Musicale Choral Ensemble directed by his wife Judith Premin.

The first performance of **The Mystic Trumpeter** took place on May 23, 2004 at the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan by the Birmingham Musicale Choral Ensemble under the direction of Judith A. Premin in the version for SSAA chorus, trumpet and organ with trumpeter David Kuehn and organist Tom Trenney.

Dr. Michael Pratt has degrees in music education and music composition from The University of Toledo, The University of Michigan, and Boston University. He studied composition with Pulitzer Prize winning composers Ross Lee Finney and Leslie Bassett at The University of Michigan, and taught music in the public schools and colleges for many years in Michigan.

He has sung with The Toledo Choral Society, Toledo Symphony Chorale, Opera!Lenawee, and The University Musical Society Choral Union of The University of Michigan with whom he has performed with The Detroit Symphony Orchestra, The San Francisco Symphony, The Kirov Orchestra, The Russian National Orchestra, The Ann Arbor Symphony, The Lansing Symphony, The Grand Rapids Symphony, The Toledo Symphony, The Birmingham Symphony, The Gabrieli Consort, and The Tallis Scholars.

He was a chorus member of the multiple Grammy award winning Best Classical Album of 2006: *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience* by William Bolcolm which is available on the Naxos label.

He has played tuba with The Toledo Symphony, Toledo Concert Band, Toledo Opera, University of Toledo Faculty Brass Quintet, Adrian Chamber Brass, Adrian College Faculty Brass Quintet, The Crosswell Opera House, The Adrian Symphony Orchestra and The Adrian City Band.

He has performed with many notable conductors, including, Valery Gergiev, Michael Tilson Thomas, Neeme Jarve, Mikhail Pletnev, Rafael Fruhbeck de Burgos, Leonard Slatkin, John Adams, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Paul McCreech, Peter Phillips, Catherine Comet, Eric Kunzel, Margaret Hillis, Martin Katz, John Finley Williamson, Jerry Blackstone, Theo Alcantara, Serge Fournier, William D. Revelli, Christopher Warren-Greene, Kenneth Keisler, Carl St. Clair, Sam Wong, Hans Graf, Arie Lipski, Lan Shui, Thomas Sheets, Andrew Massey, Sam Szor, and H. Robert Reynolds.

Michael Pratt is a member of ASCAP.

The Mystic Trumpeter

Text by Walt Whitman
from *Leaves of Grass* (1855)

Music by
Michael Pratt, ASCAP

Part One

1. Wild Trumpeter, Strange Musician

Mysterioso legato lontano ♩ = 48

The musical score is arranged in a grand staff format. It includes the following parts:

- Vocalists:** Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Each part consists of five measures of rests, corresponding to the time signature changes.
- Trumpet in C 1:** Starts with a melodic line in the first measure, marked *mf* and *(off stage)*. It continues with a series of notes across the five measures.
- Trumpet in C 2:** Five measures of rests.
- Trumpet in C 3:** Five measures of rests.
- Horn in F:** Five measures of rests.
- Trombone:** Five measures of rests.
- Euphonium:** Five measures of rests.
- Tuba:** Five measures of rests.
- Piano:** Five measures of rests in both the treble and bass clefs.

The score is divided into five measures, each with a different time signature: 5/4, 6/4, 2/4, 7/4, and 4/4. The tempo is marked *Mysterioso legato lontano* with a quarter note equal to 48 beats per minute.

The Mystic Trumpeter

6

S

A

T

B

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

C Tpt. 3

F Hn.

Tbn.

Euph.

Tuba

Pno.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, titled 'The Mystic Trumpeter', is page 5. It features a vocal quartet (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a brass section (three Cornet Trumpets, French Horn, Trombone, Euphonium, and Tuba) along with a Piano. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The vocal parts (S, A, T, B) are mostly silent, indicated by horizontal lines with a fermata. The instrumental parts are also mostly silent, with the exception of the first Cornet Trumpet (C Tpt. 1), which has a melodic line starting in measure 6. The C Tpt. 1 part begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. In measure 7, it has a quarter note D5. In measure 8, it has a quarter note E5. In measure 9, it has a quarter note F5. In measure 10, it has a quarter note G5. In measure 11, it has a quarter note A5. In measure 12, it has a quarter note B5. In measure 13, it has a quarter note C6. In measure 14, it has a quarter note D6. In measure 15, it has a quarter note E6. In measure 16, it has a quarter note F6. In measure 17, it has a quarter note G6. In measure 18, it has a quarter note A6. In measure 19, it has a quarter note B6. In measure 20, it has a quarter note C7. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The piano part (Pno.) is also silent throughout the page.

The Mystic Trumpeter

8

18

S
A
T
B

18

C Tpt. 1
C Tpt. 2
C Tpt. 3
F Hn.
Tbn.
Euph.
Tuba

18

Pno.

The Mystic Trumpeter

3

20 *mf* *mf* *legato* 5

S Hark, some wi - ld trump - e - ter, some

A *mf* *mf*

T Hark, some Hark, some

B Hark, Hark,

20

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

C Tpt. 3

F Hn.

Tbn.

Euph.

Tuba

20 *mf*

Pno.