

## *September 11, 2011 Program Notes*

### *Heroes*

The opening concert of Mid-Texas Symphony's 34<sup>th</sup> Season falls on the tenth anniversary of the attacks on September 11, 2001. As Music Director David Mairs planned the season, he wanted to engage the power of music to express that which cannot be said in words.

#### **Mairs: *Lacrimosa et Benedictus (for the Victims)***

"Following 9/11, I couldn't get the frustration and sadness out of my soul. I was bothered not only by the destruction and the killing of the 3000, but knowing that the violence would beget more violence. So much happened in that season in our nation's history -- 9/11, Iraq, Afghanistan, Katrina.

"I began this piece in January of 2005 as an attempt to get out that anger, frustration, and sadness. It opens with themes from songs that I cherish, gnarling them up, expressing my own weeping. As I wrote, my focus shifted from my own sadness to the victims, the firefighters, the heroes. I was drawn to the last movement of Mahler's Third Symphony, 'What love tells me,' a brief quote from which serves as a bridge from my feelings to the heroes and victims. In their honor and memory, the piece concludes with a simple benediction - a good word - which I composed for choir some years ago.

*May the LORD Jesus Christ be  
Near you to defend you,  
Within you to refresh you,  
Before you to guide you,  
Behind you to justify you,  
And above you to bless you.  
AMEN.*

"My hope is that the performing of this piece will serve as a balm of comfort and hope, not only to those who hear it, but also to those who work through it and perform it."

#### **Copland: *Lincoln Portrait***

**Lincoln Portrait** was commissioned by conductor André Kostelanetz of the Cincinnati Symphony, who was looking for works that expressed "the qualities of courage, dignity, strength, simplicity and humor which are so characteristic of the American people." Copland began the piece shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. It premiered in May 1942, with actor William Adams. Shortly thereafter, the orchestra repeated the work with Carl Sandburg as speaker, first in a long line of famous narrators: Marian Anderson, Walter Cronkite, Henry Fonda, Norman Schwarzkopf, James Earl Jones, Sen. Edward Kennedy, Katharine Hepburn, and many others, including Copland himself.

Copland first proposed writing about poet Walt Whitman, but Kostelanetz suggested Lincoln instead. Copland agreed on one condition: that his composition include a speaker because "no composer could possibly hope to match in purely musical terms the stature of so eminent a figure." For a 1943 program book of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Copland wrote, "The composition is roughly divided into three sections. In the opening section I wanted to suggest something of the mysterious sense of fatality that surrounds Lincoln's personality. Also, near the end of that section, something of his gentleness and simplicity of spirit. The quick middle section briefly sketches in the background of the times he lived in. This merges into the concluding section where my sole purpose was to draw a simple but impressive frame about the words of Lincoln himself."

### **Beethoven: Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 55**

Beethoven began his **Symphony No. 3** in late 1803 and completed it in the spring of 1804. In both his personal life and in the European geo-political theater, tumult and unease surrounded Beethoven. Personally, Beethoven's increasing deafness led him to withdraw from society and even contemplate suicide. In the larger world, Napoleon, once admired by Beethoven as a champion of democracy and human rights, declared himself emperor. In disgust, Beethoven changed the title of his Symphony No. 3 from "Bonaparte" to "Eroica."

Symphony No. 3 is worthy of the momentous events of its time. It is a departure from Beethoven's earlier style -- lengthy, technically challenging, majestic, and surprising. This stylistic turning point is sometimes identified as the beginning of the Romantic period.

The four movements each have their respective champions as the most noteworthy. The first, Allegro con brio, was longer and used a larger orchestration than other symphonies, capturing the heroic dimension in the key of Eb, considered the noblest of keys by many composers. The second movement, Marcia funèbre, is a funeral march, mourning the passing of the hero. Many other composers have quoted from this section of the piece and the movement itself has been used on many memorial occasions including the concert honoring the victims of the 1972 attack on the Summer Olympics. The third movement, the Scherzo, matches the opening two in intensity, while retaining the Classical symphonic form. In the Finale, a theme and variations, Beethoven returns to themes he used in a ballet about the Greek hero Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods. After a brief repose, in which he slows down one of the themes and features the beautiful sounds of the oboe, Beethoven concludes this "heroic" symphony with a brilliant and fiery charge of sound and fury. This is music fit for the most glorious of "Heroes!"