

CONCERT 20th July 2020

Dear members of WHO and friends,

As promised last week we will begin this week's concert with a fanfare. So let us begin with "Bernstein conducts Copeland's Fanfare for the Common Man" on YouTube. This historic live recording was with Copeland in attendance. Great to see the composer and one of the greatest exponents of his music in the same clip.

Staying in the US, let's take a look and listen to John Adams "Short ride in a fast machine". There is a great recording on YouTube from the BBC proms with Marin Alsop conducting a performance in 2014. Alsop is a wonderful conductor, the video is beautifully filmed and I regard it as a great performance of this piece. Inspired by a late night sports car ride, (both thrilling and terrifying), composer John Coolidge Adams was born in 1947 and is one of the most performed American minimalists. This piece was commissioned to open the 1986 Summer Festival given by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

The minimalist movement in music began in the early 1860s on the West Coast, also including composers like Steve Reich and Philip Glass. Following on from a similar art movement in the 1950s characterised by the use of simple massive forms, their music compositions were characterised by short pulsing phrases or chords being repeated with gradual changes being introduced. One of the strong influences was the music of Indian Ragas and also areas of South East Asia like Sri Lanka. Woods described this piece as a "Fanfare for Orchestra".

In 2020 the Sydney Symphony introduced 50 Fanfares, a project commissioning world premieres by 50 Australian composers. These were to be performed this year up to 2022 when the orchestra returns to the Sydney Opera House after its reconstruction and acoustic renewal. The first of the 50 works to be performed in August was to be by Christopher Sainsbury whose piece "Spirit Land" we were to perform this year. I do hope the Sydney orchestra is back by then to perform Christopher's work. I'll keep you informed.

Of course, the large Hollywood studios have used fanfares since the first half of the nineteenth century. I particularly like the fanfare for 20th Century Fox. You can also YouTube Universal Pictures 100th Anniversary composed by Brian Tyler for another good example. And who could forget the (YouTube) "Olympic Fanfare and Theme" sometimes titled "Summon the Heroes" composed by John Williams, the best of them all. Commissioned for the opening of the 1996 Olympics, it is a fanfare I have conducted a few times at special events and it never fails to create a sense of occasion, importance and expectation. All the important elements a great Fanfare should convey.

Fanfares have been used in Tannhäuser and Lohengrin by Wagner and most famously by Beethoven in the second act of Fidelio where the effect is made all the more dramatic by the use of an off stage trumpet.

The power of the fanfare was expressed most recently by composer Frank London releasing a symphonic fanfare entitled "For Our Courageous Workers" hoping to unite 1000 musicians and non musicians (if you can clap or sing along you can join the chorus) reflecting, on line, gratitude to the health workers of New York at the height of their lockdown pandemic crisis.

Let music raise us to unheralded heights of resilience and human connection. Let us Fanfare our resolve to get through these difficult times.