

Program Notes

Portraits of the American West

"Portraits of the American West" was commissioned by Greg Hustis and dedicated to Mason Jones. This piece for twelve horns and two percussionists was meant to capture scenes from the early American west.

The first movement pictures a wagon train about to embark on a westward journey over the Santa Fe Trail in 1825. This trail was very popular at the time for pioneers, but extremely dangerous. The opening chorale is meant to reflect the wonder of the journey as well as a little trepidation for the risks involved. The main Allegro theme is fanfare-like in nature representing the courage and excitement of the men and women who made this trip. The Moderato section combines the chorale theme with this main Allegro theme in a slower tempo reflecting the solitude of the landscape on this long journey. The main Allegro theme returns and the music accelerates over time as the wagon train nears its final destination. This movement concludes with a return of the opening chorale theme, now stated as a fanfare of celebration for a successful journey.

The second movement paints a musical portrait of a sunrise over the prairie during similar travels of Americans settling the west. Such a sunrise on a pretty day must have been particularly beautiful over a virgin landscape.

The third movement portrays a similar picture of Colorado. The opening fanfare is a tribute to the grand, majestic image of the Rocky mountains. The Allegro that follows is a tribute to the American cowboy and the adventures that they had while herding cattle in 1876.