Character Studies of Time: A Two Movement Work for Orchestra

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CHARACTER STUDIES OF TIME: A TWO MOVEMENT WORK FOR ORCHESTRA

A Thesis

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Agricultural and Mechanical College
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requirements for the degree of
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in

The School of Music

by

Crystal Darcell Birdsong
B.M., Centenary College of Louisiana, 2012
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ABSTRACT

The idea behind The Character Studies of Time: A Two Movement Work for Orchestra should be reminiscent of, and is inspired by the character pieces of Robert Schumann’s Carnival. Although the works of Robert Schumann are originally short piano solos, the spirit of the character piece and all that it entails could be found throughout The Character Studies of Time. This symphony does not follow a strict form of 19th century writing, although the elements of romanticism can be found throughout the piece. The “characters” as they relate to time are quite literally “night” and “day.” The individual titles are deliberate, as their purpose is to make fun of actual people. In other words, there is a comedic edge that is depicted throughout the symphony. One defining trait of the comedic appearances are the glissandos that are played in a downward motion.

“The Night Owl Hoots” is a character depiction of one who simply “drags their feet” throughout the morning. The piece begins in unison with a mixture of heavy dynamics, which signifies the dread of getting up in the morning. From this point, the main theme echoed in the flutes and clarinets are supposed to imitate an owl, which is typically heard throughout the night. It is to be played with a smugness and sense of laziness in mind. The piece is in no set form, but ends in a major key, which signifies that the character has made it to the night, where they are most alive in their natural habitat.

“The Early Bird,” is particularly more upbeat than its predecessor. The flutes, once again, have the theme. However, the flutes imitate the sound of birds. This is reminiscent of Messiaen’s various birdsongs used in some of his works. Unlike the first movement, the second movement changes tempo and time signature. This is to symbolize a person’s reaction to
midday. Eventually, the return of the original tempo and time signature symbolizes to suggest that the “early bird” has returned.
INSTRUMENTATION

2 Flutes (Fl.)
2 Oboes (Ob.)
2 Bb Clarinets (Bb Cl.)
2 Bassoons (Bsn.)
4 horns in F (Hn.)
2 Trumpets in C (C Tpt.)
3 Trombones (Tbn.)

Tuba (Tuba)
Timpani (Timp.)
Triangle- Mov. 1 & 2 (Trgl.)
Tambourine-Mov. 1 & 2 (Tamb.)

Violin 1 (Vln. 1)
Violin 2 (Vln.2)
Viola (Vla.)
Cello (Vc.)
Contrabass (Cb.)
CHARACTER STUDIES OF TIME

I. THE NIGHT OWL HOOTS

Crystal Birdsong
Fl. 1&2
Ob. 1&2
B. Cl. 1&2
Bsn. 1&2
Hn. 1&2
Hn. 3&4
C Tpt. 1&2
Tbn. 1&2
Tbn. 3
Tuba
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
VITA

Crystal Birdsong is a native of Shreveport, Louisiana. She attended and received a Bachelors of Music in Theory and Composition at The Centenary College of Louisiana in 2012. She is a candidate for the Master of Music in Composition, under the tutelage of the Boyd Professor of Music, Dr. Dinos Constantinides. Performances of Ms. Birdsong’s other compositions have been performed throughout her academic career in Composer’s Forum at Louisiana State University, one of them being a string quartet performed by Baton Rouge’s own, The Magnolia String Quartet in 2015.