

**Symphony No. 3 for Soprano, Chorus and Large Orchestra,
"Journey Without Distance"**

Richard Danielpour (born in 1956)

Composed in 1989.

This work is receiving its world premiere at this concert.

Richard Danielpour's Third Symphony, "Journey Without Distance," was, according to the composer, "inspired by *A Course in Miracles*, a body of work which deals with the power of transformation through healing relationships. It is a three volume self-study course which has often been described as a metaphysical, spiritual psychotherapy."

For this performance, Danielpour has supplied the following information on *A Course in*

Miracles, excerpted from an article by Dr. Roger Walsh, professor of psychiatry and philosophy at the University of California at Irvine:

"The *Course* came through a process of inner dictation to Helen Schucman, a professor of psychology at Columbia Medical School and an atheistic Jew. She was helped by William Thetford, a professor in her department who called himself a practicing agnostic. Neither of them could have been more surprised to be the instruments for the production of this work.

"To summarize very briefly, in 1965 Helen and Bill were working at Columbia Medical School. The Psychology Department was busy tearing itself to shreds with infighting, as many academic departments do. Finally Bill exclaimed in exasperation, "There must be a better way of doing things, and I'm determined to find it," to which Helen responded, 'I agree, and I'll do what I can to help.'

"Two weeks later, she started having a series of visual images, which became so intense she wondered if she were losing her mind. These progressed from still images to sequences of images that seemed to have highly symbolic meanings. At the end of three months, Helen heard an inner voice which said, 'This is *A Course in Miracles*. Please take notes.' Once again, she feared she was having a psychotic breakdown, and raced to Bill. Bill's response may go down in history. He said, 'You don't know what's going on. I don't know what's going on. Why don't you just take some notes?' They agreed that she would come to work an hour early the next day, dictate the notes, and Bill would type them. So each morning for seven years, Helen dictated and Bill typed...

"The *Course* is written in a peculiar style similar to the King James translation of the Bible. Several hundred pages are in unrhymed iambic pentameter (Shakespearean blank verse)... Helen and Bill asked the voice why the *Course* was in dated Christian language. The voice explained that Christianity is in need of correction because some of its original meaning has been lost. In this particular form, it continued, the perennial wisdom will be available to a group of people who wouldn't otherwise be able to hear it."

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The composer continues, "I began to read and study *A Course in Miracles* in the summer of 1987. While it affected me very deeply as a guide for my inner growth, the idea of setting a part of the *Course* to music did not occur to me until early 1988. I discussed this idea at length with my friend Judith Skutch Whitson, and with her interest and willingness to collaborate with me on an extraction of the text, the first step in the work's realization had been made. At about that time, three orchestras, the Akron, Jacksonville and Stamford symphonies, approached me with the idea of composing a major orchestral work for performance in 1990. With the generous support of the Astral Foundation and the Foundation for Inner Peace, the commission for my Third Symphony followed. I began preparing the text with Judith Skutch Whitson in March 1989, and with our selections from the original text extracted and put into stanzas (much of the *Course* itself is in iambic pentameter, but is printed in prose), I began composing the work on 25 May, 1989 at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs and finished the unorchestrated score on 15 June. I then began orchestrating the work at the MacDowell Colony on 11 July and with the exception of three weeks in September, I worked uninterruptedly on the orchestration and final draft until its completion on 9 October, 1989 in New York City. It was without question a very short time for me to be engaged in such a large work, and I was often uncomfortable with the speed at which the music seemed to pour out of me. Nonetheless, I had just enough willingness to trust this new experience and follow it to its conclusion.

"The Symphony, dedicated to the late William Thetford, is written for soprano and orchestra with the texts coming from various sections of the *Course* itself. Although the Symphony is in two parts, it is performed in one continuous movement of about thirty minutes' length with the soprano's role interspersed throughout both parts, but most present in the final section. There is also a mixed chorus of about 20-30 singers used in the Symphony's Coda.

"Part One of the Symphony alternates between a rhythmically intense, viscerally oriented music (concerned with evoking feelings of conflict and fear) and a more lyrical and open-armed sound found most often when the soprano is present in the music. It is this split and need for resolution that serves as the dialectic for the music's journey and dramatic arc. The text in Part One invites us to awaken from the dream of death and our own fearful existence and believe in a world of hope and love.

"Part Two begins with an instrumental chorale, which is followed by the voice's declamation:

The journey to God is merely the reawakening
Of the knowledge of where you are always and what you are forever.
It is a journey without distance
To a goal that has never changed.

"What eventually follows are words and music of reconciliation and embrace of the life both

within us and around us. This part of the text focuses on the joining of two human beings in a spirit of harmony and compassion, and acknowledges that to have peace we must extend it to one another. The music here is altogether more diatonic, texturally less dense and the tempos more moderate with an idiomatic vocal quality that is infused into both the voice and its accompaniment.

"The Coda of the work is a long ritualistic prayer which incorporates a chorus (hidden from the audience's view by being implanted in the orchestra). Many of the musical ideas and colors from Part One resurface here, but this time without the rage and obsession that they earlier evoked:

What was a place of death
Has now become a living temple
In a world of light.

"The chorus functions as an affirmation of and response to the solo voice's invitation to peace.

"I would like to thank the MacDowell Colony, the Corporation of Yaddo, the Astral Foundation, the Foundation for Inner Peace, maestro Roger Nierenberg (who spear-headed the idea of a three-orchestra consortium), and most especially Judy and William Whitson, who not only worked with me in extracting a text from the *Course*, but whose encouragement and love throughout the year made this music possible."

"Journey Without Distance"

Richard Danielpour

Text from "A Course in Miracles"

The special ones are all asleep,
Surrounded by a world of loveliness they do not see.
Freedom and peace and joy stand there
Beside the bier on which they sleep
And call them to come forth
And waken from their dream of death.
Yet they hear nothing.

You are the dreamer of the world of dreams.
No other cause it has or ever will.
The dream of crucifixion
Still lies heavy on your eyes;
But what you see in dreams is not reality.
Fear is a dream, conflict is sleep and peace awakening.
Death is illusion, life eternal truth.

Forgive the past and let it go
For it is gone.
You stand no longer on the ground
That lies between the worlds.
Look gently on your brother
And see the world in which
Perception of your hate has been transformed into a world of love.

The journey to God is merely the reawakening
Of where you are always and what you are forever.
It is a journey without distance
To a goal that has never changed.

Here is your savior and your friend,
Released from crucifixion through your vision,
And free to lead you now where He would be.
And gladly will you walk the way of innocence together,
Singing as you behold the open door of Heaven
And recognize the home
That called to you.

Give joyously to one another
The freedom and the strength to lead you there.
And come before each other's holy altar

Where strength and freedom wait
To offer and receive the bright awareness
That leads you home.

The lamp is lit in both of you for one another.
And by the hands that gave it to your brother
Shall both of you be led past fear
To love

The journey closes, ending at the place where it began.
No trace of it remains
What was a place of death
Has now become a living temple
In a world of light
Clear in Your likeness does the Light shine forth
From everything that lives
And moves in You.
For we have reached where all of us are one
And we are home
Where You would have us be.

AMEN

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