

Program Note: *Chasing Light...*

One of the special pleasures of living in rural New Hampshire is experiencing the often brilliant and intense early morning sunrises, reminding one of Thoreau's words, "Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me" (Walden). *Chasing Light...* draws its spirit, energy and inspiration from the celebration of vibrant colors and light that penetrate the morning mist as it wafts through the trees in the high New England hills. Like a delicate dance, those images intersected with a brief original poem that helped fire my musical imagination.

Chasing Light...

Beneath the sickle moon,
sunrise ignites daybreak's veil

Calliope's rainbowed song
cradles heaven's arc

piercing shadowy pines,
a kaleidoscope blooms

morning's embrace
confronts the dawn

The four-movement work, about eighteen minutes in duration, proceeds from one movement to the next without pause. Each movement's subtitle is associated with a pair of lines from the poem.

Mvt. I: "Sunrise Ignites Daybreak's Veil" (Con forza, feroce con bravura) opens with an introduction containing three forceful and diverse ideas presented by full orchestra: (1) a low rhythmic and percussive pedal point on "F" followed by (2) a three-note triplet figure in the brass overlaid by (3) a rapid swirling cascade of arch-like upper woodwind phrases cast in a stretto-like texture. These primary elements form the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic materials developed in the work.

Following the introduction, the strings present a theme derived from the pedal point rhythmic gesture and the brass three-note figure leading to an extended series of upward thrusting six-note sonorities and a long increasing assertive line (first brass, then later strings and woodwinds) partitioned into two parts. The movement ends with a return to the introductory material and a sustained pitch on "G" providing a link to the next movement.

Mvt. II: "Calliope's Rainbowed Song" (lontano) The rapid arched woodwind phrases in the introduction to the first movement, occur in a variety of divergent contexts throughout the work, not only as small scale gestures but in larger, more extended designs. Cast in a major arch-like palindrome form, this movement begins softly, first with solo clarinet followed by a repeated piano sonority that forms the structure of a theme played by solo flute. Gradually, this theme builds to an exuberant midpoint,

followed by sections that appear in reverse order finally ending quietly and gently with solo clarinet and a high ethereal violin harmonic on “A” that carries over to the third movement.

Mvt. III: “A Kaleidoscope Blooms” (*lacrimoso*) a slow expressive and elegiac movement for oboe (for Andrea Lenz, principal oboe of the Reno Chamber Orchestra), opens with a low, dark, repeated pedal played by piano, contrabass and tam-tam. Sudden rapid woodwind gestures contrast and frame a succession of gradually ascending oboe phrases that accumulate ever-greater urgency as the music approaches its maximum intensity at the end.

Mvt. IV: “Morning’s Embrace Confronts the Dawn” (*lontano...leggero*) The rapid and aggressive woodwind phrases in the first movement now emerge in delicate and shimmering string textures. These earlier elements prepare for a stately but urgent chorale theme that builds forcefully to the palindromic music of the third movement, the introductory materials of the first, and a final climactic conclusion.

— Joseph Schwantner, Spring 2008