

Songs of Joy—World Premiere

Commissioned by the Sun Valley Summer Symphony

Composed by Nick Kendall, Ranaan Meyer and Charles Yang

Arranged and orchestrated by TJ Cole

Composed: 2017

Length: ca. 22 minutes

Songs of Joy is the product of a special synergy between all three members of the group as well as of the creative process. “Within the larger orchestral moments, we pick out themes and turn them into pop

songs.” The group was inspired by the kind of work that Steve Hackman has done for them, heard in the first half of tonight’s program—finding themes from Classical works and melding them with pop songs—but here, Time for Three has come up with original themes, which end up in seamless structural dialogue between the orchestra and the smaller trio.

The piece, played without pause, laces together three songs, interspersed with purely instrumental sections played by the orchestra and Time for Three. Charles explains that while joy is the overarching message of the piece, the musical journey, as in life, is not as straightforward as it might initially seem: “The big picture of this piece is the idea of a blessing in disguise. Within the negative comes the positive, and it is up to us to find that. The themes we use go together, and come together at the end.” The Prelude serves as an introduction to the work. Conceived of as an elegy for strings, the section is based on three themes, one from each of three songs heard later in the work. Musically then, the Prelude provides the inspiration for the Songs of Joy that follow. The first song, “She Don’t Care,” expresses distinct responses to artistic ambition. TJ’s lush harmonies here are designed for communicative directness, and the orchestra melodically mirrors Charles’s incredible vocal range in full display in this song.

The first Interlude is built mostly on what will eventually become the themes from the song “Joy.” TJ’s ingenious orchestration layers these melodies over one another in more than ten individual musical lines, which enter one-by-one. The result is a blanket of sound creating a free-flowing canon which will culminate in the appearance of a new theme, what will eventually become the chorus melody from “Joy.” The second song, “Vienna,” is a story of complete vulnerability within a relationship. Ranaan notes that this song explores a “dive deep into the unknown while already committed to love or belief” in such a bond. (Although the storyline of the song is completely fictional, it is based on individual experiences of Time for Three.) The score draws on the style of a relaxed waltz in the spirit of a carnival to capture a dream-like state.

The atmospheric fade-out of the second song eventually coalesces into the melody of the second Interlude, with a high-energy, 16th-note patten in orchestral homorhythm, bringing in themes that will be heard in the final song. As the orchestra builds to a climax, suddenly it drops out, leaving Charles, Nick and Ranaan in a wordless, *a cappella* introduction to “Joy.” The character of the upbeat finale has a resonance with the figure of Beethoven, whose own exuberant *Ode to Joy* came towards the end of his life, one that mixed loneliness with the highest acclaim, utter hopelessness with great triumph. Can we experience full-throated joy in the face of adversity and uncertainty? Time for Three answers this question with a resounding “Yes!” here, and

in a final coup, bring all three songs together in a culminating mash-up.

These notes were originally written for the Sun Valley Summer Symphony's world premiere performance on August 3, 2017 by Jon Kochavi. Used by permission from the Sun Valley Summer Symphony and Jon Kochavi.