

SYMPHONY FOR THE MILLENNIUM

by

Aldo Rafael Forte

(ASCAP)

PART I. - dawn 1000 A.D. - contrasting civilizations - the growing conflicts of humankind -
the wars of humankind - the call to war - the aftermath of war

PART II. - Mechanization - Finale, the space age and the promise of the future

To H. Dwight Satterwhite and the University of Georgia Wind Symphony

COMPOSER'S PROGRAM NOTES

SYMPHONY FOR THE MILLENNIUM was commissioned by H. Dwight Satterwhite and the University of Georgia Wind Symphony in 2000. The composition is dedicated to Dr. Satterwhite and his superb ensemble.

I was a student of Dr. Satterwhite in the mid-sixties when I played in his junior high school band in Huntsville, Alabama. Thus, this was a very special commission! When Dr. Satterwhite asked me to write a work about the millennium, I was immediately struck by the seemingly limitless possibilities for subject matter. Naturally, I eventually narrowed these possibilities down to a few ideas and decided to compose a symphony in two parts depicting various aspects of the second millennium while also looking ahead to the third millennium.

The two parts of the **SYMPHONY FOR THE MILLENNIUM** are contrasting in character and each part consists of different sections. Part I. is mostly pessimistic and often deals with events of long ago as well as with strife, while Part II. is optimistic and depicts positive events of modern times while looking forward to the future as humankind reaches new heights in technology and exploration. In a subtle way, most of the material for the symphony is drawn from the interaction of a second followed by a third or fourth as well as the outlining of both major and minor thirds. The choice of programmatic material was made only for its musical and dramatic possibilities.

PART I. begins with dawn 1000 A.D. The opening notes of the work are intoned by an unaccompanied solo flute marked "lontano" symbolizing the "distant" past at the beginning of the second millennium. The music of this section transports us to the mystery of the Middle Ages while intoning chant-like melodies and the hollow open fifths of parallel organum. Dramatic modal progressions in the bass (m.25) lead gradually to bold statements by the entire ensemble. The tension builds and we are led to a faster tempo for the second section.

"Contrasting civilizations" (m. 63) juxtaposes "musics" of different civilizations which have coexisted during the second millennium. All the "musics" are made up of original material and the choice of the civilizations featured were made only for their musical and dramatic possibilities. Chant-like melodies in the trombones (m. 63) are contrasted with passages based on Indian raga scales with a twist of afro-American blues flavor (m70 - 74)! All this is pitted against oriental-like passages employing parallel fifths and pentatonic scales (m.95 - 101) contrasted with "Spanish-isms" (m. 103 -115).

The third section, "Growing conflicts of humankind" (m. 122), blends right out of the previous section. The themes of the "contrasting civilizations" are now stated again in fragments and are periodically interrupted by the "conflict" motif which is made up of an ascending minor second followed by a descending minor third and an ascending major second (m. 137 - 138).

The “conflict theme” is further developed in “The wars of Humankind” where conflicts between contrasting civilizations come to a head. This section is permeated by a persistent and loud rhythmic ostinato of quarters and eights (m. 157). Over this chaos, trumpets and trombones intone the menacing “Call to war” in octaves (m. 164). The tension builds until we hear the final bombastic “machine gun fire” from all the winds in repeated tones (m. 182 - 184).

After a brief silence, we are led back to a slow tempo in “The aftermath of war” (m. 185), a desolate and brooding section which recalls some of the material from the opening of the work, this time dressed in different garb. While composing this music, I imagined the tragic scene after a battle with hundreds of dead soldiers on a battlefield. A final outpouring of grief is stated by a mournful English horn solo (m. 212). **PART I.** comes to an end as three muted trumpets intone fragments of the traditional military retreat music known as “taps”.

Following a break, **PART II.** begins with the decidedly energetic mood of “Mechanization”. This music is a depiction of the advent of the industrial age of the 1800s. In contrast to much of the previous music, “Mechanization” is more sparsely orchestrated and musical ideas are tossed around with quick changes in orchestration. The music builds and we are led to the final section.

“Finale, The Space Age and the Promise of the Future” opens in a much slower and majestic tempo with regal fanfares paying tribute to the space age. After the fanfares, there follows a very lyrical and processional section (m. 383) inspired by the procession of astronauts to their spaceships. Eventually the fanfare music returns and the work ends exuberantly. This final section looks to the future with the positive feeling that humankind will scale new heights in the third millennium.

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ALDO RAFAEL FORTE

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First recording: The University of Georgia Wind Symphony conducted by H. Dwight Satterwhite. Summit CD “Milestones”, CD No. CDC 281.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Each of the percussion parts is scored in such a way that it can be performed by one player per part. The bell tree “sweeps” are an integral part of the rhythmic fabric. Therefore, they have been meticulously notated to show the rhythmic precision of the beginning and ending of each of the “sweeps”. The part should be performed precisely as notated. The 4 Tom Toms and the Suspended Cymbals should always be played with felt covered sticks and never with standard wooden snare drum sticks.

