

***Collage: Boogie***

**Libby Larsen (1950–)**

Written: 1988

Style: Contemporary

Duration: Four minutes

Libby Larsen wrote *Collage: Boogie* for the American/Soviet Youth Symphony to perform while they were on tour. The initial terms of the commission required that the piece last only one minute! That's not a lot of time for an orchestral work—or any piece of music, for that matter—so Larsen renegotiated the length. To get a lot of music into a short amount of time, she settled on the “collage” form that juxtaposes elements not normally associated with one another. Larsen uses snippets of famous American boogies like “Kitten on the Keys” and “Down the Road a Piece,” and weaves them into a complex texture with constantly shifting perspectives. “The effect is one of urban activity and intense bustle,” she says.

Libby Larsen is one of America's most prolific and most-performed living composers. She has created a catalogue of over 500 works spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and over twelve operas. Her music has been praised for its dynamic, deeply-inspired, and vigorous contemporary American spirit.

The first woman to serve as a resident composer with a major orchestra, Libby Larsen has held residencies with the California Institute of the Arts, the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, the Philadelphia School of the Arts, the Cincinnati Conservatory, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony. Frequently commissioned by major artists, ensembles and orchestras around the world, Libby Larsen has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertory.

In 1973, she co-founded (with Stephen Paulus) the Minnesota Composers Forum, now

the American Composers Forum, which has been an invaluable advocate for composers in a difficult, transitional time for American arts. Regularly sought after as a leader in the generation of millennium thinkers, Libby Larsen's music and ideas have refreshed the concert music tradition and the composer's role in it.

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***Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in A minor, Op. 54***

**Robert Schumann (1810–1856)**

Written: 1841–45

Movements: Three

Style: Romantic

Duration: 31 minutes

In 1841, the year that Robert Schumann started working on this concerto, he had just married Clara Wieck. He met Clara in 1830 when he moved into the Wieck household to study piano with her father. Over the next five years, Robert fell in love with his daughter. Her father forbade the relationship. Eventually Clara and Robert had to go to court to set aside the legal requirement of her father's consent to marry. Clara would later become one of the greatest pianists of the century, and a tireless champion of her husband's music.

Schumann attempted to write a piano concerto several times, but was unable to complete any of them. One of the problems was the form of the concerto itself. He wasn't interested in the flashy showpieces of lesser composers, nor was he impressed with the subservient role that the orchestra played in many concertos. "I've already said to you they are hybrids of symphony, concerto, and big sonata. I cannot write a concerto for a virtuoso; I shall have to contrive something else," he wrote to Clara. His solution was to come up with a single movement work that he completed in May 1841, and titled "*Fantasie for Piano and Orchestra.*" The piece never received a public performance—only a private one at a rehearsal of the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Robert's publisher urged him to turn it into a standard concerto by adding a second and third movement.

Robert finished the last two movements and reworked the original *Fantasie* (now the first movement) of his *Concerto in A Minor* in the summer of 1845. Clara began studying it that September and premiered it three

months later.

The hallmark of the first movement is the complete integration of the orchestral and solo passages. After a dramatic introduction by the piano, the movement centers on the beautiful melody initially played by the oboe. An extended cadenza for the soloist follows the body of the movement and then the main melody returns, disguised as a march, for a brilliant closing. The second movement—an *intermezzo*—is not long. It starts with elfin grace and then features a beautiful lyrical melody for the strings. A hushed, slow restatement of a motive taken from the first movement acts as a bridge to the final movement—a vigorous showstopper for the piano.

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***Symphony No. 7 in D Minor, op. 70***

**Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)**

Written: 1884–85

Movements: Four

Style: Romantic

Duration: 35 minutes

In 1883, in spite of some artistic success and the ardent support of Johannes Brahms, Antonín Dvořák was still something of an unknown. The problem was that he was from Bohemia, the nineteenth century's version of "flyover" country. Dvořák was a hero in his own country, but had not conducted outside its borders. Finally, as the result of a performance of his *Stabat Mater* in England, Dvořák was invited to travel to London to conduct a concert of his own works. The response was so great that the Royal Philharmonic invited him back and asked him to write a new work for them. He resolved to make this new symphony, what we now call his *Seventh Symphony*, "with God's help, a work which would shake the world."

The first movement begins in a dark and somber mood with a main theme in minor, first played by the violas and cellos, then the clarinets. This theme builds to a climax and then subsides, giving way to a “spacious” second theme in major, first played by the flutes. It, too, builds to a climax and then dies away to the soft beginning of the development that works through various motives of the main themes. There is the standard restatement of the opening themes, this time building to a huge climax before the whole movement dies away to nothing.

The clarinet gets to start the second movement with a serene melody. Soon the flutes join in until the violins play their expressive melody. After some stormy moments this movement, too, dies away. The third movement, a scherzo, employs one of Dvořák’s favorite tricks: the intentional confusion of rhythm. The violins and violas play a melody that has the feel of three beats to a measure over a bass line that has the feel of two beats to a measure. This rhythmic juxtaposition persists throughout the entire movement which ends full force.

The last movement begins in the minor key with a dark and stormy melody played by the cellos, horns, and clarinets. It becomes more marked and march-like before giving way to a much more lyrical theme in major. Once again, the development sections works through both themes before ushering in the recapitulation and, finally, a triumphant and brilliant close in major.

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