

Program Notes: Pioneer Sampler

In 1985, Marden Pond began research into the legacy of pioneer folk songs from Utah's unique history. Historical collections were researched and cataloged, copies of old songs were obtained, old and new recordings of folk singers were reviewed, and songs from the composer's own heritage were transcribed. Initially, and after researching hundreds of possibilities, Dr. Pond assembled a list of over thirty individual songs that seemed well-suited to an orchestral/choral setting. From this list, eight were selected. Within a few months, three of the movements were completed, "Whoa Haw Buck & Jerry Boy," "Winter Song," and "Sisters." Further work was discussed with the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Sons of the Utah Pioneers, and potential performing ensembles. During 1989-90, two additional movements were completed, "Sparkling On A Sunday Night," and "The Dying Californian." As the celebration for the Utah Statehood Centennial approached, interest was expressed in completing the suite for use during the Centennial year. A consortium of groups commissioned the completion of the suite (including the Southwest Symphony, Utah Valley Symphony, the Utah Statehood Centennial Commission, Music Enterprises). During the Spring and Summer of 1995, Dr. Pond completed the remaining movements: "St. George and the Drag-On," "The Jolly Wagoneer," "Come, Come Ye Saints," and an original orchestral "Overture." While performances of individual early movements were given in Salt Lake City and Provo (1985-1990), the premiere of the entire suite was scheduled for the Utah Statehood Centennial Anniversary (January 6, 1996) in St. George, with subsequent performances calendered during the celebration year in Provo and other venues throughout the State. The composer acknowledges the musical inspiration and guidance received over a period of many years from the book of Pioneer Songs compiled by Alfred M. Durham for the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, the engaging stories and music from Mormon Heritage recorded decades ago by The D's, the LDS Church recordings included in The Quest, and many other sources and individuals too numerous to mention.

Background On Individual Movements:

1. Overture. Scored for orchestra alone, this is the one completely original movement composed specifically for this suite. Following a powerful fanfare, an energetic theme is introduced over an ostinato-like rhythmic motive. Several other thematic ideas, soaring and lyrical melodies

are introduced and expanded on before a return to the first theme. Motivic reflections from the introductory fanfare reappear and the movement concludes with a vigorous summary of earlier musical materials. The overture, memorializing the courage, determination, and faith of the pioneer settlers of this State, is dedicated to all those whose sacrifice has contributed to the growth and cultural beauty of Utah.

2. Winter Song. The source of this song is unknown, but the plaintive message and haunting melody, along with the moving musical setting, remind us both of winter's icy bleakness and the warmth of the human spirit.

The winter has come with its cold chilly blast,
And the leaves are fast falling from trees.
All nature seems touched with the chillness of death,
For all things are beginning to freeze.
When poor robin red breast wings close to her cot
And the icicles hang 'round her door,
And you sit by your fire, so reviving and hot,
That's the time to remember the poor.

3. Sparking On A Sunday Night. The term "sparking" refers to either romantic courting or playful kissing. This delightful song, from an unknown author, describes the youthful joy of falling in love and enjoying the innocent exuberance of "sparking on a Sunday night."

Sitting in a corner, on a Sunday eve,
With a taper finger resting on your sleeve;
Starlight eyes are casting on your face their light.
Bless me! This is pleasant sparking on a Sunday night.

How your heart is thumping 'gainst your Sunday vest,
How wickedly 'tis working on this day of rest.
Hours seem but minutes as they take their flight.
Bless me! Ain't this pleasant sparking on a Sunday night.

Dad and marm are sleeping in their peaceful bed,
Dreaming of the things the folks in meeting said.
"Love ye one another," ministers recite.
Bless me! Don't we do it sparking on a Sunday night.

One arm with gentle pressure lingers 'round her waist.
You squeeze her dimpled hand, her pouting lips you taste.
She freely slaps your face, but more in love than spite.
Thunder! Ain't it pleasant , sparking on a Sunday night.

But Hark! The clock is striking, it's two o'clock I sum.
Sure as I'm a sinner, the time to go has come.
You ask in spiteful accents if that old clock is right?
And wonder if it ever sparked on a Sunday night.

One, two, three sweet kisses, four, five, six you hook;
But thinking that you rob her, put back those you took;
Then as home you hurry from the fair one's sight;
Oh but don't you wish each day was only Sunday night.

4. St. George & the Drag-On. Called to develop a cotton and grape growing enterprise in the sun-drenched climate of Southern Utah, a hearty group of settlers established a community in Utah's Dixie. While hardships were many, this anonymously created song shows the ever-present good humor of the founders of St. George, as well as their deep love for this region.

Oh what a desert place was this when first the Mormons found it.
They said no white man could live here, and injuns prowled around it.
They said the land it was no good and the water was no gooder,
And the bare idea of livin' here was enough to make one shudder.

CHORUS

Mesquite and soaproot, prickly pears and briars,
Saint George, you long will be a place that ev'ryone admires.

Now green lucerne in verdant spots redeems our thriving city,
While vines and fruit trees grace our lawns with flowers sweet and pretty.
Where once the grass in single blades grew a mile apart in distance.
And it kept the crickets on the go to pick up their subsistence.

CHORUS

The sun it is so scorching hot it makes the water sizz, sir.
The reason why it is so hot is just because it is, sir.
The wind like fury here doth blow that when we plant or sow, sir,
We place one foot upon the seed and hold it 'til it grows, sir.

CHORUS

5. The Dying Californian. While the majority of early pioneers traveled to the valley of the Great Salt Lake by wagon, handcart, or on horseback, some immigrants sailed from New York around Cape Horn (or on a shorter two-part voyage which traversed the Isthmus of Panama), expecting to meet the "Saints" in California (which was the generic name for the entire western territory of the U.S.). After an ocean journey of nearly six months, one such group landed at Yerba Buena (now San Francisco). Some of these people later came to "Deseret" at the call of Brigham Young. They brought this song about a young man who had died enroute. The setting within this suite features a baritone soloist.

Lie up nearer brother nearer, For my limbs are growing cold.
And your presence seems the dearer, When your arms around me fold.
I am dying, brother, dying, Soon you'll miss me in your berth,
And my form will soon be lying, 'Neath the ocean's briny surf.

Tell my father when you meet him, That in death I pray'd for him.
Pray'd that I might some day meet him, In a world that's free from sin.
Tell my mother, God assist her, Now that she is growing old,
Say, her child would glad have kiss'd her, As his lips grew pale and cold.

Tell my sister I remember, Every kind and parting word
And my heart has been kept tender, As my tho'ts of mem'ry stirred.
Listen brother, closely listen, 'Tis my wife I speak of now,
Tell her, Tell her how I missed her, When the fever burned my brow.

Oh! My children, Heaven bless them, They recall my life to me,
Oh! Could I once more caress them, E're I sink below the sea.
Hark I hear my Saviour calling, For His voice I know so well,
When I'm gone, then don't be weeping, Brother, here's my last farewell.

6. A Jolly Wagoneer. With words and melody created by F.C. Robinson in the 1860s, this is a light hearted tribute to the drivers of the

large wagons which carried goods and people to the State. Many of these hearty teamsters made numerous trips to and from the State, enabling otherwise stranded families to make passage, with their few possessions, to the settlements in the Great Basin. In 1866, Brigham Young specified the ideal character traits needed for these rugged drivers: “. . . select praying men for teamsters to go for the immigration -- good men who use good language and are of good habits; men who will be fathers to the people, kind to the Saints and kind to their teams.” (Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work*, p. 410)The reference to “the horrors of the war” in the last verse is a reminder that this song was composed during the time of the American Civil War, with which Utahns generally had no active connection. This musical setting features men’s voices.

Come all ye jovial songsters, and with me tune a lay,
Unto our jolly mountain boys, our teamsters blithe and gay.
Who when they’re called to duty never thinks of saying nay. But sing . . .

CHORUS

Wo my lads, wo haw, Drive on my lads, hurrah!
There’s none can lead a life so gay, As a jolly wagoneer.

They leave their friends and comrades, and all they love most dear;
To drive our craggy mountaintops, and never think of fear.
They plunge thro’ foaming rivers, laugh at those who’re in the rear. And
sing . . .

CHORUS

And as they journey o’er the plains, they’ll fight, or they will run,
Just to suit the times, you see, or they will scream in fun.
But in the line of duty they’re as constant as the sun. They’ll sing . . .

CHORUS

And in their journey homeward bound, with freight or immigrants;
They’ll tend the sick and aid the poor, and laugh away complaints.
They’ll teach the green-horn how to drive, the ladies not to faint. And sing .
. .

CHORUS

So let us bid them welcome here, for heroes sure they are;
Although they have not been to aid the horrors of the war.
They've helped to save and not destroy, and that is better far. They'll sing . .
.

CHORUS

7. Sisters. This plaintive and tragic tale is told from the viewpoint of an older sister who, in typical childlike thoughtlessness, ignores her younger sister, then runs off to play with another child. The origins of this song are unknown, but the song was taught to Dr. Pond by his older sister, Farelyn. This setting is for women's voices accompanied by harp.

Once I had a little sister with brown eyes and shiny hair,
A playful, pretty little sister gaily dancing ev'rywhere.
Out in the garden we spent many happy hours
Reading, singing, playing, working, tending beds of plants and flow'rs.

Came, one day, our cousin Lilly, having leave to spend the day,
And I thought my little sister was too young and in the way.
Coaxing and chiding would not make her leave us free,
And if I stole off with Lilly, she was sure to follow me.

So I sharply scolded Mary, who would not agree to stay.
Then I quickly turned and struck her, and in haste we ran away.
"Sister, oh sister! Wait!" she cried, "Oh wait for me!"
But we only ran the faster, 'til so far she could not see.

Thus we rambled thru the valley, picking flow'rs and blossoms gay,
And our lips were stained with berries thru the long sweet summer day.
Hillside and meadow we two traversed with delight.
When the shade grew long we parted with a kiss and fond good night. But
the morning brought me sorrow; darling Mary could not rise.
Oh, the burning hands and forehead, parching lips and heavy eyes.
"Sister, oh sister! Wait!" she cried. "Oh wait for me!"
And I thought my heart was breaking while, for tears, I could not see.

Thus she raved, both night and morning, ever calling me to stay.

And the fever slowly wasted her sweet form and life away.
Coaxing and pleading could not make her know 'twas I.
And I know my heart was breaking, as I saw my sister die.

Years have passed since that sad morning when her spirit was set free.
I would give my life twice over could she have forgiven me.
Sister, oh sister, I am grieving day by day
For that darling little sister whom I struck, then ran away.

8. Whoa Haw Buck & Jerry Boy. With a melody borrowed from “Turkey In the Straw,” this anonymous text takes us on the cross-prairie journey in a wagon drawn by two oxen named “Buck” and “Jerry Boy.” Such a mode of travel had to have been long, dirty, and dreary, but the lyrics show us how the time was enlivened by singing, dancing, flirting, humor, and the ever present goal of “reaching Salt Lake some day or bust.” (Incidentally, in the absence of any real firewood on the plains, dried buffalo droppings -- “buffalo chips” -- really were used for building a fire to cook on!)

With a merry little jig and a gay little song,
Whoa haw Buck and Jerry Boy!
We trudge our way the whole day long,
Whoa haw Buck and Jerry Boy!
What tho' we're covered all over with dust,
It's better than stayin' back home to rust.
We'll reach Salt Lake some day or bust.
Whoa haw Buck and Jerry Boy!

There's a pretty little girl in the outfit ahead,
Whoa haw Buck and Jerry Boy!
I wish she was by my side instead,
Whoa haw Buck and Jerry Boy!
Look at her now with a pout on her lips,
As daintily with her finger tips,
She picks for the fire some buffalo chips,
Whoa haw Buck and Jerry Boy!

Oh tonight we'll dance by the light of the moon,
Whoa haw Buck and Jerry Boy!
To the fiddler's best and only tune,

Whoa haw Buck and Jerry Boy!
Holding her hand and stealing a kiss,
But never a step of the dance will miss.
I never did know a love like this.
Whoa haw Buck and Jerry Boy!

9. This most beloved of Mormon pioneer hymns was written by William Clayton, who created new words to an older hymn and English folk song entitled "All Is Well." Clayton, an English immigrant in the first company of pioneers to face the western trek from Nauvoo, Illinois in the winter of 1846, was forced to leave without his wife, who was pregnant and too ill to travel. In his journal he records that, as word reached him that he was the father of a new baby son, yet still worried about his wife until she could join him, "This morning I composed a new song -- 'All is well.'"

An incident related by pioneer, Oscar Winters may give some insight into some of the choices made for Dr. Pond's musical setting which concludes this suite:

"One night, as we were making camp, we noticed one of our brethren had not arrived, and a volunteer party was immediately organized to return and see if anything had happened to him. Just as we were about to start, we saw the missing brother coming in the distance. When he arrived, he said he had been quite sick; so some of us unyoked his oxen and attended to his part of the camp duties. After supper, he sat down before the campfire on a large rock, and sang in a very faint but plaintive and sweet voice, the hymn 'Come, Come, Ye Saints.' It was a rule of the camp that whenever anybody started this hymn all in the camp should join, but for some reason this evening nobody joined him; he sang the hymn alone. When he had finished, I doubt if there was a single dry eye in the camp. The next morning we noticed that he was not yoking up his cattle. We went to his wagon and found that he had died during the night. We dug a shallow grave, and after we had covered his body with the earth we rolled the large stone to the head of the grave to mark it, the stone on which he had been sitting the night before when he sang: 'And should we die before our journey's through, Happy Day! All is well!'" (from *Improvement Era*, June 1914, pp. 781-83, quoted in *Our Latter-Day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages*, 1988, p. 59, by Karen Lynn Davidson.)

Come, Come, Ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear;
But with joy wend your way.
Though hard to you this journey may appear,

Grace shall be as your day.
'Tis better far for us to strive
Our useless cares from us to drive;
Do this, and joy your hearts will swell --
All is well! All is well!

Why should we mourn or think our lot is hard?
'Tis not so; all is right.
Why should we think to earn a great reward
If we now shun the fight?
Gird up your loins; fresh courage take.
Our God will never us forsake;
And soon we'll have this tale to tell --
All is well! All is well!

We'll find the place which God for us prepared,
Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.
We'll make the air with music ring,
Shout praises to our God and King;
Above the rest these words we'll tell --
All is well! All is well!

And should we die before our journey's through,
Happy day! All is well!
We then are free from toil and sorrow, too;
With the just we shall dwell!
But if our lives are spared again
To see the Saints their rest obtain,
Oh, how we'll make this chorus swell --
All is well! All is well!