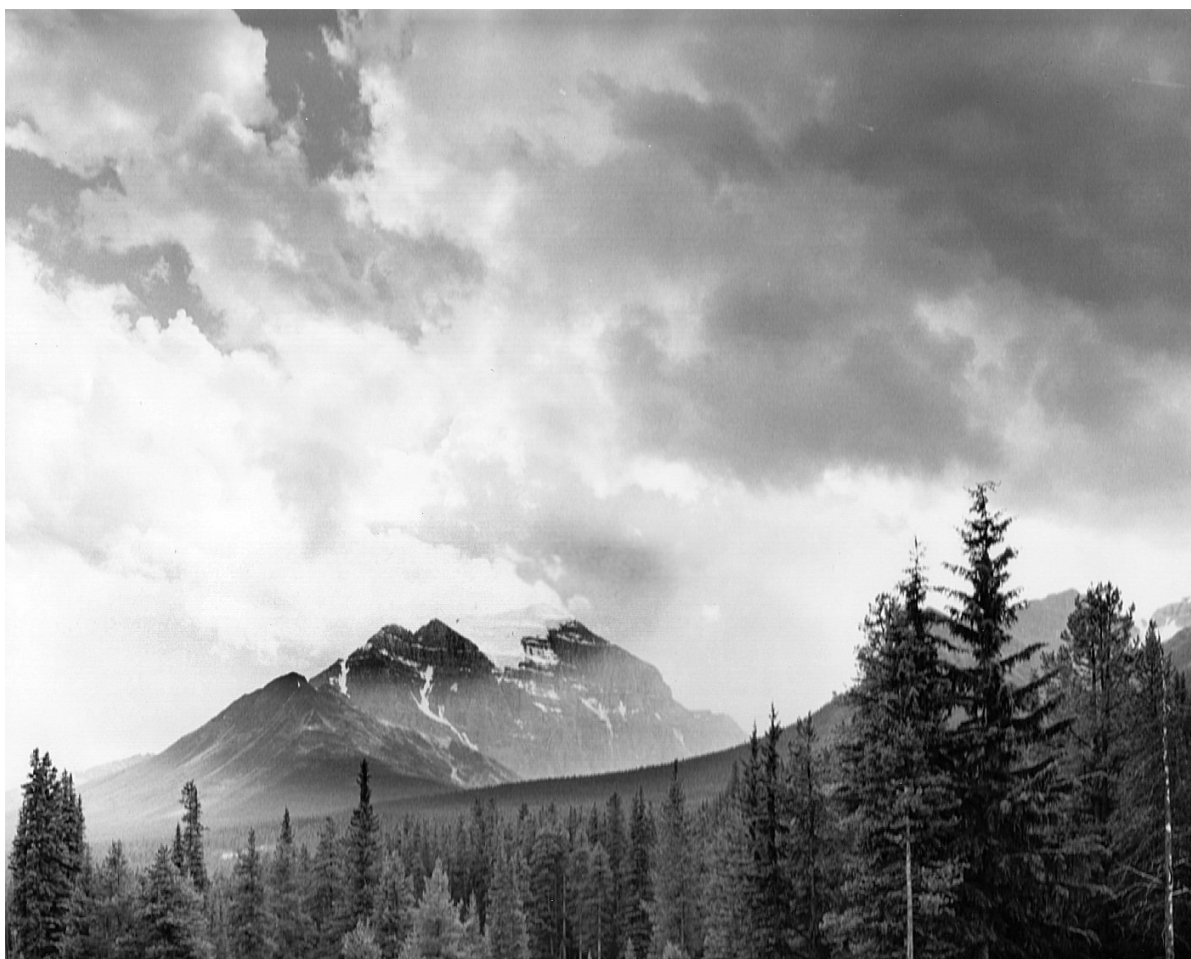


Continental Divide

(an American cantata)

Peter Bird
2010

HORN in F Parts



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Program Notes on *Continental Divide*

1. Timberline.....6

This first number is celebratory and could be subtitled, “Awakening of cheerful feelings upon arrival in the country.” But, rather than sonata form, it has a loose Mahlerian structure where one main melody is developed while 3 others vie for expression. A certain Romantic instability of key symbolizes enthusiasm that escapes Classical restraint. A final repetition of the initial section makes this structurally a da-capo aria for chorus.

The other 7 numbers of the cantata progress in historical order, from Pleistocene times before humans arrived, through the Arapaho era, the fur trade, pioneer days, arrival of the first tourists, the gold/silver rush, and the modern age of national parks and interstate highways. The central numbers (#3~6) have texts from oral tradition or contemporary accounts; the framing numbers at the start and end incorporate my own attempts at poetry.

2. Yellowstone9

The strong mantle plume that created Yellowstone has a few peers in the world: Iceland, Afar, and Hawaii. But here alone the volcanic plateau was built on the back of the older Rocky Mountain chain, producing lodgepole forests and parklands at 8,000’ elevations and peaks that go much higher. This number depicts a summer dawn along one of the verdant high-altitude river valleys (*e.g.*, Lamar River, or Yellowstone River above the falls) where bison and elk are grazing, until interrupted by wolves. The text is a set of 6 haiku-like nature poems, with 5/7/5-syllable structure but no rhyme.

3. Vision quest11

The adults of the village sing one of the traditional Arapaho Eagle Songs, with its proud refrain, “My father gave me the song of the eagle.” (I did not alter this in any way, except to add some very light instrumental accompaniment.) A young man [or a group of young men; it may be performed either way] drifts off to follow the calls of a distant eagle. He is inspired to climb the mountain Neniisotoyou’u in search of other animal mentors. He is rebuffed by a bear, and then by a cougar, but high on the mountain shoulder he feels the presence and inspiration of Thunderbird. I based his (new) song on the text of a vision-quest song of Chief Yellow Calf: “[Thunder]bird walks about; the sky is turning yellow.” (That is: Soon he will fly; prepare for thunder.) Performed in the Arapaho language.

4. Osborne Russell13

Osborne Russell (1814-1892) was a largely self-taught man from Maine who entered the trapper’s life and the Rocky Mountain fur trade at the age of 20. (Later he was a miner, a farmer, a trader, and was elected judge and then triumvir in the provisional government of Oregon Territory.) He recorded his experiences in *Journal of a Trapper...* which was published posthumously. This solo aria takes its text from the book’s valedictory poem, *The Hunter’s Farewell*, which may be the only extant poem by anyone involved in this chapter of our history. His description of the impact of firearms on the flocks of the mountains and the herds of the plains is sensitive and moving.

5. South Pass.....17

The Sweetwater River route through South Pass is more lonely and barren than scenic, but topography dictated that here the California Trail, the Oregon Trail, and the Mormon Trail necessarily ran together for several days travel as they approached the Divide. I have merged 3 songs of the trail (each in its own meter and its own key) to represent the passage of these 3 distinct kinds of pioneers in the same year. *Ho! for California* represents the gold-miners; both text and tune are authentic, although reharmonized here. The Oregon-Trail text and tune are my own inventions. The text of the LDS hymn *Come, Come Ye Saints* was written by William Clayton (1814-1879) while traveling the trail in 1846; here, I have given it a new tune that better harmonizes with the others. Despite the cultural and musical contrasts, there is no actual dissonance; perhaps I may even suggest that a new kind of polymodal harmony emerges?

6. Isabella Bird19

Isabella Bird (1831-1904) was a very independent Englishwoman who toured the Sierra Nevada and the Colorado Rockies in 1873: arriving by train, renting a horse, and finding her own way through mountains and plains, come blizzard or sun. Her account, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, is well worth reading. This solo number uses a montage of her words to describe her ascent of Longs Peak (which was guided by the colorful and mysterious "Mountain Jim" Nugent). She may have been the first woman of European ancestry to make the ascent; it is certain that later she was the first woman inducted into the Royal Geographical Society, in London in 1892.

7. Silverton22

Saturday night in a mining town! This turbulent setting with its many conflicting personalities, subplots, and emotions is represented by the overlaying of up to 6 tunes at once. Traditional tunes *An Outlandish Knight* and *Shenandoah* represent the women's point of view, and some new tunes (in the "gaslight" style of the times) represent the men's. An opera-buffa version of the sextet from *Lucia* transported into *La fanciulla del West*.

8. Logan Pass25

Approaching Glacier Park from the East, today's tourists can drive directly from the lonely and pristine rolling prairie of the Blackfeet lands to some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in the world. Chief Mountain, St. Mary Lake, Logan Pass, and the Garden Wall will not be forgotten by anyone who has made this trip, and of course the automobile makes it possible for most. But, travel by car is much too fast for the spirit.

Performance Notes

Continental Divide is scored for 9 instruments: flute, oboe, horn in F, pedal timpani (II, III, IV), violin I, violin II, cello, double-bass, and piano. (Piano parts occur only in numbers 6 & 7.) If the chorus is large, it may be best to amplify the instruments. I would not want to double them, as this would destroy the "rugged individualism" and lonesome timbre of solo performances. The total duration of this cantata is about 51 minutes.

Peter Bird, Los Angeles, 2010

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6 Continental Divide: 1. Timberline

Horn in F

Peter Bird

PETER BIRD

Allegro (♩=126)

Timp.

8^{vb}.....

f

7

13 **A**

mf

18

23 rit.

mp **mf**

29 **B** **Fine** **A tempo: Allegro** (♩=126)

mp **mf**

42

48

54 **rall.** .. (-15%) .. **Moderato** (♩=108)

f

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Continental Divide: 2. Yellowstone

Peter Bird

PETER BIRD

Largo (♩ = 60)

4

Cello
Oboe
p *mf*

10 **A**

mf

23 **B**

mf

33

mf

38 **C**

Oboe
mf

47 **D**

Andante (♩ = ♩; ♩ = 90)

mf

52 **E**

mf

62

mf

70

mf

Continental Divide: 2. Yellowstone
Horn in F

10

F

74 **Largo** (♩=♩; ♩.=60)

Musical staff 74-80: Treble clef, 9/8 time signature. The staff contains a melodic line starting with a whole note, followed by a half note, and then a series of quarter notes with stems pointing up. Dynamics include *mp* and *p*. There are fermatas over the first and last notes.

81

5

Musical staff 81-88: Treble clef. The staff contains a melodic line starting with a whole note, followed by a half note, and then a series of quarter notes with stems pointing up. Dynamics include *mp*. There are fermatas over the first and last notes.

89

Musical staff 89-96: Treble clef. The staff contains a melodic line starting with a whole note, followed by a half note, and then a series of quarter notes with stems pointing up. Dynamics include *mp*. There are fermatas over the first and last notes.

Continental Divide: 3. Vision quest

Traditional Arapaho (Eagle Song),
Peter Bird (seeker),
Chief Yellow Calf (Thunderbird Song)

Traditional Arapaho (Eagle Song),
PETER BIRD (seeker, Thunderbird Song)

Allegro (♩=132)
Timp. **75** *8va* Vln. I

79 *8va*

A
82 **MEN** *8va* **9** **WOMEN**

Yah - ho - ha - way, — ay, — hey, ay, — ay. — Oo — huu — Nei -

94

so -no bee - nii - nei — ni — Nii' - ei - hii hii - nii -

98 *Fl.* **2**

p mp

106 **7** *Ten.* **8**

Nii' - ei - hii: — be - tee - neen. Ho - hou. Ho - hou.

B
116 *Timp.* (♩=♩; ♩=66) **8**

p mp

129 **6**

mp

Continental Divide: 3. Vision quest
Horn in F

C

141 **accel.** **3** **Andante** ($\text{♩}=80$)
 Ten. Hey - a - way. Hey - ah. Ob.

148 Ten. Hey - a - way. **f**

154 Ten. Wox uun: No - noo ho - bé3 - en. Cih - nii - **mp**

160 **22** poco a poco **rall.** **3**
 (-25%)

188 **8va** Fl.

Larghetto ($\text{♩}=60$)

192 **8va** **2** **2** **rall.**

D

199 **8** **Andante** ($\text{♩}=96$) **22** WOMEN **8va** Ah Ah **mf**
 add Altos:

232

238 **f** **ff**

Continental Divide: 4. Osborne Russell

Osborne Russell (1814-1892)

PETER BIRD

Allegro (♩=140)

A

play reel twice: [tacet #1; play #2]

8

14

repeat reel

19

B

4

Continental Divide: 4. Osborne Russell

Horn in F

14

C

Andante (♩=70)

Verses #1 & #2:

23

8

35

7

47

53

1.

Timp.

2

60

D

2. rit.

(-25%)

67

- Larghetto (♩=50)

74

accel.

(+8%)

2

2

83

E

Adagio (♩=54)

29

Bar.

116

F

Slightly faster (♩=60)

laid.

mp

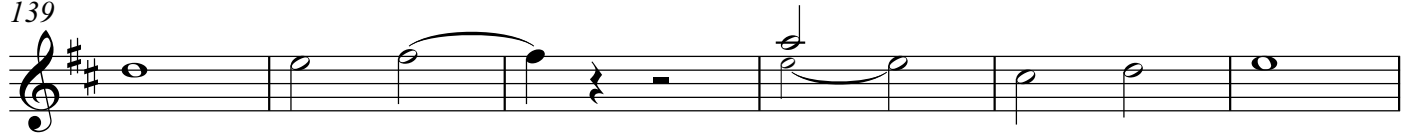
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Continental Divide: 4. Osborne Russell
Horn in F

131



139



145



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Continental Divide: 5. South Pass
Horn in F

18

80

Musical staff 80-89. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Dynamics: *p* (piano) at the start, *mp* (mezzo-piano) later. A slur covers measures 80-89.

90

Musical staff 90-99. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. A slur covers measures 90-99 with a large number '8' above it.

103

Musical staff 103-112. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. A slur covers measures 103-112 with a large number '4' above it.

113 (bar = bar)

D

Adagio (♩=68)

Musical staff 113-117. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. Time signature: common time (C). Slurs with '3:4' above them are over measures 114-115, 115-116, and 116-117.

118

Musical staff 118-123. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. A slur with '3:4' above it is over measures 118-119. A slur with a large number '2' above it is over measures 120-121.

124

E

Musical staff 124-133. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. A slur with a large number '5' above it is over measures 128-132.

134

Musical staff 134-142. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. A slur with a large number '3' above it is over measures 138-140.

143

F

Musical staff 143-155. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. Slurs with large numbers '3', '3', and '4' above them are over measures 143-145, 146-148, and 149-152 respectively. Dynamics: *f* (forte) at measure 146, *mf* (mezzo-forte) at measure 148.

156 S.&A1 (for the 2nd time)

8va

Musical staff 156-161. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. Lyrics: Sweet wa - ter! *mp* (mezzo-piano) at the end. A dashed line indicates an octave shift for the first part of the staff.

162

Musical staff 162-165. Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. A slur covers measures 162-165.

Continental Divide: 6. Isabella Bird
Horn in F

164

mp

170

p

178

mp rall. 6

E
187 **Andante** (♩=92)
11

mp S. 8va 3

ev' - ry time that I need to

F
202

mp 5

212

2 3

Continental Divide: 7. Silverton

Peter Bird & traditional

PETER BIRD & traditional

Andante (♩=100)

strings *f* *pp* 8 Pno. *8^{va}*

14 **A** *f* *mf*

19

25 **B** strings *gliss.* *mp* *mf*

30

35 **C** 8 **D** *mp*

47

54 **E** *f*

Continental Divide: 7. Silverton
Horn in F

59

mf *mp*

64

F

poco a poco crescendo

rall. .

mp *mf*

69

poco a poco crescendo

f *mf*

73

G

Adagio (♩=78)

f

79

85

accel. Poco adagio (♩=84)

p *mp* *mf*

91

rit. Adagio (♩=72)

f

95

Moderato (♩=110)

2

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Continental Divide: 8. Logan Pass

Peter Bird

PETER BIRD

Moderato (♩=120)
Timpani

8

13

20

27

33

39 **A** *rall.* 2

46

50 **a tempo** (♩=120) 6

Continental Divide: 8. Logan Pass
Horn in F

56

Alto

pow - er gone that ech - oed in these ston - y *p* *mp*

62

mf

70

B

Oboe

mf *f*

77

f

83

C

mf *mp*

90

mp

99

f

105

rall.

mf

112

D Andante (♩=88) **E**

Tenor

p

best you'll do is

126

mp *f*

bal - ance one fine sum - mer

Continental Divide: 8. Logan Pass
Horn in F

138 **F** accel.

mf *f*

144 **G** 3 Tenor

mf Paint - brush flow'rs and col - um - bine

153

f *mf*

159

mf *f*

165

mf *mf*

173

mf rall.

181 **H** Adagio (♩=72) Tenor

mf *ff* *mf* (alt.) *f*

best you'll do is bal - ance one

192

mf *ff* *mf* (alt.) *f*

fine sum - mer

201

mf

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