

Continental Divide

(an American cantata)

Peter Bird
2010

OBOE 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. Silverton23

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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Continental Divide: 1. Timberline

Allegro (♩=126)

6

Timp.

f

8[♭]-----

10

15

A

8

2

Hn.

28

B

Fine

A tempo: Allegro (♩=126)

7

mp

mf

mf

41

f

47

mf

53

rall. (-15%)

f

mf

f

57

Moderato (♩=108)

mp

63

C

mf

2

Continental Divide: 1. Timberline
Oboe

73

5

81

2

91

D 19 accel. (+17%) 2

117

Allegro (♩=126)

125

E 10 mf

139

142

f

D.C. al Fine

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Oboe

Continental Divide: 2. Yellowstone

Peter Bird

PETER BIRD

Largo (♩ = 60)

4

mp

10 **A**

6

Tenors

A riv - er winds through. *mf*

19

mf

24 **B**

3

mf

3

33

mf

tr

38 **C**

mf

42

46

Andante (♩ = ♩; ♩ = 90)

mf

3

52 **D**

10

E

7

Continental Divide: 2. Yellowstone

10

Oboe

69 Sop.
one old bull slow - ly stands. *mf*

74 **Largo** (♩=♩; ♩=60)

77 **F**
mp *p* *pp*

83 **3** *mf*

89

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.

73

77

WOMEN

81

A

85

13

102

2

3

110

3

B

118

(♩=♩; ♩=66)

8

131

4

C

140

accel.

3

Andante (♩=80)

2

Continental Divide: 3. Vision quest
Oboe

12

146 *f*

151 **13** Ten. Fl. Hey - a - way. Hey - ah.

168

175 **2** Ten. Bex - óo - kee: No - noo ho - bé3 - en. Cih

181 *poco a poco rall.* Timp. *mp* nii - boon - i!

187 *tr*

193 *Larghetto* ($\text{♩} = 60$) *rall.* (-20%) **2 2 8**

207 **D** *Andante* ($\text{♩} = 96$) **22** WOM. Ah Ah *mf*

234

239 *f ff*

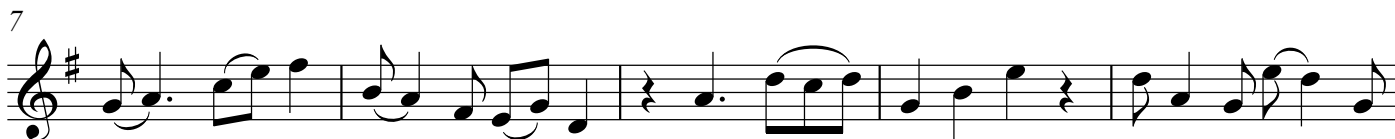
Osborne Russell (1814-1892)

PETER BIRD

Allegro (♩=140)

A

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



Continental Divide: 4. Osborne Russell

Oboe

14

C

23 **Andante** (♩=♩, ♩=70)
Verses #1 & #2: **30**

Bar. 1.

lec ting out the best.
told of mid - night's pace.

56

Timp.

(gunshot) (echoes) *mf* *p*

D

62 2. rit. (-25%)

mp *mf* 3

67 - **Larghetto** (♩=50)

72

77

accel. (+8%) 2

p

E

83 **Adagio** (♩=54)
(duet wi. Baritone)

mp *mf* 3 3

89

94

100



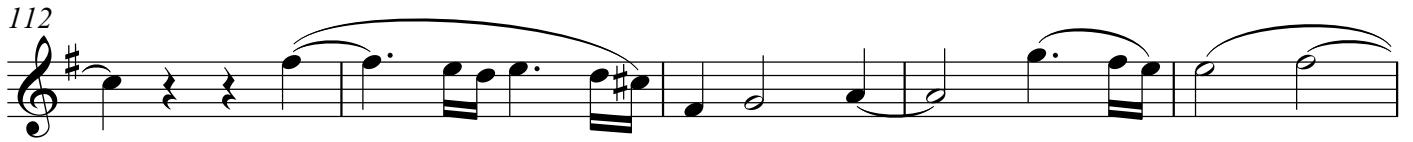
Musical staff 100-105: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains six measures of music. Measure 100 starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4. Measure 101 has a quarter note A4, quarter note B4, and quarter note C5. Measure 102 has a quarter note B4, quarter note A4, and quarter note G4. Measure 103 has a quarter note F#4, quarter note E4, and quarter note D4. Measure 104 has a quarter note C4, quarter note B3, and quarter note A3. Measure 105 has a quarter note G3, quarter note F#3, and quarter note E3.

106



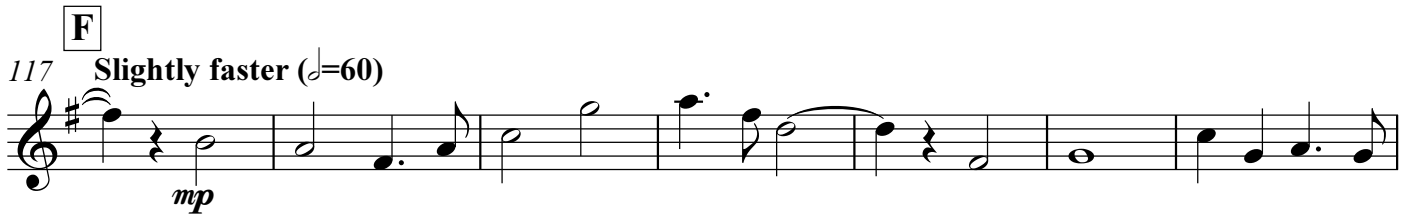
Musical staff 106-111: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains six measures of music. Measure 106 has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, and quarter note B4. Measure 107 has a quarter note C5, quarter note B4, and quarter note A4. Measure 108 has a quarter note G4, quarter note F#4, and quarter note E4. Measure 109 has a quarter note D4, quarter note C4, and quarter note B3. Measure 110 has a quarter note A3, quarter note G3, and quarter note F#3. Measure 111 has a quarter note E3, quarter note D3, and quarter note C3.

112



Musical staff 112-116: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains five measures of music. Measure 112 has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, and quarter note B4. Measure 113 has a quarter note C5, quarter note B4, and quarter note A4. Measure 114 has a quarter note G4, quarter note F#4, and quarter note E4. Measure 115 has a quarter note D4, quarter note C4, and quarter note B3. Measure 116 has a quarter note A3, quarter note G3, and quarter note F#3.

F
117 Slightly faster (♩=60)
mp



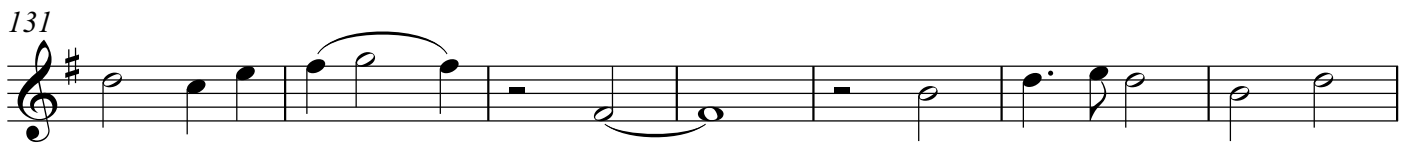
Musical staff 117-123: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains seven measures of music. Measure 117 has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, and quarter note B4. Measure 118 has a quarter note C5, quarter note B4, and quarter note A4. Measure 119 has a quarter note G4, quarter note F#4, and quarter note E4. Measure 120 has a quarter note D4, quarter note C4, and quarter note B3. Measure 121 has a quarter note A3, quarter note G3, and quarter note F#3. Measure 122 has a quarter note E3, quarter note D3, and quarter note C3. Measure 123 has a quarter note B2, quarter note A2, and quarter note G2.

124



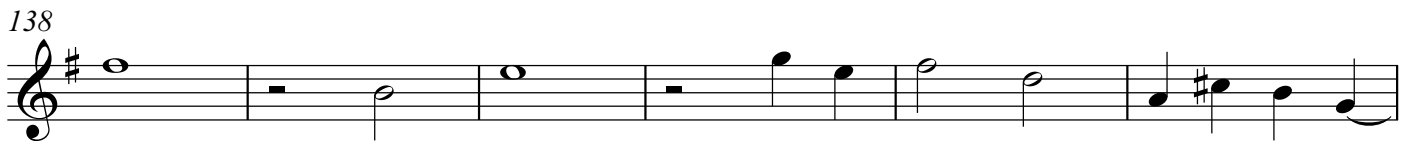
Musical staff 124-130: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains seven measures of music. Measure 124 has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, and quarter note B4. Measure 125 has a quarter note C5, quarter note B4, and quarter note A4. Measure 126 has a quarter note G4, quarter note F#4, and quarter note E4. Measure 127 has a quarter note D4, quarter note C4, and quarter note B3. Measure 128 has a quarter note A3, quarter note G3, and quarter note F#3. Measure 129 has a quarter note E3, quarter note D3, and quarter note C3. Measure 130 has a quarter note B2, quarter note A2, and quarter note G2.

131



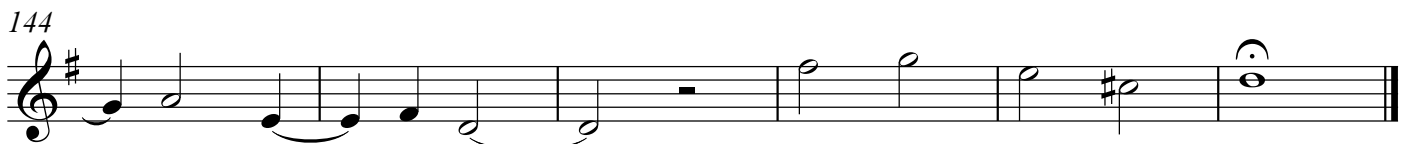
Musical staff 131-137: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains seven measures of music. Measure 131 has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, and quarter note B4. Measure 132 has a quarter note C5, quarter note B4, and quarter note A4. Measure 133 has a quarter note G4, quarter note F#4, and quarter note E4. Measure 134 has a quarter note D4, quarter note C4, and quarter note B3. Measure 135 has a quarter note A3, quarter note G3, and quarter note F#3. Measure 136 has a quarter note E3, quarter note D3, and quarter note C3. Measure 137 has a quarter note B2, quarter note A2, and quarter note G2.

138



Musical staff 138-143: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains six measures of music. Measure 138 has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, and quarter note B4. Measure 139 has a quarter note C5, quarter note B4, and quarter note A4. Measure 140 has a quarter note G4, quarter note F#4, and quarter note E4. Measure 141 has a quarter note D4, quarter note C4, and quarter note B3. Measure 142 has a quarter note A3, quarter note G3, and quarter note F#3. Measure 143 has a quarter note E3, quarter note D3, and quarter note C3.

144



Musical staff 144-149: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains six measures of music. Measure 144 has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, and quarter note B4. Measure 145 has a quarter note C5, quarter note B4, and quarter note A4. Measure 146 has a quarter note G4, quarter note F#4, and quarter note E4. Measure 147 has a quarter note D4, quarter note C4, and quarter note B3. Measure 148 has a quarter note A3, quarter note G3, and quarter note F#3. Measure 149 has a quarter note E3, quarter note D3, and quarter note C3.

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Continental Divide: 5. South Pass

Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. (1813-53: Ho! for California);

Nathan Barker (fl. 1849: Ho! for California);

Peter Bird (Oregon);

PETER BIRD (Oregon, All is Well)

William Clayton (1814-79: All is Well)

Allegretto (♩=120)

Vln. I

9

15

21 **A** 3

29 4

38 9 3

53 **B** Bar.&B. breathe a slave. ö mf

58

64 rall. . .

71 (-12%) 2 (bar = bar) 3/4

Continental Divide: 5. South Pass

Oboe

18

C

74 **Andante moderato** (♩=102)

3/4

Musical notation for measures 74-112. The staff is in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a whole rest for 34 measures. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody starts in measure 113. A dynamic marking of *mp* is present. A rehearsal mark 'Hn.' is above the staff. A slur covers the final two measures.

D

113 (bar = bar)

Adagio (♩=68)

Musical notation for measures 113-116. The staff is in treble clef. It begins with a whole rest for 4 measures. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. A slur covers the final two measures with a 3:4 ratio.

117

Musical notation for measures 117-123. The staff is in treble clef. It begins with a 3:4 ratio. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. A slur covers the final two measures with a 4:4 ratio.

E

124

Musical notation for measures 124-132. The staff is in treble clef. It begins with a 3:4 ratio. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. A slur covers the final two measures with a 3:4 ratio.

133

Musical notation for measures 133-139. The staff is in treble clef. It begins with a 3:4 ratio. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. A slur covers the final two measures with a 3:4 ratio.

140

Musical notation for measures 140-143. The staff is in treble clef. It begins with a 3:4 ratio. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. A slur covers the final two measures with a 3:4 ratio.

144

Musical notation for measures 144-147. The staff is in treble clef. It begins with a 3:4 ratio. A dynamic marking of *f* is present. A slur covers the final two measures with a 3:4 ratio.

F

148

Musical notation for measures 148-158. The staff is in treble clef. It begins with a 2:4 ratio. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. A slur covers the final two measures with a 4:4 ratio. The lyrics 'Sweet wa - ter!' are written below the staff. A rehearsal mark 'S.&A1 (for the 2nd time)' is above the staff.

159

Musical notation for measures 159-166. The staff is in treble clef. It begins with a 3:4 ratio. A dynamic marking of *mp* is present. A slur covers the final two measures.

Continental Divide: 6. Isabella Bird

Isabella Lucy Bird (1831-1904)

PETER BIRD

Moderato (♩=116) accel.

6 9

16 Allegro moderato (♩=132) A

2 2 7

27

5 9 3

44 B As ♩. + ♩

Fl. S.

mp val - ley of grass and flow - ers, *mp*

48

2

54

3 S.

mf pines break - ing in - to frin - ges

61

2 3 S.

mp Hea - ven - pier - cing,

68 Moderato (♩=100)

3 2 3

77 C

7 2

Continental Divide: 6. Isabella Bird

Oboe

20

86 *S.*
in the ve - ry heart of the Rock - *mp*

91

99

104 *poco a poco rall.*
mp *mf*
(-25%)

110

114 *accel.* (+45%)
mp

116 **D**
Andante moderato (♩=110)
mf

125

132

142

Continental Divide: 6. Isabella Bird

Oboe

149 **rall.**

mf

156 **cadenza (freely)** **a tempo** (♩=110)

Vc.
&^{vb}-----|

157

3 **6**

170

Fl.
8^{va}-----

mp

177 **rall.**

(h) #

184 **E** **Andante** (♩=92)

5 **S.**

dusts this let-ter as I

193

write.

4

Continental Divide: 6. Isabella Bird

Oboe

22

202 **F** Pno. (duet with soprano) *mf*

&nb

207

213 *mp*

217 *p*

Continental Divide: 7. Silverton

Peter Bird & traditional

PETER BIRD & traditional

Andante (♩=100)
strings *gliss.*

10

15 **A** 8 B. *mf*

25 **B** Sat - ur - day, so Dev - il take the hind - most! *mp*

30 *tr* *mf*

35 **C** *mp*

40 *mf*

44 **D** *mp*

49

54 **E** 2

Continental Divide: 7. Silverton
Oboe

24

56 *mf*

61 *mp*

64 **F** poco a poco crescendo *>p* *mp* rall..

69 *mf* poco a poco crescendo

74 **G** Adagio (♩=78) *f*

80

85 **H** accel. Poco adagio (♩=84) *p* *mp*

90 rit. Adagio (♩=72) *mf* *f*

95 Moderato (♩=110) **2**

Continental Divide: 8. Logan Pass

Peter Bird

PETER BIRD

Moderato (♩=120)

Timpani

8

14

20

29

36

43 **rall.**

50 **a tempo** (♩=120)

55

Continental Divide: 8. Logan Pass
Oboe

67 Sop.
sword is _____ set in stone. _____

71 **B**
mp *mf*

76 *f*

82 **C**
f *f*

88 *f* *f* *f*

95 *f* *mp*

101 *rall.* 3 3

110 **D**
Alto *mf* *mf*
in swirl -ing

Andante (♩=88) 7

121 **E**
f

127

Continental Divide: 8. Logan Pass
Oboe

132

Musical staff for measures 132-137. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The music consists of eighth and quarter notes with various articulations.

138

F accel.

Musical staff for measures 138-143. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 138 is a whole rest. Measures 139-143 contain eighth and quarter notes. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. An *accel.* marking is present above the staff.

144

G

Musical staff for measures 144-149. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. Measures 144-145 are whole rests. Measures 146-149 contain eighth and quarter notes. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*.

150

Musical staff for measures 150-154. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 150 has a triplet of eighth notes. Measures 151-154 contain eighth and quarter notes. A dynamic of *f* is present.

155

Musical staff for measures 155-160. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 3/4. Measures 155-156 contain eighth and quarter notes. Measures 157-160 contain quarter and half notes. Dynamics include *mf*.

161

8va

Musical staff for measures 161-169. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 3/4. Measures 161-162 are marked *8va* and contain half notes. Measures 163-169 contain quarter and eighth notes.

170

3

2

3

rall.

Musical staff for measures 170-174. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 3/4. Measures 170-171 are marked with a '3' and contain a triplet of quarter notes. Measure 172 contains a half note. Measures 173-174 are marked with a '2' and contain a pair of quarter notes. A dynamic of *mf* is present. A *rall.* marking is present above the staff.

Continental Divide: 8. Logan Pass
Oboe

180 Sop.

and ice and cold re - claim an - *mp*

H

184 - - - - Adagio(♩=72)

mf *f*

190

196

203

mf *mp*

209

p *pp*