

Continental Divide

(an American cantata)

Peter Bird
2010

Timpani (II, III, IV) 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. Yellowstone [tacet] 9

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 quest 11

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 Russell 15

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 Bird [tacet] 19

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. Silverton20

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 Pass23

Approaching Glacier Park from the East, today's tourists can drive directly from the lonely and pristine rolling prairie of the Blackfoot 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
Timpani Continental Divide: 1. Timberline

Peter Bird

PETER BIRD

Allegro (♩=126)

II(B) & III(C) & IV(F#)

3

8

13

A

24 rit.

4 2

Fine

31 B

A tempo: Allegro (♩=126)

Basses

54 rall. (-15%) Moderato (♩=108)

2 5

Tenors 8va

63 C

(8)

81

8 2

Basses

92 D

Continental Divide: 1. Timberline
Timpani

111 **accel.** (+17%) **Allegro** (♩=126)

2 **6** **5**

Tenors

The

125 **E**

sun _____ is so _____

13

140 **Basses** **D.C. al Fine**

where snow can last un - til it's late _____ Ju - ly.

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Timpani

Continental Divide: 2. Yellowstone

PETER BIRD

TACET

--- Intentionally blank ---

Timpani

To the Arapaho

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)

muffled?

II(F) & III(C) & IV(G)

7

13

19

25

strike rim with handle? > > >

31

37

43

49

Continental Divide: 3. Vision quest
Timpani

12

55

Musical staff 1: Bass clef, measures 55-60. A series of eighth notes with a crescendo leading to a dynamic marking of *mf*. Accents and 'x' marks are present above the final two notes.

61

Musical staff 2: Bass clef, measures 61-66. A series of eighth notes with dynamics *mp*, *mf*, and *mp*. Crescendos and accents are used.

67

Musical staff 3: Bass clef, measures 67-72. A series of eighth notes.

73

Musical staff 4: Bass clef, measures 73-78. A series of eighth notes.

79

Musical staff 5: Bass clef, measures 79-84. A series of eighth notes. A boxed 'A' is above measure 80.

85

Musical staff 6: Bass clef, measures 85-90. A series of eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *p*.

91

Musical staff 7: Bass clef, measures 91-96. A series of eighth notes with dynamics *mp*, *pp*, and *p*. Crescendos and accents are used.

97

Musical staff 8: Bass clef, measures 97-102. A series of eighth notes.

103

Musical staff 9: Bass clef, measures 103-108. A series of eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *ppp*. Time signature changes from 2/4 to 4/4.

109

Musical staff 10: Bass clef, measures 109-114. A series of eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *ppp*.

114

Musical staff 114: Bass clef, 2/2 time signature, quarter notes on a descending line.

B

118

(♩=♩; ♩=66)

14

Musical staff 118: Bass clef, 2/2 time signature, pp dynamic, Ten. marking, lyrics: Ne - nii - so - to - you' - u: hee - tyi -

136

Musical staff 136: Treble clef, 2/2 time signature, muffled? marking, mp dynamic, accel. marking, lyrics: hoo - noo.

C

143

Andante (♩=80)

Musical staff 143: Bass clef, 2/2 time signature, mp dynamic, Andante marking.

149

Musical staff 149: Bass clef, 2/2 time signature, eighth notes, 8-measure rest.

162

Musical staff 162: Bass clef, 2/2 time signature, mp dynamic, eighth notes.

168

Musical staff 168: Bass clef, 2/2 time signature, eighth notes.

174

3

Ten.

Musical staff 174: Bass clef, 2/2 time signature, Ten. marking, lyrics: Bex - óó - kee:

179

Musical staff 179: Treble clef, 2/2 time signature, lyrics: No - noo - ho - bé3 - en. Cih - nii - boon - i!

Continental Divide: 3. Vision quest
Timpani

183 poco a poco **rall.**

189

195 **Larghetto** (♩=60) **rall.** (-20%)

201

D

207 **Andante** (♩=96)

213

219

225

231

237

Allegro (♩=140)

play reel twice:

A

damp for bodhran sound:

II(B) & III(D) & IV(G)

5

9

crescendo ONLY on #2

13

16

repeat reel

19

B

C

Andante (♩=70)
Verses #1 & #2: **30**

Bar.

54

1. (gunshot) (echoes)

best. pace. **ff** **mf**

D

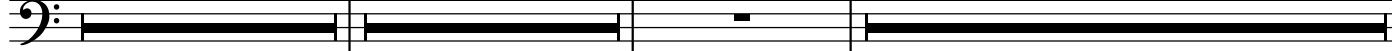
62

2. rit. (-25%) **Larghetto** (♩=50)

2 **3** **12**


Continental Divide: 4. Osborne Russell
Timpani

79 **acc.** (+8%) **E** **Adagio** (♩=54) **33**



Two musical staves in bass clef. The first staff contains a whole note rest. Above the staff, there are markings for '79 accel.' with two '2' under two dotted lines, '(+8%)', and 'Adagio (♩=54)'. A boxed 'E' is above the second measure. The number '33' is at the end of the staff.

F
117 **Slightly faster** (♩=60) **24**




And fol - low down, _____ led by the set - ting _____

Bar. # # # #

Musical staff in bass clef with notes and lyrics. Above the staff, there is a boxed 'F', '117 Slightly faster (♩=60)', and '24'. A 'Bar.' marking is above the first note. The lyrics 'And fol - low down, _____ led by the set - ting _____' are written below the staff. A series of four sharp signs (#) is written above the staff.

144



sun, _____ *mp* _____ *mp* _____

Musical staff in bass clef with notes and dynamics. The word 'sun,' is written below the first note. Dynamics 'mp' are written below the second and fifth notes. Slanted lines (decrescendos) are placed under the second, fifth, and sixth notes. The staff ends with a double bar line.

Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. (1813-53: Ho! for California);
Peter Bird (Oregon);
William Clayton (1814-79: All is Well)

Nathan Barker (fl. 1849: Ho! for California);
PETER BIRD (Oregon, All is Well)

Allegretto (♩=120)

II(C), III(D), IV(G)

16

Fl. *15^{ma}*

21 **A**

2

2

29

2

5

40

2

46

4

3

B

17

rall. . . .

71 (-12%)

(bar = bar)

Bar.&B.

C

74 **Andante moderato** (♩=102)

80

28

Continental Divide: 5. South Pass

Timpani

18

108 S.&A1

15^{ma}

Musical staff for measures 108-112. The staff is in bass clef. The notes are: G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter). The lyrics are: "All is well! All is well!" The dynamic marking *mf* is at the end of the staff.

113

(bar = bar)

D

Adagio (♩=68)

Musical staff for measures 113-118. The staff is in bass clef. Measure 113 starts with a common time signature 'C'. The notes are: G2 (half), A2 (half), B2 (half), C3 (half), B2 (half), A2 (half), G2 (half). The dynamic marking *mp* is below the staff. A bracket under measures 114-115 is labeled '3:4'. There are hairpins indicating dynamics.

119

Musical staff for measures 119-123. The staff is in bass clef. The notes are: G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter). There are hairpins indicating dynamics.

124

E

Musical staff for measures 124-130. The staff is in bass clef. The notes are: G2 (half), A2 (half), B2 (half), C3 (half), B2 (half), A2 (half), G2 (half). There are hairpins indicating dynamics.

131

Musical staff for measures 131-136. The staff is in bass clef. The notes are: G2 (half), A2 (half), B2 (half), C3 (half), B2 (half), A2 (half), G2 (half). There are hairpins indicating dynamics.

137

6

Musical staff for measures 137-147. The staff is in bass clef. The notes are: G2 (half), A2 (half), B2 (half), C3 (half), B2 (half), A2 (half), G2 (half). A thick black bar covers measures 141-146. The dynamic marking *mf* is at the end of the staff. There are hairpins indicating dynamics.

148 **F**

15

Musical staff for measures 148-162. The staff is in bass clef. The notes are: G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter). A thick black bar covers measures 153-162. There are hairpins indicating dynamics.

Timpani

Continental Divide: 6. Isabella Bird

PETER BIRD

TACET

Continental Divide: 7. Silverton

Peter Bird & traditional

PETER BIRD & traditional

Andante (♩=100)

strings *gliss.* II(C) & III(D) & IV(G) **11** Pno. *15^{ma}*

15 **A**

20

25 **B**

2 **7**

35 **C**

4 **2**

44 **D**

8

54 **E**


59

64 **F**

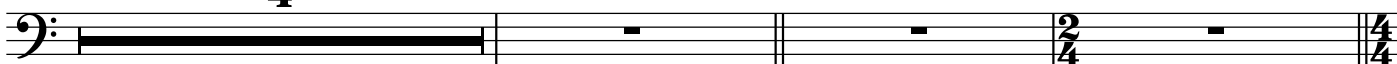
tacet to end poco a poco crescendo **3** **3** *rall.* poco a poco crescendo **3**

Continental Divide: 7. Silverton
Timpani


74 G Adagio (♩=78) **11** accel. **2**



88 H Poco adagio (♩=84) **4** rit. Adagio (♩=72) **2** **4** **4**



95 Moderato (♩=110) **2**



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Continental Divide: 8. Logan Pass

Peter Bird

PETER BIRD

Moderato (♩=120)

II(A) & III(Ef) & IV(F)

2

mp << f mf mf

8

4

III: Ef --> D

f mf f

18

Basses

The as - pen creeks are rills of foam that

mf f

24

5

III: D --> E

10

A

2

Bass

Ah. Be - tween cath

mf f

43

rall.

ed - ral moun - tain walls

mp mf f ff

49

a tempo (♩=120)

17

f mp p

71

B

4

Horn

3

f

78

f

83

C

IV: F --> G

7

Continental Divide: 8. Logan Pass
Timpani

24

90 B. tap shafts on rim:

By Bear - hat Moun - tain, Hid - den Lake *f*

95 III: E --> D **10** *rall.* **5**

112 **Andante** (♩=88) D **8** E **3** *Tenor*

The best you'll do is

126 *mp* **7** *f*

bal ance one fine sum mer day.

138 F *accel.* **2** *mf* *f*

144 **2** G **15** **12**

173 *rall.* **4** **4** **3**

184 **Adagio** (♩=72) H **4** *Tenor*

best you'll do is bal - ance one

192 **21** *mf* *ff*

fine sum - mer