

# GHOST TRAIN

## NOTES ON PERFORMANCE

By far the most frequently asked question is, "what the heck is a waterphone?". It is a percussion instrument, and it's sound is created by playing its metal 'spikes' with a well rosined bass bow. It is used in many film scores (usually mysterious or ominous scenes) and sounds like distant, squeaking metal. Since *Ghost Train* first became available, I think I have heard just about every way under the sun to reproduce this sound (Gary Green of Miami likes to bow really old music stands), and I encourage you to experiment with sounds if a waterphone is not available. The effect should be the sound of old, rusted metal sluggishly waking.

## A NOTE ON ERRATA

This is the most recently updated version (December 1st, 1996), and to the best of my knowledge all (or at least the big ones) note errors have been fixed. There are a number of errata sheets currently making the rounds, and none of them are completely correct. If you have any questions, please feel free to write me at the address listed below.

Also, it is becoming a bit of a tradition to 'doctor' the second movement, as it is full of improvisation and a bit loose in conception. This is fine to a certain extent, but I think you will find that if you just play it as written it will work rather nicely. I would **strongly** encourage to not add any measures and just play the page.

The third movement should contain no improvisation whatsoever.

## PROGRAM NOTES FOR GHOST TRAIN

*For the first movement only:*

The legend of the Ghost Train, a supernatural machine that roars out of the night through forgotten towns and empty canyons, is deeply rooted in American folklore, and it was this spirit I worked to capture.

*Add for all three movements:*

The compositional challenge came in creating a larger three movement work from the first movement which was originally conceived and performed as a single event. I felt that the use of trains as a source of sounds and inspirations was virtually inexhaustible, but I wanted to save the integrity of the original while using it as the architectural foundation. *At the Station* is just that: the train comes to a roaring halt and the passengers depart. In this movement I see countless images: friends and family reunited, the soaring architecture of the station itself, and the genuine sincerity and innocence of the era. After a reflective pastiche the locomotive builds up steam and slowly departs, grand and graceful. *The Motive Revolution* is twofold in it's implication. The name refers to the period between 1850 and 1870 when steam engines revolutionized transportation, and also describes the cyclical treatment of musical motive throughout the movement. The train blazes across the country side, moonlight glistening off it's dark steel, and ends with a final, heroic tribute to these machines and the people who worked them.

The first movement was written in the winter of 1993-94 and received its premiere March 7th, 1994. Movements II and III were written in the winter of 1994-95, and the entire triptych received its premiere on March 14th, 1995. *Ghost Train* was written for and dedicated to Thomas G. Leslie and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Wind Symphony.

## ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Born in 1970, Eric Whitacre is quickly becoming one of the bright stars of the American music scene. He is a regularly commissioned and published composer, and has received performances of his works throughout the world. Eric has received awards from ASCAP, the American Choral Directors Association, The Barlow International Foundation and the Dale Warland Singers commissioning program. As conductor, Mr. Whitacre has served as principal conductor of the College Light Opera Company, chorus master for the Nevada Symphony Orchestra, and has appeared as guest conductor with the Gregg Smith Singers and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Eric has studied composition with John Corigliano and David Diamond and holds the Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School of Music.

## AND FINALLY...

Please send me recordings, programs, letters, questions; I'd love to hear from you! Eric Whitacre • P.O. Box 1024 • Yerington, Nevada • 89447 • carperanam@aol.com

Thanks again for playing my music!



Eric Whitacre

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