

PROGRAM NOTES: “Celestial Hymns”

While working on another work, I came upon a book with some wonderful paintings by Monet, which turned out to be studies of cathedrals. I started thinking about the way painters often will do many studies of one scene or subject. This fascinated me, because composers don't really use this process in composing. So I decided to try replicating this process through music. I took musical materials for a work of mine called “blue cathedral” and created a new work using some of those materials. And I decided that I would focus my attention on a visual detail, from the overall picture that I imagined while writing the earlier work. I wanted to create the beauty and intensity of what I imagined to be the stained glass windows that one might find in a glass cathedral in the sky. I had pictured the figures in the window to actually be singing a heavenly music, and that became the basis for “Celestial Hymns”.

Commissioned in 2000 by Hilde Howden and the Bruce E. Howden, Jr., American Composers Project, for Music from Angel Fire.

--Jennifer Higdon