

Carnegie Hall Program Information

The JMU Carnegie Hall Collective

Shenandoah

American Folk Song, arr. James Erb (1926-2014)

Where Once We Stood

Based on 'Triptych' by Tarik O'Regan (1978)

I. Threnody

II. As We Remember Them

III. From Heaven Distilled a Clemency

Rubén Graciani, *choreography*
Jo-Anne van der Vat-Chromy, *conductor*

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James Madison University:

Charlie King, *Interim President*,
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Towana Moore, *Vice President of Administration and Finance*, and
Mark Angel, *Associate Vice President of Finance*,
among many others on the JMU Administrative Affairs Team.

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**Program Notes:
Where Once We Stood**

Choreography: Rubén Graciani
Music: **Triptych** by Tarik O'Regan

Where Once We Stood, a unique collaboration between James Madison University's dance, choral, and percussion departments, set to the evocative **Triptych** by celebrated composer Tarik O'Regan, is a project inspired by Rubén Graciani, Dean of the JMU College of Visual and Performing Arts.

Choreographer Graciani writes: *“When listening to O'Regan's **Triptych**, I was inspired by the collection of interfaith ideas/ideals at the center of the work and libretto. This led me to generate movement development with the dancers based on those things we feel but do not act on. We considered what it might feel like to share oneself fully and not take any “secrets” to the grave (so to speak). The score and libretto seemed to ask what it would be like, physically, to “take off the mask” and to choose to live fully – to recognize what we share across faiths or human experiences now. This is a departure from the direct text, but the score felt so resonant in its hope that I wanted to move beyond just the life/death aspect and focus on how all these shared concepts could help us connect. None of the movement is literal but an abstraction of these thoughts, feelings, ideas, and inspirations.”*

Triptych, a portrayal of life, death, and resurrection, of mortality and immortality, represents the merging of two extant works by composer Tarik O'Regan. O'Regan recounts: *“Relatively new to living in New York, I am much more aware of the independent, vibrant cultural plurality that exists today; it's probably the single most dazzling facet of the city and is largely responsible for the infamous ‘edginess’ that pervades daily life there. With this in mind, I set to work on Threnody (Movement I here) in 2004; I wanted to write something relevant to the Israeli/Palestinian issue without losing that city ‘edge.’”* The first movement is fast and rhythmically influenced by the music of both North Africa and pop-rock music in its syncopations, as well as innovative treatments and disguises of the note F throughout this movement and work as a whole as wrapped into the modal liveries of F Dorian, F Mixolydian, F Lydian and finally, in movement 3, F Major (*From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*).

Movement I: *Threnody*, conducted by Jeremy Summerly in Christ Church, Spitalfields, premiered on December 18, 2004, while Movements II and III were premiered by the Portsmouth Grammar School Chamber Choir and the London Mozart Players in a concert at Portsmouth Anglican Cathedral in November 2005. O'Regan explains: *“From the moment that the commission for *And There Was a Great Calm* (Movements II & III of the final work) was offered, I knew the piece I was about to embark upon would end up being linked with *Threnody* in some way...Musical works connected with commemoration or memorials are often suitably pensive and slow; I wanted to start with that concept but bring in some of the relentless urban rhythms that had been such a large influence on my life in the preceding two years in New York City. The result is that the second movement is quiet and gentle (a moment of recollection), while the final movement is much faster and vibrant, returning to a more openly elated rendering of the start of **Triptych**; the texts here deal with transmigration and the future.”*

The texts sources in **Triptych** represent a diverse range of religious and spiritual traditions, underpinning a global sense of unity and understanding of the human journey. These sources include William Penn, William Blake, John Milton, the Psalms of David, William Wordsworth, Muhammad Rajab Al-Bayoumi, an Egyptian poet of the early 20th century, 13th-century Persian poet Jalalu-'d'Din Rumi, and a couplet from the medieval Zoroastrian texts, the Bundahis-Bahman Yast. The second movement is almost entirely based on the famous Hebrew prayer of remembrance, "As We Remember Them," and is concluded with a line from Thomas Hardy's poem "And There Was a Great Calm," written at the signing of the World War I Armistice on November 11, 1918. An additional couplet from this poem is set in a moment of tranquility in the final movement.

Combining dance with live music-making, **Where Once We Stood** creates an emotionally rich experience. The dancers bring to life the archetypal and emotional shapes, struggles, and stresses of life, death, and resurrection. These thematic portrayals are further intensified through the harmonic density, modal fluidity, and non-traditional falling chained suspensions of the choral singing and the nearly rock-music-influenced accompaniment of O'Regan's mallet percussion writing, promising a performance that will inspire and connect with the audience.

This cross-disciplinary collaboration was initially planned for Spring 2020. Yet, interrupted by COVID-19, it saw its first fruition as part of the JMU 2023 'New Voices in Dance' Festival. When James Madison University overwhelmingly supported the invitation to perform at Carnegie Hall, Dr. van der Vat-Chromy proposed **Where Once We Stood** as the project that most uniquely represents our CVPA mission: *Embracing the values of collaboration, critical inquiry, integrity, creative excellence, inclusivity, and transformation, we strive to empower our communities to collaborate, envision, and achieve their creative and professional aspirations through exploring the arts as a vehicle for cultural advancement, engagement and transformation.* Through each unique iteration, this innovative collaboration has proven to be a one-of-a-kind artistic experience. As such, we are honored to bring **Where Once We Stood**, focused on sharing our deepest selves across faiths and human experiences and steeped in **Triptych's** messages of oneness through diversity and the transformational power of divine clemency, to Carnegie Hall.

Text and Sources

I. Threnody

When death takes off the mask, [we] will know one another, though diverse liveries [we] wear here make [us] strangers.

William Penn (1644 - 1718), from 'Some Fruits of Solitude in Reflections and Maxims' (1682)

Tremblest thou when my face appears to thee? Wherefore thy dreadful fears? Be easy, friend; 'tis thy truest gain to be far away from the sons of men. I offer a couch to give thee ease: Shall dreamless slumber so much displease?

Muhammad Rajah Al-Bayoumi (dates unknown), from 'Death Speaks', translated by Arthur J. Arberry (1950)

To see a World in a Grain of Sand, and a Heaven in a wildflower, Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand, and Eternity in an hour.

William Blake (1757-1827), from 'Auguries of Innocence' (1808)

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for [people] to dwell together in unity.

Psalms 133, from The Bible (King James Version, 1611)

II. As We Remember Them

In the rising of the sun and at its going down, we remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them.

In the opening buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them.

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.

In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we remember them.

When [we're] weary and in need of strength, we remember them.

When [we're] lost and sick at heart, we remember them.

So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are part of us, as we remember them.

Roland B. Gittelsohn (1910- 1995) [adapted], from 'The Gates of Repentance' (1978)

And the Heav'nly Quire stood mute, and silence was in Heav'n.

John Milton (1608-1674), from 'Paradise Lost', Book III (1667)

III. From Heaven Distilled a Clemency

Each shall arise in the place where their life [spirit] departs.

'Bundahis-Bahman Yast'; Indian Bundahishn (ninth century) [adapted], from 'Sacred Books of the East', Volume 5, translated by Edward W. West (1860)

[So] Why then should I be afraid? I shall die once again to rise an angel blest.

'Masnavi i Ma'navi'; Mathwani of Jalalu-'d'Din Rumi (thirteenth century) [adapted], from 'Masnavi i Ma'navi', Book III, translated by Edward H. Whinfield (1898)

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting; The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, Hath had elsewhere its setting. And cometh from afar.

William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850), from 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' (1807)

Calm fell. From heaven distilled a clemency; There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), from 'And There Was a Great Calm' - on the signing of the Armistice, (1918)

The JMU Carnegie Hall Collective Personnel

Choreography	Rubén Graciani Dean, JMU College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA)
Conductor	Jo-Anne van der Vat-Chromy JMU Director of Choral Activities
Percussion Ensemble	Casey Cangelosi JMU Studio Percussion
Collaborative Pianists	Amy Robertson, Elizabeth Williams
Choral Graduate Assistants	Colin Cossi, Addison Walton, (DMA), Ivan Godoy, (MM)
Choral Librarian	Marlow Lewis
Carnegie Hall Tour Managers	Kelly Donlan, Leah Brown, Natalie Gillum, Elijah Keyes, Eva Pierce+
Percussion Ensemble	Adelaide Hofmann, Brian McDermott, Emily Stevens Jonathan Ramirez, Josh Sheppard+, Olivia Miller Richard Collister III+, Zane Johnson
Dance Ensemble/Alternates*	Asiah Jones, Brooklynn Borders*, Brynn Persons, Destiny Bigos*, Grace Kohler, Jessie Scanlon, Jordyn Butts*, Katie Shin, Lauren Coles, Leah Overton, Maddie Gaffney, Myah Scott*Rylee Tiller, Kiley Flaherty
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TENOR: Aiden Cahill, Anthony Bassett, Brendan O'Donnell*, Bruce Russell, Colin Cahill, Devonte Garcia, Drew Dodson, Garrett Gass, Jacob Wunderler/Walton, Jasper Wilson, Jaylan Garcia, Joshua Nieves, Kieran Morales, Luke Brooks, Matt Underwood, Michael Creswick, Nick Gomez-Colon+, Paolo Mancini

BASS: Alex Dickerson, Colin Cossi+, Dan Klein, Darien Roby, Elijah Keyes, Habib Jaafar, Ian Amos, Ivan Godoy+, Johnny Park, Kevin Landry, Maximillian Stempel, Michael Tsougranis, Riley Jefferson, Roman Leonard, Takoma Williams, Thayer Causer, Thomas Stachelski, William Palestrant

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