



A DISTANT JOURNEY | PROGRAM NOTES

December 15, 2013

Many pieces of music invite their listeners to take a journey—either to a faraway place or to a long-ago time. Our first work this afternoon comes from a larger opera, a play with music, called *Lohengrin*. Richard Wagner's opera tells a story about knights and princesses and magic quests, set in Germany more than eight hundred years ago. The stirring music that you hear, led by the brass instruments, accompanies a procession of nobles to a royal wedding. Our next piece, John Adams's *Tromba lontanana*, is also a fanfare—that is, a short introductory piece of music featuring brass instruments. But it has a very different sound from Wagner's prelude. The piece's title means "distant trumpet," and the two solo trumpets, separated from the rest of the orchestra, call gently to each other across space. The orchestra plays quietly in the background.

With Silvestre Revueltas's *Janitzio*, we travel to Mexico. *Janitzio* is the name of an island in a lake near Mexico City that had become a popular tourist spot by the 1930s. The composer portrays the celebrations of the local people with rhythmic dance music, sentimental ballad tunes, and raucous clashes of bands trying to outplay each other.

Our next journey takes place in time, over the course of a lifetime friendship. The German musician Felix Mendelssohn was a very gifted young composer who wrote masterpieces well before he turned twenty. He became friends with another young prodigy, the violinist Ferdinand David, when they were both teenagers, and they went on to work together throughout their musical careers. Almost twenty years after they first met, in 1844, Mendelssohn wrote this violin concerto for his friend. Its beautiful melodies and youthful spirit have made it a favorite with audiences and performers ever since.

Finally, we travel to the Pacific Northwest—and all the way to the edge of the world—with *Umai's Journey*. Richard Cornell, the piece's composer, tells us about this adventure: The story of *Umai's journey* comes from the Yurok people, who were living on the West Coast (we now call it California) long before the Europeans arrived. It was first written down by the anthropologist Theodora Kroeber at the beginning of the twentieth century. You can read *Umai's Journey* with other wonderful stories in her book called *The Inland Whale*.

There are two things to keep in mind when you listen to the story. First is the silver flash of the sun as it sets over the water. You can see it looking westward over an expanse of ocean water at sunset as the light reflects on the curved lens of the water's surface.

The other thing is that ocean waves come in sets. The number of waves in a set varies from one place to another—in some places a set has seven waves. But in our story a set has twelve, and the twelfth one in the set is smaller than the others. When *Umai* discovers this, getting around on the big ocean is much easier.

At the end of *Umai's journey*, the chorus sings:

Umai!

You rode the rapids.

You crossed the Ocean. Lend me your canoe— This is your canoe!

Now I too

Shall have no trouble

From the River.

No trouble

From the Ocean.

Thank you, *Umai!*