

## John Corigliano - Of Rage and Remembrance - Symphony No.1 (1996)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 04 February 2011 10:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 20 October 2013 09:43

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- 01. *Of Rage and Remembrance* [0:13:08.00]  
*Chaconne based upon Symphony No. 1, movt. 3*
- 02. *Symphony No. 1: Apologue: Of Rage and Remembrance* [0:13:39.00]
- 03. *Symphony No. 1: Tarantella* [0:08:13.00]
- 04. *Symphony No. 1: Chaconne* [0:13:54.38]
- 05. *Symphony No. 1: Epilogue* [0:04:37.67] [play](#)

Michelle De Young (Mezzo soprano)  
Oratorio Society Of Washington  
The Chorals Arts Society Of Washington  
National Symphony Orchestra  
Leonard Slatkin (Conductor)

Corigliano's most famous piece of music is the score to the film *Altered States*. Actually, all of his music kind of sounds like that-- alternating moments of poignant lyricism with explosions of rhythmic energy. The son of the former concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, Corigliano literally grew up around the orchestra. So it's no surprise that his music is orchestrated with almost preternatural skill and brilliance. The First Symphony, inspired in part by the AIDS tragedy, is both an angry and a moving work. Leonard Slatkin plays it with the kind of manic energy the music demands, and the sound quality is terrific. --David Hurwitz

The focal work of the evening was Corigliano's SYMPHONY NO. 1, a piece written for the Chicago Symphony, which first performed in 1990. This is a programmatic elegy in memory of the composer's friends and loved ones who have died of AIDS. Corigliano's openly emotive, deeply personal response to the devastating loss brought on by the scourge has held up remarkably well on purely musical terms. The score has been adopted by many orchestras and

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has received two recordings, including a Grammy-winning disc under Daniel Barenboim's direction.

The angry Apologue moves from rage to remembrance, its fury giving way to elegies for three friends. The second movement is a nightmarish Tarantella, a musical depiction of AIDS dementia, that unravels as it plunges ahead ever more violently. Most affecting of all is the third movement in which two cellos interweave a 12-tone chaconne. This is a remarkable piece [of] powerful emotional undercurrent [with an] ingenious way high-decibel violence melts into the most tender sentiment and back again. --John von Rhein, Chicago Tribune

I was extremely moved when I first saw "The Quilt," an ambitious interweaving of several thousand fabric panels, each memorializing a person who had died of AIDS, and, most importantly, each designed and constructed by his or her loved ones. This made me want to memorialize in music those I had lost, and to reflect on those I was still losing. The result was my Symphony No. 1 (commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), the third movement of which fuses a tense and heartbroken poem by my friend and collaborator (The Cloisters, the Ghosts of Versailles), the poet and playwright William M. Hoffman, to a litany of names of men lost to AIDS. Of Rage and Remembrance is a reimagining of that movement as a ritual for community chorus. In it, AIDS is not only context but also content: Of Rage and Remembrance cannot be performed abstractly, as just another piece in the choral repertoire. Its audience is not really the audience for choral music; its audience is the community blighted by AIDS. That it now attracts a larger audience is beside the point: rarely has posterity seemed so irrelevant to me. — John Corigliano

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