Caroline Shaw – Partita For 8 Voices (2016)

A1 Partita For 8 Voices Part 1: Allemande 5:53 A2 Partita For 8 Voices Part 2: Sarabande 4:49 B1 Partita For 8 Voices Part 3: Courante 8:59 B2 Partita For 8 Voices Part 4: Passacaglia 5:55 Roomful Of Teeth (Ensemble): Alto Vocals – Caroline Shaw, Virginia Warnken Baritone Vocals – Avery Griffin Bass Vocals – Cameron Beauchamp Bass Vocals, Baritone Vocals – Dashon Burton Soprano Vocals – Martha Cluver Tenor Vocals – Eric Dudley Music Director – Brad Wells - Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013

Partita is a simple piece. Born of a love of surface and structure, of the human voice, of dancing and tired ligaments, of music, and of our basic desire to draw a line from one point to another.

It was written with and for my dear friends in Roomful of Teeth. Inspired by Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawing 305. ---Caroline Shaw, pulitzer.org

Composed over three summers from 2009-2011, in collaboration with Roomful of Teeth during their residencies at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), Caroline Shaw's Partita for 8 Voices received the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Music, and was nominated for a Grammy for Best Contemporary Classical Composition. It is the only Pulitzer awarded to an a cappella vocal work, and Shaw, a singer in the ensemble, is the youngest composer ever to receive the prize.

The score's inscription reads: Partita is a simple piece. Born of a love of surface and structure, of the human voice, of dancing and tired ligaments, of music, and of our basic desire to draw a line from one point to another.

Each movement takes a cue from the traditional baroque suite in initial meter and tone, but the familiar historic framework is soon stretched and broken through "speech, whispers, sighs, murmurs, wordless melodies and novel vocal effects" (Pulitzer jury citation). Roomful of Teeth's utterly unique approach to singing and vocal timbre originally helped to inspire and shape the work during its creation, and the ensemble continues to refine and reconsider the colors and small details with every performance.

Allemande opens with the organized chaos of square dance calls overlapping with technical wall drawing directions of the artist Sol LeWitt, suddenly congealing into a bright, angular tune that never keeps its feet on the ground for very long. There are allusions to the movement's intended simulation of motion and of space in the short phrases of text throughout, which are sometimes sung and sometimes embedded as spoken texture. Sarabande's quiet restraint in the beginning is punctured in the middle by an ecstatic, belted melody that resolves quietly at the end, followed soon after by the Inuit-inspired hocketed breaths of Courante. A wordless quotation of the American folk hymn"Shining Shore" appears at first as a musical non-sequitur but later recombines with the rhythmic breaths as this longest movement is propelled to its final gasp. Passacaglia is a set of variations on a repeated chord progression, first experimenting simply with vowel timbre, then expanding into a fuller texture with the return of the Sol LeWitt text.

Of the premiere of Shaw's Partita, New York magazine wrote: "She has discovered a lode of the rarest commodity in contemporary music: joy." And it is with joy that this piece is meant to be received in years to come. ---discogs.com

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