

JOE HILL

16 ACTIONS FOR ORCHESTRA, VOICES AND GUITAR SOLOIST



words from the press

This is a deeply felt, deeply musical piece. I loved it. Horvitz has a gift for writing plainspoken music with real guts and sophistication...Danny Barnes and Robin Holcomb have just the right homespun quality in their voices and delivery, and Rinde Eckert is, as always, the voice of postmodern God - simultaneously thunderous, ironic, and compassionate. {Bill Frisell's} taste is sure, and interventions subtle and apt. - Robert Carl / Fanfare

Joe Hill is, in fact, a ravishingly beautiful work... More elegiac than celebratory, Joe Hill takes an oblique approach to the martyred labor leader's story, conveying the gauzy, somber mood of a dream - history seen through the large end of a spyglass. - Paul de Barros / Seattle Times

Horvitz has the compositional techniques of the second half of the twentieth century under his belt, so in spite of its folksy sound, it's a highly sophisticated piece. The orchestral part is significant; far from being just an accompaniment to the singers, it provides a strong, colorful commentary on the dramatic situations. It also prominently features an improvised electric guitar part, played imaginatively here by Frisell. Rinde Eckert, Danny Barnes, and Robin Holcomb sing beautifully, soulfully, and are convincing as actors in the spoken parts. Christian Knapp leads the Northwest Sinfonia in a polished and passionate performance. Joe Hill is a powerful and moving work that deserves to be widely heard. Highly recommended. - Stephen Eddins / All Music

about the work

Joe Hill: 16 Actions for Orchestra, Voice and Guitar Soloist is a 75-minute oratorio based loosely on the life and times of Joe Hill. Premiered at the University of Washington's Meany Hall in 2004, and remounted at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts in Burlington, Vermont in 2005, the piece features a 30-piece chamber orchestra along with vocalists Danny Barnes, Robin Holcomb, Rinde Eckert and guitar soloist Bill Frisell.

The work combines original music by Wayne Horvitz with re-workings of American work songs and songs of struggle, in addition to new settings of words and in some cases music of Joe Hill himself. The text is by writer and founding member of the Flying Karamazov Brothers, Paul Magid.

Motivated by Hill's character and lyrics, Horvitz and Magid revive the life story and the struggle for workers basic rights led by the Industrial Workers of the World Organization. This extraordinary piece incorporates traditional church hymns, folk tunes, thought-provoking text and Joe Hill's songs in the context of a contemporary approach to the classical chamber orchestra. The culmination of all these musical styles sets the mood of the era, culture and people who contributed to America's labor rights movement.

Horvitz, known for his wide variety of repertoire, implements his own unique style of composition and standard tradition of using a full chamber orchestra. In combination with Magid's textual use of Joe Hill's lyrics and ideas of the IWW, the piece brings the labor cause back to life representing the many workers who fought for the basic rights we enjoy today.

Joe Hill: 16 Actions for Orchestra, Voice and Guitar Soloist was recorded in 2007 and released on New World Records.

view the score

http://waynehorvitz.net/scores/joe_hill_scores.html

Joe Hill and the promise of Art and Politics

http://www.waynehorvitz.net/speech/joe_hill_essay.html