Pierre La Plante

THE GREAT AMERICAN WEST SUITE

INSTRUMENTATION

1 – Conductor
3 – Flute 1
3 – Flute 2
1 – Piccolo
1 – Oboe 1
1 – Oboe 2
1 – Bassoon 1
1 – Bassoon 2
3 – B♭ Clarinet 1
3 – B♭ Clarinet 2
3 – B♭ Clarinet 3
2 – B♭ Bass Clarinet
2 – E♭ Alto Saxophone 1
2 – E♭ Alto Saxophone 2
2 – B♭ Tenor Saxophone
1 – E♭ Baritone Saxophone
2 – B♭ Trumpet 1
2 – B♭ Trumpet 2
2 – B♭ Trumpet 3
1 – F Horn 1
1 – F Horn 2
1 – F Horn 3
1 – F Horn 4
2 – Trombone 1
2 – Trombone 2
2 – Trombone 3
1 – Euphonium TC
2 – Euphonium BC
4 – Tuba
1 – Timpani
3 – Mallet Percussion
  Orchestra Bells, Chimes,
  Xylophone
2 – Snare Drum
1 – Bass Drum
4 – Percussion
  Crash Cymbals, Claves,
  Triangle, Castanets, Whip,
  Tenor Drum, Temple Blocks,
  Wood Block, Suspended
  Cymbal

Complete Band ....................... $85.00
Full Score .................................. 8.00
Parts, each ............................... 2.00
The Great American West Suite, like A Cowboy Symphony, is based on traditional cowboy and Western folk tunes: “The Dying Cowboy,” “Home On The Range,” “The Ballad of Billy the Kid,” “The Streets of Laredo,” “The Days of ’49” and “The California Stage Company.”

I. Waltz on the Range - After a brief introduction on “The Dying Cowboy,” Waltz on the Range is a setting of “Home On The Range,” one of the best known songs of the Old West. The words of the song suggest a gentle, pastoral mood—as if the singer is sitting around the campfire, calming the herd and relaxing after a hard day’s drive.

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,
Where the deer and the antelope play,
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

II. Desperado - No other outlaw in the American West has received more attention in the form of stories, books, legends, songs, TV shows and motion pictures than William Bonney, a.k.a. Billy the Kid. He is regarded as either a villain or a folk hero, depending on your personal viewpoint.

I’ll tell you a story of Billy the Kid
And all of the desperate deeds that he did, etc.

Orphaned at the age of fourteen, Billy had been in and out of trouble with the law most of his life. He felt a kinship with the Mexican community of Silver City, whose farmers and ranchers had been displaced by the wealthy Easterners who came to Southwestern New Mexico buying up land and, in cahoots with local lawmen, bankers and businessmen, did so by less than honorable means. Billy hung out with them and even learned their language. They became his second family and eventually sheltered him from the law when he got into trouble. To look at it from their point of view: If some crooked Anglo died at the hands of Billy the Kid, well, they got what was coming to them.

Desperado is set with a Spanish flair, and appropriately contrasted with a funereal sounding “Streets of Laredo.”

Beat the drum slowly, play the fife lowly,
Play the dead march as they carry me away.

The movement ends with a return to the “Ballad of Billy the Kid.”

III. The California Stage (In the Days of ’49) - One often forgets that California was part of the Old West, especially after gold was discovered in 1849 and brought thousands west seeking fame and fortune.

This movement begins with the “Days of ’49,” which many will remember as the theme song of the Gilligan’s Island TV series of the 1960s. The original is a ballad that describes the various characters who came out prospecting: Kentuck Bill, Monte Pete, New York Jake, etc.

My heart is filled with the days of yore
And oft I do repine,
For the days of old, the days of gold
And the days of ’49.

“The California Stage Company” (the full title) is the least known of all these songs and describes in somewhat humorous fashion what it was like to get around the territory other than on horseback:

There’s no respect for youth or age
On board of a California stage,

And drivers often stop and yell,
“Get out all hands and push. Up hill!

The ladies are compelled to sit,
With dresses in tobacco spit,
The gentlemen don’t seem to care,
But talk on politics and swear.

The suite reprises “Home On The Range,” with a final brief stop on the “California Stage.”

I happened across these last two songs in Dover Publications’ Songs of The Great American West (Silber ed.) and gratefully thank them for use of their versions.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: The movements are tied together with a D minor chord, so there should not be a large break between the movements, especially between the 1st and 2nd movement.

Pierre La Plante
Θ Coda

132

no rit.

133

134

135

136

137

138

139

140

141

Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Euph.

Tba.

Tim.

Mlk. Perc.

S. D.

B. D.

Perc.