

SIX PORTRAITS OF A MAN :

A Cycle of Six Songs with Prologue for solo baritone and chamber orchestra

The inspiration for 'Six Portraits' came from the intended soloist of the piece, baritone Peter Brathwaite. Peter's extraordinary work recreating several iconic portraits of prominent figures in Black history (through the Getty Museum Challenge) has resulted in a startling number of important paintings returning to international prominence. By means of his clever and resourceful use of materials, Peter has brought these often overlooked masterpieces to a brand new audience. Additionally, his thorough research and scholarship which accompany each recreation allow the observer to gain further insight and context for these startling images.

My goal was to create a powerful sonic backdrop to accompany a series of selected images - not necessarily in a literal or linear sense, but rather as a companion work that echos and broadens the visual experience, with the soloist embodying a unique combination both musical and visual focus.

The texts of the songs are drawn from poets whose collective work reflect the experiences (both literal and implied) as depicted in the some of these portraits. Spanning nearly a century, the poems range from painfully acute depictions of the struggle against everyday racism to more humorous, wry observations of life in our multicultural society.

PROLOGUE:

'I am, and have always been'

(Tom Randle)

THE BALLAD OF RUDOLPH REED

(Gwendolyn Brooks)

THE NEGRO SPEAKS OF RIVERS

(Langston Hughes)

WE WEAR THE MASK

(Paul Laurence Dunbar)

TRUE GRIT

(John Agard)

THE BLACK CHRIST

(Charles Cullen)

BEYOND THE YEARS

(Paul Laurence Dunbar)