

# Aurora

## Instrumentation

- 2 Flutes (2<sup>nd</sup> doubling Piccolo), 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets in Bb, 2 Bassoons
- 4 Horns in F, 2 Trumpets in Bb, 3 Trombones, 1 Tuba
- Timpani; Perc 1: Glockenspiel, Suspended Cymbal, Tam-tam, Lion's roar, Snare drum, Whip, Triangle; Perc 2: Vibraphone, Splash Cymbal, Suspended Cymbal, Lion's roar, Triangle, Tam-tam; Perc 3: Whip, Crash Cymbals, Suspended Cymbal, Tam-tam, Crotales, Tom-toms (3), Bass Drum, Lion's roar.
- Solo Violin
- 3 Echo Violins
- Strings

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**Aurora**, concerto for violin and orchestra. Published by Filarmonika.  
Duration: 32 minutes

During my years in Finland I was privileged enough to witness one of Nature's most spectacular displays: the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). Produced by the clash of solar flares with Earth's atmosphere, the Auroras are not only a stunning visual spectacle but also a reminder that the planet we live in is constantly interacting with its neighboring celestial bodies. The concerto, inspired by this phenomenon, takes this concept a step, or two, further. Each of its three movements pays homage to a different kind of aurora: *I. Equatorialis*, *II. Borealis*, and *III. Australis*. The last two are observable phenomena on Earth, whereas the first is used to describe similar magnetic anomalies on other planets. The soloist stands metaphorically as a witness to these phenomena, while the orchestra expands and amplifies its sounds and gestures.

*Equatorialis* begins in a quasi-cadenza-like manner, with the violin commanding the stage as the orchestra follows, imitates, and develops its germinal gestures. As the soloist finds its pulse, so does the orchestra, eventually reaching several climactic points that sound familiar yet foreign with their arresting rhythms and lush orchestrations.

*Borealis* takes us to a place of ethereal quietude, beginning with the soloist, which is echoed by three additional violins placed strategically within the concert hall. Here, the orchestra transforms the waves of light into waves of sound, enveloping the audience and making them experience with their ears what is normally reserved for the eye.

*Australis* begins menacingly in the lower regions of the orchestra, gradually growing, achieving full power, and leading to a relentless motif in the solo violin that is then echoed by different instrumental groups in the orchestra. Energy levels stay high all throughout, with tension constantly building up and being released only occasionally, thus placing enormous physical demands on the soloist. *Aurora's* three movements take the listener on a wondrous journey of light through sound.

This piece has great significance to me, not only because of its subject and its connection to my beloved Finland, but also because it is my first collaboration with Conductor Andrés Orozco-Estrada as composer-in-residence of the world-class Houston Symphony. *Aurora* is dedicated to Leticia Moreno, whose energy and excitement have been an enormous source of inspiration.