

# Dreamers

## Instrumentation

- 3 Flutes (2<sup>nd</sup> doubling Alto Flute in G; 3<sup>rd</sup> doubling Piccolo), 3 Oboes, 3 Clarinets in Bb (2<sup>nd</sup> doubling Eb Clarinet; 3<sup>rd</sup> doubling Bass Clarinet), 3 Bassoons (3<sup>rd</sup> doubling Contrabassoon)
- 4 Horns in F, 3 Trumpets in Bb (3<sup>rd</sup> doubling Piccolo Trumpet in A), 3 Trombones (3<sup>rd</sup> doubling Contrabass Trombone), 1 Tuba
- Timpani; Perc. 1: Tibetan Singing Bowl in G (392Hz), Floor tom, Snare Drum, Glockenspiel, Crash Cymbals, Suspended Cymbal (medium and large), Tam tam, Xylophone, Vibraphone; Perc. 2: Mark Tree, Snare Drum, Tubular Bells, Tam tam, Triangle, Crash Cymbals, Suspended Cymbal, Floor tom, Xylophone, Windchimes (Woodstock Chimes. Model: Affirmation Chime [small] - Amazing Grace), Glockenspiel, Paper, Whip, Sand Blocks, Bass Drum; Perc. 3: Bass Drum, Crash Cymbals, Suspended Cymbal, Vibraphone, Triangle, Tam tam, Sand Blocks, Ratchet, Whip, Sleigh Bells.
- Harp
- Strings

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**Dreamers:** Oratorio for Soprano, Mixed Chorus, and Orchestra. Published by Filarmonika.

Duration: 44 minutes.

Urgent, relevant, necessary; those are some of the words that were constantly in my mind as I was writing *Dreamers*. When Nilo and I first approached the subject, the sociopolitical climate in the U.S. and the world at large was much different and the prospect was brighter, but later on, as things took an unexpected turn, we were faced with the decision to either withdraw from tackling this issue or confronting it from a newly gained perspective. Obviously, we chose the latter, and this choice led us to an incredibly intense emotional journey.

Inspired by the Hewlett Foundation guidelines, Nilo and I, together with Cal Performances, sought to create a work that could be both relevant to our times and to the city of Berkeley, where I reside, and where Cal Performances has its headquarters. As part of my research, I found out that on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1971 Berkeley passed the first resolution in the nation protecting sailors resisting the Vietnam War, therefore allowing local authorities to refuse to cooperate with federal authorities in instances where the law went against their conscience. Berkeley was therefore the original Sanctuary City. This concept has since been expanded to include legal protections to refugees and immigrants.

Thanks to the University of California at Berkeley, from which I obtained my Ph.D. in 2012, we were able to interview many so-called "dreamers", immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children and whose legal status has remained in limbo due to the fact that their parents arrived to the U.S. illegally. Through their testimonies we were able to hear about the travails of crossing the border, the difficulties of assimilating into a completely different culture, and the uncertainty that the future now holds for them and their families. Their experiences are vastly different and I couldn't but think that the umbrella term "dreamers" by which we now refer to them is as artificial as the word "illegal". First, they prefer to be called undocumented, and second, these labels are an attempt to set them apart from us as "the others" when

in reality they are not different from you or me. After gathering these testimonies, Nilo sat to work on creating a unifying narrative that could encompass these vastly contrasting experiences. Through Nilo's deeply imaginative and poetic language we are able to expand our understanding of the issue as he presents it to us first from a grand, timeless, and universal perspective. He then gradually narrows down his focus to specific stories, bringing us down to earth, figuratively speaking, and finally taking us away and letting us rise above, so we can once again see the whole picture.

These past few months have been one of the most rewarding and most intense creatively speaking, not only because of the limited time I had to write this piece, but also because I had to deal with the enormous responsibility of tackling an issue that was making (and continues to make) headlines all the time. The oratorio is divided into six separate movements, all different from each other in terms of texture and orchestration, shifting the spotlight from soprano to chorus to orchestra as three equal narrators in the story. Just as Nilo shifts between first, second, and third person seamlessly, I have used an array of text-setting techniques that vary from word painting, to motif quoting, to associating words or phrases with specific instruments and/or combinations of instruments. Ultimately, my goal was to create music that could give the text an effective emotional frame, enfolding the listener and allowing him/her to empathize with the stories being told. But at the same time, and as is always my aim, I wanted to create music that could generate excitement on its own, even if the text were not to be uttered at all. In other words, instead of complementing each other, I want the words and the music to build on each other, crescendoing to a point where emotions can finally overflow; catharsis.

My sincere gratitude goes to everyone involved in this project starting with the co-commissioners: Cal Performances, University Musical Society, Stanford Live and Washington Performing Arts, with funds from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. I would also like to personally thank Matías Tarnopolsky and Rob Bailis for entrusting me with this commission, and Sabrina Klein for facilitating my encounters with "dreamers" throughout the research phase; my dear friends Robin Estrada and Matthew Szemela for their invaluable help whenever I had questions related to vocal and string writing, respectively; and of course, my sincere thanks go to all the "dreamers" who valiantly and generously came forth and shared their stories with us. Without them this work would simply not be possible. My deep gratitude also goes to my husband and immediate chosen family for their unwavering support and patience through what turned out to be some of the busiest months I have had in over a decade. I look forward to working with the musicians of the Philharmonia Orchestra of London and their brilliant Conductor, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and with Superstar Soprano Ana María Martínez.

This work is dedicated to all dreamers around the world who left their homes in search of a better life in the hopes that their newly adopted homeland would grant them the basic rights and privileges that every human on Earth should have access to.

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