

Cleveland Orchestra presents world premiere of poignant, Cleveland-inspired works by Allison Loggins-Hull (May 8)



Franz Welser-Möst led the Cleveland Orchestra in a premiere of Allison Loggins-Hull's "Grit. Grace. Glory" and her composition "Shoreline Shadows," both inspired by the three years she spent in Cleveland as the orchestra's Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow. Aireonna McCall-Dubé

by Stephanie Manning | Cleveland Classical

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CLEVELAND, Ohio — Composer Allison Loggins-Hull spent the past three years immersing herself in the city of Cleveland as The Cleveland Orchestra's Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow. Drawing on her interactions with residents and community organizations, her valedictory composition, *Grit. Grace.*

Glory., is a sonic celebration of the city she recently called home.

The piece, co-commissioned by the Toronto Symphony, received its world premiere by Franz Welser-Möst and The Cleveland Orchestra on Thursday, May 8, at Severance Music Center. The 22-minute work was the rightful centerpiece of the evening, interposed between symphonies by Mozart and Prokofiev.

Welser-Möst and the orchestra dove enthusiastically into the first movement, "Steel." Loggins-Hull's orchestration vividly conjures a train chugging along, powered by the engine of the basses, the marimba representing the clacking of the wheels over the tracks, and the trumpets sounding the train's insistent horn. Uneven meters and frequent tempo changes kept the energy and the interest up, evoking Cleveland's historical connections to the Underground Railroad and the progress of industry.

Following without pause, "Shoreline Shadows" built off the composer's workshops with middle and high schoolers at the Cleveland School for the Arts, where they produced

short pieces about topics ranging from gentrification and gun violence to acts of kindness and — Lake Erie.

Loggins-Hull paints these scenes carefully with a nuanced interplay of light and darkness. Especially memorable was the unsettling aura created by subtle manipulations of the gong, suggesting the “shadows” in the title.

In the second half of the piece, the quirky pizzicattos and rising and falling scales of “Quip” cheerfully spoke to what the composer described as Clevelanders’ “humble brag” spirit. While the finale, “Ode,” never quite found the rock-and-roll groove Loggins-Hull intended, tempo, density, and volume all gradually built up to a punchy finish. The City of Cleveland could hardly have asked for a more thoughtful and inspired musical tribute.

Mozart’s *Symphony No. 40* provided some lighter fare to begin the evening. The smaller, chamber orchestra-sized group used the opportunity for some refined playing, especially in the second movement, where the woodwinds tip-toed atop a bed of tranquil strings.

Prokofiev’s *Symphony No. 4* proved a well-suited pairing for Loggins-Hull’s piece, with its similar push and pull between gravitas and playfulness. The performance shone the brightest during the work’s spiky, accented interjections, crisp cymbal crashes, and brief solos in almost every woodwind part. Flutist Jessica Sindell deserves special recognition for her consistency, clear tone, and musicality in all three of the evening’s works.

But the celebrity of Thursday’s concert was clearly Allison Loggins-Hull, who received enthusiastic cheers during her onstage bows and awed applause in the balcony when she took a seat there during intermission.

The program will be repeated at 8 p.m. Saturday, May 10. Tickets are available [online](#).

Stephanie Manning trained as a bassoonist before becoming a correspondent for [ClevelandClassical.com](#). As a freelancer, her writing has also appeared in The Montreal Gazette, CBC Montreal, and Early Music America.

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