



Mark
GREY

Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio
Text by Laura Tohe

Scott Hendricks, Baritone

The Phoenix Symphony and Chorus • Michael Christie



Mark Grey (b. 1967)

Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio

Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio was inspired by the oral literature and language of the Diné people, who are also known as the Navajo people. The first-ever oratorio to be founded on an indigenous creation story, rather than the Bible, *Enemy Slayer* is based on the story of the two Navajo heroes, the twins Monster Slayer and Child Born for Water, who went to war against the monsters that threatened their people, to protect them, and to make their homes safe. But after the hero twins had killed all the monsters and returned home, they started having nightmares and could smell the blood of the monsters and heard their screams. The twins did not want to be with other people. They lost their appetites. Sometimes they were depressed, and other times they were angry and violent. They even thought of suicide.

The Valley of the Gods
Photo: Deborah O'Grady



The Navajo people could see the twins were ill – nowadays it carries the name “post-traumatic stress disorder” – and prayed to the Holy Ones to heal them. Thus was born the *Anaa’ji* (Enemy Way), one of the most sacred Navajo ceremonies and one that is still in frequent use to cleanse and heal warriors returning from today’s wars.

In October 2007 the creators of *Enemy Slayer*, Mark Grey, Laura Tohe, and Deborah O’Grady, said in separate interviews that they wanted the oratorio to be a bridge between the Navajo and non-Navajo worlds. They had been working on the oratorio for more than a year and Grey and O’Grady had learned that the Navajo people have understood for eons that war injures everyone it touches, whether or not those injuries show. O’Grady noted, “It’s about the soul of the soldiers, men and women all over the world. It’s a universal story ... that has been going on for all of history. We see veterans on the street ... homeless people, drug abusers, very broken people that we haven’t learned how to bring back in. And what’s wonderful about this piece is the hope that it gives for healing.”

In *Enemy Slayer* Tohe is careful not to refer to *Anaa’ji* or its details – that would be sacrilegious – but instead writes about its essence, which is love, faith, hope and remembering who you are and by using the Navajo language of healing. Grey, who was the Phoenix Symphony’s Composer-in-Residence, recruited Tohe, an award-winning Navajo poet, to write the lyrics, or libretto, and give shape to Grey’s visionary concept. According to Grey: “When you see large corporate America, like Disney, take a story and basically strip a lot of its cultural values out and then see *Enemy Slayer*, what you’ll understand is that what we’re doing is the exact opposite. It’s inclusion. Like someone said, it’s the extension of a prayer. It was like a long, long ceremony. It’s just one of those magical moments.”

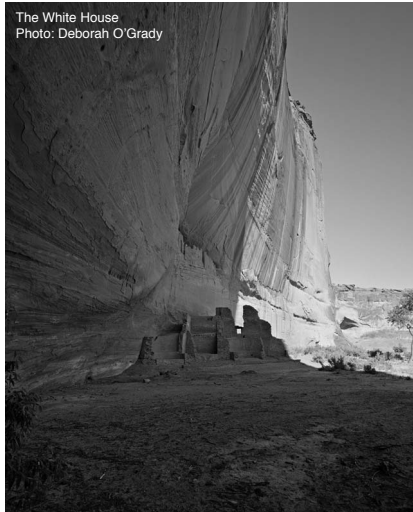
The seventy-minute piece featured a chorus of 140 singers, a full symphony orchestra, baritone soloist Scott Hendricks, and the Southwest landscape photography of O’Grady projected on a 12-by-21 foot screen. The result was an experience so moving that some audience members shed tears, and no one was left untouched by its depth of meaning.

Seeker, the Navajo veteran in *Enemy Slayer*, suffers from the same illness as the hero twins. The Western

world once called it “battle fatigue”. Clad in worn blue jeans, white T-shirt, and unbuttoned shirt was the soloist Hendricks, whose portrayal of a war veteran crumbling under survivor’s guilt punched through the air. “Brother, I miss you tonight. In my mind I see the mound of earth and the plastic flowers baked by the sun that cover you now.” As the chorus responded, photos of the Fort Defiance, Arizona veterans’ cemetery on the Navajo Reservation, filled the screen with torn American flags waving atop rows of graves under a striking blue sky and white clouds. O’Grady’s photographs conveyed the majesty of Seeker’s homeland, even as they also portrayed his mood.

The nightmares of war that torment him are captured by Tohe’s words and painted by Hendricks in

The White House
Photo: Deborah O’Grady



an intensely emotional solo: “The children lay like broken toys spilled on the streets. Red rags. Limbs and dreams rearranged by war. A sister recoils. Bodies and blood for the 21st century monster. I don’t trust the stillness. I wish for sleep, a deep sleep not hammered with gunfire and the click of my nerves, nor the sight of bodies and bloody rags scattered like trash cast to the wolves in the deserted streets. When I’m not looking, they call me a hero.”

At each turn the choir, representing Seeker’s parents, grandparents, his ancestors, and the Holy Ones, responds. His emotional torture and healing are underscored by the instruments of the orchestra, conducted by Michael Christie, the Virginia G. Piper Music Director of The Phoenix Symphony. As Seeker contemplates suicide – “I am lost. What’s the use to go on living when I am here and want to be there? *T’áadoo biniiyé’hi’dah* (what’s the use for my existence)?” His ancestors remind him: “*Shiyázhí, wéé, t’óó báhádzid* (beloved child, it is a dangerous thing to say)! Please be careful with what you say. You are speaking for all of us. *Nihiyázhí nílí* (you are our beloved child). You were not born without a reason. You are a miracle brought to live, given breath.”

They plead with him to return to the natural order in the world. “You have walked away from the corn pollen path . . . Return to the Beauty Way.” They also give him words of comfort. “In the world, there is evil and beauty, sickness and health, disorder and harmony, light and darkness. Balance must always be restored. *Shiyázhí*, take courage. Listen to our guidance, spoken with much love for you. You were raised with the natural laws of the Holy People. You were raised with *Sa’áh naaghái bik’eh hózhóón* (the Navajo philosophy of life). Remember the stories. Remember the songs. Remember the prayers. Remember who you are. What we have taught you. What the Holy People have taught you. They are in your hands now. You are armed to walk forward into the world with courage, with strength, with bravery.”

And Seeker remembers. “To choose the abyss or to slay the enemy pressed inside me. I hear my relatives’

voices in my dreams. I know it's time to make the choice. I walk with knowledge of my path. I sing with the power of my song. I pray with thunder words. I hold the power of my shield. I know who I am. I am Enemy Slayer! I take myself back. I make the world safe ... Early twilight dawn brings the cleansing light. I emerge from the belly of my mother's beauty. *Shimásání, shicheii, nántsdza* (Grandmother, Grandfather, I return). I return from the enemy by means of sacred prayer. I am cleansed of war."

The closing is a prayer repeated four times by the entire cast singing as one: "*Hózhó náhasdlíí' dooleel* (let peace prevail)." Seeker's journey toward healing takes him through the four cardinal points of life to arrive at the beginning again, the place of restoration, and renewal.

Some works of music, like great paintings, live on to become part of humanity's heritage. The most famous oratorio, Handel's *Messiah* comes to mind.

The Phoenix Symphony, through a generous but anonymous donor, has taken steps to ensure that *Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio* will not be forgotten. The concert was recorded, which is this CD on the Naxos label.

May peace prevail on Mother Earth!

Marley Shebala

Marley Shebala is Diné and Ashiwi (Zuni Pueblo), and is To'aheedlínii (The Water Flow Together clan), which is her mother's clan, and born for Cha'at (Frog clan), which is her father's clan. She is Senior News Reporter and a photojournalist for the Navajo Times. Shebala, who has 23 years of journalism experience, was named the 2005 Arizona Community Journalist of the Year by the Arizona Press Club.

Mark Grey

Originally from San Francisco, Music Alive! Composer-in-Residence Mark Grey made his Carnegie Hall début as a composer with Kronos Quartet in 2003. His solo, ensemble, and orchestral music has been performed in many venues such as the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall, Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, Barbican Centre in London, Het Muziektheater in Amsterdam, Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, Philharmonic Hall in Warsaw, UNESCO Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, Symphony Hall in Phoenix, Royce Hall in Los Angeles, as well as at the Ravinia, Cabrillo, OtherMinds, Perth International, and Spoleto festivals. He has written several large works for soloists Leila Josefowicz, Joan Jeanrenaud, and Piotr Szewczyk, and after two decades as a sound designer, he has given premières of major opera and concert works for John Adams, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Terry Riley and the Kronos Quartet among numerous others. He was the artistic collaborator, sound designer and soundscape engineer for John Adams's critically acclaimed *On the Transmigration of Souls*, which received the 2004 Pulitzer Prize in Music as well as three Grammy awards in 2005. Grey was the first sound designer in history to design for the New York Philharmonic at Avery Fisher Hall in 2002, and the Lyric Opera in Chicago in 2007, and is the first to design for the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, for Adams's *Doctor Atomic* in 2008. His music can also be heard on New Albion Records and Warner Classics.

Laura Tohe

Librettist Laura Tohe is Diné (Navajo). She is Tse'náhábilnii (Sleepy Rock People clan) and born for the Tódic'ini (Bitter Water clan). Tohe is an award-winning poet and has published her work in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. Her chapbook of poetry, *Making Friends with Water*, was translated into modern dance and music by The Moving Company in Omaha, Nebraska. *No Parole Today* was awarded Poetry of the Year by the Wordcraft Circle of Native American Writers and Storytellers. She co-edited *Sister Nations: Native American Women Writers on Community* and her latest, *Tséyi', Deep in the Rock*, won two awards from the 2007 Arizona Glyph awards. She is a Professor at Arizona State University.

Deborah O'Grady

Photographer Deborah O'Grady began a life in photography at age ten, when she won a small plastic camera as a raffle prize. Her work focuses on the landscapes of the United States, emphasizing aspects of history in relationship to contemporary development. She has explored various subjects including Lake County, California's local legends; the native peoples of the San Francisco Bay area, in a piece called *Imagining Native Earth*; and the motivations of war in *The Soldier's Dream*, which melds vintage World War II combat photos with mythological images. O'Grady has shown work in the United States and internationally, at Cologne, Germany; Washington, D.C.; Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Stockholm Konserthuset in Stockholm, Sweden; and many other venues.

Scott Hendricks



Photo: Mark Janssen

A native of San Antonio, Texas, Scott Hendricks has emerged as one of today's most versatile baritones. From Monteverdi to Schreker, Mozart to Debussy and Puccini to modern day composers, he has always maintained a diverse operatic diary and is now establishing himself as an important artist in the operas of Verdi and Wagner. He is an alumnus of the prestigious Houston Grand Opera Studio, and is a recipient of a Richard Tucker Foundation Career Grant. Scott Hendricks has performed with the Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Canadian Opera Company, and the Washington Opera under the baton of Placido Domingo. European credits include performances with the Cologne Oper der Stadt, Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, De Vlaamse Oper, Teatro La Fenice, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Der Bregenzer Festspiele and De Nederlandse Opera, with engagements with the Paris Opéra National and the Brussels Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie.

Phoenix Symphony Chorus



The Phoenix Symphony Chorus is led by Chorus Master Gregory Gentry. Founded in 2001, the Chorus serves as a professional-level performing partner for Arizona's only full-time orchestra. This ensemble is comprised of over 120 auditioned singers and is governed by its own members in partnership with the Chorus Master and Symphony staff. Members collectively donate more than 12,000 hours of service to music and the Symphony each year.

Gregory Gentry



The 2008-2009 season marked Gregory R. Gentry's third year as Chorus Master for the Phoenix Symphony. He is a member of the conducting faculty at Arizona State University's School of Music with the Herberger College of the Arts. Originally from Colorado, he holds doctorate and master's degrees from the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and a bachelor's degree from the University of Denver. He is president-elect (2010) of the Arizona Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association, and founding director of Southwest Liederkranz. Gregory Gentry's work in choral research, editing, and conducting has taken him to cities across the United States and to Europe. He has prepared choirs for such musicians as Eph Ehly, George Lynn, John Rutter, and Gunther Schuller, and for performances from Ohio to Colorado, and from California and the Carolinas to Great Britain. He made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1994, and returned there in June 2008, with Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* at Lincoln Center's

Avery Fisher Hall in 2009. As a singer and percussionist he has performed under the batons of Dave Brubeck, Aaron Copland, Karel Husa, Jorge Mester, and Robert Shaw.

The Phoenix Symphony



Founded in 1947, The Phoenix Symphony proudly serves the citizens of the greater Phoenix metropolitan area, central Arizona, and the southwestern United States. What began as an occasional group of musicians performing a handful of concerts each year, today serves more than 300,000 people annually, with 275 concerts and presentations throughout the Valley of the Sun and beyond. The 76-member Phoenix Symphony presents an annual season from September through the beginning of June, featuring full-length classical and pops concerts at Symphony Hall in downtown Phoenix, as well as concerts in Scottsdale, Mesa, Prescott and throughout central Arizona. The Symphony performs for more than 80,000 students and children, helping to introduce music to new generations and evoking a passion for orchestral music throughout the entire community.

Michael Christie



Michael Christie serves as the Virginia G. Piper Music Director of The Phoenix Symphony. He is also Music Director of the Colorado Music Festival and Music Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic. With his orchestras, he has undertaken interdisciplinary collaborations with visual artists, dance companies, and theater groups, as well as emphasizing his interest both in contemporary music and in early music informed by historic performance practice. In the opera pit, he has conducted productions with the Zurich Opera, the Finnish National Opera, the Rotterdam Philharmonic and with the Queensland Opera, making his American debut conducting staged opera with a new production of Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* at the Opera Theater of St. Louis. Michael Christie came to international attention when he was awarded a special prize for Outstanding Potential at the Sibelius Conductor's Competition in Helsinki. Following the competition, he became an apprentice conductor with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and subsequently both in Chicago and at the Berlin State Opera.

Music Alive!

As a cultural organization representing richness and diversity, The Phoenix Symphony's community engagement programs are founded on evoking a passion for orchestral music. The *Music Alive!* Residency, which offers financial and administrative support for composer-in-residence positions with orchestral ensembles, gave The Phoenix Symphony and composer Mark Grey the opportunity to create *Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio*. The program provided freedom to explore an indigenous American people, its diversity, and to bring several alternative cultural beliefs into a European classical music format and audience. The work attracted many people from all over the Southwest to experience the rich history of a land and people. The greater Phoenix and Navajo community response was overwhelming. The artistry of *Enemy Slayer* created common ground helping to dissolve political, social, and historical differences. Community excitement grew as the World Première approached in February 2007, eventually leading to the recording of *Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio*.

Meyer Sound and Mark Grey



Meyer Sound's association with composer and sound designer Mark Grey is one the company is justly proud of. When The Phoenix Symphony announced the world première and live recording of this important new work, we promptly agreed to sponsor the project by recording the concerts to the highest technical standard using the skills of our 'in house' recording team. The recording was re-mixed in our state of the art Pearson Theatre at our world headquarters in Berkeley, California. We believe the end result is a recording with depth and clarity befitting of Mark's complex and imaginative score. We would like to express our thanks to Naxos, the Phoenix Symphony and the producer Thomas Moore for making this recording such a successful and rewarding collaboration. Meyer Sound is a family business founded in 1979 by John and Helen Meyer. As manufacturers of electroacoustic systems for performing arts centers and high quality professional loudspeaker systems for the sound reinforcement industry, the company has a long association with the arts, both within the local community and beyond. The company built its reputation providing sound systems for prestigious classical and operatic events around the world and is closely associated with some of the world's best-known artists, conductors and composers.

John and Helen Meyer
www.meyersound.com

Mark Grey, Laura Tohe, Deborah O'Grady, and The Phoenix Symphony wish to thank Wendy Weston at The Heard Museum, Arizona State University, Freddie Johnson, Peteron Zah, Michael Begaye, Jennifer Wheeler (Navajo translator), Cath Brittan (copyist), John Adams, Meet the Composer and League of American Orchestras' residency program Music Alive!, and Diné College.

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

The Phoenix Symphony enjoys a long history of premiering new works that bridge gaps between Western art music and Native cultures. Hailed as 'a master', Mark Grey 'is a composer as well as a sound engineer, and what he is up to has far-reaching implications for the direction that classical music will take this century' (*Los Angeles Times*). This recording of *Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio* is of the world première performance of the first oratorio based on an indigenous North American creation story. 'Mark Grey's score is perfectly crafted, impeccably paced, beautifully scored' (*The Arizona Republic*).

The Navajo libretto and an English translation can be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/559604.htm

www.naxos.com



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Mark
GREY
(b. 1967)

Enemy Slayer:
A Navajo Oratorio
Text by Laura Tohe

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|----------|------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Prologue† | 10:17 |
| 2 | Scene 1*† | 13:49 |
| 3 | Scene 2* | 9:40 |
| 4 | Scene 3*† | 15:17 |
| 5 | Scene 4*† | 19:39 |

Scott Hendricks, Baritone*
Phoenix Symphony Chorus†

(Chorus Master: Gregory Gentry)

The Phoenix Symphony
Michael Christie,
Virginia G. Piper Music Director

This recording was sponsored by John and Helen Meyer, Meyer Sound Laboratories, Inc., Berkeley, CA, and an anonymous donor.

Recorded at Symphony Hall, Phoenix, Arizona, USA,
on 7th and 9th February, 2008

Producer and editor: Thomas C. Moore
Engineers: John Pellowe and Brian Long
(Meyer Sound Laboratories, Inc.)

Booklet notes: Marley Shebala

Cover photograph © 2007 Deborah O'Grady

Playing
Time:
68:43

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