

***a luminous jewel lone* (2002)**

This composition was commissioned by the Columbus Symphony Orchestra and the River Center to mark the official opening of the orchestra's first full season in its new home. Because the performing arts center takes its name from its proximity to the Chattahoochee River and because the river was a principle reason for the founding of Columbus by the State of Georgia, it seemed only natural to seek a title for this composition in Sidney Lanier's "Song of the Chattahoochee." Thus the composition is intended as a celebration of and a tribute to the city's extraordinary cultural achievement embodied in the brilliantly multi-faceted new complex. A reference to the phrase "jewel in the crown" is certainly intended in the title.

The title also describes the character of the music. The composer Edgard Varèse (1883-1965) used the image of a crystal as a metaphor for describing his compositions. Varèse suggested that his music is like a crystal which, when rotated, reveals different shapes, facets and colors, though it is always the same object. In the case of *a luminous jewel lone*, we substitute "jewel" for "crystal." This musical jewel forms from four pitches: C, B, G and A, taken from Columbus, Georgia. Throughout the course of the piece, the four-note motive undergoes constant variation and transformation, sometimes becoming unrecognizable.

The composition has four sections. A slow introduction features full-orchestral flourishes. Between the flourishes, against a glittering background of plucked strings and staccato woodwinds, the on-stage brass respond to a small, off-stage ensemble which heralds the C-B-G-A motive. Following a full-orchestral climax, the piece bursts into a light, playful fast section. Beginning in the highest instruments of the orchestra (piccolo, flute, violins), the ever-changing forms of our four-note motive appear throughout the orchestra, moving gradually to the lowest instruments. Having reached the orchestral depths, the piece assumes a reflective, lyrical character in a slower section. Resuming a faster tempo, high and low orchestral extremes are reconciled in a celebratory closing section for the full ensemble.