

Exegesis

AUGUSTUS O. HILL

B. July 14, 1948; New Brunswick, N.J.

Premiered by the Brazeal Dennard Community Chorus and Orchestra in April 2002 with the composer conducting; a revised version of the score is premiered by the DSO with this set of concerts.

Scored for tenor soloist and chorus with single winds including flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, and tuba along with timpani, piano, and strings (approx. 20 minutes).

The word *Exegesis* is of Greek origin meaning “to lead out.” It is the extensive and critical interpretation of an authoritative text, usually of Holy Scripture – a concept Hill here explores musically using melodic gesture and harmony, musical style and instrumentation, as well as the nuances of dynamics and color to heighten and interpret the meaning of the words.

In *Exegesis*, text is personally connected to composer, having been assembled from a 1911 baccalaureate sermon delivered to the graduating class of Shorter College in Little Rock Arkansas by college president Rev. Dr. Andrew H. Hill - paternal grandfather of the composer. Published in a booklet entitled *Mechanism and Mind*, the speech expounds on the relationship between Ezekiel the prophet’s vision of the wheels to both the individual person and the cosmos.

Drawing influences from classical music, spirituals, gospel, and jazz, the work sets the text in five sections: Vision, Creation, Faith, Wheels, and Think. Marked “misterioso,” the opening evokes the “wonder” of prophecy, and is followed in section two by the entrance of the tenor soloist, who declaims the text in the style of a recitative. Influences of jazz characterize section three “Faith,” which features a combo-like trio of trumpet, bass, and percussion. The chorus brings a gospel aesthetic to section four, which heightens the primary metaphor of the reverend’s speech—“Wheels.” The closing section “Think,” returns to the tenor’s recitative and implores the listener to consider the ideas expressed and connect his or her individual fortunes to the community and in turn the Spirit. The chorus amplifies his call through sections marked “majestic,” “spirited,” and a closing “tranquillo.”

Hill’s compositions are contemplative, reflective, and ecclesiastically inspired. *Exegesis* stands together with his many vocal, choral, and instrumental compositions such as *Resurrection, a gospel cantata*; *String Quartet No. 2*; *Psalm 91* for soloists, chorus and orchestra; *Psalms of Praise*; *Songs from Mizraim*; and *Fix Me, Jesus* for mixed chorus.

This is the Detroit Symphony Orchestra premiere of Hill’s *Exegesis*.

DSO SHOP @ THE MAX RECOMMENDS:

Program note by Aja Wood, an ethnomusicology graduate student at the University of Michigan, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.
