

## **Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman, No. 4**

JOAN TOWER

B. September 6, 1938, New Rochelle, New York

*Premiered on October 16, 1992 by the Kansas Symphony with William McGlaughlin conducting.*

*Scored for one flute, one oboe, two clarinets, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, and percussion (approx. 5 minutes).*

*The first Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman was written in 1986 using the same brass and percussion ensemble as Aaron Copland's popular Fanfare for the Common Man (1942). Written as both an homage to and parody of Copland's famous World War II statement of power and strength, Tower's fanfare offers tribute to women who are "adventurers and risk-takers."*

While the piece has political overtones - Tamara Bernstein reports that "the gutsy *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman* quickly became a hit, and an historic feminist statement in music..."—Tower states more modestly, "I think some people are not aware that there are no women composers on their concerts.... Other than that, the music is the music and the fact that I'm a woman doesn't make a difference to the music." Her *Fanfare*, then, should be viewed as a celebration (and a reminder) of women in music. In fact, there are five *Fanfares for the Uncommon Woman* total, each dedicated to an inspiring individual: No. 1- conductor Marin Alsop (currently with the Baltimore Symphony), No. 2 - Joan Briccetti (general manager, St. Louis Symphony, 1985–87), No. 3 - Frances Richard (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers director), tonight's No. 4 - conductor JoAnn Falletta (currently with Buffalo Philharmonic and Virginia Symphony), and No.5 - arts patron Joan Harris. Combined, Tower's fanfares have been performed by over 500 ensembles.

Musically, *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman, No. 4* is less indebted to Copland than Tower's first. The instrumentation (full orchestra) is significantly larger than the original 14 brass and percussion players, and the thematic material also has been expanded, stretching from three to five minutes in length. Tower's use of complex rhythmic motives coupled with colorful, textural outbursts is in sharp contrast to Copland's, which is strident and majestic. One scholar ribs, "the uncommon woman is more complex, wordier, and busier than the common man."

Tower is the first woman to win the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition and, while approaching her 70th birthday, continues to compose and teach as the Asher B. Edelman Professor of Music at Bard College in New York.

This Detroit Symphony Orchestra last performed Tower's *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman, No. 4* on July 9, 1999, with Marin Alsop conducting.

**DSO SHOP @ THE MAX RECOMMENDS:**

Tower, *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman No. 4*, Marin Alsop conducting the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Koch Int'l Classics 7469.

*Program note by Michael Mauskopf, doctorate student at the University of Michigan,  
School of Music, Theatre & Dance.*