



James Stephenson

(b. 1969)

Chicago area composer James Stephenson's works have been performed by leading American orchestras and around the world, and have been hailed by critics as having "straightforward, unabashedly beautiful sounds" and "Stephenson deserves to be heard again and again!" (Boston Herald). His music incorporates a fresh and energizing sound scape that engages the audience while maintaining integrity and worthwhile challenges for the performing musicians. This rare combination has rewarded Stephenson with a host of ongoing commissions and projects.

Recent Stephenson premieres include two new violin concertos performed by the Minnesota Orchestra (Osmo Vanska conducting, Jennifer Frautschi, violin) and the Rhode Island Philharmonic (Larry Rachleff with Alex Kerr). These works, along with his oboe concerto, were commissioned by the esteemed Minnesota Commissioning Club, and proved a wonderful boost to his early career as full-time composer. His 2nd trumpet concerto has been performed on five continents since its premiere in Australia by Rex Richardson in 2010. His growing catalog now boasts concertos and sonatas for nearly every wind instrument, in addition to the violin and piano. Commissions for solo works have come from principal players in the symphonies of Chicago, Boston, NY Phil, Philadelphia and Minnesota Orchestra, Washington DC (National), Oregon, Dallas, among others.

Stephenson is also active in the concert band world, with premieres occurring at major venues such as the 2010 Midwest Clinic, TMEA (Texas Music Educators) and the ABA (American Bandmasters Association) convention, the latter with the US "President's Own" Marine Band. In the spring of 2014, his music will be premiered/performed at four consecutive CBDNA and

ABA regional conferences.

His landmark educational work, *Compose Yourself!*, has now been performed over 250 times since its creation in 2002, and will see performances by five more orchestras this season as well. Also active as a highly sought-after arranger, Stephenson's arrangements have been performed/recorded/broadcast by virtually every major orchestra in the country, including the Boston Pops, Cincinnati Pops, NY Pops and more. Recently having added conducting to his musical palette, Stephenson has already been engaged on several occasions with orchestras in Charleston, Modesto, Ft. Myers and Lake Forest, IL.

Before moving to Lake Forest as a full-time composer/conductor, Stephenson spent 17 seasons with the Naples (FL) Philharmonic as a trumpeter, a position he won immediately upon graduating from the New England Conservatory of Music. When not writing music, he enjoys spending time with wife, Sally, and four children, or doing almost any sporting activity!

Stephenson is currently enjoying a position of Composer-in-Residence with the [Lake Forest Symphony](#).

DESCRIPTION

L'esprit de la Trompette (2012)

for trumpet and piano

duration: 4'

A micro-commission of over 125 trumpet players in the spirit of the trumpet!

Premiered by Stephenson Music scholarship awardee, Brittany Hendricks, at Grand Valley State University's 2012 International Trumpet Seminar; Richard Stoelzel, host

Program Notes from the composer

L'ESPRIT de la trompette is probably one of the most unusual, yet rewarding, “commissions” with which I’ve ever been involved.

A few years ago – I think 2008 – I got to know a young trumpet player named Brittany Hendricks. She became interested in my music, and eventually went on to perform my very difficult trumpet concerto #1.

Almost immediately she struck me as someone very talented (in many fields, including writing and drawing), and also very dedicated to her craft. I was in touch with her again in 2012, when we were both at the International Trumpet Guild conference in Columbus, GA. I asked her if she had plans for the summer, and after she had responded indicating “not much”, an idea struck me to try to provide for her the opportunity to attend Richard Stoelzel’s Grand Valley International Trumpet Seminar.

The idea was this: I would send out an offer to all the trumpet players I knew, where, if they were to consider donating just \$10, I would take the money and use it to provide for Brittany’s tuition to the seminar. In addition, they would all receive a newly composed piece for Brittany to perform there, plus another work, and get a recording of Brittany’s debut performance. I thought that, if I was lucky, I might get \$1,000.

To my delight, in just three days, I had raised \$2600!! With the extra money, I decided to send two more students to the seminar.

L’esprit is the piece composed for the occasion. It was my hope to capture the spirit of all involved, in an up-tempo uplifting work

that might be immediately enjoyable to all.

I am truly amazed by the generosity embodied by all who contributed. This work is not only dedicated to Brittany, but to the nearly 100 participants who donated money to the cause. I hope we can do it again!

Bravi tutti!!

James M. Stephenson June, 2012