

## TRAGIC OVERTURE ~ Edward Joseph Collins

### Notes for Chicago Symphony Orchestra performance, 4-5 March 1927 (the composer conducting)

A Tragic Overture was performed for the first time at the Chicago North Shore Music Festival on June 1, 1926, the work having won the \$1000 prize for the best score by an American composer offered by the Festival Association. Frederick Stock was the conductor. A second performance of the overture took place at the Stadium, New York, August 21, 1926, under the direction of Mr. Stock, and a third by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis, Mo., under the direction of the composer.

A Tragic Overture is scored for three flutes (the third flute interchangeable with a piccolo), three oboes, English horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, double-bassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, bass tuba, kettledrums, side drum, bass drum, cymbals, gong, chimes, piano and strings.

The work was composed shortly after the composer's return to America from his service in the army during the war, and represents the personal impression of a participant. Mr. Collins has contributed the following material concerning his work:

No definite program should be attached to the thematic material; however, in one or two cases it will be impossible to avoid this as the meaning is perfectly obvious. For instance, the battle scene with the pastoral interruption which constitutes the development section, and the coda, which is a funeral march with a fragment of 'taps' in the distance, are two places where only one impression could be conveyed.

There is an elaborate Introduction (*Allegro tumultuoso*) setting forth almost the entire thematic structure in chaotic fashion. From this Introduction only the opening motive for the three trumpets will be quoted:

No. 1.



The main body of the work begins with a violent theme in the strings—*meno allegro e molto pesante*:

No. 2.

1st and 2nd violins.



This is succeeded by two subsidiary motives—the first played by the high woodwinds,

No. 3.



And the second by the strings:

No. 4.

1st violin.



There is a transitional passage based upon No. 3, which leads to the second theme, expressive and tranquil in character:



Very soon No. 1 intrudes and brings about a sonorous climax, which quickly subsides, giving place to the "pastoral" idea previously mentioned:



This comes to an unexpected conclusion and is superseded by a new episode in the form of a fugue, 'bustle and confusion':



With the quieting down of the fugue a tranquil coda enters:



There is a peaceful ending to this section, rudely awakened by the side drum and gong. A new rhythm of 4 1/2 forms the basis of the entire Development section. The strings play persistently the motive of this,



While flying fragments of the other themes occur in the upper woodwind instruments and muted trumpets. The return to the first theme is preceded by a quiet section, wherein the trombone and trumpet play in imitation a variation of No. 5. The funeral march at the end,



Is begun by three muted trumpets, accompanied by the chimes and continued by the full orchestra. The ending is peaceful except for a loud stroke on the gong."