

UTOPIA RISING

UTOPIA RISING was written on a commission from the University of Southern California, H. Robert Reynolds and a consortium of university wind ensembles.

It's designed as an overture or concert opener, optimistic and bright in nature, designed to start out an evening of music on a positive note. The rhythm has a buoyant forward-driving quality, and most of the themes are based on some variation of a rising motif. This piece is always looking up.

Utopia Rising is built in a three-part form. It opens with multiple fanfares, beginning with a huge crescendo in the percussion, then moving quickly to fanfares in the low brass. The invention that follows alternates between variations of the fanfare and a rapid running figure traded off between the various wind instruments.

The middle section is a sigh of relief, a pastoral and meditative break in the action. The solo euphonium introduces the main melody, a lyrical rising line supported by soft woodwind chords. As the melody spirals higher and higher, it graduates from the euphonium to the higher woodwinds in a climb towards the heavens.

The closing section kicks off abruptly with the running figures again, this time played in a massive tutti by large sections of the wind instruments, leading on through the fanfares to a threatening section led by the trumpets. What follows is a giant affirmation, based on the second half of the rising theme, moving from a massive chorale, through a romping melodic section and on to a pyrotechnic finale.