

# Programme Notes

## **Totem Voices A Suite for Trumpet and Piano - Catherine McMichael**

### The Symbolism of Totem Poles

Reference material: "Totem Poles" by Pat Kramer, Altitude Publishing Ltd.

Totem poles are a striking feature of the Pacific Northwest. Carved from mature cedar trees, totem poles were sculpted and raised to represent a family clan, its kinship system, its dignity, its accomplishments, its prestige, adventures, stories, rights and covenants. A totem pole served as the emblem of a family or clan and a reminder of its ancestry. Totem poles have never been objects of worship. One can think of them in terms of a family crest, or a story told in sculpture, using animals as representatives of people or events.

In times past, a totem was raised for several reasons:

- To honor of a deceased elder who meant a great deal to the clan
- To show the names and rights a person had acquired over their lifetime
- To record an encounter with a supernatural being
- To symbolize the generosity of a person sponsoring a totem-raising ceremony

Today, totem poles are carved for both Natives and non-Natives. They have come to represent Northwest Pacific Coast Native tradition and pride.

**Wolf:** Powerful, avoids humans, able to heal sickness but this healing is costly, fraternizes with Ghosts at night, when in the mood turns into Whale, powerful ones are pure white

**Beluga:** Gentle small white whale, found near the shores in Alaska

**Mosquito:** Arises from transformed remains of chopped-up cannibal beings, it continues to love blood. Whale: Ruler of his own Underwater City, lives with noble supernatural beings there, hates Thunderbirds, some turn into Wolves.

**Thunderbird:** Grand Lord of the Sky Realm, frightens humans who disturb him, needs homage, carries on wars beyond human perception, eats Whales, likes to come to human's dance ceremonies. This movement includes several chants and melodies from the Tlingit (one of the Pacific Northwest clans known for their totem poles).

## **Solo De Concours - Théo Charlier**

**Solo de Concours** is a cornerstone of the trumpet repertoire, composed in 1900 by Belgian trumpeter and pedagogue Théo Charlier. This virtuosic work was written as a contest piece for the Paris Conservatoire, designed to challenge both the technical and musical capabilities of advanced students. Its demanding passages, lyrical phrasing, and stylistic variety make it a favorite among performers and audiences alike.

The piece is structured in a single movement, featuring three distinct sections: a dramatic introduction, a lyrical central section, and a brilliant finale. The introduction showcases the trumpet's bold and majestic character with fanfare-like figures and wide intervals. This is followed by the expressive second section, where the player must demonstrate their ability to shape long, flowing melodic lines with sensitivity and control. Finally, the piece concludes with a dazzling coda, demanding rapid articulation, technical agility, and confident high-register playing.

Charlier's *Solo de Concours* not only reflects his own expertise as a trumpet player but also epitomizes the late Romantic style, with its rich harmonies, dramatic contrasts, and virtuosic demands. It continues to serve as both a technical showcase and a staple in competitions and recitals worldwide, cementing Charlier's legacy in the brass repertoire.