Wine-Dark Sea
Symphony for Band
(2014)

John Mackey

i. Hubris
ii. Immortal thread, so weak
iii. The attentions of souls

Commissioned by
The University of Texas Wind Ensemble
in honor of the 100th anniversary
of the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music

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Instrumentation

Piccolo
4 Flutes
2 Oboes  (2nd doubles on English horn)
2 Bassoons
Contrabassoon

Eb Clarinet
4 Bb Clarinets
2 Bass Clarinets
Contrabass Clarinet (Bb)

Soprano Saxophone
Alto Saxophone
Tenor Saxophone
Baritone Saxophone

4 Trumpets in C
4 French Horns
3 Tenor Trombones
Bass Trombone
Euphonium
Tuba
Double bass

Piano  (prepared with glass rods in movement 3)
Harp

7 Percussionists
  Movement 1: timpani, crash cymbals, marimba, xylophone, djembe, snare drum, vibraphone,
      4 tom-toms, small bass drum, 2 tam-tams, tambourine, assorted sus. cymbals,
      bell plate, ocean drum, large concert bass drum
  Movement 2: timpani, marimba, vibraphone, ocean drum, large concert bass drum
  Movement 3: timpani, triangles, xylophone, log drums (4 pitches), vibraphone,
      assorted sus. cymbals, 4 tom-toms, small bass drum, 2 tam-tams, tambourine,
      marimba, large concert bass drum
Program Note

For the past 10 years, I’ve written all of my music in collaboration with my wife, Abby. She titles nearly all of my pieces, a process that usually involves my writing the music, then playing it for her, after which she tells me what the piece is about. Without her help, “Aurora Awakes” would be “Slow Music Then Fast Music #7 in E-flat.” Sometimes she’ll hear a piece halfway through my writing process and tell me what the music evokes to her, and that can take the piece in a different (and better) direction than I had originally intended. I’ve learned that the earlier she is involved in the process, the better the piece turns out. So with “Wine-Dark Sea,” my symphony for band, I asked for her help months before I ever wrote a note of music.

The commission, from Jerry Junkin and The University of Texas Wind Ensemble, in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music, was for a piece lasting approximately 30 minutes. How could I put together a piece that large? Abby had an idea. Why not write something programmatic, and let the story determine the structure? We had taken a similar approach with “Harvest,” my trombone concerto about Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. Why not return to the Greek myths for this symphony? And since this story needed to be big (epic, even), I’d use the original, truly epic tale of Odysseus, as told thousands of years ago by Homer in The Odyssey.

The full Odyssey, it turned out, was too large, so Abby picked some of the “greatest hits” from the epic poem. She wrote a truncated version of the story, and I attempted to set her telling to music. Here is the story the way Abby outlined it (in three movements), and I set it:

After ten years of bloody siege, the Trojan War was won because of Odysseus’ gambit: A horse full of soldiers, disguised as an offering. The people of Troy took it in as a trophy, and were slaughtered. Odysseus gave the Greeks victory, and they left the alien shores for home. But Odysseus’ journey would take as long as the war itself. Homer called the ocean on which Odysseus sailed a wine-dark sea, and for the Greek king it was as murky and disorienting as its name; he would not find his way across it without first losing himself.

I. Hubris
Odysseus filled his ship with the spoils of war, but he carried another, more dangerous, cargo: Pride. This movement opens with his triumphal march, and continues as he and his crew maraud through every port of call on their way home.

But the arrogance of a conquering mortal has one sure consequence in this world: a demonstration of that mortal’s insignificance, courtesy of the gods. Odysseus offends; Zeus strikes down his ship. The sailors drown. Odysseus is shipwrecked. The sea takes them all.

II. Immortal thread, so weak
This movement is the song of the beautiful and immortal nymph Kalypso, who finds Odysseus near death, washed up on the shore of the island where she lives all alone. She nurses him back to health, and sings as she moves back and forth with a golden shuttle at her loom. Odysseus shares her bed; seven years pass. The tapestry she began when she nursed him becomes a record of their love.

But one day Odysseus remembers his home. He tells Kalypso he wants to leave her, to return to his wife and son. He scoffs at all she has given him. Kalypso is heartbroken. And yet, that night, Kalypso again paces at her loom. She unravels her tapestry and weaves it into a sail for Odysseus. In the morning, she shows Odysseus a raft, equipped with the sail she has made and stocked with bread and wine, and calls up a gentle and steady wind to carry him home. Shattered, she watches him go; he does not look back.

III. The attentions of souls
But other immortals are not finished with Odysseus yet. Before he can reach his home, he must sail to the end of the earth, and make a sacrifice to the dead. And so, this movement takes place at the gates of the underworld, where it is always night.

When Odysseus cuts the throats of the sacrificial animals, the spirits of the dead swarm up. They cajole him, begging for blood. They accuse him, indicting him for his sins. They taunt him, mocking his inability to get home. The spirit of his own mother does not recognize him; he tries to touch her, but she is immaterial. He sees the ghosts of the great and the humble, all hungry, all grasping. Finally, the prophet Tiresias tells Odysseus what he must do to get home. And so Odysseus passes through a gauntlet beyond the edge of the world, beset by the surging, shrieking souls of the dead. But in the darkness he can at last see the light of home ahead.

Wine-Dark Sea is dedicated to Jerry Junkin, without whom the piece would not exist. The second movement, “Immortal thread, so weak,” telling of Kalypso’s broken heart, is dedicated to Abby, without whom none of my music over the past ten years would exist.

“Wine-Dark Sea: Symphony for Band” received its world premiere on February 13, 2014, with the University of Texas Wind Ensemble, conducted by Jerry Junkin, at the Texas Music Educators Association convention in San Antonio, Texas.
# Wine-Dark Sea: Symphony for Band

**i. Hubris**

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### Score

- **Piccolo**
- **Flute 1-2**
- **Flute 3-4**
- **Oboe**
- **English Horn**
- **2 Bassoons**
- **Contrabassoon**
- **Clarinet in E♭**
- **B♭ Clarinet 1-2**
- **B♭ Clarinet 3-4**
- **2 Bass Clarinets**
- **Contrabass Clarinet**
- **Soprano Sax**
- **Alto Sax**
- **Tenor Sax**
- **Baritone Sax**
- **C Trumpet 1-2**
- **C Trumpet 3-4**
- **Horn 1-2**
- **Horn 3-4**
- **Trombone 1-2**
- **Tbn. 3, Bass Tbn.**
- **Euphonium**
- **Tuba**
- **Double Bass**
- **Harp**
- **Timpani**
- **Crash Cymbal**
- **Snare Drum**
- **Drums**
- **Tam-Tam**
- **Cymbals**
- **Bass Drum**

- **Tempo:** $\frac{3}{4}$
- **Maestoso**

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**for Jerry Junkin**

- *Wine-Dark Sea: Symphony for Band*

**i. Hubris**

### Credits

- **John Mackey**
all staccato notes throughout must be VERY short and crisp
ii. Immortal thread, so weak

for AEJ
Solo B Cl
C Tpt. 3-4
C Tpt. 1-2
Horn 3-4
Horn 1-2
Clar. 3-4
Clar. 1-2
Tbn. 3-4
Tbn. 1-2
Cb. Cl.
Bs. Cl.
Fl. 3-4
Fl. 1-2
C. Bn.
E. Hn.
Euph.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
Vibes
S. Sx.
Timp
Tuba
Mba.
Pno.
Fl. 1-2
Fl. 3-4
Ob.
E. Hn.
Tbn. 3-4
Tbn. 1-2
Fl. 1-2
E. Hn.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
S. Sx.
Timp
Tuba
Picc.
Pno.
Bsn.
Ob.
Hp.
BD

Solo B. Cl.
Ch. 1-2
Ch. 3-4
Bb. Cl.
Ch. Cl.
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
C Typ. 1-2
C Typ. 3-4
Horn 1-2
Horn 3-4
Ten. 1-2
Ten. 3-4
Euph.
Tuba
Db
Pno.
Hp.
Timp
Mls.
Vibes
BD
\[d\] = 12 (爽) \[d\] = 52, rubato allarg. a tempo \(\(=52\)\)
iii. The attentions of souls
Tam-Tam
Tam-Tam
Horn 3-4
Clar. 3-4
Tbn. 3-4
Tpt. 3-4
Tpt. 1-2
Drums
Bs. Cl.
Fl. 3-4
Fl. 1-2
Timp.
Euph.
A. Sx.
B. Sx.
E
Xylo.
S. Sx.
Tuba
Picc.
Bsn.
Ob.
Hp.
Log
Cl.
BD
DB

pull light chain over top back rim of tam-tam

(leading to downbeat)

standard tam-tam mallets

rub with superball mallet

double muted/tuned mallets

rubbed with wrapped mallets

snare with fork

muted/dampened

standard tam-tam mallets

use mallet end
double-ended felt mallet/drum stick

q. = 184-196

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Tam-Tam
Horn 1-2
Clar. 3-4
Clar. 1-2
Tbn. 3-4
Tamb.
Bs. Cl.
Fl. 3-4
Fl. 1-2
C. Bn.
Timp.
Euph.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
E
Xylo.
Pno.
Hp.
Cl.

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