

AGO BOSTON 2014 COMMISSIONS

FANEUIL HALL

Pamela Decker



FANEUIL HALL is a work in two movements: *I Elegy: The Cradle of Liberty*; and *II Fugue: Liberty and Union Now and Forever*, published by Wayne Leupold Editions (WL610014). The piece as a whole pays tribute to the city of Boston through a musical portrait of the landmark that has housed pivotal meetings and events in the history of the United States. Faneuil Hall was built in 1742 as a market house that offered a meeting hall on its upper level. A subsequent restoration added a third story. The hall has been referred to as the “Cradle of Liberty,” in connection with its status as the location of citizens’ meetings and government actions that advanced the cause of liberty.

The first movement is cast in the form and meter of a lullaby—most appropriate for the image of a “cradle,” and also evocative of the way in which Faneuil Hall embraced and nurtured a new country’s yearning for freedom and innovation. A solo reed spins a lyrical, wistful line over gathering sonorities in the left-hand accompaniment. Within the lullaby’s characteristic 3/4 meter, the primary melodic line lingers on dotted-quarter downbeats in three consecutive measures, with flowing eighth-note flourishes completing the measures. The second phrase of the line begins with a similar rhythmic pattern, followed by several measures that seem to liberate the line into a choreographed increase in momentum, realized through the appearance of quarter-note downbeats that lead to extended eighth-note passages and,

finally, 16th-note ornamentation. The left-hand part creates the harmonic environment that supports and enriches the melodic line. Rising figures allow the harmonic texture to extend from one note to a collection of tones that define the prevailing harmony in the measure; in most cases, these “gathering” figures follow an ascending contour. Example 1 shows the primary melodic motive as it is developed from m. 6b through the downbeat of m. 14.

Ex. 1

As the solo line lengthens and takes on ornamental embellishment, the Harmonic Flute comes into play—just before the point at which the secondary motive enters; the eight-measure “B” section, beginning in m. 23, is dance-like and sequential in nature. The flute remains in play for a reiteration of the “A” material. In m. 47, when the secondary motive again prevails, both hands move to the Great, with the Swell coupled, accentuating the building intensity.

Textural change and a transformed rhythmic diminution of the thematic material characterize the central section of the movement; the registration in this centerpiece focuses on string and celeste sounds. The primary motivic material now appears in a transformation that outlines the “scaffolding” of the line. Some individual notes in the “A” motive do not come into play in this transformation. In addition, the outlining pitches that carry the action in this section are undergirded with intervals that highlight the inherent harmonic language in the movement, which derives from flamenco modal patterns and synthetic modes that incorporate these distinctive intervallic patterns. Under this transformed statement of the

“A” material, the left hand has quartal chord progressions that gather modal material into vertical cross-sections set above a pedal part that outlines two contrapuntal lines realized in double pedaling. Example 2 displays m. 54 through the downbeat of m. 62.

Ex. 2

An eight-measure interlude based on developed themes from the “A” and “B” sections connects the central segment of the work to the recapitulation, in which the primary material is carried again by the reed solo, followed by a coda that returns to the string/celeste combination. The overall mood of this first movement is meditative, lyrical, and post-Romantic in nature. Throughout the lullaby, melodic and harmonic materials are derived from the aforementioned synthetic modes based on intervallic patterns related to flamenco modes. There is a hint of Impressionism, but within the flamenco-influenced language.

The second movement is a fugue, which is a procedure that is representative of the process of interaction. The interplay of subject-and-answer entries, along with the sequential discourse in fugal episodes, can serve as a musical parallel to political discourse. The title of this movement, “*Liberty and Union Now and Forever*,” is the title of a painting by George Healy that is prominently centered above the stage area in the meeting hall. In some ways, the title is an effective description of the “action” in a fugue, whereby subject-and-answer entries imply unity and economy of material, whereas the design of the episodes and modulations would represent artistic liberty. The fugue subject is based on a musical spelling of “Faneuil Hall,” in combination with the continuation of a language based on flamenco modal patterns. The combination of French and Spanish influences continues within this second movement. Example 3 shows mm. 1–9, concluding with the downbeat of m. 9.

The exposition extends to m. 19, where the contrapuntal action begins to spotlight a 16th-note line derived from a diminution of the fugue subject material. The 16th-note motion remains in the texture—in one voice or another—until

Ex. 3

the final measure of this movement. As the fugue develops, the subject/answer entries begin to alternate with fanfare-like motives that heighten intensity. In addition, the subject appears in inverted and transformed entries. The pedal part assumes the 16th-note passages that originated in the left-hand part soon after the fugue’s beginning, adding to the momentum leading into the final entries of the subject material.

The statement of fanfares evolves into a section that introduces a lively motive designed from episode material and fanfare motives; this intensity-building “combination” motive appears in sequential treatment as the fugue develops and moves toward the final subject statements. Example 4 displays mm. 65–70, showing this hybrid transformation.

Ex. 4

The distinctive intervallic patterns of the flamenco modes have qualities that can be either spicy or sweet in nature; toward the conclusion of the fugue, these elements are spotlighted both separately and in combination. This interaction of “flavors” is juxtaposed with the alternation of subject lines and fanfare motives, resulting in a final section that builds to the work’s highest point of intensity as the fugue reaches its final pages.

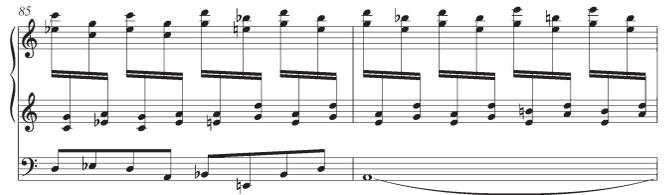
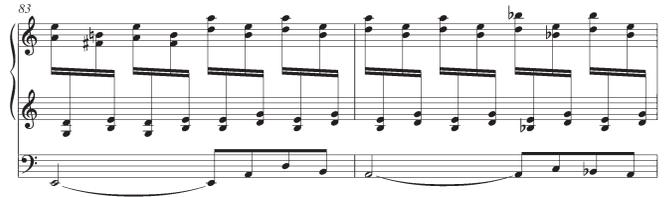
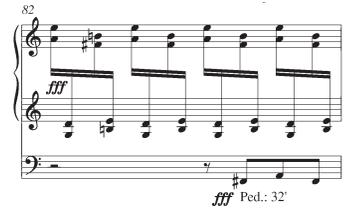
The final statement of the fugue subject, carried by the pedal part, appears in m. 82. This subject appearance reflects a modal transformation that makes a Phrygian-accented mode into an Aeolian-derived pitch collection, albeit with a hint of the lowered fifth degree, which adds a spicy effect to a section that has a bright and celebratory nature. Example 5 shows mm. 82–86.

The subject statement depicted in Example 5 evolves into a final page in which the “head” of the fugue subject is expanded into a chordal presentation above the 16th-note motive in the pedal part. Then, the “combination” episode material (shown in Example 4) drives the texture to a point at which all three parts (right hand, left hand, and pedal) are moving in flying 16th-note flourishes. A restatement of the subject in chordal realization—again above the turbulent pedal part that carries the 16th-note motion—leads directly to the concluding passage.

Performers would be free to use the first movement by itself as a meditative, lyrical piece for various types of performances and occasions. An appendix offered at the conclusion of the fugue includes a piano transcription of the first-movement lullaby. The two-movement organ work is intended for recital use; it might also be used on patriotic occasions, in the way that the *Variations on “America”* by Charles Ives is often performed on the Sunday closest to July 4. The first movement is dedicated to Steve and Jean Keplinger; the second is dedicated to Renée Anne Louprette, who is scheduled to give the premier performance at the 2014 AGO National Convention in Boston. This work is part of the final-round program repertoire for the 2014 AGO National Young Artists’ Competition in Organ Performance (NYACOP).

Ex. 5

Full Organ (adding remaining mixtures, manual reed 16', etc.), pedal to balance with manuals and pedal couplers as needed.



Pamela Decker is professor of organ and music theory at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where she is also organist at Grace St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. She holds the DMA degree in organ performance practices from Stanford University and is active as a recitalist, composer, and recording artist (Loft Recordings). Her compositions have been performed in at least 19 countries; she is represented by five publishers and has an exclusive contract with Wayne Leupold Editions for her solo organ works. Decker is pictured at the three-manual, 33-rank Schoenstein in Holsclaw Hall at the School of Music, the University of Arizona, Tucson.



Renée Anne Louprette, organist for the premier performance in Boston next summer

This series of articles illuminating new music commissioned for the 2014 AGO National Convention continues next month with Christian Lane’s conversation with composer Carson Cooman regarding his new work, *Solstice Sonata*, for trumpet and organ.