

LIQUID COMPASS Program Notes:

In the score:

LIQUID COMPASS commemorates the 140th anniversary of Carthage College's wind band. As with the school and its history of four campuses, this piece moves to different places, but never loses its bearings. Like Carthage, the music remains close to the baptismal power of water, in many layers of sound, both recorded and live. Spiritual mystery inspires a pursuit of truth and direction, and the musical compass becomes centered on the true north of the opening interval of Carthage's Alma Mater. Those two notes are an anchoring motive that appears throughout this journey, leading to an anthemic theme. The piece, like the school itself, continues to push forward while observing what has come before. Because one can't celebrate history, without reflecting on the waters over which time and experience have passed.

For the Carthage College printed program and website, May 10, 2014:

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Tonight's premiere is special for many reasons, one of which is because the audience is filled with current and past members of this significant and congenial community. Many in these seats share an emotional connection with this school, and some, with the ensemble as well. A passage in the music is orchestrated to recall the first iteration of Carthage's 1873 band, with just 2 trumpets, 1 horn, 2 trombones, and a tuba. Alumni may recognize the iconic, opening notes of their Alma Mater, which appear throughout the piece. And in each quiet, watery passage connecting one musical statement to the next, we feel the waters that flow across an ocean to Japan, connecting Lake Michigan and the Takahashi River which flanks Carthage's sister school, Kurashiki Sakuyo University. This sacred liquid reflects that of which we are made, and the global span of the community which we consciously create.

The initials "L.C." of LIQUID COMPASS nod to the Lutheran church, which is referenced at the conclusion of the piece as tubular bells ring out in celebration, like bell tower chimes. The Carthage College seal states *Christo et Ecclesiae*, "for Christ and for the Church," but could also be translated as, "for Christ and for the Band." In the early years of the college, the student mission group at Carthage was known as "the Band." As the school pauses to honor its heritage, celebrate its contributions to students' lives, and welcome a promising future, it maintains its mission to uplift the community and serve the greater good.

Fostering the creation of art to expand the wind band repertoire is a significant acknowledgment of that mission. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Carthage College, its generous alumni, and its visionary band director Dr. James Ripley, for allowing me the privilege of taking them on this sonic voyage. From this invitation to reflect upon that which is important to the school, arose the gift of reflection upon that which is important to me as an artist, and as a musical citizen. I am very proud to have had this opportunity to chart new musical waters with this wonderful ensemble.

Alex Shapiro
San Juan Island, WA
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