

CURT CACIOPPO

Of Shacklers & Heroes (Symphony No. 7)

This work celebrates the victory of Costa Rica, together with the other Central American armies, as well as one of the combatants, the musician Alejandro Cardona Llorens, over William Walker, a defender and promoter of slavery from Tennessee, and his mercenary army of filibusterers, who invaded Central America 170 years ago (1856).

00:00

It begins with the song of the yigüirro, Costa Rica's national bird, and the music introduces an atmosphere of tranquility and sweetness. Then a different bird call (02:28) is heard in the jungle, like a premonition of conflict, a painful recognition that there is a threat on the horizon. The name Alejandro Cardona is “spelled out” furtively with musical notes (03:59).

04:37

An *animato* is introduced resembling an auctioneer's blabber, derived (using gematria) from the name William Walker.

05:24

A faux elegant waltz theme intersects with the auctioneer music and the disturbing overlap spills over into a *lamentoso* in c# minor (05:45), expressing the anguish of the American slave experience.

06:57

A defiant piano outburst occurs. Walker is on the march (07:40).

08:56

The orchestra in unison hurls the epithet “hijo de puta” at him, a motif derived again from his name, and inspired by a parrot heard in Heredia that kept reiterating this phrase over and over again.

09:00

With the Costa Rican forces, Cardona arrives riding his white mule, to combat the enslaver.

09:10

Folk quotations answer aggressive martial interjections from the brass (09:33), and eventually the “hijo de puta” theme vehemently reiterates throughout the orchestra (10:23). This episode is inspired by the memory of being attacked by an army of white faced monkeys in the Braulio Carrillo National Park, who fiercely shook the branches of the trees and rained down all manner of debris as I happened to cross into their territory unawares.

11:22

Walker is stopped, and although he was not captured at that moment, his death sentence is symbolically pronounced. The order is shouted: Ready! Aim! Fire! (11:55) The music of the slaves' anguish becomes his own cry of despair. (Walker was executed by firing squad four years later, in 1860, during his third attempt to invade Central America: he was captured and sentenced to death on September 12 in the city of Trujillo, Honduras).

12:47

Alejandro Cardona Llorens' formerly dolorous music is transformed into the major mode, as liberation and peace have been restored. A celebratory march ensues (13:35), based on his "Himno Patriótico," composed to words by Tadeo Gómez (in fact, features of this hymn give rise to much of the music elsewhere in the symphony).

14:04

The work returns to the opening state of tranquility and sweetness, and concludes as it began, with the song of the yigüirro (15:10 - end).



Orquesta Sinfónica de Heredia, Costa Rica
Eddie Mora Bermúdez, conductor

CURT CACIOPPO

De esclavistas y héroes (Sinfonía No. 7)

Esta obra celebra la victoria de Costa Rica junto con los demás ejércitos centroamericanos, así como uno de los combatientes, el músico Alejandro Cardona

Llorens, sobre William Walker, un esclavista del sur de los Estados Unidos, y su ejército de filibusteros que invadió América Central hace 170 años (1856).

00:00

Comienza con cantos de los yigüirros, el pájaro nacional de Costa Rica, y de ahí emerge un ambiente de tranquilidad. Se oye en la selva un extraño canto (02:28) de pájaro que parece una premonición del conflicto, el doloroso reconocimiento de que hay una amenaza en el horizonte. El nombre de Alejandro Cardona se “deletrea” furtivamente con notas musicales (03:59).

04:37

Se introduce un material, *animato*, que parece el parloteo de un subastador y que se deriva (usando gematría) del nombre William Walker.

05:24

Se cruza con la música del “subastador” un vals, falsamente elegante, y esta superposición perturbadora lleva a un *lamentoso* en do# menor (05:45), que expresa la angustia de la experiencia americana de la esclavitud.

06:57

Se da un estallido desafiante del piano. Walker viene en marcha (07:40).

08:56

La orquesta, al unísono, espeta “hijo de puta”, dirigido a Walker, un motivo derivado nuevamente de su nombre e inspirado en una lora que escuché en Heredia que repetía una y otra vez estas palabras.

(09:00)

Con las tropas costarricenses llega Cardona. Monta una mula blanca. Se dirigen al norte del país para combatir al esclavista invasor.

(09:10)

Citas folclóricas contestan las interjecciones marciales de los metales (09:33) y eventualmente el motivo “hijo de puta” es retomado por toda la orquesta (10:23). Este episodio se inspiró en el recuerdo de una tropa de monos cariblanos que me atacó al cruzar su territorio mientras caminaba por la selva en el Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo. Agitaban violentamente las ramas de los árboles y aventaban toda clase de palos y escombros que me caían encima.

11:22

Walker es vencido. La música de la angustia de los esclavos se convierte en su propio grito de desesperación. Aunque no fue capturado en ese momento, simbólicamente se pronuncia su sentencia de muerte. Se grita la orden: ¡apunten! ¡listos! ¡fuego! (11:55) El pelotón de fusilamiento cumple su deber. (Walker fue fusilado cuatro años después, en 1860, en su tercer intento de invadir a

Centroamérica: fue capturado y condenado a muerte el 12 de setiembre en la ciudad de Trujillo, Honduras.)

12:47

La música de Cardona, anteriormente dolorosa, se transforma al modo mayor con la liberación y la restauración de la tranquilidad. Se toca una marcha de celebración (13:35), basada en el “Himno Patriótico” de Alejandro Cardona Llorens, con letra de Tadeo Gómez (vale mencionar que de este himno se deriva mucha música que aparece en otras partes de la obra).

14:04

Al final regresa la tranquilidad y la dulzura del comienzo y nuevamente se escuchan los cantos de los yigüirros (15:10 hasta el fin).

<https://curtcacioppo.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Shacklers-listening-guide.pdf>

<https://soundcloud.com/curt-cacioppo-552587316/of-shacklers-heroes-symphony>

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/662832876186917> 3/5/25

an anti-slavery declaration

As the US headed toward Civil War over the issue of slavery, the Tennessean mercenary William Walker was bent on expanding into Mexico and Central America with a private army of filibusters to establish new slave states. For a brief time he installed himself as president of Nicaragua. Eventually stopped by Central American forces, he was tried and sentenced to death by firing squad. Costa Rica made a key contribution to the resistance effort. Among their leaders were Juan Rafael Mora, an ancestor of Eddie Mora, director of the Heredia Symphony Orchestra, and Alejandro Cardona Llorenz, an ancestor of composer Alejandro Cardona Ducas, who serves on its board of directors. It was a distinct honor to compose this piece at Alejandro’s and Eddie’s request in celebration of the 160th anniversary of the defeat of William Walker. It was a joy to work with them and the very gifted and accomplished young musicians of the orchestra back in 2016. I’m so glad to be able to share this outtake from a Quicktime video that surfaced only recently.