

# Program notes for *Aubade*

I have always had an affinity for the early morning: for most of my life I have arisen at 4:30 AM to compose music, write letters, or merely read. *Aubade* literally means a morning song separating lovers at dawn. My piece is drawn from a number of conflicting influences, mixing joy and sadness. Very early on, I became acquainted with Poulenc's *Aubade*, a "concerto choreographique," written as a ballet in 1929 to evoke the drama of the goddess Diana who rebels against divine law and is condemned to eternal purity in return for her return to divinity, paying a great price for her amorous diversions. Also, I was always taken with the scene in Act III of *Romeo and Juliet* where the parting lovers have spent the entire night together and are greeted by the sound of the lark:

*Romeo*: It was the lark, the herald of the morn,  
No nightingale. Look love, what envious streaks  
Do lace the sev'ring clouds in yonder East-  
Night's candles are burnt out and jocund Day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

Finally, I always wanted to try my hand at a piece like the sensuous *Lark Ascending* of Vaughan Williams, a triumph of endless melody. It should be obvious that I have a very personal involvement in the composition of my new piece. Where the Vaughan Williams uses the orchestra, I chose an orchestra of cellos with contrabass, largely in response to that composer's consummate mastery of string writing; and, in fact I studied his use of musical space in massed string textures while working on the piece. My *Aubade* is cast in three sections, the first as a kind of prelude which bears the signature lines from Shakespeare's romantic tragedy. It is the most concerto like of the three sections, featuring a cadenza for the violin. Section II introduces materials based on Philipp Nicolai's *How Brightly Shines the Morning Star*, a hymn from 1597. That material develops in the third section, which I call "Sunrise." It is intended to be joyous and triumphant, ending with extravagant C major chords.

P.R. April 2011