

S T R I N G Q U I N T E T

A R e q u i e m f o r t h e L i v i n g

(2001)

by **A l e x a n d r a d u B o i s**

**“I ask myself, are we beyond iniquitousness when we endorse new slayings
of hundreds of persons around the world and in our own country everyday
and following this say that our country has ‘lost its innocence...’**

Why do we mourn only the dead when we keep on killing?”

-A. du Bois, December 2001

String Quintet, A Requiem for the Living (2001) for two violins, viola, and two double basses

The genesis of this quintet began with a personal meditation on images of the ocean: an empty seashore beneath the dark gray skies of an impending storm; the static, kinetic electricity pulsing off waves far out at sea; and a lone person within this setting, surveying the vast stretch of the ocean, listening to the slight whistle of the wind and the distant call of seagulls and a foghorn. The contemplation of both this haunting experience of solitude within a turbulent seascape, as well as the image of Katsushika Hokusai's iconic woodblock print *The Great Wave at Kanagawa* (part of the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* and said to have also served as the impulse behind Claude Debussy's orchestral work *La mer* and Rainer Maria Rilke's verse series *Der Berg*), provided the initial inspiration for this piece.

Although commenced during the summer of 2001, a significant portion of *String Quintet, A Requiem for the Living* was written during the immediate aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001. After 9/11, the piece began to take on deeper emotional colors and was completed during the fall of 2001. The original impetus of the ocean and a solitary mind and heart still remained as a backdrop to the work, but the piece took on a more solemn character: it commemorates the lives taken on 9/11, as well as the lives that were later lost in Afghanistan and, ultimately, Iraq. *String Quintet, A Requiem for the Living* was premiered at Auer Hall at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music on 19 March 2002, coincidentally one year to the day before the United States dropped the first bomb on the city of Baghdad.

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