

Composers in tune for a cause

Orchestral work created for Haiti relief

By JON BURLINGAME

Twenty-six years ago, "We Are the World" and "Live Aid" raised millions for African famine relief. Now, some Hollywood film composers have joined together to write a symphony they hope will raise at least \$1 million to help the victims of last year's earthquake in Haiti.

"A Symphony of Hope," a 50-minute work penned by 25 different composers from the film, TV and game worlds, was released last week and has already hit Amazon.com's top-25 chart of new classical releases.



Musicians and singers assembled at Warner Bros. to record "A Symphony of Hope," penned by 25 different composers.

It was the brainchild of composer Christopher Lennertz ("Alvin and the Chipmunks," "Horrible Bosses"), whose friend Father Tom Hagan runs the Hands Together charity in Port-au-Prince. Hagan survived the January 2010 earthquake, but an estimated 300,000 perished, and the island has endured aftershocks, a cholera epidemic and a hurricane since then.

Lennertz asked 24 other composers -- including Oscar winners Dave Grusin and Marvin Hamlisch and Emmy winners Bruce Broughton, Don Davis, John Debney, Christophe Beck, Ed Shearmur and Jeff Beal -- to contribute anywhere from eight to 32 bars of music to one of five symphonic movements.

Shearmur said: "The idea of a 'musical chain letter,' a message of support and hope for people who have gone through an unimaginable tragedy, was impossible to say no to."

The result is an orchestral work based largely on a Haitian folk melody but with emotional highs and lows that correspond to the earthquake, its aftermath, the rebuilding process and a look to the future. "If anyone knows how to do variations on a theme, and go into different dramatic areas with that theme, it's a film composer," Lennertz said.

"We're a pretty solitary bunch," said Lennertz of his fellow film and TV composers. "I wasn't asking them for money. I was asking them to do what they do best, for the right reason. They gave something real and tangible, that has value, that no one else could have given."

It took a year and the assistance of 15 orchestrators to put down all the notes. On March 26, 92 musicians and 42 singers assembled at Warner Bros.' Eastwood Scoring Stage to record the entire work. Lucas Richman conducted and, Lennertz said, everyone donated their time and talent (including the engineers, recordists and mixers).

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"It's a great cause, and a way that we can all lend our voices to helping people who have been so devastated," added composer Randy Edelman. Composer Christopher Young, who also contributed, said he believed this was the first time that a group of Hollywood composers had collaborated on a major work for a charitable cause. (Other composers who contributed were **Nathan Barr**, Tyler Bates, George S. Clinton, Elia Cmiral, Andrew Gross, David Kitay, Deborah Lurie, Lisbeth Scott, Pete Seibert, Theodore Shapiro, John Swihart, Brian Tyler, Michael Wandmacher and Tim Wynn.)

Rounding out the album are three additional tracks that Lennertz hopes potential buyers will find attractive: jazz trumpeter Arturo Sandoval and singer Lucy Schwartz performing their spins on traditional Haitian tunes, and actor Beau Bridges reading an original poem about the disaster.

According to Lennertz, Hagan's Hands Together charity operates on about \$2 million annually. His hope is that sales of the symphony could generate enough money to build a new school or clinic.

In the aftermath of the 7.0 earthquake last year, Lennertz -- whose friend Hagan had performed his marriage ceremony in 2006 -- didn't know whether Hagan was alive or dead. "I felt very helpless," he said.

He thought about what he and his colleagues know how to do: "We write music to make people feel something. In this case, I am hoping we write music to make people feel generous."

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