

Program Notes

Prophecies is inspired by my interest in history, particularly American foreign policy of the twentieth century. One of the many unexpected things that I learned while in graduate school was that in 1953, the CIA had overthrown the popular and democratically elected prime minister of Iran, Mohammed Mossadegh, (*Time Magazine's* Man of the Year in 1951) in a violent coup. Half a century later, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had this to say: "In 1953 the United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran's popular prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh. The Eisenhower administration believed its actions were justified for strategic reasons. But the coup was clearly a setback for Iran's political development. And it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs." Around the same time, Chalmers Johnson reflected more bluntly "Blowback is another way of saying a nation reaps what it sows."

Musically the piece is in a large ternary form; it begins with a sense of foreboding which gives way to chaos, violence, and dangerous forces out of control. After a march section that features several metric modulations where the pulse accelerates suddenly, it dissolves into the beginning of the middle section, sustained chords alternating between the low brass and strings with fragmented melodies scattered throughout the winds. After coalescing into an intimate passage for the principal string players, "Ey Iran" appears, an Iranian melody written in 1946 and more popular than either the pre-1979 anthem or the post Islamic Revolution anthem. The opening material subsequently returns, but moves instead to a rich statement of the main theme of the piece, heard for the first time in its entirety before giving way to the impetuous finale.

Prophecies was completed in March 2007 as the final requirement for a Doctoral of Musical Arts in composition at the University of Texas at Austin. It won the 2009 Janet and Craig Swan Prize in Composition from the University of Minnesota and American Composers Forum and was premiered in December 2009 by the University of Minnesota Orchestra conducted by Mark Russell Smith.

-Jonathan Kolm