

Remarks from Kevin McMullin, composer of *One Nation*

Throughout my life, I keep running into people with remarkable courage. When I began the *One Nation*, telling people that I was writing a piece for Native American Drum Group and Symphony Orchestra was a great way to study the progress of eyes glazing over. I think there were a number of people who were making plans to do an intervention and get me into a serious treatment program.



But the right people – the String teachers I work with, The Red Cedar Symphony, Pipestone Drum Group – these people had the courage to try something new. And not just a new project, but new work partners and new approaches to the work. It takes a lot of courage to venture into so much unfamiliar territory. It's a kind of courage that is rare. It's rare because courage doesn't always meet with success. Just as often – or even more often – it meets with failure. Happily, in this case, courage brought us to the first three performances of *One Nation*. These were, I think I can say, a success.

But the courage didn't end there. The Minnesota Youth Symphony is an established Youth Orchestra with a well-deserved track record for excellence. With its reputation, it certainly doesn't need to take chances on harebrained new works written by obscure composers from Frozen Tundra, Wisconsin. But they did take a chance. And, in particular, Jim Bartsch and the students in the Philharmonic Orchestra took a chance. They took a chance on a composer they had never heard of before, playing music they had never heard before, partnering with a music group they had never played with before, from a tradition that they were largely unfamiliar with. They took a chance that could, as far as they knew, have led to disaster. We know now, that was not the result. I think today's performance was the best I've heard you do. What a pleasure and an honor to work such courageous and able musicians.

Jim, I want to be sure that you and your orchestra understand how important it is, this kind of courage. You can practice until your fingers are bloody, your lips are blistered and you've worn your mallets to nubs. And you should. But without courage your musical skills will be meaningless and the music you play will be dull. But with courage...

With courage you will change the world, or at least the people around you. And that's pretty much the same thing. I sat down with manuscript paper and a computer and I managed to come up with some themes that hung together well enough. But you – all of you – took the piece from imagination to reality. And that is where the real work, and the real courage is.

Thank you for sharing your support, and your courage with me. I hope to live up to your example each and every day of my life.

Kevin McMullin
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