

“La Perte de la Terre”

...in the composer's words.

“I found it absolutely fascinating,” she says. “Just as Béla Bartók did with Romanian and Hungarian folk music and all vernacular music of these peoples, Alice Fletcher did with Omaha Indian Nation music. Our country has for so many years been obsessed with European music, so I think what she did was really significant.”

“Until working on the commission,” Newman says, her exposure to Indian music was “in a clichéd manner” informed by her own family's Hollywood pedigree. “We here in Hollywood have often been bombarded with real clichés of cowboys and Indians and that sort of thing, and so I was petrified, to tell you the truth, when I received this commission that I was going to offend somehow with my composition. I have not studied Indian music to the extent that I could understand what was going on with the small variations in tonality, intonation, and musical contour. All of these things became so much more apparent when I began to study Alice Fletcher's book.”

“I really worked hard to try to figure out how to use the pentatonic, or five-note, scale used by the Indian nations. I didn't want to take one of those chants Alice Fletcher had on paper and arrange it. What I wanted to do was to write something completely original. I was so desperately trying to run away from cliché. I sought to create something that was somehow infused rhythmically and harmonically with the essence of those materials.”

“I had a really great respect for our Native American cultures. A lot of blood was given by the Native American people in the white man taking over this continent. The blood they shed went into what made our country. Things like the Lewis and Clark Expedition and Louisiana Purchase also form the country. Those lost pieces of the Earth come together as a puzzle and connected so that we could now hopefully join our nations and become one great nation.”

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