

The Nine

by Randall D. Standridge

The Little Rock Central Nine

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme court issued its verdict in the historic case, *Brown v. Board of Education*. This was a watershed moment in American history as it declared that the previous practice of “separate but equal (segregating white and African-American students into separate schools)” was unconstitutional and must be ended.

Nine African-American students applied for enrollment at Little Rock Central High School, which had been previously all-white. While the Little Rock School Board and the Superintendent agreed to this, the Governor of Arkansas at the time, Orval Faubus, deployed the Arkansas National Guard to support those opposing integration and to block the students from entering the building. President Dwight D. Eisenhower intervened, federalizing the Arkansas unit and ordering them to escort the students to their classes. This situation brought to light the severe racism existent in the country at the time, and the challenges that students of color would face as children of different races finally to attend school together.

The Nine students were Ernest Green (b. 1941), Elizabeth Eckford (b. 1941), Jefferson Thomas (1942–2010), Terrence Roberts (b. 1941), Carlotta Walls LaNier (b. 1942), Minnijean Brown (b. 1941), Gloria Ray Karlmark (b. 1942), Thelma Mothershed (b. 1940), and Melba Pattillo Beals (b. 1941). Their courage and conviction will always remain an example of the power of the human spirit.

About the creation of *The Nine*

In the summer of 2016, Brice Evans, a long time friend and fantastic music educator, contacted me and asked me if I would be interested in writing a work commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Little Rock Nine. Being a Little Rock native, I was honored and thrilled about the possibility of creating the piece. I accepted the commission and started brainstorming.

Halfway through my brainstorming, I realized that I had a real problem. I had no point of reference for this work. Being a white male and born in 1976, I couldn't begin to comprehend what it must have been like for the Nine, let alone to live through the time period. I tried several approaches, but they all seemed wrong. My confidence in my ability to do justice to this piece began to falter.

And then the rest of 2016 happened.

I am not going to debate politics. I have friends on all parts of the political spectrum, and we just agree to disagree and accept each other for the aspects that we enjoy. However, in the Fall of 2016, I watched our country tear itself apart, socially speaking. I witnessed friends attacking each other over social media, people I had previously respected speaking *against* civil rights and equality, and power given to a movement that many of us thought had been “defeated.”

It was this experience and tumult that finally provided me with the insight I needed for this work and with the idea that I wanted to express with it. I realized that I had been trying to make the work too specific to the Nine and their time period; the best way to honor them was to make the message more universal.

Ignorance and hate of “the other” has been around for as long as humankind has existed, but so has compassion, kindness, and love. These two forces are polar opposites and are in constant conflict with one another, and have manifested themselves in small and large ways throughout human history. The battle between these forces serve as the inspiration for “The Nine.”

Regardless of what you believe, please hear me.

We have more that connects us than separates us.

We are always stronger together.

We can find ways to appreciate our differences, instead of letting them divide us.

We can find the light.

Peace, Love, and Music.....



About the Work

The Nine begins with an original spiritual that I composed for the piece, entitled *Show Me the Light*. The song is introduced in solo voice (or instrument) and gradually builds in strength, thought dissonant notes begin to appear, signaling the voice of opposition. The voices of dissent grow more powerful until they shout out in a triumphant fanfare, calling all to their cause.

The piece then becomes a militaristic march as the forces of opposition organize and oppose all in their way. The spiritual tries to force its way through but is blocked and rebuffed by the powerful oppressors. The conflict escalates as the two sides become more frantic until they reach their ultimate, mutual destruction.

From the rubble of the battle, the flute choir begins to state motives from the spiritual, gradually building and adding voices. The work builds again as we hear people joining hands and voices and marching together in a show of solidarity, love, and acceptance. This segment culminates with a joyous and powerful restatement of the spiritual.

After the climax, the solo voice returns until, in the final moments, all of the instrumentalists join voices for a final statement of the song. However, as the piece concludes, dissonant notes are still heard and the final chord is somewhat ambiguous, asking the question “Have we changed?” and “What's next?”

The Nine was commissioned by the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, the Little Rock Central Band, and their director, Mr. Brice Evans.

Show me the Light, show me the Light; Lord, hear my voice, show me the Light

And lead me home, through endless night; Show me the Light, Lord, show me the Light

Rehearsal Suggestions/Notes

-The work contains a vocal solo that may be performed in any vocal range OR by instruments. Parts for all are included in the package.

-A version of the work for full choir is available. If you are interested in this version, please contact me at randallstandridge@yahoo.com

-This piece is a great opportunity for cross-curricular studies. There are several books, articles, and documentaries on the subject that may be introduced in class or across various subjects.

-Tempo is as much a part of a composition as all the notes, harmonies, and rhythms of a work. Please adhere as closely as possible to the marked tempi to give the piece its correct character.

-Parts have been included for all Instrument keys for the solo voice part. If a vocal soloist is not available, please feel free to substitute an instrumentalist.

-The Timpani part calls for several pitch changes; if gauges are available, it is highly recommend to pre-tune and set gauges to facilitate an accurate performance.

-The percussion parts for this piece are quite extensive and move around a lot. Careful consideration to the percussion set up should be given to ensure a successful performance/rehearsal. Here are a few suggestions:

-Percussion 1 and Percussion 2 should be staged close to Percussion 4 and Percussion 6 to facilitate the sharing of various instruments.

-Percussion 5 and Percussion 6 share several instruments should be set up in one big station with multiple trap tables for mallets and accessories

About the composer:

Randall Standridge (b.1976) received his Bachelor's of Music Education from Arkansas State University. During this time, he studied composition with Dr. Tom O'Connor, before returning to Arkansas State University to earn his Master's in Music Composition, studying with Dr. Tom O'Connor and Dr. Tim Crist. From 2001 to 2013, he served as the Director of Bands at Harrisburg High School in Harrisburg, Arkansas.

Mr. Standridge is currently published by Grand Mesa Music, Alfred Music, FJH Music, Wingert-Jones Music, Band Works Publications, Twin Towers Music, and Northeastern Music Publications. Mr. Standridge has had several of his pieces performed internationally, and has had numerous works selected to the J.W. Pepper's Editor's Choice and Bandworld Top 100 lists. His composition *Snake Charmer*, published by Grand Mesa Music, is included in *Teaching Music through Performance in Band Vol. 8*, and his work *Gently Blows the Summer Wind*, also published by Grand Mesa Music, is included in *Teaching Music through Performance in Middle School Band*. He has had several works performed at the Midwest Music Clinic in Chicago, IL. His work *Art(isms)* was premiered by the Arkansas State University Wind Ensemble at the 2010 CBDNA conference in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Mr. Standridge is also a contributing composer for Alfred Music's *Sound Innovations: Ensemble Development* series.

In addition to his career as a composer, Mr. Standridge is the Marching Band Editor for Grand Mesa Music Publishers. He is in demand as a conductor, clinician, drill designer, music arranger, and colorguard designer for the marching arts. He is also a freelance artist, photographer, and writer. He lives in Jonesboro, AR with his family. For more information about Mr. Standridge, visit his website at: www.randallstandridge.com