

The Old Spanish Trail Suite: *An Enhanced Video Experience*

DVD Review and the Rest of the Story

The newest of our national historic trails, The Old Spanish Trail, is currently receiving widespread national and international attention through a unique mode of interpretation--one that few trail aficionados would have ever imagined. Commissioned by a grant from The National Endowment for the Performing Arts, the Orchestra of Southern Utah (Cedar City, Utah) was able to select two extraordinary young composer-arrangers to interpret the Old Spanish Trail for them. Their goal was to produce and perform an orchestral interpretation of Trail history as the basis of an original symphonic suite. Marshall MacDonald and Steven Nelson were about to make history and make that history come alive! They just didn't know it at the time!

The Old Spanish Trail Suite is a symphonic performance in three calculated movements. The first is a scintillating “*Sunrise*” movement, with melodious strings enticing a reluctant sun to witness a new epoch of history, the ascent of man. It is replete with authentic rhythms and Paiute singing, and a melody that fades with the coming of the Spanish colonizers. The “*Rain*” movement heralds an era of struggle and survival for all, an appeal for rain and relief that is rewarded by gentle winds and quenched thirst for weary travelers. “*Marche*” is a movement of endurance and determination as Spanish merchants and explorers cross mountains and deserts in a determined and unrelenting quest for passage. “*Celebration*” returns the listener to a mood of hope and a vision of accomplishment; a knowledge of challenges left behind. It is time for spirits and ambitions to soar in anticipation of a new world and new life.

In February of 2006 the premier performance of *The Old Spanish Trail Suite* was heralded with local enthusiasm and encore performances at the Heritage Center, Cedar City, Utah. Their interpretation of the Trail, the personalities of the composers and their uncommon musical ability were appreciated by all who shared the evening with them. It was, as they say, “up close and personal.” Amateur recordings of the Cedar City performance were made available to OSTA at that time but several OSTA members clamored for a more formal rendition of the Suite.

That opportunity came in a unique and unanticipated manner. Mr. Jerry Waddell, president of Video Ideas, Inc. of Chattanooga, Tennessee saw an opportunity to combine his talents and those of the musicians to create a “video-enhanced” interpretation of the *Old Spanish Trail Suite*. His vision was to create computer based photographic files and integrate those files with the musical score of the Suite to create an exact correlation between the two. The result would be a choreographed video presentation to be projected on three immense screens behind any orchestra during a live performance. While some

ideas lay dormant at times, with Jerry's apparent enthusiasm and OSTA member support the project was to become a reality.

With the help of local orchestra members, historians, pilots, photographers, native Paiutes and OSTA, Jerry's dream rapidly emerged. His "Video Enhanced" version of *The Old Spanish Trail Suite* premiered this year to an appreciative audience and standing ovations. Those attending would hardly be surprised to learn that the performance they witnessed was to garner three national awards in very short order. It would also find international acclaim from an unexpected source--China!

With continuing enthusiasm for such a unique project Video Ideas, Inc. added a historical background to the Suite, then they added a composers commentary, a videographer's commentary, an OSTA historical interpretation of the Old Spanish Trail, a photo montage of OST scenery, and capped it all off with a Director's cut to round out their extraordinary effort.

The grand debut of the new "*Old Spanish Trail Suite on DVD*" was reserved for the OSTA conference in June of 2008 at Okeh Wyngeh, NM. There Jerry Waddell presented the inspired DVD to the OSTA Board and members before he left for Denver, Colorado, to receive *national recognition* in the form of a "**SILVER TELLY**" award ...the highest award possible for orchestral innovation and video excellence in our nation The Southern Utah Orchestra was similarly acknowledged for its performance of the Suite as the only recipient of a coveted "**Audrey Baird Audience Development Award for 2008**" The Suite and orchestra also received a prestigious "**Award of Excellence**" from the National League of American Orchestras" for their performance of The Old Spanish Trail Suite and the innovation it represents.

So what happened to China?

With further encouragement and funding by OSTA members, the Chinese National Philharmonic Orchestra was contracted to perform and record the Old Spanish Trail Suite in Beijing, China, under the baton of Xun Sun, conductor of the Southern Utah Orchestra. The enthusiastic interest of the Chinese in "authentic music of the American West," as represented by the suite, has since led to a mastering of their performance in a new music CD. Already in demand, the Old Spanish Trail Suite on CD is currently being produced by Opus Con Brio, Inc. under the title of "American Journey." It is intended for international distribution in 2009

The Old Spanish Trail Suite DVD package is currently available from the OSTA sales web site or directly from Video Ideas, Inc. Those interested in a "Video Enhanced" version of the score for their local performing orchestras, or for commercial quantity sales, should contact Jerry Waddell directly at VideoIdeas.com. Thanks, Jerry!

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