

***Rolling River (Sketches on “Shenandoah”)* program note**

Though I’ve composed many original orchestral works, I’d never before created an orchestral setting of an American folk song, so this invitation from John Morris Russell and the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra came as something of a surprise, and a challenge. I was aware of *Shenandoah*, and had heard various vocal versions of this folk tune, but had never studied it. My approach in creating *Rolling River* (the title comes from a lyric in the song) was to put this beautiful tune front and center, and to use the richness and colors of this marvelous symphony orchestra to surround and highlight that tune. JMR asked for something sweeping and “cinematic,” and I attempted to deliver that in my setting, including some “tone painting” suggesting a rolling river in the woodwind writing.

— Peter Boyer

“*Rolling River* has become a new American classic and core repertoire for the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. Peter’s eloquent variations on *Shenandoah* are masterfully woven into a work of profound beauty and heart. The centerpiece of the latest Cincinnati Pops recording ‘American Originals,’ *Rolling River* displays sophisticated orchestration that is both virtuosic and subtle, and an innate sense of quiet drama that has left no audience unmoved.”

— John Morris Russell