

A Note about Mountains

My dear friend Everett Waldo brought the following quote to my attention. It is found in the Asia Museum of the Smithsonian in Washington:

*I just learned beyond the five lofty summits
There are other noble mountains.*

This quote has been a source of personal inspiration for me. I first set it to music (actually a twelve-tone row) while I was in residence at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. And although I did not know it at the time, this was the beginning of *Cold Mountain*. Subsequent artist colony residences (during my 1993-94 sabbatical year) were always near mountains and I determined to write a piece somehow inspired by these various mountains (seven in total, relating to the seven movements of *Cold Mountain*):

The Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia (Virginia Center for the Arts, November 1993)
Taos Pueblo Mountain in New Mexico (Wurlitzer Foundation, September, 1993, June 1994)
Cloud Mountain in the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming (Ucross Foundation, May 1994)
Smoky Mountains of Georgia (Hambidge Center, May 1995)
Mt. Palomar (Dorland Mountain Artist Colony, March 1994)
Mount Nittany (home base in State College)
Welsh Mountains (Sabbatical time in Wales, February 1994)

The actual realization of the piece came when the Castalia Piano Trio asked me to write a work for them for their upcoming concert tour to China.

I had recently become acquainted with the poetry of Han-shan, a Tang dynasty poet from the late 8th century or early 9th century, who wrote of the mysterious Cold Mountain where he lived and taught. The intersection of Han-shan's poems and my own mystical experiences with mountains thus inspired the composition of the music.

I was thrilled that my music was to be premiered by one of the finest piano trios in America and that it was to be performed by them on their concert tour in China. Although the music of a great number of Chinese composers is being performed in our country, it is relatively rare for the music of a contemporary American composer to be performed in China. So I was greatly honored.