

*"Songs for a Prelude* is the composer's response to the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The underlying musical gestures are all generated from the numbers 1, 9 and 11, and are manifest in pitch classes, rhythms and note durations, and in small and large scale phrases.

The opening gesture demonstrates this by using the pitch classes 1 (C#), 9 (A), and 11 (B). Its counter gesture is an inversion and slight compression of the intervals found in the first gesture. The sustained notes of these gestures are held for lengths of 9 eighth-notes, 11 eighth-notes and 1 eighth-note. At the same time, this numerology does not interfere with or dictate the dramatic flow of the work. Rather, it is used to enhance the sense of drama and climax that leads to the cathartic release at the end of the final movement.

The title of the work and its four movements comes the opening poem in Walt Whitman's book *Drum-Taps*, entitled *First O Songs for a Prelude*. Written about Whitman's experiences as a hospital volunteer during the Civil War, the first stanza provides a remarkable and timely description of New York, its strength and resilience and the fundamental American spirit.

*First O Songs for a Prelude*

Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum pride and joy in my city,  
How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue,  
How at once with lithe limbs unwaiting a moment she sprang,  
(O superb! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless!  
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis! O truer than steel!)  
How you sprang—how you threw off the costumes of peace with indifferent hand,  
How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and fife were heard in the stead,  
How you led to the war, (that shall serve for our prelude, songs of soldiers),  
How Manhattan drum-taps led."

— Stephen David Beck

The world premiere of *Songs for a Prelude* was on February 4, 2002 in the Recital Hall of the School of Music, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Stephen David Beck (born 1959, San Diego, California) received a Ph.D. in music composition and theory from the University of California, Los Angeles where he studied with Henri Lazarof, Elaine Barkin and Alden Ashforth. He held a Fulbright Fellowship at the Institut de Reherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) in Paris, France.

Beck is a composer of electroacoustic music, large ensemble and chamber music, and music for theater. About his music, he writes: "...the use of technology in my music is not meant to replace musicians, but rather to enhance and expand a performer's potential for expressiveness, technique and, most importantly, timbre. There is an uncanny beauty in the physical and mathematical laws of nature, a beauty of intense complexity bond by simplicity, order and logic. For me, this is a constant and powerful source of inspiration, and the use of modern technology seems the perfect tool for expressing that inspiration and awe."

Beck's music has been performed throughout the world, including performances at Weill Recital Hall, Sao Paulo Bienal '91, SCREAM Radio Series, Concert Band Directors National Association Biennial, North American Saxophone Alliance, New Music America, World Harp Congress, and the Triforium Series in Los Angeles. His work, *The Wild Rumpus*, won the G. Schirmer Young American Band Prize.

Beck has presented lectures and papers on his research in interactive computer music at meetings of the International Computer Music Association, the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States (SEAMUS), and the Society of Composers, Inc. He has served on the board of officers of SEAMUS and as a Regional Director and Music Coordinator of the International Computer Music Association.

Beck is the Haymon Professor of Composition and Computer Music at Louisiana State University. He holds a joint appointment at the Center for Computation & Technology, where he previously served as Director of the AVATAR Initiative in Digital Media. He is also Associate Vice President for Research and Economic Development at LSU. His music and writings have been published by G. Schirmer, MIT Press and the Computer Music Journal; his music has been recorded on the SEAMUS, EMF and Gothic record labels.

Additional information is available at <https://sdbeck.blog/>.