

Coming to America Concerto

By

Lisa Swerdlow

Written by

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There cannot be a more emotive subject these days than refugees fleeing from persecution, to hopefully a better life in another country, whilst I have not suffered persecution, I am an immigrant in another country myself, so with regards to the aspect of leaving all that you have ever known behind, and starting a new life in another part of the world in hope, that I *can* understand.

The artists Grandparents story is a far darker one though, as during the many lockdowns due to the pandemic, it gave Lisa time to research her grandparents decision to leave mother Russia, and travel away from the persecution of the Jews of the early 20th century, to a bastion of hope and freedom at that time called America, despite its trials, its tribulations and it's political upheavals, it still retains that beacon of hope for the many who wish to make a better life for themselves and their families.

So here, on this fine body of work, **Lisa Swerdlow** tells us that story, the tale of her grandparent's journey from oppression to freedom, one can only imagine the amount of courage it took to do what they did, and now Lisa has created a musical backdrop for us, so that we may understand through the music their voyage from darkness into the light of a new world.

First movement: Home of My Ancestors, is the first of 3 pieces and expresses through music and the flourishing piano and orchestration, the homeland of her grandparents in Russia, one can feel the traditional elements here, the joys of home, but also the wary anticipations of forces of destructive power that could in a moment, interrupt such pleasures, the symphonic harmony with Swerdlow's piano here creates a narrative that is incredibly cinematic.

Second movement: The Crossing, is the next part of this graphic presentation, here through the amazingly sensitive approach on both piano and strings, we can feel the journey across the oceans by her grandparents, through the imploring power of Swerdlow's performance, we are gifted an insight to the vast range of emotions here, a feeling of homesickness as well as the discombobulation from days and weeks of boat travel, perhaps we can also feel the sense of apprehension, anticipation, or doubt even, but hovering in the corners of the mind lay the one thing that makes it all worthwhile, the friendly arm around the shoulder of an old friend called hope.

The concluding offering is entitled **Third movement: The Arrival**. This I call my sigh of relief movement, that moment when hope births relief, and relief bears the fruits of happiness, and tears of joy. Through the proud and deeply moving performance by Swerdlow, one that creates such an empowering reality, we have arrived at the land of expectation and possibilities. The orchestration has been arranged and created by *Doug Hammer*, and in my view it is the best work he has ever created, this is once more a cinematic offering that raises the energies of hope, and lays it squarely in the arms of gratitude, in one of the finest performances I have heard from the pianist thus far.

Coming to America Concerto by **Lisa Swerdlow** is a tale found in times of darkness and despair, it is a story that lifts the spirits, manifests courage and builds anticipation and aspiration. The artist has been in a rich vein of form lately, and I can see no reason why this wonderful revelation of her grandparents most difficult of journeys, should not bring a little faith, optimism and confidence into your own, saying perhaps that maybe through courage, fortitude and hope, we can improve our lives too.