

presents

Ellis Island: The Dream of America

featuring

The Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra

For Fifth Grade Students

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Introduction

Dear Teachers,

The Children's Education Program is excited to bring Peter Boyer's *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, to life. *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, combines spoken word with music and projected images, to illustrate the American immigrant experience around the turn of the 20th century. The actors onstage embody stories of real immigrants, telling their own stories. Taken from the Ellis Island Oral History Project, Boyer shaped short monologues from the actual words of immigrants and created a moving narrative within an orchestral tapestry.

We hope students grasp that the actors embody immigrants who have and still do, struggle mightily for the opportunities that America offers. With a hopeful dream that they will celebrate more fully, our nation of immigrants.

Children's Education Program
Performing Arts Fort Worth



Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

Social Studies:

The student understands the reasons for and the role of key people in the European colonization of North America beginning in 1565.

- 5.1(A) explain when, where, and why groups of people explored, colonized, and settled in the United States, including the search for religious freedom and economic gain.
- 5.12(A) compare how people in different regions of the United States earn a living, past and present.
- 5.12(C) analyze the effects of immigration and migration on the economic development and growth of the United States.
- 5.21(A) describe customs and traditions of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States.

Music:

The student examines music in relation to history and cultures. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.

- 5.5(C) identify and describe music from diverse genres, styles, periods, and cultures.
- 5.5(D) examine the relationships between music and interdisciplinary concepts.
- 5.6(A) exhibit audience etiquette during live and recorded performances.

Theater:

The student relates theatre to history, society, and culture. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

- 5.4(A) explain theatre as a reflection of life in particular times, places, cultures, and oral traditions specific to American history.
- 5.5(A) analyze and apply appropriate audience behavior at a variety of performances.
- 5.5(B) compare visual, aural, oral, and kinetic aspects of informal and formal theatre with the elements of art, dance, or music.
- 5.5(C) identify and discuss how movement, music, or visual elements enhance ideas and emotions depicted in theatre.



The Composer

Peter Boyer

Peter Boyer, born February 10, 1970 in Providence, Rhode Island, is an American composer, conductor, orchestrator, and professor of music. He is known primarily for his orchestral works, which have received more than 500 performances, by over 150 orchestras.

Boyer received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rhode Island College. While an undergraduate, he received the Young American Award. He received Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from The Hartt School of the University of Hartford, where he studied composition.. Boyer then studied privately with composer John Corigliano in New York, before relocating to Los Angeles to attend the Scoring for Motion Pictures and Television Program at USC . There Boyer studied with composers including Elmer Bernstein, David Raksin, Buddy Baker and Christopher Young. On completing his studies in 1996, Boyer was appointed to the faculty of Claremont Graduate University. In 2003 Boyer established the publishing company Propulsive Music.



Peter Boyer
Portrait by Danika Singfield

Boyer has received a number of significant commissions for his work. In 2003, Boyer conducted London's Philharmonia Orchestra in a recording of his work *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, later working with a distinguished cast of actors in New York City to complete this recording project. The recording received a Grammy Award nomination for Best Classical Contemporary Composition in the 48th annual Grammy Awards (2006). *Ellis Island* has become Boyer's best-known work, with over 250 performances given by more than 100 orchestras and has been much acclaimed.



The Production

The Production

Music

All music by Peter Boyer

Prologue

Words of Helen Cohen, emigrated from Poland in 1920

Musical Interlude 1

Words of James Apanomith, emigrated from Greece in 1911

Musical Interlude 2

Words of Lilian Galletta, emigrated from Italy in 1928

Musical Interlude 3

Words of Lazarus Salamon, emigrated from Hungary in 1920

Musical Interlude 4

Words of Helen Rosenthal, emigrated from Belgium in 1940

Musical Interlude 5

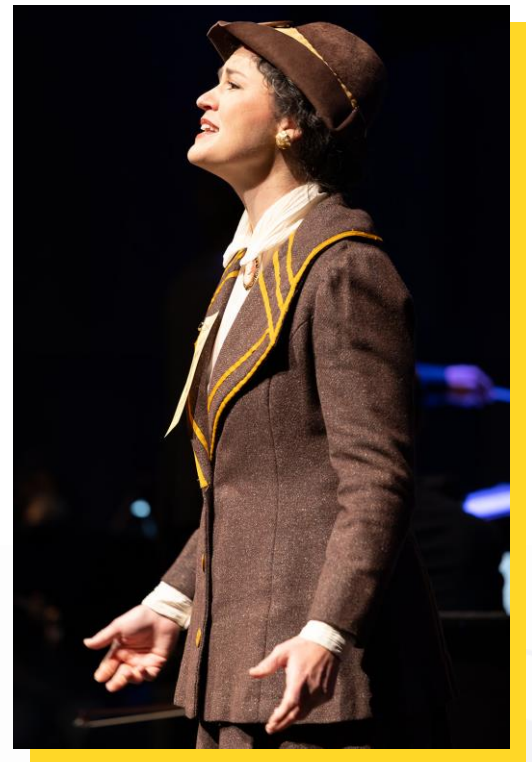
Words of Manny Steen, emigrated from Ireland in 1925

Musical Interlude 6

Words of Katherine Beychok, emigrated from Russia in 1910

Epilogue

"The New Colossus" (Emma Lazarus, 1883)



*Ellis Island: The Dream of America at Bass Performance Hall
Photo by Lane Bishop*

The Production

The following selection is taken from Propulsive Music. Notes on *Ellis Island: The Dream of America* by Peter Boyer

Ellis Island: The Dream of America was born out of my fascination with the relationship between history and music. I'm drawn to good stories—especially stories which come from the past but are relevant to the present—and as an orchestral composer, I'm intrigued by the potential of the orchestra as a storytelling medium. Of course, orchestral music cannot tell stories in a literal way, but its ability to suggest scenes and emotions, and evoke responses in listeners, has challenged and stimulated composers for centuries.



Ellis Island: The Dream of America at Bass Performance Hall
Photo by Lane Bishop

When I decided to create a work about Ellis Island, I knew that I wanted to combine spoken word with the orchestra. When I began researching Ellis Island, I learned of the existence of something which would come to define the nature of the piece: the Ellis Island Oral History Project. This is a collection of interviews, housed at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, with immigrants who were processed at Ellis Island during the years of its operation. Begun in 1973, the Ellis Island Oral History Project now contains over 2,000 interviews. The largest number of these were done during the late 1980s and early 1990s, catalyzed by the opening of the Museum in 1990. All immigrants interviewed for the Project were asked a standard set of questions: what life was like in their native country, reasons for coming to America, the nature of the voyage to port and the journey by ship, experiences arriving in New York Harbor and being processed at Ellis Island, their ultimate destination, and their experiences adjusting to life in the United States. Collectively, the interviews which constitute the Ellis Island Oral History Project—in both recorded form and in transcripts—are a treasure of immeasurable worth in American history.

The decision to use texts from the Ellis Island Oral History Project meant that the work would require actors, and it's an important distinction that they are not “narrators” or “speakers,” but actors. They deliver their monologues in the first person. The use of actors and, in live performance, projected images with the orchestra makes ***Ellis Island: The Dream of America*** a hybrid work which is closer to a theater piece than a pure concert work, though it is intended to be performed in the concert hall.



Taichi Fukumura conducts the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra at Bass Performance Hall
Photo by Lane Bishop

Though I am a composer and not a writer, I decided early in the process that I would create the script for the work myself, prior to composing the music. The creation of the script involved the selection, arrangement and editing of texts from the Ellis Island Oral History Project into a sort of dramatic narrative.

I examined over 100 interviews and found many more stories than could be included in a 43-minute piece with 25 minutes of spoken word. Ultimately, I settled on a structure which includes seven stories, four female and three male, of immigrants who came through Ellis Island from seven countries, between 1910 and 1940.

The orchestral music in ***Ellis Island: The Dream of America*** is continuous, framing, commenting on, and amplifying the spoken words. Following a six-minute orchestral prologue, the work's structure alternates the individual immigrants' stories with orchestral interludes. In general, during the actors' monologues in which the immigrants' stories are told, the orchestra plays a supporting role, employing a more sparse orchestration and texture so as not to overpower the speaking voice. During the interludes, the orchestra assumes the primary role, and accordingly "speaks up" with fuller orchestration. The prologue introduces much of the work's principal thematic material. I attempted to reflect their [the immigrants] tales with various musical styles.

In live performances of ***Ellis Island: The Dream of America***, there is a visual component which accompanies the music during the Prologue and Epilogue. This consists of images from the archive of historic photographs housed at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum Library. Many of these come from the collection of Augustus Sherman, a longtime Ellis Island employee who took a number of poignant and historically important photographs of immigrants. These immigrants' faces seem to tell their own stories, and it is little wonder that copies of many of these photographs are displayed prominently in the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

- Peter Boyer



Ellis Island

Ellis Island

On January 1, 1892, a fifteen-year-old girl from Ireland named Annie Moore, became the first immigrant to land at Ellis Island. Over the next 62 years (between 1892-1954), **twelve million immigrants** entered the United States from all over the world. Today 40%, or almost half of all Americans, have an ancestor who came to the US through Ellis Island.

Immigrants came to America for opportunities and personal freedoms such as:

- to escape religious persecution
- to escape cruel governments and war or political persecution
- to escape natural disasters, famine, drought or crop failure
- to rejoin family members who had already come to America



Hospital and Administration Buildings
Immigrants landing at Ellis Island Library of Congress
c.1910-1920. Detroit Publishing Co.



Immigration Building, home of "The Great Hall"
New York, Ellis Island Library of Congress
c.1918-1920. Unknown

The Journey

During its sixty-two years as an immigration center, most of the individuals that passed through Ellis Island were from Eastern and Southern Europe. The journey to a new life in America started weeks and sometimes months before crossing the Atlantic Ocean. They began their journey trekking through Europe until they arrived at a seaport that would take them on the multiple weeks journey to America.

Most passengers could not afford first- or second-class tickets and so were kept in the “steerage”, a large open space at the very bottom of the ship. They would be thrilled when they could go on deck and breathe the fresh air and feel the sun.



Immigrants on an Atlantic Liner Library of Congress
c.1906, by Edwin Levick.



Ellis Island and Harbor, New York Library of Congress
c. 1900-1920, by Detroit Publishing Co.

The ships were crowded with sometimes up to 3,000 people. They spoke different languages, had different religions and cultures, yet, they all had the same dream, the opportunities of a new life in America.

One of the first things the immigrants saw when they arrived in New York harbor, was the Statue of Liberty. People would often cry and cheer when they saw the famous symbol of American freedom.

Once the immigrants arrived at Ellis Island, they were taken into "The Great Hall". Everyone had to pass tests to be admitted in the country. First, they had to pass a medical exam, to be checked for infectious diseases, or disabilities. The medical examiners carried pieces of colored chalk and marked letters on the coats of those with diseases. Those with chalk marks on their coats were separated from others and put in areas called pens. People with certain diseases were sent back to their homeland.

They had to prove that they would be able to earn a living and were asked how much money they had with them. Many of them came to meet family that was already living in the United States, yet many came without knowing a single person. There were more than thirty languages spoken in "The Great Hall" and translators were available at each registration booth.



The Pens at Ellis Island, Registry Room (or Great Hall)
The New York Public Library
c. 1902-1913, by Edwin Levick



U.S. Inspectors examining eyes of immigrants Library of Congress
c. 1913, by Underwood and Underwood

People from all over the world came to the United States through Ellis Island. They had to cope with a new language, new foods, finding a place to live, finding a job, and learning how to thrive in the land of opportunities!

After 1900, people needed a passport and a visa to enter the United States. If they arrived after 1917, they had to be able to read and write at least 40 words. In 1921 the US passed a quota act, to limit the number of people from some countries.

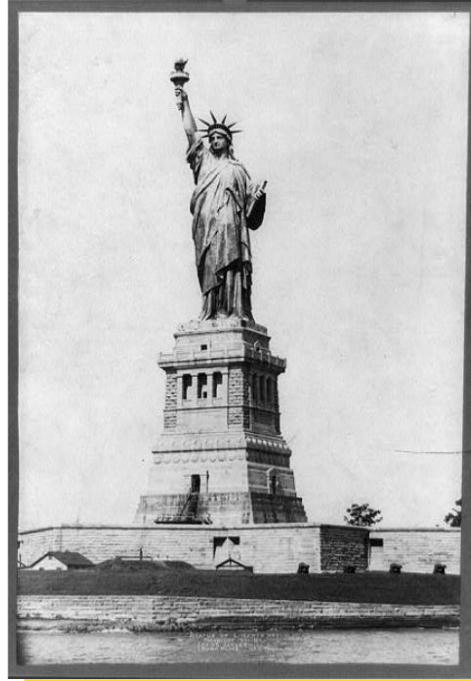
After World War 1, due to stricter immigration laws and new U.S. embassies, the number of immigrants that passed through Ellis Island had drastically decreased. The final immigrant through Ellis Island was a Norwegian merchant named Arne Petersen in November, 1954.



The Statue of Liberty

The Statue of Liberty

- The Statue's official name is, "Liberty Enlightening the World."
- Was a gift from France and sculpted by Frédéric Bartholdi. The iron frame, which held it in place, was by Gustave Eiffel (who built the Eiffel Tower.)
- The French wanted to give it to the United States by 1876, for the centennial of the American Independence, but it was not finished until 1886.
- The Statue itself is 151 feet tall and made of copper. From the bottom of the pedestal, to the top of the flame, The Statue of Liberty is 305 feet tall.
- In her right hand she holds a torch and in her left hand she holds a tablet. Inscribed on the tablet in Roman numerals, is the date of the American Independence, July 4, 1776.
- On her head is a crown with seven points that represent rays of light for the 7 continents and the 7 seas.
- In 1886 the Statue of Liberty officially opened to the public in New York Harbor.



Statue of Liberty Library of Congress
c. 1901, by Irving Underhill

At the base of the statue, is a selection of the poem "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus (1849-1887). A Jewish-American writer and activist from New York City.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"



Resources

- Scholastic:
 - Interactive Tour of Ellis Island: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/tour/index.html>
 - Virtual Field Trip of Ellis Island: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/webcast.htm>
- Library of Congress:
 - Video footage by Thomas Edison of Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island. c.1903: <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/january-01/>
- National Park Service:
 - Interactive Virtual Tour with 360-degree images of the interior and exterior of Ellis Island: https://www.nps.gov/hdp/exhibits/ellis/ellis_index.html
 - Excerpts of Oral Histories from the Ellis Island Oral History Collection: <https://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/education/classrooms/oral-histories.htm>
 - General Information and History of Ellis Island: <https://www.nps.gov/elis/index.htm>
 - Bio about Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, the sculptor behind the Statue of Liberty: <https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/frederic-auguste-bartholdi.htm>
- DK Find Out:
 - Interactive learning Tour of Ellis Island: <https://www.dkfindout.com/us/history/ellis-island/>
- Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island Foundation:
 - History and images of Ellis Island: <https://www.statueofliberty.org/ellis-island/>
 - Passenger Search Database of Actual Ellis Island Passengers between 1820-1957: <https://heritage.statueofliberty.org/passenger>
 - History and Images of The Statue of Liberty: <https://www.statueofliberty.org/statue-of-liberty/overview-history/>
- Poetry Foundation
 - Complete poem, “The New Colossus”, by Emma Lazarus: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46550/the-new-colossus>
 - Poetry Guide and short bio of Emma Lazarus: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/144956/emma-lazarus-the-new-colossus>
- National Women’s History Museum:
 - Full Biography on Emma Lazarus: <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/emma-lazarus>

[Click here](#) to visit your local Fort Worth public library for more resources.



Angels In The Wings

Angels In The Wings

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