

***Crisis* Program Notes**

My *Symphony No. 2, "Freedom"* for orchestra and chorus was commissioned by the Lexington Symphony Orchestra for the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the founding of the town of Lexington, Massachusetts in 2013. The theme of this large-scale nine-movement work is freedom, for which I set texts associated with the American Revolutionary War and the American Civil War. The authors include great American poets such as Emerson, Longfellow, Melville, and Whitman, and statesmen such as Patrick Henry, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Paine.

The first movement, *Crisis*, sets excerpts from Thomas Paine's essay *The Crisis* of December 23, 1776: "These are the times that try men's souls. . . . Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; . . . the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph." General George Washington found this essay so inspiring that he ordered it read to the troops at Valley Forge. The first movement also sets excerpts from Patrick Henry's famous speech of March 23, 1775, ending with ". . . give me liberty, or give me death!"

The opening melody is mournful and foreboding. It serves as an accompanying melody for a somber initial setting of "These are the times." These two opening melodies return together after Patrick Henry's speech, transformed rhythmically into a forceful closing recapitulation.

My arrangement of this movement for concert band and chorus was premiered on April 18, 2026, at Cary Hall in Lexington by the Lexington Bicentennial Band and the Lexington Pops Chorus as part of the Lex250 celebration to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the battle of Lexington.

John M. Tarrh

***Crisis* text**

These are the times that try men's souls. . . . Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; . . . the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. (Paine)

Gentlemen may cry, "Peace! Peace!" -- but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death! (Henry)