

Vincent Persichetti (1915-1987) based his piece, "The Hollow Men," on T. S. Eliot's poem of the same name. Eliot (1888-1965), a prominent American poet of the early 20th century, wrote remarkably few poems, considering his reputation in the literary community. His works often use a new interpretation of other literary works to express his new ideas. In "The Hollow Men," Eliot primarily drew on ideas and imagery from Shakespeare, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and the failed Gunpowder Plot of Guy Fawkes.

"The Hollow Men," both the poem and piece, strives to capture elements of post-World War I Europe—specifically hopelessness and man's need for redemption. The first part of the poem explains the titular characters of the hollow men; they are those who do not concern themselves with other people or morality. He compares them to the shades outside Inferno, wandering aimlessly and unworthy to enter either heaven or hell. They cry to those in paradise, pleading to be remembered by those who earned a better fate.

Eliot introduces a motif of eyes, specifically those of the virtuous. The hollow men exist in a place where the eyes do not see them, and they drift about in the wind. Using metaphors of premature death and ritual, Eliot paints a picture of fear and aversion. He brings in imagery of a stony, barren world full of idol worship and loneliness.

In the midst of the desolation, Eliot alludes to redemption. The shades of hollow men drift together, "Sightless, unless/ The eyes reappear/ As the perpetual star/ Multifoliate rose/ Of death's twilight kingdom/ The hope only/ Of empty men." The star and the rose are implied to be the virtuous eyes of God or Mary. Despite the hopelessness of the situation, Eliot suggests that the hollow men are still capable of being forgiven, and that they can still be saved.

In the closing of the poem, Eliot describes the men being stuck in stasis, "Between the idea/ And the reality," between stimuli and action. He echoes the Lord's Prayer, "For Thine is the Kingdom," and then ends the poem, "This is the way the world ends/ This is the way the world ends/ This is the way the world ends/ Not with a bang but a whimper." The final line refers to the whisper of betrayal, and the end for the hollow man.

Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978) was born in Russia to poor Armenian parents. He spent most of his life in Russia. Although music fascinated him, Khachaturian did not receive any formal training as a child. When he was eighteen, Gnessin Institute in Moscow admitted him due to his natural talent. He also attended the Moscow Conservatory and played the cello.

Khachaturian's ballet "Gayne" centers around characters that live on an Armenian collective farm. Gayne, her father, and her siblings all serve as models of hard work, while her husband Giko is selfish and lazy. A Soviet commander, Kazhakov, visits the village, and Giko's jealousy embarrasses everyone. Later that evening, Giko meets with smugglers and they formulate a plot to burn the fields and run away with the public money they already stole. Gayne overhears and tries to dissuade her husband, but he locks her in another room.

That night, Giko and the smugglers run into several people from the farming village, including Gayne's father and brother. The villagers send for Kazhakov for help, and the smugglers try to kill Gayne's brother. Kazhakov arrives to arrest the men, but Giko escapes and sets the field on fire. Gayne, having escaped as well, confronts her husband. He threatens to drop their child off a cliff, but Gayne still stands. Giko stabs her, but Kazhakov finds them and arrests Giko. He tends to Gayne, and over time the two fall in love. A year later, the village celebrates both the completion of the new warehouse and Gayne and Kazhakov's wedding.

The final movement of the orchestral suite, "Three Dances from 'Gayne,'" is the famous 'Saber Dance.' Recognizable from a number of its uses in pop culture, the Saber Dance is originally from the final act of the ballet. The dancers show their skills with the sabers in the style of an Armenian war dance.

John Williams (born 1932) is best known for his film soundtracks, most notably *Jaws*, the *Star Wars* trilogies, *Indiana Jones*, *E.T.*, and the *Harry Potter* films. His neoromantic style echoes the rich, orchestral Wagnerian style of the 19th century. "A Prayer for Peace" is the main theme of the film, *Munich*. It won the Grammy award for Best Instrumental Composition 2007.