



## Civic Orchestra of Tucson

PO Box 42764, Tucson, AZ 85733 | [www.cotmusic.org](http://www.cotmusic.org)  
Contact: Wallace Burney | [info@cotmusic.org](mailto:info@cotmusic.org) | 520-730-3371

### Civic Orchestra of Tucson Presents World Premiere by Tucson Composer in Virtual Performance During the Pandemic

TUCSON, AZ (May 5, 2021) — In late December 2020, Tucson composer Bob Atwell approached Charles Bontrager, Music Director of the Civic Orchestra of Tucson, and Wallace Burney, its president, about the orchestra's interest in performing a work in memory of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Four months later, the performance became a reality and can now be viewed on YouTube.

When naming the work, Atwell reflected on how Ruth Bader Ginsburg often provided a strong solo voice of legal reasoning. He decided to use the notes D, Bb, and G as a mini motif to represent her initials. The fact that she spent 13 years (a prime number) on the appeals court and 27 years (3 cubed) on the Supreme Court prompted him to extend the motif to 5-, 7-, and 11-note sets of pitches (all prime numbers). These became the basis for the work's melodies.

Rather than using a standard-sized orchestra, which would be challenging to assemble during the pandemic, Atwell wrote the 10-minute piece for five separate ensembles of musicians: one group of strings, 2 woodwind quintets, and two brass quintets. In all, 38 volunteer musicians participated in the performance. Each group rehearsed and was recorded independently. Bontrager used a metronome pulse in an earbud to establish a consistent tempo for each recording. Composer Atwell spent many hours editing the audio and video into the final product. Because each musician was independently miked, volume levels could be adjusted in post-production.

During rehearsals and tapings, safety precautions were enforced. Masks were mandatory (except for winds and brass when playing), hand sanitizers were plentiful, musicians were spatially distanced with no sharing of music stands, and restrooms were not available. Rehearsals lasted about an hour with several different ensembles meeting each evening, but not together.

Bontrager applauds the project. "For years I have celebrated the opportunity to help bring new works to life. Therefore, when Bob Atwell approached me with this project I willingly jumped in with both feet—apart from my skeptical, old-fashioned reluctance to create something in the time of COVID-19. But Bob had a vision and I am so happy to have bought into that vision and this project. 'Soliloquy' is a lovely and extremely well-crafted piece that, to a large degree, uses traditional compositional techniques. Certainly, this is true to the ear. To the heart and mind, composer Atwell's skill often stretches us beyond traditional harmonic and rhythmic expectations with very satisfying results. I am quite confident that the listening and viewing cyber audience will agree."

You can watch "Soliloquy" performed by members of the Civic Orchestra of Tucson for free by visiting [www.cotmusic.org/soliloquy](http://www.cotmusic.org/soliloquy) or [bit.ly/COT-Soliloquy](https://bit.ly/COT-Soliloquy).

The Civic Orchestra of Tucson is a 75-member all-volunteer orchestra, performing free concerts throughout the greater Tucson area since 1975. For more information about this performance and future concerts, visit [www.COTmusic.org](http://www.COTmusic.org) or call (520) 730-3371. For details about the composer, visit [www.bobatwellmusic.com](http://www.bobatwellmusic.com).