



# AS SNOW BEFORE A SUMMER SUN

## A MUSICAL-HISTORICAL TRAGEDY FOR TELEVISION

In Four Parts

THE WELCOMING  
THE WAY WE ARE  
DEAD DREAMS  
THE WANDERING

By

DAVID S. BERNSTEIN

The University of Akron

## A GUIDE FOR THE VIEWER by Philip Weeks

### Overview

"As Snow Before A Summer Sun" rests upon a musical composition by David Bernstein for full orchestra with soprano, tenor and baritone. The University of Akron Television Production Center videotaped the premiere performance at the University's Edwin J. Thomas Hall. After careful screening, the recording of the performance was fused with additional imagery-photography, paintings and line-drawings-to create a dynamic television program.

The impetus for the composition sprang from composer Bernstein's reading of Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee: An Indian History Of The American West* (New York: 1971). The composition focuses upon one phase in the history of the Americas-the conquest of the native inhabitants of the present-day United States. Specifically, "As Snow Before A Summer Sun" depicts events played out during the final years of Indian military power-roughly 1860 to 1890-when the Great Plains natives fought valiantly, but ultimately in vain, to defend their homelands. Even so, the events depicted are easily transferable to the entire scope of Indian-White relations.

Indians living in what became the United States were a non literate people. They had no system of written language. Traditions, ceremonials and historic recordings were passed down from generation to generation in oral rather than written form. (In 1821, after twelve years of labor, Sequoyah, a brilliant Cherokee, was the first to convert his tribe's spoken language to written form.)

"As Snow Before A Summer Sun" emphasizes this oral tradition and in particular Indian oratory-something with which many Indians showed exceptional ability. The composition's dialogue rests almost exclusively on the oratory of seventeen Indians of the 19th century.

"As Snow Before A Summer Sun" is an artistic endeavor that treats historical truths and events of American history. It merges contemporary music and art with a philosophy and way of life of a people undergoing extraordinary tension and tragedy. It explores the American Indian experience through artistic expression and oral tradition, both of which were important to them. It creates an opportunity to understand better the American Indians, their rich and vibrant culture and one aspect of their relationship with the people who achieved dominance over the continent.