

For the Greater Groove – program notes

Growing up, my family loved to do jigsaw puzzles, and there was often a puzzle in progress for weeks at a time on a card table in the living room. Little by little over the course of those weeks, what seemed at first like a random scattering of indistinguishable pieces slowly came together to form the picture on the cover of the box.

I spent my formative years at the back of the 2nd violin section in an all-volunteer community orchestra in Beloit, Wisconsin. We all came together once a week under the baton of our beloved conductor, Crawford Gates, and the process of learning the new music always seemed to me like putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle. Each individual player was like a piece of the puzzle that didn't make much sense by itself, and as we all learned to play our parts together properly, the "image on the box" magically revealed itself.

With music, the composer indicates the shape and color of the individual parts, but it is up to each player to blend these colors together to form a comprehensible whole, rather than just a collection of mismatched parts. It's a time consuming and highly intuitive process in which the design of the completed piece comes into focus slowly over the course of weeks of rehearsal. It involves not only learning your own individual part but also learning and listening to all the other parts as well, while collectively visualizing, with the guidance of the conductor, what that completed "image on the box" should look like. It is a generous labor of love for the sheer joy of music – a personal sacrifice of time and effort that each member makes for the greater good – the sum of which is greater than the individual parts. Since this piece is largely rhythmic in nature, you might say it is a sacrifice For the Greater Groove.

This piece is dedicated with love and admiration to all the devoted members of the Nashville Philharmonic, especially to its selfless and hardworking music director, Chris Norton.