Christopher Melen

Kalachakra

for Orchestra
DECLARATION

This volume has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed... C. J. Meleas (candidate)
Date...15/06/06

STATEMENT 1

This composition is the result of my own work. Any quotation/borrowing from the work of other composers is duly acknowledged.

Signed... C. J. Meleas (candidate)
Date...15/06/06

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for this volume, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for any relevant information (title, synopsis, etc.) to be made available to outside organisations.

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Kalachakra

The title of the piece is Sanskrit, and derives from Tibetan Buddhism (of which I am a practitioner). It is usually translated as 'wheel of time', or 'time-cycles'. The Kalachakra tradition represents a vast and profound body of teachings on the nature of time and the cosmos. Its central image is that of reality as a system of interlocking and interdependent time-cycles or 'wheels', from the cosmic scale of the stars, planets and seasons right down to the intimate periodicities of the human body: 'As above, so below'.

This 'macrocosm-microcosm' time-structure is what I have tried to reflect in my piece. The piece is not meant, however, as a literal musical description of this cosmological model: rather it should be viewed as a metaphor, a parallel but ultimately musical process, obeying purely musical laws of attraction and repulsion, creation and destruction.

Although Buddhism is not theistic in the conventional sense, it has a pantheon of sorts, with time personified in the form of the deity Kalachakra, a figure somewhat parallel to Shiva within the Hindu tradition ('Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds'). If the piece is illustrative in any sense then it is illustrative of the creative and destructive processes at work in the universe, but viewed here in a special sense as the body and limbs of the Adi-Buddha ('Cosmic Buddha'), the deity Kalachakra.

C. M.
Orchestra

2 Flutes
Piccolo
2 Oboes (2nd = Cor Anglais)
2 Clarinets in B♭
Bass Clarinet in B♭
2 Bassoons
Contrabassoon

4 Horns in F
3 Trumpets in B♭
3 Trombones
Tuba

Timpani (1 player)
4 Percussion -
I: 3 Woodblocks, Tenor Drum, Side Drum, Bongos, Suspended Cymbal (medium)
II: Suspended Cymbal (large), Clash Cymbals, Tambourine, 6 Tom-Toms, Triangle
III: Vibraphone, 3 Suspended Cymbals, 3 Temple Blocks, 2 Cowbells, Maracas
IV: Tubular Bells, Xylophone, Glockenspiel, 3 Tam-Tams, Bass Drum, Ratchet

Harp
Piano (= Celesta)

Strings (16. 14. 12. 10. 8.)

Score notated in C.

Duration: c. 27 minutes.
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Christopher Melen

To Lyric Light

For Cor Anglais, Clarinet in A, Horn in F, Vibraphone, Harp, Violin and Viola
To Lyric Light

The title of the piece is taken from a collection of poems of the same name by the Scottish writer Alasdair Gray (b. 1934). The piece was not directly inspired by any of the poems in the collection, but instead represents a musical response to the title, with its implications of lyricism and luminosity. ‘Lyric’ carries with it both the implication of song-like melody but also the sonority of the lyre, appearing here in the guise of its modern-day equivalent, the harp. Beginning with a mere continuo-like role, the harp gradually acquires a quasi-concertante status as the piece progresses, culminating in a cadenza near the end.

The material for the piece is derived almost in its entirety from the luminous chord heard at the very opening. The ensemble is divided (often rigorously, at other times rather more loosely) into three duos, plus the harp. Each of these duos is coloured by a unique mode, derived from the opening chord, and therefore represents a particular ‘frequency’ within an overall texture that might be likened to a spectrum.

C. M.

Instrumentation -

Cor Anglais
Clarinet in A
Horn in F
Vibraphone
Harp
Violin
Viola

Score notated in C.

Duration: c. 15 minutes.

Layout of instruments –
To Lyric Light

Allegro luminoso, \( j = 84 \)

legato cantabile

CHRISTOPHER MELEN
Più lirico

C A.
Cl.
Hn
Vib.
Hp

Vln
Vla

con sord.

f
p
mp
Allegro ma non troppo, \( j = 84 \)
Molto luminoso, $j = 112$
Christopher Melen

Six Metal Fugue

For Trumpet in Bb, Horn in F, Trombone, Tuba,
Tubular Bells and Steel Pans
Six Metal Fugue

The title is taken from a floor installation of the same name by the American sculptor Carl Andre (b. 1935), which consists of a complex pattern of metal squares of six different types. Andre referred to this pattern as ‘contrapuntal’ - hence the title. Like Andre’s installation, however, my piece is not a fugue in the conventional sense. While it shares with fugue a structure based on cyclic melodic material, interspersed with episodes derived from this material, the melodies in the piece - which are linked with specific instruments - are not ‘subjects’ or ‘countersubjects’, in the traditional sense. Rather, the title ‘fugue’ should be understood in the original sense of the word, that of themes in flight (from the Latin ‘fugere’, ‘to flee’).

C. M.

Instrumentation -

Trumpet in Bb
Horn in F
Trombone
Tuba
Tubular Bells
Steel Pans (Soprano and Tenor, 1 player)

Score notated in C.

Duration: c. 12 minutes.
Six Metal Fugue

Christopher Meleen

Molto sostenuto, \( \dot{q} = 36 \)

Trumpet in B♭

Horn in F

Trombone

Tuba

Tubular Bells

Steel Pana
Allegro molto, \( \frac{\text{p}}{4} \)
Quasi una toccata
(Vivacissimo, ma ritmico e preciso, \( \text{\textit{j} = c. 96} \))
Christopher Melen

From the Shoreline to the Stars

For Chamber Orchestra
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Composer's Note

'It is advisable to look from the tidepool to the stars and then back to the tidepool again.'

It was this half-remembered sentence from John Steinbeck's 1951 book The Log from the Sea of Cortez which provided the inspiration and title for the piece. In this book, Steinbeck recounts the voyage he took with his friend the marine biologist and pioneering ecologist Ed Ricketts (who appears in fictional guise in a number of the writer's novels) around the Sea of Cortez, collecting specimens. Ostensibly a travelogue, the book evolves into a meditation on one of the central themes of Steinbeck's work, the concept of the phalanx. Steinbeck used this term to refer to the phenomenon of group organisation, the cooperative coming together of individuals to form larger structural units. My piece attempts to explore this notion of collective organisation in a musical context.

One may see in polyphony a musical correlate of the phalanx concept. Yet just as in nature where we may find many 'phalanxes' co-existing and interacting, or in a state of mutual antipathy, the ensemble in my piece is in a constant state of flux with groups continually arising and disintegrating, and with the occasional single instrument emerging to assert its individuality. The piece as a whole may be viewed, therefore, as a 'polyphony of polyphonies'.

J. S. Bach was a favoured composer of both Steinbeck and Ricketts, and extensive use is made throughout the piece of the motif formed from the composer's name ('B-A-C-H = Bₘ-A-C-Bₘ'). The motif's influence may also be detected in the general intervalllic profile of the piece, which is rich in seconds and thirds.

C. M.
**Instrumentation**

Flute  
Oboe  
Cor Anglais  
Clarinet in A  
Soprano Saxophone  
   Bassoon  
Trumpet in C  
   Horn in F  
Trombone  
Accordian  
Marimba  
Vibraphone  
   Harp  
   Piano  
Violin  
   Viola  
   Cello  
   Double Bass

Score notated in C.

Duration: c. 18 minutes.
From the Shoreline to the Stars

Calmo, sostenuto assai, \( \text{\textit{c} = 84} \)

Christopher Meelen

Flute

Cor Anglais

Clarinet in A

Bassoon

Horn in F