

EDGE OF THE WORLD

Ballet for Piano and Orchestra in Three Movements

Pagan Dreaming

Winter Solstice

Sea Spirits

Duration: 29'00"

Composed by Amanda Lee Falkenberg (2003)

Composer's Notes / Journal

Edge of the World is about life, the human psyche, the beginning of time and the journey beyond those beginnings.

Edge of the World is an orchestral tour of these philosophical concepts. The potential esoteric element in these topics was my inspiration to write the score. I wanted the underlying themes in the music to be accessible, thought provoking and cloaked in shades of mystery.

The title in itself has pondering overtones and begs for reflection.

"Edge of the World."

Is there an edge to our world? Is there an edge to our minds? If there was an edge to the world, what would we find there?

The ballet is divided into three equal sections and based loosely on what I conceive as three basic fundamental stages of life and the development of the human psyche.

First Section

I. Pagan Dreaming

The beginning.

The early years after descending from the stars.

Second Section

II. Winter Solstice

The emotional awakening.

The early years of our maturity and philosophical intelligence.

Third Section

III. Sea Spirits

Surrender to the unknown.

Were we apply this developed emotional and intuitive intelligence and ultimately free our worries and curiosities to the universe. The final section is not only about rejoicing in these experiences and the lessons learnt from opening up to the universe, but there are overtones of deep wisdom and profound power.

The elements one finds in nature has a strong presence in the musical content and each movement is rooted in one or more of these elements.

For example, in Pagan Dreaming I incorporated what I felt as being earthy and primitive, raw and green with touches of "star dust" used as a reference and reminder of our own genesis. Furthermore, Pagan Dreaming is about the unconscious realm. Man being in awe of his new surroundings, his planet earth and with that he is "Drunk" in its beauty. He is overwhelmed by that organic power that surrounds him and his own powers within, and only yet to be tapped into. He is "full" on life and ready to begin his journey. Pagan Dreaming addresses issues of naivety, immaturity and the innocence and beauty in child like wonder.

Pagan Dreaming is a representation of the "Birth of time" the "Birth of our soul" the "unconscious mind," dreaming about possibilities.

In Winter Solstice, the element from nature that I drew inspiration from was the image of a barren landscape of pure white snow, dormant in time and frozen.

The cloaked landscape of snow giving the impression of lifelessness but the irony is that there is in fact life and vast amounts of activity occurring beneath the surface.

Appearances can be deceptive.

I drew inspiration from the great Stravinsky's Rite of Spring where the comments about the "cracking of the earth after a frozen winter at the arrival of spring". This to me has had such a powerful image and seemed suitable with the underlying themes for my own Winter Solstice. Why I chose a frozen image as a theme is that I felt that with the "Awakening of the mind" there is a large potential us all to be overwhelmed by what we do not know. We can be afraid to move through those fears and to take that leap into the unknown.

In Winter Solstice I wanted to look at the mind as it begins its true developmental phase where humans become much more aware of their surroundings and the choices and possibilities that accompanies that. This is reflected musically in the score as I chose a sparse and vacant "bed" of sound. Occasionally you will get a whiff of micro activity. Tiny snippets of a darting musical motif played spontaneously by the woodwind choir accompanied through out by the "cellos opening barren drone. The "darting musical motifs" are designed to depict the "cracking of the sub conscience mind" - The coming of Age. The beginnings of being able to see the larger meaning of life and the clear light that accompanies.

By the end of the second movement there is a greater sense of that mind awakening. In the second half of the movement, we feel that power unfolding and the ideas crystallizing power reflected by the momentum, pace and energy of the score.

Winter Solstice is an attempt to capture that feeling of growing wisdom and personal strength. They have felt the own power and energy and are beginning to own it.

The obvious element from nature that I used in the final movement Sea Spirits is the ocean. This image has limitless potential in every art form to communicate the artist's ideas. The concept of an ocean in this example helped reinforce the underlying layers I wanted to express musically. The Ocean being huge, grand and majestic like the untapped power of the developing mind and inward human strength. The image of a wave provides a sense of forward movement and momentum. The perseverance of a wave and it's capability of generating immense power. Water on a simple level has the ability to cleanse, and a blue ocean can also depict tranquillity reinforcing the concept of psychological surrender and being receptive.

Sea Spirits is also representative of the mystery of life. Again being the final movement this ties in closer to the Cover title Edge of The World. If there was an edge, what spirits might exist there? What challenges would we face?

This movement is where we feel like the mind has developed or is developing as much as mortal life will allow but there is still a lot of questions and thoughts desperate to be answered.

The music in this third movement has intimated this confusion, the swirling and whirling sounds generated by the orchestra are a representation of the giddy mind.

We attempt to comprehend the spiritual, the sub-conscience, and the earthly conscience but instead find ourselves in chaos of the mind. Just like the grand tides of the ancient seas that never cease swirling we never let this questioning and this quest for finding answers subside.

We do, however, reach a moment in this movement that does find itself in a very centred position, as if for just one moment, we have been given a "vision" where one becomes somewhat "enlightened" and there is for a small moment in time. A sense of peace and reflection and clarity seems to emerge.

After this moment until the end of the movement, there is a massive whirl and the music keeps generating this sense of forward movement. The music keeps pounding and growing and there is this strong, powerful force "tossing" us to the outer rims of the earth, the outer rim of the sub-conscience mind.

Finally this enormous build up of energy appears to have ended but the musical chord does not give too much away and you are left with a sense of mystery assisted by the inconclusive musical overtones, having felt that the decision rests with you.

Did they find the Edge of the World? Was there an edge?

Or was The Edge of The World just all about personal journey and therefore the question irrelevant?