

Astrolatry

Composer: Avner Dorman
Year: 2011
Duration: 14 min
Orchestration: 1+pic.2.2(Ebcl).2/4221/timp.3perc/hp.pf/str
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Program Note

Premiere:

March 25 2011

Alabama Symphony Orchestra

Justin Brown, conductor

Birmingham, AL

1. Celestial Revelations
2. The Worship of the Stars

While I was writing **Astrolatry**, I spent more time outside of large cities than ever before in my life. More than anything else, I found myself in awe of nature in a way I never felt before. Lightning, rain, winds, and the night sky were so much larger and more impressive than they are in the city; and for the first time in my life, I could truly understand why ancient people worshiped the stars.

The piece begins with the sky, as it appears when one first looks up at night: complete darkness. Then, one by one, stars begin to reveal themselves, and as the pupils of the eye widen, more and more stars and constellations appear, and we notice colors, interactions, and motion.

The first section of the composition is a dance of the revelations of the stars. Some are isolated; some come in groups; some are pretty and naïve; and some are filled with motion and conflict. Towards the end of the section, the southern star appears, calming the celestial objects with a soft tango and leading the section to

its culmination in a peaceful and full-lit sky.

A swift falling gesture figuratively drops us back to earth where the worship of the stars is about to take place. A steady quarter note beat played by low drums propels the ritual. (Though the narrative deals with prehistory, musically the ritual takes its beat from genres of electronica such as techno.) The steady beat builds up the ecstasy of the ritual, only halted by the entrance of the tribe's leader (in the Marimba). The leader, through the repetition of a simple melody in 5/8s over the 4/4 beat, brings the worshipers to catharsis.

Just before the piece ends, we all stop for a moment and take one last look at the cosmos, admiring its beauty and mystery.

- Avner Dorman

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