

(Not) The Shadow (Not After Hans Christian Andersen)

Composer: Avner Dorman
Year: 2010
Duration: 17 min 30 s
Orchestration: 3(pic.af).2+ca.3(bcl).2+cbn/4.3(opt Dtpt).3.1/tmp.3perc/pf.hp/str
Publisher: G Schirmer Inc
Commission: Meet the Composer's Magnum Opus Project

Program Note

First performance:

November 14 2010

Marin Symphony

Alasdair Neale, conductor

San Rafael, CA

Composer's Note:

Hans Christian Andersen's dark fairy tale "The Shadow" tells a tale of a learned man who sends his shadow to find out a secret on a hot summer night in a southern country. The shadow runs away and becomes a rich and powerful man through blackmail and extortion (as he can enter homes at night and see people's darkest secrets). Meanwhile, the learned man returns to his home in the northern lands and grows older and poorer writing books about the true, the good, and the beautiful. Many years later, the shadow appears at the learned man's doorstep and manipulates the learned man to pose as the shadow's shadow and help the shadow win over the heart of a princess. When the learned man refuses to go to the royal wedding as his own shadow's shadow, the prince to be (i.e., the shadow) proclaims, "my shadow has gone mad; I suppose such a poor, shallow brain, could not bear much; he fancies that he has become a real man, and that I am his shadow." And so the shadow and the princess wed, "but the learned man heard nothing of all these

festivities, for he had already been executed.”

Short analysis of the piece - in five sections:

1. Presto – begins with lively energy and a theme of Middle Eastern character. The theme develops like a spiral, revolving around the pitch E and gradually expanding around it. The main conflict of this section is between the thematic material and an insistent repetitive element that gradually takes over the texture. The repetitive element is very simple and consists of four notes: D-C-B-A. These repeat with accents on multiples of three (4 against 3) resulting in a fractal phenomenon – where larger accented patterns of notes form variants of the original motif. Chords made up of the notes of the repetitive motif start emerging with increasing intensity leading to a climatic iteration of the motif.

2. Andante – Largo – Andante - the second section is slow and expressive. The D-C-B-A motif continues to dominate this section creating both melodies and running scales.

3. Con moto – the third section is of a hallucinatory or meditative nature. The notes of the repetitive motif are now stretched farther apart, and every note has a long tail (i.e., it stays in our ears and minds for a long time).

4. Più Animato – The notes of the repetitive motif are now stretched even farther and express great pain.

5. Recapitulation – the opening conflicting elements return and fight again, though they will never be the same.

-- Avner Dorman

Avner Dorman

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Accessed on December 6, 2025