ABSTRACT

Of Fire and Rain

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*Of Fire and Rain* is an eleven-minute work for full orchestra. Through its musical materials it explores the idea of two contrasting elements, fire and water, as symbols. Conflict, balance, suffering, and healing are among the themes underlying this pairing, and the piece addresses these ideas both structurally and in the materials themselves. The piece is composed of five major sections. The first is a slow introduction which provides much of the motivic and harmonic material for the rest of the piece. The second section contains material expressing the idea of fire. This music is fast, accented, rhythmic, and dissonant, building to a large climax. Following is a section representing water, or rain. Its material is slow, sustained, consonant, and harmonically static. More fire material comes next and it builds to the largest climax of the piece. The work ends with a condensed statement of the water music, fading into the trio of swelling ocean drums which conclude the piece.
Of Fire and Rain

by

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A Thesis

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures .................................................................................................................................................. iv

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................................................... v

Dedication ........................................................................................................................................................ vi

Chapter One ....................................................................................................................................................... 1
   Origins ......................................................................................................................................................... 1
   Symbols ................................................................................................................................................... 1
   Form ....................................................................................................................................................... 2
   Creative Process ....................................................................................................................................... 4

Chapter Two ..................................................................................................................................................... 9
   Exegesis .................................................................................................................................................. 9
   Opposing Forces: Two Source Chords ...................................................................................................... 9
   Repose .................................................................................................................................................... 19
   Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................. 21

Bibliography .................................................................................................................................................... 23
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Chord “A” in its original voicing (m. 1)........................................................... 10

Figure 2a. Chord “A”, normal order .............................................................................. 10

Figure 2b. Chord “A”, prime form ............................................................................... 10

Figure 3. The “half-whole” octatonic scale ................................................................... 11

Figure 4. Chord “B”, normal order ............................................................................... 12

Figure 5. Revoicing of second harmony, mm. 12-15 .................................................... 13

Figure 6. Original pitches and prime form of clarinet-vibraphone cluster, m. 31 ....... 15

Figure 7. Violin I, m.33. Derivation from Chords “A” and “B”................................. 16

Figure 8. Violin I, m. 49. Derivation from chords “A” and “B” ................................. 18

Figure 9. Violins, mm. 54-55...................................................................................... 18

Figure 10. Harmonic reduction, mm. 105-106 ............................................................. 21
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To my parents
CHAPTER ONE

Origins

Symbols

The influential ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles first codified fire, water, earth, and air as the four fundamental elements present in all matter.¹ I have long been affected emotionally and spiritually by experiences and memories associated with two of these elements, fire and water. The intensity and lasting impact of these experiences seemed to invite musical expression. When I began to consider writing a piece that would convey both sets of experiences, I was quickly drawn to the contrast inherent in the pairing. Further contemplation led to broader application, as universal themes of life and death, femininity and masculinity, conflict, balance, suffering, and healing began to emerge. I composed Of Fire and Rain as an expression of some of the meaning that is bound up in these symbols.

In working with these ideas, I made lists of words and collages of images that depicted feelings these elements evoked. My list of fire associations contained words such as anger, fear, and pain. No doubt these associations were formed with the recurring nightmares I had as a child in which my house burned down night after night. The idea of water or rain for me yielded thoughts of peace and healing. By contrast, a number of people I spoke with had experienced recurring drowning nightmares or dreams of being engulfed in a tidal wave. This pointed me to the fascinating paradox that though fire and

water are in a sense archrivals, as water has the power to eliminate fire, both elements
have the power to kill. Moreover, the heat of fire is at times necessary to sustain life, and
nearly every living thing must have water to survive. These are powerful elements,
indeed.

Form

Somehow it seemed right to begin the piece from the fire dreams, perhaps as they
are the earliest of the experiences I was recalling. I composed an introduction that bears
feelings of anxiety, tension, and vulnerability of my childhood nightmares. This
introduction contains the seeds of the rest of the piece. The harmonic and melodic
content of much of the work can be traced to the introduction’s two harmonies. In
addition, the repeated-note motive that is a consistent thread throughout the piece is first
introduced here.

The music moves, as my memories do, from a subdued feeling of disquiet or
foreboding to something more forceful. The first fire section, whose own form is A-B-A,
begins in m. 30. The repeated-note motive fuels this section. It is used throughout the
orchestra, and is noticeable in its manifestation as repeated clusters in the *divisi* strings.
Melodic material heard in this section is derived from the pitches of the opening chords.
The fire music is accented, rhythmic, and driving. Measures 54-67 contain a contrasting
“B” section within the fire music. While its content is still derived from intervallic
relationships introduced in the piece’s opening, this music presents a less heavy-hearted
take on the fire subject than the preceding section: in places it even manages a certain
humor of absurdity. The earlier fire music (“A”) then returns and builds to a climax that
concludes at m. 102.
With the sound of two timpani the rain, or water, music begins (m. 105). I marked the score with the word *ujjayi* here because the sustained chords and the slow harmonic rhythm require the same kind of patient, controlled release as this yogic breathing technique. The music should also, perhaps, elicit the same feeling of release and calm that the deep breathing is meant to bring—the same feeling that rain evokes in me. I heard *ujjai* described as “ocean-sounding breath,” and knew it fit the music. This section grows somewhat organically, an arching melody emerging from the smooth texture. The repeated-note rain motive also appears, gently this time, in the harp, clarinet and vibraphone.

Had I ended the piece here it might have seemed, programmatically, that the rain came and put out the fire and there is no more to be said. However, one of my intentions was to use the contrast inherent in this pair of symbols to make observations about conflict between opposing forces and the struggle for balance between them. Such opposing forces may include, as one example, the co-existence of masculine and feminine traits within all people. Another such opposition can simply be differing parts of an individual’s personality that may be contradictory and difficult to reconcile. I wanted the form of the work to reflect a pursuit of balance between such opposing forces.

For this reason I chose to return to the fire music. Material from the introduction, with emphasis on the repeated-note motive, serves as a transition from the water music to the return of the fire. This fire section is shorter than the first, incorporating only the “A” material. It builds to an even bigger climax, the most frenetic point in the piece. As it comes to a sudden stop, a solo horn emerges, sustaining the pedal B from the water
material. Quietly, the water music returns and, with the aid of three ocean drums, gradually slips into silence like distant waves.

*Creative Process*

As soon as I realized that some aspect of the fire dreams was going to be significant in the piece, I began improvising at the piano, with my memories of the images and feelings from the dreams in mind. This is how I generated the opening material which contained the seeds for the rest of the piece. After I wrote the first sixteen bars of the introduction, I took some time to examine the possibilities of these musical materials.

In many ways, the creative process can be compared to the birthing process, or to child-rearing. A child has infinite potential—it is born with the capacity for many things and will inevitably grow more in some of these potentialities than in others. A parent is given the gift and responsibility of guiding the child in developing some of their abilities, though it is sadly true that we can never fulfill all of our human potential. A composer likewise faces this situation repeatedly in the creative process: she must examine the potential of the raw, undeveloped musical material and make choices about which ways she will develop that material. Thus this analytical step must be undertaken, though sometimes I think it occurs unconsciously.

The results of this and other analysis of my musical materials will be explored later. With regard to process, however, I made the necessary observations, then put them away. I soon came to another critical point in the composition of this piece when I set out to compose the fire music. It was a point at which I learned to put into practice a principle of creative work I have been learning over the years, and a point at which I
discovered how powerful that principle can be. In 2004 I was fortunate to attend a lecture given by David del Tredici at Baylor University. One of the things he said has remained with me to this day: “Composing is unwilled. The fun of composing is finding out what is inside of you. Obey whatever it is. Commit to it.” A similar kernel of wisdom spoken by the poet Allen Ginsberg puts this principle differently: “Catch yourself thinking. In other words, you don’t try and think up something. You remember you just thought something, and then if it’s interesting then you can write it down.”

While generating ideas for the fire section, I knew I was going about something wrong when my music sounded stilted and I felt as though I had been fighting myself. I stopped, stilled myself, and listened. I heard a few bars of music in my head. I wrote them down, and committed myself to working with them. I was fearful that this music would not relate to the introduction I had written, but I decided to stop trying so hard to control the outcome. It was only after I finished writing the section that I had the joy of discovering all the links between the two.

This experience became important to me throughout the rest of the composition process. I followed del Tredici’s advice the day I composed the water music. I followed Dr. McAllister’s advice, too, in spending a few hours walking in the park on a cloudy Saturday afternoon. Julia Cameron calls this “filling the well”:

Any extended period or piece of work draws heavily on our artistic well. Overtapping the well, like overfishing the pond, leaves us with diminished resources….As artists, we must learn to be self-nourishing. We must become alert enough to consciously replenish our creative resources as we draw on them—to restock the trout pond, so to speak.

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2 Allen Ginsberg, prod. and dir. Lewis MacAdams and John Dorr, 87 min., Lannan Foundation, 1989, videocassette.

After my walk along the river I was refreshed and inspired. I found a piano and repeated my experience with the fire music. Trusting the first creative impulse that came, I composed this section in its final form in one sitting.

The final section of the piece did not come so easily, and to discuss its composition requires a diversion into a topic that is of great interest to me and was present in my earliest conception of the piece. The topic is that of gender.

Susan McClary is known among musicologists for her exposure of gender issues underlying classical forms. In “Narrative Agendas in ‘Absolute’ Music: Identity and Difference in Brahms’s Third Symphony” she discusses the idea that sonata form can be seen as an enacting of patriarchal gender roles. Defending her position, McClary points to the fact that music theorists, including Arnold Schoenberg, have pointed to the political implications of tonal music. In approaching works composed within sonata form, she says, we know the “plot” in advance: The piece will begin in one key, then it will be challenged by another key, they will fight it out, and the original key will win. Reference to the primary and secondary themes of sonata form as “masculine” and “feminine” began in the mid-nineteenth century and continued through the 1960s, McClary states. Since the form is set, the fate of these “characters” is already determined: “The ‘masculine’ tonic is predestined to triumph” while “the ‘feminine’

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“Other” is subverted. “Instrumental composers [of the nineteenth century] who wanted to tell other stories risked unintelligibility,” McClary says.

As I have stated, there are multiple layers of symbolic meaning in my conception of fire and water. From the earliest conception of the piece I was aware that masculinity and femininity would among those layers. Though I have oversimplified McClary’s work, its application to my consideration of the final section of my piece is clear. While I am not working within the tonal system, the dramatic implications of my music’s form cannot be much separated from the historical context in which Western composers still find themselves.

In my readings and private contemplation I have come to a belief, or perhaps an idealistic vision, that greater healing will be possible for the world when the gender roles societies impose are minimized and people are able to freely express their truest selves (which are not sexually-defined) in a supportive environment. Given this belief, given that the fire material and water material can easily adopt “masculine” and “feminine” roles, respectively, within the piece, and knowing what McClary said about the social implications of how I treated and developed these materials across the form, I wanted to consider the ending of the piece carefully.

Wanting to infuse my work with the message of equality, I sought to juxtapose the two ideas at the piece’s conclusion. Unfortunately, doing that without sacrificing aesthetic beauty and musical sense (without “risking intelligibility”) proved to be harder than I had hoped. After writing quite a few different unsuccessful endings, I had to let go of my wish to depict my conviction in such a straightforward way.

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5 Ibid., 332.

6 Ibid., 333.
Perhaps it was fitting that I found myself struggling so hard to reconcile the two musical ideas. Maybe there is truth in the old saying, “art imitates life.” Maybe fire and water just do not mix. And perhaps it was more accurate in the end to simply fade out in the midst of a momentary calm, conveying the reality of unresolved conflict and the ongoing struggles that all people experience. We cannot tell the whole story of human experience in one work, try as we might.
CHAPTER TWO

Exegesis

Opposing Forces: Two Source Chords

Of the five sections that comprise this work, three of them are closely related to each other by means of pitch and interval content. The music contained within the two fire sections refers almost constantly to the opening harmonies of the introduction. By setting these first two chords in opposition to each other in the introduction, I created a framework with which I could address the ideas of conflict, opposition and struggle. As setting fire against water across the form conveys these ideas on the macro level, so do pitch collections within the introduction and fire sections communicate conflict on the micro level.

I tend to think of my melodic and harmonic materials in terms of intervallic content. The two chords that open the piece, however, also contain several potential triadic resources. Because the first two chords of the piece are the source of much of the material used in the fire sections, it is important to gain an understanding of their construction.

The first of these harmonies, which I will call chord “A”, is composed of six pitches: B, C, F-sharp, G, B-flat, and E-flat (Figure 1). Though the chord sounds dissonant, with some enharmonic respelling the triads E-flat major, E-flat minor, G augmented, C minor, C diminished, and B major can be drawn from it. The pitch collection also emphasizes half-step relationships (B-flat to B, B to C, and F-sharp to G)
thereby yielding also the use of the minor ninth as an octave expansion of the minor second and the major seventh as its inversion. There are also two perfect-fifth relationships present in the chord (B to F-sharp and C to G), and a perfect fourth (B-flat to E-flat). The presence of these intervals alerted me to the possibility of emphasizing second, seventh, fifth and fourth relationships on either the micro or macro level.

![Figure 1](image.jpg)

Figure 1. Chord “A” in its original voicing (m. 1).

In my preliminary analysis I also explored chord “A” in terms of set theory, determining its normal order (Figure 2a). In this voicing the intervals most emphasized are thirds: with the necessary enharmonic respelling one can find two major and two minor thirds here. Both of these possess significance in the piece.

![Figure 2a](image1.jpg)  ![Figure 2b](image2.jpg)

Figure 2a. Chord “A”, normal order. Figure 2b. Chord “A”, prime form.

Even more indispensable to an understanding of the interrelatedness of the different parts of this composition is the prime form of the opening harmony (Figure 2b). The prime form is simply the best normal order transposed so that it begins on C. The prime form

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7 In Figure 2a, B-flat has been respelled as A-sharp.
of chord “A” is [0, 3, 4, 7, 8]. The first three of these pitches comprise a subset that factors prominently in the melodic content of the piece. This subset, [0, 3, 4], with the inclusion of one additional pitch (C-sharp), also forms the beginning of the “half-whole” octatonic scale: [0, 1, 3, 4]. This pitch collection appears in a number of places throughout the fire section, as I will demonstrate. Larger fragments of the octatonic scale also emerge, particularly in surface ornamentation. The sweeping quintuplets that lead into the middle section of the fire music (m. 53) are one example of this kind of octatonic presentation.

![Figure 3. The “half-whole” octatonic scale.](image)

This opening harmony, chord “A,” persists through the first eight bars, until the first harmonic movement is made in the middle of m. 9. The movement is that of stepwise ascent: the G ascends to A, the E-flat to F, the B-flat to B natural, and the C to C-sharp. The resulting chord, chord “B” is comprised of the F-sharp minor triad plus the pitches B and F, a tritone that will figure prominently later in the piece. Because C-sharp is the lowest pitch heard until the last beat of m. 12 when the basses enter on a low F, the chord at first sounds as an F-sharp 6/4 chord with added notes B and F. Prominent intervallic resources derived from this chord include the aforementioned tritone and the major seconds (A to B and B to C-sharp) which appear more clearly when the chord is reduced to its best normal order (Figure 4).
As a microcosmic expression of my broad ideas of conflict between two opposing forces, chord “B” stands in opposition to chord “A” in many places throughout the piece. The first such instance occurs in m. 6. For five bars only the dissonant whisper of divisi strings is heard. Then, with the music’s first glint of color, the glockenspiel outlines a first-inversion F-sharp minor triad. This “B”-derived statement is the glockenspiel’s harmonic challenge to the strings, who have now stated chord “A” three times. After its descending arpeggiated F-sharp minor chord the glockenspiel changes direction and ends with the highest pitch of the motive on the “and” of the last beat of the 5/4 bar, a rhythmic position that lends an apologetic tone to the harmonic intrusion. The strings hesitate to accept the glockenspiel’s suggestion (bar 8), but finally they do in bar 9, where the flutes, clarinets, harp and vibraphone are added to color this first harmonic change.

The next motion is not a harmonic change but a re-voicing of chord “B.” The new voicing bears a little less tension: The dissonant F-natural is removed from the upper voice and though it remains in the bass it is rhythmically offset from the sounding of the other voices. Additionally, the consonant C-sharp (functioning as the fifth of the F-sharp minor triad) is doubled in the divided second violins, softening the presence of their B-natural. Because the high F-natural in the first violins resolves up to F-sharp in this harmonic revoicing, the motion has a subtle effect of resolution (Figure 5). Yet the

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8 In this figure, F natural has been respelled as E sharp.
persistence of the low F-natural warns the listener that resolution is not yet to be had, and
the orchestral outburst in m. 16 confirms this instability.

![Figure 5. Revoicing of second harmony, mm. 12-15.](image)

The opening material is then restated after a full measure’s rest. I condensed the
material in this restatement and added texture and tension by incorporating some
foreshadowing motives in the winds. Most directly, the piccolo motive in bar 20
foreshadows a primary theme of the fire music: its pitches are identical but its rhythm is
contracted. Measure 22 contains the repeated-note idea that gradually expands into
repeated chromatic clusters, another main idea from the fire section. Here it is stated in
the woodwinds and the cluster expands downward. Later the idea is stated in the violas
and cellos, and the expansion is ascending, like flickering tongues of fire. In the context
of the introduction, however, I hoped this figure (which is also hinted at and developed
some in the trumpets, bars 24-25) would contribute to the feeling of tension and
uncertainty present in the fire dreams I was recalling.
As the new harmony is sustained, the vibraphone and harp introduce, for the first time, the repeated-note motive that is one of the most prominently consistent threads throughout the piece. We will explore later how it is treated more substantially in the first fast section and worked into the slow music as a surface elaboration of the harmonic movement.

Sometimes I think of musical cells, motives, or themes in terms of characters in a plot. As the listener follows a musical idea through the piece, he comes to know it better by observing how it “responds” to different contexts or to interactions with other “characters.” Like a viewer following the transformation of a character through the plot of a film or play, the listener witnesses the ways in which this musical character transforms. The interval of a third, which we saw above in the normal order of chord “A,” in this piece plays the role of a minor character that has a few moments in the spotlight and a couple of costume changes, but does not detract from the leading roles. This “character” is formally introduced by the bass clarinet in bar 21 in an oscillating thirty-second-note figuration between the pitches F and A. Here is yet another subtle challenge to the reigning harmony, for by emphasizing the major third relationship between F and A, the bass clarinet draws our attention to the presence of an F augmented triad, also implicit in this second chord, competing with the F-sharp minor triad.

The tension that preceded the outburst in m. 16 is increased in mm. 27-29 as the basses, timpani, low woodwinds and now tuba persistently emphasize the F-natural belonging to chord “B,” while the first trumpet draws attention to its F-sharp with its accelerating repeated-note figure. The piccolo’s foreshadowing figure is picked up by the contrabassoon and bass clarinet, transposed up a minor second. The repeated-note
figure in the harp, clarinet and vibraphone continues, insistently carrying us into the new tempo and the new formal section.

As the new tempo begins, so do the clusters that characterize the fire section. The clarinets’ and vibraphone’s repeated unison C-sharps expand into a cluster containing C-sharp, D, and E. This cluster is derived from the [0, 1, 3, 4] pitch set, which is the offspring of chord “A” (Figure 6).

![Figure 6. Original pitches and prime form of clarinet-vibraphone cluster, m. 31.](image)

By m. 31 the low strings have begun their emphatic repetition of chromatic clusters also related, in their half-step construction, to chord “A.” Against all of this chord “A” material presses an opposing force: the F-natural that colors chord “B.” The second violins⁹ and the basses, doubled with a small bass drum for added articulation, interject with repeated-note figures that emphasize the tension between F-natural and F-sharp.

The predominant melodic idea of the outer sections of the fire music is first presented in m. 33 in the first violins. This melody, foreshadowed by the piccolo in the introduction, is composed of two descending half-steps followed by a descending minor third. Its relationship to chord “A” can be seen in terms of its emphasis on minor seconds and its outline of a perfect fourth. Even more directly, however, the melody is

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⁹ The second violins are required to use scordatura tuning on the G string, so that their range includes the pitch F3. In the parts, all pitches to be played on the G string are marked as such and transposed so that the players need not make any adjustments other than re-tuning their lowest string.
constructed of the first three pitches of that chord’s prime form, and preceded by the F that we will often see returning from chord “B” (Figure 7).

![Figure 7. Violin 1, m.33. Derivation from Chords “A” and “B”.

In m. 35 the motive is embellished by a pick-up B, the chord-“B”-tritone from B and F de-emphasized by octave displacement. The resulting leap exaggerates the ascending motion which perhaps compensates for all the descending intervals that follow.

An accented, unison minor second figure (from F to E) pops out from of the agitated lower strings’ texture in m. 37, signaling that we are not to indulge long in the violins’ high, sustained melody. Then the cellos state a motive that is somewhat related to the glockenspiel’s first statement: an arpeggiated triad from the piece’s opening chord that conflicts with the pre-existing harmony. This time I extracted the B major triad from the source chord. Again it is presented over what we might now view as a pedal F-natural. The cellos’ figure emphasizes both of the thirds in the triad, another appearance of this supporting “character” in the intervallic construction of the piece.

The next event is a recurrence of the four-note melody, but this time it is preceded by a little gesture that draws the ear back to the high register and prepares the listener for the melody’s entrance. This two-note gesture (m. 41) occurs in the flutes and piccolo and it is comprised of the first two pitches of the subsequent melody, but displaced by an octave so that the descent is that of a minor ninth rather than a minor second. (The
second flute actually plays the same motive transposed down a major second, so that the
gesture is heard in clusters, while the lower strings are briefly in unison.) Again the
intervalic relationship recalls chord “A,” while the prominent F-natural from chord “B”
reminds us again of the opposition between these harmonic sources.

Meanwhile, the horns, first trumpet, oboes and clarinets sustain a three-note
cluster that expands outward from the center (F – E-flat – G flat). This cluster, first heard
in m. 40 in the bassoons and contrabassoon, can be seen as a derivation of the cluster
events that have been occurring throughout the fire music; it also serves to foreshadow
the sustained harmonies of the water music. This cluster is developed through rhythmic
diminution, similar to but more complex than that imposed on the clarinet/vibraphone
cluster that opened the fire section. In addition, the pitch content of these two clusters is
very closely related. In set theory terms, the clusters belong to the same set class as they
both reduce to the prime form [0, 1, 3].

These are the primary materials of which the fire music was constructed. Other
significant moments within this material include m. 39, where the thirds return in the
cellos in m. 39. Here I extracted the B major triad from chord “A” and set it against F-
natural in the basses. Another important third is stated twice in bars 47-48, accented in
the low instruments. This interval (descending from F-sharp to D) is an expansion of the
minor third between F-sharp (G flat) and E-flat heard in the woodwinds’ sustained
clusters. In bar 49 a dramatic, disjunct repeated-note gesture is heard in the violins and
woodwinds. This gesture contains pitch content taken directly from chords A and B
(Figure 8).
A contrasting section within the fire music begins in m. 54. The flutes and piccolo rebound off of a timpani hit in a somewhat disjunct descending staccato melody. The first fragment of this melody is an E-flat minor arpeggio, another triadic extraction from chord “A.” The flutes taper off with a descending major seventh leap which is picked up by the lower strings and carried down to a low E-flat. The upper strings respond with melodic material derived from the octatonic scale, or more specifically the [0, 1, 3, 4] subset taken from chord “A” (Figure 9).

The second violins carry the retrograde of [0, 1, 3, 4], untransposed, from chord “A” while the first violins play above them, forming parallel major thirds. These ideas—the somewhat awkward, disjunct melodic ideas of the flutes and the violins’ octatonic parallel thirds—along with the lingering though less prominent presence of chromatic
clusters comprise most of the material of this “B” section. Measure 58 recalls the cellos’
arpeggiated B major triad in m. 39; here the cellos and first trombone make a similar
gesture outlining E-flat major and leaping up from the fifth of the chord to the third and
back down to the root as before. Following a quintuplet run the woodwinds then state the
octatonic melody (mm. 60-62), this time in unison, while the violins compete for
attention with fortissimo interjections before finally joining the woodwinds in bar 62 and
completing the phrase with the support of the trumpets and trombones (m. 63). The
section closes with accented triplet eighths descending through the orchestra in octaves.

In m. 68 the material from the opening of the fire section returns. Bars 71-78
feature pitched percussion and tom-toms; the four-note melody heard before in the violins
is presented in the glockenspiel and vibraphone over the marimba’s reiteration of the
tritone between B and F. The remainder of the section is developed much as the previous
statement of this material, but at its climax the music ascends to a series of repeated
clusters. Thus within the tripartite form of the first fire section, pivotal moments such as
these ascending and descending climaxes can be seen as opposing forces in conflict with
each other or in a struggle to find balance.

Repose

Within the other two sections of the work I wanted to convey healing, resolution,
hope, and renewal. In contrast to the fire music this water, or rain, music is not so
complex in its construction and it does not subject itself to the introduction’s two primary
chords. Much less chromatic, it floats on the key center of B while remaining unbound to
a clearly-defined tonality. My intent in this music is to invite the listener to rest, to
breathe, to imagine and even to experience a release of tension and an absence of conflict
or struggle. To put it more directly, the water music is meant to bring a sense of healing and a feeling of being enveloped in love.

The B pedal tone that sustains throughout these sections contributes to the music’s feeling of repose. The upper voices oscillate between two harmonies that are repeated continually in a slow, *ujjayi*-like rhythm. Meter changes allow this breath-like harmonic rhythm to fluctuate gently. I incorporated these soft irregularities not only because they prevent monotony within this prolonged harmonic stasis, but also because they mimic the gently irregular rhythm that can be heard in rain during a storm or in ocean waves.

I have stated that the water music is more independent of the introduction as its source material than is the fire music. It is linked, however, by at least two elements: First, the pedal B and overall key area are related to chord “B”; the emphasis on B in this section balances the emphasis on F and F-sharp in the fire music, the remainder of the chord “B” pitch material. Second, the descending melodic half-step that is heard in each statement of the brief harmonic progression directly counters the ascending half-step that opens the piece in the basses.

The harmonies heard throughout this section are simply the open fifth between B and F-sharp, and C-sharp major over the pedal B (Figure 10). The F sharp in the upper voice moves to E-sharp a beat later than the rest of the voices, creating a 4-3 suspension.
However, since B remains in the bass, the resolution on E-sharp creates a tritone between the outer voices. To my ear, this tritone is not dissonant, due to the close voicing of the C sharp major chord and a two-and-a-half-octave span between the outer voices. Its presence does, however, invite resolution or movement of some kind, and this propels the music forward.

Instead of resolving neatly downward, the E-sharp returns to F-sharp which then again becomes a suspension. Both of these pitches are consonant within their respective harmonies, but for the reasons just described they contain a twinge of imperative. Healing only occurs in the aftermath of suffering, and there is a glimmer of pathos in the purest joy. It was my desire to communicate this kind of contrast and balance even within the rain music.

Conclusion

Throughout the composition of this orchestra piece I sought to communicate personal and universal themes of conflict between opposing forces, the struggle to attain balance, and the healing that can result from such experiences. Using the symbolism I attribute to fire and rain as a departure point, I handled these ideas on both the micro- and macrocosmic levels. In the water music this occurred through manipulation of harmonic
tendencies and control of harmonic rhythm. The fire music demonstrated the idea of struggle between opposing forces in its treatment of opposing pitches (such as F-natural against F-sharp) and juxtaposition of pitch collections derived from two opposing harmonic sources, chords “A” and “B.” The tension inherent in conflict was first presented in the introduction. The way the form of the piece oscillates back and forth between dramatically contrasting musical materials depicts the striving for balance that I sought to express through the symbols of fire and water. These symbols also provided an opportunity for me to explore gender issues in the work simultaneously. Moreover, in the process of generating these musical materials I found practical application to an important guiding principle of creative work. Finally, I found musical expression for powerful personal spiritual and emotional experiences that have shaped my life and creative work.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

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* Throughout, unless otherwise noted, assume unison on single notes and divisi where two- and three-note clusters or double stops appear.
driving
accel. e molto cresc.