Forward

approximate duration: 18 minutes

Poe Extracts was composed in response to a commission by Andrew Hull and completed on December 18, 1996. It became the first of many works written especially for him. Movements II-IV were first performed by Hull at the California School for the Arts (3/97). The first complete performance by Hull was at the University of Arizona (4/97). He featured the work as a dramatic presentation, fit with a period costume and candles to capture the spirit in which the piece was composed. Any performer planning to play the piece as a whole (the inner three can function as an independent structure) is free to interpret the material in this way.

The work consists of five movements -
I Pit and Pendulum (prose fiction), II Upon the Quiet Mountain Top (verse), III to Eveleth (letter), IV Divine Injustice (philosophy), V Labyrinth of Light (verse)

“...The opening glissandi and rhythmic pendulums reminded me of Edgar Allan Poe’s The Pit and the Pendulum story and so I thought I’d do a piece taking that tale and dividing it up into scenes with the player taking the point of view of the narrator. Once I became more involved in reading about the life of the author as well as other works of his, I noticed recurring visual motifs he would use from genre to genre and I said to myself that it would be more interesting to illuminate something about the man through his work rather than to set one of his macabre affairs. I selected text excerpts from all sorts of his writings including stories, poems, letters, and philosophical discourses and arranged them so that the thread of his thinking from piece to piece was made apparent.

Next came the idea that in order to illustrate Poe’s swaying back and forth between sanity and madness (like a pendulum), I would avoid writing my entire work in a consistent style. Instead I would, too, sway between using the vocabularies of two musical languages. The problem was to try to maintain unity throughout a single work while developing the disparate materials independently. The piece then all fell into place very fast, composed amidst an illness I was suffering with all during the Christmas season. I decided to structure the work as a five pillar arch with through-composed and non-tonal first, third, and fifth movements. Meanwhile, the second and fourth would further explore the tonal techniques that I had previously reserved for my sacred organ chorales, here within a repetitive framework. A further means of distinguishing the two styles was in the manner of using the text. The non-tonal pieces would have rhythmically accurate renderings of the chosen passages integrated into the flow of the music and the guitar writing was to reflect the imagery Poe was drawing upon. The tonal pieces, on the other hand, would have the text read normally at the end of each ‘verse’ (for lack of a better word) of the movement while the performer plays a in vamping style in the background.

I finally decided that to bring out the pendulous nature of Poe, the last movement would contain snippets of all the previous movements thrown about, but carefully thrown about to tie together the many types of musical gestures despite the wide variety of their content. To set the stage for the piece, I used the word ‘extracts’ over ‘excerpts’, as the first obviously had more painful associations than the latter, and called the work Poe Extracts.”

- from About My Music  by the composer
I Pit and Pendulum
(6th string tuned to D)

\( \text{mf} \)  
\( \text{a tempo} \)

"I was sick unto death with that lo-
ng a-go-ny..."

"And then my vision fell upon the seven tall candles"
"their flame went out utterly... stillness and night were the universe...."

"How at least shall we distinguish its shadows from those of the tomb?"

(morendo)  Tempo I

[sub.]
accelerando...

ritardando...

"These shadows of memory tell..."

"in-distinctly of tall figures"

"The blackness... of eternal night..."

...encompassed me."

p (LV)
... saw the lips of the black-robbed judges."
1. "I stand beneath the mystic moon. An opiate vapour, dewy, dim..."
2. "Of her grand family funerals - some sepulchre, remote, alone..."
III *to Eveleth*

(5th string tuned to A)

Sonorous

"it was the hor-ri-ble ne-ver end-ing"

"os-cil-la-tion be-tween hope and dispair....."

"I drank ... ... God on-ly"

"knows how often or how much."

5:4

fff p p p
"We walk about, amid the destinies of our world-existence, encompassed by dim but ever present memories of a Destiny more vast - very distant in the bygone time...
... and infinitely awful."
V Labrynth of Light
(6th string tuned to D)

Lightly

crescendo...

sffz

mf

meno mosso

pp

"Dim vales... and shadowy floods..."

"And cloudy looking woods..."

"Whose form we can't discover..."

For the tears...
...that drip all over

"They use that moon no more."

"And they put out the star-light."

ppp crescendo poco a poco...
"And bury them up quite..."

mf

ppp crescendo...

finis

mp

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