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Vitrales

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VITRALES

AARON GOMEZ

38 Pages

*Vitrales* is a program piece for full orchestra that conveys a spiritual narrative. I organized the piece into three sections: Questioning; Emptiness; and Awakening. The main themes of these sections are: Questioning of one’s faith and the fate of one’s eternal soul, the emptiness of not having something to believe in, and the awakening of one’s faith and a re-discovery of spirituality. *Vitrales* (Spanish for stained glass) is inspired by my personal experience of looking at the stained glass windows housed in Sainte Chapelle Cathedral in Paris France and La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Spain. I attempt to convey a dream-like atmosphere through hazy orchestral textures and distorted sounds. I used extra musical cues to evoke the sounds of the Mass that I experienced at the moment of inspiration.

KEYWORDS: Vitrales, questioning, emptiness, awakening, Mass
VITRALES

AARON GOMEZ

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Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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School of Music

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2019
VITRALES

AARON GOMEZ

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VITRALES</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTRUMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE NOTES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITRALES SCORE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VITRALES

*Vitrales* is a program piece for full orchestra that conveys a spiritual narrative – my own personal spiritual narrative, in fact. I organized the piece into three sections: Questioning; Emptiness; and Awakening. The main themes of these sections are: Questioning of one’s faith and the fate of one’s eternal soul, the emptiness of not having something to believe in, and the awakening of one’s faith and a re-discovery of spirituality.

*Vitrales* (Spanish for stained glass) is inspired by my personal experience of looking at the stained glass windows housed in Sainte Chapelle Cathedral in Paris France and La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Spain. The Sainte Chapelle windows tell the story of the world from the beginning of time until the time when Saint Louis acquired Christ’s crown of thorns. As I looked at this massive narrative portrayed through glass, I began to reflect on my own personal journey. La Sagrada Familia displays bright and spectacular colors from the entire spectrum as the light emanating through it bounces off of the white interior of the cathedral. I used the bright lights as a source of inspiration for the finale of the piece.

I attempt to convey a dream-like atmosphere through hazy orchestral textures and distorted sounds. One example is the opening of the piece. I chose to score chimes being struck with soft mallets instead of the usual chime hammers. The mallets dampen the transience and the reverberation of the chimes. I chose this effect to represent the sound of distant church bells. I used dissonant chord clusters in this first section to further create a dream-like atmosphere. These dream-like, hazy orchestral textures spin a narrative of the themes of the first part of the program.
I used extra musical cues to evoke the sounds of the Mass that I experienced at the moment of inspiration. After the opening chimes of the piece, the violas play a monophonic melody in the Phrygian mode. This melody, illustrated in example 1, is modeled after the Western plainchant tradition that one would have heard during a Mass in a Roman Catholic church.

Example 1

I used spoken text to further evoke the atmosphere of a Catholic Mass. The members of the orchestra speak the Trinitarian formula as seen in example 2.

Example 2

Simultaneously, an original choral is heard in the woodwinds modeled after the hymns or chorals that can be heard during a mass or service.

The second large section of the piece, titled “Emptiness,” is meant to represent the sadness and emptiness I felt after I had decided to leave the church and my faith behind. This section begins at the grand pause at letter E. The silence is broken by an unaccompanied English horn solo. I chose to use the English horn to represent me as a wanderer looking for a metaphorical light at the end of a tunnel.

During the second half of this section, I bring back hazy textures and themes from the first section. I do this by scoring three solo bassists playing a chord cluster; this sets the foundation for the return of the chant-like melody. The viola chant, now in the tenor trombone, is a fragmented version of the original monophonic melody.

Example 3
I had to face my past and come to terms with my fears that caused me to leave the faith in the first place and the reintroduction of the atmospheric music represents this moment in my life.

After I took on this inner battle, I began to look for a new church home and to rebuild my faith. The personal spiritual journey narrative concludes with a hopeful finale. The emotional tone of the final section of the piece represents my hopeful feelings at this moment.

“Awakening” is full of bright bursts and colorful textures that layer one on top of the other. As the section continues, the texture becomes richer. I created a Debussy-esque texture through the layering ostinati in varying speeds illustrated in example 4.

Simultaneously, French horns along with trombones begin to swell in and out creating shifts in timbre as well as an auditory panning effect as seen in example 5.

“Awakening” represents my joy and relief I felt once I had finally returned to the faith. My decision to rejoin the church is represented by the large brass choral eight measures before letter M. The organ entrance at letter M, accompanied by the orchestra, recaps all of the themes previously used. The piece ends with a grand choral with the orchestra in full force at letter N marked “Trionfante” meaning triumphant.
*Vitrales* is a piece about my personal spiritual journey. My journey included questioning my faith and the fate of my eternal soul, loneliness and depression, and the re-discovery of spirituality and rebuilding of my faith. I use extra musical cues and hazy orchestra textures to convey my emotions and personal experiences while taking this journey. Through this music, I attempt to convey what my words simply cannot.
INSTRUMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE NOTES

Flute 1/Piccolo
Flute 2
Oboe 1
Oboe 2/English Horn
2 Clarinets in Bb
Bass Clarinet
2 Bassoons

4 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in Bb
3 Trombones
Tuba

Timpani
Percussion (3)
  Bass Drum
  Suspended Cymbal
  Tam-tam
  Chimes
  Crotales

Celeste

Organ

Strings

Performance Notes:
  Duration - 15:00
  Transposed Score

- Spoken - text should be spoken out loud together in rhythm like a congregation.

- Whispered ad lib. - Text should be whispered in rhythm written however speed should vary and not match surrounding players. This is to sound like scattered whispers.
Vitrales
II. Emptiness

Very slow, Defeated $\frac{2}{3} = 42$

Vitrales
Vitrales