



Elegy for the
End of Nature

String Orchestra & Percussion

STEVE DANYEW

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Elegy for the End of Nature

Year of Composition: 2021

Length: 14:15

Grade 4

Three Movements:

I. Procession of Heat and Fire

II. Water Chorale

III. Quiet (The End of Nature)

Note: Movements are meant to flow from one into another (attacca). There should not be extra space added between movements, beyond what is indicated in the score.

Instrumentation:

String Orchestra*

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Bass

Timpani

Percussion

Percussion 1: Vibraphone, Suspended Cymbal

Percussion 2: Chimes, Triangle, Tam-tam

Percussion 3: Glockenspiel, Bass Drum, Two Low Toms, Triangle

*Preferred numbers (or more – more is better!): 12, 10, 8, 8, 6

*Minimum numbers: 5, 4, 4, 2, 2

About the Piece

About 300 years ago, Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi created *The Four Seasons*, a set of four violin concerti that would become one of the most famous pieces of classical music that we have today. Along with the music, Vivaldi included short poems about each season. The poems for Spring, Autumn and Winter are largely joyful, celebrating the unique qualities of each season and painting a vivid scene for the reader. It seems that Vivaldi is celebrating nature and the life of each season.

Then, interestingly (especially given our 21st century understanding of climate change) the poem for Summer is much darker. There is almost nothing positive mentioned – nothing redeeming to this season of harsh sun and burning trees. A shepherd fears that damaging storms are ahead and the poem ends with the sky opening, dropping hail that destroys the crops of the field.

Vivaldi could not have known what was in store for us, 300 years later, as human-caused climate change has accelerated at a rapid pace in recent decades. By all accounts, the human race has not taken the threat seriously and has delayed acting.

Today, in 2021, we find ourselves in a crisis.

It is my hope that this work provides a space to contemplate what has already been lost and what will be lost in the future if our society continues to respond to the climate crisis with apathy.

David Wallace-Wells opens his book, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* with this sentence: “It is worse, much worse, than you think.” He goes on to state that this century, the planet is facing a rise in temperature of 3-5 degrees Celsius, which could render entire areas of the United States, Africa, Asia and others unlivable. This century.

We are learning that climate change will affect every aspect of human life, not just rising sea levels. Climate change will cause mass migrations of people who can no longer live in the hottest areas of the world. It will cause crop shortages, increased wildfires, more hurricanes, more disease, more heat waves, lower air quality, economic collapse, more conflict. (Wallace-Wells, 2020)

In the foreword to the book, *The Fragile Earth*, David Remnick notes, “It is now generally agreed among biologists that another mass extinction is under way...it is estimated that, if current trends continue, by the end of this century as many as half of earth’s species will be gone.”

In the 1989 essay “The End of Nature,” Bill McKibbin argues that humans have conquered nearly every corner of the earth and plundered its resources so quickly that the end of nature as we know it is upon us.

McKibbin writes, “The problem is that nature, the independent force that has surrounded us since our earliest days, cannot coexist with our numbers and our habits. We may well be able to create a world that can support our numbers and our habits, but it will be an artificial world—a space station. Or, just possibly, we could change our habits.”

This piece not only reflects on the current and future loss of nature as we know it, but also contemplates the ravaged, desperate civilization that might inhabit the earth just a few short generations from now if we are unable to slow or reverse the widening impacts of climate change.

The music here is original—I chose not to use any of Vivaldi’s music. Yet in the spirit of Vivaldi’s poems that accompany *The Four Seasons*, I included a short poem, written by my wife, Ashley Danyew, for each of the three movements. The poems continue the story that Vivaldi began in his sonnet for Summer.

The music is organized into three movements. The first, “Procession of Heat and Fire” reflects upon the slow warming of the earth and the impacts of increased wildfires. The music paints a dichotomy—the

simultaneous beauty of the earth, and the anguish caused by warming. The second movement, “Water Chorale” focuses on another dichotomy—the importance of water to our survival and the impacts of melting ice, rising seas, water scarcity, hurricanes, and other water-related challenges. The final movement, “Quiet (The End of Nature)” reflects on the loss of species (current and future) to climate change.

Poems by Ashley Danyew

I. Procession of Heat and Fire

Flames flicker and curl
like oil on water.

The air is thick with heat and smoke.

Black trees bend like paper silhouettes
against a bronze sky,
burning into the night.

II. Water Chorale

Stretching over the shoreline,
eroding, erasing.

Dark, like blue ink;
rippled, like velvet
draped over the land,
disappearing in the dark.

III. Quiet (The End of Nature)

The world is quiet;
enveloped in emptiness,
wrapped in silence.

The lush landscape now barren,
a fading memory.

Not even the wind remains.

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Project Partners

I'm grateful for the following ensembles and organizations who have supported this project and will co-premiere the music:

Acadia University String Orchestra, Dr. Tristan De Borba, Conductor

Civic Orchestra of Abilene & Abilene Youth Orchestra, Dr. Steven Ward, Conductor

Clayton State University Orchestra, Dr. Richard Bell, Conductor

El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras, James Welsch, Conductor

Euclid Symphony Orchestra, Matthew Salvaggio, Conductor

Greater Rochester Women's Philharmonic, Nancy Pettersen Strelau, Conductor

Hochstein Youth Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Casey Springstead, Conductor

Lake Norman Philharmonic, Eduardo Ceden, Conductor

Longmeadow High School Symphony Orchestra, Dr. Arthur Thovmasian, Conductor

MSU Texas Community Orchestra, Dr. Matthew D. Luttrell, Conductor

Nazareth College Symphony Orchestra, Nancy Pettersen Strelau, Conductor

Opus '89 Youth Orchestra, The Hartt School Community Division, Emmett Drake, Conductor

University of Rochester Orchestras, Dr. Rachel L. Waddell, Music Director

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, Dr. Justin Davis, Conductor

Washington and Lee University Orchestra, Dr. Christopher Dobbins, Conductor

Wilfrid Laurier University, Dr. Cynthia Johnston Turner, Dean of Faculty and Professor of Music

Winthrop Symphony Orchestra, Dr. Elisa Koehler, Conductor

Elegy for the End of Nature

Steve Danyew

I. Procession of Heat and Fire

♩ = ca. 60

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Contrabass

mp

mp

mp

mp

mp

I. Procession of Heat and Fire

♩ = ca. 60

Timpani

Percussion 1
Vibraphone
Sus. cymbal

Percussion 2
Chimes
Triangle
Tam-tam

Percussion 3
Bass Drum
Glockenspiel
Bass Drum, Toms
Triangle

mp

mp

mp

mp

mp

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9

8

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

9

8

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

18

15

Vln. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf

p

mp

p

mp

p

mp

p < *mp*

divisi

divisi

divisi

tutti

18

15

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

mp

Sus. cymbal

pp < *p*

Triangle

mp

mp

15 16 17 18 19 20

Vln. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

mp

21

22

23

24

25

26 27

Vln. Solo

Vln. I tutti

Vln. II tutti

Vla. tutti

Vc. div. *mp*

Cb. *mp*

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

26 27

Timp. *mp*

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm. Glockenspiel *mf*

Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk. *mf*
B.D. *mf*
Toms
Tri.

26

27

28

29

30

35 Poco piu mosso (♩ = 66)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

31

3

div.

f

3

f

f

f

3

3

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

31

35

36

f

mp < f

Bass Drum

31 32 33 34 35 36

37

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

div.

tutti

3

37

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

f

Two low toms
+ bass drum

f

37 38 39 40 41 42



44

Vln. I ⁴³

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

(div.)

f

44

Timp. ⁴³

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

f

Tam-Tam

Bass Drum

mf

Glockenspiel

f

43

44

45

46

47



II. Water Chorale

L'istesso Tempo (♩=60)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

83

p <>

p <>

p <>

p <>

mp

tutti

mp

div.

mp

(div.)

mp

II. Water Chorale

L'istesso Tempo (♩=60)

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

83

Tam-Tam

pp

90

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

tutti

mp

90

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

90 91 92 93

94

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

94

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

98

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

98

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

tutti

98 99 100 101

18

102

div.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

102

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

102

103

104

105

106

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

Cb. *mf*

106

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

106 107 108 109

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for measures 106 through 109. It features a string section (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., Cb.) and a percussion section (Timp., Perc. 1, Perc. 2, Perc. 3). The string parts are marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The Vln. I part has a melodic line with a long note in measure 106. The Vln. II part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Vla. part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Vc. part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Cb. part has a long note in measure 106. The percussion parts are mostly silent, with some rests indicated by horizontal lines. The score is in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. A large watermark 'PERUSAL SCORING' is visible across the page.

111

110

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

111

110

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

110

111

112

113

PERUSAL SCORE

114

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

114

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

114 115 116 117

118

Vln. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

p

pp < *p* >

div.

pp < *p* >

pp < *p* >

tutti

pp < *p* >

118

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

Vibraphone

p < *mp*

sed.

128

Meno mosso ♩ = 50

123

Vln. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

tutti

div.

tutti

pp < > *p* < > *pp* < >

pp < > *p* < > *pp* < >

pp < > *pp* < > *pp* < >

pp < > *pp* < > *pp* < > *pp* < > *mp*

pp < > *pp* < > *pp* < > *mp*

mp
128

Meno mosso ♩ = 50

123

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

(no roll, just sustain)

Bass Drum

pp

123

124

125

126

127

128

164 III. Quiet (The End of Nature)

L'istesso Tempo (♩ = 60)

163

Vln. I arco *mp*

Vln. II arco *mp*

Vla. arco *mp*

Vc. *mp*

Cb. *mp*

div.

164 III. Quiet (The End of Nature)

L'istesso Tempo (♩ = 60)

163

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

Triangle

mp
Bass Drum

p

163

164

165

166

167

168

Vln. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

p

mf

168

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

175

173

Vln. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mp *mf*

175

173

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

Triangle

mp
Bass Drum

p

173

174

175

176

177

178

Vln. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

178

Timp.

Perc. 1
Vibes
Sus. cym.

Perc. 2
Chm.
Tri.
Tam-tam

Perc. 3
Glk.
B.D.
Toms
Tri.

Triangle

mp
Bass Drum

p

Triangle

mp
Bass Drum

p

178

179

180

181

182

183