

PROGRAMME NOTE

The origins of the Pentacle go back to remotest historical antiquity and have been honoured by many civilizations. To the Jewish peoples, it symbolically designated the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses. To the followers of Pythagoras, it was called *The Pentalpha*, being composed of five interlaced A's or 'alphas'. The ancient Celts considered the five-pointed star to be a symbol of life and of the divine human. This 'star of life' became stigmatised as a sign of heretical thought and eventually as something evil. In more dangerous times to be caught in possession of a Pentacle could very well endanger your life. Despite being over 8000 years old, the Pentacle became the most famous symbol of witchcraft.

The Pentacle is an image of an up-right five-pointed star drawn inside a circle with a single continuous line making the five points equally spaced. To a witch or magician it is symbolic of the mysteries of creation. Pentangles are used in rites and rituals for consecration, evocation, transformation and banishment. Traditionally, each of the five angles has been attributed to the five metaphysical elements of the ancients. These provide the titles of the sections, which are to be played as one continuous movement.

1. *EARTH* (lower left hand corner) represents stability and physical endurance.
2. *WIND* (upper left hand corner) represents intelligence and the arts.
3. *FIRE* (lower right hand corner) represents courage and daring.
4. *WATER* (upper right hand corner) represents emotions and intuition.
5. *QUINTESSENCE* (at the topmost point) represents the All and the Divine spirit.

It is interesting to note that five-fold symmetries are rarely found in non-organic life forms but are uniquely inherent to life, as in the form of the human hand, a starfish, flowers, plants and many other living things. This pattern of five exists even down to a molecular level. Five, therefore, embodies the form and formation of life and the very essence of life and is reflected in the way the piece has been composed.

There are many uses of the number 5 in the composition, some more obvious than others. Quintuplet and other combination rhythms based around 5 are used frequently throughout the piece. Much of the harmony is based on the motifs being a fifth or combined fifths apart. There are five sections to the piece and many of the phrases are 5 bars in length. Each movement follows each other based around a harmonic cycle of fifths and has a time signature based on each of the numbers one to five.

Bi-tonal melodies and harmonies that rapidly shift between major and minor scales and triads, are used extensively throughout the piece. This gives the music an ambiguity of tone, time and place – echoing the use of the Pentacle across the many factions of history.

Pentacle was conceived as a brass band 'test piece', but I have interpreted the conventions of that genre in my own stylistic terms: for example, the passages using pulsating poly-rhythms, certain scalic combinations and tone painting – such as the twisting figures heard in the movement *Wind*, the rippling of the movement *Water* and the flutter tonguing in the *Fire* section. Whilst certain sections of the piece are highly dissonant and use irregular beat groupings and layers (the chaotic, semi-aleatoric climax in *Fire* for instance), I have also brought a strong lyrical element to the slow sections and have included the traditional 'big finish'.

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