

About The Work

"The Glass Bead Game" is a Horn Concerto loosely based on the Herman Hesse novel of the same title. In the first movement, two main themes dominate. The work opens with a bi-tonal motif based in Eb Major and A Major. This musical idea is meant to represent Herman Hesse's existential philosophy about life which is reflected in his novel. Simply put, Hesse believed that man exists as an individual in a purposeless universe that is basically hostile. This conflict between man and his environment is represented by the juxtaposition of the two keys. His main character of this novel in fact succumbs to the cold waters of a glacier fed lake at the end of this book. The other main theme is a leitmotif representing the main character, Joseph Knecht; and is first stated by the Solo Horn at letter A of the first movement. The dialogue of this theme between horn and Flute and Piccolo was inspired by the introduction of the Music Master in this novel. Joseph Knecht meets the Music Master, who accepts our main character into the intellectual society of the elite Castalia.

The second movement is dedicated to Father Jacobus. While the first movement leitmotif for Joseph Knecht was based on 5ths going up; Father Jacobus' leitmotif is based on 5ths going down. The second movement makes much use of sounds sustained into each other as you would hear in a Great Cathedral. The movement is meant to reflect the peace that Joseph Knecht felt with the introduction of history and religion.

The final movement is the most programmatic. This movement begins with the opening celebration of Joseph Knecht's coronation to the post of Magister Ludi. The celebration is heard at first from a great distance. Since Joseph Knecht is reticent about his promotion to this high post, the horn soloist, representing our main character, never plays the Celebration March Melody. The Solo Horn instead answers the melody with protest. This opening section of the final movement grows to a frenzy introducing us finally to the Presto Theme featuring the Solo Horn. The theme from the second movement is briefly referenced at letter Mm as Joseph Knecht, now burdened with the responsibilities of the Magister Ludi, reflects on his more tranquil past at the monastery with Father Jacobus. At the close of this movement, the drowning sequence is loosely reflected in the music when the opening themes of the third movement return as our main character drowns.

Opening thematic material to the second movement is used as transition to return us to the original Joseph Knecht leitmotif at Letter Rr in this final movement. Programmatically this is referencing the end of this great novel where Joseph Knecht's student, Tito, is now sitting on the lake's shore in shock over the death of his teacher, Joseph Knecht. But our main character lives on in Tito's mind as a wonderful teacher and mentor.