Embers from the Void

A Dissertation Presented

by

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Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

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We, the examination committee for the above candidate for the degree of 
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Abstract of the Dissertation
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Embers from the Void for string quartet and voice is a work centered around the idea of transition, specifically the transition state of death. Each moment explores this idea through imagery of landscape, season, and space or, more precisely, forest, winter, and emptiness (the void). The poetry, self-authored, was written for and in conjunction with the music. The two are inseparable.

A running theme that will be apparent in the text is “what lies beneath the surface.” An aspect of this theme will be present in each movement and is itself a metaphor for both literary ideas and the theoretical foundation of the music.

Musically, this work is at times sparse and relentlessly singular in process. In contrast, it is at times lush and complex. Within, there are moments in which the music could be classified as minimal, spectral, atonal, and quasi-tonal. Underlying all of this is a sole foundation that is the genesis of the entire work. This work, in practically every aspect, is formed from the geometry inherent in golden arithmetic. Proportions are guided by the golden ratio. Pitch, with rare exception, is derived from the Fibonacci sequence and similar additive number patterns that are themselves approximating, with ever increasing accuracy, the golden or “divine” proportion.

On the surface Embers from the Void is seemingly simple and transparent, however, this simplicity is the result of golden geometry that is intricate and other-worldly yet familiar, and this transparency is the result of crystalline structures at the foundation of that very geometry. To understand this work, one must look beneath the surface of the unassuming façade to the glint of gold that lies beyond.
Embers from the Void

There’s a light
There’s a light, from far away.
It shines on a redwood tree,
and in its wake...silence,
loss,
endlessly.
But there’s a light...
a little light shining.

Ember from the void,
wandering, hopelessly lost.
Everlasting.

Under the Snow
A seed falls from a tree,
helpless.
Storm clouds paint the sky in black charcoal.
Lightning strikes.
Under the snow a dead phoenix lies under the snow a dead phoenix.
Waiting, and counting our remains.
Our remains.
Not enough.
Not enough.

Sinking to Ever Darker Worlds
Slowly, cold bites my body still,
...sinking to ever darker worlds.

River ice hides ever changing,
flowing streams.
Never still.

I met the weakness in the ice.
Fought to reach the surface.
Floating,
    further down below the ice.
Slowly,
    further.
    further down.
The water’s getting colder.
    The water’s getting ...colder.
**Event Horizon**
Right out of reach, High above,
a star shining black draws near.

In the night sky turning slow,
offering to the blind eternal sight, endless sight

Here is not life,
it’s death in disguise

Still, this single point of light shines
dim and still.  
This single point of light
cast cold from the void.

**Clear Stream**
Clear stream that bends,  
tell me which way.  
The sun sets soon,  
...too soon.
...too soon.
I see a hawk in the night sky,  
an oddly black hawk.

I need some time to rest my eyes.  
I need just a moment to rest my eyes.

**Traveler’s song**  
In those great woods that carry my heart  
I fall and let you entwine  
this body curled like a newborn  
And sink beneath the warm soil.

The stars have bled the night sky  
of blackest aether.

Please watch my loved ones here,  
I set sail against the void.  
A traveler ever wandering  
through countless dark worlds.

I cross what’s empty  
and light a small fire.
There's a Light

M. Vandegriff

\( \text{Voice} \)

\( \text{Vln. I} \)

\( \text{Vln. II} \)

\( \text{Vla.} \)

\( \text{Vc.} \)

\( j = 87 \)

There's a light from
far away it shines on a red wood tree and in its wake, silence, loss,

end less but there's a light... a little light shining
There's a Light

Ember from the void wandering hopelessly lost everlasting.
There's a Light
Under the Snow

\( J = 102 \)

Voice

\[ \text{rit. Tempo.} \]

Vln. I

\[ \text{rit. Tempo.} \]

Vln. II

\[ p \]

Vla.

\[ p \]

Vc.

\[ p \]
Under the Snow

A seed falls from a tree
Helpless. Storm clouds paint the sky in black charcoal.

Lightning strikes. Under the snow
Under the Snow

52

a dead phoe-nix lies un-der the snow a dead phoe-nix wait-ing

57

and coun-ting our re-mains. Our re-mains.

Tempo.
Under the Snow
Sinking to Ever Darker Worlds

Voice: Slowly cold bites my body still. Sinking to ever darker worlds.

Vln. I: pp < p

Vln. II: pp < p

Vla.: pp < p

Vc.: p > p

Riv-er ice hides ever chang-ing flow-ing streams. Never still.
I met the weakness in the ice. Fought to reach the surface. Floating...
Sinking to Ever Darker Worlds

The water's getting colder.

The water's getting colder.
Sinking to Ever Darker Worlds

The water's getting colder.

The water's getting colder.

The water's getting colder.

The water's getting colder.
Sinking to Ever Darker Worlds

mf

rit...

f

The water's getting colder.

rit...

f

rit...

f

rit...

f

rit...

f

The water's getting colder.
Event Horizon

\[ \text{\textit{Event Horizon}} \]

\[ j = 100 * \]

\[ \text{Voice} \]

\[ \text{Vln. I} \]

\[ \text{Vln. II} \]

\[ \text{Vla.} \]

\[ \text{Vc.} \]

Repeat only once (classical repeat).
turning slow offering to the blind eternal sight endless

Here is not life, it's sight.
Event Horizon

dead in disguise. Still, this single point of light shines

dim and still. This single point of light cast cold from the void.
Event Horizon
Clear Stream

$J = 65$

Voice

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

\[ p < mp > p \quad < mp > < mf > < mp > p \quad < mf > mp < mf > \]
Clear Stream

Clear steam that bends,

tell me which way.
The sun sets soon.

Too soon.
Too soon.
I see a hawk in the night sky, an oddly black hawk.
Clear Stream

I need some time to rest my eyes. I need just a moment to rest my eyes.

\[ \sum F, \dot{b} \]

\[ \sum F, \dot{b} \]

\[ \dot{P}, \dot{b} \]

\[ p \]
Traveler's Song

Voice

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.
In those great woods that carry my heart I fall and let you en-

twine this body curled like a new born and sink beneath the warm soil. The
Traveler's Song

stars have bled the night sky of black-est ae-ther. Please watch my loved ones

here, I set sail a-gainst the void, a trave-ler ev-er wan-der-ing through
Traveler's Song

countless dark worlds. I cross what's empty and light a small fire.
Traveler's Song