

MP3 — CLASSICAL MUSIC

MILLENNIUM — FOR LARGE ORCHESTRA by John Thrower (unrevised version)
with optional electric guitar, electric bass guitar & drum set.

You are listening to MILLENNIUM, the unrevised version. First of all, let me say that the revised version is more atonal — for I found that perhaps this version was a bit too nice to give to mankind. You know... the way we treat the planet, we don't deserve... (end of discussion).

Actually, in all seriousness, Millennium is symbolically speaking, supposed to touch on a number of subjects we are all familiar with. Take the intro for example (which is shorter here). It starts off with a somewhat darker feeling (in the revised version). We have basically a descending line versus an ascending line which try to find each other, but never really do. This is the symbol for Christianity and Islam... I hope someday they will find one another.

This is followed by a 'fan-fare' like statement (Flutes in the background like digital points of light). This is supposed to symbolize the pressing forward of Time and Progress itself (ya, I know... the trumpet player... that's life) into the next Millennium, for all the problems we have in the world today are only caused by the old patterns of the 20th Century and the lack of ability of mankind to change... to change his state of consciousness. I mean, how long must these man-made conflicts continue?

By the way, a note on the lack of 'atonality' or atonal-feeling here. It is NOT intentional. There are atonalisms composed, yet they were not performed here. One of the instruments I like to use for atonal effects is the Harp. I didn't have a forward thinking harp player, bless her soul. So most of the atonal effects like gongs and sforzato á la table effects, she just didn't do. The score is more atonal sounding.

Since I am in a critical mood, let me talk about the percussion you hear on the recording. The recording was done with drum set. The score requires six additional percussionists so let it be said, if using a drum set, it MUST NOT PLAY TOO LOUD. Of course, to my own taste, the percussion sound in this recording seemed to me to be always too loud. Later on, I found out that the hall was particularly ambient to the percussion section and seemed to project it, even when they were playing pppppp ... unfortunately.

Now a short comment about the optional electric guitar, electric bass guitar & drum set. THEY ARE OPTIONAL, which means that the performance does not need them. Everything they do is doubled somewhere else. What is the reason for this? In the piece, they represent and symbolize the growing importance of popular music which as we know today is obviously portrayed by these three instruments. It is almost as if the composer is saying — 'Just as it should be considered that such opposing religious forces (such as Christianity/Islam) should try to somehow meet on common ground, perhaps the traditional classical orchestra should in some way, try to meet with the popular aspects of music.'

Some classical musicians might think this is stupid and trivial, however it has already happened in the film music of the last 50 years. Here, we have a mixture of classical, popular, electronic and other influences. Why should it not happen in modern classical music?

Eventhough MILLENNIUM somehow sounds like lighter entertainment, I assure you, it is more difficult to play than meets the ear. If you listen to the final excerpt, it should sound like basically all hell is breaking loose, Yes — the hell of mankind, not God's doing. But to make this happen, we need an orchestra of immense 'tonal-audible-potential'... musicians who know how to get everything out of their instruments and not just play loudly. That's a challenge. On the recording, this segment is unduly suppressed-filtered.

After the crashing melt-down (listen to the electric guitar) we return in a fashion, to the brooding intro and yet we have immediately an ending of atonement, hope and appeasement. This ending has been newly revised and is not quite as hopeful as what you hear in these mp3 examples. In the new version, it ends on a more subdued level, with more doubt. I have added more atonality in the mix...please harpist, do your job. The reason is, I am not sure that mankind, itself, is ready for change. I am not yet convinced. I think greed and materialism are stronger than reason and discipline. But I still have hope.

In the end, MILLENNIUM, which is dedicated to the memory of Maurice Ravel, one of the 20th centuries tried and true 'classic fusionists' ... is a lengthy orchestral overture with a symbolical statement. Digitalisation and Progress are here to stay. If mankind is willing to drop the old patterns, maybe there will be a chance for survival. By the way, the constant rhythmic chatter of the tamburo piccolo is intentional. It is my own tribute to Ravel, who in his Bolero, wrote a bold piece of 'classic fusion'.