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Dawn: a symphonic sketch for orchestra

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Graduate Program in Music

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Music

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DAWN:

*a symphonic sketch for orchestra*

by

Jeff McClellan

Graduate Program in Music

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Music
in Composition

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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The thesis by

**Jeff Gordon McClellan**

entitled:

**Dawn: a symphonic sketch for orchestra**

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Music
in Composition

Date Chair of the Thesis Examination Board
Abstract

*Dawn: a symphonic sketch for orchestra* was written as a tribute to the *Aquatic Ape Hypothesis*, and, more particularly, its author, Elaine Morgan, who has been a restless proponent of the hypothesis for more than three decades. The work is written for a Beethoven-sized orchestra and lasts just over 12 minutes long. Morgan’s evolutionary theory explains the anatomical differences between modern humans and apes by proposing that hominids lived through a semi-aquatic phase at some time in their development, providing reason for many of the aquatic characteristics & impulses that humans have and experience today.

My composition aims to capture the magic of this divergence of the genus *homo* over several million years. The music is abstractly programmatic, meaning an extra-musical narrative was envisioned during the writing of the piece, though a detailed story, specific landscape, or even approximate timeline is not associated with the development of the music – the composition is merely an attempt to evoke the changing of a hominid lifestyle in harmony with the changing of an ecosystem. I see the many contrasting episodes in this piece as snapshots of varying emotional states. As the piece unfolds, the numerous fragmented motifs accumulate and overlap with one another, sounding chaotic at times, sublime at others. They are designed as pieces of a puzzle from which the final melody derives.

Keywords

Music, Jeff McClellan, Orchestra, Aquatic Ape, Elaine Morgan, symphonic sketch, programmatic music, Canada, contemporary music
Acknowledgments

Thank you to Dr. David Myska for his guidance and support throughout the development of this work. Also, many thanks to Elaine Morgan for her inspiring words and ideas concerning the physical and psychological relationships that humans have with water.
Jeff McClellan

DAWN

a symphonic sketch for orchestra
Jeff McClellan

DAWN

a symphonic sketch for orchestra

February 2012
Duration: 12’20

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INSTRUMENTATION

Piccolo
(sounding an octave higher than written)
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in Bb
Bassoon

3 Horns in F
3 Trumpets in Bb
Trombone
Tuba

Timpani (1 player)
Suspended Cymbal
Wind Chimes
Xylophone
(sounding an octave higher than written)
Crash Cymbal
Congas
Bass Drum
Thunder Sheet
Snare Drum
Triangle

Piano

Violins I
Violins II
Violas
Cellos
Basses
(sounding an octave lower than written)

Untransposed score except as noted

Duration: 12’20"

About the piece
Dawn was written as a tribute to the Aquatic Ape Hypothesis, and, more particularly, its author, Elaine Morgan, who has been a restless proponent of the hypothesis for more than three decades. The evolutionary theory explains the anatomical differences between modern humans and apes by proposing that hominids lived through a semi-aquatic phase at some time in their development, providing reason for many of the aquatic characteristics & impulses that humans have and experience today.

My composition aims to capture the magic of this divergence of the genus homo over several million years. The music is programmatic, meaning an extra-musical narrative was envisioned during the writing of the piece, though a detailed story, specific landscape, or even approximate timeline is not associated with the development of the music – the composition is merely an attempt to evoke the changing of a hominid lifestyle in harmony with the changing of an ecosystem. I see the many contrasting motifs in this piece as snapshots of varying emotional states. As the piece unfolds, the numerous fragmented motifs accumulate and overlap with one another, sounding chaotic at times, sublime at others. They are designed as pieces of the puzzle from which the final melody derives.

Cover illustration by Alex Sheriff

- J. McClellan
February 2012
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# Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Jeff McClellan

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada

- **2006-2010 B.Mus (Honours)**

**Honours and Awards:** Western Graduate Research Scholarship, 2010-2012

**Related Work Experience:**

- **Teaching Assistant**
  - The University of Western Ontario
  - 2010-2012