

## **“Utopia on Earth, Dystopia in Heaven”**

### **CM Adams**

*Utopia on Earth, Dystopia in Heaven* is a complicated composition with a straightforward core message: either we will learn to live with the animals and nature of Earth or we will perish and die. The work was created using samples provided by the Listening Planet Foundation, a charity organized around the field recordings of Martyn Stewart. Throughout the work, several varying samples of nature, animals, and humanity are heard in combination with various bits of synthesis; in making the piece, I attempted to strike a fine balance between natural and unnatural elements. At times, the two are so intertwined that it is hard to tell them apart. This itself is analogous to humanity's relationship with the planet. Another element of importance to the work is biomorphism, an architectural movement that borrows natural elements for inspiration. I found this movement fascinating and strikingly beautiful; its view of buildings was how I consider sound myself. The city landscape is a cacophony of noise but it is not ugly. It is beautiful in a unique way much like the forest. In this work, I attempted to convey this complicated message of city and forest, human and animal, survival or death, while giving hope to a better world that may be lived in one day.

The piece itself is divided into four discrete sections that blend into one another but are recognized as separate after further listening and consideration. The first section centers around ice, rain, and synthesis. A subtle melodic idea rises from the cracking arctic landscape; several synthetic and organic shimmers move as well. The landscape rises in potential leading into a brief synth burst which starts the next section. The second section is incredibly dense. From the synth solo, several layered sections of raw and manipulated audio move into the landscape. A pulsing, bass drum-like strike occurs several times in a slow pattern. As this section breaks at the seams, a high pitched tone similar to a drum is used in a cacophonous but limited scope. The third section is based almost entirely on a connecting resonance started by the initial motif of the high pitched drum like material; from there, it develops into several foley sounds, some of which are new and some are from before, that have been manipulated to carry forth this resonance. Fragments of pitched material are distorted before a heavily manipulated version of the initial thought of the third section is heard. The cut between the third and fourth section is rather harsh. The heavy bit of disorienting material abruptly stops as a collage of different natural and human foley drifts into perception. This material continues without development before a final bit of pitched content enters. This final bit of pitched content feels conclusive, but it lacks the exact seniority to feel epic or truly satisfying. It is powerful but lacking in bass content; it is strong but has little melodic function or drive. This is intentional and symbolic to the work as a whole. I am fearful for the future of the Earth, but I am optimistic. I wish for humanity to have a happy ending, but I know we do not deserve it yet. This is what the ending states. As the material fades into natural sounds, a bright joyous whistled tune is heard before fading as well.