

Tartarus and Back

Antonio Kam

Instrumentation:

Flute (x2)
Trumpet (x4)
Piano (x1 - Mic'd up)
Harp (x1 - Mic'd up)
Violin (x1 - Mic'd up)
Strings (x4 - Violins and Cellos)
Violoncello 1 (x4)
Violoncello 2 (x4)
Acoustic Bass (x1 - Plugged into amplifier)

Context:

Tartarus and Back is a piece written in the extended ternary form in the style of a film score. The piece is set in Tartarus (in greek mythology, Tartarus is hell), and eventually the character escapes Tartarus into our earth, just to realize the state of our earth is getting closer and closer to the state of Tartarus.

Theory/Musical Analysis:

The A section is generally written in the Aeolian mode, with bar 19 to bar 36 being written the Lydian mode to contrast the Aeolian section that happens before and after - to give a sense of hope that the characters in the film are able to escape Tartarus. Most of section A has the trumpet take a solo, however, during the Lydian section, the flute takes the melody instead.

The section marked A3, which is placed after the Lydian section, is then far more energetic, and gives the listeners a sense of adventure, especially with the chord progression i bVII bVI V7, with the bVII and bVI being the chords that suggest 'adventure' the most, but the aeolian tonic still gives a sense of despair and desperation that the characters in the film scene are going through. Following the chord progression above, the progression then moves onto a chromatic descent from the tonic, which then leads into a V/V back to the tonic.

After the chromatic section, the piece then moves into the B section, which starts off in the ionian mode, then moves into the relative lydian mode, then into the parallel aeolian mode through the use of modal interchange.

The section starts off with a Picardy third leading into the parallel ionian mode, where the harp enters with arpeggios, and a solo violin takes the melody. This is the section which is supposed to show the escape from Tartarus, and the hopeful Lydian mode used reflects that. However, this is short lived, and the chords get contaminated by modal interchange from the Aeolian mode, which then shifts the key center into the parallel Aeolian key, the same key that was used at the beginning.

After a transition passage with the chord progression Dm7b5 G7/D Cm, the original main melody returns, but is now played by a solo violin, with thin, homophonic harmony. However, the addition of a cello countermelody reminds listeners that this is not Tartarus, but is instead earth.