

CHALDEAN STRUCTURES,

A TONE POEM FOR ORCHESTRA:

A COMPENDIUM OF PROCEDURES, ASPECTS, AND PROBLEMS

by

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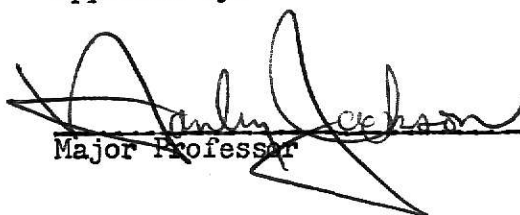
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PREFACE

This Compendium is a companion to the composition Chaldean Structures (1975), a tone poem for large orchestra based on the signs of the Zodiac, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Music in Theory and Composition. My objective in writing this piece was to create a large-scale work employing contemporary techniques used in the exploration of non-traditional sounds.

The purpose of this report is to discuss some of the procedures, aspects, and problems connected with the composition of Chaldean Structures.

I am very grateful to my major professor, T. Hanley Jackson, for the advice and guidance I have received in the preparation of this Compendium and of the composition Chaldean Structures. I would like to show my deep appreciation by dedicating this piece to him.

I. THE TITLE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The initial decision to base this piece on the signs of the Zodiac was due to the deep impression made upon hearing the first two volumes of George Crumb's Makrokosmos. Through research, it was determined that each of the signs could be developed into a character piece, using the individualistic traits associated with each. Other possibilities arose, such as each sign having particular numerical and coloristic associations. The discussions which follow in this chapter will offer an insight into the initial development of the piece.

The title

Choosing the title which best represents a compositional effort is often a difficult task. It seemed only fitting that the title should include something about astrology, the Zodiac, or some other closely related area.

The term "astrology" conjures up several different images, but that particular choice was not aesthetically pleasing. Incorporating the term "Zodiac" would have been the most logical choice, but a conflict in meaning arose.

There was a Parisian movement after World War II, by a group known as the "Zodiaque," which had grown out of mainstream music traditions. They proclaimed themselves against systems, prejudices, habits, and

fashions.¹ Since this piece is dependent on previous systems, fashions, etc., that particular choice as a possible title was quickly disregarded.

Roget's Thesaurus presents the term "Chaldean" as a synonym for "astrologer." Reference to a standard dictionary was necessary for a preliminary investigation of its meaning. "Chaldean" (kal-dé-ān) refers to a group of ancient Semitic people who ruled in Babylonia where astrology and magic once flourished.² Since interpreters of the horoscope depend on astrology for guidance, the title Chaldean Structures was chosen.

Interpretation of the horoscope

Existing material on the symbolism relating to the horoscope does not differ greatly from source to source. Those basic qualities which were chosen for direction are known to all who actively interpret the signs of the Zodiac and pursue them as a viable determiner of human nature. Research was directed toward finding highly descriptive words and phrases from each of the signs. These key words and phrases were then treated as a text might be for a choral composition; they determined the sectional forms of the piece (Chapter VIII) and the dramatic ideas. The results of that research is as follows:

Sun: circle of limitless potentiality which revolves around the twelve signs and represents power, eternity, and the generator of all life.

Aries: beginnings--potential creativity but no stability of completion (strong thrust-poor delivery)--a pioneer.

Taurus: stability (a settler)--finishes what Aries starts.

¹Edith Boroff, Music in Europe and the United States (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), pp. 620-21.

²American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, rev. ed. (1973), s.v. "Chaldea" and "Chaldean."