INSIDE THE MIRAGE

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC
August 2011
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ABSTRACT

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Inside the Mirage for orchestra is a one-movement work approximately nine minutes in duration. It is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B-flat, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 3 trumpets in C, 2 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, three percussionists and strings. The work has two climaxes that loosely divide the piece into two sections.

The conceptual inspiration of the work comes from the optical phenomenon of the mirage, an image produced by the refraction of light rays, most often caused by heat. This bending of these rays can result in optical illusions of many different sorts. To be inside a mirage is, of course, impossible, as proximity exposes the illusion for what it truly is. The concept for this piece is therefore based on the imaginary notion that the listener could step into the illusion and view an altered state of reality.

When discussing the concept of light, visual conceptions translate into musical idioms very easily, as we perceive sounds with higher frequencies to be “bright” and lower frequencies to be “dark.” Also, soft, smooth lines can be connected to the image of soft, glistening light, while harsh, articulate bursts of sound can translate into great bursts of light. These two musical ideas will comprise the bulk of material for Inside the Mirage.

Harmonically, the work uses the seven-note set 7-28, or pitch class set [0135679]. Throughout the piece, this scale is manipulated in two main ways through addition and subtraction: to create more chromatic sonorities, 7-28 is layered on top of itself; to create less harmonic density, notes are removed from 7-28.

The primary influences for Inside the Mirage are composers Gyorgy Ligeti and Witold Lutoslawski. The textures of their compositions, often consisting of intricate phrases and rhythmic complexity, are imitated throughout the piece. Inside the Mirage also borrows some orchestral techniques from these two composers, as well as some from Stravinsky.

In conclusion, Inside the Mirage consistently imitates the styles and practices of past composers while introducing distinctive melodic and harmonic principles, resulting in a synthesis of new material that maintains qualities of both old and new.
Instrumentation

Piccolo
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B-Flat
1 Bass Clarinet
2 Bassoons

4 Horns in F
3 Trumpets in C
2 Trombones
1 Tuba

Timpani
Percussion (3 Players)

Percussion I: Xylophone, Glockenspiel, Triangle, 2 Suspended Cymbals (high, low)
Percussion II: Vibraphone, Glockenspiel (share with Perc. I), 4 Tom-Toms
Percussion III: 4 Temple Blocks, 2 Triangles (high, low), Snare Drum, 2 Suspended Cymbals (share with Perc. I), Tam-Tam, 4 Tom-Toms (share with Perc. II), Bell Tree

Strings

Score is Transposed

Duration: approximately 9'30"
2 Suspended Cymbals of differing size
(never dampen)