

## PATHS TO REDEMPTION

### PROGRAMME NOTES

This work was created using simple terms to denote the principal thematic threads, also known as *leit-motifs* and this narrative may help guide listeners.

Symphony in C major examines the ephemeral human condition and man's noble aspiration towards a higher purpose and salvation, faced with implacable forces of nature.

### MOVEMENT 1: SCHISM

The first movement's sombre opening chorale (marked *maestoso: langsam e misterioso*) intoned on Wagner Tubas establishes the C major key of the work, and dominant theme, *Dogma*, representing liturgical orthodoxy, and man's fervent quest for *Redemption*, and a hint of the *Apotheosis*.

This leads into an evocation of man's highest purpose, *Noblesse*, then the music becomes more agitated embarking on a series of animated variations on a jaunty rhythmic figure, which occasionally erupt into the *Cataclysm*. One variation, a languorously exotic tziganesque episode, finally tantalisingly delivers its definitive equivalent, invoking *Yearning* and its counterpoint *Despair* that passionately suffuse the remainder of the movement before subsiding into the concluding coda. This ending coalesces with its insistent *Destiny* theme, characterised by an upward surging melody, followed by a distinct echo of Beethoven's Symphony no 5's celebrated 4 note hammer blows, and the movement finally resolves into an uneasy truce between the opposing motifs of *Dogma* and *Redemption*.

### MOVEMENT 2: MARCHE GROTESQUE

Conveying the spirit of youthful adventure seeking glory on the battlefield, the movement begins with a reveille, and a military march satirical of Miklos Rosza's and Dimitri Tiomkin's music for the Hollywood biblical epic genre. The music depicts scenes of combat and tender passion (*Dogma* in seductive garb) with a graceful pastoral interlude, but as the battle become more febrile, this episode ends amid a ravaged Hieronymus Bosch landscape, with ghost-like echoes of former skirmishes and elegiac souvenirs of unrequited love.

### MOVEMENT 3 (ADAGIO): TRANSCENDENCE

In contemplative frame of mind, the music gathers up the tattered fragments of the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement's battlefield and then resolves into ineffable serenity with a Pilgrim's procession and the slow and measured development of a fugue based on the inversion and retrograde of the liturgical themes that open the symphony, culminating in a resplendent restatement of this transformed motif, finally subsiding into a peaceful epilogue.

### MOVEMENT 4: IMMORTALITY

The introduction establishes the dominant theme that suffuses the Soprano's declamation with a mannerism that alludes to the opening bars of Richard Strauss' setting of Hermann Hesse's poem "**Beim Schlafengehen**", from "The Four Last Songs".

This setting of Elisabeth Frye's celebrated verse "**Do not stand at my grave and weep**" is succeeded by the composer's valedictory second verse "**Grieve not my passing's solemn knell**" which elaborates Frye's vision of reincarnation but also evokes Nature's struggle for survival amid implacable forces that seem to render futile man's puny efforts to overcome his destiny. Each verse is preceded by a four note motto symbolising the *Enigma of Faith*.

When the composer writes "*Time and space cease to exist*", he refers to one of Gurnemanz' admonitions to Wagner's eponymous hero, Parsifal, "*You see my son, time becomes space here*", and the movement concludes ambiguously with the four note *Enigma* motto.

### MOVEMENT 5: REDEMPTION

Preceded by an apocalyptic recapitulation of the *Cataclysm* motif, the theme of *Reconciliation* is introduced hesitantly in the strings, with two variants and leads into a magnanimous statement recalling *Noblesse*.

There follows a fugue that reprises earlier themes, swelling to a climax and a confident vaulting anthem that suddenly dissolves into fragments of reminiscences from the preceding movements. At its zenith, a magical "suspension of time" occurs, ushering into the apotheosis of the coda and an exultant reiteration of the second phrase of the *Liturgical* motif, suggesting the pealing of bells, which counterpoints the principal themes of the Symphony and at its culmination, the composer banishes any lingering doubts of our hope for salvation.