

Caitlin Harrison

Pagan Scenes and Dances

for orchestra

Each movement of *Pagan Scenes and Dances* is named after the points of The Pagan Wheel of the Year. The wheel traces the change of seasons with ceremonial occasions to celebrate or reflect on the current environmental state. The most prominent themes are from darkness to light, along with tracing the fertility of spring to the summer and autumn harvests before the death of winter. The wheel is cyclical, with every year end, *Samhain*, going into *Yule* to start the pattern again. With this in mind, the piece could technically be performed starting at any movement, although most effective would be beginning with *Yule*, *Beltane* or *Lughnasadh*. Many of the pagan festivals correlate to modern ones such as *Yule* and Christmas, *Imbolc* and Candlemas, *Ostara* and Easter, and *Samhain* and Halloween.

I. Yule — Scene

Yule starts the pagan wheel at the very darkest moment of the year, the winter solstice. Despite the stark and bleak landscape *Yule* is reminiscent of lighter times, a likely tactic to help Pagans of centuries gone by get through the harshest time of year. The movement begins by setting the barren scene with delicate higher textures in the upper strings and wind, before the darker depths of the lower instruments enter. A light snowflake-like dance takes over for the second half of the movement as the darkness begins to dissipate.

II. Imbolc — Dance

One of the more ceremonial movements, *Imbolc* symbolises the light emerging from the darkness. Like a candle in the darkness, the glockenspiel guides the deep tones of the lower instruments upwards until the emergence of the Cor Anglais solo. Whilst the slow 3/4 metre and sombre mood resembles a sarabande, the 'dance' element remains abstract until the solo.

III. Ostara — Dance

Ostara marks the spring equinox, symbolising rebirth and the boom of life one sees in nature. This is represented through the blooming fanfares in the brass and large tutti chords, with the offbeat rhythms bringing contrast to the primal dance.

IV. Beltane — Scene

After the bloom of spring comes the beginning of summer, *Beltane* (or May Day). *Beltane* celebrates the fertility of the lighter months, with bonfires traditionally lit as a purification ritual. Harking back to the more ceremonial mood of *Imbolc*, this movement contains unruly solos in the clarinet and piccolo, untameable like a flame or nature itself.

V. Litha — Dance

Litha celebrates the summer equinox, also called Midsummer, the lightest part of the year. The sun is worshipped with dancing around and jumping over bonfires. The 12/8 metre forms a clear and joyful dance, with bouncing dotted rhythms littering the canonic string theme. Some Pagan cultures also view this as the win of light over dark; the second half of the movement represents more of a battleground, with loud and turbulent gestures littering the soundscape before the opening light theme ultimately wins.

VI. Lughnasadh (*LOO-na-sa*) — Scene

Lughnasadh is a reflective occasion that thanks the Gaelic God, Lugh, for the year's harvest. The movement itself is a prayer, contrasting the rest of the work not only in theme but also texture as the instrumentation is heavily stripped back from the previous movement. The origins of *Lughnasadh* has funeral themes, marking the beginning of the death of the earth for this cycle. The prayer is also cautious, as the people ask for a forgiving winter to come.

VII. Mabon — Dance

The autumn equinox marks not only the final harvest but mostly importantly the beginning of the earth's decay. It is a dark death, with unpredictable rhythms and timbres littering *Mabon* as wild themes in the oboe and other solos represent the oncoming chaos and decent.

VIII. Samhain (*SAH-win*) — Scene

The cycle comes to and end with *Samhain*, what we commonly refer to as Halloween. The veil is at its thinnest between the living and the dead. Grand gestures open the movement before haunting themes take over in the brass and solo bassoon. The piece ends with a final dramatic run into a wild and terrifying darkness.

Contrabassoon

II. Imbolc

♩ = 80-90 *sarabande-like*

Musical notation for measures 1-5. The piece is in 5/4 time with a key signature of two flats. The first measure starts with a *fp* dynamic. The melody consists of half notes and quarter notes, with a fermata over the final note of the first measure.

Musical notation for measures 6-11. Measure 6 begins with a *mf* dynamic that tapers to *p*. Measure 7 starts with a *f* dynamic that tapers to *p*. The notation includes various time signatures: 2/4, 6/4, 4/4, and 3/4.

Musical notation for measures 12-20, marked with a boxed 'A'. The dynamics are *mf* > *p* and *mf* > *mp*. The melody features a series of eighth notes and quarter notes with a fermata over the final note of the first phrase.

Musical notation for measures 21-31, marked with a boxed 'B'. The dynamics are *f* and *mf*. The notation includes a series of eighth notes and quarter notes with a fermata over the final note of the first phrase.

Musical notation for measures 32-42. The notation consists of eighth notes and quarter notes with a fermata over the final note of the first phrase.

Musical notation for measures 43-53, marked with a boxed 'C'. The dynamics are *p*. The notation includes eighth notes and quarter notes with a fermata over the final note of the first phrase.

Musical notation for measures 54-60, marked with a boxed 'D'. The notation consists of eighth notes and quarter notes with a fermata over the final note of the first phrase.

Musical notation for measures 61-65. The dynamics are *pp*. The notation consists of eighth notes and quarter notes with a fermata over the final note of the first phrase.

Contrabassoon

III. Ostara

$\text{♩} = 60$ *bursting*

Musical staff 1: Contrabassoon part, measures 1-13. The staff begins with a 3/2 time signature. Measure 1 contains a whole rest. Measure 2 starts with a 2/2 time signature and a half note G2 with an accent and *fp* dynamic. Measure 3 has a whole rest. Measure 4 has a whole rest. Measure 5 has a whole rest. Measure 6 has a whole rest. Measure 7 has a whole rest. Measure 8 has a whole rest. Measure 9 has a whole rest. Measure 10 has a whole rest. Measure 11 has a whole rest. Measure 12 has a whole rest. Measure 13 has three eighth notes: F2, E2, and D2, each with an accent and *ff* dynamic. Above the staff, the number '2' is written above measure 3, and the number '7' is written above measure 10.

Musical staff 2: Contrabassoon part, measures 14-21. Measure 14 has a whole rest. Measure 15 has a whole rest. Measure 16 has a whole rest. Measure 17 has a whole rest. Measure 18 has a whole rest. Measure 19 has a whole rest. Measure 20 has a whole rest. Measure 21 has three eighth notes: F2, E2, and D2, each with an accent and *ff* dynamic. Above the staff, the number '22' is written above measure 15, and the number '7' is written above measure 19.

Musical staff 3: Contrabassoon part, measures 22-30. Measure 22 has a whole rest. Measure 23 has a whole rest. Measure 24 has a whole rest. Measure 25 has a whole rest. Measure 26 has a whole rest. Measure 27 has a whole rest. Measure 28 has a whole rest. Measure 29 has a whole rest. Measure 30 has a whole rest. Above the staff, the number '3' is written below measure 28.

Contrabassoon

V. Litha

Vivace ♩ = 90-105

6 A 10 B 8

25 C 6 D

34

38 2 E 8 F 4 poco rit. 3 2

CONTRABASSOON

VI. Lughnasadh

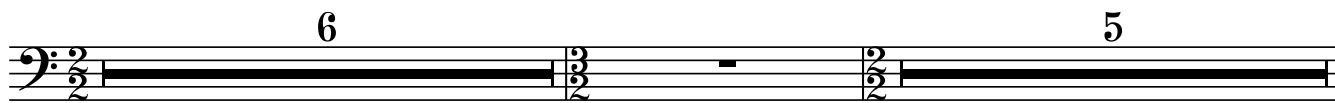
TACET

Contrabassoon

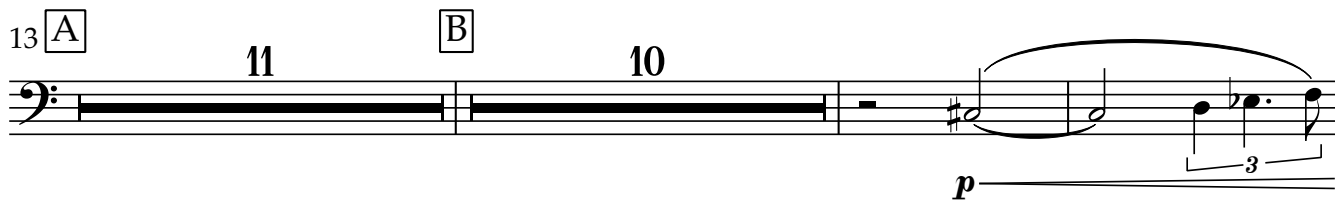
VIII. Samhain

♩ = 110-120 *haunting*

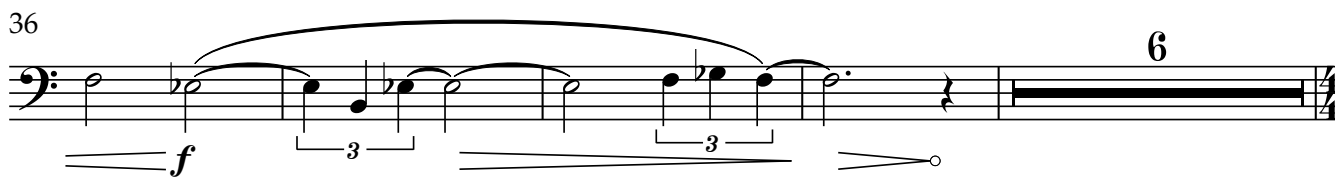
6 5



13 [A] 11 [B] 10



36



46 [C] 15



63

