

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.



Flute 2

II. Imbolc

♩ = 80-90 *sarabande-like*

3 2

11 [A]

3 2 4

*mf* > *p*      *p* < > *mf*

24 [B]

[C] [D]

21 11 12

Flute 2

III. Ostara

$\text{♩} = 60$  *bursting*

1 2 6

*sfz sfz sfz fp ff*

13

*mp p*

18

22

27

31

35

6

*ff*

45

*f* 3 3 2

Flute 2

IV. Beltane

♩. = 80 *mysterious*

1 *p*

7 *p* 2

14 **A** *p*

20 **B** *p*

27 **C** *p*

34 **D** *p*

41 **E** *ff*

48 **F** 4 9 *ff*

62 **G** 16 7 *ff*

*attacca*

Flute 2

V. Litha

Vivace ♩ = 90-105

6 A 3

*p* *mf*

11

*pp* *p* *mf* *p*

17 B breathe ad lib.

*mp*

25 C

*f*

28

*ff*

31 D 6 breathe ad lib.

*ff* *p*

40 E

*p*

48 F poco rit. 3 2

*f*

Flute 2

# VI. Lughnasadh

♩ = 80 *still, glistening*

10 **A** 10 **B** 10

31 **C**

*mp* *mf*

37 **D**

*p* *mf.p* *pp*

Flute 2

VII. Mabon

♩ = 80-90 *macabre*

3 3 5 2 2

17 2 3 2 2

29 [A] 2 11 *f*

46 [B] *mp*

52

59

65 [C] 2 5 2 2 2

80 [D] 4

88 *p* *f* *attacca* 6

Flute 2

VIII. Samhain

♩ = 110-120 *haunting*

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, 3/2 time signature. Measures 1-6. Measure 1 has a whole rest. Measures 2-3 have a half note G4 with a slur. Measure 4 has a whole rest. Measures 5-6 have a half note G4 with a slur. Dynamics: *ff*.

Musical staff 2: Treble clef, 3/2 time signature. Measures 7-12. Measure 7 has a whole note G4 with a slur. Measure 8 has a half note A4 with a slur. Measure 9 has a whole note G4 with a slur. Measure 10 has a whole rest. Measure 11 has a whole rest. Measure 12 has a triplet of eighth notes G4, A4, B4. Dynamics: *ff*.

Musical staff 3: Treble clef, 3/2 time signature. Measures 13-22. Measure 13 is the start of section A. 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 a whole rest. Measure 22 is the end of section B. Dynamics: *ff*.

Musical staff 4: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Measures 23-38. Measure 23 is the start of section C. 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. Measure 31 has a whole rest. Measure 32 has a whole rest. Measure 33 has a whole rest. Measure 34 has a whole rest. Measure 35 has a whole rest. Measure 36 has a whole rest. Measure 37 has a whole rest. Measure 38 has a whole rest. Dynamics: *f*, *ff*.

Musical staff 5: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Measures 39-62. Measure 39 has a whole rest. Measure 40 has a whole rest. Measure 41 has a whole rest. Measure 42 has a whole rest. Measure 43 has a whole rest. Measure 44 has a whole rest. Measure 45 has a whole rest. Measure 46 has a whole rest. Measure 47 has a whole rest. Measure 48 has a whole rest. Measure 49 has a whole rest. Measure 50 has a whole rest. Measure 51 has a whole rest. Measure 52 has a whole rest. Measure 53 has a whole rest. Measure 54 has a whole rest. Measure 55 has a whole rest. Measure 56 has a whole rest. Measure 57 has a whole rest. Measure 58 has a whole rest. Measure 59 has a whole rest. Measure 60 has a whole rest. Measure 61 has a whole rest. Measure 62 has a whole rest. Dynamics: *ff*.