

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.

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I. Yule

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♩ = 120 *desolate*

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Measures 1-4. Measure 1 is a whole rest with a '3' above it. Measures 2-4 contain a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *mp* and *p*.

Musical staff 2: Treble clef. Measures 5-8. Measure 5 is a whole rest with a '2' above it. Measures 6-8 contain a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *mp* and *p*.

Musical staff 3: Treble clef. Measures 9-13. Measure 9 is a whole rest with 'A' in a box above it and '24' above it. Measure 10 is a whole rest with 'B' in a box above it and '5' above it. Measures 11-13 contain a melodic line with dynamics *pp*.

Musical staff 4: Treble clef. Measures 14-18. Measures 14-18 contain a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *p*, *pp*, *p*, and *pp*.

Musical staff 5: Treble clef. Measures 19-23. Measures 19-23 contain a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *pp* and *p*.

Musical staff 6: Treble clef. Measures 24-28. Measure 24 is a whole rest with 'C' in a box above it. Measures 24-28 contain a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *p*, *mp*, *pp*, *p*, *mp*, and *pp*.

Musical staff 7: Treble clef. Measures 29-34. Measure 29 is a whole rest with '(pp)' below it. Measure 30 is a whole rest with '6' above it. Measures 31-34 contain a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *f*.

B \flat Clarinet 2

V. Litha

Vivace ♩ = 90-105

6 A 7

p *mf* *p*

16 B

p *mf* *p* *mp* breathe ad lib.

23 C 4

ff

31 D

f

35

ff

38 E 7

p

48 F poco rit. 3 2

f

B \flat Clarinet 2

VI. Lughnasadh

$\downarrow = 80$ *still, glistening*

Musical staff showing measures 1 through 10. The staff is marked with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, the number '10' is written above the first, fifth, and ninth measures. Above the second measure is a box labeled 'A', and above the sixth measure is a box labeled 'B'. The staff contains a series of horizontal lines representing notes.

Musical staff starting at measure 31, marked with a box 'C'. The staff contains a melodic line with various notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A slur covers the first two measures, and another slur covers the triplet and the following two measures.

Musical staff starting at measure 37, marked with a box 'D'. The staff contains a melodic line with various notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *mf.p* (mezzo-forte piano), and *pp* (pianissimo). A slur covers the first two measures, and another slur covers the triplet and the following two measures.

B \flat Clarinet 2

VII. Mabon

♩. = 80-90 *macabre*

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, 6/8 time signature. Measures 1-6. Fingerings: 3, 3, 5, 2, 2. Measure 2 is a whole rest.

Musical staff 2: Treble clef, 4/8 time signature. Measures 7-12. Fingerings: 2, 3, 2, 2. Measure 10 is a whole rest.

Musical staff 3: Treble clef, 4/8 time signature. Measures 13-18. Section markers A and B. Fingerings: 2, 17, 3, 5, 2, 2.

Musical staff 4: Treble clef, 4/8 time signature. Measures 19-28. Section marker C. Fingerings: 2, 3. Includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking.

Musical staff 8: Treble clef, 6/8 time signature. Measures 53-64. Section marker D. Includes a 12-measure rest.

attacca

