

DALI

Aldo Rafael Forte

DALI is a five movement work for band of about eighteen minutes in duration inspired by contrasting sculptures and paintings of the Spanish artist Salvador Dali. The work was commissioned by and is dedicated "To Matthew George and the University of St. Thomas Wind Ensemble of St. Paul, MN"

DALI is scored for standard American concert band instrumentation. Even though there are some passages in a "spanish style", all material is entirely original. There are no quotes from pre-existing works.

I. The Unicorn

The composition opens with a depiction of the 1977 bronze sculpture, "*The Unicorn*". A nude woman lies on the ground next to a unicorn who has just pierced a heart on a wall. The heart is "bleeding down the side of the wall". The music weaves material which is at once sentimental, solemn, tragic, and passionate into a musical web of sorrow. Tranquil and introspective music contrast with a few impassioned outbursts. This is the expressive core of the composition.

II. Don Quijote

This is the technical "tour de force" movement of the work. It abounds in Spanishisms symbolizing the gallant knight who is the subject of Dali's painting and drawings on Miguel de Cervantes's novel. A great majority of the musical material for the movement is derived from transformations of the themes and rhythms of the opening six bars. The movement begins innocently subdued and calculatingly builds to a bold tutti (bar 30) symbolizing the valor and courage of the hero Don Quijote. This "hero" music provides a contrast to the opening material. Afterward, a little suspense begins to ensue (bar 43). Eventually (bar 61) the Don begins his fight with the windmills. Ascending motifs scaling a tritone representing the knight's "upward" advances with his sword at the windmills's blades (ie; bars 63, 66-67, 97, ect.) are quickly answered by accented "bang" notes (ie; downbeat of 63) as the blades of the windmills hit the Don. Cacophonous harmonies (61 - 62) are contrasted with fleeting developments of the opening material (68 - 71) and bold Spanish style music (74-77). Finally (bar 97) Don Quijote has his final showdown with the windmills. The return of the "hero" music (bar 114) signals a victory for Don Quijote over the windmills!!

III. Elephant Spatial

As the tempo indication states, this movement is "sassy and outrageous" through and through! The "*Elephant Spatial*" sculpture was cast in bronze by Dali in 1980. This comical looking elephant with huge spindly legs and a pyramid on its back is also featured in Dali's 1944 painting "*Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee Around a Pomegranate, a Second Before Waking Up*" inspired by a dream that Dali's wife Gala reported to him. The artist saw these elephants as existing in a mystical nether-region, halfway to the heavens but still attached to the earth. My music concentrates totally on depicting the absurd and humorous nature of this creature. The music contrasts high tones (the elephant's spindly legs) with low tones (the elemental heaviness of all elephants). Various instrumental combinations poke fun at the elephant with often scandalous music as in the circus-like statements led by the trumpets and alto saxes (43-50). The bassoons (22-26) and the tuba (27-31) on the other hand provide light comic relief. Highs and lows eventually come together in "boogie down" telegraph-like rhythms (63-79)! At two points in the movement the elephant even "tries to dance" but its spindly legs produce only a lopsided step in 5/8 time (13-16 and 80-83)!!

IV. The Persistence of Memory

"*The Persistence of Memory*" is one of Dali's most popular paintings. It includes the first appearance of what is perhaps his most enduring image: the "soft watch" or "melting clocks". These melting clocks appear not only in later paintings but in sculptures as well. The "soft watch" acts as a metaphor for the ephemeral nature of mankind, our inevitable decay, and our subsequent obsession with the nature of time set against us. Musically, persistent rhythms of mostly quarter and eighth notes denote the consistent "ticking" of the melting clocks while the modal harmonies symbolize the painting's bleak, barren, and lifeless landscape. Other repetitive motifs seem to be "stuck in time" (ie; trumpets 5 - 11, flutes and picc. 39 - 42). There is intentionally relatively little bass register in this movement in order to better accentuate the "transparency" and uncomplicated nature of the painting. The alto saxophone melody further enhances the "barren landscape".

V. Dante's Inferno-Dali's Ghastly Images

The finale, "Dante's Inferno-Dali's ghastly images" is a collection and collage of "horrific" soundscapes depicting not only the Dante's Inferno series but also Dali's other bizarre paintings like "The Horseman of Death", "The Face of War", "The Invention of Monsters", etc. etc. Different thematic ideas and harmonic systems are constantly tugging with each other to create a "sound inferno" of sorts. Menacing themes accompanied by pounding percussion (as in the beginning of the movement) compete with tragic thematic material which feature harmonies of minor and augmented triads (73 - 85, etc.). All this confusion is compounded by sections in 5/8, 7/8, etc. (bar 10). After a huge development of all this material, everything is finally resolved in a collaged recap including some burlesque glissandi from the trombones symbolizing the outrageous nature of many of the artist's works. Even the elephant spatial music is very briefly recalled!! In the end, the music "brightens" up briefly depicting the "heaven" of Dante's "The Divine Comedy" series and the entire work concludes with a bold and majestic "Grandioso" celebrating the genius of Salvador Dali. A few Spanish ornamentations pay tribute to the artist's heritage!