URANIA FOR ORCHESTRA

A Thesis by

Randall Austin Zellers

Bachelor of Music, Wichita State University, 1994

Submitted to the Department of Music and the faculty of the Graduate School of Wichita State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music

July 2015
The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Music with a major in Music Theory-Composition.

__________________________________
Walter Mays, Committee Chair

__________________________________
Aleks Sternfeld-Dunn, Committee Member

__________________________________
Wilson Baldridge, Committee Member
ABSTRACT

Urania is a work that is loosely modelled on early Greek music theory (Urania was one of the nine muses worshipped by ancient Greeks), namely the idea of creating scale structures from inserting two variable notes in between two invariable notes that were farther apart in distance. These four note cells, or tetrachords, could then be combined with other cells to create numerous scales that would be used for the creation of melodies.

In this piece, I have adapted this concept to the prevailing Western chromatic scale, using various tetrachords (whose outer notes span the interval of a fourth) to create both melody and harmony.
URANIA

TRANSPOSED SCORE

DURATION: c. 10 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION

Piccolo
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
English Horn
2 Clarinets in Bb
Bass Clarinet
2 Bassoons
4 Horns in F
3 Trumpets in C
2 Tenor Trombones
Bass Trombone
Tuba
Timpani
Percussion (2 players)
    Suspended Cymbal, Vibraphone, Triangle, Sleigh Bells, Bass Drum,
    Snare Drum, Crash Cymbals, Tambourine, Xylophone

Piano
Strings

Urania is a work that is loosely modelled on early Greek music theory; namely the idea of creating scale structures from inserting two variable notes in between two invariable notes that were farther apart in distance. These four note cells, or tetrachords, could then be combined with other cells to create numerous scales that would be used for the creation of melodies.

In this piece, I have adapted this concept to the prevailing Western chromatic scale, using various tetrachords (whose outer notes span the interval of a fourth) to create both melody and harmony. The title reflects the inspiration for this work. Urania was one of the nine muses that were worshipped by the ancient Greeks. She was associated with the earth and the number four, which represented the world (the world was held up by four pillars, there are four cardinal points, the four winds, etc.).

While not a programmatic piece in any sense, on a more abstract level the music portrays the archetype of the hero. After a mysterious introduction in which motives from throughout the piece are heard fleetingly against a repeated note, a heroic first theme is heard against a driving accompaniment. The “hero” must overcome several obstacles (presented musically) and risk giving up hope (a mood portrayed by the melancholy second theme). The piece ends with a collage created from the first theme and its various accompaniments. This final section builds up to a great dissonant harmony which releases with a quick two note burst, perhaps reflecting the final push and victory of the protagonist.
Urania