

**Work:** Elysium

**Composer:** Gordon Hughes

**Written:** 2001

**Players:** 6

**Duration:** 3:55

**Instrumentation:** Vibraphone, 2 Marimbas (Low A), Timpani (3)

**Complete recording:** available on 'REVOLUTIONS' RCD-691

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**Program notes – Elysium**

Elysium is structured around a mesuration cannon taking its influence from the Estonian composer, Arvo Pärt. The opening theme (the 'life' theme) is 6 bars long, contains 18 notes, is 24 beats in length, is derived from the first 6 notes of the scale and contains 3 internal phrases – all numbers referencing the Trinity. The life theme, heard solemnly at first from a solo marimba, is gradually woven amongst the performers, each of whom express life through their performance of the theme.

The descending, scalic motive of a fifth (first heard at rehearsal B) – a common pitch set in church bells – represents fate (or death) in its never ending quest to overtake life.

This motive is at first purposely hidden amongst the tapestry of life unfolding around it, to express that inevitably for each of us, death's bell shall start tolling and for most, we do not hear its first tones.

Gradually this descending motive becomes more apparent, eventually fighting head to head with life when heard cutting through all in the vibraphone at rehearsal D. The entire force of the ensemble is then pitted against death in the closing section of the work – one last stand.

The composer ends the work with the vibraphone tolling an F (the dominant) in the vibraphone, pointing to the possibility that death may have won. The listener and performer are left however with no doubt that it is in fact life that overcomes; triumphing in a surging crescendo that signifies hope above all else.