

“Hiddekel: Third from Life” from *Beyond Rivers of Vision*

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Scored for two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, chimes, crash symbols, four woodblocks, glass chimes, large tam tam, marimba, orchestra bells, small tam tam, suspended cymbal, tambourine, three triangles, tom tom, vibraphone, xylophone, celeste and strings (approx. 3 minutes).

Beyond Rivers of Vision is a three-movement work for orchestra focusing on various rivers in the Bible, the men located near those rivers, and the visions connected with those men. It is interesting to note that visions are opened especially to Daniel and John as they are near a body of water while living in exile. Daniel was in Babylon (modern day Iraq) while John was on the island of Patmos (off the coast of Western Turkey). It is the deep and sincere importance of the vision then received that takes precedence over the location of a particular river. Usually the visions associated with Daniel and John refer to eschatological subject matters.

Therefore I arrive at this particular title because we must look beyond the river itself and study the vision so that its significance and deep importance has a positive changing effect on the one who reads and studies it. The textual sources are found in Genesis 2:10 – 14, Daniel 10:1 – 6, and Revelation 22:1 – 5. What I have tried to do is to provide orchestral images that serve to text-paint the above-mentioned passages. For the most part the form in these pieces are fantasia like or rhapsodic. This form is used to try to remain true the natural progression of events in the passage. At times I also use numerical and word symbolism in terms of pitches, phrases, names, and larger sections.

The first movement, “Hiddekel: Third from Life,” is based on the third river mentioned from the four divisions of the main large river in the Garden of Eden. Hiddekel (Chiddeqel – khid-deh’-kel) is the Hebrew word for the Tigris River located in modern day Iraq. The name means “rapid.” Another source informs us that the thought of “Sharp Voice” is meant to be taken from the name. This particular movement is largely in 3/4 meter with a fast tempo of consistent 16th note flourishes in the woodwinds that depict the lively character of this river with so much life and energy. This particular motive is passed throughout the orchestra from the woodwinds, brass, percussion and on to the strings. At various points in the movement the rapid sweeping melody is interrupted by dreamlike passages in the upper strings and harp. At a certain point in the music the character changes as it provides a sort of commentary on the fall of man after having eaten the forbidden fruit. Finally the movement collects its earlier motives and themes and ends in an explosion of sound.

This is the Detroit Symphony Orchestra premiere of Lee’s *Beyond Rivers of Vision*.

Program note by composer James Lee III.