

Explanation

Subject

The subject of the work is the nature and inhabitants of the area now called “The Netherlands” in the time of the “Hunebed-builders” (Late Stone Age, approx. 5000 years ago). In that time, the area was mainly covered with primeval forest, cut by rivers and brooks which frequently changed their course under the influence of tide, rain and supply of melting water from the Alps. In the woods, a great number of small animals lived, besides some bigger sorts, such as deer, wild boars, foxes and wolves. On higher places, small, isolated groups of men lived in simple huts from primitive forms of agriculture, hunting, fishing and animal husbandry. They did not know writing and worshipped nature gods which they tried to keep lenient by offerings and rituals.

It is assumed that the “Hunebeds” (simple man-made natural stone structures) marked collective graveyards and worshipping places for scattered local settlements. The total number of inhabitants of the area at that time is estimated at approx. 10,000.

Source: “De vroegste geschiedenis van Nederland”, Historisch Nieuwsblad, september 2002.

Scenario

The music is subdivided in 4 movements which transit in each other without pauses. The individual movements have as subjects:

I (Adagio): It is springtime. The sun rises, the contours of the wood become visible. Animals awake and let their presence known.

II (Allegro vivo): Young animals play with each other and try their strength. Grown-up animals go seeking for food and come in conflict with intruders of their territory and families. As more and bigger animals appear, atmosphere becomes fierce, but when the trespassers have been chased away, the animals get quiet; some go for a nap, others withdraw and look for themselves and family members.

III (Agitato): Thunderstorms and rain drives chase animals and humans into their refuges; trees are felled by strong winds and bolts of lightning. River banks are flooded, woods set afire. Chaos is everywhere, but simultaneously conditions are created for new life and order.

IV (Maestoso): Wind and rain subside and men get together in order to thank the gods for ending the storm. They accompany their hymns with primitive drums, small flutes and lithophones (= “sounding stones”). The work ends as an ode to the unity of mankind and nature.

Background

The fundamental thought behind the work is the permanent controversy in nature between chaos and order (in physical terms: entropy and energy). In the composition, two movements represent harmony and the two others controversy: the 1st movement depicts the quiet harmony of sunrise, the 2nd the struggle between animals for survival, the 3rd the destruction in nature by heavy weather, and the 4th the harmonious co-existence of man and nature: a permanently returning theme in the history of the Earth, as long as mankind exists, until the present days.

The composer