

Lago de Lágrimas

Instrumentation

- 2 Flutes (2nd doubling Piccolo), 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets in Bb, 2 Bassoons
- 4 Horns in F, 2 Trumpets in C, 3 Trombones, 1 Tuba
- Timpani; Perc. 1: Tubular Bells, Triangle, Crash cymbals; Perc. 2: Triangle, Gran Cassa, Tom-toms (3), Crash cymbal
- Harp
- Solo (Glissando) Flute
- Strings

Lago de Lágrimas, o el amor indecible de Huandoy y Huascarán, flute concerto.
Duration: 20 minutes.

"Long time ago, at the base of the Cordillera Blanca there was a powerful king who had promised his daughter to the son of a neighboring king, a union that would strengthen the kingdom in the Valley of Santa River. But his daughter, the princess Huandi, was in love with Huascar, one of the king's soldiers. One night, while the princess went out secretly to meet her lover, she was seen by a servant who told the king. The king was furious due the disobedience of his daughter, and wished to give an exemplary punishment. Feeling in danger, the princess ran away with Huascar, and the two lovers made a pact to stay together even in the face of horrible consequences.

They left before dawn, but the king sent a group of warriors on their traces. They were easily captured and chained to the rocks, face to face, with their hands tied to their backs, unable to embrace one another. The couple, abandoned to the forces of nature, cried and cried. Cold, hunger, rain and the suffering of being separated weakened them little by little. And so the Apus (mountain gods) showed pity on them and transformed them into mountains. Huascar became Huascarán, the tallest mountain of Peru, and Huandi was transformed into Huandoy. And they remain so until this day, an eternal symbol of impossible love. Even now, the mountains continue to cry, and legend says that from so many tears, the Lakes of Llanganuco were formed."¹

As soon as I had finished reading this story, I made it my mission to express it in music. It had caused an unprecedented impact on me, and although fictional, it felt eerily real. How could anyone endure such agony? What could bring about more pain than witnessing the loved one perish in front of one's eyes without being able to do anything to stop it? Yet through grief they achieved immortality, glorified by their immense suffering. Their tears brought about life to the valley; their commanding stature dominating the scenery for millennia to come.

It has taken me a little over a year to write this piece, and I have spared no effort in conveying the range of emotions that this story has awakened in me. The monumental transmutation of human suffering -symbolized by tears- into a geographical landmark, the lake, expands human experience and elevates it to

¹ This story has been transmitted orally through generations, and it exists in several versions. The version reproduced above is the result of a personal compilation from various sources, all of them anonymous.

the sphere of geological time. The lovers, now transformed into mountains, have finally attained their dream of being together, but they only achieved it through sorrow, their tears joining when flowing into the lake. I knew I had to be lead by intuition if I was to fully grasp the meaning of this story.

The concerto is divided into two movements, which can be understood in at least two different ways. The first movement can be associated with the feminine nature of Huandi, and the suffering inflicted upon her by her disapproving father, while the second could be understood as representing Huascar, with all his strength and determination not to give up even in the face of unbearable hardships. At second glance, however, one might be tempted to look at these movements in a more programmatic way, I have no objection to this, but it must be kept in mind that this work is not meant to portray all events as they unfold chronologically. In fact, I would be rather inclined to say that the music evokes emotions aroused by the story, but does not necessarily depict any specific events. Ultimately, the listener is welcome to make up his mind and use the story as a guideline if he or she may chose to do so.

From a strictly musical point of view, the piece exists within two worlds. The first movement, 'Suplicio' (Torment) is explicitly tonal. The beginning of the first movement is marked by a certain ambiguity, but once the main theme comes in, all doubts are dispelled and we are engulfed in a purely tonal world where harmony and counterpoint play equally important roles. The middle section sees an ascending fugue-like theme emerge from the lower regions of the orchestra, and a climax is achieved once the introductory theme and the main theme are combined into a single phrase. A coda-like section follows, ending the movement in a solemn, quasi-religious state.

The second movement, 'Transmutación' (Transmutation) is built in a Rondo-like form. An energetic theme is displayed at the beginning of the movement, reappearing several times throughout the piece with musical episodes in between. This movement, while also making use of triadic harmonies, does not use functional tonality except for those places where it explicitly aims at evoking the first movement, concretely the main theme. In this movement, tonality is used as a reference point, as a window to a world of sorrow. In this movement however, the main theme of the first movement (which also serves as the main theme for the whole concerto) appears juxtaposed to the theme of the second movement, thus contrasting its slow moving pace with the more urgent and hectic pace of the second movement's theme. This represents the union of the two lovers who will be soon transformed into mountains, their love perpetuated for eternity.

Flutist Jessica Warren-Acosta and I have worked together on this piece from the very beginning. Jessica's contribution has been key to the development of this concerto. It was she who suggested the use of a relatively new invention, a sliding mouthpiece, which allows the player to lengthen or shorten the tube, therefore altering the pitch of the instrument in the process. Jessica has had this device built especially for this concerto.

This piece has been commissioned by Miguel Harth-Bedoya, to whom I am deeply indebted for his unwavering support of my music. The world premiere took place under his baton on November 20, 2009 with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. This piece was revised in 2010.

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