

ROCKS

for symphonic winds, brass, harp, piano, double bass and percussion

PROGRAM NOTES:

- I. Obsidian
- II. Slate
- III. Blue Lapis
- IV. Amethyst
- V. Sulfur

A work in five movements for symphonic winds, brass, piano, harp, percussion and double bass, inspired by the five rocks listed above. The music reflects the textures and sonic implications of each: glassy, volcanic **obsidian**; dry, crisp **slate**; luxurious **blue lapis**; magical **amethyst**; and intense, burning **sulfur**.

ROCKS was commissioned by a consortium of universities in the United States and the United Kingdom, led by Kennesaw State University and their conductor, David Kehler, and including: Arkansas Tech University, Charleston Southern University, Eastern Arizona College, Emory University, Florida Atlantic University, Florida State University, Louisiana State University, Michigan State University, Middle Tennessee State University, Southwest Texas State University, Stetson University, Texas Tech University, the University of Dubuque, the University of Georgia, the University of Memphis, the University of Puget Sound, the University of South Carolina, the University of Washington, the University of West Georgia, the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse and the University of Cambridge (UK).

INSTRUMENTATION:

Piccolo
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
Eng horn
2 Bassoons
Contra bassoon
Eb clarinet
2 Bb Clarinets
Bass Clarinet
2 Alto Saxophones
Tenor Sax
Baritone Sax

4 Horns
3 C Trumpets (doubling piccolo tpt.)
3 Trombones
Euphonium
Tuba

Harp
Piano (doubling celesta)

String Bass

Timpani
Percussion 1
Percussion 2
Percussion 3
Percussion 4

Duration = ca. 21 minutes

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I. Obsidian:

Obsidian is a naturally occurring glass formed when lava extruded from a volcano cools without crystal growth. Because of the lack of crystal structure, obsidian blade edges can reach almost molecular thinness, leading to its ancient use as projectile points, and its modern use as surgical scalpel blades. Obsidian has several varieties, including *Golden Sheen Obsidian*, *Rainbow Obsidian* and *Snowflake Obsidian*. Small nuggets of obsidian that have been naturally rounded and smoothed by wind and water are called *Apache Tears*.



II. Slate:

The parent rock for slate is shale, a relatively soft sedimentary rock. Big slabs of slate have been used as chalkboards in the past, and can still be seen in the Alps as shingles on the roofs of houses. Smaller pieces of slate work well as skipping stones on a lake.



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III. Blue Lapis:

Lapis lazuli (sometimes abbreviated to lapis) is a semi-precious stone prized since antiquity for its vivid color—often an intense blue, lightly dusted with small flecks of golden pyrite. Blue lapis has been mined in the Badakhshan province of Afghanistan for 6,500 years, and trade in the stone is ancient enough for lapis jewelry to have been found at Predynastic Egyptian sites, and even as far from Afghanistan as Mauritania.



IV. Amethyst:

Purple Amethyst has been highly esteemed throughout the ages for its stunning beauty and legendary power to channel and amplify energy. It is a semi-precious stone in today's classifications, but to the ancients it was a "Gem of Fire," a precious stone worth, at times in history, as much as a diamond. It has always been associated with February, the month the Romans dedicated to Neptune, their water-god. The name Amethyst derives from the Greek word *ametustos*, meaning "not intoxicated," and comes from an ancient legend. The wine god Bacchus, angry over an insult and determined to avenge himself, decreed the first person he should meet would be devoured by his tigers. The unfortunate mortal happened to be a beautiful maiden named Amethyst, on her way to worship at the shrine of Diana. As the ferocious beasts sprang, she sought the protection of the goddess and was saved by being turned into a clear, white crystal. Bacchus, regretting his cruelty, poured the juice of his grapes over the stone as an offering, giving the gem its lovely purple hue.



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V. Sulfur:

Sulfur, in its native form, is a yellow crystalline solid. It is intrinsically linked with volcanoes, where it is mined to this day in many parts of the world, especially along the Pacific Ring of Fire. English translations of the Bible commonly referred to sulfur as "brimstone", giving rise to the name of 'fire and brimstone' sermons, in which listeners are reminded of the fate of eternal damnation that await the unbelieving and unrepentant. Early alchemists gave sulfur its own alchemical symbol which was a triangle at the top of a cross.

