

Masters' Thesis by Amanda Handel (UWS 2004)

Music of Balance: Circles and Squares

Abstract

Music of Balance is a portfolio of eight compositions, all of which bear the concealed influence of mandalas in their conception – these are made manifest musically in cyclic structures with shifting drones, pedals and tonal ambiguities. The compositional process maximises minimal materials – *circles* and *squares* – symbolically.

Organising thought, feeling and knowledge into a balanced acoustic musical form of expression is the objective of this creative project - which is carried out under the influence of symbols.

Whilst the compositional processes are intuitive, they involve a disciplinary measure which employs the circle and square as tools. Acting symbolically these tools imbue the music with meaning deeper than the obvious listening surface, and provide a rich substance of sound. Programmatic influences have been absented; replaced instead by the language of symbols – namely the mandala symbol. A range of apparent opposites arising from circles and squares – physical/ephemeral matter, chronological/eternal time and form/expression – are investigated for musical reconciliation. The compositional exploration is guided and focused by the circle in a square image understood as a universal symbol (grounded in the ancient Indian Arts, Tibetan Buddhism, Sufism and Jungian psychology), and active in representing, and thus restoring the natural balance of the soul in the universe.