

The Persistence of Memory (2010)

Program Notes

The Persistence of Memory is based on the well-known Salvador Dali painting of the same name. The painting, which features Dali's famous "melting clocks," is one of the definitive works of the Surrealist Movement in art. It evokes a number of themes that lend themselves well to the music, especially the atrophy of time and shape. Time, pitch, and timbre all "melt" and re-form throughout the piece.

The first part (Dreamscapes) depicts the ocean and mountain landscape and employs water triangle and echo chimes to create a dropping, bending, "Doppler" effect with pitches. The clocks are represented somewhat overtly by woodblocks, which persist in a tick-tock fashion through much of the piece. The second section (Gears) is inspired primarily by the war-like ants that are attacking a clock in the painting, suggesting anxiety and the unrelenting nature of time, hence the fast tempo and asymmetric meters. The final section (Melting Clocks) features cacophonous, polyphonic woodblock passages and the further decay of pitch, time, and previous motives. Throughout the piece, rhythms and sounds that first appear to be solid become amorphous, deformed, or completely liquid. The overall effect is reminiscent of a half-remembered dream, a feeling that you've been immersed in a world only vaguely resembling reality.

-Dave Hall