

Aleph (2007)

*Co-commissioned by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the New World Symphony and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.
Premiered on septembre 27, 2007 in Aberdeen (Écosse), by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, conducted by
Stéphane Denève.*

This symphonic dance constitutes the first part of my *Cosmic Trilogy* which also includes *Une lueur dans l'âge sombre* (2005) and *Supernova* (1997). This trilogy evokes three moments in the history of the universe : the Big-Bang in *Aleph*, the appearance of light and the stars in *Une lueur dans l'âge sombre* and finally the explosion and death of a star in *Supernova*.

Aleph is both the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and, in mathematics, represents the cardinality of an infinite set. In the hermetic tradition it's also a sphere which is purported to contain the whole world. My score is a huge dance of life and energy on the beginning of the universe. It's constructed entirely around the figure seven : seven sections are linked together, the main theme has seven beats in the bar and is made up of seven notes...

The work begins with a veritable « wall of sound », a huge *fortissimo* chord which releases waves of energy. A pulse establishes itself and the main theme gradually takes shape. Particles of matter assemble themselves together gradually until a new F chord releases a tumultuous energy. After this introduction, the dance proper begins : the main theme passes from one desk to another, initially light and rhythmic in character, then becoming more and more turbulent. This culminates in the first refrain which sets out the second theme in trumpet chords. After a climax of energy, the matter suddenly dissolves during the central section in which a lyrical theme on the violas and cellos seeks to open out, interrupted twice in a row by the first theme. On the third attempt, the lyrical melody finally unravels in the violins, accompanied by the initial cell. An harmonic bridge built in swirling canons upon this initial cell leads to the second refrain. The dance is suddenly interrupted by a long, crescendoing coda : a repeating figure builds up progressively in the strings, to which the first theme is added in the woodwind and finally, at the climax, the second refrain theme is superimposed in the brass in an orgiastic and frenetic dance, with which my score concludes. It is dedicated to Åsa and Stéphane Denève as a marriage gift.

Guillaume Connesson