

The Last Battle

By Gustav Johnson

For Woodwind Quintet, Brass Quintet, and Post Rock Ensemble

C.S. Lewis wrote seven children's novels based in the world of Narnia. The characters and stories are both simple, but deep, and have inspired countless readers since their publication.

The Last Battle depicts the ending of "Old Narnia" and the birth of the new, "True Narnia". Similar to Biblical prophecies, a false prophet seeks to gain power and influence over others by spreading false doctrine: that the one true God, Aslan, is actually the same as the pagan god, Tash. Many are swayed by the false teachings, as many by unknowingness of the true God as by otherwise.

The last king of Narnia and his faithful companions, among them Eustace and Jill from our own Earth, fight to free Narnia of the curse of the false prophet. The battle rages in the night, and in the chaos and slaughter our heroes are pushed through the terrible door on Stable Hill and into the darkness.

Upon arriving, they find the inside of the stable is not as dark as they had imagined—in fact, the sun is shining and the only remaining evidence of the stable is the rickety, wooden door, through which can still be heard the sounds of the false prophet's evil mob. The explanation is simple: they have entered Aslan's country, a place where all is as it should be, where old friends are met anew and happy lives lived fully time and time again.

Aslan arrives to greet the heroes, both old and new, and has Peter open the stable door to begin the ending of Old Narnia. The giant named Time awakes, winds his horn, and through the light of the falling stars our heroes witness the death pains of the world of Narnia. All living beings race towards the door and see Aslan face to face. For some it is bliss, the meeting of an old and faithful friend. For others it is terrible, an unfathomable doom.

C.S. Lewis tells of the wonders of Aslan's country in words I cannot do justice with a summary. I will suffice myself with his final words:

"And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read; which goes on forever; in which every chapter is greater than the one before."

In this work, I aimed to capture the whimsy of the world of Narnia, alongside the bravery and courage contained in its characters and stories. I can say little else except that I have worked long and labored hard on this music, and hope that my meanings are clear to the listeners.

Thanks!

Gustav Johnson