

**Contestant: Gustav Johnson**

**Title: *The Last Battle***

1. Submit a piece that **properly depicts the end of the world** in any context. This piece should **progress like a story**, of sorts, not just simply the event that causes the world to perish. The relation to the source material should be clear in your music in one way or another. Since it is difficult to convey things through sound, **your job is simply to convince the judges that you've thought about how to make it work. (/40)**

This is the happiest end of the world I've ever heard. Between the score and the notes I find it quite difficult to pin exactly how you connected it to the end of the world, but I'm going to give you the benefit of the doubt.

Some really great ideas in here. Repetition I'm assuming was used to build tension, and the overlapping of fluidity and stoicism combine to create a jarring effect of repressed motion.

These feelings are really important and you have great concepts for them throughout.

All of these ideas, as far as I can tell were pushed into a style of stylistic minimalism of various kinds: harmonic, rhythmic, etc. On paper this is a great idea too, but it falls a little bit flat when we hear the climaxes and troughs of the piece follow a similar vain with not enough change to call it a contrast in the general sense of the word. I think this is my biggest issue concerning my immersion with the world you were trying to create; I felt like I was being dragged by the ear down a road, rather than an observer, where I got to choose the angles in which I saw the chaos. Growth and decay are factors you basically rely on throughout the piece since you choose to adhere so strictly to your chosen style. This isn't inherently a bad thing, in fact, it's mostly a good thing here, since *repetition becomes your motif*. However, what I find off-putting about its execution is that when things are added or subtracted to or from this formula, it really doesn't feel like the effect has changed, and this could be due to anything from how many instruments are playing the motif at what level, to wanting a different kind of motion. For this

reason, the polyrhythm you introduce is incredibly refreshing as it basically is a development to your motif, which was really quite smart.

Overall, I certainly see the arc of your story while listening, but I think I wanted a little more specificity in your sound to make shapes within the landscape you've made.

**+28/40**

*2. The more technically based compositional aspects are judged here. These aspects include **score quality (/15), audio file quality (/15), and orchestration (/15).***

Generally, the score looks very nice. There are a couple recurring issues: the dashed lines separating halves of the measure are spaced oddly sometimes and occasionally a passage will not be spaced properly leading to accidentals that look cramped (i.e. mm. 149, 238).

Additionally, the notation of the percussion at the bottom could use some more vertical spacing, also not requiring a vertical break with extra tempo markers. m. 335 was also incredibly strange for seemingly no reason. **+11/15** I had numerous issues with the sound file, not so much caused by an inaccurate representation as the MIDI being wholly unable to render brass and winds to level of any sort of dynamic contrast or drama. Because this piece is done in such a consistent style throughout movements, repetition became rather annoying to listen to and I can't shake the feeling that I was listening to a wall of sound and rhythm for a great deal of it. **+6/15**

There's a few orchestration things to talk about, but let's focus on doubling. It can either be a very subtle tool or a very grand and powerful one. You use a lot of it throughout the piece and I can tell it's to reinforce a line you think sounds too weak on its own. Be it melodic or rhythmic doubling, to me it sounds instead like more of a crutch... as though you didn't think the motif or melody could be epic enough without the extra sound. In a way you're right; Liszt used way too many of octaves in his piano music, but nobody can deny it really helped create a bigger, more grandiose sound than a more Chopin-like singular line. Other pieces that use them with great effect is Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* (which is a fantastic, lesser-known piece everyone

should know) and almost anything in a big band context. Where it becomes less useful is in pieces like Handel's *Messiah*, most notably the *Hallelujah* chorus and Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis*, Mvt. 2 (the fast parts). Do you hear a difference? There's a difference in effect between these two styles. Doubling in the first context always builds; it shows that something is important, as if a student was highlighting an important sentence in a book. Books don't have to bold things for you because they don't want to hold the hand of the listener too much, and that's what happens with the *Messiah* and *Metamorphosis*, to me personally. And I think it's kind of happening in your piece too. I don't think you need to be so explicit with your themes, especially since you do a lot of nice layering with certain parts. This obviously isn't a rule, but there's always more to do with a line than just give it more sound. **+11/15**

*3. Submit a writing component explaining the context in which the world is being destroyed and explaining how your instrumentation **and** compositional sections depict your writing. This should include what techniques you used to demonstrate certain aspects of each, keys, styles, or anything else you feel is prudent. (/15)*

What was submitted was a helpful explanation of the story, but delves into no formal elements of the piece. I read these notes after listening to the piece and found some of the notation elements within the music to still be somewhat confusing. One of the composer's most valuable tool is defense against criticism, and you have not really provided anything that serves as a formal defense. Everything is left up to subjective conjecture, and while that is sometimes quite welcome in music (some would argue vital), when looking at specific traits, reasons become necessary, otherwise everybody is correct, which is simply not a worthy outlook to be taken.

That being said the notes were a decent summary of the story you were attempting to display. This was an interesting take on "The End of the World", and at first I didn't really see the connection. Lookin further, it makes enough sense to generally hold my interest, but overall the notes sounded like something of a book report. **+6/15**

**TOTAL: 62/100**