The Angry Garden

I was aware of damage to the environment during my studies as a scientist in the early 1970’s, but I am not sure when general abuse turned into major threat. Neither am I sure when for me it became an emotive issue, but now it is clear that it connects to the very being of civilisation. For this reason, *The Angry Garden* takes a longer-term view, the Earth and human action seen within a broader and somewhat detached perspective, reflected in the title which implies that the world has a personality, one which does not like what is being done to it.

The first movement, which had a working title of ‘Creation’, appears from nothing other than the wind. The feel is edgy and ethereal, the minor second being the important interval, most powerful at the words “that would nail God's palm to Time”. The second movement, ‘Eden’, is light in character, more reminiscent of a dripping rain forest than that of Adam and Eve.

The third movement, built around the age of the dinosaur, not surprisingly is heavy and ponderous, but with a majesty that reflects the grandness of the inhabitants. Man’s entrance is in the fourth movement, via an instrument that represents early civilisations, the didgeridoo. The choir has ‘primitive’ sounds, gradually constructing the vowels of the Western alphabet. From here the tension builds, phrases such as “more mouths, more land” and “turn up the heat” providing the driving force.

The effect of Man was held for the final movement, the crushed semitone reappears as ice creaks under off-beat motifs within the strings. This section ends with the words “the signs of change”, but of equal import is the gentle singing of “and so the prophecies have come to pass”. It was tempting to finish with the warmth of this passage but it seemed a luxury inappropriate to the subject matter, and my own feelings. Wherever one's beliefs lie, nothing is forever, and the opening words of “Stillness Darkness Emptiness Silence” draw the piece to its close, ending where it began, with the wind.