

Composer Notes

MICHAEL ABELS

Nope Suite

Nope is Jordan Peele's most ambitious film to date. It focuses on humanity's fascination with spectacle, even when that fascination threatens our common sense and personal safety. The story is set in Hollywood — that American shrine to spectacle — where a brother and sister from a family of horse trainers for media productions attempt to capture evidence of aliens using techniques they've learned in the business. The result is a work that is part family drama, part science fiction adventure, part horror film, and part Western. The score touches on all these genres and provides some connection between them.

"The Run" captures the excitement of riding a horse at full gallop through a scenic valley, while being chased by a giant flying alien that intends to swallow you whole. "A Hero Falls" begins with a solemn moment between two siblings before one of them turns to face death to save the other's life. "Pursuit" is another chase, this time on a motorcycle, leading to an exciting climax. And the final movement, "Nope," is an homage to classic Westerns, as the dust on the horizon lifts to reveal the hero, still on horseback.

Global Warming

Global Warming was written in 1990, at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Cold War was ending, and there was a warming of relations between east and west. I was very interested in folk music of other cultures, and was noticing similarities between music of certain cultures from different corners of the world. I had also become aware of a phenomenon called "global warming" which at the time was considered a scientific observation rather than a political talking point. I decided to write a piece that explored musical cultural similarities and used the title "Global Warming" as a play on words to represent that.

The majority of the piece is quite joyful. It bursts with melodies, rhythms and harmonies derived from folk music. But this joy is preceded by a more stark, somber depiction of a desert scene, a true global warming tableau as predicted by climatologists. And rather than ending joyfully, the piece suddenly returns to the desert scene at its conclusion. My thought at the time was to ask the question, "Which kind of global warming do we want to see in our world?" Thirty years later, the question remains.