

KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

A processional is the musical expression of a ritual, a ceremony made into sound. It marks a rite of passage, signifying the crossing of a threshold or the completion of a journey. The pace is slow, dignified and steady, with a feeling of inexorable forward motion. KEYS TO THE KINGDOM is my own personal take on this idea. It contains many of the characteristics of a traditional processional, but it also tells a story and acts as a musical portrait of the journey itself, portraying steps along the way and some of the branchings of the path.

The beginning sets the tone and pace with a persistent ceremonial pulse in the timpani and bass instruments, sounding under warm chords in the low brass.

The basic form is in three parts. First comes the main processional theme, an extended melodic phrase which starts quietly in a low register and then moves steadily up through the range, becoming more resolute as it goes higher and higher. The second part is an eccentric moving theme, presented in the exotic tone of the double reeds over a staccato accompaniment. It offers contrast, novelty and a bit of relief from the more somber music surrounding it. The third section is a noble and celebratory chorale, presented in tutti and led by the brass, signifying arrival, achievement and coming within view of the final destination.

After a couple of passes through this basic form, the music takes an unexpected turn and arrives at a four-bar looping section with a repetitive and anthemic quality. A high-register hook played in the flutes flies over full-bodied brass chords and a lightly marching snare drum. It's the fourth part of a three-part form, a transcendent and coda-like section that takes place above and beyond the rest of the music.

After a quiet reset featuring some moving woodwind lines, the whole form is stated once again, bigger, louder and with more conviction, with large forces laying out the themes in an epic fashion. This time when we arrive at the final anthemic section, it morphs into a true coda, extending, growing and leading on to a triumphal conclusion.