The Labyrinth

(801 years after being laid)

for harpsichord or organ

Anthony Skilbeck

The companion piece to "The Labyrinth" is "A Superimposition" (541 years after Legrant's composition).

The World Premieres of "A Superimposition" and "The Labyrinth"
were given by the composer
in St. Paul's Church, Worksop,
on 10th October, 2006

The labyrinth (laid in 1202) of Chartres Cathedral, France, inspired this composition, together with J.S.Bach's organ piece, *Kleines Harmonisches Labyrinth (A Little Harmonic Labyrinth)*. Ancient labyrinths were sometimes spiritual tools, leading pilgrims along a meditative path. My way of seeing the Chartres labyrinth is to think of a soul's journey striving through life to reach the heavenly home from which it came.

Put briefly:

i   As there are 11 rings in the labyrinth, so there are 11 sections in the composition.

ii   As the circumferences of the rings diminish in length, so the sections in the composition become shorter.

iii As one grows older, hours become shorter (it seems to me) and this is reflected in the music which appears to gradually become faster.

The centre of the Chartres labyrinth is a six-leaved "flower" (to me, symbolising Heaven); the last ten bars of the piece correspond to this.

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To create a structure for a musical composition based on the dimensions of the Chartres Cathedral labyrinth, I took measurements from a postcard of the labyrinth, showing the view as if looking from above. Each ring (or path) has an outside and an inside diameter; the measurements of the latter can be seen in the table below. Although the real diameter of the labyrinth's circumference is 12.87 metres, the measurements given are proportionally correct. In converting these to note values, I made the semiquaver equivalent to .1, the quaver to .2, the crotchet to .4, the dotted crotchet to .6, and the minim to .8. In this scheme, ten semiquavers are equal to a minim plus a quaver, and I called this a unit (of musical notation) which, when made to represent a centimetre, yielded the following:

Inside diameter of the 11th ring: 8.2 cm. When converted to time represented by musical notation: [8 x ♩ ♪] + ♪ = 41♭ beats.

"	10th	: 7.6 cm.	"	: [7 x "] + ♩ ♪	= 38	"	.
"	09th	: 7.0 cm.	"	: [7 x "]	= 35	"	.
"	08th	: 6.4 cm.	"	: [6 x "] + ♩	= 32	"	.
"	07th	: 5.8 cm.	"	: [5 x "] + ♩	= 29	"	.
"	06th	: 5.0 cm.	"	: [5 x "]	= 25	"	.
"	05th	: 4.4 cm.	"	: [4 x "] + ♩	= 22	"	.
"	04th	: 3.7 cm.	"	: [3 x "] + ♩ ♪ ♪	= 18.5	"	.
"	03rd	: 3.2 cm.	"	: [3 x "] + ♪	= 16	"	.
"	02nd	: 2.7 cm.	"	: [2 x "] + ♩ ♪ ♪	= 13.5	"	.
"	01st	: 2.1 cm.	"	: [2 x "] + ♪	= 10.5	"	.

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Harpsichord: I: 8'; **II**: 8'

♩ = 56 Duration: ca. 3'

mf
evocare gli antichi

mp

1st ring

2nd ring

3rd ring

♪ = ♪ *(sempre)*

4th ring

The phrasing should be strictly observed and an audible gap left before repeated notes.

Skilbeck: page three of "The Labyrinth"

Tempo primo ($\bullet$ = 56)

* II p sereno (tranquillo)

* Opportunity for a change of registration, if playing on the organ

allargando

ritardando

March 2003

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