

Winter Symphony

written by: Titos Menchaca

The light dims and quiet descends... libations are poured and close at hand... the fire crackles. Outside the floor-to-ceiling window, dark clouds—mysterious and menacing—roll over the horizon as the curtain rises and the overture begins in earnest... a timpani roll of thunder cautiously crescendos, then breaks into arrhythmic thumps and rumbles... *sforzando!!* Flashes of lighting, like cymbal crashes, insinuate the moisture-laden clouds blanketing the sky.

The wind begins to whip. *ACCELERANDO!!* Fierce and masculine, the music jumps from *allegretto* to *allegro*—fast to faster—then back a *tempo*, inaugurating the melodic motif. The occasional pitter of flying ice can be heard against the windows... *staccato*—like the sharp, percussive reports of a distant snare drum. Gradually, there's a trickle of snow, sporadic flurries like the shrill trilling of a piccolo... scattered at first, then quickly becoming more and more steadfast—harbingers of their brethren... a visceral foreshadowing of the *andante* movement about to unfold.

Then, responding in a perfect time to a cue from the wand of an unseen maestro, the clouds expel their lading... a swirling populace of delicate snowflakes, dancing and frolicking in a free-form, airborne ballet... *rubato*, moving in variegated tempos to better express their emotions, expanding on the motif... their playfulness a paradox to their rowdy preamble. The melody soars as the sweet vibrato of the violins and violas—two similar yet distinct voices... puckish and harmonious—carry the impish swirls through the ebb and flow of their timeless jig.

Finally, after some enigmatic amount of time, the dance is over and the newly-brightened day reveals a re-dressing of the stage: the blanket of white's migration from the heavens to the earth... to the branches, tress and shrubs... to rooftops and exposed ledges like a calm, alabaster sea delicately distended to the horizon, and undoubtedly beyond. The utter stillness and tranquility brings to mind a feminine duet of a cello—languid, *legado*—accented with the mellow tones of a French horn counter-melody... peaceful, deliberate—*baroque*-like in their point and counter-point... gradually slowing... *largo*... *lento*... and finally, *adagio*...

When the awesome beauty of one of nature's masterpieces is literally an arm's length away...

...when the stress and sensory-carnage of the city are but distant memories...

...when beloveds have shared the experience of one of Garrett County's winter symphonies—a symphony in its own meter... its own sequence... its own voice... it is these moments that live forever in the eye of the soul.

Photo by: Lance C. Bell