

# Subterranean Sky I (2009-2010)

Review by James Wyness

This piece is characterised by a series of what can best be described as 'classic' acousmatic textures, rolling textures, stretched up and down, filtered and offset with one another to create complex contrapuntal polyphony. In fact these are typical characteristics across all five movements.

The most noticeable gestural material comes in the form of metal percussion, predominantly cymbals by the sound of them, processed lightly in various ways, but never so much as to obscure the particular excitement that these metallophones have to offer. They contrast well with, and importantly, prevail against the various contrapuntal textures, offering a clear sense of orchestration.

What I enjoyed most about this piece was the sense of physical activity, a personal engagement with the sounds, a trait I wrote about in relation to one of Chrysakis' earlier albums, *Enantio Dromia*. I also appreciated the sense of form – highlighted by a clearly audible climactic point or zone in the shape of a tonal drone – as well as the dexterity in handling a range of compositional devices, for example high/low contrasts and iteration. I was less sure about the vocal fragments which always seem to me to imply a programmatic agenda of some sort and possibly too close a relationship with the material to hand. Nonetheless the piece draws to a close with a fine ritardando and a gritty granular coda.

With its dynamism and energy, this movement would work very well as a concert piece over a multi speaker array (I can imagine the Birmingham or Quebecois composers/diffusers having fun with it). It should have no problem in finding opportunities for performance.