

Arctic Shadows (1993)

The music Weinzweig composed for the 1945-46 CBC radio series *The White Empire* (a historical-documentary radio drama about the Canadian north) gained a second life as concert music in the single-movement symphonic poem *The Edge of the World: Music for Radio No. 2* and then a third life in *Arctic Shadows* for oboe and piano. In the score, Weinzweig includes this narration from the original docudrama:

The edge of the world is a dark northern wilderness—the scene of man’s conflict with the hard unyielding grimness of ice and rock—the shadows of adventurers stalk the ancient trails through the sharp, crackling stillness of an Arctic night.

Weinzweig was an early champion of the musical value and cultural importance of First Nations’ and Inuit peoples’ musics, and he frequently incorporated specific songs or styles; Weinzweig maintains many of these melodic influences of the original work in *Arctic Shadows*.

The oboe opens with a lyrical and repetitive melody, which was originally played by the violins; throughout this opening passage, the piano has a supporting role. The piano begins to gain quality, dialoguing with the oboe and establishing mood and tempo for each new section. The oboe plays five basic melodic motives throughout the work, all of which exhibit a limited range and an emphasis on third, fourth, fifth intervals.

Arctic Shadows maintains the storytelling element of the original symphonic poem, by shifting moods and textures, including the slow and sustained opening, active and fervent middle section, and spacious, tranquil ending.

Written by Alexa Woloshyn