

# SYMPHONY KYOTO - CONCOURS

## Zen Garden Ryōan-Ji Temple

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I am very excited to propose a new, classical orchestral work for the Symphony Kyoto to perform in celebration of the great Japanese political and cultural centre of Kyoto.

The proposed piece will reflect the persisting hope that continues to propel the city into a brighter, visionary future in light of the history, times of war and peace and culture that have characterized the dramatic past of Kyoto. Musically, the work will take the listener through key stages/events of Kyoto's rich, colourful history and most importantly express the Japanese spirit of Zen. There will be dramatic moments of darkness, but light will supersede the tragic, bleak and harshest seasons the city has faced. As the former capital city of Japan and modern day centre of ancient Japanese culture, there are many aspects of the city that one can draw inspiration from. I would like to focus on the most well known Japanese Zen garden, Ryōan-Ji Temple (Temple of the Peaceful Dragon) in Northwest Kyoto. I have chosen to focus on this particular garden and aspect of Japanese culture because I believe the idea of Zen, particularly in having peace and not worrying about what you can not control, is significant to the hope that has prevailed throughout the ages of the city. This peace has drawn Kyoto from dark seasons into a beautiful future of light and hope, and has always been present, even in uncertain and difficult circumstances. The piece will begin in the Heian Period, the beginning and birthing of Kyoto's documented history. It will then transition throughout various key historical periods; the Kamakura Period, Muromachi Period, Azuchi-Momoyama period, Edo Period, Meiji Period, World War Two, present-day and future Kyoto, reflecting the past, present and hope filled future. I will take the listener on a journey throughout several significant conflicts and changes with an overarching theme of Zen. I feel Zen is the most significant factor to the history of Kyoto because it also remained physically preserved and untouched in conflict, especially in WW2. Many of its historical treasures survived and it has become a cultural oasis for the rest of Japan. Kyoto has maintained a traditional atmosphere with its old buildings, streets with original grid patterns of numbers and avenues and many of its structures have been granted National Treasure and Important Cultural Heritage status by UNESCO. The Ryōan-Ji Temple has been described as a powerful, abstract Zen landscape that is designed to invoke deep meditation. Though the garden's exact meaning remains a mystery, many have found the garden's rocks

evoke the tranquil outline of a branching tree while others have seen an image of a tigress escorting her cubs across water and the Chinese character for 'heart' or 'mind.' Many people have experienced the garden to be a place of tranquil calmness and peace throughout the ages. My symphonic composition will be an imaginative walk and musical journey through the garden in various stages of Kyoto history lead by the spirit of Zen. I hope to create a beautiful, musical atmosphere where people can experience the Zen of the Ryōan-Ji Temple first in Kyoto and anywhere around the world.