

Pago a la Tierra

Instrumentation

- 2 Flutes (2nd doubling Piccolo), 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets in Bb (2nd doubling Eb Clarinet), 2 Bassoons
- 4 Horns in F, 2 Trumpets in C (2nd doubling Cuerno de Toro [Bull's Horn] in Bb and Pututo in G), 3 Trombones, 1 Tuba
- Timpani; Perc. 1: Shell Shaker, Crash Cymbals, Glockenspiel, Tam-tam, Rainstick; Perc. 2: Gourd Maracas, Tam-tam, Tom-toms (hi-med-lo), Rainstick, Crash Cymbals
- 8 Bird Water Whistles (preferably ceramic)
- Harp
- Strings

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Published by Filarmonika.

Duration: 5 minutes.

In its brief five minutes, "Pago a la Tierra" takes us on a fantastical journey as seen through the eyes of a group of young adventurers thirsty to uncover the riches and mysteries of Peru.

The title of this work is eponymous with an ancient **ceremony** practiced in the Andes since time immemorial. Its purpose is to give thanks to Pachamama (Mother Earth in Quechua language) for its fertility, and to ask for its blessing for the coming harvests. Pachamama was central to the beliefs of the indigenous people of the Andes and played an essential role in Inca mythology. This sacred ceremony, solemnly presided by a shaman, is sonically depicted here by instruments with a strong and unfiltered connection with nature, such as the shell shakers, gourd maracas, and bull's horn. Together, they summon the mountain spirits or Apus so they can witness and bless the ceremony.

After the ritual concludes, the explorers are ready to embark on a journey of discovery, from West to East, through the eight natural regions of Peru. We begin with **Costa**, where the bountiful waters of the Pacific Ocean bathe the coastal regions of Peru. We then enter **Yunga**, a Neotropical realm that exists within a narrow band of forest on the eastern slopes of the Andes Mountains. We continue our journey into the **Quechua** region, which lying between 2,300 and 3,500 meters (7,500-11,500 feet) above sea level, features vast valleys divided by rivers. Its temperate climate and fertile soils allow for an abundance of species of fruits and vegetables. As we continue our ascent, we reach **Suni**. With its glacial valleys and dry weather, it is home to one of Peru's most iconic crops, the quinoa, but it is also the birthplace of the Cantuta, the sacred flower of the Incas. Exhausted, but exhilarated, our explorers continue to climb into the thinning air of **Puna**. Lying just below the snowline, this dry and cold habitat—a far cry from the plentiful lands of the Quechua region—is home to more resilient kinds of flora and fauna. This, however, does not deter our travelers, who carry on into the quiet heights of the **Cordillera**, where the largest flying bird in the world, the majestic Condor, dwells, and where Huascarán towers at 6,768 meters (22,205 ft)—the

highest mountain in Peru and the fourth highest in the Western Hemisphere. After touching the skies, our adventurers begin their descent into the exuberance of the Rainforest, where they behold, in awe, the never-ending waters of the **Amazon** River, here depicted by swirling descending scales in the woodwinds and harp, accompanied by rain sticks; its unknown, lurking beasts portrayed by the emblematic Pututo (conch shell). A mystical shaman makes his appearance as the brass begin to blow menacing crescendi, and a group of bird water whistles, evoking the Amazon's colorful birds, join in the feast. And then, as night descends upon us, the enigmatic shaman takes flight, as he makes the landscape bloom with a grand stroke of his scepter. The rivers come alive, mysterious lights begin to flash, and all the creatures of Pachamama revel and rejoice in otherworldly harmony. Awestruck, our explorers witness as the Amazon River transforms itself into a colossal snake, only to dissolve and disappear into the darkness of the night.

This piece was originally conceived for the Opening Ceremony of the 2019 Lima Pan American Games, but it was never performed due to artistic differences with the creative team. The original disappointment, however, has now turned into joy, as my friend and newly-appointed Music Director of the Lakes Area Festival, Christian Reif, has chosen to perform it on the Festival's closing concert, which he named "Tribute to the Earth" after this work's title. In an even more serendipitous turn of events, this very year, 2021, Peru celebrates 200 years since its independence, and what better way to commemorate it than with music that celebrates its beauty, abundance, and love for Mother Earth.

Jimmy López Bellido © 2021