COMPOSER’S NOTE

The French novelist Jules Verne (1828-1905) created a unique blend of science and adventure in his series of novels known as “Voyages Extraordinaires”. Written in 1864, Journey to the Centre of the Earth is on the surface an adventure story but as the commentator Diana Mitchell has observed on a deeper level can be seen as “man’s journey into himself, always probing deeper for what lies at the centre”.

The novel takes the form of a sequence of diary entries by Axel, nephew of Professor Otto Lidenbrock. The pair follow coded instructions in a old document guiding them to Iceland where, together with their guide Hans, they enter the open crater of an extinct volcano Snæfells and pursue a trail to the centre of the earth. There follows “hair-breadth ‘scapes and ventures perilous” as the intrepid explorers encounter a vast interior world.

This music presents scenes from the novel in a rough chronological order. The work opens on the dark and brooding Summit of Snæfells and follows the adventurers as they descend into the bowels of the earth. En route they encounter the Wonders of the Terrestrial Depths (an electrically illuminated sky), a dream sequence during which Axel witnesses a Battle of Antediluvian Creatures before the final Ascent and Homecoming. The key scene of the book (and the music) reflects on Axel’s despair as he becomes separated from his companions and is Lost in the Labyrinth. His subsequent rescue is due to an acoustic phenomenon whereby he hears the voices of his friends in The Whispering Gallery.

Journey to the Centre of the Earth is dedicated to Ryan and Megan, who love the story!

Peter Graham
Cheshire
March 2005

PERFORMANCE NOTE

All passages similar to the following should be played quasi glissando: