

To a Pilgrim
in memoriam Andrew Welsh Imbrie, la fine è l'inizio

It is only natural that a eulogy, even a musical one, should make clear reference to the person whose absence it memorializes. In homage to my friend and teacher, the title *To a Pilgrim* refers to two of Andrew Imbrie's own memorial compositions, his 1971 work *To a Traveler*, commemorating the death of his friend Norman Fromm, and his 1983 work *Pilgrimage*, written in memory of his son John. Imbrie's *To a Traveler* begins with a four note motive, G-D-A-E which, upon changing the initial G to Bb, yields a group of notes containing the musical letters of the name *Andrew Imbrie*, i.e.: A D D E E Bb D E (reading R as *re*, or D, and M as *mi*, or E). This sequence of eight pitches is heard in the opening of *To a Pilgrim*, and appears again to initiate the final outburst of the work's slow, elegiac, closing section.

The form of *To a Pilgrim* is tripartite, the outer sections slower and more lyrical, the middle section more lively, at times scherzando in character. These three large sections are marked near their joinings by brief canons at the unison. In between these two points a series of five more canons occupies the exact center of the piece, each canon at a different interval quality, omitting only the tritone.

Included in the work's dedication is the phrase "la fine è l'inizio", the end is the beginning, referring to a technique of phrase construction in which the beginning of each phrase is connected to the end of the preceding one through elision, metric reinterpretation, or repetition of one or two concluding pitches to initiate the next phrase. It hardly needs saying that "the end is the beginning" is also an epigram suggesting meditation on the nature of decay and renewal, as each passing we encounter sets the stage for something fresh, as in the cycle of the seasons, or the succeeding of one human generation by the next.