Become River: Creating Soundscapes

Learn more about John Luther Adam’s piece, “Become River” on The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra’s Concert Library. 
https://content.thеспco.org/music/compositions/become-river-john-luther-adams/

Check out the composer notes on the SPCO Concert Library page for the piece and find out Adam’s motivation for composing the piece.

Research the word delta and make a guess for what the piece will sound like as the composer intended it to be a partner work to his later piece Become Ocean. What do you think will change in the texture of the piece as it moves through river and delta to ocean?

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LABEL the diagram below to make connections to the music:

Share your answer with a partner and get set up to hear “Become River”.
LISTEN ACTIVELY to Become River on The SPCO Concert Library and use the below listening guide to engage further:

**Listen from the beginning to 1:55**

What instruments do you hear? _________________

Circle the best choice for what you hear in this section:

THICK texture or THIN texture

**Listen to 5:30 to 7:00**

Listen for the variety of parts playing different pitches. These combine to form harmony and layer onto one another. How many parts do you hear playing during this section? Count the different instruments playing and record the number: ________ parts

**Listen to 8:00 to 9:15**

Notice that the high bell-like sounds have dropped out. How does this change what you hear? How does it change the mood of the piece?

**Listen to 15:15 to the end**

Describe what you hear in this section of “Become River”. Do you like the sound? Does it change the picture in your mind?

What changes about the shape of the pitches you hear throughout the piece? Circle your answer: Stay the same Pitches get higher Pitches get lower

Composers often use imagery to write music. Knowing that this piece is about a river, what would you imagine “Become Ocean” would sound like?

John Luther Adams wrote “Beyond River” and “Beyond Ocean” as a tribute to his love for nature. What do you love to do? Brainstorm instruments you’d use in your own tribute piece of music. How would your piece sound?