

PROGRAM NOTES

Jordan and the Dog Woman

Jordan and the Dog Woman is an instrumental suite inspired by the Jeanette Winterson novel *Sexing the Cherry*, a fantastical tale interweaving medieval and contemporary times in a story of Mother love and wanderlust.

I. The Pools at Wimbledon – The movement reflects the giantess, Dog Woman, describing herself in a park: “I, who must turn sideways through any door, can melt into the night as easily as a thin thing that sings in the choir at church. ... I sing inside the mountain of my flesh, and my voice is as slender as a reed ... singing songs of love and death and waiting for the sun to set.” The large bassoon opens with a gentle, slender as reed, melody. The clarinet joins in for the response gesture and gradually other instruments echo these melodic motives in a pentatonic landscape.

II. Jordan the Sailor - Jordan is Dog Woman’s found son and he describes their first encounter: “... she found me in the slime by the river...I heard dogs coming towards me and a roar in the water and a face as round as the moon ... She took me home and kept me there with fifty dogs and no company but her own.” This movement reflects Jordan’s nautical journeys in the first part as heard in the ship’s bell and foghorn sounds surrounding the opening melody that through moves through the winds. The second half is filled with fast moving scalar passages reflecting imaginings of his beloved for whom he eternally searches.

III. The Pit - London, 1665: Dog Woman loses her friend to the Plague and carries her to the burning pit. “... It was very deep, and crisscrossed with huge pieces of wood, full trees here and there. ‘I will carry her down. ... When I reached the ledge I walked round until I saw a calm and pleasant branch not yet suffused in fire. Leaning, I laid her on it and made my ascent. The grim workers looked at me silently and turned back to their dreadful task.” This blues-based movement features virtuosi passagework for oboe and horn alternating with haunting tutti chords. The plaintive final chorus wails of this terrible time in an altered minor mode.

Interlude – This respite from the horror of the plague reflects the tenderness and love with which Dog Woman cared for her deceased friend. The clarinet is featured with an emphasis on its low, chalumeau register. The other instruments provide soft harmonies to this gentle melody.

IV. Points of Light Dancing (Jordan meets Fortunata) - “There appeared to be ten points of light spiraling in a line along the floor, and from these beings came the sound I had heard. It was harmonic but it had no tune. I could hardly bear to look at the light, and the tone, though far from unpleasant, hurt my ears. It was too rich, too strong, to be music. Then I saw a young woman, darting in a figure of eight between the lights and turning her hands through it as a potter turns clay on the wheel. At last she stood back ... Slower, and slower, the sound dying with the light, until on the floor were ten women, their shoes in holes, their bodies wet with sweat.” The flute and glockenspiel create this poignant music. Accompanying instruments gradually join in and begin to interrupt the ongoing melodic line with “points of light dancing”. These interruptions become more and more prominent until the melody seems forgotten. When it reappears it is fully supported by a fluid accompaniment pattern integrating the melody and chords into a final and unifying resolution.

All quotes from *Sexing the Cherry* by Jeanette Winterson