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Renderings

Zachary David Fischer

University of Iowa

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RENDERINGS

by

Zachary David Fischer

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Music in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

July 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Professor David K. Gompper
In February of 2009 I began collaborating with the poet Margot Lurie on a series of songs for soprano voice and a large chamber ensemble. We worked separately for the following year and a half, meeting intermittently to exchange ideas and materials. I chose three poems of similar tone and thematic content, each illustrating a different "scene" which serves as a metaphor revealing a perspective of the human condition. Then I composed the music to support the text, preserving its raw clarity by allowing the piece to unfold on the surface level through simple harmonies and a primarily conjunct, speech-like vocal melody, as well as by controlling the density of instrumental textures and the rate at which new pitch information is introduced. The multiple meanings of the title are reflected in the work on several representational levels: as the vocal melody is rendered (distilled) from the surrounding harmony, the harmonies themselves render (surrender) their perceptual weight to the text, which is in itself a rendering (depiction).

Abstract Approved:  
Thesis Supervisor

Title and Department

Date
RENDERINGS

by

Zachary David Fischer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Music in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

July 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Professor David K. Gompper
This is to certify that the Ph. D. thesis of

Zachary David Fischer

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Music at the July 2010 graduation.

Thesis Committee:

David Gompper, Thesis Supervisor

____________________________
Lawrence Fritts

____________________________
Jennifer Iverson

____________________________
Jerry Cain

____________________________
Charlotte Adams
To Monica
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INSTRUMENTATION

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B♭
Bassoon/Contrabassoon

Horn in F
Trumpet in B♭
Trombone
Tuba
Percussion 1
   Drum Set
      Bass Drum, Floor Tom, Snare Drum, Wood Blocks (2),
      Cowbell, Suspended Cymbal, Triangle
   Glockenspiel
   Vibraphone
   Gong (large)
Percussion 2
   Marimba
   Vibraphone
   Crotales
   Large Bass Drum
   Suspended Cymbal
   Timpani (2)
Piano
Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
In February of 2009 I began collaborating with the poet Margot Lurie on a series of songs for soprano voice and a large chamber ensemble. We worked separately for the following year and a half, meeting intermittently to exchange ideas and materials. I chose three poems of similar tone and thematic content, each illustrating a different "scene" which serves as a metaphor revealing a perspective of the human condition. Then I composed the music to support the text, preserving its raw clarity by allowing the piece to unfold on the surface level through simple harmonies and a primarily conjunct, speech-like vocal melody, as well as by controlling the density of instrumental textures and the rate at which new pitch information is introduced. The multiple meanings of the title are reflected in the work on several representational levels: as the vocal melody is rendered (distilled) from the surrounding harmony, the harmonies themselves render (surrender) their perceptual weight to the text, which is in itself a rendering (depiction).
Still Life

I went to disgorge the bird from the cat's jaw.
   Flayed on its neck-gut, its gargoyle perch
   held an unidentifiable pulp.

A glimmer of matter. At its haunches
   there were summer ears of corn, blood-polished.
   Hip-bones

paused in leaping, one paw still positioned
   to urge the bird downward
   its polyped tongue like tinder

poised to flush the cornhusks orange
   against the butchered mass
   as if birthing the baby through the mouth

Figure: Geese

The geese were out, big as myth
Their sand-grit knuckles slapping
the asphalt. They rasped
he stumbled - and tracking
through the grass
He almost felt
The iron heat of the neck
constricted as if a cry: Repent!

A fiery brushstroke in the sky.
His heart was a target,
his heart was a target

and he had sewn gold coins into his breast pocket
his heart was a target
his heart was a void
A Russian Self-Portrait

1
I draw the shawl around my arms. There is a waltz playing.
I am bent over the sewing machine. My fingers are wax-cold, like tapers.

2
The needle stops and I am singing

3
My arms are pools of lymph, they are dripping
I see the horses coming at a gallop.

4
The color of my hair, a paper bag. The cabinets thick wood and newspaper-clotted.
Nylon pools at my knees.

5
I kicked and kicked at the church door.

6
My name is Manya
But in the new world they will call me Margot,
and my grandchildren will have long names, names of angels

7
You pick a fish by its eye. The eye of a good fish is clear as a sleepwalker's.

8
I kicked and kicked. I could hear them breathing inside
My face was clay, was stone. My skull a vault of sky.

9
My name is Margot
But call me Mara
For my life has been made bitter

10
The needle stops and I am shaking
Violently (q=72)

Score in C  
Text by Margot Lurie  
RENDERINGS  
Zachary Fischer (2010)

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B
Contrabassoon
Horn in F
Trumpet in B
Trombone
Tuba
Percussion 1
Percussion 2
Piano
Soprano
Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

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I went to disgorge the bird from the cat's jaw. Flayed on its neck-gut its
gar-goyle perch
held an un-i-den-ti-fi-a-ble pulp.

Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Pno.
S.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Very Slowly ($q=45$)

A glimmer of matter.
At its haunches, there were summer ears of
Tempo Primo ($=72$)

Flute

Ob.

Cl.

Cbsn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Tba.

Perc. 1

Glockenspiel to Drum Set

Perc. 2

Pno.

S.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

Hip-bones paused in leap- ing one paw still posi tioned

ge-

arco

mf

p

arco

mf

p

mf

arco

mf

p

mf

p

mf

mf
to urge the bird downward its poly-ped tongue like tender poised
Freely, Faster (\(\dot{\tau}=100\))
A tempo ($\mu=72$)
The geese were out, big as___
Più Mosso (q=96)

Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Pno.
S.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

Drum Set
Cross-Stick

their sand-grit knuck-les slapping the asphalt.

f Forcefully

pp mp f ppp mp
They rasped, he stumbled and tracking through the grass...
he almost felt the iron heat of the neck

constricted as if a

Snare Drum with drum sticks

to Large Gong

to Large Bass Drum
Much Slower \( (\text{\textit{q}}=45) \)
accel. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Much Faster (q=100)

Music notation with indications such as "Shouted as a warning" and "Ah".
Tempo Primo ($\frac{4}{4}$=76)

sky. His heart was a target, His heart was a tar-

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Vi.

Vc.

Db.
get and he had sewn gold coins into his breast pocket.
His heart was a target.
His heart was a void.
A Russian Self-Portrait

Forcefully ($\text{\textit{f}=60}$)

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Horn in F

Tpt.

Tbn.

Tba.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Piano

Soprano

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

Triangle
Large Bass Drum To Vibraphone

Crotales To Marimba

locod
I draw the shawl a-round my

Vigorously

ff

To Large Bass Drum

Vibrations

Marimba

mf

Vigorously

I draw the shawl a-round my
arms. There is a waltz playing. I am bento-ver the
sewing machine. My fingers are wax cold, like tapers.
My arms are pools of lymph, they are drip-ping
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Pno.
S.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

I see the horses coming at a gallop.

To Timpani

Snare off
The color of my hair, a paper bag. The cabinets thick wood.
and news-pa-per clot-ted. Ny-lon pools at my knees.
Angrily (\(q=84\))

I kicked and kicked at the church door
My name is Man-ya but in the new world they will
call me Mar-got, and my grand-child ren will have long names, names of an-gels
Slightly Faster, with Determination \( (\dot{\text{c}}=92) \)
You pick a fish by its eye. The eye of a fish.

Spoken, as a mother to a child.
good fish is clear as a sleep-walker's.
Più Mosso (\text{\textgamma}=100)

I kicked and kicked.

I could hear them breathing inside.
molto rit. . . . . . . . . . . . . Largo (\( \text{q}=50 \))

My face was clay,
was stone. My skull a vault of sky.
Anxiously (q=100) rall.

My name is Mar-got but call me Ma-ra__, for my life has been made
Very Slowly  \( (q=50) \)

The need-le stops  and I am shak-ing

Spoken sadly  \( p \)

Spoken reverently  \( mp \)