

INCANTATION

1 Countertenor
2 Tenors
1 Bass

Text by Byron

Paul Robinson

Preview File Only

Incantation

In listening to the Hilliard Ensemble perform music from a variety of periods and in a diversity of styles, my ear has always been drawn primarily to the sonority of their vocal ensemble. With that in mind, I resolved to exorcise myself from any tendency towards effect or displays of virtuosity in favour of a vehicle that would allow that sonority to come through.

The piece is modal and attempts to integrate self consciously adopted archaisms – phrygian cadences, isorhythm, musica ficta, with more modern sounding harmonies, arrived at experimentally, by stepwise movement within the modes and with occasional chromatic inflection.

The piece was a joint winner for the first Hilliard Composition Prize and has been recorded on ECM New Series.

Preview File Only

The Incantation

When the moon is on the wave,
And the glow-worm in the grass,
And the meteor on the grave,
And the wisp on the morass;
When the falling stars are shooting,
And the answer'd owls are hooting,
And the silent leaves are still
In the shadow of the hill,
Shall my soul be upon thine,
With a power and with a sign.

Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep;
There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish;
By a power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone;
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gather'd in a cloud;
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.

Though thou seest me not pass by,
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye

As a thing that, though unseen,
Must be near thee, and hath been;
And when in that secret dread
Thou hast turn'd around thy head,
Thou shalt marvel I am not
As thy shadow on the spot,
And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal.

And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse;
And a spirit of the air
Hath begirt thee with a snare;
In the wind there is a voice
Shall forbid thee to rejoice;
And to thee shall night deny
All the quiet of her sky;
And the day shall have a sun,
Which shall make thee wish it done.

From thy false tears I did distil
An essence which hath strength to kill;
From thy own heart I then did wring
The black blood in its blackest spring;
From thy own smile I snatch'd the snake,
For there it coil'd as in a brake;
From thy own lip I drew the charm
Which gave all these their chiefest harm;
In proving every poison known,
I found the strongest was thine own.

By thy cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathom'd gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy;
By the perfection of thine art
Which pass'd for human thine own heart;

By thy delight in others' pain,
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,
I call upon thee! and compel
Thyself to be thy proper Hell!

And on thy head I pour the vial
Which doth devote thee to this trial;
Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny;
Though thy death shall still seem near
To thy wish, but as a fear;
Lo! the spell now works around thee,
And the clankless chain hath bound thee;
O'er thy heart and brain together
Hath the word been pass'd – now wither!

T1 WHEN THE MOON IS ON THE WAVE AND THE GLOW WORM IN THE GRASS

BS

p.

CT

T1 AND THE ME - TEAR ON THE GRAVE AND THE WISPS ON

BS

CT WAVE AND THE GLOW WORM ON THE GRASS

T1 THE MOR - ASS WHEN THE FALL - ING STARS ARE

BS

CT AND THE ME - TEAR ON THE GRAVE AND THE WISPS ON THE MOR - ASS

T1 SHOO - TING AND THE

BS

CT AND THE SI - LENT LEAVES ARE

T1 AN - SWER'D OWLS ARE HOO - TING AND THE SI - LENT LEAVES ARE

BS

CT Still IN THE SHA-DOWS OF THE HILL SHALL MY SOUL BE UP-ON THINE

T1 Still HILL SHALL MY SOUL BE UP-ON THINE

BS

CT *sub p* WITH A POWER WITH A SIGN SHALL MY SOUL SHALL MY

T1 WITH A POWER AND WITH A SIGN *mf* (Keening)

BS *sub p*

Soul BE UP-ON THINE

(♩ = 135 Approx) *mf*

SHALL SHALL MY SOUL

THOUGH THY SLOM-BER MAY BE DEEP

THOUGH THY SLOM-BER MAY BE DEEP

* *mp*

BE UP-ON THINE WITH A POWER WITH A

YET THY SPI-RIT SHALL NOT

YET THY SPI-RIT SHALL NOT

* MARACAS - See Perf. Note.

9
16

POWER AND A SIGN SHALL MY SOUL MY SOUL SHALL MY SOUL

SLEEP THERE ARE SHADES WHICH WILL NOT VA - NISH

SLEEP THERE ARE SHADES WHICH WILL NOT VA - NISH

7
16

MY SOUL MY SOUL MY SOUL

THERE ARE THOUGHTS THOU CANST NOT BA - NISH

THERE ARE THOUGHTS THOU CANST NOT BA - NISH

10
16

BE UP - ON THINE WITH A POWER AND WITH

BY A POWER TO THEE UN -

BY A POWER TO THEE UN -

A SIGN WITH A SIGN

- KNOWN THOU CANST NE - VER BE A - LONE

- KNOWN THOU CANST NE - VER BE A - LONE

CRESO TUTTI

NO. 8

SHALL MY SOUL SHALL MY SOUL BE UP ON THINE
 THOU ART WRAPT AS WITH A SHROUD THOU ART
 THOU ART WRAPT AS WITH A SHROUD THOU ART

(CRESO)

SHALL MY SOUL BE UP ON THINE AND FOR EV - ER SHALT THOU
 GATHERED IN A CLOUD AND FOR - EV - ER SHALT THOU
 GATHERED IN A CLOUD AND FOR - EV - ER SHALT THOU

TUTTI

DWELL IN THE SPI - RIT OF THIS SPELL
 DWELL IN THE SPI - RIT OF THIS SPELL
 DWELL IN THE SPI - RIT OF THIS SPELL

THOU SHALT FEEL ME

(FREELY)

THOUGH THOU SEEST ME NOT PASS BY

mp

CT WITH THINE EYE THINE EYE AS A THING THAT THOUGH ON SEEN
 T2 FEEL ME WITH THINE EYE AS A THING THAT THOUGH ON SEEN
 B

CT MUST BE NEAR THEE AND HATH BEEN WHEN IN THAT SE CRET
 T2 MUST BE NEAR THEE AND HATH BEEN AND WHEN IN THAT SE CRET DREAD
 B

CT DREAD A ROUND THY HEAD THOU SHALT MAR VEL
 T2 THOU HAST TURN'D A ROUND THY HEAD I AM
 B

CT AS THY SHA DOW ON THE SPOT AND THE PO WER WHICH
 T2 NOT AS THY SHA DOW ON THE SPOT AND
 BS

CT THOU DOST FEEL SHALL BE WHAT THOU MUST CON CEAL
 T2 THOU DOST FEEL SHALL BE WHAT THOU MUST CON CEAL
 BS

T1

IN IN THE WIND THERE IS A VOICE

mf

THERE IS A VOICE THERE IS A VOICE(E)

SHALL FOR — BID THEE TO RE — JOICE

mp

AND A HA QIC VOICE AND VERSE

mf (legato)

IN IN THE WIND THERE IS A VOICE(E) SHALL

mp

AND A HA QIC VOICE AND VERSE

mp

HATH BAP TISED THEE WITH A CURSE

FOR BID SHALL FOR BID FOR BID

HATH BAP TISED THEE WITH A CURSE

AND A SPI RIT OF THE AIR HATH BE

THEE TO RE JOICE RE JOICE

AND A SPI RIT OF THE AIR HATH BE

4/8 3/8 7

- GIRT THEE WITH A SNARE IN THE
 IN THE WIND THERE IS A VOICE THERE IS A VOICE SHALL

3/8 3/8 7

WIND THERE IS A VOICE SHALL FOR-
 SHALL FOR - DID FOR - DID

7/6 9/16

- DID THEE TO RE - JOICE RE - JOICE RE - JOICE
 THEE TO RE - JOICE RE - JOICE

4/8 9/16

AND TO THEE SHALL NIGHT DE - ND
 IN THE WIND THERE IS A VOICE

803 CRES. 9 16 8

ALL THE QUIET OF THE SKY
SHALL FOR-BID THEE TO RE-

3 CRES. f 4 8 3 8

AND THE DAY SHALL HAVE A SUN
-JOICE AND THE DAY SHALL HAVE A SUN
AND THE DAY SHALL HAVE A SUN

WHICH WILL MAKE YOU WISH IT DONE
WHICH WILL MAKE YOU WISH IT DONE
WHICH WILL MAKE YOU WISH IT DONE

f FROM THY FALSE TEARS I DID I DID
f FROM THY FALSE TEARS I DID I DID

(♩ = ♩ APPROX)

I DID DISTIL AN ESSENCE WHICH HATH STRENGTH STRENGTH TO KILL

I DID DISTIL AN ESSENCE WHICH HATH STRENGTH STRENGTH TO KILL

(f TENUTO →)

FROM THY OWN HEART I DID WRING THE BLACK BLOOD

FROM THY OWN HEART I DID WRING THE BLACK BLOOD

IN ITS BLACKEST SPRING FROM THY OWN SMILE I SNATCH'D THE SNAKE

IN ITS BLACKEST SPRING FROM THY OWN SMILE I SNATCH'D THE SNAKE

FOR THERE IT COILED AS IN A BRAKE FROM THY OWN LIP

FOR THERE IT COILED AS IN A BRAKE FROM THY OWN LIP

I DREW THE CHARM WHICH GAVE ALL THESE THEIR CHEFEST HARM

mf

IN PRO-VING EVERY POIS-ON KNOWN I FOUND THE STRONGEST WAS THINE

OWN
OWN
BY THY COLD BREAST AND SERPENT SHILE
(*mf*)

BY THY UN-FATH-H'D GOLFO OF QUILE BY THAT MOST SEEKING VIRTUOUS EYE

BY THY SHUT SOULS HY-PO-CRI-SY

4/8

mp

mp

mf

mp

BY THY COLD BREAST AND SERPENT SMILE BY THY UN-

(Legato) BY THY COLD BREAST AND SERPENT SMILE BY THY

BY THE PERFECTION OF THINE ART

(Ossia) BY THY COLD BREAST AND SERPENT SMILE BY

-FA- THY'D GULFS OF GUILF BY THAT MOST SEE - MING

UN - FA - THY'D GULFS OF GUILF BY THAT MOST SEE -

THINE ART WHICH PASS'D FOR

THY UN FATH - HD GULFS OF GUILF BY THAT

VIR - TUOUS EYE BY THY SHOT SOULS HY - po - CRI - SY

- MING VIR - TUOUS EYE BY THY SHOT SOULS HY -

HO - MAN THINE OWN HEART THINE OWN HEART

MOST SEEING VIR - TUOUS EYE BY THY SHOT

BY THE PERFECTION OF THINE ART WHICH PASS'D FOR

- po - CRI - SY BY THE PERFECTION OF THINE ART

BY THE PERFECTION OF THINE ART

SOULS HY - po - CR - SY BY THE PERFECTION

HU - MAN THY OWN HEART BY THY DE - LIGHT IN
 WHICH PASS'D FOR HU - MAN THY OWN HEART BY THY
 WHICH PASS'D FOR HU - MAN THY OWN THY OWN
 OF TRINE ART WHICH PASS'D FOR HU MAN THY OWN

OTH - ERS PAIN AND BY THY BRO - THER - HOOD OF CAIN
 DE LIGHT IN OTHE - RS PAIN AND BY THY BRO -
 HEART I CALL UP - ON THEE
 HEART BY THY DE - LIGHT IN OTH - ERS PAIN

I CALL UP - ON THEE TO COMPEL THY SELF TO
 - THER - HOOD OF CAIN I CALL UP - ON THEE
 AND COM - PEL THY SELF
 AND BY THY BROTHER - HOOD OF CAIN THY

BE THY BE THY PROPER HELL
 TO TO THY PRO - PER HELL
 TO THY PRO - PER HELL
 SELF TO BE THY PRO PER HELL

f

AND ON THY HEAD

AND ON THY HEAD

ff TENUTO

(♩ = ♪)

I POUR I POUR THE VIAL

I POUR I POUR THE VIAL

WHICH DOTI DE - VOTE THEE DE - VOTE THEE

WHICH DOTI DE - VOTE THEE DE - VOTE THEE

TO THIS TRIAL NOR TO SLUMBER

TO THIS TRIAL NOR TO SLUMBER

NOR TO DIE SHALL BE IN THY

NOR TO DIE SHALL BE IN THY

DE - STI - NY THOUGH THY DEATH SHALL STILL SEEM

DE - STI - NY THOUGH THY DEATH SHALL STILL SEEM

NEAR TO THY WISH BUT AS A FEAR

NEAR TO THY WISH BUT AS A FEAR

mf LO THE SPELL WORKS AR - OUND THEE

mf LO THE SPELL WORKS AR - OUND THEE

AND THE CLANKLESS CHAIN HATH BOUND THEE

AND THE CLANKLESS CHAIN HATH BOUND THEE

ff

SLOWER

OER THY HEART AND BRAIN

(mp)

OER THY HEART

TO - GE - THER HATH THE WORD BEEN PASS'D

OER THY HEART

NOW WI - THER

NOW WI - THER

pp.