

Ellen Ruth Harrison

Between Magic and Possibility

ELLEN RUTH HARRISON

BETWEEN MAGIC AND POSSIBILITY

for soprano and flute

Founder or finder
Under the sign
Gone
Clouds lightening feathers
So that now
Speaking to the dead
Found somewhere

Texts from *Track* by Norman Finkelstein

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Between Magic and Possibility, for soprano and flute, sets eleven segments from Norman Finkelstein's poem *Track*, a spellbinding work that explores the darkness surrounding us. The poet and critic, Mark Scroggins, perfectly articulates the expressive characteristics that attracted me to this awe-inspiring work. "The darkness is indeed all around us here--in the vibrating, buzzing confusion of a media society, in the still jarring echoes of the Holocaust, and in the chilly 'space evacuated / by a retreating deity.' But *Track*, with its impressive array of forms, tone, and voices, excavates an exhilarating variety of paths through that darkness. . . Following them, we may not see precisely where the paths are leading, but we know we're getting somewhere."

The music reflects the magical, enigmatic quality of these texts. Each of the piece's seven songs contrasts in one form or another with those that precede or follow it. Several are mysterious, with the flute creating a hazy atmosphere through the use of extended techniques such as timbral trills and flutter tongue. Others are more anguished or even jocular; in these the flute dances around the voice with large angular leaps and sudden outbursts. The overall mood is slightly melancholy yet tinged with the hope that each of us will find that place "between magic and possibility."

My heartfelt thanks go to Norman Finkelstein for giving me permission to set these texts and to the marvelous soprano, Jackie Stevens, for asking me to write a piece for soprano and flute.

Duration: circa 13 minutes
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#

1 Founder or finder
 you among the many
 traced to the city
 you among the lost

You among the last
 voices from Paradise
 founder founder
 whispers the finder.

#

2 Under the sign of Mercury
 messages come and go

Borne through the air
 and across the water

Born under the sign
 that comes and goes

I say yes and no to my fate.

#

3 Gone
 in a single stroke
 gone into the world

Or gone into that world
 leaving me.

#

Empty house
 empty landscape

Evacuated of all meaning

Save this

Save this.

#

4 A
 (clouds
 lightening
 feathers
 eyes
 beasts
 kisses
 tears)

#

5 So that now
 all is broken
 and has been made whole

So that now
 all is whole
 and cannot be broken.

#

6 Speaking to the dead
 for the dead

Speaking of speaking
 to or for the dead

Speaking what was
 whispered in secret

Speaking the whispers
 of or in the clouds.

#

Whispered writhe
 or wraith

Whispered writhing
 wraith words

Writhing wraiths
 whispered the word

Writing wraiths
 whispered beauty.

#

7 Found somewhere between
 Magic and possibility
 Like a number or metaphor

On the border of the real

Like a number or metaphor
 Magic and possibility
 Found somewhere between.

#

Like her mirrors on the page

Her page of mirrors

On the border of sense

Reflection of the fallen

Tree of heaven

Reflection of the fallen

Fallen world of repetition.

#

And in this
 and in this

And in this
 and in that

What did she see?
 what did she reflect?

Page after page.

for Jackie Stevens

Between Magic and Possibility

Founder or finder

Norman Finkelstein

Ellen Ruth Harrison

♩ = 72, sad and mysterious

Soprano

Flute

p *pp* *p* *pp*

2nd trill key *tr* 2nd trill key *tr*

Foun - der or fin - der

6

Soprano

Flute

mp *sub. p* *mf*

2nd trill key *tr* flz. 3

you a-mong the ma - ny

9

Soprano

Flute

mf *mp* *mf*

3 3 3

traced to the ci - ty

12

Soprano

Flute

p *p*

3 3 3

you a-mong the

poco rit. A tempo

15 *mf* *mf* *f*

lost You a-mong the last the last voi-ces from

f *mf* *f*

19 *p*

Par-a-dise

p

23 *mp* *p*

foun-der foun-der whis-pers the

pp

trill 3rd finger left hand

1st trill key

2nd trill key

27 *mp* *p*

fin-der.

(tr)

2nd trill key

trill 3rd finger left hand

2nd trill key get very airy

n

Under the sign

♩. = 120, light yet vibrant

f

Un-der the sign of Mer-cu-ry mess-a-ges come and go_____

4

mess-a-ges come and go and go_____

7

mf *f*

un-der the sign_____ un-der the sign of Mer-cu-ry_____

11 *mp* *mf*

Borne through the air and across the water

mp *mf* *f*

16 *f*

un-der the sign of Mer - cu - ry Born un-der the sign that

f *mf*

20

comes and goes and comes and goes un-der the sign

mp *f*

24 *mp* *mf* *rit.*

Born un-der the sign that comes and goes that comes and goes

mp *mf* *rit.*

6 **A tempo**

28 *mp*

un - der the sign un - der the sign

mp

31 *f*

un-der the sign of Mer - cu - ry I say

f *mf*

36 *mp* 2 2

yes and no to my fate.

mp

42

p

Gone

♩ = 66, plaintive, grieving

f Gone in a sin-gle stroke gone in-to the world *mp dolce* Or

The first system of the musical score for 'Gone' consists of two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 66, with the character 'plaintive, grieving'. The first measure of the vocal line starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics 'Gone in a sin-gle stroke' are under the first two measures. The third measure has a triplet of eighth notes and the lyrics 'gone in-to the world'. The fourth measure is a whole note with the lyrics 'Or'. The piano accompaniment starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, mirroring the vocal line. The dynamics change to mezzo-piano (*mp*) and dolce in the final measure.

4 gone in-to that world leav-ing me__ leav-ing me__

dolce mp p

The second system of the musical score continues from the first. It starts with a measure rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes with the lyrics 'gone in-to that world'. This is followed by another measure rest, then a quarter note with the lyrics 'leav-ing me__'. The final measure is a quarter note with the lyrics 'leav-ing me__'. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, marked *dolce* and *mp*. The dynamics change to piano (*p*) in the final measure.

8 — Emp-ty house emp-ty land- scape__ Emp - ty

mp mf poco f

The third system of the musical score begins with a measure rest, followed by a quarter note with the lyrics 'Emp-ty house'. The next measure is a quarter note with the lyrics 'emp-ty land- scape__'. The final measure is a quarter note with the lyrics 'Emp - ty'. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, marked *mp*. The dynamics change to mezzo-forte (*mf*) in the second measure and *poco f* in the third measure. The piano accompaniment also includes a triplet of eighth notes in the final measure, marked *mf*.

12 *f* *risoluto*

house _____ E - va - cu - a -

p *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

flz. *flz.* *flz.* *flz.*

risoluto

16

- ted _____ of all mean - ing _____

f

20 *mp* *dolce*

Save this _____

mf *p* *dolce* *mp*

6

24

Save this _____

p *mp* *p*

3 3

Clouds lightening feathers

♩ = 184, breathless but joyful

mp
(clouds light-ening feath-ers eyes beasts kiss-es tears

f 5 sub. p

Detailed description: This system contains measures 1 through 4. The vocal line starts with a whole rest in measure 1, followed by quarter notes in 3/4, 2/4, and 3/4 time signatures, and a quarter rest in 3/4. The piano accompaniment begins with a forte (f) dynamic and a quintuplet of eighth notes in 3/4, followed by a half note in 2/4, and quarter notes in 3/4 and 3/4. A slur covers the piano accompaniment from measure 2 to 4, with a *sub. p* dynamic marking under the final quarter note.

5 mp
clouds light-ening feath-ers

mp f 5 sub. p

Detailed description: This system contains measures 5 through 8. The vocal line has whole rests in measures 5, 6, and 7, followed by quarter notes in 3/4, 2/4, and 3/4 time signatures. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in 3/4 starting with a *mp* dynamic, followed by a *f* dynamic section with a quintuplet of eighth notes. A slur covers the piano accompaniment from measure 7 to 8, with a *sub. p* dynamic marking under the final quarter note.

9
eyes beasts kiss-es clouds light-ening feath-ers eyes

mp f

Detailed description: This system contains measures 9 through 12. The vocal line has quarter notes in 3/4, 2/4, and 3/4 time signatures, followed by a whole rest in 2/4. The piano accompaniment has a quarter note in 3/4, followed by a half note in 2/4, and quarter notes in 3/4 and 2/4. A slur covers the piano accompaniment from measure 10 to 12, with a *mp* dynamic marking under the first quarter note and a *f* dynamic marking under the final quarter note.

13

mp

clouds light-enig feath-ers kiss-es tears kiss-es clouds light-enig feath-ers

sub. p

18

mf *mp*

eyes beasts kiss-es tears eyes beasts kiss-es tears clouds light-enig feath-ers eyes

f *sub. p* *mp* <

24

p

clouds light-enig feath-ers eyes beasts kiss es tears

f *sub. p* *sub. f*

29 ♩ = 120

A tempo

mf *mp*

clouds light-enig feath-ers eyes beast kiss-es clouds light-enig feath-ers eyes

mf *mp*

So that now

♩ = 72, **sorrowful**

mf poco risoluto *f* *mp dolce*

So that now all is bro-ken and has been made whole

6 *mf* *f*

So that now all is whole and can-not be bro ken

11 *p* *mp* *mp*

and can-not be bro - ken. and can-not be

16 *p* **rit.**

leav-ing me leav-ing me leav-ing

Speaking to the dead

♩ = 84, tenderly sad

5 poco rit.

10 ♩ = 66

p *mp* *p*

Speak-ing to the dead for the dead Speak-ing of speak-ing

14 *mp* *p*

to or for the dead

18 **molto accel.** ♩ = 132

♩ = 76

22 *p* *mf*

Speak-ing to the dead. Speak-ing what was

p *mp* senza vibrato

27 *mp*

whis-pered in se-cret Speak-ing the whis-pers of or in the

pp *mp* poco vibr. flz. senza vibr. poco vibr.

31 *f*

clouds. Whis-pered writhe or wraith

mf flz. (poco vibr.)

35

Whis-pered writ - ing wraith words

poco f *mp*

39 *mf*

Writh-ing wraiths whis-pered the word _____ Writ-ing wraiths

p

43

whis-pered beau-ty _____ Writ-ing wraiths

p *flz.*

46

whis-pered Writ-ing wraiths. _____

pochissimo vibr. *flz.* *senza vibr.* *flz.* *pp*

Found somewhere

♩ = 66, mysterious

The musical score is written for a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked as 66 beats per minute and the mood is 'mysterious'. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

First System (Measures 1-4):
 The vocal line begins with a rest, then sings "Found some-where" in a half note, followed by "found some-where" in a half note. The piano accompaniment starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic, featuring a trill in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand. The tempo changes to 2/4 for the second phrase.

Second System (Measures 5-8):
 The vocal line continues with "be-tween ma-gic" (quarter note), "be-tween ma-gic" (quarter note), and "and" (quarter note). The piano accompaniment features a trill in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*.

Third System (Measures 9-12):
 The vocal line concludes with "pos-si-bil - i - ty" (half note). The piano accompaniment features a trill in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand. The tempo is marked *poco rit.* and the dynamic is *mf*.

Key performance instructions include *mp*, *p*, *mf*, *mp*, and *poco rit.*. The score includes various musical notations such as trills, triplets, and dynamic markings.

16 $\text{♩} = 60$
 11 *mf*
 Like a num - ber _____ or me - ta - phor _____

2nd trill key
tr
mp p *mf* *f*

14 $\text{♩} = 66$
f mp *mf*
 On _____ the bor - der of the real _____ Like a num - ber _____ or

17 *mp* *rit.* *p*
 me - ta - phor Ma - gic and pos - si - bil - i - ty _____ Found some - where be -

mp *p*

21 $\text{♩} = 56$
 tween. Found some - where _____

mp *p*

24

mp

Like her mir-rors _____ on the page _____

molto legato
soft-tongued

pp

27

Her page _____ of mir-rors _____

mp *pp*

30

mp

On _____ the bor-der _____ of sense _____ Re-

p *pp* *mp*

33

mf

flec-tion of the fall-en _____ Tree _____ of hea-ven _____

pp *mp*

36

mp *p*

Re - flec-tion of the fall - en _____ fall - en _____

pp *p*

♩ = 76 accel.

18₃₉

world of re-pe-ti-tion. And in

♩ = 100

this and in this And in this and in that

46 ♩ = 56

What did she see? what did she re - flect?

49

2nd trill key trill 3rd finger left hand senza vibr.

53

page af - ter page. 2nd trill key poco vibr.