

BASS & CHORUS

Unaware, the soft caress
of wind on cheek

8.

SOP. It's nearly nothing.
A commonplace.
A little girl playing on the beach.

Sometime in all our lives
we too played on the beach.

What is it she does, then?
Is something different?
She plays in rock-pools,
digs toes into the sand,
as we did,
at her age.
The girl's the same,
only
the beach is different.

CHORUS We can't see anything

SOP. Certain parts per thousand
in the sand
in the sea
certain parts per thousand
reach her
touch her
enter her inner parts

CHORUS We can't see anything
We can't smell anything

SOP. Who cares anyway?
What's another
cancer cluster?
Nothing's proved.
Who will notice
a little girl dying
before her time?

It's nearly
a commonplace.

9. ORCHESTRAL POSTLUDE

10.

BASS The unleashed winds cannot reach me.
I do not know what manner of life waits outside.
There are no emissaries to send
across the blasted land.
Sealed underground, I cannot mark the days,
or trace the progress
of a dim sun on a spent world.

CHORUS Rouse him from the fireflash
rouse him from the final cold
rouse him from the darkness
of our empty places
turn him from the grave
before he enters.
May he step out to see
the faces of all his fathers who went before.

SOP. There are no rites to follow.
Rituals need the living
to honour the dead,
and our bodies lie
beside broken cities.

CHORUS Come, our mother, take his spirit,
wake him from his warring pleasures,
take him past the dark grave floor,
wake him,
wake him

TENOR This is his final resting-place.
There is no cause to look beyond,
no living movement,
no linnets song,
no trout to rise,
no sway of trees,
no manner of life at all.

CHORUS Wake him from his warring pleasures,
take him from the dark cave floor

TENOR Perhaps, somewhere,
an insect stirs.
There is no man
to crush it in his hand.

CHORUS Come, our mother, take his spirit,
take him
where the ancient rivers flow,
where the prairie-grasses grow,
where the land is thick with trees,
where the sea-life fills the seas,
where the living creatures roam,
sit him by your side,
take him
where the great bears roam,
take him
through this world, our home,
ask him
why he has not conquered hunger
why he took no heed of want
why he has not conquered pain
ask him
why?

Come, our mother,
take his spirit,
turn him from the grave

BASS I watch
the whole world die.
Mankind forgot its nature
and could not stop
until all that walks upon the earth is slain.
There is only wind
to shape the stone,
barren water
on a barren land,
and the shades of past that stalked
each corner of our time
have no more meaning.
Even men's souls now die;
they need the living
to give them shape.

While a dead world
is leaving mankind
behind.

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INTERVAL

Miriam Bowen

Miss Bowen was born in South Wales and studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music where she was awarded the Curtis Gold Medal. Her operatic debut was with the Glyndebourne Touring Opera as Nannetta in Verdi's *Falstaff* and Pamina in Mozart's *Zauberflöte* designed by David Hockney. Other operatic appearances include leading roles with Kent Opera and the Welsh National Opera as well as performances in Valence, and the first performance in modern times of Gluck's *Le Cinesi* with the Endymion Ensemble in London. Concert appearances include the world première of Rubbra's *Sinfonia Sacra* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* for the English Bach Festival at the Royal Festival Hall and Handel's *Messiah* with the English Chamber Orchestra at the Barbican.

Miss Bowen appears regularly with the Songmakers Almanac in London's Wigmore Hall and at the South Bank and with them she sang in the world première of a Robin Holloway composition as part of the 1983 South Bank Summer Music Festival where she also sang in a concert performance of Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* under Simon Rattle.