



Hans Abrahamsen
let me tell you

Paul Griffiths

Barbara Hannigan
Symphonieorchester des
Bayerischen Rundfunks
Andris Nelsons

MUSIC EDITION
WINTER & WINTER

let me tell you

*There is another kind of light and it is music.
Music here comes out of nothing like the light of morn-
ing, one could say, when it is almost still night.*

At the thin line of the horizon there arrives this magical sound of piccolos, violin harmonics and celesta. The music – and this is true of the whole work – is at once familiar and strange, for the language of traditional tonality is present but fractured into new configurations. Any sense of a recognizable key comes only fleetingly, and melody casts back to an ancient time of folk song.

There is familiarity and strangeness, too, in the rhythm. Generally the pulse is clear – it is picked out at the start in oscillating octaves from the celesta – but the position of the strong beat is ambiguous. Time here simultaneously ticks and floats.

Such music, beginning right away, not only presents the protagonist's world but also foreshadows the crucial melodic element associated with her first words.

And then she comes, as light in to the light, to make more light.

And now there are words: Let me tell you...

The protagonist is not quite the Ophelia of Shakespeare's Hamlet. She has the same words, her entire text being made up from words Ophelia speaks in the play, but she uses these words to express herself differently. Her utterance is at once constrained and resolute, fragile and decisive, and its nature is realized at the opening by an adaptation of a technique used by Monteverdi, of rebounding on one note. What was once an ornament becomes for her the means by which she can be at once

hesitant and assertive. She tells us of things to which there is little or no reference in the play, such as the nature of memory, or 'a time...when we had no music'. Here – 'in limping time', as the score has it – she considers how music shifts and changes time, and we recognize that this music is doing so.

*For music is time as well as light.
Music will choose how time will go, and will take us
with it in to that time.*

Repetition here is essential to the gradual unfolding. The opening of the second part replays and alters the opening of the first; the last part has an even shorter introduction, again going back to the beginning and taking it further, before arriving at the slow finale. Now microtonal tunings fold into the texture and, being derived from natural harmonics, begin to reroot the music in a glistening new world of resonance. We are in the snow, in a white landscape where the erasure of detail and contour is the renewal of possibility.

*We tune in to another now that was not there before,
but that was promised.*

Ophelia is one of those imaginary figures whose existence goes on beyond the work that gave them birth. She has appeared in paintings and in novels, including the one that was the source for this piece. Now her words come back to her transformed, and she has gained, as she herself might say:

The powers of music.



Barbara Hannigan, Hans Abrahamsen, Paul Griffiths, Andris Nelsons
Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks
CONCERT PERFORMANCE AT HERKULESSAAL, MUNICH, JULY 2ND AND 3RD, 2015

Hans Abrahamsen

let me tell you

for soprano and orchestra
(2012/2013)

Text: Paul Griffiths
(after the novel *let me tell you*, 2008)

Soprano: Barbara Hannigan
Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks
Conductor: Andris Nelsons

I Part:

1. Let me tell you how it was (3:50)
2. O but memory is not one but many (2:50)
3. There was a time, I remember (5:58)

II Part:

4. Let me tell you how it is (2:04)
5. Now I do not mind (6:13)

III Part:

6. I know you are there (1:00)
7. I will go out now (10:44)

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Dedicated to Barbara Hannigan

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