

Primavera en silencio

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8. *Humano*

for SATB and Piano

Text by
Robert Ressler

Music by
Joshua Shank

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

Note from the composer

When I first began talking about this collaboration with Dr. Bradley Miller, we focused on the mission of the institution he taught at, the University of Minnesota Morris, a public liberal arts college in rural Minnesota. One of the central aspects of an education there was environmental stewardship and, in attempting to speak to this, I began researching celebrated American conservationist Rachel Carson's landmark 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, which examined the adverse health effects of "miracle" insecticides like DDT. She firmly believed that the balance of nature was a major force in the survival of the human race, and her stunning research was, predictably, met with widespread skepticism and downright slander from chemical companies who were benefiting from the widespread use of the chemicals she revealed to be harmful to humans.

I originally thought it would be interesting to set some actual text from Carson's book but, in reading it, it became clear that the prose was thick with brilliant scientific research and didn't seem like it would sing very well. However, the title of her book (itself inspired by a line of poetry by John Keats) seemed like it could serve as a point of departure for a new text. For this, I asked Washington-based poet (and Rachel Carson fan) Robert Ressler if we might collaborate on something about the animals that are said to "sing," and how—as in Carson's title—those songs might be stolen from us if humanity doesn't quickly take a look in the mirror and start treating the environment with the same care and enthusiasm as we do some of the seemingly less important things in our lives. He agreed and, since the choir was going to take the new piece on a tour of Peru, we decided to write it in Spanish.

When *Silent Spring* was originally published, some saw it as an act of heroism. Others saw it as an irresponsible breach of scientific objectivity that weakened the public's faith in science and research. The eye of history has favored the former, and Carson—a quiet person who valued solitude and privacy—has achieved the status of international hero for blowing the whistles that she did. She passed away from a battle with breast cancer only two years after the book's publication.

Primavera en silencio was commissioned by the University of Minnesota Morris Concert Choir (Dr. Bradley Miller, conductor), and received its premiere on March 7, 2020. It is dedicated with gratitude to the memory of Rachel Carson (1907-1964). *Rest in power.*



Rachel Carson in her 1940 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee photo.

The Text

Primavera en silencio

By Robert Ressler (b. 1988)

Pájaro

La pájara cuida su nido
el futuro en una cascarita azul
pero ya viene el hacha
de un mundo resquebrajándose
y aún por nacer
caen los pajaritos antes de que se escuche su
canción.

Ballena

El canto de una cría de ballena
explora el océano por la primera vez
pero los plásticos la ahogan
que manos sin cuidado echaron al mar
su madre solo puede oír
lamentitos de dolor

Rana

La rana vigila su pequeña laguna
mientras las fábricas de avance temerario
envenenan su hogar ancestral
los químicos ahogan los cantos
en las gargantas de sus crías

Humano

Una niña baila en un bosque
sus ojos alumbrados por los rayos del sol
tallos altos de hierba rozan sus brazos desprotegidos
sus pulmones se llenan con nuestro aire compartido
¿Escuchará la niña el canto de los pájaros,
o le daremos una primavera en silencio?

Silent spring

Bird

The mother bird guards her nest
the future in a little blue shell
but the axe from a breaking world arrives
and yet to be born
the little birds fall before their song can be
heard.

Whale

The song of a newborn whale
explores the ocean for the first time
but plastics drown her
tossed by careless hands
the only thing her mother can hear
are little cries of pain.

Frog

The frog watches over her small lagoon
while the factories of reckless advancement
poison her ancestral home
the chemicals choke the songs
in the throats of her children.

Human

A child dances in a forest
eyes alight with the rays of the sun
tall stalks of grass touch her unprotected arms
her lungs fill with our air
Will she hear the songs of the birds
or will we give her a silent spring?

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“This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...”

Commissioned by the University of Minnesota Morris Concert Choir
Dr. Bradley Miller, Conductor

Primavera en silencio

In memory of Rachel Carson (1907-1964)

1. Primer espejo

Text by
Robert Ressler

Music by
Joshua Shank

♩ = 56

Piano

The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, marked *mp*. It features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The piece concludes with a double bar line and the instruction *attacca*.

2. Pájaro

♩ = 56

Soprano (S)

Alto (A)

Tenore (T)

Basso (B)

Piano

The vocal parts are in 2/4 time, marked *mp* for the first phrase and *mf* for the second. The lyrics are: "La pá-ja-ra cui-da su ni-do" and "La pá-ja-ra". The piano accompaniment is in 2/4 time, marked *mp*, and features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and the instruction *mf bring out*.

And. al Fine

14 *mp* *mf* bring out

cui-da su ni - do el fu - tu-ro en u - na cas-ca - ri-ta a -

cui-da su ni - do el fu - tu-ro en u - na cas-ca - ri-ta a -

8 cui-da su ni - do el fu - tu-ro en u - na cas-ca - ri-ta a -

cui-da su ni - do el fu - tu-ro en u - na cas-ca - ri-ta a -

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14 *mf* *mp*

14 *mf* *mp*

23 *mf* *mp* *mf*

zul el fu - tu-ro en u - na cas-ca - ri-ta a - se pe-ro ya vie - ne el

zul el fu - tu-ro en u - na cas-ca - ri-ta a - se pe-ro ya vie - ne el

8 zul el fu - tu-ro en u - na cas-ca - ri-ta a - zul pe-ro ya vie - ne el

zul el fu - tu-ro en u - na cas-ca - ri-ta a - zul pe-ro ya vie - ne el

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23 *mf*

23 *mf*

33

ha - cha de un mun-do res-que-bra - ján-do-se y aún por na - cer

ha - cha de un mun-do res-que-bra - ján-do-se y aún por na - cer

8 ha - cha de un mun-do res-que-bra - ján-do-se y aún por na - cer

ha - cha de un mun-do res-que-bra - ján-do-se y aún por na - cer

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33

43

caen los pa - ja - ri - tos an - tes de que

caen los pa - ja - ri - tos an - tes de que

se

se

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43

mf bring out

mp

51 *mf* *no vibrato* * *poco rit.*

se es - cu - che su can - ci - ón.

mf *no vibrato* * *poco rit.*

se es - cu - che su can - ci - ón.

8 *no vibrato* * *poco rit.*

es - cu - che su can - ci - ón.

no vibrato * *poco rit.*

es - cu - che su can - ci - ón.

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51 *poco rit.*

* Take all 4 beats to slowly slide up to the C-natural.

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“This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...”

3. Segundo espejo

$\text{♩} = 60$

Piano

mf *p* *f* *mf* *mp* *p*

Red. *attacca*

4. Ballena

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$\text{♩} = 42$

Tenor

Bass

Piano

p *p* *mf* *p*

Red. per harmony

El can-to de u - na crí - a de ba - lle - na

El can-to de u - na crí - a de ba - lle - na

El can-to de u - na crí - a de ba - lle - na ex - plo - ra el o -

El can-to de u - na crí - a de ba - lle - na ex - plo - ra el o -

17

cé - a - no — por la pri-me-ra vez pe-ro los plás-ti-cos la a - ho-gan

cé - a - no — por la pri-me-ra vez pe-ro los plás-ti-cos la a - ho-gan

mp *mf*

17

mf

23

que ma - nos — sin cui - da - do e - cha-ron al

que ma - nos — sin cui - da do e - cha-ron al

mf

23

f bring out

27

mar su ma - dre so-lo pue - de o -

mar su ma - dre so-lo pue - de o -

mf *f*

27

f bring out

6. Rana

mf = 88

Soprano **mf** La

Alto **mf** La

Tenor **mf** lightly ra - na, ra - na,

Bass **mf** lightly ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra - na,

Piano **mf** sempre

Red. until m. 22, beat 2

6 ra - na - vi - gi - la su pe - que - ña la - gu - na

ra - na vi - gi - la su pe - que - ña la - gu - na

ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra - na,

8va

11

mien - tras las fá-bri-cas de a -
 mien - tras las fá-bri-cas de a -
 ra - na, ra - na, ra - na,
 ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra -

8^{va}

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16

van - ce te-me - ra - rio en - ve - ne-nan su ho -
 van - ce te-me - ra - rio en - ve - ne-nan su ho -
 ra - na, ra - na, ra - na,
 - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra - na, ra -

no vibrato

mf *f*

mf *f*

(pattern change)

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15

20

gar an - ces - tral

los qui - mi - cos, a -

gar an - ces tral

los qui - mi - cos, a -

8 ra - na, ra - na, los qui - mi - cos,

na, ra - na, ra - na, los qui - mi - cos, los qui - mi -

mf

mf

mf lightly

mf lightly

20

f

Red. until m. 31

25

ho - gan los can - tos en las gar - gan - tas de sus

ho - gan los can - tos en las gar - gan - tas de sus

8 los qui - mi - cos, los qui - mi - cos, los qui - mi - cos,

cos, los qui mi cos, los qui mi cos, sus

mf

(pattern change)

(pattern change)

25

7. Cuarto espejo

♩ = 55

Piano

Two staves of piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. The top staff has a treble clef and the bottom staff has a bass clef. The music consists of chords and single notes. Dynamics include piano (p) and mezzo-forte (mf). There are fermatas over the final notes of both staves.

p *mf* *mf*

Reo. Reo. Reo. Reo. Reo. Reo.

B&F Music 8. Humano

♩ = 55

SA

TB

Vocal parts for Soprano (SA) and Tenor/Bass (TB). The music is in 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "U - na ni - ña bai-la en un bos-que sus o-jos a-lum-bra-dos por los ray-os del sol". Dynamics include piano (p), mezzo-forte (mf), and poco ritardando (poco rit.).

p *mf* *poco rit.*

U - na ni - ña bai-la en un bos-que sus o-jos a-lum-bra-dos por los ray-os del sol

U - na ni - ña bai-la en un bos-que sus o-jos a - lum-bra-dos por los ray-os del sol

16

22

Continuation of the vocal parts for Soprano (SA), Tenor/Bass (TB), and Bass (B). The music is in 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "ta-llos al-tos de hier - ba ro - zan sus bra - zos des - pro - te - gi - dos sus pul-mo-nes". Dynamics include mezzo-piano (mp), a tempo, and poco ritardando (poco rit.).

mp a tempo *poco rit.* *mp*

ta-llos al-tos de hier - ba ro - zan sus bra - zos des - pro - te - gi - dos sus

mp a tempo *poco rit.*

ta-llos al-tos de hier - ba ro - zan sus bra - zos des - pro - te - gi - dos

mp a tempo *poco rit.* *mp*

ta-llos al-tos de hier - ba ro - zan sus bra - zos des - pro - te - gi - dos sus pul-mo-nes

a tempo *poco rit.* *mp*

des - pro - te - gi - dos

41

ña el can - - - to de los

ña el can - - - to de los

8 ña el can - - - to de los

ña el can - - - to de los

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41

46

pá ja - ros, *senza rit.* G.P.

pá - ja - ros, *senza rit.* G.P.

8 pá - ja - ros, *senza rit.* G.P.

pá - ja - ros, *senza rit.* G.P.

46

senza rit. G.P.

senza rit. G.P.

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o le da - re - mos

o le da - re - mos

o le da - re - mos

o le da - re - mos

mp

8va f

Ped. until G.P.

mf senza rit. G.P. p rit. lunga

u - na pri - ma - ve - ra en si - len - cio?

mf senza rit. G.P. p rit. lunga

u - na pri - ma - ve - ra en si - len - cio?

mf senza rit. G.P. p rit. lunga

u - na pri - ma - ve - ra en si - len - cio?

mf senza rit. G.P. p rit. lunga

u - na pri - ma - ve - ra en si - len - cio?

senza rit. G.P. rit. lunga