

JUDITH MARKOVICH

When Words

fall

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SUITE FOR VIOLA & HARP



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could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Tho' stretched from sky to sky.

PROGRAM NOTES

Those words were scratched on the wall by a patient of a California insane asylum in 1917 and found after he was carried to his grave. A pastor sat on an empty lemon box and pushed against the wall with a stub pencil and paper to duplicate them. What he didn't know, however, is that while that patient wrote those words, he only recited them, for they had been written a thousand years earlier in a Jewish poem called "Akdmut."

COMPOSER NOTES

A couple of years ago, I saw "When Words Fail" as a title in my mind, but I didn't know what future piece it was for, or if it was just "a good idea." In 2022 I had a dream in which I saw a score cover in pink with a hue of gold. There was confetti on the cover. For fun, I recreated what I saw. A few months after I stored it away, Rachel Talitman contacted me with a commission for harp and viola. I woke out of another dream soon after and heard a viola playing a beautiful, soaring line that came down and ended in a stutter. I realized I had heard a clip of the new piece but suddenly I realized the reason for a stutter. It is, in a sense, an inability to express words. Then I knew where the title belonged and put it on the cover. As if that wasn't enough, a month later I received a gift from an out-of-town friend who knew nothing about this. The gift was a small dish with the words: "when words fail, music speaks." I was "tickled pink!"

~ Judith Markovich

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World Premiere: December 2023
(violinist Pierre Henri Xuereb and harpist Rachel Talitman)

MOVEMENTS

- I. Were Endless Oceans of Ink
- II. Selah One
- III. Were Vast Skies of Parchment
- IV. Selah Two
- V. Were Every Stalk a Quill
- *VI. Selah Three
- VII. Were Every Man a Scribe

14'13"

INSTRUCTION:

Harmonics in harp sound an octave higher than written pitch.

Patetico: with feeling, movingly

Affettuoso: tender

*VI. can be performed on viola d'amore.

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Commissioned by Rachel Talitman

WHEN WORDS FAIL

Suite for Viola and Harp

I. Were Endless Oceans of Ink

JUDITH MARKOVICH

Cantabile ♩ = 56

A ♩ = 70

Viola

Harp

mf

pp

mp

mp

mf

pp

mf

f

like rolling waves

3

5

6

6

B \flat

I. Were Endless Oceans of Ink

7

Vla

Hp.

ppp

mp

A

9

Vla

Hp.

f

mp

B

11

Vla

Hp.

mf

poco rit.....

B

14

Vla

Hp.

mp

pp

mf

mf

C a tempo

II. Selah One

Were Every Star a Gentle Sound

Con amore ♩ = 48

solo 8^{va}

Harp

mp
a piacere

p ————— *mp*

4 (8)

Hp.

ppp

6

Hp.

mf

ppp sub.

cresc.

9

Hp.

mp

pp

pppp

rit.....

III. Were Vast Skies of Parchment

(solo) **Patetico** (♩ = 62)

a piacere

Viola *mf* *molto espressivo*

Vla *f*

Vla *fp sub.* *f* *p* *rit.....*

A **Mysterioso** ♩ = 84

rit. poco a poco.....

Vla *tutti* *pp*

H p. *p* *mp* *simile*

G# D# G# D# C#

B **L'istesso tempo**

Vla *poco vib.* *mp* *dolce e molto espressivo*

H p. *ppp* C# A# F# A# A#

Vla *(poco vib.)* *mf* *6*

H p. A# A# A#

IV. Selah Two

Were Myriads of Tongues a Chorus

Giocoso ♩ = 54

The musical score is arranged in four systems, each containing a Viola part and a Harp part. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure numbers 1, 3, 5, and 7 are indicated at the start of each system.

- System 1 (Measures 1-2):** Viola starts with a pizzicato (pizz.) instruction and a dynamic of *mf*. Harp starts with a dynamic of *p*. Both parts feature triplet and sextuplet patterns.
- System 2 (Measures 3-4):** Viola has a dynamic of *mp* and includes a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. Harp continues with triplet and sextuplet patterns.
- System 3 (Measures 5-6):** Viola has a dynamic of *ff* and includes an *ord.* (ordine) marking. Harp includes a *cresc.* marking. A box containing F# and D# is present in the Harp part.
- System 4 (Measures 7-8):** Viola has a dynamic of *ff*. Harp includes a *ff* marking and a circled cross symbol (⊕).

V. Were Every Stalk a Quill

Vigoroso ♩ = 88

sempre

Viola *pizz.* *p*

Harp *b.d.l.c.* *ppp*

Vla 5 (3+3+2) ord. **A** *pizz.* *mp*

Hp. *p*

Vla 9 (3+3+2) ord. *p sub.*

Hp. **C#** *sons xylo* *ppp sub.*

V. Were Every Stalk a Quill

13 B pizz. *mf*

Vla

Hp. *mp* sub. C

17 (3+3+2) *f* poco accel..... *ord.* *p* sub.

Vla

Hp. *mp* sons xylo *ppp* sub.

21 C piu mosso (♩ = 92) *f*

Vla

Hp. *mp* E♭ G♯

24 A♭

Vla

Hp. A♭

*VI. Selah Three

Were Highest Heavens a Voice

*Or
Viola d'Amore

Molto Expressivo ♩ = 52

Viola

Harp

4

Vla

H p.

7

Vla

H p.

spiccato

fp *mf*

A# E♭ G♭

10

Vla

H p.

poco rit.

ord.

mf *f* *pp* *pp*

A♭ G#

VII. Were Every Man a Scribe

Dolente ♩ = 50

Viola

non vib.
p

Harp

pppp like a whispering wind

3 **A**

Vla

Hp.

5

Vla

Hp.

7

Vla

mp

Hp.