

Translations

by Elisenda Fábregas

1. El silencio

(from *Poema del Cante Jondo*)

Oye, hijo mio, el silencio.
Es un silencio ondulado,
un silencio,
donde resbalan valles y ecos,
y que inclina las frentes
hacia el suelo.

2. La mano imposible

(from the collection *El Diwán del Tamarit*)
Casida No. 6

Yo no quiero más que una mano,
una mano herida, si es posible.
Yo no quiero más que una mano
aunque pase mil noches sin lecho.

Sería un pálido lirio de cal.
Sería una paloma amarrada a mi corazón.
Sería el guardián que en la noche de mi tránsito
prohibiera en absoluto la entrada a la luna.

Yo no quiero más que esa mano,
para los diarios aceites y la sábana blanca
de mi agonía.
Yo no quiero más que esa mano
para tener un ala de mi muerte.

Lo demás todo pasa.
Rubor sin nombre ya. Astro perpetuo.
Lo demás es lo otro; viento triste,
mientras las hojas huyen en bandadas.

3. La luna negra

(from *Poema del Cante Jondo*)

En el cielo de la copla
asoma la luna negra
sobre las nubes moradas.

Y en el suelo de la copla,
hay yunques negros que aguardan
poner al rojo la luna.

1. The Silence

(from *Poema del Cante Jondo*)

Listen, my son, to the silence.
It's a rolling silence,
a silence,
wherein valleys and echoes slide,
and which bends foreheads
down towards the ground.

2. The Impossible Hand

(from the collection *El Diwán del Tamarit*)
Casida No. 6

I don't want anything more than a hand,
a wounded hand, if possible.
I don't want anything more than a hand,
even if I have to spend a thousand sleepless
nights.

It would be a pale lime iris.
It would be a dove attached to my heart.
It would be the guardian that during the night
of my transition
would absolutely forbid the entrance to the moon.

I don't want anything more than this hand,
for the daily ointments and the white sheet
of my agony.
I don't want anything more than this hand
to have a wing of my death.

Nothing else matters.
Shyness no longer named. Endless star.
All the rest is something else; sad wind,
while the leaves run away in flocks.

3. The Black Moon

(from *Poema del Cante Jondo*)

On the sky of the "copla"*
the black moon appears
above the purple clouds.

On the ground of the "copla"
there are black anvils
waiting to make the moon red.

[*copla: couplet, a two-line verse form]

4. Las seis cuerdas

(from *Poema del Cante Jondo*)

La guitarra,
hace llorar a los sueños.
El sollozo de las almas perdidas,
se escapa por su boca redonda.

Y como la tarántula
teje una grand estrella
para cazar suspiros,
que flotan en su negro aljibe de madera.

5. Clamor

(from *Poema del Cante Jondo*)

En las torres amarillas,
doblan las campanas.

Sobre los vientos amarillos,
se abren las campanadas.

Por un camino va
la muerte, coronada
de asahares marchitos.
Canta y canta
una canción
en su vihuela blanca,
y canta y canta y canta.

En las torres amarillas,
cesan las campanas.

El viento con el polvo,
hace proras de plata.

4. The Six Strings

(from *Poema del Cante Jondo*)

The guitar
makes dreams weep.
The sobbing of the lost souls,
escapes through its round mouth.

And like the tarantula
it spins a great star
to trap the sighs,
which float in its black wooden well.

5. Clamor

(from *Poema del Cante Jondo*)

In the yellow towers,
the bells toll.

Upon the yellow winds,
ringing breaks out.

Down a road travels
Death, crowned
with withered orange blossoms.
Death sings and sings
a song
with her ancient white guitar,
and sings and sings and sings.

In the yellow towers,
the bells stop.

The wind and the dust,
create prows of silver.

Program Notes

by Elisenda Fábregas

Five Songs for soprano and piano (1986) was inspired by five poems of the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898-1936). The poems "El silencio," "La luna negra," "Las seis cuerdas," and "Clamor" are drawn from the collection *Poema del Cante Jondo* (1921), and "La mano imposible" is from *El Diwán del Tamarit* (1931-35). Lorca's poetry is born from the continuous juxtaposition of contrasting and opposing symbols which attempt to negate each other. His obsession with death, which he referred to as the "Spanish lover," also pervades his work.

In "El silencio" ("The Silence"), Lorca materializes silence by telling us to listen to it. It is the quietest song of the collection with a certain purity imparted by the modal quality of the music.

In "La mano imposible" ("The Impossible Hand") we are presented with a white, marble-like, disembodied hand, an anxiously sought for (perhaps divine) hand that protects the dying. The anxiety of the search for this impossible hand is represented musically by questioning ascending melodies that pause in their climax, asking for answers. The accompaniment is highly chromatic and the meters shift constantly. Towards the end, the poem's atmosphere of anxiety lessens and there is a glimpse of accepting the impossibility of finding such a hand, even though, as Lorca says, "nothing else matters" except that hand. The piece ends with a peaceful and consonant duet of interweaving lines between the soprano and the piano.

Some symbols in Lorca's work have dual meanings: the moon, for example, represents both death threats (personified by women that enchant men and lead them to death) and eroticism. In "La luna negra," the "The Black Moon" is a terrible presence and a threat to the unwary. The music is given a floating quality by the lack of a tonal center and by the continuous trills in the piano part which surround the soprano melody. The eerie character of the music sustains the ambiance of magic and incantation that permeates Lorca's poem.

In "Las seis cuerdas" ("The Six Strings") Lorca glorifies the guitar. This instrument is to Lorca a symbol of remembrance of lost souls and a connection with the dead; "the guitar makes dreams weep" and lets the sobbing of lost souls escape through its black wooden well. As in the previous songs, melodic dissonance in the vocal lines and piano writing portrays the anguish of the text.

Finally, in "Clamor," Lorca personifies Death. We see her walking, crowned with withered citron blossoms, and singing a song with her white vihuela, while the church bells toll. Musically, the piece begins with the bell-tolling in the piano that sets up the appearance of Death (represented by a long and torturous chromatic melody in the soprano line that starts in the low register, and slowly unravels as it reaches the higher register). The melody's accompaniment in the piano is dissonant, syncopated and rhythmically insistent.