

# RETORN A LA TERRA

PROGRAM NOTES  
by Elisenda Fábregas

*Retorn a la terra* (Return to the native land) was commissioned by the 'Virtuoso Players' based in South Korea, and is inspired by two poems in the Catalan language: *Retorn a Catalunya* (Return to Catalunya), by Josep Carner, and *Sardana*, by Joan Maragall. Carner's poem describes both the excitement and nostalgia he feels on returning to his country after a long absence. Maragall's poem is an homage to the 'sardana', the National dance of Catalunya.

This work has three movements - the first and the second are connected. Carner's poem is read at various points throughout the first and second movements. Only one paragraph from Maragall's poem is read at the beginning of the third movement.

- I. *La serra de foc* (The mountain of fire) is inspired by the poem's sense of expectation and excitement at the return to Catalunya, and also by the proverbial Catalan strength. As the poem says: "la força tota vella... que ens agermana" (the old force ...that makes us family).
- II. In *Records* (Memories) the music freely uses fragments of old Catalan melancholic melodies that impart a medieval and religious tone to the entire movement.
- III. *Dansa* (Dance) is an homage to the 'sardana' and uses its basic rhythm, as well as typical melodic turns of the dance.

# “RETORN A CATALUNYA”

by Josep Carner,  
from *Obres Completes* Ed. Selecta, Barcelona 1968  
(translated by Elisenda Fàbregas)

## “Retorn a Catalunya” (in Catalan)

Ja veig damunt la terra de foc el nostre pi  
Oh gent que per les feixes daurades feu camí!  
em sobta com un vi  
la força tota vella i humil que ens agermana.  
(És viu com la ginesta i com el blau marí  
el teu escarafall, oh noia catalana.)

Com somrieu en hores del vespre, masos blancs,  
entre pallers de bona companyia,  
i cada mas ateny en curta rogalia  
bosquet i blat i vinya i un marge amb tres pollancs.

Voldria, tot perdent-me per valls i fondalades  
dir tes llaors, oh terra de salut!  
enmig de coses fosques i vides oblidades  
com aquest grill que canta dins un camí perdut.

## “Return to Catalonia” (in English)

I see on top of the land of fire our pine tree  
Oh people that among golden terraces make their  
path!  
strikes me as a wine  
the ancestral and humble force that connects us.  
(It is as alive as the ‘broom’<sup>1</sup> and as the navy  
blue of your tantrum, oh Catalan girl.)

How you smile in the evening hours, white  
farmhouses,  
among barns in good company,  
and reaches each farmhouse in close proximity  
forest and wheat and vines and three poplars at the  
edge of the path.

I would like, even while getting lost among valleys  
and hollows  
to give you praise, oh land of health!  
in the middle of dark things and forgotten lives  
like this cricket that sings in a lost path.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Ginesta’ is a plant and is translated into ‘retama’ in Spanish and ‘broom’ in English.