

for Ed Marks & Vera Barad,
in friendship, admiration and gratitude

DENMARK VESEY TAKES THE STAND

Music Theatre for Tenor Singer-Actor and Ensemble :
clarinet[s], viola, cello, keyboards [one player]

Text by DOROTHY HEYWARD *

Music by VINCENT PLUSH
July - September 1996

In a totally dark auditorium and performance area, the recorded singing of the Gullah Spiritual can be dimly heard.

THE SPIRITUAL: ** ♩ 96

Tape

Mo-ses, — Mo-ses, — don't you let king Pha-roah o-ver-take you, — Mo-ses, — Mo-ses, — don't you let king Pha-roah o-ver take you, —

Organ (prepared or pedals)

[silent] — [silent] — slowly raise volume level

Tape

Mo-ses, — Mo-ses — don't you let king Pha-roah o-ver-take you — In — some lone-some grave — yard —

Organ

drone continuing →

Tempo from tape = 96

ORGAN (manuals)

v.v./s.

* The text is largely taken from the play *Set My People Free*, by Dorothy Heyward, produced on Broadway in 1948. It is used with the kind permission of the DuBose and Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund [Mr Albert J. Cardinali, Trustee].

** The recording of the Gullah Spiritual, *Moses*, was made by Alan Lomax on St Simon's Island, Georgia, in 1960, and appears on the *New World Records* label [80278-2], and is used with permission.

~~_____~~
~~_____~~

70 ELECTRIC PIANO

target is

— 100 —

V: ARIA I - The Reasoning

F

in a broad and expansive speaking voice, addressing the audience as though were fellow conspirators-to-be...

"Talking Drum"-Music
Spiky, rumbunctious, driving.
Own Tempo: ♩ = 156, rigidly metronomic!

TENOR [*] For twelve years I have been planning, studying, teaching myself to read and to write learning

Electronic Piano
punchy!
f → fff, ad lib.
8th octave lower
ring-modulated, or VIBRAPHONE setting

history, reading every pamphlet 'bout slavery, I could lay my hands on.

learning his-to-ry
about sla-ve-ry
I could lay my hands on
as though changing gears, tonally speaking

TENOR Talking to my people, Finding out what they thought. Planting thoughts in the heads of those that had never thought before.

...to my people
...what they thought
...heads of those
...thought before

mf → fff, ad lib.

(*) Throughout this section, the Pianist improvises sparsely & sporadically on the given pitches and patterns.
When the TENOR pauses at the designated cues ↓, mirror the rhythmic pattern of his words, according to the speech-rhythms, as indicated.
At other times, the piano music - always vibrant and ejaculatory - should not overshadow the TENOR's delivery.

rev.

I

♩ = 156, as before

TENOR
whispering conspiratorially

Go now. Go back to your own people;

[Go now] *[back to your own people]*

improvise, as before

TENOR
and when I say "your own people",
[your own people] I mean your white master and his family ...

repeat as often as necessary, more fragmented with each repetition

softer with each repetition

slight pause

VI: SINFONIA

J

Brisk: ♩ = 144

Viola

'Cello
mf, ad lib. ~ scratchy, like early viols, with very little vibrato

Vla

Vc

VII. ARIA II - The Arousal

VII. ARIA II - The Arousal

TENOR

I am the de-li-ve-er

E. PNO.

quasi ♩ = 144
transposed m3+

ff subito dynamic, ebullient

free time

continue stop!

* gauge length of pause by Tenor's breathing

TENOR

Your eye has not seen me be-fore

E. CLAR. transposed

free time

E. PNO.

stop!

* gauge length of pause by Tenor's breathing

V. ARIA III: INVOCATION

of Bishop Morris Brown

Through another entrance,
the TENOR strides onto the stage.
He is now the Rev. Morris (Moses)
Brown, Bishop of the A.M.E.
Church in Charleston. Raging
and fulminating, he takes his
black congregation through Isaiah XIII

A

4" 1 5-6" 2 6-8" 3 4" 4 12-15" 5

CLARINET (Transposed)

VIOLA

CELLO

PREPARED ORGAN
pitcher sustained by pencils in keys
silent

PIANO
forearm clusters! ~ allow to die naturally
Ped *fff* *pos.* sustain throughout, by means of sandbags, etc.

TENOR
through loud-hailer,
of altered acoustic
[e.g. church, very reverberant]

Howl *ye!* *He, he, he, he, he* *HOWL* *ye,* *HOW* *(how)* *ye!!!*

improvising

slow gliss.

mf *fff* *pos.*

gliss. e. trem *sempre*

trém. harm *sol. port.*

fff *ad lib.*

in random order gradually remove pitches of chord "A", leaving.

** add TREMULANT to creat "HAMMOND"-sound*

** CLAR. VLA VO continue, ad lib, through the Bishop's entrance, enhancing but not obscuring, the howling*

VII: ARIA IV ~ APOLOGIA

Quasi recitativo:
free & naturally paced

for tenor and piano alone

Musing [≈ 66]

play as free accel. $\leftarrow$ ca 5" $\rightarrow$

held back in time 3:2

Misurato: ≈ 72

[see] Free-dom ain't some-thin' like a gift I can give 'em

[RH]

days in the sun.

ff2, resolutely

c. Sim.

Tenor

Piano

mf So hard to teach men to un-der-stand — too hard to make 'em see

f An' they can lay all their

f So hard to teach 'em that — so ea-sy to

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

THE SENTENCE

ENSEMBLE VOICE
as Court
Sergeant-at-Arms

ORGAN

Pray rise, all ye here present. The Presiding Magistrate, the Honorable Justice Lionel H. Kennedy, will now pass sentence on the accused.

mf

start
TAPE

A During the Judge's pronouncement, The ~~TENOR~~ (as Denmark Vesey) stands proud and erect, impassive and almost oblivious to the meaning of the words.

TENOR, pre-recorded as The Presiding Magistrate

in slow, deliberate phrases, elegant but damning, self-righteous and superficially fair but barely concealing the loathing

Denmark Vesey: This Court, on mature consideration, pronounces you guilty of treason

VIOLA

separate bows, much "hair" sound
f, gruffly
mf
f
2 sim.
repeat freely
stop!

CELLO

in own tempo
play on speech cues
pizz
fz
f

like VIOLA, separate bows with much "hair" sound

144
100

PRERECORDED VOICE

After the most patient deliberation, the Court was not only satisfied of your guilt, but that you were the author, and original instigator of this diabolical [plot.]

VIOLA arco

f, gluffly

CELLO

repeating frily

f, subito

repeat

arco

mf

ff