


**EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL**

TEXTS

CHINEKE! ORCHESTRA & WILLIAM EDDINS

woman.life.song

—

17 Aug 6pm

EDINBURGH ACADEMY JUNIOR SCHOOL

The performance lasts approx. 1hr 10mins with no interval.

Supported by

Susie Thomson

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Judith Weir (b 1954)

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1a On Youth

The stride of young legs and the stretch of limber arms were my wealth. My clear and powerful eyesight and my acute hearing were my treasures. I confess that the coins in my purse were scarce or altogether not there, and others may have thought me poor, but when my old grandmother threw a clump of raw peanuts on the floor of the hot oven, and as the air became perfumed with the friendly aroma of roasting nuts and my uncle, sitting happily in the dark corner, began to hum the old songs of the spirit: the aroma of the nuts, the sound – the heavy silk sound of the ancient spirituals, a glass of cold milk in my hand, my young body – obedient to my will – made me rich beyond measure and my heart was filled with gladness.

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1b Breasts!! Song of the Innocent Wild-Child

I have been waiting,
and I have been waiting,
and all over the world,
are millions, just like me...
We are all waiting –
just waiting and waiting,
for the most important thing...
Breasts!!

[Oh, Breasts!!]
Oh when shall I receive my breasts?
Will they be like
the tiny hearts of birds beating?
Or, sonorous,
even ponderous,

like majestic bells
swaying and
ringing across the land?
Oh, Breasts!!
They will be so beautiful...
Do you suppose,
even though mine do not yet show,
that they are all ready,
and just waiting,
deep inside of me?
And if I squeeze my waist, like this,
or if I tense my wrists together,
will they
— just —
— pop —
— out??!! —
visible at last?

Oh, Breasts!!
you are what I dream about — yet, wait...
Does a beloved ocean have breasts... ?
Does an ocean even need them?
No, an ocean has its crests, and every current needed for dreaming.
Does a butterfly have breasts?
No, but still everyone thrills
to the sunlight through her wings.

Oh, Breasts!!
If I had breasts I would wear them
ever so smartly,
I would use them to proudly point with,
or flash them in disdain, or lift them up in joy —
but I would never flaunt them,
nor stuff them,
and especially, never fluff them...
except on special ceremonial occasions...
when I would wear ruffles [cut]
'down to here',
every chance I got!

Oh, Breasts!!
the testers of my patience
Everyone has them, but me...
Chines, Zulus and Haitians
Hawaiians, Aleuts and Transylvanians,
Balinese, Russians and Romanians...
Everyone, but me...

Oh, Breasts!!
In fairytales, they say
giantesses have breasts so long
they can throw them over their shoulders.
Will mine be like that?
Will they be like two young candles glowing
in every dark and gloaming?
or like sweet and tasty [dark] cherries swelling from the branches,
or maybe they'll be cone-shaped like shy little tulips,
or maybe they'll be mellow like ripe and dusky melons,
or maybe they'll be 'this big' and take up all the room —
in any room I'm in.
Will having breasts change my voice?
Will breasts make me taller?
When will I receive them?
for with breasts, I am certain that,
— I will rule the world! —

Come! O Lady of my body,
for I am blessed amongst women —
untie the ribbons of my body,
so it can swell in the way it is meant to...
Oh, Moulder of Breasts,
Untier of Ribbons,
Singer to Flowers Unfolding,
please, please, come to me soon?
Breasts!
Tempestuous,
Breasts!!
Holy Mothers of every living creature,
holy with desire,

holy and on fire!
[Holy breasts!]
Breasts-to-be!
Be alive!
Now!!
MMM – mmm – mmm.

© **Clarissa Pinkola Estés**

1c Edge

He was a boy – just a boy –
and I was a very young girl.
In blazing light and shadows trimmed in gold
we took the risk of love
the grist of love
the dreamy, steamy mist of love.
For he was a boy – just a boy –
and I was a very young girl
racing to the edge of love
the bed of love
the love-me-til-I'm-dead of love.
He was a boy – just a boy –
and I was a very young girl.

We were new to time
and dreams were real.
We could play out the line
[Get] to the edge of life
the bed of life
the love-me-til-I'm-dead of life.
For he was a boy – just a boy –
and I was a very young girl.

© **Toni Morrison**

2 Eve Remembering

I tore from a limb fruit that had lost its green.
My hands were warmed by the heat of an apple fire red and humming insight
I devoured sweet power to the core.
How can I say what it was like?
The taste! The taste undid my eyes
And led me from gardens planted for a child
To wildernesses deeper than any master's call.

Now these cool hands guide what they once caressed;
Lips savor what they have kissed.
My eyes now pool their light
Better the summit to see;
Better the summit to see.

I would do it all over again:
Be the harbor and set the sail,
Loose the breeze and harness the gale,
Cherish the harvest of what I have been,
Better the summit to scale.
Better the summit to be.

© **Toni Morrison**

3a (Stave 1) The Mothership: When a Good Mother Sails from This World

Sanctu, Sanctu, Sanctu.

Down at the shores,
the long lines are forming,
the old ones patiently waiting
for the journey over water
back to their 'truest home'.

My mother is my heart.
My mantra for years has been,
'Don't die, don't die, my Dearie,
my good mother'.
But now I must bow to your angels,
and say to you,
'Lean on me'.

Lean
on
me.

I will row us past the ripping tides,
I am strong and younger than you.
I will take you to that far horizon line,
beyond which,
I cannot go.

Ohhhh... Ohhhh

Lean
on
me.
Lean
on
me —
till the last
moment,
[my love.]
'Don't cry,
don't cry',
says someone,
not myself.
'Do not be afraid.
Am I not here
beside you?
Do not fear;
you are under my protection.'
Whose voice is this?

Whose voice is speaking?
Is it myself? or my mother?
or our dearest Madre Maria,
La Virgin de Guadalupe?
She Who Holds Me, holds my mother,
holds me as I hold you,
my smaller, and smaller mother...
you take on more and more the shades of water,
your soul sparkling against the night sky.

Come, let me hold you
and birth you
through this storm.
[You, who brought me through the door of your body.
Now, I am bringing you through the door of my spirit,]
and I will —
see you —
through...
I will see you through...
to the new morning, I say —
to my beloved Big Momma, [I say —]
to mi madre pequeña, [I say —]
to the mother of my bones, [I say —]
to the mother's magic touch
making all colors jump, [I say —]
to the Ma of nightlight rooms, I say —
I will see you through,
I will see you through,
to the new morning, I say —

to the mother of the lightning sky, [I say —]
to the mother of the serpent strike, [I say —]
to the mother of remedios,
mi verba buena mother, [I say —]
to the mother who speaks with the spirits, I say —
I will see you through
to the new morning, [I say —]

to the omah of the blood red roses, [I say –]
to mother midnight nurse, [I say –]
to the mother of the body's pleasure, [I say –]
to the most beloved chocolate-grand-ma'am, I say –
I will see you through
[to the new morning, I say –]

to the frugal mother, turning her socks over
so the mended holes will not show, [I say –]
to the mother, the lover,
who made thunder under the sheets, [I say –]
to the Madonna of the grottos
of the ever-full sink and stove, I say –
[I will see you through
to the new morning, I say –]

to the kitchen-table terrorists, [I say –]
to the mothers of las velas santas, the candles lit
for the hopes of loved ones, [I say –]
[to the mother] who loved, in spite of so much, I say –
I will see you through...

[to the dragon-keeper of the family photographs, I say –]
to the mother of harsh lessons, [I say –]
to the sacred heart ringed with thorns, [I say –]
to my mother's heart broken open forever, [I say –]

I will see you through
[to the new morning, I say –]

to the little mouse mother
whose ears hear every secret thing, [I say –]
to the
most infinitely
tender
little old face,
with the eyes of a child, I say –

I will see you through...
and I will see you
in the new morning, [I say –]
... just...
... one...
... tiny...
... bedazzle...
... from now...

© Clarissa Pinkola Estés

3b (Stave 2) The Mothership, Part 2

When I say, 'My mother has died',
I mean my 'most beloved'.
Leave me to myself now,
for I am a ship who's
lost her riggings;
suddenly
come unmoored.

Oh, my mother has died;

My mother has died;

She has earned her resting now,
waiting only, and proudly so,
for her sails
to be taken down.

I, the daughter,
mend my mother's sails now;
I seek her
worn and broken
threads of light,
reweaving her dazzling linen...

The sails of the mother
are [to be] fitted to the daughtership;
raised up on the mainsail,
and the final touch —
the red ragged flag — hers —
will be flying at the topmast of my ship.
I'll be let down into the waters,
I, the daughter, will glide again,
but this time, under the sails
inherited from my mother,
and all the mothers
before her.

Ay, Mother, let me tell you
my treasured dearie-dear,
one [last] thing I have learned
from your spirit passing through me,
as sparkling shadow passes darkening shadow,
on this open night-sea journey:
I am learning to navigate
by the mysterious farthest stars —
the ones that the great wake of your passing
has revealed to me...
... for the very first time...

I will see you in the morning, I say
my sweet little mother, my most excellent omah,
'I will see you in the new morning', I say,
to someone who is weeping...
Muchisimas gracias, mi mamá;
Be with The Aeternal Mothers now,
I will see you in the morning, I say,
... just...
... one...
... tiny...
... bedazzle...
... from...
... now...

Sanctu, Sanctu, Sanctu.

4 On Maturity

The years are broken across my body like thin crystal. Their shards reach my knees in pretty, shiny piles and I know each one with a dainty intimacy. Some were friends, and I pick them up and hold them to my ear like seashells, and they whisper to me of great love, of promises, of debts paid. Some were hateful and they speak without the intent to conceal, of the blows of death, the loss of love, friendship betrayed and golden youth ravaged by the weight of time. There appears an image of wisdom. Surely I have learned [how] to live with some grace, some compassion, some mercy and some style. Will these lessons serve me as I face the next adventure?

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