

CLARINET IN B-FLAT

Jessica Rudman

A Curious Incident with the Queen

for SATB Chorus and Chamber Ensemble

with Text by Edith Nesbit

2017

ca. 10:00

Program Notes

A Curious Incident with the Queen is based Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet*. Written in 1906, the novel concludes a trilogy chronicling the fantastical adventures of four siblings while their parents are abroad. In this book, the children find one half of a two-part amulet that promises to give them their greatest desire—the safe return of their parents—and they undertake a quest to find the second half. The amulet has the power to transport people through time, so the children travel to times and places where the second half of the amulet might be found. In the company of a wish-granting creature called the Psammead, the siblings visit a utopian future as well as past civilizations including Egypt, Atlantis, and Babylon. While in Babylon, one of the children reveals to its Queen that the Psammead grants wishes. She wishes to see the children's country and is transported to London circa 1900, where the children show her the city.

This composition dramatizes a small scene from that tour, where the Queen sees the poor people of the city and mistakes them for slaves. The children naively respond that they are not slaves because they have “votes.” The interaction, while brief and of no particular consequence in the plot of the story, struck me as particularly relevant to contemporary circumstances, which I was commissioned by The Astoria Choir in 2016.

I selected the text shortly after the American presidential election, seeing in Nesbit's words an expression of both the disparity between the highest and lowest echelons of our economy and also the feeling of political powerlessness many people felt as a result of the election. To me, what seems like a fanciful, even humorous scene in fact brings up a number of serious issues. It calls to attention the question of how or even whether a society that condones economic oppression is any better than one that practices slavery. It also asks us to consider what it means to have a voice in government if it does not seem to make a difference in one's quality of life. These profound undercurrents are what stayed with me after reading Nesbit's story, and I hope that her words will make a similarly lasting impression on audiences hearing this piece.

Composer Contact Information

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Clarinet in B \flat

Commissioned by The Astoria Choir, Adam Eggleston, Director

A Curious Incident with the Queen

Edith Nesbit (1858-1924)

Jessica Rudman (b. 1982)

Majestic ♩=84

2

1-2

mf

5

mp *pp*

9

pp *mf*

12

f

rit.

15

mf *mp* *p* *n*

19 Energetic ♩=84

p *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

27

23-26 *p* *pp*

rit.

30 *mp* *mf* *f*

36 With Quick Changes of Mood $\text{♩}=60$ *molto accel.*

35 36-37 39-41

42 Suddenly Broad $\text{♩}=72$ *molto accel.*

42-45 Altos

Of course they're work- ing. That's what

49 Suddenly Gentle $\text{♩}=60$

48 *p* *ff* 50-53

Altos

54 *mp*

Why don't their mas- ters see that they're bet- ter

poco rit. **61** *Freely* $\text{♩}=48$

59 *ff* 62-67

Clarinet in B \flat

68 Moving Forward $\text{♩} = 60$

6 Altos

69-74 e - ven_____ if you un - der stand it,

78

76 *mp* *mf* *f*

molto accel.

80 *n* 83-84

85 Suddenly Broad $\text{♩} = 72$

94 accel.

89-90 91-92 94-96

Altos & Tenors

$\text{♩} = 90$

97 Can it make things,_____ buy things,_____ fix things?

rit.

100 *p* *ff*

104 Moving Forward $\text{♩}=72$

112

7

104-110

Sopranos

Well, _____ I

accel.

113 wish that all these slaves may

p

117

mf *pp* *mp* *f*

5 6

120 $\text{♩}=84$

3 3 3

pp *p*

125

123

mp

126

pp *p*

5 6

128

f *p* *n*

7 6 5

131 poco accel.

130 2 131-132 *pp* *p*

135 *mp* *mf* *ppp* 5 6 *f*

137 a tempo (♩=84) molto accel.

6 138-143 *pp*

146 Suddenly Broad ♩=84

145 *f*

148 5 6 *ppp* *ff* 2 150-151

153

152 *p*

156 *fp* *f* 3 3

Clarinet in B \flat

161

159 *ff*

162 *mf* rit.

168 $\text{♩} = 60$

165 *mp* *n* 168-171

accel.

172 *f*

175 *ffp*

$\text{♩} = 84$ molto rit. al fine

177 *ff*