



NOTES

THE LAW OF THE TONGUE: Movement II

Section 1 - bars 1-2

Depiction

A symbol of harpooning and lancing

Analysis

Harpooning - spearing to incapacitate - and lancing - the death blow itself - are the culmination of whale hunting. The violence of this act is evoked here through:

- a) dissonant harmonies characterised by double stops and two consecutive semitones (0,1,2)
- b) strong syncopation reinforced by a sforzando
- c) accents on almost all notes, amplified by snap pizzicato and glissando
- d) extreme dynamic fluctuation: fortissimo, sforzando, suddenly piano, crescendo to as loud as possible

Embedded in this gesture are chords made up of piled fifths. This type of harmony, known as quintal, characterises much of the movement

Section 2 - bars 3-18

Depiction

The baleen whales sing in the ocean's depth, as the orcas call to each other, circling... Eventually the baleens realise their danger.

Analysis

Underpinning this section is a *liberamente* texture representing the open ocean. Notated with boxes and wavy lines, it is a type of controlled aleatoricism, where the second violin and viola repeat the given material at their own tempo. A single quintal harmony (C,G,D) evokes the ocean's vastness, fluctuating musical detail its unpredictability. The latter includes changes

between very short and longer rhythmic values, single- and double-stops, block and arpeggiated chords, and normal bow position/movement and *sul tasto*/tremolo.

Against this backdrop, the cello and first violin have an ongoing and evolving dialogue. Both parts are transcriptions of whale song, the cello part baleen, the first violin orca. To recreate these songs faithfully, grace notes, quarter tones, *con sordino*, *sul tasto*, *jeté*, *glissando* and dynamic swells are used.

The baleen's sense of danger is introduced in bar 10 with a wail-like gesture. Where before the cello line has occasional gestures with small intervals in the middle register, high register, larger intervals and greater frequency dominate from this point on.

Section 3 - bars 19-68

Depiction

The orcas harass a baleen into the bay, mirroring its movements to keep it moving in the right direction. Finally it's trapped, and an orca alerts the whalers by whacking the water with its tail.

Analysis

To represent the chase, certain elements from Section 2 are developed here. Firstly, the 'head' of the baleen song (cello, bars 4-5) is this section's main motif. It is introduced by the viola in b.19 as D3, F#3, G3 in even quavers, and immediately imitated in transposed retrograde by the second violin. As the entries are so close together, the two parts form a type of micro-polyphony, as well as a rising hexachordal (six-note) contour. Related counterpoint is found at bb.24-27 (three-part), 29-31 (two-part), 36-38 (three-part) and 47-59 (two-part + melody).

In b.32, the rising, micro-polyphonic idea is extended in the following ways:

- a) rhythmic values are diminished from quavers to semiquavers
- b) entries are now a semiquaver apart
- c) the contour is inverted and extended to nine notes

The three contrapuntal parts evoke the imitative movement of a school of fish; the fourth part in the cello, a reworked fragment from the orca song, further thickens the texture. Similar passages are found at bb.34, 38, 40, 42-43 and 45.

Another important element of Section 2, quintal harmony, makes an appearance here, specifically in bb.23, 28, 33, 35-36, 39 and 41-46. While previously only perfect 5ths were used, chords are now perfect and augmented 5ths sometimes inverted and always dissonantly superimposed. This, along with the sudden appearance of accents, fortissimo dynamic, counter-metric duple feel and double-stop tutti, makes for a nasty surprise.

The rising/falling contours inspired by the baleen song fragment are further developed in bb.47-59, where they become a fully fledged melody in the violins. To achieve this new status, there is considerable fluctuation of interval, range, contour and rhythmic value. What's more, the chromatic idea opening the movement – two consecutive semitones (0,1,2) – is incorporated, heightening the melody's urgency.

(0,1,2) then overlays the section's climax in bb.60-68 as a rapid, high-register *liberamente* texture in the violins. Underneath is a dissonant quintal chord sounded nine times with great force, using accents, triple- and quadruple-stops, knocks on wood, *col legno battuto* and the loudest possible dynamic. The former could be understood as the baleen's fear, the latter as the orcas' triumph.

Section 4 - bars 69-135

Depiction

The whalers launch their boats. They harangue the baleen, eventually harpooning and lancing it.

Analysis

This section is an invented folk song, reflecting the deadly camaraderie of the whalers. In keeping with certain British hornpipes – dances associated with sailors – it has a lively tempo, (mostly) simple duple time and driving rhythm. The hunt's dark overtones are incorporated through:

- a) The mixed minor-y mode on C (C, D, F, G, Ab, A, Bb).
- b) A frequent drone on G and D, creating with the C mode a persistent unsettled feel
- c) Extensive role-exchange, where the melody is passed from instrument to instrument
- d) A dissonant refrain of accented semiquavers based on (0,1,2)
- e) Melodic diminution
- f) Phrasal reordering
- g) Counterpoint between the folk melody and the baleen wail from Section 2 (eg.10-11) in bb.102-120
- h) The harpoon gesture in b.120
- i) Counterpoint between the refrain and baleen wail in bb.121-134
- j) The lance gesture bb.135-6

The table below elucidates melodic diminution and phrasal reordering of the folk melody before the baleen wail enters. Notice its decreasing length over time and the changing sequence of phrases a, b, c, d.

Bars	Iteration	Length (crotchets)	Structure
71-77	1	13	abcd abd
78-82	2	11	abcd bd
83-86	3	9	cbd ad
87-90	4	7	abcd
90-93	5	7	abbd
94-95	6	4	cd
96-97	7	4	bb
98-99	8	4	ad
100-101	9	5	ad

Section 5 - bars 136-141

Depiction

The baleen gives one last mighty bellow and expires.

Analysis

This is an augmented tutti version of the baleen wail from Section 2, followed by a *liberamente* texture in a middle register based on (0,1,2). The gradual decrease in tempo and volume represents life seeping away...

Section 6 - bars 142-151

Depiction

A memory of the baleens singing happily into the ocean.

Analysis

This a shortened version of Section 2, which maintains the *liberamente* texture (open ocean) and cello part (baleen song), but omits the first violin (orca song).

Section 7 - bars 152-53

Depiction

The symbol of harpooning and lancing again, reflecting the cyclical nature of the hunt.

Analysis

See Section 1.

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