

Peter Hatch

Asks Alice

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(1998)

A micro-opera in two acts to be repeated 5 to 8 times.

for mezzo-soprano, two sopranos and piano

by

Peter Hatch

(Text attributed to Gertrude Stein)

Duration: circa 2 minutes x 5-8 repetitions = 10-16 minutes

Programme Note:

'Asks Alice' is a very short 'micro-opera' in two acts. The text comes from the words last spoken by Gertrude Stein. At the time of her death she turned to her companion of many years, Alice Toklas, and asked 'Alice, what is the answer?' After a pause to this unanswerable question she then asked the even more poignant "In that case, what is the question?"

The poignancy of this moment is underlined by the instructions to the performers to repeat the complete opera five to eight times in a row exactly and without a pause in between. Thus, like a recurring dream or nightmare and in the tradition of Gertrude Stein's love of repetition, her death scene is played again and again.

Asks Alice

A Micro-Opera in Two Acts to be Repeated Five to Eight Times

Peter Hatch (1998)

(text attributed to Gertrude Stein)

$\text{♩} = 180$

2 Sopranos
(Angels of Death)

Mezzo-soprano
(Gertrude Stein)

Piano

mp *f*

(Entering frantically) *f* A-----

---lice A-----

10

---lice

(screaming)
A - lice!

13 (Entering side by side quickly)*

mf

What-----

A-----lice

What-----

16 (Moving to centre stage)

A-----lice

What-----

19 (Remain at centre stage, forming a 'gate')

What

A-----lice

What-----

(continuous glissando)

What-----

*From their entry to measure 33, the singers should move quickly and cover as much of the stage area in their movements as possible - Gertrude frantically, the Angels cool but deliberate.

22

What is A-----lice
is the----- an-----

f *p* *rit.*

25

What is the an-----swer
swer-----

f *p* *rit.*

28

31

(Moving quickly to centre stage only to be blocked by the 'gate' of two Angels)

(low chromatic cluster)

rit.

34 $\text{♩} = 90$

4

(Frozen)

4

(Frozen)

4

p

(hold cluster until end) *

38

42

(Turning to Audience)

mp In that case

p In that

In that case

46

(Slowing exiting as a group)

case

What

(Slowing exiting as a group)

What is

What is

What is the question

the ques- tion

Musical score for measures 50-53. The system includes a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment, and a grand staff. The lyrics are "What is the question" and "the ques- tion". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand.

rit.....

Musical score for measures 54-57. The system includes a vocal line, a piano accompaniment, and a grand staff. The lyrics are "rit.....". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand. A dynamic marking of *f* is present at the start of measure 57.

Attacca