

I long for the belly of Africa, I long for the stampede in the Elephant Grass – the native dances – the throb of hearts burnt by the sons of the Blue Mountains. (David Fanshawe, A Story of Travel and Music, Chapter VII)

David Fanshawe (1942-2010), composer, missionary, ethnomusicologist, adventurer, filmmaker, and journalist, was a native of Devon, UK, and educated at St. George's Choir School, Windsor Castle, and the Royal College of Music. His ambition to record indigenous folk music began in the Middle East in 1966 and was intensified on subsequent journeys through North and East Africa (1969-75), resulting in his unique and highly original blend of Music and Travel. In Africa he succeeded in documenting hundreds of tribes, achieving such close rapport with local communities that they gave him special permission to record their performances. On completing his studies in 1969, Fanshawe travelled up the Nile from the Mediterranean Sea, visiting Egypt, Sudan, Uganda and Kenya over a three-year period before finally reaching Lake Victoria. Taking with him a small stereo tape recorder, he would persuade local musicians to play for him. Returning to the UK in 1972 with several hundreds of hours of recordings made during his travels, Fanshawe used the material as the inspiring foundation for *African Sanctus (Holy Africa)*, which is offered as a devotional work which celebrates the unity of God's people through prayerful song and praise, in the context of the traditional Latin Mass.

Working loosely in the *acousmatic* tradition (used extensively by certain twentieth-century composers), a performance of this piece features choral singers and instrumentalists (playing both acoustic and electronic instruments) alongside the sound of the composer's original recordings, creating a unity of live and recorded performances, a marriage of religious custom and tradition, and a wholeness of energetic praise. While Fanshawe's music represents a significant departure from that of the English Cathedral tradition in which he was raised, the composer's very pedigree would suggest that his ideas and imagination came from these roots, and were inflamed by the Holy Spirit when they came into contact with the diversity and wonder of the wider world around us, and of which we are so essentially a part.

Each movement combines tradition, sentiment, experience, and spirituality in a way that is at once exuberant and intimate. The opening movement, *Sanctus*, forms a praiseful introit to the Mass, combining the sounds and rhythms of Uganda's *B'wala Dance* with the composer's energetic portrayal of Isaiah's vision (Isaiah VI). This movement is heard three times in the course of the work, the second time with an extended setting of the *Benedictus* attached, and as an epilogue, with a *Gloria* to form the work's conclusion.

The *Kyrie eleison* is also heard more than once. In the first instance, it appears in its "liturgical" place, as the "call to prayer" at the start of the Mass. It is performed in conjunction with the taped Islamic "call to prayer", recorded in Egypt in 1969. It is a brilliant evocation, joining two of the world's great faiths into a single statement of devotion. At the conclusion of the *Agnus Dei*, it is sounded again, this time in a slightly altered manner, serving as a hymn of reconciliation between God and his people, and between people themselves. The sounding of Sudanese war drums, representing the suffering, tribal differences, and injustice found in our world, gives way to a musical meeting of Christ and Mohammed, in one of the signature moments of the work.

This relationship, through music, is developed extensively in the *Gloria*. Both Latin and Arabic are juxtaposed extensively in the *Quoniam* section, where the operatic soprano makes her first entrance. The taped chanting of young men at an Islamic prayer school is heard while the choir sings the concluding words of the movement, *tu solus Sanctus: tu solus Dominus* (*You only are holy; you only are the Lord*), in reference to the divinity of Christ.

The *Credo* is an astonishing soundscape of epic proportions. Fanshawe's riveting choral writing is remarkable on its own, but we hear as well the sounds of Sudanese courtship dances, bravery dances, chanting in a trance by moonlight, songs about Christ, the sounds of frogs at night, the Ugandan *Dingi Dingi* dance, rains, thunder, and the menacing "heavy metal" sounds of the *Crucifixus*. There really are no words to describe the experience, other than to quote the composer, who whilst riding at night on a "somewhat dangerous journey", became "very elated in the wilderness, (and) confronted God the Creator, became very moved, and was inspired".

Love Song is an instrumental (piano) interlude within the *Credo* itself, and forms a duet between pianist and singer (who is on the tape). In the composer's words, this movement (concluding with the sounding of bells in the desert of East Sudan in 1969 – rung to signify the birth of a child) "heralds the birth of Christianity to Africa".

Also found in the *Credo* is a beautiful trio for women's voices, set to the text of *Et in Spiritum Sanctum* (*I believe in the Holy Spirit*), which is dedicated especially to two missionary nuns who befriended the composer while on his travels.

One of the most famous movements of the work is the *Lord's Prayer*, which was written as a "song of soothing", occurring as it does at the conclusion of a taped Lamentation in which the composer took part. A fisherman had died under unfortunate circumstances, and was being grieved by his wife and his mother. As Fanshawe sat with them, "the words of our Lord came to my mind", and as many east Africans speak English, he said, the prayer was musically set in English, rather than in Latin.

Our own journey with this work, whether as performers as listeners, mirrors in many ways the composer's own experiences as he travelled in Africa now nearly fifty years ago. In a post-script to his biography, Ursula Vaughan Williams writes, "His adventures on that journey were funny, sad, strange, full of fortunate coincidences and maddening bad luck, which, by the time the next day arrived, had turned out to be good luck, after all. The trophies of this journey have not robbed the people from whom they are won, but enriched them, and show us wider landscapes than those we had known before."

I have carved a Cross upon Africa. That is what I have been doing. Cairo represents the Crown of Thorns, West and East Sudan represent the spread of cultivation and peace. The Lake represents the source of life. It is the Earth giving water to the roots of a huge tree, two thousand miles long. This tree bears much music, and I have tried to find it. May God give us the Spirit for peace at this time.

First the Land, and then the Sea...forever and forever and forever.