

Terms of Vener


for lyric baritone, marimba, and almglocken


Notes to the singer


- From rehearsal letter C to G, each collective noun pair (“murder of crows,” “exaltation of larks”) should have its own distinct character, which should be maintained for each successive repetition of that phrase. For instance, “murmuration of starlings” is marked *dolce*, and should be sung *dolce* each time that phrase recurs.
- Beginning at rehearsal letter G, the vocal part alternates with the spoken percussion part, overlapping in some areas. The singer should take care not to overpower the spoken part, adjusting his dynamics if necessary. Held notes are indicated with a horizontal bar, which terminates at a dashed vertical line. The singer should sustain until the word separated by the dashed vertical line. For instance, at the top of page 12, “richness” should be held until the percussion completes the word “lease.” If the length of a note is not indicated, it is at the discretion of the performer.


Notes to the percussionist

- The piece requires at least a 4 1/2 octave marimba and three low almglocken. The almglocken should be placed on a foam pad.

- I have indicated three pitches for the almglocken:  However, the specific pitches are unimportant, as long as there are discernable high, mid, and low tones. If almglocken are unavailable, you may substitute large cowbells or other hollow metallic instruments. The tone should be a muted “bonk” rather than a “clank” when struck with marimba mallets.

 indicates a marimba note struck on the node of the bar, producing a dull thud rather than a resonant tone.

 indicates a note struck “dead stick,” with the mallet resting firmly on the instrument after it has been struck, damping the tone.

 indicates that the player should scrape the resonators with the stick of the marimba mallet in an upward glissando.

- The spoken text should be performed in a full, strong stage voice. Amplification should only be used as a last resort if the text cannot be heard above the music.

Program note

Collective nouns, the varied and whimsical names given to groups of animals (and occasionally people) are a unique feature of the English language, and they have a venerable lineage. They arose as a way to distinguish aristocrats who were well-versed in the language of hunting. (Only an educated hunter would know that a group of geese is called a *gaggle* when it is swimming, but a *skein* in flight.) Some of these terms remain exotic to us—a covey of quail, a sounder of boar—but others have become so commonplace that we seldom consider how odd their origins. A pride of lions, a school of fish, a litter of puppies. Pride? School? Litter!? Only when these terms are de-coupled from their partners do we see how strange and poetic our language is, and to what lengths we will go to describe the world around us.