

MUSIC ACCORD

AUGUSTA READ THOMAS *Purple Syllables* (2004)

Reviews

Augusta Read Thomas, a long-time Tanglewood resident composer (and past TMC composer-in-residence) was present for the performance of her commissioned work for Chanticleer, "Purple Syllables" (Emily Dickinson Settings). Each of the five song texts was selected by the composer, based on poems written about birds. At one point, the singers whistled, all on different notes, and it really did sound like it was 5:30 a.m. in the Berkshires! The composer has a keen ear for mildly dissonant harmonies, and of course Chanticleer's perfect intonation made for an effective and fully realized performance of what must be a challenging work.
Steven Danker - The Advocate, 14 Jul 2005

They also sang four Emily Dickinson songs from "Purple Syllables" by Augusta Read Thomas, recently premiered in New York. All of the poems are about birds, as befits a work commissioned by Chanticleer. As harmonically and rhythmically difficult as Messiaen's tributes to birdsong - they were made to seem both simple and emotionally satisfying at first hearing.
Christopher Hyde - Maine Sunday Telegram, 30 April 2005

"Purple Syllables," a world premiere collection of Emily Dickinson settings by Augusta Read Thomas, honored Chanticleer's avian ancestry with poems evoking the "lonesome glee" of nature's songsters. The ensemble responded with purrs and trills, glassy whistles and shimmering harmonies, ideally responsive to Thomas and Dickinson's ingratiating but severe muse.
Marion Lignana Rosenberg - Newsday, 25 Apr 2005

Centerpiece of the second half was "Purple Syllables," a group of Emily Dickinson poems set by American composer Augusta Read Thomas and written for Chanticleer. Besides matching the night's theme of women, the work features further symbolic ties: All the poems concern birds, an idea inspired by the group's namesake, a rooster in one of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales." The settings are mostly playful and lyrical, and the group's clarity and ensemble unity again served them well.
Thomas Consolo - Cincinnati Post, 8 Nov 2004

Selections from Augusta Read Thomas' "Purple Syllables" anchored the second half of the concert. These setting of Emily Dickinson poems about birds (the piece was written for Chanticleer, whose name comes from a singing rooster in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales") were subtle, colorful, and at times, playful. Chanticleer navigated the difficult pieces with expression and, as always, a beautiful sound.
Steve Hicken - Tallahassee Democrat, 14 Nov 2004

Purple Syllables

Composer: Augusta Read Thomas

Instrumentation: vocal ensemble

Premiering Artists: Chanticleer

Duration: 15'

Publisher Contact

Schirmer

<http://www.schirmer.com/Default.aspx?tabid=2539>

Artist Contact

Chanticleer official site

<http://www.chanticleer.org/>

About Music Accord

Comprised of top classical music presenting organizations throughout the United States, Music Accord is a consortium that commission new works in the chamber music, instrumental recital and song genres. The Consortiums goal is to create a significant number of new works and to ensure presentation of these works in venues throughout this country and, if the occasion arises, internationally. Music Accord awards commissions principally to performers who are US citizens or reside in the US and assists these performers in selecting composers who are United States citizens or who reside in the United States.

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