

Hums with Mother Earth



Suite for Violin and Piano

*Now Introducing
Mulberry Blues
Eve's Lullaby
...and then it dawned
A Lovely and Fearful Thing
Persimmon*

Becky Archibald

Hums with Mother Earth



Mother Earth - Tamara Adams

My first grade teacher gave me a wonderful lesson about creativity with a game she called “Squiggles.” Mrs. Kessler would walk around to each child’s desk and draw a curvy line on a blank piece of paper. Our job was to help the squiggle *become* something. To see what *wasn’t* there. To see its *potential*.

For this RSA project, my wish was to create

something new out of something old (inspired by Frankenstein) and to tell the Adam and Eve story in a new way. All I needed was a squiggle to get me started....

Eventually, my muse came. (That’s her name—“Eventually”—but I just call her Eve.) The idea was to take rhythms of ancient tunes and refashion them with new melodies and harmonies. Familiar songs that have been passed down through the ages, often with unknown origins.

Rather than question the crazy thought, I sat at the piano and started humming. Not melodies, just rhythms. Humming familiar old rhythms, and letting them carry me to new places. I let the rhythms guide my fingers. And whatever musical “squiggles” came out, I vowed to work with them, and to see their potential (whether lovely, or scary.)

Now Introducing



Genesis: Creation of Eve - Lorenzo Maitani

About: The characters and their respective musical themes – Violin (Adam) and Piano (Eve) – are introduced. These themes will be explored more in-depth in the

5th movement – “A Lovely and Fearful Thing.”

Writing Challenges: Deciding which of the many versions to use! My final draft makes it sound like the characters finish each other’s thoughts. Their musical ideas are incomplete until they meet.

Fun Fact: We strongly considered humming this movement instead of playing it on our instruments. Your welcome!

Rhythmic Source: “Did You Ever See a Lassie”

Mulberry Blues



Around the Mulberry Bush - Woodie Long

About: Could this movement be about toiling after the fall? About a vicious circle of birth, labor and death? Or about remembering the beauty of their favorite mulberry tree in Eden?

Writing Challenges: Of course, I had to use a “round” as a compositional device (i.e. dividing into groups and singing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” and starting at different times) but after the first draft, I decided it was sounding too tidy and predictable. So I cut it up, shuffled measures around and sewed it back together, leaving a few loose ends.

Rhythmic Source: “Here We Go ‘Round the Mulberry Bush”

Eve's Lullaby



Mother and Child - Gustav Klimt

About: Even at the end of a not-so-easy day, we still love our children.

Writing Challenges:

The first listening of this improvisation was scary. It was difficult to believe in it enough to find the sweetness within the dissonance. And creating the violin line required lots of bad humming before finding a good one!

Fun Fact: Brahms was actually inspired by an old Viennese melody that his friend Bertha used to sing to him. So Brahms wrote his lullaby for the birth of Bertha's new baby. (Maybe he should have called it "Bertha's Birth Song?")

Rhythmic Source: Brahms' Lullaby

...and then it dawned



About: On December 4, when I listened back to my improvisations (luckily, I had the tape recorder on, or none of this would have been born) this was the only one that spoke to me as being something worth working on. A few days later, I had my first “aha” moment.

Without trying, what I had written musically was matching up with the mood of the nursery rhyme. When the character fell down, the music descended. When the

sun came out, the music was expansive and light. I had never thought of the original song being about death and rebirth, but once this hit me, I knew I was onto something!

Rhythmic Source: “The Eensy Weensy Spider”

A Lovely and Fearful Thing



La Ghirlandata - Gabriel Rossetti

About: This piece continues where the first movement, “Now Introducing,” left off. What was once sweet and fairly innocent (both the piano and the violin themes) now takes on characteristics of sadness and discouragement.

Writing Challenges: I worried that the opening violin theme wasn’t right. So I wrote a counter-melody. Then wrote an accompaniment for that counter-melody. Then wrote a new melody to go with

that accompaniment. By then, the original melody had grown on me. Hardest part was to know what to omit.

Fun Fact: The title comes from a poem by Lord Byron, who used to pal around with Mary Shelley, author of Frankenstein.

Rhythmic Source: “Did You Ever See a Lassie?”

Persimmon

By Becky Archibald

It's curious – round, squat, firm,
topped with a built-in fig leaf.

It doesn't look tasty-
so what could it become?

A hellish lump of baked brown
overly-sweetened and spiced pudding?

Or if left in its natural state,
LOVE at first sight

When you open it up
and see the stars.

