

VESTIUNT SILVE

for soprano, flute/piccolo, two violas, and harp

PERFORMANCE NOTES

PREMIERE

Harrison began writing *Vestiunt Silve* on April 4, 1951 and completed the work July 4, 1994. The piece received its premiere on August 18, 1994, at the Dartington International Summer School and Festival at Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon, England.

Articulation.

Tenuto marks represent a “push” or stress, not an attack and not a lengthening of the note value. In the case of long notes tied to an eighth note, the eighth note is marked staccato if the same pitch is taken over by another instrument. Slurs without a terminal note in the harp indicate “LV” (*let vibrate* or *laissez vibrer*); a rest after these incomplete slurs does not imply a release; simply allow the sound to die away gradually.

*Vestiunt Silve*¹

Vestiunt silve tenera merorem
virgulta, suis onerata pomis;
canunt de celsis sedibus palumbes
carmina cunctis.

Hic turtur gemit, resonat hic turdus,
pangit hic priscos merula sonores;
passer nec tacet, arridens garritu
alta sub ulmo.

Hic leta canit philomela frondis,
longas effundit sibilum per auras
sollempne; milvus tremulaque voce
ethera pulsat.

Ad astra volat aquila; in auris
alauda canit, modulus resolvit,
de sursum vergit dissimili modo,
dum terram tangit.

Velox impellit rugitus hirundo,
clangit coturnix, graculus fringulit;
aves sic cuncte celebrant estivum
undique carmen.

[Nulla inter aves similis est api,
que talem tipum gerit castitatis
nisi que Christum baiulavit alvo
inviolata.]

Translation by Mary Kay Gamel (used by permission)

The forests are getting dressed. They cover
their gloom with soft buds, droop with their fruit.
From their sky-high perches, the ring-doves sing their songs
to all who listen.

A turtle-dove complains here, a thrush answers
while a blackbird composes its age-old sounds.
Under a tall elm a chattering sparrow
just can't keep quiet.

Among the leaves over there, a nightingale
happily pours out in long-lasting measure
its usual whistle. A kite beats the air
with its voice's pulse.

Up to the stars flies an eagle! And up there,
the lark is practicing scales to the breezes.
But the melody's different when it swoops back down
and touches the earth.

A fast-moving swallow drives forth its cries,
a quail is clucking, a crow caws:
that's how the birds welcome the summer—
everywhere, singing!

[But none of the birds resembles the bee,
who possesses a chastity only She matches,
that stainless One who in her womb
carried the Christ-child.]

¹Latin text as given in Karl Breul, ed., *The Cambridge Songs: A Goliard's Song Book of the XIth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1915; reprint New York: AMS Press, 1973), 63.

For Wilfrid Mellers in honor of his eightieth birthday

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(♩ = ca. 88)

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system includes the following parts:

- Voice: A vocal line with a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a melodic line.
- Flute & Piccolo: A melodic line starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Viola I: A melodic line starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Viola 2: A melodic line starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Harp: An accompaniment line starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

The second system (measures 5-8) includes:

- Fl. Picc.: A melodic line with a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Va. I: A melodic line with a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Va. 2: A melodic line with a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Harp: An accompaniment line with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

The third system (measures 9-12) includes:

- Fl. Picc.: A melodic line with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.
- Va. I: A melodic line with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.
- Va. 2: A melodic line with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.
- Harp: An accompaniment line with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.