

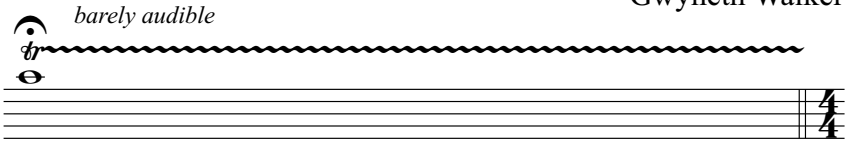
The Laughter of Women

Gwyneth Walker

Soprano speaks:



The laughter of women sets fire
to the Halls of Injustice
and the false evidence burns
to a beautiful white lightness



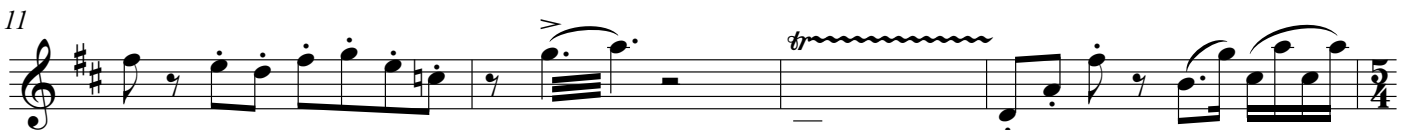
pp

With energy ♩ = 108



f joyfully

A



rit.

B slower

Soprano

3



ev - i - dence burns to a beau - ti - ful white

accel.

a tempo



p

f



rit.

p ————— *f*

C slower



p

p —————

Clarinet

accel. - - - - *a tempo*

31

35

39 **D**

43

46 **E**

49 (as if wiping off eyeglasses)

52

56 **F** *rit.* - - - - *slower*

59 *accel.* - - - - *a tempo*

63

67 *rit.* **G** slower

pp *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

70 *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Soprano 3

It runs a-cross wa-ter that di-vides, and

72 *rit.* *ff*

rec - on - ciles two un - friend - ly shores like flares that sig - nal the

75 **H** **Triumphantly** ♩ = 72 *f* *fp* *start slowly*

f *fp* *f* *fp* *f* *fp*

81 *accel.* ♩ = 72 *f*

f *f* *f*

84 *rit.*

f *f*

86 *f* *p* *f* **I** *twice as quickly* ♩ = 144

f *p* *f*

89

92

94 6 6 6 6 6 6

Interlude I – Tacet

Things

Soprano

Clarinet

mf

Sprightly ♩ = 144

mf

mf

What

5

A

hap - pened is we grew lone - - - ly, liv - ing a - mong the

p

9

things, lone - - - ly, so we gave the

p

mf

13

B

clock a face, the chair a back, the

p *mp* *p* *mf* *p*

mf *f*

Clarinet

17

ta - ble, four stout legs, which will

f *p*

21

nev - er suf - fer fa - - tigue.

key click

p *f* *p*

25

We fit - ted our shoes with tongues as smooth as our

p *f* *p*

29

own and hung tongues in - side bells so we could lis - ten to

mf *p* *mf* *p* *p*

34

their e - mo - tion - al lan - - - guage.

poco accel. - - - - -

39

D gracefully, slightly faster ♩ = 176

and be - - - cause we loved

mf

45

grace - - - - - ful pro - - - - - files

mf *p*

51

the pit - cher re - - - ceived a

E

mf *p*

57

lip, the bot - tle a long slen - - - der

mf *p*

63

neck. E - - - ven what was be - yond us

rit. **F** Slower ♩ = 138

mf *p*

68 *gradual rit.* was re - cast in our im - age; we gave the coun - try a heart, $\text{♩} = 120$

72 the storm an eye, the cave a mouth.

76 so we could pass in - to safe - - ty, the

79 coun - try a heart, the storm an eye, the

G $\text{♩} = 120$ (as before) *as an echo*

83 cave a mouth so we could pass in - to safe - ty.

rit. **a tempo**

87

(non rit.)

Interlude II – Tacet

[Piano pedal stays until midway through reading]

TEARS

(read by Mezzo Soprano)

*The first woman who ever wept
was appalled at what stung
her eyes and ran down her cheeks.
Saltwater. Seawater.
How was it possible?
Hadn't she and the man
spent many days moving
upland to where the grass
flourished, where the stream
quenched their thirst with sweet water?
How could she have carried these sea drops
as if they were precious seeds;
where could she have stowed them?
She looked at the watchful gazelles
and the heavy-lidded frogs;
she looked at the glass-eyed birds
and nervous, black-eyed mice.
None of them wept, not even the fish
that dripped in her hands when she caught them.
Not even the man. Only she
carried the sea inside her body.*

FUGITIVE (Optional reading by Pianist or Clarinetist)

9

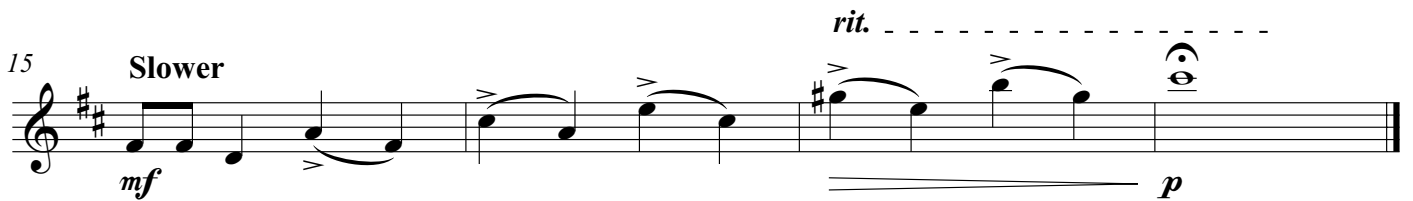
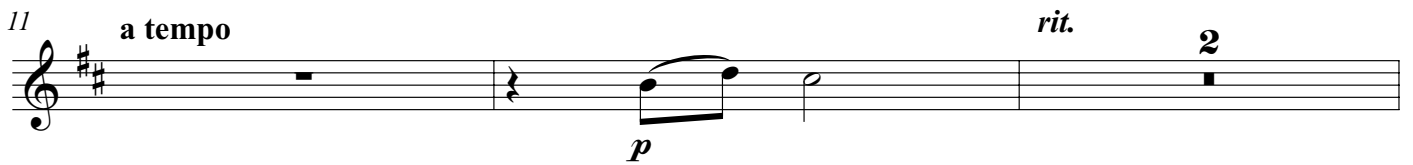
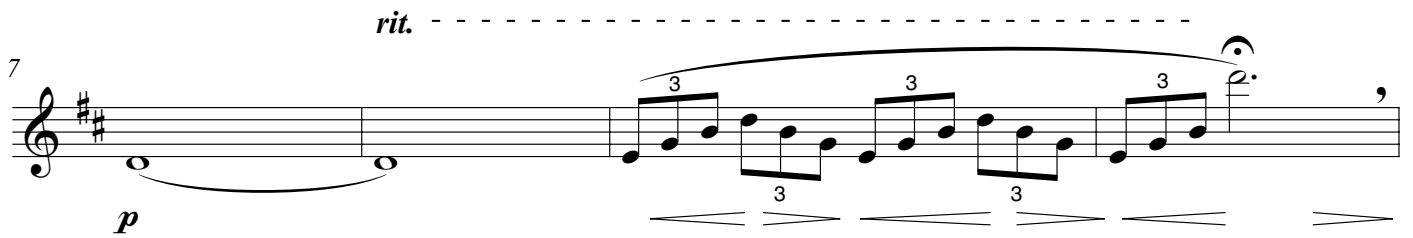
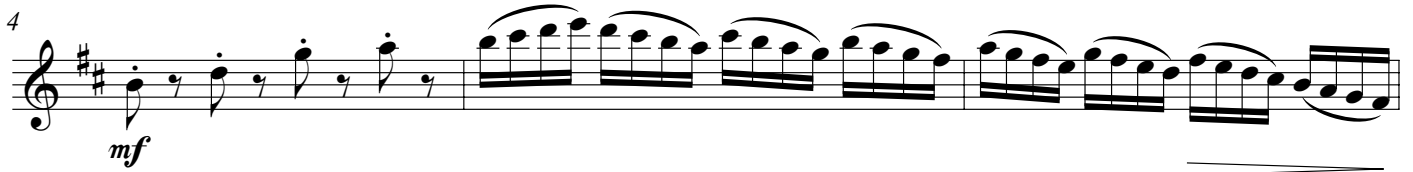
*My life is running away with me;
the two of us are in cahoots.
I hold still while it paints
dark circles under my eyes,
streaks my hair gray, stuffs pillows
under my dress. In each new room
the mirror reassures me
I'll not be recognized.
I'm learning to travel light,
like the juice in the power line.
My baggage, swallowed by memory,
weighs almost nothing. No one suspects
its value. When they knock on my door,
badges flashing, I open up:
I don't match their description.
"Wrong room," they say, and apologize.
My life in the corner winks
and wipes off my fingerprints.*

SOMETIMES, WHEN THE LIGHT (Optional reading by Pianist or Clarinetist)

*Sometimes, when the light strikes at odd angles
and pulls you back into childhood
and you are passing a crumbling mansion
completely hidden behind old willows
or an empty convent guarded by hemlocks
and giant firs standing hip to hip,
you know again that behind that wall,
under the uncut hair of the willows
something secret is going on,
so marvelous and dangerous
that if you crawled through and saw,
you would die, or be happy forever.*

Interlude III

Sprightly ♩ = c. 132



Naming the Animals

♩. = 72 *as a rocking motion*

Piano

5

11

16

21 A

27

33

Clarinet

accel. -----

39

45 **B** $\text{♩} = 80$

50

55

61 **C** ($\text{♩} = 80$) *rit.* ----- **Slower**

67 *a tempo* $\text{♩} = 80$ *colla voce*

74

80 *Slower* **D** *a tempo* $\text{♩} = 72$

87 **Free Measure** *Soprano:* Before he could put on the knowledge of who she was, with her small hands

88 **E** $\text{♩} = 72$

93 *rit.*

There are Mornings

$\text{♩} = 126$

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

pp

7 (7) (8) **A**

mf

11

15

18

p

21 **B** continue two-measure pattern

Soprano: Some mornings in summer I step outside and the sky opens and pours itself into me as if I were a saint about to die.

22 **C** ($\text{♩} = 126$)

mf

26

29 **D**

p

33 **3**
mf

40
f *p*

45 **E**
mf

49
mf *f*

54 **F**
p *p*

58 *poco rit.* *slightly slower, quasi recitative*
mf *p*

64 *rit.* **G** *Slowly*
p

67 *accel.* *a tempo* (♩ = 126) *accel.*
ffp *f* *sfp* *f*

72 H Quickly ♩ = 144

76

80

84

87

92

97

100

sfz *mf* *p*

(p) *mf* *p* *mf*

mf *f* *mf* *f*

p subito *f*

mf *p*

ff