

Sailing to the Marvellous

A dramatic cantata on the occasion of
the 900th anniversary of Bridlington Priory
(Priory 900)

Dedicated to Kurdish Christians, wherever they live.

*With thanks to Bridlington children from Burlington Junior School, Our Lady and St
Peter's and New Pasture Lane for their thoughts and words.*

Libretto

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(Runa:) to a wind-scoured village
beneath a blizzard-mountain.

She begins dancing again.

Heger dînya hemî gûl bit
gûlak bitena basi minne.

Heger dînya hemî gûl bit
gûlak bitena basi minne.

I sing about a flower,
a beautiful Kurdish flower
ripped from the earth
that still grows in my heart.

She reads what she has written in her book.

After they killed my mother,
I travelled north
to a wind-scoured village
beneath a blizzard mountain.

She writes again.

Then I fled over the border
to a country of cruel eyes,
this country of cruel eyes.

She resumes the dance.

Heger dînya hemî gûl bit
gûlak bitena basi minne.

A child appears from the side of the church, where other children are also hiding, 'pushing' through the crowd to get to Runa. The child interrupts Runa's dance, urgently.

Child 1: Hey, stop, stop!
(Spoken)

The word is echoed by the other, unseen children.

Runa: Don't be so rude!

I am singing. I am dancing.

She resumes dancing.

Child 2: You have to stop, or they'll catch all of us.

The children echo 'all of us'.

The children emerge from their hiding places, whispering and repeating 'You have to stop'. As they do this, the women's chorus move back to the audience.

Child 3: What are you looking for?

Runa: Safety. Peace. Heaven? (Spoken)

(Sings) The marvellous country where
the lovely women wait,
the lovely women
with hands full of ribbons and wool,
hands full of ribbons and wool.
The marvellous country where –

One of the children puts hands over her mouth.

Child 1: The soldiers can still get you here.

The children echo 'soldiers'.

Child 2: We are in great danger.

The children echo 'danger'.

Child 3: We found a boat.

The children echo 'a boat'.

Child 1: A fishing boat

The children echo 'a fishing boat'.

Child 2: We can escape.

The children echo 'escape' urgently.

Child 2: You shall be our captain.

The children whisper 'captain, captain' as they drag Runa down the nave, towards the boat (which is covered up) watched by the women, who gather in a cluster, looking towards the boat.

The women's chorus sing down from 10 to 0 in Kurdish and Latin increasingly urgently, both languages interweaving, possibly with some percussion.

Deh, no, hesht, h'ewt, shesh, penj, chwar, se, du, yek, sifir

Decem, novem, octo, septem, sex, quinque, quattuor, tres, duo, unum, nulla

The chorus finishes abruptly when Runa and the children have all arrived at the boat. As they remove the cover and get into it, the audience take their seats. The chorus below is repeated as many times as necessary until the audience are all sitting down.

Eternity chorus (*The church choirs, possibly with solo treble*)

Heaven is above the beautiful flower.

Heaven is a soundless place,

honest and all around us,

peaceful, calm and silver.

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When everyone is seated, the eternity chorus stops. (The children's choir are now the voices of the children who travel on the boat, which is like a much neglected fishing boat.) The children uncover the boat.

Children: This is the boat. This is the boat.
(Shouting)

C Choir: This is the boat. This is the boat.

Runa: This boat is old and rusty. This boat is... punctured!

Children: This is the boat. This is the boat.
(Shouting)

C Choir: This is the boat. There is no other boat.

Runa: This boat will sink.

C Choir: There is no other boat. You are our captain.

Runa: I am your captain, Runa of the rusty boat.

C Choir: You are our captain, Runa of the rusty boat.

Runa: Runa of the rusty tub!

C Choir: This is the boat. This is the boat
This is our rusty boat. Will it float?

Runa: I know nothing about boats.

C Choir: On the sea we'll all sail free
so start the engine, turn the key.

On the sea we'll all sail free
so start the engine, turn the key.

Easy peezy, lemon squeezy –

The organ *imitates the sound of a boat's engine starting and then stopping.*

Oooh she's sounding mighty wheezy!

Aaa-gain! Turn the key again.

The organ *imitates the starting and stopping. The children sigh.*

(C Choir:) Aaa-gain! Turn the key again.

The engine finally starts for good. The children cheer. The boat is raised high at the beginning of the nave, with something of a fanfare. Runa and the children begin their journey in the boat, at ground level but connected to it.

Hold the wheel, steady the wheel:
we must set off on an even keel.

Hold the wheel, steady the wheel:
we must set off on an even keel.

Runa: Easy, steady. Steady, easy. (*Above the choir*)

Eternity chorus (*The boat sails gently during these choruses*)

Heaven is waiting round the corner.

Heaven is a place with a golden gate,
a place with a golden gate.

2

Runa: We're searching for the marvellous
beyond the golden gate.
We are searching for the marvellous
where the lovely women wait.
for the marvellous is a country
where there's no war or hate.

Pause.

(*Spoken*) Oh no! Please no!

Heavy rain, driving rain!

(*Spoken*) I can't see. I can't see.

C Choir: Daisy chain, candy cane,
heavy rain is such a pain.
Rain, rain, ball and chain,
never show your face again!

Runa: I steer a weight of wood and steel.
How do you think that makes me feel?
I steer the weight of children's hope.
How do you think I'm going to cope?

C Choir: Rain, rain, go to Spain,
never show your face again!

Runa: Heavy rain, driving rain.

(Spoken) Go away rain! I can't see!

Heavy rain... such driving rain.
Lonely pain... my lonely pain.

They burned our church. They killed my mother.

(Monotone) I must have no hatred. I must have no hatred.
I must have no hatred. I must have no hatred.

(Spoken) Hang on in there! I can see a patch of blue sky.

(Spoken) What is it they say?

There's enough to make a pair of sailor's trues,
enough to make a pair of sailor's trues!

Eternity chorus

'Scatter the nations...' (Ps. 68:30, quoted by Thomas à Kempis) is sung beneath the first line, like an urgent, repetitive prayer.

Heaven is a blue sky after rain.

Scatter the nations that delight in war.

Together with the above, Runa continues repeating her words as the boat travels on.

(Monotone) I must have no hatred. I must have no hatred.
I must have no hatred. I must have no hatred.