

## BACKGROUND

- First performed in 2002 at Stratford-upon-Avon.
- The three dances trace a path from initial primitive energy through a more relaxed, blues-based 2nd movement to a very tranquil and simple 3rd dance.
- Plowman deliberately draws on the styles/techniques of several other disparate composers, including Bach (*Prelude No.1* from the "48"), Bartok (*Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm* from his *Mikro-kosmos*), Ligeti (*Musica Ricercata*) and Ravi Shankar (*L'Aube Enchantée*).

## STRUCTURE

- **1.** – Atypical: consists of 3 versions of the same dance (with intro and coda) + two interludes (after the 1st and 3rd versions) that use same rhythmic accompaniment.
- **2.** – Unusual regards length of each section, especially B<sup>2</sup>: A<sup>1</sup> – B<sup>1</sup> (26) – A<sup>2</sup> (34) – B<sup>2</sup> (46 – end, i.e. 69 bars).
- **3.** Change (and use) of pedal points, melodic similarities and same length suggest a two-part structure – 1-16 and 17-32.

## TONALITY

- **1.** – Tonal centres (all bluesy and chromatic) outline interval of minor 3rd: Cm → E<sub>b</sub>m (51) → Cm (63) → Am (104) → Cm (151). (A-C-E<sub>b</sub> outline diminished chord).
- **2.** – As in Dance 1, but as follows: Am → F# (26) → A (62) → F# (74) → moves gradually to C major. (F#-A-C = dim chord).
- **3.** – Very chromatic C major → very chromatic B<sub>b</sub> major (17).
- Note use of pedal points throughout

## HARMONIC LANGUAGE

- **1 and 2** – Tonal, but very few instances of functional harmony. **3** – Bs.9-13 suggest V-I in C, bars 27<sup>2</sup>-29 V<sup>7</sup>-I in B<sub>b</sub>; otherwise harmony is indeterminate and largely governed by the two pedal points.
- **1 and 2** – Static and dissonant; flute part often unrelated to underlying harmony. False relations a feature of Dance 2.

## MELODY

- **1.** – Highly motivic; often angular; at odds with piano; uses serial techniques. Motifs transformed – e.g., bar 51 used as part of flute melody in 2nd Dance.
- **2.** – Similar to Dance 1 (particularly bars 1-27). Some blues inflections. Piano has very little melodic interest – as Dance 3.
- **3.** Uses mostly angular (serial) melodic fragments from Dances 1 and 2.

## TEXTURE AND TIMBRE

- **1** – Homophonic throughout. **2** – Mostly homophonic; element of counterpoint in evidence (e.g., 4-8); **3** – sparse – essentially in a single line for the most part.
- Piano exploits its mid- to low-range in all three dances. Flute more varied, but moves from high (bright) to low (warm) from **1-3**, so underlining the work's programme.

## TEMPO, METRE AND RHYTHM

- Gradual relaxation of tempo throughout the three dances.
- Metre and rhythm play key role. **1** – Constantly changing metre; **2** – mostly in 4/4, but flute rhythms (3-25) often contradict this (improvisatory feel); 26 → far more conventional. **3** – In 6/8, but sounds more like 2/4 (+ 2 triplets).

**Dynamics** – these generally mirror the work's programme/structure – i.e., [**1**] used quite sparingly but marked by dramatic contrasts; [**2**] series of crescendos → *dim* → *ppp*; [**3**] sustained *p* dynamic but with two quite sudden crescendos at the start of second section (17-24).

## TANGO PASSACAGLIA – similarities to Night Dances

- Influence of Bach – though to a much greater extent – and Piazzolla.
- Dance element is central to piece, especially in the "tango section" (67-99).
- Harmonic style is highly chromatic and dissonant but essentially tonal; same tonic key of Cm. Tonality in both works focusses on a restricted number of keys – basically Cm → Ab → Cm in "tango" – with stretches of indeterminate key.
- Mediant relationship between keys also similar.
- Dynamics play a structural role – e.g., gentler mood of Section 2 compared with loud, energetic Section 1.
- Occasional changes in time signature are similar to those in Night Dance 2.
- Entire register (and timbre) of flute exploited as in the Night Dances.

## ARIEL - similarities to Night Dances

- Quite lengthy solo section in each work – for flute in Ariel (43-61), for piano in Night Dance 2 (81-114).
- Musical elements used descriptively – e.g., pitch content of flute drops from wild dance (90) to the end, harmonic idiom becomes less dissonant etc.
- Some textural/rhythmic similarities – e.g., cf. piano's syncopated (at times repeated) chordal accompaniment in bars 94-113 with Night Dance 1.
- Occasional "free" use of serial techniques – e.g., cumulative introduction of different pitches at opening of Ariel and the use of 10- and 7- note rows in Dances 1 and 3.
- C, either as a pitch or key centre, is a focal point in both Ariel and Dance 1. (Ariel begins and ends on/in C).

## TANGO PASSACAGLIA – differences from Night Dances

- Harmony more traditional - influenced by 18th, 19th and 20th century; faster harmonic rhythm; clear cadences. Despite mediant relation of keys, Ab is diatonic to Cm while E<sub>b</sub>m and Am (to Cm) and F# (to Am) are chromatic in the Dances.
- Structure is more traditional and developmental – e.g., use of exact repetition (107-32 = 8-33); recapitulation in tonic key more pronounced in tonal scheme.
- Texture far more contrapuntal; thicker overall, too. (Piano and flute are equals).
- Repetitive nature of ground produces very different phrase structure.
- Melody is less angular and rather more decorative overall. Tessitura of both piano and flute varies throughout.
- Metre and rhythm more traditional; crotchet beat remains constant; also rather less use of syncopation.

## ARIEL – differences from Night Dances

- Sense of tonality is more tenuous.
- Harmony much more dissonant (characterised by major 7ths/minor 9ths), but dissonance is steadily reduced as protagonists reach agreement – e.g., 74-87. Less dissonant whole-tone and quartal harmony used in bars 94-99.
- Structure is dictated even more by the programme ("narrative" form).
- Melodies very angular (note use of major 7ths/minor 9ths, except 100-19).
- Sparse textures more frequent; use of dialogue common, resulting in more shared melodic material between instruments (opening/closing sections).
- Rhythmically more complex; changes in metre limited, but sense of beat is elusive. Rests used frequently. Some use of polyrhythms. More changes in tempo. Articulation mainly staccato.