

Moon, Bride, Dogs

a chamber opera in one act

for three singers & piano quartet or quintet

Cristina Frías

story / librettist

Ryan Suleiman

composer

piano vocal score

2019

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approx. 20 min

Cast of Characters

Idiot Girl.....soprano
Moon.....tenor
Dogs.....baritone*

*Important note about Dogs: The role of Dogs is sung by one baritone. If available, any number of additional actors may be recruited to supplement the presence of Dogs. In a few spots which are underlined and in bold font, these actors speak the baritone's lines in unison. x-note-heads indicate sprechstimme for the baritone, and headless notes indicate spoken lines.

Moon, Bride, Dogs was reworked from the original Moon, Bride, Dogs: an opera-song in collaboration with the North American New Opera Workshop. The work was premiered in Atlanta, GA in May 2019 under the direction of Jennifer Jolley (artistic director), Chaowen Ting (music director), and Stephanie Havey (stage director), to whom we dedicate the piece.

Synopsis

In this surrealist adaptation of the problematic fairy tale, "Donkey Skin," in which a princess is forced to flee after her father takes her as his bride, the character Idiot Girl (soprano) escapes the clutches of her own abusive father only to find herself in a post-apocalyptic wasteland inhabited by a hoard of hungry dogs (baritone). Idiot Girl searches for her lost memories while the Dogs, starving for food and knowledge, race in excitement toward this new source of nourishment. The Moon (tenor) comments dispassionately on events unfolding below. The young bride is only able to tell her story when the Dogs eat her alive, a violent act rendered gentle and self-sacrificial for Idiot Girl as the very tearing apart of her body is what it takes for her to speak her truth and recover her memories.

any questions may be directed to the composer or the librettist

Moon, Bride, Dogs: libretto

Moon: Idiot Girl, you have fallen from the sky.

Idiot Girl: Dear Moon, somewhere far, hot, the smell of dying. I search my memories, but cannot find how I came to this place.

Moon: A swarm of dogs approaches, dust and fur.

Dogs: Where did she come from, that nasty? Falls from the sky like a rat. Want to eat her, won't be enough.

Moon: Blown away from the grasp of your father, the weight of you so light a breeze can lift you, discard you so far away...

Dogs: Fell into our desert, that nasty. No food here, no wine, no past to remember us by.

Moon: Girls in their bones hold a history of escape.

Idiot Girl: In my bones, I knew I had to run away.

Moon: Poor girl, her mother dead, no one to tell her this history.

Idiot Girl: Mother, what does it take to know yourself when you are lost?

Moon: Idiot Girl, the dogs hunger for knowledge, a story not their own.

Dogs: We'll rip her apart. She could be a bed not dirt, a brush not ticks, a caress not a car smashing our heads.

Idiot Girl: Wherever I run, my memories disappear. Like a plastic bag, discarded on the ocean roadway.

Moon: Idiot Girl, perhaps you wish not to remember.

Idiot Girl: I hear them howling, wanting, longing. Who can I possibly be to their hunger?

Moon: Your whole life you have never looked like so many possibilities.

Idiot Girl: They pounce upon me, like wet kisses on a hand that pulls away.

Dogs: Tearing away at your body, our world grows bigger. We remember your past.

Moon: Idiot Girl, do you hear them now? Listen.

Idiot Girl & Moon: The pull past the desert mountain ocean cloud, far back, to the old feeling...

Dogs: Delicious!

Idiot Girl & Moon: ...of having a mother.

Dogs: Her bones, not much meat.

Idiot Girl & Moon: The love of her belly, the curve of her love.

Idiot Girl: From white to grey to dying.

Moon: Girls in their bones hold...

Dogs: The bones of girls tell a history.

Idiot Girl: Wherever I run...

Idiot Girl & Moon: No choice but to escape.

Idiot Girl: Mother, did you marry a man thinking he knew you?

Dogs: Delicious, the feeling...

Idiot Girl: ...of having a father who loves me...

Moon: Idiot Girl.

Idiot Girl: ... A father who wants me.

Dogs: Wants her as his wife!

Idiot Girl: Mother, did he ever see past your skin and into your bones?

Moon: He was all mad all mourn all lust.

Dogs & Moon: You had no choice. You ran...

Moon: You flew, took the ocean cloud roadway...

Idiot Girl: Out here, there is no shore in sight.

Dogs: Delicious!

Idiot Girl: No shore, no sight. They are inside me, Father, sniffing my bones, pawing at my lungs. And I am an idiot girl, unrecognizable in this animal skin, this moonlight, these bones. Is this what it takes, Father, is this what it takes to be known?

dedicated to Jennifer Jolley, Chaowen Ting, & Stephanie Havey

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The pianist begins playing a few seconds before the lights come on (see lighting instructions, boxed). The pianist may vamp on the first measure ad-lib. if needed. Only MOON is on stage, off to the far right or far left, where he remains for the entire opera. He is always calm, tranquil, yet dispassionate.

PRELUDE

Light, starry ♩ = c. 144 (always ♩ = ♩)

Begin with lights completely out once the performers have taken their places. Shortly after the pianist begins, fade into a dim blue or purple stage lighting. It is desired that the audience remain in complete/near darkness during the whole performance.

1

Idiot Girl

Moon

Dogs

Piano

Begin playing a few seconds before the lights fade in.

p

8va

Red.

4

8

Moon, Bride, Dogs
piano vocal score

2

(♩ = ♩)
mf

A IDIOT GIRL enters from offstage.

* Ped. *

16 *p*

19

B SCENE: IDIOT GIRL ARRIVES
l'istesso tempo ♩ = c. 144

Moon

MOON: *mf*

I - di - ot

p

cello:

* Ped.

Moon, Bride, Dogs
piano vocal score

26
Moon

Girl, You have fal - len from the sky.

* *sempre molto pedale*

30
Moon

34 **C** IDIOT GIRL:
mf

Girl

Dear Moon, Somewhere far, hot,

38
Girl

the smell of dy

strings:
p

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piano vocal score

4 42 *IDIOT GIRL examines her surroundings.*

Girl

ing.

violin:

p *pp*

DOGS creep(s) inconspicuously from offstage. If there are multiple dog-actors, they should enter slowly, one by one. By the time MOON finishes singing the word "fur," all the dogs should be present.

D

IDIOT GIRL:

Girl

mp

I search, I search my me-mo-ries but can-not find how I came

Girl

to this place.

strings:

fp

54

mf *p* *ff*

suddenly coalescing

3

Moon, Bride, Dogs
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E declamatory. perhaps gesturing to the DOGS.

56
Moon: *f* MOON: *f* *p*

A swarm of dogs ap-proach-es, dust and

the L.H. plays indiscernable clusters, in the character of the previous phrase, though nothing need be rhythmically precise here. the R.H. may assist where possible.

mf *mp*

molto pedale

At this point, all the DOGS are on stage, stalking IDIOT GIRL.

61
Moon: *f* fur. DOGS: *mf* sprechstimme*
Dogs: *mf* Where did she come from,

mf *mp* *simile*

Ped. *molto pedale* *

IDIOT GIRL: *p* singing underneath DOGS

F

66
Girl: *p* search - - - ing...
Dogs: *p* that nas-ty? Falls from the sky like a rat. Want to

strings: *p* *sfz*

*see notes in front-matter

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6

(open-mouth hum)

71 **p**

Girl me - mo - ries... (ng)

Dogs eat her. **f** barking, dog-like wo wo_ wo_ wo wo wo wo wo wo wo

mf **p**

silently, DOGS circle around, scratching themselves, and do other dog-like things. they are menacing, yet pitiful and dirty. We feel a little sorry for them, but are also scared of them. IDIOT GIRL watches them.

75 **p** **l'istesso tempo, driving** ♩ = c. 144

Dogs **Won't be e-nough.**

(a bit hurried)

mf

meno pedale

80 **G** violin:

f **p**

Ped. *