

Fictive Music

1991

for Rebecca

flute (alto flute; piccolo)

oboe (oboe d'amore)

percussion

bongos – high/low

timbales – high/low

snare drum

roto-toms x 4

temple-blocks x 5

congas – high/low

bass drum

ratchet

piano

viola

'cello

mezzo-soprano

Duration: 10 min. 30 sec.

Whisper! Whisper! Whisper! Can you hear these whispers gathering up like a whole sky of locusts over the horizon? Listen! Whisper! Whis-sis-sisper! It's always the same. The 'story' always begins with a quiet little flurry of whisperings: sly ones, curt ones, "listen to the dirt" ones, gleeful, insinuating. Do you hear these whispers that carry my name, heroine of the latest scandal, around and around the people around me like ripples of transmuted desire? Do you hear them? Like locusts, like neurotic little insects buzzing with frustration. I heard a bitch in heat bay the moon with a swirling howl of desire and as the pack ran to her biting and snapping, I swore not to buzz like the bitter swarm, not to sizzle and spit like the empty pan on the fire, I swore to howl with the naked honesty of animal lust. There's nothing much to tell really: I could see that hunger in his eye, we laughed together out loud; we laughed like beautiful children at play; we giggled and chuckled and cackled: we were naked and happy and we laughed like hyenas...! She heard us panting and grunting and laughing like monkeys. As sly as the hiss of a snake she whispered in corners and lanes, over walls through windows, under stairs: sly little smiles sprang up around and around me like waves from the whispering ripples. I just adore the sound of fearful, jealous women whispering in a frenzy like insects whispering my name again and again - hating me - whisper - admiring me - whisper - envying me - whisper, whisper - fearing me - whisper - can you hear these whispers gathering up like a whole sky of locusts over the horizon; the sky is black as sin.

Text by Roddy McDevitt ©

The first performance was given by Ensemble Exposé, conducted by Roger Redgate, in the Queen's Hall, Edinburgh on 27 February 1991. Recorded for BBC Radio 3: Maida Vale Studios, London, 14 June 1991.