

Noises in the Night

for orchestra, opus 14

Part 1: Spirit Country

- the dead father
- the first house (Hemlock-Leaves-on-Back)
- the second house (Maggots-on-Bark-on-Ground)
- the third house (Place-of-Mouth-Showing-on-the-Ground)
- the fourth house (Place-of-Never-Return)
- the song that makes grief bearable

Part 2: The Ghost Wife

- weeping at the graveside
- follow the red plume
- saved by a tiny striped squirrel
- follow the red plume again
- the dark lake, the land of the dead
- the owl's advice
- shame at Thunder Mountain

Part 3: The Warrior with no Fear

- the four ghosts make a bet
- playing games with a ghost
- dancing with a ghost
- sledding with a ghost's rib cage
- riding a skeleton horse
- in the camp

acknowledgement

"Noises in the Night" is based on chapter 7 from the book "Tales of Native America" by Edward Huffstetler, published by Michael Friedman Publishing Group, Inc., with kind permission.

commissioned

by the Eduard van Beinum Stichting

composed

between 9th March 1998 and 13th June 1999

dedicated

to The Hague Philharmonic

duration

ca. 52 min.

homage

to Deganawidah ("The Peacemaker")

premiered

on 3rd December 1999 at the Dr. Anton Philipszaal in The Hague (The Netherlands)
by The Hague Philharmonic & Jac van Steen (conductor)

published

by Donemus

scoring

3 Flutes (1st also Piccolo, 2nd also Piccolo and Alto Flute, 3rd also Bass Flute)

3 Oboes (3rd also Cor Anglais)

4 Clarinets in Bb (1st also Clarinet in A, 2nd also Clarinets in D & Eb, 3rd also Bass Clarinet in Bb, 4th also Bass Clarinet in Bb & Contrabass Clarinet in Bb)

3 Bassoons (2nd & 3rd also Contrabassoon)

4 Horns in F

3 Trumpets in C (2nd also Trumpet in D)

3 Trombones (or Tenor Trombone, Bass Trombone, Contrabass Trombone)

Tuba (also Contrabass Tuba)

Percussion (5 players):

- Percussionist 1: 3 Bongos, Castanets, 3 Congas, Djembe, Guiro, Large Gong, 5 Octabons (Boo-bams), Rattle, Shaker (no Maracas), Shime (or Very High Tuned Junior Conga), Tambourine, 3 Very High Drums
- Percussionist 2: Castanets, Claves, Glissando Drum, Guiro, Marimba (5 octaves), Tambourine, Very Large Tam-tam, Xylophone
- Percussionist 3: 2 Low Drums, Small Gong, 4 Temple Blocks, 6 Timpani, Wood Block
- Percussionist 4: 4 African Drums (middle register), Antique Cymbals (G, Bb, B), 2 Bass Drums (the first one big, the second one very high), Chinese Drum, Quijadas (Vibraslap), Side Drum, Tabor, Tenor Drum, Very Large Chinese Cymbal, Water Drum, 2 Wood Blocks, Wood Chimes
- Percussionist 5: Tam-tam, 7 Tom-toms

Strings

Caspar Wintermans on *Noises in the Night*:

Simons, a bookworm, had read Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*. The Indians' fate it described had touched him deeply. His interest in the culture of these people led him to study their myths and legends; a number of ghost stories in Edward Huffstetler's *Tales of Native Americans*¹ were chosen as starting point for his opus 14. *Noises in the Night* requires a huge orchestra with an extensive, exotic percussion section. The score, in which Indian harmonic, rhythmic and melodic elements are wedded to Marijn's personal style, is divided into three parts. 'What struck me in the stories I've read,' Simons explains, 'is the laconic stance the Indians

take up towards death. Their adage, "It is a good day to die," is significant. The first part of my work, *Spirit Country*, portrays death in all its facets. In the tale which served as its basis a woman mourns her deceased father. She descends to the underworld which – and this I have illustrated orchestrally – turns out to be divided into four houses, each one deeper than the other. She meets her parent; he orders her to return to the earth, and the song which the spirits strike up ('The song that makes grief bearable') is henceforth sung at funerals. The myth, therefore, deals with coping with grief.

The second part, *The Ghost Wife*, features a young man. He also cannot come to terms with the loss of a loved one, his consort. The story reminds one of the adventures of Orpheus and Euridyce: the Indian travels to the beyond, situated at the bottom of a vast, dark lake. A flying red plume points out the way, a tiny squirrel (the piccolo!) acts as monitor, while a hugh owl warns the Indian not to touch his wife, who is given back to him, during their voyage home. But when the pair bivouacs on Thunder Mountain, the husband is overcome with desire. He forgets his promise, and his wife dies again. Which, the story learns, was perhaps all for the best; for if people were to become immortal, lack of space would ensue, leading to endless wars.

A sense of humour, highly characteristic for the Indians, pervades the final, seamless part, *The Warrior with no Fear*. Four ghosts decide to scare a youngster to death, but fail miserably in their end. They themselves are chased by the hero – who, when recounting his exploits to his friends, panics in *his* turn when a tiny spider walks on his sleeve.....'

Marijn greatly admires Deganawidah, 'the peacemaker,' an Indian who about 1450 founded 'the league of the Haudenosaunee,' a confederacy of six tribes in North-East America which aspired to justice and fraternity, and whose constitution bears a striking resemblance to that of the United Nations. To Deganawidah, the idealist, the dreamer, the score of *Noises in the Night* is respectfully dedicated.

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1. The title of the piece and its various parts have been derived from Huffstetler's book. The composer expresses his thanks to the Michael Friedman Publishing Group at New York for giving permission to do so.