

Hans Abrahamsen - Let Me Tell You (2016)

Written by bluesever

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I Part: 1. *Let Me Tell You How It Was* 3:50 2. *O But Memory Is Not One But Many* 2:50
3. *There Was A Time, I Remember* 5:58 II Part: 4. *Let Me Tell You How It Is* 2:04
5. *Now I Do Not Mind* 6:13 III Part:
6. *I Know You Are There* 1:00 7. *I Will Go Out Now* 10:44

Barbara Hannigan - soprano Symphonie-Orchester Des Bayerischen Rundfunks Andris
Nelsons - conductor

All the information about this half-hour-long song cycle is relegated to websites, and websites with user-unfriendly URLs, at that. So here's the basic information: *let me tell you* is based on an experimental novella by writer (and music critic) Paul Griffiths, consisting exclusively of words spoken by Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In this work they are further reduced to seven poems, assembled perhaps in the manner of the widely sold "magnetic poetry" refrigerator magnet kits. Whatever you think of the literary conceit, its realization here is remarkable. Soprano Barbara Hannigan worked closely with composer Hans Abrahamsen on the work, eliciting passages of extended vocal technique that in places resemble the vocal writing of Monteverdi. Abrahamsen's basic musical language lands about halfway between Wagner and Webern, adopting the crystalline economy of the latter but remaining basically tonal in orientation. As with the Second Viennese School, much of the vocal writing is treacherously difficult, and here's where the recording really shines: sample the finale, "I will go out now" (track seven), for some of the most controlled long pianissimi you are likely to have heard lately. Hannigan was involved in commissioning the work and has performed it with orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic; here she rejoins conductor Andris Nelsons, with whom she premiered *let me tell you* in 2013 with the Berlin Philharmonic. The performance here has an uncanny quality suggesting that the work resides in Hannigan's head, which of course is appropriate to its theme. Beautifully recorded; highly recommended. ---James Manheim, AllMusic Review

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