

Alec Roth – THE TEMPEST – text by William Shakespeare

a version of the play by William Shakespeare for actors, dancers, chorus and Javanese gamelan commissioned by The Centre for the Arts, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada
stage version first performed at the Simon Fraser Centre for the Arts, Vancouver, 8-18 March 1989
concert extracts: numerous performances including Cheltenham Festival 1986; Queen Elizabeth Hall, 1990; Royal Albert Hall (BBC Proms) 1998
original two songs ('Come unto these Yellow Sands'; 'Full Fathom Five') first performed by the English Gamelan Orchestra, Neil Sorrell (director), Bloomsbury Theatre, London, 5 October 1983

*Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices . . .*
(The Tempest, Act 3 Scene 2)

*This music crept by me on the waters,
Allaying both their fury and my passion
With its sweet air. Thence I have followed it,
Or it hath drawn me, rather . . .*
(The Tempest, Act 1 Scene 2)

COMPOSER'S NOTE

The music of the gamelan first drew me to the island of Java in 1980. My imagination was fired by the aptness of Shakespeare's descriptions of the music which permeates that other magical isle – Prospero's, in *The Tempest*, and I set two of Ariel's songs to music in 1983 as concert works for the English Gamelan Orchestra. My ambition to compose music for the whole play was realised in 1989 in a production at the Simon Fraser Centre for the Arts in Vancouver. Since then extracts from the music have been given in concert on numerous occasions, including the South Bank Gamelan Players' performance at the Royal Albert Hall for the BBC Proms in 1998.

DURATION

stage version: ca. 160+ minutes (see below for durations of individual concert items)

FORCES REQUIRED

Central Javanese court-style gamelan in *slendro* and *pelog* tuning
the standard ensemble is employed (including voices), with the exception of the *rebab* which is not used
performers need to be well versed in traditional Central Javanese performance practice (*garap*)

PERFORMANCE MATERIALS

A fully cued work-book: the music is notated in standard Central Javanese gamelan notation (*kepatihan*)
Some of the concert extracts are available in separate notations

CONCERT EXTRACTS

The following excerpts may be performed as concert works:

Dance for Ariel (*Lancaran 'Sea-sorrow'*) [ca. 3']

'Come unto these Yellow Sands' [ca. 4½']

'Full Fathom Five' [ca. 5½']

'Wondrous Heavy' [ca. 1½']

Dance for Caliban [ca. 2']

'Marriage Blessing' [ca. 4']

Solemn Music (*Ladrang 'Sea-sorrow'*) [ca. 2']

'Where the Bee Sucks' [ca. 1½']

Bubaran 'Tempest' [ca. 2']

RECORDING

a version of 'Full Fathom Five' by Vancouver-based Gamelan Madu Sari is on the [Songlines CD "Hive" \(SGL2406-2\)](#)
the individual track may be sampled and downloaded at [iTunes](#)

“. . . Alec Roth's setting of a scene from Shakespeare's "The Tempest", in which he ingeniously and resourcefully evoked Prospero's Isle with daring directness in one of the happiest East-West musical ententes I have ever witnessed."

THE SUNDAY TIMES (Felix Aprahamian) 9 October 1983