

Listening Guide

Crumb: *Ancient Voices of Children*, First Movement

DATE OF WORK: 1970

GENRE: Song cycle (5 songs and 2 instrumental interludes)

TEXT: Poems by Federico García Lorca

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Opening *vocalise*, or wordless melody, with many virtuosic effects (flutter tonguing, hissing, clicking, trills); voice used instrumentally. Rhapsodic, improvisatory-like vocal line. Voice singing into amplified piano, producing sympathetic vibrations. Pure timbre of boy soprano (on second verse), singing offstage.

1. *The Little Boy Is Looking for His Voice (El niño busca su voz)*

Medium: Soprano, boy soprano, electric piano, harp, tam-tam (gong), other percussion

TEXT	TRANSLATION	DESCRIPTION
El niño busca su voz. (La tenía el rey de los grillos.) En una gota de agua buscaba su voz el niño. No la quiero para hablar; me haré con ella un anillo que llevará mi silencio en su dedo pequeñito.	The little boy is looking for his voice. (The king of the crickets had it.) In a drop of water the little boy looked for his voice. I don't want it to speak with; I will make a ring of it so that he may wear my silence on his little finger.	Opens with an elaborate vocalise for soprano, including cries, trills, other vocal gymnastics; she sings into piano with pedal down for resonance. Strophe 1 —sung by soprano alone with turns, trills, hisses; she continues with low-pitched recitation. Strophe 2 —overlaps strophe 1; boy soprano sings offstage, through cardboard tube; folk-like character to melody.

Vocal line, at beginning of strophe 1:

The musical notation is in 3/4 time and consists of two staves. The first staff shows a vocal line starting with a piano (*p*) and *dolce* marking, followed by a series of trills and turns. The second staff continues the vocal line with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) marking and a final note marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The lyrics "El niño busca su voz" are written below the notes. Above the first staff, there are markings for *ffz sub.*, *mp sub.*, *(sim.)*, and *al niente*. Above the second staff, there are markings for *ffz mp* and *al niente*. A bracket above the second staff indicates a 14-measure phrase.