



Errollyn Wallen

All the Blues I See (2004)

Flute and String Quartet

Duration: 20 minutes

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First performance: Emily Beynon and the Brodsky Quartet, St George's Bristol, 4 March 2004

Commissioned by the BBC for Emily Beynon and the Brodsky Quartet

Dedicated to Gina Scott

In the title of Errollyn Wallen's piece for Flute and String Quartet, "Blues" refers to the color in its various shadings and also the musical blues. Composed in Belize, the composer's birthplace, and in Greenwich, the colors of the sky and the sea in their fluidity and iridescence give the extra-musical source of inspiration whereas "blue" notes inform the harmonic language of the six movements. The whole piece juxtaposes the ideas of meditation, tranquillity, even bleakness, with vitality, joy and ecstasy. Wallen allows the flute to emerge as soloist but also integrates it with the strings to form a new sound palate.

The first movement was inspired by the sea in Belize with her endlessly varying textures and shifting colours; the motion of the water, the reflection of light on its surface are encapsulated in the fluidity of the musical development. The second movement explores the oscillation between major and minor thirds; mournful flute lines with the strings first accompanying and then gradually imitating them stand adjacent to the recurring quotation of Thomas Greaves' madrigal *Come away, sweet love*. The third movement explores a D major/minor triad and opens up a dance-like ecstatic frenzy; pure vitality emerges and takes the material by storm, in which all players are caught in a spontaneous game of catch. The fourth movement presents the flute as soloist in a song; the mood changes to a feeling of isolation and bleakness with the flute playing the lines of Wallen's own song *Tree*. The fifth movement takes the lullaby as a starting point and presents again an exploration of the major and minor third; out of broadly flowing textures rapture sections emerge. The quintet closes with a recapitulation of the material of the first movement, thus framing the whole work. **All the Blues I See** is dedicated to Gina Scott.

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