

Soleils de Septembre – Lili Boulanger

The Suns of September. Boulanger made this choral and piano setting of a poem by Auguste Lacaussade, and the harmonies she uses here recreate the same kind of dreamy haze that the poem conveys, meditating on nature and the passage of time. What starts off calm slowly evolves into something a bit eerie, and especially haunting as the contralto sings over a quietly moaning chorus. It drifts off into silence, but then the piano returns with a more pastorale mood, and tremolandos push toward this sense of ecstasy, or the fluttering of wings, as the chorus echoes itself in the last lines of the poem into a glorious sunny conclusion.

Sous ces rayons cléments des soleils de septembre
Le ciel est doux, mais pâle, et la terre jaunit.
Dans les forêts la feuille a la couleur de l'ambre;
L'oiseau ne chante plus sur le bord de son nid.

Du toit des laboureurs ont fui les hirondelles;
La faucille a passé sur l'épi d'or des blés;
On n'entend plus dans l'air des frémissements d'ailes:
le merle est muet au fond des bois troublés

Ô changeantes saisons! ô lois inexorables!
De quel deuil la nature, hélas! va se couvrir!
Soleils des mois heureux, printemps irréparables,
Adieu ! ruisseaux et fleurs vont se taire et mourir.

Mais console-toi, terre! Ô Nature! ô Cybèle!
L'hiver est un sommeil et n'est point le trépas:
Les printemps reviendront te faire verte et belle;
L'homme vieillit et meurt, toi, tu ne vieillis pas.

Under these warm rays of the September suns
The sky is soft, but pale, and the earth turns yellow.
In the forests the leaves are the colour of amber;
The bird no longer sings on the edge of its nest.

the swallows have fled from the ploughmen's roof;
The sickle has passed on the golden ears of corn;
You no longer hear the quivering of wings in the air:
The blackbird is silent in the depths of the troubled woods.

O changing seasons! O inexorable laws!
What mourning, will nature alas cover itself with!
Suns of happy months, irreparable spring,
Farewell! Streams and flowers will be silent and die.

But console yourself, earth! O Nature! O Cybele!
Winter is a sleep, not death:
The springs will return to make you green and beautiful;
Man ages and dies, you do not grow old!

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Onder deze warme stralen van de septemberzon
De lucht is zacht, maar bleek, en de aarde vergeelt.
In de bossen hebben de bladeren de kleur van amber;
De vogel zingt niet meer op de rand van zijn nest

de zwaluwen zijn van het dak van de ploegers gevluht;
De sikkle heeft de gouden korenaren doorgesneden;;
We horen niet langer het trillen van vleugels in de lucht:
De merel zwijgt in de diepten van de onrustige bossen.

O veranderende seizoenen! O onverbiddelijke wetten!
Met welk een rouw zal de natuur zich helaas bedekken!
Zonnen van gelukkige maanden, onherstelbare lente,
Vaarwel! Beken en bloemen zullen zwijgen en sterven.

Maar troost jezelf, aarde! O natuur! O Cybele!
De winter is een slaap, geen dood:
De lente zal terugkeren en je groen en mooi te maken;
De mens wordt ouder en sterft, jij wordt niet oud!