

Libretto

In the Father's Garden

opera in one act

Libretto by Mark Kirtley, edited by David Kirtley

Scene: A large family garden with bean plants, squash, corn, etc. Mark and Hugh are pulling weeds.

Mark

How glad am I, you give myself a proof.

Hugh

And is it naught but pleasure to approve?

Mark

How glad am I, you give myself a proof.

Hugh

And is it naught but pleasure to approve
A son who works my garden well with me?

Mark and Hugh

(Mark): How glad am I you give myself a proof.

(Hugh): And is it naught but pleasure to approve
A son who works my garden well with me?

Mark

And yet we lose the time for plucking weeds. *(repeats)*
For now I see a distant lightning there
Among horizon clouds, and we'll be stormed.

Hugh *(consoling)*

But 'tis a sunny day, and dry the earth.
I cannot see a cloud although I squint,
Much less the lightning.

Mark

Still, but we'll be storm'd.
Perchance you cannot see the threat'ning clouds,
For I do sit within your line of sight,
The lightning by my drooping self eclips'd.
(rises)

Hugh

But sit Mark, sit. I see no storm nowhere,
And happily as father and as son
May we be happy with the dirt — me thinks
You mood about as if you wish a storm.

(thunder)

Mark

But hark the thunder! Heard you not the thunder?

Hugh

'Tis a sunny day, and quiet too,
And quieter if you would still yourself,
Or steel yourself against an inner storm.

Yet take some glances at the stalks of corn —
Their limber tassles show no windiness,
(thunder)
And nor their ears hear thunder — nor do I —
There is no stormy story in the sky.

Mark *(aside)*

I would have him hear the thunder. Why else would I
be here and hearing? But where am I that my
father would still be living, when I did bury him
four years before?

(repeats above several times)

Ah, now I know.

(thunder)

Hugh *(sings)*

O lad, hear not the rolling thunder
Lest it rolleth us;
Be glad instead and gladly tend
The gladioluses.

Mark *(aside)*

O Dad hears not the rolling thunder
Lest it rolleth him;
He's glad instead and gladly tends
The bean, the corn, the yam.

(to Hugh)

Our rhymes are weak
for I've a sleepy head.
We use that old Seik'los tune,
while I'm asleep in my bed.

Hugh

How now?

Mark

I am he that made that rhyme,
and you are already dead,
And now a character in this my dream.

Hugh

Think'st thou that thou art dreaming?

Mark

Aye, a dream.

Hugh

And I am only dreamt?

Mark

By dreaming, aye.

Hugh

You ever have been philosophical,
When all you needed was a sense of duty —
Now be dutiful my son, and work
The garden ere the black approaching clouds
All duties and serenities attack.

(thunder, louder)

Mark

So now you hear the thunder?

Hugh

Aye, though it tear
My ear which you would say I do not wear.

(wind, thunder, and rain during the following)

Mark

Then hear your son accompany the storm
To speak 'midst thunder. Aaaaah! Aaah! Aaaaaah!

Hugh

Nay, for now it rains —
I won't remain and catch a death of cold.
(starts to leave)

Mark

You are already dead. I'll have you stay
And sit within the rain and mud'ning dirt.
Do pose your ear that's dead for list'ning well.
(forces his father to remain)

Hugh

What would you have me hear? *(storm abates)*

Mark *(calmer)*

A storm, a storm —
Within my life I suffer main defeats,
And turn from being master to a slave,
And recognize the slave, and turn a storm.

Hugh

But how a slave?

Mark

In subtle ways a slave.
I dote on women even foes to themselves,
Or condescend a simp'ring smile to men
Of such who'd cuff their sons for singing songs;
In anger I do panic with a rage
That signifies I comprehend myself
A hunted prey, and cornered without hope.

Hugh

But why a slave?

Mark

I do not know the why.

Hugh

And art thou agonizing lately?

Mark

Aye.

Hugh

Then didst thou dream to feel of agony?

Mark

Nay, I did not, but I'd pluck your weeds
And win a smile and barter dignity.
I storm'd within at seeing then the truth —
That I'm an ass to ask approval's proof.
I dreamt to see myself as slave to you.

Mark and Hugh *(together)*

I dreamt to see myself, since I am you.

Mark

Let's rise and walk now, rain and dream are through ...
rain and dream are through.

End