TWICE IN A BLUE MOON

Libretto by
Christopher Hassall

Music by
Phyllis Tate

Scene: The Crames' house, with chorus outside.
Time: About 8.30

I: CHORUS

Piano

Allegro rustico

Piano II

Curtain Up

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Chorus

From rambling farms where cocks crow loud
And geese gander a song

I

mf

Ch.

Fat and proud, where
Grunting pigs pursue their will
And pale pink scents up

mf
Ch.

-set the will (mf)

Where nut-brown horses, sleek of thigh, from stable door sur-

I

B

E

mf

And rose cheek'd Sal-ly milks the cow, A love-song fold-ed

Ch.

vey the sky.

I

B

E
SYNOPSIS

The first part takes place around 1810 in and outside John Crome’s house. Neighbours are preparing to go to Norwich Fair. The Crookes are poor and, after some angry words with his wife, John grudgingly agrees to her novel suggestion that by chopping a painting in half they can sell it twice over. Mrs. Croome then sets off to the Fair with one half, leaving John with the other. He expresses his disappointment with the married state and prays for the safety of his bisected painting.

A short instrumental interlude depicts the passage of time from 1810 to 1910 and the next scene takes us to the National Gallery in London where a conducted tour is in progress. The guide relates the strange story of Crome’s painting, ‘Household Head’. The ghosts of Mr. and Mrs. Croome overhear his (her) words and John, realising with astonishment that the painting is now worth a great deal of money, has a neat trick up his ghost-like sleeve. For its happy consequence we return, after a speckle-churns interlude (‘Johnnie Croome go back home’), to 1810 and to John Crome’s house.

Production Notes:

This work was commissioned for the Samian Festival 1989 and first performed there on 12 May 1995.

The late Christopher Haward’s libretto was not originally written for stage use and has been adapted for this purpose with the kind permission of Mrs. Dea Haward.

Crome’s painting of ‘Household Head’ is reproduced on the cover by permission of The Tate Gallery, London.

Percussion and double-bass parts are on hire. Chorus parts are on sale. The two pianos play from the present scene.

PERCUSSION

4 Players

Cymbals
2 suspended (soft and hard sticks) and 2 for clashing
Flower Cymbals
Triangle
Side Drum
Bass Drum
Tambourine
Tabor (or medium Tom-Tom)
Wood Block

plus, for interlude 1 only:

Jingles
Tam-Tam
Wire Brush (on S.D. and Cymbal)
Claves
Scrapers
1 Temple Blocks (1 player)
Glockenspiel
Chromatic Xylophone
Chromatic Metallaphone
Metal Sheet
2 Tubular Bells
Sandpaper Blocks (5 players)
Train Whistles (4 players)
1-2 Motor Horns (1-2 players)

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