

PROGRAM LISTING:

Music From Behind the Moon (2002).....Edgar Warren Williams
*Entrance of the King—Madoc’s First Song—A Woman Like the Mist—Prayer of
the Salamander—Madoc’s Second Song—Maya’s Magic—To the Waste Behind the
Moon—A Quiet-Colored Paradise—The Face of Ettarre*

PROGRAM NOTES:

The scene is the supercilious Court of Netan, all men are poets, all poets are successful. Madoc is the youngest and, say the critics, the least accomplished poet of them all. Madoc, says the King, must perform a new song before the courts, one that satisfies all the critics. Alas, Madoc’s first song is laughed out of court. Withdrawing to the court gardens in disgrace, night falls. Madoc begins to hear another music, skirling. A woman white like the mist appears before him. She takes her heart from her breast and, upon her heart strings, plays a music not quite of this earth. Before Madoc can speak she disappears. Madoc is troubled by her music. All his attempts at a new song are merely parodies of this other music, this music not quite of this earth.

Madoc seeks out the wizard Docma, who performs the dreaded Prayer of the Salamander, evoking thunder, lightning, and—finally—the Father of Lies himself. Docma plucks a feather from Lucifer’s wing then sends him back into the fiery depths of hell. With this feather, Docma explains, Madoc can now write the Comfortable Music--that music liked by all men.

Again the court demands a likeable song from Madoc. With this pen made from a wing-feather of the father of lies, he write his second song. The court approves of the Comfortable Music. Madoc is a success. But, alas, he is still troubled by that other music, that music not quite of this earth.

Madoc seeks out Maya, High Sorceress. Maya explains that this music is made by the white witch Ettarre who makes her music on the dark side of the moon—this is the dreaded Music from Behind the Moon that troubles him. This is music that can be heard only by the very young and the very old. Madoc should not hear it. But now that he has, the only way to rid him of it is to kill the witch Ettarre. Maya performs her magic, conjuring up a magic sword that will kill the witch, and a silver beast half lion, half cockerel. Madoc takes the sword, mounts the beast, and takes off for the Waste behind the Moon. The flight is perilous; but--though assailed by various mythical creatures and female deities—in the end, Madoc reaches the dark side of the moon. To his surprise, he finds there a quiet colored paradise—and Ettarre at work on her music. The entire universe is suffused with her music and resonates with a tempered radiance that strikes Madoc to his heart. He raises his magic sword but, before he can strike, the witch raises her head, revealing to Madoc the Face of Ettarre. At that moment, Madoc realizes that what he feels is not hate but love. At that moment his poor parodies of her elfish music melds with that other music, that Music from Behind the Moon. The two embrace and . . . and . . .

But that is another story.

(This tale is told by James Branch Cabell in his *Music from Behind the Moon: A Comedy of Woman-Worship* (1926).)