

We Wommen Konne No Thyng Hele

for 6 voices or 6-part choir
and hand drum

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Lindensong

Sydney - Australia

We Wommen Konne No Thyng Hele

text: Geoffrey Chaucer, from 'the Wife of Bath's Tale', of 'the Canterbury Tales'

music by anthony linden jones © 1992, rev. 2001

dur: ~3:15

Original Text	Paraphrased interpretation
<p><i>We wommen konne no thyng hele; Witnesse on Myda, - wol ye heere the tale? Ovyde, amonges othere thynges smale, Seyde Myda hadde, under his longe heres, Growynge upon his heed two asses eres, The whiche vyce he hydde, as he best myghte, Ful subtilly from every mannes sighte, That, save his wyf, ther wiste of it namo. he loved hire moost, and trusted hire also; He preyede hire that to no creature She sholde tellen of his disfigure. She swoor him, 'Nay,' for al this world to wynne, She nolde nat do that vileynye or synne, To make hir housbonde han so foul a name. She nolde nat telle it for hir owene shame. But natheless, hir thoughte that she dyde, That she so longe sholde a conseil hyde; Hir thoughte it swal so soore aboute hir herte That nemely so work hire moost asterte; And sith she dorste telle it to no man, Doun to a mareys faste by she ran – Til she cam there, hir herte was a-fyre – And as a bitore bombleth in th emyre, She leyde hir mouth unto the water doun; 'Biwreye me nat, thou water, with thy soun,' Quod she; 'to thee I telle it and namo; Myn housbonde hath longe asses erys two! Now is myn herte al hool, now is it oute. I myghte no lenger kepe it, out of doute.' Heere may ye se, togh we a tyme abyde, Yet out it moot; we kan no conseil hyde.'</i></p>	<p>We women can conceal no secret. Look at Midas – will you hear the tale? Ovid, among other things small, Said Midas had, under his long hair, Growing upon his head, two asses ears. This defect he hid as best he could Cleverly from everybody's sight So that, except for his wife, nobody knew of it. He loved her completely, and entrusted And entreated her that to no creature Should she tell of his disfiguration. She swore him 'No, not for the whole world.' That she wouldn't do such a villainous thing. To make her husband suffer such a bad name – She dare not do it for her own shame. But nevertheless, she thought she would die After keeping the secret for such a long time. She thought it swelled so painfully in her heart That surely some word of it would burst out, And since she dare not tell it to anyone, She ran down to a nearby marsh. As she ran, her heart was all on fire And as a heron boomed across the mire, She put her mouth into the water. 'Oh water, don't betray me with your sound.' She said, 'I'll tell it to you and to nobody else. My husband two long asses ears. Now my heart is whole, now that it's out. I can no longer keep it secret, without doubt.' Here you can see, though we might keep it awhile, Yet, it must out – we can hide no secret.</p>

This piece uses some extended vocal techniques to highlight particular aspects of the Chaucer text, but it is essentially a simple strophic song. A frame drum (could be a *bodhran* or *tambour*) is used to both drive the pulse of the piece and to recall the sound of medieval dance music. The rhythm is derived from the iambic pentameter of the text.

The drum part is built from a number of rhythmic cells – all variants of the rhythmic feel of the text – which undergo simple transformations.

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We Wommen Konne No Thyng Hele

Text: Geoffrey Chaucer
Music: E.I.E.I.O.
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Tempo: ♩ = 90

Soprano: *spoken* *f* We wom-men kon-ne no thyng hele *Glissando*

Mezzo Soprano: *spoken* *f* We wom-men kon-ne no thyng hele *Glissando*

Alto: *spoken* *f* We wom-men kon-ne no thyng hele *Glissando*

Tenor: *p* kon - ne no thyng hele

Baritone: *mf* Wit-ness on My - da, wol ye heere the ta - le

Bass: *p* kon - ne no thyng hele

Frame Drum: *f* *mp* *p*

Soprano: *f* two ass - es

Mezzo Soprano: *f* two ass - es

Alto: *f* two ass - es

Tenor: kon - ne no thyng hele *mf* Grow-ynge u-pon his heed two ass - es

Baritone: Ov-yde a-mong-es o - there thyng-es smal - le *f* We

Bass: kon - ne no thyng hele Sey-de My - da had - de un-der his long-e heres *f* We

Frame Drum: *f*

Soprano: *Glissando* eres

Mezzo Soprano: *Glissando* eres

Alto: *Glissando* eres

Tenor: *f* eres *p* kon - ne no thyng hele

Baritone: *Glissando* wom - men kon - ne no thyng hele *mf* The whych - e vice he hyd-de as he best mygh-te Ful

Bass: *Glissando* 8 wom - men kon - ne no thyng hele *p* kon - ne no thyng hele

Frame Drum: *f* *mf* *p*

2
12

S

M

A

T

B

B

Dr.

p kon - ne no

p kon - ne no

kon - ne no thyng hele *mf* He lov-ed hire moost, and trus - ted hire al -

sub - til - ly from e - ver - y man - nes sygh - te

12 kon - ne no thyng hele *mf* That sa - ve his wyf ther wist - e of it na - mo

15

S

M

A

T

B

B

Dr.

mp He pre - ye - de hi - re that to no cre - a - tu -

thyng kon - ne no thyng hele *mp* He pre - ye - de hi - re that to no cre - a - tu -

thyng kon - ne no thyng hele *mp* He pre - ye - de hi - re that to no cre - a - tu -

so

15 *p*

24

S

M

A

T

B

B

Dr.

re She shol - de tell - en of his dis - fi - gu - re *mf* She swore him "Nay!" for

re She shol - de tell - en of his dis - fi - gu - re *mf* She swore him "Nay!" for

re She shol - de tell - en of his dis - fi - gu - re *mf* She swore him "Nay!" for

mf She swore him "Nay!" for

mf She swore him "Nay!" for

mf She swore him "Nay!" for

24 *mf* She swore him "Nay!" for

33

S al this world to wyne She nol - de do that vill - ey - nye or synne

M al this world to wyne She nol vill synne

A al this world to wyne She nol - de do that vill - ey - nye or synne

T al this world to wyne She nol vill synne

B al this world to wyne She nol vill synne

B al this world to wyne She nol vill synne

Dr. *mp* *p*

40

S *mp* To ma - ke hir hous - bon - de han so foul a na - me She nol - de nat tel - le it for hir

M *mp* To ma - ke hir hous - bon - de han so foul a na - me She nol - de nat tel - le it for hir

A *mp* To ma - ke hir hous - bon - de han so foul a na - me She nol - de nat tel - le it for hir

T

B

B

Dr. 40

50

S o - we - ne sha - me *p* We *whispered*

M o - we - ne sha - me *p* We *whispered*

A o - we - ne sha - me *mf* But *laughing voice* na - the - less hir though - te that she dy - de *p* We *whispered*

T

B

B *laughing voice*

Dr. 50 *mf* *p* *mp* That she so lon - ge shol - de a con - seil

58 *Gliss.* *spoken* *Gliss.* *Glissando*

S wo - mmen kon - ne no thyng We wo - mmen kon - ne no thyng hele

M wo - mmen kon - ne no thyng We wo - mmen kon - ne no thyng hele

A wo - mmen kon - ne no thyng We wo - mmen kon - ne no thyng hele

T

B

B *mf* Hir

Dr. *mf*

62

S

M

A

T *p* kon - ne no thyng hele kon - ne no thyng hele

B Though-te it swal so soore a-boute hir her-te That nede - ly som word hir - e most - e a - ster-te

B *p* kon - ne no thyng hele kon - ne no thyng hele *mf* And sith she dor - ste tell - e it to no man,

Dr. *p* *mf*

65

S

M *p* kon - ne no thyng hele no thyng hele

A *p* kon - ne no thyng hele no thyng hele

T *mf* Doun to a mar - eys fast - e by she *mp* ran.

B *mf* Til

B

Dr. *mf*

69

S

M

A

T

B

B

Dr.

p kon - ne no thyng hele kon - ne no thyng hele *mf* Bi -

she came there, hir her - te was a - fy-re, And as a bit - ore bomb - leth in the

69 *p* kon - ne no thyng hele kon - ne no thyng hele *mf* She laid hir mouth un-to the wa - ter doun

72

S

M

A

T

B

B

Dr.

f with thy soun *mp* Quod

f with thy soun *mp* she

f with thy soun *mp* to

wre-ye me nat, thou wa - ter, with thy soun *mp*

f We wom-men kon - ne no thyng hele *mp*

f We wom-men kon - ne no thyng hele *p*

72

78

S

M

A

T

B

B

Dr.

ff Myn hous-bon-de hath long ass-es er-ys two *molto rall* laughter

ff Myn hous-bon-de hath long ass-es er-ys two *molto rall* laughter

ff Myn hous-bon-de hath long ass-es er-ys two *molto rall* laughter

ff Myn hous-bon-de hath long ass-es er-ys two *molto rall* laughter

ff Myn hous-bon-de hath long ass-es er-ys two *molto rall* laughter

mp I and na - mo *ff* Myn hous-bon-de hath long ass-es er-ys two *molto rall* laughter

78 *mp* telle it and na - mo *ff* Myn hous-bon-de hath long ass-es er-ys two *molto rall* laughter

Slower

6
86 $\text{♩} = 50$

S *mf* Now is myn her - te al hool, now is it ou - te 1

M *mf* kon - ne no hele. hele

A *mf* Now is myn her - te

T *mp* Now is myn her - te al hool,

B *mp* kon - ne no thyng

B *mp* kon - ne no thyng

Dr. $\text{♩} = 12$

Tempo 1

90 $\text{♩} = 90$

S mygh - te no len - ger ke - pe it out of dou - te

M kon - ne no thyng hele

A *laughing voice*
I mygh - te no *mf* Heere may ye see, thogh we a time a - by - de

T mygh - te no len - ger dou - te

B hele. kon - ne no thyng

B hele. kon - ne no thyng

Dr. *f* *p* *mf* Yet

94

S *mp* We wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng *mf* wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng *f* wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng hele. *Glissando*

M *mp* We wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng *mf* wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng *f* wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng hele. *Glissando*

A *mp* We wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng *mf* wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng *f* wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng hele. *Glissando*

T *mf* We wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng *f* We wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng hele. *Glissando*

B *mf* We wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng *f* We wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng hele. *Glissando*

B *f* We wo-mmen kon-ne no thyng hele. *Glissando*

Dr. *mp* *mf* *f* *ff*