

SKATING INTO THE MELT

An Olympic poem - February 2010

Of course there are no songs
in Mahler's Fifth symphony; all
of his children are dying. We
close our eyes and see what the
composer already knew, death
in Venice and alpine meadows,
a boy and girl dancing on ice,
one degree closer to drowning.

*There is no human voice in his
passionate adagietto for harp and
string, no trumpet flourish, just
angels weeping and glimpses of
heaven refracted in frozen rain.*

What stopped one mother's heart
just before the music started?
Did the soul that left in her last
puff of breath dissolve in water?
Do the skaters hear the silence
of mothers and children frozen
in the moment their lives were
flooded with grief so all the world
could see their pain etched on
the transparent surface of glass?

As the Earth holds its breath, are
the partners, bending their knees
in moments of grace, skating into
the melt at the end of a song without
words, hoping there's still time for
the stillborn and the lost to rise up
singing through cracks in the ice?