



“A thaw of bygone snow”
Ten songs of love and loss

Ephrem Feeley

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These ten songs were written in the summer and autumn of 2007, and are musical reflections on the themes of love and loss, often portrayed together in literature. This is my first song cycle that explores a theme rather than consisting of disparate poems by a single poet. The ten poems chosen are by different authors: five of the texts are by female poets; my intention is that these are to be sung by a mezzo-soprano. The remaining five are by male poets, and it follows that these are to be sung by a baritone. The songs are to be performed in the order below, with baritone and mezzo-soprano alternating.

The title of the cycle is taken from a line in the opening song, *The First Day*, by Christina Rossetti. In the style of a recitative, this is sung wistfully, as the poet tries in vain to remember her first encounter with her beloved. This is followed by *Love's Secret*, a setting of a poem by William Blake. Behind the text is the sentiment that love unadmitted is in some way more authentic than love expressed. This setting is almost entirely strophic, with each of the three verses following a similar melodic pattern. A discordant piano interlude between the second and third verse mirrors the horror the poet's beloved feels upon learning of his love. The next song in the collection is *Wild Nights*, a robust setting of an Emily Dickinson poem. The fourth song, *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal*, uses the Tennyson poem in a tender setting that is interrupted just once by a short dramatic interlude. There follows another Tennyson setting – *Half the Night* – which is taken from the much longer poem *Maud*. This poignant setting meanders through a chromatic, modal melody, capturing the poet's agony of waiting through the night for the beloved. The next song takes a sudden turn; *There is a Lady Sweet and Kind* is a frolicsome, almost humorous, setting of a poem on courtly love by Renaissance poet Thomas Ford, which is set in folksong-style. The seventh song in the cycle is a setting of Sonnet No. 13 *If I Were Taken* by the French Renaissance poet Louise Labé, translated by the American poet Annie Finch. This is a delicate setting, with crisp détaché writing in the piano part supporting an energetic vocal line. Towards the end – “I would rather die than live” – the tempo slackens, with sustained piano chords, to draw attention to the words, only to quicken pace again to complete the piece. The eighth song, *Because She Would Ask Me Why I Loved Her*, sets the poem by the Australian poet Christopher Brennan. The penultimate song, *At Rest*, uses the poem by American poet Sara Teasdale. Her references to “a fugue of Bach's” inspired me to borrow accompaniment themes from Bach's F minor Prelude and Fugue, over a ground bass for fourteen bars, which ceases once the tone of the poem changes, only to return again at the very end. The final song *Love's Philosophy*, sets a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley, and concludes with the question that pervades the cycle: “what are all these kissings worth, if thou kiss not me?”

Ephrem Feeley
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|-------|---|-----------------|
| i) | The First Day | (Mezzo-Soprano) |
| ii) | Love's Secret | (Baritone) |
| iii) | Wild Nights | (Mezzo-Soprano) |
| iv) | Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal | (Baritone) |
| v) | Half the Night | (Mezzo-Soprano) |
| vi) | There is a Lady Sweet and Kind | (Baritone) |
| vii) | If I Were Taken | (Mezzo-Soprano) |
| viii) | Because She Would Ask Me If I Loved Her | (Baritone) |
| ix) | At Rest | (Mezzo-Soprano) |
| x) | Love's Philosophy | (Baritone) |

The First Day

Words: Christina Rossetti

Music: Ephrem Feeley

Andante quasi recitativo (♩ = 76)

Piano

I wish I could re-mem - ber the first day, first hour, first mo - ment of your mee - ting me, —

Pno.

— if bright or dim the sea - son it might be; —

Pno.

sum - mer or win - ter for aught I can say. So, un - re - cor - ded did it slip a - way,

Love's Secret

Words: William Blake

Music: Ephrem Feeley

Longingly ($\text{♩} = 84$)

Piano



The piano introduction consists of four measures. The right hand is silent. The left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment in G major, 3/4 time, starting with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic.

5

Ne - ver seek to tell thy love, love that ne - ver told can be;

Pno.



Measures 5-8. The vocal line begins with a half note on G4, followed by a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on B4, and a quarter note on C5. The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note pattern. Measure 6 has a common time signature (C), and measure 8 has a 3/4 time signature. The dynamic is mezzo-piano (*mp*).

9

for the gen - tle wind doth move si - lent - ly, in - vi - sib - ly.

Pno.



Measures 9-12. The vocal line continues with a half note on G4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on B4, and a quarter note on C5. The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note pattern. Measure 9 has a common time signature (C), and measure 10 has a 3/4 time signature. The dynamic is piano (*p*).

Wild Nights

Words: Emily Dickinson

Music: Ephrem Feeley

With vitality (♩ = 98)

Voice

Piano

mf

Wild nights, wild nights! Were I with

5

Voice

Pno.

mf

thee, wild nights, wild nights should be our lu - xu - ry,

9

Voice

Pno.

poco rit. *mf a tempo*

should be our lu - xu - ry. Fu - tile the winds to a

Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal

Words: Alfred Tennyson

Music: Ephrem Feeley

Tenderly (♩ = 80)

Now sleeps the crim-son pe-tal, now the white; nor

Piano *mp*
con ped.

This system contains the first four measures of the piece. The vocal line begins with a whole rest, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in both hands, with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and a *con ped.* marking.

waves the cy-press in the pa-lace walk; nor winks the gold-fin in the por-phyry font: the

Pno. *rit.* *a tempo*

This system contains measures 5 through 8. The vocal line continues with a quarter note G4, a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F#4. The piano accompaniment includes a *rit.* (ritardando) marking in measure 6, followed by an *a tempo* marking in measure 7.

fire-fly wa-kens: wa-ken thou with me. Now

Pno. *mf* *mp*

This system contains measures 9 through 12. The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, a quarter note F#4, a quarter note E4, and a quarter note D4. The piano accompaniment features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in measure 9, which then softens to mezzo-piano (*mp*) in measure 10.

Half the Night

Words: Alfred Tennyson

Music: Ephrem Feeley

Slow and deliberate (♩ = 100)

Piano

Half the night I waste in sighs,

5

half in dreams I sor - row af - ter the de - light of ear - ly skies.

9

In a wake - ful doze I sor - row

If I were Taken

Words: Louise Labé
Translation: Annie Finch

Music: Ephrem Feeley

Delicately (♩ = 76)

Voice

Oh, if I were ta-ken to that hand-some breast, and ra-vished by him for

Piano

mp

7

whom I seem to die, if I could live with him for all of my short days, —

Pno.

13

free of the en-vy of the rest. If

Pno.

mp

Because She Would Ask Me Why I Loved Her

Words: Christopher Brennan

Music: Ephrem Feeley

Gently (♩ = 82)

dolce

If ques - tio - ning would make us

Piano *mp sempre con rubato*

con ped.

5

wise, no eyes would e - ver gaze in eyes; if all our tale was told in

Pno. *mp sempre con rubato*

9

speech, no mouths would wan - der each to each. Were spi - rits free from mor - tal mesh, and

Pno. *mp*

At Rest

Words: Sara Teasdale

Music: Ephrem Feeley

Reflectively (♩ = 64)

Piano

I have re-mem-bered beau-ty in the

Pno.

night, a - gainst black si-len-ces I waked to see a shower of sun-light o-ver I-ta-ly, and

Pno.

green Ra-vel-lo drea-ming, drea-ming on her height. I have re-mem-bered mu-sic in the

Love's Philosophy

Words: Percy Bysshe Shelley

Music: Ephrem Feeley

With movement (♩. = 70)

8^{va}-----

mf

The four - tains min - gle with the ri - ver, and the

4

ri - vers with the o - cean, the winds of hea - ven mix for -

(8^{va})-----

4

Pno.

7

e - ver with a sweet e - mo - tion.

(8^{va})-----

7

Pno.