

On Love and Death

- 5 Rossetti Songs -

for Soprano and Piano

2009 – 2011

Christian Mason

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The songs can either be performed individually or as a complete set in the following order:

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Total Duration: c. 23 minutes

The words are taken from the following poems by Christina Rossetti (1830 - 94):

1. *A Birthday*
2. *To-day and To-morrow*
3. *What Good Shall My Life Do Me?*
4. *He and She*
5. *'Heaven's Chimes Are Slow...'*

From *Christina Rossetti – Selected Poems*, Edited by C.H. Sisson, Carcanet, 1984.

The verses used are printed on the following page, though the songs don't necessarily use all the words of the poems, and in some cases the poems are re-structured in the songs.

In an Halcyon Sea was commissioned by Rod and Nilla Freeman for their friend Sara on her 40th birthday in 2009.

The music of *Remember/Forget* is based on the original incidental music written for Peter Gill's play *Another Door Closed*, produced at Theatre Royal Bath in August 2009.

On Love and Death – 5 Rossetti Songs was first performed by Emily Hindrichs and Joseph Middleton at Aldeburgh Church on October 20th 2012, as part of the Britten Weekend.

1. In a Halcyon Sea (from *A Birthday*)

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

2. Leaf, Flower, Stone (from *To-day and Tomorrow*)

All the world is out in leaf,
Half the world in flower,
Earth has waited weeks and weeks
For this special hour:
Faint the rainbow comes and goes
On a sunny shower.

All the world is making love:
Bird to bird in bushes,
Beast to beast in glades, and frog
To frog among the rushes:
Wake, O south wind sweet with spice,
Wake the rose to blushes.

Life breaks forth to right and left –
Pipe wild-wood notes cheery.
Nevertheless there are the dead
Fast asleep and weary –
To-day we live, to-day we love,
Wake and listen, deary.

3. Through Light, Through Dark (from *What Good Shall My Life Do Me?*)

No hope in life: yet is there hope
In death, the threshold of man's scope.
Man yearneth (as the heliotrope

For ever seeks the sun) through light,
Through dark, for Love: all, read aright,
Is Love, for Love is infinite.

4. Remember/Forget (from *He and She*)

'Should one of us remember,
And one of us forget,
I wish I knew what each will do,
But who can tell as yet?'

'Should one of us remember,
And one of us forget,
I promise you what I will do –
And I'm content to wait for you,
And not be sure as yet.'

5. Heaven's Chimes Are Slow (from '*Heaven's Chimes Are Slow..*')

Heaven's chimes are slow, but sure to strike at last:
Earth's sands are slow, but surely dropping thro':
And much we have to suffer, much to do,
Before the time be past.

Chimes that keep time are neither slow nor fast:
Not many are the numbered sands nor few:
A time to suffer, and a time to do,
And then the time is past.

Dedicated to Harrison Birtwistle

1. In a Halcyon Sea

Christina Rossetti

Christian Mason
(2009)

Calm, contemplative

♩ = 45
senza vib.
pp

Musical score for the first system, measures 1-2. The vocal line features a melodic phrase starting with a half note, followed by a quarter note, and a half note. The piano accompaniment consists of a single half note in the right hand and a half note in the left hand. Dynamics include *pp* and *f*. Performance instructions include *mmm*, *aaa*, and *l.v. (to silence)*. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the piano part.

Musical score for the second system, measures 3-4. The vocal line continues with a melodic phrase. The piano accompaniment features a more active texture with eighth and sixteenth notes. Dynamics include *pp*, *mf*, *sfz*, and *p*. Performance instructions include *eee*, *8va*, and *l.v.*. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the piano part.

Musical score for the third system, measures 5-6. The vocal line features a melodic phrase with a vibrato section. The piano accompaniment includes a five-note arpeggio in the right hand. Dynamics include *pp*, *f*, and *pp*. Performance instructions include *mmm*, *iii*, *eee*, *vib.*, and *audible inhalation*. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the piano part.

A Intimate, intense use minimal vibrato and aim for a pure tone of voice

Musical score for measures 7-8. The vocal line starts with a triplet of eighth notes on 'my heart' and continues with a melodic line that rises and then falls, ending with a triplet on 'my'. Dynamics range from *p* to *f*. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand, with dynamics *f*, *p*, *ppp*, and *f*. Pedal markings are present at the beginning and end of the piano part.

Musical score for measures 9-10. The vocal line continues with a triplet on 'heart' and a melodic line that rises and then falls, ending with a triplet on 'my'. Dynamics range from *p* to *fp*. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand, with dynamics *p*, *ppp*, *f*, and *f*. Pedal markings are present at the end of the piano part.

Musical score for measures 11-12. The vocal line starts with a triplet on 'heart' and continues with a melodic line that rises and then falls, ending with a triplet on 'a'. Dynamics range from *f* to *p*. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand, with dynamics *p* and *pp*. Pedal markings are present at the end of the piano part.

B Exuberant, joyful

13 *f* *p* *mf*

breathy/half-whispered ord.

a sing - ing bird whose nest is in a wat-ered shoot an

f *p* *ff* *pp*

pp dolce

15 *p* *mf* *f*

breathy/half-whispered ord.

app - le tree whose boughs are bent with thick - set fruit a

p *pp dolce*

17

rain - bow shell that

f *p*

f *p*

8^{va}
Ped.

18

padd - - les in a hal - cyon sea - a

ff

10

3 3 3

3 6

(8)

19

eee - a - eee - a - eee - a - eee - a - eee - a eee - a - eee - a -

ppp

3 3 3 3 3 3

(8)

C Reflective, content

21

eee my heart is glad - der than all these

ppp *p*

3 3

(8)

23 breathy/half-whispered *pp* 3 ord.

be - cause my love is come to

ppp dolce

ppp dolce

rall. ♩ = c.30

25

me

ppp dolce

2. Leaf, Flower, Stone

Christina Rossetti

Christian Mason
(2010)

Fluid, Spontaneous
♩ = 66

8^{va}

pp *ff* *ppp*

6 7

2

8

p 9 10

3

8

f 11 12 12

4

8

ff 12 12 *ff* 12

5

8

ff 12 12 12

4/4

6

12 12 12 12

f

A Introspectively excited

7

p

All the world is out in leaf in leaf out in leaf

12 12 12 12 12

ppp

12

Half the world in flow - er flow - er flow - - -

12 12 12 12

B Anticipatory

15 *fp* *fp* *pp* *fp* *pp*

-er flow - er Earth has wait - ed wait - ed

20 *fp* *pp* *fp* *ppp* *fp* *pp* *fp* *pp*

wait - ed wait - ed wait - ed wait - ed

25 *fp* *ppp* *fp* *pp* *ff* **C** Joyful, Exuberant

wait - ed wai - ted weeks and weeks

30 *p* *ff* *f*

and _____ weeks _____ and _____ weeks _____ for this special hour _____

34 *pp* *p* *pp*

faint the rain - bow

36 *f* *p* *p*

comes _____ and goes _____ on a sun - ny show - -

38 *mf* *fppp* *fppp* *fppp* *fppp*

er show

39

er show

fppp *fppp* *fppp* *fppp* *fppp*

40

er

fppp *fppp* *fppp* *fppp* *fppp* *fppp*

41

show er

fppp *fppp* *fppp* *ff*

Ped.

42

rain bow show er

p *p*

44 *fp* *f* *fp* *f*

rain - bow show - er

p *p*

D

47 *ff* *mf*

All the world the world is ma - king love love love love

ff 6

Red.

51 *tr* *tr* *tr*

bird bird to bird in bu - shes

f *pp*

Red.

E

55

f

beast to beast in glades and

f Ped.

60

frog to frog among the rush - es wake

f Ped.

64

ff

o south wind sweet with spice wake wake the

ff

67

rose to blues

p

Ped.

F Slightly slower, wistful
♩ = 60

70

life breaks forth to

p

pp

76

right and left pipe wild wood notes cheer

pp

82

y N -

ppp dolce espress.

ppp dolce espress.

pp

G Melancholic

87

ev - er - the-less there are the dead fast a-sleep and wear -

mf *pp* *pp* *mf*

Ped. Ped.

8va

92

y to -

pp *p*

Ped. Ped.

8va

95 *f* *p* *f*

day we live to - day we love

(8)

98 *pp* *p*

love wake and lis - ten dear -

(8)

102 *mf* *p* *f* *ppp*

- y dear - - y

(8)

3. Through Light, Through Dark

Christina Rossetti

Christian Mason
(May 2011)

Searching
♩ = 40
ppp *p* *ppp*

No hope in life yet

is there hope in

death death

ppp bell-like *p*

Led.

14 *ppp* *fp* *pp* *pp* *p*

in death the thresh-old of mans scope man yearn eth as the

f pp *f p*

8^{vb}

A Flowing

19 *f* *p* *f*

he - li - o - trope for - ev - er seeks the sun

ffz *p* *f pp* *f pp* *f pp* *f pp*

8^{va}

f *ffz*

22 *ff* *p*

through light

f pp *f pp* *f pp*

23 *f* *ff* *fp*₃

through dark

*f pp*₅ *f pp*₆ 7 7

sffz *f* *f*

24 *f* *ff*

through dark

f p 7 6 5 *f p* *f p*

sffz

25 *p* *ff* *ff*

for

f *p*₃ *ff* *sffz*

sffz *sffz*

B Impassioned

26

love

fff *sfz* *p*

8^{va}

28

love

fff *sfz* *p*

8^{va}

30

love

fff *pp* *p*

8^{va}

4. Remember/Forget

Christina Rossetti

Christian Mason
(October 2010)

A Slow, fluid, mysterious, delicate
♩ = 45

pp *mp > pp* *pp* *mf > pp*

Should one

5 *pp* *f > pp* *pp* *ff* *p*

of us re -

B

9 *f* *p*

mem - ber and one of us one

p sempre
pp sempre
p *mf*

12

f *p* *f* *p*

of us for - get I wish I knew

15

f *pp* *ff* *pp*

what each will do but

18

f *pp*

who can tell as yet yet

C

21 *pp fpp* *f* *pp* *fpp*

— should one of us re- mem - ber and one of us for -

p cantabile *pp* *f* *p* *pp* *f*

p *f*

25 *f* *fpp* *fpp* *fpp* *fpp*

- get I prom - ise you what I will do and i'm con -

p *pp* *f* *p* *pp* *f* *f*

f *p*

29 *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *f* *p* *pp*

tent to wait for you you you you and not be sure as yet

3 p *pp* *f* *3 p* *pp* *3 p*

8^{va} ff *pp*

D

33 *f* *ppp* *mf* *ppp* *mf* *pp* <

for - - - - get - - - - yet for -

p sempre

p sempre

Ed.

37 *mf* *pp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

- get - - - - yet for - - - - get - - - - yet

mf

5. Heaven's Chimes Are Slow

Christina Rossetti

Christian Mason
(Nov. 2010 - Jan. 2011)

Ecstatically serene,
Infinitely delicate

♩ = c.20

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a *ppp* dynamic and a tempo marking of *c.20*. The lyrics are "Hea - vens chimes are slow _____ are". The middle staff is the right-hand piano accompaniment, featuring delicate arpeggiated figures and some triplet patterns. The bottom staff is the left-hand piano accompaniment, with a *ppp* dynamic and a *Red.* (Reduction) marking. The system concludes with a *fp* dynamic marking.

The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics "slow _____ are slow _____". The piano accompaniment continues with intricate textures, including triplets and dynamic shifts from *ppp* to *mf* and *fp*. The system ends with a *ppp* dynamic marking and a *f* dynamic marking.

A

The third system, marked with a box 'A', begins at measure 8. The vocal line has lyrics "Hea - vens chimes are slow _____ but _____ sure to strike at". The piano accompaniment is highly detailed, with various dynamics including *f*, *ppp*, *p*, *ppp*, *ff*, *pp*, *f*, and *mf*. The system concludes with a *Red.* marking.

B

12 *fp* *ppp* *p* *f* *f* *p* *f*

last _____ Earth's _____ sands are slow _____ but

16 *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *pp* *p* *fp* *fp* *fp*

sure - ly dropp-ing through _____ and much we have to suf-fer much to

C

20 *fp* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

do _____ be - fore the time be time be time be

Sos. Ped. sempre until bar 34

24 *f* *p* *f* *pp* *p* *f* *p*

time be time be time be

f *p* *f* *pp* *p* *f* *p*

p *ff* *p* *fff* *p* *ff* *p*

Ped.

27 *f* *pp* *p* *f* *p*

time be time be

f *pp* *p* *f* *p*

fff *p* *f* *p* *ff* *p*

Ped.

29 *f* *pp* *p* *f* *p*

time be be past

f *pp* *p* *f* *p*

fff *ff* *ff* *ff* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

Ped.

31 *ppp* *p* *pp*

past past

33 *f* *ppp*

past

D Incandescent, Effusive
 ♩ = c.48

35 *f*

chimes that keep time are nei - ther slow nor

ff sempre con forza
 (trem. as fast as possible)

ff Ped. sempre, but gently lift if resonance becomes too big

38 *mf*

fast not ma - ny are the num-bered sands nor

mf

E Wildly Clangorous

41 *ff*

few A time to

ff *ff* sempre con forza

p *pp* *ff*

Red.

44

suff - er and a time to

ff

46 *fff*

do _____ and _____ and _____

fff *fff* *fff*

48

then the _____ and _____ then the _____ and.

ff *f* *f*

51

then _____ the time _____ is past _____

p *pp* *p* *pp*

55 *p* *pp* *Red.*

58 *ppp* *pppp* *Red.*

F Very slow, serene, wistful
 ♩ = c.30

60 *pp* *f* *pp* *p* *ppp* *p*

time is past time is past

Very long: pause until after the sound has decayed completely

64 *ppp* *p*

Very long: pause until after the sound has decayed completely