

# *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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1. <i>In an Halcyon Sea</i> (2009) – c. 2.30 minutes.....	1
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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 40<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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**

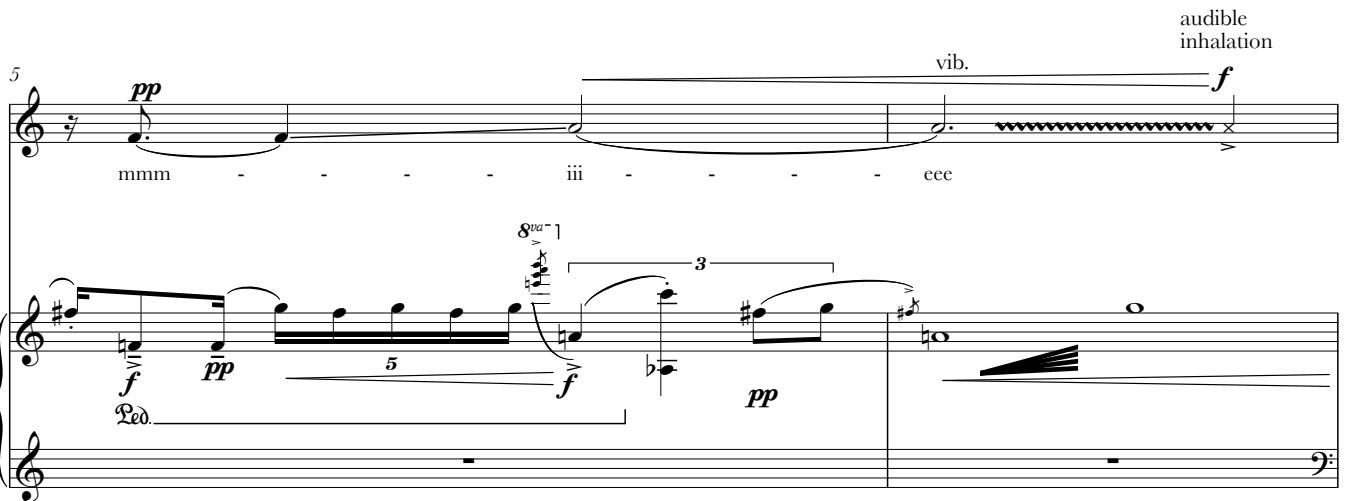
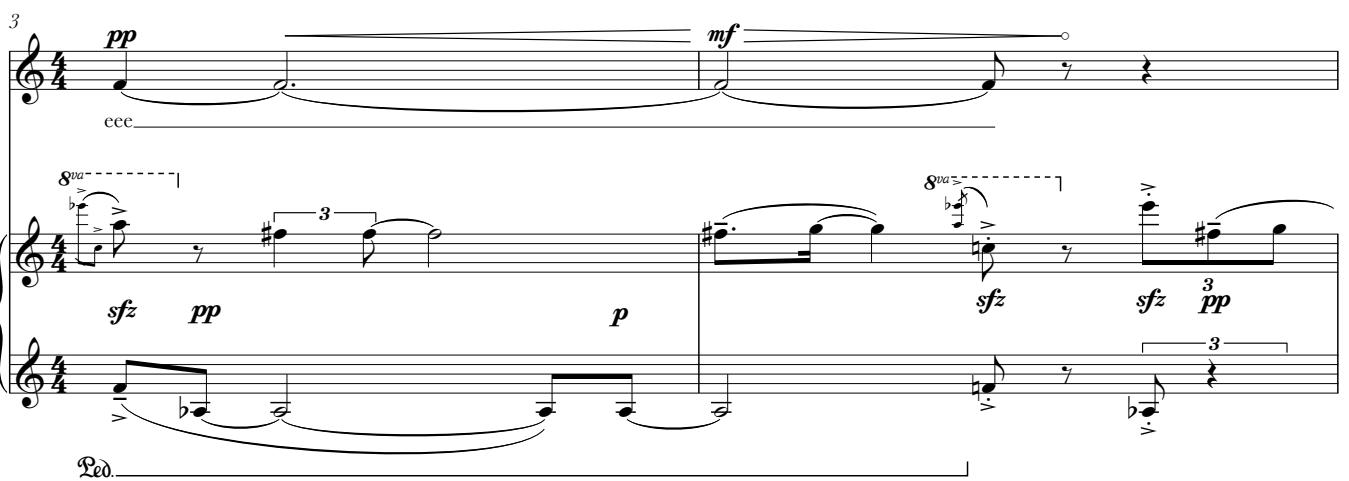
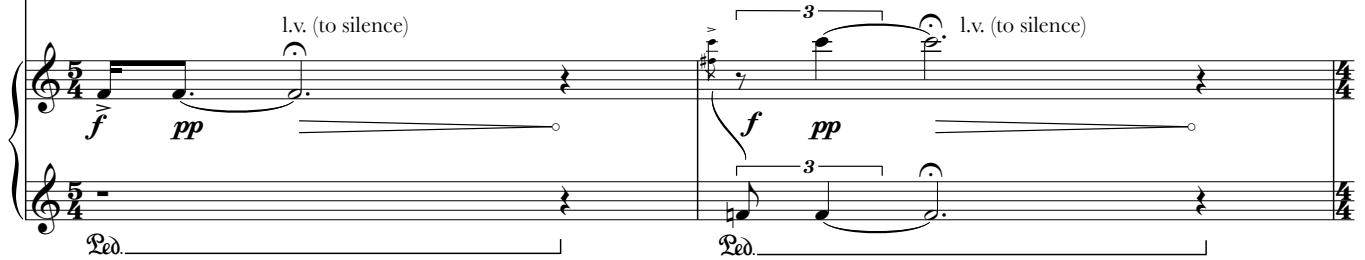
$\text{♩} = 45$

senza vib.

***pp***



l.v. (to silence)



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

7

my heart my

f p *ppp* f

*Ped.* f

9

heart my

p *fp*

*Ped.*

11

heart my heart my heart is like a

f p p *pp*

(8) *pp*

**B** Exuberant, joyful

13 *f* *p* [breathy/half-whispered] *ord.* *mf*  
 a sing - ing bird whose nest is in a wat-ered shoot an

8va *f* *p* *ff* *5* *3* *pp*  
*pp dolce*

15 *p* [breathy/half-whispered] *3* *mf* *ord.* *f*  
 app - le tree whose boughs are bent with thick - set fruit a

*p* *3* *5* *3*

17 rain - bow shell *that*  
*f* *6* *7* *5*  
*f* *p*  
*8va* *2d.*

18

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

*8va*

*ff*

(8)-----

19

*pp*

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

(8)-----

*ppp*

(8)-----

21

**C** Reflective, content

eee my heart is glad - der than all these

(8)-----

*ppp*

*p*

(8)-----

23

[breathy/half-whispered]

***pp***      3      ord.

be - cause my love is come to

***8va***

***ppp dolce***

***ppp dolce***

rall.       $\text{♩} = \text{c.30}$

25

me

(8)

## 2. Leaf, Flower, Stone

Christina Rossetti

Christian Mason  
(2010)

**Fluid, Spontaneous** *s'va*  
 $\text{♩} = 66$

6

(8)

*f*

(8)

**A** Introspectively excited

7

All the world\_\_\_\_ is\_\_\_\_ out\_\_\_\_ in leaf in leaf\_\_\_\_ out in leaf\_\_\_\_

(8)

*ppp*

(8)

12

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

(8)

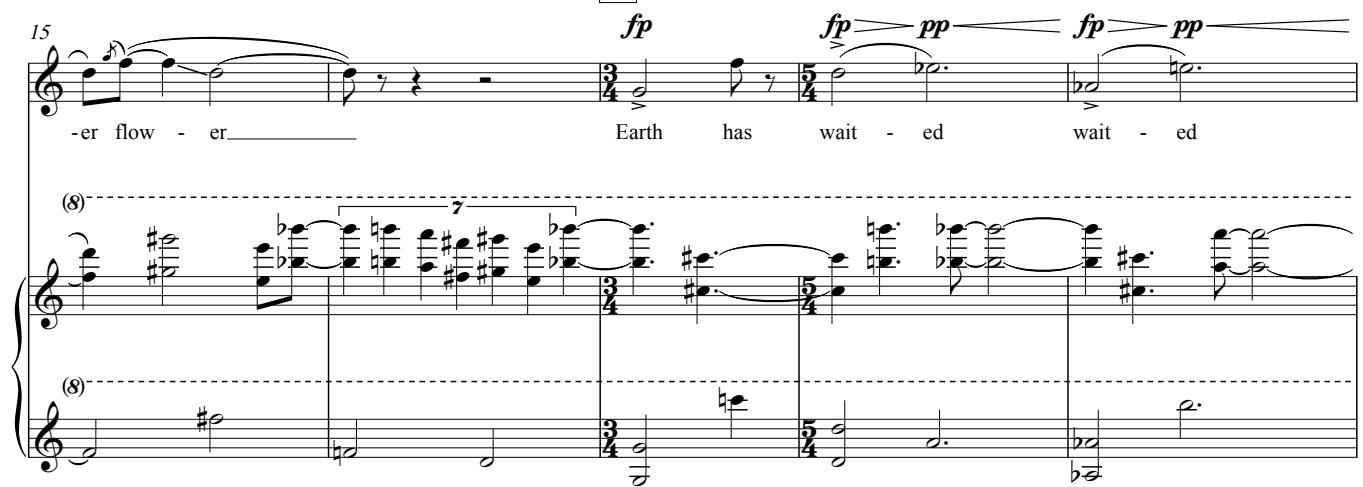
5

(8)

**B** Anticipatory

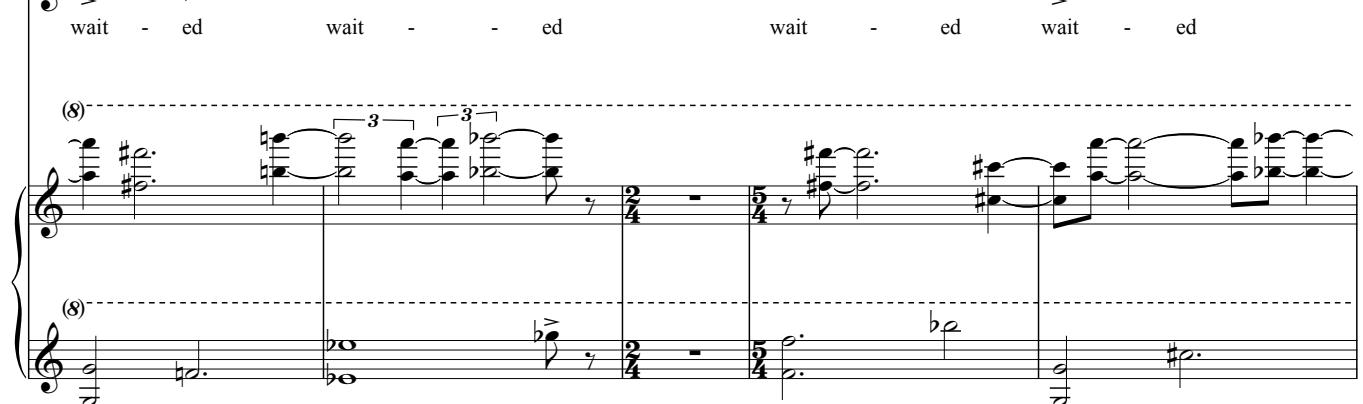
15      -er flow - er      *fp*      *fp* *pp*      *fp* *pp*

Earth has wait - ed      wait - ed

(8) 

wait - ed      wait - ed      *fp* *pp*      *fp* *pp*

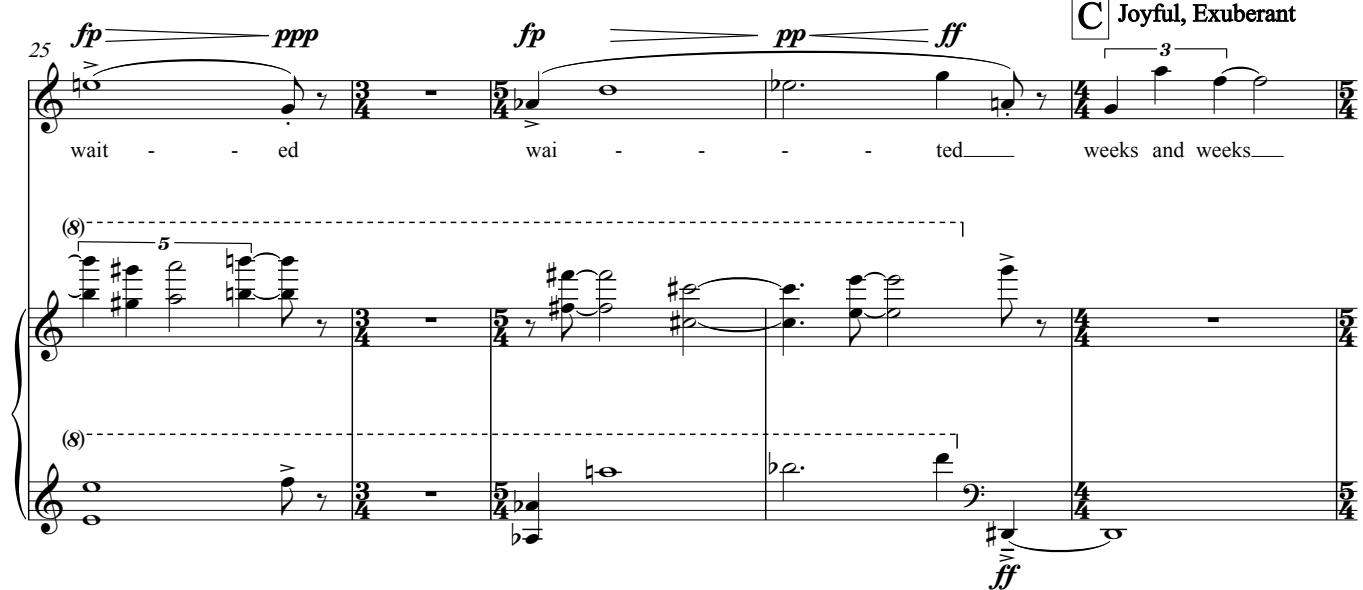
wait - ed      wait - ed

(8) 

**C** Joyful, Exuberant

25      *fp* *ppp*      *fp*      *pp* *ff*

wait - ed      wai - - - ted      weeks and weeks

(8) 

30 **p** and weeks and weeks for this special hour

ff

34

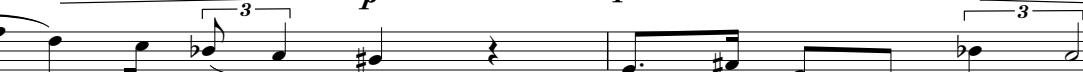
*faint the rain - bow*

*p*      *pp*

*pp*      *8vb*

Ped.

6

36 ***f*** 

Musical score for piano, page 10, measures 38-5. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is treble clef and the bottom staff is bass clef. Measure 38 starts with a dynamic *mf*. The lyrics "er show" are written below the notes. Measure 39 begins with a dynamic *f*, followed by four measures of eighth-note patterns. The dynamics for these measures are *f*, *fff*, *f*, and *fff*. Measure 5 concludes with a dynamic *f*.

39

er show

(8)

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

40

er

(8)

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

41

show er

(8)

*fppp* *fppp* *fppp* *ff*

*Ped.*

42

rain bow show er

*fp* *f* *fp* *f*

*p* *p*

44

rain - bow show - er

**D**

47

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

*legg.*

51

bird bird to bird in bu - shes

*legg.*

**E**

55 *f*

beast to beast in glades and

56 *f*

60

frog to frog a - mong the rush - es wake

64 *ff*

o south wind sweet with spice wake wake the

67

rose\_\_\_\_\_ to blu - - - shes

*p*

*p*

2e0\_\_\_\_\_

F Slightly slower, wistful

$\text{♩} = 60$

70

life\_\_\_\_\_ breaks forth\_\_\_\_\_ to\_\_\_\_\_

*pp*

*pp*

76

right and left\_\_\_\_\_ pipe wild wood notes\_\_\_\_\_ cheer

82

y \_\_\_\_\_ N -

*ppp dolce espress.*

*ppp dolce espress.*

**G Melancholic**

87

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

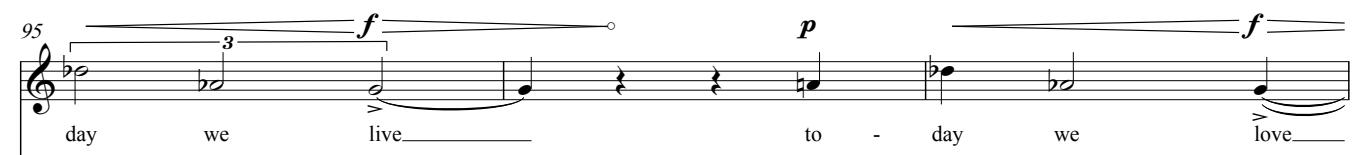
Ped. Ped.

92

to -

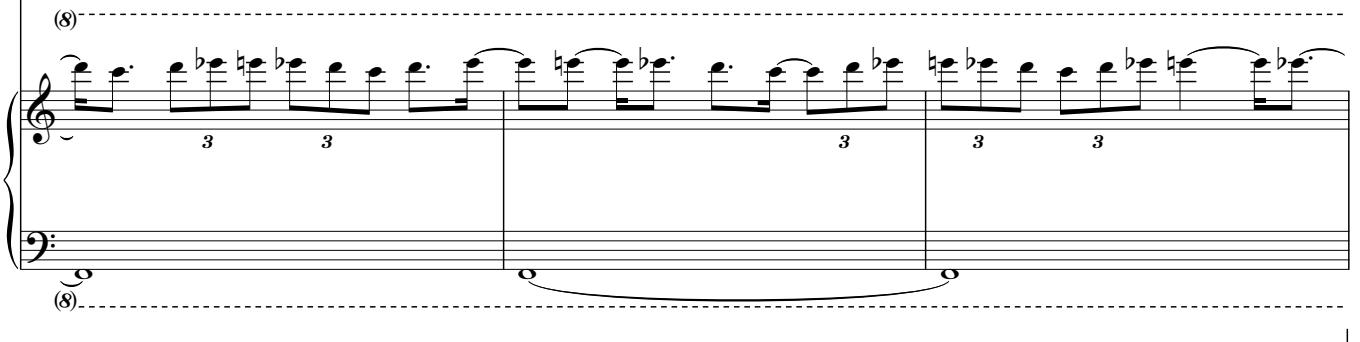
Ped. Ped. Ped.

95 *f* *p* *f*



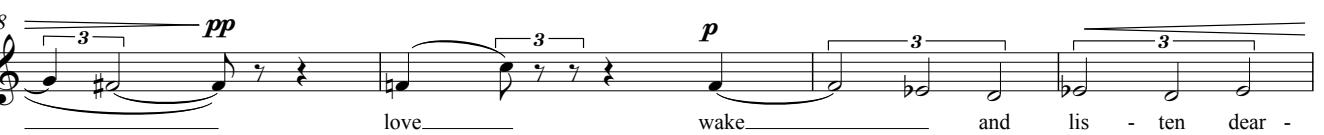
day we live\_\_\_\_\_, to - day we love\_\_\_\_\_

(8)



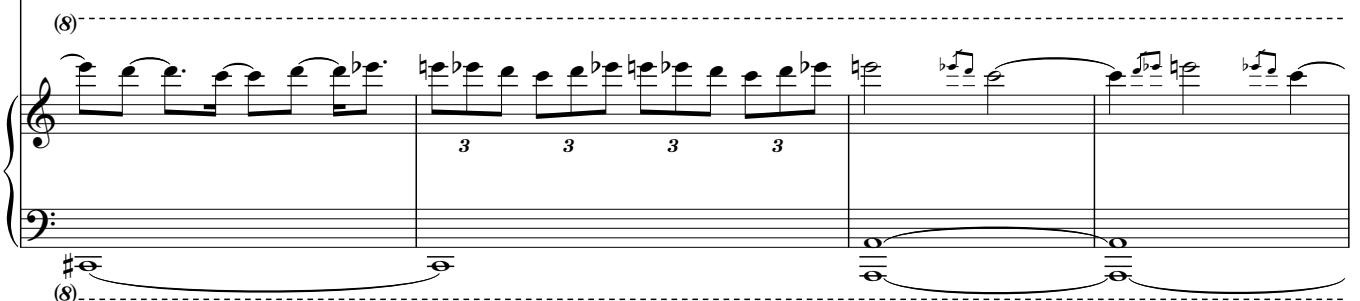
3 3 3 3

98 *pp* *p*



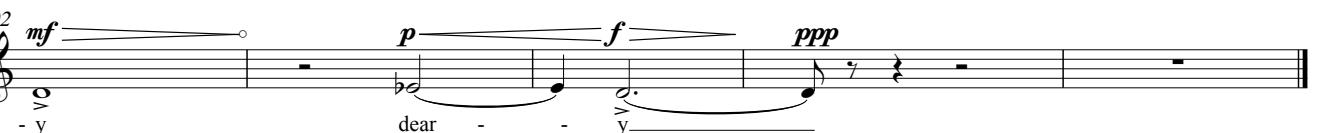
love\_\_\_\_\_, wake\_\_\_\_\_, and lis - ten dear -

(8)



3 3 3 3

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



dear - - - y

(8)



### 3. Through Light, Through Dark

Christina Rossetti

Christian Mason  
(May 2011)

**Searching**

$\text{♩} = 40$

**ppp**

No hope \_\_\_\_\_ in life \_\_\_\_\_ yet \_\_\_\_\_

**8va**

**ppp** **p** **ppp** **p** **ppp** **p** **ppp**

**Ped.**

5 **p** **ppp** **p**

is there hope in

**p** **ppp** **p** **ppp** **p**

**fp** **fp**

death death

**ppp bell-like**

**Ped.**

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

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

*f pp* *f p*

*8vb*

A Flowing

19 *f* *p* *f*

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

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

*f* *sffz*

22 *ff* *p*

through light.

*f pp* *f pp* *f pp*

*f* *sffz* *f*

23

*f*

*ff*

*fp* 3

— through — dark — 5

24

*f*

*ff*

through dark

*f p*

*f p*

*f p*

*sffz*

25

*p*

*ff*

for

*f* *p*

*ff*

*sffz*

*sffz*

**B Impassioned**

26

love \_\_\_\_\_

28

love \_\_\_\_\_

30

love \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Remember/Forget

Christina Rossetti

Christian Mason  
(October 2010)

**A** Slow, fluid, mysterious, delicate  
 $\text{♩} = 45$

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

Should \_\_\_\_\_ one \_\_\_\_\_

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

of \_\_\_\_\_ us \_\_\_\_\_ re -

**B**

9      *f*      *p*      *f*      *p*

mem - ber \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ one \_\_\_\_\_ of us \_\_\_\_\_ one -

*psempre*  
*ppsempre*

*p*      *p*      *mf*

12 *f* >  
 — of — us — for — get — I — wish I — knew

15 *f* *pp*  
 — what — each — will — do — but —

18 *f* *pp*  
 — who — can — tell — as yet — yet —



**D**

33 *f* *ppp* *mf* *ppp* *mf pp* —  
 for - get yet for -

*p sempre*  
*Ped.*

37 *mf* *pp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*  
 - get yet for - get yet

## 5. Heaven's Chimes Are Slow

Christina Rossetti

Christian Mason  
(Nov. 2010 - Jan. 2011)

**Ecstatically serene,  
Infinitely delicate**

$d = c.20$

*d = c.20*

**Hea - vens chimes are slow.**

*p* *fp*

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for voice, starting with dynamic *ppp*. The middle staff is for piano, with dynamics *ppp*, *f*, *p*, and *p*. The bottom staff is for bassoon, with dynamics *ppp* and *Ped.*. The vocal line includes lyrics: "Hea - vens chimes are slow." The piano accompaniment features various chords and arpeggiated patterns. The bassoon part consists of sustained notes. Measure numbers 1 through 10 are indicated above the staves.

4 *ppp* *mf* *fp* *f*  
slow \_\_\_\_\_  
are  
slow \_\_\_\_\_

*p* *f* *ff*

A

8

Hea - vens      chimes      are      slow \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ sure to strike at

*f* *ppp* *p* *ppp ff* *ff* *pp* *p* *f* *mf* *f* *Ped.*

**B**

12 *fp* *ppp*

last \_\_\_\_\_ Earth's sands are slow \_\_\_\_\_ but

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

*Red.*

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

*pp* *p* *fp* *fp* *fp*

**C**

20 *do\_\_\_\_\_ before the time be time be time be*

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

Sos. Ped. sempre until bar 34

24

*f*      *p*

time      be

*f*      *pp*

time \_\_\_\_\_

*p*

time      be

*f*      *p*

time      be

27

*f*      *pp*

time \_\_\_\_\_

*p*

time      be

*f*      *p*

time      be

*f*      *p*

time      be

29

*f*      *pp*

time \_\_\_\_\_

*p*

time      be

*f*      *p*

time      be

*f*      *p*

time      past

*f*      *pp*

time \_\_\_\_\_

*p*

time      be

*f*      *p*

time      be

*f*      *p*

time      past

*f*      *ff*

time \_\_\_\_\_

*p*

*f*      *p*

time      be

*f*      *pp*

time      be

*f*      *pp*

time      be

*f*      *pp*

time      be

*f*      *pp*

time      be

*fff*      *ff*

time \_\_\_\_\_

*ff*

31

33

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)

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

38

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

**E** Wildly Clangorous

41

few A time to

*ff sempre con forza*

**p** **pp** **ff** **ff** **ff**

44

suff - er and a time to

46 *fff*

do and and

*fff* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr*

48

then the and then the and

*ff* *f* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr*

51

then the time is past

*p* *pp*

55

(8)

58

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

60

*time is past*

64

Very long: pause until after the sound has decayed completely