

Jessica Rudman

Pictures of the Floating World

for Soprano and Tuba

with Text by Amy Lowell

2011
ca. 9:00

Pictures of the Floating World

Program Notes

Amy Lowell's collection of poems entitled *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919) is a set of poignant haiku-like works. The title of the book is a literal translation of the Japanese word "Ukiyo-e", which is a genre of paintings and woodcut prints dating back to the seventeenth century. The subject matter of such art works often include landscapes, historical tales, and images taken from theater. In a sense, they are vignettes frozen in time, and Lowell's poems capture that property magically.

In this eponymous set of songs for soprano and tuba, I have set seven of Lowell's poems (with an interlude for solo tuba). Like the texts, the songs are brief, and the sparse textures reflect the simple power of the words.

Composer Contact Information

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Text

From a Window

Your footfalls on the drum bridge beside my house
Are like the pattering drops of a passing shower,
So soon are they gone.

Sunshine

The pool is edged with blade-like leaves of irises.
If I throw a stone into the placid water,
It suddenly stiffens
Into rings and rings
Of sharp gold wire.

Meditation

A wise man,
Watching the stars pass across the sky,
Remarked:
In the upper air the fireflies move more slowly.

A Burnt Offering

Because there was no wind,
The smoke of your letters hung in the air
For a long time;
And its shape
Was the shape of your face,
My Beloved.

A Lover

If I could catch the green lantern of the firefly
I could see to write you a letter.

Ephemera

Silver-green lanterns tossing among windy branches:
So an old man thinks
Of the loves of his youth.

By Messenger

One night
When there was a clear moon,
I sat down
To write a poem
About maple-trees.
But the dazzle of moonlight
In the ink
Blinded me,
And I could only write
What I remembered.
Therefore, on the wrapping of my poem
I have inscribed your name.

Pictures of the Floating World

Amy Lowell

Jessica Rudman

I. From a Window

Steady ♩ = 100

Soprano

Tuba

p Your

mp *sfz* *p* *mf* *pp* *ff* *pp* *f* *p* *n*

accel. **rit.**

4 *mechanically* *mp* *f*

S. foot - falls on the drum bridge be - side my house

Tba. *f* *p* *mp* *mf* *n* *fp*

a tempo **Suddenly racing ca. ♩ = 144**

7 *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *decresc.*

S. are like the pat-ter-ring drops of a pas-sing show - er, so

Tba. *mf* *n* *mp* *mf*

10 *pp* *whispered*

S. soon are they gone.

Tba. *p* *n*

II. Sunshine

Freely, accel. **Dramatic** ♩ = 148 **rit.** **accel.**

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

S. The pool is edged with blade-like leaves of i-ris-ses. If I

Tba. **ff** **f** **p**

----- ♩ = 160 **Suddenly relaxed** ♩ = 120

4 **f**

S. throw a stone in - to the pla - cid wa - ter it sud - den - ly stif - fens In - to

Tba. **p** **ff** **f**

poco rit. al fine

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

S. rings and rings

Tba. **mf** **p**

10 **mf** **pp** **mp** **f** **p**

S. and rings of sharp gold wire.

Tba. whispered gradually rit. and decresc
: and rings :
like an echo

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III. Meditation

Delicate $\text{♩} = 54$ **pp** **accel.** **p**

S. A, a, a wise

Tba. **pp**

rit. **a tempo**

5 S. **mp** **p** man Watch - ing the

Tba. **mp** **p**

accel. **mf** **p** **pp sub.**

9 S. stars pass a- cross the sky,

Tba. **mf** **pp**

spoken (freely) **a tempo** sung **f** **p** **ff**

12 S. Re- marked: in the up - per air the fire - - flies move,

Tba. **f** **mf** **pp**

rit. al fine

S. 16

move _____ more slow - - - ly. _____

Tba. valve clicks gradually slow down

tremolo fingernails on bell start very slow and accelerate

f possible _____ *n* _____ *pp* _____ *f possible*

IV. A Burnt Offering

Solemnly

pp whispered 5" _____

S. Be-cause there was no wind

sung, but very airy 7" _____ ,

The smoke of your let-ters hung, _____

mp _____ 8" _____ *pp* *p* 6" _____ //

hung _____ in the air For a long time; _____

ppp _____ *mf* *p* _____ 9" _____

ord. 2" _____ 5" _____

S. And, and its shape Was the shape of your face,

f 5" _____ *mp sub.* 7" _____ *pp*

your face, your face, whispered 3" _____

My Be-lov-ed.

V. Interlude

Very Slow and Contemplative **accel.**

Tba. *air* *n* *f possible* *mp* *fingernails on bell* *n* *p* *mp* *fingernails on bell* *f* *stamp* *mp* *fingernails on bell* *cresc.*

rit.

Tba. *valve clicks* *f possible* *n* *air* *f possible* *n*

Pressing Forward *sing smaller noteheads in any octave

Tba. *p* *ppp* *p* *f* *ff* *n*

With Motion brassy

Tba. *air* *f possible* *ff* *n* *ff* *fff*

VI. A Lover

7

With Child-like Excitement ♩ = 240

S. *mf* *ff* *pp*
If I could catch the green lan - tern of the fire - fly,

Tba. *f* *p* *ff* *pp*
brassy → airy ord., flz.

S. *p* *fff* *mp*
I could see to write you a let - ter.

Tba. *p* *f* *ff* *p*
airy → brassy ord., flz.

VII. Ephemera

Gentle ♩ = 72

S. *pp* *poco accel.* *poco rit.* *pp*
Sil-ver green lan - terns tos sing a-mong wind-y branch - es,

Tba. *pp* *p* *pp* *mp*
airy 3 3 3

S. *mp* *poco accel.* *poco rit. al fine* *mf* *p*
So an old man thinks Of the loves of his youth.

Tba. *mf* *p*
3

Sultry ♩ = 54

a tempo

f **fff**

f **throaty**

jazzzy

night, one night, I sat down

***sing smaller noteheads in any octave**

f **ffp** **f**

9 spoken primly in free rhythm

S. To write a poem about maple trees.

air

Tba. snap

finger nails on bell

valve clicks start very slow and accelerate

Lazy ♩ = 88

p *fp*

// sung

But the daz - - -

n *f* possible *mp*

pp

12 *f* *p* whispered in awe

S. -zle of moon - light In the ink Blind - ed me,

Tba. *f* possible

16 *accel.* sung *f* *p* *f* *mp*

S. The daz - zle blind - ed me, blind-ed me, blind - ed me, And I could on - ly

Tba. *f* *p* *mp* *f* *mf*

19 *♩ = 120* *ff* *pp* *rit.* *mf* *p* *mp*

S. write What I re - mem-bered, What I

Tba. snap *mp* *mp* *f* *p*

22 *♩ = 96* *pp* *ff* *p* *ff* *molto accel.*

S. re - mem bered. There - fore, on the wrap-ping of my poem, There-fore,

Tba. *mf* *pp* *f* *fp*

Suddenly Broad ♩ = 72

26 *fff* shouted sung *growing more gentle* *mp* angelic

S. There - fore, I, I

Tba. stamp *ff* *mf dolce* *p*

29 *pp*

S. have in - scribed your name.

Tba. *pp* airy