

Jessica Rudman

The Sharp Edges of the Night

for Soprano and Piano Four-Hands

with Text by Amy Lowell

2011
ca. 10:30

The Sharp Edges of the Night

Program Notes

The Sharp Edges of the Night is a song cycle on four poems from Amy Lowell's Swordblades and Poppy Seed (1914). Each text deals with love, though none of them (except possibly the third) are pure expressions of the positive aspects of that emotion. A number of shared images link the four poems, creating a unified exploration of the light and dark sides of narrator's, or in this case the singer's, need for her beloved.

Performance Instructions

- An “X” time signature indicates an unmetred section. For the purposes of measure numbering, each unmetred section is counted as a single measure, even if it spans more than one system.
- In unmetred sections, durational notation is frequently used (see soprano in movement I, m. 55 for example). Groups of notes (ie. phrases) are joined by a beam with a number above denoting the approximate duration in seconds for the entire group. Placement of the attacks within each group is suggested by the horizontal spacing of the notes or chords.
- Durational notation is sometimes used in metered sections as well (see piano player 1 in movement I, m. 20 for example). In such cases, the durational notation expresses approximate placement within the measure. Notes should still be held for the length of the beam or until the next note included in the beam.
- An arrow pointing up above a cluster indicates the cluster should start as high as possible. Correspondingly, an arrow pointing down below a cluster means the cluster should start as low as possible.
- Clusters are indicated using the notation to the right. They should involve both black and white keys, and can be performed by slapping one's hand freely on the keys. When a clear bass note is indicated (as in this example), use that as the lowest pitch and span the approximate range shown (generally around a fifth).



Composer Contact Information

Jessica Rudman

Email: jessica_rudman@yahoo.com

Website: www.jessicarudman.com

Text

I. Anticipation

I have been temperate always,
But I am like to be very drunk
With your coming.
There have been times
I feared to walk down the street
Lest I should reel with the wine of you,
And jerk against my neighbours
As they go by.
I am parched now, and my tongue is horrible in my mouth,
But my brain is noisy
With the clash and gurgle of filling wine-cups.

II. The Bungler

You glow in my heart
Like the flames of uncounted candles.
But when I go to warm my hands,
My clumsiness overturns the light,
And then I stumble
Against the tables and chairs.

III. Aubade

As I would free the white almond from the green husk
So would I strip your trappings off,
Beloved.
And fingering the smooth and polished kernel
I should see that in my hands glittered a gem beyond counting.

IV. The Taxi

When I go away from you
The world beats dead
Like a slackened drum.
I call out for you against the juttred stars
And shout into the ridges of the wind.
Streets coming fast,
One after the other,
Wedge you away from me,
And the lamps of the city prick my eyes
So that I can no longer see your face.
Why should I leave you,
To wound myself upon the sharp edges of the night?

The Sharp Edges of the Night

Amy Lowell

Jessica Rudman

I. Anticipation

Steady ♩ = 60 (♩ = ♩ throughout)
p demure, but increasingly emphatic

Soprano
I have been tem - pe rate al - - - ways,

Player 1
silently press keys

Player 2
p ominous *mf* *pp*

5
S. *f* al - - - ways, *pp* al -

P. 1

P. 2
with growing excitement
f *ff* *p* *f* 8vb

9 **shouted** **ff** **11** sung **molto accel.** *secretly gleeful* **p**

S. ways. But I am

P. 1 **ff** **p**

Inside: slow gliss with paperclip

P. 2 **p** **fff** as fast as possible in any order **pp cresc.**

(8) **f** **fff**

12 **f** **mp** **ff** **♩ = 132**

S. like to be_ ve - ry drunk with your

P. 1 **brightly** **f** **ff** **mf**

On keys

P. 2 **f** **ff** **p** **ff** **mysterious**

(b) **grb** **f** **Red.**

14 15

S. com - ing. *p* I, *pp* I, I,

P. 1 *delicate* *pp* *cresc.* *mp* *p*

P. 2 *lush* *p* *mf* *p* (ring only) *f*

(8)---] *pp*
gradually raise ped.

poco accel.

18

S. I am to be

P. 1 *mp* *energetically* *p*

P. 2 *mp* *mf* *p*

a tempo (♩ = 132)

20

S. *drunk*

P. 1 *drunkenly*

P. 2

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

with

21

S. *your*

P. 1

P. 2

ff *p* *f* *mp* *mf* *mp* *pp* *f*

22 *mp*

S. com - - - ing.

P. 1 *p*

mp

Inside: roll with soft timpani mallets on the lowest pitches possible

P. 2 *n* *f*

25 Frozen ♩ = 88

pp
inhaled (alt: vocal fry)

S. There have been times I feared,

whispered

P. 1 *ff* bell-like

P. 2 *ppp* *ff* *pp* *f*

molto accel. ♩ = 120

30 half-sung *f* with growing urgency

S. times I feared to walk ord. 3 down the street

P. 1

P. 2

pp

n

32 *mp*

S. Lest I should reel,

P. 1

P. 2

p

ff

mp

p

On keys

accel.

34 **f**

S. reel with the wine of

P. 1 **mf** **ff** **p cresc.** 3 5 6

P. 2 **f** **mp** **f**

♩ = 160

36 **ff**

S. you,

P. 1 **ff** **fff** **dr** 3 4

P. 2 **ff** **fff** 3

41 Suddenly Still ♩ = 88

38

S.

P. 1

P. 2

pp wistful

pp wistful

42

S.

P. 1

P. 2

p

and jerk a - gainst my

mp

mf

p

f

46

47

4"

S. neigh - bours As they go by.

P. 1

pp

as fast as possible
in any order

ppp ad lib multiple wild cresc. and decresc.

P. 2

pp

expressive

9"

S.

P. 1

as fast as possible
in any order

ppp ad lib multiple wild cresc. and decresc.

P. 2

48 **ff** *3* *lightly muffle string* *p* *f* *p* *pp* *cold* *f* *inhaled* *pp* *f*

S. I am parched now, and my tongue

P. 1

P. 2

ff

sed

molto accel. **rit.** *like spitting something out*

51 *p* *f* *ff*

S. is h - h - hor - ri - ble in my mouth,

P. 1

P. 2

Inside: slap bass strings *ff*

56**Free, Quasi-Recitative**

f *p* *sfz*

8" 5"

S. But my brain is nois - y with the clash

pluck string with fingernail or guitar pick

P. 1 *f* *mf* *p*

P. 2

57 3" // 7" *ppp*

S. and gur - gle of fill - ing wine - cups.

P. 1

P. 2

II. The Bungler

Warmly ♩ = 80

S. *mp dolce* ———— You, ————

P. 1 *On keys*
p poignant *mp* *mf* *f*

P. 2 *On keys*
pp *mf decresc.*
mysterious
p cresc.
+ una corda

4 *f* *p* *mf* *p* **6**

S. ———— you ————

P. 1 *tr* *p* *f*

P. 2 *pp cresc.*
mf *p cresc.*

7 *mf* *ff* *p*

S. *mf* *ff* *p*

glow in my heart

P. 1 *p* *mf* *mp*

P. 2 *f* *f*

10 *mp* *f*

S. *mp* *f*

Like the flames of un - count - ed

P. 1 *mf* *mp*

P. 2 *mp* *mf* *mp*

12 *p*

S. can - dles.

P. 1 *mf*

P. 2 *pp*

molto accel.

14 *p*

S. But when I

P. 1 *f* (remain ♩ = 80)
keep repeating, gradually slowing down *mf*

P. 2 *ff* unbalanced *pp*

16

S. *f* *ff*

go to warm my hands, My

P. 1 *decresc. poco a poco*

P. 2 *p* *mf* *f* *pp* *f*

ff *p* *f*

Red.

17

S. *3* *f* *ff*

clum - si - ness o - ver - turns the

P. 1

P. 2 *pp* *p* *f* *ff*

f *Red.*

♩ = 108

20

molto rit.

p light. _____

mf* vulnerable** sung ***p ***And then I stum-ble, then I***

p ***mp***

p ***mf*** ***p***

slowly

ped.

22

f

***mf* decresc. al fine**

mf

f

complete 1-2 more repetitions

hold pedal into Movement III until ring from player 1 dissipates

III. Aubade

Austere and Prayer-like

pp $\xrightarrow{8''}$ *mp* $\xrightarrow{5''}$ *p* $\xrightarrow{5''}$ *mf*

S. 
As I would free the white al - mond

p $\xrightarrow{4''}$ *pp* // *p* $\xrightarrow{11''}$ *mf* *ppp sub.* $\xrightarrow{f}$

with growing fervor

S. 
from the green husk So would I strip your trap - pings off, Be - lov - ed,

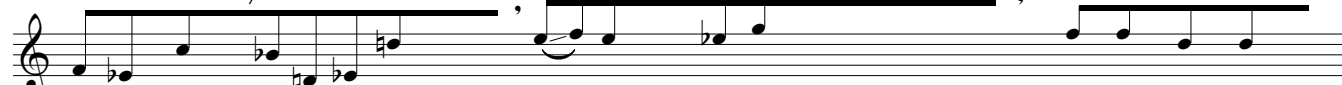
pp *reverently* $\xrightarrow{7''}$ *mf* *passionately* $\xrightarrow{9''}$ *ff* $\xrightarrow{p sub.}$

S. 
be - lov - ed, be, be - lov - ed.

ppp *half-sung* $\xrightarrow{2''}$ *mp* *extremely even* $\xrightarrow{3''}$ *ord.* $\xrightarrow{9''}$ *mf* *increasingly free*

S. 
And fin - ger - ing, and fin - ger - ing the smooth and po - lished ker - nel

$\xrightarrow{7''}$ *f* $\xrightarrow{8''}$ *ff* $\xrightarrow{6''}$ *p*

S. 
I should see that in my hands glit - tered a gem be - yond count - ing.

IV. The Taxi

Manic ♩ = 112-120

S. *mf*
When

P. 1 *f energetically* *ff* *mp*

P. 2 *f energetically* *ff*

3 *ff* *f*

S. I go a-way from you the world beats dead like a slack ened

P. 1 *f* *p*

P. 2 *p* *f* *p*

5 6 *f* *ff*

S. *p* drum. I call out for

P. 1 *f* *ff* *pp* *pp* *ff*

P. 2 *ff* *pp* *f*

Red.

7 *pp* *mp*

S. you among the jut - ted stars And shout

as fast as possible
8va

P. 1 *ff* *ppp* *ad lib multiple wild cresc. and decresc.* *ff*

P. 2 *ff* *p*

9 *f* *p* *ff* hysterically

S. in-to the rid - ges of the wind. Streets coming

P. 1

P. 2

ff *p* *ff* *8va*

11

fast! One af-ter the o-ther, com-ing, com - ing fast,

S. shouted *f* sung *ff*

P. 1

P. 2

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

Inside: fast gliss with paperclip

14

S. *p* *f* *pp* *f*
 streets _____ com - ing, streets, _____ fast _____

P. 1 *p* *pp* *n*
tr _____

as fast as possible

P. 2 *ppp* legato *ff* *mf*

S. *ff*
 streets _____ Wedge you _____

P. 1 *mf* *f*
tr _____ 7 5

P. 2 *f*
 3 6

18

S.

fff

a -

P. 1

tr

3

5

ff

P. 2

tr

3

ff

3

20

21

S.

way from me,

P. 1

fff

pp

ff

fff

8va

P. 2

fff

pp

fff

p

loco

8vb

9"

S.

P. 1

P. 2

p

mf *pp*

(8)

22 Subdued ♩ = 72

pp bleakly

S.

P. 1

P. 2

ppp withdrawn

ppp withdrawn

And the lamps of the ci - ty prick my eyes

26 **molto rit.**

S. *So that I can no longer see your*

P. 1 *slow*

P. 2

32

30 **Frantic** ♩ = 112-120 **ff**

S. *face. Why should I*

P. 1 *slower* **ff** *8va* **f harsh**

P. 2 **f harsh** **ff** **fff** *8vb* **ff**

34

S. leave you, To wound my - self

P. 1

P. 2

ff *fff* *f* *ff*

tr *tr*

3 5 3 (h)(h)

5 5 3

8th *Red*

39

37

S. u - pon the sharp ed - ges of the night?

P. 1

P. 2

fff *ff* *ff*

3 3 3 3

(h) (h) (h) (h)

Red

40

S.

P. 1

cresc.

overwhelm the singer!

8va

P. 2

cresc.

overwhelm the singer!

8va

Red

43

S.

P. 1

fff

fff

both hands or forearms

P. 2

fff

fff

both hands or forearms

8vb

Red