

Jessica Rudman

A Curious Incident with the Queen

for SATB Chorus and Chamber Ensemble

with Text by Edith Nesbit

2017
ca. 10:00

A Curious Incident with the Queen

SATB with Clarinet in B-flat, Trumpet in C, Cello, and Piano

* TRANSPOSED SCORE *

Performance Notes

- For the trumpet part, a cup mute can be substituted if a bucket mute is not available.
- A piano reduction of the instrumental accompaniment is included for rehearsals purposes. The piece may also be performed using this reduction in place of the full quartet.

Program Notes

A Curious Incident with the Queen is based Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet*. Written in 1906, the novel concludes a trilogy chronicling the fantastical adventures of four siblings while their parents are abroad. In this book, the children find one half of a two-part amulet that promises to give them their greatest desire—the safe return of their parents—and they undertake a quest to find the second half. The amulet has the power to transport people through time, so the children travel to times and places where the second half of the amulet might be found. In the company of a wish-granting creature called the Psammead, the siblings visit a utopian future as well as past civilizations including Egypt, Atlantis, and Babylon. While in Babylon, one of the children reveals to its Queen that the Psammead grants wishes. She wishes to see the children's country and is transported to London circa 1900, where the children show her the city.

This composition dramatizes a small scene from that tour, where the Queen sees the poor people of the city and mistakes them for slaves. The children naively respond that they are not slaves because they have “votes.” The interaction, while brief and of no particular consequence in the plot of the story, struck me as particularly relevant to contemporary circumstances, which I was commissioned by The Astoria Choir in 2016.

I selected the text shortly after the American presidential election, seeing in Nesbit's words an expression of both the disparity between the highest and lowest echelons of our economy and also the feeling of political powerlessness many people felt as a result of the election. To me, what seems like a fanciful, even humorous scene in fact brings up a number of serious issues. It calls to attention the question of how or even whether a society that condones economic oppression is any better than one that practices slavery. It also asks us to consider what it means to have a voice in government if it does not seem to make a difference in one's quality of life. These profound undercurrents are what stayed with me after reading Nesbit's story, and I hope that her words will make a similarly lasting impression on audiences hearing this piece.

Composer Contact Information

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Text

And now from the window
of a four-wheeled cab
the Queen of Babylon
beheld the wondrous wonders of London.

Buckingham Palace she thought uninteresting;
Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament little
better.

But she liked the Tower,
and the River and the ships filled her with delight.

“But how badly you keep your slaves.
How wretched and poor and neglected they seem,”
said the Queen, as the cab rattled
along the Mile End Road.
And Jane replied:
“They aren't slaves;
they're working-people.”

“Of course they're working.
That's what slaves are.
Do you suppose I don't know
a slave's face when I see it?
Why don't their masters see
that they're better fed and better clothed?
Tell me in three words.”

No one answered.
The wage-system of modern England
is a little difficult to explain in three words
even if you understand it,
which the children did not.

“You'll have a revolt of your slaves
if you're not careful,”
said the Queen, as the cab continued
along the Mile End Road.

“Oh, no,” said Cyril;
“you see they have votes—
that makes them safe not to revolt.
It makes all the difference.
Father told me so.”

“What is this vote?” asked the Queen.
“Is it a charm? Is it a spell?
Can it make things, buy things, fix things?
Does it heal them or help them?
Tell me, what do they do with it?”

“I don't know,” said the harassed Cyril;
“it's just a vote, that's all!
They don't do anything particular with it.”

“I see,” said the Queen, “a sort of plaything.
Well, I wish that all these slaves
may have in their hands this moment
their fill of their favorite food and drink.”

Instantly all the people in the Mile End Road,
and in all the other streets where poor people live,
found their hands full of things to eat and drink.
Roast meat, fowls, red lobsters, great yellowy crabs,
fried fish, boiled pork, beef-steak puddings,
baked onions, mutton pies;
most of the young ones
had oranges and sweets and cake.

It made an enormous change
in the look of the Mile End Road—
brightened it up, so to speak,
and brightened up,
more than you can possibly imagine,
the faces of the people.

“Makes a difference, doesn't it?” asked the Queen.
And Jane replied with cordial approval,
“That's the best wish you've had yet.”

12

rit.

13

19 Energetic ♩.=84

3

S.

A.
Buck-ing-ham Pa-lace she thought un

T.

B.

19 Energetic ♩.=84

Pno. Red.

17

pp Red.

S.
West - min - ster Ab - bey and the Hous - es of

A.
in - terest ing;

T.

B.

Pno. Red.

21

pp Red.

27

S. Par - lia - ment lit - tle bet - ter.

A.

T. *p warmly*
But she

B.

27

Pno. Red.

25 *p* *n*

rit.

S.

A. *mf warmly*
and the ships

T. *mp* *mf*
liked the Tow - er, and the Ri - ver and the ships

B. *mp warmly* *mf*
and the Ri - ver and the ships

rit.

Pno. Red.

pp *mp* *mf*

29

mf *f* **36 With Quick Changes of Mood** ♩=60

S. filled her____ with de - light.

A. filled her____ with de - light. Solo, spoken freely on pitch
p puzzled But how bad - ly you keep your

T. filled her____ with de - light.

B. filled her____ with de - light.

Pno. Red. **36 With Quick Changes of Mood** ♩=60

33 Red.

molto accel.

S.

A. slaves.____ How wretched and poor and ne-glect-ed they seem.

T.

B. *p* said the Queen, as the

Pno. Red. **molto accel.**

37

S. _____

A. _____

T. _____

B. *mf*
cab rat - tled a - long the Mile End Road.

Pno. Red. *mp*
40

42 Suddenly Broad ♩=72

S. *f*
"They aren't slaves; they're work - ing peo - ple."

A. _____

T. *mf*
And Jane re - plied,

B. _____
And Jane re - plied,

42 Suddenly Broad ♩=72

Pno. Red. *mf* *pp*
42

molto accel.

S.
 A. *tutti* *f*
 Of course they're work - ing. That's what
 T.
 B.


molto accel.

49 Suddenly Gentle ♩=60


S.
 A. *ff*
 slaves are. *p indulgently* Do you sup - pose I don't know
 T.
 B.

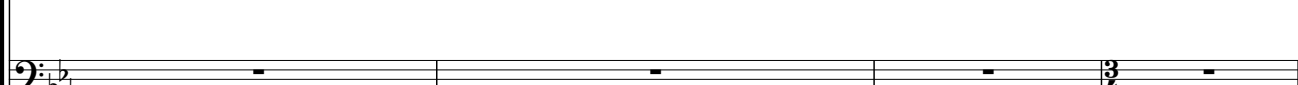
49 Suddenly Gentle ♩=60

The image shows a musical score for a piano reduction of the song "The Rose Tree". The score is written for two staves, Treble and Bass Clef, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked "Allegretto". The score is divided into three measures. The first measure contains the main melody in the treble staff and a supporting bass line in the bass staff. The second measure is a continuation of the melody. The third measure is a final chord. The score is marked with dynamics: *mp* (mezzo-piano) at the beginning, *ff* (fortissimo) in the middle, and *pp* (pianissimo) at the end. The score is labeled "Pno. Red." and "48".


S. 


A. 
 a slave's face. when I see one?


T. 


B. 


Pno. Red. 
 51

S. 
 and bet - ter

A. 
 Why don't their mas - ters see that they're bet - ter fed and bet - ter

T. 
 Why don't their mas - ters see that they're bet - ter fed and bet - ter

B. 
 that they're bet - ter fed and bet - ter

Pno. Red. 
 55

poco rit.

f **ff**

S. clothed? Tell me in three words.

A. clothed? Tell me in three words.

T. clothed? Tell me in three words.

B. clothed? Tell me in three words.

Pno. Red. **f** **ff**

58 3 6

61

Freely ♩=48solo, ad lib. pitch
p nervous

S. Well...

A. solo 1, ad lib. pitch
p nervous
Mm...

T. solo, ad lib. pitch
p nervous
Huh...

B. solo 1, ad lib. pitch
p nervous
Uh...

61

Freely ♩=48

Pno. Red.

61

68

Moving Forward ♩=60

S.

A. *solo 2, ad lib. pitch*
p nervous
Um, I...

T.

B. *solo 2, ad lib. pitch*
p nervous
Hm...

Pno. Red.

65

68

Red. _____

S. *tutti*
p No one an-swered. *mp knowingly* The wage sys-tem of mo-dern Eng-land is a lit-tle

A. *tutti*
p No one an-swered.

T. *tutti*
p No one an-swered.

B. *tutti*
p No one an-swered.

Pno. Red.

69

S. dif-fi-cult_ to ex-plain in three words

A. *mf* wryly e - ven_ if you un-der stand it,

T. *f* grim which the chil dren did

B.

Pno. Red.

73

78

S.

A. "You'll have a re - volt_ of your

T. not.

B.

Pno. Red.

77

85 Suddenly Broad ♩=72

85 Suddenly Broad ♩=72

The image shows a musical score for a piano reduction of the song "The Rose Tree". The score is written for two staves, Treble and Bass clef, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The tempo is marked "Allegretto". The score is divided into three measures, each with a different time signature: 5/4, 3/4, and 4/4. The first measure is marked "mp" (mezzo-piano) and the second measure is marked "mf" (mezzo-forte). The third measure is marked "mp" and features a crescendo hairpin. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, single notes, and rests. The page number "84" is visible at the bottom left.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Pno. Red.

87

S.

A.

T.

B.

Pno. Red.

91

S. *solo p* "Is

A. *3* is this vote?" *solo p* "Is it a charm?"

T. 8

B. *mf* asked the Queen.

Pno. Red. *cresc. poco a poco*

95

S. it a spell?

A. *solo mp* 1/2 section Can it make things, buy things,

T. *solo mp* 1/2 section Can it make things, buy things,

B.

Pno. Red.

97

♩=90 **rit.**

S.

A. *tutti* *mf*
fix things? Does it heal them or

T. *tutti* *mf*
fix things? Does it heal them or

B. *mf*
Does it heal them or

Pno. Red. **♩=90** **rit.**
99

S. *ff*
Tell me, what do they do with it?"

A. *ff*
help them? Tell me, what do they do with it?"

T. *ff*
help them? Tell me, what do they do with it?"

B. *ff*
help them? Tell me, what do they do with it?"

Pno. Red. *ff*
101

104 Moving Forward ♩=72

p gentle 3

S. said the har rassed Cy - ril. _____

p gentle 3

A. said the har rassed Cy - ril. _____

solo
shouted

T. "I don't know!"

mp exasperated

B. "It's just a vote, that's all! They don't

104 Moving Forward ♩=72

forearm cluster

Pno. Red. *fff* *pp*

104 Red. _____

solo
p to herself

S. "I see, _____ a

A. _____

tutti
pp

T. said the Queen. _____

B. do a-ny-thing par - ti - cu - lar with it."

Pno. Red. *pp*

108 6 6

S. *tutti* *mf* **accel.**
sort of play - thing. Well, I wish that all these

A.

T.

B.

Pno. Red. **112** **accel.**
8va 6 tr
(loco)

111

S. slaves may have in their hands this

A.

T.

B.

Pno. Red. **114**
(8) (tr) 6 f 6

ff **120** ♩=84

S. food and drink."

mp **f** **pp** **3**

A. Mm In-stant-ly all the

f

T.

f

B.


120 ♩=84


f **pp** **15^{ma}** **tr**


Pno. Red.


6 **6** **6** **6** **3**

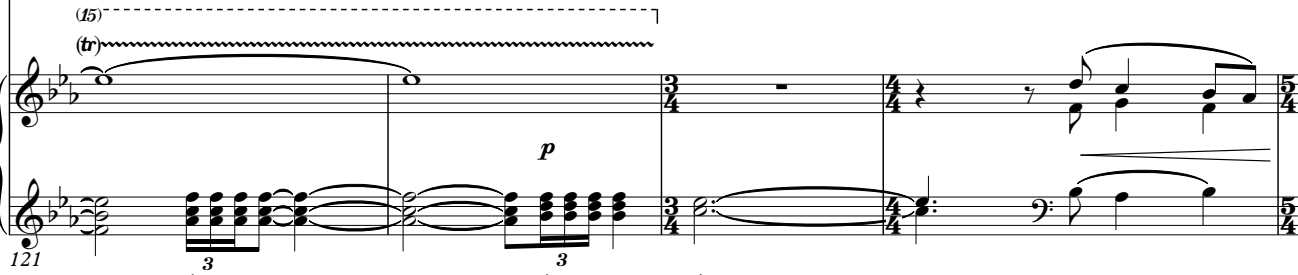
119

S. 

A. 
p
 peo - ple in the Mile End Road

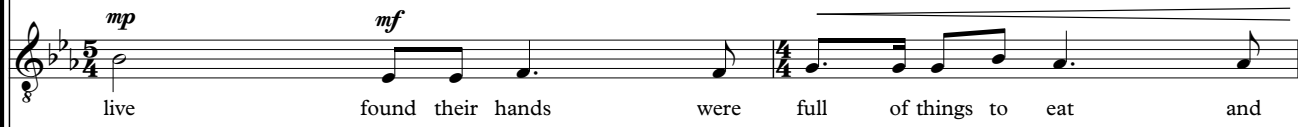
T. 
p
 And in all the o-ther streets where poor peo-ple

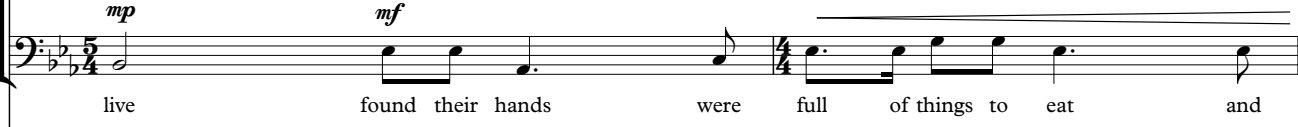
B. 
p
 And in all the o-ther streets where poor peo-ple

Pno. Red. 
 121

125 
mf
 found their hands were full of things to eat and

A. 
mf
 found their hands were full of things to eat and

T. 
mp *mf*
 live found their hands were full of things to eat and

B. 
mp *mf*
 live found their hands were full of things to eat and

Pno. Red. 
 125

S. *pp* Roast meat, fowls red lob sters,___
 A.
 T.
 B.

Pno. Red.

129

6

6

6

6

p

pp

S. *p*
Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters, Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters,

A. *pp* *p*
great yel - low - y crabs, great yel - low - y crabs,

T. *p* *mp*
fried fish, boi - led pork, fried

B. *mp*
beef - steak

Pno. Red. *mp*
132

S. *mp* *mf*
Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters, Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters,

A. *mp* *mf* *f*
great yel - low - y crabs, great yel - low - y crabs,

T. *mf*
fish, boi - led pork, fried fish,

B. *p* *mp* *mf*
pud - dings,

Pno. Red. *p* *mp* *mf*
134

ppp
Ped.

137 a tempo (♩=84)

f

S. *Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters, _____*

A. _____

T. _____

B. *pp* *Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters, _____*

137 a tempo (♩=84)

Pno. Red. *f* *pizz.* *p*

136 6 6 6

molto accel.

S. _____

A. *p* *Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters, _____*

T. *pp* *p* *3* *Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters, _____ great yel - low - y crabs, fried*

B. *3* *p* *great yel - low - y crabs, fried fish, boi - led pork, beef - steak*

molto accel.

Pno. Red. *mp* *p*

138

mp *mf*

S. Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters, great yel - low - y crabs, fried

A. *mp* *mf*
great yel - low - y crabs, fried fish, boi - led pork, beef - steak

T. *mp*
fish, boi - led pork, beef - steak pud - dings, baked on - ions,

B. *mp*
pud - dings, baked on - ions, mut - ton pies;

Pno. Red. *mf* *p*

140 Ped.

S. fish, boi - led pork, beef - steak pud - dings, baked on - ions,

A. pud - dings, baked on - ions, mut - ton pies; mut - ton pies;___

T. *mf*
mut - ton pies;___ mut - ton pies, red lob - sters,___

B. *mf*
Roast meat, fowls red lob - sters,___ great yel - low - y crabs, and

Pno. Red. *mp* *mf*

142

146 Suddenly Broad ♩=84

S. *fp* *f* *ff*
mm - - - mut - ton pies; Most of the young ones_

A. *fp* *f* *ff*
mm - - - mut - ton pies; Most of the young ones_

T. *fp* *f* *ff*
mm - - - mut - ton pies; Most of the young ones_

B. *fp* *f* *ff*
mm - - - mut - ton pies; Most of the young ones_

Pno. Red. *f* *ff*
144

S. *ff*
_____ had o - rang - es _____ and sweets and cakes.

A. *ff*
_____ had o - rang - es _____ and sweets and cakes.

T. *ff*
_____ had o - rang - es _____ and sweets and cakes.

B. *ff*
_____ had o - rang - es _____ and sweets and cakes.

Pno. Red. *ppp*
147

S.

A.

T.

B.

Pno. Red.

153

S.

A.

T.

B.

Pno. Red.

f

S. up the fa - ces, the

f

A. up the fa - ces

f

T. more than you can poss-i - bly i - ma - gine the fa - ces, the

f

B. more than you can poss-i - bly i - ma - gine the fa - ces,

Pno. Red.

156

161

ff

S. fa - ces, fa - ces of the peo - ple.

ff

A. the fa - ces, fa - ces of the peo - ple.

ff

T. fa - ces, fa - - - ces of the peo - ple.

ff

B. the fa - - - - ces of the peo - ple.

Pno. Red.

159

ff

Ped.

S. 

A. 

T. 

B. 

Pno. Red. 

168 ♩=60

S. 

A. 

T. 

B. 

Pno. Red. 

acc. **f**

S. **f** with

A. *mp* *mf* **f**
 dif - fer - ence, does - n't it?" asked the Queen. And Jane re - plied _____ with

T. *mp* *mf* **f**
 asked the Queen. And Jane re - plied _____ with

B. *mf* **f**
 And Jane re - plied _____ with

acc.

Pno. Red. *mp* *mf*
 169

ff

S. **ff**
 cor - dial ap - pro - val, "That's the best wish you've had

A. **ff**
 cor - dial ap - pro - val, "That's the best wish you've had

T. **ff**
 cor - dial ap - pro - val, "That's the best wish you've had

B. **ff**
 cor - dial ap - pro - val, "That's the best wish you've had

Pno. Red. **f**
 173

The image displays a musical score for a vocal quartet and piano reduction. The vocal parts are for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.), all in G-flat major (three flats). The piano reduction is for the Right Hand (Pno. Red.) and Left Hand (Pno. Red.). The tempo is marked 'molto rit. al fine' (very slow, to the end) with a metronome marking of 84. The score includes a vocal line with the lyrics 'yet!' and a piano accompaniment featuring a series of sixteenth-note runs in the left hand and a more complex melodic line in the right hand. The piano part is marked with dynamics like *ff* (fortissimo) and *ppp* (pianississimo). The score is numbered 176 at the beginning of the piano part.