

Jessica Rudman

The Sharp Edges of the Night

for Soprano and Piano Four-Hands

with Text by Amy Lowell

2011
ca. 10:30

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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

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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?