
MICHAEL SCHACHTER

THREE WALLACE
STEVENS SONGS
for SATB CHORUS

(2013)

PERUSAL SCORE

Notes from the composer

I have been captivated by Wallace Stevens' poetry for many years. With his idiosyncratic, almost willfully opaque language and vivid imagery, Stevens has always struck me as a particularly musical poet. In choosing to set some of his texts, I wanted to create a somewhat Stevensian gambit of my own: to faithfully access his aesthetic landscape while also creating a choral setting that has its own independent *raison d'être*. This composition, then, reflects my humble efforts towards that balance. I chose three poems from Stevens' landmark collection *Harmonium*, which established the erstwhile lawyer as a major literary figure. Critics have often grouped these particular poems together because they share many connections of both specific image and general thematic content. In all of these, Stevens explores humanity's relationship to its surroundings (both natural and social) and the importance of turning inwards for truth (whether we like that truth or not).

The work is scored for SATB Chorus, and it requires extensive *divisi* throughout. During long passages of sustained notes or repeated *ostinati*, singers should stagger-breathe throughout to maintain a consistent tone. Tempo changes should be achieved without *accelerando* or *ritardando* unless explicitly marked. Conductors are welcome to take creative liberties with the written tempo markings, which are meant as suggestions of relative proportions rather than as the final word in the matter.

I. The Man whose Pharynx was bad

The time of year has grown indifferent.
Mildew of summer and the deepening snow
Are both alike in the routine I know:
I am too dumbly in my being pent.

The wind attendant on the solstices
Blows on the shutters of the metropolises,
Stirring no poet in his sleep, and tolls
The grand ideas of the villages.

The malady of the quotidian . . .
Perhaps if summer ever came to rest
And lengthened, deepened, comforted, caressed
Through days like oceans in obsidian

Horizons, full of night's midsummer blaze;
Perhaps, if winter once could penetrate
Through all its purples to the final slate,
Persisting bleakly in an icy haze;

One might in turn become less diffident,
Out of such mildew plucking neater mould
And spouting new orations of the cold.
One might. One might. But time will not relent.

II. The Snow Man

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

III. Tea at the Palaz of Hoon

Not less because in purple I descended
The western day through what you called
The loneliest air, not less was I myself.

What was the ointment sprinkled on my beard?
What were the hymns that buzzed beside my ears?
What was the sea whose tide swept through me there?

Out of my mind the golden ointment rained,
And my ears made the blowing hymns they heard.
I was myself the compass of that sea:

I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw
Or heard or felt came not but from myself;
And there I found myself more truly and more strange.

Total performance time: 8-10 minutes

Three Wallace Stevens Songs

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

Arthur Vandelay

I. The Man whose Pharynx was bad

$\text{♩} = \text{c.144}$

Soprano *p* *cresc.* *sfp*
The time of year has grown

Alto *p* *cresc.* *sfp*
The time of year has grown

Tenor *p* *cresc.* *sfp*
The time of year has grown

Bass *mp*
The

==

$\text{♩} = \text{c.54}$

S. *pp*
in - dif - frent. (t)

A. *pp*
in - dif - frent. (t)

T. *pp*
in - dif - frent. (t)

B. *pp*
time of year

12 $\text{♩} = c.72$
p
 S. Mil - dew of sum - - mer and the deep - en - ing
 A. Mil - dew of sum - - mer and the deep - en - ing
 T. Mil - dew of sum - - mer and the deep - en - ing
 B. *pp*
 mm

16
 S. snow Are both a - like in the rou - tine I know:
 A. snow Are both a - like in the rou - tine I know:
 T. snow Are both a - like in the rou - tine I know:
 B. *mp*
 Mil - dew,

21 *p* *sfp* *mp* *pp*

* go straight to (m) of "dumbly"

S. I am too dumb - ly in my be - ing pent.

A. *p* *sfp*

* go straight to (m) of "dumbly"

too dumb - ly

T. *p* *sfp*

* go straight to (m) of "dumbly"

I am too dumb - ly

B. *p* *sfp*

* go straight to (m) of "dumbly"

I am too dumb - ly my be - ing pent.



26 $\text{♩} = \text{c.72}$

S. oo oo oo

A. *pp*

oo oo oo

T. *mp* *dolciss.*

The wind at - tend - dant on the sol - sti - ces Blows on the shut - ters of the met - rop - o

B.

32

S.

A.

T.

B.

mf *mf molto espress.*

Ah Stir - ring no po - et in his sleep,

mp

les, Ah

p

Ah

38

S.

A.

T.

B.

p *mf* *p*

and tolls The grand i - deas

sfp *sfp* *sfp* *mf* *p*

Ding Ding Dong, The grand i - deas

mf *mf* *p*

and tolls The grand i - deas

mf *p*

and oh

mp *mf* *p* *mp*

Oh The grand i - deas, grand i - deas of the vil-la-

sfp *sfp* *sfp* *mf* *p* *mp*

Oh Ding Ding Dong, The grand i - deas, grand i - deas of the vil-la-

mf *p*

The grand i - deas

44 ♩ = c.54

S. The mal - a - dy, The mal - a - dy

A. *p* The mal - a - dy of the quo - tid - - - - - ian... *p*

T. *pp* ges.

B. *p* The mal - a - dy of the quo - tid - - - - - ian... *p*

The mal - a - dy ian...

49 ♩ = c.72

S.

A.

T. *p* Per - haps if sum - mer ev - er came to rest

B. *pp* mm mm

52 ♩ = c.54

S. *mp* *sfp* *sfp* *sfp*
 And length-ened, deep-ened, com - for - ted, ca -

A. *mp* *sfp* *sfp* *sfp*
 And length-ened, deep-ened, com - for - ted, ca -

T. *mp* *sfp* *sfp* *sfp*
 And length-ened, deep-ened, com - for - ted,

B. *mp* *sfp* *sfp* *sfp*
 length-ened, deep-ened, com - for - ted,

56

S. *mf* *p*
 ressed

A. *mf* *p* *mfp*
 ressed mm

T. *p* *mfp*
 ca - ressed mm

B. *p* *mfp*
 ca - ressed mm

B. *mp*
 Through days like o - ceans in ob - sid - i - an

60 $\text{♩} = \text{c.144}$

S. *p* *cresc.*
 Hor - i - zons full of night's mid - sum - mer blaze.

A. *mp* *cresc.*
 Hor - i - zons sum - mer

T. *mp* *cresc.*
 Hor - i - zons sum - mer

B. *p* *cresc.*
 Hor - i - zons sum - mer blaze.

66 $\text{♩} = \text{c.72}$

S. *sfp*

A. *sfp* *p*
 blaze Per - haps, if win - ter once could pen - e -

T. *sfp* *pp*
 oo.

B. *mf* *pp*
 blaze oo.

mf
 blaze

accel.

70

S.

Through all its pur-ples pur-ples

p Through all *sf* pur-ples *sf* pur-ples

Through all its pur-ples pur-ples

Musical score for Soprano (S.) showing vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "Through all its pur-ples pur-ples". Dynamics include *p* and *sf*. The piano accompaniment features chords and melodic lines.

A.

trate Ah Ah

mp *mf*

trate Ah Ah

Musical score for Alto (A.) showing vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "trate Ah Ah". Dynamics include *mp* and *mf*.

T.

Through all pur-ples pur-ples

mp *sf* *sf*

Through all pur-ples pur-ples

Musical score for Tenor (T.) showing vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "Through all pur-ples pur-ples". Dynamics include *mp* and *sf*.

B.

blaze oo blaze blaze

mf *pp* *cresc. poco a poco* *mf*

blaze blaze blaze

Musical score for Bass (B.) showing vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "blaze oo blaze blaze". Dynamics include *mf*, *pp*, and *cresc. poco a poco*.

♩ = c.90

75

mf *ff*

S. to the fi - - - nal slate

sf *sf* *ff*

pur - ples pur - ples

A. Ah Ah

T. *sf* *sf* *ff*

pur - ples pur - ples

sf *sf* *ff*

pur - ples pur - ples

B. *ff*

blaze blaze

PERUSAL SCORE

90

S. *mp* One might. *mp* One might. but

A. *mp* One might. *mp* One might. but

T. *mfp* One might.

B. *mp* cold. One might. But

cold. One might. But

93

S. *f* time will not re - lent. *p* *sfp*

A. *f* time will not re - lent. *p* *sfp*

T. but time. *p* *sfp* will not re - lent.

B. *f* time will not re - lent. *mf*

time will not re - lent.

II. The Snow Man

♩ = c.90

S. 

A. 

T. 

B. *p* * stagger breathe freely





5 S. *singing* *p* 

A. 

T. *fp* *fp* *mf*


B. 


19

mp *float* *sf*

S. To be-hold the ju - ni - pers shagged with ice

A. la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la ga la ga la ga la ga

mf *mf*

T. *mp* *float* *sf*
To be-hold the ju - - ni - pers shagged with ice

B.

24

sf *mp* *p* *p* *sf* *mf misterioso*

S. (ss)

A. la ga la ga la ga la ga la ga la ga la ga la ga la ga la ga la ga la ga

la la la la oo

T. (ss)

B. The spru - ces rough in the dis -

39

S. *p* *mp* *mp*
of the wind of a few leaves, of the

A. *p* *mp* *mp*
of the wind of a few leaves, of the

T. *mp* *mp* *mf*
sound in the sound Which is the sound

B. *mp* *mp* *mf* *mf* *mf*
oh oh oh oh oh
oh oh oh oh oh

44 *mf* *mp* *espress.* *mf*
land Full of the same wind that is blow-ing,

A. *mf*
land la la la la la la la la la la la la la la
* stagger breathe freely
la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

T. *p* *mp* *espress.*
Full of the same wind that is

B. *mf* *mp* *espress.*
oh Full of the same wind

♩ = c. 126

49 *mp* *mf* *f*

S. blow-ing in the same bare place *gliss.*

mp *mf*

blow-ing ah

A. *mf*

la la

mf

T. in the same bare place

B. bare place



53 *pp* * stagger breathe freely

S. ma

pp * stagger breathe freely

A. mm

mp *misterioso*

T. For the list - 'ner, who list - ens in the

B.

III. Tea at the Palaz of Hoon

$\text{♩} = \text{c.108}$
mp *dolciss.*

S. Ah _____ Ah _____

Tea! _____ Tea! _____ Tea! _____ Tea! _____

A. Tea! _____ Tea! _____ Tea! _____ Tea! _____ Tea! _____

Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Oh_

T. *mf appassionato*
Not less _____ be - cause _____ in pur - ple _____

B. *mf appassionato*
Not less _____ be - cause _____ in pur - ple _____

4

S. *< sf* Ah _____ *< sf* Ah _____ *< sf* Ah _____ *< sf* Ah _____

Oh _____ Oh _____ Oh _____ Oh _____ Oh _____

A. *< sf* Oh _____ *< sf* Oh _____ *< sf* Oh _____ *< sf* Oh _____

Oh _____ Oh _____ Oh _____ Oh _____

T. *mp*
pur - ple _____ I de -

B. *mp*
pur - ple _____ I de -

8

S. *mf* *appassionato*
The wes - tern day through

A. *mf* *appassionato*
The wes - tern day through

A. Ah *sf*
The wes - tern day through

T. *pp** stagger breathe freely
scen - ded mm

B. *mf* *p*
scen - ded Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea!

scen - ded Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea!

13

S. *sf* *mp* *mf*
what you called The lone - li - est air, oh not

A. *sf* *mp* *mf*
what you called The lone - li - est air, air, not

T. *pp** stagger breathe freely

B. *mf* *p*
Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea!

Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea!

18

S. *mp* less was I *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *ff* my - my - self.

A. *mp* less was I *gliss.* my - self *ff*

T. *f* Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea!

B. *f* Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea!

Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea! Tea!



22 ♩ = c.90

S. *p* * glissando between eighth-notes (stagger breathe freely) Tea! Tea! Tea!

A. *sf* * stagger breathe freely humm

T. [Empty staff]

B. *mp* What was the

24

S. *mf*
gliss.
sf
 Teal. Teal. Teal.

A. *sfp*
zz

T. *mf*
 What were the hymns that

B. *sf*
 oint - ment sprink-led on my beard?



27

S. *p*
ff
 Oh Oh Oh What

A. *p*
 Oh Oh

T. *p* *mp* *ff*
 buzzed be - side my ears? What

B.

31

S. was the sea whose tide swept

Ah Ah

A. Ah Ah

T. was the sea whose tide swept

B. Ah Ah Ah

Ah Ah Ah

PERUSAL SCORE

57

S. *f* And there I found my - self

A. *f* And there I found my - self

T. *f* And there I found my - self

B. *f* found my - self

found my - self

60

S. *mp* more tru - ly and more *sfp* strange.

A. *mp* more tru - ly and more *sfp* strange.

T. *mp* more tru - ly and more *sfp* strange.

B. *mp* more tru - ly and more *sfp* strange.

more tru - ly and more strange.