

William Grosvenor Neil

At the Edge of the Body's Night

(2008)

for piano and digital acoustics



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At the Edge of the Body's Night is a setting of *Seven Poems* by the poet and writer, Mark Strand. These poems intrigued me with their potent brevity and mysterious symbolism. I found in their riddle-like form a concise emotional message, ideal for creating short melodic themes and inspiring fantastic piano music. When I recorded Mark's voice reading the poems, I knew that his recitation would be part of the compositional resources for the piece. His resonant voice, enhanced by the audio editing process, provided a powerful context for the musical interpretation of his words. The addition of a soprano voice (Ashley Parker) in the digital landscape alludes to the traditional art song setting of poems. and her siren-call voice recalls the female muse that I imagined inspired the poet in writing his words. The piano music guides the listener throughout this fantastic journey of sound and music reflecting on the meaning and character of the poems and driving the dream-like narrative forward.

Performance of the digital acoustic:

Each of the six movements (I & II are combined) for piano are accompanied by a digital audio landscape as part of the performance. At the beginning of each section, a cue is notated in the score to start the audio wave file. It is recommended that a high fidelity audio play back system be employed in the recital hall or performance space. The sound system could be interfaced with a laptop computer or iPad operated by the pianist using a foot pedal similarly used with iPads supporting a digital part or it could be executed during the performance by a technician.

Duration: ca. 24 mins.

Seven Poems

3

by Mark Strand

1

At the edge
of the body's night
ten moons are rising.

2

A scar remembers the wound.
The wound remembers the pain.
Once more you are crying.

3

When we walk in the sun
our shadows are like barges of silence.

4

My body lies down
And I hear my own
Voice lying next to me.

5

The rock is pleasure
and it opens
and we enter it
as we enter ourselves
each night.

6

When I talk to the window
I say everything
is everything.

7

I have a key
so I open the door and walk in.
It is dark and I walk in.
It is darker and I walk in.

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Seven Poems I

William Grosvenor Neil

DA: Cue 1

♩ = 60

Pre-recorded Soprano

Digital Acoustics

Piano

At the edge of the body's
night, ten moons are rising*pp**f**p**pp**p*8^{vb}

3

Sop. at the edge of the bo-dy's night

DA

Pno.

7

Sop. ten moons are ri - sing

DA

Pno.

11

Sop.

DA

Pno.

3 3 5 8vb

Sop.

DA

Pno.

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 8vb

12

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ten moons

f 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 8vb

13

Sop.

DA

Pno.

are

f

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ri - sing

f

p

pp

8va

8vb

Red.

DA: Cue 2

Seven Poems II & III

William Grosvenor Neil

Mark Strand

14 $\text{♩} = 48$

Sop *p* A scar — re-mem-bers the wound. — The wound — re - mem-bers the pain.

DA

Pno.

17 *pp* $\text{♩} = 70$

Sop Once more you are cry ing

DA

Pno. *p*

21

Sop

DA

Pno.

25

Sop

DA

Pno.

30

Sop

DA

Pno.

When we walk in the sun

32

Sop

DA

Pno.

f

34 *rit.* *a tempo*

Sop
our sha - dows are like bar-ges of si-lence.

00:30 Main Theme

DA

Pno. *ff* *8va*

37

Sop

DA

Pno. *accelarando* *f* *8va* *8vb*

42

Sop

DA

Pno. *Reverse Canyon* *08:00*

(8)

47

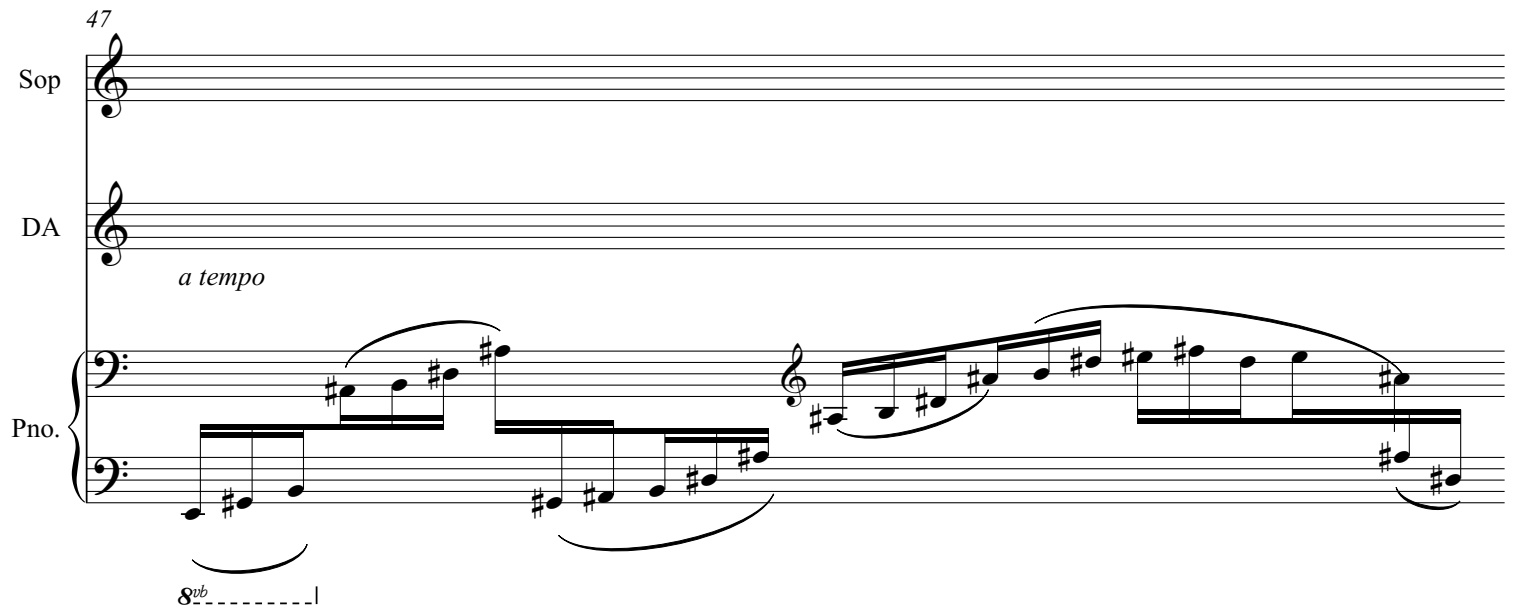
Sop

DA

a tempo

Pno.

8^{vb}-----|



48

Sop

DA

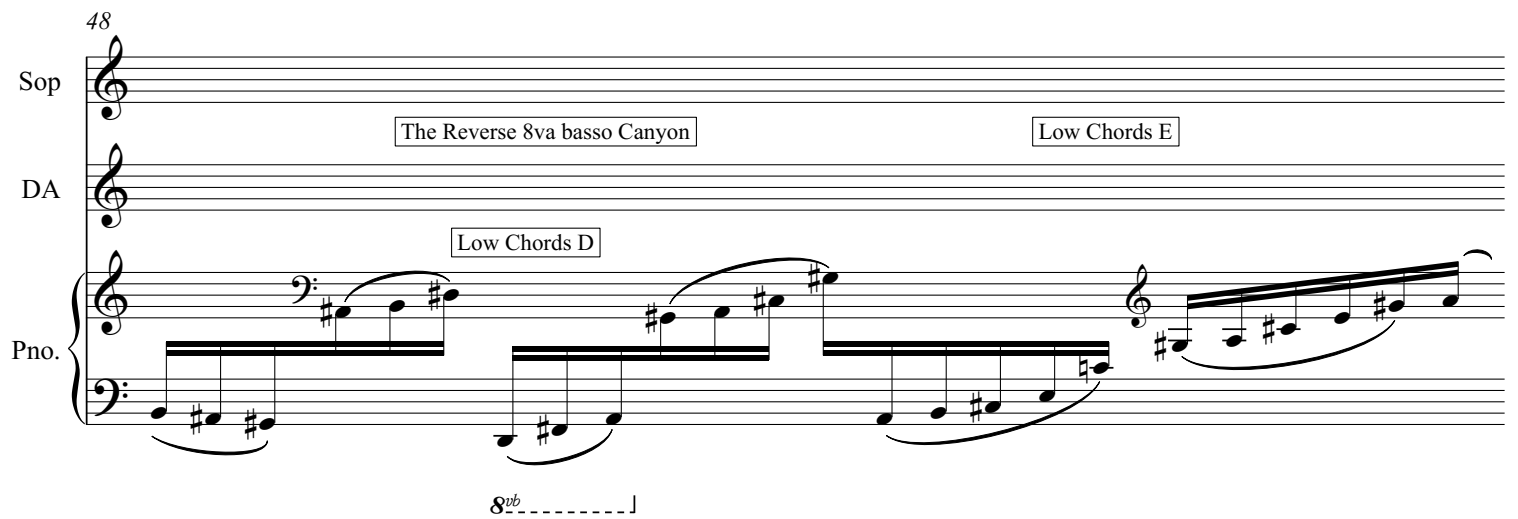
The Reverse 8va basso Canyon

Low Chords E

Low Chords D

Pno.

8^{vb}-----|



49

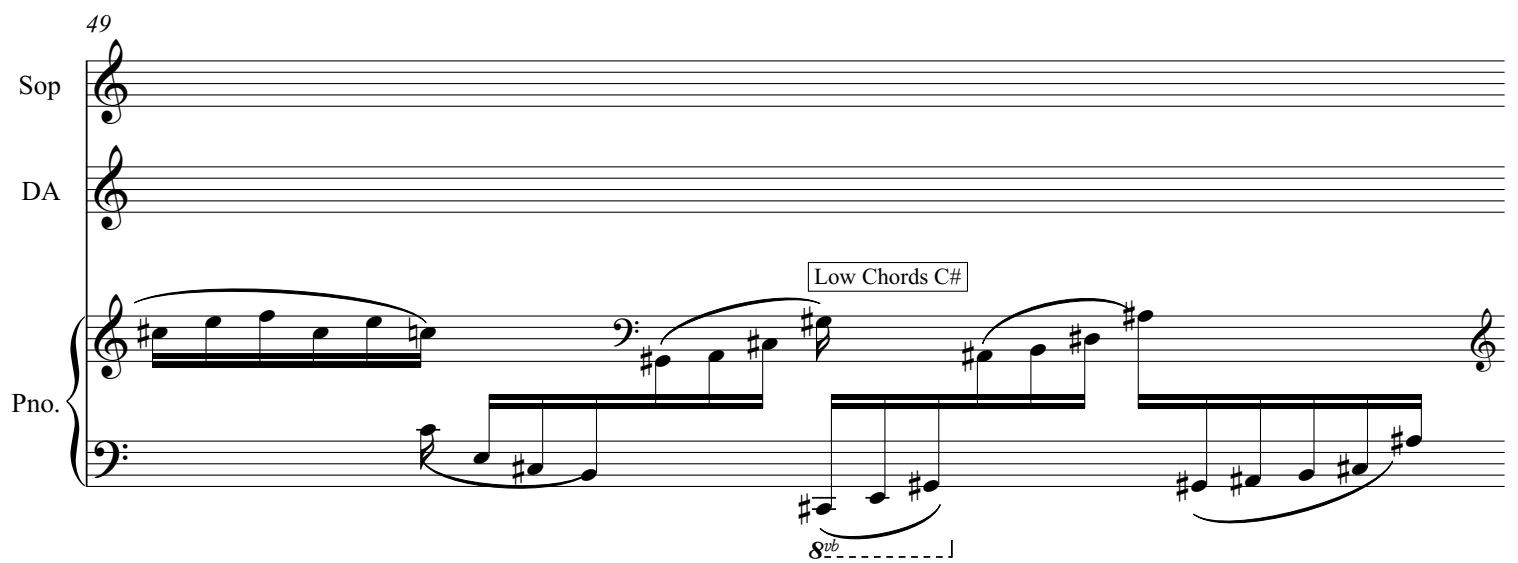
Sop

DA

Low Chords C#

Pno.

8^{vb}-----|



50

Sop

DA

Pno.

Low Chords B

8^{vb}

50

51

51

Sop

DA

Pno.

51

52

52

Sop

DA

Pno.

8^{vb}

52

53

53

Sop

DA

Pno.

8^{vb}

54

Sop

DA

Pno.

When we walk in the sun

A scar re - mem - bers the wound.

p *f* *p*

C# minor Exploration

Low Chords

56

Sop

DA

Pno.

8^{va}

57

Sop

DA

Pno.

C# Exploration Reverse

Measures 57-58. The Piano part features a complex texture with multiple voices, including a prominent melodic line in the right hand and a more active bass line. A box labeled "C# Exploration Reverse" is placed above the piano staff.

58

Sop

DA

Pno.

Measures 58-59. The Piano part continues the complex texture from the previous system, with the right hand playing a series of chords and the left hand providing a rhythmic foundation.

59

Sop

DA

Pno.

Measures 59-60. The Piano part concludes the complex texture, with the right hand playing a final chord and the left hand ending with a bass clef.

60

Sop

DA

Pno.

C minor Chord Voices

ritardando

8^{va}

f

8^{vb}

62

Sop

DA

Pno.

Progressive Cascade

rit.

Low DA

p

pp

67

Sop

DA

Pno.

00:56

8^{va}

8^{vb}

fff

fff

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for three parts: Soprano (Sop), DA (DA), and Piano (Pno.). It is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 60-61) shows the Soprano part with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The DA part has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The Piano part has a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a key signature of one flat. A 'ritardando' marking is placed over the Piano part. An 8va line is shown above the Piano part. A 'C minor Chord Voices' box is present. A 'f' dynamic marking is shown. An 8vb line is shown below the Piano part. The second system (measures 62-66) shows the Soprano part with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The DA part has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The Piano part has a grand staff and a key signature of one flat. A 'Progressive Cascade' box is present. A 'rit.' marking is placed over the Piano part. A 'Low DA' box is present. A 'p' dynamic marking is shown. A 'pp' dynamic marking is shown. The third system (measures 67-68) shows the Soprano part with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The DA part has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The Piano part has a grand staff and a key signature of one flat. A '00:56' time signature is shown. An 8va line is shown above the Piano part. An 8vb line is shown below the Piano part. 'fff' dynamic markings are shown.

DA: Cue 3

Seven Poems IV

Mark Strand

William Grosvenor Neil

♩=80

♩ = ♪

Sop. My— bo - dy lies down

DA

Piano *mf*

76

Sop.

DA

Pno.

81

Sop.

DA

Pno.

85

Sop.

DA

Pno.

pausa

(8).....

90

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p *f* *p*

f *p* *f*

6 6

96

Sop.

DA

Pno.

soprano: (whispered) I hear my own voice lying next to me. lying next to me, lying next to me, next to me.

poet: I hear my own voice lying next to me, my own voice

I hear... I hear...

I hear... I hear...

p *pp*

104

Sop. next to me.

DA

p *gliss.* *f*

Pno. *ff*

8^{va}

3 5

109

Sop.

DA

Pno. $\text{♩} = 100$ *f*

4/4

112

Sop.

DA

Pno.

115

Sop. my _____ bo - dy

DA

Pno. *subito pp* *ff* *12* *p* *p* *f*

115

Sop. my _____ bo - dy

DA

Pno. *subito pp* *ff* *12* *p* *p* *f*

120

Sop.

DA

Pno. *12* *p* *poco a poco accel.* *8va*

120

Sop.

DA

Pno. *12* *p* *poco a poco accel.* *8va*

125

Sop. **Vivace** **A tempo**

DA

Pno. **Vivace** **A tempo**

125

Sop. **Vivace** **A tempo**

DA

Pno. **Vivace** **A tempo**

128

Sop.

DA

Pno.

bo - dy

Measure 128: Soprano part is empty. DA part has a long line with an arrow pointing right. Piano part has a complex accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands. Measure 129: Soprano part has a note for 'bo - dy'. DA part has a long line with an arrow pointing right. Piano part has a complex accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands.

130

Sop.

DA

Pno.

Measure 130: Soprano part is empty. DA part is empty. Piano part has a complex accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands. Measure 131: Soprano part is empty. DA part is empty. Piano part has a complex accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands.

132

Sop.

DA

Pno.

bo - dy

8^{bb}

Measure 132: Soprano part has a note for 'bo - dy'. DA part is empty. Piano part has a complex accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands. Measure 133: Soprano part is empty. DA part is empty. Piano part has a complex accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands.

134

Sop. bo - dy

DA

Pno.

Measure 134: Soprano has a whole rest. DA has a whole rest. Piano has an eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 135: Soprano has a whole note 'bo - dy'. DA has a whole note. Piano continues the eighth-note accompaniment.

136 bo - dy

Sop.

DA

Pno.

Measure 136: Soprano has a whole note 'bo - dy'. DA has a whole rest. Piano has a complex figure with sixteenth notes and slurs. Measure 137: Soprano has a whole rest. DA has a whole note. Piano has an eighth-note accompaniment.

138

Sop. lies lies

DA

Pno.

Measure 138: Soprano has a whole rest. DA has a whole rest. Piano has an eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 139: Soprano has a whole note 'lies'. DA has a whole rest. Piano has a complex figure with slurs. Measure 140: Soprano has a whole note 'lies'. DA has a whole rest. Piano has a complex figure with slurs.

141 lies

Sop.

DA

Pno.

143 lies

Sop.

DA

Pno.

144 down

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p *ppp*

DA: Cue 4

Seven Poems V

Lento $\text{♩} = 50$ ***pp***

Sop. ***pp***

DA ***pp***

Piano ***p*** ***rubato*** ***molto legato*** ***ppp***

151 ***pp*** ***pp*** ***pp***

Sop. ***pp***

DA ***pp***

Pno. ***molto ritardando***

158 ***pp*** ***ff***

Ped.

159

Sop.

DA

Pno.

fff

ff

Red.

161

Sop.

DA

Pno.

The rock is pleasure and it opens and we enter it

rit.

pp

9

9

9

9

164

Sop.

DA

Pno.

as we enter ourselves each night.

f

9

9

6

p

pp

167

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p *ff*

168

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ff *ad lib.* *sempre ff*

Red. ad lib.

169

Sop.

DA

Pno.

mf *ff* *p*

170

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ff *p* *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

p *p* *p*

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

171

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ff *f* *fff*

p

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

Ped.

172

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ppp *fff*

tacet

gliss.

gliss.

00:03

♩=50

173 Lento *p*

Sop. *The rock is plea sure and it o-pens and we en-ter_ it as we en-ter our-selves each night*

DA *Low cluster*

Low rumble *Low rumble* *Low rumble*

Pno.

♩=70

178 *Più mosso*

Sop.

DA *Low rumble*

Pno. *ff*

8va

6 *6*

Ped.

Seven Poems VI

DA: Cue 5

181 $\text{♩} = 200$

Sop.

DA

Pno.

mf

Poet: When I talk to the window,
I say everything is everything.

184

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p *f*

186

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p

||: ev'rything is ev'rything :||

187

Sop.

DA

Pno.

f



189

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p



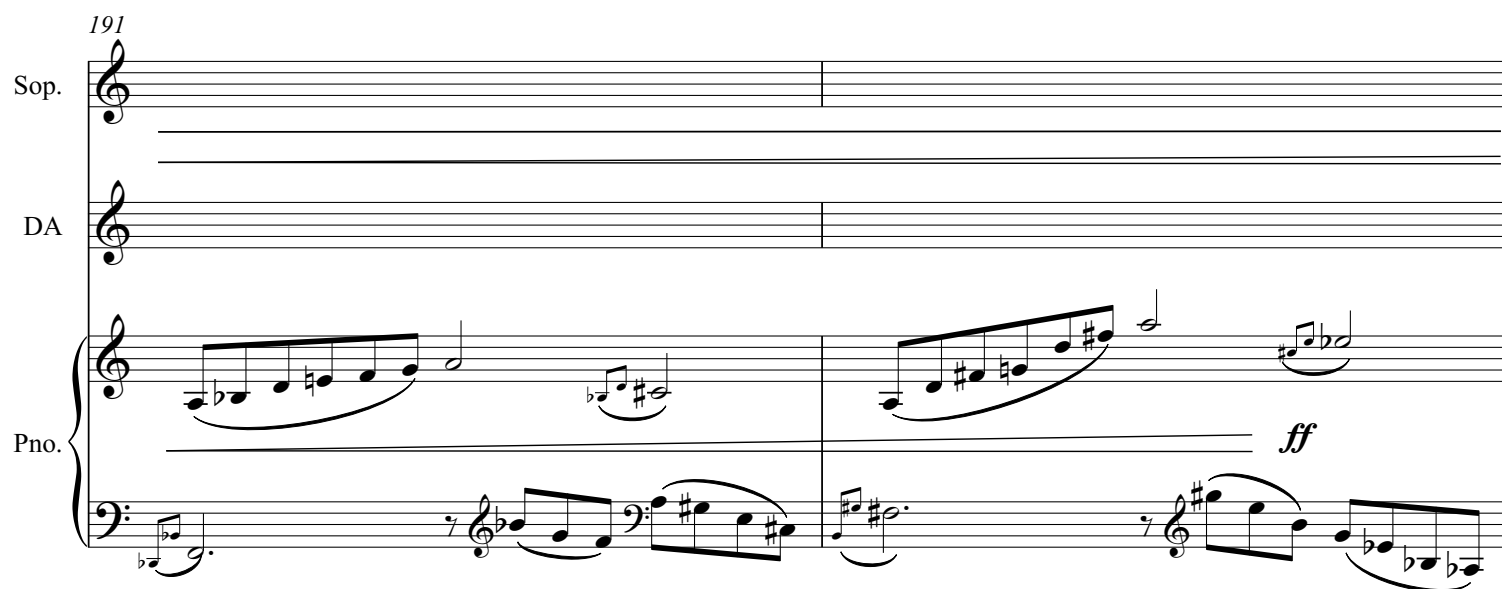
191

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ff



193

Sop.

DA

Pno.

f *p* *f*

Measures 193-195. Soprano and DA parts are mostly rests. Piano part features arpeggiated chords and a melodic line in the right hand. Dynamics: *f*, *p*, *f*.

196

Sop.

DA

Pno.

f

Measures 196-198. Soprano and DA parts are mostly rests. Piano part features a strong rhythmic pattern with accents. Dynamics: *f*.

199

Sop.

DA

Pno.

Measures 199-201. Soprano and DA parts are mostly rests. Piano part continues the rhythmic pattern with accents.

202

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p $\longrightarrow$ *ff* $\longrightarrow$ *p*

sing sing sing sing

8^{va}-----1

206

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ee —

talk to

209

Sop. *talk to talk to talk to* *ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is*

DA *p* *ff* *p* *> > > > >*

Pno. *8va* *8vb*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 209 to 212. The Soprano part begins with the lyrics 'talk to talk to talk to' and then repeats 'ev'-ry-thing is' four times. The DA part features a series of notes with dynamics *p*, *ff*, and *p*, along with six accents (>). The Piano part includes markings for *8va* and *8vb* on the first two measures.

213

Sop. *ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is*

DA *mf*

Pno. *mf*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 213 to 216. The Soprano part continues with the lyrics 'ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is'. The DA part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Piano part also has a dynamic marking of *mf* and features a melodic line in the right hand.

217

Sop. *ev' ry-thing is ev' ry-thing is*

DA *p*

Pno.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 217 to 220. The Soprano part continues with the lyrics 'ev' ry-thing is ev' ry-thing is'. The DA part has a dynamic marking of *p*. The Piano part features a complex melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

219

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p

221

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p *f*

223

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p *f* *p*

226

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ff

8va

228

Sop.

DA

Pno.

pp

p

f

p

f

pp

3

3

233

Sop.

DA

Pno.

f

f

236

Sop. *ev' ry-thing is ev' ry-thing is*

DA

Pno. *p* *f*

240

Sop. *ev' - ry-thing is ev' - ry - thing ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is*

DA *sing sing sing sing sing sing sing sing*

Pno.

244

Sop. *sing ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing* *||: ev'rything is ev'rything:|* *f*

DA *gliss.* *p*

Pno. *p*

250

Sop.

DA

Pno.

gliss.

mf *f*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 250 to 256. The Soprano and DA staves are empty. The Piano part begins with a glissando in the DA line, indicated by a diagonal line and the word 'gliss.'. The piano part features a complex melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic, arpeggiated bass line. Dynamics are marked as mezzo-forte (mf) and forte (f).

257

Sop.

DA

Pno.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 257 to 260. The Soprano and DA staves are empty. The Piano part continues with a dense, rhythmic bass line and melodic fragments in the right hand. The texture is complex and layered.

260

Sop.

DA

Pno.

Ped.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 260 to 263. The Soprano and DA staves are empty. The Piano part features a dense, rhythmic bass line and melodic fragments in the right hand. A pedal point is indicated by the 'Ped.' marking.

264

Sop.

DA

Pno.

268

Sop.

DA

Pno.

271

Sop.

DA

Pno.

(8).l

f

p

f

p

f

p

gliss.

sing

8va

8vb

273

Sop.

DA

Pno.

gliss.

sing

p

f

275

Sop.

DA

Pno.

gliss.

sing

p

f

277

Sop.

DA

Pno.

gliss.

sing

p

f

279

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p

f

281

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p

f

282

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p

f

This musical score page contains three systems of music, numbered 279, 281, and 282. Each system features three staves: Soprano (Sop.), DA (likely Alto or Tenor), and Piano (Pno.). The Soprano and DA staves are empty in all three systems. The Piano part is more complex, featuring a right-hand staff with a melodic line and a left-hand staff with a bass line. In system 279, the right hand has two measures of a continuous eighth-note pattern, each marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The left hand has two measures of a bass line, each marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. In system 281, the right hand has one measure of a continuous eighth-note pattern marked *p*, followed by a measure of a descending eighth-note scale marked *f*. In system 282, the right hand has one measure of a continuous eighth-note pattern marked *p*, followed by a measure of a descending eighth-note scale marked *f*. The DA staff in system 282 has a long horizontal line with an arrow pointing to the right, indicating a continuation of the melodic line.

283

Sop.

talk *f* *p* *f* *p*

DA

Pno.

284

Sop.

DA

Pno.

(8)

286

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ff

287

Sop.

DA

p

Pno.

Measures 287-291: Soprano and DA parts are empty. The Piano part consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents (>) on the downbeats. The right hand plays a series of eighth notes, and the left hand plays a series of eighth notes with flats.

288

Sop.

DA

Pno.

Measures 288-292: Soprano and DA parts are empty. The Piano part continues the rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents (>) on the downbeats. The right hand plays a series of eighth notes, and the left hand plays a series of eighth notes with flats.

289

Sop.

DA

f

Pno.

Measures 289-293: Soprano and DA parts are empty. The Piano part continues the rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents (>) on the downbeats. The right hand plays a series of eighth notes, and the left hand plays a series of eighth notes with flats. The dynamic marking *f* (forte) is present at the end of the system.

290

Sop.

DA

Pno.

atacca

p *f* talk to talk to talk to *p*

8^{va}---

The musical score is for three parts: Soprano (Sop.), Double Bass (DA), and Piano (Pno.). It is in 4/4 time and begins at measure 290. The Soprano part has a rest for the first two measures, then the lyrics "talk to talk to talk to" are written above a note, with a crescendo leading to a forte (f) dynamic and a decrescendo leading to a piano (p) dynamic. The Double Bass part has a rest for the first two measures, then a note marked "8^{va}" (octave up) is written above the staff, with a decrescendo. The Piano part has a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a continuous eighth-note pattern in the left hand, both marked with accents. The score ends with a double bar line.

DA: Cue 6

Seven Poems VII

294

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ff *gliss.* *3 p* *n* *f* *gliss.* *gliss.*

15^{ma} *gliss.* *inside piano* *silently depress w/ L.H.* *strum with fingertips inside piano* *60"*

15^{mb} *gliss.*

299

Sop.

DA

Pno.

Poet: I have a key. So I open the door and walk in.
It is dark and I walk in. It is darker and I walk in.

n *f* *slow gliss* *pp* *20"* *slide brass hammer the length of string*

away from keyboard

307

Sop.

DA

Pno.

e - u wae - u

3 *3* *8^{va}* *24"* *1'19"*

strum with fingertips inside piano *silently depress w/ L.H.* *f* *f*

312

Sop.

DA

Pno.

f

silently depress w/ L.H.

strum

low

low

ff

tap dampened strings in the lowest octave

3 3 3 3

316

Sop.

DA

Pno.

ff

inside piano: pluck highest octave with thumb 4th 3rd and 2nd fingers

x2

15^{ma}

321

Sop.

DA

Pno.

gliss.

low

f

ff

3 3

324 $\text{♩} = 56$

Sop. It is dark and I walk in. It is dark and I walk in.

DA

Pno. *p*

silently depress
with a small brass hammer:
lightly strike string between hammers and bridge, allowing hammer to slide along the length of the string

330

Sop. It is dark and I walk in.

DA

Pno.

335

Sop. It is dark and I walk in.

DA *pp*

Pno. *p* *ord.* *mf*

8vb
Ped.

339

Sop. It is dark and I walk in.

DA

Pno.

pp

8va

mp

p

Red.

344

Sop. It is dark and I walk in.

DA

Pno.

pp

8va

inside piano

with felt-tipped mallets

348

Sop.

DA

Pno.

f

f

pp

Red.

350

Sop. It is dark and I walk in. It is dark and I walk in.

DA

Pno.

pp

pp

inside piano

strike strings in the lowest octave with felt-tipped mallet

pp

8^{vb}

356

Sop. It is dark and I walk in. *p* Dark

DA

pp

pp

Pno.

(8)