

Sonnets without Words

When horn player Ben Goldscheider asked me if I had anything he could programme for a CD, I saw an opportunity to do what I had, for some years, longed to do. I have set many Shakespeare sonnets for voice and piano but have always felt that the long, lyrical vocal lines could work well as purely instrumental settings.

1. **Mine eye** (1999), originally for mezzo-soprano and piano, was written as a Valentine's gift for JS, the boyfriend of that time. JS was/is a great lover of visual art, and this sonnet's words conjure up a painterly portrayal of love – how the artist sees the emotion but still may not be able fathom what is felt behind a beautiful face.

2. **Music to hear** was commissioned for baritone Oliver Dunn and pianist Emma Abbate, by Peninsula Arts (Plymouth University), to celebrate Shakespeare's 450th birthday. Its bittersweet sentiments are reflected in my harmonic language. The poem is about a young man saddened by the cheerful beauty of music, because harmony and concord remind him of his obligation to marry and procreate.

3. **Sweet Love Remember'd** was a private commission from Dora Black to her husband Jack, on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary. Originally written for alto voice, the accompaniment can be performed on harpsichord or piano. The words seem full of grief and desolation at the start but they end with a positive statement that tells us that however low we have become, the memory of Sweet Love '... such wealth brings / That then I scorn to change my state with kings.'

Roxanna Panufnik, 6 July 2020

1. Mine eye (Sonnet 24)

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held.
And perspective it is best painter's art,
For through the painter must you see his skill,
To find where your true image pictured lies,
Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,
That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.
Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done:
Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me
Are windows to my breast, wherethrough the sun
Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee.
Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art,
They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

2. Music to hear (Sonnet 8)

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy;
Why lov'st thou that which though receiv'st not gladly,
Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds
By unions marries, do offend thine ear,
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear:
Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering,
Resembling sire, and child, and happy mother,
Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
Whose speechless song being many, seeming one,
Sings this to thee: 'Thou single wilt prove none.'

3. Sweet Love Remember'd (Sonnet 29)

When, in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possesses'd,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least:
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

William Shakespeare