

NOW WINTER NIGHTS

Now winter nights enlarge
The number of their hours;
And clouds their storms discharge
Upon the airy towers.
Let now the chimneys blaze
And cups o'erflow with wine,
Let well-turned words amaze
With harmony divine.
Now yellow waxen lights
Shall wait on honey love
While youthful revels, masques, and courtly sights
Sleep's leaden spells remove.

This time doth well dispense
With lovers' long discourse;
Much speech hath some defense,
Though beauty no remorse.
All do not all things well;
Some measures comely tread,
Some knotted riddles tell,
Some poems smoothly read.
The summer hath his joys,
And winter his delights;
Though love and all his pleasures are but toys,
They shorten tedious nights.

Thomas Campion

I sometimes find it hard now to recapture the special excitement that Christmas used to hold for me when I was a child. The swell of expectation used to make me giddy; the smells of cooking, of pine needles, the dark nights, the cold, it used to give me butterflies. But more than anything, it was the music that made me tingle. Singing carols was how I defined Christmas. When VOCES8 asked for a winter-themed piece, I came across this text by Thomas Campion and I found myself, almost without meaning to, writing a piece of nostalgia for feelings I would hate to think I have lost. The extraordinary blend and superb vocal talents of VOCES8 are sure to help me find my inner child.

Roderick Williams, October 2020

*Commissioned by VOCES8 for their LIVE from London – Christmas 2020 festival,
and first performed by them at the VOCES8 Centre, London, on 5th December, 2020
and live-streamed globally as part of a set of six new works.*

To the Glory of God and in loving memory of Darwin Aldridge Smith.

Duration: 3'45"

For Miranda, with all my love

Now winter nights

Thomas Campion

Roderick Williams

Dreamy ♩ = 60

The musical score is written for Soprano I, Soprano II, Alto I, Alto II, Tenor I, Tenor II, Bass I, Bass II, and Piano. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Dreamy ♩ = 60'. The score is divided into four measures, with time signatures changing to 5/8, 4/4, 5/8, and 3/4 respectively. The vocal parts (Alto II, Tenor I, Tenor II, Bass I, Bass II) have lyrics: 'Now win - ter nights, — now win - ter nights, —'. The piano part includes a section marked 'Piano (for rehearsal only)'.