

lansing mcloskey

sudden music

four songs for soprano and piano
texts by javen tanner

lansing mcloskey

*commissioned by
mormon artists group*

sudden music

soprano and piano

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

Accidentals apply to the octave in which they appear and hold throughout the measure, though in highly chromatic passages courtesy accidentals are given.

♩ = ♩ at all meter changes unless otherwise indicated.

Approximate duration: 16 minutes



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Sudden Music

1.

Look at the generous spread of stars before us,
the sporadic fire of the past, the larger shadow beyond.
Look at the throw of juniper burning into nothing,

the chipped bricks, the warped wood,
the shingles bleached under a heavy moon.
Listen to the names whispered into pillows,

names we loved or never knew we loved,
names that dripped from the corners of our lips as we slept.
Listen in darkness to the sudden music of loss.

2.

Let desire escape and rise as smoke from the burning cedar.
Watch it lift into the mute density of winter
and rub itself on the black layer

that separates voice from sound, breath from prayer—
smoke blurring the outline of the body
with the stillness that ensues;

smoke continuing through the nakedness
of branches, to hover in the valley,
to thin with the smoke of other desires.

3.

Consider the snow and its slow work,
dressing dead orchards, dulling our sense of what was
until we can no longer say with conviction,

"They were apple trees, it was summer."
Consider this and be content with winter: the cool wisdom
blown across the ear, the patches of bloodless grass.

Because if memory is anything it is dirty banks of snow
or rancid ice decaying into water. And what remains
is suspect at best. It will not be able to comfort us.

4.

Look at the frost growing its white mold
on the window, clouding the periphery, focusing
our attention on that which escapes us—

on that which has always escaped us. Let it go.
Let go of the fire, the shadow, the disappearing smoke.
Let go of names dried as stains on our pillows.

Fall a little, flinch and settle into dreams just under
the surface of sleep. Listen to the muffled voices above.
They sing, "Please, please," but from here it sounds like "peace."

Sudden Music

1.

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$\text{♩} = 60$ *accel.* ----- **With nervous energy** ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 112$)

mp *mf*

p sub. *mf*

f *mf*

11/16

11 $\frac{11}{16}$ $\frac{9}{16}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

14 $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{7}{8}$ $\frac{7}{16}$

16 $\frac{7}{16}$ $\frac{12}{16}$ $\frac{5}{8}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

19 $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

A *f* with urgency

Look!

21 $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

Look

p sub. *mf*

24 *mf*

Look _____ at the gen - er - ous spread of stars _____

27

be - fore us, _____

27 *8va* -----

f *mp*

30 *mf*

the _____ spo - ra - dic fire _____

30 *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *8va* -----

32 *f* *mf*

fire _____ of the past _____ the lar - ger

32 *f* *mp* *mf*

35

sha-dow be - yond.

mp *mf*

38

ff

40

f *mf*

Look! Look

mf *p sub.*

43

at the throw of ju - ni - per burn - ing

mf *f sub.* 6

46 *f*
 in - to noth - - - ing, —

49 **B**
 no - thing.

ff *p*

54

59 *mp* *p*
 ...as a memory...
 the — chipped brick, the warped — wood, the

63 *mf*

shin - gles bleached un - der a hea - vy moon.

66 **C** *pleading p* *mp*

Lis - ten lis - ten lis - ten to the names

70 *sensually*

the names whispered in - to pil - lows,

74 *p*

names we loved or never knew we loved,

78 *mf*
names that dripped _____ dripped _____ from the cor -

78
Piano accompaniment for measures 78-81.

82
- - ners _____ of our lips _____ as _____ we _____ slept...

82
Piano accompaniment for measures 82-84.

85 *p*
_____ slept _____

85
Piano accompaniment for measures 85-88.

89 D

89 *mf* (B \flat)
Piano accompaniment for measures 89-92, including triplets and a dynamic marking of *p* for the left hand.

92 *mf*

Lis - ten Lis - ten in the dark - - - ness

92 *p*

95 *mp* *fp*

to the sud - den

95 *mf*

E

99 *mf*

mu - - - - - sic

99 *mf*

101 *mf*

mu - - - - - sic

101

103

mu - - - - -

103

f

105

f

sic

105

mf

ff

105

107

f

of loss.

107

f

107

110

110

ff

6

6

110

Sudden Music

2.

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With longing & desire ♩ = 60

mp

Musical score for the first system. The vocal line is in 4/4 time, starting with a whole rest for two measures, then a quarter rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, starting with a half note G3, a half note A3, a half note B3, and a half note C4. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The system ends with a 5/4 time signature change.

Let de - sire es - cape and

Musical score for the second system. The vocal line starts with a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, starting with a half note G3, a half note A3, a half note B3, and a half note C4. The system ends with a 5/4 time signature change.

rise as smoke from burn - ing ce - dar. Watch it

Musical score for the third system. The vocal line starts with a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, starting with a half note G3, a half note A3, a half note B3, and a half note C4. The system ends with a 5/4 time signature change.

lift in - to the mite den - si - ty of win - ter and rub it -

14

- self on the black lay - er that sep - a - rates voice from sound, breath

18

from prayer smoke blurring the

22

out - line of the bo - - - dy with the still - ness that en - sues;

26

poco cresc.

smoke con - tin - u - ing through the na - ked - ness of

31 *(take a bit of time...)*

branch-es, — to ho - - ver in the val - ley, —

31 *8va*

(8vb)

36 *f* *mp*

to thin with the smoke — smoke —

36 *8va*

(8vb)

42 *p*

of o-ther de - sires — de - sires.

42 *8va*

(8vb)

48

48 *8va*

(8vb)

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3.

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In the distance ♩ = 54

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

Con - si - der the snow and its slow work,
dres - sing dead or - chards, dull - ing our sense of what was

8va

Leg. *Leg. sim.*

11 *p* *mf* *p*

un - til we can no long - er say with con - vic - tion, —

14 **A**

mp *pp* *mf* *p*

8va

6/8

And.

17 *slightly upbeat* *mp*

"They were ap - ple trees, it was sum - mer."

6+2 *8/4* *sim.*

And. (RH) *And. sim.* (RH)

19 *mf*

Con - si - der, — con - si - der this — and be con - tent with win - ter:

8va *mf*

(RH) (RH)

22 *(calmly) mf*

the cool wis - - - dom

p

(LH) (RH)

24 *mf* *mp* *p*

blown a-cross the ear, the patch-es of blood - less grass.

3/4 4/4

24 *8va* *mp*

3/4 4/4

27 **B** *p*

Be - cause if mem - - - o - - ry

27 *mp* *(mp)* *p*

(RH) (RH)

29

is an - y - thing is it is dir - ty banks of snow

29 *8va* *mf*

32 C *mp*

or ran - cid ice de - cay-ing in - to wa - - - - - ter.

p *mp* *mf* *p*

Leg.

34

34 *8va*

mp *p*

36

36 *8va*

And what re - mains

p *mf* *pp* *p*

38

38 *mp*

is sus - pect *poco* > > at best.

mp

40 *mf*

It will not be a - - - ble

42 *f*

to com - - - - - fort us.

44 *mf* *in resignation...* *rit.* *p* (LH)

It will not be a - ble to

46 *a tempo*

com - - fort us.

Ped.

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4.

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Freely, as a recitative (♩ = c.54)

Look at the frost

growing its white mold

on the window, clouding the periphery,

focusing our attention on

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

8va *ped.* *sim.* *in tempo; evenly*

(12) (12) (12) (12) (10) (5)

(no Ped.)

9 *rit.*----- **A** Smoothly, rolling along... (♩ = c. 78)

The first system of music features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. It contains a triplet of eighth notes followed by a quarter note, then a half note. A *rit.* (ritardando) marking is placed above the first measure. A box labeled 'A' is positioned above the second measure. The piano accompaniment starts with a 5/4 time signature and includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a half note in the left hand.

that which es-apes us

9 *rit.*----- *8va*

The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "that which es-apes us". The piano accompaniment features a *rit.* marking and an *8va* (octave) marking above the right hand. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a half note in the left hand. The dynamic marking *poco mf* is placed above the piano part.

11 *mf*

on _____ that which has al - ways_

The third system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "on _____ that which has al - ways_". The piano accompaniment continues with a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking and a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

11

The piano accompaniment for the third system continues with a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in both hands.

13

_____ es - - - caped us. _____

The fourth system features the vocal line with the lyrics "_____ es - - - caped us. _____". The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern.

13

The piano accompaniment for the fourth system continues with the same rhythmic pattern.

15

Let it go. Let _____ go _____ of the fire, _____

The fifth system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "Let it go. Let _____ go _____ of the fire, _____". The piano accompaniment includes triplet markings over the right hand.

15

The piano accompaniment for the fifth system continues with the same rhythmic pattern and triplet markings.

17 *mf*
fire, the sha - dow,

19 *mp*
the dis-ap-pear-ing smoke. Let

21
go of names dried as stains on

23
our pil - - - lows.

25 **B**

Fall a lit-tle, — flinch

27 *languidly*

and set-tle in - to dreams — just un - der

29

the sur - - - face of sleep.

31

33 **C** *mp*

Lis - ten to the muf - fled voi - ces a - bove.

35 *mf* *f*

They sing!

37 *mf* *f*

sing, sing,

39 *mf* *mp*

sing, sing,

41 *rit.* *mf* *p* , D A tempo (♩ = c. 78) *mf* (imploringly)

they sing, "Please,

please,

—

47 *rit.* *mf* *p*
but from here it sounds like —

49 E *a tempo*
mp *calmly*

"peace."

51

53

55

gwa--