The Flower that Swept by Bliss

a song cycle based on the
poetry of Samuel Greenberg (1893-1917)

for

mezzo-soprano and piano

by

Justin Henry Rubin
I: *Early Ghosts (from Loose Pages)*

When first I beheld
The sight of self alone,
Here standing upon a floor--
A new sensitive throne--
By dark corners round
I shaded myself, in hope
That some light or people
Would be seen through a grate.
But by the might of pictures
Each sighted object looked
As if my soul was but a fortune--
To its memory, meaning booked.

II: *Charm (from Sonnets of Apology)*

Charm! the haunt of souls inspiration
The gilded spirals of feigned illusions
The exhilaration of loves committance
The great awe of aeoleans Blur mutations
Wild luscious shimmering silk Hues of Roses
The Lure of slumber's innocent hum
That o'er sylvan almond shades at night
Breath the tiny stars that of moonlight
Bright keep the slur of insects muse astir
Beneath the tall blowing alfalfa's lowly Blades
The early sky recurls her clouds with Deep purple
Again sieves revelation of cosmics change
And heals the twilight of orbs restitution
Leaves its remains in the circle of suns ablution
III: Illusive Evolution (from Sick Sleuth Sonnets)
What traveling grace halts you to know
Abuse from woes turning grasp of ween
And ever Natures proof - pends a whiring show - That shades, the lustre tree
From Kin, the turban claims of prime
That hold the bettered hopeful slime
That never reals, into helpful glee
But kills the colored windy scent through such marvel growths unbent
By the riches of shape and gloss
We happy feel a lusive love
From the state of wonder assume
Ah yet he who spells rest untold
Brings thither, the soil of foreign mold

IV: Trees (from The Holy Ghost and Other Poems)
Trees - leaneate the sky as a map - in winter
And summer we seek the Hidden Heaven
The muscle that reveals the Beautiful stately plants
As the Buds red in spring - The informed part
That Nature proud secretly Hides
Trees are Beloved as memories of old
The Orchard stalks - and Trunks - laden
with the spicy Fruits - and ground covered Blossoms
Which the wind cleans while time In Blowing gust and muse is Here

Note: While misspellings from the original text have been preserved in this re-print, some have been corrected or altered to facilitate articulation in the musical settings.
Program Notes

I had never heard of Samuel Greenberg (1893-1917), but had been deeply involved with setting a number of poems by Hart Crane, and it was through him that I stumbled upon this turn-of-the-century unique American writer through Crane’s documented praise. I found myself remarkably engrossed with these terse works: this is a spontaneous poetry, sheathed in a pure surrealist tone (which antedates the more famous movement begun after World War I) and imbued with an unexpectedly raw expressiveness that immediately responds to musical embellishment.

This first encounter resulted in the composition of a set of songs for soprano, alto, and piano (Loose Pages), which were written in the Fall of 2000. Since then, I have returned to Greenberg again and again, selecting poems for the present composition from a variety of his collections (including the Sonnets of Apology, The Holy Ghost and Other Poems, Sick Sleuth Sonnets, and Loose Pages) that have intimately related subject matter. The title of this set for mezzo-soprano and piano, The Flower that Swept by Bliss, is a quote from his poem O gaze untold (from the Sick Sleuth Sonnets), that seems to summarize the nature of the author himself:

I wandered alone to the desert
and found the fever dry
But the flower that swept By Bliss
Is still Blown and unsought at thee nigh

The only image of Greenberg I know is that of him at the time of his Bar Mitzvah; the dusty, dark synagogues of early 20th century New York instantaneously came to mind. The unison rhythmic, declamatory intonations of Jewish chant, the cascade of words as if a supplication, the propulsive nature of the poems themselves, the sinuous, fleeting emotions that characterize Greenberg's words, the painfully personal - yet utterly universal - essence of his utterances, the timid voice of youth turned adult only to be cut down in premature death - all of these factors contributed to my choice of sounds that surround my settings of his works.
The Flower That Swept by Bliss

I: Early Ghosts

Languorously, but not too slow \( \frac{4}{\text{beat}} = 58 \)

music: Justin Henry Rubin (2005)
text: Samuel Greenberg (1916)

Mezzo-Soprano

Piano

\( \text{mp} \)

\( \sim \)

\( \text{ad lib.} \)

\( \text{esp.} \)

\( \text{sim.} \)

The Flower That Swept by Bliss

music: Justin Henry Rubin (2005)
text: Samuel Greenberg (1916)

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on a floor, A new sensitive throne, By dark corners round

I shaded myself, in hope, my-
sel in hope, That some light or people Would be seen

Rit. a tempo

1. (spoken)
through a grate.

When

But by the might of pictures

Each sight-ed object look'd as if my soul was

-3-
but a fortune... To its memory, meaning book'd.

Capricious $J = 112$

II: Charm
Charm! the haunt of souls inspiration The gilded spirals of

feigned illusions

The exhilaration of
love's commitment, of love's commitment

The great awe of ae-

ole-ans Blur mu-ta-tions

Wild

lus-cious shim-me- ring silk Hues of Ro- ses

The Lure
of slumber's innocent hum
That o'er sylvan almond

shades at night
Breathe the tiny stars that of moonlight
Bright

Primo tempo

- - - - - - - - -

Primo tempo

- - - - - - - - -

Primo tempo

- - - - - - - - -

Primo tempo

- - - - - - - - -

Primo tempo

- - - - - - - - -

Primo tempo

- - - - - - - - -

Primo tempo

- - - - - - - - -

Primo tempo

- - - - - - - - -
keep the slur of insects muse a-stir

Be beneath the tall blo-wing alfalfa's low-ly Blades The
Rit.

45

ear-ly sky re-curls her clouds with Deep

45

pp

48

pur-ple

A-gain sieves re-ve-la-tion

48

A tempo

51

of cosmics change and heals the twi-light

51

-9-
III: Illusive Evolution

Swaying $\cdot = 44$

What traveling

grace halts you to know Abuse from woes
tur - ning grasp of ween And e - ver

Na - tures proof... ...pends a whir - ling

show... That shades, the lus - tre tree From Kin, the tur - ban
That hold the better'd hopeful slime

a tempo

Rit.

a tempo
That never reals, into helpful glee

But kills the color'd win-dy

scent through such mar-vel growths un-bent
By the riches of

shape and gloss

We happy feel elusive

love

From the state of wonder as
Ah yet he who spells rest untold
Brings thither, the soil of foreign mold.
Gently, with rubato $\frac{4}{4}$

Trees, lineate the sky as a map, in winter

And
Summer we seek the Hidden, seek the Hidden Heaven.

The muscle that reveals the
Beau-ti-ful state-ly plants

As the

Buds red in spring,
The informed part That Nature proud, That Nature

secretly Hides Trees are Beloved

as memories of old The Orchard stalks, and

-20-
Trunks, laden with the spicy Fruits, spicy Fruits,
and ground cover'd Blossoms Which the wind cleans while
time

In

Blowing

gust

and

Muse is Here