

Loose Pages

songs on the poetry of Samuel Greenberg (1893-1917)

for

soprano, alto, and piano

by

Justin Henry Rubin

HARVEY MUSIC EDITIONS

Loose Pages

I *Early Ghosts* (duet)

II *Serenade in Grey* (duet)

III *Killing* (alto solo)

IV *Life's Mortality* (duet)

V *The Holy Ghost* (soprano solo)

VI *The Glass Bubbles* (duet)

I had never heard of Samuel Greenberg. I was deeply involved with the works of Hart Crane, had set a number of his poems, and was even inspired to write purely instrumental compositions based on some of his fantastic imagery. It was through Crane that I stumbled upon the *Loose Pages* through his documented praise of Greenberg. I found myself remarkably engrossed with these terse works - their pure surrealist tone, which antedates the more famous movement begun after World War I, are imbued with an expressiveness that immediately penetrated my mind. My response, these songs which were composed in the Fall of 2000, were written with a number of characteristics in mind to help convey hopefully more than just the sentiments (if that is indeed possible!) of the texts of the Poet. His poems are "orgies of supersensibility" (Louis Untermeyer, 1940) wherein "words... poured ...forth with a wild, chaotic passion" (James Laughlin, 1939) and therefore a narrative structure would not have been a favorable choice of settings. Instead, I tried to take a distinct musical point of view with them.

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 intimate yet universal essence of his utterances, the quality of the voice of youth turned adult only to be cut down in premature death, the fact that he played piano, the *speed* with which the texts were written - all of these factors contributed to my choice of sounds that surround and clothe them.

Note: All unique spellings from the original texts have been adjusted for ease of reading.

JHR October 10, 2000

The texts used in these works are based on transcriptions made by Michael Smith <smith@logopoeia.com> from Samuel Greenberg's original manuscripts and are used with permission. Those transcriptions are available online at: <http://logopoeia.com/greenberg/>

I Early Ghosts

Music: Justin Henry Rubin

Poem: Samuel Greenberg

Luxurient; Very Slow

Soprano

Alto

Piano

p

Articulate each arp. with a different character

very slowly

Ad lib.

S

A

Pno.

Rit. poco **A** *Tempo*

sotto voce con espressivo When first I be - held The sight of

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8 *Rit.*

S
self a - lone, Here stan - ding up - on a floor... A

A

Pno.

11 *Meno mosso* *Drifting*

S
new sen - si - tive throne...

A

Pno.

15 *Tempo primo*

S

A

Pno.

Ad.

18 *Rit. poco* **B** *Tempo*

S
A

By dark cor - ners

Pno.

21

S
A

round I sha - ded my - self, in hope That some light or peo - ple

Pno.

24 *Rit.* *Meno mosso*

S
A

Would be seen through, seen through a grate...

8va

Pno.

Tempo primo

28

S

A

Pno.

ova - - - - -

28

Red.

Rit. poco

31

S

A

Pno.

31

C *Tempo*

34

S

A

Pno.

mf But by the might of pic - tures Each sight - ted

34

f *mp*

37 *Rit.* *Meno mosso*

S
ob - ject looked as if my soul was but a for - tune To its

A

Pno.

sva

loco

40 *dim.* *Rit.*

S
me - - - mo - ry, mea - ning booked.

A
me - mo - ry

Pno.

II Serenade in Grey

Music: Justin Henry Rubin

Poem: Samuel Greenberg

Leisurely, but with motion

Soprano

Alto

Piano

mf

Ad lib.

S

A

Pno.

mf

Fol - ding eye - lid of the dew doth set, The

7

S
co - ver re-mains in the air; And it rains the street,

A

Pno.

10

S
one co - lor set, Like a huge

A

Pno.

13

S
grey cat held bare.

A

Pno.

16 **A**

S

A

Pno.

The sha - dows of light...
light, of light...

19

S

A

Pno.

sha - dows in shade... of
shade, in shade, of

22 *dim. e rit. poco a poco*

S

A

Pno.

light...
light, in shade...
8va

26 *Rit. molto* *mp*

S

A

Pno.

26(8^{va})

B 30 *Tempo*

S

A

Pno.

30 *loco* *mp*

e - ven - ly felt, through par - ted thus;

33

S

A

Pno.

33

Mine eyes feel dim and scorched from

36

S

A

grey...

Pno.

39

S

A

The neigh - bor - ing lamps throw grey

Pno.

42

S

A

stained gold... Hou - ses in the dis - tance like moun - tains

Pno.

45

S
seem, The bridge lost in the mist... The

A

Pno.

48

S
es - sence of life re - mains a screen; Life it -

A

Pno.

51

S
self in ma - ny grey spots that tri - ckle the

A

Pno.

54

S
A

blood un - til it rots... A good - sized box with win - dows

Pno.

57

S
A

set Seems like a tuf - ted grey crea - ture a -

Pno.

60

S
A

live, smooth - - ly sails o'er the

Pno.

63

S
A

ground, Like the earth in - vi - si -

Pno.

66

S
A

ble in change doth strive.

Pno.

D

69

S
A

Black spots, that rove here... here and there,

Pno.

72

S
Scur - ry off, float co - ver.

A
float in - to the co - - -

Pno.

75 *dim. e rit. poco a poco*

S

A

Pno.

ver.
8^{va}

79 *Rit. molto* **E Tempo**

S

A

Pno.

loco

mp

83

S

A

Pno.

87

S

A

Pno.

90

S

A

Pno.

93 **F**

S
A

Spot and grey were close to - ge - ther, Spot and grey were close to -

Pno.

96

S
A

ge - ther When co - lor mix - es its

Pno.

99

S
A

choice, a

Pno.

102

S

lo - ver, a lo - ver,

A

Pno.

105

Rit. al fine Long

S

a lo - - - ver.

A

Pno.

III Killing

Music: Justin Henry Rubin

Poem: Samuel Greenberg

Subdued, but expressive

$\text{♩} = 150$

Alto

Lo! the fool-ish fell. Si-lence a - bout...

Piano

Note: breath pauses at double-bars.

A

7 While the he-ro stood And saw the gath-r'ing crowd. What an awk-ward

Pno.

A

12 Fall is this... An un - seen con-quer - er,

Pno.

17

A

Piano

Af - ter look - ing toward the shout - ing throng, a -

21

A

Rit. *Poco meno mosso*

rou - ses A tri - umph - ing cry... While Da - vid held the

8^{va}

Piano

26

A

head For those who stood by... ...stood

Piano

31

A

by.

Piano

IV *Life's Mortality*

Music: Justin Henry Rubin

Poem: Samuel Greenberg

$\text{♩} = 120$

Soprano

Alto

Piano

8va

8va

3

3

3

with strength

Leg. sustain throughout each harmonic change

4

A

S

A

Pno.

4

3

3

3

3

If we should wan - der the

8

S globe for - e - ver, we al - so Would

A

Pno.

12

S want to feel the o - ther side of

A

Pno.

16

S hea - - - ven... we al - so Would

A

Pno.

20

S
A

want to feel the o - ther side of

Pno.

24

S
A

hea - - - - ven... of hea - - - -

Pno.

28

S
A

ven... of hea - - - - ven. **Long**

Pno.

(second time only)

32

S

A

Our

Pno.

loco

36 **B**

S

A

bo - dies are ful - - ly gi - ven, no

Pno.

40

S

A

mat - ter in a - ny Growth; and if we

Pno.

44

S fail, al - low - ance to ad - di - tion Is ad - hered.

A

Pno.

48

S As the mud pools re - ceive the Drip - ping

A

Pno.

52

S rain, we see the re - - ap - pear - ance Of

A

Pno.

56

S
A

eye - bub - bles dis - sol - ving wa - ter shade... dis -

Pno.

60

S
A

sol - ving wa - ter shade.

Long

Pno.

64

S
A

The

C

Pno.

68

S
A

spark - - - ling vis - ion - ar - y

Pno.

72

S
A

light in which we re - veal the dream

Pno.

76

S
A

lies as a look - ing glass In our

Pno.

80

S
fu - - - ture... and the re - mains... the

A

Pno.

85

S
ske - le - ton a - bode... In our fu - - -

A

Pno.

Rit. molto! (subito e non-dim.)

90

S
ture... the ske - le - ton a - bode.

A

Pno.

V *The Holy Ghost*

Music: Justin Henry Rubin

Poem: Samuel Greenberg

$\text{♩} = 130$ *Not rushed; with rubato*

Soprano

mp A dark scar - let robe co - vered the bo - dy,

Piano

mp

S

As he lay near a mo - na - sta - ry cel - lar door.

Pno.

mp

S

Ho - ly spi - rit of death swayed o' - er him,

Pno.

mp

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16 *Poco rit.* *Meno mosso*

S
A plain-tive seen skull, fea - tures sunk, That

Pno.
let resonate

21
frigh - tens the life in the wit - - - ness... The

Pno.
let resonate *let resonate*

26 *Poco meno mosso* **B**

S
gau - zy jet black veil. In the grey, sha-dowed

Pno.

31
Door - light the ex - tin - guished form lay in

Pno.

36 *Rit.*

S dig - ni - ty A - gainst the wall;

Pno.

dim.

41 **C**

S and the low and high cor - ners In sha - dows were

Pno.

let resonate

46 *Poco più mosso*

S ghist - ly, ad - hered a - round the

Pno.

8va

3:2

50

S pil - lars Of i - ron, pla - cid ske - le - ton thrown

Pno.

(8va)

54

S

to the cold sand Bot - tom, for - got - ten and un -

Pno.

let resonate

let resonate

59

S

re - cog - ni - za - ble where he lay at

Pno.

let resonate

64

S

mid - night; strange... we of-ten

Pno.

D

69

S

share the un - ex - plained won - der... strange... we of - ten

Pno.

74 *Poco rit.*

S

share the un - ex - plained won - - - der.

Pno.

78 *Rit.*

S

Pno.

VI *The Glass Bubbles*

Music: Justin Henry Rubin

Poem: Samuel Greenberg

Plodding; Quiet and Pale

The musical score is set in 4/4 time. The Soprano and Alto parts are mostly rests, indicating they are silent during this section. The Piano part consists of a complex, multi-layered texture of chords and arpeggiated figures. The lyrics are shared between the Soprano and Alto parts.

Soprano
Alto
Piano

S
A
Pno.

The mo-tion of ga... loops Must ei-ther Burst or re-main in mo...
mo-tion ...ther-ing of Wa-ter Must ei-ther Burst or re-main in a mo-
Allow sonority to fade into this section

6 A

S The vi-olet co... the glass, the glass

A ment vi... co-lours Through co-lours Through the glass

Pno.

9

S up lit-tle swel... that ap-pear spat... as soon a-no - ther strikes

A Throw up lit... swel-lings that ap... And ...ter as soon as ...no-ther strikes

Pno.

12

S Born ₃ pure are they Hues we feel ab - sent

A Born so pure they of col-oured Hues that we the ab - sent

Pno.

B

15

S strength of its po - wer, of its po - wer...

A

Pno.

18

S ...when they Be - gin they

A when they Be - gin

Pno.

20

S ga - ther Like sand on the Beach each ...ble Con - tains ...plete

A they ga - ther Like sand Like sand on the Beach each bub... Con - tains a com...

Pno.

Rit. e dim. poco a poco

23

S

eye of wa - - - - ter.

A

of wa - ter, eye of wa - ter.

Pno.

26

S

A

Pno.