The Flower that Swept by Bliss

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

for

mezzo-soprano and piano

by

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HARVEY MUSIC EDITIONS

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 (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.

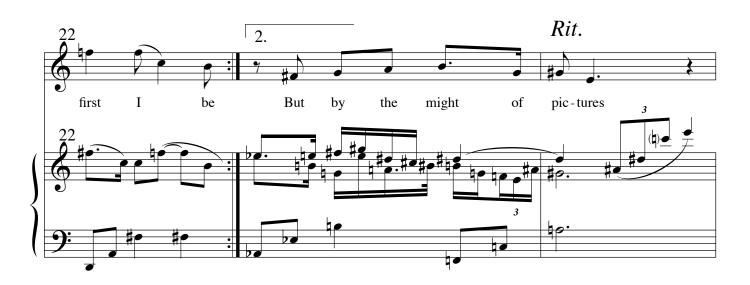
The Flower That Swept by Bliss

I: Early Ghosts











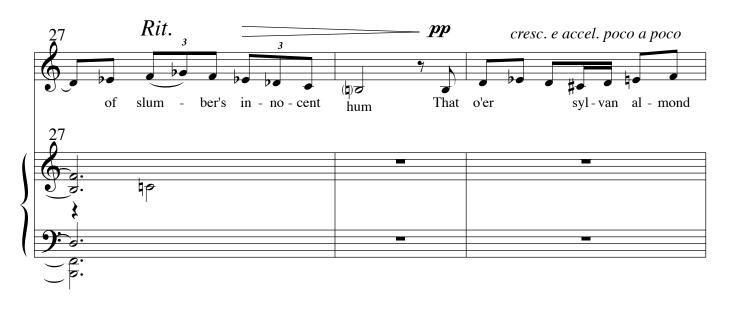


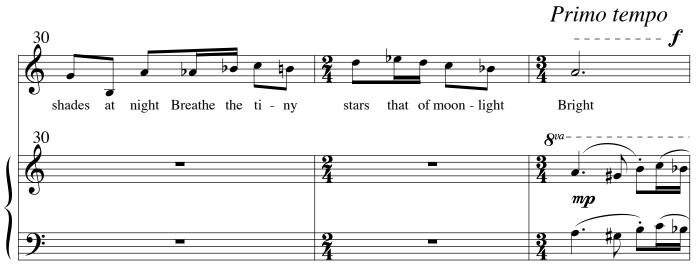
















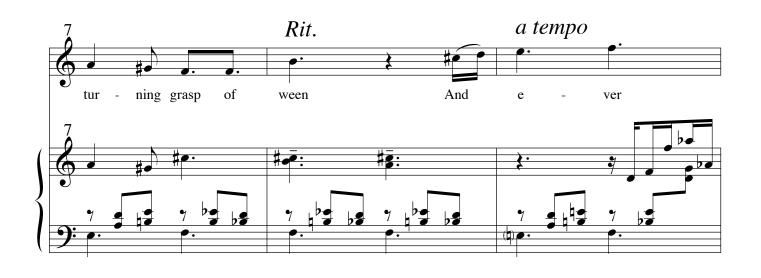


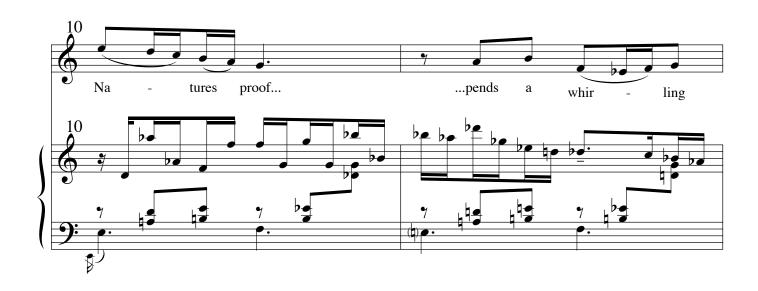


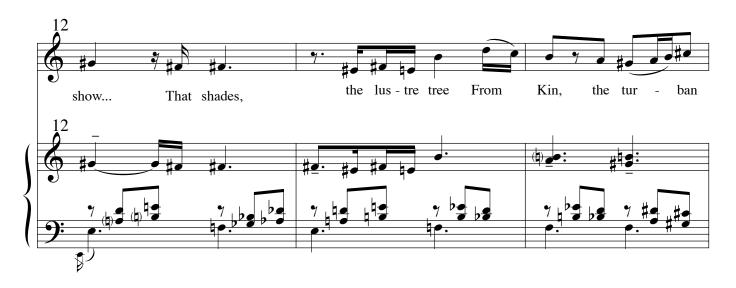


III: Illusive Evolution



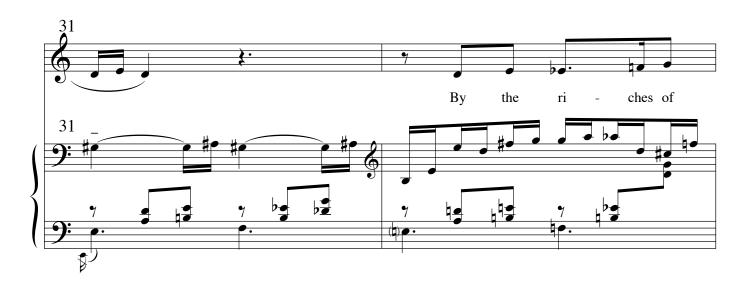


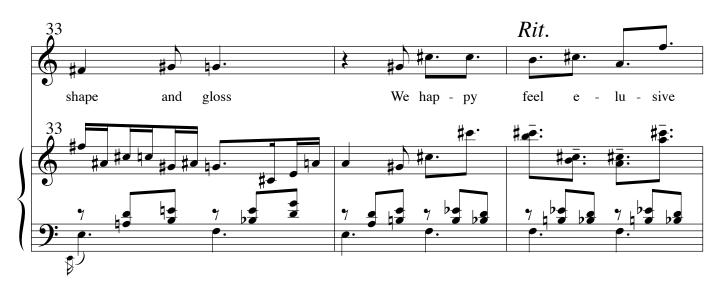


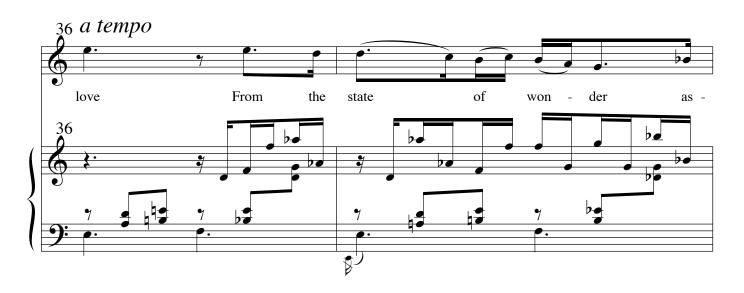




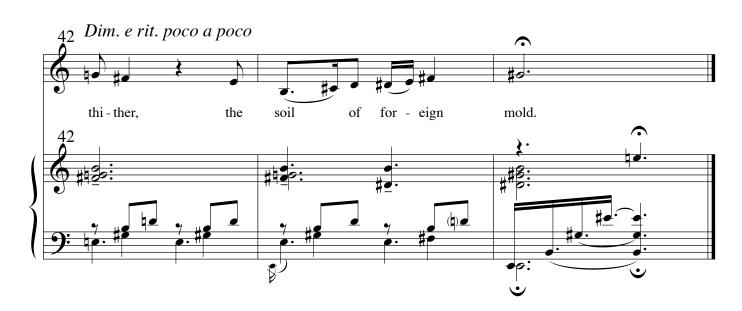












IV: Trees











