

# *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 cosmos 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 whirling  
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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 ♩ = 58

music: Justin Henry Rubin (2005)

text: Samuel Greenberg (1916)

Mezzo-Soprano

Piano

*mp*

*Red. ad lib.*

*sim.*

*esp.*

When first I be -

held The sight of self a - lone, Here stan - ding up -

10

on a floor, A new sen - si - tive throne, By dark cor - ners

13

round I sha - ded my - self, in hope, my-

*mf*

16

*Rit.* *p* *a tempo* 1. *mp* (spoken) 3

self in hope, That some light or peo - ple Would be seen

19 *3*  
 through a grate. When

22 *2.* *Rit.*  
 first I be But by the might of pic- tures

25 *a tempo* *Dim. e rit. poco a poco*  
 Each sight - ed ob - ject look'd as if my soul was

28 *(pp)* 3

but a for - tune... To its me-mo-ry, mea-ning book'd.

28 *(ppp)*

## II: Charm

*Capricious* ♩ = 112

*mp* *f* 3 3 3

*8va*

4 *4 (8va)* [loco] IV VI



7 *f* Charm! the haunt of souls in-spi-ra-tion *mf* The gil-ded spi-rals of

10 , *Rit.* *p* *a tempo*  
feign-ed il-lu-sions

14 *mf*  
The ex-hi-la-ra-tion of

18 *Rit.* 3

love's com - mit - tance, of love's com - mit - tance The great awe of ae -

18 *dim.*

21 *p* *poco meno mosso* *mp* 3

o - le - ans Blur mu - ta - tions Wild

21 *mysterioso* *pp* *p*

24 3

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

24 3

27 *Rit.* *pp* *cresc. e accel. poco a poco*

of slum - ber's in - no - cent hum That o'er syl - van al - mond

30 *Primo tempo* *f*

shades at night Breathe the ti - ny stars that of moon - light Bright

33 *f* *[loco]*

36 *f*

keep the slur of in - sects muse a - stir

39

Be - neath the

42 *mf* *p* *mp*

tall blo - wing al - fal - fa's low - ly Blades The

*Rit.* *a tempo*

45 ear - ly sky re - curls her clouds with Deep *pp*

48 pur - ple *mf* A - gain sieves re - ve - la - tion

51 of cos - mics change and heals the twi - light *mp*

51 *p*

54 *Rit.* *poco meno mosso*

of orbs res - ti - tu - tion

*pp* *p* *mysterioso*

57

Leaves its re - mains in the cir - cle, the cir - cle

60

of suns, of suns ab - lu - tion

*mp*

64 *Rit.*

64 *f* *p sub.*

### III: *Illusive Evolution*

*Swaying* ♩. = 44 *mp*

What tra - vel - ing

grace halts you to know A - buse from woes

7 *Rit.* *a tempo*

tur - ning grasp of ween And e - ver

10

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

12

show... That shades, the lus - tre tree From Kin, the tur - ban



15 *Rit.*

claims of prime That hold the bet - ter'd hope - ful slime

18 *a tempo*

18

21 *Rit.* *a tempo*

21

24

That ne - ver reals, in - to help - ful glee

27

But kills the co - - - lor'd win - - - dy

29

scent through such mar - vel growths un - bent

31

By the ri - ches of

33 *Rit.*

shape and gloss We hap - py feel e - lu - sive

36 *a tempo*

love From the state of won - der as -

38

sune

40

Ah yet he who spells rest un - told Brings

42 *Dim. e rit. poco a poco*

thi - ther, the soil of for - eign mold.

# IV: Trees

Gently, with rubato ♩ = 46

The piano introduction consists of three measures. The first two measures are in 4/4 time, and the third measure is in 5/4 time. The right hand has whole rests. The left hand plays a series of chords and eighth-note patterns. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

The vocal entry begins in measure 4. The vocal line is in 4/4 time, then changes to 5/4 in measure 5, and finally to 6/4 in measure 6. The lyrics are: "Trees, li - ne - ate the sky as a map, in win - ter". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and eighth-note patterns. The key signature has two flats. The tempo is *sotto voce*.

The piano accompaniment starts at measure 7. The right hand has a whole rest. The left hand plays a series of chords and eighth-note patterns. The key signature has two flats. The tempo is *ord.* (allegretto). The word "And" is written below the staff.

9

sum - mer we seek the Hid - den, seek the Hid - den Hea - ven

11

14

The mus - cle that re - veals the

16

Beau - - - - ti - ful state - ly plants

18

As the

20

Buds red in spring,

24

The in - for - méd part That Na - - - ture proud, That Na - ture

26

(spoken)

se - cret - ly Hides Trees are Be - lo - véd

28

as me - mo - ries of old The Or - chard stalks, and



30 *sotto voce*

Trunks, la - den with the spi - cy Fruits, spi - cy Fruits,

34

37 *ord.*

and ground co-ver'd Bloss - soms Which the wind cleans while

40 *sotto voce*

time In Blo - wing gust and Muse is Here

43 (humming)

(humming)

46 *Rit.*

*dim.*

*Rit.*