

Takuma Itoh

To a Balloon Laden with Knowledge

for SATB chorus, with divisi

commissioned by The New York Virtuoso Singers & Harold Rosenbaum, conductor

Sonnet: To a Balloon Laden with Knowledge

Bright ball of flame that through the gloom of even
 Silently takest thine aethereal way,
 And with surpassing glory dimm'st each ray
Twinkling amid the dark blue depths of Heaven,—
 Unlike the fire thou bearest, soon shalt thou
 Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom,
 Whilst that, unquenchable, is doomed to glow
 A watch-light by the patriot's lonely tomb;
 A ray of courage to the oppressed and poor;
A spark, though gleaming on the hovel's hearth,
Which through the tyrant's gilded domes shall roar;
 A beacon in the darkness of the Earth;
 A sun which, o'er the renovated scene,
Shall dart like Truth where Falsehood yet has been.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1812)

PROGRAM NOTES:

This sonnet by Percy Shelley was written during a time when there was a craze sweeping through France and England over creating manned hot air balloons. These balloon flights (the oldest human-flying technology, a century before the Wright brothers) represented the reckless adventurousness of the inventors and scientists of the time, who risked their lives to fly these highly volatile and dangerous machines in order to be some of the first humans to see the world from high above, (as well as to achieve fame and glory).

While such scientific explorations using hot air balloons were taking place, Shelley was trying to achieve something else with balloons. A political revolutionary, Shelley launched small handmade balloons filled with his manifesto, “A Declaration of Rights” that espoused many of his radical ideas at the time (e.g. “Government has no rights”; “If a person's religious ideas correspond not with your own, love him nevertheless”; “Man, whatever be his country, has the same rights in one place as another, the rights of universal citizenship”) in hopes that it would instigate social change.

While the balloons were ineffective as a social agitator (or as a mode of transportation), they represented a glimmer of hope and optimism in the sky that is reflected in this poem.

This piece was commissioned and premiered by The New York Virtuoso Singers with Harold Rosenbaum conducting, on Nov. 29, 2015 at the National Sawdust, Brooklyn, NY

DURATION: 4 minutes

Commissioned by The New York Virtuoso Singers
World Premiere by The New York Virtuoso Singers, Harold Rosenbaum, Conductor

To a Balloon Laden with Knowledge

Percy Bysshe Shelley
(1792-1822)

Takuma Itoh
(b. 1984)

Calm, Emerging ♩=69

Vocal score for Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto 1, Alto 2, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, and Bass. The lyrics are: "Bright ball of flame... Bright ball of flame... Bright ball of flame...". The score includes dynamic markings (*p*) and tempo markings (*poco*).

Piano accompaniment for the vocal score. The tempo is marked "Calm, Emerging" with a quarter note equal to 69 (♩=69). The score is written for piano and includes various chords and melodic lines.

S. 1 *p* *mf* *pp*
Bright ball of flame that through the gloom of e - ven

S. 2 *p* *mf* *pp*
_____ ball of flame that through the gloom of e - ven

A. 1 *p* *mf* *pp*
Bright ball of flame that through the gloom of e - ven

A. 2 *p* *mf* *pp*
_____ ball of flame that through the gloom of e - ven

T. 1 *p* *mf* *pp*
Bright ball of flame that through the gloom of e - ven

T. 2 *p* *mf* *pp*
_____ ball of flame that through the gloom of e - ven

B. _____

Piano accompaniment for the vocal parts, showing chords and melodic lines in both hands.

6

S. *p* ae - the - real way, *pp*

A. *p* Si - lent - ly ta - kest thine ae - the - real way, *pp*

T. *pp* hm *p* And

B. *pp* hm



12

S. *p* with sur - pa - ssing glo - ry dimm'st each ray

A. *p* with sur - pa - ssing glo - ry dimm'st each ray

T. *p* with sur - pa - ssing glo - ry dimm'st each ray

B. hm *p* dimm'st each ray

16

mf
S. Twink - ling a - mid the dark - blue depth of Hea - ven

mf
A. Twink - ling Twin - kling a - mid the dark - blue depth of

mf
T. Twink - ling Twin - kling a - mid the dark -

B.



19

pp
S. Hea - ven,

pp
A. Hea - ven, Hea - ven,

pp
T. - blue depth of Hea - ven,

mf *pp* *p*
B. Twin - kling a - mid the dark - blue depth of Hea - ven, Un - like the fi -

24

S.

A. 1

A. 2

T. 1

T. 2

B.

p *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Un - like the fi - re

Un - like the fi - re

Un - like the fi - re

Un - like the fi - re

Un - like the fi - re

-re

Musical score for Soprano (S.), Alto 1 (A. 1), Alto 2 (A. 2), Tenor 1 (T. 1), Tenor 2 (T. 2), Bass (B.), and Piano. The score is in 7/8 time and features lyrics: "Un - like the fi - re". The Soprano part is silent. The Alto 1 and Alto 2 parts enter in the second measure with a piano (*p*) dynamic and continue with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The Tenor 1 and Tenor 2 parts enter in the first measure with a piano (*p*) dynamic and continue with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The Bass part enters in the first measure with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The Piano part provides accompaniment throughout the piece.

S. 1 *p* Un - like the fi - re *f* fi - re thou bear - est,

S. 2 Un - like the fi - re *f* fi - re thou bear - est,

A. 1 *f* fi - re thou bear - est,

A. 2 *f* fi - re thou bear - est,

T. *8*

T. 1 *mp* - re *f* fi - re thou bear - est,

T. 2 *mp* - re *f* fi - re thou bear - est,

B. *f* Un - like the fi - re thou bear - est,

31

p *pp* *p* *mf*

S. 1 soon shalt thou Fade like a me-teor in sur-round - - ing

S. 2 soon shalt thou Fade like a me-teor in sur-round - - ing

A. 1 soon shalt thou Fade like a me-teor in sur-round - - ing

A. 2 soon shalt thou Fade like a me-teor in sur-round - - ing

T. 1 *p* *mf* soon shalt thou Fade like a me-teor in sur-round - - ing

T. 2 *p* *mf* soon shalt thou Fade like a me-teor in sur-round - - ing

B. *p* *mf* soon shalt thou Fade like a me-teor in sur-round - - ing

p *mf*

36

gloom, soon shalt thou _____

gloom, soon shalt thou _____

gloom, soon shalt thou _____

gloom, soon shalt thou _____

gloom, soon shalt thou _____ Fade like a _____

gloom, soon shalt thou _____ Fade like a _____

gloom, soon shalt thou _____ Fade like a _____

gloom, soon shalt thou _____ Fade like a _____

40

S. 1 *p* *mf*
Fade like a me - teor in sur - roun - ding gloom

S. 2 *p* *mf*
Fade like a _____

A. 1 *p* *mf*
Fade like a _____ me - teor in sur - roun - ding gloom

A. 2 *p* *mf*
Fade like a _____ me - teor in sur - roun - ding

T. 1 *mf*

T. 2 *mf*

B. 1 *mf*

B. 2 *mf*

44 *p* *f*

S. 1
gloom,

S. 2
gloom,

A. 1
gloom,

A. 2
gloom,

T. 1
gloom,

T. 2
gloom,

B.
gloom,

47 *mp*

S. 1
Whilst that, un - quen - cha - ble, Whilst that, un -

S. 2
Whilst that, un - quen - cha - ble, Whilst that, un -

A. 1
Whilst that, un - quen - cha - ble, Whilst that, un -

A. 2
Whilst that, un - quen - cha - ble, Whilst that, un -

T. 1
8 *mp*
Whilst that, un - quen - cha - ble, Whilst that, un -

T. 2
8 *mp*
Whilst that, un - quen - cha - ble, Whilst that, un -

B.
mp
Whilst that, un - quen - cha - ble, Whilst that, un -

50

S. *p*
 quen - cha - ble, is doomed to glow is doomed to

A. *p*
 quen - cha - ble, is doomed to glow is doomed to

T. *p*
 quen - cha - ble, is doomed to glow is doomed to

B. *p*
 quen - cha - ble, is doomed to glow is doomed to

54

S. *mf* *p* *pp*
 glow A watch - light by the pa - triot's lone - ly tomb;

A. *mf* *p* *pp*
 glow A watch - light by the pa - triot's lone - ly tomb;


T. *mf* *p* *pp* *p*
 glow A watch - light by the pa - triot's lone - ly tomb; A

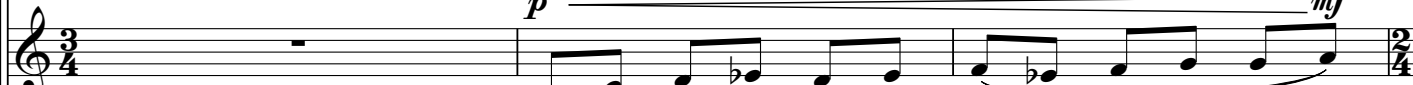
B. *mf* *p* *pp* *p*
 glow A watch - light by the pa - triot's lone - ly tomb; A


59

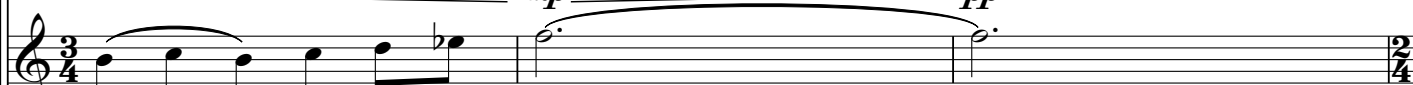
p _____ *mf*

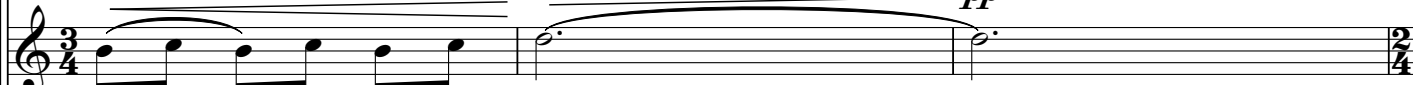
S. 1  *p* _____ *mf*
 to the op-pressed and poor

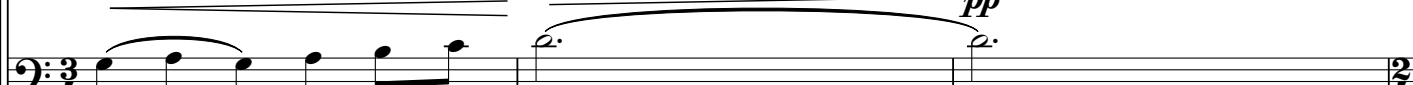
S. 2  *p* _____ *mf*
 to the op-pressed and poor

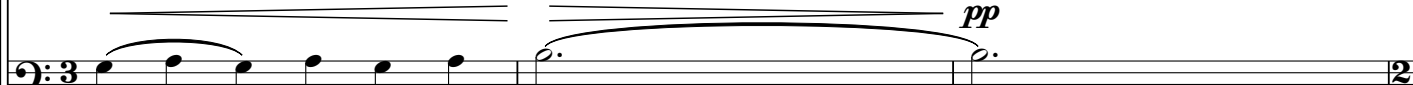
A. 1  *p* _____ *mf*
 to the op-pressed and poor

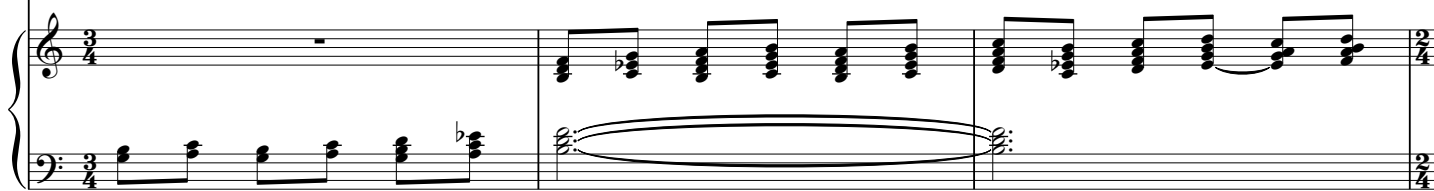
A. 2  *p* _____ *mf*
 to the op-pressed and poor

T. 1  *mp* _____ *pp*
 ray of cour-age to

T. 2  _____ *pp*
 ray of cour-age to

B. 1  _____ *pp*
 ray of cour-age to

B. 2  _____ *pp*
 ray of cour-age to



62

S. *f*
A spark _____ though gleam- ing on the ho - vel's hearth,

A. *f*
A spark _____ though gleam- ing on the ho - - vel's hearth,

T. *f*
A spark _____ though gleam- ing on the ho - vel's hearth,

B. *f*
A spark _____ though gleam - ing on the ho - vel's hearth,



67

S.
which through the ty - rant's gil - ded domes _____ shall roar;

A.
which through the ty - rant's gil - ded domes _____ shall roar;

T.
which through the ty - - rant's gil - ded domes _____ shall roar;

B.
which through the ty - rant's gil - ded domes _____ shall roar;

71

This musical score page contains eight staves. The top seven staves are for voices: Soprano 1 (S. 1), Soprano 2 (S. 2), Alto 1 (A. 1), Alto 2 (A. 2), Tenor 1 (T. 1), Tenor 2 (T. 2), and Bass 1 (B. 1). The eighth staff is for the piano, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The music is in 4/4 time and the key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into three measures. In the first measure, S. 1 has a whole rest, while S. 2, A. 1, A. 2, T. 1, T. 2, and B. 1 all play a half note G4 (F#). In the second measure, S. 1 has a whole rest, while S. 2, A. 1, A. 2, T. 1, T. 2, and B. 1 all play a half note A4. In the third measure, S. 1 has a quarter note G#4, while S. 2, A. 1, A. 2, T. 1, T. 2, and B. 1 all play a half note A4. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *mf* (mezzo-forte) with hairpins, and accents (*^*) are placed above the notes in the second and third measures. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and sustained bass notes in the left hand.

75

S. 1
bea - con in the dark - ness of the Earth;

S. 2
pp hm *p* hm

A. 1
pp hm *p* hm

A. 2
pp hm *p* hm

T. 1
sub. pp hm *p* hm

T. 2
sub. pp hm *p* hm

B. 1
sub. pp hm *mf* A bea - con in the dark - ness of the

B. 2
sub. pp hm *p* hm

Piano accompaniment

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, numbered 16 and 75, features a vocal ensemble of Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto 1, Alto 2, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2, along with a piano accompaniment. The music is in the key of D major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The vocal parts are primarily sustained notes, with Soprano 1 having lyrics. Dynamics range from *pp* (pianissimo) to *mf* (mezzo-forte). The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

80

S. 1

S. 2
p _____ *mf*
 Earth; _____

A. 1
p _____ *mf* *p sub.*
 Earth; _____ re - no - va - - ted scene

A. 2
p _____ *mf* *p sub.*
 Earth; _____ re - no - va - - ted scene

T. 1
f _____ *p sub.*
 A sun which, o'er the re - no - va - - ted scene

T. 2
p _____ *mf* *p sub.*
 Earth; _____ re - no - va - - ted scene

B. 1
p _____ *mf* *p sub.*
 Earth; _____ re - no - va - - ted scene

B. 2
p _____ *mf* *p sub.*
 Earth; _____ re - no - va - - ted scene

The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand part features a series of chords and melodic fragments, while the left hand part provides a steady harmonic foundation with sustained chords and moving bass lines. The tempo and dynamics are consistent with the vocal parts, marked with *p*, *mf*, and *p sub.*

85

S. 1 *p* *pp* *pp*
like Truth False - hood

S. 2 *p* *pp* *pp*
like Truth False - hood

A. 1 *pp* *pp*
Shall__ dart__ like Truth False - hood

A. 2 *pp* *pp*
Shall dart like Truth False - hood

T. 1 *pp*
Shall__ dart__ like Truth where

T. 2 *pp*
Shall dart like Truth where

B. 1 *pp*
Shall__ dart__ like Truth where

B. 2 *pp*
Shall dart like Truth where

89

pp

S. 1
yet has been.

pp

S. 2
yet has been.

pp

A. 1
yet has been.

pp

A. 2
yet has been.

pp

T. 1
False - hood yet has been.

pp

T. 2
False - hood yet has been.

pp

B. 1
False - hood been.

pp

B. 2
False - hood been.