

A Ring of Light

for High Voice and Piano

Lawrence Kramer

1986, rev. 2009

Texts by the composer.

1. The Waking Dream

More than once, at first light,
half-waking, I've seen your face
returning with daylight, and slept again:

as if the morning watched my sleep,
protected now, and charged with presence
that hour. Little enough:

little enough the image.
But what could be enough?

2. Nocturne

There was a street whose changing moods
were a joy of ours; there were times
when I talked with the earth
in familiar terms, nights
I deciphered its voices and silences.

Some song I liked once runs through my head.
There were closed shops and misty trees
and nothing reproached me for being mere.\

And at times some were with me,
by my side-not so many, yet
more than I can remember. I

see again the color of a jacket, or the loose
swirl of a scarf, or certain roads,
such certain nights.

Bedtime. The new-fallen snow fills the room
with a soft shining. A book lies open
on a table. Sleep calls me home.

3. A Ring of Light

"I saw eternity the other night
Like a great ring of pure and endless light"

in which we slept, blent it seemed
in oblivious shining thoughts

that rhyme our breath. Then from that ring
of light I woke, I grew afraid,

utterly baffled and lost, lost with the sirens
in the city night. Some homeless beggar

shuts unseeing eyes; Eurydice dies
in the ambulance; the alarm clock
ticks like a bomb. I fall into sleep

like a light drizzle, thinking of your hair
or shoulders in the dark. If I saw them
at daybreak, in the blue-violet light,
they could well shut me out like a blind.

4. Retrospect

We came to know where light welled up
in streams, and flowed into pools:
we came to dip in and bask, drowned
with abundance. We saw

how the blue of the day looks
in its naked sleep, so that the sweetly
troubled flesh glows with its luster.

We found the beauty of descents,
how lighted windows shine as the streets
grow dark, and the traffic clumps and thins.

We learned, it seemed, to wither and bud again,
hard though that is, hard to consent and be,
like earliest crocus, too soon golden,
too soon gone.

5. Your Name in Lights

They were the lights! They were the lights that flashed across the lake and filled the moonless sky with its ten thousand terraces of shine:

They were the lights! They were the lights of cities dancing in the distance, whorls and petals, spirals and bridges and towers of light:

They were the lights with which a quickening body will seem to turn to you alone until such bodies are a flood of dawn:

They were the lights! They were the lights of the enormous unappeasable and tender sea as it sets its gifts on the shore, the weeds good for snapping and the glistening shells:

They were the lights of the huge sun pressed like a bee to the new cups of the crocus, the lights glinting and darting as the eye fills with almost too much vision, petal and flower and terrace and shell and all:

They were the lights, they were the lights, they were the lights!

Lawrence Kramer

Duration: about 17 minutes.

This is the earliest of three song cycles composed to poems of my own. It begins as a cycle of love songs cast in a mode of reminiscence. But although the songs never wholly lose that character, the beginning is deceptive. The third song abruptly expands the frame of reference beyond the personal. The change haunts the nostalgic fourth song and reaches a long plateau of culmination—driven or ecstatic or both, take your pick—in the fifth.

A Ring of Light

1. The Waking Dream

♩ = 60 Tempo rubato

Lawrence Kramer

Musical score for "The Song of the Lark" by Maurice Strakosky. The score is for Voice and Piano. It features a 4/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is in common time (C) and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score is divided into three systems, each with a measure number (5, 9, 13) and a rehearsal mark (Led.). The first system includes a "poco rall." marking. The second system includes an "a tempo" marking. The third system includes a "rit." marking and a "ten." marking. The score concludes with a final measure in 4/4 time.

A Ring of Light

6

13

poco cresc.

poco rall. *a tempo*

p sub. *f* *p*

3 6 5 15^{ma-1}

Ped.

16

p

More than once at

5

Ped.

18

first light, half - wak - ing, I've

6 6 6

Ped.

20

— seen your face — re - turn - ing — with day - light, and slept a - again:

20

Ped. * *Ped.* * *Ped.*

24

mp *f*

as if the morn - ing — watched my sleep, pro - tect - ed now, — and charged with pre - sence

24

mf sub. *piu f* *piu f* *f*

28

ff *p*

— that hour. — Lit - tle — e - enough:

28

sfz > p

Ped. *

A Ring of Light

8

33

lit - tle e - nough the im - - - age.

33

8va

Reo.

*

35

pp

But what could be e - nough?

35

pp

mf

Reo.

*

38

poco accel.

38

f

p

pp

2. Retrospect

41 $\text{♩} = 66$

Musical score for measures 41-45. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 66$. The score is for piano (p) and includes a *poco* marking. The right hand (r.h.) and left hand (l.h.) are indicated. The music features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with various articulations and dynamics.

46 $\text{♩} = 76$

Musical score for measures 46-50. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 76$. The score is for piano (p) and includes a *poco* marking. The right hand (r.h.) and left hand (l.h.) are indicated. The music features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with various articulations and dynamics.

51 $\text{♩} = 108$

Musical score for measures 51-55. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 108$. The score is for piano (p) and includes a *poco* marking. The right hand (r.h.) and left hand (l.h.) are indicated. The music features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with various articulations and dynamics. The lyrics "There was a street whose chang - ing moods were a" are written below the staff.

A Ring of Light

10

55

joy _____ of ours. _____ There were days _____ when I talked with the earth in fa -

loco

59

mi - liar terms, _____ nights _____ I de - ci - phered its voi - ces and

p

63

si - - len - ces. _____ Some song I liked once runs through my head.

pp

67 *p* 3

There were closed shops — and

67

8vb

71 3 3 3

mis - ty trees, — and no-thing re-proached me for be - ing mere. —

71

mf *p*

75

75 *sf* *pp* una corda

Leg. *

A Ring of Light

12

79

And at times _____ some were with me, by my side: _____

79

p

82

not so ma - ny, _____ but more, more than I can re - mem - - - -

82

tré corde

85

ber.

85

ff *f* *mp* *p*

89

I see a - gain _____ the col-or _____ of a jack-et _____ or the loose swirl of a

cresc. *poco* *a* *poco*

8^{va} 8^{vb}

92

scarf, or cer-tain roads, _____ such cer - tain

ff *mf sub.* *p*

8^{va} 8^{vb}

96

nights. Bed -

mf *p*

8^{va} 8^{vb}

l.h. r.h.

A Ring of Light

14

100

time. The new - fal - len snow fills the room with a

Ped. *

103

soft shin - ing.

pp

106

A book lies o - pen on a ta - ble.

p

pp una corda

109

Sleep _____ calls _____ me home.

109

tré corde

112

112

A Ring of Light

16

3. A Ring of Light

115 $\text{♩} = 88$

"I saw e-ter ni - ty the

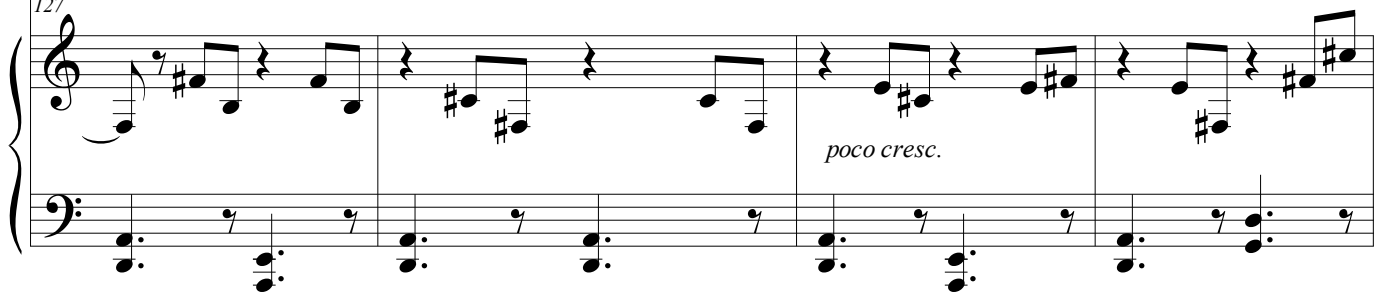
o-ther night like a great ring of pure and end - less light,"

in which we slept blent it seemed in o - bli - vi - ous shin - ing

127



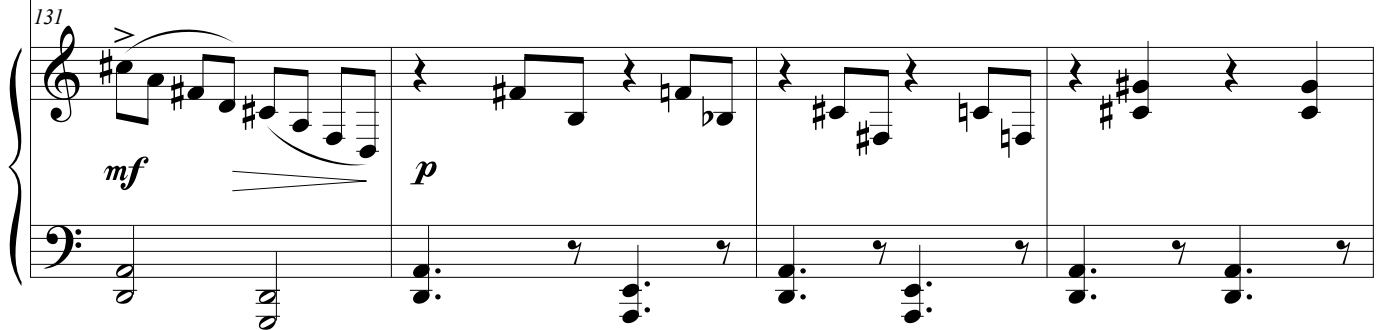
127



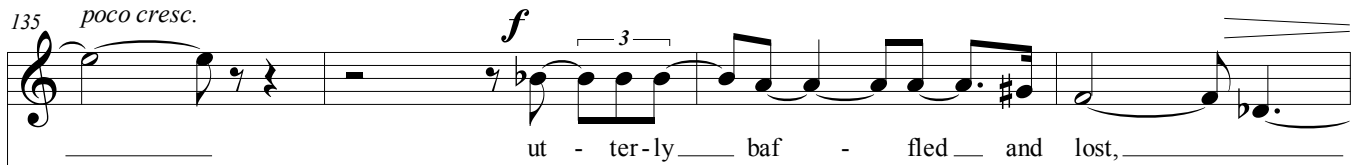
131



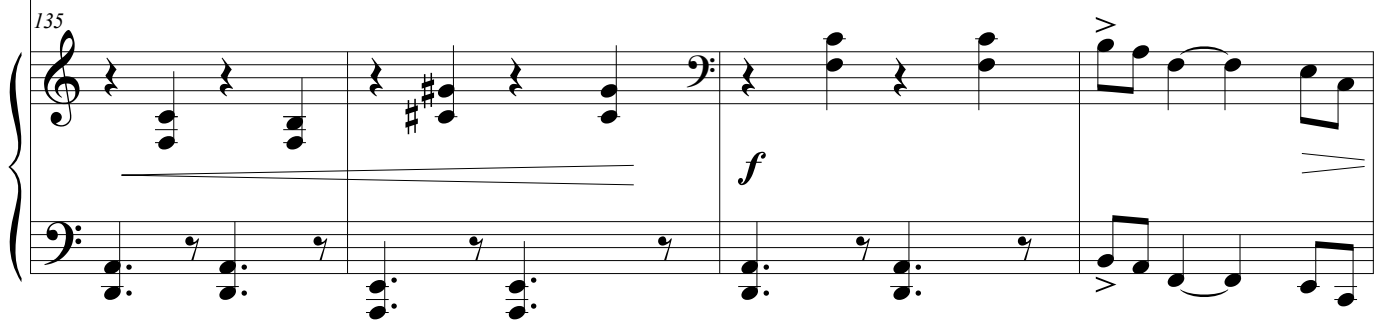
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135



135



A Ring of Light

18

139

lost with the si - rens in the ci - ty night.

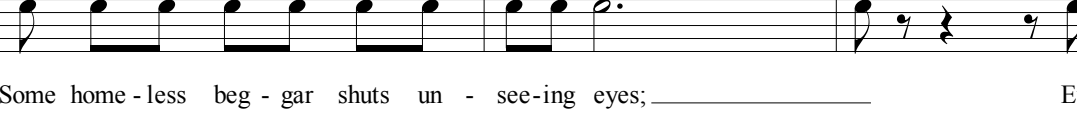
139

p

quasi recitative


quasi recitative

143



Some home-less beg-gar shuts un-see-ing eyes; _____ Eu-ri-dy-ce

143



mp *cresc.* *poco* *a* *poco*

8vb *8vb* *8vb*

ritard.

146

ritard.

dies in the am-bu-lance; _____ the a-larm clock ticks like a bomb. _____

146

ff *pp*

(8vb)

150 *a tempo*

150 *a tempo*

I fall _____ in-to sleep _____ like a

p

This system contains measures 150 through 153. The vocal line begins at measure 150 with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F#4, a quarter note E4, and a quarter note D4. The piano accompaniment starts at measure 150 with a half note G2, a half note F#2, and a half note E2. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a half-note accompaniment in the left hand.

154

154

light driz-zle, _____ think-ing of your hair and shoul-ders in the dark. _____

poco cresc.

This system contains measures 154 through 157. The vocal line continues with a half note D4, a half note C#4, a half note B4, a half note A4, a half note G4, a half note F#4, a half note E4, and a half note D4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and half-note accompaniment in the left hand. The piano part includes a *poco cresc.* marking.

158

158

If I saw them _____ at day-break _____ in the blue _____

p *mp cresc.* *poco* *a* *poco*

r.h.

This system contains measures 158 through 161. The vocal line begins at measure 158 with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a half note F#4, a half note E4, a half note D4, a half note C#4, a half note B4, a half note A4, and a half note G4. The piano accompaniment starts at measure 158 with a half note G2, a half note F#2, and a half note E2. The piano part includes a *p* marking, a *r.h.* marking, a *mp cresc.* marking, a *poco* marking, an *a* marking, and a *poco* marking.

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20

161

vio - - - - - let light, _____

161

f *cresc.* *ff*

164

they could well _____ shut me out like a blind. _____

164

p *8vb*

4. Retrospect

168 $\text{♩} = 76$

168 $\text{♩} = 76$

p

173

*allarg.**a tempo**p*

pp *p* *mf* *p*

We came to

180

know where light welled up in streams, and flowed in-to pools. We

p

8va

A Ring of Light

22

184

came to dip in and bask, _____ drowsed _____ in a-bun-dance. _____

188

We saw how the blue of the day looks

191

_____ in its nak - ed sleep, so that the sweet-ly troub-led flesh

poco cresc.

194 *molto rit. a tempo*

glows _____ with its lus - ter. _____ We found the beau - ty of de - scents, _____

p *pp*

198 _____ how light-ed win-dows shine _____ as the street goes dark, _____ and the traf-fic

p

202 clumps and thins. _____

202 _____

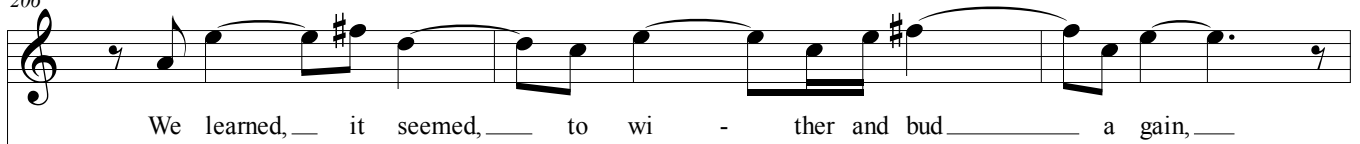
p

Sost. Ped. - - - - -

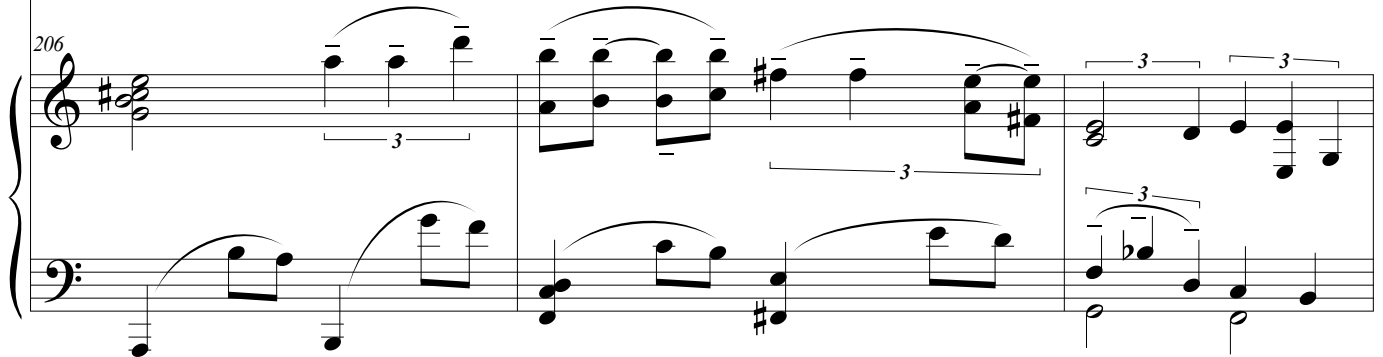
A Ring of Light

24

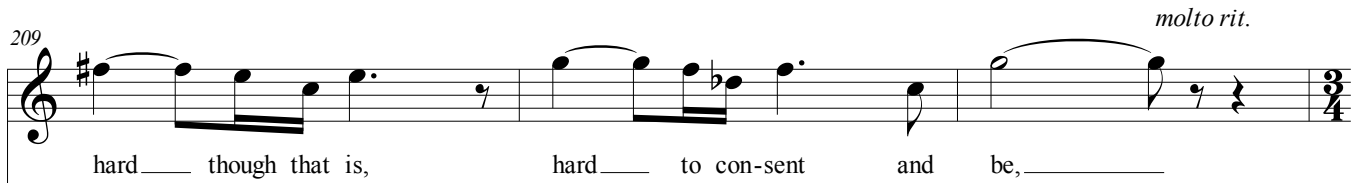
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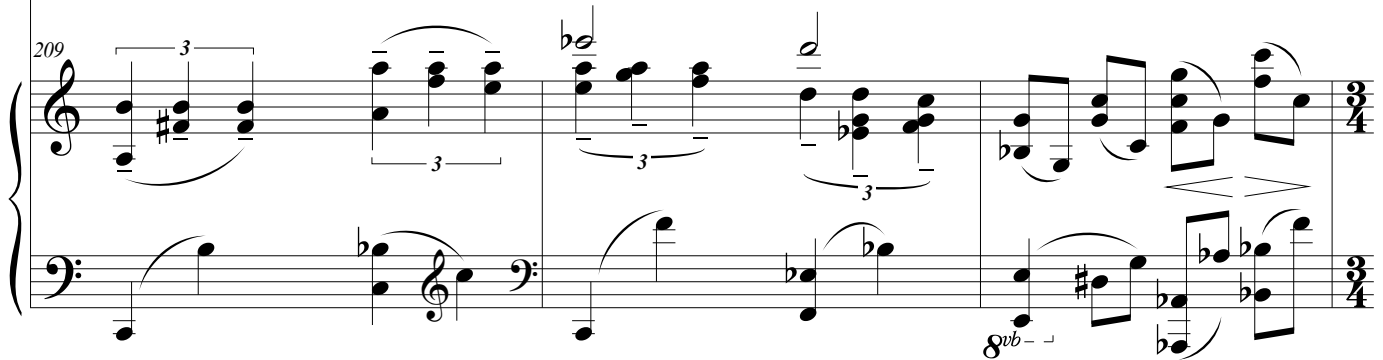
206



209



209



212



212



216 *riten.* *a tempo* *pp*

too

216

217

218

219

220 *riten.*

soon gone.

(8va)

220

221

222

223

A Ring of Light

26

5. Your Name in Lights

224 ♩ = ca. 116

They were the lights! — They were the lights

riten. accel. a tempo

pp

Lead.

229

— that flashed a-cross the lake — and filled the moon - less sky with its ten —

229

234

— thou-sand ter-ra-ces — of shine. — They were the

234

* *Lead.* * *Lead.* * *Lead.*

240

lights. _____ They were the lights!

3

240

riten. accel. a tempo

8va *ped.* *ped.* *ped.* *ped.*

246 *p*

— They were the lights _____ of ci-ties _____ danc-ing in the dis - tance. _____ Whorls

3

246

p

ped. *ped.*

251

and pe-tals, spi-rals _____ and bridg-es _____ and tow - wers of light! _____

251

ped. *ped.*

A Ring of Light

28

257 *f* *p*

They were the lights

263 *poco riten.*

3

accel.

with which a quick-en-ing bo-dy will seem to turn to you a-lone

263

8va

* Ped.

* Ped.

267 *a tempo* **f**

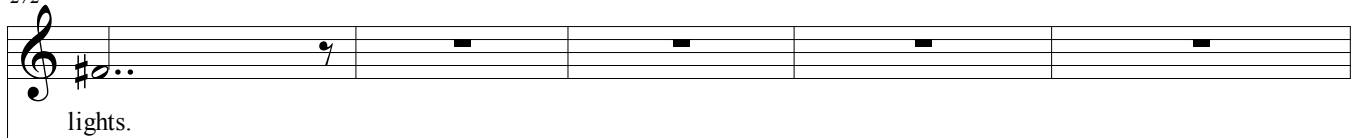
un-til such bo-dies are a flood of dawn! They were the

267 *f* *mp* *sf*

8va

Red. *Red.*

272



272

p *mp* *ff*

* Led. *sf* * Led. * Led. *sf* * Led. * Led. * Led.

277

They were the lights of the e - nor - mous un - a - peas - a - ble and

277

mp *mf* *f*

* Led. * Led.

281

ten - der sea as it sets its gifts on the shore,

281

p

* Led. * Led. * Led. simile * Led.

A Ring of Light

30

286

the weed good for snap-ping and the glist - en-ing shells.

286

* Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped.

291

They were the lights of the huge

291

* Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *fp*

297

sun pressed like a bee to the new cups of the cro-cus, the lights glint-ing

297

fp *fp* *fp* *cresc.* * Ped.

302 *poco riten.*

— and dart-ing — till the eye fills with al-most too much vi-sion,

f *ff* *mf*

* *Red.* * *Red.* * *Red.* *simile*

307 *a tempo*

— pe-tal and flo-wer and ter-race and shell and all! —

ff

* *Red.* * *Red.* *simile* *Red.*

312

They were the lights! — They were the lights! —

ff

* *Red.* * *Red.* * *Red.*

A Ring of Light

32

317 *allarg.*

They were the lights! _____

317 *p*

simile

ped. *ped.*

The musical score is for a piano and voice. The piano part is in G major and 4/4 time. It begins at measure 317 with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano part features a series of chords and single notes, with a crescendo leading to a piano (*p*) dynamic. The voice part is in the same key and time, starting at measure 317 with a treble clef. It includes a triplet of eighth notes and a series of half notes. The tempo is marked *allarg.* (allargando). The score includes performance instructions such as *simile* and *ped.* (pedal). The lyrics 'They were the lights!' are written below the voice staff.