

The Convergence: Notes on the Plague Year 2020.

For Voice and Piano

Lawrence Kramer

Text by Thomas Hardy

The Convergence of the Twain

Lines on the Loss of the *Titanic*

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls—grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?"

VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

Prepared a sinister mate
For her—so gaily great—
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX

 Alien they seemed to be:
 No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history

X

 Or sign that they were bent
 By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

XI

 Till the Spinner of the Years
 Said "Now!" And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres

The Convergence: Notes on the Plague Year 2020.

The word "notes" in the title of this piece refers, pardonably, I hope, both to the notes of the music and to notes in the sense of observations. Much of the response of the classical music world to the coronavirus pandemic has involved live streaming of classical repertoire. But composers will surely respond, too, as I seek to do here. (It is early May as I write this.) Thomas Hardy's poem "The Convergence of the Twain" is about the loss of the *Titanic* in 1912, but its narrative forms all too apt a metaphor for the shipwreck of 2020: a collision between human and natural forces that upsets the order we foolishly thought was secure, a shock wave that rips across the entire globe. The poem, with its reflection on "vaingloriousness," seems especially pertinent to condition in the United States, where arrogance and ignorance at the top levels of government, led by one vainglorious man, gave the virus a free hand to spread more misery and death than it could do anywhere else on the planet. So this musical setting is a work of political art as well as a kind of elegy. Composed to be sung by any voice type (whether as written or an octave lower), it may also be recited instead of sung.

The Convergence

Notes on the Plague Year 2020

Lawrence Kramer

$\text{♩} = 72$
tempo rubato

The musical score is written for voice and piano in 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-3) features a piano introduction with a forte-piano (*fp*) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The voice part is silent. The second system (measures 4-7) includes the vocal line with markings for acceleration (*accel.*) and deceleration (*rit.*), and piano accompaniment with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The third system (measures 8-11) is marked *a tempo* and includes piano accompaniment with a piano (*p*) dynamic, a forte-piano (*fp*) dynamic, and triplet markings. The score includes performance instructions such as *Lead.* (Lead) and *gva.* (glissando) with a fermata, and asterisks (*) indicating specific performance points.

12

f *ff*

ped. * *gva*

♩ = 60

15

fff *pp*

ped. * *gva*

In a so - li - tude of the

21

ped. * *gva*

sea, — Deep from hu - man va - n - ty, — Still - y

26

crouch - es she.

p

Ped. * *Ped.*

♩ = 72

31

Steel cham - bers,

f p f p f

* 3

35

late the pyres of her sa - la - man - drine

p cresc. f

accel. a tempo

♩ = 80

39

39
 fires, _____ cold cur - rents

39

39
p *cresc.*

42

42
 thrid, _____ and turn to rhyth - mic

42

42
f *rit.* *8va*

44

44
 ti - dal lyres. _____

44

44
p

47 $\text{♩} = 72$

O - ver the mir - rors meant

51

to glass — the op - u - lent — the

55

sea worm crawls: — gro - tesque,

58



slimed,

58

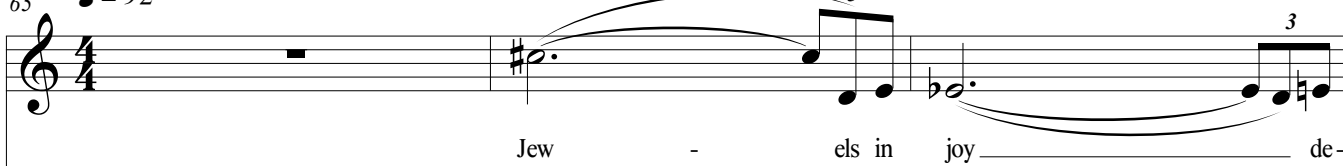
61



dumb,

in - dif - f'rent.

61

65 $\text{♩} = 92$ 

Jew - els in joy de-

65

68

signed to — rav —

p *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

70

ish — the sen — su - ous

72

mind

f

rit.

74 *a tempo* *p* *rit.* *a tempo* *pp*

Lie light - less, all their spar - kles blear and

p f p *f p* *f dim.* *p*

$\text{♩} = 72$

77

black and blind.

pp *ppp* *f* *p*

83 *pp*

Dim moon - eyed fish - es — near Gaze at the gild - ed gear —

83 *ff*

And. sempre

88

p

and que-ry: "What does this vain -

93

mf

p

$\text{♩} = 80$

glor - i - ous - ness down here?"

98

Spoken on pitch.

Sung:

Well: while was fash-ion - ing this crea-ture of cleav -

101

ing wing, the Im - ma - nent Will that stirs and

mp *cresc.*

104

ur - ges ev - 'ry thing

mf *sfz* *cresc.* *f* *sfz* *ff* *pp*

♩ = 60

108

pre-pared a sin - is - ter

pp *pp* *pp*

3 3 3 3

111

mate For her, so gai - ly great, A shape ___ of

poco cresc. *pp* *p*

114

Ice, ___ for the time far and dis -

mp cresc. *p cresc.*

117

so - ci-ate. And as the smart ship grew ___

f *p* *pp*

♩ = 72

122

In sta-ture, grace, and hue, _____ In sha - dow - y

♩ = 80

126

si - lent dis - tance grew the Ice - berg too. _____

130

A - li - en they seemed to 3

f p *f p* *f*

3

133 *accel.*

be: _____ No _____

p *cresc.* *f*

136 *a tempo*

mor - tal eye could

p

139

see _____

cresc.

140

Musical score for measures 140-141. The score is in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 140 features a piano introduction with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand plays a sequence of eighth notes with a sharp sign above each note. The left hand plays a similar sequence of eighth notes. Measure 141 shows a change in tempo and meter to 3/4, with a *rit.* marking. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note, with a *8va* marking above the final note. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. The meter returns to 4/4 at the end of the measure.

142

Musical score for measures 142-143. The score is in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 142 contains the lyrics "the in - ti - mate weld - ing of their la - ter". The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. Measure 143 continues the piano introduction with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note.

144

Musical score for measures 144-146. The score is in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 144 contains the lyrics "his - tor - y . . . or". The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. Measure 145 continues the piano introduction with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. Measure 146 continues the piano introduction with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note. A tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 72$ is present above the staff.

147

sign that they were bent By paths co - in - ci - dent

147

mf *p*

150 $\text{♩} = 80$

On be - ing a - non twin

$[\text{♩} = 80]$

150

mf *f* *p*

153

halves of one au - gust e - vent, _____

153

mf *f* *ff*

♩ = 72

158

In a whisper:

Till the Spin - ner _____ of the Years said

"Now!"

163

And each one hears,

And con-sum - ma - tion comes, _____ and

and

rit.

167

jars _____ two he-mi - spheres. _____

a tempo

173

Musical score for measures 173-174. The system consists of three staves: a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The vocal line contains whole rests. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time. Measure 173 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand plays a melodic line with a slur, and the left hand plays a bass line with a slur. Measure 174 features a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a *Leg.* marking. The right hand continues the melodic line, and the left hand plays a rhythmic pattern. A double bar line with repeat dots is at the end of the system, followed by an asterisk (*).

175

a tempo

Musical score for measures 175-176. The system consists of three staves: a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The vocal line contains whole rests. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time. Measure 175 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand plays a melodic line with a slur, and the left hand plays a rhythmic pattern. Measure 176 features a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and a *Leg.* marking. The right hand continues the melodic line, and the left hand plays a rhythmic pattern. A double bar line with repeat dots is at the end of the system, followed by an asterisk (*).

177

Musical score for measures 177-178. The system consists of three staves: a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The vocal line contains whole rests. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time. Measure 177 starts with a *Leg.* marking. The right hand plays a melodic line with a slur, and the left hand plays a rhythmic pattern. Measure 178 features a *sub* marking and a *Leg.* marking. The right hand plays a sustained chord with a slur, and the left hand plays a sustained chord with a slur. A double bar line with repeat dots is at the end of the system, followed by an asterisk (*).