

Sean Michael Salamon

Three Millay Songs

for Soprano and Piano

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For Chloe Holgate,

Three Millay Songs,

with poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay:

Only Until This Cigarette Is Ended

*Only until this cigarette is ended,
A little moment at the end of all,
While on the floor the quiet ashes fall,
And in the firelight to a lance extended,
Bizarrely with the jazzing music blended,
The broken shadow dances on the wall,
I will permit my memory to recall
The vision of you, by all my dreams attended.
And then adieu,—farewell!—the dream is done.
Yours is a face of which I can forget
The color and the features, every one,
The words not ever, and the smiles not yet;
But in your day this moment is the sun
Upon a hill, after the sun has set.*

City Trees

*The trees along this city street,
Save for the traffic and the trains,
Would make a sound as thin and sweet
As trees in country lanes.*

*And people standing in their shade
Out of a shower, undoubtedly
Would hear such music as is made
Upon a country tree.*

*Oh, little leaves that are so dumb
Against the shrieking city air,
I watch you when the wind has come,—
I know what sound is there.*

Oh, Oh, You Will Be Sorry

*Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!
Give me back my book and take my kiss instead.
Was it my enemy or my friend I heard,
"What a big book for such a little head!"
Come, I will show you now my newest hat,
And you may watch me purse my mouth and prink!
Oh, I shall love you still, and all of that.
I never again shall tell you what I think.
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly;
You will not catch me reading any more:
I shall be called a wife to pattern by;
And some day when you knock and push the door,
Some sane day, not too bright and not too stormy,
I shall be gone, and you may whistle for me.*

Only Until This Cigarette is Ended

Words by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Sean Michael Salamon

Lento rubato (In eight) ♩=46

Soprano

Piano

p *rit.* *a tempo* *mp*

Ped. normally

3

p On - ly un - til this ci - gar - ette is

rall. *a tempo* *pp*

5

en - ded, A lit - tle mo - ment at the end of all, _____

rit. *a tempo*

Only Until This Cigarette is Ended

2
7

While on the floor the quiet ashes fall, — And in the fire light to a lance ex-

ppp *p*

9

ten - ded, Bi-zarre - ly with the jaz-zing mu-sic blen - ded,

p *mp*

pp *crescendo* *mp*

Red. *

11

The bro - ken sha-dow-dan - ces on the wall, I will per-

p *mf* *p*

pp *crescendo* *mf* *pp rit.*

Only Until This Cigarette is Ended

13 *Molto mosso (In four)*

mit my mem'-ry to re-call The vis-ion of you, by all my dreams a -

f

mp

f

15

ten - ded, And then a - dieu, fare - well, the dream is

mp

f

17 *mp*

done. Yours is a face of which I can for - get The co - lor and the

> mp

Only Until This Cigarette is Ended

4

Mena

19 *p* *rit.* *pp*

fea - tures, ev' - ry one, The words not e - ver and the smiles not

19 *p* *ppp*

Tempo primo

21 *p*

yet; But in your day this moment is the sun U-pon a hill

21 *pp*

24

af - ter the sun has set.

24 *rallentando* *f* *p*

Red. ** Red.* *

City Trees

Words by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Sean Michael Salamon

Andante affettuoso $\text{♩} = 80$

Soprano

The trees _____ a-long this ci-ty

Piano

pp *piu pp* *pp sim.*

Red. normally

4 _____ street, Save _____ for the traffic and the trains, Would make a

4 *Sva*-----

7 sound as thin _____ and sweet _____ As trees _____ in coun - try

7

City Trees

lanes _____ And peo - ple stan - ding in their

mp

Sva

p

shade Out of a shower, _____ un -

mf

cresc.

mp

doubted-ly would hear such mu - sic _____ as is made U - pon -

mp

poco rit.

pp

City Trees

17 *a tempo*

— a coun-try tree.

mp

piu pp

mf

p

20 *rall.* *a tempo* *mp*

Oh, lit-tle

mf

p

pp

23 *mf*

leaves — that are so dumb Against the shrie - king city air, —

mf

8
26

City Trees

poco f

I watch you when the wind has come,

mf *mp*

Red.

28

poco rallentando

piu pp

I

pp

* Red. *

Ad lib.

30

know what sound is there.

Sub

Oh, Oh, You Will Be Sorry

Words by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Sean Michael Salamon

Sardonic ♩=106

Soprano
mf Oh, oh, you will be so - rry for that

Piano
mf *subito p*

Red. *

2 word! Give me back my book and take my kiss in -

Piano
mf *pp* *mp* *mf*

Red. *

4 stead. Was it my e - ne - my or my friend I heard,

Piano
p *subito pp* *p* *poco f*

Red. *

Oh, Oh, You Will Be Sorry

10

Slow ad lib.

Slightly slower than $\text{♩}=\text{♩}$, prancing

6

"What ___ a big book for such a little head."

Sva -----

Sva -----

mp

a tempo mp

8

p sickly sweet

Come, I will show you now my new - est hat, And you may watch me purse my mouth and

Sva -----

p

10

< mp

prink! Oh, I shall love you still and all of that.

Sva -----

mp *subito pp*

Oh, Oh, You Will Be Sorry

12 *poco f*

I ne - ver a - gain shall tell you what I think.

(*Sva*)

poco f *subito pp*

8^{va}

Tempo I

14 *p*

I shall be sweet and craf - ty, soft and sly; You

p

16 *mf*

will not catch me reading a - ny more: I shall be

mf

Oh, Oh, You Will Be Sorry

12
18

called a wife to pat - tern by;

18

Piano accompaniment for measures 12-18, featuring a steady eighth-note bass line and a more active treble line.

20

vehement f

And some - day when you knock and

20

Piano accompaniment for measures 20-21, marked *f*. The treble part features chords with accents, and the bass part continues with eighth-note patterns.

22

Ad lib.

mp

push the door, Some sane day, not too bright and not too

22

Piano accompaniment for measures 22-23, marked *mp*. The treble part has chords with accents, and the bass part has chords with accents.

24 stor - my,

24 *rall.*

Ped.

25 *A tempo*

I shall be gone, and you may whistle for me.

25 *Sva*

ff

Sva

ff

Composer's Notes

Three Millay Songs for soprano and piano is a setting of three poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), the third woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. The way in which I set the text is heavily influenced by Sondheim, my instruction in theatre, and my general discontent with the way I perceive that composers treat theatre in general. To me, whenever words are involved, the act of singing is inextricably linked to acting, especially in a live performance. This set of songs, therefore, is an effort to provide singers with something they can act. These three poems by St. Vincent Millay, a feminist stalwart, feature very strong and multifaceted female characters.

The woman in this first poem, "Only Until This Cigarette is Ended," finds herself reminiscing about lost love and resolves that, after she finishes her cigarette, she will put the man out of her mind forevermore—even though she will never be able to erase what he said. The primary challenge for me and for the singer was, and is, to bring lines 3-6 to life; here Millay interrupts her train of thought by describing the scene around her in a casual but disorienting way. This illuminates the mental state of the woman but provides a test for the soprano.

The woman in the second poem, "City Trees," notices how city trees seem mute because of the blaring noise around them. She confides in the trees, saying to them that she "know[s] what sound is there." The rhyme scheme and meter of this poem are simpler than the sonnets which precede and follow it, which I tried to match compositionally. The piano solo after the second stanza should be given all the tenderness and beauty as Millay imagines of the "music... made/ Upon a country tree."

The woman in the third poem, "Oh, Oh, You Will Be Sorry," is insulted by her chauvinist husband who believes that women shouldn't read. She responds by sarcastically obeying her husband at first, but subversively plans to leave him abruptly one day. "I will be gone," she remarks, "and you may whistle for me," poking fun at how her husband treats her like a pet. This movement starts out without an obvious tonality, but becomes less ambiguous, and also more frantic, as the woman clarifies her plan further and further. Note the short fugato passage in the piano right before the song reaches its peak, which should serve the heightening tension, not distract from it.

This piece is for Chloe Holgate, who commissioned it, and whose voice I had in mind when I wrote it. It works best when approached with a leaner tone, especially for the many softer passages in the top half-octave.

—Sean Michael Salamon