



IN THE QUIET OF NIGHT

for choir (SSA)



Music By

URSULA KWONG-BROWN

Based on a Translation by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim & Judy Yung

September 2023

IN THE QUIET OF NIGHT

Duration: c. 4'30"

Vocal Ranges



Performance Notes

The wind sounds in m10-18 are optional; if you choose not to make wind sounds, cut m9-11.

Program Note

Over the last few years, I have become increasingly fascinated by the little known story of the Immigration Detention Station on Angel Island, located in the middle of the San Francisco Bay. Sometimes referred to as "The Ellis Island of the West," Angel Island served as the entry point for virtually all American immigrants of Asian descent between 1910 and 1940. However, unlike it's East-Coast cousin, where most people were processed into New York in a matter of hours, because of the overtly racist Chinese Exclusion Act, many immigrants were held on Angel Island for weeks, or even months, in a kind of hellish purgatory, as they underwent lengthy interrogations meant to objectively prove a relationship with an existing citizen. During their seemingly-endless detentions, some immigrants carved poetry into the walls of their dormitories as a way to pass the time, and to express their unhappiness, homesickness, and fear. In the interceding years, these poems were painted over and lost to history until 1970, when, during a final inspection just before the center was due to be demolished, a park ranger stumbled upon a few faint poems and was intrigued by their potential historical significance. With the support of the local Chinese community, demolition was halted, the center was subsequently turned into a museum, and the poems - more than two-hundred of them - have been translated into English by Him Mark Lai, Judy Yung and Genny Lim.

This piece, *In the Quiet of Night*, sets a poem that was carved into the walls by a man who identifies himself simply as “Yee of Toishan,” referring to the province of Southern China. My own family immigrated from Toishan during this same period, and I feel a special kinship to this poem. It’s easy to imagine this moment he chose to memorialize, gazing across the darkness of the Bay at the foggy lights of San Francisco, caught in stillness and despondence, reflecting on the past he was forced to leave, and the uncertain future that lay ahead.

In the quiet of night, I heard, faintly the whistling of wind.
The forms and shadows saddened me; upon seeing the landscape, I composed a poem.
The floating clouds, the fog, darken the sky.
The moon shines faintly as the crickets chirp.
Grief and bitterness entwined are heaven sent.
The sorrowful man sits alone, leaning by a window.

Adapted from Lai, Him Mark, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, eds. *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940, Second Edition*. pp. 66. © 2014. Reprinted courtesy of the University of Washington Press.

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Top: *Angel Island with San Francisco in the background*. Photo by Taras Bobrovitsky, Public Domain.
Lower Left: *Angel Island Detention Center Museum*. Photo by Ursula Kwong-Brown.
Lower Right: *National Archives, Public Health Service Historical Photograph*. Original caption: “Angel Island, Cal. Intensive physical examination of aliens, Immigration Hospital.” Date: 1912-1939

Commissioned by the Thomas S. Hart School Choir

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In the Quiet of Night

With Grief & Bitterness

♩. = c 90

Soprano 1

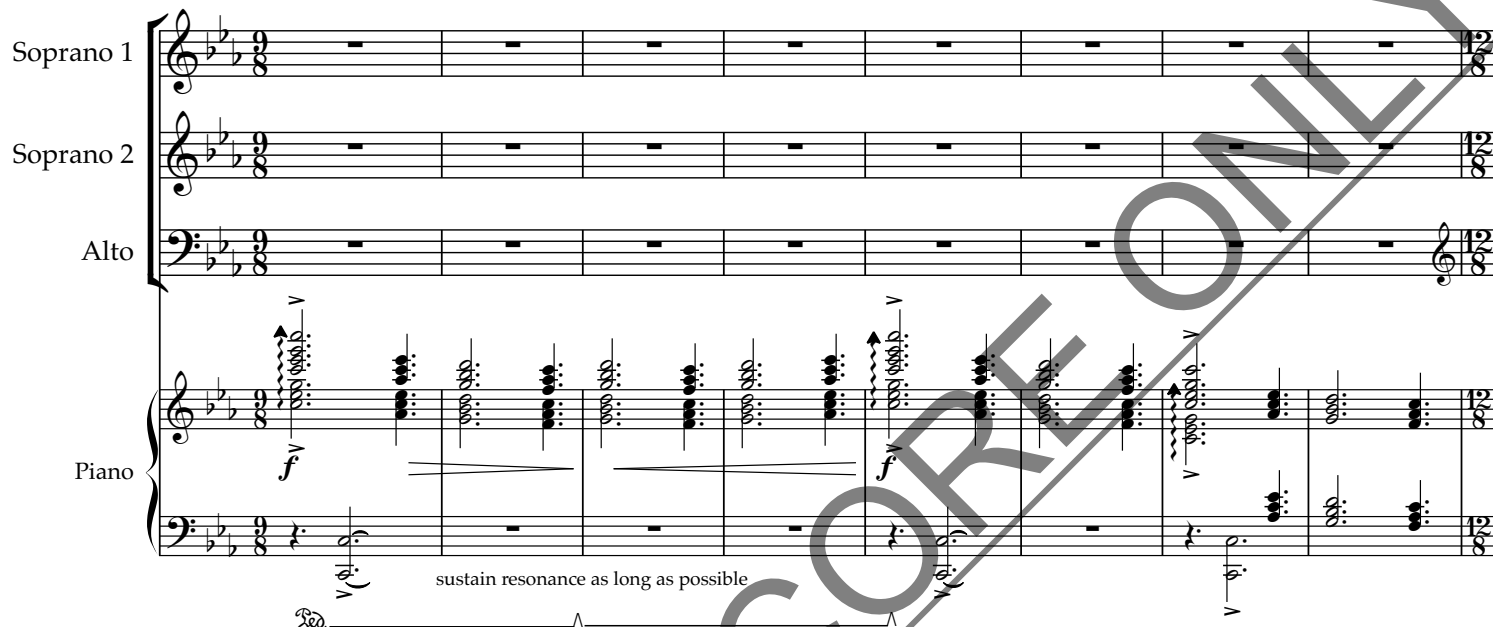
Soprano 2

Alto

Piano

f

sustain resonance as long as possible



Slower

♩. = c 60

* "fff" is meant to imitate the sound of wind.

Singers can use a mix of unvoiced "wind sounds" including: "shh" and "whoooo"

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Pno.

p *f* *mp*

fff *

In the qui-et_ of night I

p *f* *mp*

fff *

In the qui-et_ of night I

p *f* *mp* *p*

fff * *fff* *fff*

p *mf* *p*

all tremolos are unmeasured

9



A little faster

♩. = c 70

S. 1 *mf*
heard faint-ly__ thewhist-ling. of wind

S. 2 *mf*
heard faint-ly__ thewhist-ling. of wind

A. *fff* *ff* *p*

Pno. *p* *mf* *f*

15

S. 1 *p* *mf* *p* *mp*
The forms and sha-dows sad-den'd me__ up-on see-ing the

S. 2 *p* *mf* *p* *mp*
The forms and sha-dows sad-den'd me__ up-on see-ing the

A. *p* *mf* *p* *mp*
The forms and sha-dows sad-den'd me__ up-on see-ing the

Pno. *p* *mf* *f* *mp*

19

poco rit.

S. 1 *mf* *mp* *p* *mp*
land - scape I com - pos'd a po - em

S. 2 *mf* *mp* *p* *mp*
land - scape I com - pos'd a po - em

A. *mf* *mp* *p* *mp*
land - scape I com - pos'd a po - em

Pno. *f* *p*

24

A tempo
♩. = c 70

S. 1 *mp*
The float-ing clouds the fog dar-ken the sky

S. 2 *mp*
The float-ing clouds the fog dar-ken the sky

A.
The float-ing clouds the fog dark-en the

Pno. *f* *p*

30

S. 1
The moon shines bright-ly as the cri-ckets chirp

S. 2
The moon shines bright-ly as the cri-ckets chirp

A.
sky The moon shines bright-ly as the cri-ckets

Pno.

33

S. 1
mf
Grief _____ and bit - ter-ness en - twin'd are

S. 2
mf
Grief _____ and bit - ter-ness en - twin'd are

A.
mf
chirp Grief _____ and bit - ter-ness _____ en - twin'd

Pno.
f *mp*

36

S. 1
hea-ven sent _____ *p* are hea-ven sent _____

S. 2
hea-ven sent *mp* are hea-ven sent *p* are hea-ven sent are

A.
mp are hea-ven sent _____ *p* are

Pno.
40

S. 1
rit.

S. 2
hea-ven sent

A.
hea-ven sent *mf* The

Pno.
43

A little slower

♩. = c 60

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Pno.

46

mp

p

sor - row - ful man sits a - lone sits a - lone

sits a - lone

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Pno.

50

mp sustain 'ng'

p

lean - ing lean - ing lean - ing

mp sustain 'ng'

p

lean - ing lean - ing lean - ing

p sustain 'ng'

lean - ing lean - ing

p

pp

molto accel.

S. 1
win - dow by the win - dow by the win - dow

S. 2
win - dow by the win - dow by the win - dow

A.
— by the win - dow by the win - dow by the win - dow

Pno.

53

Finding Strength - Faster

- ♩ = c 100

S. 1
Ah

S. 2
Ah Ah Ah

A.
Ah Ah Ah

Pno.

56

mp f mf ff mf

S. 1 Ah Ah Ah

S. 2 Ah Ah

A. Ah Ah

Pno. f mf ff mf ff

61

molto accel. ff

S. 1 In the qui - et of, In the qui - et of, In the qui - et of,

S. 2 In the qui - et of, In the qui - et of, In the qui - et of,

A. In the qui - et of, In the qui - et of, In the qui - et of,

Pno. ff fff

66

Fierce

♩. = c 130

S. 1 *p* *ff*
night

S. 2 *p* *ff*
night

A. *p* *ff*
night

Pno. *fff* *sub p* *ff*

72