

Piano

by D. H. Lawrence
(1918)

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

Composer's note

I began this piece after reading Lawrence's splendid poem in 1918. The poem's depiction of a small boy sitting under the piano, "the boom of the tingling strings" – a wonderful phrase – had an enormously strong resonance with my own sense of childhood, and, in the first movement, I wanted to describe the same nostalgic sense of a warmer, more peace-tinted, past. What follows might be seen to take the listener forward from that world of occasional fond backward glances, to the more hectic and busy world of the present, and his weeping for the past. Although Lawrence's poem speaks of a "flood of remembrance", and his weeping for the past, I wanted to create a more hopeful and joyous world, and one perhaps looking forward rather than backward in it.

Postscript

After the piece had been performed in 1920, Paul Mann drew my attention to the earlier version of the poem, which I had used to justify my decision to end the movement with peace-tinted nostalgia. I was struck by the contrast between the earlier version with "the great black piano" racing towards a joyful climax.

Jon Lord

The Piano

Somewhere beneath that piano's superb sleek black
Must hide my mother's piano, little and brown with the back
That stood close to the wall, and the front's faded silk, both torn
And the keys with little hollows, that my mother's fingers had worn.

Softly, in the shadows, a woman is singing to me
Quietly, through the years I have crept back to see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the shaking strings
Pressing the little poised feet of the mother who smiles as she sings
The full throated woman has chosen a winning, living song
And surely the heart that is in me must belong
To the old Sunday evenings, when darkness wandered outside
And hymns gleamed on our warm lips, as we watched her fingers

Or this is my sister at home in the old front room
Singing love's first surprised gladness, alone in the room
She will start when she sees me, and blushing, spread her hands
To cover my mouth's railery, till I'm bowed in her shadow

A woman is singing me a wild Hungarian air
And her arms, and her bosom and her whole self are there
And the great black piano is clamorous as my mother would clamour
And the tunes of the past are devouring this music, as if clamorous

PREVIEW
Low Resolution

Contents

I Adagio assai	6
II L'istesso tempo	16
III Adagio	34
IV Allegro giusto	

PREVIEW
Low Resolution

To Paul Mann, with great affection and gratitude
Boom of the Tingling Strings
for piano and orchestra

Adagio assai (♩ = 48)

Piano solo

Orchestra

Vln. Vc. VI. 2 Cel.

5

Musical score for measures 5-7. The system includes a vocal line (Vc.) and a cello line (Cel.). The vocal line features a melodic phrase starting on a whole note. The cello line has a complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and dynamic markings. Dynamic markings include *pp* and *p*. A large watermark 'PREVIEW' is overlaid on the page.

8

Musical score for measures 8-10. The system includes a piano line (P) and a cello line (Cel.). The piano line has a melodic phrase starting on a whole note. The cello line has a complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and dynamic markings. Dynamic markings include *pp* and *p*. A large watermark 'PREVIEW' is overlaid on the page.

Musical score for measures 11-13. The system includes a vocal line (Vc.), a cello line (Cel.), and a timpani line (Timp.). The vocal line features a melodic phrase starting on a whole note. The cello line has a complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and dynamic markings. The timpani line has a rhythmic pattern. Dynamic markings include *pp* and *p*. A large watermark 'PREVIEW' is overlaid on the page.

15

2

Col. *p*

Hrp. *pp*

Vi./Va. *ppp*

19

Str. *pp*

Hrp./Va. *pp*

Hr. *pp*

23

Ve. *pp*

Str. *pp*

4

Cor. *ppp*

Timp./Cb. *pp*

Ve. *mf espr.*

30

FL

p en dehors

pp

33

Va.

pp

37

5

pp

lv.

lv.

p

Timp.

pp

pp

41

dm. 12

Va. pppp

Vc. pppp

This system contains measures 41 and 42. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a slur over measures 41 and 42, and a dynamic marking of *dm.* (diminuendo) with a hairpin. The middle staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *pppp*. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *pppp*. There are also some faint markings like '12' and 'Vc.'.

43

p/rit.

This system contains measures 43 and 44. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature, featuring a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *p/rit.* (piano/ritardando). The middle staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with a slur. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with a slur.

44

ppp

p

This system contains measures 44 and 45. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature, featuring a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *ppp*. The middle staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *p*. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with a slur.

p

ppp

Cl

This system contains measures 45 and 46. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature, featuring a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *p*. The middle staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *ppp*. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *ppp*. There is also a marking 'Cl'.