

Bearing the Light

Songs from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*

High Voice and Cello

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Composed and revised between 2006 and 2014, these songs explore the possibilities of dialogue between a singing voice and an instrumental counterpart that sometimes assents, sometimes dissents, sometimes mocks, sometimes comments, sometimes reinterprets, and so on, what its alter ego expresses. The standard combination of voice and piano appeals to me greatly, and I've composed for it often, but for texts as exposed and full of solitude as these *pensées* by Nietzsche the piano is almost too versatile and multi-layered. What I wanted (or rather needed) was a distinct solo voice with great expressive strength and an ample range: hence the cello.

The texts are drawn mostly from Book IV of *The Gay Science* (*Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, better translated as “Exuberant Understanding”), which is subtitled “Sanctus Januarius” and concerned with the challenges of self-fashioning and self-renewal in a world without transcendental certainties. In choosing what to set, I found that most of the passages had to be condensed to be musically effective. Tampering with Nietzsche's German was obviously out of the question. In making the English versions, I would certainly interpolate a layer of interpretation between the original and the music, but the simple fact of excerpting and arranging would have done that in any case, even had I been literal and even had I set the texts in German.

The result, like the dramatic result of all song cycles, is a fiction, in this case one that pivots on the double meaning of the quasi-Promethean title (drawn from the first song): “Bearing the Light.”

Performance time is about 20 minutes.

Texts

1. We wish we could rise up on airy dust motes like beams of light, not away from the sun but towards it. But this we cannot do. So instead let us do the only thing we can: to bear the light for the earth, to be “the light of the earth.” For this we have our wings and our speed and our discipline; for this we are even terrible like fire. (§293)
2. *Sigh*. I caught this insight in passing and quickly seized the poor words close at hand to pin it down and keep it from flying off. And now it flutters and flaps in these stale words and I scarcely know how catching this bird could have made me happy. (§298)
3. How can we make things beautiful, delightful, and desirable for ourselves when they are not? And I fear that in themselves they never are. (§299)
4. How much there is that says to me, *tarry awhile!* Armida's gardens beckon me everywhere; everywhere I must tear my heart away and find new bitterness. I must

always lift my feet, however sore; and because I must go on I look back furious at the beauties that could not hold me, because they could not hold me. (§309)

5. How greedily this wave comes in, as if it were looking for something! And now again, slower but white with excitement still. Is it disappointed? Has it found what it was looking for? --But another wave is already moving in, more greedy and more savage still, with seeming secrets in its soul and the lust for treasure. So live the waves, and so live we who will—more I will not say. (§310)

6. *The evil hour.* Every philosopher has surely had an evil hour in which he thought: What do I matter if they don't accept my *bad* arguments, too? And then flew by some little bird all full of *Schadenfreude* and twittered: "What do you matter? What do you matter?" (§332)

7. Are you angry with me, waves? Afraid I'll betray your secret? Well, go ahead, be angry; arch your green dangerous bodies as high as you can, blot out the sun with green twilight and green lightning! Go ahead: dive and pour your emeralds into the depths and cover them with your infinite mane of white foam. Everything suits me just as it suits you. I'm so fond of you for everything—how could I ever betray you? Are we not one, you and I? Your secret and mine, are they not *one* secret? (§310)

8. *Looking Back.* Today a few musical chords reminded me of a winter and a house and a life of great solitude—and the feelings too. I thought I would go on living that way forever. (§317)

9. Could one burden oneself with all the past, the oldest and newest, the losses and hopes, and endure all this, and contain it and compress it all into a single feeling--from this would surely come a happiness never yet known: the happiness of a god full of power and love, of tears and laughter, a happiness that, like the sun at evening, constantly bequeaths its inexhaustible riches, pouring them into the sea and feeling richest of all, like the sun, only when even the poorest of fisherman rows with golden oars. (§337)

10. Epilogue (from the text named at the end): What is done out of love is always done beyond good and evil. *Jenseits von Gut und Böse.*

1. "We wish we could rise up . . ."

♩ = 100

Voice

Cello

p

pizz. arco

f *p* 3 3 3

arco

pizz.

We

4

4

mp

wish we could rise up _____ on air - ry

pizz. arco

f *p* 3 3 3 3

mp

7

7

mf

dust notes _____ like beams of light, _____

mf

3 3 3 3

10

10

mf *mp*

not a - way - - - from the sun _____

punta d'arco

f *mf* *mp*

3 3 3

2
13

but towards it, towards it,

13

col legno battuto pizz.

mf *f* *p* *cresc.* *mf*

17

towards it. But this,

17

mp

20

this we can-not do. So in-

20

f *ff*

strum

cantabile

26 *p*

stead let us do the on - - - ly thing we can: to

26 *mf* *mp* arco

29 *rit.* *mf* *Slower, espress.* *mp* $\text{♩} = 88$

bear the light for the earth, to

29 *p espress.* *rit.* *f* *mp*

32 *f* *rit.* *Tempo I* $\text{♩} = 100$ *p*

be "the light of the earth." For

32 *f* *rit.* *Tempo I* *pizz. arco* *ff p*

36 *mf* *f* *Allarg.* $\text{♩} = 88$ *subito pp*

this we have our wings and our speed and our dis - ci -

36 *Allarg.* $\text{♩} = 88$ *sul tasto* *subito pp*

40 *non cresc.* *f*

pline. _____ ordin. For this _____

40 *f* 3 3

44 *ff*

_____ we are e - ven ter - - - - -

44 *ff* 3 pizz. strum

49 *pp*

- - - - - i - ble, _____ (hum) _____

49 *f p* pizz. arco sul pont. ordin. espress.

54 *p rit. a tempo mp f*

(hum) _____ like fire _____

54 *ff* rit. a tempo ten. pizz.

2. "I Caught This Insight . . ."

$\text{♩} = 88$

Voice *p*
I caught this in - sight in pass - ing _____ and

Cello *p* *pp*
3 3 3 3 3 3

3 *mf*
quick - ly seized _____ the poor words close at hand _____ to

3 3 3 3

6 *f*
pin it down and keep it from fly - ing _____ off. _____

6 *mf* *f*
3 3

9 *pp* *mf* *f*
_____ And now, and now it

9 *p* *mf* *f*
> 3 3

6
12

"I Caught This Insight"

mp \rightrightarrows *p*

flut-ters, it flu-ters and flaps, flut-ters and flaps, and

mp *mf* *p*

15

now, and now it flut-ters, it flut-ters and flaps, flaps, flaps, piu *f* piu *f*

f

18

flaps, and I scarce-ly know how catch - - -

ff *p* *f* *p*

p *f* *p*

22

- - - ing this bird

f

f

rit.

24

could have made me hap-py

rit.

3. "How Can We Make . . ."

$\text{♩} = 72$

Voice *pp* *p*

How can we make things — beau -

Cello *pp* *p*

7 *p* *rit.* *mp* $\text{♩} = 48$

- - - - ti - ful, de - light - ful, —

7 *p* *rit.*

12 *mf* *f*

and de - si - - - - - ra - ble

12 *mf* *f* 6 6

14 returning to - - - - -

for our - selves —

14 returning to - - - - -

6

"How Can We Make"

8

♩ = 72
(spoken)

16 *mp*

when they are not? And I fear

16 *mf* *mp*

when they are not? And I fear

20 *p*

that in them - selves they ne - - - ver are.

20 *p*

that in them - selves they ne - - - ver are.

4. "How Much There Is . . ."

$\text{♩} = 84$

Voice *p*

How much there is that says to me, "Tar - ry a-while," _____ "Tar-ry a-while."

Cello *f* pizz. *p*

4

Ar-mi-da's gar - dens beck - on, _____ beck-on

8 non cresc.

me, _____ beck-on me ev - ery - where. _____

cresc. *f* *p* *f* 3 3

11 *rit.* 3 *p*

Ev-ery-where I must bear my heart a - way _____

11 *rit.* 3 *f* *p* *f*

a tempo

— and taste new bit-ter-ness. I must al - ways lift my feet,

a tempo
arco
C String

p *f* *pizz.* *p*

f rit. *a tempo*

— how-e-ver sore, and be-cause I must go on I look back

f

ff *p*

fu-ri-ous at the beau-ties that could not hold me:

arco
C String

p *pizz.*

$\text{♩} = 76$
pp *rit.*

be - cause they could not hold me.

pp

pp

5. "How Greedily This Wave Comes In"

♩ = 76

Voice

Cello

p

5

p

How gree-di-ly this wave comes in,

3 3 3 3

9

as if it were look ing for some-thing.

3 3 3 3 3 3

13

p *mf*

And now a-gain, slow-er, but white with ex-cite-

3 3 3 3

p *mf*

18 *mf*
 - - ment still.

18 *mf*

22 *mf*
 Is it dis - ap - point - ed? Has it found

22 *p* *mf*

27 *p*
 what it was look - ing for? But a - no - ther wave

27 *fp*

32 *mf*
 is al - rea - - - dy mov - ing in, more

32 *mf*

37 *f* *mf* *mf* *mf* *f*
 gree - dy and more sa - vage still, with seem - ing se -

37 *f* *mf* *mf* *mf* *f*

42 *p*
 - crets in its soul, and the lust for
 42 *p sub.*

46 *rit.* *a tempo*
 trea - sure. So live the
 46 *3* *3* *3*

51 *rit.* *a tempo* *mf*
 waves, and so live
 51 *3* *rit.* *a tempo* *3* *mf*

55 *p*
 we who will.
 55 *p*

62 spoken:
 More I will not say.
 62 *pp*

6. The Evil Hour

$\text{♩} = 100$ spoken on pitch *mp* 3 sung

Voice: Ev-ery phi-lo - so - pher has sure - ly had an e - vil hour _____ in

Cello: x notehead = play behind the bridge *pizz.* *mp* 3 *sf*

4 spoken on pitch sung 3 3 3

Voice: which he thought, he thought: "What do I mat-ter, what do I mat-ter

Cello: arco *pizz.* arco *mf* *mf*

7 8va a piacere

Voice: if _____ they do not ac-cept my bad ar - gu-ments too?"

Cello: *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

10 *mf*

Voice: And then flew by some lit - tle bird _____ all full of

Cello: *pizz.* arco 3 3 3 *mf*

13 *mp* spoken: and

Scha - - - - den-freu - - - de

pizz. arco *mp*

17 *f* exasperated

twittered, twittered!

19 *mp* "What do you mat-ter?" "What do you mat-ter?"

mp *sf* pizz.

21 *p* "What do you mat-ter?" "ter?" "What do you mat-ter?"

arco *p* *mf* *rit.* *a tempo*

23 *pp* *rit.* "What do you mat - - - ter?" *a tempo*

widen vibrato normally

pp

7. "Are You Angry With Me, Waves?"

♩ = 63

Voice

Cello

p

Are you ang - ry with

me, _____ waves? _____ A-

accel.

9

fraid I'll be - tray _____ your se - cret? _____

mf

♩ = 76

13

Well, go a - head, _____ be ang - ry, _____ arch _____

f *p* *f*

"Are You Angry With Me, Waves?"

17

Musical score for measures 15-22. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music features a melody with dynamics *ff* and *f*, and a bass line with *ff* and *f*. The lyrics are: "your green dan - gerous".

Musical score for measures 23-30. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music features a melody with dynamics *ff* and *f*, and a bass line with *ff* and *f*. The lyrics are: "bod-ies as high as you can, blot out the sun".

Musical score for measures 31-38. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music features a melody with dynamics *p* and *pp*, and a bass line with *p* and *pp*. The lyrics are: "with green twi - light and green light - ning.".

Musical score for measures 39-45. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music features a melody with dynamics *f* and *f*, and a bass line with *f*. The lyrics are: "Go a - head, dive and pour your eme-ralds".

Musical score for measures 46-52. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music features a melody with dynamics *p* and *f*, and a bass line with *p*. The lyrics are: "in - to the depths, and co - ver".

"Are You Angry With Me, Waves?"

51 *rit.*

them with your in - fi-nite mane of white foam

ff *pizz.* *rit.* *pizz. on beat; finger bracketed notes*

57 $\text{♩} = 63$ *p*

Eve-ry thing suits me

pp *pizz.* *arco* *ten.* *p*

64 *mf*

just as it suits you; I'm so fond of you for eve-ry - thing

mf

70 *p* *rit.*

how could I e - ver be - tray you?

p *rit.*

75 $\text{♩} = 76$

Are we not one, you and

79 $\text{♩} = 76$

I. Your se - cret and

82 *rit.* $\text{♩} = 63$ **f**

mine, are they not one

85 *p rit.*

se - cret?

8. Looking Back

$\text{♩} = 66$

Voice

Cello

pp *p*

To - day,

6 *pp* *p*

to day — a few mu - si - cal chords — re - mind - ed me —

11 *p* *p*

— of a win - ter and a house — and a life —

15 *pp* *p*

a life — of great sol - i - tude, —

pp *fp*

21

and the feel - ings too. ____

pp *p* *fp*

26

I thought ____ I would go on ____ liv - - - ing that

pp *ppp* sul tasto

30

way ____ for - ev - - - - - et. ____

pppp

9. "Could One Burden Oneself . . ."

♩ = 84

Voice

Could one bur - - - den one - self _____ with all the past, _____

Cello

pp *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

6 the old - est, the new - est, the los - ses and hopes, and en - dure _____

6 *mp* *mf* *f*

12 _____ all this, _____ and con - tain it _____ and com - press it all _____ in - to a

12 *p* *mf*

17 > *p* sin - - - gle feel - ing, _____ from this _____ would

17 *p* *mf*

20 *p* sub. sure - ly come a hap - - - - pi - ness ne - ver yet known: _____

20 sul G (through m. 24) *p* sub.

3 3 3 3

"Could One Burden Oneself . . ."

24 *mp* *mf*
 the hap-pi-ness of a god full of pow - er and love,

24 *mp* *mf*

29 *pp* *f*
 of tears and laugh-ter, a hap-pi-ness that like the sun at

29 *pp* *f*
pp *otto voce*

33 *mp*
 eve - - - ning con - stant - ly be - queaths its

33 *mp*

35 *f*
 in - ex - haust - - - i - ble rich - es,

35 *f*

37 *mp*
 pour - - - - - ing them in - to the sea

37 *mp*

"Could One Burden Oneself. . ."

40 *pp*

and feel - ing rich - - - est of all, _____ like the

pp

44 *f*

sun, _____ like the sun, _____

f

48 *p*

_____ on - ly, on - ly when the poor - est of fish - er - men _____

p

51 *rit.*

_____ rows _____ with gold - - - - en oars. _____

rit.

10. Epilogue: "What Is Done . . ."

$\text{♩} = 72$

p

Voice

What is done _____

con sord.

Cello

p

5

out of love _____ is _____

10

al - - - ways done be - - - yond _____

14

rit. *a tempo*

be - yond _____ good and

rit. *a tempo*

"What is Done"

26

20 (Sprechstimme)

e - - - - vil. Jen - seits _____ von Gut

fp

26 *pp*

und Bö - - - - se ____

fp *pp*