

Six Blake Songs

for Soprano and Ensemble

Wilyyn Whiting

-full score-

2018

INSTRUMENTATION

Flute (also picc.)

Clarinet in Bb (also bass)

Alto Saxophone (also tenor)

Soprano

Violin

Viola*

*string IV tuned down a semitone to B2

Scordatura notated at sounding pitch

This is a C score

I	Prologue	Grave	p.1
II	Three Proverbs in Canon	Giocoso	p.9
III	Two Slow Proverbs	Cantabile	p.13
IV	Dialogue	Misterioso	p.17
V	The Caverns of the Grave I've Seen	Espressivo	p.21
VI	'Ah-Sunflower'	Risoluto	p.26

Total Duration 21'

PROGRAM NOTE

Six Blake Songs is a setting of various poems, excerpts and proverbs written by William Blake throughout his lifetime. A general open-endedness and an overt mysticism surround these texts and associations can easily be drawn between them. The concept of time is common to all the texts I have chosen to set.

William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet; painter and printmaker closely associated with the Romantic art movements of the 19th century. He made his living as a commercial engraver in London and also produced illuminated manuscripts of his own poetry. He strove to create a mythology that could encode his own spiritual and political ideals into a prophetic message.

This work was composed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Music Degree at the University of Western Ontario.

I - .Prologue

'The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their stations;
The grave is burst, the spires shed, the linen wrapped up;
The bones of death, the covering clay, the sinews shrunk & dried.
Reviving shake, aspiring move, breathing, awakening,
(America 1793: Plate 6; lines 37 – 40)

II - Three Proverbs in Canon

The eyes of fire, the nostrils of air, the mouth of water, the beard of earth.
The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands and feet Proportion.
The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man.
(‘III - Proverbs of Hell’ from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 1790: Pl.9; In.48, Pl.10; In.61, and Pl.8; In.27)

III - Two Slow Proverbs

Eternity is in love with the productions of Time... but of wisdom, no clock can measure.
(‘III - Proverbs of Hell’ from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 1790: Pl.7; In.10 and 12)

IV – Dialogue

Every night and every morn
Some to misery are born;
Every morn and every night
Some are born to sweet delight.
Some are born to sweet delight,
Some are born to endless night.
(‘VIII - Auguries of Innocence’ from ‘*The Pickering Manuscript*’ 1803: In.119 – 124)
'Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?

Does the sower
Sow by night,
Or the ploughman in darkness plough?
(‘II - Earth’s Answer’ from Songs of Experience 1794:ln.16 - 20)

V - The Caverns of the Grave I’ve Seen
Re-engraved time after time,
Ever in their youthful prime,
My designs unchanged remain;
Time may rage but rage in vain.
For above Time’s troubled fountains
On the great Atlantic mountains,
In my golden house on high,
There they shine eternally.
(‘XXXIV’ from Miscellaneous Verses 1809-1812: ln.13 – 20)

VI - ‘Ah, Sunflower’
Ah, Sunflower, weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun,
Seeking after that gilden clime
Where the traveller’s journey is done;
Where the youth pined away with desire
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow
Arise from their graves and aspire
Where my sunflower wishes to go.
(‘XX - Ah, Sunflower’ from Songs of Experience 1794: ln.1 - 8)

PERFORMANCE NOTES

= 3/4 tones sharp

= 1/4 tone sharp

♯ = slightly raised

♭ = slightly flat

♭ = 1/4 tone flat

♭♭ = 3/4 tones flat

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I - Prologue

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Grave ♩ = 60

Musical score for the first system, measures 1-4. The instruments are Flute, Bass Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Soprano, Violin, and Viola (Scordatura IV = B). The tempo is Grave, 60 beats per minute. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. The Bass Clarinet and Tenor Sax parts feature triplet markings. The Violin and Viola parts are marked *molto S.T.* and include dynamic markings *pp*, *mf*, and *f*.



Musical score for the second system, measures 5-8. The instruments are Flute, Bass Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Violin, and Viola. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *ff*, and *mf*. The Bass Clarinet part includes a key change instruction "to Bb". The Violin and Viola parts include triplet markings. The Flute part has a measure rest in the first two measures.