

Domination of Black

Music by Craig Carnahan

Poetry by Dan Conner

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Written for
The AIDS Quilt Songbook: 1992

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Domination of Black

This night, while the cold
wind pounds glass, the white
walls, all four framing
silence, the ear, our inner ear,
echoes the hollow peacocks' cry,
demanding and frightened, echoes
still, and the hemlocks wait.

All our proud peacocks!
The colors of their tails
were the leaves and
more turning; the colors
gold, a royal lavender;
the textured satin
glistening, fanned out;
dancing, preening,
prancing in the promenade.
In the urban twilight
stars swept over the floor.

I witnessed how the planets
converged: Hercules, Atlas,
Neptune in a sea of light.
Peacocks swept over the room
just as the leaves flew
from the lofty boughs
of hemlocks, hemlocks behind them.

They flew, they flew turning
down to the ground.

I heard them cry—the peacocks
turned against the dawn
for a chance to dream.

We turn in a loud fire, turn
in a wind grown loud, louder
than the empty hemlocks.

Were they
crying against the twilight, or
did they greet the brittle dawning?
Could they bear what that closing light
betrayed? Was it all so much feathery
leaves fallen fast to the cold earth
that made the peacocks sing the night's
end? And who now craves the hemlock?

For now the wind gathers
full force: the storm.
Brown leaves rake the plane,
withered and scraped up; tethered
to this westerly. The cry,
turned full rattles the glass.
The bitter wind tears it sharp
from the throat. Their cry
is my anger. Out of my window
I watch night fall again
and again there is no time
for hemlocks now. I will not fear,
cannot, but walk full force
out into the wind, the cold—
walk out, beyond the dark. I bear
no fear, for I have held them crying.

Dan Conner

from *Unending Dialogue*
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Dan Conner

Craig Carnahan

Marcato ♩ = 72

Voice

Piano

mf *f*

8

mf *mp*

15 *mp*

15

15

This night, _____ while the cold wind pounds _____ glass, _____ the

22 *mf*
 white walls, all four fram - ing si - lence, The ear,

29
 our in - ner ear, e - choes the hol - low pea - cock's cry,

35 *f*
 De - mand - ing and fright - ened, e - choes still, and the hem - locks

41 *rall. e dim. molto* *mp*
 wait all our proud pea - cocks!

Meno mosso-molto legato

46

The col - ors of their tails were the leaves and more ——— turn - ing; ———

50

————— The col - ors gold, ——— a roy - al lav - en - der; ———

accel.

54

The text - ured sat - in ——— glist - en - ing, fanned out; ———

mf tempo one *mp*

59

Waltz-like

Danc - ing, > preen - ing,

65 pranc - ing in the prom - en - ade. In the ur - ban twi - light stars swept

71 o - ver the floor. I wit - nessed how the pla - nets con - verged:

mf *broaden* *a tempo*

77 Her - cu - les, At - las, Nep - tune in a sea of light.

mp *rall.*

82 *as before* Pea - cocks swept o - ver the room just as the leaves

3 3

86 *accel.*

flew from the loft - y boughs, Boughs

90 *mf* *tempo one*

— of hem - lock be - hind them — they flew turn - ing down — to the ground. —

95 *mp* *mf*

I heard them cry, I heard them cry — the pea-cocks

101 *rall.* *Mysteriously*

turned a - gainst the dawn for a chance to dream. —

101 *rall.* *p* *col ped.*

106 *mp* *Breathlessly*

We

mp

109 *mf*

turn in a loud fire,

mf

112 *mp*

Turn in a wind grown loud,

mp

115

Loud - er than the

mp