

CCM605

Craig Carnahan

*Mourning
Songs*

Mezzo-soprano
Cello
Piano



Craig Carnahan Music
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Mourning Songs

Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1892-1950

Sorrow

Sorrow like a ceaseless rain
Beats upon my heart.
People twist and scream in pain, --
Dawn will find them still again;
This has neither wax nor wane,
Neither stop nor start.
People dress and go to town;
I sit in my chair.
All my thoughts are slow and brown:
Standing up or sitting down
Little matters, or what gown
Or what shoes I wear.

The Shroud

Death, I say, my heart is bowed
Unto thine, -- O mother!
This red gown will make a shroud
Good as any other!
(I, that would not wait to wear
My own bridal things,
In a dress dark as my hair
Made my answerings.
I, to-night, that till he came
Could not, could not wait,
In a gown as bright as flame
Held for them the gate.)
Death, I say, my heart is bowed
Unto thine, -- O mother!
This red gown will make a shroud
Good as any other!

The Dream

Love, if I weep it will not matter,
And if you laugh I shall not care;
Foolish am I to think about it,
But it is good to feel you there.
Love, in my sleep I dreamed of waking, --
White and awful the moonlight reached

Over the floor, and somewhere, somewhere,
There was a shutter loose, -- it screeched!
Swung in the wind, -- and no wind blowing! --
I was afraid, and turned to you,
Put out my hand to you for comfort, --
And you were gone! Cold, cold as dew,
Under my hand the moonlight lay!
Love, if you laugh I shall not care,
But if I weep it will not matter, --
Ah, it is good to feel you there!

Edna St. Vincent Millay
From *Renascence, and Other Poems*
Harper, New York, 1917
(public domain)

PROGRAM NOTE:

Even though these poems were written early in her career, they provide vivid evidence of Edna St. Vincent Millay's lyrical abilities and emotional insight. Steeped in images of longing and loss, the themes are operatic in scope. At times the writer's tone seems distant and removed, only to be quickly replaced by intensely personal sentiments, pulling the reader into a turbulent storm of conflicting emotions and experiences. Ultimately, we are left with a deep-seated sense of melancholy tinged with stoic resignation, as any potential for hope falls just beyond reach.

PERFORMANCE NOTE:

The poet has managed to cover a tremendous amount of territory in each of these texts and my goal in setting them was to mirror the full range of emotions and experiences the words embody. The final treatment is more operatic in its approach than a traditional song cycle would be, and the performers are asked to change gears quickly and frequently in order to convey the drama inherent in Millay's words. Dynamics, pacing, inflection, and tempi are all important factors in the interpretation – balancing sections of vigorous forward momentum with ones of quiet resolution. The movements were conceived to move seamlessly from one to the next, but the exact pacing can be at the discretion of the performers.

Mourning Songs

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

Craig Carnahan (1951-)

Sorrow
♩ = 60

Mezzo-Soprano

Introspective, pensive ♩ = 74

mp

Sor-row like a

Piano

f *mf* *mp*

Cello

mf *mp*

Mezzo

7

cease-less rain Beats up-on my heart. Peo-ple twist and scream in pain,

Pno.

7

mp

Vc.

7

mp

Duration: c. 8:30

13 *mf* *rall.* *mp* *a tempo*

Mezzo Dawn will find them still a-gain; This has nei-ther wax nor wane,

Pno. *mf* *mp* *rall.* *a tempo*

Vc. *mf* *mp*

18 *mf* **With growing intensity**

Mezzo — Nei-ther stop nor start. Peo-ple dress and go to town;

Pno. *mf* **With growing intensity**

Vc. *mf*

23

Mezzo I sit in my chair. All my thoughts are slow and brown: Stand-ing up or

Pno.

Vc.

The Shroud

46 $\text{♩} = 76$

Mezzo

Pno.

Vc.

51 *rall.*

Mezzo

Pno.

Vc.

arco

f *mf* *f*

Fervent, emotional

56 *f a tempo* *mp*

Mezzo

Death, I say, my heart is bowed un-to thine, _____ O moth-er!

Fervent, emotional
a tempo

Pno.

Vc.

mf *mp*

pizz.

mf *mp*

61

Mezzo

This red gown will make a shroud Good as an - y oth-er! *8va*-----

Pno.

Vc.

p

66

Mezzo

8va----- (I, that would not wait to wear My own brid-al things,

Pno.

Vc.

pp

mf

More controlled

71

Mezzo

In a dress dark as my hair

Pno.

Vc.

mp

arco Con sord.

The Dream

Haltingly, with rubato ♩ = 84

Mezzo

Pno.

Vc.

Mezzo

Pno.

Vc.

Mezzo

Pno.

Vc.

arco

mp

Quasi recitative

Mezzo *mp*
 Love, if I weep it will not mat-ter,

Pno. *mp*

Vc.

Mezzo
 And if you laugh I shall not care;

Pno.

Vc.

Mezzo *mf*
 Fool-ish am I to think a-bout it, — But it is good to feel you

Pno.

Vc.

Fervent, emotional

f

Mezzo

133

there. Love, in my sleep I dreamed of

Fervent, emotional

f

Pno.

133

mf

f

Vc.

133

arco

mf

f

Mezzo

136

wak-ing; White and aw-ful the moon-light reached O-ver the floor,

mp

mf

Pno.

136

mp

mf

Vc.

136

mf

Mezzo

140

and

mf

Pno.

140

mp

mf

Vc.

140