

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A BLACKBIRD

song cycle for soprano voice
and piano

by Ezra Donner

2007

9 minutes



Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird
by Wallace Stevens

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the black bird.

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and blackbird
Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A BLACKBIRD

song cycle for soprano voice and piano

3/14/2013

poem by Wallace Stevens

I

music by Ezra Donner

Serene ♩ = 52

The musical score is for a song cycle titled "THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A BLACKBIRD" by Ezra Donner, based on a poem by Wallace Stevens. The specific piece is "Serene," which is marked with a tempo of ♩ = 52. The score is for soprano voice and piano.

The first system shows the piano introduction. The right hand (R.H.) plays a series of chords, while the left hand (L.H.) plays a more active line. The tempo is marked "Serene" with a half note equal to 52 beats. The piano part begins with a "both hands" instruction, followed by "R.H." and "L.H." markings. The dynamics range from *p* (piano) to *pp* (pianissimo).

The second system begins with the vocal entry. The soprano part starts with the lyrics "A - mong ——— twen-ty snow-y moun - tains,". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines. The dynamics range from *mp* (mezzo-piano) to *mf* (mezzo-forte) and back to *mp*.

The third system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "The on - ly mov-ing thing ——— Was the". The piano accompaniment features a "loco" section with a rapid, ascending scale in the right hand. The dynamics range from *mf* to *f* (forte) and back to *pp*.

21

eye of the black - bird.

8va

21

8va

R.H.

L.H.

p

B

E

Reo.

attacca

II

Frenzied ♩ = 144

8va

R.H.

R.H.

loco

fff

L.H.

L.H.

fffz

resigned

Reo.

30

mp

I was of three minds

pp

Reo.

38

Like a tree in which there are three black - birds.

8va

38

Reo.

F

attacca

III

With momentum $\text{♩} = 80$ *f*

The first system of the musical score. The vocal line is in 6/8 time, starting with a half note rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4. The lyrics are "The black - bird". The piano accompaniment is in 6/8 time. The right hand has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4. The left hand has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note G3, a quarter note A3, and a half note B3. The dynamics are *f* for the vocal line and *ff* for the piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 80$.

The black - bird

*p sub.**8va**pp sub.*

The second system of the musical score. The vocal line is in 6/8 time, starting with a half note rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4. The lyrics are "whirled in the au - -". The piano accompaniment is in 6/8 time. The right hand has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4. The left hand has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note G3, a quarter note A3, and a half note B3. The dynamics are *p sub.* for the vocal line and *pp sub.* for the piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 80$.

whirled in the au - -

 $(\text{♩} = \text{♩})$ *mp*

The third system of the musical score. The vocal line is in 6/8 time, starting with a half note rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4. The lyrics are "tumn winds, It was a". The piano accompaniment is in 6/8 time. The right hand has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4. The left hand has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note G3, a quarter note A3, and a half note B3. The dynamics are *f* for the vocal line and *mp* for the piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 80$.

tumn winds, It was a

51

small part of the pant - o - mime.

51

attacca

IV

Maternal, comforting $\text{♩} = 60$

p

A man and a wo - man are one.

8va

p

8vb

Red.

60

mf *f*

A man and a wo -

60 loco

blurry

p

($\frac{1}{2}$ Red.) ($\frac{1}{2}$ Red.)

67

mp *p* **ritard.**

man And a black - bird are one.

67

mf

attacca

V

Light-hearted ♩ = 104

Piano introduction for the 'Light-hearted' section, measures 1-5. The music is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked as 104 beats per minute. The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte).

Vocal and piano accompaniment for measures 76-79. The vocal line is in 7/8 time and the piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "I do not know which to pre - fer The beau - ty of in - flec-tions,". The dynamics are marked as *mf* *parlando* for the vocal line and *p* (piano) for the piano accompaniment.

Vocal and piano accompaniment for measures 80-81. The vocal line is in 3/4 time and the piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "Or the beau - ty of in - nu - en - does,". The dynamics are marked as *p* (piano) for the piano accompaniment.

Vocal and piano accompaniment for measures 82-85. The vocal line is in 3/4 time and the piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "The black-bird whis-ting or just af - ter." The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte). The section ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

attacca

VI

Frigid $\text{♩} = 108$

p

ic - ic - les filled the long win - dow with bar - - -

pp

15^{ma}

Rev.

89 bar - ic glass. The shad - ow

15^{ma}

89 of the black - bird crossed it to and fro.

8^{vb}

(1/2 Rev.)

91 The mood traced in the shad - ow

pp

(1/2 Rev.)

(1/2 Rev.)

(1/2 Rev.)

(1/2 Rev.)

An in - de - ci - pher - a - ble cause.

pp

15^{ma}

R.H.

L.H.

9

attacca

VII

Pontifical ♩ = 104

f O thin men of Had - dam, *mf* Why do you im - a - gine

f *p* *mp*

Sost. *mp*

100 gol - den birds? Do you not see how the black - bird Walks

p

103 A - round the feet Of the wom - en a - bout you?

f *p* *mp*

103

f *p* *mp*

Sost. *mp*

attacca

VIII

Haughty (bossa nova) ♩ = 84

System 1 (Measures 108-111): Piano accompaniment with *fff* dynamics. Vocal line is silent.

System 2 (Measures 112-115): Piano accompaniment with *fff* and *p sub.* dynamics. Vocal line enters with *p flirtatious* dynamics: "I know".

System 3 (Measures 116-119): Piano accompaniment with *fff* and *p* dynamics. Vocal line continues: "noble accents".

System 4 (Measures 120-123): Piano accompaniment with *f* dynamics. Vocal line continues: "And lucid indescapable".

System 5 (Measures 124-127): Piano accompaniment with *f* dynamics. Vocal line continues: "rhythms, But I know, too, that the blackbird".

System 6 (Measures 128-131): Piano accompaniment with *p* and *f* dynamics. Vocal line continues: "rhythms, But I know, too, that the blackbird".

127 *mf*

Is in - volved in what I know.

127 *loco* *p*

attacca

IX

Expansive ♩ = 72

sotto voce *pp*

When the black bird

flew out of sight, —

It marked the edge of one of man-y cir-cles.

both hands *15^{ma}*

attacca

X

Tempetuous ♩ = 84

p

ff *8^{va}*

f

loco

158

ff

At the sight ____

158

f

sfz

mf

both hands

loco

167 *p sub.*
of black - birds fly - - - ing

167 *p sub.*
L.H. R.H. L.H.

171

in a green light,

8va

R.H. sim.

174

ff

E - ven the bawds of

8va

f

177

eu - - - phon - y

8va

180

would cry out sharp - ly.

ff

8vb

ffz

2

2

2

attacca

XI

Presto Agitato (Tempo di Erlkönig) ♩ = 84

System 1 (Measures 189-191): The piano accompaniment begins with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, playing continuous triplet eighth notes. The vocal line enters in measure 189 with the lyrics "He rode o-ver Con-nect-i-cut in a". The vocal melody is marked *p parlando*.

System 2 (Measures 192-194): The piano accompaniment continues with triplet eighth notes. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "glass coach. Once, a". The vocal melody is marked *f dramatic*.

System 3 (Measures 195-197): The piano accompaniment continues with triplet eighth notes. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "fear pierced him, In that he mis-took the". The vocal melody is marked *p parlando*.

System 4 (Measures 198-200): The piano accompaniment continues with triplet eighth notes. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "fear pierced him, In that he mis-took the". The vocal melody is marked *ff*. The system concludes with a double bar line and a section for the right hand (R.H.) and left hand (L.H.) of the piano, marked *mp*.

198

shad-ow of his e - quip-age for black-birds.

sfz *p*

Rec. *

attacca

XII

Babbling, moving forward ♩ = 60

mf lush, velvety

The

10

mp

L.H. R.H.

10 10 10

Rec.

204

riv - - - er is mov - - - ing.

10 10 10 10

pp

206

parlando

The black-bird must be fly - ing.

8va

p *pp*

attacca

Ponderous, inevitable $\text{♩} = 60$

225 *f*

snow - - - ing And it was go - ing to

225

(8vb)

230

SNOW. _____

loco

pp

8^{va}

8^{vb}

($\frac{1}{2}$ Leo)

239

both hands

R.H.

L.H.

p

mp

The black - bird _____

loco

8^{va}

8^{vb}

($\frac{1}{2}$ Leo)

($\frac{1}{2}$ Leo)

247

f

sat _____

In the ce-dar limbs. _____

p

3

3

f

8^{va}

8^{vb}

*

253

mp

3

3

8^{va}

8^{vb}

($\frac{1}{2}$ Leo)

B
E

*