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Title

Birds at Winter Nightfall

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John Sturt

Birds at Winter Nightfall

For High Voice, Piano and Double Bass

Full Score

Notes:

In late 2018, I was asked to write a piece for an ensemble created by Valentina Ciardelli, the then new Double Bass fellow at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. The lineup of this trio was rather unorthodox, being of a soprano, piano, and solo double bass. The purpose of this commission was to broaden what has historically been a not very well explored part of the repertoire: that of the solo double bass within chamber music.

Tasked with this, I once again came across the poetry of Thomas Hardy, whom I have set before to music (see "I Said to Love" for Tenor and Piano). This time, however, I happened across a smaller poem: the triolet "Birds and Winter Nightfall". The colourful language that Hardy uses to create the setting struck a chord within my imagination immediately, and I started to write. The piece was completed in December 2018, and was premiered in January 2019.

The textures that I used in this piece are my interpretation of a biting cold Winter's night, while the snow falls, threatening the livelihood of the small birds that appear in the gardens of the British Isles.

John Sturt

Text:

Around the house the flakes fly faster,
And all the berries now are gone
From holly and cotoneaster
Around the house. The flakes fly!--faster
Shutting indoors that crumb-outcaster
We used to see upon the lawn
Around the house. The flakes fly faster,
And all the berries now are gone!

Birds at Winter Nightfall

Thomas Hardy

John Sturt

Steady
♩=60

Soprano

Piano

Contrabass

ff *pp* *f* *sfz*

pizz. *arco* *f* *pp* *p* *f espress.* *gliss.*

A
Suddenly quicker
♩=84

Sop.

Pno.

Cb.

mp

A - round the

p *con pedale* *pp*

9

Sop. house the flakes fly fast - er

Pno. *sim.* Ped.

Cb. *p*

12 **B**

Sop. and all the berries now are gone from

Pno.

Cb.

15

Sop. Hol-ly and cot - on - e-as - ter

Pno. Ped.

Cb. 3

17

Sop. *pp*

a- round the house

Pno.

Cb.

19 **C**

Sop.

Pno. *mf*

Cb. *mf* sim.

22 **D**

Sop. *mp*

The flakes fly

Pno. *mp*

Cb. *mp*

25

Sop. *f*
the flakes fly fast - er shut-ting in - doors that

Pno. *f*
Ped.

Cb. *f*
3

28

Sop. *dim. poco a poco*
crumb-out-cast-er the crumb out - cast - er we used to see up-on the

Pno. *dim. poco a poco*
Ped.

Cb.

31

Sop. *mp*
lawn a - round the house

Pno. *mp*
— $\wedge$ sim.

Cb. *mf*
E

33

Sop.

Pno.

Cb.

cresc.

ff ma non troppo

ff molto espress.

3

F

Slower and Calmer

♩=68

36 rit.

Sop.

Pno.

Cb.

dim.

3

G

40

Sop.

Pno.

Cb.

p

A - round the house the flakes fly

pp

cresc.

p

pp

45 *mf* *rall.* *poco f* *p*

Sop. fast - er_ and all the ber-ries now are gone_____

Pno. *mf* *poco f* *pp*

Cb. *mf* *poco f* *pp*

Ped.

The musical score consists of three staves. The Soprano staff (Sop.) is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It begins at measure 45 with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The lyrics are 'fast - er_ and all the ber-ries now are gone_____'. The tempo is marked 'rall.' (rallentando) and the dynamics change to 'poco f' (poco forte) and then 'p' (piano). The Piano staff (Pno.) is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat. It starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' and a bracket. The dynamics change to 'poco f' and then 'pp' (pianissimo). The Contrabass staff (Cb.) is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and changes to 'poco f' and then 'pp'. Both the Piano and Contrabass staves have a 'Ped.' (pedal) marking. The time signature changes from 6/4 to 4/4 in the final measure.