

Involuntary Love Songs

Coluratura (High) Soprano and Piano
(one tone up from original key)

text by Alan Ashton
music by Jocelyn Morlock

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Involuntary Love Songs

Program Note

These three new songs – each in a different way – speak to the connections, the disconnections and the spaces between internal and external worlds. There are moments when something wild and unexpressed struggles to break through into the world. There are secrets in plain view, glimpses of hidden spaces, and obscured erratic truths that undermine the tidy illusion of control. – Alan Ashton

During "Thaw" the protagonist is quite disconnected from his own feelings. There are occasional "thaws" in his demeanour, but much of the time he is an observer and seems to be feeling very little. Even when he says he misses the other person, he prefaces it with the distancing phrase "I was about to say something". When writing the music for "Thaw" I attempted to mirror the coolness and restraint of the protagonist, and also to point out the occasions of strong emotional attachment, without letting the music ever get too free.

"Matches" uses imagery of fire to portray a person who is in a wild and desperate state. The tighter and tighter circles that the protagonist is running in suggest a sort of imploding introversion, where incredible energy, fear and denial have nowhere to go. The music here is also very energetic – the vocal part is full of short, almost breathless phrases. The piano part is very dense with chords; indeed, the piano threatens to overwhelm the singer at times.

In "Script" the protagonist is more definite about what he is feeling - the connection between the body and writing is made in a more clear and visceral sense. The suddenness of the summer storm at the end of the poem suggests that the protagonist is caught off-guard by his own powerful feelings, and that there is an element of danger in it. When writing the music for "Script" I attempted to create more emotional, ecstatic music, almost a siren song in which the performers could freely admit to powerful feelings that were denied earlier. The vocalise at the end may evoke a sense of transcendence, perhaps a place beyond words. - Jocelyn Morlock

Performance Notes:

Accidentals last for the measure in which they are written unless cancelled later, and are only for the octave in which they are written. Cautionary accidentals have been added for ambiguous spots. Total duration of the three songs is approximately eleven minutes.

Tempo markings are approximate, and the performers should feel free to play and sing very expressively and with rubato in both *Thaw* and *Script*. Please avoid too much rubato in *Matches*. For *Script*, grace notes in particular are to be played with rhythmic freedom. The pianist should use more pedal than usual to produce a blurry, hazy sound. There are several ossias in the score of *Script* – at m. 17 and 18 the triplets may move up a tone rather than down (see small notes in brackets) and at m. 47 an ossia bar is added. P.S. Don't worry too much about making a real "oo" vowel on the melisma ("truth") in m. 46 – 47. The word truth has already been sung several times - feel free to use a more open vowel.

Involuntary Love Songs texts

Thaw

Where was I?

There was, I think, a graffiti cloud on a rusted gate.
A guide dog narrowed his eyes,
plaintive, patient in the sun.
A young woman glowed like a bride,
glowed like a peach.

Weathered knuckles wrapped around a handkerchief,
slipped around a chrome bar.
Commuters danced a tarantella to the pitch and sway of traffic,
and steam curled skyward from the street.

Now, I read secret cursive scripts under my skin.
I was about to say something,
how I miss you from the inside out.

Now, where was I?

While you were away,
the thaw made dark rivulets under the ice
and the fog retreated from the shore.

Alan Ashton
October 2004

Matches

Oh I remember I recall
I tell myself I keep telling me
That I'm not I am not but
I keep telling myself I'm not
And the more I do
The more I tell myself I'm not
The more that part of my self
The part that I deny
I deny my self
The part that I tell myself that I am not
That part there
The more I deny the more that part runs
free and wild like a spreading fire
the fire that I deny
For I am not no not on fire
And I run free and I'm trailing smoke
And I run and run and I run
trailing smoke and flame in the dark
In the darkest night I've never seen
In tighter circles sending signals to a sky
That I can not see
I deny the sky the fire
with an eye to the part that I deny
the inner part
I circle a child cold and shy
lighting matches
Oh I recall
the inner dark that I deny
the tighter circles cold and shy
I am not no I tell myself I'm not
I tell myself
I deny
I'm trailing smoke
But I am not
no not on fire

Alan Ashton
October 2007

Script

Hold out your palms
I will fill them with licks
and nibbles and kisses.
I will spell out cryptic riddles
with the tip of my tongue.

Let your skin be a canvas,
a journal to fill with schemes,
with words that your ears are not ready to hear
and my voice fails to form.
Shivers and tremors.
Soundless syllables.

With less than a whisper,
let me reveal
that I have been cracked open by truth.
Truth strong like hunger.
Severe as a sudden summer storm,
ferocious and sweet.

Alan Ashton
September 2007

Alan Ashton

Jocelyn Morlock

Otherworldly, mysterious, birdlike

♩ = 100

f *mf* *mp* *f*

(con molto Pedale)

6

mp *p*

11

rit. Plaintive ♩ = 72

♩ = 100

mp

Where was I? _____ There was, _____

mp

17

— I think, a graf - fi - ti cloud — on a rust - ed gate. —

25

A guide dog — nar - rowed his eyes, — plain - tive,

33

— pa - tient — in the sun. A young wo man — glowed

40 *p*

like a bride, glowed like a peach.

47 *mf*

mf

51 *mp*

Weath - ered knuck - les wrapped a - round a

54 *p*

hand - ker - chief, slipped a - round a chrome bar.

p *mf*

57 *mp*

Com-mut-ers danced

mp

61 *mf*

a tar - an - tel - la _____ to the pitch and sway of traf - fic,

poco rit. **A tempo**
♩ = 100

65

and steam curled sky ward____ from the street._____

mp

poco rit. **A tempo**
♩ = 100 *mf*

69

Now,____ I read

mf

keep Ped. down (without changing) to m. 77

poco rit. **p**

73

se - cret cur - sive scripts un - der my skin.____ I was a - bout to say some

A tempo

77

♩ = 100

thing, how I miss you_____

pp

p *pp*

Detailed description: This block contains measures 77 through 81. The vocal melody begins in 3/4 time with a half note, followed by a whole note, and then a half note. It then changes to 5/4 time for the final measure, which contains a half note and a quarter note. The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with a melody of eighth and quarter notes, and a left hand with a bass line of eighth and quarter notes. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) for the vocal line and *p* (piano) for the piano accompaniment.

82

from the in - side___ out___

mf

Detailed description: This block contains measures 82 through 85. The vocal melody begins in 3/4 time with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. It then changes to 3/4 time for the final measure, which contains a half note and a quarter note. The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with a melody of eighth and quarter notes, and a left hand with a bass line of eighth and quarter notes. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte) for the piano accompaniment.

86

mp *p*

Detailed description: This block contains measures 86 through 89. The vocal melody is in 4/4 time and consists of a whole note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with a melody of eighth and quarter notes, and a left hand with a bass line of eighth and quarter notes. Dynamics include *mp* (mezzo-piano) for the piano accompaniment and *p* (piano) for the vocal line.

poco rit.

$\text{♩} = 56$

mp

90

Now, where was I? _____

94

While you ³ were a - way, the thaw made dark

98

ri - vu lets ³ un - der the ice ³ and the

101

fog re - treat - ed from the

poco rit. ♩ = 100

104

shore.

mp *p* *mf*

107 **molto rit.**

p niente

14

I am not but I keep tell-ing my-self I'm not

18

and the more I do— The more I tell my-self

22

I'm not The more that part of my self The

27 *p* *mp*

part that I de - ny I de-ny my self the part that I tell my-

32 *f* *mf*

self that I am not that part there The more I de-ny—

37

the more that part runs free and wild— like a spread-ing fire

41 *f* *ff*

the fire that I de-ny_____

46 *f*

For I am not no not on fire_____

51 *mf* *mp* *p*

and I run free and I'm trail-ing smoke And I run and run

55 *f* *mf* 3

— and I run — trail-ing smoke and flame in the dark

Measures 55-57. The vocal line begins with a half note, followed by a quarter note, then a half note, and ends with a quarter note. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. Dynamics include forte (f) and mezzo-forte (mf). A triplet of eighth notes appears in the vocal line at measure 57.

58 *mp* 3

— In — the dark-est night I've ne-ver seen —

Measures 58-61. The vocal line starts with a half note, followed by a quarter note, then a half note, and ends with a quarter note. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. Dynamics include mezzo-piano (mp). A triplet of eighth notes appears in the vocal line at measure 61.

62

in tight-er cir-cles sen-ding sig-nals to a sky that I can not

Measures 62-65. The vocal line starts with a half note, followed by a quarter note, then a half note, and ends with a quarter note. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. Dynamics include mezzo-piano (mp). A triplet of eighth notes appears in the vocal line at measure 65.

66 *mf* *ff* (possible) *ff*

see _____ I de - ny _____ the sky _____ the fire

71 *mf*

with an eye to the part _____ that I de - ny

75 *ff*

the in - ner part I _____ cir - cle a child

f *mp* *ff*

79 *p* *mp* *f*

cold and shy light-ing match-es

p *mp*

83 *ff*

Oh I re call the in-ner

ff

87 *mf* *mp*

dark that I de - ny the tight-er cir-cles cold and shy

mf *mp*

91 *mf* *mp*

I am not— no I tell my-self I'm not

94 *poco a poco cresc.* ----- *ff*

I tell my-self I de-ny I'm trail-ing smoke But I am not

99 *subito* ♩ = 176

no— not on fi - re

f *ffff*

8^{vb} -----

(senza Ped.)

Alan Ashton

Jocelyn Morlock

calm; ecstatic ♩ = 66

sempre molto pedale
piano part is very sustained, blurred, impressionistic throughout

5

8

10

mp

Hold out your palms

3

3

3

14

I will fill them with licks and nibbles and kiss

p

pp

mp

(mp)

18

kiss - es I will spell out cryptic riddles

mp

pp

ppp

mp

3

7

22

with the tip _____ of my _____ tongue. _____ Let your skin _____

p *mp*

26

_____ be a can - vas _____ a jour - nal _____

mp *pp*

28

_____ to fill with schemes _____ words that your ears _____ are not _____ read-y to

mf

31 *mp*

hear and my__ voice fails to form._____

pp *mf*

mp 3

35 *p* 3

Shi-vers and tre - - mors. Sound - less syl-la- bles_____

p *pp* *mp*

mp 3

38 *p* 3

With_____ less than a whis- per_____

p 3

41 *poco a poco cresc.*

let me re-veal _____ I have been crack'd

mf

3

3

3

44 *accel.*

o - pen by truth. _____ truth _____ truth _____

3

3

3

3

47 *rit.*

ff

ff

mf

mp

(a tempo)

Truth _____ strong

ff

mf

p

pp

mf

mp

3

3

3

3

3

50

as hun - ger

mp

p

9

9

52

mf

3

3

3

3

Se - vere as a sud-den sum-mer storm,

55

sub. p

fer - o - cious and sweet.

sub. p

3

3

58

61

mf Vocalise (on any preferred vowel) to end of piece

64

mp *mf*

pp *trills sempre pppp* *mf*

66

Measures 66-68 of a musical score. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is a single melodic line with notes and rests, featuring dynamic markings *mp* and *mf*. The middle staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with trills in the treble and triplets in the bass. The bottom staff is a single bass line with triplets and dynamic markings *pp*, *p*, *mp*, and *pp*.

69

Measures 69-70 of a musical score. The system consists of three staves. The top staff continues the melody with triplets and dynamic marking *mp*. The middle staff has a grand staff with a melodic line in the treble and a bass line with triplets and dynamic marking *mp*. The bottom staff is a single bass line with triplets and dynamic marking *pp*.

71

molto rit.

Measures 71-73 of a musical score. The system consists of three staves. The top staff shows a melodic line with a crescendo from *p* to *ppp*. The middle staff is a grand staff with a trill in the treble and a melodic line in the bass, with dynamic markings *pppp*, *mp*, and *ppp*. The bottom staff is a single bass line with triplets and dynamic markings *pp* and *ppp*. The tempo marking *molto rit.* is indicated above the first measure.