
SAM SCHEIBE

Gorgeous Nothings

For SATB Choir, Soprano Solo, String Orchestra, and Piano

www.samscheibe.com

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Gorgeous Nothings

Program Notes

I first came across Emily Dickinson's Envelope Poems in the Fall of 2019. Taken from the sealed envelopes of letters sent by Dickinson, the poems hold a unique charm. These poetic miniatures are often but a few words, yet certainly evoke the same poignancy and depth as her more formal work. Throughout the poems, there are words sketched out, replaced, or sometimes displayed in subscript. It is difficult to discern which word Dickinson intended to use in the final product, or if both words could be used interchangeably. This piece aims to capture the way Dickinson considers single words like this, for she knows the ways a word in itself can carry infinite meaning. Dickinson says, "A word is dead when it is said, some say, I say it just begins to live that day".

Dickinson spent a large portion of her adulthood in isolation, writing hundreds of letters to friends, family, colleagues, and publishers (who largely disregarded her work). In many ways, her life was lived out through these letters and the poems written upon them. Nearly two hundred years later, our lives are not dissimilar to hers in the digital age. We live through the gorgeous nothings we send to one another digitally and often find connection through these platforms, sometimes with complete strangers. I have often found that Dickinson's work has felt extraordinarily real, as if she were writing just yesterday. Perhaps it is because of the way she lived, physically alone but with a rich connection to the world through text, that her poetry resounds with so many today.

This work, *Gorgeous Nothings*, reflecting its title, provides a small gallery of the poems she wrote on the envelopes of her letters. Looking through these letters, you can see a rich life filled with joy, longing, love, passion, whimsy, and remarkable earnesty. Our lives now are no different, and we can certainly learn from her how to find connection with one another in an otherwise lonely age.

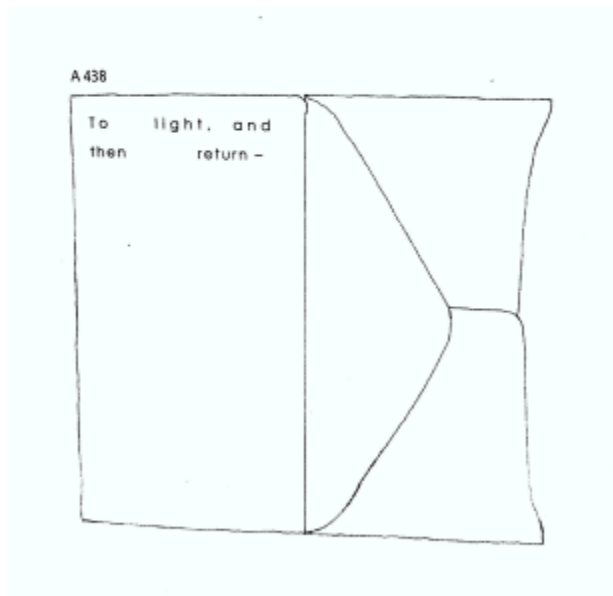
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V. Light

V

LIGHT (*A 438*)



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Gorgeous Nothings

V

Light

(Demonstration Copy for MidAmerica Productions)

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Slow, with light rit on beat 3 ♩ = 48

Piano

pp una corda

Piano

mp

SA

1. 2. *pp*

To

Pno

A

10

SA

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1

Light (:/:)* To light (:/:) To light To light (:/:) To

Piano

mp

*Divide singers into 8 groups. Singers from each group sing the designated pitch below their number on the word "Light" until the end of each bar. (excluding group 1's "to" at the end of each bar). The groups do not need to correspond with voice part (i.e. Soprano 1, Soprano 2, etc) and singers may be assigned randomly or intentionally into these groups. The singers from each group should be spread out among the ensemble, making the effect sound as if it is coming from all points, instead of cascading from one end to the other.

14

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1

Light (:/:)* To light (:/:) To light (:/:) To light (:/:)

mp *simile* *p* (last time only)

To light To light To light To light

Piano



B With Building Motion

18

mp cresc poco a poco

Light Light

mp cresc poco a poco

Light Light

mp cresc poco a poco

Light Light

mp cresc poco a poco

Light Light

mp cresc poco a poco

Light Light

cresc poco a poco

Light Light Light Light

Pno

mp cresc poco a poco

22 *mf cresc poco a poco*

S1-4 Light Light Light Light

A1-4 *mf cresc poco a poco* Light, Light Light

T *mf cresc poco a poco* Light Light Light Light

B *mf cresc poco a poco* Light Light Light

Pno *mp*

26 *f*

S1-4 1. Light Light

A1-4 *f* Light Light

T *f* Light Light

B *f* Light Light

Pno *f*

30

S1-4 *mf* Light *pp* Light

A1-4 *mf* Light *pp* Light

T *mf* Light *pp* Light

B *mf* Light *pp* Light

mf

The musical score is for a four-part vocal ensemble (S1-4, A1-4, T, B) and piano. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal parts (S1-4, A1-4, T, B) are written in treble and bass staves. They all begin with a melodic line marked *mf* (mezzo-forte) and 'Light', which then transitions to a sustained note marked *pp* (pianissimo) and 'Light'. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand features a continuous eighth-note arpeggiated pattern, while the left hand provides a harmonic foundation with chords and moving lines. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.