

The Sky With All Its Stars

*love songs on texts of Rabindranath Tagore
for baritone & piano*

Karim Al-Zand
(2004)

PROGRAM NOTE:

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is one of India's most beloved literary figures. He is known primarily for his poetry, but his voluminous output also includes novels, plays, short stories, travel diaries, autobiographical writings and many essays on philosophy, religion, education and social topics. Tagore was also an accomplished painter and composer. (Of his over two thousand songs, two are now used as the national anthems of India and Bangladesh.) He was a close friend of Gandhi and was active in Indian political life before independence. Much of Tagore's money and time went towards an experimental school he founded at Shantiniketan, based on his ideals of an enlightened and free-thinking educational system. He wrote most of his important works in Bengali, but translated many of them into English himself, including *Gitanjali* [Song Offerings], for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. The poems chosen for *The Sky With All Its Stars* are typical in their simple and elegant lyricism, buoyant humor, and striking imagery. They are drawn from three collections (*The Gardener*, 1913; *Lover's Gift and Crossing*, 1918; and *The Fugitive and Other Poems*, 1921) and are here arranged in a quasi-narrative.

Premiere performance: *The Sky With All Its Stars* was written for and premiered by baritone Paul Busselberg. The premiere of the complete *Tagore Love Songs* (see below) was given on April 4, 2005 in Houston, TX.

 September 2004

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

The Sky With All Its Stars is a six-song cycle for baritone and piano based on texts of Rabindranath Tagore. It can be paired with another Tagore cycle, *The Secret Of Your Heart* (for mezzo-soprano and piano) or it may combined with that cycle to form a larger work entitled *Tagore Love Songs*, in which singers alternate six songs each (the last two of which use the same text) then sing a final duet. The poems, drawn from various collections, are not given titles by Tagore; they are titled here by their first line (which may be given in a program).

DURATION:

1. When she passed by me	1'10"
2. It was in May	1'40"
3. Do not go, my love	1'50"
4. If you would have it so	1'10"
5. Then finish the last song	1'05"
6. I would ask for still more	1'

TOTAL: ca. 9'

TEXT:

1. When she passed by me

When she passed by me with quick steps, the end of her skirt touched me.

From the unknown island of a heart came a sudden warm breath of spring.

A flutter of a flitting touch brushed me and vanished in a moment, like a torn flower petal blown in the breeze.

It fell upon my heart like a sigh of her body and whisper of her heart.

2. It was in May

It was in May. The sultry noon seemed endlessly long. The dry earth gaped with thirst in the heat.

When I heard from the riverside a voice calling, "Come, my darling!"

I shut my book and opened the window to look out.

I saw a big buffalo with mud-stained hide, standing near the river with placid, patient eyes; and a youth, knee deep in water, calling it to its bath.

I smiled amused and felt a touch of sweetness in my heart.

3. Do not go, my love

Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

I have watched all night, and now my eyes are heavy with sleep.

I fear lest I lose you when I am sleeping.

Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

I start up and stretch my hands to touch you. I ask myself, "Is it a dream?"

Could I but entangle your feet with my heart and hold them fast to my breast!

Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

4. If you would have it so

If you would have it so, I will end my singing.

If it sets your heart aflutter, I will take away my eyes from your face.

If it suddenly startles you in your walk, I will step aside and take another path.

If it confuses you in your flower-weaving, I will shun your lonely garden.

If it makes the water wanton and wild, I will not row my boat by your bank.

5. Then finish the last song

Then finish the last song and let us leave.

Forget this night when the night is no more.

Whom do I try to clasp in my arms? Dreams can never be made captive.

My eager hands press emptiness to my heart and it bruises my breast.

6. I would ask for still more

I would ask for still more, if I had the sky with all its stars, and the world with its endless riches; but I would be content with the smallest corner of this earth if only she were mine.

—Rabindranath Tagore

Poems 1 through 5 are from The Gardener (New York: Macmillan, 1913), Nos. XXIV, XXVIII, XXXIV, XLVII and LI. Poem 6 is from Lover's Gift and Crossing (London: Macmillan, 1918), No. V. All texts are in the public domain.

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love songs on texts of Rabindranath Tagore
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Text: Rabindranath Tagore
(1861-1941)

Music: Karim Al-Zand
(2004)

1. When she passed by me

Swiftly; flowing, breezy ♩=168

dreamily mf

When she passed by me

small accents

mf *sim.*

⑤

with quick steps, the end of her skirt touched me.

⑤

p floating above the meter

From the un-known is-land of a heart

⑨

p

The musical score is written for baritone and piano. It consists of three systems of music. The first system starts with a tempo marking 'Swiftly; flowing, breezy ♩=168' and a dynamic marking 'dreamily mf'. The baritone part begins with the lyrics 'When she passed by me'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The second system starts with a measure rest (5) and continues the lyrics 'with quick steps, the end of her skirt touched me.' The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns. The third system starts with a measure rest (9) and contains the lyrics 'From the un-known is-land of a heart'. The piano accompaniment features a more melodic line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

13

rall. - - - -

came a sud - den warm breath of spring.

17 a tempo

giddy mf

A flut-ter of a fleet-ing touch brushed

20

me and van-ished in a mo-ment, like a torn flo- wer

23

pe-tal blown in the breeze. It fell up-on my heart like a

27 *decresc.*

sigh of her bo - dy and whis - per of her

31 *pp*

heart.

2. It was in May

Text: Rabindranath Tagore
(1861-1941)Music: Karim Al-Zand
(2004)

Slowly; languid, lazily ♩=84

dreary mp

It was in

⑤ May. The sul - try noon _____ seemed end - less-ly long. _____

⑤ The dry earth gaped _____ with thirst in the heat. _____

⑨ Suddenly Quickly; excited ♩=92

atwitter mf

poco rit. When I heard from the ri - ver - side

⑬

Very Slowly $\text{♩} = 40$

Quickly Again

16

sotto voce *p* *mf*

a voice cal - ling, "Come, — my dar - ling!" I shut my book and o-pened the

16

accel.

Slowly; plodding $\text{♩} = 52$

19

f *mp*

win-dow to look out. I saw a big buf - falo — with mud - stained hide, —

19

23

— stand - ing near the ri - ver — with

23

27

pla - cid, pa - tient eyes; and a youth,

27

(31) *poco cresc.* As Before

knee-deep in wa-ter, cal-ling it to its bath.

poco cresc. *p*

(35) Quickly Again

I smiled a-mused and felt a touch of sweet-ness in my heart.

mf *mp* *pp*

3. Do not go, my love

Text: Rabindranath Tagore
(1861-1941)

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(2004)

Moderately; expressive ♩=108 Slower; focused ♩=72

mp *intently*

lyrically, but interrupted Do not go, — my

mf *p*

⑤ Tempo I

earnest *mf*

love, with-out ask - ing my leave. I have watched all

⑤

⑩ *mp* *mf*

night and now my eyes are heav - y with sleep. — I

⑩

⑮ *mp*

fear lest I lose you — when I am sleep - ing. — Do

⑮

⑳ Tempo II

anxious mf

not go, — my love, with-out ask - ing my leave. I

⑳

p

㉔ Tempo I

start up and stretch my hands _____ to touch you I

㉔

㉘

f

ritenuto ($\text{♩} = 100$)
becoming increasingly desperate

ask my - self "Is it too late?" _____ Could I but en -

㉘

cresc.

f

㉛

cresc.

tan - - - gle your feet with my heart _____

㉛

cresc.

36

and hold them fast to my

allargando - - - - - Tempo I

39 *ff* breast! Do not go, my love, with-

sub. p

43 Tempo I

out ask - ing my leave.

rit. - - - - -

43 *mp* *p*

4. If you would have it so

Text: Rabindranath Tagore
(1861-1941)Music: Karim Al-Zand
(2004)

Leisurely; swaying, unhurried $\text{♩} = 132$ *conciatory*
mp

If you would have it

lightly bouncing
mp

③ *mf*
so, I will end my sing - - - ing.

⑤
If it sets your heart a - flut - ter, I will take a - way my

⑤
eyes from your face. — If it sud - den - ly

⑦ *concerned*
mf

take time

(a tempo)

⑨

relaxed

start - les you ___ in your walk, I will step a - side _____ and take a - no - ther path. ___

⑪

as before

take time

If it con fu - ses you ___ in your flow - er weav - ing. I will shun your

⑬ (a tempo)

lone - - ly gar - den. ___ If it makes the

poco accel. a tempo

⑮

wa - ter wan - ton ___ and wild, I will not row my boat by your

poco f *p* tenuto

cresc. *sub³p*

17

bank. _____

17

molto rit. - - - - - *a tempo*

decresc.

5. Then finish the last song

Text: Rabindranath Tagore
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Relaxed; melancholy $\text{♩} = 56$
resigned, dispirited
p

Then fin-ish the last song _____ and let us leave. For-

shadowing voice exactly

pp

as smoothly as possible, but
no blurring; hands locked

③ get this night _____ when the night is no more. Whom do I try to clasp in my

④

⑤ arms? Dreams can nev - er be made cap - tive. My ea - ger hands press

⑥

⑦ *pp* emp - ti - ness to my heart and it bruises my breast.

⑦ *ppp*

6. I would ask for still more

Text: Rabindranath Tagore
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Slowly; atmospheric ♩.=52 (♩♩=156)*

p *plaintive* 3
I would ask for still more,

delicate, twinkling
ppp
red. →
Una Corda →

③ if I had the sky ___ with all its stars, and the world ___ with its end - less rich-es;

③

⑤ but I would be con - tent ___ with the small-est cor-ner of this world if on - ly she were mine. ___

⑤ (B)

⑦ *red.* ^

⑦

let all notes decay

* The piano is in the background, its notes played without accent and left ringing. The two parts should proceed in 'parallel' fashion, with little attempt to precisely synchronize the piano and voice, though they should be more or less in the same place at the same time. The vocalist can use liberty in interpreting the rests which begin and end each phrase to maintain co-ordination between the parts. (The pianist might count steady sixteenths.)

