

Four Not So Serious Songs

for mezzo-soprano & piano

Karim Al-Zand
(2023)

Four Not So Serious Songs

TEXTS

This Song is Going to End

this song is going to end, my love
though its music has just begun
but I will not let it finish, my love
no I won't
I'll sing of you forever
they'll drag me
from the stage kicking
and screaming, my love
but it is no use
this song is going to end
but then what?
a void
no trace of sound
what will become of my love, my love?
stop
it's moving too fast
and very soon I fear
it will end
another bar gone by
and another
for heaven's sake slow down
my measures must be drastic
I will sing it again and again, my love
until my voice turns to dust
on my lips
but no I cannot
to sing this
strain
forever, my love
the dread
is too much to bear,
the song is going to end
it is futile
let it be done
here it is
now, my—

Karim Al-Zand

Careers

Father is quite the greatest poet
That ever lived anywhere.
You say you're going to write great music—
I chose that first: it's unfair.
Besides, now I can't be the greatest painter and
do Christ and angels, or lovely pears
and apples and grapes on a green dish,
or storms at sea, or anything lovely,
Because that's been taken by Claire.

It's stupid to be an engine-driver,
And soldiers are horrible men.
I won't be a tailor, I won't be a sailor,
And gardener's taken by Ben.
It's unfair if you say that you'll write great
music, you horrid, you unkind (I simply
loathe you, though you are my
sister), you beast, cad, coward, cheat,
bully, liar!
Well? Say what's left for me then!

But *we* won't go to your ugly music.
(Listen!) Ben will garden and dig,
And Claire will finish her wondrous pictures
All flaming and splendid and big.
And I'll be a perfectly marvelous carpenter,
and I'll make cupboards and benches
and tables and... and baths, and
nice wooden boxes for studs and
money,
And you'll be jealous, you pig!

Robert Graves (1895–1985)

Warning to Children

Children, if you dare to think
Of the greatness, rareness, muchness
Fewness of this precious only
Endless world in which you say
You live, you think of things like this:
Blocks of slate enclosing dappled
Red and green, enclosing tawny
Yellow nets, enclosing white
And black acres of dominoes,
Where a neat brown paper parcel
Tempt you to untie the string.
In the parcel a small island,
On the island a large tree,
On the tree a husky fruit.
Strip the husk and pare the rind off:
In the kernel you will see
Blocks of slate enclosed by dappled
Red and green, enclosed by tawny
Yellow nets, enclosed by white
And black acres of dominoes,
Where the same brown paper parcel—
Children, leave the string alone!
For who dares undo the parcel
Finds himself at once inside it,
On the island, in the fruit,
Blocks of slate about his head,
Finds himself enclosed by dappled
Green and red, enclosed by yellow
Tawny nets, enclosed by black
And white acres of dominoes,
With the same brown paper parcel
Still untied upon his knee.
And, if he then should dare to think
Of the fewness, muchness, rareness,
Greatness of this endless only
Precious world in which he says
he lives—he then unties the string.

Robert Graves

So You Say

So you say, my darling:
Your love is like gazelles swiftly racing,
or a lamb far from home,
or wanton sea foam.
But tell me again:
What is your love?
Flowers smitten with rain?
Again, what's that?
Your heart pat-
and-pitters in time with my gait?
Don't lay that conceit
at my feet! Wait—
there's more...? You're
a boat and I am your moor?
No, that doesn't sound right...
Last night you said your love was a hurricane,
a tempest, a squall—
or was it a serpent to my charmer's thrall?
Or an apple tree,
a lyric flute,
a honey bee,
a playful lute strumming a song without words!
Or perhaps it was birds?
Yes, that's what it was.
A cuckoo or wren, which then
lands a peck on my neck;
or a lark,
blackbird,
nightingale or dove—
or some other bird I've never heard of...
Stop the similes:
no more birds,
no more bees;
no phylum,
no genus,
no species—please!
Must our constancy be
built on hyperbole?
So I say, my darling:
No need to construe.
I know that you love me.
I love you, too.

Karim Al-Zand

for Mark Diamond and Michael Clark

Four Not So Serious Songs

for mezzo-soprano & piano

This Song is Going to End

Text & Music: Karim Al-Zand
(2023)

Very quickly; with a tense, desperate energy ♩ = 132

$\frac{3}{4}$ *mf* despondent

Musical score for the first system. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "This song is going to end,". The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more stable bass line in the left hand. Performance instructions include "RH: soft relative to LH; a fluid motor throughout, *sempre molto legato*" and "plenty of *ped.* →". A dynamic marking of *mp* is placed below the piano part with the instruction "little swells, as indicated".

Musical score for the second system. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "my love though its mu - sic has just be - gun but I will not let it". The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic motor. Performance instructions include "rallying" above the vocal line and "3+2" above the piano part.

Musical score for the third system. The vocal line concludes with the lyrics "fin - ish, my love no I won't I'll sing of you for - ev - er they'll drag me from the". The piano accompaniment features a *cresc.* (crescendo) and a *poco f* (poco fortissimo) dynamic marking. The system ends with a triplets marking.

10

stage kick-ing and scream-ing, my love but it is no

mf

13

use this song is going to

16

end but then what? a

p apprehensive cresc.

19

void no trace of sound what will be-come of my love,

poco f

22 *ff* *p*

my love stop it's mov-ing too

poco f *ff* *molto decresc.* *p*

8^a

25

fast and ver-y soon I fear it will

27 *mf*

end an-oth-er bar gone by and an-

29 *molto* *f*

-oth - er for heav-en's sake slow down my meas-ures must be dras-tic

(mf)

almost shouting at the end

31

I will sing it a - gain and a-gain and a-gain, my

33

mf

love un - til my voice turns to dust on my lips

35

but no I can-not to sing this strain for -

mp

poco rit. - - - - - a tempo

37

-ev-er, mylove the dread is too much to bear this song is going to end

40

p *3* *f* *3* *ff*

it is fu - tile let it be done

molto *ff*

43

p *3*

here it is now, my—

8^a *molto decres.* *p*

let everything ring

[2'30"]

Careers

Text: Robert Graves
(1895–1985)

Music: Karim Al-Zand
(2023)

Quickly; with a willful insistence ♩ = 126 *mf* manic energy throughout

sung with child-like obstinacy;
a sing-song-y sort of taunting

Fa - ther is quite the great - est

f jeering

mf

5 *cresc.* *jubilant* *mf*

po - et that ev - er lived, that ev - er lived an - y - where. You say you're going to write great

9 *f* protesting "fall off" at the end

mu - sic— I chose that first, I chose that first: it's un - fair. Be - sides,

13 *mf* explaining, very cross

now I can't be the great - est pain - ter and do Christ and an - gels, or love - ly pears

sfz *mp*

24

and ap-ples and grapes on a green dish, or storms at sea or an-y-thing love-ly, Be-

34

- cause that's been tak-en by Claire. It's

38

stu-pid to be an en-gine dri-ver, and sol-diers are hor-ri-ble men. I won't be a tail-or I

42

won't be a sail-or and gar-den-er's ta-ken by Ben. It's un - fair if you

48

say that you'll write great mus - ic, you hor-rid, you un - kind (I simp-ly loathe you,

57

though you are my sis-ter), you beast, cad, cow-ard, cheat, bul-ly, li-ar! Well?

65

Say what's left for me then! But we won't go to your

69

ug - ly mu-sic. (Lis-ten!) Ben will gar-den and dig, and Claire will

74

fin-ish her won'drous pic-tures all flam-ing and splen-did and big, and I'll be a

78

per-fect-ly mar-vel-ous car-pen-ter, and I'll make cup-boards and ben-ches and

86 *reaching for anything* *sputtering*

tab-les and... and...and... and... and... baths, and nice wood-en box-es for studs

sfz *sfz*

95 *f with venom* [almost shouting]

and mon-ey. And you'll be jeal-ous, you pig!

f

[1'40"]

Warning to Children

Text: Robert Graves
(1895–1985)

Music: Karim Al-Zand
(2023)

as if about to give a lecture *f* As fast as possible; anxious, high-strung ♩ = 192+ *p* *mp*

Child-ren, if you dare to think, if you

9 *mf* *fp* *mf* *cresc.*

dare to think, if you dare to think of the great-ness, rare-ness, much-ness, few-ness of this

18 *ff* *mp*

pre-cious on-ly end-less world in which you say you live, you think of things like this:

25 *mp*

Blocks of slate, en-clos-ing blocks of slate, en-clos-ing dap-pled red and

32

green, en-clos-ing dap-pled red and green, en-clos-ing taw-ny yel-low nets, en-clos-ing white and black

38 *sub.f* *p* *2* *8^a*

ac-res of dom-i - noes, where a neat brown pa-per par - cel tempts you to un-tie the

43 *mp* *8^a*

string. In the par-cel a small is-land, on the is-land a large tree, on the tree a husk-y fruit. Strip the

50 *cresc.* *mp*

husk and pare the rind off: in the ker-nel you will see Blocks of slate, en - closed by blocks of slate, en-closed by

57

dap-pled red and green, en-closed by dap-pled red and green, en-closed by taw-ny yel-low nets, en-closed by white and black

64 *sub.f* *p* *sub.f*

ac-res of dom-i noes, where the same brown pa-per parcel— Chil-dren, leave the string a -

sub.f *p legato* *cresc.* *8^a*

69 *p*

(8^a) - lone! For who dares un - do the

f *decrec.* *p*

76

par - cel finds him-self at once in-side it, on the is - land in the fruit, block of slate a - bout his head,

83 *mp*

finds him-self en - closed by blocks of slate, en-clos-ing dap-pled green and red, en-clos-ing dap-pled green and

mp

89 *sub.f* *p*

red, en-closed by yel-low taw-ny nets, en-clos-ing black and white ac-res of dom - i - noes. with the

sub.f *p legato*

95 *fp* *long* *a tempo (or faster!)* *p* *cresc. poco a poco*

same brown pa-per par-cel still un - tied up - on his knee. And, if he then should dare to

102

think, and if he then should dare to think, and if he then should dare to think, and if he then should

109

dare to think, and if he then should dare to think of the few-ness, much-ness, rare-ness, great-ness of this

115 *f* *sub.p*

end-less on ly pre-cious world in which he says he lives— he then un - ties the string.

[1'30"]

So You Say

Text & Music: Karim Al-Zand
(2023)

Quickly; lightly bouncing ♩ = 116

The piano introduction consists of four measures. The first measure is in 12/8 time, the second in 6/8, the third in 3/4, and the fourth in 12/8. The right hand features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes.

5 *mp* So you say, my dar-ling, so you say: *mf* Your

The vocal line begins with a half note followed by a quarter note, then a quarter note with a slur and two eighth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with dynamics ranging from *f* to *mp*.

8 *cresc.* love is like ga-zelles swift-ly ra-cing, or a lamb far from home, or

The vocal line features a half note with a slur and two eighth notes, followed by a quarter note, then a quarter note with a slur and two eighth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with dynamics ranging from *mf* to *cresc.*

12 *f* wan-ton sea foam. But tell me a-gain:

The vocal line begins with a half note with a slur and two eighth notes, followed by a quarter note, then a quarter note with a slur and two eighth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with dynamics ranging from *f* to *cresc.*

15 *mp* *mf* *mp*
 What is your love? Flow-ers smit-ten with
p *mp*

18 *poco f* *mp*
 rain? A - gain, what's that? Your
sub. f *pp*

21 *mf*
 heart pat- and pit- ters in time with my gait? Don't lay that con- ceit at my
p *mp* *mf*

25 *f* *mf*
 feet! Wait— there's more...? You're a boat and I am your moor?
cresc. *f* *decresc.* *p*

29 *p* *f*
 No, that does-n't sound right... Last night you said your love was a hur-ri- cane, a tem-pest, a squall—
sub. f

32 *mp* or was it a ser-pent to my char-mer's thrall? Or an ap-ple tree, a *cresc.*

36 lyr-ic flute, a hon-ey bee, a play-ful lute strum-ing a song with-out words!

40 *mp* to yourself Or per-haps it was birds? *f* Yes, that's what it was. *mp* A

43 cu - ckoo or wren, which then lands a peck on my neck; or a lark, black-bird, night-in-gale or

46 dove— or some oth-er bird— I've nev-er

(poco riten.)

49 *cresc.* *f*

heard of... Stop the si - mi - les, no more birds no more bees; no phy - lum, no

cresc. *f*

53 *ff* *molto rit.*

gen - us, no spe - cies, puh - lease!

ff *molto decresc.*

gradually add Ped.

58 - - (♩ = 52) continue to slow down - - - - - Slowly; relaxed ♩ = 44

p *sempre* *p*

Must our con - stan - cy be built on hy - per - bo - le? So I say, my dar - ling: no need to con -

62

- strue, I know that you love me. I love you, too.

pp

[2'20"]