

≈ Your Letter Pleased Me Greatly ≈
20 variations for soprano and piano

music

Karim Al-Zand

text

Desiderius Erasmus

(2023)

Your Letter Pleased Me Greatly is based on text by Desiderius Erasmus, from the Dutch theologian's book on rhetoric, *De Utraque Verborum ac Rerum Copia* (1512) [Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style]. In a virtuosic demonstration of prose embellishment, Erasmus famously provides 195 variations of the simple sentence "Tuae litterae me magnopere delectarunt." [Your letter pleased me greatly.]—each variation bringing a very different sense and sentiment to the same basic point. Twenty variants are used in my piece for voice and piano, and the work's approach reflects the same conceit: each short "variation" uses similar musical material, but projected with a succession of different moods, characters, and structural forms.

Duration

~7' 30"

✿ Chapter XXXIII

*Practice now, to make the matter clearer: let us set forth an expression as an experiment and try how far it is possible to have it turn like Proteus into several forms; not that every method of varying is suitable in any one instance, but as many as are, we shall use. Let us take the following sentence for an example: **Your letter pleased me greatly.***



Your Letter Pleased Me Greatly

Your letter pleased me greatly.
What you wrote in your letter has given me unexpected happiness.
You would scarcely believe how much I enjoyed your letter.
How exceedingly your letter has delighted my spirit!
When your letter arrived a glowing radiance seized me.
I am flattered that you thought me worthy of such a letter.
Your anxiously awaited letter has come at last.
Nothing more longed for than your letter could have come to me.
When the postman handed me your letter, my soul began to thrum with an ineffable joy.
Whatever sadness was in me, your letter soon cast it out.
What was the cause of my abundant rejoicing? Your letter!
Your letter wiped the wrinkles from my brow.
While I read what you wrote to me in your letter, a euphoric bliss stole into my heart.
Oh, wonderful! How much merriment your letter aroused in me!
What laughter, what applause, what exultant dancing your letter caused.
There is no pleasure, no charm with which I would compare your letter.
What clover is to bees, what willow boughs are to goats, what honey is to the bear, your letter is to me.
No delicacy so caresses the palate as your letter captivates my heart.
As utterly as I love you, so utterly am I thrilled by your letter.
There is nothing I shall receive with a gladder spirit than your next letter.

Desiderius Erasmus (1456–1536)

adapted from his variations on "Tuae litterae me magnopere delectarunt"

De Utraque Verborum ac Rerum Copia (1512)

[Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style]

~ Your Letter Pleased Me Greatly ~

20 variations for soprano and piano

Text: Desiderius Erasmus
from *De Utraque Verborum ac Rerum Copia* (1512)
[Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style]

Music: Karim Al-Zand
(2023)

$\text{♩} = 69$ NB: each line of text, marked by double bars, should possess a different character, musically and dramatically.

molto rit. - - - - - *ad libitum*
heartfelt p

Your let-ter pleased me

⑤ $\text{♩} = 76$ *pp* *with budding anticipation p*

great-ly. What you wrote in your let-ter,

pp *molto legato* (but pedal the harmonic changes)

⑨ *mp cresc.*

what you wrote, what you wrote in your let-ter has giv-en me,

13 *mf* *poco riten.* *poco f*

has giv-en me — un-ex - pec - ted hap-pi-ness.

cresc. *poco f* *decresc.* L.H. *mp*

17 $\text{♩} = 60$ *confidentially mp* (*pp*)

You would scarce - ly be - lieve, (you would scarce - ly be-lieve!) how

mp

19 $\text{♩} = 60$ *exuberant mf*

much I en - joyed your let-ter. — How ex - ceed - ing - ly, ex - ceed - ing - ly, ex - ceed - ing - ly — your

mf

23 *rit.* *transported, in awe p* $\text{♩} = 46$

let-ter has de - light - ed my spir-it! — When your let-ter — ar-

p

28 *cresc.* *f*

- rived a glow-ing ra - diance seized me.

cresc. *poco f*

33 ♩ = 84 *poised mp*

I am flat-tered that you

mf

37

thought me wor - thy of such a let - ter.

41 *accel.* *anxiously p* *cresc.* ♩ = 96

Your anx - ious-ly a-wait-ed let - ter has come at last, has come at

p *cresc.*

45 *ardent f* ♩ = 84

last, has come at last. Noth - ing more longed for, noth -

48

- thing more longed for than your let - ter could have come to

51 *poco rit.* - - - - ♩ = 54 *transfixed mp*

me. When the

54

post-man hand-ed me your let - ter - my soul be-gan to thum, thrum, thrum with an in-ef-fa-ble joy.

57 *ad libitum* (♩=40)
melancholy mf

What-ev-er sad-ness was in me, your let-ter soon cast it out.

60 ♩ = ♩ = 96
skittish mf

What was the cause of my ab-un-dant re-joic-ing?

62 *molto rit.* - - - -
relieved mp

Your let-ter! Your let-ter wiped the wrin-kles from my

64 *a piacere* *ten.* ♩ = 30
p enraptured

brow. While I read what you wrote to me in your

$\text{♩} = \text{♪} = 120$

67

cresc.

poco f joyous

let-ter, a eu-phor-ic bliss stole in-to my heart. Oh, won-der-ful!

70

Oh, won-der-ful! How much mer-ri-ment your

75

f ecstatic

let-ter a-roused in me! What laugh-ter, what ap-

79

ff

- please, what ex-ul-tant danc-ing your let-ter caused.

82 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ rit. $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$
 4+3

decresc.

4+3

86 $\text{♩} = 92$ contented *mf*

There is no pleas - ure, no charm with which I would com - pare your

mf

91 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ playful *mp*

let - ter. What

sfz

sfz

p sempre molto legato

95

clo - ver is to bees, what the wil - low bough is to goats,

98 *riten.* *a tempo*

what hon-ey is to the bear, your let-ter is to me.

101 $\text{♩} = 42$ *earnest mf*

No del-i-ca-cy so ca-res-ses the pal-ate as your

104 *cresc.* *allargando* $\text{♩} = 30$ ($\text{♩} = 60$) *f passionately* *mf*

let-ter cap-ti-vates my heart. As ut-ter-ly as I love you, so

106 *decresc.* *molto rit.* *p* $\text{♩} = 52$ *serious p*

ut-ter-ly am I thrilled by your let-ter. There is

(let ring)

108

ad libitum

coy mp

3

noth-ing — I shall re - ceive — with glad - der spir - it than your next let - ter. —

111

♩ = 69

molto rit. — — — — —

mf cantabile

[7'30"]