

Perplexed Music

Sonnet
for SATB Choir (divisi)

Music by
John Muehleisen

Text by
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Commissioned by The Esoterics
Eric Banks, Artistic Director and Conductor

Dedicated to the memory of Michael Christian Krueger,
for whom the Angels whisper— SWEET

PERPLEXED MUSIC

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
Whence harmonies we cannot under-
stand,
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain
unfolds
In sad, perplexed minors. Deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear and counter-
mand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-
land
With nightingales in visionary worlds.
We murmur,—'Where is any certain
tune
Or measured music, in such notes as
these?'—
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded; their fine ear hath
won
The issue of completed cadences,
And, smiling down the stars, they
whisper— SWEET.

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Program Notes

Perplexed Music was commissioned by Eric Banks and Seattle-based choral ensemble The Esoterics for a program made up entirely of musical settings of sonnets. When I read Elizabeth Barrett Browning's beautiful poem, it appealed to me immediately with its surreal images and musical references woven throughout. Ironically it did not immediately elicit a musical reaction from me, thus I was faced with something quite unfamiliar to me: a case of writer's block. It was not until a family tragedy struck that the poem resonated with me and my eyes were opened: our young niece and her husband lost their first-born child to a premature birth; he lived only five minutes. After receiving this news and allowing it to sink into our hearts, I returned to the text, and it came alive for me in a deeply poignant way. Rather than interpreting the text for the audience, I prefer to simply present the backstory and allow listeners to discover the meaning of the text for themselves, which I believe will yield a much more poignant experience of both the poem and the music. All that I will add is simply the dedication:

*Dedicated to the memory of Michael Christian Krueger,
for whom the Angels whisper— SWEET*

Performances Notes

1. Final consonants should be placed on the rest following the note(s) on which the syllable occurs.
2. Unless otherwise noted, when the women or men are divided in three parts (SSA, SAA, TTB, or TBB), divide the voices evenly between the three-parts. Three-part divisi that should be performed as distributed amongst the voices is noted as "div. as written."

Perplexed Music

Commissioned by *The Esoterics*
Eric Banks, Artistic Director and Conductor

Dedicated to the memory of Michael Christian Krueger
for whom the Angels whisper—Sweet

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

John Muehleisen (2006)

Adagio tranquilo ♩ = 44

mp 2 3

Sopranos
Ex - per - ience, like a pale mu - si - cian, holds A

p

Altos
Ex - per - ience, like a pale mu - si - cian, holds A

p

Tenor
Ex - per - ience, like a pale mu - si - cian, holds A

p

Bass
Ex - per - ience, like a pale mu - si - cian, holds A

Adagio tranquilo ♩ = 44

p

Piano*

* for rehearsal only

4 (*mp*) div. as written----- 5 6

S dul-ci-mer of pa-tience in his hand, Whence har-mo-nies we can-not un-der-

A (*p*) div. as written-----

T (*p*) 8 dul-ci-mer of pa-tience in his hand, Whence har-mo-nies we can-not un-der-

B (*p*) dul-ci-mer of pa-tience in his hand, Whence har-mo-nies we can-not un-der-

Pno. (*p*)

7 *f* 8 *f* 9 10 11 *mp* 12 *f*

S stand, Of God's will in His worlds, the strain un-folds In

A stand, Of God's will in His worlds, the strain un-folds In

T stand, Of God's will in His worlds, the strain un-folds In

B stand, Of God's will in His worlds, the strain un-folds In

Pno. (*f*) (*mf*) (*f*)

With motion ♩ = 52

div. as written-----

div. as written-----

13 (*f*) 14 *ff* 15 *mf* // Moving forward ♩ = 60 17 *mf*

S sad, per-plex-ed mi-nors. Death-ly colds Fall on us

A sad, per-plex-ed mi-nors. Death-ly colds Fall on us

T sad, per-plex-ed mi-nors. Death-ly colds Fall on

B sad, per-plex-ed mi-nors. Death-ly colds Fall on

Pno. *f* *mf* *mf*

div. as written 18 19 *mp* 20 21 *f* *ff* 22

S while we hear and coun-ter-mand Our sanguine heart back from the fan-cy-land

A while we hear and coun-ter-mand Our sanguine heart back from the fan-cy-land

T us while we hear and coun-ter-mand Our sanguine heart back from the fan-cy-land

B us while we hear and coun-ter-mand Our sanguine heart back from the fan-cy-land

Pno. *mp* *f* *ff*

With night-in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with

f *mf*

23 24 25

S

A

T

B

Pno.

Text for S2 + A1: With night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in -

in vi - - - sion - ar - y

in vi - - - sion - ar - y

night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, Ah—

26 27

S

A

T

B

Pno.

gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in -

night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, Ah—

worlds. in vi - - - sion - ar - y

worlds. in vi - - - sion - ar - y

mf sempre senza espressione

32

S
'Where is an - y cer - tain tune

mf sempre senza espressione

A
'Where is an - y cer - tain tune

(mp)
T
8 We mur-mur, — We mur - mur, —

(mp)
T2
8 We mur-mur, — We mur - mur, —

(mp)
B
mur-mur, — We mur - mur, — We

(mp)
B2
We mur-mur, — We mur - mur, —

mf

Pno.
(mp)
8eo. 8eo. 8eo.

34 (mf) 35 2

S Or meas - ured mu - - - - sic, in such

A Or meas - ured mu - - - - sic, in such

T (mp) 8 We mur-mur, — We mur-mur, —

T2 (mp) 8 We mur-mur, — We mur-mur, —

B (mp) mur-mur, — We mur-mur, — We

B2 (mp) We mur - mur, — We mur-mur, —

Pno. (mf) (mp) 2

Lea. Lea. Lea. Lea.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score, page 7, containing measures 34 and 35. The score is for a vocal ensemble and piano. The vocal parts are Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass (B), and Bass 2 (B2). The piano part (Pno.) consists of two staves. The lyrics for measures 34 and 35 are: 'Or meas - ured mu - - - - sic, in such' for S and A; 'We mur-mur, —' for T, T2, B, and B2. The piano part has lyrics 'Lea.' under the bottom staff. Dynamics include *(mf)* and *(mp)*. Measure 35 has a first ending bracket with a '2' above it. The piano part has a first ending bracket with a '2' above it. The piano part has a first ending bracket with a '2' above it.

36 (mf) 37 38

S notes as these?—

A notes as these?—

T (mp) We mur-mur,— We mur-mur,—

T2 (mp) We mur-mur,— We mur-mur,—

B (mp) mur-mur,— We mur-mur,—

B2 (mp) We mur-mur,— We mur-mur,—

Pno. (mf) (mp)

8 8

Adagio tranquillo $\text{♩} = 44$

39 *mp* 40 41 42

S
But an - gels, lean - ing from the gold - en seat, Are not so mind - ed; — their

A
But an - gels, lean - ing from the gold - en seat, Are not so mind - ed; — their

T
But an - gels, — lean - ing from the gold - en seat, Are not so mind - ed; — their

B
But an - gels, lean - ing from the gold - en seat, Are not so mind - ed; — their

Adagio tranquillo $\text{♩} = 44$

Pno.

*

div. as written ————— *ff*

43 *cresc. poco a poco* 44 45 *f*

S
fine ear — hath won The is - sue of com - plet - ed ca - den - ces, — And,

A
fine ear — hath won The is - sue of com - plet - ed ca - den - ces, — And,

T
fine — ear — hath won The is - sue of com - plet - ed ca - den - ces, — And,

B
fine ear — hath won The is - sue of com - plet - ed ca - den - ces, — And,

Pno.

46 *mp* *subito* 47 *p* < > 48 *mp* *subito* 49 *p* < > *mp* div. as written -----

S
smil - ing down the stars, they whis - per— Sweet. they whis - per—

A
smil - ing down the stars, they whis - per— Sweet. they whis - per—

T
smil - ing down the stars, they whis - per— Sweet. they whis - per—

B
smil - ing down the stars, they whis - per— Sweet. they whis - per—

Pno.

50 *mf* 51 *mp* 52 *mp* 53 54 *p* 55

S
Sweet. they whis - per— Sweet. Sweet. Sweet. Sweet. Sweet.

A
Sweet. they whis - per— Sweet. Sweet. Sweet.

T
Sweet. they whis - per— Sweet. Sweet. Sweet.

B
Sweet. they whis - per— Sweet. Sweet. Sweet.

Pno.