**Portrait of Emily** consists of settings of five poems of Emily Dickinson for soprano and a chamber ensemble consisting of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, celesta, string quartet and double bass. The string parts allow for a string orchestra to replace the string quintet.

The five poems form a cycle of their own and deal with some of the subjects closest to Emily Dickinson's heart including nature, the awesomeness of death and eternity. The settings are framed by an instrumental Prologue and Epilogue. The Prologue draws one back in time to Amherst, Massachusetts, where Emily Dickinson spent her life; the Epilogue, a thematic continuation of the last song, portrays a drifting into eternity

The songs require a highly expressive and, at times, dramatic interpretation by the singer. The instrumental colours are varied; strings at times dominating, at other times the winds. The first song —"I'll tell you how the sun rose" —which follows the Amherst Prologue is haunted by the sounds of nature as represented on wind instruments, while the fourth song —"After great pain, a formal feeling comes"—is dominated by a despairing oboe obbligato. The central song —"The soul selects her own Society"—scored for soprano, strings and celesta, is suitably contrapuntal and imperious, with recurring baroque fanfares. The second song, a setting of the familiar "My life closed twice before its close", and the fifth song, a setting of the little known early poem "Exultation is the going of an inland soul to sea", are respectively anguished and ecstatic in mood.

Although each setting consists of its own material, ideas that are found in one song may recur in a varied form in another song, so helping to unify the cycle and reveal the composer's vision of the haunted mystical world of Emily Dickinson.

## **Portrait of Emily**

Opus 43

JOHN SIMON

#### **Amherst Prologue**







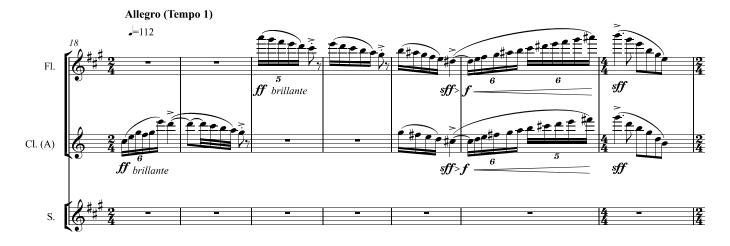






# 1

## I'll tell you how the Sun rose-

























2
My life closed twice before its close-











3
The Soul selects her own Society-













### After great pain, a formal feeling comes-

















### Exultation is the going of an inland soul to sea





















