THE PITY OF WAR

John Simon

THREE POEMS OF WILFRED OWEN FOR VOICE AND PIANO

1) FUTILITY

2) MENTAL CASES

3) ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH

Boosey & Hawkes
1

Futility

Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds,—
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,
Full-nerved—still warm—too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
—O what made fateful sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

2

Mental Cases

Who are these? Why sit they here in twilight?
Wherefore rock they, purgatorial shadows,
Drooping tongues from jaws that slob their relish,
Baring teeth that leer like skulls' teeth wicked?
Stroke on stroke of pain,—but what slow panic,
Gouged these chasms round their fretted sockets?
Ever from their hair and through their hands' palms
Misery swelters. Surely we have perished,
Sleeping, and walk hell; but who these hellish?

—These are men whose minds the Dead have ravished.
Memory fingers in their hair of murders,
Multitudinous murders they once witnessed.
Wading sloughs of flesh these helpless wander,
Treading blood from lungs that had loved laughter.
Always they must see these things and hear them,
Batter of guns and shatter of flying muscles,
Carnage incomparable, and human squander
Rucked too thick for these men's extrication.

Therefore still their eyeballs shrink tormentedly
Back into their brains, because on their sense
Sunlight seems a blood-smear; night comes blood-black:
Dawn breaks open like a wound that bleeds afresh.
—Thus their heads wear this hilarious, hideous,
Awful falseness of set-smiling corpses.
—Thus their hands are plucking at each other;
Picking at the rope-knots of their scourging;
Snatching after us who smote them, brother,
Pawing us who dealt them war and madness.

3

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmerings of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.
MENTAL CASES

Allegro \( d = 66 \)

Who are these? Why sit they here in

qui - light? When fire once stung, purging burning shadows, Droop - ping tongues from

ritardando

BOOSEY & HAWKES
allegro pp molto espress.

Memory fingers in their hair of

...

P largamente

murders—Multitudes murders they were witnessed.

...

P poco a poco più agitato cresc.

Wandering through flesh, these helpless wanderers.

...

mf

Trembling blood from those that had loved laughter.
Allegro

Un poco rit
molto espress.

Quasi un recitativo
Violento

PP express.

Un poco rit.

Kicked bow for these men's extremity.

PP express.

Allegro d = 66

Rushed

Boosey & Hawkes
P' dramatico

Tempo for slow the night passed back to their brains.

Sempre cresc.

Cause on their sense. Sunlight see a bright night comes black. Down breaks open.

molto cresc. ff

Like a wound that heals refreshed.

dim.

Andantino \( \text{j = 54} \)

Poco a poco più appassionato

cresc.

Thus their heads turn this hir-er-ious.
Sempre cresc.

Drammatico

Dolce

Nor any voice of mourning

Pianissimo

Sempre cresc.

And bu-gles call- ing

Senza Pad.

Cresc.

Quintet, 1942: Third Movement, Final Section

What candles may be held to speed them all?
appassionato

Not in the hands, but in their eyes shall shine the holy glamour.

P poco cresc.

flowers the tenderness —— PP

of silent minds, and each shadow a.

Poco rall. Lento

drawing down of blinds.