

On the Porch

for chorus, piano, and strings
(vocal score)

Commissioned by the Arlington Choral Society
in celebration of their 25th Anniversary Concert

by Jon Christopher Nelson

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text by Martha Elizabeth

On the Porch—Denton, Texas
by Martha Elizabeth

Let us live the slow way,
watching the light
while the rail-posts shadow us
with lengthening stripes.
The hours have their own momentum, a pace
logical as cloth.

Fossils from a local creek,
and stones from travels, unpolished.
Cowskull, cholla skeleton.
An oak stump, partly hollow,
where a glass leaves rings.

No more movement than to lift a wet glass.
Skin glossed with sweat.
Cool shininess
like a mirror glancing back at the sun.

Let us turn the rule of time
to pleasure, the hours
measured by design,
tailored for fulness.

Taillights blaze and dim
on the west horizon avenue.
A wasp returns to the stump and enters it,
filling the hole where the heart was,
making itself at home.

—1994

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Performance Notes

noteheads marked with ×= forced whisper

noteheads marked with ▽ or ▼ = lowest possible pitch

noteheads marked with △ or ▲ = highest possible pitch

parenthetical syllables provide a pronunciation reference and are not sung

Adagio (piano) *capriccioso* ♩ = 72

21

pf.

mp
red.

Andante ♩ = 90

cantabile mp

S

23

A

23

T

23

B

23

Let us live the slow way,

Let us live the slow way,

pf.

23

23

mf

red.

red.

27 *mf*

S watch-ing the light Let us live the

A watch-ing the light Let us live the

T *cantabile mp* watch-ing the light Let us live the

B *cantabile mp* watch-ing the light Let us live the

watch-ing the light Let us live the

27 (strings) *mp*

pf. watch-ing the light Let us live the

-----*

31 *semplce p*

S slow way, watch - ing the light

A slow way, *p semplce* watch - ing the light

T slow way, *p semplce* watch - ing the light

B slow way, *p semplce* watch - - - -

slow way, watch - - - -

31 *ppp*

pf. slow way, watch - - - -

34 *mp*

S while the rail - posts shad - ow us

A while the rail - posts shad - ow us *robusto mf* watch - ing the light

T *mp* ing shad - ow us *mf robusto* watch - - - ing the

B *mp* ing watch - ing the light

pf. (strings) *mp* *mf*

37

S

A while the rail - posts shad - ow us

T light while the rail - posts shad - ow us

B *robusto mf* rail - posts shad - ow us

pf. *espressivo* (strings) *mf*

espressivo

S
40 *f* watch - ing the light while the rail - posts shad - ow us

A
40 *f* *espressivo* watch - - - - ing the light while the rail - posts shad - ow us

T
40 *espressivo* watch - - - - ing the light shad - ow

B
40 *f* *espressivo* watch - - - - ing the light

pf.
40 *mf* (strings) *mf* (piano)

f *Red.* *f* *Red.*

Largo $\text{♩} = 50$

S
43 with length - - - en - ing stripes. length - *mp sereno*

A
43 with length - - - en - ing stripes. length - *mp sereno*

T
43 with length - - - en - ing stripes. length - *mp sereno*

B
43 us with length - - - en - ing stripes. length -

shad - ow us with length - - - en - ing stripes.

(*Sva*) ----- *maestoso*

pf.
43 *mf* *Red.*

46 *mf* *espressivo* *mf* *p* with *p* with *p*

S
A
T
B

The hours have their own mo - men - tum,

46 *tranzillo* *Sva* *p* *Red.* *Red.*

pf.

49 length - - - en - ing stripes. length - - - en - ing stripes. length - - - en - ing stripes. length - - - en - ing stripes.

S
A
T
B

a pace

49 *Sva* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

pf.

52

B

log - i - cal as cloth.

pp

52

pf.

52

Red.

Red.

Red.

56

58

8va

pf.

f

Red.

59

(8va)

59

ff

mf

Red.

Red.

Red.

f

Red.

mf

62

62

(strings)

3

pf.

Red.

Red.

Red.

f

Red.

65

pf. (strings)

68

pf.

71

Allegretto ♩ = 108

strepitoso

(piano) *S^{va}*

(piano) *mf*

pf.

(strings) *pizz.* *sfz*

74 (strings)

74

(piano) *S^{va}*

(strings) *f*

(piano) *S^{va}*

(strings) *mp*

(strings)

mf

pf.

S
A
T
B

77
77
77
77

Fos - - - sils
Fos - - - sils

pf.

(piano) (piano) (strings)

mf *ff* *mf*

mf

mf

mf

S
A
T
B

80 *secco* *f* *mf* *sfz*

Fos - sils Fos - (sil) - s Fos - sils

80 *f* *secco* *mf* *sfz* *mp*

Fos - sils Fos - (sil) - s Fos - sils

80 *secco* *mp* *mf*

from a (Fos) - sils

80 *secco* *mp* *mf*

from a (Fos) - sils

pf.

(piano) (strings) (piano) (strings)

mp *mp* *mp*

sfz *mp*

83 *mp* *mf*

S Fos - sils Fos -

A Fos - sils Fos - sils

T Fos - sils Fos - sils

B Fos - sils Fos - sils

pf. *mp* *mp* (piano) (strings) (piano) (strings)

86 *mf* *f*

S sils Fos-sils from a lo - cal creek,

A Fos - sils from a lo - cal creek,

T Fos-sils Fos - sils from a lo - cal creek,

B Fos-sils Fos-sils from a lo - cal creek,

pf. (piano) (strings) (piano) (strings) (piano) (strings)

misterioso
mf

S
89
Fos - - - - - sils

A
89
mf *misterioso*
Fos - - - - - sils

T
89
f
Fos - sils

B
89
Fos - sils

pf.
89
(piano) (strings)
f

S
92
mf

A
92
from **mf**
(Fos) - - - sils

T
92
from **mf**
(Fos) - - - sils
f

B
92
from
Fos - (sils) from a lo-cal creek,
f

Fos - sils Fos - (sils) from a lo-cal creek,

pf.
92

100 *mf*

S

A

T

B

lo - cal creek,

lo - cal creek,

lo - cal creek,

lo - cal creek, from a lo-cal creek,

and

and

and

pf.

102 *f*

S

A

T

B

stones

stones

and stones

stones

from

from

from

trav - - - els,

trav - - - els,

trav - - - els,

trav - - - els,

and stones from trav - - - els,

pf.

105 *mp*

S

A

T

B

105 *f*

pf.

108 *mf* *f* *ff* *3*

S

A

T

B

mf trav - els, *f* *f* *ff* *3* stones un - - pol - ished.

mf trav - els, and *f* *f* *ff* *3* stones un - - pol - ished.

mf trav - els, and *f* *f* *ff* *3* stones un - - pol - ished.

mf trav - els, and *f* *f* *ff* *3* stones un - - pol - ished.

108

pf.

110 *mf*

S stones from a lo cal creek,

A stones from a lo cal

T *mf* trav-els, trav-els,

B *mf* trav-els, creek,

110

pf.

113 *mf*

S stones from

A *mf* stones from

T *f* and

B *f* stones

113

pf.

116 *f* *mf*

S a lo-cal creek, un - - - -

A *mf* un - - - -

T *deciso mf* and stones

B *deciso mf* and stones

and stones

116

pf.

119 *f* *mp*

S - pol - ished. Cow -

A *f* - pol - ished. Cow *mp*

T *mp preciso* chol - la skel - e - ton. chol - la skel - e -

B *mp preciso* chol - la skel - e - ton. chol - la skel - e -

chol - la skel - e - ton. chol - la skel - e -

119

pf.

122

S
- - skull, _____ Cow - skull, _____

A
- - skull, _____ Cow - skull, _____

T
ton. chol-la skel - e-ton. chol-la skel - e-ton. chol-la skel - e-ton.

B
ton. chol-la skel - e-ton. chol-la skel - e-ton. chol-la skel - e-ton.

pf.

126

S
oak _____ stump, _____ oak

A
oak _____ stump, _____ oak

T
chol-la skel - e - ton. part - - - ly hol-low, part -

B
chol-la skel - e - ton. part - ly hollow, part - ly hol-low,

mf

mf

mf

mf

pf.

130

S stump, where a glass leaves

A stump, where a glass leaves

T ly hol-low, part - - - ly hol-low *f* part -

B part - ly hol-low, part - - ly hol-low,

pf.

133 *f* *impasto ff*

S rings. No more move - ment

A rings. *impasto ff* No more move - ment

T rings. *impasto ff* No more move - ment

B ly hol-low *f* *impasto ff* No more move - ment

part - ly hol-low No more move - ment

pf.

simily

137 *ardore*

S *ardore*

A *ardore*

T *ardore*

B *ardore*

than to lift a wet glass.

3

pf.

140 *mf*

S *mf*

A *mf*

T *mf*

B *mf*

140

140

pf.

148

S
ness like Cool shin-i-ness like a shin-i-ness like

A
Cool shin-i-ness Cool shin-i-ness like

T
like a

B
like a

pf.
148 (strings) *f* (piano) (strings) *mf* (strings)

150

S
a shin-i-ness like a mir - ror shin-i-ness like a mir - ror shin-i-

A
Cool shin-i-ness like Cool shin-i-ness like a

T
mir - - - - - ror

B
mir - - - - - ror

pf.
150 (strings) (piano) *sfz*

152

S
ness like a mir - ror shin - i - ness like a mir - ror glanc - ing glanc - ing

A
shin - i - ness like a shin - i - ness like a mir - ror shin - i - ness

T
152 *mf*

B
152 *mf*

pf.
(piano) (strings) *f* (strings) *sfz* (piano) *Sva* (strings) *mf* *ff*

154

S
glanc - ing glanc - ing back glanc - ing back glanc - ing back

A
like a mir - ror shin - i - ness like a mir - ror glanc - ing glanc - ing

T
154 *f* glanc - - - - - ing back at the

B
154 *f* glanc - ing back at the

pf.
(piano) (strings) *f* (piano) *Sva* (strings) *sfz* *mp*

156

S
glanc - ing back glanc - ing back
glanc-ing back at glanc-ing back at

A
glanc - ing glanc - ing back
glanc-ing back glanc-ing back glanc-ing

T
mf

B
sun.
156 *mf*

156

pf.
sun.
(piano) *sfz* *f* *mf* *f* *S^{va}*

158

S
glanc ing back at the sun. glanc - ing back

A
back glanc - ing back glanc - ing back

T
158 *p*

B
158 *p*

158

pf.
158 (strings) (piano) *mp* *mf* *S^{va}*

159

S
at the sun. glanc - ing back at the sun.

A
glanc - ing back back at the sun. back at the sun.

T
mf
glanc - ing back

B
mf
glanc - ing back at

pf.

(strings) *f* *ff* (piano) *sfz* *mf*

160 *f*

S
glanc - ing back at the sun. glanc - ing back at the

A
f
back at the sun. back at the sun. back at the sun. back

T
f
at the sun. glanc - ing

B
f
the sun. glanc - ing back at the sun.

pf.

(strings) *f* (piano) *sfz* (piano) *ff* (strings) *sfz*

161 *ff* *espressivo* *f*

S sun. glanc-ing back at the sun. Let us

A at the sun. glanc-ing back at the sun. Let us

T back at the sun.

B glanc-ing back at the sun.

161 *f* *fff* *ff*

pf.

Red. -----

163

S turn the rule of time to

A turn the rule of time to

T *espressivo* *f* Let us turn the rule of time to

B *espressivo* *f* Let us turn the rule of time to

turn the rule of time to

(strings) *espressivo*

163 *mf* *f*

pf.

167 *ff*

S
pleas - ure, Let us turn turn

A
pleas - ure, Let us turn turn

T
pleas - - - ure, Let us turn

B
pleas - ure, Let us turn

pf.
167 (piano) *mf*
(strings)
Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

171 *fff* *mf*

S
to pleas - ure, *mf*

A
to pleas - ure, *mf*

T
to pleas - ure, *f*

B
to pleas - ure, turn the

pf.
171 *ff* (piano) *f*
Red. Red. Red. Red. *

Calando *mp dolce* Andante *mf*

S
turn to pleas - - - ure, to pleas - - -

A
turn to pleas - - - ure, to pleas - - -

T
rule of time to pleas - - - ure, to pleas - - -

B
rule of time to pleas - - - ure, to pleas - - -

pf.
(strings) *mp*

Adagietto $\text{♩} = 72$

S
ure, - - -

A
ure, - - - *mp*

T
ure, - - - *p teneramente*

B
ure, - - - ah *p teneramente*

pf.
(piano) tranquillo *mp* *Red.* *p*

191 *mp* poco rit.

S

A *mp*
ah

T *mp*
ah

B *mp*
ah

pf.

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

194 a tempo

S

A

T

B

pf.

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

197

S

A

T *mp cantabile*
Tail - - - lights blaze _____ and _____ dim _____

B *mp cantabile*
Tail - lights blaze _____ and _____ dim _____

197

pf.

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

201

S

A *cantabile mp* on the west ho - ri - zon *mf*

T on the west ho - ri - - - zon

B on the west ho - ri - - - zon

201

pf.

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

205 *, pesante* *f*

S av - - - e - nue. av - e - nue.

A 205 *, pesante* *f*

av - - - e - nue. av - e - nue.

T 205 *mf* *, pesante* *f*

av - - - e - nue. av - e - nue.

B 205 *mf* *, pesante* *f*

av - - - e - nue. av - e - nue.

205

205

pf. *mf* *f*

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

209 *mp* poco rit. Adagio $\text{♩} = 60$

S *mp*

A *mp*

T *mp*

B *mp*

209

209 *mp* *p*

pf. *Red.*

212

S *cantabile mp*

A *cantabile mp*

T

B

A wasp re -

A wasp re -

212

pf.

Red.

215

S

A

T

B

turns to the stump and en - - - ters

turns to the stump and en - - - ters

215

pf.

Red.

Red.

Red.

219 *poco rit.* *mp*

S it, fill - - - ing the

A it, fill - - - ing the

T fill - - - ing the

B fill - - - ing the

219

pf.

Red. *Red.*

222 *poco rit.* *a tempo* *f*

S hole where the heart was,

A hole where the heart was,

T hole where the heart was,

B hole where the heart was,

222 (strings)

pf.

Red. (strings)

226 *tranquillo*
mp

S mak - ing it - self at home. at home.

A 226 *mp* *tranquillo*
mak - ing it - self at at home. at home.

T 226 *mp* *tranquillo*
mak - ing it - self at at home. at home. at home.

B 226 *mp* *tranquillo*
mak - ing it - self at at home. at home.

pf. 226 *mf* *mp*
dolce

231 *p* *pp* poco rit.

S home. home.

A 231 *p* *pp*
home. home.

T 231 *p* *pp*
home. home.

B 231 *p* *pp*
home. home.

pf. 231 *p*
(strings)
p *pp*

♩ = Largo ♩ = 50

238

S

A

T

B

238 *teneramente*

(strings)

dolce

pp

mf

pf.

244

mp

mf

3

3

f.

247

p

3

pp

(piano)

p ^{8_{ub}} _{red.}

f.