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PROGRAM NOTES

Either a male or female singer can perform this set. The poems are by the Indiana poet, James Whitcomb Riley (1849–1916). I took some liberties with his material as the songs evolved. None of the five poems were used exactly as they were written. Some verses were left out to make the storytelling more succinct. I also removed or tweaked an occasional line, and plucked out or replaced the odd word here and there. These are the things one sometimes does to make words and music sit well together. However, the intent, imagery, cadence, and the soulful message are all Riley's, and I have altered none of that.

As to performance, these songs should be performed in a continuous manner, with no pauses between songs (beyond a natural breath) so that one unfolds seamlessly into the next.

—Steven Mark Kohn, 2011

AVAILABLE EDITIONS

High Voice and Piano	8669
Medium Voice and Piano	8670

TEXTS

Vigil

Close the book and dim the light,
I shall read no more tonight.
I know you are not sleepy, dear.
I will not go, sit by me here.
In the darkness and the silence of the watch I keep,
something in your presence so soothes me,
as when I first felt your hand touch my brow.
I've no other wish than you should fold your eyelids now.
Think not of sigh or tear,
as if God were sitting here.

In the Dark

In the depths of midnight,
what fancies haunt the brain,
when even the sigh of the sleeper
sounds like a sob of pain.
The old clock down in the parlor,
like a sleepless mourner grieves.
And the seconds drip into the silence,
as the rain drips from the eaves.
And I think of the hands there
that signal the hours in the gloom,
and wonder what angel watchers wait
in my darkened room.
And I think of the smiling faces
that used to watch and wait,
till the click of the clock was answered
by the click of the opening gate.
They are not there now in the evening, no!
Nor morning, nor noon, not there!
Yet I know that they are waiting,
waiting for me somewhere.

A Dream

I dreamed I was a spider, a big fat hungry spider.
And my limbs were dangled as I watched three wretched
flies tangled in my web.
And their buzzing wings were strangled.
And I mocked them like a demon who delights to be a
demon for the sake of sin alone!
And I wove my laces 'round their terror-stricken faces till
I muffled every groan!
And I experienced a pleasure so intoxicating, that I drank
it in like wine!
And my soul engages that all through the ages, no other
spider has felt so divine.
And my victims were dying. They said "we are dying!"
Their earthly course had been run.
And the scene was so impressing, that I breathed a
special blessing,
and devoured them one by one.

At Dusk

Voices of the children seem
to come to us as from a dream
of some long-vanished yesterday
when we were young as they.

Lullaby

The maple strews the embers of its leaves
o'er the swallows nestled 'neath the eaves.
And the moody cricket falters in his cry
and the lid of night is falling o'er the sky, baby bye,
the lid of night is falling o'er the sky.
The rose is lying pallid by the cup
where the frosted lily folded up.
And the breezes through the garden gently sigh
o'er the sleeping blooms of summer where they lie, baby bye,
o'er the sleeping blooms of summer where they lie.
Yet, baby, oh my baby, for your sake,
this heart of mine is ever wide awake.
My love will never close a drowsy eye
till your own are wet above me when I die, baby bye,
till your own are wet above me when I die.

Lullabies and Dreams

for High Voice and Piano

James Whitcomb Riley (1849–1916)
Adapted by Steven Mark Kohn

Steven Mark Kohn

1. Vigil

With great delicacy, not too slowly ♩ = 58

Piano

The piano introduction consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a simple accompaniment. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 58. The piece begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. Pedal markings (*Ped.*) are placed below the first three measures, and a final marking says "with *Ped.* always".

4 *pp* tenderly

Close the book and dim the light, I shall read no more to -

Measures 4-6 of the vocal line. The lyrics are "Close the book and dim the light, I shall read no more to -". The piano accompaniment continues with a simple accompaniment. The dynamic is *pp* and the tempo is *tenderly*. Pedal markings (*Ped.*) are present below the piano accompaniment.

7

night. I know you are not sleep - y, dear. I will not go _____

pp very calmly and smoothly

Measures 7-9 of the vocal line. The lyrics are "night. I know you are not sleep - y, dear. I will not go _____". The piano accompaniment continues with a simple accompaniment. The dynamic is *pp* and the tempo is *very calmly and smoothly*. Pedal markings (*Ped.*) are present below the piano accompaniment.

10

— sit by me here. In the dark - ness and the si - lence of the

— \wedge *Ped.*

This system contains measures 10, 11, and 12. The vocal line starts with a whole note 'sit' in 2/4 time, followed by a half note 'by' and a quarter note 'me' in 2/4 time. At measure 11, the time signature changes to 4/4, and the lyrics 'here. In the dark - ness and the si - lence of the' are written. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 12, and the instruction 'Ped.' is written below the piano part.

13

watch I keep, some - thing in your pres - ence so soothes me,

This system contains measures 13, 14, and 15. The vocal line begins with a quarter note 'watch' and a half note 'I keep,' in 4/4 time. The lyrics 'some - thing in your pres - ence so soothes me,' follow. The piano accompaniment continues with a consistent eighth-note bass line and a melodic right-hand part. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 15.

16

as when I first felt your hand touch my brow.

rit. *a tempo*

rit. *a tempo*

This system contains measures 16, 17, and 18. The vocal line starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note 'as' and a half note 'when I first felt your hand touch my brow.' in 4/4 time. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line. Above the first measure, the instruction '*rit.*' is written, followed by a line and '*a tempo*'. A similar instruction is placed above the piano part at the start of measure 18. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 18.

2. In The Dark

James Whitcomb Riley (1849–1916)
Adapted by Steven Mark Kohn

Steven Mark Kohn

With quiet brooding intensity ♩ = 56 *pp*

In the depths of mid - night, _____ what

With quiet brooding intensity ♩ = 56 *pp* very smooth and dreamy

with Ped. throughout

4

fan - cies haunt the brain, _____ when e - ven the sigh of the sleep - er

7

sounds like a sob of pain. The old clock down in the

10

par - lor, like a sleep - less mourn - er grieves. ——— And the

13

sec - onds drip ——— in - to the si - lence, as the rain drips

16 *rit.*

A bit faster ♩ = 60

from the eaves. And I think of the hands there ——— that

rit. **A bit faster** ♩ = 60

building gradually

19

sig - nal the hours ——— in the gloom, ——— and won - der ——— what an - gel watch - ers wait

3. A Dream

James Whitcomb Riley (1849–1916)
Adapted by Steven Mark Kohn

Steven Mark Kohn

Freely, with sadistic playfulness **In tempo** ♩ = 108

f *mp*

I dreamed — I was a spi - der, a big fat hun - gry

Freely, with sadistic playfulness **In tempo** ♩ = 108

f *mp*

spi - der. And my limbs were dan - gled as I watched three wretch - ed flies — tan - gled in my

4

sfz

8

p sub. *molto*, *p spoken freely* *contented sigh*, *pp*

web. And their buzz - ing wings were strangled. And I

pp sub. *molto* *p*

12 **A bit slower**

accel. poco a poco

mocked them like a de - mon who de - lights to be a de - mon for the sake of sin

A bit slower *accel. poco a poco*

pp *sfz*

15

mp sub.

a - lone! And I wove my lac - es 'round their ter - ror strick - en fac - es till I

mp sub.

18

f

rit. molto

a tempo

muf - fled ev - ery groan!

rit. molto *a tempo*

f *ff* *mp*

23

rit. poco

p

And I experienced... a

rit. poco

p very calmly

4. At Dusk

James Whitcomb Riley (1849–1916)
Adapted by Steven Mark Kohn

Steven Mark Kohn

Delicately, as at first ♩ = 58 *p*

Voic - es of the chil - dren seem to

Delicately, as at first ♩ = 58

mf *p*

with *Ped.*

4

come to us as from a dream of some long - van - ished yes - ter - day

pp very calmly and smoothly

Ped.

7

Slowly, freely **In tempo** ♩ = 54

when we were young as they.

Slowly, freely **In tempo** ♩ = 54

pp

with *Ped.* **segue**

5. Lullaby

James Whitcomb Riley (1849–1916)
Adapted by Steven Mark Kohn

Steven Mark Kohn

Very misty and tranquil, not too slow ♩ = 54 *rit.* *a tempo* *pp*

The ma - ple strews the

Very misty and tranquil, not too slow ♩ = 54 *rit.* *a tempo* *legato sempre*

mp *pp*

with Ped throughout

4

em - bers of its leaves o'er the swal - lows nes - tled 'neath the

7

eaves. And the mood - y crick - et fal - ters in his cry and the

10

più p

lid of night is fall - ing o'er the sky, ba - by bye, the

più p

12

rit. *a tempo*

lid of night is fall - ing o'er the sky.

rit. *a tempo*

15

mp

The rose is ly - ing pal - lid by the cup where — the frost - ed

mp

18

lil - y fold - ed up. And the breez - es through the gar - den gent - ly