THE LIGHTS HAVE DIMMED (aría for Bass)

from

THE GOLDEN GATE

opera in two acts

music by CONRAD CUMMINGS

libretto from the novel-in-verse by VIKRAM SETH adapted by the composer



Composer's Note

Vikram Seth's best-selling novel-in-verse about love and loss in San Francisco in the 1980's, "The Golden Gate," touches on all the nostalgia I feel for my home town and reminds me acutely of the adventures of my younger life. Boys with girls, boys with boys, it's all there, along with the exhilaration and the heartbreak. Seth's verse makes these experiences sing; I've tried to capture in music their unique mixture of pathos and humor.

Feel Free to Contact Me

Singers and pianists should feel free to contact me at conrad@conradcummings.com with any questions, reactions, or thoughts. I am always open to suggestions about customizing the vocal line to best suit your voice.

Synopsis

Five twenty-somethings experience love, life, and loss in the magical and innocent San Francisco of the early 1980's. JOHN BROWN (baritone), handsome and successful, will discover too late the price of his emotional detachment. He meets LIZ DORATI (soprano) through a personals ad placed by his former college girlfriend JANET HAYAKAWA (mezzo), a sculptor and punk rock drummer. Meanwhile, John's best friend from college PHILIP WEISS (bass), reeling from a divorce which has left him the single parent of six-year-old PAUL WEISS (spoken role), begins a passionate relationship with ED DORATI (tenor), Liz's younger brother. Couples come apart; new couples form, families are created, friendships are severed. A tragic death leads John, always the outsider, to the promise of a deeper connection and a warmer life.

Where the Aria Comes in the Opera

Phil's six-year-old son Paul weeps unconsolably at the mention of his mom, Phil's exwife. A week later, Phil and Paul attend a string quartet concert at Stanford, where both find consolation in the Brahms A Minor quartet.

PHIL:

The lights have dimmed. Now they're returning. Throats clear. Brahms' A Minor begins.

The brisk allegro. Then a yearning

Warm ductile length of lyric spins

It's lovely glimmering thread at leisure

Inveiglingly from measure to measure

With a continuous tenderness

So deep it smooths out all distress,

All sorrow; ravishing, beguiling . . .

And on and on till silence comes.

Paul whispers, "That's the tune Mom hums!"

Phil's eyes are closed, but Paul is smiling,

Floating on a slow tide of Brahms,

Back in his absent mother's arms.

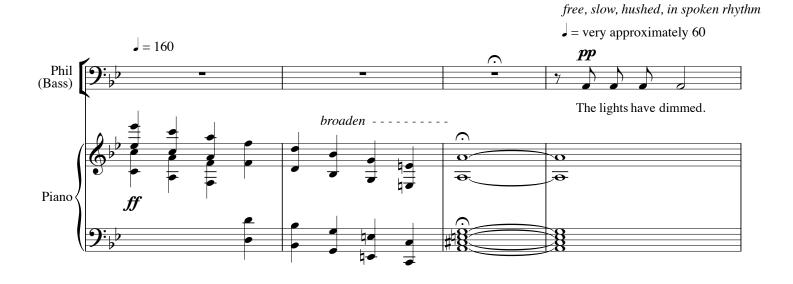
[—] from Vikram Seth's novel-in-verse "The Golden Gate," Chapter 3, Verse 37

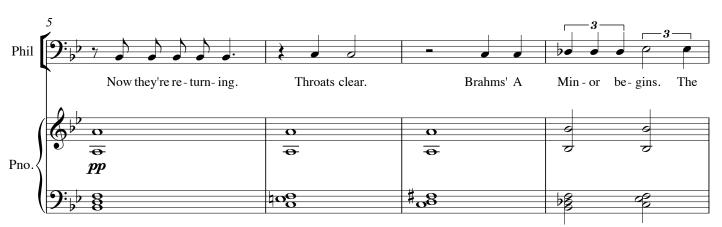
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version 6/28/15

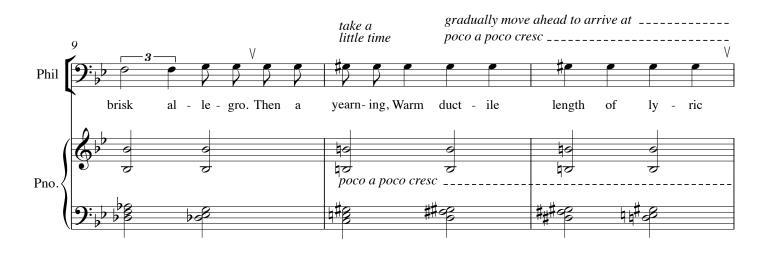
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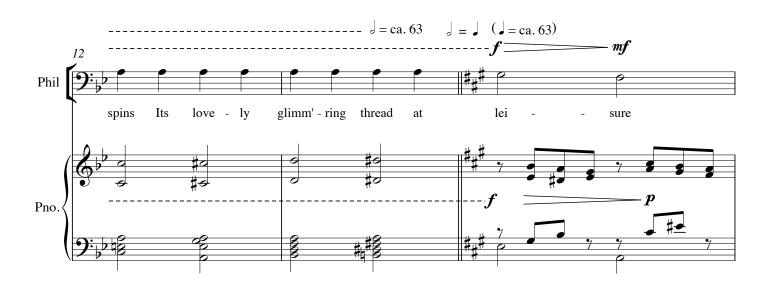
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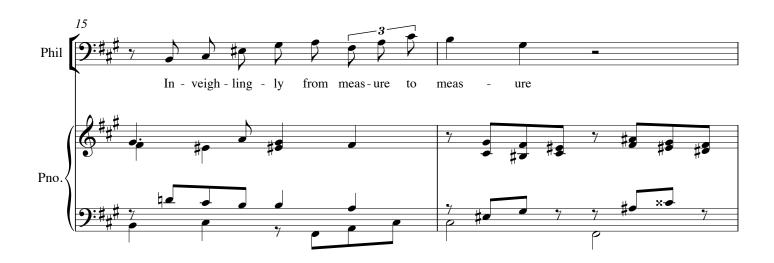




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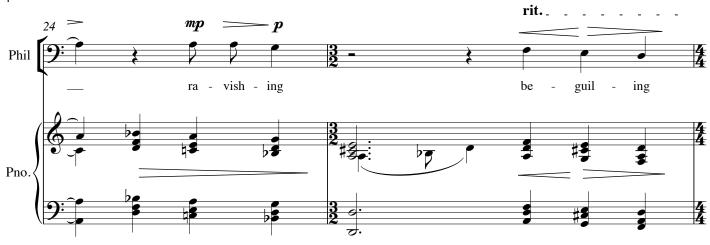




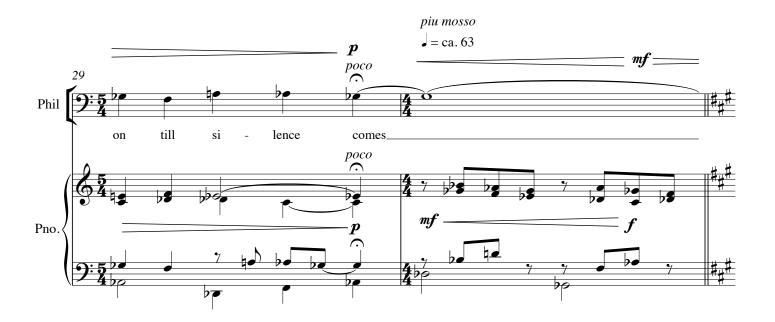




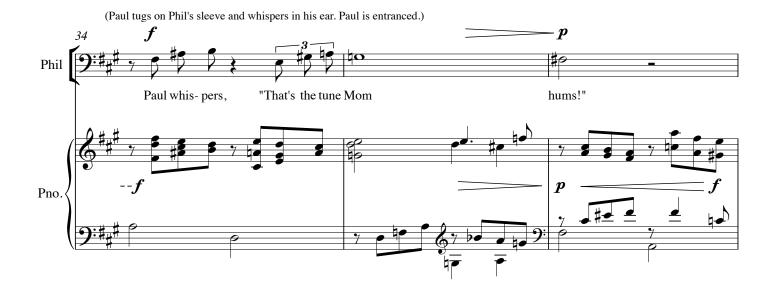




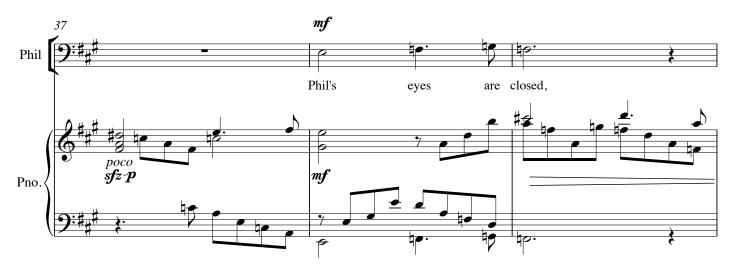








(Phil turns away so Paul can't see that he's crying.)



(Phil's attention is back to Paul.)

