

THE LIGHTS HAVE DIMMED  
(aria 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](mailto: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 ex-wife. 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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*free, slow, hushed, in spoken rhythm*

♩ = very approximately 60

♩ = 160

Phil (Bass)

*pp*

*broaden* -----

The lights have dimmed.

Piano

*ff*

5

Phil

Now they're re - turn - ing.      Throats clear.      Brahms' A      Min - or be - gins.      The

Pno.

*pp*

9 *take a little time* *gradually move ahead to arrive at* -----  
*poco a poco cresc* -----

Phil *brisk al - le - gro. Then a yearn - ing, Warm duct - ile length of ly - ric*

Pno. *poco a poco cresc*

12  $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 63$   $\text{♩} = \text{♩} (\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 63)$

Phil *spins Its love - ly glimm' - ring thread at lei - - sure*

Pno. *f* *mf* *f* *p*

15

Phil *In - veigh - ling - ly from meas - ure to meas - ure*

Pno.



17

Phil *With a con - tin - u - ous ten - der - ness* \_\_\_\_\_ *so deep it smoothes out* \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

almost half tempo

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 72$

**accel.** . . . . .

19

Phil *all dis - tress* \_\_\_\_\_ *till si - lence comes* \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

*poco pp*

*poco p*

*poco pp*

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 60$  **rit.** . . . . .

**f**  $\rightrightarrows$  **p**

tempo primo

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 63$

21

Phil *All sor - row;* \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

**f**  $\rightrightarrows$  **p**

**p**

24 *mp* *p* *rit.*

Phil ra - vish - ing be - guil - ing

Pno.

26 ♩ = ca. 50 *mf*

Phil And on and

Pno. *pp* *mf*

29 *p* *poco* *mf*

Phil on till si - lence comes

Pno. *p* *mf* *f*

*piu mosso*  
♩ = ca. 63

31 *p*

Phil

Pno.

*p* *cresc.*

(Paul tugs on Phil's sleeve and whispers in his ear. Paul is entranced.)

34 *f* *p*

Phil

Paul whis- pers, "That's the tune Mom hums!"

Pno.

*--f* *p* *f*

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

37 *mf*

Phil

Phil's eyes are closed,

Pno.

*poco sfz p* *mf*

(Phil's attention is back to Paul.)

40 *p*

Phil

but Paul is smil - ing,

Pno. *> p*

*muted, soft, far away,  
sotto voce*

43 *pp* *V* *rit. . . . .*

Phil

Float - - - ing on a slow

*muted, soft, far away*

Pno. *> pp*

*♩ = ca. 46*

*♩ = ca. 63*

*a tempo*

*ppp hushed, sotto voce*

46 *V*

Phil

tide of Brahms

*hushed, sotto voce*

Pno. *ppp*

49

*poco rit.*

*a tempo* ♩ = 63

*pp*

Pno.

53

*molto accel.*

*cresc.*

8<sup>va</sup>

Pno.

55 (8)

*f* *cresc.*

♩ = 120

Pno.

**molto rit.** . . . . . ♩ = ca. 40

57 (8)

Pno.

*ff* *pp* *ppp*

59 *pp* **accel.** . . . . . *cresc.* . . . . .

ossia

Back in his ab - sent moth - er's

*pp* **accel.** . . . . . *cresc.* . . . . .

Phil

Back in his ab - sent moth - er's

Pno.

*pp* *molto cresc.* . . . . .

61

ossia

*f* *p*

arms

broaden

A tempo

*f* *p*

Phil

arms

broaden

A tempo

Pno.

*ff* *p*

3

63

Pno.

*pp*