

Space, in Chains

A song cycle for soprano (or mezzo) and viola

JESSICA MEYER

Space, in Chains

for soprano (or mezzo) and viola 8'

Music: Jessica Meyer (b. 1974)

Text: Laura Kasischke (used with permission)

Vocal Range: A3 to B6

“Space, in Chains” is a set of three songs using the text of acclaimed poet Laura Kasischke. Her poetry is a series of abstract, yet vivid, episodes that paints a surrealist portrait of everyday suburban life and these three particular poems address loss in very different ways. My deepest thanks to Melissa Wimbish for making these come alive during her Carnegie Hall debut in October of 2016.

TEXT

Space, in Chains

Things that are beautiful, and die. Things that fall asleep in the afternoon, in sun.
 Things that laugh, then cover their mouths, ashamed of their teeth.
 A strong man pouring coffee into a cup.
 His hands shake, it spills. His wife falls to her knees when the telephone rings. *Hello? Goddammit, hello?*

Where is their child?

Hamster, tulips, love, gigantic squid. *To live.* I'm not endorsing it.

Any single, transcriptional event. The chromosomes of the roses. Flagella, cilia, all the filaments of touching, of feeling, of running your little hand hopelessly along the bricks. Sky, stamped into flesh, bending over the sink to drink the *tour de force* of water.

It's all space, in chains—the chaos of birdsong after a rainstorm, the steam rising off the asphalt, a small boy in boots opening the back door, stepping out, and someone calling him from the kitchen,

Sweetie, don't be gone too long.

Rain

The sun, made of water, like all the secrets made of tongues—
 it falls all night, and in the morning
 the flames have been put out

and the stones, bewitched, can see:

The lost hours, and into the past.
 The memories of infants, of cats, of other stones—that they have souls. That they are souls.
 And the terror of foxes.
 And the children's hospital. And the hangman's alarm clock. And the official on the doorstep.

And all the embezzled
 cents and dollars
 of the last time I saw you.

O elegant giant

These difficult matters of grace and scale:
 The way music, our savior, is the marriage of math and antisocial behavior.
 Like this woman with a bucket in the morning gathering gorgeous oxymora on the shore...

And my wildly troubled love for you, which labored gently in the garden all through June,
 then tore the flowers up with its fists in July.

Which set a place for you next to mine—the fork beside the spoon beside the knife (the linen napkin, and the centerpiece: a blue beheaded blossom floating in a bowl)—and even the red weight of my best efforts poured into your glass as a dark wine before I tossed the table onto its side.

Just another perfect night. Beyond destruction, and utterly unlikely, how someone might have managed, blindly,
 to stumble on such a love in the middle of her life.

O elegant giant.

While, outside, the woods are silent.
 And overhead, not a single intelligent star in the sky.

Space, in Chains

LAURA KASISCHKE

JESSICA MEYER

♩ = 70 Awestruck *Slightly slower* *p* *a tempo* *Slightly slower*

Soprano: Things that are beau-ti-ful_ // Things that are beau-ti-ful_ and_

Viola: *f* *mp* tremolo between harmonic and closed note // *f* *mp* tremolo between harmonic and open strings

5 *a tempo* *rit...* *pp* *a tempo* *mp* *f* *mp*

S. die. Things that fall a-sleep in the af-ter-noon, in sun. Things that laugh, then cov-er their mouths! a-

Vla. *pizz.* *arco* *gliss.*

8 *accel...* *rit...* *p*

S. shamed of their teeth_ a -shamed of their teeth. A strong man_ pour-ing cof-fee in-to a cup, his

Vla.

11 *accel...* *p* *f*

S. ha - - - nds shake_ it spills, his wife falls to her knees when the te-le-phon-e rings hel-lo-hel- lo!?

Vla.

13 *rit.....* **♩ = 60** *mp* pronounced "laaahve"

S. _ god-dam-mit hel - lo?! Where is their child? Ham-ster, tu-lips, love_ gi-gan-tic squid... to live!

Vla. *ff* *p* *slow down tremolo gradually*

18 *ff* spoken off-handedly
after a pause $\text{♩} = 70$ *pp*

S. I'm not endorsing it... An-y sin-gle tran-scrip-tion-al e-vent

Vla. *ff* *mp*

22 $\text{♩} = 60$

S. floating and delicate.....start slowly and repeat figure until voice is ready to come in The

Vla. *p* 6 6 6 6 6

23 *mp*

S. chro - mo - sones of Ro - - - ses. Fla - -

Vla. 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

24 *pp*

S. gel - la ci - li - a all the fil - a - ments of

Vla. 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

25

S. touch - ing of feel - - - ing, of

Vla. 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

26

S. run - ning your lit - tle hand hope - less - ly a

Vla. 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

27

S. long the bricks

Vla.

28

S. Sky - - - stamped in - to

Vla. *f*

29

S. flesh - - - ben - ding ov - er the

Vla.

30

S. sink to drink - - - the tour de force of

Vla.

31

S. wa - - - ter

Vla.

repeat gesture a few more times and fade while gradually sul pont & rit.

p

32 *p* *poco a poco cresc.....*

S. It's all space, in chains — the cha - os of bird-song af - ter the rain - storm, the

Vla. *p* *mf* sul pont...whistle tone harmonics

36 *moving forward...* *pulling back... mf*

S. steam ris - ing off the as - phalt, a small boy in boots op - en - ing the back - door, step - ping out, and some - one

Vla. *ff*

39 *unwinding...* *rit...* *pp*

S. cal - ling to him — from the kitch - en, Sweet - ie — don't be gone too long.

Vla. *mp*

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FOR PERUSAL ONLY

Performance materials must be purchased via www.jessicameyermusic.com

Rain

♩ = 60 Chant-like

1 *pp*

S.

The sun, made of wa-ter, like all the se-crets made of tongues it falls all night and in the

Vla.

Fingers tap the viola like droplets of rain...
slow, then getting faster -
singer comes in when rain is established.

7 *p* *pp*

S.

morn-ing the flames have been put out and the stones be-witched, can see:

Vla.

12 *mp*

S.

The lost hou-rs, and in to the past The

Vla.

16

S.

mem-or-ies of in-fants, of cats, of o-ther stones that they have souls. That they are

Vla.

20 *More agitated* *poco a poco cresc & accel.....*

S. souls. And the ter-ror__ of fox-es. And the chil-dren's hos-pit-al And the

Vla. *L.H. open A* *L.H. open A* (still pizz...like a mandolin would sound) *gliss.* *gliss.* *mf* *fp* *poco a poco cresc.....* (then cross to upper strings)

25 *ff* *p* *♩ = 60 Floating and fragile*

S. hang-man's a-larm clock. And the o-ffic-ical on__ the door-step. And all the em-bez-zeled_____

Vla. *poco a poco cresc.....* *gliss.* *gliss.* *fff* *mp* 3 3

pizz. gradually slows down and becomes more violent

30 *pp*

S. cents and dol-lars of the last

Vla. 3 3 *p* 3

33 *rit...slower and slower until the end*

S. *gliss.* time I saw you_____

Vla. 3 3 3 3 *very slow*

pp

O elegant giant

1 $\text{♩} = 145$ **Agitated**

S.

Vla. *arco*
mp

6
S.

Vla.
mf

10
S.

Vla.
f

14 *slightly out of time*
S. *p* 3 *mp*
These dif-fi-cult mat-ters of grace and scale: The way mus-ic, our

Vla. *ff* *tr* *pp* *sul pont* *tr*

21 *a tempo*
S. *f* *mp* 3 *p*
sav-ior, is the mar-riage of math and an-ti soc-ial be-hav-ior. Like this wo-man with a buck-et

Vla. *f* *tr* L.H. pizz. reg. pizz. arco ord. *mp* (*mf*) 6:4 6:4 6:4

27
S. in the mor-ning ga-thering gor-geous ox-y-mo-ra on the shore

Vla.
6:4 6:4 6:4 6:4 6:4 6:4 6:4 6:4 6:4

♩ = 66 **Passionate tango**

31

S. *f* and my wild-ly troub-led

Vla. *rit...* *ff* *mf* *gliss.*

35

S. *mp* love for you, which la-bored gent-ly in the gar-den all through June, then tore the flow-ers up with its fists in Ju-
pronounced "laahve"

Vla. *mp* *rit...* *f* *gliss.* *gliss.* sul pont

39

S. *ff* *breathless* *p* ly. Which set a place for you next to mine, the fork be-side the

Vla. *p* *ff* *mf* *pizz.*

43

S. spoon be-side the knife (the li-nen nap-kin, and the cen-ter - piece: a blue be headed blos-som

Vla. *3:2*

46

S. *mf* float ing in a bowl) ev-en the red weight of my best ef-forts poured in-to your glass as a dark wine be-

Vla. *f* *richochet arco* *trem.* *III* *II* *measured 32nds* *gliss up G string while playing open D*

50

S. fore I tossed the ta - ble on to its side.

Vla. *III II I II sim.* *III II I II sim.* *III* *6:4*

♩ = 66 Demented Tango

53 *ff*

S. *ff*
Just an-oth-er per - fect night. Be - yond destruc-tion, and ut-ter ly un like-ly how

Vla. *fff* *gliss.* *gliss.*

57 *ff*

S. *ff*
some one might have man-aged, blind - ly to stum-ble on such a love in the mid dle of her life. *O el-e-gant_*

Vla. *mf* *fff* *3*
play tremolo rhythms slow/fast/slow

61 *♩ = 150 Agitated*

S. *gi - ant*

Vla. *ff* *4:3* *3:2* *3:2* *3:2* *3:2*

66

S.

Vla. *4:3* *3:2* *3:2* *3:2* *3:2*

Recit-like...allow time between gestures

70 *pp sotto voce*

S. *pp*
While, out-side the woods are si - lent. And, ov - er - head_

Vla. *pp*

74 *rit....* *a tempo*

S. *gliss.*
not a sin-gle in-tel - li - gent star in the sky.

Vla. *sul pont* *n*

Montauk, August 8th, 2016