

Program Notes

Walter de la Mare's poem "Mistletoe" was first published in 1913, and remains popular today. His poetry frequently references the supernatural. The scene of this poem is someone sitting alone at Christmas time in a room under mistletoe. It is nighttime, as there is "one last candle burning low." The narrator is tired and lonely, and somehow, mysteriously, the narrator receives a kiss from an angel or spirit. The message of the poem is that at Christmas time, there is love for everyone, even if we cannot see it. In ancient British cultures, mistletoe was thought to bring good luck. My musical setting is at turns mysterious, eerie, and joyful, as the narrator gratefully receives the good fortune of this mysterious "kiss."

Adam Christensen's poem "The Harper's Song" imagines the music of harps warming the winter's night. The music features a modally inflected melody evocative of English folk-music, accompanied by the piano which imitates the arpeggiations of a harp.

I. Mistletoe

Sitting under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
One last candle burning low,
All the sleepy dancers gone,
Just one candle burning on,
Shadows lurking everywhere:
Some one came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go
Nodding under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,
Stooped in the still and shadowy air
Lips unseen—and kissed me there.

Walter de la Mare (1873–1956)

II. The Harper's Song

When harpers once in wooden hall
A shining chord did strike,
Their songs like arrows pierced the soul
Of great and low alike.

Aglow by hearth and candle flame
From burning branch or ember,
The mist of all their music sang,
As if to ask in wonder:

Is there a moment quite as keen
Or memory as bright
As light and fire and music sweet
To warm the winter's night?

Adam Christensen (b. 1951–2021)

Available editions

Mistletoe

Choral Score	9156
Cello Part	9156A

The Harper's Song

Choral Score	9157
Cello Part	9157A

Two Winter Scenes

Piano/Vocal Solo Score	9169
-------------------------------	-------------

Composed for the annual "Deck the Halls" Christmas concert,
Los Angeles Philharmonic, for Lisa Thelen, soprano, and David Higgs, organist

Two Winter Scenes

I. Mistletoe

for High Voice, Violoncello, and Piano

Walter de la Mare
(1873–1956)

David Conte (b. 1955)

Moderately ♩ = 126

vaguely mysterious, always buoyant

poco rit.

a tempo

(3+3+2)

Score for the first system, measures 1-4. The Voice part is a whole rest. The Violoncello part begins in measure 3 with a *p* dynamic and an *arco* marking. The Piano part begins in measure 3 with a *p* dynamic. The time signature changes from 3/8 to 3/4 in measure 3.

Moderately ♩ = 126

vaguely mysterious, always buoyant

poco rit.

a tempo

(3+3+2)

Score for the second system, measures 5-8. The Piano part continues with a *mp* dynamic in measure 5 and a *p* dynamic in measure 6. The Violoncello part continues with a *p* dynamic. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 3/8 in measure 6.

Vocal line starting at measure 5 with lyrics: "Sit - ting un - der the mis - tle - toe (Pale - green, fair - y". The dynamic is *mp*.

Violoncello accompaniment for measures 5-8, with a *p* dynamic.

Piano accompaniment for measures 5-8, with a *p* dynamic. A *Sva* marking is present above the staff in measure 7.

21

poco rit.

lurk - ing ev - 'ry - where:

poco rit.

8va

25

Just a bit slower ♩ = 116

poco rit.

Tempo I ♩ = 126

mp

Some - one came, and kissed me there.

arco

p

Just a bit slower ♩ = 116

poco rit.

Tempo I ♩ = 126

pp

8va

pp

p

29

poco rit. a tempo

mp

mf

p

poco rit. a tempo

54

ff *f* *rit.*

Lips un - seen and kissed me

cresc. *ff* *p*

cresc. *ff* *rit.*

58 **Just slightly slower than Tempo I** ♩ = 120 *poco rit.*

mp *p* (3+3+2)

there,

p *mp*

Just slightly slower than Tempo I ♩ = 120 (3+3+2) *poco rit.*

p *cresc.* *mp* *dim.*

61 **Still a bit slower** ♩ = 116 *p* *molto rit.*

and kissed me there.

p *p* *pp*

Still a bit slower ♩ = 116 *molto rit.*

p *pp*

for Hailey Gutowski, soprano; Emil Miland, cello; and Kevin Korth, piano

II. The Harper's Song

for High Voice, Violoncello, and Piano, or Harp*

Adam Christensen
(1951–2021)

Larghetto espressivo ♩ = 60

Violoncello

Larghetto espressivo ♩ = 60

Piano
(or Harp)

p

D C B♭ | E♭ F G A

red. * *red.* *

Just a bit faster ♩ = 66

mp *mf* *mp*

Just a bit faster ♩ = 66

mp *p* *r.h.* *l.h.*

mp *Ab*

molto rit. **Tempo I** ♩ = 60 *mp*

When

molto rit. **Tempo I** ♩ = 60 *mf*

l.h. *r.h.* *E♭ A♭*

Text: © Adam Christensen; used by permission.

*Harpists may choose to leave out octave duplications and play at a slightly slower tempo to avoid string buzzes.

11

mf

harp-ers once in wood-en hall a shin - ing chord did strike,

p *pp* *mf*

p *cresc.* *E_b* *mf*

15

p *mf*

— Their— songs like— ar—rows pierced the soul Of great and— low a -

mp *mp* *mp* *mp*

E_b *F#* *F#* *E_b*

19

p *mp* *molto rit.*

like, Of great and— low a -

mf *mp* *pp* *molto rit.*

B_b *mf* *l.h.* *mp* *D_b | A_b*

43 **Broader** ♩ = 54 **L'istesso tempo** (♩ = 54) **ff**

ff **L'istesso tempo** (♩ = 54) **p**

Broader ♩ = 54 **L'istesso tempo** (♩ = 54) **ff**

47 **mp** **poco rit.** **p** **l.h.** **r.h.** **poco rit.**

51 **A bit slower** ♩ = 52, *freely, like a recitative* **unis. mp** **poco accel.**

Is — there a — mo — ment quite as keen Or mem — o — ry as —

A bit slower ♩ = 52, *freely, like a recitative* **poco accel.**

molto rit.

Just a bit slower than Tempo I ♩ = 54

63

warm the win - ter's night,

mp *pp* *p*

molto rit.

Just a bit slower than Tempo I ♩ = 54

mp *p*

Red.

67

the win - ter's night.

mp *p* *pp*

Red. *pp*

Red.