

NOTES

An Earth to Walk Upon was commissioned by baritone Michael Anthony McGee. Having known Michael for almost a decade, I was aware of his extraordinary gifts and wanted very much to create a piece that would show off his great artistry. I had admired the work of Dana Gioia, as both a poet and librettist, for some time and had set his poem *Insomnia* in 2009. Dana is a music lover, and it shows in the rhythm, passion, and lyricism of his writing. All of his poems sing. *An Earth to Walk Upon* was premiered by Michael Anthony McGee and the brilliant pianist Liza Stepanova at the University of North Texas in the autumn of 2017.

The five songs that make up *Drifts & Shadows* were excerpted from the vocal chamber work *Secrets*. The latter piece is a collection of 15 solos, duets, and trios – all settings of poems by Linda Pastan. Because vocal trios are in rather short supply, revising some of the songs and offering them as a cycle for solo baritone seemed an eminently practical notion. In their dreamlike imagery and wintry allusions, Linda Pastan's evocative poems were a particularly rich inspiration. *Secrets* was commissioned by the Mirror Visions Ensemble, a group that I treasure as much for their friendship as I do for their great artistry. *Drifts & Shadows* is dedicated to soprano Tobé Malawista, tenor Scott Murphree, and baritone Richard Lalli.

A *Clear Midnight* is excerpted from *Insomnia*, a ten-movement, thirty-minute piece for four voices (soprano, mezzo, tenor, baritone) and piano. The song was premiered in 2009 at Songfest. *Insomnia* is dedicated to Rosemary Hyler Ritter.

The composer would like to thank the Corporation of Yaddo and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the sites where most of the songs were written.

—Tom Cipullo
April 11, 2020

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TEXTS

An Earth to Walk Upon

Dana Gioia

1. Rough Country

Give me a landscape made of obstacles,
of steep hills and jutting glacial rock,
where the low-running streams are quick to flood
the grassy fields and bottomlands.

A place
no engineers can master—where the roads
must twist like tendrils up the mountainside
on narrow cliffs where boulders block the way.
Where tall black trunks of lightning-scalded pine
push through the tangled woods to make a roost
for hawks and swarming crows.
And sharp inclines
where twisting through the thorn-thick underbrush,
scratched and exhausted, one turns suddenly
to find an unexpected waterfall,
not half a mile from the nearest road,
a spot so hard to reach that no one comes—
a hiding place, a shrine for dragonflies
and nesting jays, a sign that there is still
one piece of property that won't be owned.

2. Prayer at Winter Solstice

Blessed is the road that keeps us homeless.
Blessed is the mountain that blocks our way.

Blessed are hunger and thirst, loneliness and all forms of desire.
Blessed is the labor that exhausts us without end.

Blessed are the night and the darkness that blinds us.
Blessed is the cold that teaches us to feel.

Blessed are the cat, the child, the cricket, and the crow.
Blessed is the hawk devouring the hare.

Blessed are the saint and the sinner who redeem each other.
Blessed are the dead, calm in their perfection.

Blessed is the pain that humbles us.
Blessed is the distance that bars our joy.

Blessed is this shortest day that makes us long for light.
Blessed is the love that in losing we discover.

3. Unsaid

So much of what we live goes on inside—
The diaries of grief, the tongue-tied aches
Of unacknowledged love are no less real
For having passed unsaid. What we conceal
Is always more than what we dare confide.
Think of the letters that we write our dead.

4. Progress Report

It's time to admit I'm irresponsible.
I lack ambition. I get nothing done.
I spend the morning walking up the fire road.
I know every tree along the ridge.
Reaching the end, I turn around. There's no point
to my pilgrimage except the coming and the going.

Then I sit and listen to the woodpecker
tapping away. He works too hard.

Tonight I will go out to watch the moon rise.
If only I could move that slowly.

I have no plans. No one visits me.
No need to change my clothes.

What a blessing just to sit still—
a luxury only the lazy can afford.

Let the dusk settle on my desk.
No one needs to hear from me today.

5. Money

Money is a kind of poetry.—Wallace Stevens

Money, the long green,
cash, stash, rhino, jack
or just plain dough

Chock it up, fork it over,
shell it out. Watch it
burn holes through pockets.

To be made of it! To have it
to burn! Greenbacks, double eagles,
megabucks and Ginnie Maes.

It greases the palm, feathers a nest,
holds heads above water,
makes both ends meet.

Money breeds money.
Gathering interest, compounding daily.
Always in circulation.

Money. You don't know where it's
been,
but you put it where your mouth is.
And it talks.

6. A Curse on Geographers

We want an earth to walk upon,
Not reasons to remain at home.
Shall we make journeys only to see
The same stars circling in the night?
Eat the same fish in foreign harbors?
Breathe the same air? Sail across
These oceans only to discover
Our own island's other shore?

Let the oceans spill their green from off
The edges of the earth, and let
The curving plain unbend itself
Behind the mountains. Put wind back
Into the cheeks of demons. Voice,
Pronounce your reasonable desire
And sing the round earth flat again!

Drifts and Shadows

Linda Pastan

1. blizzard

the snow	chairs become
has forgotten	laps of snow
how to stop	the moon could be
it falls	breaking apart
stuttering	and falling
at the glass	over the eaves
a silk windsock	over the roof
of snow	a white bear
blowing	shaking its paw
under the porch light	at the window
tangling trees	splitting the hive
which bend	of winter
like old women	snow stinging
snarled	the air
in their own	I pull a comforter
knitting	of snow
snow drifts	up to my chin
up to the step	and tumble
over the doorsill	to sleep
a pointillist's blur	as the whole
the wedding	alphabet
of form and motion	of silence
shaping itself	falls out of the
to the wish of	sky
any object it touches	

2. The Almanac of Last Things

From the almanac of last things
I choose the spider lily
for the grace of its brief
blossom, though I myself
fear brevity,

but I choose The Song of Songs
because the flesh
of those pomegranates
has survived
all the frost of dogma.

I choose January with its chill
lessons of patience and despair--and
August, too sun-struck for lessons.
I choose a thimbleful of red wine
to make my heart race,

then another to help me
sleep. From the almanac
of last things I choose you,
as I have done before.
And I choose evening

because the light clinging
to the window
is at its most reflective
just as it is ready
to go out.

3. In Back Of

In back of "I love you"
stands "goodbye."
In back of
"goodbye"
stands "it was lovely
there in the grass, drenched
in so much green
together."
Words that wait
are dark as shadows
in the back rooms
of mirrors:
when you raise
your right hand
in greeting,
they raise their left
in farewell.

4. Subway

Sometimes, at night
I put myself
to sleep
with the names
of subway stops
between 125th
and Fordham Road; 134th...
145th...161st...
The tunnel unwinds
backwards
under ruined streets
towards a room
where my mother sits
and mediates
between my need
and my father's
silence.
Childhood is cold
comfort.
The subway roars
and shakes—memory's
beast—over
its slippery tracks:
167th...174th...
and I cling
to the loop
of numbers
as if I had an appointment
to keep,
as if my mother
and father
were not
somewhere else
underground,
already asleep.

5. the arithmetic of alternation

today I write
of the shadows
flowers make
on a white wall,
the texture of petals
and leaves like a flat braille,
a brightness
even without color

but tomorrow
I will tell
how on the warmest day
there is an icy edge
to things, a darkness
at the rim
of every shining
object

this is the arithmetic
of alternation,
the way the hours,
the seasons
arrange themselves.
it keeps us honest,
it keeps us turning
the page

A Clear Midnight

Walt Whitman

This is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into the wordless,
Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson done,
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the themes
thou lovest best,
Night, sleep, death and the stars.

An Earth to Walk Upon

for Baritone and Piano

Commissioned by Michael Anthony McGee

1. Rough Country

Dana Gioia

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Slow, free and expressive (♩ = 64)

Score for Voice and Piano. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a tempo marking of "Slow, free and expressive (♩ = 64)". The piano part starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system includes markings for "a tempo", "a piacere", and "Ped." (pedal). The third system includes markings for "a tempo well marked", "mp" (mezzo-piano), "p" (piano), and "slow roll". The score features various time signatures (3/4, 2/4, 4/4) and dynamic markings throughout.

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13 Free

pp a piacere

a tempo

Give me a land-scape made of ob-sta-cles,

Free *8va* *slow roll before the beat* *ppp colla voce* *a tempo* *poco* *f*

* *8va*

This block contains the musical notation for measures 13 through 16. It features a vocal line in bass clef and a piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Give me a land-scape made of ob-sta-cles,". The piano accompaniment includes a treble clef staff with a *8va* marking and a bass clef staff. Performance instructions include *Free*, *slow roll before the beat*, *ppp colla voce*, and *a tempo*. A large watermark "Copying is illegal only" is overlaid on the page.

17

mp

poco

f

of steep hills and jut - ting gla - cial

mp *poco* *f*

This block contains the musical notation for measures 17 through 19. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "of steep hills and jut - ting gla - cial". The piano accompaniment features a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. Performance instructions include *mp*, *poco*, and *f*. A large watermark "Copying is illegal only" is overlaid on the page.

20

rock, where the low run - ning streams are quick to flood the

This block contains the musical notation for measures 20 through 22. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "rock, where the low run - ning streams are quick to flood the". The piano accompaniment features a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. A large watermark "Copying is illegal only" is overlaid on the page.

* *8va* both hands always

23 *(non rallentando ancora)* *p* *poco riten.*

grass - y fields and bot - tom lands.

(non rallentando ancora) *dolce* *p* *poco riten.* *slow roll*

26 *Gently moving* (♩ = 60) *a tempo* *mp* *unhurried* *poco riten.*

A place no en - gi - neer can mas - ter—

Gently moving (♩ = 60) *a tempo* *poco f* *mp* *poco riten.*

28 *pressing forward* *a tempo* *poco f*

where the roads must twist like ten - drils

pressing forward *a tempo* *p* *poco f*

Commissioned by Michael Anthony McGee

2. Prayer at Winter Solstice

Dana Gioia

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Fast, accented (♩ = 88)

Voice

Piano

5

10

p Bless-ed is the road that keeps us home-less.

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14

Bless - ed is the moun - tain that blocks — our way.

poco f

17

Bless - ed — are hun - ger and thirst,

mp *f* *ff*

20

mp dolciss.

lone — li - ness — and all

23 *poco f* *poco f*

forms of de-sire. Bless-ed is the

26

la - bor that ex - hausts

29 *ff*

us with - out end.

Commissioned by Michael Anthony McGee

3. Unsaid

Dana Gioia

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Gently moving, always expressive (♩ = 62)

Piano

The musical score is written for piano and consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 1-4) is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* and *ten. mp*. The second system (measures 5-8) is in 4/4 time and includes performance instructions such as *riten.*, *a tempo*, *poco f*, and *pp*. The third system (measures 9-12) is in 4/4 time and includes instructions like *slow roll on the beat*, *riten.*, *più riten.*, *8va*, *pressing forward a tempo*, and *passione p*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

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11 *riten. molto*

mp *poco f* *p* *p sub.*

roll before the beat

14 *p* *mp dolciss.*

So much of what we live goes on in - side—

ten.

17 *pressing* *poco riten.* *poco f* *ppp* *molto sost.*

passione

The di - a - ries of grief, the tongue - tied

8va

pressing *poco riten.* *molto sost.*

passione *poco f* *ppp*

Commissioned by Michael Anthony McGee

4. Progress Report

Dana Gioia

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Allegro comodo, in 2 (♩ = 76)

Voice

Piano

Allegro comodo, in 2 (♩ = 76)
as a show tune

mp

poco f

5

Free, not rushed
poco f

It's time _____ to ad - mit

Free, not rushed
ffp

9

mp

molto rit.

A bit lazy, but still jaunty (♩ = 100)

I'm ir - re - spons-i - ble. I lack am - bi-tion. I get noth-ing

mp

molto rit.

A bit lazy, but still jaunty (♩ = 100)

poco f

p

mp

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13 *dolce*

done. I spend the morn - ing walk - ing up the

16

fire - road. I know ev - ery tree a - long the

19 *poco f*

ridge. Reach - ing the end, I turn a -

22

round. There's no point to my pil - grim - age

f

25

ex - cept the com - ing and the go - ing. Then I

poco f

28

p cresc. poco a poco *passione* *mp* *più passione*

sit and lis - ten, and

Commissioned by Michael Anthony McGee

5. Money

Dana Gioia

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Slow, free, chantlike (♩ = 72) *(spoken like a priest)*

Voice

Money . . .

Slow, free, chantlike (♩ = 72)

Piano

p *colla voce* *mp*

4 *(thinking, then signaling the pianist to play a bit more)* *rit.* *(with reverence)*

is a kind of . . . *rit.* *... poetry.*

colla voce *mp* *pp*

Fast, accented, a bit manic (♩ = 96)
a tempo

7 *f*

Mon - ey,

Fast, accented, a bit manic (♩ = 96)
a tempo

f

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11

the long green,

15

cash, stash,

18

rhi - no, jack or just plain dough.

22 *poco f* *dolce*

Chock it up, fork it o - ver, fork it o - ver, shell it

25

out. Watch it, watch it burn,

28

watch it burn, watch it burn

Graceful, more relaxed
mp dolce

Commissioned by and dedicated to Michael Anthony McGee

6. A Curse on Geographers

Dana Gioia

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Slow, with reverence ($\text{♩} = 52$) *riten. poco*

Voice

Piano

Slow, with reverence ($\text{♩} = 52$) *riten. poco*

p *p* *mp*

4

ppp sub. *p*

We want an earth_ to

7

a tempo *a tempo* *p*

walk up - on, Not rea - sons to re - main at_

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9 *mp* home. *p* Shall we make jour - neys

roll before the beat *p* *8va*

12 *pp* on - ly to see The same stars cir - cling in the night?

Relaxing a tempo *pp* *Relaxing a tempo* *b IV*

15 *p* Eat the same fish in for - eign har - bors?

8va

57 *f*

Sing the round earth

60 **Freely, slowing** *p*

sing the round earth

Freely, slowing
slow
roll
before
the
beat

colla voce

62 **Faster, impassioned** *mp*

flat, We want an earth to walk up - on

Faster, impassioned

64 Slowing, very free

pp

Not rea - sons to re - main at _____

Slowing, very free
very slow
roll

pp

colla voce

66 *morendo*

ppp

home.

morendo

ppp

68 voice may cut off on any downbeat

ppp

8va both hands *8va*

Commissioned by the Mirror Visions Ensemble

Drifts and Shadows

for Baritone and Piano

for Tobé Malawista, Richard Lalli, and Scott Murphree

1. blizzard

Linda Pastan

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Presto possibile (♩ = ca. 168)

ff

Voice

the snow has for - got - ten how to stop it falls

Presto possibile (♩ = ca. 168)

Piano

f

5

stut - ter - ing, stut - ter - ing at the glass a silk wind - sock of snow

f

f accented

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9 *p* *poco f*

blow - ing un - der the porch light

p legato *più sonore*

12 *poco f legato*

15 *poco f* *f*

tang - ling trees which bend like

17

old wo - men snarled in their own

19

knit - ting

brilliant
8va

f 4 *ff* 5 *loco* 5 5 5

21

pp *sotto voce* *p*

snow drifts up to the step o - ver the

pp *p* *mp*

25

door - sill a poin - til - list's blur

mf *f* *staccatiss.*

28

the wed - ding of

intense, accented *f* *poco* *poco f*

31

form and mo - - tion

poco *f* *poco*

for Tobé Malawista, Richard Lalli, and Scott Murphree

2. The Almanac of Last Things

Linda Pastan

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Slow, free, expressive (♩ = ca. 72) *riten.* *a tempo* *p* *legato*

Voice

Slow, free, expressive (♩ = ca. 72) *riten.* *a tempo*

Piano

p *p* *poco*

mp *poco riten.* *a tempo* *p*

3

last things I choose the spi - der lil - y for the

mp *p* *poco riten.* *a tempo*

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5 *con moto* *mf* *a piacere* *mp* *poco* *4* *poco*

grace — of its brief — blos - som, though I my - self fear

con moto *mf* *poco f* *colla voce* *mp* *4*

8 *p* *3* *poco riten.* *a tempo* *pochiss. riten.*

brev - i - ty,

p *poco riten.* *a tempo* *pochiss. riten.*

10 *pressing forward* *a tempo* *mp* *intense*

but I choose The Song of Songs be - cause the flesh — of those

pressing forward *a tempo* *mp* *3* *3* *3* *3*

12 *poco f* *pochiss. riten.* *a tempo* *f*

pom - e - gran - ates has sur - vived all the frost of

poco f *pochiss. riten.* *a tempo* *f*

15 *pochiss. riten.* *a tempo* *p* *p* *molto* *f*

dog - ma. I choose Jan - u - ar - y with its

pochiss. riten. *a tempo* *8va-1* *p* *molto* *f*

18 *pp sub.* *poco riten.* *relaxed, free* *(almost whispered)* *pp* *p*

chill les - sons of pa - tience and de - spair — and Au - gust, too

pp sub. *poco riten.* *relaxed, free* *pp*

3. In Back Of

Linda Pastan

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Presto (♩ = 160) *f* *emphatic*

Voice

In back of "I

Presto (♩ = 160) *f* (sim.)

Piano

love you" stands "good -

bye." In back of "good -

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8 *poco f* *f* , *mp dreamy*

bye" stands "it was

poco f *mp*

10 *poco f* *f*

love - - ly there in the grass,

poco f

13 *f passione* *più passione*

drenched in

passione *più passione*

f

4. Subway

Linda Pastan

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Fast, accented (♩ = 160)

Voice

Some -

Piano

ff

5

- times, some - - - times at night

f

ff

3

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10 *pp* *f*

I put my - self to sleep with the names of sub - way

13

stops be - tween One hun - dred twen - ty - fifth and Ford - ham

16 *f*

Road; One hun - dred thir - ty - fourth...

19

One for - ty - fifth ... One six - ty - first ...

23

sfp *sfp* *sfp* *ff* *p*

27

The tun - nel un - winds back - wards ____

poco f *p* *poco*

5. the arithmetic of alternation

Linda Pastan

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Slow, very expressive (♩ = 44)
pp *with tenderness* *mp dolce*

Voice

To - day I write of the shad - ows flow - - - ers make on a white wall

Slow, very expressive (♩ = 44)

Piano

pp *mp*

3 *p* *mp* *poco* *pp*

the tex - ture of pe - tals and leaves like a

pp *poco* *pp sub.* *poco*

una corda -----

5 *riten.* *a tempo* *p floating* *poco* *pp*

flat Braille a bright - - - - - ness e -

riten. *a tempo*

p dolce *poco* *pp*

----- *tre corde*

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8 *mp*

- ven with - out col - or

fast roll
pp dolciss.
mp

11 *poco f* *poch. riten.* *a tempo*
passionate, intense

but to - mor - row I will tell how on the warm - est

poch. riten. *a tempo*
passionate

poco f *mp*

13 *f* *ff*

day there is an i - cy edge to things,

poco f *f*

A Clear Midnight

for Baritone and Piano

Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

Tom Cipullo (ASCAP)

Very freely (♩ = ca. 88) *teneramente* *riten. più*

Piano *pp*

4 *a tempo* *pressing forward* *riten.* *relaxing* *pp*

This is thy

a tempo *pressing forward* *riten.* *relaxing* *pp* *poco*

poco *rit.*

8 *più riten.* *a tempo* *teneramente* *pppp* *dolcissimo* *port.*

hour O Soul, thy

più riten. *delicate* *a tempo* *ppp* *sempre colla voce*

12 *più riten.* , *ppp* *a tempo* *mp*

free — flight in - to the word - less, A - way from books,

più riten. *a tempo*

ppp *p*

15 *passione* *pressing forward* *pressing more* *ff più passione*

a - way from art, the day e - rased, the les - son done, _____

pressing forward *pressing more*

passione *ff più passione*

18

fff