

**Alice Beckwith**

# Five Armitage Songs

**for High Voice and Piano**

Duration approximately 12 minutes

Commissioned by the 2024 &Piano Festival

The first performance was given by Sarah Fox, Joe Shovelton, and Christopher Pulleyn  
at the &Piano Festival on 25 May 2024

Texts by Simon Armitage, Copyright (c) Simon Armitage

## the event horizon

a signal silence / the gathered knot of  
amplified quiet after the tuning up and  
the last cough / every qualia poised  
and set at the starting line of the  
opening bar / moments cued to a  
noiseless threshold / atoms tensed for  
the first contact of horsehair and gut /  
all instruments tempered and torqued  
as the planet spins on the tapered nib  
of a white wand and a note bubbles up  
in the singer's throat / till that  
greenflash of sound / the yaw and roll  
as we're pitched into music / tipped to  
where raw music comes pitching  
into the soul

Simon Armitage

# the event horizon

Simon Armitage

Alice Beckwith

Freely, quasi recitative, ♩=60-72

poco accel.

First system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) begins with a rest, then enters with a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) marked *mp*, followed by a quarter note (C5) and a half note (D5). The lyrics are "a sig - nal si - lence". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a *f* (forte) chord in the right hand and a half note (G3) in the left hand, both marked with a fermata. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4.

Second system of the musical score. The vocal line begins with a quarter note (G4) marked *rit.* (ritardando), followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A4, B4, C5) marked *p* (piano). The lyrics are "knot of amp - li - fied qui - et". The piano accompaniment features a *colla voce* (colla voce) marking and a triplet of eighth notes (G3, A3, B3) in the right hand, marked *p*. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4.

Third system of the musical score. The vocal line begins with a quarter note (G4) marked *mf* (mezzo-forte), followed by a half note (A4) and a quarter note (B4). The lyrics are "cough ev - ery qua - lia poised and set at the". The piano accompaniment features a *f* (forte) chord in the right hand and a half note (G3) in the left hand, both marked with a fermata. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4.

10

start - ing line of the op - ening bar

12

mo - ments cued to a noise - less

14

thre - shold

## 16 Flowing, in time (tempo primo)

*p espress.*

at - oms tensed

*pp legato*

*simile*

*una corda*

## 18

*cresc.*

for the first contact of

*cresc.*

## 20

*mf*

horse - hair and gut

*mf*

*f*

*tre corde*

22 **Ad lib.** *mp*

all in-stru-ments tem-pered and torqued as the pla - net

*colla voce* *mp* *f* *p* 8<sup>va</sup> 10

24 **In time, assertive** *pp cresc.*

spins on the tap - ered nib of a

*pp*

26 *mf* *f*

white wand and a note bu - bles

*mf* *f*

28

up in the sing - er's throat

*mp*

*in the style of a 50s jazz singer*

**With rubato, as necessary**

30

till that

*colla voce* *p cresc.*

32

green flash of sound

*wide trill*

*f*

*slow spread*



34 *mf cresc.* pitch bend down pitch bend up

the yaw and roll as we're pitched

*cresc.* *f*

3 3

36 *f*

in - - - - - to

*f* *tr*

3 3

38 *Rhythmically free*

mu - sic

*subito ff* *p* *senza ped.*

8va

40 *mf* *rit.*

tipped\_ to where raw mu-sic comes pitch-ing in - to the soul

spread chord ahead of the beat

*mp*

*fff* forceful

*ped.*

The musical score is written for piano and voice. The piano part is in 9/4 time, featuring a melody with triplets and a sustained chord. The voice part has lyrics. The score includes dynamic markings (mf, mp, fff), a ritardando (rit.), and a pedal point (ped.).

## Close Season

Winter arrived this morning.  
She'd flown overnight  
and was tired and tetchy,  
throwing her bags in the boot  
and trapping her coat in the car door,  
a full-length snow leopard fur  
which she cheerfully told me  
was *not fake*.

For a woman of such stark glamour  
and minimalistic chic  
she takes up a lot of space;  
already she's claimed the boxroom  
and several empty drawers.  
She's painted the windows grey  
and stands behind me, unnervingly,  
if I pick up a book.

When she goes outside  
to shrink-wrap the garden  
and lock up the pond  
I open her wardrobe,  
press a cold white linen blouse  
to my face, daren't even caress  
the silk camisole top  
stitched only by frost.

She has switched the cherry tree off.  
The silvery-blue negligee  
she draped on the bed  
is just breath.

Simon Armitage

## Close Season

Simon Armitage

Alice Beckwith

**Playful, with freedom ♩ = 84**

Musical score for "The Snow Bird" by Victor Young. The score is in 3/4 time and features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Win - ter arr - ived this mor - ning. — She'd spoken flown ov - er night and was ti - red and tet - chy,". The piano part includes triplets and a "heavily" marking. The vocal part includes a "mp" marking and a "spoken" section. The score is divided into measures 1 through 8.

10 *cresc.*

throw-ing her bags in the boot and trapp-ing her coat

12 **Meno mosso**  
*mf* with confidence *accel.*

in the car door, a full-length snow leo-pard fur which she

14 **Flowing** (♩ = 92) *f*

cheer-ful-ly told me was not fake.

17 *mf*

For a wom-an of such stark gla-mour

19 *sultry*  
*mp*

and min - i - mal - is - tic chic she

21 *mf*

takes up a lot of space al - read - y she's claimed the box - room and

*p* *mf* *colla voce*

23 *rit.* . . . . *In time*

sev - eral em - pty drawers.

25 *mp*

She's

*f*

27 *heavily*

paint - ed the win - dows grey and stands be - hind me, un -

*mp*

29 *freely*

nerv - ing - ly if I pick up a book.

*pp*

32

*f*

35 *f animato*

When she goes out - side to shrink - wrap the gar - den and

A little slower, freely *mf cresc.*

37

lock up the pond I

39

op - en up her ward - robe, press a cold white lin - en

*mf*

41

blouse to my face,

*p*

43

*mp*

dar - en't ev - en car - ess the silk cam - i - sole top



## Meno mosso, opening tempo (♩ = 84)

46

stitched on - ly by frost.\_\_\_\_

49

*p* she has switched the che - rry tree off.

52

*rit.* *mf* The sil - ve - ry blue neg - li - gee she draped on the bed is just breath. *pp*

55

*molto rit.*

Ped.

# The Catch

Forget  
the long, smouldering  
afternoon. It is

this moment  
when the ball scoots  
off the edge

of the bat; upwards,  
backwards, falling  
seemingly

beyond him  
yet he reaches  
and picks it

out  
of its loop  
like

an apple  
from a branch,  
the first of the season.

Simon Armitage

# The Catch

Simon Armitage

Alice Beckwith

**Languorous and relaxed** (♩. = 40)

The first system of the musical score is in 6/4 time, featuring a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Languorous and relaxed' with a quarter note equal to 40 beats. The music begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of chords and single notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment. A 'con ped.' (con pedale) instruction is present in the left hand. The system concludes with a fermata over the final notes.

The second system continues the musical piece. It begins with a measure rest in the right hand, followed by a vocal entry. The tempo marking 'poco rall.' (poco rallentando) is indicated, followed by a measure rest and then a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The vocal line enters with the word 'For -'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes. The system ends with a fermata over the final notes.

The third system begins with a measure rest in the right hand, followed by a vocal entry. The tempo marking 'A tempo' is indicated. The vocal line enters with the words 'get the long smouldering af - ter noon.'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes. The system ends with a fermata over the final notes.

7 rit. . . . .

It is this\_\_ mo - ment when the ball\_\_ scoots\_\_ off the edge of the

9 rit. . . . . In time

bat; up-wards, back - wards,

*p* *mp* *mf*

11 *molto*

fall - ing seem - ing - ly be - yond him yet he\_\_

*f* *molto*

13 *mp espress.*

rea - ches and picks it out of its loop like an app - le

15 **Broadening**

from a branch, the first of the sea - son.

17

from a branch, the first of the sea - son.

## Give

Of all the public places, dear  
to make a scene, I've chosen here.

Of all the doorways in the world  
to choose to sleep, I've chosen yours.  
I'm on the street, under the stars.

For coppers I can dance or sing.  
For silver-swallow swords, eat fire.  
For gold-escape from locks and chains.

It's not as if I'm holding out  
for frankincense or myrrh, just change.

You give me tea. That's big of you.  
I'm on my knees. I beg of you.

Simon Armitage

# Give

Simon Armitage

Alice Beckwith

**Moderato, plaintive** ♩ = 84

First system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, and a half note F#5. The lyrics "Of all the pub - lic pla - ces, dear," are aligned under the notes. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-D5, and C5-E5. The left hand plays a series of chords: G3-B2, A2-C3, B2-D3, and C3-E3. The tempo is Moderato, plaintive, with a quarter note equal to 84 beats per minute.

Second system of the musical score, starting at measure 3. The vocal line continues with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, and a half note F#5. The lyrics "to make a scene, I've cho - sen here." are aligned under the notes. The piano accompaniment continues with the same chord progression as the first system. The right hand plays a series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-D5, and C5-E5. The left hand plays a series of chords: G3-B2, A2-C3, B2-D3, and C3-E3.

Third system of the musical score, starting at measure 6. The vocal line continues with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, and a half note F#5. The lyrics "Of all the door - ways in the world" are aligned under the notes. The piano accompaniment continues with the same chord progression as the first system. The right hand plays a series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-D5, and C5-E5. The left hand plays a series of chords: G3-B2, A2-C3, B2-D3, and C3-E3.

9 **poco rit.** . . . . .

to choose to sleep, I've cho - sen yours.—

*freely, not rushed*

12 **A tempo**

*mf*

I'm on the street, un - der the

*mf*

15

stars.

*8va*

18 **Più mosso**

*mf*

For cop - pers I can dance or

*mf*



21 *cresc.*

sing. For sil - ver - swa - llow swords\_ eat fire. For

*cresc.*

24 *f*

gold - es - cape from locks\_ and chains.

*f*

*mp dim.*

27

*p*

30 **A tempo**

*mp*

It's

33

not as if I'm hold - ing out for frank - in - cense or

*mp cresc.*

36

myrrh, just change. You

*p* *p pleading*

39

give me tea. That's big of you.

*p*

42

I'm on my knees. I

*p*

45

beg of you.

47 **molto rit.**

free and expressive

24

*pp*

# Mist

Who does it mourn?  
What does it mean,  
    such nearness,  
    gathering here  
    on high ground  
while your back was turned,  
drawing its net curtains around?  
Featurless silver screen, mist  
    is water  
    in its ghost state,  
    all inwardness,  
    holding its milky breath,  
veiling the pulsing machines  
    of great cities  
    under your feet,  
    walling you  
    into these moments,  
    into this anti-garden  
of gritstone and peat.

Given time  
the edge of your being  
    will seep  
    into its fibreless fur;  
    you are lost, adrift  
in hung water and blurred air,  
    but you are here.

Simon Armitage

# Mist

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Alice Beckwith

**Mysteriously, unrushed** (♩ = 56)

The first system of the musical score for 'Mist' is in 2/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It consists of three measures. The right-hand staff (treble clef) contains whole rests in all three measures. The left-hand staff (bass clef) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. It features a descending eighth-note scale in the first measure, followed by a half-note chord in the second measure, and a half-note chord in the third measure. A 'Ped.' (pedal) marking is placed below the first measure, with a line extending under the first two measures.

The second system of the musical score continues from the first. It consists of two measures. The right-hand staff (treble clef) begins with a measure rest, followed by a half-note chord, and then a half-note chord. The left-hand staff (bass clef) begins with a measure rest, followed by a half-note chord, and then a half-note chord. A 'Ped.' (pedal) marking is placed below the first measure, with a line extending under the first two measures.

The third system of the musical score consists of two measures. The right-hand staff (treble clef) begins with a measure rest, followed by a half-note chord, and then a half-note chord. The left-hand staff (bass clef) begins with a measure rest, followed by a half-note chord, and then a half-note chord. A 'Ped.' (pedal) marking is placed below the first measure, with a line extending under the first two measures.

10 *mp*

Who does it mourn? What does it

Ped.

13

mean, such near - ness, gath - ering here on high ground

8va

16 *cresc.*

while your back was turned, draw - ing its net

(8) *cresc.*

19

cur - tains a - round?

This system contains measures 19, 20, and 21. The vocal line begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a half note G4. The piano accompaniment features a descending eighth-note scale in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand.

22

*mf* Fea - ture - less sil - ver screen, mist \_\_\_\_\_

*mf*

This system contains measures 22 and 23. The vocal line starts with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a half note G4. The piano accompaniment features a descending eighth-note scale in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand.

24

— is wa - ter in its \_\_\_\_\_ ghost state,

This system contains measures 24 and 25. The vocal line begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a half note G4. The piano accompaniment features a descending eighth-note scale in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand.

26

all in - ward - ness,

This system contains measures 26 and 27. The vocal line begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a half note G4. The piano accompaniment features a descending eighth-note scale in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand.

28

hold - ing its mil - ky breath, *f* veil - ing the

30

pul - sing ma - chines of great cit - ies *f* un - der your

32

feet, *dim.* wall - ing you in - to these mo - ments, *dim.*



34

*mp* 3

in - to this an - ti gar - den of

37

*p espress.*

grit-stone and peat. Giv - en time

40

the edge of your be - ing will seep

42

in - to its fib - re - less fur;

45

*p*  
Ped. 8va

48

*p cresc.*  
you are lost, a - drift in  
*pp* *p*

51

hung wa - ter and blurred air,

54

*dim.*

but you are here

57

*poco rit.* . . . *A tempo*

*p*

you are here.

*mp*

*Ped.*

59

*8va*