

W. Jay Sydeman

A Prayer
for Contralto (or Oboe or Violin),
Viola and Piano
(c. 1983)

A Prayer for contralto, viola and piano was written in the early eighties while I was teaching at the Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, CA.

I wrote the text, which is quietly inward looking and meditative, reflective of the life of spirit which is at the foundation of all of Steiner's teaching. Nevertheless there is a middle section in which the viola becomes quite ecstatic before returning to its original quieter state. For the most part voice and viola are in contrapuntal relationship to each other, with the piano creating romantic flowing textures around both. Although the text clearly outlines these states of being, it is obviously intrinsic to the instrumental version as well.

A word about the text: Although it speaks a creator God and Christ being, this is not intended to refer to our traditional organized religions, but rather to that which dwells within us as a spark of that creativity.

– W. Jay Sydeman, January 2014

W. Jay Sydeman's life mirrors the breadth and variety of his music. Born in New York in 1928 and educated at Manhattan's Mannes School of Music, he quickly became one of the most sought-after and honored composers of his generation, receiving commissions from such prestigious groups as the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Tanglewood Music Center, and the Boston Symphony, which premiered his orchestral work in memory of John F. Kennedy in 1966. "Sydeman uses a whole battery of far out techniques," wrote the *New York Times*, "but he has an uncanny ability to throw in the whole avant-garde machinery as if it were the simplest, most normal way of making music in the world ... More than many of his colleagues, he seems to know what will sound well, and he works for some remarkably attractive, pure textures. His sounds seem to grow from a physical sense of exactly what material is right."

In 1970, after a heady period that included awards from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Library of Congress, Sydeman left New York – and composition – to begin a journey of personal and artistic exploration.

"Around 1980," he has written, "I returned to composition – at first a large number of choral works which reconnected me to the source of all music – the human voice. Out of this new lyric impulse have evolved all of my works since that time – more romantic, more accessible. I create music for the musician."

– Howard Hersh,
Artistic Director of "Music Now"

Sydeman is part of a composers' group in Nevada City annually producing the "Wet Ink Festival of New Music." He now lives in Mendocino and hosts a bi-weekly program on KZYX, "The Mind of a Composer," 10 am to noon on Mondays, introducing and commenting on contemporary music.

Duration: circa 3:45

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Edited and engraved by Rick Shinozaki (Albany, CA) in consultation & collaboration with the composer.

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Text by the composer

Lento rubato ♩ = c. 60

Contralto
(or Oboe
or Violin)

Viola

Piano

mp *sempre legato*

mp

We turn from the

5

out - er world to the in - ner world and in the si - lence

p

p

p

Red. *

8 *mp* **A**

and the still - ness we seek deep with - in our

mp

mp

Reo. * Reo. Reo. *

11

souls the pres - ence of our cre - a - tor

Reo. Reo. Reo. *

14 *p sub.*

the source of life fa - ther mo - ther God.

p sub.

Reo. 5 Reo. Reo.

17 *f*

We seek the glo - ry of the

mf passionately

Red. Red. Red. *

19 *mp*

Christ with - in. O - pen our hearts to the

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

22 *mp*

in - com - ing of this hea - ven - ly light.

Red. Red. Red. Red.

24

f passionately 3 3

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

26

mp

In the

mp 3 *mp* 3 *p*

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

29

qui - et - ness of our wor - ship may our in - ner vi - sion

mp 3 *p*

Red. *

33

o - pen to the re - al - i - ty and the

Measures 33-34 of a musical score. The top staff is a vocal line in C major, 4/4 time, with lyrics "o - pen to the re - al - i - ty and the". It features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 34. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time, with a melodic line and a bass line. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time, with a bass line. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 34.

35

glo - ry of the world of spir - it which is all a-bout us.

Measures 35-36 of a musical score. The top staff is a vocal line in C major, 4/4 time, with lyrics "glo - ry of the world of spir - it which is all a-bout us.". It features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 35 and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 36. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time, with a melodic line and a bass line. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time, with a bass line. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 36.

37

Measures 37-38 of a musical score. The top staff is a vocal line in C major, 4/4 time, with a fermata over measure 37. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time, with a melodic line and a bass line. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time, with a bass line. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 38.

Measures 37-38 of a musical score. The top staff is a vocal line in C major, 4/4 time, with a fermata over measure 37. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time, with a melodic line and a bass line. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time, with a bass line. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 38.

39

f 3

f 3 3 5

Red. Red. *

D

41

p

May the peace and se - ren - i - ty bless us — and the

p

p

43

light of thy coun - te - nance — shine up - on — our — path way —

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

45

hence - forth _____ and for - ev - er _____ more.

mp

Red. *

E

48

p

p

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. *

51

Red. Red. *

Red. Red.