

Nicolas Chuaqui

*Snow Songs*

for soprano and piano

2018

**Program note:**

Looking out from my window, I can see much of the city; in the winter, it is immersed in snow, and the wind constantly blows snow into the air.

Winter is beautiful in its tranquillity but also cruel and deadly. Downtown Rochester is picturesque in the snow, but the streets become wind tunnels, and you can shiver just thinking of how cold and frozen-over the pavement is.

Winter is also an alienating experience, since everyone covers their bodies completely (not to mention the fact that people don't venture outside, so the street can become an eerie place). Perhaps that alienation allows reality to disappear for some time.

In the first song, we and the speaker are pulled into the hypnotic dance of snowflakes blowing through the air. The second song is a journey—a supernatural experience that may be dream or reality. In the third the speaker is disturbed by a seemingly innocent experience. An interlude is followed by a meditation on the sound of the word “I...” and the speaker is unable to articulate the meaning of the song through mere words. The sixth song focuses on the paradox of beauty and brutality present in winter, and its relationship to those of us in safety and shelter. The last song focuses on the dreamlike and fantastical mood that connects all the songs.

**Total duration:** approx. 17 minutes

**Texts:**

**1**

dancing snow  
has begun  
to pull me in

**2**

I stand  
silently  
in a dark field  
far from here  
the air goes by me  
and suddenly  
I stand  
in the street outside my apartment window  
an old woman  
is walking and struggling  
through the snow  
she slips  
and falls  
I rush to her  
I hold her hands to steady her  
her face is hidden by a shawl  
I brush it back  
but  
she won't look at me  
then  
I look at her hands  
and  
I think I see your hands  
you won't look at me  
then  
I look for your face  
and I think I see my face  
then  
suddenly  
I am floating  
far above my street  
and the dark field  
and the stars surround me  
shining  
far yet near

**3**

running through the snow naked with you  
should not be this much fun  
it reminds me of a primeval time  
when the hunt and the kill were all that mattered  
yes, it does.

4  
(interlude)

5  
I...

6  
Morning, cold and damp, brings me snow, sunlit in the street below my window.  
Streetside, grass and flowers, choked by the snow, lie frozen.  
Thus for the beauty I behold, so much had to die.  
What could I say to a flower?  
“Thank you?”  
“Thank you!”  
“Thank you.”  
What would the flower say?

7  
still dreaming  
I rise up  
and fly  
you may think that you see me  
but you're only dreaming

(Texts by the composer)

# SNOW SONGS

for soprano and piano

Nicolas Chuaqui  
2018

1

Entranced and dreamlike; ♩ = 60

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for the soprano voice, starting with a 4/4 time signature, changing to 3/2, and then back to 4/4. It contains the lyrics "da - - -" with a melodic line starting on a whole note. The piano accompaniment is written on two staves (treble and bass clef). The piano part begins with a *pp* dynamic and the instruction "muted, like a field of snow". The bass line starts with a *ped.* (pedal) marking. The piano part features a flowing eighth-note melody in the right hand and a more static bass line. Dynamics include *pp* and *p* with hairpins. The system concludes with a *pp dolce* marking.

The second system of the musical score continues from the first. It begins with a measure number '4' in the soprano staff. The soprano part has the lyrics "ncing snow" and includes a *port.* (portamento) marking. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar texture. Dynamics include *p* and *n* (fortissimo). The system concludes with a *n* dynamic marking.

8

has be - gun

*mp*

12

to pull me in

*p* *sonore*

*pp* *dolce*

15

**Dramatic, intense;** ♩ = ca. 72

***p***

I stand si-lent-ly in a dark field far from here.

hold down these pitches silently;  
sustain pedal the entire time

The markings in this song are here to represent, in a sense, enough information to help with the correct interpretation of the song, but not too much so as to be overwhelming. It is impractical to capture all the nuances and details that a good singer will bring to the interpretation. Ultimately the goal should be for the singer to identify with the character and express the text.

6

the air goes by me and sud-den-ly I stand in the street out-side my a-

10

part-ment win-dow an old wo man is walk - ing and strug-gl ing

14

through the snow she slips and falls I rush to her I hold her hands

*anxious* *calming down*

20

to stea-dy her her face is hid-den by a shawl I brush it back but she won't

***f***

24 *mf*  

 look at me! then I look at her hands and I think I see your hands

29 *f* *p* *mf* *p* *p*  

 you won't look at me! then I look for your face and I think I see my face then

35 *dim.* *rit.*  

 sud-den-ly I am float - ing far a - bove my street and the dark field

40 *dim.*  

 and the stars sur - round me shin -

44 *pp*  

 - ing far yet near



Playful; \* ♩ = 66

*mp* (*<*) *dolce* *mf* *agitato* *pp* *f*

\*the dynamics should contrast a lot, and feel unpredictable

*Red.* *Red.*

6

run-ning through the snow na - ked with you

*pp subito* *cresc.*

8

should not be this much

*mf* *poco rit.* *(a tempo)* *p* *f* *f*

11

fun it re - minds

13

me of a prim - e - val time when the hunt and the

16

kill were all that matt - ered

18

Musical score for measures 18-19. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *poco rit.* (poco ritardando). The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

20

Musical score for measures 20-21. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "yes it does" under the notes. The tempo is marked *rit.* (ritardando) and *pp misterioso* (pianissimo, misterioso). The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked *p dolce* (piano, dolce) and *pp* (pianissimo). The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

February 25-26

FOR PERUSAL USE ONLY

Slow and very reflective; ♩ = 46-48

rit. . .

*p* *pp* *ppp*

ped.

5 Tempo of the first song (♩ = 60)

poco rit. A tempo accel. . . .

cresc.

ped.

7 rit. Tempo of third song (♩ = ca. 66)

rit. . . . accel. . . .

*f* *pp* *p* *p* *mf*

8<sup>vb</sup>

ped.

12 ♩ = ca. 80

*f*

3 5

ped.

14

15

16 Slower ♩ = ca. 56 rit. . . . .

*espress.*

*mp* *pp*

17

18

19

June 28-29

FOR PERUSAL USE ONLY

Very calm; ♩ = ca. 56

Very calm; ♩ = ca. 56

*whispy cloud*

*ppp poss.*

*n p mp*

*a(i)*

This movement is written in I.P.A. The single word of the piece (other than in measure 31 to the end, which doesn't represent any word) is "I," as in the pronoun. Only in measures 20 and 24 should the second part of the diphthong (ɪ) be clearly pronounced; elsewhere it should simply be at the end of the utterance as in normal English.

5

*pppp sempre*

*a(i)*

9

*(ɪ)*

13

Musical score for measures 13-15. The top staff is a vocal line with rests. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with triplets and a bass line with sustained notes.

overall  
cresc:

16

Musical score for measures 16-17. The vocal line has dynamic markings *p*, *(mp)*, *p*, *(mp)*, *mp*, *(mf)*, *pp sempre*, and *(f)*. The piano accompaniment continues with sustained notes.

The accents indicate a somewhat glottal attack. It should feel like the Bs are slipping out from the Cs. They should be slid into.

glottal attacks -----> "goat trill" (sim.)

18

Musical score for measures 18-21. The vocal line includes a "goat trill" marked (sim.) and dynamic markings *mf* and *p*. The piano accompaniment features triplets and sustained notes.

22

Musical score for measures 22-24. The vocal line has a *ppp* dynamic marking. The piano accompaniment features sustained notes and a *ppp* dynamic marking in the final measure.

12

26

*f* (pedal to connect)

30

high inhalation, pitchless, voiceless

*pp* *sempre*

low exhalation, pitchless, voiceless

*pp* *sempre*

*i* *u*

33

sim.

*p*

*ff*

*n*

*p* *ppp* *poss.* *ff* *n*

*i* *u*



6

Intimate; delicate; ♩ = ca. 56

*pp dolce*

pedal to connect chords; each new harmony

Moving more; ♩ = 72-76

*mp espress.*

7

Morn - ing, cold and damp, brings me snow,

*pp* *pp* *p*

*rit.*

*poco accel.* *rit.*

12

sun-lit in the street be - low my win - dow

*mp* *pp*

17 **Tempo primo** (♩ = ca. 56) ♩ = 72-76

street - side, grass and flowers, choked by the snow, — lie  
(flowers)

23 **rit.** . . . . . **A tempo** (♩ = 72-76)

fro - zen\_ thus for the beau-ty I be - hold, so

(with pedal)

29 **espress.** **rit.** . . . . . **A tempo** (♩ = 72-76)

much had to die What could I say to a

More free (quasi ad. lib) *molto cresc.*

(in time)

36

flower? Ah Ah (Ah) "Thank you?" "Thank you!"

*p* *colla voce* *mf*

*f*

41

Tempo primo (♩ = ca. 56)

*espress.*

"Thank you" What would the

*p* *mf* *pp subito*

45

*molto rit.*

flower say?

*pp*

Very slow; entranced; other-worldly; ♩ = ca. 44-46

still dream- ing \_\_\_\_\_ I

*pp* bell-like (sim.)

*poco*

*sed.*

6

rise up \_\_\_\_\_ and fly \_\_\_\_\_

*p* *p*

*poco*

*8va*

*poco*

*non accell...*

*8vb*

*8vb*

10 *poco*

17

you\_ may think \_\_\_\_\_ that you see\_ me\_

(8)-----

*poco*

8vb

14

*p* *pp*

but\_ you're on - - ly dream - ing

*pp dolce*

*espress.*

19

(*poco rit.*)

*pp*

(also 8vb)

8vb

**molto rit.** . . . . .

26

*(a tempo)*  
**ppp**  
*dim.*  
*8vb*

February 18 / June