

The Mona Lisa

Text: Leanne Veitch

Music: Michael Winikoff

For SATTBB choir and Soprano solo

She is there
in smoky hues of black, tan and green
with some white between the edges of the frame
and the listing catch-plate, bearing her name

Visitors. Admirers.

they look:
oh yes....mmm...beautiful...exquisite...
a fine piece of artwork
he really knew what he was doing.
I must buy a print at once -
where's the souvenir shop?

they don't see:
her hidden heart
a wooden plank that's all -
not even canvas.
Rotting all the while.

While the visitors smoked
and the lightbulbs flashed
and the babies screamed
and threw rattles on the carpeted floors

before they slung her in a perspex cage
and hung a crimson barrier on golden stands
and glued the 'No Smoking' signs to the walls
in four major languages.

And esperanto.

Such a small smile:
her eyes, so far away.

The background
semi-formed in the acid colours of a dream
fading into a memory of long dead fingers
twisting the bristles of a brush
and catching a smile then bones,
now dust.



Program Notes

Leanne wrote: “*I keep coming back to this poem. The Mona Lisa has always fascinated me, and there is something incredibly sad about the picture for me. I also find her bone structure interesting, and in this work focused on the fact that not only is the famous smile that was painted now long gone, so too are the fingers that painted her.*”

In setting Leanne’s poem I have tried to create a dream-like texture (“acid colours of a dream” and “smoky hues of black, tan and green”). In places the texture vanishes to capture the solitude and loneliness (“such a small smile, so far away”). The section about the visitors (smoking, with flashing lightbulbs, and screaming babies) is set (somewhat ironically) in a happy relaxed style, but, significantly, without any passion or real emotion: it is simply a somewhat pretty tune. The piece ends with a sad fade on the final word: “dust”, emphasised with a sibilant “s”.

In composing this piece I’ve tried to write simply, and to make the piece more readily performable than some of my other works. Although the choir does divide into multiple parts, the piece is almost entirely in 3/4, is rhythmically simple, and does not use any sharps or flats.

Performance Notes

The vowel sounds of “She”, “Is” and “In” should be identical.

Crescendos and Diminuendos above the Soprano part apply to all parts, and those above the (first) Tenor part apply to all of the men.

The first tenors have a few glissandos (e.g. in bars 2 and 4). Please be careful to only sing glissandos where they are explicitly marked. For example, there should *not* be a glissando in bar 6.

A (preferably female) single voice should read the text in bar 22. This should be timed so that it ends around the beginning of bar 27, and certainly before the soprano entry on “they don’t”. While the text is being spoken the choir should sing very quietly, to enable the speaker to be heard. It is a good idea to select a speaker who is able to project (perhaps an actor or lecturer?).

The crescendo in bar 27 is only for the Altos — other parts should change their dynamics from *ppp* to *f* (sopranos) or *mf* (men) suddenly.

The altos have the tune in bars 40-49, and should be allowed to come through. The soprano part in bars 46-50 should be gentle, and should not overpower the alto part.

In bars 61-64 brackets in the lyrics indicate consonants that should not be sung. For example, in bar 61 the second tenors sing “smo-kee” without ever pronouncing the “ng”.

The soloist (soprano or alto) should be sourced from the choir, and should have a light clear sound rather than a full operatic tone.

In the final two bars, the women and first tenors should sustain an “s” sound, starting almost inaudibly, then rising in volume (in bar 101), and then (in bar 102) fading away to nothing. To dust.

The Mona Lisa

Leanne Dahirja Veitch

Duration: approx. 5:00

Michael Winikoff
October-December 2009

Andante $\text{d} = 60$

Soprano Alto Tenor 1 Tenor 2 Bass 1 Bass 2

She is there is there — She is there is there — She is there is there —
 She is there she — She is there she — She is there she —
 She is — She is — She is —
 She — She — She —

In smo-ky hues of black tan and green with some white be-tween the ed-ges of the frame —
 in smo-ky hues of black tan and green in smo-ky hues of black tan and green with some white be-tween the
 She is there is there — She is there is there — She is there is —
 She is there she — She is there she — She is there she —
 She is — She is — She is —
 She — She — She —

and the li-sting catch-plate bea-ring her name — they
 with some white be-tween the and the li-sting catch-plate bea-ring her name — they
 there — She is there is there — vi-si-tors ad-mi-riers
 — She is there she — vi-si-tors ad-mi-riers
 — She is — vi-si-tors ad-mi-riers
 — She — is there vi-si-tors ad-mi-riers

18

S look they look they look they look they
A look they look they look *p* they look they
Tenor 8 vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers
Bass vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers

Spoken (single female voice): oh yes ... mmm ... beautiful ... exquisite ... a fine piece of artwork / he really knew what he was doing. I must buy a print at once - / where's the souvenir shop?

22 *ppp* *f (sudden)*

S look they look they look they look they look they look they don't
A look they
T 8 vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers
B vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers

28

S see her hid - den heart they don't see her hid - den heart they don't see
A look they look they look, they don't see her hid - den heart they don't see
T 8 vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers, they don't see her hid - den heart
B vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers vi - si - tors ad - mi - rers, they don't see her hid - den heart

33

S *p*: *p*: *p*: *p*:
A *p*: *p*: *p*:
T 8 they don't see her hid - den heart a wood - en plank that's all not e - ven can - vas
B *p*: *p*: *p*: *p*: *p*: *p*: *p*:
they don't see her hid - den heart a wood - en plank that's all not e - ven can - vas not e - ven can - vas

(same tempo, don't slow down)

37

Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), Bass 2 (B2)

p rot-ting all the while *mp* Ah while the vi - si-tors smoked and the

p rot-ting all the while *mp* Ah while rot-ting all the while *mp* Ah

p rot-ting all the while rot-ting all the while rot-ting all the while

42

Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), Bass 2 (B2)

light - bulbs flashed and the ba - bies screamed and threw rat-tles, threw rat-tles on the car-pe-ted floor, Ah

Ah

rot-ting all the while rot-ting all the while rot-ting all the while

46

(first sopranos only)

Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), Bass 2 (B2)

mp Ah

rot-ting all the while rot-ting all the while

She

Ah

rot-ting all the while rot-ting all the while

51

S
A
T
T2
B1
B2

p *gliss.* *pp* *p*

— is there is — there — be - fore they slung her in a per-spx cage slung her in a
 — is there she — slung her in — slung her in —
 She is — slung her in — slung her in —
 She — slung her in — slung her in —

56

Tutti *p*

S
A
T
T2
B1
B2

per-spx cage and hung a crim - son bar - ri - er on gol-den stands —
 per-spx cage slung her in a per - spex cage and hung a bar - ri - er on gol-den stands —
 slung her in —
 slung her in —
 slung her in —
 slung her in —

61

S
A
T
T2
B1
B2

glued the no — i(n) —
 — smo-ki(ng) — four —
 — si(gn) — ma-jor — *pp*
 — to the wa(ll) — lan-gua - ges and Es - pe - ran - to — Es - pe -

67 *Slower (e.g. $\text{♩} = 53$) Solo, freely p*

A tempo (firsts only) *pp*

Solo Such a small smile her eyes, so far away the —
 S —
 A —
 T —
 T2 —
 B1 ran - to
 B2 —

73

Soprano 1 back - ground se - mi-formed in the a - cid co - lours of a dream the a - cid co - lours of a drea(m)
 Soprano 2 —
 Alto 1 —
 Alto 2 —
 Tenor —
 Bass — *mf*
 fa - ding

78

Soprano —
 Alto —
 T —
 B fa - ding fa - ding in - to a me - mo - ry of long dead fin - gers twi - sting the

espressivo

83

S A T Bass 1 Bass 2

pp (echo)

bri-stles of a brush the bri-stles of a brush *p* cat - ching a smile cat - ching a smile
and cat - ching a smile cat - ching a smile

90

Solo S A

mp

such a small smile: her eyes, so far a - way

Tenor 1 Tenor 2 B1 B2

cat - ching a smile cat - ching a smile bones bones
cat - ching a smile cat - ching a smile then bones bones
cat - ching a smile cat - ching a smile then bones bones
cat - ching a smile cat - ching a smile bones bones

96

S A T1 T2 B1 B2

now now (pp) now (pp) now (pp) now dust
dust *ppp* *ppp*

SSS SSS SSS

24 December 2009
Dunedin, New Zealand