

Kindred Hearts

Songs about love over four poems by Bryan Borland

Album Info

In 2011, deeply impressed by the work of American poet [Bryan Borland](#), I asked him if he would agree to write a few poems that I could set to music. In his website, he had published several poems, most of them centered around gay life and his personal experiences as a gay man. I was highly interested in writing a work about this topic and Bryan accepted right away.

I wrote the first movement, Emancipation, between December 2011 and January 2012 – right after Bryan finished writing the set—but my job as Director of the Music Department at a local university prevented me from continuing the composition and I was forced to leave it on standby for several years. It was not until 2015—after I resigned from my position and became a part-time professor – that I found the time and inspiration to complete what I had started in 2011.

From the beginning I decided I wanted a very intimate sound and thought that the technique of popular singing was the best way to properly convey my concept of the piece. This decision influenced the style of the music, which lies somewhere in between classical and popular. The treatment of the musical materials and the music notation is classical but the style of the vocal part and the harmonic dimension of the cycle is closer to that of popular music.

The purpose of this work is to portray an aspect of gay life that is usually underestimated, even considered by many as non-existent: love, a simple four-letter word that describes a dimension of human existence that many people would never attribute to gay people.

Copyright

The texts below are the intellectual property of Bryan Borland, who has authorized Antonio Gervasoni for their use, which is hereby done without any detriment to Mr. Borland's legitimate rights over them. They are included in this document for reference only. Please do not copy or use them in any way without the permission of their author.

1. Emancipation

We moved in together after a week,

the space between the sidewalk
and our secret life
electric with each step,
the transformation between
public and private
striking, like a sudden change from
man to hero.
On the street you are my friend,
my roommate,
my nothing more than simple
anything,
but close the door and
our masks are tossed aside with the day's
shirts and pants,
my three-piece suit
crumbling to formless glory,
your clothing peeled from
a day's work in the heat,
my hands tender, yours
rugged to the knuckles,
a balance between
movement and muscle,
a cloaked common ground
walked upon only by those who search long enough.
Finally free, we fall in love anew,
each time greater than the last,
each thump of heart
harder
with every twist of the lock.

2. Holden

The hospital room was too white,
you never liked white
so I filled it with things from our home,
with photographic evidence of our life,
with clothing you wouldn't need
fastened to the windows as makeshift curtains
and a painting we'd bought in New Orleans leaning
against the wall, the cats of Jackson Square

holding vigil from the corner.

Your sister said the apartment must be quiet with just me,
that I must be relieved
to not have the burden, that I can live it up now with
nighttime visitors and
more space,
that I could even have your larger bedroom
if I chose to stay.

The doctor gave you, at best,
two days,
the time it took for us to fall in love. You liked to say
God pushed us off the cliff together,
the only one I knew
who made religion
guiltless.

The priest due soon, your mother
told me to say goodbye,
that she'd like your family with you
in the end.

I wanted to ask her
where she was at three in the morning,
who changed the wet sheets,
who held your head in your sickness,
who brushed your hair away from your eyes
and read you stories you memorized as a child?

In my numbness

I leaned down and in front of your father
kissed you full on the lips,
determined

to not let you go over this edge
alone,

to not move,

to not leave,

to remain

and sing you to your early sleep,

to say

goodnight, my sweet,

goodnight.

3. Love's Epiphany

In the days
and years afterwards,
I came to see that
love
says goodbye without
finality,
that love
expects and receives reunion,
that love,
imprisoning and kind,
is you,
leaving your mark,
is you
proving our existence,
is us
becoming immortal,
that love
waits patiently for
a friend
who was always there,
that love
has no true beginning and end,
that love
is at once and
was always
forever.

4. Unexpected

I did not expect
to find it here,
green eyes don't replace
your blue,
but together
they are the color of the ocean
that laps at my feet,
that cools my ankles and
quenches my thirst,

they are the
waters I believed
I would never taste again
but my throat was dry
and I was offered drink, and so
here's a toast to you,
to handsome memory and answered prayer,
a friend comes now to
reignite the sun,
your spirit not
erased or replaced
but enhanced and affirmed in this familiar light,
happiness rising in colorful plumes from your ashes
just as you would want,
my cup full of gratitude,
my glass raised high
as I think back and acknowledge
my understanding of love
all began
with you.