Three Sonnets by Sri Aurobindo:

Settings for Soprano and Orchestra

Diane Thome
PROGRAM NOTE

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By Diane Thome

For several years prior to composing THREE SONNETS I was deeply immersed in the study of Sri Aurobindo's epic poem SAVITRI, a study which continues. SILVER DEER, my 1980 violin and piano composition was inspired by a brief excerpt from that vast text. Having musically opened the door with this small chamber piece I then wished to embark upon a larger and truly explicit integration of poetry and music. From a collection of Sri Aurobindo's Sonnets written over a period of many years I extracted three which embraced the subjects of nature, death, love, divine descent and transformation. The order in which I arranged these sonnets provided an over-all formal design and suggested certain contrasts of instrumentation, texture, linearity and temporal characterization between the movements. I chose to use an expanded tonal language which at certain times becomes distinctly modal, as when a quotation from the SEDERUNT of the great medieval composer Perotin, is disclosed near the end of the third movement. This repeated rhyme quotation begins with the words:

"Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
Life shudders with a strange felicity;"

My primary aim throughout was to capture and evoke in the music some of the meaning and beauty which these sonnets possess for me. The music, in fact, became a way of resonating these meanings.

The work was begun in July 1983 and completed, after several interruptions, in January 1984. It is dedicated to Madhav Pandit.
ORCHESTRA

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in Bb
Bassoon
Horn in F: I, II
Trumpet in C: I, II
Trombone I (Tenor)
Trombone II (Bass)
Percussion (One player): Triangle, Glockenspiel,
Vibraphone, Xylophone,
Low Tympani (C→G)

Harp
Celesta
Piano
Violin
Viola
'Cello
Bass

Score in "C" except for Bass which sounds 8 bassa; and Glockenspiel,
Xylophone, Celesta which sound 8 va.
Rose, I have loved thy beauty, as I love
The dress that thou hast worn, the transient grass,
O'er which thy happy careless footsteps move.
The yet-thrilled waysides that have watched thee pass.
Soul, I have loved thy sweetness as men love
The necessary air they crave to breathe,
The sunlight lavished from the skies above,
And firmness of the earth their steps beneath.
But were that beauty all, my love might cease
Like love of weaker spirits, weren't thy charm
And grace of soul, mine might with age decrease
Or find in Death a silence and a term,
But rooted to the unnameable in thee
Shall triumph and transcend eternity.

TRANSIIT, NON PERIIT

(My grandfather, Rajnarayan Bose, died September 1899)

Not in annihilation lost, nor given
To darkness art thou fled from us and light;
0 strong and sentient spirit; no mere heaven
Of ancient joys, no silence eremite
Received thee; but the omnipresent Thought
Of which thou wast a part and earthly hour;
Took back its gift. Into that splendor caught
Thou hast not lost thy special brightness. Power
Remains with thee and the old genial force
Unseen for blinding light, not darkly lurks;
As when a sacred river in its course
Dives into ocean, there its strength abides
Not less because with vastness wed and works
Unnoticed in the grandeur of the tides.

KRISHNA

At last I find a meaning of soul's birth
Into this universe terrible and sweet,
I who have felt the hungry heart of earth
Aspiring beyond heaven to Krishna's feet.

I have seen the beauty of immortal eyes,
And heard the passion of the Lover's flute;
And known a deathless ecstasy's surprise.
And sorrow in my heart for ever mute.

Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
Life shudders with a strange felicity;
All Nature is a wide enamoured pause;
Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.

For this one moment lived the ages past;
The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.
I have loved thy beauty, as I love the dress that thou hast worn.

No Meter - Poco Meno Mosso

the transient grass, over which thy happy careless footsteps move along the yet thrilled way-sides that have watched thee.
sweetness as men love
love the necessary air they crave to breathe,
Fl.
Cl.
Hp.
Sop.
Vln.
Vla.

of the earth their steps beneath.
were that beauty all, my love might cease like love of

were i thy

weaker spirits;
charm and grace of soul.
mine sight with age decrease.
\[ j = 104 - 112 \]

\[ \text{Hn. 1} \]
\[ \text{Tpt. 2} \]
\[ \text{Twn. Th. Bb. Th.} \]
\[ \text{Kyl. Bo.} \]
\[ \text{Pf.} \]
\[ \text{Pf.} \]
\[ \text{Sup.} \]
\[ \text{Vln.} \]
\[ \text{Vla.} \]
\[ \text{Vlc.} \]

\[ \text{div.} \quad \text{con. sord.} \]

\[ \text{cresc.} \quad \text{poco cresc.} \]

\[ \text{dramatic} \]

\[ \text{Not in annihilation lost, nor given to} \]
There its strength abides
At last I find a meaning of soul's birth. ff
I who have felt the hungry heart of earth...
Fl.  
Cl.  
Glock.  
Hp.  
Sop.  

pir-ing beyond heaven, beyond  

Fl.  
Cl.  
Tept.  
Hp.  
Pf.  
Sop.  
Vln.  
Vla.  
Vlc.  
Bs.  

heaven to Krishna's feet
Poco Rit.  B  A tempo

I have seen the beauty of immortal

eyes, and heard the passion of the lover's
Near-er and near-er now the music draws,
Life shudders with a strange felici-ty.

All na-ture is a wide en-amoured pause
Hop-ping her Lord to touch, to clasp, to be.
moment lived the ages past;

The world now

throbs, the world now throbs

Full

pp