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## Abandoning Abuse: Acknowledging Adoption in the 21 Century

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Abandoning Abuse:  
Acknowledging Adoption in the 21 Century

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Music in Music

by

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University of Arkansas - Fort Smith  
Bachelor of Science in Music Education, 2017

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## Abstract

The inspiration for this set of pieces arose from a friendship with fellow grad student Morgen Cavanah. Morgen and I were both adopted as children, and it this common background that gave rise to these pieces. The poems chosen were written by Morgen about individuals or events in her life. Though I had planned to set 9 of the original 12 poems, this set is comprised of my four favorites. Each piece uses repetitive piano motives that underlie the melodic lines of the voice, flute, and cello. This choice explores harmonic and melodic possibilities that expand minimal accompaniment. Much of the harmonic language is flavored with jazz through the use of extended chords. *To Eli*, aims to expand the idea of a ballad. Morgen's background in opera inspired me to recreate a recitative-like section where the piano acts as harmonic accompaniment for solo voice that is separated by flute and cello interludes. The original melodic material returns as the final cadence is extended in anticipation until the voice concludes the piece measures later. *For Witt* is a strophic waltz set in a minor mode, but conveying a message of hope. The central moment appears before the final verse, as the flute and cello perform staccato pulses in the set 3/4 meter while the vocal line and piano are syncopated to create a 4/4 feel. The third movement, *Attn: Chase*, is my favorite. It opens with waves as the piano arpeggiates two alternating chords that share 4 common tones: C-E-A-D. The idea of water continues as the voice imitates rain while singing "trickle down." The piece ends with acapella voice repeating the last line of the poem. This was done to emphasize that we as humans can only do so much to fix or heal our issues, and our problems should be put into higher hands. *Dear Joanna* is the most

light-hearted of the pieces. Inspired by Sufjan Stevens, I decided to use 7/8 time because of its whimsical nature and the unbalanced lilt that gives a strong momentum.

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**Instrumentation**

Soprano

Flute

Cello

Piano

## Poems

### I. For Eli (Tonight)

Tonight

As I always do -

I look up towards the night sky from the blades of grass on which my body rests. Alone.

It usually seems so black, all darkness, but I just can't say the same about-

Tonight.

The sky has transformed itself from black to a hue of handsome blue.

A shade of sapphire I've only ever seen once here on this earth.

The same azure that rests gently, exclusively in his eyes. Limited edition.

This must be the color of the waves that live in heaven. Little splashes of dark blue majesty, lapping ardently at my heart. Creating flutters of unrequited passion, just so much so that the tiny pangs of longing that they create equate perfectly to the greatest hint of love I'll ever be able to witness here on earth. Still worth it. Still incomprehensible how a mere mortal is allowed to gaze upon the beauty of this color, cobalt.

I cannot say, here in this sky, that the beauty lives within glittering grains of sparkle. For, like his eyes, it's not the luster -but the turquoise tinge - that encapsulates my being entirely. Enrapturing me with a unique disposition composed entirely of safety. Like the shade of a weeping willow comforts me from up above, I'm protected by the navy blue that lives within those eyes.

A cooling sensation washes away the hours of grief I spent in many moments without this shade, without his touch. Blue so far from view.

But tonight

When in the sky, I saw the color of his eyes, I was so struck with wonder. Wonder. Will I ever see something so beautiful again? I also wonder, if the sky, just like those eyes, will lead me straight to heaven.

Tonight - as I always do, I look up towards the night sky from the blades of grass on which my body rests. Alone - but this time I'm not alone. Because the sky that hid itself behind a mask of black revealed itself to me in your unique shade of blue. All because you once saw me, and now, I must see you.



## II. To Witt (These Flowers Still Grow)

Burning roses there you are

Slowly blackening on the hearth

Ashes, dust, we all just are

Wilting roses of the earth

Burning roses there you are

Melted petals drip and fray

Drifting floating fade away

Through it all this this I know

Though wrought with thorns

These flowers still grow

Carrying beauty to the land

Burning roses there you are

Red with color fading fast

Roses bloom even when life is sad

Sorrow like this is ne'er to last

Watching still the time turn back

As all these roses fade to black

**III. Attn: Chase (The Fruit That Was Thusly Planted)**

Watering can fears

Trickle down to

Tend to God's green earth

They can help to form the roots

But only God's green thumb

Can tend to

The fruit that was thusly planted

**IV. Dear Joanna (Oklahoma is OK)**

Oklahoma

Solitary adventure bores me

I am magnetized to my patch of happiness

Family

When I realize it is no longer

My inclination to run

But my duty to stay

Poems used with permission by Morgen Cavanah.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# I. For Eli

Lyrics by Morgen Cavanh

## Tonight

Deborah Ellis

Andante (♩=118)

Soprano

Flute

Cello

Piano

*mf*

*mp*

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped.

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*mf*

\* Simile

11

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

16

*mf*

S

To - night \_\_\_\_\_ as I al - ways do \_\_\_\_\_ I look

Fl.

Vc.

*mp*

Pno.

For Eli

21

S

up to the night sky from the blades of grass on which my bo-dy rests a - lone

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

25

S

It us - ua - lly seems so black all dark - ness \_\_\_\_\_ but

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

For Eli

29 *rit.* *a tempo*

S  
I just can't say the same \_\_\_\_\_ a - bout to - night.

Fl.  
*mp* 3

Vc.

Pno.

33

S

Fl.  
33

Vc.  
33

Pno.  
33



36

S

Fl.

Vc.

*mp*

Pno.

40

S

Fl.

*mf*

Vc.

*mf*

Pno.

44

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

49 *rit.*

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*mf* For Eli

53

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*mf*

This must be the co - lor of the waves that live in hea -

57

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*mp*

ven Lit - tle spla - shes of the dark blue

For Eli

61

S  
ma - jes - ty Lap - ping ar - dent - ly at \_\_\_ my heart

Fl.  
*mf*

Vc.  
*mf*

Pno.

65

S  
*mp* Cre - at - ing flut - ters of un - re - qui - ted pas - sion just so much so that

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

For Eli

69

S

the ti-ny pangs of long - ing e-quat-ing per-fect-ly to the great-est hint of love I'll

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

73

S

e're be a-ble to wit-ness here on earth.

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

For Eli

77 *p* *mf*

S Still worth it. Still in-comp-re-

Fl. *p*

Vc. *p*

Pno. *p* *mf*

82

S hen-si-ble how a mere mor-tal is all-owed to gaze up-on the beau-ty of this col-or

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

86

S  
co - balt \_\_\_\_\_ A cool - ing sen - sa - tion wa - shes a - way the

Fl.  
*mp*

Vc.  
*mp*

Pno.

92

S  
hours of grief I spent ma - ny mo - ments with - out his shade, \_\_\_\_\_

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

For Eli

S  
with - out his touch. Blue so far from view

Fl.  
*mf*

Vc.  
*mf*

Pno.

S

Fl.  
*mf*

Vc.

Pno.  
*mp*

Leg. \* Leg.



106

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

\* Ped.

111

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*mp*

For Eli

116 *mf*

S To - night \_\_\_\_\_ as I al - ways

Fl.

Vc. *mp*

Pno.

121

S do \_\_\_\_\_ I look up to the night sky from the blades of grass on which my

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

125

S

bo-dy rests a - lone But this time I'm not a - lone -

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

130

S

- - The sky that hid it - self be - hind a mask of black re - vealed it - self to

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

For Eli

134

S

me in your u-nique shade of blue. For once you first saw me and

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

138

S

now, I must see you - to - night.

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

# II. To Witt

Lyrics by Morgen Cavanah

## These Flowers Still Grow

Deborah Ellis

**Allegro** (♩ = c. 135)

Soprano

Flute

Cello

Piano

*mp*

*mp*

*p*

Ped. \* Ped.

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

5

5

5

5

\* Ped. \* Ped.

II. To Witt

10

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*mp*

*mp*

*Ped.*

15

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*mp*

*mp*

*Ped.*

II. To Witt

21

S *mf*  
Burn - ing ros - es

Fl.

Vc. *mp*

Pno. *mf* *mp*

Red. \*

27

S  
there you are slow - ly black - en - ing on the hearth

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

Red. \*

II. To Witt

32

S

Ash - es dust - we all just are we all just

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

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

38

S

are

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*Red.* simile



II. To Witt

43 *mf*

S  
Burn - ing ros - es there you are

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

49

S  
melt - ed pet - als drip and fray drift - ing float - ing fade a - way fade \_\_\_\_\_ a -

Fl. *mf*

Vc.

Pno.

II. To Witt

54

S

way

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

59

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*p*

*pizz.*

*cresc.*

II. To Witt

65 *mp*

S Through it \_\_\_\_\_ all this I know Though wrought \_\_\_\_\_ with

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

71 *f*

S thorns \_\_\_\_\_ these flow - ers \_\_\_\_\_ still grow Car - ry - ing

Fl. *mf*

Vc. arco *mf*

Pno. *mf*

II. To Witt

77

S  
beau - ty to the land These flow ers still - grow these

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

83

S  
flow - ers still grow

Fl.

Vc.  
*mp*

Pno.  
*mp*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
Ped. Ped. Ped.

II. To Witt

89 *mp*

S  
Burn - ing ros - es there you are Red with co - lor fa - ding fast

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*Red. Red. Red. Red. Simile*

95

S  
Ros - es bloom when life is sad So - row like this is

Fl.

*mf*

Vc.

Pno.

101

S

ne'er to last ne - ver to last

Fl.

*mp*

Vc.

*mp*

Pno.

107

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

Score

# III. Attn: Chase

Lyrics by Morgen Cavanah

## The Fruit That Was Thusly Planted

Deborah Ellis

Andante (♩ = 90)

Soprano

Flute

Cello

Piano

*p*

*p*

*Ped.* \* *Ped.* \* *simile*

6

S

6

Fl.

6

Vc.

6

Pno.

*p*

*p*

11

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

16

*mp*

S

Wa - - - ter - ing can

Fl.

*p*

Vc.

*p*

Pno.



21 *mf*

S fears \_\_\_\_\_ wa - ter - ing \_\_\_\_\_ can fears \_\_\_\_\_ trick - le down

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

26 *p* *f* *mp*

S trick - le down trick - le down trick - le down trick - le down trick - le down

Fl. *p* *mf* *p* *mp*

Vc.

Pno.

31 *mf*

S  
trick - le down \_\_\_\_\_ to tend to God's green

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

37 *f*

S  
earth \_\_\_\_\_ Tend \_\_\_\_\_ to God's \_\_\_\_\_ green earth \_\_\_\_\_

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

42

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

46

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

*mp*

They

*mf*

*mf*

*mp*

50

S

can help to form

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

54

S

the roots They can help to they can

*mf* *mp*

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

59 *mf*

S  
help form they can help to \_\_\_\_\_ form \_\_\_\_\_ the

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

65 *mf*

S  
roots \_\_\_\_\_ on - ly God's green thumb

Fl. *mf*

Vc.

Pno.

69 *p* *f*

S  
on - ly God's green thumb \_\_\_\_\_ on - ly God's green thumb \_\_\_\_\_

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

73

S  
Can tend to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ fruit \_\_\_\_\_ that was

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

77 *mf*

S  
thu - sly plan - ted \_\_\_\_\_ But on - ly God's green thumb can

Fl. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

Pno. *mf*

83

S  
tend to the fruit that was thus - ly plant - ed

Fl.

Vc.

Pno. *p*

III. Attn: Chase

89 *ff*

S  
On - ly God's green thumb

Fl. *f*

Vc. *f*

Pno. *f*

95

S  
can tend to the fruit

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.



101 **Lento** *espress.*

S On-ly God's green - thumb\_\_ can tend to\_\_ the fruit that was

Fl. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

Pno. *pp*

107

S thu - sly thu - sly plan\_\_ ted On - ly God\_\_\_\_\_ can tend\_\_ to\_\_ the

Fl. 107

Vc. 107

Pno. 107

113

S

fruit that was thusly plan - ted

113

Fl.

113

Vc.

113

Pno.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a vocal and instrumental ensemble. The page is titled 'III. Attn: Chase' and is page number 45. The score is for measures 113-115. The vocal line (Soprano, S) is in treble clef and contains the lyrics 'fruit that was thusly plan - ted'. The instrumental parts for Flute (Fl.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.) are shown in their respective staves. The Flute and Violoncello parts have a few notes in measures 113 and 115. The Piano part is mostly silent, with some notes in measures 113 and 115. The tempo/mood marking '113' is placed above the first measure of each part.

# IV. Dear Joanna

Lyrics by Morgen Cavanah

## OKlahoma is OK

Deborah Ellis

**Spirito** (♩=138)

Soprano

Flute

Cello

Piano

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

IV. Dear Joanna

11 *mf*

S

So - li - ta - ry ad - ven - ture bores me

Fl.

*mf*

Vc.

Pno.

*mp*

16

S

I am mag - ne - tized to my place of hap - pi - ness

Fl.

Vc.

*mf*

Pno.

IV. Dear Joanna

21 *f* *mf*

S Fam - i - ly fa - mi - ly

21 *mf* *mp*

Fl.

21 *p* *mp*

Vc.

21 *p* *mp*

Pno.

26

S

26 *mp*

Fl.

26 *mp*

Vc.

26 *mp*

Pno.

IV. Dear Joanna

31 *mp* *mf*

S  
When I re - a - lize it is no long - er ——— When I re - a - lize it is no

Fl.

Vc.

Pno. *mp*

36 *f*

S  
long - er ——— My in - cli - na - tion is to run -

Fl.

Vc.

Pno. *mf* *f*

IV. Dear Joanna

40

S Grandly *mf* *a tempo*

But my du - ty is - to stay \_\_\_\_\_

Fl. *mf*

Vc.

Pno. (8<sup>va</sup>) Slow gliss.

46

S

Fl. *mp*

Vc. *mp*

Pno. *pp*

51

S

51

Fl.

51

Vc.

*p*

*pp*

51

Pno.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, titled 'IV. Dear Joanna', is page 51. It features four staves: Soprano (S), Flute (Fl.), Violin (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The Soprano part consists of three whole rests. The Flute and Violin parts play a melodic line starting on a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, Bb4, and C5, then a half note Bb4, and finally a half note G4 with a fermata. The Flute part is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Violin part is marked with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The Piano part features a complex texture with multiple voices in the right hand, including sixteenth-note patterns and sustained chords, while the left hand has three whole rests.