

Ellen Ruth Harrison

PROMISE SONG

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for treble voice and piano

2020

Commissioned by Salon 21
Jill Jantzen, Artistic Director

Text by Don Bogen
from *Immediate Song*
published by Milkweed Editions, 2019

Don Bogen's poem has a very claustrophobic feel to it that I have tried to express in the music. The static quality of the harmony and the repetitive gestures create an ominous atmosphere from which the singer and pianist break out in several anxiety-ridden phrases only to succumb once again to the sinister mood of the earlier music.

My heartfelt thanks go to Jill Jantzen and Don Bogen for asking me to write this piece and to Kate Tombaugh for giving it voice.

Duration: circa 6 minutes
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PROMISE SONG

When the taps ran blood
she set her books on fire--
then she was in a white place
where everyone lied.

Words, words, words:
smoke puffed out from mouths,
stick figures of her name
in riot on the forms.

The fat door hides the rules
under its mattress pad.
A conference room is calm.
If you promise, they said,

and told me in the silence
after they put her back,
*Don't listen--everything
she tells you is a lie.*

-- Don Bogen

for Don

Promise Song

Don Bogen

Ellen Ruth Harrison

♩ = 72 Claustrophobic

The first system of the musical score is in 3/4 time. It features a vocal line on a single treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves (treble and bass clefs). The piano part begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and includes a *mp* dynamic. A *Ped.* (pedal) marking is present at the bottom of the piano part. The vocal line is mostly rests in this system.

7

The second system begins at measure 7. The vocal line starts with the lyrics "When the taps ran blood,—" and "when the taps ran". The piano accompaniment features a piano (*p*) dynamic. The system concludes with a *Ped.* marking.

13

The third system begins at measure 13. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "blood" and "she set her books on fire,—" and "she set her books on fire". The piano accompaniment features dynamics of *mp*, *mf*, and *f*. The system concludes with a *Ped.* marking.

18

rit. A tempo ♩ = 72

When the taps ran blood, ran

24

mp

Più mosso ♩ = 84

rit.

A tempo ♩ = 72

mf

blood, _

When the

30

taps ran blood she set her books on fire

35 *mp* *mf*

then she was in a white place

41 *mp* *f*

where ev'-ry-one lied

47 *pp* *mf* *mp*

Più mosso (♩ = 88) *A tempo* (♩ = 88)
poco accel. . . . *f*

Words, words,

53

poco accel. . . A tempo

poco accel.

words, _____ Words, words, _____ words:

mf *f*

58

A tempo

mf

f

smoke___ puffed out from mouths,___ stick

ff *mp* *mf*

1/2 Pedal

62

rit.

fi-gures of her name___ in ri-ot, ri - ot on the___ forms.

p

67 $\text{♩} = 72$

p *mp*

When the taps ran blood ran blood The

73

mf *mp*

fat door hides the rules un-der its mat-tress pad. A con-frence room is

78

mf *mp* *mf* *accel.*

calm. If you pro-mise, they said, if you pro-mise, you

6
83 $\text{♩} = 84$
f
pro - mise, pro - mise,
f *mp* *mp*
p
Ped. 6

89 *mp* *mf* rit.
Words, words, words Words, words, words
mp *p* *mf* *mp* *p*
1/2 Pedal 6 1/2 Pedal

93 $\text{♩} = 72$, Semplice
mp
and told me in the si-lence af - ter they put her back,
p
Ped. Ped.

99

p Don't lis - ten, *mp* don't lis - ten, don't lis - ten, *p*

105

p don't lis - ten *p* ev'-

112

mp ry-thing she tells you, ev'-ry-thing she tells you, like a bell

117 *mf* *mp* *p*

ev'-ry-thing is a lie. When the taps ran blood, ran

mf *p*

Ped. Ped.

123 *mp*

blood.

pp *pp*

127

pp