

Ellen Ruth Harrison

Her Cowboy Boots

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HER COWBOY BOOTS

for mezzo-soprano and piano

Text from "Thirteen Ways of Looking at Cowboy Boots"

(Hat tipped to Wallace Stevens)

by Ellen Austin-Li

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Her Cowboy Boots was composed in November 2019 for the Cincinnati songSLAM, a collaboration between Cincinnati Song Initiative and Sparks & Wiry Cries. My heartfelt thanks go to Ellen Austin-Li for giving me permission to set her poem and to Ellen Graham and Matthew Umphreys, the wonderful performers who are part of my songSLAM team.

Duration: circa 3.5 minutes

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I.

Among the crowd of footwear
standing in her closet,
she chooses the androgynous black cowboy boots.

II.

She was of two minds,
like her stylish yet functional
leather cowboy boots.

IV.

A woman and a pair of shoes
are one.
A woman and her pair of cowboy boots
are at least two.

V.

She doesn't know which she prefers,
the seductress in high-heeled boots,
or the shit-kicking, tough-talking cowgirl
ruling in her cowboy boots,
or both.

VII.

O Cowboys of the Wild West,
could you have imagined over a hundred years hence
a gentlewoman wearing your boots, prancing around, shopping,
dancing, loving in the boots you rode brokeback saddle in?

IX.

When the cowboy boots are put away,
the imprint of their power remains
on her choices.

Her Cowboy Boots

Ellen Austin-Li

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♩. = 84, with a swagger

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 1-6) features a vocal line starting with a rest, followed by the lyrics 'A-mong the crowd of'. The piano accompaniment includes a treble clef with chords and a bass clef with a steady eighth-note bass line. The second system (measures 7-12) has lyrics 'foot-wear stand-ing in her clo-set,'. The piano accompaniment continues with similar textures, including a dynamic change to *p* in measure 10. The third system (measures 13-18) has lyrics 'she choos-es the an-dro-gyn-ous cow boy_'. The piano accompaniment features a more active treble line and a consistent bass line. Dynamics include *mf*, *p*, and *f*.

19

boots.

f *mf*

25

mf

She was of two _____ minds, _____ like her

mf *mf*

31

styl-ish yet func-tion - al _____ leath - er cow - boy _____ boots.

mp *mf* *mp* *mf*

37

mp A wo - man and her pair of shoes *mf* are one.

43

mp A wo - man and her pair of cow - boy boots *f* are

49

at least two *f* *mf* *mf*

55

f
She does - n't know which she pre - fers, — the se -

60

duct-ress in high - heeled boots, or the shit - kick - ing,

65

tough-talk-ing cow-girl — rul - ing — in her cow - boy — boots,

71

mp or — both *f* or — both

p *mp* *f* *mf* *mp*

77

mp O — Cow - boys — of the Wild — West,

p *mp*

82

— could you have i - ma-gined o-ver a hun-dred years hence — a gen - tle-

p *mf* *mf*

87

wo - man_ wear - ing your boots, pranc ing a - round, _____ shop - ping,

This system contains five measures of music. The vocal line features a melody with eighth and quarter notes, including a half note with a fermata. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands, with dynamic markings like *v* and *f*.

92

dan - cing, lov - ing _____ in the boots you rode broke - back

This system contains five measures of music. The vocal line continues with a melody that includes a half note with a fermata. The piano accompaniment features a more active bass line and dynamic markings such as *f* and *mf*.

97

sad - dle_ in?

This system contains five measures of music. The vocal line has a melody that ends with a half note and a fermata. The piano accompaniment includes a dynamic marking of *f* and concludes with a final chord.

103 $\text{♩} = 66$, pensive *p* *mp* *p*

When the cow-boy_ boots are put a - way, the

pp

Ped.

109 *mp* *p* *mp*

im - print of their pow-er re - mains_ on_ her choic - es_ on her

115 *p*

choic - es_ on her choic - es.