

SONGS FOR THE MERMAID TAVERN

Five Keats Settings for Voice and Piano

Poems by
JOHN KEATS

Music by
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John Keats was born in London in 1795 and died of tuberculosis in Rome in 1821, where he had gone to seek a better climate.

The poems chosen demonstrate the range of Keats' poetic talent, from the musings on life and love of "In Drear-nighted December" and "When I Have Fears" to the magic and mystery in his feline friend; from the silly doggerel of "Song About Myself", written for his sister, to the celebration of fellow poets in "Lines on the Mermaid Tavern", a famous drinking place in London, said to have been a favorite of Shakespeare.

SONGS FOR THE MERMAID TAVERN was composed in State College, Pennsylvania and New York City in January and February 2009.

In Drear-nighted December

In drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity;
The north cannot undo them
With a sleety whistle through them;
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

In drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look;
But with a sweet forgetting, \\\nThey stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.

Ah! would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Writh'd not of passed joy?
The feel of not to feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numbed sense to steel it,
Was never said in rhyme.

Sonnet to a Cat

Cat! who hast pass'd thy grand climacteric,
How many mice and rats hast in thy days
Destroy'd? - How many tit bits stolen? Gaze
With those bright languid segments green, and prick
Those velvet ears - but prythee do not stick
Thy latent talons in me - and upraise
Thy gentle mew - and tell me all thy frays
Of fish and mice, and rats and tender chick.
Nay, look not down, nor lick thy dainty wrists -
For all the wheezy asthma, - and for all
Thy tail's tip is nick'd off - and though the fists
Of many a maid have given thee many a maul,
Still is that fur as soft as when the lists
In youth thou enter'dst on glass bottled wall.

When I Have Fears

When I have fears that I may cease to be
 Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,
 Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
 Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!
 That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
 Of unreflecting love! – then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

Song about Myself

1.

There was a naughty Boy,
A naughty boy was he,
He would not stop at
home,
He could not quiet be –
He took
In his Knapsack
A Book
Full of vowels
And a shirt
With some towels –
A slight cap
For night cap –
A hair brush,
Comb ditto,
New Stockings
For old ones
Would split O!
This Knapsack
Tight at his back
He rivetted close
And followed his Nose
To the North,
To the North,
And follow'ed his nose
To the North.

2.

There was a naughty boy
And a naughty boy was he,
For nothing would he do
But scribble poetry –
He took
An ink stand
In his hand
And a pen
Big as ten
In the other,
And away
In a Pother

He ran
To the mountains
And fountains
And ghostes
And Postes
And witches
And ditches
And wrote
In his coat
When the weather
Was cool,
Fear of gout,
And without
When the weather
Was warm –
Och the charm
When we choose
To follow one's nose
To the north,
To the north,
To follow one's nose
To the north!

3.

There was a naughty boy
And a naughty boy was he,
He kept little fishes
In washing tubs three
In spite
Of the might
Of the maid
Nor afraid
Of his Granny-good –
He often would
Hurly burly
Get up early
And go
By hook or crook
To the brook
And bring home
Miller's thumb,

Tittlebat
Not over fat,
Minnows small
As the stall
Of a glove,
Not above
The size
Of a nice
Little Baby's
Little fingers –
O he made
'Twas his trade
Of Fish a pretty Kettle
A Kettle
Of Fish a pretty Kettle
A Kettle!

4.

There was a naughty Boy,
And a naughty Boy was he,
He ran away to Scotland
The people for to see –
There he found
That the ground
Was as hard,
That a yard
Was as long,
That a song
Was as merry,
That a cherry
Was as red –
That lead
Was as weighty,
That fourscore
Was as eighty,
That a door
Was as wooden
As in England –
So he stood in his shoes
And he wonder'd,
He wonder'd,
He stood in his shoes
And he wonder'd.

Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
Have ye tippled drink more fine
Than mine host's Canary wine?
Or are fruits of Paradise
Sweeter than those dainty pies
Of venison? O generous food!
Drest as though bold Robin Hood
Would, with his maid Marian,
Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
Mine host's signboard flew away,
Nobody knew whither, till
An astrologer's old quill
To a sheepskin gave the story,
Said he saw you in your glory,
Underneath a new old sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

1. In Drear-nighted December

John Keats (1795-1821)

Bruce Trinkley

Adagio con moto $\text{♩} = 66$ *p*

Voice

In drear - night-ed De - cem - ber,____ Too

Piano

p

5

mp

hap - py, hap - py tree,____ Thy branch - es ne'er____ re - mem - ber____ Their

cresc. *mp*

9

p *cresc. poco a poco*

green fe - lic - i - ty;____ The north can-not un - do them____ With a

pp

13 *mf* *dim.*

sleet - y whis - tle through them; Nor froz - en thaw - ings glue them From

8va

mp

17 *mp* *dim.* *p* *pp*

bud - ding at the prime. In drear - night - ed De -

21 *poco cresc.*

cem - ber, Too hap - py, hap - py brook, Thy

24 *mp* *dim.* *p poco cresc.* *mp dim.*

bub - blings ne'er re - mem - ber A - pol - lo's sum - mer

27 *p* *cresc. poco a poco*

look; _____ But with a sweet for - get - ting, _____ They

30 *p* *cresc. poco a poco* *f*

stay their crys - tal fret - ting, _____ Nev - er, nev - er

33 *mf* *dim.*

pet - ting _____ A - bout the froz - en

35 *pochiss. rit. mp a tempo* *dim.*

time, _____ Ah! would 'twere so with man - y _____ A

p *pochiss. rit. a tempo* *p* *sombre, sonore*

39 gen - tle girl and boy! But were there ev - er an - y With'd

simile

43 *dim.* not of pass - ed joy? The feel of not to feel it, When *p*

dim. *p cresc. poco a poco*

47 *f* *anguished* there is none to heal it, Nor numb - ed sense to steel it, Was *mf*

f

51 *calando al fine* *mp* *rit.* nev - er said in rhyme. Was nev - er said in rhyme. *p*

mp dim. al fine *rit.* *p*

2. Sonnet to a Cat

For Voice and Piano

John Keats (1795-1821)

Bruce Trinkley

Adagio di gatto ♩ = 66

15^{ma} ----- ,

Piano

*mf**p*

4 *f* *mf*

Cat! who hast pass'd thy grand cli - mac - ter - ic,

mf

5

How man-y mice and rats hast in thy days De - stroy'd?

f

7 *mp*
How ma-ny tit bits stol - en? Gaze With those bright lan - guid

sub. p *mf* *p*

9 *mf*
seg - ments green, and prick Those vel - vet

cresc.

11 *poco rit.* *a tempo*
ears, but pr'y - thee do not stick Thy

poco rit. *a tempo*
mf *mp*

13
la - tent tal - ons in me. and up -

15 *poco rit.* *mp*

raise Thy gen - tle mew and

grazioso

17 *cresc. poco a poco* *a tempo*

tell me all thy frays Of fish and mice, and rats and ten - der

a tempo

p cresc. poco a poco

19 *f* *mf* *rit.* *mp*

chick. Nay, look not down, nor lick thy dain - ty wrists, For

f *mf* *rit.* *dim.*

22 **Meno mosso** ♩ = 60

all the wheez - y asth - ma, and for all Thy tail's tip is

mp

Poco piu mosso $\text{♩} = 66$

25 *p* *poco rit.* *mp* *mf*

nick'd off, and though the fists Of man - y a maid have giv - en thee man - y a

poco rit.

28 *poco rit.* *a tempo* **Marziale** $\text{♩} = 100$ *mf*

maul, Still is that fur as soft as when the lists In

poco rit. *a tempo* *poco marcato*

32 *cresc.* *allarg.*

youth thou en - ter'dst on glass bot - tled

mf *cresc.* *allarg.*

35 *f* *a tempo*

wall.

a tempo *f* *mf* *8va*

3. When I Have Fears

John Keats (1795 - 1821)

Bruce Trinkley

Andante espressivo ♩ = 84-92
mp freely, espressivo

Voice

When I have fears that I may cease to be -

Piano

mf *mp*

6 fore my pen has glean'd my teem - ing brain, Be - fore high - piled books, in char - ac -

11 *mf* *mp*

t'ry, Hold like rich gar - ners the full - rip - en'd grain; When

mf

3/4 3/4

16

I be-hold, up-on the night's starr'd face, _____ Huge cloud-y sym-bols of a high ro-mance, And

p dolce

20

think that I may nev-er live to trace Their shad-ows, _____ with the mag-ic hand of

cresc. mf poco rit. mp a tempo

mp poco rit. a tempo

24

chance; _____ And when I feel, fair crea-ture of an hour! That I shall nev-er

p poco cresc.

p dolce

29

look up-on thee more, Nev-er have rel-ish in the faer-y power Of

mf

35 *mf cresc.* *f* *mp*

un - re - flect - ing love! _____ then on the shore _____

cresc. *f* *sub. p*

41 *cresc.*

_____ Of the wide world I stand a - lone, _____ and think _____

cresc.

47 *f* *p*

_____ Till Love and Fame to

f *p*

51 *rit.*

noth - ing - ness do sink. _____

rit. *pp*

4. Song About Myself

John Keats (1795-1821)

Bruce Trinkley

Quasi recitativo ♩ = 80
mp playfully

Voice: There was a naugh-ty Boy, A naugh-ty boy was he, He

Piano: *mf* *mp*

Adagio con moto ♩ = 69

6 would not stop at home, He could not qui - et be. He took In his Knap-sack A

ritmico *mp*

11 Book Full of vowels And a shirt With some towels, A slight cap For night cap, A

mf *mf*

16

hair brush, Comb dit - to, New Stock-ings For old ones Would split O! This Knap-sack Tight at his

Piu mosso $\text{♩} = 76$

21

f

back _____ He riv - et - ted close And fol - lowed his Nose To the North, To the North, And

25

mf **Con brio** $\text{♩} = 116$

fol-low'ed his nose To the North. _____ There was a naugh-ty boy And a

30

naugh - ty boy was he, For noth - ing would he do But scrib - ble po - et -

35

cresc. poco a poco

ry, He took An ink stand In his hand And a pen Big as

cresc. poco a poco

40

ten In the oth - er, And a - way in a Poth - er He

f *rit.*

With abandon $\text{♩} = 96$

45 *mf*

ran To the moun-tains And foun-tains And ghost-es And Post-es And witch-es And ditch-es And

f *mf*

49

wrote In his coat _____ When the weath-er Was cool, Fear ____ of gout, And with-out When the

f *mf*

53

weath - er Was warm, Och the charm When we choose To

p *mf*

56

fol - low one's nose To the north, To the north, To fol - low one's nose To the

p *mf*

59 **Meno mosso** ♩ = 88 *mf*

north! There was a naugh-ty boy And a

mp *sempre secco*

65 *sub. mp*

naugh-ty boy was he, He kept lit - tle fish - es In wash - ing tubs three In

Con moto ♩ = 80*cresc. poco a poco*

71 spite Of the might Of the maid Nor a - fraid Of his Gran - ny-good, He of - ten would

sub. p cresc. poco a poco

75 Hur - ly bur - ly Get up ear - ly And go By hook or crook To the brook And bring home MiHer's

f pochiss. rit. mp a tempo cresc. poco a poco

f pochiss. rit. a tempo mp cresc. poco a poco senza pedale

80 thumb, Tit-tle-bat Not o - ver fat, Min - nows small As the stall Of a glove, Not a -

mf mp cresc. poco a poco

84 bove The size Of a nice Lit-tle Ba - by's Lit - tle fin - gers, O he made 'Twas his trade Of

mf f

89 *dim. poco a poco* *mf* *mp*

Fish a pret - ty Ket - tle A Ket - tle Of Fish a pret - ty Ket - tle A

94 *molto rit.* *freely* **Come prima** ♩ = 80

Ket - tle! There was a naugh-ty Boy, And a naugh-ty Boy was

99 *espressivo* *mf* **Galloping** ♩ = 92

he, He ran a-way to Scot-land The peo-ple for to see.

105 *non cresc.*

There he found That the ground Was as hard, That a yard Was as long, That a

non cresc.

110 *mp*

song Was as mer - ry, That a cher - ry Was as red, That lead Was as

p

115

weigh - ty, That four - score Was as eight - y, That a door Was as wood - en As in

piu p

120 **Meno mosso** *p*

Eng - land, So he stood in his shoes And he won - der'd, He won - der'd, He

pp

125 *allarg. al fine*

stood in his shoes And he won - der'd.

allarg. al fine

8vb

5. Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

John Keats (1795-1821)

Bruce Trinkley

Moderato quasi brindisi ♩ = 152 *mf*

Voice

Souls of Po - ets dead and gone,

Piano

mf sempre sonore *mp simile*

5

What E - ly - sium have ye known, Hap - py field or moss - y cav-ern, Choic - er than the

10

poco cresc.

Mer - maid Tav-ern? Have ye tip - pled drink more fine

mf *mp poco cresc.*

14 *f* *mf poco cresc.*

Than mine host's Ca - nar - y wine? Or are fruits of

mf *mp poco cresc.*

17 *f* *dim. poco rit.*

Par - a - dise Sweet - er than those dain - ty pies Of

mf *dim. poco rit.*

20 *a tempo mf* *f* *mf poco cresc.*

ven - i - son? O gen - er - ous food! Drest as though bold Rob - in Hood

a tempo mp *mf* *mp*

24 *f* *mf*

Would, with his maid Mar - i - an, Sup and bowse from horn and

mf *mp*

Piu mosso $\text{♩} = 152$

28 *molto rit.* *mp* *cresc.*
 can. I have heard that on a day Mine host's sign - board

32 *f* *p* *simile* *cresc.*
 flew a - way, No-bod - y knew whith - er, till An as - trol - o - ger's old

36 *cresc. poco a poco* *mf*
 quill To a sheep - skin gave the sto - ry, Said he saw you in your

40 *f* *dim.*
 glo - ry, Un-der - neath a new old sign Sip-ping bev - er - age di -

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The voice part is in a single staff with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The score is divided into four systems, each starting with a measure number in a box (28, 32, 36, 40). The tempo is marked 'Piu mosso' with a quarter note equal to 152 beats per minute. The dynamics range from *mp* (mezzo-piano) to *f* (forte). The tempo changes include *molto rit.* (molto ritardando) and *cresc.* (crescendo). The piano part features various textures, including chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines. The lyrics are written below the voice staff, with some words hyphenated across lines. The score ends with a double bar line and a key signature change to two flats (B-flat, E-flat).

44 *poco rit.* *mp* *a tempo*

vine, _____ And pledg - ing with con - tent - ed smack The Mer - maid in the

poco rit. *a tempo*

p

48 *poco rit.* **Moderato** ♩ = 152 *sempre p sotto voce*

Zo - di - ac. Souls of Po - ets dead and gone, What E - ly - sium

poco rit. *pp*

52

have ye known, Hap - py field or moss - y cav - ern,

55 *allarg.*

Choic - er than the Mer - maid Tav - ern?

allarg.