# Spitfire Irene a song cycle

for Solo Soprano (with overtones)

Adam Strickson Edward Caine

a song cycle for solo soprano

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Words: Adam Strickson Music: Edward Caine

Duration: 18'

Seven songs tell the life story of a woman who is ninety in the year 2011. At the beginning of the Second World War, like Amy Johnson, she was an 'Attagirl', one of the select ATA (Air Transport Auxiliary) female pilots delivering Spitfires, Hurricanes and Lancasters to airfields all over Britain. Over the course of a long life, she has experienced many loves and letdowns, but perhaps her greatest love was her Spitfire.

'Spitfire Irene' is a character featured in the full length music-theatre piece, Flight Paths, which has been commissioned by imove and forms part of the **Wingbeats** project for the Cultural Olympiad. For more information go to <a href="https://www.imoveand.com/p/wingbeats">www.imoveand.com/p/wingbeats</a>

**Spitfire Irene** was written as part of the Leeds based composer-poet collaboration project 'As in waking dream' (subtitle: A Woman's Life and Love) in which six poets and composers got together to produce responses to Schumann's 'Frauenliebe und Leben'. The cycle was premiered on 23/5/11 at the Assembly Rooms in Leeds by soprano Peyee Chen, in cooperation with Opera North.

Adam Strickson: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/pci/staff/staff\_astrickson.html

Edward Caine: http://www.edwardcaine.com/

# Or 'A woman's love and life'

Adam Strickson

# 1. I was my own Wendy.

I was my own Wendy, all summer froth and loveliness, a Never-Never girl in a silky dress with peacock feathers from a fancy ball who parted curtains on the garden wall.

Oh the staccato of that hurtling fall!
Oh the shamefulness of that skirt-up sprawl!

I was my own Wendy: a spanking for the grass stains, a week of horrid ankle pains.

I was my own Wendy: always knew that courage stings, always knew I'd do great things, always knew I'd find my wings.

### 2. Darling of the air

Convent school.
'Doing an Amy'.
Stuck out my arms.
Flew across the quad.

I was a darling of the air.

Flying lessons. Went solo. Took a Tiger high. Played with clouds.

I was a darling of the air.

War. Joined up. Air Transport Auxiliary. Ferried planes to men. Risked neck.

I was a darling of the air.

Flew unarmed.
No radio. No instruments.
Frontline delivery.
Loved every moment.

I was a darling of the air,

#### 3. You moved. I moved.

You moved. I moved. My glorious Spitfire. How snug! How thrilling! The tremor in your wings!

You moved. I moved.
My Spit...spit...fire!
With my swept back curls
I was your Attagir!

You moved. I moved. My Spitter! My fire! Your metal loveliness trembled with eagerness!

\*

Perhaps it was never meant that I learnt to feel free inside you.

You moved. I moved.

How I learnt to feel free inside you!

### 4. In such a night.

In such a night

In such a night

The music at the Lansdowne
The way he put his drink down
My dashing magpie frock
He squeezed my stocking top

In such a night

In such a night

The scratch of his lapel The rush in the hotel My silly need to know His ardent wish to go

In such a night

In such a night

He had no music in himself

He had no music

#### 5. Stuck

He cut off my wings, left me with a child in the incessant drizzle of a valley where the sun slept for ten long months.

I never dreamt it would end like that, stuck in a cold mansion above the shoe mills and bowed heads of a Lancashire town.

Sometimes my muscles stretched like seabirds and the wind in the sky of my skin swirled though he threw me onto the stone flags.

He threw me onto the stone flags and never came home.

I looked at my daughter sleeping and felt desperately alone

so desperately alone, stuck in a cold mansion above the shoe mills and bowed heads of a Lancashire town.

# 6.Losing altitude

A woman's task is the task in hand and that has killed me slowly, day after day, year after year, flying blind against the wind: caught in a bad marriage, briefly happy in a second but always losing altitude, flying blind against the wind.

When I cried at the kitchen sink, I lost altitude.

When a greenfinch died in my hands, I lost altitude.

When my daughter left for Canada, I lost altitude.

I always thought I'd save myself before my plane burst into flames.

#### 7. Woman much missed.

Oh Wendy girl, Attagirl, Spitter girl, sky high girl

Woman much missed

how you call to me

call to me I'm ninety now, ninety, ninety!

When I pluck the sparrow's tail, I feel my six stone body fail but woolly sleeves hide hidden wings and deep inside a bird still sings.

I'm ninety now, ninety, ninety!

Oh Wendy girl, Attagirl, Spitter girl, sky high girl

Woman much missed

how you call to me

call to me

call to me

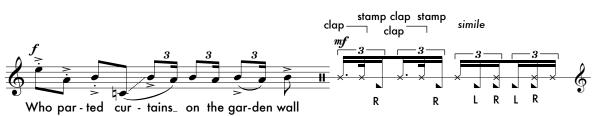
I spread my wings, become my love, my life, myself.

a song cycle for solo soprano

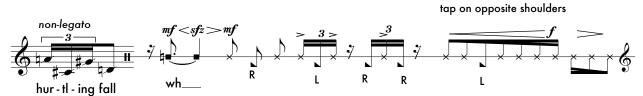
# 1. I Was My Own Wendy

Adam Strickson Edward Caine

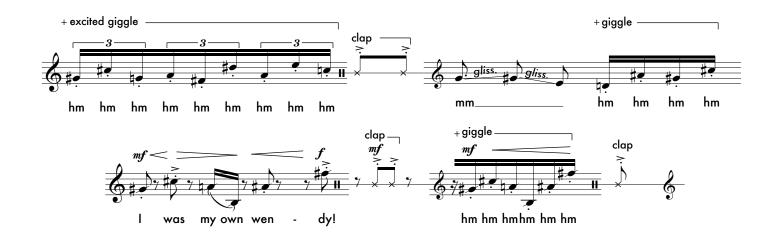


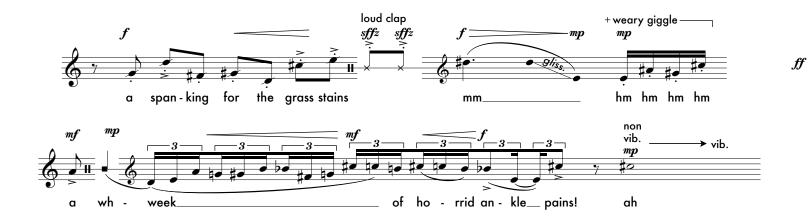


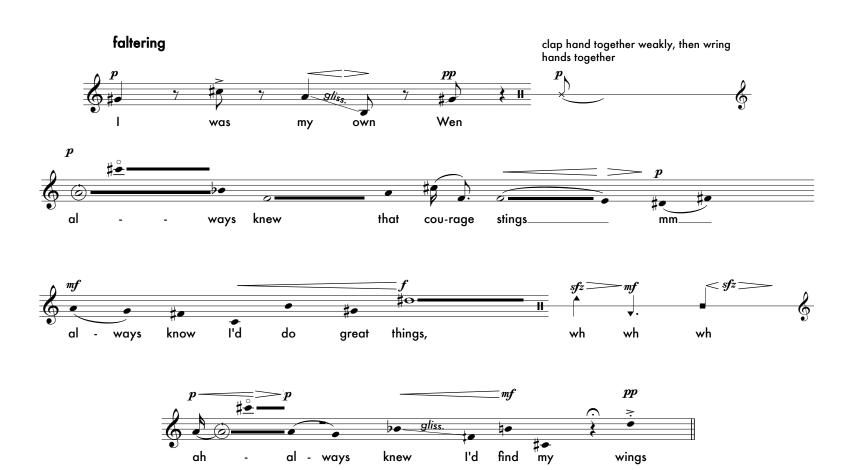




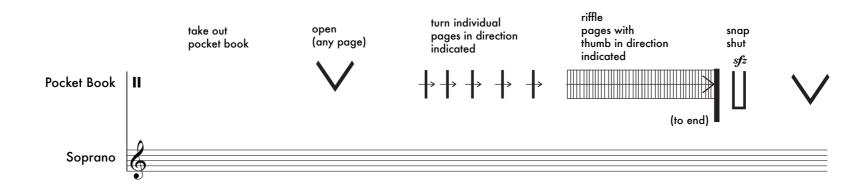


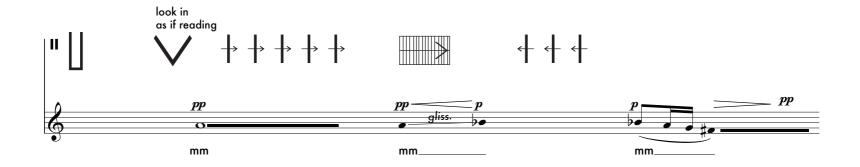


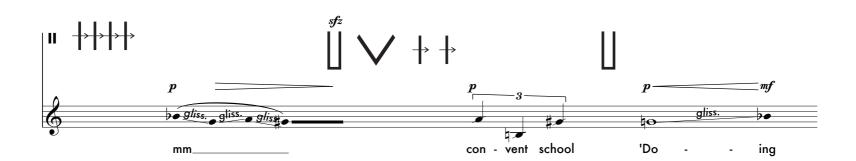


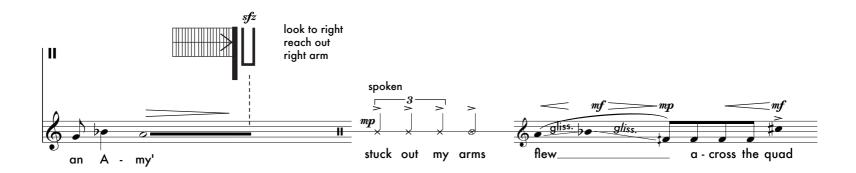


# 2. Darling of the Air



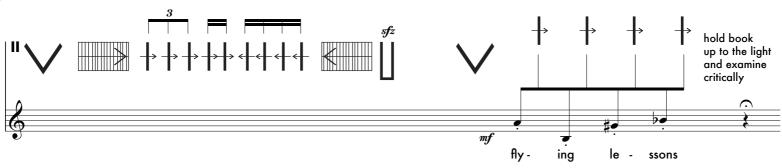


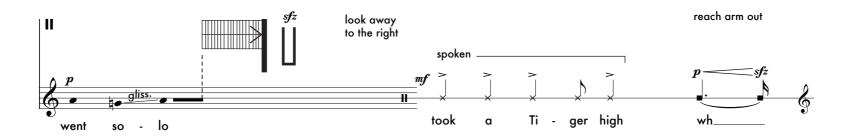


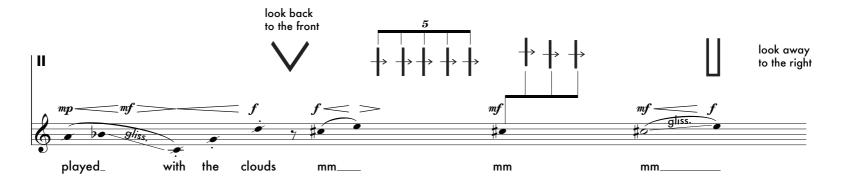


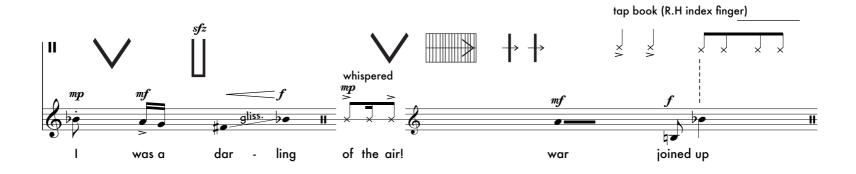


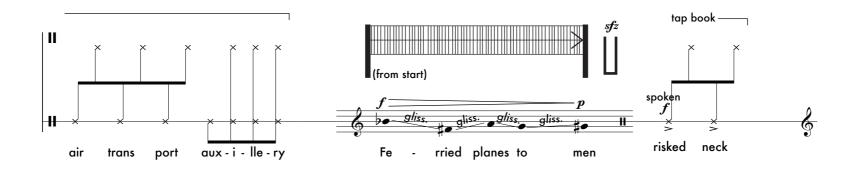


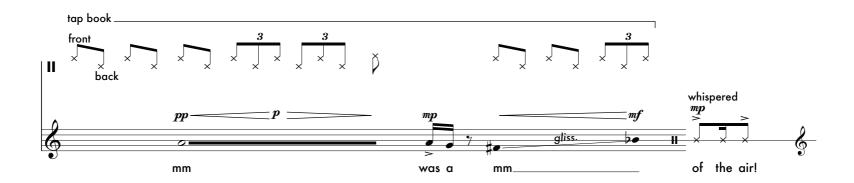


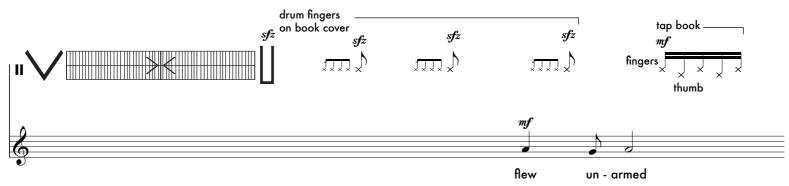


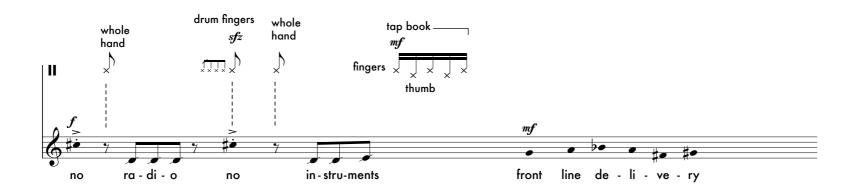


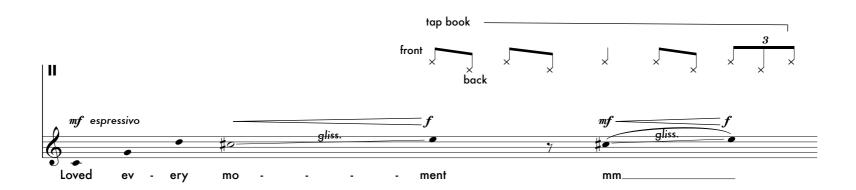


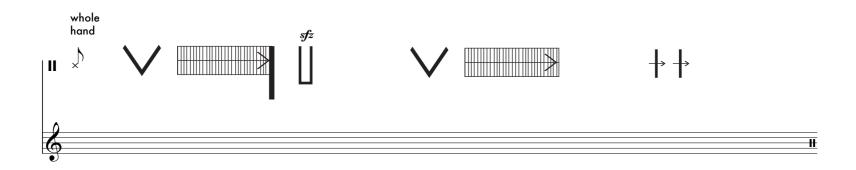


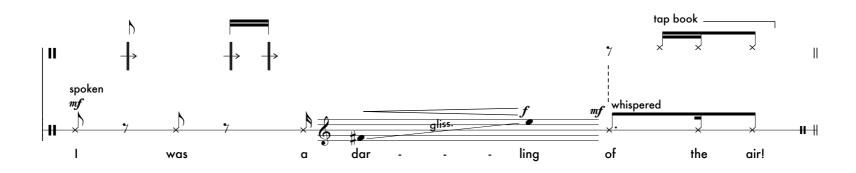






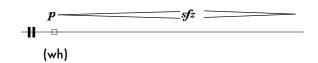


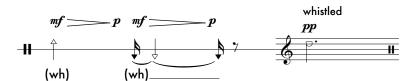




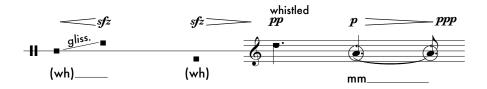
# 3. You Moved, I Moved

# free tempo, quite slow

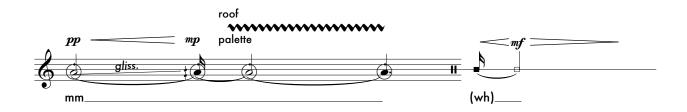




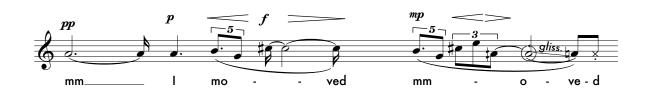


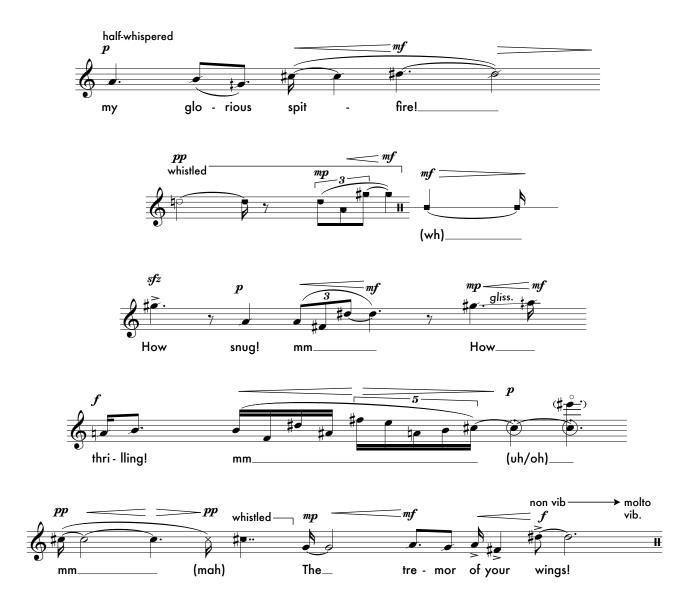




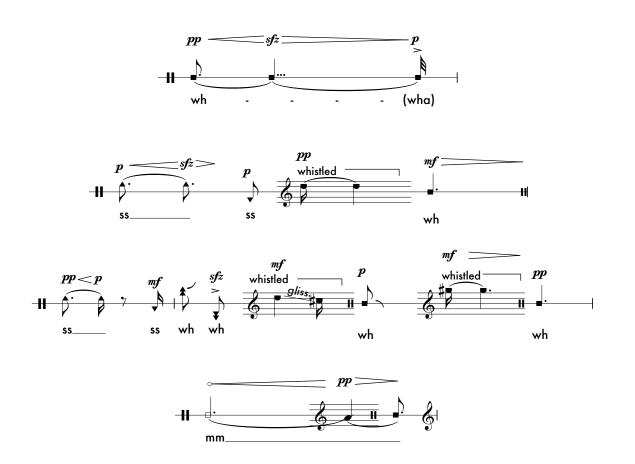


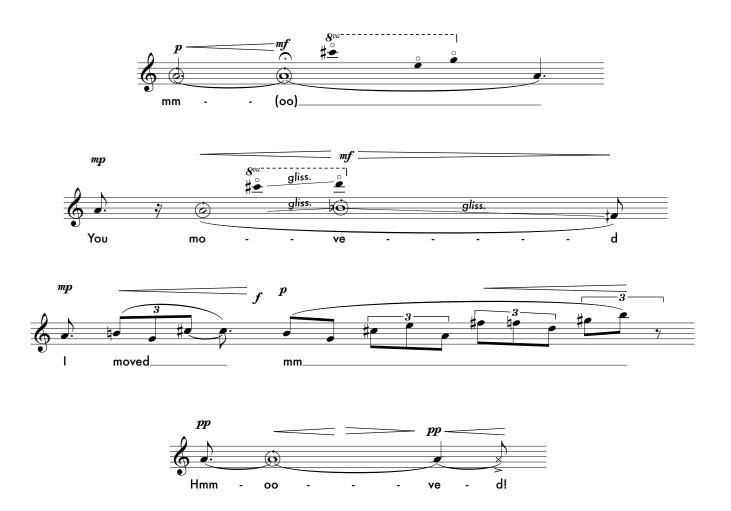




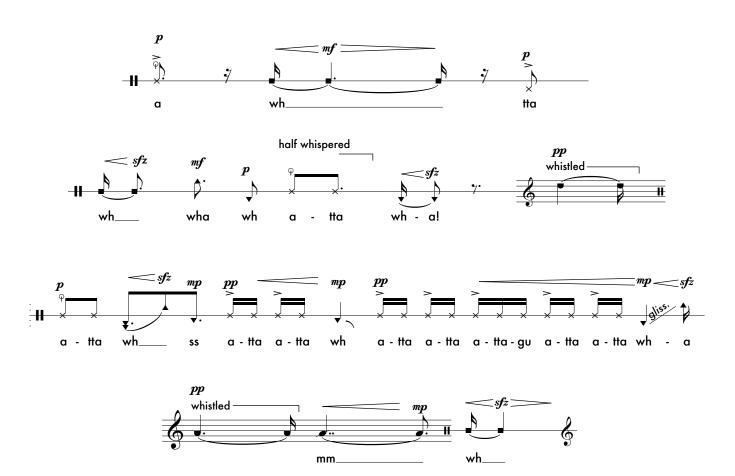


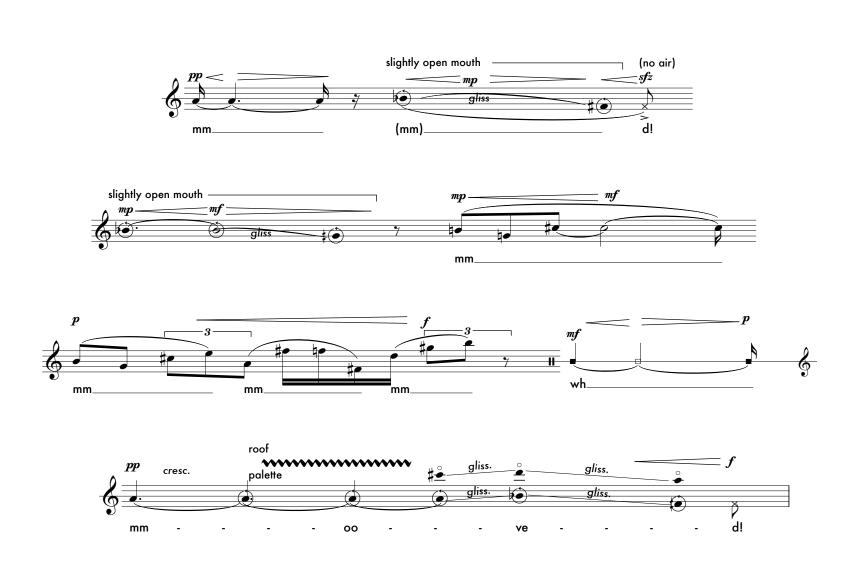
[attacca]

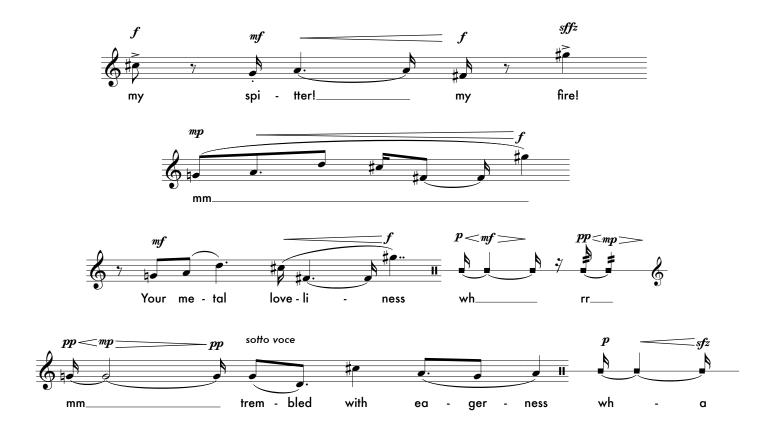


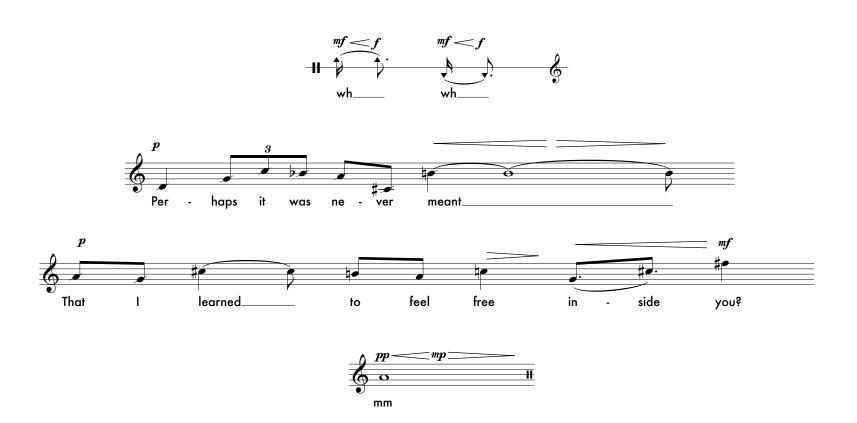


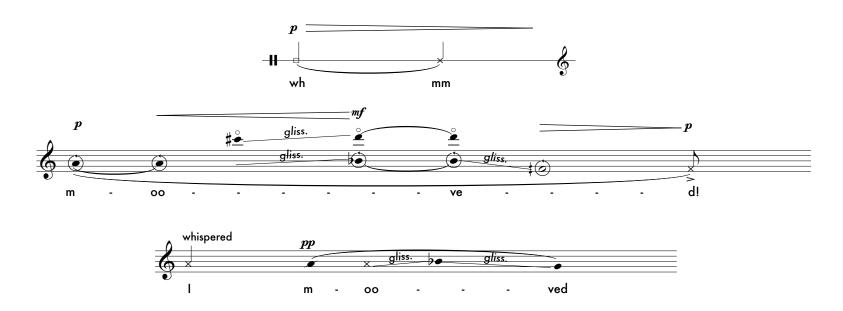






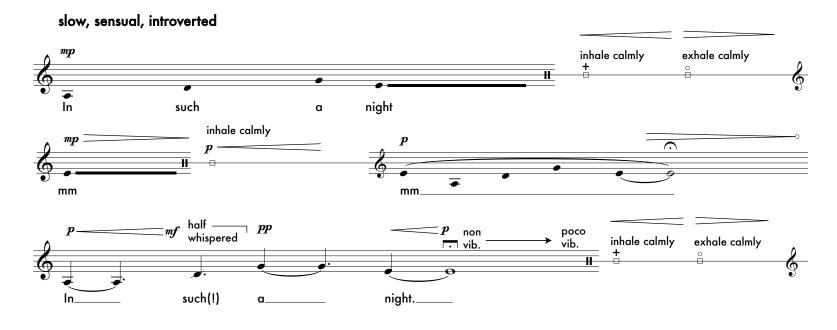




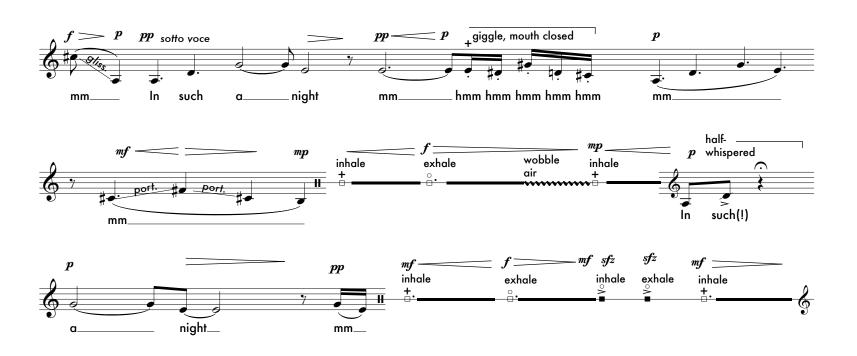


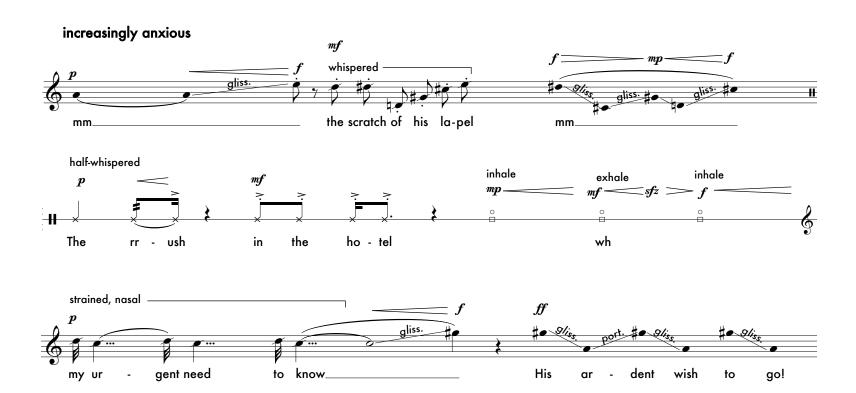


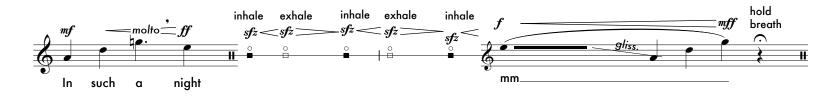
# 4. In Such A Night

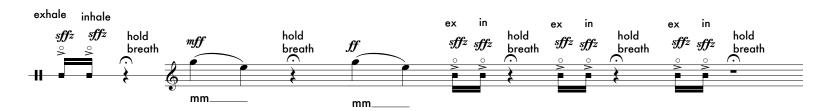


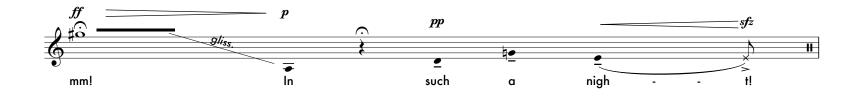












# sadly, inward





# 5. Stuck

# slow, sad, sorrowful, nostalgic



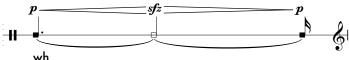








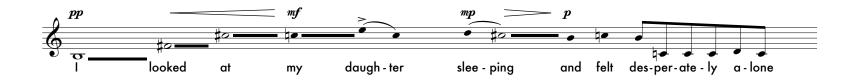


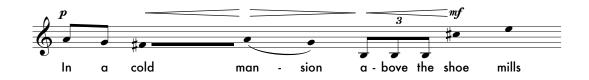












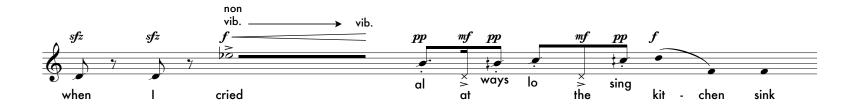


# 6. Losing Altitude

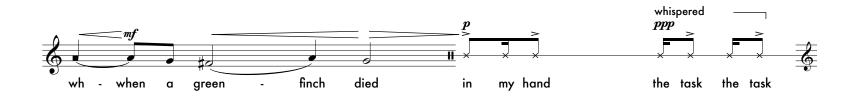
# Pensive, fragmented, alternating quick and slow gestures

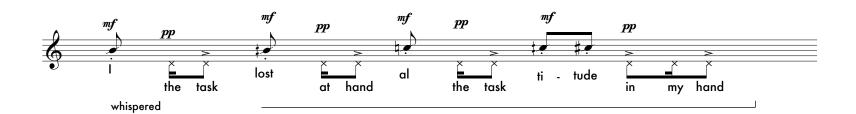


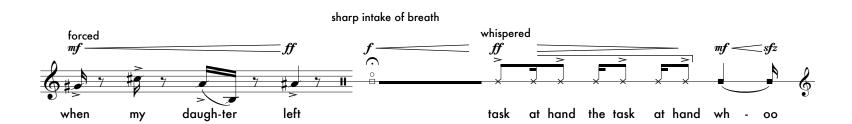


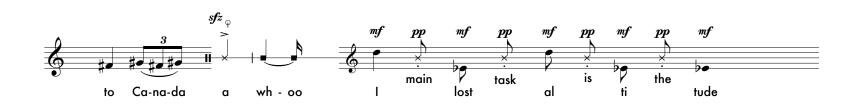












# slow, inward



# Notes on 7. Woman Much Missed

Start with the cell indicated by \*

- Structure -

Progress through the Cantus Firmus sections, with Improvisation before, after and between each section. Returns to improvisation are marked by arrows pointing upwards. After finishing the Cantus Firmus on one section (no repeats), move onto the next during improvisation.

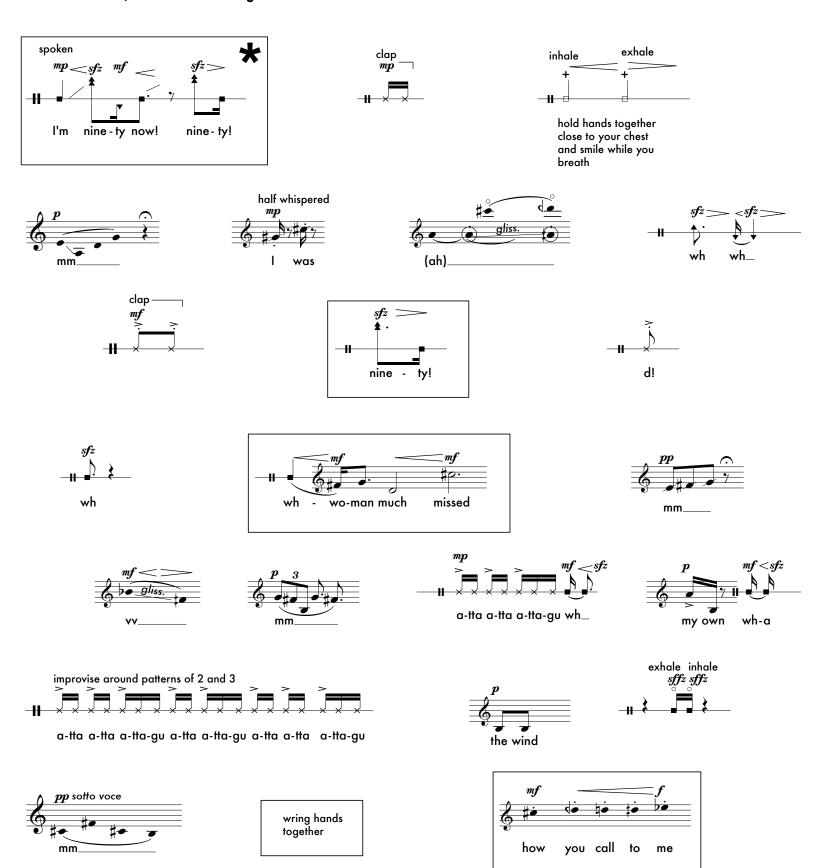
- Improvisation -

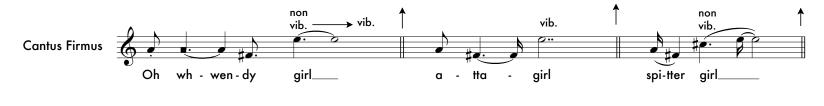
Pass through the cells in any order, feel free to improvise based on the cells, and to interrupt or interlocute one cell with another. Do not include cells from the Cantus Firmus. Length of improvisations are down to the performer. Boxed cells should take prominence over non-boxed cells.



# 7. Woman Much Missed

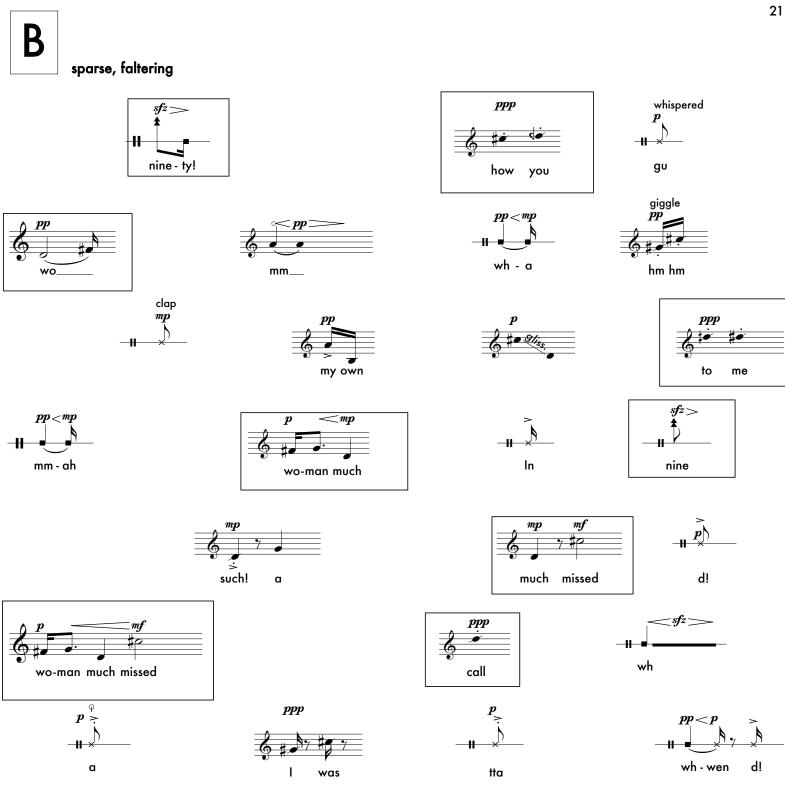
# old, but with child-like glee

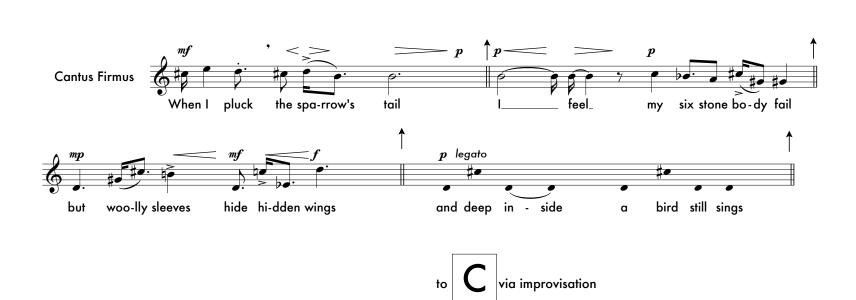












# brightening up

