

ON
THE
THINGS

TENOR
LIVE ELECTRONICS
PRERECORDED MICROTONAL PIANO

STEPHEN LUCAS (2013)

PROGRAM NOTES

This piece uses a revised translation of the text *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things) by Lucretius (ca. 99 BC - ca. 55 BC).

The original text was poetry used to persuade the Romans to embrace the modern developments of science without having to renounce their traditional religions. The new interpretation regards these issues in similar ways, but is adapted to a modern audience.

The text selections have been adapted as a song cycle with the microtonal piano emulating the music of Schubert. The overlaps of quotations require a breach of the tonal tradition which the microtonal piano seeks to resolve.

Furthermore, the translated text evokes the ancient poetic style, which imposes its own structures on the text setting. Although the instrumentation is not standard, the essence of the original text is maintained.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The notation here is intended to be interpreted in a manner similar to Schubert's *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin*.

The first problem is to conform to the tempo of the prerecorded piano tracks (à la karaoke) which has been carefully constructed. This significantly reduces the technical logistics of the performance, but puts a burden on the vocalist to find expression within the predefined timing.

The second problem is that the vocalist should only sing in an equal temperament, despite the upsetting tuning of the microtonal piano. This should be accommodated by the built in "vocal synth track" in the software, which can be used for reference. However, where temporal expression may be impossible, the performer should seek to find their own nuance in the relationship to the piano microtonality.

The execution of the electronic part is detailed in the software, but will typically require a technician to monitor levels and cues. The score notation is not specific but should be relatively clear after rehearsal.

The text is from the poem *De Rerum Natura*
by Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus (ca. 99 BC – ca. 55 BC).

The translation is done by Stephen Lucas with reference help from
translations by W. H. D. Rouse, Martin Ferguson Smith,
A. E. Stallings, and William Ellery Leonard.

The translation focuses on reinforcing rhetorical figures and
integrating the text into the musical quotations from Schubert.

1. Mother of Rome

Mother of Rome joy of gods and men,
Dearest Venus that beneath the slipping stars,
Where sails the many voyaged seas
Where grows the fruitful living lands

through you all are conceived
having the vision of the great sun
Goddess winds fly free, clouds fly,
For you the damned earth bears scented flowers,

Waters of wide stretches smile and laugh
Glowing they fill the lighted sky.

2. Hence Nature

Hence Nature into their primal bodies dissolves all,
and nothing perishes ever to death.
For, were aught mortal in every part,
Before our eyes it might be snatched,
Since no force were needed to tear its bonds.

But of truth, because all things exist,
With seed boundless nature allows
Destruction nor collapse of all,
until some outward force may break,
Or inward to its hollow cells,
Dissolve it down.

3. For Wind

For wind tenuous with subtle body,
Drives and pushes a mighty ship of mighty bulk,
One hand directs it, whatever its momentum,
Whatever its direction one helm steers it,

Great and many are moved and hoisted
By moving wheels and engines,
With little effort.

4. Of the Pierides

Through pathless fields of the Pierides,
I wander where no other has.

I love to come to drain their untouched springs,
and pluck their untouched flowers
To seek for my head a signal crown,
from where the Muses have never touched a head:

First, since I teach of mighty things,
and free the mind from knots of rite,
Next, since I compose of things so dark,
a song touched by the Muses' grace.

5. Sudden Need

Sudden need and shortage persuaded to many things;
for they would lay their kindred on pyres made by others,
with loud cries and thrust the torch
so much blood and fighting rather than losing their bodies.

And now good listener, if I must speak,
I pray you bring to true philosophy,
and mind detached from cares.



STEPHEN LUCAS (1979-2304)

ON THE THINGS

1. MOTHER OF ROME

STEPHEN LUCAS, Op. 153
(1979 - 2304)

Somewhat lagging; $\text{♩} = 66$

Tenor

Piano

Electronic Voice

T

Pno.

T

Pno.

The musical score consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 1-6) features the Tenor, Piano, and Electronic Voice parts. The second system (measures 7-12) features the Tenor and Piano parts, with lyrics "Mo-ther of Rome joy of gods and men," appearing below the piano staff. The third system (measures 13-18) features the Tenor and Piano parts, with lyrics "Dear-est Ven-us that be -neath the slip - ping stars, Where sails the man - y" appearing below the piano staff. Various performance instructions and dynamic markings are included throughout the score.

18

T voy-aged seas — Where grows the fruit-ful liv-ing lands

Pno.

24

T

Pno.

Elec. V.

31

T through you — all are con-ceived hav-ing the vi-sion of the great sun —

Pno.

T 37

Pno. 37

37

God - dess, winds fly free, clouds fly,

T 41

Pno.

ec. V.

For you the damned earth bears scent-ed flowers,

T 47

Pno. 47

sec. V. 47

This image shows a musical score page numbered 47. The top staff is labeled 'T' and has a clef of G. The second staff is labeled 'Pno.' and has a bass clef. The third staff is labeled 'sec. V.' and has a treble clef. The piano part consists of two staves, with various notes and rests. The vocal part has several measures of rests at the beginning. The piano part includes dynamic markings like > and specific note values like 8/8. The vocal part includes dynamic markings like +25 and -25.

53

T

Wa - ters of wide stretch-es smile and __ laugh, Glow-ing they fill __ the light-ed sky __

Pno.

Elec. V.

58

T

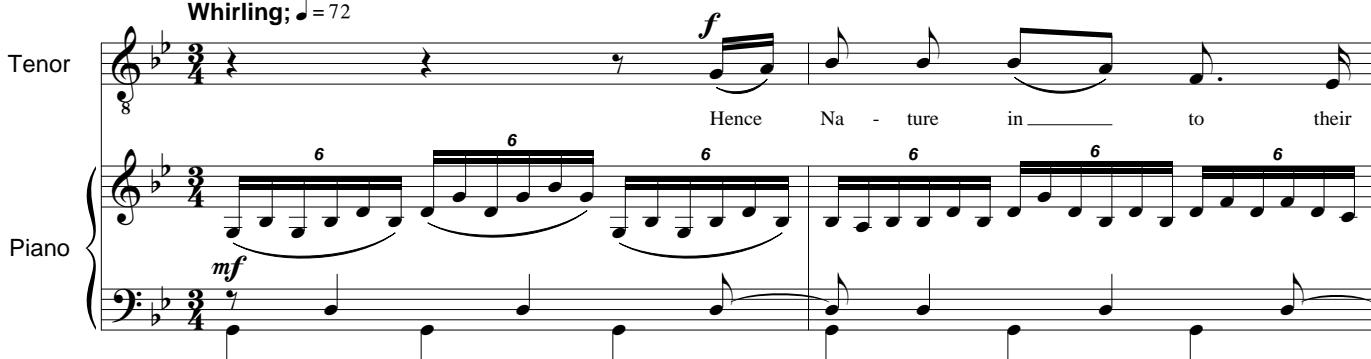
8

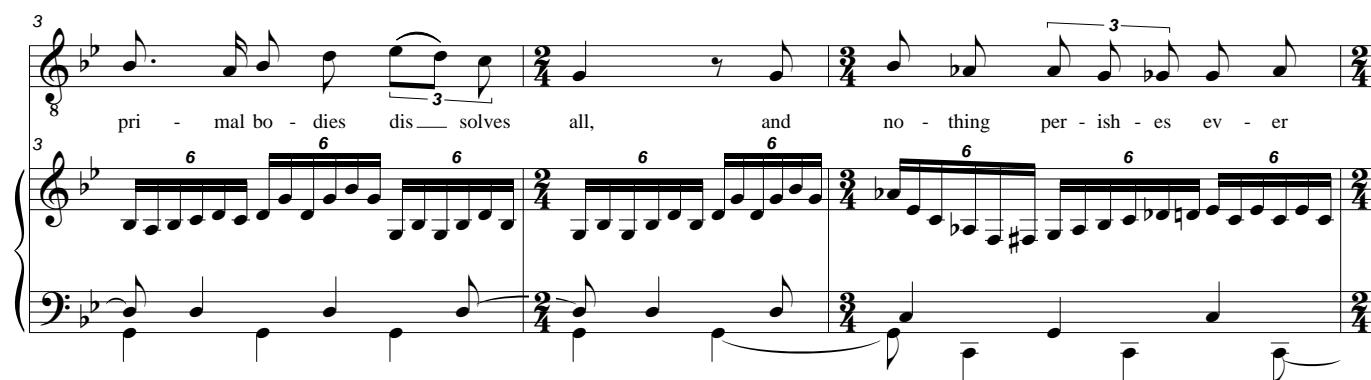
Pno.

Elec. V.

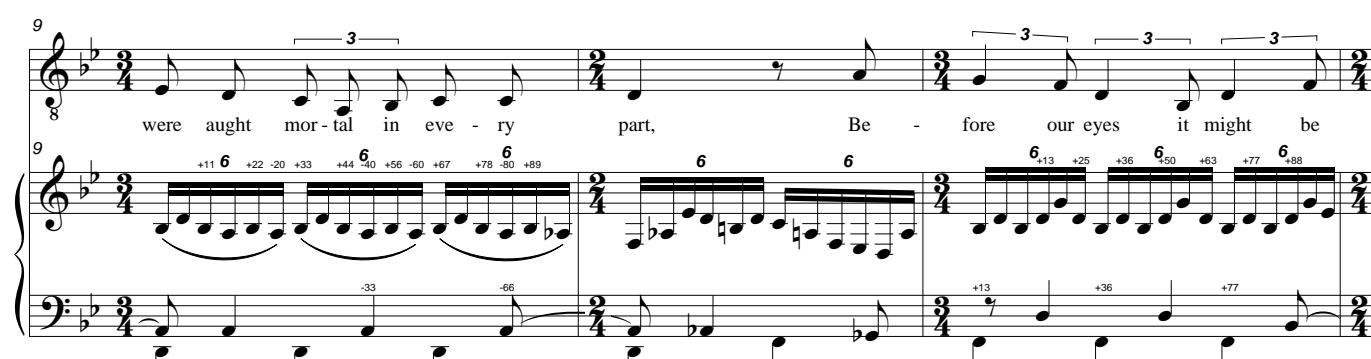
2. HENCE NATURE

Whirling; $\text{♩} = 72$

Tenor 

Piano 

T 

Pno. 

T 12
 snatched, Since no force were need - ed to tear its
 Pno.

T 12
 bonds. But of

T 16
 truth, be - cause all things ex - ist, With seed bound - less na - ture al -
 Pno.

T 19
 lows De - struc - tion nor col - lapse of all, un
 Pno.

22
 T til some out - ward force may break, Or in - ward to its hol - low

Pno. {

25
 T cells, Dis - solve it down.

Pno. {

28
 T —

Pno. {

3. FOR WIND

Moderately; ($\text{♩} = 96$)

This musical score page contains four staves. The Tenor staff uses a treble clef and common time. The Piano staff uses a treble and bass clef with a dynamic marking of $+3$. The Piano Noise staff consists of two sets of piano keys. The Electronic Voice staff uses a treble clef and common time.

T 6
8 For wind ten-u-ous with sub-tle bo - dy, Drives and push-es a__ might - y ship of might - y

Pno. tuning slides
Some longer notes artificially sustained...

Pno. Nse.

Elec. V.

This musical score page continues the composition. It includes lyrics for the Tenor part: "For wind ten-u-ous with sub-tle bo - dy, Drives and push-es a__ might - y ship of might - y". The Piano part includes performance instructions: "tuning slides" and "Some longer notes artificially sustained...". The Piano Noise and Electronic Voice parts provide harmonic support.

12

T
bulk, One hand di - rect - it, what - ev - er

Pno.

Pno. Nse.

Elec. V.

12

12

12

17

its mo-men - tum, What - ev - er its di - rec - tion one helm steers it,

Pno.

Pno. Nse.

Elec. V.

22

T Great and man - y are moved and hoist - ed By mo - ving wheels and en - gines,

Pno.

22

Pno. Nse.

22

Elec. V.

28

T With lit - tle ef - fort.

Pno.

28

Pno. Nse.

28

Elec. V.

4. OF THE PIERIDES

SL

Rather fast; $\text{♩} = 72$

Tenor

Through

T

path - less fields of the Pi - er - i - des, I wan - der where no oth - er has. I love to come to

Pno.

T

drain their un - touched springs, and pluck their un - untouched

Pno.

*: (pai-er-ee-dayz)

T 18 flow - ers — To seek — for my head a sig - nal crown, from where — the Mu - ses have ne - ver
 Pno.
 18
 Pno.
 18

T 22 touched a head: First, — since I teach of mighty things, and free
 Pno.
 22
 Pno.
 22

T 27 the mind from knots of rite, Next, since I com - pose of things so dark, a song touched by the
 Pno.
 27
 Pno.
 27

33
 T Mus - es' grace. First, since I teach of mighty things and free the mind from
 Pno.

 38
 T knots of rite, Next, since I com-pose of things so dark, since I com-pose of
 Pno.

 43
 T things so dark, a song touched by the Mus - - - - - es grace.
 Pno.

48

T

8

Pno.

A musical score page featuring four staves. The top staff is for the Trumpet (T), indicated by a 'T' and a clef, with a measure number 48 and an 8th note value. The bottom three staves are for the Piano (Pno.), indicated by a 'Pno.' and a bass clef, also with a measure number 48. The piano staves show complex rhythmic patterns with various note heads and stems. Numerical values are placed above and below the notes in some measures, such as '+13 +11 +6 +2 +8 +2 +8' above the first measure and '-9 -7 -6 -3 -3 -9 -13' below it. Measure 48 contains measures 15, 12, 10, 8, 5, 2, 89, 22, and 0. Dynamic markings like 'tr' (trill) and 'tr' (trill) with numerical values like -80 and -50 are also present. A large brace groups the three piano staves together.

5. SUDDEN NEED

Limited; $\text{♪} = 76$

Measure 5 (Tenor): Rests throughout.

Measure 5 (Piano): **pp**. Measures 6-7 (Piano): Dynamic markings include **rit.**, **+10**, **-5**, **+14**, **+11**, **+13**, **+25**, **-5**, **+12**, **fp**.

Measure 6 (Electronic Voice): Rests throughout.

Measure 6 (T.): **rit.** Measures 6-7 (T.): **mf**. Text: Sud - den need and short - age per - suad - ed to man-y things; for they would lay — their. Measure 7 (Pno.): Measures 6-7 (Pno.): **rit.** Measure 7 (Elec. V.): **n.**

Measure 7 (T.): **mf**. Text: Sud - den need and short - age per - suad - ed to man-y things; for they would lay — their. Measure 7 (Pno.): Measures 6-7 (Pno.): **rit.** Measure 7 (Elec. V.): Rests throughout.

T. 12
 kin_dred on_pyres made by oth_ers, with loud_cries and thrust the torch_

Pno.
 Elec. V.

T. 18
 so much blood and fight-ing rath-er than los-ing their bod-ies. And now good

Pno. (distorted granulation)

Elec. V.

T. 25
 lis-ten-er, if I must speak, rit. a tempo I pray you bring to true phil-

Pno.
 Elec. V.

T. 30

os - oph - y, and mind de - tached from de-tached from cares.

Pno. 30

Elec. V. 30

T. 35

Pno. 35

Elec. V. 35