

and so i killed a man

from
the laurels

libretto by
michael lewis macLennan

music by
jeffrey ryan

soprano and piano

Perusal Copy

and so i killed a man

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Vocal Range: B3 to Db6 (plus a guttural G#3)

Original Instrumentation:

Bb clarinet, percussion, harp, violin, viola, cello, contrabass

Score and ensemble parts are available; if performing the aria alone, the clarinet is optional

Performance Notes:

In the opera, Laurel runs through a large city park at night, chased by a male Stranger. We are initially invited to see the Stranger as a dangerous stalker and to “read” the woman as a helpless victim. In the course of the story, however, clues are slipped which suggest that the victim isn’t so innocent. Through music, word and action, the opera reveals that “The Stranger” is in fact part of Laurel’s psyche, and his pursuit of her is with a more complex purpose. When she stabs him and explains her motives, talking of “killing a man tonight,” we think she is referring to The Stranger we have just seen her stab. But when The Stranger stirs, not killed, we realise that he is not the victim. He is haunting her, a voice she cannot escape which offers her the only way to properly silence him. The piece ends in this place of heightened dilemma.

As the aria *And so I killed a man* begins, Laurel stabs The Stranger, killing him. As his body slides to the ground to rest at her feet, she begins to feel a new sense of freedom, not realising that it is at the cost of her conscience and her humanity. The aria should be performed with an improvisational blues quality over the regular pulse of the accompaniment, to convey both this sense of freedom and a touch of cold madness.

And so I killed a man
(Michael Lewis MacLennan)

I slipped in the knife
There was a place in him that ached for it.
He fell against my breast
Slid his leaking body over me
Like he craved more.
Even as his life left me.
Lost.

And so I killed a man tonight.
It doesn't matter why,
My reasons are now irrelevant,
But I could do it—that's the thrill
And I can leave here, face the world
My secret safe inside.
While you, my voice, my still, small voice,
Lie silent in the loam.
You can't hold me now.
The coming dawn glows through the trees
And warms my limbs and shows the way.

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(LAUREL stabs THE STRANGER) (She drives the knife deeper) (He slumps against her) (LAUREL is in a trance. THE STRANGER slowly slides to the ground, dying.)

LAUREL
p empty, parlando

1 $\bullet = 72$ rit. to ----- $\bullet = 60$ rit. to ----- $\bullet = 42$

I slipped in the knife

(chimes) *p*
(descending string gliss.)
con ped. ad lib.

5
There was a place in him that ached for it. He fell a-against my breast

7 *sensuously* ----- *ten.* ----- *ten.* ----- *mp*
Slid his leak-ing bo-dy o-ver me Like he craved more.

(He dies (She looks down at
at her feet.) him, no longer afraid.)

9 *rit.* *mp* *mf > mp* *Senza misura* *p* *guttural* *♩ = 60* *A tempo*
With simplicity

E-ven as his life left me. Lost.

pppp *p* (harp arp.) *con ped. ad lib.*

13 *mp* *with a bluesy improvisational feel*

And so I killed a man to night.

(muted strings) *mp legato, very simply* *p*

17

It does-n't mat-ter, mat-ter,

20 *straight, emotionless* *(chest tone feel)* *conversational*

It does-n't mat-ter why, My rea-sons are now

23

ir - rel-e-vant. But I could do it— that's the thrill—

26

And I can leave here, face the—

29

world My se - cret safe

32

in - side. While

straight, emotionless -

35 $\bullet = 78$ poco più mosso *mf* *rit. to* $\bullet = 60$ *p* *stronger*

L you, my voice, my still, small voice, Lie si-lent in the loam. You

39 *mf* *p*

L can't hold me now. The com-ing

43 *mf*

L dawn glows through the trees And warms my limbs and

46 *ten.* *pp* *ten.* *pp* *Sva*

L shows the way.