

eLEGY FOR
MISS COVINGTON

poem by Barbara Goldowsky
music by Jeffrey Ryan

for SSAA choir and string orchestra

Perusal Copy

ELEGY FOR MISS COVINGTON

poem by Barbara Goldowsky | music by Jeffrey Ryan

Instrumentation:

SSAA choir

String orchestra (min. 33221)

Total performance time ca. 4'50"

Programme note:

From a New York Times article, May 18, 1910:

"Blanche Covington made up her mind that there was no escape from Halley's Comet and that it would kill everyone in Chicago...Dreading the suffering she might have to undergo she locked herself in a room and turned on the gas."

When I first explored Barbara Goldowsky's poetry for my mezzo-soprano cycle *First there was light*, there were many poems that inspired me musically, but didn't fit with that particular project. *Elegy for Miss Covington* is one of those poems that I've been waiting to set. The poem finds a dark humour in Miss Covington's ill-informed and (certainly to the modern observer) ludicrous actions—how could she overreact like that?—and in this setting, there is much gossip as the story spreads. Fortunately, Miss Covington was saved, and after her moment of notoriety was over, her name disappeared into oblivion. The piece turns sweetly poignant when the poem conjectures what the rest of her life, which went unreported, might have been, suggesting that perhaps she lived a full, long life, and her spirit now rides the tail of the comet.

Elegy for Miss Covington was commissioned by Elektra Women's Choir in celebration of its 20th anniversary.

(programme note by Barbara Goldowsky and Jeffrey Ryan)

ELEGY FOR MISS COVINGTON

Miss Covington had read the dreadful news
about the gas.

The Comet's tail contained — a scientific
fact — cyanogen. Identified by almond
scent, a particle upon the tongue
could kill, the papers said.

Miss Covington could see a future bleak
as outer space; closed door
and window, then turned on
the gas — illuminating —
and took her first breath of eternity.
A neighbor called police.
Miss Covington was saved.

The New York Times does not record
her further life, or death.
Had she a brother in the War
who came back maimed by mustard gas?
A favorite niece in Europe,
deported to a Camp?

Likely she just lived on, to die
of peaceful age, using
her gas range for the family meal,
a wholesome loaf of bread.

Miss Covington, stay well!
Your molecules waft by, mixed into comet dust,
trailing the faint familiar smell
of home-baked almond cookies.

Barbara Goldowsky
From *Ferry to Nirvana and New Poems*
© 1991 Used with permission

commissioned by Elektra Women's Choir
in celebration of its 20th anniversary

poem by
Barbara Goldowsky

ELEGY FOR MISS COVINGTON

music by
Jeffrey Ryan

♩ = 120 *Tempo di busybody*

Musical score for strings and woodwinds. The score includes staves for S1, S2, A1, A2, vn I, vn II, va, vc, and cb. The music is in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 120. The score features dynamic markings such as *pppp*, *pp*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, and *fff*, and includes performance instructions like "non-div." and "0". A large "Perusal Copy" watermark is overlaid on the score.

1

2

3

4

5

6

*cutoff with no accent

p *crisply, un poco sotto voce*

S1 Miss Co - ving - ton had read

S2 read the dread - Miss

A1 the dread - Miss Co - ving - ton had read

A2 read the dread -

vn I *mf* *sim.*

vn II *mf* *sim.*

va

vc

cb

Score for vocal and instrumental parts. The vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) are in 4/4 time. The instrumental parts (vn I, vn II, va, vc, cb) are in 4/4 time. The score is divided into two systems, 11 and 12. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*. A large watermark 'Perusal Copy' is overlaid on the score.

S1
the dread - - - - ful, dread - ful, dread - ful *mf*

S2
Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton read the dread - ful *mf*

A1
the dread - ful, the dread - ful *mf*

A2
p Miss Co-ving-ton had read the dread - ful, — dread - ful *mf*

vn I
mf

vn II
mf

va

vc

cb

sfp *mf sub.*
S1 news a - bout the

sfp *mf sub.*
S2 news a - bout the

sfp *mf sub.*
A1 news a - bout the

sfp *mf sub.*
A2 news a - bout the

pizz.
vn I *p*

pizz.
vn II *p*

arco
va *p* *mf* *p* *gl.*

arco
vc *p* *mf* *p* *gl.*

arco
cb *p*

13

14

15

B

The musical score consists of seven staves: S1, S2, A1, A2, vn I, vn II, va, vc, and cb. Measures 16 and 17 are in 3/4 time, and measure 18 is in 4/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) are marked *pp* and have the lyrics "gas" written below them. The violin parts (vn I, vn II) are marked *p* and *f* in measure 18, with the instruction "arco" above them. The viola part (va) is marked *mf* and has the instruction "biting, at the frog" above it. The cello part (vc) is marked *mf* and has the instruction "biting, at the frog" above it. The double bass part (cb) is marked *mf*. A large "Rehearsal Copy" watermark is overlaid diagonally across the score.

16

17

18

mp legato
 The Co - met's tail con-
mp legato
 The Co - met's tail con-

sim.
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf

p

19

20

21

spoken
urgently *mp* *mp* *mf*

S1 A fact! A fact! A sci-en-ti-fic fact!

spoken
urgently *mp* *mp* *mf*

S2 A fact! A fact! A sci-en-ti-fic fact!

A1 tained cy-

A2 tained cy-

as before
mf

as before
mf

22 23 24

firmly mf *horrified f*

S1
Cy a - no - gen Cy - a - no - gen!

S2
questioning mf *horrified f*
Cy - a - no - gen? Cy - a - no - gen!

A1
a - no - gen *spoken*
horrified f
Cy - a - no - gen!

A2
a - no - gen *spoken*
horrified f
Cy - a - no - gen!

vn I
p *f*

vn II
pizz. *ff*

va
ord. *p < f*

vc
ord. *p* *f*

cb
f

25 26 27

C

mp legato
S1 I - den - ti - fied by al-

mp legato
S2 I - den - ti - fied by al-

AI

A2

vn I

vn II *arco*

va *p sub. arco*

vc

cb *arco*
p \longleftarrow *mf*
p \longleftarrow *mf*
p \longleftarrow *mf*

28 29 30

SI
- mond scent, a par-ti-cle a par-ti-cle a

S2
- mond scent, a par-ti-cle a par-ti-cle a

A1
mp
a par-ti-cle a par-ti-cle a

A2
mp
a par-ti-cle a par-ti-cle a

vn I
p *p* *f* *p* *f*

vn II
mf *p* *mf* *p*

va
mf *p* *mf* *p*

vc
p (*p sempre*)

cb
p *mf* *col legno batt.* *mf*

p *mf* *mf* *mf*

[31] [32] [33]

f
 S1 par-ti-cle u - pon the tongue could kill,

f
 S2 par-ti-cle u - pon the tongue could kill,

f
 A1 par-ti-cle u - pon the tongue could kill,

f
 A2 par-ti-cle u - pon the tongue could kill,

p *f* *sfp* *f*
 vn I

mf *p* *sfp* *f*
 vn II

mf *p* *sfp* *f*
 va

p *f*
 vc

mf
 cb

34

35

36

D

pp sub. *mf*
S1 the pa - pers said. Miss Co-ving - ton could see a

pp sub. *mf*
S2 the pa - pers said. Miss Co-ving - ton could see a

pp sub. *mf*
A1 the pa - pers said. Miss Co-ving - ton could see a

pp sub. *mf*
A2 the pa - pers said. Miss Co-ving - ton could see a

mf
vn I

mf
vn II

gl.
ppp *mf*
va

gl.
ppp *mf*
vc

arco
mf
cb

37 38

S1
 fu - ture bleak__ as ou - ter space; closed door and

S2
 fu - ture bleak__ as ou - ter space; closed door and

A1
 fu - ture bleak__ as ou - ter space; closed door and

A2
 fu - ture bleak__ as ou - ter space; closed door

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

39

40

41

E ♩ = 72 sub. rit. to ----- ♩ = 60

mp *p*

S1 il - lu - mi - na - ting, — and took her

mp *p*

S2 il - lu - mi - na - ting, and took her

mp *p* *div.*

A1 il - lu - mi - na - ting, and took her

mp *p* *div.*

A2 il - lu - mi - na - ting, and took he(r)*

il - lu - mi - na - ting, a(nd)*

mp *pp*

vn I

f *mp* *pp*

vn II

f *mp* *p* *pp*

f *mp* *p* *pp*

va

f *mp* *p* *pp*

f *mp* *p* *pp*

vc

f *mp* *p* *pp*

f *mp* *p* *pp*

cb

45 46 47 48

*omit final consonant(s)
to end with open vowel

1
S1
first breath of e - ter - ni - ty
div a3
first breath of e - te(r)*

2
3
first breath o(f)*

1
S2
first breath of e - ter - ni -
div a3
first breath of e -
3
first brea(th)*
fi(rst)*

A1

A2

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

**omit final consonant(s)
to end with open vowel*

49

50

51

Con rubato

F ♩ = 120 *A tempo*

** see note unis. hold (poco) (don't move!) a relieved exhale*

** see note unis. hold (poco) (don't move!) a relieved exhale*

** see note unis. hold (poco) mp*

** see note unis. hold (poco) mp*

A neigh - bor called po - lice

A neigh - bor called po - lice

(poco)

I II sim. pp mf

II III sim. pp mf

(poco) pizz. p

(poco) pizz. p

(poco) pizz. p

52 53 54

**in unison, a dramatic, audible inhale, through the mouth; hold breath and do not move until indicated*

Score for vocal soloists (S1, S2, A1, A2) and instruments (vn I, vn II, va, vc, cb). The score is in 3/4 time and includes lyrics: "Miss Co-ving-ton, Miss". Dynamics include *mp*, *mf*, *f*, and *div.*

Score for vocal soloists (S1, S2, A1, A2) and instruments (vn I, vn II, va, vc, cb). The vocal parts have lyrics: "Co-ving-ton", "was", and "saved". The instrumental parts include dynamics like *pp* and *f*, and performance markings like *div.* and *pp sub.*. The score is divided into measures 57 through 62.

57

58

59

60

61

62

(tempo giusto)

G (♩ = 120)

ff
(d)

S1

ff
(d)

S2

ff
(d)

A1

ff
(d)

A2

vn I

mp

vn II

mp

va

arco

mp

vc

pizz. arco

mf mp

cb

pizz. > (♯)

mf

63 64 65

SI
S2
A1
A2
vn I
vn II
va
vc
cb

pizz. III II I
p
sim.
mf
mp
p

66 67 68

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score, page 22, containing measures 66, 67, and 68. The score is arranged in a system with seven staves. The top four staves are for strings: SI (Soprano I), S2 (Soprano II), A1 (Alto I), and A2 (Alto II). The bottom three staves are for woodwinds: vn I (Violin I), vn II (Violin II), va (Viola), vc (Violoncello), and cb (Contrabasso). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. In measure 66, the woodwinds play a melodic line with accents and slurs. The string parts are mostly rests. In measure 67, the woodwinds continue their melodic line, with dynamics *mf* and *mp*. The string parts have some notes. In measure 68, the woodwinds play a similar melodic line. The string parts have notes and rests. A large diagonal watermark 'Rehearsal Copy' is overlaid on the score.

SI
S2
A1
A2
vn I
vn II
va
vc
cb

69 70 71

p *f*

mp

gl.

f

f

f

Detailed description: This page of a musical score covers measures 69, 70, and 71. The top four staves (SI, S2, A1, A2) are for strings and contain rests. The woodwind section includes two violins (vn I, II), a viola (va), a violoncello (vc), and a double bass (cb). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4. Dynamics include piano (p), mezzo-piano (mp), and forte (f). Performance markings include accents (^), glissandi (gl.), and hairpins. A large watermark 'Personal Copy' is visible across the score.

H

unis. mp legato

S1
The New York

S2
Miss Co-ving-ton

A1
Miss Co-ving-ton Miss

A2
The New York

vn I

vn II

va
non-div. pizz.
ff (pizz.) **mp**

vc
non-div. pizz. **ff** *arco* **sfp** *pizz.* **ff** (pizz.) **mp**

cb
non-div. pizz. **ff** **ff**

S1
 Times does not re - cord

S2
 Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A1
 Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss

A2
 Times does not re - cord

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

Score for page 26, featuring vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) and instrumental parts (vn I, vn II, va, vc, cb). The score includes lyrics such as "her fur - ther life," and "Miss Co-ving-ton".

S1
— her fur - ther life,

S2
Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A1
Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A2
— her fur - ther life,

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

S1
or death.

S2
Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A1
Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A2
or death.

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

78 79

J

The musical score is divided into two measures, 80 and 81. The vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) and the string parts (vn I, vn II, va, vc, cb) are shown. The vocal parts have lyrics: "Miss Co-ving-ton" and "Had she a bro-ther in the". The string parts have dynamics: *mp*, *p*, and *mf*. The woodwind parts (va, vc) have markings: *div.*, *arco*, and *mf*. The tempo is *mp* and the mood is *(p sempre)*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

S1
—
Had she a bro - ther in the

S2
div.
Miss Co-ving-ton
(p sempre)
Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A1
div.
Miss Co-ving-ton
(p sempre)
Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A2
—
mp
Had she a bro - ther

vn I
p

vn II
p

va
div. arco
mf

vc
div. arco
mf

cb

S1 War who came back maimed by mus - tard gas?

S2 Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A1 Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss

A2 — who came back maimed by mus - tard gas?

vn I *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

vn II *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

va

vc

cb

The musical score is for page 29 of a score. It features four vocal parts: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), and Alto 2 (A2). The lyrics for S1 and A2 are "War who came back maimed by mus - tard gas?". S2 and A1 have lyrics "Miss Co-ving-ton". The instrumental parts include Violin I (vn I), Violin II (vn II), Viola (va), Cello (vc), and Double Bass (cb). Dynamic markings of *mf* and *p* are present for the violin parts. The score is in 2/4 time and G major.

Score for vocal and instrumental parts. The vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) sing the lyrics: "A fa - vo - rite Miss Co - ving - ton". The instrumental parts include Violin I (vn I), Violin II (vn II), Viola (va), Violoncello (vc), and Contrabasso (cb). The score is divided into two measures, 84 and 85. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The dynamic marking *mf* is present in the instrumental parts.

S1
 niece in Eu - rope, de - port - ed to a Camp?

S2
 Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A1
 Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton

A2
 niece de - port - ed to a Camp?

vn I
p *mf* *p*

vn II
p *mf* *p*

va

vc

cb

K

f *mf*

S1 Like - (ke)*-ly she just lived on, —

S2 Miss Co-ving-ton Co-ving-ton Like - (ke)*-ly she just lived on, —

A1 Miss Co-ving-ton Miss Co-ving-ton Like - (ke)*-ly she just lived on, —

A2 Like - (ke)*-ly she just lived on, —

vn I warmly *mp*

vn II warmly *mp*

va unis. warmly *p* *mp*

vc *mp*

cb warmly *mp*

88

89

90

*articulate the "k" metrically as indicated

S1
 — to die of peace-ful age, — of

S2
 — to die of peace-ful age, — of peace - ful, peace-

A1
 — to die — of peace - ful age, — of peace-

A2
 — to die, to die — of peace - ful,

vn I
vn II
va
vc
cb

91

92

93

94

95

M

poco rit. ----- *A tempo* (♩ = 60)

pp dolce

S1
gas range — for the fa-mi-ly meal, a whole-some loaf of bread. —

S2
gas range — for the fa-mi-ly meal, a whole-some loaf of bread. —

A1
gas range — for the fa-mi-ly meal, a whole-some loaf of bread. —

A2
gas range — for the fa-mi-ly meal, a whole-some loaf of bread. —

pp dolce

(8^{va})

loco solo espr.

p

vn I

vn II

va

vc
mf *mf* *mf*

cb

101

102

103

104

105

con rubato, colla solo

The musical score consists of seven staves: S1, S2, A1, A2, vn I, vn II, va, vc, and cb. Measures 106 and 107 are in 2/4 time, and measure 108 is in 4/4 time. The string parts (S1, S2, A1, A2, vn II, va, vc, cb) are mostly silent, with rests. The violin I part (vn I) has a triplet in measure 106 and sixteenth-note runs in measures 107 and 108. A large 'Perusal Copy' watermark is overlaid on the score.

106

107

108

Musical score for measures 109, 110, and 111. The score is in 4/4 time and includes parts for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Violin I (vn I), Violin II (vn II), Viola (va), Violoncello (vc), and Contrabass (cb). The woodwind parts (S1-A2, va, vc, cb) are mostly silent, indicated by rests. The Violin I part (vn I) features a melodic line with triplets and sextuplets. A dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo) is present in measure 110. A large diagonal watermark "Perusal Copy" is overlaid on the score.

109

110

111

molto rit. ----- *A tempo* ♩ = 48

The musical score consists of seven staves: S1, S2, A1, A2, vn I, vn II, va, vc, and cb. Measures 112 and 113 are marked *molto rit.* and contain rests for all instruments. Measure 114 is marked *A tempo* and features a first violin part with a sixteenth-note scale starting on G4, marked *mp*. The scale is divided into three groups of six notes, each marked with a '6'. The final two notes of the scale are marked with a '6' and a fermata. The first violin part then continues with a half note G4 marked *pp*, followed by a half note F4 marked *pp* with the instruction 'gli altri (enter imperceptibly)'. The piece concludes with a half note G4 marked *tutti* and 'gl.'. The woodwind and other string parts (S2, A1, A2, vn II, va, vc, cb) have rests in all three measures.

112

113

114

N

pp dolce

S1 Miss Co-ving-ton, stay well! Your mo-le-cules

pp dolce

S2 Miss Co-ving-ton, stay well! — Your mo-le-cules

pp dolce

A1 Miss Co-ving-ton, stay well! Your mo-le-cules

pp dolce

A2 Miss Co-ving-ton, stay well! — Your mo-le-cules

vn I *pp* (staggered bowing)

con sord. div.

vn II *pppp* < *mp*

con sord.

va *pppp* < *mp*

con sord.

vc *pppp* < *mp*

cb *pppp* < *mp*

115

116

117

118

S1
 waft by, mixed in - to co - met dust, trail - ing the faint fa-

S2
 waft by, mixed in - to co - met dust, trail - ing the faint fa-

A1
 waft by, mixed in - to co - met dust, trail - ing the faint fa-

A2
 waft by, mixed in - to co - met dust, trail - ing the faint fa-

vn I
vn II
va
vc
cb

(pp) *whispered (soft, but audible)*
p unis.

S1 Miss Co-ving-ton! Miss Co-ving-ton! Miss Co-ving-ton!

(pp) *whispered (soft, but audible)*
p unis.

S2 Miss Co-ving-ton! Miss Co-ving-ton! Miss Co-ving-ton!

(pp) *whispered (soft, but audible)*
p unis.

A1 Miss Co-ving-ton! Miss Co-ving-ton! Miss Co-ving-ton!

(pp) *whispered (soft, but audible)*
p unis.

A2 Miss Co-ving-ton! Miss Co-ving-ton! Miss Co-ving-ton!

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

125

126

127

128