

# He's Come Home Again

for high voice and piano

poetry by  
Suzanne Steele

music by  
Jeffrey Ryan

Perusal Copy


# He's Come Home Again

poetry by Suzanne Steele / music by Jeffrey Ryan

## *Performance Notes:*

Duration ca. 5 minutes.

Pedal markings must be carefully observed.

 give note a slight rhythmic and dynamic stress.

## *Programme Notes:*

In 2012, poet Suzanne Steele and composer Jeffrey Ryan collaborated on *Afghanistan: Requiem for a Generation*, a major oratorio commissioned by the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and One Yellow Rabbit, setting Steele's original writings as Canada's war poet in Afghanistan. *He's Come Home Again* is drawn from the Requiem's *Sanctus* movement. As the music marches ceremoniously forward, Steele's poem observes the repatriation of a soldier's body, poignantly contrasting images of spring and new life with the realities of life in war and the soldier's last moments. The final lines reflect the new reality of those left behind, their lives forever changed, the future they imagined now unattainable.

## *He's Come Home Again*

Suzanne Steele

He's come home again

Sweet sting, prairie Spring, he's come home again  
Moon-dust Afghanistan washed from his body, his face  
A fine Chinook blessed him with soft rain  
Prairie rain pushing silver, blue, flax opening again  
Blades of grass, the fox feathering  
New born Pasque, brown hawks circling, conquering earth, sky as once he traversed  
Fatigue, despair, ricochet, near miss, glanced bullet,  
Heat, KAF's putrid, poison, lousy air.

His left right left into wire spider trap  
Afghan winter, his last  
That boy tried so hard to inhale, breathe,  
Hang on to Spring, hang on to Home.  
O now comes the petalling  
Now comes their shattering—season forever emptying.  
Now comes the never shall be.

# He's Come Home Again

1  $\bullet = 84$  *Brightly*  $\bullet = 63$  *sub. Darkening rit. to*  $\bullet = 48$  *mf* *p* *< mf*

He's come home. a -

7 *Senza misura, freely and expressively* *p* *mf* *p* *p*

gain. Sweet sting, prai - rie Spring, he's come

*p* (hold through measure)

9  $\bullet = 54$  *A procession, inexorable* *p* *simply but expressively*

home a - gain. Moon - dust Af - ghan - i - stan washed

*p* *legato, deliberate, one step at a time*

14

from his bo - dy, his face.

*(p)\**

19

*p*

A fine Chi - nook blessed him with soft

*f* *p*

(*p*)

24

*mp*

rain, prai-rie rain push-ing sil-ver,

*f* *mp sub.* *mf*

(*p*) (*mp*)

29

blue, flax o-pen-ing a-gain, blades of grass, the fox fea-ther-ing,

*mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

(*mp*) (*mp*) (*mp*) (*mp*)

33

*mf* *mp*

new-born Pasque, brown hawks cir-cling, cir - cling, con-quer-ing earth,

*mf* *mp sub.*

37 *p*

sky, as once he tra-versed fa-tigue, des-pair,

*p sub.*

42

ri-co-chet, near miss, glanced bul-let, heat, heat, —

46

KAF's pu-trid, poi-son, lou-sy air.

50 *mp*

His left right left in-to wire spi-der trap. Af-ghan win-ter, his last. —

54 *mp* *< mf* *mf*

That boy tried so hard to in-hale, breathe, hang on to Spring,

*Senza misura, freely, expressively, as before*

58 *p* *p*

hang on to Home. O

61

now comes the pe-tal-ling\_(ng), now comes their shat-ter-ing,

62 *A piacere, simply* *pp* *the final note goes out into the silence*

sea-son for-e-ver emp-ty-ing\_(ng). Now comes the ne-ver shall be.