

He's Come Home Again

for soprano, violoncello and piano

poetry by
Suzanne Steele

music by
Jeffrey Ryan


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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.

poetry by Suzanne Steele

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music by Jeffrey Ryan

for soprano, violoncello and piano

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

sop $\frac{7}{8}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ He's come home a-

vc $\frac{7}{8}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ *p*

mf *mp* *p*

7 *p* **A** *mf* *p* *p* *p*

sop $\frac{2}{4}$ gain. Sweet sting, prai - rie Spring, he's come

vc $\frac{2}{4}$ (hold through measure) *p*

p (hold through measure)

B ♩ = 54 *A procession, inexorable*

9 *p* simply but expressively

sop home a - gain. _____ Moon - dust_ Af - ghan - i - stan washed_

vc *p*

p legato, deliberate, one step at a time

14

sop _____ from his bo - dy, _____ his face. _____

vc

f *p*

(*p*)* *outside voices remain at soft dynamic

19 **C** *p*

sop A fine _____ Chi - nook blessed _____ him _____ with soft _____

vc *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

f *p*

(*p*)

24 **D** *mp*

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

vc *pp* *p* *mp*

f *mp* *mf*

(*p*)

29

sop blue, _____ flax o-pen-ing a-gain, blades__ of grass, the fox fea-ther-ing,

vc

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

33 **E** *mf* *mp*

sop new-born Pasque, — brown hawks__ cir-cling, cir - cling, con-quer-ing earth,

vc *mf* *mp sub.*

mf *mp sub.*

37 **F** *p*

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

vc *p sub.*

p sub.

42

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

vc

46

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

vc

50 **G** *mp*

sop His left right left in - to wire_ spi - der trap. Af - ghan win - ter, his last. _____

vc *pizz.*
p

54 *mp* *< mf* *mf*

sop That boy tried so hard_ to in - hale, breathe, hang on_ to Spring,

vc *mp* *arco* *mf*

58 **H** *p* *p*

sop hang on_ to Home. O _____

vc *p* *pp*

Senza misura, freely, expressively, as before

61

sop
now _____ comes the pe-tal-ling_(ng), now _____ comes their shat - ter-ing,

vc

(let fade—allow vc to emerge)

62

sop
sea-son for - e - ver emp - ty - ing_(ng). Now comes the ne - ver shall be. _____

vc

A piacere, simply
pp

the final note goes out into the silence

pp