

Jay C. Batzner

**Selecting a Reader
/ A Widow
(2012)**

for mezzo-soprano and bass line

UNSAFE BULL MUSIC

Program Notes:

I have this collection of poetry from Pitt Press that I've been reading and reading since about 1992. A few poems by Ted Kooser caught my mind and I filed them away for a future text setting. When Katherine Crawford asked me to write a piece for her and electronics, I decided to finally act on these poems. The two poems, "Selecting a Reader" and "A Widow," are set in a continuous musical framework even though there is no programmatic reason or connection between the two.

Performance Note:

While I originally composed this work for voice and synth, I feel like this piece would work well for piano or any instrument that can play a bass line. When the octaves appear in measures 49, 59, and so on, perform some kind of meaningful flourish if performing on a monophonic instrument.

Lyrics from the poem "Selecting a Reader" from *Sure Signs: New and Selected Poems*, by Ted Kooser, © 1980. All rights controlled by the University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. Used by permission of University of Pittsburgh Press.

Lyrics from the poem "A Widow" from *Flying and Night: Poems 1965-1985*, by Ted Kooser, © 2005. All rights controlled by the University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. Used by permission of University of Pittsburgh Press.

Selecting a Reader/A Widow

for Katherine Crawford

Jay C. Batzner
poetry by Ted Kooser

Breezily, ♩=80

2 3 4 5 *mf*

serene, detached

mf

secco

6 7 8 9 10 11

have her be beau - - - ti - ful,

12 13 14 15

and walk - ing care - ful - ly up on my po - et - ry at the lone - li - est mo - ment

The musical score is written for voice and piano in 4/4 time. It begins with a tempo marking of 'Breezily, ♩=80'. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-5) features a vocal line with rests and a piano accompaniment starting with a 'secco' dynamic. The second system (measures 6-11) contains the lyrics 'have her be beau - - - ti - ful,' with a melisma over measures 7-9. The third system (measures 12-15) contains the lyrics 'and walk - ing care - ful - ly up on my po - et - ry at the lone - li - est mo - ment' and includes changes in time signature from 4/4 to 6/4 and back to 4/4. Dynamics include *mf* and *secco*. Performance instructions include *serene, detached* and *mf*. Measure numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 are indicated above the vocal line.

16 17 18 19 20

of an af - ter - noon, her hair still

21 22 23 24 25

damp at the neck from wash-ing it. She should be

26 27 28 29

wear-ing a rain-coat, an old one, dirt-y from not hav-ing mon-ey — e-nough for the

30 31 32 33 34

clean-ers.— She will take out her glass-es,

35 36 37 38 39

and there in the book-store, she will thumb o-ver my

40 41 42 43 44

po-ems, then put the book back up— on its shelf.

45

46

47

She will say to her-self, "For that kind of mon-ey, —

Musical score for measures 45-48. The vocal line is in treble clef with lyrics. The piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). Measure 45 starts with a whole rest in the vocal line and a quarter rest in the piano line. Measure 46 has a quarter note in the vocal line and a quarter note in the piano line. Measure 47 has a quarter note in the vocal line and a quarter note in the piano line. Measure 48 has a half note in the vocal line and a half note in the piano line. A fermata is placed over the piano line in measure 48.

freely, not in strict tempo

49

f

50

51

a tempo

52

53

I can get my rain - coat cleaned."

Musical score for measures 49-53. The vocal line is in treble clef with lyrics. The piano accompaniment is in grand staff. Measure 49 has a quarter note in the vocal line and a quarter note in the piano line. Measure 50 has a quarter note in the vocal line and a quarter note in the piano line. Measure 51 has a whole rest in the vocal line and a whole note in the piano line. Measure 52 has a whole rest in the vocal line and a whole note in the piano line. Measure 53 has a whole rest in the vocal line and a whole note in the piano line. Dynamics include *f* and *mp*. A fermata is placed over the piano line in measure 53.

54

55

56

57

58

And she will.

Musical score for measures 54-58. The vocal line is in treble clef with lyrics. The piano accompaniment is in grand staff. Measure 54 has a quarter note in the vocal line and a quarter note in the piano line. Measure 55 has a quarter note in the vocal line and a quarter note in the piano line. Measure 56 has a quarter note in the vocal line and a quarter note in the piano line. Measure 57 has a quarter note in the vocal line and a quarter note in the piano line. Measure 58 has a quarter note in the vocal line and a quarter note in the piano line.

rit. ----- **Somber**, ♩=70

59 60 61 62 63 *mp* 64 65

She's combed his neck-ties

p

clear pedal minimally

66 67 68 69 70 71

out of her hair and torn out the tongues of his shoes. She's

72 73 74 75 76 77

poured his ash-es out of their urn and in-to his hu-mi-dor.

78

79

80

81

82

For the ver-y last time, she's scrubbed the

83

84

85

86

87

88

floor a-round the toi-let. She hates him

89

90

91

92

93

94

95

she hates him e-ven more for dy-ing.

*repeat ad lib.
slow decrescendo*