

Serpents in Red Roses Hissing  
GP-S001.1  
SATB choir, a cappella

Joshua Shank

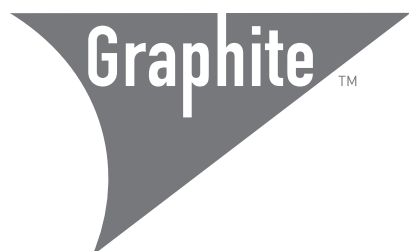
pdf download - \$2.15  
printed - \$3.85

# Joshua Shank

## Serpents in Red Roses Hissing

for a cappella SATB choir

from *Color Madrigals*



notable. elevated.

[www.graphitepublishing.com](http://www.graphitepublishing.com)

## Performance Notes

Because of the tight harmonies, little to no vibrato is desirable.

Take a breath only when indicated by a rest.

If a crescendo appears without a starting/ending dynamic it is based on the treatment of the text.

## Program Notes

### 1. Serpents in Red Roses Hissing

This text starts off very simply as an exercise in dichotomy: every line contains two things which are diametrically opposed to one another. Keats takes this principle and seemingly works himself into a rhythmic frenzy until his poem sounds more like a witch's incantation than a piece of poetry. But then, at line 23 ("O the sweetness of the pain!"), it suddenly turns into a beautiful elegy as he calls upon the Muses. After all this Keats ends up very simply in passion and sorrow over the grave of his beloved – a beautiful (and very human) ending to a poem that spends most of its energy invoking the gods.

## Text

### A Song of Opposites

Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow,  
Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather;  
Come today, and come tomorrow,  
I do love you both together!  
I love to mark sad faces in fair weather,  
And hear a merry laugh amid the thunder.  
Fair and foul I love together:  
Meadows sweet where flames burn under,  
And a giggle at a wonder;  
Visage sage at pantomime;  
Funeral, and steeple chime;  
Infant playing with a skull;  
Morning fair, and stormwrecked hull;  
Nightshade with the woodbine kissing;  
Serpents in red roses hissing;  
Cleopatra regal-dressed  
With the aspics at her breast  
Dancing music, music sad,  
Both together, sane and mad;  
Muses bright and Muses pale;  
Sombre Saturn, Momus hale.  
Laugh and sigh, and laugh again  
O the sweetness of the pain!  
Muses bright, and Muses pale,  
Bare your faces of the veil!  
Let me see! and let me write  
Of the day and of the night

Both together. Let me slake  
All my thirst for sweet heartache!  
Let my bower be of yew,  
Interwreathed with myrtles new;  
Pines and lime-trees full in bloom,  
And my couch a low grass tomb

– John Keats (England, 1795-1821)

## FYI

If you're not a rigorous student of the classics it can be difficult to read through the poetry and understand everything Keats is talking about. Listed here are some of the more obscure things he mentions in the course of his writing which, once you know what they are, can really make each text come to life.

**Hermes:** the messenger of the Greek gods (known as "Mercury" in the Roman pantheon). He wears a winged hat and winged sandals to speed him to his destinations.

**Lethe:** One of the rivers of hell whose waters the souls of the dead drank after they had been confirmed for a certain space of time in the pit of Tartarus. It had the power of making them forget whatever they had done, seen or heard before.

**Momus:** the god of pleasantry.

**Saturn:** leader of the Titans who was defeated by his sons (Jupiter, Pluto and Neptune). He attempted to eat them for fear that they would overthrow him.

*A special note: I am especially indebted to Matthew Culleton and Vicki Peters for supporting the creation of such a large work. They and their respective choirs gave all six pieces amazing premieres in three different "volumes" (red/green, purple/yellow and blue/orange).*

Commissioned by The Singers - Minnesota Choral Artists  
Matthew Culloton, Conductor

# For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.

## Serpents in Red Roses Hissing

from *Color Madrigals*

for Stephen Swanson

SATB Chorus, a cappella

John Keats

Joshua Shank

*Like a fanfare* (♩ = ca. 116)

notable. elevated.

S *f* Wel - come joy, \_\_\_\_\_ and wel - come sor - row, \_\_\_\_\_

A *f* Wel - come joy, \_\_\_\_\_ and wel - come sor - row, \_\_\_\_\_

T *f* Wel - come joy, \_\_\_\_\_ and wel - come sor - row, \_\_\_\_\_

B *f* Wel - come joy, \_\_\_\_\_ and wel - come sor - row, \_\_\_\_\_

5

S Le - the's weed \_\_\_\_\_ and Her - mes' fea - ther; \_\_\_\_\_

A Le - the's weed \_\_\_\_\_ and Her - mes' fea - ther; \_\_\_\_\_

T Le - the's weed \_\_\_\_\_ and Her - mes' fea - ther; \_\_\_\_\_

B Le - the's weed \_\_\_\_\_ and Her - mes' fea - ther; \_\_\_\_\_



Please report performances of this piece to  
Joshua Shank at [joshua@joshuashank.com](mailto:joshua@joshuashank.com)

© 2013 Graphite Publishing. All Rights Reserved.  
For permission to copy visit [graphitepublishing.com](http://graphitepublishing.com).

*Slower* (♩ = ca. 80)

9

*mf*

S Come to - day, and come to - mor - row, \_\_\_\_\_

*mf*

A Come to - day, and come to - mor - row, \_\_\_\_\_

*mf*

T Come to - day, and come to - mor - row, \_\_\_\_\_

*mf*

B Come to - day, and come to - mor - row, \_\_\_\_\_

13

*mp*

S I do love you both to - ge - ther! Fair and foul I

*mp*

A I do love you both to - ge - ther! Fair and foul I

*mf*

T I do love you both to - ge - ther! Fair and foul I

*mf*

B I do love you both to - ge - ther! Fair and foul I

17

*cresc. poco a poco*

S love to - ge - ther: \_\_\_\_\_

*cresc. poco a poco*

A love to - ge - ther: \_\_\_\_\_

*cresc. poco a poco*

T love to - ge - ther: \_\_\_\_\_

*cresc. poco a poco*

B love to - ge - ther: \_\_\_\_\_

21 *Unrelenting, like an incantation* (♩ = ca. 130)

*f* *mf*

S And a gig-gle at a won-der;

A And a gig-gle at a won-der;

T Mea-dows sweet where flames burn un - der;

B Mea-dows sweet where flames burn un - der;

24

S Fu-ner-al, and stee-ple chime; —

A Fu-ner-al, and stee-ple chime; —

T Vi-sage sage at pan-to-mime; — In-fant play-ing with a skull;

B Vi-sage sage at pan-to-mime; — In-fant play-ing with a skull;

27

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.

S Morn-ing fair, and storm-wrecked hull; \_\_\_\_\_ *sub. f* Ser-pents in red ros-es

A Morn-ing fair, and storm-wrecked hull; \_\_\_\_\_ *sub. f* Ser-pents in red ros-es

T \_\_\_\_\_ *notable. elevated* Night-shade with the wood-bine kiss-ing;

B \_\_\_\_\_ Night-shade with the wood-bine kiss-ing;

30

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.

S hiss - ing; \_\_\_\_\_ With the as - pics at her breast —

A hiss - ing; \_\_\_\_\_ With the as - pics at her breast —

T *sub. f* Cle - o - pat - ra re - gal - dressed \_\_\_\_\_

B *sub. f* Cle - o - pat - ra re - gal - dressed \_\_\_\_\_

33

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.

S \_\_\_\_\_ *f* Both to - ge - ther, sane and mad;

A \_\_\_\_\_ *f* Both to - ge - ther, sane and mad;

T *f* Dancing mu - sic, mu - sic sad, \_\_\_\_\_ Mu - ses

B *f* Dancing mu - sic, mu - sic sad, \_\_\_\_\_ Mu - ses —

37

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.

S Mu - ses bright and Mu - ses pale; \_\_\_\_\_

A Mu - ses bright and Mu - ses pale; \_\_\_\_\_

T bright and Mu - ses pale; \_\_\_\_\_

B bright and Mu - ses pale; \_\_\_\_\_

notable. elevated.

40

S Som-bre Sa - turn, Mo - mus hale. \_\_\_\_\_

A Som-bre Sa - turn, Mo - mus hale. \_\_\_\_\_

T Som-bre Sa - turn, Mo - mus hale. \_\_\_\_\_

B Som-bre Sa - turn, Mo - mus hale. \_\_\_\_\_

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.

43

*molto rall.* *ff* *Tenderly* (♩ = ca. 80)

S Laugh and sigh, and laugh a - gain \_\_\_\_\_

*molto rall.* *ff* *notable. elevated.*

A Laugh and sigh, and laugh a - gain \_\_\_\_\_

*molto rall.* *ff* *mf*

T Laugh and sigh, and laugh a - gain O the sweet-ness of the

*molto rall.* *ff* *mf*

B Laugh and sigh, and laugh a - gain O the sweet-ness of the

5

*A slow burn to the heartache*

(♩ = ca. 66)

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.

47 *poco rit.* *mp* *mp*

S the pain! — Mu - ses bright, and Mu - ses

A the pain! — Mu - ses bright, and Mu - ses

T pain! — Mu - ses bright, and Mu - ses

B pain! —

Graphite™

50

S pale, — Bare your fa - ces of the veil! —

A pale, — Bare your fa - ces of the veil! —

T pale, — Bare your fa - ces of the veil! —

B *mf* Mu - ses bright, and pale, — Let me

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.

Graphite™



53 *mf*

S Let me see! and let me write \_\_\_\_\_ Of the day and of the night \_\_\_\_\_

A *mf*  
Let me see! and let me write \_\_\_\_\_ Of the day and of the night \_\_\_\_\_

T *mf*  
Let me see! and let me write \_\_\_\_\_ Of the day and of the night \_\_\_\_\_

B *f* washing away  
see! \_\_\_\_\_ let me write \_\_\_\_\_ Both to -

57 *f* *rit.*

S Both to - ge - ther. Let me slake \_\_\_\_\_ All my thirst for sweet \_\_\_\_\_

A *f* *rit.*  
Both to - ge - ther. Let me slake \_\_\_\_\_ All my thirst for sweet \_\_\_\_\_

T *f* *rit.*  
Both to - ge - ther. Let me slake \_\_\_\_\_ All my thirst for sweet \_\_\_\_\_

B *f* *rit.*  
ge - ther. Let me slake \_\_\_\_\_ All my thirst for sweet \_\_\_\_\_

60 *ff* *mp* *A little slower* (♩ = ca. 60)

S heart - ache! Let my bo - wer be of

A heart - ache! Let my bo - wer be of

T heart - ache! Let my bo - wer be of

B heart - ache! Let my bo - wer be of

64

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.

S yew, In - ter - wreathed with myr - tles new;

A yew, In - ter - wreathed with myr - tles new;

T yew, In - ter - wreathed with myr - tles new;

B yew, In - ter - wreathed with myr - tles new;

68

S *mp* Pines and lime - trees full in bloom, And my

A *mp* Pines and lime - trees full in bloom, And my

T *mp* Pines and lime - trees full in bloom, And my

B *mp* Pines and lime - trees full in bloom, And my

72

S *mp* couch a low grass tomb.

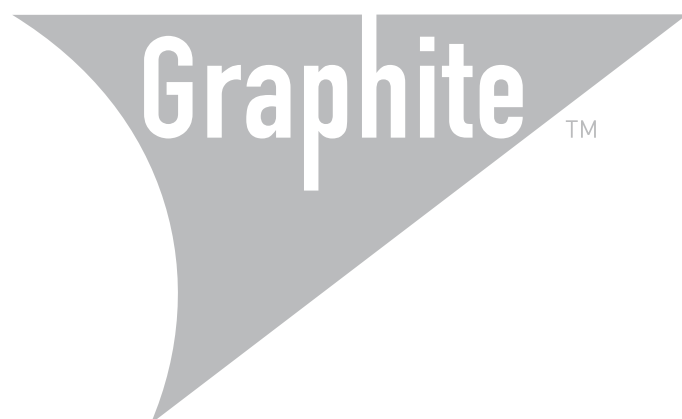
A *mp* couch a low grass tomb.

T *mp* couch a low grass tomb.

B *mp* couch a low grass tomb.

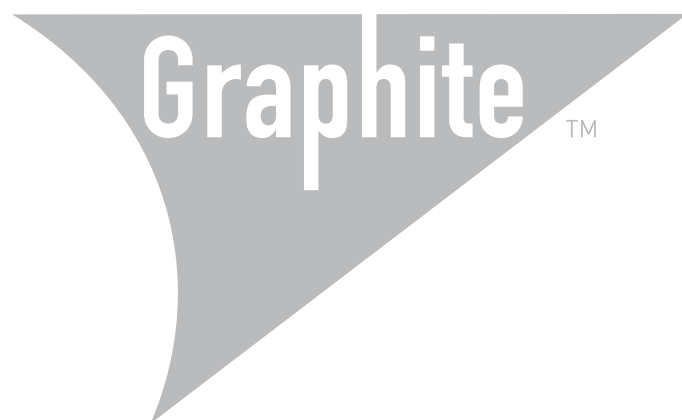
8

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.



notable. elevated.

For perusal purposes only. Do not copy.



notable. elevated.

## Joshua Shank



Joshua Shank (b. 1980) has been commissioned by organizations such as the Lorelei Ensemble, the Choral Project, the American Choral Directors Association, and the Association for Music in International Schools. From 2004-2014, he served as Composers-In-Residence for the Minneapolis-based professional choir, The Singers, where he collaborated annually to expand and invigorate the repertoire for professional-caliber ensembles through innovative programming as well as new works written specifically for the ensemble. In 2002, he became the youngest recipient ever of the Raymond W. Brock Composition Award from the American Choral Directors Association. A native of Minnesota, his music was recently featured in a documentary about the extensive choral tradition in the upper Midwest, *Never Stop Singing*, and his published works have sold over 150,000 copies worldwide.

Joshua received his undergraduate degree in Music Education from Luther College where he studied conducting with Weston Noble. He has also earned master's and doctoral degrees in Musicology and Composition from the University of Texas at Austin where he studied with Donald Grantham and the late opera composer Daniel Catán. A fierce advocate for students' access to music education, he served as a public-school teacher in Minneapolis/St. Paul for many years before going on to teach at

Gonzaga University, Valley City State University, and Eastern Washington University. When he's not writing music, you can probably find him biking, studying vegetarian cooking, or watching hilariously bad movies.

Other choral works for mixed voices from Graphite Publishing:

Eric William Barnum	GP-B008	The White Birds	SATB, a cappella
Eric William Barnum	GP-B010	Conflagration	SATB, piano
Abbie Betinis	GP-B004	Blessed Be the Lord, My Rock	SAB, piano, organ, or a cappella
B.E. Boykin	GP-B022	Holding the Light	SATB, piano
B.E. Boykin	GP-B024	It's a Long Way	SATB, piano
Jennifer Lucy Cook	GP-C009	They Are Mother	SATB div., SA soli, piano
Jennifer Lucy Cook	GP-C012	How Can I Keep From Singing?	SATB, piano
Dessa and Jocelyn Hagen	GP-D023	Controlled Burn	SATB, orchestra or chamber ens.
Dessa and Jocelyn Hagen	GP-D026	Look Out Above	SATB, a cappella, soli, body percussion
Christine Donkin	GP-D019	In Flanders Fields	SATB, a cappella
Christine Donkin	GP-D020	In Paradisum	SSAATTBB, a cappella
Jocelyn Hagen	GP-H003	I Lift Up My Eyes (Psalm 121)	SSATB, a cappella
Jocelyn Hagen	GP-H014	To See the Sky	SATB, piano
Christopher Harris	GP-H015	Alleluia, For This Day	SATB (div), piano
Christopher Harris	GP-H016	Were You There?	SATB, a cappella
Christopher Harris	GP-H018	He's Able!	SATB (div), piano
Isaac Lovdahl	GP-L002	They Brought a Joyful Song	SATB (div), piano
Isaac Lovdahl	GP-L006	Though the great Waters sleep	SATB (div), piano
Luke Mayernik	GP-M004	Emblem	SATB, S solo, piano, violin, cello
Luke Mayernik	GP-M005	IKON	SSAATTBB, a cappella
Paul John Rudoï	GP-R013	Gamaya	SATB, opt. djembe
Paul John Rudoï	GP-R014	Stillness and the Night	SATB, a cappella
Joshua Shank	GP-S001	Color Madrigals (6 movement cycle)	SATB, a cappella
Joshua Shank	GP-S004	Daughter Ecstatic	SATB, soli quartet, a cappella
Timothy C. Takach	GP-T001	'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime	SATB, a cappella
Timothy C. Takach	GP-T010	Neither Angels, Nor Demons, Nor Powers	SSATBB, a cappella
Takach and Hagen	GP-T016	This is How You Love (multi-movement)	SATB, a cappella
Joe Twist	GP-T020	Hymn of Ancient Lands	SATB (div), S solo a cappella
Joe Twist	GP-T021	Weep, O Mine Eyes	SSAATTBB a cappella
Ellen Gilson Voth	GP-V002	Across the empty square	SATB, piano
Dale Warland	GP-W001	Always Singing	SATB (div), a cappella
Dale Warland	GP-W003	Sed Amore (But by Love)	SATB (div), piano
Reignall Wright	GP-W006	The Gift to Sing	SATB, piano
Reignall Wright	GP-W007	Tides	SATB, violin, viola, piano
Reignall Wright	GP-W008	Life's Mirror	SATB, piano

Graphite™

notable. elevated.

www.graphitepublishing.com