
steven
stucky

EYESIGHT
for S.A.T.B. Chorus, a cappella

Text by A.R. Ammons



THEODORE
PRESSER
COMPANY

This piece has an odd history. A few years ago, I agreed to be one of the “prizes” in an auction to benefit Chorus America: the highest bidder would get a new piece from me, while their money went to the organization. The winning bid came from a collection of several professional choruses and directors. But I was always a little vague about the details, and, hearing nothing more about it for a few years, forgot the whole thing.

One day I received a message from Thomas Edward Morgan, director of the Ars Nova Chamber Singers in Boulder: they had scheduled the premiere of my new piece for a few weeks later, and could they have the music, please? I needed a text, quickly, and (as usual) I was in a Los Angeles hotel room, not at home with my books. So I turned to the internet and soon tracked down my favorite poet, A.R. Ammons (1926-2001).

Once I stumbled on “Eyesight,” I remembered having loved the poem years before. Archie must have loved it, too, because he included it both in his *Collected Poems 1951-1971* and in the later *Selected Poems*. It has everything you want in an Archie Ammons poem: what Edward Hirsch called his “offbeat, sideways, unpredictable radiance,” his “homespun glory.” It has one of his trademark conversations with a mountain (perhaps from his native North Carolina), it has the fluid motion from one line to the next (enjambment, if you want to get technical) that won’t let him or his reader rest till the very last word of the very last line, and it has in that last line one of those sudden insights that leave us breathless: “some things that go are gone.”

I miss Archie, but he’s not gone. I’m grateful for the wonderful poems he left us, and I’m grateful that he was always generous and kind when I had the chutzpah to add my music to his.

— Steven Stucky
Los Angeles
February 2007

“Eyesight” from COLLECTED POEMS 1951-1971 by A.R. Ammons.
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Duration: c. 3'

Eyesight

for S.A.T.B. Chorus, a cappella

A.R. AMMONS

STEVEN STUCKY

Semplice, non troppo lento (♩ = 84)

Soprano
p cresc.
It was May, it was May be -

Alto
p cresc.
It was May, it was May be -

Tenor
p cresc.
It was May, it was May,

Bass
p cresc.
It was May, it was May,

Piano (for rehearsal only)
p cresc.

Semplice, non troppo lento (♩ = 84)

S.
f
fore my at - ten - tion came to spring

A.
f
fore my at - ten - tion came to spring and my

T.
f dim.
be - fore my at - ten - tion came to spring and my

B.
f dim.
be - fore my at - ten - tion came to spring

Piano
f

S. and my word I said, and my word I

A. word I said, and my word I said, and my word I

T. word I said, and my word I said, and my word I

B. and my word, and my word, my word I

S. *pp* said to the south-ern slopes I've missed it, I've

A. *pp* said to the south-ern slopes I've missed it, I've

T. *pp* said to the south-ern slopes I've missed it,

B. *pp* said to the south-ern slopes I've missed it,

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S. *cresc. poco a poco*
missed it, _____ it came and went _____ be -

A. *cresc. poco a poco*
missed it, _____ it came and went _____ be -

T. *cresc. poco a poco*
_____ I've missed it, _____ it came and went be -

B. *cresc. poco a poco*
_____ I've missed it, _____ it came and went be -

cresc. poco a poco

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S. *f*
fore I got right to see, I got right to see:

A. *f*
fore I got right to see, I got right to see:

T. *f*
fore _____ I got right to see, right to see:

B. *f*
fore _____ I got right to see, right to see:

f

p sub.

S. don't wor - ry, — said the moun - tain, — try the lat - er north - ern

p sub.

A. don't wor - ry, — said the moun - tain, — try the lat - er north - ern

p sub.

T. don't wor - ry, — said the moun - tain, — try the lat - er north - ern

p sub.

B. don't wor - ry, — said the moun - tain, — try the lat - er north - ern

p sub.

p cresc.

S. slopes or if you can climb, can climb, —

p cresc.

A. slopes or if you can climb, can climb, —

pp cresc.

T. slopes or if you can climb, — or if you can climb, —

pp cresc.

B. slopes or if you can climb, — or if you can climb, —

pp cresc.