

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

(lines on the loss of the "Titanic")

text by Thomas Hardy

for SATB and piano

Jake Berran

(2021)

**"The Convergence of the Twain
(Lines on the loss of the "Titanic")"**

by Thomas Hardy

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls — grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" ...

VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

Prepared a sinister mate
For her — so gaily great —
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX

Alien they seemed to be;
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

X

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

XI

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said "Now!" And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

About the Work

Thomas Hardy wrote "The Convergence of the Twain" in 1912, ten days after the sinking of the *Titanic*. The event was surely a tragedy, especially considering that fewer third class passengers were rescued than those in the upper classes. However, Hardy hardly mentions the passengers and his rather cold interpretation characterizes the sinking as the inevitable punishment of greed, opulence, and power. I believe the text communicates an important secondary message for us today: as climate change increasingly affects our world, we must remember that the Earth is powerful and should be approached with care rather than domination. We must, as many cultures have been able to, coexist with the Earth in order to avoid subjecting humanity to the same fate as the *Titanic*.

The text and my setting of it follow a binary form: stanzas I-V portray the sunken state of the ship, while stanzas VI-XI go back to tell the story of its sinking. There are two predominant categories of textures: one is open, ethereal, and even cold to represent the ocean and nature; the other is full of structure, heat, and vitality to represent humans' attempted conquest. In addition to this textural dichotomy, the sopranos and altos often act as nature and the tenors and basses as humanity. Though this may be the opposite of what the text insinuates (the ship being "she"), it enables a critique of "masculine" exploitation of the Earth. The consonants *ss* and *sh* are ubiquitous in the vocal parts, often respectively symbolizing the sound of ship engines and ocean waves. The text is sometimes fragmented; for example, at B the slower "cold currents" consume the "steel chambers" and "fires" of the ship. The final section is a "drowning" of syllables, from *ah* to *ooh* to *mm*.

Harmonically, G is often the pitch center symbolizing nature, and the G Phrygian climax at rehearsal letter I, the moment the ship inevitably collides with the iceberg, is foreshadowed melodically and harmonically a few times. The "funeral march" progression of Chopin (i-VI-i) is used as well to symbolize the ship's death at letter A, m. 69, and the very end. In the second half of the piece, the key center slowly steps from A \flat (even G, technically) up to D \flat , "snapping" back to G at the peak.

Performance Notes

Extended techniques: Square noteheads are used for unpitched consonants (*ss* or *sh*) and whispering. Triangle noteheads (mm. 110-111 only) are used for whistling, in whatever pitch range is comfortable. Both are on one line staves except in the case of divisi with a pitched part and in mm. 62-64. Dynamics or number of players may need to be adjusted if the balance is off. There is a schwa vowel in m. 8. Arrows indicate a smooth transition from one vowel to the next.

Alternate notes are given for the sopranos in mm. 125-135 if needed for range and/or endurance. Staggered breathing is encouraged during long ostinatos.

There is a soprano solo in mm. 1-10 and an alto solo in mm. 72-73. Otherwise, sections are always unison or two-part divisi.

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The musical score is written for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 44. The Soprano part starts with a 'Solo' section marked *p* and features a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics are: "In a so-li-tude of the sea Deep from hu-man". The Alto part has a vocal line with a fermata and a note marked *n* (noisy) and *p* (piano). The Piano part features a complex accompaniment with a *f* (forte) dynamic and a *p* *sempre* (piano always) marking, along with a *ped. ad lib* (pedal ad libitum) instruction. The score changes to a 3/4 time signature. The Soprano part continues with lyrics: "va-ni-ty va-ni-ty And the Pride of Life that planned her, stil-ly". The Alto and Tenor parts have vocal lines with lyrics: "va-ni-ty ah -> e" and "ah -> e". The Bass part has a vocal line with a note marked *n* and *sh*. The Piano part continues with a complex accompaniment, including a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic and a *f* (forte) dynamic. The score ends with a double bar line.

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

Section A $\text{♩} = 66$ $\text{♩} = 100$

S
p
 cou-ches she
n *p*
 ss

A
n *p* *n* *n* *p* *n*
 sh ss

T
n *p* *n* *p* *mp* *p*
 sh Steel cham - bers, late the pyres

B
p *mp* *p* *mf marcato*
 Steel cham - bers, late the pyres Of her

Pno.
n *mp* *n* *p* *mp* *p* *mf marcato*

Section B

S
n *mf* *n*
 ss

A
n
 ss

T
mf marcato *f* *mf all*
 sa - la-man-drine fi - res her fi-res her fi-res her fi-res her fi-res her fi-res her

B
f *p*
 sa - la-man-drine fi - res steel cham - bers

Pno.
f *mf*

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3

21

S *n* *p* *n* *n* *p* *n*
ss

A *mp* *n* *n* *mp* *n*
ss

T *mp*
fi - res her fi - res her fi - res her fi - res her fi - res her fi - res her

B *mf* *f*
steel cham - bers steel cham - bers steel cham - bers

Pno.

26

S *n* *p* *n* *n*
ss sh

A *p*
cold cold

T *mp* *p*
fi - res her fi - res her fi - res her fi - res her fi - res her fi - res her fi - res her

B *mf* *mp* *p*
steel cham - bers steel cham - bers steel cham - bers steel

Pno. *p* *mf* *p*

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31 *n* *p* *mp*

S cold cur - rents cold cur - rents

A cur - rents cold cur - rents cold cur - rents

T *p sempre* *n* *p* *n* *n* *p* *n* *n*
sh her fi - res sh fi - res sh fi - res sh sh sh

B cham - bers cham - bers cham - bers cur - rents ooh

Pno.



(C)

T *n* *p* *n* *n* *pp* *sim.*
sh sh

B *n* *p* *n* *p* *sim.*
ooh

Pno.

38

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

44 *p*

S Cold cur - rents thrid and turn to rhyth - mic

A Cold cur - rents thrid and turn to rhyth - mic

T

B

Pno. *p* *mp* *pp*

p sempre

49

S ti - dal lyres ooh

A ti - dal lyres ooh

T ooh

B ooh

Pno. *p*

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55

S *mf*
ooh

A *mf*
ooh

T *mf*
ooh

B *mf*
ooh

Pno. *mf* 3 3 3 5 6

59

D ♩ = 60

S *n* *p* *n* *p* *n*
sh _____ fi - sh _____

A *n* *p* *n*
sh _____

T *n* *pp* *n*
sh _____

B *n* *pp* *n*
sh _____

Pno. *p* *f* *p* 3 3 3

hold (slightly blurred, but not too muddy)

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

7

63

S *pp* *n* *pp* *p*
 fi - sh _____ Dim moon-eyed fish-es near

A *p* *p* *n* *pp* *p*
 dim fi - sh Dim moon-eyed fish-es near

T *n* *pp*
 ooh _____

B *n* *pp*
 ooh _____

Pno. *p*

68

S *p* *mp*
 gaze gaze gaze

A *p* *mp*
 gaze gaze gaze

T *p* *mp* *p*
 at the gil - ded gear

B *p* *mp* *p*
 at the gil - ded _____ gear

Pno. *mf* *p* *mp*

71

S *p* Well

A *p* What does this vain - glor - ious - ness down here? *mf* *p* Section *p* Well

T *p* and que - ry

B

Pno. *p* *p* *pp* *n* *p*

E ♩ = 72

S *mf* *articulate* *n* While was fash - ion - ing

A *mf* *articulate* *n* While was fash - ion - ing

T *n* *articulate* *mf* While was fash - ion - ing this crea - ture of clea - ving wing

B *n* *articulate* *mf* While was fash - ion - ing this crea - ture of clea - ving wing

77 ♩ = 72

Pno. *mf* *pesante*

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

81 *mf* *n* *mf*

S *ss* *mf* The

A *p* *mp* *mf*
the will the will The

T *mp* *3*
fash - ion - ing

B *mp* *3*
fash - ion - ing

Pno. *p*

84 *f* *f* *mf* *n*

S *f* Im - ma - nent Will that stirs and ur - ges ev - ery - thing

A *f* Im - ma - nent Will that stirs and ur - ges ev - ery - thing

T *n* *mf* *n*
sh

Pno. *mf* *f*

♩ = 90 ♩ = 72

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86 *p* **F** ♩ = 60 *mp* *p*

S
Pre - pared a si - ni - ster mate For

A
si - ni - ster mate For

T
mf While was fash - ion - ing

B
mf While was fash - ion - ing

Pno.
mf *p* *mp* *p*
p sempre

90 *mf* *p*

S
her so gai - ly great A

A
her so gai - ly great A

Pno.
mf *mf*

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11

93

S *mp* shape of *mf* Ice

A *mp* shape of *mf* Ice

T *n* *mp* *n*
ss

B *n*
ss

Pno. *p* *mp* *mf* *p* ³

96

S *mf* far and dis - as - so - ci - ate

A *mp* far and dis - as -

T *p* far and

B *p* *n* *pp* far

Pno. *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

G ♩ = 80

99

S *p* far

A *p* so - ci - ate far

T *p* dis - as - so - ci - ate far And *p*

B and dis - as - so - ci - ate far And *p*

Pno. *pp* *p* ♩ = 80

103

S *f* grace, and hue

A *f* grace, and hue

T *mf* as the smart ship grew *f* In stat - ure, grace, and hue

B *mf* as the smart ship grew *f* In stat - ure, grace, and hue

Pno. *f* hold

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half of each section: whistle with pitch bend
everyone else: exhale on "oo"

107

S *whisper p*
In sha - dowy si - lent dist - ance grew the Ice - berg too

A *whisper p*
In sha - dowy si - lent dist - ance grew the Ice - berg too

T *whisper p*
In sha - dowy si - lent dist - ance grew the Ice - berg too

B *whisper p*
In sha - dowy si - lent dist - ance grew the Ice - berg too

Pno. *p*

8^{vb}

n *mf* *n*
see note above

n *mp* *n*
see note above

n *p* *n*
see note above

n
see note above

112

S *p*
Al - ien they seemed to be

A *p*
Al - ien they seemed to be

T *p*
Al - ien they seemed to be

B *pp* *n* *p*
Al - ien they seemed to be

Pno. *p*

H ♩ = 90

♩ = 90

ad lib.

116

S *mp* No mor-tal eye could see

A *mp* No mor-tal eye could see

T *mp* No mor-tal eye could see

B *mp* No mor-tal eye could see

Pno. *mf* *p* *mp*



119

S *mf* The in-ti-mate weld-ing

A *mf* The in-ti-mate weld-ing

T *mf* The in-ti-mate weld-ing

B *mf* The in-ti-mate weld-ing

Pno. *mf*

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122 *f* *ossia*

S
of their la - ter his - to-ry their his - to-ry

A
of their la - ter his - to-ry their his - to-ry

T
of their la - ter his - to-ry their his - to-ry

B
of their la - ter his - to-ry their his - to-ry

Pno. *f*

126 $\text{♩} = 100$ *ff*

S
Till the Spin-ner of the Years Said

A
Till the Spin-ner of the Years Said

T
Till the Spin-ner of the Years Said

B
Till the Spin-ner of the Years Said

Pno. *f* *ff*

131 *ff* I ♩ = 108

S *ff* Now! And each one hears

A *ff* Now! And each one hears

T *ff* Now! And each one hears

B *ff* Now! And each one hears

Pno. *ff* *ad lib*

134

S And con - sum - ma - tion comes, _____ and

A And con - sum - ma - tion comes, _____ and

T And con - sum - ma - tion comes, _____ and

B And con - sum - ma - tion comes, _____ and

Pno.

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17

♩ = 120

136

S jars two he - mi - spheres

A jars two he - mi - spheres

T jars two he - mi - spheres

B jars two he - mi - spheres

Pno.



138

Pno.



141

Pno.

poco rit.-----

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

J *a tempo*
f

S
ah

A
ah

T
ah

B
ah

145 *a tempo*

Pno. (R.H.)

149

S
ah

A
ah

T
ah

B
ah

149

Pno.

The musical score is for a vocal quartet and piano. It is in 3/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system, starting at measure 145, features a vocal quartet (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The vocalists sing 'ah' on a long note, with a dynamic marking of *f*. The piano accompaniment consists of a bass line with triplets and a right-hand part with arpeggiated figures. The second system, starting at measure 149, continues the vocal quartet and piano accompaniment. The vocalists sing 'ah' on a long note, with a dynamic marking of *f*. The piano accompaniment consists of a bass line with triplets and a right-hand part with arpeggiated figures.

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

19

♩ = 66

153 *p*

S
ooh

A
ooh

T
ooh

B
ooh

Pno. *p*



157 *n* *p* *n* *n* *pp* *n* *pp* *pp*

S
sh

A
sh

T
ooh
sh

B
ooh
sh

Pno. *p* *n* *p* *n* *pp*

♩ = 44