Be Your Tears Wet

for Solo Violin

Be Your Tears Wet for Violin

for Beverly Shin

Notes to the Performers:

"Be your tears wet?" is a line from Shakespeare's King Lear (Act IV, 7). Lear's former kingdom is in ruins as his treasonous daughters war for the throne. Cordelia, his only faithful and loving daughter, returns from exile to his side with the army of France. Since he last saw her, at the moment he turned her out of his house, he has brought upon his own head (and upon others) a dark succession of tragedies. He is touched with madness now. And as he returns to consciousness he can not quite believe it is really her, or that she has returned from his cruel banishment with forgiveness in her heart.

CORDELIA Sir, do you know me?

LEAR You are a spirit, I know. When did you die? ... Where have I been? Where are I? Fair daylight? I am mightily abused. I should ev'n die with pity To see another thus. I know not what to say. I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see; I feel this pinprick. Would I were assured Of my condition!

CORDELIA O, look upon me sir, And hold your hand in benediction o'er me. [He attempts to kneel.] No, sir, you must not kneel.

LEAR Pray, do not mock me.
I am a very foolish fond old man,
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;
And, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks I should know you, and know this man,

Yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant What place this is, and all the skill I have Remembers not these garments, nor I know not Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me, For, as I am a man, I think this lady To be my child Cordelia.

CORDELIA [Weeping] And so I am, I am.

LEAR Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not. If you have poison for me I will drink it. I know you do not love me, for your sisters Have, as I do remember, done me wrong. You have some cause, they have not.

CORDELIA No cause, no cause. ...Will't please Your Highness walk?

LEAR You must bear with me. Pray you now, forget and forgive. I am old and foolish.

The music in this work is about the layering of emotions inextricably bound together in what we call bittersweetness, such as Lear's happiness at seeing his daughter, which was simultaneously pained with the memory and knowledge of all that had come before. The music for me hovers between sighs of deep love and sighs of grief. The melody appears over a canvas of twinkling gestures which becomes audible again each time the melody pauses. The spot marked "More Remote" is for me a musical icon for the bittersweetness I associate with the piece's title. This icon also becomes more visible in the fabric of the soloist's singing as the melody repeats.

Lighting Cues: All of the lighting changes must happen very slowly... relatively imperceptibly (if the lighting changes cannot be performed gradually then they should probably be abandoned). A good deal of interpretation is left to the concert-makers.

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Program Note:

with bits of dust... and encircling a beam of the moon...

I will see you through what must be tears of joy, but what light is left in my heart's blessing is dampened by such deep sorrows. "Be your tears wet?" he asked Cordelia. Love still after such a cost.

"Pray you now forget and forgive."

Forget and forgive.

(be) with dust...and (tears).. in a beam of the moon...(your) moondust

I will see you through a moon that might be (your) tears, when my heart's (wet) light is dampened by dusty sorrows. "Be your tears wet?"
Forget (your tears) of dust. Forget, as (your) love was bits of (tears), when my light is by your sad joy

forgive

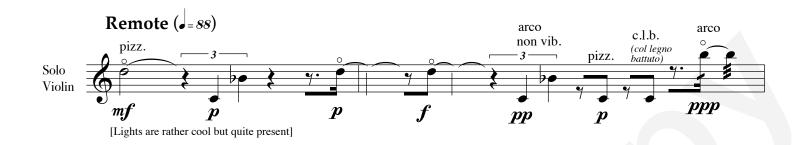
it's a light of

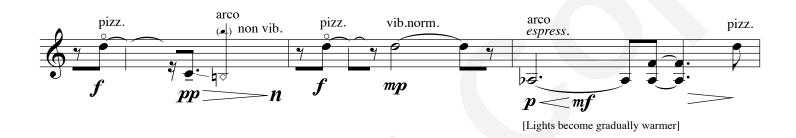
such cost

As I see you glowing in a beam of the moon with bits of dust encircling I can only ask you if yours are tears?

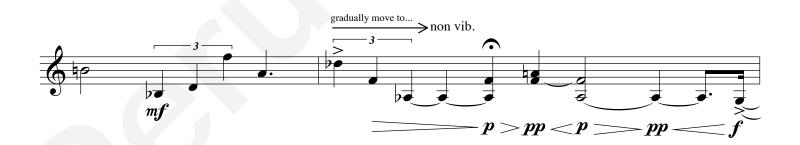
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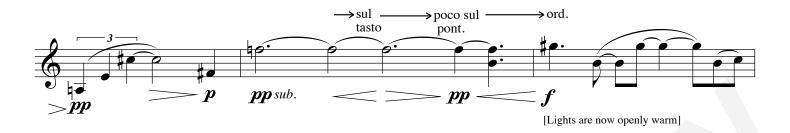








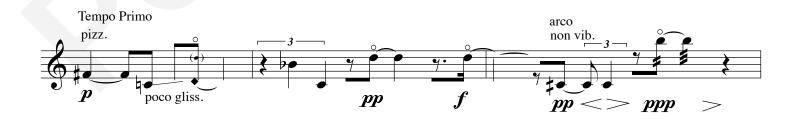




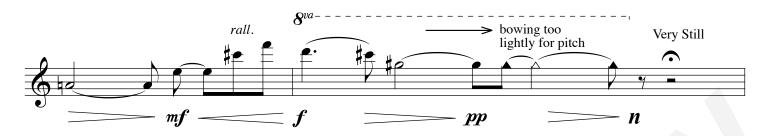












a tempo

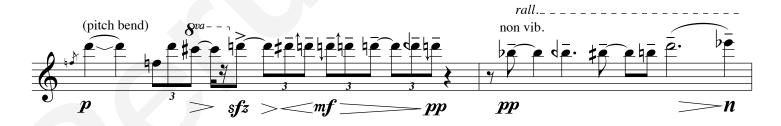


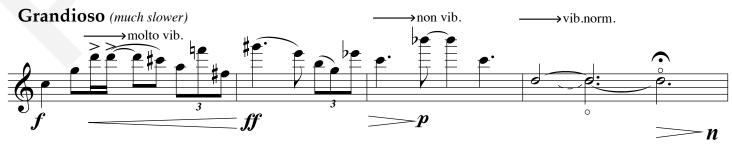
With Feeling (Use a variety of colors) espress.



[Lights down to a single tender, lonely beam]







With Tenderness

