

ANNA RUBIN

Night of Nights
for

Soprano & Piano
based on the
poem of Nelly Sachs

Program note

German Jewish poet and Nobel laureate Nelly Sachs created a unique body of work commemorating the Holocaust. She and her mother managed to flee Germany on the last flight allowed out of Germany to Sweden and lived there for the rest of her life. In “Nacht der Nächte,” Sachs manages in a few lines to express an enormous depth of loss and desolation with the hope of eventual redemption. I have made my own translation of the poem and included some German from the poem because of the unique vividness of the poet’s language. The musical language of the piece is veers towards and away tonality and exploits many pianistic colors.

Night of Nights – German poem by Nelly Sachs, English interpretation by Anna Rubin

Night fell - a coffin full of black fire,
Ein Sarg aus schwarzem Feuer-
The red colors of amen, *die roten Amenfarben,*
Enfolded themselves within, within the black fire.
in this purple were rooted Teeth, hair and the flesh – a body –, *in dieser purpur.*
A tree trembled in the wind of a ghost – *im Geisterwind* -
Bright as light - *Hellgesichtig* - this fierce angel with one day on earth,
its face brilliant and burning- –
burst into fire, black fire.
The flames – *Die Flammen*-- fled into the very soul of the living .
Musik – Music rang through into the shape of resurrection.

Original German text:

*Die Nacht war ein Sarg aus schwarzem Feuer
Die roten Amenfarben der Gebete
bestatteten sich darin
In diesem Purpur wurzelten Zähne – Haare – und der Leib
ein geschüttelter Baum im Geisterwind
Hellgesichtig – dieser Eintags-Cherab
zündete sich an
Die Flammen im Adernetz
liefen alle ihrer Deutung zu
In der Auferstehungsasche spielte Musik*

Notes on Performance

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system has two staves. The upper staff contains a whole rest followed by a quarter rest, then an eighth rest, and finally a quarter note. The lower staff contains a melodic line starting with a half note, followed by a quarter note, and then a half note. A slur covers the first three notes, and a '6' is written below the first note. A heavy horizontal line is drawn across the staff. The second system has two staves. The upper staff contains the word 'The'. The lower staff contains a heavy horizontal line.

p

Repeat figure for duration indicated by heavy horizontal line.



wind,

Gliss upwards briefly

Mournfully

♩ = ca. 78

Soprano Solo

S. Solo

S. Solo

6

S. Solo

mp

Night

Pno.

f

p

5

3

Ped. $\wedge$ Ped. $\wedge$

9

S. Solo

falls a cof - fin a cof - fin.

Pno.

3

Ped. $\wedge$ Ped. $\wedge$

11

S. Solo

f *mf*

Die Nacht war ein Sarg aus schwarz - en

Pno.

f

8^{vb}

13 *f*

S. Solo

Feu _____ er _____ a cof- fin of black

Pno.

mf *f*

Ped. _____

poco rall.

15 *tr* *mp* *f*

S. Solo

of black fire _____ Ah

Pno.

7 *7*

Ped. *8^{vb}* _____

17 *mp*

S. Solo

the red

Pno.

mf *mp* *3*

Ped. _____

poco accel..

= ca. 80
5

19

S. Solo

col-ors of A - men A men , A - A-men

Pno.

mf

p

3

6

3

6

p

21

S. Solo

A - - - men - far - ben._____

Pno.

pp

3

6

7

Ped._____ ^ Ped._____ ^

23

S. Solo

En-fold-ed them-selves with-in___ with-in___ the black_____

Pno.

mp

p

3

Ped._____ ^ Ped._____ ^ Ped._____ ^

26 *mf*

S. Solo

fire_ ausschwarz - en

Pno.

poco *p*

Ped.

Fiercely

28 *f* *gliss.*

S. Solo

Feu - er Feu - er

Pno.

f

Ped.

8vb

30

S. Solo

Feu - er Teeth, hair

Pno.

mf *tr*

33

S. Solo

gliss.

were root - ed were root-ed

Pno.

35

S. Solo

in this pur - ple And the flesh—

Pno.

37

S. Solo

And the flesh—

Pno.

Ped.

38

S. Solo

A - - - men, A - men.

Pno.

Ped.

40

S. Solo

Pno.

pp

Ped.

Ped.

42

S. Solo

mp

A tree, a tree trem - bled

gliss.

Pno.

f *pp* *mp*

Ped.

Ped.

44

S. Solo

mf

trem-bled in the wind, wind

poco rall.

Pno.

mp f

mp f

R.H.

R.H.

Ped. *p*

Ped.

46

S. Solo

wind

p

6

6

7

Pno.

L.H.

Ped.

Ped.

gliss.

48

S. Solo

Ah im

mp

f

pp mp

Pno.

50 *Freely - pianist follows singer* *mf*

S. Solo

Gei ster wind, Gei- ster, Gei- ster wind _____ Bright as light _____

Pno.

Ped. _____ Ped. _____

53

S. Solo

Hell-ge-sich tig! _____ this fierce ang - el with

Pno.

Ped. _____ Ped. _____

55

S. Solo

one day

Pno.

p

Ped. _____

56

S. Solo

one day

Pno.

p *poco* *poco* *mf*

3 3

57

S. Solo

mf

one day on earth earth its face shin-ing and

Pno.

mf

Ped. *8vb* Ped.

59

S. Solo

burn - ing in - to black

Pno.

gliss.

9

8vb

60

S. Solo

fire!

ppp

Pno.

(8)---

61

S. Solo

Arioso

Pno.

62

S. Solo

Pno.

♩ = ca. 88

64

S. Solo

tr

mf

The

Pno. Strike inside lower strings with palm or mallet

p

Ped.

6

6

6

66

S. Solo

flames

fled

Pno.

Ped.

6

6

6

6

67

S. Solo

in - to the souls

of the

Pno.

Ped.

6

6

6

6

6

6

69

S. Solo

liv - ing.

Pno.

Ped.

6

6

6

6

6

71

S. Solo

The sound of

Pno.

Ped.

6 6 6 6

72

S. Solo

Mu - - - sic

Pno.

Ped.

6 6 6 6

73

S. Solo

played in the

Pno.

Ped.

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

75

S. Solo

ash - - - es

Pno.

Ped.

76

S. Solo

of the

Pno.

Ped.

77

S. Solo

re - - - sur - rec - tion.

Pno.

Ped.

78

S. Solo

Pno.

Ped.

6

79

S. Solo

Ah

Pno.

Ped.

6

rit.

80

S. Solo

Pno.

Ped.

6

81

S. Solo

Ah

Pno.

Ped.

The musical score for measures 81 and 82 consists of three staves. The top staff is for the Soloist (S. Solo) in treble clef, showing a single note 'Ah' with a long horizontal line underneath it, indicating a sustained vocal sound. The middle staff is for the Piano (Pno.) and is divided into two systems. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melodic line with sixteenth-note runs and triplets, marked with a '6' for a sextuplet. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line with octaves and a triplet, also marked with a '6'. A pedal point is indicated in the bass line with a 'Ped.' marking and a long horizontal line. The bottom staff is for the Pedal (Ped.) and shows a single note with a long horizontal line underneath it, indicating a sustained pedal point.