

# Now That You See the Night

(2008)

three songs for soprano and harpsichord

poetry by Joyce Carol Oates, Sarah White, and Wallace Stevens  
music by Carson P. Cooman

- I. On This Morning of Grief (for Joyce Carol Oates on her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday)
- II. Yucca on White Sands
- III. Sonatina to Hans Christian (for Jeff and Katharine)

*Now That You See the Night* (2008) for soprano and harpsichord is a cycle of three songs on poems of three American poets: Joyce Carol Oates, Sarah White, and Wallace Stevens. The first song alternates and integrates slower, wide-ranging lyrical lines in the voice with faster, dramatic figuration in the harpsichord. The second song is simple and ballad-like. The third song is fierce and driving.

Carson P. Cooman  
June 2008  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

*Performance note:* No dynamic markings are given in the harpsichord part. On an instrument with a variety of stops and timbres available, the player should make musical choices to support and match the voice.

## On This Morning of Grief

Joyce Carol Oates

Cupped in your hands you bring me  
an abandoned wrens' nest—  
exquisite in miniature  
the fine-woven grasses like silk,  
moss that's still green,  
soiled string, milkweed seed, white cat fur—  
and in the precise center a hollow  
and in the hollow a single eggshell  
from which life  
has pecked its way free, and flown:  
smaller than my smallest fingernail,  
delicately brown-speckled—  
the egg's halves parted  
like an eye on the verge of opening.

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## Yucca on White Sands

Sarah White

My mother, the dune,  
gave me these bells  
and said "Rattle them. Summon  
the rain, your infrequent father."

She made a spiny skirt  
and said "Wear this.  
You live by yourself."

She said: "Here comes the wind.  
I'll be shifting. Remember  
your thousands of toes—"

Curl them  
in clumps of cold, dark sand,  
and hold on."

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## Sonatina to Hans Christian

If any duck in any brook,  
Fluttering the water  
For your crumb,  
Seemed the helpless daughter

Of a mother  
Regretful that she bore her;  
Or of another,  
Barren, and longing for her;

What of the dove,  
Or thrush, or any singing mysteries?  
What of the trees  
And intonations of the trees?

What of the night  
That lights and dims the stars?  
Do you know, Hans Christian,  
Now that you see the night?

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# Now That You See the Night

three songs for soprano and harpsichord

3

Carson P. Cooman  
Opus 770

*for Joyce Carol Oates on her 70th birthday*  
I. On This Morning of Grief

Joyce Carol Oates

**A** ♩ = 100

Soprano

*mf* ♩ = 60, freely

Cupped in your hands

*always dramatic*

3

3

6

**B** ♩ = 100

you bring\_ me an a - ban - doned wren's nest—

3

3

**C** ♩ = 60, freely

*mp*

ex - qui - site in min - ia - ture \_ the fine wo - ven grass - es like silk, moss \_\_\_\_\_ that's still \_

3

3

3

3

*p*

4

**D**

*mf* *p*

green, soiled string, milk-weed seed, white cat fur—

*(freely, not aligned with voice)*

**E**

$\text{♩} = 100$   $\text{♩} = 60, \text{freely}$

*mp*

and in the pre-cise cen-ter

**F**

*p* *mf*

a hol-low and in the hol-low a sin-gle egg-shell from which life has

**G**

*f* *mp* *f*

pecked its way free, and flown: small-er than my small-

*H*

est fin - ger - nail, de - li - cate - ly brown - speck - led - the egg's

*J*

halves part - ed like an eye on the verge of o - pen - ing. (hum)

*K*

(♩ = 60) unsynchronized, separate tempos to end

(hum)

♩ = 100

*rit.*

c. 2 min.

## II. Yucca on White Sands

Sarah White

Simply (♩ = 104)

*mp*

My moth-er, the dune, gave me these bells and said "Rat-tle them. Sum-mon the

*mf*

9

rain, your in-freq-uent fath-er."

She made a spi-ny skirt and said "Wear this. You

*f*

16

live by your-self."

*p*

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22 *mf* ————— *f*

She said: "Here comes the wind. \_\_\_\_\_ I'll be shift-ing. Re-mem-ber

28 *rit.* *a tempo* *mp*

your thou-sands of toes— Curl them in clumps of

34 *mf* *mp* ————— *f* *rit.* *pp*

cold, \_ dark sand, \_\_\_\_\_ and hold on. \_\_\_\_\_

c. 1¼ min.

for Jeff and Katharine  
 III. Sonatina to Hans Christian

Wallace Stevens

Fierce (♩ = 136)

(♩ = ♩ sempre)

*ff*

If a - ny duck in a - ny

*with force*

5

brook, Flut - tering the wa - ter For your crumb

10

Seemed the help - less daugh - - ter Of a moth - er Re -

15

gret - ful that she bore her; - Or of a - noth - er, Bar - ren, and

20

long - ing for her; \_\_\_\_\_ What

25

of the dove, Or thrush, - or - a - ny

29

sing - ing mys - ter-ies? What of the trees And in - to - na - tions of

*mf*

trees? What of the night That lights and dims the

38 *ff*

stars? Do you know, Hans Chris - tian,

41 *(ff)* *sub. mp* *ffff*

Now that you see the night?

c. 1 min.

April-June 2008  
 Cambridge, Massachusetts  
 — Coram Deo —  
 Duration: c. 4½ min.