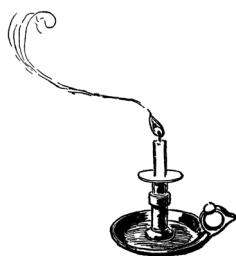


Shelter This Candle

Edna St. Vincent Millay

SATB, oboe, horn, cello, harp

~ CONDUCTOR'S SCORE ~



Elizabeth Alexander

To the Wife of a Sick Friend

Shelter this candle from the wind.
Hold it steady. In its light
The cave wherein we wander lost
Glitters with frosty stalactite,
Blossoms with mineral rose and lotus,
Sparkles with crystal moon and star,
Till a man would rather be lost than found:
We have forgotten where we are.

Shelter this candle. Shrewdly blowing
Down the cave from a secret door
Enters our only foe, the wind.
Hold it steady. Lest we stand,
Each in a sudden, separate dark,
The hot wax spattered upon your hand,
The smoking wick in my nostrils strong,
The inner eyelid red and green
For a moment yet with moons and roses,—
Then the unmitigated dark.

Alone, alone in a terrible place,
In utter dark without a face,
With only the dripping of the water on the stone,
And the sound of your tears, and the taste of my own.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Commissioned by VOICES Chorale, Music Director Lyn Ransom

Shelter This Candle

for SATB choir, oboe, horn, cello and harp

Edna St. Vincent Millay
(♩ = 66)

Elizabeth Alexander

S
A
T
B
Oboe
Horn
Violoncello
Harp

pizz. lightly
p
pp
+++++

5
Choir (Tutti)
Vc
Hp

hold teeth and lips gently apart, exhale deeply
sh
arco
pp *mp* *pp*
mp

9 *mp* *pp*

Choir (Tutti)

Hp

14 *pp* *pp*

T

B

Vc

Hp

pizz. *p* arco *p*

18 *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

T

B

Hn

Vc

Hp

22

pp

S

pp

A

Hn

Vc

mp

Hp



26

mp

S

mp

A

T

B

Hn

Vc

pp

pp

Hp

30 *pp*

S *pp*

A *pp*

T *mp* *pp*

B *mp* *pp*

Ob *p*

Hp *pp*

35

Ob

Hn *p*

Hp *mp*

38

Hn

Hp *mf* *f* *mf*

41

Ob *mp*

Hn *mp*

Vc *mp*

Hp *f*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 41, 42, and 43. The Oboe (Ob) part features a melodic line with a *mp* dynamic. The Horn (Hn) part has a similar melodic line, also marked *mp*. The Violin (Vc) part plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes, marked *mp*. The Harp (Hp) part has a complex texture with a *f* dynamic, featuring sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand.

44

Ob *mf* *pp*

Hn *mf* *pp*

Vc *mf* pizz.

Hp m.d. *mf* *mp*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 44, 45, and 46. The Oboe (Ob) part has a melodic line that starts at *mf* and ends at *pp*. The Horn (Hn) part has a similar melodic line, also starting at *mf* and ending at *pp*. The Violin (Vc) part plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes, marked *mf*, with a *pizz.* (pizzicato) instruction in measure 45. The Harp (Hp) part has a complex texture with a *mf* dynamic, featuring sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand, with a *mp* dynamic in measure 46.

47

T *pp*

B *pp*

Vc *mp*

Hp *pp*

Shel - ter_ this

Shel - ter_ this

Detailed description: This system contains measures 47, 48, 49, and 50. The Tenor (T) and Bass (B) parts have lyrics: "Shel - ter_ this". The Tenor part is marked *pp* and the Bass part is marked *pp*. The Violin (Vc) part has a melodic line in measure 50, marked *mp*. The Harp (Hp) part has a complex texture with a *pp* dynamic, featuring sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand.

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59

T *p* *pp*
can - - - - - dle,

B *p* *pp*
can - - - - - dle,

Ob

Hn *p*

Vc *p* *pp* arco

Hp *mp*



63

S *pp*
Shel - ter___ this

A *pp*
Shel - ter___ this

T *pp*
Shel - ter___ this

B *pp*
Shel - ter___ this

Ob

Vc

Hp *B₄*

67

S can - - dle. from the

A can - - dle. from the

T can - - dle. from the

B can - - dle. from the

Vc

Hp

70

S wind, *mf* *p*

A wind, *mf* *p*

T wind, *mf* *p* *pp*
o - a - o - a - o - a

B wind, *mf* *p* *nondiv. pp*
o - a - o - a - o - a

Ob *p* *mf* *p*

Hn *mp* *mf* *p*

Vc *mp* *mf* *p*

Hp *f* *Bb* *p bisbigliando*

75 *p* nondiv.

S
Shel - ter this can - dle from the

A
Shel - ter this can - dle from the

T
p o - a - o - a - o - a o *pp*

B
p o - a - o - a - o - a o *pp*

Vc

Hp

79 *mp*

S
wind. Hold it stead - y,

A
wind. Hold it stead - y,

T
pp o - a - o - a - o - a - o *mp* a - o - a - *pp*

B
pp o - a - o - a - o - a - o *mp* a - o - a - *pp*

Ob
mp

Vc
mp

Hp
mp C#

(+ + | + + | + + | + + |)

82

S *pp*
Hold it stead - y,

A *pp*
Hold it stead - y,

T *p* *pp*
o

B *p* *pp*
o

Ob *pp* *p*

Hn *pp* *mp*

Vc *p*

Hp *p*



86

T *pp* *p* *pp*
Hold it stead - - - y, Hold

B *pp* *p* *pp*
Hold it stead - - - y, Hold

Ob *pp*

Hn *pp*

Vc *pp*

Hp *pp*

l.v.

90

T *p* *pp*
it - - - - - y.

B *p* *pp*
it - - - - - y.

Ob

Hn *p*

Vc

Hp *E_b*

94

S *mp*
In - - - - - its

Ob

Vc

Hp *C₄* *D_b A_b*

97 **B**

S *mp*
light - - - - - the cave where - in we wan - der,

A *mp*
In its light the cave where - in we wan - der,

Vc *mp*

Hp *mp*

(+ + + + +)

109

S *Solo mp*
glit - ters, glit - ters with

Ob

Vc

Hp

Ci



112

S
frost - y sta - lac - tite,

Ob *mp*

Vc *mf*

Hp *mf*



115

Ob

Hn *mf*

Vc

Hp

Change pedals from ++|+|++ to ++|+|++

119 Tutti *mp*

S
Blos - soms with min - er - al rose, and

A
Blos - soms with min - er - al rose, and

T
min - er - al rose and

B
min - er - al rose and

Hn

Vc

Hp
(G₄ C₄ D₄ →) G₄ C₄ D₄

123 *mf*

S
lo - tus,

A
lo - tus,

T
lo - tus,

B
lo - tus,

Ob

Hn

Vc

Hp
f *stiss.*

(+++|+|+++)

127

Ob *p*

Hn *p*

Vc *p*

Hp *p* G# A#



131

S *mf*
Spar-kles with crys - tal moon and star, 'Til a

A *mf*
Spar-kles with crys - tal moon and star, 'Til a

T
'Til a

B *mf*
'Til a

Ob *mf*

Hn *mf*

Vc *mf*

Hp *mf* F# G# A# *mp* gliss. gliss.

S
man would rath-er be lost, 'til a man would rath-er be lost,

A
man would rath-er be lost, 'til a man would rath-er be lost,

T
man would rath-er be lost, 'til a man would rath-er be lost,

B
man would rath-er be lost, 'til a man would rath-er be lost,

Ob

Hn

Vc

Hp
mf *mp* *mf* C# F# *mp*
gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.
(+++|+++) (|++|+++)

Detailed description: This page of a musical score features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and instrumental parts for Oboe, Horn, Violoncello, and Harp. The vocal lines are in G major and contain the lyrics 'man would rath-er be lost, 'til a man would rath-er be lost,'. The instrumental parts include a harp accompaniment with specific dynamics and glissando markings, and woodwind parts with melodic lines and slurs.

S
we would rath - er be lost

A
we would rath - er be lost we would rath - er be lost

T
we would rath - er be lost

B
we would rath - er be lost

Ob

Hn

Vc

Hp
C₁ *mf*

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score, page 17 of a larger work, starting at measure 139. It features a vocal quartet (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and an orchestra. The vocal parts are in a 4-part setting of the text "we would rather be lost". The Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts are written in treble and bass clefs. The Alto part has a second line of music starting in measure 4. The instrumental parts include Oboe (Ob), Horn (Hn), Violoncello (Vc), and Harp (Hp). The Harp part includes a dynamic marking of *mf* and a fingering of C₁. The score is written in a common time signature and includes various musical notations such as rests, beams, and slurs.

143

S
— than found.

A
— than found.

T
— than found.

B
— than found.

Ob

Hn

Vc

Hp
C#

146 *full of awe*

S
We have for - got - ten where we are,

A
full of awe
We have for - got - ten where we are,

T
full of awe
We have for - got - ten where we are,

B
full of awe
We have for - got - ten where we are,

Ob

Hn

Vc

Hp

mf



150

Hn

Vc

Hp

niente

pp

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161 *mp* *pp* *pp*

S Shel - ter_ this

A Shel - ter_ this

T *mp* *pp*

B sh

Vc pizz. *p*

Hp gliss. gliss. *pp* gliss. *p*

(+ + + + +)

164 [C] *p* *pp* *pp* *p* *pp* *pp*

S can - - - - dle,

A can - - - - dle,

T o - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o

B

Ob

Vc arco flautando, sul tasto *p*

Hp *p*

(+ + + + +)

168 *pp*

S o - i -

T *p* Shrewd - ly blow - ing

Ob

Hp

172

S o - - - - i - o - i - o - - - - i -

T down the cave from a se - cret door

Hn *pp* *p*

Hp

176 *niente*

S o - i - o

A *p* en - ters our *mp* on - - - ly

T *mp* en - ters our on - - - ly

Hn *p* *pp*

Vc *p*

Hp A#

(+ + + + +)

179

S *p*
i - o - i - o - - - - i - o

A
foe

T
foe, *mf* the

B *p*
i - o - i - o - - - - i - o *mf* the

Vc

Hp



182

S *mp* *mf*
o - a - o - a - o - a - o - - - - a - o - a - o - - -

A *mp* *mf*
o - a - o - a - o - a - o - - - - a - o - a - o - - -

T *f*
wind, Hold it stead - y, Hold it

B *f*
wind, Hold it stead - y, Hold it

Ob *mf*

Hn *p*

Vc *f*

Hp *mf* A₃ B_b

196 **D** a tempo

mp

pp

S stand _____ each in a sud - den, sep - a - rate dark, _____

whispered: *mp*

A _____ sud - den, se - par - ate,

mp

pp

T stand _____ each in a sud - den, sep - a - rate dark, _____

hold teeth and lips gently apart, exhale deeply *pp*

B _____ sh _____

Ob _____ *pp*

Hn *f* _____ *pp*

Vc *f* _____

Hp *f* C# E# F# G#



202

S _____ [o - i - o - i - o - i - o] _____

p

A _____ The

T _____ [o - i - o - i - o] _____

mp

pp

B _____

Ob _____

Hn _____

arco

Vc _____ *p*

S
A
T
B

hot (t) wax (x) spat-tered up - on your hand,

The

Ob
Hn
Vc
Hp

p *p*

C# E# Gb

G# C#



T

smok - - ing wick in my nos - - trils strong,

Ob
Hn
Vc
Hp

p 4

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224

S *mf*
mo-ment yet with moon and ros - es,

A *mf*
mo-ment yet with moon and ros - es,

T *warmly mp*
with moon and ro - ses,

B *warmly mp*
with moon and ro - ses,

Ob *mf* *p*

Vc *mf*

Hp *mf* *p*
G₄ D₄ A₄



230

T *pp*
then the un - mit - i - ga - ted dark, the un

B *pp*
then the un - mit - i - ga - ted dark, the un

Ob

Hn *warmly* *p*

Vc *pp*

Hp *pp*
play low on strings (not quite *pres de la table*)
E₄ F₄ E₄ C₄

237

Solo *mf*

S A T B Ob Vc Hp

A - lone, a - lone in a ter - ri-ble

mit - i - ga - ted dark, a - lone,

mit - i - ga - ted dark,

sul pont. (gradually accelerate into unmeasured tremolos) *mp*

mf *mf*

G_b

+

244

S A T B Ob Vc Hp

place, *p* niente

a - lone, *p* niente

a - lone, *pp* in ut - ter

pp *pp*

251

Tutti **pp** sotto voce

S [o - a - o - a - o - - - a - o - a - o - a - o - a - o]

A

T

B dark, _____ with-out a face, _____

Vc niente

Hp C: B: Eb lonely p



259

F

S with on - ly the drip-ping on the

A with on - ly the drip-ping on the

T with on - ly the drip-ping on the

B with on - ly the drip-ping on the

Hp

264

S
stone. and the sound of your tears, and the

A
stone. and the sound of your tears, and the

T
stone. and the sound of your tears, and the

B
stone and the sound of your tears, and the

Hn *con sordino*
p

Vc

Hp *gliss.* *p*
G \sharp A \flat



268

S *pp*
taste of my own

A *pp*
taste of my own

T *pp*
taste of my own

B *pp*
taste of my own

Ob *p*

Hn

Vc

Hp *gliss.* G \flat A \sharp

272 **G**

Musical score for measures 272-275. The score is for three instruments: Oboe (Ob), Viola (Vc), and Harp (Hp). The Oboe part features a melodic line with a slur and a quartet (4) in the fourth measure. The Viola part has a similar melodic line with slurs. The Harp part has a rhythmic accompaniment with a 'gliss.' marking in the first measure and a '+' symbol below the staff. A double bar line is present at the end of the system.



Musical score for measures 276-279. The score is for three instruments: Oboe (Ob), Viola (Vc), and Harp (Hp). The Oboe part has a melodic line with a slur. The Viola part has a melodic line with slurs. The Harp part has a rhythmic accompaniment with a 'gliss.' marking in the first measure. A double bar line is present at the end of the system.



Musical score for measures 280-283. The score is for three instruments: Oboe (Ob), Viola (Vc), and Harp (Hp). The Oboe part has a melodic line with a slur. The Viola part has a melodic line with slurs. The Harp part has a rhythmic accompaniment with a 'gliss.' marking in the first measure. A double bar line is present at the end of the system.

284 **H**

S *pp*
Shel - ter__ this

A *pp*
Shel - ter__ this

Ob

Vc

Hp
B \flat E \natural C \sharp G \natural

(+ + | + + + +)



288

S *p*
can - - - - - dle, Shel - ter__ this

A *p*
can - - - - - dle, Shel - ter__ this

Vc

Hp
gliss.

292

S
can - - - - - dle,

A
can - - - - - dle,

Ob
mp

Hn
p *mp*

Vc
mp

Hp
mp



296

S
mp
Hold it

A
mp
Hold it

T
mp
Hold it stead - y, Hold it

B

Ob

Hn

Vc

Hp
C₄ *gliss.*

300

S
stead - y, hold it

A
stead - y, hold it

T
stead - y, hold it

B
mp
Hold it stead - y, hold it

Ob
mf

Hn
mf

Vc
mf

Hp
mf

7

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, numbered 300 and 35, features vocal and instrumental parts. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are in a 6/8 time signature. The Soprano, Alto, and Tenor parts have lyrics: "stead - y, hold it". The Bass part has lyrics: "Hold it stead - y, hold it". The instrumental parts include Oboe (Ob), Horn (Hn), Violoncello (Vc), and Harp (Hp). The Oboe, Horn, and Violoncello parts are marked *mf*. The Harp part is marked *mf*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet ◦ Margaret & George Alexander, parents ◦ Yehuda Amichai, poet ◦ Bjorn Arneson, generous web designer ◦ Scott Bates, poet ◦ Abbie Betinis, composer/colleague ◦ Dennis Blubaugh, music dealer ◦ Michael deVernon Boblett, poet ◦ Ray Bradbury, writer ◦ Norbert Capek, visionary ◦ e. e. cummings, poet ◦ Philip Dacey, poet ◦ Emily Dickinson, poet ◦ Evelyn Dudley, poet ◦ Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister/writer ◦ Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer ◦ Richard M. Fewkes, writer ◦ Peshua Gertler, poet ◦ Richard S. Gilbert, minister/writer ◦ Jack Gallagher, composer/teacher ◦ Paul Gerike, proofreader ◦ Steve Harper, technical advisor ◦ Steve Hawkins, generous web designer ◦ Edie Hill, composer/colleague ◦ Langston Hughes, poet ◦ Mark Humphrey, piano technician ◦ Karel Husa, composer/teacher ◦ Kalidasa, poet ◦ Garrison Keillor, storyteller ◦ Denise Levertov, poet ◦ George Ella Lyon, poet ◦ Jonathan Machen, artist ◦ Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet ◦ J. David Moore, composer/colleague ◦ Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet ◦ Gerald Rich, poet ◦ Carl Sandburg, poet ◦ King Sigismund III, religious reformer ◦ Steven Stucky, composer/teacher ◦ Rabindranath Tagore, poet ◦ Howard Thurman, civil rights leader/writer ◦ John Greenleaf Whittier, poet ◦ Theodore Tuckering Williams, poet ◦ Daniel Winter, pianist/teacher ◦ Nancy Wood, poet ◦ Yehudi Wyner, composer/teacher ◦ Paul Adams, technical advisor

A LOT OF HARD WORK & CREATIVITY WENT INTO BRINGING THIS MUSIC TO YOU...



...AND SOME OF IT WAS EVEN MINE.

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307

S *pp* *mf*
sh

A *pp* *mf*
sh

Vc *sul tasto, flautando*
pp *mp*

Hp *p*



311

S *pp*

A *pp*

T *pp* *p*
Shel - ter___ this can - - - - dle,___

B *pp* *p*
Shel - ter___ this can - - - - dle,___

Vc *pizz.*

Hp

315

pp *p* *pp*

S
00 - 0 - 00 - 0 - 00 - 0 - 00 - 0 - 00 - 0

A
00 - 0 - 00 - 0 - 00 - 0 - 00 - 0

T
pp *p*
Shel - ter__ this

B
pp *p*
Shel - ter__ this

Vc

Hp
gliss. *p* B \flat

321

pp *pp*

S
sh

A
pp *pp*
sh

T
p *pp*
can - - - - dle,

B
p *pp*
can - - - - dle,

Ob

Vc
pizz. *p*

Hp

S *mf* *pp*

A *mf* *pp*
Hold it

T *mp* *mf* *pp*
sh

B *pp*
Hold it

Ob

Hn

Vc *p*

Hp *gliss.*

331 **J**

Solo *mp* sing to the other soloist, or directly to the audience
stead - y,

Solo *mp* sing to the other soloist, or directly to the audience
stead - y,

A *pp*
stead - - y.

B *pp*
stead - - y.

Hn *pp*
arco: change bow discreetly

Vc *pp*

Hp *8va p bisbigliando*

335

Musical score for measures 335-338. The score includes parts for Solo (two staves), A, B, Vc, and Hp. The lyrics "stead - y," are written under the vocal lines. The Vc part features a dotted line with a circled 8 below it. The Hp part has a treble clef staff with a whole bar line and a bass clef staff with notes.



339

Musical score for measures 339-342. The score includes parts for Solo (two staves), A, B, Vc, and Hp. The lyrics "stead - y," are written under the vocal lines. The Vc part features a dotted line with a circled 8 below it. The Hp part has a treble clef staff with a whole bar line and a bass clef staff with notes.

343

Solo *p* stead - - - y,

Solo

A *ppp* stead - y.

B *ppp* stead - y.

Vc

Hp



347

Solo

Solo *p* stead - y,

A

B

Vc

Hp

351

Solo *stead - - y.*

Solo *stead - y,*

S *pp*
sh

A *niente*

T *pp*
sh

B *niente*

Vc *(8)*

Hp

356 *mp* *niente*

S *niente*

A *Breathe slowly and deeply, listening carefully:*

T *mp* *niente*

B *Breathe slowly and deeply, listening carefully:*

Hp

Composer's Notes:

Before I composed a single note of *Shelter This Candle*, I already knew several things about the piece. I knew that the poem spoke of love's ability to transform even the darkest moments of our lives into times of comfort, connection and wonderment. I loved the delicious images that the poem offered: light, darkness, exhilaration, loneliness, and the sounds of wind and falling tears. The combination of harp, oboe, horn, cello and choir was nothing short of luscious.

What I did not imagine was how Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem would enter my consciousness so deeply.

I composed the first section of *Shelter This Candle* with a light heart. Crafting the brilliant underground world of "crystal moon and star" was a delight for me, full of "child in a candy shop" moments. After about ten days of composing, satisfied with my work thus far, I laid the song aside for several weeks in order to complete an orchestra piece.

Little did I know what was in store for me when I returned to face the second half of the poem, and the entrance of "our only foe, the wind." On some level, I had lost track of the importance of the poem's title: "To the Wife Of a Sick Friend"! *Oh yes, I remembered. This poem is about how we respond to the most difficult times of life, when we could easily become overwhelmed by grief or despair. During times like these, leaving the cave is not an option.*

Every day, as I worked on the second, darker section of the piece, those words repeated themselves to me — *leaving the cave is not an option*. The conclusion of the song needed a palpable sense of how dreadfully lonely the darkness can become if we allow the light of our love to be extinguished. I took many walks, and reminded myself to breathe. One day, I suddenly understood the exact significance of the last line of the poem: if the candle is allowed to go out, the poet will be able to *taste* her own tears, but she will only be able to *hear* her friend's tears, echoing somewhere out in the dark space, far away.

After the final words of the poem had been set to music, there was still something more to say, but it took me a long time to figure out exactly how to conclude this song. The answer lay, once again, in the poem's title: "To the Wife Of a Sick Friend." *Of course, I thought. We are, all of us in the whole world, in this big earthly cave together. But in the poem itself, there are only two solitary characters: Edna and her friend's wife, holding one candle between them, singing to each other with everything in their hearts: "Steady, steady, steady..."*

- E.A.

April 13, 2008