Poems of 1917

for Piano

by

LEO ORNSTEIN
All the years of my life have been the years of my anguish. I was a child and I wept as the great laughing world spun against my will. And there came upon my little soul swift storms of despair when the world laughed no more but was black, and was a blow against me.

And I grew. I was a boy. My spirit went forth and was hurt. All of me became groping fingers that life crushed, and eager eyes that life blinded. I was a flower, then, bruised back to the hard earth from which I had pushed upward.

But still I grew, until I was a man. And it was my agony that grew, feeding upon all the world. This was my growing. And this was how I learned to speak. My pain yearned to know itself. My pain needed words and a name. All of my language was the song of my pain. And all of what I saw and heard was pasturage for my despair.

O how wide was the world of my pain! and how innumerable were the ways of my sorrow! For sorrow had come. I had spread upward. My knowing was a blossom of warm petals above a wracked black field. I had come to understand. I had come to sorrow.

The world was full of men. the world was a dread pent prison. All about were the walls of Mystery—the gay hard walls that could not be broken down. The walls of the Sky swung and cajoled and laughed. The walls of Birth were a grey distant cloud welling with the laughter of remembrance. The walls of Death were near, and were a dancing maze of many colors. And when I looked at them they drew away and were deep black, and laughed. But all the walls were high beyond my thoughts and beyond my dreams; and within were men and women - all the men and women who had ever been and who should ever be. And I was one of them.

I was one of them; but I knew why the walls laughed. Understanding had come upon me like burgeoning on the bleak wood of a tree in this sad Spring. The years of my life had been years of anguish. Now I was a man and saw, a man and understood. I knew that the years of my life had turned to years of sorrow.

The men and women were angry together, and rended one another. They were prisoners. They were thrust in the prison of life. Mystery closed them together, closed them more close than the blood of a mother and her child that lives in her womb. But they were enemies. They hated one another. And the walls laughed at them.
They knew not whence they were, nor whither they were going. They were enthralled and agonized with this vast, close Mystery that held them. One skein of suffering and travail bound them together. Yet they were not friends; they would not be lovers. They maimed and cheated and slew. And the walls of the Heavens and the walls of Birth and the walls of Death laughed long at them.

What did they know but each other? What did they have but each other? What could they have and know, save one thing - love? Yet they poisoned; they wove bonds of pain; they made prisons for their hearts. The Mystery of life was not anguish enough for them; the bonds of Birth and of Death were not helplessness enough for them; the blind ecstasy of the world that circled them and made them quivering flesh of its despair was not despair enough for them. And the walls of their prison laughed.

I stood high upon the agony of the living and looked upon men, upon the pity of men who had love and who cast love away. This year, I was a man and looked about me. And I saw my brothers and my sisters, they who in all the common blackness of their lot had only love, and who hated each other. And the laughter of our Prison was clear to me. So the years of all my life shall be years of my sorrow.

Waldo Frank
Dedicated to Leopold Godowsky

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I.

Leo Ornstein, Op. 41

Andante espressivo

Piano

In all these pieces accidentals apply only to those notes before which they stand. They do not carry through the measure.
poco a poco crescendo

e molto marcato
poco a poco rit. e smorzando
IV.

Sostenuto (*molto appassionato*)

R.H.

L.H. marcato

Piano

R.H.

L.H.

rit.

R.H. *più animato*

L.H. *mf*
sempre piu f
VI.

Lento

Piano

\textit{p molto espressivo}

\textit{mf} \hspace{1cm} \textit{mp}

\textit{pp} \hspace{1cm} \textit{pp}

\textit{a tempo}

\textit{ff appassionato} \hspace{1cm} \textit{ff}

\textit{marcato}
VII.

Andante con moto e malinconioso

Piano
sempron più appassionato
moltò dim.

Tempo imp.
IX.

Allegro, ma non troppo

Piano

\textit{p} dolce
X.

Vivo (con fuoco)

Piano

f e sempre marcato