

Rubble Becomes Art

For Soprano and Piano

Dosia McKay

Rubble Becomes Art

Composed by

Dosia McKay

Originally composed for mezzo-soprano, flute (or violin), bassoon (or cello), and guitar

Transcribed for soprano and piano by the composer

Poetry by

Sally Atkins, Valerie Foote, and Cathy Larson Sky

I	–	Dark Sister, Sing	4'55"
II	–	The Secret	4'15"
III	–	Lemniscates	4'50"

Total duration: 14'00"

***Commissioned by Kate Steinbeck and Pan Harmonia
in Celebration of Pan Harmonia's 20th Season***

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along with generous support from private donors

"Rubble Becomes Art" is a triptych of art songs commissioned by flutist Kate Steinbeck, founder and director of Pan Harmonia, marking the chamber music organization's 20th season. The composition sets to music the poetry of three North Carolina women writers on the themes of inclusivity and exclusivity regarding cultural, economic, and gender issues. The three poems, although distinct in their style and thematic content, present a cohesive call to healing and reconciliation, not only as it pertains to the injustices suffered by women, but the humanity as a whole.

The opening poem by Sally Atkins entitled "Dark Sister, Sing" is, in the poet's own words, "a ceremony of forgiveness." The beginning stanzas outline deep brokenness and fracture in the fabric of our society. Atkins calls it "rubble of neglect." The poem continues as a stately procession "in the rhythms of breath and seasons", with each stanza reaching deeper into reconciliation and reparation.

The second poem by Valerie Foote, entitled "The Secret", tells the story of a betrayal of a young girl whose innocence is stolen by a stranger and who, fifty years later, experiences a powerful flashback and a breakthrough.

The final poem by Cathy Larson Sky, entitled "Lemniscates", is a rich and abstract kaleidoscope of imagery from around the Earth depicting the forces of nature bringing renewal, beauty, and unity to all humankind. The last stanza of the poem contains the phrase "rubble becomes art" and it is a testament to powerful healing and transformation of a broken world.

Thus, the triptych begins with "rubble of neglect" but it ends with the transformation of rubble into art. This is what we, the artists, do. We gather the rubble in our hands and make art from it, bringing healing to the world around us and to ourselves. It is my hope that my music fuels this endeavor.

- Dosia McKay
2019

Dark Sister, Sing
– by Sally Atkins

Dark Sister, sing to me
Sing a song of longing
To see beneath the surface
Rubble of neglect
Human hunger for bread
And kindness.

Dark Sister, sing to me
A song of sacred rage
To shatter the walls
Of fear and ignorance
Refuse the bitter cup
Of violence.

Sing to us, Dark Sister
Sing a song of sadness
Then let us lick
With our own tongues
The wounds of poverty
And privilege.

Dark Sister, sing to us
Sing a song of healing
Offer prayers to Earth and Sky
In the old language of humility
In the rhythms of breath
And seasons.

Sing then to me, Dark Sister
Sing to me of wisdom
A thousand ways to listen
To stones and mountains
To the teachings of the trees
And to each other.

Sing through me, Dark Sister
A song of reparation
Teach me again
The ancient songs of welcome
The chants that open hearts
To the stranger.

Dark Sister
Make of these words
A ceremony of forgiveness
In the beauty of the singing
May we find ourselves holy
And fall in love
With the world again.

The Secret

-by Valerie Foote

Humiliation gnaws away at my belly like a blind rat, raw and senseless.
It is the sickening experience of ultimate intrusion and abandonment
that i thought only comes before death.

my ghosts are the demons,
that gather to feed on my misery.

In the morning the greyness settles in the still house.

To the front door, i turn the knob into the sun.

It still lives and i am grateful.

i follow her dance to the open road.

It's then the man calls to me and his smile lulls me.

Hello peanut, he says.

i am the tiny peanut waiting to be devoured.

Why peanut? I think, over the years that have past between us.

The deserted carriage house is full of smells and stillness.

i am special i tell myself

because I caught his smile.

His fingers filter through my hair and a breeze ruffles the pansies with their
frozen smiles

they will keep smiling through my shame.

Their silence will keep the secret in the years to come.

Fifty years later and I tell the gardener No,

Don't plant those pansies in my garden!

They still nauseate me with their false smiles.

They saw and they never told.

Lemniscates

-by Cathy Larson Sky

Dawn.

A mule deer and her fawn graze on fallen apples.

Our eyes meet and hold, then

their long necks bend again to fruit.

My boot rakes a rain-soaked patch of mint.

Green scent rises, tinged with forgiveness.

In ancient Peche-Merle caves, hand prints in red ochre

dance on scorched walls. Underground pools rise,

soak crevice to ceiling with bright algae.

Soft now, a dream.

Shrill cries. A legion of eagles passes overhead, blocks the sun.

Grey feathers float toward earth.

Houses begin to shake and sing with the voices

of the dead. Dishes tumble from their shelves.

In Africa they say of breakage spirit has been set free.

In the metropolis sulfurous bubbles explode.

Arctic winds clear the stink. Butterfly bushes

burst the concrete, flutter with lapis,

gold

orange.

Jelly-roll land writhes like a glittering emerald serpent,

a belly dancer's sequined girdle. Fearless children

ride its waves, shouting till nightfall.

Sun returns, a kindergarten drawing, benevolent

cheeks turnip-round. Its lemon rays warm all.

No more you, me, them.

Rubble becomes art. How we live.

A kind of thick bread,

perfumed with herbs.

Rubble Becomes Art

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Originally composed for mezzo-soprano, flute, bassoon, and guitar.
Transcribed for soprano and piano by the composer.

Poetry by Sally Atkins

I - Dark Sister, Sing

Dosia McKay

$\text{♩} = 52$ Evenly, as if in a procession

Soprano *mf*
Dark Sis-ter, sing to me

Piano *mf*
sustain pedal as needed

6
Sing a song of long - ing To see be - neath the sur - face

8
Rub - ble of ne - glect Hu - man hun - ger for

The musical score is written for soprano and piano. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 52, 'Evenly, as if in a procession'. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-5) shows the soprano part starting with a rest, followed by the lyrics 'Dark Sis-ter, sing to me'. The piano accompaniment starts with a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system (measures 6-7) continues the vocal line with 'Sing a song of long - ing' and 'To see be - neath the sur - face'. The piano part features a triplet in the right hand. The third system (measures 8-11) continues with 'Rub - ble of ne - glect' and 'Hu - man hun - ger for'. The piano part includes a triplet and a sextuplet in the right hand. The score ends with a double bar line.

Dosia McKay - Rubble Becomes Art, for soprano and piano

10

bread and kind - ness.

mf

12

A *mf*

Dark Sis - ter, sing to me

dim.

mp

14

A song of sa - cred rage To

cresc.

mp *cresc.*

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16 *f*

shat - ter the walls Of fear and ig - no - rance Re -

mf

3

6

3

18 *cresc.*

fuse the bit - ter cup Of

cresc.

19 *ff*

vio - lence.

f *mp* *mf*

3

B

25

mf

Sing to us, Dark Sis - ter Sing a song of sad - ness

3 3 6 6 6 6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 25 and 26. The vocal line starts in 5/4 time and changes to 4/4 at measure 26. The piano accompaniment features triplets in the right hand and sixteenth-note patterns in the left hand. Measure 26 includes a double bar line with a repeat sign.

27

Then let us lick with our own tongues The

6 6 6 6 3 6 6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 27 and 28. The vocal line continues in 4/4 time. The piano accompaniment features sixteenth-note patterns in the left hand and chords in the right hand. Measure 28 includes a double bar line with a repeat sign.

29

wounds of po - ver - ty and pri - vi - lege.

6 3 dim. 3 3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 29 and 30. The vocal line continues in 4/4 time. The piano accompaniment features sixteenth-note patterns in the left hand and chords in the right hand. Measure 30 includes a double bar line with a repeat sign and a *dim.* marking.

31

p *mf*

3 3 6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 31 and 32. The piano accompaniment features triplets in the left hand and chords in the right hand. Measure 32 includes a double bar line with a repeat sign.

32

cresc. 6 6 6 6 *f* 3

C

34 *mf* *cresc.* *f*

Dark Sis-ter, sing to us Sing a song of heal - ing Of - fer

mf 3 *p* 6 *cresc.* 3

36

pray-ers to Earth and Sky In the old lan - guage of hu-mi - li - ty In the

f 3 3 6

38 *dim.* *mf*

rhythms of breath And sea - sons.

6 *dim.* 3 *p*

40 D *mf*

Sing then to me, Dark Sis - ter

43

Sing to me of wis - dom A thou - sand ways to lis - ten To stones and moun - tains To the

46

tea - chings of the trees And to each o - ther.

48 *dim.* *mp* *mf* *8va*

tea - chings of the trees And to each o - ther.

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50

Musical score for measures 50-51. The system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 3 and 6. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

51

Musical score for measures 51-52. The system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part continues with complex rhythmic patterns and fingerings. The key signature has two sharps.

E

52 *mf*

Sing through me, Dark Sis - ter

Musical score for measures 52-53. The system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns with fingerings. The key signature has two sharps. The time signature is 5/4.

53

A song of re - pa - ra - tion Teach me a -

Musical score for measures 53-54. The system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns with fingerings. The key signature has two sharps. The time signature is 5/4.

54

gain The an - cient songs of wel - come The chants that o - pen

cresc.

6

cresc.

3 3 3 3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 54, 55, and 56. The vocal line starts in 4/4 time, then changes to 2/4 for measure 55, and returns to 4/4 for measure 56. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Measure 54 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '6') and a quarter note. Measure 55 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '6') and a quarter note. Measure 56 has a piano part with four eighth-note triplets (labeled '3'). Dynamics include *cresc.* above the vocal line and *cresc.* above the piano part in measure 56.

57

hearts To the stran - ger.

f

6

mf 6

mf 3

3 3 3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 57, 58, and 59. The vocal line starts in 2/4 time, then changes to 4/4 for measure 58, and has a whole rest in measure 59. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Measure 57 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '3') and a quarter note. Measure 58 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '6') and a quarter note. Measure 59 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '3') and a quarter note. Dynamics include *f* above the vocal line in measure 58 and *mf* above the piano part in measures 58 and 59.

F

60

Dark Sis - ter Make of these words a ce - re - mo - ny of for - give - ness In the beau - ty of the sin - ging May we

mf

3

3

3

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 60, 61, and 62. The vocal line starts in 4/4 time, then changes to 3/4 for measure 61, and returns to 4/4 for measure 62. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Measure 60 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '3') and a quarter note. Measure 61 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '3') and a quarter note. Measure 62 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '3') and a quarter note. Dynamics include *mf* above the vocal line in measure 60.

63

find o - ur - selves ho - ly And fall in love

cresc.

cresc.

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 63 and 64. The vocal line starts in 4/4 time and continues in 4/4 for measure 64. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Measure 63 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '3') and a quarter note. Measure 64 has a piano part with a sixteenth-note triplet (labeled '3') and a quarter note. Dynamics include *cresc.* above the vocal line in measure 64 and *cresc.* above the piano part in measure 64.

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65

With the world a - gain. *f*

accelerando if singer can't hold

6

f

Detailed description: This musical score page contains measures 65 through 68. The soprano part begins with the lyrics 'With the world a - gain.' and features a fermata over the word 'gain.' followed by a dynamic marking of *f*. A slur spans across measures 66 and 67. The piano accompaniment starts with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated figure in the right hand, marked with a '6' (sixteenth notes), and a similar figure in the left hand. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed above the piano part in measure 66. In measure 67, the piano part consists of block chords. In measure 68, the piano part features a wavy line indicating a tremolo effect on the chords. A performance instruction 'accelerando if singer can't hold' is written above the piano part in measure 67. The page concludes with a double bar line.