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Program Notes

Conceived over lunch at the Oak Room in the famed Algonquin Hotel in New York City, *Songs of Sophistication* is an homage by poet Robert Bode and composer John David Earnest to the wit and verbal swordplay of the members of the "Algonquin Round Table" of the 1920s. Such literary luminaries as Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, George S. Kaufman, Robert E. Sherwood, Alexander Woollcott, and Harold Ross met for lunch daily at the Algonquin to discuss the affairs of the day and to trade delicious bon mots. The five songs in this set explore such sophisticated topics as travel, food, love, language, and the true nature of genius, subjects that surely would have been discussed, dissected, satirized, and parodied by the brilliant circle of friends at the Round Table.

Songs of Sophistication

Cuisine d'amour

I have dined in all the finest spots,
New York to Monte Carlo.
I have breakfasted al fresco
In cafes beside the Arno.

And though I treasure each soufflé
And the chefs who did prepare them,
It's the sauces I remember most
And the men with whom I've shared them.

I've had bechamels with barons,
And bernaises with marquis'.
I've had remoulades and curries
That would drop you to your knees.

I've had truffle sauce at Buckingham
And caper at Versailles.
I've had tartar at the Vatican
And Hoisin in Shanghai.

I've had hollandaise in Amsterdam
On Benedictine oefs;
I've had Worcestershire and Paprikash
On shepherds pies and wurst!

But of all the sauces that I've shared
With lovers strong and true
There is none, my dear
That can compare, my dear
To the roux I had with you!

The Poet's Choice

(with apologies to Ogden Nash)

On any given day –
What would you say? –
Would Dorothy Parker and Millay
Prefer for lunch
A Daiquiri?

Or would you guess,
If you were pressed,
That they'd confess
A fondness, say,
For Tanqueray?

It matters not to me, my friend,
Not a little nor a lottle,
The form that holy genius takes,
Nor the color of the bottle.

A Poet to His Muse

I pray to places in my dreams
To magnify my art:
Emblazon me with Tuscany
And Amsterdam my heart!

My arteries lack Burgundy,
My limbs could use more Spain;
I don't have good absorption of
Tunisia in my brain.

My eyes pine for the mighty Rhine
And for the golden Seine;
My soul craves days spent in Marseille
And nights, Parisienne.

I'd like to Cannes my office
And Saint-Tropez my home;
I'd spread Nepal from wall to wall –
The air I'd fill with Rome.

If I could see more Venice,
Or hear Kiev, perchance,
My barcarolle would be more droll,
My villanelle would dance!

I call to you, my Muses:
I beg you, Come tonight!
Transport me to the South of France,
Inspire me with its light!

I know these places in my dreams,
Each rock and every bench;
And, oh! the poems that I'd write
If only I spoke French!

Love Song

I have never seen the Taj Mahal
or floated down the Nile,
I have never tracked an elephant
or hunted crocodile.

I have never been to Timbuktu
or touched the Papal hem,
I have never made a pilgrimage
to holy Bethlehem.

I have never seen a fashion show
in Paris or Milan,
I've never even trained to run
the Boston marathon!

I have never opened at the Met
like Callas or Caruso,
I have never won a Pulitzer
(and don't expect to do so).

And yet, for all the things I haven't
seen or heard or tasted,
I cannot say that of my life
a moment has been wasted.

For I have seen the world complete,
reflected in your eyes,
and I have traveled with you to
a private paradise.

Inspiration

What did Mr. Shakespeare read on Sunday afternoon?
Did he seek the latest sonnets in the Stratford Picayune?

And what did Mozart whistle as he shopped with Mrs. M?
Was it his own tune, I wonder, or Salieri's latest gem?

It makes me ponder Socrates, before his tragic end:
Did he quote Homer to his best Platonic friend?

And maybe witty Oscar Wilde, when at a loss for words,
Delivered *bon mots* as his own that he had overheard?

Was there art before Picasso? Or design before Chanel?
And whose Bolero did the trick before Maurice Ravel?

The thinkers who think first thoughts first leave second thoughts behind;
They're busy thinking things unthought by lesser humankind.

To be a genius is a chore, as every scholar tells us,
It must be hard to think your thoughts and never someone else's!

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Songs of Sophistication

Cuisine d'amour

for Medium Voice and Piano

Robert Bode

John David Earnest

Freely, in cabaret style (♩ = ca. 60)

mf

I have dined in all the fin-est spots, New

mp *f colla voce* *mf*

5

York to Mon-te Car-lo. I have break-fast-ed al fres-co in ca-

9

fés be-side the Ar-no. And though I treas-ure each souf-flé and the chefs who did pre-

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This decision was made by the poet and the composer.

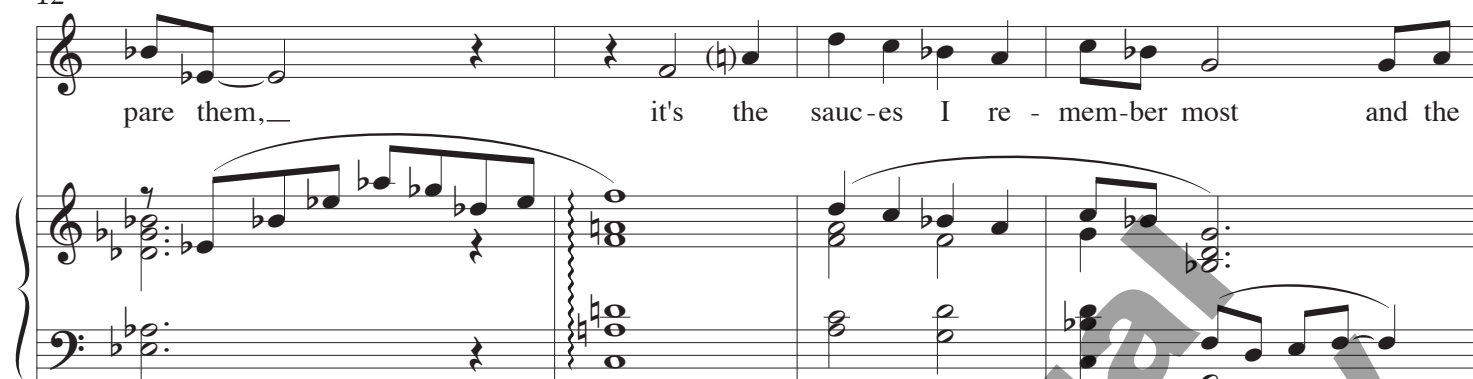
Composer's Engraved Facsimile Edition

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4

12

pare them,— it's the sauc-es I re - mem-ber most and the



16

Quickly ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 80$)

men with whom I've shared them. I've had Béch-a-mels with

rit. *f*



20

ba - rons and Béar - nais - es with mar - - - quis;
("mar - - - keez")



24

I've had ré-mon-lades and cur - ries that would drop you to your



57

true, there is none, my dear, that can com -

61

pare, my dear, to the rous I had with

65

Quickly ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 80$)

you.

Cuisine d'amour

for Medium Voice and Piano
(higher transposition)

Robert Bode

John David Earnest

Freely, in cabaret style (♩ = ca. 60)

mf

I have dined in all the fin-est spots, New

mp *f colla voce* *mf*

5 York to Mon-te Car-lo. I have break-fast-ed al fres-co in ca-

9 fés be-side the Ar-no. And though I treas-ure each souf-flé and the chefs who did pre-

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true, there is none, my dear, that can com -

pare, my dear, to the rous I had with

Quickly ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 80$)

you.

The Poet's Choice

(with apologies to Ogden Nash)
for Medium Voice and Piano

13

Robert Bode

John David Earnest

Nonchalant (♩. = ca. 66)

p legato

simply

p

4

8

f *mp*

On _____ an - y giv - en day,

f *p*

12

what would you say? _____ Would Dor' - thy Park - er and Mil-

sub. p

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A Poet to His Muse

for Medium Voice and Piano

Robert Bode

John David Earnest

Freely (♩ = ca. 76) *mf*

I pray to plac-es in my dreams

Freely (♩ = ca. 76)

f *colla voce* *mf*

col pedale

4

to mag-ni - fy my art: Em-blaz - on me with

f

7

Lively (♩ = ca. 120) *mf*

Tus-ca-ny and Am - ster-dam my heart! My

Lively (♩ = ca. 120)

f

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11

ar - ter - ies lack Bur - gun - dy, my limbs could use more Spain;

mp

This system contains measures 11 and 12. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 2/4 time signature. The lyrics are "ar - ter - ies lack Bur - gun - dy, my limbs could use more Spain;". The piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic marking.

13

I don't have good ab - sorp - tion of Tu - nis - ia in my

This system contains measures 13 and 14. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "I don't have good ab - sorp - tion of Tu - nis - ia in my". The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

16

brain. My eyes — pine for the might - y Rhein and

This system contains measures 16 and 17. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "brain. My eyes — pine for the might - y Rhein and". The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Lively, as before (♩ = ca. 120)

60

mp (excitedly)

ev' - ry bench; and oh! _____ the po - ems

Lively, as before (♩ = ca. 120)

p

63

mf

f

I could write if on - ly I _____

mp *mf* *f*

66

a tempo

spoke _____ French! _____

a tempo

f marc. *ff*

15 April 2003
New York City
c. 2'40"

for Ron and Deborah Weiss

Love Song

for Medium Voice and Piano

Robert Bode

John David Earnest

Relaxed, but with motion (♩ = ca. 88) *mp* (*quasi recit.*)

Voice: I have nev - er seen the Taj Ma - hal or

Relaxed, but with motion (♩ = ca. 88) *p* *sempre legato* *colla voce* *mp*

Piano

6 *mf* *f*

float - ed down the Nile, I have nev - er tracked an el - e - phant or

11 *poco rall.* *mp* **Poco meno mosso** (♩ = ca. 80)

hunt - ed croc - o - dile, I have nev - er been to

poco rall. **Poco meno mosso** (♩ = ca. 80) *mp* *legato* *col pedale*

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I can-not say that of my life a mo-ment has been wast-ed.---

a tempo
mf

f

For I have seen the world com-plete, re-flect-ed in your eyes, and

a tempo
mf

f

broadly

poco rit.

a tempo
mp

I have trav-eled far with you_____ to a pri-vate par - a - dise.---

broadly

poco rit.

a tempo
mp

mf

mp

rall. poco a poco

p

June 2005
New York City;
Aberdeen, Florida

c. 3'00"

Inspiration

for Medium Voice and Piano

Robert Bode

John David Earnest

(♩ = 60-66)

mf

Voice

What did Mis-ter Shake-speare read on

(♩ = 60-66)

Piano

f *mp*

5

Sun - day af - ter - noon? Did he seek the lat - est

8

son - nets in the Strat-ford Dai - ly Pi - ca - yune?

mf

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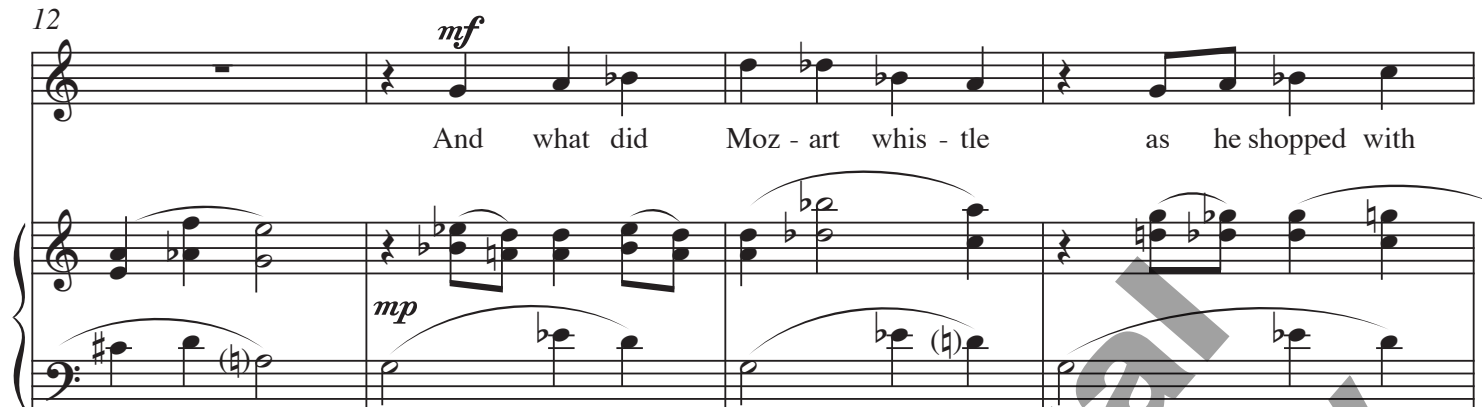
28

12

mf

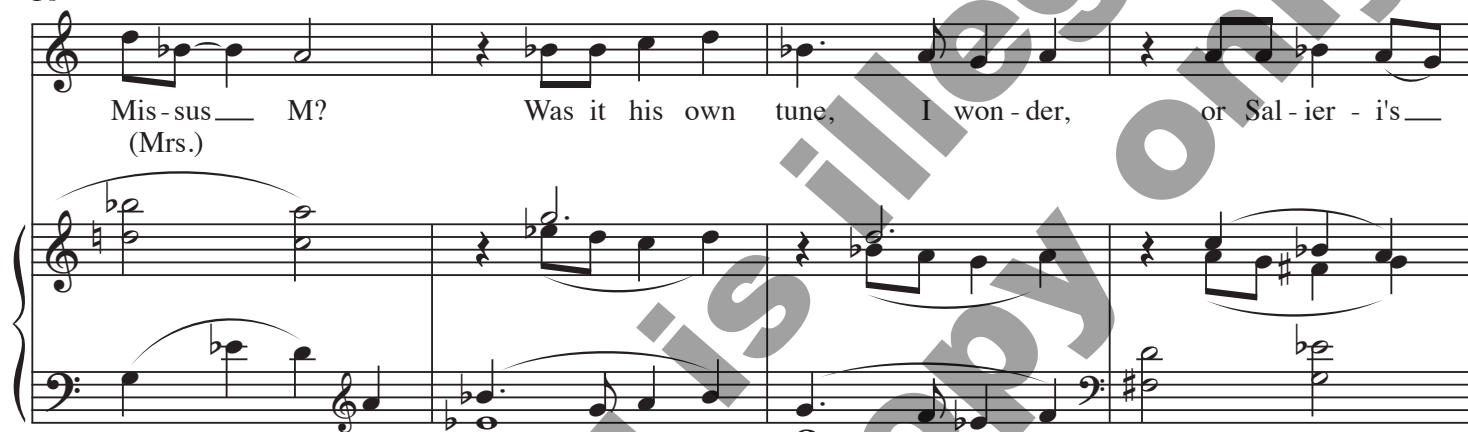
And what did Moz - art whis - tle as he shopped with

mp



16

Mis - sus — M? Was it his own tune, I won - der, or Sal - ier - i's —
(Mrs.)



20

lat - est (h) gem? It makes me

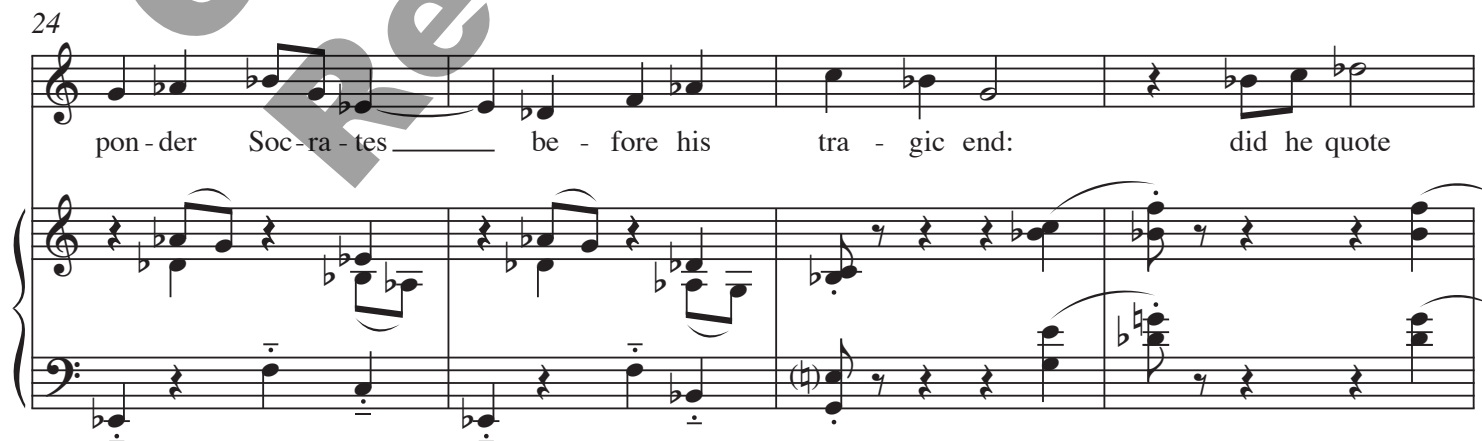
mf

mp



24

pon - der Soc - ra - tes — be - fore his tra - gic end: did he quote



59 *f* *mf*
by les - ser hu - man - kind. To

63
be a gen - ius is a chore, as ev - 'ry scho - lar tells us, it

67 *f* *f*
must be hard to think your thoughts and —

70
nev - er some - one el - se's! —

4 May 2004
Walla Walla, WA
c. 2'00"