HENRY FLURRY

I WISH
I COULD REMEMBER
THAT FIRST DAY

FOR SATB DIVISI

POEM BY
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
I wish I could remember that first day
by Christina Rossetti (1881)

I wish I could remember that first day,
  First hour, first moment of your meeting me,
  If bright or dim the season, it might be
Summer or Winter for aught I can say;

So unrecorded did it slip away,
  So blind was I to see and to foresee,
  So dull to mark the budding of my tree
That would not blossom yet for many a May.

If only I could recollect it, such
  A day of days! I let it come and go
  As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow;

It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;
If only now I could recall that touch,
  First touch of hand in hand – Did one but know!
Program Notes

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830 – 1894) was an English poetess celebrated during her life as the natural successor to Elizabeth Barrett Browning. When I was searching through Christina Rossetti’s collected works for a love poem to set to music, I was struck by the poetess’ repeated juxtaposition of complex emotions with the subject of love. This poem is no exception. “I wish I could remember” is the second of a sonnet collection entitled *Monna Innominata*, whose poems offer an increasingly complex voice to the typically anonymous woman exalted in the love poems of the male-centric Victorian literary world. To me, the author’s strong desire to remember the first meeting of her lover implies a powerful love that permeates both the author’s present and past. The slow but strong growth of her passion is only indirectly referenced (“… the budding of my tree / That would not blossom yet for many a May.”), but it forms the emotional bedrock upon which the author expresses a mixture of feelings. We sense her regret and anger of not remembering that moment (“So unrecorded did it slip away, / So blind was I to see and to foresee,”) and her recognition of the significance of that same moment (“It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;”). Ultimately, Rossetti leaves us with an exclamation of wonder and full appreciation of what initially appeared to be an insignificant moment of human contact (“First touch of hand in hand – Did one but know!”).

Heartfelt thanks are offered to Kay Wood and Dennis Houser, who commissioned this work. Prescott Chorale premiered *I Wish I Could Remember That First Day* on February 13, 2016.

- Henry Flurry, 2016
I Wish I Could Remember That First Day

Christina Rossetti

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dim, if bright or dim, if bright or dim or bright or dim the season. It might be

If bright or dim or bright or dim, If bright, If bright or dim, or dim the season.

Sum-mer, Win-ter, for aught I can say. First day, first
day, first
It might be Summer or Winter, for a tempo. First moment, Summer or Winter, or Winter for the first hour, First moment, Summer or Winter, or Winter for

aught I can say, for aught I, aught I can say. So un-recorded did it slip a-
aught I, aught I, aught I can say. So un-recorded did it slip a-
aught I, aught I, aught I can say: nnn_
aught I, aught I, aught I can say. So un-recorded did it slip a-
aught I, aught I, aught I can say: nnn_
aught I, aught I, aught I can say: nnn_

* Balance the dynamics of the altos with the sopranos, and then adjust to balance with the lower voices.
So un-record-ed did it slip a-way,

So un-record-ed did it slip a-way,

So un-record-ed did it slip a-way,

So un-record-ed did it slip a-way,

So un-record-ed did it slip a-way,

So un-record-ed did it slip a-way,

So un-record-ed did it slip a-way,

So un-record-ed did it slip a-way,
see and to foresee,

So dull to mark the budding of my tree.
tree the budding of my tree that would not blossom

So dull to mark the budding of my tree that would not blossom

So dull to mark the budding of my tree that would not blossom
May. I could, I could, If on-ly I could re-coll-ect it, such a
day of days! Day of days! Day of days!
May. I could, I could, If on-ly I could re-coll-ect it, such a
day of days! Day of days! Day of days!
May. I could, I could, If on-ly I could re-coll-ect it, such a
day of days! Day of days! Day of days!
May. If on-ly I could, If on-ly I could, If on-ly I could re-coll-ect it, such a
Red. | acceler. | a tempo primo
---|---|---
Red. | acceler. | a tempo primo
come and go and come and go as trace-less as a thaw of by-gone snow; 

I let it come and go, 

It seemed to mean so little, meant so much; If only now I could re-

It seemed to mean so little, meant so much; If only now

* Decrescendo to nothing.
I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

I could re-call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re-call that...

* No Vibrato
touch of hand in hand.

mf

touch of hand in hand in hand.

mp

touch of hand in hand in hand.

S. A. T. B. Red.

solo did one but, ritenuto but know!

one, but know!

f

one, but know!

A.

T.

B.

Red.