

Mrs. Bixby's Sons

for baritone and piano

David K. Gompper
2004

Text

Executive Mansion, Washington, November 21, 1864.

Mrs. Bixby, Boston, Massachusetts:

DEAR MADAM: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

Abraham Lincoln

Program Notes

Despite the fact that Mrs. Bixby, a Southern sympathizer, destroyed the letter, that she lost not five but two sons in the Civil War (the War Department misspoke), or that many believe John Hay, one of Lincoln's private secretaries, is the author of the letter, this message of condolence is generally considered unsurpassed. The number five is pervasive in this musical setting, used metrically, rhythmically and intervallically. The song was written for and is dedicated to Stephen Swanson, who premiered it 24 October 2004 at the University of Iowa.

for Stephen Swanson
Mrs. Bixby's Sons

David Gompper

♩ = 100-108

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p

p legato *poco a poco cresc*

6

f *dim.*

13 rit. A tempo *mp*

Ex - ecutive Man - sion Wash - ing - ton

rit. A tempo *m.g.*

p

Nov-em-ber twen-ty-first eigh-teen six - ty four

Mrs. Bix-by, Bos-ton Mas-sa-chu-setts Dear Ma-dam,

rit. *A tempo*

mf

I have been shown in the files of the War De-part-ment a state-ment

29

of the Ad - ju - tant Gen - er - al of Mas - sa - chu - sets

34

that you are the mo - ther of five sons who have died

p tenderly

38

glor - iou - sly on the field of bat - tle

dim.

42

loco

8vb

46 $\text{♩} = 72 (\leftarrow \text{♩} = \text{♩} \rightarrow)$

I feel how weak and fruit-less

51

6 must be any words of mine which

54

6 should attempt to be guide you from the grief

57

Ped. from the grief of loss so overwhelming

accel.

61

61

cresc.

6 6 6 6 6 6 66

A tempo

64

64

But I can - not re frain from ten - der - ing to

f *mf* *sf*

68

68

you the con - so - la - - - tion

mp *p*

70

that may be found in the thanks of the Re pub-lic

73

they died to save. I pray that our Hea - ven - ly

75

Fa - - - - - ther

Ped. Ped.

may as - suage the an - - guish

77

of your be - reave - ment, and leave you

79

on - - ly the cher - ished me - - mo -

81

ry of the loved and lost and the sol - emn

8 84

pride that must be yours

86 rit. $\text{♩} = 100$

rit. $\text{♩} = 100$ to have

p

88

laid so cost - ly a

$\text{♩} = 100$

90 rall.

sac - ri - fice up - on the

cresc.

Ped.

A tempo

93

f

Musical score for measures 93-94. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a fermata over the word "al" and continues with "tar of". The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with multiple voices, including a prominent bass line with sustained notes and a treble line with active eighth-note patterns. The key signature has two flats and the time signature is 5/8.

95

p

Musical score for measures 95-98. The vocal line includes the words "free dom Yours, ve-ry sin-cere - ly". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar texture, featuring a bass line with sustained notes and a treble line with active patterns. The key signature has two flats and the time signature is 5/8.

101

$\text{♪} = 132$

Musical score for measures 101-104. The piano accompaniment is shown with dynamic markings *p*, *mp*, and *pp*. The key signature changes to one flat and the time signature is 6/8. The score includes a fermata and a repeat sign. The word "Ped." is written below the piano part in two locations.

Ped.

Ped.

Ab - ra - ham
Lin - coln

Ped. Ped. Ped. *8va*

This system contains measures 105 through 110. The vocal line (bass clef) has lyrics "Ab - ra - ham" and "Lin - coln". The piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs) features complex chordal textures with many accidentals. Pedal points are indicated by "Ped." in the bass clef. An *8va* marking is present in the right hand of measure 109.

Ab - ra - ham

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

This system contains measures 110 through 115. The vocal line (bass clef) has the lyric "Ab - ra - ham". The piano accompaniment continues with complex textures. Pedal points are indicated by "Ped." in the bass clef.

Lin - coln
(nn) —

pp

Ped. Ped. *8va*

This system contains measures 115 through 120. The vocal line (bass clef) has the lyric "Lin - coln" and "(nn) —". The piano accompaniment features complex textures. Pedal points are indicated by "Ped." in the bass clef. A *pp* dynamic marking is present in the right hand of measure 119. An *8va* marking is present in the right hand of measure 120.

122

Musical score for measures 122-127. The score is written for three staves: a bass staff and two treble staves. The bass staff contains a melodic line of eighth notes. The upper treble staff features a complex texture of chords and arpeggios, with a horizontal line above it. The lower treble staff includes a *loco* section and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

128

Musical score for measures 128-133. The score is written for two treble staves. The upper staff contains a complex texture of chords and arpeggios, with a horizontal line above it. The lower staff includes dynamic markings of *dim.* and *p*. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).