

Paul Burnell

December Air

Not for performance

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composed 2021

for voices in three parts

Performance notes

'December Air' is intended for a voice ensemble of at least six voices and should be suitable for average-sized choirs.

The piece is not specific with regard to voice part. For example, it can be performed by female voices only, or by female voices on the top two lines and male voices on the bottom line, or by other mixed or doubled combinations. To this end, the parts may optionally be performed one octave lower than a treble clef would suggest, as indicated by the treble clef with (8) below.

Specific conductor cues are shown as circled numbers with down arrows. Approximate durations between cues in the opening 'senza misura' section are shown in seconds within the bracketed lines.

Spoken text is presented on a single line staff, with the text below the line.

The solo hand rubbing, and finger clicks are shown on a single line staff with x note heads.

Unvoiced sounds, when presented on a five-line staff, are shown with diamond note heads.

The whistling may be performed at any convenient octave consistent with the dynamic marking. It is understood that some performers may find it difficult to produce a pitched whistle, but it is anticipated there will be an overall mix of air sound with the whistle sound – a 'breathy whistle'.

Staggered breathing may be employed where it is difficult to sustain a note for the written duration.

Material that is to be repeated independently is enclosed within repeat bar lines, with the repetitions continuing for the length of the thick line, and finishing at the notch at the end of the line. The repetitions are independent of the other parts, and also of other voices within the same part. Numbered cues are provided to show the start and end of the repetitions, with intermediary cues for any changes such as diminuendo or accelerando, or a change from whispered to spoken.

Gradual changes in both voiced and unvoiced sounds are shown by the horizontal arrows between the associated text, with the length of the transition coinciding with the placement of the arrow.

The following sounds are pronounced:

'eh' as in 'air'

'sss' as in 'hiss'

'ssh' as in 'hush'

'oo' as in 'moon'

'aw' as in 'for'

'ah' as in 'star'

There are two optional endings: Fine 1 at the end of bar 57, and Fine 2 at the end of bar 91.

If performed all the way through to the end, the duration of the piece is 7 minutes.

If the performance ends at Fine 1, the duration of the piece is 3:20

If the performance ends at Fine 2, the duration of the piece is 5 minutes.

The text evokes an archaic spell or incantation that reflects on the permanence of love at a time when celestial changes signal daybreak and the end of the year.

December Air

December moon,
December star,
December sun,
December air.

Trees are silver in December,
The air now is colder.
The trees bare feelings in a web of fragile memory.
The sky is turning to the moon,
The sky is turning to the full moon.
The stars blazing high bestrewn.
All of the firmament reflecting,
The stars reflecting my stare.

December air,
Air forever.

Forever moon,
Forever star,
Forever sun,
Forever.

Love is whispering a secret,
Forever, for evermore.
My love reciting incantations in a reverie.
A treasure buried in a heart, the heart,
A treasure buried in a warm heart,
Is safe though we are apart.
Love is a precious rare donation,
A love forever we share.

Air, forever air.

Trees at sunrise in December,
The year now is olden.
The trees grow shadows as the past time becomes memory.
The sky is turning to the sun, the sun,
The sky is turning to the bright sun.
The stars fading one by one.
Time is a precious rare donation,
A present that is aware.

Air, December air.

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senza misura

1 c.12" 2 c.10"

Voices 1 *p* 2 SOLI hum with open mouth, coordinate breaths to sustain sound *mm*

SOLO rub palms of hands together slowly in circular motion (a 'theatrical' gesture - will produce almost no audible sound)

Voices 2 2 SOLI click fingers *f*

Voices 3

3 c.10" 4 c.12" 5 c.4"

3 *(m)*

gradually slow circular motion to a stop at 5

SOLO spoken
December moon, December star, December sun, December air.

Andante con moto ♩ = c.84

6 (2 SOLI) (p) (m) TUTTI

① TUTTI Whispered, exaggerated December star December sun repeat independently stop at 3

② dim. al niente

③ rit.

unvoiced mf p breathy whistle (voiced) pp p cresc. molto

eh → oo De-cem-ber moon, De-cem-ber star, De-cem-ber

TUTTI p breathy whistle cresc. gliss.

13 A tempo f (voiced) f f (voiced) mp whistle f

De - cem - ber air De - cem - ber air De - cem - ber air

sun, De - cem - ber De - cem - ber moon, De - cem - ber star, De - cem - ber sun, De - cem - ber

any high pitch air

18 mf p pp

air.

mf p mp

De-cem-ber moon, De-cem-ber star, De-cem-ber sun, De-cem-ber De-cem-ber moon, De-cem-ber

unvoiced mp mf (voiced) pp p

ssh → sss oo

24 *p*
 Trees are sil-ver in De-cem-ber, The air now is cold - er. The trees bare feel-ings in a web of frag-ile
pp
 star, De-cem - ber sun, De-cem-ber De-cem-ber moon, De-cem-ber star, De - cem - ber sun, De-cem-ber
pp
 (oo) oo

30 *cresc.*
 mem - o - ry. The sky is turn-ing to the moon, The sky is turn-ing to the
cresc.
 De-cem-ber moon, De - cem - ber star, De - cem ber sun, De-cem-ber De - cem - ber
cresc.
 oo aw

35 *mp* *mf* *3*
 full moon. The stars stars the stars blaz-ing high be-strewn. All of the
mp *mf*
 moon, De - cem - ber star, De-cem-ber sun, De-cem-ber De-cem-ber moon, De - cem - ber
mp *mf*
 (aw) ah ah

40 *mp* *dim.* *p* *rit.*
 fir - ma-ment re - flect-ing, the fir - ma-ment re - flect-ing, The stars re - flect-ing my
p *dim.* *pp*
 star, De - cem-ber sun, De cem-ber De - cem-ber air, De cem-ber air, De cem-ber De cem - ber
p whistle
 (ah) oo

A tempo

46 *mp* stare. Air for - ev - er air for - ev - er

unvoiced *mp* eh → oo *p* (voiced) Air for - ev - er air for - ev - er air

mp for - ev - er air for - ev - er Air for - ev - er air for - ev - er air for - ev - er

① independently repeat and accel.

52 ② *pp* air for - ev - er air for - ev - er air air air for - ev - er.

③ *pp* Whispered, rapidly ④ becoming spoken stop at 5 ⑤ *molto*

Forever star repeat independently for - ev - er.

Forever sun for - ev - er.

② *dim.* stop at 3 ③ *pp* for - ev - er air for - ev - er air for - ev - er air for - ev - er.

Opt. Fine 1 *molto*

58 *mf* Love a se - cret, For - ev - er, for ev - er. Re - cite

mf Love is whis-per-ing a se - cret, For - ev - er, for ev - er-more. My love re-cit-ing in-can

mf For - ev - er moon, For - ev - er star, For - ev - er sun, For - ev - er. For - ev - er

63 *dim.* in can - ta-tions in a rev - er - ie. *p* A treas - ure bur-ied in a heart, the heart, A

dim. ta - tions in a rev - er - ie. *p* A treas - ure bur-ied in a heart, A

dim. moon, For - ev - er star, For - ev - er sun, For - ev - er. For - ev - er moon, For - ev - er

68 *f*
 treas - ure bur-ied in a warm heart, Is safe safe is safe though we
 treas - ure bur-ied in a warm heart, Is safe safe is safe though we
 star, For - ev - er sun, For - ev - er. For - ev - er moon, For - ev - er star, For - ev - er

73 *mf 3* *rall. dim.* *p*
 are a - part. Love is a pre - cious rare do - na tion, a pre - cious rare do - na tion, A love for
 are a - part. Love is a pre - cious rare do - na tion, a pre - cious rare do - na tion, A love for -
 sun, For - ev - er. For - ev - er air for - ev - er air for - ev - er air for - ev - er for - ev -

79 *ritenuto* *molto* *A tempo*
 ev - er we share. Air for - ev - er Air for - ev - er air for -
 ev - er we share. Air Air, for - ev - er air
 er for - ev - er for - ev - er for - ev - er Air, for - ev - er air for - ev - er

85 *mf unvoiced* *f (voiced) molto* *pp* **Opt. Fine 2**
 ev - er air sss → ssh → eh air.
 for - ev - er air for - ev - er air for ev - er *p* breathy whistle
 air for - ev - er air for - ev - er air *molto pp*

92 With boldness and spirit
f (*Con bravura*) *p sub.* *c.3"* *f*

Trees at sun-rise in De - cem - ber, The year now is old - en. (n) The

Trees De - cem - ber, The year now is old - en. (n)

Trees De - cem - ber, The year now is old - en. (n)

97

trees grow shad-ows as the past time be-comes mem - o - ry. The sky is turn-ing to the

trees grow as the past time be-comes mem - o - ry. The sky is turn-ing to the

trees grow grow shad-ows as the past time be-comes mem - o - ry. The sky is turn-ing to the

102 *p sub.* *c.3"* *f* *cresc.* *rit.* *ff* **A tempo**

sun, (n) The sky is turn-ing to the bright sun. The stars

sun, the sun, (n) The sky is turn-ing to the bright sun. The stars

sun, (n) The sky is turn-ing to the bright sun. The stars

107 *rit.* **A tempo** *molto rit.* *p sub.* *c.3"* *ff* **A tempo**

stars the stars fad-ing one by one. (n) Time is a

stars the stars fad - ing one by one (n) Time is a

stars the stars fad-ing one by one. (n) Time is a

Meno mosso

♩ = c.76

112 *rall.* *p* *pp* *p*

pre - cious rare do - na - tion, *nm* A pre - sent

pre - cious rare do - na - tion, *nm* A pre - sent

pre - cious rare do - na - tion, *nm* A pre - sent

117 *pp* *p* breathy whistle

that is a - ware. Air, De - cem - ber

that is a - ware. *pp* *p* (*legatissimo*) Very Smoothly

that is a - ware. *pp* *p* (*legatissimo*) Very Smoothly De - cem - ber air

122 *gliss.* *pp* *pp* *pp* unvoiced

air De-cem-ber air breathy whistle ssh sss

air De-cem-ber air breathy whistle *pp*

De-cem-ber air *dim.*

128 *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *f*

(sss) eh TUTTI unvoiced

SOLO Rub palms together as before; gradually slowing

eh unvoiced

eh unvoiced *ppp* *p* 2 SOLI click fingers

eh