

KNT2201

Kenneth Tay

The Night Express

SSA, piano

MUZIKSEA

TEXT

For he chants of the wheels,
Of the wheels revolving, revolving:
Of the places where he was sojourning, sojourning,
As he listens to grumbling discs returning, returning:
In his mind run thoughts evolving, evolving.

Wheels rotating fast rumble
As he dreamily thinks of the faces,
Of the faces with features now growing dim, growing dim,
That he has left behind him, behind him,
With the lengthening of those infernal places.

Like a crow to his country,
His homeland retracing, retracing
His intangible flight from exile, from exile;
As with listening ears he sits rooted the while
To the metal tune of wheels replacing, replacing.

And to himself he mutters:
I am coming home, coming home,
I am homeward departed, homeward departed,
For the train that is taking me home has started, has started,
To meet flesh of my flesh beneath the station dome.

Teo Poh Leng (1912-1942)

PROGRAMME NOTES

The Song of the Night Express appeared in the 1937 issue of *Life and Letters To-day*, a prestigious literary magazine that had also published the work of D. H. Lawrence, Dylan Thomas and Julian Symons. This poem is an excerpt from Teo Poh Leng's longer work, F.M.S.R., based on the nine hour-long train journey between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. The rhythm of modernism hums throughout the poetry, perhaps punctuated by the pessimism of the world economic depression of the 1930s. My musical setting, with recurring motifs throughout the piece, seeks to recreate the sounds of the train as it makes its journey connecting the two cities.

The Song of the Night Express is one of the earliest works of poetry written in the English Language by a Singaporean writer. The poet, who had taken on a pseudonym when publishing poetry, perished in the Sook Ching massacre as a victim of the Japanese occupation of Singapore in World War II.

More information about Teo Poh Leng and his poetry can be gleaned through *Finding Francis: A Poetic Adventure* (2015) edited by Eriko Ogihara-Schuck and Anne Teo.

15 January 2024

The Night Express

SSA with Piano

Teo Poh Leng (1912-1942)

Kenneth Tay (b. 1992)

Moving forward ♩ = 120

Piano

mp *p*

6

mp

S For he chants of the wheels of the wheels re-volv-ing of the

S chants of the chants chants wheels re-volv-ing

A chants chants chants

10

S plac-es where he was so-journ-ing so-journ-ing As he lis - tens_ to_

S chants wheels re-volv-ing of the plac-es where he was so-journ-ing lis - tens_ to

A chants chants chants chants chants chants lis - tens_ to_

mf *mf* *mf* *mf*



Unauthorised duplication
of this score is illegal

14

S grum - bling discs re - turn-ing re - turn-ing In his

S grum - bling discs re - turn-ing re - turn-ing where he was so-journ-ing

A grum - bling discs re - turn-ing chants chants chants

18

S mind run thoughts e - volv-ing e - *mp*

S mind run thoughts e - volv-ing e - volv-ing *mp*

A mind run thoughts e - volv-ing chants *mp*

p

22

S
 volv-ing chants of the wheels of the wheels re-volv-ing of the

S
 in his mind run chants of the wheels chants chants wheels re-volv-ing

A
 chants chants chants chants chants

S2 notes rearticulated,
 light marcato but connected

$\text{♩} = 240 (3+3+2+2+2)$

26

S
 plac-es where he was chants of the wheels

S
 chants wheels re-volv-ing chants of the whe - - - els

A
 chants chants chants ro - tat-ing, re - volv - ing,

mf

mp

mf

29

S ro - tat - ing fast wheels

S ro - tat - ing fa - - - st whee - - - els

A ro - tat-ing, re - volv - ing, ro - tat-ing, re - volv - ing, ro-tat-ing ro-tat-ing, re - volv - ing,

32

S ro - tat - ing fast

S ro - tat - ing fa - - - - - st

A ro - tat-ing, re - volv - ing, ro - tat-ing ro - tat-ing, re - volv - ing,

34 *f*

S rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble

S *f* rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble rum - ble

A *f* *sim.* rum-rum-rum-rum-rum-rum

Piano tacet to b.42

36 *mp* *sim.*

S rum-rum-rum-rum-rum-rum

S *mf* As he dream - i - ly

A *mp* *sim.* rum-rum-rum-rum-rum-rum

38

S thinks _____ of _____ the fac - es, of the

40

S *fa - - ces with fea - - tures*

A

42

S *...rum left him rum-rum*

S *gro - wing dim left him rum-rum-rum-rum-rum-rum*

A *...rum That he has left be -*

mf

44

S *rum-rum-rum-rum-rum-rum left him rum-rum*

S *rum-rum-rum-rum-rum-rum left him rum-rum-rum-rum-rum-rum*

A *hind him With the length - en - ing*

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52

S home - land re - trac - ing, His in -

S home - land re - trac - ing, His in -

A home - land re - trac - ing, His in -

56

S tan - gi - ble flight *ff*

S tan - gi - ble flight *ff*

A tan - gi - ble flight *ff*

59

S from ex - ile As with

S from ex - ile with

A from ex - ile As with

The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand has chords and melodic lines, including quintuplets. The left hand features triplets and other rhythmic patterns.

62 *mf*

S lis - ten - ing ears he sits root - - - ed

S *mf* lis - ten - ing ears he sits root - - - ed

A *mf* lis - ten - ing ears he sits root - - - ed

The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand has chords and melodic lines. The left hand features triplets and other rhythmic patterns.

66 *mp*

S the while to the met - al - tune of

S the while to the met - al - tune of

A the while to the met - al - tune of

mp *p*

70

S wheels re - plac-ing re - plac-ing, He mut-ters he_

S wheels re - plac-ing re - plac-ing wheels re - plac - ing mut-ters

A wheels re - plac-ing wheels wheels wheels mut-ters

74

S mut-ters I am com-ing home I am home-ward de - part-ed de-

S mut-ters home, I am com-ing home I am home-ward de - part-ed

A mut-ters home home home home home

78

S part - ed for the train *mf* that is tak - ing me home has

S home - ward de-part-ed *mf* train that is tak - ing me home has

A home home *mf* train that is tak - ing me home has

82

S start-ed has start-ed To_ meet_ flesh of_ my

S start-ed, has_ start-ed start - ed, has start-ed meet_ flesh of_ my

A start-ed, home home home meet_ flesh of_ my

86

S flesh be - neath the stat-ion the_ dome the_ *mp*

S flesh_ be - neath the_ stat-ion the stat - ion dome the_ *mp*

A flesh_ be - neath dome dome dome dome *mp*

90 *dim. al fine*

S dome the_ dome the_ dome the_

S *dim. al fine* dome the_ dome the_ dome the_

A *dim. al fine* dome dome dome