

# The Song of the Orphan

by Tom Baker  
1996

Frog Peak Music

# The Song of the Orphan

(1996)

**Text by Rainer Rilke**  
**Translation by R.F.C. Hull**

*For The Esoterics*

## Performance notes:

*The Song of the Orphan* is a work for mezzo-soprano, four readers/speakers, and mixed *a cappella* chorus (SATBB).

The speakers read in tandem, creating a 'mesh' of voices that begins alone and remains present beneath the singing parts until bar 21. The readers keep pace with one another as notated; Speaker 1 leads, and each performer is then cued by the part directly above his/her own line. Dynamics for the speaking lines are noted in the vocal score and cued by the conductor. The speakers should practice the timing of the lines so that they conclude their parts in bar 21. If the speakers have not reached the end of their lines, they should be cued to stop in that bar.

Tempo markings are approximate.

Accidentals last through the measure; they apply only to the voice part in which they occur.

# The Song of the Orphan

## Speaking parts

Reader One	Plain Text
Reader Two	<b>Bold Text</b>
Reader Three	<i>Italic Text</i>
Reader Four	Plain Text (sans serif)

---

Dear Lou, Oh a thousand hands have been building at my fear, and out of a

---

remote village it has become a city, a big city, in which unspeakable things

---

happen. It grew all the time and took the quiet green out of  
**Dear Lou, I was so tormented day after day. I was torn out of**

---

my feeling that no longer bears fruit. Even in Westerwede it was growing,  
**myself into their lives, through all their burdened lives. I often**

---

and houses and streets arose out of the fearful circumstances and hours that  
**had to say aloud to myself that I was not one of them, that I would go**

---

passed there. When Paris came, it quickly became very big.  
**away again from that horrible city in which they will die.**

*Dear Lou, There*

---

In August of last year I arrived there. It was the time when the trees in the city  
**I said to myself and felt that it was no deception. And yet, when I noticed how**  
*were those women who pass by one quickly in long velvet cloaks, with paper*

---

are withered without autumn, when the burning streets, expanded by the  
**my clothes were becoming worse and heavier from week to week,**  
*roses on antiquated hats under which their hair hangs down looking as*

---

heat, will not end and one goes through smells as through many sad rooms.  
**and saw how they were slit in many places, and I was frightened.**  
*though it were melted together. And all those people, men and women.*

---

Then I went past the long hospitals whose gates stood wide open  
**I felt that I would belong irretrievably to the lost if some passer-by**  
*They are in some transition, perhaps from madness to healing,*  
Dear Lou, There were these old women who set down a heavy basket on the

---

with a gesture of impatient and greedy compassion. When I passed by the  
**merely looked at me and half unconsciously counted me with them.**  
*perhaps also toward insanity; all with something infinitely delicate in their*  
ledge of some wall (very little women, whose eyes were

---

Hotel Dieu for the first time, an open carriage was just driving in, in which a  
**Anyone could push me down to**  
*faces, with a love, a knowledge, a joy, as with a light that is burning only a*  
drying up like puddles), and when they wanted to grasp it again, out of their

---

person hung, swaying with every movement, askew like a broken marionette,  
**them with the cursory judgment of a disparaging glance.**  
*very little bit, and could certainly be made clear again*  
sleeve shoved forth slowly a long, rusty hook

---

and with a heavy ulcerating tumor on his long, gray, dangling neck. And what  
**And wasn't I really one of them, since I was poor like them and full of opposition**  
*if someone would look and help. But there is no one to help. No one*  
instead of a hand, it went straight and surely out to the handle of the basket.

---

people I met after that, almost every day; stumps of caryatids upon whom  
**to everything that occupied and rejoiced and deluded and deceived other**  
*to help those who are only just a very little bit perplexed, frightened, and*  
And there were other old women who wandered up and down with

---

suffering, the entire structure of suffering was laid, under which they were  
**people.** **Was I not denying**  
*intimidated; those who are just beginning to read things differently from*  
the drawer of an old night stand in their hands, showing everyone that twenty

---

living slow as tortoises. And they were passers-by among other passers-by, alone  
**everything that was valid about me? I was as much a stranger as if I were sharing**  
*the way they are meant; those who aren't at home in cities and lose themselves*  
rusty pins were rolling around inside it, which they must sell.

---

and undisturbed in their fate. You caught them as impressions at most, and  
**it with someone unknown.** **Did I**  
*in them as in an evil wood without end.* *All*  
One evening late in the fall, a little old

---

you regarded them with calm, detached curiosity like a new kind of animal,  
**not starve, like them at tables on which stood food that I did not touch because**  
*those to whom pain is happening every day, all those who can no longer hear*  
woman stood next to me in the light of a store window.

---

for whom misery had fashioned special organs, organs of hunger and dying. **And**  
**it was not pure and simple like that which I loved?** **And**  
*their wills going in the noise, all those over whom fear has grown.*  
She stood very still, and I thought that like me she was busy looking at

---

they were wearing the comfortless, discolored mimicry of the too great cities,  
**did I not already differ, like them?** *Why does no one help them in the big cities?*  
objects displayed and I hardly noticed her. Finally, however, her proximity

---

and endured beneath the foot of each day that trod on them like tough beetles,  
**Was I not clearly like those lonely ones who were misted over only on the**  
*Where are they going when they come so quickly through the streets? Where*  
made me uneasy, and I don't know why, I suddenly looked at her peculiarly

---

were enduring as if they still had to wait for something, twitching like bits of a  
**outside by the fumes and heaviness of the city and laughter that comes like**

*do they sleep, and if they cannot sleep, what goes on then before their sad eyes?*  
clasped, worn-out hands.      Very, very slowly and old, long, thin pencil rose out

---

a big chopped up fish that is already rotting but still alive. They were living,  
**smoke out of the evil fires that keeps it going.**      **Nothing was so**

of those hands, it grew and grew, and it took a very long time until it was

---

living on nothing, on dust, on soot, and on the filth of their skin, on what falls  
**little laughter as the laughter of those estranged creatures:**      **when they**  
*And what kind of words do they say to themselves when their*  
entirely visible,      visible in all its wretchedness. I cannot say what produced such

---

from the mouths of dogs, on any senselessly pillaged thing that might yet be  
**laughed, it sounded as though something were falling on them,**  
*lips summon up their strength and work? Do they still weave real words? Are*  
a terrible effect in this scene, but it seemed to me as if a whole destiny were being

---

bought for some inexplicable purpose. O what a world this is! Pieces, pieces of  
**falling and being dashed to pieces and**  
*those still sentences they say, or does it crowd out all confused, as out of a burning*  
played out before me, a long destiny, a catastrophe that was working up frightfully

---

people, parts of animals, remains of things that have been, and everything  
**filling them up with broken bits. They were serious, and their seriousness**  
*theater, everything that was in them, spectator and player, audience and*  
to the moment when the pencil no longer grew, and,      slightly trembling,

---

still agitated, as though driven about by a mysterious wind, some carrying,  
**reached out for me like the force of gravity and drew me deep down into**  
*hero? Does no one think of the fact that there is a childhood in them*  
juttred out of the loneliness of those empty hands. I understood at last that

---

some being carried, falling and overtaking one another in their fall.  
**the center of their misery.**  
*that is being lost, a power that is sickening, a love that is falling.*  
I was supposed to buy it.

# The Song of the Orphan

## For The Esoterics

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♩ = 72

1 (Voices...30") Cue: "...a broken marionette..."

*mp*

Mezzo solo

I am no - one, and ne - ver will be a - ny - one

Soprano

Alto

*mp*

Tenor

*mp* No - - - - one

Bass I/II

*mp* No - - - - one

Speakers

(cue voices...)

*pp*

Song of the Orphan (2)

5 *p* *mf* *p* *mp* 3

Solo for I am far too small to claim to be. Mo - thers and fa - thers

Sop. to be mo - thers

Alto small be. Mo - thers fa - thers

Ten. claim be. Mo - thers fa - thers

Bass to be. Mo - thers and fa - thers

Spkrs.

9 *p* *slower* (♩ = 48) *tempo I* *mf* n.b.

Solo take pi - ty on me. I fear it will not pay to raise me.

Sop. oo - - oo ee it will not raise me.

Alto oo me will raise me.

Ten. oo me will raise me.

Bass oo me will raise me.

Spkrs.



Song of the Orphan (3)

13 *mp*

Solo *mp* *mp*

Sop. *mp*

Alto *mp*

Ten. *mp*

Bass *mp*

Spkrs.

I shall fall vic-tim to the mo-wers scythe. No - one can find me

I shall fall to find me

I shall fall to the scythe no - one find me

I shall fall to the scythe. No - one find me

I shall fall to the scythe. No - one find me

16 *slower* (♩ = 48) *tempo I*

Solo

Sop.

Alto

Ten.

Bass

Spkrs.

use - ful now young.

use - ful now. I'm too young,

use - ful now young. to

(use - ful now) I am too young.

*mf*

18

*mf*

Solo

Sop.

Alto

Ten.

Bass

Spkrs.

To - mor - row will be too late, too late. I have

and to - mor - row will be too be too late. one dress,

be too late. dress,

and to - mor - row (be too late.) too late. One dress,

21

*freely* *a tempo*

Solo

Sop.

Alto

Ten.

Bass

Spkrs.

spoken

but it will last

worn thin and fa - ded. Last

worn and fa - ded. Last

and fa - ded. Last

worn. Last

*ppp*

24 *mp* *pp* *mp*

Solo *mp* *pp* *mp*

Sop. *mp* *pp* *mp*

Alto *mp* *pp* *mp*

Ten. *mp* *pp* *mp*

Bass *mp* *pp* *mp*

Spkrs.

an e-ter-ni-ty, e-ven be-fore per-haps.  
 e-ven be-fore God.  
 e-ven be-fore God.  
 e-ven be-fore God.  
 e-ven be-fore God.  
 e-ven be-fore God.

27 *mp* *p*

Solo *mp* *p*

Sop. *mp* *p*

Alto *mp* *p*

Ten. *mp* *p*

Bass *mp* *p*

Spkrs.

I on-ly have this wisp of hair, it al-ways re-mained the same,  
 Dear - - - - - est.  
 Dear - - - - - est  
 Dear - - - - - est  
 Dear - - - - - est  
 Dear - - - - - est  
 (cue voices out)

Song of the Orphan (6)

29

Solo *pp* *rit.* 3

it once was some - ones dear - est love now he has no - thing

Sop.

Alto love.

Ten. love.

Bass love.

Spkrs.

32

Solo *ppp*

that he loves.

Sop.

Alto

Ten.

Bass *ppp*

Spkrs.