

Elucidation

Förklaring

*Immersed in your beauty
I see my life explained;
From the riddle of darkness
An answer is revealed.*

*Immersed in your beauty
I am inspired to pray;
For the world is now blessed
Because you are near.*

*Your clarity is endless
And drenched in light;
I could die in your presence
Immersed in your beauty.*

Setting the poem of the same title by Karin Boye,
in Swedish and English, translated by the composer,
for eight-part mixed chorus (SSAATTBB) *a cappella*

Eric Banks

Commissioned by Roger Jordan, and premiered by
The Esoterics in the concert VIVIDA, October 2010.

About this work

Karin Boye (1900-1941) was born in Göteborg (Gothenberg), Sweden, and moved to Stockholm in 1909. She studied at Uppsala University from 1921 to 1926, and debuted in 1922 with a collection of poems entitled *Moln* (*Clouds*), from which this poem, *Förklaring*, is taken. With two of her colleagues, Boye founded the poetry magazine *Spektrum*, which introduced the work of Surrealists and TS Eliot to Swedish readers. She was largely responsible for translating Eliot's work into Swedish. Throughout her work, Boye explores her own personal turmoil with lesbianism, socialism, and her religious upbringing. Boye died in an apparent suicide after swallowing several sleeping pills, and her body was found on a boulder on a farm outside of Gothenberg. This boulder has become a memorial to Boye. Karin's "wife," Margot Hanel, committed suicide shortly Boye's death. In 2004, the Uppsala University Library named a branch in Boye's honor. In her poetry, Boye is brutally honest and surprisingly simple. For me, her work is about the desire for perfection, the pain of imperfection, and the ever-growing rift between the beauty of aspiration and bitterness of reality.

As a Buddhist, Boye's verses that struggle with expectation and suffering resonate very deeply within me. When I became friends with Roger Jordan, a fellow Buddhist and photographer, and saw some of his work that captures the fleeting beauty of clouds here in the Puget Sound region, we decided to collaborate on a piece in which my choral music would accompany a slideshow of his photographs. In Jordan's photos, the Sound and the sky are captured from the same vantage point, several times over the course of a single day. Since the water and the clouds feature so prominently and speak so compellingly in this piece, I wanted to set a text from Boye's *Clouds* that is "immersed" in such beauty - hence my choice of *Förklaring*. I have attempted to compose a piece that is seamless and continuous, but not overly dramatic, so as to not detract from the photographs that it is meant to accompany. Below, you will find the twelve lines of *Elucidation*: in Swedish and IPA (the International Phonetic Alphabet), which explains how the Swedish is to be pronounced in the score.

I din skönhet sänkt

'i din šønhet sɛŋkt

Immersed in your beauty

Ser jag livet förklarat

ser ʃɔ livɛt fœrklɔrat

I see my life explained;

Och den mörka gåtans svar

'ok dɛn mœrka gotans svɔr

From the riddle of darkness

Uppenbarat.

'uppenbɔrat

An answer is revealed.

I din skönhet sänkt

'i din šønhet sɛŋkt

Immersed in your beauty

Bedja jag vill.

bedʃa ʃɔ vill

I am inspired to pray;

Världen är helig,

værlɛdn ær hɛlɪg

For the world is now blessed

Ty du är till.

ty dʏ ær tɪll

Because you are near.

Ändlös av klarhet,

'ɛndlœs 'ɔv klɔrhet

Your clarity is endless

Ljusfördränt,

ʃʏsfœrdrɛŋkt

And drenched in light;

Ville jag dö hos dig,

vɪllɛ ʃɔ dø hos dɛʃ

I could die in your presence

I din skönhet sänkt.

'i din šønhet sɛŋkt

Immersed in your beauty.

Here are the glyphs for Swedish

in the International Phonetic Alphabet:

Vowels:

a as in *hot*

æ as in *hat*

e as in *hate*

ɛ as in *hen*

i as in *heat*

ɪ as in *hit*

o as in *home*

ɔ as in *haw*

u as in *hoot*

ʊ as in *hook*

ø as in the German word *Höhe* (ɛ through o)

y as in the German word *Hüte* (i through u)

ʏ as in the German word *Günter* (ɪ through u)

Consonants:

bdfghklmnpstv as in English

ʔ a glottal stop, as in 'as or 'in (and 'or) ☺

j a consonantal y, as in *you*

r flipped, as in the Italian *ragazzi*

ŋ a diagraph, as in English *sing*

š as in *fish* or the German *ich-laut*, but with closed lips and open teeth

Performers' notes:

The consonantal releases of each Swedish syllable should happen on the rest that follows each pitch.

The Swedish text (the ongoing chain of suspensions should always be kept softer than the English counterpoint.

English diction may be sacrificed for an overall sense of calm.

Elucidation

Eric Banks

Billowingly $\text{♩} = 81$

p het het het li
p søn søn søn jo
p din din din ser
p i i i sænkt
p het het
p søn søn *mf* lm .
p din din
p i i *mf* lm - mersed in your
5
S1 rat ka 'up
S2 klo mør svor
A1 før den tans
A2 vet 'ok go
T1 *mf* lm - mersed in your beau - ty, lm .
T2 mersed in your beau - ty, lm - mersed in your beau -
B1 *mf* lm - mersed in your beau - ty, lm - mersed in your
B2 beau - ty, lm - mersed in your beau - ty,

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S1 *i* s'ent v'ill

S2 rat het jo

A1 bo Søn ja

A2 p'en din bed

T1 mersed in your beau - - - - - ty, I see my life ex - plained; *p* v'ill

T2 ty, I see my life ex - plained; *p* jo

B1 beau - - - - - ty, I see my life ex - plained; *p* ja

B2 I see my life ex - plained; *p* bed

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S1 *mf* From the rid - dle of dark - - - - - ness,

S2 *mf* From the rid - dle of dark - - - - - ness, From

A1 *mf* From the rid - dle of dark - - - - - ness,

A2 *mf* From the rid - dle of dark - - - - - ness, From the rid - dle of

T1 he 'aer 'ov

T2 'aer dv l'os

B1 den ty 'end

B2 værl lig till

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S1 From the rid - dle of dark - - - ness, An an - swer is re -
 S2 the rid - dle of dark - - - ness, An an - swer is re - vealed.
 A1 From the rid - dle of dark - - - ness, An an - swer is re - vealed.
 A2 dark - - - ness, An an - swer is re - vealed.
 T1 før iø i
 T2 lys le de
 B1 het vil hos
 B2 klør drøkt dø
 S1 vealed. *p* sēkt het li
 S2 *p* het søn iø
 A1 *p* søn din ser
 A2 *p* din i sēkt
 T1 sēkt het
 T2 het søn *mf* lm
 B1 søn din *mf* lm
 B2 din i *mf* lm - mersed in your

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SAMPLE
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S1 rat ka 'up

S2 klo mør svor

A1 før den tans

A2 vet lok go

T1 *mf* Im - mersed in your beau - - - - - ty, Im -

T2 mersed in your beau - - - - - ty, Im - mersed in your beau - - - - -

B1 *mf* Im - mersed in your beau - - - - - ty, Im - mersed in your

B2 beau - - - - - ty, Im - mersed in your beau - - - - - ty,

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S1 'i serkt vill

S2 rat het jo

A1 bo søn ja

A2 pen din bed

T1 mersed in your beau - - - - - ty, I am in - spired to pray; *p* vill

T2 ty, I am in - spired to pray; *p* jo

B1 beau - - - - - ty, I am in - spired to pray; *p* ja

B2 I am in - spired to pray; *p* bed

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