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Michael Murray

# **The Last Invocation**

*for soprano and string orchestra with piano*

poem by Walt Whitman

(2016)

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duration ca. 7'

**The Last Invocation – Walt Whitman (1819-92)**

At the last, tenderly,  
From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,  
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors,  
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;  
With the key of softness unlock the locks – with a whisper,  
Set ope the doors O soul.

Tenderly – be not impatient,  
(Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,  
Strong is your hold O love.)

1871

This setting of Walt Whitman's *The Last Invocation* is an adaptation of "Fly," the second movement of my *Fantasia Concertante on Old American Tunes* for solo viola, piano, and string orchestra. When my brother Alan passed away in late 2016, I was moved to compose music to honor his memory. The sentiment expressed in Whitman's poem brought to mind Albert E. Brumley's 1929 folk hymn, "I'll Fly Away," which had inspired the original movement of the *Fantasia*. This adaptation was written in response to the ending of a life, but it expresses the sense of release and lightness overcoming fear and darkness as death approaches.

*"Some glad morning when this life is o'er, I'll fly away;  
To a home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away.  
I'll fly away, O glory, I'll fly away;  
When I die, Hallelujah, by and by, I'll fly away."*

# The Last Invocation

Walt Whitman

*in memory of my brother, Alan*

Michael Murray

Adagio ♩ = 60

Soprano

Piano

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

con sord. *p*

*mp* *p*

*mp* *p*

*mf*

*p* *mp* *p*

*p* *mp* *p*

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The Last Invocation

Musical score for "The Last Invocation" (page 2), measures 10-18. The score includes parts for Soprano (S), Piano (Pno.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D.B.).

**Measures 10-13:** The strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamics range from *p* to *f*. The Soprano part has rests. The Piano part has rests.

**Measure 14:** A dynamic shift occurs. The strings play a half note with a "short" marking above it. Dynamics range from *p* to *mp*. The Soprano part has a rest. The Piano part has a rest.

**Measures 15-18:** The strings continue with a melodic line. Dynamics range from *p* to *mp*. The Soprano part has rests. The Piano part has rests.

**Measure 19:** The strings play a final melodic phrase. Dynamics range from *p* to *mp*. The Soprano part has a rest. The Piano part has a rest.

**piu mosso** ♩ = 72

**S**  
19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26  
At the last, ten - der - ly, From the

**Pno.**  
*p*

**Vln. I**  
*f* *p* *mp*

**Vln. II**  
*f* *p* *mp* *p*

**Vla.**  
*f* *p*

**Vc.**  
*f* *p*

**D.B.**  
*f* *p*

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

The Last Invocation

27 28 29 30 31 32 33

S  
walls of the pow-er-ful for-tress'd house, From the clasp of the knit-ted

Pno.

Vln. I  
*p* *mp* *pp*

Vln. II  
*pp*

Vla.  
*pp*

Vc.  
*mp* *p* *pp*

D.B.

27 28 29 30 31 32 33

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for 'The Last Invocation' covers measures 27 to 33. The vocal line (Soprano) begins at measure 27 with the lyrics 'walls of the pow-er-ful for-tress'd house, From the clasp of the knit-ted'. Measure 28 features a triplet of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment consists of a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with a melodic line. The string section includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello, all playing sustained notes with dynamic markings of *p*, *mp*, and *pp*. The Double Bass part provides a harmonic foundation with sustained notes. The score is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature.

34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41

S  
locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors, Let me be waft - ed. ——— Let

Pno.

Vln. I  
*p* *mp*

Vln. II  
*p* *mp* *p*

Vla.  
*p* *mp* *p*

Vc.  
*p* *mp* *p*

D.B.  
*p*

34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41

*p*

The Last Invocation

S  
— me glide noise-less-ly forth; — With the key of soft - ness un-lock the locks - with a whis-per,

Pno.

Vln. I  
*p* *mp* *p*

Vln. II  
*mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Vla.  
*mp* *p*

Vc.  
*mp* *p*

D.B.

42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49

8<sup>vb</sup>

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for 'The Last Invocation' features a vocal line and an orchestral accompaniment. The vocal line (Soprano) begins at measure 42 with the lyrics 'me glide noise-less-ly forth;'. It includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 43 and a fermata in measure 45. The orchestral accompaniment includes Piano (Pno.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D.B.). The Piano part has a 'sub' marking in measure 45. Dynamics range from piano (*p*) to mezzo-piano (*mp*). The score is numbered 42 through 49 at the bottom.

S  
50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58  
Set ope the doors O soul. Ten-der-ly, ten-der-ly, ten-der-ly be not im-

Pno.  
*p*

Vln. I  
*pp*

Vln. II  
*pp*

Vla.  
*pp*

Vc.  
*pp*

D.B.  
*pp*

50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for 'The Last Invocation' features a Soprano (S) and a string ensemble. The Soprano part, in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#), has lyrics: 'Set ope the doors O soul. Ten-der-ly, ten-der-ly, ten-der-ly be not im-'. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) is in treble and bass clefs, with a dynamic marking of *p*. The string ensemble consists of Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D.B.), all in bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp. The strings play a sustained, moving line with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The score is numbered 50 through 58.

The Last Invocation

59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66

S  
pa - tient, — (Strong is — your hold O mor-tal flesh, — Strong is —

Pno.  
*p*  
*ppp* *8<sup>va</sup>*  
*ppp* *8<sup>vb</sup>*

Vln. I  
*p* *ppp*

Vln. II  
*pp* *ppp*

Vla.  
*pp* *ppp*

Vc.  
*pp* *ppp*

D.B.  
*pp* *ppp*

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for 'The Last Invocation' covers measures 59 to 66. The vocal line (Soprano) begins at measure 59 with the lyrics 'pa - tient, — (Strong is — your hold O mor-tal flesh, — Strong is —'. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *p* and *ppp*, and performance instructions like *8<sup>va</sup>* and *ppp 8<sup>vb</sup>*. The string section (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., D.B.) provides harmonic support with various dynamics including *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The score is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature.

Adagio ♩ = 60

67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76

S — your hold O love.) soloist: Move to offstage as discreetly as possible for m. 87.

(8<sup>va</sup>)

Pno. *ppp*

(8<sup>vb</sup>)

Vln. I *p*

Vln. II *p*

Vla. *p*

Vc. *p*

D.B. *p*

67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76

The Last Invocation

10

Serenely ♩ = 54

77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85

S

Pno. *mp*

*Leg. (sempre)*

Vln. I senza sord. *mp*

Vln. II senza sord. *mp*

Vla. senza sord. *mp*

Vc. senza sord. \* *mp*

D.B. senza sord. *mp*

77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85

*mp*

\*all strings bow with slight separation until the end

(offstage)

S  
86 87 88 89 90 91 92  
Some glad morn-ing when this life is o'er, I'll fly a-way.

Pno.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

The Last Invocation

This musical score page, titled "The Last Invocation", is numbered 12. It features seven staves: Soprano (S), Piano (Pno.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D.B.). The Soprano part consists of a single line with a treble clef and a series of rests, with measure numbers 93 through 101 indicated above. The Piano part is a grand staff with treble and bass clefs, playing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The string parts (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and D.B.) are all in bass clef and play a similar eighth-note accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as accents (>) and slurs (—) across measures 97-101. Measure numbers 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, and 101 are printed at the beginning of each measure on the Soprano and Double Bass staves.

This musical score page, titled "The Last Invocation" and numbered 13, covers measures 102 through 109. The score is arranged in a system with seven staves, labeled on the left as S, Pno., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and D.B. The Soprano (S) part consists of whole rests in every measure. The Piano (Pno.) part features a dense texture of chords, with a crescendo leading to a fermata and a final note marked *l.v.* (ritardando) at the end of measure 109. The Violin I (Vln. I) part is mostly silent, with whole rests. The Violin II (Vln. II) part plays a rhythmic eighth-note pattern with a crescendo and a fermata at the end of measure 105. The Viola (Vla.) part plays a similar eighth-note pattern with dynamic markings and a crescendo leading to a fermata at the end of measure 108. The Violoncello (Vc.) part plays a rhythmic eighth-note pattern with a crescendo and a fermata at the end of measure 105. The Double Bass (D.B.) part plays a rhythmic eighth-note pattern with a crescendo and a fermata at the end of measure 103. Measure numbers 102 through 109 are printed above the Soprano staff and below the Double Bass staff.