

# The Heart of a Woman

for soprano and string quartet

poetry by Georgia Douglas Johnson (1918)  
music by Frank S. Li (2016)

# Text

## The Heart of a Woman

The heart of a woman goes forth with the dawn,  
As a lone bird, soft winging, so restlessly on,  
Afar o'er life's turrets and vales does it roam  
In the wake of those echoes the heart calls home.

The heart of a woman falls back with the night,  
And enters some alien cage in its plight,  
And tries to forget it has dreamed of the stars  
While it breaks, breaks, breaks against the sheltering bars.

– Georgia Douglas Johnson (1918)

## Performances Notes

The soprano's notes range from C4 to B5.

All four string players will require both standard mutes and metal practice mutes. If the composer is involved with the performance and able to attend, he can provide one of each type (two total, one rubber and one metal) sized for a standard violin or viola.

Parallelogram notes in the string parts (first seen in measure 14) indicate brush sound. These are largely pitchless, brushy sounds produced by touching the string lightly (as if playing harmonics) with all four fingers at once. Played with light bow pressure, it creates the sound of a bow against the string without activating pitch – as if the bow has insufficient rosin.

Full Score

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1  $\text{♩} = 108$

Soprano

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

until m. 14, slur at will unless indicated

s.p.

*ff* *f* *ff* *f* *ff* *f*

6 6 6 6 6

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2

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

6 *fff*

*fff*

*f* 6 *fff* ord. *p*

*fff*

3

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ord. *p*

6 6 *fff* *p*



9

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*f* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *ff*

11

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*f* *f* *p*

14 ♩=72

13

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

6 (ff)

III \*brush sound

ppp

III \*brush sound

p

f

pp

ppp

III \*brush sound

ppp

IV \*brush sound

ppp

s.t. 3

pp

ppp

(ppp)

Brush sound: largely pitchless sound, touch the string lightly (as if playing harmonics) with all fingers at once. Light bow pressure, as if bow has insufficient rosin.

17 *tranquil, masked*

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

(improvise vowels)

oo... -----> oh

3

ppp

p

pp

ppp

p

pp

ppp

ppp

ord.

pp

ppp

22

Sop. *p* *ppp* *p*

Vln. I *ppp* *p* *mf* *pp < mf >* *pp*

Vln. II *p* *ppp* *p* *pp < mf >* *pp*

Vla. *p* *ppp* *p* *pp < mf >* *pp*

Vc. *pp < mf >* *pp*

28

Sop.

Vln. I *IV \*brush sound*

Vln. II *IV \*brush sound*

Vla.

Vc. *< mp >* *ppp*



*brightly*

*mf*

Sop. *mf*  
 The heart of a wo-man The heart

Vln. I  
*mp* *pp*

Vln. II  
*mf*

Vla.  
*mf* *pp*

Vc.  
*pp* *mp* *ppp*

Sop. *p* *mf* *mp* *f*  
 of a wo-man ah goes  
*exuberant, hopeful*

Vln. I  
*mp* *f*

Vln. II  
*mp* *p* *mf sub.* *f*

Vla.  
*mp* *mf* *mp* *f*

Vc.  
*f* *(p)* *mp* *p* *mp* *f*

44

Sop. *ff* *mp sub.* *pp*  
 forth with the dawn, the dawn,

Vln. I *s.p.* *pp sub.* ord.  
*pp sub.* ord.

Vln. II *s.p.* *pp sub.* ord.  
*pp sub.* ord. *mp*

Vla. *s.p.* *pp sub.* ord.  
*pp sub.* ord.

Vc. *s.p.* *pp sub.* ord.  
*pp sub.* ord.

50

Sop. *mf* *f* *mp* *mf*  
 As a lone bird, soft wing-ing, so

Vln. I *s.t.* *p* *mf* *mp*  
*pp* *pp* *pizz.* *arco* *f*

Vln. II *pp* *pp* *pizz.* *arco* *f*

Vla. *ppp* *p* *f*

Vc. *ppp* *p*

54

Sop. *mf*  
so rest - less

Vln. I *pp* *pp* arco *s.t.* pizz. arco *s.t.*

Vln. II *pp* pizz. arco *s.t.* pizz. arco *s.t.*

Vla. *ff* *pp* *s.t.*

Vc. arco *p* *s.t.* *pp*

60 ♩ = 108

58

Sop. *f*  
rest-less-ly on.

Vln. I con sord. (metal) ord. *p* *ff* *f* 6

Vln. II pizz. arco *s.t.* con sord. (metal) ord. *p* *ff* *f* 6

Vla. 6/4

Vc. 6/4

61

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

6 *fff*

*sfz* *pp*

*mf*

*fff*

con sord. (metal) ord.

*sfz* *pp*

*sfz* *(pp)* *mf sub.*

con sord. (metal) ord.

*fff*

*sfz* *pp*

*sfz* *pp*

*fff*

*sfz* *pp*

*sfz* *pp*

64

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*mp*

*sfz* *pp*

*mf*

66

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*sfz* *pp*

3

68

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*sfz* *pp*

*sfz* *pp*

*sfz* *pp*

*sfz* *pp*

3

70

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*ppp* *ff* *pp*

*sfz* *pp*

*pp* *sfz* *pp*

*sfz* *pp*

senza sord

senza sord

73  $\text{♩} = 72$

Sop.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*mf* *dreary* *(p)*

The heart \_\_\_\_\_ of a wo-man

senza sord

*p > ppp* *pp* *mf > (p)*

senza sord *sfz > pp* *mf > (p)*

*sfz > (pp)* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *5*

*sfz > (pp)* *pp* *p* *p*

79

78 *mf* *sub.* *f*

Sop. falls back with the night, The heart\_\_\_\_\_

Vln. I *p* *f* *pp* *f* *p* *f* *p* *pizz.* *arco* *mf* *(p)*

Vln. II *pp* *mfp* *pp* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *mf*

Vla. *p* *p* *pp* *p* *f* *mf* *p*

Vc. *(pp)* *mf* *pp* *f* *p* *f* *p* *p*

3 s.p. ord. 4 4

83 *ff* *mf* *(p)* *mf*

Sop. \_\_\_\_\_ of a wo-man\_\_\_\_\_ falls

Vln. I *mf* *(p)* *pp* *pp*

Vln. II *p* *mf* *p* *pp* *pp*

Vla. *pp* *p* *mf* *(p)* *pp* *pp*

Vc. *pp* *mf* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

88

Sop. back with the night, And enters some a-li-en

Vln. I *pp* *pp* *ppp* *sfz* *(mp)* *sfz* *sfz*

Vln. II *pp* *pp* *ppp* *sfz* *(mp)* *sfz* *sfz*

Vla. *pp* *pp* *ppp* *sfz* *(mp)* *sfz* *sfz*

Vc. *pp* *f*

Sop. cage in its plight,

Vln. I *mp* *f* *mp* *f* *ff* *mp* *f* *mp*

Vln. II *mp* *f* *ff* *mp*

Vla. *mp* *f* *ff* *mp*

Vc. *ffp* *ff* *mp* *f* *mp*



*mp* *f* *mp* *f*

Sop. *And* tries

Vln. I *f* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vln. II *f* *mf* *p* *mf*

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

Vc. *mf* *p* *mp* *ff*

98 *mf* *f* *mf* *lush and depressing*

Sop. tries\_ to for - get it has for-get it has

Vln. I *f* *p* *sfz* *p* *mf*

Vln. II *mp* *f* *p sfz* *p sfz* *p* *mf*

Vla. *f* *p* *sfz* *p* *sfz* *p* *mf*

Vc. *p* *f* *p* *sfz* *3* *p* *mf*

102 *f* (,) *fff*

Sop. dreamed of the stars,

Vln. I *ff* *fff*

Vln. II *ff* *fff*

Vla. *ff* *fff*

Vc. *f* *fff*

106 *mp* *sub.* *rit.*

Sop. stars,

Vln. I *p* *pp* *con sord.*

Vln. II *p* *pp* *con sord.*

Vla. *p* *pp* *con sord.*

Vc. *p* *pp* *con sord.*

*beautiful despair*

Sop. *p* While it breaks, breaks, breaks *mp* on the shel - ter - ing

Vln. I *s.t.* *ppp*

Vln. II *con sord.* *s.t.* *ppp*

Vla. *ppp* *con sord.* *s.t.*

Vc. *ppp*

cut off when needed

116

Sop. *pp* bars.

Vln. I *ppp* *ord.* *p* *f* *ff* *molto s.p.*

Vln. II *ppp* *ord.* *p* *f* *ff* *molto s.p.*

Vla. *ppp* *ord.* *p* *f* *ff* *molto s.p.*

Vc. *ppp* *ord.* *p* *f* *ff* *molto s.p.*

opt. ad lib repeat,  
no more than 4x total

121 **accel.** . . . . .

**Sop.** [Musical staff with rests]

**Vln. I**  
*ff*  
Almost scratch tone. If desired, this could break bow hairs.  
[Musical staff with triplets and accents]

**Vln. II**  
*ff*  
Almost scratch tone, if desired. This should break bow hairs.  
[Musical staff with accents]

**Vla.**  
*ff*  
Almost scratch tone, if desired. This should break bow hairs.  
[Musical staff with accents]

**Vc.**  
*ff*  
Almost scratch tone, if desired. This should break bow hairs.  
[Musical staff with quintuplets and accents]

end as if torn off