

Meditation

mélodie for tenor, cello, and piano

(2024)



Benjamin Gabbay (b. 1995)

Text by Charles Baudelaire (1821 - 1867)

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Duration: 5"30"

The narrator in Baudelaire's poem "Recueillement" (often translated as "Meditation" in English versions of the text) speaks endearingly to their own grief as though it were a person, leading it on through a twilit scene. Condemning the frivolities and vain pleasures of the masses, the narrator invites their personified grief to look beyond these earthly cares and watch the sun set into "la douce Nuit qui marche"—"the sweet Night that marches."

This piece, which I call a *mélodie* for its stylistic ties to early-20th-century French art song, sets Baudelaire's text with almost chorale-like simplicity against a gently rocking melody that pervades the entire work—reminiscent of a lullaby or an old folk tune, steadily advancing like Baudelaire's "march" of the night.

*Sois sage, ô ma Douleur, et tiens-toi plus tranquille.
Tu réclamais le Soir ; il descend ; le voici :
Une atmosphère obscure enveloppe la ville,
Aux uns portant la paix, aux autres le souci.*

*Be wise, O my Grief, and keep more calm.
You demanded the night; it descends; here it is:
A dark atmosphere envelops the town,
To some it brings peace, to others, concern.*

*Pendant que des mortels la multitude vile,
Sous le fouet du Plaisir, ce bourreau sans merci,
Va cueillir des remords dans la fête servile,
Ma Douleur, donne-moi la main ; viens par ici,*

*While the mortals of the vile multitude,
Under the whip of Pleasure, that tormentor without mercy,
Go gather remorse at the servile party,
My Grief, give me your hand; come over here,*

*Loin d'eux. Vois se pencher les défuntes Années,
Sur les balcons du ciel, en robes surannées ;
Surgir du fond des eaux le Regret souriant ;*

*Far from them. See the dead Years wilting,
On the balconies of the sky, in antiquated robes;
From the depths of the waters emerges smiling Regret;*

*Le Soleil moribond s'endormir sous une arche,
Et, comme un long linceul traînant à l'Orient,
Entends, ma chère, entends la douce Nuit qui marche.*

*The dying Sun goes to sleep under an arch,
And, like a long, trailing shroud from the Orient,
Hear, my dear, hear the sweet Night that marches.*

- "Recueillement" by Charles Baudelaire
(1821 - 1867)

- Literal English translation by the composer

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