

Eldorado

for SSA (treble) chorus and piano

RUSSELL NADEL

(2011)

Duration: c. 3'30"



Program Notes:

This work is an original setting of Edgar Allan Poe's poem "Eldorado," for three-part treble chorus. This poem spoke to me as a reader and as a composer for one main reason - namely, that it was not unremittingly dark or "horrific," as much of Poe's other work often is, but that it ends on a purposefully vague note, leaving the reader to interpret for himself or herself what exactly is happening, and what the next step on the knight's journey might be. I have read that Poe wrote this poem as an unsubtle message to the miners and others who wanted to move West and "get rich quick" during the California Gold Rush of the mid-1800s; but personally, I prefer to interpret Poe's "Eldorado" not merely as a symbol of the fruitless pursuit of gold or riches, but rather, as a greater symbol of something worth questing and striving for. I believe that at the end, when the shadow shows the knight the way, the knight does reach his Eldorado (whatever that might look like), and does find fulfillment for his life's quest - and I hope that that hopefulness and sense of light, at the end of "the valley of the shadow," comes through in my setting of the text.

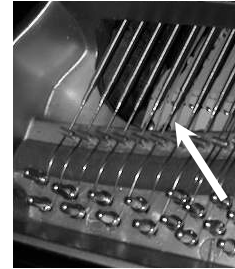
In my setting, I used harmonic and textural changes to highlight each occurrence of the word "shadow" in the poem. Just as Poe carefully redefines the word each time it recurs, I used different chord progressions (which lead momentarily away from the key center and back) each time. As tools to highlight the narrative's forward momentum, I also used several different "weaving" contrapuntal textures in the voice parts; a "galloping" piano accompaniment (perhaps representing the knight on his horse); and a couple of surprising modulations.

Eldorado was commissioned by the Organization of American Kodály Educators (OAKE) in July 2011 as part of the 2011 Ruth Boshkoff Composition Prize. It will be premiered in February 2012 by the OAKE National Conference Youth Choir, composed of OAKE members' students who audition from across the nation, at the 2012 OAKE National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

– *Russell Nadel*
September 2011

Performance Notes:

In measure 51, there is a special effect called for in the piano part. This effect is sometimes called “muted” piano. The pianist (or page-turner) identifies the lowest D string in advance (the sixth string on typical 88-key pianos), and, anytime from measure 48 onwards, presses one finger very hard on the silver, unwound part of the string just behind the agraffe (small brass hole through which the string passes). The arrow in the diagram points to the exact location. If the pedal is depressed and the key is struck hard, while this part of the string is pressed hard, it will produce a special sound quality (stereotypically used in horror movie soundtracks).



Note that to achieve this effect on grand pianos, the music stand might need to be removed or adjusted so the string can be reached. Also, this effect may be difficult to achieve on upright pianos. If logistics or the construction of the piano prevent this effect from being used, disregard it; but it will make a wonderful and unique difference in the sound world of the music if it is executed correctly!

Text:

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old,
This knight so bold,
And o'er his heart a shadow
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow;
“Shadow,” said he,
“Where can it be,
This land of Eldorado?”

“Over the mountains
Of the moon,
Down the valley of the shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,”
The shade replied -
“If you seek for Eldorado!”

commissioned by the Organization of American Kodály Educators (OAKE),
via the 2011 Ruth Boshkoff Composition Prize; premiered by Ruth Boshkoff, conductor

ELDORADO

Edgar Allan Poe (1849)

RUSSELL NADEL

Moderato (♩ = 60)

SOPRANO 1

SOPRANO 2

ALTO

Piano

Moderato (♩ = 60)

5

S.1

S.2

A.

Pno.

Gai-ly be-dight, A gal-lant knight, In sun-shine and in sha-dow, Had

Gai-ly be-dight, A gal-lant knight, In sun-shine and in sha-dow,

mf

mp *f* *p*

10

S.1 *mp legato*
 jour-neyed long, Sing-ing a song, In search of El - do - ra-do. El-do-

S.2 *mp* *p*
 Sing-ing a song, jour - neyed long, El-do-

A. *mp* *p*
 Sing-ing a song, jour-neyed in search of El - do - ra-do. El-do-

Pno. *mf sub.* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

14

S.1
 ra - do, El-do - ra-do, El-do - ra - do...

S.2
 ra - do, El-do - ra-do, El-do - ra - do...

A.
 ra - do, ooo, El-do - ra - do...

Pno. *molto leg.* *p* *mf* *mp*

Red.

22 *mf*³

S.1 But

S.2 *mp*

A. But

But

Pno. *p sub.* *mp distinto* *mf* 8vb

28 *f*

S.1 he_grew old, This knight so bold, And o'er_ his heart a sha-dow Fell as he found

S.2 he grew old, This knight so bold, And o'er_ his heart a sha-dow

A. he grew old, This knight so bold, And o'er_ his heart a sha-dow

Pno. *mf sub.* *f*

poco rit.

A tempo
p distant

33

S.1

No spot of ground That looked like El - do - ra - do. El-do-

S.2

No spot of ground That looked like El - do - ra - do.

A.

No spot of ground That looked like El - do - ra - do.

poco rit.

A tempo

Pno.

38

S.1

ra - do, El-do - ra - do, El-do - ra - do...

S.2

El-do - ra - do, El-do - ra - do...

A.

El Do - ra - do, Do - ra - do...

Pno.

44 **Meno mosso** (♩ = 44) 5

S.1 *pp* Ooo..._____

S.2 *mp* Failed him at

A. *mp* And when his strength Failed him at

Meno mosso (♩ = 44)

Pno. *mf* *mp* *p distant*

move L.H. to bridge, 6th string*

49

S.1 *p* Ooo..._____ sha - dow..._____

S.2 *p* length, sha - dow..._____

A. length, He met a pil - grim sha - dow;_____

Pno. *f* *15ma* *8vb*

* L.H. (or page-turner) presses down very hard on the D string where it meets the bridge; R.H. plays the key forcefully.

6 53 *mp* *ff* *mf* **molto rit.**

S.1
 “Sha- dow,” said he, “Where can it be, — This land of El-do - ra -

S.2
 “Sha- dow,” said he, “Where can it be, — This land of El-do - ra -

A.
 “Where can it be, — This land of El-do - ra -

Pno.
p *mf* *mf* *ff* *molto rit.* *poco marc.* *mf*

8^{va}-1 8^{vb} 8^{vb}

57 **Più mosso** (♩ = 56) *ff* *p* *pp* *mf*

S.1
 - do?" Ooo... Ooo...

S.2
 - do?"

A.
 - do?" Ooo... “O-ver the moun - tains Of the

Pno.
ff legato *mp*

(8)

62

S.1 *mf* *risoluto*
 Ooo... "Ride, bold-ly ride,"

S.2 *mp* *mf* *risoluto*
 Down the val - ley of the sha - dow, "Ride, bold-ly ride,"

A. *mf* *risoluto*
 moon, Down the val - ley of the sha - dow, Ride, bold-ly ride," The

Pno. *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *mf*
 (8) *loco*

66

S.1 *mf*
 "If you seek for

S.2 *mp*
 "If you seek for

A. *mp*
 shade re - plied, "If you seek for

Pno. *f* *p sub.* *mf*
8va
8vb

69

S.1 *ff*
El - do - ra - do!"

S.2 *f*
El - do - ra - do!"

A. *f* *pp*
El - do - ra - do!" Ooo, _____

Pno. *p sub.* *p*
(8) _____ Red. _____

73

S.1 *pp* *p*
Ooo, _____ ooo... _____

S.2 *mp*
El-do - ra - do...

A. *pp*
ooo... _____

Pno. *molto leg.*

82 rit. A tempo

S.1

S.2

A.

Pno.

rit. A tempo

p

86 molto rit.

S.1

S.2

A.

Pno.

ppp Mmm...

ppp Mmm...

ppp Mmm...

molto rit.

p