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Two Letters of Sulpicia

for mezzo-soprano
and bassoon

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Jonathan Santore

Two Letters of Sulpicia

I.

At last love comes! I sing it in the streets
And will not hide it here, among these sheets.

Exult, my heart! At last, the Queen of Joy,
Won by the music of my begging strain,
Led to the couch of bliss my willing boy,
And bid us revel, thrill in every vein!

Last night, entranced in ecstasy we lay,
And cursed the all-too-quick return of day,
And now I write this letter – not to seal,
But to rejoice, remember, and reveal.

I try to act cool, solemn – but I grin
Remembering the glory of our sin.
Two worthy equals – what a night we spent –
I cannot, cannot, for my soul, repent!

II.

If, from the bottom of my foolish heart,
I don't repent of last night's childish games,
May I no longer feel your ardor start,
No longer hear you whisper lover's names.

You grasped my knees, and yet I made you go –
Why be embarrassed that I want you so?
And yet, with eyes downcast, I let you turn,
Not wanting you to see my passion burn.

-- Sulpicia (1st Century BCE)
Free translations by JCS, based on the work of
James Grainger (c. 1721-1766)

Written for Jennifer Fijal and Molly Finkel -- two exceptional young women

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I.

Freely; quasi recitative (Tempo I)

molto rall.-----

Mezzo

At last love comes! I sing— it in the streets And will not

Bassoon

mf *mp*

Proudly; flowingly (♩ = 66) (Tempo II)

Mezzo

hide it here, a-mong these sheets.

Bsn.

(mp)

Mezzo

Ex - ult, my heart! At last, the Queen of Joy,

Bsn.

mp

Mezzo

Won by the mu - sic of my beg-ging strain,

Bsn.

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pressing forward ----- accel.-----

Mezzo *mf* *f*

Led to the couch of bliss my will-ing boy, And bid us rev - el,

Bsn. *f*

----- molto rall.----- Tempo I

Mezzo *mf*

rev - el, thrill, _____

Bsn. *sfzmp*

Mezzo

thrill _____

Bsn. *sfzmp*

----- molto rall.----- Langorously (♩ = 60) (Tempo III)

Mezzo *ff* (non dim.)

thrill _____ in eve - ry vein!

Bsn. *sfzmf*

11 ----- (♩ = 72)

Mezzo

11 yet I made you go— Why be em-bar - rassed that I want you so?

Bsn.

14 Numbly (♩ = 52) rall.-----

Mezzo

14 sub. *mp* And yet, with eyes down - cast, I let you turn. Not want - ing you to see my pas - sion

Bsn.

14 sub. *mp*

17 With increasing passion (♩ = 52) accel. e cresc. ----- *mf* ----- *f*

Mezzo

17 burn, burn, burn.

Bsn.

17 cresc. ----- *mf* ----- *f*

20 ----- *ff* molto rall. ----- Tempo I (non dim.)

Mezzo

20 See my pas - sion burn.

Bsn.

20 *sfzmp* ----- *p*