my father moved through
dooms of love

for SATB chorus, solo violin, and piano

By Kyle Gann
(2005-6)
Based on a poem by E.E. Cummings
My father moved through dooms of love

When James Bagwell asked me for a new choral work, I already knew my father didn’t have long to live. I always associated my father with choral music, for he sang in church choruses much of his life, and even once with the Dallas Opera. I was in the mood to steep myself in E.E. Cummings, and was immediately drawn to his “My father moved through dooms of love.” Whether a text appeals to me for musical uses has little to do with content and everything to do with the rhythm and feel of the words. Cummings’ poem was perfect in this respect, and I started setting phrases of it even before I learned that he wrote it in 1926 after his own father, a prominent scholar and minister was killed by a train hitting his car. The poem seemed to have chosen me more than I it.

Since the piece was to be both celebratory and funereal (as I hope it turned out), it would have seemed wrong, too personal, I thought, to include a vocal soloist – but I wanted a wordless presence to stand apart in the place of the father, and a violin solo seemed like just the thing. I dedicate the piece to my good friend James Bagwell, who lost his father the year before I lost mine.

My father moved through dooms of love was commissioned by director James Bagwell for the Dessoff Choir. The work was premiered March 10, 2007, at Merkin Hall in New York City by the Dessoff Choir, James Bagwell conducting, with violinist Rachel Handman and pianist Steven Ryan.

Kyle Gann

my father moved through dooms of love
through sames of am through haves of give,
singing each morning out of each night
my father moved through depths of height

this motionless forgetful where
turned at his glance to shining here;
that if(so timid air is firm)
under his eyes would stir and squirm
newly as from unburied which
floats the first who, his april touch
drove sleeping selves to swarm their fates
woke dreamers to their ghostly roots

and should some why completely weep
my father's fingers brought her sleep:
vainly no smallest voice might cry
for he could feel the mountains grow.

Lifting the valleys of the sea
my father moved through griefs of joy;
praising a forehead called the moon
singing desire into begin

joy was his song and joy so pure
a heart of star by him could steer
and pure so now and now so yes
the wrists of twilight would rejoice

keen as midsummer's keen beyond
conceiving mind of sun will stand,
so strictly(over utmost him
so hugely) stood my father's dream

his flesh was flesh his blood was blood:
no hungry man but wished him food;
no cripple wouldn't creep one mile
uphill to only see him smile.

Scorning the Pomp of must and shall
my father moved through dooms of feel;
his anger was as right as rain
his pity was as green as grain

septembering arms of year extend
yes humbly wealth to foe and friend
than he to foolish and to wise
offered immeasurable is

proudly and(by octobering flame
beckoned)as earth will downward climb,
so naked for immortal work
his shoulders marched against the dark

his sorrow was as true as bread:
no liar looked him in the head;
if every friend became his foe
he'd laugh and build a world with snow.

My father moved through theys of we,
singing each new leaf out of each tree
(and every child was sure that spring
danced when she heard my father sing)

then let men kill which cannot share,
let blood and flesh be mud and mire,
scheming imagine, passion willed,
freedom a drug that's bought and sold

giving to steal and cruel kind,
a heart to fear, to doubt a mind,
to differ a disease of same,
conform the pinnacle of am

though dull were all we taste as bright,
bitter all utterly things sweet,
maggoty minus and dumb death
all we inherit, all bequeath

and nothing quite so least as truth
--i say though hate were why men breathe--
because my Father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than all

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my father moved through
dooms of love

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violin

Piano

6

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln.

Pno.

sames of am through haves of give.

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my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love
should some why complete-ly weep my fa-ther's fin-gers brought her sleep

my fa-ther's fin-gers brought her sleep vain-ly no smal-lest

my father moved through dooms of love
Lifting the valleys of

voice might cry

Lifting the valleys of

for he could feel the mountains grow

for he could feel the mountains grow

Lifting the valleys

intensifying slightly

the sea

my father moved through griefs of joy

the sea

my father moved through griefs of joy, my father moved

of the sea

my father moved through griefs of joy, my father moved

my father moved through griefs of joy, my father moved

my father moved through dooms of love

my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love
joy was his song and joy so pure a heart of star

my father moved through dooms of love
by him could steer and pure so now and now so yes the wrists of twilight would

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re-joice

re-joice keen as mid-summer's keen beyond conceiving mind of sun will

re-joice keen as mid-summer's keen beyond conceiving mind of sun will

re-joice keen as mid-summer's keen beyond conceiving mind of sun will

re-joice keen as mid-summer's keen beyond conceiving mind of sun will

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my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love

stand, so strictly stood my father's dream his flesh was flesh his blood was blood

stand, so strictly stood my father's dream his flesh was flesh his blood was blood

will stand, so strictly stood my father's dream his flesh was flesh his blood was blood

will stand, so strictly stood my father's dream his flesh was flesh his blood was blood

my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love
his pity was as green as grain

my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love
the dark his sorrow was as true as bread: no liar looked.

him in the head; if every friend became his foe he'd

my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love
child was sure that spring danced when she heard my father sing
then

let men kill which cannot share let blood and flesh
then let me kill which cannot share be bled and mire

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my father moved through dooms of love
my father moved through dooms of love

because my father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than

all

because my father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than

because my father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than

because my father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than

cause my father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than all

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