

Songs of Cordelia

for soprano and cello

Kuno Kjærbye : music

William Shakespeare : lyric - excerpts from "King Lear"

I. song

Cordelia : What shall Cordelia speak ? Love and be silent

(quote Goneril)

Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter.

Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty.

Beyond what can be valued rich and rare.

No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour:

As much as child e'er loved or father found :

A love that makes breath poor and speech unable :

Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

Then poor Cordelia :

(quote Regan)

I am made of that self-mettle as my sister.

And prize me at her worth. In my true heart,

I find she names my very deed of love :

Only she comes too short, that I profess

Myself an enemy to all other joys

Which the most precious square of sense professes,

And find I am alone felicitate

In your dear highness' love.

And yet not so, since I am sure my love's

More ponderous than my tongue.

II. song

Lear : Speak.

Cordelia : Nothing my lord.

Lear : Nothing ?

Cordelia : Nothing

Lear : Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

Cordelia : Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty

According to my bond, no more nor less.

Lear : But goes thy heart with this ?

Cordelia : Ay, my good lord.

Lear : So young and so untender ?

Cordelia : So young and so true.

III. song

Lear : Let it be so: thy truth then be thy dower,
For by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecrate and the night,
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbored, pitied and relieved
As thou my sometime daughter.

IV. song

Lear : Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever!
I know when one is dead and when one lives:
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass:
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives.

A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
Cordelia, Cordelia! Stay a little. Ha?

And my poor fool is hanged! No, no, no life?
Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there!