

## ***Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal*** (2004)

SSAATTBB a/c

Difficulty rating: 4

Duration: 5'00"

Premiere: Princeton Singers, conducted by Steven Sametz, Bethlehem, PA, 06/26/04

***[Available through Oxford University Press]***

*Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal* was written in 2004 in an intense five days during my second year attending the Oxford Summer Institutes at Lehigh University. I composed *Shiloh (A Requiem)* at the previous year's sessions. The program was sponsored by Oxford University Press and featured The Princeton Singers, a marvelous professional ensemble led by Steven Sametz, who also chairs the choral Program at Lehigh. A dozen or so composers all wrote a new piece from scratch, under the guidance of Sametz and guest composer Zhou Long, with the Singers available for work-shopping. Add in an ample amount of singing and the whole experience was boot camp, no question. But it also had an important impact on me as a composer and musician, thanks in no small part to the talents and support of Zhou, Sametz, then President of OUP Music/USA, Christopher Johnson, the Princeton Singers, and many of the composer participants I befriended, including Paul Carey, Reg Unterseher and Stacy Garrop, just to name a few.

For this setting of one of Tennyson's Songs from The Princess, I've tried to capture the lush, drowsy atmosphere and quiet ecstasy of this poem of lovers waking while all else sleeps. Divided men begin with a 'sleep' motif, out of which the women emerge with rich images of the night. The music wakes up slightly with the fireflies, but our lovers inevitably lose themselves in one another. By the time the men return with an elaboration of the opening motif we are beyond the power of the simplest word, and 'sleep' has been replaced by 'ah,' 'ooh,' and 'mmm.'

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Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;  
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;  
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:  
The fire-flies waken: waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,  
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,  
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves  
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,  
And slips into the bosom of the lake:  
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip  
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

--*Alfred Tennyson* (1847)