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# Something Permanent

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Paul Salerni

# Something Permanent

(poems by Cynthia Rylant on photographs by Walker Evans)

for

Mezzo-soprano and Guitar

*I. Land*

*II. Mission*

*III. Minstrels*

*IV. Boys*

*V. Apartment*

*VI. Bed*

*VII. Rocker*

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# I. Land

**Andante**

♩=80

Mezzo-soprano

Acoustic Guitar

*p*

She thought she could re-mem-ber a

*p* *simile*

3

time when the

5

land was beau-ti-ful to her,

7

and the clouds were the pro-vince of

9

an gels. the

11

trees shel - ter, the

13

fields wide o - pen runn

15

ing. But her back had not stopped hurt - ing

*mf* *f*

18

*mp*

her for de - cades now but her fin - gers al - ways

*mp*

21

*mf*

had a sting and eyes red and tired, but she fi - gured

*mf*

25

*cresc. poco a poco*

she must be mis - ta - ken, must have heard some - thing in

*cresc. poco a poco*

28

**molto rit.**

*f*

church a - bout that,

*f*

30 - - - - -

*pp*

**Pesante** **Allargando** *ff*

32 *f* *ff*

be-cause the earth ne-ver was no-thing but work.

## II. Mission

**Pesante**

1 *mf*  $\text{♩} = 75$

Lord it was no place for a man to end up.

*mf*

5 *mp* *p* *cresc. poco a poco*

He'd walked circ - les a - round it for days. But when

*mp* *p* *cresc. poco a poco*

8

he fi - nal - ly did pass through that door and

11

feel the prea - cher's hand on his tired, warm

*f*

14

head, the shame slipped off him like rain and

*p* poco rit. . . . . A tempo

18

he was a child a - gain: hun gry, still, pure.

poco rit. . . . . *pp*

Raggy

III. Minstrels

1 ♩=112

Musical notation for measures 1-3. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a 12/8 time signature. It starts with a whole rest in measure 1, followed by a half rest in measure 2, and then the lyrics "It did-n't mat ter if" in measure 3. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef with a 12/8 time signature. It begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. A mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking is placed above the piano staff in measure 3.

Musical notation for measures 4-5. The top staff continues the vocal line with lyrics "no - bo - dy re - mem - bered them la - ter on." in measure 4. The bottom staff continues the piano accompaniment. A mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking is placed above the piano staff in measure 5.

Musical notation for measures 6-8. The top staff has a whole rest in measure 6, followed by a half rest in measure 7, and then the lyrics "if no-bo-dy re-mem bered" in measure 8. The bottom staff continues the piano accompaniment.

Musical notation for measures 9-11. The top staff has lyrics "them la - ter on. They'd had a few mo-" in measure 9. The bottom staff continues the piano accompaniment.

Musical notation for measures 12-14. The top staff has lyrics "ments to them- selves, on that stage," in measure 12. The bottom staff continues the piano accompaniment.



14

And no - bo - dy knew

16

how much they would have paid to

*poco ad lib. quasi recitativo senza tempo*

19

get that time when no white folks could in - ter - fere

**In tempo**

24

in their lives. When not a per - son

28

on this earth could touch or dis - turb them,

31

lest be ac-cused of spoil - ing what some con - si - dered

**A tempo**

34

a good show. They

*mf* *pp* *mp*

$\text{♩} = 120$

38

would have worked for free, for free, like slaves,

40

42

They would haveworked for free, like slaves,

44

just for those mi nutes of be-ing

47

just for those mi

50

nutes of be-ing no such thing.

*p*

54

*mf* *p* *pp*

Sexy

IV. Boys

1  $\text{♩} = 55$

*p*  $\overset{5}{\text{—}}$   
They both loved the same

*p*  $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   
girl but she would-n't have either of them

*mf*  $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   
be-cause she was mar-ried - and to the

*mf*  $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   
store ow-ner by god, so

*p*  $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   $\overset{3}{\text{—}}$   
it was-n'tworth think - ing-a-bout. But at

12

18

night, they each stretched u - pon a bed

20

and

22

had her had her whole and lei-sure - ly.

26

And when they were done, they

29

settl - ed her back in their mind like a soft peach will

*p*

32

dis - ap pear in - to a young boy's pock - et,

*p*

36

warm Au - gust nights.

*pp*

40

*rit.*

*ppp*

Motoric

V. Apartment

147 ♩=140

*mf*

5

When her re - la - tives

*ponticello*

4

from the south

came

7

up for a vis - it,

10

they la - ment - ed her sor - ry state,

13 *mf*

hav-ing to live in that lit-tle box hav-ing no

16

field nor trees, hav-ing no hills to

19 *f*

look toward. She ne-ver told them how she did n't misstose

*f*

23 *mf*

things, how she would

*mf*



27

like a-wake at night, her a-

30

part-ment win-dow wide o - pen, and lis

33

*f* somewhat free, bird-like

ten to the ci - ty like she was list-en-ing

*f* somewhat free, bird-like

36

like she was list - en - ing like she was list - en - ing

38

Ad lib.

*p*

like she was list - en - ing to

In tempo, ma come prima

Ad lib.<sup>17</sup>

40

birds \_\_\_\_\_ like she was list-en-ing like she was list-en-ing to

*p* *f* *p*

Gentle tango

45

hymns, \_\_\_\_\_ like she was hear-ing a lo - ver. \_\_\_\_\_ a lo -

*f* *rit.* *p* *pp*

*p* *f* *p normale*

Tempo primo

51

ver. \_\_\_\_\_ She ne - ver told them \_\_\_\_\_

*mf* *mf* *ponticello*

55

\_\_\_\_\_ how hard it was \_\_\_\_\_ to

*mf*

58 *f*

wipe that smile off her face

61 *p* *f*

each and e - very time

**Ad lib.**

64 *p*  $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$  **In tempo**

— they com - plained.

Gentle tango

VI. Bed

1 ♩=100

*p*

Of course, it was hard to make love with the children in the

*p*

6

room

9

but that did - n't keep them from try - ing, and

12

they were pret - ty suc - cess - ful some would say,

*mf*

15

since they had se - ven kids

*simile*

20  
19 *pp* *mp* 3  
now. He would be - gin it byreach-ing o - ver and soft - ly

23  
pull-ing at a slen - der piece of her long hair, wrapping it in his

26 *p* *pp* 3  
fin - gers, and then dead ti - red but still in love,

30 *mp* 3 *p* *cresc. poco a poco*  
they would turn toward each o - ther and ne - stled in the warm

33 *mf*  
breath - ing of their oth - er ba - bies, ease their wea - ry

37 *p*

minds with the sex they knew would like - ly

*p*

40 *mf* *poco rit.* *mp* *p* *pp*

make them poor - er and

*mf* *mp* *p*

46 *mp* *rit.* *pp*

rich - er at the same time.

*pp* *mp* *pp*

VII. Rocker

22 Gently rocking

1  $\text{♩} = 75$

*p*

She want - ed to be sure to hear the o - ther ba - bies

*p*

9

*subp*

if they cried, so she nursed them, one at a time,

16

*subp*

at the bot - tom of the stairs then car - ried them one at a

22

*mp* *p* *pp*

time, \_\_\_\_\_ soft - ly up, soft - ly up, soft - ly up, \_\_\_\_\_

31

poco rit. . . . . A tempo

their small hearts beat - ing. \_\_\_\_\_

38

poco rit. . . . .

*pp*