

How Do I Love Thee?

for soprano and piano

Sid Richardson
(2024)

How Do I Love Thee?

Instrumentation

Soprano
Piano

Duration

2 minutes, 30 seconds

Texts

"How Do I Love Thee?"

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

by Elizabeth Barrett Browning
from *Songs from the Portuguese* (1850)

Program Note

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "How Do I Love Thee?" (Sonnet 43) is a standout poem in her collection *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850). My fiancée had given me a copy of this collection early on in our courtship, and I often returned to it during my marriage preparations as it represents for me an intriguing meditation on love, nature, and religion. The love Barrett depicts here is eternal; it transcends space and time. The poetry inspired a lush musical setting in which harmonic resonances accumulate in the piano as the singer lists the various ways her love manifests itself. Intimate moments of hushed reflection are juxtaposed with exuberant bursts of passion. The music expands outward in register and intensity as it develops in an evocation of the love Barrett describes, which, rooted in our experiences here on earth, opens outward to the cosmos. *How Do I Love Thee?* was commissioned by New England Conservatory of Music in celebration of the wedding of David Scudder and Betsy Ridge.

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How Do I Love Thee?

Elizabeth Barrett Browning
(1806-1861)

dedicated to my love, Elizabeth

Sid Richardson
(b. 1987)

♩ = 69 Floating

Soprano

mf pensive *poco* *3*

How do I love thee? —

Piano

p dolce *pp* *p*

Red.

♩ = 72 un poco più mosso, flowing

4

p *mf* *p* *mp* *3* *mf* *3*

Let me count the ways. I love thee — to the depth and breadth and

mp brillante *p* *mp*

8

f soaring *mf* *p* *mf* half-spoken

— height — my soul can reach — when feel-ing

pp *mf* *pp* *mp brillante* *mf*

How Do I Love Thee?

11 *ord.* *f* *mp*

out of sight for the ends of Be-ing and i-de-al Grace.

p

14 *mfecstatic*

I love thee to the lev-el of eve-ry—

17 *f* *mp* *pp* (echo)

day's most qui-et need, qui-et need—

mf *pp* *ppp*