

## Colonnades, for Piano Solo – Text and Music by Douglas Buchanan

### BOOK I

#### I. So what do the mountains have to gain...?

*Rain falls facewards, meeting out the droplets that shape earth and sea, and see the gust blow the lines sideways against the mountainside, so rivers flood down to stream and gully where thickening scrub waits to burst the bonds of spring and winter and up and leave with spore and leaf to summer-autumns without end or begging for inceptions, and cleansing the face of old sins, no room for sour fruit when seasons are left to blow away in gusts and faceward rain.*

Backing to reach beyond the ancient heights, young hills bend ceaseingly, impatient to touch the sky but unsure what transcendence will bring

So what do the mountains have to gain by raising their peaks and valleys beyond reach? Hulking sky- and westward bastions of Earth and Time, finding their ancient manifolds unlocked by questing shivers of hands, rebel with the magnitude only lodestone can bring, and still wait for the day their memory erodes their lodes, until: dust lifting sky bequeaths the hills their life, and, saving a gust, blow from earth to sky and Stars and then beyond.

The core gives Birth, but slow revolutions wind the tired world; a clockwork? no desert in this watch, watch carefully as the winding decisions spin out the world.

#### II. Angry, scraggle-tongued plants

Angry, scraggle-tongued plants invade to force and grate against the bricks these concrete jests now laid for naught as justice— bracken— jutting bramble

renders futile the footpaths of forgotten conquerors

### III. Colonnades

Traveling east from the well-springs of darkness along the ruined gallery of colonnades: here, there a shattered visage of crystal and stone, stoically erupted from tight-clung earth still holding close its own facets of memory. The stone-brick path curves through each cloistered history, moving through hours to wayside disbelief, driving its insinuate way toward the bright heart of the world.

#### IV. Prime: The Cathedral of Sacred Ruination

Praising its exalted emptiness, the cathedral holds its ruination sacred, withholding broken staff and Sundered miter as reliquaries of dilapidation: hear the tattered banners in silent gusts leading the shadowed masses which now populate the pews, singing:

“Wholly, wholly, wholly gone, gone beyond.”

#### V. Interlude

#### VI. Sign-Post Cities

a post: last sign of the straying cities who, shocked by their own indifference, fold up their brown'd alleyways, moving off to pasture and fold, searching for land unspoil'd by rigor and reclaim their right to nature.



## **X. *Sext: The Frightened Kyries***

the frightened Kyries amass themselves against the gates of Heaven  
pushing for welcome,  
frantic Fathers, prostrate Paters  
all berobed, bejeweled with blessings,  
(sent to Above for savings Below)  
but no pounding, no staving upon those bright Doors of Morning  
would welcoming egress bring:

and it was not known, among that crowd, whether  
the bars were jammed  
or the hosts busied  
by some star-spanned War of the Holy,  
or altogether, hopelessly absent;

though to them,  
not more frightening to have no greeter,  
to suspect behind the grimly shining doors  
no wizened council waited,

no, indeed:

but that there was omnipotence beyond  
and what could keep  
such Light  
from answer?

## **XI. Interlude**

## **BOOK II**

## **XII. *None: Clouds***

What is it, then, that the clouds know  
to force them in forever-flight  
a hundred times away from past and yearnings  
or greater monsters still:  
collapses, truths too hard for holding  
in the still of the mind.

A vast hulking on the horizon,  
dread, intent,  
a visage just beyond sight  
but there  
nonetheless,  
to tear through soft grey  
(but too strained for tepid mists):  
solely moist cloying white remains  
and then—  
only until release.

## **XIII. Epitaph**

at a glance,

red blood on the marble,  
the slick remains of a half-burial:  
welcoming stone bejeweled with glistening droplets

*in toto*: rubies always send them home.

## **XIV. “as a Young Man”**

in the hedge beside,  
a shade,  
(as of a young man)  
leaning quietly against a pillar  
knife-grin between the lips,  
a ferrous thief  
stealing lives  
for its own beauty

now, bending over,  
a rusted sieve in hand  
sluicing,  
kindfully,  
the crimson juices.

## XV. Interlude

### XVI. *Vespers: the Glowering Twilight*

At dusk,  
    between worlds,  
the glowering twilight  
    unveils  
    as day  
    surrenders  
    sun to moon,  
betraying the still watchfulness of night:

red broken clay laced with cloven green  
    lies flat upon the rillside  
    thoughtful ever,  
    as the dusky summer-ender  
    breezes slowly past the face of all things known  
    inviting either sleep,  
            or dreams,  
            or, perhaps on waking,  
            some arcane 'twixtness  
            hidden under sundered vales;

such unreckoned rifts drift back, then,  
in this 'tween-time  
    this half-light,  
    so as to make all things greyly shadowed  
    and thus (imp)ossible  
    and therefore  
    possible

## XVII. Lone-tree hill

lone-tree hill  
    sways,  
    whistling,  
    not-dead limbs  
    straggled-  
        up  
    unmoved by  
    still  
breezes

Hanging  
    slow  
    anD  
    stEA-  
    Dy

crackled branches  
    split  
    a  
fissured horizon,  
    the  
once-wholesome mantle  
    of sky  
    now  
a furnace  
    of  
red

### XVIII. Twin flints

twin flints spark in the dark of the wood  
nestled between fitful trees,  
though  
only for a moment  
for that is all they need:  
now,  
forever burned into the eyes of the mind  
two searing holes  
that delve the dank recesses,  
find that shuddering  
spot which  
dare not linger  
out once  
day departs and  
cuckoo sings  
the fleeting  
of clouds:

it has announced itself, this thing-in-the-woods  
so that there is nothing left to do  
but enter.

### XIX. The Eye

a million green blades contract away from that living monolith  
as from a deep wound in the tortured earth,  
the skin splayed out across forgotten rock  
and nailed down  
with iron-rod and steel-spike:

staring wide straight out from the center peers  
(nigh-unmoving)  
the sole Watcher in the Night  
well-deep pupil contracting in slow heartbeats,  
waits for the unknown purpose to arrive;  
reflecting nothing, save  
the dark-down places  
of the universe.

(the air about chants the unremembered runes,  
forbidden, save here,  
which lie blazing, wounded into skin and stone,  
tongued by some charnel priesthood  
still-rotting beneath  
the bright-burn gaze)

save the doughty green warriors  
and their gradual warfare of bramble,  
all living has departed the clearing  
fleeing for more-than-life,  
more-than-fear,  
as the buzzing air—  
the multitude of chattering incantations—

swallow whole the fleeting starlight  
in one  
steep  
and  
faceless

moan

**XX. *Compline: Ritual of Ash and Stone***

Hooded fiends shoulder the throne to raise, astride harsh steadfastness,  
to hold, not the laurel-reathed, urn-oiled;  
rather,  
the shade of a saint:  
its head lolls, drools drole similitude and an annihilate stare,  
then rithes, to, fro—a nash of teeth—  
thus shat forth so foul a dread,  
a loud shout, as out a siren's throat

drones on,  
and on,

an unearthly hush:

adroit hands tune a distant flute: infertile trills, austere;  
The dried falsetto sounds lude and distasteful to our ears

(this is rong,  
all rong, and rusted:  
let us out!  
To release, and return,  
not alone,  
not  
all-  
one)

an irate no-one, (torn asunder from the folio of the infinite,)  
tries to sound [her-his-our-out-there-here-hear]  
rath of earthfulness,  
foretell a future florid and lush,  
flush red fertiliti

releases a satin thread of dross-refrains to intone the roar of a sea of disrelief

(No graseful Sinai or Ararat here,

no tree-hull for sail or safe from rain-tossed fate,  
or stained reefs in torrid seas forlorn,  
salt-tears  
to seethe,  
soddin,  
soddin,  
soddin for release)

as the nations fire  
their leaders' ire  
the heart-assassins—on no seal set—nurse to foul-health the inland fools,  
the futile strain  
to rein in  
those rushed hounds of erosion,  
flint-steel annihilation  
to defase shadoes,  
the lustful adulterers  
of sound and sense.

(The fountains of need fill the strained flesh  
[tho transient]  
to seal, to find,  
the torch  
of a friend.)

See: the earthshatter  
releases forth the infernos of land  
a tirade of rusted root,  
dirt and slate elided—anaesthetised—in harsh tones of dust  
stolen out, to atone the loss of one  
and one  
[and one,  
and one]

the steel nife tore it forth  
in ferrous fearlessness  
'ere there authored trite sonnets to sae:

“here is self: to thee I lend Truth, Feather, Star, and Sun,  
to funnel into lute-notes,  
to resite in fountains,  
tho onli the deaf  
do hear,  
so irrational is art”

(the lunar shine fades soon,  
and then the sane shall dote upon the Noontide?  
O steadfast loneli,  
should friendli disaster roar  
to defer that leaden refusal of stolen nites  
then, laud! for thou shalt hasten free!)

there:

interred  
insofar  
as a late denial  
for errantri  
sets the left-hand road  
to sire the lost—  
to defer the found—  
to hasten heart’s ruination—

so, refer, too:

as the lone soldier entrusted to astound the air  
in the final duel-duet of saturation and surrender,  
strains,  
artless,  
to sound the horror  
of  
loss—  
or  
the

soul’s  
arrest—  
in this  
last  
Ritual  
of  
Ash  
and  
Stone

### **XXI. on Frost’s *November***

unnumbered leaves litter the forest floor  
strewn unkindly by some unseen and many-bloodied hand  
(since fallen with triumphant madness to the earth)  
to force, uncaring, from life  
the economy of the individual  
(while mother-father-branches sway their mourning,  
dipping down in weeping  
to reach once more  
the vein’d pulse of childer fallen)  
adrift in piles, raked to heaps,  
those Excesses of Power  
could ne’er hope to understand  
this Fall that they  
themselves  
have  
hastened

## XXII. the Trial of Memory

the figure beats rapidly on the drowning window as mountains rise to either side,  
afraid of no return, and sinking,  
deep-gut terror that slowly seeps and drips past mirror'd illusion  
as the choking water of entrapment, of no-will-be,  
rivers coolly in, firmly, clogging the lungs of past and present

such changes of future as will become gone,  
for now and evermore,  
leaves the tiny one alone  
viewing rapidly filling waves of brown, intent  
to push out the remembrance-soaked air  
and rush in, too real, too real for words, or pain, or waking, and then gone—

so, exempt from the Trial of Memory,  
slinks off, welcomed to the sacred and smoldering oblivion

## BOOK III

### XXIII. prayer

Cellophane cross on a bedroom wall,  
Scribbled writings in a bathroom stall,  
Holy réfuse and withal,  
The Lord Above has made them all.

### XXIV. *Matins: Three Angels*

Three angels hold aloft a crown  
strewn with amulets and stray annunciations  
while below  
lancelight pierces the thorny columns  
Bidding the King's welcome...

### XXV. *Aubade: the hedge of the world*

...but,  
across the hedge of the world,  
moss-bowled stone and ancient oak

hide deeper wonders still:  
inchoate riches of dew and dusky twilight  
forming slowly 'ere the sun's ascent  
can brush away the intween magic  
that lightens flower and spurs the fae-dance of leaves,  
while the sky-bound twins  
(yet unseen for now)  
pull, in their blind arena,  
at promised oceans of sound...

### XXVI. a great gasp of waves

...a great gasp of waves yawn their brilliance to the moon,  
pushing on through the brief space of dreams  
to yield their liquid yearning to the stars,  
considering:  
the heavens turned over,  
the bowl of the sea catching the lamplight of these celestial giants  
while winded waves wind their joyous way,  
azure viridian,  
across the blanketed night...

### XXVII. glistening silence

...the glistening silence  
alights softly atop gently falling waters:  
glancing sheen upon the ripples,  
a slow nimbus:  
the aurora of sound  
running bright through mind and body...

### XXVIII. *Lauds: the Glories of Sunset*

...while the glories of sunset tower over all  
as the road leaves off:  
two hills rise to greet the traveler,  
robed in paradisiac green,  
where warm-spread rays open wide the beaming arms  
to gather home the scattered.