

REASONS TO LIVE



ERIC SHANFIELD

REASONS TO LIVE

Eric Shanfield | 2007/2013-15 | 12'

stories by Amy Hempel

Soprano

Piano

Reasons to Live is my tribute to Steven Sondheim.

REASONS TO LIVE

by Amy Hempel

1. IN A TUB

My heart—I thought it stopped. So I got in my car and headed for God. I passed two churches with cars parked in front. Then I stopped at the third because no one else had.

It was early afternoon, the middle of the week. I chose a pew in the center of the rows. Episcopal or Methodist, it didn't make any difference. It was as quiet as a church.

I thought about the feeling of the long missed beat, and the tumble of the next ones as they rushed to fill the space. I sat there—in the high brace of quiet and stained glass—and I listened.

At the back of my house I can stand in the light from the sliding glass door and look out onto the deck. The deck is planted with marguerites and succulents in red clay pots. One of the pots is empty. It is shallow and broad, and filled with water like a birdbath.

My cat takes naps in the windowbox. Her gray chin is powdered with the iridescent dust from butterfly wings. If I tap on the glass, the cat will not look up.

The sound that I make is not food.

When I was a girl I sneaked out at night. I pressed myself to hedges and fitted the shadows of trees. I went to a construction site near the lake. I took a concrete-mixing tub, slid it to the shore, and sat down inside it like a saucer. I would push off from the sand with one stolen oar and float, hearing nothing, for hours.

The birdbath is shaped like that tub.

I look at my nails in the harsh bathroom light. The scare will appear as a ripple at the base. It will take a couple of weeks to see.

I lock the door and run a tub of water.

Most of the time you don't really hear it. A pulse is a thing that you feel. Even if you are somewhat quiet. Sometimes you hear it through the pillow at night. But I know that there is a place where you can hear it even better than that.

Here is what you do. You ease yourself into a tub of water, you ease yourself down. You lie back and wait for the ripples to smooth away. Then you take a deep breath, and slide your head under, and listen for the playfulness of your heart.

2. IN THE ANIMAL SHELTER

Every time you see a beautiful woman, *someone* is tired of her, so the men say. And I know where they go, these women, with their tired beauty that someone doesn't want—these women who must live like the high Sierra white pine, there since before the birth of Christ, fed somehow by the alpine wind.

They reach out to the animals, day after day smoothing fur inside a cage, saying, "How is Mama's baby? Is Mama's baby lonesome?"

The women leave at the end of the day, stopping to ask an attendant, "Will they go to good homes?" And come back in a day or so, stooping to examine a one-eyed cat, asking, as though they intend to adopt, "How would I introduce my new cat to my dog?"

But there is seldom an adoption; it matters that the women have someone to leave, leaving behind the lovesome creatures who would never leave them, had they once given them their hearts.

3. MEMOIR

Just once in my life—oh, when have I ever wanted anything just once in my life?

4. WEEKEND (PART II)

Dinner was a simple picnic on the porch, paper plates in laps, the only conversation a debate as to which was the better grip for throwing shoes.

After dinner, the horseshoes were handed out, the post pounded in, the rules reviewed with a [new rule added due to falling-down shorts. The] new rule: Have attire.

The women smoked on the porch, the smoke repelling mosquitoes, and the men and children played on even after dusk when it got so dark that a candle was rigged to balance on top of the post, and was knocked off and blown out by every single almost-ringer.

Then the children went to bed, or at least went upstairs, and the men joined the women for a cigarette on the porch, absently picking ticks engorged like grapes off the sleeping dogs. And when the men kissed the women good night, and their weekend whiskers scratched the women's cheeks, the women did not think *shave*, they thought: *stay*.

REASONS TO LIVE

1. IN A TUB

Amy Hempel

Eric Shanfield

$\text{♩} = 126$

Soprano

f

My heart - I thought it stopped. So I got in my car and head-ed for God. I

Piano

f

5

Sop.

passed two church-es_ with cars parked in front. Then I stopped at the

Pno.

Ped.

9

Sop.

mf

third be - cause no one else_ had. It was ear - ly af - ter - noon, the

Pno.

mf

13

Sop.

mid - dle of the week.

Pno.

Ped.

17

Sop. *f* I chose a pew in the

Pno. *f*

22

Sop. cen-ter of the rows. E - pis - co - pal or Me-tho-dist it di - dn't make a - ny diff-erence.

Pno.

26

Sop. It was qui-et as a church.

Pno. *Ped.*

31

Sop.

Pno.

36 *f*

Sop. I thought a - bout the fee - ling of the long

Pno.

43

Sop. - missed beat, and the tum - ble of the

Pno. *r.h.*

48

Sop. next ones as they rushed to fill the space.

Pno. *l.h.*

54 *mf*

Sop. I sat there in the high brace of qui-et

Pno. *mf*

Ped.

59

Sop. and stained glass and I list - ened.

Pno. *f*

very light pedaling

62

Sop. *mp* At the back of my house I can stand

Pno. *mp*

65

Sop. in the light from the sli - ding glass door and look out on-to the deck.

Pno.

68

Sop. The deck is plant - ed with mar - gue - rites and

Pno.

Ped.

71

Sop.

suc-cu lents in red clay pots.

Pno.

no ped.

74

Sop.

One of the pots is emp-ty. It is shal-low and broad, and filled with wa-ter like a

Pno.

77

Sop.

bird - bath.

Pno.

mf

80

Sop.

Pno.

83 *mf*

Sop. My cat takes naps in the win - dow - box. Her gray chin is

Pno.

86

Sop. pow - dered with the ir - i - des - cent dust from but - ter - fly wings.

Pno.

89

Sop. If I tap on the glass the cat will not wake up. The sound I make

Pno.

92

Sop. is not food. When I was a girl I sneaked

Pno.

95

Sop. out at night. I pressed my-self_ to hed - ges_ and fit-ted the sha - dows

Pno.

98

Sop. of trees.

Pno.

mf

101

Sop. *mf* I went to a con-struc - tion site near the lake._____ I took a con - crete mix - ing-tub,

Pno.

104

Sop. slid it to the shore,_____ and sat down in-side it like a sau - cer. I would push off from the

Pno.

f

107

Sop. sand with one sto - len oar and float, hear-ing

Pno.

110

Sop. no - thing,— for hours. The

Pno.

rubato parlando ***f***

113

Sop. bird-bath is shaped like that tub. I look at my nails in the harsh bath-room light. The

Pno.

p ***mf***

118

Sop. scare will ap-pear as a rip-ple at the base. It will take a cou - ple of weeks to

Pno.

p ***mf***

123 *f*

Sop. *f*
see.

Pno. *f*

130 *f*

Sop. *f*
I lock the door___ and run a

Pno. *f*

137

Sop. *f*
tub of wa - ter.

Pno. *f*

r.h.

143

Sop. *f*

Pno. *f*

149

Sop. *mf*

Most of the time you don't real-ly hear it. A pulse is a thing that you

Pno. *mf*

l.h.

154

Sop. *mf*

feel. E - ven if you are some-what qui-et.---

Pno. *ff* *mf sub.*

158

Sop. *f*

Some-times you hear it through the pil-low at night.---

Pno. *f*

163

Sop.

Pno.

170

Sop. But I know— that there is a place where you— can

Pno.

r.h.

175

Sop. hear it e - ven bet - ter than that._____

Pno.

Ped.

(♩=♩)

181

Sop. Here is what— you do. You

Pno.

mf

sim.

187 luxuriously

Sop. ease your - self— in - to a tub of wa - ter,

Pno.

192

Sop. *mp* you ease your - self down.

Pno. *mp* light ped.

197 *mp*

Sop. You lie back and wait for the rip-ples to smooth a - way...

Pno.

200 *mf*

Sop. Then you take a deep breath, and slide your head un - der,

Pno. *mf*

204

Sop. and lis - ten for the play - ful - ness of your heart.

Pno.

REASONS TO LIVE

2. IN THE ANIMAL SHELTER

Amy Hempel

Eric Shanfield

$\text{♩} = 144$

mf

Soprano

Ev - ery time you see a beau - ti - ful wo - man, some - one is

Piano

mf

Ped.

6

$\text{♩} = 176$

f

Sop.

ti - red of her, so the men say.

Pno.

f

11

f

Sop.

And I know where they

Pno.

16

Sop.

go, these wo - men,

Pno.

21

Sop. with their ti - red beau - ty that some-one doesn't want

Pno.

Ped.

27

Sop. *ff* these wo - men who must live

Pno. *ff*

33

Sop. like the Si - er - ra white pine,

Pno.

39

Sop. there since be - fore the birth of Christ, fed some-how by the

Pno.

44

Sop. al - pine wind.

Pno.

49

Sop. *mp* They reach out to the an - i - mals,

Pno. *mp*

54

Sop. day af - ter day smooth - ing fur in - side a cage, say - ing "How is Ma - ma's ba - by? Is

Pno.

59

Sop. Ma - ma's ba - by lone - some?"

Pno.

64 $\text{♩} = 144$ tempo one

Sop. *mf*

The wo - men leave at the end of the day, — stop - ping to ask an at -

Pno. *mf*

Red.

70 $\text{♩} = 176$ tempo two

Sop. *f*

ten-dant, "Will they go to good homes?"

Pno. *f*

76 *f*

Sop. *f*

And come back in a day or so — stoop ing to ex -

Pno. *f*

81

Sop.

a - mine a one - eyed cat,

Pno.

86

Sop.

ask - ing, as though they in - ten - ded to a -

Pno.

Ped.

91

Sop.

dopt,

Pno.

96

ff

Sop.

"How would I in - tro - duce my new cat to my dog?"

Pno.

ff

102

fff

Sop.

But there is sel - dom an a - dop - tion;

Pno.

fff

108

Sop.

Pno.

p sub. *ff*

114

Sop.

Pno.

mf

it mat-ters that the wo-men

119

Sop.

Pno.

have some-one to leave, leav-ing be - hind the love - some crea - tures, who would ne - ver

123

Sop.

Pno.

leave them, had they once gi - ven them their hearts.

REASONS TO LIVE

3. MEMOIR

Amy Hempel

Eric Shanfield

♩=100 *f* *p* ♩=126 *p*

Soprano

Just once in my life - Oh, when have I e-ver want-ed____

Piano

f *dolce* *p*

5

Sop.

a - ny - thing____ just once in my life?

Pno.

mp

The musical score is written for Soprano and Piano. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The first system begins with a tempo marking of 100 and a dynamic of forte (f). The vocal line starts with a half note, followed by a quarter note, and then a half note. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and arpeggios. The tempo and dynamic change to 126 and piano (p) for the second system. The vocal line continues with a half note, followed by a quarter note, and then a half note. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and arpeggios. The second system starts at measure 5. The vocal line begins with a half note, followed by a quarter note, and then a half note. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and arpeggios. The dynamic is mezzo-piano (mp). The score ends with a double bar line.

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4. WEEKEND (PART II)

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Eric Shanfield

$\text{♩} = 69$ *rit.* $\text{♩} = 69$ *a tempo*

mp

Soprano

Din - ner was a sim - ple pic-nic

Piano

ff *mp*

Ped. *sim.*

4

Sop.

on the porch, pa - per plates in laps, the on - ly con - ver - sa - tion a de-

Pno.

7

Sop.

bate as to which was the bet - ter grip for throw - ing shoes.

Pno.

10

Sop.

Af - ter din-ner the horse-shoes were hand-ed out, the post pound-ed in, the rules re-viewed, with a new rule:

Pno.

13

Sop. have at - tire. The wo - men smoked on the porch, the smoke re - pel - ling mos

Pno.

16 *mf*

Sop. qui - toes, and the men and child - ren played on e - ven af - ter dusk,

Pno. *mf*

19

Sop. when it got so dark that a can - dle was rigged to ba - lance on top of the

Pno.

21

Sop. post, and was knocked off and blown out by ev - ery sin - gle al - most ring - er.

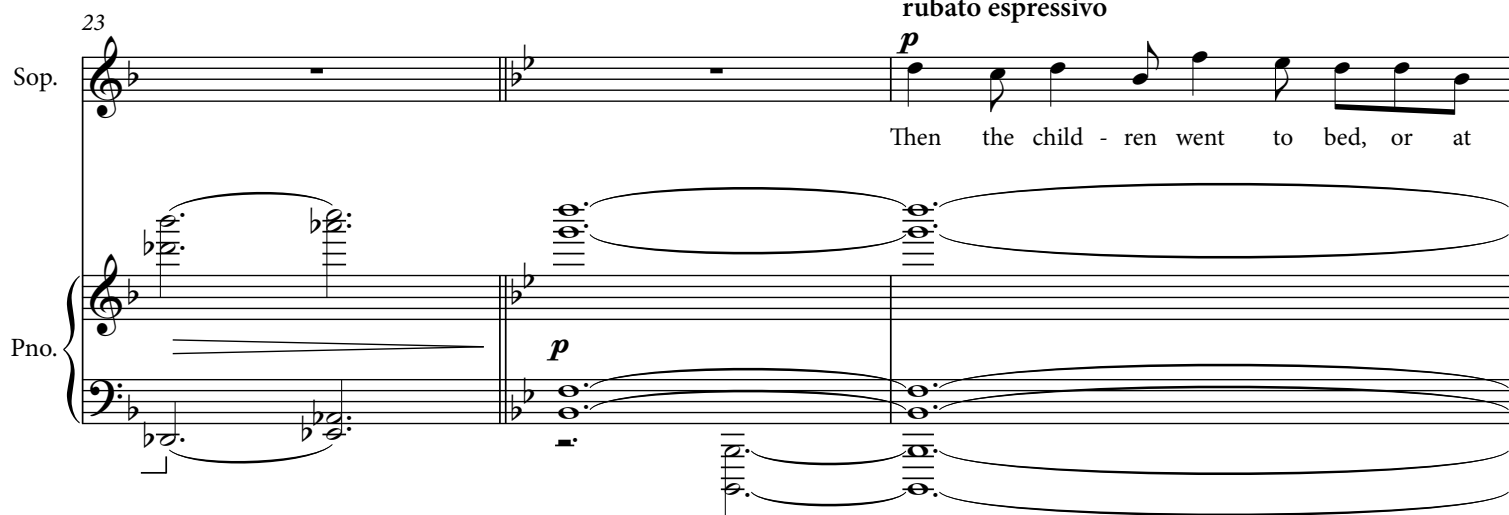
Pno.

rubato espressivo

23

Sop. *p* Then the child - ren went to bed, or at

Pno. *p*



26

Sop. least went up - stairs, and the men joined the wo - men for a ci - ga - rette on the porch,

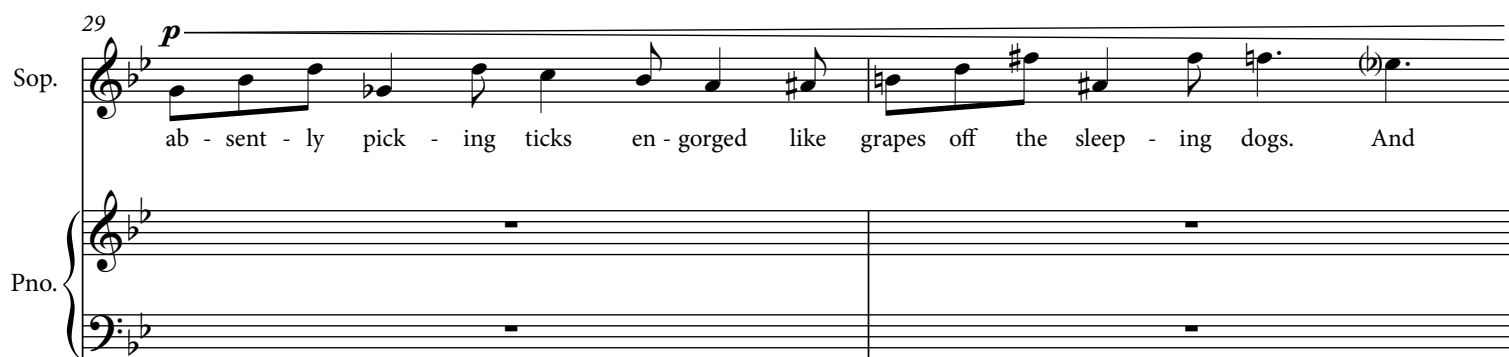
Pno.



29

Sop. *p* ab - sent - ly pick - ing ticks en - gorged like grapes off the sleep - ing dogs. And

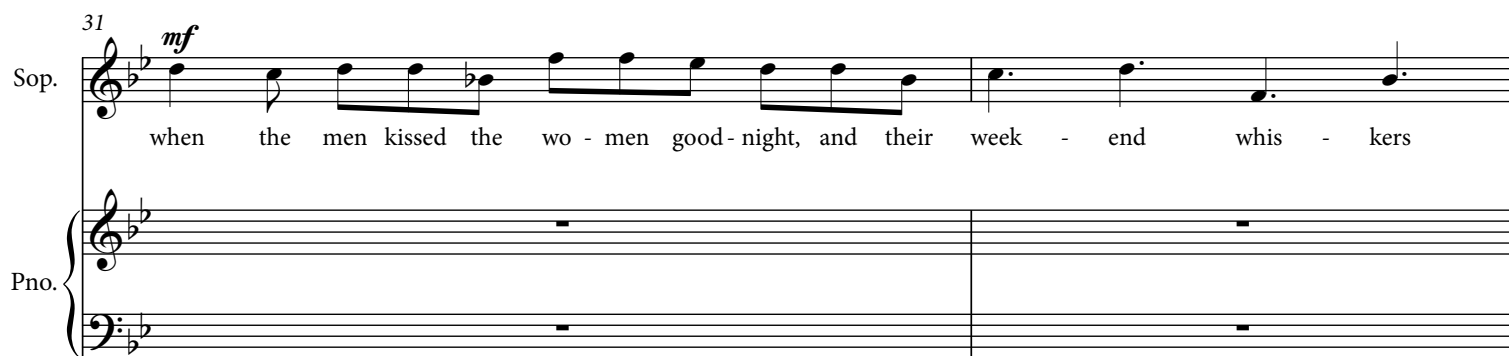
Pno.



31

Sop. *mf* when the men kissed the wo - men good - night, and their week - end whis - kers

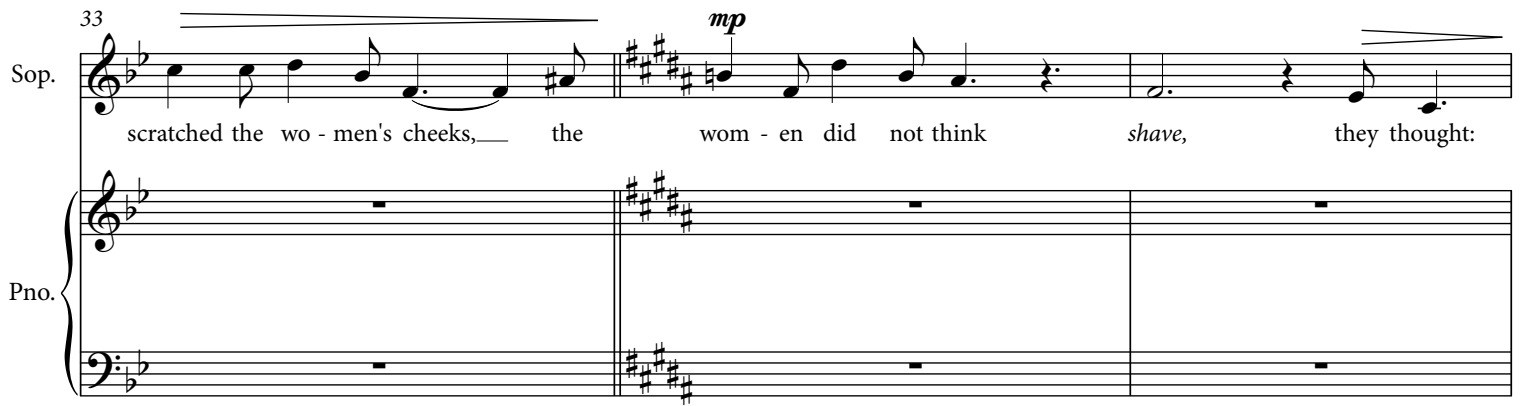
Pno.



33 *mp*

Sop. scratched the wo - men's cheeks, the wom - en did not think shave, they thought:

Pno.



36 *p*

Sop. *stay.*

Pno. *p* *ff* *p*

Ped.

