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SONGS ON LETTERS OF  
JOHN AND ABIGAIL  
ADAMS

for mezzo soprano, baritone, and string quartet

PIANO VOCAL SCORE



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- 1 John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 2 November 1818, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society
- 2 Abigail Adams to John Adams, 11 August 1763, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society
- 3 John Adams to Abigail Adams, 4 October 1762, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society
- 4 Abigail Adams to John Adams, 6 May 1777, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society
- 5 John Adams to Abigail Adams, 16 March 1777, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society
- 6 Abigail Adams to John Adams, 23 December 1782, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society
- 7 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, 10 November 1818, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society

I would like to thank the Massachusetts Historical Society and their staff for their kind support and their efforts in making this material available to the public. In particular I am indebted to the following source for inspiration, and I highly recommend it for anyone who wishes to read these letters:

Margaret A. Hogan and C. James Taylor, ed., *My Dearest Friend: Letters of Abigail and John Adams*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

# SONGS ON LETTERS OF JOHN AND ABIGAIL ADAMS

John, Abigail, and John Quincy Adams

James Kallembach

## 1. My ever Dear and Revered Father (John Quincy Adams, 2 November 1818)

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 80$  **In strict rhythm, intensely**

The musical score is set in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It consists of three systems of piano and vocal parts.

**System 1:** The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The vocal line is a whole note rest.

**System 2:** The piano part continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "My ev - er Dear" on a triplet of eighth notes. The dynamic is *mp*. Performance instructions include "(recit., with formal composure)" and *mf*.

**System 3:** The piano part continues. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "and Re - vered Fa - ther: By a let - ter from my son John, I have this". The dynamic is *mf*, then *f*. Performance instructions include *cresc.*, "(increasingly agitated)", and "(distracted)".

7 *ff*

day been ap - prised of that af - flic - tive dis - pen - sa - tion of

7 *ff* *sim.*

Pno

9 (*regaining composure*) *mf*

3 Prov - i - dence which has be - reft you of the part - ner of your life;

9

Pno

11 (*tenderly*) *p*

me of the ten - derest and

11 *mp*

Pno

14

most af - fec - tion - ate of Moth - ers,

Pno

17

*mf* (with composure)

and our spe - cies of one whose ex - is - tence was

*sub. p* *f* *pp* *mf*

Pno

20

vir - tue. —

*sub. f* *mf*

Pno

Lilting rhythm (less strict), lyrical

(grieved, sincere)

23

How shall I of - fer you con - so -

Pno

25

la - tion for your loss when I feel that my own is ir -

Pno

27

rep - 'ra - ble? Where shall I en - treat you to look for

Pno

29

com - fort in that dis - tress which earth has noth - ing to as - suage.

Pno

cresc.

31  $\text{♩} = \text{c.} 80$  **In strict rhythm, intensely** *(recit., with expressive composure)* ***mp***

In ev - ery

Pno

*f*

*sub. p*

33

anx - ious hour I have felt that I ought to write to you, and en -

Pno

35

deav - or to soothe by the com - mun - ion of sor - rows that an - guish

Pno

37

which I knew was prey - ing up - on your heart.

Pno

pizz.

*mf*

*mp*

**Lilting rhythm (less strict), lyrical**

39

*mf* (tenderly, concerned)

Do not im - pute, my

Pno

*mp*

41

41

41

Pno

dear and on - ly Par - ent, — the si - lence I have

44

44

44

Pno

kept to ne - glect of that sa - cred du - ty — which I

47

47

47

Pno

*(recit., with expressive composure)*

*mp*

*p*

*mp*

owe you. The pangs of dis-so - lu - tion are past,

50

and my Moth - er, I hum - bly hope,

Pno

52

is a spir - it, pu - ri - fied e - ven

Pno

54

from that lit - tle less than heav - en - ly pu - ri - ty.

cresc.

Pno

(passionately) *ff*

56

Pno

56

*mp*

Will the

59

Pno

59

*ff*

sim.

deep af - flic - tion of your son now meet in con -

61

Pno

61

gen - ial feel - ing with your own, —

(with composure)

64 *mf*

with-out prob - ing the wound it is the deep - est of his wish - es

Pno

64 *mf* *dim.*

66 *poco rit.* *a tempo, but slower and freely*

to al - le - vi - ate? Let me

Pno

66 *pp* *mf* *p*

69 (tenderly) *rit.*

hear from you, my dear - est fa - ther, let me hear from you

Pno

69 *mf* *pp*

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 56$  **Recitativo, but keeping chord changes in tempo.**

72 Recit.: *p* (reverently)

soon. And may the blessings of that God, whose tender

72 *mf*

75 mercies are over all his works, still shed rays of heavenly

79 hope and comfort over the re - main - der of your days.

Pno

Pno

Pno

Tempo I, but a bit slower (in strict time)

*mp* (recit., with expressive composure)

82

Your dis-tressed but ev-er af-fec-tion-ate and

Pno

84

du-ti-ful son.

Pno

2. There is a tye (Abigail Adams, 11 August 1763)

Lyrical, yet driving and insistent  $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 72$

*rit.*

Piano

*pp* *p* *mp* *cresc.* *ten.*

7 *a tempo*

*rit.*

*mf* *cresc.* *ten.*

11 *a tempo*

*f* *cresc.* *ten.*

15 Recit.:

*poco marcato* *mp*

If I was sure your ab-sence to-day was oc - ca-sioned, by what it

18

gen'rally is, either to wait<sup>3</sup> upon Com-pa-ny, or pro - mote some good work, \_\_\_\_\_

18

21

\_\_\_\_\_ I free-ly confess my Mind \_\_\_\_\_ would be much more at ease \_\_\_\_\_ than at present it

21

*sub p*

24

is.

24

*mf*

28

Hu-man-i - ty o - blig-es us \_\_\_\_\_ to be af-fect-ed with the dis-tress-es \_\_\_\_\_ and Mis-er-

28

*mp*

31 *3*

ies of our fel - low crea-tures. Friend - ship is a band yet strong - er,

31 *cresc.*

33 which caus - es us to feel with great - er ten - der - ness the af -

33 *sub. p*

35 *3*

flic-tions — of our Friends.

35 *sub. p cresc.*

**Non marcato, rhapsodic, yet driving and insistent**

39 (Non recit.) *poco rit.* *a tempo*

And there — is a tie more bind - ing than Hu-

39 *ff*

43

man-i - ty, \_\_\_\_\_ and strong-er than Friend-ship, \_\_\_\_\_ which makes us

43

47

anx-ious for the hap-pi-ness and wel-fare of those to whom it binds us. \_\_\_\_\_

47

*dim.* *mp*

52

It \_\_\_\_\_ makes their Mis - for - tunes,

52

57

Sor-rows and af - flic - tions, our own. U - nite \_\_\_\_\_ these, and there \_\_\_\_\_ is a

57

*cresc.*

62 *rit.* *a tempo*

three-fold cord— by this cord I am not a - shamed to

66 *rit.* *Recit.: a tempo* *Come prima*

own my - self bound. — The — Fab-ric of-ten wants re-pair-ing

70

and if we ne-glect it the De-i-ty — will not long in-hab-it it, — yet af-ter all our

73

care and so-lic-i-tude to pre - serve it, it is a tot-ter-ing Build-ing, — and —

More lyrical

Arioso rit.

76 of - ten re - minds us \_\_\_\_\_ that it will fi - nal - ly fall, that

79 it will fi - nal-ly fall. \_\_\_\_\_ Ac - cept this hast-y Scrawl\_

ten.

*p*

83 \_\_\_\_\_ warm from the Heart of Your Sin-cere... \_\_\_\_\_

*sub. p*

87

*mp dim.*

90

90

*pp*

The image shows a musical score for piano, measures 90-92. The score is written in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Measure 90 features a treble staff with a whole note chord (F#4, C#5) and a bass staff with a whole note chord (F#2, C#3). Measure 91 features a treble staff with a whole note chord (F#4, C#5) and a bass staff with a whole note chord (F#2, C#3). Measure 92 features a treble staff with a whole note chord (F#4, C#5) and a bass staff with a whole note chord (F#2, C#3). The dynamic marking *pp* (pianissimo) is present in measure 92, with a hairpin indicating a gradual increase in volume.

Chicago, 23 January 2013

### 3. Miss Adorable (John Adams, 4 October 1762)

♩ = c. 80 **Exuberant**

Piano

Dear Miss A -

4

Pno

dor - a - ble, By the same To - ken — that the

6

Pno

Bear - er here - of sat up with you last night,

9

Miss — A - dor - a - ble, By the same

Pno

12

To - ken that the Bear - er here - of sat up with you last night

Pno

15

Pno

19

I here-by or - der you to give him as man-y Kiss-es,

23

and as man - y Hours of your Com - pa - ny af - ter Nine O' Clock

25

*poco rit.*

as he shall please to De - mand and charge them to my Ac - count...

29

*a tempo*

I pre - sume I have \_\_\_\_\_ good Right

Pno *pp* *mp*

32

to draw up - on you for the Kiss - es as I \_\_\_\_\_ have giv - en

Pno *mf* *mf sub. p* *cresc.*

36

*molto rit.*

**Slowly, freely**

*tenderly*

two or three Mil-lions at least, \_\_\_\_\_ when one has been re-

Pno

40 ten. *Tempo I*

ceived,

Pno

40 ten. *mp* *cresc.* *f*

43

and of Con - se - quence — the Ac - count be - tween us is im -

Pno

43 *mf* *cresc.* *f* *mf*

46

*pochiss. rit.*

mense - ly in fa - vor of yours, —

Pno

46 *mp* *pp*

4. In Vain the Spring Blooms (Abigail Adams, 6 May 1777)

♩ = c.. 80 In strict rhythm; melancholy, yet rhapsodic

In vain the Spring Blooms or the

Birds sing, their Mu - sic has not its for - mer

mel - o - dy, mel - o - dy, In vain the

Spring Blooms or the Birds sing, their Mu - sic has

*mf* *p* *mf* *sub. p* *mf* *mf* *mf*

*cresc.* *meno* *8va*

12

not its for-mer mel - o - dy, mel - o - dy, nor the

12

*cresc.*

15

Spring its u - su - al pleas - ures.

15

*mf* *sub. p*

18

'Tis four Months <sup>4</sup> want - ing three days since we part - ed eve - ry

18

*f*

20

day I have mourned the ab - sence of my

20

*mf*

22

Friend, \_\_\_\_\_ and felt \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_

24

va - can - cy in my \_\_\_\_\_ Heart \_\_\_\_\_ which noth - ing, noth - ing

26

can \_\_\_\_\_ sup - ply. I look round with mel - an -

28

chol - y de - light and sigh \_\_\_\_\_ for my ab - sent

30

part - ner, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ sigh \_\_\_\_\_ for my ab - sent

*mp*

33

part - ner. \_\_\_\_\_ In vain the

*pp*

35

Spring Blooms or the Birds sing, \_\_\_\_\_

35

37

\_\_\_\_\_ their Mu - sic has not its for - mer mel - o - dy,

37

*mp*

*cresc.*

40

mel - o - dy, In vain the

40

*sub. p* *mp*

43

Spring Blooms, the Spring Blooms, the

43

*cresc.* *mf*

45

Spring Blooms, the Spring

45

47

Blooms...

47

*f* *dim.* *mp*

50

50

*non dim., non rit.*

*p*

7

The image shows a musical score for piano and voice. It consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains three measures of music, with the first measure starting at measure 50. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a key signature of one flat. It also contains three measures, starting at measure 50. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A crescendo hairpin is present in the first measure of the piano part. The second measure of the piano part is marked with a piano dynamic (*p*). The third measure of the piano part has a fermata over the final note. The vocal line has a melodic line with a fermata over the final note in the second measure. The tempo/mood marking *non dim., non rit.* is placed above the piano part. The number 7 is written below the piano part in the third measure.

5. The Spring advances (John Adams, 16 March 1777)

Jovial, yet longing ♩ = c. 96

*f*

Piano

The Spring ad-vanc-

This system contains the first four measures of the piece. The bass clef staff has a whole rest in the first three measures and a quarter note in the fourth. The piano part consists of two staves. The right-hand staff has chords in the first two measures, followed by a melodic line in the third and fourth. The left-hand staff has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the first two measures, followed by a melodic line in the third and fourth. Dynamics include *f*, *mf*, *f*, and *p*. The tempo is marked as c. 96.

Pno

5 es ver-y rap-id-ly,

This system contains measures 5 through 8. The bass clef staff has a quarter note in measure 5, followed by a half note in measure 6, and rests in measures 7 and 8. The piano part consists of two staves. The right-hand staff has chords in measure 5, followed by a melodic line in measure 6, and chords in measures 7 and 8. The left-hand staff has chords in measure 5, followed by a melodic line in measure 6, and chords in measures 7 and 8. Dynamics include *sfz*, *mf*, *mp*, and *f*.

9 *poco rit.* *accel.* *a tempo*

Pno

This system contains measures 9 through 12. The bass clef staff has a whole rest in the first three measures and a whole note in the fourth. The piano part consists of two staves. The right-hand staff has a melodic line in measure 9, followed by a melodic line in measure 10, and chords in measures 11 and 12. The left-hand staff has a melodic line in measure 9, followed by a melodic line in measure 10, and chords in measures 11 and 12. Dynamics include *mp*, *pp*, *f*, and *sfzp*. Performance directions include *poco rit.*, *accel.*, and *a tempo*.

14

the Spring ad - vanc - es ver-y

Piano accompaniment for measures 14-17. The bass line starts with a whole rest, followed by eighth notes. The treble line has chords and eighth notes. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, *p*, and *sfz*.

18

rap - id - ly, \_\_\_\_\_ and all Na - ture will soon be clothed in her gay - est Robes, in \_\_\_\_\_ her \_\_\_\_\_

Piano accompaniment for measures 18-21. The bass line has eighth notes with triplets. The treble line has eighth notes. Dynamics include *mf*, *mp*, *p*, and *cresc.*. Diminuendo markings (*dim.*) are present.

22

\_\_\_\_\_ gay - est Robes. \_\_\_\_\_ The \_\_\_\_\_ green Grass,

*poco rit.* *a tempo*

Piano accompaniment for measures 22-25. The bass line has eighth notes. The treble line has eighth notes. Dynamics include *p*, *f*, and *mp*. Tempo markings *poco rit.* and *a tempo* are present.

26

which be-gins to show it - self, here, and there, re - vives in my

Pno

29

long - ing I-mag-i - na-tion my lit - tle Farm, and its dear In - hab-i-tants, its

Pno

33

dear In-hab-i - tants. \_\_\_\_\_ What

Pno

37

— Pleas-ures has not this vile — War ——— de-priv-ed me of? ———

3

Pno

37

*pp*

*mf*

*f*

*f*

41

I — want ——— to — wan - der in my Mead-ows, to

2/4

3/4

Pno

41

*p*

*f*

*sfz*

*f*

45

ram-ble o-ver my Moun - tains, ——— and to sit in Sol - i - tude, ——— or with

3

3

4/4

Pno

45

*mf* *cresc.*

48

*rit.*

Vocal line in bass clef, measures 48-51. Measure 48 has a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 51 ends with a fermata. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

her who has all my Heart, by the side \_\_\_\_\_ of the Brooks. \_\_\_\_\_

48

Piano accompaniment for measures 48-51. Measures 48-50 feature a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Measure 51 features a fermata. Dynamics include *ff* and *p*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

52

Vocal line for measure 52, showing a whole note with a fermata. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

52

Piano accompaniment for measure 52. The right hand has a chord with a fermata, and the left hand has a whole note. Dynamics include *dim.* and *pp*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

6. Should I draw you the picture of my Heart (Abigail Adams, 23 December 1782)

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66$

Should I

3 draw you the pic - ture of my Heart, ——— it would be what I hope you still

6 Love; ——— though it con - tained noth - ing New; the ear - ly pos - ses - sion you ob -

9 tained there; — should I draw you the pic - ture — of my Heart, —

*pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *mf* *p* *cresc.* *pp*

12

— should I draw you the pic - ture of my Heart, ——— it would

*sempre sostenuto*

*pp*

15

be what I hope you still Love; ——— though it con - tained noth - ing New; the

*p* *cresc.*

18

ear - ly pos - ses - sion you ob - tained there; ——— and the ab - so - lute power you have

*mf* *mp* *cresc.*

21

ev - er main - tained o - ver it; leaves not the small - est space ——— un -

*mf*

24

oc - cu - pied. — Should I draw you the pic - ture — of my Heart. —

*pp*

27

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 84$

I have seen near a score of

*mf*

30

years roll o - ver our Heads, with an — af - fec - tion

32

height - ened and — im - proved by time — nor have the drea - ry years —

34

of ab - sence in the small - est de - gree ef -

36

faced from my mind the dear un - ti - tled man to

*slowing very gradually*  
to ♩ = c. 72 at m. 45

38

whom I gave my Heart.

42

Should I draw you the pic - ture of my

*molto sostenuto*

46 Heart, \_\_\_\_\_ it would be what I hope you still Love; \_\_\_\_\_ though it con-

*cresc.*

49 tained noth-ing New; the ear-ly pos-ses-sion you ob-tained there; \_\_\_\_\_ should I

*rit. slower, molto sostenuto*

*ff dim.*

52 **A tempo, elegiac** draw you the pic-ture of my Heart, \_\_\_\_\_ should I draw you the pic-ture of my

*f*

55 Heart, \_\_\_\_\_ should I draw you the pic-ture of my Heart, \_\_\_\_\_ should I

58

draw you the pic - ture of my Heart...

58

*dim.*

61

61

*p* *dim.*

65

65

*p* *8va* *pp* *8va*

68

68

*pp* *15ma* *dim.*

71

71

74

74

# 7. The bitterness of Death is past (John Adams, 10 November 1818)

*legato, resigned*  
*p* (adjust to be heard over the strings)

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 80$

Piano

The bit - ter - ness of Death is past.

6

The grim Spec - ter so

Pno

6

*f* *ben marcato* *cresc.*

11

ter - ri - ble to hu - man Na - ture has no sting left for me.

Pno

11

*sub. p* *mp*

17

My con-so-la-tions are more than I can num-ber. The Sep-a-

Pno

22

ra-tion can-not be so long as twen-ty Sep-a-ra-tions here-to-fore.

*poco rit.*

Pno

29 **Slower**  
*sweetly, lyrical*

The sym-pa-thy and Be-nev-o-lence of all the World, has been

Pno

35

such as I shall not live long enough to describe.

Pno

Tempo I

40

Your letter of the Second is all and no

Pno

44

more than all that I expected. Never was a more

Pno

49

**Slower**

du - ti - ful Son. Nev - er a more Af - fec - tion - ate Moth - er.

Piano accompaniment for measures 49-54. The right hand features a melodic line with dynamics *mf* and *pp*. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines.

**Tempo I, but slightly slower (faster than tempo mm. 50-54)**

55

Recit.:

*lyrical, pained*

- Love to your Wife. May you

Piano accompaniment for measures 55-59. The right hand has a melodic line with dynamics *mp* and *cresc.*. The left hand features a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

60

Recit.:

nev - er ex - pe - ri - ence her Loss. So

Piano accompaniment for measures 60-65. The right hand has a melodic line with dynamics *sub. p* and *n*. The left hand features a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

66 *poco rit.* *a tempo*

prays your Aged and Af - flict - ed Fa - ther,

Pno

66

66

*pp*

71 *poco rit.*

Pno

71

71