

Peter Nickol

Sea, Shore and Tide

for mezzo soprano 

with piano and string quintet (vln 1 & 2, vla, vc and db)

duration: c. 12 mins

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The nineteenth-century naturalist J. G. Wood described how crucial is the action of the tides in the study of the shoreline, its creatures and plants. 'Twice in every day of twenty-four hours,' he wrote, 'the water advances and recedes, and thus at least one opportunity is given daily for the observer to follow the retiring waves, and to discover some small portion of the wonders of the sea.' In his mind it was no mere fact: he described the moon's gravitational effect as 'the grand exciting cause of the tides'.

If we watch over an estuary, we see a constantly developing drama enacted between water and land, driven by forces more powerful than we can resist.

PN, July 2010

I The Grand Exciting Cause of Tides

Sea,
Sea and land are wonderfully like,
with mountains and valleys,
volcanoes and prairies.

Twice in every day
the sea advances and recedes.

The grand exciting cause of tides
is the force called gravitation;
the moon being the chief agent
through which it acts.

adapted from *The Common Objects of the
Sea-Shore* by J. G. Wood (1892)

II Lincolnshire Shores (at Mablethorpe)

Here again I come, and only find
Gray sandbanks, and pale sunsets, dreary wind,
Dim shores, dense rains, and heavy-clouded sea!

A still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand,
Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white.

As the crest of some slow-arching wave,
Heard in dead night along that table-shore,
Drops flat, and after the great waters break
Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,
Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,
From less and less to nothing.

lines from *Lincolnshire Shores (at Mablethorpe)*
by Alfred Tennyson

III The Sands of Dee

'O Mary, go and call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home
Across the sands of Dee.'
The western wind was wild and dank with foam,
And all alone went she.

The western wind crept up along the sand,
And o'er and o'er the sand,
And round and round the sand,
As far as eye could see.
The rolling mist came down and hid the land:
And never home came she.

'Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair –
A tress of golden hair,
A drownèd maiden's hair
Above the nets at sea?
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
Among the stakes on Dee.'

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
The cruel crawling foam,
The cruel hungry foam,
To her grave beside the sea:
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home
Across the sands of Dee.

Charles Kingsley

IV Forever

I am forever walking upon these shores,
Betwixt the sand and the foam,
The high tide will erase my foot-prints,
And the wind will blow away the foam.
But the sea and the shore will remain
Forever.

Kahlil Gibran, from *Sand and Foam*

Sea, Shore and Tide

I The Grand Exciting Cause of Tides

Peter Nickol

Slow but steady
♩ = 60

The musical score is for a piece in 3/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is 'Slow but steady' with a quarter note equal to 60 beats per minute. The score includes parts for Voice, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, Double bass, and Piano. The Voice part is mostly silent with some rests. Violin I has a glissando and a triplet in the third measure. Viola and Cello play sul ponticello chords, with the Cello moving to normale in the fourth measure. Double bass plays a steady eighth-note pattern. Piano has a few notes in the fourth measure.

Violin I: *gliss*, *p*, triplet

Viola: *sul pont*, *mp*, *simile*

Cello: *sul pont*, *mp*, *simile*, *normale*, *p*

Double bass: *mp*, *simile*

Piano: *p*

5

Sea,

normale

p

p

p

pizz arco

simile, ma poco più piano

tr

simile

11

sea, _____ sea and land are won-der-ful-ly like, with

simile

p

p

p

pizz *mp* *p* *simile*

tr

tr

tr

58

For - e - - - - - ver.

58

58

65

65

65