

Dragging for Traps, op. 1

A Song for solo voice (medium) with piano accompaniment

Poetry by Milton Acorn

Music by Alan Fraser

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Notes

A lobster trap is a strange construction of wooden slats and thin rope netting, about a meter long, which lies on the bottom of the sea waiting for a lobster to crawl into it, after which he can't get out again. The trap is attached to a buoy by a long rope, so the lobster fisherman can know where it is and have the means by which to pull it up and see what's in it. When a big storm rolls in, the sea currents become so strong that traps start traveling hither and thither along the sea floor as if of their own volition. Also, big waves can pull on the buoy with such ferocity that it becomes separated from the rope and thus of course from the trap as well. When the storm subsides, the owner of the traps heads out to sea with a contraption which he drags along the sea bed, rounding up his delinquent lobster lures.

All these circumstances set the scene for our poem. The day after a big blow the swell of the sea still runs strong, leading the lobster fisherman, out in his boat searching for lost traps, to suspect at times that his axis of locomotion lies as much along the vertical as the horizontal.

I used Milton's (Milton Acorn's, that is) poem almost as is, occasionally making small changes to fit the musical rhythm. Here's the original:

*When you're hanging to a pendulum
you wouldn't be there unless there's something to do
so mind the swing and mind your job;
like when you're out in a lobster boat
dragging for traps in the swell after the storm.
No time to think: "What am I
doing here, whose mother
loved me along with other fools?"*

*Turn into the waves and toss,
turn to the side and roll 45 degrees plus,
turn your back to them and mind the splash.
Just don't think you're going to be seasick..
All the time there's traps on the shore
bumped, bruised, broken, tangled with their lines.
Hold on and drag, trying not to be sure
that they're the very traps you're dragging for.*

- from Milton Acorn's *The Island Means Minago*, Poems from Prince Edward Island

Pronunciation: 'your': yr
'you're': yr
'you've been': y bin
'hanging': hangin'
'dragging': draggin'
'for': fr

Other instances of 'Island twang' are more or less inexplicable (in print, I mean), but if you stick somewhat closer to an Irish lilt than a Somerset (?) you won't go far wrong.

For the singer: The notation of the swoops at measure 32 is a gross approximation; feel free to create your own version.

For the musician, uh, I mean pianist: The dotted rhythms can be double-dotted ad libitum except where it would conflict with running 16ths in the other hand. The indication '*ritard.*' applies only to the notes immediate to it, as in Schumann.

- A.F.F., Wednesday, July 26, 1995.

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a song for solo voice (medium) with piano accompaniment

dedicated to Denise Mullen who was its first inspiration

Poetry by MILTON ACORN

Music by ALAN FRASER, March, 1980

Allegretto

The musical score is written for a solo voice and piano. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and a 6/8 time signature. The tempo is marked *Allegretto*. The piano accompaniment starts with a *mf* dynamic. The first system shows the piano introduction. The second system features the vocal line with lyrics: "When you're hang— ing to a pen— du lum you would— n't". The piano accompaniment includes a *p* dynamic and a *with pedal* instruction. The third system continues the vocal line with lyrics: "be there with no. thing to do. So mind the swing and". The piano accompaniment includes a *with an Island twang* instruction, a *mf* dynamic, and a *cresc.* marking. The score concludes with a *mf* dynamic.

Red.

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mind your job; like when you're out in a lobster boat

cresc.

cresc.

Red.

drag- ging for traps in the swell from the storm. *ad lib. (ham it up!)*

sfz *agitato* *no time*

poco rit. e dim. *a tempo*

f *mf*

tr 23 13 2 1

to think, "What am I doing here, whose mother loved me along with other fools?"

tr *tr* *tr* *dim.*

Turn in-to the waves and toss and toss, turn to the side and

p *cresc.* *p* *cresc.*

p *cresc.* *sf* *p* *cresc.*

senza ped. *ped.*

roll for-ty five de-grees plus. Turn your back to them and

f *ad lib* *rall.* *a tempo mp*

sfz *f* *dim.* *mp*

mind the splash, just don't think you're going to be,

mp *p*

ritenuto - - - - -

going to be sea sick.

sfz *sfz* *sfz*

poco rinf. *pp*

ped.

sfz *p* *a tempo* *cresc.* *mf*

All the time there's traps on the shore bumped,

poco a poco - - - *a tempo*

p

sempre cresc.

bruised, broken and tangled with their lines.

Hold on and drag, trying not to be sure that

rall. ad. lib. *sfz*

they're the ve-ry traps you've been drag-ging

a tempo

for.

dehors *ritard.*

Red.