

M. Rostovtseva
text by Miss G.M.West

Canary girls

for 6-part mixed choir a cappella

autumn 2016

Canary girls is a nickname for women who worked in the munitions factories during the Great War. The nickname arose because of repeated exposure to toxic substances such as TNT which can turn the skin orange-yellow reminiscent of the plumage of a bird, the canary (which itself was used by miners to detect toxic carbon monoxide in coal mines.)

The text for this sketch is taken from a book called „On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War “ by Angela Woollacott. It is a quote by a Miss G. M. West who joined the Women Police Service during the war and was sent to police one of the munitions factories in Britain:

„The particles of acid land on your face & make you nearly mad, like pins & needles only much more so; [& they land on your clothes & make brown specks all over them, & they rot your handkerchiefs & get up your nose & down your throat , & into your eyes, so that you are blind & speechless by the time your hour is up & you make your escape. “]

My goal is to illustrate her quote by painting the words by spacing and fragmentating them, also by alternating between singing and speech.

Performance notes

s.v. - senza vibrato

v.l. - vibrato lento

The ends of glissandos are not determined.



semi-pitched singing



whispering



spoken with natural speech inflection

Canary girls

G. M. West

M. Rostovtseva

$\text{♩} = 58$

mf
legato

Soprano 1

Aa

Soprano 2

mf
legato

Aa

Alto

mf
legato

Aa

s.v. → v.l.

5 *mp* *s.v.* *mf*

S. *aa_ aa_ aa aa_ a-cid*

S. *mf f mf* *a - ssss - i - d The par-ti-cles of a - cid*

A. *mp mf f mf* *aa aa_ a - ssss - i - d a - cid*

T. *mf* *a - cid a - cid*

Bar. *mf* *a - cid a - cid*

B. *mf* *a - cid a cid*

9

S. *aa* a-cid The par-ti-cles *f* *aa*

S. a-cid The par-ti-cles *f* *aa*

A. a-cid *p* *mm*

T. 8 The par-ti-cles of *p* *mm*

Bar. *šh*

B. *šh* *šh*

13

S. *mf* *aa*

S.

A. *mf*

T. *mf*

Bar. *p* *mm*

B. *p* *mm*

16

S. *p* *p < mp*
l-and on your face

S. *mf* s.v. → v.l. → s.v. *p* *mp*
aa_ land on your face

A. *p* *p < mp*
lll - and on your face

T. *p* *mp*
land on your face land on your face

Bar. *p* *mf* *f*
fff - ei - ssss

B. *p* *mf*
fff - ei-

20

S. *mp*
aa_ aa_ aa_

S. aa_ aa_

A. *mp*
aa_ aa_

T.

Bar. *mf*

B. *f* šh

SSSS

