

Tom Armitage

Montségur

For Soprano and Piano

Using Texts by Six Trobairitz

Montségur

*For Soprano and Piano
(originally written for Soprano and String Trio)*

By Tom Armitage

The Siege of Montségur was a nine-month siege by the Kingdom of France against the Cathars, concluding on March 16th, 1244. The siege came more than a decade after the conclusion of the Albigensian Crusade against Catharism in Medieval Occitania - modern-day France. The result of this crusade was the gradual decline of Catharism along with a shift of tolerances in previously liberal Occitania in favour of the traditional conservatism of the Roman Church.

Occitania, a famously free-thinking and creative land would not see such cultural sophistication again until the Renaissance. It was a region in which many religions and spiritualities co-existed peacefully and women were afforded greater equality than was typically seen in Medieval Europe. The troubadours, the jewel in Occitania's cultural crown, wrote thousands of songs suggesting erotic conquests and romantic anecdotes. Likewise, the female troubadours - the *Trobairitz* - wrote similarly raunchy poetry suggesting that they were not just objects of lustful desires but willing facilitators as well.

When the Catholic Church finally forced a foothold in the Catharist Occitania, this tolerant society along with its forward-thinking artistic culture began to crumble. Evidence of the *Trobairitz*' existence was destroyed, leaving us with a measly thirty poems, only one of which with its melody remaining. This is a stark contrast with the three thousand troubadour poems and one thousand melodies remaining from their male counterparts.

Of those thirty poems, I have selected six here for this Occitan song cycle. The Star of David - today used as one of the newer symbols of Judaism is religious history - has an

almost ancient association with Occitania, and each of its six points is represented with a song in this cycle. In this case, the two triangles making up the star, representing male and female in the ancient spirituality that influenced Occitan culture, suggest the aggressive/submissive nature of the poems used here. The use of aggressive poetry here is in reference to the sexually-charged dominance of the *domna* in these Trobairitz poems. The chosen poetry of a more submissive nature laments the decline of this female-appraising society - highlighting their perceived weaknesses and relegating the role of the woman to a second-class citizenship.

I have named this cycle *Montségur* in honour of the resilience that the citizens of Occitania showed against their occupiers, even some time after the crusade's conclusion. Although attempts have been made to recreate the music of the Trobairitz using a sound-world that troubadour historians will be familiar with, these settings are composed in a style that I can recognise as my own. The results of this is that the meanings of the texts, although respected and appraised in their original light, are also afforded more relevance in today's discussion of gender identity.

1. Estat ai en greu cossirier (La Comtessa de Dia)

Ben volria mon cavallier
tener un ser en mos bratz nut,
q'el s'en tengra per erebut
sol q'a lui fezes cosseillier;
car plus m'en sui abellida
no fetz Floris de Blanchaflor;
eu l'autrei mon cor e m'amor,
mon sen, mos huoills e ma vida.

- - -

I'd like to hold my knight
in my arms one evening, naked,
for he'd be overjoyed
were I only serving as his pillow,
and I am more pleased with him
than Floris with his Blanchaflor.
To him I grant my heart, my love,
my mind, my eyes, my life.

2. Bele Doette as fenestres se siet (Anon)

Bele Doette as fenestres se siet,
Lit en un livre mais au cuer ne l'en tient;
De son ami Doon li resovient
Qu'en autres terres est alez tornoier.
E or en ai dol!

- - -

Lovely Doette is sitting by the window
reading a book, but her thoughts are elsewhere;
she is thinking of her beloved Do,
who has gone to tourney in foreign lands.
Oh, what grief I feel!

3. Na Maria (Bieiris de Romans)

Na Maria, pretz e fina valors
e.l gioi e.l sen e la fina beutatz
e l'acuglir e.l pretz e las onors
e.l gent parlar e l'avinen solatz
e la douz cara e la gaia acundansa
e.l ducz esgart e l'amoros semblan,
qe son en vos, don non avetz egansa
me fan traire vas vos ses cor truan.

Per qe vos prec, si.us platz, qe fin' amors
e gausiment et doutz umilitatz
me puosca far ab vos tan de socors,
qe mi donetz, bella dompna, si.us platz,
so don plus ai d'aver gioi esperansa,
car en vos ai mon cor e mon talan
e per vos ai tut so c'ai d'alegransa
e per vos vauc mantas ves sospiran.

- - -

Lady Maria, the virtue and pure worth
and joy and wisdom and pure beauty
and graciousness and virtue and honour
and noble speech and lovely company
and sweet face and cheerful manner
and sweet gaze and amorous expression,
these things, in which no one equals you,
draw me to you with no deceitful heart.

For this I beg you, please, to let pure love,
delight, and sweet humility
give me the help I need with you
so you will grant me, lovely lady, please,
the gift which I most hope to enjoy;
for in you lie my heart and my desire:
I have all my happiness because of you,
I'm sighing many sighs because of you.

4. Ia de chantar non degra aver talan (Castelloza)

Ia de chantar non degra aver talan
car on mais chan
e pieitz me vai d'amor,
que plaing e plor
fant en mi lor estatge,
car en mala merce
ai mes mon cor e me,
e s'en breu no.m rete,
trop ai faich lonc badatge.

- - -

I should never have the wish to sing
because the more I sing
the worse it goes for me in love;
laments and tears
find their home in me,
for I have placed my heart, my self
where there's no mercy;
if he does not accept my service soon,
I will have stayed too long.

5. Quant ce vient en mai ke rose est panie (Anon)

Quant ce vient en mai ke rose est panie,
Je l'alai coillir per grant dr'uerie;
En pouc d'oure o'i une voix serie
Lonc un vert bousset pres d'une ab'iete:
Je sant les douls mals leis ma senturete.
Malois soit de Deu ke me fist nonnete!

- - -

When May arrives and roses bloom,
I go a-picking with love on my mind;
in little time I hear a lovely voice
in a green grove near a convent.
I feel the pleasant pains below my waist.
God curse whoever made a nun of me!

6. Ar em al freg temps vengut (Azalais de Porcairagues)

Ar em al freg temps vengut
quel gels el neus e la fainga
el aucellet estan mut,
c'us de chanter non s'afrainga;

- - -

Now we have come to the cold time
When the ice and the snow and the mud
and the little birds are all mute,
For not one is inclined to sing;

1. Estat Ai En Greu Cossirier

From 'Montségur'

Text by Comtessa de Dia (12th Century)

Music by Tom Armitage (2015)

Assured (♩=65)

Soprano

Piano

mp *mf* *mp* *f*

f *f risoluto*

5

S.

Pno.

mp *mf* *ff* *molto* *pp*

f *f più risoluto*

9

S.

Pno.

ff

12

S.

Pno.

p

fff

3 3 3 3

15

S.

f

Ben vol-ria mon ca - val lier, —

Pno.

3

p

mp

3

18

S.

Ben vol - ria mon ca - val - lier ten - er un ser en mos bratz

Pno.

mf

p

21 *mp* *ff*

S. *nut,* q'el s'en ten-gra per

Pno. *ff*

24 e - reu-but sol q'a lui fe - zes_ coss-ei - llier;

Pno.

27 car plus_ m'en sui a-bel - li - da no fetz Flo -

Pno. *fff*

29

S. ris de Blan-cha-flor;

Pno.

31

Meno mosso

S.

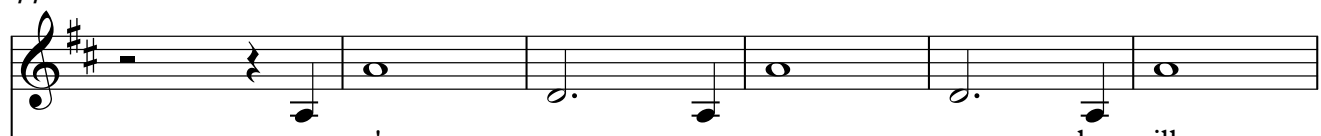
Pno. *pp* *p*

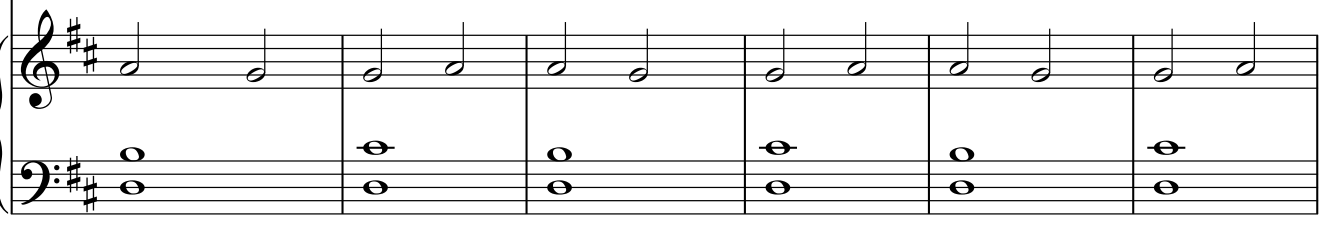
38

S. *mp*
eu l'au - trei mon cor

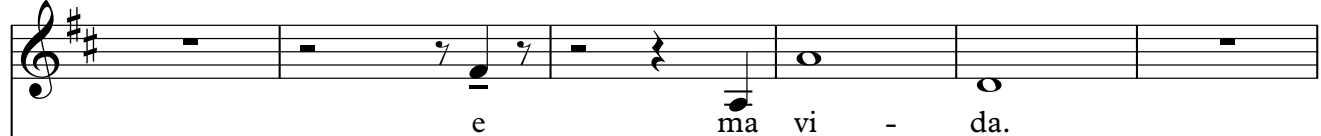
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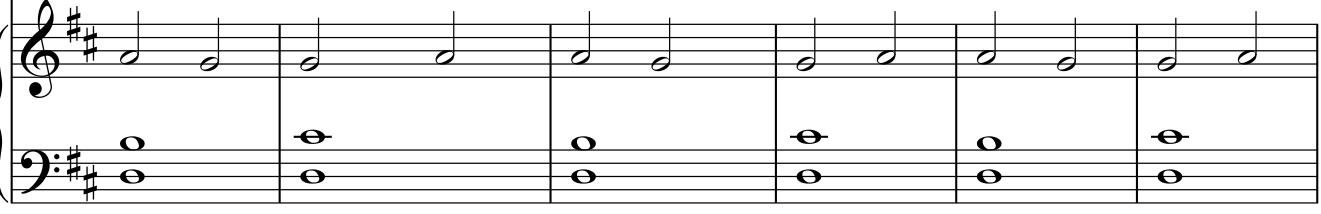
44

S.  e m'a - mor, mon sen, mos hu - oills

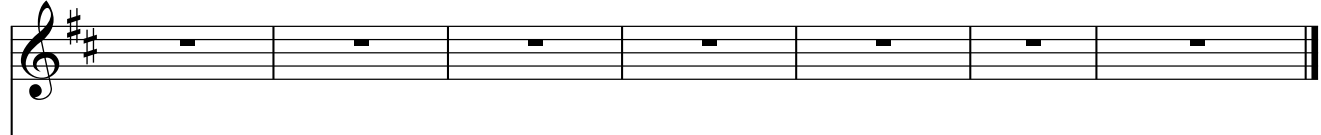
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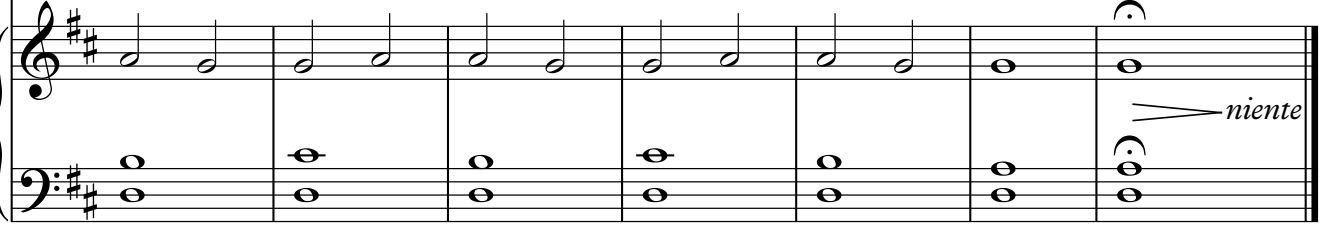
50

S.  e ma vi - da.

Pno. 

56

S. 

Pno.  niente

2. Bele Doette

From 'Montségur'

Words Anon - Trobairitz

Music by Tom Armitage

(November 2017)

Lamenting (♩=60)

Soprano

mp *pp*

Be - le Do - ette as fe-nes-tres se siet lit en un liv-re, mais au

Piano

5

S. *p* *mp* *f*

cu-er ne l'en tient; De son a-mi, De son a-mi, Doon,

Pno. *f* *mp*

10

S. *with urgency* *mf*

Doon li re - so - vi - ent Qu'en au-tres ter - res

Pno. *sub. p*

14 *f* *despairingly pp* *p* *mp*

S. *est al - lez tor - noi-er. E or en ai dol.*

Pno. *sffz* *f > mp*

19

S.

Pno. *sub. pp*

25

S.

Pno. *mp*

3. Na Maria

From 'Montségur'

By Tom Armitage
Text by Bieiris de Romans

Freely (♩=c.50)

Soprano

Piano

mf

p

mf

S.

Pno.

poco accel. -----

A tempo

più mf

f

S.

Pno.

accel. . . .

accel. . . .

pp

ppp

f

molto

S.

Pno.

A tempo

A tempo

fff

ff

23

S. *f*

Na Ma - ri - a, Na Ma - ri - a, Na Ma

Pno.

29

S. *mf*

ri - a, pretz e fi-na va - lors e'l gioi e'l sen e la fi-na beu-tatz e l'a - cu-gli-ri e'l

Pno.

33

S. *f* *sub. p* **Sweetly** (♩=80)

pretz e las on-ors e'l gent par-lar e l'a-vi-nen so - latz e la douz ca-ra e la gai-a-a-cun-dan-sa e

Pno.

38

S. **accel.** (♩=100)

ducz es- gart e l'a - mo-ros sem - blan, qe son en vos

Pno.

45 **rall.**

S. 

 — don non a-vetz e - gan sa me fan trai-re vas vos ses cor tru - an.

Pno.  **rall.**

54 ($\text{♩} = 100$)

S. 

 Per qe vos prec, si'us platz, qe fin a- mors e gau

Pno.  *p*

61

S. 


 - si-ment e doutz u-mi-li - tatz me puo-sca far ab vos tan de so

Pno. 

67 *f* *mf*

S. 

 cors, qe mi do - netz, bel-la domp - na, si'usplatz, so don plus ai d'a

Pno. 

73 *sub. p* *f* *mp*

S. *2* *2* *2* *2*

- ver gioi _____ es-per - an sa. _____ car en vos ai mon cor e mon ta -

Pno.

80

S. *4* *3* *3*

lan. e per_ vos_ ai tut so c'ai d'a-le-gran-sa

Pno. *fp*

84 *Meno mosso* *molto rall.*

pp

S. *4* *3* *3*

e per_ vos_vauc man-tas ves sos-pi - ran.

Pno. *pp* *fp*

4. Ia De Chantar Non Degra Aver Talan

From 'Montségur'

By Tom Armitage
Text by Castelloza

Hushed (♩=70) unpitched whisper
pppp

Soprano

I - a de chan - tar non de -

Piano

ppp

9

gra a - ver ta - lan car on mais

17

chan e pi - eitz me va - i d'a -

25

mor que pla - ing e plor fant en

33

mi lor es - tat - ge car en ma -

41

la mer - ce a - i mes mon cor

49

e me; e s'en bre - u no'm re -

57

te trop a - - i fa - -

62

ich lonc ba - dat - ge.

5. Quant ce vient en mai ke rose est panie

From 'Montségur'

By Tom Armitage

Text Anon

(♩=80) *f* (♩=80)

Soprano

Quant ce vient en mai ke rose est pa

Piano

ff *p*

4

S. ni - e, Je l'a-

Pno.

p *mp* *f*

8

S. lai coil - lir per grant drü - e - rie;

Pno.

p *pp*

11

S. *f*

En pouc_d'oure oï une voix se - ri - e

Pno. *f*

16

S. *p*

Lonc un vert bou - set pres d'une a - bi - e - te.

Pno. *p*

20

S.

Je sant les douls mals leis ma senturete. Mal-ois soit de Deu ke me fist non-ne-te.

Pno. *f*

6. Ar Em Al Freg Temps Vengut

From 'Montségur'

Tom Armitage

17th March 2011

Text by Azalais de Porcairagues

Fragile (♩=52)

Piano

p

Measures 1-3 of the piano accompaniment. The music is in 6/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The right hand plays chords and single notes, while the left hand has a sparse bass line.

4

Measures 4-6 of the piano accompaniment, continuing the harmonic structure from the previous system.

Sop.

7

Delicately
sempre mp

Ar em al freg temps ven - gut,

Measures 7-9. The soprano line begins with the lyrics 'Ar em al freg temps ven - gut,'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and a bass line.

10

Measures 10-12 of the piano accompaniment.

Sop.

13

Quel gels el ne - us e la fain - ga

Measures 13-15. The soprano line continues with the lyrics 'Quel gels el ne - us e la fain - ga'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and a bass line.

16

Sop.

El a - u - cell - et es - tan mut,

20

Sop.

As if dying breaths
p , , , , ,

c'us de chan-ter non

26

Sop.

s'a - frain - (ain) - ga.

29