

## Pianist & Coach

### Against that time, if ever that time come

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This sonnet looks to the future to a time when the love affair will be properly in the past. The speaker takes full responsibility for the disintegration of the relationship even though it is the beloved that leaves, avoiding the speaker's eye. Despite the speaker's seeming innocence, it is the beloved that is stripped of all guilt and forgiven in advance.

In this third song Tchaikovsky uses a favoured compositional device in using contrast: he puts the piano and voice at odds with each other. One can perhaps imagine a chance meeting in a busy street, which makes the scorned lover's heart stop – and with it time stands still too...

The voice enters solo and the accompaniment is answers with a constant dread-filled dotted rhythm. It is as if the piano itself is avoiding any association with voice. In fact the lugubrious dotted pace grows hostile until its hostility builds up to a climax at the third time when "Against that time..." is refrained. The piano is indeed incarcerating the voice in walls of violent accented chords.

The devastating l'envoi reiterates the dotted rhythm of the opening in the piano and we can imagine that our street scene is back in real time and the beloved is seen from behind, having walked passed without looking around.

#### **Sonnet 49**

Against that time, if ever that time come,

When I shall see thee frown on my defects,  
When as thy love hath cast his utmost sum,  
Called to that audit by advis'd respects;  
Against that time when thou shalt strangely pass,  
And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye,  
When love, converted from the thing it was,  
Shall reasons find of settled gravity;  
Against that time do I ensconce me here,  
Within the knowledge of mine own desert,  
And this my hand, against my self uprear,  
To guard the lawful reasons on thy part:  
    To leave poor me thou hast the strength of laws,  
    Since why to love I can allege no cause.

Margaret Cable and André Tchaikowsky perform [Sonnet 49](#)

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