

# When I Was Eighteen

## from *Transit of Venus*

Music: Victor Davies  
Libretto: Maureen Hunter

Le Gentil, an 18th century astronomer, and Celeste, the young woman he loves, are in his observatory at night. The view of the heavens are magnificent. If the transit of the planet Venus across the face of the sun were timed, it could be calculated how far the sun is from the Earth and a great accomplishment.

♩ = 108

LE GENTIL: *mf*

When I wa eight- een,

5

and my fa - ther was dy - ing, I made him a sol - emn

8

pro - mise that I would be - come a priest.

I meant to do

I tru - ly did. But then one eve - ning,

*harp/picc.*

*Ped.*

quite by chance, I heard an as-tro-no-mer speak. As I

*mp*

*Ped.* \* *Ped.* \* *Ped.* \*

*cresc.* *mf*

lis-tened, - some-thing - caught

*pp* *cresc.* *mf*

Ped. \* Ped. \*

*f*

hold of me. \_\_\_\_\_

*cresc.* *f*

Horns & Trbs.

Timp.

*ffz*

Ped. \* Ped. \*

*ff* *f*

In that mo-ment my life was changed. I

*ff* *f*

Ped. \* Ped. \*

knew I'd found a bet - ter way to de-vote my-self to God.

She stands and moves away.  
 He picks up the robe which  
 has fallen at her feet.

**rall.**

**Tempo** ♩ = 88

*mp*

Tell me, Cel-este:

what do you see when you look at the sky? \_\_\_\_\_ Stars and the moon.

*Ped.*

rall.

Parlando

Tempo ♩ = 112

Do you know what I see?

Horn solo

*mf*

\* *Ped.* \* *Ped.*

A thou - sand my - ster - ies, -

*mf*

\* *Ped.*

51

each more in-tri-cate

55

than the last. Cre - a - ted by

*Ped.* \*

60

God to re-mind us we are mor-tal, to  
other worldly

*Ped.* \* *Ped.* \* *Ped.* \*

(ossia)

cresc.

65

chal-lenge us — and di - mi-nish us, — to move us end-less-ly to won - de -

other worldly

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped.

69

What a cre - a - tion, — Cel-

cresc.

cresc. Horns

\* Ped.

72

este! — What a Cre - a - tor!

f

\* Ped.

*mf*

What a pri-vi-lege to probe those

*mp* *mf*

\*Ped. \*

mys-teries, to help ex-plain the ways of God to man.

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped.

**molto rit.**

He moves in behind her, drapes  
the robe across her shoulders  
and turns her to face him.

*mf*

\*Ped. \*



87

Tempo

rall.

Tempo

*mp*

Come here, Cel-este, I want to

91

He takes her to his telescope, which is pointed at the night sky.

**Parlando**

show you some-thing. Look

95

She looks in the telescope and immediately pulls back in disbelief and fright.

$\text{♩} = 108$

*mf*

*f*

**accel.**

through that lens and tell me what you see. Ve-nus, Ve-nus!

100

rall. Tempo

First star of the eve - ning, last

*f*

104

*mf*

*f*

star of the mor - ning, though not a star at all, but a pla - net

*mf*

*f*

*Ped.*

\*

*Ped.*

\*

109

that gleams in the night sky like a star.

*Ped.*

\* *Ped.*

\* *Ped.*

113

*mf cresc.*

*f*

She turns to face him

No won-der men look at her and think of love.

*mf cresc.*

*f*

Ped.

118

*mf*

For the Greeks, it was A - phro - di - te. For the

*mf*

Ped.

121

*mf*

*ff*

Ro - mans, Ve - nus, Ve - nus, the god-dess of

*mf*

*ff*

Ped.

125

love. \_\_\_\_\_

*dim.*

*p*

Ped.

128

*mp*

*mp*

*dim.*

*p*

But for me, she is

\* Ped. \*

131

*sotto voce*

*sotto voce*

*pp*

des - ti - ny.

Ped.