

RUSSELL STEINBERG

Rucksack

Monodrama for Mezzo Soprano and Piano

Text by Juliane Heyman

Op. 78a

Duration: 14 minutes

Blown To Bits Publications

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Music by Russell Steinberg
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NOTES

Rucksack is a single movement monodrama that interweaves two stories from Juliane Heyman's book *From Rucksack to Backpack*. The first story details her harrowing year and a half long escape from the Nazis, beginning with the arrest of her parents in 1938. In semi-comic relief, her next story describes her first hiking experience just a few years later in the United States. The police arrest her and her girlfriend, believing them to be prostitutes because they were walking alone with backpacks! Apparently, hiking was only popular in the US *after* the 1940s.

The parallels and confusion juxtaposing these two stories is meant to provide both a dramatic counterpoint as well as the urgent importance of allowing immigration in a free society.

For The Singer

The vocal part switches continually between three different styles: bel canto, rhythmic speech, and dramatic speech. Bel canto is exclusive to Julie's hiking story in the Poconos mountains. The speech is used mostly to relate her difficult journey of escape from the Nazis. Bel canto is notated as conventionally. Rhythmic speech is notated with crossed notes (x) beamed rhythmically. It should be spoken in a clipped manner, monotone, and with precise rhythm. The dramatic speech includes narration and dialogue and appears in boxes sometimes over a single held chord, and other times spaced out above measures of music. Experiment with the pacing of this speech with the piano, as well as the pacing between all three vocal styles, to create the most effective musical drama.

For The Pianist

The piano part switches between two different styles—

- 1) an *Americana* style, for Julie's hiking story in the Poconos mountains (popular with composers in the 1940s like Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Harold Shapero, etc.)
- 2) an Expressionist style (tritones, fourths, and fifths) for her difficult journey of escape from the Nazis (associated with many German composers in the first half of the 20th century)

The *Americana* style should be played in a lyrical manner with beautiful tone. The Expressionist style should be played "orchestrally," with the 16th note triplets emulating a percussive snare drum and disjunct passages with leaps of 7ths and 9ths sounding like woodwinds.

Rucksack

text by Juliane Heyman

adapted by Russell Steinberg

Sung:

Lovely wildflowers covered the rolling mountains; the beautiful landscape and the silence on the trail of the Poconos.

Spoken:

I was born in the free city of Danzig Poland in 1925. I survived the Second World War and was extremely fortunate to have escaped the Nazis. My luck was always with me and I felt I was invulnerable. In 1935 when Jewish children were no longer permitted to attend public school, I transferred to a newly established Jewish school. During the ten minute walk each day the Nazi boys harassed me and sometimes even hit me. In 1938 the Nazis imprisoned my parents. Several months after their release, we departed in the middle of the night, leaving everything that was dear to me.

Sung:

Spring of 1943, New York city, a college holiday. Lisbeth and I decided to go for a hike in the country to the Poconos mountains in Pennsylvania. Lisbet prepared sandwiches, I brought fruit and cookies.

We planned to spend a couple of days surrounded by nature.

Lovely wildflowers covered the rolling mountains.

Spoken:

I was sent to school in Switzerland. I traveled by myself and at the border was subjected to a strip search by the Germans. After a term, I joined my parents in Brussels, Belgium. On May 10, 1940 we heard the sound of gunfire outside our apartment. We went to the balcony and realized the Germans had invaded Belgium. We left by train and headed to the coast. We crossed the French border on foot... with our rucksacks on our backs.

Sung:

The beautiful landscape and the silence on the trail of the Poconos.

At the trailhead, the bus took us to the town of Wilkesbar. With our rucksacks on our backs, we found no signs of a room.

Spoken:

We arrived in Dunkirk where we spent three days in a cellar. The family continued, with no idea where we were going. We repeatedly were caught in the crossfire between French and German forces. One day I was lying in a ditch and the man next to me lost a leg in the fire... We worked in a bakery, then on a farm. Mother and father finally succeeded in receiving visas for the U.S. My parents obtained false documents to enter the unoccupied zone of France. But at the border, the train was stopped... and the Nazis began a search.

Sung:

All of a sudden a police car stopped next to us.

"Get in!"

"What have we done?"

"We are taking you to the police station for some questioning."

I could not understand why.

Spoken:

The German authorities did not discover that our papers were forged. To my great relief we had escaped the Nazis again.

Sung:

“Well, well, what are you bringing us here?” said the police captain in the interrogation room. He did not seem mean like a Nazi in Europe.

“Why are you in Wilkes-bar?”

“We have been hiking in the Poconos. We were looking for a room to spend the night.”

He could not understand. Hiking was only popular in the United States after the war.

The captain explained:

“Knapsacks on your backs looked like you were runaway girls, runaway girls, heading, heading toward prostitution, toward prostitution.”

Spoken:

We spent several months on a farm near Bordeaux in the wine country. I learned to make wine, which I enjoyed. Mother and Father finally succeeded in receiving visas for the U.S. Many, including most of my relatives, did not make it and were killed in the concentration camps. We did not learn of this till the end of the war... While waiting for the freighter for America, I felt free and secure and gorged myself on food, which I had not been able to do for over a year. When our boat passed the Statue of Liberty in New York, cliché or not, it was and remains to this day the symbol of our family's deliverance. I was moved beyond words and looked forward to a new life in the United States without the dangers of the past.

Sung:

The captain asked the officers to take us to a respectable boarding house.

The lesson that I learned was not to walk with a rucksack in a city.

Lovely wildflowers covered the rolling mountains; the beautiful landscape and the silence of the Poconos.

16 *mf*

Voice

on the trail of the Po - co - nos.

Pno.

mf

tr

19 **foreboding** ♩=60

Voice

foreboding ♩=60

Pno.

pp

mf *p*

secco, like a drum

Speak rhythmically:

mp

I was born in the free ci - ty of Dan zig Pol - and in nine-teen twen-ty five.

Pno.

Speak ad libitum:

I survived the Second World War and was extremely fortunate to have escaped the Nazis. My luck was always with me and I felt I was invulnerable...

♩=60
Voice
Sing: *mp*

My

♩=60

Pno.

mp

26

mf f mp

Voice

luck was al-ways with me I felt I was in vul - ner a - ble. The beau-ti - ful land-scape and the

Pno.

mf f mp

29

mf f

Voice

si - lence on the trail of the Po - co - nos.

Pno.

f mp

Speak rhythmically:

mp

Voice

In nine-teen thir - ty five when Jew-ish chil - dren were no

Pno.

pp

long - er per - mit - ted to at - tend pub - lic school.

Pno.

sfz

Speak ad libitum:

I transferred to a newly established Jewish school. The ten minute walk each day made me very apprehensive. The Nazi boys harassed me and sometimes even hit me.

Pno.

Pno.

37

Pno.

In 1938 the Nazis imprisoned my parents.

|| Several months after their release, they heard that the authorities

Pno.

were going to come again and we decided to leave immediately.

We departed in the middle of the night, leaving everything that was dear to me.

leaving everything that was dear to me.

Pno.

44

tranquillo

Bright and excited

Voice
Sing:

mf

Spring of nine-teen for-ty three

Bright and excited

Pno.

49

Voice

f *mf* *mp*

New York ci - ty A col-lege hol - i - day. Lis-beth and I

Pno.

51

Voice

mf

de-cid-ed to go for a hike in the count-ry to the Po-co-nos mount-ains

Pno.

54

Voice

mp

in Penn-syl-van - ia. Lis-bet pre-pared sand-wich-es,

Pno.

56 *mf* *mp* *mf*

Voice I bought fruit and cook-ies. We planned to spend a cou-ple of days _____

Pno. *mf* *mp*

58 *f*

Voice sur-round-ed by na-ture. Love-ly wi-lid flow-ers co-veded the

Pno. *mf* *f*

60 Speak rhythmically: *mp*

Voice rol-ling mount-tains. I was

Pno. *p* *secco*

Speak ad libitum:

Voice sent to a school in Swit-zer-land. I traveled by myself and at the border was subjected to a strip search by the Germans.

Pno.

65 like a march *f* *sfz*

Pno. *f* *sfz*

Speak rhythmically:

mp

On

After a term at the Swiss school, I joined my parents in Brussels, Belgium.

Piano accompaniment for the first system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment.

May tenth nine-teen for-ty we heard the sound of gun fi-re out-side-our a-part-ment.

Piano accompaniment for the second system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment.

Piano accompaniment for the third system, including piano accompaniment.

Speak ad libitum:

We went to the balcony, and realized that the Germans had invaded Belgium. We left by train and headed to the coast. We crossed the French border on foot...

Speak rhythmically:

in a clipped style

mp

with our ruck - sacks on our

Piano accompaniment for the fourth system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment.

backs

Pno.

mp

p *pp* *p*

Pno.

78

mf *mp* *mf*

Sung:

80

mf *mf* *f*

The beau-ti - ful land-scape and the si - lence_ on the trail of the Po - co - nos.

Pno.

f

83

p

At the trail head, the bus took us to the town of

Pno.

p

85

mf

Wilkes - bar With our ruck - sacks on our backs we found no signs of a

Pno.

room.

mf *p* *mf*

4/4

Spoken rhythmically:

We ar - rived in Dun-kirk where we spent three days in a cel-lar.

p *pp*

Speak ad libitum:

The family continued, with no idea where we were going.

We repeatedly were caught in the crossfire between French and German forces.

One day I was lying in a ditch and the man next to me lost a leg in the fire.

pp *f* *secco*

We worked in a bakery in Abbeville. We spent several weeks working on a farm. My parents obtained false documents to enter the unoccupied zone of France.

Pno.

f 3 *rit.* *p*

Dramatic:

But at the border the train was stopped...

...and the Nazis began a search.

Pno.

pp 3 6 *mp* *mf* *f* 3 3 3 6

Pno.

ff *accel.* *p*

A tempo
Voice **Dramatic**
Sung: *f*

All of a sud den__ a po lice car stopped

Pno.

ff *f* *8va*

105 (Policeman) (Julie) timidly *p*

Voice: next to us "Get in!" "What have we done? What have we done?_"

Pno. *mf* *p*

108 (Policeman) *f*

Voice: "We are tak-ing you to the po-lice sta-tion for some

Pno. *f* *sfz* *p* *f sfz* *p* *f*

111 (Julie) *mp* Speak rhythmically:

Voice: quest-ion - ing." I could not un-der - stand why. The

Pno. *p*

114 Voice

Voice: Ger - man au - thor - i - ties did not dis - cov - er that our pap - ers were forged.

Pno. *3*

Speak ad libitum:

with swagger Sung: (Policeman)

To my great relief we had escaped the Nazis again.

mf

"Well well,

Pno.

L.H.

ad lib.

R.H.

L.H.

f

mf

with swagger

Speak rhythmically:

118

mp

what are you bring-ing us here?" said the po-lice cap-tain in the in-ter-ro-ga-tion room.

Voice

Pno.

mp

120

(Julie) *p*

(Policeman) *mf*

He did not seem mean like a Na-zi in Eur-ope. "Why are you in Wilkes-bar?"

Voice

Pno.

p

mf

p dolce

124

(Julie) *p dolce*

mf

mp

"We have been hi-king in the Po-co-nos. We were look-ing for a room to spend the night."

Voice

Pno.

mf

mp

8va

127

Voice

mf He could not un-der-stand, hi-king on-ly be-came pop-ular in the Un-it-ed States— af-ter the war.

mp

Pno.

mf

131

Voice

p The cap-tain ex-plained, **Mock bluesy** knap - sacks on our

mf

Pno.

p **Mock bluesy** *mp* *mf*

134

Voice

f backs looked like you were run-a-way girls run a way girls

Pno.

f

137

Voice

ridiculoso head-ing head-ing to-wards pro - sti - tu - tion to-wards pro - sti - tu - tion.

Pno.

ridiculoso *sub.pp*

Speak rhythmically:

140

Voice

We spent se-ver-al months on a farm near Bor-

Pno.

Speak ad libitum:

I learned to make wine, which I enjoyed. Mother and Father finally succeeded in receiving visas for the U.S.

deaux in the wine coun - try.

Pno.

Many, including most of my relatives, did not make it and were killed in the concentration camps.

rit.

ad libitum

pp disembodied

PPP

Red.

Pno.

We did not learn of this till the end of the war.

accel.

p

Pno.

♩=80

While waiting for the freighter for America, I felt free and secure and gorged myself on food,

Pno.

♩=80

(softly not to obscure the voice)

which I had not been able to do for over a year.

rit.

rit.

mp *mf*

Pno.

♩=60 even slower

When our boat passed the Statue of Liberty in New York, cliché or not, it was and remains to this day the symbol of our family's deliverance.

pp *mp* *pp* *mp*

8va
intimo

Pno.

I was moved beyond words and looked forward to a new life in the United States... ...without the dangers of the past.

p *mf* *p dolce*

Pno.

Sung: *p* *mf* *p*

The cap-tain asked the of-fi-cers to take us to a re-spect-a-ble boar-ding

Pno.

mf *p*

164

Tr. Solo *mp* *mf* *f* *Tr. Solo*

house. The les-son that I learned was not to walk with a ruck-sack in a ci - ty.

Pno.

mp *mf* *f* *8va*

Speak ad lib.

Only years later did they become a common sight in American cities.

Sing: *p*

Love - ly

Pno.

p

Maestoso

170

Voice *mf espr.* *f* *espr.*

wild - flow-ers cov-ered the rol - ling moun - tains the beau-ti - ful land-scape

Pno.

espr. *mf* *f* *espr.*

ad lib.

173 *p* *mf* *p* **rit.**

Voice

and the si - lence of the Po - co - nos.

Pno.

> p *f* **rit.**

176 **Lento** *pp*

Voice

Love - ly wi - ld flow - ers.

Pno.

Lento *> pp* *ppp* *8va* *8va* *3* *3* *Ped.* *Ped.*

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