

Epistulae ex Ponto for soprano and orchestra
Text: Publius Ovidius Naso – Music: Larry Alan Smith

Movement II – *Tristia* III.III: 1-12 – *Haec mea*

If you're wondering perhaps why my letter
is written in another's hand, I'm ill.
Ill in the furthest region of an unknown land,
and almost unsure that I'll be better.
How do you think I feel, lying here
in a vile place, among Getae and Sarmatians?
I can't stand the climate, I'm not used to the water,
and the land itself, I don't know why, displeases.
There's no house here suitable for a patient, no food
that's any use, no one to ease his pain with Apollo's art,
no friend here to bring comfort, no one
to beguile with talk the slowly moving hours.

Movement III – *Tristia* III.III: 13-20 – *Lassus in extremis*

I'm weary lying here among distant peoples, places,
in sickness now thoughts come to me, of what's not here.
Though I think of everything, still you above all, wife,
it's you who occupy most of my thoughts.
Absent, I speak to you: you alone my voice names:
there no night for me without you, and no day.
They even say when I babbled disjointed things,
your name was on my delirious lips.

Movement V – *Tristia* III.III: 21-36 – *Si iam deficiam*

If I were failing now, and my tongue stuck to my palate
could barely be revived by a little wine,
let someone say my lady's come, I'll rise,
hope of you the reason for my vigour.
So, maybe, while I'm anxious for my life,
do you pass happy hours there forgetting me?
Not you, I know it. Dearest, it's clear to me
without me you have no hour that isn't sad.
Still if my fate's fulfilled its destined years,
and the end of my life's here, so quickly,
how difficult was it, O great gods, to spare the dying,
so I might have been covered by my native earth?
If sentence might have been delayed till the hour of death,

or swift death might have anticipated exile.
I could easily have renounced the light, just now,
when I was whole, now life's given me to die in exile.

Movement VI – *Epistulae ex Ponto* I.IV: 1-8 – *Iam mihi deterior*

Now the decline of life is on me, whitening my hair,
now the wrinkles of age are furrowing my face:
now strength and vigour ebb in my weakened body,
the games of youth that pleased, no longer delight.
If you suddenly saw me, you wouldn't know me,
such is the ruin that's been made of my life.
I admit the years have done it, but there's another cause,
my anguish of spirit and my continual suffering.

Movement VII – *Epistulae ex Ponto* I.IV: 47-58 – *Te quoque*

No doubt you've aged too because of our troubles,
you who were still young when I left the city.
O let the gods grant me to see you so,
and set fond kisses on your altered hair,
and, clasping your slight body in my arms,
say: 'It's love for me that's made you thin,'
and tear for tear tell you of my sufferings,
enjoying the speech together I never expected,
and offering that incense, with grateful hand, due
to the Caesars and the wife worthy of a Caesar!
Would that the Dawn, Memnon's mother, with rosy lips
might soon call forth the day when the Prince relents!

Movement VIII – *Tristia* III.III: 37-46 – *Tam procul ignotis*

So I'll die far away then, on a foreign shore,
and my fate will be desolate as the place itself:
my body won't grow weak on a familiar couch,
at my death there'll be no-one there to weep:
nor will my lady's tears be falling on my lips,
adding a few brief moments to my life:
no parting instructions, no last lament
as a friendly hand closes my failing eyes:
but with no funeral rites, without honour of a tomb,
my head will bow, un-mourned, in a barbarous land!