Voids
A chamber opera for 15 musicians in 2 acts
By David John Roche
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Instrumentation and singing cast

1 soprano
2 tenors
1 conductor
1 flute
1 oboe
1 clarinet
1 bassoon
2 violins
1 viola
1 double bass (preferred) or ‘cello

Notes to woodwind

Crossed noteheads are an indication to perform an air tone.

Notes to string players

Triangle noteheads are an indication to perform vertical bowing.

Crossed noteheads are an indication to deaded the left hand obver the indicated pitch.

The score is in C
Duration: approximately 35 minutes
Libretto

‘Vanishing Diary’ by Tom Clucas

Living in slow motion, colours drain away,
Pass Friday on a barstool sipping gin
And ruminating mouthfuls of old shadows,
Lost days amounting to a vanishing diary,
Dissolving in a conscious vapour trail. Waiting, watching,
Waking still. Always staying vigilant
And staking out a night’s insomnia
Across this vacant bar. Crystal holding spirits
is toying with half-light. Waiting, watching,
Waking again and balancing, always, just on this brink;
As liquor slips around old mortal circuitry
With lyric kindling in its blood,
A London madrigal. Symphonic collaging of wrongs,
Humanity injusticing;
My soul doth magnify colossal loss,
A library of all that disappoints,
Watching in a mirror as moonlight spills,
Saturating lurid clouds with wild visions
Old anarchy is amassing again,
No button now to undo history’s
Circular conflicts. And what of consolation,
This clutch of dust confronts oblivion,
Void that no mortal can avoid,
To sorrow in obscurity
Or grasp our dissolution, to fill our footprints in,
Smoothing out glass sands until our passing
Amounts to nothing at all.
This anonymity, it looms with horror;
That minds can soak away as foam in sand
Thoughts dissipating into nothing,
So why not go on waiting, watching
This skull a vacant factory,
Which grows industrially nightmarish.

‘What’s life, what drink’ by Thomas Peak

What’s life, what drink, you ask through blood-rinsed pupils
For both you swig far more than you would stand
But give me that – to lift my cross – too much or none at all
I gladly toast – THE HEALTH OF OUR HOST! – and swig of both until I fall

‘Ozymandias’ by Robin Lamboll

I found a man from transatlantic lands
Who said – an icon stands in our fair port
A mighty woman, scroll and torch in hands
Still radiant, but round that island bought
Import and billboards showing sour frowns
Pontificating, pointing digits form
A pool of wrath, which that colossus drowns
Small hands that mock it, mottos murk its song
And walls it off; and writing on this wall
Says ‘I am Donald Trump, king of kings
Look on my works, oh mighty, as you fall
And worship souls of gold.” Now all around
Stand blocks so high and mirror-window malls
That lofty lights blur out, all lost in sound

‘I ask; but calming spirits’ by Michael Brown

I ask; but calming spirits, to confound
My solitary gift, for what of sight
Doth God day labour claim, prescribing light
Lain follow, though within my soul abound
Urgings to load th' Almighty, and profound
my own account, that God my faith not slight
Now half my days, by his unwinding light
Whilst I do think on how my world is bound
Your duty do who only stand and wait
and post on land and bounding main and hill
Thousands to his bidding run
but kiss his chains, is dutiful, his gait
Man for his work or his own gifts, who will
such murmurings, affirm, God doth not dun

‘No!’ by Enis Yucekoralp

No hope – no light!
No dream – no night!
No rest – no peace – no fate for time not set –
No truth – no deep repose –
No lionised shad-ows –
No luck – no chance no safety from the threat –
No fast key for the hold –
No lorded susurrations spoken cold –
No cloud of soft benevolence –
No mountains stacked with oaths of somnolence –
No ascending sleeping summits –
No calling quits! –
No paying off the debt – no restoration,
No hying to the halt – no station –
No woe – now no devotion –
No pause – no brace –
No saint to save our timed-out grace –
No source – no end – no hand-in-hand tranquillity –
No boundary – no ability –
No faith, no wealth, no importunity,
No quick amelioration of joint –
No soul, no sleep, no joy, no eternity,
No sounds, no views, no names, no modernity –
No point!

‘As our shadows always say’ by Joel Lipson

It was dark, and I was combing through a library, intoning
Dusty words that honour roaming as our birthright and our way;
Such old songs, mayhap too frightful for a man not so insightful,
Point us all towards our rightful joy in passing shadows stray.
A book is how you drink up youth and find your shadows stray,

As our shadows always say.

So I took a book of grammar, bound in black and midnight glamour,
And I drank its inky manna as a postulant to pray;
But although a drop was thrilling, thirsty gulps sank unfulfilling
Through a liquid spirit spilling most unwillingly away.
It is said such draughts will swallow us and spirit us away,

But our shadows do not say.

As I sat, a stray fallacious and appallingly ungracious
Rumour struck a most audacious chord in my sad brain of clay;
It put forward to my hymnal a suspicion that our sins all
Had a basis in this symbol which was not up on display.
All my dusky mirth was naught: was this a fault in our display?

My own shadow would not say.

Though I know a mark was missing, still this twilight clung, insisting
That my manuscript’s black listing, with its marks that curl and splay,
Could contain no such omission and that my own intuition
Is that faulty composition which no soothing can allay.
If anything could lull that which no soothing can allay,

Still my shadow did not say.

From my agony of flouting all our laws against such doubting,
And my own prognostic touting things taboo, a ‘lackaday’
Was my only invocation and assay at information,
And this ailing adjuration simply burnt out with my day.
And for all my labours, diction also burnt out with my day,

Though our shadows always stay.

With a start, my monstrous passion, this proclivity to ration
Out my symbols in a fashion most disturbing for my play
Was again brought low by naming an accompanying shaming:
Its disgust appoints that framing form in which our tumult lay.
And its glow must soon unmask that form in which this tumult lay,

As it is our shadows’ way.
So my ghost draws nigh for haunting, all its susurrations flaunting
Whilst I murmur my avaunting and admit my part to play;
Was it light that did this hunting or that night which it’s confronting?
As this twilight blurs with blunting, it’s a victory for gray.
And in anything I do, it’s always victory for gray,

But my shadow has this day.

As its light was slowly fading, my old library’s dark shading
Took a form of midnight wading, a vast pit of briny clay;
This abyss was black with foaming in a mimicry of gloaming
Which I chorus with a groaning and a nigh-inhuman bray.
My fantastical absorption draws a nigh-inhuman bray

From my shadow’s lack of say.

In this void, I saw a talon float among its mouldy gallons,
And its unabating fathoms told a story of dismay;
Long ago, a symbol mythic stood in tombs now cold and cryptic,
And this shadow monolithic is its solitary display.
Such a mark in isolation is a solitary display

Of our shadows’ prior days.

How can such an abrogation of intrinsic figuration
And its clinging connotation find a harmony with fray?
As I watch it through this prism built of artificial rhythm,
I am conscious of a schism in my thinking as I sway.
Though I work towards a fixity of thinking as I sway,

I don’t know what shadows say.

But my cramp was always chronic, out of touch with things harmonic,
And I sought my gods Chthonic in a suit for Bring What May;
I saw function in abstraction, so I wrought a sad contraction
Of my various distractions, and I thought again to pray.
I cast off my crumbling dicta and I thought again to pray,

Though to what, I cannot say.

Am I nothing but a minion caught up in his opinion,
Sustaining a dominion in which I hold no say?
As I blink I think I spy it, that monstrosity who
riots
In tranquility to try atoning for that soul it slays.
Our capacity for pardon sojourns in that soul it slays;

Why, our shadows will not say.

If you follow with conviction symbol’s dogma, contradiction
Is a mandatory affliction, a compulsion all must pay;
In our war of long attrition, I succumb to dull cognition
And a musing disposition which I disavow today.
I cannot now outlast that thing I disavow today

As my shadows’ shadows say.

Now a lacking form’s abrasion grinds away at this occasion
Of our auguring invasion, and a dimming daylight ray
Is our only visionary, shining stubborn and contrary
As has long stood customary in this conflict built on play.
Both light and dark attain this holy status built on play,

Or our shadows, anyway.
As I took in this black vision I was conscious of collision
And a dubious provision for a limiting array;
Such an army got of worry would consist of mankind’s scurry
Past my thoughts which always flurry in a hazy, misty way;
Not many turn young thoughts to old affairs that misty way,
Now that shadows hold our day.

I unfold this drab oration that my coal-black usurpation
Might inspirit a narration with its unimportant say;
But although my word is focal to our grasp upon this total,
It is only frail and vocal, caught within and lost its way.
And many disavow an orator who’s lost his way,
Far surpassing shadows’ say.

It will vanish from our thinking just as mind constructs a linking
Which admits our dusky drinking, proving mind a thing to flay;
I forgot what I was doing in that library, still cooing
At my darling books and wooing folk in fiction all my days
And actuality submits to fiction all my days,
But my shadow slinks away.

So for now, I’m bound to swallow up a shadow which is hollow,
And abandon my tomorrow to our midnight’s winding way;
I maintain that I was soaring, but our world is now a pouring
Out of all my old imploring, and a missing symbol’s play.
I doubt I can claim back that dark and missing symbol’s play.
What’s a shadow anyway?

‘Monochromatique’ by Mathilde Sergent

[æ] obscur, [i] rougi, [y] criant, [o] blafard :
Nous avons tant appris par ta susurration :
A, soupirant sanglot du stimulant scorpion
I, aboi purpurin surgissant sous son fard.

[œ] monochromatic, rusting [æ], blazing [ju], liquid [oo]:
All call out in rusting, didactic mix:
A, a lascivious scorpion’s sobbing, sighing solo
And I barks as it soars—mask off, kicks.

L’U brillant, aboli, saoul d'appris, animal,
Tandis qu'O larmoyant, Lusignan ou astral,
“Modulant tour à tour,” divin final, trou noir!

Shining U, drunk with animal wisdom,
Whilst O wails widly from its solar kingdom,
Valhalla: final stop in pitch-black abandon!
‘I carry your warmth’ by Alexandra Clark

i carry your warmth about (i carry it in my warmth) i am not without it (all points i go you go, my soft; and anything that is brought about by only i is your doing, my darling)

   i fear of no doom (my doom is you, my dulcet) i want no world (for alluring you is my world, my staunch) and it’s you is anything a moon has always shown and anything a sun will always sing is you

this is most inwards untold nobody knows (this is root of root and bud of bud and sky of sky of a plant called animation; which grows most high a soul can with or mind can hush) and this is the fascination that’s holding the stars apart

i carry your warmth (i carry it in my warmth)
1: 'Vanishing Diary' / 'What's life, what drink'

\[ \text{Fl.} \]

\[ \text{Ob.} \]

\[ \text{Cl.} \]

\[ \text{Bsn.} \]

\[ \text{Pno.} \]

1: 'Vanishing Diary' / 'What's life, what drink'

\[ 80 \text{ Andante} \]

\[ \text{S. Solo} \]

\[ \text{T. Solo I} \]

\[ \text{Vln. I} \]

\[ \text{Vln. II} \]

\[ \text{Vla.} \]
Pass Friday on a bar-stool sipping gin and ruminating
mouthfuls of old shadows

arco

Lost days amounting to a vanishing diary, Dissolving in a conscious
mor - tal cir - cui - try

with ly - ric kind - ling in its blood
symphonic collaging

Harry i-ty
in-jus-ti-ning
My soul doth mag-ni-fy
co-loss-al loss
watching in a mirror as moonlight spills,
as moonlight spills,
Fl. 
Cl. 
Pno. 
S. Solo 
T. Solo I 
Vln. I 
Vln. II 
Vla. 
Db. 

sa-tur-a-ting lu-rid cloud with wild vi-sions 
wild vi-sions old an-ar-chy is a-mass-ing a-gain
This clutch of dust confronts oblivion Void
obscurity or grasp our dissolution or
grasp our dissolution dissolution to
fill our footprints, in smoothing out glass
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Pno.
S. Solo
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Db.

all mounts to nothing at all at

(ffp) (fp) (fp) (fp)
it looms looms with horror that minds can soak away as
Fl.  
Cl.  
Pno.  
S. Solo  

187

aching in to no-thing so why not go on watch-ing wait-ing, watch-

Pno.  
S. Solo  

192

196

which grows which grows in-dus-tri-al-ly

This skull a va-cant fac-to-ry,
Night marsh

What's life, what drink you ask

through blood-rinsed pupils

for both you swig far more than you would stand far more than you would stand
rall.

S. Solo

distant but that is land

T. Solo 1

distant round is land

T. Solo 2

distant is land

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Db.
bought Import and billboards Import
Import and billboards showing sour frowns
sour frowns pontificating pointing digits form a pool of wrath pool of wrath

sour frowns pontificating pointing digits form a pool of wrath pool of wrath

sour frowns pontificating pointing digits form a pool of wrath pool of wrath

pizz.
which that colossus drowns drowns small hands that mock it
Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

S. Solo

T. Solo 1

T. Solo 2

Vln. 1

Vla.

Db.

small hands mock hands that mock mot tos

small hands that mock it mot tos

that mock small hands that mock mot tos

p

p

p
And walls it off; and writing on this wall writing on this wall wall.

And walls it off; on this wall and wall it off;

And walls it off; and writing on this wall.

And walls it off; and writing on this wall.
King of kings works oh
look up on my works oh mighty
I am Donald Trump
as you fall and wor...
souls of gold. a - round
souls of gold all a - round
ship souls of gold. Now a - round stand
Now all around stand
3: 'I ask; but calming spirits'

I ask; but calming spirits to confound My
F
O
B
Cl.
Bsn.
S. Solo
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Db.

so li ta ry gift, for what of sight Doth God day God day la bour claim
though with-in my soul...

f grazioso

Frazioso
my own account

my faith not slight

Now half my days

my own account that God

by his unwinding
Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

S. Solo

T. Solo 1

T. Solo 2

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

doi_ whilst_ I do think on how my world
ff powerful

is_bound your d_u_t_y do who only stand and

ff powerful

is_bound your d_u_t_y do who only stand and

ff powerful

is_bound your d_u_t_y do who only stand and
Fl.
grazioso

Ob.
grazioso

Cl.
grazioso

T. Solo 1
bound - ing main and hill Thou - - - sands

T. Solo 2
bound - ing main and hill Thou - - - sands

Vln. 1

Vln. II

Vla.
grazioso
fl.

ob.

cl.

bsn.

solo

solo 1

solo 2

vln. i

vln. ii

vla.

db.

f molto rubato, expressivo

f molto rubato, expressivo

f molto rubato, expressivo

God

God

God

or his own gifts

who
Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Pno.

S. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Db.

No hope no light! No dream no night!
No rest
No peace
No fate
for time not set
No truth
No deep repose
S. Solo
no li-on-ised sha-dows
No luck no chance no safety
Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Pno.

S. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Db.

---

spoken cold
No cloud of soft benevolence
No mountains stacked with
grace no source no end no hand in tranquility

No boundary no ability

no faith no wealth no importunity

no quick amelioration of joint No
5: 'As our shadows always say'

$=160$ A (mostly) metronomic ensemble, an over-the-top, fluid singing cast

S. Solo

T. Solo 1

T. Solo 2

Vn. I

Vn. II

Vla.

Db.
Dusty words that honour roaming as our birth-right way:

such old songs, in-sight-ful,

roaming as our birth-right and our way:

mayhap too fright-ful for a man not so in-sight-ful,

roaming as our way:

in-sight-ful,
right-ful joy in pass s - tray

right-ful joy in ing dows s - tray A book is how you drink up youth

Point us all to-wards our right-ful joy in sha s - tray

mf f p mf f p mf f p mf f p
So I took a book of grammar.
bound in black and mid-night gla-mour, And I drank its in-ky ma-na as a pos-tu-lant to pray; But...
Through a liquid

Although a drop was thrilling, thirsty gulps sank unfulfilling
Through a liquid spirit spilling most unwillingly away

Through a liquid

Through a liquid

Through a liquid

Through a liquid
It is said such draughts will swallow us
But our shadows do not say.

us and spirit us away
But our shadows do not say.

But our shadows do not say.
As 1 sat, a stray fallacious and appallingly ungracious brain of clay;

As 1 sat, Rumour struck a most audacious chord in my sad brain of clay;

As 1 sat,

brain of clay;
It put forward to my hymnal a suspicion that our sins all not up on display.

Suspicion Had a basis in this symbol which was not up on display.

Suspicion not up on display.

fp

fp

fp
Fl. 

Ob. 

Cl. 

S. Solo 

T. Solo 1 

T. Solo 2 

Vln. I 

Vln. II 

Vla. 

Db. 

All my dus-ky mirth was naught: was this a fault in our dis-play? My own sha-dow would not say.

My own sha-dow would not say.

My own sha-dow would not say.
Though I know a mark was missing, still this twilight, insisting That my manuscript's black listening,
splay, Could contain no such omission and that my own intuition is that faulty

with its marks that curl and splay, Is that faulty

splay, Is that faulty composition
No sooth can a-lay
If any thing could hul that which
Soo thing can all-ay
Still my shade did not say.

No sooth can a-lay
That which
Soo thing can all-ay
Say.

Which no sooth can a-lay
That which no sooth can all-ay
Say.
...From my agony of fou-ting all out laws And my own

...all out laws And my own prog-nos-tic things ta-

...all out laws a-gainst such doubt-ing, And my own

...
Tack - a - day  
and ass - ay at in - for - ma - tion, And this ail - ing

boo, a  'lack - a - day  
Was my on - ly in - vo - ca - tion and ass - ay  
And this ail - ing ad - jur - a - tuin

'Tack - a - day  
and ass - ay  
And this ail - ing
with my day. And for all my labours, distemper, also burnt out with my day. Though our shadows always stay.

simply burnt out with my day. with my day. Though our shadows always stay.

with my day. with my day. Though our shadows always stay.
With a start, my monstrous passion, this proclivity to ration

Out my symbols in a fashion
play Was a gain brought low by na ming an ac com pa ny ing sham ing:

most dis tur bing for my play na ming

play na ming
that framing from which our tumult lay. And its glow must soon un-mask that form in which this tumult lay,

Its disgust app-onits that framing from which our tumult lay.

that framing from which our tumult lay.
As it is our shade's way.
So my ghost draws nigh for haunting, all its susurrations flaunting.
Whilst I murmur my aunt-ing
play;

Whilst I murmur my aunt-ing and admit my part to play;

Whilst I murmur my aunt-ing
play; Was it light that did this hunt-ing
con-front-ing
As this twi-light blurs with blun-ting.

or that night which it's con-front-ing
it's a victory for gray. And in any thing I do, it's always victory for gray,
But my shadow has this day.
As its light was slowly fading, my old library's dark shading

But my shadow has this day.
ry's dark shading Took a form of midnight wandering,
a vast pit
This abyss
mimicry of gloaming

a vast pit
This abyss was black with foaming in a mimicry of gloaming

a vast pit of briny clay;
This abyss
mimicry of gloaming

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

S. Solo

T. Solo 1

T. Solo 2

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Db.
and a nigh-in-hu-man bray. My fantas-ti-cal ab-sorp-tion

which I cho-rus with a groan-ing and a nigh-in-hu-man bray. My fantas-ti-cal

and a nigh-in-hu-man bray. My fantas-ti-cal
draws a nigh'ti-man bray From my sha-dows' lack of say.
In this void, I saw a talon float among its mouldy gall-ons,
and its un-a-ba-thing fa-thoms told a story of dis-may;

Lo-ng long a-go, a-go A sym-bol my-thic stood in tombs now cold and cryp-tic, and
this shadow monolithic is its solitary display such a mark in i-
Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Pno.

S. Solo

days  days  days  days

of our pri - or  days

T. Solo I

days  days  days  days

of our pri - or  days

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Db.
don't know what shadows say. But my cramp was always,

say say say say

think what what what

pizz.

pizz.
out of touch with things harmonic, And I sought my Gods sought my gods my gods____
saw

suit for Bring What May

Chthonic in a suit for Bring What May
wrought a sad contraction of my

a sad contraction of my various,

I wrought a sad distractions,
I cast off my

and I thought again to pray.

arco norm.
Fl.  

Ob.  

Cl.  

Pno.  

S. Solo  

crum-bling dic-ta and  

T. Solo I  

crum-ling dic-ta and  

Vln. I  

Vln. II  

Vla.  

Db.  

765
I thought again to pray,
Though to what I can

Though to what I

min - ion caught up in his op - in - ion, Sus -

Though to what I

Though to what I

Though to what I

Though to what I

Though to what I
not say__________ If you follow with convic-ion dog-ma,
in which I hold

in which I hold
contradiction is a mandatory affliction a compulsion all must pay in our war

no say? As I blink I think I

no say? As I blink I think I
of long war of long at-tr-tion, I succ-umb to dull cog-ni-tion and a mu-sing dis-po-si-tion which I
spy it, that mon-stros-i-ty who ri-ots
spy it, that mon-stros-i-ty who ri-ots
dis - a - vow to-day I can-not now out - last that thing I dis - a - vow

in tran - quil - it - y to try a - ton - ing for that

in tran - quil - it - y to try a - ton - ing for that
Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Pno.

S. Solo

T. Solo 1

T. Solo 2

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Db.

dis - a - vow to - day to - day

sould it slays; our ca - pa -
As my shadows say
city for pardons in that would
city for pardons in that would
it slays why our shadows will not say
Now a lick-ing form's a-bra-sion grinds a-way at this occ-a-sion  Of our au-gur-ing in-va-sion, and a dimm-ing day-light ray

dimm-ing day-light ray  Is out on-ly vi-sion-ar- y,
Both light and dark attain this holy status built on play, or our shadows, anyway.
As I took in this black vision I was conscious
for a limiting array;

I was conscious
for a limiting array;

I was conscious of collision And a dubious provision for a limiting array;
Past my thoughts which always flutter in a hazy misty way.

Such an army got of worry would consist of mankind's scurry Past my thoughts
Now that shadows hold our day.

1 unfold this drab or a tion that my coal-black u sur a tion

drab or a tion

Now that shadows hold our day.
But although my word is focal

with its unimportant say;

But although my word is focal to our grasp upon this total,

Might inspire a narration

arco norm.
lost its way. And many disavow an orator who's lost his way.

It is only frail and vocal, caught within and lost its way.

lost its way.
Far surpassing shad'ows' say.  
It will vanish from our think'ing just as mind constructs a link'ing.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
S. Solo
T. Solo I
T. Solo II
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Db.

Which admires
I forgot

Which admires
I forgot what I was doing in that library, still cooing

Which admires our dusky drinking, proving mind a thing to flay; I forgot
At my darling book and wooing folk in fiction all my days
And actually submits to fiction all my days

At my darling

At my darling

p

p

p
But my shadow slinks a way
So for now, I'm bound to swallow
up a shadow which is hollow, and abandon my tomorrow

up a shadow which is hollow, and abandon my tomorrow

up a shadow which is hollow, and abandon my tomorrow

up a shadow which is hollow, and abandon my tomorrow
to out mid-night's winding way; I maintain that I was soaring,
sym-bols play. What's a sha-dow an-y-way?
6: 'Monochromatique'
A soupirant sanglot du stimulant,
L'U brill - ant a - bo - li so - oul d'app - ris
Fli.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Pno.

S. Solo

T. Solo I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Db.

— go you, go, my soft —

— a ny thing that is brought —
about by only by I is your doing my darling

about by only by I is your doing my darling

about by only by I is your doing my darling

about by only by I is your doing my darling
I'm afraid of no doom my doom is you my dul-cet I want no
ny-thing  a moon has al-ways shown and a ny-thing

ny-thing  a moon has al-ways shown and a ny-thing
and this fascination that's holding the stars a-

part

Carry your warmth

ca-rry it in my warmth