

Three Songs of Gertrude Stein

for SATB chorus with soprano solo
and optional speaker

Music by Bill Alves

Text by Gertrude Stein

Three Songs of Gertrude Stein

Text:

#1: "Tillie"

Tillie labor Tillie labor eye sheds or sheds, Tillie labor Tillie labor late in shells ear shells oil shells, Tillie labor Tillie labor shave in sew up ups ups Tillie Tillie like what white like white where, like, Tillie labor like where open so or Tillie labor. Tillie lay Tillie laying Tillie laying, Tillie lime, Tillie Tillie next to a sour bridge next to a pan wiper next to ascent assent, next to, assent, assent.

(1914)

#2: "Come out cow"

Cow come out cow come out cow come out come out cow cow come out come out cow cow come out cow come out cow come out come out cow cow come out come out cow cow come out cow come out cow come out cow come out cow come out cow come out.

From "Emp Lace" (1914)

#3: "A Sonatina"

I need her, she needs me, she needs me, I need that she is splendidly robust. Please me by thinking at ease.

She is gentle and considerate. She can do no more than be gentle and considerate and we find that to be quite enough to satisfy and not rebuff.

Little singing charm can never do no harm, little baby sweet can always be a treat. And are sonatinas in music boxes and do they follow one after the other and are music boxes grind organs yes or no. I believe it and I told her so and she believed it as I very well know. I tell her so so.

Oh no I love you so oh no.

I have often heard it said that a skylark never goes to bed. I have often heard it said that they sing. I have often heard it said that they are suddenly ahead and I have often heard it said that they sing.

I see the moon and the moon sees me, God bless the moon and God bless me. /

From "A Sonatina Followed by Another" (1921)

Three Songs of Gertrude Stein

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Performance notes:

There is no solo part in song #1, "Tillie." The soloist may sing with the chorus. The soloist enters in song #2, "Come Out Cow," just after letter E and in a free rhythm. She should make no attempt to coordinate her rhythm with that of the rest of the chorus. The chorus continues repeating the phrase at letter E until the soloist gets to letter F (approximately 8 repetitions) at which time the conductor should cue the chorus to go on to letter F. The soloist's part after letter I is likewise in a free rhythm, uncoordinated with the rest of the chorus, though it should work out that she finishes at approximately the point shown, that is, before the rest of the chorus finishes.

The solo part in song #3, "A Sonatina," is likewise unsynchronized with the rhythm of the chorus, except that the soloist should try to line up with the points given by vertical dashed lines. With practice, these points can be arrived at naturally, without obvious rushing to catch up or waiting.

The speaker in "A Sonatina," though optional, is preferred, and may be either male or female. He or she should speak loudly enough to be heard over the chorus and soloist, and a microphone may be used if necessary. However, care should be taken that the spoken part not dominate or interfere with the lullaby-like mood of the piece. The speaker should speak the same lines as the soloist at a moderate pace, beginning each line slightly before the soloist begins singing the corresponding text and overlapping somewhat with it. The speaking should be matter-of-fact, without great emotional expression, as in the manner Stein herself speaks on the recordings she made of her own poetry.

Program notes:

Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) was a pioneering modernist in American literature, though she lived most of her life in France. There she endeavored to create in literature the same objectification and focus on the immediacy of thought that her friend Picasso had created in his Cubist paintings. At times she went even further, making language into a fascinating abstraction where the sounds of the words themselves finally trump meaning. As a composer, I have long been attracted to her musical perspective of language, her use of repetition, and the seeming simplicity of these supposed "difficult" works.

"Tillie," from 1914, is one of many literary portraits that she composed, where she used language not to explicitly describe the subject, but to indirectly suggest a picture in the reader's mind. Though the subject of this prose poem is unknown, we can easily hear the busyness of her activities through the rhythms Stein makes of the phrase "Tillie labor." Gradually the words like Tillie's activities transform through delightful puns and wordplay until Tillie finally slows and her "ascent" becomes "assent."

"Cow come out" is a paragraph from a longer nearly abstract poem, "Emp Lace," also from 1914. "A Sonatina" is from the very long poem, "A Sonatina Followed by Another" which she wrote in Vence, France in 1921. According to her friend and collaborator Virgil Thomson, the title refers to her habit of improvising "sonatinas" on the white keys of the piano, though she had no musical training whatever. Though the poem is filled with charming though fleeting images of her stay in southern France, I have extracted bits of the prose that show its lullaby-like mood and which often seem to refer to her life partner, Alice Toklas.

7

S

A

T

B

labor Tillie Tillie labor

labor Tillie Tillie labor

labor Tillie Tillie

Tillie labor Tillie labor

Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie

labor Tillie labor Tillie

labor Tillie labor Tillie labor

Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

A

10

pp

S

A

T

B

Tillie labor Tillie labor

Tillie labor Tillie labor

Tillie labor

labor labor Tillie

Tillie labor labor Tillie

Tillie labor labor Tillie labor

Tillie labor labor Tillie labor

Tillie labor labor Tillie labor

Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

13

S
Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor

A
Tillie Tillie labor labor Tillie Tillie labor labor Tillie Tillie labor labor Tillie

T
Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie

B
Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

16

S
Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor

A
labor labor Tillie Tillie labor labor Tillie Tillie labor labor Tillie Tillie labor labor Tillie

T
labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie

B
Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

B

19 Div. *mf* *mp* unis.

S eye sheds or sheds,

A labor labor Tillie Tillie labor labor Tillie Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie

T labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie

B Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor

22 *mp*

S Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor

A labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie

T labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor

B labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor

25

S
Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor

A
labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie

T
Tillie labor Tillie labor late in shells

B
labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor

28

C

S
Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor

A
labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

T
ear shells oi - - - l shells

B
labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor labor labor Tillie labor labor Tillie

34

S
Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie shave in sew up ups ups,

A
Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

T
Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

B
Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

Piano
Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

D

37 *mf*

S Tillie Tillie Tillie

A *mf* Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

T *mf* Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

B *mf* Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

mf

40

S Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Div. like. like

A Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Div. *f* like. unis. *mf* like white Tillie

T Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

B Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

43 unis.

S white _____ where, _____ Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

A Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

T Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Div. like _____ what _____ white _____ like _____ what _____

B Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

E

46

S Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie like _____

A like _____ what white _____ unis. Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

T Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

B Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

49 *mf*

S what
white like
Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

A like what white
like
Tillie Tillie
Tillie like white where,

T *f* like white where,
Tillie Tillie Tillie like white where, like, *mf*
Tillie Tillie

B Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie

52 *f* like white Div. where, like, *mf* *f*

S like white where, Tillie Tillie like white Tillie

A Div. like white where, unis. Tillie

T *f* like white where, like, Tillie like

B Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie Tillie like white

F

55

S white Tillie where, like, *pp*

A Tillie white where, Tillie like, *pp* Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

T white Tillie where, like, *pp*

B Tillie where, Tillie like, *pp*

58

S Tillie Tillie Tillie labor *f*

A Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

T Tillie Tillie Tillie labor like *f*

B Tillie like Tillie Tillie Tillie labor where *f*

61

S
Tillie Tillie labor o - pen Tillie labor o - - pen

A
Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

T
f Tillie Tillie where labor Tillie labor o - pen

B
Tillie Tillie o - pen labor so Tillie labor o -

64

G
mp

S
so or labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie

A
mp Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor

T
mp so or Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor

B
mp - - pen so or

67

S
lay _____ labor Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor labor Tillie lay _____

A
Tillie labor labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie lay labor Tillie labor

T
Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie lay _____ labor Tillie lay _____

B
next to a so - ur bridge _____

70

S
Tillie lay _____ labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie lay - - ing Tillie lay -

A
Tillie labor Tillie lay _____ Tillie lay - ing Tillie Tillie lay -

T
Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie labor Tillie lay - - - ing Tillie labor Tillie lay - ing

B
next to a pan wip - er _____

H

73 *mf*

S ing Tillie lay - ing Tillie Tillie lime Tillie Tillie lime next

A ing Tillie Tillie lay - ing Tillie next to a scent Tillie Tillie

T Tillie lay - ing Tillie lay - ing next to a - - -

B *mf*

o

77 *dim.*

S to Tillie lime a - - - scent Tillie lime next to next

A *dim.* a - scent next to a scent Tillie next to a - scent

T *dim.* scent Tillie next to Tillie lime next to a - scent as - sent, Tillie lime

B *dim.*

I

[illegible]

93

S
— sent, next to, as - - - sent, as - - sent.

A
— sent, next to, as - - - sent, as - - sent.

T
— sent, next to, as - - - sent, as - - sent.

B
next to, as - - - sent, as - - sent.

pp

pp

pp

pp

Stein Song #2

Come out cow

from "Emp Lace"

♩ = 136

Soloist may sing with sopranos until letter D

Soprano solo

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Piano (rehearsal only)

mp

Come out cow come out cow Come out cow come out cow *mp* cow come

A

S

A

T

B

Come out cow come out cow Come out cow come out cow

out cows come out come out cow come

First system of the musical score. It includes vocal parts for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B), along with a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "come out cow come out cow come out cow". The piano part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes.

B

Second system of the musical score, marked with a box 'B' and a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking. The lyrics are: "come out cow come out cow come out cow". The piano part continues with a rhythmic accompaniment. The vocal parts S, A, and T have lyrics, while B is silent.

C

Score for Section C, featuring Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass (B), and Piano accompaniment.

Soprano (S): come out cow come out cow come out cow

Alto (A): out come out cow cow come out come out cow cow come

Tenor (T): out cow come out cow come out come out cow come out cow cow come

Bass (B): (Silent)

Piano: Accompaniment for the vocal parts.

D

8 times

Score for Section D, featuring Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass (B), and Piano accompaniment. This section is marked **f** (forte) and repeated 8 times.

Soprano (S): come out cow come out cow come out cow

Alto (A): out come out cow cow come out come out cow cow come

Tenor (T): out come out cow come out cow cow come out come out cow come out cow cow come

Bass (B): (Silent)

Piano: Accompaniment for the vocal parts.

Lyrics below piano: Cow come out cow cow come

E 8 times
or until end of solo

mp Free rhythm, over repeating chorus,
but not synchronized with them.

Solo

p

S

p

A

T

B

cow come out come out cow come out

out come out cow cow come

come out cow cow come out come out

cow come out come out

p

Solo

cow come out come out come out cow

F

Solo

mf

S

mf

A

mf

T

B

cow come out cow cow come out come out cow come

out come out come out cow cow come out come out cow

come out cow come out cow come out cow come out cow come

cow come out come out cow come out cow come out cow come

Solo

S

A

T

B

mf

Cow _____ come _____

out come out cow come out come out cow come

cow come out comeout cow cow come out cow come out comeout cow cow come out

come out cow come out cow comeout cow cow come out cow come out cow comeout cow cow

Cow _____ come _____

G

Solo

S

A

T

B

out _____ cow _____

out come out cow come out come out cow come

cow come out comeout cow cow come out cow come out comeout cow cow come out

come out cow come out cow comeout cow cow come out cow come out cow comeout cow cow

out _____ cow _____

mf

Solo

Come

S

out come out cow cow come out come out cow cow

A

cow come out come out cow cow come out cow come out come out cow cow come out

T

come out cow come out cow come out cow come out cow come out cow come out cow come out

B

come out

H *f*

8 times

Solo

out

S

f out *gradual decr.*

cow come out come out cow come out cow come out come out

A

f out *gradual decr.*

out come out cow cow come out come out cow come

T

f come out *gradual decr.*

come out cow cow come out come out come out come out

B

f cow *gradual decr.*

cow come out come out

Soprano solo enters here in free rhythm and not in synchronism with the chorus. However, the solo should end approximately at the point shown, before the choir ends.

I 4 times

Solo

Cow _____ come

S *p*
come out cow come out cow come out cow

A *p*
out come out cow cow come out come out cow

T *p*
out come out cow come out cow cow come out come out cow cow come

B *p*
cow cow come out cow cow come out

p

J

Solo
out _____ come _____ out _____ cow _____

S
come out cow come out cow

A
out come out cow cow come out come out cow cow come

T
out come out cow come out cow cow come out come out cow cow come

B
cow come out cow come out

p

Solo

cow _____ come _____ out _____

S

A

out come out cow cow come out come out cow

T

out come out cow come out cow cow come out come out cow cow come

B

cow cow

Solo

come _____ out _____ cow _____

S

A

cow come out cow cow come out

T

out come out cow come out cow cow come out come out cow cow come

B

cow cow

L

Solo

S

A

T

B

cow come out

cow come out

out come out cow cow come out come out cow

cow

cow

Solo

S

A

T

B

cow come out

come out cow

cow

cow

cow

Stein Song #3

25

A Sonatina

from "A Sonatina Followed by Another"

 $\text{♩} = 88$

Soprano solo

Soprano *pp sempre* Take long, staggered breaths

Alto *pp sempre* Take long, staggered breaths

Tenor

Bass

Piano (rehearsal only) *pp sempre*

Solo

S

A

T *pp sempre*

B

[A] [B]

Speaker: I need her, she needs me,

Solo

I need her,

S

A

T

B



Speaker: she needs me,

Solo

she needs me, she needs me,

S

A

T

B

pp sempre

oo

5 C



Speaker: I need that she is splendidly robust.

Solo

I need that she is

S

A

T

B

D

Speaker: Please me by thinking at ease.

Solo

splen - did - ly ro - bust. Please me by

S

A

T

B

Speaker: She is gentle and considerate.

E

Solo *think-ing at ease. She*

S

A

T

B

Solo *is gen - - - tle and con - si - de - rate. She can do*

S

A

T

B

F

Speaker: And we find that to be quite enough to satisfy and not rebuff.

Solo

no more than be gen - - - tle and con - si - de - rate and

S

A

T

B

Solo

we find that to be quite e - nough to sa - - - fy and

S

A

T

B

G

Solo

not re - - buff.

S

A

T

B

Take long, staggered breaths

Speaker: Little singing charm can never do no harm.

Solo

Lit - tle sing - - - ing

S

A

T

B

Speaker: Little baby sweet can always be a treat.

Solo

charm can nev - er do no harm, lit - tle ba - by sweet can al - ways be

S

A

T

B

Speaker: And are sonatinas in music boxes and do the follow one after the other

H

Solo

a treat. And are son - a - ti - nas in mu - sic box - es and do they follow

S

A

T

B

Speaker: and are music boxes grind organs yes or no.

I

Solo

one af-ter the o-ther and are mu-sic box-es grind or-gans yes or no.

S

A

T

B

Speaker: I believe it and I told her so.

Speaker: and she believed it as I very well know.

Solo

I be-lieve it and I told her so and she be-

S

A

T

B

J

Speaker: I tell her so so.

Solo

lieved it as I ve - ry well know. I tell her so

S

A

T

B

K

Speaker: Oh no I love you so oh no.

Solo

so. Oh no

S

A

T

B

L

Solo

I love you so oh

S

A

T

B

Speaker: I have often heard it said that a skylark never goes to bed. I have often heard it said that they sing.

Solo

no. I have oft-en heard it said that a sky-lark nev-er goes to bed. I have oft-en heard it

S

A

T

B

M *Speaker:* I have often heard it said that they are suddenly ahead, and I have often heard it said that they sing.

Solo

said that they sing. — I have oft-en heard it said that they are sud-den-ly a-head and

S

A

T

B

N *Speaker:* I see the moon and the moon sees me,

Solo

I have oft-en heard it said that they sing. — I see the moon and the

S

A

T

B

Speaker: God bless the moon and God bless me.

Solo

moon sees me, _____ God bless the moon and _____ God bless me. _____

S

A

T

B

S

A

T

B

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp