

JULIAN BESSET

Perfect Imperfections

(SECULAR PSALMS)

for male voice sextet

A Conceit

p With Poise

Counter-Tenor 1
Per - fec - tion Im - per - fect is a new ___ tense, is _____

Counter-Tenor 2
Per - fec - tion Im - per - fect is a new ___ tense, is _____

Tenor
Per - fec - tion Im - per - fect ___ is a new ___ a new tense, _____

Baritone 1
Per - fec - tion Im - per - fect is a new tense, a new tense, a new tense, a new tense,

Baritone 2
Per - fec - tion Im - per - fect is a new tense, a new tense, a new tense, a new tense,

Bass
Per - fec - tion Im - per - fect is a new tense, a new tense, a new tense, a new tense,

Piano Reduction

5

CTen. 1
a new tense, ___ or ___ Im - per -

CTen. 2
a new tense, ___ or Im - per - fec - tion Per - - - fect.

T
is a new ___ tense, or Im - per - fec - tion Per - - - fect. It tends to att - end, or att -

B 1
___ a new ___ tense, or Im - - - per - - - fec - - - tion

B 2
___ a new ___ tense, or Im - - - per - - - fec - - - tion

B
___ a new ___ tense, or Im - - - per - - - fec - - - tion

5

Pno.

Perfect Imperfections

8

C.Ten. 1 *f* fec - tion Per - - - - - fect.

C.Ten. 2 *f* It tends to att - end, or att - ends to wait *p* Up - on in - tent. Per - - - - - fect

T *f* ends to wait to wait *p* Up - on in - tent. Per - - - - - fect Im - per - fec - tion

B 1 *f* Per - - - - - fect. Per - - - - - fect. *p* It tends to att - end, or att - ends

B 2 *f* Per - - - - - fect. Per - - - - - fect. *p* It tends to att - end, or att - ends

B *f* Per - - - - - fect. Per - - - - - fect. *p* It tends tends

Pno. *f* *p*

12

C.Ten. 1 *p* It tends

C.Ten. 2 Im - per - fec - tion should not En - dure; should not En - dure;

T *p* should not En - dure; Im - per - - - - - fect

B 1 to wait Up - on in - tent. Per - - - - - fect

B 2 to wait Up - on in - - - - - tent. Per - - - - - fect

B to att - end, or

Pno. *p*

Perfect Imperfections

15

CTen. 1
to — att - end,

CTen. 2
not — En - dure; should not En - dure; Per - fect

T
8 Im - per - fect Per - fec - tion can In vi - sage pam - pered.

B 1
Im - per - fec - tion should not En - dure; Im - per - fect Per - fec - tion — can —

B 2
Im - per - fec - tion — should not En - dure; Im - per - fect Per - fec - tion — can —

B
att - ends to wait — Up - on in - tent. Per - fect Im - per - fec - tion should not —

Pno.

18

CTen. 1
It tends — to att - end, A - bait - ing spi - ffl i - ca - tion. It en - vi - sa - ges

CTen. 2
Im - per - fec - tion A - bait - ing spi - ffl i - ca - tion. It en - vi - sa - ges

T
8 In vi - sage pam - pered. A - bait - ing spi - ffl i - ca - tion. It en - vi - sa -

B 1
— In vi - sage pam - pered. A - bait - ing spi - ffl i - ca - tion. It —

B 2
— In vi - sage pam - pered. A - bait - ing spi - ffl i - ca - tion. It —

B
— En - dure; A - bait - ing spi - ffl i - ca - tion. It —

Pno.

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22

C Ten. 1
a - scent On de - scen - ding, Re - tar - ding.

C Ten. 2
a - scent On de - scen - ding, Re - tar - ding, My own

T
8 ges a - scent On de - scen - ding, Re - tar - ding, My own

B 1
en - vi - sa - ges a - scent On de - scen - ding, Re - tar - ding, My own

B 2
en - vi - sa - ges a - scent On de - scen - ding, Re - tar - ding, My own

B
en - vi - sa - ges a - scent On de - scen - ding, Re - tar - ding, My own is ru - ddy

Pno.

26

C Ten. 1
My own is ru - ddy And scuffed

C Ten. 2
is ru - ddy And scuffed

T
8 is ru - ddy And scuffed Ne - ver

B 1
is ru - ddy And scuffed Ne -

B 2
is ru - ddy And scuffed Ne - ver shall a - ttain

B
And scuffed Ne - ver shall a -

Pno.

Perfect Imperfections

30

C Ten. 1
Ne - ver shall a - ttain Nor ob - tain

C Ten. 2
Ne - ver shall a - ttain Nor ob - tain

T
8 shall a - ttain Nor ob - tain

B 1
ver shall a - ttain Nor ob - tain

B 2
Nor ob - tain

B
ttain Nor ob - tain

Pno.

36

C Ten. 1
That which was o - ffered And ta - ken in vain Now cur -

C Ten. 2
That which was o - ffered And ta - ken in vain Now

T
8 That which was o - ffered And ta - ken

B 1
That which was o - ffered And ta - ken in vain Now

B 2
That which was o - ffered And ta - ken in vain

B
That which was

Pno.

41

C Ten. 1
sing my veins. My ten - dons are tense A - tten - tion fli - ckers

C Ten. 2
cur - sing my veins. My ten - dons are tense A -

T
8
in vain Now cur - sing my veins.

B 1
cur - sing my veins. My ten - dons are tense

B 2
Now cur - sing my veins. My ten - dons are tense

B
o - ffered My ten -

Pno.

48

C Ten. 1
and Spu - tters like wick.

C Ten. 2
tten - tion fli - ckers and Spu - tters like wick.

T
8
My ten - dons are tense A - tten - tion

B 1
A - tten - tion fli - ckers and Spu - tters like wick.

B 2
A - tten - tion fli - ckers

B
dons are tense

Pno.

Perfect Imperfections

52

CTen. 1 In - tense in - cense *rit.*

CTen. 2 In - tense in - cense *rit.*

T 8 fli - ckers and Spu - tters like wick. In - tense in - cense *rit.*

B 1 In - tense in - cense *rit.*

B 2 and Spu - tters like wick. In - tense in - cense *rit.*

B A - tten - tion fli - ckers *rit.*

Pno. *rit.*

56

CTen. 1 *pp* Ca - nnot pre - vail

CTen. 2 *pp* Ca - nnot pre - vail

T 8 *pp* In - tense in - cense Ca - nnot pre - vail A -

B 1 *pp* In - tense in - cense Ca - - -

B 2 *pp* In - tense in - cense Ca - - -

B *pp* In - tense in - cense Ca - - -

Pno. *pp*

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60

CTen. 1
A - - - - - gainst In - fec - tion.

CTen. 2
A - - - - - gainst In - fec - tion.

T
gainst In - fec - tion.

B 1
nnot pre - vail Ca - nnot pre - vail A - gainst In - fec - tion.

B 2
nnot pre - vail Ca - nnot pre - vail A - gainst In - fec - tion.

B
nnot pre - vail Ca - nnot pre - vail A - gainst In - fec - tion.

Pno.

Tripping Urchin

62 **With Conviction** *rit.* *a tempo* *mf*

CTen. 1
His game

CTen. 2
mf His game *p* war, *mf* is played *p* At night -

T
p His game is played At night -

B 1
mf His game is played At night - fall;

B 2
p His game is played At night -

B
p His game is night - fall; He

Pno.
mf *rit.* *sf* *mf* *p*

69 *mf* *f*

C Ten. 1 is played At night-fall; He runs a- gainst his Sha- dow.

C Ten. 2 fall; He runs a- gainst his Sha- dow. *ord. asp. ord. asp. ord. asp.*

T fall; He runs a- gainst his Sha- dow. Sha- dow. *ord. asp. ord. asp. ord. asp. ord.*

B 1 At night - fall; He runs a- gainst his Sha- dow.

B 2 fall; He runs a- gainst his

B runs a- gainst

Pno. *f*

72 *mf* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

C Ten. 1 The street

C Ten. 2 *ord.* He runs a- gainst his Sha- dow. He runs a- gainst his Sha- dow. The street

T The street is steep. He

B 1 Sha- dow. The street is steep. He runs

B 2 Sha- dow. The street is steep. He

B his Sha- dow. The street is steep. He runs coun- ter

Pno. *mp* *mf*

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C.Ten. 1 is steep. He runs coun - ter The slope; *mf* The swin - ging

C.Ten. 2 is steep. He runs coun - ter

T runs coun - ter The slope;

B 1 coun - ter The slope; The swin - ging lamp

B 2 runs coun - ter The slope; The swin - ging lamp

B The slope; The swin - ging

Pno.

81

C.Ten. 1 lamp O-ver-head Mag - ni - fies his Pro - jects. The mad-ding wall

C.Ten. 2 runs coun-ter The slope; The swin-ging lamp O - ver-head

T O - ver - O - ver - head Mag - ni - fies his Pro - jects.

B 1 O - ver - O - ver - head Mag-ni - fies Mag - ni - fies his Pro - jects. his Pro - jects.

B 2 The swin-ging lamp O - ver - O - ver - head Mag - ni - fies his Pro - jects. his Pro - jects.

B O - ver - O - ver - head Mag - ni - fies his Pro - jects. his

Pno.

85

C.Ten. 1 *f* *p*
 To his left E-choeshis spurts.

C.Ten. 2 *mp* *f* *rit.* *p*
 Mag - ni - fies his Pro-jects. The mad - ding wall To his left E-choes his

T *p* *f* *rit.* *p*
 Pro - jects. The mad - ding wall To his

B 1 *p* *f* *rit.* *p*
 Pro - jects. The mad-ding wall To his left E-choes his spurts. Now his sha-dowed

B 2 *p* *f* *rit.* *p*
 Pro - jects. The mad - ding wall To his left E -

B *p*
 Pro - jects. The mad-ding wall To

Pno. *p* *f* *rit.* *p*

91

C.Ten. 1 *molto rit.* *mf* *a tempo*
 Now his sha-dowed selves Re - cede, Be - fore

C.Ten. 2 *molto rit.* *mf*
 spurts. Now his sha - dowed selves Re - cede,

T *molto rit.* *mf*
 left E - choes his spurts. Now his sha - dowed

B 1 *molto rit.* *mf*
 selves Re - cede, Be-fore the next Orb, Then fall wa-xing a-gain wa - ning. de-feat: this time,

B 2 *molto rit.* *mf*
 choes his moo-ning be-hind, Be-fore And a - gain He con-cedes A game Next time

B *molto rit.* *mf*
 his left E - choes his spurts. Now his sha - dowed selves

Pno. *molto rit.* *mf* *a tempo*

Perfect Imperfections

96 *f*

C Ten. 1 *f* the next moo-ning Orb, Then fall be - hind, Be - fore wa - xing a - gain *rit.*

C Ten. 2 *f* Be - fore the next moo - ning Orb, Then fall be - hind,

T *f* selves Re - cede, Be - fore the next moo - ning Orb,

B 1 *f* war, war, And re - treats.

B 2 *f* war, And re - treats.

B *f* Re - cede, Be - fore the next

Pno. *f* *rit.*

The Lecturing Gardener

100 *f* **With Gusto**

C Ten. 1 *f* His knees Are es - sen - tial, Dun - ga - rees Ex - is - ten - tial. Ge - nu - flec -

C Ten. 2 *f* His knees Are es - sen - tial, Dun - ga - rees

T *f* His knees Are es - Ge - nu - Helps Re - flec - ting. Helps Helps Helps

B 1 *f* sen - flec - ting *half shout!* yelps yelps yelps yelps

B 2 *f* tial, How - ev - er he yelps When - e - ver a thorn, rai - ses his scorn.

B *f* Dun - ga - rees Ex - is -

Pno. *f*

Perfect Imperfections

104

C.Ten. 1 *rit.* *half shout!*
 ting Helps Re - flec - ting. How - ev - er he yelps When - e - ver

C.Ten. 2 *rit.*
 Ex - is - ten - tial. Ge - nu - flec - ting Helps Helps Re - flec - ting. How - ev - er

T *rit.*
 Helps When - e - ver a thorn, rai - ses his scorn. Feig - ning in - dif - fe -

B 1 *rit.*
 yelps yelps When - e - ver a thorn, rai - ses his scorn. Feig - ning in - dif - fe - rence

B 2 *rit.*
 Feig - ning in - dif - fe - rence He pre - tends dif - fi -

B *rit.*
 ten - tial. Ge - nu - flec - ting Helps Re - flec - ting. He pre -

Pno. *rit.*

108

C.Ten. 1

C.Ten. 2 *half shout!*
 he yelps When - e - ver a thorn,

T
 rence He pre - tends

B 1 *Hum nonchalantly!*
 He pre -

B 2
 dence And no mu - ti - ny A - gainst

B
 tends dif - fi - dence And no

Pno.

111

C Ten. 1
rai - ses his scorn. Feig - ning in - dif - fe - rence He pre - tends

C Ten. 2
scorn. Feig - ning in - dif - fe - rence

T
dif - fi - dence And no mu - ti - ny A - gainst

B 1
tends dif - fi - dence And no mu - ti - ny A - gainst

B 2
Na - ture's boun - ty. The worms cry out "Leave us a loam",

B
mu - ti - ny A - gainst Na - ture's

Pno.

114

C Ten. 1
dif - fi - dence And no mu - ti - ny A - gainst

C Ten. 2
He pre - tends dif - fi - dence And no mu - ti - ny A - gainst

T
Na - ture's boun - ty. The worms cry out

B 1
Na - ture's boun - ty. boun - ty. The worms cry out

B 2
"Leave us a loam", The worms cry out

B
boun - ty. The worms cry out

Pno.

118

C.Ten. 1

C.Ten. 2

T

B 1

B 2

B

Pno.

But like a lout

Na-ture's boun - ty. The worms cry out "Leave us a loam",

He leaves

But like a lout He leaves no

But like a lout He leaves no stone

But like a lout He leaves no

123

C.Ten. 1

C.Ten. 2

T

B 1

B 2

B

Pno.

He leaves

no stone

stone Un - turned. O - bli-vious,

stone Un - turned. O - bli-vious, Un - per - turbed,

Un - turned. no stone Un-turned.

stone Un - turned. no stone

u - ses Na - ture

per - He u - ses Na - ture

To de - li - ver a lec - ture.

Diogenes's Catch

130 Nobly, Dirgelike

C.Ten. 1

C.Ten. 2

T

B 1

B 2

B

Pno.

Al - ways say - ing

Ne - ver bot - tom of the bar - rel, He col - lects stuff Al - ways say - ing

Ne - ver bot - tom of the bar - rel,

Ne - ver bot - tom of the bar - rel,

Ne - ver bot - tom of the bar - rel,

Ne - ver bot - tom of the bar - rel,

mp

135

C.Ten. 1

C.Ten. 2

T

B 1

B 2

B

Pno.

it's 'nough!

He col - lects stuff Al - ways say - ing it's 'nough!

He col - lects stuff Al - ways say - ing it's 'nough!

He col - lects stuff stuff Al - ways say - ing it's 'nough!

He col - lects stuff Al - ways say - ing it's 'nough!

He col - lects stuff Al - ways say - ing it's 'nough!

He col - lects stuff Al - ways say - ing it's 'nough!

139

f

C.Ten. 1
Not ha - ving's the pe - ril, Ne - ver scrap,

C.Ten. 2
Not ha - ving's the pe - ril, Ne - ver scrap, A plas - tic

T
Not ha - ving's the pe - ril, Ne - ver scrap, A plas - tic

B 1
Not ha - ving's the pe -

B 2
Not ha - ving's the pe -

B
Not ha - ving's

Pno.
f

142

rit.

C.Ten. 1
A plas - tic wrap. On - ly one room, No more room, No more room, "Rake it all,

C.Ten. 2
wrap. On - ly one room, No more room,

T
wrap. "Rake it all,

B 1
ril, Ne - ver scrap, No more room,

B 2
ril, Ne - ver scrap, room,

B
Ne - ver scrap, On - ly one

Pno.
rit.

146

C.Ten. 1 *p* Mu - ses he, — All at sea In his sack. —

C.Ten. 2 "Rake it all, — Mu - ses he, — All at sea In his sack. —

T *p* Mu - ses he, —

B 1 To that mall — Mu - ses he, —

B 2 To that Mu - ses he, —

B mall Back"! To that — Back"! Back"! Back"! —

Pno. *p*

The Wonderer

152 *mf*

C.Ten. 1 *mf* Con - flic - ting ac - counts, For cir - cum - ven - ting

C.Ten. 2 *mf* Con - flic - ting ac - counts, For — cir - cum - ven - ting

T *mf* Con - flic - ting ac - counts, For cir - cum - ven - ting Re - a - li -

B 1 *mf* Con - flic - ting ac - counts, For cir - cum - ven - ting Re - a - li - ty. —

B 2 *mf* Con - flic - ting ac - counts, For cir - cum - ven - ting Re - a - li -

B *mf* Con - flic - ting ac - counts, For For

Pno. *mf*

157

C.Ten. 1
It a - mounts To pre - ven - ting See - ing it through:

C.Ten. 2
Re - a - li - ty. No - thing to chew In -

T
ty. It a - mounts To pre - ven - ting See - ing

B 1
It a - mounts To pre - ven - ting See -

B 2
ty. It a - mounts To pre - ven - ting See -

B
For cir -

Pno.

162

C.Ten. 1
No - thing to chew No - thing to chew

C.Ten. 2
con - sis - tent scrib - bling

T
it through: No - thing to chew

B 1
ing it through: No - thing to chew In - con - sis - tent

B 2
ing it through: No - thing to chew

B
cum - ven - ting Re - a - li - ty.

Pno.

A Conceit

Perfection Imperfect is a new tense,
 or Imperfection Perfect.
 It tends to attend,
 Or attends to wait
 Upon intent.

Perfect Imperfection should not
 Endure;
 Imperfect Perfection can
 In visage pampered.
 Abaiting spifflication.

It envisages ascent
 On descending,
 Retarding.
 My own is ruddy
 And scuffed

Never shall attain
 Nor obtain
 That which was offered
 And taken in vain
 Now cursing my veins.

My tendons are tense
 Attention flickers and
 Sputters like wick.
 Intense incense
 Cannot prevail
 Against Infection.

Tripping Urchin

His game is played
 At nightfall;
 He runs against his
 Shadow.
 The street is steep.
 He runs counter
 The slope;
 The swinging lamp
 Overhead
 Magnifies his
 Projects.
 The madding wall
 To his left
 Echoes his spurts.
 Now his shadowed selves
 Recede,
 Before the next mooning
 Orb,
 Then fall behind,
 Before waxing again
 And again waning.
 He concedes defeat :
 A game this time,
 Next time war,
 And retreats.

The lecturing gardener

His knees
 Are essential,
 Dungarees
 Existential.
 Genuflecting
 Helps
 Reflecting.
 However he yelps
 Whenever a thorn,
 raises his scorn.
 Feigning indifference
 He pretends diffidence
 And no mutiny
 Against Nature's bounty.
 The worms cry out
 "Leave us a loam",
 But like a lout
 He leaves no stone
 Unturned.
 Oblivious,
 Unperturbed,
 Invidious,
 He uses Nature
 To deliver a lecture.

Diogenes's catch

Never bottom of the barrel,
 He collects stuff
 Always saying it's 'nough!
 Not having's the peril,
 Never scrap,
 A plastic wrap.
 Only one room,
 No more room,
 "Rake it all,
 To that mall,
 Back"!
 Muses he,
 All at sea
 In his sack.

The Wonderer

Conflicting accounts,
 For circumventing
 Reality. It amounts
 To preventing
 Seeing it through :
 Nothing to chew
 Inconsistent scribbling
 For circumscribing
 Geometric patterns,
 All vain quibbling
 Intent on describing
 With diogenesick lanterns,
 Projecting patches
 Of light like matches
 On an albicant
 Shrub. As an infant,
 He munched soap,
 Sitting in a tub.
 There's the rub,
 A last trope.