

# **Precarity Songs**

for vocal quartet

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Christopher Fisher-Lochhead



## **Precarity Songs [2015-21] for vocal quartet**

*for Quince*

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Whether due to the structural instability of the gig economy, the oppressive finitude of temporary work, or the ever-present threat of imprisonment and deportation imposed on undocumented workers, precariousness has become the defining characteristic of a growing number of modern workers. This nascent economic class, the precariat, is more susceptible to economic coercion and therefore less given to self organizing around a politics of solidarity; in other words, it is the cowed and pliable labor source of which capital dreams. *Precarity Songs* confronts this economic reality through words and musical time.

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*Precarity Songs* was premiered by Quince at New York's DiMenna Center on March 9th, 2019.

**2. Four Until L8**  
(text by the composer)

Who is it,  
that in expectancy binds  
brittle matchsticks?

It might be  
the last man  
to leave the celebration.

Who is it,  
that in expectancy binds  
brittle matchsticks?

It could be  
the last man.

I regard this clock,  
its face red,  
its hands without cufflinks.

Its face is red.  
This perforated night  
is clumsy and red-faced.

What furtive absences  
will supersede this thick,  
thick, thick moment?

Absences in wood,  
in metal,  
and in flesh.

I regard this clock,  
its face red,  
its hours without possession.  
Its face is red.

Who is it,  
that in expectancy binds  
brittle matchsticks?

I thought I heard you say  
that silence cannot be equivocal,  
but it was just silence  
after all.

# 1. Précis

Chris Fisher-Lochhead

haltingly, ♩ = 56

Amada

Carrie

Liz

Kayleigh

[m] [ə] [m] [ə] [ə] [m] [ə] [m] [ə]

6

A

C

L

K

[a] [m] [a] [m] [ə] [ə] [u] [a] [m]

[a] [m] [a] [m] [ə] [ə] [u] [a] [m]

[a] [m] [a] [m] [ə] [ə] [u] [a] [m]

[a] [m] [a] [m] [ə] [ə] [u] [a] [m]

\*throughout, reserve vibrato for the ends of notes, and even then keep it subtle.

A

11

A *mp* > *pp* *mp* > *pp* < > *p* < > , *mp* > *pp*

C *mp* > *pp* *mp* > *pp* < > *p* < > , *mp* > *pp*

L *mp* > *pp* *mp* > *pp* < > *p* < > , *mp* > *pp*

K *mp* > *pp* *mp* > *pp* < > *p* < > , *mp* > *pp*

15

A *mp* > *pp* < > *mp* > *pp* < > *mf* > *p* < > *mp* < > *mf* *mp* > *pp* ◡

C *mp* > *pp* < > *mp* > *pp* < > *mf* > *p* < > *mp* < > *mf* *mp* > *pp* ◡

L *mp* > *pp* < > *mp* > *pp* < > *mf* > *p* < > *mp* < > *mf* *mp* > *pp* ◡

K *mp* > *pp* < > *mp* > *pp* < > *mf* > *p* < > *mp* < > *mf* *mp* > *pp* ◡

**B**

20

A *p* < *mp* *p* < *mf* *mp* < > , *p* < *mp* *p* < *mf*

C *p* < *mp* *p* < *mf* *mp* < > , *p* < *mp* *p* < *mf*

L *p* < *mp* *p* < *mf* *mp* < > , *p* < *mp* *p* < *mp*

K *p* < *mp* *p* < *mf* *mp* < > , *p* < *mp* *p* < *mp*

[m] [ə]— [m] [ə]— [ə]— [m] [ə]— [m] [ə]—>[ə] [a]

[m] [ə]— [m] [ə]— [ə]— [m] [ə]— [m] [ə]—>[ə] [a]

[m] [ə]— [m] [ə]— [ə]— [m] [ə]— [m] [ə]—> [ə]

[m] [ə]— [m] [ə]— [ə]— [m] [ə]— [m] [ə]—> [ə]

25

A *p* *mf* > *p* *mp* < *mf* < *p* < *pp*

C *p* *mf* > *p* *mp* < *mf* < *p* < *pp*

L *mf* > *p* *mf* > *p* *mp* < *mf* < *p* *mp* > *pp*

K *mf* > *p* *mf* > *p* *mp* < *mf* < *p* *mp* > *pp*

[m]— [a] [m]— [ə]— [ə]—>[u]—>[a] [m]

[m]— [a] [m]— [ə]— [ə]—>[u]—>[a] [m]

[a] [m]— [a] [m]— [ə]— [ə]—>[u] [a] [m]

[a] [m]— [a] [m]— [ə]— [ə]—>[u] [a] [m]

C

30 *pp* < *p*      *pp* < *mp*      *p* < > ,      *p* < *mp*      *p* ————— *mp*

A [m] [ə]—      [m] [ə]—      [ə]—      [m] [ə]—      [m] [ə]—>[ə] [a]

C [m] [ə]—      [m] [ə]—      [ə]—      [m] [ə]—      [m] [ə]—>[ə] [a]

L [m] [ə]—      [m] [ə]—      [ə]—      [m] [ə]—      [m] [ə]—>[ə]

K [m] [ə]—      [m] [ə]—      [ə]—      [m] [ə]—      [m] [ə]—>[ə]

35 *mf*      *mp*      *mf*      *p*      *mp* > *pp*

A [m]—      [a] [m]—      [ə]—      [ə] —————> [u]      [a] [m]

C [m]—      [a] [m]—      [ə] —————> [u]      [a] [m]

L [a] [m]—      [a] [m]—      [ə] —————> [u]      [a] [m]

K [a] [m]—      [a] [m]—      [ə]      [ə] —————> [u]      [a] [m]



# 2. Four until L8

Chris Fisher-Lochhead

with a gossamer clarity (♩ = 92)

Amanda  
 Carrie  
 Liz  
 Kayleigh

Who is it, that in ex-pec-tan-cy binds brit-tle match-sticks? It might be

8

A  
 C  
 L  
 K

the last man to leave the cel-e-bra tion... Who is it, that in ex-pec-tan-cy

15

A  
 C  
 L  
 K

binds brit-tle match - sticks? It could be... the last man...

24 **B** *mp*

A I re gard this clock, its face red, its hands with out cuff links...

C *mp* I re gard this clock, its face red, its hands with out cuff links...

L *mp* I re gard this clock, its face red, its hands with out cuff links...

K *mp* I re gard this clock, its face red, its hands with out cuff links...

29 **C** *mf* *mp*

A Its face is red. This per-for-at-ed night is clum-sy and red-faced. What fur-tive ab-sen-ces

C *mf* *mp* Its face is red. This per-for-at-ed night is clum-sy and red-faced. What fur-tive ab-sen-ces

L *mf* *mp* Its face is red. This per-for-at-ed night is clum-sy and red-faced. What fur-tive ab-sen-ces

K *mf* *mp* Its face is red. This per-for-at-ed night is clum-sy and red-faced. What fur-tive ab-sen-ces

34 *mf* *p* *f* *p*

A will su-per sede this thick, thick, thick, mo- ment?

C *mf* *p* *f* *p* will su-per sede this thick, thick, thick, mo- ment?

L *mf* *p* *f* *p* will su-per sede this thick, thick, thick, mo- ment?

K *mf* *p* *f* *p* will su-per sede this thick, thick, thick, mo- ment?

39 *mp*

A Ab-sen-ces in\_ wood, in met al, and in flesh.

C Ab-sen-ces in\_ wood, in met al, and in flesh.

L Ab-sen-ces in\_ wood, in met al, and in flesh.

K Ab-sen-ces in\_ wood, in met al, and in flesh.

45 **D** *mf* *pp* *p*

A I re- gard\_ this clock, its face red, its hours with-out pos-ses-sion. its face is

C I re- gard\_ this clock its face red, its hours with-out pos-ses-sion. its face is

L I re- gard\_ this clock its face red, its hours with-out pos-ses-sion. its face is

K I re- gard\_ this clock its face red, its hours with-out pos-ses-sion. its face is

50 **E** *mp*

A red. Who is it, that in ex-pec-tan-cy binds brit-tle match sticks?

C red. Who is it, that in ex-pec-tan-cy binds brit-tle match sticks?

L red. Who is it, that in ex-pec-tan-cy binds brit-tle match sticks?

K red. Who is it, that in ex-pec-tan-cy binds brit-tle match sticks?\_

8

56 **F** *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*, *mf*

A I thought I heard you say that si-lence can-not be e-qui-vo cal but it was

C *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

I [m] that si - lence [m] but it was

L *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

I [m] that si - lence [m] but it was

K *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

I [m] that si - lence [m] but it was

poco rit.

62 *p* *pp*

A just si lence af - ter all. [u]

C *mp* *p* *pp*

[m] af - ter all. [u]

L *mp* *p* *pp*

[m] af - ter all. [u]

K *mp* *p* *pp*

[m] af - ter all. [u]