

Nell Shaw Cohen

Memory

I. Senses

II. Recollection

III. Inward Action

IV. This Power of Memory

For Solo Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass

Text from St. Augustine's "Confessions"
English Translation by Henry Chadwick

Excerpt from St. Augustine's "Confessions", Book X
Translated by Henry Chadwick

(Note: a section of the original text has been removed for this setting.)

Memory preserves in distinct particulars and general categories all the perceptions which have penetrated, each by its own route of entry. Thus light and all colors and bodily shapes enter by the eyes; by the ears all kinds of sounds; all odors by the entrance of the nostrils; all tastes by the door of the mouth. The power of sensation in the entire body distinguishes what is hard or soft, hot or cold, smooth or rough, heavy or light, whether external or internal to the body. Memory's huge cavern, with its mysterious, secret and indescribable nooks and crannies, receives all these perceptions, to be recalled when needed and reconsidered. Every one of them enters into memory, each by its own gate, and is put on deposit there. The objects themselves do not enter, but the images of the perceived objects are available to the thought recalling them. But who can say how images are created even though it may be clear by which senses they are grasped and stored within.

For even when I am in darkness and silence, in my memory I can produce colors at will, and distinguish between white and black and between whatever colors I wish. Sounds do not invade and disturb my consideration of what my eyes absorb, even though they are present and as it were hide in an independent storehouse. On demand, if I wish, they can be immediately present. With my tongue silent and my throat making no sound, I can sing what I wish. The images of colors, which are no less present, do not intrude themselves or interrupt when I draw upon another treasury containing sounds which flowed in through the ears. So I recall at pleasure other memories which have been taken in and collected together by other senses. I distinguish the odor of lilies from that of violets without smelling anything at all. I prefer honey to a sweet wine, a smooth taste to a rough one, not actually tasting or touching at the moment, but by recollection.

These actions are inward in the vast hall of my memory. There sky, land and sea are available to me together with all the sensations I have been able to experience in them, except for those which I have forgotten. There also I meet myself and recall what I am, what I have done, and when and where and how I was affected when I did it.

This power of memory is great, very great, my God. It is a vast and infinite profundity. Who has plumbed its bottom? This power is that of my mind and is a natural endowment, but I myself cannot grasp the totality of what I am.

Memory - I. Senses

St. Augustine
trans. Henry Chadwick

Nell Shaw Cohen

Drone on C throughout.

$\text{♩} = 85-95$

ALTO

Mem - o - ry pre - serves in dis - tinct par - tic - u - lars and gen - er - al cat - e - go - ries —

7

all the per - cep - tions which have pen - e - trat - ed, each by its own route of en - try.

11

Thus light and all col - ors and bod - i - ly shapes en - ter by the eyes;

16

by the ears all kinds of sounds; — all o - dors by the en - trance of the nos - trils; all tastes by the

20

TENOR

door of the mouth. — The pow - er of sen - sa - tion in the en - tire —

26

bod - y dis - tin - guish - es what is hard or soft, hot or cold, smooth or rough, heav - y or light,

32

BASS

wheth - er ex - ter - nal or in - ter - nal to the bod - y. Mem - o - ry's hu - u - u - uge

38

cav - ern, — with its mys - te - ri - ous, se - cret and in - de - scrib - a - ble nooks and cran - nies,

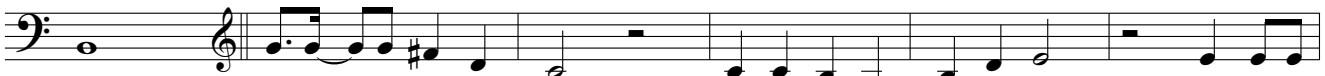
43



re-ceives all these per-cep - tions, to be re-called when need-ed and re-con-sid -

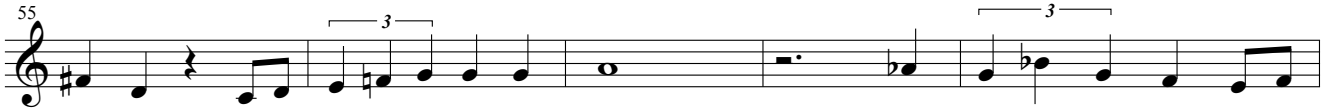
49

SOPRANO



ered. Ev-e - ry one of them en- ters in - to mem-o - ry, each by its

55



own gate, and is put on de-pos - it there. The ob - jects them - selves do not

60



en - ter, but the im - ag - es of the per - ceived ob - jects are a - vail - a - ble to the thought re -

64

TENOR



call - ing them. But who can say how im-ag-es are cre - at - ed e-ven

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though it may be clear by_ which sens - es they are grasped and stored with - in.