

I'm Sick of "Musnt's"

for two-part treble chorus and piano

RUSSELL NADEL (ASCAP)

(2014)

Duration: c. 3'00"



Text:

Oh, I'm sick of "musn'ts," said Dorothy D.
Sick of musn'ts, as I can be.
From early dawn till the close of day
I hear a musn't, and never a *may*.
All day long I'm told what I musn't do,
By teachers, preachers and parents too.
They judge me and shake their heads all day long -
Everything I do seems wrong!

It's "you musn't lie there like a sleepy head,"
And "you musn't sit up when it's time for bed."
"You musn't cry when I comb your curls,"
"You musn't play with those noisy girls."
"You musn't be silent when spoken to,"
"You musn't chatter as parrots do."
"You musn't be pert, and you musn't be proud,"
"You musn't giggle or laugh aloud."
"You musn't rumple your nice clean dress,"
"You musn't nod, in the place of a 'yes.'"

So all day long the musn'ts go,
'Til I dream at night of a horrible row
Of goblin "musn'ts" with monstrous eyes
That stare at me in a shocked surprise.
Oh, I hope I will live to see the day
When someone will say to me, "Dear, you may."
For I'm sick of "musn'ts," said Dorothy D.
Sick of musn'ts, as I can be.

- Ella Wheeler Wilcox,
from *The Beautiful Land of Nod* (1892)
(*some text added or altered by the composer)

Program Notes:

I found this text hilarious, and still amazingly relevant and familiar even after more than 120 years – Wilcox really captured the irony and frustration that sometimes comes with being a child, and I’m sure her narrator’s plea for a “may” will resonate with children of all ages! Help students notice the three main melodic themes that return throughout the piece (mm. 3-11, mm. 43-47 in Voice 2, and mm. 50-54 in Voice 2), and encourage singers to make the performance their own with the addition of student-suggested facial expressions, hand gestures, body language, and even lyric substitutions (as suggested in the Performance Notes below)! Young singers should make sure to come across as sophisticated and frustrated (not whiny) during this song.

I am most grateful for Caroline Crocker’s patience and assistance in editing this work through many drafts, and to Caroline Goldstein and the Georgia chapter of the American Choral Directors’ Association for helping bring this piece to life!

– Russell Nadel
March 2014

Performance Notes:

Mm. 20-26 and 37-40: If necessary, Voice 2 may be omitted to simplify the music.

M. 49: The lower pitches are preferred, if they can be sung gently.

Mm. 55-72: All lyrics may be sung as written, or may be revised by the singers to reflect “musn’t” that the singers hear in their own lives: “You musn’t play Xbox® after eight,” etc.

M. 66: For comic effect, a solo singer may call out “Polly wanna cracker?” during the rest.

M. 84: The Voice 1 high A is optional. The director may also choose to have Voice 1 singers leap to the A instead of *glissando* to the A.

Vocal Ranges:



Voice 1



Voice 2

Please see www.russellnadel.com for a complete list of published and unpublished compositions, excerpts of scores and audio recordings, upcoming performance announcements, teaching resources, and more.

I'M SICK OF "MUSNT'S"

Ella Wheeler Wilcox
additional text by Russell Nadel

RUSSELL NADEL (ASCAP)

Freely *f* **drammatico**

VOICE 1 "Oh, I'm

VOICE 2 *f* **drammatico**
"Oh, I'm

Piano

f *rit.* *3* *8va* *3* *8va* *ff*

r.h. *l.h.* *Ped.*

Moderato (♩ = 112)

V. 1 *mf*
sick of 'mus- nt's,'" said Do-ro thy Dee, "Sick of mus-nt's, as I can be. "From

V. 2 *mf*
sick of 'mus- nt's,'" said Do-ro thy Dee, "Sick of mus-nt's, as I can be. "From

Pno. *p*

2

8

A

V. 1
ear-ly dawn till the close of day I hear a mus-n't, and ne-ver a **may**. All day long I'm told

V. 2
ear-ly dawn till the close of day I hear a mus-n't, and ne-ver a **may**.

Pno.

cresc. *f* *p*

V. 1
what I mus-n't do by tea-chers, prea-chers and pa-rents too.

V. 2
mf
They judge me and shake their heads

Pno.

mfp *sfp cresc.*

8^{vb}

molto rit.

V. 1
f
Ev' - ry - thing I do seems wrong!

V. 2
f
all day long: Ev' - ry - thing I do seems wrong!

Pno.

f

Red.

B Largo, prim and resigned (♩ = 92)

V. 1 *mp* *mf*
It's, "You mus-n't lie there like a sleep - y - head," And, "You mus-n't sit up when it's

V. 2 *p* *mf* *p legato*
It's, "You mus-n't lie there like a sleep-y- head!"

Pno. *mf distinto* *mp* *p*

V. 1 *poco a poco accel.* *f* suddenly directed to Voice 2 singers
time for bed." "You mus n't cry when I comb your curls," "You musn't play with those

V. 2 *mp stacc.* *mp legato*
"Don't sit up when it's time for bed!" "Don't cry when I comb your curls!"

Pno.

V. 1 *mf*
noi - sy girls." "You mus-n't chat-ter as

V. 2 *mf* responding to Voice 1 singers
"You mus-n't be si - lent when spo - ken to,"

Pno. *ff sub.* *p sub.*