



Bettina Sheppard
Love is Anterior to Life

Five Part Mixed Choir

Lyrics

*Love— is anterior to Life—
Posterior—to Death—
Initial of Creation, and
The Exponent of Breath.*

- Emily Dickinson

Program Note

Love is Anterior to Life is part of a larger song cycle of Emily Dickinson poetry settings originally performed at Hunter College's Lang Recital Hall. It has been professionally recorded on C4: The Choral Composer/Conductor Collective's second album *Cornerstones*. Excerpts have been included in concerts at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and at New York City Center.

The four-line poem appears in Dickinson's idiosyncratic style of broken textual lines interrupted by dashes. Each line is brilliantly separate and concise while allowing a sense of flow and eternity. Sopranos, altos and tenors are each assigned one line with its own melody and metrical form, which is then repeated throughout. Only the basses sing the entire poem, while the second alto simply sings the word "love." We feel the choppy nature of the poem with its distinct thoughts, but also the repetitive, eternal cycle of life and death.

- Bettina Sheppard

Love is Anterior to Life

Emily Dickinson

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Steady rhythm ♩ = 96

SOPRANO 1

SOPRANO 2

ALTO 1
mf
Love is an-ter-i-or to life... Love is an-ter-i-or to life... Love is an-ter-i-or to life...

ALTO 2
mf
Love...

TENOR

BASS

4

S. 1

S. 2
mf
Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i -

A. 1
Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life... Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life... Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life...

A. 2
Love_ Love_ Love_

T.

B.

7

S. 1

S. 2
or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos -

A. 1
Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._

A. 2
Love_ Love_ Love_

T.
mf
In - i - tial of cre - a - tion. In - i -

B.

10

S. 1
mf
The ex - po - nent of breath. The ex -

S. 2
ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death.

A. 1
Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._

A. 2
Love_ Love_ Love_

T.
tial of cre - a - tion. In - i - tial of cre - a - tion. In -

B.

13

S. 1
po- nent of breath. The ex - po- nent of breath. The ex -

S. 2
Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to

A. 1
Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._

A. 2
Love_ Love_ Love_

T.
i - tial of cre - a - tion. In - i - tial of cre - a - tion.

B.
f
Love is an - ter - i - or to life,

16

S. 1
po- nent of breath. The ex - po- nent of breath. The ex -

S. 2
death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i -

A. 1
Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._

A. 2
Love_ Love_ Love_

T.
In - i - tial of cre - a - tion. In - i - tial of cre - a -

B.
Pos - ter - i - or to death, In - i - tial of cre - a - tion and the

19

S. 1
po- nent of breath. The ex - po- nent of breath. The ex -

S. 2
or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos -

A. 1
Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._

A. 2
Love_ Love_ Love_

T.
tion. In - i - tial of cre - a - tion. In - i - tial of cre - a -

B.
ex - po - nent of breath.

22

S. 1
po- nent of breath. The ex - po- nent of breath. The ex -

S. 2
ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death.

A. 1
Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an-ter - i - or to life._

A. 2
Love_ Love_ Love_

T.
tion. In - i - tial of cre - a - tion. In - i - tial of cre -

B.
f
Love is an - ter - i - or to life,

25

S. 1
po - nent of breath. The ex - po - nent of

S. 2
Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i -

A. 1
Love_ is an - ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an - ter - i - or to life._

A. 2
Love_ Love_

T.
a - - - tion. In - i - tial of cre - a - -

B.
Pos - ter - i - or to death, In - i - tial of

27

S. 1
breath. The ex - po - nent of breath.

S. 2
or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death. Pos - ter - i - or to death.

A. 1
Love_ is an - ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an - ter - i - or to life._ Love_ is an - ter - i - or to life._

A. 2
Love_ Love_ Love_

T.
tion. In - i - tial of cre - a - - tion.

B.
cre - a - - tion and the ex - po - nent of breath.