

I AM BREAD

NICOLA LEFANU

This scena for soprano and piano sets a poem by the Irish poet Brendan Kennelly. The setting lasts about seven minutes; note that the word order is slightly changed from the original poem as given below. I composed it in 1987 for the soprano Tracey Chadwell, who gave the premiere at the Brighton Festival that year.

Bread

Someone else cut off my head
In a golden field.
Now I am re-created

By her fingers. This
Moulding is more delicate
Than a first kiss,

More deliberate than her own
Rising up
And lying down.

Even at my weakest, I am
Finer than anything
In this legendary garden

Yet I am nothing till
She runs her fingers through me
And shapes me with her skill.

The form that I shall bear
Grows round and white.
It seems I comfort her

Even as she slits my face
And stabs my chest.
Her feeling for perfection is

Absolute.
So I am glad to go through fire
And come out

Shaped like her dream.
In my way
I am all that can happen to men.
I came to life at her fingerends.
I will go back into her again.

Brendan Kennelly

