

R O R E M

ned r o r e m c e n t e n n i a l

Festive alleluias (1991)

Five Armenian love songs (1987)

Four madrigals (1948)

From an unknown past (1951)

I feel death... (1953)

In time of pestilence (1973)

Ode to man (2005)

Pilgrim strangers (1984)

Three poems by Baudelaire (1986)

Virelai (1961)



THE ESOTERICS
Directed by Eric Banks

Saturday | 21 October 2023 | 8pm
Plymouth United Church of Christ
1217 6th Avenue | Seattle

Sunday | 22 October 2023 | 3pm
St John's Episcopal Church
114 20th Avenue SE | Olympia

About tonight's program

Dear friends,

Since it is relatively simple to find information about the extraordinary life and work of Ned Rorem online, I will refer you to the composer's own website - www.nedrorem.net - where you can read all about Rorem and his music. If you've read about the concert on The Esoterics' website, then you've already seen the thumbnail sketch that we wrote about him there. Instead of filling this page with biographical information that you can find more eloquent and readily online, I would rather take this space to share a few recollections about Rorem, and to tell you a little about the concert program.

My very first exposure to Ned Rorem was through a dog that belonged to one of The Esoterics' founding members, Tom Jewell (who occasionally still sings with the group). When I first moved to Seattle, I met Tom in Seattle Pro Musica, and upon a visit to his house, I was greeted by Ned, his cocker spaniel. When I asked Tom about the origin of his dog's name, he asked me, very pointedly: "Have you never heard of Ned Rorem?" Of course, at 21 years old, I knew everything - so I laughed and pretended that I had. A few weeks later, I remember seeing a shelf FULL of Rorem's diaries from Paris and New York in the University Book Store. I remember thinking "I needed to learn more about this guy..."

The following summer, I worked at the UW as an accompanist to the various voice studios there. Several of the students were working on solo songs by Rorem, and it was my job to play for their lessons and recitals. It was then that I discovered Rorem the composer -- lyrical, elegant, temperamental, even a bit nostalgic. I was so taken with Rorem's writing that a couple years later, I performed a cycle of his songs in a recital of arts songs with Will Dean (who is also singing in this weekend's concert). I remember performing "Such beauty as hurts to behold" and "Youth, day, old age, and night" -- glorious songs that remain with me 30 years later. Although I never met Rorem personally, his music spoke deeply to me -- not only as a gay man, but as an artist who never truly cared about what others were doing or thinking...

Sam Beckert, another one of the singers in this weekend's concerts, worked at music store at the University of Utah when he was an undergraduate there. One day, Rorem (who taught composition briefly at UU) stopped in the store and was looking around. When Sam encountered this "customer," he immediately realized that it was the composer, who was just making sure that the store was selling his own music.

When Philip Barnes, the conductor of the St Louis Chamber Chorus, commissioned Rorem in 2004 to compose *Ode to man* - the cycle that starts our program, the composer insisted that the conductor (whose day-job is classics professor) to translate Sophocles' *Antigone* himself. Not only did Rorem refuse to pay the rights to the Penguin Classics translation of the text, he wasn't satisfied with Barnes' first attempt at rendering Sophocles. Rorem called Barnes from his home in Nantucket, while cooking fish, and informed him that his translation "left precious little space for a composer to insert something of himself." He needed to be less slavish in the way he translated the Greek. Click. End of call. Not exactly "warm and fuzzy."

For as light and romantic as much of Rorem's vocal music is, much of his choral music sets texts that are serious and quite dark. Rorem composed a lot of sacred Christian choral music (which I have not included in this program), and his secular choral music explores themes of longing, loneliness, sadness, unrequited love, illness, suffering, war, death, and yes - Satan.

This program does have a few lighter moments, but they are most definitely eclipsed by these darker themes. I have arranged the pieces in the program in something close to chronological order by the life of the poet - starting with Sappho and Sophocles, and ending with Whitman and Baudelaire. The entire chorus is comprised of four different ensembles. An octet and double sextet (Ensembles A and B) share the first half, and a sextet and double-octet (Ensembles C and D) sing after intermission. Each half of the concert ends with a piece or two by the entire choir of 40 singers. I realize this is a slightly different format, but I hope you enjoy the variety of ensemble size and timbre -- it was a lot of fun to rehearse these smaller group sizes!

Thank you **so much** for coming to our concert today, and for masking to protect everyone here. I hope to see you in December for *A calendar of light!* Until then, please stay healthy and safe.



Eric Banks
Founding Director
The Esoterics

UPCOMING ESOTERICA

Please join us for the remaining concerts of our thirtieth season, and have a sneak peek at the concerts we have planned for next year!

SHADOWS & SUN A calendar of light 9 | 10 December 2023

The Esoterics will bring its thirtieth season to a close with the world premiere of *A calendar of light* by POLYPHONOS winner and Los Angeles composer, Dale Trumbore. One of our favorite composers, our friend Dale has been sculpting this concert-length choral calendar since before the COVID-19 pandemic began. The Esoterics will finally welcome her back to the Pacific Northwest, along with Barbara Crooker - the poet of this calendar, to join us for its world premiere performances. The Seattle concert will be followed by a 30th anniversary gala and year-end party. We hope that you will join us!

LIGHT & TRUTH With the Yale Glee Club 9 | 10 March 2024

For the first concert weekend of our 31st season, The Esoterics is excited to be able to welcome Jeffrey Douma and the Yale Glee Club to the Pacific Northwest! We will be sharing a program with this world-renowned chorus of Eric's *alma mater*, for which he served as assistant conductor before he moved to Seattle and started The Esoterics. YGC will be offering a fascinating program of works by Shireen Abu-Khader, Nilo Alcalá, Lesia Dychko, Jonathan Bailey Holland, Ismael Huerta Marin, Udi Perlman, Kevin Puts, Shruthi Rajasekar, and André Thomas. Please join us!

SPLENDOR & SOLACE To have been there before 18 | 19 May 2024

Commissioned in 2018, *To have been there before* sets a series of texts that describe the pristine wilderness of Southeast Alaska by the American naturalist John Muir. Scored by Eric Banks for chamber orchestra and surround-sound triple-chorus, Muir's texts about sky, sea, field, forest, and *aurora borealis* are set in both English and Tlingit, in order to honor the native protectors and guides who made Muir's incredible journey possible. This concert will also include two world premieres for chorus and string orchestra -- *Anges nus* and *Fleurs d'artifice* -- by the Parisian composer, Philippe Bodin.

R O R E M

ned rorem centennial

P R O G R A M

Please turn off all noise-making devices, and refrain from talking during the performance.

This program includes all of the a cappella choral compositions by Ned Rorem (1923-2022)

With intermission, the running time of this concert is about 100 minutes.

Four madrigals (1948) *sung by ensemble A*

- I. Parting
- II. Flowers for the graces
- III. Love
- IV. An absent friend

Ode to man (2005) *sung by ensemble B*

- I. Strophe A
- II. Antistrophe A
- III. Strophe B
- IV. Antistrophe B

From an unknown past (1951) *sung by ensemble A*

- I. The lover in winter plaineth for the spring
- II. Hey nonny no!
- III. My blood so red
- IV. Suspiria
- V. The miracle
- VI. Tears
- VII. Crabbed age and youth

Five Armenian love songs (1997) *sung by ensemble B*

- I. Light and eye
- II. I have looked
- III. Green
- IV. Golden boy
- V. The mountain road

Virelai (1961) *sung by the entire ensemble*

In time of pestilence (1973) *sung by the entire ensemble*

- I. Adieu, farewell earth's bliss...
- II. Rich men, trust not in wealth...
- III. Beauty is but a flower...
- IV. Strength stoops unto the grave...
- V. Wit with his wantonness...
- VI. Haste therefore each degree...

INTERMISSION

I feel death... (1953) *sung by the tenors and basses*

Pilgrim strangers (1984) *sung by ensemble C*

Three poems of Baudelaire (1986) *sung by ensemble D*

- I. Invitation, to the voyage
- II. Cat
- III. Satan's litanies & prayer *soloists denoted by **

Festive alleluias (1991) *sung by the entire ensemble*

THE ESOTERICS

Eric Banks *Founding director*

Aaron Moore ^{D*}

Allison Fortenberry ^D

Avery Wong ^B

Barbara Leigh ^D

Betsy Baeskens ^B

Brittni Liyanage ^A

Christine Dove ^C

Daniel Powers ^A

Dave Doody ^C

Erik Abramson ^D

Erin Bathurst ^B

Gillian Dockins ^A

Gustavo Elias ^D

Jeremy Edelstein ^B

Jeremy Evans ^{D*}

Joe Scott ^D

Jonathan You ^A

Julia Jay ^C

Kelly Baker ^{D*}

Lillian Ashworth ^D

Livia Lennington ^A

Lora Korpar ^B

Maria Drury ^D

Matt Bonner ^A

Michael Saunders ^C

Mimi Couture ^{D*}

Mitchell Baier ^C

Nathan Wasner ^B

Nik Krainchich ^B

Nora Allen ^B

Patrick Clark ^D

Penny Cramer ^B

Sam Beckert ^B

Sarah Haynes ^B

Sarah Lewontin ^D

Shawna Avinger ^D

Stephen Elliott ^A

Tom Peters ^D

Tristain Lukey ^B

Will Dean ^D

Special thanks to:

Patricia Lahtinen | *Supertitlist*

Daniel Powers | *Audio Producer*

Mitchell Baier | *Facilities Coordinator*

Matthew Bonner | *Volunteer Coordinator*

T H E E S O T E R I C S

Now in the midst of its 30th concert season, Seattle's most innovative chorus has drawn local, national, and international praise for performing rarely-heard compositions of contemporary music for unaccompanied voices, for infusing elements of the literary, theatrical, and visual arts into the typical concert experience, and for inspiring and performing new *a cappella* choral settings of poetry, philosophy, and spiritual writings by composers around the world. In early 1992, Eric Banks brought together a group of friends to perform his Master's and Doctoral recitals in Choral Studies at the University of Washington. After Banks' recitals were completed, the group wanted to keep singing together, so Banks chose a name for his ensemble based on the Greek adjective εσοτερικος – which describes a close-knit community and the secret knowledge that its members share. Since incorporating with this name in 1993, The Esoterics has performed hundreds of concerts throughout the Pacific Northwest, has commissioned and premiered hundreds of new works for *a cappella* voices in myriad languages, and has mastered many of the most virtuosic choral works of the last century in concerts described as “compelling,” “crafted,” “luxuriant,” “lyrical,” “sumptuous,” and “superb.” The Esoterics has released twenty-one CD recordings on its own label (Terpsichore) and has been honored to compete at the 2000 Cork International Choral Festival (Ireland), the 2001 Certamen Coral de Tolosa (Spain), and the 2006 Harald Andersen International Choir Competition in Helsinki (Finland). As well, The Esoterics has demonstrated its continuing commitment to choral education in becoming the only choral ensemble in Washington State that grants continuing-education credit to its members who also teach in the public schools. In recognition for its efforts in choral education and innovation, The Esoterics has been honored five times with the ASCAP and Chorus America Award for the Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music (in 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2017). The Esoterics has been honored to receive grants from the arts commissions of Washington State, King County, and the City of Seattle, as well as funding from Amazon, Google, Microsoft, the Seattle Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the BMI Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Esoterics is a proud member chorus of ACDA (the American Choral Directors Association), Chorus America, IFCM (the International Federation for Choral Music), and GALA (the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses).

M I S S I O N S T A T E M E N T

The Esoterics is a Seattle-based vocal ensemble that is dedicated to performing and perpetuating contemporary *a cappella* choral settings of poetry, philosophy, and spiritual writings from around the world.

While cultivating artistic expression and cultural understanding among its singers and audience alike, The Esoterics aspires to reflect the beauty, power, and significance that are inherent in the music of our time.

E R I C B A N K S

As a conductor, composer, clinician, vocalist, linguist, and ethnomusicologist, Eric Banks has garnered significant acclaim as one of the most creative and compelling choral directors in the United States for his unwavering commitment to new music for unaccompanied voices. In 1992, Eric founded The Esoterics, a professional-caliber chamber chorus in Seattle whose mission is to perform and perpetuate contemporary choral music beyond the scope of the established *a cappella* canon. After completing his BA in Composition at Yale University in 1990, Eric relocated to Seattle to study in the departments of Choral Studies and Music Theory at the University of Washington. His MM thesis (1992) is a performance edition of *Dixit Dominus* by Chiara Margarita Cozzolani; his MA thesis (1995) is a postmodern analysis of Arvo Pärt's *Credo*; and his DMA dissertation (1996) surveys the choral music of Mexican composer and Aztec ethnomusicologist Carlos Chávez. In 1997, at the conclusion of his graduate study, Banks traveled to Sweden as a Fulbright Scholar and Lois Roth Fellow in order to learn more about its contemporary choral culture. While in Stockholm, Eric performed with several ensembles, including the Swedish Radio Choir and the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir. In his music, Eric is drawn to ideas that are 'esoteric' in origin, and chooses to express concepts that are undiscovered, under-represented, or not easily decipherable to a wider audience. As a composer, Banks has been able to combine his love of poetry, foreign language, classical civilization, social justice, comparative religion, and the natural sciences to create a growing repertoire of new works for *a cappella* chorus. Several of Banks' commissioned works have been recorded by The Esoterics, and can be found on CDs released on the Terpsichore label. Eric was a visiting scholar at the Royal Conservatory of Music and Swedish National Radio in Stockholm, as well as at the Cama Oriental Institute in Mumbai, India. Winner of the 2010 *Dale Warland Singers Commission Award* from Chorus America and the American Composers Forum, Eric has received composition and research grants from 4Culture, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Artist Trust, the Atwood Foundation, New Music USA, the San Francisco Arts Commission, Seattle City Artists, the Washington State Arts Commission, and three “creativity” grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. His upcoming premieres include pieces for the International Federation for Choral Music, the Taipei Philharmonic Chorus, and the Vancouver Chamber Choir. Eric lives in Seattle with David Gellman, his husband of 26 years (who is also The Esoterics' graphic design guru). You can read more about Eric's work on his own webpage: www.ericbanks.com. Eric is a member of ASCAP.

Texts and translations

Four madrigals (1948)

poems by Sappho,

translated by Cecil Maurice Bowra

I. Parting

Truly I want to die.
Such was her weeping
When she said goodbye.

These words she said to me,
"What sad calamity!
Sappho, I leave you most unwillingly."

To her I made reply:
"Go with good heart, but try
Not to forget our love in days gone by.

Else let me call to mind,
If your heart proves unkind,
The soft, delightful ways you leave behind.

Many a coronet
Of rose and violet,
Crocus and dill upon your brow you set:

Many a necklace too
Round your soft throat you threw,
Woven with me from buds of ravishing hue,

And often balm you spread
Of myrrh upon my head,
And royal ointment on my hair you shed."

II. Flowers for the graces

Weave garlands, maiden, from the strands
Of dill, and with soft gentle hands
Set the delicious leafage round your head.

The goddess and the happy graces
Love to look on flower-crown'd faces,
But turn aside from the ungarlanded.

III. Love

Love has unbound my limbs and set me shaking,
A monster bittersweet and my unmaking.

IV. An absent friend

A glorious goddess in her eyes
Were you, her comrade, and your songs
Above all other songs she'd prize.

With Lydian women now she dwells
Surpassing them, as when day dies
The rosy-fingered moon excels

The host of stars, and light illumines
The salt sea and the cornland glows
With light upon its thousand blooms.

In loveliness the dew spills over
And with new strength revives the rose,
Slim grasses and the flowering clover.

But sadly up and down she goes,
Remembering Atthis, once her lover,
And in her heart sick longing grows.

Ode to man (2005)

setting verses by Sophocles, from Antigone,

translated by Philip Barnes

I. Strophe A

Many are the wonders of the world,
None more wonderful than man.
He passes across the grey sea,
Before lashing winds,
Striding through waves
As they swell beneath.
He works the Earth,
Who is first of our gods,
Who wastes not away,
Who never lies fallow,
As year to year man turns
The sod with the plough,
Furrowing behind his team of stallions.

II. Antistrophe A

Man in his cunning snares many a bird,
Beasts without number,
And the teeming sea's fish.
He hunts them down
With traps and nets that let nothing go.
Though they roam the hills and are wild,
Man still controls them.
He even breaks the horse
With its shaggy mane,
While the feisty bull he tames
With a yoke that grips its neck.

III. Strophe B

Speaking and thinking swift as wind,
Learning to live as kith and kin –
These are Man's skills.
He has learned to shun shards of ice
That winter brings with frosts of a clear sky.
Man, resourceful, never at a loss,
Prepares for what will be.
Man working with man,
Unravels the inexplicable.
For death alone will he find no cure.

IV. Antistrophe B

Man sways between bad and good,
Beyond what we might expect.
At his best he clings to nature's laws
And the justice that gods mete out.
Then do we hold him in highest regard.
Yet when man is reckless beyond words,
With no good motive,
Then he is a true outcast.
Could I share the warmth of a fire
With someone so cold,
Whose thoughts are never my thoughts?

From an unknown past (1951)

*setting various anonymous poems
from the 15th and 16th centuries*

I. The lover in winter plaineth for the spring

O western wind, when wilt thou blow
That the small rain down can rain?
Christ, that my love were in my arms
And I in my bed again!

-- *Anonymous 16th century poet*

II. Hey nonny no!

Hey nonny no!
Men are fools that wish to die!
Is't not fine to dance and sing
When the bells of death do ring?

Is't not fine to swim in wine,
And turn upon the toe,
And sing hey nonny no!
When the winds blow and the seas flow?
Hey nonny no!

-- *from the Christ Church MS*

III. My blood so red...

My blood so red
For thee was shed,
Come home again,
My own sweetheart,
Come home again!
You've gone astray
Out of your way,
Come home again!

-- from an anonymous 15th century MS

IV. Suspiria

O would I were where I would be!
There would I be where I am not:
For where I am would I not be,
And where I would be I can not.

-- *an anonymous poem*

V. The miracle

Behold a wonder here!
Love hath received his sight!
Which many hundred years
Hath not beheld the light.

Such beams infused be
By Cynthia in his eyes
As first have made him see
And then have made him wise.

Love now no more will weep
For them that laugh the while!
Nor wake for them that sleep,
Nor sigh for them that smile!

So powerful is the beauty
That love doth now behold,
As love is turned to duty
That's neither blind nor bold.

Thus beauty shows her might
To be of double kind;
In giving love his sight
And striking folly blind.

-- *Anonymous, c 1600*

VI. Tears

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste!
But my sun's heav'nly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lies sleeping,
Softly, now softly lies sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets;
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at even he sets?
Rest you then, rest, sad eyes!
Melt not in weeping,
While she lies sleeping,
Softly, now softly lies sleeping.

-- from John Dowland's
Third and last book of songs or airs (1603)

VII. Crabbed age and youth

Crabbed age and youth cannot live together:
Youth is full of pleasance, age is full of care;
Youth like a summer morn, age like winter weather;
Youth like summer brave, age like winter bare.
Youth is full of sport, age's breath is short;
Youth is nimble, age is lame;
Youth is hot and bold, age is weak and cold;
Youth is wild, and age is tame.
Age, I do abhor thee; youth, I do adore thee;
O, my love, my love is young!
Age, I do defy thee: O, sweet shepherd, hie thee,
For methinks thou stay'st too long.

-- attributed to William Shakespeare

Five Armenian love songs (1987)
setting five poems by Nahapet Quchak
Նահապետ Քուչակ (d 1592),
translated by Ewald Osers

I. Light and eye (#11)

Ես աչք ու դու լոյս, հոգի,
ի՛ես at՜k u tu lo՛s, hoki,
I am the eye, you are the light, my love,
առանց լո՛յս՝ աչքըն խաւարի.
arants lo՛s at՜k՛an xavari.
Blind without light is the eye.

Ես ձուկ ու դու ջուր, հոգի,
ի՛ես tsug u tu t՜jur, hoki,
I am a fish, the water you, my love,
առանց ջո՛ւր՝ ձուկըն մեռանի.
arants t՜jur tsug՛an merani.
Without water fish must die.

Երբ գծուկն ի ջրէն հանեն
ի՛երբ ztsugn i t՜յրճԵՆ hanԵՆ
If you pull a fish from the river
Լ՛ի այլ ջուր ձըգեն, նայ ապրի,
vi a՛լ t՜jur tsԱԿԵՆ, na՛i abri,
And throw it into another, it will live,
Երբ գիս ի քենէ գատեն,
ի՛երբ zis i kԵՆԵ zadԵՆ,
But if I am parted from you,
քան զմեռնելն այլ ճար չի լինի:
kan zmԵՐՆԵԼՆ a՛լ dzar t՜ji lini.
I'll die without hope of reprieve.

II. I have looked (#79)

Իմ եա՛ր, թէ ի վեր հայիմ,
im յar, tԵ i vԵr ha՛im,
I have looked near and far,
թէ ի վայր, քան ըզքեզ չըկա.
tԵ i va՛r, kan ԱԿԵԶ t՜յԱԳԱ.
And this is what I've learned:
Ամենն աստեղաց նըման,
amԵՆՆ asԾԵԱԿՆ ՈԼՄԱՆ,
Most other beauties are in the stars;
դուն ի մէջ պայծառ լուսընկա.
tun i mԵԺ ba՛dzar lusԱԳԱ.
You are bright as the moon.
Կաղանդըն շնորհաւոր կ'սսեն
gawant՛an ՏՆՈՐհավօր gasԵՆ
If on Christmas
ի տարին մէկ օր մի կու գայ,
i darin mԵԶ or mi gu ka՛i,
We have our happiest day,

Այսօր ինձ հազա՛ր կաղանդ
a՛s'or intz hazar gawant
You bring a thousand Christmases
աչերուս, որ ըզքեզ տեսա:
at՜jԵrus, vor ԱԿԵԶ dԵsԱ.
With your smile.

III. Green (#59)

Մըտիկ իմ եարին արեք,
m՛adig im յarin arek,
Regard my love: all dressed in green,
զինչ հագեր՝ ամենն է կանաչ,
zint՜j haker, amԵՆՆ Ե ganant՜j,
Her frock is like the spring;
Հագեր գոյնըգոյն կապայ,
haker ko՛hԱԿո՛h gaba՛i,
Buttons and ribbons are green,
կոճակ ու օղակն է կանաչ.
godzag u օbagn Ե ganant՜j.
No other color to be seen.
առեր ու պաղչան մըտեր,
arԵr u baւԺյan m՛adԵr,
I took her out into the woods;
ջուր կ'երթայ, եզերն է կանաչ
t՜jur gԵrta՛l, յԵԶԵՐՆ Ե ganant՜j
A stream was tumbling down between
Մըտիկ ծառերուն արեք
m՛adig dzarԵrun arek
Green banks, and all around the trees
ծառն ծաղկեր, տերեւն է կանաչ:
dzarn dzaւԶԵՐ, dԵՐԵՎՆ Ե ganant՜j.
Were arrayed in leaves of vernal green.

IV. Golden boy (#15)

Երբ որ ես պրզտիկ էի,
ի՛երբ or Եs bԱԶԴիգ Ե՛ի,
When I was young and innocent,
կանչեին ինձ ոսկի տըղայ.
gant՜jԵin intz vosgi dԱԵԱ՛l.
They called me a golden boy.
Մեծցա, սիրու տեր եղայ,
mԵԾԾtsa, siru dԵր յԵՅԱ՛l,
I grew up, fell in love,
երեսիս գոյնըն կու գընայ.
ի՛երԵsիs ko՛hԱՆ gu kԱՆԱ՛l.
And gone are my color and my joy.
Մանկտի՛ք, ձեր արեւն ասեմ,
mangԱԴիկ, tԵՐ arԵՎՆ nasԵՄ,
Young men, beware: love is stronger than rock;
որ սիրուն՝ քարըն չի դիմնայ.
vor sirun karԱՆ t՜ji timna՛l.
Take heed of my appeal:
Սիրուն՝ քար Լ'երկաթ պիտի,
sirun kar vԵrgat bidi,
To keep love out you need iron-clad stone,
պողպատե դըռնակն ի վերայ:
boւԵbade tԱՐճԱԳՆ i vԵրԱ՛l.
And shutters made of steel.

V. The mountain road (#9)

Քանի՛ սարերովդ երթաս,
kani sarԵrovt ertas,
No matter how many mountains you cross,
օր մի յիմ ափըս տի ընկնիս.
or mi him արԱs di ԱճճՆիs.
Soon you will come to the shore.
Երբ օր մի յիմ ձեռքն ընկնիս,
ի՛երբ or mi him tԵՐԿՆ ԱճճՆիs.
On that day, when you fall into my arms,

քան անեմ որ խոստովանիս.
pan anԵՄ vor xosԾhovani՛s.
I will make a promise to you.
Երթամ ես ի յան կարմունջն
ի՛ertam Եs i յan garmunt՜j՛ն
When you are done with your blushing journey,
որ իժիր դու բաժգող կ'անցնիս —
or i՜zir tu բա՜ճկօւ gantsnis --
We will sit and rest and share our lives together -
Առնեմ զայն որ անցեր ես,
arnԵՄ շա՛h vor antԵՐ Եs,
I will learn about everywhere you've already been,
առնում զայն որ դեռ տի անցնիս:
arnum շա՛h vor tԵr di antԵnis.
And let you take me everywhere you've yet to go.

Virelai (1961)

setting a poem by Geoffrey Chaucer

Alone, walking,
In thought plaining,
And sore sighing,
All desolate:
Me rememb'ring
Of my living,
My death wishing,
Both early and late:

Infortunate
Is so my fate
That wote ye what?
Out of measure
My life I hate:
Thus desparate
In such poor estate
Do I endure.

Of other cure
Am I not sure
Thus to endure
Is hard certain.
Such is my ure,
I you ensure,
What creature
May have more pain?

My truth so plain
Is taken in vain,
And great disdain
In remembrance,
Yet I full fain,
Would me complain,
Me to abstain
From this penance.
But in substance,
None allegeance
Of my grevaunce
Can I not find.
Right so my chaunce
With displeasance
Doth me advance,
And thus an end.

In time of pestilence (1973)

setting a poem by Thomas Nashe

Adieu, farewell earth's bliss!
This world uncertain is:
Fond are life's lustful joys,
Death proves them all but toys.
None from his darts can fly;
I am sick, I must die -
Lord have mercy on us!

Rich men, trust not in wealth,
Gold cannot buy you health;
Physic himself must fade;
All things to end are made;
The plague full swift goes by;
I am sick, I must die –
Lord have mercy on us!

Beauty is but a flower
Which wrinkles will devour;
Brightness falls from the air;
Queens have died young and fair;
Dust hath closed Helen's eye;
I am sick, I must die –
Lord have mercy on us!

Strength stoops unto the grave,
Worms feed on Hector brave;
Swords may not fight with fate;
Earth still holds open her gate;
"Come, come!" the bells do cry;
I am sick, I must die –
Lord have mercy on us!

Wit with his wantonness
Tasteth death's bitterness;
Hell's executioner
Hath no ears for to hear
What vain art can reply;
I am sick, I must die –
Lord have mercy on us!

Haste therefore each degree
To welcome destiny;
Heaven is our heritage,
Earth but a player's stage.
Mount we unto the sky;
I am sick, I must die –
Lord have mercy on us!

INTERMISSION

I feel death... (1953)

*setting a section from The rival ladies
by John Dryden (Rodorick, Act 4, Scene 3)*

I feel death rising higher, still and higher
Within my bosom, every breath I fetch
Shuts up my life within a shorter compass,
And, like the vanishing sounds of bells,
Grows less and less each pulse,
'Till it be lost in air.

Pilgrim strangers (1984)

*setting a section from Specimen days
by Walt Whitman*

How few of life's days and hours
(and they not by relative value or proportion,
but by chance) are ever noted.

Begin my visits among the camp hospitals
in the army of the Potomac.

Outdoors, at the foot of a tree, I notice
a heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, et cetera,
a full load for a one-horse cart.

I do not see that I do much good
to these wounded and dying;
but I cannot leave them.

Once in a while some youngster
holds on to me convulsively,
and I do what I can for him;
at any rate, stop with him
and sit near him for hours, if he wishes it.

I am more and more surprised
at the very great proportion of youngsters
from fifteen to twenty-one in the army.
I afterwards found a still greater proportion
among the southerners.

Amid the deep excitement, crowds and motion,
it seems strange to see many of the soldiers,
in the midst of all, sleeping sound.
They drop down anywhere,
close by the basements, on the sidewalk,
aside on some vacant lot, and deeply sleep.

A poor seventeen or eighteen year old boy
lies there, on the stoop of a grand house;
he sleeps so calmly, so profoundly.
Some clutch their muskets firmly, even in sleep.
Some in squads; comrades, brothers close together –
and on them, as they lay, drips the rain.

But the hours, the day, the night passed,
and whatever returns, an hour, a day, a night
like that can never again return.

Of all the days of the war, there are
two especially I can never forget:
the day of the news of that Bull Run defeat,
and the day of Abraham Lincoln's death.
I was home in Brooklyn on both occasions.
The day of the murder we heard the news
very early in the morning.

Mother prepared breakfast –
and other meals afterward –
as usual; but not a mouthful was eaten
all day by either of us. We each drank
half a cup of coffee; that was all. Little was said.
We got every newspaper morning and evening,
and passed them silently to each other.

I have noticed through most of the hospitals
that as long as there is any chance for a man,
the surgeon and nurses work hard for his life,
doing everything night and day to save a life
from the very grip of the destroyer.
But once that grip is firmly fixed, leaving
no hope at all, the surgeon abandons the patient.

Stewart C. Glover, Company E, 5th Wisconsin –
was wounded May 5, in one of those fierce tussles
of the Wilderness – died May 21 – aged about 20.
He was a small and beardless young man,
an ideal American of his age. He had served
nearly three years, and would have been entitled
to his discharge within three days.

The fighting had ceased for the day,
for the general rode by and called
for volunteers to bring in the wounded.
Glover responded among the first –
went out gaily – but while in the act
of bearing in a wounded sergeant to our lines,
was shot in the knee by a rebel;
consequence: amputation and death.

He had resided with his father,
an aged and feeble man, in Batavia, N.Y.,
but was at school in Wisconsin,
after the war broke out, and there enlisted, like it,
was very manly, was beloved by officers and comrades.

He kept a little diary, like so many of the soldiers.
On the day of his death he wrote:
"Today the doctor says I must die –
all is over with me – ah, so young to die."
On another blank leaf he penciled to his brother,
"Dear brother Thomas, I have been brave
but wicked – pray for me."

Tonight as I was trying to keep cool,
sitting by a wounded soldier in Armory-square,
I was attracted by some pleasant singing
in an adjoining ward...

*My days are swiftly gliding by,
And I a pilgrim stranger,
Would not detain them as they fly.*

The principal singer was a young lady-nurse,
accompanying on a melodeon,
and joined by the lady-nurses of other wards.
They sat there, a charming group,
with their healthy faces and standing up...

*Those hours of toil and danger;
For O we stand on Jordan's strand,
Our friends are passing over,*

... a little behind them were
some fifteen of the convalescent soldiers,
with books in their hands, singing.
Of course it was not
such a performance as the great soloists
at the New York opera house take a hand in...

*We'll gird our loins my brethren dear,
Our distant home discerning,
Our absent Lord has left us word,*

...yet I am not sure,
but I received as much pleasure sitting there,
as I have had from the best Italian compositions.

The men lying up and down the hospital
(some badly wounded –
some never to rise thence),
in their cots with their drapery of white curtains,
and the shadows down the lower
and upper parts of the ward...

*Let every lamp be burning,
For O we stand on Jordan's strand...*

...then the silence of the men,
and the attitudes they took –
the whole was a sight
to look around upon again and again.
And there sweetly rose those voices up to...

...the high, whitewashed wooden roof...

*My days are swiftly gliding by,
And I a pilgrim stranger,
Would not detain them as they fly.
Those hours of toil and danger;*

...and pleasantly the roof sent it all back again.

*For O we stand on Jordan's strand,
Our friends are passing over,
And just before, the shining shore,
We may almost discover.*

*We'll gird our loins my brethren dear,
Our distant home discerning,
Our absent Lord has left us word,
Let every lamp be burning,*

*For O we stand on Jordan's strand,
Our friends are passing over,
And just before, the shining shore,
We may almost discover.*

No sooner had our men surrendered,
the rebels instantly commenced robbing the train
and murdering their prisoners.
Two on their backs were now surrounded
by a demoniac crowd,
each member stabbing them
in different parts of their bodies.

One had his feet pinned
firmly to the ground by bayonets.
The wounded had all been dragged
out of the wagons. Some not yet dead
but horribly mutilated were groaning.
Of our men who surrendered
most had been thus maimed.

At this instant a force of our cavalry,
who had been following the train at some interval,
charged suddenly upon the Secesh captors,
who proceeded to make
the best escape they could
Most got away, but we gobbled seventeen men,
in the very acts just described.

The men were taken to a hollow square,
and the ironical remark made to them
that they were now to be given
"a chance for themselves."

A few ran for it. But what use?
From every side the deadly pills came.
In a few minutes seventeen corpses
strewed the hollow square.

I was curious to know whether
some of the Union soldiers, some few
(some one or two at least of the youngsters),
did not abstain from shooting
on the helpless men. Not one.

There was no exultation,
very little said, almost nothing,
yet every man there contributed his shot.

Multiply the above by hundreds,
light it with every lurid passion,
the lion's lapping thirst for blood,
boiling volcanoes of human revenge
for comrades slain, with the light of
burning farms and smoldering embers,
and in the human heart
everywhere black, worse embers –
and you have an inkling of this war.

Most of these sick or hurt
are evidently young fellows from the country.

Look at the patient and mute manner
of our American wounded
as they lie in such a sad collection,
from all the states and all the cities.

Most are entirely without friends here,
and hardly a word of sympathy or cheer,
And everywhere among the countless gravestones
we see the word unknown.

Three poems of Baudelaire (1986)

setting three poems, translated by Richie Howard

I. Invitation, to the voyage

Imagine the magic
Of living together
There, with all the time in the world
For loving each other,
For loving and dying
Where even the landscape resembles you:
The suns dissolved
In overcast skies
Have the same mysterious charm for me
As your wayward eyes
Through crystal tears,
My sister, my child!
*All is order there, and elegance,
Pleasure, peace, and opulence.*

Furniture gleaming
With the patina
Of time itself in the room we would share;
The rarest flowers
Mingling aromas
With amber's uncertain redolence;
Encrusted ceilings
Echoed in mirrors
And Eastern splendor on the walls –
Here all would whisper
To the soul in secret
Her sweet mother tongue.
*All is order there, and elegance,
Pleasure, peace, and opulence.*

On these still canals
The freighters doze
Fitfully; their mood is for roving,
And only to flatter
A lover's fancy
Have they put in from the ends of the earth.
By late afternoon
The canals catch fire
As sunset glorifies the town;
The world turns to gold
As it falls asleep
In a fervent light.
*All is order there, and elegance,
Pleasure, peace, and opulence.*

II. Cat

As if he owned the place, a cat
Meanders through my mind,
Sleek, and proud, yet so discreet
In making known his will

That I hear music when he mews,
And even when he purrs
A tender timbre in the sound
Compels my consciousness –

A secret rhythm penetrates
To unsuspected depths,
Obsessive as a line of verse
And potent as a drug:

All woes are spirited away
I hear ecstatic news –
It seem a telling language has
No need of words at all.

My heart, assenting instrument,
Is masterfully played,
No other bow across its strings
Can draw such music out

The way this cat's uncanny voice
– seraphic, alien –
Can reconcile discordant strains
Into close harmony!

One night his brindled fur gave off
A perfume so intense
I seemed to be embalmed because
(Just once!) I fondled him...

Familiar spirits genius, judge,
The cat presides – inspires
Events that he appears to spurn,
Half goblin and half god!

And when my spellbound eyes at last
Relinquish worship of
This cat they love to contemplate
And look inside myself,
I find to my astonishment
Like living opals there

His fiery pupils, embers which
Observe me fixedly.

III. Satan's litanies

Aptest angel and the loveliest!
A god betrayed, to whom no anthems rise,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Prince of exiles, exiled prince who, wronged,
Yet rises ever stronger from defeat,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Omniscient ruler of the hidden realm,
Patient healer of all human pain,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Who even to lepers and such outcast scum
By love inculcates all we know of bliss,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Who gave to death, your oldest paramour,
A child both lunatic and lovely – Hope!
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Who grants the criminal's last look of pride
That damns the crowd beneath the guillotine,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Who knows each cranny in the grudging earth
Where gems are hidden by a jealous god,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Whose eye can pierce the deepest arsenal
Where buried metals slumber in the dark,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Within whose mighty arm the sleepwalker
Avoids the rooftop's yawning precipice,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Who magically rescues the old bones
Of drunkards trampled by the horses' hooves,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Who to console our sufferings has taught
How readily shot and powder may be mixed,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Who sets your sign, in sly complicity,
Upon the rich men's unrelenting brow,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Who lights in women's greedy hearts and eyes
Worship of wounds, rapacity for rags,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

The outlaw's staff and the inventor's lamp,
Confessor to the traitor, hanged man's priest,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress!

Adoptive father to those an angry god
The father drove from his earthly paradise,
Satan, take pity on my sore distress.

Prayer:

*Satan be praised!
Glory to you on high*

*Where once you reigned
In heaven, and in the pit
Where now you dream
In taciturn defeat!*

*Grant that my soul, one day,
Beneath the tree of knowledge,
Meet you, when above your brow
Its branches, like a second temple, spread!*

Festive alleluias (1991)

setting the traditional text

Alleluia!

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